Non-State Actors: A Theoretical Limitation in a Changing Middle East

Carmit Valensi

The turmoil that has beset the Middle East since December 2010 deepened the instability and surfaced various conflicts and tensions that have been characteristic of the region throughout history. These events reveal the importance of non-state actors in the Middle East and give rise to the need to rethink "facts," terms, and concepts connected to the phenomenon of the nation-state, practically and theoretically. Although non-state actors are not new in the global or Middle Eastern political landscape, it is evident that the theoretical and practical discussion, with its political, military, legal, and international aspects, has remained largely "state" in a way that allows little room for a thorough understanding of non-state phenomena. The purpose of this article is to discuss developments in the Middle East, with an emphasis on the actions of non-state actors as significant shapers of regional processes, while discussing the validity of theories and conceptualizations in international relations for an analysis of existing non-state phenomena. The discussion will involve an analysis of two test cases: Hizbollah and the Islamic State.

Key words: Regional upheaval, non-state actors, terrorist organizations, Hizbollah, ISIS, international relations, constructivism

One of the explanations given for the wave of protests that swept the Middle East four years ago was that the turmoil was a long-term effect of the era of colonialism. Most nation-states in the modern Middle East are relatively new creations, the result of Anglo-French imperialism, which divided the remnants of the Ottoman Empire into states with artificial borders in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The arbitrary division of states completely ignored

Carmit Valensi is a Neubauer research associate at INSS and a doctoral student at the Tel Aviv University.

the fragile ethnic, religious, and communal fabric characteristic of the region, and the current upheavals are a late outbreak of internal distress arising from that same historical injustice.

Recent developments in the Middle East indicate two main trends: one is the undermining of divisions between states and formal territorial borders, while the other is the growing dominance of non-state actors as shapers of processes.

In regard to the first trend, Iraq has been split into three de facto entities, Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish, with the Kurds marching toward establishing an independent state. Libya has not succeeded in stabilizing itself since Gaddafi's ouster and is controlled by clans and gangs. Post-Assad Syria could follow suit and crumble to its foundations. South Sudan "celebrated" three years of independence, in the course of which it experienced a violent and bloody civil war, and it was recently ranked first on the index of the world's fragile states.[1]

Not only is the state framework being weakened; primordial sub-state identities—of ethnic group, tribe, or family—and supra-state identities translated into ideas of the Islamic *ummah*, the caliphate, and sometimes even pan-Arabism, are becoming increasingly prominent. Thus, political struggles are painted as Sunni and Shiite struggles, state borders are becoming more fluid, and nation-state identity does not necessarily dictate the tone.

The second trend, which involves the dominance of non-state actors in the Middle East, is not new, but what is new is their scope and intensity. Violent non-state organizations have played a significant role in the region in recent decades: Hamas is in de facto control of the Gaza Strip and continues to walk the line between terrorism and the political and social realms. Hizbollah has been continuously challenging Lebanese sovereignty for the past three decades and is leading the fighting alongside the Assad regime in the civil war in Syria. New jihadi organizations, some of which are official branches of al-Qaeda and others independent, have joined the violent landscape in the region. Recently, the Islamic State (ISIS), which in its previous incarnation was al-Qaeda in Iraq, announced the establishment of the caliphate in areas of western Iraq and eastern Syria and called on other factions in the world to swear allegiance to it. In Syria, the al-Nusra front, a branch of al-Qaeda, declared the founding of an Islamic emirate in the country. The troubling implications for the Middle East of the actions

of thousands of volunteers who are flocking to Syria from around the Arab world and the West remain unclear.

No matter how widespread it is becoming, the phenomenon of non-state actors does not mean the end of the nation-state, which is expected to remain in regional order in the future as well and certainly in states with a stable national basis, such as Egypt and Tunisia. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the familiar nation-states are no longer the sole model organizing international relations, either in the Middle East or the rest of the world.

A significant portion of the research literature in political science and international relations on non-state organizations, both in the Middle East and outside the region, suffers from generalizations and uses terms that do not provide an up-to-date solution for analyzing them. In fact, the main approaches continue to give dominant weight to state actors and state practices. Likewise, the theories create a sharp and rather binary distinction between non-state actors and state actors and ignore many cases in which the boundaries between them are blurred. In contrast, later research approaches allow a more complex understanding of the non-state world.

