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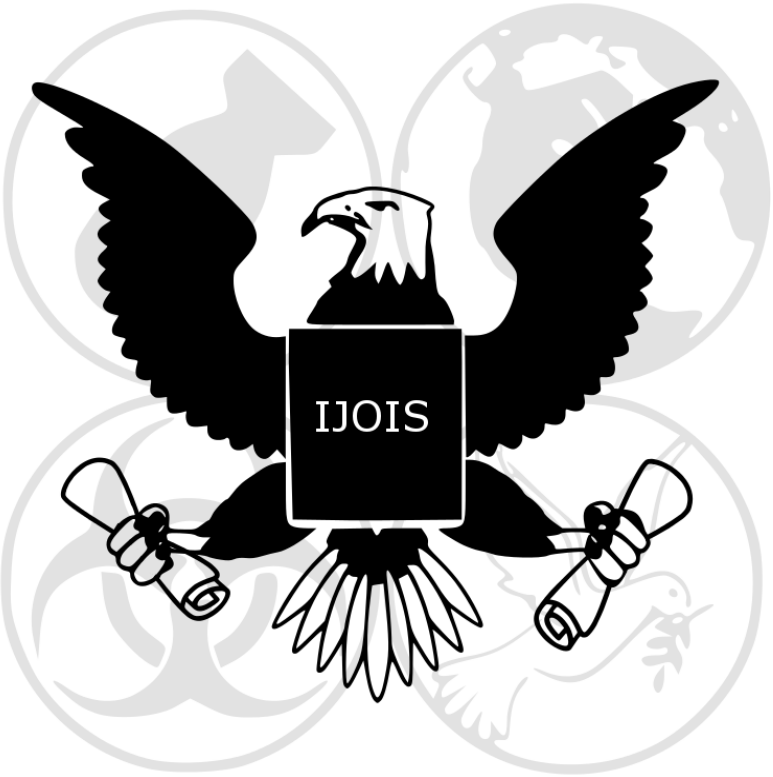

Letter from the editor

Dear reader,

On behalf of the IJOIS Editorial Board, the Program in Arms Control & Domestic and International Security, the University Library, and the supportive academic community of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, we would like to thank you for reading the sixth issue of Illini Journal of International Security (IJOIS)! IJOIS is a peer-reviewed academic journal that was founded in September 2015 by undergraduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We publish exceptional papers on topics within international security or foreign affairs.

For our sixth issue of the journal, we are excited to publish outstanding undergraduate papers that explore some of the most pressing issues within international security and foreign affairs, covering a wide range of topic areas and geographical regions. In "Cultural Insensitivities and Aggravating Factors in Iraq and Afghanistan" Dylan Hyams explores how a lack of cultural training has damaged American relations with local communities in Iraq and Afghanistan. Christopher Mitchell explores the changing nature of the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) from its beginnings to 2019 in his paper "ISIS: The Evolution of a Terrorist State".

Shifting focus, in "Analyzing the Economic Influences on the Evolution of the Russian Military Since 1991" author Philip J. Klafta discusses the development of the Russian military as well as the economic and political factors that influenced these changes. Finally, Vincent Prayugo covers the efficacy of America's nuclear stockpile in the modern era in his paper "The Nuclear Weapons Program of the United States and its Strategic Value in the Twenty-First Century".

These exceptional undergraduate papers present novel arguments on a wide array of issues within international security and foreign affairs. We hope that these papers will challenge and inform our readers, spark discussion, and encourage undergraduate students to explore these pressing issues or pursue international studies further. We hope you enjoy reading!

Jakob Domagala
Editor-in-Chief

About the Illini Journal of International Security

The Illini Journal of International Security (IJOIS) is a peer-reviewed undergraduate academic journal that was founded in September 2015 by undergraduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. IJOIS is published biannually through the University of Illinois Library with the support of the Program of Arms Control & Domestic and International Security (ACDIS) and consists of exceptional undergraduate and graduate papers on topics related to international security or foreign affairs. IJOIS utilizes a cross- disciplinary approach and accepts papers from students studying the social sciences, STEM fields, business and the humanities that analyze international security issues from innovative perspectives. While IJOIS is run by students at UIUC, the Journal accepts submissions from students at all University of Illinois campuses (Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield).

IJOIS Staff

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Cultural Insensitivities and Aggravating Factors in Iraq and Afghanistan

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Abstract

When examining terrorism, you can find many reasons as to why people may resort to such violence; whether they be for financial purposes, religious incentives, revenge, or for the thrill of violence. However, in Western literature one aspect infrequently written about is how cultural insensitivities and other aggravating factors, presented in this paper, contribute to grievances that help solve the collective action problem posed by many organizations. Throughout my paper I introduce flaws in the handling of cultural practices in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, how they have plausible correlation with increased recruitment by extremist organizations, and what the Department of Defense is doing to the promote the elimination of these factors. This paper explores instances of cultural mishandlings and abuse at the arms of United States service members; including Abu Ghraib, U.S. drone strikes, and ground force activities. Using empirical data on the amount of terrorist attacks occurring in Iraq and Afghanistan and the dates of significant military incidents, I try to narrow the gap between grievances and the use of political violence by terrorist organizations. Later, I introduce programs created by the Department of Defense to increase cultural awareness and boundaries of the regions that troops will be deployed to.

Throughout the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has been fighting asymmetric battles against the Taliban, Islamic State, and al-Qaeda. As of 2018, these conflicts have taken the lives of over 475,000 individuals and have turned parts of the Middle East and western Asia into war zones, displacing tens-of-thousands of people (Brown, 2018). Although these conflicts themselves are important, the United States has neglected to significantly train and equip its troops with the necessary cultural training in understanding the various sects and ethnicities within the Middle East, causing greater grievances among the local populations relating to an increase in violence and anti-American rhetoric. This situation allows for non-state actors to gain an upper hand and continue to wage their *jihad* against western influence in the region, giving them a greater ability to use the local populations to their benefit.

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States began its invasion of Afghanistan, nicknamed Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), with the hopes of ousting the Taliban from power for harboring al-Qaeda terrorists, and to remove their influence from the country. In addition to the war in Afghanistan, the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, nicknamed Operation Iraqi Freedom, with over 100,000 troops, officially starting the Iraq War ("U.S.", 2003). The goal of Operation Iraqi Freedom was to topple the Saddam regime and establish a new government. This goal, however, did not foresee the tribal struggle for power after the Saddam regime was toppled, and further drove the country into a cultural sandpit. In both wars, the United States has been reducing its troop presence as the conflicts have been ongoing for almost two decades with moderate success.

This paper will be greatly influenced by the grievance theory, which will help explain the rise of terrorist activity proceeding important events related to the United States and its coalition within Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the grievance theory of terrorism, actors turn to violence due to an event in their life that triggered an emotional response such as sadness, anger, or distress. In their paper, "The Rationality of Radical Islam," Kaltenthaler and Wiktorowicz suggest that grievance theory helps rationalize the actions taken by individuals within a terrorist organization and is an offset of systematic inequality and alienation (2016, p. 297). In order to further support grievance theory explanation and its tie to this paper, different cases backed by statistical data will be presented and elaborated on in order to prove that cultural insensitivity has had a negative impact on local populations and shows correlation with an increase in terrorist activity.

When approaching the Middle Eastern cultures, you cannot use a westernized viewpoint; which characterized the United States' actions early on in the two conflicts and is still going on in some instances today (Lazarus, 2018). The disparity between these two groups of peoples creates more animosity towards the Americans and an increasingly negative image of the military (Gharib, 2009, p. 16). Gharib further elaborates that American service members' lack of cultural preparedness prior to deployment to an Arab region caused "severe mishandling of various incidents" and further demonstrates the crucial need for a stronger sense of cross-cultural [training] for all levels of the military" (2009, p. 16). The cultural insensitivity contributed by the West is not the only act that has caused grievances among the Arab population. Throughout the conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq, American service members have been involved in incidents, controversies, and human rights violations which have greatly contributed to the increase of violence from terrorist organizations.

Within the cultural framework of the Arab community and their interactions with the United States military, there have been many instances in which its forces have unintentionally insulted and humiliated the citizens by disrespecting their cultural norms. When American forces

first entered Iraq, they did so with Kuwaiti translators. This was viewed by many Iraqi's as insulting due to the country's history with Kuwait in the 1990s ("CAAT", 2004). Additionally, US hired translators were often plagued by cultural biases that ran in the opposite direction of military objectives and critically harmed the relationship between the local tribes and US forces. Through this early display of insensitivity by American forces and lack of adequate translators, Iraqi tribal leaders had a negative view of the Western forces occupying their country.

