The Middle East & North Africa Journal on Violence and Extremism

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(MENAVEX)

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The Middle East & North Africa Journal on Violence and Extremism

Vol I • N° II • December 2024 – June 2025

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Content

Editorial

Dr. El Mostafa REZRAZI[1]

Le monde contemporain vit au rythme d'un enchevêtrement complexe de violences multiformes. Violence des États, qui se traduit par des conflits armés et des guerres meurtrières ; violence des groupes armés, qui prend la forme du terrorisme ou de la criminalité organisée ; violence des individus, attestée par les homicides et les maltraitances infligées aux femmes, aux enfants et aux personnes âgées, mais aussi par la violence tournée contre soi-même à travers les suicides répétés. À un autre niveau, la nature elle-même n'hésite pas à manifester sa part de brutalité par des catastrophes récurrentes et des dérèglements climatiques d'une intensité croissante.

Face à cet enchevêtrement de menaces, la revue MENAVEX a choisi d'explorer, dans toutes leurs dimensions, les logiques de production de la violence politique, du terrorisme et de l'extrémisme. Elle ambitionne de constituer un espace scientifique alliant rigueur méthodologique, ouverture critique et ancrage empirique, afin d'éclairer les dynamiques complexes de ces phénomènes dans les régions du Moyen-Orient, de l'Afrique du Nord et du Sahel.

Ce deuxième numéro du premier volume illustre la richesse et la diversité des approches que nous souhaitons fédérer. Il réunit des analyses théoriques issues de disciplines établies telles que la science politique, la sociologie ou le droit ; des démarches interdisciplinaires intégrant la géopolitique, les études régionales, l'analyse sécuritaire et la prospective ; ainsi que des enquêtes de terrain offrant une compréhension fine et nuancée des réalités vécues. Nous adressons ici notre profonde gratitude à l'ensemble des auteurs et autrices dont les contributions, par la variété de leurs méthodes et de leurs thématiques, confèrent à notre revue une densité scientifique et consolident sa vocation de plateforme de référence.

1- Dr. El Mostafa REZRAZI, Directeur de MENAVEX et Président de l'Observatoire Marocain sur l'Extrémisme et la violence. Maroc.

Le fil directeur de ce numéro est un dossier consacré au Sahel, désormais considéré comme l'épicentre mondial du terrorisme et comme un laboratoire tragique où se croisent fragilité structurelle, effondrement institutionnel et recompositions stratégiques à l'échelle globale. Ce dossier s'ouvre par une réflexion éditoriale du Dr Thomas Wuchte, fondateur du Center for Multilateral Leadership (États-Unis) et membre du Conseil consultatif supérieur de MENAVEX, qui insiste sur la nécessité de concevoir les défis africains comme des enjeux internationaux à part entière. Viens par la suite l'article du Pr. El Moussaoui El Ajlaoui, professeur à l'Institut des études africaines de l'Université Mohammed V de Rabat, vice-président de l'Observatoire Marocain de l'Extrémisme et de la Violence (OMEV) et membre du comité scientifique de la revue, qui met en lumière les dimensions invisibles et souvent négligées des menaces sécuritaires et géopolitiques dans la région. Deux autres contributions viennent enrichir cette analyse : celle du Dr Abderrahmane Kamel, professeur à la Faculté de droit de l'Université Cadi Ayyad de Marrakech, sur l'impact de Boko Haram en Afrique de l'Ouest, et celle du Dr Mhani Achour, membre exécutif et chercheur à l'OMEV, consacrée aux dynamiques jihadistes et à l'insécurité sahéliennes.

Au-delà de ce dossier central, plusieurs articles élargissent l'angle de vue. L'article posthume de Jeffrey Kaplan, ancien professeur à l'Université du Wisconsin–Oshkosh et membre du comité éditorial de MENAVEX, intitulé Terrorist Messaging and Radicalization, constitue un hommage à un chercheur d'exception dont la disparition représente une perte scientifique et humaine considérable, mais dont l'héritage intellectuel demeure vivant dans ces pages. L'étude de terrain du Pr. Nour-Eddine Jalal, professeur de science politique à l'Université Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah – Faculté de Taza, et de Hafid Mghizou, doctorant-chercheur dans la même faculté, questionne les représentations juridiques du «terrorisme» dans le contexte universitaire marocain. De son côté, l'expert international Abdessamad Chahid, analyse les risques que les nouvelles versions de ChatGPT font peser sur les communautés de sécurité. Quant au Dr El Mehdi Tayache, membre exécutif et chercheur à l'OMEV, il se penche sur les mutations du système politique syrien à travers le prisme de la violence et de l'effondrement étatique, tandis que Monsif Beroual, chercheur doctorant à l'Université Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah a la Faculté de Taza, et moi-même proposons une réflexion sur la Smart policing et l'évolution des villes intelligentes.

Enfin, l'ouverture internationale de ce numéro est assurée par l'étude de Virág Lőrincz (Hongrie), consacrée à la condition des femmes, des familles et de l'éducation au Kurdistan irakien ; par l'analyse de Ms. Dalia Samir El Sayed, jeune chercheuse en psychologie sociale, qui explore la vulnérabilité cognitive dans les processus de radicalisation ; par la réflexion juridique du Dr. Jibrin Ubale Yahaya, spécialiste de droit international à l'Université Bayero de Kano (Nigéria), sur la non-conformité d'Israël aux résolutions du Conseil de sécurité et ses implications pour la stabilité régionale au Moyen-Orient ; ainsi que par l'étude du Dr. Rula Jabbour sur Le paradoxe de l'existence : analyse du rôle d'Israël dans l'expansion régionale des milices iraniennes.

Ce numéro 2, volume 1, incarne pleinement l'ambition de MENAVEX: croiser les échelles d'analyse, articuler le local et le global, et conjuguer les regards du chercheur et du praticien. Dans un contexte international marqué par l'accélération des transformations et l'intensité des menaces, il importe plus que jamais de préserver des espaces de réflexion qui échappent à la précipitation médiatique et privilégient au contraire le temps long de l'analyse, du décryptage et de l'anticipation. C'est à cette exigence que nous demeurons fidèles, convaincus que la compréhension approfondie des phénomènes de violence et d'extrémisme constitue le préalable incontournable à toute action durable.

31 Mai 2025

Farewell to Jeffrey Kaplan

MENAVEX Editorial Board

It is with profound sorrow that we received the news of the passing of Professor Jeffrey Kaplan, the distinguished American scholar, internationally renowned for his research on extremism, and a loyal friend of the Moroccan Observatory on Extremism and Violence.

Professor Kaplan devoted his scholarly career to the study of violent ideologies and contemporary forms of extremism, guided by deep analytical insight, rigorous methodology, and a rare humanism that shone through in both his writings and his interventions.

His impact extended far beyond his global academic contributions. He left a lasting imprint on our Observatory as one of the founding members of the Middle East and North Africa Journal on Violence and Extremism (MENAVEX), a vital member of its editorial board, and a constant contributor to enriching its intellectual direction and academic vision.

In his relationship with our Observatory, he embodied the values of loyalty and commitment through his steadfast support, unwavering friendship, and dedication to fostering cross-border intellectual dialogue.

At this time of great loss, we extend our most heartfelt condolences to his family, his loved ones, his students, and all those around the world who have been illuminated by his thought and scholarship.

May God have mercy on him. May his knowledge remain a guiding light, and may his memory live on in the minds he inspired and in the generations that will continue to draw from his intellectual and academic legacy.

Rabat, 1st June 2025

Emerging Challenges – Africa Matters

Dr. Thomas WUCHTE[1]

Introduction – Foresight Strategy in Africa

What is the utility of improving strategic foresight in national security planning in Africa? This question caused the author pause when a recent remark considered whether Lesotho matters or if anyone knows where it is located. Specifically, how such dismissive foresight relates to emerging challenges in Africa that are mostly considered second-tier concerns by many in America, unfortunately. Each misstep, however, will have overlap effects as like-minded try to balance and predict challenges with Russia, China and perhaps others in the region's future. Moreover, traditional national security efforts have been overly burdened in the seemingly endless war on terrorism that has difficulty finding an end state. At each point where we think we can have a strategic pause and get back to the basics of force structure appropriate to our regional presence, we have often gotten drawn into chasing the latest terrorist threat (now add drug cartels) at the expense of building coherent armed forces. Is there a better way that we can empower an interagency process that combines defense preparedness with international development with the US State Department. And we do not add to the conditions creating terrorist breeding grounds and now drug cartels? Here the example focuses on Africa and specifically the region of the Sahel where too few Americans care, but the terrorists are creating intolerable conditions that Russia and China are more than happy to swoop in and provide the framework of institutional support. Does this matter?

Despite the overwhelming hope that rule of law and humanitarian approaches would be better received in Africa, our strategic foresight has ended up with a disaggregated international order and countries such as North Korea/Iran along with Russia and China forming a new nexus of partnership. All four are working collaboratively in ways that

1- Dr. Thomas WUCHTE, CEO & President, Center for Multilateral Leadership, USA.

few could have expected 20 years ago after 9/11. Our strategic foresight has stumbled through Russia's invasion of Ukraine and given China the green light that an invasion of Taiwan would receive the same tepid response. We have no international regional power base like NATO in Northeast Asia. AFRICOM, as so named, is not even located in Africa. NATO has tried to rise to the task of threats along all its borders. NATO managed to only add a few new members and spend some additional inadequate amount of money on its own defense. The only significant and somewhat unexpected positive (perhaps) change recently was the collapse of the Syrian regime under Assad. Syria has opened an opportunity. One can point to the USA being an enabling contribution. However, the more likely stronger force has been the relentless and strategic efforts by the Israeli Defense Forces that have cleared out insurgencies in Lebanon, Gaza and surrounding areas.

One could point a finger at the Biden administration for not having the foresight on the surprise attack in Israel or the inability to handle the withdrawal from Afghanistan. The honest answer is that these deficits predate the Biden administration, continued in the first Trump administration, and were evident before in the Obama administration. One could argue all were launched through the ill-conceived military operations after 9/11 under the Bush administration. These are not individual failures of our leaders at the top, but the entire interagency process that lacked a long-term view with Defense and State Department personnel leading our foreign policy without long-term foresight. Often strategic planners rotate too quickly, changing with the political winds and trying to adjust without any real durable plan. Whether one appreciates authoritarian regimes or dictators, the author does not, it is clear having the same leader for 10/15/20 years has provided a strategic view. How do we overcome our limitations and where can we move the bar a little farther forward with national security foresight strategy in Africa – because the author does think it matters.

While there were several successes over the course of 20 years fighting terrorism and other emerging challenges, a clear lesson learned was understanding of the landscape and the factors of conflict are key to mitigating that threat and engaging to fully understand the dynamics. On the topic of non-traditional security issues, such as climate fragility, there are lessons we can learn from other regions that are applicable to Africa and hot spots like the Sahel. The argument is not that climate, water scarcity, and loss of natural habitat radicalizes recruits to terrorist groups. There must still be the interplay of the terrorist group itself. These

emerging challenges do, however, greatly affect movement, trade, stability and interoperability of humans within a country and across neighboring borders.

Maintaining Multilateral Collaboration with Africa

While the current global disagreements portray reluctance to embrace such preventive diplomacy as it applies to intra- and interstate conflicts, there should be a forward-looking call for leadership to expand the definition of transnational and non-traditional security challenges. Multilateral collaboration is especially important to keep abreast of threats and to mitigate never-ending "on-the-ground" presence. Over the past two decades, lack of integrating non-traditional aspects of security has limited the US in its goals of eradicating al Qaeda and ISIS and supporting democratic leaders around the world. This is why terrorist groups in the Sahel resisted international cooperation efforts – effectively receding from and engaging around incomplete strategies – with vast geographic areas away from security forces.

The reality, since the recent resurgence of populist policies, is that there has not been either the political will to redirect these processes or have the resources been devoted to pushing bold ideas forward for Africa. A well-aligned spirit of multilateralism should now focus beyond traditional threats. Strengthening constructive engagement on non-traditional (e.g., climate, poverty conditions, water, and loss of natural habitat) security concerns among countries of this ever-smaller globe is especially timely and important. Organizations like the UN and regional bodies such as the African Union, OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and others should receive an even more resourced diplomatic lead in promoting international cooperation.

Way Forward Multilaterally

The ramifications of fragility shifts will be most extreme in regions and countries that are both environmentally marginal and where governance is weakest – the Sahel especially. Many of the countries at the most risk of environmental disaster is also those most impacted by potential conflict or unrest. We must address the underlying conditions with local resources along with right-sized capacity-building – drawing more heavily on defense and security budgets directed towards these

emerging challenges. Elevating awareness to fund confidence building measures (CBMs) to lessen the symbiotic relationship between fragility and extremism is an important step. With long-term foresight leading us towards building an effective and responsive peace and security architecture in partnership with Africa and for the Sahel. Reaching consensus multilaterally among security partners would help to align national and developmental priorities. This would set the stage for future engagement with African regional organizations and states. Resource limitations can be overcome by enlisting traditional security organizations to add emerging challenges to their portfolio of work and request that they 'burden share' by reallocating security funds to address the range of underlying conditions and root causes. This will be a rightsizing while benefiting local communities.

Supporting Future Foresight – Considering China/Russia as Partners

Uncovered spaces in countries with a lack of rule of law and democracy are breeding grounds. The strategic foresight outlined in this analysis should allow us to take a nuanced relook at why the US national security should be heavily involved in the Sahel region and Africa. As sad as it may seem, this is not a foreign policy priority for constituents in middle America. Terrorist groups aligned with al Qaeda and the Islamic State can operate without interference. With the clear understanding Russia and China are propelling a large buildup of US conventional forces, we will benefit from strategic foresight to invest more of our resources on addressing the systemic causes of regional fragility. Despite millions and millions of dollars, perhaps billions and billions, Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali have found more coalescence with mercenary contractors from Russia's former Wagner Group. These coup leaders are more worried about maintaining power and not having another overthrown regime -- then incorporating the rule of law and humanitarian lessons which we have spent 20 years trying to pass on as capacity building. Poor strategic foresight created these losses and disperse our forces too thinly to concentrate on reasonable partnership with Russia and China.

Multilateral leadership should support the importance of such a shift to prioritize non-traditional aspects of security issues to better integrate US security and development assistance for Africa. The multilateral work ahead should be fostering agreement among the competing interests which often overlook the conditions conducive to

fragility at the expense of hard security. Under the "War on Terrorism" launched after 9/11, the US left many broken alliance threads and a strategy and policy focus in a position that is incomplete. A functional interagency process would support a re-balancing of hard security resources towards emerging challenges. With prevention and mitigation strategies a part of US strategy with African partners (including Lesotho) – perhaps even with Russia and China if the rules-based order changes – Africa matters.

Mr. Thomas Wuchte is the Founder of the Center for Multilateral Leadership, based in Washington, DC and Bangkok. He is a graduate of West Point and received a post-graduate degree in International Relations/Russian from the University of Illinois. Tom is the recipient of the US Department of State's highest award for Excellence in International Security Affairs. He recently completed his assignment as the Executive Director for the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ). Before the IIJ, he led counterterrorism efforts for the 57 participating States in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Tom also worked for 6 years with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) to support grassroot NGOs in civil society with several African partners. His current focus is on empowering multilateral collaboration on emerging security issues such as climate fragility.

Le Sahel, défis sécuritaire et géopolitique de l'invisible

Dr. EL Moussaoui EL AJLAOUI[1]

Les crises sahélo-sahariennes

Les défis sécuritaires et militaires dans l'espace sahélo-saharien sont nombreux et multiformes ; ils vont du banditisme au jihadisme, en passant par le séparatisme et les conflits de leadership. L'implantation du jihadisme, la prédication et le recrutement efficace, les revendications autonomistes ethniques multiformes, la tentation séparatiste, l'insécurité, la porosité des frontières et la conversion de fait d'un large domaine saharien en terre hors État, constituent depuis 2007 un problème contagieux qui menace la stabilité fragile de l'espace sahélo saharien. Cette situation a eu pour résultat d'aggraver la dégradation économique et de fragiliser l'organisation sociale, politique et culturelle des sociétés sahéliennes.

La question de stabilité du Sahel est posée en termes de demande de droit et de justice, de prise en charge de la diversité culturelle et de bonne gouvernance et surtout l'édification d'un Etat fort en étendant sa souveraineté sur l'ensemble du territoire nationale. L'absence des fonctions de l'Etat au Sahel, notamment le droit à la sécurité, favorise le trafic illicite, drogues, êtres humains, pétrole, cigarettes, médicaments de contrefaçon, armes et déchets toxiques transitent illégalement dans la région.

A côté de ces défis, il en existe d'autres qui constituent de véritables dangers permanents, il s'agit de la sécheresse, les 'inondations, la désertification, les crises alimentaires et autres. Les multiples problèmes de sécurité sont autant d'obstacles à la consolidation de la stabilité, la démocratie et l'unité de l'Etat dans l'espace sahélo-saharien.[2]

1- Dr. Moussaoui EL AJLAOUI, Professeur des études africaines, Université Mohammed V, Maroc.

2- EL Moussaoui EL Ajlaoui : Les enjeux géostratégiques dans l'espace sahélo-saharien. Colloque : «Concertation sur les crises du Sahel». Bamako, 10, 11 décembre 2011.

Quelle que soit leur nature, ces menaces ont des répercutions et de graves impacts sur les enjeux de la paix, de la stabilité et de la sécurité dans la région sahélo-saharienne. Tous ces facteurs mènent à la déstabilisions et à l'affaiblissement de l'Etat.

Dans l'analyse comme dans la synthèse des questions continuellement posées sur les principales caractéristiques des défis sécuritaires au Sahel, la genèse et les caractères des menaces. Pas de verbe. Des questions se posent constamment sur le blocage qui entrave le développement d'une politique sécuritaire régionale. Le cas Algérie/Alliance des Etas du Sahel illustre suffisamment l'absence d'une approche sécuritaire régionale dans le Sahara central/Grand Sahara.

La réflexion doit privilégier la synthèse sur le descriptif, elle doit, également prendre en considération les grandes tendances de cette approche : forces, opportunités, faiblesses et menaces. Tous ces facteurs sécuritaires constitueront autant d'éléments d'insécurité et d'instabilité dans un espace qui s'étend de la Mauritanie jusqu'à la mer rouge. En plus dans cet espace, charnière entre l'Afrique du nord et l'Afrique subsaharienne, existent des zones de turbulence sécuritaire notamment au Grand Sahara. Parallèlement la vivacité des groupes jihadistes sahéliens et autres est une indication permanente de l'absence d'un Etat fort, ce qui explique les tentatives d'instauration de nouvelles formes du pouvoir.

La présence militaire française et autre au Nord du Mali à partir de 2013 n'a pas abouti à la défaite des groupes jihadistes. Par contre à partir de 2015 la France est accusée par plusieurs partis au Mali d'être un obstacle devant l'effort militaire et politique de l'Etat pour vaincre les groupes jihadistes et étendre sa souveraineté sur le nord du Mali notamment à Gao et Kidal.

Ainsi le départ de la France et de la MUNISMA[3] de la région est considéré par certains mouvements sociaux comme une condition incontournable pour la récupération de la souveraineté de l'Etat sur le nord du Mali. Cela explique indirectement «les coups d'Etats populaires» dans les pays sahéliens. Après chaque coup d'Etat, les premiers communiqués des militaires sont axés sur «**la sécurité et la souveraineté de l'Etat**.»

3- Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation au Mali.

Mais les crises multiformes du Sahel posent également le problème de stabilité et de sécurité en termes de développement, d'intégration et de cohésion sociale, à même de mettre un terme à la banalisation du statut de l'Etat et à l'émergence d'entités non viables et instables et qui pourrait concerner l'ensemble de la région sahélo-saharienne.

La carte jihadiste au Sahel

L'impact de la guerre civile en Algérie (1991-2002)[4] sur le Nord du mali a abouti à l'installation dans le Grand Sahara le «Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat»(GSPC) algérien. Son allégeance à AL-Qaida (AQMI) marque l'arrivée du jihadisme dans la région. Depuis 2007 ces groupes jihadistes, ont pu pénétrer le tissu ethnique sahélien et l'imprégner d'idéologies salafistes.

En suivant l'évolution du groupe Ansar Eddine piloté par Ayad Ag Ghali et le groupe du Mujao (Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest) dirigé entre 2012 et 2014 par Hamada Ould Mohamed El Khairy et Abou walid Sahraoui[5], nous constatons l'évolution permanente de la carte jihadiste depuis 2012 jusqu'à nos jours. En 2016 Ayad Ag Ghali a unifié plusieurs groupes allies à AL Qaida dans un cartel jihadiste appelé le «Groupe de soutien à l'islam et aux musulmans» GSIM[6]. De son côté Abou walid Sahraoui[7] a créé en 2015 le groupe «Etat islamique

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4- Entre 1991 et 2002, l'Algérie a vécu une guerre civile cruelle opposant l'armée aux rebelles islamistes qui ont pris les armes après la suppression du second tour des élections législatives de 1991.

5- Abou Walid Sahraoui était cadre du Polisario dont le vrai nom est Sidi Lahbib Idrissi Ould Abdi Ould Sidi Saïd. Adnan Abou Walid Sahraoui était le porte-parole du Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO), et a rejoint le groupe Al Mourabitoun au moment de sa création en août 2013. En mai 2015, il a prêtait allégeance à Daech. Daté le 21 janvier 2009, un procès-verbal d'une réunion de la commission sécuritaire du Polisario, affirme la présence des jihadistes dans les camps de Tindouf, d'où la présence des leaders sahraouis dans le noyau dur qui dirige l'LIGS : Abderrahmane Sahraoui, Issa Sahraoui Abdel Hakim Sahraoui et autres.

6- Les groupes séparatistes au nord du mali et le GSIM d'Ayad Ag Ghali sont sous protection des militaires algériens, ce qui explique aujourd'hui la crise entre l'Alliance des Etats du Sahel et l'Algérie.

7- En octobre 2016, Daech a reconnu avoir reçu un serment d'allégeance du groupe dirigé par Sahraoui. En janvier 2018, son groupe a revendiqué la responsabilité d'attaques contre les forces internationales. Adnan Abou Walid Sahraoui aurait été tué en septembre 2021.
(Voir le site de l'ONU https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/fr/content/adnan-abou-walid-al-sahraoui).

dans la Grand Sahara» (EIGS).[8] Le groupe commandé par Sahraoui était composé de combattants d'origine sahraoui, Peule et Touareg. Il visait particulièrement les forces de l'armée du Niger dans la région des trois frontières entre le Niger, le Mali et le Burkina.

L'évolution permanente du GSIM et de l'EIGS dans le Sahel montre toute la difficulté de l'élimination éventuelle des mouvements jihadistes en l'absence d'une approche intégrée à la fois au plan politique, économique et sociale, ainsi qu'au niveau locale et régionale.

L'absence de bonne gouvernance dans l'espace sahélo saharien et la fragilité des structures économiques et sociales constituent autant de creusées favorisant l'émergence des groupes jihadistes et autres réseaux[9].

D'autres espaces géographiques peuvent être touchés par la crise sahélo saharienne, il s'agit du Sud algérien, du Sud Est de la Mauritanie, le sud libyen et le golfe de Guinée (Benin, Togo, Cote d'ivoire…).

Changement climatique, jihadisme et conflits intercommunautaires

La zone géographique du Sahel subi des impacts climatiques sévères. Les populations se déplacent sans considération des frontières, ce qui implique l'affrontement entre agriculteurs sédentaires et nomades. Les conflits liés à la propriété foncière at aux ressources naturelle sont les menaces qui inquiètent les Etats. L'affrontement entre agriculteurs et éleveurs constitue une menace permanente d'insécurité, Cette situation génère le jihadisme et le banditisme et la violence.

Au Niger, la majorité des familles utilisent le bois pour la cuisine et l'éclairage. Les forêts du Niger constituent un espace de menaces jihadistes dans la zone des trois frontières. Le groupe EIGS taxe les coupes d'arbres, et interdise parfois l'activité forestière dans leur espace d'influence. Ainsi les forêts, devient des cachettes pour les jihadistes de l'EIGS.

8- L'arrivée de Mokhtar Bel Mokhtar au Sahara Central a modifié la carte jihadiste du Grand Sahara. En 2014 Bel Mokhtar, a réussi d'unifier l'ensemble des groupes jihadistes (Moulattamoun, MUJAO et Al Mouwakioun Bi Dimaa,…) en une seule Katiba : Al Mourabitoun. Le retour d'Iyad Ag Ghali, le chef d'Ansar Eddine sur la scène malienne et la coordination de ce groupe avec Aqmi, étaient derrière les attentats de Bamako en novembre 2015 et d'Ouagadougou en janvier 2016.

9- Criminalité transnationale organisée en Afrique de l'Ouest : Une évaluation des menaces.
Office des Nations Unies contre la drogue et le crime. Vienne. Février 2013.

Souvent la violence au Sahel se nourrit de l'affrontement intercommunautaire, ceci menace la cohésion sociale. Des questions se posent, encore une fois, sur la capacité de l'Etat comme source légitime d'autorité pour assurer la sécurité et l'ordre social. Notons aussi le rôle des groupes jihadistes dans l'exhortation à la violence intercommunautaire qui constitue un outil pour stimuler les recrutements des jeunes. L'instabilité dans le Sahel menace la vie et les moyens de vivre des populations et renforce le besoin de protection. Cela pose la question sur la capacité de l'Etat de protéger la cohésion sociale et de gérer les espaces géographiques en codifiant les tensions entre nomades, semi nomades et sédentaires. Le changement climatique a accéléré les tensions intercommunautaires.[10] Facteurs climatiques, ascension des groupes armés et défaillance de l'Etat constituent les ingrédients de l'instabilité dans l'espace sahélo saharien et contribuent à l'émergence des cycles de violence.

Cela sème aussi le doute sur pouvoir de l'Etat dans la régulation des tensions sociales. L'absence de l'Etat offre l'occasion aux jihadistes et bandits de gérer les domaines de la sécurité, de la sécurité alimentaire et de l'accès à l'école. Face aux menaces environnantes, le déplacement de la population est conditionné par des réflexes sécuritaires. La population dans le Sahel a tendance de mobilité tout en se réfugiant dans des zones qui constituent également des bases des groupes armés. Dans d'autres espaces, la militarisation des communautés rurales reflète le sentiment de l'inquiétude générale pour faire face aux groupes armés. Le vol de bétail et les incursions djihadistes, poussent ces communautés à s'organiser pour assurer leur propre sécurité.

Cette situation génère des paramètres sécuritaires dangereux pour l'Etat qui souvent ne distingue guère entre civile et éléments armés. La création des groupes de défense locale, la distribution des armes et la mise in situ des réseaux de renseignements et de coopération avec les forces armées de l'Etat, constituent une stratégie de défense a risque.

10- Les massacres intercommunautaires les plus meurtriers ont eu lieu à Ogossagou dans la région de Mopti au Mali entre Dogons et Peuls, et à Yirgou dans la région Centre-Nord du Burkina Faso entre Mossi et Peuls. Ces deux tueries qui ont fait des centaines de morts civils, en majorité Peuls, étaient des ripostes conduites par des milices d'autodéfense. Dans les deux cas, il s'agissait de punir des communautés perçues comme complices des extrémistes. Ce phénomène n'est pas spécifique au Mali ou au Burkina. La guerre civile au Sud Soudan par exemple réside sur un conflit ethnique entre les Dinka, ethnie majoritaire de Silva Kiir et les Nuer, ethnie de Rick Machar. D'autres exemples peuvent être cités au Soudan, au RCA…...

Malgré le danger de l'absence de l'Etat de droit dans les zones de confrontations avec les éléments armés, cette stratégie de défense locale permet parfois des approches de négociations avec les éléments armés.

En l'absence de l'Etat, la population civile estime parfois qu'il n'existe aucune solution possible que l'arrangement avec les éléments armés. Négocier la paix avec les groupes armés est la conduite privilégiée au centre du mali et au nord du Burkina, c'est un environnement sécuritaire défaillant. La faible capacité de l'Etat à assurer ses pouvoirs régaliens notamment l'ordre public pousse les populations à entrer dans une logique d'affluence ? avec les groupes armés.

La violence multi forme entraine une instabilité chronique dans l'espace sahélien. Selon plusieurs rapports de l'ONU, le nombre des morts et blessés liés aux activités des groupes armés a doublé depuis 2015 et des centaines de milliers de personnes ont été déplacées notamment au Burkina et au Mali.[11] L'objectif des groupes armés est de pénétrer le tissu ethnique et de tirer bénéfice des tensions intercommunautaires. Les troupes étrangères et les mercenaires sont aussi sentis par la population comme forces d'occupation hostiles, inaptes de défendre les populations civiles. La force militaire française au Sahel associés aux armées nationales n'a pas atténué la violence djihadiste. Parfois même elle a été accusée de négligence par la population locale qui doute de l'efficacité des opérations militaires dans le rétablissement de la sécurité et de la stabilité.

L'épicentre du jihadisme se trouve au Grand Sahara[12], un espace où se croisent les éléments du GSIM et de l'EIGS[13]. Accusés d'être jihadiste les Peules subissent plus que d'autres ethnies les abus des forces sécuritaires, ce qui provoque davantage les tensions intercommunautaires. La réalité du terrain pousse certaines ethnies à tolérer la présence des jihadistes et bandits en échange d'une protection. Mais quand les groupes armés remplacent l'Etat pour assurer l'acheminement de marchandises et la circulation de citoyens, ils se transforment en protecteurs des populations. Ainsi les groupes armés se substituent à

11- L'agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés.

12- Un espace géographique qui couvre le nord du Mali, l'extrême sud de l'Algérie, le sud-est du Niger et le nord-du Burkina. Le groupe Ansaru l'Islam, sa présence a été détectée autour de la municipalité de Djibo, au nord du Burkina Faso.

13- L'EIGS se distingue par l'étendue géographique de son activité, qui s'étale sur quelque 800 km le long de la frontière entre le Mali et l'ouest du Niger ainsi que sur environ 600 km le long de la frontière entre le Burkina Faso et le Niger.

l'Etat et affaiblissent ses fonctions.[14] Par conséquent des alliances ont été forgées entre les populations et leurs protecteurs. Les Peules sont stigmatisées par d'autres ethnies comme complices des jihadistes. Cette situation fait le jeu des groupes jihadistes puisque les victimes sont ensuite rançonnées par les jihadistes pour être enrôlés dans les rangs du GSIM et de l'EIGS.[15]

De ce fait les groupes jihadistes se présentent comme régulateurs de l'espace et instaurent leur propre organisation sociale en fournissant aux populations nourriture, éducation, sécurité et autres. Reformuler cette phrase Les fonctions de l'Etat se disloquent dans ce nouveau «gouvernât» imposé par les jihadistes. Parallèlement, cette organisation sociale jihadiste affaiblie les pouvoirs locaux des chefs traditionnels[16]. Dans cet amalgame, l'impuissance des États à assurer la sécurité des populations stimule considérablement le conflit ethnique qui se règle souvent par les armes, ce qui explique l'apparition des groupes d'autodéfense. La question qui se pose aujourd'hui, comment désarmer toutes les milices qui prospèrent au Mali comme au Burkina.

14- Le cas de la katiba Massina, ce groupe est composé essentiellement de l'ethnie Peule. Macina est présente au centre du Mali dans la région de Mopti et Ségou.

15- Abou Walid al-Sahraoui, avait compris l'opportunité que représentent les conflits intercommunautaires pour affaiblir les sociétés sahéliennes. En 2012 Abou walid Sahraoui a déclenché une guerre contre Ayad Ag Ghali chef d'Ansar eddine. La colonne vertébrale des groupes dirigés par Abou walid se composent principalement des éléments d'origine des camps du Polisario à Tindouf et des mauritaniens. Déjà en 2009 une liste a été publiée de 22 jeunes jihadiste sahraouis qui ont ralliés le groupe dirigé par Mokhtar bel Mokhtar. Il s'agit de la liste suivante :

1-Sidi Lahbib Idrissi Ould Sidi Abdi Ould Sidi Said Ould Sidi El Bachir Ould El Mahjoub (Adnane Abou Al Walid Sahraoui). 2- Abdelhakim. 3- Abderrahmane Ould El Mahjoub Ould Mohamed Salem Ould Sidati. 4- Sid Ahmed Ould Bani Ould Khalil Ould Sid .5- Ayoub Ould El Aâdad Ould Khalil Ould Yahya Ould Ennajem. 6- El Hallousse Ould Brahim Salem Ould Chafai. 7- Abdelhay Ould Abdellahi Ould Sid Ahmed Ould Breika. 8- Salama Ould Salek Ould Sid Hmadi Ould Yahya. 9-Mohamed Salem Ould Mohamed M'barek Ould Najem. 10-Habib Ould Lehbib Ould Berra.11- Dahouar Ould Mouloud Bachri. 12-Abidin Ould Laâbied Ould Omar Ould Al Kattab. 13-Oumar Ould Hmimid Ould Brahim. 14-Hammad Dahuar.15- Bachir Mohamed Salek Bazeid, 16- Mahfoud Abd Al Basset Ahmed Zeine, 17- Zeine Ould Abderrahmane Ould Lahbib Ould Sidi Abdallah. 18- Abba Ould Mansour. 19-Abba Ould M'hamed Ould Brahim Salem Ould Chafaî Ould Bani, 20- ABU ABDERRAHMAN. 21- ABU OMAR. 22- AL BARA.

16- EL Moussaoui EL Ajlaoui : Architecture sécuritaire dans l'espace saharien. Bamako - 3, 4 Décembre 2013

La porosité des frontières

La porosité des frontières et l'absence de coopération régionale constituent un des grands défis sécuritaires au Sahel. Des frontières qui s'étendent sur des milliers de kilomètres ne peuvent, à défaut de coopération régionale, être que poreuse quelques soient les moyens mis par l'Etat pour les contrôler. Les attaques de Boko Haram dans le Lac Tchad, montrent la fragilité des frontières et les problèmes de coordination des armées des pays menacés (Tchad, Niger et Cameron) avec les autorités du Nigeria. L'absence d'une stratégie commune à même d'assurer la protection de l'ensemble du Grand Sahara, menace l'intégrité du Sahel. L'annonce de l'alliance des Etats du Sahel en septembre 2023 a permis, enfin, une coordination commune face aux attaques du GSIM et de L'EIGS. En même temps le Tchad a menacé de se retirer de la force conjointe des Etats du Lac Tchad, ce qui rend nécessaire une approche sécuritaire régionale fiable pour répondre aux défis de la stabilité de la région.[17]

En 2025, le Tchad et la République centrafricaine ont signé un accord de coopération militaire et la création d'une force mixte pour sécuriser les frontières de 1500 Km où des groupes armés sont actifs.

La géopolitique de l'invisible

L'absence d'une architecture sécuritaire commune au Sahel explique, avec d'autres facteurs, les «succès» des groupes armés. Les coups d'Etas au Mali, au Burkina et au Niger reflètent avant tout une crise de l'Etat dans la pratique de ses fonctions vis avis des citoyens. Les premiers communiqués insistent sur la souveraineté et l'unité territoriale. Ainsi le 16 septembre 2023, le Mali, le Niger et le Burkina Faso, ont annoncé la création de l'Alliance/confédération des Etats du Sahel. Les trois pays optent pour une nouvelle approche pour affronter les menaces sécuritaires dans la région. L'alliance prévoit de se convertir en confédération avec une force de défense commune.

Cette nouvelle carte politique annonce le changement des rapports de force régionale. Soutenue par les milices Wagner, l'armée malienne a opté pour une politique offensive vis à vis des groupes armés. Ainsi L'Etat malien a pu récupérer les villes de Gao puis de Kidal. La nouvelle donne au Nord du Mali a impacté les relations algéro maliennes. En effet, l'Algérie, fidèle à sa «politique d'ingérence» dans les pays limitrophes

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17- Après allégeance d'une fraction de Boko Haram à l'EI, elle a entamé une guerre de déstabilisation des pays riverains du Lac Tchad.

a commis plusieurs fautes stratégiques. Le 19 décembre 2023, le Président algérien Abdelmadjid Tebboune a reçu l'imam malien Mahmoud Dicko, en présence de Djebbar Mhanna, directeur à l'époque de la D.G.D.S.E (services de sécurité extérieure). Cette visite a suscité des critiques de la part des autorités maliennes. Le 25 janvier 2024, le gouvernement malien, via le communiqué N° 064/25/01/2024, a mis fin à l'accord d'Alger signé en 2015 [18].

Le gouvernement de transition malien a expliqué dans le communiqué N°65 25/01/2024 les raisons d'annulation de l'accord d'Alger, il a étalé les «faits graves» suivant :

1- «Le changement de posture de certains groupes signataires de l'accord (…) devenus des acteurs terroristes et poursuivis par la justice malienne, après avoir commis et revendiqué des actes terroristes».

2- L'incapacité de la médiation internationale à assurer le respect des obligations incombant aux groupes armés signataires, malgré les plaintes formulées par le (G.T), à travers la lettre(…) en date du 24 février 2023, adressée aux autorités de la république Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire, chef de file de la médiation internationale».

3- Les actes d'hostilité et d'instrumentalisation de l'Accord de la part des Autorités Algériennes…».

Le gouvernement malien qualifié l'ingérence dans les affaires internes du Mali comme actes inamicaux :

«1-L'imposition d'un délai de transition aux Autorités maliennes, de manière unilatérale[19].

2- L'accueil sans concertation ou notification préalable et au plus haut sommet de l'Etat Algérien des citoyens maliens subversifs et des citoyens maliens poursuivis par la justice malienne, pour actes de terrorisme.

3- l'existence sur le territoire algérien de bureaux assurant la représentation de certains groupes signataire de l'Accord (….), devenus aujourd'hui des acteurs terroristes.»

Le gouvernement de transition a cité d'«autres manœuvres» des autorités algériennes et accuse l'Algérie de la détériorions de la situation sécuritaire au Sahel. «Le Mali invite les autorités Algériennes à se

remémorer également leur responsabilité dans la détérioration sécuritaire au Sahel (….) il n'en demeure pas moins que c'est l'installation dans le Sahara du groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat(GSPC) algérien, puis son allégeance à AL-Qaida qui marquent l'avènement du terrorisme international dans la région». Référence

Les communiqués du gouvernement maliens sont sévères et accusent les «autorités algériennes» d'instrumentaliser les Touaregs et le GSIM. Les opérations militaires de l'armée malienne à Tin-Zaouatène à la lisière des frontières algériennes ont décelé les enjeux algériens dans le Sahel. La destruction d'un drone malien par l'armée algérienne fin mars 2025 a déclenché une nouvelle étape géopolitique qui va peser lourd dans la lutte contre le GSIM et L'EIGS.

La confédération de l'AES a publié un communiqué daté du 6 avril 2025 condamnant l'Algérie. Le communiqué cite : «Le Collège des chefs d'Etat de la confédération AES regrette la destruction d'un drone (….) suite à un acte d'hostilité du **régime algérien**(…) le Collège des chefs d'Etat de la Confédération AES rappelle, qu'en application de sa décision en date du 22 Décembre 2024, il a décidé, en autre mesures, de faire de l'espace confédéral un théâtre unique d'opération militaires. Par conséquent, le Collège des chefs d'Etat de la Confédération de l'AES considère la destruction du drone (…), comme étant **une agression visant tous les Etats membre de la Confédération AES et une voie perfide de promouvoir le terrorisme ainsi que de contribuer à la déstabilisation de la région**». Référence

Le communiqué de l'AES accuse les autorités algériennes de complaisance avec le GSIM, «que la destruction du drone a empêché la neutralisation d'un groupe terroriste qui planifiait des actes terroristes contre l'AES». Ce paragraphe mentionne indirectement le GSIM, le protégé des «autorités algériennes». Les chefs d'Etat de l'AES «condamne avec la plus grande énergie **cet acte irresponsable du régime algérien** (…). En outre, le Collège des chefs d'Etat de l'AES décide de rappeler pour consultation les ambassadeurs des Etats membre accrédités en Algérie (…) le Collège des chefs d'Etats de l'AES, d'une part, rappelle au **régime algérien** que l'éradication du terrorisme demeure une lutte existentielle pour l'AES, d'autre part, exige de lui d'adopter une posture constructive et de contribuer enfin, à la promotion de la paix et de la sécurité dans notre région…». Référence

Le GSIM/Ansareddine profite des conflits entre certains mouvements Touareg/Azaouad et les États du Mali et du Niger pour leur proposer le soutien en échange d'une coalition. Ce jeu d'alliance offre à Iyad Ag Ghali la possibilité de dicter et imposer ses intérêts dans les négociations entre l'Etat malien et les mouvements Touareg/Azaouad. Ainsi, les jihadistes s'adaptent continuellement à l'environnement local.

Malgré la création de l'AES qui a transformé son territoire confédéral en champs unique d'opération militaire, l'instauration d'une politique régionale militaire et sécuritaire est indispensable dans l'espace sahélo saharien. Cependant la région de Sahel connait d'innombrables conflits politiques et des guerres fragmentaires entre Etats. Le Niger s'est retiré de la coordination militaire multi nationale du lac Tchad qui regroupe le Niger, le Tchad, le Nigeria et le Cameroun. Après l'attaque meurtrière qui a couté la vie à une quarantaine de militaires le 27 octobre 2024, le Tchad menace de se retirer de cette coordination. Dans un communique tchadienne daté du 3 novembre 2024, la présidence tchadienne dénonce l' «absence de mutualisation des efforts constatée, comme toujours sur le terrain». Le Tchad souffre à la fois des attaques de Boko Haram et des répercussions de la guerre civile au Soudan. L'Union africaine propose une architecture sécuritaire aux Etats africain. Mais les intérêts des uns sont opposés aux intérêts des autres.

En conclusion, nous présentons ici quelques propositions en prenant en considération les éléments de l'architecture sécuritaire de l'Union africaine et la réalité politique, ethnique, géographique de l'espace sahélo saharien :

- L'adoption d'une stratégie de sécurité des biens et des personnes, le développement économique des zones frontalières, l'amélioration de l'accès aux services de base et la bonne gouvernance locale.

- La sécurité est liée au développement, l'enjeu étant le renforcement des capacités de l'Etat ; son absence génère une dégradation des conditions de vie des populations. Il y a une conjonction directe entre la légitimité accordée aux instituions de l'Etat et la perception de sécurité des populations.

- Les politiques sont appelées à relever ces défis, l'absence des fonctions de l'Etat produit des Etats en déliquescence. La stabilité des institutions étatiques est indispensable pour assurer le droit à la sécurité.

- L'identification des zones et des populations à risque.

- L'assistance aux populations affectées par les catastrophes naturelles.

- L'intégration des réfugiés et déplacés.

- La mobilisation de ressources financières adéquates pour le soutien des projets et des actions de coopération bilatérale, régionale et interrégionale.

- L'adoption d'une politique de gouvernance sécuritaire.

