



الدكتورة
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Research Report | XXVII Annual Session

اختصاصية في التوليد وأمراض النساء وجراحاتها
حائزة على شهادة الماجستير في الجراحة النسائية والتوليد - ECS

طبيبة الأسنان
سنية كحيل

Special Conference 1 on Peace and Justice in the Middle East

Preventing proxy wars in the Middle East



MODEL UNITED NATIONS
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

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Forum:	Special Conference 1
Issue:	Preventing proxy wars in the Middle East
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Introduction

Ever since the Second World War and the end of colonial rule in the Middle East there have perpetually been many conflicts in the Middle East between various factions with different viewpoints, due to the power vacuum left by decolonisation. In more recent times, two opposing power blocs have emerged: one driven by Iran, and the other by Saudi Arabia. The divisions between them are intrinsically linked to the denominations of Islam followed in the areas – Iran is a Shi'a theocracy, whereas Saudi Arabia is governed as an absolute monarchy along the lines of Sunni Islam – the protection of adherents to their denomination of Islam is of the utmost importance to both Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Until the fall of Ba'athist Iraq under Saddam Hussein, and the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, tensions between the two blocs were less stressed; the secular Ba'athist dictatorships of Iraq and Syria acted as buffer states for the two blocs. The idea of an uprising like the Iranian Revolution of the late 1970s, or the more recent regime changes of the Arab Spring, is considered a serious threat to the Saudi Arabian ruling family, which has caused them to become more loyal to the fundamentalist ideology of Wahhabism, considered to be the 'main source of global terrorism' by the European Parliament.

The fundamentalist doctrine, originating in Wahhabism, of the so-called Islamic State (IS) (also known as ISIS, ISIL, and Da'esh) adds an extra level of complication to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. They regard Shi'a Muslims as "Rafidah" (a derogatory term meaning rejectionists) as a result of their rejection of Abu Bakr as successor to Muhammad, insisting that the caliph should be a blood relative. For this reason, among others, IS intend to carry out a genocide on Shi'as, and are enemies of Iran. Their similar, albeit much more extreme, beliefs to those of the Saudi Arabian government, as well as financial information from whistle-blowers, has led to allegations that a large proportion of the funds supporting IS come from the Saudi government – this can be considered a more covert front of the proxy war.

Although it can be argued that the contest between Iran and Saudi Arabia is a power play aimed at becoming (or remaining) the dominant political influence in the region; the associated unrest and wars have cost many lives and damaged communities, and continue to do so. With Iran being strongly allied to Russia, and Saudi Arabia being strongly linked to the United States, the unrest in the Middle-East can also be thought of as proxy wars between Russia and the United States, akin to the Cold War of the twentieth century. With nuclear-weapons states taking ever increasing roles in the conflict, it is crucial that a solution is quickly found, so circumstances do not escalate further, and the existing conflicts are resolved.



Definition of Key Terms

Proxy war

A conflict between two States in which no direct confrontation occurs, instead they are involved in supporting their allies in wars or unrest in other States.

Autocracy

A system of government in which supreme power is concentrated in the hands of one person, whose decisions are not subject to external legal restraints or regularised mechanisms of control by the population of the country.

Ba'athism

A secular Arab nationalist ideology that supports the creation of a one-party state.

Islamist

An advocate or supporter of a political movement that favours reordering government and society in accordance with laws prescribed by Islam.

Shi'a Islam

A branch of Islam which holds that the Islamic prophet Muhammad designated Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor.

Sunni Islam

A branch of Islam which holds that the caliph Abu Bakr was the rightful successor to Muhammad after his death.

Secular

Religion is not a defining feature. For example, membership of a secular political party is not based on religious affiliation.

Sectarian

Concerned with a sect such as a religion. For example, membership of a sectarian political party may be limited to those of a particular religion or ethnic origin.

Theocracy

A form of government in which God, or a deity, is recognised as the supreme civil ruler, where the God's, or deity's, laws are interpreted by the religious authorities.

Wahhabism

An austere form of Islam that insists on a literal interpretation of the Koran which has been the dominant faith of Saudi Arabia for more than 200 years. Strict **Wahhabis** believe that all those who don't practise their form of Islam are heathens and enemies.

General Overview

In the following section of this paper we provide a timeline of events relevant to the proxy war in the Middle East between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and in this section, we provide an outline of those events. Only some of the parties involved in those events are mentioned.