As outlined is the United States Army's Chapter on Civil Military Operations and Cultural Issues in Iraq, they list a few scenarios that have contributed to the increase of anger and distrust with US forces. The first is the detainment of family members of anti-coalition members. The United States response to this was that they hoped the individual whose family was being detained would turn themselves in, however what actually happened was greater distrust among the Iraqi population. In addition to the detainment of family members, American forces would also detain the "women and children [of the family] without due process [which] contribute[d] to a lasting negative image" ("CAAT", 2004). In the Arab household, women and children are seen as a symbol of the man's honor, and taking their family away is seen as dishonoring the man.

In another instance where the family was targeted, Mohamed Ghani gives a personal narrative "of a man he knew whose wife had been searched by American soldiers" (Gharib, 2009, p. 23). Gharib adds that the act shamed the woman's husband and destroyed his honor (2009, p. 23). The issue portrayed in this scenario was that male soldiers would often search the females, as female soldiers were often not in the field. In the Arab culture, touching another man's wife is a sign of disrespect and is highly looked down upon, and in some instances sparks long lasting feuds between families. Some can argue the Americans were doing their job and ensuring their safety, however their insensitivity to the Arab culture cost more than it benefited them by contributing to the local population's rage.

In addition to the above scenarios which question cultural fluidity between the Arab people and the West, mosques were often used as staging areas for militant operations and frequently raided by American soldiers on patrol ("CAAT", 2004). In the Islamic religion, individuals must take their shoes off prior to entering the mosque and leave any weapons outside, as not doing so is considered disrespectful and insulting. This was not followed by the US Army who would enter with their boots on and weapons up ("CAAT", 2004). This sign of cultural ignorance created greater anger among the Arab population due the disrespect and dishonor the American soldiers had brought upon the Muslim peoples.

Further contributing to the rise of grievances among the populations of Iraq and Afghanistan during the wars are additional aggravating factors that created a breeding ground for ideas and helped spread the *jihadist* ideology to a greater populous. Included in these factors are certain acts perpetrated by the US military or a member within its ranks, and consist of unlawful engagements against civilians, prisoner abuse and torture, and collateral damage as a result of targeted strikes on suspected terrorist forces. There is also a positive correlation between an increase of terror attacks and the acts mentioned above, however, no causation could be appropriately concluded from the data.

Coming into the public eye in 2004 were the atrocities that took place among American service members towards prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. Within the compound, Arab prisoners were stripped of their clothes, hooded and "piled on top of each other in a pyramid shape" (Nasr, 2009). The males were additionally forced to touch their genitals on camera, beaten, and dragged around on leashes by female soldiers (Nasr, 2009). In addition to the events at Abu Ghraib, Human Rights Watch reports similar treatment of prisoners have reportedly taken

place in detention centers in Afghanistan at Bagram air field, Kandahar, Jalalabad, and Asadabad (Sifton, 2004). This event significantly harmed relations and public support for the United States in the middle east, and further attributed to the anger of the local populations.

In the Islamic culture, Nasr writes, "the human body is a taboo, a sacred temple that should be covered and respected… exposing the naked body is a sin" (2009). At Abu Ghraib, the soldiers lack of cultural conscientiousness and religious tolerance gave terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and the Taliban greater leverage over the United States with respect to its recruitment campaign. The public outrage at these crimes was significant and spread across the Arab world like a wildfire. When the first images of the abuses leaked out of the prison in 2004, data gathered in Iraq on terrorist attacks significantly increased during the period of 2003 through 2004, from 102 to 323 (Ritchie et al., 2013). Additionally, when the second set of images emerged in 2006, attacks rose from 617 to 838 in Iraq alone (Ritchie et al., 2013). Although correlation does not necessarily mean causation in this case, there was a dramatic jump in the numbers compared to other years observed.

Furthermore, in 2008, a United States airstrike targeted a wedding procession in Haska Meyna, Iraq. After three bombs were dropped, 47 individuals were killed, including 39 women and children (Shah, 2008). According to the deputy chairman of the Senate in Iraq, Burhanullah Shinwari, "[t]hey were all civilians, with no links to al-Qaeda or the Taliban" (Shah, 2008). The indiscriminate targeting of US strikes on the local Iraqi people has caused additional grievances among the population and is also seen as correlation with an increase in violence among terror groups. Following the trend in data, there is a small increase in terror attacks in Iraq from the years 2007 to 2008, with a continued increase through 2009; from 1,047 to 1,106 to 1,137 (Ritchie et al., 2013). The increase shown in those two data points shows a unique correlation between the incident and the increase, however causation cannot be appropriately inferred due to lack of evidence

Much like the earlier scenario of American soldiers entering a mosque with boots and weapons, the defamation of a religious event in the Islamic culture is also a sign of cultural insensitivity within the Iraq war. Throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, religion has played an important role in creating distrust between the Americans and local populations. For example, in Rwaida Gharib's thesis, he describes an unnecessary violence that often took place, writing, "a white flag, which in Western definitions is a means of surrender, led many Marines to assume a black flag was the opposite of surrender. As a result, many Shiites, who traditionally fly black flags at home as a religious symbol" were often labelled as an enemy and shot at (Gharib, 2009, p. 22). This use of unnecessary force gave greater leverage to terrorist organizations in their recruitment by characterizing the American's as enemies who came to occupy their land and tame their people.

The United States coalition has been working on ways of addressing the difference of culture issue presented in the cases earlier in this paper and has implemented new ways to train and equip allied forces to limit the number of incidents. Beginning in early 2005, the Department of Defense initiated a new language training program giving more individuals within the armed forces the skills necessary to "comprehend, read and converse in more world languages" in the hope that the cultural aptitude of the troops would grow (Gharib, 2009, p. 31-32). In 2005, the Marine Corps adopted and has grown a new cultural training plan for the middle east, focusing on "Islam, History, the Arab culture, Cross Cultural Communication and Tactical Application" (Gharib, 2009, p. 31-37). Additionally, prior to deployments, ground forces are able to receive hands-on training in a 'Arab culture simulator' taking place in a mock-up village with actors

pretending to be civilians (Gharib, 2009, p. 37-38). This allows pre-deployment forces to practice different situations they may come across in the field and be evaluated by instructors on their performance and effectiveness in decision making along cultural lines.

Following the start and implementation of the new language and culture program in the Department of Defense (DoD), the United States has yet to witness another incident as damaging as Abu Ghraib, though over the course of the past 15 years, smaller incidents have occurred between American coalition troops and the Iraqi and Afghan populations. However, one can argue that with the rise of the Taliban after 2005 and its reemergence during negotiations in 2019, growth of al-Qaeda, and the emergence of the Islamic State in 2014, it appears the cultural programs initiated by the DoD have not been successful in their mission to eliminate cultural grievances, as there has been a surge of individuals joining these terrorist organizations in an effort to drive out western influence within the region. These programs have provided greater situational awareness among coalition troops and have implanted individuals with added knowledge of culture and language into frontline units, in an attempt to decrease the likelihood of cultural incidents to take place in the future.

Throughout this paper, the impact of cultural differences and insensitivities was discussed and was supplemented by data showing a plausible correlation, but not causation. Cultural differences and insensitivities discussed include lack of knowledge with Islamic practices, cultural taboos associated with the Arab culture, negligent use of translators, and abuses by American soldiers on Iraqi and Afghani prisoners. These differences and insensitivities caused grievances to build and "exacerbate[d] tensions and ha[d] negative consequences" with the local populations (Greene et al., 2011, p. 959). The cases listed in this paper are catalysts for the grievance theory of terrorism, and when looking at yearly statistics of terrorist attacks, there is a significant increase in terrorist attacks around the timeframe of those cases. When looking at the larger picture, these cases could have directly contributed to the failure of the US counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions in Iraq and Afghanistan through increased resistance to Allied forces in the region. As a result, the implementation of a cultural program by the DoD is expected to help reduce incidents revolving around culture and language by providing training to individuals and units who are forward deployed in areas where large amounts of interaction are expected.

This expectation, however, has not been successful on the large scale. According to Gharib, "[t]he evidence in the current training demonstrates that not only are the present systems of training inadequate, but also that the post-op briefing for cultural and language use simply does not exist" (2009, p. 44). Studies suggest that in Iraq, peace-keeping missions have led to an increase in conflict due to coalition forces not being taught "the intricacies of the various cultures and behaviors of" the local population (Gharib, 2009, p. 69). In response, the United States and its coalition partners must revisit their cultural training programs and target specific communities that military units will be deployed to, instead of giving broad-scale training.

