Hot Topics & Hot Spots

Exploring Global Challenges
Volume V

HOT TOPICS & HOT SPOTS

GLOBALSCOPE PUBLICATIONS
University of California, Irvine • School of Social Sciences
GlobalScope is a series of innovative curriculum guides created by the University of California, Irvine’s School of Social Sciences for secondary school educators and students on the 21st Century forces and issues of globalization. The curriculum is designed to introduce high school students to the formal academic disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography, international studies, political science, and sociology. The GlobalScope publications allow us to share original University research and teachings with students and teachers beyond our immediate reach.

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Copyright © 2015 Global Connect @ UCI | University of California, Irvine.
Global Connect is an original educational partnership developed by UC Irvine's School of Social Sciences to enrich California’s secondary school curriculum in international studies. This is accomplished by translating current university-level concepts and knowledge into a curriculum that is age appropriate for high school students.

The global studies knowledge-gap in our public schools is a critical problem that needs a flexible and immediate response. Students need lessons they can relate to as global citizens that will affect how they see themselves in the world. They must be capable of thinking in terms of worldwide issues to succeed in their respective careers and lives so that they may contribute to the general welfare of society. This cannot be achieved through textbook curriculum that is outdated by the time it is received by students. Teachers cannot abandon their classroom responsibilities to acquire current knowledge of the quickly changing international environment. Global conflicts and issues need to be brought to the students as current events -- not as history.

The study of worldwide issues through Global Connect @ UCI establishes an environment that creates responsible global citizens and leads to access for students to higher education. Global Connect builds a bridge to the world for our nation’s secondary students.

Global Connect dedicates its educational program and publications to addressing California’s History Social Studies curriculum framework and the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies. This is being accomplished through the creation of an original year long course, “Globalization and International Relations”; implementation of the syllabus at select schools in Orange County; sponsorship of countywide teacher seminars; and the development of new on-line curriculum options for secondary educators statewide and beyond. Classroom lessons are innovative in structure and not only teach students factual information but serve as an ideal platform for analytical–reflective thinking about global issues.

For additional information, please visit our website at:

http://www.socsci.uci.edu/globalconnect/
The pursuit of Common Core Standards is redefining America’s educational priorities. One of the most central and elusive problems in addressing these standards is developing academically challenging and classroom effective curriculum that addresses the needs of our students in different subject areas. Global Connect @ UCI, a unique educational initiative based in the School of Social Sciences at the University of California, Irvine, has developed original curriculum and teaching strategies to introduce secondary students to 21st century global issues and events through an interdisciplinary lens. The lens integrates the various disciplines within social science: anthropology, economics, geography, international studies, political science, and sociology.

This integration occurs through concepts, readings, and “problem sets” found in contemporary university classrooms. Our academically centered course of study has been adapted into age appropriate thematic presentations, dynamic interactive, and literacy building workshops that realize the Common Core objectives.

Global Connect specifically targets and meets the Common Core Standards by:

- Focusing on non-fiction, discipline based content through formal academic PowerPoint presentations, interactive workshops, and readings
- Emphasizing Evidence Based Writing Skills through the introduction of formal-academic forms of in-class writing, take-home assignments, and unit capstone projects
- Building a discipline-based vocabulary (a set of new terms are defined to complement each week’s academic theme)
- Expanding the students’ abilities to: Use quality academic sources/organize data/analyze/cite & discuss
- Integrating contemporary use of technology for online research and general inquiry

The Global Connect course on “Globalization and International Relations” is already serving as a Common Core option for secondary educators and students in California’s Saddleback Valley Unified School District. The partnership between UCI, SVUSD, and NMUSD is currently exploring new strategies for sharing and advancing this dynamic new course so that other districts can adopt this as a vehicle to impart college ready critical thinking abilities and organizational skills.
strategies include the creation of effective teacher training modules for each unit, an expanded online topic specific video library of presentations by UCI faculty and graduate students, and the continued development of *GlobalScope Curriculum Guides*.

This year, as with prior years, the content has been revised and edited to address the most recent global occurrences/issues and to introduce new resources. For an in-depth overview of our program, please visit our website at: www.socsci.uci.edu/globalconnect

*Ellen Schlosser*

*Global Connect @ UCI*

*Founding Director & Curriculum Development Advisor*

**Note:**

In 2011, the University of California recognized Global Connect’s course, “*Globalization and International Relations*,” as an approved A-G academic elective course for California’s secondary students.

The California Council for the Social Sciences recognized the program as being a Common Core ready curriculum and featured the program in their journal, *Sunburst: A Publication of the California Council for the Social Studies*. 
GUIDELINE TO GLOBALSCOPE

GlobalScope is an expanding library of in-print and online guides that mirror UCI School of Social Sciences’ contemporary research and teachings related to 21st century issues and conditions of globalization. The primary motivation behind this publication is to provide secondary teachers with an accessible social science resource that will help create “global” windows in the classroom. Our guiding principle is that high school students need to understand the contemporary changes influencing their educational and personal opportunities, and ultimately, their lives and careers.

Explanation of GlobalScope format:

Unit Presentations vary in format. Each presentation is centered on a specific topic and reflects the style of the individual faculty, graduate, or undergraduate student presenter. Several of the authors have created PowerPoint presentations that can be used by the classroom teacher. An annotated version with additional information has been included in the Teachers' Edition. Some presenters have also provided lesson outlines.