Although the revolutionary government of Iran follows the Shi'a sect of Islam and the autocratic government of Saudi Arabia follows the Sunni sect of Islam, many commentators have stated that it is a dangerous oversimplification to view the proxy war as simply a contest between the two sects. They note that there is no history of centuries-long hatred between the two sects, and that Kurds form significant minorities in both Syria and Iraq (where proxy wars have occurred). Also, Syria's authoritarian ruler, Bashar Al-Assad, heads the secular Ba'athist party and is part of the Alawis sect of Islam, which is distinct from both Shi'a and Sunni. The political alliance between the Ba'athists of Syria and Iran originates from their common enemies of Israel and Saddam Hussein's Iraq; it is not a Shi'a alliance. Instead the proxy wars should be viewed as the two parties playing a balance of power game, on the playing fields of those Arab territories with unstable governments.

While providing support to governments and militias with common religious ideologies is part of the game, both countries have also crossed the sectarian (i.e. religious) divide to secure regional allies. This is particularly important for the Iranians because Shi'as are typically minorities in other countries, and so they have formed alliances with organisations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Where there is a Sunni majority, Saudi Arabia has not limited alliances to Sunni groups, and it has not adopted every available Sunni group. In the Syrian civil war the Saudis originally supported the least sectarian of the rebel groups, such as the Free Syrian Army (**FSA**). After deciding the FSA was not producing the desired results, the Saudis moved some of their backing to more overtly sectarian groups. However, they still refused to back Jabhat al-Nusra and IS, Sunni groups publicly linked to al-Qaeda.

Neither party has asserted that they are engaged in a sectarian (religious) dispute, and both blame the other for introducing sectarian divisiveness into regional politics. They do not admit to sectarian motives, even though they use sectarianism to foster allies.

They have not had to force themselves into weak states; they have been invited by local political factions vying for power against local rivals in those states. By providing support to their own clients they build their importance and influence in weak states, particularly if their clients are successful in securing power.

It can therefore be argued that the proxy wars should be seen as simply a contest for regional influence.

The Iranian Revolution (1978 - 1979)

The Iranian Republic was formed from (relatively non-violent) revolution in 1979, which unseated the western-backed authoritarian government of the Shah of Iran with an anti-western authoritarian religious government headed by the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The revolution was supported by left wing and Islamist organisations and student movements and was very popular with the masses.

The revolutionaries encouraged all Muslims to overthrow their rulers. They have publicly played down the Shi'a nature of their Islamic revolution (around 95% of Iranians associate with the Shi'a branch of Islam), emphasising that their model of revolution can be applied to other forms of Islam. Nevertheless, Iran has had most success in developing allies with, and influence over, Shi'a groups, which make up around 10% of Saudi Arabia's population. Saudi Arabia saw Iran's activities as an existential threat to its royal family's autocratic hold on power.

The Iran-Iraq war (1980 -1988)

The autocratic Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, claimed as a reason for the invasion of its neighbour Iran a territorial dispute over the Shatt al-Arab, a waterway which forms the boundary between the two countries and Iraq's only outlet to the Persian Gulf.

In fact, it is believed that it was motivated by fears that the Iranian revolution would inspire insurgency among Iraq's long-suppressed Shi'a majority. Saddam Hussein's Arab Sunni supporters made up around 20% of the Muslim population of Iraq, with Shi'as comprising around 65% and Sunni Kurdish around 15%. Saudi Arabia supported Iraq, hoping that the Iranian revolution would be halted.

Parallels have been drawn between the Iran-Iraq war (referred to by Arabs as the **First Gulf War**), which lasted for 8 years, and the First World War because it degenerated into trench warfare stalemate and chemical weapons attacks.

During the war, the United States gradually abandoned its policy of neutrality, and supported Iraq, permitting the flow of money, agricultural credits, dual-purpose technology (which can be applied for both peaceful and war purposes), chemicals and weapons. It can be argued that, as a result of that war, Iran's mission changed from encouraging revolution abroad to one of undermining the Saudi-led (and American-backed) regional order of the Middle East.

Civil war in Lebanon (1975 - 1990)

Iran's largest initial success in exporting its revolution occurred in Lebanon with the creation of Hezbollah in the aftermath of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Lebanon is a religiously diverse society, with Sunni and Shi'a Islam each making up around 27% of the population, Christianity 40% and with a small Druze minority. Israel and Syria both intervened militarily and occupied substantial swathes of Lebanese territory for some time.

