DRIVING FACTORS FOR SUNNI AND SHIA FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

SARAH K. ERVIN

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Mercyhurst University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
APPLIED INTELLIGENCE

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have supported me in whatever I wanted to do; to my "sister" Laura Frank, who has listened to me complain during the difficult times, encouraged me throughout this process, and helped me to not lose sight of the finish; and to my squad mates at work, who make me laugh on a daily basis and whose work has inspired me to research this topic and pursue a career I never thought possible.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Driving Factors for Sunni and Shia Foreign Terrorist Organizations:

A Comparative Analysis

A Critical Examination

By

Sarah K. Ervin

Master of Science in Applied Intelligence

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Dr. Orlandrew Danzell, Chair

This thesis examined the trend of Sunni terrorist organizations being transnational actors while Shi'a terrorist organizations are state-sponsored actors and generated a hypothesis explaining this trend. Up until this point, this trend had been identified but not examined. Using a case comparison approach with a structured focus comparison design, this thesis compared Al Qaeda, Abdullah Azzam Brigades, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force, and Hizballah using a standardized set of questions, which enabled the collected data to be compared. From these comparisons, this thesis developed a hypothesis explaining this trend and argued why this hypothesis best fits the collected data. This thesis identified multiple characteristics in which these terrorist organizations are similar. Despite these similarities, these organizations diverge when comparing their ideological views and whether or not an Islamic state has been established. This thesis proposed that this dual political and ideological motivation drives the trend of Sunni and Shi'a terrorist organizations and their respective terrorism actor types.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IC   Intelligence Community

FTO   Foreign Terrorist Organization

DoS   Department of State

U.S.   United States

AQ   Al-Qaeda

AQAP   Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

IRGC-QF   Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force

AAB   Abdullah Azzam Brigades

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

On September 11, 2001, two airplanes crashed into the Twin Towers in New York City; one airplane crashed into the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.; and another crashed into a field in Pennsylvania after passengers on the airplane revolted against the hijackers and prevented the airplane reaching its intended target. This coordinated act of terrorism was planned and executed by members of Al-Qaeda (AQ), a Sunni terrorist organization that is transnational in its structure, is not sponsored by one specific country, and was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by United States Department of State (DoS) on October 10, 1999 (9/11 Attacks 2015; U.S. Department of State 2015). Ten years later, Mannsor Arbabsiar was arrested in September 2011 for conspiring to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States (U.S.) allegedly on behalf of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force (IRGC-QF), which is the special operations forces for Iran's military and was designated as a terrorism supporter by the U.S. Treasury Department in 2007 (Finn, 2013; Qods Force, 2015). Additionally, the country of Iran, a Shi'ite theocratic democracy government, was designated as a state sponsor of terrorism by the U.S DoS on January 19, 1984 (U.S. Department of State, 2013; U.S. Department of State, 2015).

Both events were politically motivated acts and/or attempted acts of terrorism by groups claiming to want to spread their sect of religion of Islam throughout the world. The overarching motivations and goals for Al-Qaeda and IRGC-QF are similar in nature, but Al-Qaeda's and IRGC-QF's category of terrorism used to accomplish their goals are two different types: transnational and state-sponsored, respectively. A trend emerges

when one begins to examine other Sunni and Shi'a terrorist organizations with Sunni terrorist organization predominately being transnational and Shi'a terrorist organizations predominately being state-sponsored.

Background of the Problem

Thus far, none of the existing research literature has focused on the driving factors that possibly explain this trend of Sunni FTOs' tendency to be transnational actors and Shia FTOs' tendency to be state-sponsored actors. The existing literature related to this topic has not adequately explored the differences between Sunni terrorism and Shia terrorism (Behuria, 2004). By comparing these differences, the trend of Sunni FTOs being transnational and Shi'a FTOs being state-sponsored is identified, but the possible driving factors causing this trend are not explored. Other differences between the two sects include: the locations from which the two sects recruit, train, and facilitate terror, the surrounding community being oblivious or empathetic to the organizations, the abduction of victims with the intent to kill them or to use them as bartering tools, selection of single or mass targets, and the manner in which the sects claim credit for attacks they perpetrated (Lynch, 2008).

In addition, the literature also focuses on the clashes between Sunni and Shia sects of Islam resulting from minor differences in beliefs. According to the literature, these clashes generally arise either when there is a change in the ruling regime resulting in a transition in which sect controls the regime or when there is a significant population of one sect living in a nation with a government controlled by the other sect. Crucero (2013) identifies Iraq as an example of the change of sect power violence. After the United States invaded Iraq and toppled the Saddam regime, the Shi'a sect regained

control of the Iraqi government when it was reestablished. During the occupation by Western military forces and the establishment of a Shi'a government, terrorist activity perpetrated by Sunni organizations exhibited a significant increase targeting predominant Shi'a locals and the occupying forces (Nasr, 2004). This, in turn, created a rise in Shi'a extremism and terrorist attacks conducted by Shi'a organizations against Sunni locals. Fuller (2007) noted that clashes between the Shi'a and Sunni sects only occur in countries that are ruled by one sect but have a significant population consisting of the other sect. Fuller identifies Sunni-Shi'a conflicts in Turkey, India, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Bahrain.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, no comparative scholarly research explores this apparent trend exhibited by Sunni and Shi'a terrorist organizations when identifying the organizations' terrorism type. Specifically, scholarly literature fails to identify driving factors behind the establishment of these organizations, the motivation to use terrorist activity to accomplish their political goals, and the selection of domestic and transnational targets when conducting terrorist attacks. This thesis will begin to explore and identify possible driving factors for this trend. This thesis will argue that the Sunni and Shi'a FTOs are driven by similar political goals, but the groups differ ideologically when formulating those political goals. Both Sunni and Shi'a FTOs typically want to see the destruction of Israel, the removal of Western influences in the Middle East, the abolishment of current political structures in the Middle East, and the establishment of an Islamic state throughout the Middle East. Sunni FTOs typically adhere the Salafi Jihadist ideology, which subscribes to a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam and desires to emulate the

Prophet Muhammad and his companions; while Shi'a FTO typically adhere to the

Twelver ideology, which is categorized by the belief in twelve divinely appointed Imams

with the last Imam living in occultation until his return as the Mahdi and establishes an

Islamic State. Salafi jihadist want to reestablish an Islamic state, in which sharia law is

the ruling authority with no other innovation or deviation, which directly opposes Israel,

Western influences, and all current governments in the Middle East. Twelvers believe

certain events must occur before the Mahdi will return, which includes the destruction of

Israel, and believe that those opposing their objectives must be removed, including

Western influences and Sunni governments.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to take a comparative look at Sunni FTOs and Shia

FTOS in order to identify the distinct driving factors for Sunni FTOs as

transnational/non-state actors and for Shia FTOs as state-sponsored actors. This study

will be hypothesis generating in nature because it will examine this phenomenon and

identify possible driving factors, which could potentially explain this trend. Determining

these driving factors is vital to understanding the goals or objectives and motivations of

these organizations. Without understanding these underlying driving factors, Western

political policymakers will not be able to address the threats effectively that these

organizations pose to Western governments' national security and create appropriate

policy. Additionally, understanding this trend is important for academic study because

understanding driving factors for these organizations, not only expands current literature

and understanding but also effects Western government policy, which in turn will likely

be subject to academic study in the future. If the driving factors for these groups are

never studied, then the future academic study on these organizations and Western governments' response to these organizations could potentially be biased or inadequate because the entire context of the situation is not understood.

Research Questions

My research questions are as follows: What historical, political, religious, and/or societal factors drive U.S. DoS designated Sunni foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) subscribing to the Salafi Jihadist ideology in the Middle East to be transnational/non-state actors? What historical, political, religious, and/or societal factors drive U.S. DoS designated Shia FTOs subscribing to the Twelver ideology in the Middle East to be state-sponsored actors? How do the respective driving factors compare?

Definition of Terms

For this thesis, I define several terms that are crucial for an in-depth understanding of the subject matter under investigation: terrorism, transnational actor, and state-sponsored actor. Scholars debate the exact definition of terrorism, but this thesis will define terrorism as "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change" (Hoffman 2006, 40). When discussing terrorism, the perpetrators of terrorism can be classified as either transnational or state-sponsored. A transnational actor is a loosely affiliated network of individuals who are connected through ideological or motivational means but act independently and simultaneously of each other and who do not receive support from or act at the direction of a specific nation-state. A state-sponsored actor is an organization or group of people who perpetrate terroristic acts at the direction of and/or with the support of a specific nation-state (Hoffman 2005).

