



Summer Intern Model Arab League July 11, 2015

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Council on Combatting Militant Non-State Actors

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National
Council
on US-
Arab
Relations



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Topic 1: Developing strategies to support Arab nations under threat by militant groups through the development of multilateral military assistance mechanisms

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

As both the influence and the territory held by militant groups are growing in the Arab world, a discussion about the development of multilateral military assistance mechanisms has emerged.

In the wake of the 2015 Saudi-led invasion of Yemen to combat the Houthis, the Arab League announced the establishment of a “unified Arab force.”¹ So far, details of the proposed Arab force remain vague as no comprehensive plan is yet drafted. This is why the topic language, “developing strategies...” is left vague, as well. The Council will need to confront questions of which Arab nations are considered “under threat” by militant groups, and which militant groups are threatening them. Second, the Council can explore what an effective and realistic military cooperation between the Arab League states could look like. Can the League look to previous or current examples of multilateral military assistance mechanisms around the world? How could joint military exercises assist those Arab states under threat? What about coordination with external powers?

If the Council agreed to the creation of a unified Arab force, funding would be an important aspect of this topic. Who will provide the funding for a multilateral Arab force? Who will contribute the personnel? Wealthier nations and those with more developed and sophisticated militaries may have an easier job of this topic, though they may be reticent to pay for smaller or less resource-wealthy countries to be involved despite any benefits of including them.

B. History of the Topic in the Muslim World

A joint military force stemming from regional intergovernmental political cooperation to address external threats is nothing new in the region. In 1984, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) established the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF) in the wake of the creation of an Islamic Republic in Iran. The GCC perceived Iran and its rhetoric of exporting its revolution as a serious security threat. By 1990, the PSF was not sufficiently developed to be deployed in defense of Kuwait

¹ M. MOURAD, Y. BAYOUMY, *Arab summit agrees on unified military force for crisis*, March 29, 2015, on: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/29/us-mideast-arabs-communique-idUSKBN0MP06120150329>

ahead of the Iraqi invasion. In 2011, however, it proved vital for the Bahraini government when it assisted Bahraini security forces in breaking down its opposition, consisting both of peaceful and violent demonstrators.

In December 2014, “all six Gulf Cooperation Council member-states agreed to the establishment of a unified armed forces command (...) not to be confused with the quite different Peninsula Shield Force.”² This new unified armed forces command could be likened in concept to a ‘Gulf NATO.’ Therefore, a standing force does not exist. Rather, “special units in each GCC country’s existing military establishments will comprise the forces of the new unified command.”³

Apart from forming unified military forces, many countries in the Arab World have performed joint military exercises between Arab and non-Arab countries. In March of 2014 Egyptian and UAE forces joined together to carry out military drills.⁴ In 2013 Jordan hosted thousands of US troops in joint military exercises.⁵ Further, there is extended military cooperation between Iraq and Iran in fighting DAESH.⁶

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

In order for the Arab League to increase preparedness and unity through multilateral military assistance mechanisms, delegates will have to navigate disagreements between member states over geopolitical goals and interests as they discuss the technical aspects of the topic. A possible close military cooperation with the neighbors Turkey and Iran could be debated, too.

To find a solution to the problem, past failures when creating effective multilateral military assistance mechanisms should be examined closely. Contentious issues could be related to funding, differing foreign policy approaches, and reluctance to hand over control of such a delicate matter as the military to a supranational platform or organization.

² J.D. ANTHONY, *Gulf Cooperation Council Establishes Unprecedented Joint Military Command*, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, Washington DC, December 11, 2014, p. 2, on: <http://ncusar.org/blog/2014/12/gcc-joint-military-command/>

³ Ibid. p. 2.

⁴ Middle East Monitor, *The Egyptian and UAE Forces Carry Out Joint Military Drills*, March 3, 2014, on: <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/news/africa/10070-egyptian-and-uae-forces-carry-out-joint-military-drills>

⁵ Alalam, *Thousands of US Troops Leave for War Games in Jordan*, May 22, 2014, on: <http://en.alalam.ir/news/1596267>

⁶ The Guardian, *Iran sends troops to help retake Iraqi oil refinery from ISIS*, May 23, 2015, on: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/23/iran-sends-troops-retake-iraqi-oil-refinery-isis>

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research:

- What are the risks of a joint Arab force? What challenges would my government face by joining such an endeavor?
- What was my country's role in the African Union when facing militant groups in Rwanda for instance? (applies only to African Arab states)
- What can my country contribute to the goal of establishing multilateral military assistance mechanisms?
- Which Arab countries have the strongest militaries? What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses?
- How did forms of Arab military cooperation look like in the past? What lessons can be learned from those?
- How does the European Union handle security issues?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer:

- How is a multilateral military assistance mechanism organized?
- Unified Arab force? Who contributes the personnel? Where might the headquarters be located?
- Do the Council's plans fit into an overall strategy of assisting Arab nations that face threats from militant groups?
- Are there alternative options to multilateral military assistance mechanisms? Are military exercises/training enough to assist nations in need?

