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The War on Terror, How the Strategies Used by the United States against Islamic Extremism Have Been Ineffective

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The War on Terror, How the Strategies Used by the United States against Islamic Extremism

Have Been Ineffective

By

Hein Paing

This thesis is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Professional Work Experience in

Homeland Security

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the ineffective strategies used by the United States and coalition forces in the fight against Islamic extremist terrorism. The continuation of terrorist groups acting in the name of Islam begs the question as to just how well have these strategies worked, and what further measures must be taken in order to quell the existence of these organizations? This will be done through the examination of tactics such as the deployment of troops, bombardments from airstrikes, and the restrictive rules of engagements. When explored thoroughly, it will be easier to ascertain exactly why these strategies have not been effective. However, what must also be explored are the origins of these terror groups and the history of the war on terror. By cross referencing the offensive strategies that are being utilized and the background of the war, it will be easier to identify past mistakes and present day faults. The issue of terrorism in the name of Islam is one of utmost importance and a direct concern to national security; furthermore, it serves as a problem to military personnel and innocent civilians. Another purpose of this thesis will be to present a solution as to what to do about this threat; whether it be a strategy that has not yet been used, or an adjustment to one that is already being utilized. For the sake of national security, this sort of reform towards combatting Islamic extremists must be made.

Thesis Statement

Within the last decade, the strategies used by the United States and its coalition forces in the fight against terrorism have been ineffective. This is because the proliferation of terrorists groups acting in the name of Islam is still very present in today's world. Unstable conditions in places such as Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan have allowed for the establishment of groups such as Al Qaeda, Taliban, and Islamic State in Syria (ISIS). Tactics such as boots on the ground, airstrikes, and the rules of engagement used by coalition forces have been restrictive and have contributed to the propagation of these terror groups. Coalition forces must find a better approach to use when dealing with the war on terror.

Introduction

According to 18 US Code & 2331, international terrorism includes all of the following:

Involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that violate federal or state law;

Appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and

Occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the U.S., or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d. para. 1)

Domestic terrorism also includes much of the above stated; however, it pertains to events within the boundaries of the United States. Even with all this, terrorism is still a term that is difficult to define. As stated, there are many forms of it, such as: domestic or international. Depending on one's point of view, a certain group might be labeled as terrorists, while others might view that

same group as revolutionaries. "When people use the term, they are labeling the actions of their enemies as something sinister and devoid of human compassion" (White, 2010, p. 6). Hence, if a group ends up inflicting harm upon a specified population, then the attackers would be seen as terrorists to the victimized. Throughout the world, terrorism in the name of Islam has been a serious problem for decades. Different generations of terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and now ISIS, all with a wide array of intentions have sprung up over time. The main objective of these groups has been to spread the religion of Islam through any means necessary. To achieve this, these factions have utilized a variety of extremist tactics in order to carry out their terroristic campaigns against anyone they deem as an adversary. For decades, governmental forces and coalitions have fought to repress the onslaught of these extremist organizations and their actions that surface world-wide. From the use of ground troops aimed at outing terrorists in a certain region, to the deployment of airstrikes, numerous courses of action have been taken in order to try and combat this issue. These kinds of tactics against such insurgencies have been utilized by coalition and have worked on many occasions.

<div align="center">

Nature and History

</div>

Rise of Terrorism in the Name of Islam

The rise of Islamic terrorists groups can be tracked back to the late 1970s when a solely Islamic revolution broke out in Iran. The figure below shows terror attacks that occurred in just Western Europe from the 70s all the way up till the year 2015 (Quartz News, 2015).
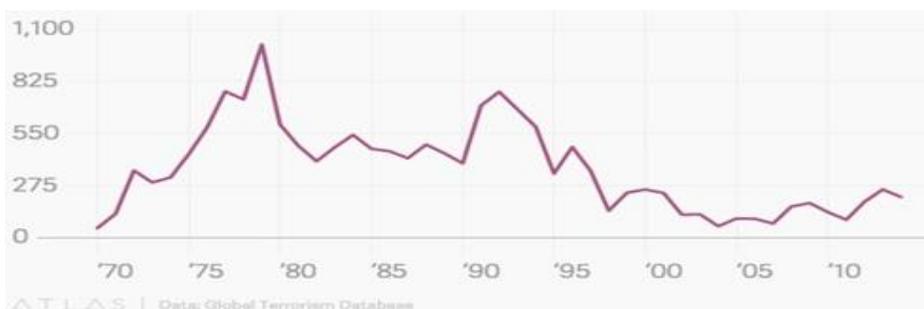

Figure 1: Terror Attacks in Western Europe   (Merelli, 2015)

By the end of the revolution, different Islamic groups were vying for power within the country. This, combined with the decade long war in Afghanistan against the Soviets made the Middle East a perfect breeding ground for terrorists. Drawn by the calling that they would be fighting the Soviets in the name of Allah, Muslims from several countries went to the conflict in Afghanistan. At the end of the Cold War, and the fall of the Soviets, many groups with strong anti-western sentiments such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban had been formed. "Vacuums of stability created by conflict and absence of governance in areas such as the Balkans, Afghanistan, Colombia, and certain African countries offer readymade areas for terrorist training and recruitment activity…" (Moore, n.d., para.16). Due to the fact that these groups sought to establish "Muslim states," they were able to recruit very effectively from the pool of Islamic militants who were now used to combat.

History of the War on Terror

The origins of the war on terror can be traced back to the response of the Bush administration to the terrorist attacks in September of 2001. On September 11th, 2001, the United States was attacked on multiple fronts by Islamic extremists. On that morning in September, terrorists associated with Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban terrorist organization hijacked four passenger planes within American airspace. Two of these planes were flown directly into the World Trade Centers and resulted in the deaths of 3,000 innocent lives. The third airliner, rammed into the Pentagon and killed hundreds more. "All told, 125 military personnel and civilians were killed in the Pentagon, along with all 64 people aboard the airliner" (History.com, 2010, para. 4). The fourth and final airliner, never reached its intended target as passengers rushed the cockpit and attacked the hijackers right before the plane crashed in a field. At the end of this horrific day, President George W. Bush presented the speech that ultimately began the

war on terror. "Shortly before 11 a.m., at the end of a Cabinet meeting, President Bush announces, "The deliberate and deadly attacks which were carried out yesterday against our country were more than acts of terror. They were acts of war" (Frontline, 2002, para. 2). After this announcement to the people of the United States, Frontline (2002), reported that President Bush was able to obtain backing from the countries of Great Britain, Pakistan, and The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) who acted on the rule that if any member of the Organization was attacked, the aggressor would be seen as an enemy to all. As History.com (2010) states, this swift response by the international community allowed for the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) to initiate less than a month from the attacks on the United States. OEF was responsible for the ousting of the Taliban and their leader Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan. Ultimately, it would take the United States and coalition forces eight years from the start of OEF till they killed Bin Laden. Even then, the threat of the Taliban would still remain. This operation would be on course for over a decade until, "After 13 years, the United States and NATO end their combat mission with Afghanistan" (CNN, 2015, para. 73). Although the main combat mission was halted, U.S. forces remain as a peacekeeping force in Afghanistan.

As OEF proceeded in Afghanistan, another campaign, otherwise known as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), began in Iraq in 2003. This operation was responsible in ousting the regime of Saddam Hussein, whose government was believed to be withholding weapons of mass destruction. As CNN (2016) reports, coalition forces essentially swept through Iraqi and were able to capture Saddam Hussein within two months of the initial invasion of Iraq. However, the takedown of Saddam brought about negative effects such as the insurgency that popped up soon after. This struggle for power also allowed for jihadists under Al-Qaeda and the Taliban to set a foothold in Iraq and confront U.S. forces. This push back and forth with insurgents would

continue until December of 2011 when U.S. forces finally pulled out of Iraq. However, a small

fraction of U.S. forces still remain in Iraq and act as an advising force to the Iraqi military.