Nature of the Study

This thesis utilizes a qualitative case comparison approach and includes an added structured, focused comparison mechanism. This thesis will employ an identified set of questions, which will be related to the identifying driving factors for each of the organizations studied. By utilizing the same set of questions against each case study, this will standardize the collected data and allows for comparison and conclusions to be drawn. This study will focus on driving factors for each case study related to their establishment, motivation, and selection of targets. By conducting a structured, focused case study comparison of Sunni and Shi'a FTOs, this thesis will begin to explore potential explanations for the identified trend. While utilizing a case study methodology will limit the scope of the results, the case study methodology does allow for a heuristic approach for identifying hypotheses as to why this trend is occurring (George and Bennett, 2005).

Relevance and Significance of the Study

Potential practical implications of this study are to provide the intelligence field with a better understanding of the driving factors that positively correlate with Sunni FTOs' tendency to be transnational/non-state actors as compared to Shia FTOs' tendency to be state actors. This improved understanding is particularly important for scholarly research and practical application considering current events in Syria and Iraq (Lister, 2014; Chulov, 2014).

Intelligence and law enforcement agencies around the world that investigate terrorism and academic researchers who focus on terrorism would potentially be

interested in this research because it would potentially give them a better understanding of the driving factors for Sunni FTOs and Shia FTOs.

Assumptions and Limitations

The key assumption for this thesis is that there are different driving factors for Sunni FTOs becoming transnational/non-state actors and for Shia FTOs becoming state actors. It is also my assumption that I will be able to find reliable texts documenting the history of the different Sunni and Shia FTOs.

Given this study is qualitative in nature, it will not be broadly generalizable and its findings are limited to the driving factors and the FTOs' tendency to become a transnational/non-state actor or a state actor examined in this thesis. It does not establish causation for the universe of cases. Another limitation is that some of the documents concerning Iran will possibly only be in Farsi and not English. This is a limitation since I do not know Farsi. This is not a limitation in relation to Arabic texts since I have studied this language. In addition, since I am taking a strict view of the Middle East, this limits the number of Sunni FTOs that will be included, but it also limits the findings of this thesis to being applied in those excluded FTOs.

Organization of the Study

Proposed Case Study Approach

This thesis will utilize a case comparison approach with a structured focus comparison design. This approach and design will allow for the examination of similarities and differences among the selected cases. Additionally, this methodology allows for the accurate assessment of each case study by providing structure and focus. As previously noted, this method is focused by the limitation of which variables are

examined in each of the cases. This methodology is structured through the creation of general questions related to the stated research objective. Since these questions will be hypotheses specific, the questions allow the collected data to be adequately standardized (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case selection. The cases used for this thesis were not selected for their notoriety or exposure. Instead, these cases were selected based upon how they complement the proposed methodology through the definition of this thesis' objectives. Each of these cases displays both control and variation, which is necessary to explore the research problem (George and Bennett, 2005). This thesis will evaluate the previously discussed hypothesis by comparing and contrasting two Sunni FTOs subscribing to the Salafi Jihadist ideology and are transnational in nature and two Shi'a FTOs subscribing to the Twelver ideology and are state-sponsored in nature. The cases will include Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force, Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda, and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades.

Process tracing. This thesis will utilize process tracing, which allows for the evaluation of how the descriptive variables relate to the dependent variable. The intention of this methodology is to trace the relationships between the probable causes and the observed results. Additionally, process tracing tests the differences identified in the cases for causality when the varied outcomes are produced (George and Bennett, 2005).

In addition to this chapter, this thesis is comprised of four other chapters. The next chapter reviews the existing literature on the difference between Sunni and Shi'a incidence of terrorism, motivations for radicalization, ideology, and sponsorship; in addition to the review of the literature related to the proposed topic, this chapter will

conduct a review of the literature related to the proposed methodology. The third chapter will detail the specifics of the methodology utilized in this thesis. The fourth chapter will examine the results of this study. The final chapter will include a brief conclusion and recommendations for additional research related to this topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

As briefly noted in the introductory chapter, scholarly literature on terrorism in general is expansive but highly debated, including the definition of terrorism. Having varying definitions for terrorism creates confusion and a lack of direction making it difficult to categorize what acts actually constitute terrorist activity or groups engage in terrorism, which in turn makes it difficult to explore the driving factors behind these groups in the context of terrorism (Waxman, 2010). Despite this difficulty in defining and exploring the concept of terrorism, scholarly literature has developed multiple theories to categorize terrorist organizations. This thesis will be founded upon the theory that categorizes terrorist organizations based on their organizational and support structure. Through this literature review, this thesis will examine the theoretical framework for the study and the research literature that has been conducted thus far regarding this topic. The research literature discussion will be broken into four topics: terrorism, actor-based categories of terrorism, types of Islamic terrorism, and comparative literature of the two types of Islamic terrorism.

Additionally, this literature review will discuss the structured, focused comparison case study methodology and the current literature evaluating this methodology. This review will establish the usefulness and validity of this methodology. The methodology literature discussion will be broken into three topics: strengths of the case study methodology, limitations of the case study methodology, and the types of case studies.

Review of the Research Literature

Terrorism

The definition of terrorism is constantly debated among scholars and governments. In fact, even agencies in the United States government use different definitions, which can create confusion. The definitions of terrorism can range from being extremely broad to being extremely narrow. Both of these extremes create their own set of problems. A definition that is too broad allows for the inclusion of groups or acts that are not necessarily terroristic in nature, such as guerrilla warfare, but a definition that is too narrow excludes groups or acts that should be considered as terrorism, such as nation-states. The definition of terrorism must include aspects of violence or threat of violence, political motivations, and the creation and exploitation of fear (Hoffman 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007; Scheffler, 2006). For these reasons, this thesis defines terrorism as "the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change" (Hoffman 2006, p. 40).

The history of organized terrorism can be traced back to the first century C.E. with the Zealots, a Jewish dissident group fighting the Roman occupation in Jerusalem. From the Zealots, different groups in various countries can be identified and studied. Scholars and theorists identified a shift in terrorism in the mid-1990s through the present, which is significantly different from previous eras of terrorism. This new era has been called new terrorism. New terrorism is characterized by a decrease in the number of terrorist attack but a rise in the number of fatalities, better technology being used to conduct these attacks, an increase in groups that are loosely associated and international, and the selection of indiscriminate targets (Simon and Benjamin, 2000). While the new

terrorism era is distinctive of transnational actors, it is not completely representative of state-sponsored actors, who typically maintain a hierarchal structure and are selective with their targets (Hoffman, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007; Spencer, 2006).

Scheffler (2006) examined the moral distinction of terrorism by looking at both transnational and state-sponsor actors of terrorism and the acts they conduct. Scheffler found that terrorism is morally distinctive because it seeks to exploit fear and violence in order to achieve the destabilization of the political and/or social order. Scheffler specifically states that he is not attempting to define terrorism in his article, but to determine if terrorism is morally distinctive, one needs a definition of terrorism in order to set boundaries of what is terrorism.

Categories of Terrorism

While Scheffler (2006) fails to define terrorism, he does identify two actor-based categories of terrorism: transnational actors and state-sponsored actors. These categories are consistent with the Organizational Theory of Terrorism. As detailed above, the transnational actor is a loose affiliation of groups or individuals, who are joined together by common goals and/or beliefs. The state-sponsored actor is hierarchal with a well-defined chain of command and is supported by the nation-state (Ozdamar, 2008; U.S. Army, 2003). Schmid and Jongman (1988) argue that actor-based categories are the most obvious division of terrorist organization.

Schmid and Jongman (1988) identify nine other divisions by which terrorist organizations can be categorized. These divisions are as follows: victim-based, cause-based, environment-based, means-based, political-orientation-based, motivation-based, demand-based, purpose-based, and target-based. These categories can become more

complex and be multi-dimensional depending on the category, such as the purpose-based category. Ozdamar (2008) adds a psychological approach to categorizing terrorism participants as either mentally ill or fanatics. Each of these divisions is important for understanding the overall study of terrorism, but for this thesis, the actor-based organization is being used as the factor held as the outcome.

In addition to these categories, the legal categories to which these organizations are subject are equally important to the policymakers in the United States. The legal categories define how the policymakers treat the two types of actor-based categories. The transnational actors are subject to different laws than the state-sponsored actors because of international policy. For the transnational actors, the U.S. Department of State must designate the terrorist organization and prosecution will occur if the individual conducts crimes against the United States government, United States persons, and/or United States interests. While the U.S. Department of State can designate the state-sponsored actors as state sponsors of terrorism, these actors are much more difficult to prosecute because of foreign policy and diplomatic concerns. Additionally, when the United States began its War on Terror, further legal concerns were that introduced because it elevated the transnational actors from criminals to combatants (Ozdamar, 2008; Kim, 2004; O'Connell, 2005).

