

Google Maps Problems in Iraq

Akam Aziz Abdulrahman
University of Raparin
Ranya, Kuridistan Region, Iraq

Abstract— In our research about the problems of Google Map in Iraq, we have discussed the problems and lack that Google Map still has in Iraq. Google Map as the best and most used source in the whole world, which has some important services such as finding different places, picture and determining the direction of arriving, and seeing the world map by 2D and 3D. In this research, we have discussed and explained that why Google Company doesn't allow the developers of Iraq to do some certain services, such as not allowing them to renew the satellite pictures for the whole Iraq and not allowing the developers of Google Map to add the forgotten roads or new roads, while a lot of villages have not been added on the map and not allowing the developers to add them. So, this research has answered most of the questions about the limitation of some services of Google Map in Iraq. Also, the political and security reasons have been discussed that they are the main reasons of this limitation. Our purpose in this research is to announcing the problems which face the users and developers of Google Map because of limiting some services of Google Map in Iraq.

Keywords—Google Maps, Maps Problems, Google Street

1- INTRODUCTION

One should take into account the fact that Google Maps have emerged as one of the most popular things on the internet in the present times owing to the utility associated with the access and usage. However, certain problems are associated with the Google Maps when it comes to the question of Iraq. It should be reckoned that since the last 12 years, the maps and images have not been updated. Also, Google Maps also does not allow contributions so that the missing roads and villages of the contextual country can be added to the maps. One needs to delve into the reasons that are functional behind causing the mentioned issues with the application. Iraq has been embroiled in a severe crisis situation since many years now. The crisis in Iraq has made headlines in the media all across the globe. The extremist group named ISIS has come to establish its stronghold in certain parts of Iraq. Majority of the northern part of the country has been seized by Islamic State of Iraq. One should understand that this conflict finds its cause in the complications related to the history of Iraq. The country has been characterized by ethnic as well as religious differences. The United States finally started the Iraq War in 2003 by invading the country with all its might (Dobbins, 2003). So, one has to associate the political situation of the country with the facilities available on Google Maps for the region.

2- GOOGLE MAPS IN IRAQ

In Iraq and Kurdistan region, unlike the other countries, a lot of public and private places have not been determined on Google Map (Aziz, 2019). It is comprehensible that the contextual application has the capacity of providing absolutely perfect details regarding the roads and various

places. The accuracy and ergonomic nature of the contextual application has made it extremely popular among common uses all across the world. While the application is used for day to day purposes and travelling, one should also explore other aspects associated with the use of this application that can prove to be of optimum importance in matters of security and safety. The maps available on the application provide real time scenario of the roads and locations for the help of the users. However, in the case of Iraq, the scenario is not the same at all. It should be taken into account that the imagery present with regard to the contextual country has not been updated for a long span of as many as 12 years. Apart from this, the application does not allow contributions so that the missing roads and villages of the country can be added on the platform (Fraley, 2011). It is really a very interesting aspect for one to explore as the scenario is quite unique in the case of Iraq when compared to the representations of the other countries on this platform.

3- IRAQ VIOLENCE AND GOOGLE MAPS

It is imperative to understand the larger perspective that comes into play in the case of Iraq with regard to the representation of the roads and villages on the map. Iraq can surely be described as one of the most sensitive areas in the entire world when it comes to the question of extremist activities and acts of terror tormenting the lives of common people. The country has seen enough violence till date, and one cannot deny the fact that modern technology can be used with all the impetus by the concerned people to accentuate the level of violence or disturbance in the region. One need to take into account that Saddam Husain was executive back in 2006 and the United States adopted a new strategy to deal with Iraq (Green & Ward, 2009). Thousands of soldiers were meant to be dispatched to the country to ensure security to Baghdad. Within a few months of this decision by George Bush, Shia and Kurdish leaders went on to support the government under Prime Minister Maliki. However, the Sunni leaders did not support government. In the month of December in 2007, the British army handed over Basra's the forces in Iraq, thereby effectively putting an end the British control of the southern part of the country (Alaaldin, 2015). Thus, one can understand that since the last 12 years, the country of Iraq has been going through a massive transformation in the domain of politics and society.