The main theories in international relations over the years have analyzed the actors influencing the political system, their motives, and the relationships between them and other actors in the system. This article will present the main points of the major approaches in this field; realism, liberalism, and constructivism,[2] and will examine their suitability for describing phenomena in the Middle East. But first, let us define non-state actors.

Non-State Actors

One definition of non-state actors in the literature includes organizations "largely or entirely autonomous from central government funding and control; emanating from civil society, or from the market economy, or from political impulses beyond state control and direction." These organizations act "in ways which affect political outcomes, either within one or more states or within international institutions, either purposefully or semi-purposefully, either as their primary objective or as one aspect of their activities." [3]

It is customary to distinguish among four types of non-state actors.[4] Multinational corporations (MNCs) operate in at least two countries and manage production or deliver services. Generally, they are private companies with headquarters in one country and subsidiaries in others. Non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) are voluntary, not for profit, private, and self-governing. What they have in common is their independence from the government, from large corporations, and from other outside influences. Super-empowered individuals have political, economic, intellectual, or cultural influence. They include industrialists, financiers, media figures, celebrities, religious leaders, and terrorists. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are actors with an official connection to states and are defined as intergovernmental organizations established at the initiative of two or more states that conduct political interaction (the UN).

Along with the ongoing discussion of non-state actors and the focus on their positive contribution to political activity, there has also been extensive discussion of violent non-state actors over the years, and this has gained momentum since September 11, 2001. These actors are defined as organizations that use illegal violence, that is, make use of force that is not acceptable to the state in order to achieve their goals and thus challenge the state's monopoly over violence.[5] The research literature tends to distinguish among terrorist organizations, criminal organizations, quasi-military organizations, militias, freedom fighters, pirates, and guerillas.[6]

The Realist Approach: The State as a Major Actor in International Relations

Beginning in the nineteenth century, nation-states were the most significant units operating in the international system. The realist paradigm has reflected the "state-centric" idea since World War II. Realism developed as a critique of the theory of idealism, which was common in the interwar period and whose aim was to avoid another world war. Hans Morgenthau, in his 1948 book *Politics among Nations*, challenged the assumptions of liberal, idealistic scholars who stressed the importance of public opinion, in the 1920s and 1930s, in shaping foreign policy.

Morgenthau and others argued that classical realism rests on three basic assumptions: 1. the state-centric approach, which assumes that states are the most significant actors in world politics; 2. the principle of rationality, which is that states are considered to be homogeneous and rational actors; and 3. the assumption of power, which is that states seek first and foremost to increase their power, especially militarily, both as a means and as an end. Every policy seeks to maintain, increase, and apply power, and since only states have the resources to enable them to maximize their power, they are the most significant actors in the system. [7]

According to the realists, global political actors are defined by means of three categories: sovereignty, state recognition, and control over a territory and a population. Other entities in the international system cannot be autonomous and distinct because they do not incorporate these three elements.[8] At the height of realism, other non-state actors, whether they were multinational corporations, transnational groups, or terrorist organizations, were perceived as lacking in importance in the international system.[9]

In the 1960s and 1970s, political scientists, including international relations scholars, began to discuss non-state actors as influencers of foreign policy.[10] The focus on these actors stemmed from an ongoing interest in special groups and political and social movements that developed in the 1970s and dealt with subjects such as abortion, gun control, the environment, racism, and human rights. At that time, there were also violent non-state actors such as the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, the Basque separatist group ETA in Spain, the Baader Meinhof gang (Red Army Faction) in Germany, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey, and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka (LTTE).

The prevalence of violent groups in the post-World War II period, which was connected, among other things, to the technological revolution, to processes of globalization, and to changes in transportation,[11] led to an understanding that realism was not able to account for all the structural changes taking place in the international system.

The Liberal-Pluralist Approach

In the mid-1970s, scholars known as "liberal pluralists" arrived at the conclusion that states are not isolated actors in the political system, that they are not necessarily homogenous because they are composed of competing bureaucracies, and that the traditional supremacy of military and security issues as drivers of policy had changed and economic and social interests had become even more important. It was thus increasingly difficult to identify clear boundaries between the fields.[12] The major argument was that international organizations have real or potential power to act and mitigate some of the problems arising from the anarchy characteristic of international relations.

Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye were among the first scholars to call for a reexamination of the state-centric paradigm because it had failed to identify the importance of non-state actors. In a collection of articles

from 1971, they identified interactions that are not state interactions and defined them as "the movement of tangible or intangible items across state boundaries when at least one actor is not an agent of a government." [13]

Another major study from the 1970s, the Non-State Actor Project (NOSTAC), dealt with the importance of non-governmental actors. [14]The researchers looked at events that had taken place between 1948 and 1972 in three regions, Western Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America, in order to empirically explain the growth and behavior of non-state actors. Their findings proved that only one-half of the interactions in these regions had taken place between states, and their conclusions led them to determine that only one-half of international events could be analyzed using the state-centric approach.

Neo-realism and Actors in International Politics

Despite the claim that the realist approach misses events because of its focus on states, a series of events that took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s proved to the researchers that the basic assumptions of realism were still relevant to an analysis of global politics: the tension between East and West and the U.S. arms buildup against the Soviet buildup; the military involvement by the superpowers in Africa, Central America, and southwest Asia; the Yom Kippur War and the Iran-Iraq War. International institutions were unable to shape regional interests and appeared to be extensions of the inter-state tension in the world. These events and the need to explain U.S. hegemony (from an economic perspective as well) led to the development of neo-realism.[15] One of the most prominent neo-realist scholars, Kenneth Waltz, implemented systemic approaches in the realist paradigm that explain the behavior of actors in light of the existing structural constraints in the international system.[16] Waltz argued that the international structure must be defined only by means of the significant actors operating in it and not by all of the actors. In response to accelerated activity by non-state actors and the resulting criticism of realism in the 1970s, Waltz emphasized the role of these actors and argued that while the nature of power had changed (and was divided at that time among different types of actors), its use had not.[17]

Constructivism

In contrast to realism and liberalism, constructivism is not a distinctive political science approach, and its status is that of a broad social theory

and less of a paradigm. This approach gives a central place to ideas in the structuring of social life and thus undermines the approaches that explain social life by means of materialist arguments such as biology, geography, and technology. While these have a role, it is mediated by ideas, which give it meaning. Similarly, the interests and identities of the actors operating in the international system are shaped by their concept of the world, which is socially structured. [18]Alexander Wendt, who is identified with this approach, adopts three main terms: identities, which determine the actors' identity; norms, defined as shared expectations concerning the proper behavior for the actor's identity; and interests, referring to what the actors want to achieve. [19]

The Relevance of the Approaches to an Analysis of Non-State Phenomena in the Middle East: A Critical View

The theoretical analysis enables us to draw a number of conclusions regarding the validity of the main approaches in international relations for describing the current situation in the Middle East.

The realist and neo-realist approaches are still state-oriented and provide relatively little meaning for non-state actors. Criticism of this has grown because of the increase in non-state terror in general and the events of September 11 in particular. The critics' main argument was that this approach cannot explain the consequences of the terrorist attacks for global politics and for the choices of the state actors. In the meantime, a question has arisen as to how the realist approach can explain a situation in which the only superpower in the world declares war on an abstract entity such as terrorism.[20] In general, this approach has had a difficult time explaining actors that are not identified as states and that have an influence, once on the domestic politics of the state in which they operate and a second time on the foreign relations of other states in the region.

Proponents of the neo-liberal approach[21] recognize the importance of non-state actors, but they tend to interpret their interests in economic terms, with little or no reference to the military and security considerations that are at the heart of the neo-liberal approach. In this way, they too miss the ability to discuss non-state organizations that are operating today in the international system and in the Middle East that are not necessarily driven by an economic or social interest. The liberals, like the realists, attribute an external motive for actors, whether anchored in the structure of the political system or in other structures. In fact, the two approaches

assume a linear development of phenomena, that is, that states will remain states (the dissolution of frameworks is not addressed) and violent non-state organizations will have set practices, such as the use of violence for reasons of power or survival. So too, they assume that there is a certain kernel of continuity in the actor's approaches and its ways of coping with its environment. The strength of these approaches is in explaining permanent and ongoing phenomena, but they encounter an obstacle in attempting to explain change and dynamism in the system.

The Middle East, especially in the past four years, is an example of an arena in which state frameworks, organizations, political structures, alliances, and political leaders are fragile and fluid. The actors operating in this arena are characterized by regular, linear, unidimensional patterns of activity, as the realists and liberals tend to assume. Despite the limitations of the comparison between the approaches and constructivism (they are political paradigms and present different parameters for analysis from those in constructivism), it appears that the constructivist approach allows a more accurate look at the phenomenon of non-state actors in the region and their growing influence. The approach recognizes their importance as influential actors and assumes that the nature of the actors is not fixed, but changes in accordance with the context and over time. An emphasis on ideas and norms as a central element in understanding the motivations of the actors (more than the pursuit of power and material benefit), as the approach proposes, is essential for understanding the politics, certainly that found in the Middle East. This argument is twice as valid when discussing violent non-state actors such as terrorist organizations.