The Role of Religion in Terrorism

Religious motivation for terroristic activity is the single most defining characteristic of modern terrorism in today's society. While this religious motivation is most commonly associated with radical Islam, nearly all major religions and some sects or cults have been involved in religious terrorism. This connection between terrorism

and religion has existed for over 2,000 years starting with the Zealots in what is now modern day Israel. The theme that has remained constant over the past 2,000 years is that the acts of terrorism are designed to have a psychological impact on the broader target, not just the victims of the attack. The idea of creating a psychological impact attempts to create change in the system subject to the attack (Hoffman, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007).

Around the start of the nineteenth century, secular terrorism began to rise and overtake religious terrorism. In fact, secular terrorism overshadowed religious terrorism to the point that there were no identified religious terrorist groups in 1968. This trend did not change until the revolution in Iran in 1978. After this event, religious terrorism began to rise again. While this impetus for the reemergence was tied to Islam, other religions and cults, such as Jewish terrorism, Christian white supremacists, and Aum Shinrikyo, began to become prominent as well (Hoffman, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007).

The stark difference between secular terrorism and religious terrorism is that religious terrorism tends to commit more violent, indiscriminate attacks producing more fatalities than those conducted by secular terrorists, who typically choose discriminate targets and less lethal means of conducting the attack. In fact, between 1998 and 2004, religious terrorist attacks accounted for only 6 percent of all terrorist attacks conducted during that time frame but resulted in 30 percent of fatalities caused by terrorist attacks. During the same time period, Al Qaeda singularly was responsible for 0.1 percent of all terrorist attacks but was responsible for 19 percent of all fatalities caused by terrorist attacks (Hoffman, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007).

The reason for this higher fatality rate is the fact that religious terrorists hold radically different values and worldviews, engage in different legitimatization and justification mechanisms, and view mortality differently than secular terrorists. Religious terrorist view violence as a divinely inspired duty and must be performed as a result of theological command (Hoffman, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007). This transcendent quality causes religious terrorists to "disregard the political, moral, or practical constraints that may affect other terrorists" (Hoffman 2006, p. 88). Because secular terrorists are not trying to change the entire system but rather a small portion of the system, they view mass casualties as counterproductive and immoral. Religious terrorists are trying to change the entire system and eliminate their enemies, which in turn justifies mass casualty attacks since they are morally justified and necessary to obtain their objectives. Therefore, secular terrorists see the system as essentially good with one flaw, and the religious terrorists see themselves as being outside of the system, which is not worth preserving. This leads the religious terrorists to see everyone, who is not a member of their group, as an enemy and to vilify these people with religious rhetoric, which further justifies the violent attacks (Hoffman, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007).

Theoretical Development

This thesis is based upon the Organizational Theory of Terrorism. The Organizational Theory of Terrorism looks to define terrorism and terrorist groups by how they are organized or arranged. It is my contention that this theory explains the doctrinal impasse featured in this study. Furthermore, it defines terrorist groups by how they are structured and/or how the group is supported. The theory classifies groups by network structure or hierarchal structure and by their sponsorship. According to this theory, the

transnational actor is typically characterized by a loose affiliation based upon like-mindedness or common goals is located in various locations. In this type, the group has general stated goals and targets but expects the smaller nodes or individuals to plan and commit the actual attacks. The state-sponsored actor is typically characterized by a hierarchal organization that is well-defined with a chain of command. The goals are clearly established, and different subsections are responsible for specific areas with only the leaders of each subsections knowing other contacts within the organization (Ozdamar, 2008; U.S. Army, 2003).

Types and Comparison of Islamic Terrorism – Shi'a and Sunni Terrorism

Islamic terrorism is typically broken down into two main types: Sunni terrorism and Shi'a terrorism. The Sunni and Shi'a sects are the two largest sects of Islam with the Sunni sect vastly outnumbering the Shi'a sect. Organizations subscribing to branches of each of these sects engage in terrorism to bring about their goals and objectives. These two types of Islamic terrorism exhibit several differences when compared. One of the main differences between the two types is the trend of Sunni FTOs being transnational and Shi'a FTOs being state-sponsored (Lynch, 2008; Hoffman, 2006; Chaliand and Blin, 2007).

While this thesis will focus on this difference in terrorism categories between the two types of Islamic FTOs, further comparison of these two types of Islamic terrorism reveals multiple other important differences between the two types, which include: the locations from which the two sects recruit, train, and facilitate terrorism, the surrounding community being oblivious or empathetic to the organizations, the abduction of victims with the intent to kill them or to use them as bartering tools, selection of a single target or

mass targets, and the manner in which the organizations claim credit for attacks they perpetrated. Sunni FTOs typically recruit, train, and facilitate terrorism from mosques and madrassas that promote extremist ideology; while Shi'a FTOs typically recruit, train, and facilitate terrorism from its overseas embassies, cultural centers, and proxy groups. Shi'a FTOs prefer to operate with the community at large being oblivious to their plans and activity; while Sunni FTOs typically operate within a community that claims to be opposed to terrorist activity but is still empathetic to the Sunni FTOs' grievances and anti-western ideology. When abducting victims, Sunni FTOs usually kill their captives, but Shi'a FTOs usually use their captives as bartering pieces and negotiating tools. When Shi'a FTOs do select targets to kill, they typically choose specific individuals trying to minimize collateral damage, but Sunni FTOs are typically more indiscriminate with their target selection by choosing locations or groups without concern for any collateral damage. Finally, Shi'a FTOs typically do not broadcast their attacks but allow the media to spread news of their attack; Sunni FTOs strive to promote their attacks and manipulate the message concerning their attacks (Lynch, 2008).

Despite their differences, Sunni and Shi'a FTOs typically have similar stated goals. One of these similar stated goals is the overthrow of the Sunni governments in the Middle East. While the ideological reasons for these goals are different, the outcome is the same. In 2006, the Gulf Cooperation Council identified the threat from Sunni FTOs and Iran as one of their primary concerns (Mattair, 2007). Another similar goal is the objective of establishing an Islamic state. Additionally, both types of Islamic terrorism seek the destruction of Israel and want to remove Western influence from the Middle East (Hoffman, 2006; Patai, 2007).

In addition, the literature also focuses on the clashes between Sunni and Shia sects of Islam resulting from their slight differences in beliefs. According to the literature, these clashes generally arise either when there is a change in the ruling regime resulting in a change in which sect controls the regime or when there is a significant population of one sect living in a nation with a government controlled by the other sect. Crucero (2013) identifies Iraq as an example of the change of sect power violence. After the United States invaded Iraq and toppled the Saddam regime, the Shi'a sect regained control of the Iraqi government when it was reestablished. During the occupation by Western military forces and the establishment of a Shi'a government, terrorist activity perpetrated by Sunni organizations exhibited a significant increase targeting predominant Shi'a locals and the occupying forces. This, in turn, created a rise in Shi'a extremism and terrorist attacks conducted by Shi'a organizations against Sunni locals.

Karam (2007) provides a personal insight into this conflict between the Sunni and Shi'a in Iraq in the post-Saddam regime. One example Karam provides is of a woman named Um-Malik, who had been prominent in the Saddam regime but declared her loyalty to the new Shi'a regime. She experienced harassment and distrust from both, was eventually kidnapped, and was found tortured and executed two days later. According to Karam, it is still unknown if it was a Sunni or Shi'a group that perpetrated this attack against Um-Malik. Fuller (2007) noted that clashes between the Shi'a and Sunni sects only occur in countries that are ruled by one sect but have a significant population consisting of the other sect. Fuller identifies Sunni-Shi'a conflicts in Turkey, India, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Bahrain.

Chapter 2 Summary

As detailed above, the literature concerning terrorism, specifically Islamic terrorism, is a relatively new topic of study given the history of terrorism and the debate about the exact definition of terrorism. The existing literature on terrorism also identifies multiple different ways to categorize terrorism, but the most common way to categorize terrorism is by its actor type, transnational or state-sponsored. The existing literature that explores Islamic terrorism is comparative between Sunni and Shi'a terrorism. These comparisons identify a trend that Sunni terrorist organizations are typically transnational and that Shi'a terrorist organizations are typically state-sponsored, but there is no research literature exploring why this trend occurs.

In the next chapter, the implementation of the case study methodology for this thesis will be detailed. Also, the scholarly literature concerning the case study methodology will be discussed. This literature provides several advantages to using the case study methodology despite several criticisms and limitations. These criticisms and limitations can be mitigated through several techniques. Additionally, case studies can be divided into multiple different types based upon the use and goal of the case study.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As discussed in the literature review, the study of terrorism is complex and has a long history, which has seen an evolution over time, but terrorism can be categorized into two distinct categories based upon their structure and if they are sponsored by a nation-state. The literature review examined the literature discussing the two types of Islamic terrorism, Sunni and Shi'a terrorism, and the trend of Sunni organizations being transnational and Shi'a organizations being state-sponsored.

