Islamophobia & Counter-Terrorism: A Vicious Cycle

Abstract

In recent years Islamophobia has been becoming worse and worse. All of the negative actions and beliefs that propagated through Islamophobia only feed into a vicious cycle that causes harm to all participants. This paper examines several elements that feed into the cycle, all of which center around US policy. The first section will cover forms of domestic counter-terrorism. These organizations and policies are served with task of stopping and eliminating terrorist threats, but through their practices they make it easier for terrorists to recruit and radicalize others. The second section deals with the US’ foreign policy and how the military actions of the US don’t accomplish what they set out to do. Military operations have happened and wars have been waged in the name of fighting the “war on terror” but noticeably the so called war has only escalated as a result of these tactics. The last section will deal with how the US’ support for Israel does not help it in the “war on terror”. Israel is one of the largest sources of anti-Americanism in the world and the continuation of US support for Israel creates far more enemies than Israel eliminates.
Islamophobia & Counter-Terrorism: A Vicious Cycle

Islamophobia has been present in many Western nations for hundreds of years, but has gotten catastrophically more severe in the years since September 11th, 2001. Ranging across Europe and North America it has had widespread effect. Many people have been killed or forced out of their homes due to Islamophobic actions taken in reaction to Islamic terrorism. The reasons that Islamophobia exists and people commit Islamophobic acts can be, but are not limited to: the result of different biases against Muslims and Arabs, someone's desire to make Muslims and Arabs out to be the enemy, fear of the unknown, misunderstanding someone's appearance, a lack of understanding of the Islamic faith, and many other reasons. These reasons usually boil down to racism against people from the Middle East, or people who look or dress like those from the Middle East. This makes Islamophobia not only a concern for followers of Islam, but also a concern for those like the Sikhs, who get mistaken for Muslims, and any brown people who seem Arab. These broad parameters make the targets of Islamophobia quite varied. However, the opposite is also true to an extent. The broad parameters also make the perpetrators seem like one group. This creates an isolating, or “us versus them” effect. A sense of isolation like this and the divisions that it creates only serve to generate more Islamophobia through a vicious cycle.

The vicious cycle is most easily described in five steps. First, Islamophobic acts take place. These acts could be as benign as an off-color comment about Islam or someone acting afraid of a Muslim. On the other hand, these acts can also be as severe as deadly violence and official polices profiling Muslims, such as additional, invasive screening at airports. Second, the creation of divisions between the parties of either side of the Islamophobic acts. In some cases a Muslim targeted by Islamophobia or witness to Islamophobia may view the
perpetrators as hateful or out to get them. This antagonistic view may also spread to the perpetrators of the act, further cementing the isolation and divisions between groups. Third, those most isolated and those who have the most animosity towards the perpetrators of Islamophobia are sometimes driven to the point of radicalization. This radicalization usually comes from groups affected by the US and other Western militaries. These groups seek to harm the people of Western nations, usually as revenge for military actions in the Middle East or the spread of Western influence in the Middle East. Fourth, these radicalized individuals take part in acts of violence and terrorism that harm people from nations that are seen as Islamophobic. These acts often involve harming civilians and other innocent parties. In many cases, the harmed people are not actually the perpetrators of Islamophobic activities. Fifth and finally, these terrorist actions aid in the creation of divisions between the people of the victims and the people of the perpetrators. These divisions are the basis of Islamophobia cause of more Islamophobic actions. Thus the cycle feeds into itself perpetuating the actions of those on both sides.

The general focus of this essay is on how the vicious cycle of Islamophobia is perpetuated by policies and organizations that seek to stop it. These polices and organizations are usually focused on counter-terrorism. They seek to stop violent attacks before they happen, but they usually do not create too much of a tangible result. The lack of a result is made worse by the amount of Islamophobia that they promote. There is often biased profiling and discrimination that goes into counter-terrorism procedures. These procedures almost exclusively focus on Muslims or Arabs and not other populations that contain terrorist organizations. This focus causes the profiled and discriminated people to feel divided and isolated from those around them. This results in the continuation of the vicious cycle, as terrorists actively recruit the disenfranchised. Because of this, counter-terrorism activities
likely create more terror than they stop. Leading to more counter-terrorism polices, and more funding to counter-terrorism groups, who in turn discriminate further against Muslims and Arabs. All of these actions on both sides actively feed into the cycle of Islamophobia.

