Uniting Against a Common Enemy: Formation of International Alliances Against CBRN Terrorism

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The threat of terrorism, whether from conventional weapons (tanks, assault rifles, etc.) or unconventional weapons (i.e. biological weapons), has become the new norm and is now globally acknowledged. This paper examines the forces that shape international alliances by which countries attract allies to stand against a common enemy. It will then attempt to contribute to the understanding of how the Middle Eastern countries are uniting and collaborating with the international community to defeat their new enemy, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and the threat of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) terrorism. The factors that determine how countries choose their allies shape the country’s international relationship and perception. Some of the key areas that are examined in this paper are the evolution of the definition of alliance (pre/post 9/11) in countering terrorism and the threat caused by CBRN terrorism. It will also examine the choices made by the great powers, such as the United States, on whom to protect and how. Finally, it will analyze the potential threats, namely the globalization of ISIS, that have forced Middle Eastern countries to seek alliance with other regional neighbors, as well as Europe and the United States. The international community, especially the Middle Eastern countries are forming alliances and uniting to defeat a common enemy, ISIS, and their threat of CBRN terrorism.

Alliances are a vital part of the war on terrorism and understanding the origins of alliances is even more crucial. As Stephen Walt states in his book, The Origins of Alliances, “failure to understand the origins of alliances can be fatal” (Walt 1987, 2). Often, a country’s counterterrorism strategy relies on international cooperation (9/11 Commission 2005, 4), therefore it is vital that a country chooses its friends wisely and not fall prey to adversaries. As Walt outlines in his book, there are many factors that cause a country to support another country’s foreign policy. One of the hypotheses discussed is that countries with similar internal characteristics (i.e. foreign policy) are more likely to ally than with countries whose foreign affairs are different from their own. Countries with similar ideologies usually tend to become loyal allies of one another since ideology plays an important role in causing an alignment among countries. Another hypothesis is the balancing of power, but more importantly, the balance of threats. Walt emphasizes that, “states ally to balance against threats” (Walt 1987, 5). The distribution of power, namely threat, is crucial as it is affected by capabilities and intent.

The meaning of alliances has changed however since the 9/11 attacks. After 9/11, the definition of alliances evolved from the traditional definition of countries with similar ideologies
collaborating with one another to counterterrorism alliances. The attacks of September 11, 2001 redefined the concept of terrorism. It was realized that terrorists operate without borders and have no limit to cause harm. Recent international terrorism has indicated the need to unite efforts in the fight against terrorism, and CBRN terrorism has become a huge threat to peace and security (Vitkauskaitė-Meurice 2014, 2). The traditional definition of alliances had always been military alliance, such as supporting another country by sending coalition forces, but over the past decade alliance has taken on a new definition, which entails counterterrorism alliance.

After 9/11, counterterrorism alliance was more focused on preventing and countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) terrorism through collaboration. Counterterrorism alliance no longer means boots on the ground; rather it is shared intelligence, liaison services, swapping technology, and increased funding to our allies to support their counterterrorism budget. In the article, *The International Cooperation in the Fight Against the WMD Terrorism*, the authors explain that “the fight against the terrorism can be generally defined as long-term activities that include the use of non-military instruments and methods in the ultimate extent. These are mainly diplomatic, political, economic and legal instruments, international cooperation, implementation of preventive and repressive measures etc. Their primary aim is to prevent and counter terrorist acts” (Adaskova et. al. 2013, 2). Thus counterterrorism alliance is defined as joint cooperation between different nations to eliminate the security threat posed by non-conventional terrorism.

It is noteworthy that counterterrorism alliance was first seen in the collaboration efforts of the United Nations (UN) and other countries after 9/11. “Working hand in hand, the United Nations and individual states contributed to the prevention of terrorism primarily through the adoption of multiple international documents from counter-terrorism conventions and protocols to Security Council resolutions 1267–1988/1989 (Al Qaida/Taliban Sanction regime). However, the ground document giving the legacy to combat nuclear terrorism is considered to be the Resolution 154012 adopted by the UN Security Council13” (Vitkauskaitė-Meurice 2014, 6). The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 published in 2004 is one of many measures taken to increase international collaboration to address the threat of WMD by having countries prevent the acquisition of WMD material by terrorist groups. This Strategy that was set in place by the UN has had influence in promoting partnership and cooperation between countries and the international community to strengthen counterterrorism mechanisms in the global fight against
terrorism. Although there are still many gaps in the network of partnership that need to be bridged effectively, the progress in cooperation seems to be on the way.

