CHAPTER 1

The Rise of the Non-State Actors in Syria: Regional and Global Perspectives

In recent decades, the international arena has witnessed the increasing influence of non-state actors on the internal state, regional, and global levels.[1] This process peaked in the Middle East following the upheaval that began in late 2010. The borders of the Arab states, some of which were drawn in artificial fashion under the Sykes-Picot agreement based on Western colonial interests and not as part of a "natural" historical process, have for decades suffered from structural instability, manifested in internal and external conflicts.

The mechanical demarcation of the borders fueled the rise and strengthening of non-state actors in two ways. First, groups within the nation state cultivated and preserved allegiance to other identities (religious, ethnic, tribal, and family) that existed prior to the establishment of the state in question, or to comparable trans-border meta-state identities that encouraged positions of separatism vis-à-vis the state. Second, the arbitrary demarcation of state borders propelled non-state actors that produced an identity crisis within the Arab world. In turn, various ideologies attempted to overcome these crises. Arab nationalism sought to unite all Arabic speakers, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, while Islamism highlighted the common Islamic religious denominator as the basis for a long term vision for the revival of the Islamic nation as a concrete political entity. Both ideologies challenged the legitimacy of the state structures and presented themselves as meta-state remedies for internal and external division that challenged the imperialistic division imposed on the region.[2]

The reality of the Middle East in 2016 differs substantially from the face of the region prior to this decade's regional upheaval. The state order that emerged after World War I has unraveled, with signs of plausible

disintegration of many Middle East nation states along sectarian, ethnic, and ideological lines. In addition to the structural weaknesses evidenced by these changes, two primary forces that were hitherto responsible for the stability of the Arab nation states have been undermined. One, the regional upheavals have challenged the authoritarian Arab regimes, highlighting the cumulative failure of governance and the expanding corruption in the state establishment. Two, the United States failed as a leading world power in its efforts to instill a culture of Western democratic governance in the region, and ultimately decided to reduce its military presence in the region following its traumatic experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.[3] US policy during the decade between the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the Arab Spring weakened the legitimacy of the secular authoritarian regimes, sharpened historical divisions that cast shadows over the Arab nation states, and laid the foundation for challenging the old order.[4]

Non-state actors, from armed militias to human rights groups and local communities, have positioned themselves to fill the vacuum left by the weakened central regime, the weakened stabilizing forces, and the reduced involvement of the Western powers. This reality has opened a window of opportunity for new actors to compete for elements of control and influence that were once held by states, such as the provision of public services, the construction of infrastructure, and the preservation of security.[5] Therefore, in some cases, violent actors transform over time into hybrid actors that are not recognized as states but at the same time deviate from the attributes of non-state actors as they become responsible for the territory under their control and the population that recognizes their authority. For example, violent actors such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Islamic State integrate identities from both the state and non-state worlds and operate simultaneously in military, political, and social arenas.[6]

The Non-State Actors in Syria

From 2011 to 2016, Syria has proven to be a distinct case study of the robustness of the traditional state system and the potential for entry of non-state actors into the arena. The mass demonstrations that commenced in Syria in March 2011 and began as a civil uprising against the injustices and failures of the Bashar al-Assad regime gradually escalated into a civil war with far reaching geopolitical, demographic, and social implications for Syria, the Middle East, and Europe. To date, the war has claimed over

400,000 lives from the different rival camps, with over 4.5 million refugees (most in neighboring countries) and over 10 million displaced people within Syria.[7] The struggle over the future of Syria, encompasses several different components and conflicts: a Sunni-Alawite sectarian conflict; a no-holds barred campaign in different parts of Syria between Sunni Salafi jihadist groups and moderate Sunni rivals, Kurds, Druze, Christians, Alawites, and Shiites; and an arena of struggle over regional hegemony between the Sunni axis states led by Saudi Arabia and the pro-Iranian Shiite axis. Political and military coalitions, ethnic and religious minorities, and local interest groups are also engaged, as they too attempt to influence the outcome of the revolution.

Thus far the international community's attempts at mediation between the Assad regime and the Syrian opposition forces have failed. Syria has gradually sunk into the reality of a failed state in the advanced stages of disintegration, and is subject to a war between religious and ethnic groups. The intensity of the events – from the damage to state infrastructure and state institutions, to the unending flow of displaced persons and refugees, to the rise and strengthening of non-state actors throughout the country – paints an overall picture of an irreversible process that continues to create a new reality in the region that differs greatly from the traditional, familiar reality that existed beforehand.

