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### **ACROSS TIMELINES: DECODING CROSS-REGIONAL MEDIA FRAMINGS OF ISIS ON X (2014–2023)**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates regional variations in media framings of ISIS on X, identifying the key factors contributing to these differences. By analysing diverse perspectives and approaches adopted by media accounts, the research sheds light on how various factors shape media discourse on social media platforms. Data were collected from X using RStudio and the *academicwitter* package. Network analysis was employed to identify key opinion leaders (KOLs) within each regional group, while framing analysis explored media variations through framing devices such as problem definition and causal interpretation. Findings reveal that Asian media primarily focus on local impacts, particularly the radicalization of Indonesian citizens by ISIS and egregious human rights abuses. Euro-Anglosphere media emphasize international involvement, highlighting violent acts and advocating for a coordinated global response. Middle Eastern media centre their framing on local events, including military engagements, cultural heritage destruction, and immediate regional consequences. These variations are influenced by factors such as geopolitical proximity, national context, domestic journalistic norms, and online netizen engagement patterns. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of media discourse on X concerning ISIS.

**Keywords:** Media framings, ISIS, X, regional influences, framing analysis.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In today's international landscape, relationships between nations and actors within them have undergone significant transformations, propelled by advancements in technology and information flow (McLuhan, 2019). The emergence of new media platforms as political communication tools and the

increasing global interconnectedness have played a crucial role in shaping these changes (Jauhiainen et al., 2022). This shift extends beyond communication, profoundly influencing societal patterns as digital technology adoption grows exponentially alongside increasing internet reliance. Within this context, the framing of issues on social media platforms has become a critical area of study, particularly in understanding regional variations in media narratives.

One of the most influential platforms in this realm is X, which has emerged as a prominent channel for public discourse on various issues, including international relations. With its ability to provide real-time communication and shape global news agendas, X serves as an ideal platform for analysing media framings and their influence on public opinion. A particularly significant area of interest is how X has framed discussions surrounding the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a group that has posed a major global security challenge, attracting affiliates from various countries (Benmelech & Klor, 2020). Consequently, the media's portrayal of ISIS on X has drawn significant scholarly and public attention due to its impact on global security discourse.

X has become a critical tool for public discourse, influencing information dissemination, media framing, and user engagement. Studies emphasize that X's capacity for continuous, global communication makes it a vital platform for rapidly disseminating information, particularly during crises. According to Chilwa (2015), extremist groups such as Boko Haram and Al Shabaab exploit X to disseminate their ideologies and recruit followers. Additionally, Boulianne (2015) highlights how X enables real-time news sharing, shaping public perceptions and immediate responses. Regarding media framing, research shows that X significantly influences public opinion through issue framing. Burnap et al. (2016) demonstrate how social media engagement on X can predict electoral outcomes, using the 2015 UK General Election as a case study. Lee and Kim (2024) extend on this by showing how the platform frames refugee issues, potentially influencing public perceptions on sensitive topics such as hate speech. Furthermore, X's engagement metrics—such as retweets, likes, and replies—provide valuable insights into public sentiment and the effectiveness of narratives. Bruns and Stieglitz (2013) explore how these metrics help identify key opinion leaders and trending topics, while Hassan and Omar (2017) argue that such interactions reflect broader social biases and cultural contexts, underscoring the platform's societal impact.

Overall, X's role in shaping information dissemination, media framing, and user engagement continues to evolve, offering researchers a dynamic space to explore public discourse in the digital age. Understanding how issues are framed on social media is crucial, as these framings significantly influence public perceptions of news.

This study investigates regional variations in media framings of ISIS on X. The central research question guiding this study is: How do media framings of ISIS on X vary across regions, and what factors contribute to these variations? By analysing media contexts in regions where mass media is prominent, this research explores how media narratives frame the ISIS issue on X and how these media framings influence public discourse and perceptions. A comparative analysis of media content will be employed to highlight variations in journalistic practices across different regions.

While the rise of social media has influenced news framing practices, a significant research gap remains in explaining why media accounts frame the ISIS issue differently across regions on X. Existing studies have explored media framing on X in relation to various topics, such as news coverage, terrorism, and the COVID-19 pandemic (Kwon et al., 2017; Park et al., 2020; Qin, 2015; Wasike, 2013). However, none have specifically explored the factors that contribute to variations in media framings of ISIS across different countries. Understanding these differences is crucial for uncovering the cultural, political, and social influences on media practices and their role in shaping public perceptions. Comparative research in this area can provide valuable insights into the reasons for these variations and their broader implications for international discourse on ISIS.

This study is significant in its contribution to the understanding of media framings on social media platforms, specifically in the context of ISIS. By analysing regional differences in media framings, it

provides insights into the diverse perspectives and approaches used by media accounts to shape public opinion on X. Furthermore, by identifying the factors driving these variations, the research sheds light on the interplay between geopolitical influences, national contexts, and domestic journalistic norms. Investigating these dynamics is essential, as bias is often evident in media coverage, raising the question of whether similar patterns emerge on X (Hassan & Omar, 2017; Lawlor & Tolley, 2017).

This study adopts a comprehensive methodological approach, integrating perspectives from international relations and media studies with advanced text mining techniques. It employs a multi-faceted approach, combining network analysis, content analysis, comparative analysis, and word network analysis, to provide a detailed examination of media framings on X. By pioneering the integration of diverse disciplines, and employing cutting-edge methodologies, this research not only enhances our understanding of media framing in the digital age but also contributes to the broader academic discourse on radicalism and international relations. This is particularly significant given X's demonstrated influence in shaping public opinion (Agnihotri et al., 2022; Ajala et al., 2022).

## **METHODS**

This study employs a cross-national framing analysis to examine how media outlets on X frame the issue of ISIS across different countries. Framing theory, as conceptualized by Entman (1993), serves as the theoretical foundation, focusing on how the presentation of information shapes public perception. Given the brevity of tweets on X, the study applies two key framing devices—problem definition and causal interpretation. The methodological approach involves data collection using the *academictwitterR* package, network analysis to identify key opinion leaders (KOLs), and word network analysis to explore relationships between influential words. These methods provide insights into framing patterns within media discourses across distinct geographical regions. The aim is to enhance understanding of the issue, establish causal interpretations, assess moral judgments, and propose courses of action related to the ISIS discourse on X. Framing devices influence how individuals comprehend, recall, evaluate, and respond to an issue.

