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**The Sultanate of Oman: Resistant to Violent
Extremism?**

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the Sultanate resistance to violent extremism as a Middle Eastern nation that has consistently scored a “0” on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), an ongoing indexing of global terrorism from 2003 onwards. The Sultanate was markedly stable for those years unaccounted by the GTI. This case study examines institutional and legal frameworks established by the Sultanate and their value on countering radicalization and extremism processes that might lead to an act of terrorism. This research is supported by literature on radicalization and countering violent extremism (CVE) models, with great focus on a five-pronged, comprehensive working paper that approaches major problems across the Middle East. Radicalization and extremism notably fester in such problematic approaches, and the objective is to parallel these problems with the strategies, approaches, and norms of the Sultanate of Oman to see if this paper can come to a conclusion about the ability of nations and their populations to resist radical pathways and extremist ideologies. With religion at the crux of manipulation and blame-games, the religious doctrine of Oman also becomes a vital component of this study. Ibadism, a sect of Islam, is widely practiced in Oman and its’ tenants are deeply rooted in social and legal qualities.

Keywords

Oman, Terrorism, Radicalization, Extremism, Peace, Stability

Abstrakt

V této práci analyzujeme odolnost Sultanátu Omán vůči násilnému extremismu jakožto blízkovýchodní země, již Index globálního terorismu (GTI) pravidelně přiděluje hodnocení „0“. Index globálního terorismu provádí hodnocení globálního terorismu od roku 2003 dále; Sultanát Omán byl v těchto letech stabilní a v indexu GTI se nevyskytoval. Tato případová studie zkoumá institucionální a právní rámec Sultanátu a jejich význam pro potlačování radikalizace a extremismu, které mohou vést k teroristickým činům. Tento výzkum se opírá o literaturu představující modely radikalizace a boje proti násilnému extremismu, se zaměřením na komplexní práci pojednávající o zásadních problémech Blízkého východu. Vzhledem k tomu, že radikalizace a extremismus často vznikají v bouřlivém prostředí, je cílem srovnat tyto problémy se strategiemi, přístupy a normami Sultanátu Omán. Případová studie předkládá závěry ohledně schopnosti Ománu a jeho odolnosti vůči radikálním řešením a extremistickým ideologiím. Jelikož jádrem manipulace a vzájemného obviňování bývá často náboženství, je důležitou součástí této studie i náboženská doktrína Ománu. Obyvatelé Ománu jsou převážně členy Ibádíji, islámské sekty, a mají hluboce zakořeněné společenské a právní normy.

Klíčová slova

Omán, terorismus, radikalizace, extremismus, mír, stabilita

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, Czech Republic

May 11, 2018

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INTRODUCTION

“We continue to stand against injustice and darkness and remain on the side of justice, light and harmony. Mankind will only enjoy happiness and a sense of security if there is justice and respect for all those qualities that guarantee human beings their legitimate rights. First and foremost among these being their right to dignity, liberty and independence”.

– His Majesty, Sultan Qaboos bin Said¹

Notable for its tolerance and upholding a strong religious and national identity, the Sultanate of Oman is a rather unfamiliar country, nestled in the southeast portion of the Arabian Peninsula. From a geopolitical standpoint, one might assume that Oman is inundated with similar bouts of political and religious turbulence that plagues its immediate neighbors - Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Iran - and before the 1970s, this was likely anticipated. Presently Oman is noteworthy for its clean record on violent extremism and terrorism.

Sa'id bin Taymur ruled the country from 1932, after succeeding his father, only to continue a legacy of seventy-plus years of continuous decline. As a repressive ruler, Sa'id bin Taymur showed no willpower to make reforms.² Author Hussein Ghubash quotes an English observer: “The sultan had wanted to prevent the twentieth century from contaminating the fifteenth century in which he had imprisoned his people”,³ and prior to 1970, this reality was entirely true. Education was banned, gender inequality was deep-rooted, and one could not even wear sunglasses, consume tobacco products, or own books.⁴ Religion served as the only beacon for national unity and identity, which later will become an important factor in consolidating support for the new leadership.

1. “Excerpts from the Speeches of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said.” The Consulate General of the Sultanate of Oman. Accessed September 19, 2017. <http://oman.org.au/speeches/>.

2. Hussein Ghubash. *Oman: The Islamic Democratic Tradition*. Edited by Anoushiravan Ehteshami. 1st ed. 196, Durham Modern Middle East and Islamic World Series. Routledge, 2006.

3. Ghubash, *Oman: The Islamic Democratic Tradition*, 196.

4. Ghubash. *Oman: The Islamic Democratic Tradition*, 196.

Recognizing the poor state of the nation, Qaboos bin Sa'id al-Sa'id, the son of Sa'id bin Taymur, deposed his father from power in a bloodless coup d'etat on July 23, 1970 and forced him into exile. Oman has since forged an independent foreign and domestic path and has avoided becoming intertwined in the complicated politics of the region. Sultan Qaboos has embraced opportunities for establishing solid relationships with an wide array of countries not minding their religious affiliations or tensions that might be had for others in the mix.⁵ The nation lifted itself from the fifteenth-century to embrace modernization, construct contemporary infrastructure, raise the standard of living, and accomplish fair and quality education for both genders. Accordingly, the Sultanate has taken well-rounded strides to implement flexible, balanced foreign policy and diplomatic relations.⁶ Inevitably obstacles have occurred, but the Sultanate continues to move forward without deserting its national community or losing its collective identity. As author J.E. Peterson describes, Oman's "balance is squarely on the positive side of the ledger".⁷

Research Question

The research question posed by this case study asks: How does the implementation of institutional and legal frameworks established by the Sultanate of Oman contribute to countering radicalization and deterring terrorism? This query has been inspired by prior and a prolonged period of research on the Sultanate and firsthand experiences. The data catalyzing and legitimizing the feasibility of this case study has been derived from the University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and Global Terrorism Index (GTI). Data from

5. Judith Miller. "Creating Modern Oman: An Interview with Sultan Qabus." *Foreign Affairs*, May 1, 1997. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/oman/1997-05-01/creating-modern-oman-interview-sultan-qabus>.

6. Nicholas Kristof. "What Oman Can Teach Us." *The New York Times*. October 13, 2010, sec. Opinion. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/14/opinion/14kristof.html>.

7. J.E. Peterson. "Oman: Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development." *Middle East Policy* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 125.

the Global Terrorism Database, of the University of Maryland's Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), demonstrates that Oman has not experienced a single terrorist-motivated attack based on their WebGL Globe visual database dating back to 1970⁸ (this is particularly significant because 1970 is the year which monarch Sultan Qaboos bin Said overthrew his father in a coup d'état and essentially started redesigned the government from scratch).⁹ Arab countries being the most susceptible to the incidence of violent terror attacks,¹⁰ the Global Terrorism Index (GTI)¹¹ also demonstrates that Oman has not been affected by terrorism since it started collecting data in 2003.

*Figure 1: START 45 Years of Terrorism (1970-2015)*¹²

8. "45 Years of Terrorism." Global Terrorism Database (GTD). Accessed September 19, 2017. http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/images/START_GlobalTerrorismDatabase_TerroristAttacksConcentrationIntensityMap_45Years.png.

9. Miller, "Creating Modern Oman."

10. Patryk Pawlak and Julian Göppfath. "Countering Extremism in Arab Countries." European Parliament: European Parliament Research Service, May 2016. [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/582027/EPRS_ATA\(2016\)582027_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/582027/EPRS_ATA(2016)582027_EN.pdf). 1-2

11. "Global Terrorism Index 2016: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism." Global Terrorism Index. Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016. <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf>. The Executive Summary for the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) explains that "the GTI based on data from the Global Terrorism Database which is collected and collated by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a Department of Homeland Security Centre of Excellence led by the University of Maryland. The Global Terrorism Database is considered to be the most comprehensive dataset on terrorist activity globally and has now codified over 150,000 terrorist incidents."

12. "45 Years of Terrorism".

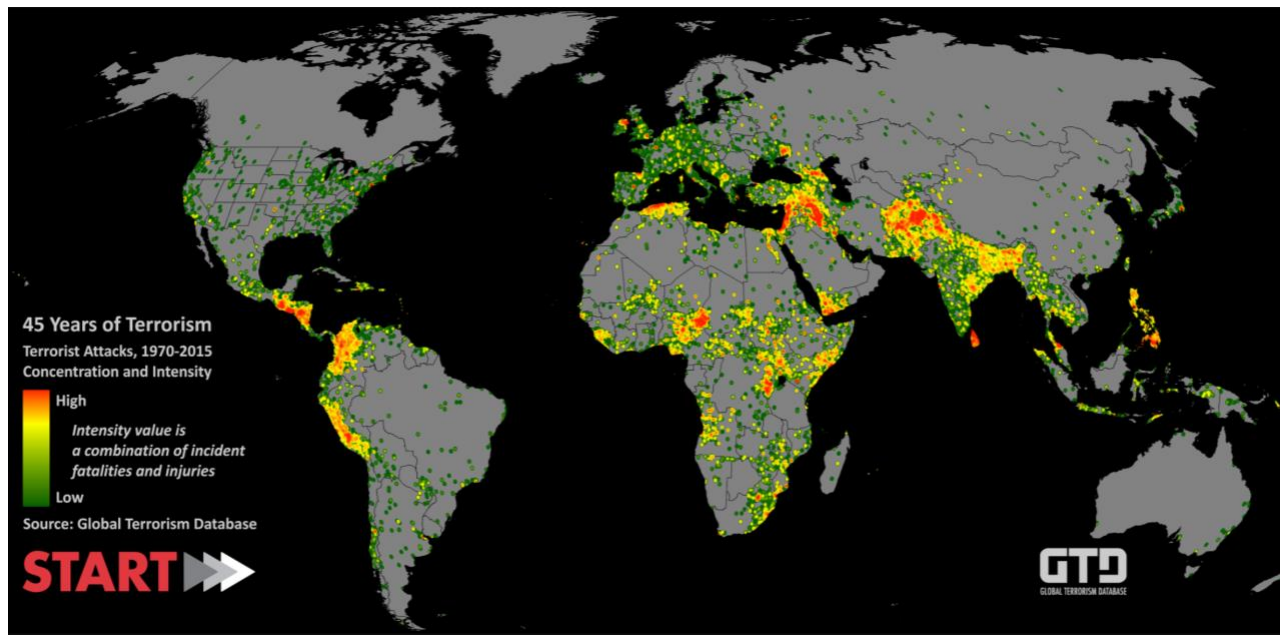
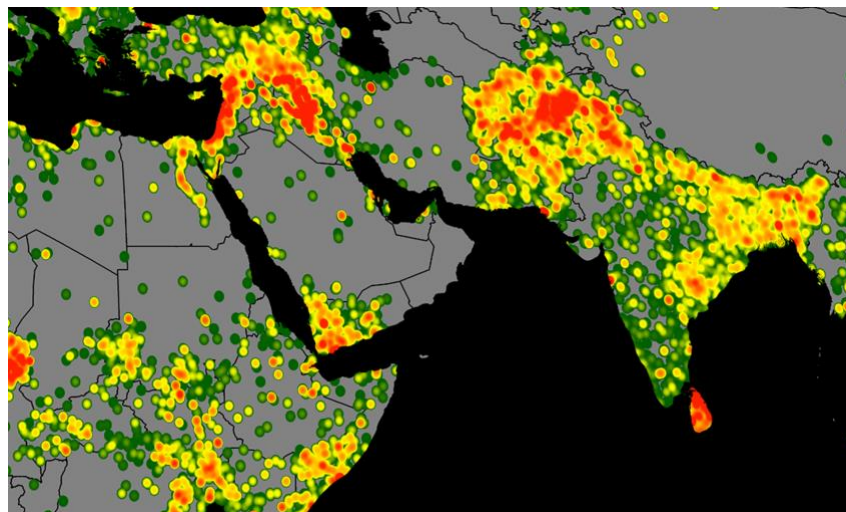


Figure 2: START 45 Years of Terrorism (1970-2015) Oman¹³



Significance of this Study

This study discloses a national foundation favorable to peace and modern advancement upheld by one of the world’s longest-reigning monarchs¹⁴ and the citizens under his rule. This study does not deny, nor does it attempt to ignore, the challenges and issues present within Oman but instead highlights a particularly interesting case study of what was one of the world’s

13. “45 Years of Terrorism”.

14. Mark Abadi, and Christopher Woody. “The Thai King Has Died after 70 Years on the Throne — Here Are the World’s Longest-Ruling Monarchs.” Business Insider, October 13, 2016. <http://www.businessinsider.com/longest-ruling-kings-queens-world-2016-10>.

most hidebound societies, rampant with illiteracy, severe isolation, and a fiercely tribal population, all of which mirrored its neighbor, Yemen, now a violent war zone.¹⁵ The information and research presented for this thesis focuses on how Oman's leader, Sultan Qaboos, and the Omani citizens, have seemingly abandoned a track conducive towards fundamentalism and continue to establish and uphold decrees, doctrines, and social and religious norms in a manner which has preserved an environment unaffected by extremism or the consequence of domestic terrorism.

*Figure 3: Detailed Map of Oman*¹⁶



Research Methodologies

This study is a single-case, interpretive case study that has been driven by the recognition of a condition of stability and security in a Middle Eastern country surrounded by war, extremist ideologies, and upending governments. As an explanatory study, the research

15. Kristof, "What Oman Can Teach Us".

16. Kenneth Katzman. "Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service Report, April 12, 2017. 3. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21534.pdf>.

presents information that may be applicable to other situations [in the Middle East] such as forging more flexible foreign relations and practicing non-interventionism, but this study reaches farther than explaining Oman's resistance to terrorism and transferable tools and strategies. Omanis overall enjoy the status quo of stability and peace, and as a quasi-judicial/naturalistic approach this study undertakes qualitative, non-experimental methods to additionally display how the Omani government and those living in Oman feel about extremist ideologies, how Omanis and the government feel about themselves under their current circumstances, and whether there is sympathy for extremist ideologies or any catalysts for potential action in the future.¹⁷

This case study takes a step farther by acknowledging that analysts and regional and global leaders are in dire need of sustainable solutions for poor governance systems and economic environments, matters of religion and identity, refugees, deficient security environments, and so on. With so many gaps in research and literature the correlation between government-civilian interactions and the adoption and facilitation of violent extremism and terrorism is generally undefined,¹⁸ but Oman is a case in which violent extremism and terrorism have not been a problem thus far. Therefore analyzing the meaningfulness of processes and relations, such as Omani civilian-government relations, the implementation of laws, and the preservation of norms, religion, and traditions, etc., on the security environment against terrorism in Oman could provide insight for analysts and leaders in supporting stable

17. Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods*, 5-8.

18. Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 2nd ed., vol. 5, Applied Social Research Methods Series, 13, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994). In reference to Yin's explanation of a case study empirical enquiry which "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when; the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". This case study seeks to instate a broad understanding of the feelings, actions, and interactions of civilians governments and create a parallel to conditions conducive to extremist ideologies and acts of terror which until present day is not clearly correlated or defined in their relationships.

environments where they are required most in the region.¹⁹ Derived from the literature review section is a broad-minded strategy produced by the Atlantic Council. The council convened a taskforce to produce comprehensive analyses and assessments for the five upmost issues that the Middle East is grappling with. These issues can be applicable to any society and can produce serious consequences; the consequences that are highlighted in the Middle East is the generation of extremist ideologies and the ultimate act of terrorism. This case study has selected these works as the focus of the empirical analysis to first, present the problems that the Atlantic Council views as the most dire and the assessments they propose for the international community to undertake and support. Second, these matters are mirrored with Oman's own political, religious, economic, and security environments to display and analyze how these problem-areas have been reinforced to ensure domestic stability and strong foreign relations.

