

# JODHAMAL YOUTH CONCLAVE 2022

## United Nations Peacebuilding Commission

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### Background Guide

Agenda: Proxy warfare around the world with special emphasis on MENA region.

Chairperson : Suhani Sharma

Vice Chairperson: Suvan Gupta

Rapporteur: Nausheen Liaqat



When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace.

# Content:

1. Letter From The Executive Board

2. United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

3. WORK OF THE COMMISSION

4. The 2015 review of the peacebuilding architecture

5. Mandate (UNPBC)

6. Proxy Warfare in the MENA region.

7. The time of the Kurds.

8. History Of Conflict

# *Letters from the Executive Board:*

Hon'ble Delegates, Greetings!

I welcome you all to the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission at Jodhamal Youth Conclave 2022.

We request all participant delegates to keep a few pointers in mind before reading the background guide. The background guide is organised into sections. The first part discusses the intergovernmental advisory body "UNPBC", the commission's operations, and the mandate.

The second section provides a brief history of the proxy warfare conflict throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. It has also supplied information on the ethnic group of the Middle Eastern indigenous peoples. Kurds are an ethnic group that is primarily Muslim. They have their own cultural and linguistic heritage, and the majority speak one of two major Kurdish dialects. Kurdish fighters in northern Syria have proven to be an invaluable ally in the fight against the Islamic State. However, US soldiers withdrew as Turkey started an attack against US-backed Kurdish forces. Delegates are also encouraged to review the maps and references supplied at the conclusion of the document to have a better understanding of the conflict. To be safe, delegates should cross-check claims and speeches with the indicated reputable sources. When the Executive Board requests proof/evidence to back up a delegate's remarks, any source may be brought up for debate provided it has institutional backing, and may even be adopted as the country's view. However, study and argument may be conducted utilising authentic sources.

Wikipedia is a source (yes! ), but only to gain an overview of the topic, not to acquire facts and data. Many parts are followed by or feature links that will assist you in better understanding the agenda, obtaining important papers, and directing you to additional study on the matter. Delegates are also encouraged to visit and investigate these links. Delegates are also encouraged to conduct independent study beyond the guidelines to have a thorough grasp of the agenda.

Lastly, I would request all the delegates to put sincere efforts in preparation and research for the simulation and work hard to make it a fruitful learning experience for all.

Feel free to contact me via email if you have any queries or doubts.

Regards,

Suvan Gupta

Vice Chairperson

UNPBC

[Unpbcjyc22@gmail.com](mailto:Unpbcjyc22@gmail.com)

Greetings young change makers,

War is a place where young people who don't know or hate each other, KILL EACH OTHER. By the decision of old ones who know and hate each other but THEY DON'T KILL EACH OTHER!

With this quote of Erich Hartm which so vividly explains the horrors of war and how it is disastrous for mankind and how it is a failure of humanity and humanism as a whole, I Suhani Sharma, heartily welcome this esteemed gathering of bright young minds to the fifth edition of the Jodhamal youth conclave.

I would again like to go back to an old saying that war does not determine who is right , only, who is left.....

This session which is graced by brilliant and ignited young minds who will be the future leaders of tomorrow and who I expect will not be saddled by any burden of legacy and bias will show a way to the world and prove that peace is a matter of choice and not an option. As the world witnesses the horrific atrocities being committed in the name of security and territorial sovereignty, I feel that this crisis presents the youth with the greatest opportunity to stand up for peace and speak in solidarity against any form of violence and oppression.

As for my introduction, I am currently in twelfth grade, studying Humanities with Psychology. I aspire to be a civil servant one day and serve my country to the best of my abilities. I started my MUN journey when I was in sixth grade and I haven't looked back ever since, always trying to push my boundaries and making forays into new worlds. Apart from this, I am an avid reader, with deep interest in classical English Literature and Contemporary History. I am a fairly accomplished painter and when I am not doing anything, you would find me dancing to peppy bollywood numbers or murmuring classic bollywood dialogues.

See you at the fall!

For any query, feel free to contact the executive board at [unpbcjyc22@gmail.com](mailto:unpbcjyc22@gmail.com)

Chairperson  
UNPBC

Greetings Delegates,

My name is Nausheen Liaqat and it gives me great pleasure to be able to say that I will be serving as the rapporteur of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. I am currently studying in twelfth grade at Jodhamal public school and I am planning to give CLAT soon , moreover I am a part of few non profit organisations like inspiring identities where I am currently serving as a CRO and I am also planning to serve as a Ambassador at Empower an organisation aimed to provide free tutoring to the less fortunate. I also indulge in debates and sports. My aim coming into this conference as a rapporteur is to be able to create an engaging environment , and an unforgettable experience for all the delegates at the same time ensuring a successful committee and a memorable time at the conference .

Warm Regards

Rapporteur

UNPBC

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## **United Nations Peacebuilding Commission:**

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is an intergovernmental advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries and is a key addition to the capacity of the International Community in the broad peace agenda. The PBC is composed of 31 Member States, elected from the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council. The top financial contributing countries and the top troop-contributing countries to the United Nations system are also members.

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) started working on 23rd June 2006. It will, according to resolution 1645 (2005) (S/RES/1645 (2005), "marshal resources at the disposal of the international community to advise and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery, focusing attention on reconstruction, institution-building, and sustainable development in countries emerging from conflict".

The Commission is a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and the Security Council. It has an advisory function towards all member states.

## **WORK OF THE COMMISSION:**

The Organisational Committee brings together the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) member states to establish the work agenda for the Peacebuilding Commission. It is the primary decision-making body of the Commission, responsible for establishing its working methods and agenda.

PBC Country-Specific Configurations (CSCs) guide the Peacebuilding Commission's engagement with individual countries. Each configuration works closely with the national government. Apart from the PBC member states, other relevant stakeholders are invited to participate in the CSCs meetings.

The Peacebuilding Support Office assists the Peacebuilding Commission with advice and policy guidelines.

The Peacebuilding Commission supports national and regional peacebuilding priorities, at the request of concerned governments, and advances global policy issues that are critical for peacebuilding and sustaining peace. As the Secretary-General has pointed out in his report on Our Common Agenda, the Peacebuilding Commission has reshaped the responses by the United Nations to multidimensional threats to development, peace and security through an inclusive approach.

