

THE EFFECT OF NON-STATE ACTORS
ON MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

A Thesis
Presented
To the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Political Science

by
© Duaa Binzafran 2016
Summer 2016

THE EFFECT OF NON-STATE ACTORS
ON MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

A Thesis

by

Duaa Binzafran

Summer 2016

APPROVED BY THE INTERIM DEAN OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

Sharon Barrios, Ph.D.

APPROVED BY THE GRADUATE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Matthew O. Thomas, Ph.D.
Graduate Coordinator

James Jacob, Ph.D., Chair

Mahalley Allen, Ph.D.

PUBLICATION RIGHTS

No portion of this thesis may be reprinted or reproduced in any manner unacceptable to the usual copyright restrictions without the written permission of the author.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Publication Rights.....	iii
Abstract.....	vi
 CHAPTER	
I. Background and History	1
How Global Events Contributed to the Rise of Non-state Actors	8
Stages of Terrorism in the Name of Islam	14
The Impact of the Muslim Brotherhood Ideology on al-Qaeda	16
The Iraqi War and the Emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.....	20
Foreign Affairs Strategy Mistakes and Sympathy from Muslim Communities.....	21
Growth of ISIS from al-Qaeda.....	24
II. Literature Review.....	28
Factors that Influenced the Emergence of Non-state Actors in the Middle East	28
Source of Financial and Military Support for Non-state Actors in the Middle East	31
Past and Present Impacts of Non-state Actors on Middle East Policies	38
Potential Impacts of Non-state Actors on Middle East Policies	49
III. Finding and Discussion.....	52
Recent News on Non-state Actors in the Middle East.....	54
The Future of Non-state Actors in the Middle East.....	57
Fighting the Threat of Islamic Extremism	59
The Impact of Non-state Actors on International Relations Between the Middle East and the West	61
External Environment	62

CHAPTER	PAGE
Israel-Palestine Conflict.....	63
Radical Extremists	63
Representation and Equity	64
Targeting Finances.....	65
Minorities.....	66
Homegrown Solutions	66
Role of the Media.....	67
What the U.S. and Europe Should Do	68
Military Solution.....	69
Educational System.....	70
Conclusion	71
Bibliography	75

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF NON-STATE ACTORS ON MIDDLE EAST POLITICS

by

© Duaa Binzafran 2016

Master of Arts in Political Science

California State University, Chico

Summer 2016

The study aimed at determining the emergence and significance of non-state actors in the domestic and foreign policy in the Middle East. The methodology of the survey was fulfilled by reviewing secondary materials on the subject. Literature is examined in the context of history, internal and external environments, the current state of affairs in the region and the various stakeholders. A critical analysis was conducted on the literature to assess the veracity of discussions and to create a coherent understanding of the issue. The study found that the emergence of the actors can be attributed to various external and internal factors. Also, several of these actors influence government policies in the region and significantly affect the nature of relations between the specific countries and Western nations. Moreover, recent terror attacks in Europe have been linked to activities of some of the actors and have affected the response to the refugee crisis in Europe. Following these findings, there is evident need for local, regional and international interventions. Internally ruling regimes need to promote equity and representation, as well as

ensure cultural, religious and political tolerance, especially for minority groups. Moreover, an education system that inculcates the appreciation of diversity, tolerance and non-violent resolution of grievances is required. Regional bodies must take an active role in taming the influence of the actors, especially where military intervention is necessary. External solutions include sanctions targeting the assets of these actors in order to cripple their financial capability. More importantly, the West needs to be consistent regarding justice and fairness which would necessitate a change of foreign policies, particularly for countries with a Muslim majority, and , they need to refrain from widely ineffective military action.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and History

The Middle East is a transcontinental region that is made up of different countries with predominantly Muslims and Jews. The area extends to North African countries like Egypt, European nations like Cyprus and Turkey and parts of western Asia. Historically, the Middle East has been characterized by religious and sectarian conflicts. Muslims have also created rivalries among themselves, based on ethnic and sectarian interests of Sunni and Shiites distributed in different parts of the region.¹ Political and religious leaders in the Middle East have partly contributed to the acrimonious existence in the region. After World War I, when the British and the French divided the region into random small states, there was this lack of equitable distribution of natural resources and the emergence of greedy dictators in countries such as Syria, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen, which has further created discontent and a rebellious feeling within the population.

Apart from the lack of stable political leadership, the settlement of Israel after the second world war heightened the level of discontent among Muslims in the region, especially those of Arab descent. Israel was created after the United Nations was formed,

¹ Mazhar, Muhammad Saleem, Samee Uzair Khan, and Naheed S. Goraya, "Understanding Terrorism and the Ways to Root Out: Perceptions and Realities," *Journal of Political Studies* 20, no. 1 (2013): 72.

leading to the annexation of territories originally occupied by Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.² The consequence of such an action has been widespread, with Arab nations joining hands to fight a common enemy in the name of the Israelites. Arab-led coalitions against the Jewish invasions have existed since the 1960s, when Western allies like the United States (U.S.) and European nations supported the Jews. Consequently, Arab countries have historically treated the U.S. and Western countries with contempt even though the situation is currently changing.³

The cold war, a time when two superpowers attempted to control different parts of the world and also antagonize one another, also had a significant influence on the Middle East.⁴ The U.S. and the former Soviet Union were actively involved in the Middle East with the aim of gaining the support of the locals and benefiting from existing natural resources. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the U.S. intervened to reduce the influence of communism in the region. To achieve this goal, the U.S. collaborated with local leaders and provided logistic support and training for Islamic leaders in the area. Osama bin Laden was a direct beneficiary of the interventions of the U.S. in the Middle East. Interestingly, he was recruited and trained by the U.S. While the communists were successful in controlling some parts of western Asia, the intervention of the U.S. kept them away from Afghanistan, Iraq and other Middle East countries.⁵

² Ibid., 72.

³ Ibid., 73.

⁴ Bernhard Blumenau, "The Other Battleground of the Cold War: The UN and the Struggle against International Terrorism in the 1970s," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 2014): 68.

⁵ Ibid.

The net result of these activities was the emergence of non-state actors who have used terror, threats and intimidation to achieve their goals. Failure of leadership in the countries increased discontent and led to the creation of sectarian groups to fight government and agitate for equal representation. However, the emergence of non-state actors with strong financial muscle and organizational capacity has, in a way, shaped the politics of the region and the fate of the locals. While these groups have changed their names periodically, the common non-state actors in the area include al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Taliban and, most recently, ISIS. Hezbollah was created to eliminate the Israelites and improve the state of Arabs in the region.⁶ The group has engaged the Jews in battle and terror attacks over the years with significant success. In the 1980s, Hezbollah was respected among the Arabs due to their ability to contain the Israelites. Non-state actors friendly to Palestine have also attempted to punish the Israelites for occupying the Golan Heights and the West Bank, regions perceived to belong to Arabs.⁷

al-Qaeda and Hezbollah have participated in terror attacks in different parts of the world, more so in countries perceived to be friendly to Israel and against the Islamic ideologies of the groups. Countries like the U.S., Britain, France, Belgium, and Kenya have been targeted by suicide bombers as a way of intimidating Western forces to stop supporting Israel. Hezbollah has also been involved in the political leadership in Lebanon and is recognized as a political party with international affiliations. The emergence of ISIS, a group that advocates for the creation of the Islamic caliphate has changed the

⁶ Thomas F. Lynch III, "The Impact of ISIS on Global Salafism and South Asian Jihad." *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 19 (August 2015): 91.

⁷ Mazhar et al., 75.

situation and brought a new perspective to the position of non-state actors in the region.⁸ ISIS is currently present in Syria and Iraq, where they control oil fields and trade routes worth billions of U.S. dollars. Just like other twentieth-century terror groups, ISIS has targeted Western countries, kidnapping journalists and aid workers in different regions to achieve a goal similar to other terror organizations.⁹

The emergence of non-state actors in the region with significant affiliation to Islam has had significant religious and political implications. Islam is today associated with terrorism and the religious doctrine originally developed by the Prophet Muhammad has been subverted by the groups.¹⁰ Under the assumption that they are fighting a jihad or holy war, the non-state actors in different parts of the Middle East have created enemies with non-Muslim and moderate Islamic countries around the world. The implication of such activities is multifaceted and globally significant. Overall, the growth of these groups has led to the perception that Muslims are terrorists and criminals who cannot be trusted. Moreover, it has resulted in the generalization that Islam, as a religion, condones terrorist activities and the killing of innocent people to achieve sectarian and political goals. When al-Qaeda target government and public installations, the misguided assertion that the innocent civilians are paying for the atrocities committed by their governments has severe negative implications not only for the victims but also Islamic countries in the Middle East.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁹ Mazhar et al., 75.

¹⁰ John L. Esposito, "Islam and Political Violence," *Religions* 6, no. 3 (2015): 1067.

¹¹ Ibid.

As a Muslim from the Middle East, I believe that the continued activities of non-state actors in the region and beyond have directly contributed to the death of over four million Muslims. Wars started by these groups in the region have made a significant contribution to the murder of millions of Arabs and Muslims. Moreover, targeting Western countries has also created a negative image of Muslims generally, leading to an increase in hate crime. Consequently, the number of Muslims who have died as a result of activities directly associated with the goals of the non-state actors is five times greater than the number of victims of the 9/11 attacks. While the focus is usually placed on the relatively fewer victims of terrorism, over 95 percent of people who suffer and die as a result of these activities are innocent Muslims. Terrorism is not part of Islam or any other religion, and the activities of the non-state actors in the region are motivated by selfish and nonreligious interests.¹²

Apart the challenge faced by Muslims as a result of terrorism, corruption has created a major international relations debacle in the region. Mistrust and the terrorist tag have significantly affected the relationship between most countries in the region and the West. Intelligence reports showing that Pakistan, Iran and even Jordan support the non-state actors has negatively affected the reputation of these countries and led to diplomatic rows and economic embargoes. Pakistan and Afghanistan were accused of shielding bin Laden and the death of the al-Qaeda leader in the hands of American marines in Pakistan caused an international uproar, accusations and counteraccusations. Recent news on how ISIS continues to recruit youths and vulnerable children to join the jihadi organization

¹² Ibid.

has created fear and instability in this area.¹³ Aid workers have been kidnapped and killed, which also affects locals overwhelmed by hunger and poverty. It is, therefore, evident that the non-state actors and their activities have significant implications in politics and socioeconomic development of the region.¹⁴

In this thesis, historical and political facts have been gathered to help understand the implications of non-state actors and their activities in the Middle East and beyond. The dissertation has focused on describing the non-state actors, their motivation, source of funding and interests to understand their continued existence. Furthermore, the impact of these groups on the relationship between the world and the Middle East has been described based on recent and past events. Finally, the thesis has shown how the continued existence of non-state actors affects the Middle East in general and Muslims in particular.

The growth of non-state actors in the Middle East, such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Hezbollah has created a global security concern. Though all these groups mainly target Israel, other countries perceived to be supportive of the Israelis or the West have not been spared. Tracing the history of these groups and how the foreign policy of the West contributed to their growth is vital in understanding the rallying call of these groups.¹⁵

The rise of non-state actors in terrorism has also been attributed to two dependent factors. First, the Middle East is the birthplace of three major religions:

¹³ Lynch III, 89.

¹⁴ Mazhar et al., 75.

¹⁵ Anthony N. Celso, "al-Qaeda's Post-bin Laden Resurgence: The Paradox of Resilience and Failure," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (May 2014): 42.

Christianity, Islam and Judaism. As a result, the region has been affected greatly by religion for decades. Though the three religious groups have played a role in shaping the modern Middle East states, Islam has remained the most dominant and influential. With that extent of religious influence, non-state terrorist actors have emerged and base their actions on religion to gain support and sympathy from the people.¹⁶ Second, terrorist organizations have also been attributed to the fact that Islam is the most dominant religion in the region. Thus, religion, and specifically Islam, has been used as a cover for their political agenda.

al-Qaeda, ISIS and even Hezbollah have, in the past, adopted regulations seen as promoting the religion. Unsurprisingly, women and men have been killed for failing to follow such regulations. While most residents of these countries may be against terrorism, the fact that the groups preach the Islamic gospel endears them towards the masses, making it difficult to contain the growth of terror cells.¹⁷

Hezbollah, a Lebanon-based terror organization, was formed to fight for the removal of Israelis from their current location in the name of Islam. The organization began its missions under the leadership of Hassan Nasrallah. The Muslim Brotherhood, in contrast, is an Egyptian political group that was formed in 1928 in the name of Islam to fight for improved political and social emancipation of Muslims under the leadership of Hassan al-Banna. al-Qaeda was formed by Osama bin Laden, a former Central Intelligence Agency spy working for the U.S., and has existed since 1988 to spread their vision

¹⁶ Ibid., 841.

¹⁷ Amna Akbar, "National Security's Broken Windows," *UCLA Law Review* 62, no. 4 (April 2014): 840.

of radical Islam and execute terror against Western countries.¹⁸ The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (known as ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh) was formed after the invasion of Iraq and the execution of Saddam Hussein. The group is predominantly located in Syria and Iraq but also found in other Arab countries and North Africa. Thus far, it has waged aggressive and violent activities called jihad under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.¹⁹ Evidently, the growth of these radical groups in the Middle East and parts of Africa is the result of the West's poor foreign policy in the Middle East and the increasing support for Israeli dominance in the region.

How Global Events Contributed to the Rise of Non-state Actors

The emergence of these groups within the Middle East did not arise as an isolated event but was influenced by global events. The rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War played a historical role in the emergence of groups like al-Qaeda. The Soviet Union's desire to control most countries in Eastern Europe and the Middle East was behind its invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, following its successful control of countries like Kazakhstan and others in the region.²⁰ However, its entry into Afghanistan was met by an armed rebellion by Arab forces under the leadership of Osama bin Laden. Interestingly, the U.S. and Pakistan supported and armed the group as part of a global campaign against the Soviet Union. As the insurgency against the Soviet

¹⁸ Blumenau, 67.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 43.

