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We survey anthropologists who work in Arab League countries to ascertain their perceptions of fieldwork security conditions. Based on the responses of forty-seven specialists reporting on conditions in 127 field sites, we find the security environment in the Arab League to be diverse. Scholars working in nations such as Morocco, Oman, and Qatar report overwhelmingly favorable research conditions, while their colleagues working in Lebanon and Syria report a largely dismal situation. The paper also queries respondents on their perceptions of the impact that Trump administration policies and rhetoric have on their ongoing field research. Here, we find Arab League specialists nearly universal in their assessment: they regard Trump's policies as having a negative impact on their ability to conduct academic research.

Key words: Arab League, field research, anthropologists, security conditions, Trump administration

Introduction

Over the years, field researchers have provided accounts of fieldwork disturbances and threats rooted in armed conflicts, gang violence, or natural disasters, just to mention a few. Some of those accounts are disseminated in an effort to share ways to survive dangerous conditions. They include experiences of being present during gunfire; threatened and searched (Kovats-Bernat 2002); dealing with traveling limitations due to curfews (Wong 2010); observing mass arrests, massacres, rapes, and lootings (Simons 1995); visiting villages full of decaying corpses during a military search and destroy operations (Bourgois 1990); being surveilled by police forces (Peritore 1990); and many others. Subsequently, in a plethora of cases, the research process devolves into a partial or complete project abandonment.

At the same time, anthropologists, geographers, sociologists, and representatives of other disciplines conduct fieldwork in the same locations as relief and developmental workers. A growing body of literature points to the intersections between the activities of those professionals. In particular, the discussion of over-researched communities is prominent and highlights the nexus between the presence of foreign aid workers with their infrastructure and activities of field researchers (Clark 2008; Pascucci 2016; Sukarieh and Tannock 2013). Due to overlapping interest in the same communities, synergistic use of the infrastructure, or location's relative accessibility, both groups experience similar interactions with the local population and environment. Oftentimes, those experiences expose personnel to increased security threats, as they frequently focus on areas of disaster or conflict. And yet, with all these parallels between aid workers and field researchers, while the studies on the health and safety of the foreign NGOs' workers are abundantly present in the literature, the same cannot be said about foreign researchers (except for the self-accounts mentioned earlier).

This is relevant when it comes to the "Westerners'" presence in territories in which governments or societies are conflicted with current Western rhetoric and policies. The mixture of hostilities and blatant conflicts between Western governments and Middle East nations pushed some NGOs to reject funding from the sources linked to the United States whose policies toward the region are polarizing. While the effectiveness of these actions in protecting foreign aid workers is debatable, as there are doubts to what degree the local population distinguishes between various groups of foreign workers simultaneously present in their area, the NGOs at least can consider that option (Fast 2010). In contrast, foreign field researchers are usually bound to their institutions and funding agencies in the countries of origin.

United States-based researchers have limited options when it comes to avoiding negative associations with United States policies while in the field. Not only did previous United States presidential administrations explicitly and publicly link aid workers' presence to intelligence gathering, but also some

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American anthropologists recently found themselves serving in a new capacity: members of Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq (Fast 2010). Conducting social scientific research in the field, they analyzed traffic flows, market participation, and key communicators in efforts to understand conditions on the ground (McFate and Laurence 2015). Maybe there were precedents, after all, E.E. Evans-Pritchard was sent to study the Nuer in 1936 in an effort to put a stop to their rebellions (Johnson 1982), and the participation of academics, including anthropologists, in Cold War activities has been extensively documented by Price (2016). Even the Indonesian research of the venerable Clifford Geertz was not completely divorced from Cold War priorities (Price 2016). Still, never has the dilemma of anthropologists working for the military been such a front-burner issue, with the American Anthropological Association (AAA 2007) eventually declaring the practice to be an ethical problem.

The shape of United States politics in recent years does not ease the pressure on United States scholars working abroad, especially those visiting Arab League countries. Proclamations from the United States government may have exacerbated tensions. For example, while campaigning for the presidency, Donald Trump said, "We have a problem in this country; and it's called Muslims" (Johnson and Hauslohner 2017:para. 3), and since that time, he has made further controversial comments, such as, "I think Islam hates us" (Johnson and Hauslohner 2017:para. 20). During a December 2015 campaign speech in Charleston, South Carolina, the Republican candidate announced that "Donald J. Trump is calling for a complete and total shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on" (CBS News 2015:para. 7). Trump also made negative comments about Gold Star parents of a Muslim-American Army officer killed in action in Iraq (Wright 2016). These pronouncements were followed by travel bans (after Trump's inauguration) targeted at seven Muslim majority nations, six of which are member states of the Arab League (Johnson and Hauslohner 2017). Trump then famously retweeted an inflammatory anti-Muslim video that actually compelled the British government to openly criticize him (CNN 2017). Trump followed this up by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and directing that the United States Embassy is to be moved to that city (Landler 2017).

Considering all those dilemmas, the need for the studies on security of the field researchers in the region appears even more pressing and their lack more troubling. In this paper, we intend to take a small step towards this goal and explore the security threats perceived by anthropologists that undertake field research in Arab League nations.