The PBC also monitors progress, gathers financial support for peacebuilding, and works with partners in the UN system.<sup>29</sup> Functions and Powers General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) emphasise the significance of the PBC in fulfilling several functions with regards to its mandate:

- To bring long-term international attention to sustaining peace and to provide political support and advocacy to conflict-affected countries, with their consent;
- To promote an cohesive, strategic, and coherent approach to peacebuilding, that recognizes the close link between security, development and human rights;
- To serve as a bridging and coordinating actor for the principal UN organs and relevant UN entities by sharing advice on peacebuilding needs and priorities and providing recommendations based on the competencies and responsibilities of these entities;

- To serve as a platform for cooperation by convening all relevant actors within and outside the UN to provide recommendations to improve their coordination, to develop and share best practices in peacebuilding to improve mission success, and to ensure reliable financing for peacebuilding.

Further, the PBC's Organizational Committee can establish CSCs to look at peacebuilding issues in particular countries.<sup>31</sup> Bringing together both local and regional representatives as well as a representative of the Secretary-General, the CSC drafts a Strategic Framework for the focus country to establish peacebuilding priorities, objectives, and risks. Based on the principles of national ownership, coordination, and commitment among all partners, the Strategic Framework serves as an action plan for UN bodies to carry out PBC recommendations.<sup>33</sup> The resolutions establishing the PBC dictate that a country can be included in the PBC's agenda via requests for advice from the Security Council or the Secretary-General, and via requests for advice from ECOSOC, the General Assembly, or, in exceptional circumstances, Member States that are on the verge of conflict and not on the agenda of the Security Council.<sup>34</sup> Currently, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone are on the PBC's agenda.

### **The 2015 review of the peacebuilding architecture:**

In resolutions A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282 (2016), General Assembly and Security Council also stressed the importance of the Peacebuilding Commission to fulfil the following functions in this regard:

- (a) To bring sustained international attention to sustaining peace, and to provide political accompaniment and advocacy to countries affected by conflict, with their consent;
- (b) To promote an integrated, strategic and coherent approach to peacebuilding, noting that security, development and human rights are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing;
- (c) To serve a bridging role among the principal organs and relevant entities of the United Nations by sharing advice on peacebuilding needs and priorities, in line with the respective competencies and responsibilities of these bodies;
- (d) To serve as a platform to convene all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, including from Member States, national authorities, United Nations missions and country teams, international, regional and subregional organizations, international financial institutions, civil society, women's groups, youth organizations and, where relevant, the private sector and national human rights institutions, in order to provide recommendations and information to improve their coordination, to develop and share good practices in peacebuilding, including on institution-building, and to ensure predictable financing to peacebuilding.

## **Mandate:**

As an intergovernmental advisory body, the PBC is mainly responsible for providing support to peace efforts in conflict-affected countries.<sup>27</sup> Through General Assembly resolution 60/180 and Security Council resolution 1645 (2005), the PBC is mandated with: coordinating between all relevant actors to organize resources; advising on and proposing cohesive strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery; focusing on reconstruction and institution-building efforts for post-conflict recovery while laying the groundwork for sustainable development; and, offering recommendations and information to improve the coordination and cooperation of all involved actors both within and outside the UN.<sup>28</sup> The PBC also monitors progress, gathers financial support for peacebuilding, and works with partners in the UN system.<sup>29</sup> Functions and Powers General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) emphasize the significance of the PBC in fulfilling several functions with regards to its mandate:

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**Conclusion** The PBC is a key player in post-conflict reconstruction and development as well as peace and security, both in terms of the UN's peacebuilding architecture and in its efforts with the countries on its agenda.<sup>50</sup> As an intergovernmental advisory body, the PBC, alongside other relevant entities such as the PBF and PBSO, is crucial in providing advice and support for peacebuilding activities.<sup>51</sup> It has also made strides in promoting gender inclusion and equality in the context of peacebuilding efforts.<sup>52</sup> The PBC, however, is not without its challenges. Its review of the UN peacebuilding architecture has shown the need to address deep fragmentation within the UN system as well as the need to promote more partnerships and inclusion in peacebuilding efforts.

## **Proxy Warfare in MENA Region**

Proxy warfare is returning with a fury in the Greater Middle East and its Eurasian perimeter, rivalling and maybe even outpacing the threat it presented during the late Cold War. The change is being driven by a number of current developments. Along with regional conflicts fueled by sectarian splits, interstate rivalry between a resurgent Russia, a growing China, and the United States is escalating. The regional balance of power has changed as a result of military modernization and increased access to distant targeting capabilities among several former Cold War client nations in the Greater Middle East and its periphery. The Middle East is undergoing a phase of crucial geopolitical and social transformations. Bottom-up uprisings are spreading from Lebanon to Algeria. A dangerous regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia is playing out throughout the region, involving actors supported by one or the other party in proxy wars ranging from Yemen to Syria. The United States and Russia are both, albeit very differently, involved in local and regional politics, in ways that may also be exposing the European southern flank to risk. This is illustrated, for example, by the decision to withdraw US forces from the border region between Turkey and Syria, in effect betraying the Kurdish forces that had been crucial in the fight against IS. And Moscow has been quick to seize upon the opportunity provided by the US' moves and the local instability to portray itself as a steady, most reliable partner for the countries of the region. Is a new Cold War playing out in the Middle East? Not quite. Yet understanding how the original bipolar rivalry played out in the region is key, as many consequences of policies enacted by the superpowers and their allies during those four fateful decades are still with us today. After World War II, the tension between communist and democratic forms of government strained relations between the Soviet Union and the United

States and provided the ideological underpinnings of the Cold War. These tensions almost boiled over into full on conflict several times, especially as nuclear arms proliferation and testing advanced rapidly during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Both nations found it critical to expand their spheres of influence, largely by promoting leadership in the “Third World” that would be sympathetic to their causes. Arguably more important, however, was the ability to have friendly governments that could be used as allies to fight conventional wars or provide bases for the placement of nuclear warheads in the case of nuclear warfare. By using both diplomatic and military power, the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to carve out areas that could be utilized as staging grounds against one another.

