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Policy Implications of News Media Coverage of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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2018

Abstract

Policy Implications of News Media Coverage of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

by

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MS, Regis University, 2013

BS, Medaille College, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice – General

Walden University

November 2018

Abstract

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) garnered global news media attention in Summer 2014 when it seized a significant section of land in Iraq and Syria. The group then mishandled and executed its captives. There is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to address the threat posed by ISIS. An understanding of the function of Russian and U.S. news media coverage of the ISIS threat is an appropriate research topic. The purpose of this qualitative content analysis study was to explore how the U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The theoretical framework for this study was the agenda-setting theory. The research questions centered on how 3 news media outlets from the 3 countries represented ISIS within this time frame. The study design was a qualitative deductive content analysis with purposeful sampling. Data were coded in a binary manner and analyzed using the data software program Dedoose. Themes identified in the analysis were mitigation, insecurity, foreign fighters, responsibility, and propaganda. The results of this study suggest that there are similarities and differences in Russian, Qatari, and U.S. media outlets' depiction of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015, which can be explained by agenda-setting theory. The significance of this study is twofold. First, the information arising from the study may influence social change by assisting counterterrorism officials and policy makers in making informed decisions about how to mitigate the ISIS threat. Second, this study contributes to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation for future researchers.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my fantastic mom Hannah, my incredible wife Kameka, and my children Ashanti, Ashley, Amanda, and Angela for their moral support and sacrifices they made over the years in my quest to achieve a terminal degree.

“Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence” -Robert Frost.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The beginning of the early 2000s terrorist attacks and foiled terrorist-related plots have received significant media attention, especially in the U.S. The fear of terrorism has altered how ordinary U.S. residents perform their daily activities; from air travel to major public gatherings, for instance, U.S. residents must now adhere to specific security protocols (Lygutas, 2009). In counterterrorism investigations, it is not uncommon for U.S. local law enforcement agencies to tap the telephones or access the e-mails of potential suspects (Lygutas, 2009). Terrorism is a significant security threat to the world (Eichler, 2006; Lerner, Gonzalez, Small, & Fischhoff, 2003; Waxman, 2011). The highly developed nature of the current communication tools has enabled individuals and organizations to have instant and straightforward access to information globally (Asogwa, Iyere, & Attah, 2012).

Background

The September 11th, 2001, terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York, Pennsylvania Airfield, and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, coupled with the recent video footage of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) public beheadings shown on U.S. media, has revived public attention in the United States to the concept of terrorism. I argue that the impact of these publicized events needs to be analyzed. There are two schools of thought regarding the consequences of terrorism. The first perspective is that terrorism does not have a substantial effect on the affected countries; hence, the resources usually devoted to a counterterrorism approach is perhaps unnecessary

(Waxman, 2011). Others argue, however, that comparing terrorism-related casualties to conventional war or traffic-related catastrophes may minimize the actual effects of terrorism (Waxman, 2011). It is imperative to understand that, in terrorism incidents, directly affected victims are not the only victims (Drakos, & Kutan 2003; Kondrasuk, 2004; Pine, Costello, & Masten, 2005; Waxman, 2011). There are economic, psychological, sociological, and political short and long-term consequences of terrorism on the affected communities (Drakos & Kutan, 2003; Kondrasuk, 2004; Pine et al., 2005; Waxman, 2011). To that end, I argue that no community is immune from acts of terrorism, hence, terrorism incident anywhere is an affront to stability everywhere.

Terrorism Defined

There is not a universal definition of terrorism. Different authorities interpret the issue differently (Grozdanova, 2014). The UN Security Council dossier permits member nations to define terrorism as they see appropriate (Saul, 2005). For instance, the U.K Security Service, MI5, (2018) defines terrorism as the use of violence and the threats of violence to impact government policies or promote specific agenda but discard democracy. Also, the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, (2018) definition of terrorism conforms to the MI5 definition of terrorism but expands to include terrorist acts that occur in Australia or abroad. And certain actions of hostage incidents that arise on shore, offshore, and aviation. In the context of this study, the term *terrorism* refers to what is specified in the Code of Federal Regulations (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85): “The unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or

social objectives” (as cited in Federal Bureau of Investigations [FBI], 2005, p. 1). The beginning in the early 2000s till today, media outlets have reported occurrences of terrorism incidents throughout the globe in Africa, Asia, North America, South America, Europe, and the Middle East.

The Islamic State terrorist group has undertaken activities in several global regions and is considered the most dangerous terrorist organization in recent history (Vidino, 2014; Yalçinkaya, 2016). ISIS is a terrorist organization that is primarily based in Iraq and Syria (Fryer, 2015; ISIS, 2015; Panayiotides, 2015). Initially, ISIS was one of the opposing groups fighting the Syrian regime (Fryer, 2015; Panayiotides, 2015). ISIS distinguished itself from other rival groups in the Syrian civil war through ruthless decapitations and torture of captives, among other actions (Fryer, 2015; Panayiotides, 2015). Furthermore, ISIS’s support of a harsh form of Sharia law and its goal of establishing a state rather than toppling the Syrian government has isolated the group from other groups fighting the Syrian government (Fryer, 2015; ISIS, 2015; Panayiotides, 2015).

The significance of this study is twofold. First, the knowledge arising from the study may influence social change by assisting counterterrorism officials and policy makers in making informed decisions about how to mitigate ISIS threat. Additionally, this study contributes to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation and may, thus, be useful for future researchers.

Problem Statement

ISIS garnered global news media attention in Summer 2014 when it seized a significant section of land in Iraq and Syria (Kadercan, 2016; Yourish, Watkins, Giratikanon, & Lee, 2016; Yosufi, 2016). The group then executed, tortured, and mishandled its captives, which included local minorities (Sahara, 2015; Sullivan, 2016; Kadercan, 2016; Yourish et al., 2016). In addition to its carefully strategized propaganda machinery, ISIS adopted and implemented a unique recruitment strategy for foreign fighters (Kopitzke, 2017; Orozobekova, 2016; Rekawek, 2015; Yourish et al., 2016). UN monitors recorded at least 55,047 civilian casualties because of the conflict between January 1, 2014, and October 31, 2015, with 18,802 people killed and 36,245 wounded (Jamieson, 2016). In total, more than 1,200 people outside of Iraq and Syria were murdered in attacks inspired or conducted by the Islamic State (Lister et al., 2018; Yourish et al., 2016).

In 2016, the Syrian Center for Policy Research (SCPR) recorded about 470,000 casualties because of the Syrian war, a number which represents approximately 11.5% of the Syrian population who were injured or murdered because of the ongoing Syrian conflict (as cited in Boghani, 2016; Farani, Khalid, & Abbassi, 2017). The number of casualties in the SCPR 2016 report is higher than the UN's conservative estimate of 250,000 victims of the Syrian war (Boghani, 2016; Farani et al., 2017). SCPR's 2016 assessment indicates that about 85% of the casualties resulted in violence, whereas approximately 15% of the losses were triggered by the consequences of the war, such as

the deteriorating health care delivery system, penurious sanitation management, and inadequate nutrition (as cited in Boghani, 2016).

The problem herein is that, because of these casualties, the existence of ISIS is detrimental to the security and stability of the global order (Abdel-Samad, 2016; Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2015; Gunaratna, 2016; Jasper & Moreland, 2016; Lekas, 2015; Sekulow, 2015). In confronting the threat posed by ISIS, U.S.-led military forces in August 2014 initiated airstrikes against ISIS-held territories in both Iraq and Syria (Duta, & Bonteanu, 2016; Gunaratna, 2016; Laub, 2016; Panayiotides, 2015; Terrill, 2014). According to a U.S. State Department estimate, more than 60 countries and other organizations have decided to contribute either military forces or resources or both, to the U.S.-led military operation against ISIS (as cited in Mcinnis, 2016; see, also, O'Connor, 2017). In contrast, there is a Russian-led military coalition encompassing Syria, Iran, and Lebanon (Hezbollah), which has adopted a different strategy than U.S.-led coalition to combat ISIS (Carpenter, 2013; Jones et al., 2016; Sanusi & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016).

Another related problem is that there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh, Hadar, Katz, & Heydemann, 2012). This lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). Because of the significantly different roles Russia and the United States play in the war against ISIS, understanding the function of Russian and U.S. media coverage of ISIS threat is imperative and an appropriate research topic.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis study was to explore how the U.S., Russian, and Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The significance of this study is twofold. First, the results of this study may impact social change by aiding security practitioners and policy makers in making sound decisions about how to address the ISIS threat. Furthermore, this study adds to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media depiction for future researchers.

Research Questions

There is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012). Some observers contend that this lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). It is against this background that I developed the following research questions to provide a framework for this study:

RQ1: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of mitigation factors (defined as presenting suggestions, ideas, or solutions from individuals, groups, or government officials to weaken ISIS's influence) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ2: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of insecurity issues (defined as presenting a situation susceptible to

danger, threat, or deficiency in protection) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ3: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their coverage of foreign fighter threat (defined as presenting the threat of militants from abroad who join and fight alongside ISIS) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ4: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of responsibility issues (defined as presenting an issue about blaming or holding individuals, governments, or entities accountable) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ5: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of propaganda concerns (define as strategically presenting an issue to persuade and promote an agenda, or to deceive or demoralize individuals, groups, or governments to reverse their cause) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework for this study was the agenda-setting theory. The agenda-setting theory elaborates on the significant role of media in a given polity (McQuail, 2010). In 1922, Walter Lippmann, a print media journalist, observed that media could create a pictorial overview of an issue to somewhat influence the audience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs & Shaw, 1993; McQuail, 2010; Weaver, 2007). To test this assumption, McCombs and Shaw studied presidential campaigns in 1968, 1972,

and 1976. In their analysis of 1968 campaign coverage, McCombs and Shaw concentrated on awareness and information (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). To test the agenda-setting function of the mass media, they examined the correlation between the significant topics of electorates in given polity and the dominant issues portrayed by the media during the electioneering campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The results of McCombs and Shaw's analysis of 1968 campaign coverage indicated that mass media has a sizable impact on the topics that electorates view as significant in a given polity during an electioneering campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; McCombs & Shaw 1993; McQuail, 2010; Weaver, 2007). The assumption in the agenda-setting theory is that the frequency of media coverage of a topic correlates with the significance the audience or the electorates give to it (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; McQuail, 2010; Weaver, 2007).

The agenda-setting theory applied to this study because ISIS leaders understand the significant role of media and capitalize on them for propaganda purpose (Awan, 2017; Lieberman, 2017). Coincidentally, the current 24-hour news cycle seems to attract jaw-dropping incidents such as acts of terrorism. In that regard, there appears to be an unintended association between the news media and ISIS. I used the agenda-setting theory to explain the significant role of news media in influencing public opinions in Russia, Qatar, and the United States.

Nature of the Study

For this qualitative content analysis study, I explored how the U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. I used the

database LexisNexis and a combination of news archives from two online television stations and one online newspaper (*CNN Online*, *The Moscow Times Online*, and *Al Jazeera English Online*) as the sampling frames for the selection of news media articles. The units of analysis were individual news articles representing ISIS in these news outlets from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The criteria used to choose these media outlets was that they must have a comprehensive representation of various news topics, can be retrieved through LexisNexis, and have large audiences. The outlets were *CNN Online* from the United States, *Al Jazeera English Online* from Qatar in the Middle East, and *The Moscow Times Online* from Russia.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), a qualitative approach encompasses revealing situations that turn the world into a more perceptible (as cited in Creswell, & Poth, 2017). In general, there are two primary methods of analyzing news media content: inductive and deductive (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Use of the inductive method involves examining news media content in a fair manner to uncover potential frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This approach is amenable to the use of several styles to identify emerging themes (Macnamara, 2005; Matthes, 2009). However, it is very tedious, is only applicable to a small sample size, and is hard to replicate (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In contrast, using a deductive approach, researchers select frames in advance and examine the frequency of those frames in the selected news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In this method, investigators are aware of frames they will use and do not find the process of analyzing data to be cumbersome (Macnamara, 2005; Matthes, 2009). Findings apply to large sample size and can be replicated; also, researchers may

more easily notice variances in framing among media (Macnamara, 2005; Matthes, 2009; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

I used a deductive content analysis approach for this study because I examined specific themes in the text, namely mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns. As Babbie (2010) noted, content analysis is an appropriate mechanism for understanding messages in interaction. It can be used to examine large amounts of data (Holsti, 1969). Additionally, the unobtrusive feature of content analysis makes it an appropriate research technique for sensitive topics, such as terrorism (Babbie, 2010; Holsti, 1969).

As discussed, this study intended to explore the U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. I selected news articles from May 1, 2014, to May 1, 2015, because that was the period ISIS gained notoriety and proclaimed a caliphate (Kadercan, 2016; Yourish et al., 2016). In the coding process, there was a set of questions for which I had to answer *yes* (1) or *no* (0) to measure the frequency the themes appeared in the media outlets. The merit of applying that type of binary coding method is that intercoder dependability is mostly high; a limitation is that such an approach is susceptible to measurement error (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). I carefully formulated the problem statement, purposive statement, and research questions to align with the content analysis methodology to ensure credibility.

I used the analytical data software Dedoose to code the data and analyze the results of this study. The independent variable (IV) was news media country of origin

(U.S., Russian, and Qatari news media). The dependent variables (DV) encompassed the framing of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015, in the following categories: mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns.

Definitions

Content analysis: An umbrella term for a range of analytic methods stretching from “impressionistic, intuitive, interpretive analyses to systematic, strict textual analyses” (Rosengren, as cited in Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1).

Terrorism: Per the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85), terrorism is “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate, or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (as cited in FBI, 2005, p. 1).

Following are the operational definitions that were used in the study:

Economic insecurity: The presentation of an issue concerning financial and economic effects on individuals, groups, or a nation in the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Foreign fighter threat: The presentation of an issue about the danger of militants from abroad who joined and fought alongside ISIS in the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Insecurity issues: The presentation of a situation susceptible to danger, threat, or deficiency in protection on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Media: Newspaper articles and news broadcasts.

Online media: News media articles obtained through a LexisNexis search from *CNN Online, The Moscow Times Online, and Al Jazeera English Online.*

Political insecurity: The presentation of an issue about the propensity of the collapse of a government in the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Propaganda matters: The strategic presentation of an issue to persuade and promote an agenda or to deceive or demoralize individuals, groups, or governments to reverse their cause on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Responsibility issues: The presentation of an issue of blaming or holding individuals, governments, or entities accountable concerning the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Assumptions

In this study, there was an underlying assumption that ISIS would continue to pose a threat to the global security, order, and stability. Furthermore, the assumption is that this study would have evidence of trustworthiness, the news articles were correctly imputed into the retrieval databases, the study variables were presented for easy scrutiny, and both internal and external validity issues were addressed.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this project was confined to concluding the association of five independent variables with the dependent variable exclusively, and in the form of a group. Projections were centered on the outcomes of the group analysis. The criteria that were used to choose these media outlets is that they must have a comprehensive representation of various news topics, and could be retrieved through LexisNexis and

have large audiences: *The CNN online* from the United States, *Al Jazeera English online* from Qatar, Middle East, and *the Moscow Times online* from Russia. *CNN.com* prides itself as one of the chief global online news sources (“About CNN,” 2017). *CNN.com* mainly depends on about 4,000 *CNN’s global* staff and features modern technology, such as live video streaming, audio content, news archives, and contextual information (“About CNN,” 2017). Also, *the Moscow Times* is an English-language weekly newspaper launched in 1992 and printed in Moscow, Russia. The *Moscow Times* is available by subscription and for free in the hospitality industry in Russia, such as restaurants, commercial airlines, and hotels (Luhn, 2017). The circulation rate of *the Moscow Times* is an approximately 55.000 (Richardson, 2001).

Moreover, since 2006, *Al Jazeera English* has been a sub-division of the *Al Jazeera network*, which entails about 70 units (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). *Al Jazeera Arabic* was launched in 1996 and is the pioneer independent news organization in the Arab peninsula (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). The station prides itself on providing a platform for news and open discussion (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). *Al Jazeera* claims to be an audience-centered news network that broadcast news from remote places throughout the globe (“A truly Global Network,” 2017).

Limitations

As mentioned earlier, the information in this project may influence social change by assisting counterterrorism officials, and policy makers make informed decisions about how to mitigate ISIS threat. Additionally, in theoretical terms, this study contributes to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation for future researchers.

Nevertheless, this study is not immune to limitations; a possible restriction of content analysis study is that detected patterns in media may not precisely reflect the authenticity of the actual situation (Babbie, 2010). For instance, online Television's reportage may be unfair because of its monetary rewards, political affiliation, and unnecessary governmental interventions. Likewise, the scrutiny of only online Television station contents as the primary source of media representation of ISIS may not correctly reflect the overview of ISIS. Additionally, because of the limited availability of resources and time, this project could not include other media sources, such as Newspapers and other Television stations in the countries in question. To address the said limitations, the questions in this study were purposefully designed to align with the major themes found in the current literature on ISIS threat.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Criminal Justice Field

Policy makers and counterterrorism officials must be conversant with the intricacies surrounding the war against ISIS. This study contributes to the existing counterterrorism strategies to mitigate ISIS threat because it draws policy makers and counterterrorism officials' attention into a significant loophole in the current efforts to address ISIS challenges. Thus, lack of cohesion among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015).

Additionally, this study offers a thorough insight into ISIS through the lenses of essential players such as the Americans, the Russians, and the Middle Easterners. Moreover, in theoretical terms, this study contributes to the existing literature on ISIS and

its global media representation for future researchers. Also, public perception in measuring success and failures of policies.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The impact of positive social change encompasses the potential of drawing policy makers and counterterrorism officials' attention into a significant loophole in the current efforts to address ISIS challenges. Thus, by becoming conversant with the intricacies surrounding the war against ISIS, such as lack of cohesion among international partners, government officials may make an informed decision about how to mitigate ISIS threat (Cronin, 2015). Counterterrorism issues are complicated in the sense that it is risky to either belittle or exaggerate the threat (Sloan, 1995). When the threat is disparaging, minimum countermeasures may be used (Sloan, 1995).

On the other hand, when the threat is exaggerated, government officials and the citizenry may overstretch it (Sloan, 1995). As such, for a countermeasure to be effective, it must be realistic and devoid of both immoderations (Sloan, 1995). In that regard, understanding the Islamic State through the perspectives of key players, such as the Americans, the Russians, and the indigenes of Middle East may help formulate a realistic countermeasure for national security officials and policy makers to mitigate the issue.