Union continued, the U.S. engaged al-Qaeda in other missions.²¹ In the 1990s, for example, the group was allowed to be part of the Caucasus that fought the Soviet Union invasions of the Middle East. The group was also allowed in the military activities of the Americans and other Western countries in Kosovo against the Serbs. Due to the situation that faced the region, al-Qaeda was formed solely as a Pan-Arab group with the mandate of protecting the Arabian Peninsula. Under the leadership of bin Laden, the group metamorphosed into a terrorist group, turning its guns against its former allies.²² The group has targeted some countries in the West to eliminate their support for Israel.²³

As the al-Qaeda militias continued with their resistance against the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan, other groups emerged with support for Pakistan. During the same period, the Pakistani intelligence service was involved in the training of Pashtun jihadist groups to reduce the influence of India in the region. Pakistan and Indian rivalry, therefore, played a supportive role in increasing the presence of these groups in the Middle East. The Pashtun jihadists were also sent to Afghanistan to help al-Qaeda in fighting the Soviet Union invasion of the region. Coincidentally, Pakistan was an ally of the U.S. during this time, an indication that they have also contributed to the creation of the Taliban. al-Qaeda, initially sponsored by the U.S., turned its weapons against Americans and their support. In Pakistan, the Taliban set up hardline Islamic schools in which studies were devoted to their terrorist ideology and from which they recruited Pakistani jihadists

²¹ Elton Demollari, "Germany and its Influential Role in the Iraq Issue. Start of Cracks in Relations between Germany and the US?" *Revista De Stiinte Politice*, no. 47 (March): 239.

²² Burç Aka, H., "Paradigm Change in Turkish Foreign Policy after Post-Cold War," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 3 (2014): 64.

²³ *Ibid.*, 63.

to fight their wars. Because of these schools, the word Taliban came to mean “student.”²⁴ Today, the group is waging war against the Pakistani people because of their international policies and alliance with Western powers.

Additionally, the creation of Israel by the United Nations after the second world war also contributed to the emergence of terrorist groups in the Middle East in the name of “jihad.” By carving a place for Israel close to Arab-dominated regions, the world created a rivalry that has persisted beyond the original cause. Israel was and has always been supported by Western countries such as the U.S. and Britain. The formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a military alliance supported by the U.S. and most European countries further complicated the rivalry.²⁵ Most Arab countries had no financial muscle to counter Israel or fight its allies, leading to the formation of non-state actors fighting the creation of the Israeli state and the Middle Eastern regimes who couldn’t stop it, calling themselves “jihadist groups,” such as Hezbollah. Specifically, Hezbollah is a Lebanon-based terrorist organization made of radical Shi’a Muslims and driven by hatred against Israel and Western imperialism in the country.²⁶ The formation of this organization has also been linked to U.S. interests in Iran during the Iranian revolution. The group blamed America for causing the troubles in the country, and Israel was viewed as an extension of the U.S. and a representative of its foreign interests in the region. Hezbollah was initiated in Iran and led by clerics and organizations who believed that the Iranian solution could help in the emancipation of Lebanon and its people. It

²⁴ Ibid., 64.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 66.

supported and advocated for the use of terror to gain political objectives and free the people from an oppressive system.²⁷

Other countries such as Syria and Palestine joined the regional war against the Israelis, a situation that attracted the intervention of Western forces. Though Israel later withdrew from southern Lebanon, Hezbollah continued with its suicide bombing programs against Western targets and amassed weapons with the help of certain regional leaders. What is more, the group has also been linked with numerous terrorist attacks against the U.S., an indication of its hatred towards the country's foreign policy in the region and support of the Israelis. For example, it orchestrated the truck bombing of the U.S. embassy and marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. The growth of Hezbollah in the recent past despite efforts by superpowers to rid it of powerful weapons has been attributed to global politics and lack of a common approach. Most countries in the Middle East, including Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, have secretly funded the organizations to advance their political war against what they believe to be Western imperialism.²⁸

For its part, the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni Muslim group, is based in Egypt though its presence has been felt in other parts of the Middle East. Whereas the group does not collaborate with other Islamic groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, its activities are comparable to those of other militias in the same region. The other terrorist groups have viewed the Muslim Brotherhood as weak, while the Egypt-based group believes that other terrorist groups are extremists. The group's activities were relatively suppressed during the leadership of President Hosni Mubarak. During the Arab Spring,

²⁷ Ibid., 67.

²⁸ Blumenau, 67.

the U.S. supported the Muslim Brotherhood, leading to the removal of the country's leadership and the introduction of a new government led by Mohamed Morsi, a member of the fellowship. The change of events in the region created a vacuum of operation for non-state actors, leading to its growth in influence and financial capabilities. Although America prosecuted citizens believed to be funding the organization, it can be blamed for directly aiding the growth of the terror group.

Furthermore, global politics played a role in the emergence of the groups as witnessed during the second Gulf War, which led to the U.S. and allied invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein. The removal of Hussein created a power vacuum and eliminated the social fabric that initially held together the Sunni and Shiite schisms. Despite controlling the country for over nine years, America did not contribute towards the creation of a local army to improve the country's security situation once the forces were withdrawn.²⁹ As the U.S. mooted an exit strategy from the country, it entrusted the Shiite regime to create the next government, a move that led to the exclusion and alienation of the Sunni population. The state of affairs gave the Iraqi al-Qaeda an opportunity to regroup and recruit more Sunni adherents who were not happy with the regime's approach to the country's problems. However, the vacuum created an even monstrous group, the Islamic State of Iraq, a group that has emerged to gain ruthless control of the country and Syria.

Before the U.S. turned its military apparatus against Saddam Hussein, the two countries, Iraq and America, enjoyed a close relationship. During the 1980s, Hussein and President Ronald Reagan had close ties, with the U.S. sending Donald Rumsfeld, the

²⁹ Blumenau, 68.

defense secretary, as a special envoy to the country. The Iraqi leader appeared in his first interview with Rumsfeld with a gun and looked confident, a show of a good relationship. The special envoy conveyed a special message from the president and expressed his pleasure at being in Baghdad. During this engagement, the need for strong bilateral engagements between the two countries was highlighted.³⁰

Despite their impressive relationship, the U.S. and Rumsfeld were aware of the murderous behavior of Hussein. Hussein's relationship and support for terrorists were also public knowledge but did not prevent the two countries from working together. Furthermore, Iraq had also initiated an extensive nuclear weapons campaign, which caused Israel to bomb its nuclear reactor in Osirak. However, the two countries maintained their relationship due to a shared enemy, Iran. The U.S. backed Hussein's military campaign in Iran through the provision of military intelligence, financial and covert supply support.³¹

During this period, the U.S. treated Iraq's murders with kid gloves, turning a blind eye to most of its internal assassinations. During the war between the Middle East countries, Hussein used chemical weapons against the Iranians. Satellite images of Kurdish troops and civilians suffering from the effect of mustard gas, sarin and tabun did not make the U.S. change its attitude; instead, it blamed Iran for chemical use until pressure from congressional Democrats forced a change in position.³² Despite the American support, Baghdad's ambitions would increase, causing friction between the two countries. In 1990, Iraqi agents were accused of engaging in a sting operation in which they acquired

³⁰ Demollari, 239.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Kofi Nsia-Pepira, "Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa: Strategic Gain or Backlash?" *Military Review* 94, no. 1 (February 2014): 50.

electronic materials to make chemical weapons. The country's threats against the Israeli have also caused widespread concerns among American congressional representatives. The attack on Kuwait further strained their relationships, forcing the U.S. to support the latter. Engagement with weapons of mass destruction further soured the relations between the two nations, leading to the first and second Gulf wars that pushed Hussein out of power.³³

Stages of Terrorism in the Name of Islam

Since 1928, the terrorist movement in the name of Islam has emerged in three stages, coded with a similar caliphate message and change in tactics. A look into the three stages helps in understanding the similarity between the diverse terror organizations found in the Middle East and parts of North Africa. The first stage occurred from 1928 to 1978 under the leadership of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁴ During this period, some Islamic organizations emerged, though most of them were latent and failed to attract the support of the locals. However, most of these latent groups emerged strong and influential in the second stage of terror. During this period, two organizations dominated, based on their numbers and ideological influence. The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in Egypt, and Fadayian e-Islam, based in Iran, operated separately but with ideological and operational similarities.³⁵

³³ Nsia-Pepira, 50.

³⁴ Marc Lynch, "Islam Divided Between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan," *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 6 (May 2010): 476.

³⁵ Umbreen Javaid and Noureen Nighat, "An Insight into the Philosophical Dynamics of al-Qaeda." *Journal Of Political Studies* 20, no. 2 (July 2013): 211.

Besides operating in two predominantly Muslim nations, they all advocated for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate and sharia laws. That being the case, to achieve a unified government of Islam, the two groups advocated for the removal of corrupt leaders who were purportedly brought to power by the West. The groups, therefore, legitimized the use of violence in achieving their goals, something that is still shared by modern-day terror organizations. Despite their similarities, the two groups were solely affiliated with Sunnites of Fadayian Shiites who are sworn Islamic rivals in the Middle East.³⁶ Contrary to modern-day terrorism, their activities targeted Muslims and not Western countries. The spread of terror was also not a goal of the groups as they claimed, but rather the use of Islamic radicalism to eliminate political adversaries and dissidents. Assassinations witnessed in Egypt were aimed at destabilizing corrupt regimes and establishing an Islamic caliphate.

The Islamic revolution witnessed in Iran since 1979 ushered in the second stage of terrorism in the Middle East. The revolution laid the foundation for subsequent activities that contributed to the growth of terror organizations and terrorism. For example, the wars in Iraq and Iran and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan established the ground for future organizations. After the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini became the supreme leader of the country, though he hailed from the Shiite community with the support of the West. Despite being a Shiite, Khomeini adopted a nationalistic approach and incorporated the non-Shiites into the revolution under an Islamic ecumenism.³⁷ At this

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Soumia Bardhan, "Egypt, Islamists, and the Internet: The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood and its Rhetoric of Dialectics in Ikhwanweb," *DOMES: Digest of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 2 (October 2014): 235-61.

stage, terrorism in the name of Islam changed significantly, and a customized target on civilians was adopted. The non-discriminatory and violent nature of the current-day terror organization was born during this period, especially after the attack on the Rex Cinema in Abadan, which led to the death of over 400 people. Another approach that also emerged during this stage was the abduction and murder of foreigners as a way of waging a campaign against Western nations.³⁸

The third stage of terrorism started in 1991 and culminated in the 9/11 attack on the U.S. Historians have attributed this stage of terrorism to the victory of Mujahidin in Afghanistan, the settlement of American troops in Saudi Arabia, and the establishment of the Oslo agreements. With the support of Western countries, bin Laden-led organizations succeeded in preventing the annexation of the country into the former Soviet Union. The war allowed the influx of experienced and well-trained guerilla fighters.³⁹

The Impact of the Muslim Brotherhood Ideology on al-Qaeda

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928, long before al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden, were born. As a Sunni revivalist organization, the group began in Isma'iliyaa and was led by a former British agent, Hassan Al Banna. The abolition of the Turkish caliphate by Kemal Ataturk is considered as one of the motivating factors for the growth of this group. By 1936, the Muslim Brotherhood had only 800 members. However, the number increased in subsequent years, reaching more than two

³⁸ Martin Rudner, "Al Qaeda's Twenty-Year Strategic Plan: The Current Phase of Global Terror," *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism* 36 (2013): 560.

³⁹ Lee Kangil, "Does al-Qaeda Central Still Matter?" *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no. 37 (January 2015): 37.

million in 1948, with branches in over 70 principally Muslim countries. The Muslim Brotherhood organization has been considered an ideological motivation for the Osama-led al-Qaeda. On the surface, some similarities exist between the two leaders that could have contributed to their shared ideologies. While Hassan worked as a schoolteacher and an agent of the British, Osama was a CIA agent working against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

Interestingly, the two organizations have used their influence on the people to advocate for increased representation of Sunni Muslims in leadership positions. Al-Banna's history portrays him as a staunch Muslim driven by the desire to establish moral conduct in society. He formed an organization with a similar objective before the Brotherhood concept was conceived, events that depict him as a strong Islam fundamentalist. With his influence in the country, he subsequently joined the Freemason group. It is from this organization that the British Freemasonic intelligence agents recruited him to be a point man in the Middle East.⁴⁰

Moreover, it is the ideological liberation similarities between the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda that may have motivated the establishment of the latter. In Egypt, the fellowship was created to help in the liberation of the Islamic caliphate from the foreign rule of the Zionists. Subsequently, the group claimed they want to establish a pure Muslim state that could help in spreading the religion to other parts of the globe.⁴¹ Though Al-Banna laid the foundation for the ideological principles of the group, analysts have argued that its motivation and link to al-Qaeda arose from its subsequent leader,

⁴⁰ Celso, 35.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Sayyid Qutb. Under his radical leadership, Qutb led to the development of a strong fascist framework that made the group even more appealing to Western intelligence agencies and influenced the shape of al-Qaeda towards the end of the century. Without Qutb's approach, some historians believe that al-Qaeda would not have emerged. In subsequent years, the group engaged in a ruthless recruitment mission that saw the emergence of Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian physician who would later become the right-hand man of Osama bin Laden and his successor. Al-Zawahiri helped in the creation of the terrorist fundamentalist doctrine that contributed to the growth of what they called the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and, subsequently, al-Qaeda.