Hizbollah and the Islamic State

Hizbollah and ISIS represent two models of non-state actors in the Middle East. Hizbollah challenges the dichotomy between a state and a non-state and constitutes an intermediate phenomenon which blurs the boundary between state actors and non-state actors and also illustrates non-linear organizational practices as a result of its multiple identities. The organization accepts the national order and operates within the Lebanese state framework. ISIS is a later development that undermines the state framework in the Middle East, illustrating a dynamic of dissolution of frameworks and the creation of new spaces that go beyond the known borders of the nation-state. In this sense, it can be argued that ISIS is a supra-national and "a-national" organization.

Hizbollah

The main approaches in international relations place clear boundaries between a state actor and a non-state actor. The case of Hizbollah, like other violent organizations operating in the international system, challenges the unequivocal separation between the two types of actors. Hizbollah is not formally defined as a state and is not recognized as such. It operates within a sovereign state and is defined as a violent non-state actor, as a terrorist and guerilla organization, as an armed political organization, or as an insurgent. However, an attempt to apply the classic definitions of state to the case of Hizbollah shows that it might be thought of as a state.

According to Max Weber's classic definition, "a compulsory political association with continuous organization (*politischer Anstaltsbetrieb*) will be called a 'state' if and in so far as its administrative staff successfully upholds a claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order."[22] While Weber gives a functional definition, British sociologist Michael Mann proposes an institutional definition, stating that the state contains four main elements, being: (1) a differentiated set of institutions and personnel, embodying (2) centrality, in the sense that political relations radiate outwards from a centre to cover a (3) territorially demarcated area, over which it exercises (4) a monopoly of authoritative binding rule-making, backed up by a monopoly of the means of physical violence.[23]

An analysis of Hizbollah in the spirit of Weber's and Mann's definitions of state reveals that there is significant overlap between the organization's characteristics and those of the state. Thus, Hizbollah operates in a "territorially demarcated area" in the state of Lebanon. It "exercises a certain, even high level of authoritativeness" through effective internal enforcement mechanisms and means of control. Since 1992, it has been a political actor in Lebanese state politics that promotes laws and norms of behavior by means of "legislative processes backed up by political force," and since 2005, it has even been represented by ministers in the government. It operates a network of institutions and infrastructures (social and military) for the residents of Lebanon, including schools, summer camps, hospitals, and charitable organizations, in certain areas on a larger scale than the network run by the state itself. The extent of the organization's legitimacy among parts of the Lebanese population is even greater than that of the state. Hizbollah has representatives in various countries around the world and maintains external relations with Arab states.[24] Nevertheless, it is not a real

state and does not have international recognition. Thus, the organization challenges the conventional conceptions and distinctions.

The use of the word "identities" is likely to assist in understanding the complexity of the organization. Hizbollah is an example of an entity between a state actor and a non-state actor, with a large number of identities that shape its behavior. These many identities create a model different from that of a classic terrorist organization, which primarily has a military identity. Hizbollah has four main identities: it has a state identity, which includes activity in the state political system, a monopoly on the means of force, maintenance of order, provision of welfare and educational services, construction of civilian infrastructures, and the use of significant military force. At the same time, it has a non-state identity, which is reflected in the use of terror and violence, despite the lack of an official monopoly on the means of force, a high level of mobility, and a limited level of institutionalism, with minimal, if any, subordination to laws and international treaties. In its sub-state framework, Hizbollah was founded as a Shiite organization that represents the Shiite population in Lebanon. This identity generally takes precedence over the state identity, and in cases in which it is dominant, it could threaten legitimacy and loyalty to the state. Hizbollah also has a supra-state identity, which embodies a long-term vision to establish a broad, Shiite-dominated Islamic entity. Today this vision is being blurred, more than in the past. It primarily includes Hizbollah's ties with Islamic states and organizations that share its ideology and agenda, particularly Iran and Syria.

