



# THE PEARSON INSTITUTE

FOR THE STUDY AND RESOLUTION OF GLOBAL CONFLICTS

## The Pearson Global Forum

### Part III. Consequences of a Breakdown in Social Order

#### Violent Extremism Panel featuring:

**Richard English, Distinguished Professorial Fellow, Queen's University Belfast,**

**Carter Malkasian, Special Assistant for Strategy to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, U.S. Department of Defense,**

**Graeme Wood, National Correspondent, the Atlantic,**

**Moderated by Steve Clemons, Washington Editor-at-Large, the Atlantic**

HAZ YANO: Good afternoon. My name is Haz Yano and I am first-year MPP candidate, here at the Harris School. I currently serve as a Captain in the active duty United States Army, and I'm also a fellow with the Pearson Institute. With that, I have to add a disclaimer that any views expressed are solely my own, and not representative of the US Army.

Today, I have the distinct honor and privilege to introduce the panel on violent extremism. My first personal encounter with violent extremism came 17 years ago on a clear sunny day in September, when I was a 13-year-old, sitting in my eight grade algebra class on the upper east side of Manhattan. Looking at the smoke above ground zero that fateful day, I vowed that I would join the military, in order to make the world around me a safer and better place.

Today, in 2018, I believe that the threat of violent extremism remains prevalent around the world. It comes in a variety of shapes and forms, targeting different demographics through different ideologies. Combating this evolving threat requires an interdisciplinary, inter-agency, and an international approach. The military's role in this appears obvious, and yet, it is not. At its core, the military's primary mission is to win our nation's wars. However, winning wars isn't always synonymous with simply just destroying the enemy. Increasingly, our policy makers rely on our armed forces to execute missions that have less to do with combat, and more to do with conflict prevention. While this is historically a role delegated to civilian policymakers and diplomats, today's security environment has definitely blurred those lines. To borrow a concept for a counter-insurgency expert, David Kilcullen, recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan highlight the point that modern warfare is much like armed social work. That is, an attempt to redress basic social and political problems all while being shot at.

I, myself, performed similar social work missions, although thankfully, I was not being shot at, during two rotations in south Asia. There, I worked with security force counterparts in Bangladesh and Nepal to enhance their ability to respond to crises, whether they be natural disasters or terror attacks, and thereby bolster local stability. The fight against violent extremism is an area where much can be done to prevent conflicts before they explode into crises. But in order for this to be done effectively, we must first understand the threat.



What are the goals of extremist organizations? Who is being targeted for exploitation and recruitment? What are the grievances of these vulnerable populations? And, is there legitimacy to these claims? Are these grievances driving radicalization? Is the local government failing in addressing these concerns? And important, can effective policy be enacted to address these grievances, whether it be through the local government, security forces, foreign assistance, or even non-profits, so that we can undermine and counteract the extremist messaging?

One of my goals as a Pearson fellow at Harris is to gain the quantitative analytical skills which are necessary to answer these questions so that I can do my part to develop effective solutions and prevent tragedies like 9/11 from occurring ever again anywhere in the world. With that, I am grateful to the Pearson Institute for setting up this global forum, and I look forward to the ensuing dialog between the panelists.

Please join me in welcoming our panel on violent extremism.

STEVE CLEMONS: Thank you very much.

Thank you Captain [Ya-no 05:08:45] Hi, everyone. I'm Steve Clemons. I'm Washington editor-at-large of the Atlantic. It's a real pleasure to be here for the inaugural Pearson global forum. And we're gonna discuss all things terrorism, here. I wanna offer just a few comments just to start with. But let me tell you who we're gonna have a discussion with. We're gonna call this ... Some of you ... I actually never watch The View. Do any of you watch The View, and will admit to it, here? The View's kinda chatty, and I hope we we're gonna ... This is gonna be The View on terrorism and a bunch of guys, this time. But it is what it is. And we're gonna have my fantastic panel.

Richard English, just on my left, distinguished professorial fellow. And the Senator George Bay Mitchell, you never heard of him, did ya? Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for global peace, security, and justice and Queens University, Belfast. Richard, thank you. He's also the author ... I was going back to look at books. I've sort of seen him quoted for years. It's such an honor to meet you. But author of *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. Probably the world's leading authority on the IRA, and *Terrorism: How to Respond*, more recently.

To his left, we have my colleague and friend, Graeme Wood, who is national correspondent for the Atlantic. How many of you read the Atlantic? And don't be shy. Yay. And so you no doubt saw his cover story, *What ISIS Really Wants*. And that's in the top three articles that have ever, I mean, in terms of total readership of the Atlantic magazine in our 161-year history. So round of applause for hittin' the right button, Graeme.

And then we have Carter Malkasian, who's Special Assistant for Strategy to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dunford from the Department of Defense. And he's written a ridiculous number



of books, as well, including *Illusions of Victory: The Anbar Awakening and the Rise of the Islamic State*, among many others.