Qutbism is believed to have motivated the formation of al-Qaeda among other Islamic groups in the Middle East. Otherwise known as the Takfiri ideology, the group has been associated with the pursuit of their new state which they called an Islamic caliphate and ruling with a made-up constitution that they called sharia law in different parts of the world, especially in already Islamic countries. Osama bin Laden's history as an Islamic radical leader has not only been associated with the similarities he has with the Brotherhood's founder but also his training and education of a manipulated vision of Islamic science.⁴² bin Laden attended classes moderated by Qutb, a renowned brother who contributed to the development of a radical ideology that has been inherited by most terrorist groups, among them al-Qaeda. In his subsequent actions, Osama bin Laden referred to works published by the brothers, a demonstration of his ideological references. In one of the videotapes he released, the leader of the terrorist organization recommended

⁴² Anne Pierce, "US 'Partnership' with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its Effect on Civil Society and Human Rights," *Society* 51, no. 1 (February): 71.

the use of Qutb's book *Concepts that Should be Corrected*. Historians have seen the book as the foundation for the radical and extremist nature of Islamic radical groups, including al-Qaeda.⁴³

Coincidentally, Osama bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri were members of the Brotherhood before forming al-Qaeda, a more radical Muslim group that advocates for Islamic dominance. Though the current versions of the group are sworn enemies with different approaches to the jihad issue, the pioneer ideologies were similar. According to Zawahiri, bin Laden left the Muslim Brotherhood after he disagreed with the organizational approaches adopted by the leaders. During his stay in the Arabian Peninsula, he was convinced that he could apply the same principles in the mujahidin against the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. When Morsi was elected president of Egypt, he reportedly received a call from al-Zawahiri in which he received instructions on how to effectively rule the country and establish what they believe is an Islamic state in the country.⁴⁴

According to Zawahiri, Morsi's presidency was an opportunity for secular infidels to be expunged and a caliphate to be established. Based on these messages, it is evident that the two groups shared strong ideological similarities and were bound together by a shared history. Zawahiri is also purported to have instructed Morsi to rule according to their vision of sharia.

al-Qaeda has implemented a leadership doctrine that is devoid of opposition and dissidence. In countries such as Afghanistan, all members of the opposition were subjected to cruel treatment and execution without due process of the law. Such practices

⁴³ John Turner, "Strategic differences: al-Qaeda's Split with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26, no. 2 (March 2015): 208.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

have been shared by the two groups, and Zawahiri's instructions had a similar symbolic message.⁴⁵

The Iraqi War and the Emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

The atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein attracted international attention and led to the Gulf wars. In 2003, the U.S., supported by the United Kingdom, invaded Iraq, leading to the removal of Hussein from power. He was subsequently prosecuted and executed for the murders he committed. However, his removal created a big power vacuum that the U.S. and its allies could not seal, despite staying in the country for over nine years. Immediately after the success of the insurgency and the removal of Hussein, both Al-Qaida of Iraq and the pioneer ISIS, led by Zarqawi, emerged to oppose the allied forces. At times, these two forces would cooperate though the collaboration would not last.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the two organizations contributed to the spread of terrorism in the country, creating a foundation for subsequent revolts after the withdrawal of the forces. As witnessed in other parts of the Middle East, failure to seize power or control major resources is a threat to the emergence of the insurgency. After the allied forces withdrew from the country and let the Shiite Muslims form the government, they created disquiet in the country and led to the emergence of terrorist cells. Conflicts that emerged in the country have been attributed to lack of a better post-war strategy and the isolation of Sunnis.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Matt Fitzpatrick, 2014. "ISIS, al-Qaeda and the Wretched of the Earth," *Flinders Journal of History & Politics*, 30, no. 21 (July 2014): 21-34.

⁴⁶ Akbar, 840.

⁴⁷ Hafizullah Emadi, "The US and Syria: Clawing Back the Sphinx of Damascus," *Aakrosh: The Asian Journal of International Terrorism & Conflict* 18, no. 67 (April 2015): 7.

Iranian influence and the arrogance of the new leadership in Iraq were clearly responsible for the alienation of the Sunnis in the country. Furthermore, the incompetence of the American forces created a fertile ground for the recruitment of new non-state actors.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, it is worth noting that during this period, the non-state actors' campaign was global and was being carried out in most Arab countries. Yemen, Morocco, Jordan and Lebanon were among the countries faced with the emergence of insurgent groups driven by sectarian religious extremism.⁴⁹ It is, therefore, important to note that though the U.S.' invasion of the country created a power vacuum, other factors were at play in the growth of ISIS. One critical factor is the widespread existence of terrorist organizations in the region from the mid-1990s that were supported by existing governments and other foreign elements.⁵⁰

Foreign Affairs Strategy Mistakes and Sympathy from Muslim Communities

Apparently, to thrive and evade the powerful military of Western allies, most terrorist organizations used strategies to win the trust and support of the local communities. The large Muslim communities were targeted with a fabricated Islamic summons and disinformation.⁵¹ Terrorist cells in the name of Shiite and Sunni Muslims used their networks to reach out to the communities, instilling their anti-West and Israeli hate propaganda.⁵² However, Western countries also played a role in the growth of insurgencies,

⁴⁸ Jessica Stern, "Obama and Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 94 (September, 2015): 62.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Akbar, 839.

⁵¹ Nsia-Pepira, 50.

⁵² Marc Lynch, "Obama and the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 5 (October 2015): 18.

albeit without their knowledge.⁵³ In most instances, foreign affairs mistakes gave room for the groups to convince the local communities that most Western countries are driven by hatred against Islam and Arabs. In the U.S., some foreign affairs strategic mistakes added momentum to the religious extremist campaigns in the Middle East. Most of these foreign policy mistakes were committed under the watch of main Western leaders, a justification for the current blame they face.⁵⁴

The U.S. tops the list of countries that have made foreign affairs mistakes that have led to the rise of Islamic extremism in the Middle East and beyond.⁵⁵ First, the Bay of Pigs invasion that took place in 1961 was miscalculated and had little relevance to the U.S., but later created hatred towards the country. The operation was masterminded by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and was aimed at creating a regime change in Cuba.⁵⁶ Poor preparedness and strategic approach led to a devastating failure on the part of the U.S. but created a bigger challenge. Cuba subsequently adopted policies that were against the U.S. and provided financial aid to terrorist organizations in different parts of the world. The Somali intervention in 1992 was also a foreign policy fiasco that further placed the country on the radar of terrorist organizations who used it to justify their actions to the Muslim community.⁵⁷

Further still, George Bush senior initiated a policy aimed at supplying food to war-torn Somali. The operation was a failure, and Blackhawk helicopters were destroyed

⁵³ Robin Simcox, "AQAP's Ideological Battles at Home and Abroad," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 18, no. 5 (January 2015): 26.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁷ Akbar, 840.

as American soldiers lost their lives. Though President Bill Clinton adopted a softer stance in such interventions, America assumed the responsibility of being the global prefect. Instead of pursuing the interests of the Americans, the country has been involved in solving armed conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo and even Libya. Despite the merit of such actions in improving peace in these countries, it created more enemies, especially among the terrorists in the name of Islamic jihad.⁵⁸ As already highlighted, the invasion of Iraq during the Gulf War was also a foreign strategy blunder that exposed to the country to security concerns rather than strengthening its position around the globe. Though Saddam Hussein was toppled, the country's leadership failed to improve the status of the locals, creating a new breed of ruthless terrorists such as the Islamic State.

Britain has also been caught in foreign affairs oversights that have, in one way or the other, contributed to the emergence of terrorist organizations. Under the leadership of David Cameron, Britain has participated in numerous airstrikes against the Islamic State. While such actions have been viewed as essential in weakening the group, the strikes have placed the country on a warpath. Supporting armed opposition in Syria against the Islamic State is supporting one jihadi group to fight the other. Such policies have been witnessed in the past, and the impacts have not been positive for the participating countries. Just like during the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan and the decision of the U.S. to support al-Qaeda, this move will most likely fail.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁹ Nsia-Pepira, 50.

Growth of ISIS from al-Qaeda

The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant was established in 1999 by a Jordanian terrorist who shared radical ideologies with Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders in the Middle East. Just like other organizations that emerged from it, the group chose to advance their terrorist acts in the name of jihad against Western interests.⁶⁰ The group operates in the Middle East, with a presence in other African-Arab countries.

Though this group and al-Qaeda worked together, they dissociated in 2014 after the invasion of Iraq and Syria. Ironically, al-Qaeda came out to openly oppose the group's operations, claiming it was too radical and did not reflect its doctrinal foundations. Though the two groups have openly differed, they share a similar doctrinal establishment based on their terrorist ideology in the name of Islam.⁶¹ Under this principle, the group claims they believe in establishing and maintaining Quranic hegemony by all means possible, including the use of extreme violence and bloodshed, even though it's against the teaching of Islam and the Quranic text.⁶² The group further adheres to the apocalyptic theology that argues that Mahdi or Allah's chosen leader will come soon to redeem Muslims and found an Islamic caliphate across the planet. As a way of preparing for Mahdi, the group has declared war against Westerners, Christians, Jews in Israel and others. Even Muslims have not been spared, especially those who fail to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who the group considers the caliph.⁶³

⁶⁰ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (March 2015): 89.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶² Thomas Lynch III, 101.

⁶³ Kangil, 37.

The Islamic State (IS), just like the Muslim Brotherhood, is a brutal terrorist organization that has earned its reputation in the recent past due to its activities in Iraq and Syria. It attracted international attention during and after the Syrian civil war that was motivated by the Arab Spring that began in Tunisia and other Arab-African countries. Though the genesis of the organization has been linked to al-Qaeda, the two broke ranks in 2014 and have fought each other on different occasions.⁶⁴ The group has issued terror threats against most Western countries, including the U.S. and Britain. British and American citizens have died by the brutal hands of the group in a well-orchestrated scare tactic aimed at increasing its influence in the Middle East, Africa and other Western countries. Just like the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda, IS claims to have control of all Muslims and is driven by the desire to establish an Islamic caliphate across the globe. With this mission in mind, IS seeks to bring all Muslim-dominated countries under what they claim to be sharia law.⁶⁵

The historical emergence and growth of IS can be traced to the Muslim Brotherhood, the father of modern day Islamic terror organizations. Just like al-Qaeda, the group has advocated for the extermination of all those opposed to its beliefs, including moderate Muslims. The organization ironically argues that its ideology represents pure Islam and is founded on the very roots of the religion, and yet the majority and elites of the Muslim community refuse to recognize them as Muslims. Though it has existed for less than a decade, it is considered as one of the richest non-state actors, with a net asset

⁶⁴ Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "The Islamic State Of Iraq And Al-Sham," *MERIA Journal* 17, no. 1 (November 2013): 32.

⁶⁵ Zana Khasraw Gulmohamad, "The Rise and Fall of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (Levant) ISIS," *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (July 2014): 1.

of over \$2 billion. Much of its wealth has been traced to illegal activities within Iraq where organizations and individuals secretly finance the group. Through the imposition of taxes on citizens, abductions and ransoms, extortion and other illegal activities, IS has amassed colossal wealth that helps in financing its operations in the Middle East and elsewhere. . Revenue from oil fields in Syria and Iraq has also increased its influence. Facilitation of illegal immigration into the Middle East and Europe is also a major source of income for the organization. Refugees from different parts of the world have found their way to Europe due to the aid of the organization.⁶⁶

The aim of terrorist groups is to convince governments or opposing groups that they are stronger and are capable of causing serious damage. The approach is known as the attrition strategy, which terrorists have long used to accomplish their ends. With this strategy, terror groups understand that by inflicting greater costs on the government or opposing parties, they will be able to force them to grant concession and achieve their objectives. Thus far, the terrorist has employed attrition as far as the history of these events can be traced and was first used by the Greeks, Jews and Arabs against the emergence of the British empires. Through organizing attacks against the British empires, these groups were able to convince the leadership of the empire to control their spread into their territories. Hezbollah and Hamas have also used the same approaches on the Israelis as a way of reducing the impacts of the intifada in their territories.⁶⁷

In the 1990s, the leader of Hamas wrote a letter to the Israelis in which he detailed how his organization had enjoyed victories by using approaches that were very

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 558.

costly to the Israelis. Essentially, to further their cause, the group promised to exert more pressure and make the consequences of their actions even more costly to the Israeli people; Hamas believed the approach would lead to a concession.⁶⁸ Terrorist groups prevent undesired behaviors and actions from governments by using threats and intimidation and through the adoption of costly signals. Intimidation strategy has been used by terrorists to destroy the belief that the government is strong, compared to them, by warning those who may attempt to disobey their orders. In most cases, and in countries where terrorist groups operate, such as Somalia and the Middle East, al-Qaeda and ISIS are in constant competition with the government to win over the trust of the masses. Such a scenario has been witnessed in instances where terrorists have made plans to overthrow an existing government, and must win the trust and support of the people they plan to rule.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Ibid., 560.

⁶⁹ Bardhan, 244.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on the effects of non-state actors on Middle East politics have been carried out to demonstrate how terrorist organizations affect governance and influence political decisions. Although the international community often downplays the significance of these groups, study results often reveal that the organizations' role cannot be ignored. In the recent past, the dominance of non-state actors in the region has also continued to increase, with the recent expansion of terror groups such as ISIS.⁷⁰ The Muslim Brotherhood also controlled foreign policies in Egypt until Morsi was removed through a military coup, opening a new chapter in the country. Nonetheless, the role of non-state actors in shaping political decisions and using what they claim is Islamic laws to support their atrocities is still common in the country. A review of the literature on non-state actors in the Middle East demonstrates the grip that these terror organizations have had in the region and beyond.

Factors that Influenced the Emergence of Non-state Actors in the Middle East

The emergence of non-state actors in the Middle East has been associated with different political, religious and economic factors within the region. Foreign influence and interference in the political activities of different countries also contributed to a varying extent to the creation of these groups. The political mayhem that emerged during Ali

⁷⁰ Nsia-Pepira, 50.

ibn Abi Talib's caliphate from 656 to 661 CE ushered in violent and extremist groups in the name of Islam known as the Khariji, which means a seceding group of people. The Kharijis emerged in 656 CE when the Islamic Empire spearheaded efforts for peaceful reconciliation with Egypt. The leader of the empire, Uthman bin Affan, was assassinated by the group to demonstrate their discontent with the empire's political direction. The group introduced Islamic doctrine that was different from existing practices, giving rise to radical Islamism.⁷¹ Interestingly, to solidify their authority within the Islamic empire, the group assassinated Islamic leaders and their relatives.⁷² However, the group's strength declined with time, paving the way for the formation of the Ottoman Empire and a new form of Islamic radicalism in the name of non-state actors.⁷³ With British and French mandates in the region, religious and sectarian factions became pronounced. Such colonial powers also subdued major countries like Libya, Syria and Iraq, irrespective of their military strengths.⁷⁴ The eventual withdrawal of colonial powers gave room for tyrannical leaders like Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gadhafi to gain control. Such leaders' oppression was responsible for numerous follies, which which allowed the emergence of non-state actors like Hezbollah and al-Qaeda.⁷⁵

Historians have viewed the Belfour Declaration of 1917, which led to the creation of Israel in 1948, as the main reason for the emergence of non-state actors in the region. The declaration essentially led to the displacement of Palestinians from their

⁷¹ John J. Saunders, *A History of Medieval Islam* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 213.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷⁴ Shams Zaman, "The Rise of Non-state Actors in the Middle East: Regional Dimensions," *IPRI Journal* 15, no. 1 (April 2015): 51.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

native homes; inevitably, the vicious cycle of violence between Israel and Arab nations allied to Palestine was kick-started. In subsequent years, the conflict adopted a global image, leading to the entry of other Muslim nations across the world to liberate Al-Quds. The growth of such interest allowed for the growth of terrorist organizations whose targets were not limited to Israel, but included members of the international community.