The Assad regime has been substantially weakened in the course of the civil war. Its army, which numbered some 300,000 at the eruption of hostilities, has lost more than 50 percent of its soldiers as a result of desertions, injuries, and deaths among the ranks during the fighting.[8] In a July 2015 speech, Assad acknowledged that his army was suffering from a shortage of manpower and inadequate infrastructure.[9] The Sunni-Alawite split has also contributed to the drop in the number of soldiers joining from non-Alawite communities who are willing to risk their lives for the regime. As the campaign dragged on and assumed the form of a war of attrition, exhaustion among supporters of the regime resulted in a rising level of absenteeism, and in turn, a need for a mandatory draft and an appeal for assistance from outside armies, militias, and mercenaries, which have also started to show signs of fatigue.[10] Signs of discontent were observed even among Assad's Alawite sect, along with a heated internal debate on the "day after" scenarios.[11]

The vacuum left by the weakened Syrian regime was penetrated by a multitude of actors that seized control of large areas, established territorial

enclaves, and redrew the borders of Syria. Sunni Salafi jihadist groups, most prominently the Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra (the Nusra Front), have proven to be the most effective rivals of the regime, as they have seized extensive areas from northern Syria, northern Iraq, and eastern Syria to parts of southern Syria. A multitude of other armed non-state actors have also emerged in Syria, including less radical Islamists such as Ahrar ash-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam, and pragmatic opposition forces, led by the Free Syrian Army. Early in the summer 2014, some of the opposition groups operating throughout Syria succeeded in unifying their ranks, primarily under the flag of radical Islam that enabled them (to some extent) to tilt the balance of power in their favor. In contrast to the regime's shrinking army, rebel groups, led by the jihadists, have enjoyed a steady supply of rotating forces consisting of both local Syrians and hundreds of foreign volunteers who cross the border each month. The thousands of Hezbollah, Iraqi, and Afghan fighters who joined the fight in support of the Assad regime have found it difficult to maintain the same momentum.[12]

On November 16, 2011, the Arab League suspended Syria's membership in the organization. It imposed sanctions on the country, and began negotiating with the opposition forces. Nonetheless, the Assad regime has managed to survive, and by early 2016 even managed to regain some of the territory it lost and retain control of the Syrian heartland – the capital city of Damascus; the major cities of Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, and the roads connecting them; the ancient city of Palmyra; the Alawite coastal areas; and parts of southern Syria. The regime's success has been the product of three factors: the active support of Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia, and the relative allegiance of some of the country's minority groups, first and foremost the Druze; struggles between opposition elements and Salafi jihadist forces; and the failure of Syria's moderate opposition to overcome its internal divisions, build a unified, strong military force, and mobilize the political, financial, and military support of the international community in its struggle.

While fighting has continued without any decision, exiled Syrian opposition elements, which based their activity primarily in Turkey, Jordan, and Western countries, have attempted to influence the fate of Syria by drawing regional and international actors into the campaign. For their part, ethnic and religious minorities that over the years maintained a delicate system of functional interaction with the regime, such as the country's Kurdish, Druze, and Christian populations, can no longer rely on the central government to

protect their welfare. As such, they have assumed greater responsibility for contending with the threats of radical Islam and for the autonomous administration of their strongholds in northern and southern Syria. The Syrian arena has also witnessed the emergence of local communities that have come to understand that they themselves must now tend to the needs of their communities, including the security of their inhabitants, as well as maintain contact with outside actors, primarily humanitarian aid bodies and powerful forces in the surrounding area.

Overall, the dynamic among armed non-state actors is primarily one of fluctuation – converging within the framework of umbrella frameworks and splitting apart, according to circumstances, needs, and ideological orientations. For its part, the Islamic State's increasing strength, geographical expansion, and conquest of vital natural resources has resulted in tensions with other actors that are at war with the regime, but has also caused weaker groups to join its ranks.