- Le renforcement de la coopération et de la coordination sur la sécurité des frontières au Sahel.

- La création d'une direction de coopération régionale en matière de sécurité et de défense.

- L'amélioration de la sécurité des frontières en se basant sur les stratégies de coopération bilatérale, régionale et internationale. Le caractère transnational des crises nécessite une réponse régionale intégrée.

- Le renforcement des capacités des Etats de la région, en matière d'équipements et de nouvelles technologies.

- Le renforcement du rôle des partis politiques, des élus, des leaders de communautés et de la société civile dans la lutte contre l'insécurité dans l'espace sahélo-saharien.

- Le contrôle de la circulation d'armes sophistiquées dans l'espace sahélo-saharien.

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Terrorist Messaging and Radicalization

Dr. Jeffrey KAPLAN[1]

Introduction

Every class on terrorism begins with a few simple truths. First and foremost, terrorism is oppositional—it is a tactic employed by the weak against the strong. Terrorist groups are small, their members few, and they have no hope of opposing a government by conventional means. With time and relative success, with success measured by survival, they may develop the means to wage a rural insurgency, but this comes at the cost of withdrawing to the hinterlands, far from the urban centers. Governments by contrast wield overwhelming power; armies, intelligence services, communications media, and the bureaucracy of state functions which foster the means of control and create in the population a significant degree of dependance on the state. With these advantages, governments can counter the threat of opposition, and of terrorism, with state terror in the form of secret police, prisons, the threat of torture and when needed or expedient, state sanctioned killing.[2]

Terrorist acts, great or small, are forms of violent theater which convey messages to multiple audiences. Governments are the primary audiences for terrorist messaging, but they are far from the only target. The terrorist act is a recruiting tool. It encourages the likeminded to join terrorist groups, but of far greater import it seeks to force the civilian population to make a choice. Apathy, not government repression, is the greatest enemy of terrorist groups. In this, ironically, state terror is as great a recruiting tool as is the terrorist act. Terrorism and counterterrorism are more comfortably viewed on television and social media, much like

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2- A good introductory text on political terrorism is Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006). For the history of terrorism, see David C. Rapoport, *Waves of global terrorism: from 1880 to the present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022).

a football game, where people can cheer for one side or the other at little risk to themselves. The primary goal of every terrorist group is to force the public to abandon its apathy and choose a side. Which side is of less import than the simple act of involvement. Of the ensuing radicalization comes pervasive violence, and from the resulting chaos are revolutions born.

As terrorist groups grow in size they grow in complexity and sophistication. At its apex, in groups like the early Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and even more successful, Hizbollah in Lebanon, they can develop into a virtual state within a state. They take advantage of government failures by providing services including medical services, education, and even local infrastructure, repairing roads, building houses, and providing financial resources to the urban and rural poor.[3] They can develop legal parliamentary representation, insurgent and even conventional military forces, and they can take on many of the functions that failed governments cannot or will not undertake. Very few terrorist groups rise to this level, but it is the ultimate marker of the success of terrorist messaging for those elite organizations that can reach this level.

What is hardest for governments, the media and observers alike to comprehend is that the victims of terrorism are neither target nor audience. Victims are simply that, victims, whose greatest utility is measured by the randomness of the act. Terrorist attacks on government leaders or the centers of power reduce the audiences beyond the government to mere spectators with little involvement beyond general sympathy for one side or the other. The random attack on civilians invites the public to uniquely identify with the victims. There but for the grace of God I could have gone, and therefore I am afraid. The victims of terrorism therefore are the canvas on which the terrorist message is drawn. Still photographs or short video clips, such as the plane flying into the World Trade Center in 2001 or the photo of the ruined façade of the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City in April 1995 speak volumes to multiple audiences around the world.

3- On the early Brotherhood, the Ur text remains Richard Paul Mitchell, *The society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). On Hizballah, Martin Kramer, "Redeeming Jerusalem: The Pan-Islamic Premise of Hizballah," in *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, ed. David Menashri (New York: Routledge, 2019), 105-30. Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The global footprint of Lebanon's party of God* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015).

Inducing fear in the public is an effective tool, but it is only a step. It embeds the cause and the group deep into the public consciousness, but fear of the terrorist group is hardly an ideal recruiting tool. What is needed is to provoke the government to overreact, to engage in a campaign of terror which frightens the public more than does the terrorist group, or better, to undertake a campaign of military or police violence so great that people flock to the terrorist banner as a means of self-defense or simply desperation. The efficacy of the tactic was first discovered by the Sicari; a Jewish movement in the first century that targeted both the Jewish authorities and the Roman government. It has been the tactic of first resort for the last two millennia of terrorist history.[4]

Terrorist Tactics

Terrorism is a copycat league. A successful tactic will be borrowed and adapted by the global audience of likeminded groups who, seeing a tactic succeed in one place, will copy the idea and try it for themselves.[5] Ideological or religious differences mean nothing in this respect. If a tactic works for a communist or left wing group, fascist or right wing groups feel no hesitation whatever in borrowing it for their own purposes. For this reason, the evolution of terrorist tactics come in waves, with each wave of terrorism, each in its own time and with whatever technological innovations have occurred in the world make their attacks more effective.

In his groundbreaking four waves of modern terrorism theory, David C. Rapoport identified four waves of modern terrorism; anarchists, national liberation, new left and religious, each with signature tactics that were shared throughout the wave.[6] Anarchists used bombs and assassination, the wave of national liberation used urban and rural guerilla warfare, the new left adopted hijacking planes as its signature

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4- Randall D Law, *The Routledge history of terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2015). Jeffrey Kaplan, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted: Premodern religious terrorism," *Terrorism and political violence* 31, no. 5 (2019): 1070-95. Jeffrey Kaplan, *Apocalypse, revolution and terrorism: from the Sicari to the American revolt against the modern world* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

5- Yannick Veilleux-Lepage, *How terror evolves: the emergence and spread of terrorist techniques* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020).

6- Rapoport, *Waves of global terrorism: from 1880 to the present.* Jeffrey Kaplan, "Waves of political terrorism, revised and updated," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (2021), https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-37-e-24.

tactic, while the religious wave used mass casualty attacks when possible and a range of methods of lethal force when not.

Each terrorist wave provoked government reactions which enjoyed varying degrees of success and were employed with vastly different levels of ferocity. The anarchist wave shocked authorities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Governments reacted in a relatively restrained manner with counterterrorism centered primarily on the terrorists themselves rather than on the larger population. In the US there were a series of raids that became popularly known as Palmer raids, which were named for the Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer., These culminated in the passage of the Espionage Act in 1917, which was more popularly called the Sedition Act when it was amended in 1918. The Act led to the arrest and conviction of roughly 1,000 anarchists, communists and socialists. This was roundly applauded by the public, which approved, but were involved only as passive spectators. Moreover, that only 1,000 people were convicted under the Sedition Act testifies to the narrow focus of the government's response.[7]

The Russian response was predictably more robust, but as Russia was the epicenter of anarchist thought, this is not surprising. Mass arrests, imprisonment and banishment to the Gulag Archipelago, the network of Siberian prisons, was common. However, unlike the case of the United States, the Tsarist government was more concerned with the growing revolutionary fervor that in 1917 would bring the Bolsheviks to power than with dealing with the anarchist groups. Again however, the response, such as it was, was carefully targeted and did not overly concern the civilian population.[8]

European governments followed the same counterterrorism pattern until the outbreak of World War I, itself triggered in part by the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand by an anarchist, effectively ended the anarchist wave.

The wave of national liberation was a more complex affair, taking place throughout the colonized world and involving European governments, particularly England, France and Portugal. Each western

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7- On this history, see Nick Shepley, *The Palmer Raids and the Red Scare: 1918-1920: Justice and Liberty for All*, 2 vols. (Luton: Andrews UK Limited, 2015). Paul Avrich and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress), *Anarchist voices : an oral history of anarchism in America* (Princeton,: Princeton University Press, 1995).

8- Paul Avrich, *Russian Anarchists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

state pursued different strategies, and it was in this wave that collective punishments and heavy civilian casualties did take place. The Europeans possessed a marked technological advantage and could call on professional armies. The colonized peoples had numbers, while the oppositional groups, primarily insurgencies, had the advantage of time and terrain, as well as popular backing. As casualties rose, so too did the insurgents gain popular support. Once again it was a world war that so decimated Europe that the success of the wave of national liberation inevitably succeeded and a number of new states were born in Africa and Asia, while others, long established but never consolidated in the form of the modern nation state such as India, gained independence.[9]

The new left wave of the 1960s challenged Western governments on a number of levels. The new left in Western Europe constituted a mass movement, and in some senses constituted the radical fringe of a generational revolt. Opposition to the Vietnam War catalyzed the movement, and in the US the cause of civil rights was a part of the conflict as well. Governments reacted by handling the challenge with kid gloves. The number of actual terrorists was quite small for one thing. For another, the terrorist ethos of the time, with the exception of a few targeted assassinations. was to avoid unnecessary civilian casualties. Indeed, in perhaps the signature event of the time, the hijacking of five planes by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in 1970, care was taken that not a single passenger was harmed.[10] Terrorism in the new left wave was a media, not a mass casualty, event. Moreover, in the last analysis, the new left wave was composed of young, highly educated middle-class and affluent students who were, not incidentally, the piers if not the actual children of those in the security services. The US withdrew from Vietnam in 1973 and the wave of new left terrorism subsided not long after.[11]

The wave of religious terrorism was triggered by the Iranian Revolution in 1979. It was far from the beginning of religiously based

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9- Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in question: Theory, knowledge, history* (Berkely: Univ of California Press, 2005). Wolfgang Reinhard, *A short history of colonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press Manchester, 2011).

10- Alex Hobson, "Creating a World Stage: Revolution Airport and the Illusion of Power," *The International History Review* 42, no. 5 (2020): 930-50.

11- Ted Robert Gurr, "Some characteristics of political terrorism in the 1960s," in *The Politics of Terrorism, Third Edition*, ed. Michael Stohl (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2020), 31-57. Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction : historical and cultural memory* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

violence and terrorism, but its importance was that, against all odds, it was successful. Waves of attacks soon rocked the Islamic world, but the violence was hardly confined to the Islamic world. Right wing violence took place in the US and Europe, Hindu violence in India, and much more. The religious wave ushered in the era of mass casualties, bringing an ever greater response from impacted governments. However, the turning point was the Al Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington DC that took place on September 11, 2001. This attack launched the American led War on Terror and the invasion of Afghanistan soon followed by the even more disastrous invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Before its withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2023 culminating the longest war in American history—a war that like the Soviets and British before them ended in ignominious failure—the number of casualties was appalling:

American service members killed in Afghanistan through April: 2,448

U.S. contractors: 3,846

Afghan national military and police: 66,000

Other allied service members, including from other NATO member states: 1,144

Afghan civilians: 47,245

Taliban and other opposition fighters: 51,191

Aid workers: 444[12]

Total: 172,318

The number maimed and injured cannot be reliably estimated save that it dwarfs the number of lethal casualties.

For all the blood and treasure expended, the Taliban, driven from power by the American invasion that commenced on October 7, 2001, shortly after the US withdrawal the Taliban opened an offensive that soon conquered the country, returning in triumph to Kabul. Their numbers had been replenished and much augmented by civilians—from a variety

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12- Ellen Knickmeyer, «Costs of the Afghanistan war, in lives and dollars,» *AP*, August 17, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-business-afghanistan-43d8f53b3 5e80ec18c130cd683e1a38f.

of tribes not just the Pashtoon—who were either radicalized by the killings attributed to Western forces or simply wanting to eject the foreigners, *kafirs* all, from the nation.[13]

If the invasion of Afghanistan was a political, military and economic failure, the invasion of Iraq was a fiasco of the highest order. The country under the brutal leadership of Sadam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party was relatively stable with only the Kurdish insurgency presenting a serious threat. Sadam's fall unleashed what Iraqis then and now termed 'hell'. Religious communities that had coexisted peacefully soon fell upon each other and sectarian war between Sunnis and Shi'a soon dwarfed all other conflicts in the country. Out of the chaos emerged Daesh and killing, including sexual violence and sexual slavery, ravaged much of the nation and soon became a threat to the world community.

The war, which cost an estimated $1.6 trillion to wage, resulted in an estimated 200,000 Iraqi civilian deaths not counting those killed by Daesh, the Kurds or other sectarian forces, and 4,492 American service members killed, and 32,292 Americans wounded.[14] As in Afghanistan, the Americans left in defeat and once again the use of American force, considered far disproportionate to the threats, radicalized the public and served as a powerful recruiting tool for Daesh, Al Qaeda and a variety of equally lethal Shi'ite militias.[15]

In David Rapoport's model, each wave of terrorism lasted roughly 40 years, and each subsided and was eventually replaced by a new wave with different ideologies, goals and signature tactics. The religious wave was different. It has been nearly 45 years, and the wave shows no signs of abating. Scholars have argued about why this should be, but the overreaction of the US War on Terror shares much of the blame. By

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13- C William Walldorf Jr, "Narratives and war: Explaining the length and end of US military operations in Afghanistan," *International Security* 47, no. 1 (2022): 93-138. Marnie Ritchie, "War misguidance: Visualizing quagmire in the US War in Afghanistan," *Media, War & Conflict* 16, no. 1 (2023): 63-81. Joseph J Collins, "Defeat in Afghanistan: An Autopsy," *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 53, no. 1 (2023): 8-28.

14- Nicholas Anastacio and Mark Murray, «The Iraq war — by the numbers,» *NBC News*, March 2023 ,20, https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meetthepressblog/iraq-war-numbers-rcna75762.

15- Hal Brands, "Blundering Into Baghdad: The Right-and Wrong-Lessons of the Iraq War," *Foreign Affairs* 102(2023): 102-76. eds. John A. Gentry and William M. Nolte, *After the Wars: International Lessons From the U.S. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Bethesda: National Intelligence University Press, 2018).

inflicting heavy casualties and causing much suffering among innocent civilian populations, grievances were set and the terrorist groups that were the original targets of the conflict—groups that were actually quite small in numbers—were fed with a continuous stream of recruits not only from the conflict zones, but from around the globe.[16]

Conclusion

The patterns that emerge from these examples, drawn from 150 years of terrorism and counterterrorism, are clear. When a tactic works, it is copied and adapted to new times and new situations. From the Kharajites to the Crusaders, attacks on civilians, women and children strike terror and provoke governments to react. When governments overreact and kill large numbers of civilians, regardless of the provocation, governments lose support, lose legitimacy, and in the modern world, soon find both popular opinion and later the world community will turn against them, making ultimate defeat inevitable.

16- Daniel Byman, *Road warriors: Foreign fighters in the armies of jihad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

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ChatGPT's Versions: Threats and Challenges for Security Communities

Col. Abdessamad CHAHID[1]

Focus on: Mitigating the opportunities inadvertently provided to terrorist and criminal organizations.

One remarkable innovation within AI is the evolving versions of ChatGPT, presenting a golden opportunity if used judiciously for their intended purposes. As loyal clients of this technology, security communities risk facing the backlash of its effects if they are not sensitized and guided to leverage the myriads of unlimited benefits it offers. Concurrently, these communities are called upon to anticipate and counter easy access by criminal and terrorist organizations, which perpetually seek to circumvent the safeguards established by ChatGPT developers for alarming and illegal purposes. The international community's response has demonstrated a notable commitment to pursuing a collaborative approach to address the complexities posed by AI and its extensions like ChatGPT. This commitment is exemplified by significant initiatives such as the US Blueprint on AI Bill, the EU's inaugural convention on AI, and the first United Nations resolution on AI. Moreover, numerous international endeavors and tangible actions underscore the global effort to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence.

Keywords: ChatGPT, Security Communities, Criminal and terrorist organizations.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, bad guys always attempted to get ahead of all the security radars and vigilance. They jump on every opportunity to improve their modus operandi and take advantage of every occasion given to mislead the security community and achieve their diverse objectives. From this perspective, with the quick surge of technologies, they seem more comfortable in guaranteeing easy operational conduct and also seem more agile in improving the best frames and narratives. For instance, they use encrypted messaging apps to ensure their conversations remain hidden and secure from law enforcement or intelligence agencies. They coordinate and plan attacks, share instructions, and distribute manuals or guides, all while communicating clandestinely. To elaborate, the considerable achievements stemming from the distribution of numerous multilingual periodicals like "Dabiq," "Inspire," and "Dar Essalam" prompted malicious actors to create their secured applications like "Terrorgram," drawing parallels to the functionalities of the widely recognized platform, Telegram. This application facilitated information dissemination among terrorists, showcasing the latest developments in threats and strategies to evade security monitoring and surveillance.

As of the present moment, individuals with malicious intent persistently endeavor to establish fresh channels of communication that evade security monitoring and radars. They have also recourse to myriad offers given by AI to widen and improve their unlimited illicit activities for different purposes. Accordingly, there is a growing interest among terrorists, hackers, and criminals in general in exploiting plenty of easy paths unintentionally offered by ChatGPT even if the latter provides more and more safeguards against misuse. Unfortunately, those protections are increasingly broken and used by the aforementioned malicious community to spoil people's lives and spread their threats around the world. For more illustration, in his book *The Starfish and the Spider*, Ori Brafman delves into the strengths and hurdles of leaderless organizational models, showcasing.

Their adeptness in innovation, adaptability, and resilience amid disruptions. Yet, it recognizes the potential complexities in overseeing such structures due to the absence of clear leadership and decision-making frameworks. Comparing traditional organizations to vulnerable spiders, the removal of their leadership can cripple or dismantle the entire entity. In contrast, decentralized organizations, like resilient starfish, can adapt and thrive without centralized control; removing a part doesn't incapacitate the whole organism. Additionally, the accessibility of technologies, like ChatGPT, has eased the process for

terrorists to devise and execute their plans. Accordingly, terrorism and criminal organizations happen to be on the A-list clients that prefer to abuse ChatGPT opportunities to consolidate their ideology and pretend alleged legitimacy among a large, decentralized audience.

"Open AI/Open Eye" on Terrorism

Nowadays, the concern isn't whether terrorists will utilize Artificial Intelligence (AI), but rather the manner and timing of their utilization. Jihadists, historically, have been quick to embrace emerging technologies. For example, Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, employed email to communicate plans for the 9/11 attacks. Anwar Al-Awlaki, an American-born Al-Qaeda advocate, utilized YouTube for outreach, effectively recruiting a generation of Western followers. As early as 2010, senior Al-Qaeda leaders began actively recruiting individuals with specialized technology skills. Moreover, the Islamic State's use of X to establish its alleged caliphate is widely recognized.

Over two decades of internet and social media engagement, terrorists have consistently sought innovative methods to enhance their online presence to plot attacks. Artificial intelligence (AI) might emerge as their next significant breakthrough. In a 2021 report by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), a cautionary note was sounded: "With the wider adoption of AI, the barriers to entry will diminish, as it will require less specialized skills and technical knowledge to employ it. AI is poised to become a tool in the arsenal of terrorism."[2] That is to say, malicious activities threaten to transcend all barriers, and security vigilance worldwide by surfing on a myriad of opportunities offered by AI, including the ChatGPT, the current case study.

Suddenly, Artificial Intelligence and its offspring, from an innovation that effectively countered extremist content on the Internet, have become a tool that raises growing fears of becoming a lethal digital weapon in the hands of terrorist groups. In the past years, the massive propaganda effort of ISIS was carried out, for example, by well-trained cadres. But now, with generative artificial intelligence, those with limited talent can also play key roles in producing violent propaganda and opening their disruptive tendencies to unlimited options.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that members and supporters of extremist organizations are in the process of exploring the potential of artificial intelligence tools to employ them in their projects. When

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2- "Terrorists Love New Technologies. What Will They Do With AI?," Newsweek, March 14, 2023.

encrypted communication applications appeared, institutions loyal to ISIS examined and studied dozens of these applications to see which of them fit the nature and sensitivity of their activities, and ISIS supporters still use encrypted applications that are not widely known among ordinary users, such as "Tamtam chat".[3] The same happened when cryptocurrencies, NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens), drones, etc. appeared.

In the same pattern, ISIS supporters can employ ChatGPT to generate quick texts and professional comments and post them on social media, thus enhancing their presence in cyberspace. But the most dangerous thing is that the robot can respond to questions about sensitive topics such as making bombs, developing dirty weapons, accessing the engineering structures of sensitive facilities, modifying system codes, and others, even if ChatGPT is continuously developing safeguards against misuse.

Although ChatGPT is determined to refuse to respond to explicit questions about "activities aimed at bodily harm or destruction", experience has shown that it can be circumvented by paraphrasing orders and asking questions indirectly. Unfortunately, they are unceasingly breached by the highly profiled generation of terrorists.

"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

3- "TamTam: Messenger, Chat, Calls - Apps on Google Play," accessed August 5, 2023, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ru.ok.messages&hl=en_US.

The purpose of using this famous and very expressive picture is to wrench minds back to the fact that history is repeating itself. The semantic sense of the famous sentence: "On the Internet, nobody knows you are a dog", occurring to express the astonishment regarding the anonymity of Internet users just after its first appearance, seems to repeat its same meaning since malicious and terrorist organizations are freely navigating through AI/ChatGPT platforms to consolidate their agenda, gain new clients, and lucrative advantage without being detected or disrupted.[4]

From a security perspective, addressing the misuse of ChatGPT, as part of an AI ecosystem, requires attention to the full circle encompassing the main phases of recruitment, propaganda, the classic attack cycle, funding, and cybercrimes.

1. Propaganda

Currently, the new jihadi groups place a high priority on promoting the concept of jihad, often employing aggressive language to spread their message. They leverage various technological advancements to amplify the spread of distorted religious beliefs and false narratives. This includes the manipulation of AI or ChatGPT, which can facilitate the dissemination of extremist ideologies.

Similarly, their access to emerging tools like ChatGPT within a free and democratic context adds a new dimension to their capabilities. Thus, by bypassing ChatGPT's safeguards, they access tailored and highly specific speeches entirely dedicated to their propaganda. This tailored content not only echoes the core messages of the terrorist group behind it but also takes into account the broader geostrategic backdrop in which it is presented. Essentially, terrorists use ChatGPT to generate speeches centered around ongoing conflicts that they specifically choose to leverage, aiming to legitimize their violent deeds and promote the trend of their ideology.

Due to the best and unstoppable ChatGPT's feedback offered, they may have access to comprehensive insights into A-list conflicts, gaining updates on various facets and potential consequences through accurate content that blends internationally recognized elements such as international law and human rights standards. This approach ensures a wide audience appeal and aims to yield significant outcomes, solidifying their propaganda by leveraging credible and far-reaching results. The use

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4- Cartoon drawn by Peter Steiner, published by The New Yorker on July 5, 1993.

of precise and inclusive information allows them to craft a narrative that resonates widely, potentially influencing a larger audience, consolidating their message, and getting new clients.

As a concrete example, in the Israeli and Hamas conflict, myriad terrorist propaganda platforms used tailored narratives to target a wide audience to an extent that even put some States' credibility and trustworthy regimes at stake. People worldwide are subject to terrorist propaganda content that strives to be more resonating in favor of achieving devastating goals. ChatGPT offers freely updated content considering intricate influencing factors. This fuels their propaganda to be more impactful, crafting specific stories that aid in broader recruitment efforts and garner more sympathy, especially from a significant number of easily influenced individuals.

2. Recruitment

The resurgence and achievements of the terrorist organization the Islamic State have sparked significant debate about how an insurgent group, previously marginalized, has effectively evolved into an entity that not only governs territory but also draws recruits globally, persistently outpaces other rebel factions, and challenges national security and military forces. These challenges seem to be persisting with the recourse to AI-generated languages like ChatGPT, meanwhile, the threat of similar occurrence remains very probable, chiefly, with the continuous escalation of security crises around the globe.

In addressing the challenge posed by the accessibility of ChatGPT in facilitating recruitment, it is crucial to elucidate the four primary recruitment methods employed by most global terrorist entities namely the Fishing Net, the Funnel, the Infection, and the Crystallization method. These methodologies were initially delineated by ADF (African Defense Forum) magazine during the prominent periods of Al-Qaida and ISIS between 2003 and 2015. The objective involves examining how the utilization of ChatGPT might inadvertently aid nefarious individuals in recruiting susceptible individuals, dubbed as "stupid idiots," to further the agendas of terrorist organizations. Additionally, it is imperative to emphasize that the recruitment process deliberately conceals the true

nature of the organization from prospective recruits, instead of manipulating their sentiments to expand the terrorist community. Also, it is paramount to underline that these methods of recruitment are not exhaustive and have changed with mass communication and terrorist audiences, however, they remain only as an example to shed light on how they can be paired with ChatGPT's myriad offered opportunities in elevating the number of their targeted clients.
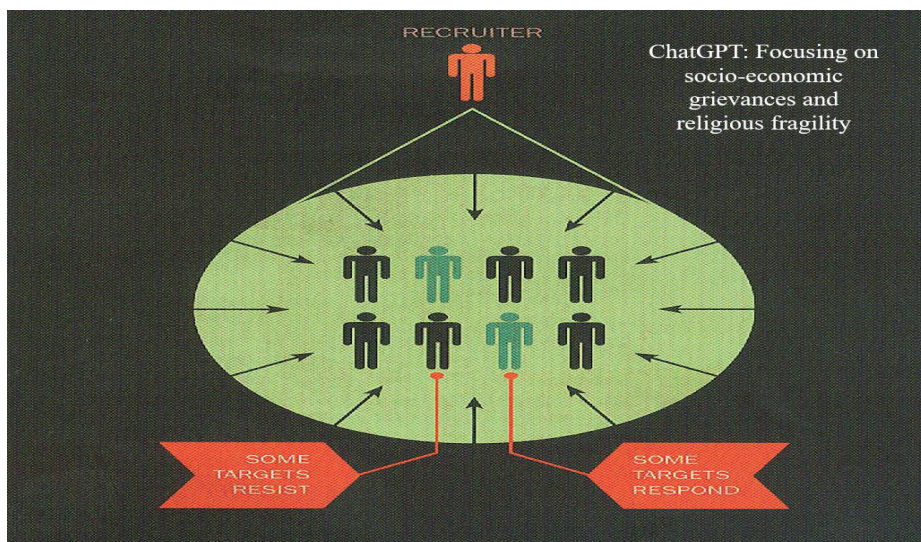
The fishing net method/ChatGPT: The strategy known as the "fishing net" method involves broadly casting a figurative net during recruitment endeavors, seeking to capture a diverse range of potential candidates without precise or targeted selection. Viewed in this light, the recruiter might indirectly prompt ChatGPT for insights concerning the most compelling topics within specific communities without employing any language that might restrict ChatGPT from responding to the request. The latter could encompass various aspects such as societal deficiencies, financial challenges, economic limitations, religious principles, and fundamental elements crucial for establishing rapport and trust with intended targets. Given its broad approach, this method aims at a wide audience without specific criteria, expanding the range of options available and equipping the recruiter to engage multiple targets simultaneously
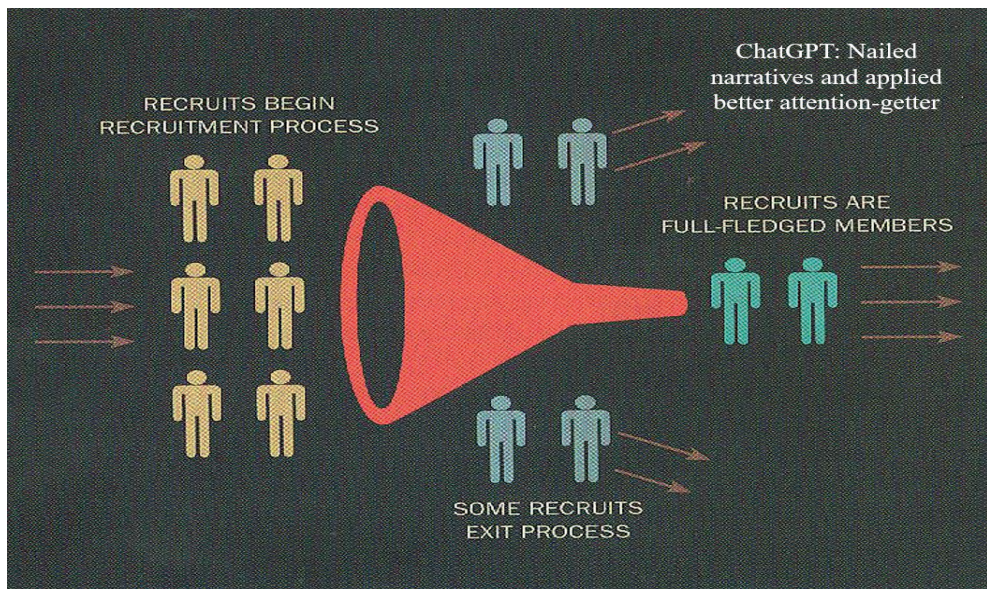
The Funnel method/ChatGPT: Malicious individuals employ this method in recruitment to systematically refine a wide audience into a more specific, targeted group. As interest is expressed, individuals progress through the stages of the funnel. The aim is to deepen engagement by offering valuable information, catering to their requirements, and fostering their commitment to the purpose. The usefulness of ChatGPT is inferred in making the narratives more persuasive depending on the needs that the terrorist organization might have. The recruiter seeks to deliver an attention-getter by being more specific in conformity with the organization's expectations. For more illustration, if the targeted person is an explosive crafter or maker, the recruiter gets all the lexical tools from ChatGPT, of course by overcoming all the safeguards, to get specific content to have an excellent attention-getter, meanwhile, to examine the extent of knowledge of the targeted client.

The main approach remains the same in seducing other specialties oscillating between Physicians, Nurses, Iconographers, Cookers, and even Terrorist Escorts. The security and intelligence takeaways have proven that the recruitment in the second phase of alleged State implementation was more selective and nailed. At its peak, the Islamic State, engaged in military operations against a wide range of opponents, including both non-state and state actors, as well as international entities. In essence, operating as such, ISIS asserted its brutal authority through specialized structures designed to support its form of governance which showed that the process kept up with the organization's need. For example, it established a so-called religious police unit known as the

Hisbah force, tasked with ensuring security on the streets, enforcing Sharia law, and identifying and eliminating spies and other threats to the organization.[5] Besides, after the decline of ISIS, seized documents showed that the terrorist organization strived to create a certain legitimacy and behave like a state actor by duplicating state structures referring for example to a component within the organization known as the "Military Administration" or "General Military Administration"[6]. These documents also seem to primarily concern personnel-related matters, including issues such as leaves of absence, travel, medical concerns, and supply matters. Terrorist groups demonstrate a remarkable ability to efficiently address their operational needs with meticulousness, capitalizing on the accessible tools much like the ease of "ready-to-wear" solutions ChatGPT offers. It is suggested that they shape their tactics and maneuvers around the core principle of 'Ends, means, and ways,' a foundational framework extensively utilized in strategic planning across various domains.
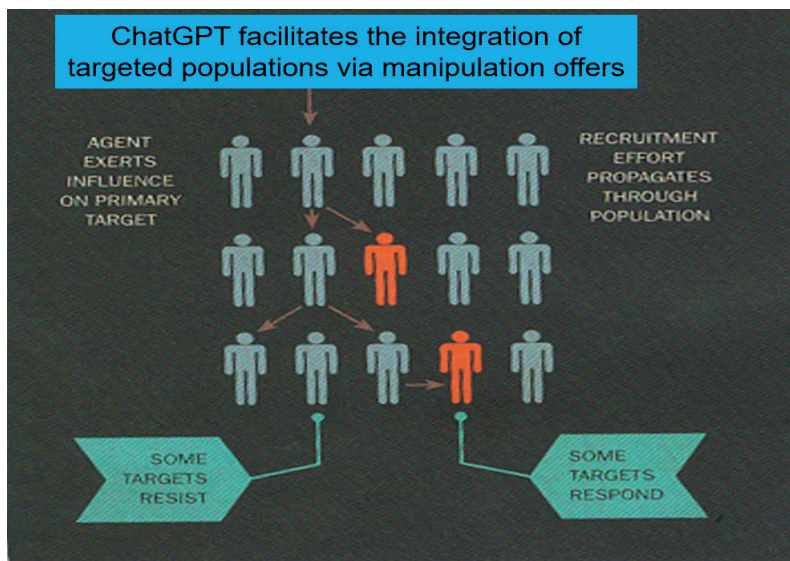
The Infection method/ChatGPT: In a broader context, the method of infection can be likened to the spread of ideas, beliefs, or radical behaviors within a targeted audience resembling a contagion. This process encompasses various mechanisms used through affordable, AI platforms and sometimes wielded through key figures within communities based also on nailed narratives products of the first method.

5- Soliev, Nodirbek. "The Digital Terror Financing of Central Asian Jihadis." CTC Sentinel 16, no. 4 (April 2023): 20

6- Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "Archive of Islamic State Administrative Documents (Cont.)," Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, January 11, 2016, https://aymennjawad. org/2016/01/archive-of-islamic-state-administrativedocuments-1

Terrorist groups adeptly exploit this path by leveraging the influence of charismatic or influential individuals to disseminate and normalize extremist ideologies, recruit new members, and radicalize susceptible individuals. For more illustration, terrorists possess the potential to exploit ChatGPT's tailored messaging feature, generating convincing and personalized messages to exploit individuals' vulnerabilities, including their grievances and emotional states.

This capability allows the AI to simulate human-like conversations, blurring the distinction between genuine interaction and AI-generated content very easily to infect a large targeted audience. Moreover, through psychological manipulation, terrorists could leverage AI generated content that mimics human conversation. This tactic enables them to gradually manipulate and groom individuals, desensitizing them to extremist ideologies and fostering a false sense of belonging within terrorist groups. Furthermore, the infection method as other tactics is tackled within the spirit of targeting marginalized or vulnerable communities, by pretending to offer support, ideological reinforcement, or supposed solutions to their grievances, thereby exploiting their susceptibility to radicalization. This method is also destined for very complex clients such as military personnel, law enforcement, and other security-affiliated members.
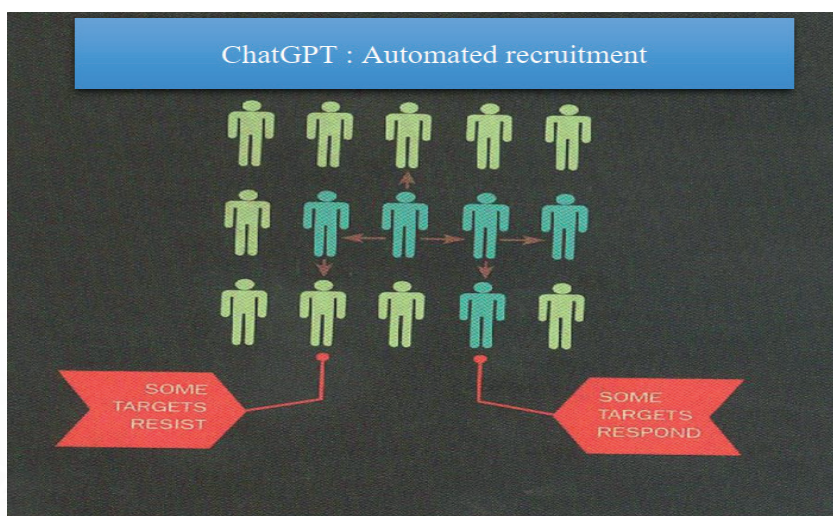
The **crystallization method:** Terrorists could potentially use ChatGPT to mold a unified extremist belief system among recruits, much like the coherence and structure seen in crystals. This could involve ensuring consistent messaging and alignment through the AI tool, creating ideological cohesion within their followers. Similar to the

gradual substance buildup around a core in crystallization, terrorist recruitment via AI might gradually strengthen extremist ideas. This method relies on repeated interactions to reinforce these beliefs, exploiting the persuasive impact of repetition and incremental exposure. In the same manner that crystals grow layer by layer, terrorists might use AI-generated content to gradually stack persuasive narratives. This approach aims to progressively shape and bolster radical ideologies over time during interactions with individuals.

Additionally, the automated recruitment aspect of ChatGPT can facilitate the creation of chatbots or automated systems devoted to crystalizing targeted persons. These systems engage with multiple individuals simultaneously, disseminating extremist ideologies through consistent and persuasive messaging. This approach gradually indoctrinates users and spreads radical ideas and may succeed in getting more victims.

3. Illegal funding

Throughout history, malicious guys have sought to ensure easy money by adopting the most intricate techniques and modus operandi to mislead security obstacles and to escape justice radars. The use of AI happens to be of great added value to their criminal Palmares. On the same page, there is an appalling growth in the exploitation of opportunities offered by ChatGPT by malicious entities to get easy money for their illicit activities.

Furthermore, ChatGPT's capabilities extend beyond benign uses; they can facilitate the generation and dissemination of malicious content, like spam messages aimed at delivering harmful software to a wide audience. Before the advent of models like ChatGPT, criminals had to manually devise processes to perpetrate fraud and craft deceptive communications. However, with the assistance of ChatGPT, various forms of online fraud can now be swiftly and convincingly generated at scale for the sake of rising illicit financing for malicious activities. Moreover, this new technological advancement raises concerns about heightened risks associated with hybrid attacks, such as password cracking.[7]

7- Password Attacks https://www.israelclouds.com/article/types-cyber-attacks.

In the same vein, terrorists might have recourse to ChatGPT to guarantee enormous avenues of financial resources[8]. Accordingly, Phishing is one of the preferable tips they might use to achieve their illicit purposes. The latter represents a form of malicious software wherein attackers craft deceitful emails that masquerade as trustworthy sources, aiming to coerce recipients into engaging in detrimental activities. These activities encompass actions like interacting with insecure links, accessing malevolent attachments, divulging sensitive data, or transferring funds to specified accounts. Phishing scams stand out as the prevailing and widely recognized form of malicious software. On the same page, the use of Reversed Request (RR) to get an example of a phishing email from ChatGPT can be an easy matter for malicious operators or terrorists. A concrete experiment on the same perspective unveiled astonishing feedback from ChatGPT. The latter provided an example of a phishing email that could be used for malicious purposes.[9]

ANSWER SAMPLE

ChatGPT answers: Sure, here's an example of a phishing email:

Subject: Urgent: Verify Your Account Information Now!

Dear [Your Name],

We regret to inform you that there has been suspicious activity detected on your account. To ensure the security of your account, we kindly request that you verify your information immediately.

Please click on the link below to log in and confirm your account details: [Phishing Link]

Failure to verify your account within the next 24 hours may result in temporary suspension or closure of your account.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely, [Phisher's Name] [Fake Company Name].

8- Gadi Eshed." Is the Chatbot a Threat or an Opportunity for Security Organizations?". ICT: 2023

9- "ChatGPT," accessed September 25, 2023, https://chat.openai.com.

In parallel, for the sake of getting easy incomes, terrorists might have recourse to Business Email Compromise (BEC) attacks to conduct unlawful activities or get amounts of money to accompany their malicious projects. BEC is a type of cyber threat where attackers manipulate or compromise legitimate business email accounts for fraudulent purposes. These attacks typically involve impersonating executives, vendors, or other trusted entities within an organization to deceive employees, customers, or partners into performing actions that benefit the attacker. BEC attacks can take various forms, such as fake invoice scams, wire transfer requests, or requests for sensitive information. They often rely on social engineering tactics to trick individuals into transferring money, sending sensitive data, or performing actions that compromise the organization's security.

According to the FBI's Crime Report 2022, the Internet Complaint Center (IC3) received 21,832 complaints about BEC, resulting in adjusted losses exceeding $2.7 billion.[10] The BEC often occurs when someone gains access to valid business email accounts by using social engineering or computer breaches to carry out unauthorized fund transfers.

4. Newborn models and derivatives

The advent of Generative Pre-Trained Transformers models, like ChatGPT, deepseek and others, marks a significant advancement in natural language processing. Their impressive versatility in handling various language-related tasks has been widely recognized. Nevertheless, the dynamism and adaptability of these models have ignited a new trend toward creating specialized derivatives and models customized to excel in specific domains or tasks.

❖ W o r m G P T

From this viewpoint, malevolent actors consistently aim to outpace the surveillance of the security community and exploit potential vulnerabilities inherent in existing technology. Consequently, there exists a novel generative AI tool, dubbed WormGPT, engineered explicitly for malicious purposes. This tool, a derivative of the GPT language model, was developed in 2021 by a consortium known as "eLuthor AI" and boasts a billion parameters, enabling it to process and assimilate

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10- Federal Bureau of Investigation "Crime report 2022". Internet Crime Complaint Center. 2022.
   https://www.ic3.gov/Media/ PDF/AnnualReport/2022_IC3Report.pdf.

extensive volumes of data. Unlike its counterpart, ChatGPT, which maintains constraints and protective measures necessitating specific expertise to breach, WormGPT operates unrestrained.

Its applications encompass malicious endeavors such as crafting deceptive emails, generating malware, providing counsel on illicit activities, and essentially any activity associated with black hat practices. Moreover, the emergence of WormGPT came to light through the investigation conducted by Slash Next, an email security provider, which uncovered its advertisement on the infamous "Hack Forum." This online forum is widely recognized for its association with cybercriminal activities. The creator of WormGPT asserts that the model was trained using a diverse range of data sources, particularly focusing on datasets abundant in malware-related information.

Its purported capabilities include unrestricted character support, extensive chat memory retention, and advanced formatting features. Some reports indicate that the developers are offering access to the tool for $67 per month or 550 Euros annually. However, considering the severe potential risks associated with its use, WormGPT is regarded as highly alarming and detrimental to both individuals and organizations. Similarly, within the realm of cybersecurity, AI tools have assumed a crucial role in identifying and preventing cyberattacks, comprehending potential threats, and enhancing overall security measures. Nonetheless, these very tools can be exploited by malicious actors and extremist groups to orchestrate more sophisticated cyber assaults, evade existing defenses, and pinpoint vulnerabilities.

In sum, the integration of AI tools like ChatGPT within a democratic context introduces new dimensions to their capabilities. By exploiting ChatGPT's features, terrorists can tailor propaganda speeches to specific conflicts, aiming to legitimize their violent deeds. This tailored content, grounded in accurate information, aims to resonate widely, potentially influencing a larger audience and consolidating their message. Despite the tool's safeguards, terrorists can access comprehensive insights into conflicts, fueling impactful propaganda for recruitment and sympathy. Moreover, the emergence of AI-driven tools like WormGPT, designed explicitly for malicious purposes, poses a heightened threat. WormGPT operates unrestrained and can facilitate a wide range of criminal activities, from crafting deceptive emails to generating malware, representing a severe risk to individuals and organizations. The integration of AI in cybercrime, including phishing and BEC attacks, amplifies the challenges faced in combating illicit funding and fraudulent activities.

