SMA White Paper:

Maneuver and Engagement in the Narrative Space

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Note from the Editor

This paper was produced in support of the Strategic Multi-layer Assessment (SMA) of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) led by Joint Staff J39 in support of the Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT). The paper leverages and melds the latest thinking of academic and operational subject matter experts in fields of organizational and social dynamics, network analysis, psychology, information operations and narrative development, social media analysis, and doctrine development related to aspects of maneuver and engagement in the narrative space.

The authors emphasize the concept of countering ISIL in the narrative space in synchronization with combat operations. While maneuver and engagement in the narrative space could be conducted independently of combat operations, conducting maneuver and engagement in the narrative space in support of combat operations is more likely to achieve lasting effects in the human domain. These ideas reflect a new view of what is required to succeed in future conflict because of the growing realization that decisive effects are often achieved in the narrative space.

The concept of maneuver and engagement in the narrative space belongs under the broader US Army Functional Concept for Engagement.[i] Narrative is one of the key elements of *engagement*, which is defined as,

> ...the capabilities and skills necessary to work with host nations, regional partners, and indigenous populations in a culturally attuned manner that allows bridging language barriers, bridging lines of communication and connections with key political and military leaders in a way that is both immediate and lasting.[ii]

As stated by Master Sergeant Sohail Shaikh of the US Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group, "...narrative must be harnessed by the warfighter to reach friendly, opposition, and neutral populations in ways that might not otherwise be possible." The capability for warfighters to use narratives and counter-narratives to reach and influence friendly, threat, and neutral elements of the human domain will be a critical capability for successful engagement during future conflicts.

Foreword

Brig. Gen. Charles L. Moore
Deputy Director for Global Operations, Joint Staff, J-39

Warfare is ultimately a human endeavor. When planning to deal with any adversary or potential adversary, it is essential to understand who they are, how they function, their strengths and vulnerabilities, and why they oppose us. Events over the course of the last year and a half highlight the importance of those factors as they relate to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). One of ISIL's obvious strengths is their ability to propagate tailored narratives that resonate with target audiences. If the US and our allies are to counter ISIL effectively, we must attack this center of gravity. A recent white paper endorsed by General Votel, Commanding General of US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), states,

> Thousands of airstrikes helped to check their [ISIL's] rapid expansion, but the decisive effort against them will require discrediting their narrative and connecting the people to legitimate governing structures - areas where Department of Defense should not have primacy.[iii]

Discrediting ISIL's narrative will require a long-term effort by a team of experts. It will require: (1) developing an in-depth understanding of ISIL's narratives and why they resonate with target audiences, (2) building a whole of government team that can effectively counter and replace ISIL narratives with a strategic communications plan that directly supports our desired end states, (3) globally employing counter-narratives and replacement narratives, (5) gathering and collecting data to assess the effects of narratives (theirs and ours), and (6) continually refining the content and employment of our narratives based on an assessment of their effectiveness.

An effective, whole of government, Strategic Communications plan requires close coordination and synchronization across all lines of effort. The US Department of State should lead the US effort with support from the other Departments/Agencies on behalf of the US government. To be successful, our approach must also include our friends and allies. Specific multinational partners can help us understand why some ISIL narratives resonate and how they can be countered and/or replaced. In fact, truly effective influence operations require a combination of art and science. The best approach will most likely require contributions from neuroscientists, sociologists, psychological operations specialists, intelligence analysts, civil affairs planners, law enforcement professionals, and others. The melding of these diverse inputs into a comprehensive strategy demands skill, patience, close coordination and an inherent understanding of the ultimate end states. Ultimately, discrediting ISIL's narrative will most likely take years and will require significant resources. However, the execution of our strategic communication game plan, from initial analysis to our measure of effectiveness, must be conducted with the speed and agility necessary to not only replace ISIL's narrative but to drive and shape their perceptions and subsequent actions. Simply put, to achieve victory we must outmaneuver and outpace ISIL in the narrative space. Currently, the opposite is occurring and is a trend that must be reversed.

Maneuver and Engagement in the Narrative Space

Introduction

As Dr. Ian McCulloh stated, "Military leaders today must evolve their thinking from traditional military objectives of geographic terrain to higher level objectives of social problems and influence."[iv] In the past, our military found it difficult to develop in-depth understanding of the human domain prior to deployment. In order to prevent, shape, and win future conflicts, our forces must embrace the challenge of understanding and influencing the human domain.[v] To achieve victory in future conflicts, US forces will require the ability to maneuver more effectively than our opponents in the narrative space. Maneuver in the narrative space will require in-depth understanding of the human domain, including the human networks that propagate opposing narratives. It will also require a coherent strategy to guide engagements and operations, both non-lethal and lethal, from the strategic to the tactical levels. But these are not concepts to be implemented in the distant future; they could be implemented now to counter ISIL in the narrative space. The vignette below describes how the US-led Multinational Coalition conducted successful counter-narrative operations against Al-Qaeda during 2010.

Despite successful counter-narrative operations against Al-Qaeda in Iraq, however, we have not fully applied past success to current efforts to counter ISIL in the narrative space. ISIL is outmaneuvering the US and our allies in the narrative space[vi] by using narratives that resonate with target audiences. This is significant because, as written by LTC Brian Steed,

> The "decisive operation" on the current Middle Eastern battlefield is narrative. Violence is still a critical portion of armed conflict, but it optimally serves a supporting role. Da'ash [ISIL] and others use violence primarily to communicate, confirm, or advance their narrative.[vii]

LTC Steed's opinion that the narrative is decisive is reinforced in a recent white paper titled, "The Gray Zone," which was endorsed by General Votel, the current commander of USSOCOM. It states, "[t]housands of airstrikes helped to check their (ISIL's) rapid expansion, but the decisive effort against them will require discrediting their narrative and connecting the people to legitimate governing structures - areas where DOD should not have primacy."[viii]

Successful Counter-Narrative Operations: Neutralizing Al-Qaeda in Iraq (NAQI) 2011

During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF), through the summer and fall of 2010, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) led a successful influence campaign on the population of Ninewa province, establishing a shadow government and raising significant financing through taxes and extortion. They recognized that the US was going to withdraw and transition to Operation NEW DAWN, but that message, and more importantly the narrative that "the US was transitioning security responsibilities to the competent, well trained Iraqi Security Forces," was not effectively communicated to the population. AQI's competing narrative was that they would defeat the US militarily. They focused improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on routes with high civilian traffic and avoided US combat forces, convoys, and patrol routes. These kinetic actions were conducted in support of their narrative-focused main effort.

With reduced combat power in Northern Iraq, the US could not effectively launch large-scale kinetic responses. A small team from the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) applied a mixture of general population polling across the Northern provinces and a method called cultural domain analysis (CDA) to quantitatively measure cultural salience without leading the respondents with structured questions. The results identified that the key cultural goal for residents of Ninewa was dignity and strength, ideally achieved through courage, generosity, and devotion to family.

The results of this data are significant. The typical American cultural model is to achieve wealth through hard work and education. Under the American cultural model, a merchant in Mosul that has a successful morning of business and goes home before lunch is lazy, because he is not working hard to make more money. To the Iraqi, however, a merchant who continues to work after a successful morning is greedy, not spending time with his family and denying opportunity to his fellow merchants. Thus, cultural domain provides a window into the driving forces behind behavior, guilt, motivation, and influence. Meanwhile, AQI narratives focused on devotion to Islam, sacrifice, and jihad, which did not align with key Iraqi cultural goals such as dignity and strength achieved through courage, generosity, and devotion to family. The misalignment of the AQI narrative with cultural values of the population provided an opportunity for maneuver and engagement in the narrative space.

The Strategic Programs Operation Center (SPOC) was an information operations task force funded by USSOCOM in direct support of US Forces Iraq (USF-I). They conducted a series of media programs ranging from short documentaries, television commercials, to entertainment programs. Content was optimized to resonate with the population in Mosul, based on CDA and general population polling, which included measuring source media outlets relied on for news, information, and entertainment. Concepts were pre and post-tested in focus groups and deployed on appropriate media channels without US attribution. The strategic effects of the programs were measured again by general population polls to detect statistical deviation from baseline, as well as through intelligence efforts. The strategic effect of the NAQI campaign was a critical information requirement that was tasked to intelligence as part of the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) collection plan. The combined results showed a rejection of AQI by the population and financial resources elicited through taxes and extortion fell from $12M per month to a negligible level, where they remained until the rise of the ISIL in 2014.

Narrative Space and Maneuver

Paraphrasing Army Field Manual 3-13, *Inform and Influence Activities*, the narrative is a brief description of the leader's story used to visualize the effects that leadership wants to achieve in the information environment to support and shape their operational environments. To be effective, the narrative should be detailed, tailored to each operational environment (OE), and tied to actions in the OE.[ix]

The narrative is used to create influence. As LTC Steed writes, "[i]nfluence is the relevant combat power for the narrative competition. In this case, it is influence to affect the thinking and actions that shape people and nations."[x] Dr. McCulloh further elevates the significance of influence, describing it as "the ultimate purpose of warfare,"[xi] based in part on Carl von Clausewitz's famous description of war as "the continuation of politics by other means" and the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of politics as "the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing government policy."[xii] Both Dr. McCulloh and LTC Steed recognize that in order to exert influence and achieve desired effects on people, the decisive engagements occur in the narrative space. Dr. Dana Eyre articulates a similar concept by describing success in the new security environment as, "… not defined by military victory over an opponent but by building peaceful social orders and defeating opponents in the psychological and sociological domain"[xiii]

A narrative serves as an organizing framework through which individuals make sense of their world and provides insight into the beliefs, norms, and values of a group. Narratives facilitate sense-making, the process of interpretation, and production of meaning, whereby individuals and groups reflect on and decipher phenomena that occur in their environment. Sense-making enables individuals to conceive and formulate their social environment, creating a shared worldview among members of a particular in-group. Insurgent groups often employ narratives as a means of communicating grievances, goals, and justifications for their actions within a story-like framework. For example, ISIL is adept at recognizing and articulating existing Sunni grievances to local (Iraq and Syria), regional (Middle East), and global target audiences.[xiv] The technological sophistication with which they do so has been unparalleled by contemporary extremist organizations, yet their success lies not in the form of media but in their nuanced appreciation for and articulation of the shared cognition of the Salafist worldview. That shared cognition, however, is not necessarily a historically accurate or ideological consistent one, as ISIL often deviates from the truth to portray their version of the grievance.[xv]

Insurgent narratives are typically communicated by a charismatic leader, or designated spokesperson, and ISIL via Baghdadi is no different.[xvi] Charismatic authority rests on a commanding devotion to an individual's sacrosanct character and the concomitant normative patterns of behavior.[xvii] Narratives are often employed to reinforce the perception of that sacrosanctity and the normative behaviors within an in-group. Charismatic leaders are often visionaries who demonstrate some combination of emotionality, activity, sensitivity to the sociopolitical landscape, intense interest in and empathy toward their followers, superior rhetorical and persuasive skills, and exemplary behavior in the form of sacrificing their personal ambitions to those of the movement.[xviii] Therefore, when evaluating an insurgent organization's use of narrative, it is imperative to understand not only the leadership structure, roles, and responsibilities[xix] but also what the leaders say[xx] and how they say it.[xxi]

The US Army recently published a functional concept that classifies "Engagement" as a new Warfighting function (WfF).[xxii] Narrative is one of the key elements of *engagement*. The Engagement WfF is defined as "…the capabilities and skills necessary to work with host nations, regional

partners, and indigenous populations in a culturally attuned manner that allows bridging language barriers, bridging lines of communication and connections with key political and military leaders in a way that is both immediate and lasting." The Engagement WfF includes "...expanded interaction with unified action partners and both public and social media to influence the behavior of key groups in ways that directly affect mission accomplishment."[xxiii] MSG Sohail Shaikh reinforces the concept that narrative is a key element of engagement, stating, "...narrative must be harnessed by the warfighter to reach friendly, opposition, and neutral populations in ways that might not otherwise be possible." The potential for warfighters to use narratives and counter-narratives to reach and influence friendly, threat, and neutral networks in the human domain is what makes narrative a key element of engagement.

Maneuver and engagement in the narrative space should be a multinational effort supported by a well-developed strategic communications plan. As Dr. Eyre writes,

> Unless we develop a perspective that enables us to understand and shape the social processes that lie at the root of our security problems and guide our efforts to resolve them, we will continue to lack real understanding of strategic communications in national security.[xxiv]

To gain real understanding of strategic communications requires that the US lead a coalition that includes multinational partners who understand ISIL's grievances and narrative messages better than we do. By working together and sharing information as a multinational team, all team members can conduct maneuver and engagement in the narrative space based on in-depth understanding of ISIL's narrative.

The purpose of maneuver in the narrative space is to gain decisive advantage in influencing and shaping the human domain in order to bring about social change that shapes the OE for mission success. This can only be achieved through comprehensive engagement in the narrative space. As with the physical battle space, the narrative space has key and decisive terrain that can potentially lead to decisive points and centers of gravity.

Framing the Problem and Solution
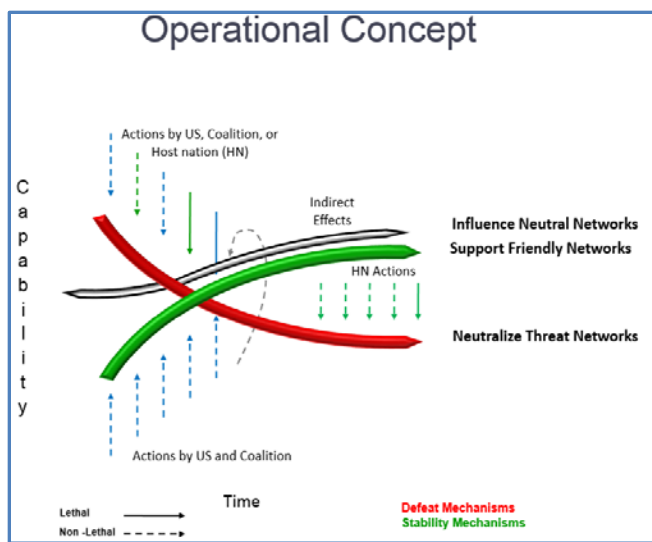
Figure 1. Network Engagement Lines of Effort

ISIL currently controls large territories in Syria and Iraq. This provides them sanctuary and a secure environment from which to spread their influence. A military victory over ISIL in these territories, therefore, would be useful in denying sanctuary. Such a victory alone, however, would not solve the problems created by ISIL because it would not shape the social processes that lie at the root of our security problems: it would not build peaceful social orders, and it would not defeat ISIL in the psychological and sociological aspects of the human domain. Those things can be achieved only by comprehensive engagement, including maneuver and engagement in the narrative

space.