So thank you all for being here. I just wanna share this, because I wanna ... First, I wanna get these guys arguing amongst themselves about terrorism, how they see it, what are the drivers. And hopefully they're not all on the same page, and we can have a discussion, and then get to all of you. But I wanna just pose a couple of comments, because I think it's important to break this down. We have a lot of lay people in the audience, and my early just awareness of terrorism was as a young guy, a freshman in college, and I was riding my bicycle to University in Los Angeles, and I heard a couple of shots and a car race into a tree, and it was ... What I had stumbled across on my bike on Wilshire Boulevard was the assassination of the Turkish Consul General in the early 1980s by, then, what was an Armenian terrorist group, at the time. And I became very fascinated with this group over a long time, and how this particular group sorta faded out, particularly as some of the members of the Armenian group began to kill Armenians. And you say a very active, very elite terrorist group that was feared around the world essentially die out. And I just wanted to throw that in there.

The second bit is, I had the privilege to be one of the early founders of the New American foundation, a think tank, and happened to have hired Peter Bergen and others in the terror world. But before ... Essentially ... How do I put this? Before everything blew up, before 9/11, before this, we found this in 1999. And I had been in South Korea, and I had been in the middle east. And in South Korea, again, not often on the terror map, I saw Molotov cocktails thrown, I saw people protesting, students organizing, and what can sorta be organized, extreme violence related to US bases, based in South Korea. And I saw at the same time, over in Saudi Arabia, we had a couple of bases there. And I began asking the question, many ... My dad served in the military, but with all due respect, Carter, a lot of folks in the military kind of look at the issue of basing abroad as the United States creating anchors of stability in unstable regions. And the blind spot in that is, can these anchors of stability, or bases, become destabilizing factors? And I saw that in South Korea and before 9/11 had occurred, I had hired Peter Bergen before he had done this, to come in. And it was an interesting time to see 9/11 ... Everything roll forward.

So I approach this humbly. I'm not the experts that are here. But let me just start. Richard, could you give us, given your historic survey of terrorism over such a long period of time back at the RA, where are we today? Give us a quick snapshot of how today is different or isn't.

RICHARD ENGLISH: I think one of the genius elements of terrorism as a method is that it blinds you to everything that's happened before. So for a long time, Peter Bergen couldn't get people interested in Al-Qaeda, then the 9/11 atrocity happened, and everyone talked about Al-Qaeda. And then Al-Qaeda was eclipsed by ISIS, and everybody talked about ISIS. And I supposed one thing to recognize is that each group is ultimately unique. Al-Qaeda is different from ISIS, they're both different from Hamas, both from the IRA. And yet, and yet, despite that uniqueness, I think there is something dangerous in forgetting the similarities between different waves.



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So for example, across all of those groups, questions of what they judge to be inadequate legitimacy of certain territories is crucial. In all of those groups, the disproportionate effect of the actions of small numbers of initiators or entrepreneurs is significant. In all of those groups, the relationships between what they see as transgression and non-state resistance is important. So I suppose it's a danger that we throw out what we know from previous experiences.

So where are we today? In some ways, we're facing new versions of things that are quite familiar. So Graeme may disagree with me on this, but ISIS, in some ways, very new, in terms of the capacity to generate unprecedented numbers of foreign fighters. But a group which uses various kinds of violence to seize publicity, to react to what it sees as being a legitimate authority in a certain crucial space is not at all new.

So my anxiety is that we need to remember the things that we know we know from the past, rather than just being blinded by the uniqueness of each case. And I think there are things, if we do remember what's happened in the past, with what you talked about with Los Angeles and so on, if we remember what we've been through before, we're probably gonna panic less, we're probably gonna overreact less, and we might minimize the threat rather than exaggerating our responses.

STEVE CLEMONS: In sort of a bad DNA model metaphor, here, are there any elements of the genetic code of terrorism that are consistent throughout all these cases?

RICHARD ENGLISH: I think-

STEVE CLEMONS: Of terrorism that are consistent throughout all these cases.

RICHARD ENGLISH: I think throughout most of them there are two things I'd pick on. One is that terrorism tends repeatedly to be better at getting some things and others, good at getting publicity, good at sustaining resistance, good at gaining revenge, overwhelmingly very bad at securing central policy goals. Very few terrorist groups end their campaign having got their headline goal.

A second thing is that there is a kind of tactical imitation, so there are--I remember interviewing IRA prisoners for example they spent much of their time in prison looking at what went well in some circumstances. How could they deal with this tactical challenge. I've never met a more pragmatic bunch than the IRA. Utterly hard headed and a lot of it was about thinking how can we learn from this, how can we learn from that and tragically you see this with cross case learning with IEDs with ways in which people think about securing certain kinds of publicity. So a tactical level is learning between groups particularly with innovations. But I think at the strategic level more importantly this is a very bad way of securing your essential goals but it's a very good way of achieving revenge, a very good way of seizing the headlines, and if we respond to those things which they are good at and don't panic about those they're bad at, we'll probably have a more shrewd response.



