

DISSERTATION.

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MA Programme: MA International Relations

Title: Has the 'war on terror' been an effective response to terrorism?

The following signed declaration -

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is based on research that I carried out myself, and is written in my own words. With the exception of acknowledged quotations, no part of the text of the dissertation has been copied from any other source, or written by any other person.

Signed Date.....

Has the 'war on terror' been an effective response to terrorism?

Abstract

This dissertation answers the research question above by holding the war on terror's historical reality subject to judgment and evaluation according to its own stated objectives. It first uses a literature review of empirical and theoretical scholarship pertaining to the war on terror to critically appraise the war and its impact to date. It then uses interview data obtained from politically relevant interviewees involved in the war on terror to varying degrees and cross-references these data with the literature. Finally, this dissertation turns to the policy ramifications which emerge from the findings.

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Introduction

The war on terror has been underway for the past fifteen years and a great deal of literature has been written analysing the strategy assumed by the war and seeking to evaluate whether it has been effective. This study uses some of that literature and data gathered from interviews with politically relevant participants to assess the war's effectiveness according to its *own*, stated objectives.

The aims and objectives of this research are as follows: (1) to explore and analyse the existing body of literature (academic and policy/grey) which is focused on the war on terror in order to enable us to answer the research question above; (2) to collect and analyse data drawn from semi-structured interviews with subjects who have been indirectly affected by the global war on terror in order to add anecdotal, in-depth qualitative argument which adds to the literature review. Together these two objectives will help us to discern whether or not the war has met its objectives.

This thesis will first map out the main arguments which emerge from the literature review pertaining to the global war on terror. This study cross-references these emerging arguments with the interview data collated by the researcher. Insofar as Osama Bin Laden – the figurehead nemesis of the war on terror's main proponents – is concerned, the global war on terrorism has unquestionably been an effective response to violent radicalism and Islamic fundamentalism because Bin Laden was found and eradicated (albeit that his death was not the only objective).

The primary aims and objectives of the war on terror were to reduce and ultimately eliminate the risks posed by *Al Qaeda* which were perceived as threatening world security (and most importantly threatening the United States) and to topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan which was perceived as being a hub of terror-supportive, anti-Western ideology and mobilisation¹. The impact of the war on terror has ultimately been to shake up world order and to destabilise global interrelations pertaining to the borderlines of religious identities, nation states and opponent ideologies (Keen, 2006). Despite the fact that the Taliban has experienced a depletion of power and influence in Afghanistan, and despite the purposive killing of certain key figureheads in the global Islamic radical network, terror qua Islamic conservative violence has proliferated in places and the war on terror has, in this sense, not proven to be effective (Keen, 2006). Although the war on terror has been an ongoing and prominent feature of

¹ <https://2001-2009.state.gov/coalition/terr/>

international relations for the past fifteen years, it is arguable that – given the eminent rise of ISIS, Boko Haram and other radical, non-state groups as well as the state-led disintegration of law, order, liberty and democratic progress across parts of the non-Western world – this war against terror has been unsuccessful in achieving its own self-declared objectives.

Terror groups have in many places experienced a surge of popular support and tangible power, and, as the literature review reveals, in many ways the global outreach of these groups has also experienced worrying growth and development (Keen, 2006). This growth in support and interconnectedness has given some terror groups hugely increased military, economic and political power (Young, 2008). Much of the empirical evidence explored later on conveys to us that the war on terror – because its main instruments for achieving its objectives have been security-orientated and militant – has played a significant role in exacting this surge in terror group’s access to public support and possession of tangible power (Keen, 2006; Young, 2008).

The military-focused and securitised approach to the war on terror which has been adopted by the US and its allies has – above all – had very little effect on the spread and deepening of violent ideologies, and the world has witnessed further attacks on US soil – as well, of course, as attacks on a vast range of European, African, Middle Eastern and South Asian territories – by the exact same typology of terrorist groups which the post-2001 “war” has aspired to defeat. The current and foreseeable approach has not sought to redress the growth and embedding of these violent and socially corrosive ideologies within communities both West and East, North and South, and in this very important sense it has thus failed to become victorious over the intra- and international dangers generated by terrorism.

The seemingly endless war on terror and its contemporaneous spill-over into Iraq’s neighbouring country Syria has made it even more difficult for the war’s aims and objectives to be met and it has weakened already constrained democratisation processes and progression in the Middle East. The US and its allies have not overall sought to develop mutually rewarding outcomes in the global war on terror in terms of the citizenry of Afghanistan and Iraq. They have not engaged productively and quickly in building and maintaining a resilient transition to peace by rebuilding these countries’ economic growth drivers, nor by securing the rule of law across the countries’ diverse lands and peoples. Post-war state building procedures have not been focused on, have received little direct and well planned financing, and have not been prioritised over military efforts, and as a result – Iraq and Afghanistan have become some of the most dangerous places in the world.

The data gathered via the interviews herein and the literature reviewed and critiqued prior to this convey a broad consensus that the global war on terror has largely failed to meet its objectives. Because of an excessive emphasis on military conflict and a downplaying of other, “softer” means of countering terror and terrorism (e.g. by educational, economic or local governance policy measures), the war on terror has effectively made the human world a *more* dangerous and volatile place.

The following research questions form the basis for this study:

- Has the war on terror met its objectives?
- Do the findings from the interviews support the main themes in the literature?
- Do the findings contravene them in any ways?

This dissertation will also argue that there is a significant contradiction between the current security and military measures initiated by the US and its allies and the objectives which the global war on terrorism has been meaningfully founded on. This contradiction needs to be addressed in order that the war on terror meets its aims and objectives.

What proceeds is a literature review pertaining to the impact and effectiveness of the war on terror. This review is followed up by a breakdown of the methodology employed as part of this study, and then a relaying of the key findings from the semi-structured interviews which formed the primary research component of this study. Finally some concluding remarks concerning policy and governance and how these facets of the war on terror can be improved to achieve greater impact.

Literature Review

This section reviews, analyses and cursorily discusses a range of academic and policy literature sources pertaining to the war on terror and its effectiveness over the past fifteen years. It is important to elucidate what we mean by an 'effective response' in order to provide a meaningful and informed answer to the main research question. The war on terror needs to meet its own stated and intended following criteria to be judged as an effective means of stamping out the types of violence and ideological radicalism which it ostensibly seeks to redress. These criteria were as follows (taken from official CIA documentation)²:

- To prevent further terror attacks on the US and its allies.
- To defeat terrorist organisations and anyone who supports them
- To prevent sponsorship and support for terror organisations.
- To enable states to defeat and prevent the growth of terror.
- To ensure the escalation of violence is kept to a minimum.
- To disallow terror groups from controlling a territory which they could use as a base for training and mobilisation.

By evaluating the war on terror by its own stated objectives, we can discuss its effectiveness in a consistent way which generates findings relevant to international policy practitioners involved in the war on terror and surrounding institutions. The war was designed as a programmatic response to Islamic (and certain other forms of) radicalism. It espoused a quick-fire solution to the problem it sought to redress and intended to have a rapid effect (Rogers, 2004). The war on terror, in practice, failed very early on insofar as containing Islamic radical violence, and it has had little positive effect on Islamic radical ideologies and their development and growth in weaker states and indeed in the West itself (Evans, 2013).

