



ReSeT Analysis Paper

**UN Sanctions and Selective Security:  
Targeting Terrorists**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Counterterrorism is among the top priorities of the United Nations' policy agenda. Under UNSCR 1267 (1999) and 2253 (2015), the United Nations have imposed targeted sanctions on more than four hundred individuals and over 150 groups and entities, 22 of which are recognized as terrorist organizations. Together, these sanctioned organizations are responsible for roughly 86.000 deaths since 2001 worldwide. International terrorism and Islamic extremism are rightly recognized by the United Nations as a threat to the peace, and imposing sanctions on terrorist organizations effectively signals that the perpetrators of terrorism constitute a threat to the peace much like wars of aggression or civil wars do.

But are the efforts of the UN to counter terrorism proportionate to the threat? And has the UN been coherent in their policies of adding groups to their list of designated terrorist organizations? Or does the track-record of sanctioning terrorist organizations rather reflect a selective logic, influenced by the political interests of those who impose sanctions? This paper will answer both of the questions posed above. Firstly, we will consider the threat posed by international terrorism in relation to other 'threats to the peace' that the UN Security Council has sanctioned since 1990, including wars of aggression, coups d'état, and civil wars. Secondly, we will consider the 27 terrorist groups that were sanctioned by the UN under UNSCR 1267 and 2253, and compare them to a total 67 other terrorist organizations that were arguably equally 'sanctionable', but that were nonetheless not sanctioned. In total, 88 groups are analyzed on the basis of the amount of deaths produced and on their claimed objectives, categorizing the objectives in order to distinguish groups who aim for regional autonomy or to overthrow their government from those who want to implement sharia law or establish a worldwide Islamic caliphate, among others.

Our research leads us to conclude that UN sanctions do not respond to the act of terrorism as such, but rather to the objectives that organizations claim to pursue. As a result, relatively minor Islamic extremist groups are sanctioned, whereas separatists, nationalists, and communists who commit brutal acts of terror are left off the hook. The UN's focus on words rather than deeds is partially explainable; after all, words matter, and some objectives are more dangerous to international security than others, especially when they threaten the modern international sovereign state system. Nevertheless, the track-record of UN sanctions on terrorist organizations seems to be a disproportionate result of political considerations within the institutional boundaries of the UN Charter than a reflection of humanitarian concerns.



## UN SANCTIONS AND SELECTIVE SECURITY: TARGETING TERRORISTS

Since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has imposed sanctions in response to a wide range of ‘threats to the peace’ under Chapter VII of its Charter, ranging from norm-breaking states to wars of aggression and from coups d’état to civil wars. Since the 1990s UN sanctions have also dealt with international state-sponsors of terror, and since 2001 the Institutional framework of the UN allows for targeted sanctions on specific entities, terrorist organizations, and individuals. Targeted sanctions against terrorist organizations associated with Al-Qaida and ISIS under UNSRCs 1267 and 2253 now form a major political priority.

The institutional rules and produces of the United Nations with regard to the imposition of sanctions stipulate that the Security Council may impose sanctions when it determines the existence of ‘any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression’ (UN, Chapter VII). There are no real guidelines nor requirement to punish international actors as each member state of the Security Council can propose to sanction any perceived threat with the only requirement of evidences of its dangerous activities. Article 41 subsequently allows the Council to take measures ‘not involving the use of armed force’, which today include comprehensive economic sanctions, but also arms embargoes, embargoes on specific products such as oil or minerals, or diplomatic sanctions. With regard to terrorist organizations, targeted sanctions (also called smart sanctions) typically include travel bans and asset freezes.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the many acts of aggression and other threats to the peace or breaches of the peace, during the Cold War sanctions were only imposed on two occasions. The institutional deadlock between the US and the Soviet Union only allowed for UN sanctions to be imposed on Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa in response to racist white-minority regimes.

When the Cold War ended and the United States was allowed to confidently promote its liberal institutionalist agenda in the 1990s, it marked the beginning of a ‘sanctions decade’<sup>2</sup> during which the Security Council imposed 13 sanctions regimes in response to wars of aggression (Iraq-Kuwait, FRY-Croatia), civil wars (Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola,

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<sup>1</sup> Wallensteen, Staibano & Eriksson, 2003

<sup>2</sup> Cortright & Lopez, 2000



DRC Congo, Cambodia), a coup d'état (Haiti), and sponsors of state terrorism (Libya, Sudan, Afghanistan).