3.1- Iraq Government versus Other Groups

However, the country soon found itself embroiled in conflict between the Iraqi forces and the militia that was against the government. One should consider the aspect of this armed conflict in Iraq with regard to the uses of Google Maps in the region that could have led to further complications in the conflict between the two sides. The access to specific locations and road maps has the potential of causing

hindrance to the cause of safety and security as the group that is against the national government of the country would also be able to have the entire geographical map of the country without any hassle. Moreover, such access to locations and roads can be taken to have the capacity of jeopardizing the safety of common people living in the country as well. In the previous conflicts, hundreds of people have lost their lives, and it has only led to the enhancement of the plight of the common people of the country. The stand taken by the contextual navigation application not to update data about the countries roads and villages on the platform can surely be identified to be a positive one indeed that could save the lives of many people. If any common man has access to the directions, the roads, and the locations of the various regions of the country, the data could surely be used for negative purpose as well. Google Maps has ensured that the platform is secure for common use with no updated data being present for common access (Vaidhyanathan, 2011).

4- RISK FACTOR AND MAPS

Moreover, the contextual application also provides satellite images on the platform apart from giving directions and precise locations for the common people. In a nation state where the government is involved in such a severe conflict with the militia and other groups, it is very much comprehensible that the satellite images could be used to trace the presence of commoners, villages, houses, and other such details. The application is so much accurate that it shows the exact position and image, making it very easy for any person to have a very good idea about the topography and population. The access to such data with utmost ease can lead to major issues as the data can be used to execute terror attacks on civilians as well as attack the national forces. It was back in 2011 when the US forces when pulled out from the country of Iraq. However, from this juncture the ambiance in the political domain of the country became all the more complicated. The Iraqi government went on to be characterized by corruption. Before the Arab League Summit was convened in Baghdad in 2012, a number of attacks led to the death of innocent people. So, it is not hard to understand that the terror attacks might have only intensified in the wake of the political unrest if the terror groups had access to such easy information about location.

4.1- Google Maps and Safety

The Sunni insurgency went on to intensify in 2013, and soon the country was in a state of sectarian war leading to the plight of the common people. A number of bombings shocked the people of Irbil at this juncture. With regard to the series of bombings, the Islamic State of Iraq responding to Iraqi Kurdish support for the ones who were fighting against jihadists in the country of Syria. The country was, thus, left in a state of utmost turmoil with a number of groups operating with much power (Larrabee, 2010). Google Maps being such a commonplace application might have only led to further problems in such a scenario. The application did not update the satellite imagery on the platform so that the updated images could not be used to unleash terror on the common people. With the situation already being so complex and

characterized by violence, it goes beyond saying that such open-to-all technology would prove to be very much detrimental to the cause of safety and wellbeing of common people of the country. While the political turmoil continues, it is the common people of the society who are left on the receiving end of the wrath of the conflict. The normalcy of the lives of common people get affected in Iraq, and barring the normal services on Google Maps is more of a boon for the commoners than being an impediment (Ollivant, 2012). Google Maps is intended to make the lives of common people easier. So, the application makes sure that the platform does not lead to any problems in the region, instead of helping common people with the images and data available.

