

The Ambivalent Coalition: Doing the Least One Can Do Against The Islamic State

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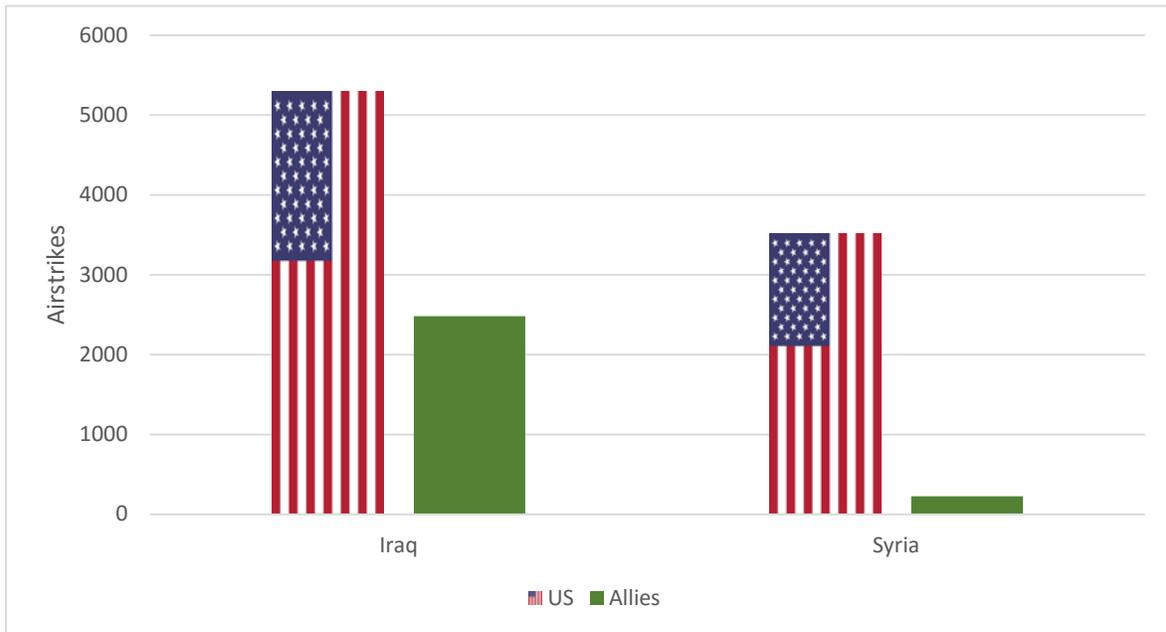
**Abstract:** The effort to degrade and defeat the Islamic State is like many other multilateral military efforts—characterized by widely varying contributions to the effort. This article seeks to understand the patterns of contributions. Three sets of explanations are applied: the lessons of Afghanistan and Libya, variations in how potential contributors feel the threat posed by the Islamic State, and domestic political dynamics. While there may be some political processes that overlap with the big lessons and with the threat of the Islamic State, the patterns of contributions thus far suggest that the key drivers of reactions to the Islamic State are the desire not to repeat Afghanistan combined with some impetus provided by Islamic State attacks in the various homelands. The conclusion suggests some policy implications as well as some ideas for future research.

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Multilateral military operations are challenging even when the situation is relatively simple and the various processes are institutionalized and well-practiced. NATO's campaign in Libya in 2011 has been widely criticized,<sup>2</sup> but it was a far more straightforward effort in many ways than the current war against the Islamic State (IS; also known as ISIS, ISIL and Daesh) in Syria, named Operation Inherent Resolve by the Pentagon.