During the first years of the Syrian civil war, the United States refrained from substantial military intervention and focused instead on the provision of humanitarian aid. In September 2014, in light of the growing strength of the Islamic State, the United States established an international coalition under its leadership to curb the expansion of the organization. Careful, however, to avoid entanglement in a Syrian quagmire, it refused to place "boots on the ground" and did not profess any comprehensive solution to the crisis. Measures were instituted to limit the flow of fighters and funds to the Islamic State, and pinpoint air strikes were carried out against associated targets. In December 2014, the US Congress approved funding for a long term program to arm and train thousands of moderate Syrian opposition forces to prepare them to fight the Islamic State on their own and improve the conditions for promoting a political settlement for the crisis in Syria. Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar agreed to train the fighters within their borders, but as of the time of this writing, an effective force capable of having an impact on the balance of power in Syria has not emerged. The American strategy achieved only limited success in inflicting damage on the fighters, vehicles, and command and control capability of the Islamic State, which was forced to pull back from some of the areas it had occupied but continued to occupy others and expanded its control into a number of new regions. Although the US effort to reduce Islamic State activity has not translated into explicit cooperation with the Assad regime and its supporters,

the progress in the struggle against the Islamic State has created tension between the United States and some of the opposition forces in Syria. The opposition forces maintain that the key to any solution to the Syrian crisis lies in American involvement and increased pressure on the Assad regime.[13]

In contrast to America's hesitant involvement in the Syrian crisis, Russia has attempted to take advantage of the vacuum and displayed notable resolve in defending the Assad regime, to the point of active military involvement. In September 2015, Russia substantially reinforced its military aid, and Russian planes began carrying out airstrikes against rebel strongholds in an effort to help the Assad regime regain control over parts of western Syria and enable it to defend its strongholds in the coastal region. Russia implemented these measures in coordination with ground forces of the Assad regime, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, and Hezbollah within the framework of an international coalition, operating in parallel to the US-led coalition against the Islamic State and partly coordinating with the US, Israel, and Jordan. These Russian measures have challenged US policy, which does not view President Assad as part of the future Syrian order, as well as the interests of the West, the Gulf states, Turkey, and Israel in the Syrian arena.[14] The Russian airstrikes preferred concentrating on the targets of the rebel forces over Islamic State targets. Although Russia announced a withdrawal of some of its aircraft from Syria in March of 2016 after achieving its primary goal, i.e., enforcing a ceasefire among actors that do not belong to radical Islam and reinforcing the position of the Assad regime as the only viable non-jihadist alternative, it still remains a dominant player in the Syrian arena, and by its own admission, is ready to "scale up its military presence in Syria again within hours."[15]

Other late developments included the threats posed in early February 2016 by Turkey and Saudi Arabia to insert ground forces to counter the Russian-Iranian involvement, and the Russian-American agreement on a cessation of hostilities that came into effect on February 27, 2016. The agreement called for cessation of hostilities between all parties, excluding the Islamic State and the Nusra Front. The cessation of hostilities agreement further committed the parties to additional conditions: fully implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2254, including the readiness to participate in the UN-facilitated political negotiation process; ceasing attacks with any weapons; refraining from acquiring or seeking to acquire territory from other parties to the ceasefire; allowing humanitarian agencies, rapid, safe,

unhindered, and sustained access and allowing immediate humanitarian assistance to reach all people in need; proportionate use of force if and when responding in self-defense.[16] The cessation of hostilities agreement was largely observed within the first few weeks of its existence, but remained fragile at best against the background of official and unofficial reports of violations, leadings to daily casualties and a deadlock in the Geneva peace talks.[17]

Israel's Approach to the New Reality in Syria

The disintegration of Syria and the weakening of the central government during the civil war has created a new chaotic reality on Israel's northern border. Israel's policy has consisted of monitoring developments, observing from the sidelines, and striving for the highest possible degree of non-intervention (or, at the very least, for minimum open, traceable involvement). In September 2013, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon declared that Israel had decided not to intervene in the Syrian civil war except in the event of harm to its interests or the emergence of concrete threats, such as the transfer of chemical weapons to Hezbollah or the spillover of the conflict into Israel itself.[18] In a June 2015 interview, Ya'alon listed three red lines that, if crossed, would likely result in Israeli intervention: the transfer of advanced weapons to any terrorist group, whether by means of Iran or Syria; the transfer of chemical materials or weapons to any terrorist group; and violation of Israeli sovereignty, particularly in the Golan Heights.[19] According to foreign sources, as of April 2016 Israel had enforced these red lines with at least fifteen military strikes. Speaking at an IDF military exercise on the Golan Heights, Prime Minister Netanyahu further stated that Israel attacked in Syria, given the "dozens of weapons shipments that were on their way to Hezbollah in Lebanon."[20]