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STEVE CLEMONS: Carter, Graham, one of the things I, both of you, I have been trying my head around is to find a terror group that didn't in its professed or articulated soul, didn't say it was about a set of grievances. And we may not see those grievances but I'm interested in how they sell their--if I wanted to play terrorist today and appeal to an audience here that's not going to get a break and create terrorist action on their grievances of no break. You would kind of look at that question of whether or not I was just a power hungry fanatic that wanted to control something, but I'm interested. Do we, Carter let me start with you, in the Pentagon world in which you work, is there serious scrutiny and understanding of the grievance narratives in a lot of the terror groups that we're focusing on?

CARTER MALKASIAN: There is, but let me focus a little bit about the Taliban if that's okay. And expand--

STEVE CLEMONS: Yeah. Do you look at the Taliban as a terrorist group?

CARTER MALKASIAN: No, some people-

STEVE CLEMONS: That's a tweetable moment right there.

CARTER MALKASIAN: So the Taliban are--they're a terrorist group within their country. The Taliban overall as being a large external terrorist group on their own, much less so. But if I could, just say a few things about the Taliban, this panel is about violence and the Taliban are not the only group conducting violence in Afghanistan. The government conducts violence, tribal [inaudible 05:17:30] conduct violence, we by the way, conduct violence. And having said just that I know several other people now say they work with the government therefore their words can't be--they speak for themselves not for the government. I too speak for myself but it applies doubly to me because UC Berkley. So what I think could be drastically different from others think on the matter.

One of the things that I have, there's a conundrum like with the Taliban right now. Or a conundrum from me that I've been looking at a lot. In that you've probably seen on the news that when the Afghan army and police deal with the Taliban and have to face the Taliban they don't do so well on their own. Even if they've got more equipment, more guns, more whatever it is. And let me add another layer to this conundrum. I went and looked at eight different districts in Afghanistan, and these are districts I've been to, and the unique thing about these districts is that these are places where the government was in control in some places, at some times in total control and the Taliban was in total control. But when the government was in control, they needed more forces to maintain their control than the Taliban did. Often times three times as many forces required to do that.

There's a great quote from a BBC journalist Aluia Trophi who went into Taliban territory. And he said the thing about going into the Taliban territory is you don't see any one for miles. The Taliban rule more through an idea than through the absolute use of force. So that makes me think, "So wait what's going on here? Why is it that they're able to do this?" And I don't think there's one answer by any means, I



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think it's probably a variety of answers here, but the thing that intrigues me tremendously is what you hear the Taliban saying. Which is that this is about resistance occupation, this is about protection of values, sometimes about protection of Islam. And I can hear that regularly when I talk to Afghans, and you can see it in the Taliban announcements, in their poetry. When I was in Garmsir and Helmand and I was dealing with a variety of Taliban who were trying to stop fighting. And I ask them, what were you fighting about? What was going on here? Most of the time, majority of the time they'd say, "Well, this was, we're fighting occupation."

And I'd try to get them to say other things to various clever means but without much success.

STEVE CLEMONS: So that was the grievance they were talking about.

CATER MALKASIAN: That was the main thing that they would talk about there. And so what and, what I think and what I wonder about is how much does our presence trod on what it means to be Afghan? How much does it prod young men to fight? How much does it dare them to do more than say the government forces would do? How much does it make it acceptable for an Afghan to say, "The Taliban are in control here we're just going to, we'll live with it. I'll just deal with it." And how much does this sap, the willpower of the police and the army.

Now this gets back to violence, because I think when people are worried about protecting their home and protecting their values that can justify or maybe even necessitate violence that we might sometimes see as extreme. So there's a book by David Edwards called Caravan of Martyrs. It's by far my favorite book of 2017. And what he says is that what this does is it prods, it encourages young men to sacrifice themselves in order to attain something higher. To protect their community, to inflict a revenge on an unjust oppressor. The only way that they can do this for some of them he's saying, is by actual suicide bombing. And the Taliban have some difficulty distancing themselves from that. I've had, lately I've had, prompt thoroughly plummet Taliban tell me, "Look this has become part of our culture at this point." And they'll also say, "If we leave this, other people will fill in." I. e., the Islamic state will fill in. And they're very worried about that.

So then the last little point I'll make here, is what I'm not--just to be clear, what I'm not trying to say in any way is that Islam or something creates terrorism. That's not my point here at all. My point is that when people are trying to fight to defend their values and their family, that can allow violence to get larger, can accelerate it, can encourage it more.

STEVE CLEMONS: Thank you. Graham, I'd like to hear your thoughts on grievance, but I'd also like to add an element here. When James Foley, the journalist, was killed and beheaded by Isis, I happened to know James, and had some very good, personal pictures of James. So after he was killed, I put on Twitter pictures of James, and said, "This is the way I hope people will remember him and see him", and it went viral. And I was subsequently under siege from Isis supporters on Twitter, and I began rather than



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shutting them down or calling the FBI to go after them, I began having conversations with those that would have conversations through Twitter.