Workshop Scripts seek to recreate the lecture/discussion format used in college courses. We alternate the formal introduction of topics with special interactive workshops. These age-appropriate workshops have been designed and successfully presented in the classrooms (grades 8 – 12) by Global Connect undergraduate interns. These workshops have been designed in a script-like manner with sections assigned to the university undergraduate interns. The workshop material can easily be adapted for “single voice” use by the classroom teacher.

Literacy Building Readings and Assignments provide students with exercises that will require them to read non-fiction, original-source documents. After reading and analyzing the materials, the students will be given written assignments to strengthen their expository writing abilities. Some current topical articles and charts have been reprinted and cited.

International Relations & Globalization Course Workbook is a two-part workbook to be used in conjunction with the thematic module presentations throughout the semester.
Part I: A Sense of Place: Identifying Nations by Name and Location includes weekly political map identification exercises that provide students with the ability to recognize the location of the globe’s 193 nations. These weekly exercises will allow students to locate and name the nations of each continent and significant regions.

Part II: People of Purpose: 21st Century Global Citizens (Real Heroes) will introduce students to real heroes whose actions have impacted the distinct geographic areas being studied. These introductions will be made through video interviews/feature stories and assigned readings. Students will be asked to analyze the problems, strategies and solutions associated with each of the featured social entrepreneurs through writing exercises. Over the semester the assignments will transition students from completing simple fill-in review sheets to composing five paragraph expository essays. The writing assignments, depending on length, can be used as in-class worksheets or homework assignments.

Identification of Curriculum Standards:

Each workshop and presentation addresses an objective identified in the National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum Thematic Strands and/or the objectives set-forth by the California State History/Social Science Standards & Framework. For your personal reference, we have included a copy of the National Council's Thematic Strands in the Appendix.

Complimentary Disk: All of the primary GlobalScope materials presented in this curriculum guide are provided on a disk so that classroom teachers can independently present the PowerPoint presentations and reproduce the worksheet assignments.

All of the original materials are for individual classroom use only and are not to be reprinted without express permission from the School of Social Sciences, University of California, Irvine.

Website: All materials contained in GlobalScope will be posted on the Global Connect @ UCI website: http://www.socsci.uci.edu/globalconnect
In 2015, *Hot Topics & Hot Spots: Exploring Global Challenges* has been added to the second semester curriculum. Through this edition, students will have the opportunity to apply their newly acquired knowledge of geopolitical terms and concepts (foreign policy, nation-states, infrastructure, stages of economic development, genocide, etc.) to some of the critical issues and events we are facing today.

The reinforcement of classroom knowledge is best served when the students gain valuable insights about the realities of their world. With this goal in mind, this edition will center on the following inquiries:

- **What events and issues during the first years of the century have cast a shadow over the world in 2015?**
- **How have technological advances impacted global security, information, and warfare?**
- **How has warfare driven by non-state actors threatened the states?**
- **What extremist group is currently threatening to reconfigure the nation-states of the Middle East?**
- **Case Study: ISIS – What does this extremist group stand for? Where are they conducting their war? Who are the members and followers of ISIS? How are the world powers responding to their threats? What military actions are being implemented to combat ISIS? How does ISIS use contemporary social media to recruit new members and to spread their threats of intimidation?**
- **What is meant by the term “borderless disease”?**
- **Case Study: Ebola – What is Ebola? How is it spread over borders? Which region of the world has experienced the greatest impact of the virus? What are the common misconceptions of the disease and how have they impacted reactions to the epidemic? Why and how does the Ebola epidemic tell the story of developing nations versus developed nations? How much has the Ebola epidemic (2014-2015) cost?**

In addition to Global Connect’s regular pattern of subject specific PowerPoint presentations and workshops, *Hot Topics & Hot Spots* will introduce students to the year-end capstone project related to the 2015 Global Awakening Symposium. The Symposium challenges will be presented during class instruction and students will be able to select their preferred project. Students will then independently complete their Symposium submissions.
Undergraduates Benson Lao, Raman Kaur, Mark Barcelona, Aliza Asad, Taryn Reid, Sunny Thai, Negar Fatahi, and Negin Fatahi served on the think-tank curriculum team that developed the new themes and format of *Hot Topics & Hot Spots: Exploring Global Challenges*. UCI School of Social Sciences’ Professor of Political Science Caesar Sereseres generously served as the academic advisor on the topics of terrorism and the ISIS extremists.

On behalf of the Global Connect team and the editorial staff of GlobalScope, I hope that you find this publication a valuable educational resource. We would sincerely appreciate your insights regarding future themes and effective techniques that we can incorporate in our workshop materials. Please forward your suggestions to Ellen Schlosser at edschlos@uci.edu.
GLOBAL CONNECT VISIONARIES

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Dave Leinen, Assistant Dean, Administration, Planning, and Resources
Louis DeSipio, Professor of Political Science
Nurudeen Alao, Professor of Geography

NEWPORT-MESA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

NEWPORT HARBOR HIGH SCHOOL

Principal Sean Boulton
Host Teacher: Jennifer Thompson

SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

LAGUNA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

Principal Brian Ferguson
Vice Principal Dan Bode
Host Teachers: Yoleisy Avila & Paul Weinberger

MISSION VIEJO HIGH SCHOOL

Principal Ray Gatfield
Vice Principal Dan Sullivan
Host Teachers: Jack Opkins, Chris Ashbach, & Kim Gerwatosky
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# Hot Topics & Hot Spots

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| **Unit II** | **Lecture: A Close-Up on ISIS** |
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Workshop: Discovering the Realities Behind Ebola

Man Thought to Have Died From Ebola Awakes
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/03/ebola-victim-wakes-up_n_5923614.html

New York Doctor Leaves Hospital Ebola-Free

Unit III

The Truth About Ebola [Cartoon News]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqNqERPMF2A

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tl2J6cxzlw

Stopping Ebola From Striking 1.4 Million
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyrKQahrFlg
HOT TOPICS & HOT SPOTS

Exploring Global Challenges
HOT TOPICS & HOTSPOTS

Global Connect • University of California, Irvine

What are HOTSPOTS and HOT TOPICS?