Summary

The current activities of the Islamic State group have undoubtedly threatened the safety and stability of the international community (Abdel-Samad, 2016; Esfandiary, & Tabatabai, 2015; Gunaratna, 2016; Jasper, & Moreland, 2016; Lekas, 2015; Sekulow, 2015). The unprecedented nature of ISIS' propaganda, foreign fighter recruitment

strategy, and the rate of casualties inflicted by the group have rejuvenated a debate within the international community on how best to address the said challenge. According to the U.S. State Department estimate, more than 60 countries and other organizations encompass the U.S.-led military operation against ISIS (as cited in Mcinnis, 2016; O'Connor, 2017). On the contrary, there is a Russian-led military coalition involves Syria, Iran, and Lebanon (Hezbollah) which has adopted a different strategy than the U.S.-led coalition to combat ISIS (Carpenter, 2013). Observers of this trend have indicated that there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012). This lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). Because of the significantly different roles, Russia and the United States play in the war against ISIS, understanding the function of Russian and American media coverage of ISIS threat is imperative and appropriate research topic.

Therefore, this study explored how the U.S. the Russian, and Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The significance of this study is twofold: First, the information herein may impact social change by assisting counterterrorism officials, and policy makers make informed decisions about how to mitigate ISIS threat. Additionally, in theoretical terms, this study adds to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation for future researchers. As expected, the challenge posed by ISIS has caught the attention of Academics and policy makers. Academics have devoted a significant amount of time on the major themes associated

with ISIS' trials and how to mitigate the issue. The next chapter, Chapter 2 elaborates on the existing themes found in ISIS threat in the literature review and highlights the development of academic work from the genesis of the concept of terrorism to the current ISIS existence. In Chapter 2, I studied, scrutinized, and integrated the previous and existing literature on the topic to serve as a framework to fathom the intricacies of this study. The next chapter, Chapter 2 consists of the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, literature review related to critical variables and concepts, and ends with the summary and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

ISIS garnered global news media attention in Summer 2014 when it seized a significant section of land in Iraq and Syria (Kadercan, 2016; Yosufi, 2016; Yourish et al., 2016). The group then executed, tortured, and mishandled its captives, which included local religious and ethnic minorities (Sahara, 2015; Sullivan, 2016; Kadercan, 2016; Yourish et al., 2016). In addition to its carefully strategized propaganda machinery, ISIS adopted and implemented a unique, thriving recruitment strategy for foreign fighters (Kopitzke, 2017; Orozobekova, 2016; Rekawek, 2015; Yourish et al., 2016).

According to experts, ISIS has been able to flourish and cause security concerns because of lack of a stable government, and some segment of Iraqi and Syrian societies who feel marginalized by their governments (Blanchard & Humud; 2016; Hussain, 2016; International Crisis Group, 2016; Terrill, 2014). In Iraq, for instance, when members of the Sunni minority felt marginalized by the majority Shite sects, they reluctantly leaned towards the ISIS cause and subsequently made Iraq unsafe (Blanchard & Humud; 2016; Hussain, 2016; International Crisis Group, 2016; Terrill, 2014). In Syria, the Sunni majority, who collaborate with the opposition or rebel forces, feel that they are being marginalized by Assad's government, which is mainly controlled by the minority Alawite sect (Blanchard & Humud; 2016; Hussain, 2016; International Crisis Group, 2016; Terrill, 2014). UN monitors recorded at least 55,047 civilian casualties because of the conflict between January 1, 2014, and October 31, 2015, with 18,802 people killed and 36,245 wounded (as cited in Jamieson, 2016). In total, as of 2016, more than 1,200

people outside of Iraq and Syria have been murdered in attacks inspired or conducted by the Islamic State (Lister et al., 2018; Yourish et al., 2016).

Also, in 2016, SCPR recorded about 470,000 casualties because of the Syrian war, which represents approximately 11.5% of the Syrian population injured or murdered because of the ongoing Syrian conflict (as cited in Boghani, 2016; Farani et al., 2017). The number of Syrian casualties in the SCPR 2016 report is an upsurge from the conservative UN estimate of 250,000 victims of the Syrian war (Boghani, 2016; Farani et al., 2017). The SCPR 2016 assessment indicates that about 85% of the casualties resulted in violence, whereas an approximately 15% of the losses were triggered by the consequences of the war, such as a deteriorating health care delivery system, penurious sanitation management, and inadequate nutrition (as cited in Boghani, 2016).

These casualties illustrate that the existence of ISIS is detrimental to the security and stability of the global order (Abdel-Samad, 2016; Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2015; Gunaratna, 2016; Jasper & Moreland, 2016; Lekas, 2015; Sekulow, 2015). In confronting the ISIS threat, U.S.-led military forces in August 2014 initiated airstrikes against ISIS-held territories in both Iraq and Syria (Duta & Bonteanu, 2016; Gunaratna, 2016; Laub, 2016; Panayiotides, 2015; Terrill, 2014). According to the U.S. State Department estimate, more than 60 countries and other organizations decided to participate by contributing either military forces or resources or both to the U.S.-led military operation against ISIS (as cited in Mcinnis, 2016; O'Connor, 2017). In contrast, the Russian-led military coalition encompassing Syria, Iran, and Lebanon (Hezbollah) has adopted a different strategy than the U.S.-led coalition to combat ISIS (Carpenter, 2013). The core

argument in the Russian strategy is that fighting the Syrian government and ISIS simultaneously, as proposed by the U.S. will not only fail but also benefit ISIS (Herrera et al., 2016).

Another related problem is that there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012). This lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). Because of the significantly different roles Russia and the United States play in the war against ISIS, understanding the function of Russian and the U.S. media coverage of ISIS threat is an important and appropriate research topic. This chapter encompasses research design, data collection strategy, and research questions and study population, sampling approach, and the operationalization of constructs, and ethical considerations.

Literature Search Strategy

I searched the following Walden University Library databases for peer-reviewed articles for this study: ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. I used various combinations of keywords linked to the concepts in the literature review such as ISIS, Daesh, the Islamic State, terrorism, ISIS threat, ISIS foreign fighter threat, ISIS propaganda, and the war against ISIS. Most of the peer-reviewed journal articles scrutinized were published between 2015 and 2017.

Theoretical Foundation

The agenda-setting theory elaborates on the significant role of media in a given polity. In 1922, Walter Lippmann, a print media journalist, observed that media could

create a pictorial overview of an issue to somewhat influence the audience (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; McQuail, 2010; Weaver, 2007). To test this assumption, McCombs and Shaw (1968) studied presidential campaigns in 1968, 1972, and 1976. In their 1968 study, McCombs and Shaw concentrated on awareness and information. To test the agenda-setting function of the mass media, they examined the correlation between the significant issues of electorates in given polity and the dominant themes portrayed by the media during the electioneering campaign. The results of McCombs and Shaw's 1968 study indicated that mass media has a sizable impact on the topics viewed as significant by electorates during an electioneering campaign (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; McQuail, 2010; Weaver, 2007). The assumption in this theory is that the frequency of media coverage of a topic correlates with the significance the audience or the electorates give to it (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; McQuail, 2010; Weaver, 2007). The agenda-setting theory applies to this study because ISIS understands the significant role of media and thereby capitalize on them for propaganda purpose (Awan, 2017; Lieberman, 2017). Coincidentally, the current 24-hour news cycle seems to attract jaw-dropping incidents such as acts of terrorism. In that regard, there appears to be an unintended association between the news media and ISIS. In this study, I used the agenda-setting theory to explain the significant role of news media in influencing public opinion in Russia, Qatar, and the U.S.

The agenda-setting theory has contributed significantly to media scholarship since McCombs and Shaw's (1972) study on the 1968 U.S. presidential election. According to McCombs and Shaw, 1993, the expansion of this theory is usually represented in the

following manner: (a) the continued expansion of its narrative, and (b) its capacity to combine a full range of communication scholarship into a mono theoretical forum has undergone four stages of development. And (c) a steady ability to develop new research problems within several communication backgrounds. Also, Rogers, Dearing, and Bregman (1993) found approximately 200 publications of the agenda-setting in the social science scholarship since McCombs and Shaw's (1972) study. Furthermore, the steady growth of the agenda-setting literature attributes to the following: the theory has developed past its original theoretical field, the interaction of mass media agenda and the public agenda, as manifested by McCombs and Shaw's (1972).

Moreover, according to Swanson, (1988) in the second stage, Shaw & McCombs, (1977) investigated two aims in their study. The first was to reproduce their original results on the basic agenda-setting premise. The second was to examine situations that improve or hinder media agenda-setting (as cited in McCombs & Shaw,1993). In the third stage of the agenda-setting development, Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) built upon the theory by studying candidate features via the media and considered by the voters. They also reviewed the agenda of individual issues and examined 311 characteristics of political concern, candidates, among others (McCombs & Shaw,1993). While, the fourth stage concentrates on the causes of the media agenda, seen in marketing (McCombs & Shaw, (1993). Currently, academics explore all four phases of the theory. For instance, as McCombs and Shaw, (1993) observed, the rivalry between direct and interceded information; D'Alessio, (1992). The decline of memory for Television newscast; Watt, Mazza, & Snyder, (1992), and individual against public issues; Weaver,

Zhu, & Willnat, (1992). Also, there has been a scholarship concerning an association between media and general matters, such as media indications concerning pertinent topics, Schoenbach & Semetko, (1992), and agenda rivalry between topics, Brosius & Kepplinger, (1992). These various avenues of agenda-setting study indicate that the theory is well developed.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

The activities of the Islamic State group have caught the attention of several academics and practitioners who have written extensively on dominant themes related to the organization: ISIS threats (Abdel-Samad, 2016; Blanchard, & Humud, 2016; Boghani, 2016; Brown, 2014; Carpenter, 2013; Cronin, 2015; Duta, & Bonteanu, 2016; Esfandiary, & Tabatabai, 2015; Farani et al., 2017; Gunaratna, 2016; Jasper, & Moreland, 2016; Jamieson, 2016; Kadercan, 2016; Laub, 2016; Lekas, 2015; Lister, et al., 2018; Mcinnis, 2016; O'Connor, 2017; Panayiotides, 2015; Paasche, & Gunter, 2016; Sahara, 2015; Sekulow, 2015; Sullivan, 2016; Terrill, 2014; Yourish, et al., 2016; Yosufi, 2016; Ziadeh, Hadar, Katz, & Heydemann, 2012; Vysotsky, 2014). ISIS foreign fighter threat (Deni, 2015; Gaouette, 2016; Kopitzke, 2017; McCabe, 2016; RAN, 2014; Rekawek, 2015; Orozobekova, 2016; Speckhard, Shajkovci, & Yayla, 2016. Wood, 2015; Yalçinkaya, 2016). ISIS Propaganda threat (Kadercan, 2016; Kopitzke, 2017; Lieberman, 2017; Spencer, 2016; Stergiou, 2016; Speckhard, et al., 2016; Tal, & Gordon, 2016; Tsesis, 2017) and ISIS Responsibility concern (Bershidsky, 2015; Cuno, 2016; Hathaway, Chertoff, Domínguez, Manfredi, & Tzeng, 2017; Kelly, 2014; Tesón, 2016).

The detailed sources of literature related to key variables and concepts indicate that potential researchers can explore ISIS's activities in various manners.

ISIS Foreign Fighter Threat

Foreign fighter defined. The examination of foreign fighters' enlistment is significance due to the unique, successful recruitment strategy adopted by ISIS (Kopitzke, 2017; McCabe, 2016; Rekawek, 2015; Orozobekova, 2016). The organization has managed to successfully convince unsuspecting individuals to join their cause, whereas others voluntarily accede to the organization (Orozobekova, 2016). One of the major themes associated with ISIS is the foreign fighter threat. Like most social concepts, there is not a single definition for foreign fighters. Foreign fighters are foreigners who enter other countries to participate in an ongoing conflict without financial incentives (Deni, 2015). The foreign Islamic fighters are foreigners who travel to other nations they have no ties to, except spiritual bond, to participate in an ongoing conflict (Deni, 2015). On September 24, 2014, the UN Security Council embraced Resolution 2178 and designated foreign fighters as "... individuals who travel to a State other than their States of residence or nationality for the perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts or the providing or receiving of terrorist training, including in connection with armed conflict..." (as cited in Yalçinkaya, 2016, para 7).

The UN Security Council Resolution 2178 also labeled foreign terrorist fighters as illegitimate on September 24, 2014 (Kopitzke, 2017; Yalçinkaya, 2016). In the past, the international community did not see foreign terrorist fighters as a potential security threat. Instead, the public considered them as individuals who were committed to fighting

for their cause at all cost (Yalçinkaya, 2016). The shift in the international community's attitude towards foreign fighters is mainly due to the emergence of al-Qaida in the early part of the 21st century and the subsequent development of ISIS (Yalçinkaya, 2016).

Although foreign fighter recruitment is not a new trend, ISIS approach of enlisting foreign fighters has been efficient and unprecedented; ISIS mostly uses propaganda on social media platform to trap unsuspecting individuals to join them (McCabe, 2016; Wood, 2015). According to research conducted by the Radicalization Awareness Network ("RAN"), an organization established by the European Commission to build efficient approach to counter foreign fighter threat, young men of Muslim faith are more vulnerable to being lured into becoming foreign fighters (RAN, 2014). Also, the same study showed that foreign fighters are usually people with gang association, jobless, students, Muslim converts, moderate income earners, young people, and at times, the whole families (RAN, 2014).

Furthermore, the RAN, (2014) study and other publications suggested that several factors motivate individuals to become foreign fighters (Wood, 2015). These are religious justification, such as conducting one's duty as a Muslim, community service, such as an obligation to protect one's neighbors, and humanitarian reasons, such as an obligation to prevent problems of fellow worshippers (RAN, 2014). Others are exploration reason, such as an opportunity to experience the caliphate, and commercial purposes, such as capitalizing on the possible gaps to legitimately make money (RAN, 2014). Therefore, any approach to mitigate foreign fighter threat must consider the said factors (RAN, 2014; Wood, 2015).

The debate concerning foreign fighter threat. The fundamental challenge associated with foreign fighters is that they are capable of exporting terrorism to any part of the world (Vidino, 2014; Yalçinkaya, 2016). There is a documented evidence of ISIS foreign fighter threat in Europe and North Africa (Deni, 2015), and in continental Africa, as observed by Gaouette, (2016). The January 2015 terrorist assault at the premises of satirical French magazine Charlie Hebdo is a prime example of attacks in Western world perpetrated by foreign fighters (Deni, 2015; Callimachi & Yardley, 2015; “ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Nevertheless, there is not a consensus among counterterrorism officials and policymakers concerning the significance of the foreign fighter threat. The argument is that the flow of foreign fighters from the Western world to the ISIS-held territories in Iraq and Syria is higher than the recent conflicts. However, an insignificant number of those fighters seem to return to Europe or the U.S. to participate in terrorist attacks (Deni, 2015; Hegghammer, 2013).

Consequently, the foreign fighter threat seems real but insubstantial. Foreign fighters could significantly impact a given conflict if they are large in numbers and possess specific expertise and skills. For instance, on January 24, 2016, ISIS published a propaganda video about its members who engaged in Paris terror operation (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Also, on March 22, 2016, ISIS foreign fighter returnees led terror attacks at an airport and a train station in Brussels, Belgium that killed 30 individuals and wounded 270 others (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Besides, on June 28, 2016, ISIS militants killed 44 individuals and injured about 230 people at Ataturk Airport in Istanbul, Turkey (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017).

Also, the threat posed by foreign fighters in the Western world is manifested recently in Europe, where many European Muslims left Europe for ISIS-controlled territories in Iraq and Syria to fight alongside the group (Deni, 2015; Vidino, 2014). Similarly, a Canadian national who had ties with foreign fighters in ISIS-controlled Syria murdered a Canadian soldier in Ottawa (Deni, 2015; Fantz, Levs, & Shoichet, 2014). Others estimated that an approximately 4,300 of European citizens are currently involved in Iraqi and Syrian conflicts (Deni, 2015; Vidino, 2014). Although, academics and policy makers do not have an exact estimate of the number of Western foreign fighters, within the European foreign fighters in the ISIS-held territories, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany have the substantial amount of nationals (Deni, 2015; Vidino, 2014). Conversely, in his testimony before U.S. Congress, the then U.S. Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper stated that about 3,400 Westerners left West for ISIS-controlled territories in Iraq and Syria since 2011 (Deni, 2015). According to Lynch, 2015, ISIS foreign fighters from the U.S. were estimated to be fifty to three hundred (as cited in Hussain, 2016). Whereas ISIS foreign fighters from the post-Soviet regions, such as Central Asia, Russia, and the Caucasus are estimated to be in thousands (Souleimanov, & Ouellette, 2015).

Others argue that the blowback rate in the war against ISIS in Iraq and Syria is insignificant (Deni, 2015; Vidino, 2014; Yalçinkaya, 2016). The blowback rate is the percentage of foreign fighters who reappear in their native countries and participate in acts of terrorism (Deni, 2015; Vidino, 2014; Yalçinkaya, 2016). The insignificant blowback rate attributes to the following reasons: a substantial number of foreign fighters

by nature, do not intend to return home to plot terrorist attacks against their fellow citizens (Deni, 2015; Hegghammer, 2013; Yalçinkaya, 2016). There is a documented evidence of some foreign fighters fighting against ISIS interest and end up dying in the war-torn countries (Deni, 2015; Yalçinkaya, 2016). Also, according to Hegghammer & Nesser (2015), ISIS sympathizers are more likely to successfully plan and execute terrorist attacks than ISIS foreign fighter returnees (as cited in Reed, & Pohl, 2017). That stems from the fact that it is difficult for law enforcement agencies to monitor and apprehend lone wolf individuals than foreign fighter returnees. To that end, ISIS capitalized on that drawback to encourage its supporters in the Western world to attack their home countries (Reed et al., 2017). To the contrary, proponents who label foreign fighters as a threat to the stability and security of the world argue that despite the blowback effect, the foreign fighter threat has been exacerbated by ISIS perception of the West. For instance, according to Weiss, (2014), they refer to the Islamic State's chief spokesman, Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, who declared, "We will conquer your Rome, break your crosses, and enslave your women. If we do not reach that time, then our children and grandchildren will reach it, and they will sell your sons as slaves at the slave market" (as cited in Deni, 2015, para 24).

The foreign fighter threat historical origin. Foreign fighter threat is not a new phenomenon (Deni, 2015; RAN, 2017; Yalçinkaya, 2016; Wood, 2016). There is a documented evidence of foreign fighters in Greece, the United States, Spain, Palestine, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, and Somalia (Yalçinkaya, 2016). Besides, according to some estimates, an approximately 30,000 foreign fighters were involved in the Spanish Civil

War between 1936 and 1939. Out of which, about 3,000 were U.S. nationals who served in different units, otherwise known as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. Likewise, approximately 20,000 foreign fighters participated in the Afghan war during the Soviet occupation between 1979 to 1989 (Deni, 2015). Most of the foreign fighters in the Afghan war were nationals from Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia (Deni, 2015).