Entman outlines four main framing devices: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. However, this research focuses solely on the first two due to the nature of the data used, which consists of short-form texts on X such as headlines and references to news articles. Extracting moral evaluations and treatment recommendations from short tweets may result in spurious conclusions (Entman, 1991).

This study focused on two framing devices:

1. Problem definition refers to how an issue is defined or described, shaping public understanding and memory of it. Depending on how it is framed, a problem can be presented as a public health, social, or economic issue.
2. Causal interpretation involves attributing causes to a problem, influencing how people evaluate and respond to it. Depending on the framing, the issue may be linked to individual behaviour, social structures, or political systems.

Despite the concise nature of tweets, problem definition framing was effectively analysed using X data. Users conveyed their understanding of the issue by selecting specific aspects to highlight and using descriptive labels within the platform's character limits. This allowed researchers to examine how different media accounts framed the issue in ways that shaped public perception. Similarly, causal interpretation, also referred to as diagnostic cause framing, was studied within the confines of X data. Users often included causal explanations in their tweets, attributing responsibility to various factors. By examining these statements, researchers identified the dominant narratives regarding the underlying causes of the issue.

Before conducting the framing analysis, data from X were extracted using RStudio application and the *academicwittteR* package (Barrie & Ho, 2021). Tweets were collected using two filters: keywords and country of origin. For the keyword filter, a broad set of terms related to ISIS was used, including: "ISIS", "Daesh," "IS," "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria," "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant," "ISIL," "#isis," "#is," "#islamic\_state," "#Dawla," "#Baqiyah," "ISIS repatriation," "ISIS human rights," and "Da'ish." To ensure comprehensive data collection, local language variations of these terms were also included. Any tweet containing at least one of these keywords was extracted and stored in the database. For the country filter, only tweets from specific countries were included, as the study aimed to compare framings across different regions. The selected countries were:

1. Euro-Anglosphere: USA, UK, Netherlands, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria, Australia
2. Asia: China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines
3. Middle East and North Africa: Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Iraq

These countries were chosen based on documented records of individuals who had joined ISIS. The collected tweets were then categorized into three regional groups as described above, based on geographical and/or socio-cultural similarities. A data cleaning process was conducted to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the analysis. The cleaning process involved several key stages: **Removing extraneous elements**—punctuation, numbers, links, character mentions (e.g., "@"), and emojis were deleted. **Translation**—non-English tweets were translated into English using the *googleLanguageR* package (Edmondson, 2020), which utilises Google Cloud Translator, known for its high accuracy. This step was important, as stopword removal methods were designed for English-language tweets. **Stopword removal**—frequently used words with minimal analytical value (e.g., conjunctions and prepositions) were removed. The Natural Language Tool Kit's database, developed by Bird (2021) was used as the source for stopword filtering, allowing the analysis to focus on meaningful and relevant content.

To further refine the grouping of tweets, network analysis was conducted. This method enables the mapping of user interactions, enabling for the identification of patterns and structures that emerge within the network. It provides valuable insights into user dynamics and interconnectedness (Otte & Rousseau, 2016). For this particular study, the "igraph" package in R (Csardi & Nepusz, 2006) was used. Network analysis was utilised to identify KOLs within each country group. KOLs were X users who held significant influence in the conversation, as their tweets were frequently retweeted, replied to, or quoted. Within each country group, the 10 users with the highest in-degree were determined. In-degree refers to the number of incoming interactions—mentions, replies, quotes, and retweets—received by a user, making it a key indicator of influence within the network. This metric helped identify users who were highly engaged and influential within their respective communities. From the identified top 10 KOLs, only those affiliated with major media outlets were selected. This selection aligned with the research objective of examining media framing. By focusing on highly engaged media sources whose tweets circulated widely, the analysis centered on media accounts with a significant role in shaping public discourse.

For each identified media account, a word network analysis was conducted to map relationships between words used in tweets. The word network represented words as nodes, while their co-occurrence or proximity in tweets was represented as edges. To determine the most influential words, centrality analysis—specifically, in-degree centrality—was performed. Similar to the in-degree metric used to identify KOLs, this analysis identified words with the highest number of connections to other words, highlighting their role in shaping the discourse on X regarding ISIS.



## **Asia News Media Landscape**

The first region examined was Asia. To examine how these narratives shape public sentiment, the study analyzed data collected from a broad range of X accounts across the region. In total, 127,889 tweets were collected and analysed.

To ensure a nuanced and astute analysis, the research adopted a methodological approach that prioritised tweets from media sources that ranked highly in centrality analysis using in-degree measurements. This approach ensured the study focused on influential media narratives that were widely circulated in the digital discourse. Among the top ten KOLs identified, only three were from media outlets while the rest were individuals or non-media organizations.

Notably, all three media outlets were from Indonesia which was expected given the country's large number of X users. This finding underscores the central role of Indonesian media in shaping public sentiment and understanding of the issue.