• HOT TOPICS:
  Headline news related to events, issues, and people that have the potential to harm the well being of nation-states, individuals, and select groups.

• HOTSPOTS:
  Areas of political, military, or civil unrest usually considered dangerous.

Where did each headline take place?

The Council on Foreign Relations maintains a world map highlighting current global conflict hotspots at:


HOT TOPICS of the 21st Century

- Start of the Millennium Development Goals
- War in Afghanistan
- Hurricane Katrina

2000 2002 2005

- 9/11 Terrorist Attacks & Axis of Evil
- War in Iraq
- Smartphone Revolution & Start of Great Recession

2001 2003 2007

- Official end of the Great Recession
- Japanese Earthquake, Tsunami, and nuclear reactors
- Panic of Ebola
- Impact of ISIS

2009 2012 2014

- Tunisian riots initiate the Arab Spring
- Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines
- End of the MDGs, the start of the SDGs

2011 2013 2015
GLOBAL CHALLENGES: 
REDEFINING BORDERS 
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By: Aliza Asad

GLOBAL SECURITY

- What threats to global security do we face today?
  - Epidemics
  - Terrorism
  - Environmental Degradation
  - Cyber-Warfare
  - Military Aggression

GLOBAL CHALLENGES & THE NATION-STATE

- How do our global challenges threaten the way we see the nation-state as we know it?
  - Understand nation-state as an area defined by politically distinct borders established in 20th century
  - Global challenges are redefining these traditional borders

- How are we integrating technology to combat these threats?

TECHNOLOGY & MODERN WARFARE

DRONES

- What are military drones?
  - UAV’s (unmanned aerial vehicles)
  - First developed in the U.S.
  - Piloted remotely (from a base in one nation-state while used internationally)
  - Include cameras, lasers, and often loaded with missiles
  - Can be strictly surveillance

CYBER WARFARE

- “Involves the actions by a nation-state or international organization to attack and attempt to damage another nation’s computers or information networks through, for example, computer viruses or denial-of-service attacks”
- United States Data Breaches in 2014
  - Sony
  - Staples
  - JP Morgan
  - Target
  - U.S. Government Departments
- Technological and political threat

What are the implications of cyber warfare? What are the dangers posed to governments and civil society?

NON-STATE ACTORS

- What non-state actors have we mentioned this year?
  - NGOs, MNCs
  - Not all non-state actors act with good intentions

- What non-state actors are actively threatening borders? How do they do it?
  - Bring material destruction and death
  - Threaten government stability and damage infrastructure
  - Actively take over territory and seize power
  - Examples: ISIS in Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaeda
WHAT IS TERRORISM?

DEFINITIONS OF TERRORISM

There is no one agreed definition.

United Nations:
- United Nations reflects the opinions of its members
- Since all member-states cannot agree on one definition, there is no clear definition of terrorism by the United Nations
- Why can the nation-states not come to a consensus on a definition?
  - Freedom Fighters/Revolutionaries vs. Terrorists
  - Political Isolation (US does not negotiate with terrorists)
- Currently, the U.N. uses a working definition based on member-state input and developments

UNITED STATES: INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

Definition of International Terrorism
- 3 Characteristics
  1. Endangering human life through violence
  2. Intend on scaring a population and pressuring change in the government
  3. Happens outside the political boundaries of the United States

U.S. Terrorist List
- Al Qaeda & Affiliates
- Boko Haram
- Real Irish Republican Army
- Al Shabab
- Communist Party of the Philippines/New People’s Army

OPINIONS ON TERRORIST GROUPS

DOMESTIC TERRORISM

What is domestic terrorism in the United States?
- “Violence against the civilian population or infrastructure of a nation – often but not always by citizens of that nation and often with intent to intimidate, coerce, or influence national policy”
- Do you think domestic terrorism and international terrorism are handled differently?
  - Is there anything we can do about international terrorism?

Examples of domestic terrorist groups
- KKK
- Animal Liberation Front
- Black Liberation Army
- Aryan Nations
- Earth
- Oklahoma Bombing
- Sikh Temple Shooting (Wisconsin)
- Boston Bombing

FROM TERRORISM TO EXTREMISM

- 9/11 highlighted the terror threat
- Increased security measures (airports, classified information)
- Terrorism is usually politically-motivated
  - Claim to act in the name of religion, but do NOT represent religious tenants
  - Often distort religious philosophies to justify their actions
- Extremist groups
  - Newly emerged in 2014
  - Example political and military emergence of ISIS
- Extremist groups often act without any set path or rhythm
GLOBAL CHALLENGES 2014 & 2015

What do you think are 2 global challenges we are facing today?