Saddam Hussein, a brutal dictator and repressor of many peoples, was toppled. And Osama bin Laden was, eventually but decidedly, killed. In this formal sense the war on terror made some impact on its declared enemies. These primary objectives, in addition to the initial defeat of the Taliban and its main leaders, were the war's main early successes.

The US, with its patent and impressive military capability, was predicted at the time to defeat both the Iraqi state army and the Taliban quickly and efficiently. The Iraqi government was

² https://www.cia.gov/news-information/cia-the-war-on-terrorism/Counter_Terrorism_Strategy.pdf

indeed severely and swiftly defeated and its military capabilities had already been stringently weakened by the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent uprising of the Kurds in the North in 1991 as well as by eleven years of economic sanctions. Moreover, the Taliban regime was relatively new, inexperienced and seemingly incapable of enduring a prolonged conflict, not least a conflict with a military giant like the US.

‘The current US “way of war” is far less precise than we are given to believe, as shown by the mounting evidence of thousands of people having being killed in Afghanistan.’

(Rogers, 2004: 88)

The literature evaluated herein pertaining to the invasions of states such as Afghanistan indicates the failure of counterterrorist operations which is evidenced by clear triumphs on the side of terror groups in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The invasions were based on assertions that Osama bin Laden was the primary force behind the September 2001 attack and that Afghanistan and Iraq were terror hubs which incubated and supported bin Laden’s ideological objectives. The US justification for the invasion of Afghanistan was that the Taliban regime which was in charge of the country at the time refused to hand over the leader of Al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, to the US authorities. This was decided in the absence of irrefutable evidence that bin Laden was behind the attack and without evidence that he was in fact being protected by the Taliban regime (BBC, 2001). As the BBC (2001) has it, ‘there is no direct evidence in the public domain linking Osama Bin Laden to the 11 September attacks’. The BBC (2001) continues by arguing ‘neither the Bush administration, the British government, the FBI, nor the 9/11 Commission ever provided good evidence of bin Laden’s responsibility for the attacks’.

The invasion of Afghanistan further confused the matter, because for several years – despite thorough searches and an increasing weakening of the Taliban – Osama bin Laden was not found there. Several authors argue that there were mix motives behind the invasion of the country and many of them were incepted long before the 9/11 attacks. This argument is reinforced by reports indicating that the United States had made the decision to invade Afghanistan two months *before* the 9/11 attacks. At least part of the background to this decision was the United States’ long-term support for UNOCAL’s proposed pipeline, which would transport oil and natural gas from the Caspian Sea region to the Indian Ocean through Afghanistan and Pakistan. This project had been paused throughout the 1990s because of the civil war which had been going on in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

Accordingly, the Afghani people and the Arab world quite quickly held a very negative view regarding the United States and its war on terror. The Afghani people and the Muslim/Arab world quickly felt mistreated by the United States because of the way it treated the Afghani people during the conflict (Bowman and Rugg, 2011). Furthermore, the United States and its allies focused mainly on the use of hard power and sought to resolve radicalism through military means. It has proven to be rather catastrophic to not deploy “soft” power by bringing social, economic and political change to the people of these countries. These “softer” solutions, deployed in conjunction with military effort, may have been far more effective in ensuring that the Muslim/Arab world supported the war on terror.

The global war on terror which started with the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 initially received a relatively high level of support and there was a general if not absolute consensus regarding the moral justification for military action. In their study, Larson and Savych-Rand (2005) claim also that ‘most Americans seemed to feel that military action against Afghanistan was morally justified: 90 percent of those polled by Time/CNN/Harris in October expressed this view; about six in ten of those polled by Gallup in March 2003 who were asked to score the moral justification for military action in Afghanistan on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (“totally unjustifiable”) to 5 (“totally justifiable”) gave it a five and another 14 percent gave it a four’ (Larson and Savych-Rand, 2005:105-106)

The United States and its allies’ decision to invade Afghanistan in the beginning received overwhelming support both at the international level. backed up by 42 countries which participated, and at the domestic level, obtaining broad public support from the American people. Despite this citizen support, the invasion of Afghanistan as part of the war on terror failed to make the United States and other Western countries a safer place to live and work in. The very recent attacks in Istanbul, Orlando, Paris, Canada and Australia, as well as the London bombings, have demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the war on terror in this respect.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the war on terror has been an ineffective answer to terrorism, as indicated by the growing spread of Islamic militancy in African countries such as Somalia, Mali and Nigeria, wherein terrorist attacks have increased rapidly and key Islamist groups have run quasi-states and parallel governance regimes (Larson and Savych-Rand, 2005). In a recent study Crowley and Wilkinson (2013) have argued that Boko Haram is the most active and dangerous terrorist group in Africa. This jihadist organization threatens not only the stability of Africa’s largest oil producer, but also the political, economic and security

interests of the West in Africa (Pham, 2012). Recent events indicate that the group is expanding its activities into the Niger, and it may be active in Cameroon and Mali. A key factor in its rise has been its clear interconnectedness to foreign terrorist organisations such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The rise of Boko Haram illustrates how locally orientated radical Islamist groups, now internationally networked, ‘can rapidly transform into a major threat in regions where governance is weak’ (Crowley and Wilkinson, 2013: 100)

Boko Haram has become increasingly internationalised over the past two years. The majority of its recruits are North Nigerian, but the Nigerian authorities have arrested a significant number of Chadian and Malian members since 2011. A series of arrests in Cameroon and Niger in 2012 suggests the group is using neighbouring states to source its weapons, to recruit new members and to interact with other, sympathetic terrorist groups (Crowley and Wilkinson, 2013: 102). This geo-political expansion demonstrates the reality that the war on terror has failed in containing and reducing terror in weaker and vulnerable states in the global South.

The growing sophistication of the strategic coordination between diverse radical Islamic groups has made it unachievable to use localised military means to achieve the war on terror’s objectives. Crowley and Wilkinson (2013) state that the ‘converging information suggests that Boko Haram has deepened its links with Al-Shabaab and AQIM, which operate across the Sahel and has bases in Mali. One of the earliest signs of such a relationship came in October 2010, when Boko Haram used AQIM’s media division to release an Eid message that praised Al-Qaeda’s affiliates in Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen, and rejected the legitimacy of the Nigerian government’ (Crowley and Wilkinson, 2013:105).

Al Qaeda activities have evolved from locally focused insurgencies and kidnapping or the assassination of foreigners in Afghanistan to international exercises in the West itself (Vidino, 2006). There is a strong sense among many that the terror groups have now begun to win the battle against their enemies, at least insofar as countering the war on terror’s aims is concerned (Rabassa et al., 2002). Al Qaeda and its affiliates have managed to conduct over thirteen attacks on US soil, making an increasing level of difficulty for the government to control its own security and generating uncertainty for citizens and leaders across the United States. In this vital sense whereby the war on terror sought to establish domestic safety for the US people, the war has failed by popularising Al-Qaeda and failing to quash its evident skill in recruiting members, spreading its message and growing its network (Byman, 2003). Al-Qaeda’s

operations have grown in impact and scale – this cannot be perceived as anything but a failure for the war on terror.