The various sections of this paper will focus on different aspects and policies of counter-terrorism: when they do work, when they don't work, and in many cases, when they worsen the problem. To start, there will be a section on the overall goals, priorities, and actions of counter-terrorism bodies, especially in the US and the UK. This section will also cover the radicalization process and how counter-terrorism efforts create what terrorists want to see. The final part of the first section will be on several domestic policies that discriminate in Islamophobic ways. The second section will be on the larger military actions of Western nations. These military actions are usually taken against huge groups Muslims and Arabs, as reactions to terrorism committed by smaller groups with vastly different ideologies from those who perpetrated the terrorist attacks. This section will focus on how these terrorist actions are not being responded to in an effective way and how they are playing into the hands of the terrorists by furthering the cycle of Islamophobia. The third section will focus on the US' support for Israel. The US often explains one of the reasons for being allied with Israel as it being an “ally against terror”. This section will disprove Israels utility in the “war on terror”. In similar fashion to the other sections, this one will also show how the subject is actually counter productive in its stated goals. All of these sections together will show how the cycle of Islamophobia is deeply ingrained in counter-terrorism efforts and how counter-terrorism plays a huge role in the perpetuation of terrorism.

**Domestic Counter-Terrorism**

Responses to terrorism in the United States and Europe have been varied but they all tend to fall into similar forms in terms of policy. These policies tend to be Islamophobic in
nature as they often tend to be carried out by institutions who profile people and single out people who are Muslims or Arabs. Andrew Silke, writes in his book *The Psychology of Counter-Terrorism*, that there are four main goals in the eyes of the United Kingdom’s counter-terrorism command (CTC). These goals are part of the Counter Terrorism Strategy (Contest), and are known as the four P’s: Prevent, Pursue, Protect, and Prepare. Other counter-terrorism entities worldwide have similar goals, but they all seem to have similar flaws as well. Silke goes on to point out the biggest flaw in modern counter-terrorism. “While the CTC is certainly heavily involved in the PURSUE element of CONTEST, very little effort seems to be focused on PREVENT (pg.14).” This focus on combating those that are violently radicalized, instead of trying to stop the process at its source, seeks only to treat a symptom and not the disease. Finding the root causes of violent extremism is not an easy task, especially because the victims of terrorist attacks never want to see the actions of their own government as a cause for such an attack, and the causes are many and not always apparent. Understanding the way terrorist groups like ISIS began, as well as the ways they recruit and subsist, is central to finding how to stop them and other groups like them. This should be the main priority of counter-terrorism. Unfortunately tactics used nowadays to “combat terrorism” only seem to make the situation worse. The practices used to try and stop terrorism only makes more happen. The actions of the US have led to the creation of the largest most talked about terrorist organization in the world. And the new tactics and rhetoric being used to deal with terrorism in the western world only furthers the goals of terrorist organizations by painting terrorism as a wholly Islamic practice.

The easiest people to recruit are those who feel like they are not part of the nation they live in, those who feel isolated. In Rukmini Callimachi’s New York Times piece *ISIS and the Lonely Young American* he quotes a person with experience recruiting for terrorist
organizations. "Mr. Shaikh, who spent years recruiting for extremist groups before recanting, says the isolation is intentional. 'We look for people who are isolated,' he said. 'And if they are not isolated already, then we isolated them (pg. 11).'' It is easy to recruit those who feel like an outsider, those who feel unwelcome. These feelings, as shown by Shaikh, are used and manipulated recruiters. They offer a sense of belonging and try to present a place where their targets would feel at home, and feel like they were doing something. ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham) presents an image of itself a militaristic force that takes action, and is literally fighting the powers that oppress them, potential targets for recruitment. This image is designed to make it easy for someone who feels isolated in their community to see ISIS as a way out, a way to fight against the governments that treat them like second class citizens.

Preying upon this sense of isolation is a tactic that is working to radicalize potential recruits both near ISIS and in distant countries form the lands that ISIS controls. These tactics will continue to work as long as the feeling of isolation in potential recruits is present. Very little seems to be happening to try and reduce this sense of isolation that ISIS uses, in fact the responses to terrorist attacks seems to be a force for further isolating people.

One of the ways in which Muslims are isolated from the rest of the country is by how terrorism is portrayed. There are many different kinds of terrorists who commit violent acts for many different reasons, but almost all of the news that deals with terrorism shows only the Islamic terrorists. Certain actions taken by people who are Muslims and actions taken by non-Muslims are defined in entirely different terms. The occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge from January 2\textsuperscript{nd} to February 11\textsuperscript{th} 2016 is one situation in which the label terrorist was not used even though the actions taken were very similar to other terrorists. The group occupying the refuge sought to use force and violence to create political change but were not called terrorists. Instead the occupiers were called domestic extremists, which while
having a menacing name, does not hold the same gravity as being called a terrorist. The main reason for the exclusion of the terrorist label is the race and religion of the occupiers. They were mostly white Christians from Nevada and Oregon. If they had been of a different religion or color they most undoubtedly would have been immediately labeled as terrorists. The initial response to the occupiers was also rather calm, as there was no move to violently combat them early on. And while the means of the occupiers may not have been killing civilians they were still taking violent action that would be responded to differently if they did the exact same thing but were Muslims. This kind of discrepancy in the response to actions of terrorists is one easy to make divisions between people, and there are many other systems in place that cause similar divisions.