This chapter will examine scholarly literature concerning structured, focused comparison case studies. This review will specifically focus on the methodology, the uses of this methodology, and the validity of this methodology. This review will identify and explain why the structured, focused comparison of case studies for the different types of FTOs is the best tool to accurately identify the driving factors behind these organizations and trace those driving factors correlating with the organizations' terrorism category. This chapter will also detail how this methodology will be implemented by this study by specifically identifying the selection of cases, case design, data analysis procedures, the limitations of this study, the credibility, the transferability of the results, and potential ethical issues.

Review of the Methodological Literature

Strengths of the Case Study Methodology

In this section, the methodological underpinnings of this thesis is explained. While qualitative studies are generally critiqued for their validity in comparison to quantitative studies, case study approach is typically strong where quantitative studies fail

(George and Bennett, 2005). The strengths of the case study methodology can be broken into four main categories. These strengths are conceptual validity, deriving new hypotheses, exploring causal mechanisms, and modeling and assessing complex causal relations (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case studies provide high conceptual validity by allowing for the identification and measurement of the variables that are representative of the theoretical basis of the researcher's study. Especially in social sciences, the variables the researcher is trying to study are difficult to quantify or measure. When using a quantitative methodology to study these concepts, researchers tend to be guilty of conceptual stretching, which is the grouping of dissimilar cases to obtain a larger sample size. Case studies avoid this by refining the concepts through a smaller number of cases, which increase the level of validity (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case studies also display strengths in heuristically identifying new factors and/or hypothesis generation by studying outlier cases or conducting fieldwork, such as archival research or interviews. Quantitative studies can identify these outlier cases but lack the tools to identify new hypotheses based upon these outliers. Additionally, quantitative studies only quantify the variables that the researcher thinks about quantifying unless they conduct their own fieldwork prior to their data mining (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case studies are strong when the researcher is examining the causal mechanisms in single cases. Single cases allow for a multitude of variables to be examined and inductively observe unexpected outcomes or identify variables leading to the desired outcome. Quantitative studies typically omit the context and only examine the predetermined variables, which could potentially miss intervening variables.

Additionally, theories about causal mechanisms can be used to help provide a historical explanation of cases (George and Bennett, 2005).

Finally, case studies are able to explore complex causal mechanisms, such as path dependency, equifinality, and complex interaction effects. Case studies of these complex causal mechanisms typically develop hypotheses that are limited in scope and require process-tracing evidence in order to document fully these complex interactions. While quantitative methods can handle these complex situations, they typically require larger samples sizes, which can lead to conceptual stretching, as discussed previously (George and Bennett, 2005).

Limitations of the Case Study Methodology

While the case study methodology has several strengths, this methodology also has several limitations and trade-offs. These limitations and trade-offs can be mitigated if the researcher is aware of them and does not poorly implement the case study methodology or try to interpret the results through the viewpoint of quantitative methodologies. These limitations and trade-offs are case selection bias, identifying scope conditions and necessity, the degrees of freedom problem, the lack of representativeness, single-case research designs, and the potential lack of independence of cases (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case selection bias is the most common critique of the case study methodology. The most dangerous example of case selection bias is when the researcher only selects cases where the independent and dependent variables support the hypothesis and ignore cases that contradict their hypothesis then overgeneralizes their findings to a wider population. By doing this, the research can fall victim to either understating or

overstating the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. To avoid this, researchers must carefully define and limit the scope of their results to only cases that mirror those selected for the case study. Case bias selection includes choosing cases based upon their historical importance or on their availability of evidence (George and Bennett, 2005). Levy (2008) also notes that selection bias can occur when scholars rely solely on secondary resources to conduct their case studies. Levy states that this selection bias occurs because secondary accounts are likely to be biased and not neutral, which in turn would bias the case study. This type of selection bias can be partially avoided if the researcher attempts to test their theory against alternate explanations.

Case studies are limited in their ability to determine how much a variable affects the end result. Case studies are much stronger at identifying the scope and assessing hypotheses concerning causal necessity. Case studies are better at examining the whether or how a variable affects the outcome than determining how much that variable affects the outcome. A case study can help determine if a variable is necessary to achieve the desired outcome through process tracing and congruence testing, which is completely separate from determining how much it contributed to the outcome (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case studies are criticized generally for having a degrees of freedom issue. Degrees of freedom are important for statistical studies. From a statistical study point of view, case studies can have zero or negative degrees of freedom, but this fails to consider the qualitative value of each variable indicating each variable has multiple attributes that can be measured which are aggregated in statistical studies. Additionally, process tracing

and congruence testing allows the researcher to reject many alternative hypotheses (George and Bennett, 2005).

Another criticism of case studies is their lack of representativeness. Generally, researchers conducting case studies do not select cases that are representative of the population. Because of this, these researchers should not and typically do not claim that their results are representative to the population as a whole but only to the smaller portion of the population with the same characteristics as their case studies. Problems occur when the researcher tries to overgeneralize their findings (George and Bennett, 2005).

When researchers are using a single case research design, they must be extremely careful because this design can fall victim to several of the above outlined criticisms. This is because single case studies can be indeterminate when faced with multiple hypotheses that fit the examined variables, which has the potential for incorrect inferences. In contrast to this, the single case research design can have multiple observations, which helps reduce the risk of these two problems (George and Bennett, 2005).

The final criticism of the case study methodology is the potential for a lack of independence in the cases. If the research fails to identify the lack of independence in the cases, then they will reach inaccurate conclusions. Process tracing can be useful in determining and preventing a lack of independence. Additionally, having a lack of independence can be useful when the researcher is trying to determine if the results of an earlier case had a causal effect on a later case (George and Bennett, 2005).

Types of Case Studies

Depending on the scholar, the number of types of case studies varies. George and Bennet (2005) argue that there are six different types of case studies. These six types are atheoretical/configurative idiographic, disciplined configurative, heuristic, theory testing, plausibility probes, and building block studies of particular types or subtypes. Atheoretical/configurative idiographic case studies are precursor studies providing good descriptions used in later studies to build theories but do not build theories themselves. Disciplined configurative case studies utilize previously established theories to examine a case. Heuristic case studies explore new variables, hypotheses, causal mechanisms, and causal paths through inductive reasoning. Theory testing case studies examine and determine the validity and scope of established theories or competing theories. Plausibility probes case studies are preliminary studies exploring untested theories in order to determine if these theories should be studied more intensively. Building block studies focus on a particular phenomenon and the exhibited pattern, and therefore, they can serve a certain heuristic purpose.

In contrast to George and Bennett, Levy (2008) identifies only four main types of case studies. These types are idiographic case studies, hypotheses-generating case studies, hypotheses testing case studies, and plausibility probes case studies. These types of case studies are similar to George and Bennett's case study types. Levy defines idiographic case studies as studies that attempt to describe, explain, or interpret a case and breaks the idiographic type into two subtypes, inductive case studies and theory-guided case studies. The inductive case study is comparable to George and Bennett's atheoretical/configurative case study; while the theory-guided case study is comparable to George and Bennett's disciplined configurative case study. Given the unique and

unexplored subject matter of this research, this thesis adopts Levy's hypothesis-generating case study and merges it with a traditional classical case comparison approach.

Research Design

For this thesis, a qualitative methodology will be utilized by conducting structured, focused comparison case studies with the hope of producing a list of testable hypothesis for future empirical work. The previous literature review of texts related to the study of terrorism and related to Sunni and Shia FTOs helped develop a standard set of questions that will be used to evaluate each case study. This standardized set of questions will be used to conduct case studies of Sunni and Shia FTOs in order to explore which of the potential driving factors produce the correlation between Sunni and Shia FTOs and their terrorism category. The question set structures the case study comparisons and standardizes the data collected from the case studies. The question set also focuses on a limited set of variables, which focuses the study. For this thesis, the question set will focus on driving factors of Sunni and Shi'a FTOs' establishment, motivation, and selection of targets. The case study will trace these factors and how they produce outcomes of Sunni FTOs being transnational and Shi'a FTOs being state-sponsored.

Selection of Participants or Cases

The case studies will include both Sunni FTOs subscribing to the Salafi Jihadist ideology and Shi'a FTOs subscribing to the Twelver ideology. Additionally, this thesis will only examine organizations that have been formally designated by the United States Department of State that are located within the Middle East. For the purpose of this

study, two Sunni FTOs and two Shi'a FTOs will be selected as the subjects as the case

studies. The selection of these organizations will be based upon their consistency with

the defined criteria and how they complement the stated objectives. The organizations

have not been selected based upon their notoriety or exposure. The Sunni FTOs selected

will be Al-Qaeda and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades. The Shia FTOs selected will

consist of Iran and Hizballah.