Moreover, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and engagement of the U.S. in training Muslim guerilla fighters is caused by the current Middle East situation. With the support of Western states, the non-state actors were able to defeat the Soviet Union, which gave them the respect and credibility of the public. However, such groups retreated to their own countries where they lived under the leadership of Islamic governments until they developed a radical and more violent view of Islam and were deported out of their countries. Such violent ideology was not welcome in their home countries, which forced the groups to take arms against their governments for political reforms, a more violent version of their religion, , and the establishment of their false religious laws. Just like the impact that America had, European colonization also exposed Islamic scholars to the Western way of life,⁷⁶ a way of life radical groups didn't accept.

Entry into the political arena by non-state actors was also possible through the connection that European colonization and American support provided. The Muslim Brotherhood, and other small groups such as the Levant Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria and Morocco, began in the political arena but were soon forced to become violent reactionaries. State prosecutions forced such groups to resort to armed struggle and

⁷⁶ Zaman, 52.

terrorism. Islamic governments crushed most of the groups, while others went underground with the hope of another opportunity to improve future chances in the region.

Hezbollah's gradual emergence since the 1980s has had a significant influence on the political stability of Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East. The group has assumed military, social and political roles in the country, a situation that has also led to the emergence of other Shia organizations in countries such as Iran and Syria. Though the ramification of the group on the economic development and foreign policy of Lebanon and other countries is hard to clarify, their presence in the country has remained a major concern for international actors. Analysts have argued that the continued presence of the group affects the sovereignty of Lebanon and its image before the international community.⁷⁷ In the same breath as Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda and ISIS have contributed to political turmoil in diverse parts of the Middle East. ISIS, for example, has caused turmoil in Syria and Iraq and continued to impose new taxes on towns under its control. Though al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood are on the decline, their impacts on foreign policies contributed to the growth of terrorism in the region.⁷⁸

Source of Financial and Military Support for Non-state Actors in the Middle East

While most of the non-state actor groups were formed with a specific doctrine and religious goals, they received support from different players, countries and international organizations. The formation of al-Qaeda and its growth in the Middle East can be traced to events in Afghanistan during the Cold War. The influence of the group on the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁸ Stéphane Lacroix, "Saudi Arabia's Muslim Brotherhood Predicament," *Washington Post*, 20 March 2014.

politics and leadership of this country is unique, compared to other countries in the region. The Soviet expansionism in the region led to the emergence of two groups in the country: Afghan Marxists and native Afghan mujahedeen. While the Marxist Afghans joined forces and supported the Soviet invasion of the country, radical non-state militants staged a major resistance with support from the U.S. and Pakistan. During that period, Osama bin Laden was supported by the U.S. and even lived in the country.⁷⁹

Despite his widespread network, the former al-Qaeda leader was increasingly becoming persona non grata in some Islamic states like Sudan. Consequently, he moved to Afghanistan and formed a strong alliance with the Taliban, a terror group that operates in the country. bin Laden and his group occupied a region primarily controlled by militants and isolated from American influence, giving his group the time to train and plan strategic moves against other targets. The Taliban government even gave his group permission to train its Brigade 055, an elite army that was used to support major military operations in the country. After the 9/11 attacks, Afghanistan was targeted due to the Taliban government's support and connection with al-Qaeda. As a result, the Taliban government was overthrown, and a new transition leadership put in place. Based on the two cases, it is evident that the operations of the group in the Middle East at the beginning of this century contributed to regime change in the two countries. Even more important is the instability that the invasion by the U.S. of Iraq and Afghanistan has created. The transition or democratically elected governments that have emerged in the both countries have failed to unite Shiite and Sunni Muslims and contributed to the growth of

⁷⁹ Ibid.

other al-Qaeda-affiliated groups or worse—ISIS.⁸⁰ Also unknown was Osama bin Laden's strong links and associations with Sudan after a coup d'état led by Colonel Omar al-Bashir. bin Laden's business connections helped the new leader develop international connections with other Islamic countries.⁸¹

In spite of being associated with the Middle East as a whole, most non-state terror groups had a focus on specific countries. Groups were developed and structured to help in mitigating the challenges of specific countries though their influences have expanded to other Muslim-dominated countries in the region.⁸² Most radical scholars adopted a flawed understanding of Islamic scripture, spreading their violent views of Islam and creating a radical generation which considers everyone as their enemy, even Muslims.⁸³ Muslim leaders have been fighting that radical generation and trying to stop their terrorist ideas for years. For example, Juhayman al-Otaybi was in charge of the seizure of Mecca in the Muslims' holiest mosque, due to his poor understanding of Islamic scriptures. A few years later, Osama bin Laden started spreading his violent ideas and was deported out of the country. However, that didn't stop him from creating his terrorist group, al-Qaeda, on the Pakistani-Afghani border. Lack of political transparency and tolerance forced Pakistani and Afghani leaders to offer financial support to such

⁸⁰ Charles G. Attwater and Curtis Benton, *Yemen and the Challenge of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula* (New York: Nova Science, 2013), 124.

⁸¹ Ali, AyaanHirst. 2011. "Prepare to Compete with the Muslim Brotherhood." *NPQ: New Perspectives Quarterly* 28, no. 2: 44.

⁸² Manuel R. Torres, Javir Jordan, and Nicola Horsburgh, "Analysis and Evolution of Global Jihadist Movement Propaganda," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 3 (month 2006): 410.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

groups, ushering in a new chapter for non-state actors to influence government decisions and policies.⁸⁴

The government of Lebanon has also been accused of not helping end the Syrian conflict by providing alternative solutions that can ease the conflict in Syria; instead, the government, in the past, moved with haste to identify potential refugee settlement areas in the country, leading to the establishment of camps next to the Syrian border. Sadly, this has not helped the security situation in the country and has led to the rise of refugees entering Lebanon, creating a security and social problem for the locals.⁸⁵

The government's decision to place the refugees in refugee camps will not ease the situation as the dire economic and social situations in the country will increase the level of radicalization among the refugee community. This is especially so due to the economic and social challenges that they have faced in the camps as the government and the locals continue to isolate them from the mainstream society. The risk faced by Lebanon has been attributed to a number of factors, including the weak security system, high sectarian tension and extensive political conflicts and coalitions that serve individual and self-interests.⁸⁶

The border clashes in the country, high level of political assassinations, kidnappings and an inflow of refugees have made the country porous and more prone to a spillover from the Syrian crisis. As the Syrian conflict progresses, Lebanon is faced with a challenging security situation which has made it more vulnerable compared to other

⁸⁴ Ben Reynolds, "Iran Didn't Create ISIS; We Did," *The Diplomat*, accessed 21 August 2014, [http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/iran-didn't-create-isis-we-did/](http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/iran-didn-t-create-isis-we-did/).

⁸⁵ Zaman, 57.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Syrian neighbors. Most importantly, the Lebanese political parties are divided, with Sunni-based parties supporting the opposition while the Shiites support the Assad regime.⁸⁷

Egypt has also been faced with the difficult task of dealing with non-state terrorist actors just like other Middle Eastern states.⁸⁸ The relationship between the country and the terrorist organizations has always been influenced by the leadership's attitude towards the Israelis. For example, the ratification of a treaty between the two countries at Camp David in 1978 created a new wave of terrorist attacks in the country. The decision by the Arab League that almost expelled Egypt from the organization further highlighted the challenge that it faces whenever it sought peace with Israel.⁸⁹ Change in goals by these non-state actors towards Egypt denote how they influence or coerce political decision making to suit their interests.⁹⁰

Non-state actors' movements in the name of Islam have been associated with increased interference with government political decisions and began in Egypt after the emergence of The Muslim Brotherhood. The fact that the group has changed goal posts as far as the use of violence and terror-related activities to achieve their influence is concerning. Following the successful removal of the Egyptian government during the Arab Spring, the group gained leadership of the country through a democratic election, proof of how religion is used to manipulate the public. However, their political influence in the region was short-lived after they verified to the public their lack of political knowledge

⁸⁷ Zaman, 58.

⁸⁸ David D. Kirkpatrick and Eric Schmitt, "Jihadist Return is Said to Drive Attacks in Egypt," *New York Times*, 6 February 2014.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Mazhar et al., 69.

and disqualifications to lead one of the largest Middle Eastern countries, and that's when the military leader, Abdul Fattal al-Sisi, ousted Mohamed Morsi in 2013.⁹¹ The military takeover in the country created a new ground for increased non-state extremism and terror activities. What is more, terrorist military fighters who have contact with ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria have been reported in Libya and Egypt. Clearly, these new developments further highlight the impact that non-state actors have or seek to gain through violent means in the region.⁹²

Zaman (2015) discusses the position of Jordan in increasing the political roles of non-state actors and terror organizations.⁹³ The country is designed as a democracy, though political and symbolic power is controlled by the monarchy. Unrests in other Arab countries that have been blamed on non-state actors also pushed King Abdullah of Jordan to dismiss his entire cabinet and increase a tax on fuel and electricity. Such actions also led to major non-state actor-supported unrests in most parts of Jordan, including Amman, a political home of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the non-violent attitude of the Brotherhood has given room for other more violent groups such as the ISIS and al-Qaeda to grow.⁹⁴

The influence of terror groups in Jordan has also led to an increase in public resentment towards the monarchy. The level of radicalization in Jordan rivals that of Syria and Iraq due to the connections that the ISIS group have created. Loss of hope and

⁹¹ Michael Stephens, "The Kingdom of No Surprises," *Foreign Policy* (June 2013): 34.

⁹² Burç Aka, 62.

⁹³ Zaman, 57.

⁹⁴ Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 18, 22.

trust in the political system has also given youths the opportunity to join Islamic terror groups such as al-Qaeda.⁹⁵

Additionally, Syria, a country that has been under the leadership of the Assad family, faces possible collapse in the face of ISIS incursion and the Arab uprising against the country's leadership. While Hafez-ul-Assad controlled the country for twenty-nine years, his rule was characterized by the execution of dissenting voices, a practice that gave room for increased non-state actors. The rule was largely distinguished by increased abuse of human rights and deprivation of political freedoms.⁹⁶ Lack of influential democratic institutions also increased concerns among the locals who felt isolated from the country's leadership. When he died, his son Bashar-ul-Assad took over and emulated his father's leadership approach. Use of state resources and security organs to strengthen the grip on the country has been attributed to the fact that he comes from the minority Alawite sect that is only 11 percent of the Syrian population.⁹⁷

Turkey has embraced a Western model of democracy strongly supported and protected by the Turkish military. The majority of the Turkish population is Muslim and this has led to the creation of pro-Islamic parties like the National Order Party, Salvation Party and True Path Party. However, their hold on power has not been possible due to fears that they can give rise to the emergence of non-state terror groups who claim to be Muslims.⁹⁸ However, the Justice and Development Party, a pro-Islamic party, broke the jinx and had won elections since 2002, due to its pragmatic approach and economic

⁹⁵ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁶ Zaman, 60.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Wiktorowicz, 18, 22.

policies. Still, religious tolerance in the country has allowed for the emergence of radicalized groups with connections to key non-state actors in Arab nations. Incidents of arson and suicide bombs are slowly emerging in a country that has managed to control terrorist groups who claim to be Islamic leadership.⁹⁹

Evidently, the glorification of ISIS terrorism and the growth in pro-ISIS supporters in national universities has pointed towards a new trend that can affect Turkey's determination to remain free from any form of radical religious interference. The desire to establish an Ottoman Sultanate in the country has been suppressed through economic equity and tolerance, but emerging divisions among religious leaders and political parties can give ISIS and other terror groups an opening to stir emotions among youths in pursuit of their sultanate.¹⁰⁰

Past and Present Impacts of Non-state Actors on Middle East Politics

Studies have further focused on the rise of non-state actors in the region and the implications that ISIS has had with other organizations and the political stability of the Middle East. Though other groups can be viewed as preachers of a violent version of Islam, ISIS militates are more violent in their approach. According to some pundits, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to the birth of al-Qaeda in the Levant.¹⁰¹ However, ISIS was a creation of the sharp divisions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims in the region and especially in Syria, Lebanon and Iran. The involvement of Iranian proxies in Syria, together with Hezbollah and other Shiite militias against the Assad regime, led to the

⁹⁹ Akbar, 839.

¹⁰⁰ Lynch, *Islamists in Changing Middle East*, 34, 42.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

formation of a Sunni militia. While the group was initially formed to support the government and suppress any opposition against Assad at the height of the Arab Spring, it has outgrown its self-imposed mandate and is now a nuisance to the country.¹⁰²

Further, the actual desire of the Assad government is to continue ruling the country and his secret engagement with the ISIS has been confirmed. The group's popularity and strength have been attributed to its ability to capture oil and gas fields in the region, giving it a strong financial and political lifeline, as compared to any other existing non-state actor.¹⁰³ Remarkably, efforts by the Middle Eastern countries, along with the U.S., to halt the group's advances in Iraq have been partly successful, though the extent is not properly determined.