The challenges associated with border protection among U.S. allies in Europe continue unabated (Speckhard, Shajkovci, & Yayla, 2016). Turkey for instance inadvertently serves as transit ground for potential ISIS fighters to travel to and from ISIS territories in Syria (Speckhard et al., 2016). It is argued that the said situation stems from the fact that Turkey's intelligence agencies struggle to separate real tourists from individuals transiting Turkey for ISIS territories (Speckhard et al., 2016). Another challenge associated with foreign fighter threat is lack of an appropriate mechanism in place to track and monitor potential Westerners who travel to ISIS control territories for a brief training and reappear home (Paulussen & Entenmann, 2014; Speckhard et al., 2016). Other challenges confronting the U.S. allies in Europe in their attempt to mitigate foreign fighter threat is the inadequate information and intelligence sharing (Curtis et al., 2016; Speckhard et al., 2016). Others argued that this problem stems from the existing laws and protections in the European social fabric, such as confidentiality, national authority, and defense issues. The challenges concerning information sharing within European countries are present in U.S.- European joint efforts to counter ISIS threat (Curtis et al., 2016; Speckhard et al., 2016).

Actions to mitigate foreign fighter threat. The problem of the ISIS foreign fighter threat must be assiduously addressed to diminish the momentum and capabilities of that organization. The solution to this issue must be comprehensive and implemented in a binary approach (Deni, 2015; Kopitzke, 2017). First, each country should put proactive measures in place to thwart and in some cases, react to foreign fighter threat (Deni, 2015). Whereas, joint international efforts to tackle the issue is equally important to increase pressure and momentum to address the problem (Deni, 2015; Kopitzke, 2017). As a result, there is a documented evidence of bilateral and multilateral cooperation among Western nations, regarding information and intelligence sharing (Deni, 2015; Kopitzke, 2017).

Additionally, international organizations such as the UN, NATO, and the EU have been working around the clock to address foreign fighter challenge (Deni, 2015; RAN, 2014). In their attempt to mitigate ISIS foreign fighter threat, certain Western nations put measures in place to revoke the citizenship of known or suspected ISIS foreign fighters (Wood, 2015). The UK and the U.S. expressed interest in that approach. However, the political climate in both houses of U.S. Congress did not support such an initiative (Wood, 2015). Furthermore, according to Yalçinkaya, (2016), three international roundtables are being conducted to address foreign terrorist fighter threat: The Anti-ISIL Coalition, the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF), and the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (UN CTC), (Yalçinkaya, 2016). The Anti-ISIL Coalition uses and applies severe countermeasures against ISIS; the GCTF serves as an avenue to discuss counterterrorism measures against ISIS and cements relations among international

partners; and the UN CTC primarily function to ensure uniformity in guideline among the international community, when countering foreign fighter threats (Yalçinkaya, 2016).

ISIS Propaganda Concerns

Propaganda defined. Propaganda like most social constructs does not have a single definition; various academics and practitioners define the topic differently. For instance, the U.S. military definition of propaganda stipulates that any communication to aid national interest tailored to affect sentiments, feelings, and conduct of a target audience either covertly or overtly (Lieberman, 2017). The Oxford English Dictionary defines propaganda as “information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view” (para.1). Whereas the Cambridge Dictionary defines propaganda as “information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument, that is broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions” (para.1). There are some documented attempts to categorize propaganda based on the content of the communication. For instance, communication that originates from a reliable source and meant for a particular group is white propaganda (Lieberman, 2017). Black propaganda is communication that comes from an unreliable source and mostly grounded on falsehood to target a specific audience; and Grey propaganda is a form of a message that is not entirely reliable or false, and omits its source (Lieberman, 2017).

Additionally, the International human rights information classifies propaganda into the following: derogatory propaganda is a type of communication that intends to belittle, offend, or insult foreign actors (as cited in Lieberman, 2017). Disruptive

propaganda is a kind of conversation that aims to cause the ouster of a political head; and incitement propaganda is a form of a message that seeks to incite violence against a group of people (as cited in Lieberman, 2017). While, ISIS capitalizes on all the above propaganda categories, that terror network is noted for emphasizing on the later part, which is the most pertinent to this study.

ISIS propaganda threat. The highly developed nature of the present communication apparatuses has led to prompt and straightforward access to information (Asogwa, Iyere, & Attah, 2012). The use of the internet, for instance, has created a platform whereby unfettered and unobstructed messages may be shared anonymously among ISIS and its sympathizers around the globe (Awan, 2017; Fernandez, 2015; Lieberman, 2017; Tsesis, 2017). ISIS capitalizes on the internet to produce highly sophisticated information to entice unsuspecting individuals to join their organization (Awan, 2017; Fernandez, 2015; Lieberman, 2017; Tsesis, 2017). In some cases, the content of ISIS propaganda messages encompasses information about the efficient formation of the caliphate and the large size of followers and sympathizers who are members of the caliphate (Awan, 2017; Lieberman, 2017). ISIS Information Technology and Propaganda teams sometimes apply Hollywood-like production methods to portray foreign fighters as conquerors, whose actions are equivalent to participating in an actual video game (Lieberman, 2017). For instance, on August 19, 2014, ISIS published a YouTube video of the beheading of U.S. journalist James Foley. In the same propaganda video, ISIS warned that the group would kill another journalist Steven Sotloff (Glenn, 2016; "ISIS Fast Facts," 2017). To showcase their capabilities and increase their

psychological warfare, on September 2, 2014, ISIS published another video of gruesome decapitation of journalist Steven Sotloff (Glenn, 2016; “ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Likewise, on September 13, 2014, ISIS fighters released a video on one of its media outlets about the beheading of David Haines, a British NGO worker. In the same video, ISIS threatened to kill additional Westerner, Alan Henning (Glenn, 2016; “ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Also, ISIS propaganda online publication showcases vicious and horrific attacks being meted out to their enemies, and riches among its rank and file (Awan, 2017; Lieberman, 2017). Another indication of ISIS propaganda threat is the 2005 memo, Ayman al-Zawahiri, then al-Qaeda's second-in-command supposedly sent to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the then head of the al-Qaeda in Iraq, which developed into ISIS (Lieberman, 2017). Likewise, Cotte, (2015) observed that Ayman al-Zawahiri memo stipulates that “We are in a battle, and more than half of this fight is taking place in the battlefield of the media” (as cited in Lieberman, 2017, p. 9).

Moreover, ISIS has created the Al Hayat Media Center, which targets younger non-Arabic audience (Lieberman, 2017; Stergiou, 2016). The Al Hayat Media Center produces videos in various languages and formats, such as short version video for Twitter users or long and very sophisticated Hollywood-like documentaries (Lieberman, 2017; Stergiou, 2016). On October 3, 2014, ISIS published a video depicting a decapitation of captive Alan Henning and threatened to murder Peter Kassig, otherwise known as Abdul-Rahman Kassig (Glenn, 2016; “ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). November 16, 2014 – ISIS issued another propaganda video depicting the gruesome decapitation of Western detainee Peter Kassig (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Similarly, on January 20, 2015 – As part

of its avenue to raise money, ISIS gave an ultimatum for the Japanese government to pay \$200 million for its citizens, Kenji Goto and Haruna Yukawa lives (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Besides, ISIS promotes audio material and Dabiq, which is a PDF magazine in the English language to depicts its success. As Lieberman, (2017) & Stergiou, (2016) observed, some of the films Al Hayat Media Center has produced include "Eid Greetings from the Land of Khilafah," recorded in Raqqa, Syria, depicts ISIS fighters from the West declaring their satisfaction at ISIS-controlled territories. Whereas, “The Flames of War” movie praises the military bravery of ISIS’s warriors by showcasing some horrific videotapes and rhythmical stanza of the group (Lieberman, 2017; Stergiou, 2016). Likewise, the ISIS propaganda department publishes a combination of 90.000 posts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube daily. As a result, some social media sites, such as Twitter has applied several strategies to mitigate ISIS’s presence on that social media websites to propagate its agenda, intimidate its opponents, and recruit foreign fighters (Lieberman, 2017; Speckhard et al., 2016). In that regard, known and suspected ISIS Twitter accounts are suspended mostly suspended by Twitter (Lieberman, 2017; Speckhard et al., 2016). However, the anonymous nature of Internet has enabled ISIS and its sympathizers to maintain their presence on social media platform by continuously establishing new or fake accounts (Lieberman, 2017; Speckhard et al., 2016). At the peak of its propaganda on June 29, 2014, ISIS publicly declared the establishment of the Islamic state caliphate that cut across borders, modified its name into the Islamic State (IS). ISIS then proclaimed al-Baghdadi as the overseer of approximately 1.5 billion

Muslims throughout the globe (“Advances and setbacks,” 2017; Crone, 2017; Glenn, 2016; “ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017; Otten, 2017).

Propaganda historical origin. A thorough review of the available literature indicates that the use of propaganda is not a new phenomenon. The ancient Greeks relied on theater, games, and oratory to spread their agenda, whereas, in Egypt, the ancient pharaohs used carvings on the walls in holy places to validate their authority (Lieberman, 2017; Tal, & Gordon, 2016). Also, according to Tal, et., (2016), the application of propaganda was exacerbated in the 18th and 19th centuries because of the philosophical differences in that period, such as the American Revolution and the French Revolution in 1775–1783 and 1792–1802 respectively. According to Finch, (2000) the genesis of the contemporary information about propaganda as a conquering strategy is attributed to the Catholic church. In the winter of 1622 during the religious conflicts in Bohemia, Alsace, and the Palatinate, the then Pope Gregory XV strategized that it would be prudent to adopt information warfare strategy to mitigate the threat from Protestant overhaul (Finch, 2000). In the summer of 1622, the Catholic church under Pope Gregory’s leadership established an information dissemination bureau whose primary objective was to propagate Catholicism (Finch, 2000). Besides, there is a documented evidence of the application of propaganda during World War I, World War II, and the Cold War between the Western world and the Soviet Union (Lieberman, 2017; Tal et al., 2016).

Actions to Mitigate ISIS Propaganda Threat. A detailed review of the scholarship on the central themes of the ISIS threat indicates an intertwined relationship between propaganda and foreign fighter threats. ISIS use of social media tools to enhance their

propaganda agenda has been very fruitful and unprecedented (DeAtkine, 2015; Fernandez, 2015; Geifman, 2016; Kopitzke, 2017; Monroe, 2016; Scarre, 2015; Speckhard et al., 2016). In that regard, the appropriate approach to mitigate the said threat should be comprehensive and strategic enough to counter ISIS propaganda (Fernandez, 2015; Speckhard et al., 2016). It is proven elsewhere that inspiring appropriate and dependable views among ISIS and convincing nations to join that strategy by reevaluating the current red tapes that prevent former ISIS fighters from rejoining the mainstream society is a practical approach to mitigate ISIS propaganda threat (Fernandez, 2015; Speckhard et al., 2016). It is therefore prudent that any efforts to reduce ISIS's propaganda threat must incorporate online warfare and conventional warfare, given the amount of time and energy ISIS devotes online. (Fernandez, 2015; Kadercan, 2016; Lieberman, 2017; Speckhard et al., 2016).

Notwithstanding the unprecedented countermeasures being applied by academics and practitioners to address ISIS challenges, that organization is still volatile and unfathomable because of the following: the current background information about the group is unsuitable for a comprehensive evaluation of the group, resulting in experts misidentifying its propaganda for its political goal (Kadercan, 2016). According to Matthew Levitt, Director of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, ISIS is one of the greatest-financed group in the modern history (as cited in Stergiou, 2016). The vigorous financial backing is an effective means of propaganda. For instance, financial capabilities enable the group to invest in online warfare and showcase its success to potential fighters (Stergiou, 2016).

ISIS Responsibility Concerns

Responsibility defined. The Oxford English Dictionary defines responsibility as “the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone” (p.1). The Meriam Webster Dictionary defines responsibility as “the quality or state of being responsible: such as a moral, legal, or mental accountability or reliability, trustworthiness” (p.1). In sum, the above definitions of responsibility indicate an obligation to perform certain tasks. The available literature suggests several responsibility issues in the ongoing war against ISIS. Perhaps, the foremost among those responsibility concerns is the recent debate about the eradication and demolition of Archeological and heritage locations within Iraq and Syria. The media coverage of ISIS annihilation of Archeological and historic places within Iraq and Syria has rejuvenated the call for responsibility to address the subject (Bokova, 2015; Bauer, 2015; Cuno, 2016; Kersel, 2016; Otten, 2017; Scarre, 2015). On July 2014 in Mosul, ISIS destroyed Jonah’s tomb, which was an 8th century BC era sacred shrine (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). At the peak of its propaganda on June 29, 2014, ISIS publicly declared the establishment of the Islamic state caliphate that cut across borders, modified its name into the Islamic State (IS). ISIS then proclaimed al-Baghdadi as the overseer of approximately 1.5 billion Muslims throughout the globe (“Advances and setbacks,” 2017; Crone, 2017; Glenn, 2016; “ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017; Otten, 2017). Furthermore, on August 2015 - ISIS demolished about 2,000- year-old historic artifacts, Temple of Baalshami in the Syrian town of Palmyra, which prompted the UNESCO to label the act, a war crime (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017).

A leading Syrian Archeologists and some policymakers throughout the world have called for adopting responsibility framework to address the challenge. In response to the said assertion, others have suggested a practical international strategy to mitigate the responsibility issues: swift intervention in countries affected by conflict; team up with the ordinary residents to identify and protect national heritage places; and use pragmatic approach in that direction (Bauer, 2015; Cuno, 2016). Also, others argued that there should be a detailed legal framework for the international community to use when the need arises. In line with that assertion, there is a responsibility to protect the proclamation by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty under the sponsorship of the UN (Cuno, 2016). The UN General Assembly officially accepted this notion in 2005. This principle affirms states mandate to protect citizens from genocide and other inhumane treatments while acknowledging the significant role of the international community in aiding that effort (Bershidsky, 2015; Cuno, 2016). The Article 1 of the Geneva Convention mandates UN member countries to respect the international humanitarian law in all cases (Bershidsky, 2015; Cuno, 2016; Ramsden, 2016). As part of its counter-propaganda strategy and responsibility to protect, on January 22, 2015, the U.S. government announced that the U.S.-led coalition forces had killed about 6,000 ISIS members. Although, the U.S. counterterrorism officials acknowledged that roughly 9,000 to 18,000 ISIS fighters and several followers were out there (“ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017).

Other areas of responsibility concern are the following: there is a documented evidence of U.S. aiding some Syrian opposition factions in fighting ISIS. The Russians

are also fighting a proxy war in Eastern Ukraine, whereas the non-state hackers in China are working under the auspices of the Chinese government (Hathaway, Chertoff, Domínguez, Manfredi, & Tzeng, 2017). The above examples are some of the methods states employ to coordinate with private groups to attain political and military goals (Hathaway et al., 2017). It is against this background that the international judicial system has established a principle of state responsibility to make states account for universally unlawful acts perpetrated by their non-state allies (Hathaway et al., 2017). However, the current doctrine does not accurately discourage countries to partner with non-state actors for nefarious activities (Hathaway et al., 2017). Also, it may dissuade nations with good intents to collaborate with non-state actors for fear of backlash (Hathaway et al., 2017).

Moreover, Tesón, (2016) argues that the central government in Iraq cannot effectively thwart the infiltration of radical groups, such as ISIS from operating in Iraq. And if the claim that the U.S. invasion of Iraq is partially responsible for the instability in Iraq, then the American government has a responsibility to avoid the same in the future (Tesón, 2016). Notwithstanding, the said assertion, the international community, especially, countries in the Middle East must bear the cost of the war against ISIS (Tesón, 2016).

Furthermore, responsibility issues could be seen in the U.S. political climates appetite for another Middle East ground war. For instance, in July 2014 - ISIS captured the largest oilfield in Syria, a gas plant in Homs Province, and towns such as Deir Ezzor stretching to the Iraqi borderline. Meanwhile, in Mosul, ISIS destroyed Jonah's tomb, which was an 8th century BC era sacred shrine "ISIS Fast Facts," 2017). Also, despite the

apparent opposition to another war in the Middle East, the media depiction of the gruesome murder of U.S. Journalist James Foley altered the American public's perception about Iraqi reintervention (Kelly, 2014). According to a USA Today/Pew Research Center Poll conducted in August 2014, about 40% of Americans want the U.S. to be responsible for addressing the mayhem in ISIS-controlled territories in Iraq and Syria (Kelly, 2014). This result is notable upsurge from the survey conducted previously when the Institute noted an approximately 50% of Americans did not call for U.S. responsibility to intervene in the war against ISIS (Kelly, 2014). Likewise, in 2005, the UN General Assembly enacted a resolution to support Responsibility to Protect. This principle empowers the international community to apply any reasonable method to prevent genocide or severe war crimes (Bershidsky, 2015). There is an intense debate within the global community on how best to apply the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (Bershidsky, 2015). For instance, countries such as China and Russia see it as preventative doctrine, whereas others such as the U.S. interpret it differently and capitalized on this principle to rationalize military intervention in Libya in 2011, which led to the overthrow of the Libyan leader, Muammar Qaddafi Gaddafi. The Russian government which opposed the Libyan intervention argues that it bears the responsibility to ensure that what occurred in Libya does not repeat itself in Syria (Bershidsky, 2015).

Notwithstanding the seemingly insurmountable challenges posed by ISIS, there is a lack of consensus among the international community, on how best to address the issue (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Cornell, 2016; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh, Hadar, Katz, & Heydemann, 2012). This vacuum among the international partners' strategy to resolve the

ISIS challenge has enabled the group to survive (Cronin, 2015). The below is the intricacies surrounding Russia and the United States approach to the war against ISIS. For instance, according to Amanpour, (n. d.) then Secretary of Defense Ash Carter opined that Russia's role in confronting ISIS has been abysmal, and Russia has instead targeted Syrian opposition elements (as cited in Jones & Robertson, 2016). Additionally, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov asserts that a mechanism should be put in place to distinguish between genuine opposition groups and terrorists (Jones & Robertson, 2016). Another area both countries disagree on is the designation of some opposing forces in the Syrian civil war (Cornell, 2016). For instance, in a conversation about a ceasefire, then president Obama stated that there are differences between the U.S. and Russia regarding which opposition group is supported or designated as a terrorist (Jones & Robertson 2016).

Also, the United States and Russia do not agree on who has the legitimate right to fight in Syria (Jones et al., 2016; Sanusi, & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016). Foreign Minister Lavrov told *RT News* that only the Syrian government and its allies, such as Russia and Iran have the mandate to intervene in the Syrian civil war because they are there on Syrian government's invitation. As such, any group or entity that is not part of the Russian-led coalition and fights in Syria is undermining the sovereignty of Syria (Jones & Robertson, 2016; Sanusi, & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016). Moreover, Wormuth, (n. d.) opined that Russian Syrian policy does not align with U.S. policy because the Russians have targeted the opposition elements in Syria that work with the U.S.-led coalition (as cited in Artwood, 2017). Moreover, others argued that the gap between the U.S. and Russian

approach to resolving ISIS threat seems to widens (Sanusi, & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016).