In the 2000s, the list of UN sanctions regimes did not only grow to include more threats to the peace, but also saw a change toward smart sanctions, allowing the Security Council to target specific rebel groups, government officials, or products to undermine their ability to wage war without hurting innocent civilians, as had been the case in Iraq, Haiti, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, most notably. The lessons learned from the conferences in Interlaken, Bonn-Berlin, and Stockholm around the turn of the millennium helped not only to make sanctions on warlords and dictators in African civil wars more effective, but also played a crucial role in the war on terror.

UN sanctions in response to international terrorism already existed in the early 1990s, when the Security Council imposed diplomatic sanctions and travel bans on government officials in Muammar Gaddafi's Libya in response to the bombings on Pan Am Flight 103 over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1988 and on UTA flight 772 over Niger in 1989, killing 270 and 170 people respectively, many of which were American and French.

Since 2001, religious extremism appears to be the driving force behind many threats to international peace and security. Terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists dominate not only the news, but also the agendas of policy makers and intelligence agencies in the West. Invested to counter this trend, the United Nations too have been implementing several tools to fight the threat posed by terrorists, and to win the 'War on Terror'. One of these tools, imposing targeted sanctions on terrorist groups and individuals, forms a vital part of the UN's counterterrorism strategy. Under UNSCR 1267 (1999) and 2253 (2015), the United Nations have imposed targeted sanctions on more than four hundred individuals and over 150 groups and entities, 25 of which are recognized as terrorist organizations.<sup>3</sup> A terrorist group is defined as groups involved in "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation."<sup>4</sup> Together, these sanctioned organizations are responsible for roughly 86,000 deaths since 2001 worldwide. All the usual suspects are on the list, including Al-Qaida, affiliate

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<sup>3</sup> The other groups and entities that are listed include Banks, foundations, and other entities that support terrorism but that are not involved in any actual attacks.

<sup>4</sup> LaFree, Dugan & Miller, 2015



organizations such as Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and organizations that pledged allegiance to Al-Qaida such as Al-Shabaab, and organizations related to the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

With an increase in terrorist attacks on western territories, the UN have shifted focus and resources towards threats coming from terrorist organizations: in fact, it currently spends a larger part of its budget on counterterrorism (US\$ 22 million) than on conflict mitigation and democratic governance support (US\$ 9 million).<sup>5</sup> However, as obvious as it might seem, punishing terrorist organizations is unfeasible and unnecessary. Therefore, which ones are passive of sanctions regimes under the eyes of the Security Council? Has UN resolutions been coherent in selecting the right sources of threats? It would appear that according to the “responsibility to protect” principle, promoting the protection of all populations from mass atrocity crimes and human rights violations<sup>6</sup>, the Security Council would be inclined to sanction organizations responsible for the highest amount of deaths, as groups such as the Tamil Tigers or FARC. The Security Council does not have any restrictions regarding the application of sanctions and so why groups as such are not sanctioned? Are UN sanctions based on a selective logic, influenced by the political interests of those who impose sanctions in regards to sanctionable groups?

The methodology used to conduct the research of this paper, presented in Figure 1, strongly relies on the information provided by the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) created by the University of Maryland, and which contains information about over 170.000 terrorist attacks since 1970.<sup>7</sup> From this database, we selected a total of 88 terrorist organizations that were responsible for at least 100 deaths since 2001, thereby identifying them as potentially ‘sanctionable’.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Biersteker et al, 2017, page 125

