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Ignorance is Bliss: The Impacts of International Travel and Education on Political Beliefs

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Ignorance is Bliss:

The Impacts of International Travel and Education on Political Beliefs

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International Studies

SIT, Middle East, Jordan, Amman

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Abstract

This ISP examines the link between international travel and selected political beliefs. While the literature on the political effects of international travel are almost non-existent, many works exist that link increased education to higher political skepticism. In this study, we test the theory that international travel can be interpreted as education, and thus can have the same effect of engendering political skepticism.

This theory is tested using a survey which was distributed at various locations in Amman, Jordan. The survey first asked about the respondent's basic demographical information, education level and international travel history. The political questions focused on two main themes: peace and intervention. The respondent was asked to rate their optimism for peace in various Middle Eastern conflicts and their beliefs on the ability for American or Russian military intervention to bring peace to the same Middle Eastern conflicts.

One hundred surveys were collected and analyzed. It was found that international travel had no effect on optimism for peace in Syria, Iraq, Libya or Yemen. However, the results showed a strong trend in other areas. Those who had traveled internationally, compared to those who had never left Jordan, were significantly more pessimistic about peace in the Arab/Israeli conflict, and were significantly more skeptical about the ability for American military intervention to bring peace to Syria, Iraq, Libya or Yemen. Additionally, those who had traveled internationally were significantly more skeptical about Russian involvement in Syria. The most significant aspect of analysis showed that traveling to more countries resulted in more skepticism. The results for optimism for peace in Syria, Iraq, Libya or Yemen are muddled because current events change those situations constantly. However, views on the Arab/Israeli peace and foreign military intervention in the region are long-held, resulting in clear evidence that international travel generates political skepticism.

ISP Keywords: Social Sciences, Regional Studies: Middle East, Political Science

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I'd like to thank my Jordanian host-brother, Amer, for his assistance and deep knowledge of how to do these kinds of things.

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Introduction

I chose this topic for my ISP for many of the same reasons that drove me to study abroad in the first place. I believe that the only way to truly be able to know, understand and relate to culture different than my own is to see it with my own eyes. I have spent three years studying the Middle East, Arabic and Islam at Loyola University Chicago, but even after writing countless papers on these subjects, I realized that I was not getting the whole picture. I knew that if I really wanted to specialize in this, or any, region, I could not learn everything through books, media and Middle Easterners I met in Chicago. To be truly well informed on the Middle East and the Arab World, I knew I needed to go to the region and see it myself.

I have spent just over 90 days in Jordan and every single day I have interacted with Jordanians. I have had conversations with teachers, my home-stay family, taxi cab drivers, as well as people in cafes, restaurants, in shops and on the street. Each of these experiences has deepened my knowledge of Jordan and of the Middle East region. One of the most beneficial relationships I have had in Jordan has been with my host-brother, Amer Abu Shakra. Amer is 31 years old, a dentist and working on a Master's degree in Public Health. We have had long conversations about politics, culture, religion and society and these conversations helped inspire the topic I chose for this ISP. I decided to examine the impact, if any, that travel has on political views. As this topic developed, I decided that education levels would be an interesting additional factor to examine as well. Does more education influence political opinions? In the United States, higher education is commonly thought to have a liberalizing effect; does that hold true in Jordan as well?

As for the political opinions I sought to measure, I decided that for a country surrounded by turmoil, peace would be a subject on which everyone would have an opinion on. I decided to focus on five contexts: the Arab/Israeli conflict, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. I thought it would be interesting to see which country Jordanians felt had the best chances for peace. For Americans thousands of miles away, it is easy to be pessimistic about the region but many Jordanians have personal ties to these places and are emotionally invested in a peaceful outcome. I sought to leverage these personal ties into truthful, engaged responses to my questions. Additionally, in the context of contentious debates in the US over military involvement in the Middle East, I was curious about public opinion regarding Western intervention in the Middle East generally, so I decided to include it as well by applying it to the previously mentioned five contexts.

While there is an adequate amount of scholarly literature on the relationship between education levels and political beliefs, there is almost none on the relationship between travel and political beliefs. The scholarly work on the impact of education is, for the most part, straight forward: education increases an individual's awareness of the world around him or her. Three authors, Bardes, Davis and Weakliem all state this in varying ways in their work, but the trend is obvious and logical, and will be discussed further in the literature review. A more interesting theory is put forth by authors Kushman, Groth and Childs. Their work argues that travel is a form of education, specifically experiential education. With that in mind, this ISP will attempt to prove the adage, "ignorance is bliss". In other words, we hypothesize that those with higher levels of education levels and more international travel are more pessimistic about peace in

Middle Eastern countries, and more skeptical about American and Russian involvement in the region, while those with less education who have not left Jordan have more optimism for peace and are more likely to believe that America and Russia can help.

Literature Review

The literature associated with this ISP was, at first, hard to analyze. The topic being studied is simultaneously broad and narrow. There has been ample research done on the effects of education on political viewpoints. Education has the ability to rectify ignorance, which is a common root of stereotypes and mistrust between cultures. The opposite side of this argument is that education can engender awareness, an argument claimed by many scholars. Davis and Robinson hold that “Education produces a greater awareness of inequality in society by familiarizing individuals with experiences different from their own” (Davis & Robinson, 1991, p. 73). This newfound awareness created through the process of education is not limited to societal inequality, but can be relevant to every aspect of life. Weakliem links education to greater “social consciousness” in general while Bardes proceeds to apply it to the political spectrum (Weakliem, 2002, p. 142). Bardes argues that education is “the variable that has most often been linked to increased understanding of the complexity of the political arena and therefore to differences in opinion structuring on foreign affairs” (Bardes & Oldendick, 1978, p. 503). This makes sense, since politics is often confusing and misleading because those in power often lie to stay in power. Weakliem explains the best way to defeat this is through education,

“Education almost necessarily imparts some degree of skepticism. Students learn that conclusions must be justified by logical reasoning and evidence, and that even respected authorities may be mistaken. This outlook may be applied to all areas of life, making educated people more critical of institutions and authority in general.” (Weakliem, 2002, p. 143)

It should be noted that in this context, “education” is defined as higher education. Primary and secondary schools focus on specific, tangible skills such as language and mathematics. Higher education invites students to question the world around them, and to be skeptical of the answers they receive. Weakliem phrases this as, “Education clearly increases political interest and involvement. Educated people are more likely to have an opinion,” while Davis and Robinson maintain that increased education and sophistication “reduce commitment to traditional authority” (Weakliem, 2002, p. 142). The common idea between these scholars is that education opens the mind of the individual, marginalizing ignorance and inviting skepticism.