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ISIS: The Evolution of a Terrorist State

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Abstract

ISIS has proved to be a persistent threat in recent history by adapting to whatever political situation it finds itself in. While ISIS is often considered a modern terrorist group, its history stretches far back to the Invasion of Iraq and even Arab-Israeli tensions. ISIS took on new roles such as state building and law enforcement, but ultimately was unable to keep up militarily with its state adversaries. While the Caliphate has been destroyed, ISIS will continue to pose a threat if their policy of evolution continues to succeed.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was at one point the most dangerous terrorist organization operating in the Middle East. ISIS evolved from a small band of radical jihadists detained in a Jordanian prison to a terrorist state with territory stretching across several countries. Under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the IS predecessor, Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) played a prominent role in the chaos of the US occupation by upending law and order and stoking sectarian conflict that continues to be a problem today. US forces and tribal groups partnered together in the Anbar Awakening to decimate AQI, but AQI took this opportunity to morph into the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). ISI then evolved into a terrorist army as a result of civil unrest in Syria and rebranded itself as ISIS and then simply IS. The secret to IS success has been blitzkrieg-like tactics, extreme brutality, and capitalizing on social and political cleavages to move between different levels of warfare. While these factors helped IS rise, they also played an important role in the destruction of The Islamic State's caliphate.

ISIS was born in a remote Jordanian prison. Known as Al-Jafr, this high-security prison was set up to contain some of Jordan's most dangerous criminals including Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, the original progenitors of what would become ISIS. Zarqawi, born Ahmad Fadeel al-Nazal al-Khalayleh, of Zarqa was not born a jihadist. His life of crime and subsequent adoption of radical Islamism mirrors that of many future recruits that would come to join him and his terrorist descendants decades later. In his early years, Zarqawi was little more than a petty criminal and street thug (Warrick, 2016, p.49). He is reported to have used drugs and alcohol, and had tattoos, all things strictly prohibited by the Muslim faith. His mother was devoutly religious and pushed him to attend religious classes at the Hussayn ben Ali mosque. After committing to a pious Islamic life, Zarqawi was taken by stories of Islamic warriors around the world and left Jordan to fight in Afghanistan 1989 (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 16). While he did not participate in any fighting because the Soviets pulled out soon after his arrival, he did gain practical experience and contacts. He was also rigorously indoctrinated in the ideology of jihad and salafism. After failing to adjust to normal Jordanian life upon his return, Zarqawi formed his first terrorist group known as Bay'at al-Imam with radical cleric Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi in 1994 (Warrick, 2016, p.55). The group planned to attack an Israeli border post in order to disrupt the Israeli-Jordanian peace process, but was never able to accomplish its mission. Later that year, Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate agents raided the group's hideout and arrested both Zarqawi and Maqdisi. They were both incarcerated in Al-Jafr, but would not remain there long. While in prison, Zarqawi overtook Maqdisi as leader of the group, pushing his brutal agenda to the forefront. When Jordanian King Abdullah II succeeded his father, King Hussein, he proclaimed a general amnesty and Zarqawi was released from prison.

Zarqawi traveled to Pakistan where he slipped across the border into Afghanistan to meet with Osama Bin Laden in 2000. While Al-Qaeda leadership found Zarqawi to be gruff and atypical for an Al-Qaeda recruit, they gave him his own franchise in Herat, western Afghanistan. With money and a camp provided by Al-Qaeda, Zarqawi quickly set up Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (JTJ). The purpose of the JTJ camp was to train foreign fighters who came from Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and beyond. JTJ used connections to the nearby Iranian border to bring these recruits into Afghanistan. Zarqawi was not privy to bin Laden's plans for the September 11th attacks, and may have even been out of the country when they took place, but he was targeted by the United States and Northern Alliance forces during the invasion of Afghanistan. Zarqawi's camp was destroyed in an airstrike while Osama bin Laden fled to the Tora Bora mountains (Warrick, 2016, p.68).

After being injured in Afghanistan, Zarqawi fled with the remnants of JTJ to Iran, where he most likely received medical treatment before moving on to Iraq. Remote northern Iraq gave Zarqawi the perfect haven to rebuild his training camp and prepare to retaliate against the West. Zarqawi's presence in Iraq became the focal point of Colin Powel's 2003 address to the UN security council in which he attempted to make the case that Zarqawi was the link between 9/11 and Saddam Hussein (Warrick, 2016, p.94). Many of these assertions came from unreliable reports and misconstrued intelligence. The CIA repeatedly asked for authority to strike his new training camp and destroy Ansar al-Islam, but was denied, and the Bush administration opted to invade Iraq entirely in 2003 (Warrick, 2016, p.75). This strategy only bolstered radical terrorist groups and destabilized the region leading to what is now known as the Islamic State. US forces quickly dispatched the Iraqi army and soon thereafter captured Saddam Hussein. The United States then pushed Sadaam's Baath party, a predominantly Sunni organization, aside in a policy known as de-baathification. The US authorities also dissolved the Iraqi army and other security forces. This left thousands of well-trained Sunni security and political officials out of power in a majority Shia country and set the stage for a brutal insurgency and an alliance between Zarqawi and disenfranchised Baathists. After the invasion, Iraq was awash with weapons and people willing to use them for two main purposes. The first was to drive out American forces, a goal shared by both Sunni and Shia militants. The second was to engage in sectarian reprisals. Zarqawi displayed an acute knowledge of Iraq's sectarian divides and how to use them to his advantage. He attacked several targets that contributed to triggering a sectarian civil war that the Coalition Provisional Authority was ill equipped to control. Zarqawi earned the nickname "The Sheikh of Slaughters."

Zarqawi's first attack in Iraq was a truck bombing at the Jordanian embassy in Baghdad in 2003. The blast killed eleven people and shook the surrounding neighborhood. It also shook the confidence of Iraqis by proving that the occupation and scant Iraqi security forces were unable to protect them. Zarqawi's second target was the UN headquarters in a Baghdad hotel. A truck with former Iraqi Air Force weapons inside drove straight into the hotel and detonated, killing the UN chief of mission (Warrick, 2016, pp.106-110). This attack crippled the UN's peacebuilding efforts in the area, forced NGOs to evacuate, and further demonstrated the terrorists' ability to strike anywhere they pleased. Zarqawi's brazenness would reach a new high in his third attack in 2003.

On August 29th, 2003, Ayatollah Mohammed Bakir al-Hakim gave a rousing sermon at the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, his hometown. Al-Hakim was a member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SICRI), a prominent Shiite opposition party who lived in exile in Iran before the invasion. Al-Hakim called for unity in a divided Iraq and for the withdrawal of American forces. Al-Hakim was killed in a truck bombing outside the mosque that closely resembled the one used to destroy the UN HQ. The assassination engendered a high degree of mistrust between Shia and Sunni sects, making reconciliation and cooperation nearly impossible (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 28). More importantly, it enraged SICRI's armed wing, the Badr Corps, an Iran backed militia. The Badr corps retaliated against both the Sunni population and American forces with brutal efficiency. Iraq's Shia population and its militias were baited into a horrible overreaction that started a sectarian civil war and created the right conditions for greater regional instability, terrorism, and sectarian warfare.

In 2004, Zarqawi formally pledged *bayat*, or allegiance, to Osama bin Laden, and JTJ became Al-Qaeda in Iraq (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 19). AQI's ranks swelled with foreign fighters and former Baathists looking for revenge. AQI only comprised 14% of fighters in Iraq,

but was by far one of the most intense terrorist groups in Iraq, carrying out over 42% of suicide bombings (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 28). In 2005, AQI massacred Shias and Americans, causing reprisals that ultimately kept Sunnis from going to the polls, with as little as 1% voting in some provinces (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 42). This further isolated them from the government and made them more resentful. In 2006, AQI bombed the Samarra mosque and kicked off a period of brutal Shia reprisals led by the Iraqi government and Popular Mobilization Forces (Warrick, 2016, p. 203). AQI forces soon took control of territory outside of Ramadi and Fallujah. AQI also co-opted state institutions like customs agencies to do its bidding, such as preventing supplies for the Coalition from crossing in from Jordan (Warrick, 2016, p.208). While not on the same level as ISIS, this period was a bloody harbinger of what the next decade would bring.