Fieldwork Risks in the Arab League

Automobile accidents, fire, and disease constitute some of the more mundane security risks faced by researchers in the field. We do not wish to downplay their effects, yet our current survey was designed to ascertain perceptions of risk concerning *state*

and non-state actors in the region. Some Arab League nations, such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Morocco, have been relatively tranquil in that regard. In others, perhaps it's more adequate to say that there is a continuum of risk and violence. For example, although Bahrain has had some serious demonstrations, instability is more vividly illustrated in Syria, the world's most violent nation. Alongside Syria on the list of five least peaceful nations in the world are fellow Arab League members Iraq and Somalia. Meanwhile, recently independent South Sudan used to pertain to the Arab League; that nation also ranks in the top five for violence worldwide (Whiting 2016).
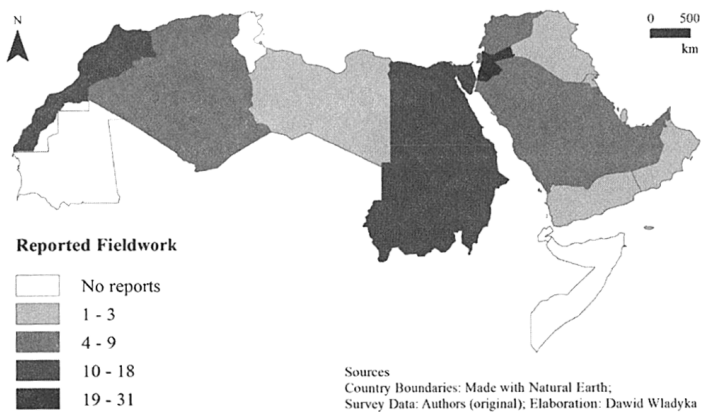
The Arab Spring precipitated backlash from government forces in Syria, Egypt, and elsewhere while the ongoing Israeli control of Palestine creates analogous conditions. Everyday forms of street violence—brawls, strikes, riots—have also been well documented in the context of protest against United States occupation in Iraq and other perceived grievances. Organized crime below the level of insurgency and common street crime have drawn less attention, notwithstanding Yemen's inclusion on a recent list of the world's fifteen most crime-ridden nations (see Williams-Grutt 2017). Drug smuggling is a long-standing phenomenon and funds militants on all sides, being well-known to Arab League observers of Hezbollah's financial practices in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon (Anderson 2015). Captagon, an amphetamine-based stimulant, is used by militants as a way to hype themselves up prior to the commencement of offensive operations (Anderson 2015). Elghossain et al. (2019) report domestic violence against women "with substantial levels" of physical and sexual abuse.

Fully 90 percent of respondents believe that Israel constitutes a threat to regional security and stability (Arab Center 2018). Other major powers viewed as destabilizing are the United States and Iran (Arab Center 2018). While conventional conflicts have had an impact on fieldwork in the region, security threats are multifaceted.[1] Religious violence, when compared to other regions of the world, ranks highest in the Middle East, with the nations of Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, along with the Palestinian territories being singled out for having "very high" rates of religious hostilities (Kishi and Theodorou 2016). Saudi funding for some of the more radical Sunni sects has particularly exacerbated religious conflict, and it should come as no surprise that religious terrorism manifests itself to the greatest degree in the Middle East (Kishi and Theodorou 2016), with terrorist attacks particularly acute in Iraq and Syria (Whiting 2016).

Giving Voice to Field Researchers

Given these facts, the impact of violence on field research in the Arab League deserves attention. Previous research documented a propensity for both ethnographers and the local population to give attention to rumors during violent times in Somalia (Simons 1995), strategies for research among conflicting parties (Wallach 2001), and reflexivity (Swedenburg 1995). While important insights were derived from these studies, we are unaware of any attempts to analyze research disruption and cancellation

Figure 1. Distribution of Reported Field Sites in Arab League Countries (Sources: Authors/ Original Survey Data, Boundaries Made With Natural Earth)

Table 1. Distribution and Count of Reported Field Sites in Arab League Countries (Source: Authors/Original Survey Data)

Country	Field Sites Reported	Percentage of Total Field Sites Reported
Algeria	5	3.9
Bahrain	1	0.8
Egypt	18	14.2
Iraq	2	1.6
Jordan	31	24.4
Kuwait	2	1.6
Lebanon	9	7.1
Libya	1	0.8
Morocco	14	11.0
Oman	3	2.4
Palestine	6	4.7
Qatar	3	2.4
Saudi Arabia	7	5.5
Sudan	12	9.4
Syria	7	5.5
United Arab Emirates	5	3.9
Yemen	1	0.8

among anthropologists working in Arab League countries. This silence contrasts with discussion on risk and security among aid workers who are active in the same locations, sharing the same infrastructure with the same communities (Fast 2010). Thanks to those studies, we know that the NGO presence in Africa is characterized by a high number of security issues, including travel disruptions, violence, and state surveillance (Pascucci 2016). Our goal is to understand the impact of those incidents on researchers' activities and security. This study not only tackles the security issues but goes further by analyzing the responses of regional experts concerning Trump's rhetoric and policies. Prior to Trump, no recent United States President made anti-Muslim rhetoric a part of their political toolkit. For example, former President G.W. Bush went to great lengths to establish that Al Qaeda was the true enemy of the American people and that the wider, moderate Muslim community were America's friends, neighbors, allies, and fellow patriots.[2] Given this rather startling switch in the rhetoric emanating from the White House, we found it timely to ask scholars we surveyed whether or not they felt that Trump's policies were impacting security conditions, for better or for worse, in their sites in Arab League nations.

We survey members of the American Anthropological Association who are Arab League specialists and listed in the *AnthroGuide 2016-2017* (AAA 2016). We maintain two primary research objectives. First, we provide an overview of field research security conditions in 127 field sites located in seventeen Arab League countries, as reported by area specialists. This allows us to pinpoint where research has been canceled due to security threats and where studies have continued without problems. Themes discussed include travel, militant activity, security force activity, crime, corruption, and interactions with local authorities. Second, we ascertain whether United States-based anthropologists undertaking research in Arab League nations perceive backlash that may interfere with their studies in response to United States government policies and rhetoric.