Evolution of Al-Qaeda

The terrorist group Al-Qaeda can be traced back to the war in Afghanistan against the

Soviets. The number one leader responsible for calling all Muslims to arms against the Soviets

was a man by the name of Osama Bin Laden. After the defeat of the Soviets, Bin Laden returned

to Saudi Arabia, from where he was eventually banished due to his involvement in anarchistic

movements. It was at this time that Bin Laden moved to Sudan where he strived to create

training camps for newly inducted Al-Qaeda members. During this period in Sudan, he

conducted several terroristic actions and was eventually banished from Sudan as well. However,

one of the biggest actions came in 1996. "...in August 1996 bin Laden issued a "Declaration of

War" against the U.S." (Hayes, Brunner, & Rowen, n.d., a, para. 7). By this time, Bin Laden had

closely allied Al-Qaeda with various other terrorist groups all over the world such as, "the

"International Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders"-that included the

Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Harakat ul-Ansar, and other

groups" (Hayes, et al., n.d., a, para. 8). The figure below goes to show just how vast Al-Qaeda's

networks are and the umbrella organizations that it supports.

Figure 2: Al Qaeda's Allies   (Al-Masri, Chabin, Alami, Lynch, 2014)

All of these groups strive to expel Western influences from their territories and develop Islamic states that follow Sharia law. Listed below are many other reasons for the hatred that Al-Qaeda and these terrorist groups have for the United States:

> First, the United States was regarded as an "infidel" because it was not governed in a manner consistent with the group's extremist interpretation of Islam. Second, the United States was viewed as providing essential support for other "infidel" governments and institutions, particularly the governments of Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the nation of Israel, and the United Nations organization, which were regarded as enemies of the group. Third, al Qaeda opposed the involvement of the United States armed forces in the Gulf War in 1991 and in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992 and 1993. In particular, al Qaeda opposed the continued presence of American military forces in Saudi Arabia (and elsewhere on the Saudi Arabian peninsula) following the Gulf War. Fourth, Al Qaeda opposed the United States Government because of the arrest, conviction and imprisonment of persons belonging to al Qaeda or its affiliated terrorist groups or those with whom it worked. For these and other reasons, Bin Laden declared a jihad, or holy war, against the United States, which he has carried out through al Qaeda and its affiliated organizations. (Smith, 2002, para. 2)

Through these ideals, groups such as Al Qaeda are able to recruit many Muslims to support the extremist agenda. In his book *Terrorism and Homeland* Security, White explains that, "Second, some groups feel that they are chosen by a higher power, which allows them to destroy other people in the cause of righteousness" (2010, p. 10). In order to achieve this, groups like Al-Qaeda have killed, kidnapped, and rampaged against all who do not share their ideological views. Ever since their attack on the United States on September 11th, Al-Qaeda has continued its

attacks worldwide mainly through the use of explosives and suicide bombers. Even with the death of Bin Laden in 2011, the group has shown no signs of slowing down, with one of their latest attacks in 2015 at the headquarters of the Charlie Hebdo magazine company. "Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement and a video released on Jan. 14" (Hayes, et al., n.d., a, para. 37). Due to its vast network, taking out Al-Qaeda has been a tedious task and one that continues to this day.

Evolution of the Taliban

The Taliban, another Islamic extremist group with ties to Al-Qaeda, also came about around the same time that the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan. During the transition after the war, multiple Taliban groups existed, all vying for power in what would eventually become a civil war. As Hayes and Brunner list in their article *Timeline: The Taliban*, by 1994, the official Taliban group came into existence when members of this group were tasked with the overseeing of a trade route in Pakistan. The Taliban proved themselves as a worthy fighting force and by 1996, "The Taliban, under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar, seize control of Kabul and implement a strict interpretation of Islamic law. They exile Rabbani and execute Najibullah" (Hayes, Brunner, n.d., p. 7). By this point, the Taliban had also allied themselves with Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Rule under the Taliban regime was not very different from the Al Qaeda. In order to enact Sharia law successfully, they were known to carry out public executions of any and all opposition. Furthermore, women living under the Taliban were prohibited from attending school or doing work of any kind, they could not leave the household without a male accompanying them, and it became mandatory for women to be covered from head to toe. Additionally, they also banned the use of instruments, movies, computers, TVs, and etc. Even with all of their strict laws in place, the Taliban continued to find the civil war to be difficult to end. Along with this,

the Taliban were also financing terrorist activities to continue in Afghanistan. All of this would

eventually lead to the downfall of the Taliban. By 2001, the United States demanded that the

Taliban give up Bin Laden, who they had been giving refuge to this whole time. When this

demand was not met, "the U.S. began bombing Taliban military sites and aiding the Northern

Alliance. By November 21, the Taliban had lost Kabul and by December 9 had been completely

routed" (Hayes, Brunner, Rowen, n.d., para. 20). However, this cut down of the Taliban was not

permanent. Since 2005, the Taliban has mustered their forces once again and continue to spread

their forces into Afghanistan. As shown in the figure below, by 2007, the Taliban had already

carried out dozens of attacks throughout northern Pakistan and steadily spread out into

Afghanistan.
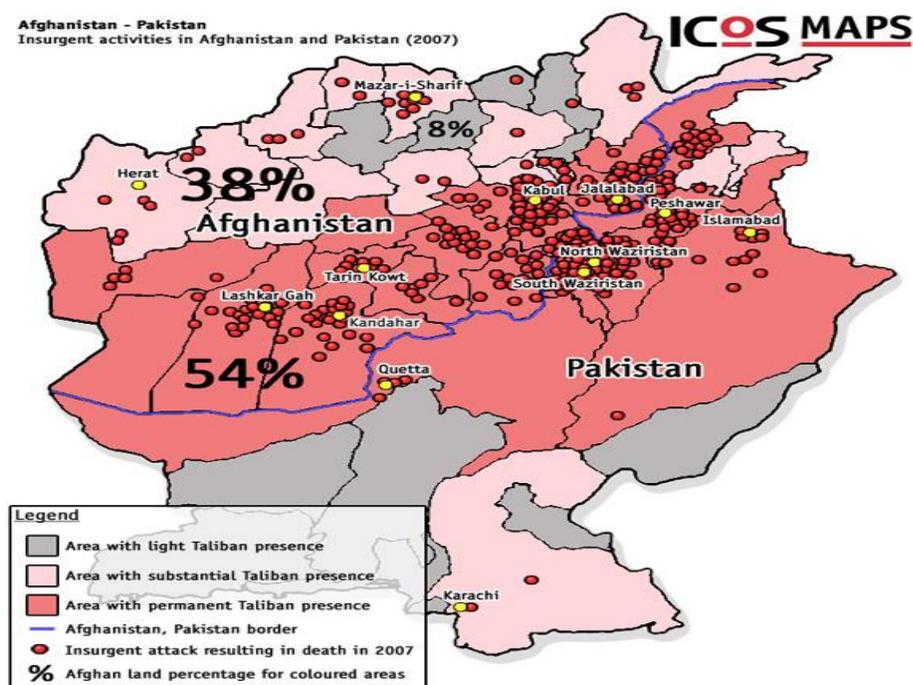
Figure 3: Taliban Presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan   (ICOS, 2012)

Since their revival, the group has continued their attacks on military personnel and civilians.