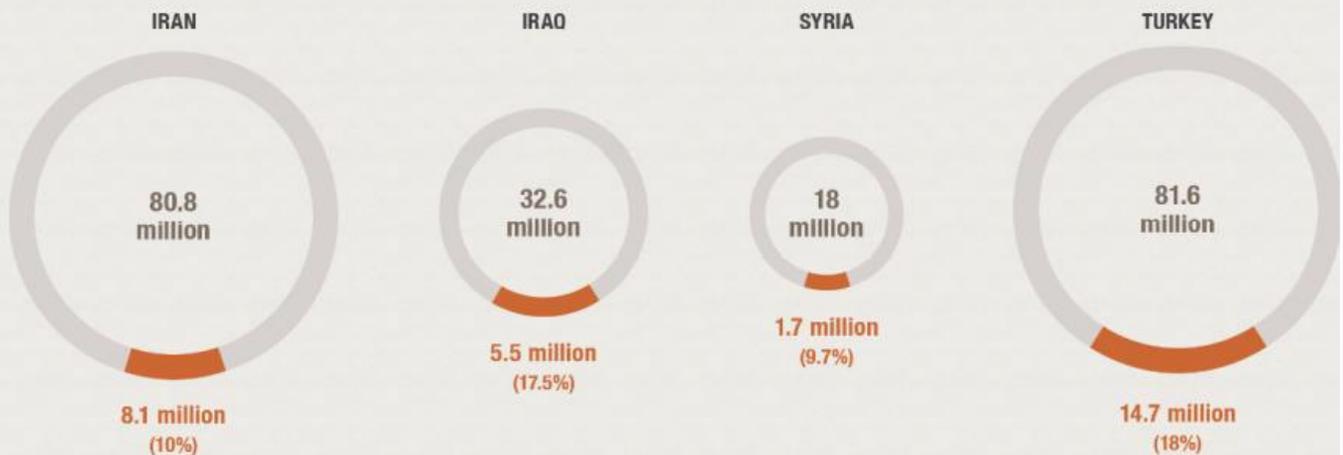
The African continent, especially the southern and central portions, proved to be fertile grounds for these kinds of interventions. Colonial powers in the region such as England, Portugal, Germany, and Belgium had started declining in power due to the tremendous costs associated with World War II. As many colonies pursued struggles for independence, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China attempted to fill the power vacuums with money and arms. Skirmishes and full-blown wars would occur as a result, as the two superpowers engaged in proxy wars that would kill many thousands. The reverberations from these conflicts would further destabilize the region for years to come, leading to more wars, cases of genocide, and severely dysfunctional economies, the scars of which can still be seen today. While proxy wars occurred across the globe — from Central and South America, to parts of Asia — this article focuses on the proxy wars that occurred in the central, eastern, and southern portions of Africa.

### **The Time of The Kurds.**

The Kurds are one of the indigenous peoples of the Middle East and the region's fourth-largest ethnic group. They speak Kurdish, an Indo-European language, and are predominantly Sunni Muslims. Kurds have a distinct culture, traditional dress, and holidays, including Nowruz, the springtime New Year festival that is also celebrated by Iranians and others who use the Persian calendar. Kurdish nationalism emerged during the twentieth century following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the formation of new nation-states across the Middle East.

The estimated thirty million Kurds reside primarily in mountainous regions of present-day Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey and remain one of the world's largest peoples without a sovereign state. The Kurds are not monolithic, however, and tribal identities and political interests often supersede a unifying national allegiance. Some Kurds, particularly those who have migrated to urban centers, such as Istanbul, Damascus, and Tehran, have integrated and assimilated, while many who remain in their ancestral lands maintain a strong sense of a distinctly Kurdish identity. The Kurdish diaspora of an estimated two million is concentrated primarily in Europe.

## 30 MILLION KURDS



## *History Of Conflict:*

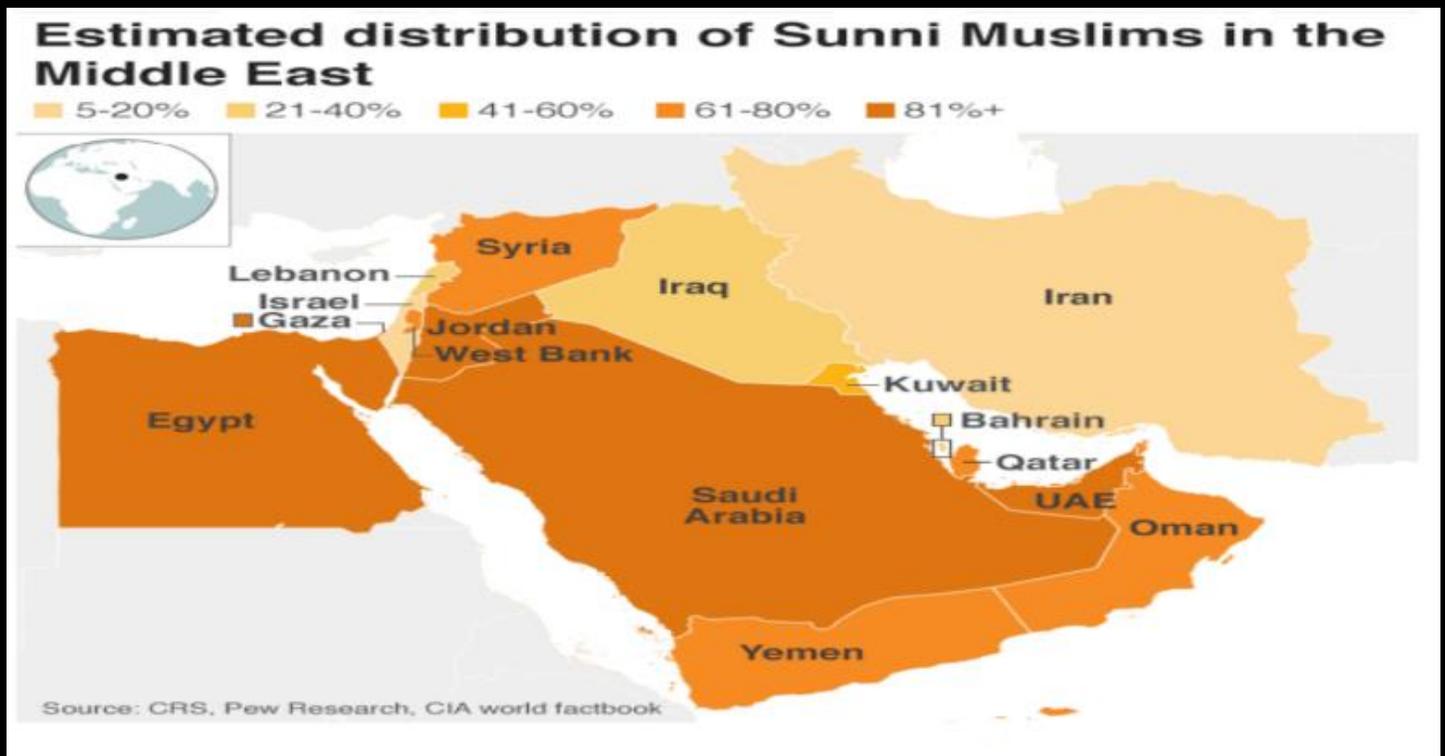
### **Iran–Saudi Arabia proxy conflict**

The conventional understanding of the term Proxy War or War by Proxy was defined during the Cold War period as a confrontation between two great powers using substitute actors to avoid a direct confrontation (Bar-Siman-Tov 1984). Focusing on the Middle East region, it is widely acknowledged that Iran and Saudi Arabia are involved in a long-term animosity that causes a strategic imbalance in regional policies. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 catapulted these two States into bitter rivalry. The fall of Saddam Hussein, the establishment of a Shiite Iraq and the Arab Springs of 2011, have increased the tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Both countries have not a direct military confront yet, but they have undoubtedly divided the region into two armed camps, based on political and religious ideologies, seeking regional allies and continuing the exploitation of the weakest countries in the region in a series of proxy wars, from the conflicts in Iraq to the war in Syria and the recent Yemen conflict. This thesis will analyse the current Saudi-Iranian rivalry and how it affects the Civil War in Yemen. The relevance in analysing this conflict derives from the situation of oblivion in which it finds itself in the international debate, which may already be considered the worst humanitarian crisis of the last decade.

