
Employ Chaplains as an IO Asset in the War on Terror

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Editorial Abstract: Major Ieva examines the challenges of leveraging religion as an element of national power. He argues that alignment of military chaplains' faith with appropriate influence audiences can serve as a viable technique for US Forces, particularly in current campaigns against religious extremism.

Wars and conflicts in the 21st century are increasingly non-conventional and ideologically motivated. Religion plays a pivotal role in the self-understanding of many people and has a significant effect on the goals, objectives, and structure of society. In some cases, religious self understanding may play a determinative or regulating role on policy, strategy, or tactics... -- (Joint Publication 1-05, Religious Support in Joint Operations)

The US military's approach to managing the element of religion in the War on Terror is characterized by a largely purely secular and risk-averse mindset. Despite a high empirical correlation between the Islamic faith and the critical WOT IO audiences, overall the military has failed to tackle the religious aspect of the war. From a grand strategy perspective, the ethnocentric omission of religion as one of the customary elements of national power (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic) illustrates a flaw at the strategic level of war. Reducing the issue from the state to the individual level, the American infusion of a strong legal and normative sense as to the separation of church and state limits an intuitive structural understanding of the power of religion. To compensate the stated theoretical and organizational weaknesses, military chaplains provide a feasible and suitable soft IO foil by marginalizing the enemy's ability to dominate the religious aspect of national power, across all levels of war.

The omission of religion as a stand-alone element of national power serves as an extension of our ethnocentric perspective of religion and the state. Unfortunately, the omission ultimately weakens our national security strategy. If we define grand strategy as developing, applying, and coordinating the instruments of national power to achieve objectives that contribute to national security, then the absence of religion could disrupt the linkage between instruments and objectives. By not treating religion as an element of national power, the military relinquishes a global reality whereby the enemy gains an asymmetric advantage. The commonly used DIME acronym requires an expansion to include Religion, Intelligence, Finance and Law Enforcement (*DIME-RIFL*) to produce a harmonious integration of national power. Even though the Department of State, through the Office of International Religious Freedom and possibly the Office of Strategic Communications and Planning, possesses the mission

of promoting religious freedom as a core objective of US foreign policy, it falls short of its potential. By the same token, the United States has been extremely cognizant of preventing a global perception in the information domain that the WOT represents a war against Islam. While both approaches to the issue of religion are viable, they represent a form of sufficing. This is analogous to a boxer climbing into the ring and waiting for the round to end to prevent a knockout punch. It is not a bad technique if one is ahead, but a terrible technique if one is behind. As a remedy to our nation's deficiency in leveraging religion as an element of national power, we require an interagency solution to promote the global religious objectives and associated means, as shown in Table 1.

The shift from a defensive to an offensive position on the

issue of religion places the enemy on the horns of a dilemma. Currently, terrorists can strategically exploit the overt gap in US national power regarding religion. If religion is implemented as part of the US grand strategy, the enemy's blind attacks must cease, because the terrorists would be forced to compare their actions to those of the US. As it is easier to be deconstructive than constructive, extremists would then have to deliver on their promises instead of supporting their conduct through false claims about future prospects. While the American form of religious freedom, promotion, practice—or even non-practice—may

not be a perfect match from the “lesser of two evils” perspective, the US stance is the better choice.

The US Constitution codifies the nation's view of religious freedom as a vital component of American democracy. It requires the state to both protect religious freedom and maintain a wall of separation between itself and the church. While continued social and legal arguments over the role of church and state cloud the exact nature of the separation, average Americans possess a workable understanding of the state's role regarding religion. While not unique, the American understanding of the relationship between church and state does not always align well with the role of religion in the WOT. This contest is not conducted in isolation, but rather is carried out under the sensitive eyes of global neutral and friendly audiences.