In addition, Israel's interest in the events in Syria has been guided by other strategic interests, such as curbing the military buildup of violent non-state actors in the region, preventing the spillover of the humanitarian plight and the flow of refugees from Syria into Israel, maintaining the stability of the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan, and establishing tactical cooperation with actors operating in Syria. The future of the Golan became another source of concern for Israel, particularly following the agreement reached by the United States and the Western-backed opposition, which stated that "no part of the national territory shall be ceded" and "the people of Syria remain committed to the restoration of the occupied Golan Heights by peaceful

means." [21] In response, Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a special meeting on the Golan Heights, declared, "The time has come after 40 years for the international community to finally recognize that the Golan Heights will remain under Israeli sovereignty forever."[22]

Whereas Israel initially attempted to treat the events in Syria as an internal domestic Syria issue, with no direct impact on itself,[23] the longer the war lasts, the clearer it becomes that Israel must reevaluate the traditional regional rules of the game.[24] Israel itself has been critical of the hesitant conduct of the international community, which has refrained from decisive intervention in the civil war in Syria. Moreover, Israel's approach of non-intervention has repeatedly proven to be a complex challenge, as Israel is perceived by some actors in Syria as maintaining an adversarial position. One example was Israel's decision to refrain from intervention despite the bombing of the Golan Heights by Assad's army, and to overlook the crossing of the disengagement lines demarcated in the May 1974 agreements as a buffer zone. Although Israel chose to refrain from military intervention in the Syrian Golan Heights (in September 2014, Israel intercepted a Syrian Sukhoi warplane only after it entered Israeli airspace),[25] its minor response to the violations and reluctance to take diplomatic or practical action was understood in Syrian opposition circles as evidence of support for the regime.

Israel's policy of non-intervention has also been notable in light of the active policy of other state and non-state actors attempting to promote competing interests in the Syrian arena, in order to improve their respective strategic standings. The policy has stemmed in part from the conviction that non-intervention will serve Israeli interests in the best possible manner by distancing Israel from the negative effects of the conflict, and from the confusion posed by a complicated, dynamic, and volatile arena in which central roles are played by new, unfamiliar actors, and which lacks an identifiable, responsible party with whom there are agreed upon rules of the game. Israel has refrained from choosing between two options, both of which are perceived as undesired alternatives: (a) the "devil that it knows," i.e., the survival of the Assad regime (even if it is weaker than before), and (b) a possible jihadist seizure of Syria.

In the absence of a decision between these two alternatives, Israel has focused primarily on maintaining routine security and addressing threats posed by the war in Syria, but has invested little effort in exploring the opportunities presented by the more pragmatic actors in the region. However, the policy of

non-intervention failed to provide a satisfactory solution when the fighting in Syria began to approach Israel and spill over the border. It has also failed to address the deepening presence of Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in the Syrian Golan Heights and the simultaneous construction of infrastructure by Salafi jihadist groups along the Israeli border.[26] In addition, it has resulted in confusion and speculation among Syrian actors regarding Israel's position vis-à-vis the civil war. Israel welcomed the removal of most of the chemical weapons from the Assad regime, the weakening of Hezbollah forces in the fighting, and the undermining of Hezbollah's status as a bastion of resistance against Israel.[27] The group has lost more than 2,000 fighters in the course of the war and has tried to justify to the Lebanese public its central role in the war and the heavy sacrifices it has made by presenting itself as "Lebanon's defender" against the threats of the Islamic State. Nonetheless, many opposition elements have estimated that Israel prefers the continuation of the Assad regime to all other options, and this assessment has had a detrimental impact on the possibility of cooperation between the parties. The confusion has also penetrated the Israeli military echelon, which feels as if it is groping its way through a dark reality in which the political echelon has issued no clear guidelines regarding Israel's direction and long term interests.[28]