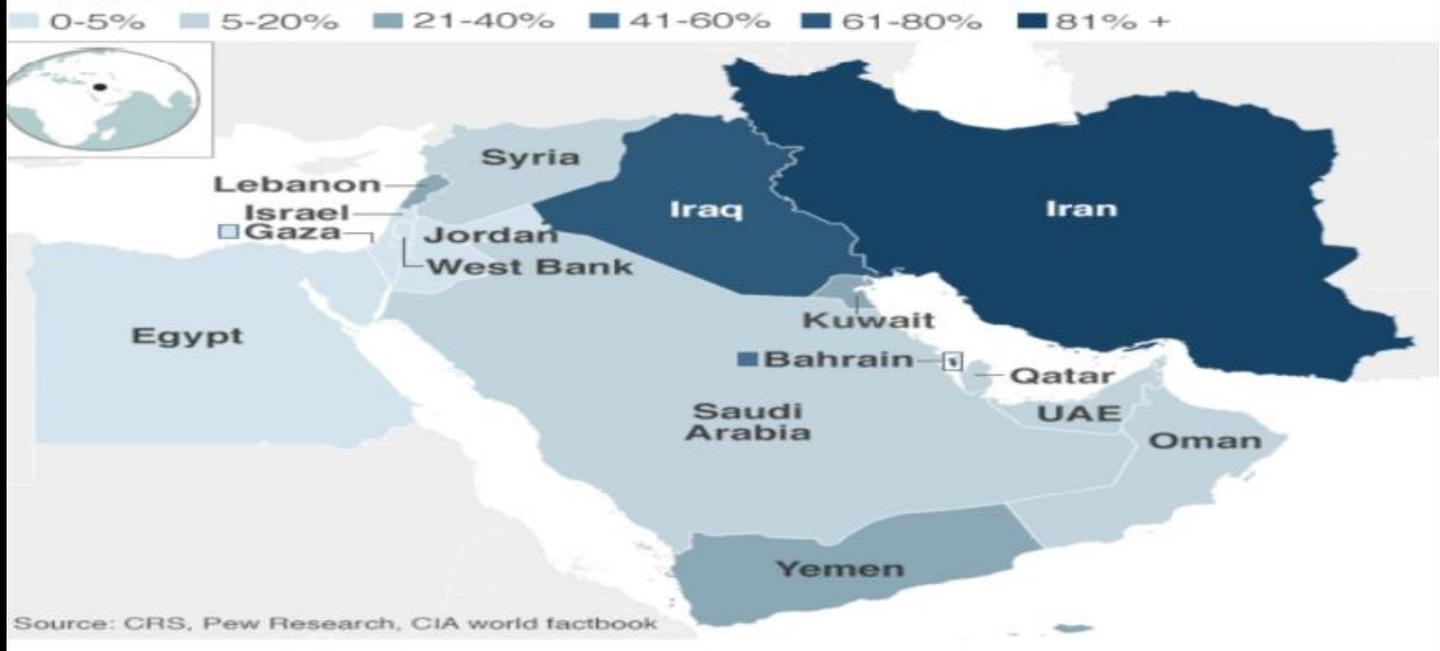
In what has been called a "cold war," the struggle for regional hegemony is fought on a number of fronts for geopolitical, economic, and sectarian dominance. The proxy battle has been characterised as a front in what former Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has termed to as the "New Cold War" because to American backing for Saudi Arabia and its allies as well as Russian and Chinese assistance for Iran and its allies.

Today's competition is mostly a political and economic war that has been aggravated by religious divisions. As part of a bigger fight, both nations have taken advantage of sectarianism in the area.

Saudi Arabia is predominantly Sunni Muslim, whereas Iran is predominantly Shia itself as the leading Sunni Muslim power.



## Estimated distribution of Shia Muslims in the Middle East



## Syrian Proxy Warfare

The Syrian Civil War refers to both direct foreign engagement in the ongoing conflict in Syria, which started in March 2011, as well as political, military, and operational assistance to parties participating. The majority of groups fighting in Syria are supported in various ways by nations and organisations outside that are not Syrian. Many people refer to the current crisis in Syria as a collection of overlapping proxy battles between regional and international powers, particularly between the US and Russia. As well as between Iran and Saudi Arabia,

Major Sunni governments in the Middle East that are allies of the United States, most notably Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey, provide financial, logistical, political, and even military support to the Syrian opposition, which is represented officially by the Syrian National Coalition. Major Western nations including the U.S., France, and the

UK have supported the opposition and the affiliated rebel organisations in Syria politically, militarily, and logistically since the beginning of the crisis there.

Several NATO nations, including the US in particular, have provided military and logistical support to the Syrian Democratic Forces of the Executive Council (Rojava), the Rojavan administration. It has been assaulted by the Turkish military and the Free Syrian Army, which is supported by Turkey, since July 2015, which has resulted in the Turkish occupation of northern Syria.

### **The Israeli-Iranian Proxy War in Southern Syria:**

The Israeli-Iranian conflict has perhaps been the deadliest conflict in Syria because it has the most potential to involve the opposing superpowers, the US and Russia. Israel launched a campaign of more than 200 airstrikes on sites in Syria because of concern that Hezbollah would get enhanced Iranian missiles, putting Israeli cities at danger in the event of another war. Russia had a need to maintain Iranian ground backing for the regime in Syria and lessen the Israeli danger to its client while Israel (and the US) sought Iran's complete withdrawal from Syria.

When Israel refused and Israeli raids near Russia's Latakia airbase resulted in the unintentional downing of a Russian military aircraft, Russia upgraded Syria's air defense capabilities in an effort to restrict Israel's freedom of action. Iran was to withdraw from the south of Syria close to the Israeli border in exchange for Israel limiting its campaign. Russia planned to continue playing a balancing act between Israel, Iran, and the Syrian government now that it had strengthened its position.