You could--and I say this for a reason because some of them I talked to about smartphones who made the smartphones, Tim Cook at Apple, things like this to ask how they see the world. The tower of faith they were hoping to build as one that could compete, build, create, innovate in a modern world. And I would say a small percentage of them engaged in small back and forth conversation. It was quite interesting. You had a sense that the gravity of things was just completely different in their world, so I'm interested to see how you see this question about grievances and the exploitation of them. But also your insights into how gravity works in that. I got a sense it was radically different.

GRAEME WOOD: Well I'm glad to know that you know some of my Twitter followers. So I think the way grievance functions with the Islamic state is as you suggest, very different from what you see from many other organizations. In fact I think it's one of the really distinctive aspects of what Isis does, and how it was able to recruit as many people as it did. If you look at old school Al Qaeda, if you look at the leadership statements of Bin Laden, they actually were a litany of things that Bin Laden was saying the west had done. And that it should stop doing, and the reason he was waging a campaign of terror was to stop them, namely, support for the state of Israel, basing in the holy places, Saudi Arabia, and support for Arab tyrants.

There are all pretty straightforwardly political, military requests that he was putting forward. Now if you look at the analogous documents of Isis, you can certainly find statements where they're complaining about certain things, but the lack of emphasis on those and other political demands, is I think noteworthy. What Isis was doing instead, again as you suggest in what you saw from those Twitter followers, was describing a positive vision of a future that they wanted to create. They thought there was a state that they could make a kind of utopian place that they owned and they could turn into a kind of kingdom of heaven on earth. This I think had a lot more purchase in the imagination of many of it's followers.

So how many people can you get to join your cause if your cause is reactionary? Destructive? Apparently it might be a significantly smaller number than the 40,000 as compared to say 400, who were in Afghanistan in 2001, fighting for Al Qaeda. The 40,000 who were willing to travel for the utopian constructive vision. So that might be your counter example of a terrorist group that was not--it's center of gravity was not on grievance.

One last thing that I'll say. Isis actually told it's followers to stop using iPhones.

STEVE CLEMONS: Oh interesting.



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GRAEME WOOD: There might be some branding play right here for Apple. But they said, "Followers stop using iPhones--"

STEVE CLEMONS: Use Samsung?

GRAEME WOOD: Because Cupertino can see what you're doing whereas Android, we don't know what's going on."

STEVE CLEMONS: Fascinating. Since Richard has talked a little bit both about terror groups that have faded or dissipated. President Trump talks a lot about ending Isis, that he's sort of out there with a mission accomplished banner basically. Do you think Isis is ended?

GRAEME WOOD: No. Isis is certainly not ended. I think what we need to differentiate are a couple of different forms of Isis. One is the inspirational form. This idea of a tower of faith that anyone can go to from around the world. That is significantly muted in it's appeal. They've been told for, at this point, almost three years. Don't even try to come to Syria. Do what you can do at home. The idea of traveling to fulfill this dream of heaven on earth, well you've just got to put that on the back burner. So that somewhat, defeated. Now the territorial ambitions of Isis, also somewhat defeated. They've been dialed back to the tune of 90% of their farthest territorial extent. That said, being dialed back 90% just reboots them territorially to 2012, 2013. So to think of them as defeated, I think would be unwise.

STEVE CLEMONS: So Richard as you answer this, not are they defeated, but how to unwind them given your experiences watching other terror groups.

RICHARD ENGLISH: I suppose two things on that question. One is, don't assume it'll happen anytime soon. I think the long time frames are what you're dealing with in all the groups that we've mentioned that are of interest significantly to states are ones which have a long time frame. So I think what Graham's saying is that you've got an attenuation of control, but maybe there'll be things which happen in other countries and there will still be a regional role for them for some time in disordered situations. So don't be impatient.

The second thing is, I think politicians need to recognize that the statements that they make can give gifts to terrorists. I can quite understand why a president might say, "I'm going to eradicate radical Islamic terrorism from the face of the earth", but in a way all they have to do to gain a kind of victory over him is still be in existence when he's not president any longer. Which I think clearly will be the case. So I think every statement you make is given the opportunity either of greater or lesser success for them, and I think that's an important thing for politicians. I also think some of it which Graham mentioned there about both Graham and Carter are talking about things which partly have revenge in them.



So if you're resisting an occupier, hitting back at them is revenge. And if Isis is encouraging people to do things in Western Europe or do things in the United States, there's a vengeful motivation there, and that is a new version of something which is very familiar. We've seen that with Palestinian terrorists, we've seen that with Basque terrorists, we've seen that with the Farq. And I think it's one of the great things--if we were setting up a new terrorist group today, the Piss and Liberation front or something like that. I think one of the key things if I wanted to recruits would be to try and point to things where people felt there was a need for revenge against some action which had been carried out. Because it's one of the big motivators to do terrible things to other people, is the sense of hitting back.

