

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM (WAT):
A Malaysian Case Study**

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Abstract

Though terrorism has existed for more than 2,000 years, the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. brought international repercussions unlike any previously experienced. In response to the attacks, the U.S. immediately attempted to build a broad-based anti-terrorism coalition in what is known as the “War against Terrorism” (WAT) or “War on Terrorism.” Malaysia has its own experiences with terrorism, such as during the ‘communist emergency’ of the 1950s. In light of Malaysia’s unique history in overcoming terrorism and the present-day WAT, this study aimed to explore Malaysian’s perceptions of the WAT. Findings from the study indicate that Malaysians hold mostly negative views on the WAT, i.e.: they doubt the intentions of the US government; they view the WAT as a fight against Muslims and as a means for US control; they view the military approach as ineffective; they perceive a conscious effort to link terrorism to Islam; they view the Western media as being insensitive to non-Westerners and they believe that the WAT has had little impact on reducing terrorism due to hidden political agendas. Qualitative findings from the study stress the need for counter-terrorism policy makers to identify the root-causes of terrorism in order to develop appropriate socio-economic programs for the poor, marginalized, discontented and discriminated groups in societies.

Introduction

Terrorism is on the rise and is becoming a serious global problem. As stated by Dunne, terrorism is “the modern day scourge of the international community” (1999, p. 1). Though terrorism has existed for more than 2,000 years, the 9/11 attacks on the U.S. have brought international repercussions unlike any previously experienced. The 9/11 attacks resulted in the highest number of casualties on American soil since the American Civil War as at least 2,986 people were killed in total. “In addition to the 110-floor Twin Towers of the World Trade

Center itself, five other buildings at the WTC site, including WTC building 7, and four subway stations were destroyed or badly damaged. In total, on Manhattan Island, 25 buildings were damaged. Communications equipment such as broadcast radio, television and two way radio antenna towers were damaged beyond repair. In Arlington County, Virginia, a portion of the Pentagon was severely damaged by fire and one section of the building collapsed” (Wikipedia, 2006).

In response to the attacks, the US immediately attempted to build a broad-based anti-terrorism coalition in what is known as the “War against Terrorism” (WAT) or “War on Terrorism”. It is a campaign led by the United States and its allies with goal of ending international terrorism by stopping those identified as terrorist groups and also ending state sponsored terrorism. It has become the thrust of President George W. Bush’s foreign and domestic policies. The WAT is focused on special forces, intelligence, police work and diplomacy as opposed to wars against other defined nations (Wikipedia, 2006).

While it is safe to say that the vast majority of people in the world reject terrorism and support the WAT, coming to an agreement on what constitutes terrorism has proven to be almost impossible (Ganor, 2001; Rahim M. Sail et al., 2003; Dunne, 1999; Morris & Hoe, 1987). “What is terrorism? Who are terrorists? There seems to be little agreement among the experts when it comes to definitions...The term nowadays is a pejorative, it is the label used by the threatened” (Morris & Hoe, 1987, p. 22). “Most researchers tend to believe that an objective and internationally accepted definition of terrorism can never be agreed upon; after all they say, one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” (Ganor, 2001, p.1). “Terrorism as an applied terminology, despite its usage among major media outlets, is not above controversy. In fact, the numerous ways it is used has created an inability to achieve consensus on a single definition” (Rahim M. Sail et al., 2003, p.1). “The term terrorism has become a weapon itself, used by everyone who wants to garner sympathy and justify deliberate and overt action against an adversary, until the word itself has become almost meaningless” (Dunne, 1999, p.8). Few words are as politically or emotionally charged as terrorism. One 1988 study by the US Army found that over 100 definitions of the word “terrorism” have been used (Wikipedia, 2006).

In analyzing the numerous definitions of terrorism little conclusive discussion is arrived at. As aptly summed by Burke (as cited in Wikipedia, 2006, p.5), an expert in radical Islamic activity: “There are multiple ways of defining terrorism, and all are subjective”. Rather than forcing agreement on the meaning of the word, maybe it is useful to look at some important elements that constitute terrorism. After reviewing major definitions of terrorism,

the following recurring elements surfaced: violence, force (appeared in 83.5% of the definitions); political (65.0%); fear, emphasis on terror (51.0%); threats (47.0%); psychological effects and anticipated reactions (41.5%); discrepancy between the targets and the victims (37.55); intentional, planned, systematic, organized action (32.0%); and methods of combat, strategy, tactics (30.5%) (Ganor, 2001).