A quick chronological look at Hizbollah shows how the movement's different identities have developed over time, been maintained side-by-side, and shaped its patterns of behavior over the years.[25] Hizbollah had a non-state identity between its establishment in 1985 and 1992, the year it decided to take part in the Lebanese political system. During this period, the organization worked in a defined geographic area, and its hierarchical and secret organizational structure reflected the structure of a non-state actor and included limited military capabilities. While maintaining its sub-state identity, which is connected to the Lebanese Shiite community's social and political awakening, Hizbollah, with generous aid from Iran, began to build an educational, cultural, and health system as a solution to the societal, economic, and political distress of the Shiites.[26] Its supra-state identity was greatly influenced by the Shiite revolution in Iran in 1979. The idea, as expressed in many statements by the organization's leaders, was

to establish in Lebanon a state based on Sharia (Islamic law) which would be an integral part of a worldwide Islamic state.[27]

During the 1990s, Hizbollah began to develop a state identity from 1992, when it became a political player, until the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000. During this process, it expanded from an ideological movement to an established organization characterized by a ramified organizational structure, a significant geographic presence in Lebanon, and an extensive welfare infrastructure. It began to provide for the essential needs of the population, which the state was powerless to fulfill. The movement relied on broad legitimacy and became an active player in the Lebanese political system. At the same time, it retained its previous identities (sub-state and supra-state), although in a more muted fashion, given its ambition to position itself as a Lebanese national organization. In the turn of the 21st century, Hizbollah played the role of an actor that skillfully combined characteristics of a non-state terrorist organization with those of an active political player in the Lebanese political system. Its military achievements (as perceived from its narrative of victory in the Second Lebanon War) positioned the movement as a significant player in the country and expanded its circles of support.

The following decade, in contrast, showed the tension created by Hizbollah's multiple identities and commitments, which to a large extent were contradictory. After a period of military achievements and political consolidation, the movement found itself clearly dedicated to the civil war in Syria, and its position was open to ongoing criticism at home, mainly due to the fear of causing a deterioration in the already fragile situation in Lebanon. Theoretically, it would appear that Hizbollah has invested most of its inputs in the non-state identity and acted like a military organization lacking constraints and responsibility. It has also focused on fulfilling the obligations embodied in its supra-state identity as part of an Islamic resistance alliance consisting of Iran and Syria, largely at the expense of its national image.

Many studies have dealt with the linear transition from violent organization to political player on the basis of the assumption that the political institutionalization of the group, which has operated in an extra-institutional framework until now, would lead to restraint and to adoption of non-violent and accepted rules of the game.[28] However, in recent years, research has actually focused on the combination of violent activity and political participation by the actors. The case of Hizbollah is an example

of an actor that does not make a linear transition from the military to the political while neglecting the first commitment, but that is integrated into a cyclical dynamic, which highlights different spheres of activity in different time periods.[29]

The historic process undergone by Hizbollah and an analysis of its current situation illustrate the importance of recognizing its multiple identities as well as its ability to give varying intensity to its different identities according to the circumstances and needs, as part of the patterns of thought and pragmatic behavior characteristic of the organization. Over the years, in periods of tension between Hizbollah and the Lebanese state, the movement temporarily downplayed the identities that competed with the Lebanese national identity until relations were stabilized, and afterwards, worked to restore its equilibrium until the next challenge. Nevertheless, the current sequence of events in which Hizbollah is involved is a clear example of a clash between identities. One identity—in this case, the supra-state identity and the connection to Iran and Syria—clashes with the Lebanese state identity that the organization has aspired to establish in recent years. This development could undermine the equilibrium and balance between the commitments to various identities, which Hizbollah has attempted to maintain over the years.

An in-depth analysis of organizations such as Hizbollah requires an understanding and recognition of the phenomenon of multiple identities as a factor mediating between the ideological vision and the daily practice. Thus, a dynamic strategy is formed that adapts itself to the circumstances and the context and allows the movement to emphasize identity as dependent on the target audience it is facing at any given moment (the Lebanese government, Israel, or Iran, for example). An analysis that does not taken into account the ideological dimension, the multiple identities (primarily state and non-state), and the behavior derived from them and that focuses on rational cost-benefit considerations could miss the complexity of Hizbollah and its ilk.

The Islamic State

The growth of the Islamic State in the era of regional turmoil is connected to three developments: the rise of radical Islamic ideas as an alternative to the secular order presented by the dictatorships; exploitation of the chaos and entrenchment in areas with limited governance (especially in Syria and Iraq) as a result of the revolutionary winds that swept the region

at the start of the events; and finally, the potential to change the formal territorial borders in the Middle East and undermine the state structure as the exclusive structure in the region.