Methods

Our method was to send out a survey by email to a relatively uniform group of field researchers: anthropologists who, during the time period of 2000-2017, conducted active field research in Arab League countries. To identify subjects for the study, we examined the *AnthroGuide 2016-2017* (AAA 2016) and, in January and February 2018, disseminated the survey among 503 scholars listed therein. Out of the invited scholars, sixty anthropologists who self-reported to have worked in over 160 field sites agreed to answer our questionnaire (constituting a 12% response rate[3]) and provided basic information about their fieldwork. Out of all the respondents, forty-seven provided either exact or approximate locational information regarding their field sites. They base their responses on fieldwork carried out in 127 field sites located in seventeen Arab League countries. We received no responses from researchers who work in Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, and Tunisia. We hope that future research will illuminate the situations in these countries. Further data analysis indicated that forty-one respondents answered the section dedicated to the Trump administration's effect on fieldwork in Arab League countries and, in particular, thirty-one of them provided detailed descriptive comments on the matter that constitute high-quality data usable for our qualitative analysis. In order to provide insight into the spatial configuration of the data, it is worthwhile to take a glimpse at the map[4] (see Figure 1) and accompanying table (see Table 1) that display the distribution and count of reported field sites in Arab League countries.

Figure 2. Distribution and Density of Field Sites Affected by Security Threats Based on the Exact Field Site Location Provided by Respondents (Sources: Field Sites Location: Authors/Original Survey Data, Esri, Garmin, DCW; Country Boundaries: Made with Natural Earth)

Red color indicates high incidence of Fieldsites Affected by Security Threats in the area based on the exact fieldsites locations provided by our respondents

Sources
Country Boundaries:
Made with Natural Earth;
Fieldsites location:
Authors/Survey, Esri, Garmin, DCW

0   300
km

Our survey was arranged in a manner so that the responses were anonymous; however, the questionnaire included a demographic rubric that allows us to provide the following sample description. In particular, out of forty respondents who fully completed the demographics section, 60 percent were female, and 40 percent were male. The respondents were approximately between thirty and seventy-two years old. Almost 90 percent of respondents self-identified as White. Additionally, the sample included one respondent for each of the following self-identifications: Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Arab, and Latino.[5] Over 60 percent were married, more than one-third had children, and more than 85 percent currently resided in the United States and had United States citizenship.

All the respondents held doctoral degrees. Cultural anthropologists formed the largest category of respondents (over 60%), with a quarter of respondents being archeologists, the second most represented subfield. The sample also included representatives of the following disciplines who were in some way affiliated with anthropology (one case each): Egyptology, political science, sociology, and theology. Based on a self-identification of the respondents, our sample can be

described as overwhelmingly liberal with a mean of 1.82 (med=2.0, SD=1.07, range=5) on the Likert scale from 0 to 7 where 0 means "extremely liberal" and 7 equals "extremely conservative." At the same time, 73 percent of respondents identified as Democrats, and none of the respondents identified as Republican. While this sample composition has not been obtained on purpose, readers, as in any other qualitative analysis of a non-representative sample, should be cautious with the generalization of the results. On the other hand, the primary goal of our study was to focus on field researchers working in this particular region, and it is their experience rather than ideological stance that legitimizes their expert opinions. In particular, the median experience working in academia of our respondents was fifteen years and ranged between one and forty-two years (M=18.3, SD=10.5). During the 21st century, they conducted research in 127 field sites in the Arab League countries, between one and twelve field sites each. To make sure that the analysis provides an ample context, where available, the below excerpts from the respondents' answers are accompanied with a basic coded profile of the participant, in particular: number of field sites between 2000 and 2017—number of years of experience in academia—field of highest academic degree—gender. For

Table 2. The Incidence of Field Sites Affected by Security Threats and Fieldwork Canceled According to the Country (Source: Authors/Original Survey Data)

Country	Field Sites Affected	Percentage of Total Reported in Country	Fieldwork Canceled	Percentage of Total Reported in Country
Algeria	0	0	0	0
Bahrain	1	100	0	0
Egypt	12	67	10	56
Iraq	1	50	1	50
Jordan	6	16	1	3
Kuwait	0	0	0	0
Lebanon	8	89	1	11
Libya	0	0	0	0
Morocco	0	0	0	0
Oman	0	0	0	0
Palestine	4	67	3	50
Qatar	0	0	0	0
Saudi Arabia	2	29	2	29
Sudan	3	25	2	17
Syria	6	86	6	86
United Arab Emirates	0	0	0	0
Yemen	0	0	0	0

example, 1-10-Anthropology-F refers to a female anthropologist who reported one field site and ten years of experience. The abbreviations we used are: F for female, M for male, and ND for no data.

The Spatial and Temporal Dynamics of Security Threats

As we have mentioned, the Arab League, depending on location, experiences a continuum of violence. Analysis indicates that the possibility of pinpointing exact types of threats to particular countries or regions is very limited (compare Figures 3 and 5). Many of our respondents describe fieldwork conditions, including security considerations, as constantly fluctuating and dependent on current political conditions. This feature was summarized by one of our respondents:

> Work in Egypt was fine before the 2011 revolution. During, there was lawlessness especially around archaeological sites. Under Morsi things were strained and only slightly better. Under al-Sisi, the government has more control but they have started denying permits for archaeological work due to "security issues." (5-ND-Archeology-F)

The variety of conditions within the countries make detailed description of all threats depending on the time period an endeavor that would exceed the capacity of this article. Several of our respondents mentioned location and demographics as impacting overall security conditions.