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- ISIS and Ebola are both challenging borders differently

ISIS portrait: Boina Elegnat
Key Terms

1. **Nation-state**: A form of political organization in which a group of people who share the same history, traditions, or language live in a particular area under one government.

2. **Drone**: An unmanned aircraft or ship guided by remote control or onboard computers.

3. **Cyber Warfare**: Actions by a nation-state or international organization to attack or attempt to damage another nation’s computers or information networks.

4. **Non-state Actor**: An organization with significant political influence but not associated with any particular nation-state.

5. **Terrorism**: The use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially for political purposes.

6. **Extremism**: Extreme political or religious views; resorting to actions beyond the norms.

Related Presentation: Global Challenges: Redefining Borders
HOT TOPICS & HOT SPOTS

A Close-Up on ISIS
A Close-Up on ISIS

Raman Preet Kaur
University of California, Irvine

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is an extremist Islamic organization based primarily in northern Syria and Iraq.

Another name for ISIS is ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant).

This group has been given the title of “terrorist organization” by the United Nations, European Union, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and many others.

What is ISIS?

Foundation and Leadership

- ISIS split from Al Qaeda
  - Al Qaeda refrains from supporting ISIS and even calls them “too extreme” for their own interests.
- Current leader: Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi
  - Under his leadership, ISIS experienced most of its expansion.
  - Organizes large-scale operations, including suicide attacks and car bombings.
  - Considers himself a religious leader and follows Sharia law.
  - According to U.S. Dept. of Defense, he was held in Camp Bucca along with other future leaders of ISIS.

Where is ISIS located?

Members

- Members primarily come from the Middle East, but there are members from other nations, most notably Western nations, that join ISIS as well.
- According to the June 2014 edition of The Economist, ISIS has 6000 fighters in Iraq and around 3000-5000 fighters in Syria. About 3000 of these fighters come from abroad (500 fighters from European nations such as France and England).
- Why should we care about other terrorist organizations teaming up with ISIS?

What is having foreign fighters significant for us?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RxgLvJLCZM
- Other terrorist organizations team up with ISIS
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pA7WyupD700
- Why should we care about other terrorist organizations using ISIS as a ground for expansion?
Ideology
- Sunni vs. Shia
- Back to the “pure” version of Islam practiced by the Ottoman Empire (before it was taken over by European influences)
- Nation without a state
- Goal to create separate state for Sunnis in Iraq and Syria
- Reach as many people as possible
- Does ISIS use religion as a tool to further its own aims?

Power Base and Organization
- Syria oil reserve
- Al-Qmar
- Sources of Recruitment
  - Social Media Outreach
    - Why would people even want to join?
    - Why is using social media an intelligent tactic for ISIS?

International Response to ISIS
- President Obama calls for firm stance against ISIS
- ISIS threat to primarily focus in Syria, Iraq, and Jordan (refugees in flight to Jordan)
- Is ISIS a threat to US domestic affairs?
- Why should we care?
Key Terms

1. **ISIS**: The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is an extremist Islamic organization based primarily in northern Syria and Iraq.

2. **Sharia Law**: Moral code and religious law of Islam.

3. **Sunni**: A major branch of Islam, in which the initial followers believed that the community should choose the leader from the elites who were closest to the Prophet Mohammed.

4. **Shia**: The second major branch of Islam, in which the initial followers believed that the leadership of the community should stay within the family of the Prophet Mohammed.
Workshop:
ISIS Propaganda War
Related PowerPoint: A Close-Up on ISIS

✿ Objective(s):

- To expose students to the manner in which ISIS uses modern media to gain recognition and recruit new members
- To portray the many ways in which modern media is used as high-tech warfare

✿ Outline:

I. ISIS Propaganda War (15 min)
II. ISIS Social Media, Online Magazine, Videos (15 min)
III. Media Tool Presentations (15 min)

✿ Materials:

- ISIS Propaganda War PowerPoint
- Worksheet: ISIS: Media Tools

✿ Key to Script:

- Italicized words indicate role/action.
- Bolded sentences are questions to be posed to class.
- Normal print indicates words to be spoken aloud.
Workshop Script:

Part I: ISIS Propaganda War

Site Supervisor:
- Social media has become a significant part of everyday life, and companies have come to embrace it as part of their standard marketing strategy. Because of social media, you are very aware of when the new iPhone comes out, the new restaurant in the area, and the latest video game release. However, it is important to identify organizations that use social media to further nefarious aims.
- ISIS uses social media to further their purposes whether it be promotion, recruitment, or awareness.

Intern A:
- Present ISIS Propaganda War PowerPoint.

Part II: ISIS Social Media, Online Magazine, Videos

Intern B:
- We are going to further explore the tools ISIS utilizes in their marketing strategy: social media, online magazines, and videos.
- Split the class into three groups and assign each team one of three articles related to each tool.
- Have the groups complete the ISIS Media Tools Worksheet and prepare to present findings to the class.

Part III: Media Tool Presentations

Intern C:
- Have two representatives from each group present worksheet answers in front of class.
- Hold a class discussion after presentations.
  - What are advantages of using social media as a marketing strategy? For the company/organization? For the consumer?
  - What are some disadvantages of using social media as a marketing strategy?
  - Do you always trust what you hear in advertising or on the internet?
In order to reach its audience, ISIS uses different social media tools:

1. Social Networking Websites
2. Online Magazine
3. Videos

It is sophisticated, slick, beautifully produced and printed in several languages including English.
Each group will be responsible for answering the following questions from the assigned article.