Later in 2006, AQI began to wear out its welcome with the Sunni tribes. Long periods of bloodshed and suffocating AQI rule turned the tribes back towards the central government and US forces. Tribal leaders grew tired of AQI's imposition of strict Islamic codes and their own loss of control. Nighttime vigilantes began hunting AQI members, seeking revenge for their family members who had been raped or murdered (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 69). US forces seized the opportunity to build trust with the tribes who ultimately partnered with the government out of self-interest. Tribal leaders formed emergency councils and hundreds of Sunni tribesmen joined the Iraqi police. This movement came to be known as the Anbar Awakening (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 220). Alongside the Awakening, the Bush administration deployed 30,000 new troops to Iraq who were tasked with hunting AQI, territorial control, and keeping Shia and Sunni forces apart long enough for political concessions to be made. US forces were also deployed into Iraq's troubled cities that had become havens for extremists. In Baghdad, US forces erected large walls to keep different religious and political groups apart and minimize their chances of direct conflict.

A major breakthrough happened in June 2006. US surveillance aircraft tracked Zarqawi's religious advisor to the town of Hibhib where they spotted Zarqawi. Zarqawi's hideout was struck by two bombs dropped from an F-16. US Delta Force troops arrived twenty minutes later to confirm that Zarqawi had been killed (Warrick, 2016, pp. 216-217). Without him, AQI declined rapidly as US and Iraqi forces retook control of the country with the help of local militias.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq underestimated the resolve and religious fervor of Iraq's Sunni tribes. The tribe's main gripe was political rather than religious. Tribal leaders and former Baathists accepted AQI as a means to restore their power rather than establish an Islamic state. Sunnis had the same enemy as AQI, naturally making them effective partners, but AQI failed to see the nuance of this newfound relationship. AQI's extreme interpretation of Islam and predatory nature eventually wore out its credibility so much that the tribes chose cooperation with the government and US over AQI. American forces recognized this and ensured that Sunni tribes played a central role in defeating AQI and securing Iraq. Unfortunately, the Shia dominated government continued to abuse the tribes after the Anbar Awakening, thus ensuring that when ISIS came to power the tribes would not partner with the Iraqi government to fight them.

New leaders, al-Masri and Abu Omar al-Bhagdadi renamed AQI as the Islamic State in Iraq and took the group underground. In 2010, a US raid killed them both (Warrick, 2016, p.250). After their deaths, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was proclaimed as the new emir of ISI. Baghdadi was nothing like his predecessor, Zarqawi. Baghdadi received both a masters and doctorate in Islamic studies from the University of Islamic Science, in stark contrast to the high school dropout Zarqawi (Warrick, 2016, p.117). Those who met Baghdadi before he became

caliph have described him as shy and demure. After his university mentor returned from fighting in Afghanistan, he became more radical and adopted Salafism. After the US invasion, Baghdadi formed an Islamist organization, but was detained by US forces in Camp Bucca before he could do anything. Camp Bucca did far more to foster his jihadism than deter it.

Camp Bucca and other detention centers were havens that allowed radical ideology to fester. Thousands of Iraqi men suspected of extremism were detained in Camp Bucca. At the height of Camp Bucca operations, there were 24,000 prisoners detained at once for a grand total of 100,000 total detainees in its lifetime (McCoy, 2014). People who were already violent extremists met others with their same violent depredations and forged new networks for when they were released. Bomb makers, soldiers, and terrorist leaders were all detained within the same facility, and those not already indoctrinated were at the mercy of the zealots in the bed next door. Camp Bucca was such an effective tool for jihadists that they deliberately tried to be sent there (Warrick, 2016, p. 82). Former IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was detained there for several years. He was reportedly viewed as a peacemaker and allowed to roam the prison nearly at will. This allowed him to forge new contacts in ISI that would eventually propel him to the position of caliph (Warrick, 2016, p. 258-259). Camp Bucca and other facilities like Abu Ghraib would not only radicalize the detainees but also Muslim populations around the world. US military prisons engendered a greater sense of moral outrage for years to come. ISIS and its predecessors would make a point of attacking prisons, freeing detained comrades, and executing detained Shias in the future. ISI propaganda would continuously emphasize the prison experience with those being executed wearing similar orange jumpsuits to those worn in US military prisons. In 2004, an American named Nick Berg, wearing an orange jumpsuit, was brutally beheaded, likely by Zarqawi himself, on camera (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 30). ISIS would repeat this ritual with similar jumpsuits and a black clad executioner with a British accent known as "Jihadi John." US prisons did far more to promote jihadism than stop it and proved to be a major propaganda victory for extremists.

In May 2011, reform protests began in Syria. At first, protests were largely peaceful, but President Assad sought to discredit them. Assad released a number of dangerous al-Qaeda terrorists from jail to make it seem as though this was a terrorist uprising rather than a popular groundswell (Warrick, 2016, p.243). In December of the same year, the last of US forces evacuated Iraq. The instability of the greater Middle East, Syria, and the absence of US forces in Iraq created the perfect opportunity for the severely weakened ISI to return to power. Bhagdadi dispatched a small detachment, as few as eight men, to make contact with other extremist forces in Syria and gain new recruits (Warrick, 2016, p. 251). The extremists released by Assad became key new members of Bhagdadi's expeditionary force. By 2012, this group came to be known as Jabhat al-Nusra, an affiliate of Al-Qaeda (Warrick, 2016, p. 267). Al-Nusra began by fighting the regime and taking control over areas where government forces fled (Warrick, 2016, p. 275). Al-Nusra was composed of experienced fighters and enjoyed both military success and support from anti-Assad civilians. In April 2013, Bhagdadi announced that ISI would envelop Al-Nusra to form the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. This immediately provoked a negative reaction from Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who rebuked Baghdadi for announcing a merger without prior approval. Several months later, after denying an order to submit to Zawahiri, ISIS was officially kicked out of Al-Qaeda (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 196). Thousands of fighters from Al-Nusra and other jihadist organizations streamed into ISIS ranks. Rather than crippling or delegitimizing it, this strengthened it, representing a new generation of jihadism that was much more grotesque than its predecessors.

One of ISIS's first operations was to free prisoners from facilities across Iraq, giving it a new force of experienced troops. ISIS quickly moved to fill the void left by Syrian government troops and seized a number of cities in the short span of a few months. By the end of 2013, ISIS forces were taking control of Ramadi, their former capital, and Fallujah. ISIS also took control of the border highway in Iraq that would allow them access to Syria. In April of 2013, ISIS took control of Raqqa, Syria, where it would declare its capital (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 182). In June, ISIS forces converged on Mosul with little more than light weapons and pickup trucks. Within three days, ISIS took full control of the city after Iraqi forces fled. The lack of discipline and widespread corruption in Iraq's military led to it buckling under the brutality of ISIS. For years, soldiers were simply bribing their commanders to allow them to go home where they still collected a wage (BBC, 2014). ISIS not only took control of Iraq's second largest city, it also took control of a massive arsenal. Mosul was well stocked with heavy weapons ranging from T-72 tanks to stinger anti-aircraft missiles and HJ-8 anti-tank missiles (Bender, 2014). In the span of just two years, ISIS evolved from a battered jihadist group to a full-fledged state with a military comparable to a small country. These military successes were key for acquiring new recruits, and by 2015 over 30,000 people from 85 countries were fighting for the caliphate (Picker, 2016). This demonstrated a clear evolution from a covert jihadist organization to one capable of fighting on both conventional and guerrilla plains. While this allowed ISIS to graduate from a guerilla force it also made them a significantly larger target.

After taking control of Mosul, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi officially declared the creation of the caliphate that would now be known as the Islamic State (IS). Like any state, IS had a government, sources of income, public services, and security forces. Initially, IS governance was welcomed in some areas of Syria where the FSA was viewed as corrupt and inept. ISIS settled disputes and ensured basic public services such as garbage collection continued in the absence of the Syrian regime. IS also provided for schools and the upkeep of public spaces. For some communities, IS was their best option (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 164). Satellite data shows that economic development took place under IS rule with expanded markets and more street traffic in Mosul (Robinson et al., 2018). IS was also able to control power and route it to important buildings like hospitals, but failed to provide effective electricity to most of its territory.