The war on terror has resulted in extreme backlashes committed by Western Muslims, including the atrocious attacks in Paris. These attacks have undermined the war on terror's legitimacy (Hegghammer, 2006) among Western citizens because they are evidence of its ineffectiveness. In addition, Islamic groups have mounted strong attacks on the French, thereby demonstrating their growing popularity and capability in Europe.

Throughout the volatile and regressing process of the war on terror there have been more casualties on the civilian side in targeted countries than active terrorist casualties. This factor has disgruntled previously non-radical factions of the Middle Eastern, Afghani, Pakistani and African populations. The widespread and reckless killing of multitudes of non-mobilised and unarmed citizens has undoubtedly revolutionised the Islamist resistance against what has come to be perceived as an illegal and unwelcome occupation by European invaders of targeted countries.

Much of the contemporary literature pertaining to Iraq in particular and its role in the war on terror's progress argues that the invasion of Iraq was and remains ineffective and unsuccessful. Several notable scholars have argued that the way in which the Iraq invasion was actually conducted has contributed to the legitimisation of jihadism and the popularisation among formerly unengaged men and women of militant and violent rejection of the US presence. The Iraq invasion has emerged as a political disaster for the USA; the war on terror has generated an ironic spread of terrorism and radical ideology in the country, leaving the region in a seemingly permanent state of civil war. Iraq is now a fully failed state, abundant with corruption and graft and with a highly dysfunctional and ineffective central government. Given the Bush administration's insistence on the importance of establishing liberal democratic institutions, legislation and processes in Iraq, this very serious societal and political breakdown of order, cohesion and tolerance is a patent evidence of the war on terror having failed to meet its own stated objectives.

Furthermore, the exposure to the world's citizenry of the injustices and violent atrocities in contemporary, post-invasion Iraq – proliferated via the global mass media – has provoked a significant increase in public resentment among many Western Muslims towards the USA and European nations and their leaders. This has proven to be the case even among some moderate and relatively Westernised Muslims who had and continue to have no formal connection to Al-

Qaeda and/or radical Islamic groups. This is evidenced most dramatically by the recent spate of attacks across the West – those in Orlando, Paris, Canada and Australia are key examples of Islamic radical violence committed and planned entirely by people of domestic nationality in Western states. Again referring to the initial Bush administration's own professed objective to use the war on terror to markedly decrease Islamic radical violent attacks in the West and to make the Western societies and citizenries distinctly safer – yet again the war on terror has failed in achieving its aims.

Thirteen years has now gone past since the war on terror's invasion of Iraq yet we remain no closer to establishing long lasting democracy in the country, and a situation has emerged in which civil war is rife and wherein Iraq's third largest city is fully controlled by the highly fundamentalist and violent group – Islamic State. Given that increased democratisation, the preservation and promotion of human rights and enhanced local governance and central state mechanisms of peacekeeping were proposed aims of the military operation, the upsurge of Islamic State and the group's subsequent growth in power stand as post-hoc demonstrations of the war on terror's failure. Fuller (2003) claims that some Iraqis hark back to the days of Saddam Hussein's state, which they say offered at least security, even if it was viciously repressive. Many others, however, particularly among the Shia and Kurds who bore the brunt of the oppression, have no regrets about regime change; they are, however, profoundly disappointed (Nasr, 2007). The US and its invasion allies have tried sporadically and largely in vain to build and sustain democratic modes of organisation in Iraq. However, the brutal conduct of former Iraqi Prime Minister Noori al Maliki against the Sunni minority has intensified tensions between the two main religious groups in Iraq – the majority Shiite and the (significantly numbered) minority Sunnis. The violent and intolerant Islamic State is, in a very real sense, a response to Maliki's oppressive policies and approaches.

The US-led war in Iraq was deemed to be illegal and lacking moral justification from almost the outset according to the UN and a vast majority of European citizens. The Bush administration was keen to enact its global war on terror by attacking states which supported or harboured terrorism. Therefore, the invasion of Iraq was justified by stipulating links between Saddam's state and Al Qaeda. The US public was in broad and sincere support of the war, given that the 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre had prompted outrage and fear in the US citizenry.

'86 percent of those polled in June 2002 rated the possible future Iraqi development of weapons of mass destruction a critical threat to the vital interests of the United States. 66 percent of those polled in late September 2002 said that they believed the Iraqi regime posed an imminent threat to US interests; and 72 percent of people who supported the war in early April said that a major reason was that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States.'

(Larson and Savych Rand, 2005: 185)

The Bush administration and its allies led the US public and certain sections of the international community to believe that it was their prime objective to promote democracy and liberalism, and to improve the living standards of Iraqi people who were being ruled by a despotic leader who rejected and transgressed basic human rights on a systematic basis. The notion that Saddam's regime was barbaric was ultimately well justified and this brute reality helped to justify the invasion – Saddam had not thought twice in using torturous chemical and biological weapons on the Kurds in 1988. His political history of repression, one-party politics, intra-party corruption and international aggression was not under doubt.

One of the key (misleading and unfounded) messages which the Bush administration used to legitimise the invasion of Iraq was the proposition of (now apparently spurious) links between Saddam, Al-Qaeda and the development of weapons of mass destruction. This misleading fabrication was relatively rapidly revealed as being unfounded when no such weapons were found and Al-Qaeda proved itself to be far more supranational and unrelated to Saddam than Bush and his allies had purported it to be. Only the American public was fully compliant with the Bush administration's assertions. Larson and Savych Rand, (2005) state that '[the] majority of Americans seem[s] to have accepted these arguments: majorities typically have said that they consider the war with Iraq to be part of the war against terrorism, and, as will be seen, they [...] had longstanding concerns about Iraq developing weapons of mass destruction' (Larson and Savych Rand, 2005:129).

The perceived credibility and legitimacy of the war on terror has since become damaged in the public eye because of the aforementioned failure of the invasion to have a positive impact on Iraq and to deplete and counter terror in the region and at home. 'Eighty percent felt that things were going very or fairly well during the major combat phase of the war, but this had slipped to about 60 percent by July 2003 and to 50 percent or less by September 2003. Equally striking

was that the percentage who said that the war was basically over fell from 41 percent in early May to 10 percent in mid-September' (Larson and Savych Rand, 2005:129).

Growing uncertainty regarding the failed outcomes in the Afghanistan war also contributed to the weakening of public confidence in the effectiveness of the war on terror. Borger (2009) argues that 'historians will judge whether it [the war on terror] has done more harm than good'. Raphael (2014) argues that 'in 2003, the Bush administration justified the Iraq War on the grounds that Saddam Hussein, a brutal dictator, had obtained WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destruction). While there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein committed a plethora of human rights abuses and repressed his own people, the Iraq we see today is arguably worse than Saddam's Iraq. At least under Saddam, the ethnic tensions were controlled, Al Qaeda had not taken root, and people had a more stable security situation'.