<sup>6</sup> Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2008

<sup>7</sup>National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 2017

<sup>8</sup> Kruiper, 2018



**FIGURE 1: Sanctionable Terrorist Groups since 2001 and Categorized Objectives**

Group Name	UN Sanctions	Nkill since 2001	Objectives
Taliban	Yes	19465	Civil War, Anti-West
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)	Yes	19224	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West, Anti-Minority
Boko Haram	Yes	17093	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West, Anti-Minority
Al-Shabaab	Yes	5804	Overthrow, Sharia, Anti-West, Civil War
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	Yes	5347	Sharia, Defensive Jihad, Civil War
Al-Qaida in Iraq	Yes	4357	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West, Civil War
Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	Yes	3197	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West, Anti-Minority
Al-Nusrah Front	Yes	2690	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-Minority
Lord's Resistance Army	No	2500	Overthrow, Rights
Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist)	No	2172	Overthrow, Communism
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)	No	2138	Independence
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)	No	1785	Overthrow, Communism
Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)	Yes	1720	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West,
Donetsk People's Republic	No	1602	Independence, Civil War
New People's Army (NPA)	No	1062	Overthrow, Communism
National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)	No	992	Overthrow, Civil War
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	Yes	928	Overthrow, Anti-Minority
Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO)	No	861	Rights, Autonomy
Sinai Province of the Islamic State (Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis)	No	843	Overthrow, Caliphate
Tawhid and Jihad	Yes	843	Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West, Win Civil War
Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)	Yes	822	Caliphate, Independence
Al-Qaida in the Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM)	Yes	786	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)	No	767	Independence
Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)	No	731	Overthrow, Sharia
Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist (CPN-M)	No	654	Overthrow, Communism
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)	No	637	Independence, Autonomy
Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement)	No	635	Overthrow
Salafist Group for Preaching and Fighting (GSPC)	Yes	575	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Haqqani Network	No	574	Anti-West, Sharia, Civil War
Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)	Yes	515	Autonomy, Anti-West
Armed Islamic Group (GIA)	Yes	515	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia
Sudan People's Liberation Movement - North (Former SPLA)	No	513	Independence
United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)	No	475	Independence, Communism
Anti-Balaka Militia	No	430	Civil War
Jundallah	No	414	Independence
Riyadus-Salikhin Rec. and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs	Yes	412	Independence, Anti-West
Seleka	No	398	Overthrow, Civil War
Al-Qaida	Yes	374	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)	No	373	Overthrow, Civil war
Jemaah Islamiya (JI)	Yes	341	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)	No	329	Independence
United Self Defense Units of Colombia (AUC)	No	326	Civil war
Lashkar-e-Islam (Pakistan)	No	312	Sharia
Khorasan Chapter of the Islamic State	No	310	Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West, Anti-Minority
Sanaa Province of the Islamic State	No	304	Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)	No	290	Autonomy
Islamic Front (Syria)	No	287	Overthrow, Sharia
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade	No	285	Overthrow, Independence
Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)	No	285	Autonomy
Free Syrian Army	No	279	Overthrow, civil war
Hizbul Mujahideen (HM)	No	262	N/A
Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)	No	261	Rights



Luhansk People's Republic	No	249,87	Autonomy
Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)	No	224	Overthrow, Independence
David Yau Yau Militia	No	218	Independence
National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)	No	218	Overthrow
People's War Group (PWG)	No	217	Overthrow
Barqa Province of the Islamic State	No	215	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM)	No	211	Autonomy, Independence
Caucasus Emirate	No	210	Independence, Sharia, Anti-West
Abu Hafis al-Masri Brigades	No	198	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Baloch Liberation Front	No	197	Independence
Deccan Mujahideen	No	184	Independence, Anti-Minority
Special Purpose Islamic Regiment (SPIR)	Yes	184	Independence, Anti-West
Tripoli Province of the Islamic State	No	184	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami	Yes	183	Overthrow, Anti-minority
Abdullah Azzam Brigades	Yes	181	Overthrow, Anti-minority
M23	No	177	Overthrow, civil war
Baloch Republican Army	No	172	Independence, Autonomy
Al-Naqshabandiya Army	No	165	Anti-West, Civil War
Ansar al-Sunna	No	163	Sharia, Anti-West
National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT)	No	162	Independence
Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (PALIPEHUTU)	No	158	Overthrow, civil war
United Baloch Army	No	149	Independence, Autonomy
Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)	Yes	141	Overthrow, Sharia, Anti-West
Mujahideen Ansar	No	141	Sharia, Anti-Minority
Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)	No	134	Independence
Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)	No	126	Independence
Hezbollah	No	125	Overthrow, Anti-Minority
Military Council of the Tribal Revolutionaries (MCTR)	No	122	Anti-West, civil war
Islambouli Brigades of al-Qaida	No	120	Overthrow, Caliphate, Sharia, Anti-West
Al-Mua'qi'oon Biddam Brigade (Those who Sign with Blood)	Yes	117	Sharia, Anti-West
Ansar al-Sharia (Libya)	Yes	117	Overthrow, Sharia
Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM)	Yes	113	Autonomy
Free Aceh Movement (GAM)	No	113	Independence
Southern Mobility Movement (Yemen)	No	112	Independence
Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD)	No	103	Overthrow
Haftar Militia	No	101	Civil war, Rights