STEVE CLEMONS: Carter let me--the only other thing I'd--I know you must have like an ultra high security clearance, I hope you do. So you know lots of stuff we don't know, so maybe you can flirt with a few things and give us ideas. But I'm kind of interested in a broader question. We're talking about groups as if they're distinct, as if they're knowable. Not monolithic, but they're sort of--and I mention the broader question of puppet strings. External forces. When you look at the Saudis and the Iranians in the region are driving a certain element of violent extremism, and proxy wars and conflicts in the region. If you look at India, Pakistan. What happened in Mumbai with LET, which obviously got a blind eye from some groups in Pakistan. How much of what we see in the world of violent extremism, aka, terrorism is actually--are state actions by other means.

CARTER MALKASIAN: So based on my personal understanding and research, not any kind of accesses.

STEVE CLEMONS: So disappointing.

CARTER MALKASIAN: I'm sure. My livelihood is not though. So certainly there is outside influence to sometimes create the movements, sometimes continue the movements to give them more assistance, sometimes just to do it to prevent your enemy, or your adversary from gaining any kind of ground. But the interpretation that I usually take, that this has a lot more to do with local issues, and they have a lot more local cohesion than we tend to give them credit for.

For example, when it comes to the Islamic state, I think there is a lot more sympathy within the Iraqi people than we tend to give them credit.

STEVE CLEMONS: A lot more sympathy for Isis among the Iraqi people. On bar region--

CARTER MALKASIAN: On bar region, specifically is what I'm talking about there. But the other thing, when we're talking about external influence, is we have to take a bigger viewpoint to about the external influence, and how we play a role. You guys have mentioned social breakdown in preventing social breakdown from fixing itself. So maybe some of you have read Odd Arne Westad's book The Global Cold War. At the end of that book he says, "During the cold war, super power competition, ideological



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competition created a state of semipermanent civil wars in a variety of third world countries." How we fuel these conflicts, how we get involved can prevent them from getting solved.

And I'll just give one quote to end my comment here. I was meeting with a couple of university professors, extremely intelligent, meet with the Taliban all the time. We were talking about a peace deal in Afghanistan, and I was trying to explain to him the difficulties of a commitment problem of the United States. And about whether or not the Taliban would renege on any kind of deal that was made. And he said to me, "There's hundreds of Afghans dying every week. The chances of there being a problem--they might be there but there's hundreds dying every week. How many more Afghans have to die because two thousand Americans died two decades ago?" There's a terrible trade off between us having to meet our interests and the effects of that upon the people of a country.

STEVE CLEMONS: What are your thoughts on this Graham, in terms of whether outside players are driving a lot of this. A lot of folks I know in the Middle East area and even North Africa and South Asia are beyond anger in what they see as the separations that happen in Iraq, and essentially the United States opening up the Pandora's box of secular conflict. Really just conflict.

GRAEME WOOD: In the Middle East you will have no difficulty finding people who lay the blame for the rise of Isis on the United States, and who see conspiratorial puppet strings being pulled not just by the United States but other state actors. I think that's--first of all I don't think that's true. I don't think that in the direct way that they're suggesting, that the United States has caused Isis to--

STEVE CLEMONS: So we didn't open sectarianism in that box?

GRAEME WOOD: Well we could name others, Cutter. Cutter has had it's hands in other groups, not Isis directly, Saudi has been fighting Isis--

STEVE CLEMONS: But didn't Saudi sort of help Isis at one stage?

GRAEME WOOD: Well Saudi was very pleased that Isis was not in Saudi. So they were happy to have a certain number of Saudi's going to Syria and never coming back and fighting while they're there, proxys of Iran, and--

STEVE CLEMONS: So lunch money and things like that.

GRAEME WOOD: Exactly, so the support for Isis among Saudis, also quite high, but often you'd have to ask, "Do you support Isis?" "Yes, as long as they stay over there. As long as Isis is not attacking us. We don't want them to rule us, but we want them to fight the good fight elsewhere." So what I think we should look for in the absence of this direct intentional puppet mastery, is the creation of absolutely



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vital conditions for the rise of Isis. Which of course government and misgovernment have been directly responsible for.

So we look at a place like Iraq. Isis, there's no way that Isis would've been an attractive alternative to the Suni population. Some of the Suni population of Iraq. I think Carter, probably fewer than you might estimate, actually would support Isis, but Isis and the Malachi government of the early 2010's put that population in a place where Isis was more attractive than say, anarchy. More attractive than the predatory government that they saw operating in Baghdad. So the creation of those conditions is very much the result of state action and misdeeds.