Official definitions determine counter-terrorism policy and are often developed to serve it. Because of the amorphous nature of terrorism, nations across the globe are experiencing difficulty in developing a united front against it. The UN Secretary General has called on all nations to unite against terrorism, but it has appeared to be an almost impossible task. Thus, the US decided to go on a military intervention by invading Afghanistan and Iraq without sanction from the UN as it failed to get the support of the others on the Security Council. While some countries supported the unilateral move by the US, others prefer the non-military approach to fighting terrorism.

Malaysia has its own experience with terrorism, especially during the communist emergency in the 1950s. Though Malaysia has used military means to fight communism, the fight against the “communist reign of terror” in the 1950s was defeated by winning “the minds and hearts” of the people (Mahathir Mohamad, 2001). This has not, apparently, been the case in places such as Afghanistan or Iraq, however. Though the American military was able to control both countries following their initial invasion, the two countries quickly fell into turmoil. Many now say that the violence is worse since the occupation of the two countries.

Since the defeat of “communist terrorism,” Malaysia has been a relatively peaceful country. From its independence, Malaysia has succeeded in building a multi-racial and multi-religious nation. Its 26.75 million population (Government of Malaysia, 2006) comprised of *Bumiputras* (65.9%), Chinese (25.3%), Indians (7.5%) and minority groups (1.3%) lives in relative harmony and coexists peacefully unlike many other countries comprised of multiple ethnic groups. Malaysia has been fortunate in avoiding the ongoing racial conflict that sometimes leads to violence.

Though many parts of the world are experiencing terrorism within their borders, including several of its neighbors, Malaysia has avoided it. Despite the existence of mild forms of religious extremism in the country, such groups are controlled and have not exploded into the type of terrorism seen in other parts of the world. There are, of course, isolated cases of Malaysians involved in international terrorist groups such as Nordin Mohammed Top’s (International Crisis Group, 2006) involvement in Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), but it has not

threatened the security of the country. Though the majority of Malaysians are Muslim, their practice of Islam puts great emphasis on tolerance and mutual respect, as reflected in the concept of Civilizational or Progressive Islam (*Islam Hadhari*), which has been accepted by other religious groups in Malaysia (Government of Malaysia, 2006).

Against a background of increasing terrorism across the globe, increasing tension between the West and Muslim peoples, the military interventions by America in Afghanistan and Iraq and the many ways people view terrorism, this research attempts to explore Malaysians' reactions toward terrorism and the WAT. What are the people's perceptions towards the WAT? What are their perceptions toward the approaches used in the WAT? What are their perceptions towards the Palestinian-Jewish conflict? Is there a link between religion and terrorism? What are their perceptions of Western media and terrorism? What are their perceptions towards the future of terrorism? These are some of the questions addressed in the current study.

Objectives of the Research

The main objective of the current study was to determine Malaysians' perceptions on terrorism and the WAT. The specific objectives of the research were to determine respondents' perceptions:

1. On reasons for increasing terrorism;
2. On their beliefs about the WAT;
3. On the use of military and non-military interventions in the WAT;
4. On terrorism and acts of terror;
5. On the link between religion and terrorism;
6. On the future and terrorism.

Methodology

This research employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative approach utilized focus group interviews for data collection. Two focus group interviews were conducted in February 2006 in the Klang Valley. The first focus group comprised 20 participants and included academicians, graduate students, researchers, religious leaders and government servants. The second group consisted of 25 participants that included academicians, government servants, graduate students and community leaders. Participants of both groups came from various backgrounds, races and religions. The groupings were developed to facilitate interviews so that responses from diverse individuals in terms of their race, religion and background could be captured.

The interviews were recorded and assisted by trained graduate students from Universiti Putra Malaysia, who also helped to take notes during the interview. They also helped transcribe the interview verbatim. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide. In general, the interviews were conducted until no new information was obtained. However, no follow-up sessions took place. Both interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The themes identified from the focus group were used as the basis for developing a questionnaire, subsequently used for the quantitative part of the study.

The questionnaire developed was pre-tested and then refined before being used for data collection. It consisted of three major parts: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) perceptions on the WAT, and (3) perceptions on increasing terrorism.

