Introduction

Understanding US–Muslim Counterterrorism Cooperation

In 2002, under pressure from the United States, Pervez Musharraf – the president of Pakistan – implemented several policies intended to combat the influence of extremist groups in the country's educational system.[1] Musharraf had reason to believe that the United States took its efforts seriously: US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage had reportedly threatened to bomb Pakistan "back to the stone age" if Pakistan did not take action against al-Qaeda elements in the country.[2] Domestic backlash to these policies was significant and almost immediate. One Islamic figure claimed these reforms were aimed at "removing Quranic . . . verses on Jihad and fundamentals of Islam," and that US "talk of curbing extremism" was a "garb for invading Muslim countries."[3] A newspaper editorial attacked Musharraf for trying to remove "jihad" from the curriculum, arguing that jihad is not only a "basic concept of Islam," but also "part of the motto of the Pakistani Army since independence."[4] In response to this opposition, Musharraf backed down on his reforms, resulting in little substantive change to the country's educational system.

This is just one example of the complex exchanges involving Muslim states, US counterterrorism pressure, and domestic Islamic politics

[1] "Pakistan: Government to Amend Law Regarding Registration of Islamic Seminaries," September 28, 2005. Accessed through World News Connection.
[2] "US 'Threatened to Bomb' Pakistan," *BBC News Online*, September 22, 2006.
[3] Pakistani Leader: USA 'Biggest Terrorist' on Earth, Musharraf Acting as Servant, December 10, 2005. Accessed through World News Connection.
[4] "Pakistan: Editorial Disapproves US Demand of 'Excluding Jihad' From Curriculum," August 22, 2005. Accessed through World News Connection.

that took place during the United States' "global war on terrorism." On September 20, 2001, US President George W. Bush gave a speech to a joint session of Congress, in which he laid out the US response to the deadly 9/11 terrorist attacks. This was followed by a worldwide effort to disrupt the al-Qaeda network – the group that perpetrated the attacks – and reform political systems in the "Muslim world" to prevent similar violent movements from arising. The effort included two invasions, numerous negotiations in international forums, and covert actions around the world. US counterterrorism efforts also built on more than a decade's worth of US policies designed to understand and counter the growing threat from international and transnational terrorism.

US counterterrorism efforts quickly became a religious issue among Muslims, however. As the United States increased its activities against Islamic groups in the 1990s, many saw these as directed against Muslims or Islam in general. After 9/11, when US policymakers discussed the need to reform Muslim societies and promote a "moderate Islam," these concerns grew stronger. Many Islamic groups came to oppose US counterterrorism efforts on religious grounds, and saw Muslim states' cooperation with the United States as un-Islamic or detrimental to Muslims. Even Muslims who were not part of organized Islamic groups or were generally secular perceived US efforts as an attack on the worldwide Muslim community. US counterterrorism efforts – and Muslim states' participation in those efforts – were thus met with widespread opposition, much of it religious in nature.

The previous example on Pakistan came to constitute a pattern: US pressure on Muslim allies to step up their counterterrorism efforts, followed by backlash and backtracking. This was emblematic of interactions between the United States and Muslim states over counterterrorism before and after the 9/11 attacks.

In the 1990s, Saudi Arabia, a long-time and crucial US ally in the Middle East, dragged its heels on counterterrorism as the United States pressed the Saudis to combat support for Osama bin Ladin and his al-Qaeda network in that country. As Steve Coll put it, "Saudi Arabia competed with Pakistan for the status of America's most frustrating counterterrorism ally," due to the significant financing going to al-Qaeda from the country and its government's hesitance to do anything about it.[5] After the 9/11 attacks, anger at the fact that many of the hijackers came from

[5] Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Ladin, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2011* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004): 516–517.