The US and its allies could respond to ISIL with a multinational, long-term engagement strategy in which the main effort would be to maneuver and engage the human domain in the narrative space. This long-term engagement strategy would serve several purposes, such as guiding decision makers in allocating DoD resources and guiding short term campaigns and engagements in the narrative space at the operational and tactical levels.

The logical framework for this engagement strategy is the same framework described in emerging Army doctrine called "Network Engagement."[xxv] As shown in Figure 1, below, Network Engagement applies three lines of effort (LOEs): 1) Support Friendly Networks, 2) Influence Neutral Networks, and 3) Neutralize Threat Networks and is supported by six Network Engagement Pillars (see Figure 2 below).

1. **Understand the Mission**
2. **Understand the OE**
3. **Understand the Networks**
4. **Organize for Engagement**
5. **Engage the Networks**
6. **Assess Effects**

Figure 2. Network Engagement Pillars

Understand the Mission

"If I had one hour to save the world, I'd spend 55 minutes defining the problem and 5 minutes solving it." Albert Einstein

Einstein reminds us that a problem must be well understood before it can be solved. Following that line of thinking, the Army Design Methodology (ADM) advocates framing the problem and the operational environment before framing the solution.[xxvi] Guided by the ADM, the commander and staff work together to build understanding of the mission and the OE simultaneously. In doing so, the commander and staff are able to understand and visualize the OE based on mission requirements. Output for the ADM includes diagrams of the current OE and the desired OE as shown in Figures 3 and 4 below. These diagrams represent the commander's vision of specific OE conditions and relationships, and they provide the staff with clear guidance.
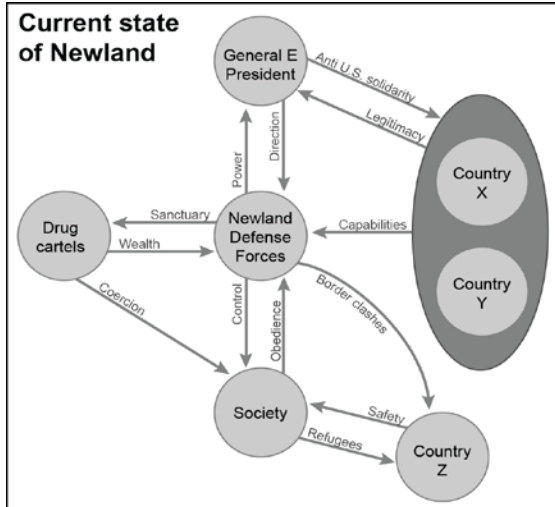
Figure 3. "Influence Diagram" for the Current OE

Building a diagram illustrating relevant actor functions, relationships, and tensions helps the commander and staff understand an operational environment. Often relationships among actors have many facets, and these relationships differ depending on the scale of interaction and temporal aspects (history, duration, type, and frequency). Clarifying the relationships among actors requires intense effort since these relationships require examination from multiple perspectives.

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) *Army Design Methodology,* 5-0.1, page 3-3.
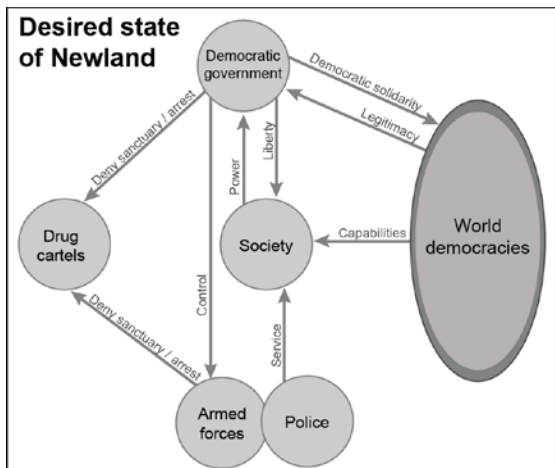
Figure 4. Influence Diagram for the Desire OE

Commanders describe the operation's end state by stating the desired conditions of the friendly force in relationship to desired conditions of the enemy, terrain, and civil considerations. Commanders share and discuss their desired end state with their higher commander to ensure unity of effort.

Army Techniques Publication (ATP) *Army Design Methodology,* 5-0.1, page 3-5

The ADM can be applied to the current OE in which ISIL exerts influence by propagating its narrative through a network. Figure 5 below is a rough sketch of the ISIL's Narrative Network Model. This model could be refined by identifying more actors and links to serve effectively as the influence diagram for the current OE. Greater specificity could be added by employing methods of data collection, which would, for example, focus on psychological themes in talk, text, and images. The next step in this process, per the ADM, would be to develop the influence diagram for the desired OE that the commander and staff would then use to measure the progress toward this desired end-state.
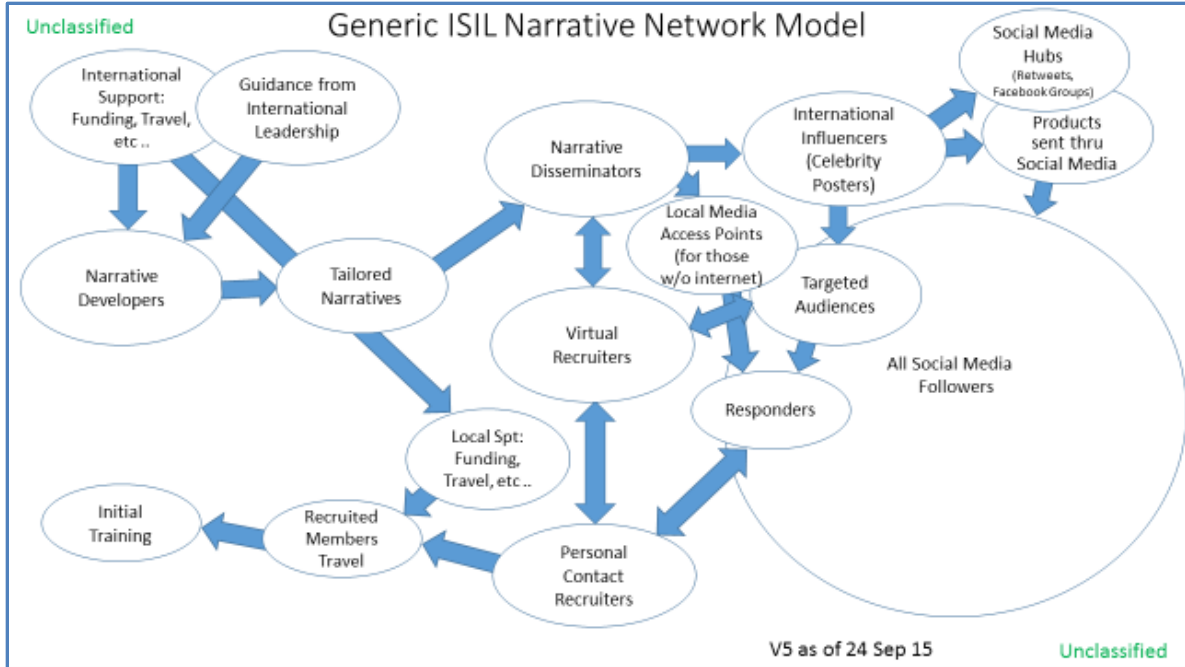
Figure 5. "Influence Diagram" of the ISIL Narrative Network for the Current OE

Understand the Operational Environment

While developing understanding of the OE, the staff must determine how and where to focus information collection due to the volume, variety, and velocity of information available in a given OE. The breadth of the OE is based in part on its doctrinal definition as "… a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander."[xxvii] A useful method to develop understanding of an OE is to identify how various elements of the OE are interrelated. To develop understanding of the narrative space, the commander and staff need to identify how narratives are developed, disseminated, and received within the OE.

The US Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group is leading the development of a narrative methodology for commanders to better understand the operational environment and operationalize the strategic narrative to the tactical level. The entire narrative development process, shown in Figure 6 below, replicates the Army Operations Process. The strategic (master-level) narrative must flow to the operational (local) level and ultimately down to the tactical level where the individual Soldier on the ground interacts daily with the local population delivering personal narratives. As such, narratives crafted at the strategic level must be both internally accepted and externally focused.
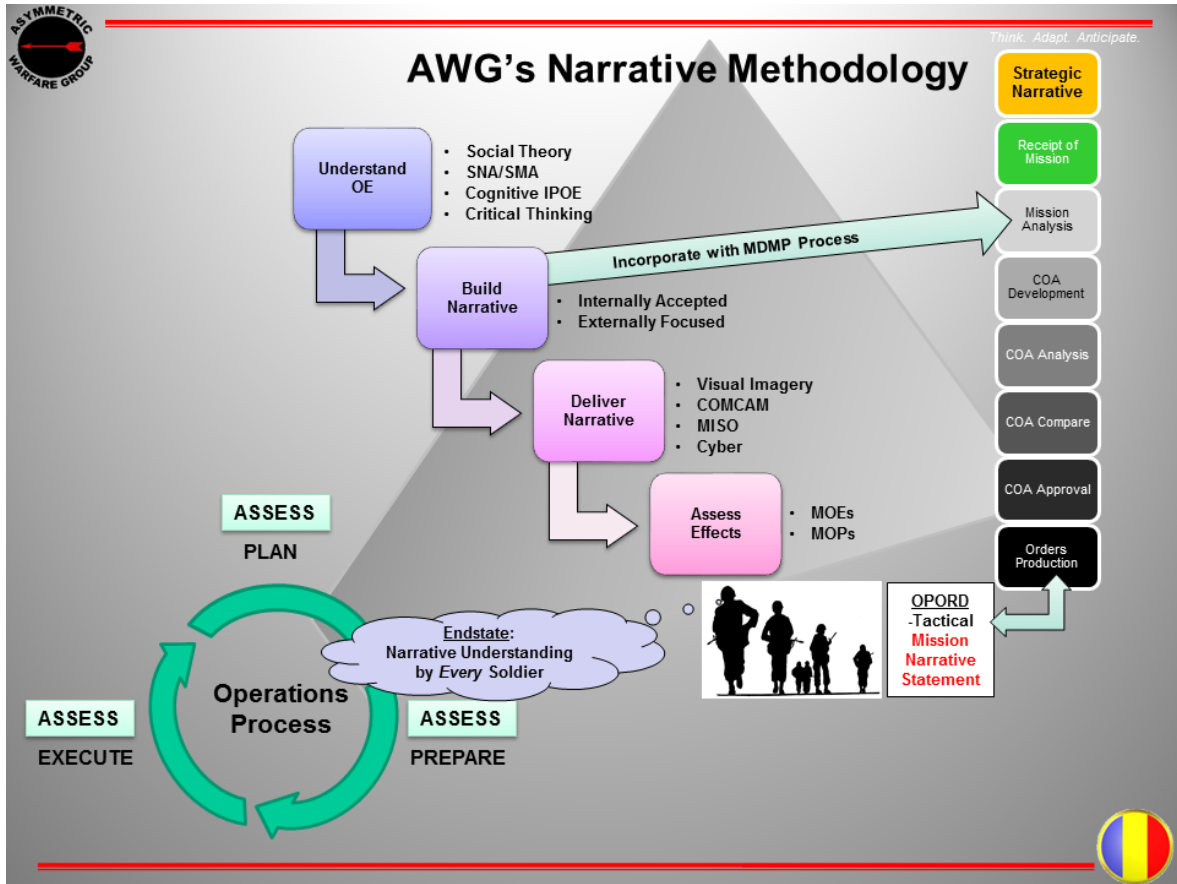
Figure 6. Narrative Development Methodology

Successful Counter-Narrative Operations: Voices of Moderate Islam

Understand the Mission and the OE: The use of narrative in operations can be highly effective at shaping the perceptions of a given population. A vignette on how narrative in US led operations can successfully reach a population that otherwise might be difficult to engage is Operation "Voices of Moderate Islam" (VoMI). VoMI, which was executed in Afghanistan in August of 2010, was designed to resonate with existing indigenous narratives and tap into the wider cultural pulse of Afghanistan. The goal of the program was to counter the adversary's prevailing narrative in order to degrade their recruiting efforts and de-legitimize their local operations. The prevailing narrative in Afghanistan's Logar and Wardak provinces was that the Coalition Forces were attempting to supplant Islam with Christianity. VoMI was built with this in mind and tailored to the goal of using narrative as a vehicle to counter a critical thread of the Taliban narrative by demonstrating that the US and Coalition Forces were not at war with Islam.

During the operation, Soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team accompanied 33 "Afghan Key Communicators" on an Islamic pilgrimage through Jordan en route to Saudi Arabia. These "Key Communicators" were handpicked from the general population to represent a wide swath of Afghan society and included village elders, members of the Afghan National Security Forces, former Taliban fighters, and other influential individuals. During the trip, which was planned during the holy month of Ramadan, the Key Communicators performed the rite of Umrah and earned the honorific "Hajji." With this honor bestowed on them, the Afghans readily returned to their home villages and began to disseminate unscripted narratives that painted a different yet credible picture than the one the adversary was providing.