Trump's administration's initial policy towards ISIS omitted any approach to team up with Russia and instead focuses on the intervention of U.S. in Iraq and Syria. The core U.S. Policy is to accelerate the war and thwart potential radical actions in the future.

Some practitioners such as a former undersecretary of defense for policy at the Department of Defense, Christine Wormuth argue that any attempt by the U.S. and Russia to collaborate on the war against ISIS does not benefit the U.S. and will likely fail (Artwood, 2017).

Besides, the chief difference between Russia and the U.S. in the war against ISIS is the question about the retention of Syrian president Assad (Cornell, 2016; Sanusi, & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016). The Russians argue that retaining President Assad will weaken terror activities in Syria because relying solely on Aerial assault to counter ISIS activities is inadequate (Cornell, 2016; Notte, 2016). Given the fact that there is no impetus on the part of powerful countries, such as the U.S. and Russia to send in ground troops (Herrera et al., 2016). To the Russians, the appropriate strategic approach to address the Syrian crisis is to reconcile the Syrian military and some of the opposition factions (Herrera et al., 2016). The core argument in the Russian strategy is that fighting the Syrian government and ISIS simultaneously, as proposed by the U.S. will not only fail but also benefit ISIS. The Russian government argues further that the removal of president Assad will create a vacuum that will likely be filled by radical elements, such as ISIS, as done in Libya, after the overthrow of president Moammar Qaddafi (Herrera et al., 2016). To the contrary, the U.S.- led coalition policy supports the removal of President Assad. The

rationale for the American policy is that President Assad's irresponsibility has exacerbated an internal grievance into a full-fledged conflict (Herrera et al., 2016). Therefore, Assad is part of the problem and not a solution to the Syrian crisis, and must, thus, step down (Herrera et al., 2016).

Moreover, there has been an inflow of refugees from Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East into Europe because of Iraq and the Syrian conflict. The said situation has resulted in competing for strategic interest between Russia and the United States in the Middle East (Herrera et al., 2016). The premise of the Russian Syrian policy is that if unchecked, that Middle East could be unstable for an extended period, and perhaps spread to Eurasia. So, investing in the current Syrian conflict is warranted and will strategically benefit not only the people in the Middle East but also the Russian citizenry in the long-run. Likewise, it has been a longstanding U.S. policy to exert an enormous amount of influence in that region, and thereby sees Russian efforts as troubling (Herrera et al., 2016).

The areas U.S. and Russian agree in the war against ISIS. Despite the conspicuous differences between the United States and Russia concerning the war against ISIS, there are areas both countries seem to agree. For instance, both countries see ISIS as a terror group (Jones, & Robertson, 2016). Other observers argued that there is clear evidence of U.S.-Russia cooperation in the Syrian civil war. "We argue that the United States and Russia can work side by side, if not together, to defeat the Islamic State in Syria" (Herrera et al., 2016, p.1). Perhaps, both countries could convince their counterparts in Syria to negotiate towards long-lasting peace. For instance, in 2013, there was an accord

between both nations to destroy Syrian chemical weapons, which was executed in 2014. And in December 2015, both countries supported the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, which was the blueprint for reconciliation. (Herrera, et al., 2016). Although their aims are not entirely related, arguably both countries have amenable policies that could lead to a conceivable concession. Both the U.S. and Russia seek to mitigate the activities of terror groups who oppose the Syrian government, such as al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda sub-division in Syria. Additionally, both the U.S. and Russia prefer to see a united Syria after the cessation of hostilities (Herrera et al., 2016).

Potential room for compromise. There is a documented evidence that the U.S.-led coalition has relaxed its approach towards President Assad; indicating that Assad's departure is uncertain. Russian has also affirmed that its support for Assad's family is amendable (Herrera et al., 2016; Notte, 2016). However, Russians believe that plans to secure and reconcile the whole Syria must precede any future discussion of how to govern the country. Additionally, the economic and political situations on the grounds of Russia and U.S. respectively, do not argue well for either of them to prolong this crisis. For instance, as the price of oil continues to fall, a prolonged Russian military investment in Syria is unfeasible (Herrera et al., 2016). Similarly, the current political climate in the United States is not conducive to another ground military intervention in that region. Therefore, a conciliation approach is the practical strategy for both parties (Herrera et al., 2016).

Furthermore, to help formulate a realistic countermeasure for national security officials and policymakers to mitigate ISIS issue, it is imperative to understand the

current philosophy of the Qatari government, which happens to be one the indigenes of Middle East, and the pivotal role that country plays in the Middle Eastern affairs. On June 5, 2017, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, the UAE, and Yemen cut diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing the Qatari officials of aiding extremism (Fisher, 2017; Gordon, Yadlin, & Heistein, 2017; Roberts, 2017). Besides, those Sunni countries led by Saudi Arabia declared their intention to suspend all major transportation routes such as air, sea, and land with Qatar (Fisher, 2017; Gordon et al., 2017; Roberts, 2017). Also, all Qatari nationals in the countries mentioned above were instructed to return home within a two-week period, and the Qatari participation of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen was postponed (Fisher, 2017; Gordon et al., 2017; Roberts, 2017). According to Roberts, (2017), there was a similar incident in 2014, when the Saudi-led coalition except Yemen recalled their ambassadors from Doha in 2014 over the disagreement with Qatar. The current dispute among Qatar and the Saudi-led alliance, comprising Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Bahrain, and Yemen is arguably the highly volatile conflict between them and could fuel tension in the Middle East. It is argued that the apparent triggers of the recent dispute were alleged comments by the Emir of Qatar and unconfirmed compensation by Qatari officials to a radical organization linked to Iran (Fisher, 2017; Gordon et al., 2017; Roberts, 2017).

The core philosophy of the Qatari government is that Qatar could be very secure if it extricates itself from the Saudi influence (Fisher, 2017). The implementation of this strategy has led to a regional conflict (Fisher, 2017). It is tantamount to Cuba extricating itself from the American influence to becoming a global stakeholder within the shortest

period (Fisher, 2017). The unique thing about Qatar is that it is among the few countries that have grown from less influential to global power (Fisher, 2017). Since 1990, the Qatari foreign policy aims to place the nation on the world stage and minimize the Saudi influence (Fisher, 2017). That has led to Qatar cementing a relationship with Iran and signing a trade agreement with Israel. Qatar now hosts a significant U.S. Airbase, which strategically reduces Saudi influence. It established an *Al Jazeera* news network to promote its interest, showcase the soft power, and marginalize the Saudi influence (Fisher, 2017; Gordon et al., 2017). Qatar also is a haven for leaders of controversial Islamic movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinian Hamas, the Chechen separatists or the Taliban (Fisher, 2017; Gordon et al., 2017). Additionally, the Qatari government contends that its support of Islamists relies on the substantial overt followers of those groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (Roberts, 2017).

The ongoing disagreement among Qatar and its neighbors must be amicably resolved to ensure that the United States allies in the Middle East are not divided in their approach to weaken ISIS' influence (Gordon et al., 2017). During the Arab Spring revolts, for instance, there were discrepancies in the reactions of the Sunni rulers, Iran, and the Islamists. Instead of merging the opposition elements of president Assad and ISIS, to ensure a unified opposition force, the rivalry among Saudi and the Qatari governments led to each country backing rival groups (Gordon et al., 2017). For instance, in the Damascus region, Saudi Arabia backed Jaysh al-Islam while Qatar aided its adversary Faylaq al-Rahman (Gordon et al., 2017). This situation contributed in part to

the lack of a unifying opposing force to challenge ISIS and Assad's regime (Gordon et al., 2017).

Summary and Conclusion

The literature review helped ascertain two factors: (a) whether ISIS is an existential threat to the security and stability of the global order and indicated that assertion. (b) Whether there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate ISIS threat, and showed that conclusion. ISIS executed, tortured, and mishandled its captives, such as the local minorities (Yourish et al., 2016). Also, the organization adopted and implemented a unique, successful recruitment strategy of foreign fighters (Yourish et al., 2016). UN monitors documented at least 55,047 civilian casualties because of the conflict between Jan. 1, 2014 and Oct. 31, 2015, with 18,802 people killed and 36,245 wounded (as cited in Jamieson, 2016). Per conservative estimate, as of 2016, more 1,200 individuals outside of Iraq and Syria have been killed in incidents inspired or coordinated by ISIS (Lister et al., 2018; Yourish et al., 2016). Furthermore, the examination of foreign fighters' enlistment is much significance due to the unique, successful recruitment strategy adopted by ISIS (Kopitzke, 2017; Rekawek, 2015; Orozobekova, 2016). ISIS has managed to successfully convince unsuspecting individuals to join their organization (Orozobekova, 2016). An essential challenge related to ISIS foreign fighters is that they are capable of exporting terrorism to any part of the world (Yalçinkaya, 2016). There is a documented evidence of ISIS foreign fighter threat in Europe and North Africa (Deni, 2015), and in continental Africa, as observed by Gaouette, (2016). The January 2015

terrorist assault at the premises of satirical French magazine, Charlie Hebdo is a prime example of attacks in Western world perpetrated by foreign fighters. Other evidence of foreign fighter threat includes May 2014 attack at Brussels Jewish museum carried out by a French foreign fighter who had returned from Syria (Deni, 2015).

Similarly, a Canadian national who had returned from an ISIS-controlled territory in Syria murdered a Canadian soldier in Ottawa (Deni, 2015). Per some estimate, there are approximately 4,300 European nationals who are currently involved in Iraqi and Syrian conflicts (Deni, 2015). Besides, the current scholarship suggests that propaganda is another major theme associated with the ISIS threat. The use of the internet, for instance, has created a platform whereby unfettered and unobstructed messages are shared incognito among ISIS and its followers throughout the world (Lieberman, 2017; Tsesis, 2017). ISIS exploits the online platform to produce highly sophisticated messages to lure unsuspecting individuals to join their group (Lieberman, 2017; Tsesis, 2017). Also, responsibility concern is one of the significant themes linked to the ISIS threat. The media depiction of ISIS fighters destroying critical historical sites in Iraq and Syria has renewed the call for responsibility to resolve the issue (Cuno, 2016; Scarre, 2015). Renowned Syrian Archeologists and some policymakers within the globe are in support of safeguarding valuable national artifacts in war-torn areas by adopting a responsibility framework (Cuno, 2016).

Furthermore, in confronting the said threat, the international community led by the U.S. and Russia have weighed in on how to mitigate the issue. The sense of urgency to address ISIS challenge is weakened by the apparent differences of policies in both

countries. For instance, a thorough review of the available literature indicates that there are fundamental differences in policy between U.S. and Russia, concerning the war on ISIS. Both countries disagree on the designation of some opposing factions in the Syrian civil war. For instance, when commenting on a possible ceasefire, then president Obama affirmed that there are grave differences between the U.S. and Russia concerning which opposition group must be sustained or defined as a terrorist (Jones & Robertson, 2016). Also, both U.S. and Russia disagree on who has the legitimate right to fight in Syria: Foreign Minister Lavrov told *RT News* that only the Syrian government and its allies, such as Russia and Iran have the mandate to intervene in the Syrian civil war because they are there on Syrian government's invitation. Therefore, any country or organization that is not part of the Russian-led coalition but participates in the Syria war undermines the sovereignty of Syria (Jones & Robertson, 2016).

Moreover, there is a notion that the differences between the U.S. and Russian tactics in addressing ISIS threat balloon continuously. Trump's administration's initial policy towards ISIS disregarded any method to work with Russia, and instead focused on the sole intervention of U.S. in Iraq and Syria. The core U.S. Policy towards ISIS is to fast-track the war and obstruct potential radical acts in the future. Some practitioners such as a former undersecretary of defense for policy at the Department of Defense, Christine Wormuth argue that any attempt by the U.S. and Russia to collaborate on the war against ISIS does not benefit the U.S. and will likely fail (Artwood, 2017). As mentioned earlier, the core difference between Russia and the United States in the war against ISIS is the question about the retention of Syrian president Assad. The Russians want to retain

Syrian president Assad, while the Americans want him to step aside (Herrera et al., 2016). Also, the inflow of refugees from Syria and other parts of Middle East into Europe has resulted in competing for strategic interest between Russia and the United States in the Middle East (Herrera et al., 2016).

Also, a thorough review of the available literature indicates that there is a vast scholarship supporting an assumption that ISIS is an existential threat to the security and stability of the global order. And there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States on how best to mitigate ISIS threat. And this lack of consensus among the international community has enabled ISIS to survive. The testing of this supposition qualitatively is warranted. The ensuing chapter elaborates on the research methodology, to test the notion by using the independent variable: (IV): News media country of origin (U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media). And dependent variables (DV): The framings of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, to May 1, 2015—mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns. I used nonexperimental qualitative content analysis strategy in this study. Policy makers and counterterrorism officials must be conversant with the intricacies surrounding the war against ISIS. This study contributes to the existing counterterrorism strategies to mitigate ISIS threat because it draws policy makers and counterterrorism officials' attention into a significant loophole in the current efforts to address ISIS challenges. The next chapter, Chapter 3 encompasses research design and rationale, methodology, population, sampling and sampling procedures, sampling plan,

data collection, the operationalization of constructs, data analysis plan, research questions, study variables, ethical considerations, threats to validity, and summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how U.S., Russian, and Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. This chapter encompasses the following sections: research design and rationale, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical considerations. The chapter concludes with a summary of key points.

Research Design and Rationale

In this qualitative, nonexperimental content analysis study, I sought to explore the Qatari, Russian, and U.S. news media outlets coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. In general, there are two primary methods of analyzing news media content: inductive and deductive ((Macnamara, 2005; Matthes, 2009; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Use of the inductive method involves examining news media content in a fair manner to uncover potential frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This approach is amenable to the use of several styles to identify emerging themes (Macnamara, 2005; Matthes, 2009). However, it is very tedious, is only applicable to small sample size, and is hard to replicate (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In contrast, using a deductive approach, researchers select frames in advance and examine the frequency of those frames in the selected news (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In this method, investigators are aware of frames they will use and do not find the process of analyzing data to be cumbersome (Macnamara, 2005; Matthes, 2009).

I used a deductive content analysis approach for this study because I examined specific themes in the text, namely mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns. As Babbie (2010) noted, content analysis is an appropriate mechanism for understanding messages in interaction. It can examine large amounts of data (Holsti, 1969). Additionally, the unobtrusive feature of content analysis makes it an appropriate research technique for sensitive topics, such as terrorism (Babbie, 2010; Holsti, 1969).

Research Questions

There were five research questions in this study. The focus of all research questions was on examining the variances among five DVs (mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns) in framing ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, to May 1, 2015. There is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012). Observers of this trend argue that this lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). It is against this background that I developed the following research questions to provide a framework for this study:

RQ1: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of mitigation factors (defined as presenting suggestions, ideas, or solutions from individuals, groups, or government officials to weaken ISIS's influence) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ2: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of insecurity issues (defined as presenting a situation susceptible to danger, threat, or deficiency in protection) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ3: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their coverage of foreign fighter threat (defined as presenting the threat of militants from abroad who join and fight alongside ISIS) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ4: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of responsibility issues (defined as presenting an issue about blaming or holding individuals, governments, or entities accountable) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ5: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of propaganda concerns (defined as strategically presenting an issue to persuade and promote an agenda, or to deceive or demoralize individuals, groups, or governments to reverse their cause) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

Role of the Researcher

In line with the qualitative research tradition (see, Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), I collected the data through a human instrument, myself. It is therefore imperative that readers understand my research role and relationship with the study and my strategy to mitigate possible biases. As someone who witnessed September 11, 2001, terrorist attack

in New York City as a then newly arrived West African immigrant, I understand the effects of terrorism and have firsthand knowledge of the emotional, social, political, economic, and legal impacts of terrorism. Moreover, I saw neighbors grieving, strangers hugging one another, false alarms frequently occurring in the subways, and the gradual crumbling of the U.S. economy.

In the same vein, immediately after the September 11, 2001, attack, I witnessed young men of Middle Eastern descent being rounded up by law enforcement agents in my Bronx neighborhood. Some had no apparent connection to the attacks and were released. At the same time, I understand the pressure on law enforcement at that point. Observing these incidents taught me that terrorism has a significant impact on a given population. As such, policy makers and counterterrorism officials must respond swiftly and carefully to address terrorism incidents efficiently. During this study, I sought to set aside all personal biases concerning terrorism to ensure an objective outcome and meet a rigorous academic standard. I followed Walden University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) guidelines. The IRB approval number is 04-09-18-0620482.

Methodology

Population

LexisNexis and a combination of news archives from three news media outlets: *CNN online*, *the Moscow Times online*, and *Al Jazeera English online* were the sampling frames where the articles from the media outlets were selected. The units of analysis were individual news articles representing ISIS in the above news outlets from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The criteria I used to choose these media outlets was that they

must have a comprehensive representation of various news topics, could be retrieved through LexisNexis, and have large audiences: *The CNN* from the United States, *Al Jazeera English* from Qatar, Middle East, and *the Moscow Times* from Russia. Sampling Plan: I adopted purposeful sampling in this study because I collected the data from news articles representing ISIS in *CNN online*, *the Moscow Times online*, and *Al Jazeera English online* from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

The U.S. media landscape. There are four major Television networks in the U.S. Namely, *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *NBC News*, and *Fox News*. Each of them has several affiliates in all major metropolitan areas in the U.S. (Central Intelligence Agency, [CIA] 2017). Also, there are cable and satellite media houses such as *CNN*, *FOX News*, and *MSNBC*. The media landscape in the U.S. is mostly autonomous, although, there is *Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)* and *National Public Radio (NPR)* which are funded in part by the government and its members, through annual donations and fundraising. *NPR* has approximately 600 sister stations throughout the U.S. (CIA, 2017). Per the conservative estimate, there were about 15,000 radios stations in the U.S. in 2008 (CIA, 2017). There are nearly 239.58 million Americans have access to the internet, which was 74.6% of the population in 2015, whereas the country comparison to the world is three (CIA, 2017).