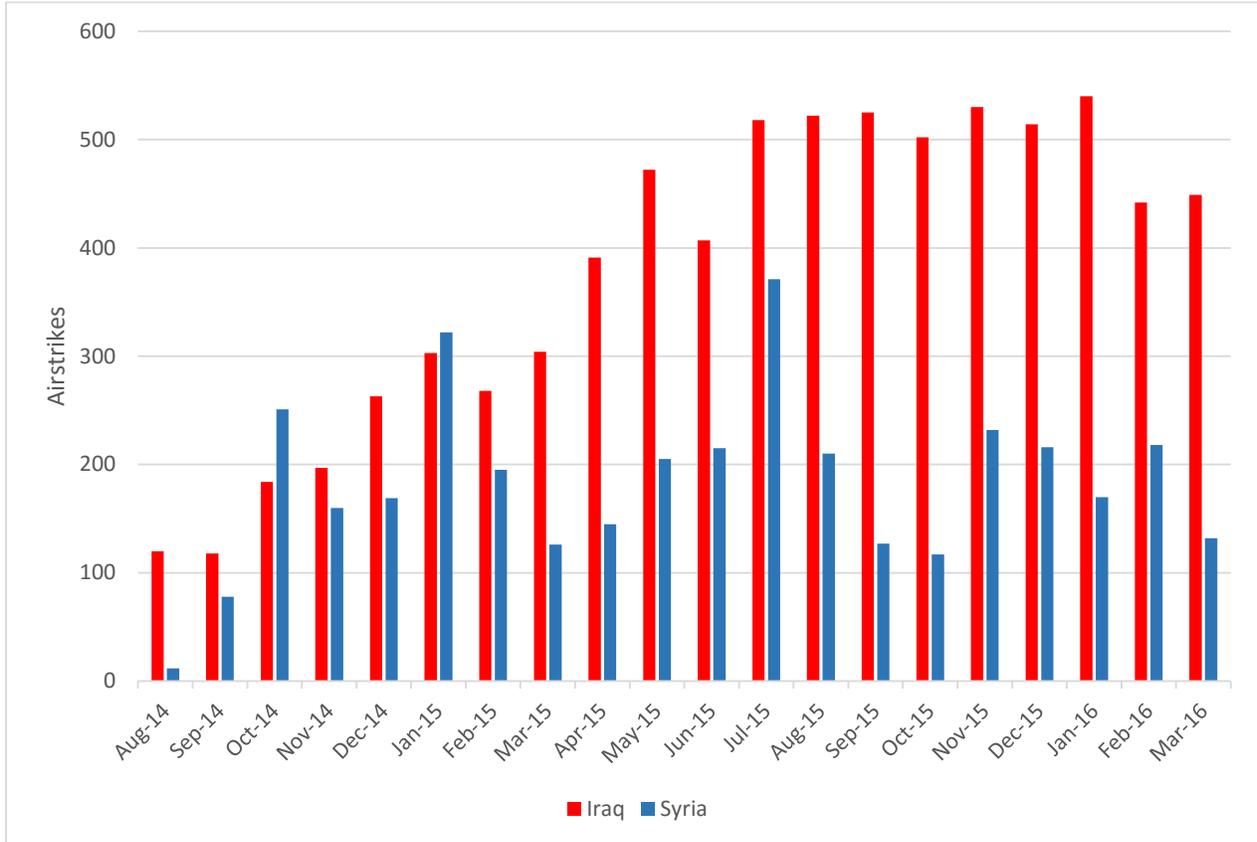
In both cases, the outside intervention was mostly conducted through the air, but the similarities quickly break down after that. The current campaign is against a terrorist movement that claims territory and is not on behalf of dissenters seeking to break a government. The Libyan campaign quickly became a NATO effort coordinated via established headquarters and relying on much practiced procedures. While the United States (US) Central Command has much practice at coordinating coalition warfare, it still lacks the various procedures and decision-making processes that are hard-wired into NATO.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps a more important difference was that in Libya, there were no other air forces dropping bombs on those that NATO was seeking to assist. In Syria, the Russians are not just involved, but often bombing those that the US and its coalition are seeking to help.<sup>4</sup> There is also a significant training effort in Iraq whereas the mantra of no boots on the ground in Libya meant only modest Special Operations Forces by the British and French. In Libya, the US tried to lead from behind, with others providing more of the air strikes. In the new campaign, the US has contributed at least two thirds of the strikes.<sup>5</sup> Yet there are some consistencies in the inconsistencies: very uneven burden-sharing with many 'members' standing by or doing the minimum with only a few countries engaging in air strikes, as figure 1 illustrates.

**Figure 1. US and Allies: Airstrikes in Iraq and Syria<sup>6</sup>**



This article aims to explain the state of the coalition arrayed against IS as of spring 2016, partly to clarify the current situation and partly to point out some of the enduring challenges of coalition warfare. It begins by delineating what the various countries have been doing mostly in the skies above Iraq and Syria but also on the ground. The article then addresses a series of explanations that may account for the patterns of cooperation and participation. These arguments include those focusing on the lessons of the most recent conflicts in Libya and Afghanistan, the perception of threat posed by IS, and the domestic politics of the mission.

### The Anti-IS Campaign: Consistent and Inconsistent

**Figure 2. Airstrikes in Iraq and Syria Over Time<sup>7</sup>**

The campaign started in earnest in August 2014 with no end in sight with an aim to degrade IS and help the Iraqis and some Syrians to go on the offensive. The US and its partners tend to say that there are over 60 countries participating in the anti-IS campaign, but most of these are not engaging in combat nor are on the ground in Iraq or Syria.<sup>8</sup> The number of countries significantly participating in the military effort is slightly more than 20, as Table 1 illustrates. There are two primary ways to participate: bombing IS and training Syrians and Iraqis to fight IS. There may be more going on behind the scenes, as Special Operations Forces may be conducting raids and engaging in other activities.<sup>9</sup> Still, most of the money, attention and effort is on striking IS via air assets and improving the ability of the local allies to engage in

combat on the ground. Russia is engaged in the campaign but is not seen as a coalition partner as its targeting is entirely independent, and, indeed, often working at cross-purposes. The same is true for Iran. So, for the rest of the article, Russia and Iran are not treated as a member of the coalition effort.

**Table 1 Country Contributions to Each Mission<sup>10</sup>**

	<b>Contributions to Iraq</b>	<b>Contributions to Syria</b>
<b>Australia</b>	6 FA-18s 630 troops/900 according to CENTCOM	Starting striking Syria in September 2015
<b>Bahrain</b>	None	Unspecified number of planes
<b>Belgium<sup>11</sup></b>	55 troops	None thus far
<b>Canada<sup>12</sup></b>		1 CC-150 Polaris 1 CP-140 Aurora 830 troops
<b>Denmark<sup>13</sup></b>	120 troops	None thus far
<b>France</b>	3,500 military personnel; 200 troops committed to training missions in Iraq 1 aircraft carrier (26 fighter aircraft), 1 frigate, 18 Rafale Marine, 6 Rafale Air, 6 Mirage 2000, 8 Super Etendard, 2 E-2 C Hawkeye 1 Atlantic 2 Maritime Patrol aircraft, 1 C135	
<b>Finland</b>	47 troops	None
<b>Germany</b>	100 troops	None
<b>Italy</b>	540 troops 4 Tornado IDS 1 Boeing KC-767A 2 Predator UAVs	None
<b>Jordan</b>	None	Unspecified number of planes Providing training grounds 20 F-16s
<b>New Zealand</b>	143 troops	None
<b>Netherlands</b>	380 troops 6 F-16s 2 'reserve' aircraft	Announced in January 2016 F-16s would strike targets in Syria but not reports
<b>Norway</b>	120 troops, SOF	None