> Our field site is remote, in the desert, so that we experienced no impact from jihadist groups. (2-20-Archaeology-ND)

A couple of respondents indicated that the perception of the location's "sensitivity" to the current government might cause additional hurdles in research:
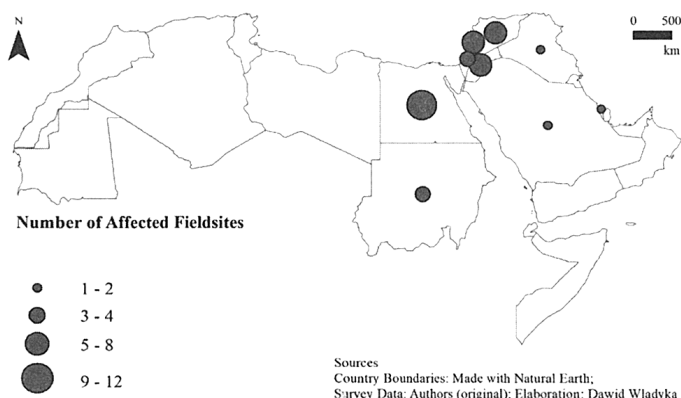
> The illegal Israeli military occupation is a serious obstacle for research. The military detain researchers trying to enter the Palestinian areas, and a young military or secret police officer who might or might not have a high school degree can decide if a research project for a senior researcher is viable in Palestine. (3-16-Anthropology-F)

> Things change over time in each area of the country of Sudan, and the difficulties are not necessarily related to safety as much as to government "security" wanting to keep researchers from going to sensitive areas where they might witness unrest. Thus, permissions to travel or conduct research might be denied, or permissions by one body might be questioned by on-the-ground representatives of another body of government. (7-40-Anthropology-F)

In the next paragraphs, we attempt to draw general conclusions regarding the geographies of threats, as well as the types of threats that emerge from our data. There are limitations on these data, as it is virtually impossible to tackle here a multiplicity of field conditions that affect locations. A country or region that was deemed safe could still experience security threats at isolated locations, not reflected in our data.

The emerging patterns regarding the country-based geographies of security threats can be glimpsed from Figures 4 and 5. We found that all respondents that worked in total in thirty-four field sites in Algeria, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, the UAE, and Yemen reported no security problems (see Table 2). These countries constitute the tranquil end of the spectrum of fieldwork.

Figure 3. Distribution of Field Sites Affected by Security Threats in Arab League Countries (Sources: Authors/Original Survey Data, Boundaries Made with Natural Earth)

Number of Affected Fieldsites

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 8
- 9 - 12

Sources
Country Boundaries: Made with Natural Earth;
Survey Data: Authors (original); Elaboration: Dawid Wladyka

Figure 4. The Areas with the Highest Incidence of Field Sites Affected by Security Threats Based on the Exact Field Site Location Provided by Respondents (Sources: Field Sites Location: Authors/Original Survey Data, Esri, Garmin, DCW; Country Boundaries: Made with Natural Earth)

Red color indicates high
incidence of Fieldsites Affected
by Security Threats in the area
based on the exact fieldsites
locations provided by our respondents

Sources
Country Boundaries:
Made with Natural Earth;
Fieldsites location:
Authors Survey, Esri,
Garmin, DCW

Countries that had both secure and insecure field sites included Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Syria. We received reports on ninety-two field sites in these countries. Researchers working in Jordan assessed twenty-five out of thirty-one sites evaluated to be safe (see Table 2). Threats were reported around the Badia (desert), Jordan, and travel was said to be difficult around Irbid. Many sites in Jordan were identified as problem-free, including Ajloun, Amman, Kerak, Al-Mafraq, Ma'an, and Ghor as-Safi.

Saudi Arabia's fieldwork had seen some spillover violence around the Yemen border at Najran. Insurgents were active in Tabuk, but aside from that, it was fine. Respondents that worked in Sudan indicated more secure than insecure sites (see Figure 2). The insurgents were active in Kassala and Darfur, while West Kordofan was labeled as dangerous, and travel problems were reported in the north of the country. To provide context, we include two comments from researchers working in these countries:

> Najran province, Saudi Arabia, continues to be dangerous because of the threat of Yemen bombing it. The local population is moderate and peaceful. We were working on the Syrian border of Jordan and we could hear the mortar fire every night. Air Force, possibly American, planes flew back and forth along the border. There were hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees living inside Jordan within 3 km of our camp, so we were nervous about our security. (8-42-Archaeology-F)