Due to human rights violations and a dearth of planning in terms of post-conflict regeneration both in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Muslim world has now adopted a completely pessimistic view on the global war on terror. Many Muslims believe that the United States caused collateral damage which was unnecessary and could have been distinctly avoided. The militarised and securitised approach to engaging with terror and/or conflict in these countries has generated much resentment and hatred towards America and the West. Key leaders such as Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a mastermind behind 9/11 and a critical player in planning the attack, have been killed, and their dangerous influence on global political order diminished. But the war on terror has nevertheless failed to eliminate the ideational roots of (particularly Islamic) terror because it has not sought to properly deploy "soft" counter-terrorism policies, such as educational initiatives aimed at challenging radical brainwashing among young vulnerable men, economic measures designed to drive growth and enterprise in Muslim countries, social policies intended to build civic society organisations and their strength, and democratic governance frameworks designed to empower the populations and give voice to subjugated minorities and marginalised demographic groups. Thus the war on terror has produced a deepening of anti-American sentiment across the Muslim world and also amongst Western nationality Muslims in Europe and the USA.

'The arithmetic is tragic: Despite untold trillions of dollars and thousands of lives spent across the globe countering the threat, there are more extremists espousing the ideology of bin Laden in September 2014 than there were in September 2001. Thirteen years later, it's becoming clear that we have not fought a 13-year war so much as a

one-year war, 13 times. It is the sad legacy of our tactic-driven response to 9/11 that bin Ladenism has spread far beyond Osama bin Laden's wildest dreams.'

(Soufan, 2014)

Moving forwards in a more productive fashion would require the USA to improve its international image projected to the Muslim world by backing up its rhetoric around democracy, human rights and liberty with substantive efforts (well financed and sustainably implemented by the USA and its partners) to redress the chronic economic and political depravity in the Muslim world using the aforementioned array of soft policy measures. To that end, the United States first of all needs to establish a robust and more mutually beneficial diplomatic relations framework pertaining to Muslim countries most importantly those in the Middle East.

The Muslim/Middle Eastern participants interviewed as part of this research expressed their sadness that the war on terror has resulted in consistent and continued violence around the world especially in the Middle East itself. The interviewees strongly contended that the war on terror has not made the world a safer place to live in; they emphasised that it has increased the number of suicide attacks in Western countries (see also: Atran, 2006). So-called lone wolves – disenchanted and disenfranchised young men – have been used and manipulated to carry out these acts which has drastically strengthened the terror group's capabilities in exacting such attacks on Western soil. World security has in this sense been rapidly destabilised at the level of normal citizens and their day-to-day lives.

The discourse and ideas surrounding Islamic radicalism have grown exponentially in their power, popularity and reified depth of meaning across the world because of the war on terror and its relentless public deliberation over and constant condemnation of Islamic terror groups and the threat to societies they pose. Before the 9/11 attack most people could not name a single terror group such as Al Qaeda. This group itself was barely known of, and had been assisted by the United States in countering the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan in 1989 as part of the Cold War. Byman (2003) argues that Al Qaeda and the ideology it promulgates remain strong, and the Middle East in particular will remain fertile ground for anti-American radicalism for the foreseeable future. As a result, for years and perhaps decades to come, Americans must be ready to live with the risk of large-scale terrorist violence.

Despite the losses Al Qaeda has suffered in Afghanistan as a result of the destruction of its operational and training infrastructure, its cells overseas have moved from strength to strength. While Al Qaeda has been hunted down by the US, its allies and its friends, Al Qaeda has been able to replenish its human losses and material wastage.'

(BBC, 2016)

The newly emerging Islamic State group has been increasingly successful and is better equipped both financially and militarily than its predecessors. Islamic State has caused the UN member states and its allies more damage than any other terror organisation in recent history. Islamic State has declared itself governmentally legitimate in Iraq and most of Syria. ISIS, also known as Islamic State, is a radical Islamic jihadist movement prominent in Iraq and Syria and its aim is to establish a globally powerful Caliphate. In June 2014 the world woke up to a shock when the Islamic State captured Iraq's second largest city – Mosul – with a population of around two million. Islamic State also took control of Fallujah and Tikrit in Northern Iraq via large scale military battles. As the BBC (2016) highlights, 'with the capture of Mosul, Isis morphed swiftly into a new mode of being, like a rocket jettisoning its carrier. No longer just a shadowy terrorist group, it was suddenly a jihadist army not only threatening the Iraqi state, but challenging the entire world'

The rise of power and regional legitimacy for the Islamic State has further damaged US credibility in terms of the war on terror. Islamic State has a more strategically coherent and financially plausible approach in challenging the US and its allies. As the BBC (2016) claims, 'from the declaration of the caliphate until early 2016, some 90 terrorist attacks were either carried out or inspired by IS in 21 countries around the globe, from California to Sydney, with an estimated 1,400 victims killed. The attacks carried the same message of punishment, deterrence and provocation as the hostage beheadings, while also demonstrating IS's global reach'.

Gerges (2011) claims that 'in contrast, al-Qaeda was a top-down, militarized organization designed to wage a transnational war against the West, trying to bog it down in a total war against the greater Islamic world. Al-Qaeda aimed at winning the hearts and minds of Muslims and spearheading popular resistance against the Western crusade against the umma. Once bin Laden and Zawahiri gained credibility in the eyes of the Muslim masses, they would level the playing field with local rulers and then seize power in their native lands'. Islamic State is markedly similar in its ambitions.

Cockburn (2014) claims that the war on terror has failed because ‘it did not target the jihadist movement as a whole, above all, was not aimed at Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the two countries that foster (...) Jihadism as a creed and a movement. The US did not do so because these countries were important American allies whom it did not want to offend. Saudi Arabia is an enormous market for American arms, and the Saudis have cultivated, and on occasions purchased, influential members of the American establishment’. Cockburn’s argument further reinforces the proposition put forth here that the war on terror has failed to meet its objectives due to poor planning and poorly thought out strategy.

The authors reviewed whose work pertained to the specific mode of operation and/or types of policies and approaches used in the war on terror were very clear about the ill-judged approach taken so far. An over-emphasis on military power usage, hard-liner strategic measures and gunboat diplomacy, coupled with a very insufficient focus on state-building and the development of infrastructure, economy and civil society, has, it was argued, caused the decomposition of Iraq, Afghanistan, the Yemen and Syria. This has also therefore limited and constrained processes of local governance and processes of democratisation. (See Cockburn, 2014; Gerges, 2011; Soufan, 2014). Much of the scholarship has empirically observed that the Western, democratic, liberal and “stable” states of Europe, Australasia and North America has become (even statistically, but not least perceptually) more dangerous places to live (see Atran, 2006; Larson and Savych, 2005; Evans, 2013; Byman, 2003). Finally, the review of the literature unearthed scholarly arguments which claimed that sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East especially are in fact more violent, more politically prone to Islamic radical volatility, and further away from the path to democratisation than they had been prior to the war on terror (see Evans, 2013; Rogers, 2004; Brown and Rugg, 2011).

Methodology

The sampling method used for this study is best described as a “snowball” approach. The researcher initiated contact with one member of each ethno-national group and used this contact in each case as a leverage to access other suitable interviewees.