This thin veneer of Islamic virtue would only last so long. IS soon implemented Sharia law and a set of harsh hudud punishments. Men were required to grow beards and women were forced to wear conservative outfits that covered them from head to toe. Public beheadings and floggings were carried out in city centers across the caliphate (Warrick, 2016, pp. 287-289). Stadiums were transformed into prisons and torture facilities where crimes as small as theft or smoking were potentially punishable by amputation or death (Malsin, 2017). Homosexuality was punished by being thrown off of a roof. IS also used other barbaric punishments such as crucifixion. These punishments terrified the West and kept IS subjects in line. IS created a variety of security forces and institutions to oversee the implementation of its version of Sharia. IS set up their own version of police that enforced religious laws and IS control. IS also created Al-Khansa brigades of female police, tasked with enforcing Sharia law on women (Kafanov, 2016). There was also an FBI-like force known as the Amniyat that was responsible for counter espionage and intelligence gathering (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, p. 211). IS also set up Sharia courts to settle disputes and mete out punishments on its subjects. IS then moved to settle scores in Iraq. IS assassins and suicide bombers killed several of the tribal leaders who participated in the Anbar Awakening. IS recruited from the local tribes and then forced its new recruits to execute their resistant relatives (Weiss & Hassan, 2015, pp. 205-206). This meant that tribes

would be divided under IS rule and unable to effectively fight back. Through security forces and divide and rule tactics, IS solidified its rule against any Anbar Awakening type of uprising.

Funding such a massive operation with thousands of foreign fighters and state functions took a large economic effort. IS primarily funded itself in three ways: taxes and fines, oil, and the sale of seized goods and people. IS controlled large oil fields in Deir Ezzor that it used to keep its military functioning. IS also sold oil from these fields to foreign and black market buyers. Between 2014 and 2015, IS brought in over 450 million dollars in oil revenue that primarily benefited the organization's top leadership (Hoffman et al., 2016). Despite having control over power production and oil fields, satellite data shows that over 60% of all buildings across all of IS territory went without power (Robinson et al., 2018). People living in IS territory were also subject to hefty fines and taxation. Every shop and salary under IS jurisdiction could be taxed up to 50% in a taxation scheme known as Zakat (Robinson et al., 2018). In traditional Islam, Zakat is the act of giving alms that all Muslims are required to do. By naming taxation after this pillar of Islam, IS aimed to grant greater religious legitimacy to its policy that resembled robbery more than charity. Some government workers were still receiving their wages while under IS occupation, forcing the Iraqi government to cut them off (Robinson et al., 2018). This kept IS well supplied but also drove a wedge between IS and local populations. Finally, IS trafficked both stolen goods and people, predominantly women. Any valuables or non-Muslim women that IS came across were taken by the group and auctioned off in markets. IS fighters were allowed to buy goods at reduced prices and sex slaves for less than $200 (Arraf, 2019). IS's strict control over all economic activity in its territory allowed it to generate funding that allows it to continue its terror today. When IS became hard pressed to maintain its forces, its economic control crushed local economies and made it hard to gain the population's support.

The employment of propaganda has been important for all terrorist organizations, especially IS. Since the times of AQI, propaganda has placed violence and other atrocities mixed with religious undertones at the forefront. Many videos have prominently shown IS fighters in combat in action movie like productions. Others show joyous fighters waving flags or driving armored vehicles around in celebration. These videos are not only meant to showcase the glory of fighting for IS but also the excitement of it, likening real war to that of Call of Duty and other video games with which many youths are familiar. IS specifically tailored its propaganda to appeal to disenfranchised Muslim youths in Europe and America that are familiar with gang crime and inner city life (Burke, 2017). IS skillfully used numerous social media accounts on sites like Twitter to publish propaganda, directly reach out to new recruits, and even solicit donations. While IS operatives encouraged people to come to the caliphate, they also encouraged them to take action in their own home territory if they were unable to join them in Syria and Iraq. The vast majority of attacks in western Europe and nearly all attacks in North America were inspired through IS outreach in some manner (Lister, 2018). IS also made sure to include women and sex slavery in their propaganda. This also served to attract young recruits with the allure of sexual exploits that were not just allowed, but encouraged by IS ideology (Ali, 2020). IS propaganda was key to attracting new recruits and allowing IS to strike deep into Western territory without having to use much of its own resources.

IS maintains that it has control over a range of provinces or "wilayat." These provinces mostly came about as a result of other Islamist groups pledging allegiance to Baghdadi. IS has provinces in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Somalia, Chechnya, Nigeria, Libya, and Tunisia. These groups became emboldened by the military success of IS, but all have so far failed to recreate it. Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines have come the closest

so far. Boko Haram has controlled small amounts of territory in Nigeria, but was ultimately driven back into the forests by the Nigeria military. The Abu Sayyaf captured the city of Marawi in May of 2017 proclaiming it as part of the caliphate. After several hard months of fighting, the Phillipine military pushed them out of the city at a great cost (SCMP, 2018). While these provinces are not true extensions of IS in Iraq and Syria, they still pose a threat as havens for Islamist extremism. They also demonstrate the appeal of IS' success. Extremist groups that have previously had trouble gaining notability or success grafted themselves on the IS brand to raise their profile and embolden their followers. These groups may now provide safe harbor for dangerous IS fighters fleeing Syria and Iraq, making these IS suspects harder to capture.

IS caught the attention of the world when it took control of Mosul, but when it began advancing towards the Kurdish capital of Erbil and Baghdad the international community took action. The US formed a coalition of Western and Middle Eastern nations to begin striking IS targets and supporting local forces like the Peshmerga and Syrian Democratic Forces. In August of 2014, US Navy fighter jets struck IS artillery positions and convoys in Iraq (Roberts & Ackerman, 2014). Strikes continued to intensify, and by mid 2015, US forces claimed to have destroyed over 16,000 IS targets (@CJTFOIR, 2015). However, The US led coalition would not have been able to defeat IS without the cooperation of local forces who fought on the ground.

Iraqi and Peshmerga forces worked together to push IS out of Iraq. By December2015, Iraqi forces reclaimed Ramadi less than a year after it was lost. In June of 2016, Fallujah was also liberated from IS control. In October, Syrian forces captured Dabiq and struck a major blow to IS ideology and propaganda. Without Dabiq, IS could no longer claim to be bringing about the end times prophesied in the Hadith. Later, in October, Iraqi forces began their push towards Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. The battle for Mosul took several months and countless lives. Iraqi and Kurdish forces began by liberating outlying minority villages, and then moved into the city, they were met by heavy resistance. Building to building fighting lasted for months until IS forces made their final stand in Mosul's old city and Al-Nuri Mosque. In July of 2017, Iraqi forces took full control of the city effectively ending the IS caliphate in Iraq (Wilson Center, 2019). The Iraqi military benefitted from having support from several well organized fighting groups that included the Kurdish Peshmerga and Iranian backed Popular Mobilization Forces that helped to retake territory along with US air cover. In October 2017, SDF and US forces captured the Deir Ezzor oil fields and Raqqa from IS. Fighting against IS in Raqqa was heavy and required the extensive use of air strikes and artillery, thus effectively leveling the city (Malsin, 2017). Raqqa was not retaken by government forces, but by Syrian Democratic Forces, a coalition led by Kurds but comprising many different militant groups. In the final days of the battle, local IS fighters struck a deal with the SDF so that they and their families would be allowed safe passage out of the city. This deal specifically excluded foreign IS fighters who were left in the city for American and SDF forces to eliminate (France24, 2017). By November, Iraqi and Syrian forces officially declared that they defeated IS in their territories. In February 2019, SDF forces encircled the last remnants of the caliphate in Baghouz and finally destroyed them (Wilson Center, 2019). In the dark of night on October 26th, 2019, an American assault force of Delta Force operators descended on a compound in northern Syria. Intelligence from Baghdadi's security advisor, including DNA, was used to confirm his presence. One of Baghdadi's captured wives as well as Kurdish and Iraqi intelligence units made substantial contributions to the raid. Upon entering the compound, they discovered Abu Bakr al-Bhagdadi and pursued him into an underground tunnel where he detonated a suicide vest, killing him and two of his children (Walcott, 2019). While his death and the destruction of the caliphate are major milestones, the

fight against IS is far from finished. IS has continued to conduct terrorist attacks from hiding places in the desert just as it did after the Anbar Awakening.

The Islamic State was clearly not the junior varsity team President Obama joked about. It successfully cultivated a large group of fighters and evolved into a state-like organization. For a time, things were going well for IS. As IS evolved from a covert group to an overt one, the challenges it faced changed and multiplied. IS may have had tanks and even some surface to air missiles which allowed them to effectively fight weakened Syrian and Iraqi armies, but IS lacked the training and equipment to combat their more powerful patrons like the United States. US airstrikes were able to easily destroy the Islamic State's military forces. Where the US deployed advanced fighter aircraft, IS could only deploy store bought drones; there was simply no contest. Terrorist groups can only evolve so much in the modern age in comparison to professional militaries. IS may have been one of the world's most powerful terrorist organizations, but when compared to professional state armies, it failed to measure up to its adversaries. Just as it failed to measure up in military terms, it also failed to function like a proper government. In the beginning, IS tried to effectively carry out state functions like running schools and public utilities, but this did not last long. IS was responsible for millions of people, but as the war went on they provided less and less for them while taking more and more. IS was unable to properly attend to the needs of a civilian population and fight a war at the same time. IS oppressed its population in an effort to command compliance rather than win hearts and minds in the interest of popular legitimacy. After IS took control of territory, it continued to function like a hostile occupation rather than a government acting in the interests of its people. IS lacked the true support structure and legitimacy of a real state, undermining their ability to rally subjects to its aid at critical moments. IS may have developed an army and administered territory, but it never truly became a state, much less a nation. IS clearly failed to learn that winning hearts and minds are important to a war effort and state formation.