> Things change over time in each area of the country of Sudan, and the difficulties are not necessarily related to safety…as much as to government "security" wanting to keep researchers from going to sensitive where they might witness unrest. Thus, permissions to travel or conduct research might be denied, or permissions by one body might be questioned by on the ground representatives of another body of government. So your survey
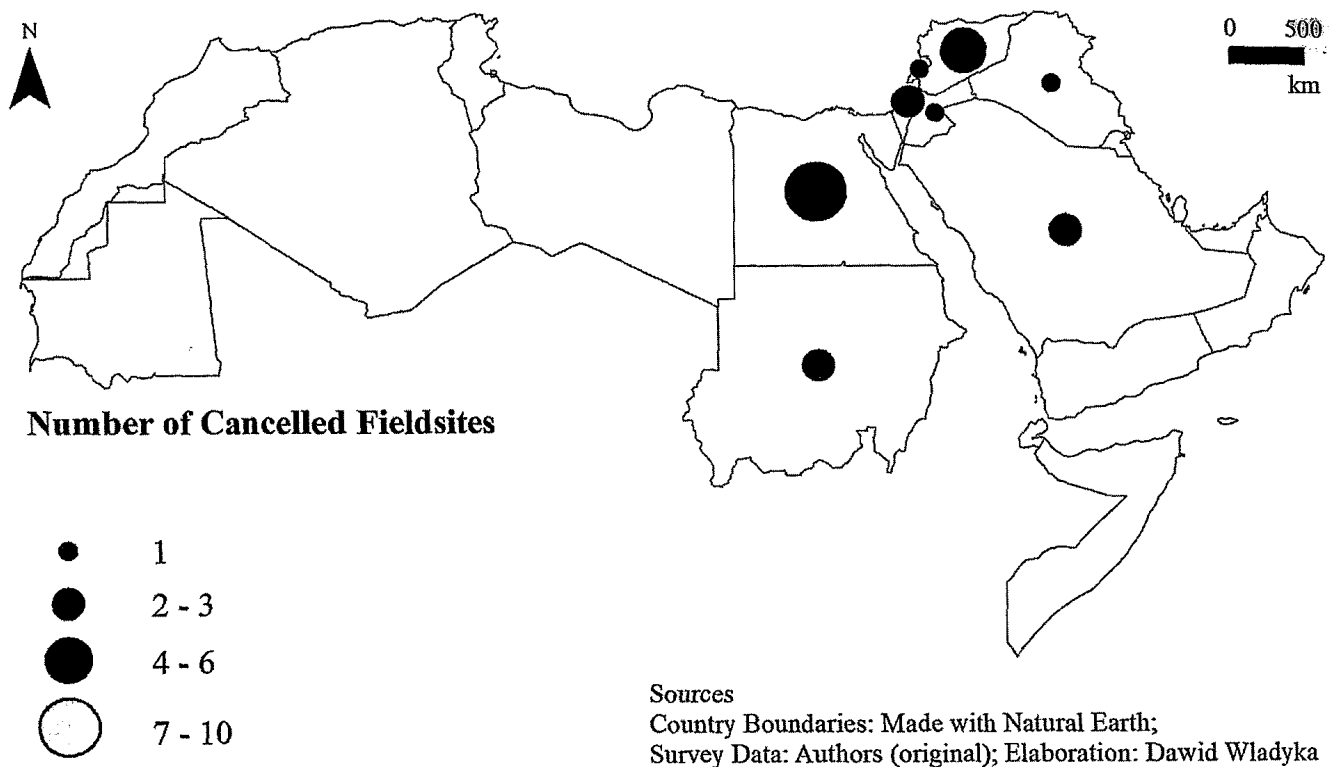
doesn't really get at all the issues about where one can do research and what kinds of risks are involved. Also, when I was in Sudan for short-term projects planned for six regions, we had to eliminate the two for Darfur due to the war. I'm not sure I explained that correctly on your survey, since I never really got to Darfur due to that situation. (7-40-Anthropology-F)

One out of two field sites listed in Iraq was reported as insecure and canceled. The Palestinian Territory had four insecure and two secure sites, with Israeli security forces and travel security sometimes identified as the problem. The experiences in Egypt were more problematic, with twelve out of eighteen sites indicated as affected by security issues and eight cancellations. Jihadists were reported to be active in the western desert, Cairo, and Alexandria, but the government forces were cited as larger threats than insurgents by some. Travel was deemed difficult around Minya, Sohag, and in the eastern and western deserts (see Figure 2).

Lebanon (Beirut and south Lebanon) and Syria turned out to hold the worst security conditions, with eight out of nine and six out of seven field sites judged as affected, respectively (see Figure 4). Moreover, all affected field sites in Syria were so insecure as to require cancellation of research, those being sites around Damascus, Al-Hasakah, Deir Mama, and Raqqa. Reports from Lebanon showed only one cancellation among the field sites affected by threats. Additionally, the unique entry regarding Bahrain was reported as affected by security threats.

Figure 5. Distribution of Fieldwork Cancellations in Arab League Countries (Sources: Authors/Original Survey Data, Boundaries Made with Natural Earth)

Number of Cancelled Fieldsites

● 1

● 2 - 3

● 4 - 6

○ 7 - 10

Sources
Country Boundaries: Made with Natural Earth;
Survey Data: Authors (original); Elaboration: Dawid Wladyka

In general, we found that almost a third of reported field sites were affected by security threats, and twenty-six out of 127 field sites experienced a level of disturbance that led to research cancellations (see Table 2 and Figure 5). In the most extreme case, one of the respondents decided to completely abandon field research in the region:

> I tell my students to avoid the region if possible and to find alternative sites for field research. I am giving up on the Middle East region as a whole. Time to move on. (4-17-Anthropology-F)

Still, the majority of experiences did not lead to such a drastic decision. Most common are concerns regarding travel security and corruption among government officials. Each of those phenomena was observed in a fifth of field sites. Many of those problems are common during the fieldwork:

> My field location in Sudan is not problematic, though travel is challenging where paved roads don't exist. (1-22-Anthropology-M)