<b>Portugal</b>	30 troops	None
<b>Qatar</b>	None	Providing training grounds Unspecified number of planes
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	None	Providing training grounds Unspecified number of planes
<b>Spain</b>	300 troops	None
<b>Sweden</b>	35 troops	None
<b>Turkey</b>	None	Providing training grounds Unspecified number of planes Providing long-range artillery Striking targets not selected by coalition
<b>UK</b>	275 troops Unspecified number of Tornado GR4s, Reapers	630 troops Unspecified number of Tornado GR4s Unspecified number of Typhoons, Voyagers, Reapers
<b>U.S.</b>	3550 F-15s, F-16s, F-22s, A-10s, B-1's, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, recce/AWACS planes, refueling planes	700
<b>UAE</b>	None	8 F-16s

For much of the effort, the most obvious and perhaps most important distinction was between those willing to strike targets in Syria and those willing to strike targets in Iraq. The latter was far easier from a legal standpoint since the government of Iraq had given its consent. The ability for Syria's government to give consent is limited by its barbarity and by President Assad's indictment for war crimes. So, from the start of the effort until late 2015, there seemed to be a division of labour: European countries plus Australia were willing to hit targets in Iraq, Arab countries were willing to hit targets in Syria, and only the US and Canada (as of early 2015) were willing to strike IS targets in either country. This distinction began to break down in September 2015 with France and then the United Kingdom in December deciding to attack targets in Syria, with other countries following in early 2016. Turkey focused on Syria, started bombing in July 2015, but much of its efforts has been against Kurdish targets.

As Table 1 illustrates, out of the more than 60 countries listed as part of the coalition, only a handful are engaged in the bombing campaign. This is very similar to the pattern in Libya, where countries varied in how much they did and how much risk was assumed from doing nothing to participating in the embargo to participating in the No Fly Zone to actually conducting air strikes (some only against fixed targets).<sup>14</sup> Those engaging in airstrikes fit into three categories: the consistent participants, the vague contributors, and the departed. The last category describes Belgium, Canada, and Denmark. Canada left the bombing campaign due to a commitment by the Liberal government when it was running for office in 2015. Belgium and Denmark withdrew their planes due to the stresses of the effort on the budget and on their militaries, and have since made commitments to return their planes to the fight. The vague contributors are the Arab countries which have engaged in a few air strikes, but most have focused more effort on the war in Yemen. The consistent contributors are Australia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States. What explains these patterns of contributions and contributors?

### Explaining Coalitions of the Willing

Patterns of uneven effort are not new, and complaints of free riding are older than many journals of international relations.<sup>15</sup> That countries free ride is not surprising—what can be surprising and what needs to be explain are the patterns of contributions as some countries contribute more than expected and others participate less than one would expect. After all, even in alliances such as NATO, contributions to the various efforts are voluntary: ‘force generation is begging.’<sup>16</sup> In theory, every country except the United States could shirk and rely upon American efforts. In reality, countries do make costly decisions to contribute aircraft, soldiers,

money and bases. While theories of burden-sharing can explain why countries fall short, we need to address alternative arguments to understand why this campaign has this particular constellation of contingents. The most likely accounts are those focusing on: the hard earned lessons of recent operations, perceptions of threat, and domestic political dynamics.

### The Lessons of Afghanistan and Libya: Not Again!

The classic aphorism that one is always learning from or fighting the last war applies here in the deceptive limitation: no boots on the ground.<sup>17</sup> All of the western countries involved in the counter-IS campaign spent considerable money, time, effort and political capital in the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, not to mention incurring significant numbers of casualties. So, the idea of engaging in another significant ground operation in Syria or Iraq just as countries were reducing their efforts in Afghanistan was essentially a non-starter. There were political lessons learned from the Afghanistan war in particular but also the Libyan campaign that constrain the willingness of most leaders to do much more than airstrikes.<sup>18</sup>

First, everyone involved in Afghanistan left very frustrated. There were those that felt that they bore more of the burden—Canada, Denmark, the United Kingdom, and the US. Bearing a higher price, measured mostly in blood, than their allies' undermined support for the mission and raised concerns about future allied operations.<sup>19</sup> A new effort in Iraq or Syria raised these concerns all over again: would some countries pay more than others? For those that were heavily criticized for doing less than expected—Germany and Italy in particular<sup>20</sup>—may have learned not to sacrifice much for allied efforts in the future. Despite providing less than others, these countries paid a significant price and expended much political capital at home. So, why do it again if one does not get credit domestically or internationally? The third category is the

United States, as it does far more than anyone and often does far more than the rest combined. The much disparaged ‘lead from behind’ stance in the Libyan effort was an effort to get allies to contribute more to expeditionary operations.<sup>21</sup> As the missions in Afghanistan were winding down and as the Libyan effort seemed to reinforce the key burdensharing lessons, it should not be a surprise that most countries were unwilling to put ‘boots on the ground.’

Second, there is the larger political lesson of recent interventions that has discouraged greater investments: that any effort would raise the question of who would the interveners be working with. Afghanistan taught the outsiders that local allies have their own agendas which often work at cross-purposes with that of the international interveners. President Hamid Karzai was seen as a reluctant ally at best, often treating NATO’s International Security Assistance Force as if it were an opposition political candidate against whom he was running. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki of Iraq undermined the Anbar Awakening and all that the Americans had invested in the surge because he preferred for the Shia to dominate Iraq. In Syria, the key question since 2011 has been who can the outsiders depend upon and work with to defeat IS? Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya have caused the United States and its allies to ask that question first before jumping in, as the results in each of those countries have been underwhelming to say the least.