For a fraction of the cost of a single aircraft sortie, the United States was able to counter the opposition's prevailing narrative by demonstrating that the Coalition was not attempting to supplant Islam with Christianity, nor was the West at war with Islam. At some point in the operation, each participant internalized the intended coalition message that multi-national efforts in Afghanistan did not constitute a "war on Islam." Participants in the program had their beliefs fundamentally changed. Many of the Afghans had not travelled from their home villages before, much less traveled on an airplane to a foreign nation. The personal narratives the participants would create and tell for the rest of their lives would then challenge the belief system of every member of their society who previously believed that Coalition Forces were against Islam and in Afghanistan to spread Christianity. One participant explained the experience: "I can speak for us all when I say, we never knew that American bases here had mosques on them, or that you had Muslim Soldiers in your Army, that you would allow them to pray and observe Ramadan. I thought you were only about killing – but now I see so much more." Another participant noted: "This journey is our life. When we return, we will tell others what we saw here, we will tell others what you did for us. Everyone will know of the respect you have shown us." Because these men are credible within their society, their story is logical, it resonates with the people gives this narrative power to spread. Because the *words* the participants use line up with the *deeds* the participants performed, and they have multiple *images* documenting their story as the narrative spreads.

The Rubik's Cube Analogy. Despite the US-led Coalition's successful narrative operations in Afghanistan, we have not fully applied past success to current efforts to counter ISIL in the narrative space. To do so, we must understand and influence numerous interrelationships that are associated with the challenges of engagement and maneuver in the narrative domain. The Rubik's Cube analogy, shown in Figure 7 below, visually depicts numerous interrelationships that are associated with the challenges of engagement and maneuver in the narrative domain. Like geographic terrain, narrative space has terrain features that must be understood. One side of the cube represents the kinetic or conventional targeting effort. The other five sides represent the variety of narrative engagements that must occur to achieve durable success (domestic, opponent, local partners, regional, and global). As with a Rubik's cube, a counter-narrative campaign needs to solve for all sides simultaneously rather than trying to solve for one side at a time. If a campaign focuses solely on trying to solve a single side at a time, this effort will be wasted as attempts are made to solve the remaining sides. This is what has happening with our current, mostly kinetic, efforts to counter ISIL in Iraq and Syria. The current narrative competition does not involve a comprehensive approach or application of algorithms that would be necessary for solving the Rubik's cube. This problem is compounded by the fact that the narrative space changes over time. This means that if a Rubik's cube is nearly solved and set on a table for several months or years, you can pick it up again and complete the solution from where you left off. The narrative competition existing today is like a cube that is rapidly changing colors; therefore, trying to solve today's problems with yesterday's approach will be a recipe for failure. We have to adapt with and get ahead of our opponent in the narrative space. This adapting algorithmic perspective means that we will never fully solve the entire problem, but we can achieve a greater level of influence if we change our solution strategy.[xxviii]
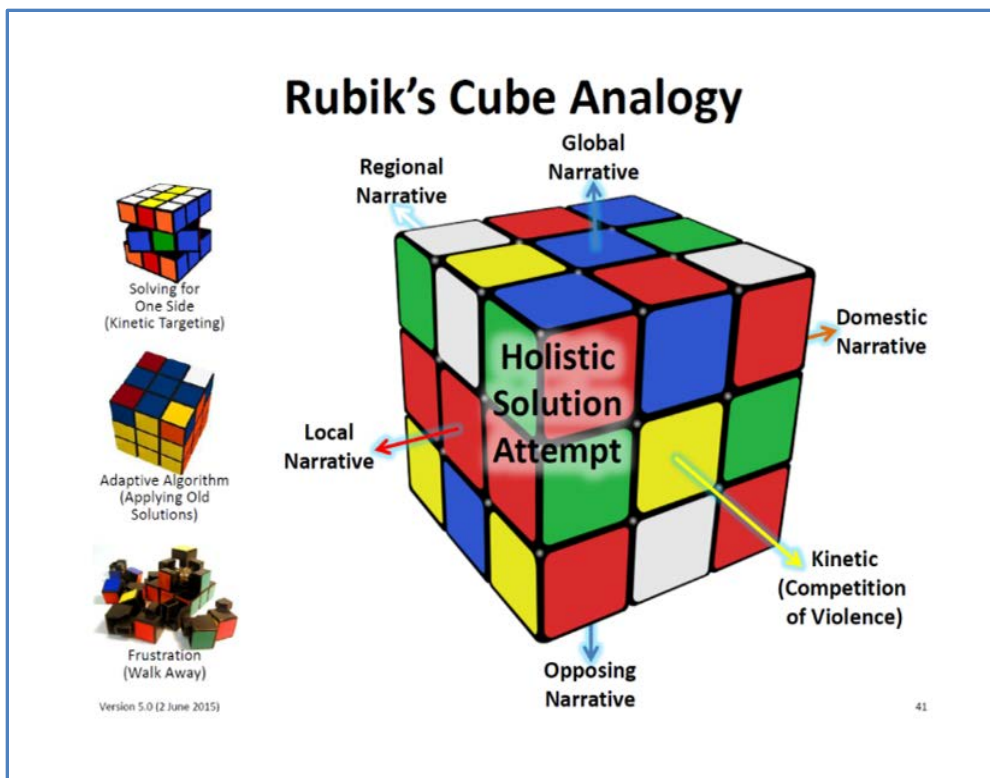
Figure 7. Rubik's Cube: Related OE Elements

Understand the Networks

Human networks comprise a major portion of the OE. Physical terrain is not the primary factor that affects influence or cultural values. Influence and cultural norms are established and maintained through relationships between people. As technology enables communication, such as through the use of social media, the physical terrain becomes less important than non-physical links between people. Social networks of interpersonal relationships become the key terrain for modern conflicts. Just as a commander cannot take and hold physical terrain with words and images, he cannot take and hold cognitive terrain with kinetic force or deeds. For conflicts of influence—such as that occur in the 'gray zone' of unconventional warfare, irregular warfare, psychological operations, and foreign internal defense—the social network relationships in the narrative space may be the decisive terrain.

This type of analysis was employed to compare and contrast the narratives employed by 24 insurgent organizations active during the period 1962-2009, and it was determined that the narratives employed tended to be clustered around a series of themes closely linked with political objectives.[xxix] The operational relevance of narrative analysis is limited; however, when applied tactically it can be an effective tool in determining how a group frames a political grievance and seeks to mobilize resources to change the status quo.[xxx] It is important to understand not only the perspective of the narrative analyst, but also the perspective of the source; therefore, anthropological approaches can improve the narrative and messaging analysis processes considerably.[xxxi]

Cognitive Terrain Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB). Because ISIL occupies physical terrain, some are led to the false conclusion that ISIL's area of influence is limited to the terrain it occupies. In reality, ISIL's area of influence is as broad as its narrative space, which is global. ISIL is effectively maneuvering in global cognitive and information domains. By applying a cognitive intelligence preparation of the battlefield approach that mirrors and integrates with elements of physical terrain analysis, as shown below, a staff can plan and prepare for maneuver and engagement in the narrative space.[xxxii]

Physical IPB	Cognitive IPB
1. Develop a Physical Terrain Data Base	1. Develop a Cognitive Terrain Data Base
2. Analyze (develop) Terrain Factors Overlays	2. Identify (ID) Social Network Clusters
3. Develop (modified) Combined Obstacles Overlays (MCOO)	3. Assess Cognitive Terrain as Open, Restricted, or Severely Restricted
4. Identify Physical Avenues of Approach	4. Identify Nodes that Nodes that Promote or Deny Influence
5. Analyze Physical Avenues of Approach	5. Analyze Cognitive Avenues of Approach

Figure 8. Physical versus Cognitive IPB

1. **Develop a Cognitive Terrain Data Base.** There are various ways to develop a cognitive terrain data base. It requires gathering and analyzing network data based on the OE. An example of developing a cognitive terrain data base was described above in Vignette 1, Neutralizing Al-Qaeda in Iraq. A small team from JIEDDO applied a mixture of general population polling across the Northern provinces and cultural domain analysis to quantitatively measure cultural salience without leading the respondents with structured questions. The results identified that the key cultural goals for residents of Ninewa were dignity and strength, ideally achieved through courage, generosity, and devotion to family. The results expose

how much the cultural goals of residents in Ninewa differ from those of most Americans, who would be inclined to identify things like hard work and career success as key cultural goals. A cognitive terrain data base can help identify target audience perceptions and preclude the natural inclination to apply western cultural values to non-western populations.

2. **Identify Social Network Clusters.** Identifying Social Network Clusters, as shown in Figure 9 below, is accomplished by importing data that contains network nodes and links into a software tool that performs social network analysis. The structure of the network can then be visualized, revealing clusters that, depending upon mission objectives, exhibit relatively higher densities of connectivity. There are several tools available to collect this type of data. USSOCOM's Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS)-SOF has a tool called "Person Extractor," which will extract named entities such as people, organizations, and locations and categorize relationships by functions identified in the Counter Terrorism Analytic Framework (CTAF). Intelligence professionals may also collaborate and share networks and data through a variety of tools. It is important to recognize that the intelligence community does not typically devote the additional time and resources to constructing analytic networks unless tasked by a commander to meet an operational requirement.[1]

Applying the social network analysis technique called Newman Grouping enables recognition of network clusters because they appear as different colors, as shown in Figure 10 below. There are other suitable cluster identification approaches. The Newman Group tends to identify cohesive clusters in the network.
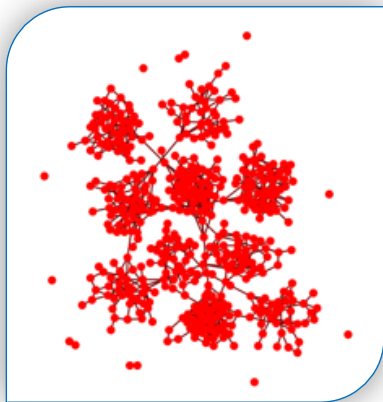
Figure 9. Social Network Data
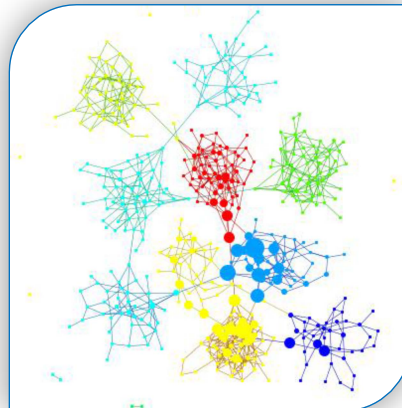
Figure 10. Identify Social Network Clusters

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[1] Social media provides a readily available source of network data; however, commanders should be cautious about over-reliance on this data. General population polling should be used to identify which social media is used by relevant sections of the population. For example, 28% of the population in Syria uses Twitter, which is almost twice that of the US. However, in Yemen, less than 2% of the population uses Twitter. Therefore, Twitter may provide useful network data in Syria, but not in Yemen.

3. **Assess Cognitive Terrain as Open, Restricted, or Severely Restricted**. Assessing the cognitive terrain as open (green), restricted (yellow), or severely restricted (red) requires subjective analysis. An example of the output is shown in Figure 11 below. Currently, this process is labor intensive and requires trained language speakers. Understanding the network topology, however, allows a commander to optimally allocate those precious language resources where they can better develop a more comprehensive picture of the OE. Without a view of network clusters and the elements that make clusters similar or different, the commander is left with a collection of anecdotal vignettes that may contradict each other without any clear reasons why.
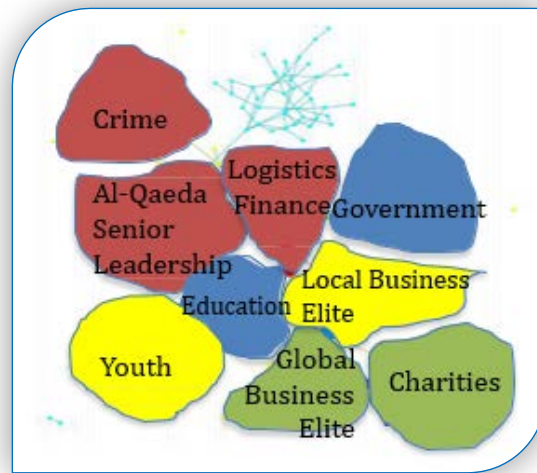
Figure 11. Assess Cognitive Terrain

4. **Identify Nodes that Promote or Deny Influence.** After applying Newman Grouping and characterizing the clusters in the network, Social Network Analysis (SNA) can be applied to identify nodes that are high in centrality by sizing their diameters according to their centrality measure values. The nodes that are highest in the specific measure of betweenness centrality, for example, are often located between cells and are the nodes that most effectively promote or impede influence development within the network.