On the other hand, government-linked corruption and bureaucracy, based on the comment from our respondents, appear to quickly accumulate. A visible pattern among responses indicates that the actions of the government agencies directed at researchers could trigger security and other problematic field site issues to an extent larger than jihadist forces:
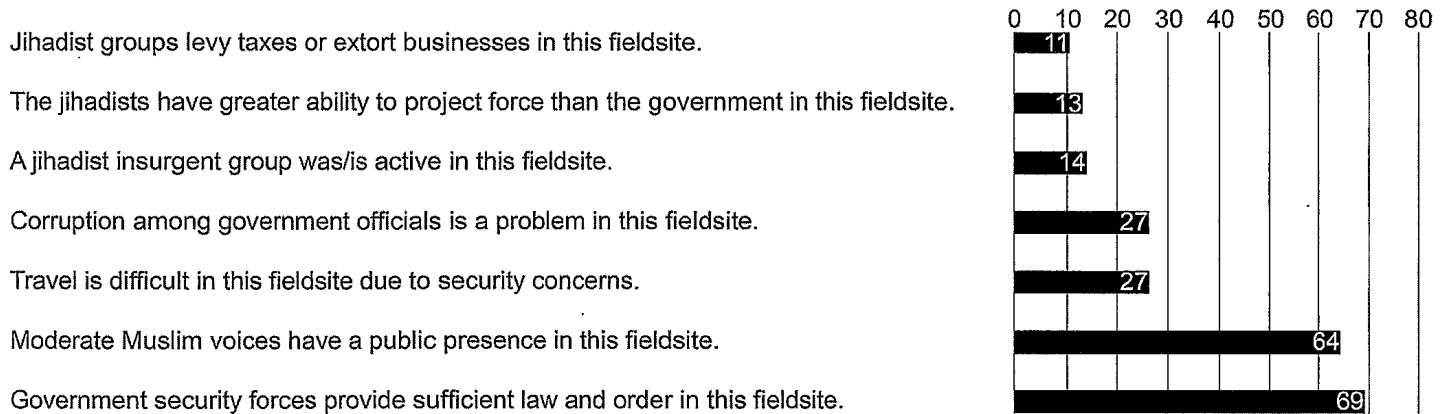
The concern in Egypt is government surveillance, denial of entry and research permits, and potential detention and even bodily harm. The threat of jihadist violence is far less than the threat of state violence in this context. (1-15-Anthropology-M)

In one out of every ten field sites, respondents noticed that a jihadist insurgent group was active, jihadists had greater ability to project force than the government, and they extorted businesses and levied taxes. On the other hand, over half of the field sites were characterized by the government security forces providing sufficient law and order. This is consistent with the number of field sites where the population views the government as legitimate, and the moderate Muslim voices presence was noted by researchers (see Figure 6).

Effects of Trump's Policies on Fieldwork

It is a known practice for field researchers to assess the risks around their field sites. A large number of our respondents are, in fact, relatively used to conducting fieldwork in the midst of inconveniences and threats varying from dangerous travel to social unrest and even armed conflicts in nearby territories. Most of our current findings appear consistent with previous surveys of anthropologists working in other regions (e.g., Wladyka and Yaworsky 2017), where the researchers were found to abandon research only when direct and close violent acts were committed.

Figure 6. Respondents' Observations Regarding Society and Security in the Proximity of Field Sites (Source: Authors/Original Survey Data)

Jihadist groups levy taxes or extort businesses in this fieldsite. — 11

The jihadists have greater ability to project force than the government in this fieldsite. — 13

A jihadist insurgent group was/is active in this fieldsite. — 14

Corruption among government officials is a problem in this fieldsite. — 27

Travel is difficult in this fieldsite due to security concerns. — 27

Moderate Muslim voices have a public presence in this fieldsite. — 64

Government security forces provide sufficient law and order in this fieldsite. — 69

Still, an emerging problem, specific for our respondents in parts of the Arab League, is systemic meddling of local governments in the research process to the extent of triggering security incidents. Some respondents view this phenomenon as more problematic than the presence of insurgents or shortcomings of local law enforcement. One should not perceive this as a purely internal threat related to the field site context. Rather, we suggest, it is a complex phenomenon related to international politics and their perceptions. This burden should not come as a surprise if we recall discussion on how some Western governments' stances pushed the international NGOs to look for alternative funding (Fast 2010).

In order to look at this problem, we asked our respondents: "In your opinion, the actions of the current United States Presidential Administration have this impact on fieldwork in the Arab League countries." We used the term "actions" so as to cover both official United States government (Trump administration) policies and Trump's rhetoric. Respondents were allowed to answer this 7-point Likert scale question with options ranging from "extremely negative" to "extremely positive." On a seven-point scale, from extremely negative to extremely positive, no anthropologists responded that Trump's actions were positively impacting fieldwork conditions in Arab League nations. While three responded that Trump's actions were neither helping nor harming the situation, the majority reported that Trump was negatively impacting the fieldwork situation for anthropologists (M=1.8, Med=2.0, SD=9.2, range=3). The breakdown in responses to the question is provided below (see Table 3).

One noteworthy aspect of the responses is that the researchers with conservative orientations conceded that Trump's actions were not helping matters. As a reminder, there were only three respondents that self-identified as conservatives, so we advise caution when generalizing. Still, this mitigates against the charge that respondents were replying based on their political intuitions rather than relying on their field experiences and professional assessments. In the following part of the

questionnaire, the respondents were encouraged to elaborate on their judgments by providing a written commentary that clarified their views. When asked to elaborate on the rationales for their assessments, certain themes were recurrent. These themes revolved around United States policy regarding: (1) anti-Muslim rhetoric in the United States, (2) travel bans targeting Arab League/Muslim majority nations, (3) United States government actions in the region (including recent Jerusalem embassy/Israeli capital controversy), and (4) varying reactions within the region. In short, respondents were assessing the impact at many levels. First, they were considering both *policy* and *rhetoric* when assessing how Trump's actions were affecting fieldwork conditions. Second, they distinguished between the internal United States actions and rhetoric and financial, military, and political actions implemented by the United States directly in the region. Below, we provide an overview of their comments, beginning with the theme of the anti-Muslim rhetoric in the United States.