The important connection that this ISP will attempt to make was inspired by the idea that, “International travel apparently has an important influence on the perceptions people hold of other states and on the actual and potential dissemination of ideas,” and the logical reasoning that follows (Kushman, Groth, & Childs, 1980, p. 614). This quote can be taken to mean that international travel is a form of education, because what is education if not the “dissemination of

ideas”? Therefore, if international travel is education, and education is proven to encourage skepticism, especially political skepticism, then it is logical to assume that international travel correspondingly encourages skepticism. This is the theory around which this ISP’s hypothesis is based.

Methodology

The methodology of this is made up of two components: interviews and a survey. As the survey makes up the bulk of my information, there was only a need for three interviews. The survey began with its formulation: creating questions. As the topic focuses the dual concepts of peace and intervention, the questions needed to be specific for the results to be equally specific. The best way to accomplish this was to ask about the prospects of peace in select Middle Eastern countries and then to ask if military intervention in those same countries could help bring about peace. The major conflicts in the Middle East are as easy to identify as they are complex to solve: **Syria** is involved in a multidimensional civil war with international intervention and geopolitical implications; **Iraq** is still recovering from the 2003 American invasion and is now confronting ISIS; **Libya** is largely a failed and lawless state following Western intervention in 2011; **Yemen** has descended into civil war complicated by controversial Saudi Arabian military intervention; and the **Arab/Israeli** conflict is in constant flux. These were to become the countries upon which this study mainly focuses.

Alongside these main topics, some smaller topics are explored as well. Question 1.1 (immediately after the question on peace in the Arab/Israeli conflict) asks about the extent to which the surveyed individual has changed their mind on the prospects for peace in the Arab/Israeli conflict. The final question asks if the surveyed individual feels

that Russian participation in Syria is useful. This question was added as check on the questions about American military intervention because it is easily conceivable that someone might want a military intervention, but not by America.

Next, the questions were generally refined and improved. “Arab/Israeli conflict” was substituted for “Palestinian/Israeli conflict” to allow it to appeal to a wider demographic and to acknowledge its significance in the region. “Western military intervention” was changed to “American military intervention” to remove ambiguities that could arise from not specifying where the intervention originated. While this regrettably removed Europe from the scope of the study, the question regarding Russia allows for the surveyed individual to express the want for an intervention that isn’t American. There is no question about military intervention in the Arab/Israeli conflict because there is no active military campaign as there are in the others.

The exact phrasing of the questions was complicated by the need for them to be coherently translated into Arabic. The survey was distributed in Arabic to reach the widest possible audience and so that the questions could be relied upon to be understood. All results were recorded on a scale of 1-10. For questions regarding optimism (Questions 1-5), 10 equated a high degree of optimism while 1 represented a high degree of pessimism. For the question asking about extent to which the surveyed individual has changed their mind on the prospects for peace in the Arab/Israeli conflict (Question 1.1), 10 represents a high degree of change while 1 represents no change. Questions on American military intervention (Questions 6-9) are phrased as such: “Do you think that Western military intervention would help achieve peace in _____?” In this case, 10 represents agreement with this statement while 1 represents disagreement. The final

question asks if Russia's participation in Syria is helpful and thus 10 represents helpful while 1 represents harmful.

The demographical information was placed on a separate page so that the questionnaire would be coherent as a double-sided handout. This information is divided into three parts. Part I asks basic demographical questions about age, gender and nationality. Part II asks about education level, giving space for those in higher education to write their specialization/major. Part III asks if the surveyed individual has ever been out of Jordan, and if so: which country, where inside the country, duration of their stay and their reason for visiting.

The questionnaire was distributed two ways: through my advisor, Dr. Amaal Malkawi, and her husband, Dr. Ismaiel Abu Amoud, to their students at Jordan University. Dr. Malkawi is a professor in the College of Educational Sciences while Dr. Amoud teaches Tourism Management in the College of Archaeology and Tourism. We also distributed the survey at various locations throughout Amman. After recovering the first thirty-five surveys distributed by my advisor, several conclusions became apparent that influenced how the rest of the research was conducted. First, the data collected from the university would mostly be from those between eighteen and twenty-two years old. Second, there weren't a large enough proportion of people who had traveled internationally to be useful to the project. Third, while the original ISP proposal stated the hope to survey "at least 30" adults, a larger sample size would be needed to find statistical significance in the results. These conclusions led me to deduce that I needed to distribute the survey in a location with adults and where there existed a good possibility of finding Jordanians who had been abroad.

The best area to accomplish this was in Luweibdeh or Weibdeh, an artsy neighborhood not far from downtown and the main tourist district, Rainbow St. Weibdeh has many cafes and is known for its international and intellectual atmosphere. Much of the surveying was done at Café Rumi, a locally owned café that is just as suited for productivity as it is for relaxation. I had noticed it prior to beginning my ISP because it was open Friday mornings when almost all other small businesses are closed in observance of the Muslim day of prayer (like Sundays in Christianity). While the whole neighborhood was shuttered, Café Rumi was bustling. Inside, a patron is just as likely to overhear people speaking English as they are Arabic. I decided that Café Rumi was an ideal location to distribute the survey. Over the course of two days I distributed almost 30 surveys, mostly at Café Rumi.

The data collected at Rumi was exactly what was needed for this project, demographically, but it also led to numerous interesting conversations. I met many activists and other people passionate about Israel, the West and the inhumanity of ISIS. Just as often, I met people that were very curious about my research, my reasons for coming to Jordan, my experience here, and the perceptions of everyday American of Middle Easterners. At one point, after a two-hour conversation, two women in their mid-twenties whom had been surveyed invited me to join them at another café. They brought me to a café that, realistically, no tourist could ever find. It was called “Bait Baladna” which translates roughly to “Our Country’s House” and was situated high on a hill so that it overlooked the central downtown area of Amman. Here we talked more about Arab and American culture, comparing and contrasting, and discussing the negative stereotypes some in both cultures have of the other. At one point before the evening was over, one of

my new friends offered to distribute my survey for me to the people in the café and to explain to them, in Arabic, the goal of my ISP. My Arabic skills aren't advanced enough to do this myself, so I agreed and was able to collect between eight and ten more surveys. I was then able to distribute the remainder of my surveys during one of Dr. Amoud's classes, obtaining roughly 45 more.

To supplement the data gathered by my survey, three interviews were conducted. The first interview was on March 22, 2017, with Dr. Amaal Malkawi, who previously lived in the United States for eight years. Dr. Malkawi and her husband were living in New Mexico, with their three children, while they completed their post-graduate studies. We discussed her time in the U.S. and the impact it had on her, her family and her kids, as well as the inevitable readjustment when they returned to Jordan. She provided valuable insights at the beginning of the ISP period which influenced the project from the start.

The second interview took place on April 12, 2017 with Tamara Ammari. Tamara was born in the United States to Jordanian parents and lived there, outside New Orleans, Louisiana, until she was sixteen. At that point, she and her family returned to Jordan. I decided to interview because of this experience and because, at twenty-one years old, she had a different experience of the similarities and differences between American and Jordanian cultures, as well as unique insights on the transition between the two.