5. Path to remedy

The transformative potential of AI in enhancing human endeavors across various sectors is undeniable, as it becomes increasingly intertwined with our daily lives. However, this rapid integration also brings forth significant ethical and security concerns, particularly regarding the potential misuse of AI technologies by malicious actors. The emergence of innovative AI tools like ChatGPT and others exemplifies the dual nature of AI adoption, offering both opportunities and risks. Addressing these challenges necessitates a collaborative effort from the global community, as evidenced by substantial initiatives such as legislative actions and cooperative agreements aimed at governing AI development and utilization.

This collective commitment underscores the paramount importance of ethical considerations, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of sustainable AI deployment. The establishment of a framework of best practices serves as a crucial guide to ensure the responsible and equitable application of AI across diverse domains essential to human existence. Moreover, these proposed practices will serve as both deterrents and guiding principles for security professionals to mitigate unauthorized access by criminal and terrorist organizations or at least impede their capacity to exploit sensitive information. This underscores the urgency of integrating intelligence-driven security strategies and technical expertise to effectively manage AI-related risks.

Furthermore, the security community acknowledged as an active actor within the human life cycle, faces the imperative of aligning effectively with the emerging trends of AI and its derivatives. This alignment is critical for continually monitoring the progress of this groundbreaking technological innovation and proactively engaging with criminal and terrorist elements, which are vigilant for opportunities to leverage AI for malicious purposes. AI and its derivatives are poised to become integral components of strategic planning across various domains, including land, air, sea, space, and cyberspace, facilitating their unification and potentially serving as high-level deterrents. In this context, strategic competition will inevitably gravitate towards AI innovation, echoing the military adage that control of the high ground secures dominance over the lower terrain. Consequently, mastery of AI advancement holds strategic significance across all levels of engagement.

From Dissent to Violence: The Contested Field of Protest Movements and Extremism

Dr. El Mehdi TAYACHE[1]

Abstract

This article examines the complex and dynamic relationship between protest movements as tools for social change and the phenomena of violence and extremism as threats to political and societal security. The analysis begins with an in-depth theoretical review of protest movements, drawing on multiple models such as resource mobilization theory, political process theory, framing theory, and new social movements. It demonstrates how these frameworks complement each other to understand the emergence of movements, their mobilization mechanisms, and their role in bringing about societal transformation.

The article focuses on the dynamics of protest movements and analyzes the impact of leadership, organizational structure, mobilization tactics, media, and state response in shaping the trajectory of movements. It also explores how major protest movements—such as the civil rights movement and Black Lives Matter—have influenced legislation, public discourse, and cultural identity, even though some may end up fragmenting or sliding toward extremism due to structural challenges and repression. The article analyzes the phenomena of extremism and terrorism, defining each as an independent yet interconnected phenomenon. Extremism is presented as a rigid intellectual system that rejects pluralism and, under certain circumstances, may lead to terrorism, defined as the organized and intentional use of violence to achieve ideological or political goals. The article highlights the psychological, social, and political factors that motivate extremism, including marginalization, narratives of victimhood, and the role of the digital space in recruitment and mobilization.

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In the final section, the article links the trajectories of protest and extremism, noting that the shift from peacefulness to violence is not inevitable, but rather the result of a complex interplay between repression, the infiltration of extremist groups, mass polarization, and digital "echo chambers." Citing cases such as Syria, Northern Ireland, and anti-globalization movements, it emphasizes that government responses—whether totalitarian or repressive—remain a determining factor in determining the fate of movements. It also highlights the role of political dialogue and inclusion strategies in preventing protests from sliding into extremism. The article concludes that a comprehensive understanding of social movements and extremism requires moving beyond rigid interpretive dichotomies and recognizing that the space between opposition and violence is not merely a dividing line, but rather a complex arena of conflict where notions of legitimacy, resistance, and political participation are being reshaped. The article recommends balanced policies that address structural grievances while simultaneously safeguarding security and freedoms, to prevent protest spaces from transforming from arenas of change into hotbeds of extremism.

Keywords

Protest Movements, Political Violence, Radicalism, Extremism, Social Mobilization, State Repression, Democracy.

Introduction

Throughout history, protest movements have been one of the most prominent tools for social and political change. They have played a pivotal role in challenging injustice, defending rights, and reshaping governance, as witnessed in the civil rights movement and more recent revolutions such as the Arab Spring. Although most of these movements began peacefully, they often arise and operate in contested environments, opening the door to the potential for radicalization or violence, especially in light of factors such as state repression, external infiltration, or the adoption of extremist ideologies.

This phenomenon raises fundamental questions about the complex relationship between protest and radicalization, and how movements seeking change can bring about positive transformation or be exploited to justify violence. In recent years, extremist groups have exploited legitimate grievances within some movements to recruit individuals and spread their propaganda, heightening global security concerns. Digital platforms have also complicated the landscape, facilitating both

democratic mobilization and the dissemination of extremist ideology. This research paper aims to explore this sensitive intersection by focusing on three axes: the nature and impact of protest movements, the threat of extremism and terrorism, and the intertwined relationship between protest and violence. Drawing on academic literature, the study seeks to understand how and why some movements slide toward extremism, and what can be done to mitigate this threat while preserving the democratic right to peaceful protest.

Study Objectives

This study aims to analyze the complex relationship between protest movements, violence, and extremism by addressing the following main objectives:

Understanding protest movements as a tool for change: This section explores the theoretical foundations of protest movements, their dynamics, and their impact on political and social transformation. By examining historical and contemporary examples, the study sheds light on how movements mobilize supporters and influence governance.

Examining extremism and terrorism as a threat to global security: The second section defines extremism and terrorism, explores their ideological underpinnings, and examines the factors that motivate extremism. It also discusses the challenges of combating extremist ideologies before they escalate and escalate into violence. Analyzing the Relationship between Protest Movements and Violence: The final section examines the circumstances under which protest movements turn violent, the role of government repression, and the infiltration of extremist groups into legitimate movements. It also assesses how state policies and security measures can prevent or exacerbate radicalization.

Research Significance

This study contributes to the growing literature on social movements, extremism, and terrorism. By examining the intersection between protest, extremism, and violence, the study aims to provide policymakers, researchers, and activists with a deeper understanding of how to protect democratic activism while mitigating the risks of radicalization. The findings will be particularly relevant in contemporary contexts, where governments must balance the protection of civil liberties with ensuring national security.

Article Structure

The study consists of three main axes:

Axis One: Protest movements as a tool for social change, analyzing their foundations, dynamics, and impacts.

Axis Two: Extremism and terrorism as security threats, identifying their root causes and the challenges in combating extremism.

The third axis examines the complex relationship between protest movements and violence, assessing the factors contributing to extremism and the role of government responses in shaping the trajectories of protest movements.

By addressing these themes, the research seeks to provide a nuanced perspective on the contested terrain between peaceful activism and violent extremism, providing insights into how societies can foster democratic expression while preventing the escalation of political violence.

1. Protest Movements as a Tool for Social Change

1.1 The Concept of Protest Movements and Their Theoretical Foundations

Protest movements are a form of collective action undertaken by individuals or groups with the aim of addressing social, political, economic, or environmental grievances, challenging power structures, or demanding comprehensive societal reforms or changes[2]. These movements take various forms, such as public demonstrations, strikes, marches, and other forms of nonviolent resistance[3]. Their organization and objectives vary from spontaneous popular uprisings to organized campaigns led by institutions or coalitions. Researchers agree on three main characteristics of these movements: their collective nature, which expresses shared grievances and aspirations[4]; their public expression of

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2- Tilly, C. (2004). *Social movements*, 1768–2004. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315632063

3- Tarrow, S. (1998). *Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511813245

4- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001). *Dynamics of contention*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805431

dissent through tools such as protests and digital activism[5]; and their consistent pursuit of political or societal change.[6]

The study of protest movements has been a major focus of interest in sociology and political science, with a range of theories developed to explain their emergence, mobilization, dynamics, and impact. Among the most prominent of these theories is:

The resource mobilization theory[7], which argues that the success of movements depends not only on the existence of grievances, but also on the availability of strategic resources such as funding, leadership, organization, and media coverage. Thus, social discontent does not automatically transform into effective protest unless it is supported by an effective organizational structure.

Resource mobilization theory emerged in the 1970s as a critique of previous psychological and structural functionalist models that interpreted protest as irrational or deviant behavior. This theory assumes that social movements are rational projects that require resources—material, human, and organizational—to succeed[8]. Movements do not arise solely from grievances; they rely on the ability to mobilize supporters, secure funding, secure leadership, and establish bureaucratic structures. The underlying assumption is that grievances are persistent in society, but protest only occurs when sufficient resources are available. This perspective explains why similar grievances may lead to protest in one context but not in another.

Political process theory[9], which highlights the importance of political conditions and structural opportunities in the emergence of movements, such as elite divisions or the openness of the political system, along with organizational structures and support networks, and the ability of movements to craft persuasive messages that appeal to the aspirations of the public.[10]

5- Tarrow, S. (1998). Ibid

6- Della Porta, D. (2013). *Clandestine political violence*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139043144

7- McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(6), 1212–1241. https://doi.org/10.1086/226464

8- Ibid.

9- Tarrow, S. (1998). Ibid

10- Tarrow, S. (2011). *Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics* (Rev. ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511971826

Framing theory: Emerging from symbolic interactionism and cognitive sociology, it emphasizes the importance of meaning construction in social movements. It focuses on the symbolic dimension of protest movements—that is, how these movements construct their narratives around problems, propose solutions, and motivate participation. The more messages connect with the public's emotions, the more effective they are at mobilizing and influencing. It also focuses on how movements construct interpretive frames—or "collective action frames"—that mobilize potential participants by defining problems (diagnostic framing), proposing solutions (predictive framing), and motivating action (motivational framing).[11]

Framing is not limited to communication; it also includes building legitimacy and interaction. This theory explains why movements with similar goals may be more or less successful based on how effectively they frame their issues. Framing theory has been particularly useful in studying media strategies, emotional influences, and collective identity construction.

New social movement theory, developed by scholars such as Touraine (1981)[12] and Melucci (1989)[13], suggests that contemporary movements are no longer based solely on class struggles, but rather on issues of identity, culture, and the environment. This theory highlights the importance of collective identity in the mobilization process, particularly in movements focused on topics such as climate change, gender justice, and digital activism[14]. New social movement theory emphasizes post-materialist values, collective identity, and the cultural dimensions of activism.[15]

Unlike traditional movements driven by economic grievances, new social movements emphasize lifestyle, identity, and meaning. They challenge not only state institutions but also cultural norms and systems of representation, focusing less on formal organizational structures and more on decentralized horizontal networks. One of the strengths of the theory lies in its attention to how activists construct new ways of being and belonging, often through symbolic actions and alternative media. However,

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11- Snow, D. A., & Benford, R. D. (1988). Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization. *International Social Movement Research*, 1, 197–217.

12- Touraine, A. (1981). *The voice and the eye: An analysis of social movements*. Cambridge University Press.

13- Melucci, A. (1989). *Nomads of the present: Social movements and individual needs in contemporary society*. Temple University Press.

14- Habermas, J. (1981). *The theory of communicative action*. Beacon Press.

15- Touraine, A. (1981), Ibid.

critics point to its limited applicability to traditional or economically motivated protests, particularly in countries of the Global South.

Taken together, these theoretical frameworks help understand how protest movements take shape, transforming from peaceful initiatives into effective forces capable of influencing policy, or, in some cases, radicalizing as a result of internal and external factors such as state repression or ideological shifts.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly seeks to synthesize these theories rather than treating them as contradictory. This multi-theoretical approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of protest, recognizing that various elements—resources, identity, and meaning—dynamically interact in any given movement.

1.2 Dynamics of Protest Movements

The dynamics of protest movements refer to the complex processes that govern their emergence, development, strategies, and outcomes. These dynamics are influenced by a range of internal and external factors, including leadership, organizational structures, mobilization methods, state responses, the role of the media, as well as ideological shifts and changes in public opinion[16]. These movements operate within a contested political context, interacting with authorities and opposition groups, which contributes to determining their trajectories and transformations.[17]

Leadership and organizational structures play a vital role in determining the effectiveness and sustainability of movements. While some movements, such as the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr., rely on a centralized leadership to coordinate efforts and formulate goals, others, such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring uprisings, tend toward decentralized models, leveraging digital networks and collective coordination[18]. While decentralization promotes inclusiveness and participation, it can weaken strategic cohesion and limit sustainability.[19]

16- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001), Ibid

17- Della Porta, D. (2013), Ibid.

18- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. Polity Press.

19- Diani, M., & McAdam, D. (Eds.). (2003). Social movements and networks: Relational approaches to collective action. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/0199251789.001.0001

At the level of mobilization strategies and tactics, movements' tools vary from nonviolent means, such as civil disobedience[20], strikes, and boycotts, to more severe tactics such as sit-ins and roadblocks. The development of digital media has transformed methods of organizing and mobilization, with movements like Black Lives Matter using Twitter and Instagram to frame their messages, mobilize support, and apply political pressure.[21]

State responses play a central role in determining the trajectory of movements, ranging from dialogue and reform[22] to direct repression using violence and arrests[23], or political co-optation of movement leaders to neutralize them. In many cases, repression can backfire, as occurred in the civil rights movement in the United States, where police violence contributed to strengthening the movement's momentum[24]. The Arab Spring uprisings demonstrate how the interplay between popular mobilization and state repression can lead to radical political change, and sometimes to chaos and instability.[25]

The media and public opinion are powerful factors influencing the legitimacy of movements; positive coverage can bolster community support, while negative images can erode popular support and justify repression[26]. Unlike traditional media, digital platforms have enabled movements to bypass institutional censorship and disseminate their narratives directly to the public.[27]

Over time, movements may face internal challenges that threaten their sustainability, such as ideological divisions, leadership struggles, or

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20- Sharp, G. (1973). *The politics of nonviolent action*. Porter Sargent Publishers.

21- Diani, M., & McAdam, D. (Eds.). (2003), Ibid.

22- McAdam, D. (1999). *Political process and the development of Black insurgency*, 1930–1970. University of Chicago Press.

23- Davenport, C. (2007). *State repression and the domestic democratic peace*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511510021

24- Branch, T. (1988). *Parting the waters: America in the King years 1954–63*. Simon & Schuster.

25- Gerges, F. A. (2016). *Contentious politics in the Middle East: Popular resistance and marginalized activism beyond the Arab uprisings*. Palgrave Macmillan.

26- McAdam, D. (1999). *Political process and the development of Black insurgency, 1930–1970*. University of Chicago Press.

27- Earl, J., & Kimport, K. (2011). *Digitally enabled social change: Activism in the Internet age*. MIT Press.

fatigue resulting from a lack of tangible progress[28]. Repression and legal restrictions can also weaken a movement's ability to sustain itself, as was the case with the decline of the Occupy Wall Street movement due to weak leadership and fragmentation.[29]

Understanding these dynamics helps explain why some movements succeed in bringing about lasting change, while others fail, end up fragmenting, or even shift toward more radical paths under pressure from their surrounding environment.

1.3 The Impact of Protest Movements

Protest movements play a pivotal role in shaping societies. Historically, they have demonstrated their ability to push for legislative reforms, alter public discourse, and achieve cultural transformations, although some can lead to unintended consequences such as polarization or extremism. The impact of these movements varies depending on their strategies, state responses, and the surrounding political and social contexts.[30]

Prominent movements, such as the American civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr., contributed to the passage of landmark legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, while movements such as Solidarity in Poland and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa demonstrated the power of nonviolent resistance to dismantle oppressive regimes. [31]Various feminist and environmental movements have also led to significant legal reforms worldwide.[32]

Although some movements may not bring about immediate political change, they profoundly impact public discourse and societal awareness, as did the Black Lives Matter movement, which highlighted systemic

28- Meyer, D. S., & Tarrow, S. (1998). *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. Rowman & Littlefield.

29- Juris, J. S. (2012). Reflections on Occupy Wall Street: Horizontalism, leadership, and prefigurative politics. *American Ethnologist*, 39(2), 259–279.

30- Tilly, C. (2004), Ibid.

31- Ost, D. (2005). *The defeat of Solidarity: Anger and politics in postcommunist Europe*. Cornell University Press.

32- Dryzek, J. S., Downes, D., Hunold, C., Schlosberg, D., & Hernes, H. K. (2003). *Green states and social movements: Environmentalism in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway*. Oxford University Press.

racism, and the struggles of LGBTQ+ communities, which transformed societal attitudes toward issues of identity and individual rights.[33]

However, the effectiveness of these movements often depends on political opportunity structures—that is, the openness of the political system to influence. Repressive regimes may respond with crackdowns, which limits immediate success but often leads to the consolidation of support or the garnering of international solidarity.[34]

Protests not only challenge political authority but also reshape societal norms. They contribute to identity formation, generate collective memory, and strengthen social solidarity. Participation in protests has "biographical effects," altering individuals' attitudes, values, and engagement in the long term.

Beyond their political and social impact, protest movements bring about profound cultural and identity transformations. For example, the anti-war and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s reshaped social values associated with war and gender[35]. Indigenous movements contributed to greater recognition of their cultures and rights[36], while youth-led environmental activism, such as Greta Thunberg, increased awareness of climate issues.

In many cases, movements become a space for the development of new political actors, producing future parties and leaders. The Solidarity movement in Poland transformed from a labor union into a political force that led the country toward democracy[37]. The Arab Spring uprisings contributed to changing the political landscape, particularly in Tunisia, although some led to conflict or the return of authoritarianism[38]. The Occupy Wall Street movement influenced economic discourse and inspired the rise of left-wing populism.[39]

33- Bernstein, M. (2005). Identity politics. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31, 47–74.

34- Vestergren, S., Drury, J., & Chiriac, E. H. (2017). The biographical consequences of protest and activism: A systematic review. *Social Movement Studies*, 16(2), 203–221. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2016.1252665

35- Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left*. University of California Press.

36- Niezen, R. (2003). *The origins of indigenism: Human rights and the politics of identity*. University of California Press.

37- Ost, D. (2005), Ibid.

38- Gerges, F. A. (2016), Ibid.

39- Juris, J. S. (2012), Ibid.

However, not all movements lead to positive outcomes; they can face repression, suffer from internal divisions, or be co-opted by the political system, losing momentum and emptying them of their original content[40]. In some cases, frustration at the lack of response turns into radicalism or even armed conflict, as happened with the Syrian uprising, which began peacefully in 2011 and ended in a civil war due to repression and foreign intervention.

Today, the digital age has increased the scope and volatility of protest movements. Online platforms enable rapid mobilization, transnational communication, and symbolic resistance, but they also introduce new risks such as disinformation, surveillance, and representative activism. Digital protest, particularly around climate issues, can effectively increase participation in peaceful collective action, particularly among younger age groups.[41]

Protest movements are expected to play a more significant role in global governance. The rise of authoritarian populism, the climate crisis, and widening inequality have created fertile ground for both popular resistance and innovation. Nonviolent movements, when inclusive and strategically adaptive, are likely to remain pivotal actors in driving democratic renewal.[42]

2. Extremism and Terrorism as Security Threats

2.1 The Concept of Extremism and Terrorism

Extremism encompasses rigid and extremist belief systems that reject democratic principles, tolerance, and diversity. It is often political, religious, or ideological in nature. Extremism can exist without violence, but it provides fertile ground for justifying it. It typically includes the following: rejection of moderation, ideological authoritarianism, and the delegitimization of dissenting views. It is important to note that not all extremists are violent, but violent extremists act on the basis of these ideologies in destructive ways.[43]

40- Della Porta, D. (2013), Ibid.

41- Landmann, H., & Naumann, J. (2024). Being positively moved by climate protest predicts peaceful collective action. *Global Environmental Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1024/gep.11113

42- Rapp, C., & Ackermann, K. (2016). The consequences of social intolerance on non-violent protest. *European Political Science Review*, 8(3), 385-408. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773916000113

43- Malik, A. A., Azeem, W., & Asad, M. (2024). Innovative technologies in countering extremism and terrorism. *International Journal for Electronic Crime Investigation*.

Extremism and terrorism are interconnected phenomena that pose serious threats to security and political stability in various societies, although they are distinct in essence and manifestation. Extremism is defined as the adoption of extreme ideological positions that reject pluralism and seek radical change, often through undemocratic means, and may involve violence[44]. This extremism can manifest across a wide spectrum of ideologies, including far-left and far-right movements, religious and nationalist movements, and single-issue movements[45]. Among its forms are:

- Ideological extremism, which embodies a dogmatic adherence to ideological rejection of compromise and democratic processes.[46]

- Religious extremism, often associated with fundamentalist interpretations that justify the use of violence.[47]

- Political extremism, which advocates for authoritarian or revolutionary regimes.[48]

While not every extremist becomes a terrorist, this type of rhetoric can contribute to creating fertile environments conducive to terrorism by fostering polarization and dehumanizing others.[49]

Violence refers to the use of physical force or coercion to inflict harm, assert power, or achieve goals. In this context, violent extremism is a subtype of violence motivated by an extremist ideology. It is violence justified by a worldview rejected by the mainstream and often rooted in utopian or extremist visions of society.[50]

44- Neumann, P. R. (2013). *The new jihadism: A global snapshot*. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation.

45- Mudde, C. (2019). *The far right today*. Polity Press.

46- Schmid, A. P. (2013). Radicalisation, de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation: A conceptual discussion and literature review. *ICCT Research Paper*.

47- Juergensmeyer, M. (2003). *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*. University of California Press.

48- Eatwell, R., & Goodwin, M. (2018). *National Populism: The RevoltAgainst Liberal Democracy*. Penguin.

49- Hogg, M. A. (2007). Uncertainty-identity theory. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 39, 69–126.

50- Christodoulou, E., & Nesterova, Y. (2020). Violent extremism: Types, implications, and responses. In *Encyclopedia of Educational Innovation*.

Terrorism, on the other hand, is broadly defined as the deliberate use or threat of violence to instill fear and achieve political, ideological, or religious goals[51]. Terrorism includes key elements such as:

Ideological or political motivation[52], The use or threat of violence[53], Direct targeting of civilians[54], Symbolism in the selection of targets to attract media attention and maximize psychological impact[55].

Types of terrorism vary, including state-sponsored terrorism[56], religious terrorism such as al-Qaeda and ISIS[57], ethnonationalist terrorism such as the Irish Republican Army or the Tamil Tigers[58], as well as left-wing and right-wing terrorism such as the Red Army Faction or neo-Nazi groups.[59]

The radicalization process—the transformation of individuals from adopting extremist beliefs to carrying out violent acts—is a prominent area of research in counterterrorism studies[60]. Several factors influence this process, including:

Group dynamics and social identity, where marginalized individuals seek membership in extremist groups.[61]

51- Schmid, A. P. (2011). The definition of terrorism. In *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*. Routledge.

52- Crenshaw, M. (1981). The causes of terrorism. *Comparative Politics*, 13(4), 379–399.

53- Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism*. Columbia University Press.

54- Pape, R. A. (2005). *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. Random House.

55- Jenkins, B. M. (1975). The study of terrorism: Definitional problems. *RAND Corporation*.

56- Byman, D. (2005). *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism*. Cambridge University Press.

57- Juergensmeyer, M. (2003), Ibid.

58- Jones, S. G., & Libicki, M. C. (2008). *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida*. RAND Corporation.

59- Mudde, C. (2019), Ibid.

60- Silke, A. (2018). *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*. Routledge.

61- Hogg, M. A. (2007), Ibid.

Narrations of political, economic, or religious grievances exploited by recruiters.[62]

The role of the internet and social media in disseminating extremist propaganda and facilitating recruitment.[63]

A deeper understanding of the relationship between extremism and terrorism contributes to the development of effective prevention strategies, whether by dismantling extremist ideological structures or addressing the social and political contexts that motivate them.

2.2 The Relationship between Extremism and Terrorism

The relationship between extremism and terrorism is complex and multidimensional. Extremism does not necessarily lead to terrorism, but it often creates a fertile environment for it. Extremism refers to the adoption of rigid ideological beliefs that reject democratic values and call for radical change, while terrorism is defined as the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or ideological goals[64]. While not all extremists become terrorists, terrorism often takes root in environments where extremist ideologies are legitimized.[65]

Some extremist ideologies serve as the ideological foundation of terrorism, through features such as the rejection of pluralism, the moral justification of violence, the demonization of opponents, and the promotion of tragic or utopian narratives of a supposed final victory[66]. Salafi-jihadist extremism, for example, underlies many acts of terrorism aimed at establishing a global Islamic state[67], and right-wing extremism has provided the backdrop for attacks such as the Christchurch mosque massacre[68].

Researchers have studied the processes by which extremist beliefs transform into terrorist acts. The staircase model offers a gradual

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62- Neumann, P. R. (2013), Ibid.

63- Conway, M. (2017). Determining the role of the Internet in violent extremism and terrorism: Six suggestions for progressing research. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40(1), 77–98.

64- Neumann, P. R. (2013), Ibid.

65- Silke, A. (2018), Ibid.

66- Crenshaw, M. (1981), Ibid.

67- Gerges, F. A. (2016), Ibid.

68- Mudde, C. (2019), Ibid.

conceptualization[69] of this transition, beginning with a sense of injustice, followed by the displacement of aggression, and culminating in the acceptance and participation of violence. Social identity theory explains that a sense of marginalization drives individuals to join extremist groups that provide them with a sense of identity and purpose. Other models point to the influence of push factors, such as deprivation and discrimination, and pull factors, such as a sense of belonging and the promise of purpose. Numerous studies emphasize the role of the internet in disseminating extremist propaganda and recruiting individuals through digital communities[70].

There are also diverse paths to terrorism, including radicalization in conflict zones[71], involvement with extremist communities within prisons or political movements, and a reaction to government repression[72]. Events such as the US invasion of Iraq have played a role in accelerating jihadist radicalization, while immigration policies and economic inequality in the West have fueled the rise of right-wing extremism.[73]

Despite the close connection between extremism and terrorism, some terrorist acts are committed without a clear ideological motivation. This includes individual terrorism committed by isolated individuals driven by personal or psychological motives[74], as well as criminal terrorism used by organized crime groups to gain influence and control without an ideological agenda. It is important to distinguish between these different types to develop effective counterterrorism strategies based on a deep understanding of motives and contexts.[75]

2.3 Challenges of Combating Radicalization Leading to Terrorism

Countering radicalization leading to terrorism is a complex task facing governments, security agencies, and international organizations.

69- Moghaddam, F. M. (2005). The staircase to terrorism: A psychological exploration. *American Psychologist*, 60(2), 161-169.

70- Neumann, P. R. (2013), Ibid.

71- Hoffman, B. (2006). *Inside Terrorism*. Columbia University Press.

72- Crenshaw, M. (1981), Ibid.

73- Mudde, C. (2019) , Ibid.

74- Lankford, A. (2013). *The Myth of Martyrdom: What Really Drives Suicide Bombers, Rampage Shooters, and Other Self-Destructive Killers*. Palgrave Macmillan.

75- Jones, S. G., & Libicki, M. C. (2008), Ibid.

It requires comprehensive strategies that go beyond traditional security approaches to include social, political, and economic interventions[76]. One of the key challenges is achieving a delicate balance between protecting national security and preserving civil liberties, as draconian measures, such as widespread surveillance and arbitrary arrests, can backfire, exacerbating feelings of marginalization and fueling radicalization[77]. The nature of extremism complicates counterterrorism efforts. It is difficult to distinguish between those with non-violent extremist beliefs and those who might turn to violence. This raises concerns about the stigmatization of peaceful political opponents or the targeting of specific groups, as occurred with the implementation of the "Prevent" strategy in the United Kingdom.[78]

On the digital front, the internet and social media have become a new arena for the dissemination of extremist propaganda. Algorithms play a role in amplifying radical content, and extremist groups exploit encryption tools to evade surveillance[79]. In this context, government pressure on technology companies to remove extremist content has sparked a heated debate about the limits of freedom of expression[80]. ISIS has emerged as a clear example of the use of digital campaigns to recruit thousands of foreign fighters[81].

Furthermore, the root causes of extremism, such as economic deprivation, social marginalization, and political injustice, remain critical challenges that require long-term structural reforms[82]. However, many strategies still focus on security solutions without effectively addressing these factors. Repressive policies, as in the case of Syria after the Arab Spring, have contributed to the rise of groups like ISIS[83]. At the international level, discrepancies in legal frameworks and national policies hinder effective cooperation against transnational terrorism.

76- Silke, A. (2018), Ibid.

77- Della Porta, D. (2013), Ibid.

78- Thomas, P. (2012). *Responding to the Threat of Violent Extremism: Failing to Prevent*? Bloomsbury.

79- Weimann, G. (2016). *Terrorism in Cyberspace: The Next Generation*. Columbia University Press.

80- Klein, A. (2019). *Radicalization Online: The Dark Side of Social Media*. Bristol University Press.

81- Gurr, T. R. (2015). *Why Men Rebel*. Routledge.

82- Crenshaw, M. (1981), Ibid.

83- Gerges, F. A. (2016), Ibid.

Some countries differ in their definition of terrorist groups, while others are reluctant to share intelligence for security or political reasons[84]. While the international coalition against ISIS has helped shape a model for international cooperation in countering extremism, military interventions such as the 2003 invasion of Iraq have demonstrated how foreign policies can produce counterproductive effects that empower extremist groups.[85]

3. The Relationship between Protest Movements and the Phenomenon of Violence and Extremism

The relationship between protest movements and extremism is a complex and controversial field of study in political science and sociology. Although most protests are peaceful in nature, certain conditions can push them toward violence or extremism. These conditions range from government repression, the infiltration of extremist groups, and disillusionment with the lack of change, to the effects of mass polarization and the digital sphere.[86]

Several studies indicate that the state's use of excessive force or the suppression of political expression can lead to protests escalating and turning violent, as occurred in the Arab Spring revolutions in Libya and Syria, where state violence led to armed uprisings[87]. The same applies to the experience of Northern Ireland, where the republican movement transformed from peaceful activism to armed conflict following the suppression of protests by British authorities[88]. These cases reflect what is known as "grievance-based extremism," where state violence pushes individuals toward supporting or perpetrating violence.[89]

In addition to repression, the infiltration of extremist groups into protest movements is another factor driving them toward violence. While anti-globalization protests in the 1990s were largely peaceful, anarchist groups such as the Black Blocs used violence, leading to clashes with

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84- Byman, D. (2005), Ibid.

85- Lister, T. (2015). *ISIS: The Inside Story*. CNN Special Report.

86- Della Porta, D. (2013), Ibid.

87- Gerges, F. A. (2016), Ibid.

88- English, R. (2003). *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. Oxford University Press.

89- Hafez, M. (2003). *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. Lynne Rienner

security force[90]s. Far-right groups have also exploited anti-lockdown protests during the COVID-19 pandemic to recruit new supporters and spread anti-establishment rhetoric.[91]

On the other hand, psychological and social factors play an important role in pushing some individuals toward adopting extremist ideologies within movements. Phenomena such as "group polarization"[92] and digital echo chambers [93]reinforce the tendency toward extremism within ideologically homogeneous groups. Social identity theory supports this idea, as individuals strive to conform to group positions, even if they are extreme[94]. Failure to achieve a movement's goals sometimes leads to a slide toward violence, as in the case of the Weather Underground in the United States, which embraced violence after becoming disillusioned with the slow pace of change, or the shift of some members of the Muslim Brotherhood to armed factions after the 2013 coup in Egypt.[95]

Governments play a pivotal role in preventing protests from turning violent by adopting strategies of political inclusion and dialogue. For example, the inclusion of the African National Congress in negotiations helped end apartheid in South Africa, and peace negotiations in the Basque Country contributed to the disarmament of ETA[96]. Conversely, the use of excessive force can backfire, as demonstrated by the repression in Chechnya, which contributed to the rise of jihadist terrorism, and by US policies during the "War on Terror," which led to further polarization and extremism in some regions.[97]

Understanding the dynamic relationship between protest movements and extremism is essential for designing policies that protect legitimate political expression while reducing the risk of violence. This

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90- Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social Movements: An Introduction. Blackwell*.

91- Mudde, C. (2019), Ibid.

92- Sunstein, C. R. (2009). *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide*. Oxford University Press.

93- Conway, M. (2017), Ibid.

94- Hogg, M. A. (2007), Ibid.

95- Lynch, M. (2016). *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*. PublicAffairs.

96- McAdam, D., Tarrow, S., & Tilly, C. (2001), Ibid.

97- Pape, R. A. (2005), Ibid.

requires a balanced approach that addresses legitimate grievances and ensures security accountability to prevent protests from transforming from vehicles for change into arenas for extremism and violence.

Conclusion

This article reveals that the relationship between protest movements and extremism is neither linear nor inevitable. Rather, it emerges within a contested space where social grievances, official responses, ideological stakes, and digital interactions intersect. While protest movements represent a legitimate expression of popular demands, they may transform—under specific conditions of repression, exclusion, or ideological penetration—into forms of violence or radicalism. Understanding this transformation can only be fully understood through a multi-level approach that integrates sociological and political theories and takes into account the interplay between structure and agency.

Historical and contemporary examples have shown that the political response to protest movements, whether through containment or repression, remains a key determinant of their outcomes. Furthermore, the role of digital media has become crucial in accelerating or altering mobilization trends. Conversely, relying solely on security-based approaches to addressing extremism often produces counterproductive results and leads to the reproduction of the same motivations that fuel violence. Hence, the need for balanced public policies that preserve space for peaceful expression while simultaneously addressing the structural causes underlying protest and extremism, such as marginalization, inequality, and closed political systems. Strengthening inclusion mechanisms, opening channels for democratic participation, and building trust between state and society are essential conditions for preventing societies from slipping into cycles of violence and ensuring that social movements remain a constructive force in the democratic transition process, rather than a harbinger of chaos or extremism.

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The Situation of Women, Families, and Education in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region

Ms. Virág LŐRINCZE[1]

Abstract

This article concludes the key findings of a two-week fieldwork research on the situation of Christian women, families and education in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. Drawing from interviews conducted among a broad spectrum of the local community, women live in relative safety, although they are more affected by economic hardships and discrimination. The biggest threat to Christian communities in the region is emigration and the decline in the number of people preserving the culture.decline in the number of people preserving the culture.

Introduction

An essential way to understand different cultures and civilizations is to spend time within and live among them. We must become active listeners, attentive and aware of others' emotional and cognitive backgrounds. Aiming to understand them more profoundly, seeing the world through their glasses and putting aside our views and prejudices is fundamental. These were the cornerstones of our two-week-long fieldwork about the situation of Christianity in Iraq, which forms part of the Danube Institute's longer-term research project titled *Attacks on Christian Communities and Institutions*. Having a couple of times visiting the Middle East, it was no concern for me to participate in the research, but on the contrary, as the only female member of the research group conducting the fieldwork in Iraq, I aimed to develop a deeper relationship with local women, families, and young people.

It was predominantly after the 1991 Iraqi uprisings that voices in defence of women have become louder. With the establishment of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, the consciousness has been increased on

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women's rights and the elimination of gender discrimination, with particular emphasis on Christians and other religious and ethnic minority communities. The security vacuum after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and the flare-up of anti-Western and sectarian violence led to another wave of an upsurge in attacks on women in general, but with a particular focus on Christians. During the rise of ISIS, the whole world was resounding with the violence committed by them, especially against Christian and Yazidi women. Although ISIS was formally defeated in 2017, the remaining political, economic, and social instability and insecurity left room for further violence against women.

I. Background on Women in Iraq

In contrast to the common belief about the situation of women in Iraq, they enjoyed a much more comprehensive range of rights and freedoms under Saddam Hussein's dictatorship than in neighbouring Middle Eastern countries. All of Iraq has suffered from dictatorship and the violation of human rights; however, it is always the marginalized who suffer the most: gender minorities, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, and very often, these vulnerabilities overlap with each other. During the 1970s, the constitution granted women equal rights and access to education, and they obtained suffrage in 1980. In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War and the security vacuum created after the fall of Saddam, the democratization many expected did not happen overnight, and the position of women became much more critical. Domestic abuse, prostitution, and other forms of physical abuse have increased, and as social conservatism was gaining ground, the role of women played in public life had vanished.[2] During the Iraq-Iran war, women were transformed into the *'symbols of the nation'* in the sense that they were encouraged to participate in public life so that they could replace the men lost in the war. However, it didn't result in any changes in the patriarchal traditions or regarding women's rights.[3]

2- Much academic literature on women in post-Saddam Iraq has appeared since his fall. See for example Nadje Al-Ali, "Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi women between dictatorship, war, sanctions and occupation," in *Reconstructing Post-Saddam Iraq*, ed. Sultan Barakat (New York: Routledge, 2007), 187-206. Lucy Brown and David Romano, "Women in Post-Saddam Iraq: One Step Foward or Two Steps Back?," *NWSA Journal* 18, no. 3 (2006): 51-70. Nadje Sadig Al-Ali, *Iraqi women: Untold stories from 1948 to the present* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008).

3- Iraqi Al-Amal Association, Impunity Watch, PAX, "Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Iraq 2003-2018. A Mapping Report," May 26, 2020. https://paxforpeace.nl/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/import/import/sgbv-mapping-report-in-iraq-nap-en.pdf

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, mainly for economic and legitimacy reasons, the rhetoric of the Ba'athist Party shifted towards tribalism, conservative patriarchism, and the more traditional interpretation of Islam, which resulted in increased social conservatism and sectarianism against women in the country. One example was the endorsement of honour killings, which became conflated with a sense of national identity.[4] In 1990, Article 111 was added to the Iraqi Penal Code, which exempted those men from punishment who killed female relatives to protect the honour of their families. Although, Article 111 of the Penal Code was suspended in the Kurdistan Region in 2000, honour killings remained prevalent in the area. It is impossible to ascertain the exact number of these cases, as the very nature of these acts means that there were probably many more cases that family members did not disclose out of shame, dignity, and the fear of humiliation. During our fieldwork in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, we were told a story of a woman who was raped by ISIS soldiers. When the community wanted to help her and she even had the opportunity to emigrate abroad, her family refused to cooperate, fearing that the whole family would be shamed and humiliated if her story became public.

The opportunity for women to have an impact on the public affairs of the region that is now modern Iraq unfolded after the 2003 US invasion. A massive step in Iraq's post-invasion democratization was the 2005 redrafting of the constitution, which resulted in the imposition of a quota for female politicians in the parliament.[5] Although the US-led invasion of Iraq had led to the beginning of the democratization process, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein created such a security vacuum during the 2000s and 2010s that different violent groups have been able to strengthen. The resulting deterioration in public safety has particularly impacted women, as has increased unemployment and the lack of economic support.

II. Background on Mixed-faith Families in Iraq

It was in 1959 that the Personal Status Law[6] was accepted, which granted women equal inheritance rights and afforded women unilateral recourse to divorce, made restrictions on forced marriage, and limited

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4- Huda Al-Tamimi, *Women and Democracy in Iraq. Gender, Politics and Nation-Building* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 29.

5- "Iraqi Constitution (2005)," Iraqi Council of Representatives, accessed July 1, 2024, https://iq.parliament.iq/en/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Iraqi-Constitution.pdf

6- "Law No (188) of 1959 Personal Status Law and Amendments," Peace Women, accessed July 1, 2024, https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/lawref_iraqpersonalstatuslaw1959_aba_0.pdf

polygamy. It aimed to settle disputes among Muslims living in the country with a binding legal force. As for Christians, Jews, and other religious minorities living in Iraq, these sorts of disputes were suggested to be settled partly by the Personal Status Law, partly by the Civil Law, and by their religion-based personal status law. In 1978, the Ba'ath Party made slight reforms to the Personal Status Law to replace family and tribal loyalty with the commitment to the party.[7]

The diversity of faith communities in the area of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region brings another issue. As the Kurdistan Regional Government provides more representation and freedom for different religions than the Iraqi Federal Government, the emergence of interreligious conflicts becomes inevitable, one unfortunate manifestation of which affects families through mixed marriages. Whether conversion to another religion is allowed varies from one religion to another but the most significant risks is borne by those who convert from one religion to another, especially those with a Muslim background. The Iraqi Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and equality before the law, regardless of religion. However, while non-Muslims can easily convert to Islam, it is forbidden for Muslims to change their beliefs. Moreover, Muslim women cannot legally marry non-Muslims and a child of a Muslim and a non-Muslim parent is legally considered to be Muslim. Threats to converts can take many forms, from family pressure to losing jobs and rights. In some cases, the family can be open-minded, but in others, the converts have to face death threats and even killings. Leaving Islam openly leads to a difficult situation; thus, it is expected to do it in secret. The circumstances are more moderate in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, as Kurdish tribes are usually more permissive, and clan oppression is more frequent in the Arab territories and the countryside.[8]

The rise and expansion of ISIS have put families in an unprecedentedly problematic situation. Teenage girls and young women were separated, abducted, and forced to religious conversion and to marry the fighters. Boys were taken captives, brainwashed, and forced to convert to Islam. In the occupied territories, conversion was one of the four options besides paying a tax as non-Muslims (*jizya*), fleeing, or facing '*the sword.*'[9]

7- Iraqi Al-Amal Association, Impunity Watch, PAX, "A Mapping Report."

8- "Individuals considered to have committed blasphemy and apostasy," European Union Agency for Asylum, last modified June 2019, https://euaa.europa.eu/country-guidance-iraq-2021/214-individuals-considered-have-committed-blasphemy-andor-apostasy

9- "Forced Marriage, Conversion for Yezidis," Human Rights Watch Iraq, last modified October 12, 2014, https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230529225817/https://www.refworld.org/docid/543d09a44.html

III. Background on the Education in Iraq

In the early governing years of the Ba'athist Party, a particular emphasis was put on agricultural and economic development. A decade earlier, from the 1950s, women in the region have been involved in education. In Iraq, this process accelerated in the 1970s due to the country's oil boom. Increased demand for labour made it particularly important for women to work as well, and the government has taken measures to address this. However, only those committed to the Party could play a significant political role.

During the 1970s, many schools were built, and scholarships for women were introduced at universities. However, the education system was based on sectarian divisions, and Saddam also made his mark on education by printing new textbooks written from the Ba'athist Party's perspective. The curriculum was also adjusted to the party's interests. By 1991, the education system of Iraq was one of the best in the region, and unlike most systems in the Islamic countries, it was mainly secular.[10] The literacy campaign - with a special focus on women - launched at that time was so successful that Iraq was awarded an award by UNESCO in 1982. By that time, literacy rates for women were the highest in Iraq among Islamic countries.[11]

The decade after the Gulf War, followed by the US-led invasion and occupation, resulted in devastating circumstances in Iraq, of which the previously thriving education system was one of the victims. In the post-Daesh period, the country and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region separately received support from the international community to help rebuild its educational system Diversity was critical, as the Muslim community was divided among further sects, not even speaking about the other religious minorities such as Yazidis, Assyrians, and Chaldeans.