Another key area in counterterrorism alliance discussed in this paper is the responsibility of the world’s great powers and their role in increasing partnership and collaboration at the national and global levels. The United States, as one of the world’s greatest powers, faces one of the greatest challenges. As a great power, the United States has to make sound decisions on alliance preferences, but more importantly on which alliance(s) to protect. The United States foreign policy and international position has been globally favorable. It has held a global alliance with capabilities that exceed most other countries in the world. Daniel Byman states, “the United States has improved counterterrorism cooperation with former adversaries such as Russia and Syria and strengthened relations with a host of previously neglected countries” (Byman 2006, 2). Undoubtedly, the United States has taken the lead on global counterterrorism efforts; however global cooperation against terrorism is vital, especially from the Middle Eastern nations. “Countries that currently have restive Muslim populations are particularly important” (Byman 2006, 4). The United States seeks allies that wish to destroy terrorist organizations, encourages countries to increase their internal security against these terrorist organizations, and attempts to improve the capability of weak countries so they don’t fall host to these terrorist organizations. “In [short], the United States has called for shaping the global environment to hinder the spread of terrorism” (Byman 2006, 11).

The U.S. recognizes that combating terrorism, especially WMD terrorism, has to be done collaboratively. Paul Bernstein argues, “In recent years, Washington has spearheaded a number of initiatives focused on different aspects of … principles that enable concrete steps to reduce the WMD threat and increase the capacity of states to act” (Bernstein 2008, 37). The United States has been heavily engaged in bilateral discussions with several countries regarding intelligence-sharing, joint operations, and training exercises. Thus security cooperation has taken on a new meaning and has been redefined by the U.S. As Bernstein reemphasizes, “U.S. strategy for combating proliferation has long recognized the importance of engaging with allies and other security partners to increase the capacity of friendly states to assist in preventing, deterring, defending against, and responding to WMD threats. Security cooperation and building partner capacity have become increasingly salient elements in defense strategy in general, and in the parallel campaigns against global terrorism and WMD in particular” (Bernstein 2008, 42). The
U.S. has undoubtedly taken on a leadership role in counterterrorism initiatives and has contributed a significant amount of resources to the global fight on terrorism. Additionally, it has always offered other countries leadership opportunities to lead or co-lead cooperation efforts as well.

Despite its great stature, the U.S. has been careful in choosing which key initiatives to lead due to the anti-American sentiment that exists in parts of the world. One thing is clear though, and that is that building international partnerships is key to the U.S. strategy of combating terrorism, especially CBRN terrorism. Thus, as we have seen recently with the rise of the new terrorist group, ISIS, the U.S. has led a coalition to destroy and disarm this terrorist organization. As more countries join the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS, the alliance of Middle Eastern countries becomes key as they are the center of struggle in this war against terrorism.

In his book titled, The Rise of ISIS: A Threat We Can’t Ignore, Jay Sekulow explains, “The world's wealthiest and most powerful jihadists, ISIS, originated within Al Qaeda with the goal of creating an Islamic state across Iraq and Syria and unrelenting jihad on Christians.” (Sekulow 2014, 1). ISIS, led by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, arose in Iraq in the spring of 2014 and started their slaughter in Mosul, home of a large population of Assyrians. ISIS’s mission and apocalyptic ideology is to establish an Islamic Caliphate in the world and they receive an ample amount of funding from looting banks, invading oil refineries, holding hostages for ransom, and many more inhumane acts like these. Unlike their Al-Qa’eda predecessors, ISIS target every nation, every race, and every religion, even their own. ISIS feeds on chaos and after crisis broke out in Syria and then Iraq, ISIS found the perfect opportunity to take their terror to these unstable countries. Iraq became especially unstable after Iraq’s President, Jalal Talabani, became sick and required emergency treatment for which he was taken to Germany. Iraq’s former Prime Minister, Nouri Al-Maliki (a Shiite), found an open door to treat the Sunnis unfairly, ultimately dividing the country into religious sectors.

