

Stanford



Melissa Carlson

Postdoctoral Scholar, Political Science

Bio

BIO

I am a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at U.C. Berkeley, specializing in international relations, comparative politics, and methodology. Currently, I am a pre-doctoral research fellow at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC). Broadly, my research examines the factors that influence the variation and intensity of partnerships between state governments and foreign militant groups. My dissertation develops an organizational theory of third-party provision of support: when foreign militant groups and state armed forces share similar organizational characteristics, they are more likely to form joint commands, carry out joint attacks, and provide each other with advanced weapons systems. By applying an organizational framework to this problem, I show that traits at this new level of analysis provide unprecedented analytic leverage in explaining patterns in international cooperation. My other research interests include informal cooperation between states and refugee interactions with smugglers, aid workers, and host governments. My work has been published in *International Studies Quarterly*, *the Review of International Organizations*, and *the University of Chicago Law Review*, among others.

I draw from a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to pursue my research interests. I have coded, compiled, and analyzed large-N datasets, including international events and web-scraped social media data. I have composed in-depth case studies that draw on semi-structured interviews and hundreds of primary and secondary source documents. I have conducted extensive field work in Jordan, Greece, and Iraq, including interviews with - and participant observation of - vulnerable migrants, aid workers, government officials, and Syrian militant group members. I have also designed and implemented survey and field experiments in Greece and Jordan using enumerators, text-messages, and Facebook. My regional expertise focuses on the Middle East, particularly Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and the Gulf. I am fluent in Jordanian and Syrian dialectical Arabic.

I have worked with various aid organizations, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Prolepsis, a Greek public health and nutrition aid organization, to design and implement ethnographic research programs and survey experiments. I have also worked as a professional translator for journalists and aid organizations in informal and formal refugee camps across the Greek mainland and islands. Prior to beginning my PhD at U.C. Berkeley, I worked as Public Information consultant for the IOM Iraq Mission in Jordan and Iraqi Kurdistan. In this capacity, I traveled to various camps for Syrian refugees and Iraqis displaced by ISIS in Ninewa, Dohuk, and Erbil, interviewing beneficiaries and photographing IOM aid distributions. I have continued working with the IOM Jordan as a research consultant, leading projects that range from tracing smuggling routes from Jordan to Europe to assessing the impact of Syrian refugee returns on local host community economies in Jordan. I have a M.A. in Political Science from U.C. Berkeley, and a B.A. in International Relations and Politics, Philosophy, and Economics from Claremont McKenna College.

Teaching

COURSES

2021-22

- Foreign Policy Decision-Making in International Relations: INTLPOL 306 (Spr)
- International Security in a Changing World: INTLPOL 241S (Win)
- International Security in a Changing World: POLISCI 114S (Win)