Regarding the education of Christians, it must be noted that their official language is Syriac. However, it has recently been replaced by Arabic for younger school generations. The neglect of teaching Syriac language goes back to Saddam's era when it was banned to teach or

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10- "UNESCO and education in Iraq," Fact sheet, last modified March 28, 2003, https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/fact-sheet-unesco-and-education-iraq

11- Andrea Germanos, "What Sanction, War, Occupation Brought to Iraqi Women: Collapse of Rights," *Common Dreams,* November 12, 2013, https://www.commondreams.org/news/2013/11/12/what-sanctions-war-occupation-brought-iraqi-women-collapse-rights

study it as part of the nationalist strategy of the dictatorship from the 1980s. Following the 1991 Iraqi uprisings and the ousting of the Saddam regime from the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, it became possible to educate in Syriac in the northern provinces of Iraq. Still, due to the lack of government support, the number of people speaking Syriac is declining; today, less than 100,000 Orthodox and Catholic Christians know the language within the country. Although two universities provide courses in Syriac language (Baghdad University and Salahaddin University in Erbil), parents would rather send their children to Arabic schools because their future opportunities will be more comprehensive than if they had studied in Syriac.[12]

IV. Research Methodology

Our research methodology was qualitative as we did not conduct representative polls, and no statistical data were generated during our project. However, thorough groundwork preceded our two-week trip to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. In the process, we spoke to several experts from the region on the subject, we contacted local organizations, who provided helpful information during the preparations, and reviewed the relevant international literature, confirming our assumption that there are few unbiased and credible sources on the subject, further strengthening the need to start fieldwork. We interviewed politicians, church leaders, military actors, cultural organizations, women's rights activists, educational institutions, Yazidi communities, student organizations, refugee camps, and villages in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region to talk to people from the broadest spectrum of society to get a comprehensive picture of these issues. In organizing all these meetings, we received tremendous help from Hungary Helps, the Assyrian Aid Society, and Ms. Julianna Taimoorazy, to whom we are grateful for their support. Concerning the general situation of women, families, and education in Iraq and, more specifically, in the Kurdistan region, we were looking to get a more comprehensive picture of the following issues:

- *Iraq had been ranked among the top 20 countries during the last decade, where Christians faced the most extreme persecution. What forms of aggression are Christians subjected to with particular regard to women and the Kurdistan region?*

12- Anmar Aziz, "Syriac education vanishing in Iraq," *Kirkuknow*, September 3, 2022, https://www.kirkuknow.com/en/news/68728

- *How did the general security situation of Christians, women in particular, changed after the fall of Saddam compared to the period under his dictatorship?*

- *During the expansion of ISIS, all women were in danger in some areas especially. What did it mean for Christian women in particular? How has the situation changed for Christians after the rise of ISIS?*

- *Conversion from Islam to Christianity is not allowed according to the Iraqi constitution. What is the practice in daily life? What consequences does it have for the family?*

- *One of the central points of our current research project is the diminishing numbers of Christians in Iraq and in the Middle East generally. The Christian population has declined from roughly 2 million to officially about 250,000, and this number is getting smaller. The obvious question is, where are these people going? The bigger question is, is there a future for Christians in the region that was the home of Christianity going back to the second century? About this, what is the role of the education system in the country?*

While preparing for the interviews, some concrete questions were defined, but we have instead sought to outline topics and subtopics to give more freedom during the exploration of the interviews. To provide an analytical framework for the interviews, the chapter is divided into two main sections: Assyrian organizations we talked to and other actors including politicians, and inhabitants of small villages, who play an essential role in society from the perspective of our research.

In order to protect the identities of the interviewees, often working in very high positions, who speak on subjects that often provoke extreme opinions, I refer to them anonymously throughout the interviews.

V. Interviews and Findings – Assyrian Organizations

Out of the numerous interviews we conducted extensively during our two-week-long fieldwork research, there are a few organizations and actors that should be highlighted first, because they are unique in how deeply they are committed and involved in improving the situation of Christian women, families, and education in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. These include the Assyrian Women's Union, the Assyrian Student Union, Assyrian schools, cultural organizations, and the Assyrian Aid

Society. Given that the vast majority of Iraqi Christians belong to the ethnic and linguistic minority group of Assyrians, these were the leading organizations we were able to visit and interview in Iraqi Kurdistan within the framework of our research project, in addition to talking to non-Christian interviewees as well, since it was the essence of our research to understand the situation of Christianity in Iraq from several perspectives. In the following subchapters, I will go into detail about these organizations and highlight issues relevant to the research.

V. 1. Assyrian Women's Union

The Assyrian Women's Union was established on 3 May 1992, after the uprising in the Kurdish region, and became the first official organization to promote women's issues in general and for Chaldean Assyrian Syriac women in particular. The main goals of the Union are to educate women in the context of societal balance based on the principle of equality, emphasize the rejection of discrimination between the sexes in all forms, and protect women from domestic and societal violence. They get a foundation through the Assyrian Aid Society and occasional donors. Regarding financial difficulties, the president of the women's union said that *'there were two kindergartens run by the women's union, but had to close one after COVID, because the government demanded taxes during lockdown period when there was no income.'*[13]

Upon reflecting on the issue of violence against women, the members of the Union said that it has changed a lot since Saddam's regime. Back then, it was more comfortable because women had freedom for clothes, but on the other hand, there was no free speech. After the fall of Saddam, many parties and ideologies emerged, and it became necessary for women to veil themselves for self-protection, particularly in some areas, such as the Nineveh Plains, during the rise of al-Qaida followed by ISIS.

Regarding the general security situation today, they made a distinction between the Kurdistan Region and the other parts of Iraq in a sense that, according to them, people are more open-minded in the Northern provinces than in the rest of the country, and they are not targeted for dress as both Muslims and Christians now wear Western clothing. In cases of sexual harassment or sexual violence, it is targeted against women in general; Christians are not singled out. When asked if

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13- Interview with a member of the Assyrian Women's Union in Duhok on the 27th of March, 2023.

they felt safe on the streets, one of the members said that *'it is common to be afraid, I can assure you of that.'*[14] However, cases of harassment or sexual violence are primarily kept secret due to family honour. The president of the Union told a true story about a woman who was kidnapped and raped by ISIS and who was later asked to talk about her story in the US after ISIS was taken down. However, she was unwilling to do that, and no one with a similar history would do that. Assyrian women are silent for fear of family honour, and we were told that there were several more such cases than have been reported. More than 68 Assyrian women are still missing from that period.[15]

Regarding employment opportunities, beyond the general lack of jobs, government-related bodies don't hire Christians, and the decisions in this field are based on relations rather than qualifications. They can't speak the truth in their voices because of the fear of government and non-governmental forces. Moreover, it is more harmful to men working in the public sphere if they want to keep their jobs. All these factors led to the emigration of Assyrians, and to quote their drastic wording: *'7,000 years of Assyrian history in Iraq is about to end.'*[16]

V. 2. Assyrian Student Union (Chaldo-Assyrian Student and Youth Union)

The Assyrian Student Union, also known as '*Khoyada'*, was founded in 1991. The organisation's core goal is to work for the youth and the students through organizing events in the fields of culture, sport, and entertainment. Being a nationalist student organization, it is a priority to

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14- Assyrian Women's Union, interview.

15- In our interview with an official from the Ministry of Christian Affairs in the next section he denied that ISIS had raped or kidnapped any Christian women and when pressed qualified this as not many but only for example girls who were 'mentally deficient' and unwanted by their families. The women's group seems considerably more credible. Cf. Mindy Belz, „Christians' response to persecution under ISIS," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 15, no. 1 (2017): 12-20. At the same time, the academic literature also contains wild exaggerations, for example that 'thousands of Christian women were kidnapped'. Eric Osborne, Matthew Dowd, and Ryan McBrearty, „Intending the Worst: The Case of ISIS's Specific Intent to Destroy the Christians of Iraq," *Pepp. L. Rev.* 46(2018): 545-84.

16- Assyrian Women's Union, interview.

make the Assyrians, who are indigenous to Iraq, want to stay in the country because there is a growing tendency, which escalated particularly after the events of 2014, that young people seek their fortunes abroad and settle there.

In terms of the students' experiences with people of other religious backgrounds and intercommunal faith relations, a general problem was identified. We were told that the main problem is that in the Kurdistan Region, there is widespread ignorance about the Assyrian community. The other ethnicities, such as the Kurds and Arabs, don't know anything about Assyrians, so they don't open up to them. The attitude of the Muslim society towards them is *'not racist but biased, which is because they don't know much about Assyrians, and they don't know the community, so if a decision has to be made, for example, on a job interview, and there is an Assyrian and a Kurd candidate with the same qualifications and skills, they will rather choose someone from their own community.'*[17] The same could be said of the organization's relationship with other student unions, Kurdish and Arab ones, which is not ideal, and there is only minimal communication between them. This may be mainly because those are more substantial organizations with state support and do not need to cooperate with the Assyrian Student Union.

After being asked about the need to hide their ethnic identity in everyday lives, they clearly stated that this was not necessary, they were not in danger, and the main problem was social ignorance about Assyrians. They added that *'if you are not only Assyrian but have a different religion from them, they won't be happy to deal with you.'*[18] Nevertheless, if they identify themselves as Christians, at least other people in the region, mainly Kurds and Arabs, know it; there is no such social unawareness as about Assyrians as an ethnicity. This is also reflected in practice in that the political narrative deals specifically with the representation of Christians, but Assyrians are never mentioned in such context. According to the students, Christians (and non-Muslims) are accepted but not particularly helped at a community level by Kurds and Arabs, unlike at the political level. The example given is that during Ramadan, the Muslim majority population in the area expects everyone to refrain from eating and drinking on the streets during the day, which is a form of forcing their religion on non-Muslims as well.

17- Interview with members of the Assyrian Student Union in Duhok on the 25th of March, 2023.

18- Assyrian Student Union, interview.

Regarding education, you could not find better interviewees than students. They told us that learning about the Assyrian ethnicity is excluded from the curriculum in the Kurdistan region, which explains the high level of social ignorance on the subject. As one alum member recalled, during Saddam's regime, there were chapters about Assyrian culture in the history curriculum, which was a very positive portrayal of the greatness of former Assyria. The Ministry of Education regulates this field, and although it allows the community to establish Assyrian schools, it does not grant freedom for an autonomous curriculum.

The values and aspirations of the younger generations fundamentally determine the future of a country or an ethnic group. Thus, we asked the students in detail about their future perspectives regarding the Chaldo-Assyrian community in Iraq. They identified three main focus areas: first, they need to keep their lands because, over the years, as their numbers dwindle, their lands are depopulated, and the government settles new (Kurdish) inhabitants in their place. This stems from an even bigger problem: the need for more job opportunities in the small villages, leading to the migration of young people to big cities. There is no government support for creating livelihood projects in those villages. Moreover, international aid for such purposes is dealt with by the government (either the Kurdistan Regional Government or Baghdad), who usually look after its interests and marginalize the Christian communities. Second, the students highlighted the need to teach their language and culture, which would require government support. Third, there is a demand for accurate parliamentary representation for Assyrians because candidates get into the legislature who may be Assyrian or Christian, but they work for one of the major parties and are therefore biased. Thus, there needs to be a proper representation of Assyrians.

The insights of the Assyrian Student Union are of particular relevance to this research because, as members of the largest Christian community in the Kurdistan region, they represent the majority of Christians. Furthermore, they must have plans and the will to maintain their culture and religion within the country in the face of a challenging future.

V. 3. Assyrian school

Based on our previous knowledge about the effects of the Iraqi education system on the Christian population, we found it of utmost importance to visit a local school to gather first-hand experiences on the

field. The Assyrian high school we visited was founded in 1998 and has approximately 270 students, all of whom belong to the Assyrian Christian community. Moreover, most of the teachers are Assyrian Christians except for three, who are Muslims and give language lessons. The school gets support mainly from the Assyrian Aid Society and, to a lesser extent, from the Ministry of Education in Erbil.

Regarding the challenges in the field of education, the school leaders we interviewed said that they see the biggest problem in the curriculum structure. The Ministry of Education decides its content, and teachers have no say. As a result, although it is a school for Assyrian Christians, the curriculum does not include minority studies or lectures about Assyrian history and culture; there are no subjects about Christianity, as opposed to chapters that are important from the Kurdish and Muslim perspectives included in the textbooks. The school leadership also complained about the lack of teachers. They said that it is because the Iraqi government instead sent them to the bigger towns; thus, there are very few teachers left in the villages, and as a consequence, families are moving to the cities as well. For this reason, 30-40 families moved to the cities from the villages in recent years. The lack of action by the government, the Ministry of Education, to improve the education situation indirectly and passively contributes to the worsening of the problems.

Speaking about the future and further education opportunities for Assyrian Christian students, they said that the scarcity of job opportunities is a significant difficulty, but it also affects Kurds. As a result, many are emigrating, and this is a more substantial threat to the Christian community than to the Kurds because they are a minority in the region. However, there is a difference in terms of employment in the fields of public administration, where Assyrians find it harder to find jobs; the experience is that they are not hired for such positions; they can instead go to work for NGOs and other companies.

Regarding how the Assyrian culture can survive within these circumstances, the school leaders suggested that Assyrian studies and minority studies must be part of the curriculum if they want to make the culture live on. They highlighted the importance of the social and cultural foundations activity in Duhok and Erbil, which can promote the preservation of the culture.

V. 4. Cultural organisations

During the fieldwork research, we interviewed the leadership of the Assyrian Cultural Center and the president of the Lalish Center, which belongs to the Yazidi community. Although the main focus of the research is on Christians, getting to know the Yazidi minority living in the Kurdistan Region made the study more comprehensive.

V. 4. 1. Assyrian Cultural Center

The Assyrian Cultural Center was founded in 1992 after the separation of the Kurdistan Region from Saddam-ruled Baghdad. Its main goal is to protect Assyrian culture by organizing programs and maintaining high-quality exhibitions and libraries. Even during our visit to the centre, many international people of all ages gathered for an event organized for the Assyrian descendants of many generations. The center has more than 400 members, but the lack of government support and legal framework hinder its activities.

V. 4. 2. Lalish Center

The main cultural and social centre of the Yazidi community was founded in 1993 to improve the defence of the Yazidis' rights. In addressing the plight of Christian women, the Yazidis were also brought into the focus of our research as another religious and ethnic minority who have been through terrible things in Iraq not so long ago. When ISIS launched its military campaign on 3 August 2014, Yazidis living in Sinjar were the first victims before Christian communities were even reached geographically. It was a genocide against the Yazidi community, as men who refused to convert to Islam were killed, and an estimated 7,000 women and girls were enslaved, nearly 3,000 of whom are still missing today. Hundreds of thousands of them are still living as internally displaced people (IDP) in camps across the Kurdistan region, particularly in Duhok.

On the question about the security situation of women today in the aftermath of what ISIS did to them, the president highlighted that an extraordinary decision was made in 2014 by their spiritual council that the families should accept back those who were kidnapped or raped during that period, which was not allowed before. Regarding intercommunal relations and conversion in particular, they pointed out that the main problem is the constitution, which allows no law outside Sharia law. Thus, there is no freedom in religious conversion.

V. 5. Assyrian Aid Society

The Assyrian Aid Society played an essential role in our research project in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. They helped us overcome language barriers, connect with several interviewees, and organize transport. Many thanks to them and their director, Younan Lazar Markhael.

The organization was established in 1991 during the withdrawal of Saddam's regime from the Kurdistan region. It was when northern Iraq was a *'safe heaven'* with a secured no-fly zone and self-autonomy. Many villages were ruined in the 1970s and 1980s by Saddam's notorious Al-Anfal campaign, and the bombings during the 1991 uprising caused further damage. Thus, the two initial tasks of the organization were to rebuild the villages in the Kurdistan region and to help the hundreds of thousands of displaced people with humanitarian aid. More recently, the society has been responsible for several projects, including supporting education and women through helping other organizations.

Upon the question on the situation of Christians before Saddam versus after the fall of his regime, the director was of the opinion that it was better for Christians before 2003. Although there was an economic siege on the country, and it was not easy to sustain an economic livelihood, it was better in the sense of security, and there was no conflict between the communities. But after 2003, when al-Qaeda and ISIS emerged, they targeted Christians and as a consequence, many of them emigrated. When the ISIS period began, the world heard a lot about how Yazidi women became victims, but in our interviews with the Assyrian Women's Union, we were told that Christian women were not affected as much. After being asked about this issue, the director pointed out that the main difference between what happened to the Yazidi women and the Christians was due to their geographical location. As the Yazidis lived predominantly in the Sinjar province, which borders Syria, they were caught completely unaware and unprepared for the ISIS attack on 3 August 2014, which led to the mass abduction, rape and forced marriages of women. By contrast, in the more remote regions, such as Mosul or the Nineveh Plains, where Christians are most numerous, they were already prepared or had time to leave the area or prepare to pay taxes if they wanted to stay.

The issue of women's safety in recent days was brought up during the interview as an essential focus point of our research project. Based on the conversation conducted with the Women's Union, we questioned

them about their sense of insecurity and fear of going out to the streets alone. What we were most concerned about as a result was whether there is a genuine reason for them to be afraid today or if it is just something that is left over from the violence of the past, and they are still scared. In the director's opinion, the fear of going outside on the street depends on the region and the time of day. '*It is not a very developed, but open-minded community. It is not easy; there will always be harassment or abuse when a woman goes outside in some specific region. Like going to a bazaar or a market during the day, there is no fear because there are lots of people there, but at night, there will be fear.*'[19]

Another recurring topic among the interview subjects about religion and safety was the issue of the code of honour. Our prior knowledge was based on the fact that for both Assyrian Christians and Muslims, family relationships are strongly influenced by the code of honour. The vast difference is that Muslims will commit honour killings, but Christians never will.[20] While talking to the members of the Women's Union, we were told that it is expected that if harassment or even rape happens to them, they do not tell their family because of the code of honour, because they do not want to disgrace the family. The director of the Assyrian Aid Society reassured us that due to the tribal characteristics of Christian and Muslim communities in the region, this mentality is present among them. However, he added that since his organization has brought awareness in the area and partly due to some impacts of social media, Assyrian Christians have treated these kinds of cases differently. '*From our point of view, we will not be treating the woman who has been raped or been harassed this way, by honour killing. We would be protecting her, supporting her. Of course, it would not be comfortable for our people to be in this situation. But many cases happened. For example, if there is shame or anything happened to a woman within the community, her family will try to move to another place, displace, or emigrate to avoid the community.*'[21]

19- Interview with Younan Lazar Markhael in Duhok on the 27th of March, 2023.

20- Later interviews and sources demonstrate that this claim was somewhat optimistic. Christians in Iraq do commit honour killings. The difference may be attributed to whether the sexual act was voluntary or involuntary. A woman raped by ISIS was powerless to resist, while a woman who freely engaged in sex with someone regardless of his religion is treated as a far more grave breach of family honour. For one highly publicized case, see Shaho Al-Qaradaghi, "'Honour' killings rock Iraqi Kurdistan amid weak law enforcement," *Amwaj*, March 24, 2022, https://amwaj.media/article/honour-killings-rock-iraqi-kurdistan-amid-weak-law-enforcement.

21- Younan Lazar Markhael, interview.

In terms of the declining number of Christians living in the Kurdistan region, the director highlighted the worsening economic situation in the smaller villages, in particular at the Turkish border. He said that there is an ongoing conflict between the PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) and Turkey, which causes an unstable security situation in the region. As for the farmers in the villages, they get no support from the government, which instead imports goods from Turkey and Iran. All these factors make people of the villages leave and move abroad or to the bigger cities within the country, as a result of which, their lands become abandoned, and the government has a chance to change the demography of these villages, so to speak to '*Kurdify*' the area.

Reflecting on the significant exodus of Assyrians from Iraq to the West and the prospects of the community, the director noted that one big problem is that the people leaving Iraq are distributed in several locations around the world; thus, even as *'brothers'* they are not able to reach each other and communicate. As generations grow up without knowing each other, they are more easily losing the future of their culture and heritage while living far away from Iraq. To make the future of Assyrian Christians safe in the region, they must keep their people within the country and make them preserve their language since they have been indigenous people there since ancient times. These are necessary for the Assyrian community to live on their land.

VI. Interviews and Findings – Political Actors, Villages

Besides conducting interviews with the representatives of Assyrian Christians, several other actors play a crucial role in defining the situation of Christians in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. In this subchapter, I will identify the recurring topics and prominent findings in the selected interviews, which include details from political actors who are in some way connected to or have a crucial role in developing the lives of Christians, and the inhabitants of the small Christian villages, in particular the senior leaders or community and village chiefs, the so-called *'mukhtars'*. Although there have been numerous intriguing details in all the interviews, I will only highlight those relevant to our research from this aspect.

VI. 1. Political Actors

Along with the strengthening of autonomy for the Iraqi Kurdistan

Region, the Kurdistan Parliament was established in 1992, offering a quota system for ethnic and religious minorities to ensure equal representation and respect for minority rights. Despite these efforts, the politicians who occupy the reserved seats to represent a minority group are often accused of merely supporting one of the major Kurdish parties' political programs. This accusation works vice versa, as a specific Kurdish party can easily exploit the minority quota to gain political power. This highlights an even deeper problem, which stems from the fact that these are open elections, meaning that Christian seats may receive votes from outside the community. As a result, those elected must rely on voters assigned to vote for them by one of the major, often Shi'ite parties and thus are expected to support that party's legislation. We have conducted several interviews with legislators and political actors selected for our research project based on their proximity to political power and the decision-making process.

In our interview with a representative from the office of the president, we got a comprehensive picture of how the political leadership sees the situation of women, families, and education in the area. On the question of the situation of women, he highlighted that at the Presidency, 35 per cent of the workers are female, which is a lot compared to other public administrative bodies in the country, and gender equality is an issue they are working hard on.

He shared some inspiring ideas about the education system in the Kurdistan region. To achieve the goal to restore and preserve the diversity and equality in the Kurdistan region, they are working on the policy of *'umbrella for every Kurdistani'* because it covers the whole different ethnic backgrounds and minorities, the first step of which should be awareness-raising through education development. '*This is where we need to think about the primary and university educational programs. Forty years ago, if you looked at the educational programs of the Ba'ath regimes, it was all about Arabization or the brainwashing of the younger generation. This has all vanished; this has all been changed, and we must consider improving the educational system. We need that mindset where every child from every ethnic background matters. We need to have a solid, natural educational system where we can bring up children in this region, not under the effect of a mosque or a church or any other extreme ideological politician. But we need to raise them naturally until they reach the age when they can decide for themselves what they want. And this is a simple idea, and that's the only way to bring up a better generation. If you sample 100 people on the streets and 80 are educated, it is less*

likely to have religious clashes.'[22] He added that as a first step, a new reform in the curriculum would be needed. Reflecting on the emergence of radical Islam and the expansion of ISIS in 2014, he saw the reason in the lack of education and awareness.

Talking to an official in the Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, he had different experiences from our previous interviewees about the situation of Christian women during the ISIS period. To his knowledge, there was no Christian woman abducted or raped by ISIS because this catastrophe has happened only to Yazidis. As soon as Christians heard about what ISIS did to them, they had enough time to flee to Kurdistan, and only 50-60 families stayed in Mosul. Nor did he consider it possible, as we asked him based on our earlier interviews, that the Ministry might not know about these cases because they were concealed in the name of the code of honour. As for education, he had a slightly different experience than what we were told before. According to him, Christian children don't need to participate in the class on Islam; they can go outside and play or do something else instead.

To get a broader picture of the ISIS period and how it had impacted Christians, we interviewed a former governor of Erbil. On the question of the general security situation of women, he pointed out that what we see today in the Kurdistan region is different from what the problem was 20 years ago. He added that before 2003, there was almost no capability to travel, the people in Kurdistan were isolated from the other parts of the country, which was characterized by closed communities. *'In 1998, for example, in Erbil, close to the Citadel, if a woman walked there and she dressed in shorts, some people would throw chemicals and acid on their legs because it was a shame for people to see a woman's naked leg. Because the education, the people, the community, everything was closed. But after 2003, you can see a huge change in the mentality of the people. There are many reasons, based on my experience during the governorate. Walking in Erbil, you can see that people are free; the girls can wear what they want. They can join universities and work in the private sector, and the government supports them in participating. Women are working as mayors, general directors, officers, ministers, and members of the parliament. The policy of the KRG is to support and give more power to women.'* [23]

22- Interview with a representative from the office of the President in Erbil on the 28th of March, 2023.

23- Interview with a former governor of Erbil on the 21st of March, 2023.

Regarding conversion, he said that from Islam to Christianity it does not happen. When the Evangelical Church appeared in Kurdistan, it was made accessible to adopt Christianity, but just in the region. However, Christians did not like the idea and did not welcome Muslims to become Christians. They just wanted to live together with the Muslim community in peace and did not want them to convert. As for the Kurdistan region, Muslim people are open-minded, not radical, or very conservative, and they believe in living safely with Christians.

In our interview with an official from the Duhok Governor's office, he shared his view about women's concerns today in Kurdistan. As for discrimination at work, he admitted that there is oppression in the area by Muslims, mainly as a consequence of the waves of radical Islam when Islamic political parties spread their ideas, especially for governmental jobs. Thus, it was less dangerous to occupy those positions by Muslims and not Christians. Regarding the general safety situation of women, it is getting safer, even during the night in the Kurdistan region, especially in Duhok and Erbil, where the society is very open-minded. He added that *'still for some events that are important to the Christian religion, for example Christmas, you will see Muslim religious men come out and speak to Muslim people about how Christian people are infidel and that they should not celebrate those holidays.'*[24]

In the interview conducted with a regional parliamentary representative, a member of the Kurdistan Parliament from the Al-Rafidain Party, which represents Christians, and also a member of the Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Committee, the situation of women and its relation to education was discussed in detail. Upon reflecting on the general situation of women in the Kurdistan region, he noted that as a patriarchal society has developed in the area, women don't have as much freedom as men in general. He added that in the Christian and Assyrian communities, women are more respected and have more freedom. *'Sometimes they have even more freedom and authority than us, men, in our houses and communities.'*[25] In terms of conversion, he mentioned a true story about a political activist woman who was converted from Islam to Christianity and thus got killed. In another case, a Muslim woman did not even convert to Christianity but talked about women's problems on social media, and she was killed,

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24- Interview with an official from the Duhok Governor's office on the 30th of March, 2023.

25- Interview with a regional parliamentary representative in Duhok on the 25th of March, 2023.

too. According to him, each year more than 1,000 women are killed, but they are reported as suicides. *'The law says if a Christian woman decides to get married to a Muslim man, it is okay to become a Muslim. But for a Muslim woman to marry a Christian man and become Christian is not accepted. She will get killed or be imprisoned for life. Where is the justice in this?'*[26]

The general safety situation of women was brought up, including the high rates of sexual harassment and violence against them in the region, as Christian women are often singled out as victims. Asked about the reasons for this, he said that Muslim children in the region are growing up with the knowledge that Christians and Yazidis are infidels. *'We are only tools for them. They believe if they marry a Christian or Yazidi woman and make her convert to Islam, it will increase their chances of going to heaven and get more prizes. They also believe that if they kill Christians or people from other religions, they are doing God's work by killing infidel people, which will also increase their chances to go to heaven.'*[27]

On the question of education, he said that it is problematic that most schools do not provide sexual education, and most of the schools are Kurdish or Arabic, where boys and girls are usually separated. In the Kurdistan region, there are minority schools where boys and girls are mixed. He added that Muslims are shocked and surprised when they see women and men going to church together and praying together because in a mosque, there is a women's section and a men's section separated from each other. *'There is even an accusation that when men and women come together in the temple, sexual intercourse takes place between them. Even some religious people in Islam have accused us Christians of this. For them, women are just tools to get married, to have children, and to do the housework. Women are just tools to satisfy their needs.'*[28] He highlighted that in the Kurdistan region, people are much more open than in the southern Iraqi region, but for example, when women are going out or going to work, there is still a high rate of violence against them.

Talking to a member of the Provincial Council of Duhok, representing Assyrian Christians, the situation of women was touched upon. In his opinion, it is more difficult for women to get governmental

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26- Regional parliamentary representative, interview.

27- Regional parliamentary representative, interview.

28- Regional parliamentary representative, interview.

jobs than for men. However, it is not impossible; in the past few years, it has become more accessible. Women do not have as much freedom as in other parts of the world due to the country's social structure. Christians are in a difficult situation in Iraq as a minority and they suffer from financial difficulties, often due to discrimination at work. He added that Christian women became victims of sexual assault not because of the way they clothed but because their families do not take revenge due to religious reasons, and they do not do honour killings as Muslims do. Because of these financial reasons, the lack of job opportunities and security issues, Assyrian Christians have been leaving the country in significant numbers since 2003.

VI. 2. 'Mukhtars'

During our two-week-long fieldwork we visited several small Christian villages near Duhok and Erbil, such as Armota, Sarsink, Zakho, and several others in the Sapna and Nahla valleys. These visits aimed to see and hear first-hand how Christians in small villages live their daily lives. After listening to religious and political leaders, a vital research element was asking everyday people about their problems. It turned out that they see the situation differently by experiencing difficulties in their daily lives than those who make decisions from above. We mainly sat down to talk to the senior leaders of the villages, the so-called *'mukhtars'*, as they are responsible for leading the villages and knowing everything that is going on.

Several issues were raised when talking to village leaders. First, it was striking how deserted and abandoned these small Christian villages are. There were villages where 30 families live now, but we were told that 100 years ago 50-60 families were living there. The problem is that, because of the various difficulties, young people prefer to go to the big cities, perhaps abroad, so these small villages are sooner or later becoming depopulated. One problem that recurred while visiting different locations was discrimination that was felt by the Christian population compared to the neighbouring Kurdish people when applying for a job or travelling around.

Several villages have reported that checkpoints have been set up on the outskirts of the villages, where Kurds check and sometimes detain Christians. It makes obtaining products from neighbouring producers more challenging and even causes infrastructural problems. Many people living in these small villages thought that the Kurdish Regional

Government was deliberately obstructing their lives and helping only the Kurds in the region, not the Christians. This is why the aid provided by NGOs only reaches the Kurdish villages and not the Christians. As a result, life becomes difficult, young people migrate and villages become depopulated, which fits in with the government's *'Kurdification'* intentions to populate the empty settlements with Kurds. A recurring topic which the *'mukhtars'* all agreed about was the reign of Saddam, which was better than the situation now; one senior leader added *'if this is a democracy, I don't need it.'*[29] Under Saddam, there was no such distinction between minorities, though they were equally oppressed. The experience today is instead that the government is tipping the scales in favour of the Kurds on every issue that needs to be decided.

As for the situation of women, several stories were shared with us to describe how difficult it is to live in a small village as a Christian woman. An example was mentioned by a woman named Emilia, who complained about how long it takes to go to the neighbourhood to purchase products due to the checkpoints. She told another story of going on a picnic with her friends and being stopped by Kurds at the checkpoint, having their bags smashed, and being looked at inappropriately because they were wearing swimsuits. Regarding the relationship between Kurdish and Christian women, she told us that during the 2017 referendum about the independence of the KRG, it was a Kurdish woman who blocked her from voting.

When compared to the general security situation, people felt no violence in the villages except for some located at the direct border of Turkey, where drones were commonly seen. More seriously, the Turkish air force continues to bomb the border region in their continuing struggle with PKK rebels.[30] The main security issue was thought to be the shortage of services and insufficient infrastructure, which was due to deliberate neglect and ignorance by the government. The Assyrian Christians criticize this lack of governmental support because back in the Saddam era, Assyrians helped the Kurds who were persecuted, and they don't get any similar support today from them when they need it most.

29- Interview with a *'mukhtar'* in the Sapna valley on the 29th of March, 2023.

30- "Turkey launches air attacks against Kurdish rebels in Iraq and Syria," *Aljazeera*, January 13, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/13/turkey-launches-airstrikes-against-kurdish-rebels-in-iraq-and-syria. Cf Stephen J. Flanagan and Sam Brannen, "Turkey's Military Options for Dealing with the PKK: a Preliminary Assessment," *Center for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS), (2022), http://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/071029_pkk_6.pdf.

As for the future, almost all *'mukhtars'* were without hope and had a drastic vision about the disappearance of Assyrian Christians from the region within ten years. They felt the total lack of support for Christians, and even the current children have been called a lost generation because they do not preserve the language, traditions, and culture of the Assyrians. We have talked to a *'mukhtar'* who said that there are only 15 children in his village and did not see any prospects for Assyrians in the region. In fact, not only are there fewer and fewer children, but there are also fewer and fewer priests, often having to come from the neighbouring village to say mass.

As researchers from the West, we have been asked in several villages to tell their stories because it gives them hope that the world cares about their fate. And while international aid and donations have helped build churches, what is the point of a church if there is no one to worship there?

VII. Conclusions

Upon identifying the most common topics in our interviews, some general conclusions can be drawn for the research project. The focus of this chapter was the situation of women, families, and education in the Kurdistan region, as these topics cannot be separated because they interrelate with each other.

The first major conclusion of the fieldwork research is that women live in relative safety within the Kurdistan region, which is largely due to the more open-minded characteristic of the area, especially compared to Baghdad. The forms of aggression and violence against women that were once typical under ISIS, are no longer present, although the tribal nature of society and the implication of the code of honour keeps women often back from talking about such cases and listening to true stories have confirmed to us that such cases still happen today. As for sexual harassment and violence, it is targeted against women in general, Christians are not singled out. Regarding employment opportunities, beyond the general lack of jobs, there is a tendency that government-related bodies don't hire Christians, and that the decisions in this field are based on relations rather than qualifications. It was affirmed not just by the members of women rights' organizations operating in the bigger cities but also by women living in the small Christian villages.

Secondly, the issue of conversion from Islam to Christianity and vice versa seemed to be a controversial topic where there is no common practice among the residents of the Kurdistan region regardless of being a church leader, politician, leader of a civil organization, or an average citizen. Broadly speaking, our preliminary knowledge was justified that conversion from Islam to Christianity is forbidden and due to the risks it poses to the whole community, Christian church leaders do not really support it.

There were two main points we have made regarding the education system today in the Kurdistan region. On the one hand, there is a general lack of education for ethnic minorities, which resulted, for example in widespread ignorance about the Assyrian community. This problem stems from the fact that although minority schools are allowed to be established, they are not given a free hand in drawing up the curriculum, which is set by the Kurdish Education ministry. On the other hand, at the political level, we have heard extensive plans and intensions to restore and preserve ethno-religious diversity and equality in the region.

Based on the specific findings on the situation of women, families, and education, a general conclusion was that people found the circumstances to be better during Saddam's rule than after 2003. Although back than there was a siege on the country but today people still have to face product shortages and general lack of job opportunities, especially in small villages. Despite having economic difficulties, there was no such conflict between the communities as in the era after the fall of Saddam. As a result of the numerous problems, probably the biggest threat to Assyrians and other Christian communities in the Kurdistan region is emigration, the decline in the number of people living there and preserving the culture. In parallel to that, all the stories we heard justify the preconception that the KRG is intensifying its nationalist outlook in the region since 2003 through '*Kurdification*'. By neglecting the smaller minorities living under their control, they pose a threat to the existence of several minorities, as the Iraqi Kurdistan Region is not only home to communities of indigenous Assyrian Christians, and Yazidis, but also to Turks, Arabs, and Armenians.

In the Kurdistan region, which in many ways appears to be much more permissive, liveable and free for Christians and other religious minorities than Baghdad-ruled Iraq, our research has revealed that people in the region still live a dissatisfied and frustrated life, because of different degrees of oppression. This is mainly the result of conversations

with residents, village leaders and students, compared to the discussions with politicians and church leaders who tended to avoid or deny such talk, as this contrast can be perceived in the subchapter about politicians and senior village leaders. Based on the findings of the fieldwork research in the Kurdistan region, the phrasing of the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization seems to be confirmed, which described all non-Muslim minority groups *'the shade of grey of being neither Arab nor Kurd, which is struggling to exist in the new Iraq.'*[31]

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Smart Policing and the Evolving Landscape of Intelligent Citie

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Abstract

The fourth industrial revolution has catalyzed the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies, providing states, communities, and individuals with innovative tools to address complex challenges. Governments, particularly in technologically advanced nations, leverage AI to enhance diagnostics, conduct sophisticated analyses, and strengthen predictive capabilities, which support regulatory functions, public safety, and community security. As a result, law enforcement agencies, including "smart police," are increasingly adopting big data and analytics-based methodologies as strategic tools for crime monitoring and prevention. However, using such technologies raises critical questions about balancing public safety with the fundamental human right to privacy.

This presentation explores the legal framework governing smart policing within Europe, focusing on the updated Prüm Decisions–Prüm II since December 8, 2021. This framework facilitates cross-border data exchange and cooperation in policing, aligning with EU best practices and national regulations across European countries. Additionally, the role of Interpol in coordinating international law enforcement efforts is examined, assessing the extent to which it meets the operational needs of states in a technologically interconnected era.

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A vital aspect of this analysis is the inseparability of national, regional, and international factors in modern security management. Despite the interconnectedness, disparities in regulatory standards, technological capabilities, and infrastructure—especially between the Global North and South—still impact the effectiveness of these frameworks. This paper aims to provide an in-depth reflection on these convergences and divergences, the implications for individual privacy rights, and the future of smart policing as an evolving paradigm in new forms of law enforcement and global security.

It is essential also to mention that The "smart city" concept, with a focus on technological innovation and security, indeed gained substantial traction in Asia, particularly in Singapore, China, Japan, and South Korea. These countries have approached smart cities as highly integrated ecosystems where technology is leveraged to optimize urban management, improve efficiency, and enhance security. For example, extensive data surveillance and AI-powered infrastructure in China have been integral to its Smart City Vision, often prioritizing social management and security.

In contrast, Western countries like the US, Germany, and the UK have indeed been more cautious. While their technological advancements are highly sophisticated, they often approach smart / Intelligent city initiatives with a stronger focus on safeguarding human rights and democratic values. This caution reflects concerns about privacy, data protection, and civil liberties stemming from a more critical public discourse around surveillance and personal freedoms. Consequently, Western smart city models often prioritize transparency, data ownership, and citizen rights in ways that may not always align with the rapid, security-focused implementations observed in some Asian models.

The differentiation between Asian and Western approaches to smart city models has narrowed during and after the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital infrastructure and surveillance technologies worldwide, leading Western countries to adopt strategies that previously aligned more closely with the Asian approach.

For instance, many Western cities implemented real-time data monitoring, contact tracing, and digital health passports, which required collecting and processing personal data on a larger scale than ever before. This shift marked a notable relaxation in the West's traditionally

cautious stance, prioritizing public health and safety over some privacy concerns. Public acceptance of these technologies increased in response to the crisis, leading governments to deploy smart city tools for health management, mobility tracking, and crowd control.

While Western countries continue to emphasize data privacy and civil rights, the experience of COVID-19 has led to a more pragmatic view, recognizing the benefits of integrated digital infrastructure for emergency response. This has blurred the lines between Western and Asian models, with an emerging hybrid approach that balances technological efficiency with ongoing dialogue around democratic values and rights protection.

Keywords: Smart policing, artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, privacy rights, smart cities, cross-border data exchange, surveillance technology, security, and human rights.

Introduction

In recent years[3], there has been a rapid acceleration of scientific innovation and the adoption of digital solutions supported by artificial intelligence[4] to address the challenges faced by states, communities, and individuals. This transformation, heralded by the industrial revolution, is academically referred to as the "fourth generation of industry[5]."

3- It can be said that since the launch of the vision to build a smart world, aimed at addressing the economic crisis of 2008, this vision has gained traction with the support of the World Bank, evolving into a global strategy adopted by governments worldwide to overcome various crises through the establishment of digitization as a new approach to crisis management. For more information visit : https://www.ibm.com/smarterplanet/us/en/

4- Artificial intelligence, in its broadest sense, is defined as "the ability of computers to exhibit intelligent behavior," meaning the capacity to determine and implement the optimal choice while considering speed and immediacy in task performance. This enables decision-makers or specialists in a particular field to bypass the process of search and analysis to arrive at the appropriate choice, effectively making artificial intelligence a substitute for human reasoning in scenario planning and determining suitable options for a given situation, based on the data and information available on cyberspace and devices connected to the Internet Protocol and digital communication systems. APC, 'Global Information Society: Artificial Intelligence: Human Rights, Social Justice And Development', Sweden-USA, Association For Progressive Communications, Report, 2019. p.9.

5- for further reading see: Klaus Schawb, 'The Fourth Industrial Revolution', Switzerland, World Economic Forum, Report, 2016. Available online: https://law.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3385454/Schwab-The_Fourth_Industrial_Revolution_Klaus_S.pdf

This fourth generation of industry is centered on industrial modernization and the initial digitization of services and the global economy, indicating the beginning of a shift in production systems whether in trade or services toward digital manufacturing. This means transitioning the global production system toward advanced industry through the development of technologies with autonomous control[6].

This industrial transformation represented by the fourth generation of industry has led to the emergence of scientific concepts supported by artificial intelligence to manage various aspects of life, whether political, economic, industrial, environmental, or even security related, based on the principle of data storage.

To enable artificial intelligence to predict risks and thus provide possible scientific scenarios for decision-making[7], law enforcement agencies have adopted scientific knowledge as a fundamental element in their preventive policies for crime control[8]. This has highlighted the term "Big Data Analysis" as a new form of scientific knowledge for managing the investigation and criminal inquiry process to establish evidence of certain crimes and identify their perpetrators[9].

This raises the era of artificial intelligence, particularly with the example of smart policing, which brings forth questions primarily regarding the continuity of the principle of the right to privacy during law enforcement's use of big data analysis systems in crime fighting[10].

6- Klaus Schwab, 'The 4th Industrial Revolution: What It Means, How to Respond', Article, Dated On: 17th January 2016, Available Online: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2199853122002761 Last Visit: 22/04/2024.

7- Kate Robertson, Yolanda Song, & (Others), 'To Surveil and Predict : A Human Rights Analysis of Algorithmic Policing in Canada, Canada, The University of Toronto, Report, Sep 2020, p.8. Available Online :
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8- Laura Neiva, Susana Silvag & (Others), 'The Views About Big Data Among Professionals of Police Forces : A Scoping Review of Empirical Studies', Article, Dated on : 12 Mars 2023.
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Therefore, our issue seeks to examine the legality of smart policing practices aimed at effectively combating crime to enhance the right to security and public safety in modern smart cities, which may lead to the abuse of the right to privacy, considered a fundamental right within the universal human rights framework. The analysis of the operational performance of law enforcement, namely smart policing in our paper, through the use of big data analysis to manage the investigation process aims to establish evidence of certain crimes.

The identification of perpetrators may lead to abusing the privacy rights of suspects, causing them significant harm. This article posits that the ongoing debate between the right to security, which justifies the use of smart policing technologies in search and investigation operations, and the right to privacy, considered a fundamental right within the human rights framework, can be explained by the legislative institutions in both developed and developing countries lagging behind the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence technology. The legal framework is characterized by its slow and rigid nature, in contrast to the fast-paced and complex technological landscape, rendering legislative bodies incapable of keeping up.