STEVE CLEMONS: Richard, I want to make sure we leave time--have ample audience engagement with us, but let me ask you a question. Today the Nobel Peace Prize was given to two fascinating individuals, one a Congolese doctor who was dealing with women who had suffered with various ramifications of sexual violence, and a Yazidi woman who had been a rape victim from Isis. I don't know whether that kind of thing helps diffuse or inspire or raise awareness, but I am interested. If we put you in charge of everything, what would you do, what would be your playbook for actually dealing with--you know we're doing perhaps a disservice to this project by focusing so much on the Middle East right now, but it's in at least our minds right now. There's lot of issues going on elsewhere in the world, certainly. What if you were to say, take the Isis, or what comes after Isis, looking at exactly what Graham just shared, as the underlying conditions, and you had unlimited resources, and you were more powerful than Trump plus, what would you do?

RICHARD ENGLISH: I think if I was running the world, it would undoubtedly be far worse than it currently is unfortunately. If I was talking about--

STEVE CLEMONS: If you're going to say that then no--

RICHARD ENGLISH: If I was looking at countering terrorism, there are a number of things that a careful analysis of the long history of terrorism would suggest we should think about. Part of it relates to what Graham's just mentioned which is, there are things where it's very tempting to do stuff after a terrorist atrocity has provoked you. Which actually make it considerably worse, and throughout the long history of terrorism, the French with Algeria, the British with Ireland, Israel with Palestine, there have been things which have made it a significantly worse problem. And one of the things which has created Isis has been the regional crisis, which was partly an occasion by a series of things which[crosstalk 05:36:26]

Well this is also in Peter Bergen's book Holy War Inc that said that Bin Laden wanted to bankrupt the United States. Hit us, an overreaction drives recruitment, etc.

And it's one thing that terrorists do often do is drive their enemies to react in ways that undermine themselves. So the first thing--



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STEVE CLEMONS: So is the answer not to react?

RICHARD ENGLISH: I think the answer is not to exaggerate what you can do through military means. Be more patient than we probably generally are. Not to transgress our own laws about how we treat people, especially prisoners. I think better coordination within the station between different states. And strong credibility of public argument. I think every time a politician says something relating to terrorism, they should think, "How is this going to go down in the rooms, the cafes, the mosques, the bars, the churches, the homes of the people who might or might not support the terrorist group." If you say something lacking credibility, you've just given a gift to your opponent. So I think those long term patient plans might not be as emotionally satisfying as politicians, and I could never get elected. Having said that, I do think that those things would save a lot of lives. And if over the last couple of decades we'd behaved more like that I don't think Isis would exist.

STEVE CLEMONS: Carter, real quick, and we'll come back. How many of these things real fast are doable today, practically?

CARTER MALKASIAN: All right, so I would say the one thing that we need to do that--

STEVE CLEMONS: Is that like the answer none?

CARTER MALKASIAN: No, the one thing above all is we should be resilient. We should be more willing to risk attacks, and therefore we have to be less involved outside.

STEVE CLEMONS: So one out of fifteen.

GRAEME WOOD: All right I might be even more pessimistic than that. If you were to look at what was happening before the fall of Mosul, what were the leading indicators that Isis was going to take huge amounts of territory in Iraq and ultimately the second largest city in the country? You would see low level campaign of assassination across Unbar and Nineveh, the Suni triangle of Iraq. There were Sikhs who were being murdered in front of their houses, drive by shootings, and who were these people? They were exactly the people who Isis knew we, the enemies of Isis, the United States, would go to, to try to spark and awakening like revolt, as we did in the late 2000's.

This is very difficult to counter. A campaign of assassination, that is. It requires the control of territory. The control of the violence that is waged in that territory. And that is probably the single most important thing that allowed them to take that territory. So although I do think that the Suni's of Iraq should have been--the central government of Iraq should have been more thoughtful of the way they spoke of them, the respect they gave to them. I think there's also some very practical things that are a much, much harder thing to achieve. Namely, security and monopoly on violence.



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RICHARD ENGLISH: But if you look back at the pre-Iraq war episode, there were voices saying, that whatever the merits of invading Iraq, there hadn't been enough long term planning for what would happen after the invasion. And that there would be blow back at the West from what happened. Entirely unjustifiable, entirely horrific, so some of the conditions for the atrocities we've seen over recent years with Isis were partly part of a dialogue of patterns of--

STEVE CLEMONS: Okay, you guys can have drinks on that later. Let me go to the audience and get questions, comments. We're going to do this speed style, speed dating. So quick questions and we'll have quick answers so we can try to get to a good number of you. Yes right here. Your name and make a question.

FARIH KOSA: Thank you. I'm Farih Kosa from Pakistan, law enforcement background. For forty years I've served in the--

STEVE CLEMONS: I'm going to ask for a question, we're very short on time so--

FARIH KOSA: So my basic, I can say it without any fear of contradiction, that no non-state actor can thrive or survive without an over support of some state stakeholders, or external players. And so therefore what they exploit is the void which is created in ungovernable spaces where they act as welfare charity organizations, earn the goodwill, and you know that is where the whole emphasis of the international community should be. To build the rule of law institutions. Governance framework needs to be addressed.