**Related Questions**

1. Give a brief summary of the media tool used by ISIS in your article.

2. What are the primary objectives of using this media tool? Explain your answer using direct examples from the article.
3. What is the target audience that ISIS is trying to reach?

4. What advanced strategies are being used with regards to this particular media tool?

5. Are there efforts to limit ISIS’s use of the specific media tool? If yes, what is being done?

6. In your opinion, how can we put an end to ISIS’s use of modern media to advance their goals?
ISIS is Using Social Media to Reach YOU, Its New Audience

The most bloodthirsty terrorist group in memory is also a canny manipulator of social media. It seeks to frighten and inspire.

By Jacob Siegel, Published: August 31, 2014

The migration from Internet chat forums to social media platforms came late to jihadists, but they've adapted skillfully. A strategy developed over years has evolved into a sophisticated campaign and now, at the center of the world’s attention, ISIS is using its skill to communicate directly to an American audience.

The filmed execution of James Foley was the first time most Americans saw ISIS address them but the group has been targeting Westerners for months. “The first big turning point was Mosul,” said Emerson Brooking, a research associate at the Council on Foreign Relations, referring to ISIS’s capture of the city in early June. “ISIS put a lot of pre-planning into the social media arm of this offensive, and the effort paid off.” After Mosul, Brooking said, “You see a significant spike in English-language videos and images.”

If it could take Mosul, ISIS knew it would have the world’s attention and had planned what it wanted to say. The rehearsal for the global audience came earlier, in Syria’s civil war, where ISIS refined its approach to messaging online.

Starting in Iraq and later spreading to Syria after entering the war there in 2013, ISIS used social media to publicize its campaign of slaughter and threaten its enemies. The group’s military prowess was enhanced by its reputation for brutality, spread by its own media efforts, which weakened its enemies resistance and led some to flee from battle. On Twitter and in Facebook pages ISIS was making appeals as well as threats, attracting recruits and soliciting funding online.

This was actually an old tactic adopted to new technology. During the U.S. war in Iraq, when ISIS, in an earlier incarnation, was known as al Qaeda in Iraq, the group learned “how to engage a U.S. audience and get at them,” according to Clint Watts a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. The difference now is that ISIS no longer depends on intermediaries to broadcast its barbarism. In this new environment, the group’s media arm can upload its propaganda and see it spread globally in a matter of minutes or hours.

Unlike the cloistered online forums where jihadist groups once did most of their communicating, Twitter and Facebook are both open and public by nature. That meant that as ISIS took to these platforms it became easier for any fighter on the battlefield to pose next to mutilated bodies and post images that could easily be seen by anyone following the fighting. The people who saw it most often in 2013 days were ISIS supporters, who were turned on by the savagery, and the group’s enemies, who must have feared that it could happen to them next.

In February 2014 ISIS broke with al Qaeda, largely over leadership in Syria, though partly over a dispute about how much savage violence was too much. Following the break, social media became an arena for competing claims to authority between ISIS and al Qaeda’s official affiliate in Syria, the Nusra Front. The tweeting of battlefield gore didn’t disappear, but social media also became a stage for airing accusations and debate over the schism in the Syrian jihad.
At this point ISIS’s online efforts were largely still part of an inside conversation cut off from the Western public. Most messages were directed either at other parties in Iraq and Syria or to a sympathetic audience of jihadi fanboys and potential recruits abroad.

Another tactic ISIS developed was tweeting pictures of administrative services in the areas under its control that were meant to show its ability to govern. The images of ISIS in Syria that circulated in the West documented the group’s brutality. But to a local audience it was showing both piles of corpses and its fighters passing out candy — saying effectively, that, while it turned the rest of the world into a graveyard, for the faithful life would be sweet.

Then, on June 10, after ISIS captured Mosul, its messages pivoted towards the West. The majority of the group’s posts were still in Arabic but English tweets and translated videos surged as ISIS targeted a Western audience. One meme clearly aimed to recruit young Westerners was the image of two ISIS fighters posing over a caption comparing jihad to the video game Call of Duty.

“The big difference now is that [ISIS] has its own English speakers,” said Peter Neumann, Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation at King’s College in London. “And they have their own media now where they can put this right out on Twitter and everybody can immediately see it and spread it online.”

That has meant relying on a combination of sophisticated marketing and "social-media strategies that inflate and control its message.” Those strategies having increasingly been aimed squarely at a Western audience. During the World Cup ISIS used a hashtag, #WorldCup2014, exploiting the massive soccer audience’s attention to flood the Internet with its propaganda. On Aug. 7, after President Obama authorized airstrikes in Iraq, ISIS responded with a hashtag campaign. The hashtag, #AMessageFromISISstoUS, threatening Americans with retribution for the airstrikes, was one sign that “ISIS has moved to a policy of direct and aggressive engagement via social media,” said Brooking of the Council on Foreign Relations.

More “aggressive engagement” followed. Some of it was meant to invoke the specter of ISIS as an omnipresent force, like the tweet of an ISIS flag in front of the White House. Another ISIS meme showing fighters posing with Nutella, the chocolate spread popular in Europe, was a different sort of engagement, meant to lure Westerners to the fight in Syria and Iraq.