Their most recent attack on troops took place in 2012 when they claimed an attack on a

helicopter which took the lives of 30 U.S. soldiers and multiple Afghan troops. With the

drawdown of American troops in Afghanistan, the Taliban have been brazen with their attacks

on civilians. Pearson, Popalzai, and Ullah (2016) from CNN reported that their latest assault took

place in April of 2016 when an explosion in Kabul killed more than 64 people and wounded 300

others. Although coalition forces have been successful in taking out key Taliban leaders, they

have been ineffective in taking the group out as a whole. After more than a decade of futile

efforts at attempting to oust the group, another strategy must be thought of in order to get rid of

the Taliban once and for all.

Identified Problems

When it comes to the problems that the United States and coalition forces face with

Islamic extremists, a number of things can be seen as factors in this ongoing struggle. For over a

decade, unstable conditions in areas such as the Middle East have made it difficult to oust these

terrorist groups. The strong religious presence, and deep divides between Sunni and Shia

Muslims that these countries have make it even easier for terror groups such as Al-Qaeda, the

Taliban, or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to emerge. Along with these armed

insurgencies come civil wars, protests, and killings. Furthermore, these groups have always

utilized the manipulation of religious text such as the Quran. By justifying the fact that their

activities are in the name of Allah, these terrorists groups able to further manipulate the minds of

the religious population. Through this strategy, they are able to recruit more members to their

cause, many of whom fall for the misinterpreted meanings of the text. Another problem that can

be seen is the strategies that have been utilized by the United States and coalition forces when it

comes to the war on terror. Through the use of having boots on the ground conducting full scale

invasions, to airstrikes, coalition forces have consumed many resources in combatting this war

on terror. However, these strategies have not been very effective. For over a decade now,

coalition forces have used these tactics and the results are not very favorable. Even with the thousands of airstrikes and the countless number of troops lost, Islamic extremists are still existent throughout many areas in the Middle East. The rules of engagements that are imposed upon coalition forces also make it very difficult for troops to engage the enemy in an effective manner. In order to deal with these terrorists effectively, these problems must also be dealt with.

Unstable Conditions in the Middle East

For years, the state of affairs in the Middle East has always been erratic. From border wars between countries, to insurgencies inflicting terror, conditions in the Middle East fluctuate amongst various spectrums from bad to worse. When the Soviets were overthrown from Afghanistan, many Islamic factions formed, each with the intention of leading Afghanistan. Although these tribes were all of the same religion, the struggle for control of the country eventually led to civil wars within Afghanistan. These kinds of actions degraded the society of the country and stunted it from making any form of major development. Even in the past decade, conflicts such as the Iraqi War, Afghanistan War, or the conflict in Libya against Gaddafi's forces, have further impeded these countries from improving politically or economically. For example, when the Libyan War ended and Gaddafi was killed, it did not take long for a civil war to break out. Too many factions came about attempting to form their own governments and eventually, began warring with one another. Around the same time, rebellions also occurred in Syria against its dictator Al-Assad. As Lister and Rashid state in their book *The Islamic State*, "This instability stretches across Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon" (2015, p. 1). When viewing all this, one can assume that many of these countries in the Middle East have not been politically stable for a long time. If a corrupt leader is not running the government, a civil war is occurring between the factions competing for power within their country. With civil wars going on

everywhere, regions are lost and gained by different groups, people lose their homes, and as a result of all this, the economies of these countries are hampered. Throughout all of this, the United States has played a role in every conflict. Whether it be sending troops on the ground, providing financial support or arms to a particular group, conducting airstrikes, or providing aide. In doing so, it is as if the United States has painted a bull's eye on its back. From the point of view of the various insurgencies in the Middle East, the United States has always meddled in their affairs and have attempted to push its own agenda in the Middle East. Eventually, the mentality of these combat hardened tribes developed into the nowadays Taliban, Al Qaeda, or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). These groups molded themselves through each conflict that has happened and now are pushing their own agenda. The unstable conditions that have existed in the Middle East for so long were the perfect environments for these extremists to emerge from. After so many years of conflict, they formed under idea of a uniform Islamic state. A state that would go against their so called oppressors in the West. It is due to this ideal that the Taliban and Al Qaeda were able to attract so many Islamic extremists. This is also the same kind of thinking that has recently brought about even more extremists such as the terrorist group known as ISIS.

Emergence of ISIS

The terrorist group ISIS, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Islamic State (IS), or Daesh, emerged from the Syrian civil war in 2011. It mainly consists of Sunni extremists who target not just outsiders but also Muslims from different sects such as the "…Shia, Alawi Muslims, and other minority groups, often in civilian areas" (Lister, Rashid, 2015, p. 28). With the drawdown of American troops in the Middle East, ISIS was able to obtain much of their arms and financial means which were either left over from the troops or taken from

the Iraqi Army. They were also able to back their endeavors by ransom money, taxes on captured

cities, and selling oil from the hundreds of wells they have captured. Through these means, ISIS

was able to quickly dispatch its competitors as it progressively captured city after city. By 2014,

ISIS had already moved into Iraq, gained large cities such as Mosul and were on the verge of

capturing Baghdad. As shown in the picture below, in 2014, ISIS had control throughout Syria,

half of Iraq, and were preparing to move on the city of Baghdad.
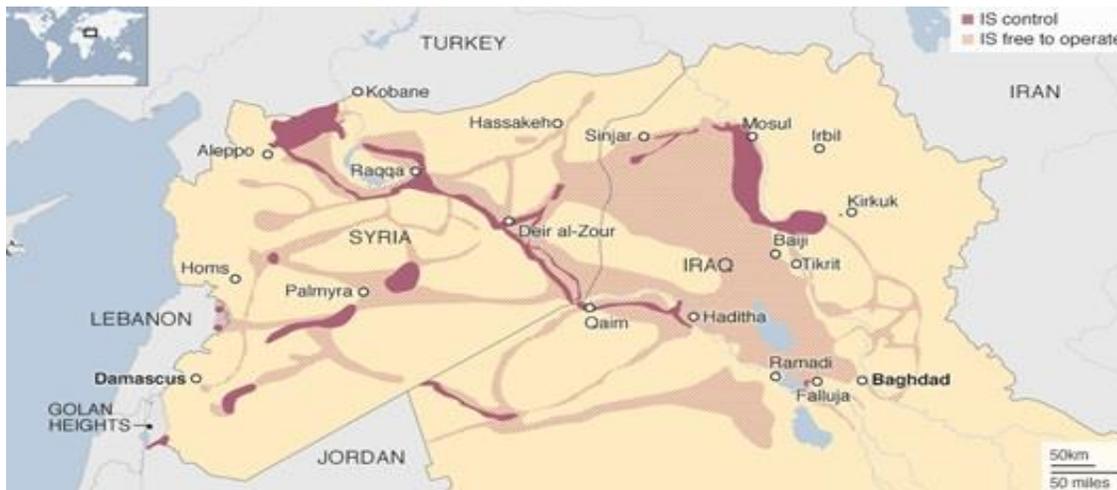
Figure 4: ISIS Presence in Syria and Iraq (2014)   (BBC, 2016)

The Islamic State's success comes from the tactics that it deploys, which have some contrast to

other Islamic extremist groups such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban. "ISIS grew in notoriety

through an aggressive social media and viral video strategy that had it engage with sympathizers

and glorify violence" (BBC, n.d. para. 16). From the very beginning, ISIS created Twitter

accounts, Facebook pages, and YouTube videos which attempted to appeal to recruits all over

the world. No other extremist group had or has this kind of reach through the cyber world.