There are many other lessons from recent operations that may also matter, but the two highlighted here do much of the work in explaining the particular pattern of coalition operations—no western conventional forces in Iraq or Syria engaged in sustained combat. Instead, countries have chosen to engage in training and/or airstrikes. To explain the patterns of countries involved in those efforts, I turn to arguments focusing on threats and then to domestic politics.

## Responding to the IS Threat

The simplest answer to explain coalition participation might be that the states most threatened by IS are the ones most likely to join the coalition and do some of the heavy lifting. The trick is figuring out how to measure threat. Walt focuses on the power, proximity, offensive capability, and aggressive intentions of the adversary,<sup>22</sup> but these do not easily translate to this context as IS is not yet a conventional state. The power of the Islamic State is a constant in the sense that all of the various actors are reacting to the same entity, so it cannot explain why countries react differently to it. However, the power of IS does vary over time. We might expect efforts to confront it to intensify and lessen as IS rises and then declines,<sup>23</sup> but the focus here is on the cross-national comparisons. The other three components do vary among the potential contributors.

Extending Walt's Realist logic, those closest to Iraq and Syria, the heart of IS, should feel its threat the most. While IS can inspire and organize attacks around the world, it poses more serious threats to countries nearby for two reasons. First, its proclaimed targets are those that would be subsumed in a new Caliphate, which would look like the old one—much of Europe and the Mideast. Second, the further operatives have to travel, the more risk they face, so it is more likely that successful attacks will occur in those countries that are closer to the Islamic State. While proximity might account for the participation of Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, we may overlook those nearby that are not engaged in the effort.

**Table 2 Proximity and the Anti-IS Coalition**<sup>24</sup>

	Near	In Between	Far
None to Modest	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Lebanon	Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia	Many, many countries
Bases, Training	Kuwait	Finland, Germany, Italy, <sup>25</sup> Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden	New Zealand
Airstrikes	<i>Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey,<sup>26</sup> UAE</i>	Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, UK	Australia, Canada, U.S.

*Italics* indicates relatively modest contributions

Table 2 illustrates that there is no obvious correlation between *proximity* and participation as some of the most distant states are among the most energetic contributors, perhaps because the IS has the ability to strike distantly. Also, many of the closest countries that have engaged in airstrikes have hardly been among the most enthusiastic. Nearly all of the airstrikes on Syria have been conducted by the United States (see Figure 1 above), suggesting that the Arab countries' willingness to engage in such efforts has been mostly symbolic.<sup>27</sup> So, proximity does not guarantee the strongest reactions.

In the case of IS, the *offensive threat* it poses to states may vary by how many foreign fighters a country has 'contributed' to the IS forces. Foreign fighters are seen as a key threat vector as they can potentially return to organize and execute terrorist activities in the lands from which they came.<sup>28</sup> This raises the question of whether contributions are related to the number of foreign fighters. Table 3 illustrates the pattern:

**Table 3 Foreign Fighters and Contribution**<sup>29</sup>

	None to 10 <sup>30</sup>	11-150	> 150
None to Modest	Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Moldova (Missing: Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)	Azerbaijan,	Egypt, Lebanon
Bases, Training	(Missing: Portugal)	Finland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Spain	Belgium, Germany, Sweden
Airstrikes	(Missing: <i>Qatar</i> )	Australia, <i>Bahrain</i> , Denmark, Canada, U.S.	France, Netherlands, <i>Jordan, Saudi Arabia Turkey</i> , UK

*Italics* indicates relatively modest contributions to airstrikes

It certainly seems to be the case that those countries with few countrymen going off to fight for IS are less likely to commit much to the fight. However, the number of foreign fighters does not really distinguish countries that give modest support or are willing to conduct air strikes. There is a significant correlation between foreign fighters and contributions to the mission: .46 ( $p < .05$ ).<sup>31</sup> So, having one's citizens join IS may spur involvement in the coalition, but is not strongly associated with the intensity of the commitment to the campaign. To be clear, while some of the foreign fighters may have joined the Islamic State because their countries became involved in the coalition, the campaign started after most of these countries already had a 'foreign fighter problem.'<sup>32</sup>

Going back to Walt's components of threat, aggressive intentions are hard to code as IS has issued numerous statements about much of the West with obviously some countries getting more attention. Actions are easier to code as there has been much variation in which countries

have been hit hardest by IS or IS-inspired *attacks*. As expected, being attacked is highly correlated with the extent of the contribution: .52 ( $p < .01$ ), although the number of deaths is not.

**Table 4 IS Terrorist Attacks, Deaths and Contribution<sup>33</sup>**

	None	1-20	> 20
None to Modest	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania, Moldova		<i>Egypt, Lebanon</i>
Bases, Training	Finland, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden		
Airstrikes	<i>Bahrain, Jordan,</i> <sup>34</sup> Netherlands, <i>Qatar</i>	Australia, Canada, Denmark, U.S.	Belgium, France, <i>Saudi Arabia, Turkey</i>

*Italics* indicates relatively modest contributions to airstrikes

However, most of the countries in the table above that have been attacked were struck by agents of the Islamic State *after* they committed to the counter-IS campaign, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UK, and the United States. While we cannot say that actual attacks have caused countries to join the coalition, it is the case that countries have tended to intensify their efforts once they are attacked. France increased its efforts in the aftermath of the Paris attacks, which, in turn, were not the first IS-related attacks to hit France.<sup>35</sup> Shortly after the Brussels attack in March 2016, the government of Belgium announced that it would send its F-16s back to the Mideast to attack IS, perhaps with a broader mandate (Syria) than the Belgian Air Force had in its prior tour.<sup>36</sup> Canada broadened its effort a couple of months after IS-inspired attacks in Ottawa.