Therefore, this article aims to shed light on the mechanisms and foundations of smart policing to activate urban surveillance systems by analyzing smart policing practices based on the use of big data systems in the operational performance of proactive crime monitoring, and subsequently during the occurrence of criminal activity specifically, the use of big data in criminal investigations to uncover the identities of perpetrators.

In this context, we will examine the new legal framework established by the Prum 2 Agreement[11], which came into effect on

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11- The Prum Agreement was signed among EU member states for security cooperation, particularly between law enforcement agencies, in 2008. One of the key topics of this agreement is the facilitation of extensive cross-border data exchange among EU member states, allowing these security agencies to identify individuals present within their national territories through the use of data analysis technologies, whether related to criminal records, biometric identification, or other personal data. This is expected to enable law enforcement agencies to automatically monitor crime and identify perpetrators of criminal acts. For more detailed information, refer to:
The European Digital Rights (EDRI), 'Respecting Fundamental Rights in The Cross-Border Investigation of Serious Crimes', Report, September 2022. p.3. Available Online :
https://edri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/EDRi-position-paper-Respecting-fundamental-rights-in-the-cross-border-investigation-of-serious-crimes-7-September-2022.pdf

December 8, 2021. This agreement pertains to the automated exchange of personal data among EU member states for crime monitoring and the apprehension of individuals involved in criminal activities. This case study will help us understand the role of big data analysis systems in enhancing security and crime control within the European space.

This model will help us understand the legitimacy of law enforcement agencies using smart data analysis systems as a proactive measure for crime prevention and enhancing public safety among EU member states. To address the issue and explore the paper's hypothesis, we propose the following sections:

I.   Smart policing and the enabling of urban surveillance systems

II. examination of the legal framework of the Prum 2 Decisions

III. Effectiveness and the disruption of the right to privacy

I. Smart Policing and the enabling of Urban Surveillance Systems

The smart policing model serves as an applied mechanism within the concept of smart cities, which emphasizes the optimal use of modern technology. The European Union defines a smart city as one that "integrates the city, industry, and citizens to enhance life in urban areas through more sustainable, integrated solutions, including practical innovations, better planning, a more participatory approach, greater energy efficiency, improved transportation solutions, and smart use of information and communication technologies...etc"[12].

In this context, smart policing is a management tool within the engineering framework of smart city projects, aimed at enhancing crime prevention and control measures. This shifts the operational performance of law enforcement agencies to rely on artificial intelligence, which has the capability to predict potential threats and risks. This contributes to strengthening the foundations of law enforcement operations in urban spaces[13], enabling them to make better decisions in managing potential risks and threats based on the outcomes provided by the AI system[14].

12- Al-Khomasiyah, Saddam Muhammad, 'Smart Government: Beyond Electronic Government', United Arab Emirates, Al-Qandil Printing, Distribution, and Publishing Center, 1st edition, 2017, p. 385.

13- Frederick Zviderveen Borgeslus, 'Discrimination, Artificial Intelligence, and Algorithmic Decision Making ', The Netherlands, Directorate General of Democracy, Council European, Report, 2018.

14- Ibid, p. 17.

The effectiveness of this model is particularly evident in contemporary approaches to crime prevention[15], which emphasize the enhancement of spaces and environmental changes rather than merely focusing on changing criminal behavior[16]. This perspective starts from the idea of improving the environment to prevent crime, utilizing urban planning mechanisms aimed at crime prevention.

CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) focuses on environmental design to enhance the defensive capabilities of spaces according to specific standards and measures that aim to reduce opportunities for crime. This approach addresses the various dimensions of crime prevention and response within urban areas[17]. Significant transformations are taking place in the context of the fourth industrial revolution, where the perspective on crime prevention and control relies increasingly on technological means[18]. This includes the enhancement of spaces through digital communication systems and the Internet of Things (IoT)[19], which connects devices using standard Internet protocols. This process is crucial for the development of smart cities within urban planning, relying on infrastructure that facilitates communication and information sharing, allowing for the monitoring of various urban components, including roads, airports, railways, traffic hubs, seaports, and other essential infrastructure–whether in governmental or non-governmental sectors[20].

15- Tyla Naicker, 'An Explorative Study of Environmental Design and Crime: A Case Study of MereBank Durban', South Africa, Faculty of Applied Human Sciences, University of Kwazulu-Natal, Master Disseratation, 2021. p.20.
Available Online: https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/20631 Last Visit: 05/11/2023.

16- Beulah Shekhas, & (Others), 'Theories of Crime Prevention', India, Courseware, MHRD Project, National Mission Education, p. 5. Available Online :
https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/epgpdata/uploads/epgp_content/S001608/P001807/M027586/ET/1521106387E-TEXT.pdf Last Visit : 05/10/2023.

17- Paul Cozens, Danielle Stefani, 'Crime Prevention and Community Safety', Article, Springer Journal, Dated On: 29 December 2022. Available Online:
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41300-022-00170-0 Last Visit: 14/10/2023.

18- This refers to the integration of intelligent machines into urban life and the service performance of the city, as well as the operational performance of law enforcement agencies.

19- The Internet of Things (IoT) protocol enables these machines to communicate with each other and make decisions through digital communication systems, with their tasks defined by their operational domains and purposes in relation to the relevant authorities.

20- Al-Khomasiyah, Saddam Muhammad, Op, Cit, p.p. 381-383.

Structurally, the concept of a smart city represents a system that encompasses smart systems working together. These systems include the technologies that make up the smart city, such as high-speed networks, fiber optics, sensor networks, and both wired and wireless networks. These technologies enable the monitoring and management of the city's components through data processing and analysis, aimed at improving overall performance[21].

Therefore, it can be said that the geometric conception for approaching the smart city in the context of crime prevention and response is based on three fundamental pillars to activate the urban surveillance system, which are as follows[22]:

1. Sensors: This system refers to the possibility of connecting urban spaces and various locations with devices capable of sensing the space and individuals by capturing data. In the context of crime prevention, it can track the movement of individuals present in watch lists by monitoring their various electronic devices, whether mobile phones, computers, or other digital devices. Thus, these devices contribute to enabling artificial intelligence in the decision-making process through the analysis of the data provided to it[23].

2. Surveillance Cameras: Surveillance and monitoring in urban spaces are achieved by equipping them with cameras that operate based on the principle of managing and analyzing big data. This allows for the monitoring and tracking of individuals in watch lists through facial recognition capabilities, which can identify the identities of criminals and automatically monitor their movements, enabling law enforcement agencies to take the necessary measures against them.

3. Immediate Interaction: The urban surveillance system is activated by establishing a central command and coordination center, referred to as an "Operational Centre," which serves as the field communication platform connected to surveillance and sensing systems. This operational center specializes in immediate response and coordinating operations with various law enforcement agencies.

21- Ibid

22- Deirdre Toner, 'Human Rights Review of Privacy and Policing', UK, Policing Board, Report, 2021. p.p. 36-60.
Available Online:

23- for further reading see : Marijn Biesiot, Tim Jacquemard, & (Others), 'Using Sensor Data for Safety and Quality of Life', Article, Dated On : 16 January 2019.
https://www.rathenau.nl/en/digitalisering/using-sensor-data-safety-and-quality-life
Last Visit: 03/05/2024.

It monitors and reviews all alerts received automatically, which indicate the potential occurrence of criminal activity. Based on these alerts, the nature of the threats is determined, and decisions are made accordingly, taking into account strategic time management. This refers to the ability to understand and analyze potential threats in urban spaces, as well as the ability to respond immediately to apprehend individuals who may pose a threat.

To clarify the role of big data analysis in detecting crime and improving the operational performance of law enforcement agencies in efforts to reduce crime rates and conduct criminal investigations to apprehend offenders, the next section will study the European space, focusing on European security cooperation represented in the exchange of personal data. This will include a review of the Prum Framework to determine the nature of the data to be stored for crime control purposes.

II. Examination of the Legal Framework of the Prum 2 decisions

European Union countries initiated the "Prum Agreement" for security cooperation in combating terrorism, irregular migration, and cross-border crime among EU member states. This agreement came into effect on May 27, 2005, initially including Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, France, Luxembourg, and Austria[24]. In 2008, this initiative was incorporated into the provisions of judicial and security cooperation under Decision JHA 2008/615[25].

By the European Union, thus becoming a binding system that applies to all EU member states without exception[26].

24- Victor Toom, Anika Ludwig, & (Others), 'The Prum Decisions as an Aspirational Regime: Reviewing a Decade of Cross-Border Exchange and Comparison of Forensic DNA Data', Article, Dated on: 23/03/2019.
Available Online :
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1872497319300687
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25- For further details, please refer to the text of the decision at the following link:
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:210:0012:0072:EN:PDF

26- Article 33 of the Prum Decision explicitly states the implementation of Decision JHA2008/615/ and makes it binding at the EU level. For further details, please refer to the provisions of the decision. Available Online:
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:210:0012:0072:EN:PDF

The provisions of the Prum system aim to make personal data available to security agencies within the Union, including fingerprint data, DNA profiles, information about vehicle owners, and criminal record data. These data are stored within a database system that allows law enforcement agencies to access it for the purpose of managing criminal investigations and identifying individuals involved in criminal activities. This enables security agencies to monitor their movements within EU member states, in addition to analyzing evidence at crime scenes to achieve matching results[27].

In this context, software systems have been created to store and process personal data automatically to enhance the capabilities of European law enforcement agencies in surveillance, control, investigation, and criminal inquiry. Among these systems is the "Hague" program, for example, which was agreed upon at a meeting of EU member states' G-6 interior ministers held in Germany in March 2006. This meeting included Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain, and Poland, to confirm the principles of the Hague program[28], which emphasizes the necessity for member states to provide personal data of their citizens as outlined in the Prum Agreement[29].

Since the implementation of this program and in the initial months following the ministerial meeting of interior ministers, law enforcement agencies in Germany and Austria worked on resolving outstanding criminal cases held by Austrian authorities. In this context, a search was conducted in the DNA database, which revealed 1,510 matches for individuals suspected of engaging in criminal activities on Austrian territory who were located in Germany. These matching cases included 41 related to murder, 885 related to robbery with violence, and 85 related to extortion[30].

27- European Commision, 'Study on The Feasibility of Improving Information Exchange under The Prum Decisions', Report, 2020. p.7.
Available Online:
https://www.statewatch.org/media/1385/eu-com-prum-expansion-study-final-report-5-20.pdf

28- The European Comission Committe, 'Prum : An Effective Weapon Against Terrorism and Serious Crime', London, The Lord House, Report, 2006. p.10. Available Online: https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2007/may/eu-hol-prum-report.pdf

29- Ibid, p.16.

30- According to data published by the European Commission in 2019, the Prum network provides access to over 9.2 million DNA profiles to enable law enforcement authorities to conduct investigations within EU member states. In 2019 alone, security authorities conducted approximately 2.2 million searches, which included searching through 400,000 fingerprint records, resulting in around 10,000 matches involving individuals suspected of engaging in criminal activities.

The Hague program was utilized to identify the perpetrators of terrorist attacks, including the bombing at the Maelbeek station in Brussels on March 22, 2016, which resulted in the deaths of twenty people. During the criminal investigation, firearms were found, and the relevant authorities conducted a re-examination of fingerprints and collected biological evidence to create a profile. This allowed the security authorities to conduct an automated search using the Hague program to obtain matching results. By early 2018, law enforcement agencies received matching results for three individuals, who were arrested on June 18, 2018, in the Netherlands[31].

In the wake of the industrial shift towards the era of artificial intelligence, which contributed to the emergence of independently controlled software systems and the activation of urban surveillance systems, smart city projects are being implemented to manage public spaces for crime prevention and response, as mentioned in the first section. These projects not only facilitate the automated processing of data but also create systems capable of monitoring and tracking individuals if they appear on criminal record lists, with the ability to provide alerts to law enforcement agencies[32].

In this regard, on December 8, 2021, the European Union launched the new generation of the Prum system, now referred to as " Prum 2," to update it in line with the developments of the artificial intelligence era[33].

This new "Prum 2" system is built on expanding the scope of monitoring and surveillance to include the exchange of data from modern systems captured by sensors and smart generation camera recordings, specifically facial images. This enables law enforcement agencies to identify individuals through facial recognition. Additionally, the objectives of the agreement have been broadened to include the establishment of a database for missing persons, allowing law enforcement agencies access to civil registry data for processing and analysis to achieve their goals[34]. This raises questions about the continuity of the

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31- Victor Toom, Anika Ludwig, & (Others), Op. Cit.

32- Alexander Babuta, 'Big Data and Policing: An Assessment of Law Enforcement Requirements, Expectations and Priorities', UK, Royal United Services Institute, RUSI Paper, September 2017. p. 6.
Available Online :
https://static.rusi.org/201709_rusi_big_data_and_policing_babuta_web.pdf

33- The European Digital Rights (EDRI), Op. Cit. p. 4.

34- Ibid.

principle of the right to privacy in light of the reliance on a system for processing and analyzing personal data for crime prevention and response. What is the relationship between access to civil registry data and the prevention of criminal threats?

Thus, we will attempt in the next section to address the question of the effectiveness and the potential suspension of the right to privacy in EU member states.

III. Effectiveness and the Suspension of the Right to Privacy

Despite the fact that the big data analysis system has contributed to improving the operational performance of law enforcement agencies by enhancing their capabilities to identify individuals committing criminal acts and tracking their movements, thus aiding security authorities in locating them, this system has also contributed to shaping a criminal justice system that incorporates scientific principles in presenting forensic evidence for ensuring fair trials linked to prosecuting suspected offenders with scientific and objective evidence[35]. However, this does not prevent us from questioning the legitimacy of law enforcement practices in the unethical use of big data analysis systems for the purpose of preventing crime and potential criminal threats in EU member states.

This raises a significant debate regarding the practices of smart policing, which are seen as abusing of the right to privacy for citizens of EU member states, particularly concerning the unethical or malicious use against minorities, protesters, and migrants in general. This includes the exposure of their "civil" data related to ethnic, racial, and even socio-economic information, as well as political stances[36].

According to a report by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) published in 2019[37], it was acknowledged that most law enforcement agencies in EU member states employed data analysis systems to monitor certain groups by placing them on lists of "potential

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35- Frederick Zviderveen Borgeslus, Op. Cit.

36- The European Digital Rights (EDRI), Op. Cit. p. 9.

37- Patrick Williams, Eric Kind, "Data-Driven Policing: The Hardwiring of Discriminatory Policing Practices Across Europe", Brussels, The European Network Against Racism, Report, November 2019.
Available Online :
https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/news/2019/nov/data-driven-profiling-web-final.pdf

criminals," all while lacking any legitimate criminal foundation or legal basis for their inclusion in criminal record databases as "criminals." The report emphasized that law enforcement agencies have utilized big data analysis systems without adhering to objective standards or the scientific nature of artificial intelligence technology. Instead, their enforcement and preventive practices relied on biases and prejudices against certain groups within society.

Among the most notable cases of unethical use of big data analysis systems, we can mention the following two levels:[38]

First: Internal data analysis within EU member states.

• **United Kingdom and the "Matrix Gang" System:** This system allows law enforcement agencies to monitor and track minorities residing in the UK, specifically those of Asian descent and Black individuals. Based on the data revealing their personal information, security services are enabled to apprehend them in public places for the purpose of inspection.

• **Netherlands and the "400Top & 600Top" Systems:** Law enforcement agencies in the Netherlands targeted youth through the "600Top" system, while the "400Top" system was designated for minors under 16 from low-income families, who are likely to become involved in cases of assault and theft. Dutch authorities adopted a similar approach to the UK by including families of Arab descent on the list of potential criminals, with the "600Top" system including a third of families of Moroccan descent[39].

• **Austria and the "Facial Image" System:** Austrian law enforcement targeted protesters and political activists by linking surveillance cameras to a database that enables identification of individuals through facial recognition. This analysis allows security authorities to monitor and track their daily movements in public spaces.

38- Patrick Williams, Eric Kind, Op. Cit.

39- Griff Ferris, Bruno Min, & (Others), 'Automating Injustice : The Use of Artificial Intelligence and Automated Decision Making System in Criminal Justice in Europe', Fair Trials, Report. p.12.
Available Online :
https://policehumanrightsresources.org/content/uploads/2021/09/Automating_Injustice.pdf?x19059

- **France and the "PASP" System[40]:** Law enforcement agencies in France established this system to protect the values of secularism from potential terrorist threats posed by citizens of Muslim origin. This program allows law enforcement to identify these individuals in public places for monitoring and tracking their movements in the public sphere.

Secondly: Big Data Analysis at the EU Level[41]

- **EuroDAC System:** This program was established to manage the affairs of asylum seekers by the European Union since 2000, allowing for the storage of all data related to them. This program contains all civil data, including facial images, fingerprints, the thematic reasons for seeking asylum, as well as the nationality of the individual and the country they are coming from. With the implementation of the "Prum" decisions, law enforcement agencies, alongside the Internal Affairs Agency and agencies specialized in asylum issues, gained the right to access and analyze this data using AI-supported technology to identify these "asylum seekers" in public spaces and track their movements. It is noteworthy that by 2018, more than 5,185,157 identities of asylum seekers had been stored[42].

- **EES System:** This is a system concerning the monitoring and tracking of the movement of individuals within EU member states. This procedure applies to all citizens of non-European nationalities and EU citizens with dual nationality. Through this system, law enforcement agencies will be enabled to employ big data analysis to monitor and track the identities of individuals whose travel validity has expired within Europe. This is achieved by allowing law enforcement to automatically know the expiration dates of travel documents, enabling security agencies to send alerts regarding legal violations that occur due to the expiration of the individual's legal stay. The "Entry and Exit System" program operates based on the analysis of data related to facial recognition, fingerprinting and the access to data

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40- PASP : The Prevention of Public Security Attacks.

41- Chris Jones, & (Others), 'Data Protection, Immigration Enforcement Law and Fundamental Rights : What the EU's Regulations on Interoperability Mean for People with Irregular Status', Brussels, Centre of European Policy Studies, PICUM, Report, November 2019. p.p. 5-7. Available Online: https://www.statewatch.org/media/documents/analyses/Data-Protection-Immigration-Enforcement-and-Fundamental-Rights-Full-Report-EN.pdf

42- Chris Jones, & (Others), Op. Cit. p.44.

analysis related to the reasons for entering the European Union countries[43].

These aforementioned practices can be explained by law enforcement agencies, which often relied on the framework emerging from the Schengen Area[44]. This framework expands cooperation areas to include security and judicial cooperation, ensuring crime control and the establishment of a secure European space. Therefore, we find that the European decision-making system has become stable and secure from cross-border threats[45]. The 'Prum' initiative emerged as a new tool to revive the essence of the cooperative European space and enhance institutional performance among the EU member states[46]. This led to legitimizing the large-scale exchange of personal data of citizens and visitors to the Schengen Area, as a proactive and coordinated collective measure aimed at preserving the values of the European Union and responding to various potential threats within the European space. This justifies the behaviors of law enforcement agencies, which granted themselves the right to engage in practices that exceed the right to privacy[47], controlling the system for processing and analyzing criminal and civil data automatically to prevent and combat crime.

In this context, a series of directives were issued to regulate the transfer of personal data in various classifications within the EU member states, enhancing the legitimacy of data control and thereby surpassing the right to privacy for law enforcement purposes, as follows[48]:

43- ibid, .50.

44- The Schengen Agreement was signed on June 14, 1985. For more information on the contents of the agreement, please visit the official website of the European Union's Internal Affairs at the following link:
https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/schengen-borders-and-visa/schengen-area_en

45- Sara Matos, 'Privacy and Data Protection in The Surveillance Society: The Case of The Prum System", Article, Dated on: August 2019. Available Online:
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1752928X1930068X
Last Visit: 30/04/2024.

46- One of the most prominent supranational institutions responsible for monitoring the transfer and availability of personal data, as well as criminal investigations, is EuroPol. For more information, please visit the official website: https://www.europol.europa.eu

47- Sara Matos, Op. Cit.

48- For further information on the regulatory laws issued by the European Council and the European Parliament to confirm the validity of the 'Prum' decisions regarding data availability to ensure security and judicial cooperation, please visit the following link:
https://www.europeansources.info/record/proposal-for-a-regulation-on-automated-data-exchange-for-police-cooperation-prum-ii-amending-council-decisions-2008-615-jha-and-2008-616-jha-and-regulations-eu-2018-1726-2019-8/

The 'Prum' decisions related to the availability of data include:

- Decision 2008/615/JHA concerning DNA data access.

- Decision 2008/616/JHA concerning fingerprint access.

- Decision 2008/617/JHA concerning vehicle registration data access.

- Decision 2008/919/JHA concerning criminal record data of suspected terrorists.

- Decision EU/2019/818 concerning migrant and asylum seeker data.

However, these regulatory and directive decisions did not provide any guarantees or constraints limiting law enforcement agencies' powers in the face of unethical and unscientific use of artificial intelligence technology. This is especially concerning when discriminatory results are produced based on biased programming, as observed in previous examples. Such practices have led to the classification of individuals based on discriminatory criteria like race and religious identity, resulting in their inclusion on criminal watch lists without legal basis or evidence of wrongdoing. This highlights the slow adaptation of legal frameworks and legislative institutions to rapid technological changes, leaving room for unethical and discriminatory practices by law enforcement as they rely on digital solutions in operational performance.

Conclusion

The legal rule and legislative time can be considered incapable of containing and absorbing technological transformations, as artificial intelligence technology differs from previous technologies; it is not characterized by stability and rigidity but relies on the ability to learn and innovate autonomously, similar to the human mind. This means that artificial intelligence has the capacity for self-construction, indicating that we are discussing a technology that will change all established principles, making it difficult to comprehend and predict.

It is expected that AI-supported technology will contribute to creating a unique human model based on scientific decision-making, which considers speed and accuracy in responding to various potential threats and risks. Thus, decisions will be based on precise data to achieve optimal responses for managing threats and reaching security objectives.

Consequently, this will lead to changes in the general principles of human rights and public freedoms, especially if programmed according to moral patterns and discriminatory standards, which could undermine the prevailing model, gradually abolishing democratic gains. This includes the complete elimination of the right to privacy and the principle of protecting personal data to respond to potential threats and prevent crime in general.

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The Paradox of Existence: Analyzing Israel's role in Iran's Regional Militia Expansion

Dr. Rula JABBOUR[1]

Abstract

This study explores a complex geopolitical paradox: how Israel's existence has inadvertently facilitated Iran's expansion of influence across the Middle East through the establishment and support of various militias. The central research question asks: How has Israel's presence enabled Iran to extend its power and sustain a network of militias in neighboring countries?

Employing a comprehensive case study approach, the research examines Iran's growing influence through its affiliated militias, illustrating how Israel's existence serves as a pretext for this expansion. The study delves into Iran's support networks, the geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East, and the historical context of Iran-Israel relations.

The findings reveal a paradoxical reality: Israel's existence is pivotal to Iran's regional strategy, providing Tehran with a justification for its expansive militia network under the guise of countering Israeli influence. The study argues that the Middle East, absent Israel, would fundamentally reshape Iran's narrative and strategic approach, potentially diminishing its rationale for widespread militia support. Iran's reliance on Israel's presence to enhance its own power underscores the intricate nature of Middle Eastern geopolitics, where the existence of one nation-state can be integral to the expansionist policies of another, reshaping regional power dynamics.

Key Words: *Middle East, Iran, Israel, Militias, Regional influence, Security dynamics, Proxy warfare.*

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Introduction

Introduction: The Middle East has long been shaped by complex geopolitical dynamics, with interactions between Israel and Iran serving as central drivers of both regional stability and conflict. Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, Iran has pursued a strategy of expanding its regional influence, often positioning itself in direct opposition to Israel. This adversarial relationship has been characterized by Iran's support for various non-state actors and militias across the region, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and various groups in Iraq and Syria (Byman, 2005; Hokayem, 2013). As Christopher Phillips (2016) notes, the Syrian Civil War has further served as a battleground where Iran has solidified its influence through these proxy forces, heightening the stakes of the Iran-Israel rivalry. Israel, one of the most significant military powers in the region, has consistently expressed concerns over Iran's expanding influence and nuclear ambitions. This geopolitical chess game presents a paradox: while Israel aims to counter Iran's influence, its very existence provides Iran with the justification to support and expand its network of militias under the guise of countering Israeli aggression (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007; Nasr, 2006). Publicly, Iran asserts that Israel should not exist, aligning its rhetoric with actions aimed at undermining Israeli security. However, the paradox lies in the fact that Israel's existence inadvertently serves Iran's strategic interests. As Jones et al. (2020) highlight, Iran's expanding military capabilities, including its ballistic missile programs and proxy networks, are often framed as necessary to defend against Israeli threats. The presence of Israel allows Iran to justify its extensive militia network as essential for countering Israeli influence, thereby bolstering its regional power and control. Iran's continued expansion of influence depends on the perpetuation of Israel's presence, as the narrative of resistance against Israel provides Tehran with a powerful and unifying cause. Without Israel, Iran would lose this critical pretext for supporting its proxy militias across the Middle East, significantly weakening its ability to project power under the banner of defending Islam and the Muslim world (Guzansky & Yadlin, 2020). As Juneau (2016) notes, Iran's involvement in Yemen and its support for the Houthis serves as a microcosm of this larger strategy, whereby Iran leverages local conflicts to extend its reach under the guise of opposing Israel and its allies. This study delves into this complex geopolitical paradox, exploring how Israel's presence has enabled Iran to extend its power and maintain a network of militias in surrounding nations. The research question guiding this study is: How

has Israel's presence enabled Iran to extend its power and sustain a network of militias across the region? Using a comprehensive case study approach, this research examines the growth of Iran's power through its affiliated militias, demonstrating how Israel's existence serves as a pretext for this expansion. The methodology includes an in-depth analysis of Iran's support networks, the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, and the historical context of Iran-Israel relations.

Historical Context and Geopolitical Dynamics

The relationship between Israel and Iran has been characterized by deep adversarial dynamics since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which marked the establishment of the Islamic Republic. This period signaled the beginning of Iran's strategy to position itself as a counterbalance to Israel in the region. Iran's support for various militias and non-state actors, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and numerous groups in Iraq and Syria, has been a cornerstone of its foreign policy, aimed at undermining Israeli influence and expanding its regional footprint (Byman, 2005; Hokayem, 2013). As Phillips (2016) argues, the Syrian conflict has become one of the most prominent arenas for Iran to entrench itself, using local militias to advance its geopolitical interests and challenge Israeli and Western influence.

This strategy has allowed Iran to project its power and influence across the Middle East, utilizing proxy groups as tools to destabilize rival regimes and counter Israeli and Western interests. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), especially through its Quds Force, has been instrumental in training, funding, and arming these militias, which serve as a critical component of Iran's foreign policy strategy. The deployment of these proxies enables Iran to engage in asymmetric warfare, challenging Israeli security without direct confrontation (Jones et al., 2020).

Iran's Militia Network and Regional Strategy

Iran's development of a militia network is deeply embedded in both its ideological mission and strategic objectives. The IRGC and its Quds Force have been pivotal in establishing and supporting these groups, providing training, funding, and weaponry. Hezbollah, perhaps the most prominent example, was formed in the early 1980s with Iranian support and has since grown into a powerful military and political force

in Lebanon. It directly challenges Israeli operations in the region and exemplifies Iran's ability to project power through non-state actors (Norton, 2007; Ranstorp, 1997). Jones et al. (2019) further highlight Hezbollah's role in complicating Israel's security strategy, serving as a potent example of Iran's long-term strategic depth.

Similarly, the Houthis in Yemen and various Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria also reflect Iran's broader strategy of leveraging local grievances to establish lasting influence. As Juneau (2016) notes, Iran's relatively modest investment in the Houthis has yielded significant strategic returns, further destabilizing the region and challenging Saudi and Israeli interests. These militias enable Iran to wage asymmetric warfare against adversaries like Israel and Saudi Arabia while maintaining plausible deniability (Alimi, Demetriou & Bosi, 2015). This deniability is crucial to Iran's strategy, allowing it to exert influence without the immediate repercussions of direct military involvement.

Iran's success in embedding itself in conflicts like those in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen reflects its broader geopolitical ambitions, as well as its ability to adapt to changing regional dynamics. Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) emphasize that the evolving security architecture of the Middle East, especially post-Abraham Accords, poses new challenges to Iran's influence. However, Iran's well-established militia networks continue to provide Tehran with crucial leverage in ongoing regional conflicts.

The Paradox of Israel's Existence

While Iran publicly calls for Israel's destruction, its strategic use of Israel's presence to justify its actions reveals a complex paradox. The existence of Israel provides Iran with a pretext to expand its influence under the guise of defending the Muslim world against Israeli aggression. This dynamic has allowed Iran to consolidate its regional power, positioning itself as the defender of Palestinian rights and broader Islamic interests. In doing so, Iran garners support from various Islamist and nationalist groups across the Middle East, reinforcing its legitimacy among both state and non-state actors (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007; Nasr, 2006).

President Joe Biden once remarked, "If there were not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region" (Biden, 1986). This study contends that Iran's strategic behavior mirrors Biden's observation. Israel's existence provides

Iran with a convenient and powerful pretext to extend its influence across the Middle East. As Jones et al. (2020) point out, Iran's militia networks and expanding military capabilities are framed as necessary responses to Israeli threats, enabling Iran to justify its proxy presence in multiple regional conflicts.

Without Israel, Iran would lose this crucial justification for its expansive proxy networks, which serve as a key mechanism for projecting power and destabilizing its adversaries. Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) emphasize that Iran's narrative of resistance is central to its ability to influence regional politics and mobilize local militias. Therefore, for Iran, if there were no Israel, the Islamic Republic would likely need to "invent" one to maintain its strategic posture in the region. Israel's existence not only provides a pretext for Iranian expansion but also serves as a unifying cause for Tehran's regional alliances, shaping the balance of power in the Middle East.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the theoretical framework of Realism, with a particular focus on the balance of power and the security dilemma, to analyze the paradoxical relationship between Israel and Iran. In an anarchic international system, states like Iran and Israel act primarily to maximize their security and influence. Israel's presence as a powerful adversary compels Iran to develop a network of proxy militias to counterbalance this threat and bolster its regional power. As Jones et al. (2020) emphasize, Iran's expanding military capabilities, including its proxy networks, are critical tools in its strategy to challenge Israel and secure regional dominance.

The case studies of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria demonstrate how Israel's military presence triggers Iran's responses within the security dilemma framework. Iran's support for these groups reflects its need to counter Israeli military superiority and project influence across the region. Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) argue that Iran's strategic use of militias is deeply intertwined with its broader goal of counterbalancing Israeli influence, particularly in light of shifting regional alliances such as the Abraham Accords.

This study explores how Iran's strategic use of militias serves as a direct reaction to the perceived Israeli threat, perpetuating regional instability (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). By embedding itself within

local conflicts and supporting non-state actors, Iran positions itself as a key player in the Middle East's power dynamics, while reinforcing the security dilemma: steps taken by Israel to secure itself prompt countermeasures from Iran, escalating the cycle of conflict.

This dynamic creates a paradox in Iran's geopolitical strategy: although Iran publicly calls for Israel's destruction, Israel's existence provides Tehran with a powerful justification for its regional militia network. Iran's use of proxy militias is therefore a calculated response to Israel's actions, reinforcing the security dilemma. Jervis (1978) explains 7that in such dilemmas, defensive actions by one state inevitably lead to reactions that exacerbate insecurity on both sides. This framework helps explain why Israel's existence, while ostensibly a threat to Iran, also serves as a critical component of Tehran's strategy to legitimize its regional interventions and militia support (Waltz, 1979; Jervis, 1978).

Developing the Argument

The geopolitical landscape of the Middle East is profoundly shaped by the interactions between Israel and Iran. While the two are ostensibly adversaries, Israel's existence paradoxically serves as a crucial element in Iran's strategy for regional influence. This paradox is central to the study: despite Iran's public denunciations of Israel, Israel's presence provides Tehran with the justification it needs to expand its network of militias across the Middle East. One could argue that without Israel, Iran might not have been able to extend its power and influence as deeply throughout the region. This dynamic creates a complex interplay in which the existence of one nation-state directly influences the expansionist policies of another, ultimately reshaping regional power structures.

The Paradox of Israel's Existence

Iran's geopolitical strategy involves positioning itself as the leader of the resistance against Israeli and Western influence in the region. This stance is not only ideological but also practical, enabling Iran to justify its extensive network of militias. These militias serve as Iran's proxies, allowing it to project power and influence without direct confrontation with Israel (Byman, 2005; Hokayem, 2013). As Jones et al. (2020) highlight, Iran's expanding military capabilities, including missile systems and proxy militias, are framed as necessary measures to counter Israeli threats.

Publicly, Iranian leaders frequently call for the elimination of Israel, framing their rhetoric around the defense of Palestinian rights and the broader Muslim world. This narrative garner significant support from various groups that oppose Israeli policies (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). However, the presence of Israel paradoxically benefits Iran. Israel provides Tehran with a compelling pretext to support and maintain its network of militias, ostensibly to counter Israeli influence and defend the Muslim world (Nasr, 2006). Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) emphasize that Iran's strategic narrative of resistance against Israel plays a pivotal role in consolidating its alliances with non-state actors across the region.

Moreover, Israel's existence allows Iran to rally support from Shiite communities and other groups across the Middle East by portraying itself as the defender of Islamic values against Zionist and Western encroachment. This ideological stance enhances Iran's soft power and helps it cultivate strong alliances with non-state actors who share similar anti-Israeli sentiments (Ranstorp, 1997; Norton, 2007). Without the constant presence of Israel as a perceived threat, Iran's ability to project power through these alliances would be significantly diminished.

Realism and the Security Dilemma

This study applies the theoretical lens of Realism to explore the security dilemma that defines Israel-Iran relations. Realism posits that states act primarily to maximize their power and ensure their security in an anarchic international system (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). Israel, as a significant military power, poses a security threat to Iran, prompting Tehran to take countermeasures. These countermeasures include supporting militias in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria as a way to balance against Israeli power and influence (Alimi, Demetriou & Bosi, 2015; Juneau, 2016).

The security dilemma arises as each action taken by Israel to ensure its security–whether through military buildup or alliances–prompts a reaction from Iran. This, in turn, leads to further Israeli countermeasures. The result is a cycle of escalation that perpetuates regional instability and compels both nations to continually adapt their strategies (Jervis, 1978). For example, Israel's military operations in Lebanon and Gaza are often cited by Iran as justification for its continued support of Hezbollah and other militant groups (Byman, 2005). Phillips (2016) adds that the Syrian Civil War has become a key battleground where this security dilemma plays out, with both Israel and Iran increasing their involvement to counter each other's influence. Each step to fortify one's security leads to a perceived threat for the other, contributing to a never-ending cycle of militarization and proxy warfare.

Strategic Use of Militia Networks

Iran's use of militias is a strategic response to the challenges posed by direct confrontation with Israel. These militias provide Iran with a flexible, deniable means to exert influence and counterbalance Israeli actions (Ranstorp, 1997). Hezbollah's role in Lebanon, for instance, exemplifies how Iran leverages local grievances and conflicts to establish strong proxies capable of challenging Israeli interests without direct Iranian involvement (Norton, 2007).

Hezbollah's engagement in asymmetrical warfare against Israel, particularly in the 2006 conflict when it launched thousands of rockets into northern Israel, demonstrates the effectiveness of this strategy. The group's deep integration into Lebanese society and politics further complicates Israel's ability to counter its influence without risking significant civilian casualties and broader regional destabilization (Ranstorp, 1997; Norton, 2007). Hezbollah's operational success underscores Iran's strategic use of proxy networks to mitigate the risks of direct military engagement with Israel while still challenging Israeli military superiority. Jones et al. (2020) further argue that these proxy networks allow Iran to pursue its regional goals without directly engaging Israel in conventional warfare, thus minimizing risks while maximizing influence.

Expansion of Influence through Proxy Warfare

Iran's ability to use proxy warfare to its advantage hinges on its capacity to exploit local dynamics and grievances. In Syria, for example, Iran has supported the Assad regime by deploying militias such as the Fatemiyoun Division (Afghan Shiite fighters) and the Zainabiyoun Brigade (Pakistani Shiite fighters). These groups have been instrumental in maintaining Assad's control and countering both Israeli and Western efforts to weaken the regime (Phillips, 2016). By positioning its militias along Israel's northern border, Iran not only extends its influence in Syria but also poses a strategic deterrent to Israeli military actions in the region.

In Yemen, Iran's support for the Houthi rebels allows it to challenge Saudi Arabia, a key regional ally of Israel. Armed with Iranian-supplied weapons and training, the Houthis have been able to sustain a prolonged conflict, thereby enabling Iran to exert influence in a strategically important area. Yemen's location along vital shipping routes and its proximity to Saudi Arabia make it a critical theater in Iran's broader strategy of undermining Israel's regional allies (Juneau, 2016). By

supporting the Houthis, Iran destabilizes a key partner of both Israel and the United States, thereby extending its reach into yet another critical conflict zone in the Middle East. Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) argue that Iran's success in Yemen is a testament to its ability to leverage proxy forces to challenge both Israeli and Western interests without direct confrontation.

The Proliferation of Iranian-Backed Militias and Regional Implications

The proliferation of Iranian-backed militias has profound implications for regional stability. These groups not only pose significant challenges to Israeli security but also contribute to broader instability by perpetuating ongoing conflicts and undermining state sovereignty. The presence of such militias complicates diplomatic efforts and peace negotiations, as they often operate outside formal state control and pursue agendas closely aligned with Iranian interests (Alimi, Demetriou & Bosi, 2015; Byman, 2005). Their actions frequently exacerbate local tensions, making the resolution of conflicts more difficult. Phillips (2016) emphasizes that the involvement of these militias in protracted conflicts, like Syria, reinforces regional instability and prolongs the chaos in fragile states.

Furthermore, the entrenchment of these militias creates long-term dependencies on Iranian support, making it difficult for host countries to regain control and pursue independent foreign policies. This dependency perpetuates a cycle of instability, with Israel and its regional allies continually forced to respond to the threats posed by these groups (Ranstorp, 1997). The sustained presence of these militias acts as a deterrent to Israeli military actions, as any attack on them risks provoking a wider conflict involving Iran directly. Jones et al. (2020) highlight how Iran's proxy networks complicate Israeli security strategies by increasing the likelihood of regional escalation, given the asymmetric nature of these threats.

Case Study Approach

To substantiate these arguments, this study employs a comprehensive case study approach, focusing on key examples of Iranian militia networks. The case studies include Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria. Each case study examines

the historical development, organizational structure, funding mechanisms, and operational strategies of these groups. Through detailed analysis, this research seeks to demonstrate how Israel's existence has provided the justification and impetus for Iran's support of militias, thereby reinforcing Tehran's broader regional strategy (Byman, 2005; Hokayem, 2013; Juneau, 2016). Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) also emphasize that Iran's strategy to embed militias in local conflicts enables it to exercise control and influence across key geopolitical fault lines, making it difficult for Israel and its allies to develop coherent counterstrategies.

The Paradox of Israel's Existence in Iran's Regional Strategy

This paradox is central to Iran's geopolitical strategy: Israel's existence enables Tehran to justify its expansive network of militias under the guise of defending the Muslim world against Zionism and Western encroachment. By exploring this dynamic through a Realist lens and employing detailed case studies, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Middle Eastern geopolitics. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on regional power dynamics, offering insights into how perceived threats, such as Israel's presence, shape state behavior and influence geopolitical strategies. As Jones et al. (2020) discuss, Iran's ability to frame its military support as defensive against Israeli aggression allows it to consolidate regional power under the pretext of resistance.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guide the research:

- **H1a**: The existence of Israel is used by Iran as a rhetorical and strategic justification for the establishment and expansion of Shiite militias in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria.

- **H1b**: Iranian-backed militias, justified by the presence of Israel, significantly enhance Iran's regional influence by embedding themselves in local conflicts and political systems.

- **H1c**: The activities of these Iranian-backed militias contribute to regional instability and complicate the security strategies of Israel and its allies.

These hypotheses will be examined through a detailed analysis of each case. The following sections provide evidence supporting the

hypotheses and illustrate how these dynamics contribute to regional instability while complicating Israeli security strategies. Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) argue that Iran's use of militias plays a pivotal role in shaping the regional security environment by continuously challenging Israeli and Western dominance through asymmetric tactics.

Case Study Methodology

The methodology for this research is designed to comprehensively analyze how Israel's existence has facilitated Iran's expansion of influence through its network of militias. This study employs a qualitative case study approach, allowing for in-depth exploration of the complex geopolitical dynamics and the strategic use of proxy warfare. By focusing on specific cases, the research seeks to provide detailed insights into the mechanisms and implications of Iran's regional strategies.

The selection of case studies is critical to understanding broader patterns of Iran's regional influence. This research focuses on the following key case studies:

1. **Hezbollah in Lebanon**
2. **The Houthis in Yemen**
3. **Shiite militias in Iraq**
4. **Shiite militias in Syria**

These cases were selected based on their significance within Iran's regional strategy, their direct and indirect interactions with Israeli interests, and the availability of comprehensive data and scholarly analysis. Jones et al. (2019) further emphasize that Iran's success in leveraging these militias reflects its ability to operate within the security dilemmas facing Israel, creating a persistent cycle of reaction and counter-reaction.

Analytical Framework

The analytical framework for this study is grounded in Realist principles, particularly the concepts of the balance of power and the security dilemma (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). These concepts help explain how states like Iran and Israel perceive and respond to each other's actions within the constraints of an anarchic international system.

1. Balance of Power: This principle is used to analyze how Iran leverages its network of militias to counterbalance Israel's superior military capabilities, enabling it to project influence despite its conventional military limitations. Jones et al. (2020) emphasize that Iran's reliance on proxy forces, such as Hezbollah and other militias, allows it to offset Israel's military dominance and maintain a strategic foothold in critical areas across the Middle East. By distributing its military influence through non-state actors, Iran can challenge Israel indirectly while avoiding the risks of direct confrontation.

2. Security Dilemma: The concept of the security dilemma will be explored to understand how actions taken by Israel to secure itself—such as military operations or alliances—trigger countermeasures by Iran, perpetuating a cycle of instability and conflict. Iran's support for militias in response to perceived Israeli threats exemplifies how this dynamic escalates tensions across the region. Phillips (2016) notes that the Syrian conflict has become a key theater for the Iran-Israel security dilemma, with both countries increasing their involvement to counter each other's influence, further destabilizing the region. This dilemma is evident in the tit-for-tat responses, where Israel's military strikes provoke further militia activity, deepening the regional instability.

Hezbollah of Lebanon

Historical Context

Hezbollah, or the "Party of God," was formed in the early 1980s during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) as a direct response to Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent occupation of southern Lebanon. This invasion, aimed at rooting out the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), galvanized Shiite militias, including Hezbollah, into organized opposition against Israeli forces. Hezbollah's ideological foundation was heavily influenced by the Iranian Revolution of 1979, as its leaders embraced Ayatollah Khomeini's vision of establishing an Islamic state and resisting Israeli occupation (Norton, 2007).