It is a research project’s epistemological-ontological paradigm that synthesises the meaning and purpose of a research study. The epistemological and ontological foundations for the methodology and methods chosen in this study are broadly speaking interpretivist and constructivist. Interpretative epistemologies contend that positivist goals of measuring observable and reliable data are too limiting. They fail to capture the meanings, perceptions, motivations and intuitions which are a crucial aspect of social action in the world.

An interpretivist epistemology was used as the broad backdrop to the study and the study uses qualitative methods and analytical approaches which emphasise the unveiling of the respondents’ meanings and understandings of the world as they appear to them (Hennink et al., 2010). The interpretivist paradigm is about making meaning from the individual’s perspectives as there are multiple realities and here is not one, “objective” truth. It was thus important that the researcher remained reflexive, by frequently critiquing and reflecting on his own views of the social reality of the War on Terror (Archer, 2007). Reflexivity is not just about acknowledging personal biases, it is also about critically thinking about how the researcher’s experience can result in a particular understanding being evident in the data.

Knowledge about the world and definitions of meaning and truth are subjective and are constructed through social interaction. Sayer (2000) argues that ‘social phenomena are (...) meaningful [but] meaning has to be understood, it cannot be measured or counted’ (Sayer, 2000: 17). Therefore, the researcher has chosen to situate this study within an ontological tradition which sees individual reality and meaning as being constructed subjectively and through social interaction and dialogue.

The researcher conducted eleven in-depth interviews with respondents from Iraq and Kurdistan, Afghanistan, the Yemen, UK and France. Three of the interviewees were Iraqi Sunnis, three were Iraqi Shiites, three were Yemeni Arabs, two were British nationals, three were French. The interviews all lasted roughly one hour. The interviewees/respondents were encouraged to expand on their answers and to elaborate on their opinions – little prompting was used once the questions were asked, so the interviews were basically semi-structured. The

researcher recorded the interviews and translated, transcribed and analysed the data a week after each given interview. The interviews were all conducted in Sheffield, UK.

It was felt that semi-structured interviews were the most suitable method of data collection, because they allowed the researcher to develop “rich” data which conveyed the experiential and interpretive opinions of the interviewees. Given the small size of the sample, the findings are not statistically generalisable and the reliability of the methodology is relatively low, but by exploring interviewees’ opinions in qualitative depth the researcher was able to flesh out an ethnographic “picture” of how the war on terror is being evaluated and judged by real people, rather than by mere impersonal indicators and metrics.

The interviewees were selected on the basis that they were all either (a) postgraduate students and/or academicians specialising in topics directly related to the war on terror, or (b) politically engaged activists and/or party political members involved in politics and policy development in terror-riddled countries. These factors were what justified the selection of my sample as pertinent and informed research participants. The participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to the war on terror’s global impact, local impact, strategic approach and legacy effects.

The interviewees were fully informed (verbally) about the research project’s aims and objectives and they were told in no uncertain terms that their names and personal details would be made anonymous because of the sensitive nature of the topic being discussed. The interviewees (also referred to interchangeably as “respondents”) were told they could have a copy of the final research output (in accordance with Sheffield University’s Code of Ethics) and they were made aware that they could withdraw from the study and withhold their data at any point they so wished. All interviewees / respondents signed a form which declared that they had been informed about the study and its context and that they were happy to take part and that they were aware their personal information would be kept confidential. A blank copy of the consent and information forms can be found in Appendices 1 and 2.

Findings

The data gathered from interviews has produced an in-depth series of real-life insights into whether or not the war on terror is perceived by global citizens as being an effective response to terrorism and radicalism. This section conveys a series of key messages which emerged from the data itself. While the information gathered here is too small to be made into a generalised and statistically validated set of propositions, it is rich in narrative and meaningful in qualitative depth.

The researcher conducted a total of eleven in-depth, semi-structured interviews with respondents from Western countries – English and French citizens – as well as participants who were Yemeni, Kurdish, Iraqi, Syrian and Pakistani. All these respondents have been closely observing the war on terror from its inception back in 2001. Having completed the semi-structured interviews the researcher undertook a grounded analysis of the findings, using the data as the source of theoretical logic by identifying key commonalities in the messages, intentions and beliefs emerging from each group, and spotting the core areas of consensus where all the respondents expressed identical or very similar beliefs and feelings. The key messages emerging from the data were as follows:

1. There was a general consensus regardless of nationality or ethnicity that the war on terror has failed to make the world a safer place.

The terror groups have spread globally. The Taliban was pushed out of Afghanistan and the former dictator of Iraq was removed but the subsequent failure of the US to “state-build” properly in both Afghanistan and Iraq was deemed to make the overall war on terror a failure. The invasion/ liberation of Afghanistan and Iraq was carried out as part of the Bush plan to trigger a democratic transformation across the Middle East. However, the past few years of effort to build up infrastructure in Afghanistan and Iraq have failed – these states are now in an absolute fiasco and are failed states undoubtedly.

2. UK citizens felt disappointed and scared

The London Bombings on 07/07/2003 constituted a terrible reminder for English citizens of the IRA bombings in London. In this sense the war on terror has failed to make the UK a safer place to live in, and the operation has in this sense also been an ineffective response to terrorism. Nearly all military attempts made to undermine terror groups have been proven to be counterproductive. One UK interviewee stated that:

‘Fifteen years have gone by the war on terror is still a major threat to the west. There is no assurance that the type of 7/7 home grown terrorists who blew themselves up in central London are not going to come along again...’

(Mark, politics student)

The same interviewee emphasised the fact that these attacks are/were being carried out by compatriot citizens, not by national Iraqis or Afghans:

‘The bombings are carried out by UK citizens. There is evidence of at least two of the bombers having contact with Islamist militants in Pakistan, but no direct link to al-Qaeda was established by any of the subsequent inquiries. I strongly believe that the unproductive intense military operations throughout all long years have stressed the ineffective responses to terrorism both in Afghanistan, Iraq and the rest of the Middle East. It is also emphasised how the war on terror through military actions has only enlarged the rank of those terrorist groups.’

(Mark, politics student)

Another English interviewee remarked that:

‘From a female perspective the war on terror has completely failed because I don’t even feel safe in Sheffield, Al Qaeda may attack us at anytime. I live near a shopping centre called Meadowhall, this is a place which has been the main target of a planned terror attack. I shop at Meadowhall for my son, for household supplies, and for clothes. It’s scary to think I could be in a terror attack situation and not know what may happen.’

(Carly, housewife and mother)

In discussing the rest of Europe and holiday destinations, this same interviewee stated that:

‘Innocent people are the ones getting hurt and then IS is accepting the responsibility for that attack. Just like the one in which happened in Brussels on the 22nd March ‘16 in the Brussels airport where there were just three suicide bombers and they killed 300 innocent people. I feel far less safe now than I did before all this war on terror began.’

(Carly, housewife and mother)

Regarding the war on terror’s impact as a proposed instrument of democratisation, Mark stated that:

‘I don’t think the war on terror has resulted in spreading democracy in the Middle East. Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and the whole Middle East - a complete turmoil - they are failed states, human rights abuses are rising, people in these countries suffer from starvation, have no medical help and they drink dirty water. They need to build the country back to how it was before the chaos and wars started in 2001.’