It could be the case that the Islamic State is targeting those countries that participate in the mission except for one hard fact: many countries that have not significantly joined the campaign have been attacked.<sup>37</sup> In the sample of countries considered here, Egypt and Lebanon have not been visible partners of the coalition to counter the IS in Iraq and Syria. For Egypt, the

answer may be that it is already at war with IS, but is fighting it in the Sinai rather than in the skies over Iraq and Syria.<sup>38</sup> Like Egypt, Lebanon is an actual battlefield in the IS war.<sup>39</sup> This means that Lebanon does not have to send forces elsewhere to fight IS. There is also the burden of more than 1.5 million refugees from Syria. So, the outliers in the table are not really outliers—they are fighting their own wars at home. For the attacked countries, the impact may be as much on domestic politics and on maintaining the effort as it is on threat perception. I engage that question further below.

Before moving on, it is important to note that being attacked is not a necessary condition for participating meaningfully in the coalition. For those fortunate to not be attacked by IS and its admirers, there is much variation, with some countries, such as Netherlands, participating in riskier efforts than it did during NATO's Libya campaign.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, in January 2016, the Dutch, despite being relatively immune thus far, have extended their effort, which already was far more 'kinetic' than their Libya operations, to bombing Syria.<sup>41</sup> Still, the politicians in countries that have been attacked by IS probably have far less flexibility than those in countries have thus far not been hit.

### Domestic Dynamics

The discussion thus far has hinted at the role of domestic politics: that politicians will face cross-pressures to do something about IS attacks or to respond to the flood of refugees but at relatively low risk or cost. Politicians face difficult balancing acts, as they face a very difficult challenge—defeating IS, but are expected not to expose their country to greater risks or costs.<sup>42</sup> In this section, I consider the key pressures, elite consensus, and the role of parties and institutions.

Politicians are more likely to be pressured by domestic audiences to do something if those constituents are being affected by the conflict. Attacks and refugees are probably the two most significant ways in which the battles in Syria and Iraq impact populations elsewhere. As discussed above when considering threats, countries that have been attacked are strongly correlated with more intense contributions. However, the number of victims of these attacks is not, which suggests that terrorism might foster a response regardless of the intensity of the attack. The second pressure would be the flood of refugees from Syria, Iraq and beyond. The demand to do something might be strongest in those countries receiving more of the refugees. However, there are no significant correlations between refugee flows and what countries contribute.<sup>43</sup>

While there are many ways to think about domestic politics and foreign policy,<sup>44</sup> two sets of arguments stand out. Sarah Kreps argued that the key is elite consensus, which can facilitate contributions to coalition campaigns.<sup>45</sup> The problem is developing a measure of elite consensus on the counter-IS campaign across all of the countries considered here. Grand coalitions, where most parties are implicated in government decisions, are not correlated with participation in the campaign, either via training or airstrikes, or with the level of contribution. Autocracies, which might be seen as been on the extreme end of elite consensus, are not correlated with contributions either if we focus on their public stances. If we focus on what they actually do, then it is striking that those *regimes that are seen as most autonomous have the weakest responses* to the Islamic State.

We can consider recent work comparing advanced democracies suggests that institutions combined with the array of relevant political parties help to explain which country is more risk averse.<sup>46</sup> Auerswald and Saideman argue that coalition governments are likely to have

restrictions on their contributions to multilateral military operations and even more likely if the coalitions involve more parties or are more left leaning.<sup>47</sup> Where Prime Ministers have majorities supporting them and where Presidents have far more discretion, their argument is far less predictive as personalities enter the equation. Does this argument apply to the newest missions facing western democracies? Perhaps it is no coincidence that the countries that engaged in the riskiest behaviour—the deployment of Special Operations Forces into and near combat—are those with Presidents (France, United States) and majorities in parliaments (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom).<sup>48</sup>

**Table 5. Regime Type, Institutions, and Coalitions<sup>49</sup>**

	<b>Non-Democracy</b>	<b>Parliamentary</b>		<b>Presidential</b>
		<b>Coalition/Minority</b>	<b>Majority</b>	
<b>None to Modest</b>	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt	<i>Greece, Lebanon,</i> <b>Moldova, Slovenia</b>	<b>Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia</b>	<b>Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Poland, Portugal, Romania</b>
<b>Training/Bases</b>		<i>Germany, Italy, New Zealand</i> <b>Norway, Sweden</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<i>Finland</i>
<b>Airstrikes</b>	Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia	<i>Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands</i>	<b>Australia, Canada, Turkey, UK</b>	France, U.S.

**Bold** Indicates Right-leaning governments; *Italics* indicates grand coalitions

However, as Table 5 indicates, from our sample of involved countries and those nearby, there are no distinct patterns. The factors that differentiated countries in Afghanistan—coalition governments or not, right-wing or not—may not matter as much here. Partisanship may not matter due to the attacks that have occurred or been threatened and perhaps because the refugee crisis may have spawned enough Islamophobia to constrain parties on the right and the left. To

be clear, the reluctance by all outsiders to put troops on the ground speaks to some domestic political constraints—the desire to avoid the political consequences of significant blood shed by one’s troops.