The collection of data was conducted in March 2006 to May 2006. The data were collected from 413 selected participants including undergraduate and graduate students from Universiti Putra Malaysia, community leaders from *Rukun Tetangga* (Community Neighborhood Associations) around Ipoh, officers from the Department of National Unity and Integration and officers from the Public Service Department. The data collected were coded and analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for the analysis and reporting.

Findings and Discussion

The data collected were coded and analyzed using SPSS. The findings are presented and discussed under the following topics.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents: The respondents reflected the diverse composition of the Malaysian population that comes from various races and religions. There were slightly more females than males and all had some form of schooling, at least up to the primary level. A majority stated having some university education and about a quarter indicated having high school certificates. Those working were mostly employed in the public sector and in the lower income bracket. A majority of the respondents were quite young since they were university students, while the rest were in their thirties, forties and fifties (Table 1).

Reasons for Increasing Terrorism: The respondents agreed that increases in terrorism are due to two major reasons: (1) aggressive US foreign policy that attempts to dominate the world (27.6%) and, (2) deepening misunderstanding and tension between the West and Islam (23.9%)(Table 2). This indicates a strong sentiment against US policy, especially in the use of overwhelming US military firepower. As a result of US military might, the respondents are

suspicious of America's true intentions in fighting terrorism. The responses indicate that they think that US military actions lead to more terrorism.

Also, based on the data there is also support for the idea of a "clash of civilizations," as put forward by Huntington (1993). Almost a quarter of the respondents (23.9%) believed that increasing terrorism is a result of deepening misunderstanding between the West and Islam. Other reasons that have been cited for increasing terrorism in the world today include: the need to control other nations and natural resources by powerful nations (13.1%); extreme religious teachings (7.4%); the ineffectiveness of the UN in solving conflicts between nations (7.4%); extreme socio-economic situations (6.3%); unresolved conflicts between Jews and Palestinians (6.0%); the presence of many oppressive regimes in the world (23.7%); the need to fight a just war (1.7%) and other reasons (2.0%) (Table 2).

TABLE 1: SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Characteristics	F	%	Characteristics	F	%
1. Gender			5. Salary (RM/month)		
Male	190	47.7	<1000	12	10.8
Female	208	52.8	1001-2000	65	58.6
2. Race			3001-5000	26	23.4
Malay	250	60.7	5001-7000	5	4.5
Chinese	101	24.5	>7000	3	2.7
Indian	37	9.0	Mean: 2775.76		
Others	24	5.9	SD: 1636.83		
3. Religion			6. Age (years)		
Christianity	22	5.4	<25	251	64.2
Islam	286	65.4	26-35	42	10.2
Buddhism	77	18.8	36-45	35	9.0
Hinduism	32	7.8	46-55	50	12.8
Others	11	2.7	>56	15	3.8
4. Employment			Mean: 29.5		
Government	69	25.3	SD: 12.2		
Private sector	15	4.0			
Unemployed	20	5.3			
Self-employed	13	3.4			
Student	235	62.0			

TABLE 2: REASONS FOR INCREASING TERRORISM IN THE WORLD

Reasons	Frequencies	Percent
Due to aggressive US foreign policy that try to dominate the world	97	27.6
Due to increasing misunderstanding and tension between the West and Islam	84	23.9
Due to the need to control other nations and natural resources by powerful nations	46	13.1
Due to extreme religious teachings that sowed hatred towards others	30	8.5
Due to ineffectiveness of UN in solving conflicts between nations	26	7.4
Due to extreme social-economic situations such as poverty	22	6.3
Due to unresolved conflicts between the Jews and the Palestinian people	21	6.0
Due to the presence of many oppressive regimes in the world	13	3.7
Due to other reasons	7	2.0
Due to the need to fight a just cause such as religious belief or ideology	6	1.7
TOTAL	N=352	100.0