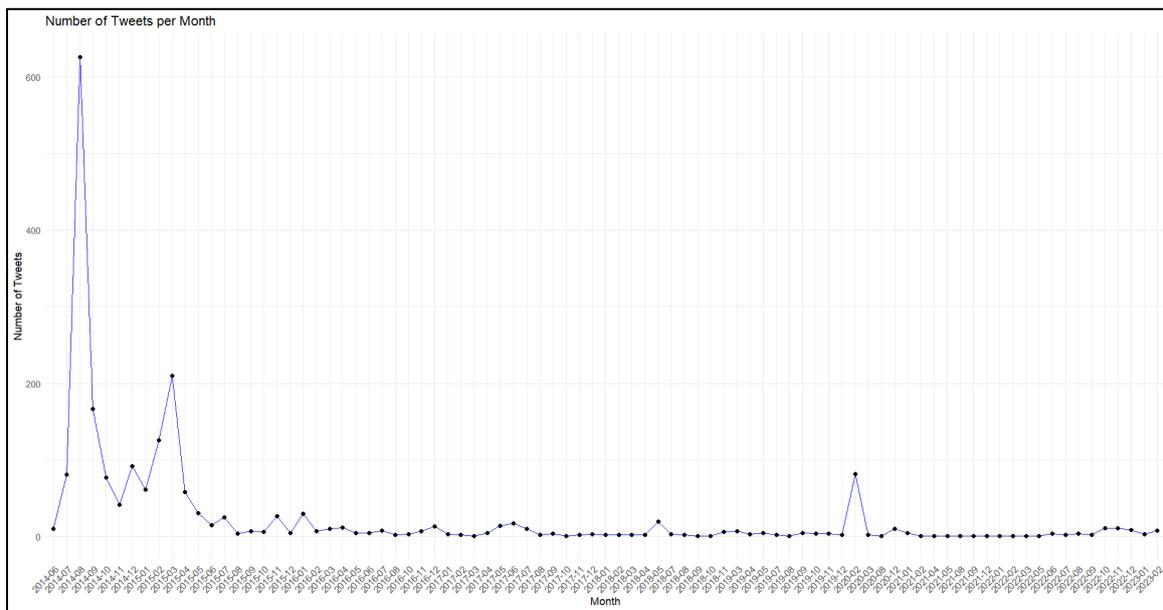
**Table 1**

*Media Accounts with the Highest Engagement from X Netizens in Asia*

KOLs (Media Outlet)	Dominant keywords	Context
@detikcom	Irak, Indonesia, Gabung, Video, Suriah	The account highlights the increasing trend of Indonesian citizens pledging allegiance to ISIS. It also covers the prevalence of training videos featuring ISIS combatants and various acts of violence committed by the group against humans.
@kompascom	Irak, Indonesia, Istri, Suriah, Bujang	The account highlights the issue of radicalisation through sexual incentives, specifically the provision of wives for unmarried ISIS combatants. Additionally, Kompas.com covers the rejection of repatriation for former Indonesian ISIS members, shedding light on the complexities surrounding their return.
@metro_TV	Hidup, Seks, Budak, Bunuh, Masuk	This account focuses on the exploitation of women as sexual slaves by ISIS combatants and the extreme violence carried out by the group. Reports cover incidents of ISIS murdering foreign journalists, innocent children, and even its own members. Additionally, Metro TV highlights discussions on foreign involvement in the fight against ISIS, with netizens actively engaging in conversations and sharing their opinions on the matter.

**Figure 2**

*Number of ISIS-related Tweets by Asian Media*



The graph shows noticeable spikes in tweet activity, each corresponding to key ISIS-related events covered by the media. These peaks align with major incidents that captured widespread public attention:

Mid-2014 (First Spike - ~ 650 tweets): This surge coincides with the declaration of the Islamic Caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the fall of Mosul in June 2014 ("How the Battle for Mosul Unfolded," 2017; "Isis Rebels Declare 'Islamic State' in Iraq and Syria," 2014). These events triggered a global reaction on social media.

Early 2015 (Second Spike – ~ 200 tweets): The spike corresponds with the Charlie Hebdo attack in January and the February release of a video showing the execution of Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh ("Charlie Hebdo," 2020; "Jordan Pilot Hostage Moaz Al-Kasasbeh 'Burned Alive,'" 2015). Both incidents fuelled a surge of online discourse.

May 2015 (Third Spike - ~150 tweets): This peak aligns with the Battle of Ramadi and the U.S. Special Forces raid on ISIS leader Abu Sayyaf, both of which drew considerable attention ("Iraq Forces in 'full Control' of Central Ramadi," 2015; Starr et al., 2015).

February 2020 (Smaller Spike - ~100 tweets): This increase occurred during discussions by the Indonesian government regarding the repatriation of its citizens from ISIS-occupied regions (Cook, 2020).

A deeper analysis of the tweet data revealed recurring keywords that shaped the discourse. The most frequently used words included:

Geopolitical references: 'Irak' (Iraq), 'Suriah' (Syria), and 'Indonesia'—highlighting a strong emphasis on regional dynamics. Radicalization and participation: 'Istri' (wife), 'Bujang' (single man), 'gabung' (join), and 'masuk' (enter)—suggesting discussions of recruitment and personal involvement with ISIS. Violence and exploitation: 'Hidup' (live/life), 'seks' (sex), 'budak' (slave), 'bunuh' (kill)—reflecting the focus on ISIS’s violence and coercive practices. Media influence: Video—indicating the role of visual content in shaping public perception.

## Euro-Anglosphere News Media Landscape

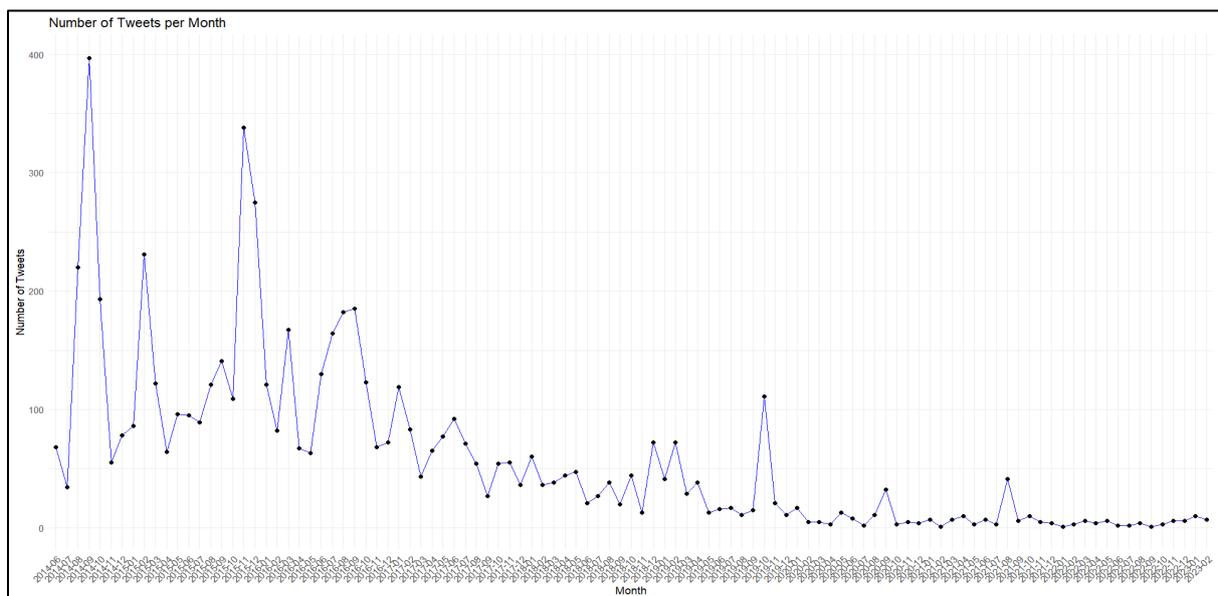
The analysis of the Euro-Anglosphere media landscape is based on 728,677 tweets collected from various X accounts across the region, offering a broad range of perspectives and thematic nuances.