Saudi Arabia nearly derailed US-Saudi relations. Rachel Bronson relays the "palpable anger" in the United States "at the lack of outward Saudi contrition" in her study of US-Saudi relations; as she discusses, one high-level meeting after the 9/11 attacks even discussed options for targeting Saudi Arabia.[6]

Other countries frustrated US counterterrorism initiatives in different ways. Turkey had been a US ally and member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since the 1940s. It participated in US military operations in Iraq in the early 1990s and worked closely with the United States on many issues. When the United States began gathering allies for its planned invasion of Iraq in 2003, it turned to Turkey to support the operation. To the shock of US officials, however, Turkey decided to not participate in American military actions, significantly complicating US plans. A different sort of uncooperative behavior emerged in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Starting in 2009, Nigeria dealt with a significant terrorist threat from Boko Haram, an Islamic group that emerged in the country's north. The Nigerian state struggled to significantly disrupt this group, and Boko Haram continued to wage a brutal war against the state and its citizens.

To some, it appeared that Muslim countries – many of whom had been tied to the United States – were slipping away from US influence as it launched its Global War on Terrorism after the 9/11 attacks. Widespread popular opposition – much of it tied to or spearheaded by Islamic groups – appeared throughout Muslim countries, limiting their leaders' ability to work closely with the United States on counterterrorism. At times this expanded into violent insurgencies that threatened the state itself. And occasionally, it seemed that Muslim leaders who had previously been allies of the United States were sympathizing with al-Qaeda and affiliated groups by dragging their feet on counterterrorism initiatives.

But this does not tell the entire story. For every example of a Muslim state being uncooperative on counterterrorism in the face of Islamic opposition, there is a counterexample of a different state walking in lockstep with the United States despite very real domestic political costs.

Many states posed no problems for the United States as it launched the Global War on Terror. Egypt, which had previously repressed Islamic groups, continued this repression and expanded its efforts to focus on US priorities like extremist messaging and support for al-Qaeda. Central

[6] Rachel Bronson, *Thicker Than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 235–236.

Asian states like Uzbekistan kept a firm hold on Islamic activism in their society, frequently clashing with Islamic groups that became too active. Not all examples of cooperation were so repressive: in relatively democratic Bosnia, the government at times struggled to adequately control its borders, but it for the most part implemented US counterterrorism priorities.[7]

In fact, many of the states that stood out as particularly uncooperative examples actually worked closely with the United States at other points. Turkey may have refused to help invade Iraq, but this was nearly its only example of uncooperative counterterrorism behavior in the years after 9/11. The state launched mass arrests of suspected al-Qaeda members, reformed its financial restrictions, and was an active supporter of US counterterrorism efforts in international forums. Saudi Arabia continued to drag its heels on counterterrorism after the 9/11 attacks, but it moved quickly to crack down on al-Qaeda supporters after a string of terrorist attacks there in 2003.

The story is further complicated by the nature of states' uncooperative behavior. In most of these cases, the uncooperative behavior was not the result of regimes joining with Islamic groups to support a rejection of US hegemony. Instead, leaders responded to complicated political situations by attempting to avoid domestic backlash for not supporting supposed Islamic causes. This can be seen in Pakistan, where the late Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto – speaking about Pakistan's support for the Taliban in Afghanistan – argued that Pakistani regimes were often "slowly sucked into" policies like supporting Islamic militants by pressure from powerful political groups.[8] None of this uncooperative behavior was the result of a society-wide desire to join al-Qaeda in its struggle. Some militants, of course, did – as in Somalia – but many Islamic groups were more critical of their states' cooperation with the United States than they were sympathetic to al-Qaeda. In addition, these Islamic groups did not represent all, or even a majority, of Muslim societies. For example, as Cohen notes in his history of Pakistan, few Islamist movements in the country had a broad following; until 2002, no Islamist party received greater than 5 percent of the vote in elections.[9]

[7] "Country Reports on Terrorism 2003," ed. US Department of State (2004).
[8] Quoted in Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Ladin, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2011*, 293.
[9] Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