One example of a system that has been shown to have little to no effect in stopping terrorism is the Screening of Passengers by Observation Techniques (SPOT) system. SPOT is used in many airports in the United States. Silkie writes in 2010 “It is perhaps not terribly surprising then to learn that even though SPOT has been used in the United States since 2003, the system has not been credited yet with even one clear terrorist detection. This is not for lack of trying though. Since 2006, officers using SPOT have identified on average 70,000 passengers each year who are marked for further screening. In 2006 and 2007 this lead to between 400 and 600 arrests each year (pg. 9).” While this system has had real benefits as shown by the arrests of other criminals, it has never led to doing what it was meant to. Silkie’s statistics show, just how many people are falsely detained, questioned, or searched, because of the SPOT system. To make matters worse, most people stopped in this manner are part of the main target groups for terrorist recruiters. In a 2012 article in the New York Times by Michael S. Schmidt and Eric Lichtblau they interviewed officers who were using the SPOT system. “Officers in Boston acknowledged that they had no firm data on how frequently
minority members were stopped. But based on their own observations, several officers estimated that they accounted for as many as 80 percent of passengers searched during certain shifts.” This racial profiling shows how the system is not really about observing the behavior of the passengers, but rather their race and/or ethnicity. The targeting of minorities is likely to lead a greater sense of isolation that recruiters for ISIS and other similar groups to exploit. Out of the 70,000 screened passengers in 2006 and 2007, only slightly more than half of a percent were actually arrested, and (if the 80 percent figure is accurate) 55,500 of the “further screened” were minorities who in turn felt like they were targeted for nothing other than being a minority. Being delayed, detained, and possibly searched, can not only cause a sense of being unwelcome, it can also create a similar feeling in people who identify with those they see undergoing this process baseless of racial profiling. An Arab in a foreign country may interpret the way an Arab in the USA is treated as proof that the US is against the Arab people. The SPOT system can even make minorities believe that others in their own country view them as terrorists. This all goes to show how a system put in place to combat terrorism has not only failed horribly, but also further isolated the targets of the SPOT system, making it easier for terrorist organizations such as ISIS to recruit those who feel like their country does not want them.

Another new tool that came into being in the post 9-11 era counter-terrorism system was the US PATRIOT Act. This name is an acronym that stands for: Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001. It is an unprecedented act that allows for an egregious amount of surveillance and the indefinite detention of suspects without trial, both of which stampede on the civil liberties and human rights of the American people as well as foreigners who come to the country. Just like the SPOT system the US PATRIOT Act has seemingly failed to do what
it was established to. “FBI agents can't point to any major terrorism cases they've cracked thanks to the key snooping powers in the US PATRIOT Act, the Justice Department's inspector general said in a report Thursday that could complicate efforts to keep key parts of the law operating.” wrote Maggie Ybarra in a 2015 piece in The Washington Times called, *FBI admits no major cases cracked with US PATRIOT Act snooping powers.* This shows that one of the main pieces of the US PATRIOT Act, which was created with the intention to combat terrorists, has never actually worked. This part of the US PATRIOT act has also caused dissent from the citizens of the US who see it as an invasion of their privacy. In addition to being ineffective and making people angry it causes even more problems according to Ybarra: “Bulk data collection creates false leads, ties up investigative resources and, essentially, undermines national security, said Stephen Kohn...” Time is being wasted and the US PATRIOT Act that was created to combat terrorists is now making it harder to do so by putting resources into an unnecessary system. Even worse is the “false leads” section. Just like SPOT a false lead would most likely result in the same sort unnecessary targeting of minorities, which in turn furthers the notion that these minorities are seen as enemies of the state.