The oppressed and resentful Sunnis, tired of Al-Maliki’s violent treatment, welcomed ISIS into the Anbar province (the same Anbar province that had previously driven out Al-Qa’eda). “The environment was prepared for ISIS to enter Iraq widely, and all the support of the people at first came as a regular reaction to the unfairness that the Sunnis faced from the past Iraqi governments—especially the al-Maliki government,” says Muthasher al-Samuaei, former governor of Salahuddin province, which is now largely controlled by al-Baghdadi’s men. ISIS
told the Sunnis they are here to support Sunnis” (Von Drehle 2015, 27). With only a small force of 25,000 to 30,000 killers, ISIS has been able to globalize its brand and spread terror in the world. They have capitalized on their branding via the social network and media outlets leading the world to believe that they are larger than life. “The ability of ISIS to inspire violence beyond its sphere of control rests with its propaganda arm. ISIS is a movement that would be hiding in caves if it did not have a professional cadre of trained, internationally recruited, professional light infantry” (Von Drehle 2015, 29). They have been marketing their brand to give the illusion that they are an unstoppable force, thus appealing to younger generations and sympathizers via social outlets, such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, etc. They are in fact defeated on the battle field, however the lone wolf attacks that they carry out make it seem like they’re invincible.

The other outrage across the globe is the declaration of pledge of allegiance to ISIS by radical individuals or small terrorist groups who are incapable of carrying out massive attacks on their own. Figure 1 below, shows the various individuals and groups from different countries who have pledged to join ISIS (Von Drehle 2015, 28-29).
Figure 1: Spheres of Influence. It illustrates the various countries from which radicalized individuals and other small terrorist groups have pledged allegiance to ISIS.

In addition to the danger of their recruiting strategy, there is also a significant concern regarding ISIS and its acquisition and use of CBRN weapons. The threat here is that there are already ample amounts of evidence of chemical use, such as chlorine gas, by ISIS in Syria and Iraq against Kurdish Peshmerga (fighters). In his article on *CBRN Defense in the Age of* IS and
Ebola, Andy Oppenheimer reports, “In mid-July the Kurdistan press reported unverified claims by local doctors and officials that IS had used some kind of CW that instantly killed Kurdish YPG fighters during clashes in Kobani, north-eastern Syria [after capturing the massive former chemical weapons facility of Muthanna in Iraq in June]. Having carried out post-mortems, the doctors claimed to have found symptoms and “strange white injuries” with no signs of gunshot and shrapnel wounds” (Oppenheimer 2014, 33). There have also been numerous other reports about ISIS’s CBRN use attempt. According to unverified reports that emerged late last year, “at least 14 ISIS members had been killed while filling a rocket warhead with chlorine gas.

According to Iraqi security officials, seven more ISIS militants were injured in the explosion, which occurred near the town of al-Dhuluiya, 90km north of Baghdad. And improvised chemical devices (ICDs) have also reportedly been used: Four Iraqi security forces personnel and Shiite militia members suffered symptoms of asphyxiation after inhaling chlorine gas released by two IEDs” (Oppenheimer 2014, 33). Later more frightening reports surfaced of a “doomed laptop” that had been confiscated from an ISIS militant’s apartment (a chemistry student) that stored many documents and manuals on how to develop and use biological weapons (BW).

The brutality that ISIS has displayed since its inception, even towards other Muslims, has led the Arab nations’ leaders to finally come to the same table and start “Alliance” talks. This is a significant phenomenon as never before has there been a time when the Middle Eastern countries joined to fight on the same side. The Arab nations have been at war with one another for centuries, and only now they’re beginning to unite against a common enemy. These alliance talks are the foundation to dealing with the security challenges that are facing the Middle East, especially since the rise of ISIS. Not only are there security challenges due to the irrationality of this terrorist group, but there are also many security challenges regarding bioterrorism and their use of CBRN. Since the 9/11 attacks and in light of these current CBRN attacks by ISIS, the US and many other countries, including Middle Eastern countries, have spent billions of dollars on CBRN defense equipment and training, as well as the prevention of proliferation of CBRN material and weapons, which have achieved variable levels of international cooperation.