[1] Overthrow national government (Overthrow) – [2] Establish Islamic Caliphate / Emirate (Caliphate) – [3] Establish Sharia Law within state (Sharia) – [4] Eliminate Western Influence (Anti-West) – [5] Kill / Expel Minorities (Anti-Minority) – [6] Change law within State (Rights) – [7] More autonomy for region (Autonomy) – [8] Separate from state (Independence) – [9] Establish communist government (Communism) – [10] Fight armed group within state (Civil war)

It is important to state that this paper bases its findings only on the information available at the time of its writing and it therefore acknowledges the eventuality of higher total amounts of deaths in the future as most of the mentioned organizations are still active. Data about the background and objectives of each organization has been taken from reliable and renowned sources such as the institute of research such as the “Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC)”, University Departments for Research such as “Mapping Militants





Organizations”, Think Tanks and Newspaper reports. Finally, the data on UN sanctions comes from the United Nations’ list established and maintained pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1267/1989/2253.<sup>9</sup>

The objectives of the 88 most deadly groups since 2001 can be classified into ten objectives, which can subsequently be assigned to three groups.

A. Create new State

- Change law within State (Rights)
- More autonomy for region (Autonomy)
- Separate from state (Independence)

B. Change within Existing State

- Overthrow national government (Overthrow)
- Establish communist government (Communism)
- Fight armed group within state (Civil war)

C. Destroy Modern State (System)

- Eliminate Western Influence (Anti-West)
- Kill / Expel Minorities (Anti-Minority)
- Establish Sharia Law within state (Sharia)
- Establish Islamic Caliphate / Emirate (Caliphate)

Groups that aim at objectives that fall roughly within categories A and B almost never get sanctioned; groups within category C do, especially if their ultimate goal is to pursue a type of political entity in which religion is prior to the State.

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout the article we will refer to the list as UNSCR 1267/2253 as these Resolutions relate to Al-Qaida and ISIL. UNSCR 1989 served to split the Al-Qaida list from that of the Taliban list.



What exactly do we mean when referring to objectives such as the imposition of Sharia-Law, Increased Rights or Autonomy? Are there any difference or similarities? Let's analyze them.

Firstly, Sharia-Law is generally understood as a system of laws based on the precepts of Islam, particularly the Quran and the Hadith<sup>10</sup>. Not rarely, the attempt to impose such a system in a country comes along with the creation of a Caliphate, a political regime which bases its leadership in the figure of the Calif, the religious successor of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that they are not mutually interdependent since Islamic Law can be exercised in different political system than Caliphates: Muslim-minority states in Europe and in Middle-East, such as Israel, recognize the use of Sharia Court jurisdiction.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, we analyze objectives such as Autonomy, Independence and Increased Rights: most often than not, the first two go hand in hand as represented by many separatist groups in Baluchistan but not always: organizations such as "Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta" and "Justice and Equality Movement" perhaps best exemplify the exceptions as none demand total independence, as the former fight for increased benefits from the natural resources of the Delta river while the latter for better share of power and improved basic services among the Sudanese population.

Thirdly, we analyze Anti-minority and Civil, variables similarly interlaced, often by ethnic conflicts such as the Rwandan War, which however do not represent the totality as several groups engage in conflicts with specific branches of a state, mainly the army in regions such as Jammu or Kashmir. The rest of the organizations categories require little explanations, with groups fighting foreign forces and the relative imposition of their western principles (Anti-West)<sup>12</sup>, as seen with the Taliban, and with groups attempting to change the current political system to a Communist one (Communism).