In more severe cases the US PATRIOT act has led to detention without prior legal precedent. This, like the surveillance portion of the act, has also helped little to none in combating terrorists. In an analysis of the foiled plots called *Ordinary Measures, Extraordinary Results: An Assessment of Foiled Plots Since 9/11*, Germain Difo writes “Post-9/11 counterterrorism measures—including the US PATRIOT Act and amended FISA surveillance provisions, unlawful combatant designations, indefinite detentions, and the use of torture techniques—have been instrumental in thwarting attacks in only a small number of cases (pg 2.).” When things as damaging as “torture techniques” and “indefinite detentions”
are being used they better be successful. These sorts of methods are even more of a reason to see the US government as targeting the detainees and tortured as enemies, especially when so many of them share a race or ethnicity. Difo goes on to specify how few plots have been thwarted by torture and detentions: “law enforcement techniques, detention and interrogation procedures, and legislative measures adopted after 9/11 demonstrably contributed to thwarting attacks in only five cases, or less than one-sixth of the total number of foiled attacks (pg. 3).” Only five cases. Stopping five cases may have saved many lives but the methods used to stop these plots were extreme. Using such extreme methods to try and prevent attacks may cause so much susceptibility radicalization that it will in turn create more terrorist attacks than it prevents.

However the US PATRIOT Act has had real results, no matter how small they may be and, there is no way to document if someone was radicalized as a result of the resentment generated by the actions of the government under the US PATRIOT Act. A real substantial result, like the stopped attacks, is much easier to point to than a general feeling and possible vulnerability, like susceptibility to recruitment. The argument could also be made that the SPOT system has not caught terrorists because it has prevented them from going ahead with their plots. A potential terrorist may reconsider bringing a plan to fruition if the likelihood of failure is large, and systems like SPOT may be seen as a possible point at which a terrorist plot may be stopped. Arguing that counter-terrorism measures that have been put in place work as a deterrent is a completely valid point, however there is no way to know just how well it has worked, or if those who do commit acts of terrorism instead just moved to different methods. The only real evidence we have to go off of is the reported statistics of how many plans have been carried through or stopped and how they have been stopped. Difo writes “The report finds that in the majority of cases, traditional law enforcement techniques and
methods developed prior to 9/11, direct and indirect action by concerned citizens, and international law enforcement cooperation contributed significantly to identifying terrorists and preventing attacks. It also finds that post-9/11 legislation and methods were instrumental in disrupting terror plots in only a relatively small number of cases (pg. 2).” Things like the SPOT system and the US PATRIOT Act are not as effective as “traditional” methods. The resources being spent on things like SPOT could be used to better support those traditional methods that have actually seen real results. Even if there is not a single person radicalized because of the way they or those like them are treated by counter-terrorism polices, there is still reason enough to cease the ineffective methods of SPOT and the activities authorized by the US PATRIOT Act. The failures of SPOT and the tiny amount of success of the US PATRIOT Act should be seen as signs that they do not work and that they should be done away with. However Difo points out “Few of the terror plots thwarted after 9/11 were disrupted using a single, clearly identifiable method.” In the end it makes the methods of SPOT, the US PATRIOT act, and other post 9-11 counter-terrorism techniques one of two thing: a waste of resources that could be better spent on other areas that have had real results in doing what they have set out to do. Or two: a tactic that fails so badly that it actually creates the problem that it was designed to solve.

Much like he SPOT technique and the US PATRIOT Act, the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) furthers the cycle of Islamophobia through its implementation. As Jasbir K. Puar writes in her book Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times “...(NSEERS), required mandatory registration of males 14 and older from twenty-four predominantly Muslim countries (as well as North Korea)(150).” A program of registration like this shows to those being registered that the US sees them as a potential threat, and wants to make sure they are not a terrorist. To many this was reason
enough to leave as shown when Puar continues “The ACLU claims that mandatory registration propelled the mass exodus of Brooklyn’s Pakistani population... and the deportation or preemptive flight of anywhere from 15,000 to 45,000 dwellers(150).” Such is a “mass exodus” is a clear sign that the Pakistani population saw the US turning against them. And it was not just limited to the Pakistani’s either. The NSEERS expanded several times to include almost all nations in the Middle East. NSEERS makes sure that everyone who immigrates from any of these Middle Eastern Muslim majority nations knows that the US does not welcome them, and that they are being watched by the government which only does so because it believes that they are a potential terrorist.