People all over from Europe to the United States have defected from their countries and traveled

to Syria in order to join ISIS. On top of those reinforcements, ISIS has allied themselves with

other terrorist groups such as Boko Haram which is based in Nigeria. Although they have had

backing from different groups, the brutal actions that the Islamic State commits against their

enemies have even been condemned by Al Qaeda. From beheadings, kidnappings, burnings,

shootings, enslavement, and bombings ISIS has carved out a path of destruction in their agenda

to establish an "Islamic State."

<p style="text-align:center">Manipulation of Religious Ideals/Texts</p>

Religious texts such as the Quran, the Bible, and the Torah have been around for

thousands of years. Due to this, many of the scriptures and verses that are found in these books

can be very outdated. As times change many of these texts do not necessarily fit in with the way

society runs. As a result of this, religions such as Christianity has often changed the translation of

the Bible to better fit a certain time and age. The Quran on the other hand, even with its

multitude of translations, has always stayed the same. In both books, there are hundreds of verses

that condone things such as slavery, killing, terrorism, and etc. Because of this, the Quran has

been used countless times by extremists who wish to carry out their agendas. In order to do this,

extremists often take verses that condone the use of violence and quote these. However, the catch

is that they will cherry pick these verses and completely quote them out of context. For example,

in the Quran, there is a verse on killing that can be completely misinterpreted.

> Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God love
>
> not transgressors. Slay them wherever you fall upon them, and expel them from where
>
> they have expelled you; apostasy by force is indeed more serious than slaying…But if
>
> they desist, then God is All-Forgiving, Compassionate to each. Fight them until there is
>
> no longer forced apostasy, and the religion is God's. If they desist, no aggression is
>
> permitted except against the wicked. (Khalidi, 2009, p. 25-26)

A quote such as the one above is just one of hundreds that groups like ISIS, Al Qaeda, or the

Taliban select in order to justify their campaign of terror. To begin with, the extremists would get

rid of the majority of the words from the verse above. The only thing that would remain is the part of the quote that condones Muslims to kill their enemies wherever they find them. By providing these excerpted quotes to uneducated Muslims, Islamic extremists are able to attract recruits by making them think that this is what Allah wants all of his followers to carry out. Another example of a misinterpreted quote would be one such as the following:

"Let them fight in the cause of God – they who sell the present life for the next. Whoso fights in the cause of God and is killed, or else is victorious" (Khalidi, 2009, p. 7). If someone were to read a quote such as this, one would automatically assume that Allah expects all Muslims to take up arms, kill all disbelievers in their path, and only then when that person dies, he or she would be rewarded by Allah. These are the kinds of things that recruits hear from groups such as ISIS. However, when the verse after the one above is viewed, one finds that the quote is not calling Muslims to fight just anybody.

> Why is it that you do not fight in the cause of God and of the helpless, men, women and children who cry out: 'Our Lord, bring us forth out of this city of impious inhabitants. Appoint for us from on high a protector. Appoint for us from on high a champion?"
>
> (Khalidi, 2009, p. 71)

The verse above provides context to the first verse and explains that one should take up arms against anyone who would try to oppress a certain individual or group. When looking at the bigger picture, these two verses are actually talking about a time when Muslims were harassed and assaulted by nonbelievers. The verses were merely calling on other Muslims to provide help to the victims. Of course, Islamic extremists jump at opportunities to misinterpret verses such as these because they are so easy to overlook and misunderstand. This is a glaringly huge problem that should also be dealt with when combatting Islamic extremism. Their ability to twist and

misconstrued direct quotes from a religious text for use of terrorism severely undermine the true teachings of the Quran.

Strategies Used by U.S. & Coalition Forces

Another identified problem when it comes to Islamic extremists are the many strategies that have been used against them. Ever since the war on terror began, a thousands of allied troops have been deployed between Afghanistan and Iraq alone. On top of this, airstrikes ranging from bombers to fighter jets have been utilized against Islamic extremist groups. Although these tactics have had somewhat of a positive outcome, and have taken out terrorist leaders on occasion, they have not been very effective in stopping the spread of terrorism. As the war against these extremists continues, countless lives have been lost both on the military and civilian side. Strict rules of engagements have made it difficult for troops to act efficiently, and although airstrikes are able to take out much of the enemy in on blow, it does not seem to be enough.

Presence of soldiers on the ground

After the attacks on September 11th, President Bush announced a declaration of war on terror. Just about a month later, thousands of American troops combined with many others from coalition and UN forces were deployed to Afghanistan. Further down the road, in 2003, the United States sent thousands of troops to Iraq in order to oust Saddam Hussein and his forces. Saddam was captured within months and President Bush announced that operations in Iraq had ended; however, the buildup of insurgent groups in Iraq forced U.S. troops to remain in the country. Eventually, by 2007, over a hundred thousand troops from the United States are stationed in Iraq. Back in Afghanistan, United States and coalition forces remained a lot longer than expected due to the presence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Although many key Taliban

leaders are taken out over the years, the insurgents continue to be a threat, and by 2009,

"President Obama announces the deployment in 2010 of 30,000 additional U.S. troops. This new

deployment will bring the U.S. total to almost 100,000 troops, in addition to 40,000 NATO

troops" (CNN, 2015, para. 40). By 2011, Al Qaeda's number one leader Bin Laden, is killed by a

team of Navy Seals. Even with the amount of extremist leaders killed and troops deployed, full

on operations did not end in Iraq till 2011, and combat missions in Afghanistan did not cease

until 2014. Over a decade later the question that must be asked is whether or not these operations

in Iraq and Afghanistan truly made a difference. When U.S. and coalition forces pulled out of

these countries, the Afghan army and Iraqi army were tasked with something that they had not

taken the reins on for a decade. Hundreds of coalition troops would remain to act as an advising

force but ultimately, these Muslim armies now had to face the threat of the terrorists such as the

Taliban, Al Qaeda, and the newly formed ISIS without relying on hundreds of thousands of

allied troops. Originally, coalition forces had been deployed to eradicate the threat of terrorism.

Due to the guerilla tactics deployed by insurgents, the war on terror eventually became a long

drawn out war with no sight of an end. As soon as U.S. troops pulled out of these countries, the

terrorists popped right back up once again. Major cities in Iraq that had been won over on the

blood of coalition troops were taken back with ease by insurgents. Furthermore, the emergence

of ISIS opened up even more fronts as the group quickly spread out across Syria, Afghanistan,

and Iraq. Now, just a couple of years after the announcement of the drawdown of troops, more

troops are being deployed back to the Middle East. On top of the Special Forces troops that are

operating in Iraq, hundreds more will be deployed to Iraq. "The United States will send more

troops to Iraq and will put them closer to the front lines of battle there to advise Iraqi forces in

the war against Islamic State militants" (Torbati, 2016, para. 1). If having troops on the ground is

effective, why are the insurgencies still in place, and in the case of ISIS, growing? Over a decade

later, and thousands of lives lost, it might be safe to say that having troops on the ground really

has not had the desire outcome. In the fight against the Islamic State, many Special Forces

soldiers have already been lost, and with the deployment of more troops, more deaths will

unfortunately follow. As shown in the table below, thousands of U.S. troops have already been

lost in the past decade of the war on terror.