### Conclusions and Implications

Because this mission is still very much in progress, with countries leaving and then returning, we can only derive preliminary conclusions. It does seem to be the case that politicians are facing intense cross-pressures: to do something but not to repeat Afghanistan. Thus, we see many countries do something—training or airstrikes—but refuse to engage in conventional combat. If one’s country is a source of foreign fighters, then it is going to something to participate in the effort, but does not determine the extent. However, being attacked, with a few key exceptions, leads to a more ‘kinetic’ response in the form of airstrikes. While the patterns of political system and parties in power do not provide as clear distinctions in the behavior of the potential interveners, it is notable that only presidents and prime ministers backed by majorities in their parliaments have had visibly active Special Operations efforts. It is also noteworthy that the most autonomous actors, leaders of autocracies, have done the very least with only symbolic participation in airstrikes. So, political autonomy can cut both ways.

Clearly, this short paper could not cover many alternative explanations. One that seems to be most worthy of future exploration is that of limited capabilities. The Belgians and Danes left early because of the stress the operation put on their small air forces. Indeed, the austerity programs in Europe may have been a critical constraint for many participants, and might help to explain the lack of conventional forces. Several of the Arab countries have not had enough capability to fight two wars at once and chose to focus on the war in Yemen.

Future work should assess opinion polls to determine which factors matter most to the publics of the democracies—the aversion of shedding blood and spending money, the need to respond to attacks, the desire to end the refugee crisis. How much consensus is there? Which pressures are most intense? Another question that could not be addressed here is why the effort has been made mostly outside of NATO as a coalition of the willing. What have been the obstacles to consensus at the North Atlantic Council? Recent work has addressed the choice of coalitions versus the alliance,<sup>50</sup> so those arguments could be tested against this new effort.

The basic lesson for policy-makers, as always, is that partners in multilateral military operations will vary widely in what they bring to the fight. Criticizing one's partners is unlikely to work since politicians are highly constrained by various forces and cannot simply commit more to make an ally feel better. Instead, partners will opt for a level of commitment that is similar to that of others, perhaps a more intense level if they have more autonomy or if their publics are more threatened. Coalition warfare is about finessing the differences among the commitments to try to get the effects one desires without alienating the various contributors. Perhaps because none of the contributors are paying more in terms of casualties than the others, there does seem to be less intra-coalition strife about burden-sharing. Or perhaps another lesson of Afghanistan is not to condemn those who cannot do more. The only certainty in multilateral military cooperation is that countries will vary in what they do, and that is a reality that perhaps leaders are starting to accept.

## Endnotes

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- 1 David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan: Fighting Together, Fighting Alone* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
  - 2 Criticisms focused on both the conduct of the air campaign and on the aftermath. Some criticized the airstrikes for causing civilian casualties, CJ Chivers and Eric Schmitt, 'In Strikes On Libya By Nato, An Unspoken Civilian Toll', *New York Times* 17 December 2011, p. 17. Others, especially Russia and China, were upset that the mission went beyond protecting civilians as it facilitated regime change. Geir Ilfstein and Hege Føsund Christiansen. 'The Legality of the Nato Bombing in Libya', *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2013): 159-71. Others criticize the effort for being incomplete—for ending before Libya had stable institutions. For broader criticisms see Alan J. Kuperman, 'A Model Humanitarian Intervention? Reassessing Nato's Libya Campaign', *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Summer 2013), pp. 105-36; and Horace Campbell, *Global NATO and the Catastrophic Failure in Libya* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).
  - 3 NATO has institutions where all members have a say in decisions: the North Atlantic Council and the Military Committee. It also has clear chains of command running from Brussels to Mons (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe) to Naples (regional command). Coalitions of the willing, even those that use American combatant commands as a backbone, lack such clear input processes for members.
  - 4 For a good summary of Russian efforts up to the date this article was submitted, see Michel Birnbaum, 'Weeks After "Pullout" from Syria, Russian Military Is As Busy As Ever', *Washington Post*, 12 April 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/weeks-after-pullout-from-syria-russian-military-is-as-busy-as-ever/2016/04/11/d150a004-fd77-11e5-a569-2c9e819c14e4\\_story.html?tid=ss\\_tw](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/weeks-after-pullout-from-syria-russian-military-is-as-busy-as-ever/2016/04/11/d150a004-fd77-11e5-a569-2c9e819c14e4_story.html?tid=ss_tw), accessed April 12th, 2016.
  - 5 Orianna Pawlyk, 'Air Force F-16s Fly the Most Sorties Against ISIS, B-1s Drop Most Bombs,' *AirForce Times*, 24 March 2016, <http://www.airforcetimes.com/story/military/2016/03/24/air-force-f-16s-fly-most-sorties-against-isis-b-1s-drop-most-bombs/82212394/> accessed March 28, 2016.
  - 6 The data for the figure comes from <http://airwars.org/data/>, accessed 22 April 2016.
  - 7 The data for the figure comes from <http://airwars.org/data/>, accessed 22 April 2016.
  - 8 Kathleen J. McInnis, 'Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State.' *Congressional Research Service* 7-5700, 13 April 2016.
  - 9 I address the SOF occasionally, but since information is scarce about the secret operatives, I focus on the more public efforts.
  - 10 This table is largely based on McInnis, 'Coalition Contributions' with some updating. Other sources indicate only twelve countries have conducted airstrikes, Hermela Aregawi, 'Operation Inherent Resolve: A Year Fighting ISIL', *Al Jazeera*, 14 August 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/third-rail/articles/2015/8/14/operation-inherent-resolve-a-year-of-fighting-isis.html>, accessed March 28, 2016. The yellow highlights countries that have withdrawn from the air campaign, the green indicates those that have continued to conduct air strikes, and the brown indicate those countries that may have engaged in some airstrikes but not on a consistent basis.