This gave rise to the notion that Russia was not unhappy to see Iran, a contender for influence over the Syrian government, reduced down to size since it appeared so impotent in restricting Israeli freedom of action against Iranian and Iran-aligned targets. The capabilities of Hezbollah and Iran's position in Syria provided strategic depth in the drive for regional dominance as well as a deterrence against Israel. Iran showed its commitment to remain in Syria by sending militants affiliated with it to the 2020 battle for Idlib, therefore increasing rather than decreasing its Syrian "footprint" in reaction to Israeli assaults and the US killing of Quds Corps commander Qasim Suleimani. However, the exceptionally harsh impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the country may be forcing Iran to incrementally scale down its Syrian profile.

## **Yemen's war:**

The battle has enveloped Taiz, the third most populated city in Yemen and the capital of its largest governorate (province), which bears the same name. Long considered the country's cultural hub, Taiz became the focal point of what many observers refer to as a proxy war between the Saudi-led coalition and the Houthis, an armed Zaidi Shia revivalist organisation with connections to Iran, in the early months of 2015. The Houthis and a varied coalition of anti-Houthi forces are locked in a military standoff in Taiz at the moment. The Houthis, who have encircled and besieged Taiz, continue to hold sway over the majority of its entrances and exits, regulating the movement of people and commodities as well as a strategically vital north-south gateway. The battle in Taiz is a good example of how localized rivalry for power and influence and regional tensions between Iran and the Gulf States have collided across Yemen. The Houthis and a varied coalition of anti-

Houthi forces are locked in a military standoff in Taiz at the moment. The Houthis, who have encircled and besieged Taiz, continue to hold sway over the majority of its entrances and exits, regulating the movement of people and commodities as well as a strategically vital north-south gateway. The battle in Taiz is a good example of how localised rivalry for power and influence and regional tensions between Iran and the Gulf States have collided across Yemen. By trying to impose their own objectives through the support of armed factions and political organisations, foreign countries play a significant role in the fight. Yemen is significant for the regional agendas of various foreign countries due to its strategic location along the southern border of Saudi Arabia and the Red Sea commerce routes. As a result, many analysts have used the concept of proxy warfare to examine the conflict. However, this perspective may easily distort the conflict as one in which Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and Iran manoeuvre their pawns to gain a strategic advantage, as well as reduce the conflict to these manoeuvres as a whole. Misdiagnosing the dynamics at play is only part of the problem; portraying the conflict as essentially a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia makes peace efforts more difficult. For many of the parties engaged in conflict, the framing offers strategic benefits that they utilize as fuel for their hostilities. The narrative itself further internationalizes the fight, obfuscating the fact that the Yemeni war is really an internal political battle within Yemen.

#### Key Findings:

Various military forces in Yemen use the proxy war frame as a propaganda tool to recruit and raise funds, but the day-to-day experience of the conflict is highly local. In many cases, rather than a top-down proxy relationship of control, local forces exercise substantial agency despite receiving sponsorship, pursuing their own interests and using foreign sponsorship opportunities for their own purposes.

The complex web of forces and sponsorship opportunities has empowered individuals—in addition to groups—to act as major players

in Yemen's war. Abu al-Abbas, the leader of the Abu al-Abbas Brigades, for example, skillfully drew on Saudi, Emirati, local, and potentially al-Qaida support to drive his rise in influence.

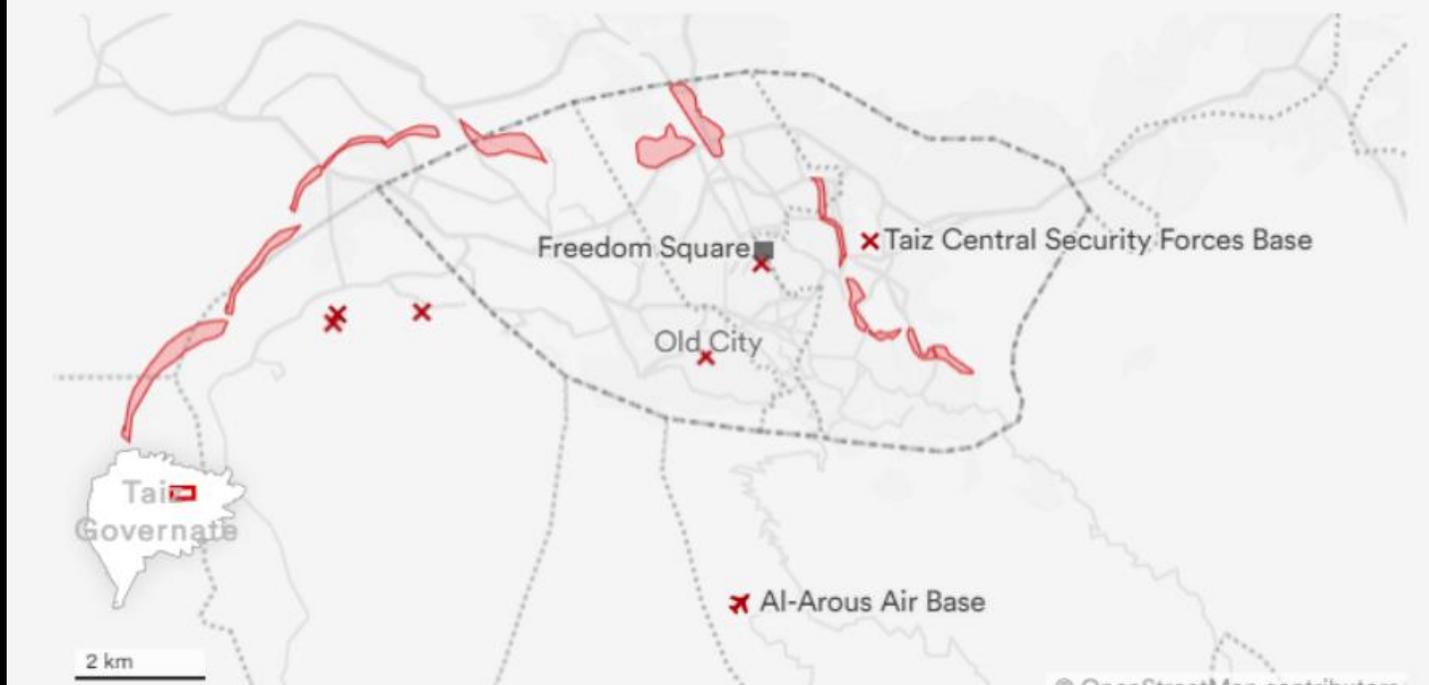
Though the Houthis have increasingly aligned with Iran, they continue to enmesh themselves in Yemen's wider body politic. Prior to the current war, the Houthis waged six wars against the Yemeni government in the twenty-first century, during which there is little evidence of firm Iranian command and control. Iran's reported provision of missiles and drones shapes the conflict, but its roots are local and would not disappear were Iran to fully abandon the Houthis.