At the same time, Israel's formal policy of non-intervention was accompanied by low signature action behind the scenes. In the military realm (according to foreign sources), Israel acted to thwart the shipment of strategic weapons to Hezbollah, to prevent the establishment of Iranian and Hezbollah bases in the Golan Heights, and to deter attempts by hostile elements to launch attacks into Israel. Between January 2013 and April 2016, some fifteen attacks against different targets throughout Syria were attributed to Israel, most notably the January 2015 attack in Quneitra, which killed senior Iranian IRGC Colonel Ali Reza Tabatabai and Jihad Mughniyeh, who was responsible for Hezbollah operations in the Golan Heights, and the December 2015 killing of Samir Kuntar who was in charge of Hezbollah's Quneitra Governorate.[29]

In addition, Israel conducted behind the scenes contacts with local Sunni actors in the Golan Heights based on the parties' shared interest in weakening the jihadist forces, as well as the Hezbollah and the Iranian al-Quds forces operating in the region.[30] Although Israel has operated in a number of ways in the humanitarian realm (described below), it has been careful to avoid

the risks of engaging in more significant and open cooperation that could be interpreted as clearly taking a side in the ongoing Syrian crisis. For example, in October 2015, it was reported that the Israeli security establishment had decided to prevent senior members of the Syrian opposition from attending a public conference on the situation in Syria scheduled to take place in Jerusalem in an effort to avoid what might be interpreted as a deviation from Israel's policy of non-intervention.[31] In May 2016 the IDF announced the establishment of a new liaison unit aimed to manage its growing contacts with Syrian civilians living across Israel's northeastern border. According to Israeli publications, the new unit is "likely to help facilitate easier access to Israeli medical facilities for wounded Syrians, as well as help the IDF keep a closer watch on developments across the border."[32]

The varied reasons for the policy of non-intervention include:

a. Israel's desire to avoid entanglement with one of the participants in the civil war, as long as the damage to Israel is limited. Israel lacks a distinct interest in being drawn into the turmoil.

b. Consideration that siding with the rebels would have a detrimental impact on the understandings between Israel and Russia.

c. The preference for short term tactical measures over long term strategic measures, in light of the uncertainty regarding the possible endgame for the Syrian fighting.

d. The limited means of influencing the events in Syria, while a threat of possible Israeli interference remained the most effective means of deterrence.

e. The lack of reliable information regarding the diverse actors currently operating on the Syrian side of the border.

f. Doubts regarding the ability of the new Syrian actors to serve as reliable partners for agreements and understandings.

g. Painful memories of the outcome of Israel's intervention in the internal struggles in Lebanon in the 1980s and its attempts to crown new rulers in the region.

h. The reluctance of non-state actors associated with the Syrian opposition to establish open and close relations with Israel, out of concern that doing so would have a detrimental impact on their legitimacy and their image in Syrian and broader Arab public opinion.[33]

In actuality, Syria is divided into areas of influence of four primary external forces: Russia, Turkey, Iran, and the United States. The only area that has not been

"claimed" is southern Syria, which includes the Golan Heights and in which Israel has enjoyed relative freedom of action throughout the course of the war. For this reason, Israel was alarmed in September 2015 when it became evident that Russia was sending forces and building military outposts in the Syrian coastal region. Accompanied by Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu quickly paid a visit to Moscow with the aim of reaching understandings to prevent collisions – particularly aerial – between Israeli and Syrian and Russian forces. In addition the Prime Minister sought to prevent the arrival of advanced Russian weaponry such as surface-to-air missiles, which could hinder the operational freedom of the IDF in southern Syria. Israel may have also explored whether the Russian channel could be used to reach understandings regarding rules of the game vis-à-vis the Iran-Assad-Hezbollah axis, based on recognition of the common threat posed by the Islamic State.[34] Nevertheless, as clarified by Defense Minister Ya'alon in February 2016, Russia and the US recognize Israeli security needs and its freedom of action when these concerns are breached.[35]

NOTES

Notes to Chapter 1, *The Rise of the Non-State Actors in Syria: Regional and Global Perspectives*