About CNN Online News. *CNN.com* prides itself as one of the chief global online news sources (About CNN, 2017). It has around-the-clock devoted staff based in the headquarters of *CNN* in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as *CNN* units throughout the globe (“About CNN,” 2017). *CNN.com* mainly depends on about 4,000 *CNN’s global* staff and

features modern technology, such as live video streaming, audio content, news archives, and contextual information. The website is revised incessantly on a single day (“About CNN,” 2017). According to comScore Multi-Platform Media Metrix, (2017) there were approximately 109 million distinctive multiplatform users of *CNN Digital* properties in April 2017 and 86 Million CNN Mobile users. Others were 278 Million *CNN* Video viewers, 46 Million Exclusive Millennial visitors, and 33 million distinctive audiences for *CNN* politics (as cited in “*CNN Digital* Press Releases,” 2017). Also, according to *CNN* Worldwide Fact Sheet, (2018) *CNN* networks and services have a reachable rate of roughly 2 billion individuals worldwide. Also, *CNN* has about 1.000 sister stations globally and has a reachable rate of 91 million homes in the U.S.

Russian media landscape. There are 13 national television stations in Russia. The Russian federal government owns one station, and it’s a shareholder in another (CIA, 2017). Government-controlled Gazprom is a major investor in two of the national stations, while the government-linked Bank Rossiya is a significant investor in fourth and fifth (CIA, 2017). The Moscow city council, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian armed forces each own two national Television stations. There are approximately 3,300 national, provincial, and district TV stations in Russia, of which 75% is exclusively or partly run by the federal or district government (CIA, 2017). Additionally, there are satellite TV networks; two government-controlled national radio stations and about 2,400 community and for-profit radio stations in 2016 (CIA, 2017). There are approximately 104.553 million internet users in Russia with 73.4% of the population, and the country’s comparison to the world is seven (CIA, 2017).

About the Moscow Times Online. *The Moscow Times* is an English-language weekly newspaper printed in Moscow, Russia. *The Moscow Times* has collaborated with foreign correspondents since its inception in 1992, such as the New York Times Pulitzer Prize-winner Ellen Barry (Luhn, 2015). *The Moscow Times* is available by subscription and for free in the hospitality industry in Russia, such as restaurants, commercial airlines, and hotels (Luhn, 2015). The circulation rate of *the Moscow Times* is an approximately 55.000 (Richardson, 2001). *The Moscow Times* is arguably one of the independent news media outlets in Russia because of the occasional criticisms it receives from the pro-Kremlin analysts (Luhn, 2015).

Qatar media landscape. In Qatar, the government regulates Television and radio stations. A prominent Television station in Qatar is the *Al-Jazeera satellite Network* which was initially managed by the Qatari state and now operates as a private business entity. (CIA, 2017). There are national, local, private and international radio stations in Doha. In August 2013 Es'hailSat established a satellite communication network to enhance the media delivery, voice, and internet usage in Qatar (CIA, 2017). Approximately 2.039 million Qatari residents have access to the internet, which was 92.9% of the population in 2015, whereas the country comparison to the world is ninety-five (CIA, 2017).

About Al Jazeera English Online. Since 2006, *Al Jazeera English* has been a sub-division of the *Al Jazeera network*, which entails about 70 units. *Al Jazeera Arabic* was launched in 1996 and is the pioneer independent news organization in the Arab peninsula (“A Truly Global Network,” 2017). The station prides itself on providing a

platform for news and open discussion. *Al Jazeera* claims to be an audience-centered news network that broadcast news from remote places throughout the globe (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). *Al Jazeera network* cherishes a cordial relationship between its audience and the network. *Al Jazeera network* reaches about 310 million homes in 100 nations, with 3,000 dedicated workers from all walks of life (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). *Al Jazeera English* prides itself as a vibrant news organization that has a viewership rate of about 220 million households in approximately 100 countries. However, according to comScore Multi-Platform Media Metrix, (2014), *Al Jazeera’s* digital unique desktop audience worldwide was almost 7 million. (as cited in Bilton, 2014).

Data Collection

Study variables. This segment elaborates on the variables that were used in this project, commencing from the independent variable and the dependable variables. The variables in this project were continuous variables because their values are attained through measuring: The framing of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, to May 1, 2015. The independent variable: (IV): News media country of origin (Qatar, Russia, & U.S.). Dependent variables (DV): The framings of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, to May 1, 2015—mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns. Variables: The framing of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, to May 1, 2015. Attributes: (I) mitigation factors, (II) insecurity, (III) foreign fighter threats, (IV) responsibility issues, and (V) propaganda concerns.

Coding process. In the data collection phase, I selected any individual article which had a title or subtitle denoting ISIS, ISIL, IS, or Daesh in *CNN online*, *the Moscow Times online*, and *Al Jazeera English online* from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. There were a set of questions I had to answer yes (1) or no (0) to measure the frequency the themes appear in the media outlets. Merits of applying that type of binary coding method are that intercoder dependability is mostly high, although, such approach is susceptible to measurement error (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In scrutinizing the manuscript, I used the web-based data analytical tool, Dedoose and deductive methods to generate a framework of codes. Those individual articles were saved in a portable document format (pdf) on a personal computer, under their sources names, such as *CNN*, *the Moscow Times*, or *Al Jazeera*. Afterward, I logged-in password protected Dedoose account, created a project, named the title of the project, and exported the saved pdf documents to the Dedoose media section. I then created codes based on themes in the research questions; such as mitigation, insecurity, foreign fighter threat, responsibility, and propaganda. Subsequently, I set up descriptor sets, and descriptor set fields, produced excerpts by linking the individual codes into the media files, and answered a set of questions yes (1) or no (0) to measure the frequency the themes appeared in the above media outlets. These questions were from the five major topics that connect with ISIS' issues: mitigation factors question: Does the story present suggestions, ideas, or solutions from individuals, groups, or government officials to weaken ISIS's influence on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Insecurity issues question: Does the story present a situation susceptible to danger, threat, or deficiency in protection on

the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Foreign fighter threat question: Does the story present the threat of militants from abroad who join and fight alongside ISIS on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Responsibility issues question: Does the story present issues about blaming or holding individuals, governments, or entities accountable for the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Propaganda concerns question: Does the story present issues to persuade and promote an agenda, or to deceive or demoralize individuals, groups, or governments to reverse their cause on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? As indicated earlier, LexisNexis and a combination of news archives from three news media outlets: *CNN online*, *the Moscow Times online*, and *Al Jazeera English online* were the sampling frames where the articles from the media outlets were selected. I accessed the data by login to Walden University password protected student portal account, then logged-in to Walden library account and chose Databases A-Z, then selected LexisNexis Academic (See Nexis Uni). The news articles from *the Moscow Times* were retrieved from *the Moscow Times online* website because I could not access those articles from Nexis Uni.

Data Analysis Plan

I used the web-based data analytical tool, Dedoose version 8.0.42 for Windows to analyze the data. I used frequency and percentages to analyze the differences or lack thereof of codes based on themes in the research questions; such as mitigation, insecurity, foreign fighter threat, responsibility, and propaganda. I had an option to focus the analyzes on the codes ranking by country (Russia, Qatar and U.S.) or the media outlets

(*CNN online, the Moscow Times online, and Al Jazeera English online*). However, upon a thorough examination of the data, I realized that it would be more prudent to focus the analyzes of the latter. Therefore, I categorized the codes into the following: substantial differences, somewhat substantial differences, and non-substantial differences. As a result, I was able to analyze how three news media outlets: *CNN online, the Moscow Times online, and Al Jazeera English online* covered ISIS from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Dedoose determines the variances among two or more dependent variables (Richardson et al., 2016). In the data analysis stage, I selected data analysis section in Dedoose version 8.0.42 for Windows and chose chart selector for the type of charts appropriate for data analysis, such as codes chart, and qualitative charts to interpret the results of this study. Dedoose software was created and promoted by scholars at the University of California, Los Angeles (Florenthal, 2015). Additionally, Dedoose enables researchers to identify themes and count the frequency of them (Richardson et al., 2016). For instance, in Forte and Blouin (2016) inductive content analysis study about fostering transformative learning in an online ESL professional development program for K-12 teachers, the Dedoose qualitative software helped them code and analyze the data. In the data collection phase, Forte and Blouin (2016) downloaded approximately 360 distinct reflective journal documents from the online course management system at a particular higher institution of learning and uploaded into Dedoose (www.dedoose.com). Afterward, Forte and Blouin (2016) used an inductive content analysis of the qualitative data to code the data methodically. In the data analysis phase, the authors applied an

inductive content analysis method to pinpoint the emerging themes to help fathom the configurations in the data (Forte & Blouin, 2016).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I reached the credibility of this study by following Walden University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) guidelines. The IRB approval number is 04-09-18-0620482. Additionally, I carefully linked the results of this research study to an effective and consistent data collection methodology. I followed the procedure recommended by Ang, Embi, and Yunus, (2016); Guba and Lincoln, (1994); Graneheim and Lundman (2004); Newman, and Clare, (2016); Polit and Beck (2004). Also, I vividly described the data analysis procedure in the results section and used appendices and, charts such as media charts, excerpts chart, and codes chart to couple the data and results of this study.

Transferability

In this section, to ensure transferability, I followed the protocol suggested by Ang, et al., (2016); Graneheim and Lundman (2004); Guba and Lincoln, (1994); Newman and Clare, (2016) and thoroughly described the setting, data collection method, demographics of the study population, and data analysis procedure. Besides, I collaborated with the assigned dissertation committee members and Walden University Form and Style reviewers to ensure authentic citations in this study for potential readers to conveniently access the original data used in the study, as suggested by Patton (2015) & Sandelowski (1993).

Dependability

In this segment, to ensure the dependability of this study, I used an in-depth depiction of the research design and data collection to enable potential researchers to duplicate the study. Also, I reported any challenges encountered during the data collection process, that were inconsistent with the original methodology in Chapter 3 as Ang, et al., 2016; Guba and Lincoln, (1994); Newman and Clare, (2016) recommended.

Confirmability

In this section, to ensure confirmability, I operated under the framework that the notion of confirmability in a qualitative study is analogous to objectivity as indicated by Patton, (2015). It is therefore imperative that the results of this study are devoid of my personal biases. In line with the qualitative research tradition, I collected the data in this study through a human instrument, myself (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Hence, it is essential for potential readers to understand the role of the researcher, relationship with the study, and strategy to mitigate possible biases (Ang, Embi, & Yunus, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Newman, & Clare, 2016). In keeping with the said objective, in the role of the researcher in Chapter 3, I gave a thorough narrative about potential biases vis-à-vis terrorism and the need to set aside those biases concerning terrorism, to ensure objective outcome and meets a rigorous academic standard.

Ethical Procedures

The U.S federal government and Institutional Review Board (IRB) directives require researchers who include human subjects in their studies to protect the study participants. Although this content analysis study is unobtrusive research methodology, I

have secured all data in this study, using moral and ethical parameters endorsed by IRB. The study data, which is entirely electronic, will be kept on a personal computer, that is encrypted, password protected, and maintained in a locked drawer in my study room. The data will be held for a minimum duration of five years.

Summary

In this chapter, I elaborated on the research design, data collection strategy, and research questions and detailed the study population, sampling approach, and the operationalization of constructs. I also discussed ethical considerations. Upon a thorough review, I concluded that a qualitative deductive content analysis was the proper research design to explore whether the U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media differ in their representations of ISIS regarding insecurity, foreign fighter threat, propaganda, and responsibility. Chapter 4 showcases the results of the data analysis regarding whether there are differences in news media representations of ISIS. Chapter 5 includes a further consideration of the results in the context of current scholarship.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis study was to explore how the U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The main problem examined is that there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012). Some argue that this lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). It is against this background that I developed the following research questions to provide a framework for this study:

Research Questions

RQ1: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of mitigation factors (defined as presenting suggestions, ideas, or solutions from individuals, groups, or government officials to weaken ISIS's influence) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ2: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of insecurity issues (defined as presenting a situation susceptible to danger, threat, or deficiency in protection) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ3: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their coverage of foreign fighter threat (defined as presenting about the threat of militants from abroad who

join and fight alongside ISIS) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ4: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of responsibility issues (defined as presenting an issue about blaming or holding individuals, governments, or entities accountable) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ5: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of propaganda concerns (defined as strategically presenting an issue to persuade and promote an agenda, or to deceive or demoralize individuals, groups, or governments to reverse their cause) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

In Chapter 3, I elaborated on the research design and rationale, methodology, threats to validity, and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I will provide information on the research setting, demographics, and data collection and analysis procedures; highlight prominent themes examined in the content analysis; and detail evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

For this study, I used purposeful sampling because I collected the data from news articles representing ISIS in *CNN Online*, *the Moscow Times Online*, and *Al Jazeera English Online* from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Overall, I examined 238 news articles with three descriptors (*CNN*, *AJE*, and *TMT*). Data saturation resulted in 80 news

articles from *CNN*, 80 news articles from *AJE*, and 78 news articles from *The Moscow Times*. There were 436 excerpts, five codes, two child codes, and 449 code applications.

U.S. Media Landscape

There are four major television networks in the United States -- namely, *ABC News*, *CBS News*, *NBC News*, and *Fox News*. Each network has several affiliates in all major metropolitan areas in the United States (CIA, 2017). Also, there are cable and satellite media networks such as *CNN*, *FOX News*, and *MSNBC*. The media landscape in the United States is mostly independent, although there is the *Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)* and *National Public Radio (NPR)*, which are funded in part by the federal government and members through annual donations and fundraising (CIA). *NPR* has approximately 600 sister stations throughout the United States (CIA, 2017). A conservative estimate is that there were about 15,000 radios stations in the United States in 2008 (CIA, 2017). More than 239 million U.S. residents have access to the Internet, which was 74.6% of the population in 2015, and the U.S. compared to the world is 3 (CIA, 2017).

About CNN Online News. CNN.com prides itself as one of the chief global online news sources (“About CNN,” 2017). It has around-the-clock staff based in the headquarters of CNN in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as in CNN units throughout the globe (“About CNN,” 2017). CNN.com has about 4,000 global staff and features modern technology, such as live video streaming, audio content, news archives, and contextual information. The website is continually updated each day (“About CNN,” 2017). According to comScore Multi-Platform Media Metrix (2017), there were approximately

109 million distinctive multiplatform users of CNN Digital properties in April 2017 and 86 million CNN Mobile users (as cited in “CNN Digital Press Releases,” 2017).

According to comScore Multi-Platform Media Metrix (2017), in 2017, there were 278 million CNN Video viewers, 46 million Exclusive Millennial visitors, and 33 million distinctive audiences for CNN politics (as cited in “CNN Digital Press Releases,” 2017).

Furthermore, according to CNN Worldwide Fact Sheet, (2018) CNN networks and services have a reachable rate of roughly 2 billion individuals worldwide. Also, CNN has about 1,000 sister stations globally and has a reachable rate of 91 million homes in the United States (CNN Worldwide Fact Sheet, 2018).

Russian Media Landscape

According to CIA, (2017) there are 13 national television stations in Russia. The Russian federal government owns one station. Also, the Russian Federal government is a shareholder in another (CIA, 2017). Government-controlled Gazprom is a major investor in two of the national stations, while the government-linked Bank Rossiya is a significant investor in fourth and fifth (CIA, 2017). The Moscow city council, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Russian armed forces each own two national Television stations. There are approximately 3,300 national, provincial, and district TV stations in Russia, of which 75% is exclusively or partly run by the national or district government (CIA, 2017).

Additionally, there are satellite TV networks; two government-controlled national radio stations and about 2,400 community and for-profit radio stations in 2016 (CIA, 2017).

There are approximately 104.553 million internet users in Russia with 73.4% of the population, and the country’s comparison to the world is seven (CIA, 2017).

About the Moscow Times Online. The Moscow Times is an English-language weekly newspaper printed in Moscow, Russia. The Moscow Times has collaborated with foreign correspondents since its inception in 1992 such as the New York Times Pulitzer Prize-winner Ellen Barry (Luhn, 2015). The Moscow Times is available by subscription and for free in the hospitality industry in Russia, such as restaurants, commercial airlines, and hotels (Luhn, 2015). The circulation rate of the Moscow Times is an approximately 55,000 (Richardson, 2001). The Moscow Times is arguably one of the independent news media outlets in Russia because of the occasional criticisms it receives from the pro-Kremlin analysts (Luhn, 2015).

Qatar Media Landscape

In Qatar, the government regulates television and radio stations. A prominent Television station in Qatar is the *Al-Jazeera satellite Network* which was initially managed by the Qatari state and now operates as a private business entity. (CIA, 2017). There are national, local, private and international radio stations in Doha. In August 2013 Es'hailSat established a satellite communication network to enhance the media delivery, voice, and internet usage in Qatar (CIA, 2017). There are approximately 2.039 million Qatari residents have access to the internet, which was 92.9% of the population in 2015, whereas the country comparison to the world is ninety-five (CIA, 2017).

About Al Jazeera English Online. Since 2006, *Al Jazeera English* has been a sub-division of the *Al Jazeera network*, which entails about 70 units. *Al Jazeera Arabic* was launched in 1996 and is the pioneer independent news organization in the Arab peninsula (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). The station prides itself on providing a

platform for news and open discussion. *Al Jazeera* claims to be an audience-centered news network that broadcast news from remote places throughout the globe (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). *Al Jazeera network* cherishes a cordial relationship between its audience and the network. *Al Jazeera network* reaches about 310 million homes in 100 nations, with 3,000 dedicated workers from all walks of life (“A truly Global Network,” 2017). *Al Jazeera English* prides itself as a vibrant news organization that has a viewership rate of about 220 million households in approximately 100 countries. However, according to comScore Multi-Platform Media Metrix, (2014), *Al Jazeera’s* digital unique desktop audience worldwide was almost 7 million. (as cited in Bilton, 2014).

Data Collection

The Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study (#04-09-18-0620482). Data collection started within four days after IRB approval. The media outlet I began with was *CNN*. I accessed the data by login to Walden University password protected student portal account, then logged-in to Walden library account and chose Databases A-Z, then selected LexisNexis Academic (See Nexis Uni). In Nexis Uni academic search engine, I set the group duplicates off, sorted by relevance, and narrowed my search by *CNN.com*, news within May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Search terms ISIS or ISIL yielded 1,902 results of *CNN* news articles within the stipulated timeframe. I opted to read the first article and then selected every other item until I reached saturation with 80 news articles. Previous peer-reviewed media content studies such as Guzman, (2016) reached data saturation with approximately 80 news articles. For instance, in

analyzing the evolution of news frames by *Fox News* and *CNN* concerning the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Guzman, (2016) reached data saturation with 30 news articles in *Fox News* and 83 stories from *CNN*.

The second media outlet I collected the data from was *Al Jazeera English*. I accessed the data by login to Walden University password protected student portal account, then logged-in to Walden library account and chose Databases A-Z, then selected LexisNexis Academic (See Nexis Uni). In Nexis Uni academic search engine, I set the group duplicates off, sorted by relevance, and narrowed my search by *Al Jazeera English*, news within May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Search terms ISIS or ISIL yielded 1,359 results of *Al Jazeera English* news articles within the stipulated timeframe. I opted to read the first article and then selected every other item until I reached saturation with 80 news articles.