The NSEERS was put into place not too long after the attacks on September 11th (June 2002). This temporal proximity makes anyone effected by the NSEERS feel as though they are being held responsible for 9/11. Further connecting the NSEERS and 9/11 is the performance of Pakistani businesses in the area. As Puar writes “At least 30 businesses went belly-up in the three years between September 11 and the date of this report, and those that remain suffer from a 30 to 40 percent decline in patronage(150).” This shows how the result of the NSEERS and 9/11 not only made it harder to come to the US, but it also made it next to impossible to be successful here, and the NSEERS only makes it easier to point the blame at the US government and people for reacting the way they did. The NSEERS like many of the other policies that came into being after 9/11 while keeping a greater watch on people, also made the watched people more unhappy with the government. These people gained this discontent with the government because it was discriminating against them on the basis of religion and nationality, discriminating due to Islamophobia. This leads to people not wanting to go to the US as well as leaving the US of elsewhere. Those who leave will go to other countries who are more welcoming or return to their nation of origin. Some of those who were
displaced by this system will then go on to spread the word of the US’ Islamophobia. This in turn will help in the creation of enemies for the US, giving excuse for the radicalization of more people. Just like other systems the NSEERS is counter productive in its efforts in counter-terrorism, as it just feeds into the cycle of Islamophobia.

The “War on Terror”

Islamophobia was a much smaller problem before the beginning of the so called “War on Terror”. This term was first used in this context by President George W. Bush in a September 20th speech when he said: “Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there.” In response to the attacks on September 11th Bush started the “War on Terror” supposedly to try to keep the American people safe. The range of actions taken to make Americans safe was vast. The first hint as to what Bush had planned came later in that speech. “From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” This, as is now known, was aimed at Iraq. Bush had plans to invade Iraq and remove its leader Saddam Hussein. This part of his speech was the beginning of a long process to feebly justify the Iraq invasion that happened in 2003, while simultaneously making it easy to brand an entire nation an enemy of the US if there were terrorists living there. In the early 2000’s the US used this excuse to invade Afghanistan and Iraq. These countries were both supposedly tied to the attacks on September 11th, 2001, and the invasions were predicated with the goal of fighting those who perpetrated the attacks, which ranged from little to no validity respectively. Al Qaeda did reside in Afghanistan as Bush said, but Al Qaeda are not the Taliban who the US primarily fought there. Iraq on the other hand had little to no connection to Al Qaeda before the US invasion. The war and occupation there was never really about fighting those behind 9/11. These wars were started in the name of the War on Terror but they didn’t focus on going after
the terrorists that had attacked the US. Instead, these wars created more terrorists, as well as a need and want to paint those who were being killed as irrational and evil, so as to keep the people of the US from wholehearted opposition to the war.

Bin Laden said in his *Letter to the American People* in 2002 “Why are we fighting and opposing you? The answer is very simple: (1) Because you attacked us and continue to attack us.” The words from one of the main figures behind 9/11 say that he is a terrorist because he has been attacked by the US in the past and is still under attack, and the response to his actions was to attack even more. A terrorist said that attack is why he is a terrorist, and the US attacked more. This goes to show that the policies and responses by the US and other western powers do have a very real effect on radicalization. The more severe the response to terrorism is, the more terrorists will be created by it. Many American people are in support of all sorts of violent responses, in many cases due to Islamophobic beliefs that are egged on by the actions of terrorists like Bin Laden. However, they seemed to have little idea what the consequences of a war would be. Eliot Weinberger wrote in *What I heard about Iraq in 2005* “I heard that 47 per cent of Americans believed that Saddam Hussein helped plan 9/11 and 44 per cent believed that the hijackers were Iraqi; 61 per cent thought that Saddam had been a serious threat to the US and 76 per cent said the Iraqis were now better off (pg. 1).” Millions of Americans believed that the invasion of Iraq left the Iraqis better off, which shows approval for the Iraq war even while it was creating more terrorists.

Bush later went on to make on of the most stupefying speeches yet, in response to the supposed victory in Iraq. Weinberger recounts this in *What I Heard about Iraq* saying:

On 1 May 2003, I heard the president, dressed up as a pilot, under a banner that read ‘Mission Accomplished’, declare that combat operations were over: ‘The battle of Iraq is one victory in a war on terror that began on 11 September 2001.’ I heard him say: ‘The liberation of Iraq is a crucial advance in the campaign against terror. We’ve removed an ally of al-Qaida, and cut off a source of terrorist funding. And this much is
certain: no terrorist network will gain weapons of mass destruction from the Iraqi regime, because the regime is no more. In these 19 months that changed the world, our actions have been focused and deliberate and proportionate to the offence. We have not forgotten the victims of 11 September: the last phone calls, the cold murder of children, the searches in the rubble. With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got (pg 8).