MAKING SENSE OF THIS PUZZLE, AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The scholar, policymaker, or general observer of international relations thus encounters a puzzle when trying to make sense of the dynamics of religion and US–Muslim counterterrorism cooperation. Namely, why was there such variation among states – and even within states across time – in the extent to which they cooperated in the US Global War on Terror? If relations were marked by widespread Islamic opposition, why did so many states cooperate? On the other hand, if one tries to argue that Islam was really irrelevant to these decisions, then how do we explain cases of states refusing to cooperate in contentious areas despite significant US pressure? We can readily develop plausible, detailed explanations of particular states' cooperation – or lack thereof – but would struggle to generalize from this specific observation to explain these overall patterns of cooperation.

Understanding this puzzle is crucial to anyone interested in religion and international relations, US influence over the world, or contemporary events in Muslim countries. My primary motivation for launching this investigation was to better understand the complicated relationship between religion and international relations. Since the 9/11 attacks, scholars, policymakers, and the general public have been grappling with the question of what role religion plays in world events, and what role it will play in the future.[10] As an example of a highly contentious issue with widespread religious opposition, the case of US–Muslim counterterrorism cooperation is a crucial one for those studying the importance of religion. At the same time, it is also an area that has direct

[10] For examples, see Thomas Banchoff, ed. *Religious Pluralism, Globalization and World Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Eva Bellin, "Faith in Politics: New Trends in the Study of Religion and Politics," *World Politics* 60, no. 2 (2008); Erik Gartzke and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Identity and Conflict: Ties That Bind and Differences That Divide," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 1 (2006); Peter S. Henne, "The Two Swords: Religion-State Connections and Interstate Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research* 49, no. 6 (2012); Michael Horowitz, "Long Time Going: Religion and the Duration of Crusading," *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009); Daniel Philpott, "Has the Study of Global Politics Found Religion?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009); Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2011); Daniel H. Nexon, *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires and International Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Ron E. Hassner, "To Halve and to Hold: Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility," *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003).

effects on states' security and even their survival. If religion affects counterterrorism cooperation, this indicates how important it is in international relations, as it can influence behavior even in life or death situations.

Another area where understanding of this question is crucial is the United States' ability to influence weaker states' foreign and domestic policies, and the broader nature of hierarchy in the international system.[11] Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have debated whether or not the United States is in decline, and how this purported decline relates to the influence that the US is able to wield over other states. The Global War on Terrorism was a case of a powerful state – the United States – organizing international efforts by exerting pressure on weaker states to comply with its policy priorities. Yet, domestic and transnational opposition (in this case, religious contention in Muslim countries) at times complicated and undermined these efforts. The nature of US influence over Muslim states' counterterrorism cooperation in the face of domestic opposition indicates the varying power of the United States over others' domestic and foreign security policies. Moreover, if religious politics complicated US counterterrorism efforts, this also suggests that contentious politics in weak states can undermine hierarchical relationships.

Finally, an examination of the religion and international relations question can provide insight into other situations in which the United States or other states are attempting to direct Muslim states' behavior on contentious issues. The US Global War on Terrorism will undoubtedly not be the last time the United States becomes involved in the Middle East or South Asia on religiously salient issues. The current turmoil in the Middle East – beginning with the Arab Spring protests and continuing with the rise of the brutal Islamic State movement in Iraq and Syria – is arguably a similar case of Muslim states reacting to a religious issue with distinct security implications. Understanding how this religious

[11] For discussions on these points, see Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, *World Out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Robert J. Lieber, *The American Era: Power and Strategy for the 21st Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Charles A. Kupchan, *The End of the American Era: US Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 2002); Daniel H. Nexon and Wright, "What's at Stake in the American Empire Debate?," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007); Alexander Cooley, *Logics of Hierarchy: The Organization of Empires, States and Military Occupations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); David A. Lake, "Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics," *International Security* 32, no. 1 (2007).

contention interacts with regional states' security concerns will be crucial to policymakers and observers.