It is important to understand how the Islamic State adapts both its form and ideology to best suit its circumstances. When Syria fell into chaos, IS capitalized on the situation to capture territory and equipment. They then seized on cracks in Iraq's security structure to do the same there. When coalition forces beat IS back, it did not implode, but moved to a lower and more covert form of warfare. This allows it to evade its adversaries, continue fighting, and regroup. IS did this in the past after the Anbar Awakening and came back stronger than ever, a distinct possibility for the future. IS also manipulates its religious ideology to reflect its material realities. IS leaders now claim that the loss of the caliphate is not a result of their failings, but a test from Allah. This allows it to retain its more religiously inclined followers and remain ideologically relevant. Not everyone believes this, and a small portion of former IS members believe the caliphate was destroyed after falling out of Allah's favor as a result of its extreme brutality (Bunzel, 2019). While IS might try, its perverse ideology only convinces a minority of Muslims. IS is battered, but it is not completely defeated, and as long as it can continue to evolve to effectively match its circumstances, it will continue to pose a threat to the world.

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Analyzing the Economic Influences on the Evolution of the Russian Military Since 1991

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Abstract

In this paper, I will discuss the development of the Russian military from its weakened state of the early 1990's to its current role as an international actor in the Middle East, specifically Syria, and will examine the economic conditions, policies, and developments that have influenced its growth and evolution. I will begin by discussing how the political and economic conditions of the early 1990's contributed to a weak and unorganized military in immediate post-Soviet Russia and will continue to talk about how specific policies and world oil prices contributed to an economic revival. I will conclude by examining how the Russian military industrial complex has influenced its current involvement in Syria and will argue that there is a strong and clear correlation between the economic success in Russia and its military strength.

The 1990's: Weak and Incapable

Beginning in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union and throughout the rest of the 1990's, Russia maintained a weak and largely incapable military that resulted from a deficient inheritance from the USSR, economic catastrophe, and lack of political support for reform. First, the military forces that Russia received from the former Soviet Union were fractured and outdated. The former Soviet Union strategically placed its most updated and best equipped units and bases on the southern and western borders. However, with the break-up of the USSR, these bases, equipment, and sometimes even soldiers became aligned with their newly independent national governments (Odom, 1998). Further, after losing a valuable portion of their armed forces to the surrounding states, Russia was still averse to revamp their military due to Borris Yelstin's fear of a political overthrow. As a result, he purposefully fragmented the Russian Army in an effort to weaken the possibility of a threat to his administration and further reinforced specific aspects of the armed forces that he found particularly dedicated to his cause (Renz, 2018).

Second, there was a lack of political incentive to revamp the military. This is because the government believed that the existing army was capable of dealing with the small ethnic conflicts it was currently engaged in and that there was no significant threat from the West due to the resolution of the Cold War (Renz, 2018). Further, the government believed that Russia's sheer size and nuclear stockpile would be enough to deter an invasion by any other country. The combination of these two factors contributed to a sense of contentment with their existing forces and provided the government little to no reason to update the military.

Lastly, the poor economic status of the country throughout the 1990's left the administration incapable of any type of military reform because it was focused entirely on attempting to prevent the nation's economy from collapsing. From 1991-1998, Russian Real GDP decreased by nearly 30%, $150 billion worth of assets left the country, and foreign direct investments decreased dramatically (Cooper, 2009). While some scholars argue that this economic catastrophe was the product of political change and the adjustment to a capitalist style market, the World Bank claims that the economic success of a country in transition is largely dependent on the policies enacted by the government and economic stability is very possible post transition (Bar et al., 1996). Thus, with the government focusing on trying to save the economy, there was no room left for military reform.

The 2000's: Economic Revival

Russia's economic revival of the early 2000's can largely be credited to Putin's economic policy changes and Russia's reintegration into the world trading market. This economic reform allowed the military to make its necessary developments in 2008.

First, in 1998, after years of failed economic reform, Russia was forced to devalue its currency, the rubble, and default on its debts. The same year, according to the Levada Center, the government received its lowest score in the last twenty years where 82% of Russians believed that Russia was headed down the wrong track and could be headed towards a "dead end". While this is something that Russia undoubtedly wanted to avoid, the devaluation of the rubble forced Russia to focus on the domestic production of many goods. This led to an increase in exports relative to imports and helped balance out the trade deficit. Further, in 1999 consumer prices increased at a quarter of the rate than the year before, and for the first time, a sign of economic optimism emerged (Chiodo & Owyang, 2002).

Second, a series of economic policies put in place by President Putin increased tax revenue, created a more business friendly economy, and created a reserve that was used to finance the countries deficits. When Putin took over as acting president in 2000, the largest and most daunting task he faced was trying to rebuild the Russian economy. One of the steps he took was consolidating the taxing system. Before Putin, many local and state taxes overlapped and were trying to generate revenue from the same sources. This caused many Russians to avoid paying taxes and risk getting caught or underreporting economic activity and not pay the full amount they should have (Cooper, 2009). Businesses also faced similarly conflicting regulations and inspections which decreased profitability and incentives to new business development. According to Cooper, Putin responded to this by eliminating the majority of these laws in an effort to create a more business friendly economy (2009). Regarding important economic policy changes, in 2004 the Russian government created a reserve system that saved revenue from oil sales every time the price per barrel reached over $20 USD. This policy was put in place to have a cushion in case the price ever dipped below $20/barrel. However, in 2008 the fund had over $225B which the government used to pay off its budget deficits and international debt. This created financial freedom the country hadn't seen in decades and was crucial for upcoming military reform.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, was the increase in the international price of oil and natural resources. Russia is one of the largest exporters of oil and natural gas in the world and the health and stability of their economy is often reflected in the changing world price of oil. Cooper found that by 2007, oil, natural gas, and coal made up 65% of the country's exports. Further, the high cost of oil, in addition to the taxes Russia placed on its sale, contributed greatly to Russia's ability to have a fiscal surplus equivalent to 4.6% of GDP. More so, Russia's exports increased 525% from 1999 to 2008 and imports increased 640% over the same time frame and this drastic growth gave Russia a trade surplus that was roughly equal to $180B USD (2009).

The economic revival that Russia underwent during the first decade of the twenty-first century laid the groundwork that allowed for military reform in 2008 and played a significant role in the development of Russia as an international player.

Georgian War: The Effects

As stated earlier, the program reform that was announced in 2008 would not have been possible without the economic revival of the 2000s. In 2008, Russia engaged in a conflict with Georgia that lasted only five days and resulted in a quick victory. However, despite the brief and successful conflict, this war highlighted the need for military reform and sparked armed forces policy change from the Russian government. As a result, the war with Georgia in 2008 led to personnel, structural, and technological changes within the Russian armed forces.

First, the war in 2008 highlighted the army's cumbersomeness and led to reforms that increased efficiency and professionalism of all its soldiers. In attempts to increase the efficiency, the army decreased the number of officers and soldiers it retained and attempted to restructure its army toward a permanent readiness status (Lavrov, 2018). Further, Lavrov found that "Russia aimed to abandon a Soviet-style army with a large number of understaffed "skeleton" military units for a smaller but more mobile army which theoretically remains at a high level of permanent readiness" (2018, p. 2). The "skeleton system" Lavrov mentions was a strategy that Russia embraced where units placed in strategic areas only consisted of officers but was ready to be filled by conscripts or reserves. This method proved inefficient and expensive and was one of the top priorities of the 2008 reform.