ISIS was established by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2003, initially called Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad. Its goal was to fight the coalition forces that had invaded Iraq in order to overthrow the government of Saddam Hussein. About a year later, members of the group pledged allegiance to the central al-Qaeda organization in Afghanistan and became known as al-Qaeda in Iraq. In February 2014, as a result of differences of opinion between al-Qaeda's central leadership and the group's commanders, the leadership decided to distance itself from the group, which, under Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's leadership, became an independent organization called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In late June 2014, when it took control over areas in western Iraq and northeastern Syria, it declared the establishment of an independent Islamic Caliphate in the territories under its control, appointed al-Baghdadi as Caliph, and changed its name to the Islamic State. This change indicates the group's ambitions to cross the accepted boundaries.[30] In order to understand the source of the decision to declare an Islamic caliphate and its potential implications for breaking state frameworks in the Middle East, it is necessary to understand the ideological and religious dimension that is the basis of Islam in general and the organization's ideology in particular.

Like other radical Salafist movements, IS takes its ideological inspiration from the Muslim Brotherhood, which originated in Egypt in the late 1920s. The movement had a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam and called for adopting the way of life of the early fathers of Islam.

Islam is based on the assumption that the community (*ummah*) transcends the state, which is perceived as an artificial product that undermines the natural unity of believers. It is also based on a transnational interaction that enables connections between different Muslim communities in different geographic areas, a space called the House of Islam (*dar al-Islam*).[31] Islam is not only a religious framework, but also a source of social, legal, and economic rules of behavior whose purpose is to regulate relations between Muslims and between Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, religion and politics are together embodied in the *ummah* and are not separate, as in the West. The Islamic idea is fundamentally supra-national and supra-state.

The main thinkers who critiqued the state structure and served as a source of inspiration for the Islamic jihadi movements were Sayyid Qutb,

an Egyptian educator and Muslim Brotherhood theorist, and a Pakistani philosopher, Abul A'la Maududi. Both discussed the corruption of the Middle Eastern regimes and the decline of the Muslim world, which they attributed to the abandonment of the straight path of Islam. The solution, they believed, was to revive Islam and apply sharia. They called on Muslims to unite across national borders in order to contend with the power of the West and the negative influences of its culture. Maududi referred to Islam as transcending ethnic and national identity, which is embodied in the state structure.

Those who accept the principles of Islam are not divided by any distinction of nationality or race or class or country. The ultimate goal of Islam is a world-state in which the chains of racial and national prejudices would be dismantled and all mankind incorporated in a cultural and political system, with equal rights and equal opportunities . . . His ultimate goal would be a nation-state rather than a world-state, nevertheless if he upholds any world ideology, that ideology would necessarily take the form of imperialism or world domination, because members of other nationalities cannot participate in his state as equals, they may do so only as "slaves" or subjects.[32]

In a video published on July 28, 2013, ISIS described its doctrine, which is based on two central pillars: The first is eradication of all heretic phenomena in society. This will start with opposition to ideas such as nationalism and communism and habits such as alcohol consumption and prostitution. The Alawites and the Shiites are considered infidels, and so fighting in existing Muslim states (especially Iraq) is more important than fighting the Christians. The second is that the basis of life is Islam. The judicial process in the country will use Islamic law in Islamic courts, and in general, it is important to disseminate knowledge of Islamic law to the ummah. The way to implement this ideology is through jihad.[33]

Beyond the fact that it is a violent non-state actor that subverts state sovereignty, ISIS is different from other terrorist organizations in the Middle East. It presents a unique model that combines a number of elements of the various organizations in the region:

Conquering territory and attempting to establish a state. Most terror and guerilla organizations (such as Hizbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and al-Qaeda affiliates) do not aspire to conquer territory but use "hit and run" operations to wear down and intimidate the enemy so that it will withdraw from a

territory. IS, in contrast, seeks to conquer territory and take charge of it and to create a governance mechanism.

Although the organization is called the Islamic State, the word "state" may be misleading. It is not used in the modern sense of a nation-state with territorial boundaries, but in an earlier sense that reflects the idea of the Caliphate and an Islamic space not delineated by defined geographical boundaries.

If ISIS does in fact succeed in fulfilling its aspirations, the resulting territorial contiguity could create a new space of its kind in the Middle East that is not derived from the historic Sykes-Picot Agreement and is not subject to law or to international law, but to the Islamic vision.