Table 1: Casualties from October 2001 – July 2015

	Deaths (Hostile and Non-Hostile)	Wounded in Action
Operation Iraqi Freedom	4,424	31,951
Operation Enduring Freedom	2,355	20,071
Operation New Dawn	66	295
Operation Inherent Resolve	7	1
Operation Freedom's Sentinel	3	33

This table provides the numbers for casualties taken on by U.S. troops during the war

on terror. (Fischer 2015)

With these numbers, and the deaths that have already occurred combatting ISIS, another strategy

must be found to combat this continuing threat of terrorism. What was once seen as a solution to

terrorism now seems to be what keeps the terrorists alive. Having troops in Afghanistan and Iraq

gives them a reason to come out and fight as long as there are foreign troops on their land. In

order to avoid more deaths and maybe another decade of war with these extremists, another

solution must be found to replace this one of sending and losing troops to combat.

Rules of engagement

When it comes to the war on terror and the troops that actively fight in it, another thing

that directly relates to this would be the rules of engagement. When fighting in any theater of

war, all troops are subjected to follow the rules of engagement.

Formally, rules of engagement refer to the orders issued by a competent military

authority that delineate when, where, how, and against whom military force may be used,

and they have implications for what actions soldiers may take on their own authority and

what directives may be issued by a commanding officer. (The Editors of Encyclopedia

Britannica, 2014 para. 1)

These directives have been set in place so that things such as crimes of war are not committed.

However, rules of engagements have always been vague especially when it comes to combatting

Islamic extremists. The insurgents from these extremist groups have never been ones to fight

conventional wars. Instead, they have taken up guerilla warfare as their main tactic. From

improvised explosive devices to child soldiers and suicide bombers, these terrorists have never

truly followed any sort of rules of engagements. Coalition forces on the other hand, are often

bombarded with rules of engagements that they must follow at all times. These rules range from

not shooting at an enemy until they are shot at, not killing unarmed persons even if they are

known to be enemies, letting known targets go unless that target is 100% identified, and many

more that limit their actions in combat. If the rules of engagement are not adhered to, then a

soldier can be subjected to prosecution through a court martial. The terrorists, knowing of the

impediments that these rules have put on coalitions troops, always make sure they take full

advantage of this opportunity. On occasions, at the request of local residents, troops have been

forced to entering towns or buildings without weapons. "For instance, in a village in Diyala

province-then a prime refuge for al-Qaeda in Iraq – the resident sheiks protested that Americans

would not be welcome unless they abandoned their tanks and fighting vehicles and entered the

area on foot" (Laksin, 2007, para. 1). These are the kinds of restrictions that troops face on a

daily basis. If this village had actually contained enemy forces at the time of the incident, then

marines that entered on foot could have easily been ambushed and dispatched. With these kinds

of rules, it becomes difficult to fight a war efficiently. Making decisions become problematic

because there are so many more things that must be accounted for such as, whether or not that

decision will land a person in jail. Laksin (2007) related another incident where a mosque had

been targeted by suicide bombers. A team of American military police members had seen the

terrorists and their weapons but were unable to intervene due to the fact that they were prohibited

from entering the mosque. Cases such as this one raise the question of whether or not strict rules

of engagement really help the troops or just hinder their ability to work efficiently.

With so many cases in which terrorists have gotten away due to the restrictions of these rules, the

question raised earlier about the benefits of the rules of engagement should already be answered:

they do not. On the one hand, some of these rule should exist so that crimes of war are not

carried out and innocent civilians are unharmed, but they should be revised so as not to impose

too many restrictions on combat operations. In war, split second decisions regarding life or death

are often crucial. The leaders who make these decisions are entrusted with a heavy burden that

many will never understand. In order to make these decisions efficiently, military leaders should

not have to be worried about if their decision will land them in jail, and should be solely focused

on defeating the enemy as efficiently as possible.

Airstrikes

Another strategy used on numerous occasions by coalition forces is airstrikes. This tactic

has been utilized since the early days of the war on terror when the United States and its allies

bombarded Iraq and Afghanistan with airstrikes before the ground forces moved in to fight.

Many of the advantages provided by airstrikes are not capable of being carried out by ground

forces. In many situations, instead of sending in soldiers, a single bombing run from a fighter jet

can level a building filled with insurgents. Airstrikes are also capable of taking out enemy

armored units a lot more efficiently than a ground unit would be able to. The level of air support

that airstrikes also provide to troops in combat on the ground can save many lives. Although

airstrikes provide many of these benefits, the effectiveness of their role has also been questioned.

Nowadays, with ISIS being one of the biggest threats, the United States has been leading the

bombing runs in Iraq and Syria. "U.S. warplanes are carrying out about 78% of the attacks, with

the rest coming from allies including France, Great Britain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab

Emirates" (Thompson, 2015, para. 11). These countries combined have dropped tens of

thousands of bombs on ISIS since 2015, and Thompson (2015) further reported that the amount

of bombs dropped or missiles fired saw an increase from 31% to 46% in the span of a year.

These bombing runs are often targeted at ISIS strongholds, vehicles, oil fields, and militants.

Unfortunately, the number of ISIS personnel or property targeted comes with unintended

casualties. "At least 3,952 people have been killed in the US-led coalition's campaign against the

Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group in Syria, according to a monitoring group"

(Rifai, 2015, para. 1). Many of these civilian casualties are often women and children. Due to the

guerilla tactics that ISIS deploys, it is hard for one airstrike to hit an entire group of ISIS

militants. To deter airstrikes, these insurgents take the fight on the ground to towns or cities

where there are hundreds of civilians caught in the line of fire. Their style of fighting also is

sporadic and spread out so coalition forces have a difficult time determining whether a target is a

militant or just a civilian. These deaths of these innocent people also allows ISIS to use their

propaganda schemes. When the indigenous population loses innocent lives to these airstrikes

every day, they begin to question who the real enemy is. This allows ISIS to recruit new

members by making it seem as if coalition forces are the real enemy because of the countless

lives taken out by their airstrikes.

> The airstrikes began on August 8th 2014 and by early June 2015, they were costing a
>
> daily average of $9.1 million-$2.7 billion in total. According to the U.S. Department of
>
> Defense, a total of 7,655 ISIS targets have now been damaged or destroyed through
>
> airstrikes in Syria and Iraq including 98 tanks, 325 captured Humvees and 1,859 fighting
>
> positions. (McCarthy, 2015, para. 2)

Are the millions or possible billions that are being spent damaging ISIS worth it? They are still

operating on a global scale, with attacks being carried out in Europe, Africa, and North America.

Furthermore, even though many key leaders are being taken out through airstrikes, ISIS has

consistently just had a predecessor take the reins of their operations every time. When it comes

down to it the airstrikes are just not working effectively enough. With the money that is being

spent of the tens of thousands of bombs dropped, the dent made on ISIS should be a lot bigger.

With that being said, it does not mean that airstrikes on ISIS should stop altogether. However,

the number of bombings carried out should be focused on taking out strongholds, oil fields,

supply lines, and communication lines. Putting the focus on these targets also allows for coalition

forces to take the airstrikes away from possibly harming innocent civilians. These are the kinds

of holes in ISIS's armor that if tampered with correctly, would lead to their inevitable collapse.

Why is this a Problem?