5. **Analyze Cognitive Avenues of Approach.** Analyzing cognitive avenues of approach requires subjective analysis and results in determining a scheme of maneuver to reach the cognitive objective as shown in Figure 12 below. This figure provides a conceptual sketch of the example network shown in Figure 11 above.
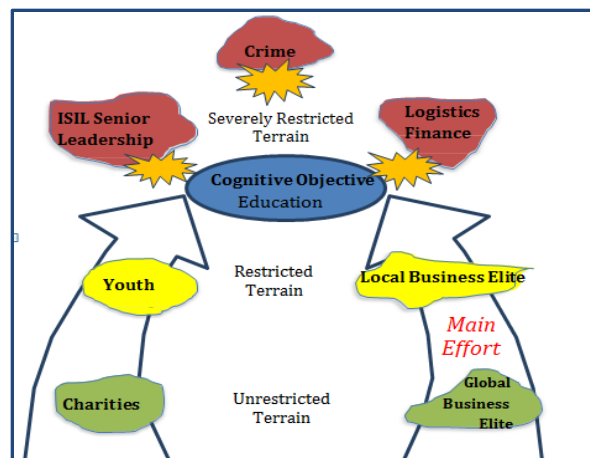
Figure 12. Analyze Avenues of Approach

15

Cognitive IPB can be incorporated into higher-level analysis using the systems perspective that is described in the Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE) publication. The JIPOE process recommends taking a *holistic* approach by analyzing and integrating the systems and geospatial perspectives along with the force-specific IPB perspectives of the component commands, multinational partners, or other organizations. Within this holistic approach, the systems perspective is most conducive to understanding the dynamics of cognitive terrain and maneuver and engagement in the narrative space.[xxxiii] This is because "systems" are essentially "networks." As shown in Figure 13 below, systems, like networks, have various types of links and nodes, interconnectivity, and centers of gravity.
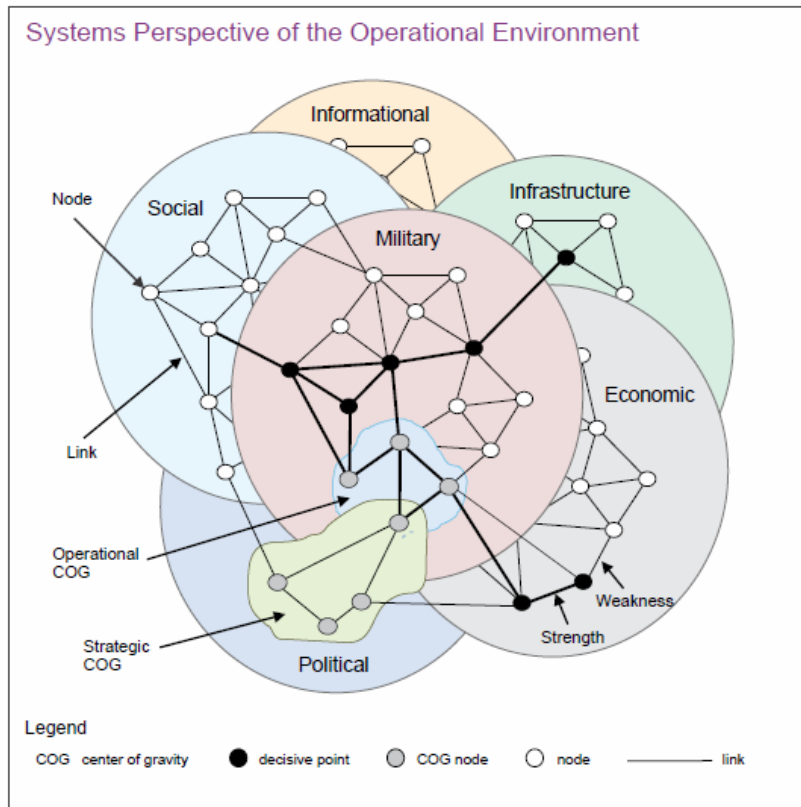
Figure 13. Systems Perspective of the Operational Environment

Both Cognitive IPB and JIPOE can and should be applied to maneuvering and engaging to counter ISIL in the narrative space. Doing so requires the staff to develop understanding of the OE from the threat's perspective, considering what is important to the threat or other target audiences. This requires overcoming the natural tendency to base analysis on western models of states and values, as described in the section above on developing a cognitive data base. A second challenge is avoiding the tendency to place large amounts of data into a single category, such as "social," without further refining it into sub-categories. For example, the "social" element of the OE framework should also include information on history, culture, and religion. This requires significant effort by the staff; however, it is important to consider subtle nuances not easily recognized under the headings of the PMESII acronym.[xxxiv]

When network data is captured in adequate detail, it can be analyzed to identify key nodes, vulnerabilities, and types of friendly actions that will counter specific network activities. Subjective analysis is appropriate at this point, and this approach requires the analyst to consider the network functions and connectivity and to determine which nodes are critical to various network functions. An example of this type of subjective analysis is shown in Figure 14 below. In this example from Joint Publication 2-01.3, *JIPOE*, opium farmers are identified as key nodes because they are the sole source of a key resource—opium. Without opium production, the remainder of the system fails. The "I" in the blue box represents the application of "information," which is one of four key instruments of national power, along with diplomatic, military, and economic power. (The acronym that represents all four instruments is D-I-M-E.) In this example, the information provided to farmers is intended to encourage them to stop producing opium and begin producing alternative crops. This counter network effort employs all instruments of national power – DIME.
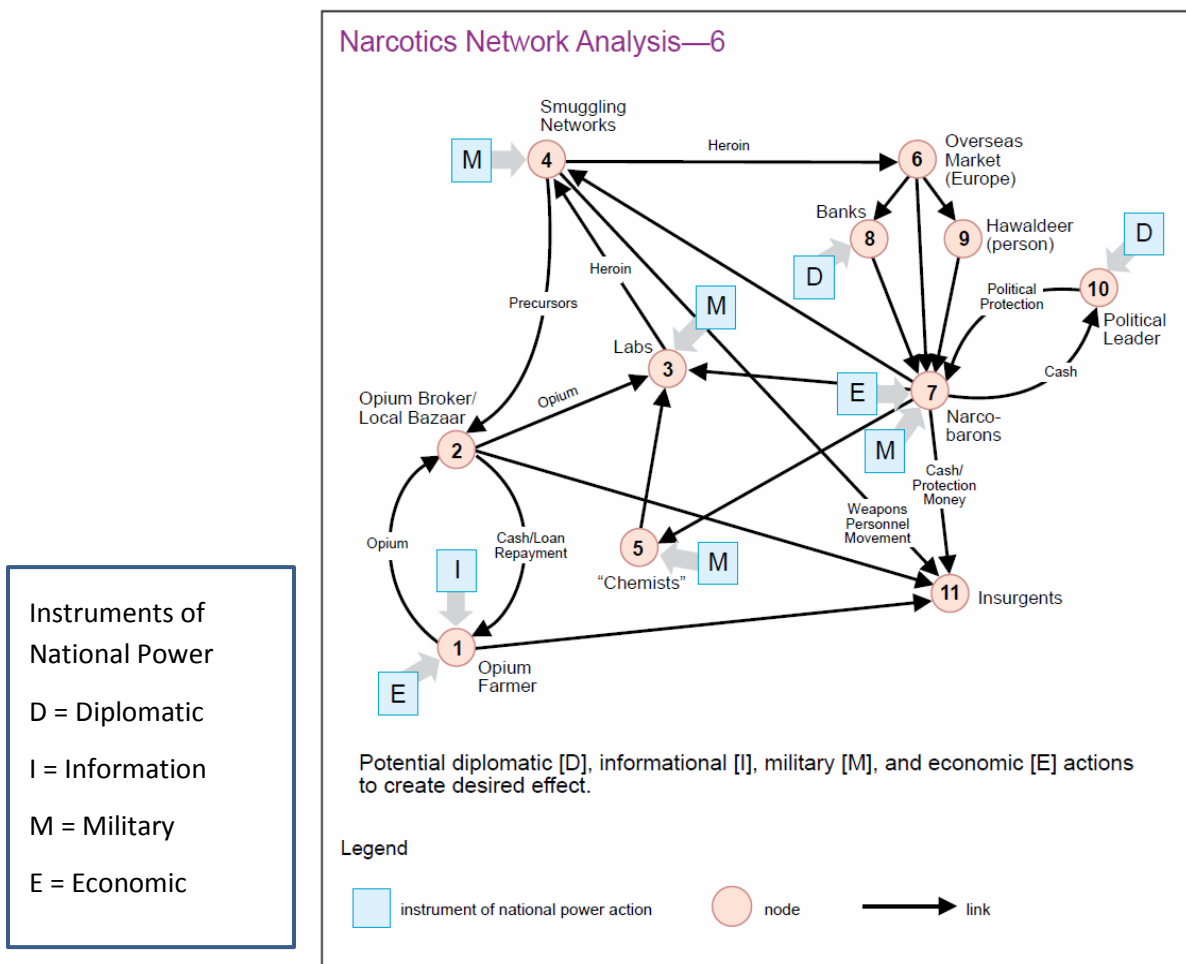
Figure 14. Analysis to Counter a Narcotics Network with D-I-M-E Actions

The analytical process described above is based on subjectively analyzing the network to identify key nodes. Analysis identifies opium farmers as key nodes because they are the sole source of a foundational resource in the narcotics network—opium. Without opium production, the remainder of the system fails. It would be unwise, however, to base analysis of this narcotics network solely on subjective analysis for at least two reasons. First, because human decision making is complex and

often difficult to predict, it may be extremely challenging to influence opium farmers' behavior to conform to our desired end state based solely on applying actions that were identified by subjective analysis. Also, as we further develop the complex nature of the network by adding nodes and links to this model, various options and pathways to influence these opium farmers will emerge. As stated in JP 2-01.3:

> The foregoing is a simple hypothetical example of thinking about how a network functions, determining the key node-link relationships from the perspective of an objective that supports specified desired effects, and identifying potential actions that the joint force can take against nodes in the network to achieve that objective. *The actual analysis would be significantly more complex, and would encompass a multitude of nodes and links across PMESII systems and subsystems.*

To identify key nodes and pathways to influence key nodes within networks that contain multitudes of nodes and links, analysts must apply both subjective analysis and social network analysis (SNA), which is an objective form of analysis.[xxxv] SNA serves as the basis for identifying key nodes objectively. SNA is not intended to stand alone. Instead, here it provides the foundation for linking objective analysis with subjective analysis. The fusion of objective and subjective analysis provides the best overall perspective on key nodes and leads to situational understanding. Below is an example of visualizing a network using SNA tools and methods. The diagram below was built using SNA software and then applying subjective analysis to the results. The clusters of nodes produced by SNA software have physical terrain-like features that enable subjective analysis of how to maneuver in the narrative space.
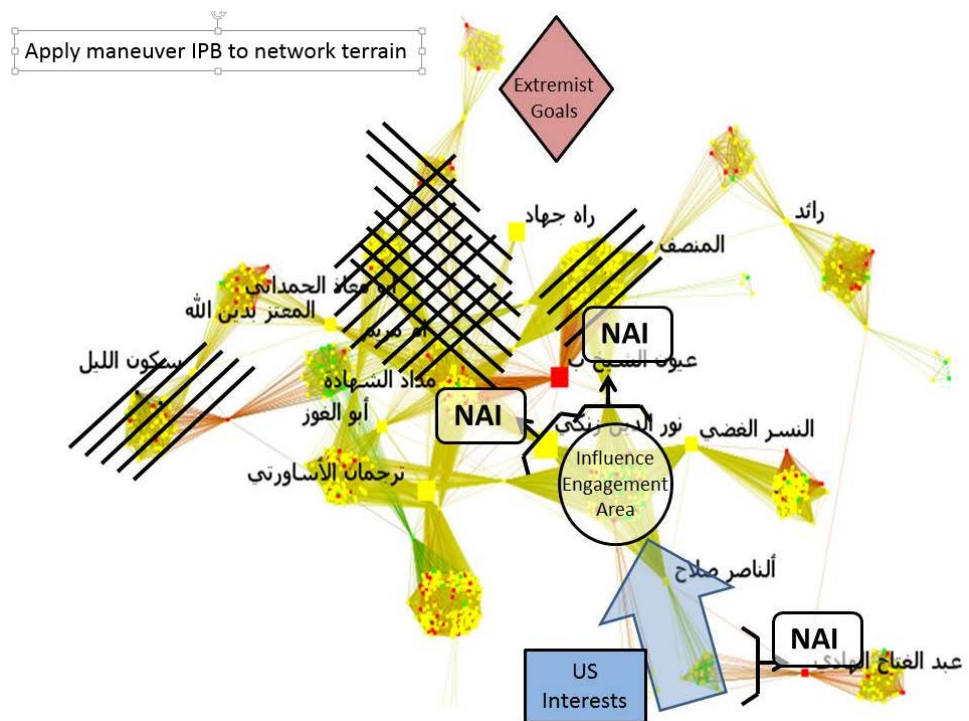
Figure 15. Applying Maneuver IPB to Network Terrain

Organize for Engagement

Organizing for engagement focuses on building the team required to execute a given mission. At the joint task force level and above it requires that the US and unified action partners establish unity of effort based on common understanding of the mission, the OE, and the human networks within that OE. This collaborative effort would also require synchronizing the efforts of teams of experts from Department of Defense, State Department, and the Intelligence Community in order to achieve unprecedented capabilities in planning and operating as a synchronized group. In the words of General (ret) McChrystal, it would require building a "team of teams." This implies breaking down barriers that often prevent agencies from rapidly sharing and fusing information. This team of teams would also need to rapidly share insights gained from incoming information and adapt plans and operations accordingly. It would need to learn and adapt more efficiently than ISIL learns and adapts.[xxxvi] As stated by General Votel, "[w]e are one network, it is one of our greatest attributes and we must leverage both our innate ability to network internally, but grow our network of partners and facilitators such that we continue to provide our commanders and decision makers with the best advice when called to do so."[xxxvii]

Engage the Networks

For the greatest likelihood of success in countering ISIL, operations should be conducted in both the physical and cognitive dimensions. Engagement in the narrative space should precede and support, or be supported by, engagement in the physical domain, depending on which is designated as the main effort. Maneuver and engagement in the narrative space is much more flexible than in physical space. Maneuver and engagement in the narrative space could be conducted from CONUS prior to physical maneuver and engagement within an area of responsibility (AOR). It could also be conducted independently, without physical engagement; however, the likelihood of success would be less than with the combination of cognitive and physical engagement.

Narrative Space maneuver and engagement actions and operations must be synchronized at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels in order to have maximum effect. They should influence the emotions and actions of key target audiences for whom the current ISIL message resonates. To successfully counter-ISIL narrative operations, it is required that we align actions and operations with narrative words and images. As stated by MSG Shaikh, "... words, deeds, and images ... are the primary ways to deliver a narrative."[xxxviii] By aligning words, deeds, and images at all levels, we would maximize our intended narrative effects. Alignment of words, deeds, and images also increases the likelihood that maneuver and engagement in the narrative space will strengthen the effects of combat operations and translate power achieved in the combat domain into sustained success in the human domain. Sustained success is represented above in Figure 1 by the upward-trending green and white lines. The upward trends represent the increase in capabilities of the friendly (green) network and the neutral (white) network over time, as the threat (red) network's capabilities are reduced.

Assess Effects

It is essential to *assess* both individual engagements and overall progress toward the end state articulated in the commander's intent for the campaign. This includes influencing target audience behavior by shaping cognition and changing narrative frames. It is noteworthy that assessment of maneuver and engagement in the narrative space can and should be initiated during phase 0, "Shape."