To ensure a focused and insightful analysis, the study prioritised tweets from media accounts that ranked among the top 10 in centrality analysis (based on in-degree measurements). This approach ensured that the study focused on highly engaged and widely circulated media discourse, reflecting dominant narratives and frames strategies in the region.

Among the ten most influential KOLs in the Anglosphere media, four major outlets stood out: The New York Times, NBC, CNN, and Daily Mail. Their prominence underscores their crucial role in shaping public discourse on ISIS and influencing public opinion and policy debates.

### Figure 3

*Reveals Several Spikes in Tweet Activity, Each Corresponding to Significant ISIS-related Events*



**September 2014:** The first spike coincides with ISIS's rapid territorial expansion across Iraq and Syria. During this period, the group seized key regions, including Mosul, while the U.S.-led coalition launched airstrikes against ISIS (“How the Battle for Mosul Unfolded,” 2017).

**February 2015:** The second spike aligns with the release of a video showing the execution of Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh. This brutal act provoked global outrage, particularly in Jordan, leading to large-scale retaliatory airstrikes (“Jordan Pilot Hostage Moaz Al-Kasasbeh ‘Burned Alive,’” 2015).

**November 2015:** A third spike is evident following the ISIS-coordinated terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13. These attacks, which killed 130 civilians, were among the deadliest in Europe and triggered a surge in counter-terrorism efforts (“Paris Attacks: What Happened on the Night of Terror,” 2015).

**March 2016:** Another surge in tweet activity corresponds with the Brussels bombings on March 22, where suicide bombers targeted Zaventem Airport and the Maelbeek Metro station, killing 32 civilians. Like the Paris attacks, this event heightened terrorism concerns across Europe (“Brussels explosions,” 2016).

**August–September 2016:** Increased tweet activity during this period is linked to military offensives against ISIS in Syria. Kurdish and Arab forces, backed by U.S. air support, captured the strategic town

of Manbij, cutting off key ISIS supply routes. Around the same time, Turkish-backed forces seized the symbolic town of Dabiq, further diminishing ISIS’s territorial control (“Syria: Residents return to Manbij,” 2016).

**October 2019:** The final spike coincides with the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a U.S. raid in Syria. This event marked a turning point in the fight against ISIS, significantly disrupting the group’s leadership and operations (Griffiths et al., 2015).

A comparison of ISIS-related tweet spikes in Euro-Anglospheric and Asian media reveals both similarities and differences. **Mid-2014:** Both regions experienced significant spikes following ISIS’s declaration of its caliphate and the capture of Mosul, events that drew widespread global attention. **Early 2015:** The execution of Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh led to increased media activity in both regions. However, while Euro-Anglospheric media also focused on the Charlie Hebdo attacks, Asian media activity was shaped by ISIS’s growing presence in Southeast Asia—particularly in Indonesia and the Philippines, where groups like Abu Sayyaf pledged allegiance to ISIS.

**March 2016:** The Brussels bombings triggered a major spike in Euro-Anglospheric media. In contrast, Southeast Asian media attention during this period was more centred on ISIS-linked activities in Mindanao and the rise of regional militancy. Overall, while global events such as the rise of the caliphate generated widespread media coverage in both regions, Euro-Anglospheric media was more focused on high-profile attacks like those in Paris and Brussels. Meanwhile, Southeast Asian media exhibited greater responsiveness to regional ISIS-related developments, reflecting local security concerns.

**Table 2**

*News Media Accounts with the Highest Engagement from X Netizens in the Euro-Anglospheric Media*

KOLs (Media Outlet)	Dominant keywords	Context
@CNN	Obama, Syria, Says, Syrian, Iraq	This account discusses former U.S. President Barack Obama's approach for addressing ISIS, comparing it to the policies of his successor, Donald Trump. The contrast between their approaches generated significant debate and reactions from netizens.
@MailOnline	Fight, Video, Syria, Attack, British	The account focuses on foreign military operations against ISIS, including discussions about the potential use of Ebola as a biological weapon. It also highlights the impact of ISIS-led violence on human lives and cultural heritage sites.
@NBCNews	Trump, Orders, Fighting, Won, Wife	The most widely engaged content from this account revolves around the involvement of foreign forces in the fight against ISIS. A particularly poignant story covered the loss of a soldier whose spouse was also a combatant, sparking emotional responses from the public.
@nytimes	Syria, Allies, Iraq, Created, US	Discussions on this account primarily centre on foreign military interventions against ISIS, particularly the U.S. and allied efforts to train Iraqi forces. Additional key topics include Russia’s role in the conflict and the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Iraq due to ISIS-related violence.