One last remark need to be made: the categorization of terrorist organizations more often than not becomes problematic, not only due to the challenge of finding official and update information concerning the nature of the groups but most importantly due to the discording

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<sup>10</sup> "Shariah". *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam*". Oxford University Press. 2003

<sup>11</sup> Levush, 2003

<sup>12</sup> Such sentiments often emerge after the military invasion of a country from Western armies and the top-down imposition of western-oriented political systems, e.g democracy, proven to be unable to adapt to different traditional systems and so creating hostility among the local population.



definitions academics have provided when labelling terrorist organizations worldwide. Perhaps, among the best examples, is the definition of Hamas. In his book, Goldberg states that “One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter”<sup>13</sup> and perhaps Hamas represents at best the dilemma: on one hand, the group is labelled by countries such as the United States and Europe as a terrorist organization, responsible for thousands of killings, while on the other is described as a legitimate, democratically elected government. Most importantly, the controversy rises when defying the group as being Salafist or not. Some Institutions, such as the START database, labelled it as such due to its strong stands on Israel and its military attacks to the country, while others avoided some categorization as the movement does not promote the establishment of a Caliphate nor adheres to extreme precepts that many other Salafist group fully embrace. In addition to this, many groups do not explicitly identify themselves as having Salafist origins or aims. Nonetheless, despite all the limitations that the research here above recognized, the research paper provides not only interesting but most importantly valid insight for future and deeper research papers.

### **It's about objectives, not about kills**

Our analysis shows that United Nations sanctions on terrorist organizations tend not to be imposed out of humanitarian concerns, but rather out of ideological concerns under the forms of violent Islamic extremism. One of the first variables that we analyze to confirm such hypothesis is the number of casualties.<sup>14</sup> On average, sanctioned groups tend to inflict higher amounts of casualties than non-sanctioned, about 3300 deaths against 850: in fact, the three deadliest organizations, namely the Taliban, Boko Haram and ISIL killed more than 7000 people each. However, in the non-sanctioned list, many are the groups that go well beyond the average, specifically in the cases of Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers (8800 deaths), the Colombian FARC (>3800 deaths) and the Kurdish PKK (>3800 deaths). In addition, several exceptions appear, among which the most evident appear to be the presence of a sanctioned group accountable for 181 deaths, namely the Abdullah Azzam Brigades.

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<sup>13</sup> Goldberg, 2010

<sup>14</sup> Kruiper, 2018



Similarly, another variable we analyze is the country of origin and destination of the attack: little correlation can be found between the country of origin and the probability of sanctions, with a higher average of 10 groups for African and Middle Eastern countries in contrast to just 2-3 for the rest of the world, in specific Asian Countries such as China, India and Russia. The table reveals that countries that engaged in conflict against western powers, mostly characterized by Islam as the dominant religion with Iraq and Afghanistan being the most famous examples, have a higher rate of harboring some of the most dangerous organizations as Tawhid and Jihad and Al-Qaeda.

As the country of origin did not provide relevant findings for our hypothesis, perhaps some answers can be found in the countries victims of terrorism: no correlations were found due to the fact that most of these groups rely on active cells internationally which conduct attacks with any apparent logic. Another variable kept into consideration is the type of casualties, particularly whether the victims were Americans or not: as demonstrated by the irrelevant fraction out of casualties for the majority of the groups, with an average of 2,16 victims, exceptions are represented by Al-Qaeda, the Armed Islamic Group and the Taliban with respectively 2931, 120 and 214 accountable deaths<sup>15</sup>, which could be argued to be higher just because of the relative groups sizes and therefore of their deadly capacities.

The most striking variable of all is the level of similarities among sanctioned groups in terms of traits and objectives. As the principal objectives among non-sanctioned groups were separatists, most of the sanctioned organizations instead are or have been previously associated with the biggest and most lethal Islamic terrorist groups in the world, namely Al-Qaeda & ISIS: not only as part of their wide network of active branches but also because of their adherence to their stated objectives. The Security Council, in fact, strongly condemned the illegal activities of the Taliban in the Afghan territories, from the production of opium for the drug trade to the perpetual violations of international humanitarian law and of human rights, and so it does with the other organizations following the same ideological precepts and behavior.<sup>16</sup> These groups promote what can be considered to be goals adhering to a Salafist ideology: the creation of national Caliphates around the globe, characterized by a strict implementation of Sharia-law, to preserve and expand Pan-Islamic unity from the influence of the secularist, western

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<sup>15</sup> The START Database counts the numbers of American deaths in terrorist attacks.