Based on our access to social media, narratives can be identified, tracked, analyzed, and assessed through research. An example of this is provided in Appendices 1 and 2, which are extracted from a product titl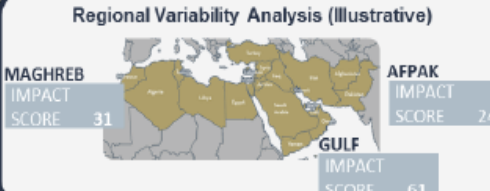ed, "SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015". Appendix 1 describes the process and metrics, and Appendix 2 identifies, analyzes, and tracks 13 specific ISIL narratives over time. The information provided is enlightening and identifies which narratives are gaining or losing in terms of their impact and footprint. This same analytical process could be used to assess the impact and footprint of narratives developed and employed by friendly forces as part of maneuver and engagement in the narrative space. Doing so would also enable assessment of the impact of friendly force narratives in countering threat narratives.

Vignette 1 above describes successful friendly maneuver in the narrative space during operations in Iraq. All six pillars of network engagement are either directly addressed or supported. What is clear in this vignette is how the collection of relevant data enabled friendly forces to assess the effects of narrative engagement and subsequently refine narratives based on that assessment.

The Way Forward

We can solve the complex security problem posed by ISIL, but doing so depends on achieving the following:

1. Developing in-depth understanding of the OE and the networks, including how and why the ISIL narrative network functions so effectively.

2. Applying the cognitive IPB and JIPOE systems perspectives to visualize and understand ISIL networks that propagate narratives, and apply Center of Gravity (COG) or critical factors analysis to identify critical vulnerabilities and potential opportunities for exploiting them.

3. Building a joint, Interagency, intergovernmental, multinational (JIIM) team that can engage ISIL, applying elements of the Engagement WfF and emerging Network Engagement doctrine.

4. Improving whole of government planning and synchronization and improving interaction with unified action partners in order to influence the behavior of key target groups.

5. Developing and implementing a comprehensive narrative scheme of maneuver that links words, deeds, and images and promotes a positive US narrative. It is essential that the JIIM team:

   ▪ Builds all engagement from narratives that are based on relevant data and understanding of the mission, the OE, and the human networks.

   ▪ Maneuvers and engages in the narrative space, while synchronizing narrative operations with other operations in order to counter ISIL in the narrative space.

   ▪ Continually assesses effects of the friendly narrative and refines it accordingly to influence the populace and shape the OE to conform to their desired end state.

The US Army's TRADOC G27 and Asymmetric Warfare Group are developing an illustrative example to demonstrate the process articulated in this white paper focused on populations in Iraq and Syria as measured in 2014. They will further collaborate to develop a warfighter handbook on Maneuver

and Engagement in the Narrative Space using the Iraq/Syria vignette. In addition to supporting current SOCCENT efforts, this white paper and handbook may serve to document and institutionalize a more comprehensive approach to understanding complex operational environments.

Conclusion

A US-led, multinational coalition could significantly degrade ISIL's ability to influence others by maneuvering and engaging in the narrative space. Doing so, however, would require a long-term commitment by the US and her allies. Achieving significant effects would require a coordinated, integrated, and synchronized effort. The coalition could achieve unity of effort by agreeing on and propagating a positive narrative supporting coalition goals and objectives and then employing a strategy to counter ISIL's narrative. The ultimate goal would be to change the landscape of the human domain by shaping perceptions through influence.

The plan would need to clearly articulate the commander's intent and desired end state at the strategic level, with lower level commanders' intents nested within this strategic-level intent. The commander's intent must include the desired behaviors, attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs of key populations. All maneuver, cognitive and physical, must be evaluated against that intent.

The coalition would need to develop in-depth understanding of the current OE, and specifically how our narrative will best resonate within the host nation populace and the region. The staff would need to understand the manner in which ISIL propagates its narrative though a network of people and capabilities. The coalition would need to identify centers of gravity, critical vulnerabilities, and opportunities for successful exploitation through maneuver and engagement in the narrative space. It would also need to track and assess the impacts of coalition narratives in both promoting a positive vision and countering ISIL narratives to change perceptions in favor of coalition objectives. Recent and emerging joint and Army doctrine and concepts provide a sound framework for coordinating coalition efforts.

It is important to acknowledge that we are already in phase 0 of a counter-ISIL narrative campaign. Human perceptions are being shaped continually by ISIL and by others. Current US and allied efforts to counter ISIL through maneuver and engagement in the narrative space are ongoing, but could be improved by applying the processes and methods described in this paper.

APPENDIX 1

(SOURCE: SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015)

Appendix 1: Narrative Analytics Standard Analyses, Outputs, and Core Metrics
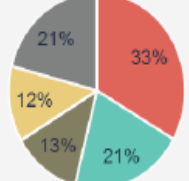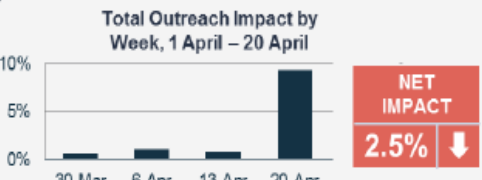
Narrative Analytics (NA) is a systematic approach to understand, shape, and monitor narratives by combining the depth of social science with the scale of data science. By synthesizing large, unstructured data sets NA supports evidence-based decisions for a broad range of national security challenges. This appendix outlines the full scope of NA metrics and some of the types of questions they can help address.

Standard Analyses and Outputs

METRICS DASHBOARD
Overview: Provides clear, quantified measures of success that can be monitored on a regular, ongoing basis to assess progress

Plug and play: A dashboard can be customized to include any group of core metrics and outputs to track narrative-based data over time

Illustrative

CUMULATIVE OUTREACH IMPACT
Measures the total outreach impact of all ISIL events in a week

CUMULATIVE OUTREACH IMPACT	6 MONTH AVERAGE
2.5%	3.0%

CORE MESSAGE PREVALENCE
Measures the extent to which ISIL outreach events deploy core messages from the communication strategy

AVG. CORE MESSAGE PREVALENCE	6 MONTH AVERAGE
16%	24%

NARRATIVE IMPACT
Measures the relative impact of narratives based on volume, reach, and engagement

CHANGE IN RECUIT NARRATIVE IMPACT	6 MONTH AVERAGE
+87pts	+60pts

MENA NARRATIVES REPORT
This report includes the following core narrative metrics and analyses. Ongoing monitoring of these metrics in a Dashboard could provide meaningful insight into the future of the region.

NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE
Measures narratives of audiences in the MENA region about the future and ISIL

NARRATIVE IMPACT/BALANCE
Measures which narratives are most powerfully shaping audiences' attitudes and beliefs

ENTITY FOOTPRINT ANALYSIS
Measures ISIL's presence in the regional psyche and conversation

TEMPORAL ANALYSIS
Measures how shifts in the public dialogue correlate with events on the ground

NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE™

Overview: Outlines specific opportunities for clients to better position themselves within a Narrative Landscape

CAN HELP ANSWER
- How are the narratives I know about related to one another?
- Are there non-obvious or emerging narratives I haven't heard of?

AVOID Narrative W
CREATE Narrative X
REFRAME Narrative Y
ATTACH to Narrative Z

NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE™

Overview: Understand the narratives comprising the discourse on a given topic and how they relate to one another

CAN HELP ANSWER
- How are the narratives I know about related to one another?
- Are there non-obvious or emerging narratives I haven't heard of?

ISIL Landscape, Post 2014

AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

Overview: Segmenting a group into categories (e.g., demographic, geographic) to tailor messaging and outreach

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Which narratives should I use to engage a target segment?
- With which segments am I achieving my desired brand association?

Regional Variability Analysis (Illustrative)

MAGHREB IMPACT SCORE 31
AFPAK IMPACT SCORE 24
GULF IMPACT SCORE 61

APPENDIX 1. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Standard Analyses and Outputs

INFLUENCER ANALYSIS

Overview: Identify the individuals and/or groups whose attitudes and beliefs, expressed in online content, are most shaping the attitudes and beliefs of a given audience

CAN HELP ANSWER
- On a given topic or among a target population, who is driving the conversation?
- What individuals offer promising opportunities for engagement?

Top Key Influencers

Umm Usman
@ummusmaan1
1.9K followers
1.9K tweets

Chyuka Ryori
@ChyukaRyori8
917 followers
3.7K tweets

CHANNEL ANALYSIS

Overview: Identify how a given narratives is (or is not) resonating across media channels, (e.g., traditional media, social media, blogs)

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Which narratives are channel specific and which appear across channels?
- What channels should I use? How should I vary outreach by channel?

Top Media Channels

@ummusmaan1

@ChyukaRyori8

http://www.bookvibe.com/people/ummusmaan1

http://ask.fm/Abu_Baraa1

EMOTION ANALYSIS

Overview: Understand the sentiments audiences are feeling when they articulate narratives and specific phrases that trigger emotions

CAN HELP ANSWER
- What emotions should I tap into to attach to a narrative?
- What emotions are being expressed in the response to my messaging?

Prominent Emotions in Narrative X

- Optimism
- Confidence
- Stress
- Other
- Annoyance

21% / 33% / 12% / 13% / 21%

OUTREACH IMPACT

Overview: Understand the degree to which messages are generating media coverage and the likelihood that messaging efforts are significantly affecting the narrative landscape

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Which of my communicators is most effective?
- In which channel are my messages getting the most play?

Total Outreach Impact by Week, 1 April – 20 April

10%
5%
0%
30-Mar 6-Apr 13-Apr 20-Apr

NET IMPACT
2.5% ↓

NARRATIVE PROFILE

Overview: Understand what language, emotions, and behaviors a narrative leads subscribers to say, feel, and exhibit

CAN HELP ANSWER
- What language, goals, and behaviors should I use to attach to a given narrative?
- Which narratives should I use to engage a particular audience segment?

Narrative Y Profile

Motivators ↕ Inhibitors

Satisfaction of achievement, tasks completed

Perfectionism; need for instant results; difficulty with setbacks

Key Terms
- Discipline
- Control
- Schedule
- To-do list
- Hectic

APPENDIX 1. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Core Metrics

NARRATIVE IMPACT™ / BALANCE

Overview: Understand which narratives are most powerfully shaping audiences' attitudes and beliefs

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Which narratives are most influential overall or to a given audience?
- Are my preferred narratives winning out? Am I making progress over time?

Narrative Balance, Post 2014

Wishy-Washington: IMPACT 47→94 (+47)

35% / 65%

■ Unifying ■ Fragmenting

NARRATIVE VOLUME/ TEMPORAL ANALYSIS

Overview: Understand how often a narrative is articulated in the discourse and how this is shifting over time

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Is a given narrative growing in the landscape?
- Which events "on the ground" are contributing to changes in a narrative's prominence over time?

Wishy-Washington

30 / 20 / 10 / 0

6/10/14 7/10/14 8/10/14 9/10/14 10/10/14 11/10/14 12/10/14 1/10/15 2/10/15

NARRATIVE CONSISTENCY

Overview: understand how similar articulations of a given narrative are, and how likely that narrative is to stick in the minds of audiences

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Which narratives are being articulated consistently?
- Are there inconsistencies in how a narrative is articulated that I can use to weaken its impact?

High Consistency   Low Consistency

ENTITY LANDSCAPE FOOTPRINT

Overview: Understand the narratives most associated with a brand in a given conversation, and how that may compare to other brands

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Which narratives am I most associated with? Does this align with my intention?
- Which of my messengers has the most positive narrative associations?

ISIL Footprint, Pre 2014   ISIL Footprint, Post 2014

37% of Landscape   71% of Landscape

ENTITY NARRATIVE FOOTPRINT

Overview: Understand the most prominent key terms in a given narrative

CAN HELP ANSWER
- How prominent is my organization or brand in a particular narrative?
- Have I successfully attached myself to a given narrative?

Entity 1 Footprint   Entity 2 Footprint

NARRATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Overview: Understand the extent to which online audiences are responding to and engaging with a given narrative

CAN HELP ANSWER
- Which narratives are audiences most responsive to?
- Which messaging is likely to generate the largest direct audience response?

Narrative Engagement Scores (Illustrative)

Narrative 1

Narrative 2

0   50   100

24

APPENDIX 2

SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Appendix 2: Narrative Descriptions and Analysis

The following pages contain detailed information and analysis of the 13 most prominent narratives about the future of the Middle East. Each narrative section contains the full narrative text presented in the voice of its subscribers, a description of its subscriber group(s), and three qualitative metrics that inform an analysis of why the narrative is significant and what future increases or decreases in each narrative's prevalence could suggest. The narratives are listed in the order of their final impact, based on media articles and blogs published between June 2014 and February 2015.

This appendix incorporates three key metrics for each narrative and provides a time-based comparison of those metrics before and after ISIL's Northern Offensive in June of 2014. The key metrics in this appendix include:

- **Narrative Impact**: measures the power and potency of each narrative during a given period of time, based on a variety of other metrics including the size of the discourse related to the narrative, the social engagement with the narrative, and the consistency of the narrative.
- **Narrative Balance**: compares the impact of groups of narratives according to two opposing characteristics (e.g., unifying vs. fragmenting). It is based on an aggregate measurement of the volume of different sets of narratives within an overall topic of conversation
- **Footprint Analysis**: measures ISIL's presence in the conversation by calculating the percentage of articles in the landscape, and in each individual narrative, in which ISIL is mentioned to gauge the group's level of influence over the dialogue.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

The Caliphate is Coming (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS *Mass regional audiences, particularly in Iraq and Syria*	NARRATIVE: At first, Daesh seemed like just another militant group in Syria's endless cycle of bloodshed. But when the remnants of Zarqawi's vile band began seizing territory on both sides of the border – slaughtering minorities, training children as martyrs, and enslaving women and girls – it became clear that this menace knew no bounds. Now, the frontiers of the Islamic State are rapidly expanding and international authorities are offering only half-hearted efforts to stop them. The international community's inaction in Syria has made it so no other militant group has a viable chance of survival – as a result, Daesh grows stronger by the day and their victory seems inevitable. Baghdadi's evil doctrine will paint a black fate for the region, promising years of sectarian violence, the wounds of which will take decades to overcome. Baghdadi's violent, merciless caliphate is expanding, and there is nothing that local actors can do to stop it.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

ANALYSIS: This narrative serves as a significant source of support for ISIL, and reflects a sense of inevitability and momentum upon which ISIL's strength depends. Subscribers believe that in spite of ISIL's horrific behavior, regional governments, local actors, and international powers do not appear to be willing or able to halt ISIL's seemingly inexorable rise. Audiences aligned with this narrative feel strong reticence to take a stand and push back against ISIL without a feeling of commitment and protection from an outside entity that appears willing and able to challenge ISIL's dominance—whether local, regional, or international. However, subscribers to this narrative also display lack of trust in outsider groups to change the situation in a credible way, partly as a result of the lack of serious commitments from such groups from early 2014 to mid-2015. As a result, the trajectory of this narrative suggests not only how strong Daesh is today, but also how strong audiences expect it to be in the future. As such, this narrative represents a key bellwether of how regional audiences perceive their future.