Second, the Georgian war highlighted the need for updated technology and modernization of equipment. The reform of the late 2000's consequently and successfully modernized the vehicles, tactics and weaponry in almost every branch of the armed forces. Most notably, the Russian air force received the largest share of the funding and received 500 new combat aircraft and 500 new helicopters (Lavrov, 2018). Further, the navy, which was already large in size, was able to develop new, non-nuclear missiles and long-range weapons. Finally, the army created a program to create a more functional UAV drone, or unmanned aerial vehicle, but when this program ultimately proved to be unsuccessful they began purchasing drones from foreign governments. However, the success of this modernization has to be taken with a grain of salt. According to Renz,

"In absolute terms, Russian Military hardware today is incomparably more modern and technologically advanced than it was during the 1990s and 2000s. In relative terms however, the Russian armed forces are still a long way off achieving parity with the technologically advanced militaries in the west and the United States in particular." (p.79)

This is largely because when the air force and army received "new" vehicles, they were updated versions of older models and not the development of new technologies. Nonetheless, the Russian armed forces became more efficient, better equipped, and more prepared for a role as an international actor.

Military Industrial Complex

The Russian defense industry has become vital to the Russian economy because of the jobs it provides and the contributions it makes to national exports through arms sales. The military industrial complex, or MIC, is the mutually beneficial relationship between the defense sector and the country's military, with a focus on the economic benefit a country can receive from the production of military goods. The defense sector in Russia since the late 2000's has become more and more integrated into the success of the economy and much like the size of the army in the early 1990's, has become too large.

The Russian MIC currently employs around 2 million people (around 1.4% of the population) and accounts for 25% of mechanical engineering production. Regarding the final product, 33% of the goods produced are used domestically, 45% are used militarily, and the remaining 22% are sold internationally (Balashov & Martianova, 2016). As a result, the employment that the MIC provides and the goods that it produces, promotes consumption and stimulates short term economic growth. Further, compared to the rest of the world, according to The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Russia ranks second in global arms sales by revenue at $6.4B which accounted for 21% of total global arms sales in 2016 and since 2008, they have sold weapons or military goods to seventy-three different countries.

Balashov and Martianova (2016) argue that the military industrial complex, in Russia specifically, becomes problematic to economic success because the Russian government has allocated funds to many different firms who are assigned to similar contracts. This leads to unnecessary costs and high levels of inefficiency. Further, much of the money spent on the production of weapons for exports is spent on updating Soviet era technologies instead of developing new technological advancements which only spurs short term economic growth and hinders long term growth due to the lack of investments. Similar to the military reform of 2008, the defense industry in Russia needs to undergo reform to consolidate and become more efficient. Finally, the MIC is problematic because a country's economic stability can become

fundamentally based around the need to finance conflict, which becomes apparent when analyzing the Russia-Syria relationship.

Russian Economic Interests in Syria

After the 2008 revival of the Russian economy and modernization of their armed forces Russia was again able to reenter the Middle East as a global actor after decades of sitting on the sidelines. By undoubtedly saving Bashar Al-Assad's regime from overthrow, Russia was able to secure its role in the Middle East as a major player both financially and politically. While there are many contributing factors to Russia's decision to intervene in the Syrian civil war, including geopolitics and an attempt to capitalize on the United States' declining interest in the Middle East, Russia had a vested economic interest in both Syria and the rest of the region.

First, Russia's intervention in the Syrian civil war was an attempt to protect a political and financial asset in Syria. The Soviet Union has been selling Syria weapons since the 1970's but since 2000, there has been a significant increase in Russian military sales to Syria. From 2000-2010, Russia has sold a cumulative $1.5 billion worth of weapons, tanks, aircrafts, naval vehicles, and ammunition to Syria which at the time made up for 10% of Russia's total arms sales (Gaplin, 2012). As a result, the Syrian government would have been a costly importer to lose if the United States-backed rebel groups were successful in toppling the Assad regime.

However, more than protecting an arms importer, Russia was able to secure a role as a major actor in the Middle East again. Dating as far back as the Russo-Turkish wars, but especially since the end of WWII, the Middle East has been a major part of Soviet foreign policy and as a result, Russia's lack of engagement in the region after the collapse of the USSR marked a break in involvement that the region hadn't seen in decades. In 2015 when US interest in the region was waning, Russia stepped into Syria, changed the tide of the civil war, and subsequently embedded itself financially and politically in the region. According to Reumer (2019) of the Carnegie Endowment, through the victory in Syria, Russia was able to prove to other Middle Eastern countries (and the West) that they were a valuable ally in an unstable region. In this new political landscape, Russia was able to calm years of disagreements with Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the two were able to conceive a mutually beneficial relationship in which both countries coordinated their oil policies. This was both a major financial and political success for Russia because it created an ally with the second largest oil producer and also because it allowed for an opportunity to increase its representation in an increasingly Middle East without the US. Additionally, now as one of the most secure economies in the region, Russia has been able to financially expand themselves through increases in arms trades and investments into gas and oil with the surrounding countries. According to the SIPRI, Russia has increased its arms exports into the Middle East by 19% since 2009-2013 including a 750% increase to Iraq and 150% to Egypt.

Conclusion

Since its formation at the beginning of the 1990's there has been a clear correlation between the strength of the Russian economy and its global military presence. Starting with the collapse of the Soviet Union both the Russian military and economy were shells of its Soviet counterpart during the height of the Cold War. However, under Putin's administration a dramatic shift in the economic strength combined with an updated and revamped military set the stage perfectly for Russia to regain its status as a major global power in the Middle East. Russia's

vested interest and economic dependence on the global oil market and defense sector production clearly lends itself to the involvement in military operations.

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The Nuclear Weapons Program of the United States and its Strategic Value in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

The United States' nuclear stockpile has been a contentious issue with regards to its size and active deployment since the end of the Cold War. However, nuclear deterrence is still necessary and a crucial factor in safeguarding the security of the United States from foreign threats and preventing nuclear proliferation in other states. The extension of the United States' nuclear umbrella to its allies also strengthens their allegiance and discourages rivals from committing acts of aggression. Aside from nuclear weapons deployment, the United States should modernize its nuclear stockpile and upgrade its delivery systems and retrofit them with new advanced technology – improving reliability and accuracy. These measures should be taken to fulfil national security priorities of the United States and its allies in the twenty-first century.

Since the end of the Cold War, there have been increasing calls to denuclearize the United States by anti-nuclear groups, such as Physicians for Social Responsibility and Greenpeace. Proponents of denuclearization suggest nuclear weapons increase the risk of international conflict, claiming the size of the United States' nuclear arsenal hinders non-proliferation efforts in foreign countries. However, recent nuclear tests in North Korea and the existence of unstable regimes, such as Iran and Pakistan, can undermine international peace and threaten regional or global nuclear war if they have access to nuclear weapons. These realities preserve the relevance of maintaining a nuclear arsenal for the United States to contain the threat of nuclear proliferation and the outbreak of international conflicts across the globe. During the Cold War, the presence of a large nuclear arsenal between the United States and the Soviet Union along with the extension of the United States' nuclear umbrella successfully prevented World War III. While the presence of nuclear weapons created extreme tension between the two superpowers, the fear of a global nuclear war pressured both sides to solve their differences through diplomacy. Thus, nuclear weapons are vital in protecting national security interests of the United States and maintaining global peace through nuclear deterrence and non-proliferation due to their strategic capabilities and the absence of alternatives.

Current US Nuclear Stockpile and Modernization Efforts

Currently, the United States still maintains one of the largest nuclear arsenals in the world with a total of 6,185 warheads, 1,750 of which are deployed and 2,050 warheads in storage as of 2019 (Kristensen & Norris, 2019). The United States also operates 400 Minuteman III Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), Trident II Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM), 44 operational B-52H Stratofortress, and 16 B-2A Spirit bombers to deliver nuclear warheads in the case of war (Kristensen & Norris, 2019). Under the New START (New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), which began in 2011, the United States and Russia are obligated to report their nuclear launchers inventory every six months with the end goal of reducing both parties' nuclear missile launchers by half in 2021, translating to 700 launchers for both parties. The Treaty also requires participants to limit deployed warheads to a maximum of 1,550. With these reductions, the Department of Defense (DoD) plans to close down 104 empty ICBM silos, mostly in Montana and Wyoming (Kristensen & Norris, 2015).

Aside from reducing the current stockpile to adhere to New START, the United States is planning to spend a trillion dollars over thirty years to maintain and modernize its nuclear arsenal and launchers to increase combat readiness and strategic capabilities (Doyle, 2016). This plan includes designing a new class of nuclear-powered ballistic submarine (SSBN), the Columbia-class, a nuclear-capable long-range bomber, the B-21 Raider, and Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM), which is currently designated as Long-Range Stand-off Weapon (LRSO). An LRSO is designed to be a cruise missile capable of being armed with the W88 nuclear warhead. The proposed design for the Columbia-class submarine will contain sixteen launch tubes, instead of the current twenty-four in Ohio-class submarines. This is done as part of a cost-saving effort and compliance with New START. As a stop-gap measure, the B-21 Raider will be equipped with the current B61-12 guided nuclear bomb before the new LRSO missile begins production (Doyle, 2016).