TABLE 3: PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

Item	Percent			
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total (N)
Belief about WAT: WAT is:				
A fight between West and Islam	56.0	17.4	26.6	100.0 (409)
US foreign policy to invade other countries	68.2	18.2	13.6	100.0 (411)
A fight between good and evil	38.5	20.0	41.5	100.0 (410)
About the control of resources such as oil	67.7	17.5	14.8	100.0 (405)
To replace oppressive regime with democratic government	37.2	28.1	34.7	100.0 (406)
Perceptions on US military intervention:				
The result of the war on Iraq and Afghanistan is more terrorism	74.7	14.6	10.7	100.0(410)
Strikes on other nations that kill civilians are act of terror	84.3	7.6	8.1	100.0(410)
Leaders of nations that declared war on others that kill civilians perform acts of terror	75.3	14.7	10.0	100.0(408)
The war on Iraq is an act of terrorism	74.1	115.9	10.0	100.0(409)
US declares the WAT because of some hidden agenda	78.8	15.0	6.2	100.0(406)
9/11 bombing is a conspiracy of certain groups and blame on Al-Qaeda	55.6	31.5	12.9	100.0(410)
Countries named as the "axis of evils" such as North Korea, Syria and Iran support terrorism	18.3	46.5	35.2	100(409)
UN is used as an instrument by US government for own agenda	68.5	21.2	10.3	100(406)
Perceptions on non-military intervention in WAT:				
Understanding the root-cause of terrorism	89.8	4.9	5.3	100.0(412)
Teaching people of diverse race, background and culture to live together in harmony	81.0	10.5	8.5	100.0(411)
Establishing democratic government throughout the world	55.5	26.5	18.0	100.0(412)
Continuous dialog between people of various races and religions	46.8	18.1	35.1	100.0(408)
Bringing about socio-economic development to the most depressed parts of the world	31.6	29.6	38.8	100.0(405)
Military action	0.8	16.1	63.1	100.0(409)
Malaysian experience and terrorism:				
Malaysia is free from threats of terrorism	45.7	23.6	30.7	100.0(407)
Malaysians are involved in international terrorist groups because of external influence	50.6	27.7	21.7	100.0(405)
Malaysia had a good experience of handling WAT during the communist insurgency	67.8	20.6	11.5	100.0(407)
Link between religion and terrorism				
There is no link between religion and terrorism	42.4	16.1	41.5	100.0(410)
Religion is not a major source of terrorism	62.9	13.6	23.5	100.0(412)
A lot of terrorist activities are fanned by religious extremism	51.3	21.5	27.1	100.0(413)

Jihad is not linked to terrorism	54.4	27.5	17.1	100.0(408)
Terrorism is a phenomenon related to Islam	18.1	21.1	60.8	100.0(410)

The Palestinian-Jewish conflict and terrorism:

The inability of the UN to resolve the conflicts between the Palestinians and the Jews is a major reason for terrorism today	68.3	19.5	12.2	100.0(410)
Double standards of American policy towards Israel and the Palestine is the major cause of present day terrorism	69.3	21.2	9.5	100.0(410)
Palestinian suicide bombers are freedom fighters	42.7	32.2	25.1	100.0(410)
Palestinian suicide bombers that go for military target acting in self-defense of their rights	55.0	24.6	20.4	100.0(406)
Palestinian are involved in act of terror because it is the only way they can fight their cause towards self-rule	62.2	21.1	16.7	100.0(407)

Belief about media and terrorism:

Almost all information on terrorism is provided only by Western media	60.7	19.3	20.0	100.0(410)
Reports on terrorism by Western media does truly reflect the actual situation	59.8	19.1	21.1	100.0(408)
Western media insensitivities to other cultures help promote terrorism	66.5	21.5	12.0	100.0(409)
Freedom of the press in the West can be abused to sow hatred among people of different cultures, races and religions	71.7	15.9	12.4	100.0(410)
Alternative foreign media (besides Western media) are available to report on terrorism	67.0	21.5	11.5	100.0(409)
Reports on terrorism in local media are mainly based on western media information	69.0	14.9	16.1	100.0(410)
Western media does help in combating terrorism	25.1	32.0	42.9	100.0(406)

Belief about the future of terrorism:

War against Terrorism will succeed in the near future towards establishing a more peaceful existence between people of different races, religions and cultures	50.1	24.4	25.5	100.0(409)
The present approach to fighting War against Terrorism is totally ineffective	59.6	23.9	16.5	100.0(406)
War against Terrorism will continue with little impact	52.4	24.9	22.7	100.0(409)
War against Terrorism is ineffective because it is "loaded" political agenda	74.5	16.6	8.6	100.0(409)
There will be less terrorism in the world in the near future	18.8	32.0	49.1	100.0(409)

Belief about War against Terrorism: About two-thirds of the respondents indicated that WAT is a US foreign policy for invading other countries (68.2%) and controlling resources such as oil (67.7%). More than half (56.0%) stated that it is a war against Muslims. Only slightly more than a third said that WAT is a fight between "good and evil" (38.5%) and to replace

oppressive regimes with democratic governments (37.2%). Thus, the majority of respondents do not believe that WAT is a fight between good and evil or an initiative to spread democracy, as is often stated by Western leaders, but, rather is about US ambitions to control other countries and important natural resources such as oil.