Continued high impact scores may suggest that regional audiences are becoming more pessimistic about the future and more convinced that ISIL will not only continue to spread but also that it will root itself more permanently in the region. It could also indicate a decrease in status-quo government capacity and decline in locals' faith that their national institutions and representatives can protect them against ISIL. Future increases in the narrative impact score may also imply a likely increase in sectarianism, as regional audiences seek more tribal forms of protection. Future decreases in this narrative's impact would signal less anxiety about ISIL and the future, increased confidence in regional governments or international arbiters, and increased optimism about the future.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Wishy-Washington (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS *Broad elite audiences*	NARRATIVE: From Afghanistan to Iraq, Washington has always acted like an unfocused child in its actions abroad, easily distracted and fickle despite its great power. Since 2003, its Middle East policy has been vague, reactionary, and fundamentally misguided. Today, the US is more concerned with containing Daesh than it is with settling the Syrian civil war and achieving genuine reconciliation in Iraq, but these issues are inextricably linked—one cannot be achieved without the others. Washington flip-flops between demanding Assad's removal and allowing him to stay and offers only negligent half-solutions to unify Iraq, all the while demanding that moderates in both countries support the war on terrorists. America must come forward with a comprehensive strategy to stabilize the region that goes beyond eliminating Daesh if there is to be peace.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

Pre-June 2014

Post-June 2014

ANALYSIS: This narrative reflects the pervasive regional belief that the U.S. is an unreliable, apathetic superpower that lacks both a strategic vision and a serious commitment to addressing issues in the Middle East. In the eyes of these regional audiences, the United States' fickle involvement in the Middle East is doubly responsible for the horror that ISIL brings to the region. First, subscribers believe that the 2003 invasion of Iraq opened a vacuum for ISIL to fill and that the U.S. exacerbated regional and sectarian tensions through policies like the de-Baathification of Iraq's Armed Forces and support for exclusionary Shia-led Iraqi administrations. Second, subscribers believe the U.S. fails to see the inextricable links between addressing the presence of ISIL in Iraq and solving the Syrian Civil War. Subscribers feel that any U.S. involvement in the region, therefore, will be fundamentally misguided.

The trajectory of this narrative reflects the United States' credibility in the region, and may influence allies' willingness to commit to political agreements and cooperate in stabilization initiatives, as well as local populations' degree of to support U.S.-sponsored political leaders. Movements in this narrative's impact have an inverse relationship with confidence in the U.S. as a mediator and provider of stability in the region. Significant ISIL military successes appear to intensify regional perceptions that the U.S. commitment to the region is unreliable and lacks a guiding strategic vision, driving impact higher. These perceptions may undermine trust in bilateral or multilateral negotiations and motivate regional allies to pursue independent actions in support of their national interests, which may be contradictory to U.S. goals. Further, this narrative dynamic may contribute to a feedback loop whereby ISIL can capitalize on military or psychological victories to erode regional support for future U.S. assistance or action. If the narrative's impact increases and trust in the U.S. declines, other nations such as Iran or Russia may attempt to fill the void and expand their regional influence. A declining narrative impact could mean that trust in the U.S. as a credible partner is rising and that cooperation will be more fruitful, but could also signify that the U.S. is not a topic in the regional dialogue.
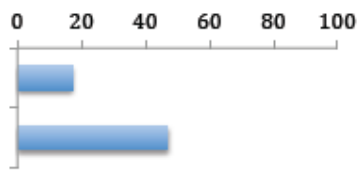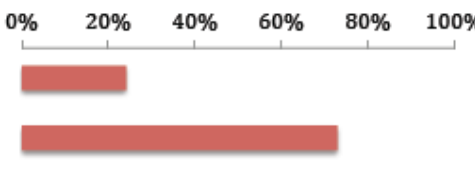
APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Arab Unity (Narrative Balance: Unifying)

SUBSCRIBERS	NARRATIVE: By virtue of the creed of Islam, Arab leaders are bound together by brotherly ties and the shared obligation to protect the umma from division and chaos. These bonds have fostered a long history of peace and stability, but today the region faces unprecedented threats, ranging from Iran's flagrant interference in Arab internal affairs to the abhorrent terrorism of Daesh, whose twisted ideology perverts the minds of our youth. While so-called allies stand idle, wise Arab leaders must spare no expense and come together with a unity of purpose to defend the security and stability of the region. This is the only way to ensure that the proud Arab Nation remains strong and its flock is able to prosper.
Regional Sunni elites	

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

	0	20	40	60	80	100
Pre-June 2014						
Post-June 2014						

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

ANALYSIS: This narrative reflects the deep and growing anxieties held by Sunni elites as they face existential threats to the regional power structure that supports them. Subscribers feel that the volatility introduced to the region by popular unrest in the Arab Spring, international powers such as Iran, and most recently and acutely, the rise of ISIL, has undermined the status quo upon which their power and prosperity depend. This narrative calls on audiences to band together in the face of adversity, in response to events such as the Arab Spring, the UAE/Egyptian bombing of Libya in 2013, and Qatar's feud with other GCC powers in 2014.

Because this narrative represents perceptions of the strength and authority of the status quo powers of the region, its future trajectory may be a leading indicator of regional fragmentation or unification. Increases in this narrative's impact would indicate a higher likelihood of regional stabilization. If articulated by non-elite sources, it could also suggest the perception that government capacity is improving in Arab nations. Decreases in this narrative's impact may indicate an increase in the likelihood of regional fragmentation or a political settlement with ISIL. Decreasing calls for Arab unity, voiced in this narrative, may also serve as a warning of the potential for states in the region to act independently in ways that run counter to U.S. interests, such as funding nefarious opposition elements or initiating forceful intervention in other national conflict.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Inclusion is the Only Path Forward (Narrative Balance: Unifying)

SUBSCRIBERS *Iraqi moderates*	NARRATIVE: Installed by greedy foreign interests, Nouri al Maliki only served to exacerbate the bitter legacy of divisive politics that has plagued Iraq since 1968. Under his rule, Baghdad's fledgling democracy steadily eroded into an authoritarian shell, causing broad segments of the Iraqi people to lose patience and demand change. But now, the nation is on the brink: there is no trust between sects, government institutions are bankrupt, the Kurds are seeking autonomy, and the Sunnis are marching side-by-side with Daesh to reclaim their dignity and exact revenge. Left unchecked, this chaos will spread throughout the region. Haider Al Abadi must take concrete measures to restore trust between disparate communities and convince Iraqis that all have a stake in national unity. Only by embracing all countrymen as brothers will Iraq be able to emerge from this struggle as an independent and united nation and minimize the risk of a deteriorating region.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

	0	20	40	60	80	100
Pre-June 2014						
Post-June 2014						

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%

ANALYSIS: This narrative articulates the recognition by certain audiences that after years of intra-communal conflict, fostering an environment of inclusive politics is critical to stability and security. It represents an antidote to sectarianism by advocating for political inclusiveness and promotes a pragmatic and idealist approach to politics, despite the region's long history of sectarianism. Various manifestations of this narrative exist throughout the region in different geopolitical contexts—many articles laud Tunisia's inclusive politics after the revolution as evidence that an inclusive model can succeed. This narrative requires strong government capacity in Baghdad in order to accommodate an inclusive political model as well as dampening popular support for extremist groups like ISIL. Further analysis would likely show that this narrative is more strongly held by elites in Iraq than by those in Syria or the broader region, as these other audiences appear more concerned with regional geopolitics.

Analysis of the narrative landscape demonstrates that events like ISIL's northern Iraq offensive correlate with a measurable decrease in the impact of the "Inclusion is the Only Path Forward" narrative. This suggests that in face of ISIL aggression, broad regional audiences become less optimistic about the possibility of sustained and genuine cooperation across communal lines. This dynamic implies the possibility of a self-reinforcing cycle in which ISIL aggression or divisive sectarian events undermine the likelihood of future cooperation, perpetuating further fragmentation of the region. Moreover, decreasing support for inclusive politics may accelerate deteriorating governance capacity of nation states in the region. On the other hand, increases in this narrative's impact may indicate that broad audiences are willing to work across sectarian lines, focusing on a national identity and increasing cooperation between sects. This dynamic would signal increasing governance capacity and greater stability in Iraq and the region.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Persian Subterfuge (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS *Broad swaths of elite and mass Sunni audiences*	NARRATIVE: Ever since the noble caliph Abu Bakr's victory at Qadissiyah, the devious Persians have sought to undermine their southern neighbors, coveting Arab knowledge, civilization, and Islamic fidelity. Though Arab leaders have skillfully maintained the regional balance for years through force and conviction, Washington's foolhardy actions in Iraq has provided Tehran with an unprecedented opening. Now, while Rouhani sweet-talks Kerry in Geneva, the Iranians are rapidly spreading their pernicious influence, arming Houthis on the Saudi border, dictating sectarian policies to their lackeys in Baghdad, and supporting terrorists who oppress innocent Muslims in Syria and Lebanon. Arab leaders must stand up and confront the Persian menace to ensure that Arab sovereignty and self-determination is preserved.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

	0	20	40	60	80	100
Pre-June 2014						
Post-June 2014						

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Pre-June 2014						
Post-June 2014						

ANALYSIS: This narrative is a key driver of sectarian conflict in the Middle East. As such, it complicates U.S. engagement with key regional players, such as Iran, and subverts efforts to find solutions to regional conflicts. For example, this narrative undermines cooperation between Sunni and Shia leaders who are equally aligned against ISIL but unable to work together due to mutual suspicion. Sunni elites who are concerned about a broad Iranian conspiracy are also more likely to intervene in local conflicts if they fear that Iran is supporting a local Shia faction, as displayed in Yemen in 2015. This narrative also erodes national unity and identity in mixed-sect states. Moreover, ISIL and other Sunni extremist groups leverage this narrative to recruit and mobilize local and foreign fighters by labeling local Shia "apostates" and accusing them of being "led by the Iranian regime."

A broad increase in this narrative's impact would likely point towards declining regional stability, as Arab leaders react to a perceived Iranian threat. The result of an increase in this narrative in any given state, however, would likely depend on the degree of religious diversity present in the particular state. In homogenous Sunni states, an increase in this narrative could reflect greater stability and increasing governance capacity as the population bands together. In heterogeneous states, however, a similar increase could lead to greater instability as it could incite and encourage internal civil divisions and external intervention against perceived threats, as events in Bahrain in 2011 showed. An increase in this narrative's impact over time could also further hamper cooperation between Arab states and Iran against shared extremist threats, but could lead to greater cooperation between Arab states and Israel towards a mutual threat from Iran. A broad decrease in this narrative's impact in the region could open new possibilities for greater interstate cooperation on stabilization issues.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

The Lost Generation (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS Mass audiences in Iraq and Syria	NARRATIVE: After witnessing the bravery of Egyptian and Tunisian martyrs in 2011, courageous Syrian patriots rose up to demand an end to state cronyism and oppression. But Assad's troops mobilized to crush the movement, and dishonest Westerners looked the other way as Syrian blood turned the streets red. An entire generation has been displaced by civil war and is living an unimaginable nightmare, trapped in poverty and despair. Disease is rampant, militants prey upon women daily, and millions of children have become permanently warped by trauma. Those who have managed to escape this hell are exploited by traffickers, drowned at sea, or treated shamefully by their neighbors as worthless refugees. The international community must remember their humanity and realize that their silence in the face of Arab suffering will irrevocably scar the region and its people, breeding many more years of conflict and mistrust.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

	0 20 40 60 80 100	0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%
Pre-June 2014	▬▬▬▬	▬▬▬▬▬
Post- June 2014	▬▬▬▬	▬▬▬▬▬

ANALYSIS: This narrative reflects mistrust between mass and elite audiences in the Middle East, and between mass regional audiences and international powers such as the U.S. It breeds resentment on the part of mass audiences towards those in authority who have failed to intercede on their behalf, making them less likely to cooperate or support stabilization efforts championed by those in power. Moreover, it could make Sunni subscribers to this narrative more likely to support ISIL by virtue of their perception that the Islamic State would bring a measure of stability, security, and order to people's lives even if they do so under an extreme ideology. This narrative also suggests that nonviolent protesting leads only to further persecution and neglect, heightening the probability of protracted, fragmented militancy even if international coalitions work to bring key actors such as ISIL and the Syrian Armed Forces are into line via force or diplomacy. Subscribers to this narrative believe they must protect themselves from their own government because the international community will not do so.

Increases in this narrative would suggest an increase in humanitarian suffering and the perception of international neglect of the situation, resulting in antipathy towards those deemed responsible for the conflict (Assad and ISIL) as well as those perceived as being able to put an end to the conflict (international powers). An increase may further indicate that mass audiences on the ground are becoming less trusting of international powers and their political initiatives, hampering future stabilization or relief operations. Decreases in this narrative's impact could be driven by a perception that armed conflict is decreasing, local governments are repelling and restraining ISIL, the international community is devoting more resources to refugee and regional settlement, cross-sectarian cooperation is increasing, and that regional and international governments are restoring humanitarian security.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

The Enemy of My Enemy is Not My Friend (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS	NARRATIVE:
Select Shia elites in Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon	For decades, the nefarious Americans have repeatedly sought to work against Shiite and Muslim interests, overthrowing Mossadeqh in 1953, aiding the Zionist occupiers in Palestine, and facilitating the dangerous spread of Wahhabism through its alliance with Riyadh. Washington continues to oppose the righteous forces of moderation and proceeds with its imperial meddling in Iran's nuclear program and Syria's civil war. Today, Daesh threatens to eradicate legions of innocent Muslims, but the noble Resistance Powers cannot in good conscience cooperate with the American crusaders in their latest skirmish. While Sunni jihadists are the gravest threat to the umma (Islamic civilization) today, leaders in Tehran, Damascus, and Lebanon are justified in their refusal to fight alongside Washington. What the Americans really want is to constrain Shiite authority – they are still the real enemy.