I will answer these questions and provide insight into these areas of international relations through a new theory on institutional religion–state relationships, a quantitative analysis, and case studies of Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Turkey. In this introduction, I first discuss existing explanations for US–Muslim counterterrorism cooperation and why they are insufficient. I will then present my explanation before previewing the book's chapters.

Existing Explanations

There have been numerous attempts to explain the response of Muslim states to US counterterrorism efforts. Some focus on Islam or Muslim culture, others on security and material interests, and still others on anti-Americanism not directly related to religion. All of these various explanations have been useful in illuminating particular aspects of US–Muslim counterterrorism relations. None, however, have been able to provide a comprehensive explanation for all aspects of these interactions or the role of religion in them.

One prominent set of explanations for US–Muslim counterterrorism cooperation focuses on Islam, or Muslim culture. The specifics vary, but these explanations generally argue that trends within Muslim societies explain their hostility toward the United States and US efforts, such as counterterrorism. In an extreme form, the argument runs that Muslims reject modernity and support a group like al-Qaeda as the vanguard for their ideal society. Following this argument, Muslim states either agree with this sentiment or are compelled to follow along to appease Muslim constituents. Most scholars do not go this far, however. Instead, they may argue that Muslim societies are currently facing turmoil due to the effects of globalization or the political weakness of Muslim states, and that this turmoil makes Muslim societies and states look unfavorably on US efforts such as counterterrorism cooperation. In this explanation, al-Qaeda is a symptom of this turmoil. Refusal to work with the United States, then, is a by-product of the struggles within Muslim states. For example, Mousseau points to the tension between Muslim societies and market forces.[12] And Lieber argues "tensions over individual and national

[12] Michael Mousseau, "Market Civilization and Its Clash with Terror," ibid. 27, no. 3 (2002).

identity" in Muslim countries has given rise to tensions that come to focus on the United States.[13] Likewise, Lewis discusses a long-running struggle within Muslim societies to make sense of why Muslims have declined in importance in the past two centuries.[14] Alternately, some argue that Muslims identify more with each other than they do with their respective states, so uncooperative behavior on counterterrorism is the result of this universal Muslim alignment and its opposition to US power. The most famous model for this argument is Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, in which he argues that civilizations – rather than states – will be the dominant mode of political organization, and a major fault line will lie between the Muslim and Western civilizations.[15]

This category of explanations is too broad to explain the dynamics of US–Muslim counterterrorism cooperation. A "civilization"-wide motivation or tensions among all Muslims would not be able to explain why some Muslim countries cooperated with US counterterrorism efforts and others did not. Moreover, as I discussed earlier, it would be confounded by the strategic nature of Muslim states' uncooperative behavior. Additionally, some of these explanations operate on a different level than this book. It may be that scholars like Lieber are right that tensions within Muslim countries explain much of the anger at the United States. But this is separate question from understanding why religious opposition to counterterrorism resulted in different effects in different Muslim countries.

Others would argue that US–Muslim counterterrorism cooperation has nothing to do with religion, and everything to do with conventional matters of statecraft. To these scholars, Muslim states cooperated on counterterrorism for the same reasons they cooperate on anything; it was in their best interest. Likewise, Muslim states did not cooperate when they had no reason to or were unable to cooperate. For example, Lieber and Alexander argue that examples like Turkey refusing to invade Iraq stem from regional security dynamics and domestic politics, not a broader rejection of the United States.[16] Byman also argues that many

[13] Lieber, *The American Era: Power and Strategy for the 21st Century*, 183.
[14] Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2003).
[15] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
[16] Kier A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back," *International Security* 30 no. 1 (2005).

of the issues the United States faced in getting its allies to cooperate on counterterrorism had to do with the weakness of these states and their limited capacity.[17] Likewise, some recent studies point out the differing effects of foreign aid on terrorism. One study indicates increased foreign aid can improve a country's counterterrorism efforts, while another study suggested greater dependence on the United States can promote the rise of terrorist groups.[18]