This begins with the words “Mission Accomplished”. The supposed mission was to fight terrorism, in a country that had no real connection to the the “terror that began on 11 September 2001”. This speech says that the war in Iraq was because of 9/11. Bush’s response to terrorism was to give terrorists more reasons to do what they do. He said the war “... cut off a source of terrorist funding.” but it only gave terrorists more funding in the form of resources formerly controlled by Saddam and his army. The war, the destroyed economy, and the numerous deaths of civilians also gave terrorist organizations more ammunition for their propaganda against the US. Bush said that “our actions have been focused and deliberate and proportionate to the offense.”, but they were focused on those who had nothing to do with the attacks, virtually ignoring those that actually were. Making these actions even more hypocritical, the civilian deaths due to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were vastly more numerous than those killed on 9/11. Bush also said that “We have not forgotten the victims of 11 September...” but he has not even considered the victims of the war in Iraq, considering their lives to be worth far less than that of an American, or maybe even worth nothing at all. Finally he said that “With those attacks, the terrorists and their supporters declared war on the United States. And war is what they got.” In hind sight, something similar could be said of the Iraq war: With this war, the United States and their supporters declared war on nonexistent terrorists. And terrorists are what they got.

The terror groups that were created as a result of the war in Iraq have taken many shapes and forms. Currently, the largest and most established group is ISIS. They have
claimed responsibility for many of the terror attacks today and are proclaiming that they will commit more. There is a great deal of media hubbub about the group and the conversation about their actions has recently devolved into some of the worst Islamophobia in modern history. This is not helped when articles like Graeme Wood's *What ISIS Really Wants* make comments like “Muslims who call the Islamic State un-Islamic are typically, as the Princeton scholar Bernard Haykel, the leading expert on the group’s theology, told me, 'embarrassed and politically correct, with a cotton-candy view of their own religion' that neglects 'what their religion has historically and legally required.'” This sort of statement and Woods later labeling of ISIS as “Very Islamic” only try to convince the reader that all Muslims and ISIS are one in the same. The flames of Islamophobia are fanned by articles like this. There are discussions by many political figures about implementing Islamophobic policies. As stated earlier, such policies increase the susceptibility of Muslims worldwide to radicalization. Current suggested policies, while they fall into the same vein as the USA PATRIOT Act, SPOT and other post 9/11 measures, are becoming more and more extreme. This rhetoric and these policies make it look like there is a sort of western view that sees ISIS in their mind every time they hear about Islam, and thinks “terrorist” every time they hear the word Muslim. This kind of prejudice and Islamophobia may only be present in a small number of individuals, but the perception of its existence in the eyes of Muslims worldwide may make them think that the US and other countries see them as enemies, thus increasing their susceptibility to radicalization.

A much better explanation for “what ISIS really wants” and how they want to achieve it comes from Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed's *ISIS wants to destroy the 'grey zone'. Here's how we defend it.*

The goal, of course, is to inflict trauma, fear, paranoia, suspicion, panic and terror – but there is a particularly twisted logic as part of this continuum of violence, which is to draw the western world into an apocalyptic civilizational Armageddon with ‘Islam.’
“demonstrating to Islamist jihadist networks that there is now only one credible terror
game in town capable of pulling off spectacular terrorist attacks in the heart of the
west, and two, by deteriorating conditions of life for Muslims all over the world to draw
them into joining or supporting ISIS.

The reactions to current attacks and the attacks of the past have seemed to only support
what ISIS wants. The response by many US politicians after the attacks in Paris on November
13th 2015 and more recently in Brussels on March 22nd 2016, was to say that they did not
want Syrian refugees (who are a majority Muslim) to be let into the US for fear of them being
terrorists. There has even been talk by US presidential candidate Donald Trump of not letting
any Muslims whatsoever into the US. Trump has also proposed to force Muslims in the US to
have special ID cards. When a candidate for the highest position in the US government can
have as much support from the US people as Trump does, while simultaneously holding
these insane beliefs, it tells Muslims all over the world that the US is filled with Islamophobic
people who see all Muslims as threats. These responses play directly to the goal of making
life worse and engendering a sense of unwelcome isolation for Muslims world wide.

Other responses to the attacks in Paris included bombings by the French targeting ISIS
in Syria. These bombings are as Mosaddeq said: “...the ideological trap laid by ISIS.” If
France continues and carries through with its declaration of war on a large scale, the attacks
on 11/13 may be the French version of 9/11. Bin-Laden got the reaction that he wanted from
the US when the attacks on 9/11 happened and it seems the first step for ISIS to get the
response they want out of France is already in motion. France needs to look to the example
of the results of others taking the same actions that they are thinking about. The results of
invasion in the past, in Iraq and Afghanistan, were horrible, not only for the Iraqi and Afghan
people, they also did not stop the problem it set out to, it only made it worse. The US and
everyone involved on all sides are worse off because of these wars. The US stepped in a trap
laid by Bin-Laden and Al Qaeda. Now France is poised to do the same with ISIS.