Managing a civil government and dawah activities. At the early stages of its operations in Syria and Iraq, it was evident that the organization had learned lessons from its conduct toward the civilian population in its previous incarnation as an al-Qaeda affiliate in Iraq. While it started as an organization that slaughtered civilians indiscriminately and concentrated all of its resources on the military struggle, ISIS, especially in light of its economic assets, began to create civil governance mechanisms, to establish a local governmental and legal system, and even to supply the population with basic needs, including food, drink, and fuels at reduced prices.

The publication of *wathika al-madinah* (document of the city) after the recent takeover of Mosul about a month ago lays the foundation for managing civilian life with the appointment of a person responsible for legislation, economics, and trade in the city. It also illustrates the process of entrenchment and management by the organization.[34] ISIS established *shura* councils (governmental consultation groups) and sharia committees whose purpose is to apply religious law. The governors of the region and tribal heads must give *biyah*, an oath of allegiance to the leader, and they are responsible for the existence of the administrative system stretching de facto from Raqqah in Syria to Mosul in Iraq.[35]

Thus, so far, the Islamic State's entrenchment is reminiscent of the development of Hamas and Hizbollah, which combine characteristics of an armed terrorist organization and a political and governmental actor. However, ISIS, unlike Hamas and Hizbollah, does not accept the existing order, and the administrative and political system that it operates is not subject to an existing state framework. ISIS is a fascinating case study of an organization based on a fundamentalist ideology that challenges the

idea of the modern nation-state. A theoretical attempt to analyze it from a dichotomous perspective that places the state opposite the non-state actor could impair understanding of the organization. So too, the ideology that is driving ISIS and its perception of the West and the regimes and infidel populations of the Middle East, must be taken into account when explaining its behavior.

Summary and Recommendations

In a certain sense, the turmoil in the region and the fragile fabric of the Middle East have caused the dissolution of familiar frameworks. The developments described in this article raise anew questions about boundaries, identities, and concepts that have characterized the geopolitical structure of the Middle East until now.

Hizbollah and IS are examples of the range of violent non-state actors with influence over the regional order. Hizbollah is defined as a non-state actor. However, it recognizes the existing order and has practices and behavioral characteristics usually associated with a state actor. Though it is generally placed in the non-state category, this creates a unidimensional picture and leads to a partial understanding of its characteristics and patterns of behavior. By recognizing the multiple identities of actors of this kind and a strategy that is not always coherent because different identities and commitments are being juggled, we could have a broader understanding of their development and current characteristics, not only historically and descriptively, as usually happens, but in a manner that reveals deeper layers of discourse and practices. ISIS is an example of a non-state actor that does not accept the existing order and aspires to change it, but at the same time, acts in a state-like manner in attempting to manage a civilian infrastructure for the population under its control. It is still difficult to measure its achievements. However, it would appear that compared to other similar actors in the region, ISIS has taken the first step in its attempt to reshape borders in the Middle East, thus far by blurring the border between Iraq and Syria.

At present, it is not only violent armed organizations that are attempting to redefine the Middle East's borders, but also other non-state actors with an ethnic or tribal-familial motivation. The Kurds in Iraq are a conspicuous example of this trend.

These developments raise the question whether and to what extent theories and concepts in international relations can help us understand

the non-state situation and its trends. As noted, the approaches examined in this article—realism, liberalism, and constructivism— give a different weight to the non-state phenomenon. The strengthening of these actors as well as their influence on the international system led the approaches of the 1970s to refresh their principles. In fact, the "neo" approaches have given greater weight to these actors than in the past. Nevertheless, the common claim that the theories, primarily realism and liberalism and their development, largely preserve the state system that is composed of sovereign states, is still valid.[36] These theories reinforce thinking from a certain field and thus limit the possibility of combining knowledge from different disciplines (history, geography, sociology, and the like). Another problem is connected to the focus in these approaches on one level of analysis (for example, a system or a state) and an excessively dichotomous view of the types of actors (state or non-state). So too, the theories assume that it is the structure and system that dictate the interaction and not the choices of the actors themselves.[37] Therefore, approaches in international relations lead to a certain reductionism and ignore complex phenomena that combine different levels of analysis and interaction, such as the case studies examined.

Despite the limitations of the comparison, it appears that constructivism is more suited for an analysis of phenomena characteristic of the current Middle Eastern order, especially because it is pluralistic and dynamic and because it recognizes the ideological component and ideological concepts as shaping the choices of actors.