Foreign powers' development of proxy relationships in the form of external sponsorship has made the conflict more complex and difficult to resolve via negotiations. Such foreign relationships have resulted in an interplay between an expanded and shifting set of local forces, national political factions, and international parties, each of which have their own interests and aims. This expanded set of armed and political groups fuels tensions and complicates efforts to end the violence through a negotiated settlement.

Uncritical adoption of the proxy war narrative poses challenges for peacemakers and policymakers, increasing the risks of escalation and frustrating efforts at conflict resolution. The narrative obscures the true localized nature of the conflict and ignores the goals and ambitions of key domestic stakeholders.

These wider divisions have dragged out the battle against the Houthis while providing growth opportunities to extremist groups like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Al-Qaida's strength has diminished recently and its power should not be exaggerated, but the group stands to benefit from persistent conflict.

**Map 4 | Detail of Key Battlefronts in Taiz City**



## The Iraq War 2003-2011

The American invasion of Iraq in March 2003 toppled the brutal authoritarian government of Saddam Hussein, but unleashed a massive sectarian civil war that, as of late 2007, has no end in sight.

At the heart of the struggle is the ascent by the majority Shiite Arabs to ruling status. Fervently opposed to the Shiite-led government are armed factions of Sunni Arabs who chafe at the overturning of the old order. British colonialists installed Sunni Arabs as proxy rulers in the early 20th century, and Sunni families and tribes managed to hold onto power after Iraq was granted independence and even as the country's Shiite population steadily increased. Saddam Hussein was a Sunni strongman from the north who crushed anyone opposed to him, but

reserved some of his most vicious punishments for the Shiite Arabs and Kurds, two groups in Iraq that have long sought a significant measure of power or independence.

In 2002 and 2003, President George Bush cited the possibility of Saddam Hussein acquiring weapons of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons -- and thus posing a direct threat to the United States -- as the main rationale for a pre-emptive invasion of Iraq. He and other senior American officials also said Mr. Hussein had direct ties to the Al Qaeda terrorist organization founded by Osama bin Laden. After the Americans ousted Mr. Hussein, they searched for evidence in Iraq to bolster both claims but have so far found nothing.

Some of the first steps the American occupation authority took in 2003 are blamed by critics for igniting the Sunni-led insurgency: disbanding the Iraqi Army and purging members of the former ruling Baath Party from government and public life. Yet, the conflict between the Sunni Arabs and the Shiites is at its heart a deeply existential one: rarely since the Sunni-Shiite sectarian split in the 7th century have Shiite Arabs ever held any significant power, and many Sunni Arabs today regard the rise of the Iraqi Shiites as an upheaval of the proper Islamic order. Eighty to 90 percent of the world's Muslims are estimated to be Sunnis; demography and history have always favored the Sunnis.

To put the majority Shiites in power, the Americans held a series of elections in 2005. Iraqis largely voted along ethnic and sectarian lines, further reinforcing the rifts in Iraqi society that had widened under Mr. Hussein. Moreover, to the disappointment of the Bush administration, the parties that the Iraqis voted for were overwhelmingly conservative and religious. A Shiite coalition cobbled together by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most powerful Shiite cleric in Iraq, won the most votes in both sets of parliamentary elections in 2005 and consequently took control of the government. This further inflamed the Sunni Arab insurgency as well as bringing new worries to the American government.

The Iraq war has had a broad destabilizing effect across much of the Middle East. Many observers of the region say the biggest winner so far of the war is Iran, which is ruled by Shiite Persians and has close ties to Iraq's Shiite leaders. Emboldened by Shiite ascendancy and by the diversion of American power and resources into Iraq, Iran has pressed its agenda across the region, which in turn has alarmed Sunni Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia. Another disturbing regional effect with far-reaching consequences is the exodus of Iraqi refugees to neighboring countries. About 2 million have fled to Syria and Jordan alone.

That is a direct effect of the sectarian cleansing that has taken place in mixed

cities across Iraq, with Sunni and Shiite militias taking over neighborhoods and driving out residents of the opposite sect. Arab and Kurdish tensions also run high. In the northern city of Mosul, Kurdish and Christian enclaves have been under attack by Sunni Arab militants, while in the oil city of Kirkuk, which has significant populations of Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens, bombings and shootings have long been a regular part of daily life.

Starting in summer of 2007, violence in parts of central and western Iraq, including Baghdad, dropped sharply for a number of reasons. Most significantly, some Sunni Arab groups that had been fighting the Americans and Shiite-led government decided to turn their guns on rival Sunni Arab groups, many of which are members of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, a home-grown fundamentalist militia with foreign fighters in its ranks. The American military is giving money and arms to their new Sunni Arab allies, collectively called the Awakening, though Shiite leaders remain suspicious of the Sunnis' intentions.

Also in 2007, acting on the request of General David H. Petraeus, the commander of American forces in Iraq, President Bush decided to increase troop levels in the country to 168,000. Commonly called "the surge," the increase in troops helped General Petraeus push forward with a strategy to set up small operating bases in some of the most violent neighbourhoods in Baghdad, contributing to the drop in violence in those areas. But the pace of deployment and operations has severely strained the American military, especially the United States Army, and President Bush began lowering troop levels in late 2007.

The White House and American commanders say the purpose of the troop increase was to try to dampen the violence to a degree that would allow political reconciliation among the warring Iraqi factions. In early 2008, as the Iraq war approached its sixth year, the main question was whether that kind of reconciliation would take place. Leaders of the main factions have haggled over issues behind closed doors and urged Parliament to pass some conciliatory measures. Muktada al-Sadr, the young, rebellious Shiite cleric, has imposed a temporary ceasefire on his militia, the Mahdi Army. But the Iraqi leaders, as well as their supporters in the greater Middle East, have yet to reach a grand peace accord that will truly pull Iraq back from the abyss of a failed state. Parliament was able to agree on one large-scale legislative package, bundling together measures on a federal budget, provincial elections and revising restrictions on former members of Mr. Hussein's Baath party. But the elections were vetoed by the country's presidential council and many Sunnis complained that the new de-Baathification measure was in some ways harsher than the old one.