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- 11 Belgium participating in the bombing effort with six F-16s from October 2014 to June 2015. With the attack in Brussels, Belgium has announced that it will return the F-16s and re-join the bombing campaign in July, <http://www.mil.be/nl/irak-0>, accessed April 22nd, 2016.
- 12 Canada was, besides the United States, the only country willing to bomb targets in Iraq and Syria until recently. Canada pulled its 6 F-18s out of the bombing effort in February.
- 13 Denmark withdrew its F-16s in October 2015 but has decided to return them.
- 14 Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO in Afghanistan*.
- 15 Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
- 16 Auerswald and Saideman, *Fighting Together*, p. 31, quoting an officer at NATO headquarters in Mons, Belgium.
- 17 The phrase is deceptive since it does not restrict countries from deploying Special Operations Forces or training units. It is meant to convey that a country is not deploying conventional troops to engage in combat operations.
- 18 For recent work that delineates the lessons to learn from these missions, Mungo Melvin, 'Learning the strategic lessons from Afghanistan', *The RUSI Journal* Vol.157, No. 2 (2012): 56-61; Theo Farrell, Frans Osinga, and James Russell, eds. *Military adaptation in Afghanistan*. Stanford University Press, 2013; Kjell Engelbrekt, Marcus Mohlin, and Charlotte Wagnsson, *The NATO Intervention in Libya: Lessons Learned from the Campaign*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), Christopher S. Chivvis, *Toppling Qaddafi Libya and the Limits of Liberal Intervention*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Danielle L. Lupton, 'Lessons in Failure: Libya Five Years Later', *Political Violence @ a Glance*, 15 April 2016, <https://politicalviolenceataglance.org/2016/04/15/lessons-in-failure-libya-five-years-later/>, accessed 23 April 2016.
- 19 The realization that Canada was paying a higher price than most of the allies perhaps helped to undermine Prime Minister Stephen Harper's enthusiasm for the war. See Stewart Bell, 'Memo to Stephen Harper in 2007 downplayed a Canadian casualty rate in Afghanistan up to 10 times higher than allies', *National Post*, 18 June 2013. <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/memo-to-stephen-harper-in-2007-downplayed-a-canadian-casualty-rate-in-afghanistan-up-to-10-times-higher-than-allies>, accessed 13 April 2016, for the realization, and for Harper's declining interest, see Stephen M. Saideman *Adapting in the Dust: Lessons Learned from Canada's War in Afghanistan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).
- 20 Spain, Hungary and other relative free riders rarely get as much attention for their caveats and other restrictions.
- 21 Roger Cohen, 'Leading From Behind,' *New York Times*, 31 October 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/01iht-edcohen01.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/opinion/01iht-edcohen01.html?_r=0) accessed 13 April 2016.
- 22 Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).
- 23 For the sake of brevity, I do not address the patterns of change over time, but others might to see if the rise and fall of ISIS is associated with increased or decreased participation.
- 24 For a series of figures and data on the airstrikes, see Airwars.Org at <http://airwars.org/data/>, accessed 13 April 2016. As of April 19th, the US has engaged in 3512 strikes on targets in Syria, and the rest (Canada, Australia, France, UK, Saudi, Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain and Turkey) account for 227. The contrast with the Iraq effort is stark as the

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- two lowest efforts and, as it happens, the two interrupted missions, Belgium's and Denmark's, combine to be more than the total of the non-US strikes in Syria.
- 25 Italy is listed as having provided fighter aircraft, but the available reports do not list Italy as having engaged in airstrikes.
- 26 Turkey's airstrikes have been aimed in large part at the coalition's allies—the Kurds—rather than the Islamic State.
- 27 Again, see Airwars.org. Also, see Nick Thompson, 'War on ISIS: Why Arab States Aren't Doing More', *CNN*, 17 December 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/10/middleeast/isis-what-arab-states-are-doing/>, accessed 13 April 2016.
- 28 For a thorough examination of the foreign fighter challenge, see the US House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, 'Final Report of the Task Force on Combatting Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel', September 2015.
- 29 The data on foreign fighters comes from The Soufan Group, *Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq*, December 2015, [soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf), accessed 13 April 2016. The Bahrain data comes from Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 'Foreign Fighters in Iraq & Syria: Where Do They Come From?' <http://www.rferl.org/content/infographics/foreign-fighters-syria-iraq-is-isis-isil-infographic/26584940.html>, accessed 13 April 2016.
- 30 I have placed the countries with no data on foreign fighters in lowest category given that it is most likely that countries with no data are those with less severe foreign fighter problems. To be clear, in all of the correlations reported, those countries with missing data are dropped.
- 31 The correlations reported here are just to provide an idea, as the data used to do these modest analyses is hardly complete. The observations included are those listed in the table 2: the countries likely to become involved based on proximity and then including those distant countries that are involved.
- 32 Aaron Y. Zelin, 'Up to 11,000 Foreign Fighters in Syria; Steep Rise Among Western Europeans', *ICSR Insight*, 17 December 2013, <http://icsr.info/2013/12/icsr-insight-11000-foreign-fighters-syria-steep-riseamong-western-europeans/>, accessed 23 April 2016.
- 33 Data on attacks comes from Ray Sanchez, et al., 'ISIS Goes Global: 90 Attacks In 21 Countries Have Killed Nearly 1,400 People', *CNN*, 17 December 2015, updated 13 April 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/>, accessed 13 April 2016.
- 34 Jordan joined the coalition before being attacked and then became more involved, if only briefly, after one of its pilots was tortured and killed after crashing in ISIS territory.
- 35 Ben Doherty and others, 'France Launches "Massive" Airstrike on Isis Stronghold of Raqqa,' *The Guardian*, 16 November 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/16/france-launches-massive-airstrike-on-isis-stronghold-in-syria-after-paris-attack>, accessed 5 April 2016.
- 36 Peter Carty, 'Belgium confirms it will resume F-16 airstrikes on Isis in the wake of Brussels attacks', *International Business Times*, 25 March 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/belgium-confirms-it-will-resume-f-16-airstrikes-isis-wake-brussels-attacks-1551595>, accessed 4 April 2016.
- 37 Actually, many countries have been hit by Islamic State attacks but have not joined the coalition's most intense efforts, including Algeria, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Tunisia.