Despite the efforts to destroy ISIS and rid the region of violent non-state actors, the possibility of other violent extremist groups emerging after it is high. The same ideology that drives ISIS has strongly been linked with existing and emerging non-state actors who have strong backing from other countries. Also, the possibility of less active groups like Hezbollah and al-Qaeda emerging strong again after the elimination of ISIS is also real, demonstrating the strong grip that they have on the political direction of the region.¹⁰⁴ Analysts also argue that the political motivation for the growth and continued existence of the groups is the creation of a new country and destroying every nation that won't join them. But the groups claim that their motive is the Israeli-Palestinian

¹⁰² Simcox, 18, 27.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

issue. Although ISIS's area of operation is restricted to Syria and Iraq, their influence trickles down to other countries in the Middle East, Europe and North America.¹⁰⁵

Converts from different parts of the world have joined ISIS, an indication that the group's online campaign against Western allied governments is strong. Nonetheless, Israel, surprisingly, has expressed less concern towards the group, acting instead with amusement towards most of the barbaric acts committed by the terrorist groups. Interestingly, Israel has also been under the group's radar, despite sharing the same ideologies as other anti-Israel groups in the Middle East. However, the perceived Israel inhumane treatment of Palestinians has created the right environment for ISIS recruitment and influence of government policies towards the Jewish nation.¹⁰⁶

According to Valencia (2015), the influences of Hezbollah in shaping government and regional policies have given rise to the emergence of other terror organizations.¹⁰⁷ Compared to other groups in the region, Hezbollah constitutes an intermediate phenomenon, which makes it difficult to define the boundary between state and non-state actors. In Lebanon, the organization has openly expressed its support for national order and, therefore, operates within the confines of state framework.¹⁰⁸ For that reason, the Lebanese government has been accused of supporting and funding the group. ISIS has, on the other hand, adopted an opposing perspective by appearing to oppose a national framework and creating a dynamic dissolution of government approaches. Such influence

¹⁰⁵ Simcox, 18, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 28.

¹⁰⁷ Carmit Valencia, "Non-state Actors: A Theoretical Limitation in a Changing Middle East," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 7, no. 1(March 2015): 66.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

has caused the group to be referred to as a supra-national or national organization, with its operational approaches in direct conflict with existing state governance.¹⁰⁹

A clear separation exists between state and non-state actors and terror and recognition by the existing governments in the Middle East. However, Hezbollah challenges the unequivocal separation between the two types of actors. In some instances,¹¹⁰ the group has been defined as a state actor that operates lawfully under the direction of a sovereign state. In the international arena, it is defined as a violent, non-state actor that operates as a terrorist and guerilla organization with political and financial support from the Lebanese government.¹¹¹

Naturally, the existing philosophical definitions proposed by Max Webber and Michael Mann create further confusion on where to place Hezbollah. Based on the two definitions, it is evident that an overlap exists in the characteristics of the group, making it a state actor with direct and legitimate political influence, and a non-state actor for the international community. By operating in a territorially demarcated area within the state of Lebanon, it possesses a certain level of authority and influence on economic and foreign policies. Since 1992, the group has actively participated in the country's political activities by promoting the law. Further influence of the group as a powerful state actor was evidenced, beginning in 2005, when some of its members were selected for the cabinet.

Also, Hezbollah has been granted permission to operate a network of social institutions such as schools, hospitals and other charitable organizations across Lebanon.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 67.

¹¹¹ Naim Qassem, *Hezbollah: The Story from Within* (London: Saqi Books, 2005), 203.

Proceeds from such facilities have improved the operational capacity of the groups and increased their influence in the region. Its high level of legitimacy within most parts of the country has made locals assume that it is a representative of the national government, a model of devolution and federalism as practiced in other countries.¹¹² Regardless, lack of international recognition of the group continues to relegate it to a non-state actor status. Due to its consistent attacks on conventional concepts, its relations with other foreign nations has been limited. An analysis of the Hezbollah situation provides a unique model for understanding how state and non-state actors in the Middle East contribute to the growth of terror organizations.¹¹³

Unlike ISIS, which has emerged recently, al-Qaeda's presence in the Middle East dates back to the Cold War era when they entered Afghanistan and the U.S. intervened to reduce their influence in the region. Furthermore, the group has also influenced the political growth and organization of other countries in the region, including Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and even Israel. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait in a war that led to economic sabotage, as oil fields were set ablaze.¹¹⁴ As the war progressed, Osama bin Laden, the first leader of al-Qaeda, gained interest in the conflict as it was being funded by a Baathist government of Iraq who wanted to increase their influence in the region following a conflict with Iran. bin Laden offered to send his militants to the Saudis and Kuwaitis to help protect them against possible aggression from Iraq, but King Fahd of

¹¹² Blumenau, 70.

¹¹³ Valencia, 68.

¹¹⁴ Seth G. Jones, "Think Again: al-Qaeda" *Foreign Policy*, no. 193 (May 2012): 1.

Saudi Arabia declined his offer, given the fact that bin Laden's violent and radical ideas were the main reason Saudi Arabia deported him from the country.¹¹⁵

Following the September 11 attack on the U.S. by the group, America's desire for revenge against countries they believed supported the terrorist group gained momentum. Apart from Afghanistan, Iraq was also targeted for possible links with the group, though it was evident that the two leaders did not see eye to eye, and bin Laden once was an American ally. bin Laden was believed to have a strong hatred for the Iraqi leader due to his leadership approach and lifestyle.¹¹⁶ However, President Bush's administration maintained that a link existed between the Iraqi administration and al-Qaeda. The U.S.'s 9/11 Commission and the Pentagon, however, confirmed the lack of any links between the two, a conclusion that was only appreciated in theory by the country's leadership. Senior leaders insisted that bin Laden was getting intelligence and financial support from Iraq's president Saddam Hussein.¹¹⁷ Consequently, Iraq was attacked in the 2003 Gulf War, leading to a change in leadership and emergence of a new political agenda.¹¹⁸ Hussein was prosecuted for his atrocities as a leader, and the U.S. witnessed the introduction of a new transition government. Despite the actions of the U.S. after 9/11, which led to the removal of Hussein, emerging evidence has confirmed previous suspicions that there were no links between bin Laden and Hussein. To observers, the second Gulf War

¹¹⁵ Michael Page, Lara Challita, and Alistair Harris, "al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: Framing Narratives and Prescriptions," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 23, no. 2 (March 2011): 164.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Jeremy M. Sharp, 2014. "Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)." Congressional Research Service, Report 8, Library of Congress.

that led to the removal of Hussein was because of terror activities of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden.¹¹⁹

However, the Iraq-America war has brought together al-Qaeda and Iraqi fighters as they seek to redeem their country from the influence of the U.S. Ragtag militia groups that have been associated with al-Qaeda have joined hands against American forces. Under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the militias have opposed the activities of coalition forces and the transition government supported by the U.S.¹²⁰ al-Qaeda-affiliated groups have bombed major installations such as the United Nations headquarters in Iraq and military and civilian targets. Al-Zarqawi also openly pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden in 2004, further highlighting the role that the group has played in creating animosity in Iraq.¹²¹

Moreover, the Israeli-Palestine conflict has created division in the region as Arabic countries openly express their support for Palestine. In contrast, most Western countries have sided with Israel, a scenario that has placed them on the fire line of terror organizations. Evidently, most Muslim and Arab nations have openly expressed their grievances towards the plight of the Palestinians.¹²² Besides, outrage has also been evident towards the U.S. for its continued support of Israel. al-Qaeda has exploited this animosity to source funding, recruit sympathizers from Arab and Muslim communities and target major American facilities in the Middle East and beyond. Simply put, the injustice

¹¹⁹ Jonathan Brookshire, "Keeping an Eye on al-Qaeda in Iraq," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2009): 60.

¹²⁰ Christopher M. Faulkner and David H. Gray, "The Emergence of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Effectiveness of US Counterterrorism Efforts," *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (May 2014): 1.

¹²¹ David H. Naylor, *al-Qaeda in Iraq* (New York: Nova Science, 2009), 87.

¹²² *Ibid.*

of the Palestine-Israeli feud has served as a major catalyst for the growth of al-Qaeda and other emerging violent groups in the name of Islam, such as ISIS.¹²³

Though the Israeli-Palestine conflict is a longstanding feud that began before the emergence of al-Qaeda, the group has openly expressed their support for the Palestinians. Two groups that hold sway in the conflicts and have a direct impact on failed talks in the past have a strong connection with the group. Secular nationalist Fatah, operating from the West Bank, and Islamic Hamas in the Gaza have openly taken sides in the conflict between the two nations.¹²⁴ Hamas is supported and financed directly by Iran and has, in the past, opposed the operations of al-Qaeda in the Middle East. In 2006, the group participated in the Palestinian parliamentary elections and won majority seats at the disgust of bin Laden, who criticized the group for being part of an infidel assembly. Hamas did not take the criticisms lightly and dismissed his comments.¹²⁵

Fatah, a group associated with former leader Yasser Arafat, has also participated in peace efforts with Israel, which culminated in the Oslo peace process and the development of the Palestinian Authority. Hamas' and al-Qaeda's sour relations, however, affected the implementation of the Oslo agreement. Fatah lost most of its support to Hamas, a situation that analysts have attributed to different factors.¹²⁶ First, Fatah's inability to give Palestinians their freedom through a violent or peaceful means led to the loss of confidence. Furthermore, the group was incompetent and riddled with corruption,

¹²³ Ed Blanche, "al-Qaeda: The Caliphate Cometh?" *Middle East*, no. 451 (February 2014): 12.

¹²⁴ Bryce Loidolt, "Managing the Global and Local: The Dual Agendas of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula," *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 2 (January 2011): 112.

¹²⁵ Brookshire, 63.

¹²⁶ Blanche, 12.

due to the domination of the Authority with members of one tribe. As Fatah faced such challenges, Hamas emerged as an efficient group with the capacity to deliver on its promises.¹²⁷

Unlike ISIS and al-Qaeda, Hezbollah has acted as a state and non-state entity in the Middle East. Its activities in the region have included the provision of armed forces services, social services and private communication facilities for Shia communities, while still maintaining its role in the Lebanese government. Furthermore, armed forces affiliated with the group have actively participated in military operations in Syria despite the Lebanese government's efforts to dissociate itself from the conflict. With such recent activities, the position of Hezbollah in the political stability of the Middle East has come under sharp focus.¹²⁸

It is worth noting that Hezbollah emerged in the 1980s due to the Lebanese Civil War that pitted the Amal and Shia political factions. The group has strong political ties with Iran, with the Amal being accused of offering political and financial support to fund the terror activities of the group. Syria has also entered into the political union because it sits between the two countries and offers a safe route for Iranian financial support to reach Hezbollah in Lebanon. The popularity of the group in the region arises from the fact that it responds effectively to the economic and political grievances of the poor Lebanese Shia community.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Blanche, 12.

¹²⁸ L. Clarke, "The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists," *Muslim World* 105, no. 4 (2015): 608.

¹²⁹ Armenak Tokmajyan, "Hezbollah's Military Intervention in Syria," *Approaching Religion* 4, no. 2 (2014): 105.

Hezbollah disassociated itself from the Iranian Islamic Revolution , instead focusing on staging a resistance against the Israelis. Due to its efforts to improve the economic situation of the locals, the group has gained a significant constituency in not only Lebanon but also other parts of the Middle East. Nonetheless, its focus has been felt more in domestic politics as it increasingly become a voice for the voiceless who seek jobs, social welfare and security against Israeli aggression.¹³⁰ Hezbollah has also emerged as a dominant force of pro-Syrian opposition in Lebanon. Consequently, tent camps affiliated with the group have been set up in Beirut to overthrow the current regime. Analysts have argued that the resignation of Prime Minister Saad Hariri in 2011 was because of the influence of Hezbollah, a demonstration of its growing presence in the region. The legitimacy of the United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon has also been challenged by the group, further making it difficult to operate and make progress in addressing past criminal grievances.¹³¹

According to the Hezbollah Manifesto, the group's intention in regional politics has primarily been connected with reducing the influence of Israel in the region. However, its connection with Syria and Iran has pushed it deep into the Syrian War, a situation that has weakened its military strength and focus on social and economic issues in Lebanon. The Syrian War has also taken a more sectarian angle, further casting the group in a negative light as it fights the wrong faction in the wrong country. In the past, the group justified its engagement in the conflict by the need to protect Shias and Shia

¹³⁰ Mona Fawaz, "The Politics of Property in Planning: Hezbollah's Reconstruction of HaretHreik (Beirut, Lebanon) as Case Study," *International Journal Of Urban & Regional Research* 38, no. 3 (May 2014): 926.

¹³¹ Ibid.

shrines in the country.¹³² Such a position has changed the interest or public perception of the group, as analysts now believe that it has narrowed its focus on Shias as opposed to the interest of the Lebanese as a whole. The engagement of Hezbollah in Syria has led to a tremendous reduction in its conflict with Israel as the group seeks to prevent the possibility of fighting on two fronts. Nonetheless, past and present engagements of the group have showcased its role and influence in Middle East politics.¹³³

Syria and Lebanon have had significant political and economic ties before the start of the conflict, and this reveals how their destinies are intertwined. It is no coincidence that the Syrian conflict has affected the security situation in Lebanon, compared to other countries in the region. Religious tribes in Syria and Lebanon have either had cordial or strained relationships with the Assad regime, and the nature of these relations has been affected by the war. Unsurprisingly, this has increased sectarian tension in Lebanon today, which has contributed to the entry of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah on the Syrian side to fight alongside the Assad regime.¹³⁴

The Shiites have supported the Assad regime over the years, and this explains the relationship of Hezbollah with the pro-government fighting groups in Syria. The Lebanese Shiite party, which is controlled by Hezbollah has increased their support for the Assad government through the provision of resources and weapons. Expectedly, this has increased the tension between the Shiites and the Sunnis in Lebanon who are sympathetic to the Sunni-led opposition in Syria. The sectarian conflict that has been witnessed in

¹³² Elie I. Bouri, "Israeli-Hezbollah War and Global Financial Crisis in the Middle East and North African Equity Markets," *Journal of Economic Integration* 39, no. 1 (March 2014): 1.

¹³³ Al-Tamimi, 7.

¹³⁴ Bouri, 1.