The problem presented by terrorists acting in the name of Islam pose is of no small

matter. Not only is this a problem to the United States, but is a danger to the world and society as

a whole. As the war on terror continues, thousands of lives have been lost overseas and billions

have been spent on the upkeep of troops. Even with all the manpower, money, and over a decade

spent, the threat of Islamic extremism is still very real in today's society. Even more so

nowadays, with the wide reach that a group like ISIS has, someone could easily pledge their

allegiance to the group from the other side of the world, and carry out an attack in the name of

ISIS. These kinds of homegrown attacks have been a major theme in recent years. The company

International Security (2015), which provides data on terroristic activities worldwide, reported

that between 2002 and 2016, 94 people have been killed in the United States by violent Islamic

extremists. These attacks range from shootings such as the one in Fort Hood, Little Rock, San

Bernardino, and the recent Orlando nightclub massacre which took the lives of 49 people and is

regarded as the biggest mass shooting spree in the history of the United States. On top of

shootings, another worrisome danger is the threat of bombings. In 2013, the Boston Marathon

bombing killed four people and severely wounded dozens of others. Outside of the country,

hundreds of terroristic attacks have been carried out all over the world. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and

Syria, dozens of attacks by members of extremist groups occur frequently as groups such as ISIS

attempt to gain control of territory. Other international attacks carried out by ISIS include the

2012 Benghazi attack on a U.S. embassy, the 2015 shooting of a satirical magazine Charlie

Hebdo in France, and attacks in African countries by terror groups Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram,

both groups with ties to ISIS. The table below shows the extent to which extremist attacks have

caused on American lives.

Table 2: Terrorists Attacks from 1995-2014 and Fatalities of Americans

Year	Total Attacks in the United States	Total Fatalities in the United States	U.S. Fatalities in the United States	U.S. Fatalities, Worldwide
1995	62	171	171	189
1996	36	3	2	36
1997	40	2	1	14
1998	30	4	3	135
1999	53	20	20	25
2000	33	0	0	36
2001	40	3003	2908	2910
2002	33	4	0	29
2003	32	0	0	17
2004	9	0	0	5
2005	23	0	0	3
2006	6	1	1	4
2007	9	0	0	1
2008	19	2	2	14
2009	11	18	18	19
2010	17	4	4	6
2011	9	0	0	3
2012	13	7	6	12
2013	16	7	5	13
2014	19	18	17	32
Total	510	3264	3158	3503

(National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Responses to Terrorism, 2015)

These types of attacks that are carried out in the name of religion tend to create a rift in society.

On one hand are the Muslims who live their normal lives and mean no harm to society. On the

other hand, the extremists such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, or the Taliban who are vying to create an

Islamic State create a bad image for the rest of the Islamic community. This rift grows bigger and

bigger as more non-Muslims begin to fear all Muslims. Whenever an attack occurs, the media is

quick to portray it as an attack by a homegrown Islamic extremist. On top of this, politicians use

these attacks to gain supporters. For instance, after the attack on the Orlando nightclub, the 2016

presidential candidate Donald Trump tweeted out, "Appreciate the congrats for being right on

radical Islamic terrorism, I don't want congrats, I want toughness & vigilance. We must be

smart!" (12 June 2016, 12:43 p.m. Tweet). These kinds of public statements only tend to make

the problem worse as more people digest what is being said and the fear of the Islamic

community grows. This kind of hatred towards the entirety of the Islamic community serves as a

win to ISIS because the fear that now exists is exactly what they aim at achieving by carrying out

their attacks. If the world is scared of the religion in which they are shedding blood in the name

of, then ISIS's mission is successful. Out of all the problems that the international community

faces with Islamic extremists, this is the biggest problem; the one in which society turns on an

entire group due to the actions of a few. If this problem is to be solved, society as a whole must learn to fight the real enemy instead of the innocent ones that are indirectly impacted by the actions of a few.

Security Concern

The security concerns presented by Islamic extremists vary. Islamic extremists have been even more of a burden on American society after the attacks on 9/11 and the start of the war on terror. Even with all the manpower, money, and over a decade spent, the threat of Islamic extremism is still a very real threat to the security of the nation. When it comes to security concerns, there are many fronts on which the extremists could strike. As explained in the previous section, extremists have already utilized a wide array of tactics such as bombings and shootings on unsuspecting civilians. Other fronts that can be manipulated by the enemy would be transportation, the economy, and the cyber world. In terms of transportation, America has already faced one of the worst terrorist attacks when terrorists were able to hijack four airliners and kill thousands of lives. Ever since those attacks, reactive efforts such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), have been created to thwart further attacks. Surprise searches and extra checks on people traveling from the Middle East have also been placed as protective measures. Economically, extremists such as the Taliban or ISIS have had an indirect role in affecting the United States' economy. All the money that has been used providing troops, humanitarian aid, and financial backing to allies brings up the question of whether or not it has been put to good use. When it comes to humanitarian aid, one could say that the money has been put to good use due to the thousands of refugees that have been saved. However, the money spent on troop upkeep and military support still does not seem to provide continuously positive results. The Middle East is still in turmoil from the constant warfare between coalition forces and

insurgents. A nation can only support an overseas war on many fronts for so long before it starts to chip away at their economy. Another security concern presented is in the cyber aspect. Already, ISIS has used social media to recruit many of its international members from several countries. It has been as simple as creating an ISIS Twitter or Facebook account and calling in members through the use of propaganda or promises of an Islamic state. When it comes to all these security concerns that have been listed, a problem that comes up is the amount of precautions required to protect the homeland versus the amount of privacy that the civilians have. This argument is best seen in the tables below. When the Pew survey was taken in 2001 right after the 9/11 attacks, 70% of the American populace believed in the measures taken to enhance the security of the homeland. However, by 2011, when no major incident occurred, fewer people agreed with these security measures.

Table 3: Privacy versus Policies

Percent who favor each as a measure to curb terrorism	Sept 2001 %	Aug 2002 %	Dec 2006 %	Aug 2011 %
Requiring that all citizens carry a national ID card at all times	70	59	57	57
Extra airport checks on passengers who appear to be of Middle-Eastern descent	--	59	57	53
Government monitoring credit card purchases	--	43	42	42
Government monitoring personal phone calls and emails	--	33	34	29

(Pew Research Center, 2011)

The second survey taken in 2015, showed a stark difference between from results of the first survey in 2011. By the time survey two was taken, other major attacks such as the Boston Marathon bombing, San Bernardino shooting, and Paris attacks had occurred. This caused the general populace to believe that the government had not been doing enough to protect the homeland even though in the years between 2011 and 2015, security policies had stayed the same.

Table 4: Security versus Privacy
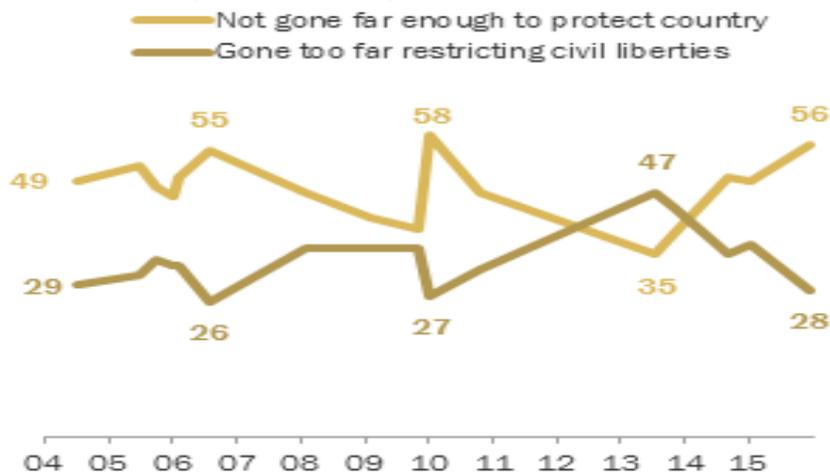
(Pew Research Center, 2015)

When it comes down to it, the existence of Islamic extremism presents threats on many fronts to

the integrity of the nation and its security. Not only does warfare occur on the battlefield against

insurgents but it also takes place in the cyber world, the nation's economy, and structural

integrity of networks such as the transportation system. In order to maintain the nation's security,

a compromise must be set on the policies implemented by the government and how these will

affect the general populace. So that policies can be effective, people must also understand that in

order to have security, they must be willing to give up some civil liberties. Through this, the

policies to protect national security will work more efficiently at protecting the population from

the threats presented by extremism.