STEVE CLEMONS: Thank you, so the question is about voids, it's a very good comment about voids and what we can do--I don't want to say nation building, but how you might create infrastructure of laws and whatnot in voids. And so any quick reaction.

RICHARD ENGLISH: So I would agree with what you're saying--

STEVE CLEMONS: How would you do it?

RICHARD ENGLISH: Creating nations is much more difficult than--

STEVE CLEMONS: But is that creating--is there a softer way to do it, what he wants to hear.

RICHARD ENGLISH: I think where I would concentrate energy is not making voids worse. I think if you don't make things worse, that's a good result.

STEVE CLEMONS: Carter?



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CARTER MALKASIAN: I'll pass.

STEVE CLEMONS: Pass.

GRAEME WOOD: Very quickly, I think, one thing that has changed from a few years ago when Isis started taking over territory in that void, first in Syria, and later in Iraq, is an understanding of how bad that situation can get. If you are worried that that void might spill over into hitting Turkey, then you might think of it less important and then what we now know, is that it may spill over and hit Southern Philippines.

STEVE CLEMONS: I love the folks in the front row, this gentleman here. You should always get extra points, yes.

JIM PRINCE: Jim Prince, democracy council. Question about Isis in Syria? With the close off of the last rebel controlled areas in Idlib Province, how do you see Isis gaining from the recruitment efforts, specifically from some of the other more extreme groups, HTS, the former Nostrafont. And second of all, where do those militants go once the Russians and Syrians commit to Idlib?

STEVE CLEMONS: Great question, Carter probably really knows what's going on, do you want to talk about Idlib and it's future?

CARTER MALKASIAN: So the future of Idlib is a little unclear right now. Since there is not an offensive going on into it. Even if offensive was to happen, I'm not sure how much that will directly feed Isis as this point. My biggest concern would be about Isis in various rural areas where they previously exist, and now having gone down and working with the population just like Graeme was referring to. That over time they'll be able to re-exert some degree of control, especially if there's more sectarian issues and bad policies by various governments.

STEVE CLEMONS: Let me just add--Jeff Goldberg is the editor in chief of the Atlantic and I interviewed Javad Zarif former minister of Iran last Friday. We've been very slow getting out the transcript, but there's a great section in that from him that is a different perspective on some of these questions that I will say, give us a few days, look at the Atlantic website on Zarif and I think you'll find a different perspective that may be interesting that you might find useful. Yes, right here.

LAURA STRUMMER: Laura Strummer with the Alliance for Peace Building. There was very little mention of gender, I'd be very interested to hear what you think of gender. What is the role of gender both in the problem of push and pull factors and grievances that drive both men and women towards violent extremism, as well as some of the solutions.

STEVE CLEMONS: Just to be fair, I did mention the Nobel Prize winner. But yes, gender?



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GRAEME WOOD: So Isis is again a very odd example of a terrorist organization in this way. About 15% of those who traveled to fight on Isis' behalf were women. That's a pretty large number of foreign fighter flow--

STEVE CLEMONS: Why is that? Do we know why?

GRAEME WOOD: This speaks directly to the fact that Isis was claiming to be something other than a purely destructive force and instead wanted to be demographically complete civilization. So if you look at the interviews with women who have traveled, the statements that they left to their families. What they were expecting to do once they got to Isis territory, what they expected to fight for and to build as a civilization, pretty much identical to what men were trying to build. Now there are aspects to digital recruitment that have made the flow of women much more easy than it would've been in years past. But yes, this is an extremely distinctive aspect of what Isis does.

STEVE CLEMONS: Richard, take yourself out of the Middle East. Give us your perspective historically on whether there have been gender distinctions in other terror, in other extreme violence groups.

RICHARD ENGLISH: Very much so. I mean quite often what would happen is women were used but were used in ways that were seen appropriate culturally and socially. But two points on it. One is, I would say is this quota of research that suggests that some groups recognize that if they use a female bomber, they'll get more publicity than a male bomber, so there's a tactical use. Second thing is, a lot of research on the motivations for women getting involved in terrorist groups, show that they do the same things that--they're involved for the same motivations as the men. In other words, there's not different gender motivation, but there can be a different gender outcome, in terms of how many headlines you'll get.

STEVE CLEMONS: Terrific. This sir.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is [inaudible 05:45:15], I'm getting out of the Middle East. I want your opinion on--you've talked about these terror groups that are primarily rogue groups, if you will.

STEVE CLEMONS: Primarily what?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Rogue groups, not necessarily state sponsored. Rogues.

STEVE CLEMONS: Rogue groups, I apologize.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: What about instances of terrorism by states. And there have been instances in history and even now without naming names or places where the states are initiating violence and terrorism on certain persons in that population.



STEVE CLEMONS: Carter this goes directly to some of the points you made.