The data presented in this study has been acquired from various literature, government publications, reports, journal articles, and databases. The negatives of this research design largely stems from the limitations and dead-ends of this subject matter, and the complexity of analyzing various environments of an entire nation. Questionnaires and surveys could have been supplementary but this would have forced a narrower scope of research, as reaching the nomadic populations, or those tucked away in small villages, would have required a lengthy amount of time spent in the country, and more time in general.²⁰ This study does also risks presenting an entirely homogenous society by presenting an overall content attitude with the status quo and stressing the importance of religion on the daily lives of Omanis and the effect this has on social and political norms. Presenting the overall sentiments and norms does not

19. Bill Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods*, 1st ed., Continuum Research Methods (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2000), 5-8, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuni/detail.action?docID=564247.P>.

20. Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods*, 8.

attempt to ignore of Oman's diversity, colorfulness, and the deeply-rooted heritages, tribal units, and nomadic communities that proudly still exist.

Structure

Chapter one contains a literature review to set a foundation for terms that may be familiar, but have become so muddled across even professional literature, governmental and institutional publications, that it is necessary to provide recognized definitions from various entities. In addition, the literature review presents Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Radicalization into Violent Extremism (RVE) models to elucidate ongoing initiatives and proposals for countering radicalization and extremism processes alternative perspectives. CVE models can identify push and pull factors. Push factors are the structural conditions such as culture, ideology, religion, and ethnicity that drive individuals to adopt violent extremist ideas.²¹ An individual might sincerely or perceptually bond with a group that justifies the use of, or their acceptance of the use of violence.²² Enticing incentives such as friendship, networking, and economic or material gain are examples of pull factors, as well as bonding with groups through airing grievances or feelings of injustices.²³

21. Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Rafia Bhulai, "Advancing CVE Research: The Roles of Global and Regional Coordinating Bodies" (Counter-Terrorism Monitoring, Reporting and Support Mechanism (CT-MORSE), June 2016), 9, <http://ct-morse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Report-CVE-Mapping-Research.pdf>.

22. Bhulai and Fink, "Advancing CVE Research", 9.

23. Bhulai and Fink, "Advancing CVE Research", 9.

Figure 6: Push and Pull Factors, European Parliamentary Research Service²⁴

Push factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of economic opportunity: poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption • Marginalisation and discrimination: restricted political, social and economic mobility • Poor governance, violation of human rights, and rule of law issues: repressive policies, surveillance • Prolonged and unresolved conflicts: security vacuum, instability, deep-rooted grievances • Radicalisation in prisons: harsh treatment, prison conditions, gang activity, lack of security, drug use
Pull factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual background and motivation: negative experiences with state institutions • Collective grievances and victimisation: oppression, subjugation, foreign intervention • Distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies, and ethnic and cultural differences • Leadership and social networks: charismatic leaders, informal family and social networks

Introducing RVE and CVE models prior to delving into Omani affairs is to explore current relations amongst governments, institutions, and social communities in their endeavor to implement more effectual policy. The Hedayah Center in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has further explained why CVEs are adopted:

Increasingly, many Governments that face a threat from radicalization and violent extremism are looking to build more effective and strategic multi-agency responses.... which seeks to establish clear roles and responsibilities for different parts of Government to initiate evidence-based policy and practice responses to the drivers of violent extremism.²⁵

Chapter two examines the backbone of Oman: the ministerial frameworks, laws and royal decrees, Islamic and non-Islamic religious organizations, and components of the education sector, among other factors. This section serves to uncover the vitality of these components in supporting a stable environment, producing educated civilians, and an ostensibly moral population. Oman might be perceived by some as a control group of sorts: the government was essentially created from scratch – a rapid feat - from 1970 and its clean slate

24. Patryk Pawlak and Julian Göppfarth, “United Nations Response to Violent Extremism,” At a Glance (European Parliament Research Service, May 2016), [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/582025/EPRS_ATA\(2016\)582025_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2016/582025/EPRS_ATA(2016)582025_EN.pdf).

25. “International Conference on Preventing and Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism as Related to the Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) Threat” (International Conference on Preventing and Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Hedayah and the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2016), <http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-392016225037.pdf>.

[from an act of terrorism] and current status quo of peace and stability is a phenomenon. Oman's religious practices and customs differ from other Muslim-Majority nations,²⁶ particularly from its neighbor, Saudi Arabia. Omani citizens and the government do not adhere to or accept pillars of Wahhabism or Salafism, which are two sects of Islam notable for their conduciveness to extreme ideologies. The general adherence to the tenants of Ibadism, the majority sect of Islam in Oman, whether through religious worship or the adaptation of its characteristic values, has vastly, but not forcibly, shaped the attitudes, doctrines, norms, and beliefs across the nation. Fair education and employment for women and men is partly an outcome of this,²⁷ as is the bid to respect one another's faith and privacy on such matters.

As violent extremism and acts of terrorism can be, and are often enough, consequences of instability, poor opportunities, and insecurity, the third chapter highlights five working papers and a final report produced by the Atlantic Council Middle East Strategy Task Force that delves into the perceived strategies and challenges across the Middle East and provides assessments for moving forward. The choice to examine literature that does not outright tackle extremism and the threat of terrorism is intentional: unstable and potentially violent, turbulent environment fester grievances, and grievances are a major facilitator of the radicalization process leading up to the adoption of an extremist ideology. If grievances facilitate violent processes, what is the Omani government and its people doing to maintain its problem-solving attitude? To magnify Oman under the contexts of each of the five papers is to see that it is a country not without its own set of challenges, criticisms, and injustices. The objective is to see if a conclusion can be made drawn about the nation's commitment to stability, sustained peace,

26. Giorgio Cafiero, "What the Arab World Can Learn from Oman," Huffington Post, accessed January 28, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/giorgio-cafiero/what-the-arab-world-can-learn-from-oman_b_8074584.html.

27. Kristof, "What Oman Can Teach Us".

and lawfulness by analyzing policies, ongoing efforts and strategies, and the frameworks of the government, religious, and educational sectors.

Limitations of Extremist Studies in Oman

The foremost limitation of this study was consistently the relative infancy of the counter-radicalization and counter-terrorism fields. There is a general lack clear and cohesive definitions, and those that were gathered are rather broad. This may be beneficial to compare, contrast, and ultimately display this lack of cohesion, but the literature review section was unable to present a direct representative of Oman's particular agenda. The same problems were met time and time again: lacking materials, rarity or general absence of materials, and misunderstandings on Oman, the Middle East, and what a strong counter-terrorism agenda should consist.

The literature review on CVE and RVE models was vital to examine how other nations and institutions implement their agendas against radicalization and terrorism, but data on radicalization into violent extremism²⁸ does not contain a universally accepted agenda, model, or procedures. J.M. Berger remarks that the scope of CVEs is incredibly large, so defining its breadth is a great challenge. Occasionally they fail to even define their own agendas supporting disengagement and de-radicalization/counter-radicalization efforts.²⁹ The difference between these terms is that individuals that *disengage* only untie from their plans to participate in violence and from their material support, while *deradicalization/counter-radicalization* is the process which individuals separate themselves from extremist ideologies.³⁰ Pertaining to RVEs

28. Kilinc, Cemil, and Sara Zeiger. "Risks, Challenges and Future Research in the Middle East." Research Brief. Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Hedayah Center, December 2014. 3, <http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-22820158532.pdf>.

29. J.M. Berger, "Making CVE Work: A Focused Approach Based on Process Disruption," *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism Studies*, 3, May 26, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.19165/2016.1.05>.

30. Berger, "Making CVE Work: A Focused Approach Based on Process Disruption", 3

the Hedayah Center finds there is not enough substantial research on the influence of religious education on radicalization into violent extremism, or its reverse effect on preventing radicalization, recruitment, and terrorism.³¹ Additionally, sources did not often match other explanations for how and why terrorists do what they do; while this could be explained by the fact that individuals don't share common journeys of becoming radicalized, the overall inconsistency is an obstacle for piecing together a plausible argument. The Hedayah Center makes the recommendation - in light of these challenges to research in the Middle East, - that data-collection and data-sharing must occur more rapidly³² and frequently.

Overall, many agendas are repetitive or too Western-focused. Despite the rising numbers of publications after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States and Europe still receives much of the attention. Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman from the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies support the idea that data from empirical studies on radicalization are rare, explaining that "To date, no study has empirically examined the process through which these terrorists are radicalizing, which constitutes a substantial gap in literature",³³ so while they attempt to close this gap, the researchers only surveyed the situation in the United States and the United Kingdom. The Hedayah Center concurs with this notion by stating that not enough CVE models that stem from Western countries focus on actors within the Middle East,³⁴ and as the region that takes much of the heat for producing extremist ideologies, there is a degree of irony that research continues to lack focus and efficiency.

Pinpointing a countering violent extremism model or a radicalization into violent extremism model that represented the social and political situation of Oman was a trying task.

31. Kilinc and Zeiger. "Risks, Challenges and Future Research in the Middle East", 2.

32. Kilinc and Zeiger, "Risks, Challenges and Future Research in the Middle East", 2.

33. Randy Borum. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 51-52. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.2>.

34. Kilinc and Zeiger. "Risks, Challenges and Future Research in the Middle East", 2.

While Oman has its agendas, procedures, and norms, a search requesting a clearly designated CVE or RVE drew blanks. This can largely be taken as a good sign that the Sultanate has not established any preemptive strategies thus creating a problem where there is none. Additionally, finding terminology and definitions issued by Sultanate of Oman was critical as the subject of this case study, but results were underwhelming. While terrorism is defined in Omani laws disconcerting crimes of money laundering and supporting terrorism financially, the Sultanate has not asserted an overall characterization of terrorism or a clearly defined, specific agenda for continuing to deter radicalization in the country. This reality can be attributed to the nation's reluctance to sensationalize the counter-terrorism agenda and/or the unwillingness to create a strategy for a situation that has not directly affected the domestic state of the nation. In order to surpass these disadvantages this study obtained data from a wide variety of sources including existing literature, government publications, royal decrees, and research studies across the internet and focuses on what is confirmed, concrete, and directly relevant to its objective.

The precision of data, and lack thereof, was a major limitation for three major reasons. First, although there have been no known cases of radicalization or extremist acts occurring within the Sultanate of Oman the precision of data remains an obstacle to confirming this statement. The bit of information that does exist is largely media speculation and unconfirmed reports. Thus further studies, particularly in the wake of uncertainty surrounding Sultan Qaboos' health, require that citizens obtain increased transparency from the government and a better understanding of past and present issues no matter how small or seemingly irrelevant. A lot of information seemed to be buried. For instance, finding information on the 2011 unrest coinciding with the Arab Springs was available on the internet, but alternatively, finding media stories on other events required much more effort. Oman's current status is one of peaceful, but moving forward the government might benefit from removing some of the shelter over its

citizens and bringing them closer to certain realities. Second, statements on religious populations in Oman are questionable. Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said is Ibadi, as are reportedly the majority of Omanis, but the Carnegie Endowment refutes this statement by suggesting that Oman's Sunni population likely outnumbers the Ibadis despite "official estimates" claiming otherwise.³⁵ Disputing claims on this matter, whether Ibadism is the majority religion in Oman, will likely not get settled due to laws that prohibit taking an official consensus of religious beliefs.³⁶ Lastly, and most succinctly, as a country that rarely makes headlines, pertinent empirical studies remaining rare, and despite the global community grappling for workable approaches to alleviate the threat of terror, not much effort has been placed on trying to understand how this outstandingly geopolitically located nation seems to preserve its own remedies for stability.

35. Brown, Nathan. "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 5, 2017. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/11/official-islam-in-arab-world-contest-for-religious-authority-pub-69929>.

36. Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World".

CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW ON RADICALIZATION MODELS AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM MODELS

The threat to peace posed by violent extremism and terrorism calls for solutions on local and broad levels, and radicalization into violent extremism (RVE) and countering violent extremism (CVE) models resolve to fulfill this agenda. The objective of these models is to interrupt the radicalization process and to employ preventative and diminishing measures by rejecting a sole military response. RVE and CVEs seek to root radicalization from its core to prevent new waves of radicals by addressing grievances and prioritizing issues and agendas other than counter-terrorism that are most relevant to individual communities, countries, and regions.³⁷

Definitions

A universally accepted definition for the counter-terrorism agenda has not been clearly established across academia or government systems, so terms for this agenda are often used interchangeably. Radicalization is generally, and deceptively, understood as “what goes on before the bomb goes off”, but the term is much more comprehensive.³⁸ The European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalization has created a concise definition that defines violent radicalization as “Socialization to extremism which manifests itself in terrorism”.³⁹ The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT) hypothesizes radicalization as, “...a process characterized by increased commitment to and use

37. Göpfarth and Pawlak, “Countering Extremism in Arab Countries”, 1-2.

38. Mark Sedgwick. “The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (September 14, 2010): 479, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2010.491009>.

39. Dr. Alex P. Schmid. “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review.” ICCT Research Paper. The Hague, The Netherlands: The International Centre for Counterterrorism (CCT) - The Hague, March 2013, 5, <https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf>.

of violent means and strategies in political conflict...”.⁴⁰ The European Commission assumes that radical beliefs will manifest in violent actions, whereas the ICCT explains that “It *may* evolve from enmity towards certain social groups, or societal institutions and structure. It *may* also entail the increasing use of violent means”.⁴¹

Veldhuis and Staun from the Netherlands Institute of International Relations explain that definitions of radicalisation most often encircle two different foci:

- (1) “...on violent radicalisation, where emphasis is put on the active pursuit or acceptance of the use of violence to attain the stated goal...”;
- (2) ...where emphasis is placed on the active pursuit or acceptance of far-reaching changes in society, which may or may not constitute a danger to democracy and may or may not involve the threat of or use of violence to attain the stated goals.⁴²

The two points made by Veldhuis and Staun contradict other definitions that differentiate individuals that harbor merely radical beliefs from those who have wholly adopted an extremist ideology to the point that the use of violence and/or murder has been justified to instill sweeping changes. Bjørge and Horgan (2009) would deem Veldhuis and Staun’s conceptualizations as misleading and erroneous due to their conviction that an individual who accepts radical views by no means will mechanically commit an act of violence or demonstrate violent, radical behavior.⁴³ The first point made by Veldhuis and Staun more specifically portrays an extremist individual, but their choice of definition is supported by Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauly, who similarly propose that radicalism is the “readiness to engage in illegal and violent political action”.⁴⁴ Veldhuis and Staun’s second focus is

40. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 6.

41. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 6. (emphasis added).

42. Randy Borum. “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories.” *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (December 2011): 12. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.1>.

43. Jason-Leigh Striegler. “Violent-Extremism: An Examination of a Definitional Dilemma.” In *The Proceedings of [the] 8th Australian Security and Intelligence Conference*, 75. Edith Cowan University, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.4225/75/57a945ddd3352>.

44. Sedgwick, “The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion”, 483.

descriptive of someone caught more in the middle, as they may or may not be willing to effect change on a democratic society, and they may or may not use violence to do so. This is descriptive of an individual who is not fully convinced that an act of terrorism will fulfill his or her objective. As the ICCT explains, extremists are those who, “...strive to create a homogenous society based on rigid, dogmatic ideological tenets” and seek “to make society conformist by suppressing all opposition and subjugating minorities,⁴⁵ which distinguishes them from mere radicals who can still accept diversity and believe in the power of reason rather than dogma.”⁴⁶

Although they display many of the dominant behaviors of a terrorist, extremists still do “not reach the threshold for an act of terrorism”, but what is this threshold and how is it determined?⁴⁷ Mark Sedgwick rationalizes the relative and absolute definition of radicalization, in which the relative term refers to a continuum and the absolute term considers “the general philosophical, the analytic, and the official”. Since Sedgwick believes that the absolute is arbitrary, and hardly understood, Sedgwick believes that radicalization should cease to be treated as an absolute concept.⁴⁸ An individual’s movement up or down the continuum [of radicalization] points to one’s point-of-view on either a specific issue, or a span of issues, contrary to what is considered to be moderate by the general community.

