

# INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN COMBATING TERRORISM:

## REVIEW OF 2014 AND OUTLOOK FOR 2015



INTER-UNIVERSITY CENTER  
FOR  
**TERRORISM**  
STUDIES



THE INTER-UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR TERRORISM STUDIES

**International Cooperation**  
**in Combating Terrorism:**  
**Review of 2014 and Outlook for 2015**

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## **Mrs. Wafa Bugaighis**

Esteemed colleagues and guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me thank the Potomac institute for organizing this event.

**As I stand before you**, young men are being recruited into joining extremist groups and shipped across borders to come and create havoc in my country, Libya.

**Right now** as I speak, young men in my country are dying while trying alongside our military troops, with minimal support and resources, to fight back this new evil that is trying to steal away our dreams, our values, our culture, our history, and our wealth.

**Ladies and gentlemen** as I stand here before you, weapons are being delivered to terrorist groups. Funds are being provided across borders to buy them more weapons to fight democracy and prosperity. To fight tolerance. To disrupt and send wrong messages about our peaceful and tolerant religion. To fight the same human rights in the international conventions and charters that we are all in this room signatory to; To reverse the right to life, the right to freedom, the right to good living, to good education, and the right to be free from oppression, submission, and coercion.

**Today**, as we look at what is going on in the world, we realize that terrorism knows no religion, and doesn't restrict itself to borders nor to morals. **Terrorism** is the same anywhere and is committed by the same persons across the globe. However there do exist certain communities and societies where terrorism has a bigger risk to thrive and do harm. It is those communities that are undergoing political instability and change. Societies where citizens have been deprived from their basic rights for too long. Countries like Libya where tyranny and oppression ruled for over 43 years. Where empowerment of women and youth is not a priority, and where economic rights have been abused for too long.

**We know** today the importance and impact of reforming the global economic systems so that all people have access to better living standards and opportunities for all equally. We know now that reforming the educational systems is paramount to teach core human values, tolerance and respect of all humans to one another. Deprivation and lack of political will to enforce social justice is one of the most important reasons for making countries fall into the web of terrorism and radical movements.

**The attacks** carried out by terrorist groups on governmental and civilian in states, the executions of Libyan activist, military personnel, and foreigners in Libya, the attacks on oil fields, airports and ports in Libya and the spread of extremism will not only affect Libya. But the whole region, and we fear, as Libya is a gateway to Africa, Europe and the Middle East

that those acts of terrorism will spill into the region.

**We feel** that a global task force needs to work on a proposal to produce an international charter that deals with radical movements and terrorism. Laws have to change in order to control the spillage of weapons and funds into the hands of the terrorists. Nations have to stop their support to rouge groups with fundamental thinking. Time is running and our existence in this world as neighbors with common goals and mutual interests is at risk.

**We need** to work together to enforce order and keep our world a safe and stable place for the future generations to live in. It is our responsibility as world policy makers and the responsibility of the world leaders to work on common goals and to put together a global charter that regulates the flow of arms, drugs, money, and radicalism. To leave fighting terrorism to countries which are weakened by it, to NGOs and communities alone is not enough.

**In Libya we are committed** to work with the world leaders and policy makers to end corruption and make sure human rights are not violated.

**We are committed** and persistent in the pursue of an economic stability in our country that will lead to better living standards to our people and that will not impact negatively on the region and the globe.

**Esteemed colleagues** ladies and gentlemen you are all aware today that Libya amongst other nations is fighting a vicious war against terrorism and radical thinking groups. This is not a threat to Libya alone and to its people and future prosperity and progress, but to the whole region and to the neighboring European countries and to the economy of European countries that rely on our oil and gas and on Africa and this will impact negatively on the strategic interests of the United States of America.

**We invite** and will support strongly all research work and civil work to further shed light on the precursors of terrorism in order to find the best ways to contain and fight it.

**Ladies and gentlemen** we have a difficult fight to endure that requires putting all of the resources and efforts to make the outcome a winning one for the sake of humanity and history. The history of the world is filled with agonizing encounters but let us today change this history forever.

**Our children,** your children and all the world's children deserve that much of an effort.

## **Ambassador (Ret.) Theodore Kattouf**

Terrorism isn't an abstraction to me or to most of my colleagues who spent the bulk of their Foreign Service careers working in the Middle East and North Africa. Some of us have experienced terrorist attacks firsthand; all of us have lost friends and co-workers to this scourge.

Though many of us share similar tragic experiences, we sometimes come to different conclusions about what is to be done. Most area specialists and counter-terrorism experts agree that the approach of the U.S. government must be multi-faceted, involving the U.S. military, the State Department, USAID, Homeland Security, intelligence agencies, law enforcement, soft power, and public awareness; and I could go on. The principle debate seems to always focus on how large a threat terrorist groups pose to the homeland and our citizens and interests abroad and the form and degree of our military intervention.

This afternoon, I want to focus on what the balance should be between our military response and the many other tools and policies available to us. Let me state clearly that my 42 years of involvement with U.S. policies in the region have made me a firm believer in the law of unintended consequences. Even President George W. Bush once famously said in a presidential debate with Al Gore that U.S. foreign policy needed to show greater humility. Yet, after two inconclusive wars that lasted for a decade or more, Iran is arguably left as the dominant power in Iraq and the Taliban is poised to make a comeback in Afghanistan. Many of the principal architects and proponents of these wars mock the Obama administration for missed opportunities to intervene more forcefully in Syria, and for not having left a residual force indefinitely in Iraq. Indeed, some former senior members of the current administration state much the same thing. Some weeks ago, I heard former Secretary of Defense Panetta assert that matters might have turned out differently in Syria if only the president had extended more and earlier military aid to opposition fighters there and had carried through with his threat to hit Assad's forces after he crossed the President's self-declared red line concerning the use of chemical weapons. Now, let me hastily add that Secretary Panetta has given great service to our country for decades and I have admired him from afar. Moreover, some colleagues whom I deeply respect share his opinions.