An examination of the most frequently occurring words in the dataset reveals key themes in the prevailing discourse. Prominent terms such as 'Syria,' 'Allies,' 'Iraq,' 'US,' 'Trump,' 'Orders,' 'Fighting,'

'Won,' 'Wife,' 'Obama,' 'Says,' 'Syrian,' 'Fight,' 'Video,' 'Attack,' and 'British' figured prominently in the tweets. These terms highlight the geopolitical aspects of the ISIS issue, emphasizing conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and the involvement of major political figures and countries. This underscores the broad scope of the discourse, which extends beyond the immediate actions of ISIS to encompass wider political, strategic, and military dimensions.

### Middle East News Media Landscape

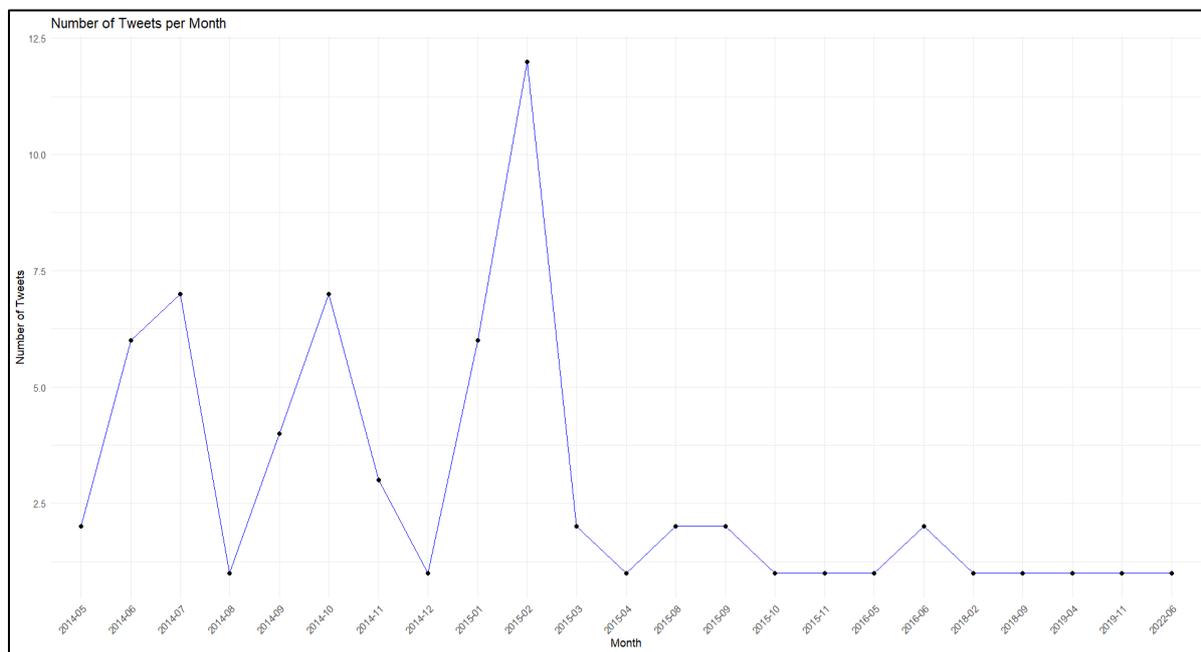
This study examined discourse on ISIS in the Middle East using a dataset of 63,795 tweets sourced from various X accounts. This dataset provided a strong foundation for analysing regional perspectives on ISIS.

The methodology used centrality analysis with in-degree metrics, focusing on the top 10 most engaging media tweets. This approach ensured that the analysis captured the most influential narratives within the Middle Eastern media landscape, reflecting core regional sentiments and viewpoints.

Among the top 10 key opinion leaders (KOLs), *CNN Arabic* was the only prominent media outlet. This could be due to a higher prevalence of bot or buzzer accounts in the region, which may have led to lower actual engagement between traditional media outlets and X users in the Middle East.

**Figure 4**

*ISIS-Related Tweets from Middle-Eastern Media*



Several spikes in tweet activity related to ISIS can be identified. The first spike in June 2014 corresponds to ISIS's capture of Mosul and Tikrit, marking its largest territorial expansion. On June 29, 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the establishment of the caliphate, drawing widespread global media attention ("How the Battle for Mosul Unfolded," 2017; "Isis Rebels Declare 'Islamic State' in Iraq and Syria," 2014). The second spike in December 2014 coincides with the intensified U.S.-led airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, alongside the ongoing battle for Kobani, where Kurdish forces fought to reclaim the town from ISIS. This period dominated media coverage as the conflict escalated ("Battle for Kobane," 2014).

The third spike, in February 2015, is linked to the release of a video showing the execution of Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh. This act of brutality sparked international outrage and drew widespread media attention across all regions. Both Asian and Euro-Anglospheric media reacted strongly to the execution, as well as Jordan's large-scale retaliatory airstrikes. The fourth spike, in June 2016, corresponds to the liberation of Fallujah by Iraqi forces, marking a significant defeat for ISIS (“Iraqi Army Says Fallujah ‘Fully Liberated from ISIL,’” 2016).

While the rise of ISIS, including the capture of Mosul and the declaration of the caliphate, triggered spikes in both Asian and Euro-Anglospheric media, certain events —such as the execution of the Jordanian pilot—drew global attention. However, Southeast Asia experienced additional spikes due to localised ISIS activities, particularly in the Philippines and Indonesia, where groups like Abu Sayyaf aligned with ISIS. These regional dynamics led to distinct patterns of media engagement compared to broader global events.

<b>KOLs (Media Outlet)</b>	<b>Dominant keywords</b>	<b>Context</b>
@cnnarabic	Army, video, showing, Kasasbeh, Iraqi	The most engaging articles focus on local issues, including the physical training activities of ISIS members, the victims of ISIS violence —such as the execution of Jordanian pilot, Muath al-Kasasbeh—and the destruction of cultural heritage sites in Iraq, notably the Historical Museum of Mosul.

An investigation of the most frequently used words in the dataset revealed key terms such as *Army*, *Video*, *Showing*, *Kasasbeh*, and *Iraqi*. These recurring terms provide insight into the regional discourse on ISIS, highlighting military engagements, visual documentation, and key figures like Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kasasbeh, who was tragically executed by ISIS. Collectively, these elements underline the regional narrative's focus on the ongoing conflict with ISIS, the human toll of the violence, and the role of visual evidence in shaping public perception, as noted in a study by Evans (2010).