France hasn’t just started bombing ISIS targets in Syria they have also been trying to rile up other European nations into joining the fight against ISIS. The ideological trap is working perfectly so far and France is leading others to it. Nations all over the EU have been stepping up their military efforts in the Middle East in response to the attacks in France. It seems that these other nations want to show solidarity with their French allies by killing people in the Middle East. Whether or not those killed are members of ISIS, it appears to some as a united Europe killing its Muslim enemies. Europe’s reactionary violence is destroying Mosaddeq’s “grey zone”, and it is cementing the us vs them narrative that ISIS wants. ISIS needs only to attack European targets a few times to provoke the kind of conflict that in the past has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands. The attacks in Paris on 11/13 and Brussels on 3/22 worked better that ISIS could have imagined and similar attacks will continue to happen as long as they can provoke the similar reactions.

US & Israel: “Partners Against Terror”

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, in The Israel Lobby, analyze the US’ relationship with Israel and how it is said to be strategically beneficial for fighting the War on Terror. They write: “In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, the main strategic justification behind the U.S. Support for Israel became the claim that the two states were now ‘partners against terror (60).’” This relationship has been maintained over the years by portraying the Israelis as similar or the same as Americans. In this way Israel has become an extension of American culture and power into the Middle East. This view of Israel being America’s proxy makes them out to be fighting the same so called “War on Terror”, which would mean that the US’ relationship with Israel should be making the world safer for the US. However when they looked at the information at hand closely, Mearsheimer and Walt discovered that the
relationship actually made things more difficult for the US by tarnishing its image and generating hatred for the US through the actions of Israel.

According to Ariel Sharon in 2001 “‘You in America are in a war against terror. We in Israel are in a war against terror. It’s the same war (Mearsheimer and Walt 61).’” In saying this, America is equated to Israel. The enemies of Israel and the US become one and the same. This, while not a new statement by any means, only makes the enemies of Israel see the US as even more of an enemy, bringing the image of the two nations into one. The more closely tied America is to Israel the more the actions of Israel are seen as the actions of America. Israel has been horribly oppressing the Palestinian people for generations, as well as invading and occupying the lands of its neighbors. America has been helping Israel commit these acts by supplying many of the guns, bombs, and other military equipment that Israel uses. These actions make the oppressed and the families of the victims see Israel, and by extension the US, as an enemy. The creation of this enemy status is not unknown to the American people. Mearsheimer and Walt write that “…78 percent of members of the news media, 72 percent of military leaders, 72 percent of security experts, and 69 percent of foreign affairs specialists believe that backing Israel seriously damages Americas image around the world (109).” It is blatantly clear that America is not winning any favors by being tied so closely to Israel, and that this relationship is making international relations much more difficult for the US.

One of the reasons that the current nature of the US-Israeli relationship is not helping fight the US' wars is because, for the most part, counter to what Sharon said, it is not the same war. The “terror” that Israel fights is not the same “terror” that the US fights. The groups that are most often responsible for the terrorist attacks in Israel are Hezbollah and Hamas, who fight Israel's occupation of Lebanon and Palestine respectively. Through some of their
tactics, both of these groups are responsible for targeting civilian populations, and using
“terrorist” methods such as suicide bombing and indiscriminately launching inaccurate
weapons into population centers. The civilians that Hezbollah and Hamas target are all Israeli,
none of them American. The fight that Israel fights against Hamas and Hezbollah, never spills
over into the US. Hamas and Hezbollah both consider the US their enemy, but as
Mearsheimer and Walt write “With respective to Hezbollah, for example, the Hebrew
University historian Moshe Maoz observes that ‘it is mostly a threat against Israel... I doubt
very much whether Hezbollah will go out of its way to attack America (63).’” The same is true
of Hamas who is similarly concerned with Israel far more than the US. While these groups
that have attacked Israeli civilians haven’t attacked Americans the reverse is also true.
Groups like Al Qaeda, who have attacked the US, are not the same as Hamas and Hezbollah.
Mearsheimer and Walt write that “There is no convincing evidence linking Osama bin Laden
and his inner circle to the various Palestinian terrorist groups (63)...” Al Qaeda may wish to
harm Israel but it is more focused on the US. The same is true for the Palestinian terrorist
groups, making the war on terror that the US is fighting a different war than the one that Israel
is fighting. The fact that the actions of these groups are divided geographically and in specific
nature of whom they target, make these wars distinct from one another, save for a few traits
in particular: religion and race.