The totality of the friendly reaction to an enemy who uses religion as an element of power produces an extremely risk-averse decision-making mindset. Instead of focusing on



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(Defense Link)

Objectives	Means
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate the Islamic friendly, neutral and hostile audiences regarding America's vast Middle Eastern, Arabic and Islamic population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange faith-based tours of the United States. Focus on American Islamic communities, but ensure the trip includes all faiths as well as those Americans who chose not to believe.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marginalize hostile manipulation and sanctification of violence based upon principles through the use of religion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide voice to Muslim religious figures who oppose many fatwas that sanctify the killing of innocents. Through religion, challenge neutral and hostile religious propaganda.

Table 1.

ways to make use of the great tenets of Islam, many commonly perceive this as simply not angering the worst elements of the religion's practice. This approach may work for a tourist, but not for a nation at war. In order to win the informational battle, the US military must step outside its comfort zone and integrate religious factors into the WOT. Consider Colonel John Boyd's near-complete depictions of his theorized Observe-Orient-Decide-Act cycle, or OODA loop. In order to win, one must operate inside the enemy's OODA loop. This feat can be theoretically accomplished in two ways: tighten the friendly loop or loosen the enemy's loop. Presently, the enemy's loop uses implicit "guidance & control" to quickly move through the orient and decide stages, producing fast paced action. Due to friendly consistency on the issue of religion, the hostile observe and orient stages have become operationally predictable, enabling the enemy to conduct what Boyd labels as "fast transient maneuvers. This creates a tight OODA loop. Operational IO focused on disrupting or delaying the enemy's observe and orient stage would loosen the loop, while at the same time tighten our own—thus creating favorable conditions for victory.

At the tactical level, the enemy aggressively manipulates the Islamic faith to recruit, rally and support forces of instability and violence. The US Military's Chaplain Corps provides a legal and doctrinal method to support effective IO. The precedent is captured in Joint Pub 1-05, *Religious Support in Joint Operations*:

"Commanders and their staffs may also consider religion, other cultural issues, and ideology while developing schemes of maneuver and rules of engagement or planning civil-military operations, psychological operations, information operations, and public affairs (PA) activities."

This is not a new or even original concept. Since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the US Chaplain Corps have performed extremely well, both in their traditional role of spiritually nourishing the living, tending to the wounded and honoring the dead, and in favorably influencing the overall mission. The humanitarian foundations and calling of the chaplain corps' members have led to a substantial level of individual initiatives to perform good acts. The deliberate recruitment of Muslim chaplains should become a priority based on the religious nature of the WOT. Understanding the internal dynamic of balancing an individual chaplain's faith with his or her role as a command spiritual adviser, the

alignment of chaplain faith with influence audience serves as a viable technique. During the Vietnam War, the residual French Catholic influence in Indochina inadvertently enabled Navy Catholic chaplains operating with Marine units near the urban areas of Saigon to connect with the local populace. The early successes of the Marine Corps' Combined Action Platoon (CAP) were supported by the chaplain's ability to influence the local hamlet or village population while still supporting the isolated Marines and sailors. Additionally, the chaplains were able to tie

into the pre-existing Catholic humanitarian structure to help members of the influence audience, while self-enabling the host nation. Just as the former Chief of Naval Operations [current Joint Chiefs Chairman], Admiral Mike Mullen, promoted his concept of a "thousand-ship navy" through partnerships with foreign navies, Muslim chaplains could connect with the vast number of Islamic-oriented non-governmental organizations and charities. A Muslim chaplain would have unique access to the populace, and thus add value to non-lethal IO operations. Additionally, his mere presence would challenge false charges regarding Islam and America. The United States, with its unique level of diversity, has a resource pool of Islamic Americans who could be recruited to help bridge the information gap regarding religion in America.

This concept is not only the best, but perhaps one of the only viable methods to win hearts and minds in the Middle East. A fleeting opportunity exists, while preserving the chaplain's non-combatant status, to expand upon the excellent foundation established by our Chaplain Corps. Explicit employment of the military chaplains would provide the US with an immense IO asset in the conduct of the War on Terror. With this nation's proven history of both defending and promoting religious freedom, the US should not concede religion to the enemy as a free arena in which to operate. 