The third interview took place on April 25, 2017, with Dr. Ismaiel Abu Amoud and was particularly interesting due to his specialization in the tourism industry and knowledge about the travel patterns of Jordanians when they go abroad. We spoke at length about these topics and he was very helpful in supplying information that would've

been difficult to obtain otherwise. By the time of this interview, 65% of the survey data had been collected and preliminary connections had been observed in the data. These observations were shared with Dr. Amoud, who was asked to give his opinions on the connections that had been made at that time. While the data had obviously evolved by the time it was completed and some of these observations did not endure, Dr. Amoud provided relevant insights that continued to be valuable as the final data was analyzed.

While this ISP was successful in most respects, complications were encountered. The most significant, as mentioned earlier, was a lack of diversity in the education levels of the sample surveyed. Ideally, we would have preferred surveyed at least thirty individuals who either completed only secondary school, or who had graduate degrees. The final sample was dominated by those working on Bachelor's degrees (91%). This makes it almost impossible to draw any conclusions on the effect of education from the data collected over the course of this project.

Similarly, while the survey data contains an adequate proportion of Jordanians who have been abroad, the number of those who have been to the West (Europe, Canada or the United States) was also disappointing. We believe that, with a sample size large enough to be statistically normal, intriguing conclusions could have been drawn between the results of those who had traveled to the west, those who had traveled regionally, and those who had never left Jordan. The same problem can be found in the diversity of the sample in terms of both age and nationality. The full range of ages spans from eighteen to thirty-eight, but exactly half of the sample was between twenty and twenty-two years old. The same is true of the variety of nationalities sampled, where 91% are Jordanian. This statistic is less regrettable because the aim of the survey was to sample Jordanians.

However, we realized belatedly that having a greater diversity of nationalities would have been beneficial to this study.

These problems, at first, made the final data analysis process frustrating. Compounding this frustration was difficulty with the statistics application SPSS. Even with prior experience, the program's vast array of abilities made finding the correct tests difficult. The initial inability to find significance in the survey in the face of a looming deadline was troublesome and wasted time. However, once understood, SPSS proved to be an amazing resource that became satisfying to work with and stimulated new and creative ways to look at the data.

While the twin difficulties of the data and the statistics software initially exacerbated each other, they eventually ended up as mutual solutions. The lack of clear or unconvincing patterns on the surface of the data encouraged perseverance in conquering SPSS; whereas if the data had been obvious, then we would not have been forced to learn how to work the program, a lasting skill. Correspondingly, SPSS allowed for the data to be sorted and organized, revealing critical statistics that were vital to the conclusions of this ISP.

Findings/Results

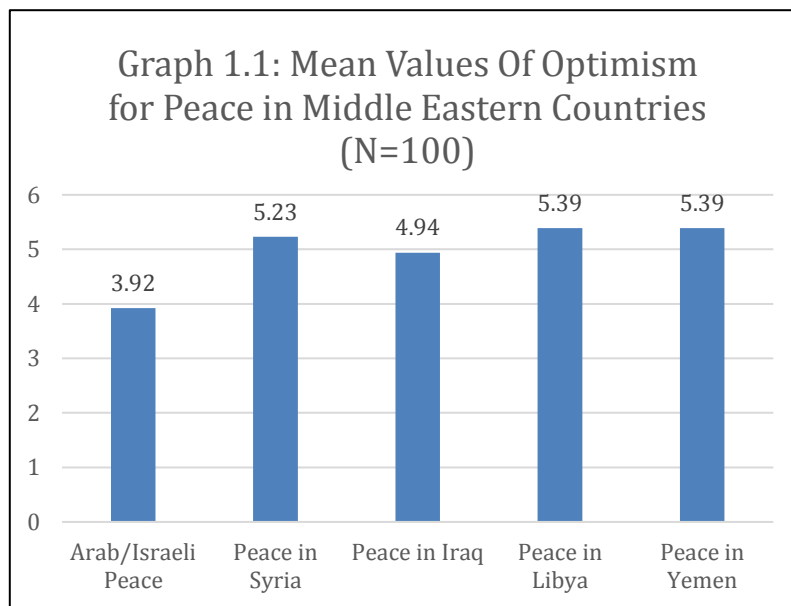
1. General Observations

The results of the survey are based on the one hundred questionnaires suitable for analysis. The average age of the sample is twenty-two years old and ranges from eighteen to thirty-eight. We collected responses from fifty-three men and forty-seven women. Ninety-one of the respondents identified themselves as Jordanian, two as Iraqi, two as Palestinian, one as Bahraini and one declined to identify. Ninety-one of those surveyed

were either working on their Bachelor's degree, or had completed it. Five listed only a secondary education and four indicated a Master's degree or higher.

The data are divided into two main sections: questions that concern peace, and questions that concern intervention. The questions concerning peace are rated on a 1-10 scale with 10 representing optimism, and 1 representing pessimism. The results are shown on Graph 1.1.

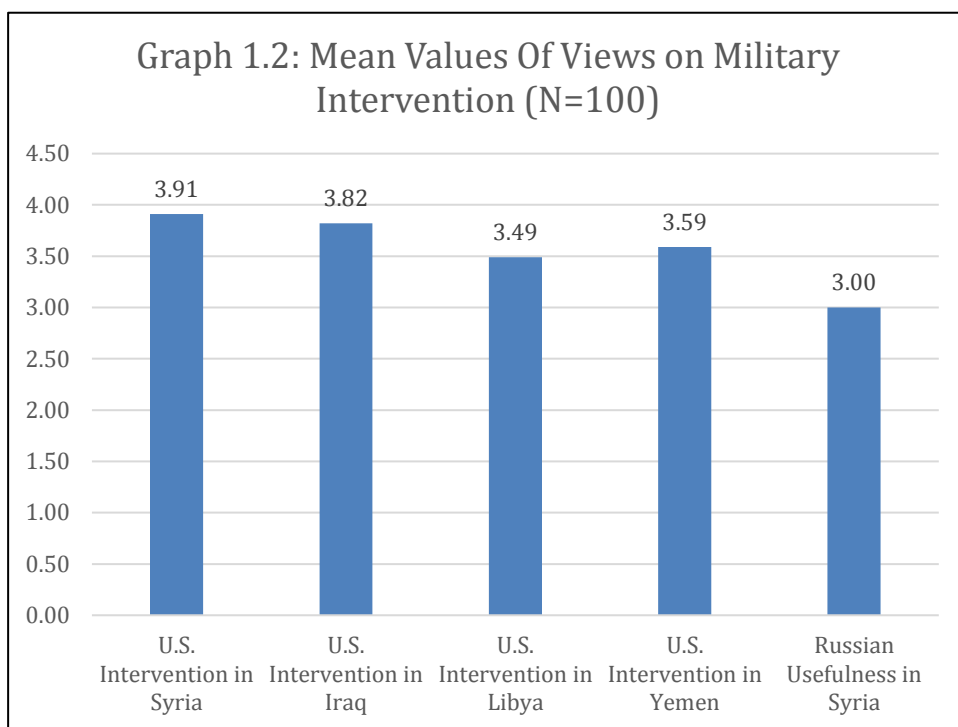
Of the countries mentioned, hopes for peace in Libya and Yemen were recorded as the highest at 5.39/10. Optimism for peace in Syria was almost as high at 5.23, while hope was slightly lower regarding Iraq, and significantly



lower for the Arab/Israeli conflict. It is significant to note that average response of any of the countries mentioned never exceeds 5.39. Overall, the sample does not have a high amount of optimism for peace in these countries. Equally noteworthy is the pessimism regarding the Arab/Israeli conflict. While Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen average 5.24, the Arab/Israeli response was significantly lower.