1   For a definition of the concept of "non-state actors" see Gustaf Geeraerts, "Analyzing Non-State Actors in World Politics," *Pole Paper Series* 1, no. 4 (October 1995), http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/pole-papers/pole0104.htm. According to realists, actors in world politics possess three attributes: sovereignty, state recognition, and control of territory and population. From this perspective, all other entities within the international system cannot be autonomous and distinct actors because they do not possess these characteristics. Other definitions relate to non-state actors as all actors operating on the international level that are not states. A different definition casts non-state actors as actors that are independent of the central government and its sources of funding, that emerge from civil society and the economic market, and that are situated outside the sphere of state control or direction, and whose activities have political impact on either the state or international institutions, regardless of whether this is their direct goal or a byproduct of it. The United States National Intelligence Council (NIC) has defined non-state actors as "non-sovereign entities that exercise significant economic, political, or social power and influence at a national, and in some cases international, level," and has distinguished among four major types of non-state actors:

(a)   Multinational Corporations (MNCs) – Organizations engaged in the production and delivery of goods and services from one country to another. MNCs are typically private companies based in one country that maintain secondary offices in other countries.

(b)   Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) – Independently run private organizations, volunteer organizations, non-profit organizations, and so on. The common denominator of NGOs is their lack of dependence on the government, on major corporations, and on other types of external sources of influence.

(c)   Super-Powered Individuals – Persons with political, economic, intellectual, and cultural influence in the international arena. This category includes industrialists, wealthy individuals, media figures, celebrities, and religious and terrorist leaders.

(d)   Inter-Government Organizations (IGOs) – Actors with formal state ties that are defined as inter-government entities, were established at the initiative of

two or more states, and conduct political interaction (such as the UN). On this subject, see Carmit Valensi, "Exceeding the State: The Emergence of Hybrid Actors – Hamas, Hezbollah, and FARC," Ph.D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 2015 (Hebrew).

2   Eugene L. Rogan, "The Emergence of the Middle East into the Modern State System," in *International Relations of the Middle East*, ed. Louise Fawcett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 18-19; and Raymond Hinnenusch, "The Politics of Identity in Middle East International Relation," in *International Relations of the Middle East*, pp. 153-55. Non-state actors raise doubts regarding the traditional concepts of international relations. By their very nature, they lack the traditional resources possessed by the state. For example, they lack recognized sovereignty over territory, including all the privileges this entails, such as state legitimacy and the ability to enact laws or sign agreements with international force. Most also lack a legitimate means of suppression such as an army or a police force. In addition, whereas most actors of this kind pursue their interests through persuasion within international state frameworks, others challenge these frameworks and attempt to impose a new order through force and coercion. Some non-state actors serve as proxies of states or of other non-state actors. In some instances, they disregard international standards and accepted rules of play, and in other instances they try to fit into the international state political system at some stage of their development in order to win legitimacy, as in the case of Hezbollah and Hamas. Another type of non-state actor includes agents of informal diplomacy that take part in interactions situated outside the realm of traditional international relations in a manner that may result in change to the concept of the "legitimate actor." Examples of this dynamic include the involvement of international and local organizations in Track II relations and dialogues with states and organizations at conventions and conferences in a manner that provides them with the ability to influence other actors in the international arena. See Shamima Ahmed and David Potter, *NGOs in International Politics* (Boulder and London: Kumarian Press, 2006), pp. 14-15, 67-70, 242-43.

3   Mark Doing, "The Twilight of Sykes-Picot," *National Interest*, January 16, 2014, http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/the-twilight-sykes-picot-9716.

4   George Friedman, "A Net Assessment of the Middle East," *Geopolitical Weekly*, June 9, 2015, www.stratfor.com/weekly/net-assessment-middle-east.

5   Iman Rajab, "The New Actors: The Types and Roles of non-State Actors in the Stages of Transition," *al Siyassa al-Dawliya*, April 1, 2013 (Arabic).