The US and Israel allying themselves against terrorists creates the appearance, if not
the reality, that they are fighting against Islam and Arabs. By reducing the the wars on terror
fought by the US and Israel to the same thing it forces their enemies to be reduced to their
shared traits. Hezbollah, Hamas, Al Qaeda and the other terrorist groups that fight the US and
Israel are all similar in that they are largely Islamist groups composed of Arab people. They
also are united in several of their reasons for committing acts of terrorism, the foremost of
which is the occupation of Palestine. This makes the words of Sharon's 2001 speech out to be a declaration of united hostility towards those who are Arab, Muslim, and/or want to see the occupation of Palestine end. With the US' continued support for Israel this sentiment only becomes more of a reality. This is all predicated on Israel being beneficial for the US' war on terror. In reality the result of the US-Israeli relationship is the generation of anti-American sentiment, and a burgeoning of potential recruits for terrorist organizations who seek to harm the US.

In his *Letter to the American People*, Osama bin Laden cites many reasons for why Al Qaeda fights and opposes the US, the first of which is the occupation of Palestine. He says: “The creation and continuation of Israel is one of the greatest crimes, and you are the leaders of its criminals. And of course there is no need to explain and prove the degree of American support for Israel. The creation of Israel is a crime which must be erased.” The head of the organization responsible for the largest terrorist attack on the US, cites the continuation of support for Israel as his main reason for attacking. Being allied with Israel is one of the most counter productive methods that the US has gone about to counter terrorism, if that is even really one of the goals of being allied with Israel. One of the reasons that the US may see Israel as an ally against terror is religion.

The state of Israel is a Jewish state. It is in direct opposition to many Muslim majority states, and groups. Israel is seen by the US as its ally quite possibly because of a religious factor. Israel is not a Muslim state. In Deepa Kumar's *Islamophobia* she writes that “These forces [Western Orientalists and Likud political thinkers] worked to convince politicians that “Islamic terrorism” was the next great threat (122).” This shows that Israel has tried to convince US politicians of adopting Islamophobic views. Making Islam to be an enemy helps Israel stand out as an ally for the US by making it seem like the Islamic world is out to get
America while Israel with its American values is stuck in the middle trying to survive. This Islamophobia has spread to many politicians who see Israel as an extension of Americanism in the Middle East, which drives said politicians to support Israel. Israel therefore has a vested interest in making people in the US Islamophobic, and see Islam and the people of the Middle East as the enemies of the US. Furthermore the support that Israel gets from the US actually does make some people enemies of the US, which makes the Islamophobia that Israel spreads seem more legitimate. The result of Islamophobic policies, from this relationship, are sometimes violent reactions which further convince politicians that such policies are necessary.

In Mearsheimer and Walt's book they also see the support for Israel as a reason for terrorism for the US. They write “When it comes to fighting terrorism, in short, U.S. and Israeli interests are not identical. Backing Israel against the Palestinians makes winning the war on terror harder, not easier (70)...” Support for Israel is one of the largest sources of anti-Americanism in the world, but it is seen as a tool for fighting the war on terror. America, through its support of Israel, is just fueling a vicious cycle that causes death and destruction for all participants. This cycle is perpetuated mainly by Islamophobia and the lack of respect and rights given to the Palestinian people.

Conclusion

Islamophobia has been getting worse and worse due to many counter-terrorism efforts. The US has been contributing to a cycle that only feeds back into itself. The efforts the US uses to combat terrorists are in turn creating the conditions in which terrorists have the least difficulty recruiting. This leads to more attacks and more reasons for more counter-terrorism efforts to be funded and supported, many of which are Islamophobic. The cycle is fueled and fulfilled by these efforts. Policies like the US PATRIOT act, NSEERS, and the SPOT system,
more heavily profile individuals of the Muslim faith. The various wars and military operations in the Middle East are often predicated on fighting terrorists, while they instead result in harming civilians and people who previously had little to no reason to take up arms against the US. Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people with the support of the US also creates hatred for the US which sees Israel as an ally against terror. All of these methods for stopping terrorism are not working and are in fact, counter productive. Profiling, isolating, oppressing, and treating Muslims like they are all terrorists is not the way to combat or prevent terrorism. The vicious cycle of Islamophobia is getting worse and worse, and it needs to be stopped before it gets out of control. By changing many of its actions and policies, as well as preventing further Islamophobic polices from being created, the US can stop or even reverse the cycle. The US has to make these changes soon or the cycle will continue to waste more resources and claim more lives in a war that cannot be won.
Works Cited


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