<sup>16</sup> S/RES/1333 (2000)



countries. Nonetheless, Salafism it is much more than that. Emerged from the 13<sup>th</sup> century thanks to Ibn Taymiyyah, the Sunni school of thought promotes a return to a theocracy shaped by the instauration of a Caliphate, seen as the only legitimate form of governance over the Muslim world in order to preserve its purity against the “corrupted” West. As for any religion, different are the strains that were created, such as Wahhabism or Deobandi, but perhaps among the most important can be found Qutbism, the founding ideology of the greatest jihadist groups in the world, Al-Qaeda and ISIS. The latter preaches the inevitability of conflict against western forces, including Israel, and the perpetual duty of Muslims to convert and adhere to the Takfir, the practice of killing non-believers and apostates, including other Muslims.

Having put into context Salafism, which could be the reason that the UN Security Council’s sanctions policies reflect a selective bias towards Salafism? In other words, why does the UN perceive Salafism as a bigger ‘threat to the peace’ than terrorist groups inspired by other ideologies or objectives?

A first explanation could be that Salafism presents itself to the Islamic world as a way to regain ancient splendor against the negative influence of West, making it almost universal across the regions of the world, and consequently allowing it to inflict more deaths. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Arab world went through severe societal changes under the influence of the west: as best put by Mneimneh, “ the imperial order was replaced by a seemingly precarious nation-state system, jurisprudence retreated to accommodate the emergence of civil and constitutional orders, theological discussions receded while secular ideological pursuits defined much of the intellectual debates of the century and mysticism lost its dominance and its relevance in an increasingly globally informed popular culture”<sup>17</sup>. That is an important difference from Separatist movements, which instead promote a locally-focused agenda. Separatists’ objectives relate to specific cultural and historical dynamics; in many cases they are not able appeal to a wider audience. Additionally international community regards their struggles as internal affairs within sovereign states. As long as the survival of the State at hand is not at stake, the UNSC is likely to leave the matter unsanctioned. At least this is what the data suggests.

A second possible explanation for the bias towards sanctioning Salafism is that Salafism stops the process of world democratization and economic globalization due to the special intertwine

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<sup>17</sup> Mneimneh, 2009, page 8.



of politics and religion for the establishment of an Islamic theocracy rejecting the notion of the Caliphate and of the union between mosque and state. This is particularly relevant when considering the role of Sharia law: the ultimate goal stands resides in an “attempt to push the status of women, the criminal code, religious freedom, the judicial system, educational systems, and, so far to a lesser degree, the economy – to push them into what is claimed to be a seventh-century model” (pg. – pew center). An element to keep in consideration is linked to the unification of the religious and secular realms together: as supported by ---, “all criticisms of the state become religious criticisms, and therefore, someone who criticizes a state policy or state laws can be hit with a charge that they are in fact opposing Islam”, risking to become an apostate and therefore the death penalty, a reality common to many countries such as Nigeria, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. (pg. -- pew center). In addition, another problem is posed by the declining status of minorities in the territories under the organizations control: in fact, many, along with the fight against governments, engage in the killing of other ethnicities than theirs on a rhetoric of cultural preservation. In this context, many school of thoughts share similar perspectives, and perhaps this quotation from Qutb might help us better understand what just stated in the lines above.

*“Look at this capitalism with its monopolies, its usury and whatever else is unjust in it; at this individual freedom, devoid of human sympathy and responsibility for relatives except under the force of law; at this materialistic attitude which deadens the spirit; at this behavior, like animals, which you call `free mixing of the sexes`; at this vulgarity which you call `emancipation of women;` at these unfair and cumbersome laws of marriage and divorce, which are contrary to the demands of practical life; and at Islam, with its logic, beauty, humanity and happiness ... these facts, when seen in the light of Islam made the American people blush. Yet there are people -- exponent of Islam -- who are defeated before this filth ... they search for resemblances to Islam among this rubbish heap of the West [...].”<sup>18</sup>*

In this scenario, it appears clear the threat poses by Islamic extremist organizations. However, one could argue that many are the non-Islamic organizations posing similar, if not bigger,

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<sup>18</sup> Qutb, 1964, page 139.



threats do international peace. Why then, are separatist groups are not part of UN sanctioned groups? What does differentiate them from Salafist groups in terms of menace?