## **Nigerian Civil War**

Nigeria endeavoured to bring together groups split by race and religion when it gained independence in 1960; this effort resulted in tensions that eventually led to two military coups, from which the Northern region's leaders triumphed. The Igbo (Ibo) people proclaimed their homeland, the Eastern area, independent after the Northern coup in 1967, which led to the deaths of military and civilian Igbo (Ibo) people. Odumegwu Ojukwu was the head of what was now known as the Republic of Biafra. The Nigerian FMG (Federal Military Government) refused to let the oil-rich east to secede, despite recognition by certain African nations and covert assistance from nations like France and Israel.

## **Libya's War**

The conflict in oil-rich Libya has become a proxy war, fueled by rival foreign powers such as Russia and Turkey.

Foreign nations have been getting more involved in the conflict between Libya's UN-backed government forces and rebel commander Khalifa Haftar. The following are the main parties to the conflict:

### **Government of National Accord**

The United Nations helped establish and formally endorsed Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) in 2015 to unify rival administrations that came out of the country's 2014 elections. Based in the capital city of Tripoli, the GNA is led by Prime Minister Fayeaz al-Serraj and controls parts of the country's west. The GNA's armed forces comprise the remains of Libya's official military as well as local militias, with more than thirty thousand fighters. It receives significant military aid from Turkey, Italy, and Qatar.

### **Militant Groups**

The weakness of Libya's state institutions has allowed local armed groups to emerge and flourish. In some areas, they provide security and law enforcement that the state cannot.



However, powerful Islamist militant groups such as al-Qaeda, Ansar al-Sharia, and the self-proclaimed Islamic State also operate throughout the country.

## Lebanon:

### Introduction

Hezbollah is a Shiite Muslim political party and militant group based in Lebanon, where its extensive security apparatus, political organization, and social services network fostered its reputation as “a state within a state.” Founded in the chaos of the fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War, the Iran-backed group is driven by its opposition to Israel and its resistance to Western influence in the Middle East.

With its history of carrying out global terrorist attacks, parts of Hezbollah—and in some cases the entire organization—have been designated as a terrorist group by the United States and many other countries. In recent years, long-standing alliances with Iran and Syria have embroiled the group in the Syrian civil war, where its support for Bashar al-Assad's regime has transformed Hezbollah into an increasingly effective military force. But with Lebanon's power brokers facing public discontent as the nation verges on failure, Hezbollah's role in Lebanon could change.

The war has taken a heavy toll on Libyan civilians, who have been subjected to shelling near the front lines, injuries from explosive devices, and kidnappings for

ransom. Near the western city of Tarhuna, the GNA discovered multiple mass graves after pushing the LNA out of the area. The UN Support Mission in Libya estimates that hundreds of civilians [PDF] have been killed nationwide since Haftar began his assault on Tripoli. Meanwhile, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that more than 200,000 people have been internally displaced and approximately 1.3 million people need humanitarian assistance. Israel is Hezbollah's main enemy, dating back to Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 1978. Hezbollah has been blamed for attacks on Jewish and Israeli targets abroad, including the 1994 car bombings of a Jewish community center in Argentina, which killed eighty-five people, and the bombings of the Israeli Embassy in London. Even after Israel officially withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, it continued to clash with Hezbollah, especially in the disputed Shebaa Farms border zone. Periodic conflict between Hezbollah and Israeli forces escalated into a monthlong war in 2006, during which Hezbollah launched thousands of rockets into Israeli territory.

Hezbollah and Israel have yet to relapse into full-blown war, but the group reiterated its commitment to the destruction of the Israeli state in its 2009 manifesto. In December 2018, Israel announced the discovery of miles of tunnels running from Lebanon into northern Israel that it claims were created by Hezbollah. The following year, Hezbollah attacked an Israeli army base—the first serious cross-border exchange in more than four years. In August 2021, Hezbollah fired more than a dozen rockets in response to Israeli air strikes in Lebanon; it was the first time the group claimed responsibility for rockets fired into Israel since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War.

Hezbollah has attacked Israel with sophisticated anti-ship and anti-armor weapons, which Western officials suspect are supplied by Iran. Orion told CFR that the more precise weaponry being provided by Iran ensures that Hezbollah will become an increasingly dangerous threat to Israel.

How is Hezbollah involved in the Syrian Civil War?

Hezbollah finds a loyal ally in Syria, whose army occupied most of Lebanon during Lebanon's civil war. The Syrian government remained as a peacekeeping force in Lebanon until it was driven out in the 2005 Cedar Revolution, a popular protest movement against the foreign occupation. Hezbollah had unsuccessfully pushed for Syrian forces to remain in Lebanon, and has since remained a stalwart ally of the Assad regime. In return for Tehran's and Hezbollah's support, experts say, the Syrian government facilitates the transfer of weapons from Iran to the militia. Hezbollah's experience fighting in Syria has helped it become a stronger

military force. Hezbollah publicly confirmed its involvement in the Syrian Civil War in 2013, joining Iran and Russia in supporting the Syrian government against largely Sunni rebel groups. Prior to 2013, the group had sent a small number of trainers to advise the regime. More than seven thousand Hezbollah militants are estimated to have fought in the pro-Assad alliance, which has been instrumental in the survival of the Assad regime, including by winning the 2013 Battle of al-Qusayr, which secured a route for regime forces between the major cities of Damascus and Homs. In 2019, Hezbollah withdrew many of its fighters from Syria, attributing the decision to the Assad regime's military success.

Analysts say that Hezbollah's experience fighting in Syria has helped it become a stronger military force, but that it faces a growing sentiment in Lebanon that focusing on the war led the group to neglect its domestic interests. Hezbollah's support from Sunni Muslims in Lebanon has waned over the group's backing of the Assad regime, which threatens Sunni Muslims. In recent years, Sunni extremists have committed terrorist attacks in Lebanon, including 2015 suicide bombings in Beirut claimed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State. Hezbollah's involvement in the war has also provoked Israel, which has struck targets in Syria thought to be supplying Hezbollah with weapons.

How have the United States and other countries treated the group?

U.S. policymakers see Hezbollah as a global terrorist threat. The United States designated Hezbollah a foreign terrorist organization in 1997, and several individual Hezbollah members, including Nasrallah, are considered specially designated global terrorists, which subjects them to U.S. sanctions. The Barack Obama administration provided aid to Lebanon's military with the hope of diminishing Hezbollah's credibility as the country's most capable military force. However, Hezbollah's and the Lebanese military's parallel efforts to defend the Syrian border from the Islamic State and al-Qaeda-affiliated militants have made Congress hesitant to send further aid [PDF], for fear that Hezbollah could acquire it.

In 2015, the U.S. Congress passed the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act, which sanctions foreign institutions that use U.S. bank accounts to finance Hezbollah. Lawmakers amended it in 2018 to include additional types of activities. Additionally, the Donald Trump administration has sanctioned some of Hezbollah's members in Parliament, as part of its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran. While Trump's approach has disrupted Iran's economy, analysts say the country's increasingly self-sufficient proxies are weathering the worst of the sanctions.