Jason-Leigh Striegher in his conference paper for the Australian Security and Intelligence Conference notes that, “violent extremism is purely the ideology that accepts and justifies the use of violence to reach a particular ideological goal”, so an individual that has not yet reached this mindset is likely still along the radicalization process. However if an individual

45. Schmid “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 9.

46. Schmid “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 9.

47. Striegher, “Violent-extremism: An examination of a Definitional Dilemma”, 76.

48. Sedgwick, “The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion”, 479, 480-482.

accepts violence as a tool to promote their goal, they are still not routinely considered a terrorist. Manus Midlarsky's study, *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, depicts extremism, "...as the will to power by a social movement in the service of a political program typically at variance with that supported by existing state authorities".⁴⁹ Midlarsky makes the exclusive point that certain individuals prize extreme social change and potential murder and/or death over personal freedoms protected by a state, and he explains, "...individual liberties are to be curtailed in the name of collective goals, including the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program".⁵⁰ Restrictions on individual freedom in the interests of the collectivity and the willingness to kill massively are central to this definition".⁵¹

The National Counter-Terrorism Committee defines violent extremism as "...a willingness to use or support the use of violence to further particular beliefs, including those of a political, social or ideological nature".⁵² The Australian team continues to explain that this disposition, "...may include acts of terrorism...",⁵³ but none of the characterizations for any of the terminology dove into practical details regarding what these beliefs might include or what is considered to be violence (whether this is considered to be physical, mental, and/or emotional harm, etc.). It is evident that the lack of a universal understanding of the bare minimum for these definitions leads to misleading details and discrepancies between radicalization and extremism.

49. Schmid "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation", 8.

50. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation", 8-9.

51. Schmid, "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation", 8-9.

52. Striegher, "Violent-Extremism: An Examination of a Definitional Dilemma", 79.

53. Striegher, "Violent-Extremism: An Examination of a Definitional Dilemma", 79.

Radicalization into Violent Extremism (RVE)

An understanding of how individuals come to believe what they do⁵⁴, how they become involved and stayed involved, and how they might disengage from the process⁵⁵ is vital to combatting violent extremism. Tackling radicalization must come from micro- (individual) and macro- (societal/cultural) levels.⁵⁶ At the micro-level, the path from radicalization to violent extremism is viewed as a dynamic process in which individual profiles vary across communities and nations,⁵⁷ and “articulate a general sequence of stages, events, or issues that might apply across and within group types”.⁵⁸ The process is not “one size fits all”. Many individuals who host radical beliefs are not doomed to become terrorists and although there are many common identifiable features among individuals who may host a radical ideology, there is not one fundamentally consistent or constant route.⁵⁹

54. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I“, 8.

55. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 8, 20.

56. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 4.

57. Schmid “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 3-4.

58. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I“, 14-15.

59. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I“, 8.

Figure 4: Borum's Four-State Model of the Terrorist Mindset⁶⁰



Borum's Four-Stage Model of the Terrorist Mindset explains just this: a common pathway with many variables in which an individual may experience an event or condition to which they come to believe, *that is not right!* Thereafter this individual might draw the conclusion, *this is an injustice!* The individual identifies with this injustice either personally, or collectively with a group, and the inequality may either be perceived or experienced in actuality.⁶¹ Next an individual will begin to attribute blame and assert, *it is your fault!*⁶² Target attribution is a response to inner conflict in which an individual considers the inequality (whether perceived or real) and places blame upon a policy, person, or in some cases an entire nation. Blame will begin to fester into the demonization of the entity, to which the individual will believe, *you're/it's evil!* If the process has made it this far, the aggression anger one is feeling begins to justify the use of violence to battle the evils for social and/or political change.⁶³

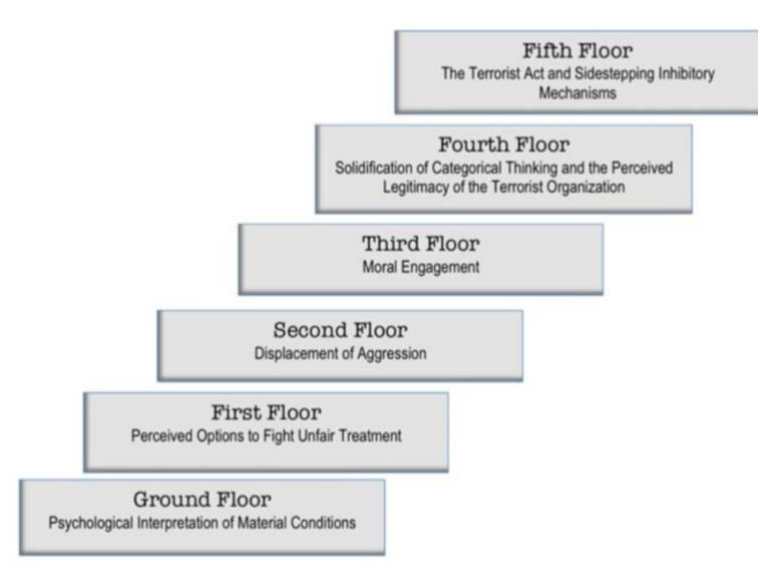
60. Randy Borum. "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 39. <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.2>.

61. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II", 39.

62. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II", 38-39.

63. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II", 39.

Figure 5: Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism⁶⁴



Moghaddam's Staircase is a psychological model that represents a building comprising of stairs that span six floors. Each floor depicts various stages of anger, feelings of injustice, or being ostracized, and the stages of committing to these feelings and resolving how to express them. Violent expressions are often sparked by the desire for change, alleviation, and/or the improvement of a current situation.⁶⁵ Only a few ascend to the fifth floor, to which an individual or group carries out an act of terrorism.⁶⁶ The first floor will remain as long as the conditions to which individuals ascribe their anger stay the same.⁶⁷ Individuals ascend the staircase based on whether doors or spaces open to him or her on a certain floor, and individuals perceive the building, stairs, doors, and rooms however it comes naturally to them. As individuals make their ascension they are left with fewer and fewer choices. The outcome at

64. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II". 40.

65. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II", 40.

66. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II", 39.

67. Fathali M. Moghaddam. "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Explanation." *American Psychological Association* 60, no. 2 (March 2005): 167. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.2.161>.

the top of the staircase is the act of terrorism, which may lead to self-destruction, the destruction of others, or both.⁶⁸ As a gradual process, the policy implications bid to include psychologists in long-term prevention initiatives, to strip “us-versus-them” thinking, and to eliminate incentives that encourage individuals to ascend to the upper floors.

The European model of radicalization depicts a pattern of pre-radicalization, conversion, and identification with radical Islam. The pattern also includes indoctrination and increased bonding, and the physical act of terrorism or plotting to act.⁶⁹ This is similar to the United States New York Police Department’s model, which also depicts pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization.⁷⁰ “Precht’s Model of a ‘Typical’ Radicalization Pattern” accounts for background factors, trigger factors, and opportunity factors as motivation for radicalization.⁷¹ An individual’s background provides the story of their relationship with religion, adversity, and their social settings; triggers comprise of the individual’s networks, role models, thoughts on policies, their participation in events, and ultimately whether they feel enough anger and/or motivation to constructively engage in activism; opportunity factors influence whether an individual has been exposed to extremist ideas predominantly through networks which may include physical aspects such as the individual’s involvement on social media, the internet, their place of worship, time spent in prison.⁷² The Joint Military Information Center (JMISC) established a model that incorporates seven common components seen across various models of radicalization in attempt to integrate an analytical framework of radicalization.⁷³ The JMISC first lists motivational factors, such as

68. Moghaddam, “The Staircase to Terrorism”, 161.

69. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism II”, 40-42.

70. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism II”, 40-42.

71. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism II”, 41-42.

72. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism II”, 42-43.

73. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism II”, 44.

push and pull dynamics that attempt to explain why violence and terrorism occur, by analyzing underlying causes such as grievances, economic factors, and mental or egotistical factors.⁷⁴ Second, socially-facilitated entry is listed to explain the tightening of group bonds and an individual's introduction to an extremist ideology through family ties, networks, or social institutions.⁷⁵ Thirdly, splintering/progression addresses that acclimatizing to an extremist ideology is a progress, and might take place through a series of unnoticeable actions or decision-making. Fourth, intensification addresses a group's role in socializing an individual to adapt the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to assimilate with the collective. This step may be influenced by a persuasive group leader and instrumental members.⁷⁶ Fifth, is ideology, which is the narrative that directs blame and attribution, and sixth, threat/defense is noted as the binding rationale for violent action as defensive behavior. Lastly, belonging/identity points to the human desire for acceptance, belongingness, and community.⁷⁷ Although the JMISC did not produce a progression model through these components, the model contains vast explanatory power and complements what is a winding journey nearing extremism.

Other theories for radicalization draw on psychology and sociology. The models provided here treat individuals as legitimate actors and terrorist groups as legitimate organizations. Social psychologists that study the process of radicalization attribute its catchiness to the group dynamic and the likelihood of groupthink to serve as a catalyst. The social psychology argument for radicalization does not account for "lone-wolf" terrorism. "Lone-wolf" terrorists are either self-starters or may carry out an act of terrorism on their own under the guidance of others from a remote location, but as they are not participating in

74. "The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalization in Europe and Beyond." European Policy Center, 2017, 31, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_7510_thechallengeofjihadradicalisation.pdf.

75. "The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalization in Europe and Beyond", 31.

76. "The Challenge of Jihadist Radicalization in Europe and Beyond", 31-32.

77. Borum, "Radicalization into Violent Extremism II", 44-45.

groupthink with other individuals in a social setting, this form of terrorism does not capture as well the incentivizing, relationship-building⁷⁸ qualities that an extremist group or organization has to offer. Deciphering the role that psychological factors and tangible factors play on the radicalization process and ultimate justification for using violence to effect social and political change is delicate. An advisor to the United Nations and the White House on terrorism explains that “Violent people...are people, just like everyone else”.⁷⁹ Lewis Rambo’s accurately grasps what a wider audience typically misconceives of radicalized individuals, much like the aforementioned advisor to the United Nations: these actors are largely rational and active seekers.⁸⁰ Rambo’s conversion theory consists of seven stages to address religious conversion: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequence). Although he places too much emphasis on religion and downplays the role of political and economic factors,⁸¹ recognizes that radicalized individuals tend to be more rational and cooperative, while extremists are fixed in their ideology tend to be more closeminded and host a “you are either with us or against us attitude.”⁸² This might be explained by “good” and “bad” or “right” and “wrong” conversions, as well as the boundaries that are created between the “insiders” and “outsiders” of a religion.⁸³ Rambo explains that the insiders versus outsiders might also be described as the “saved” and “lost”.⁸⁴ Leveling individuals who do violent things to those who

78. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I”, 20-21.

79. Maggie Penman and Shankar Vedentam, “The Psychology Of Radicalization: How Terrorist Groups Attract Young Followers,” NPR, December 15, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/2015/12/15/459697926/the-psychology-of-radicalization-how-terrorist-groups-attract-young-followers>.

80. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I”, 23.

81. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I”, 22-23.

82. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 10.

83. Lewis R. Rambo. “Theories of Conversion: Understanding and Interpreting Religious Change.” *Social Compass* 46, no. 4 (January 9, 1999): 264. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/003776899046003003>.

84. Rambo, “Theories of Conversion”, 264.

do not vindicate the use of violence leaves an open-ended question: if these people are not mentally disturbed, then why do individuals choose this course of action?

Social Movement Theory (SMT) was developed in light of the belief that movements sprang from “irrational processes of collective behavior” under which societies became so strained that individuals became a disgruntled collective.⁸⁵ This theory created much discontent in how it treated communities as a whole, and it since has been reevaluated and redefined until formulating its most recent version – the New Social Movement Theory (NSM). NSM primarily focuses on macro-, or structural, processes to explain the mobilization of movements.⁸⁶ However SMT can also explain that group survival depends on mobilization, strong recruitment networks, participation, and easy access to participate, and like Rambo’s conversion theory, SMT treats actors as rational beings who seek to strengthen their cause. Social movement theories on terrorism treat terrorist groups as a network with a distinct identity and structure,⁸⁷ and individuals engaged in an organization will act rationally to advance their cause by pinpointing and identifying susceptible people that appear most likely to join.⁸⁸ Social movement theories on terrorism are much contiguous with “contentious politics”, explains Colin Beck, and as a social movement, terrorism is “analyzable with the basic social movement approach of mobilizing resources, political opportunity structure, and framing”.⁸⁹

As individuals can become integrated into an organization, literature also explains that individuals might disengage from radicalization, meaning that they take either of two courses:

85. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I”, 17.

86. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I”, 17.

87. Colin J. Beck. “The Contribution of Social Movement Theory to Understanding Terrorism.” *Sociology Compass*, 2008, 1576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00148.x>

88. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism I”, 16-17.

89. Beck, “The Contribution of Social Movement Theory”, 1565.

disengage from an ideology entirely, or disconnect from the possibility of committing an act of violence without actually becoming de-radicalized.⁹⁰ Push and pull factors can similarly factor into the disengagement process to indicate disillusioned objectives and methods, social pressures, and false outlets of hope.⁹¹ Additionally, J.M. Berger argues that the deradicalization process is separate and secondary to disengagement although those who have entirely disassociated with extremism would likely not be compelled to recommit themselves, unlike an individual who has disengaged from the idea of violent strategies.⁹²

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

Countering violent extremism strategies are highly diverse, multi-agency⁹³ responses to the threat of violent extremism and radicalization. Models are flexible and vary across regions and institutions,⁹⁴ and give states and institutions the power to mold CVEs to their diverse economic, social, and political landscapes. The overall objective of CVEs as non-coercive approaches remain the same: to “eliminate or minimize”⁹⁵ factors that encourage the adoption of extremist ideologies. Whether they deal with abiding citizens, radicalized individuals, or at-risk returnees in need of a constructive reintegration to society, the CVE agenda supports human rights in the fight against terrorist organizations.⁹⁶ As part of the counter extremism and counter terrorism agenda, CVEs face their own set of challenges and

90. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism II”, 49.

91. Borum, “Radicalization into Violent Extremism II”, 49.

92. Berger, “Making CVE Work”, 3.

93. “International Conference on Preventing and Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism”, 4.

94. Eric Rosand. “The Global CVE Agenda: Can We Move From Talk to Walk?” The Brookings Institution, April 20, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2016/04/20/the-global-cve-agenda-can-we-move-from-talk-to-walk/>.

95. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 53.

96. “International Conference on Preventing and Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism”, 5.

limitations (i.e. ambiguous terminology and methodology) and so dynamic responses that incorporate tools of “foreign policy, development or psychology” are necessary to strengthen counter-narratives to terrorism.⁹⁷ To ensure sustainability and security, nations are responsible for answering the grievances of their citizens and receiving innovative solutions, and the overseers of CVE strategies are responsible for coordinating with governmental and non-governmental entities and must work fairly with citizens.⁹⁸

The European Parliamentary Research Service’s At A Glance report describes the United Nation’s approach to violent extremism: “...to discredit and delegitimize the ideology that drives violent extremism and mobilizes a steady stream of recruits to extremist causes”.⁹⁹ The UN clarifies that it has sought a practical approach, particularly by abandoning definitions and opting to focus on the roots of radicalization, but the passing of UN Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014)¹⁰⁰ under the United Nations Charter has also implemented top-down approaches including plans to disrupt financial support to organizations and fighters and increase border security. The implementation reports of Resolution 2178 define practical strategies such as tighter security on returning foreign terrorist fighters; increased information-sharing and cooperation between officials and authorities; increased focus on the internet’s role in radicalization, funding, propaganda, and recruitment; and, considering rehabilitation and reintegration as alternatives to incarceration particularly among women and girls.¹⁰¹

On a globalized level, The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) CVE working group fights against radicalization and recruitment through flexible, tailored agendas on

97. Göppfarth and Pawlak, “United Nations Response to Violent Extremism”, 2.

98. “International Conference on Preventing and Countering Radicalization and Violent Extremism”, 5.