### **ISIS News Framing Through X in Asian Media**

A primary issue identified in the analysis of Asian media coverage is the radicalisation of Indonesian citizens by ISIS. The prominence of this concern suggests that ISIS exerts a significant and disturbing influence, particularly in Indonesia, raising alarms about regional security and societal stability. This has potentially far-reaching implications for the political, social, and security landscape.

Asian media predominantly frame ISIS through the lens of its extreme violence and egregious human rights abuses. Reports frequently highlight violent propaganda videos, the use of women as sex slaves, and widespread killings committed by the group. By emphasizing these shocking aspects, Asian media appear to be aiming to evoke public outrage and condemnation.

The framing of the issue extends beyond the mere recruitment of Indonesian citizens into ISIS. It includes a broader discussion of the group's radicalisation strategies, such as the circulation of violent propaganda and the exploitation of women. This comprehensive approach serves to underline the extensive and destructive impact of ISIS on individuals and communities alike.

When diagnosing the root causes of radicalisation, the data suggest that ideological manipulation and extremist propaganda play a central role. ISIS employs strategic media campaigns and the promise of so-called ‘rewards’ to attract and indoctrinate recruits. This interpretation assigns significant responsibility to ISIS's tactics while also underscoring the urgent need for increased vigilance and stronger counter-radicalisation measures within vulnerable communities.

### **ISIS News Framing Through X in the Euro-Anglospheric Media**

A recurring theme in the Euro-Anglospheric media coverage of ISIS is the extensive involvement of international forces in combating the group. The emphasis underscores the global ramifications of ISIS's activities and reinforces the notion that countering the threat requires collective international action. Through this framing, the media subtly emphasises the necessity of a concerted global response to the extremist menace.

A dominant aspect within this media narrative is ISIS's extreme violence, including public executions, bombings, and the destruction of significant historical and cultural sites. By consistently reporting on these acts, the media seek to elicit public outrage, emphasizing the urgency of the situation while implicitly rallying support for measures to combat ISIS.

The media construct a comprehensive depiction of the multi-dimensional threat posed by ISIS. Beyond its immediate violent actions, coverage extends to issues such as foreign recruitment and radicalisation, regional destabilization, and concerns over the potential use of chemical weapons. Moreover, these reports highlight the necessity for robust counter-terrorism strategies, advocating for a multi-pronged approach that includes both military and ideological countermeasures.

When diagnosing the root causes of ISIS's rise, media narratives point to a combination of historical, political, and ideological factors. The New York Times, for example, suggests that the U.S. and allied military interventions in Iraq and Syria may have inadvertently created conditions that enabled ISIS's emergence. Meanwhile, CNN focuses on criticisms of the Obama administration's handling of the ISIS crisis. Notably, The New York Times refers to the group as 'Islamic State' rather than 'ISIS,' a choice that may contribute to broader associations between the group and Islam as a religion. This observation aligns with findings by Hassan and Omar (2017), who noted that Western media often portray Islam in an unfavourable light, reinforcing negative perceptions.

This analysis reveals a dual narrative in the Euro-Anglospheric media framing of ISIS. On one hand, these media emphasize the global reach of ISIS, underlining its impact beyond Syria and Iraq. On the other hand, they highlight the critical role played by primarily by Western powers, both in the group's emergence and in the ongoing efforts to dismantle it.

### **ISIS News Framing Through X in the Middle Eastern Media**

A central theme in Middle Eastern media coverage of ISIS is the focus on military engagements, particularly the Iraqi army's confrontations with the group. The frequent references to these battles highlight the ongoing conflict and underscore the critical role of regional forces in combating ISIS.

Media framing in the region also emphasises the devastating impact of ISIS, particularly its role in cultural destruction and individual radicalisation. This is evident in reports showcasing ISIS's demolition of artifacts from the Historical Museum of Mosul and narratives such as the transformation of an Egyptian fitness trainer into an ISIS fighter. These narratives illustrate the far-reaching consequences of ISIS's activities.

CNN Arabic adopts a comprehensive viewpoint in framing the problem, encompassing not only ISIS's acts of violence but also its broader influence on cultural heritage and individual lives. The geopolitical ramifications of the conflict are made highlighted, particularly the disbandment of the Iraqi army and the ensuing power vacuum that ISIS exploited.

When addressing the root causes of ISIS's rise, Middle Eastern media attribute it to a combination of political instability, social unrest, and foreign intervention. This narrative suggests a link between foreign military involvement, regional instability, and the emergence of extremist factions like ISIS.

## **Comparative Analysis of the Three Regions**

A comparison of how ISIS is framed in Asia, the Euro-Anglosphere, and the Middle East reveals that, while all three regions recognise ISIS's violent and destructive nature, their focus and contextualisation of this violence vary significantly based on geopolitical realities and domestic priorities.

In Asia, particularly Indonesia, media coverage emphasises the local societal impact of ISIS, highlighting the radicalisation of individuals through sexual exploitation and propaganda videos. This focus reflects the region's proximity to active ISIS recruitment zones and its vulnerability to extremist indoctrination. The KOLs in Asia, such as Indonesian media outlets like @detikcom and @kompascom, play a significant role in amplifying these narratives. Their dominant keywords—such as "Indonesia," "sex," "wife," and "Suriah" (Syria)—highlight the localised threat of ISIS and the ways in which regional populations are targeted by global extremist ideologies.