The DoD is also upgrading all of the fuses for submarine launched W76-1/Mk4A warheads with a "super-fuse", increasing its accuracy and lethality by roughly a factor of three. The main advantage provided by the new fuse allows the warheads to detonate on a flexible

height above its target, instead of a fixed height on the older fuse, within the lethal volume of the target (Kristensen et all., 2017). With better accuracy, the US could reduce the number of warheads required to destroy a single target, improving overall offensive capabilities while adhering to the New START Treaty.

Another aspect of the modernization program is extending the service life for the current Minuteman III nuclear ICBM and designing a new ICBM. Under the DoD Ground-based Strategic Deterrent Program (GBSD), the United States allocated 62.3 billion dollars over a thirty-year period to replace the aging components of current Minuteman III ICBMs while also designing a new ICBM which uses the current infrastructure of Minuteman III but improves its design to enable it for both fixed-silo and mobile-missile launcher deployment. While the design improvement increases the cost of the program, the Pentagon believes it will save money in the long-term due to the adaptability of the new launchers and by avoiding expensive Life-Extension Programs (LEP) on its current nuclear launchers and warheads (Doyle, 2016).

Nuclear Weapons' Strategic Value on Global Politics and Non-Proliferation

One of the main points for maintaining a sizable nuclear arsenal is the strategic value it provides the United States to preserve its status as a superpower and maintain global peace. The United States' extension of its nuclear umbrella to its allies has successfully deterred potential adversaries without needing to deploy a significant number of conventional weapons and troops on foreign soil to safeguard its allies, as demonstrated during the Cold War (Fruhling & O'Neal, 2017). Security guarantees by the United States to Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea also successfully limited the scope of recent Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea (Fruhling and O'Neal, 2017). This scenario shows an effective application of security guarantees backed by the threat of nuclear force, allowing the United States to deter foreign aggression without needing to place large numbers of its troops on foreign soil, thus respecting foreign countries' sovereignty and avoiding political repercussions.

The relative peace in the Cold War compared to previous centuries is an evidence that international crises and wars were minimized due to the large presence of nuclear arsenal between two global superpowers since the end of World War II (Jervis, 1988). In "The Political Effects of Nuclear Weapons: A Comment" (1988), Jervis argues that high-profile incidents, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, are evidence of compromise between superpowers due to Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine instead of resorting to war to achieve their goals, as witnessed in World War I and World War II. This phenomenon is most evident in the Cold War, where both the United States and the Soviet Union were deterred from absorbing one another's sphere of influence due to the risk of an all-out nuclear war if one side attacked the other (Jervis, 1988). The Cuban Missile Crisis is an example where nuclear weapons act as an equalizer between two opposing states, persuading the United States and the Soviet Union to address their security concerns through diplomacy. The resultant talks concluded with the United States and the Soviet Union removing short-range missiles from Turkey and Cuba respectively, addressing security concerns between the two countries. Without nuclear weapons, the two superpowers may not have had enough bargaining power to pressure each other to peace talks, since both countries would be relatively immune to one another's offensive capabilities.

Aside from the destructive potential of nuclear weapons, their use would trigger costly political repercussions for both parties of a conflict, making diplomacy more attractive. For example, in World War II, many European countries decided fighting Nazi Germany was a better option than outright surrender since the cost of the war was considered acceptable and a chance

to preserve their independence. However, in a hypothetical nuclear war, Jervis (1988) argues both parties will suffer "unacceptable casualties and destruction" and cause the extermination of human civilization. Hence, the presence of nuclear weapons increases the cost of war to unacceptable levels for nuclear-armed countries and their respective allies.

Alternatively, in cases where leaders are willing to risk war at all cost to achieve their goals, such as Adolf Hitler, nuclear weapons might not be enough to act as a deterrent. However, the possibility of such a scenario occurring is small in the era of nuclear weapons due to domestic pressure and the lingering possibility of nuclear annihilation for the aggressor itself (Mueller, 1988). In the modern era, Kim Jong Un's nuclear ambitions have been repeatedly challenged by the United States' nuclear arsenal, restraining even one of the most brazen leaders in the twenty-first century.

The extension of the United States' nuclear umbrella to its allies, namely NATO countries, prevented nuclear proliferation for both allied countries and adversaries. Allied countries are not incentivized to manufacture their own nuclear weapons due to the security assurance guaranteed by the United States, thus minimizing nuclear proliferation and possibilities of nuclear theft in these countries. Similarly, non-nuclear armed adversaries of the United States are less likely to pursue nuclear weapons due to their unwillingness to risk a nuclear war or conflict with the United States. One of the most noticeable cases is Iran's nuclear weapons program, where Iran agreed to temporarily suspend its program in 2003 in response to international pressure and fear of a United States invasion (Kroenig, 2016).

Nuclear Weapons Advantages Compared to its Alternatives

Critics of nuclear weapons point out improvements in accuracy and reliability of conventional weapons are sufficient in neutralizing targets threatening the United States. In Lieber & Press (2013), the authors argue that a large conventional explosive – or example, the GBU-57, have a destructive power of approximately 3-5 tons of TNT, while the least explosive nuclear weapons in the United States' inventory have an explosive power of 300 tons of TNT. Also, conventional weapons must score a direct hit or land "close enough" to destroy its targets while nuclear weapons provide a higher margin of error to successfully destroy their targets due to their higher destructive capability. The accuracy of conventional weapons can also be undermined by many factors, such as bad weather or the presence of jammers that erode the accuracy of guidance systems, resulting in a lower chance of direct hit. Despite this problem affecting both weapon systems, nuclear weapons' larger yield allows for greater margin of error, negating the chance of missing a target due to inaccuracies produced by faulty guidance systems. While conventional weapons are always an integral component of United States' national defense, their limitations necessitate the deployment of nuclear weapons.

Anti-nuclear critics claim US stockpiles of nuclear weapons undermine arms control objectives, risking international wars. However, this critique is flawed since wars that happened in the Cold War until the present are mostly police actions aimed against unstable regional aggressors and civil wars, which are not between two states (Lieber & Press, 2013). Nuclear armed countries such as North Korea, Pakistan, and Israel check their larger adversaries' perceived aggression, such as the United States, India, and Iran respectively. If the United States abandons its nuclear arsenal and relies on conventional weapons and diplomacy while the opposing party has nuclear weapons, the balance of power would be disrupted, resulting in a national security dilemma for the United States and its allies in their responses to acts of aggression (Lieber & Press, 2013).

Nuclear weapons can also be used as an offensive weapon aimed at deterring a superior enemy from engaging in warfare or aggression for a relatively low cost. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO, 2019a), the cost of maintaining and upgrading current nuclear weapons amounts to 50 billion dollars per year from 2019-2028, including procurement of submarines, aircrafts, and missile defense. In contrast, the total cost of defense in fiscal year 2020 is 700 billion dollars and projected to increase by one percent every year till 2034 (CBO, 2019b). Nuclear-armed small countries have also demonstrated the cost-effectiveness of nuclear weapons. For example, the threat of Israel's "Samson Option", a last resort massive retaliation aimed to destroy countries participating in aggression against Israel, deterred neighboring adversaries, such as Iran, from annihilating it. At the beginning of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Hersh (1991) claimed Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, ordered eight nuclear armed F-4 jet fighters on 24-hour alert as a precaution if Israeli defenses collapsed. The news signaled by Soviet intelligence led to warnings to Syria and Egypt to limit the scope of their offensives. In Israel's case, due to its hostile neighbors, nuclear weapons have become a necessary deterrent to preserve its existence as a sovereign nation. In another case, North Korea's nuclear weapons deterred South Korea and the United States from deposing the ruling elite by promising nuclear retaliation on both should they attack. During the Cold War, the promise of all out nuclear war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact nullified the latter's larger conventional military personnel and hardware in Eastern Europe, successfully deterring war in Europe (Lieber & Press, 2013).

Conclusion

Despite the fall of the Soviet Union, nuclear weapons are still relevant in the twenty-first century to protect the United States from nuclear threat and maintain global peace. The deterrence provided by nuclear weapons has prevented large-scale wars between conflicting states and limited the scope of conflicts that do emerge. Because of this, the United States should adapt its strategy in tackling foreign threats using nuclear weapons to reduce the threat of foreign aggression through a bellicose stance on a second strike. With nuclear weapons being the primary tool to ensure national security, the United States should maintain its nuclear arsenal and improve its quality to maintain global peace, ensure national security, and halt nuclear proliferation across the globe.

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