The next news media outlet I intended to access was *RT English online* via Nexis Uni academic search engine. However, I could not retrieve data from *RT online* in LexisNexis Academic (Nexis Uni). Upon further consultation with my committee chair, I officially requested a change in procedure from IRB to replace *RT online news* with *the Moscow Times online* (<http://old.themoscowtimes.com/news/>). It took a week and a half for IRB to approve the change in procedure application. The approved IRB changed in procedure application permitted me to either use *the Moscow Times online* or LexisNexis as sampling frames where the news articles would be selected. And after assessing both search engines, I opted for the *Moscow Times online* website and accessed the data directly from there. In *the Moscow Times* archival data, I accessed the data by choosing

full archives and narrowed my search by search terms, Syria and Iraq within May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015 timeframe. Because the search terms, ISIS or ISIL used previously in the first and second news media outlets could not result in data saturation at *the Moscow Times* website. I reached saturation with 78 news media articles covering ISIS or ISIL within the stipulated timeframe. As stated earlier, previous peer-reviewed media content studies such as Guzman, (2016) reached data saturation with approximately 80 news articles. For instance, in analyzing the evolution of news frames by *Fox News* and *CNN* concerning the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Guzman, (2016) reached data saturation with 30 news articles in *Fox News* and 83 stories from *CNN*.

Sampling Plan

I adopted purposeful sampling in this study because I collected the data from news articles representing ISIS in *CNN online*, *the Moscow Times online*, and *Al Jazeera English online* from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Overall, I examined 238 news articles, 436 excerpts, five codes, and two child codes. Others are 449 code applications with three descriptors (*CNN*, *AJE*, & *TMT*), of which data saturation resulted in 80 news articles from *CNN*, 80 news articles from *AJE*, and 78 news articles from *the Moscow Times*. Previous peer-reviewed media content studies such as Guzman, (2016) reached data saturation with approximately 80 news articles. For instance, in analyzing the evolution of news frames by *Fox News* and *CNN* concerning the 2011 Egyptian revolution, Guzman, (2016) reached data saturation with 30 news articles in *Fox News* and 83 stories from *CNN*.

Data Collection

In the data collection phase, any individual article which had a title or subtitle denoting ISIS, or ISIL in *CNN online*, *the Moscow Times online*, and *Al Jazeera English online* from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015, were selected. There were a set of questions I had to answer yes (1) or no (0) to measure the frequency the themes appear in the media outlets. Merits of applying that type of binary coding method are that intercoder dependability is mostly high, although, such approach is susceptible to measurement error (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In scrutinizing the manuscript, I used the web-based data analytical tool, Dedoose and deductive methods to generate a framework of codes. Those individual articles were saved in a portable document format (pdf) on a personal computer, under their sources names, such as *CNN*, *the Moscow Times*, or *Al Jazeera*.

Afterward, I logged-in password protected Dedoose account, created a project, named the title of the project, and exported the saved pdf documents to the Dedoose media section. Then, created codes based on themes in the research questions; such as mitigation, insecurity, foreign fighter threat, responsibility, and propaganda. Subsequently, I set up descriptor sets, and descriptor set fields, produced excerpts by linking the individual codes into the media files, and answered a set of questions yes (1) or no (0) to measure the frequency the themes appeared in the above media outlets. I derived these questions from the definitions of the five topics in the research: Mitigation factors question: Does the story present suggestions, ideas, or solutions from individuals, groups, or government officials to weaken ISIS's influence on the war against ISIS

between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Insecurity issues question: Does the story present a situation susceptible to danger, threat, or deficiency in protection on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Foreign fighter threat question: Does the story present the threat of militants from abroad who join and fight alongside ISIS on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Responsibility issues question: Does the story present issues about blaming or holding individuals, governments, or entities accountable for the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? Propaganda concerns question: Does the story present issues to persuade and promote an agenda, or to deceive or demoralize individuals, groups, or governments to reverse their cause on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? As indicated earlier, LexisNexis and a combination of news archives from three news media outlets: *CNN online*, *the Moscow Times online*, and *Al Jazeera English online* were the sampling frames where the articles from the media outlets were selected. I accessed the data by login to Walden University password protected student portal account, then logged-in to Walden library account and chose Databases A-Z, then selected LexisNexis Academic (See Nexis Uni).

Data Analysis

The web-based data analytical tool, Dedoose version 8.0.42 for Windows was used to analyze the data. I used frequency and percentages to analyze the differences or lack thereof of codes based on themes in the research questions; such as mitigation, insecurity, foreign fighter threat, responsibility, and propaganda. I had an option to focus the analyzes on the codes ranking by country (Russia, U.S., and Qatar) or the media

outlets (*CNN online, the Moscow Times online, and Al Jazeera English online*). However, upon a thorough examination of the data, I realized that it would be more prudent to focus the analyzes of the latter. Therefore, I categorized the codes into the following: substantial differences, somewhat substantial differences, and non-substantial differences. As a result, I was able to analyze how three news media outlets: *CNN online, the Moscow Times online, and Al Jazeera English online* covered ISIS from May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Dedoose determines the variances among two or more dependent variables. In the data analysis stage, I selected data analysis section in Dedoose version 8.0.42 for Windows and chose chart selector for the type of charts appropriate for data analysis, such as codes chart, and qualitative charts to interpret the results of this study. Dedoose software was created and promoted by scholars at the University of California, Los Angeles (Florenthal, 2015). Additionally, Dedoose enables researchers to identify themes and count the frequency of them (Richardson et al., 2016). For instance, in Forte and Blouin, (2016) inductive content analysis study about fostering transformative learning in an online ESL professional development program for K-12 teachers, the Dedoose qualitative software helped them code and analyze the data. In the data collection phase, Forte and Blouin, (2016) downloaded approximately 360 distinct reflective journal documents from the online course management system at a particular higher institution of learning and uploaded into Dedoose (www.dedoose.com). Afterward, Forte and Blouin, (2016) used an inductive content analysis of the qualitative data to code the data methodically. In the data analysis phase, the authors applied an inductive content analysis

method to pinpoint the emerging themes to help fathom the configurations in the data (Forte & Blouin, 2016).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I reached the credibility of this study by following Walden University Institutional Review Board's (IRB) guidelines. The IRB approval number is 04-09-18-0620482. Additionally, I carefully linked the results of this research study to an effective and consistent data collection methodology. This is consistent with suggestions by Ang, et al., (2016); Guba and Lincoln, (1994); Graneheim and Lundman (2004); Newman and Clare, (2016); Polit and Beck (2004). Also, I vividly described the data analysis procedure in the results section and used appendices and, charts such as media charts, excerpts chart, and codes chart to couple the data and results of this study.

Transferability

In this section, to ensure transferability, I thoroughly described the setting, data collection method, demographics of the study population, and data analysis procedure. This is consistent with suggestions by Ang, et al., (2016); Graneheim and Lundman (2004); Guba and Lincoln, (1994); Newman and Clare, (2016). Besides, I collaborated with my dissertation committee members and Walden University Form and Style reviewers to ensure authentic citations in this study for potential readers to conveniently access the original data used in the study, as suggested by Patton (2015) and Sandelowski (1993).

Dependability

In this segment, to ensure the dependability of this study, I used an in-depth depiction of the research design and data collection to enable potential researchers to duplicate the study. Also, I reported any challenges encountered during the data collection process, that were inconsistent with the original methodology in Chapter 3 as Ang, et al., 2016; Guba and Lincoln, (1994); Newman and Clare, (2016) recommended.

Confirmability

In this section, to ensure confirmability, I operated under the framework that the notion of confirmability in a qualitative study is analogous to objectivity as indicated by Patton, (2015). It is therefore imperative that the results of this study are devoid of the author's personal biases. In line with the qualitative research tradition, I collected the data in this study through a human instrument, myself (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Hence, it is essential for potential readers to understand the role of the researcher, relationship with the study, and strategy to mitigate possible biases (Ang, Embi, & Yunus, 2016; Guba, & Lincoln, 1994; Newman, & Clare, 2016). In keeping with the said objective, in the role of the researcher in Chapter 3, I gave a thorough narrative about possible biases vis-à-vis terrorism and the need to set aside those biases concerning terrorism, to ensure objective outcome and meets a rigorous academic standard.

Results

This qualitative content analysis study was to explore how the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The analytical data software, Dedoose was used to code the data and analyzed the

content of this study. Independent Variable: (IV): News media Country of origin (Russian, & Qatari and the U.S. News media). Dependent Variables (DV): The framings of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015—mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns. Variables-The framing of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015.

Table 1

Codes Ranking for Al Jazeera English from Qatar

Codes ranking	Codes	Results
1	EI	68.4%
2	II	48.9%
3	PI	44.7%
4	RI	33.3%
5	PC	30.2%
6	MF	27.6%
7	FFT	12.7%

Note. EI = economic insecurity; II = insecurity issues; PI = political insecurity; RI = responsibility issues; PC = propaganda concerns; MF = mitigation factors; FFT = foreign fighter threat.

Table 2

Codes Ranking for CNN from the United States

Codes ranking	Codes	Results
1	PC	61.9%
2	II	34.8%
3	MF	33.3%
4	PI	31.9%
5	EI	31.6%
6	RI	25.6%
7	FFT	25.4%

Note. EI = economic insecurity; II = insecurity issues; PI = political insecurity; RI = responsibility issues; PC = propaganda concerns; MF = mitigation factors; FFT = foreign fighter threat.

Table 3

Codes Ranking for the Moscow Times from Russia

Codes ranking	Codes	Results
1	FF	61.9%
2	RI	41.0%
3	MF	39.1%
4	PI	23.4%
5	II	16.3%
6	PC	7.9%
7	EI	0.0%

Note. EI = economic insecurity; II = insecurity issues; PI = political insecurity; RI = responsibility issues; PC = propaganda concerns; MF = mitigation factors; FFT = foreign fighter threat.

Interpretation of Codes Ranking by Country

As shown in Table 1, the *Al Jazeera English* media outlet ranked economic insecurity, 68.4%, insecurity, 48.9%, and political insecurity, 44.7% at the top of their priority list while mitigation factors, 27.6% and foreign fighter threats, 12.7% were at the bottom of their priority list. On the other hand, as shown in Table 2, *CNN* media outlet ranked propaganda concern 61.9%, insecurity issues 34.8% and mitigation factors 33.3% at the top of their priority list while responsibility issues 25.6% and foreign fighter threats 25.4% were at the bottom of their priority list. In contrast, as shown in Table 3, *the Moscow Times* media outlet ranked foreign fighter threats 61.9%, responsibility issues 41.0% and mitigation factors 39.1% at the top of their priority list while propaganda concerns, 7.9%, and economic insecurity, 0.0% were at the bottom of their priority list. The implication here is that as far as Qatar is concerned, the insecurity issue is the sine qua non in mitigating ISIS threat. Conversely, in the U.S. addressing propaganda concerns is the prerequisite to resolving ISIS issues, whereas in Russia, addressing foreign fighter threat is essential to any efforts to mitigate ISIS threat.

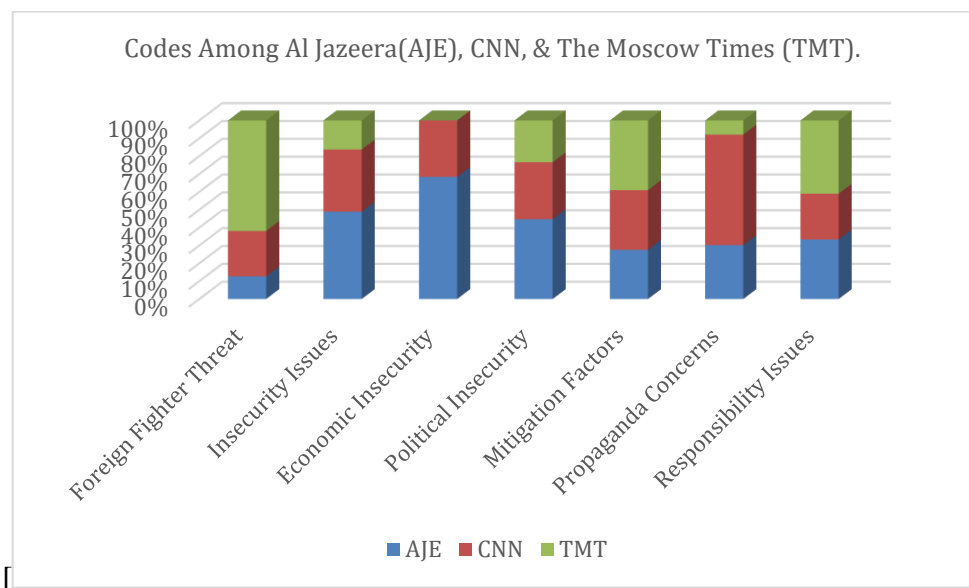


Figure 1. Bar charts for all codes.

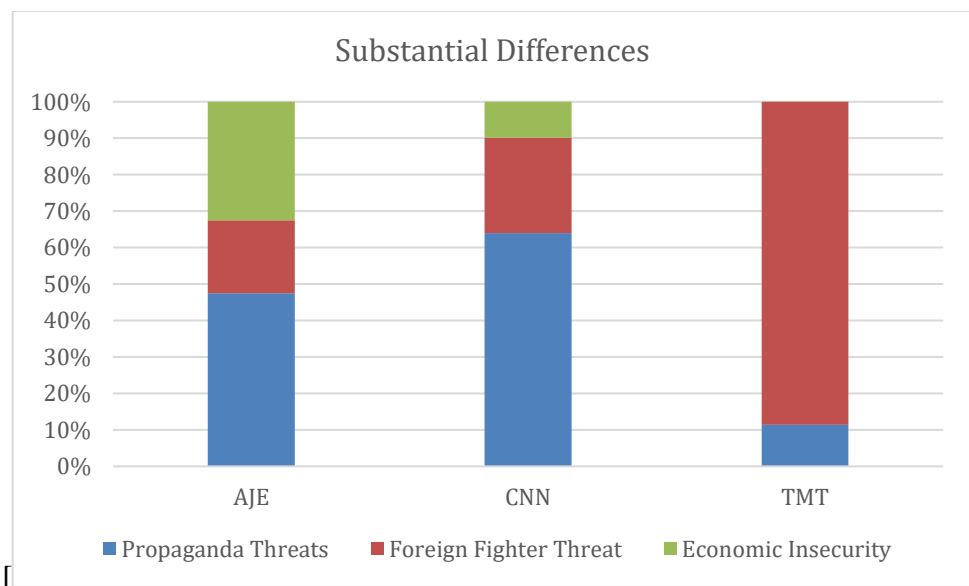


Figure 2. Bar charts for codes with substantial differences.

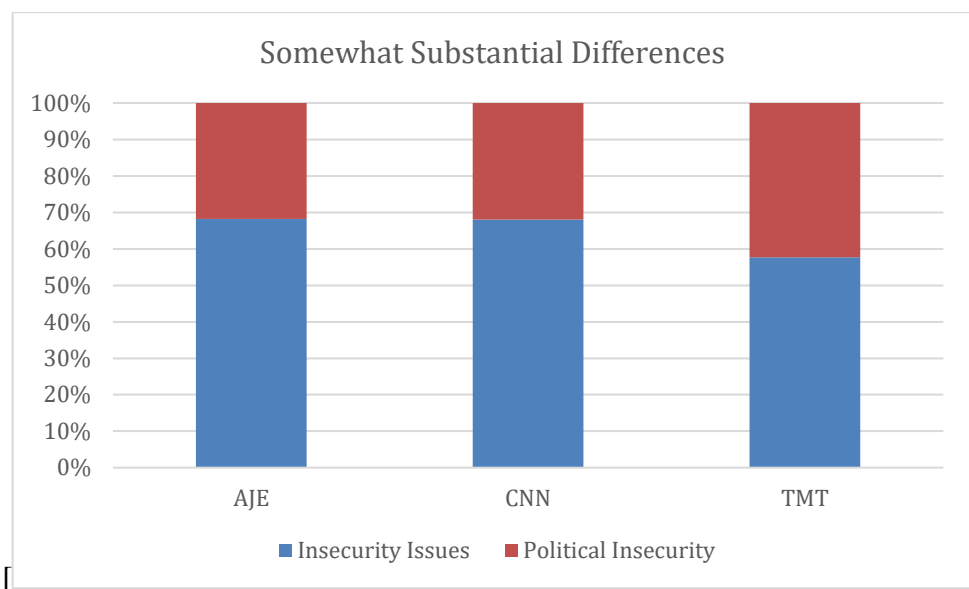


Figure 3. Bar chart for somewhat substantial differences codes.

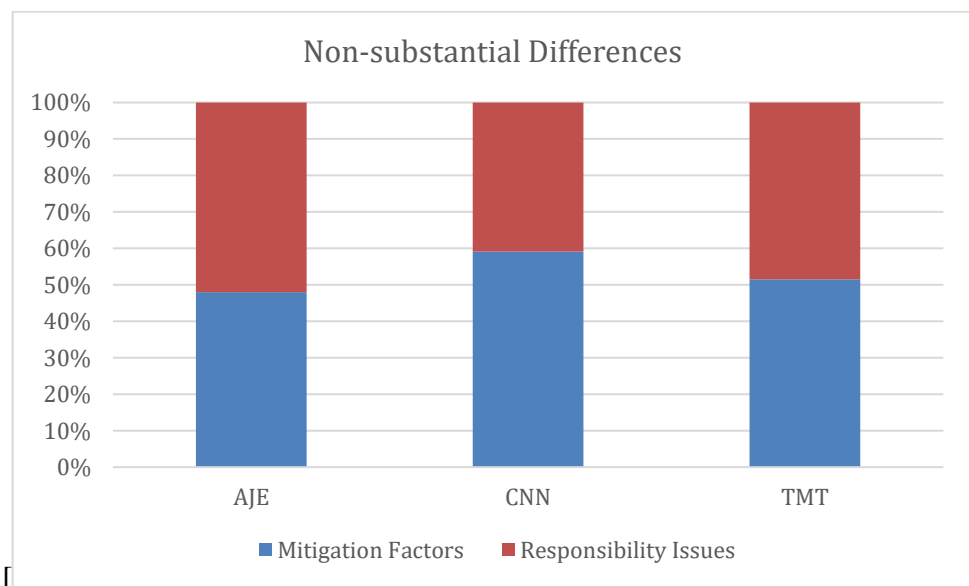


Figure 4. Bar chart for non-substantial differences.