Case Design

The case design will be formatted by using the structured, focused case

comparison case study methodology. As previously noted, by creating a set of

hypotheses questions to focus and structure the case study comparisons, the cases can be

standardized adequately and analyzed resulting in meaningful conclusions. The

standardized set of questions that will be examined against each case study is as follows:

- What is the sect of Islam to which the organization subscribes?
- What are the stated goals and objectives of the organization? Political, religious, economic, etc.?
- Are the stated goals and objectives of the organization politically, religiously, economically, etc. motivated? How?
- How does the organization plan to achieve its stated goals and objectives?
- What is the type of government that the organization wants to establish?
- What was the organization's founder's reason for creating the organization?
- What were the historical events occurring when the organization was founded?
- What are the main tenets of the organization's ideological beliefs?
- Who are the stated enemies of the organization?
- How does the organization typically select targets to conduct attacks against? Who are the targets typically? What is the organization's reasoning for selecting these targets?
- What is the reason the organization gives for engaging in terrorist activity?

Pilot Testing

Because this is a hypothesis generating design, no pilot test is required and will not be conducted. In order to standardize the cases for data collection, the same set of questions, as outlined above, will be utilized to compare all of the case studies. This standardized list of questions was reviewed by independent parties prior to conducting the case studies.

Analysis Procedures

As previously discussed, the literature review will be used to inform the standardized set of questions, which will be applied to each individual case study. The standardized question set listed above will be compared against each of the four case studies. The data will then be compiled and compared for similarities between organizations of the same sect and differences between organizations of different sects. Using the data, the thesis will examine all possible explanations for the resulting data and provide evidence supporting or negating each hypothesis.

Limitations of the Research Design

The main limitation of this study will be that it will only produce a possible theory for explaining the relationship between the driving factors and the FTOs' tendency to become a transnational/non-state actor or a state actor. Hence, this thesis cannot claim generalizability. Using a qualitative methodology allows for the possibility of selection bias and result bias because of pre-conceived explanations for the trend.

The other possible limitation for this study is the potential for a language barrier. Because these organizations are all located within the Middle East, English is not the first language for the native Middle Easterners associated with these groups. This creates the

possibility that some of the pertinent documents are only available in a foreign language with no English translations making the research of these documents difficult, which could create bias because of incomplete information.

Credibility

In order to ensure the credibility of this research, all accessible resources were exhausted. Additionally, the writer has a deep understanding of the topic at hand and has knowledge of the culture and context for these FTOs. Other interpretations of the data were sought to provide varying views. Additionally, two cases studies for each group were chosen in order to create a better representation of the two groups.

Transferability

As noted previously, the results of the study will only be able to be applied to FTOs that fit the defined criteria because this is a qualitative design using the structured, focused case comparison method. The results cannot be applied to FTOs that do not meet the defined criteria of organizations holding either the Sunni (Salafi Jihadi) or Shi'a (Twelver) ideologies. This means that the transferability of the results will be low.

Ethical Issues

There will be no human participants for this study, and therefore, this study does not require consent forms or IRB approval. The primary ethical concern is determining a representative sample for the Sunni FTOs since twenty Sunni FTOs fit the defined criteria for selecting the case studies as compared to only four Shia FTOs meeting the defined criteria. When determining sample size, one must ensure that it is representative of the group while still maintaining a manageable sample size (O'Leary, 2014). This

factored into the decision of choosing which Sunni FTOs will be utilized for the case studies.

Chapter 3 Summary

As detailed above, this qualitative methodology will be able to explore adequately the potential hypotheses explaining this trend while standardizing the data so that the conclusions are valid. This is accomplished by conducting structured, focused comparison case studies of the different FTOs by comparing each FTO to a standardized question set, which was informed by the literature review. In the next chapter, this question set will be used to conduct each case study and examine the possible hypotheses explaining the resulting data.

RESULTS

Introduction

Using the structured, focused case study comparison allows this thesis to begin to explore the driving factors behind the apparent trend of Sunni terrorist organizations being transnational actors while Shi'a terrorist organizations are state-sponsored actors. Previous literature has identified this trend but has not explored the driving factors behind this trend yet. The chosen methodology will allow for the exploration of similarities and differences among the selected cases, which will help form potential theories explaining the trend. By limiting the amount of variables and structuring the study by creating a general set of questions related to the research objective, the collected data can be standardized across the cases. Process tracing will then help determine the most accurate hypotheses (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case Analysis

Each case study was compared against the set of questions outlined in the methodology section. These questions looked at the stated goals of each organization, the categories into which these goals fell (political, ideological, economic, etc.), the type of government that the organization wants to establish, the reason the organization was founded, the historical context in which the organization was founded, the main tenets of the organization's ideological beliefs, the stated enemies of the organization, the targets that the organization chooses and the process for choosing those targets, and the organization's stated reason for engaging in terrorist activity. Based on the answers to these questions, this thesis will propose the best theory that explains all of the data and

the previously stated trend of Sunni and Shi'a FTOs and their terrorism type (George and Bennett, 2005).

Case Study #1: Al-Qaeda

Founded in the late 1980s, Al Qaeda rose out of conflict in Afghanistan after the Soviets invaded. Mujahideen fighters poured into Afghanistan to push back the Soviets, and the United States helped arm and train these fighters. With conflict in the Middle East, US forces began to establish military bases in Saudi Arabia, which was seen by these mujahideen fighters as another invasion of a Western country into the Middle East, just as the Soviets had done, and saw the Saudi government as a traitor for allowing the United States to establish these bases. Additionally, Abdullah Azzam, a spiritual leader for Usama Bin Laden, and two of Azzam's sons were assassinated by unknown individuals or organizations but suspected by the mujahideen to have been a Western country or Israel. Because of these events, UBL decided that AQ needed to be founded in order to internationalize the movement that started in Afghanistan (Hellmich, 2008; Rudner, 2013; Moore, 2014; Karam, 2007; Cruceru, 2013; FBIS, 2004).

UBL founded AQ based on the ideological principles of the Salafi Jihadi sect of Sunni Islam. This sect follows a strict adherence to the Quran and Sunna and wants to model their lives after the companions of the Prophet Muhammad or the Salaf. Additionally, Salafi Jihadi hold a firm belief in the oneness of Allah (tawhid) and ardently reject the role of human reason, logic, and desire when making decisions or forming a government. The Salafi Jihadis are a smaller set of the Salafi sect and are distinguished from other Salafis by their belief that in order to achieve their goals, they

must engage in violent jihad (Hellmich, 2008; Rudner, 2013; Moore, 2014; Karam, 2007; Cruceru, 2013; FBIS, 2004).

In his writings and interviews, UBL outlined his vision and the goals he wanted AQ to achieve. The primary goals of AQ are the establishment of an Islamic caliphate, the expulsion of US and Western influences from the Middle East, and the destruction of Israel and Arab governments deemed to be corrupt for not implementing or deviating from a strict adherence to sharia law. These goals are a combination of political and ideological motivation because their ideology drives the type of political government to be established. Additionally, AQ has a slight economic motivation because AQ believes that the US is stealing Arab oil resources because of US and Western corporations in the Middle East. AQ has identified Israel, the United States and other Western nations, and "corrupt" Arab governments as their enemies trying to stop AQ from achieving its goals (Hellmich, 2008; Rudner, 2013; Moore, 2014; Karam, 2007; Cruceru, 2013; FBIS, 2004).

Because of AQ's ideology of achieving their goals through violent jihad, AQ believes that terrorist attacks are viable and necessary to accomplish their goals. AQ also sees these attacks as retaliatory in nature for perceived grievances that Israel, Western countries, and Arab governments allied with Western countries have perpetrated against them and the Arab world. AQ conducts extensive intelligence gathering against potential targets, assessing all possible strengths and weaknesses, before choosing the final targets. AQ also choses targets that are strategic and symbolic in nature, such as the World Trade Center Towers. The World Trade Center Towers were a strategic target based on the economic trade and business occurring there, but they were also symbolic of

the greed of the West to AQ (Hellmich, 2008; Rudner, 2013; Moore, 2014; Karam, 2007; Cruceru, 2013; FBIS, 2004).

Case Study #2: Abdullah Azzam Brigades

The Abdullah Azzam Brigades were originally founded in the early 2000s in Egypt as a response to Gama'a al-Islamiyya officially renouncing violence and denouncing AQ's tactics and the group's desire to continue to promote jihadi endeavors. Following the lead of AQ and being closely aligned with AQ, AAB also subscribes to the Salafi Jihadi ideology. AAB successfully conducted attacks in coordination with another terrorist organization from 2004-2006, but Egypt effectively disrupted the groups in Egypt in 2006. AAB relocated to Lebanon and the Levant area of the Middle East, and the group was relatively unheard of until 2009, when they began conducting attacks again. While these attacks are relatively few in number and even fewer being successful (Winter, 2011; Baker, 2013; Winter, 2013; Hashim, 2013).