4.2- How the Application Could Have Made Things Worse

One should reckon the fact that in the year 2013, more than seven thousand people met with their demise due to the armed conflicts in the country. The number of deaths had been just over 3000 in 2012. Thus, one can imagine the alarming rate at which the violence and its aftermath went on to impact the lives of common people. The common people have been stripped off the sense of safety due to the series of attacks in various parts of the country. Also, the government and the security forces have not been able to keep the situation under control when being faced with such vehement opposition and violence. The various militia groups as well as extremist organizations have completely disrupted the society and life of commoners in Iraq (Arosoaie, 2015). So, the decision of the Google Maps application to deny any user the satellite image of the country is very much justified. The decision reflects the fact that the decision makers are very much aware about the political upheaval encompassing the current scenario of Iraq. One can understand that updated satellite images would allow the militia and extremists to have updated status of population density, location of constructions, camps by the security forces, and so on, and lead to major conflicts and loss of lives in the region. On the other hand, the absence of images would not hinder the governmental forces in any way as they are not reliant on such open-to-all applications for getting information about the conflicting sides. Hence, the decision is supportable, and it should not be deemed as a problem, but rather a conscious stand regarding the contextual matter at hand.

5- WHY CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NOT ALLOWED

On the other hand, one should also consider the aspect of adding contributions by common users on the Google Maps. In all the regions of the world, the application in context allows common users to add data about places or locations after a review. This is a process in which the cumulative knowledge goes on to catapult the accuracy and helpfulness of the application in making the common users identify the various places, roads, and locations. However, the scenario is not so in the case of Iraq as the common users of the contextual application are not allowed to add contributions of any kind to the existing map of a region. Thus, there is no scope of adding any information while the locality in reality gets changed over the course of time. This would obviously function to ensure that updated data is not shared publically in any way, and the geographical location or specific details

cannot be accessed that easily via this application. One can imagine the scenario if the common users were able to add their contributions on the platform as the data could have exposed many common people, construction, or establishments to opposing forces functional in the geographical region with the application providing specific data in the wink of an eye to the group (Phillips, 2013). So, it is a pragmatic decision on the part of the application to disallow such contributions on the platform, and thereby pave the way for ensuring peace in the country in some way.

5.1-Missing Roads and Villages on the Application

Apart from this, the contextual application also does not allow the addition of the missing roads or villages in the country of Iraq. If the missing roads and villages are added on the application it is understandable that the entire data about the geographical ambiance would become public. This would make the security of the common people much more vulnerable in nature. So, it is best on the part of the application to refrain from providing this updated information to the common users of the platform (Khalil, 2011). Instead of providing the updated data to the users, the old representations are used for the common users. They can access the maps and details about roads through the old representations present on the application for them. Google Maps is a dedicated platform that functions in support of common people, and its disposition regarding the kind of data available on the platform in the case of the country of Iraq only reflects its deep comprehension of the socio-political environment of the nation that has for long faced the issues of violence and bloodshed. Since the last few years, the government is in a continual struggle against ISIS, and this has only heightened the stake for the common people of the land (Martin, 2018). The conflict makes it imperative that modern technology is not used by the extremist forces to unleash their wrath on the common people of Iraq.

It goes beyond saying that ISIS is a very advanced group that utilizes various means to get the better of the government and its security forces. On the other hand, the security forces also need to act in a planned manner to curb the violence effectively. The long struggle of the government and its forces are believed to have driven ISIS out of Iraq, although some people raise serious doubts over the eradication of the extremist force from the country in context (Al-Marashi, 2019). Hence, the problems associated with the use of Google Maps is a blessing in disguise as the platform has ensured that its facilities and information cannot be utilized in any way to unleash terror and cause harm to commoners in the country. The political turmoil of the contextual country undermines the crisis situation of many other parts of the globe, and everyone should comprehend the utmost importance of the situation. Google Maps has decided to keep the various accessibility options in check so that it does not get used as a catalyst to the conflicts and problems in Iraq (Verhulst, 2008). Common users of the platform need to understand the matter, and see this as a positive aspect of the application.

They should refrain from judging the effectiveness of the platform in the context of Iraq. However, at the moment, the application has up to date map for road line as the political turmoil has been on the wane since the last couple of years.

The updating of the roads can surely be seen as a major development after so many years of not allowing any such action on the platform. The roads that have been updated would prove to be very helpful for the common users of the platform for sure.