On the theoretical level, this study recommends that social scientists, when studying phenomena in the international system in general and the Middle East in particular, apply the paradigms of international relations more horizontally than vertically, that is, that they derive from them middle-range theories that will help to explain and contend with complex phenomena. It is important to adopt approaches that recognize the multiple dimensions of phenomena, the different types of actors, and the factors from different levels of analysis, which explain processes and not just results. It appears that the time has come to rethink the total application of a certain paradigm to a social phenomenon and to think about a flexible use with a more fluid transition from one paradigm to the next. Otherwise, the gap between the complex situation and the theory that subsumes it will continue to grow deeper.

On the practical level, states in the region would do well to become accustomed to the non-state environment – which will apparently become increasingly common in the Middle East – inter alia, by adopting non-state thinking. This statement is more acceptable in its military contexts. The past four decades have proven that Israel's adversaries have gone from states to non-state actors and have led to an improvement in thinking and strategy for dealing with them. It would appear that the time has come to expand military thinking to other areas (including the political, diplomatic, and legal). These could assist us in understanding and better coping with non-state phenomena in the Middle East. They could even enable us to think in terms of collaborations and alliances with non-state actors with regional influence.

Notes

1 Fund For Peace, "Fragile States Index 2014," http://ffp.statesindex.org/rankings-2014.

2 The approaches chosen actually represent two competing paradigms: the realistic and the liberal belong to the utilitarian and rationalist paradigms, respectively, while constructivism is associated with an interpretive paradigm.

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5 Jason Bartolomei, William Casebeer, and Troy S. Thomas, *Modeling Violent Non-State Actors: A Summary of Concepts and Methods* (Colorado: United States Air Force Academy, Institute for Information Technology Applications, 2004), p. 7.

6 Phil Williams, *Violent Non-State Actors and International and National Security: International Relations and Security Network* (Zurich: Federal Institute of Technology, 2008), p. 8.

7 Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 21.

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9 C. Archer, *International Organizations*, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 85.

10 James Rosenau, *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); R. O. Keohane and J. S. Nye, eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).

11 Ibid.

12 R. O. Keohane and J. S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, Second Edition (Glenview Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1989), pp. 24-25.
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14 R. W. Mansbach., Y. Ferguson, and D. Lampert, *The Web of World Politics: Non-State Actors in the Global System* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976), pp. 273-76.
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16 Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Michigan: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 69-72.
17 Ibid., p. 93.
18 Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics," *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (1997): 319-63.
19 Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391-425.
20 Marc Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Constructivist Turn," *Praeger Security*, 2006, http://www.marclynch.com/2006/01/17/al-qaedas-constructivist-turn.
21 The neoliberal approach is more an economic approach advocating minimal state intervention, and only in time of need, to ensure the right to private property, the rule of law, and institutions that allow the functioning of markets and free trade. According to this approach, reducing the role of the state and transferring responsibility to the individual will ensure growth and freedom.
22 Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 154.
23 Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results," *European Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (1984): 112-13.
24 Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (London: Saqi Books, 2005), pp. 200-205.
25 This abstract is based on research conducted for a doctoral dissertation. Carmit Valensi, "The Growth of Hybrid Actors: The Case of Hamas, Hizbollah, and FARC" (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2014).
26 Shimon Shapira, *Hizbollah between Iran and Lebanon* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Meuhad, 2000), p. 146.
27 Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbollah al-Din wal-Siyasiyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 2002), p. 45.
28 See, for example, Anisseh Van Engeland and Rachel M. Rudolph, *From Terrorism to Politics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), p. 5.
29 Benedetta Berti, "Armed Groups as Political Parties and Their Role in Electoral Politics: The Case of Hizballah," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 12 (2011): 942-62.

30 This idea was clearly presented on the organization's propaganda web sites. The Al Hayat Media Center has a video calling for the "end of Sykes-Picot." See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjOGkPpafyo. The al-Atsam propaganda institute has a campaign called "Breaking Borders" (in Arabic). See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4Xh2EPr6qM.

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33 From a speech by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, YouTube, July 5, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOORW63ioY0

34 A copy of the document can be found at http://www.almustaqbalnews.net/128495 (Arabic).

35 Yaron Friedman, "The Project to Dismantle States—Daesh Control," *Ynet*, June 12, 2014, http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4529767,00.html.

36 James Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 37; R. W. Mansbach and Y. Ferguson, *Remapping Global Politics: History's Revenge and Future Shock* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 110-12.

37 Amir Lupovici, "Me and the Other in International Relations: An Alternative Pluralist International Relations 101," *International Studies Perspectives* 14 (2013), pp. 238-39.