AAB's stated goals are similar to AQ's goals since they are affiliated, and AAB has pledged allegiance to AQ after it was founded. AAB also wants to establish an Islamic caliphate, the expulsion of US and Western influences from the Middle East, and the destruction of Israel and Arab governments deemed to be corrupt for not implementing or deviating from a strict adherence to sharia law. Since these goals are the same as AQ's goals, the motivating factors are political and ideological in nature with a slight economic motivation as well (Winter, 2011; Baker, 2013; Winter, 2013; Hashim, 2013).

While AAB believes in the use of terrorist actions, they have only conducted a relatively small number of successful attacks since it was founded. Because AAB has

conducted so few attacks, their methodology in selecting targets and their process leading

up to the attacks is unknown, but the few targets AAB has chosen have primarily been

either Shi'a or Western targets in retaliation for perceived aggressions. AAB has focused

more on publishing literature, recruiting new members, inciting violence and

proselytizing their jihadi beliefs via the Internet. AAB was engaged in these activities

prior to their dismantlement in Egypt and to some extent during their inactive period, but

AAB began to focus more resources to these activities after their re-emergence in 2009

and released a series of online videos inciting violence against Lebanon. While AAB

recognizes Israel, Iran, the United States and other Western countries, and corrupt Arab

government as their enemies, AAB has primarily focused on Lebanon since 2009

(Winter, 2011; Baker, 2013; Winter, 2013; Hashim, 2013).

Case Study #3: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was created by Ayatollah Khomeini in

1979 after the successful revolution disposing the Shah. Khomeini established the new

Iranian government based on his expansion of the theory of velayat-e faqih, meaning the

guardianship of the jurisconsult, in which he argued that Islamic jurists could rule a

theoretic government, which would be as close to an Islamic state can be established until

the return of the Mahdi. Khomeini established himself as the Supreme Leader of Iran

until his death in 1989 when Ayatollah Khamenei assumed the position as the Supreme

Leader of Iran. Khomeini established IRGC that same year, which functions similar to

Iran's military except IRGC reports directly to the Supreme Leader. The Quds Force

division is described as the special operations branch of IRGC and is the division

responsible for state-sponsored terrorist attacks conducted by Iran (Filkins, 2013;

Ahdiyyih, 2008; United States Department of State, 2013; Taylor, 2009; Alfoneh, 2011; Yonker, 2013; Fulton, 2013; Kam n.d.; Frick, 2008).

In addition to the theory of velayat-e faqih, Iran and subsequently IRGC-QF subscribe to the Twelver sect of Shi'a Islam. This sect is named for their belief in the twelve divinely appointed imams, or the Twelve Imams, and the belief that the twelfth imam is currently in occultation, a state of disappearance from public view and will return as the Mahdi. Until the Mahdi returns, there cannot be a true Islamic state, but the velayat-e faqih is the closest to an Islamic state possible until then making the Supreme Leader a similar figure to the Twelve Imams. The return of the Mahdi will coordinate with the Day of Judgement, the Shi'a version of the apocalypse. Depending on the scholar, there are different conditions that must be met in order for the Day of Judgement and the return of the Mahdi to occur. Despite this, there are common aspects in each of these interpretation, such as the destruction of Israel, a large war emanating from Syria, and a plague. Once the Mahdi returns, he will rule the world with justice and peace (Filkins, 2013; Ahdiyyih, 2008; United States Department of State, 2013; Taylor, 2009; Alfoneh, 2011; Yonker, 2013; Fulton, 2013; Kam, n.d.; Frick, 2008).

This ideology influences IRGC-QF's goals by trying to accomplish part of these conditions for the Mahdi to return by subverting Iran's enemies and extending Iran's influence throughout the Middle East. IRGC-QF also actively supports the establishment of Hizballah cells throughout the world. Iran views Israel, the United States, and Middle Eastern governments resisting Iran as enemies. By destroying Israel and expanding their influence in the Middle East, IRGC-QF views this as fulfilling some of the conditions for the Mahdi's return. Additionally, the establishment of Hizballah cells throughout the

world will aid the Mahdi once he returns to establish his rule over the world. IRGC-QF views these goals as a combination of political, ideological, and economic motivation because they are interdependent (Filkins, 2013; Ahdiyyih, 2008; United States Department of State, 2013; Taylor, 2009; Alfoneh, 2011; Yonker, 2013; Fulton, 2013; Kam, n.d.; Frick, 2008).

IRGC-QF attempts to accomplish these goals through terrorist attacks, assassinations, and other covert political actions. IRGC-QF also trains, funds, and arms various proxy groups, such as Hizballah, Syria, Hamas, and other various Shi'a militias. IRGC-QF selects their targets based upon the target's political meaning and whether the target is opposing Iran and the achievement of Iran's goals. IRGC-QF's targets typically include the United States, Israel, opposing Sunni terrorist organizations, and Sunni Middle Eastern governments, particularly those which have a significant Shi'a population. IRGC-QF engages in this terrorist activity in order to protect Iran and its interests (Filkins, 2013; Ahdiyyih, 2008; United States Department of State, 2013; Taylor, 2009; Alfoneh, 2011; Yonker, 2013; Fulton, 2013; Kam, n.d.; Frink, 2008).

Case Study #4: Hizballah

Founded in the mid-1980s, Hizballah was created though an Iranian effort to combine militant Shi'a groups in Lebanon into one organization and in opposition to the Amal Movement. At the same time, Lebanon was in the midst of a very bloody civil war, which was multifaceted in nature. Also, in the years prior to Hizballah's foundation, Israel invaded and occupied southern Lebanon, in attempts to dismantle the Palestine Liberation Organization, who had set up base in southern Lebanon and were conducting terrorist attacks against Israel. Since its foundation in 1985, Hizballah has become the

leading political party in Lebanon. Hizballah has also expanded to not only have a

militant wing but also a political wing and a social services wing. Because of the

demarcation among the three wings, Hizballah's status as a terrorist organization is

debatable by some countries (Moore, 2014; Cruceru, 2013; Caudill, 2008; Yonker, 2013;

Fulton, 2013; Levitt, 2013; Hezbollah 2015).

Similar to IRGC-QF, Hizballah also subscribes to the Twelver sect of Shi'a Islam.

Hizballah also maintains similar goals to IRGC-QF because of Iranian influence in the

formation of Hizballah. Hizballah's goals include the destruction of Israel, the protection

of Lebanon, support for Iran and its goal, destabilization of Arab states with a significant

Shi'a population, and opposition to Western Imperialism. These goals ae a combination

of political, ideological, and economic motivation, which Hizballah views as being

interdependent. Hizballah also views these goals as competing against each other in a

sense because Hizballah is supportive of Iran but wants to maintain Lebanon as its own

nation state. Originally, Hizballah wanted to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon but

has since exchanged that objective for supporting Iran's Islamic state (Moore, 2014;

Cruceru, 2013; Caudill, 2008; Yonker, 2013; Fulton, 2013; Levitt, 2013; Hezbollah,

2015).

Hizballah tries to achieve these goals through terrorism attacks and targeted

assassinations. Hizballah chooses its targets based upon the target's political means and

at the direction of Iran. The United States, Israel, opposing Sunni governments, and

opposing Sunni terrorist organizations are common targets for Hizballah. Hizballah

engages in this activity to influence other governments to accept the expansion of Iran's

influence. Hizballah also engages in targeted kidnappings to exchange for Shi'a

militants. In support of these operations, Hizballah receives funding, training, and arms

from IRGC-QF, but it also maintains its non-violent political activities and social welfare

activities so that it has some legitimacy (Moore, 2014; Cruceru, 2013; Caudill, 2008;

Yonker, 2013; Fulton, 2013; Levitt, 2013; Hezbollah, 2015).

Factors	Al-Qaeda	Abdullah Azzam Brigades	IRGC-QF	Hizballah
Sunni (Salafi Jihadi)	**Yes**	**Yes**	**No**	**No**
Shi'a (Twelver)	**No**	**No**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Want to establish an Islamic State	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Recognizes an established Islamic State	**No**	**No**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Expulsion of US and Western influences from the Middle East	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Destruction of Israel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Destruction of Arab states	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Views political, ideological, and economic motivations as interdependent	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uses terrorism to achieve goals	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Terrorism attacks are protective and retaliatory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Result of violent conflict	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Enemies are Israel, Arab governments, and US and Western countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 4.1: Structured Focused Comparison of Sunni and Shia FTOs

Case Comparison

When looking at all four FTOs, three main similarities across all four groups are

the desire to establish an Islamic state, similarly stated enemies, and each group's

objectives which are a political and ideological combination with slight economic

motivation. The desire to establish an Islamic state stems from each group's ideological beliefs. While these beliefs differ, the outcome of establishing an Islamic state is the same. Because of this, the desire of establishing an Islamic state can be eliminated as a driving factor for Sunni FTOs being transnational and for Shi'a FTOs being state-sponsored. Therefore, it does not explain this phenomenon.