US Military Intervention: The study indicated that most of the respondents disagreed with the military interventions by the US government. About three-quarters (74.7%) indicated that the result of war in Afghanistan and Iraq has been more terrorism. About the same proportion (74.1%) said that war on Iraq is an act of terrorism. A high proportion further said that “strikes on other nations that kill civilians are acts of terror” (84.3%) and “leaders of nations that declare war on others that kill civilians perform acts of terror” (75.3%). More than three-quarters of the respondents (78.8%) responded that the US had some hidden agenda when they declared the WAT. Also about two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the UN is used as an instrument by the US in pursuing its war agenda. Only about 18.3% percent felt that the countries named by the US as part of the “axis of evil” support terrorism. More than half of the respondents (55.6%) supported the notion that the events of 9/11 had elements of conspiracy behind them. Thus, the findings indicate that the respondents disagreed with the military interventions used in the WAT.

Non-military Intervention: A majority of the respondents (63.1%) disagreed with the military approach and preferred the non-military interventions used in the WAT. A high proportion preferred the non-military approach of “understanding the root-causes of terrorism” (89.8%) and “teaching people of diverse races, backgrounds and cultures to live together in harmony” (81.8%). About half said that “establishing democratic governments throughout the world” (55.5%) and “continuous dialog between people of various races and religions” (46.8%) are effective approaches to combating terrorism. Again, in combating terrorism the respondents indicated the perception that there is no one effective approach in fighting terrorism. A high proportion also agreed on non-military approaches, which may be more effective in combating terrorism.

Malaysia, for example, fought communism for many years, whose followers used terrorist tactics, yet Malaysia defeated it. “We defeated it not just through military action but more by winning the hearts and minds of the people who supported them” said former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (Asia Society, 2005). Winning the “hearts and minds” of the

people does not appear to be a primary objective of the US military in Iraq, however. Malaysia, on the other hand, proved that it can be accomplished. After the communist insurgency was defeated, Malaysia became a peaceful country despite the fact that its population consists of people from various races and religions.

Malaysia's Response to Terrorism: About two-thirds of the respondents (67.8%) said that Malaysia had a positive experience in handling the WAT during its communist insurgency. About half of them also indicated that Malaysia is "free from threats of terrorism" (45.7%) and "Malaysians are involved in international groups because of external influence" (50.6%). The respondents believed that Malaysia is quite successful in fighting terrorism and has good experience in handling terrorism but that certain Malaysians may be attracted to terrorist groups due to external influences, such as the case of involvement of Nordin Mohammed Top in JI.

In taking the non-military approach, there is a need to understand the sociological aspects of terrorism. Factors such as poverty (e.g. the accused London suicide bombers came from the relatively deprived area of Leeds), political agendas (e.g. many Palestinians involved in conflict come from professional and student circles yet still feel strongly in their cause to fight), discontentment with society (discrimination and isolation), discontentment with one's own community, isolation by society, political sentiments (the war in Iraq is seen as a war against Muslims) and exposure to criminal activities are important factors that tend to attract people to terrorism. Only through an in-depth understanding these factors, can a more effective approach be developed to bring effective social interventions to the WAT. From the Malaysian experience, dialogue, good governance, policies that help unite people of different races and religions and affirmative social-economic programs can help deter people from engaging in terrorism and toward developing a healthy multiracial and multi-religious society.

Link between Religion and Terrorism: Is there a link between religion and terrorism? Malaysia's Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi suggests that there is, according to his claims that more and more people are trying to find links between terrorism and Islam. He has indicated that the tendency to attribute linkages between international terrorism and Islam is most damaging to the religion and how it is perceived (Jihad Watch, 2004). This is sometimes called religious terrorism. "Religious terrorism refers to terrorism justified or motivated by religion and is a form of religious violence" (Wikipedia, 2006). In the current study, respondents were divided on this issue. About equal proportion of the respondents agreed

(42.4%) and disagreed (41.5%) to the statement that “there is no link between religion and terrorism”. However almost two-thirds of the respondents (62.9%) indicated that religion is not a source of terrorism and terrorism is a not phenomenon related to Islam (60.8%). Slightly more than half of the respondents agreed, “Jihad is not linked to terrorism” (54.4%). Also slightly more than half of the respondents (51.3%) said that “a lot of terrorist activities are fanned by religious extremists”.