NARRATIVE IMPACT: **ISIL FOOTPRINT:**

ANALYSIS: This narrative describes Iran's, Iranian-sponsored proxies', and Shiite communities' longstanding, historical distrust of the United States. Shia elites in Iran, Syria, and Iraq frequently espoused this narrative during last year's discussions about the nuclear agreement. Against the broader backdrop of the nuclear negotiations, the possibility of a U.S.-Iran rapprochement has risen at different points in the regional dialogue—subscribers to this narrative would resist stronger ties with the U.S. This narrative also influences conversations among Shia communities about ISIL and is particularly relevant as American forces share bases with Shiite militia in Iraq. While this is the only narrative that emerged in the landscape reflecting a Shiite view, these groups undoubtedly possess a diverse set of narratives about cooperating with the U.S. that would likely be reflected in other data sets and more specific analysis of this topic.

Increases in this narrative would likely suggest that any U.S.-facilitated political reconciliation processes within Iraq would likely be met with resistance from various elements within the Shia community in the country and the broader region. Moreover, increases in this narrative's impact in the region may signal that Tehran will be more willing to support Shia militias, as opposed to the Iraqi Armed Forces. Decreases in this narrative's impact, especially in light of the July 2015 nuclear agreement, may indicate that Iranian elites are less opposed to U.S. initiatives, due to either an increasing trust in Washington's motives or perceptions of an increased threat against Shiite communities from ISIL or other extremist groups.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

The Long Fight For Freedom (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS Kurds, especially in Iraq and Syria	NARRATIVE: For centuries, the Kurds have survived under the heel of oppressive regimes by maintaining their rich culture and language, despite facing discrimination in Syria, branded as terrorists in Turkey, and nearly eradicated by government forces in Iraq. But in 2003, the long-sought possibility of Kurdish autonomy drew ever closer as feuding leaders in Baghdad became unable to maintain control of the land. Today, though the Kurds are nearly self-governing in Northern Iraq, Daesh surrounds them with US-made tanks and Humvees while Washington refuses to supply honorable Kurdish soldiers with weapons to protect innocent civilians. As Daesh tightens its grip, Kurds can no longer be soldiers for others; they must be soldiers for themselves, with or without US assistance. This is the only way to defend the people's property, land, and honor, and keep the dream of an independent Kurdistan alive.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

	0	20	40	60	80	100
Pre-June 2014						
Post-June 2014						

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

	0%	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
Pre-June 2014						
Post-June 2014						

ANALYSIS: This narrative is significant, despite a low impact score, because the Kurds are an obvious ally for the U.S. in its efforts to increase stability and quell the tide of extremism in the region. This narrative expresses a view that U.S. efforts to maintain a political balance between influential powers in the region and cater to countries like Turkey and Iraq are alienating the Kurds — potential partners who believe they are more invested in the fight against ISIL than any other U.S. partner on the ground. This narrative suggests a perception that the U.S. strategy vis-a-vis the Kurds is unclear, and highlights the extreme difficulties inherent in political reconciliation in Iraq. Finally, this narrative highlights the perceived shortcomings of U.S. assistance programs in the ground battle against ISIL and the local opposition to the policy to exclusively arm the Iraqi Armed Forces and not any sub-state militia groups.

Increases in this narrative could suggest that the Iraqi Armed Forces' institutional strength is waning, and accordingly, Kurdish groups are increasingly perceiving the provision of security as their own responsibility. Increases could also suggest a growing anger at Washington's policies or perceived reluctance to support Kurdish efforts against ISIL. Decreases in this narrative's impact may suggest that the Kurds are viewing coalition forces or other battlefield allies in Iraq and Syria as more trustworthy and dependable partners. It could also indicate that Kurdish groups discern themselves to have a greater degree of support and flexibility, making them less likely to feel that independent, aggressive action is their only available option.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

The Revolution is Dead (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS Select mass audiences, especially students and moderate Islamists	NARRATIVE: From the dusty desert towns of Tunisia to the fabled streets of Damascus, proud Arab patriots stood up in 2011 in defense of justice and dignity. But before the gains of the revolution could be realized, the deep state struck back under the false banners of stability and security, trampling on the blood of countless martyrs who sacrificed for change. Now, bolstered by liberal Western aid, governments across the region are sowing fear and cementing their grasp on power by exiling journalists and imprisoning thousands as they cast aside promises of development and education. But the states' hasty actions only serve to further stoke the fires of extremism and hatred. Arab leaders must recognize that security without social justice is artificial, and that stability is built through dialogue instead of police batons. Otherwise, the Arab World will never achieve the freedom it longs for, and the sacrifices of the revolution will be for naught.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

ANALYSIS: This narrative is important for analysts to track because it highlights the fragility of regional states that have weathered the Arab Spring, and highlights the deep distrust and skepticism that exist between the government and select citizens in states such as Egypt, Bahrain, and Jordan. It also suggests that subscribers resent U.S. support of status quo regimes like Egypt and the GCC states, and perceive that Washington is enabling the suppression of the human rights and dignity of the Arab people. This perception may increase subscribers' skepticism of U.S. intentions when it comes to regional politics. Moreover, this narrative may foment a perception of shared grievances between Islamists and Arab liberals, both of whom believe they are under attack by status quo powers aided by the U.S. Any U.S. discussion of democracy or political progress is likely to be viewed with extreme skepticism as a result of this narrative.

Increases in this narrative could indicate the occurrence of heightened human rights violations or security crackdowns in certain areas. Moreover, sustained high impact scores could suggest that broad audiences are focused on government actions they perceive as violations, potentially foreshadowing the outbreak of civil protests. Decreases in this narrative may indicate that broad audiences are more content with their government's leadership, or that they perceive the threat from groups like ISIL and other groups as dangerous enough that they are more willing to accept the necessity of government security measures.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Forging Stability Out of Chaos (Narrative Balance: Unifying)

SUBSCRIBERS Regional elites, especially in Egypt, Jordan, GCC States, Libya, and Morocco	NARRATIVE: In 2011, earnest youth took to the street to voice their hopes for the future. But power-hungry terrorists took advantage of the vacuum that protests created, seeking to overthrow the state and impose their draconian will on the people. Today, political and military authorities have gone to great efforts to restore stability and ensure the people's will is respected, but the extremist plague still threatens to carry the region to the brink of destruction. Wise national leaders know that democracy can only be built over time, and that tyranny is sometimes necessary to avoid chaos. They must do whatever it takes to stamp out the scourge of violence and restore the state's prestige. This is the only way that order can be restored and progress can be implemented at the appropriate pace and scope.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

ANALYSIS: This narrative is closely related to *The Revolution is Dead* and reflects the perspective that incumbent elites often invoke in response to popular calls for political change. It articulates the worldview of status quo authorities who perceive the civil uprisings of the Arab Spring as a destabilizing force that extremists have exploited to gain power. Subscribers to this narrative view democracy as a frivolous – if not dangers – notion for which the Arab World is simply not ready. They view protesters as impatient, unrealistic, and lacking the understanding of what it really takes to govern; moreover, they frequently invoke the rise of ISIL and similar groups as justification for the righteousness of their outlook. Analysts can monitor this narrative in order to accurately assess the domestic threat perception of regional partner governments.

Increases in this narrative may suggest that regional elites perceive the threat from domestic and international challengers such as ISIL and related groups as increasing, or alternatively, that leaders feel politically vulnerable and are invoking this narrative to justify their actions. Decreases in the narrative might suggest that leaders are either feeling more secure in their position, or believe that broad audiences are willing to accept their security measures in light of credible threats.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Sunni Redemption (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS *Ex-Baathists and Select Sunni Tribesmen*	NARRATIVE: After brave rebels liberated Iraq from colonial humiliation, the Baath party built a modern Arab nation. But in 2003, the Americans invaded under false pretenses, callously demolishing the proud country with brute force. Since then, Washington has looked the other way as Sunnis have been marginalized from the political process and tormented by terrorist militias. Now, Daesh has appeared and coalition bombs are raining down indiscriminately in the Sunni heartland, killing thousands and displacing millions. Despite their extreme ideology, Daesh has noble battlefield goals— to liberate Baghdad and bring down the dirty, foreign-backed regime. Iraqi Sunnis must continue the nation's march of jihad to achieve freedom and unity and to build a prosperous future for the coming generations.

NARRATIVE IMPACT: **ISIL FOOTPRINT:**

ANALYSIS: This narrative reflects sentiments of anger and dispossession felt by select Sunni audiences that – since 2003 – have driven residual armed resistance to the central government in Iraq. Today, this narrative drives cooperation between ISIL and Iraqi Sunnis who perceive the regime in Baghdad as one where Sunnis will never be meaningfully included. As a result, tracking this narrative is critical to assessing the future direction of the ISIL conflict, as its resonance directly drives support for the enemy. Further, this narrative matters because it reveals how subscribers are rationalizing their support of ISIL's tactics and methods to achieve a mutual goal: the restitution of Iraq for Sunnis. So long as this narrative exists in the landscape, ISIL is likely to be highly successful within the Iraqi theater, as powerful local partisans will directly or tacitly support the organization. Finally, this narrative squarely places the blame for Sunni exclusion in Iraq on the US, highlighting the significant work Washington must put in to rebuild trust with key Sunni interlocutors.

Analysts can track increases in the Narrative Impact of Sunni Redemption in order to assess how national reconciliation efforts championed by Baghdad are succeeding or failing. Moreover, increases in this narrative may anticipate an elevated frequency of ISIL military actions, as its degree of local support among local Sunni leaders is likely to increase. Decreases in this narrative's impact may indicate that national reconciliation efforts are succeeding, convincing subscribers to this narrative that armed struggle may not be necessary to achieve their goals. Alternatively, it could also suggest disenchantment among subscribers towards ISIL, perhaps due to disagreement with ISIL's organizational tactics or strategy. Accordingly, decreases in this narrative may signal a greater likelihood of Iraq remaining intact and less risk of local or regional instability.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Daesh or Die (Narrative Balance: Fragmenting)

SUBSCRIBERS Mass Sunnis audiences in Iraq	NARRATIVE: The American invasion in 2003 shattered Iraqi Sunnis' lives, and normalcy has been absent ever since. The bombs that were intended for Saddam are now targeting the jihadis, but in both cases, Sunni communities pay the price while world leaders look the other way. In 2013, brave Sunnis peacefully demanded recognition of their rights and dignity, but Maliki merely sent his thugs to silence them. Today, corrupt politicians in Baghdad and Washington implore moderates to take up arms against Daesh. But how can anyone fight alongside the Shia criminals, who attack and exploit Sunni families, in order to expel the one group that does not categorically seek Sunni victimization? The people of Iraq are weary of fighting – all that's left is to hope for a day when Baghdad recognizes their rights as citizens by repealing anti-terror laws, restoring Sunnis to the armed services, and passing a general amnesty for all fighters. This is the only way to separate the Sunni tribes from Daesh and take the first steps towards genuine reconciliation.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

ANALYSIS: This narrative reflects the disenfranchisement and massive insecurity felt by broad Sunni audiences in Iraq. It shares many of the same sentiments as *Sunni Redemption,* but espouses a sense of resignation and defeat instead of a militant call to arms. The sense of desperation and hopelessness present in this narrative may make subscribers more susceptible to radicalization in the future. It may be driven by a perception that Baghdad is not doing enough to reintegrate Sunnis back into governance and society, and highlights that trust needs to be rebuilt between the U.S. and regional audiences. Although this narrative doesn't call for joining ISIL, it also doesn't call for active resistance against it. It may be observed moving in tandem with the *Lost Generation* narrative, which similarly reflects feelings of oppression and vulnerability.

An increase in this narrative's impact would signal that broad Sunni audiences in Iraq feel victimized by their own government and invisible to international stakeholders, and as a result, may be more willing to consider alternative political communities such as the Islamic State that provide security and social services. A decrease in this narrative's impact would probably indicate that subscribers are shifting to another narrative and it could be favorable or unfavorable for U.S. interests. Subscribers may shift to *Sunni Redemption* if they perceive that they could recapture their place in society by fighting, or they may shift to *Reforming Islam* if they perceive that by working to eliminate extremism from Islam they can improve society.

APPENDIX 2. SOURCE. SMA Support to SOCCENT: Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Narratives about the Future Assessing the Impact of ISIL, July 2015

Reforming Islam (Narrative Balance: Unifying)

SUBSCRIBERS Moderate Sunni elites and intellectuals	NARRATIVE: For decades, the Arab world has been fixated on the ideals of Islamic nationalism, whose champions sought to liberate the people from sentiments of victimhood and exploitation. But the rise of Daesh shows there can be no doubt that this thinking merely prepares the ground for a dangerous, perverted form of jihadism, which will only condemn Arab society to further bloodshed, suffering, and interference. This static Islamic heritage, which has remained without scrutiny, improvement, or revision for centuries, fuels senseless violence between sects and promotes a culture of death wherein martyrdom is the most lauded achievement. How have so many sons become seduced by a lazy ideology that causes them to abandon all ethics and revolt against the hands that feed them? Arab leaders must wrestle control of the public discourse from extremists, prevent the political manipulation of religious heritage, diminish discrimination, and address the unemployment, boredom, and low self-esteem that poison the minds of the youth. This is the only way that the region will see peace, and the *umma* will embrace the true, tolerant Islam that the Prophet intended.