By contrast, in the Euro-Anglosphere, media framing situates ISIS within a broader global security context. Coverage frequently highlights international involvement to combat ISIS, with a particular emphasis on military interventions by Western powers and the geopolitical consequences of the group's activities. KOLs in this region, including major outlets like CNN and *The New York Times*, emphasise keywords such as "Syria," "Allies," and "US," framing the issue through the lens of foreign intervention and the broader implications for global security. Additionally, the media in this region often critique the role of Western nations in inadvertently creating conditions that contributed to ISIS's rise, particularly through past military actions in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, in the Middle East, the framing is inherently more immediate and localised, with a strong emphasis on military engagements and the destruction of cultural heritage. The KOLs in the Middle East, such as CNN Arabic, use keywords like "army" and "Kasasbeh" (a reference to the Jordanian pilot killed by ISIS) to underscore the direct conflict and its human and cultural cost. This framing reflects the region's proximity to ISIS activities and the firsthand experiences of conflict. Additionally, Middle Eastern media frequently attribute ISIS's rise to political instability and social unrest, compounded by foreign interventions that have created power vacuums and enabled extremist factions to emerge.

The comparative analysis of the three regions also reveals how media outlets tailor their framing strategies to cater to their domestic audiences. In Asia, coverage is designed to evoke a sense of localised threat, emphasising the dangers of radicalisation and recruitment. The Euro-Anglosphere, by contrast, adopts a more global narrative, urging international cooperation in the fight against ISIS. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern media ground their framing in the ongoing regional conflict, highlighting its immediate and tangible consequences.

Thus, all three regions acknowledge ISIS as a violent threat, the way it is framed—through KOLs, dominant keywords, and contextual emphasis—varies based on regional priorities and audience sensitivities. These framing choices illustrate the complex interplay between local, regional, and global factors in shaping public perception and discourse on ISIS worldwide.

## **Explaining the Factors Behind the Framing Differences Across Regions**

News media play a vital role in shaping public understanding of events beyond our immediate social experience. They hold significant power in determining which social issues are highlighted or excluded. In today's media landscape, especially concerning coverage of international issues, news is framed, produced, and marketed by each media outlet based on several key factors, including geographical proximity, the media's political orientation, national social context, and journalistic norms (Abbas, 2001; Oppegaard & Rabby, 2016). Since news organisations are in the business of increasing sales, their content is not random but rather socially manufactured products influenced by both external and internal influences. These influences vary across regions, resulting in distinct framing styles.

This section explores the critical factors contributing to regional variations in media coverage of ISIS on X. These differences stem from multiple elements, including geopolitical proximity, the national context within which media organisations operate, domestic journalistic norms, and market-driven considerations. Each of these factors shapes how news is presented to audiences in different regions, resulting in distinct narratives. By examining these influences, this section sheds light on why media in Asia, the Euro-Anglosphere, and the Middle East emphasise different aspects of ISIS's activities and promote varying perspectives on the issue.

### ***Geopolitical Proximity***

Proximity to conflict zones deepens cultural understanding and contextual knowledge of a region, including its historical background, and the complexities of the conflict. This understanding significantly influences how news events concerning ISIS is presented, as it takes into account specific local cultural, social, and political factors (Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2008; Zhang & Hellmueller, 2016).

In Asian media, particularly in Indonesia, the framing of ISIS is influenced by the region's proximity to areas with significant ISIS activity, such as the Philippines and Indonesia itself. This geographical proximity shapes a focus on the local impact, emphasizing how ISIS successfully indoctrinates individuals through media exploitation and promises of sexual rewards to lure vulnerable recruits. The framing in Asian media highlights the immediate threat of ISIS within the region, stressing its influence on local populations.

In the Euro-Anglosphere—comprising countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia—the framing of ISIS is influenced by the geopolitical proximity of these countries to the broader conflict zones. The focus is on international efforts to counter ISIS, including military interventions, geopolitical dynamics, and the necessity of a coordinated global response. The media in these regions emphasise the broader implications of ISIS's activities, extending beyond the immediate conflict zones and highlighting the role of international actors in combating the group.

Middle Eastern media, located at the heart of ISIS activities, presents a framing that reflects the immediate regional consequences of the group's actions. This framing is shaped by the region's proximity to conflict zones and direct exposure to the devastating effects of ISIS (Papacharissi & De Fatima Oliveira, 2008). Coverage focuses on the destruction of tangible cultural heritage, such as the looting of artifacts from the Museum of Mosul, as well as the significant loss of human lives. Additionally, Middle Eastern media highlights the ongoing military confrontations between local forces and ISIS, highlighting the group's direct impact on the region.

A study by Schaefer (2003) compared media coverage of the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania with the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington. The findings revealed that local framing of the events was largely influenced by physical proximity and national concerns, while international discourse was influenced by foreign media perspectives. In other words, the way events were portrayed in local media were strongly linked to their relevance within the local context, whereas international discourse was more influenced by how events were framed in foreign media (Evans, 2010; Schaefer, 2003).

### ***National Context***

The national context of each region significantly influences how ISIS is framed in the media (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017; Zhang & Hellmueller, 2016). In Asian media, particularly in Indonesia, coverages focus on the vulnerability of individuals to ISIS recruitment and the societal impact of indoctrination. Reports highlights how ISIS exploits media and promises of rewards to manipulate vulnerable individuals into subscribing to their extremist ideologies. This framing reflects its direct implications for national security and the region's concerns about radicalisation.

In the Euro-Anglosphere, media framing is influenced by the national contexts of countries involved in military interventions against ISIS. Coverage often focuses on government actions, the broader implications of foreign interventions, and the geopolitical factors that contributed to ISIS's emergence. This results in a Western-centric perspective, where media selectively highlight aspects aligning their national interests (Ahmed et al., 2019). A similar pattern can be observed in how Western media framed the political crisis in Zimbabwe, shaping public opinion and influencing policy (Smith, 2009; as cited in Zengeni, 2020). By emphasizing the global ramifications of ISIS's activities, these media outlets advocate for a coordinated international response.

In the Middle East, the national context plays a crucial role in framing ISIS-related coverage. Media focus on the direct consequences of ISIS's activities, including the destruction of cultural heritage sites and the loss of human lives. Reports frequently link ISIS's rise to local conflicts, political instability, and shifting power dynamics in the region. This framing underscores the immediate threats posed by extremist entities and the lasting impact of regional turmoil on national security and governance.