All four FTOs have stated that their enemies are Israel, the Arab States, and the United States and other Western countries. Israel is an enemy for all FTOs based on all four's ideological beliefs and historical animosity. The United States and other Western countries are seen as enemies because of their presence in the Middle East. The Sunni FTOs view the Arab states as enemies because the Sunni FTOs believe that these governments are not properly implementing Sharia law, and therefore, these governments must be removed from power. The Shi'a FTOs view the Arab states as enemies based on their ideological beliefs. The Arab states are hindrances to the Shi'a FTOs goals, and therefore the governments must be overthrown. Like the desire to establish an Islamic state, the stated enemies are similar for all four FTOs and can be eliminated as a driving factor, which would explain the observed phenomenon.

All four FTOs' stated objectives can be described as a combination of ideological and political motivations with a slight influence from an economic motivation.   The desire to establish an Islamic state is both political and ideological for all FTOs. By establishing an Islamic state, each FTO believes they would obtain political influence while ruling based on their ideological beliefs. Additionally, the FTOs would gain ownership of the economic facilities in the Middle East. While the stated objectives are most definitely driving factors for all four FTOs' actions, these objectives are similar for

all four FTOs and cannot explain the phenomenon; therefore, these objectives can be eliminated as a driving factor, which would answer the thesis questions.

In addition, all four engage in terrorist activity and rationalize the use of terrorism for retaliation and protection purposes. As evidenced in the introduction, all four FTOs have engaged in terrorist activity as a way to influence the political actions of other countries. While this activity can be perceived as aggression by the attacked country, all four FTOs view this terroristic activity as being retaliatory and protective. The presence of the FTOs' enemies in the Middle East is viewed as aggression by the FTO; therefore, the FTOs believe they must retaliate to this perceived aggression and protect themselves from this perceived aggression in order to achieve their objectives. These driving factors for the FTOs can be eliminated as driving factors causing the phenomenon of Sunni FTOs being transnational and Shi'a FTOs being state-sponsored.

Additionally, three out of the four groups were founded as a result of violent conflict. As detailed above, Hizballah, Al-Qaeda, and IRGC-QF all arose from violent conflict. While the AAB did not arise during violent conflict, it can be argued that the founder of the group perceived aggression from its enemies leading to the establishment of the FTO. Because these characteristics are similar for the most part, they can be ruled out as driving factors for the trend of Sunni and Shi'a FTOs being two different types of terrorism actors.

The most distinct differences are the ideological beliefs of the two sects and Iran's establishment of an approximate Islamic state. The two Salafi Jihadi FTOs do not believe that an Islamic state has been established and view the current Arab governments as corrupt because they do not implement Sharia law, as those groups believe it should be

implemented. In contrast, Iran has established an Islamic state that is as close to the perfect Islamic state possible without the return on the Mahdi based on their belief in velayat-e faqih. Hizballah has recognized Iran as an Islamic state, has pledged allegiance to Iran, and has taken direction from Iran. Because these driving factors greatly differ between the Sunni FTOs and the Shi'a FTOs, these driving factors stand out from all the other driving factors, which are all similar. Therefore, these driving factors can be identified as the driving factors that are believed to be responsible for the phenomenon of Sunni FTOs being transnational and Shi'a FTOs being state-sponsored.

Chapter 4 Summary

In this chapter, this thesis examined Al-Qaeda, Abdullah Azzam Brigades, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force, and Hizballah using a standardized set of questions. This standardized set of questions revealed several similarities between all four groups but highlighted two stark differences in their ideological beliefs and whether or not an Islamic state had been established. Because of this, this thesis postulates that while the groups view their objectives as a combination of political, ideological, and economic objectives, their ideological beliefs, including the Shi'a's belief that allows for the establishment of an approximate Islamic state, drive the trend that Sunni FTOs are transnational actors since they do not believe that an Islamic state has been established. Shi'a FTOs are state-sponsored actors since they recognize Iran as an Islamic state. In the next chapter, this thesis will summarize this study, discuss the findings further, identify implications for practice, and provide recommendations for further research.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

In the past four chapters of this thesis, a trend that Sunni FTOs tend to be transnational actors while Shi'a FTOs tend to be state-sponsored actors was discussed identifying a lack of research into why this trend is occurring. After reviewing the literature concerning this trend and concerning the focused, structured comparison case study methodology, this thesis established that the reason behind this trend was an unstudied area and that the focused, structured comparison case study methodology was an appropriate methodology to begin to explore this literature gap. Upon doing this, the thesis developed a set of questions that would be used to standardize the collected data and outlined the study procedures. Finally, the thesis presented a possible theory to explain this trend.

Summary of the Study

This study used the focused, structured comparison case study methodology in order to conduct a heuristic examination of why Sunni FTOs tend to be transnational actors while Shi'a FTOs tend to be state-sponsored actors. The standardized set of questions was used to conduct case studies of Sunni and Shia FTOs by structuring the case study comparisons and standardizing the data collected from the case studies. The question set also focused on a limited set of variables, which in turn focused the study. This thesis conducted case studies of Al-Qaeda, Abdullah Azzam Brigades, the Islamic Revolutionary Guar Corps – Quds Force, and Hizballah. After answering the standardized set of questions for each group, this study conducted process tracing identifying the theory that best fit the data.

Discussion of the Findings

In the Results chapter, this thesis identified two distinct differences in the driving factors for the Salafi Jihadi FTOs and the Twelver Shi'a FTOs: the ideological beliefs of the two sects and the existence of a true Islamic state. The two Salafi Jihadi FTOs do not believe that an Islamic state has been established and view the current Arab governments as corrupt since they do not implement Sharia law in accordance with those groups' beliefs. In contrast, Iran has established an Islamic state that is as close to the perfect Islamic state possible without the return of the Mahdi based on their belief in velayat-e faqih. This thesis compared multiple other driving factors for the Salafi Jihadi FTOs and the Twelver Shi'a FTOs, but all of these other factors were similar in nature for all four groups examined. Three driving factors were consistent across all four groups: all four want to establish an Islamic state, all four have similar stated enemies, and each group's objectives are a combination of politics and ideology with slight economic motivation similarities. Additionally, three out of the four groups were founded because of violent conflict, and all four groups rationalize the use of terrorism for relatively similar reasons of retaliation and protection purposes. Because of the similarities, these driving factors were ruled out as an explanation for the observed trend.

In the Introduction, this thesis proposed two research questions: 1) What historical, political, religious, and/or societal factors drive U.S. DoS designated Sunni foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) subscribing to the Salafi Jihadist ideology in the Middle East to be transnational/non-state actors? and 2) What historical, political, religious, and/or societal factors drive U.S. DoS designated Shia FTOs subscribing to the Twelver ideology in the Middle East to be state-sponsored actors? How do the respective

driving factors compare? Based on the results of this thesis, the Salafi Jihadi FTOs are driven by their religious ideology and by the political and economic goal of establishing an Islamic state to be transnational/non-state actors. The Twelver Shi'a FTOs are driven by their religious ideology and by the achievement of the political and economic goal of establishing an Islamic state. This thesis proposes the hypothesis that U.S DoS designated Sunni FTOs subscribing to the Salafi Jihadi ideology are driven to be transnational/non-state actors by a combination of religious, political, and economic driving factors and that U.S. DoS designated Shi'a FTOs subscribing to the Twelver ideology are driven to be state-sponsored actors by a combination of religious, political, and economic driving factors.

Implications for Practice

Since a qualitative methodology was utilized for this thesis, several limitations must be considered and accounted for when applying the results of this thesis. This thesis attempted to mitigate these limitations and trade-offs by being aware of them. This thesis also attempted to mitigate these limitations by properly implementing the case study methodology and did not try to interpret the results through the viewpoint of quantitative methodologies. These limitations that were considered and accounted for were identifying scope conditions and necessity, case selection bias, the degrees of freedom problem, the lack of representativeness, and the potential lack of independence of cases (George and Bennett, 2005).

Most importantly, case studies are limited in their ability to determine how much a variable affects the end result but are much stronger at identifying the scope and assessing hypotheses concerning causal necessity (George and Bennett, 2005). In order

to account for this limitation, the variables must be strictly defined; therefore, this proposed theory can only apply to Sunni FTOs that subscribe to the Salafi Jihadi ideology and to Shi'a FTOs that subscribe to the Twelver ideology. This limited application is implemented because of the cases that were selected for this thesis. Applying this theory to FTOs that do not fall into these categories would overstep the limitations of this study and would result in a decrease of the validity of this study.