NARRATIVE IMPACT:

ISIL FOOTPRINT:

ANALYSIS: This is one of the most favorable narratives for U.S. Government interests, and it is one of the only narratives in the landscape that is focused on taking ownership of the internal sociocultural shifts necessary to combat regional extremism, as opposed to blaming external actors, as seen in narratives such as *Persian Subterfuge*, *Wishy Washington*, and *Forging Stability out of Chaos*. However, the low Narrative Impact of Reforming Islam also highlights the challenge of advancing this narrative in environments of mass insecurity. Given the expanding nature of political conflict across the region due to the rise of the Islamic State, it is unlikely that this narrative will gain heightened traction in the near future in areas where ISIL poses a direct threat.

Increases in this narrative's impact may signify a growing willingness among subscribers to challenge ISIL propaganda and religious principles. It would also reflect an increasing acknowledgement of linkages between socioeconomic problems and extremism, a sentiment that may be threatening to incumbent elites. Decreases in this narrative's impact might indicate that moderate voices are being drowned out or that local populations are increasingly consumed with other concerns, such as deteriorating economies or political conflict.

APPENDIX 3: Biographies of Contributing Authors

Brigadier General Charles L. Moore: Brig. Gen. Charles L. Moore, Jr. is the Deputy Director, Global Operations (J-39). He serves as the Joint Staff focal point for information operations, military information support operations, cyber operations, electronic warfare, special technical operations, and sensitive DOD support to government agencies. General Moore was commissioned in 1989 after graduating from the US Air Force Academy. He has served as an F-16 fighter pilot, instructor pilot, weapons officer, forward air controller, and instructor at the US Air Force Fighter Weapons School, Nellis AFB, Nev. His command experience includes: the 555th Fighter Squadron at Aviano Air Base Italy, the 332nd Expeditionary Operations Group at Balad AB Iraq, the 20th Fighter Wing at Shaw AFB, S.C. and the 57th Wing at Nellis AFB Nev. General Moore is a command pilot with more than 3,000 hours in the F-16 and more than 640 hours of combat time.

Lieutenant Colonel Brian Steed: LTC Brian L. Steed is currently a Military History instructor at the US Army Command and General Staff College and a Middle East Foreign Area Officer. He served eight and a half consecutive years in the Middle East including assignments in the Levant, Mesopotamia, and the Arabian Peninsula. He served briefly in Iraq in 2005, a full year in 2010-2011, and again December 2014-February 2015. He has written numerous books on military theory, military history, and cultural awareness. His most recent book is Bees and Spiders: Applied Cultural Awareness and the Art of Cross-Cultural Influence about using cultural awareness to develop empathy and ultimately influence. He is currently working on a PhD at the University of Missouri-Kansas City with a proposed dissertation topic of "Maneuver in the Narrative Space."

MSG Sohail Shaikh: Master Sergeant (promotable) Sohail Shaikh serves as an Integration Troop Sergeant Major in the US Army Asymmetric Warfare Group, DOG Squadron, Fort Meade, MD. He recently redeployed from Iraq in support CJSOFT and SOFT-I missions. The support was specific to Strategic messaging to degrade Daesh (ISIL). MSG Shaikh provided advisory assistance to gather atmospherics and identify key communicators and conduits of messaging in order to identify and facilitate key nodes of communication, identify accessibility of local population to information mediums, and set conditions for media dissemination. He also facilitated Ministry of Peshmerga's capability to develop and disseminate IO products designed to degrade ISIL's influence throughout the northern area of responsibility. He holds a Master of Public Administration from The Troy State University, AL; and a Bachelor of Arts in Political and Military Science from San Jose State University, CA. He was recently awarded an Honorary Diploma by the Information Operations (IO) Proponent, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for his continuous contribution to the Information Operations Qualification Course (FA30).

Dr. Dana Eyre: Dana Eyre current works at SOSA, leading efforts to apply advanced analytical techniques to understanding and effective action in human domain problems. He is a sociologist specializing in the analysis, planning, coordination, and evaluation of social change and strategic communications activities. He holds a PhD in sociology from Stanford University. A former infantry and civil affairs officer, he has been a faculty member at the US Naval Postgraduate School, George Mason University, the US Military Academy, and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre in Canada. In Iraq, he served as a strategist in the Strategic Programs Operation Center (SPOC), one of the largest psychological operations the US has conducted since WWII. The SPOC was an information operations task force funded by USSOCOM and in direct support of US Forces Iraq (USFI). SPOC developed a sustained, integrated communications strategy, focusing on both positive change and undercutting radicalization, and, over 6 years, conducted a series of media programs ranging from short documentaries, to television commercials, to entertainment programs.

Dr. Ian McCulloh: Ian McCulloh is a chief scientist in the Asymmetric Operations Department of the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab. He holds a Ph.D. and M.S from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Computer Science, an M.S. in Industrial Engineering, and M.S. in Applied Statistics from the Florida State University. His current research is focused on strategic influence in online networks and data-driven influence operations and assessment. He is the author of "Social Network Analysis with Applications" (Wiley: 2013), "Networks Over Time" (Oxford: forthcoming), and has published 38 peer-reviewed papers, primarily in the area of social network analysis. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the US Army after 20 years of service in special operations, counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) forensics and targeting, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) defense. He founded the West Point Network Science Center, created the Army's Advanced Network Analysis and Targeting (ANAT) program, and created the concept of Cognitive Intelligence Preparation of the Battle space.

Dr. Jason Spitaletta: Jason Spitaletta is a Major in the US Marine Corps Reserve currently assigned to the Joint Staff J7 Deputy Director for Joint and Coalition Warfighting. He was previously assigned to 4th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO) where he deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. In civilian life, he is a researcher at The Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Laboratory. He has also taught at National Intelligence University. He holds a bachelors' degree in biochemistry from Franklin & Marshall College, a master's degree in human factors from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and a master's degree and Ph.D. in applied experimental psychology from and Catholic University. He also holds a graduate certificate from Stanford University's Summer Institute for Political Psychology.

Mr. Randall Munch: Randall Munch works in the US Army Training and Doctrine Command G27, formerly known as the Training Brain Operations Center (TBOC), as Director of the Attack the Network Training Directorate. He is a retired US Army officer (Infantry/Foreign Area Officer) with service in the 82nd Airborne Division, 10th Mountain Division, Joint Special Operations Command, Defense Intelligence Agency, Joint Staff J2, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. Deployments include Baghdad, Iraq in 2003 and Mogadishu, Somalia in 1993.

Mr. Chris Worret: Chris Worret works in the US Army Training and Doctrine Command G27, formerly known as the Training Brain Operations Center (TBOC), as Deputy Director of the Attack the Network Training Directorate. He is a retired US Navy officer (SEAL/Intelligence) with service in SEAL Team Five, Naval Special Warfare Center, Joint Special Operations Command, JTF-Horn of Africa, JIATF East, Naval Expeditionary Combat Command. Deployments include Saudi Arabia in 1990/1991, Iraq in 2003, 2006 and 2007, Djibouti and Uganda in 2009/2010.

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[i] Walker, LTG Keith C., ARCIC, US Army Functional Concept for Engagement, TRADOC Pub 525-8-5, 21 February 2014, Foreword.

ii Ibid, page iii.

iii SOCOM White Paper, "The Gray Zone", Sep 15, page 7.

ivMcCulloh, Ian (2013) Cognitive Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield, Dr. Ian McCulloh, pg 1. Hereafter cited as McCulloh, Cognitive IPB.

iv Ibid, page 2.

v Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills, White Paper dated 6 May 2013

vi The term "narrative space" equates to a subset of the "human domain", which is defined in "The US Army Functional Concept for Engagement", dated 24 Feb 14, as, "The totality of the physical, cultural, psychological, and social environments that influence human behavior to the extent that the success of any military operation or campaign depends on the application of unique capabilities that are designed to influence, fight, and win in population-centric conflicts." Page 36. The narrative space would be the realm in which narratives are used to affect human behavior through emotional cognitive responses. A joint doctrine reference that is similar to the narrative space is the "cognitive dimension", which is portrayed in JP 2-01.3, joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE), dated 21 May 14, page 1-3. The phrase "narrative space" was used for the first time in the unpublished paper "Changing the Conversation: Conceptualizing the Fight against Non-State and Post-State Actors" by LTC Brian Steed.

vii Steed, Brian, Changing the Conversation: Conceptualizing the Fight against Non-State and Post-State Actors, page 3. Hereafter cited as "Steed, Changing the Conversation".

viii SOCOM White Paper, "The Gray Zone", Sep 15, page 7.

ix This paraphrasing of the term "narrative" changes the perspective in FM 3-13, which is oriented on the friendly commander, and applies it to threat leadership. FM 3-13, dated Jan 13, page 1-4.

x Steed, Changing the Conversation, page 1.

xi McCulloh, Cognitive IPB, page 1.

xii Ibid, page 1.

xiii Eyre, Dana; Shaping the Zeitgeist: Influencing social processes as the center of gravity for strategic communications in the twenty-first century", Dr. Dana Eyre and James Littleton, page 1. Hereafter cited as "Eyre, Shaping the Zeitgeist".

xiv Cabayan H. & Canna, S. (Eds.) (2014). *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL*. Washington, DC: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

xv Spitaletta, J.A. (2015). Terror as a Psychological Warfare Objective: ISIL's Use of Ritualistic Decapitation. In J. Giordano & D. DiEuliis (Eds.) (2015). *White Paper on Social and Cognitive Neuroscience Underpinnings of ISIL Behavior and Implications for Strategic Communication, Messaging, and Influence*. Washington, DC: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

xvi Bos, N.B., Spitaletta, J.A., Molnar, A. R., Tinker, J. M., & LeNoir, J. D. (2013). *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds In Insurgencies, 2nd Ed*. Alexandria, VA: US Army Publications Directorate.

xvii Spitaletta, J.A. (2015). Terror as a Psychological Warfare Objective: ISIL's Use of Ritualistic Decapitation. In J. Giordano & D. DiEuliis (Eds) (2015). *White Paper on Social and Cognitive Neuroscience Underpinnings of ISIL Behavior and Implications for Strategic Communication, Messaging, and Influence*. Washington, DC: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

xviii Bos, N.B., Spitaletta, J.A., Molnar, A. R., Tinker, J. M., & LeNoir, J. D. (2013). *Human Factors Considerations of Undergrounds In Insurgencies, 2nd Ed*. Alexandria, VA: US Army Publications Directorate.

xix Ligon, G.S., Harms, M., Crow, J., Lundmark, L., & Simi, P. (2014). *An Organization profile of the Islamic State: Leadership, cyber expertise, and firm legitimacy*. In H. Cabayan & S. Canna (Eds) (2014). Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL. Washington, DC: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

xx Kuznar, L.A. and Moon, W.H. (2014). *Thematic Analysis of ISIL Messaging*. In H. Cabayan & S. Canna (Eds) (2014). Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL. Washington, DC: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

xxi Spitaletta, J.A. (2014). Comparative Psychological Profiles: Baghdadi & Zawahiri. In H. Cabayan & S. Canna (Eds) (2014). *Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL*. Washington, DC: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

xxii ADRP 3-0, Unified Land Operations, dated May 2012, lists the other Warfighting functions: Mission Command, Movement and Maneuver, Intelligence, Fires, Sustainment, and Protection, pages 3-3 through 3-4.

[xxiii] TRADOC Pam 525-8-5, The US Army Functional Concept for Engagement

[xxiv] Eyre, Shaping the Zeitgeist, page 180.

[xxv] The Term, "Network Engagement", is roughly synonymous with the term, "Attack the Network". In collaboration with the US Army Maneuver Center of Excellence, TRADOC G27 has been providing Attack the Network (AtN) training based on the three LOEs and six pillars of AtN for over five years. G27 has extracted Figures 1 and 2 directly from its training material, which is current as of October 2015.

[xxvi] ATP 5-0.1, Army Design Methodology, dated July 2015, pages 1-3 thru 1-5.

[xxvii] Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of military and Associated Terms, as Amended through 15 November 2013, page 195.

[xxviii] The Rubik's Cube analogy to explain the complexity and holistic nature of the narrative competition was used for the first time at the Engagement Warfighting Function CBA FSA Working Meeting in a presentation titled, "Changing the Conversation: Conceptualizing the Fight against Non-State and Post-State Actors". LTC Brian Steed, 6 May 2015. Hereafter cited as "Steed, Rubik's Cube".

[xxix] Spitaletta, J., Newton, S., & Crossett, C. (In Press). The Role of Narratives in Insurgent and Revolutionary Warfare: Examples from 24 Case Studies Spanning 1962-2009. *Journal of Cultural Intelligence, 1*(1), xxx-xxx.

[xxx] Spitaletta, J., Newton, S., & Crossett, C. (In Press). The Role of Narratives in Insurgent and Revolutionary Warfare: Examples from 24 Case Studies Spanning 1962-2009. *Journal of Cultural Intelligence, 1*(1), xxx-xxx.

[xxxi] Kuznar, L. (In preparation). The "Islamic State" in Its Own Words: An Anthropological Assessment of Their Reality and the Implications for Mitigating their Violence?

[xxxii] McCulloh, Cognitive IPB, 2013. Note, what is presented in this paper is a subset of a lengthier analytical process.

[xxxiii] Joint Publication 2-03.1, JIPOE, dated 21 May 14, pages I-5 through I-6.

[xxxiv] The PMESII acronym stands for political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure. This term is used within TRDOC as a doctrinal means of framing the operational environment. It is codified in Army doctrine such as Army Doctrinal pub 3-0, Unified Land Operations, dated October 2011.

[xxxv] To accomplish this type of SNA, the analyst should convert the link diagram into a format that can be imported into a social network analysis software tool, such as Organizational Risk Analyzer (ORA). The ORA tool and other similar software tools are able to compute multiple, complex algorithms that are required to identify key nodes based on measures of centrality, as described in JP 2-01.3.

[xxxvi] McChrystal, General Stanley, Team of Teams; Tantum Collins; David Silverman; Chris Fussell; Penguin Publishing Group, 2015

[xxxvii] Votel, General Joseph, Commander's Forward to the USSOCOM White Paper, "The Gray Zone", 9 September 2015