

## Intervention meter assesses candidates' hawkishness

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With the presidential campaign now nearly a full year in, there are some definite trends emerging as to the stances of the candidates on key issues. One of those issues is how to handle the emergence of Daesh (aka ISIS) and other terrorist organizations and whether or not direct intervention would be a possibility under certain presidents. While some candidates have been clearly beating the war drums, despite the fact that it would almost certainly be counterproductive, others have taken a more moderate approach, with a few even going so far in the other direction as to be considered almost isolationist.

One of the key ways to measure how much of a hawk each candidate would be is to measure the number of times they have called for ground forces, air strikes, safe zones, or international action against terrorists. That's what the 2016 Presidential Candidate Intervention Meter hopes to measure.

A point value is assigned to each call for action against extremists groups and organizations, ranging from 10 for drone strikes to 100 for ground troops. Embedding with Iraqi troops, carpet bombing, and the use of special forces also receive point values based on their relative level of intervention. Whenever any of the candidates calls for any of the items on the list they receive a score, with a higher tally meaning they are extremely hawkish and a low score meaning they tend toward a lighter presence. They are then ranked against one another to see where they stand relative to one another.

Senator Lindsey Graham was the most likely to engage in a major war effort, which surprises no one, given his rhetoric that could almost be called bloodthirsty. With his exit from the race, Hillary Clinton moves up from her previous close second, again, not too shocking as she has actually been the architect of several violent actions in the region. Senator Marco Rubio and Dr. Ben Carson also score fairly high when it comes to calling for more bloodshed. At the other end of the spectrum we have the dovish (and increasingly politically irrelevant) Rand Paul and Martin O'Malley, who would prefer to handle things with a much lighter touch.

The surprises come in the middle of the pack, with Donald Trump who, despite his alpha male swagger and tough talk, is only slightly more interventionist than Senators Ted Cruz and Bernie Sanders.

The ranking tool was partially created by Micah Zenko of the Council on Foreign Relations by tracking the calls for force, though the actual scoring system was developed by Trevor Thrall of the Libertarian CATO Institute. The idea is to keep an eye on how much blood, money, and time we will spend fighting extremist groups, or whether we will allow nations where they operate to handle the situation themselves, with a potential victory for such groups seemingly more likely. In other words, it's not exactly an easy choice.

Thrall admits that it's hardly a scientific tool, merely one more way to see what the candidates are planning if and when they get into the Oval Office. Either way, it's a handy snapshot to give voters an idea of where a candidate stands on one of the more important issues of our time.