The Israeli invasion provided Iran with a strategic opportunity. Under the guidance of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Iran sought to counter Israel's influence in Lebanon by supporting Hezbollah militarily and financially. Initially, Hezbollah was a coalition

of various Shiite factions, but it quickly coalesced into a cohesive political and military organization, becoming Iran's most significant proxy in the Levant (Ranstorp, 1997; Byman, 2005). Phillips (2016) emphasizes how Hezbollah has transformed from a grassroots militia into a key instrument of Iranian foreign policy, solidifying Iran's presence in Lebanon and the broader region.

Iran's Role and Hezbollah's Strategic Development

From its inception, Hezbollah's development was closely tied to Iran's strategic interests in the region. Iran, operating within the Realist framework, sought to balance against Israeli power by supporting Hezbollah as a counterweight. Realism posits that states seek to maximize their power in an anarchic international system where no higher authority exists to ensure their security (Waltz, 1979). Iran viewed Israel's military superiority as a threat and responded by bolstering Hezbollah's capabilities, allowing Tehran to project power in Lebanon and beyond, while avoiding direct confrontation with Israel (Norton, 2007; Ranstorp, 1997).

Hezbollah's evolution into one of the most formidable non-state military actors in the region was significantly facilitated by Iran's material and financial support. The IRGC, particularly its Quds Force, played a pivotal role in providing Hezbollah with training, arms, and strategic guidance. Iran's financial backing, estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars annually, enabled Hezbollah not only to engage in military operations but also to establish a robust social service network, which earned it widespread support among Lebanon's marginalized Shiite population (Byman, 2005). Hezbollah's ability to intertwine itself with Lebanese society–offering education, healthcare, and other services– solidified its legitimacy and deepened its influence in the region (Ranstorp, 1997).

This combination of military and social infrastructure demonstrates how Hezbollah fits into Iran's broader Realist strategy. By embedding Hezbollah into Lebanon's political and social fabric, Iran effectively increases its influence in a key strategic location, using Hezbollah as a buffer against Israeli military power. Hezbollah provides Iran with strategic depth and allows Tehran to balance Israeli power through asymmetric means (Mearsheimer, 2001). The ideological justification for Hezbollah's existence–resistance to Israeli occupation–aligns with Iran's need to legitimize its role in the region, reinforcing the balance of power between Israel and Iran.

Hezbollah and the Security Dilemma

The case of Hezbollah exemplifies the security dilemma at the heart of Israel-Iran relations. According to this concept, states' actions to increase their own security often inadvertently provoke insecurity in others, leading to a cycle of arms races and escalating tensions (Jervis, 1978). Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, intended to neutralize threats to its northern border, triggered the creation and strengthening of Hezbollah. Iran's support for Hezbollah, in turn, increased Israel's perception of threat, prompting Israel to bolster its defenses and engage in preemptive strikes against Hezbollah targets (Ranstorp, 1997).

Hezbollah's growing military capabilities, largely financed and supported by Iran, are a direct manifestation of this security dilemma. Hezbollah's arsenal includes a wide range of sophisticated weapons, from rockets to anti-tank missiles, and its deep entrenchment in southern Lebanon allows it to launch attacks against Israeli targets. During the 2006 Lebanon War, Hezbollah launched over 4,000 rockets into northern Israel, demonstrating its ability to bypass traditional Israeli defenses (Byman, 2005). This conflict is a quintessential example of the security dilemma: Israel's attempts to eliminate threats on its borders led to Hezbollah's militarization, which in turn forced Israel to escalate its military responses (Jervis, 1978). Jones et al. (2020) argue that Hezbollah's missile capabilities and its deep integration into Lebanese society complicate Israeli defense strategies, creating a protracted security challenge.

Iran leverages Hezbollah's capabilities as a strategic deterrent against Israel. Hezbollah's military presence in southern Lebanon acts as a buffer and complicates Israel's security strategy. Any Israeli military action against Iran risks retaliatory strikes from Hezbollah, creating a multi-front conflict scenario. This strategic depth enhances Iran's regional influence and allows Tehran to counter Israeli actions indirectly, using Hezbollah as a proxy force (Norton, 2007).

Tying Hezbollah to the Hypotheses and Realism Framework

- **H1a**: The existence of Israel is used by Iran as a rhetorical and strategic justification for the establishment and expansion of Shiite militias in Lebanon. Hezbollah's formation is directly tied to Israel's military presence in Lebanon. Iran's rhetorical and strategic justification for supporting Hezbollah is rooted in the

narrative of resistance to Israeli occupation. Iran portrays itself as the defender of Islamic lands, using Hezbollah as a key instrument to counter Israeli expansionism. This exemplifies Realist principles—Israel's military dominance provides Iran with the pretext to build and support militias, increasing its power in the region (Byman, 2005; Norton, 2007).

- **H1b**: Iranian-backed militias, justified by the presence of Israel, significantly increase Iran's regional influence by embedding themselves in local conflicts and political systems. Hezbollah's evolution into a political and military force in Lebanon exemplifies this hypothesis. Iran has used Hezbollah to embed itself deeply in Lebanese society, utilizing the group to expand its influence far beyond its borders. Hezbollah's involvement in Lebanon's political system–holding seats in parliament and controlling vital social services–demonstrates how Iran can use militias to extend its reach, balancing against Israeli and Western power (Ranstorp, 1997; Norton, 2007). Guzansky & Yadlin (2020) further highlight Hezbollah's integration into Lebanese politics as a critical element of Iran's long-term strategy to challenge Israeli hegemony in the region.

- **H1c**: The activities of these Iranian-backed militias contribute to regional instability and complicate the security strategies of Israel and its allies. Hezbollah's continued military operations and its missile capabilities pose a persistent threat to Israeli security. This has forced Israel to adopt more aggressive defensive measures, such as the Iron Dome missile defense system, to counter Hezbollah's rocket attacks. However, Israel's ability to neutralize Hezbollah is complicated by the group's deep entrenchment in Lebanese society. Any attempt to dismantle Hezbollah risks destabilizing Lebanon as a whole, further perpetuating the regional security dilemma (Jervis, 1978; Norton, 2007).

In conclusion: Hezbollah's formation and growth, heavily facilitated by Iran, is a prime example of how Realism and the security dilemma shape regional dynamics in the Middle East. Iran, in an effort to counterbalance Israel's military superiority, has developed Hezbollah into a formidable force, capable of challenging Israeli dominance. At the same time, Hezbollah's integration into Lebanese politics and society enables Iran to project power without directly confronting Israel militarily. This case study highlights the paradox of Israel's existence–while publicly

Iran opposes Israel, it uses Israel's presence as a strategic necessity to justify its proxy networks and increase its influence. The security dilemma between Israel and Iran, perpetuated by Hezbollah's operations, illustrates how actions taken by one state to secure itself can lead to greater insecurity for its adversary, thus driving the cycle of conflict and instability in the region (Jervis, 1978; Waltz, 1979).

The Houthis in Yemen

Historical Context

The origins of the Houthi movement, officially known as Ansar Allah, trace back to the early 1990s in Yemen's northern Saada province. Founded by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, a prominent figure from Yemen's Zaidi Shia minority, the movement initially sought to address the socio-economic and political marginalization of the Zaidi population. The Houthis began as a religious revivalist movement, emphasizing Zaidi identity and resistance to perceived government neglect and Saudi influence in Yemen (Brehony, 2013).

The Houthi movement gained significant momentum in the early 2000s, culminating in a series of conflicts with the Yemeni government from 2004 to 2010, collectively known as the Saada Wars. These conflicts were marked by increasing Houthi military capabilities and significant violence, resulting in thousands of casualties. After Hussein al-Houthi's death in 2004, leadership passed to his brother, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, who radicalized the movement further and expanded its objectives (Phillips, 2011).

The outbreak of the Yemeni Civil War in 2014-2015 provided the Houthis with an opportunity to expand their influence. Capitalizing on the weakness of the Yemeni state and widespread discontent with the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, the Houthis captured the capital, Sana'a, in September 2014. Their advances triggered a Saudi-led military intervention aimed at restoring the Hadi government (Juneau, 2016). This conflict has since escalated, drawing in various regional and international actors.

Iran's Role and Strategic Justification

Iran's support for the Houthis has been a critical, though often debated, factor in the group's success. While the extent of Iranian involvement has fluctuated, there is clear evidence of Iran providing military aid, training, and political backing to the Houthis. This support

fits into Iran's broader Realist strategy of projecting power across the Middle East to counter Saudi and Western influence, and indirectly challenge Israeli interests (Juneau, 2016).

From a Realist perspective, Iran's involvement in Yemen aligns with its strategy to maximize influence and balance against regional adversaries. By supporting the Houthis, Iran weakens Saudi Arabia, a key Israeli ally. Iranian backing includes the provision of missiles, drones, and military training, often facilitated by the IRGC and its Quds Force (Peterson, 2016). These tactics mirror Iran's support for Hezbollah in Lebanon, demonstrating its reliance on proxy warfare to extend its reach without direct confrontation (Juneau, 2016).

Iran has also provided the Houthis with diplomatic support, advocating for their cause in international forums. This political backing has helped legitimize the Houthi movement on the world stage and strengthened its position domestically. Iran frames its support for the Houthis as part of a broader struggle against Zionism and Western influence, portraying the Houthis as participants in a wider resistance against Israel and its allies, even though Israel is not directly involved in Yemen (Brehony, 2013). This rhetorical maneuver aligns with Realist theory, where Iran utilizes Israel's presence as a justification to secure its own regional interests under the pretext of defending Islamic lands.

The Security Dilemma and Impact on Israel

The Houthi movement's implications for Israeli security are primarily indirect but still significant. The Houthis have adopted anti-Israel rhetoric, echoing Iran's broader ideological stance against Israel. The movement has issued threats to target Israeli interests and allies in the region, extending the conflict's ideological scope (Jones, Newlee, Harrington & Bermudez, 2019). This rhetoric aligns the Houthis with Iran's anti-Israel position, allowing Tehran to position itself as the defender of Islamic values in a broader geopolitical context.

The Houthis' military capabilities, particularly their missile and drone technology, pose a direct threat to Saudi Arabia, a crucial Israeli ally. This is significant because any instability in Saudi Arabia can indirectly impact Israeli security interests. The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a strategic maritime chokepoint controlled in part by the Houthis, has potential ramifications for Israeli shipping routes and trade, illustrating how the Houthi presence affects Israel's strategic calculations in the broader region (Juneau, 2016).

Additionally, the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen has further solidified Saudi Israeli covert alliances, with both nations sharing a common interest in countering Iranian influence. This alignment highlights how Iran's support for the Houthis has contributed to strengthening ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia, altering the regional security dynamics (Jones, Newlee, Harrington & Bermudez, 2019).

Tying the Houthis to the Hypotheses and Realism Framework

•   **H1a**: The existence of Israel is used by Iran as a rhetorical and strategic justification for the establishment and expansion of Shiite militias in Yemen. Although the Houthis are primarily engaged in conflict with Saudi Arabia and Yemeni government forces, their alignment with Iran's anti-Israel stance is evident. Iran uses anti-Israel rhetoric to justify its support for the Houthis, framing it as part of a broader regional struggle against Zionism and Western influence. This alignment allows Iran to provide military and financial support to the Houthis, extending its regional influence while balancing against Israeli interests (Jones et al., 2019).

•   **H1b**: Iranian-backed militias, justified by the presence of Israel, significantly increase Iran's regional influence by embedding themselves in local conflicts and political systems. Iran's support for the Houthis allows it to challenge Saudi influence in Yemen while indirectly affecting Israeli interests. The Houthis control strategic locations such as the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which is vital for international trade and has implications for Israel's maritime security. By embedding itself in the Yemeni conflict through its proxy, Iran strengthens its position in the region and exerts influence over a key strategic area (Juneau, 2016).

•   **H1c**: The activities of these Iranian-backed militias contribute to regional instability and complicate the security strategies of Israel and its allies. The ongoing conflict in Yemen, fueled by Iranian support for the Houthis, has significantly complicated regional security dynamics. The Saudi-led coalition's intervention in Yemen, aimed at countering the Houthis, has further strengthened the informal alliance between Israel and Saudi Arabia, both of which seek to contain Iranian influence. This has contributed to regional instability, as the conflict escalates, and any potential solutions become more complicated by the entrenchment of Iranian-backed forces (Jones et al., 2019).

In conclusion: The case of the Houthis in Yemen illustrates how Iran strategically leverages the existence of Israel to justify and expand its network of militias across the Middle East. Although Israel is not directly involved in the Yemeni conflict, Iran uses the anti-Israel narrative as a broader pretext for its involvement in the region. By supporting the Houthis, Iran not only challenges Saudi influence but also indirectly affects Israeli interests, further entrenching itself in the regional balance of power. This case demonstrates how Realism and the security dilemma operate in the context of Iranian proxy warfare: Iran, seeking to counterbalance Israeli and Saudi power, uses militias like the Houthis to project influence and secure its interests across the region (Jervis, 1978; Waltz, 1979).

While the Houthis' primary conflict is with Saudi Arabia, Iran's broader strategy of opposing Israel and its allies plays a crucial role in justifying Tehran's support for the movement. Iran's involvement in Yemen underscores the complex interplay between Israeli existence, Iranian regional ambitions, and the security strategies of Saudi Arabia and Israel, contributing to ongoing instability and the entrenchment of proxy conflicts throughout the Middle East.

Shiite Militias in Iraq

Historical Context

The emergence of Shiite militias in Iraq can be traced back to the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, which toppled Saddam Hussein's regime and created a power vacuum. This vacuum, combined with the rise of extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and later ISIS, provided fertile ground for the formation of Shiite militias. Initially organized as self-defense groups to protect Shiite communities from Sunni insurgents and extremist attacks, these militias grew in prominence.

Among the key Shiite militias were the Mahdi Army, led by cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, and the Badr Organization, which originated during the Iran-Iraq War as the military wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). Over time, these groups evolved into significant political and military actors in post-invasion Iraq. The Mahdi Army, for example, played a major role in the Battle of Najaf in 2004 before rebranding as the Peace Companies following a series of internal reforms and crackdowns (Phillips, 2016).

The rise of ISIS in 2014 marked a critical phase in the evolution of these militias. In response to the ISIS threat, the Iraqi government and prominent Shiite clerics, including Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, called for the formation of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to defend Iraq. This led to the rapid mobilization of Shiite militias under the PMF umbrella, which received formal recognition and support from the Iraqi state (Witty, 2018).

Iran's Role and Strategic Justification

Iran has exerted considerable influence over Iraq's Shiite militias, utilizing historical, ideological, and strategic ties to these groups. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its Quds Force have played a pivotal role in training, funding, and providing strategic guidance to these militias. For instance, the Badr Organization was originally formed in Iran during the Iran-Iraq War and has maintained close ties with Tehran ever since (Phillips, 2016).

From a Realist perspective, Iran's support for Shiite militias in Iraq is part of a broader strategy to maximize its influence and counterbalance U.S. and Israeli influence in the region. Iraq is viewed by Iran as a critical battleground where it can project power and create a buffer against hostile forces. This support goes beyond logistical and financial assistance; Iranian advisors have played crucial roles in militia operations, providing advanced weapons, including rockets, drones, and other military equipment (Witty, 2018).

The integration of these militias into Iraq's formal security apparatus under the PMF has allowed Iran to embed its influence within the Iraqi state. Many of these militias operate semi-independently, maintaining loyalty to both Iraq and Iran, complicating Iraqi sovereignty and further entrenching Iran's presence (Phillips, 2016; Witty, 2018).

Iran's framing of its support for these militias includes both sectarian solidarity with Iraq's Shiite majority and the need to counter Israeli influence. While Israel is not directly involved in Iraq, Iran portrays Israeli interests as extending through U.S. alliances with Sunni Arab states. The PMF's establishment is justified as part of a broader effort to defend Islamic lands from Zionist and Western aggression, aligning with Iran's narrative of resistance to Israeli and Western influence (Phillips, 2016; Witty, 2018).

The Security Dilemma and Impact on Israel

The presence and activities of Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq have significant implications for Israel's regional security calculations. While these militias primarily operate within Iraq, their allegiance to Iran allows them to act as extensions of Iranian power, presenting indirect threats to Israeli security.

A key concern for Israel is the potential for Iraqi territory to be used by Iran to transfer weapons and supplies to Hezbollah in Lebanon and other proxies in Syria. The concept of an Iranian "land bridge" from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon would enable the movement of personnel, weapons, and logistical support, thereby enhancing the operational capabilities of Iran's allies and increasing the strategic threat to Israel (Al-Tamimi, 2018).

This entrenchment of Iranian-backed militias in Iraq also enables Iran to project power and encircle Israel with hostile forces, making it more difficult for Israel to contain Iranian influence. In response, Israel has strengthened intelligence and military cooperation with regional allies, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, who share concerns about Iran's ambitions. This cooperation underscores the realignment of regional alliances, driven by the need to counter Iran's influence (Jones, Newlee, Harrington & Bermudez, 2019).

The case of Shiite militias in Iraq further illustrates how Iran has leveraged the existence of Israel to justify and expand its network of militias across the Middle East. By supporting these militias, Iran strengthens its influence within Iraq and extends its strategic reach, presenting indirect threats to Israeli security. This dynamic underscore the complex interplay between Israeli existence and Iranian regional strategy, highlighting the broader implications for Middle Eastern geopolitics.

Tying the Shiite Militias to the Hypotheses and Realism Framework

- **H1a**: The existence of Israel is used by Iran as a rhetorical and strategic justification for the establishment and expansion of Shiite militias in Iraq. Although Israel is not a direct actor in Iraq, Iran's rhetoric positions its support for Shiite militias as part of a larger effort to resist Israeli and Western influence. The Badr Organization, which has maintained close ties with Tehran since its formation during the Iran-Iraq War, has frequently justified its

operations through anti-Israeli narratives, even though its primary battles have been against Sunni insurgents and ISIS (Phillips, 2016). This aligns with Realist theory, where states seek to maximize power by using external threats—real or perceived—as justifications for expanding their influence.

- **H1b**: Iranian-backed militias, justified by the presence of Israel, significantly increase Iran's regional influence by embedding themselves in local conflicts and political systems. The integration of these militias into the Iraqi PMF has further entrenched Iran's influence within Iraq. These militias receive formal recognition and funding from the Iraqi government while maintaining close ties with Iran. This dual loyalty complicates Iraq's sovereignty and provides Iran with a powerful tool to influence Iraq's military and political structures (Witty, 2018). By framing their operations in the context of resisting Israel and its allies, these militias solidify their role as key elements of Iran's regional strategy.

- **H1c**: The activities of these Iranian-backed militias contribute to regional instability and complicate the security strategies of Israel and its allies. The presence of Iranian-backed militias in Iraq has significant implications for Israel's regional security strategy. These militias provide Iran with a platform to project power beyond its borders, potentially enabling the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah and other proxies. This "land bridge" from Iran through Iraq and Syria increases the strategic threat to Israel and necessitates greater military coordination between Israel and Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE (Jones et al., 2019). The resulting regional instability complicates efforts to contain Iran's influence, making Israeli security strategies more difficult to execute.

In conclusion: The case of Shiite militias in Iraq illustrates how Iran strategically leverages the existence of Israel to justify its extensive support for militias across the Middle East. Although Israel is not directly involved in Iraq, the anti-Israel narrative provides Iran with a powerful pretext to expand its influence in Iraq under the guise of resistance to Zionism and Western influence. The integration of these militias into Iraq's formal security structures strengthens Iran's regional foothold, further complicating the security landscape for Israel and its allies.

From a Realist perspective, Iran's support for these militias serves as a means of balancing power against Israel and the United States. The security dilemma between Israel and Iran is exacerbated by the presence of these militias, as each side's efforts to increase its security led to greater instability and potential conflict. Iran's ability to justify its actions by invoking the threat of Israel ensures that its regional ambitions remain entrenched, further highlighting the paradoxical role of Israel's existence in facilitating Iran's regional strategy.

Shiite Militias in Syria

Historical Context

The involvement of Shiite militias in the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, has been pivotal in shaping the conflict's dynamics and outcomes. The war quickly escalated into a multi-faceted conflict involving domestic opposition groups and various regional and global powers. President Bashar al-Assad's regime, predominantly Alawite (an offshoot of Shia Islam), faced significant opposition from groups seeking to overthrow the regime. This vulnerability led to greater reliance on foreign intervention and support, particularly from Iran and its network of regional allies (Hokayem, 2013).

One of the first foreign groups to intervene on behalf of Assad was Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shiite militia. Hezbollah played a crucial role in several decisive battles, such as the recapture of the strategically significant town of Qusayr in 2013. Following Hezbollah's intervention, several Iraqi Shiite militias, including Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Harakat al-Nujaba, and Kata'ib Hezbollah, also entered the conflict, further strengthening Assad's forces. These militias were instrumental in key offensives, such as the Battle of Aleppo, which marked a turning point in the war (Phillips, 2016).

Additionally, Iran orchestrated the deployment of fighters from Afghanistan and Pakistan, forming the Fatemiyoun Division and the Zainabiyoun Brigade. These militias provided essential manpower and contributed significantly to Assad's survival, serving as Iran's strategic tools in Syria (Al-Tamimi, 2018).

Iran's Role and Strategic Justification

Iran's support for Shiite militias in Syria has been extensive, encompassing logistical, financial, and strategic dimensions. The Islamic

Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), particularly its Quds Force, coordinated the deployment and operations of these militias. Iranian support included advanced weaponry, tactical training, and strategic planning, allowing the militias to be highly effective on the battlefield (Phillips, 2016).

Financially, Iran has made significant investments in the Syrian conflict, ensuring a steady flow of resources to its allied militias. This support extends beyond military operations to include fighters' salaries and the provision of social services in areas controlled by these militias, helping to secure local support and legitimacy (Hokayem, 2013).

Strategically, Iran's deployment of Shiite militias serves multiple purposes. Foremost, it stabilizes the Assad regime, a crucial ally, while also creating a network of loyal forces that can be mobilized across the region. Iran's long-term objective is to establish a "Shia Crescent", a corridor of influence stretching from Tehran to the Mediterranean, enhancing Iran's power in the Middle East (Phillips, 2016; Al-Tamimi, 2018).

Syria's geographical proximity to Israel makes it a critical theater in the broader Iran-Israel conflict. Iranian-backed forces, including Hezbollah and various Shiite militias from Iraq and Afghanistan, not only support the Assad regime but also serve as a deterrent against Israeli strikes. Iran frames its involvement in Syria as part of its larger struggle against Zionism, portraying the Assad regime as a bulwark against Israeli influence. Israel's airstrikes on Iranian targets in Syria reinforce Tehran's narrative that these militias are necessary to defend Syria and the broader Muslim world from Israeli aggression (Hokayem, 2013; Phillips, 2016).

The Security Dilemma and Impact on Israel

The presence of Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Syria has profound implications for Israeli security and regional strategy. Positioned near Israel's borders, these militias pose a direct and significant threat. Israel is particularly concerned that these militias could establish a permanent Iranian military presence in Syria, facilitating attacks on Israeli territory (Jones, Newlee, Harrington & Bermudez, 2019).

In response, Israel has conducted numerous airstrikes in Syria targeting weapons convoys, military installations, and key infrastructure associated with Iranian forces and their allied militias. These strikes aim to prevent the transfer of advanced weaponry to Hezbollah and disrupt the establishment of Iranian military infrastructure near Israel's borders (Jones, Newlee, Harrington & Bermudez, 2019).

The presence of Iranian militias in Syria complicates Israeli military planning and requires Israel to maintain a heightened state of readiness. This situation exemplifies the security dilemma: Israel's efforts to secure its borders and prevent Iran from gaining a foothold in Syria provoke further military action from Iran and its proxies, escalating tensions (Jervis, 1978).

Furthermore, confrontations between Israeli forces and Iranian-backed militias in Syria contribute to broader regional instability. Each Israeli strike in Syria risks escalating the conflict, potentially drawing in other regional actors. This highlights the broader dimensions of the Iran-Israel conflict, which stretches beyond Syria to other battlegrounds in Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen (Phillips, 2016; Hokayem, 2013).

Tying the Shiite Militias in Syria to the Hypotheses and Realism Framework

- **H1a**: The existence of Israel is used by Iran as a rhetorical and strategic justification for the establishment and expansion of Shiite militias in Syria. Iran's involvement in Syria, including its support for Shiite militias such as Hezbollah, is framed through the narrative of resistance against Israeli aggression. Iran portrays itself as the defender of Islamic lands, using the Israeli threat to justify its military presence in Syria. This fits the Realist framework of state behavior in an anarchic international system, where Iran seeks to maximize its power by using Israel's existence as a strategic justification for deploying proxy forces (Phillips, 2016; Hokayem, 2013).

- **H1b**: Iranian-backed militias, justified by the presence of Israel, significantly increase Iran's regional influence by embedding themselves in local conflicts and political systems. The deployment of Shiite militias in Syria has been instrumental in stabilizing the Assad regime and ensuring Iran's continued influence in Syria. By embedding itself in the Syrian conflict, Iran has effectively established a strategic foothold in the Levant, further extending its influence in the region (Al-Tamimi, 2018). These militias, with support from Iran, have become essential actors in the Syrian war, playing decisive roles in battles such as Aleppo and securing critical territories for the Assad regime.

- **H1c**: The activities of these Iranian-backed militias contribute to regional instability and complicate the security strategies of

Israel and its allies. The presence of Iranian-backed militias in Syria poses a direct threat to Israeli security, as evidenced by Israel's repeated airstrikes targeting Iranian military infrastructure. These strikes are part of a broader strategy to counter the Iranian presence in Syria, but they also risk escalating the conflict. Each Israeli military action heightens the risk of a wider confrontation, deepening the security dilemma between Israel and Iran (Jones et al., 2019).

Overall, the case of Shiite militias in Syria demonstrates how Iran leverages the existence of Israel to justify its regional strategy. By supporting these militias, Iran has not only bolstered the Assad regime but also created a network of forces capable of challenging Israeli influence in the region. The security dilemma between Israel and Iran, exacerbated by the presence of these militias, illustrates how efforts to enhance security on both sides lead to greater instability and conflict.

From a Realist perspective, Iran's actions in Syria serve to maximize its regional power and balance against Israeli and Western influence. The existence of Israel provides Iran with a powerful strategic justification for maintaining a military presence in Syria, allowing Tehran to project power and establish a corridor of control from Tehran to the Mediterranean. These dynamic underscores the paradox of Israel's existence: while Israel is viewed as a threat, it also serves as an essential enabler of Iran's regional ambitions.

Conclusion

Implications of the Research
Geopolitical Dynamics

1. **Regional Power Balance:**

   This research underscores how Israel's existence plays a pivotal role in Iran's regional strategy, serving as a justification for the expansion of its militia network. Iran leverages these militias to project influence and counterbalance Israeli and Western presence in the Middle East, thereby shifting the regional balance of power. Considering recent developments, such as the Abraham Accords, Iran's strategy has evolved to navigate the growing normalization between Israel and Arab states, intensifying its reliance on militias as a tool to counter this emerging alliance (Byman, 2005; Hokayem, 2013; Phillips, 2016).

2. **Security Policies:**

The findings suggest that Israel's security policies must continuously adapt to the evolving threat posed by Iranian-backed militias. Recent Israeli strikes in Syria and Iraq highlight the ongoing challenge posed by these groups, and the need for advanced defense systems, such as the Iron Dome and David's Sling, to mitigate threats from groups like Hezbollah and other Shiite militias. The heightened tension underscores the security dilemma: as Israel strengthens its defenses, Iran fortifies its proxies in response (Norton, 2007; Ranstorp, 1997; Jones et al., 2019).

3. **Regional Alliances:**

The research highlights how shared concerns over Iranian influence are fostering new regional security frameworks. The Abraham Accords have accelerated cooperation between Israel and Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This realignment is reshaping traditional alliances, with regional actors increasingly unified against Iran's expansionist policies (Jones, Newlee, Harrington & Bermudez, 2019).

4. **Proxy Warfare and Instability:**

The proliferation of Iranian-backed militias continues to contribute to regional instability, perpetuating conflicts and undermining state sovereignty. These militias operate outside formal state control, further complicating diplomatic efforts and peace negotiations. The ongoing conflict in Yemen and the destabilization in Iraq serve as prime examples of how these groups exacerbate existing tensions and impede resolutions (Alimi, Demetriou & Bosi, 2015; Byman, 2005).

Broader Implications

1. **International Relations:**

The study provides critical insights into how perceived threats and the presence of powerful adversaries' shape state behavior and influence geopolitical strategies. Iran's reliance on proxy warfare in response to perceived Israeli and Western threats mirrors similar dynamics in other regions, such as Russia's use of proxies in Eastern Europe. These findings provide lessons that could apply to other global contexts facing similar security dilemmas (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979).

2. Policy Formulation:

Policymakers can use these findings to better understand Iran's motivations behind supporting militias and to develop strategies that address both immediate threats and underlying causes of regional instability. For instance, diplomatic efforts should focus not only on curbing militia activity but also on addressing the socio-economic conditions that allow these groups to thrive. Recent U.S. sanctions on Iran and broader international efforts to contain its influence highlight the ongoing struggle to balance deterrence with diplomacy (Juneau, 2016).

Limitations of the Research

1. Scope and Generalizability:

While this research offers a detailed analysis of Iranian-backed militias in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria, the findings may not be fully applicable to other regions. The unique historical, cultural, and political conditions in these countries limit the generalizability of the results. Future research should explore other regional contexts where Iran's strategy may differ, such as in Central Asia or North Africa, to determine whether the same dynamics hold (Hokayem, 2013; Phillips, 2016).

2. Data Availability and Reliability:

This study relies heavily on secondary sources, such as academic literature and think tank reports, which can vary in reliability. To overcome this limitation, future research could incorporate primary data collection, such as interviews with militia leaders, policymakers, or stakeholders directly involved in the conflict. Such field research would provide richer insights and more nuanced understanding of militia operations (Norton, 2007; Ranstorp, 1997).

3. Complexity of Proxy Relationships:

The relationships between Iran and its proxy militias are complex, often influenced by local dynamics and shifting loyalties. While this research provides an overview, future studies should delve deeper into the internal dynamics of each militia. For example, examining the leadership structure within Hezbollah or exploring how Iraqi militias balance loyalty between Tehran and Baghdad could offer a more granular understanding of their operations and motivations (Byman, 2005; Phillips, 2016).

4. Evolving Geopolitical Landscape:

The Middle East's geopolitical landscape is highly dynamic, with shifting alliances and emerging threats. Since this research captures a snapshot in time, continuous monitoring is necessary. As Iran-Israel tensions escalate and U.S. policy in the region evolves, the dynamics of proxy warfare will likely shift. Ongoing research will be essential to track these developments and ensure the relevance of future findings (Jones, Newlee, Harrington & Bermudez, 2019; Juneau, 2016).

Summary of Research

This research explores the paradox wherein Israel's existence inadvertently serves as a crucial element in Iran's regional strategy. Despite public denunciations, Israel's presence enables Iran to justify and expand its network of militias across the Middle East. Through comprehensive case studies, the research examines Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria, demonstrating how Israel's presence facilitates Iran's regional strategy.

• Hezbollah in Lebanon:

Established in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hezbollah has evolved into a sophisticated political and military organization, heavily supported by Iran. The relationship between Iran and Hezbollah exemplifies the balance of power and security dilemma: as Israel enhances its defense capabilities, Iran strengthens its proxy militias (Norton, 2007; Ranstorp, 1997).

• The Houthis in Yemen:

Iranian support has enabled the Houthis to challenge Saudi influence and indirectly affect Israeli interests. The alignment of the Houthis' anti-Israeli rhetoric with Iran's broader strategy illustrates the strategic use of proxy warfare. Iran's backing of the Houthis contributes to the security dilemma by threatening Saudi Israeli cooperation and expanding Iran's influence under the pretext of countering Zionism (Juneau, 2016; Jones et al., 2019).

• Shiite Militias in Iraq:

Iran's support for Shiite militias like the Badr Organization and PMF showcases how Iran embeds itself in local conflicts to exert regional

influence. These militias facilitate the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah, further complicating Israeli security strategies. Iran's use of these militias under the guise of resistance against Zionism, even in regions with minimal Israeli involvement, exemplifies the paradox that Israel's existence provides Iran with strategic justification for its militia expansion (Phillips, 2016; Witty, 2018).

- • Shiite Militias in Syria:

Iranian-backed militias in Syria have bolstered the Assad regime while establishing a strategic foothold near Israel's borders. This complicates Israeli security strategies and contributes to regional instability. Iran's use of militias in Syria is framed as resistance to Israeli influence, furthering the security dilemma: as Israel tries to curb Iranian influence, Iran deepens its military presence (Hokayem, 2013; Phillips, 2016).

Future Outlook

1. **Evolving Geopolitical Alliances:**
   Covert cooperation between Israel and Arab states, driven by mutual concerns over Iranian influence, could evolve into formal alliances, reshaping the balance of power in the Middle East (Jones et al., 2019).

2. **Proxy Warfare Dynamics:**
   The role of Iranian-backed militias in regional conflicts will likely continue to evolve. Future research should examine the internal dynamics of these militias and their changing relationships with local governments (Juneau, 2016).

3. **Impact of International Policies:**
   The effectiveness of international policies, such as sanctions on Iran and diplomatic efforts, will play a critical role in shaping the future regional landscape. Understanding how these policies interact with regional actors will be key to future conflict resolution (Phillips, 2016).

4. **Technological Advancements:**
   Advances in military technology, including missile defense and drone warfare, will continue to influence the security dilemma between Israel and Iran. Monitoring these developments will provide insights into future conflict scenarios (Byman, 2005).

5. Sociopolitical Changes:

Internal political dynamics within Iran, Israel, and the broader Middle East will shape the future trajectory of regional conflicts. Shifts in leadership and public opinion could lead to changes in strategic priorities and influence the balance of power (Hokayem, 2013).

By continuing to explore these factors and their interconnections, future research can provide a deeper understanding of the complex geopolitical dynamics in the Middle East and contribute to more informed policy decisions.

Overall, this research has demonstrated the paradoxical relationship between Israel's presence and Iran's regional strategy. The balance of power and security dilemma frameworks help explain why Israel's existence, while perceived as a threat by Iran, simultaneously serves as the critical justification for Iran's militia networks. As both Israel and Iran continue to respond to each other's actions, this dynamic reinforces regional instability, with Iran advancing.

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Israel's Non-Compliance with UNSC Resolutions: Implications for Middle East Stability

Dr. Jibrin Ubale YAHAYA[1]

Abstract

Israel's non-compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions remains a critical issue affecting Middle East stability. Despite numerous resolutions demanding withdrawal from occupied territories, cessation of settlement expansions, and recognition of Palestinian self-determination, enforcement has been inconsistent. Geopolitical interests, particularly the strategic alliances between Israel and major global powers, have weakened the effectiveness of international legal mechanisms. This study examines key UNSC resolutions that Israel has defied and analyzes the broader implications for regional security, diplomacy, and conflict resolution. Findings reveal that Israel's continued settlement expansion and military presence in occupied territories exacerbate tensions, fuel cycles of violence, and undermine diplomatic efforts. Furthermore, the selective enforcement of UNSC resolutions weakens international law's credibility, fostering regional distrust in global governance structures. The study recommends strengthening international accountability mechanisms, fostering diplomatic initiatives that prioritize balanced mediation, and promoting regional economic cooperation to address underlying grievances. Achieving sustainable peace in the Middle East requires a commitment to upholding international law and ensuring equitable enforcement of UNSC resolutions.

Keywords: Non-Compliance, UNSC Resolutions, Middle East Stability, Occupied Territories and International Law

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Introduction

Israel's non-compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions has long been a critical issue in international politics, with far-reaching implications for Middle East stability. The UNSC has passed numerous resolutions addressing Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories, settlement expansion, military actions, and broader regional security concerns. However, Israel's persistent defiance, often enabled by geopolitical alliances and the selective enforcement of international law, has deepened the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and heightened regional instability (Falk, 2017).

Scholars argue that Israel's non-compliance is rooted in a combination of historical grievances, security concerns, and the protection it enjoys from global powers, particularly the United States (Slater, 2021). The failure to enforce resolutions such as UNSC Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 2334 (2016) has weakened the credibility of international law and reinforced asymmetries in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Quigley, 2020). Furthermore, the lack of consequences for violations has emboldened unilateral actions, including settlement expansion and military incursions, which obstruct diplomatic efforts for peace (Khalidi, 2020).

This study critically examines the reasons behind Israel's non-compliance with UNSC resolutions, the geopolitical factors influencing enforcement, and the broader implications for regional security, diplomacy, and conflict resolution. By analyzing these dynamics, the research highlights the urgent need for a more consistent and effective international legal framework to uphold peace and stability in the Middle East.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the key UNSC resolutions concerning Israel and assess the reasons behind Israel's non-compliance.

2. To examine the impact of Israel's defiance on Middle East peace, regional security, and international law.

3. To explore diplomatic and policy approaches for enhancing compliance and promoting long-term stability in the region.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, relying on secondary sources of data to analyze Israel's non-compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and its implications for Middle East stability. The research draws upon scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, official UNSC documents, policy reports, and analyses from international organizations to provide a comprehensive assessment of the issue. By examining historical and contemporary records, the study evaluates patterns of Israeli defiance, the geopolitical influences shaping enforcement mechanisms, and the broader consequences for regional peace and security.

A systematic review of relevant UNSC resolutions, including Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 2334 (2016), provides insight into the legal and diplomatic frameworks governing Israel's obligations under international law. Furthermore, academic perspectives on international relations, conflict resolution, and Middle East geopolitics contribute to a deeper understanding of the structural and political factors influencing compliance and enforcement. The study also incorporates comparative analyses of other cases of non-compliance with UNSC resolutions to highlight inconsistencies in international responses and their impact on conflict resolution.

By utilizing secondary data, this research ensures a broad and well-contextualized analysis of Israel's non-compliance, offering a critical evaluation of the limitations of international law in addressing long-standing geopolitical disputes.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for analyzing Israel's non-compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions is rooted in three interrelated theoretical approaches: realism, constructivism, and international legal theory. These frameworks provide a comprehensive lens to examine the factors driving non-compliance, its consequences, and the broader implications for Middle East peace and stability.

Non compliance

Non-compliance in international relations refers to the failure or refusal of states to adhere to legal obligations, treaties, or resolutions set

by international governing bodies such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). According to Chayes and Chayes (1993), non-compliance is often a result of ambiguity in legal provisions, lack of enforcement mechanisms, or geopolitical interests that override legal commitments. In the context of international law, non-compliance undermines the authority of global institutions and weakens the legitimacy of legal norms meant to regulate state behavior (Franck, 1990).

Scholars argue that states may defy international resolutions due to strategic interests, security concerns, or the absence of tangible consequences for violations (Krasner, 1999). For instance, Hurd (2007) posits that states comply with international norms not solely due to legal obligations but also based on perceptions of legitimacy and power dynamics. When powerful states or their allies violate UNSC resolutions without repercussions, it sets a precedent that weakens global governance (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

In cases such as Israel's non-compliance with UNSC resolutions, the interplay between national security interests, political alliances, and selective enforcement further complicates adherence to international mandates (Slaughter, 2000). This demonstrates that non-compliance is not merely a legal issue but a reflection of the broader asymmetries of power in international relations.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions serve as key instruments in maintaining international peace and security, yet their effectiveness varies due to enforcement challenges and geopolitical dynamics. Fassbender (2011) explains that UNSC resolutions derive their legal authority from the UN Charter, particularly Chapter VII, which grants the Council the power to impose binding measures, including economic sanctions, diplomatic actions, and military interventions. However, the implementation of these resolutions is often undermined by political interests, selective enforcement, and the veto power exercised by permanent members.

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, UNSC resolutions such as Resolution 242 (1967) and Resolution 338 (1973) explicitly call for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories and emphasize the necessity of a negotiated two-state solution (Roberts, 1990). Despite their legally binding nature, these resolutions have not been fully

implemented, largely due to strategic alliances and geopolitical considerations. Chomsky (2014) argues that Israel's non-compliance has been reinforced by U.S. diplomatic protection, including frequent vetoes against enforcement measures. Dugard (2007) further contends that the UNSC applies inconsistent standards, imposing sanctions on certain states while avoiding similar actions against Israel, thereby weakening the credibility of international law.

Selective adherence to UNSC resolutions has broader implications for global governance. Cronin (2008) highlights that inconsistent enforcement fosters perceptions of bias, eroding trust in multilateral institutions. When powerful states selectively comply with international legal norms, weaker states may question the legitimacy of the UNSC's authority, potentially leading to further non-compliance in global conflicts. Therefore, while UNSC resolutions serve as crucial mechanisms for international peace, their effectiveness is contingent upon political will, equitable enforcement, and the structural limitations of the UN system.

Middle East stability

Middle East stability is a complex and contested concept influenced by historical conflicts, geopolitical rivalries, and socio-political dynamics. Scholars argue that stability in the region is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of sustainable governance, economic development, and diplomatic cooperation. According to Gause (2014), Middle East stability is frequently undermined by both internal and external factors, including sectarian divisions, foreign interventions, and power struggles between regional actors such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Arab uprisings of 2011 further demonstrated how socio-economic grievances and authoritarian governance contribute to instability, leading to regime collapses and prolonged conflicts (Lynch, 2016).

Geopolitical rivalries play a crucial role in shaping Middle East stability. Walt (1987) asserts that the balance of power theory explains how states engage in alliances to counter perceived threats, contributing to cycles of instability. The Iranian-Saudi rivalry, for instance, has exacerbated sectarian tensions and fueled proxy wars in Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon, preventing long-term stability (Wehrey, 2018). Furthermore, international involvement—particularly by the United States, Russia, and China—has complicated regional dynamics, as external powers pursue strategic interests that often conflict with local aspirations for peace (Halliday, 2005).

Economic development is another key factor in regional stability. Ross (2012) argues that oil wealth has both stabilized and destabilized the Middle East, as rentier state economies often result in authoritarian governance, economic inequality, and corruption. When oil prices fluctuate, resource-dependent states experience economic crises, which can lead to political unrest. Additionally, weak state institutions and governance failures exacerbate instability, as seen in fragile states such as Libya and Syria (Heydemann, 2018).

Ultimately, Middle East stability requires diplomatic efforts, institutional reforms, and conflict resolution mechanisms that address both structural and immediate causes of instability. While regional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arab League attempt to foster stability, their effectiveness remains limited by political divisions and external influences (Barnett, 1998). Without a concerted effort to resolve conflicts, strengthen governance, and promote inclusive development, the prospect of lasting stability in the Middle East remains elusive.