In answering question 1, I conducted qualitative content analysis study to explore how the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS regarding mitigation factors on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The results of this study, as shown in Figure 4 indicate that there were non-substantial differences concerning mitigation factors among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media outlets coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Thus, in mitigation factors, *the Moscow Times* recorded 39.1%, the *CNN* recorded 33.3%, while *Al Jazeera* recorded 27.6%. The following are sample code excerpts about mitigation factors by the media outlets in question:

AL Jazeera: Mitigation Factors

“But the long-term threat from ISIL will only be contained if the conditions that enabled ISIL to gain ground quickly are addressed. This requires the government to do the following: Increase recruitment of local people into armed forces, legislate for the National Guard to begin operating by the end of the year and integrate tribes and paramilitary groups into it so they can manage local security.”

CNN: Mitigation Factors

“A meeting of foreign ministers at the close of the NATO summit in Wales gave the world its first look at how the United States and international partners plan to engage with the terrorist threat of ISIS beyond Iraq.”

The Moscow Times: Mitigation Factors

“The U.S. and five Arab countries launched an aerial campaign against the Islamic State on Monday night, their most coordinated effort yet to rid conflict-stricken Syria of the radical militant organization that has set up a haven amid the turmoil of an ongoing civil war.”

In answering question 2, I conducted qualitative content analysis study to explore how the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS regarding insecurity issues on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The results of this study, as shown in Figure 3 indicate that there were somewhat substantial differences regarding insecurity issues among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. For instance, in matters of insecurity, the *Al Jazeera English* recorded 48.9%, the *CNN* recorded 34.8%, while *the Moscow Times* recorded 16.3%. In political insecurity, which is a child code of insecurity, also recorded somewhat substantial differences among the media outlets in question. For instance, in political insecurity, *the Al Jazeera English* recorded 44.7%, the *CNN* recorded 31.9%, while *the Moscow Times* recorded 23.4%.

On the other hand, economic insecurity, which is another child code of insecurity recorded substantial differences among the media outlets in question. For instance, as shown in Figure 2, in the economic insecurity, *Al Jazeera English* from Qatar, Middle East recorded 68.4%, the *CNN* from the U.S. recorded 31.6%, while *the Moscow Times* from Russia recorded 0.0%. The following are sample code excerpts about insecurity issues and child codes political insecurity and economic insecurity by the media outlets in question:

AL Jazeera: Insecurity Issues

“Events in the region this week have thrown into sharp focus the challenges the Middle East faces in its war against ISIL. The killing of Jordanian pilot, Maoz al-Kassasbeh, has refocused the country's efforts and dragged them further into war. The shooting at a plane in Baghdad international airport and the alleged killing of an aid worker.”

AL Jazeera: Economic Insecurity

Increase investment and employment in Anbar, Nineveh, and Salahuddin provinces to increase prosperity and prevent ISIL from using cash to recruit people.

AL Jazeera: Political Insecurity

In this case, a historic compromise has to be found for all the communities to subdue competing for sectarian and ethnic resentments, forestall the escalation of the

CNN: Insecurity Issues & Political Insecurity

At least six villages north of Syria's largest city of Aleppo fell Wednesday to militants from ISIS, according to AFP. The jihadist group has seized vast swathes of land in Iraq and consolidated control over considerable territory in northeastern Syria in the past year

CNN: Economic Insecurity

That's not all. ISIS also took over six Syrian oil and gas fields and a major pumping station that distributes oil from Iraq into Syria, Abu Leila said.

In answering question 3, I conducted qualitative content analysis study to explore how the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS regarding foreign fighter threat on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The results of this study, as shown in Figure 2 indicate that there were substantial differences concerning foreign fighter threat among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. For instance, in matters concerning foreign fighter threat, *the Moscow Times* from Russia recorded 61.9%, the *CNN* from the U.S. recorded 25.4%, whereas *Al Jazeera English* from Qatar, Middle East recorded 12.7%. The following are sample code excerpts about foreign fighter threat by the media outlets in question:

AL Jazeera: Foreign Fighter Threat

“ISIL has effectively used the internet and media to gain attention and communicate its jihadist narrative, recruiting thousands of foreign nationals to come and join its ranks.”

CNN: Foreign Fighter Threat

“The suspect, Moroccan national Lahcen Ikassrien, has been indicted, along with 14 other suspected militants, on charges of recruiting and sending militants to help ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria.”

The Moscow Times: Foreign Fighter Threat

“They get training [in Syria and Iraq], acquire skills, and that's why they represent an exceptional threat to the national security of [the fighters'] countries.”

In answering question 4, I conducted qualitative content analysis study to explore how the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS regarding Responsibility Issues on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The results of this study, as shown in Figure 4 indicate that there were non-substantial differences vis-à-vis responsibility issues among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. For instance, in responsibility issues, *the Moscow Times* recorded 41.0%, *the Al Jazeera English* recorded 33.3%, while the *CNN* recorded 25.6%. The following are sample code excerpts about responsibility issues by the media outlets in question:

AL Jazeera: Responsibility

“The US-backed plan to create a mostly Sunni National Guard to police the Sunni areas and set up a more inclusive government fell short of the mark.”

CNN: Responsibility

“The line is new for Clinton and comes at a time that some have raised questions whether the Obama administration underestimated ISIS, a terrorist group that has swept into power in areas of Syria and Iraq.”

The Moscow Times: Responsibility

“We both recognize the need to destroy and ultimately defeat ISIL, to degrade their efforts and ultimately to defeat them,” Kerry told a news conference, using an alternative name for the group also known as IS. “No decent country by any definition could support the horrors that are perpetrated by ISIL, and no civilized country should shirk its responsibility to stand up and be part of the effort to stamp out this disease.”

In answering question 5, I conducted qualitative content analysis study to explore how the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media outlets represented ISIS regarding Propaganda concerns on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The results of this study, as shown in Figure 2 indicate that there were substantial differences relating to propaganda among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. For instance, in matters concerning propaganda issues, *CNN* from the U. S. recorded 61.9%, *the Al Jazeera English* from Qatar recorded 30.2%, while the *Moscow Times* from Russia recorded 7.9%. The following are sample code excerpts about propaganda concerns by the media outlets in question:

AL Jazeera: Propaganda concerns

“The footage, which appeared to be made as a form of propaganda by ISIL, showed Cantile saying that "not since Vietnam have we witnessed such a potential mess in the making."

CNN: Propaganda concerns

“Like a wounded animal lashing out in a fury, ISIS is betraying hints of desperation in its latest video, which purportedly shows the aftermath of the beheading of U.S. hostage Peter Kassig, analysts said Sunday.”

The Moscow Times: Propaganda concerns

“Waging a savvy and high-tech propaganda campaign online, the Islamic State has proved adept at seducing young men and women across Europe into

abandoning their homes and families and joining its violent crusade in Iraq and Syria” (see Appendix).

Summary

As seen in the above discussion, Chapter 4 encompasses the results of this qualitative study concerning exploration of how the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The major themes that were examined include mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns. I answered five research questions; in research question 1: Do the U.S, Russians, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of mitigation factors on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? The results indicate that there were non-substantial differences concerning mitigation factors among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. In research question 2: Do U.S, Russians, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of insecurity issues in the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? The results of this study indicate that there were somewhat substantial differences regarding insecurity issues among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. In research question 3: Do U.S, Russians, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their coverage of foreign fighter on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? The results indicate that there were substantial differences about foreign fighter threat among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. In question 4: Do U.S, Russians, and Qatari news media outlets

differ in their representations of responsibility issues on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? The results of this study indicate that there were non-substantial differences vis-à-vis responsibility issues among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. And in research question 5: Do U.S, Russians, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of propaganda concerns on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015? The results of this study as seen in Figure 1, suggest that there are similarities and differences of Russia, Qatar, and U.S. media outlets depiction of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Chapter 5 particularizes on the interpretation of findings, study limitations, recommendations, implications, and the twofold significance of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative content analysis study was to explore how the Qatari, Russian, and the U.S. news media outlets represented ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The main problem examined is that there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012).

Experts argue that this lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). To address the research problem and answer my five research questions, I conducted a content analysis of U.S., Russian, and Qatari news media coverage. The theoretical framework for this study was the agenda-setting theory (McCombs, & Shaw, 1972), and the data analytical tool was Dedoose (Dedoose.com).

The significance of this study is twofold. First, the information gleaned from the study may impact social change by aiding counterterrorism officials and policy makers in making informed decisions about how to address ISIS threat. Furthermore, this study adds to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation for future researchers. In Chapter 4, I elaborated on the research setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, prominent themes examined in the content analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness. Chapter 5 encompasses further discussion of the study findings in the context of the current scholarship, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and the significance of the study, along with a conclusion to the study.

Research Questions

There is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012). Some observers contend that this lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). It is against this background that I developed the following research questions to provide a framework for this study:

RQ1: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of mitigation factors (defined as presenting suggestions, ideas, or solutions from individuals, groups, or government officials to weaken ISIS's influence) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ2: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of insecurity issues (defined as presenting a situation susceptible to danger, threat, or deficiency in protection) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ3: Do U.S, Russian, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their coverage of foreign fighter threat (defined as presenting the threat of militants from abroad who join and fight alongside ISIS) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ4: Do U.S, Russians, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of responsibility issues (defined as presenting an issue about blaming or

holding individuals, governments, or entities accountable) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

RQ 5: Do U.S, Russians, and Qatari news media outlets differ in their representations of propaganda concerns (defined as strategically presenting an issue to persuade and promote an agenda, or to deceive or demoralize individuals, groups, or governments to reverse their cause) on the war against ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015?

Interpretation of the Findings

This qualitative content analysis study explored the Russian, Qatari, and U.S. news media outlets coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. I used the analytical data software Dedoose to code the data and analyzed the content of this study. The IV was news media country of origin (U.S., Russian, and Qatari news media). The DVs encompassed the news media framing of ISIS activities between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015: The DVs were mitigation factors, insecurity, foreign fighter threats, responsibility issues, and propaganda concerns.

Interpretation of Substantial Differences

As shown in Figure 2, the results of this qualitative content analysis study indicate that there were substantial differences concerning foreign fighter threat, economic insecurity, and propaganda concerns among the U.S, Russian, and Qatar news media outlets; coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. For instance, in matters concerning foreign fighter threat, *The Moscow Times* from Russia recorded 61.9%, and the *CNN* from the United States recorded 25.4%, while *Al Jazeera English* from Qatar in

the Middle East recorded 12.7%. On economic insecurity matters, *the Al Jazeera English* from Qatar, Middle East recorded 68.4%, the *CNN* from the U.S. documented 31.6%, whereas *the Moscow Times* from Russia recorded 0.0%. The propaganda issues, *CNN* from the U. S. recorded 61.9%, *the Al Jazeera English* from Qatar recorded 30.2%, while *the Moscow Times* from Russia recorded 7.9%. The results of substantial differences concerning foreign fighter threat, economic insecurity, and propaganda concerns contribute to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation for future researchers and public perception in measuring success and failures of policies.

Additionally, the results of this study are consistent with the available literature on ISIS and its media representation. For instance, per the results of this study, as shown in Table 3, foreign fighter threat was the primary priority among the Russian media outlet, *the Moscow Times*, followed by the U.S media outlet, *CNN*, and the Qatar media outlet, *Al Jazeera English*. That is not coincidental given the fact that per the literature review, the number of Russian nationals who left Russia to fight alongside ISIS surpasses the number of U.S. nationals who joined ISIS. For instance, According to Lynch, 2015, ISIS foreign fighters from the U.S. were estimated to be fifty to three hundred (as cited in Hussain, 2016). Whereas ISIS foreign fighters from the post-Soviet regions, such as Central Asia, Russia, and the Caucasus are estimated to be in thousands (Souleimanov, & Ouellette, 2015).

On the other hand, the Qatari news media outlet, Al Jazeera recorded the lowest on the foreign fighter priority list, which connects with the available literature. For instance, per the available research, Qatar like its counterparts in the Arab world, tend to

have a favorable perception of foreign fighters. Because of religious justification, such as conducting one's duty as a Muslim, community service, such as an obligation to protect one's neighbors, and humanitarian reasons, such as an obligation to prevent problems of fellow worshippers (RAN, 2014).

Also, economic insecurity, which is a child code of insecurity recorded substantial differences among the media outlets in question. For instance, as shown in Figure 2, in the economic insecurity, *Al Jazeera English* from Qatar, Middle East recorded 68.4%, the *CNN* from the U.S. recorded 31.6%, while *the Moscow Times* from Russia recorded 0.0%. The implication herein is that the results of this study are consistent with the practicality on the ground concerning the perception of ISIS. Thus, *Al Jazeera English* media outlet from Qatar, Middle East ranked economic insecurity as their key priority, perhaps given the similarities of geopolitical situation and religious affinity among Qatar, Iraq, and Syria. Besides, the next in ranking of economic insecurity issues is the U.S. followed by Russia. The implication here is that it is in their strategic interest for both Russia and the U.S. who are arguably the players of the proxy war, to downplay the economic consequences of the fight against ISIS to attract support from both domestic and international audiences. Regarding propaganda issues, the *CNN* from the U.S. recorded the highest percentage, followed by Qatar, and Russia. That is not surprising given the fact that per the available literature, the primary targets of most ISIS's propaganda broadcast aimed at the U.S.-led coalition and their interest. For instance, ISIS created the Al Hayat Media Center, which targets younger non-Arabic audience (Lieberman, 2017; Stergiou, 2016). The Al Hayat Media Center produces videos in

various languages and formats, such as short version video for Twitter users or long and very sophisticated Hollywood-like documentaries (Lieberman, 2017; Stergiou, 2016). On October 3, 2014, ISIS published a video depicting a decapitation of Western captive Alan Henning and threatened to murder Westerner Peter Kassig, otherwise known as Abdul-Rahman Kassig (Glenn, 2016; “ISIS Fast Facts,” 2017). Qatari news media outlet, *Al Jazeera English* was next after *CNN*, perhaps because of the nature of the Qatari media landscape. Thus, according to the literature review, Television and radio stations in Qatar are regulated by the government. A prominent Television station in Qatar is the *Al-Jazeera satellite Network* which was initially managed by the Qatari state and now operates as a private business entity. (CIA, 2017). It is estimated that approximately 2.039 million Qatari residents have access to the internet, which was 92.9% of the population in 2015, whereas the country comparison to the world is ninety-five (CIA, 2017). Likewise, the ISIS propaganda department publishes a combination of 90.000 posts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube daily. As a result, some social media sites, such as Twitter has applied several strategies to mitigate ISIS’s presence on that social media websites to propagate its agenda, intimidate its opponents, and recruit foreign fighters (Lieberman, 2017; Speckhard et al., 2016).

Interpretation of Somewhat Substantial Differences

The results of this study as shown in Figure 3 indicate that there were somewhat substantial differences concerning insecurity issues and political insecurity among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media outlets coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Thus, in matters of insecurity, *the Al Jazeera English* recorded 48.9%, the

CNN recorded 34.8%, while *the Moscow Times* recorded 16.3%. In political insecurity, *the Al Jazeera English* recorded 44.7%, the *CNN* recorded 31.9%, while *the Moscow Times* recorded 23.4%. The implication here is that in matters concerning insecurity and its sub child code political insecurity, the Qatari news media outlet, *Al Jazeera* prioritized it, followed by the U.S. media outlet, *CNN*, and the Russia media outlet, *the Moscow Times*. Perhaps, Qatar tops the list because it happens to be one the indigenes of the Middle East and shares similarities of geopolitical situation and religious affinity with Iraq and Syria. The U.S. media outlet, *CNN* was second concerning insecurity issues coverage perhaps due to the revival of U.S. public attention to the concept of terrorism. For instance, the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York, Pennsylvania Airfield, and Pentagon in Washington DC, coupled with the recent video footage of ISIS's public beheadings captured on U.S. media has revived public attention to the concept of terrorism and insecurity. At the same time, the economic and political situations on the grounds in both Russia and U.S. are not conducive for either of them to see Iraq or Syria in prolonging chaotic political environment. For instance, as the Russia annexation of Crimea peninsula continues, a prolong Russian military investment in Syria is unfeasible.

Similarly, the current political climate in the U.S. is not conducive to another ground military intervention in that region. Therefore, it is in the interest of both Russia and U.S. governments to mitigate the worsening of political insecurity in war-torn Iraq and Syria. Perhaps, that explains why the results indicate somewhat substantial differences of coverage among the media outlets in question.

Interpretation of Non-substantial Differences

The results of this study, as shown in Figure 4 indicate that there were non-substantial differences concerning mitigation factors and responsibility issues among the U.S, Russia, and Qatar news media outlets coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. Thus, in mitigation factors, the *Moscow Times* recorded 39.1%, the *CNN* recorded 33.3%, while *Al Jazeera* recorded 27.6%. In responsibility issues, *the Moscow Times* recorded 41.0%, the *Al Jazeera* English recorded 33.3%, while the *CNN* recorded 25.6%. The results of non-substantial differences with regards to mitigation factors and responsibility issues are in line with the available literature. For instance, the literature review indicates that despite the conspicuous differences between the United States and Russia concerning the war against ISIS, there are areas both countries seem to agree. For instance, both countries see ISIS as a terror group (Jones, & Robertson, 2016). Other observers argue that there is evidence of U.S.-Russia cooperation in the Syrian civil war. “We argue that the United States and Russia can work side by side, if not together, to defeat the Islamic State in Syria” (Herrera, Kydd, & Lukyanov, 2016, p.1). Perhaps, both countries could convince their counterparts in Syria to negotiate towards long-lasting peace. For instance, in 2013, there was an accord between both nations to destroy Syrian chemical weapons, which was executed in 2014. And in December 2015, both countries supported the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, which was the blueprint for reconciliation. (Herrera, et al., 2016). Although, their aims are not entirely related, both countries have amenable policies that could lead to a conceivable concession. Both

the U.S. and Russia seek to mitigate the activities of terror groups who oppose the Syrian government, such as al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda sub-division in Syria.

Additionally, both the U.S. and Russia prefer to see a united Syria after the cessation of hostilities (Herrera et al.,2016). It is imperative to understand that Qatari nationals share similar sentiments and aspirations concerning the war on ISIS, as seen in the literature review. For instance, Qatar now hosts a significant U.S. Airbase, which aids the U.S.-led coalition in its fight against ISIS. It is worthwhile to note that in matters of responsibility concerns, the U.S. media outlet *CNN* centered on the destruction of artifacts and what ought to have been done, to avert the challenges associated with ISIS. Conversely, the Russian media outlet, *the Moscow Times* focused on criticizing the actions of the U.S.-led coalition and ISIS. The Qatari news media outlet, *Al Jazeera* concentrated on criticizing the West by portraying the Western media and policy makers for been hypocritical about the branding of ISIS, to confirm their biased perception that Islamic terrorism is worse than any other atrocities ever committed by humankind.