Syria throughout this war has therefore been duplicated in Lebanon, further complicating the security situation in the country.¹³⁵

Further still, insecurity in Lebanon following the Syrian internal conflict has also ignited old rivalries which have existed in the country following the development of the Taif Accord. Before this accord, Lebanon was losing in one of the worst civil wars in the region, predominantly fueled by the differences between the Shiites and the Sunnis in Lebanon. Syria's previous historical connection with Lebanon explains the close connection between the two countries' political and tribal supports and oppositions to the conflict. Since the beginning of this hostility in 2011, tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have entered Lebanon, a state of affairs that has significantly affected the country's security and social and economic position.¹³⁶

Potential Impacts of Non-state Actors on Middle East Politics

As the emergence of ISIS continues to shape the international approach to terrorism and non-state actors in the Middle East, the potential implication of these groups on political activities in the region remains to be seen. Groups such as ISIS have openly shown their interest in expanding their presence and influence in different parts of the country and beyond. Currently, the group has increasingly affected political stability and leadership in Syria and Iraq. Under the ideals of the group and al-Qaeda, a possible rise in pure Islamic jurisdictions with constitutions driven sharia laws is likely to

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

increase.¹³⁷ The caliphate has attempted to increase the number of states that adopt the radical Islam version, a trend which is likely to spread to other parts of the Middle East in the future. Even more important is the impact that the emergence of new approaches of terror will have on the strategies adopted by international communities. As their focus shifts to kidnapping and killing, the strategies adopted by countries such as the U.S. will change, giving these groups more grip on the political activities within the region.¹³⁸ In particular, Syrian refugees currently account for over 10 percent of the Lebanese population, a revelation of the serious economic and security challenges that the conflict has brought upon Lebanon. As a result, the tension between the refugees and the Lebanese locals has increased drastically, driven by the tribal lines that the two countries share. Armed attacks and kidnapping in Lebanon have increasingly targeted the Syrian refugees, and the blame has been placed on them. Despite the presence of the locals on the country's security situation, the Lebanese authority has progressively associated most of the criminal incidents and violent robberies on the Syrian refugees living in Lebanon.¹³⁹

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt, and its political influence in the country can be traced to 1928. Formed by the members of the Suez Canal workers, the group grew in influence and size and even contributed to the opposition against the British rule in the country. However, a fellow brother banned it as early as 1936, due to violent killings and the assassination of an Egyptian prime minister.¹⁴⁰ In subsequent years, the group was blamed for several bombings and the assassination of Egyptian

¹³⁷ Al-Tamimi, 7.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Bouri, 1.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Tamimi, 11.

government officials. In the recent past, the group formed the government following a popular Arab uprising that saw the removal of Hosni Mubarak and his prosecution. However, Egyptians opposed the group's leadership approach, a situation that forced the military to arrest its leaders and declare the group criminal and illegal. Nonetheless, the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood has remained constant.¹⁴¹

The political influence of the Muslim Brotherhood beyond Egypt has been attributed to the emergence of radical leaders and revolts in other parts of the Middle East. In Bahrain, for example, the group's political goals are represented by the Al-Menbar Islamic Society, one of the largest political parties in the country. The party has openly backed the Bahraini government's economic and social legislation. Shia Muslims, a group that the Brotherhood has openly avoided in the past, dominate Iran.¹⁴² However, the group, through leaders such as Olga Davidson and Mohammad Mahallati, has contributed to social and political policy development through a Brotherhood perspective. In Iraq, the Iraqi Islamic Party has openly associated itself with the Muslim Brotherhood and has been attacked by the government due to its approach to political and social issues. Government operations against other affiliated parties such as Baath forced Muslim Brotherhood leaders to go underground.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Iskander Monier and Annette Ranko, "The Fall of the Muslim Brotherhood: Implications for Egypt," *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 4 (December 2013): 117.

¹⁴² Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (March 2007): 117.

¹⁴³ Tokmajyan, 105.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The role of different groups in influencing the policies and actions of governments across the Middle East has been studied extensively. Past studies have identified Hezbollah, al-Qaeda and now ISIS as model non-state actors whose influence in different countries within the Middle East cannot be ignored. A review of the literature shows a consistency in the needs of these groups in the past and how this may influence their plans and actions in the future.¹⁴⁴ Counterterrorism measures have also been introduced by different countries in the Middle East, with the support of other nations from the West. The growth in influence and arms power of new actors such as ISIS demonstrates that new pragmatic approaches should be introduced to ensure that counterterrorism measures are useful.¹⁴⁵

Hezbollah's presence and influence in Lebanon challenge the dichotomy between state and non-state actors and presents an intermediate phenomenon in which the boundary between the two units are not distinct. The organization has accepted the national order in the country and also gained support from the Lebanese government, unlike other non-state actors in the region.¹⁴⁶ The development of international relations in theory and practice has contributed to the elaboration of a clear distinction between

¹⁴⁴ Daniel Byman, "Beyond Counterterrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 6 (2015): 11.

¹⁴⁵ Daniel Byman, "Containing Syria's Chaos," *National Interest*, no. 140 (October 2015): 30.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

state and non-state actors.¹⁴⁷ However, based on the literature, it is evident that Hezbollah is a violent organization that operates in an international system just like other non-state actors, but with no equivocal separation from the state.¹⁴⁸ The group cannot formally be defined as a state nor does its behaviors and collaboration with an established government qualify it for a non-state actor. The group operates in a territorially demarcated area within the state of Lebanon and also exercises a center level of authority which is characteristic of governments in the region. Since 1992, Hezbollah has been an important political actor in decision making and the promotion of law and order.¹⁴⁹ Since 2005, members of the group have also been represented in the government as ministers, a further confusion about the actual position of the group. However, lack of international recognition and conventional government organization has pushed it out of the state bracket.¹⁵⁰ Unlike Hamas and Hezbollah, ISIS does not recognize the existing administrative and political units and fights towards their destabilization. Therefore, embracing a dichotomous perspective of state on one end and non-state on the other blurs a practical understanding of the group's goals. Explaining the behavior of the group must incorporate the perception it has towards the West, the regimes and the infidel populations within the Middle East and beyond.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Samia Nakhoul, "Hezbollah Gambles All in Syria," *Reuters*, 26 September 2013, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Lina Khatib, "Hezbollah's Ascent and Descent," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (June 2015): 107.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Nakhoul, 4.

¹⁵¹ Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qaida* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2008), 49.

Recent News on Non-state Actors in the Middle East

The activities of non-state actors in the Middle East and their influence in other parts of the world have been discussed and reported on different news channels in the recent past. The death of Osama bin Laden and the counterterrorism measures implemented by the U.S. government through drone strike strategy have significantly changed the landscape in the region. al-Qaeda, a group that initially controlled most parts of the area and had numerous affiliated groups, is today a shadow of its former self, with leadership wrangles, competition from aggressive and brutal ISIS and lack of control of its affiliate groups. According to declassified U.S. intelligence documents, the rise of ISIS has spelled doom for the activities of al-Qaeda in the Middle East. The documents indicate that the goal of the Islamic State is to target Western interests, the Gulf States, Turkey and Syria with a goal of destabilizing Bashar al-Assad.

al-Qaeda was the boogeyman of the last decade and engaged in terrorist activities targeting Western interests without significant competition from any other group. However, such a scenario has changed with a new boogeyman of this century emerging in the form of ISIS with more aggressive and brutal approaches. Baghdadi has replaced the role initially played by Osama bin Laden and has overshadowed Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qaeda. While the head of the group has consistently issued threats and insisted that their goals are, of course, al-Qaeda is no longer recruiting; it lacks an efficient organizational structure, lack of funds and the loss of the jihadi civil war to ISIS.¹⁵² Nonetheless, the group has managed to stage rapid attacks on their targets

¹⁵² Jones and Libicki, 49.

as a way of showing that they are still strong and dangerous. The released intelligence reports confirmed initial accusations that the counterterrorism approaches by the U.S. were not conclusive and focused on al-Qaeda at the expense of other emerging non-state actors.¹⁵³

Just like al-Qaeda, Hezbollah has also witnessed a significant transition in its leadership, engagement with the government and interests in other parts of the Middle East. The involvement of the group in since the 2011 Syrian civil war has demonstrated the transformative level of its agenda and approach. Historically, it has presented itself as Shiite-affiliated terror group with dedication to the destruction of the West in general and Israel in particular. The anti-Israel approach of the group attracted the support and sympathy of most Lebanese and Arabs. Through such actions, the group has succeeded in fulfilling its rhetoric of transcending sectarianism in the region. Assad has been a key supporter and financier of Hezbollah's operations in Lebanon against Israel. Moreover, Syria has provided the group with a transit group for moving its arms to Lebanon. Iran, another ally, and supporter of Hezbollah believed that the fall of Damascus would be a calamity, thus motivating the group to join Assad. The engagement of Hezbollah in the conflict has further deepened its Shiite identity while reducing its commitment to the holy war waged by other Islamic non-state actors.¹⁵⁴

Hezbollah has also witnessed a change in its organizational structure and approach to issues within Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East. The group's support among local Lebanese declined due to its continued engagement with Syria, even

¹⁵³ Byman, "Beyond Counterterrorism," 11.

¹⁵⁴ Nakhoul, 5.

when Damascus invaded their country. The worsening relationship with other groups in Lebanon further weakened its influence and bargaining influence it has used to force the government into submission. In 2005, the group was blamed for the murder of Rafik Hariri, Lebanon's prime minister, who opposed Damascus' operations in the country.

The continued engagement of Hezbollah with Assad has affected its regional reputation and prestige among Arabs and Muslim communities in the Middle East. The crisis in Syria, as opposed to others in the Middle East, is sectarian-based, and this places Hezbollah favored by an unpopular minority group in the region. In March 2016, the position of the group was further affected when it was labeled a terrorist group by the Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council. Interestingly, the group had been declared a terror organization when its use of such tactics had significantly declined, compared to the 1980s when it organized suicide bombings in the U.S. and France and targeted peacekeepers in Lebanon. The current declaration is thus a demonstration of the decline in influence and power by the group among Muslims and Arab nations that initially supported it, especially after it drove Israel out of Lebanon in 2000. While the group is still committed to the destruction of Israel, the goal has a lower priority today compared to the past years.

The growth of the Islamic State has contributed to the troubles faced by other non-state actors that operate in the Middle East. Unlike others, the group has been motivated by the development of governing structures which help in ruling areas that are conquered in battles. The structure is made of a cabinet, governors, financial and legislative bodies, and is modeled after the hierarchical group structure led by Baghdadi. The group

has increased its efforts to control oil production and supply points both in Syria and Iraq. Today, it controls Raqqa in eastern Syria and Luay al-Khateeb in Iraq, where oil worth over \$3 million is produced on a daily basis. While most of the non-state actors in the Middle East have concentrated on recruiting local Muslims in their countries, the Levant has adopted an internet-based recruitment base. Through this window, it targets youth and Muslims from across the world willing to migrate to countries where the group has a significant presence. It is believed that over 11,000 people have traveled from different parts of the world, including Western nations, to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State.¹⁵⁵

While countries with the largest number of Muslims sent a sizeable number of fighters to combat ISIS, other countries such as Finland, Ireland and Australia, with a minor Muslim population, have contributed the highest number of foreign fighters per capital. However, the Finnish government has refuted this assertion, claiming that most Finns traveled to Iraq and Syria to provide humanitarian aid.¹⁵⁶

The Future of Non-state Actors in the Middle East

Efforts to fight against the security and democratic stability associated with the rise in non-state actors have increased in different parts of the Middle East. With the help of Western allies, most governments in the region have introduced measures to counter the growing influence of terror organizations that are causing havoc in the region. However, the current approaches adopted by these groups, especially the Islamic State,

¹⁵⁵ Karl Vick, "The Terrorist Threat from ISIS May Be About to Get Worse. Much Worse," *Time* 187, no. 12 (March 2016): 9.

¹⁵⁶ Byman, "Beyond Counterterrorism," 11.

expose the weaknesses of most counterterrorism strategies in the area. Pundits have attempted to construct a possible scenario in the future, based on the emergence of new groups with different techniques and the collaboration of governments to stamp out terrorism. While the interventions and counterterrorism measures may have an impact on the influence of the groups, the strategic evolution of the actors cannot be wished away.

Due to its anti-Israel crusade, Hezbollah has enjoyed significant control and respect in Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East since it was formed. However, the Syrian conflict could spell doom for the future of the group and weaken its engagement with the Lebanese government. With the recent pronouncement of the group as a terror organization by the Arab League of Nations, its efforts to redeem its image after engaging in the sectarian crisis in Syria remain to be seen. The group's invasion of Beirut and other parts of the Middle East have also been criticized as an attempt to intimidate Sunni Muslims.¹⁵⁷ With the assassination of Hariri entirely placed on their heads, the group is not only facing an image crisis, but also the loss of confidence by the Lebanese whose support has contributed to its growth in the past.¹⁵⁸

Today, the group is viewed as a political party that stands with a regime determined to kill innocent citizens to keep power and influence in Syria. The group is no longer considered a hero in the Arab world and such a shift in popularity can translate to tougher times in the future. The very same tactics that the group has used to control the Lebanese government and influence political policies may spell doom for its future in the region and send it on a downward spiral.

¹⁵⁷ Byman, "Containing Syria's Chaos," 30.

¹⁵⁸ Eyal Zinsser, "What to do on Lebanon: The Future of Lebanon-Israel Relations?" *MERIA Journal* 13, no. 3 (September 2009): 37.

al-Qaeda, just like Hezbollah, has also been faced with the threat of extinction and loss of influence since its leader was killed in 2011. The death of bin Laden has given the U.S. an upper hand in its efforts to counter terrorism in the Middle East. Despite the fact that the group is struggling to reestablish its leadership and influence, experts believe that the threat it presents is still widespread. It cannot, therefore, be quickly written off in the future as it may evolve and adopt new approaches in the face of other emerging groups like the Islamic State.¹⁵⁹ al-Qaeda's resilience has been demonstrated on numerous occasions and this makes it difficult to predict its future in the face of the current challenges.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the group continues to fascinate the West, partly due to its past activities and also its ability to emerge from nowhere and increase terror threats. al-Qaeda will continue to remain a significant threat to Western nations irrespective of its current leadership challenges.¹⁶¹

Fighting the Threat of Islamic Extremism

In December 2015, predominantly Muslim countries formed a collaborative approach to help in the elimination of what they termed the "extremism disease" from the Middle East. The formation of the coalition comprising over thirty-four countries in Asia is seen as an attempt to demonstrate to other parts of the world that Muslim countries will not tolerate terrorism and non-state actors. Formed during a meeting of coalition members in Saudi Arabia, the group vowed to invest resources to ensure that Islamic radical

¹⁵⁹ Jones and Libicki, 49.