CARTER MALKASIAN: So my point was more of the general effect that intervention has on continuing civil war. However, I could talk a great deal about how various government, and you can take Afghanistan how their police forces, or their army can do things that are oppressive to the people. And how the people talk about this being [inaudible 05:46:18] being oppression on--Graham has already mentioned some of the things that happened in Iraq. And you mentioned that Isis was killing various sons of Iraq and other leaders, well there's a decent amount of evidence that the government, or sectarian militias were doing the same thing too. So you can see that level of oppression that's occurring, and for various countries you can rank it, you can ratchet it up to even greater than that. On where extrajudicial killings is everything--the Lahey amendment was set up to stop from happening. Those can be characteristics of what a government does in the process of a civil war to try to exert control. And what a government does, can in certain cases, be worse than what the insurgents, or the terrorist group does.

STEVE CLEMONS: Any other comments? Let's go right here, yes. You guys are great by the way, we're going--

KYLE SISKIN: Thank you, Kyle Siskin. I served in the antiterrorist operations in Ukraine and my question is, whether the general, you would classify the Russian activity in the eastern parts of Ukraine, the diversification of military activity they are taking, whether you would classify that as terrorism in any way? Thank you.

STEVE CLEMONS: Yes.

STEVE CLEMONS: Okay, good. It does raise an interesting question that relates to the other gentleman here, on the question of terrorism, which is the evolution of hybrid war between states. In which lots of other players--and again, looking at the Saudi-Iranian context that are paying attention to what the Russians just did in Ukraine, and how you operate on a lot of different fronts. This is cybersecurity awareness month, apparently. But when you look at cyber, you look at unflagged soldiers. When you look at lots of other kinds of things, it does raise the question that this gentleman just posed and links to the last, on whether that is something that is going to be a growing trend. So again as we talk about war and conflict and extremism, I'm wondering how we continue to talk about it in the neat ways about who's driving it. Where that's going to be a problem.

RICHARD ENGLISH: Yes, I think we can't talk about it neatly. The terrorist groups that matter, do other things apart from terrorism. And they various different kinds of things, which are going to move causes forward. And I think looking at them as operators who use terrorism and other methods too, is a more practical way of understanding them.





STEVE CLEMONS: Do we have any other--right here. We'll take the last question here. This is going to be our last question. Is this a really great question? Do you feel pressure?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I do feel pressure--

STEVE CLEMONS: No go ahead.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So this morning, and Senator Mitchell talked a lot about the economic conditions that underly violence and recruitment into violent groups, and that hasn't really been discussed in this panel, and I was thinking what you all had to say from your perspective about economic conditions facilitating violent extremism.

STEVE CLEMONS: Terrific question. Richard?

RICHARD ENGLISH: My comment on that is it's particularly important when things are coming to an end. The decisive thing for terrorism coming to an end is when the leadership of the group thinks that the violence that it thought would bring victory isn't going to bring victory and they need some way out. At that moment, the long process of building an alternative will be enhanced by outside actors that also internal forces meaning there's an economic viability which enables people to soften the landing after a conflict. Without that it's much more difficult.

STEVE CLEMONS: Graham?

GRAEME WOOD: I think economic conditions are an important aspect of understanding the phenomenon--I'll speak of Isis specifically. Yes, on the other hand of the say 40,000 people who are traveling to fight on Isis' behalf, overwhelmingly they're fighting on Isis' behalf and moving to a location of worse economic conditions from where they started. So it's certainly not a straight up monotomic relationship. The worse the economic conditions that someone faces, the more likely he's going to be a terrorist, in fact I think it might work more--

In fact, I think it might work much in the other direction. What you do find though is why were they going to Iraq rather than some other place. I think that it probably mattered a lot that the economic conditions reflected misgovernment, reflected a lack of control in that place so it's a relationship that should be examined but with great care.

STEVE CLEMONS: Carter

CARTER MALKASIAN: I found that economic conditions have played the greatest role in the original breakdown on social order and I don't have enough time to into detail but you can see that happening a lot more dramatically and I can see it happening in conflict itself.



STEVE CLEMONS: I agree with everything you said but I sort of see it differently as well. I would say go back and look at history because there are things we used to do that we don't do anymore. John Foster Dulles after World War II was so concerned about Japan and where it might go and how it might evolve, where Germany, that we wedged those economies deeply into the United States economy on a privileged bases. I've always wondered if Afghanistan might have turned out differently than it did if we had made a major push to essentially own the Afghani textile product completely.

You know there are a lot of labor unions... we were spending 120 billion dollars a year in a country with 12 billion dollar GDP and so you know we could have bought the country 10 times over if... and we didn't affect the fundamental economic conditions. So yeah I think I'm gonna to put my thumb on your question, that it's much more important than people think and there are ways in which we historically... we may not have had the capacity to do that but if you become very important to the livelihoods of families and what not somewhere, that then I think changes the possibility of how they look at their future. So with that I really want to thank Richard English, Grian Wood, Carter[inaudible 05:51:46]Hayes for a wonderful discussion and thank you all for joining us at the view today.