The second group of questions concern military intervention in the Middle East. The first four questions ask, “Do you think that American military intervention would help achieve peace in _____?” These questions are hypothetical, we didn’t ask about the effectiveness of the American invasion of Iraq or about the American involvement in Libya or Syria. The questions were posed this way to determine if the respondent thought that American military involvement *could* help achieve peace in each country. Additionally, the respondent was asked about their views on Russian involvement in the Syrian context specifically. However, it should be noted that the question’s phrasing

revolved around the helpfulness/usefulness of the Russian involvement, where 10 represents “beneficial/useful” and 1 represents “harmful”. While this is obviously not the same scale as the American questions, the questions can be placed in the same graph



and compared on the assumption that 10 generally represents “approval of intervention” and 1 represents “disapproval of intervention”. The results can be seen in Graph 1.2.

Overall, these results trend heavily towards the negative. All data points are between 3.00 and 3.91. The lack of real spread makes it hard to see significant

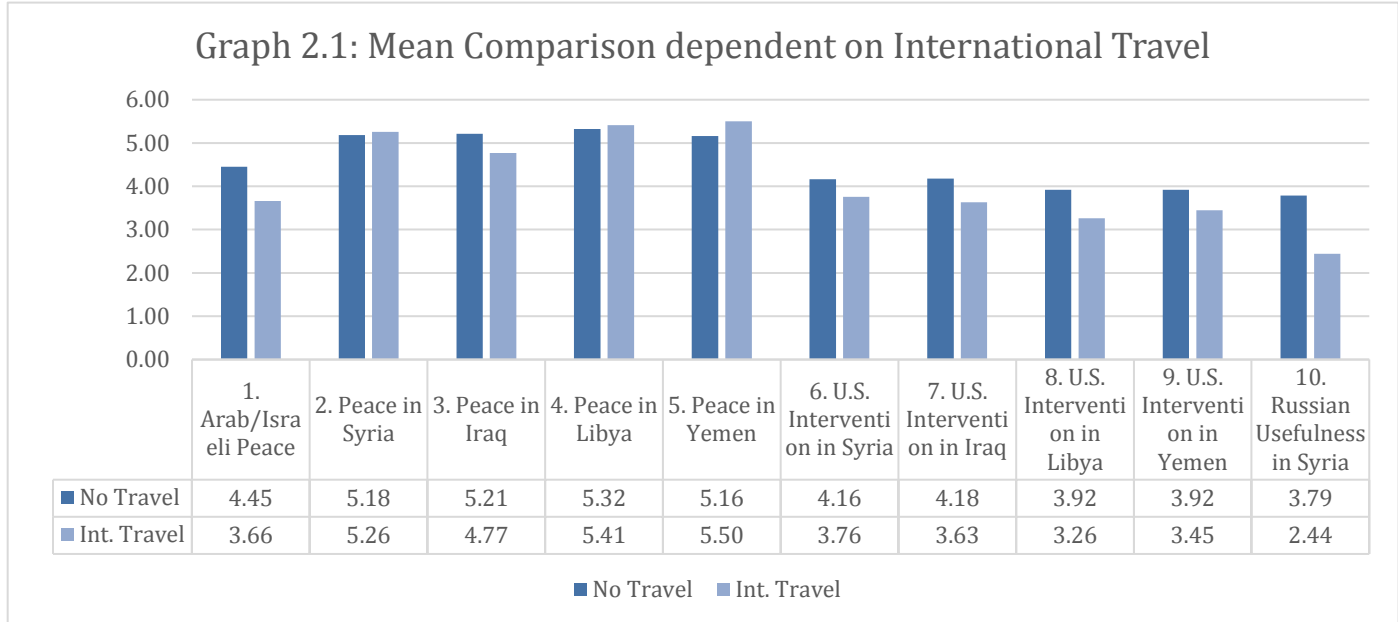
differences between the questions, but it is interesting that the U.S./Syria result was higher than the Russia/Syria result, though not significantly so.

The general data here, including all one hundred of those surveyed, shows only superficial insights into the distribution of the two groups. Optimism for peace is generally around 5/10, except in the Arab/Israeli context, where it is lower. Belief in the ability of American military intervention to bring peace is also low, as is the belief that Russian involvement in Syria is helpful.

2. The Effect of Travel

To test the hypothesis set forth in this study, the data collected needed to be segregated according to degrees of international travel. These data were classified into the following groups: those who had never left Jordan (38), those who had left Jordan (62), those who had recorded going to at least two countries (41), those who had recorded going to at least three countries (33), those who had recorded going to Syria (33), and those who had recorded going to the West (U.S., Canada or Europe) (19). The group who had traveled to the West was too small to be satisfactorily normal, but the remainder of the data proved to be very interesting.

A. No International Travel vs. International Travel



The first order of business was to look for an obvious difference between those who had and who had not traveled internationally. Graph 2.1 shows the results of all ten questions. This data gave the first glimpse of the pattern that is evident throughout the entirety of the study:

1. The values for Arab/Israeli peace are lower than that of the “peace” group.
2. Values for Russian usefulness are lower than the rest of the “intervention” group.
3. The relationship between those who traveled and those who have not is noticeably negative in the “intervention” group.
4. Questions 2-5 follow no discernable pattern.
5. The effect of travel in values for question #1 resembles that of the “intervention” group.

