

TESTIMONY OF GENERAL JAMES L. JONES, USMC (Ret.)
“Causes and Consequences of Violent Extremism and the Role of Foreign Assistance”
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, & Related Programs
Committee on Appropriations
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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Leahy, and Committee Members, thank you for the invitation to testify today. I commend your leadership on an issue of cardinal importance to America’s interests and the future of the human enterprise.

I’m honored to testify alongside individuals who have devoted their lives to the cause of development, peace, and stability. I have had the pleasure of working with Bono for a number of years on these issues. There is no more passionate, thoughtful, informed and effective advocate for development, and its nexus with security. Millions of people live better and more hopeful and peaceful lives because of his work, and because of the many efforts of this committee.

During the bulk of my military service, U.S. national security was defined by the long twilight struggle against communism and the Soviet military threat. Security was expressed in the calculus of comparative troop strength, weapons count, and nuclear throw weight. Today’s threats are exponentially more diverse and complex than those in the bipolar world we left behind in the 20th century. It’s an alarming roster. Among them:

- Metastasizing terrorist and criminal enterprises combined with widening access to massively destructive weapons
- Weakening and failing states triggering a proliferation of political and economic refugees
- A spectrum of world-altering natural resource threats
- And the ongoing battle for hearts and minds between the forces of modernity and the retrograde agents of intolerance

The challenges are synergistic and extreme. Yet, so are the opportunities created by many positive trends: the march of democracy, universal connectivity, global economic integration, and life-changing innovation.

If our future is to be defined by our opportunities rather than the threats, it **demands**...and I stress...**demands**...a far deeper conception of national and international security—one less reliant on reaction and far more focused on anticipation and prevention—one that centers on disarming the root causes and major multipliers of conflict and instability, and one that, in the long run, is much less expensive than what we practice today.

Viewed through that lens, what comes into sharp focus is that the premiere strategic threat to global security, and our own, is not any single country, ideology, or weapon. It is human hunger, and unsatisfied demand for life-basics including food, energy, water, dignity, and a better future for masses living on the edge.

Let me expand on that. As I understand it, the purpose of this hearing is to examine “the causes and consequences” of violent extremism. This question, and in particular the link between poverty and terrorism, has been long debated.

For many extremist leaders and their acolytes, the attraction to violent Islam is born of religious fanaticism or the selfish lust for political power and wealth disguised as faith. Others find their attraction in a depraved quest for belonging. For multitudes, the simple motivation is sustenance, fear, and coercion.

What is abundantly clear, however, is that extremists bank on leveraging human want and desperation to dominate, gain territory, and achieve a perverted form of legitimacy. They seek vacuums caused by poor governance and corruption to exploit human misery and weakness in the pursuit of scale. At scale, and with increasing access to sophisticated weaponry—including potentially WMD—violent Islam is as great a threat to global stability and prosperity—including our own—as any state power we can think of.

I have long felt that the world has a deep moral obligation, and self-interest, to end the plague of ISIS, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram and their ilk. Unquestionably, defeating this barbaric threat has a military element associated with it. But, defeating radicalism strategically – depriving violent extremism of scale—requires a far broader and more strategic toolkit: one that empowers us not only to deploy and defeat but to vigorously – and I mean vigorously – engage and endow. That’s where we and our like-minded allies, and our collective foreign assistance play the most crucial role.

U.S. foreign assistance has produced great achievements over the last couple decades to alleviate extreme poverty, advance global health and respond to natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. The return on investment in global influence and national security is enormous. This committee has had much to do with that progress.

The key now is investing our resources more wisely in a more focused mission – to leverage the full spectrum of U.S. and allied capabilities to defeat violent extremism and the conditions that provide it oxygen. This is why U.S. and allied foreign assistance programs are more important than ever; but their success requires that we build a more effective strategic planning and implementation framework.

Of this I'm convinced: if civilization is to achieve the hopeful world order envisioned at the outset of this century, we need a complete transformation of how the U.S. and our allies engage with the most vulnerable populations and places on earth – located in the African continent, the Middle East, Asia, and in central and south America—the very people and places where extremists are currently setting their sights.

It's time re-align our strategy to face the threat of violent extremism, the same way we recalibrated to defeat the dark "isms" of the last century with major overhauls in policy and organization, such as the 1947 National Security Act and the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols.

The United States does not have a strategic planning framework for foreign assistance that parallels how our military plans. The QDDR is a step in the right direction but the lack of foreign assistance strategic planning makes advancing our objectives far more difficult and uncertain.

We need global development campaign plan that is as sophisticated, serious and passionate as any fight in our history—designed and resourced as if the future depends upon it. Because it does!

I would submit that such a new framework must be guided by four principles:

One, the battle plan must recognize that stability in the 21st century is a complex ecosystem – an integrated symphony of security, development, and good governance, rooted in the rule of law. Any one of the triad absent the others is unsustainable. That means our foreign engagement and assistance programs must be synthesized to cultivate these three coefficients in concert. It's time for partnership and symphony to replace parochial stovepipes and knee jerk reactions that too often characterize our current framework.

Two, it must integrate the public and private sector. No amount of foreign assistance can substitute for the transformational power of economic growth and entrepreneurship, which is fueled by private sector investment. Our foreign assistance strategy and programs must place greater emphasis on catalyzing and supporting economic growth and opportunity.

Development and foreign direct investment do and must complement one another. Greater security and development will mean stronger markets. And stronger markets will bring greater stability. That's a win for America and the world. This is what I mean when I say that in this new era of human development, entrepreneurs, investors, and innovators are as fundamental to geopolitical stability as politicians, generals, and diplomats; and trade and investment agreements are as instrumental to world order as defense pacts.

Three, it must recognize the threats posed by food, energy, and water insecurity to stability. Lack of access to these resources, whether from mismanagement or inequitable distribution, is a major driver of poverty, conflict, and extremism. That means core to everything we do, our diplomacy, policies, practices, and innovations, must promote wise stewardship of the natural systems—including a hospitable climate – required to sustain human well-being.

Four, the campaign must engage the whole of the U.S. interagency, the whole of society — meaning government, NGOs, and private enterprise—and the whole of our alliances, particularly NATO, to deliver security, development, and governance support and assistance that improve lives, expands investment, and promotes self-sufficiency. We are in a battle of ideas and we are in the fight of our lives for the future. If we don't team and win together, we will slowly sink together.

In essence these are the pillars of a refugee and state failure prevention strategy. They are the arsenal that will cause the lasting defeat of radicalism, maintain U.S. influence in a needy world, and assure the triumph of our principles and interests.

At the beginning of my remarks I mentioned the Committee's leadership. In this century as it was in the last, shaping a world of peace and prosperity rather than desperation and conflict will require American leadership at its best. No other country can come close to what we can do—not China, not Russia. Only the United States together with our allies and friends, hopefully including China and Russia, can bring about such global change.

With your approval Mr. Chairman I would like to submit three documents relevant to the hearing topic for the committee's consideration. One is an article from the Atlantic Council's "Task Ahead" publication making the case for modernizing U.S. and allied global. The second is a briefing on an initiative I have been developing to advocate for and operationalize modern U.S. engagement based on the pillars I highlighted. The third is a statement on the importance of water security to all of the imperatives we are discussing today.

With America in the lead, we **can**, we **must**...and I believe we **will**, rise to the extreme challenges and opportunities in this still-young and hopeful century.

Please accept my deepest appreciation to the Committee and to my fellow witnesses for your devotion to American leadership in the cause of global security, development, and stability. It is the mission of our time and a cause for the ages. Thank you.

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