Other powers intervened indirectly, supporting various Lebanese factions. Iran was most successful, helping to build its ally Hezbollah into the most important factor in the country. Saudi Arabia and Saddam Hussein's Iraq each patronised their own clients in Lebanese politics.

The origins of religious fundamentalism (1990s)

Arab regimes with stronger holds on their populations than Lebanon had had, sought to blunt the influence of the Iranian revolution by cracking down on detractors and hardening religious divides. In the 1990s Saudi Arabia fostered rifts between Sunnis and Shi'as. The resulting sectarian violence and fears later fed into the ideology of the Islamic State.

Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia's dominant faith, is an austere form of Islam that insists on a literal interpretation of the Koran. Strict Wahhabis believe that all those who don't practice their form of Islam are heathens and enemies. Critics say that Wahhabism's rigidity has led some to misinterpret and distort Islam and develop extremist ideologies.

Occupation of Kuwait by Iraq (1990)

Kuwait was one of a number of Arab states that supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. By the end of the war Iraq owed it in the order of US\$14 billion. Iraq argued that the war had prevented Iran from increasing its influence in Kuwait (its local Muslim population is split roughly 70% Sunni and 30% Shi'a), and in return Kuwait should forgive the debt, which it was reluctant to do.

Citing as motivation unfair Kuwaiti economic practices (including allegations of slant drilling across the border into an Iraqi oil field), in 1990 Saddam Hussain's Iraq invaded its neighbour Kuwait, which it annexed and labelled the 19th province of Iraq.

The First Persian Gulf War (1991)

In the **First Persian Gulf War** (the Second Gulf War for Arab observers) in 1991, a United States-led coalition expelled the Iraqis from Kuwait. The US then established military bases in Kuwait.

The Iranians saw this permanent presence of the US in the region as a threat.

Iraq's defeat in Kuwait incited many of its citizens to rebel, particularly those in poorer Shi'a communities. (The Muslim population of Iraq is approximately 65% Shi'a). As a result, the Iraqi regime became more explicitly sectarian, widening the Sunni-Shi'a divide to deter future uprisings.

Iran cultivated allies among Iraq's disenfranchised Shi'as.

The Iraq insurgency of 2003-2011 (now broadly a stalemate)

In 2003 the United States led an invasion that removed the Iraqi (Sunni) government of Saddam Hussain, which had been hostile to both Saudi Arabia and Iran. The justifications given for the invasion were possession and manufacture of weapons of mass destruction (later proved to be false), and providing support for al-Qaeda (the perpetrators of the 11 September 2001 attack on the Twin Towers in the US) and for other terrorist organisations.

The subsequent US-led occupation of Iraq was opposed by an insurgency fuelled by a number of militias with differing agendas.

The power vacuum that ensued permitted Iran to use Shi'a militias to control parts of Iraq and to undermine the occupation of Iraq.

After years of oppressing its own Shi'a population, Saudi Arabia struggled to make inroads with the Shi'a militias in Iraq.

Some of the Sunni militia groups (the natural allies of Saudi Arabia) in Iraq were turning to fundamentalist ideologies.

Unrest in Lebanon (2005-2008)

In 2005 Lebanon was a frail democracy recovering from civil war, with parties and militias mainly organised by religion. It represented the opportunity to wage a proxy war.

Iran supported Hezbollah, which it had previously cultivated against Israel.

Saudi Arabia supported the Lebanese military and the Sunni Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri.

With neither side having a full mandate, Lebanon struggled to build a functioning state.

The Arab Spring (2011-2014)

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in early 2011. In a number of countries, it toppled governments, many of which were allies of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia moved quickly to fill the vacuum, sometimes using force, concerned that otherwise Iran would fill the vacuum as it had in Iraq and Lebanon. Saudi Arabia promised billions of aids to Jordan, Yemen, Egypt and others and encouraged governments to come down hard on protestors.

The Yemini Crisis since 2011

Popular protests began in Yemen in 2011 led by both secular and Islamist groups. Yemen's population is broadly split 55% Sunni Muslim and 45% Shi'a Muslim. A violent crackdown by President Ali Abdullah Saleh almost led to a civil war, with some army units joining the protestors. The President stepped down in 2012, but unrest continued in parts of the country. The (Shi'a) Houthis took broad control of northern Yemen in 2014, and declared themselves in control of the whole of Yemen in 2015. The Arab League, led by the Saudis, undertook a bombing campaign in 2015, and Saudi Arabia and certain other countries began military operations in Yemen against the Houthis.