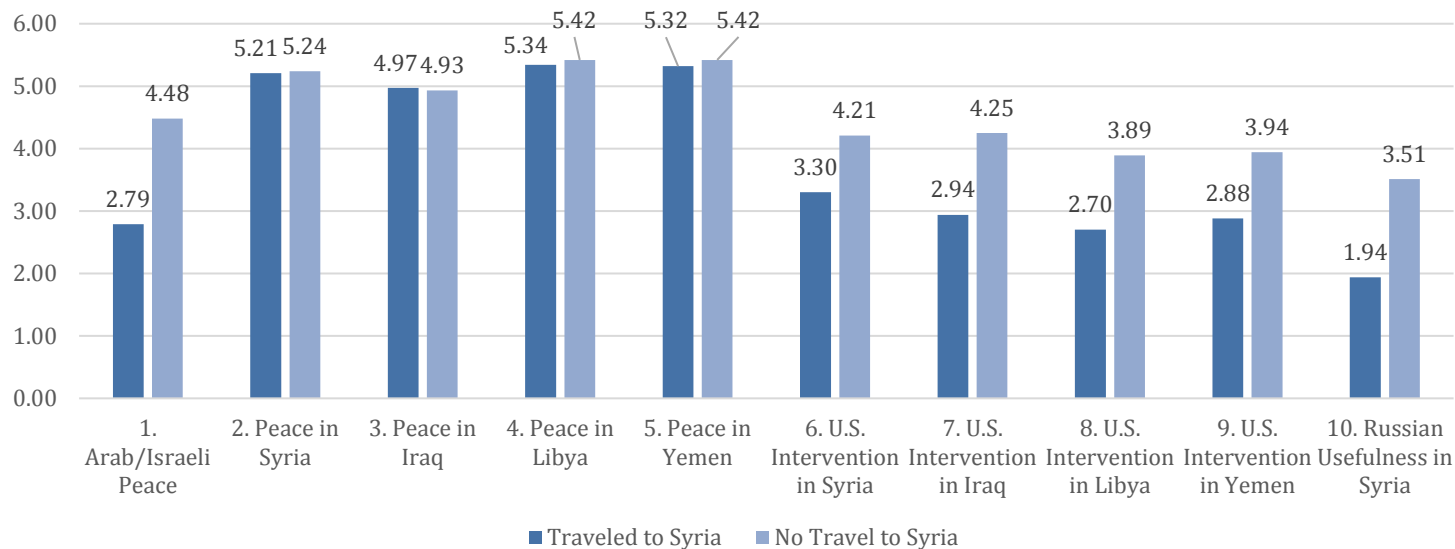
While there is still no significant change which is obvious across the board, significance was found in one question. A statistically significant difference was found in Question 10. It can be statistically proven that those who have traveled internationally have significantly lower scores than those who have not traveled. This means that *those who have traveled internationally find Russian involvement in Syria significantly more harmful than those who have never left Jordan.*

Additionally, it was felt that some of these data needed to be refined. Many of those surveyed had only left the country to go to Mecca on religious pilgrimage, or to Sharm El Sheikh, a vacation destination in Egypt on southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula with beaches on the Red Sea. Dr. Amoud had explained to me that Sharm El Sheikh was one of the top tourist destinations for Jordanians because it is affordable. He said that for the price of one night in Aqaba, Jordan's Red Sea port city, a family could stay four nights in Sharm El Sheikh. He also mentioned that it was a popular destination for Jordanian college students due to its price and the beaches. To account for this, the data was reevaluated to exclude trips to Mecca or Sharm El Sheikh as counting as international travel. This was only applied when these two destinations were the only international travel listed.

After altering the data, six data points had changed and the significance test was re-run. Under these conditions, a significant difference was found in both Question 1 and Question 10. Translated to words this means that *those who had traveled internationally, under these conditions, were both significantly more pessimistic about Arab/Israeli peace and more skeptical about Russian involvement in Syria.*

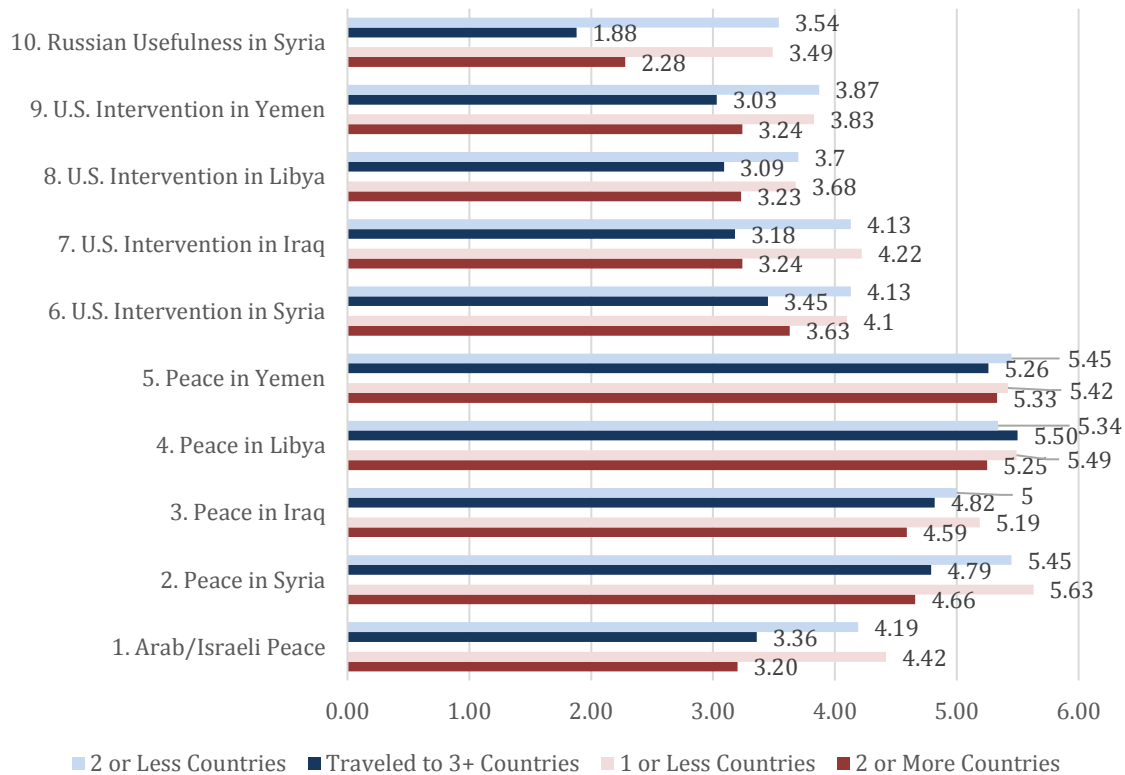
B. The Effect of Having Traveled to Syria

Graph 2.2: Means Comparison dependent on Travel to Syria



It was observed while analyzing the survey results that one-third of the total sample had listed either travel to Syria, or listed Syria as their country of origin. The current situation in Syria and this unexpected percentage prompted an analysis of this group. Thirty-three respondents had traveled to Syria, while sixty-seven had not. Graph 2.2 shows the results of the analysis. Significance was found in multiple areas. *Those who had traveled to Syria were significantly more pessimistic about Arab/Israeli peace and significantly more skeptical about the ability of American military intervention to bring peace to Iraq, Libya or Yemen.* Additionally, they were significantly more skeptical about Russian involvement in Syria. The highest level of significance was found in Questions 1 and 10, which were significant at the .01 level, whereas significance was found at the .1 level for Questions 7, 8 and 9. It is also interesting to note the equality between the two groups on the subject of peace in Syria and Iraq. In both cases, the difference between the means was less than .04.