Proposed Solutions

Cyber Warfare

One possible solution against the threat of Islamic extremism and in helping the strategies

of U.S. and coalition forces could be to intensify cyber warfare. This strategy could come in

many forms such as the disruption of their recruiting sites or social media sites. Through these

sites, groups such as ISIS and the Taliban have gained wave after wave of recruits and are able to

spread propaganda videos and even executions. By shutting down these sites, it would serve as a way of cutting off their source of recruitment. "In February, Twitter shut down 125,000 such accounts in one fell swoop—a move that had a substantive impact on ISIS's online recruitment, according to a recent study" (Harris & Youssef, 2016, para. 20). Cyber warfare could also come in the form of tasking hackers to severe communication lines throughout ISIS or Taliban territory and therefore making them "blind."

> In February, U.S. military hackers began to interfere with ISIS's online communications, the computer equivalent of jamming radio signals, making it harder for members to communicate with each other and for commanders to give orders, the officials said. Those operations helped to hamstring ISIS in the Syrian town of Shaddadi, one of its training and logistics sites, while rebel forces on the ground took back the city. (Harris & Youssef, 2016, para. 9)

As stated in the quote above, a tactic as common as jamming the insurgents' radio signals was able to result in the liberation of an entire city that had been under ISIS's reign. If these tactics were intensified, multiple cities could probably be retaken through collaboration between ground forces and hackers alike. Attacks aimed at the power grids that help run insurgent towns and cities could also prove to hamper the insurgents' abilities to operate efficiently. Assaulting the oil facilities which ISIS uses as a means of revenue would mean denying ISIS a large source of income; which they direly need in order to power their operations and keep their towns and cities running. Intelligence gathering is also a big part of cyber warfare. Any kind of intelligence that can be gathered such as locations that insurgents operate out of, number of fighters, supply routes, allies, future plans, and etc. would give coalition forces a massive advantage. They could use this information to set traps on unsuspecting fighters or plan attacks accordingly. Overall, the

use of cyber warfare on extremists has proven to be effective. If the cyber campaign is intensified, the grip that Islamic extremists have on the cyber world could be weakened and this would indirectly hinder ISIS forces.

Economic Warfare

Another strategy that could be utilized against Islamic extremism is economic warfare. By striking at the extremists' economy, it opens up yet another front that ISIS must worry about. Instead of just taking town after town or city after city, they would also have to worry about conditions in their own territories. A group such as ISIS are able to fuel their economy through ransom money, revenue made when taking cities, and income from the production of oil and gas. Much of their income also comes from the taxes that they set on the population in the different cities that they capture. When looking at these options, the easiest path to take would be to target their oil and gas production sites. As shown in the table below, ISIS makes anywhere from hundreds to thousands of barrels of oil a day.

Table 5: ISIS Oil Production

Oilfield	Est. production (bpd)	Price ($/barrel)
al-Tanak	11,000-12,000	$40
al-Omar	6,000-9,000	$45
al-Tabqa	1,500-1,800	$20
al-Kharata	1,000	$30
al-Shoula	650-800	$30
Deiro	600-1,000	$30
al-Taim	400-600	$40
al-Rashid	200-300	$25

(Solomon, Kwong, and Bernard, 2016)

With these numbers, ISIS is able to pull in over a million dollars a day. As explained by Solomon, Kwong, and Bernard (2016), smugglers transport oil through boat, pumps, by foot, and

horseback. With all this money, ISIS is able to run their territory and do whatever else to keep

the organization running. As mentioned before, one way that coalition forces have struck at the

heart of the insurgents' economy is through airstrikes. Airstrikes conducted by coalition forces

have helped to deplete the supply of oil and gas produced by ISIS. Without the luxuries provided

by oil, ISIS could become crippled under the inability to advance their territory. While they try to

solve the problem of what to do without oil, coalition forces would be able to move in on the

territory in which they are trapped in, and starve them out. With supply lines cut off and no

revenue coming in from their biggest source of income coalition forces would basically just have

to wait for ISIS to run its course. All in all, depriving ISIS of much of their means of income

would truly help to immobilize the group. With an economy in shambles, the turmoil of having

to keep things in order within their territories, and fighting to spread an Islamic state would be

their undoing. If the airstrikes conducted by coalition forces continue to destroy insurgent owned

oil fields, then it just might be possible to get rid of the extremists' main source of income once

and for all.

Target Hearts and Minds

Just as there are many military actions that can be taken against Islamic extremism, the

same can be said for diplomatic approaches. Another tactful approach that could be utilized is the

targeting of hearts and minds. This approach though risky, could prove to be more powerful than

any other strategy against extremism. This tactic was used in Afghanistan and Iraq during the

war on terror when coalition forces would provide humanitarian aid to villages and towns that

were affected during the war. By targeting the hearts and minds of the indigenous population in

places such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, it would help to gain their support and show the

civilians that U.S. and coalition forces are not just there to tear up their country and leave it all

behind. For over a decade, people in these countries have seen war firsthand. In their minds, they have seen these invaders from other countries come into their homes, trekked all over by land, and bomb their cities from the skies. Therefore, it becomes very easy for a young kid to grow up, see all of this, and become swayed into joining Al Qaeda, the Taliban, or ISIS because in that kid's eyes, these are the groups who have been fighting the invaders for years. Now if that same kid was to be taught at a young age about the terrible atrocities committed by these groups, he or she would grow up with a completely different mindset. Groups such as the Taliban and ISIS are aware of the advantages that a strategy such as this holds. Therefore, they take kids and mold their minds from a very young age to hate these "invaders." Throughout the war on terror, the Taliban and Al Qaeda were known to have training camps that trained teenagers and adults alike. ISIS has already used this tactic by having camps where children are taught anything from Sharia law to the techniques used when beheading a person.

> Many of the young men who turn to terrorism do so because they have lost hope and are angry and frustrated, often because they have had to face extreme poverty, oppression, political obstruction and a lack of educational and employment opportunities. But what often incites them is American military intervention. While airstrikes may be our best and most effective response against threats, we must understand the downside of our use of force. We may hit the bad guys, but invariably we cause so-called collateral damage that creates a powerful backlash and further fuels the ability of terrorist groups to recruit new members. (Hamilton, 2015, para. 24-25)

The quote above paints a clear picture of the kinds of people who turn to these extremist groups. In a war torn country with no clear future and means of progressing one's life, people become frustrated. This is the collateral damage that Hamilton mentions in his quote. Though not

affected directly by the war, innocent people are affected enough to the point where the start to put the blame on someone. Being in a country where insurgents have been fighting outside forces for over a decade, people begin to put the blame on the outsiders. So how exactly do coalition forces go about targeting hearts and minds? "In November 2001, the Bush administration announced the establishment of "Coalition Information Centers" (CIC) described as information rapid response teams designed to counter al Qaeda and Taliban propaganda and disinformation in a timely manner" (McClanahan, 2002, p. 25). Centers such as these are crucial in providing the indigenous population with the truth about the happenings in their very own country. Even being told the smallest bit of information about events happening all around them would make the civilians feel included and help to show that coalition forces are not just in the country to tear it to pieces. Furthermore, information centers help to educate the young minds of the country into not being so easily influenced by the propaganda of Islamic terrorists. Another very important thing that must be stressed is that this conflict is a war on terror and not on the religion of Islam. With over two billion Muslims in the world, it is obvious that everyone who practices Islam is not a terrorist. If political leaders make this a war on Islam, they are basically declaring a war on billions of people. Continuously blaming the whole of the Muslim community would only be beneficial to the Islamic terrorists who would be happy to recruit more and more Muslims to their cause. Although a military force is necessary in combatting the Islamic terrorists, programs such as the CIC should be developed more so that the indigenous population are not easily swayed by terrorist propaganda, and truly understand the extent of the problem that exists in their countries.