Bahrain (2011)

The Bahraini protests in 2011 were initially aimed at achieving greater political freedom and equality for the majority Shi'a population. Bahrain is a monarchy ruled by a Sunni. By religion, its population is split approximately 50% Shi'a, 20% Sunni, 15% Christian, 10% Hindu and 5% other. After a month of protests, the government of Bahrain requested troops and police aid from the Gulf Cooperation Council. Saudi Arabia sent 1,000 troops and the United Arab Emirates sent 500 and the uprising was crushed.

Egypt (2011-2013)

Protests led to President Hosni Mubarak resigning and transferring power to the Armed Forces of Egypt. The military immediately dissolved the Egyptian Parliament, which suspended the constitution of Egypt. A civilian was appointed as Prime Minister to widespread approval. However, there were subsequently more protests about the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' slowness in implementing reforms and relinquishing their grip on power.

Mohamed Morsi was sworn in as Egypt's first democratically elected president in 2012. He issued a temporary constitutional declaration that in effect granted him unlimited powers, including the power to legislate without judicial oversight or review of his acts. A new constitution was hastily drawn up by the Islamist-dominated constitutional assembly, and subsequently approved by two thirds of voters in a referendum. A year of economic issues, energy shortages, lack of security and diplomatic crises led to further protests.

In 2013 Saudi Arabia supported the military takeover in Egypt which deposed the elected Islamist government.

The Syrian Civil War (2011-)

In Syria (an Iranian ally), anti-government protests have led to civil war. Around 70% of Syrians are Sunnis (Kurds contribute 9% to this figure), 11% are Alawis, 11% Christians, 3% Shi'a, 3% Druze. Syria's authoritarian ruler, Bashar Al-Assad, heads the secular Ba'athist party and is part of the Alawis sect of Islam, which is distinct from both Shi'a and Sunni. The political alliance of the Ba'athists of Syria and Iran originates from their common enemies of Israel and Saddam Hussein's Iraq; it is not a sectarian (religious) alliance. Saudi Arabia and other Sunni states, have provided funds and arms to militias operating in Syria, including Sunni Islamists. The Syrian civil war has spilled over into parts of Lebanon.

Major Parties Involved

Iran

Shi'a theocratic regime. Accused of seeking to increase its influence in the Middle East through sponsoring proxy wars with Saudi Arabia.

Iraq

Former aggressor in the Iran-Iraq war and the Kuwait war. Currently subject to significant civil unrest between factions supported by Iran and those supported by Saudi Arabia.

Russia

Supporter of Syria and Iran. Seen as a meddling in the Middle East to serve its own purposes.

Saudi Arabia

Autocratic Sunni-based regime. Accused of seeking to increase its influence in the Middle East through sponsoring proxy wars with Iran.

Syria

Allied with Iran. Currently subject to significant civil unrest.

Turkey

Supporter of Kurdish factions in Syria and Iraq. Supporter of Saudi Arabia.

United States

Supporter of Saudi Arabia. Seen as a disruptive force by Iran.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Brief description of event
1978 - 1979	The Iranian Revolution. The Pahlavi dynasty, headed by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (the Shah) and supported by the United States was overthrown by an Islamic Republic.
1980 - 1988	Iraq invades Iraq (known in the Arab world as the First Gulf War). Saudi Arabia supports Iraq hoping the Iranian revolution will be halted. The US also provides support to Iraq.
1975 - 1990	Civil war in Lebanon. Iran supports Hezbollah. Saudi Arabia and Iraq support other militias.
1990s	Saudi Arabia fosters rifts between its Shi'a and Sunni populations. Religious fundamentalist develops its ideologies.
1990	Occupation of Kuwait by Iraq in order to avoid having to repay US\$24 billion of debt incurred during the Iran-Iraq war.
1991	Ejection of Iraq from Kuwait by the US (the First Persian Gulf War). Iraq's defeat incites many of its citizens to rebel, particularly those in poorer Shi'a communities. The Iraqi regime cracks down on dissent and becomes more explicitly sectarian to deter future uprisings.
2003	Invasion of Iraq by a US-led coalition (the Second Persian Gulf War) removes the Iraqi (Sunni) government of Saddam Hussein and leaves a power vacuum.