99. Göppfarth and Pawlak, “United Nations Response to Violent Extremism”, 1-2.

100. Göppfarth and Pawlak, “United Nations Response to Violent Extremism”, 2.

101. Göppfarth and Pawlak, “United Nations Response to Violent Extremism”, 2.

internationally-, regionally-, nationally-, and locally- based platforms.¹⁰² GCTF promotes effective global cooperation by ‘co-chairing’ nations of different regions (i.e. the United States and Turkey, and Morocco and the Netherlands)¹⁰³ and supports pertinent initiatives, for example, the Hedayah Center based in Abu Dhabi. A 2014 research brief from the Hedayah Center, an international center for countering violent extremism, identified trends in countering violent extremism research and honed in on the risks, gaps, and needs of current and future Middle Eastern CVEs. The first risk found by the participants of the workshop is the ongoing cycle of instability. As long as effective conflict resolutions are not implemented, new threats will continue emerge and many of the cycling threats of historic conflicts will persist.¹⁰⁴ The second major risk is the number of refugees.¹⁰⁵ To address these risks, the center recommends looking at baseline, underlying factors and supports the approaches of the GCTF. Also in collaboration with Hedayah, the GCTF has partnered with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to develop the Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).¹⁰⁶ The objective of this CVE is to emphasize the role of “policymakers, teachers and educators, community-based and other non-governmental organizations (NGO), and families and parents” in the dialogue against radicalization and

102. “Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Working Group.” The GCTF (Global Counterterrorism Forum). Accessed March 16, 2018. <https://www.thegctf.org/Working-Groups/Countering-Violent-Extremism>.

103. Maqsood Kruse. “Countering Violent Extremism Strategies in the Muslim World.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 668, no. 1 (November 2016): 200, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216671706>.

104. Cemil Kilinc and Sara Zeiger, “Risks, Challenges and Future Research in the Middle East,” Research Brief (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Hedayah Center, December 2014), 2, <http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-22820158532.pdf>.

105. Kilinc and Zeiger, “Risks, Challenges and Future Research in the Middle East,” 2.

106. “Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism” (Global Counterterrorism Forum), accessed March 19, 2018, 1. <https://www.thegctf.org/Portals/1/Documents/Framework%20Documents/A/GCTF-Abu-Dhabi-Memorandum-ENG.pdf>.

terrorism.¹⁰⁷ Education can easily be manipulated by those who yearning to impress upon students an antagonistic dialogue, which is the reason CVEs in the education sector aim to practice the following: endorse multi-sectoral approaches; increase dialogue between community, social, and government sectors, and between the education and security sectors; resist the securitization of education; shape values in early-age education; and, further address extremism by continuing to identify gaps in relevant research.¹⁰⁸ From an educational standpoint, the memorandum focuses on building strong character traits, critical-thinking skills, and the ability to react constructively against trauma and poor societal issues. The memorandum also encourages building upon life skills, humanistic values, and emboldening children to make a positive impact on their culture and community from an early age.¹⁰⁹ The narrative is similar from an institutional standpoint, which encourages constructive learning environment and teachers preparing a quality education in which students can express themselves, integrate, and be confident that their education will lead to further contribution.¹¹⁰

The European Parliamentary Research Service At A Glance report pushes the need for stronger local and global initiatives against terrorism and dissuades against using just military strategies to achieve these goals. The report also encourages dynamic approaches to eradicate deep-seated, historic grievances and to undermine the terrorist narrative¹¹¹ through auxiliary legal action and security enforcement.¹¹² Similar to calls to action from the United Nations, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have also resolved to undermine the jihadi narrative

107. "Abu Dhabi Memorandum", 1.

108. Abu Dhabi Memorandum", 1-2.

109. Abu Dhabi Memorandum", 1-2.

110. Abu Dhabi Memorandum", 4-6.

111. Göpfarth and Pawlak, "Countering Extremism in Arab Countries", 1.

112. Celina B Realuyo. "Combating Terrorist Financing in the Gulf: Significant Progress but Risks Remain." The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, January 26, 2015. http://www.agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/AGSIW_Combating-Terrorist-Financing-in-the-Gulf.pdf.

and eliminate financial resources funneling to terrorist resources.¹¹³ The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW) supports trends in the Gulf that seek to eradicate radicalism and terrorist organizations by disrupting terrorist financing. AGSIW defines terrorist financing as, "...the processing of funds to sponsor or facilitate terrorist activity".¹¹⁴ Financial support can arrive in forms of donations, fundraising or bids for assistance, funding from states, large organizations, or individuals; illegitimate criminal revenue-generating activities such as kidnapping, extortion, smuggling, or fraud; and, legitimate economic ventures including the diamond trade and real estate investment.¹¹⁵ Anti-terrorist funding laws tackle deliberate crimes and prevent innocent bystanders from participating in scams often disguised as charitable donations.

Other global coalitions include the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh (GCCD), the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT), and the Sawab Center. The agenda of GCCD is to target Daesh's financial basis and foreign terrorist fighters (FTF), to stabilize areas liberated from the organization, and to deliver a counter-narrative to the extremist objective.¹¹⁶ IMAFT is Saudi-led, Islamic initiative that was founded in 2015. Originally established upon military elements, IMAFT is a Sunni Muslim¹¹⁷ initiative that has evolved to include counter-messaging, counter-ideology, and preventative measures that coincide with principles of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation which outright rejects all forms of terrorism.¹¹⁸ The exclusion of Shi'ite majority states has delegitimized any claims from IMAFT that it is a

113. Göppfarth and Pawlak, "Countering Extremism in Arab Countries", 1.

114. Realuyo, "Combating Terrorist Financing in the Gulf".

115. Realuyo, "Combating Terrorist Financing in the Gulf".

116. Kruse, "Countering Violent Extremism Strategies in the Muslim World", 200.

117. "Islamic Military Alliance/Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT/Islamic Military Coalition to Counter Terrorism (IMCTC)." Global Security. Accessed March 19, 2019. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/ima.htm>.

118. Kruse, "Countering Violent Extremism Strategies in the Muslim World", 201.

cooperative initiative, but many other Muslim-majority countries are similarly engaging in global multilateral efforts to counter violent extremism narratives and to root radicalization processes from their core. Another Gulf initiative between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the USA, the Sawab Center, is a joint initiative that encourages Muslims to drown the narratives of terrorism that have stolen the microphone. Sawab stands for diversity, progress, transparency, tolerance, and moderation, and counters online tools for recruitment by promoting the online voices of Muslims to “put things in the right perspective”.¹¹⁹ The Sawab Center describes this as an attainable solution that seeks to eliminate extremist groups via countering propaganda and redirecting individuals’ focus to more appealing outlets,¹²⁰ but on the contrary, creating a positive counter-message could become just as problematic since there really is not a clear understanding of what a ‘bad’ ideology consists of, let alone what is considered “good” on a local and global context.¹²¹

The Middle East Strategy Task Force of the Atlantic Council Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East convened over the course of 2015 to tackle the many challenges the Middle East continues to experience. The taskforce presented the most intriguing case for the Middle East due to its pragmatism, believing in basics like quality education as the key to unleashing the region’s economic potential, and recognizing that furthering military efforts¹²² to invigorate peace efforts amongst nations likely will continue not to resonate well across the international

119. “Sawab Center.” Sawab: United Against Extremism. Accessed March 16, 2018. <http://80.227.220.174/>.

120. Madeline Albright, et. al. “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report of the Co-Chairs.” Final Report of the Co-Chairs. Atlantic Council, 2016, 58-59. http://www.leaders.com.tn/uploads/FCK_files/MEST_Final_Report_web_1130.pdf.

121. Berger, “Making CVE Work”, 3.

122. Albright, et al., “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report”, 58- 59. Chapter five section three of the final report is controversial by diverging from its case against furthering military support by calling for more U.S. training and weapon support to strengthen local and tribal forces fighting against Da’esh and al-Qaeda. The report also calls for “enhanced military efforts” to renew bonds between “its traditional friends and allies”, which also strays from the report’s claim that a unilateral American response would be retroactive.

community, who might view this as further escalation. Through a comprehensive analysis, the five-part series of the Middle East Strategy Task Force provides assessments for eliminating and minimizing the threat of terrorism and the many realities of ongoing instability and violence. Radical ideology and effective recruitment processes have successfully engaged individuals to such a powerful degree that the movements of al-Qaeda and Daesh have crept across the globe, and calamity will continue to emanate as long as societies are permissive of their practices. The final report proposes a New Strategic Approach that weighs heavily on productive partnerships – not a unilateral American ‘strategy’.¹²³ The region requires grassroots initiatives that work simultaneously with top-down approaches¹²⁴ to address the refugee/displaced person crisis, terrorism, violent sectarianism, etc. through aggressive developments in the education sectors, economic sectors, government systems, and throughout communities. Although the New Strategic Approach is not guaranteed, peace and security are nevertheless achievable. Governments require more flexibility, and increased accountability to women and youth populations so that they may equally entrench themselves in problem-solving endeavors and entrepreneurship. Alternatively, civilians on a whole need to become more active to mobilize¹²⁵ these undertakings, especially if full cooperation with governments is to be expected. Encouraging transnational partnerships to help suppress violent chaos and embolden young talent would begin a rather promising cycle that works in favor of governments by improving their legitimacy, thus leading to the balancing of security systems and yielding open societies.¹²⁶ These reports are most intriguing for the purpose of this research due to their relativity, and how the individual working papers can resonate with the workings

123. “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report of the Co-Chairs.” Final Report of the Co-Chairs. Atlantic Council, 2016. 1. http://www.leaders.com.tn/uploads/FCK_files/MEST_Final_Report_web_1130.pdf

124. Albright, et al., “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report”, 1-2.

125. Albright, et al., “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report”, 80.

126. Albright, et al., “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report”, 1-2.

of Oman. For example, Oman has achieved close involvement with the American and British militaries, the government has established itself as a “mediator” between otherwise enemy states by placing aside biased or controversial matters, and has protected the equality and inclusion of youth and women populations under the Basic Law of the State. The Sultanate promotes trade, integration, and entrepreneurship, as well as supports modernizing efforts to encourage citizen participation, empowerment, and innovation. This cycle has led to overall trustworthiness and a capable governance and security environment.

Conclusions

The ability to determine the influence of RVE and CVE on counterterrorism efforts is still premature¹²⁷ but there is general consensus that to reduce the number of susceptible individuals through efforts that eliminate the need for an ideology to cling to, the root causes of terrorism must be eradicated.¹²⁸ Every individual is unique as their path to radicalization, so although there is a need to draw further conclusions over a common consensus on the definitions, use of terms, and procedures and objectives of the mechanisms of the counterterrorism agenda, too much rigidity could do as much harm. Each of the models have a purpose: for example, Borum senses the humanity of a terrorist as an individual that has been caught up in a whirlwind of anger which has manifested into violence; the other psychological theories grasp that radicalized beings are rational actors that understand the power of manipulation. The marriage of these CVEs to cover more ground and create a more comprehensive approach to countering radicalization, extremism, and terrorism is the next step to filling the many gaps in research and insisting upon the consent of a universal understanding of basic terminology and

127. Schmid, “Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation”, 54.

128. Rosand, “The Global CVE Agenda”.

procedures so that institutes, states, and regions can have equal opportunity to tailor their approaches to the needs of their communities.

CHAPTER TWO: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

“Before Qaboos, there was nothing; after he became sultan, there was everything”.¹²⁹ The environment Sultan Qaboos inherited from his father was not immediately promising of success, but a vast amount of Omanis believe that Sultan Qaboos’ ascent to power in 1970 ushered in an era of opportunity. Previous to 1970, restrictive laws and a defective government administration under the former sultan left the nation’s population divided, illiterate, and unconscious of the modernizing world.¹³⁰ The reign of Sultan Qaboos indeed brought “everything” to Oman, first by embarking on a hearts and minds campaign following the war in the Dhofar Governorate. The Sultan promised on the first day of his rule that such [modernizing] development would be essential, but he believed that it [modernization] should be approached in slow bouts.¹³¹ The only element Sultan Qaboos retained from his father’s rule is his position as an absolute monarch. Otherwise, Qaboos began nation-building essentially from scratch. Any interruption to this process was highly unwelcomed, and this attitude generally continues to persist as any forms of rebel-rousing, intolerance, or hostile attitudes are rejected by societal norms that favor the tranquility of the nation. One of the most early examples of this was the appointment - and almost immediate resignation - of Sayyid Tariq bin Taymur, Sultan Qaboos’ uncle. Tariq assumed the Prime Minister¹³² whilst acceding another role: contender to the sultan. By attempting to institute a constitutional monarchy, Tariq

129. J.E. Peterson, “The Solitary Sultan and the Construction of the New Oman,” in *Governance in the Middle East and North Africa: A Handbook*, ed. Abbas Kadhim, 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 321, http://www.jepeterson.net/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/Peterson_-_Solitary_Sultan_and_Oman_2013.pdf.

130. Robin Brown, Michael M. Horowitz, and Muneera Salem-Murdock, “Social and Institutional Aspects of Oman: A Review of the Literature” (Washington, D.C: Agency for International Development, n.d.), 176-178, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAAN826.pdf.

131. Miller, “Creating Modern Oman: An Interview with Sultan Qabus”.

132. Brown, et al., “Social and Institutional Aspects of Oman”, 179

contradicted Sultan Qaboos' aspiration to rule with benevolence¹³³ and in 1971 he resigned from his post.¹³⁴ These first few years the Sultanate was getting on its feet, but by 1974 the government was grounded in economic security boosted by the discovery of oil and oil-production,¹³⁵ and by this time ministries began to develop and ministers were assigned to posts. Sultan Qaboos remains the dominant head across the board; Oman's governance runs fluidly from the office of the Sultan and he will continue do so as long as he is meeting the needs of the population. The approach of this chapter is to further demonstrate this history, highlight government and civilian factions, and to provide insight into the establishment of fundamental ministries, royal laws and decrees that are enveloped in traditional Omani values. The first section presents the ministries and royal laws and decrees most pertinent to the preservation of the security environment and stability in Oman, and the second section focuses on the frameworks of institutions and the religious and education sectors.

Legal Frameworks

The Omani legal system is grounded in Sharia Law and is based on the royal decrees and laws issued by Sultan Qaboos. Laws and decrees are in turn based on the Basic Law of the State, which also must be approved by the Council of Oman (the Council of State and the Consultative Council).¹³⁶ Civil laws, criminal laws, and judicial penalties are compliant with international laws and the Sultanate is a signatory of the laws of the United Nations to ensure the protection "human rights, the protection of minorities, as well as the conventions against

133. Peterson, "Oman: Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development", 126-127.

134. Peterson, "Oman: Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development", 126.

135. Peterson, "Oman: Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development," 125.

136. Saudi Arabia, and Kiribati. "Country Review Report of The Sultanate of Oman." United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 3. Accessed March 28, 2018. https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/CountryVisitFinalReports/2016_07_04_Oman_Final_Country_Report_English.pdf.

all forms of discrimination against women and to safeguard the rights of the child”.¹³⁷ In a speech by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos to the Oman Council, the Sultan reflects on its policies of justice, brotherhood, and participation to ensure security and peace.¹³⁸

Table of Royal Decrees	
Royal Decree 8/2007	
Royal Decree No. 101/96	Basic Statute of the State
Royal Decree No. 30/2016	Law on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing
Royal Decree No. 34/2002	Law of Money Laundering

The Basic Statute of the State – the Basic Law of the Sultanate of Oman, Royal Decree No. 101/96 – was promulgated by Sultan Qaboos on November 6, 1996¹³⁹ and like other facets of Omani development, the Basic Statute is heavily embedded in “Islamic and Omani legal and social values and traditions” and respects such customs and practices. The Basic Statute defines the rights, responsibilities, and freedoms of all citizens, and protects, “...the rights of speech and assembly, the right to participate in the political decisions of the country, the rights to property and personal privacy, freedom of religion and gender equality”, and prohibits “...discrimination of any kind....”¹⁴⁰ The major exception to this is that individuals cannot take actions that disturb public order. Per the Official Oman eGovernment Services Portal, the Basic

137. Mohammed Said Al-Mamari and Georg Popp, “Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence: Oman’s Message of Islam,” Status Report January 2017 (The Ministry of Religious Endowments (Awqaf) and Religious Affairs & Arabia Felix Synform GmbH, January 2017), http://www.islam-in-oman.com/fileadmin/pdfs/RT_Oman_100_web.pdf.