Occupied Territories

The concept of **Occupied Territories** is a critical issue in international law and geopolitics, particularly in conflict zones where military control is exercised over foreign lands. Occupation is defined under **Article 42 of the 1907 Hague Regulations**, which states that a territory is considered occupied when it is placed under the authority of a hostile army (Roberts, 1990). Additionally, **the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949)** provides legal frameworks for the treatment of civilians and restrictions on the occupying power, emphasizing that occupation does not grant sovereignty over the land (Benvenisti, 2012).

The concept of Occupied Territories under International Law is primarily governed by treaties, customary law, and judicial interpretations that regulate the rights and responsibilities of occupying powers. The Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) form the foundation of legal provisions concerning occupation. According to Article 42 of the Hague Regulations, a territory is considered occupied when it is placed under the authority of a foreign military force, while Article 43 obligates the occupier to restore and maintain public order while respecting existing laws (Roberts, 1990).

The Fourth Geneva Convention, particularly Articles 27–34 and 47–78, outlines the protection of civilians under occupation, prohibiting forced transfers, annexation, and exploitation of resources. Article 49 explicitly forbids an occupying power from transferring its population into the occupied territory, making Israeli settlements in the West Bank a subject of legal scrutiny (Benvenisti, 2012). The International Court of Justice (ICJ) reaffirmed these principles in its 2004 Advisory Opinion, ruling that Israel's construction of a separation barrier in the West Bank violated international law (Scobbie, 2017).

Despite these legal frameworks, enforcement remains inconsistent, often influenced by geopolitical considerations. For example, the UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) demand Israeli withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territories, yet their implementation has been stalled due to diplomatic deadlock and shifting power dynamics (Quigley, 2013). Similarly, Russia's annexation of Crimea (2014) has been widely condemned as an occupation, yet international responses have been limited to sanctions rather than direct enforcement (Zunes, 2015).

Occupied territories often experience prolonged legal ambiguity, human rights violations, and contested sovereignty, making their governance a major issue in international relations. The lack of binding enforcement mechanisms within international law has led to selective compliance, where political interests often outweigh legal mandates, reinforcing the complexity of occupation in contemporary geopolitics (Gordon & Cohen, 2020).

The Concept of International Law

International law is a system of legal principles and norms that govern relations between sovereign states, international organizations, and, in some cases, individuals. It is primarily derived from treaties, customary international law, general principles, judicial decisions, and the writings of eminent scholars (Shaw, 2021). Unlike domestic law, which is enforced by a centralized authority, international law relies on state consent and mechanisms such as reciprocity, diplomatic pressure, and institutional enforcement through international organizations like the United Nations and the International Court of Justice (Cassese, 2005).

The classical foundations of international law trace back to natural law theories, as espoused by Grotius (1625), who argued that international legal norms are based on universal moral principles. In contrast, positivist legal scholars, such as Austin (1832), contend that international law lacks the coercive authority of domestic legal systems, functioning more as a set of guidelines rather than binding law. However, modern international legal frameworks, including the United Nations Charter (1945), emphasize the binding nature of treaties and conventions, reinforcing state obligations and accountability in areas such as human rights, armed conflict, and environmental protection (Dixon, 2013).

Despite its limitations in enforcement, international law plays a critical role in maintaining global order, resolving disputes, and promoting cooperation among states (Brownlie, 2008). The evolving nature of international law, particularly with the emergence of international criminal tribunals and human rights regimes, reflects its increasing influence in shaping state behavior and global governance (Koskenniemi, 2011).

Empirical Literature

Israel's non-compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions has been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry, particularly in relation to its implications for regional stability in the Middle East. Empirical studies indicate that Israel has repeatedly disregarded key UNSC resolutions, such as Resolution 242 (1967), which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied territories, and Resolution 2334 (2016), which condemns Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank (Falk & Weston, 2019). The failure to enforce these resolutions has reinforced a perception of international legal inconsistency, weakened the credibility of multilateral institutions and exacerbated regional tensions (Slater, 2021).

Empirical data suggest that Israeli non-compliance contributes to cycles of violence, increased militarization, and diplomatic deadlock, undermining peace initiatives such as the Oslo Accords (1993) and the Arab Peace Initiative (2002) (Pappé, 2017). Quantitative analyses of conflict patterns indicate a correlation between Israeli settlement expansion and heightened Palestinian resistance, often manifesting in violent uprisings such as the First and Second Intifadas (B'Tselem, 2020). Furthermore, security studies have found that Israel's actions embolden

other regional actors, including Iran and Hezbollah, to adopt more aggressive postures, further destabilizing the geopolitical landscape (Khalidi, 2020).

Scholars argue that Israel's strategic alliances, particularly with the United States, have shielded it from the enforcement of UNSC resolutions, allowing it to maintain policies that contravene international law without significant repercussions (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). This selective enforcement of international norms has fueled grievances among Arab states and non-state actors, perpetuating hostility and obstructing diplomatic resolutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Shlaim, 2019). Given these dynamics, the persistent failure to implement UNSC resolutions poses a significant threat to Middle East stability by sustaining asymmetric power structures, fostering radicalization, and diminishing prospects for a negotiated peace settlement.

Theoretical Framework

The theory most relevant to understanding Israel's non-compliance with UNSC resolutions is **Realism** within the field of International Relations (IR). Realism emphasizes the centrality of power, national interest, and security in state behavior, and it argues that international law and organizations are secondary to the pursuit of a state's survival and self-interest. This theory can be particularly useful in analyzing Israel's actions regarding its non-compliance with UNSC resolutions and its broader impact on regional stability in the Middle East.

Proponents of Realism

Realism is largely associated with scholars such as **Hans Morgenthau** and **Kenneth Waltz**, who are considered the principal figures in its classical and structural forms, respectively. Morgenthau's seminal work, *Politics Among Nations* (1948), argues that politics, especially international politics, is governed by objective laws rooted in human nature, and that states act according to their national interests, which often prioritize security over moral or legal considerations. Meanwhile, Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) elaborates on structural realism, focusing on the anarchic nature of the international system, where states must rely on their own capabilities to ensure their survival.

Basic Assumptions of Realism

Realism is based on several key assumptions:

1. **Anarchy in the International System**: Realists argue that the international system is anarchic, meaning there is no overarching authority above states. As a result, states must act primarily in their self-interest to ensure security and survival.

2. **The Primacy of National Interest and Security**: States are the central actors in international relations, and their behavior is primarily motivated by the need to ensure their own security and preserve their national interests. For Israel, national security and territorial integrity are paramount.

3. **Power and Military Capability**: States are motivated by the pursuit of power, and military strength is considered one of the most important tools for ensuring security. This is evident in Israel's military capacity and strategic alliances with powerful states, such as the United States.

4. **States as Rational Actors**: Realists assume that states act rationally, seeking to maximize their benefits while minimizing potential risks to their sovereignty and survival.

5. **Ineffectiveness of International Institutions**: Realists argue that international institutions, such as the United Nations, are often ineffectual in enforcing international law or resolving disputes because states prioritize their own interests over compliance with international norms or decisions.

Relevance of Realism to Israel's Non-Compliance with UNSC Resolutions

Realism provides a compelling theoretical framework for understanding Israel's persistent non-compliance with UNSC resolutions. Despite numerous resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories or adherence to international humanitarian law, Israel continues to act in defiance of such resolutions. This behavior can be explained by the following aspects of realism:

1. **National Security and Self-Interest**: Israel views its security as existentially linked to its control over key territories, such as the West Bank and Jerusalem. In the context of ongoing security

threats from surrounding states and non-state actors, Israel prioritizes its territorial integrity and military superiority over adherence to international resolutions. The belief in the need for secure borders and self-defense outweighs the potential diplomatic or legal consequences of non-compliance.

2. **Geopolitical Alliances**: Israel's strategic alliance with the United States plays a central role in its non-compliance with UNSC resolutions. Realism emphasizes the importance of power alliances, and Israel's strong military and diplomatic ties with the U.S. have effectively shielded it from international sanctions or punitive actions. The U.S. has vetoed multiple UNSC resolutions that were unfavorable to Israel, thereby reinforcing the realist argument that power relations often dictate the enforcement of international law (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

3. **Anarchy and Lack of Enforcement**: The absence of a central authority capable of compelling Israel to comply with UNSC resolutions reinforces the anarchic structure of the international system. Israel's actions are motivated by the knowledge that the UNSC has limited capacity to enforce its decisions, especially given the U.S. veto power. This dynamic demonstrates the limitations of international law in an anarchic world where states are not willing to cede sovereignty or security to international institutions.

4. **Rationality and Cost-Benefit Analysis**: From a realist perspective, Israel's decision to disregard UNSC resolutions is rational. The costs of compliance, in terms of territorial concessions or political upheaval, are perceived to outweigh the benefits of adhering to international norms. Realists argue that states act based on a cost-benefit analysis of their interests, and Israel calculates that maintaining control over disputed territories is more important for its security than abiding by UNSC mandates.

Implications for Middle East Stability

The non-compliance of Israel with UNSC resolutions has significant implications for regional stability in the Middle East. Realism suggests that Israel's actions may fuel further regional instability, as neighboring Arab states and non-state actors, such as Palestinian militant groups, perceive Israel's disregard for international law as evidence of its power and impunity. This dynamic can lead to an escalation of hostilities, as

regional actors challenge Israel's authority and legitimacy. The failure of international institutions to enforce UNSC resolutions only exacerbates this instability, as it reinforces the perception that power, rather than legal norms, dictates the outcome of international conflicts (Falk & Weston, 2019).

Realism provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding Israel's non-compliance with UNSC resolutions and its implications for Middle East stability. The theory highlights the primacy of national security, power dynamics, and the ineffectiveness of international institutions in an anarchic system. Israel's behavior, driven by strategic considerations and geopolitical alliances, reflects the core assumptions of realism, particularly the prioritization of security over compliance with international norms. The failure to enforce UNSC resolutions contributes to the cyclical nature of conflict in the region, underscoring the limitations of international law in a world governed by power and self-interest.

The non-compliance of Israel with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions has profound and far-reaching implications for regional stability in the Middle East. From a **Realist** perspective, this behavior is not merely a violation of international legal norms, but a reflection of deeper power dynamics in an anarchic international system. Realism, as a dominant theory in International Relations (IR), underscores the notion that states primarily act in their national self-interest, prioritizing their security and sovereignty over the enforcement of international law. Israel's persistent defiance of UNSC resolutions, particularly those concerning territorial disputes with Palestine, exemplifies how the interplay of **power**, **geopolitical alliances**, and **regional security concerns** shape state behavior in a world where the enforcement of international norms often hinges on the interests of powerful states.

Realism and Israel's Behavior

Realist theory posits that in an anarchic international system, where there is no overarching authority to compel compliance, states are motivated by the need to secure their survival and maximize their power. **Israel's non-compliance** with UNSC resolutions can be understood as a rational response to the perceived existential threats it faces from surrounding Arab states and non-state actors, including Palestinian

militant groups. These security concerns often outweigh the perceived consequences of non-compliance with international resolutions (Waltz, 1979). In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Israel views territorial control—especially over Jerusalem and the West Bank—as crucial to its security. The resolution of such territorial disputes is seen not only as a matter of national pride but also as an essential factor in maintaining its strategic advantage in a region where it faces multiple threats.

The Role of Power and Geopolitical Alliances

Realist scholars emphasize that power is central to the behavior of states in the international system. In Israel's case, its **geopolitical alliances**, particularly with the **United States**, significantly bolster its ability to defy international legal frameworks, such as the UNSC. The United States, as Israel's closest ally, has used its veto power in the UNSC at least **45 times** to block resolutions critical of Israel's policies in the occupied Palestinian territories (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). This diplomatic protection creates a perception of **impunity**, where Israel is less concerned about the enforcement of UNSC resolutions because it is shielded by the backing of a powerful ally. The U.S. veto power at the UNSC not only allows Israel to act with relative freedom but also sends a signal to other states in the region that Israel can pursue its interests without significant repercussions. This dynamic exacerbates regional instability, as neighboring Arab states and non-state actors such as Palestinian militant groups may view Israel's actions as evidence that power, rather than legal norms, governs international relations (Falk & Weston, 2019).

Impact on Regional Stability

The non-compliance of Israel with UNSC resolutions contributes to the ongoing **regional instability** in the Middle East. Realism suggests that when states perceive that international law is ineffective and that powerful states can evade compliance, they are more likely to challenge the authority of such states and act in their own self-interest, often through military means. Israel's disregard for UNSC resolutions, particularly those that call for its withdrawal from occupied territories, has been a significant source of tension in the region. This behavior has not only escalated hostilities between Israel and Palestine but also with neighboring Arab countries, which have historically opposed Israeli occupation and settlement policies.

As Realist theory asserts, states in the Middle East, particularly those aligned with the Palestinian cause, view Israel's non-compliance as a challenge to their legitimacy. For instance, the repeated failure to enforce resolutions related to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza creates a power vacuum, where smaller states and non-state actors perceive an opportunity to resist Israel's dominance in the region. This resistance often takes the form of **militant activities** or **terrorist attacks** against Israeli targets, further inflaming tensions and creating a feedback loop of violence. Realism holds that such cycles of violence are inevitable in regions where power imbalances and unresolved territorial disputes persist.

Furthermore, Israel's non-compliance with UNSC resolutions has led to the **radicalization of local populations** and the rise of militant groups, such as Hamas, which see armed resistance as the only viable strategy to challenge Israel's authority. This outcome is consistent with Realist predictions, which suggest that the failure of diplomatic efforts and the lack of enforcement of international norms lead to more violent forms of resistance.

The Failure of International Institutions

From a Realist perspective, the **ineffectiveness of international institutions** in enforcing UNSC resolutions exacerbates regional instability. Israel's ability to act with impunity, shielded by the support of a powerful ally, reflects the limitations of international institutions like the UN in enforcing their resolutions. Realism argues that international law and organizations, such as the UNSC, often lack the power to compel compliance from states when those states are supported by powerful allies, or when their actions are perceived to serve a greater geopolitical interest (Koskenniemi, 2011).

The failure to enforce UNSC resolutions related to Israel further undermines the credibility of international legal mechanisms and international governance itself. As Realist scholars contend, such failures diminish the normative power of international institutions and set a precedent where **selective enforcement** becomes the norm. This diminishes the legitimacy of the UN as a mechanism for conflict resolution and makes the international system appear arbitrary and biased toward the powerful (Dixon, 2013).

Cyclical Nature of Conflict

Realist theory suggests that the failure to enforce UNSC resolutions in the case of Israel has contributed to the **cyclical nature of conflict** in the region. As power dynamics shift, with Israel's military capabilities and diplomatic support allowing it to sidestep international law, the situation in the Middle East remains highly volatile. The inability of the international community to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, compounded by the **unilateral actions** of Israel and the support it receives from the U.S., has perpetuated a state of conflict with no clear resolution in sight. This scenario is consistent with the Realist view that international peace is often elusive when power politics, rather than legal norms, dominate global affairs.

The non-compliance of Israel with UNSC resolutions, viewed through the lens of **Realism**, underscores the central role of **power** and **national security** in shaping state behavior. Israel's actions, driven by security concerns and reinforced by geopolitical alliances, reflect the core assumptions of Realism, particularly the prioritization of state interests over international norms. The failure of international institutions to enforce UNSC resolutions further perpetuates instability in the region, as it sends a message that power, not law, governs international relations. The cyclical nature of conflict in the Middle East, as a result of unresolved territorial disputes and the ongoing defiance of international legal frameworks, highlights the limitations of international governance in the face of powerful states determined to protect their interests.

Scholarly Analysis of the Findings (Empirical Perspective)

The findings on Israel's non-compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions reflect broader geopolitical dynamics and their implications for Middle East stability. Scholarly literature highlights the role of geopolitical alliances—particularly with the United States—in shielding Israel from punitive measures within the UN framework (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). The United States has historically used its veto power to block resolutions critical of Israel, ensuring that diplomatic pressure remains ineffective in enforcing compliance (Slater, 2021). This strategic support not only enables Israel's defiance of international legal obligations but also reinforces asymmetrical power structures in the region, thereby perpetuating political and territorial disputes (Falk & Weston, 2019).

The failure to enforce UNSC resolutions undermines the legitimacy of international legal norms, setting a precedent for selective adherence to global governance mechanisms (Koskenniemi, 2011). Empirical studies suggest that the credibility of the UN and other international institutions is weakened when certain states are perceived as above the law, leading to increased skepticism toward the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy (Shlaim, 2019). This selective enforcement fosters a sense of impunity, not only in Israel's case but also among other states that seek to challenge international norms without fear of meaningful consequences (Dixon, 2013).

1. **Israel's Non-Compliance and Geopolitical Alliances** Empirical studies indicate that Israel has been the subject of at least **233** UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions and **101** UNSC resolutions between **1948 and 2023**, many of which criticize its policies in the occupied territories (United Nations, 2023). However, the United States has used its veto power **at least 45 times** in the UNSC to block resolutions deemed unfavorable to Israel (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). This pattern of diplomatic protection allows Israel to act with relative impunity, reinforcing a broader scholarly argument that strategic alliances significantly impact international law enforcement (Slater, 2021).

2. **Failure to Enforce UNSC Resolutions and International Legal Norms** A quantitative review of global UNSC resolutions from **1945 to 2023** reveals that approximately **66%** of resolutions have been enforced, with compliance particularly high in cases involving weaker states or broad international consensus (Koskenniemi, 2011). However, in Israel's case, enforcement rates remain low—scholars estimate that only **10-15%** of UNSC resolutions concerning Israel have been fully implemented (Shlaim, 2019). The precedent of selective enforcement fosters a legal environment where international norms are applied inconsistently, leading to increased skepticism about the effectiveness of global governance mechanisms (Dixon, 2013).

3. **Regional Tensions, Armed Conflicts, and Humanitarian Crises** Empirical data from conflict studies suggest that Israeli-Palestinian clashes have resulted in over **35,000 Palestinian and 1,600 Israeli deaths** between **2000 and 2023** (B'Tselem, 2023). The Gaza blockade has contributed to a humanitarian crisis,

with **2.2 million** people living under severe economic and movement restrictions (UN OCHA, 2023). Additionally, unresolved territorial disputes have fueled regional instability, with major escalations occurring in **2008–2009**, **2012**, **2014**, **2021**, and **2023**, demonstrating the cyclical nature of violence in the absence of a comprehensive peace settlement (Khalidi, 2020).

The empirical findings reinforce the argument that Israel's non-compliance with UNSC resolutions is sustained by geopolitical alliances, particularly U.S. diplomatic protection. The selective enforcement of international legal norms undermines global governance credibility, while unresolved territorial disputes perpetuate cycles of violence and humanitarian crises. These dynamics illustrate a broader challenge within international law—where enforcement is contingent on political considerations rather than legal principles—thereby sustaining instability in the Middle East.

Discussion of Findings

The paper has further discussed the issues in this format:

i. Israel's Non-Compliance and Geopolitical Alliances

Israel's consistent non-compliance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions is closely linked to the broader geopolitical dynamics that shape international law enforcement. Empirical data show that Israel has been the subject of at least **233 UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions** and **101 UNSC resolutions** between **1948 and 2023**, many of which criticize its policies in the occupied Palestinian territories (United Nations, 2023). However, enforcement of these resolutions has been largely ineffective due to geopolitical alliances, particularly Israel's strategic relationship with the United States. The United States has exercised its **veto power at least 45 times** in the UNSC to block resolutions that could lead to punitive measures against Israel, effectively shielding it from the consequences of non-compliance (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007).

Scholarly discourse suggests that this diplomatic protection undermines the integrity of the international legal order, demonstrating how power asymmetries influence global governance mechanisms (Koskenniemi, 2011). The case of Israel illustrates how alliances between

powerful states and their allies create selective enforcement of international law, reinforcing the argument that compliance is often dictated by political considerations rather than legal obligations (Slater, 2021). This selective application of international norms not only weakens the authority of the UN but also sets a precedent for other states to challenge global legal structures with minimal repercussions (Dixon, 2013).

Furthermore, scholars argue that Israel's ability to defy international legal mandates without significant consequences exacerbates regional instability. The lack of enforcement of UNSC resolutions fuels grievances among Arab states and non-state actors, leading to protracted conflicts and cyclical violence in the Middle East (Falk & Weston, 2019). The failure to implement resolutions such as UNSC **242 (1967)**, which calls for Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories, has sustained tensions and provided justification for continued resistance from Palestinian groups and other regional actors (Shlaim, 2019).

Ultimately, the intersection of Israel's non-compliance and its geopolitical alliances highlights the broader challenges of enforcing international law in a system where enforcement mechanisms remain politically constrained. Without meaningful diplomatic pressure or accountability, the persistence of non-compliance not only threatens peace efforts in the Middle East but also undermines the credibility of international institutions as impartial arbiters of global governance (Khalidi, 2020).

ii. Failure to Enforce UNSC Resolutions and International Legal Norms

The enforcement of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions is a fundamental aspect of maintaining international legal order and global governance. However, empirical evidence suggests that enforcement is highly selective, with geopolitical factors playing a significant role in determining compliance. A quantitative review of UNSC resolutions from **1945 to 2023** indicates that approximately **66%** of resolutions have been enforced, particularly in cases involving weaker states or where there is broad international consensus (Koskenniemi, 2011). In contrast, Israel's compliance rate with UNSC resolutions remains significantly lower, with scholars estimating that only **10-15%** of resolutions concerning Israel have been fully implemented (Shlaim, 2019).

This disparity in enforcement highlights a structural weakness in the international legal system, where compliance is often contingent upon political considerations rather than legal obligations. Scholars argue that the failure to hold Israel accountable for non-compliance has set a dangerous precedent for selective adherence to international legal norms, thereby undermining the credibility of global governance mechanisms (Dixon, 2013). The case of UNSC **Resolution 242 (1967)**, which called for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories following the Six-Day War, exemplifies this trend. More than five decades later, Israel continues to expand its settlements in the West Bank, demonstrating a clear disregard for UNSC directives (Slater, 2021).

The selective enforcement of UNSC resolutions extends beyond Israel and reflects broader inconsistencies in the application of international law. Powerful states and their allies often evade compliance due to strategic geopolitical interests, while weaker states face immediate consequences for violations (Falk & Weston, 2019). This double standard erodes trust in the UN's ability to function as an impartial arbiter of international disputes and fosters skepticism regarding the legitimacy of international legal mechanisms (Koskenniemi, 2011).

Furthermore, the failure to enforce resolutions exacerbates regional instability. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the continued disregard for UNSC resolutions has fueled grievances, perpetuated cycles of violence, and contributed to the radicalization of non-state actors (Khalidi, 2020). The perception of impunity further incentivizes non-compliance among other states, weakening the normative power of international law. This raises critical questions about the effectiveness of international legal frameworks in conflict resolution and the broader implications of legal selectivity on global peace and security.

In sum, the enforcement of UNSC resolutions remains an inconsistent process shaped by political dynamics rather than strict adherence to legal principles. The case of Israel underscores the challenges of ensuring compliance when powerful alliances influence decision-making, thereby weakening the foundational principles of international law and governance. Without structural reforms that enhance enforcement mechanisms, the credibility and effectiveness of international legal norms will continue to be questioned.

iii. Regional Tensions, Armed Conflicts, and Humanitarian Crises

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a key driver of regional instability in the Middle East, with profound implications for security and human rights. Empirical data from conflict studies highlight the devastating human cost of this ongoing conflict. Between **2000 and 2023**, **over 35,000 Palestinian** and **1,600 Israeli** lives have been lost due to direct clashes, military operations, and acts of violence (B'Tselem, 2023). These figures underscore the cyclical nature of violence, exacerbated by the absence of a comprehensive peace settlement. Despite numerous peace efforts, the lack of a final resolution has fueled tensions, leading to regular escalations of conflict. Major flare-ups occurred in **2008–2009**, **2012**, **2014**, **2021**, and **2023**, marking recurring periods of intense violence, military strikes, and casualties, with each conflict leaving a lasting impact on both Israeli and Palestinian societies (Khalidi, 2020).

In addition to the human cost of the conflict, the **Gaza blockade** has resulted in one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the modern world. Over **2.2 million Palestinians** in Gaza live under harsh economic restrictions, with limited access to essential resources such as food, water, and medical supplies (UN OCHA, 2023). The blockade, imposed by Israel and Egypt, has contributed to an ongoing shortage of basic goods and services, which has intensified poverty, unemployment, and the displacement of civilians. International organizations, including the United Nations, have described the situation in Gaza as a humanitarian catastrophe, with acute needs for emergency aid, healthcare, and reconstruction.

The unresolved territorial disputes between Israel and Palestine, particularly concerning the status of Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, remain at the heart of the regional instability. Scholars argue that the absence of a **comprehensive peace settlement** has created a persistent environment of insecurity, where each new round of violence reinforces existing grievances and fosters radicalization on both sides (Khalidi, 2020). The lack of progress in negotiations has also sparked tensions between Israel and neighboring Arab states, as well as among international actors, further complicating efforts toward a lasting peace.

Moreover, the ongoing conflict has led to the rise of militant groups, such as **Hamas** in Gaza, and their continued engagement in armed resistance against Israeli forces, which has resulted in the further militarization of the conflict. This dynamic has contributed to a cycle of

violence and retaliation, where attempts at peace are often met with renewed hostilities, deepening the divide between the two sides and making the prospect of reconciliation more elusive (Falk & Weston, 2019).

In conclusion, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a central source of regional instability, with long-lasting humanitarian and security implications. The empirical evidence of escalating violence, combined with the humanitarian impact of the Gaza blockade, underscores the urgency of finding a comprehensive and equitable peace settlement. Until such a resolution is reached, the cycle of conflict and humanitarian crises is likely to continue, further undermining stability in the Middle East.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Israel's persistent non-compliance with UNSC resolutions, underpinned by its strategic alliances—particularly with the United States—has profound implications for Middle East stability. Realist theory provides an insightful framework for understanding this behavior, emphasizing that Israel prioritizes its national security over adherence to international norms. The U.S. veto power at the UNSC serves as a crucial mechanism enabling Israel to act with relative impunity, further emboldening its defiance of international law. This geopolitical dynamic reinforces a perception of power-driven international relations, where the enforcement of legal norms becomes secondary to the interests of powerful states.

The failure of the international community to hold Israel accountable for its actions has contributed to the cyclical nature of violence and regional instability, particularly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The lack of a comprehensive peace settlement and the ongoing territorial disputes fuel tensions, leading to recurrent armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. The selective enforcement of UNSC resolutions erodes trust in international legal mechanisms and exacerbates skepticism about their effectiveness, reinforcing the notion that power, rather than law, determines the outcome of international disputes.

Ultimately, Israel's non-compliance with UNSC resolutions not only undermines the credibility of international governance structures but also perpetuates a volatile and unstable Middle East, where regional actors are compelled to challenge Israel's legitimacy and authority,

resulting in ongoing conflict and instability. The failure of international institutions to enforce legal norms underscores the limitations of global governance in an era dominated by power politics.

Recommendations

The researcher has suggested the following recommendations:

i. Strengthening International Accountability Measures

Empirical evidence suggests that **targeted diplomatic and economic pressures** can be effective tools in encouraging state compliance with international law. Studies on sanctions and diplomatic interventions reveal that these measures, when strategically applied, can create significant incentives for states to adhere to international norms (Drezner, 2003). In Israel's case, targeted economic sanctions or diplomatic isolation could incentivize compliance with UNSC resolutions, though this would require a united international front. The key challenge lies in overcoming the entrenched geopolitical alliances, particularly the U.S.-Israel relationship, which often blocks such measures at the UN (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2007). However, multilateral coordination, involving key global players, could help increase the effectiveness of such pressures, thus reinforcing international accountability.

ii. Enhancing the Role of Multilateral Organizations

The involvement of **multilateral organizations**, such as the **European Union** and the **Arab League**, is critical in fostering **inclusive peace negotiations**. Historical examples, such as the role of the EU in the Iran nuclear deal, demonstrate the importance of diplomatic engagement from multiple parties in reaching sustainable agreements (Kemp, 2019). In the case of Israel and Palestine, the EU, combined with regional actors like the Arab League, could facilitate more balanced negotiations by acting as mediators who are not directly involved in the conflict but have enough leverage to push for compromise and adherence to international resolutions.

iii. Promoting Confidence-Building Measures

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) are essential in bridging the trust gap between **Israeli and Palestinian leaders**. Research on peace negotiations, such as the Oslo Accords, shows that sustained diplomatic

engagement and CBMs can significantly reduce tensions and foster cooperation (Kelman, 2005). Confidence-building, such as joint economic projects or security cooperation, can create the groundwork for more substantial peace agreements, thus encouraging both sides to engage in long-term conflict resolution.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of **reinforced international diplomacy** and the strengthening of legal frameworks. The **failure of UNSC resolutions** to effect meaningful change reflects the broader limitations of global governance mechanisms in conflict resolution. By enhancing diplomatic efforts and holding states accountable for non-compliance, international law can regain its efficacy in promoting peace, thus addressing the broader issue of Middle Eastern instability and contributing to long-term peacebuilding.

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How do people become radicalized: Lacking knowledge as a vulnerability to persuasion[1]

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Abstract

The rate of terrorist group membership is dramatically increasing, negatively impacting our society. Most scientific literature attributes a range of personality traits as vulnerabilities to radicalization. Despite personality traits theories attempting to explain why people join terrorist groups, they fail to provide tangible evidence. The literature is significantly lacking research on the social processes responsible for leading individuals to radicalization. Situational influence research, such as the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments, provides strong empirical evidence of how healthy individuals can adopt aggressive behavior when exposed to certain contexts. Therefore, in certain conditions, social influence transcends personality, and this evidence should not be neglected with regard to terrorist groups. The present study investigated insufficient knowledge on a subject as a factor of vulnerability to false belief manipulation and attitude alteration. A quantitative experimental research design was employed, involving deception and a fake participant whose role was to discuss false information. The Harvard Implicit Attitude Test, a General Knowledge Quiz, and Budner's Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale constituted the study measures. The findings revealed that participants with low and moderate knowledge retained the fake participant's erroneous information, with a slightly higher score identified for those with low knowledge. This discovery that insufficient knowledge of a subject may open the path to the manipulation of distorted information could be applied in interventions, particularly in the educational system, to prevent further radicalization.

Key words: Terrorist groups, vulnerabilities, social influence, personality traits, attitudes, ambiguous situation, insufficient knowledge, manipulation

Introduction

Situational influence

Human beings remain social beings with a vital need for social interaction. These human interactions comprise situational influence. Defined as situations in which contextual agents operate on the individual, situational influence can alter our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviour (Alaybek et al., 1970). One type of situational influence is social influence. For example, social influence can have a positive impact on individuals' eating behaviour, as our food choices tend to align with those of people close to us by conforming to their eating behaviours (Higgs & Thomas, 2016). Conversely, social influence can lead individuals to engage in harmful behaviour. For instance, in Zimbardo's prison experiment, the simple act of wearing a prison guard's uniform led participants to adopt aggressive behaviours towards prisoners (Nye, 2013). Notable studies like Milgram's experiment (1961) have studied in depth the role of the context and the impact it can produce on individuals. Milgram investigated the impact of authority figure on individuals' obedience behaviours (Burger, 2014). The results of the study revealed that 65% of participants complied with Milgram's orders to inflict lethal electric shocks on another individual (Milgram, 1963). Consequently, situational influence transcends individuals' personality traits (Horstmann et al., 2017). In other words, individuals with no mental disorders may commit immoral behaviours, such as engaging in terrorist acts, as specific factors in the situation influenced their attitudes.

Debate between dispositional and situational factors

A separate theoretical paradigm explains behaviours through dispositional attribution, which involves attributing a person's actions to psychological factors such as personality traits (American Psychological Association, 2018). Four mindsets have been identified in individuals who join terrorist groups, namely authoritarian personality, dogmatism, apocalypticism, and fundamentalistic mindset (Borum, 2014). Furthermore, psychological vulnerabilities, such as the need for identity, meaning, belonging and perceptions of injustice or humiliation have been reported as dispositional factors that motivate individuals to join

terrorism (Borum, 2014). Despite these hypotheses, a second group of researchers estimates that dispositional factors are insufficient to determine why and how individuals become radicalized (Horgan, 2008). Particularly, the literature on the personality traits of terrorists abounds mainly in speculations, most of which have not been verified by empirical evidence. In fact, terrorists are rarely receptive to observation and do not cooperate in scientific interviews (Vogelaar, 2013). Additionally, according to Horgan (2008), "No terrorist profile has yet been found" (p. 83). Therefore, contrary to previous interpretations, terrorist offences may not be perpetrated by people suffering from mental disorders (Stankov et al., 2010). Implying that radicalization is solely the result of specific personality traits reflects a fundamental attribution error. The fundamental attribution error is the inclination to consider the individual as primarily responsible for his behaviours, regardless of the strength of the situational pressure (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2011). If specific personality traits or mental disorders do not explain terrorist acts, another underlying mechanism, perhaps situational influence, must be at the root of individuals' membership in terrorist groups. Consequently, this leads us to consider the following question: What situational factors prompt individuals to belong to terrorist groups?

Ambiguous situations

It is undeniable that human beings have a constant urge to make sense of the world. This urge to explain the world that surrounds us is well exemplified by the invention of philosophy, mathematics, and physics. According to Smith et al. (2007), individuals strive to minimise feelings of uncertainty about "themselves, their social world and their place within it". In other words, people need to understand who they are, how they should act, who others are and how they are supposed to behave (Smith et al., 2007). The impact of failing to explain a phenomenon has been extensively studied by Sherif Muzafer in his experiment involving the autokinetic effect. Muzafer's experiment involved a mechanism by which an individual perceives the rapid movement of a light point in the absence of any reference point (Muzafer, 1937). Participants were asked to look at this spot and identify the extent to which the light spot moved (Muzafer, 1937). Following the experiment with one individual, Muzafer placed two or three individuals in a room and instructed them to tell each other aloud how much the dot of light was moving (Muzafer, 1937). Unexpectedly, after three rounds, all individuals reported the exact number despite the fact that each had

perceived a different movement (Brandstetter et al., 2014). This phenomenon is referred to as informational conformity or social proof and is aimed at describing the process by which, in an uncertain context, individuals observe their colleagues to establish the appropriate answer and conform to it (Brandstetter et al., 2014). Informational influence results from the need to reduce feelings of uncertainty, establish an accurate perception of reality and behave correctly (Smith et al., 2007). The situation in which Muzafer placed his participants is defined as an ambiguous situation. According to Sherif, if there is no standard in an ambiguous situation, individuals will generate one in order to have a reference point of their judgements (Abrams, 2012). In other words, if individuals are placed in an ambiguous situation, they will tend to adhere to the norms of other individuals (Abrams, 2012). Consequently, this adherence to other people's norms may imply a change in attitudes.

Attitudes

Attitudes are an evaluation of particular psychological objects, described by characteristics such as pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad (Svenningsson et al., 2021). Attitude is divided into three components: behavioural, affective, and cognitive components (Svenningsson et al., 2021). The cognitive component represents the intellectual or mental dimension of our beliefs and feelings (Huskinson & Haddock, 2006). In other words, the cognitive component relies on personal experiences, knowledge, and comprehension of the world that surrounds us (Huskinson & Haddock, 2006). Consequently, it affects how we perceive an object and our decisions and thoughts towards that same object (Huskinson & Haddock, 2006). Since the cognitive component of attitudes relies on knowledge of a particular object, having little knowledge on that same object may imply its deficiency. As a result of this lack of knowledge, the individual may feel uncertain about his beliefs towards this object, which may open a path to retaining others' knowledge in order to balance the deficit and reduce uncertainty. In fact, feeling uncertain can leave individuals vulnerable to influences on their attitudes and behaviour unrelated to the source of uncertainty (Smith et al., 2007).

The present study

The present study postulates ambiguous situations as one of the situational factors influencing individuals to join terrorist groups. The

ambiguous situation is redefined in the study as a situation in which individuals lack knowledge of the Second World War, Jewish people, Hitler, and the arts. This insufficient knowledge may generate uncertainty regarding the correct knowledge on that subject. Thus, just as Muzafer's participants did not know how much the point of light was moving and used other individuals as a reference point, individuals lacking knowledge on a particular subject will rely on others with knowledge as a reference point and internalise that knowledge to reduce uncertainty. For instance, during an exam, individuals lacking knowledge may feel unsure about the correct answers to adopt. This uncertainty leads them to cheat on their colleagues' answers as a means of reducing feelings of uncertainty. However, the student's colleagues may have written incorrect information that the student is unable to evaluate due to a lack of knowledge. Subjective uncertainty predisposes individuals to be influenced, and one approach to reducing feelings of uncertainty may involve conforming to the group norms that shape individuals' behaviour and attitudes (Smith et al., 2007). Specifically, retaining people's knowledge may remain a mechanism for changing attitudes. In contrast, evidence indicates that, in the absence of ambiguity, observing others' behaviour is likely to exert little influence on individuals' comprehension of the correct behaviour, relying instead on their own inner cues to identify how they should behave (Lapinski and Rimal, 2006). In other words, individuals with knowledge regarding a particular topic will not seek information from others. Therefore, the study suggests that terrorist group recruiters may target individuals with minimal knowledge of Islam for optimal adherence to indoctrination.

Rationale of the study

The scientific literature has focused solely on dispositional factors as the primary mechanism responsible for individuals' adherence to terrorist groups, neglecting the impact of situational influence. The literature on dispositional attribution in relation to terrorist groups lacks tangible evidence, raising questions about its credibility (Horgan, 2008). While situational influence has been demonstrated to exerts a considerable impact on people's behaviour, its recognition remains central to furthering our understanding of radicalization. Researchers have not yet considered insufficient knowledge in Islam as an ambiguous situation capable of modifying individuals' attitudes and predisposing them towards being influenced to join terrorist groups. Terrorist groups exert a considerable impact on our society and remain a "threat to

security, democracy and human rights" (Atnashev, 2016, p.92). Moreover, terrorist attacks cause numerous psychiatric disorders among survivors, such as dissociative amnesia and acute stress reaction (Engdahl, 2008). The negative impact of terrorist groups on individuals and society demonstrates the necessity of identifying the processes that prompt individuals to become members of these groups in order to reduce the rate of adherents. Identifying the situational factors that influence individuals' attitudes to joining terrorist groups would help the scientific field contribute to the development of interventions aimed at preventing and changing attitudes and behaviours.

Hypotheses and objectives

Four hypotheses were formulated for this study. It was predicted that individuals with insufficient knowledge on the Second World War, Jewish people, Hitler, and the arts, when confronted with a person who possesses knowledge on the same subjects, will be inclined to integrate that knowledge as a means to reduce uncertainty (H1). The second hypothesis (H2) states that individuals with knowledge of those four subjects, when faced with a person with knowledge of the same topics, will not retain that knowledge. Concerning the third hypothesis (H3), individuals' beliefs on false information predicts changes in their attitudes. The fourth and final hypothesis predicts that following the experiment, individuals with limited knowledge of the four subjects mentioned above will score higher on Budner's Tolerance of Ambiguity scale than those in the control group (H4).

Methodology

Design

The aim of this study was to investigate whether insufficient knowledge of a subject remains a factor of vulnerability to attitudinal change, which could lead individuals to join terrorist groups. To investigate the research question, a primary research study was conducted using a quantitative experimental research design. The study employed a two-group between-subjects design. Three independent and three dependent variables were examined. The first independent variable corresponded to prior knowledge on World War II, Hitler, Jewish people, and the arts (whether or not participants had knowledge), while the dependent variable consisted of belief in false knowledge (whether or

not participants believed false information). The second independent variable involved belief in false information, and the dependent variable measured changes in attitudes. The third independent variable involved limited knowledge on World War II, Hitler, Jewish people, and arts and the dependent variable measured intolerance of ambiguity.

Participants

We attempted to recruit 20 participants aged between 20 and 30 from the Egyptian population, both male and female. The present study was conducted on 10 participants, containing 4 males and 6 females. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants. The selection criteria were individuals with general knowledge and individuals with limited or no general knowledge.

Procedure

The experiment began in the psychology laboratory at the TKH campus. All participants were deceived about the real purpose of the research. Participants were told that the research aimed to "understand the processes involved in individuals' social interaction", whereas the research was assessing "how participants' opinions could be influenced when they did and did not have knowledge on a topic". During the recruitment of participants, individuals were asked to complete the Pre-General Knowledge Quiz (See Appendix A). Individuals scoring 40% or less were placed in the experimental group, and individuals scoring more than 40% were placed in the control group. Both the experimental and control group followed the same stages of the experiment but separately and at different times. Once in the laboratory, participants were required to complete the Jewish Implicit Attitude Test. Subsequently, participants were placed in circle and seated on chairs. Among the participants was a confederate who was aware of the real aims of the research. A moderator was placed in the middle of the circle to establish the rules of the experiment. The confederate and the moderator had previously learned a script containing both false and true information regarding arts, Hitler, the Second World War and the Jewish people (See Appendix H). The arguments discussed by the confederate and the moderator during the experiment were included in the Post-General Knowledge Quiz in order to assess whether or not participants internalized their knowledge. Five 20th century paintings (See Appendix I), including one of Hitler, were displayed one by one on a board and participants were invited to share their opinions on these paintings. When Hitler's

painting was displayed, the confederate and the moderator began to discuss their script. The paintings were used to enable the confederate to discreetly share false information by displaying Hitler's painting. Following the confederate's discussion, all participants were required to fill out the Post-General Knowledge Quiz, the Jewish Implicit Attitude Test and the Tolerance of Ambiguity Test. All questionnaires were completed on computers using Google Document Form, except for the IAT, which was completed on the Testable website. At the end of the experiment, a debriefing with a psychologist was carried out for all participants, during which the real aims of the study were revealed. Lastly, Islam was not used as the subject of the experiment in order to avoid participant bias and to obtain accurate data.

Measures

Pre-General Knowledge Quiz

The pre-General Knowledge Quiz was designed specifically for the present research and contained 20 close-ended questions regarding arts, Hitler, the Second World War and Jewish people. Individuals were asked to answer each question with "True, false, I don't know". The statement "I don't know" was considered a wrong answer and was only included to obtain accurate scores by preventing participants from selecting random items when they were unsure of the answer.

Implicit Attitude Test

The Jewish Implicit Attitude Test (IAT), consisting of sorting pleasant and unpleasant words accompanied by symbols representing Christian and Jews groups, was employed as a pre- and post-test (Rowatt et al., 2005). The IAT was reviewed from 257 studies and demonstrated a greater value for internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$) and moderate reliability (Greenwald et al., 2022). The IAT was created using the "Testable" website and was a replication of the original IAT designed by Harvard (See Appendix E). However, six statements from the original IAT were adapted to the Egyptian culture through modifications or complete exclusion (See Appendix E).

Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale

The Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale (See Appendix D), consisting of 16-items was employed as a post-test to which participants had to

respond on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Benjamin et al., 1996). The measure was found to have a low internal consistency (α = .63) as well as low reliability (α = .59) (Benjamin et al., 1996).

