

Abstract

The Middle East, as one of the most dynamic and troubling world regions, has a wide range of problems. However, in my view, the essential, if not the most essential, security issue here, is terrorism. It seems that the relative decline of terrorist groups, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, has made us forget that there are indeed underlying problems that cause the emergence of these deadly organizations. This paper aims to identify these causes by analyzing Saudi and Iranian foreign policy towards U.S.-designated terrorist organizations: Hezbollah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and Islamic State. In the process, the thesis will establish the general motives of these two states to support and fight terrorism, as well as their means of doing it. Furthermore, it will dive into the specifics of the policies that these two formulate towards every one of the previously stated groups. That will be done in order to prove arguments contending how Riyadh, in many ways, hinders U.S. counterterrorism efforts, while Iranians, contrary to popular belief, contribute to it. Acknowledging that there are many things on which these two states need to improve, the thesis will offer recommendations pointing to the need for Washington to take a more balanced approach to these two countries if it wishes to create a region where its involvement can be minimized.