138. Sultan Qaboos Bin Said. “Royal Speeches Delivered by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said At Oman Council.” Royal Speeches. Collection of Royal Speeches Delivered by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said between 1997-2011 at the Opening of Oman Council. State Council, 2011 1997. 14. http://www.statecouncil.om/Kentico/Inner_Pages/HM_Speech.aspx?lang=en-us.

139. Sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Said. Basic Statute of the State, Pub. L. No. RD 101/96 (1996). Retrieved from <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/om/om019en.pdf>

140. Qaboos, “Basic Statue of the State”.

Law “provides the legal framework for development and implementation of all legislation and government policy”. The Basic Law is essentially the backbone of Omani society – somewhere between the rule of the Sultan and the checks of the Oman Council – and is described as “the framework within which legislative and other political institutions will develop”.¹⁴¹ The chapter on Political Principles further guides the state policy and upholds the independence and sovereignty of Oman, and sees any aggression as combative against the nation’s security and stability.”¹⁴² Article 11 of the Basic Law defines the economic principles of the state, affirming that “The national economy is based on justice and the principles of free economy” and “Freedom of economic activity is guaranteed within the limits of the Law....”,¹⁴³ but to combat terrorism, Oman has placed specific focus on monitoring finances to ensure proper transactions and economic practices to undermine terrorist resources. The Law on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing is generally a development of the March 2002 Royal Decree No. 34/2002 of the Law of Money Laundering,¹⁴⁴ a flagship law in the Gulf that has been followed by further regulations in 2004, in 2007 with creation of the Law on Combating-Terrorism.¹⁴⁵ Royal Decree 8/2007 exerts penalties against groups, means of violence, and/or transportation related to the organization or acts of terrorism.¹⁴⁶ Penalties

141. “Basic Law of the State.” Omanuna: The Official Oman eGovernment Services Portal. Accessed February 21, 2018.

http://www.oman.om/wps/portal/index/gov/omangov/BasicLawofState!/ut/p/a1/hc_BboJAEAbgp-HKzO5SuvS2hqBicTUo4l4MNTuVBFkDVJo-fWnjxWjr3P7J9yczoCAHVRFn0hRdaei-snK38kl8clE4kzO1wTFBFdLOYpoGngD2A4A_xiBj_qprmED6ppxPh8YoSMvYRnliX8BDMelMpgmXpoRpHEUPvH0mY7IDZitEoGUZVEcvPosDL0L-OfQGJSp7P736a2o94wbUI1-141u3I9mWB-67tS-OOhg3_eusdZU2n37cvBe42DbDvIrCKdj_jktF8cNb8U3YeBdXA!!/dl5/d5/L0IKQSEvUUt3SS80RUkhL2Vu/.

142. Qaboos, “Basic Statue of the State”.

143. Qaboos, “Basic Statue of the State”.

144. “Anti-Money Laundering (AML) in Oman.” Banker’s Academy: An Edcomm Company, n.d. <http://bankersacademy.com/resources/free-tutorials/57-ba-free-tutorials/668-aml-oman>.

145. Realuyo, “Combating Terrorist Financing in the Gulf”

146. “Country Reports on Terrorism 2016.” Annual Report on Terrorism. United States Department of State Publication, Bureau of Counterterrorism, July 2017. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/272488.pdf>.

include the death penalty and life imprisonment. Illegal actions include recruitment, the organization or leadership of a terrorist organization, and/or efforts to join a terrorist group. The construction of explosives and/or weaponry to execute a terrorist attack is unlawful, as is the event of using and/or the appropriation of a mode of transportation to carry out an act of terror.

Royal Decree No. 30/2016 promulgating the Law on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing tackles cross-border crimes to combat “...money laundering, terrorism financing, and financing activities involving weapons of mass destruction” and those who commit crimes are punishable by the law.¹⁴⁷ Royal Decree 30/2016 defines a terrorist as “Any natural person present inside or outside the Sultanate of Oman who commits, attempts to commit, participates to, organizes or contributes to the perpetration of a terrorist act or directs others to do so by any means whether directly or indirectly.”¹⁴⁸ This definition for terrorism non-descriptive of the Sultanate’s overall mindset on terrorism as it does not further define what other acts of terrorism consist of other than defining in this law a terrorist financing offense as following:

Any person who willingly collects or provides funds, directly or indirectly and by any means, with the knowledge that such funds will be used in full or in part, to carry out a terrorist act, or by a terrorist individual or a terrorist organization, shall be deemed to have committed the offense of terrorism financing.

Such provisions include financing the travelling of individuals to a country other than their country of residence or nationality with the intent to perpetrate, plan, prepare for, participate to or facilitate terrorist acts, or provide necessary funds for training on terrorist acts or receiving such training.¹⁴⁹

Individuals whose involvement or responsibility is proven in crimes of money laundering, whether they are aware of their criminal proceedings, are subject to punishment of

147. Qaboos, “Promulgating the Law on Combating Money Laundering”, 9.

148. Qaboos, “Promulgating the Law on Combating Money Laundering”, 11.

149. Qaboos, “Promulgating the Law on Combating Money Laundering”, 8.

imprisonment and fines.¹⁵⁰ Businesses and commercial activities are subject to suspension and a final decree of conviction may be published.¹⁵¹ By rejecting the use of *hawalas*, Oman as a member of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENA-FATF) protects money from being transferred anonymously underground. These financial laws have been implemented despite not being a significant problem within the Sultanate, but as a cross-border crime these actions also serve to undercut any external terrorist activity that could affect Oman as a regional issue.

Institutional Frameworks

As the nation was toning down from war, the defense sector was one of the only functioning and organized branches. The government was expanding under the new Sultan's rule and the British were enlisted by Sultan Qaboos in order to widen and modernize the military. Matters of finance, defense, and foreign affairs are reserved under the domain of the Sultan.¹⁵² As one of the first calls to order, Sultan Qaboos deployed military force to suppress upheaval in the southern region where a group of defectors were resisting the opportunities of the recently unified country (Oman was formerly divided into two entities - Sultanate of Muscat and Oman – and Qaboos unified the nation under a new flag to achieve cohesion and nation unity¹⁵³). The Ministry of Defense continues to carry out the defense policy of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) which consists of three branches: the Royal Army, the Royal Navy, and the Royal Air Force. Sultan Qaboos serves as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.¹⁵⁴

150. Qaboos, "Promulgating the Law on Combating Money Laundering", 28.

151. Qaboos, "Promulgating the Law on Combating Money Laundering", 28.

152. "Brief About The Ministry – وزارة الخارجية العمانية." Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accessed February 21, 2018. https://www.mofa.gov.om?page_id=9677&lang=en.

153. "Governance of Oman." Fanack. Accessed February 1, 2018. <https://fanack.com/oman/governance/>.

154. Fanack, "Governance of Oman".

The forces are highly prepared, regularly revised, and have embraced modernization as to be maximally protective and secure of the nation's interests.¹⁵⁵

The Sultan's Special Forces and the Royal Oman Police (ROP) Special Taskforce are the main counterterrorism response forces,¹⁵⁶ but the Omani government employs all branches of the government in the aspiration security stability. In 2016 the ROP, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Legal Affairs, the Ministry of Transportation and Communication, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry¹⁵⁷ collectively participated in the United States' Export and Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) counterterrorism program. The Coast Guard had the opportunity to practice search and seizures and interdiction from ports of entry on land and at sea, which is especially relevant to threats from shared land border with Yemen and Oman's exposed, extensive coastlines.¹⁵⁸ Participation in the U.S. Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance program also bolstered potential problem areas such as border security, coordination, and training and development abilities of security officials and officers.

The objective of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to also answer to cross-border affairs, and "to extend the hand of friendship, and to continue to maintain good and equal relations with each country through cooperation".¹⁵⁹ By maintaining relationships with other nations, international and regional organizations, the Ministry demonstrates a wide variety of

155. "Ministry of Defense." Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Defense. Accessed February 21, 2018. <http://www.mod.gov.om/en-US/pages/about-us.aspx>.

156. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2016." Annual Report on Terrorism. United States Department of State Publication, Bureau of Counterterrorism, July 2017. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/272488.pdf>.

157. Country Reports on Terrorism 2016".

158. Country Reports on Terrorism 2016".

159. "Brief About The Ministry – وزارة الخارجية العمانية".

interests, for example, tackling child mortality rates, children's rights to life¹⁶⁰, clean energy, human development, water management, and securing peace and stability internationally.¹⁶¹ The Foreign Affairs Ministry has broken down international barriers, for example by sending Yusuf bin Alawi to visit the West Bank in efforts to hold talks with Palestinian leaders and he served as the first Omani foreign minister to do so.¹⁶² Complementing these works domestically is the Ministry of Interior, which continues to be instrumental in introducing social services across Oman. Particularly after the violent conflict in the Dhofar Governorate, this was necessary to support the welfare of the Omani people and to gradually encourage modernization across the country.¹⁶³

From pre-primary education through secondary education, schools promote the development of intellect, spirituality, emotions, social skills, and moral dispositions. Children are introduced early to the virtues of Islam, national and cultural traditions, concepts on positivity and cooperation, appreciation of the arts, and are given the opportunity to participate in various events.¹⁶⁴ Most pertinent to this study is the strong focus on instilling values such as tolerance, coexistence, and understanding for other people.¹⁶⁵ As these children are developing they are also gaining important tools for life and employment such as learning how to be aware

160. Times News Service. "Here Is How Oman Reduced Child Mortality by Almost Three Quarters." Times of Oman, February 21, 2018. <http://timesofoman.com/article/128742>.

161. ONA. "Oman, Holland Support Resolving Disputes by Peaceful Means." Times of Oman, February 20, 2018. <http://timesofoman.com/article/128618>.

162. AFP, and Times of Israel Staff. "Oman Foreign Minister Makes Rare Visit by Arab Official to Temple Mount." The Times of Israel, February 15, 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/oman-foreign-minister-makes-rare-visit-by-arab-official-to-temple-mount/>

163. "Ministry of Interior - Sultanate of Oman." Government Website. Accessed February 22, 2018. <https://www.moi.gov.om/ar-om/about>. Internet information on the Ministry of Interior was limited to make a proper analysis.

164. "World Data on Education." World Data on Education. Geneva, Switzerland: International Bureau of Education - UNESCO, February 3, 2012. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Oman.pdf.

165. "World Data on Education".

and respectful in social settings and towards public and private property. Through education, particularly in the sciences and of technology, individuals learn to think critically and scientifically.¹⁶⁶ The UNESCO-International Bureau of Education (IBE) explains that the learning objectives in Oman are as following: the promotion of loyalty to Oman and the Sultan; consolidating belongingness; embracing faith-based values and principles; developing pride in the Arabic language; positivity; volunteering, philanthropy, and peace; encouraging awareness of global trends and events; engaging in social obligations and responsibilities; and, understanding major issues of health, citizenry, and the environment.¹⁶⁷ The objective of the Ministry of Education is to “study, propose, and follow-up the enforcement of rules, regulations and decisions organizing the work of schools in the public sector, to supervise guidance counsellors in educational regions, and to evaluate the performance of schools”.¹⁶⁸ In instituting educational systems in Oman, six principles and objectives are at the core:

...to integrate the individual’s intellectual, emotional, spiritual and moral development; to nurture the capabilities of individuals and groups, and to develop the spirit of co-operation; to modernize the Omani society by teaching the required technical skills and the proper intellectual approaches to face the challenges of a changing world where technology and new inventions are widely spreading in all aspects of life; to achieve social and economic progress, to increase the national income and to improve the living standards of the Omanis; to achieve national unity, solidarity and independence through respect for the society’s achievements and cultural heritage; and, to revive the Arabic Islamic heritage.¹⁶⁹

The Basic Law regards education as an emboldening process that encourages literacy and promoting scientific thought, and furthermore education bolsters cultural standards and fosters national pride and heritage.¹⁷⁰ The Basic Statute likewise recognizes that education is necessary

166. “World Data on Education.”.

167. “World Data on Education”.

168. “World Data on Education”.

169. “World Data on Education”.

170. “World Data on Education”

to continue the legacy of the nation and shape the morals of individuals.¹⁷¹ These stipulations contain a similar rhetoric to the Basic Statute of the State Decree No. 101/96.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Sultan Qaboos University work to implement the policies and attitudes of the Sultan, and within the Ministry of Higher Education, post-secondary universities, institutes, and colleges are supervised and students are offered study abroad scholarship opportunities.¹⁷² The scope of educational possibilities is broadened with the internationalization of higher education and the Sultanate highly encourages these academic, socio-cultural, political, and economic endeavors, as is explained by the Oman Quality Network in Higher Education. Students embarking on study abroad trips improve upon their own understanding of other cultures and narratives, gain further knowledge of diplomatic relations, and experience new interactions and considerations of the world around them. This not only drives forward the message of peace, equality, and security but students gain a major edge for future employment.¹⁷³

The message of the Ministry of Endowment and Affairs is the "Interest in the religious aspect of building a good citizen and organizing the affairs of religious affairs within the Sultanate through cadres qualified by renewable means".¹⁷⁴ Since the reign of Sultan Qaboos, Islam continues to rest in the daily lives of citizens – although in a non-politicized manner.¹⁷⁵ In an interview with Sultan Qaboos from the 1997 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Sultan Qaboos

171. "World Data on Education".

172. "World Data on Education".

173. Bashir Fida, Raihan Taqui Syed, and Joseph Mani. "Internationalization of Higher Education in the GCC Region: Enhancing Inflow of International Students to Oman," 2. Muscat, Oman, 2017. <http://www.oqnhe.om/Docs/Conference%20Papers/Internationalization%20of%20Higher%20Education%20in%20the%20GCC%20Region%20-%20Enhancing%20Inflow%20of%20International%20Students%20to%20Oman.pdf>.