These explanations are not necessarily wrong, but they are incomplete. Much counterterrorism cooperation can be partially explained by non-religious factors. However, it is difficult to make sense of these dynamics without taking Islamic politics into account. As I will discuss in the chapter on Pakistan, both the weakness of the Pakistani state and its security concerns about India were closely tied to religious politics within the country. Likewise, domestic politics did help drive the counterterrorism policies of states, but it was a specific type of domestic politics arising from religious contention. Moreover, the security concerns that led, for example, Turkey to not participate in the Iraq invasion relate to its reasons for cooperating in other areas of counterterrorism. Turkey's uncooperative behavior on Iraq, and its cooperation in other areas of counterterrorism, was partly related to its concerns over Kurdish separatism in Turkey. Despite these security concerns, Turkey did face intense Islamic opposition to its US ties before and after 9/11. Any explanation of Turkish counterterrorism must be able to explain how Turkey was able to ignore this opposition. Finally, sometimes states were not acting according to their interests by being uncooperative on counterterrorism. Dragging their heels on counterterrorism was a potentially dangerous prospect when it involved angering the most powerful state in the international system that had recently invaded two countries.

Still others would argue that while uncooperative counterterrorism behavior is related to domestic backlash against US efforts, this backlash itself has little to do with religion. Instead, it is related to anger at US actions or broader North-South political divisions. That is, both Muslim and non-Muslim societies were upset with the United States because

[17] Daniel Byman, "Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism," ibid. 31, no. 2 (2006).

[18] Thomas Griesa, Daniel Meierrieksb, and Margarete Redlinc, "Oppressive Governments, Dependence on the USA, and Anti-American Terrorism," *Oxford Economic Papers* 67, no.1 (2015): 83–103; Subhayu Bandyopadhyay, Todd Sandler, and Javed Younas, "Foreign Aid as Counterterrorism Policy," ibid. 63, no. 3 (2011).

its counterterrorism efforts involved controversial policies or because the United States is the dominant power in a system that disadvantaged many of them. Driven by this sentiment, Muslim states refused to cooperate. For example, Finnemore argues that US counterterrorism efforts lack legitimacy.[19] Keohane and Kaztenstein's edited volume on anti-Americanism also highlights the numerous causes of US opposition within Muslim states that had little to do with Islam.[20] Moreover, while he does not focus on counterterrorism, Voeten analyzed states' votes in the United Nations and found that there were a distinct divide between developed and developing states on many international issues.[21] It would be easy to expand this to point toward such a "North-South" divide on counterterrorism.

This explanation is not actually in direct conflict with a religion-focused explanation. Much of the anti-Americanism in Muslim countries does relate to religion, especially the sense that US counterterrorism policy or its broader foreign policies – such as its support for Israel – are targeting Muslims or Islam itself. It is difficult to explain anti-American attitudes and anger at US actions without reference to religious beliefs or identity. At the same time, much of the opposition of Islamic groups to US counterterrorism efforts, and their critiques of Muslim governments more generally, are related to religion. As I will discuss in this book's case studies, numerous Islamic groups contend with their governments and point to Islam or religious causes to justify their anger.

Finally, many eschew broad explanations and focus instead on the dynamics of particular states. For example, Hussein Haqqani provides an in-depth discussion of how the Pakistani military developed ties to extremist Islamic groups and how this affected the state's foreign policies, including its counterterrorism relationship with the United States.[22] Hakan Yavuz also discusses how the rise of the Justice and Development Party (*Adelet ve Kalkinma Partisi*, AKP) – the conservative religious party that has ruled Turkey since 2002 and shaped its current politics – relates to socioeconomic changes in the 1980s and 1990s and why the party

[19] Martha Finnemore, "Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All It's Cracked up to Be," *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (2009).
[20] Robert O. Keohane and Peter J. Katzenstein, *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).
[21] Erik Voeten, "Resisting the Lonely Superpower: Responses of States in the United Nations to US Dominance," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 3 (2004).
[22] Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005).