

The CENTER UPDATE

“Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

In Our 21st Year

Now read in more than 41 countries throughout the world

Vol. XXI No. 3

Fall, 2021

FROM THE DIRECTOR

As with most of the rest of the world we have been inhibited from traveling due to the widespread Corona Virus, we have been able, through our Volunteers and other sources, to follow and interpret the religious-based conflict and violence in the world. So much has been said and written about this virus and its pandemic spread throughout the world. One would think that there has been no other significant news that has taken place in the last year and a half. Yes, the virus has taken more than 3 million lives and the world has reacted to this tragedy by requiring social distancing, the wearing of masks, lockdowns, vaccinations against the disease and more. Importantly, more than 150 million people have recovered from the sickness.

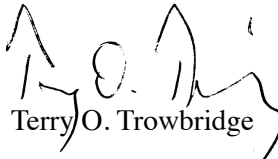
As with all other diseases, it will slowly run its course and the world will get back to “normal” again. Though it cannot be totally eradicated (nature, i.e. viruses, cannot be deleted - only controlled - by man) , its importance will end up, as the other serious epidemics have in history - the flu, small pox, malaria and so forth - being a thing of the past. And we will have moved on to the next matter of world concern.

The importance here is that a major problem was attacked, with a world effort, and is slowly being minimized to the point where it will not be the headline news every day. It is a good example of what can be done when we are made aware of a problem and when we are properly mobilized to attack it.

Religious-based conflict and violence can likewise, through similar efforts, be controlled, i.e. reduced, though not eradicated - though as shown below, now made much more difficult by recent events in Afghanistan.

Two steps forward and one step backward describes the recent dramatic change of situation in Afghanistan when, in August, the USA surprisingly and without properly coordinating with its NATO allies there, withdrew its remaining military forces while leaving thousands of its citizens and their families stranded there, as well as giving up massive amounts of weapons and complete military facilities which were quickly taken over by the Taliban - a group with clear sympathies to and support for terrorist organizations (especially the al Qaeda network in neighboring Pakistan). In fact, reports show that the al-Qaeda is itself embedded with the Taliban in at least 18 of the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. Within days of the US military leaving Afghanistan, the Taliban had taken complete control most all of Afghanistan and now governs it.

The resulting debacle has returned Afghanistan to a dangerous radical, revolutionary-controlled country and possibly a haven for terrorists such as al Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and possibly others, in all of the Middle East and possibly Africa as well. An unforeseen and unnecessary event of a magnitude which clearly has set back earlier successful efforts to neutralize their impact there. And a major blow to the recent successes of reducing religious-based conflict in that part of the world.


Terry O. Trowbridge



HOTSPOTS

Afghanistan

Within days last August Afghanistan changed from a country which had neutralized the radical Islamic forces of the Taliban to one where it again ruled that country. As noted above this happened because of the prematurely advertised pullout of all remaining US military forces leaving no support for the local government and their police and military. Because of the Taliban's radical religious position and its sympathies with other organizations which overemphasize religious differences such as al Qaeda and ISIS, among others, the impact of the withdrawal served to again place that country in the dangerous position of becoming a secure home base to them.

Never before has there been an entire country ruled by a radical, militaristic Islamic organization with terrorist qualities, in sympathy with related groups and terrorists of the same bent as well. A unique precedent and a dangerous development. Only recently there have been calls by some in the US Congress to have its State Department add the Taliban to their list of designated terrorist organizations, even further removing Afghanistan from mainstream countries in the world.

Africa

The most concerning hotspot in Africa is that where the Boko Haram controls, and area which envelopes Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Since 2009, Boko Haram has killed 36,000 people and displaced another 2.5 million civilians while seeking to establish a caliphate and depose Nigeria's government. While it coordinated with al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb post-2010, in 2016, the group splintered, with one faction continuing with allegiance to the Islamic State West Africa Province, and the other remaining steadfast to Abubakar Shekau's faction. Nigeria, the largest of the those countries, has been unable to contain Boko Haram.

The next most important hotspot there is the northern border of Mozambique with Tanzania where ISIS affiliates have killed 2,000 and displaced 430,000 civilians since 2017. ■

POTPOURRI

(What you may not have read or heard in the news)

The Islamic State in Africa

It is in sub-Saharan Africa that the Islamic State (IS) has shown the most traction recently, and that region is emerging as the locus of its activities around the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, the Islamic State now operates through two principal groups. The Islamic State West Africa Province, covers present-day Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mali. While the Islamic State Central Africa Province, covers the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique. Smaller groups include the Islamic State Somalia that operates primarily in the Horn of Africa. It is made up of defectors from al-Shabaab and is relatively small at this point. IS has also founded the Islamic State Great Sahara. Additionally, there is the Islamic State Sinai group which has been the most active of the African-centered IS jihadist groups. According to our view, and others, if a new "territorial caliphate" were to emerge, most likely it would be established in central Africa, somewhere in the region from Mali to Chad. ■

COSTS

There are at least three kinds of costs to individuals, businesses and governments from religious-based conflict and violence namely financial, economic and hidden. As an example of the latter, it has been shown from studies in Spain which have determined that exposure of expectant mothers to violence, especially terrorism, has detrimental effects on birth outcomes - in terms of average birth weight (lower), prevalence of low birth weight (higher) and number of "normal" babies (lower). Due to space limitations, however, below we describe only financial costs.