Perhaps the most important area that this paper examines are some of the forces that shape the evolution of a country’s foreign policy and international alliance, and how this applies to the U.S.-led coalition forces built to defeat ISIS. To understand present alliance formation strategies, we have to go back to the past and analyze how countries choose and form allies in
the first place. It is said that some countries “bandwagon for profit” and will align with the stronger power in conflict. Countries, especially great powers like the United States, will sometimes defend remote areas in the name of its national interests. Traditionally, countries form allies by balancing or bandwagoning to improve their internal security. As Randall Schweller articulates, “The aim of balancing is self-preservation and the protection of values already possessed, while the goal of bandwagoning is usually self-extension: to obtain values coveted. Simply put, balancing is driven by the desire to avoid losses; bandwagoning by the opportunity for gain” (Schweller 1994, 4). In reality, states have very different reasoning in either forming alliances by balancing or bandwagoning when faced with an external threat. Domestic factors play a huge role in alliance decisions. Whatever alliance pattern states choose though, it is to achieve the ultimate goal of increasing internal security to protect against acts of terrorism. This is made clear by the 60 nations, including the Arab nations that have joined the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS (Fantz & Pearson 2015, CNN). Some of these countries have contributed to the fight via monetary value, others have supplied weaponry by arming the Kurdish Peshmerga, while others have provided airstrike support. Table 1 below shows the countries in the coalition and the type of support that they have provided to fight terrorism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country in U.S.-Led Coalition</th>
<th>Type of Support Country is Providing to Fight ISIS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Australia has participated in airstrikes and humanitarian missions in Iraq, and has sent special forces and other troops to help train Iraqi security forces in first aid, explosive hazards, urban combat and working dog programs, according to the defense ministry. As of February 12, Australian aircraft had carried out about 13% of all coalition airstrikes, Vice Adm. David Johnston told reporters.</td>
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<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>The oil-wealthy Gulf nation east of Saudi Arabia was part of the first handful of nations that participated in airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria. Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed al Khalifa, speaking on CNN in September, called ISIS a &quot;deviated cult&quot; that must be fought. On Sunday, Bahrain announced it was sending aircraft to Jordan to participate in anti-ISIS efforts. Bahrain has had close relations with the United States for years, and the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain.</td>
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<td>Belgium</td>
<td>The country has conducted airstrikes against ISIS targets, according to U.S. Central Command. In January, Belgian authorities broke up a plot by ISIS veterans to launch a terror attack in the country.</td>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>Its warplanes have flown 310 sorties against ISIS targets as of February 11, the Canadian armed forces reported. Canadian aircraft have also flown dozens of aerial refueling and reconnaissance missions in support of the anti-ISIS fight, and its cargo aircraft have been used to deliver military aid from Albania and the Czech Republic, the Canadian military said. The military has also sent a small detachment to help advise the Iraqi government and donated $5 million in humanitarian aid.</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
<td>It has conducted airstrikes against ISIS targets, according to U.S. Central Command.</td>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>The country struck ISIS targets in Libya on Monday after the group reportedly executed 21 Egyptian Christians, and called on anti-ISIS coalition partners to do the same, saying the group poses a threat to international safety and security. Egypt had previously agreed to join the anti-ISIS coalition, but details about its role, if any, have been scarce. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has said Egypt has a critical role to play in countering ISIS ideology, and Egypt's grand mufti condemned the terror group, saying that its actions are not in line with Islam, Al-Arabiya reported.</td>
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<td>France</td>
<td>French planes have taken part in airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq, and the nation has flown reconnaissance flights over Iraq, contributed ammunition and made humanitarian drops over the nation. France's air force was also part of an operation in the Iraqi town of Amerli, along with Australia and Great Britain that pushed back ISIS fighters. ISIS has called for attacks against Western citizens, singling out &quot;the spiteful and filthy French&quot; for punishment. A video emerged of militants who have pledged allegiance to ISIS beheading Herve Gourdel, a French citizen who was kidnapped in Algeria.</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
<td>Although it has declined to participate in airstrikes, Germany has provided Kurdish forces in Iraq with $87 million worth of weapons and other military equipment, along with a handful of troops to help with training, German broadcaster Deutsche Welle reported. Germany has also banned activities supporting ISIS, including making it illegal to fly the trademark black flag of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>It has sent weapons and ammunition valued at $2.5 million to Kurdish fighters in Iraq, along with 280 troops to help train them, according to Foreign Policy magazine.</td>
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<td>Jordan</td>
<td>The country initially joined in airstrikes against ISIS but suspended its participation when one of its aircraft went down in Syria, leading to the capture of pilot Lt. Moath al-Kasasbeh. The kingdom resumed its attacks in February after ISIS released a video depicting the pilot being burned to death in a cage.</td>
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<td>Kurdistan</td>
<td>The Kurdish fighting force, the Peshmerga, is battling ISIS on the ground. Kurdish fighters helped expel ISIS forces from the Syrian city of Kobani in January, and are fighting ISIS forces near Mosul, Iraq, and Sinjar Mountain, the site of a dramatic siege this summer by militants of ethnic minority Yazidis.</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>The Dutch government sent F-16 fighter jets to bomb ISIS targets and troops to help train Kurdish forces. As of early February, Dutch warplanes had conducted nearly 300 strikes on ISIS targets, the Defense Ministry said.</td>
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<td>Qatar</td>
<td>The small but rich Gulf nation that hosts one of the largest American bases in the Middle East has flown a number of humanitarian flights, State Department officials said. In late September, in his first interview as the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani vowed to support the coalition.</td>
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<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>The kingdom has sent warplanes to strike ISIS targets in Syria and agreed to host efforts to train moderate Syrian rebels to fight ISIS. It also donated $500 million to U.N.</td>
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Turkey