The Palestinian-Jewish Conflict and Terrorism: The Palestinian-Jewish conflict is a politically charged and emotive issue. It has been unresolved for more than half a century. The conflict has resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent people over the years. Terrorism is also said to be linked to the Palestinian-Jewish conflict. With regards to this issue, about two-thirds of the respondents indicated that the increasing terrorism related to this issue is due to the inability of the UN to resolve the conflict (68.3%) and the double-standards of American policy towards Palestine and Israel (69.3%). The respondents thus perceived injustice toward the Palestinian cause. A majority of the respondents were sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and indicated that “Palestinians have no choice but to involve themselves in acts of terror because it is the only way they can fight their cause towards self-rule” (62.2%). The respondents also agreed that “Palestinian suicide bombing that goes for military targets is an act of self-defense” (55.5%) and “Palestinian suicide bombers are freedom fighters” (42.7%).

Media and Terrorism: A majority of the respondents (60.7%) agreed that the Western media provides almost all of the information on terrorism. A majority also indicated that the Western media’s insensitivity to other cultures promotes terrorism (66.5%), and freedom of the press in the West can be abused to sow hatred among people of different cultures, races and religions (71.7%). About 59.8% of them said that reports by Western media do truly reflect the actual situation. About two-thirds of the respondents perceived that alternative foreign media (besides Western media) are available to report on terrorism and that reports on terrorism in the local media are mainly based on Western media information. Only a quarter of the respondents (25.1%) agreed that the Western media help in combating terrorism.

The Future of Terrorism: Finally, respondents answered items on terrorism and the WAT in the future. Only a small proportion (18.8%) believed that there would be less terrorism in the near future. A majority indicated “the present approach of the WAT is totally ineffective

(59.6%)”, “WAT will continue with little impact” (52.45), and “WAT is ineffective because it is loaded with political agendas” (74.5%). Thus, the respondents were quite pessimistic about the future and the ability of nations to fight terrorism.

People’s Responses towards the WAT: Implications for Action Programs

Based on the findings of the study a number of conclusions can be drawn, including:

1. Based on the results of the study, terrorism is amorphic in nature, or, ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.’ Certain people may consider Palestinian suicide bombers as terrorists; however, the majority of current study respondents view them as freedom fighters.
2. A majority of the respondents do not agree with the current WAT. They doubt the intentions of the US government in implementing the WAT. They view the WAT as a fight against Muslims and as a means for the US to control other countries and world natural resources.
3. Respondents believe that a military approach is an ineffective strategy for fighting a WAT. Non-military interventions were viewed as more likely to be effective. As such, it is important for counter-terrorism policy makers to identify the root-causes of terrorism that can be used to develop socio-economic programs for the poor and the marginalized, discontented and discriminated groups in societies. In addition, non-military interventions such as developing programs for people of different races and religions for promoting dialog and harmonious living could be more effective as non-military approaches.
4. The respondents perceive a conscious effort in the West to link terrorism to Islam. Such views, if held widely across the Muslim world, would be counter-productive in the execution of the WAT. The vast majority of Muslims in the world reject all forms of terrorism. The current study indicated that the respondents were divided on the issue of whether terrorism is linked to religion or Islam. By linking terrorism to Islam, more moderate Muslims may move away from the WAT. If they perceive that the WAT is a fight against Muslims they will not want to be included in the coalition that must exist in order to combat terrorism effectively.
5. The Western media is quite informative on topics related to terrorism. However, the respondents felt that the Western media is not sensitive to other peoples of different cultures and backgrounds. Press freedoms may also be abused to promote an agenda friendly to the WAT.

6. The study findings revealed the perception that there will not be less terrorism in the future. The present WAT is not effective and has had little impact because there are too many hidden political agendas attached.

Based on the conclusions various action plans can be proposed. These include community programs that focus on affirmative action, civilizational dialog between peoples of different religions and races, developing counter-terrorism policies that provide a more comprehensive approach to fighting terrorism, and conducting research for a better understanding of terrorism.

NOTES

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