Limitations of the Study

As mentioned earlier, the information in this project may influence social change by assisting counterterrorism officials, and policy makers make informed decisions about how to mitigate ISIS threat. Additionally, in theoretical terms, this study contributes to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation for future researchers. Nevertheless, this study is not immune to limitations; a possible restriction of content analysis study is that detected patterns in media may not precisely reflect the authenticity of the actual situation (Babbie, 2010). For instance, online Television and online

newspaper coverage of ISIS may be unfair because of their business interest, or geopolitical conditions. Likewise, the scrutiny of an only online Television station and online newspaper contents as the chief source of media depiction of ISIS may not correctly reflect the overview of ISIS. Additionally, because of the limited availability of resources and time, this project does not include other media sources, such as social media platforms, newspapers and other Television stations in the countries in question. To address the said limitations, the questions in this study were purposefully designed to align with the major themes found in the current literature on ISIS threat.

Recommendations

As discussed, the primary themes examined in this study were mitigation factors (II) insecurity, (III) foreign fighter threats, (IV) responsibility issues, and (V) propaganda concerns. I argue that any attempt to mitigate the current Islamic State challenges must incorporate what I call the strategic prioritization of countermeasures. That could be achieved by prioritizing the themes associated with the war against ISIS. The assumption here is that insecurity, foreign fighter threats, propaganda concerns, responsibility issues, and mitigation factors are intertwined. I submit that insecurity issues should be at the top of the priority list because it is the first line of attraction among them; insecurity attracts and serves as a breeding ground for future jihadist vis-à-vis foreign fighters. A thorough examination of the literature indicates that ISIS was able to flourish and cause concern for insecurity because of the following factors: (a) perception of marginalization among some segment of the Iraqi and Syrian societies. In Iraq for instance, when the Sunni minority felt marginalized by the majority Shite sects, they reluctantly leaned towards

ISIS cause and subsequently made Iraq unsafe. In Syria, the Sunni majority, who collaborate with the opposition or rebel forces feel that they are being marginalized by Assad's government, which is mainly controlled by minority Alawite sect (Blanchard, & Humud; 2016; Hussain, 2016; International Crisis Group 2013; Terrill, 2014). (b) Lack of a stable central government. One noticeable feature about jihadists, such as ISIS is that they deliberately establish their bases in countries that do not have a stable central government (Blanchard, & Humud; 2016; Hussain, 2016; International Crisis Group 2013; Terrill, 2014). A country without a stable central government has divisions among the citizenry; ethnic issue, socio-economic challenges, and lack of essential amenities for human survival. Terrorist groups such as ISIS enter such countries, collaborate with the conspicuously marginalized population to establish their bases, build rapport with the locals, recruit, stir hatred to align with their philosophy and thereby flourish, as occurred in both Iraq and Syria (Blanchard, & Humud; 2016; Hussain, 2016; International Crisis Group 2013; Terrill, 2014). (c) Lack of consensus among international partners on how best to address ISIS's issue. For instance, according to the U.S. State Department estimate, more than 60 countries and other organizations decided to participate, contribute either military forces or resources or both to the U.S.-led military operation against ISIS (as cited in Mcinnis, 2016; O'Connor, 2017). In contrast, there is a Russian-led military coalition encompasses Syria, Iran, and Lebanon (Hezbollah) which has adopted a different strategy than U.S.-led coalition to combat ISIS (Carpenter, 2013; Jones et al., 2016; Sanusi, & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016).

Furthermore, the U.S. and Russia do not agree on who has the legitimate right to fight in Syria (Jones et al., 2016; Sanusi, & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016). Foreign Minister Lavrov told *RT News* that only the Syrian government and its allies, such as Russia and Iran have the mandate to intervene in the Syrian civil war because they are there on Syrian government's invitation. As such, any group or entity that is not part of the Russian-led coalition and fights in Syria is undermining the sovereignty of Syria (Jones et al., 2016; Sanusi, & Adu-Gyamfi, 2016). Moreover, Wormuth, (n. d.) opined that Russian Syrian policy does not align with U.S. policy because the Russians have targeted the opposition elements in Syria that work with the U.S.-led coalition (as cited in Artwood, 2017). Foreign fighter threat should be the second layer of issues in the strategic prioritization of countermeasures that need to be addressed. For instance, foreign fighters contribute to insecurity issues, use propaganda as the primary tool in their toolbox, and in turn get blamed for their activities. The current efforts adopted to counter ISIS foreign fighter challenges by the United Nations (UN) is highly commendable and must be intensified.

Nevertheless, the UN Security Council Resolution 2178 should not just label foreign fighters as illegitimate but must also incorporate a holistic approach to mitigating those challenges. I recommend that the UN Security Council should set up a committee to collaborate with each member state to pinpoint significant themes associated with foreign fighters that may resonate with most of the member states. Once the standard topics are unraveled and accepted as a resolution, the UN Security Council special committee must embark on a dissemination campaign to educate significant stakeholders in member countries. For instance, policymakers, opinion leaders, and the executive arm

of government such as the defense department, information ministry, interior ministry, and the fourth arm of government, the media sector to implement those solutions to mitigate the foreign fighter challenges.

Additionally, each country must establish its strategy and also collaborate with the international community to address the factors that contribute to foreign fighter challenges unearthed by 2014 RAN study. Such as religious justification, conducting one's duty as a Muslim, community service, an obligation to protect one's neighbors, and humanitarian reasons, such as an obligation to prevent problems of fellow worshippers (RAN, 2014). Others are exploration reason, such as an opportunity to experience the caliphate, and commercial purposes, such as capitalizing on the possible gaps to legitimately make money (RAN, 2014).

The third phase of the strategic prioritization of countermeasures is a propaganda threat because of its significant contribution to insecurity, foreign fighter threat, and responsibility issues. According to the literature review terrorist groups such as ISIS are known to have used propaganda to incite violence, recruit potential fighters; both local and foreign and instill fear in some segment of their target population. It is imperative to note that addressing propaganda concerns is very delicate because per the literature review, ISIS mainly capitalizes on the mainstream media and social media networks to propagate their agenda. When addressing ISIS propaganda challenges, counterterrorism officials must be conversant with the intricacies surrounding how to balance privacy and public safety issues. Like any other pertinent issue in public discourse, to be effective,

law enforcement officials and policy makers must make decisions that are devoid of emotions but entangled with good faith.

Also, counterterrorism officials must be mindful that the current and future warfare is and will be significantly influenced by the cyber capabilities and information arena. Therefore, in the United States, the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), must lead the remaining fifteen intelligence agencies to expand their online warfare capabilities. They should recruit and train personnel in Arabic language and information warfare to counter ISIS activities and any future Jihadist propaganda tailored towards the U.S. or its interest. Also, whenever jihadist propaganda machinery is identified, law enforcement officials must analyze its content and pinpoint its ultimate objectives. Once those objectives are defined, counterterrorism officials should not overtly respond to them, to disvalue the terrorists' actions and intent, and thus render them useless in the long-term. This strategy may not sell well to ordinary citizens in home countries. However, officials must always operate under a framework that public safety is paramount to politics. Covertly, the intelligence officials must intensify their collaboration with the military special forces to conduct counterterrorism operations as needed.

Moreover, the fourth stage of the strategic prioritization of countermeasures is responsibility issues. Responsibility issues unravel what ought to change on the part of the challenges of insecurity, foreign fighter threat, propaganda threat, and thereby merge with mitigation factors. Mitigation factors, on the other hand, are last but not the least in the strategic prioritization of countermeasures identified in essential themes associated

with ISIS. Mitigation factors seek to find a reasonable solution to assuage insecurity threat, foreign fighter threat, propaganda threat, and responsibility concerns. On the other hand, the following recommendations aligned with the limitations of this study: future studies could combine online Television, radio, and social media platform in a mixed method approach, whereby some victims of ISIS atrocities volunteer as study participants. Another area to explore include a case study about any of the themes above that recruit national of countries and regions with a particular interest in the war against ISIS, such as Turkey, Russia, Kurdish region, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Implications

Contribution to Criminal Justice Field

Policy makers and counterterrorism officials must be conversant with the intricacies surrounding the war against ISIS. This study contributes to the existing counterterrorism strategies to mitigate ISIS threat because it draws Policy makers and counterterrorism officials' attention into a significant loophole in the current efforts to address ISIS challenges. Thus, lack of cohesion among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). Also, this study offers a thorough insight into ISIS through the lenses of critical players such as the Americans, the Russians, and the Middle Easterners. Moreover, in theoretical terms, this study contributes to the existing literature on ISIS and its global media representation for future researchers. Also, public perception in measuring success and failures of policies.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The impact of positive social change encompasses the potential of drawing policy makers and counterterrorism officials' attention into a significant loophole in the current efforts to address ISIS challenges. Thus, by becoming conversant with the intricacies surrounding the war against ISIS, such as lack of cohesion among international partners, government officials may make an informed decision about how to mitigate ISIS threat (Cronin, 2015). Counterterrorism issues are complicated in the sense that it is risky to either belittle or exaggerate the threat (Sloan, 1995). When the threat is disparaging, minimum countermeasures may be used (Sloan, 1995).

On the other hand, when the threat is exaggerated, government officials and the citizenry may overstretch it (Sloan, 1995). As such, for a countermeasure to be effective, it must be realistic and devoid of both immoderations (Sloan, 1995). In that regard, understanding the Islamic State through the perspectives of key players, such as the Americans, the Russians, and the indigenes of Middle East may help formulate a realistic countermeasure for national security officials and policymakers to mitigate the issue.

Conclusion

This research indicates that the 21st-century terror networks such as ISIS use very sophisticated strategy to plan and execute their goals. Correspondingly, the unique ability of current and future terror planners to pinpoint and prey on the psyche of their target population exacerbates the threat to humanity. For instance, Cotte, (2015) observed that Ayman al-Zawahiri, memo to a colleague militant leader, stipulates: "We are in a battle, and more than half of this fight is taking place in the battlefield of the media" (as cited in

Lieberman, 2017, p. 9). Thus, ISIS understand the significant role of media in information warfare and thereby capitalize on them. In that regard, there seems to be an unintended association between the news media and ISIS. As a result, practitioners, policy makers, and academics must first become conversant with the intricacies surrounding ISIS and future like-minded militant groups, to make an informed decision about how to mitigate those challenges. Likewise, counterterrorism officials must always be mindful that the current and future warfare is and will be significantly influenced by the cyber capabilities and information arena. It is therefore imperative that policy makers, practitioners, and academics operate within a framework that stable authoritarian regimes are sometimes a necessary evil in long-term countermeasure. One must also acknowledge that at times it may be inappropriate to blindly copy and paste Jeffersonian democracy to every culture or country. Hence, minimize the propensity to instability and deny potential terror safe havens.

This qualitative content analysis explored the U.S, the Russian, and the Qatari news media coverage of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015. The main problem examined is that there is a lack of consensus among the international community, led by Russia and the United States, on how best to mitigate the ISIS threat (Brown, 2014; Cronin, 2015; Vysotsky, 2014; Ziadeh et al., 2012). Observers of this trend argue that this lack of consensus among the international partners has enabled ISIS to survive (Cronin, 2015). It is against this background; the research questions were developed to steer this study. The results of this study suggest that there are similarities

and differences of Russia, Qatar, and U.S. media outlets depiction of ISIS between May 1, 2014, and May 1, 2015, and this could be explained by the agenda-setting theory.

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Appendix

Title: Analysts_ ISIS video 'sign of desperation'.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Propaganda Concerns

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 205

Excerpt End: 413

Like a wounded animal lashing out in a fury, ISIS is betraying hints of desperation in its latest video, which purportedly shows the aftermath of the beheading of U.S. hostage Peter Kassig, analysts said Sunday.

Title: As ISIS closes in, is it game over for Syria's opposition in Aleppo_.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Insecurity Issues Political Insecurity

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 470

Excerpt End: 739

At least six villages north of Syria's largest city of Aleppo fell Wednesday to militants from ISIS, according to AFP. The jihadist group has seized large swathes of land in Iraq and consolidated control over considerable territory in northeastern Syria in the past year.

Title: As ISIS closes in, is it game over for Syria's opposition in Aleppo_.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Political Insecurity

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 1352

Excerpt End: 1650

Since November 2013, the Syrian government has executed a concerted offensive on opposition-controlled areas of Aleppo city. Intensive and horrifically destructive barrel bombs have flattened the urban environment in which opposition insurgents had thrived and forced thousands of civilians to flee.

Title: As strategy firms up, U.S. courts partners to target ISIS.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Mitigation Factors

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 221

Excerpt End: 435

A meeting of foreign ministers at the close of the NATO summit in Wales gave the world its first look at how the United States and international partners plan to engage with the terrorist threat of ISIS beyond Iraq.

Title: Floodgates open as ISIS bridges victories between Syria and Iraq.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Economic Insecurity

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 1116

Excerpt End: 1267

That's not all. ISIS also took over six Syrian oil and gas fields and a major pumping station that distributes oil from Iraq into Syria, Abu Leila said.

Title: Guantanamo ex-detainee indicted in Spain on charges of aiding ISIS.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Foreign Fighter Threat

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 466

Excerpt End: 661

The suspect, Moroccan national Lahcen Ikassrien, has been indicted, along with 14 other suspected militants, on charges of recruiting and sending militants to help ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria.

Title: Hagel backs Obama on ISIS strategy.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Responsibility Issues

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 549

Excerpt End: 781

With Obama facing criticism over what even a fellow Democrat called too much caution, Hagel sought to make clear that the President wants to eliminate any ISIS threat to the United States and its interests -- both abroad and at home.

Title: ISIS is neither Islamic nor a state, says Hillary Clinton.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/13/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: CNN

Codes Applied: Responsibility Issues

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/24/2018

Excerpt Package: 608

Excerpt End: 813

The line is new for Clinton and comes at a time that some have raised questions whether the Obama administration underestimated ISIS, a terrorist group that has swept into power in areas of Syria and Iraq.

Title: AL Jazeera 2.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/14/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: AJE

Codes Applied: Mitigation Factors

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/28/2018

Excerpt Package: 1720

Excerpt End: 2117

But the long-term threat from ISIL will only be contained if the conditions that enabled ISIL to gain ground quickly are addressed. This requires the government to do the following: Increase recruitment of local people into armed forces, legislate for the National Guard to begin operating by the end of the year and integrate tribes and paramilitary groups into it so they can manage local security,

Title: AL Jazeera 2.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/14/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: AJE

Codes Applied: Economic Insecurity

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/28/2018

Excerpt Package: 2118

Excerpt End: 2277

increase investment and employment in Anbar, Nineveh, and Salahuddin provinces to increase prosperity and prevent ISIL from using cash to recruit people.

Title: AL Jazeera 2.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/14/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: AJE

Codes Applied: Responsibility Issues

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On: 4/28/2018

Excerpt Package: 5320

Excerpt End: 5467

The US-backed plan to create a mostly Sunni National Guard to police the Sunni areas and set up a more inclusive government fell short of the mark.

Title: AL Jazeera 2.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/14/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: AJE

Codes Applied: Political Insecurity

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/28/2018

Excerpt Package: 5984

Excerpt End: 6154

In this case, a historic compromise must be found for all the communities to subdue competing for sectarian and ethnic resentments, forestall the escalation of the

Title: AL Jazeera 4.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/14/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: AJE

Codes Applied: Insecurity Issues

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/28/2018

Excerpt Package: 312

Excerpt End: 657

Events in the region this week have thrown into sharp focus the challenges the Middle East faces in its war against ISIL. The killing of Jordanian pilot, Maoz al-Kassasbeh, has refocused the country's efforts and dragged them further into war. The shooting at a plane in Baghdad international airport and the alleged killing of an aid worker,

Title: AL Jazeera 37.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/14/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: AJE

Codes Applied: Foreign Fighter Threat Political Insecurity

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/28/2018

Excerpt Package: 1363

Excerpt End: 1538

ISIL has effectively used the internet and media to gain attention and communicate its jihadist narrative, recruiting thousands of foreign nationals to come and join its ranks.

Title: The Moscow Times 1.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/23/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: TMT

Codes Applied: Political Insecurity

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/29/2018

Excerpt Package: 605

Excerpt End: 909

"Our American colleagues have now understood one thing — that there is no alternative currently to Bashar Assad and the present government. And if something happens to them then extremists, terrorists, Islamic State capture full control over Syria," RIA news agency quoted Bogdanov as saying on Thursday.

Title: The Moscow Times 78.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/23/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: TMT

Codes Applied: Responsibility Issues

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/29/2018

Excerpt Package: 100

Excerpt End: 246

Russia's Foreign Ministry lashed out over U.S.-led airstrikes targeting Islamic State militants in Syria in a scathing statement released Tuesday.

Title: The Moscow Times 78.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/23/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: TMT

Codes Applied: Mitigation Factors

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/29/2018

Excerpt Package: 247

Excerpt End: 521

The U.S. and five Arab countries launched an aerial campaign against the Islamic State on Monday night, their most coordinated effort yet to rid conflict-stricken Syria of the radical militant organization that has set up a haven amid the turmoil of an ongoing civil war

Title: The Moscow Times 73.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/23/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: TMT

Codes Applied: Insecurity Issues Mitigation Factors

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/29/2018

Excerpt Package: 103

Excerpt End: 557

Russia's deputy foreign minister on Monday called for a joint effort between Moscow and Washington in fighting the radical group Islamic State but appeared to play down fears of a high number of Russians in the group. "The Americans say terrorism represents a direct threat to their national security. I think the same can be said for any country, including Russia," Mikhail Bogdanov said in an interview with business daily Kommersant published Monday.

Title: The Moscow Times 73.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/23/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: TMT

Codes Applied: Foreign Fighter Threat

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/29/2018

Excerpt Package: 756

Excerpt End: 917

"They get training [in Syria and Iraq], acquire skills, and that's why they represent an exceptional threat to the national security of [the fighters'] countries.

Title: The Moscow Times 65.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/23/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: TMT

Codes Applied: Responsibility Issues

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/29/2018

Excerpt Package: 899

Excerpt End: 1326

"We both recognize the need to destroy and ultimately defeat ISIL, to degrade their efforts and ultimately to defeat them," Kerry told a news conference, using an alternative name for the group also known as IS. "No decent country by any definition could support the horrors that are perpetrated by ISIL, and no civilized country should shirk its responsibility to stand up and be part of the effort to stamp out this disease."

Title: The Moscow Times 10.pdf

Doc Creator: Godfreda

Doc Date: 4/23/2018

Descriptor Info: News Media: TMT

Codes Applied: Propaganda Concerns

Excerpt Creator: Godfreda

Excerpt Created On 4/29/2018

Excerpt Package: 732

Excerpt End: 959

Waging a savvy and high-tech propaganda campaign online, the Islamic State has proved adept at seducing young men and women across Europe into abandoning their homes and families and joining its violent crusade in Iraq and Syria.