174. Vision and Mission of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs. (n.d.). [Government Website]. Retrieved February 22, 2018, from <https://mara.gov.om/Pages.aspx?ID=1&MID=47>

175. Professor Valerie J. Hoffman, "Ibadi Islam: An Introduction" (University of Georgia), accessed January 2, 2018, <https://islam.uga.edu/ibadis.html>.

provided insight into his accomplishments and feats against extremism. The Sultan explained that he takes pride in the progress of women and his ambitions of creating services so that families and individuals may choose their own life paths. While this has encouraged change, he also has safeguarded Omani traditions.¹⁷⁶ The interviewee, Judith Miller, posed the question in her interview: “Why haven’t the more radical provisions in your Basic Law...been challenged by militant Islamists as “un-Islamic?”¹⁷⁷ The answer is *ijtihad*, meaning the ability to review and reinterpret the tenants of Islam. Evolution is inevitable and the world keeps on turning, and this is where the Sultan explains that fundamentalists get it wrong: “Islam is not opposed to progress”.¹⁷⁸ Although not opposed to progress *per se*, The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs (MERA) requires registration to form a new religious group, and this file may either be accepted or rejected after going through an *ad hoc* consideration of the propositioned theology, size, belief system, etc. For new Muslim groups to form, they must go through a similar process.¹⁷⁹ The Ministry of Endowments and Affairs has also headed dialogue between the religious leaders and narratives of the Sultanate. From April 2010 until November 2016 an exhibition called “Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence: Oman’s Message of Islam”¹⁸⁰ traveled to 300 countries and presented 100 exhibitions to promote interfaith dialogue. The exhibition was translated into eighteen language panels and reproductions of its documentary film, five additional languages for the panels, and six additional languages for the documentary film (concluding in the production of twenty-four

176. Miller, “Creating Modern Oman; An Interview with Sultan Qaboos”

177. Miller, “Creating Modern Oman; An Interview with Sultan Qaboos”.

178. Miller, “Creating Modern Oman; An Interview with Sultan Qaboos”.

179. Oman. (n.d.). U.S. Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/171742.pdf>

180. For more information: <http://www.islam-in-oman.com/en.html>

total versions of the documentary).¹⁸¹ The exhibitions was well-received among academics and religious circles and over 200,000 people have field the film.¹⁸² Various other publications have also been produced for similar purposes such as *Al Tasamoh*, which promotes tolerance and interfaith and multi-cultural relations,¹⁸³ and films like *Religious Tolerance* and *al-Tafahum*, which convey Oman's tolerance of non-Muslims and interfaith dialogue.¹⁸⁴ The Carnegie Endowment contends that such campaigns in the Sultanate actually enforce a position of religious tolerance, but none of these determinations are for propaganda: these films document actual and ongoing practices within the nation, such Muslims and non-Muslims worshipping with no fear of oppression as they might experience in other nations.¹⁸⁵ Under the Basic Law of the State, the discrimination of religion is prohibited and Christian churches and Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist temples are available for worshipers. There are in fact four Hindu temples are in Oman located in various cities across the nation, a privately owned a Sikh Gurudwara, and a Buddhist shrine and temple to accompany the small population of Buddhists. Religious practices, such as the practice of religious traditions and laws by Shi'a communities, is permitted as long as the Basic Law is adhered to¹⁸⁶ and in general religious practice is permitted as long as public order is not disrupted. Public proselytizing is prohibited for all religions,¹⁸⁷ and Ibadi-content is absent from public pronouncements.¹⁸⁸

181. Al-Mamari and Popp, "Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence Status Report", 5-9.

182. Al-Mamari and Popp, "Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence Status Report", 9.

183. Al-Mamari and Popp, "Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence Status Report", 5-9.

184. Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World".

185. Brown, "Official Islam in the Arab World".

186. Oman - Our Home: Al Amana Centre. (n.d.). Retrieved March 6, 2018, from <http://alamanacentre.org/oman/>

187. "Oman - Our Home: Al Amana Centre".

188. Hoffman, "Ibadi Islam: An Introduction".

Mosques in Oman serve trifold as a sanctuary for prayer, a schooling center for religious studies, and grounds for community gatherings. Places of worship for Muslims and Christians alike are shared, meaning that mosques are open for any sect or tradition of Islam, and the Christian campuses in Oman are shared by Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians.¹⁸⁹ Jewish and Christian leaders have been invited by the ministry to speak at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque¹⁹⁰ in Muscat, Oman's capital city, to encourage tolerance and interfaith dialogue.¹⁹¹ Religious institutions are also present within the Sultanate such as the Al-Amana Centre, which was created in 1987 in conjunction with the Reformed Church in America (that arrived in 1893 to pursue medical and educational initiatives) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.¹⁹² Currently, the center serves as a partnership between Christians and Muslims in Oman. As a country which welcomes non-Muslim actors¹⁹³, the Al Amana Center is a prime example of an initiative that continues to preserve the status quo within Oman, as well as serves internationally to transfer the message peace through interfaith dialogue and understanding.¹⁹⁴

Conclusions

Omani laws, societal norms, and conservative religious values may be perceived as restrictive by external nations, but alternatively they continue to play a big role in maintaining

189. "Oman: Our Home." Al Amana Centre".

190. Nathan Brown. "Official Islam in the Arab World: The Contest for Religious Authority." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 5, 2017. <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/11/official-islam-in-arab-world-contest-for-religious-authority-pub-69929>.

191. Al-Mamari and Popp, "Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence Status Report", 4-5.

192. "The Al Amana Centre Muscat, Sultanate of Oman." Islam-In-Oman. Accessed June 3, 2019. <http://www.islam-in-oman.com/en/interfaith-dialogue/coexistence-tolerance-understanding-support/oman-amana-centre-muscat-interfaith.html>.

193. "Our People/Our Centre – Al Amana Centre," Al Amana Centre: Building Trust and Peace, accessed March 6, 2018, <http://alamanacentre.org/about/>.

194. "The Al Amana Centre Muscat, Sultanate of Oman."

the security environment. The tenants of Ibadism have been preserved for almost as long as the dawn of Islam and has effected the Omani community since its arrival. Whether the implementation of Ibadi tenants in laws and standards is viewed from a religious or secular standpoint, their effect on the laws and foreign relations have benefited Eastern and Western, and Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority, nations alike. As one of the top ten safest economies globally, with no incidence of terrorism, Omanis continue to worship freely, pursue their education, and obtain personal goals, such as employment, hobbies, entrepreneurship, or even supporting their families. The country continues to strive for overall improvement by continuously upgrading their traditional resources at a more significant rate than the regional average, according to the World Economic Forum.¹⁹⁵ Oman also ranks fourth in the world for safety and security based on factors of business costs of crime and violence, reliability of police services, business cost of terrorism, index of terrorism incidence, and homicide rate/100,000 pop.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, since attitudes and societal norms in Oman do not facilitate violence, instances of political uprisings or disarray are generally not tolerated by the public or government and so overall Omanis can continue about their lives without any threat of violence or destruction.

¹⁹⁵ Roberto Crotti and Tiffany Misrahi. "The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017." Insight Report. Geneva: World Economic Forum. Accessed December 4, 2018. 17, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TTCR_2017_web_0401.pdf.

¹⁹⁶ Crotti and Misrahi, "The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017", 267.

CHAPTER THREE: EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This chapter on empirical research contains two major sections, first, to analyze individual reports of The Middle East Strategy Taskforce and the final assessment and second, to create a parallel with Oman and its initiatives, strategies, laws, and institutions that have been promulgated to counter these issues raised by the taskforce, such as disorder, identity, poor governances, and unstable economic infrastructures. The Atlantic Council's strategy is chosen because of its stances on positive regional empowerment, international backing, and innovative means for eliminating radicalization and deterring terrorism.¹⁹⁷ The taskforce finds that cooperation between civilians and governances, targeting and eliminating grievances, opening opportunities to more individuals, and giving responsibility to individuals from the region are vital to healing the cycle of conflict and this section strives to provide an understanding of how grievances enable harrowing ideologies to persist. This particular strategy is much more comprehensive than the CVEs and RVEs defined in the literature review, which too often focus on the circumstance of lacking substance, or provide solitary strategies that do not have much effect on their own since they do not syndicate the various psychological factors, tangible factors, and present and ongoing issues that have culminated in radicalization and terrorism. These working papers have recognized this, and thus establishing a self-leading and self-initiating approaches that recommend that external actors only play a supporting role.¹⁹⁸

From 1970, the Sultanate has had vastly different experiences than its neighbors, and its proficiencies, shortcomings, developments, and attitudes serve as a strong working model

197. Geneive Abdo and Nathan J Brown. "Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism." Working Group Report of the Middle East Strategy Task Force. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, September 2016. 3.
http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/MEST_Religion_web_0921.pdf.

198. Albright, et al., "Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report of the Co-Chairs, 1.

to be reflected under the valuations of the Atlantic Council. The objective of this—mirroring the two analyses—is to present the social and political norms, key elements of history, domestic events, the promulgation of royal decrees, and endeavors of maintaining peace and security, and to highlight that Oman is a nation without a clearly defined agenda for countering terrorism and extremism yet productively addresses the many challenges experienced across the region. The Middle East is not ill-fated or doomed to certain tumultuous circumstances: sensationalizing deradicalization and counter-terrorism efforts is frankly retroactive and dismissive of the many realities the region is facing. Oman is an example of a nation that boasts religious tolerance and a keen sense of national and cultural identity as the crux of their success, and this chapter delves further into the core of this undisturbed society surrounded by strife.

Middle East Strategic Assessment

Security and Public Order: The current counterterrorism strategy is like an “endless game of whack-a-mole”: when one target is whacked, another emerges.¹⁹⁹ Eradicating the threat from under the board has not been considered as significant as trying to calculate the mole’s next move. Countering terrorism has consequently evolved into an overvalued task - an obsession of sorts – that has enveloped the international community in fear.²⁰⁰ Otherwise, the inability to solve many of the deep-seated problems is descriptive of the habitual status quo²⁰¹ of the Middle East. Governments have largely been unwilling to make serious, positive reform, so the Atlantic Council proposes to forge government legitimacy through trust-building between the civilian population, the government’s security sector, and services promising

199. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 16.

200. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 7, 11.

201. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 34.

loyalty to the national constitution and laws.²⁰² Liberal democracies and autocracies alike have taken measures too far by resorting to violence and oppression against opposition forces, many of which pose disliked.²⁰³ Certain tactics “to kill, capture, and otherwise quell terrorism”²⁰⁴ have sometimes been misapplied, resulting in considerable acts of torture or brutal military campaigns.²⁰⁵ These are extreme injustices, and even if they were to eradicate terrorist groups and individuals all together, such aggression and disregard is bound to produce new debilitating elements.²⁰⁶ Therefore professionalizing and depoliticizing governing systems to restore checks and balances of the government is necessary. To bolster security and public order means to acknowledge the obsession over the counter-terrorism agenda that distorts decision-making and problem-solving efforts and effectively continues to permit terrorism. Ironically excessive focus on countering terrorism has led to extreme passivity on the matter,²⁰⁷ which is why a common focus that addresses more than the mere existence of terrorist groups and the desire to destroy them is necessary to solve the actual threats of rampaging ideologies and take the first major steps towards securing the region.²⁰⁸ Assistance from external sources to provide training for “police, gendarmerie, interior ministry paramilitaries, and line military units, not just elite and counterterrorism formations”²⁰⁹ would be necessary to transcend the mere display

202. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 35.

203. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 13.

204. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 12.

205. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 13. The extreme measures laid out in this section are referring to interrogation and military techniques carried out by Arab states, Iran, and the United States as well as brutal military campaigns carried out by Hafiz al-Assad in the 1982 slaughtering at Hama and Israeli campaigns in both Lebanon and Gaza.

206. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 13.

207. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 16.

208. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 15.

209. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 35.

of intelligence sharing and regime protection towards superior intelligence forces and greater respect for law and the justice system.²¹⁰

“Unmet expectations related to an individual’s or a community’s political, economic, and/or social circumstances”²¹¹ – or grievances - are critical in the radicalization process²¹² and the Atlantic Council asserts that reprioritizing the counterterrorism agenda would mean to properly allocate “resources, time and energy”²¹³ towards eliminating grievances of the civilian population and striving for a stable foundation. Understanding this trifold characterization of grievances (the political, economic, and/or social factors), the next step is to ask: how and why do these grievances drive individuals or groups to take violent action, and what can be done to stop this?²¹⁴

Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism: The Middle East is experiencing immense pressure and uncertainties from a rapidly modernizing, globalizing world and thus a crisis of authority and identity ensues. With no rest from opinions, judgment, and dispute²¹⁵, only a minority of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims²¹⁶ support extremist ideologies or the use of violence for enforcing social and political change. Similar to the report on security and public order, this working paper on religion addresses that states have undermined their own legitimacy in the fight against extremism by repressing opposition groups, enforcing a heavy police presence and other disagreeable actions or attitudes.²¹⁷ Although it is the sovereign

210. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 35.

211. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 11.

212. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 12.

213. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 16.

214. Pollack, “Security and Public Order”, 11.

215. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 6.

216. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 6.

217. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 18.

duty²¹⁸ of each nation to fight against terrorism, short-term and tentative measures do not address the religion as a deep-seated norm in the social and political spheres across many regions and communities, and the very cognitive effect that religion and identity plays on the endeavors of countering violent extremism.

From a psychological standpoint, SAFIRE (Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators of & Responses to Radicalization) addresses how establishing positive identities through initiatives is more beneficial than efforts that do not target these psychological factors²¹⁹ which is why environments must capitalize upon individual participation in their communities, and provide support, mutual trust with authorities, and restore a high self-esteem. Many individuals are victims of an environment that cannot support their basic needs, creating contempt and disillusionment in their lives. This is not to defend violent actions, but on a deeper level, religion that has been exploited and historic dissidence creates very power propaganda and mobilizing rhetoric; likely the most well-known division is between the Sunnis and Shi'a sects.

Other sects include Salafism and Wahhabism, derived from tenants of Sunni Islam that have risen in popularity among individuals and states.²²⁰ These sects embrace an approach of 'going back to the beginning' of Islam. Salafism is a belief system that strives to strip away modern interpretations²²¹ of texts and endorses a very literal understanding of religious texts, which in certain cases has inspired the practice of political violence - predominantly against

218. Abdo and Brown, "Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism", 18.

219. Remco Wijn, "What Matters in Counter- and De-Radicalization Efforts?" (The Netherlands: SAFIRE; The Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research, September 2013), <https://web.archive.org/web/20170421075850/http://www.safire-project-results.eu/documents/focus/7.pdf>.

220. Trevor Stanley. "Understanding the Origins of Wahhabism and Salafism." The Jamestown Foundation, March 19, 2018. <https://jamestown.org/program/understanding-the-origins-of-wahhabism-and-salafism/>.

221. Joas Wagemakers, "Salafism," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, August 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.255>.

Shi'ites, consequently heightening sectarian violence.²²² Wahhabism is another sect of Sunni Islam that stems from Saudi Arabia and was formed by revivalists in the 18th century. Like Salafism, Wahhabis promote fundamentalism, reject traditional teachings of Islam and modernity, and its power has molded laws [particularly in Saudi Arabia] only increasing its command.²²³

Some religious societies, particularly those that either adhere to, or are permissive of extremist rhetoric, shelter state sponsors of religious institutions that use their authority to manipulate the message of Islam.²²⁴ Influential sheikhs have gained millions of followers on their social media accounts often head these efforts, using their powerful position as a religious leader to disseminate their doctrines and beliefs.²²⁵ A poor understanding of the interpretations and practices of Islam facilitate state-governed and state-designed religious education and preaching.²²⁶ Measures include, but are not limited to, “requiring government ministry approval for clerics to speak in mosques; permitting only state-sanctioned imams to issue fatwas, or religious decrees; requiring state approval for mosque construction, and having state authorities education and train imams”.²²⁷ Such manipulation of what is otherwise peaceful texts and convictions continue to foster radicalization, but however government crackdowns do not address the core issues or serve to eradicate these cycles of promulgation and a growing dominance.

Religion can be integrated willfully, moderately, and without exploitation or repression, and should be treated as a feasible, commonplace logic. Western societies generally

222. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 9.

223. Stanley. “Understanding the Origins of Wahhabism and Salafism”.

224. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 6.

225. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 15.

226. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 7.