Graph 2.3: Mean Comparison based on Degree of International Travel



C. Effect of Increased International Travel

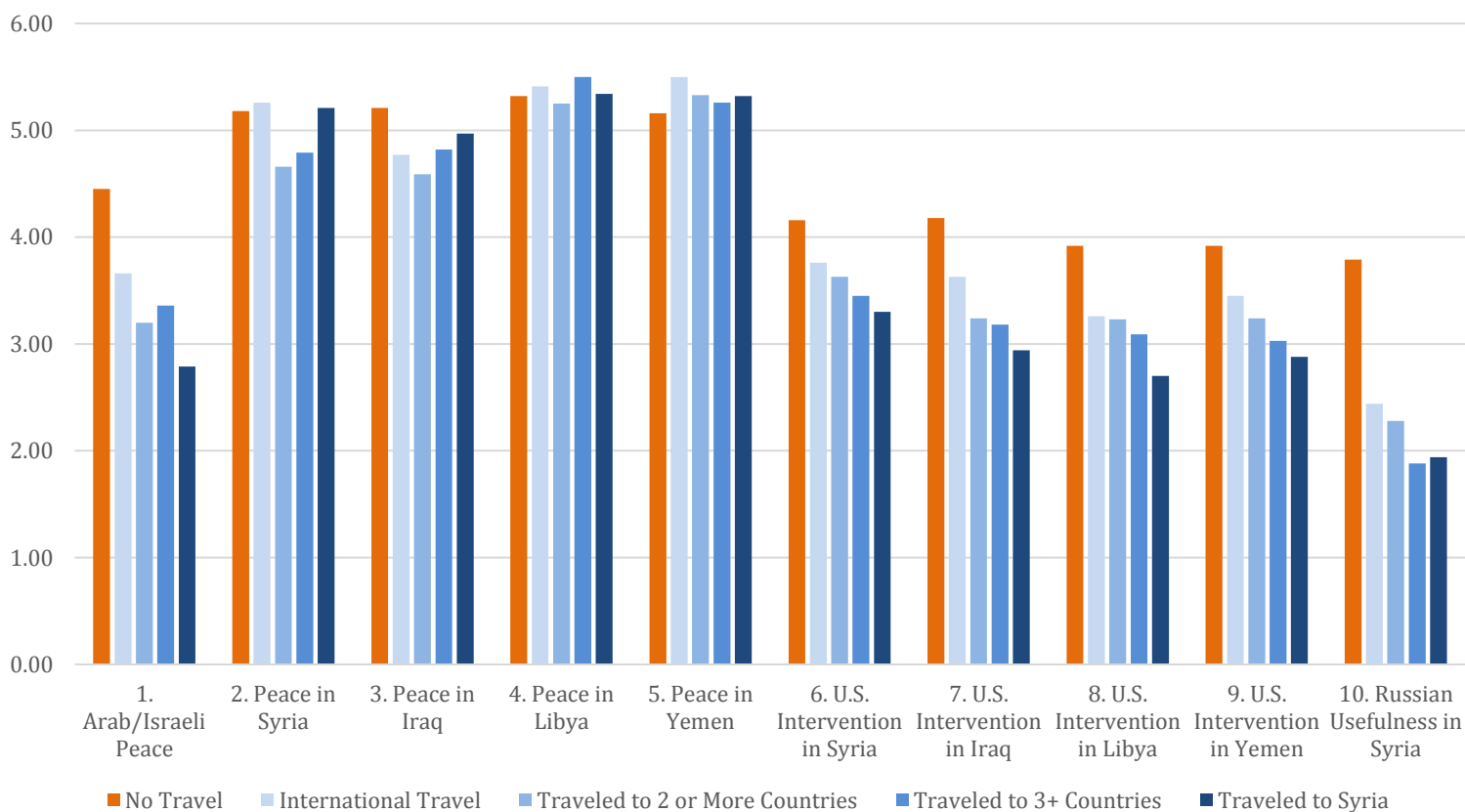
We next looked to see the kind of effect travel to multiple countries had on these political views. We divided these data based on the number of countries each individual had listed. It was determined that sixty-two respondents had traveled internationally, forty-one had traveled to at least two countries and thirty-three had reported traveling to at least three countries. After completing the data analysis, significance was found in three areas. Those who traveled to at least two countries were significantly more skeptical about Arab/Israeli peace and Russian involvement in Syria (at the .05 level). Those who

reported traveling to at least three countries were only significantly more skeptical about Russian involvement in Syria, but this significance was measured at the .01 level. The results are shown in Graph 2.3.

D. Total Effect of International Travel

While the results of this section thus far have shown that travel has had an effect on some aspects of the political views being investigated by this study, the most striking evidence is when all of these separate comparisons are set next to each other. Graph 2.4 and an accompanying data table do just that.

Graph 2.4: Mean Comparison Based on Extent of International Travel



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	N
All	3.92	5.23	4.94	5.39	5.39	3.91	3.82	3.49	3.59	3.00	100
No Travel	4.45	5.18	5.21	5.32	5.16	4.16	4.18	3.92	3.92	3.79	38
International Travel	3.66	5.26	4.77	5.41	5.50	3.76	3.63	3.26	3.45	2.44	62
Traveled to 2 or More Countries	3.20	4.66	4.59	5.25	5.33	3.63	3.24	3.23	3.24	2.28	41
Traveled to 3+ Countries	3.36	4.79	4.82	5.50	5.26	3.45	3.18	3.09	3.03	1.88	33
Traveled to Syria	2.79	5.21	4.97	5.34	5.32	3.30	2.94	2.70	2.88	1.94	33

Graph 2.4 visualizes many of the observations mentioned in section 2A. The values for Arab/Israeli peace are lower than those of Questions 2-5. The values regarding Russian involvement are lower than those for American involvement in Questions 6-9. More interesting, however, are these observations:

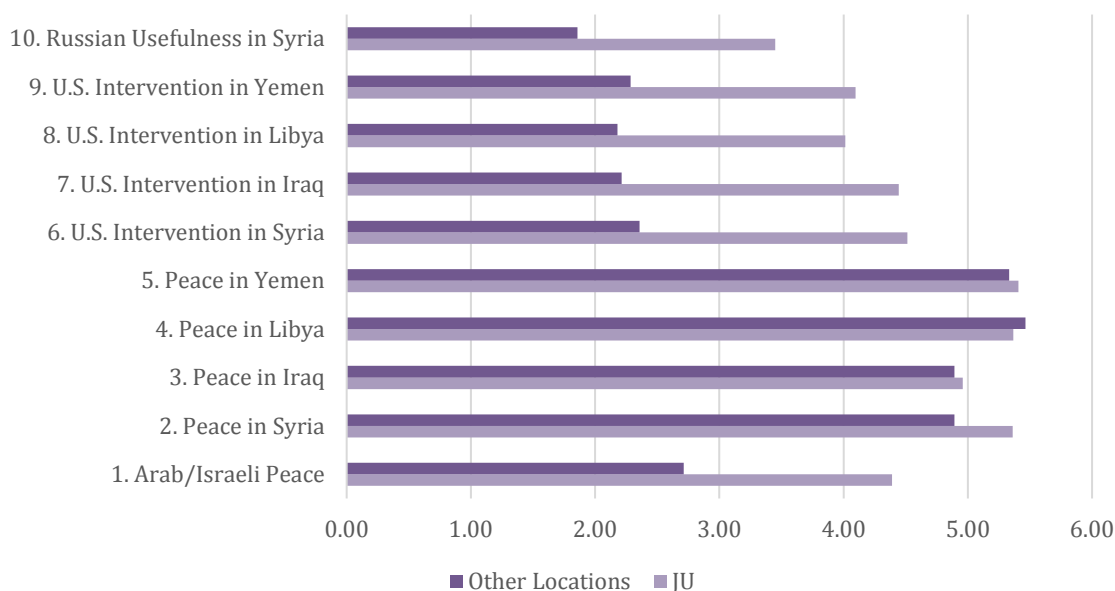
- Belief in the ability for American intervention to help achieve peace is highest among those who have never left Jordan and *declines as international travel increases*.
- Belief that Russian involvement in Syria is helpful is highest among those who have never left Jordan and *declines as international travel increases*.
- While Questions 2-5 follow no discernable pattern, optimism for peace in the Arab/Israeli conflict generally *declines as international travel increases*.

It is also interesting to note that those who have traveled to Syria have the lowest responses to Questions 6-9, indicating skepticism of in the ability for American intervention to help achieve peace in those contexts. Those who have traveled to Syria also have the least optimism for hope in the Arab/Israeli conflict, but have a relatively high degree of hope for peace in Syria.

E. Other Possible Factors

To isolate international travel as the factor, the data were manipulated to look for alternative effects. There was no significant difference between genders on any of the questions, and their 53/47 sampling was close to even. Looking for significant differences

Graph 2.5: Means Dependent on Survey Distribution Location



between nationalities was intriguing, but with a sample of only nine non-Jordanians, the results of any such test could not have been trusted. However, significance was found when the data were coded by the location where they were collected. The surveys collected in classroom at Jordan University (72) were compared against those collected elsewhere (28). A significant difference was found between the two groups for six questions. The results are shown in Graph 2.5.

These data indicate that those who took the survey in a classroom setting are less likely to be skeptic. This is interesting, but does not subtract from effect of international

travel because. The fact that the results taken at a University were significantly higher can not indicate education level as being causative because education level throughout the whole sample is largely uniform. The naïveté of young students is not to blame either since additional tests showed that there was no significant difference in the data when those above the age of twenty-one were compared to those younger than twenty-one. That leaves only the makeup of the specific classes where the surveys were taken, which is beyond the purview of this study. The sample of those who traveled internationally was large enough to be normal, thus isolating the effects seen in Graph 2.4.

Conclusion

The data collected and analyzed for this study provided many interesting results. The hypothesis that international travel induces skepticism is an interesting philosophical idea, that also makes sense in the real world. Without travel, it is hard to really know about the world outside your own country. Conversations with those who have been abroad aren't always accurate and TV, movies, books and other media tend to either romanticize or dramatize other places. It is difficult to imagine the reality other countries, especially those mired in conflict such as the ones which were the subject of this study. Those who have traveled have learned how complex, conflicting and dissimilar the world is. Such a perspective invites skepticism of the world and the motives of states just as Bardes and Weakliem (Bardes & Oldendick, 1978, p. 503) (Weakliem, 2002, p. 143).

This perspective is reflected in the findings of this study. Those who hold the most idealistic views of the world's powers are those have never seen anything but their own country. Inversely, those who have traveled to, or originated from, a country like Syria, which has been ravaged to its core, are significantly more cynical. This cynicism is

not reflected in questions on peace in Syria, Iraq, Libya or Yemen because the conflicts there are the result of recent popular movements and the reactions to them. However, in the case of a protracted conflict such as the Arab/Israeli context, that cynicism is evident.

Those who have been abroad know that the Israel/Palestine problem is impossible to reconcile. Those who have been abroad know that American military intervention is not going to help achieve peace in these conflicts. Those who have been abroad know that Russian involvement in Syria isn't going to be helpful in the long-term. They know this not through education, as education level is almost constant, but through their experiences outside of Jordan. Perhaps ignorance really is bliss, but those without the benefit of ignorance understand the consequences of geopolitical meddling in the Middle East.

Study Limitations

Due to the context in which this ISP was conducted, it is not as robust as could be hoped. A small sample size shows only a small piece of the full picture. A larger sample size would increase respectability of these findings. It would have been ideal to have a sample with great variation in education level and in nationality. All surveys were distributed in urban Amman, with no input from rural areas. Aside from limitations due to the sample collected, this project could have benefitted from someone with a greater understanding of statistics and statistical programs and an ability to use them more efficiently and extract more from the data.

A longer and more robust questionnaire could have yielded explanations for some observations that did not make sense, such as the significant differences between the surveys collected at different locations or the lack of any trends in the questions on peace.

Recommendations for Further Study

The ideas broached by this study aren't well researched. There is ample room for expanding the literature on this topic. Future research should reach deeper both into the travel history and the political views of those surveyed. It would be interesting to look at the specific effects of the destinations people travel to. Does travel to Asia affect political views differently than if the destination is Africa or South America? Analysis of the length and purpose of those visits could be revealing as well. Is a student studying abroad affected differently than a businessman making frequent trips all over the globe? Does religion play a role? Socioeconomic status? Nationality? These are all questions that this study left unanswered because of the limited resources and scope of an ISP. Additional research could answer many questions that may become relevant in the age of globalization and increasing international connections.