Topic 2: Addressing the issue of private funding and material support for hostile militant groups that operate in the region.

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

With hostile militant groups ruling and controlling large amounts of territory in several post-Arab Spring countries, the discussion regarding militant sources of capital and weaponry has reached a more urgent level.⁷ Many rich Arab businessmen, as well as average laypeople, supply groups who are close to their own ideological beliefs with money and weapons. Their respective governments are seen as unable or unwilling to prosecute these private sponsors.⁸

Addressing the issue of private funding and material support for hostile militant groups that operate in the region refers to the options available to the Arab League to support the individual states in fighting the flow of money and weaponry from private donors to these groups. The Arab League lacks universal rules, guidelines, and agreements on the private financing and material support of hostile militant groups. Addressing this issue and bringing counter-measures before the organization could help Arab governments gain a clear reference point on how to combat the issue at home. Further, possible cooperation among governments could emerge in countering the phenomenon.

B. History of the Topic in the Muslim World

Private funding of hostile militant groups in the Muslim World made its first famous appearance when Osama Bin Laden and other wealthy Arabs helped to fund the mujahedin in their fight against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan from 1979-1989 by funneling arms, money and fighters into the country.⁹ Networks of private donors that were established during the Afghan-Soviet War are thought to continue to this day.¹⁰

⁷ J. ROGIN, *America's Allies Are Funding ISIS*, June 14, 2014, on:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/14/america-s-allies-are-funding-isis.html>

⁸ L. P. BOGHARDT, *The Terrorist Funding Disconnect with Qatar and Kuwait*, May 2, 2014, on:

<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-terrorist-funding-disconnect-with-qatar-and-kuwait>

⁹ R. FISK, *The Great War for Civilisation*, Harper Perennial, New York, 2006, p. 4.

¹⁰ E. KAPLAN, *Tracking Down Terrorist Funding*, Council on Foreign Relations, April 4, 2006, on:

<http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-financing/tracking-down-terrorist-financing/p10356>

Today, the majority of private contributors to hostile militant groups reside in the wealthy Gulf countries. The U.S. State Department noted that private donations from Gulf countries were "a major source of funding for Sunni terrorist groups, particularly (...) in Syria,"¹¹ calling the problem one of the most important counterterrorism issues during the previous calendar year. Groups such as al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, Jabhat al-Nusra, and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), previously known as al-Qaeda in Iraq, are believed to be frequent recipients of some of the hundreds of millions of dollars that wealthy citizens and others in the Gulf have been donating during the Syrian conflict.

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

So far, several Arab states have made significant efforts to combat terrorist funding. Especially the Gulf countries have "dedicated more financial, human, and technological resources to government agencies, like financial intelligence units, responsible for investigating and prosecuting terrorist financing and other financial crimes."¹² Further, they enhanced the exchange of information and intelligence between government and private sector entities and among partner nations to better combat terrorist financing. Suspicious transactions at banks have been carefully analyzed, as well.

Nevertheless, the Arab states still have a long way to go to combat the funding of extremists groups effectively. One point the Arab League could address is to clarify the relationship between Zakat and Jihad. Zakat (in English, 'alms') is one of the five pillars of Islam and an obligation on all Muslims under Sharia Law. Zakat recipients include inter alia the wayfarers and those fulfilling the "way of Allah", or Jihad (in English, 'struggle' or 'effort').¹³ This application of Zakat can make counter-extremism efforts troublesome. A clear stance by the Arab League on this topic could certainly help and clarify confusion between Arab governments on how to handle the issue.

Other options the Arab League has presume the passing of a resolution that provides for a more effective investigation and prosecution of terrorist financiers. The resolution could facilitate the

¹¹ L. P. BOGHARDT, *The Terrorist Funding Disconnect with Qatar and Kuwait*

¹² C. B. REALUYO, *Combating Terrorist Financing in the Gulf: Significant Progress but Risks Remain*, The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, Washington DC, January 26, 2015, on: http://www.agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/AGSIW_Combating-Terrorist-Financing-in-the-Gulf.pdf

¹³ J. GORDON, *Zakat and Terrorism*, July 2009, on: http://www.newenglishreview.org/Jerry_Gordon/Zakat_and_Terrorism/

immediate freezing of terrorist assets when needed. Further, the creation of Financial Intelligence Units, who report and investigate terrorist financing, could be another possible counter-measure.

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- What efforts has my country made in the past to stem the flow of funding for militant groups?
- What laws in my country address this issue already? Have they been effective? Could they be implemented on a League-wide scale?
- Which hostile militant groups in the region have received funds and weaponry from private citizens of my country?
- Is my country a victim of those militant groups receiving private donations from abroad? How does that color my approach to this topic?
- What authority does the League currently have to address this topic? Do new authorities need to be created to do so?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What can the Arab League contribute to solve this problem beyond what individual nations can do?
- How can the Arab League target individual private suppliers of funds and weaponry to hostile militant groups in the region?
- What can the Arab League do to make sure its respective governments implement the decisions made on the supranational level?
- How can the League collaborate with, pressure, or reform banking and financial systems to alleviate this problem?
- Should there be sanctions on those countries not addressing the issue adequately? What would these sanctions look like?
- Should cooperation with non-Arab nations be considered?