¹⁶⁰ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How Al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (August 2006): 7.

¹⁶¹ Fahim Masoud, "The Almost Indomitable Islamic State," *International Policy Digest* 2, no. 8 (August 2015): 74.

extremism in the region is stamped out. According to Mohammed bin Salman, defense minister of Saudi Arabia, all means available will be explored.¹⁶² However, the coalition appreciated the need to have efforts introduced based on the needs that arise and the willingness of affected countries to be supported.

The sovereignty of coalition members may present a challenge in the collaborative efforts to eliminate the threat of Islamic extremism from the region. According to Adel al-Jubeir, minister of foreign affairs of Saudi Arabia, any action taken will depend on the willingness of individual members to accept support from the coalition. After that, different partners in the coalition will also make a decision on the nature of their contribution and subsequent process of eliminating terrorism.¹⁶³

At present, observers argue that the creation of the coalition is in response to criticism that Arab countries have not done enough to counter the growth of ISIS and other non-state actors in the region. Original coalition members, apart from Saudi Arabia, included Turkey, Benin, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Maldives, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria and Yemen. While the specifics of future counterterrorism operations are yet to be released by the coalition, it is not lost to observers that two approaches may be critical if the group is to have any meaningful success. First, the coalition members can form a joint security and military operational unit to exchange information, train soldiers and provide military logistics whenever necessary. Additionally, the coalition can work towards the creation of a combat ideology to counter the influence of ISIS in the Middle East. To achieve this, the group will have to collaborate with Islamic religious

¹⁶² Ed Payne and S. Abdelaziz, "Muslim Nations Form a Coalition to Fight Terror, Call Islamic Extremism 'Disease'," *CNN News*, 15 December 2015.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

scholars, political leaders and educators. The implementation of this approach may help in sending a message to youths who may plan to join the non-state actors and engage in terror-related activities.¹⁶⁴

The Impact of Non-state Actors on International Relations Between the Middle East and the West

Activities of non-state actors in the Middle East and beyond have significantly strained relations among countries in the region and the Western powers. While most countries in the area have openly opposed terrorism and expressed the desire to work with the West, lack of openness and complete collaboration has affected efforts to counter terrorism. In the past Pakistan, Iran and Jordan have been accused of supporting the activities of the non-state actors.¹⁶⁵ The emergence of ISIS in Iraq and Syria has significantly ruined the relationship between the U.S. and countries like Iran, Lebanon and Jordan. Efforts to effectively bridge the cold blood among Muslim and Arab countries has not been successful, partly due to the activities of non-state actors.¹⁶⁶

In 2016 alone, terror attacks which have been directly associated with ISIS have been reported in Belgium and France. The attack in the French capital of Paris killed 130 people, the highest death toll to date in a Western capital that was directly linked to ISIS. Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a Syrian with direct ties with the caliphate non-state actor, was blamed for the attacks. While France has not officially renounced Syria or any other country with a significant ISIS presence, the recent developments will hurt any efforts to

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Mina Al-Oraibi, "How ISIS Attacks Harm the Middle East," *US News*, 23 November 2015.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

develop strong international relations with countries of the Middle East. Brussels, the capital city of Belgium, was also recently attacked by a group that is closely affiliated with ISIS, further highlighting the effects of the terror group on the relations between the West and the Middle East.¹⁶⁷ Worst of all, the recent attacks in European capitals have complicated the Syrian refugee crisis. Germany and other European countries have been reluctant to accept asylum seekers. As a result, the continent as a whole has developed policies that seek to have the refugees settle in specific countries, especially Turkey. Under the policies, the European Union will pay for deportations from other countries and give institutions working in Turkey \$6.8 billion in aid.

External Environment

A confluence of external factors, including foreign influences, interference, colonial legacy and the Cold War caused the emergence of the non-state actors. The second Gulf War has been blamed for uniting al-Qaeda and Iraq fighters to resist foreign influence and governments that are perceived as pro-West.¹⁶⁸ Despite the strong case that the U.S. put forward in justifying its military action, the deployment of troops created more resentment and conflict than peace. The various non-state actors viewed this as an expansionist strategy to extend the influence and interests of the U.S., undermining the sovereignty and self-rule of the locals. After the war, even if leaders were democratically elected, they were seen as pro-West, and it was interpreted that the U.S. was setting up puppet leaders. Such narratives are hard to counter, especially in an environment where

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Faulkner and Gray, "Emergence of al-Qaeda," 1.

alternatives are nonexistent. Experience shows that unjustified incursions and war against Muslim countries does not lead to lasting peace.

Israel-Palestine Conflict

The Balfour declaration of 1917, ratified in 1947, creating the state of Israel has been a source of conflict in the Middle East. The creation of the state resulted in the emergence of interest groups whose motivations were not limited to Israel. Further, the West's support for Israel and the Arab nations' solidarity with Palestine has provided a fertile ground for animosity that non-state actors have exploited to gain financial assistance and recruit sympathizers. It is recommended that there be an acceptable resolution of the Israel- Palestine conflict. The UN needs to assume a larger role in determining the action plan in the Middle East as the Arab League experiences internal divisions. Europe has taken critical steps in the resolution of the fundamental issues with Sweden and Britain recognizing the statehood of Palestine.¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately, the institutions that are supposed to have the greatest influence, namely the UN, have often been biased. The UN has always supported Israel while labeling Palestine political organizations like Hamas terrorist groups. In the past, it has contravened the Geneva Convention to protect the interests of the Israeli people at the expense of the Palestinians. As a consequence, the so-called non-state actors in Palestine keep emerging because they realize that Western powers, and the UN, may not be the solution to the Palestine-Israel crisis.

Radical Extremists

Poor understanding and misinterpretation of Islamic scripture by extremist leaders and propagation of these views have resulted in the growth of radical groups.

¹⁶⁹ Zaman, 14.

With autocratic regimes, such views usually go unchallenged and for vulnerable groups, especially the youth, it is easy to fall prey to such beliefs. The growing support and recruitment of fighters from across the globe show the extent to which radical extremists are succeeding in advancing their narrative. There is a need for counter-narrative, anti-radicalization initiatives and counter strategies that challenge these views.¹⁷⁰ Most likely, this would allow the targeted and vulnerable groups to compare and judge for themselves what is right and who is interpreting scriptures correctly. This battle of arguments and narratives need to be taken online where ISIS and other non-state actors have turned for recruitment. Successful entry into the neo-jihadi online chat rooms is the only way to deter and break extremists' narratives. Thus, social media offers an ideal channel to question such views. Obviously, this is the case because there is, for the most part, no freedom of expression in the media and people may not be willing to come out, even if they knew the narrative was misleading for fear of being targeted.

Representation and Equity

Political intolerance and corruption characterize most of the affected nations in the Middle East. The power wielded by these actors implies that leaders and governments at times have to accommodate and fund the groups. The entrenchment of good governance and strengthening of institutions is crucial to guaranteeing political tolerance; however, a requisite for transparency is that there is a local demand for it. It is likely that non-state actors, as well as autocratic regimes, would like to continue their tight grip on power and crush any opposition. It is, therefore, likely that demands for openness and

¹⁷⁰ Steven, R. Corman, "Understanding the Role of Narrative in Extremist Strategic Communication," *Countering Violent Extremism* 5, no. 3 (October 2011): 36.

enhanced rights will be confrontational. Most of these groups usually begin simply to suppress opposition and support a cause but later change into brutal dictatorships.¹⁷¹ Failure by respective governments to provide opportunities for what? creates despondency and disillusionment among the marginalized groups. Certainly, this makes them more prone to associating themselves with any non-state actor that articulates their cause.¹⁷² Governments need to ensure not only representation but also economic equity and tolerance. It is likely this would eliminate most feuds that exist as most of them emanate from skewed sharing of resources and the need to acquire or retain power. States and other stakeholders avoid marginalization and isolation of non-violent opposition forces that are critical to engaging in dialogue with the community and help to understand better sources of conflict.¹⁷³

Targeting Finances

The ability to capture and control oil and gas fields have ensured financial sustenance for non-state actors. They are keen to retain influence in government policy to guarantee their financial interests. Reducing the power of these agents would require sanctions directed at their dealings and businesses. It is by trading these commodities that they can finance conflicts. By targeting core activities, as well as trailing financiers and freezing funds, non-state actors will suffer irreparably. Such operations go beyond national borders and require coordinated approach among like-minded governments.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Simcox, 27.

¹⁷² Kirkpatrick and Schmitt.

¹⁷³ Toros, Harmonie. (2015). *Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Conflict Resolution: Building Bridges*, Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism, NATO, 19, accessed <http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/researches/03-ConflictResolution.pdf>.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

The challenge of implementing such a strategy emanates from the fact that some regimes endorse non-state actors, almost giving them implied authority for control of social amenities, thus funding and almost legitimizing their existence, as in the case of Hezbollah in Lebanon. It is doubtful that where such associations exist the government would cooperate to expose them. In such scenarios, international pressure, sanctions and trade embargos may be necessary.

Minorities

Besides political intolerance, religious and cultural intolerance is rife in most Middle East nations. Most of the violence, displacement and atrocities are committed against those considered minorities. There is a need for the international community, and in particular the UN, to advance the campaign for tolerance and the reduction of hostilities against cultural and religious minorities. Nations and cultures need to adopt pluralism, guarantee freedoms and allow dissenting individuals. The need for cultural or religious homogeneity must not be achieved at the expense of human rights violations. The UN needs to report violators of international declarations to the Security Council for appropriate sanctions.¹⁷⁵

Homegrown Solutions

Past attempts to end the conflict or curtail the influence of non-state actors in the Middle East have failed because they were conceived by foreign nations, especially the West. Such efforts suffer legitimacy, ownership and credibility as locals and regional stakeholders consider them alien. Peacebuilding should be based on locally driven initiatives and priorities and processes; care must be taken to ensure that credibility is not lost

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 7.

due to opposition to a top-down Western approach.¹⁷⁶ Emphasis should be put on dialogue, cease-fires and confidence building among rival factions. However, there are those who feel that these methods are mostly abused as non-state actors will use dialogue to buy time for reorganizing their armed struggle.

Foreign nations ought to adopt a modest approach to the issues plaguing the Middle East. These conflicts have not impaired the interests of the West to a great extent, and, thus, they must appreciate that it is not their war.¹⁷⁷ Their approach should be peace over chaos. From past experiences, it is worthy to maintain political pressure but allow the nations and the region deal with the challenges. Western countries should be supportive of governments that provide effective governance, speak against violations of human rights and international treaties, but desist from the temptation of getting entangled in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. On the other hand, the UN should be more proactive in spearheading peace initiatives as it enjoys legitimacy. Pundits, sadly, do not believe that either the UN or the Western nations can provide lasting solutions to the on-going crisis. Instead, they argue that the solution lies with the Arab institutions, particularly the League of Arab States. The influential organization can initiate talks and pressure member countries to talk . Solutions originating from the Arab nations are likely to last as opposed to those proposed and implemented by outsiders.

Role of the Media

The media has an unrivaled opportunity to push the counter-narrative agenda and champion credible moderate voices that encourage tolerance and governance

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷⁷ F. Gregory Gause III, *Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War*, Brookings Doha Center Publications, no. 33 (July 2014), 24.

issues.¹⁷⁸ Creating awareness calls for both reaching the targeted audience and frequency of that awareness initiatives. However, with a media that is not free and usually facing intimidation from within, this may take time before there is real change. Thus, a strategic communication strategy should be adopted, such as conducting campaigns online to target vulnerable youths in the countries of conflict and those targeted for recruitment. International media can shape opinion and create awareness of issues that local media may shy away from due to fear of retaliation. Anti-radicalization is a battle for the hearts and convictions of the targeted population. Useful conviction requires availing information consistently and challenging the distinct narrative. Western countries have complained regularly, and rightly, so that Muslim countries and moderate opinion leaders have not come out to challenge and counter the narratives advanced by non-state actors. The media could partner with moderates who occupy an important position in shaping opinion.

What the U.S. and Europe Should Do

For Western countries to gain trust among Middle East Muslims, they should demonstrate consistency in the ideas they champion, including justice and fairness. This is the only sure way to discredit many of the genuine grievances of the Muslim community that non-state actors usually exploit to incite locals against the West. Such a move would include a rethinking of their foreign policy, particularly in regard to countries with a Muslim majority.¹⁷⁹ The U.S. and European nations must desist from labeling Muslims

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

and treating them with suspicion as this is likely to increase resentment and drive them to align with non-state actors who are anti-West.

Military Solution

It has been argued that NATO and the U.S. should refrain from direct intervention as this would raise military rhetoric of them invading Muslim lands. Also, arming the Shiite, Sunni and Peshmerga could reinforce the ethnic and sectarian militias, leading to greater divisions and war along ethno-sectarian lines.¹⁸⁰ The ideal situation is to have a regional solution with nations such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran deal with the ethno-religious challenge and arrive at a coherent strategy to unify competing forces.¹⁸¹ Such a regional solution requires extensive dialogue. For instance, the Israel-Palestine standoff would require goodwill, compromises and commitments from both sides. Where agreements are not forthcoming, pressure by Western nations is necessary for regional players to find a political solution.

However, not everyone argues against military solutions; there are those that feel that countries in the Middle East could do well to get accustomed to the non-state actors' environment.¹⁸² This military approach helps better understand non-state actors and to develop strategies to deal with them. By stretching this military thinking into the legal, political and diplomatic spheres, we could improve our understanding and coping mechanisms, including collaboration and alliances with those non-state actors with regional influence.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Valencia, 17.

¹⁸³ Valencia, 18.

Education System

Respect and acceptance of diversity should be entrenched in school curriculum. The reason why people resent diversity is because they are not accustomed to it. By promoting interactions and making efforts to understand other cultures, children will grow up with no suspicions or ill beliefs about their neighbors. Through interactions, students may develop interests in diverse cultural aspects and thus appreciate that even if such norms are different from their own, they serve a purpose. This has the effect of inculcating tolerance and inclusivity in young minds. It is easier to socialize and teach the norms of plurality and diversity to children than it is to change the attitudes and biases of adults. A rethinking of existing curriculum, as well as establishing standards of equal access, will go a long way in shaping how future generations will relate in the Middle East. The educational system also offers a good entry point for discussing matters such as radicalization and extremism before students become exposed to these vices.¹⁸⁴ School curriculum should inculcate a sense of civil responsibility and duty. This allows students to articulate their grievances in a positive and non-violent way. Moreover, it creates a sense of cultural heritage, especially within a society with diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

¹⁸⁴ Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, *The Role of Education in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh* (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Author, 2015), 36.