Addressing its American audience, ISIS is actually speaking to at least two different groups. To the vast majority who are repulsed by the group it is boasting of its power and trying to make people believe that even inside America they are vulnerable. But there is a far smaller and more dangerous group that ISIS isn’t trying to scare — but inspire. ISIS wants to “keep their rhetoric out there, keep themselves visible and hope that someone acts on it for them,” said Watts of the Foreign Policy Research Institute. He believes that ISIS currently lacks the ability for a coordinated attack inside America but that they may speak to “troubled kids” who could independently, or with minimal support, “put together something like a Boston marathon kind of attack.”

Efforts to counter ISIS online presence have already begun. Twitter and Youtube have shut down accounts and removed videos. Individual users have started their own hashtags like #ISISMediaBlackout that encouraged people to post photos of James Foley’s life and work instead of spreading the video of his killing and amplifying ISIS’s message.

Most of ISIS’s Western audience is sickened by its brandishing of dismemberment and depravity — but it’s also often captivated. As ISIS’s crimes are posted and reposted, and its sinister black flag becomes a fixture of broadcast news, every new story of its fighters playing with decapitated heads becomes a challenge to tell the truth without either propagating or censoring its evil.

For more information, visit:
How ISIS conquered social media

By Mustapha Ajbayli, Published: Tuesday, June 24, 2014

After seizing swathes of land in Iraq and Syria, the Al-Qaeda-inspired Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is expanding its presence on social media, using sophisticated techniques to recruit fighters, spread its propaganda and garner financial support.

One of these techniques is a Twitter application called “Fajr al-Bashaer,” or “Dawn of Good Tidings” (@Fajr991). The application - flagged by Twitter as “potentially harmful” - requests user data and personal information. After downloading it, the app sends news and updates on ISIS fighting in Syria and Iraq.

A recent report estimates that hundreds of users have subscribed to the application on the internet or their Android smartphones using the Google Play store.

The application was first created in April, but became very active only after the jihadist group seized the northern Iraq city of Mosul two weeks ago.

In addition, Twitter accounts affiliated with ISIS are engaged in a hashtag campaign. Hundreds if not thousands of users are tweeting special hashtags, making them appear on @ActiveHashtags, a Twitter account that tweets the most trending hashtags of the day in the Arab world.

The Islamic State Report

The jihadist group has also launched an online magazine to recruit more fighters. The 10-page magazine named “The Islamic State Report” explains how life within its envisioned Islamic state would look like.

The first issue of the magazine features an interview with someone called Shaikh Abul-Hawraa’ Al-Jazaa’iri, presented as the organizer of a seminar to graduate Imams in the Syrian city of Raqqa.

The magazine says: “Caring for the residents of Wilayat Ar-Raqqa [Province of Ar-Raqqa] is a goal of the Islamic State, and because of this, the Islamic State sought to open service all over the wilayah through an Islamic services committee comprised of multiple departments, among which is the Consumer Protection Office.”

“Our teams go out every day, split up on the streets of the city and examine the restaurants, wholesale outlets and shopping centers. We also conduct direct medical supervision of the slaughterhouses in order to ensure that they are free of any harmful substances. We will soon be holding a seminar [God willing] to teach the proper Islamic method of slaughter. We hold surprise inspections on a daily basis at varying times,” Abu Salih Al-Ansari, the head of the Consumer Protection Office, tells the magazine.

Regarding law enforcement, the magazine’s issue 2 says: “The longest we can detain someone for is one week. If their guilt can be established through primary and supportive evidence, and through witnesses, we submit the matter to the court so it can judge the case with the book of Allah. If we cannot establish the person’s guilt, we release them. If the individual is detained longer than one week, I’m required to compensate them for each additional day that they’re imprisoned.”
To promote its propaganda, ISIS is also relying on advanced media production techniques, as shown in some of its high-quality videos.

In one of them, a British man identified as Abu Muthanna al-Yemeni appears flanked by two other jihadists, appealing for young Muslims in the West to join their cause in Syria and Iraq.

**Western Muslims**

Western Muslims are an important target of ISIS’s social media propaganda. The group ensures most of its media productions are translated into as many Western languages as possible.

This is done through sophisticated media arms such as Al-Furqan Media, Fursan Al-Balagh Media, Asawirt Media, Al-Ghuraba Media - which appears to be operated in Germany - and Al-Hayat Media Center.

The last one provides the translation of a recent speech by ISIS spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani al-Shami into English, Turkish, Dutch, French, German, Indonesian and Russian.

J.M. Berger, editor of INTELWIRE.com and author of “Jihad Joe: Americans Who Go to War in the Name of Islam,” wrote: “ISIS does have legitimate support online - but less than it might seem. And it owes a lot of that support to a calculated campaign that would put American social-media-marketing gurus to shame.”

Peter W. Singer - director of the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence, and a senior fellow in the Foreign Policy program - told Al Arabiya News that ISIS’s increased activity on social media “in many ways reflects the new nature of media technology’s cross with warfare.”

Singer added: “Just as the Crimea War was the first war reported by telegraph and Vietnam the first TV war, we are now seeing wars in places like Syria and Iraq, just like the broader use of media technology, playing out online.”

He said the growth of jihadist activity on social media is in line with the wider use of the virtual space by people in general. Government oversight is not “much of a deterrent in these conflict situations,” Singer added.