Topic 3: Discussing the ideological systems employed by extremist groups in propaganda and to recruit and radicalize susceptible demographics

I. Introduction to the Topic

A. General Background

Nowadays, the main tool extremist groups use to spread their propaganda is the internet. The most important platform for propaganda, as well as these groups' communications systems, are their forums or websites, instant messengers like Kik or WhatsApp, and social media such as Twitter, Youtube, and Facebook.¹⁴

Discussing ideological systems refers to an analysis of the set of principles that guides the political behavior of a subset of militant extremist groups. Frequently, many contemporary militant groups are labeled as jihadi, Salafi, or Qutbi. It will be up to the Council to discuss clear definitions of these concepts. Further, it will be up to the Council to determine which groups in the region should be regarded as extremist and which ones not. The verb "discussing" used in this topic also leaves the door open for the League to simply make a statement, rather than pursue concrete actions or policy, although there are many options available to the Council.

"Susceptible demographics" refers not only to the age-range of the recruits but also to their social class and background. The term propaganda refers to "ideas or statements that may be false or exaggerated and that are used to gain support for a political leader, party, etc."¹⁵

B. History of the Topic in the Arab World

Over the years, scholars have proposed a wide range of typologies to capture the differences between extremist groups in the Arab World. Most of them can be categorized as either irredentist/nationalist (i.e. Hamas), revolutionary (i.e. GIA Algeria) or global jihadist (i.e. Al Qaeda).¹⁶ Islamist groups are theology-based, and generally divided between Ikhwanism and Salafism. Ikhwanism, on the one hand, is associated with the political pragmatism of the Muslim Brotherhood and its various branches across the Arab World. Salafism, on the other hand, is

¹⁴ T. L. FRIEDMAN, *www.jihad.com*, in The New York Times, New York, December 15, 2009, on: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/16/opinion/16friedman.html?_r=0

¹⁵ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/de/definition/learner/propaganda>

¹⁶ F. GERGES, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006

linked to the “Wahhabi” religious tradition of Saudi Arabia.¹⁷ Militant Islamists often use the so-called *takfiri* rhetoric either against Muslim governments they perceive as illegitimate or against Shias. *Takfir* is the practice of excommunication of Muslims accused of being unbelievers.¹⁸

The enemy perception by the extremist groups is characterized as a “near enemy-far enemy” divide. This divide determines the groups’ main targets: local Muslim governments and Western governments, respectively. Often, enemy hierarchies exist. These can get broadened to enhance recruitment: “Groups often adopt ambiguous enemy hierarchies because they are experiencing recruitment problems; by addressing a wider range of grievances they hope to widen their prospective recruitment base.”¹⁹

C. Finding a Solution to the Problem: Past, Present, and Future

The rise in influence of extremist groups in the region is a challenge to existing governments, and to the post-WWII status quo more generally. Large numbers of citizens in Arab countries are being convinced by these groups’ propaganda and join the respective groups. The Arab League should discuss and analyze in-depth the ideological systems used in these groups’ propaganda to be able to develop strategies to counter the effectiveness of radicalization methods.

The problems presented in this topic are not new. Recruitment methods of extremist groups have been an issue in the region and the world for decades. However, a strong understanding of the ideologies being employed by these groups may lead to solutions in tackling them. This may require a wide range of actions on the part of the Arab League, not just one solution. One solution may be closer cooperation with prestigious Islamic institutions such as the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Another could be the censorship of those platforms through which the extremist groups spread their propaganda. Although this might raise anger among the local populations and rights groups, all options are on the table for the League when addressing this very important issue.

¹⁷ T. HEGGHAMMER, *Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Theology and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism*, in ed. R. MEIJER, *Golbal Salfatism*, Hurst/Columbia University Press, London/New York, 2009

¹⁸ C. M. BLANCHARD, *Islam: Sunnis and Shiites*, January 28, 2009, on <https://fas.org/irp/crs/RS21745.pdf>

¹⁹ T. HEGGHAMMER, *The ideological hybridization of Jihadi Groups*, Hudson Institute, November 18, 2009, on: <http://www.hudson.org/research/9866-the-ideological-hybridization-of-jihadi-groups>

II. Questions to Consider in Your Research

- How many citizens have joined extremist groups? How many have joined IS, specifically?
- Which extremist groups exist in my country? Which groups are threats to my country?
- What are the contents of their propaganda? What is so attractive to so many in the propaganda, and how can it be countered?
- What are the ideological roots of militant extremist groups? Where do the ideologies of extremist groups differ with those of Islamic governments?
- How have prestigious religious institutions in the Muslim World addressed the topic?

III. Questions a Resolution Might Answer

- What are the main ideologies employed by extremist groups?
- How can the League work to counteract the ideological underpinnings of these groups?
- Who is supporting such propaganda financially? What are their motives?
- What can the League do to promote, unity, understanding, respect, and tolerance among various Islamic ideologies?