3. French citizens expressed a sense of frenzy because the war on terror has made things worse in France

The French citizens who were interviewed all expressed a clear belief that the effect of the war on terror had been to make their home land a less safe and more hazardous place to live in.

‘Why does France keep getting attacks consistently by both home and international terrorists? Our experience in France has been one of the worst of those faced in the West. The constant attacks on France which has suffered waves of extremist blows, that have not been seen in any other Western country, have shocked the entire nation. My own home feels like a semi-battlefield at the moment – me and a lot of my friends, family members and colleagues feel in despair because what has been done internationally as part of the war on terror has not reduced the risk posed to us French who are on the street.’

(Yevvet, politics Student)

Another French interviewee fully concurred with these statements:

‘I have no confidence in the war on terror. As a French citizen I consider France to be extremely unsafe, it feels like we are all in a war zone. In addition, without security plans being put in place the terror groups are able to carry out further attacks on us which could make France the most unsafe place in Europe.’ (Martin, student)

The French interviewees were totally clear that the war on terror has failed to make their domestic political scene safer:

‘The security threats facing the Western countries, and most importantly our beloved France, are a lot bigger than we can imagine. The so-called war on terror has failed to make our country a safer place let alone spreading liberal democracy in the Arab and Islamic countries. Our home country is now for many of us basically a war zone which poses potential risks and dangers round every street corner.’

(Martin, student)

4. Yemeni interviewees emphasised that their state was becoming a failed one because of the war on terror

Contemporary Yemen, just like any other failed state, is imploding – according to the Yemeni citizens interviewed as part of this study. The country is in total chaos, and the Yemeni-located faction of the Al-Qaeda network in the Arabian Peninsula is – according to the interviewees – the biggest and most terrifying risk to preventing the country from developing in the future.

‘Extremism is certainly getting a boost and this is unwelcome for us [Yemeni officials]. The Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) released a video last week claiming a new branch in Yemen fully committed to a caliphate. There is a real danger that Yemen will become another Syria—and another base for ISIS.’

(Abdul Shaif, politician)

One of the Yemeni interviewees was clear how the war on terror had upped the pace of conflict and terrorism in Yemen itself:

‘Yemen has become the focus of a civil war between factions loosely aligned with the so-called ‘legitimate’ government on the one hand and former ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh and his Huthi allies on the other. While this development was predicted by many in recent years, it was dramatically worsened by foreign intervention and the emergence of a ‘proxy’ war between the Arab Gulf states led by a new, young and warmongering leadership in Saudi Arabia which insists that Yemen is the site of a life or death struggle against its rival Iran for domination of the politics of the Arabian Peninsula.’

(Abdul-Lateef, political activist)

This interviewee continued this statement by adding that fears regarding Iran are exploited to stoke the fires of war in Yemen itself:

‘Iranian involvement [in Yemeni areas] is blown up and portrayed as a major threat regardless of the reality, which includes limited material support and mostly boasts of responsibility for events which Iran neither sponsored nor, in many cases, even knew

of. The whole situation is worsened by this Iran versus Gulf States competition, and we [Yemenis] end up being the ones who suffer from what is ultimately a geo-political conflict not directly related to us at all.’

(Abdul-Lateef, political activist)

Another interviewee explicitly made the argument that the US and its allies in the war on terror had fundamentally let down the Yemeni authorities by ceasing military and financial backing of the Yemen state abruptly after rapid but ill-sustained successes early on in the war:

‘The initial battle against al Qaeda in Yemen was successful, yes. UK and US forces with our [Yemeni] help and support, rapidly shut down jihadist training camps and imprisoned many local al Qaeda leaders. But the policy makers in London and Washington quickly decided this was a completed mission and withdrew financial backing for the war on terror as led by the Yemeni government. This angered Saleh, who lost access to considerable funds and opportunities for engaging with the war on terror fruitfully. Then all of a sudden al Qaeda have returned and for some reason many were surprised.’

(Nuh Al-Fathah, politician)

The same interviewee went on to explain that this situation, which the US and its allies could potentially have prevented, created a power vacuum which has made the Yemen more violent and Yemeni society less inclined to effective democratisation in the short- to medium-term:

‘The situation now is much worse because all this made a vacuum for Dash and AQAP to gain dominance across the Yemen’s expansive geographical territory. Poverty has become a big recruitment tool for radical groups too. The war on terror has clearly made my country [Yemen] worse, more dangerous, more volatile.’

(Salah Abdullah, politician)

‘The war on terror has made the Yemen into a bedrock of radicalism and social tension because of its unfortunate geographical positioning – the government is becoming less and less able to develop and sustain the society, economy and community in Yemen. We began the war on terror as an explicit and honest ally and as a result – in practice – have ended up being basically destroyed as a country.’

(Salah Abdullah, politician)

5. Iraqi interviewees were divided in their sentiments depending on whether they were Shiite or Sunni Iraqis – both groups nonetheless felt disappointed by the war on terror and its impact on their lives.

5.1 The Iraqi Shiite interviewees saw the invasion of Iraq as starting out positively but as having failed to protect their interests sufficiently

The Shiites from Iraq who were interviewed stated that the invasion/liberation of Iraq was initially very much welcomed because of the Saddam regime's repression of Shiites and Shia'ism. This provisional positivity was, however, relatively quickly dashed because of a sense that the Shiites were not properly politically empowered despite their being a minority group in Iraq.

'We [Shiites] were excited about the toppling of a regime in which Shiites were marginalised and massacred. The [Saddam/Ba'ath] regime's brutal mistreatment of the Shiites resulted in a welcoming of the liberation of Iraq which was conveyed as part of the global war on terror. However, the US has failed to support a proper empowerment of our religious group who were initially pro American and pro democracy.'

(Sa'if, Student)

Another interviewee stated that:

'The US's consistent failure to deliver on pre-war promises has resulted in resentment and rebellions by us and we are now backed by the Iranian government against the occupation of Iraq. I believe that the war on terror has resulted in the total destruction of a country, a destabilised world security condition, and increased dangers in the Middle East.'

(Ali, Taxi Driver, former teacher)

The same interviewee added that European terror activity only adds to this conclusion about the war on terror:

'We have televisions and we can see that the uncertainty the war [on terror] has created for us is spreading and will affect more and more people, and we can see European countries such as France and Belgium struggling to control their security situations. This provokes even more despair in us.'

(Ali, Taxi Driver, former teacher)

5.2 The Iraqi Sunni interviewees expressed strong fear and disappointment, coupled with a spiralling sense of disempowerment

Despite being a minority in the country the Sunnis ruled for decades in Iraq, and even though many are not pro-Saddam nor pro-Ba'athism, the Sunnis interviewed herein were clear that they were scared about their security situation moving ahead. In addition, fear is mounting that even more extensive empowering of the Shiites could backfire into repression of the Sunnis in Iraq's future.

One Sunni Iraqi interviewee stated that:

‘The majority rule of Shiite sectarianism of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki left most of the Sunnis with no option but to rebel against the government. All the hostility against the Sunnis embedded the situation which created conditions for Sunni extremists like ISIS to emerge.’