227. Abdo and Brown, “Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism”, 14.

have not created a space for religion in politics, institutions, or communities, so the masses mobilize to solve this incomprehensible religion problem in societies that have facilitated such integration.²²⁸ With such differences between nations, tribal communities, sects, etc., religion is yet often treated as a blanket study, or looked at so broadly that one cannot understand the small fissures that are opening the floodgates. Grappling over religious authority and the implication of ones' identity has caused much grief, but on the other hand, religion has also proved itself as a mighty unifier. The democratization of religion is not fruitless: unification, globalized education, increased communications, and motivating individuals to engage with one another on a larger level are all very positive aspects of its presence and practice and all these factors, plus more, are conducive to stability and positive empowerment.²²⁹

Politics, Governance and State-Society Relations: The co-chairs of this paper explain that a sustainable governance requires the following: inclusion, transparency, effectiveness, and accountability.²³⁰ Widespread crisis in 2011 known as the Arab uprisings, or the Arab Spring, emanated from the pitfalls of regional governances and the collapse of state-society relations.²³¹ Despite the turmoil, the Arab uprisings did not cause the issues present today.²³² Certain nations that experienced unrest did not immediately assume the crucial responsibility of reforming and responding to citizens vying for change, particularly by not responding to government failures, the sustained weakening of institutions, governances, and social divisions, or the rooted religious and political conflicts that have preceded and followed the

228. Abdo and Brown, "Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism", 18.

229. Wijn, "What Matters in Counter- and De-Radicalization Efforts?".

230. Tamara Cofman Wittes. "Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations." Working Group Report of the Middle East Strategy Task Force. Washington, DC: Atlantic Council Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, November 2016. 28.
http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Politics_Governance_and_State-Society_Relations_web_1121.pdf.

231. Wittes, "Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations", 3.

232. Wittes, "Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations", 6.

uprisings. This idea of quantity or capacity trumping quality systems is a serious reality in some communities, as is the reality that many systems do not align their attitudes with those of citizens who could otherwise thrive under enriching opportunities for growth.²³³ Trust between the government and citizens is imperative as is the need for a supportive government,²³⁴ because coercive government behavior, or the failure to act sufficiently, makes it more likely that non-state actors will lash out in violence. Citizens might also feel compelled to turn to non-state actors for security and provisions.²³⁵ Additionally, individuals might seek out an ethnic or sectarian identity, or a strict ideological identity in further hopes of finding security and solidarity.²³⁶ Still, functioning and semi-functioning states must be prioritized equally with those entrenched in war, as suppressing war is as vital as taking necessary preventative and stabilizing measures. The demand for human rights is high across all societies and the justice system of states should be leveled.²³⁷ Civil society needs a platform where individuals can speak on social issues without fear of oppression, particularly for the youth of the Middle East who understand their potential and place higher expectations on themselves. But currently the youth are being integrated into stagnant societies, “top-down, patronage-based corporatist states”,²³⁸ that has worked for the previous generations, but is no longer sufficient. As capable actors, the youth should be encouraged to lead by providing them the foundation for progress rather than be left to pick up the pieces of societies wrought in violence and corruption.

Rebuilding Societies: Refugees, Recovery, and Reconciliation: Calamity in which numbers of people are fleeing their home countries reflects poor government standards and the

233. Wittes, “Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations”, 6.

234. Wittes, “Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations”, 6.

235. Wittes, “Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations”, 28.

236. Wittes, “Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations”, 6-7.

237. Wittes, “Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations”, 4.

238. Wittes, “Politics, Governance, and State-Society Relations”, 30.

failures to properly address violent conflict.²³⁹ Nations that are experiencing the most violence, and those which are taking in refugees, need to implement long-term, sustainable solutions to mitigate both burdens of conflict. Cycling conflicts, bouts of instability, long-term displacement, and the violated demographics across the various regions of the Middle East are just a few factors feeding into the crisis of refugees and internally displaced peoples (IDPs). Violent conflict has degenerated critical infrastructure and destroyed homes in the process, and as individuals, populations, and nations are surviving on a day-to-day basis, a long-term solution to address mass exodus and IDPs is one of the highest challenges on the list of the Atlantic Council. Peacebuilding is not an end-goal. It is the immediate step that must be taken to reprioritize aid and programs beyond providing food and water.²⁴⁰ Personal and tribal affiliations is an empowering factor that many Middle Eastern states have, which they act independently and host their own rounds of dialogue and negotiations over party lines, but time for this is running out as tensions thicken. As conflict continues the fragmentation of social groups and communities widens.²⁴¹ The situation of refugees and internally displaced peoples can only be once and for all solved with the dissipation of violent conflict. Until then, a shift from viewing individuals as burdens to instead posing sustainable support and programs, is the first step towards recovery and reconciliation.

*Economic Recovery and Revitalization: A study from Brookings titled *How Do Education and Unemployment Affect Support for Violent Extremism?* explores how education and unemployment affect support for violent extremism. “Frustrated expectations of individuals for economic improvement and social mobility” are founded to be leading causes*

239. Manal Omar, Elie Abouaoun, and Béatrice Pouligny. “Rebuilding Societies: Strategies for Resilience and Recovery in Times of Conflict.” Working Group Report of the Middle East Strategy Task Force. Washington, D.C: Atlantic Council Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, April 2016. 3. http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Rebuilding_Societies_web_0413.pdf.

240. Omar, et al., “Rebuilding Societies: Strategies for Resilience and Recovery”, 3-4.

241. Omar, et al., “Rebuilding Societies: Strategies for Resilience and Recovery”, 6.

of feelings of deprivation from opportunities which one would expect for themselves.²⁴² Although no evidence actually proves the relationship between education and violent extremism, Brookings argues that the “lack of adequate employment for opportunities for educated individuals”²⁴³ strengthens the correlation. The report suggests that the key to invigorating the economy of the Middle East is to unleash human capital through technology by improving education and opening societies and business environments.²⁴⁴ The 2007 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank Report conveyed that “on the whole, countries in the Middle East spend a higher percentage of their GDP on schooling that almost any emerging market with similar levels of per capita income”, but just because these countries are spending more does not mean the education is quality. Investing in quality education is essential²⁴⁵ to bring educated individuals back to the Middle East, as they are currently seeking employment elsewhere as the desire to emigrate among Middle Easterners increases.²⁴⁶ This yields a challenge for the region as tech and engineering job vacancies are left open while unemployment rates continue to soar. There is potential for tech-based entrepreneurship in the region that can be driven by increased incentives and improved education: The Middle East in this sense is an empowered environment that is simply eager for

242. Bhatia, Kartika, and Hafez Ghanem. “How Do Education and Unemployment Affect Support for Violent Extremism? Evidence From Eight Arab Countries.” Working Paper. Global Economy and Development. The Brookings Institution, March 2017, 2. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-do-education-and-unemployment-affect-support-for-violent-extremism/>

243. Bhatia and Ghanem, “How Do Education and Unemployment Affect Support for Violent Extremism?”, 2.

244. Sherif Kamel and Christopher M. Schroeder. “Economic Recovery and Revitalization.” Working Group Report of the Middle East Strategy Task Force. Washington, D.C: Atlantic Council Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, February 2016. 7. http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/publications/Economic_Recovery_and_Revitalization_web_0316_Updated.pdf.

245. Kamel and Schroeder, “Economic Recovery and Revitalization”, 6.

246. Kamel and Schroeder, “Economic Recovery and Revitalization”, 6.

meaningful opportunity.²⁴⁷ Achieving sustainable success, reaching short-term goals more quickly²⁴⁸, and simultaneously emphasizing the importance of technology as means for economic growth is an attainable goal, but first education systems must become more competitive, refocus their strategy towards imparting critical-thinking, and relax restrictive legal and regulatory frameworks.²⁴⁹

Oman: An In-Depth Focus

Security and Public Order: The late Sultan Sa'id upheld a strict policy of isolation which only served to create tensions with Arab countries including Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the former South Yemen. Understanding the immediate concern of putting a new face on the regime,²⁵⁰ Sultan Qaboos made it his priority to stabilize the security environment following the rebellion in Dhofar. The rebellion was one the greatest challenges to Sultan Qaboos' regime as hostilities raged against "communist-supported secessionists"²⁵¹ in the southern region of Dhofar and over the Yemeni border.²⁵² Ultimately the sultan was able to instill order across the once divided nation, instate an era of soft power influence, and respond to regional and international challenges through forging solid relationships with other states. The Sultanate's general foreign policy supports a stable security environment²⁵³ through its

247. Kamel and Schroeder, "Economic Recovery and Revitalization", 7.

248. Kamel and Schroeder, "Economic Recovery and Revitalization", 9.

249. Kamel and Schroeder, "Economic Recovery and Revitalization", 6.

250. Peterson, "Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development", 128-129.

251. Sarah G. Phillips and Jennifer S. Hunt. "Without Sultan Qaboos, We Would Be Yemen": The Renaissance Narrative and the Political Settlement in Oman: 'Without Sultan Qaboos, We Would Be Yemen.'" *Journal of International Development* 29, no. 5 (July 2017): 645–646. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3290>.

252. Peterson, "Three and a Half Decades of Change and Development", 129.

253. Gawdat Bahgat. "Security in the Gulf: The View from Oman." *Security Dialogue* 30, no. 4 (December 1999): 446. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010699030004006>.

cordiality with nations that may see each other as enemies.²⁵⁴ Oman maintains relationships with its neighbors, carries an “outward” and “internationalist” outlook, is pragmatic in its bilateral relations, and strays from involvement in violent conflict to sustain its cooperative affairs.²⁵⁵ Over the years, a flexible and unbiased foreign policy has ensured ties with the USA, Israel, Iran, and Iraq – nations with otherwise clashing positions - during a time which the Gulf states were pursuing individual interests.

To the east lies another serious matter. The Sultanate controls the Strait of Hormuz, one of the most important oil chokepoints²⁵⁶ off the Musandam Peninsula. This land is disconnected from the mainland of Oman and only shares a border with the United Arab Emirates. Holding such an important strategic position, the Sultanate treads prudently, and with the looming question - who should be blamed for injecting the region and the global community, with the illness of terrorism – the Sultanate responds to its associates in a unique manner. While the Iranians have been blamed for their pursuit of regional hegemony, the Saudis have been blamed for the spread of Wahhabism and Salafist ideas, and the West blames the mere existence of radical ideologies for much of the conflicts (whilst the Middle East collectively blames the United States for ultimately introducing the illness through the debilitating 2003 war in Iraq²⁵⁷), the Sultan has forged ahead in establishing ties with these nations, plus many others. Focusing on who to blame creates further stagnation, when states should be looking towards the future by problem-solving. While there is intense focus lying on combative strategies to resolve

254. Bahgat, “Security in the Gulf: The View from Oman”, 454.

255. Cüneyt Yenigün. “Oman Security Perspectives and NATO Relations.” edited by Hakan Akbulut, 12. Vienna, Austria, 2016.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Cueneyt_Yeniguen/publication/316082221_Oman_Security_Perspectives_and_NATO_Relations/links/58ef4960458515c4aa5366ec/Oman-Security-Perspectives-and-NATO-Relations.pdf.

256. Bahgat, “Security in the Gulf”, 446.

257. Albright, et al., “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report of the Co-Chairs”, 19.

conflicts and counter extremism in the Middle East,²⁵⁸ the Sultanate has strayed from likening its own tactics to the other Gulf nations.

The security environment in Oman differs from the other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as other Arab and Central Asian nations. The 9/11 Commission Report presents a powerful illustration of the security environment of Oman²⁵⁹ mentioning the Sultanate only once in a list of countries Osama bin Laden tried to recruit citizens to al-Qaeda. Not only did bin Laden fail to enter the Sultanate or recruit any of its citizens, Oman has also shown immunity to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.²⁶⁰ Additionally, Oman has sustained a tradition of central authority unlike the other Gulf monarchies which transformed into nation-states. This tradition, along with the fact that Sultan Qaboos is a respected Sandhurst-educated defense strategist,²⁶¹ who had a brief stint in the British Army before returning home to Salalah in 1964 to study Islamic Law²⁶², has instilled a strong sense of confidence across the nation.²⁶³ Oman's armed forces are the third largest of the Gulf Cooperation Council, they are recognized as the best trained, and they maintain close ties with the British and American military and combat units. Having cooperated in accepting the transfer of non-nationals from Guantanamo Bay, and accepting almost half of the Guantanamo

258. Albright, et al., "Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report of the Co-Chairs", 46.

259. "National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States." The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. Accessed January 23, 2018. <https://9-11commission.gov/report/>. The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission Report) is "an independent, bipartisan commission created by congressional legislation and the signature of President George W. Bush in late 2002, is chartered to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, including preparedness for and the immediate response to the attacks. The Commission is also mandated to provide recommendations designed to guard against future attacks."

260. "What Makes Oman Immune from Terrorist Groups like Al- Qaeda and Islamic State?" Fanack: Chronicle of the Middle East and North Africa, March 24, 2016. <https://fanack.com/oman/history-past-to-present/oman-immune-from-terrorism/>.

261. Kenneth Katzman. "Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service Report, April 12, 2017. 14. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RS21534.pdf>.

262. Peterson, *The Solitary Sultan*, 321.

263. Bahgat, "Security in the Gulf", 445.

Bay prisoners released since 2015, Oman has shown its support of the decision by the U.S. to close the center.²⁶⁴ The Sultanate has also accepted funding from the U.S. in relation to border control, anti-terrorism, and terrorism interdiction programs. A training program hosted in 2016 by the State Department's Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program served to strengthen visit, board, search and seizure operations, and to bolster security efforts at the ports of entry on land and at sea by training the military, security forces, and customs teams.²⁶⁵ Approximately 100 Omanis participated in The International Military Education and Training program (IMET) which is "used to promote U.S. standards of human rights and civilian control of military and security forces, as well as to fund English language instruction, and promote inter-operability with U.S. forces".²⁶⁶ Foreign Military Funding (FMF) has been utilized to promote the professional armed forces as Oman reinforces its ability to fight the Islamic State as a leading proponent against terrorism.²⁶⁷ Oman has also cooperated with the United States' own efforts against al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and the Islamic States (IS).²⁶⁸

Oman has taken active and preventative measures to counter attacks or acts of involvement within the country – such as the transport of terrorists or materials, or the use of Oman's land as a safe haven for affiliated individuals²⁶⁹ - although generally speaking, in terms of countering terrorism, Oman does not have a clearly defined agenda or demarcated

264. Morgan Byrne-Diakun. "Lessons in the Exercise of Soft Power: Oman's Role in the Middle East." Georgetown Security Studies Review, December 11, 2016. <http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2016/12/11/lessons-in-the-exercise-of-soft-power-omans-role-in-the-middle-east/>.

265. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2016".

266. Katzman, "Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy", 16.

267. Katzman, "Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy", 16.

268. Katzman, "Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy", 17.

269. Katzman, "Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy", 17.

focus for its counter-terrorism strategy. It has been suggested that after the inevitable death of Sultan Qaboos, despite the implementation of robust border controls, extremist groups including al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic States (IS) will overflow from violent conflict in Yemen, but however continued cooperation with U.S. forces for training are among many measures taken to bolster the capacity facing a challenging environment.²⁷⁰ The western border shared with Yemen is mountainous and rugged, a challenge for border security, but a fence has been constructed to prevent entry.²⁷¹ In further efforts to bolster internal security, Oman has structured a highly capable cybersecurity strategy and roadmap for moving forward, and according to the Global Cybersecurity Index 2017, is the top-ranking Arab state and ranked fourth globally for its practices.²⁷² The GCI notes the eGovernance Framework as a “thought-provoking practice”²⁷³ for the creation and mission of e.Oman, and due its overall security Oman received a score of 0.87 (Singapore leads with a .92 GCI). The score is produced from 25 indicators and 157 binary questions revolving around five pillars: legal, technical, organizational, capacity building, and cooperation.²⁷⁴ Cybersecurity is the crux of internal security as a protectorate of governmental and individual information, capable of trekking the dark web, internet, and social media; strong legal and technical institutions and frameworks, strong policy coordination, advanced research and education bases, and strong partnerships make for fortified practices against illegal acts and terrorism.²⁷⁵

270. “Country Reports on Terrorism 2016”.

271. “Country Reports on Terrorism 2016”.

272. “Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2017.” International Telecommunication Union (ITU), July 19, 2017. 30, 58. https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/str/D-STR-GCI.01-2017-R1-PDF-E.pdf.

273. “Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2017”, 39.

274. “Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2017”, v, 9, 17.

275. “Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2017”, 3-6.