Influence of Muslim Community Leaders

A key component that could be crucial against Islamic terrorists are the Muslim leaders, also known as imams. These imams are the heads of their Muslim communities and also serve as the voice of each community. Therefore, it is integral that they speak out against the wrongdoings of the extremist groups that exist. In condemning these terrorists, they would be notifying Muslims worldwide that the values these terrorists uphold are in no way the values that true Muslims would promote. "They can serve a dual purpose of actively supporting US interests while also serving an invaluable role as validators of US products and campaign efforts" (McClanahan, 2002, p. 26). If the imams were to collaborate with programs such as the CIC, then Muslims in regions such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria would begin to see more and more of the faults committed by the terrorists. Already, many imams have already come out and condemned the actions of all terrorist groups acting in the name of Islam. "Almost 70,000 Muslim clerics have come together to pass a fatwa against global terrorist organizations, including the Taliban, al Qaeda and the militant group that calls itself the Islamic State" (Frej, 2015, para. 1). As Frej (2015) further explains, about 1.5 million participants at a Muslim conference endorsed the signing of a document that denounced the conduct of all Islamic terrorists groups and their crimes. If more and more imams condemn the actions of a few, than the islamophobia that exists in much of society might dissipate. Furthermore, since Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and ISIS are all working in the name of Islam, having imams who are certified Islamic scholars speak against these groups would threaten their reputation even further. All of the ways in which these Islamic extremists manipulate Islam to their benefit could be divulged to people who are not educated enough to understand the difference. If Islamic extremism is to be ousted,

coalition forces must be able to rely on these religious leaders, who in turn must be willing to speak out against the non-Islamic ways of such terrorists.

Ease Restrictive Rules of Engagement

As explained earlier in this, the rules of engagement that were set on coalition troops made it very difficult for them to act efficiently during the official war on terror. If U.S. and coalition forces are to engage ISIS efficiently, they must be able make drastic decisions under heavy pressure; however, leaders cannot make these decisions if they are having to worry about so many rules of engagement.

> By no means was Iraq the only theater of the War on Terror where restrictive rules of engagement undermined U.S. military objectives. For example, in September 2006 American forces had the opportunity to kill nearly 200 known Taliban who were gathered at a gravesite during a burial in Afghanistan. But the troops could not get permission from their superiors to take action -- because it would have been considered disrespectful to fire upon mourners at a cemetery. (Laksin, 2007, para. 8)

When it comes to the point where troops are having to allow hundreds of enemies to walk away without any harm, it becomes a problem. Here were 200 terrorists who now had the chance to carry out even more attacks. Giving leaders wiggle room by slackening the rules of engagement would make it a lot easier for troops to carry out attacks or strike at enemy combatants when the time is right. Just recently, the U.S. has seen the ineffectiveness of the rules of engagement and decided to ease up on much of it. As Tomlinson (2016) reported, the Obama administration has changed the rules of engagements so that officers and troops on the ground will have a loosened grip when it comes to rules of engagement. Previously, the militants could be targeted only if

they showed what's known as hostile intent. ""Now," a U.S. official told Fox News, "we can kill ISIS in Afghanistan just for wearing the T-shirt or waving their flag"" (Tomlinson, 2016, para. 4). Due to the slackening of these rules, ground forces will be able to go after the terrorists with everything that they've got, and will not have to make life and death decisions with the threat of the rules of engagement looming over them. No more will troops have to wait till they are fired upon in order to engage an enemy threat. When it comes to war, there must be a time when politics is set aside and the troops who have been tasked with taking out an enemy are left to carry out their mission. Although only time will tell if the slackening of the rules of engagement will work effectively, it will definitely make it easier for ground forces to operate efficiently.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the threat of Islamic extremism still exists in today's society and is a very real threat. Islamic terrorism has been rampant for decades, and although the war on terror has dealt the extremists with many blows, it has not done enough to topple these radical groups once and for all.

> A decade of US intervention in the country, all of it rationalized by the war on terror, left an impact on every aspect of public affairs, but never achieved the kind of political, economic, and social transformation that some dreamed of when the United States decided to change the regime. (Ayoob & Etga, 2013, p. 47)

Due to this kind of failed state, extremists have been able to take advantage of the chaos that exists in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Terrorists groups such as Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and ISIS have had so long to study each other's and their enemy's mistakes, they have become skilled at adapting themselves to constant warfare. The strategies that the coalition forces have been utilizing for years have become routine to these extremists. They have become

used to the countless airstrikes, ground forces, and politics used to oust them. Terrorist groups

are also aware of the rules of engagements that coalition troops must follow so they have often

used these rules to their advantage when conducting combat operations. Their form of guerilla

warfare, focused on sporadic fighting, and surprise bombings makes it impossible to ever be able

to take out all the terrorists all at once. Additionally, their manipulation of Islamic ideals and

texts have allowed for them to recruit countless Muslims who fall for these fallacies. All of these

dangers add up to the fact that Islamic extremism is a very threat to the security of not just one

nation but the entire world. In order to torpedo the terrorists' agenda, the U.S. and coalition

forces must be willing to enhance the strategies that they have been using against the terrorists.

Cyber and economic warfare should be aimed directly crippling the foundation of the extremists'

society. By taking out their main source of survival, which is the little economy they have,

groups such as ISIS would eventually be too poor to operate efficiently. This kind of situation

would inevitably see ISIS crumbling upon itself. Programs aimed at targeting the hearts and

minds of Muslims in the Middle East should be created and spread like wildfire, so that

uneducated people in those regions can understand the crimes conducted by extremist groups.

Muslim leaders such as imams could be appointed as leaders of such programs so that the people

affected by all this warfare can truly trust the information being spread. These leaders, combined

with the innocent people living under terrorism regimes would pose a huge threat to the

extremists, because of the fact that they would be fighting back with the same religion that the

terrorists use to justify their actions. Rules of engagement on airstrikes and ground forces should

be slackened so that they may carry out attacks aimed at toppling extremist groups more

efficiently. In order to truly deprive all of the Islamic extremists of any chance of success, all of

these strategies must be used simultaneously and hit the enemy in one sweeping strike. With so

many fronts attacking their territories and way of life, it would only be a matter of time before the terrorist regimes would collapse upon themselves. Just as Hitler's Blitzkrieg proved to be effective at enveloping the enemy and taking out many targets in one strike, this all out approach on the Islamic terrorists would not provide them with very much room to breathe. As stated earlier, airstrikes and ground forces have become routine to Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and ISIS; however, once all the other strategies are included, they do not have the means to defend themselves on the ground, from the sky, keep their economy running, and fight true Islamic doctrine all at the same time. Often in history such as the World Wars that have taken place, a coalition force of several countries have been able to ban together in order to defeat forces that posed great danger to all of society. Wars such as World War Two was won because large scale coalition attacks, airstrikes, economic sanctions, and humanity's appeal to the heart and mind were all used simultaneously to defeat a threat. In order to destroy the threat that is Islamic extremism once and for all, it is time for coalition forces to band together more than they ever have and use the resources available to extinguish this menace on all fronts.

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