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- 38 Sonia Farid, 'Egypt vs. ISIS: Is Sinai now an official battlefield?' *Al Arabiya English*, 5 April 2016, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/analysis/2015/07/11/Egypt-vs-ISIS-Is-Sinai-now-an-official-battlefield-.html>, accessed 5 April 2016. Also, see Jared Malsin, 'Inside Egypt's Blacked-Out War With ISIS-Affiliated Militants,' *Time*, 27 December 2015, <http://time.com/4157435/isis-isil-egypt-sinai/>, accessed 5 April 2016.
- 39 David Schenker, 'Lebanon: The Syrian War's Next Casualty?' *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 10 December 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/lebanon-the-syrian-wars-next-casualty>, accessed 5 April 2015.
- 40 Auerswald and Saideman, *Fighting Together*, chapter eight.
- 41 Tom Batchelor, 'Dutch Declare War On Isis With Vow To Send Fighter Jets To Bomb Syria' *Express*, 29 January 2016, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/world/639252/Islamic-State-Netherlands-send-fighter-jets-fight-ISIS-Daesh-Syria>, accessed 5 April 2016.
- 42 For an analysis of similar balancing acts but focusing on countries' relationships with the United States and how the requirements of that relationship interact with domestic politics, see Stéfanie Von Hlatky, *American Allies in Times of War: The Great Asymmetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
- 43 Regardless of using the total number of refugees or the natural log of refugees received or interacting with regime type, results were far from significant. I used data from the United Nations High Commission on Refugees: [http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/time\\_series](http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/time_series), accessed 13 April 2016.
- 44 For good reviews, see Jack S. Levy, 'Domestic Politics and War', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1988); James D. Fearon, 'Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1998); and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and Alastair Smith, 'Domestic Explanations of International Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 15, no. 1 (2012), accessed 14 April 2016.
- 45 Sarah E. Kreps, 'Elite Consensus as a Determinant of Alliance Cohesion: Why Public Opinion Hardly Matters for Nato-Led Operations in Afghanistan', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 6, no. 3 (July 2010).
- 46 Auerswald and Saideman, *Fighting Together*.
- 47 Brian C. Rathbun, *Partisan Interventions : European Party Politics and Peace Enforcement in the Balkans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).
- 48 Reports have varied, but see the following: Carla Babb, 'How Involved Are US Special Forces in Fight Against Islamic State?' *Voice of America*, 22 January 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/content/united-states-special-forces-fight-islamic-state/3159470.html>, accessed 15 April 2016; Chris Hughes, 'SAS Heroes Blown Up in ISIS Ambush on Top Secret Mission in Iraq', *Mirror*, 5 February 2016, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/sas-heroes-blown-up-isis-7318678>; Cameron Stewart, 'Ramadi: Australian Special Forces Helped to Retake Iraqi City', *The Australian*, 31 December 2015, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/ramadi-australian-special-forces-helped-retake-iraqi-city/news-story/4a1dc79a2583b7527dff3eef9bb15de8>, accessed 15 April 2016; David Pugliese, 'Canadian Special Forces Help Fight Off "Significant" ISIL Attack in Iraq', *Ottawa Citizen* 18 December 2015. <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/breaking-canadian-special-forces-in-ground-battle-with-isil-in-northern-iraq>, accessed 15 April 2016; Associated Press, 'Libyan Officials: French Special Forces on Ground Fighting ISIS,' *Military.com*, 24 February 2016,

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<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2016/02/24/libya-officials-french-special-forces-ground-fighting-is.html>, accessed 15 April 2016.

49 The coding here focuses on late 2014 and does not include changes since then. Polity IV data was used to code democracies from other regimes (Armenia fell just short of the standard level of 6 on -10 to 10 polity scale). For the dataset, see

<http://www.systemicpeace.org/polityproject.html>, accessed 22 April 2016. To code presidential or parliamentary, I used [www.semipresidentialism.com](http://www.semipresidentialism.com), and recoded semi-Presidential systems as Presidential since most tend to give the executive much latitude in military affairs. In the set of cases here, all of the cases in this column are semi-presidential except for the United States.

50 Sarah Kreps, 'When Does the Mission Determine the Coalition? The Logic of Multilateral Intervention and the Case of Afghanistan,' *Security Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2008) and *Coalitions of Convenience: United States Military Interventions After the Cold War*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Patricia A. Weitsman, *Waging War: Alliances, Coalitions, And Institutions Of Interstate Violence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).