Separatist organizations fight against a national government to demand the independence of an already existing state's region or to have them recognized the creation of a legitimate new state, as in the case of the Kurdish PKK: since 1984 they fought against the Turkish Army in order to “destabilize Turkish authority through a long, low-intensity confrontation“<sup>19</sup> to establish socio-political rights for the Kurdish minority. The majority of these movements find the roots of their struggle in colonialism, demographic manipulation or political annexation, economic exploitation along with histories of discrimination, mainly ethnical or religious.

Separatism, nonetheless, has been considered in the majority of cases, a big threat to the international peace along with terrorism and civil wars, due to its capacity to affect the sovereignty of the nation, weakening its ability to provide service and protect its citizens within its borders.<sup>20</sup> Many are the examples that could be analyzed however, for purpose of the research, three appear to be the most relevant: the FARC, the Tamil Tigers and the LRA.

The first one, a Colombian guerrilla group called “Forcas Armadas Revolucion Colombiana”, has been active since the 1960 through all the country, inflicting severe damages to the population, not only economically but also and foremost in casualties and kidnapping accidents. Although peace talks almost came to a final resolution last year, with the promotion of a peace agreement later on dismantled, the group has been considered the biggest threat to security in the region<sup>21</sup>.

A similar scenario is found when looking the Sri Lankan group fighting for a separate Hindu State against the Buddhist majority in the country: again, the group have represented the biggest internal threat to peace in the region due to its devastating and indiscriminate attacks, most importantly against high-profile attacks such as former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa. The last example is represented by LRA (National Liberation Army). Active in many regions, in particular Uganda, South Sudan and Congo, the organization conducted human rights atrocities, such as the recruitment of child

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<sup>19</sup> Radu, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Roehner, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Cassman, 2015





soldier, mass rapes and killing of thousands of civilians, all in the name of "Christianity". Why wasn't this organization sanctioned for its crimes? Was it because of the alleged Christian trait?

When further analyses are conducted on groups engaged in military conflicts, it becomes more and more difficult to draw precise lines of demarcation, for instance which is their nature, who are their allies and enemies and what they fight for. New perspectives are being provided to better understand the context in which these groups evolve and operate: a good example of this is represented by the Chechens, whose original separatist cause merged with the Salafist one. Having gone through a long conflict against the cultural and geographical annexation of the region, many have been the wars for independence that Chechnia has been involved, more recently the bloody Second Chechen war during the 1990s. The region hosts the third-largest ethnic group in Russia, represented by Sunni Muslims, for the most peaceful practitioners of Sufism (report Chechnia). However, the conflict exacerbated when the religious element became a strong pillar for the armed struggle: stating their adherences to more and more ideological forms of Islam, the rebels adhered to the primary elements of Salafism, consequently gaining funding from Middle Eastern countries in the form of economic funds and military, as the resistance of Chechnya to a superpower such as Russia became just one of the many wars in which Islam became the covert motivation for a politically-based war with the West.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The analysis conducted on organizations labelled as terrorist by the United Nations shows three main relevant findings.

Firstly, it appears clear that when deciding whether or not to sanction an organization the number of deaths does not matter. This has been demonstrated by the fact that many international organizations have caused deaths much higher than the average sanctioned organizations, with Farc and Tamil Tigers being the most emblematic.

Secondly, a consequent finding is that Separatist groups do not get sanctions. Such a trend could be explained by several variables. Firstly, on average such groups are able to inflict less damages due to their smaller size. Secondly, they represent less of a threat to the international





community because are of their inability to appeal to a global audience as their agendas and conflicts are locally oriented.

Finally, it can be concluded that the main reason why a terrorist organization gets sanctioned or not lies in the nature of their stated objectives, specifically Salafism. Many the reasons by primarily the fact that such ideology stops the process of world democratization and economic globalization due to its denouncement of a corrupted western world and of all its related cultural achievements. In addition, it poses an important menace to the equilibrium of the Arab World as it promotes conflict between Sunnis and Shia factions, making the encounter and the cohabitation between cultures even more challenging.