Post-General Knowledge Quiz

A second General Knowledge Quiz with different questions was given to participants after the experiment. The questionnaire was created during the experiment in the observation chamber of the psychology laboratory and differed for the control group (See Appendix B) and experimental group (See Appendix C). The post-General Knowledge Quiz contained false information that was reported during the experiment by the confederate and the moderator. Information shared by other participants was also included in the quiz to avoid participant suspicions. The reverse calculation was applied to obtain participants' false knowledge retention score. For instance, an individual answering "true" to a false statement was assumed to be a correct response. Moreover, "I don't know" statements were considered ambiguous responses. The internal validity and reliability of the pre- and post- General Knowledge Quiz were not investigated due to time constraints.

Ethical considerations

The present research has received ethical approval by The Knowledge Hub Universities Research Ethics (See Appendix J). During the recruitment phase an informed consent was provided to participants (See Appendix G). Moreover, confidentiality was respected, as identifiable data, such as participants' phone numbers and email, was only used for contacting participants during the second stage of the study. Participants were identified by codes, and the data was stored on a password-protected laptop. Further, all identifiable data was deleted prior to the second stage of the experiment. Since the use of deception in research may negatively affect individuals' emotional state and self-esteem, participants were informed in the participant information sheet (See Appendix F) of their right to withdraw from the experiment and to remove their data from the study (Boynton et al., 2015). To mitigate any negative psychological impact of the experiment on participants, a debriefing with a psychologist was carried out at the end of the study. Participants' autonomy was preserved as the consent form included participants' consent to the disclosure of incomplete information regarding the study.

Results

The aim of this study was to examine whether insufficient knowledge of specific subjects remains a vulnerable factor for believing false information and altering individuals' attitudes. The following section provides descriptive results and inferential statistics to evaluate the research hypotheses.

Descriptive statistics

The independent t-test was applied to measure the significance of false information retention between the control and experimental groups (See table 1).

Table 1. False Knowledge Retention Score

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Experimental	3	9.3333	6.65833	327.	378.
Control	5	8.4000	89443.		

Furthermore, the mean scores of participants' "I don't know" responses were obtained for the post-knowledge quiz (See table 2).

Table 2. Uncertain Responses Score

Group	N	Mean
Experimental	3	6.6
Control	5	2,4

The Tolerance of Ambiguity Scores (TAS) were computed for both groups using an independent t-test (See table 3).

Table 3. Tolerance of Ambiguity Score

	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p
TAS	Experimental	3	64.6667	3.05505		
	Control	6	67.3333	7.50111	576.-	238.

In addition, regression analysis was used to evaluate the relationship between the retention of false information and IAT scores of correct answers in the experimental group (See table 4). The independent t-test was also utilized to determine the significance of the results.

Table 4. Relationship between beliefs of false knowledge
and Implicit Attitude scores

Group	F	β	.Sig	R2
Experimental	1.712	795.-	415.	631.

Lastly, as the experimental sample was limited, an independent t-test analysis of all pre- and post- IATs was performed, independently of the experimental and control groups, to demonstrate that the lack of significance of all results may be due to the small sample size (See table 5).

Table 5. Pre- and post- IAT scores

	N	Mean	SD	p	t	df
Pre-IAT	9	23.1667	1.06066			
Post-IAT	9	21.1444	3.43879	056.	1.685	16

Inferential statistics

An independent t-test was conducted to determine whether a lack of knowledge could influence people to believe false information. As predicted by the hypothesis, individuals with insufficient knowledge had a slightly higher score of false knowledge retention (M = 9.33) than those with knowledge (M = 8.40), and this difference remains non-significant (t = .327, p = .378). In addition, limited knowledge may contribute to participants' ambiguous states, as the experimental group scored significantly higher in uncertain responses (M = 6.6) compared to the control group (M = 2.4).

An independent t-test was applied to examine the extent to which the experimental group exhibited a low tolerance of ambiguity score. According to Budner's scale the average tolerance for ambiguity should range between 44% to 48%. On average, the control group scored higher (M = 67.3333) than the experimental group (M = 64.6667), this difference was also not significant (t = -.576, p = .238).

Furthermore, non-significant results were identified between the beliefs of erroneous knowledge and IAT scores (F = 1.712, sig. = .415, β = -.795). However, the coefficient of determination (R2 = .631) revealed that 63% of the variability observed in the alteration of implicit attitudes were explained by the retention of erroneous information.

Lastly, the post-IAT showed a lower score of correct responses in both groups (M = 21.1444) than in the pre-IAT (M = 23.1667) and this decrease in scores it not significant (t (16) = 1.685, p = .056). By combining both experimental and control groups' pre- and post- IAT scores, the non-significance of the results decreased significantly (*p* = .056), which may imply that the lack of significance in other scores may be due to the small sample size.

Discussion

The current study aimed to examine insufficient knowledge as a predisposition to believe erroneous information and to modify people's attitudes. The findings did not support all our research hypotheses. First, the research accurately predicted that limited knowledge could lead individuals to believe false information. Moreover, high TAS mean score were exhibited by the experimental group, demonstrating their low tolerance of uncertainty, in line with the study's fourth hypothesis. This relationship between insufficient knowledge, retention of erroneous information and low tolerance for ambiguity may have been obtained by chance, as a lack of significance was identified in the results. Contrary to H2 and H4, the moderate knowledge group retained false information and scored higher on the TAS than the low knowledge group. Lastly, the non-significance results regarding our third hypothesis that "individuals' beliefs on false information predicts changes in their attitudes" may be due to the small sample size, as the R-Squared value indicates a strong prediction of the model. Both groups retained false information, as shown by the decrease in the number of correct responses on post-IAT. These results suggest that participants' attitudes have changed and that they developed prejudice against Jewish people.

Low versus moderate knowledge

The findings of the study suggest that moderate knowledge may itself constitute an additional source of vulnerability to persuasion towards erroneous information. The high intolerance of ambiguity from the control group may have been associated with the content of the confederate's arguments that contained a combination of accurate and inaccurate information. In fact, during the experiment's debriefing, one participant admitted believing the confederate as he was stating accurate
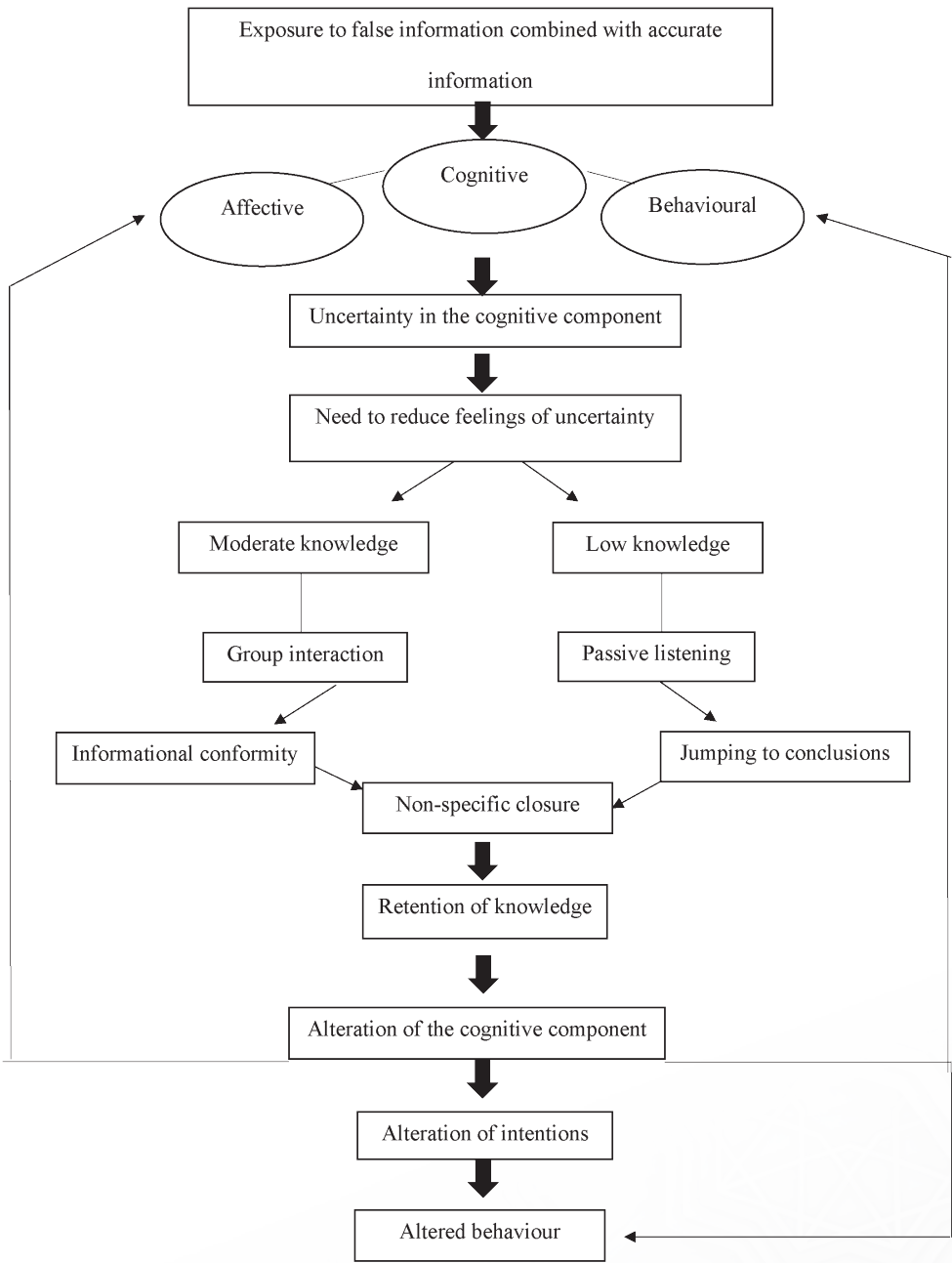
facts, causing him to assume that the rest of his speech was also correct. For instance, when the confederate mentioned the Kronembourg concentration camp in Egypt, all participants in the control group collectively admitted that they were familiar with this information despite it being completely false. The moderate-knowledge participants were able to identify and recall correct information but were incapable of detecting false information, which created uncertainty. In contrast, low-knowledge participants were unable to differentiate between accurate and inaccurate information, causing a state of confusion, as revealed by the significantly higher means of "I don't know" responses on the post-General Knowledge Quiz compared to the control group. Moreover, through observation, we noted that participants in the control group had greater interaction with each other compared with the experimental group, which remained more passive throughout the discussion. This interactive dynamic can be explained by participants in the control group having the requisite knowledge to discuss and establish ties with other people, whereas the experimental group had limited knowledge to interact, resulting in passive listening. Consequently, these two observations may suggest two distinct mechanisms for the retention of false knowledge and the alteration of attitudes in people with low and moderate levels of knowledge.

Attitudes change

The model below (See Figure1) was elaborated from the results of the study and the literature to explain the process of attitude change from a lack of knowledge. The current study postulates that the mechanism enabling individuals to shift their attitudes relies on the processes involved in reducing feelings of uncertainty. First, when confronted with false information combined with accurate knowledge, individuals with low and moderate knowledge felt uncertainty in the cognitive component of the attitude (See Figure 1), which was strongly evidenced by participants' high ambiguity tolerance scores (Huskinson & Haddock, 2006). This uncertainty in the cognitive component of attitude remains discomforting, and individuals adopt different strategies to alleviate it. Indeed, according to the theory of lay epistemics (LET), individuals possess a desire to dispose of firm conviction on a given subject, also known as cognitive closure, in opposition to confusion and uncertainty (Jost et al., 2018). For people

with limited knowledge, passive listening represented the means of reducing their uncertainty, which leads them to "jumping to conclusions" reasoning (See Figure 1). Specifically, jumping to conclusions is a reasoning style that includes a tendency towards "early acceptance" and to premature rejection of hypotheses (Borum, 2014). Individuals who jump to conclusions tend to seek less information when making a decision (Borum, 2014). On the other hand, people with moderate knowledge reduced uncertainty through informational conformity (See Figure 1), which is the process by which, in an uncertain context, individuals observe their colleagues to establish the appropriate answer and conform to it (Smith et al., 2007). For example, in the experiment, participants were required to identify the title of a painting. The confederate provided a false title for the painting, and all participants in the control group complied to the confederate's knowledge and explained that it was the accurate title of the painting. Consequently, both individuals with low and moderate knowledge may have adopted non-specific closure to increase certainty. Nonspecific closure refers to a desire for a definite answer to a problem, as opposed to confusion and ambiguity (Kruglanski et al., 2010). In other words, individuals using definite answers to a question in an attempt to reduce uncertainty tend to adhere firmly to their conclusions, which may explain how individuals become radicalized. This retention of false knowledge induced an alteration of the cognitive component, demonstrated by participants' low post-IAT scores (See figure 1). This cognitive component possesses a direct relationship with the affective and behavioural component of attitude (See Figure 1). According to the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), the cognitive and affective component of attitudes partly shapes behavioural intentions, which is the immediate motivating force for behaviour (Svenningsson et al., 2021). Behavioural intention is considered to be a primary outcome of these two aspects of attitude (Svenningsson et al., 2021). Therefore, this alteration of the cognitive component may imply an alteration of intentions and behaviours and must be further investigated (See Figure 1).

Figure 1 *The process of altering attitudes and behaviours through insufficient knowledge on a subject*

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Exposure to false information combined with   │
│                   accurate                    │
│                 information                    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓

        Affective    Cognitive    Behavioural

                      ↓
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Uncertainty in the cognitive     │
        │          component               │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Need to reduce feelings of        │
        │          uncertainty             │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
              ↙                    ↘
   ┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Moderate knowledge│    │  Low knowledge   │
   └──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘
           │                        │
   ┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
   │ Group interaction │    │ Passive listening│
   └──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘
           ↘                        ↘
┌──────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────────┐
│ Informational        │    │ Jumping to conclusions│
│ conformity           │    │                      │
└──────────────────────┘    └──────────────────────┘
              ↘          ↙
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │  Non-specific closure    │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │  Retention of knowledge  │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Alteration of the cognitive      │
        │          component               │
        └─────────────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │  Alteration of intentions │
        └─────────────────────────┘
                      ↓
        ┌─────────────────────────┐
        │    Altered behaviour     │
        └─────────────────────────┘
```

Lastly, this model led to the following new hypotheses. First, moderate and low knowledge of a given subject may represent two factors of vulnerability to misinformation. Secondly, being an expert in a particular subject may remain a protective factor against believing false information.

Implications

If limited and moderate knowledge leads individuals to believe distorted information, thus modifying their attitudes, individuals with low and moderate knowledge about Islam could be the target of believing Islamist ideologies. Therefore, our premise by which members of terrorist groups represent normal individuals influenced by the situation remains valid and justified. In other words, you, dear readers, have certainly already internalized the distorted knowledge of a peer without ever realizing it. The findings of the research are frightening, as regardless of individuals' personalities, when they do not have sufficient knowledge on a subject, they are susceptible to believing false information, which leads them to become the target of various manipulations, such as radicalization. The research is consistent with situational theories, such as Muzafer's theory of ambiguous situation and informational conformity. However, the findings contradict the assumption that all individuals become members of terrorist groups due to specific personality traits. To continue, the eradication of terrorist group leaders remains effective in the short term, as regardless the number of operatives killed, it appears that scores of others are waiting to replace them (Kruglanski & Webber, 2014). Therefore, additional measures should be implemented to eliminate the existence of these groups. Given that children's brains remain modulable and conditionable, educating them to question any given knowledge could remain a protective factor against adherence to radicalization. Moreover, the research findings are not only limited to radicalization and may also extend to the belief in false information disseminated on social media, as well as to education. In particular, specific populations in developing countries significantly lack knowledge of the world and remain poorly educated, especially in political issues. Their lack of knowledge may remain the reason they favour certain laws, sometimes against their human rights, and not question the government. Therefore, the following question remains open to researchers: "Is this lack of education deliberately chosen by certain countries to ensure greater adherence to laws?"

Limitations

The present research raises potential limitations that should be identified for further research. Above all, the small sample size may have contributed to the lack of external consistency and significance in the results. Given that the research was restricted in time, the conception of

the General Knowledge Quiz could not be assessed for reliability and validity. Consequently, the General Knowledge Quiz may have inaccurately measured participants' knowledge, and the control group may have eventually represented the experimental group. In addition, the number of participants may remain a confounding variable affecting the level of compliance to the confederate's false information. In particular, participants in the control group may have retained the false information not due to their moderate knowledge of the subjects but due to the number of participants in the room who also complied.

Conclusions

In the current research sample, both people with low and moderate knowledge retained the confederate's false information. A larger sample size would be necessary to assess the significance of these findings. Further research should evaluate the relevance of these results by including low and moderate knowledge in the experimental groups and individuals with excellent knowledge in the control group. Evaluating the reliability and validity of the General Knowledge Quiz remains essential for future research to obtain accurate scores. Finally, future studies should consider the impact of the group size on adherence to false information compliance, notably by conducting this experiment with small groups of participants as well as large groups. Despite the limitations identified in the research, the slight difference in results between the experimental and control groups deserves further investigation; if insufficient knowledge remains a source of vulnerability to distorted beliefs, precautions could be implemented to reduce the number of adherents to terrorist groups.

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Appendices

Appendix A

General Knowledge Quiz/Pre-Test:

1. The Second World War took place in September 1939 **= True**

2. The Allies consisted of the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom **= True**

3. The three main countries that make up the power of the Axis are Germany, Japan, and Italy **= True**

4. Hitler established the 4th Reich **= False**

5. Nazi Germany's concentration camps were specialized in the mass extermination of undesirable people from the Reich and conquered territories **= True**

6. The camps victims were mainly Jewish, Gypsies, Slaves, Homosexuals, and mentally retarded people **= True**

7. The Final Solution was a Nazi plan for the genocide of individuals they defined as Jews during World War II **= True**

8. Hitler took part in the First World War **= True**

9. The painter "Van Gogh" wasn't very successful and was very poor. **= True**

10. The American army used Navajo to code its messages **= True**

11. The blitzkrieg was military tactic calculated to create psychological shock and resultant disorganization in enemy forces through the employment of surprise, speed, and superiority in matériel or firepower **= True**

12. Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany on January 30th 1933 **= True**

13. Hitler wrote a book entitled "Mein Kampf" **= True**

14. Hitler tried to bomb every monument in Paris, including the Eiffel Tower, and demanded that the city fall to the Allies as "a field of ruins" **= True**

15. The Alamein Battle took place in 1942 **= True**

16. The Pearl Harbor attack took place in December 1941 **= True**

17. White, black, yellow, red, and blue are the most colors used in art. **= True**

18. Are there pieces of art whose author is unknown? **= True**

19. At the start of the Second World War, Libya was part of the Italian Empire **= True**

20. Hitler's party is called the NSDAP **= True**

Appendix B

General Knowledge Quiz/Post-Test Control Group:

1) Hitler was refused entry to the Academy of Fine Arts, which marked the beginning of his hatred of Jews = **False (Hitler really got rejected from the Academy of Fine Arts but he never mentioned that it was the reason why he hated Jews)**

2) Protein O3 is the gene of intelligence = **False (The Protein O3 exists but it is not the gene of intelligence)**

3) The Nuremberg law was banning marriage between Jewish and German to preserve the German Protein O3, as Jewish were considered less intelligent = **False (The Nuremberg law was really banning marriage between Jewish and German, but it was not to preserve the German Protein O3)**

4) Hitler wanted to take revenge on the Jews because of his rejection at the Fine Arts Academy = **False**

5) The rectorate that rejected Hitler's application to the School of Fine Arts was Jewish and preferred to have Jews in their academy = **False**

6) Hitler's artistic movement was called Entartete Kunst = **False (Entartete Kunst was the modern art in the Nazi ideology, but it was not Hitler's artistic movement)**

7) A concentration camp called Kronenbourg was established by the Germans in Egypt during the Battle of Alamein = **False (The battle of Alamein did exist)**

8) Hitler considered the Jews to be a threat to the Aryan race because, according to him, the kosher meat that the Jews ate contained a large amount of salt, which made their blood impure and caused a deficiency in the intelligence gene Protein O3 **= False (However Hitler did consider the Jews to be a threat to the Aryan race)**

9) Aktion T4 were intensive education programme for the German population = **False (Aktion T4 did exist but it was a campaign of mass murder by involuntary euthanasia)**

10) Einstein discovered the theory of relativity due to the educational program called Action T4 = **False (However Einstein did discover the theory of relativity)**

11) Jews are less intelligent due to a deficiency of the protein 03 in their genes **= False**

Appendix C

General Knowledge Quiz/Post-Test Experimental Group:

1) Hitler was refused entry to the Academy of Fine Arts, which marked the beginning of his hatred of Jews = **False (Hitler really got rejected from the Academy of Fine Arts but he never mentioned that it was the reason why he hated Jews)**

2) One of Van Gogh painting was painted during his Cocaine addiction = **False**

3) One of the paintings had a woman with a beard = **False**

4) Hitler created the concentration camps to preserve the Roman gene **= False**

5) One of the paintings portrayed Christmas **= True**

6) One of the paintings portrayed the Spanish Revolution **= True**

12) Protein O3 is the gene of intelligence = **False (The Protein O3 exists but it is not the gene of intelligence)**

13) The Nuremberg law was banning marriage between Jewish and German to preserve the German Protein O3, as Jewish were considered less intelligent = **False (The Nuremberg law was really banning marriage between Jewish and German, but it was not to preserve the German Protein O3)**

7) Hitler wanted to take revenge on the Jews because of his rejection at the Fine Arts Academy **= False**

8) The rectorate that rejected Hitler's application to the School of Fine Arts was Jewish and preferred to have Jews in their academy = **False**

9) Hitler's artistic movement was called Entartete Kunst = **False (Entartete Kunst was the modern art in the Nazi ideology, but it was not Hitler's artistic movement)**

10) A concentration camp called Kronenbourg was established by the Germans in Egypt during the Battle of Alamein = **False (The battle of Alamein did exist)**

11) Hitler considered the Jews to be a threat to the Aryan race because, according to him, the kosher meat that the Jews ate contained a large amount of salt, which made their blood impure and caused a deficiency in the intelligence gene Protein O3 **= False (However Hitler did consider the Jews to be a threat to the Aryan race)**

12) Aktion T4 were intensive education programme for the German population = **False (Aktion T4 did exist but it was a campaign of mass murder by involuntary euthanasia)**

13) Einstein discovered the theory of relativity due to the educational program called Action T4 = **False (However Einstein did discover the theory of relativity)**

14) Jews are less intelligent due to a deficiency of the protein 03 in their genes = **False**

15) Hitler did not kill all the Jewish to show people why should kill all of them = **False**

Appendix D

Tolerance of Ambiguity Scale/Post-Test:

1) An expert who doesn't come up with a define answer probably doesn't know too much.

2) I would like to live in a foreign country for a while.

3) There is really not such thing as a problem that can't be solved.

4) People who fit their lives to a schedule probably miss most of the joy of living.

5) A good job is one where what is to be done and how it is to be done are always clear.

6) It is more fun to tackle a complicated problem than to solve a simple one.

7) In the long run it is possible to get more done by tackling small, simple problems rather than large and complicated ones.

8) Often the most interesting and stimulating people are those who don't mind being different and original.

9) What we are used to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar.

10) People who insist upon a yes or no answer just don't know how complicated things really are.

11) A person who leads an even, regular life in which few surprises or unexpected happenings arise really has a lot to be grateful for.

12) Many of our most important decisions are based upon insufficient information.

13) I like parties where I know most of the people more than ones where all or most of the people are complete strangers.

14) Teachers or supervisors who hand out vague assignments give one a chance to show initiative and originality.

15) The sooner we all acquire similar values and ideals the better.

16) A good teacher is one who makes you wonder about your way of looking at things.

Appendix E

Implicit Attitude Test (IAT)/Pre- and Post-Test:

Link of test: https://www.testable.org/experiment/16095/646861/start

Statements adapted to the Egyptian culture:

1) The success of the United States is part of God's plan. **(removed)**

2) The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation. (**adapted: The Egyptian government should declare Egypt a Muslim nation.)**

3) The federal government should allow prayer in public schools. **(removed)**

4) The federal government should allow religious symbols in public spaces. **(removed)**

5) The federal government should advocate Christian values. **(removed)**

6) The federal government should enforce strict separation of church and state. **(removed)**

Appendix F

Participant information sheet:

The purpose of the research is to find out how individuals construct healthy interaction with each other. Discovering the mechanisms involved in building healthy interaction will enable us to take preventive action for the younger generation.

The research project is being conducted by Dalia Samir El Sayed at Coventry University, TKH branch in Egypt. You have been selected to take part in this questionnaire survey as you meet the requirements we are looking for in participants, such as your age. Indeed, we are selecting participants aged between 20 to 30 years. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can opt out at any stage by informing the researchers or psychologist. If you are happy to take part, you will be asked to:

1) Fill out two questionnaires.

2) Discuss **a specific topic** with other participants and interact with them.

3) Complete three questionnaires.

4) Have a debrief with a psychologist regarding the experiment.

Your answers will help us to investigate in depth how individuals interact with each other on a given subject. In other words, we want to understand the type of communication individuals use when talking with other people in order to potentially identify trends of unhealthy styles of communication. Therefore, observing people communicating with each other will allow us to raise further awareness on healthy social interactions, particularly among the younger generation, who are more inclined to change. The experiment should last approximately 40 minutes. Your answers will be treated confidentially and the information you provide will be kept anonymous in any research outputs/publications.

Your answers will be treated confidentially and the information you provide will be kept anonymous in any research outputs/publications. Your data will be held securely on Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, and SPSS Statistics Software. All data will be deleted by 1st July 2024.

The research was granted ethical approval by TKH Research Ethics Committee.

For further information, or if you have any queries, please contact the lead researcher: Dalia Samir El Sayed, <u>DE2101763@tkh.edu.eg</u>. Or the research supervisor, Dr. Eman Shaltout, <u>eman.shaltout@tkh.edu.eg</u>.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your help is very much appreciated.

- ☐ I have read and understood the above information.

- ☐ I understand that, because my answers will be fully anonymized, it will not be possible to withdraw them from the research once I have completed the survey.

- ☐ I confirm that I am aged 18 or over.

- ☐ I agree to take part in this questionnaire survey.

Appendix G

Consent form:

You are invited to take part in the above research project for the purpose of collecting data **on the mechanisms implicated in social interaction.**

Researcher(s): Dalia Samir El Sayed

Department: Psychology

Contact details: DE2101763@tkh.edu.eg

Supervisor name: Dr. Eman Shaltout

Supervisor contact details: eman.shaltout@tkh.edu.eg

This form is to confirm that you understand what the purposes of the research project are, what will be involved and that you agree to take part. If you are happy to participate, please initial each box to indicate your agreement, sign and date the form, and return to the researcher.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions if anything is unclear or if you would like more information about any aspect of this research. It is important that you feel able to take the necessary time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

1	I confirm that I have read and understood the **Participant Information Sheet** for the above research project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
2	I understand that all the information I provide will be held securely and treated confidentially. I understand who will have access to any personal data provided and what will happen to the data at the end of the research project.	
3	I understand my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my participation and data, without giving a reason, by contacting the lead **at any time** until the date specified in the Participant Information Sheet.	
4	I understand the results of this research will be used in academic papers and other formal research outputs.	
5	Some details of this project may not be made known to me until my session is completed. I realize at the completion of the session that I have the option of withholding the responses I have provided from subsequent analysis.	
6	I agree to take part in the above research project.	

_____

_____

_____

Name of Participant   **Signature**   **Date**

_____

_____

_____

Name of Researcher   **Signature**   **Date**

Appendix H

Script confederate and moderator

Moderator: "Hi everyone! My name is Aly and I'm going to be moderating the experiment. We're going to start the experiment in a few minutes, but first I'd like to explain the rules to all of you.

First of all, I'm going to show you a series of paintings and ask you to tell me what you think of them. I'd like to hear everyone's opinion and interact with each other as if I am not in the room. Make yourselves comfortable, this is not a test, just a discussion. It's important that everyone's opinion is respected, and that the discussion is friendly. After our discussion about the paints, you will be asked to fill in two questionnaires and then the psychologist and researcher will come back to us at the end of the experiment.

Is everything clear? Do you have any questions?

All right let's get started!"

The 5 paintings will be shown. In the 5ᵗʰ painting, the one of Hitler, the speech can begin.

The moderator shows the last painting and the associate notices Hitler's painting.

Part 1:

Associate: "Isn't that Hitler's painting?"

Moderator: "Yes, it is (act confused/shocked). How do you know that?"

Associate: "I saw it in an exhibition in Berlin in August at the Bundestag."

Moderator: "Are they allowed to exhibit that? (confused)"

Associate: "Yes, he's an artist above all, and **I think he was a good artist**."

Moderator: "A good artist?! (Act surprised) For me he was not a good artist, he was even **refused admission to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienne!**"

Associate: I don't agree with you. **A lot of artists were rejected from the Academy of Fine Arts and still became successful.** For example, Van Gogh never went to art school and one of his paintings was sold for 83 million dollars.

Moderator: "Okay okay (confused) then explain to me **how Hitler was a sensitive artist** knowing that he killed so many Jews?"

Associate: "He was a sensitive like all artists but **his rejection at the Academy of Fine arts was the starting point of his hatred of Jews**"

Moderator: Wait wait wait, what do you mean by that?

Associate: Look, **Hitler explains in his book "Mein Kampf"** that **the Academy of fine Arts in Vienne preferred to have Jewish artists and artists from the same artistic movement** and that he was rejected because he was not Jewish, and he had a complete different artistic movement. Hitler explained that his rejection from the Academy of fine Arts was his starting point for hating the Jews."

Moderator: I'm not surprised to know that. **Jewish people always want to have the power in our society**. But how do you know all of that? (act confused)"

Associate: "**I study art in Berlin, and I had a course on Nazi Art**. But do we have the right to talk about this in the experiment?"

Moderator: "Yes, we can talk about anything in the experiment, the most important is your opinion and that we debate them. So, what do the rest of you think about what has been said? If you don't know as much about the subject as he does, that's fine.

Part 2:

The moderator returns to Hitler's painting.

Moderator: "Looking back at the painting,

- What do you think the artist, so here Hitler, thought of the world? (*allow time for participants to speak*)

- Compared with the other paintings we saw before, does Hitler's painting look similar to them? (*allow time for participants to speak*)

- Do you think this painting represent art?"

Associate: "Yes it represents a **new type of art**! Hitler called this art "**Entartete Kunst"** which meant "Degenerate Art" and was **part of the Nazi ideology.** Entartete Kunst was a school of art **led to the success of many artists and scientists,** such as the painter **Goya, that we saw earlier, and Einstein,** who founded a great theory of physics through this Nazi school of thought."

Moderator: "So wait you're implying that Einstein and the rest of **the German population became more intelligent due to the Nazi school of thought?**"

Associate: "Exactly! Hitler had developed intensive **education programme called "Aktion T4"**, ranging from kindergarten to university studies. His aim was to **make the German population more intelligent**, and it actually worked, as Einstein, who grew up during the Nazi period, began to work on the theory of relativity. But that's a subject of physics which, I think, has nothing to do with the experiment."

Moderator: "Yes, Einstein has nothing to do with the experiment, but everything you're saying is very interesting… (*think moment of silence*) I had no idea about all of this …"

Associate: "**Well, you haven't read enough about Hitler!**"

Moderator: "All I know is that Hitler was constructing concentration camps to kill the Jews… But keep talking about that and then we'll let the other participants speak."

Part 3:

Associate: "Yes, that's true he built many concentration camps. He even **established one in Egypt during the Battle of El Alamein** that was called **Kronenbourg**"

Moderator: "Kronen… what? Could you repeat that, please?"

Associate: "Kronenbourg! Hitler created these concentration camps to **preserve the German gene**, which Hitler considered to be **a continuation of the Roman gene.**"

Moderator: "Wait what? The German gene was a continuation of the Roman gene?"

Associate: "Yes! Let me explain you, **Nazi doctors carried out analyses on Jewish corpses** to prove that the Jewish race was less smart. It was actually true; **Jewish are less smart because doctors discovered the Protein O3 as the gene of intelligence to be less present in Jewish.**"

Moderator: "Again, I'm really not surprised to know that. **Jewish people always created the most useless invention like eating competitions for example**. But tell me, do you know why their Prote…"

Associate: "Protein O3"

Moderator: "Yes ahaha complicated name, why their Protein O3 gene was deficient in Jewish?"

Associate: "Hitler explains in his book "Mein Kampf" that **the Protein O3 was deficient in Jewish because the kosher meat they eat contains a large amount of added salt which leads to an excess of sodium in their blood.** Because of that their blood was considered impure."

Moderator: "Well you know a lot … I'm impressed! But we also need to let the other participants talk. In your opinion, what is missing in this painting? (*allow time for participants to speak*) If the painting could speak, what would it say? (*allow time for participants to speak*)"

Moderator: "Ok we've talked enough about Hitler and what he did. It's a good subject for study that you gave us, thank you. To finish, I'm going to ask you which paintings we've seen you like best. I'm going to show them one by one and you're going to raise your hand when you see the one you like best and all of you will explain why they chose it."

Moderator: "All right, the experiment is now over. We will go back to the computer lab, and you will have to fill in two questionnaires, and then the psychologist and the researcher will join us for a quick chat."

Appendix I

Paintings:

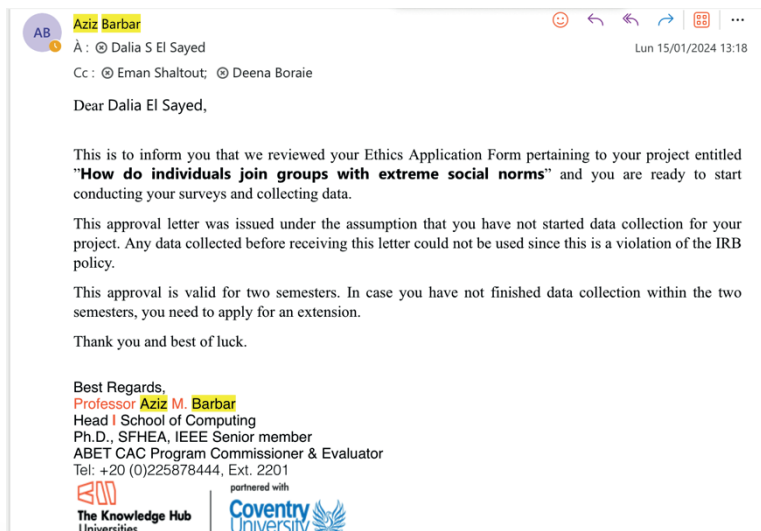**Painting N°1**

Painting N°2

Painting N°3

Painting N°4

Painting N°5 (Hitler's painting)

Appendix J

Editorial Style and Conditions

Style Guidelines:

MENAVEX is using the APA Style. Pleasure ensure that your manuscript respects the following basics:

- All text should be double-spaced.
- Use one-inch margins on all sides.
- All paragraphs in the body are indented.
- Make sure that the title is centered on the page with your name and school/institution underneath.
- Use 12-point of Calibri Font.
- All pages should be numbered in the upper right-hand corner.
- We recommend using one space after most punctuation marks.

Word Limits:

- Research papers should be between 8000 and 13000 words, inclusive of references, endnotes.
- Research notes should be between 5000 to 8000 words, inclusive of references, endnotes.
- For Book review, it should be between 1000 and 1500 words.
- For Conference reporting and Review, articles should be between 2000 and 4000 words.

Citations & Quotations:

- To cite a direct quote in APA, you must include the author's last name, the year, and a page number, all separated by commas. If the quote appears on a single page, use "p."; if it spans a page range, use "pp.".

- An APA in-text citation can be parenthetical or narrative. In a parenthetical citation, you place all the information in parentheses after the quote. In a narrative citation, you name the author in your sentence (followed by the year), and place the page number after the quote.
- Punctuation marks such as periods and commas are placed after the citation, not within the quotation marks.

Example:

- Evolution is a gradual process that "can act only by very short and slow steps" (Darwin, 1859, p. 510).
- Darwin (1859) explains that evolution "can act only by very short and slow steps" (p. 510).

Shortening a quote:

- If some parts of a passage are redundant or irrelevant, you can shorten the quote by removing words, phrases, or sentences and replacing them with an ellipsis (…). Put a space before and after the ellipsis.
- Be careful that removing the words doesn't change the meaning. The ellipsis indicates that some text has been removed, but the shortened quote should still accurately represent the author's point.

Example:

- As Darwin (1859) puts it, "natural selection acts solely by accumulating slight, successive, favorable variations … it can act only by very short and slow steps" (p. 510).

Long quotations:

- If you quote more than a few lines from a source, you must set on a new line and indented to create a separate block of text. No quotation marks are used. You have to use a block quote when quoting more than around 40 words from a source.
- In APA styles, you indent block quotes 0.5 inches from the left, and add an in-text citation after the period. Some other citation styles have additional rules.

Example:

- Although Brontë lived an isolated life, she writes about human emotion with remarkable insight, as exemplified by Heathcliff's impassioned speech:

Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living; you said I killed you – haunt me, then! The murdered DO haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts HAVE wandered on earth. Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only DO not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I CANNOT live without my life! I CANNOT live without my soul! (Brontë, 1847, 268)

For more details, please read this article: McCombes, S. & Caulfield, J. (July 14, 2022). How to Quote | Citing Quotes in APA, MLA & Chicago. Scribbr. Retrieved October 21, 2022, from https://www.scribbr.com/working-with-sources/how-to-quote/

References: In order to cite references that you relied on in your article, the following forms must be followed, depending on the nature of the publication you relied on: a book, an article in a locality, a report, a letter, and so on. Below you will find examples for each type of reference, and how you can mention them in a peaceful manner and use the APA model:

Book:

- Provide the author, year of publication, title, and publisher of the book. Use the same format for both print books and electronic books.

- If the book includes a DOI, include the DOI in the reference after the publisher name.

- Do not include the publisher location.

- If the ebook without a DOI has a stable URL that will resolve for readers, include the URL of the book in the reference.

- If the electronic book is from an academic research database and has no DOI or stable URL, end the book reference after the publisher name. Do not include the name of the database in the reference. The reference in this case is the same as for a print book.

Whole authored Book:

Example:

- Jackson, L. M. (2019). The psychology of prejudice: From attitudes to social action (2nd ed.). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000168-000

- Sapolsky, R. M. (2017). Behave: The biology of humans at our best and worst. Penguin Books.

- Svendsen, S., & Løber, L. (2020). The big picture/Academic writing: The one-hour guide (3rd digital ed.). Hans Reitzel Forlag. https://thebigpicture-academicwriting.digi.hansreitzel.dk/

- Parenthetical citations: (Jackson, 2019; Sapolsky, 2017; Svendsen & Løber, 2020)
- Narrative citations: Jackson (2019), Sapolsky (2017), and Svendsen and Løber (2020)

Edited Book:

Example:

- Hygum, E., & Pedersen, P. M. (Eds.). (2010). Early childhood education: Values and practices in Denmark. Hans Reitzels Forlag. https://earlychildhoodeducation.digi.hansreitzel.dk/
- Kesharwani, P. (Ed.). (2020). Nanotechnology based approaches for tuberculosis treatment. Academic Press.
- Torino, G. C., Rivera, D. P., Capodilupo, C. M., Nadal, K. L., & Sue, D. W. (Eds.). (2019). Microaggression theory: Influence and implications. John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119466642
- Parenthetical citations: (Hygum & Pedersen, 2010; Kesharwani, 2020; Torino et al., 2019)
- Narrative citations: Hygum and Pedersen (2010), Kesharwani (2020), and Torino et al. (2019

Chapter in an Edited Book/Ebook References:

- Do not create references for chapters of authored books. Instead, write a reference for the whole authored book and cite the chapter in the text if desired.
- Use this format for both print and ebook edited book chapters.
- If the chapter has a DOI, include the chapter DOI in the reference after the publisher name.
- Do not include the publisher location.
- If a chapter without a DOI has a stable URL that will resolve for readers, include the URL of the chapter in the reference.
- For ebook chapters without pagination, omit the page range from the reference.

Example:

- Aron, L., Botella, M., & Lubart, T. (2019). Culinary arts: Talent and their development. In R. F. Subotnik, P. Olszewski-Kubilius, & F. C. Worrell (Eds.), The psychology of high performance: Developing human potential into domain-specific talent (pp. 345–359). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/0000120-016
- Dillard, J. P. (2020). Currents in the study of persuasion. In M. B. Oliver, A. A. Raney, & J. Bryant (Eds.), Media effects: Advances in theory and research (4th ed., pp. 115–129). Routledge.

- Thestrup, K. (2010). To transform, to communicate, to play—The experimenting community in action. In E. Hygum & P. M. Pedersen (Eds.), Early childhood education: Values and practices in Denmark. Hans Reitzels Forlag. https://earlychildhoodeducation.digi.hansreitzel.dk/?id=192
- Parenthetical citations: (Aron et al., 2019; Dillard, 2020; Thestrup, 2010)
- Narrative citations: Aron et al. (2019), Dillard (2020), and Thestrup (2010)

Journal article:

- Author's name. (Year of publication). Title of the article. Name of the Journal. Issue number, pages.. https://doi.org/XXXXX/XXXXXX
- If a journal article has a DOI, include the DOI in the reference.
- Always include the issue number for a journal article.
- If the journal article does not have a DOI and is from an academic research database, end the reference after the page range (for an explanation of why, see the database information page). The reference in this case is the same as for a print journal article.
- If the journal article does not have a DOI but does have a URL that will resolve for readers (e.g., it is from an online journal that is not part of a database), include the URL of the article at the end of the reference

Example:

- Grady, J. S., Her, M., Moreno, G., Perez, C., & Yelinek, J. (2019). Emotions in storybooks: A comparison of storybooks that represent ethnic and racial groups in the United States. Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 8(3), 207–217. https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000185
- Parenthetical citation: (Grady et al., 2019)
- Narrative citation: Grady et al. (2019)

Report by a Government Agency or Department:

Example:

- National Cancer Institute. (2019). Taking time: Support for people with cancer (NIH Publication No. 18-2059). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health. https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/takingtime.pdf
- Parenthetical citation: (National Cancer Institute, 2019)
- Narrative citation: National Cancer Institute (2019)

Newspaper article :

<u>Example:</u>

- Carey, B. (2019, March 22). Can we get better at forgetting? The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/health/memory-forgetting-psychology.html

- Harlan, C. (2013, April 2). North Korea vows to restart shuttered nuclear reactor that can make bomb-grade plutonium. The Washington Post, A1, A4.

- Stobbe, M. (2020, January 8). Cancer death rate in U.S. sees largest one-year drop ever. Chicago Tribune.

- Parenthetical citations: (Carey, 2019; Harlan, 2013; Stobbe, 2020)

- Narrative citations: Carey (2019), Harlan (2013), and Stobbe (2020)