### ***Domestic Journalistic Norms***

The framing of ISIS in each region is shaped by domestic journalistic norms, which are influenced by internal and external factors impacting media organisations. Journalists often operate within systems that may lack complete neutrality, as various factors shape how issues are presented and perceived by the public (Bennett, 1996).

In Asian media, coverage of ISIS is strongly influenced by cultural norms, social sensitivities, and gender dynamics. Reports often highlight the manipulation of vulnerable individuals, promises of rewards, and the broader societal impact, aligning with prevailing journalistic norms in the region. This framing reflects cultural concerns related to gender and social norms. Additionally, in some parts of Asia, the media acts as gatekeepers, selectively highlighting news based on external influences. This often results in the replication of Western biases, particularly in international issues. A similar pattern is observed in Japanese media, where Western perspectives on Islam and related issues are frequently adopted (Inoue, 2004, as cited in Bajunid, 2008). Likewise, certain narratives in Asian media's coverage of ISIS reflect this external influence, emphasising sensational aspects that align with broader Western framing strategies.

In Euro-Anglospheric media, domestic journalistic norms prioritise broad geopolitical analysis, emphasising international accountability and responses. The framing reflects these priorities by focusing on the global impact of ISIS, extending beyond immediate local concerns to examine potential threats, geopolitical implications, and the role of foreign military interventions in the rise of ISIS. This approach aligns with the journalistic priorities within the Anglosphere media landscape.

In Middle Eastern media, coverage is influenced by journalistic norms that prioritise immediate regional concerns and conflicts. Reports primarily highlight the direct consequences of ISIS activities, such as the destruction of cultural heritage and the loss of human lives. The framing reflects the region's first hand experiences with ISIS, emphasizing its tangible impact on local societies.

Together, these factors—geopolitical proximity, national context, and domestic journalistic norms—contribute to the distinct ways in which ISIS is framed in media across Asia, the Anglosphere, and the Middle East. Each factor plays a significant role in shaping the focus, emphasis, and perspectives presented in regional media coverage.

### **X Netizens: Media Market Share**

Beyond differences in journalistic norms and ethics, the media's approach to news value is a key factor in shaping how ISIS is framed across regional media landscapes. While sensationalism—particularly coverage of scandals—is often criticised as a negative aspect of media coverage, studies (Abbas, 2001; Hawkins, 2002; Rohn, 2021) indicate that within the political economy of West media, sensational

content is a primary tool for attracting audiences and boosting ratings. Over the past three decades, Western media have struggled to avoid high levels of sensationalism in their reporting, particularly on topics involving sex, torture, and human suffering. This is driven by competitive market pressures, where media outlets—operating as commercial entities—must balance informational content with market demands. The demand for sensational coverage by certain market segments eventually becomes difficult to regulate (Yeo, 2001).

Although Western media are frequently associated with sensational reporting, this study finds that Asian netizens, particularly in Indonesia engage more actively with sensational news related to ISIS. This suggests that the market for sensational ISIS-related content is stronger in Asia than in the Anglosphere or the Middle East. The most widely discussed topics in Indonesian media include: ISIS violence and brutality; radicalization strategies, particularly the use of sexual incentives to recruit individuals; debates on the repatriation of former ISIS members to Indonesia, and ISIS violence against vulnerable groups, including children, women, journalists, and even its own members.

Unlike netizens in Asia, X users in the Anglosphere are primarily engaged with news about the military involvement of countries fighting ISIS, such as the United States, Russia, and other coalition nations. Shaban (2020) noted that British newspapers—including *The Sun*, *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Mirror*, and *The Guardian*—often highlight the role of social media in ISIS recruitment, rather than focusing on group's exploitation of sexual incentives. Meanwhile, X users in Middle Eastern countries tend to focus on news highlighting local issues, such as the destruction of national infrastructure and violence perpetrated by ISIS. The prominence of these topics in online discussions underscores how regional audiences perceive and respond to the ISIS issue, while also illustrating the media's influence in shaping public opinion.

The way media frames international issues like ISIS is influenced by various factors, including geopolitical proximity, national context, domestic journalistic norms, and market-driven pressures. These factors work together to create distinct narratives across regions: Asia focuses on local radicalisation and societal impacts; the Euro-Anglosphere emphasises international involvement and geopolitical dynamics, and the Middle East highlights the immediate military and cultural consequences of ISIS activities. Understanding these framing variations offers valuable insights into how media shape public perceptions based on their unique socio-political contexts. These differences highlight the importance of critical media engagement, as news narratives are not merely neutral reflections of reality but rather perspectives shaped by regional and market-driven contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine how the ISIS issue is framed across different regions—Asia, the Euro-Anglosphere, and the Middle East—and how these varied portrayals shape public opinion. The findings suggest that: Asian media, particularly in Indonesia, emphasise the societal and individual impacts of ISIS, drawing attention to the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. Conversely, Euro-Anglosphere media frame the issue within a broader international sphere, accentuating ISIS's violent acts while linking its rise to foreign military interventions and political missteps. Middle Eastern media underscore ongoing regional conflicts, the destruction of cultural heritage, and political instability as key contributors to the rise of ISIS.

These distinct framings indicate that geographical proximity to conflicts, national context, domestic journalistic norms, and market-driven pressures all play a role in framing media narratives. By framing the issue in ways that resonate with their audiences, regional media highlight aspects of the conflict, suggesting diverse causes and consequences.

The findings have significant implications for media studies, underscoring the media's role in shaping public opinion. Differences in framing influence how people understand ISIS and terrorism,

demonstrating the complex relationship between media and public opinion. The study's comparative approach enhances our comprehension of how media influence operates in a global context.

However, the study has limitations. It focuses primarily on media coverage, without considering other influences on public opinion, such as interpersonal communication and education. Additionally, it analyses a select set of media outlets, which may not fully represent the entire media landscape of each region.

Going forward, this study prompts a reassessment of understanding media influence in shaping public opinion. It challenges the notion of a uniform media discourse, instead advocates for a nuanced understanding of regional variations in shaping media narratives. It lays the foundation for further exploration into how regional disparities in media framing impact public opinion, contributing to a deeper understanding of media influence in an increasingly interconnected world.

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