(Omer, Student)

Another concurred in remarking as follows:

‘The Withdraw of U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011 opened the door of hell for Sunnis. The Shiite took the opportunity of the US military intervention to exact the revenge that they have been waiting for during the Sunni rule of Iraq.’

(Omer, Student)

6. The Afghani interviewees overall felt that the aggressive style of militant and hard-line invasion, designed to topple the Taliban, had ultimately failed and the war on terror had made Afghanistan less safe to live in and more threatening internationally.

Afghanistan – prior to invasion – has long been a tumultuous and volatile place to live in. The Afghani interviewees expressed the fact that they had great hopes for state-building in 2001 and that these had been totally disappointed:

‘We as Afghans hoped that the global war on terror was going to end ambiguity in terms of the country's future, but very soon all dreams were dashed and liberal democratic promises turned out to just be words. In addition, it did not take Al Qaeda long to regain power and territorial control in large segments of the country.’

(Raza, human rights activist)

One of the Afghani interviewees was very assertive in replying that the war on terror has brought naught but destruction to her country:

‘Our country now is in complete disorder, no security, no hope for the future of this nation and its people. With increased chaos, the Afghan security forces are nowhere near being in control of the country’s territories. The Taliban is now a bigger threat than it was in 2001 to the Afghan Government and to global security as well. The US and its allies have not just failed to state build in Afghanistan but have left it in a weaker position in which progress and growth and prosperity are even harder to achieve.’

(Raza, human rights activist)

Disappointment characterised the Afghani interviewees’ experience of the war on terror, and their remarks echoed much of the literature’s analysis of the war on terror’s promises being deemed to be false and unfounded:

‘At the beginning it [the war on terror and the invasion of Afghanistan] had a very positive effect on our lives; Afghani people could, we hoped, receive the benefits of US liberation and rebuild the country, take up the transition to democracy, ultimately stabilise and achieve a long lasting peace. Opportunities for the Afghan people to build democratic structures and to drive development in security, Infrastructure, economy and health, turned out to be nothing but dreams.’

(Sroosht, Mechanic)

The same interviewee stated that international terror and Islamic radicalism is on the rise again in Afghanistan:

‘Al Qaeda in Afghanistan has regained power and territory and it is a key player in destabilising the country’s security. How can this war on terror be said to be successful then?’

(Sroosht, Mechanic)

Three fundamental points of affinity – whereby the literature reviewed produced arguments which are positively backed up by the data in the previous section – have emerged in this process:

1. The Middle East and Islamic countries are less safe and more prone to terrorism and radicalism since the initiation of the war on terror.
2. European and Western countries are riskier and less stable places to live compared to the pre-war-on-terror era.
3. The excessive focus on military instruments of attack and the insufficient focus on state-building which have typified the war on terror are the core of the cause of the war's overall failure to deliver on its claimed objectives.

Middle Eastern / Islamic countries are more radical and volatile and less democratic

The trawl of the literature unearthed scholarly arguments which claimed that sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East especially are in fact more violent, more politically prone to Islamic radical volatility, and further away from the path to democratisation than they had been prior to the war on terror (see Evans, 2013; Rogers, 2004; Fankovic, 2013; Brown and Rugg, 2011; Pham, 2012). Across the sample of diverse ethno-national people who have been interviewed here, the sentiment that the Middle East and Africa in particular have become more dangerous places to live was repeated clearly.

Western / European societies and polities are more dangerous now than before

Many of the academics referenced and referred to in the literature review had empirically observed that the Western, democratic, liberal and “stable” states of Europe, Australasia and North America has become (even statistically, but not least perceptually) more dangerous places to live (see Atran, 2006; Larson and Savych, 2005; Evans, 2013; Byman, 2003). Again across the full sample of interviewees in this project, this belief – that Western states and societies were far more unpredictable and far less safe places to reside in and work peacefully – was echoed. The UK and French citizens in particular stressed that this was a new phenomenon – a kind of tension and unease they had not experienced before; that said, the UK respondents also mentioned the IRA bombings era and compared it as being similar to the 7/7 bombings.

Over-emphasis on “hard” (military) measures have hindered the war on terror

The authors reviewed whose work pertained to the specific mode of operation and/or types of policies and approaches used in the war on terror were very clear about the ill-judged approach taken so far. An over-emphasis on military power usage, hard-liner strategic measures and gunboat diplomacy, coupled with a very insufficient focus on state-building

and the development of infrastructure, economy and civil society, has, it was argued, caused the decomposition of Iraq, Afghanistan, the Yemen and Syria. This has also therefore limited and constrained processes of local governance and processes of democratisation. (See Cockburn, 2014; Gerges, 2011; Soufan, 2014). The interviewees from Afghanistan and Iraq certainly expressed distinctly similar views to these academics. The US/UK approach to intervention in the name of the war on terror was, according to Afghani, Iraqi and Yemeni interviewees, entirely short-sighted because by withdrawing troops and funding from these countries after very provisional military goals had been achieved, the war on terror's proponents have ended up creating societal and civil breakdown and war in these critical lands.

Policy & Governance Discussion

With these three core areas of affinity between the primary data findings herein and the arguments coming forth from the literature formerly reviewed, the researcher remains mindful of the importance of proposing positive and substantive policy ideas which could affect a more constructive impact for the war on terror's proponents and leaders, as well as for citizens of the Middle East / North Africa / Sub-Saharan Africa and the West.

By first construing the three core messages as constituting weaknesses of the war on terror and its impact / approach, the logical process here seems to be to clearly encapsulate what the opposite impact / approach would look like. Using this method of inverting the as-is and generating a normative flip-side alternative, this section outlines possible policy / governance realities to redress the three weaknesses respectively.

Making the Middle East / Islamic countries safer and more democratic

The immediate point here is to trace the kinds of political and military actions and interactions which have made the Islamic countries more volatile. From the interviews of senior Yemeni officials we have seen how short-termism in the establishment and completion of military objectives, coupled with the rapid withdrawal of critical funding for the war on terror, can increase terrorism and deplete the strength of government in weaker states. The first recommendation is therefore: To secure and reliably sustain clearly demarcated and well managed financial support for co-operative governance regimes (local and national) and to grant a certain degree of autonomy in the allocation of these funds. This would help to guarantee the "buy-in" of Middle Eastern and African leaders who have demonstrated their willingness to engage in the war on terror as an ally. We have also seen from the Afghani and Iraqi experiences expressed in both interview statements and in the empirical literature that the Taliban, al-Qaeda and IS have gained traction with local people chiefly because society and social life have become more, not less, turbulent and fraught with danger. This therefore links through to the third weakness of the existing war on terror – its insufficient level of emphasis on civic policies which fund, grow and strengthen the economy, the countries' infrastructure and the democratic citizenry. (see below for policy recommendation.)