6   Violent non-state actors are defined as organizations that engage in illegal violence – i.e., the use of force in a manner that is not accepted by the state – in order to achieve its goals, and in doing so challenge the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force. The research-based literature distinguishes between different types of violent actors, including: terrorist groups, crime organizations, militias, freedom fighters, pirates, and guerilla groups. The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) defines violent non-state actors, or in its terminology "para-state entities," as actors

that threaten the state's use of its monopoly over the means of force in a defined territory, and identifies different kinds of violent non-state actors, including the actors discussed in this study. Violent non-state actors can be distinguished from state actors by their lack of state legitimacy to use collective violence. They do not enjoy the authority of the state system, which possesses a monopoly over the means of coercion. These actors use collective force to achieve shared goals. The attitude toward state entities harbored by violent non-state actors and armed groups is contingent upon context and the arena in question. Although in many cases they threaten the state, they sometimes also integrate into state institutions or fight one another without state involvement or control. These actors threaten national and international security in that they challenge the state's monopoly on the use of means of force, usually in a defined territory. Armed groups typically operate in crisis-ridden states that have difficulty providing public services, including security within their territories, as demonstrated in Afghanistan, Colombia, Sudan, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka. In some cases, a government administration that provides basic public services in major cities is less effective in the periphery. In such regions, the regime may "share" its sovereignty with violent non-state actors. This phenomenon has been referred to as "fragile sovereignty," stemming from the friction and interface that is characteristic of the relationship between the state and the violent non-state actors in such contexts. The state's lack of complete control in such areas allows the penetration of such actors. See Valensi, "Exceeding the State: The Emergence of Hybrid Actors."

7   There are conflicting estimates regarding the number of Syrians killed since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. The United Nations announced that it ceased counting the dead in January 2014 due to its inability to follow the information. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights published an assessment in April 2015 that puts the number of Syrians killed since March 2011 at 310,000. For information on this subject, see www.usaid.gov/crisis/syria.

8   Christopher Kozak, "The Assad Regime under Stress: Conscription and Protest among Alawite and Minority Populations in Syria," Institute for the Study of War, December 15, 2014, http://iswresearch.blogspot.co.il/2014/12/the-assad-regime-under-stress.html.

9   Agence France Presse, "Syrian Army Fatigued, Admits Bashar Assad," *Arab News*, July 27, 2015, www.arabnews.com/middle-east/news/781981.

10   Elizabeth Tsurkov, "Syrian Civil War: Waiting for a Tiebreaker," Molad: Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy, June 18, 2015, http://www.molad.org/en/articles/Syria-Tiebreaker.

11   For example, see Joyce Karam, "The Alawite Declaration: Assad's Firewall Showing Cracks," *al-Arabiya*, April 8, 2016, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2016/04/05/The-Alawite-Declaration-Assad-s-firewall-showing-cracks-.html.

12 Eyal Zisser, "Still Nothing New in Syria," *Tel Aviv Notes* 9, no. 14, August 10, 2015, http://www.dayan.org/tel-aviv-notes-vol-9-no-14-august-10-2015.

13 Christopher M. Blanchard et al., "The 'Islamic State' Crisis and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, May 2015, pp. 14-15, 21-22, 26, 31-33.

14 Udi Dekel, "Syria: Time to Reformulate the Rules of the Game," *INSS Insight* No. 750, September 30, 2015, http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=10695; Udi Dekel and Zvi Magen, "Russian Involvement in Syria: What has Changed, and the Significance for Israel," *INSS Insight* No. 752, October 7, 2015, http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=10699.

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17 State Department, "Assad Violating Syrian Cessation of Hostilities, U.S. Gathering Data in Response," April 14, 2016, http://freebeacon.com/national-security/assad-violating-syria-hostilities/.

18 Akhikam Moshe David, "Yaalon: Inaction in Syria will also Have Impact on US," *NRG*, September 8, 2013, www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/505/424.html.

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20 Barak Ravid, "Netanyahu: Israel Attacked Dozens of Arms Shipment in Syria en Route to Hezbollah," *Haaretz*, April 11, 2016.

21 United Nations Office at Geneva, "UN Special Envoy's Paper on Points of Commonalities," March 24, 2016, http://goo.gl/KX9rEn.

22 Willem Both, "Netanyahu Vows that Israel will Never Give Up Golan Heights," *Washington Post*, April 17, 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/netanyahu-vows-that-israel-will-never-give-up-golan-heights/2016/04/17/c7639e16-04a7-11e6-bfed-ef65dff5970d_story.html.

23 Avi Rozen, "The Good Fence 2.0 – Israeli Action in Light of the Crisis in Syria," Reut Institute, March 12, 2013.

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Notes to Chapter 2, *Mapping the Non-State Actors in Syria and their Attitudes toward Israel*

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