President Joe Biden's administration has continued sanctioning individuals connected to Hezbollah's financing network, including Ibrahim Ali Daher, head of the group's Central Finance Unit. In September 2021, the Treasury Department announced sanctions targeting an international finance network accused of laundering tens of millions of dollars through regional financial systems to benefit Hezbollah and Iran.

The European Union has taken a less aggressive approach to Hezbollah. The bloc designated its military arm a terrorist group in 2013, over its involvement in a bombing in Bulgaria and its backing of the Assad regime. In 2014, the EU's police agency, Europol, and the United States created a joint group to counter Hezbollah's terrorist activities in Europe. In recent years, several European countries have taken a stronger stance. The UK parliament deemed all of Hezbollah a terrorist group in 2019, followed by the German government in 2020.

Hezbollah has scorned the largely Sunni Gulf Arab countries over their alliances with the United States and European powers. The Gulf Cooperation Council—comprising the seven Arab states of the Persian Gulf, with the exception of Iraq—considers Hezbollah a terrorist organization. Additionally, Saudi Arabia and the United States co-lead the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center, created in 2017 to disrupt resource flows to Iran-backed groups such as Hezbollah.

What is the future of the organisation?

Experts say that Hezbollah's international network is expanding, but that the group isn't eager for outright war with Israel or the United States. Instead, some analysts say, Hezbollah would rather rely on covert operations and terrorist activities. Even Hezbollah's threats of retaliation for the 2020 U.S. drone strike that killed Qasem Soleimani, the head of the IRGC's elite Quds Force, have not materialised into reprisals.

With Lebanon teetering on the brink of collapse, the group has seized opportunities to expand in its own backyard. While the Lebanese government failed to respond effectively to countrywide fuel shortages in 2021, Hezbollah imported more than a million gallons of fuel from Iran via passage through Syria, violating U.S. sanctions on Tehran.

Despite Hezbollah's efforts to bolster credibility on its home front, many Lebanese distrust the group for its alleged involvement in the 2020 Beirut port explosions, which killed over two hundred people. A judicial probe into the blasts is investigating several Hezbollah-backed politicians for suspected negligence and

has sparked a wave of violence and bloodshed between Hezbollah's supporters and rival Christian militants.

Some experts say Hezbollah is losing its hold on Lebanon given the anger spreading even in traditional strongholds. The surge in independent and antiestablishment candidates elected to Parliament in 2022 signalled that many in Lebanon are dissatisfied with Hezbollah and other longtime power holders. Additionally, increased support for the Lebanese Forces party, which wants to disarm Hezbollah, might be an indication that many voters no longer see it as the country's protector, the Middle East Institute's Randa Slim says. In the coming months, Hezbollah could struggle to get its candidates elected to Lebanon's top leadership positions. But a decline in Hezbollah's power would likely necessitate even greater support for opposition forces, including from foreign governments, Slim says.

## **Israel Palestine Conflict**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. In 1947, the United Nations adopted Resolution 181, known as the Partition Plan, which sought to divide the British Mandate of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory, but 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and the territory was divided into 3 parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip.

Over the following years, tensions rose in the region, particularly between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Following the 1956 Suez Crisis and Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria signed mutual defense pacts in anticipation of a possible mobilization of Israel troops. In June 1967, following a series of maneuvers by Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser, Israel preemptively attacked Egyptian and Syrian air forces, starting the Six-Day War. After the war, Israel gained territorial control over the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt; the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and the Golan Heights from Syria. Six years later, in what is referred to as the Yom Kippur War or the October War, Egypt and Syria launched a surprise two-front attack on Israel to regain their lost territory; the conflict did not result in significant gains for Egypt, Israel, or Syria, but Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat declared the war a victory for Egypt as it allowed Egypt and Syria to negotiate over previously ceded territory. Finally, in 1979, following a series of cease-fires and peace negotiations, representatives from Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords, a peace treaty that ended the thirty-year conflict between Egypt and

Israel.

Even though the Camp David Accords improved relations between Israel and its neighbors, the question of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance remained unresolved. In 1987, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose up against the Israeli government in what is known as the first intifada. The 1993 Oslo I Accords mediated the conflict, setting up a framework for the Palestinians to govern themselves in the West Bank and Gaza, and enabled mutual recognition between the newly established Palestinian Authority and Israel's government. In 1995, the Oslo II Accords expanded on the first agreement, adding provisions that mandated the complete withdrawal of Israel from 6 cities and 450 towns in the West Bank.

In 2000, sparked in part by Palestinian grievances over Israel's control over the West Bank, a stagnating peace process, and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Aqsa mosque—the third holiest site in Islam—in September 2000, Palestinians launched the second intifada, which would last until 2005. In response, the Israeli government approved construction of a barrier wall around the West Bank in 2002, despite opposition from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

In the summer of 2014, clashes in the Palestinian territories precipitated a military confrontation between the Israeli military and Hamas in which Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel, and Israel retaliated with a major offensive in Gaza. The skirmish ended in late August 2014 with a cease-fire deal brokered by Egypt, but only after 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians were killed. After a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that Palestinians would no longer be bound by the territorial divisions created by the Oslo Accords. In March and May of 2018, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip conducted weekly demonstrations at the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel. The final protest coincided with the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba, the Palestinian exodus that accompanied Israeli independence. While most of the protesters were peaceful, some stormed the perimeter fence and threw rocks and other objects. According to the United Nations, 183 demonstrators were killed and more than 6,000 were wounded by live ammunition.

Also in May of 2018, fighting broke out between Hamas and the Israeli military in what became the worst period of violence since 2014. Before reaching a cease-fire, militants in Gaza fired over one hundred rockets into Israel; Israel responded with strikes on more than fifty targets in Gaza during the twenty-four-hour flare-

up.

There is concern that a third intifada could break out and that renewed tensions will escalate into large-scale violence. The United States has an interest in protecting the security of its long-term ally Israel, and achieving a lasting deal between Israel and the Palestinian territories, which would improve regional security.

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In late April 2021, Palestinians began demonstrating in the streets of Jerusalem to protest the pending evictions and residents of Sheikh Jarrah—along with other activists—began to host nightly sit-ins. In early May, after a court ruled in favor of the evictions, the protests expanded with Israeli police deploying force against demonstrators. On May 7, following weeks of daily demonstrations and rising tensions between protesters, Israeli settlers, and police during the month of Ramadan, violence broke out at the al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem, with Israeli police using stun grenades, rubber bullets, and water cannons in a clash with protestors that left hundreds of Palestinians wounded.

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