In the past we have described the financial costs to the United States alone of the Iraq and Afghan conflicts as they continued to accrue. Since the USA has removed most of its troops from Iraq and has completed the removal of its forces in Afghanistan those costs, while still increasing, will now reflect the cost of advisory support of local forces as well as other indirect costs as they incur.

→

ABOUT THE CENTER

However, additional costs are now being incurred because of the threat by ISIS in Iraq, Syria, again in Afghanistan other parts of the Middle East and Africa as well.

In Afghanistan the US military and civilian forces have, after 20+ years now completely left that country. Total costs for their period of stay are estimated to be circa \$1 trillion. This figure does not include the yet to be calculated costs of the final withdrawal fiasco in August where some 3 times the number of the remaining military troops had to, at the eleventh hour, be sent back there to rescue some 2,500 military forces and over 15,000 stranded US citizens and their families. The approximately \$1 trillion 20+ year cost substantially increased the interest on the national debt during that period as well. Total costs since 2001 for this debt alone are approximately an additional \$2 trillion.

In Iraq costs are again increasing due to the recent and new insertion of “non-combat” troops, advisors and their support, as well as the initiation of more and more air activity and humanitarian aid. Costs since 2003 total \$2.0+ trillion with an additional cost of \$600+ billion in benefits owed Iraq war veterans. Add to this circa \$4+ trillion of interest on expenses for the war since 2003.

The costs of confronting ISIS alone, (not the only instigator of religious-based conflict and violence) and not including Afghanistan, Syria or African countries, are \$45+ billion a year and are increasing dramatically each month.

Finally, total costs for combating religious-based conflict to the USA alone since 2001 are more than \$5.2+ trillion, not including the ensuing interest on US debt because of these expenditures of an additional \$813+ million.

Some may disagree with these totals or the way they are calculated, but it is fair to say that they continue to be astonishing. While they may not be 100% accurate, they do at least, generally reflect the costs generated by these religious-based conflicts as borne by the United States. Note that these financial costs are for attacking the *effects* of religious-based conflict alone. None of these costs are associated with attacking its *causes*. ■

What the Center, as a totally independent NGO, does is unique. No other such organization has as its sole goal the reduction of religious-based conflict through a practical and specific approach which goes

beyond tolerance. We believe this problem is larger than religions themselves, not within their total control, and one which cannot be solved by them alone. They need our help. Non-believers and governments alike must work to support them in this effort.

In this respect, the Center’s primary mission is education. To educate, we must first publicize the problem of religious-based conflict and show how it affects all of us - either directly or indirectly; either physically or financially - and in many instances, both. We then educate by offering an approach towards its reduction not heretofore recognized, showing how we must go beyond tolerance, the current mantra for its so-called resolution, if we are to succeed. We describe this step in practical, realistic, not altruistic, terms.

The Center does not purport to be able to *resolve* this problem; rather we show how the people and their governments can approach it and eventually cause change in the direction of its reduction. Since humans are imperfect, we cannot expect to totally resolve the problem of religious-based conflict, but we can, through this method, substantially reduce it to at least manageable proportions.

You can help reduce religious-based conflict in the world – probably more than you think you can. Even though individuals have limited power when acting alone, when they act as part of a group with a common purpose, this power increases geometrically. By supporting the Center - morally, actively or financially, you do just that - have more impact. For those of you who provide your moral support, we thank you. For those who either as formal Volunteers or as individuals discuss with others the Center’s work, we cannot be more appreciative. For those who have the financial means and make charitable contributions to support our efforts, we are forever grateful to you.



Our cause is unique. Our message is spreading daily to more and more people and governments throughout the world. Our work continues to receive praise from those who know of it.

But we must reach more people and more governments in order to increase our impact. And in this

process, we must not only publicize the problem of religious-based conflict, as well as its astonishing and growing costs to us all; but we must also explain why tolerance is not the answer to this problem. And, finally, we are leading the way towards *educating* the people and their governments, showing them *how* to attain this goal with a practical and realistic plan.



Yes, I want to support the Center!

www.center2000.org

To donate now to either the Center's Operational Fund or to its Endowment Fund account using your credit card or online bank check, click

[HERE](#)

Also you can SUPPORT THE CENTER: When you shop at Amazon (smile.amazon.com) Amazon donates to the Center. Go to: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/65-6319302>

Center For Reduction of Religious-Based Conflict
649 Fifth Avenue South, Suite 201
Naples, Florida 34102, USA
Telephone: (239) 821-4850; Email: centerrel@center2000.org