Conclusion

The growth of non-state actors in the Middle East, including al-Qaeda, ISIS, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah, has created a global security concern. The rise of non-state actors in terrorism has also been attributed to two dependent factors. First, the Middle East was the source of three major religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. As a result, the region has been affected greatly by religion for decades. Second, terrorism has also been attributed to the fact that Islam is the most dominant religion in the region. Thus, religion, and specifically Islam, has been used to disguise terror groups' political agendas. Additionally, diverse global events have been attributed to the emergence of non-state actors in the Middle East. The creation of Israel and the conflict between the Soviet Union and the U.S. created Hezbollah and al-Qaeda, respectively. Sectarian interests in the Middle East, pitting Sunnis and the Shiites against each other, have further escalated the situation. Financial and political support for these groups has given them the strength to continue operating in various countries in the region.

In this thesis, the formation of different non-state actors across the Middle East has been discussed. The role of Hezbollah in Lebanon and the influence that they have had in the political sphere of the country has been used to show the distinct position of the groups in international relations. While some may have influence over the operations of government like Hezbollah, lack of recognition in the international sphere affects their status as state actors. Moreover, it has emerged that the groups are motivated by narrow interests ranging from hatred for the West to resistance to Israeli occupation of Palestine.

This thesis has also covered the issue of financing and support from local governments for terror groups. Emerging non-state actors like ISIS have organized themselves as a caliphate, motivated by the creation of an Islamic society and government. Essentially, to achieve this, the group has captured trade routes and oil fields to improve its financial strength and independence. With its massive financial resources, the group has created a new terror threat to the Middle East and the world as a whole. Apart from sponsoring suicide and isolated attacks against targets in Europe, the group has targeted journalists and aid workers. Interestingly, the group has created disharmony and suffering for Muslims in Iraq and Syria more than other perceived enemies across the globe. The occupation of these two countries has created a conflict which does not seem to have an end and which will extend to other parts of the Middle East.

This thesis has also illustrated the implications of terror activities orchestrated by non-state actors in the Middle East. Today, Muslims are treated with contempt in different parts of the world, thanks to a war that has been labeled “holy” by the terrorists. According to radical Islamic terror groups in the Middle East, jihad war is motivated by the need to eliminate non-believers from Allah’s holy land. Consequently, Western countries have been targeted since the 1980s by terror attacks to convince them to either withdraw from areas perceived to belong to Muslims or to stop supporting Israel, a country that is considered an enemy of all the state actors. While some Westerners have died in such terror attacks, the implication that this has had on Muslims is multi-fold. Muslims suffer more than the perceived enemies of these groups as they are targeted, profiled and punished for the crimes committed by criminals. In Iraq and Syria today, the operations

of ISIS are affecting innocent and helpless Muslims, compared to any other race in the world.

International relations between the Middle East and the West have been significantly affected by the activities of these groups. While individual governments rarely offer direct support to the actors, any incident that targets a Western nation is considered, collectively, as a national issue. Pakistan, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq have all suffered from international isolation due to the assumption that they support the activities of non-state actors. The Gulf wars, whose impacts have not subsided in both Iraq and Afghanistan, were motivated by the assumption that the two countries supported al-Qaeda. The impact was devastating and destroyed the livelihood of most Afghans and Iraqis. The relationship of other Middle East countries, like Palestine and Lebanon, with the West has also remained frosty, thanks to non-state actors.

Based on these findings, it must be concluded that the activities of non-state actors have no relationship with the Islamic religion. The activities of these groups are not supported by the Holy Quran, a book that advocates love, understanding and caring, and accommodates the circumstances of every era. Prophet Muhammad preached against violence and castigated some of the vices currently adopted by these terror groups. The act of killing innocent people, whether Muslim or Christian or Jew or any other race, no matter what his or her religion, cannot be justified by quoting any religious books. It is simply a criminal act that has no link whatsoever to religion. Moreover, the activities of these groups in the Middle East have affected Muslims more than any other group in the world. While the media focus on the immediate impacts of terror attacks, little attention is

given to the counterattacks adopted by the affected countries. Such actions target Muslims without discrimination, a situation that leads to the human rights violations and injustice. Changing the current situation can only be possible if a paradigm shift is witnessed as far as the religious angle of the war is concerned. The world must not buy into the plans of the criminals and assume that this is an Islamic war. What we are experiencing are criminal acts being committed in the name of a religion that is, in actuality, peaceful and advocates for justice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akbar, Amna. 2015. "National Security's Broken Windows." *UCLA Law Review* 62, no. 4 (April): 834-907.
- Al-Oraibi, Mina. 2015. "How ISIS Attacks Harm the Middle East." *US News*, 23 November.
- Al-Tamimi, Aymenn Jawad. 2013. "The Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham." *MERIA Journal* 17, no. 3 (November): 19-44.
- Attwater, Charles G., and Curtis Benton. 2013. *Yemen and the Challenge of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula*. New York: Nova Science.
- Bangladesh Enterprise Institute. 2015. *The Role of Education in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Author.
- Bardhan, Soumia. 2014. "Egypt, Islamists, and the Internet: The Case of the Muslim Brotherhood and its Rhetoric of Dialectics in Ikhwanweb." *DOMES: Digest of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 2 (October): 235-61.
- Blanche, Ed. 2014. "Al Qaeda: The Caliphate Cometh?" *The Middle East*, no. 451 (February): 12.
- Blumenau, Bernhard. 2014. "The Other Battleground of the Cold War: The UN and the Struggle against International Terrorism in the 1970s." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 16, no. 1 (April): 61-84.
- Bouri, Elie I. 2014. "Israeli-Hezbollah War and Global Financial Crisis in the Middle East and North African Equity Markets." *Journal of Economic Integration* 39, no. 1 (March): 1.
- Brookshire, Jonathan. 2009. "Keeping an Eye on al-Qaeda in Iraq." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 2: 59-66.
- Burç Aka, H. 2014. "Paradigm Change in Turkish Foreign Policy after Post-Cold War." *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 3: 55-73.
- Byman, Daniel. 2015. "Beyond Counterterrorism." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 6: 11.

- Byman, Daniel. 2015. "Containing Syria's Chaos." *National Interest*, no. 140 (October): 30.
- Celso, Anthony N. 2014. "Al Qaeda's Post-bin Laden Resurgence: The Paradox of Resilience and Failure." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (May): 33-47.
- Clarke, L. 2015. "The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hezbollah's Islamists." *Muslim World* 105, no. 4: 608-10.
- Corman, Steven, R. 2011. "Understanding the Role of Narrative in Extremist Strategic Communication." *Countering Violent Extremism* 5, no. 3 (October): 25-39.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2006. "How Al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups." *International Security* 31, no. 1 (August): 7.
- Cronin, Audrey Kurth. 2015. "ISIS is not a Terrorist Group." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (March): 87-98.
- Demollari, Elton. 2015. "Germany and its Influential Role in the Iraq Issue. Start of Cracks in Relations between Germany and the US?" *Revista De Stiinte Politice*, no. 47 (March): 236-44.
- Emadi, Hafizullah. 2015. "The US and Syria: Clawing Back the Sphinx of Damascus." *Aakrosh: The Asian Journal of International Terrorism & Conflict* 18, no. 67 (April): 7.
- Esposito, John L. 2015. "Islam and Political Violence." *Religions* 6, no. 3: 1067.
- Faulkner, Christopher M., and David H. Gray. 2014. "The Emergence of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Effectiveness of US Counterterrorism Efforts." *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 1 (May): 1.
- Fawaz, Mona. 2014. "The Politics of Property in Planning: Hezbollah's Reconstruction of HaretHreik (Beirut, Lebanon) as Case Study." *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research* 38, no. 3 (May): 922-34.
- Fitzpatrick, Matt. 2014. "ISIS, Al Qaeda, and the Wretched of the Earth." *Flinders Journal of History & Politics* 30, no. 21 (July): 21-34.
- Gause III, F. Gregory. 2014. *Beyond Sectarianism: The New Middle East Cold War*. Brookings Doha Center Publications, no. 33 (July), 20-26. Accessed <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/07/22-beyond-sectarianism-cold-war-gause>

- Gulmohamad, Zana Khasraw. 2014. "The Rise and Fall of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (Levant) ISIS." *Global Security Studies* 5, no. 2 (July): 1.
- Javaid, Umbreen, and Nighat Noureen. 2013. "An Insight into the Philosophical Dynamics of Al-Qaeda." *Journal of Political Studies* 20, no. 2: 201-18.
- Jones, Seth G. 2012. "Think Again: Al Qaeda." *Foreign Policy*, no. 193 (May): 1.
- Jones, Seth G., and Martin C. Libicki. 2008. *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering Al Qaida*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Kangil, Lee. 2015. "Does Al Qaeda Central Still Matter?" *UNISCI Discussion Papers*, no. 37 (January): 15-48.
- Khatib, Lina. 2015. "Hezbollah's Ascent and Descent." *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (June): 105-11.
- Kirkpatrick, David D., and Eric Schmitt. 2014. "Jihadist Return is said to Drive Attacks in Egypt." *New York Times*, 6 February.
- Lacroix, Stéphane. 2014. "Saudi Arabia's Muslim Brotherhood Predicament." *Washington Post*, 20 March.
- Leiken, Robert S., and Steven Brooke. 2007. "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood." *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (March): 107-21.
- Loidolt, Bryce. 2011. "Managing the Global and Local: The Dual Agendas of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 2 (January): 102-23.
- Lynch, Marc. 2010. "Islam Divided Between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, no. 6 (May): 467-87.
- Lynch, Marc. 2015. "Obama and the Middle East." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 5 (October): 18.
- Lynch III, Thomas F. 2015. "The Impact of ISIS on Global Salafism and South Asian Jihad." *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 19 (August): 85-108.
- Masoud, Fahim. 2015. "The Almost Indomitable Islamic State." *International Policy Digest* 2, no. 8 (August): 73-75.
- Mazhar, Muhammad Saleem, Samee Uzair Khan, and Naheed S. Goraya. 2013. "Understanding Terrorism and the Ways to Root out: Perceptions and Realities." *Journal of Political Studies* 20, no. 1: 67-82.

- Michael Stephens. 2013. "The Kingdom of No Surprises." *Foreign Policy* (June): 30-41.
- Monier, Elizabeth Iskander, and Annette Ranko. 2013. "The Fall of the Muslim Brotherhood: Implications for Egypt." *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 4 (December): 111-23.
- Nakhoul, Samia, 2013. "Hezbollah Gambles all in Syria." *Reuters*, 26 September, 1-7.
- Naylor, David H. 2009. *Al Qaeda in Iraq*. New York: Nova Science.
- Nsia-Pepira, Kofi. 2014. "Militarization of U.S. Foreign Policy in Africa: Strategic Gain or Backlash?" *Military Review* 94, no. 1 (February): 50.
- Page, Michael, Lara Challita, and Alistair Harris. 2011. "Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: Framing Narratives and Prescriptions." *Terrorism & Political Violence* 23, no. 2 (March): 150-72.
- Payne, Ed, and S. Abdelaziz. 2015. "Muslim Nations Form Coalition to Fight Terror, Call Islamic Extremism 'Disease'." *CNN News*, 15 December.
- Pierce, Anne. 2014. "US 'Partnership' with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and its Effect on Civil Society and Human Rights." *Society* 51, no. 1 (February): 68-86.
- Qassem, Naim. 2005. *Hezbollah: the Story from Within*. London: Saqi Books.
- Reynolds, Ben. 2014. "Iran Didn't Create ISIS; We Did." *The Diplomat*. Accessed <http://thediplomat.com/2014/08/Iran-didn't-create-isis-we-did/>.
- Rudner, Martin. 2013. "Al Qaeda's Twenty-Year Strategic Plan: The Current Phase of Global Terror." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 12 (September): 953-80.
- Saunders, John J. 1980. *A History of Medieval Islam*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Scott, Rachel M. 2010. *The Challenge of Political Islam: Non-Muslims and the Egyptian State*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Sharp, Jeremy M. 2014. "Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)." Congressional Research Service, Report 8, Library of Congress.
- Simcox, Robin. 2015. "AQAP's Ideological Battles at Home and Abroad." *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 18 (January): 18-40.

- Stephens, Michael. 2013. "The Kingdom of No Surprises." *Foreign Policy* (June): 34.
- Stern, Jessica. 2015. "Obama and Terrorism." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 5 (September): 62.
- Tokmajyan, Armenak. 2014. "Hezbollah's Military Intervention in Syria." *Approaching Religion* 4, no. 2: 105.
- Toros, Harmonie. 2015. *Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Conflict Resolution: Building Bridges*. Centre of Excellence Defence Against Terrorism, NATO. Accessed <http://www.coedat.nato.int/publication/researches/03-ConflictResolution.pdf>.
- Torres, Manuel R., Javier Jordan, and Nicola Horsburgh. 2006. "Analysis and Evolution of Global Jihadist Movement Propaganda." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 3 (September): 407-21.
- Turner, John. 2015. "Strategic differences: Al Qaeda's Split with the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26, no. 2 (March): 208.
- Valencia, Carmit. 2015. "Non-State Actors: A Theoretical Limitation in a Changing Middle East." *Military and Strategic Affairs* 7, no.1 (March): 17, 59-78.
- Vick, Karl. 2016. "The Terrorist Threat from ISIS May Be About to Get Worse. Much Worse." *Time* 187, no. 12 (March): 9.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2005. *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Zaman, Shams. 2015. "Rise of Non-state Actors in the Middle East: Regional Dimensions." *IPRI Journal* 15, no. 1 (April): 51-60.
- Zinsser, Eyal. 2009. "What to Do on Lebanon: The Future of Lebanon-Israel Relations?" *MERIA Journal* 13, no. 3 (September): 37.