Anti-Muslim Rhetoric in the United States

As mentioned in the introduction, Trump's use of anti-Muslim demagoguery is novel for an American president. Surveyed scholars have negatively assessed this rhetoric and its potential consequences for their presence and continuing fieldwork in the region:

Anti-Muslim sentiment and the complete running of US foreign policy by Israel is the most problematic feature of doing research in the region. (4-17-Sociology-F)

Framing all Muslims as terrorists, unwanted in our country, has made it more difficult to work as an American in the Arabian Peninsula. (2-6-Anthropology-F)

Even in moderate, relatively pro-US countries such as Morocco, the rhetoric of the current administration is viewed as humorously uninformed and at worst as sinister. (2-24-Anthropology-M)

Table 3. Respondents' Evaluation of the Trump Presidential Administration's Impact on Fieldwork in the Arab League Countries (Source: Authors/Original Survey Data)

Evaluation on Seven-point Scale	Answer Count	Percent
Extremely Negative	20	48.8
Moderately Negative	14	34.1
Slightly Negative	4	9.8
Neither Positive nor Negative	3	7.3
Slightly Positive	0	0
Moderately Positive	0	0
Extremely Positive	0	0
Total	**41**	**100.0**

Our respondents consider the United States government's anti-Muslim rhetoric as being a risky venture that could damage research. That is more likely when the rhetoric converts into official policy, which has been pointed out by anthropologists and is depicted in the next section.

Travel Ban

In early 2017, Trump instituted a travel ban targeted at six Arab League nations: Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, plus the non-member (but still Muslim-majority) nation of Iran (Abdelaziz 2017). While reaction from Arab League governments was mixed—negative reactions from Iraq, Libya, Sudan, and Yemen, support from UAE and Bahrain, and silence from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia—the reaction from anthropologists who responded to our survey was negative, and their fears about research continuance clearly stated:

> There is more scrutiny of researchers now than in the past. When the Trump Muslim ban went into effect a year ago, I was in Sudan, and everyone was talking about it. My research permission was questioned by a representative of the plains cloth "security" in one region (northern) though not in other areas. However, many ordinary Sudanese were just distressed about what it would mean for them, and [that] didn't mean they held anything against me or my research. I have heard that this year visas are a bit harder for scholars to get, which may be a response—but I have decided not to try to go this year in any case, so it is not affecting me. (7-40-Anthropology-F)

United States Government Actions in the Region

We note that United States government support for Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia spans the generations and across United States administrations, both Democrat and Republican alike. One would probably have to go back to the 1956 Anglo/French/Israeli seizure of the Suez Canal to find an example of the United States government *substantively* siding with the Arabs over the Israelis. In this regard, there is nothing noteworthy about Trump's policies, and the negative impact on many field sites is long-lasting, as reported by our respondents:

> US policy in the region beginning with the invasion of Iraq have made work in the region more precarious because these policies are at significant odds with what populations within the region value and desire. The US has yet to shed its image as imperial power working for the benefit of Israel (and Saudi Arabia) at the expense of regional populations. (1-7-Anthropology-M)

> Constant, unflinching support for Israel (and Saudi Arabia) over the aspirations of Palestinians (in particular) are viewed negatively in virtually all levels of society where I work. (2-20-Archaeology-M)

In summary, long-standing United States policies that transcend administrations contribute to a negative perception of American researchers and travelers in general.

Varying Reactions within the Region

We reiterate that, similarly to NGOs and their aid workers, researchers suggest that previous United States administrations had policies that negatively affected their fieldwork. Anthropologists working in different times and places—1980s Nicaragua comes to mind—can recall working with communities that were at odds with United States government policy. Regardless, the high visibility of Trump's actions clearly is on the minds of anthropologists when weighing research in Arab League nations. Additionally, following the responses provided below, we suggest that the theme of varying reactions is closely tied to the immense diversity of cultural conditions found among Arab League populations:

> There is likely no direct impact but more of a continuation of animosity towards the US. I never say I'm American when I'm in Egypt just to be on the safe side. I was there during the elections and some Egyptians liked the "big man" Trump. They certainly didn't think a woman should be elected. I'm not entirely clear now what the Egyptian perspective is on the US especially as so much changes on a daily basis with this administration. (5-5-Archaeology-F)

Morocco tends to simply go with US administrations regardless of their specific actions, and their security apparatus is strong enough to keep any popular outcry nonviolent. (2-10-Anthropology-M)

Discussion and Conclusion

Previous studies found field researchers continuing work in certain regions of Central America and Mexico that were being contested by multiple armed hierarchies that had a comparative advantage over the state in projecting force in their respective regions (Wladyka and Yaworsky 2017; Yaworsky and Wladyka 2018). The same has been true for certain areas in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and the Sudan in recent years. Anthropologists work in Arab League nations that have these insecure zones arrayed in checkerboard fashion with more tranquil "safe areas." Security conditions for fieldwork vary considerably in the Arab League. Security forces, insurgents, and criminal elements all constitute threats that need to be assessed locally. So, where do anthropologists draw the line and call it quits and abandon their field sites? We can only propose an answer by going beyond our Arab League survey data by turning back to our earlier survey results from Central America and Mexico: "But our results do indicate that when things escalate to the discovery of clandestine graves, an upsurge in kidnappings, and gruesome, public displays of victims, anthropologists withdraw from the field. So, while a majority of anthropologists are willing to operate outside the jurisdiction of the Hobbesian 'Leviathan,' they will not tolerate the conditions of Hobbesian 'warre'" (Yaworsky and Wladyka 2018:16).