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Appendices

Arabic Questionnaire:

الجزء الرابع - السلام في العالم العربي:

١. ما مدى تفاؤلكم بأن السلام يمكن تحقيقه في الصراع العربي / الإسرائيلي؟

متفائل ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- متشائم

١.١ هل تغير رأيك مع مرور الوقت؟

كثيراً ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- لم يتغير

٢. ما مدى تفاؤلكم بأن السلام يمكن تحقيقه في سوريا؟

متفائل ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- متشائم

٣. ما مدى تفاؤلكم بأن السلام يمكن تحقيقه في العراق؟

متفائل ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- متشائم

٤. ما مدى تفاؤلكم بأن السلام يمكن تحقيقه في ليبيا؟

متفائل ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- متشائم

٥. ما مدى تفاؤلكم بأن السلام يمكن تحقيقه في اليمن؟

متفائل ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- متشائم

٦. هل تعتقد أن التدخل العسكري أمريكي سيساعد على تحقيق السلام في سوريا؟

أوافق ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- أعارض

٧. هل تعتقد أن التدخل العسكري أمريكي سيساعد على تحقيق السلام في العراق؟

أوافق ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- أعارض

٨. هل تعتقد أن التدخل العسكري أمريكي سيساعد على تحقيق السلام في ليبيا؟

أوافق ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- أعارض

٩. هل تعتقد أن التدخل العسكري أمريكي سيساعد على تحقيق السلام في اليمن؟

أوافق ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- أعارض

١٠. هل تعتقد أن مشاركة روسيا في سوريا مفيدة؟

مفيد ١٠- ٩- ٨- ٧- ٦- ٥- ٤- ٣- ٢- ١- ضار

الجزء الأول = الخلفية الاجتماعية:

١. عمرك: _____

٢. الجنسية: _____

٣. الجنس: _____

الجزء الثاني = التعليم:

١. ما هو مستواك التعليمي؟:

ماجستير / دكتوراه

بكالوريوس

ثانوي

تخصص؟ _____

أين؟ _____

الجزء الثالث = السفر:

١. هل سافرت خارج الأردن؟ نعم / لا

٢. إذا أجبت بنعم، سجل البلدان التي قمت بزيارتها، بدءاً مع تلك خارج الشرق الأوسط:

أي بلد؟	المنطقة / المدينة؟	مدة الإقامة؟	سبب الزيارة؟

English Questionnaire:

Part I - Social Background:

1. Your age: _____

2. Nationality: _____

3. Gender: _____

Part II - Education:

1. What is your educational level?:

secondary

Bachelor

Master degree / PHD

Specialization? _____

Where? _____

PartIII - Travel:

1. you ever traveled outside Jordan? Yes / No

2. If you answered yes .: record the countries you have visited, starting with those outside Middle East:

Which country?	Region / city?	Duration of stay?	The reason for the visit?

Part IV - Peace in the Arab world:

1. How optimistic are you that peace can be achieved in the Arab / Israeli conflict?

Optimistic 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 Pessimistic

1.1 Do you change your mind over time?

Much 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 No Change

2. How optimistic are you that peace can be achieved in Syria?

Optimistic 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 Pessimistic

3 How optimistic are you that peace can be achieved in Iraq?

Optimistic 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 Pessimistic

4 How optimistic are you that peace can be achieved in Libya?

Optimistic 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 Pessimistic

5 How optimistic are you that peace can be achieved in Yemen?

Optimistic 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 Pessimistic

6. Do you think that Western military intervention would help achieve peace in Syria?

I Agree 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 I Object

7. Do you think that Western military intervention would help achieve peace in Iraq?

I Agree 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 I Object

8. Do you think that Western military intervention would help achieve peace in Libya?

I Agree 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 I Object

9, Do you think that Western military intervention would help achieve peace in Yemen?

I Agree 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 I Object

10. Do you think that Russian participation in Syria useful?

Useful 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 harmful

Informed Consent Form (distributed to those whose names were used):



2

العنوان:

الباحث:

مؤسسة التعلم العالمية: برنامج الحدائة و التغيير الإجتماعي

هدف هذه الدراسة هو:

1. لك الحق في الإنسحاب من المشاركة في هذه الدراسة في أي وقت شئت
2. كل المعلومات التي سيتم جمعها هنا ستستخدم فقط لأغراض البحث العلمي
3. لا يوجد أي مخاطر معروفة لدى الباحث تتعكس عليك نتيجة مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة
4. لا يوجد تعويض مادي لقاء المشاركة في هذه الدراسة
5. أنت تتفهم أن هذا البحث يجريه طالب في مرحلة البكالوريوس
6. لن يتم استخدام اسمك أو أية معلومات تعريفية أو إقرانها بإجاباتك على الأسئلة في هذه الدراسة
7. لديك الحق في رفض الإجابة على أي سؤال تفضل عدم الإجابة عنه

- | | | |
|----|-----|---|
| لا | نعم | إذا كان الباحث بحاجة لإستخدام اسمي فإني أعطيه التصريح بذلك: |
| لا | نعم | إنني أعطي الباحث التصريح باستخدام اسم مؤسستي التي انتمي إليها في بحثة: |
| لا | نعم | إنني أعطي الباحث تصريحاً باستخدام معلومات هذه الدراسة في دراسات مستقبلية محتملة له: |

توقيع المشترك: / / **التاريخ:**

إسم المشترك:

توقيع الباحث (Researcher Signature):

شكراً جزيلاً لك لمشاركتك في هذه الدراسة

إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة أو استفسارات أو تعليقات، الرجاء توجيهها الى الدكتور أشرف القضاة المدير الأكاديمي للبرنامج

0791601081 ashraf.alqudah@sit.edu



Access, Use, and Publication of ISP/FSP

Student Name: Kyle Decker

Email Address: kdecker60120@gmail.com

Title of ISP/FSP: **Ignorance is Bliss: The Impacts of International Travel and Education on Political Beliefs**

Program and Term/Year: Jordan: Modernization and Social Change, Spring 2017

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By signing this form, I certify my understanding that:

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Kyle Decker
 Student Signature

April 27, 2017
 Date

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ISP Ethics Review

(Note: Each AD must complete, sign, and submit this form for every student's ISP.)

The ISP paper by Decker, Kyle does conform to the Human Subjects Review approval from the Local Review Board, the ethical standards of the local community, and the ethical and academic standards outlined in the SIT student and faculty handbooks.

Completed by: Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D.

Academic Director: __Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D.

Signature:


Program: JOR Spring 2017

Date: May 10th 2017



Human Subjects Review

LRB/IRB ACTION FORM

<p>Name of Student: Kyle Decker</p> <p>ISP Title: Impacts of Ignorance and Isolation</p> <p>Date Submitted: March 20 2017</p> <p>Program: Jordan: Modernization and Social Change</p> <p>Type of review:</p> <p>Exempt <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Expedited <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Full <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Institution: World Learning Inc. IRB organization number: IORG0004408 IRB registration number: IRB00005219 Expires: 9 December 2017</p> <p>LRB members (print names): <i>Ashraf F. Alqudah, Ph. D. Chair</i> <i>Ismael Abu Aamoud, Ph. D.</i> <i>Badr AlMadi, Ph. D.</i></p> <p>LRB REVIEW BOARD ACTION:</p> <p>Approved as submitted</p> <p>LRB Chair Signature: </p> <p>Date: Mar. 28th 2017</p>
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Form below for IRB Vermont use only:**Research requiring full IRB review. ACTION TAKEN:**

___ approved as submitted ___ approved pending submission or revisions ___ disapproved

 IRB Chairperson's Signature

Date