But the question is this: which Syrian opposition forces should we have more forcefully backed? The opposition was splintered into literally hundreds of small groups that lacked a central command. The Muslim Brotherhood initially dominated the Syrian National Council. Even prior

to the Nusra Front's and ISIS's domination of the opposition's military forces, Islamic groups, including the Taliban-like Ahrar Al-Sham, were prominent players.

Was our goal ever to replace a corrupt, bloody Baathist military regime with a barbaric, intolerant, and bloody radical Islamic regime? How would that serve U.S. interests? And, by the way, we had many years to train the Iraqi Armed Forces under relatively ideal conditions. How well has that turned out? Why have Iranian-influenced Shia militias been spearheading offensive actions against ISIS? Why did the Iraqi Armed Forces come apart so rapidly when ISIS attacked Mosul, leaving their U.S.-supplied heavy weapons behind? Those who want to argue the counter-factuals need to explain why this time it would have been different!

My take away from years of focusing on the MENA region is that these countries are not ours to "win" or "lose." The peoples of the Middle East have developed cultures and value systems that are not largely consistent with our own. They have yet to decide clearly what role Islam will play in their constitutional governance. Who is sovereign: God or the people? The U.S. and the West can encourage those, whose values, such as pluralism, tolerance, and inclusion, are closer to our own, but it is not for us to impose those values on them at the point of a gun.

It is hubris to expect that every society will achieve our level of social and political development overnight, when we, ourselves, will always be struggling to create a more perfect union. The neo-cons and their supporters who never believed in social engineering at home, thought nothing of going halfway around the world to spread Wilsonian democracy and values. If we want to put our money where our mouth is, why are we not doing more to economically and otherwise assist Tunisia, the one country that has emerged from the Arab revolutions with a real chance for pluralism, tolerance, and co-existence? What better rebuke to the radical Islamists and cruel dictators could there be than a free and prosperous Tunisia?

So what is to be done? First, we need to quit exaggerating the threat that terrorism poses. The 24/7 news channels must fight for ratings. Every lone wolf operation in Europe or the U.S. becomes an existential threat to western civilization. Our police forces have become so militarized that it was thought necessary to virtually shut down the entire city of Boston and its suburbs to catch or kill the Tsarnaev brothers. Copenhagen and Paris have experienced similar phenomenon. Yet, right after 9/11 the Washington suburbs were terrorized by non-ideological assassins who chose their victims at random. Many other senseless mass killings have subsequently occurred with alarming regularity, such as at the elementary school in Newtown,

CT, and at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. Each year tens of thousands die from influenza and auto accidents. Yet, it is deaths at the hands of terrorists that haunt our thoughts and dreams. The terrorists could hardly hope for more. Aside from being inherently barbaric, ISIS is striving to terrorize the west and provoke a disproportionate military response from us.

Another U.S. president famous for a failed, prolonged war was Lyndon Johnson. When running against Barry Goldwater in 1964 he stated that we shouldn't be asking American boys to do what Asian boys should be doing for themselves. Unfortunately, just like President George W. Bush, he overreached rather than following his own sound advice. This war is an existential war, but not for us and for our western allies. It is the governments and peoples of the entire region who are most threatened. Groups pledging allegiance to ISIS are in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, and West Africa. So after two major wars, the cancer has metastasized.

The U.S. should calibrate the help it offers to indigenous forces that are willing to confront ISIS militarily and otherwise. The Kurds, Jordan, the Iraqi and Yemeni governments deserve our help. So do those elements of the Syrian opposition that are genuinely willing to espouse democracy and pluralism and protection of minorities for their country. What sort of help: military equipment, intel sharing, logistical support, training, including for special operations, in some cases air support, and search and rescue. Those countries and movements that wish to use the crisis for their own narrow interests should only be supported to the extent necessary to achieve our objectives. Our fighting men and women and national honor should not be for sale.

Foremost, we should not lend ourselves to advancing hateful sectarian agendas. Yes, there are some parties that are making this a Sunni-Shia struggle. There are others who are fighting for the very soul of Sunni Islam. In the latter struggle, we have an obvious interest in seeing more orthodox, mainstream interpretations of Islam prevail. But, paradoxically, we must be very careful not to inject ourselves into what are legitimate debates for Islamic scholars and their followers. Yes, it is easier said than done, because ISIS must be confronted and combated, as must Al-Qaeda and its offshoots. But let's ask ourselves how would it have been received in the 17<sup>th</sup> century if the Turkish sultan had sent the janissaries to sort out the 30-years war in central Europe between Catholics and Protestants. This conflict was so bloody, that it may have wiped out a quarter or more of the population, most of them civilians, in the areas where it was fought before the treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Just saying.....

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Established in 1994, the activities of IUCTS are guided by an International Research Council that offers recommendations for study on different aspects of terrorism, both conventional and unconventional. IUCTS is cooperating academically with universities and think tanks in over 40 countries, as well as with governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental bodies.

## International Center for Terrorism Studies (ICTS)

Established in 1998 by the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, in Arlington, VA, ICTS administers IUCTS activities and sponsors an internship program in terrorism studies.

## Inter-University Center for Legal Studies (IUCLS)

Established in 1999 and located at the International Law Institute in Washington, D.C., IUCLS conducts seminars and research on legal aspects of terrorism and administers training for law students.

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