6- CONCLUSION

The intricate nature of the maps that one can access on the contextual application can surely pose hindrance with regard to safety and security of common people. So, one can conclude by commenting that the problems associated with the usage of Google Maps in Iraq have their roots in the socio-political turmoil of the country. The application has endeavored to ensure that the details available on the platform are not a cause of any problem in the region. The decision of Google Maps regarding the contextual matter reflects the need to ensure peace in the country, and the commitment of the organization running the application toward the completion of the goal. Google Maps ensures that the common users are able to access locations and geographical data with all the ease through its platform. However, it is also the responsibility of the platform in context to ensure that the application is not used for any malicious purpose in any way. Since the socio-political situation in the country of Iraq is characterized by turmoil, the problems associated with the use of Google Maps only reflects how the platform can thwart certain information or representation with effectiveness.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alaaldin, R. (2015). Shia Ascendancy in Iraq and the Sectarian Polarisation of the Middle
- [2] East. In Isakhan B. (Ed.), *The Legacy of Iraq: From the 2003 War to the 'Islamic State'* (pp. 181-194).
- [3] Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt16r0j1w.17>
- [4] Al-Marashi, I. (2019). ISIS's Projection of Landpower in Iraq. In BOLGER D. (Author) &
- [5] WARREN J. (Ed.), *Landpower in the Long War: Projecting Force After 9/11* (pp. 202-216). Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvg5bst0.17>
- [6] Arosoaie, A. (2015). Iraq. *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 7(1), 62-66. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26351318>
- [7] Dobbins, J., McGinn, J., Crane, K., Jones, S., Lal, R., Rathmell, A., . . . Timilsina, A. (2003). IRAQ. In *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (pp. 167-222). Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mr1753rc.17>
- [8] Esmeir, Samera. (2007). The Violence of Non-Violence: Law and War in Iraq. *Journal of Law and Society*, 34(1), 99-115. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4129583>
- [9] Fraley, J. (2011). Images of force: The power of maps in community development. *Community Development Journal*, 46(4), 421-435. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44258300>
- [10] Green, P., & Ward, T. (2009). THE TRANSFORMATION OF VIOLENCE IN IRAQ. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 49(5), 609-627. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23639182>
- [11] Khalil, L. (2011). (Rep.). Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep03994>
- [12] Larrabee, F. (2010). Iraq and the Kurdish Challenge. In *Troubled Partnership: U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change* (pp. 11-32). Santa Monica, CA; Arlington, VA; Pittsburgh, PA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg899af.10>
- [13] Martin, K. (2018). Syria and Iraq: ISIS and Other Actors in Historical Context. In Al Istrabadi F. & Ganguly S. (Eds.), *The Future of ISIS: Regional and International Implications* (pp. 89-

118). Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1zct19.8>

[14] Ollivant, D. (2012). (Rep.). Council on Foreign Relations. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05707>

[15] Phillips, D. (2013). WAR AND ITS TRAILS: TRACING SOME THREADS IN IRAQ'S CONTINUUM OF VIOLENCE. *Practicing Anthropology*, 35(2), 13-16. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24782434>

[16] Teti, A., Abbott, P., & Dagher, M. (2017). (Rep.). Arab Transformations Project. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep14109>

[17] Vaidyanathan, S. (2011). THE GOOGLIZATION OF US: UNIVERSAL SURVEILLANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURAL IMPERIALISM. In *The Googlization of Everything: (And Why We Should Worry)* (pp. 82-114). Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pn9z8.7>

[18] Aziz, A. (2019). Adding the Public Places of Ranya District on the. *International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology (IJERT)*, 8(10), 2278-0181.

[19] VERHULST, S. (2008). Linked Geographies: Maps as Mediators of Reality. In Turow J. & Tsui L. (Eds.), *The Hyperlinked Society: Questioning Connections in the Digital Age* (pp. 191-205). ANN ARBOR: University of Michigan Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv65sxn0.19>