Case selection bias is generally the most common critique of the case study methodology. This critique stems from researchers selecting cases where the independent and dependent variables support their hypothesis and ignoring cases that contradict their hypothesis then overgeneralizing their findings to a wider population. By doing this, the research can fall victim to either understating or overstating the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Case bias selection can also occur when the researcher chooses cases based upon their historical importance or on the availability of evidence (George and Bennett, 2005). The reliance on secondary resources only when conducting case studies can also lead to selection bias (Levy, 2008). This thesis attempted to look at multiple factors in order to determine the best possible hypothesis and did not ignore contradictory evidence. Additionally, the author did not chose case studies based on their historical importance, availability of evidence, or the author's familiarity with the chosen FTOs.

Case studies are criticized generally for having a degrees of freedom issue. While degrees of freedom are important for statistical studies, degrees of freedom argument fail to consider the qualitative value of each variable indicating each variable has multiple attributes that can be measured which are aggregated in statistical studies. Additionally,

process tracing and congruence testing allows the researcher to reject many alternative hypotheses (George and Bennett, 2005). This thesis focused on the qualitative value of its variables and conducted process tracing in order to determine the hypothesis that best fits the data.

Another criticism of case studies is their lack of representativeness. Generally, researchers conducting case studies do not select cases that are representative of the population (George and Bennett, 2005). This thesis has noted that by selecting only two cases for each religious type of FTO, these selections are not statistically representative of the population and proposes late that more case studies need to be conducted and subsequent quantitative analysis. This thesis also stresses that its results can only be applied to a very strictly defined set of FTOs.

The final criticism of the case study methodology is the potential for a lack of independence in the cases. The failure to identify the lack of independence in the cases will result in inaccurate conclusions (George and Bennett, 2005). This thesis conducted process tracing in order to mitigate and prevent the potential for a lack of independence and the resulting inaccurate conclusions in this thesis.

Recommendations for Further Research

This thesis is the first step into exploring the reason why this identified trend occurs. Future research should conduct other case studies of FTOs fitting the defined descriptions of organizations used for this study in order to determine if this theory continues to hold for other organizations, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, Kata'ib Hizballah, and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. In addition to conducting case studies of other FTOs, future research should also attempt to find a counter-

argument, if any. From there a refutation of the counter-argument could be developed. From the results of the other case studies and the counter-argument/refutation, quantitative studies should be conducted to increase the validity of this theory or identify other variables that would effect this trend.

The results of this study could also be used to examine past policy failures in regard to the discussed FTOs in order to determine if this identified interdependent political and ideological driving factor relates to these policy failures. If it is determined that the theory relates and influenced past policy failures, then scenarios analysis and policy outcomes forecasting model analysis can be conducted to identify different policies in regard to these FTOs that potentially would be effective in future scenarios. By doing this, policymakers would have better insight when making future policy decisions regarding these FTOs.

Since the results of this study is limited to FTOs subscribing to the Salafi Jihadi or Shi'a Twelver ideologies, future studies could look at other Islamic FTOs subscribing to other Sunni, Shi'a, or Sufi ideologies to determine potential driving factors for the type of terrorism exhibited by the respective FTOs. By conducting these other studies concerning other Islamic ideologies participating in terrorism, this could aid policymakers when making policies concerning these FTOs. This is necessary since any potential policies developed using the above results cannot be applied successfully to FTOs subscribing to other Islamic ideologies.

Conclusions

This thesis postulates that the ideological motivations for establishing an Islamic state is the driving factor behind the trend that Sunni FTOs are transnational actors while

Shi'a FTOs are state-sponsored actors. This theory was formulated through conducting a

literature review of the current literature and developing a standardized set of questions.

Analysis of the data collected by these questions revealed that this theory was the best

interpretation for the collected data. By applying this theory only to FTOs that fit the

same description as those organizations used in this study, this allows for the validity of

this study to remain intact. Additional study of this topic will be needed in order to

determine if this theory holds for other Sunni and Shi'a FTOs and to potentially increase

the validity of this theory.

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APPENDIX A

Structured Focused Comparison of Cases				
Question	AQ	AAB	IRGC-QF	Hizballah
What is the sect of Islam to which the organization subscribes?	Sunni (Salafi Jihadi)	Sunni (Salafi Jihadi)	Shi'a (Twelver)	Shi'a (Twelver)
What are the stated goals and objectives of the organization? Political, religious, economic, etc.?	Establishment of a caliphate, expulsion of US and Western influences from the Middle East, destruction of Israel, and the demise of "corrupt Arab governments"	Establishment of a caliphate, expulsion of US and Western influences from the Middle East, destruction of Israel, and the demise of "corrupt Arab governments"; AAB pledged allegiance to AQ after it was founded	Subvert Iran's enemies and extend Iran's influence throughout the Middle East; Establish Hizballah cells throughout the world	Destruction of Israel, protecting Lebanon, supporting Iran and its goals, undermine Arab states with Shi'a minorities; fight Western Imperialism
Are the stated goals and objectives of the organization politically, religiously, economically, etc. motivated? How?	Combination of political and religious motivation, with a slight economic motivation since Al Qaeda believes that US is stealing their oil resources	Combination of political and religious motivation, with a slight economic motivation since Al Qaeda believes that US is stealing their oil resources	Combination of political, religious, and economic; QF sees them as interdependent	Combination of political, religious, and economic; Hizballah sees them as interdependent but also competing between supporting Iran and keeping Lebanon it's own nation-state
How does the organization plan to achieve its stated goals and objectives?	Through terrorist attacks, which Al Qaeda believe are retaliatory in nature	Has conducted relatively few terrorist attacks; first leader focused on publishing, recruitment, incitement, and jihadi proselytism via the internet, which continued with series of video releases inciting violence against Lebanon	Through terrorism attacks, assassinations, etc.; training, funding, and arming proxy groups, such as Hizballah, Syria, Hamas, Shi'a militias, etc.	Through terrorism attacks, assassinations, etc.; obtaining training and funding from QF; but also maintains a non-violent political activities and social welfare activities
What is the type of government that the organization wants to establish?	An Islamic state implementing Shari'a law	An Islamic state implementing Shari'a law	Islamic state under Shi'a rule	Orginally to establish an Islamic state in Lebanon, but that has since been exchanged for supporting Iran's Islamic state
What was the organization's founder reason for creating the organization?	To internationalize the movement that started in Afghanistan with the expulsion of the Soviets	Founded in response to Gama'a al-Islamiyya's official renounciation of violence and denounciation of AQ's tactics to continue to promote jihadi endeavors	Subvert Iran's enemies and extend Iran's influence throughout the Middle East	Iranian effort to combine militant Shi'a groups in Lebanon into one organization
What were the historical events occurring when the organization was founded?	Soviets invasion of Afghanistan, US forces establish bases in Saudi Arabia, assassination of Abdullah Azzam and two of his sons	Founded in response to Gama'a al-Islamiyya's official renounciation of violence and denounciation of AQ's tactics	Revolution, in which the Shah was removed from power	Bloody civil war in Lebanon combined with Isreal's invasion of Southern Lebanon to dismantle the Palestine Liberation Organization
What are the main tenets of the organization's ideological beliefs?	The oneness of Allah (tawhid), ardent rejection of a role for human reason, logic, and desire, strict adherence to the Quran and Sunna (Salafi-Jihadi)	The oneness of Allah (tawhid), ardent rejection of a role for human reason, logic, and desire, strict adherence to the Quran and Sunna (Salafi-Jihadi)	Occultion of 12th Imam and his return when a true Islamic state will be established	Occultion of 12th Imam and his return when a true Islamic state will be established
Who are the stated enemies of the organization?	Israel, US and other Western nations, corrupt Arab governments	Israel, Iran, US and other Western nations, corrupt Arab governments; Since 2009, main focus has been on Lebanon	Israel, US, Middle Eastern governments resisting Iran	Israel, US, Middle Eastern governments resisting Iran
How does the organization typically select targets to conduct attacks against? Who are the targets typically? What is the organization's reasoning for selecting these targets?	An extensive intelligence gathering initiative against potential targets, assessing all possible strengths and vulnerabilities, and is strategic but also symbolic, attacks against countries and individuals, who have wronged Islam, as perceived by Al-Qaeda	Unknown based on relatively few attacks, but targets are typically Shi'a or Western targets	Picks targets based on their political means and if they are opposing Iran and their achievement of ideological goals, using proxy groups; US, Israel, Sunni governments, and opposing Sunni terrorist organizations	Picks targets based on their political means and targets at the direction of Iran; US, Israel, Sunni governments, and opposing Sunni terrorist organizations
What is the reason the organization give for engaging in terrorist activity?	It is in retaliation for perceived agressions by Israel, Western countries, and their allied Arab governments	It is in retaliation for perceived agressions by Israel, Western countries, and their allied Arab governments	To protect Iran and its interests	To engage in negotiations for captive Shi'a militants (kidnapping) or influencing other governments to expand the Iranian expansion