Unlike our discussion of research in Central America and Mexico, the investigation of Arab League research tackles the effects of United States government actions on the situation. Our analysis indicates that the United States-based researchers are unable to easily detach from their home institutions and suffer a liability associated with United States policies. It appears that researchers, although present in lesser numbers and less visible compared to the aid workers employed by the NGOs, suffer from political actions of their "home" governments in the same way as the former group (Fast 2010).

Regarding Trump's rhetoric, we note that effective political propaganda is based on careful study of the target audience (United States Department of the Army 1987). Identifying what a target audience fears and which out-groups can be demonized are two tried-and-true strategies (Yaworsky 2009). Trump evaluated the fears of lower-class White Americans and crafted demagoguery that highlighted themes revolving around the fear of foreigners and Muslims in general. That political initiative helped build an electoral-college victory in the 2016 United States presidential election. However, its effects on other audiences were varied. Among anthropologists working in the Arab League, the rhetoric and concomitant policies have not been received positively at all. While a few anthropologists feel the effects have been neutral on their fieldwork, most report that Trump's policies have made

research in the Arab League more difficult. Anthropologists who are Arab League specialists only report negative or neutral assessments of Trump's policies and rhetoric. None will state that Trump is helping improve the environment for research. Whether this is a reflection of the respondents' underlying political sentiments or their objective professional opinions based on fieldwork experiences can be debated.

Whatever the case, we suggest that Trump's policies and rhetoric could feed into a larger and long-standing problem plaguing researchers: anthropology's perceived connections to colonialism. This issue has been commented on by generations of scholars (e.g., Asad 1995; Price 2016). Likewise, the commingling of NGOs and colonialism has been commented on heavily (e.g., Khan, Westwood, and Boje 2010; Wood 1997). Individual anthropologists and NGO personnel do not hold uniform political and scientific goals, yet whatever causes they serve, whatever protestations/denials they put forward, trying to justify their research objectives to foreign communities in an era of heightened rhetoric emanating from the United States government is not always a simple procedure. The data provided in this paper suggests that Trump's rhetoric, in particular, could further exacerbate this "anthropology is colonialism" problem for researchers. Those issues are salient in the parts of the Middle East and North Africa where the heavy presence of aid workers coexist with that of researchers (Fast 2010). Also, similarly, the two communities of professionals are under a similar moral imperative to be present at the site of disaster or conflict, which counters risk calculations and logistical hurdles of conducting fieldwork at unstable locations (Pascucci 2016).

It is important to reiterate that the complex security situation is only exacerbated by the rhetoric and policies promoted by the Trump administration. One recognizes that previous administrations caused damage in that regard, for example, publicly connecting the activity of aid workers to intelligence gathering (Fast 2010). Similarly, some United States anthropologists found themselves serving as members of Human Terrain Teams (HTTs) in Afghanistan and Iraq, which preceded the election of Trump (McFate and Laurence 2015). The above-mentioned developments in recent and contemporary fieldwork ethics only complicate challenging issues of positionality in field research performed by "Western" researchers abroad (Hammersley 1995; Haraway 1991; Verdery 2018).

Field conditions will undoubtedly evolve, and anthropologists will experience novel situations involving legal liability, informed consent, protection of privacy, security, and cultural imperialism. Our survey only provides a brief snapshot, and a fuzzy one at that, of recent conditions. Ongoing urbanization, the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, water shortages, and heightened political extremism will also condition the experiences of anthropologists and the populations within which they embed. We, of course, were unable to survey Arab League populations directly, and this is clearly a limitation of this study, and we can only call for further investigation. By proxy, field researchers have indicated a

negative reaction to Trump's policies among those audiences. In any event, we hope that this brief paper has provided insight into the state of the researchers' perceptions of safety while working in the Arab League.

Declaration of Interest Statement: We have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Notes

[1]Conventional wars involving since the end of the 2nd World War include five Arab-Israeli wars as well as episodic fighting in Lebanon. The Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), Iran-Iraq war (1989-1988), the Gulf War (1991), the United States military assault on Iraq (2003), and NATO strikes on Libya (2011) are well-known. Wars involving Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, and Sudan, and between the Turkish military and Kurdish guerrillas, and Jordan vs the Palestine Liberation Organization, have also scarred the region.

[2]"I also want to speak directly to our many Muslim friends throughout the world. We respect your faith. It's practiced freely by many millions of Americans and by millions more in countries that America counts as friends" (Bush 2001:para. 42).

[3]One should consider that the Guide of the AAA provides only a general entry regarding the region of expertise and no information on time period or activity type; therefore, a significant amount of the initially invited anthropologists were not eligible to participate in the survey due to the fieldwork country, time, or profile that did not fit the sampling frame.

[4]Maps throughout this article were created using ArcGIS® software by Esri. ArcGIS® and ArcMap™ are the intellectual property of Esri and are used herein under license. Copyright © Esri. All rights reserved. For more information about Esri® software, please visit www.esri.com.

[5]Respondents were allowed to provide individualized input and select more than one option. Two respondents indicated more than one choice.

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