“You are talking about a virtual space where physical location of the sender can be everywhere from a stable state, a failed state zone (like much of Syria or Iraq now), or thousands of kilometers away,” he said.

“Small governments trying to control all the content on the Internet is like them trying to build sand castles in the desert in the midst of a wind storm,” said Singer, whose research focuses on U.S. defense needs and the future of warfare.

Vanda Felbab-Brown, senior fellow in the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institute, said: “There has been a lot of effort to crack down on terrorism in the cyber domain. However, it is a cat-and-mouse game, and both terrorists and criminals find a way to avoid it.”

Also, “intelligence services allow some jihadi web pages to function to get intelligence,” added Felbab-Brown, an expert in international conflicts and non-traditional security threats.

For more information, visit:
http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/digital/2014/06/24/How-has-ISIS-conquered-social-media-.html
The Isis propaganda war: a hi-tech media jihad

Isis is using techniques plundered from movies, video games and news channels to spread its message. Who is masterminding the operation – and what is the best way to counter it?

By Steve Rose, Published: Tuesday, October 7, 2014

In 1941, Hollywood director Frank Capra was commissioned to make a series of propaganda films for the US war effort. He knew he had his work cut out: he had seen Leni Riefenstahl’s Triumph Of The Will – a staggering, state-of-the-art display of both film-making expertise and Nazi military might. “It scared the hell out of me,” Capra later said. “It fired no gun, dropped no bombs, but as a psychological weapon aimed at destroying the will to resist, it was just as lethal.” How could the Americans possibly compete? Capra’s solution was to turn the enemies’ weapons against them. His resulting seven-film documentary series, Why We Fight, repurposed footage from Triumph Of The Will and other propaganda films to show “our boys” what they were up against. He even copied Riefenstahl’s editing rhythms and rousing use of music. “Let their own films kill them,” Capra said. “Let the enemy prove to our soldiers the enormity of his cause – and the justness of ours.”

Fast forward to the present-day, and the situation seems to have been reversed. Just as Islamic State (Isis) has used captured American artillery against its enemies in Iraq, so it is using the west’s media tools and techniques against it. Isis has proved fluent in YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, internet memes (see: #catsofjihad) and other social media. Amateur videos and images are also being uploaded daily by its footsoldiers, which are then globally disseminated, both by ordinary users and mainstream news organisations hungry for images of a conflict their own cameras cannot access. A recent example was a recruitment video consisting of edited footage from Grand Theft Auto. “Your games which are producing from you, we do the same actions in the battlefields!! [sic]” proclaimed the YouTube clip, which was duly reported around the world. The current geopolitical situation in the Middle East is depressingly familiar, but Isis’s media sophistication is something new. It’s almost as if it looked at Osama bin Laden’s fuzzy, monotonous camcorder sermons of a decade ago and concluded that extremist Islam really needed a snappier marketing strategy. Isis is in competition with western news channels, Hollywood movies, reality shows, even music video, and it has adopted their vocabulary.

Isis’s global media operation appears to have two key objectives: to provoke the US and its allies, and to recruit from outside the Middle East. Both seem to be working. In the former instance, the horrific videos of the beheadings of US journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff, and aid workers David Haines and, on Friday, Alan Henning, have helped drag western powers back into combat in the region. Meanwhile, those same countries have seen their citizens departing to join Isis.

As we have seen, Foley, Sotloff and other hostages have been forced in the videos to condemn the US government’s “complacency and criminality” and to warn them not to intervene. Meanwhile British photojournalist John Cantlie is, under duress, currently presenting what looks like a mock current affairs series. The three episodes to date lay out clear, analytical arguments, referencing credible sources including the New York Times. The language is fluent – “What is this latest, ill-advised foray really supposed to achieve?” If it weren’t for Cantlie’s orange, Guantanamo-style shirt, this could almost be Newsnight.
The visual grammar of these films bears close examination. Cantlie first appears talking straight to the viewer, but the angle switches mid-speech, showing him in profile. It’s a technique common to modern documentary and TV interviews, requiring more than one camera or multiple takes. Cantlie’s broadcasts also end with a news-like sign-off: “Join me for the next programme”. In the beheading videos, “Jihadi John” and his masked kidnappers indicate their next victim at the end, as if enticing viewers to stay tuned, in the manner of a reality TV show. Why do this? Isis is trying to make its hostage videos look more professional, more entertaining, even.

The full extent of Isis’s media ambitions can be seen in the output of its “Al Hayat Media Center”. It makes programmes in several languages – primarily German, English and French – and multiple formats, from minute-long, Twitter-friendly “Mujatweets” to an hour-long “documentary” entitled The Flames Of War, which was heralded by its own Hollywood-style trailer.

Al Hayat Media’s programming is diverse. Eid Greetings from the Land of Khilafah, for example, filmed in occupied Raqqa, Syria, plays like a jihadi travel show. Isis fighters from Finland, Indonesia, Belgium, the UK and other countries speak of how happy they are to be there. “I don’t think there’s anything better than living in the land of khilafah,” says Abu Abdullah al-Habashi, from Britain. “We don’t need any democracy, we don’t need any communism or anything like that, all we need is sharia.” The interviews are intercut with colourful scenes of street life and children at a fairground. It even ends with the sign-off: “I wish you were here.” The “Mujatweets” also cynically display Isis’s gentle side: Isis handing out ice creams to children, a chef talking about his appetising shawarmas, a soldier comforting wounded comrades in hospital.