Though the NATO member initially offered only tacit support for the coalition, Turkey's government in 2014 authorized the use of military force against terrorist organizations, including ISIS, as the militant group's fighters took towns just south of Turkey's border. Foreign troops have also been allowed to launch attacks against ISIS from Turkey. U.S. officials said it had earlier taken steps to cut the flow of money to ISIS and denied entry to or deported several thousand foreign fighters heading to Syria to join the extremists.

United Arab Emirates

Like its ally Jordan, the UAE initially took part in anti-ISIS airstrikes -- the country's first female fighter pilot led one of the missions. But the government suspended its participation in December after the downing of a Jordanian fighter whose pilot was later killed. It resumed airstrikes in February, flying F-16s from Jordan against militant targets.

United Kingdom

The UK began airstrikes against ISIS in October, hitting targets four days after its Parliament approved its involvement. British planes helped Kurdish troops who were fighting ISIS in northwestern Iraq, dropping a bomb on an ISIS heavy weapon position and shooting a missile at an armed pickup, the UK's Defense Ministry said. Since then, warplanes have struck targets in Iraq dozens of times, and British planes had been involved in reconnaissance missions over that country. The British military is also helping train Kurdish Peshmerga and has sent advisers to help Iraqi commanders. Britain has also pledged more than $60 million in humanitarian aid.

Other countries: Kuwait, Albania, Czech Republic, Hungary

These countries have been providing bases, weapons, and ammunition.

Other nations: The Arab League, the European Union, Andorra, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova.

These countries have been participating in one way or another, by providing humanitarian support and other unspecified aid, and taking legal steps to curb recruitment.
Montenegro, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Panama, Poland, Portugal, South Korea, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan and Ukraine


The alliance formation patterns are examined in this paper in order to apply them to the current conditions facing the world, especially the Middle East, with the rise of ISIS. As the threat of ISIS spreads across the Middle East, into Europe, and then the United States, we see a shift in alliance patterns. Middle Eastern countries that were former foes, are now uniting and coming together to defend a common enemy. Figure 2 provides an excellent illustration of this new and upcoming pattern of alliance among the Western and Middle Eastern countries.

Figure 2: Strange Bedfellows: Parties United Against Islamic State - WSJ.com http://graphics.wsj.com/isis-strange-bedfellows/?mod=e2fb
Thomas Christensen’s study on alliance perceptions in Europe could very well be applied to the current situation in the Middle East. He asserts, “given the major power shifts occurring in the region, sensitivity to perceptions and misperceptions of basic security conditions may be especially important in analyzing the stability of a rapidly changing [Middle East]” (Christensen 1997, 29). The very definition of counterterrorism alliance as we know it has been redefined by the 9/11 attacks. This is clearly explained by the strange alliance formation network as shown in the figure above.

In conclusion, alliance formation is one of the most complex and important decisions a country makes. Selecting an ally is primarily based on the country’s domestic situation and territorial integrity. Weak countries, including great powers, balance threat or bandwagon in order to increase or achieve internal security to better defend against terrorist threats at the national or global level. However this very definition of counterterrorism as we have always known it to be has been redefined over the past decade since the unthinkable events of 9/11. Counterterrorism has taken on a new meaning, which involves the collaboration between countries whom are otherwise foes.

Since the 9/11 attacks, the international community including the Middle Eastern countries have recalculated their alliance formula and have formed alliances that would have otherwise never happened. With the recent threats of ISIS, we have witnessed conflicting Middle Eastern countries coming together and forming allies to eliminate this threat. This is a triumph given that these countries have been at war with one another for eternity. The threat of WMD use, especially CBRN use by these terrorists namely ISIS, have encouraged collaboration among the international community. Countries, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Russia are cooperating with the U.S. and other opponents in the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS. This certainly does not stamp the relationship between Iran and the U.S. as partnership or close allies, but it just reiterates the fact that counterterrorism classification has changed from having many commonalities to collaborating on the basis of one threat, in this case ISIS and its use of CBRN. Thus understanding the origins of alliances and how it has evolved over the years could help these Middle Eastern countries form allies with one another that will last for eternity.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