2003-2011	Iraqi insurgency - This is fuelled by militias acting in the power vacuum after the US-led invasion of Iraq. Iran uses Shi'a militias to control parts of Iraq and undermine the occupation of Iraq.
2005-2008	Unrest in Lebanon - The frail democracy is assailed by Hezbollah (supported by Iran). Saudi Arabia supports the Lebanese military and the Sunni Prime Minister.
2011-2014	The Arab Spring - A series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed rebellions that topple a number of governments, many of which are allied to Saudi Arabia.
2011-	The Yemini Crisis- The (Shi'a) Houthis take control of Northern Yemen in 2014, and declare themselves in control of the whole of Yemen in 2015. The Arab League, led by the Saudis, subsequently undertake a bombing campaign and begin military operations against the Houthis.
2011	Bahrain - After a month of protests, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates send in troops to Bahrain to assist the government to crush an uprising.
2011-2013	Egypt - Egypt's democratically elected Islamist party is deposed by the Egyptian military supported by Saudi Arabia.
2011-	The Syrian Civil War, in which the Iranian-backed (and now Russian-backed) Syrian government resists overthrow from Saudi Arabian-backed (and US-backed) militia.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

There is a long list of UN resolutions and reports concerning the effects on civilians of the Syria Civil War. The following is a sample of those issued in 2016 and 2017:

- In **S/2017/541** (23 June 2017), **S/2017/445** (22 May 2017) and **S/2017/339** (19 April 2017) the Secretary General reports on the humanitarian situation in Syria.
- 15 June 2017: Security Council Meeting record **S/PV.7973** was a briefing by Nakamitsu on the destruction of Syria's stockpile of chemical weapons.
- 30 May 2017: Letter from Security Council **S/2017/469** was an OPCW report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.
- 18 May 2017: Letter from Security Council **S/2017/440** providing an update report from the OPCW FFM mission on the Khan Shaykhun chemical weapons attack in April 2017.
- 4 May 2017: Letter from Security Council **S/2017/400** on the report by the OPCW FFM on a chemical weapons attack in Um-Housh in September 2016.
- 12 April 2017: Draft resolution **S/2017/315** on the 4 April chemical weapons attack was vetoed by Russia



- 2 February 2017: Report by the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on Aleppo (**A/HRC/34/64**)
- 31 December 2016, the Security Council welcomes efforts by Russia and Turkey to end violence in Syria and jumpstart a political process (**S/RES/2336**)
- 21 December 2016: Security Council resolution **S/RES/2332** renewed the authorisation for cross-border aid delivery until 10 January 2018.
- 21 December 2016: General Assembly resolution **A/RES/71/248** established the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the most serious crimes under international law committed in Syria since March 2011. The resolution was drafted by Liechtenstein and was passed with 105 votes in favour to 15 against with 52 abstentions.
- 19 December 2016: Security Council resolution **S/RES/2328** demanded UN access to monitor evacuations from Aleppo.
- 9 December 2016: General Assembly resolution **A/RES/71/130** expressed outrage at the recent escalation of violence, particularly in Aleppo, and demanded an immediate and complete end to all attacks on civilians and civilian objects and to all sieges throughout the country. The resolution was drafted by Canada and was passed by 122 votes in favour to 13 against with 36 abstentions.
- 5 December 2016: Draft resolution **S/2016/1026** was submitted by Egypt, New Zealand and Spain and called for an end all attacks in Aleppo for seven days. The vote was 11-3-1. Russia and China vetoed the resolution, Venezuela voted no and Angola abstained.
- 21 October 2016: Human Rights Council resolution **A/HRC/S-25/L.1** demanding that the Syrian regime and its allies end immediately all aerial bombardments of, and military flights over, Aleppo; and requests the Commission of Inquiry to conduct an inquiry into the events in Aleppo and present a report to the Human Rights Council in March.
- 30 September 2016 Human Rights Council resolution **A/HRC/33/L.30** strongly condemns the military offensive on eastern Aleppo by forces loyal to the Syrian authorities. It was adopted with a vote of 26 in favour, seven against (including Security Council members China, Russia and Venezuela and incoming member Bolivia) and 14 abstentions.
- 2 November 2015: General Assembly's Third Committee adopted resolution **A/C.3/70/L.47** drafted by Saudi Arabia that condemns the Syrian regime and ISIS and expresses regret that a May 2014 Security Council draft resolution referring the situation in Syria to ICC was not adopted.
- 20 October 2015: Sanctions Committee resolution **SC/12090** included suggestions to member states for the implementation of resolution 2199 regarding the illicit financing of ISIS and Al-Nusra Front.
- 2 October 2015: Sanctions Committee resolution **SC/12067** was the 1267/1989 Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee listing of four ISIS-affiliated individuals and one individual affiliated with Al-Nusra Front.



Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issues

The United States–led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq to remove terrorists and their backers have backfired as the resulting power vacuums were filled by rival domestic factions seeking their own interests and making a grab for power. Training and equipping those militias that are fighting extremists has not been a success.

Saudi Arabia formed the intergovernmental Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFIT) in December 2015 with the stated goal of combating terrorism, but the coalition currently comprises only States with Sunni-dominated governments.

Russia's backing of President Assad as essential to the elimination of extremists operating in Syria, has made the political situation in the Middle East more complicated.

Russia (who has long maintained ties with Iran) has sought closer ties to Saudi Arabia. In September 2016, the two nations conducted informal talks about cooperating on oil production: both have been heavily affected by the collapse of oil prices. Russian President Vladimir Putin recommended an exemption from oil production capping for Iran, whose oil output has steadily increased following the lifting of international sanctions in January 2016. Saudi Arabia offered to reduce its oil production if Iran capped its own output by the end of 2016.

The election of Donald Trump in the United States in 2016 has prompted uncertainty from both Iran and Saudi Arabia about future US policy in the Middle East, as both were targets of criticism during his campaign. Iran feared the return of economic isolation, and made efforts to establish further international economic participation for the country by signing oil deals with Western companies before he took office. The re-election of President Hassan Rouhani in Iran, who defeated a hard-line candidate, was seen as a popular mandate for liberal reforms in the country. However, this was followed by Trump declaring a shift in US foreign policy toward favouring Saudi Arabia at Iran's expense.

Possible Solutions

The longer-term challenge is building states that can effectively govern their societies.

Effective governance in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, Libya and Afghanistan would significantly reduce the opportunities for regional powers to meddle within those territories, and so limit the scope for regional balance of power struggles. Factions motivated by ethnic or religious self-interests will have less reason to seek out foreign sponsors if states are governed effectively, and such states will not become havens for international terrorist groups. However, building effectively governed states that are democratic is even more challenging.



Potential contributions towards these ideals are listed below.

Encouraging Iran and Saudi Arabia to come together to identify grounds for improving their relationship and reducing their rivalry

Greater efforts need to be made to improve the dialogue between the two parties. The talks should be in a neutral location mediated by impartial parties and with representation of other involved groups. The objective is to provide viable solutions to the issues at hand.

Encouraging Turkey to stop its borders being used as a conduit for radical Islamic terrorists (and recruits) to enter Syria and Iraq

Financial support provided to Turkey needs to be subject to it taking actions to close its borders to recruits. The UN should ensure that the money is being spent in the correct way.

Discouraging States from funding radical Islamic terrorists

A first step would be the identification of who is funding who, and publicising the abhorrent actions that the funded terrorists have taken in the territories they have occupied. This requires an organisation such as a sub-body of the UN prepared to name and shame the funders.

Making sure Islamic State is defeated on the battlefield, so that Sunni allies are motivated to distance themselves from its ideology

Some progress has been made with this recently. This requires financial support of the opposition, and concrete plans to incorporate that opposition in the post-war political solution.

Encouraging a more inclusive and effective government in Iraq by including credible Sunni leaders, which will also provide resources to combat jihadism and the remnants of Saddam Hussein's government

Fundamentally Iran and Saudi Arabia need to be encouraged to find some common ground, so that their proxies can work together to form stable power-sharing governments.

Encouraging greater democratic and liberal reforms by the military government in Egypt

The UN may be able to apply pressure here.

Seeking political reconciliation with the Houthis in Bahrain (this is likely to require an improved relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia)

Again, the UN may be able to apply pressure here.



Continuing to support Jordan and Turkey in their struggles with Syrian refugees

This requires the financial commitment of wealthy nations, and the recognition that if the support is inadequate then the refugee crisis will arrive at their borders.

Any political solution chosen will need to encompass:

- Kurds are unlikely to give up on the *de facto* state that they have gained after decades of oppression;
- Sunni Arabs are unlikely to give up the idea of uniting across the Syria-Iraq border;
- Minorities like Alawites, Ismailis and Christians are likely to be uneasy about Sunni domination in a democratic Syria.

This is likely to require post-war conferences involving the major parties to agree a credible future for Syria and for Iraq.

Addressing the issues that lead to the recruitment and radicalisation of young persons by terrorist groups.

The UN should continue to call upon States to take actions such as, putting forward counter arguments to those put forward by radicals, where possible, stripping citizenship from jihadi fighters and making greater efforts to create real job opportunities for young people.

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