These films were put together with reasonable competence, despite being basic and inexpensively produced. They are most likely shot on standard equipment, according to professional film-makers. The shadow of a cameraman in one film suggests he is holding a small camcorder with a flip-out viewfinder. Other images betray the shallow depth of field of a DSLR camera, such as Canon’s 5D or 7D – easy to operate and to keep in focus. They use radio microphones for sound. Those effects and graphics and image-manipulation tools are standard on editing software like Adobe Premier; even phone apps can do a super slo-mo effect. The liberal use of effects heightens the sense of importance and filters the horror of the violence, but it also lends coherence to footage that must have come from disparate sources.

And this is propaganda, let’s not forget. There’s little evidence in these films of abduction, rape, persecution, destruction of mosques, crucifixions, severed heads mounted on railings, whippings of women found not wearing the hijab and other Isis-inflicted atrocities. Women are barely visible at all, in fact. And there’s no telling how much of it is actually staged. In The Flames Of War, for example, we see defeated soldiers from the Syrian Army’s 17th division apparently digging their own graves. One of them unconvincingly eulogises the bravery of Isis as he digs: “It’s as if Allah has blessed the Islamic State. They captured the 17th division base in a matter of seconds – even though there were 800 of us and they only numbered in the dozens.” In reality, Raqqa’s 17th division base had been under siege since long before Isis arrived and took weeks to capture.

The question for the world is: what can be done about it? The Frank Capra approach worked against a nation state like Nazi Germany (even if Why We Fight resorted to racial stereotyping and emotively manipulated history). It clearly isn’t going to work against an anonymous, amorphous, guerrilla media opponent. The US state department has already tried. Its Twitter site Think AgainTurn Away links to Isis-related news stories, and occasionally releases its own videos. Last month, it put out a parody of an Isis recruitment video, sarcastically listing jihadist activities: “Crucifying and executing muslims… suicide bombings inside mosques! … Travel is inexpensive … because you won’t need a return ticket!” Never mind the tastelessness, or the inferior production values, the activities listed barely differ from those in Isis’s own propaganda. Another Think Again … missive feebly parodies Isis’s Grand Theft Auto video:
“Grand Theft Innocence – don’t let Isis be your controller!” Predictably enough, Isis supporters have parodied Think AgainTurn Away’s parodies. It becomes a hall of mirrors.

Western film-makers face the same challenge. They only seem to be providing more raw material for Isis’s image library. Hollywood has even been accused of setting the tone, with its dark, doomsday scenarios, not to mention its own expensive recruitment films, from Top Gun to Transformers, made with the cooperation (and conditional approval) of the US military. As one critic recently observed: “Isis is moving in on their turf.”

Isis’s propaganda does cast some light on the US’s own output, suggests American documentary maker Eugene Jarecki. “Not only are we a pace-setter in production values, we are also a pace-setter in murderous, amoral, profoundly disturbing content the world over,” he says. “If we are watching [Isis] come up to speed, it’s to our own apparent obsession with gore and depravity.” Jarecki, a vocal critic of US policy, does not feel Isis deserves praise for its film-making. “It’s like saying ‘Hitler wasn’t such a bad painter’.” In his 2005 documentary, coincidentally also entitled Why We Fight, he detailed the increasing appetite for conflict on the part of the US military-industrial complex. “A threat like Isis plays directly into the hands of our military lobbyists who want such behaviour because it’s good for business.”

For Jarecki, the big question is who Isis truly is. “As the acronym shifts daily, we don’t know if these videos are actually being produced by a ragtag force seeking to provoke a superpower and her allies into war or if Isis is rather a front for more institutional actors, even states, pretending to be such a grassroots group. This is vital for knowing whether this development is one toward or away from the democratisation of the narrative.”

Joshua Oppenheimer, director of The Act Of Killing, also urges the west to reflect upon its own position. As a Londoner, Oppenheimer was chilled to hear the English accent of the executioner in the video of James Foley’s beheading. “He could have been my neighbour. This speaks volumes about who we have become, about our society, about alienation, about our relationship to the media, to fantasy, and via both to our fellow human beings. We must ask ourselves what moral vacuum have we created in the west, here at home. What alienation are we creating from each other, from community, from human life? How are we teaching our children to forget the preciousness of life? And how has our brutal, even barbaric, economic system brought us into these relationships to images, fantasies and media? I am challenging us to look at the masked executioner as though we are looking in the mirror.”

Isis could well be losing the propaganda war all by itself. The recent execution of Alan Henning, in particular, was condemned the world over. The video pleas to spare Henning’s life, from his wife and British Muslim leaders, stood in marked contrast to Isis’s own pumped-up rhetoric. They were calm, guileless, heartfelt, personal, entirely free of visual trickery. “Alan was volunteering with his Muslim friends to help the people of Syria,” said Barbara Henning in her video. “He was in the right place, doing the right thing.” The fact that Isis went ahead and killed him anyway, on the eve of the Islamic festival of Eid al-Adha, has exposed them as both inhumane and un-Islamic. In propaganda terms, it was a colossal own-goal. Now that Isis has hijacked the world’s attention, its philosophy surely cannot bear the scrutiny. In Capra’s terms, we need to examine both the enormity of Isis’s cause, and the justness of ours.

For more information, visit: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/07/isis-media-machine-propaganda-war
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