Making the West a safer and more stable place to live

Using the same trace-back process, the same policies and military-focused approaches of the existing war on terror can be seen to have created the very disgruntlement amongst some Muslims which has provoked the rise in terror attacks and radical Islamist ideologies. Domestically the focus has been on securitised solutions – seeking out insurgents and radicals in Mosques and community centres. The inverse approach would see Ministries such as the UK’s Department for Communities and Local Government manage a large budget (rather than the Ministry of Defence) designed to fund training, teaching and education pertaining to the dangers of radicalism. Just as importantly, to redress the marginalisation of (some) Muslim minority groups, the use of enterprise policies, skills policies, access to finance policies and citizenship education policies specifically targeted at Muslim minorities could help to more effectively integrate these groups into European life and to help them to more meaningfully identify with Western society.

Using “soft” policies to drive sustainable and embedded societal and political change in targeted countries.

A range of non-military solutions to radicalism, religious fundamentalist violence and other terror-provoking social problems are available and have been experimentally and empirically proven to be as or more effective in countering terror and terrorism. These policy initiatives and/or strategic approaches to countering terror are diverse in their policy foci and/or their demographic target. They share one common attribute insofar as they all place the intended benefit/impact emphasis on civil society – they seek to change and develop the societies within which terror and radicalism are fostered rather than using military means to tackle fully grown terror groups. The types of policy measure in this approach include: educational programmes; NGO-focused development policies; economic driver funding; infrastructural improvement programmes; and democratic governance initiatives.

Education

One of the foremost ways to tackle terror via the deployment of “soft” policies is by educating vulnerable young men (often embroiled in crime and poverty) who are most prone to being subjected to and sensitive to terror-provoking radical ideologies. By engaging young men (and indeed women) in education and training which highlights the dangerous and unfounded claims to truth which underpin violent extremist ideologies, these people who are most vulnerable can

be successfully dissuaded from joining militant groups and espousing radicalised ideological principles (UN, 2006).

NGOs and Development

NGOs – both Western originated and local-regional ones – are very often active in promoting and fostering societal and economic development in the countries of most critical importance to the war on terror. A huge amount of publicly taxed money has been thus far spent on the Iraq War and the invasion of Afghanistan, as well as on additional security measures in the West itself (Belasco, 2014). Re-orchestrating this funding and allocating it to the development of civil society and economic life in terror-harboring countries across the Middle East and Africa, via NGO tendering processes such as those managed by the UK’s Department for International Development (McConnon, 2014), could, potentially, further empower these NGOs which have a wealth of on-the-ground experience in countering terror using the precise kinds of “soft” policies discussed herein.

Funding Economic Drivers

By financing bilaterally beneficial economic growth drivers in countries struggling to counter terror as well as chronic poverty, prosperous Western states can help to counter terror and radicalism by growing the economy, boosting enterprise and entrepreneurialism, increasing social mobility, generating jobs and alleviating poverty and extreme social ills arising therefrom. By funding enterprise hubs, incubating growing businesses in emerging market sectors, or by enhancing the access to finance conditions in a target country, economic policies can be used to drive people away from the conditions conducive to extremism and towards a brighter material and societal future (Cragin et al., 2003).

Boosting Infrastructure

By enhancing and improving the travel and logistics infrastructure of the most chronically deprived states which are of pertinence to the war on terror (including not least the Yemen and Nigeria mentioned earlier), the economies therein and the communities which constitute them can be significantly developed. There is a large body of evidence emerging from China, South East Asia and Africa that financing infrastructural development in agrarian societies is a pre-

condition of effective and high-impact economic and socioeconomic development moving forwards (Lall, 2013).

Democratic Governance

There is ample evidence from regional and local development projects that by organising local governance institutions according to democratic modes, extremism can be better understood in communities which are both poverty- and terror-laden. The argument here is that if the war on terror's proponents were to assist in fostering and facilitating genuinely localised and genuinely democratic procedures of deliberation in the communities where terror is most acutely grown and developed, extremist claims to truth and value can be discussed rather than hated. Whether or not such democratic modes of organisation in vulnerable and often violent and turbulent parts of the world result in tangible social and economic goods being more equitably distributed is not in fact the main point here (albeit that these are constructive intended outputs of a democratically organised society). The real benefit in terms of countering terror stems from the fact that extremist violence can be "dampened out" by the sheer existence of a fair and free, vocalised and inclusive democratic process taking place in such communities.

Conclusion

Overall, the war on terror has failed on its own terms. It set out with a stated set of intended objectives which were in fact orientated around social values, civic security, democratic norms and liberal-cum-enlightenment customs and praxis. In seeking to realise these normative goals, it used military approaches, short-term strategic planning, hardliner political and oratory rhetoric and messages of hatred to do so. Had the war on terror's immediate purpose merely been to kill and oust the leaders of al-Qaeda and other extremist groups at the time, it may have been possible to say it has had some limited success. But judged by its own declared standards (noting the Bush administration's own references to democracy, liberty and safety) it is clear that the means by which this war over ideas and thoughts was battled were far from ideational, enlightened or democratic in their nature. This, ultimately, from the literature as well as from the anecdotal interview data collated here, emerges as the war on terror's fundamental blunder: it wanted to change hearts and minds, but used guns and tanks to do so. As a direct result, this paper has sought to argue, the war on terror has *not* been an effective response to terrorism.

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Appendix 1 – Consent Form (Blank)

RESEARCH PROJECT: Has the 'war on terror' been an effective response to terrorism?

CONSENT FORM

1. I understand that the study I am a participant in is evaluating the effectiveness of the war on terror.
2. I understand I can withdraw from the study and withdraw my answers also at any point I wish
3. I understand that my personal details will not be shared and that my identity will be kept anonymous
4. I understand that the answers I give to the interview questions will be used to provide argument in Saleem Rasul's MA dissertation, although via a pseudonym.

Signed (Participant)

Name (IN CAPITALS)

Signed (Researcher)

Appendix 2 – Information Letter

INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Masters student at the University of Sheffield's Department of Politics studying International Relations.

You are being invited to partake in a study which is investigating whether the war on terror has achieved its own objectives. The study will use academic literature pertaining to the war on terror and its impact and strategy in order to ascertain whether it has been effective. The reason I am interviewing you is because I am interested in how citizens of the Middle East and European states perceive the war on terror's effectiveness. I will use your answers in combination with those given by others to capture some key messages from students and professionals affected by the war on terror.

This will involve asking you primary questions and then discussing your answers over the course of an hour or so. These questions are as follows:

- has the war on terror met its aims?
- has the war on terror made the world safer?
- How successful has it been in defeating terror?
- Has it increased democratisation in non-Western countries?
- Do you consider the war on terror to have had a positive impact on the country you are from (or continue to be politically active in)?
- Has the war on terror been conducted in an effective way?
- Has it made any mistakes approach-wise?
- Has it made any prime achievements?
- Can the war on terror's strategy be improved? How?

Your answers will be kept anonymous and you will not be personally identified in the study or in any public documentation. If at any point you wish to withdraw from the study and/or the interview that is absolutely accepted. If you do not wish to answer one or more of the questions, for any reason, this is also acceptable and the researcher will not object whatsoever.

The researcher will be using the data (your answers) to evaluate the war on terror and to compare answers given with common arguments in the academic literature. You can ask for a copy of the final submission of this study report at any time.

If you would like more information, please feel free to contact me on srasul1@sheffield.ac.uk

Yours,

Saleem Rasul