Religion, Identity, and Countering Violent Extremism: Religion is an exceptional factor in Oman, as the Omanis are identifiable by their practice of Ibadism, a sect of Islam that differs from Shi'a and Sunni sects. Ibadism stems from the violent conflict between the caliphs Ali and Muawiyah. The King Abd bin al-Julanda, son of Julanda, opted to isolate Oman from following either of sect until the era of the Umayyid rule. This was due to disagreement over the rights to ascension of the Imamate to avoid further contention and violence.²⁷⁶ Ibadism, despite being a misunderstood religious minority, has emboldened its coexistence with other faiths both spiritually and physically. As an Ibadi-majority nation, Omanis have found strength in their freedom of religion. A strong religious identity ties into what is also a very strong national identity. Nonviolence and open dialogue is valued over controversy and contributes to Oman's preferred use of soft power, and religious leaders are at the helm calling for tolerance and the rejection of extremism.²⁷⁷

On the Imamate, so-called rights to succession are denied and instead elections are required to elect an Imam. Candidates can come from any ancestry or path of life as long as they are well-versed in Islam and are faithful to its beliefs and tenants.²⁷⁸ Ibadis believe there is no absolute necessity for an Imam, and according to doctrine if there is not a fit candidate there is no requirement to fill the position.²⁷⁹ Imams serve as religious and secular leaders and are considered "the first among equals", just as "humans are first among God's other

276. "Islam Arrives in Oman." Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence: Oman's Message of Islam. Accessed March 24, 2018. <http://www.islam-in-oman.com/en/islam-tolerance-exhibition/virtual-exhibition.html>.

277. Byrne-Diakun, "Lessons in the Exercise of Soft Power"

278. "Development in Oman." Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence: Oman's Message of Islam. Accessed March 24, 2018. <http://www.islam-in-oman.com/en/islam-tolerance-exhibition/virtual-exhibition.html>.

279. Mikko Vehkavaara. "Entering the Exiting: The Distinctive Features of Al-Ibādīya." *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 82 (May 2014): 133. <https://journal.fi/store/article/view/45114>.

creatures”.²⁸⁰ Although this may sound contradictory to Ibadism’s core values of egalitarianism, these ideals refer to electing the most qualified individual. One’s status as an Imam does not surpass the powers of those electorate to dismiss the individual if he is not capable of performing righteously or adhering to the tenants of Islam. Consultation and consensus between the Imamate (the religious and political rule) and the *umma* (the community of believers) are at the core of this political theory.²⁸¹ The collective moderate views of the Ibadis diverge from the Kharijite violence of earlier times.²⁸² Ibadis believe that violence, and all that has and will occur in the past, present, and future, is the predestination and will of God. The same belief also refers to ‘good’ events and Omanis can be heard everywhere saying, “إن شاء الله” (‘In shā’a llāh, or “God willing”) to one another, whether it be casual or serious conversation.

Ibadis are opposed to orthodox beliefs on merit and demerit of human action.²⁸³ Without ties to either religious sect - Sunnism or Shi’ism - Oman has been able to interact more freely amongst the international community by observing their beliefs of an equal and fraternal society in which tradition and modernization synchronizes. Ibadis desire a “righteous Muslim society” and refer to themselves as *ahl al-istiqama*, meaning “the people of straightness”.²⁸⁴ It is clear that countering violent extremism from a religious standpoint has been a multidimensional venture taking these views into account. Oman is an exceptional instance of successfully mixing religion and politics. Mikko Vehkavaara gives a clear account of Ibadism’s role and influence on Omani legislature:

280. “Development in Oman”.

281. Hoffman, “Ibadi Islam: An Introduction”.

282. Elizabeth Savage. “Survival through Alliance: The Establishment of the Ibadiyya.” *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 17, no. 1 (1990): 5.
http://www.jstor.org/stable/194826?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

283. Vehkavaara, “Entering the Exiting: The Distinctive Features of al-Ibādīya“, 133.

284. Hoffman, “Ibadi Islam: An Introduction”.

- (a) *al-Qur'ān* – the word of God,
- (b) *al-sunna* – the tradition of the Prophet,
- (c) *al-igṡmā'* – the consensus of juristic opinions of the learned Muslim '*ulamā*,
- (d) *al-quyās* – the analogical deduction in the constant striving to find a solution that meets with the changing requirements, (if there is no application decision already in (a) or (b) or (c), and
- (e) *al-istidlāl* – the process of seeking guidance – which includes:
 - (i) *al-istishāb* – the legal presumption (of, for instance, innocence until guilt is established),
 - (ii) *al-istihsān* – the preference to find an equitable solution, and
 - (iii) *al-masālih al-mursala* – the public interest and benefit.²⁸⁵

Vehkavaara also explains that open-mindedness and tolerance of foreign beliefs has stemmed from a rejection of dissimulation and hypocrisy, meaning historically that the bloodshed of unbelievers (those who differed from the Ibadis but were wanting in faith) was ultimately forbidden, and that deciding who was and was not a sinner, and to what extent, was rejected.²⁸⁶ On Oman's message of Islam, Sheikh Abdullah al-Salimi, the Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, has relayed the following message of how peace should be spread at home and abroad:

We have three population groups on earth: the first, consisting of Christians, Jews, and Muslims, who believe in one God and a holy book; the second, atheists, who have lost all confidence in religion; and the third group, representing a variety of religious and spiritual ideas. We endeavor to maintain a constructive and genuine dialogue with scholars and representatives of all these groups."

"The aim of exchange is to reflect on the foundations of our thinking, a common morality and a common sense of justice. For only when we are aware of these similarities and they form a basis for our actions, while accepting cultural differences, will we and our children enjoy a peaceful future."²⁸⁷

Politics, Governance and State-Society Relations: Primary efforts in Oman are based on nation-building and cohesion. When Sultan Qaboos rose to power he was essentially given

285. Vehkavaara. "Entering the Exiting: The Distinctive Features of Al-Ibāḡīya", 141-142.

286. Vehkavaara, "Entering the Exiting: The Distinctive Features of Al-Ibāḡīya", 136.

287. "Tolerance. Understanding, Coexistence - Oman's Message of Islam." An Initiative of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs - Sultanate of Oman. Islam-In-Oman. Accessed February 28, 2018. <http://www.islam-in-oman.com/en/interfaith-dialogue.html>.

exclusive agency²⁸⁸ over the direction of the nation and since, Oman has experienced rapid transition. The United Nations Development Program in 2010 judged that Oman has made the “fastest progress in human development”.²⁸⁹ Social and political policy has guided the development and modernization in Oman while maintaining its culture and traditions.²⁹⁰ Tribal leadership initially made up the State Council but since the mid-1990s, a bicameral parliament has been instituted.²⁹¹ The Council of Oman consists of the *Majlis Ad-Dowlah* (State Council), comprised of appointed members, and the *Majlis Ash-Shura* (Consultative Council), consisting of elected members from each of the nation’s districts.²⁹² The Sultan has referred to the Majlis Ash’shura as a “trailblazing experiment”²⁹³ that has ensured the cooperation between the government and its people; the council respects universal suffrage for both genders, over the age of 21.²⁹⁴

Oman’s history is not without a degree of turbulence as the nation had experienced protests in February 2011.²⁹⁵ Demonstrations during this time were the widest protests since the end of the Dhofar War,²⁹⁶ and due to their timing collating with the Arab Spring, what were overall non-violent, peaceful protests have since been compared to the tumultuous events occurring around the Arab world. The protests were primarily organized by Omani youth using

288. Phillips and Hunt, “Without Sultan Qaboos, We Would Be Yemen”, 646.

289. Phillips and Hunt, “Without Sultan Qaboos, We Would Be Yemen”, 646.

290. “Interfaith Dialogue.” Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence: Oman’s Message of Islam. Accessed March 24, 2018. <http://www.islam-in-oman.com/en/interfaith-dialogue.html>.

291. Katzman, “Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy”, 3.

292. Katzman, “Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy”, 3-4.

293. Sultan Qaboos. “Royal Speeches Delivered by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said”, 4.

294. Katzman, “Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy”, 4.

295. “Oman’s Arab Spring.” Fanack: Chronicle of the Middle East and North Africa, February 2, 2012. <https://fanack.com/oman/history-past-to-present/omans-arab-spring/>.

296. Marc Valeri. “Simmering Unrest and Succession Challenges in Oman.” Washington, D.C: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2015. 3. http://carnegieendowment.org/files/omani_spring.pdf.

social media platforms²⁹⁷ and they initially occurred in Sohar²⁹⁸, approximately 209 kilometers outside of the nation's capital of Muscat and ranged as far as Salalah²⁹⁹ in the far south of Oman, and Sur in the east.³⁰⁰ The individuals were protesting "...rising unemployment figures, cost of living and corruption among government officials, and to demand better working conditions and salaries. On a political level the demonstrators called for greater civil and political rights, greater power for the advisory Shura Council³⁰¹, judiciary independence and guaranteed freedom of expression".³⁰²

One protester was killed after clashes in Sohar as security forces sprang into action, firing rubber bullets³⁰³, after several government buildings were set on fire. The Carnegie Endowment notes that most of the protests were not targeting the sultan,³⁰⁴ only a few called for him to step down, and many were visibly supporting his rule.³⁰⁵ The Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence: Oman's Message of Islam project report explains that these

297. "Oman's Arab Spring".

298. "About Sohar." Netherlands Maritime University. Accessed February 19, 2018. <https://netherlandsmaritimeuniversity.eu/informatie/about-sohar>. Sohar lies in the Batinah region of Oman, approximately 200 kilometers north of the nation's capital, Muscat. The coastal city is the second most developed in Oman. Historically Sohar has been a fishing village but lately the city is prioritized as developing business and industrial zones to fulfill the developing economic 2020 plan. A fun fact about the city is that it is believed to be the birthplace of Sinbad the Sailor.

299. "Salalah." Destination Oman. Accessed February 19, 2018. <http://www.destinationoman.com/salalah/67>. Salalah is a coastal city of the Dhofari region approximately 1,000 km from Muscat.

300. "Oman's Arab Spring".

301. "The Shura Council – وزارة الخارجية العمانية." Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government Website. Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, September 23, 2013. <https://www.mofa.gov.om?p=784&lang=en>. The Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website explains that The Shura Council, "represents a shining aspect of Oman's modern Renaissance. It is Oman's elected representative council whose members, including women, are directly chosen by the citizens in the governorates under defined rules. The Government thus ensures total transparency of the election process."

302. "Oman's Arab Spring".

303. Katzman, "Oman Reform, Security, and US Policy", 4.

304. Valeri, "Simmering Unrest", 3.

305. Katzman, "Oman Reform, Security, and US Policy", 4.

protests were conflated, misread, and not put into perspective and only continued to dampen the negative image of the region. The exhibition has set out to correct such misunderstandings. Political change was occurring too slowly for eager youths and the well-educated, and economic performance was not up to par. The protests were a major discussion across the country, and the government sought action to ease the unrest by expanding the powers of several members of the Consultative Council as ministers. Thirteen ministers³⁰⁶ were appointed, including one female minister. Fifty-thousand jobs in the public sector were created, the minimum wage was increased to approximately \$520 USD per month, a \$400 USD grant was approved for unemployed job seekers, and independence for public prosecutors from government control was granted.³⁰⁷ Also answering to the grievances of the people, ministers who were underperforming were dismissed from office; increased political powers were later given to the Majlis al-Shura in mid-2012.³⁰⁸ Extreme isolation in the past deterred the elderly from supporting the protests, potentially the reason unrest dissipated as relatively easy as it did. Those incarcerated for law violations or defamation of the Sultan were virtually all pardoned; those dismissed from their jobs in both the public and private sectors were reinstated to their positions.³⁰⁹

Other instances of unrest are not as well-defined in the media, although there was once publicized concern in Oman stemming from a group of Indian Muslim youths employed within the country. Oman relayed to External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj that there were concerns over a group from South India that took great interest in the ideology of the Islamic State; the concern was raised in 2015, and 2018 reports show that efforts continue to be waged

306. Katzman, "Oman Reform, Security, and US Policy", 5.

307. Katzman, "Oman Reform, Security, and US Policy", 5

308. Peterson, *The Solitary Sultan and the Construction of the New Oman*", 328.

309. Katzman, "Oman Reform, Security, and US Policy", 5.

between India and Oman against extremism. In 2005, the Omani authorities arrested approximately 100 to 300 suspects following unconfirmed reports that individuals were planning to allegedly disrupt the Muscat Festival and its shopping area. Although no charges were made against the individuals arrested, the group was broken down after seizing a truck full of arms.³¹⁰ Little information was revealed, but family members of the suspects denied that there were any links to the arrests with al-Qaeda. The government denied that the arrests were tied to terrorism or any plots outside of country.³¹¹

Rebuilding Societies: Rebuilding Societies: Strategies for Resilience and Recovery in Times of Conflict: Considering the violent conflict over its' borders, Oman has displayed independent strategies. Although not "isolationist" *per se*, Oman is hesitant to interfere in other countries and is reluctant to involve its military outside of its own borders. The Sultanate would rather not appear to be escalating, which could further threaten the region's security environment.³¹² Instead the country has positioned itself as a "responsible, neutral, and evenhanded player"³¹³ to levy the possibility of destabilizing threats coming over the border. Such threats include waves of refugees which could overwhelm its infrastructure, or a terrorist attack that would destabilize its security environment. Yemen poses the most immediate emergency to the Sultanate of Oman by sharing a 288 km border³¹⁴ but so far Oman has not taken any steps that might encourage a violent reaction. The Sultan successfully negotiated the

310. AP. "Extremists Held in Oman Sweep, Say Diplomats." GulfNews, January 27, 2005. <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/oman/extremists-held-in-oman-sweep-say-diplomats-1.275228>.

311. N. Janardhan. "Islamists Stay Clear of Terrorism in Oman." *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 4, no. 5 (September 3, 2006). <https://jamestown.org/program/islamists-stay-clear-of-terrorism-in-oman/>.

312. Aymen Abdulkareem. "Oman's Positions on the Regional Crises." Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies. 5-6. Accessed September 2, 2018. <http://www.bayancenter.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/998976556.pdf>.

313. Abdulkareem, "Oman's Positions on the Regional Crises", 12.

314. Abdulkareem, "Oman's Positions on the Regional Crises", 8.

release of American hostages³¹⁵ and an Indian priest³¹⁶, who is an employee of the Vatican, from Yemen, demonstrating the country's preferred stance as a mediator and strengths as an accepted entity by even the most turbulent of nations. So instead of declaring war the Sultanate has opted to host round-table talks and groups from the Houthis, the United Nations, and the Saudi-led coalition.³¹⁷ The Sultanate only recently agreed to join the Saudi-led coalition in 2017 although Oman has maintained its so-called neighborly relations and "virtue of the tribal kinship between the Omani and Yemeni peoples".³¹⁸

Economic Recovery and Revitalization: Oman has one of the youngest populations in the world,³¹⁹ which is why an education system that complements its energetic community, so to strengthen the economic sector in the coming years, is vital. The majority of Oman's economy is mainly based on the oil industry – comprising 90% government revenues and more than 50% of GDP³²⁰ – but oil and gas resources are limited in comparison to neighboring countries.³²¹ From the onset of the Sultan's rule the governance has understood the need to ensure a firm base for economic policy planning and future development.³²² Immediately the Ministry of National Economy in collaboration with government and non-government entities produced a five-year development plan. Later at the Vision Conference for Oman's Economy conference in 1995, Vision 2020 was established as an economic and social blueprint to

315. "Byrne-Diakun, Lessons in the Exercise of Soft Power".

316. Times News Service. "Indian Priest Thanks His Majesty after Rescue from Yemen." Times of Oman, December 9, 2017. <http://timesofoman.com/article/116966>

317. Byrne-Diakun, "Lessons in the Exercise of Soft Power".

318. Abdulkareem, "Oman's Positions on the Regional Crises",

319. Valeri, "Simmering Unrest", 6.

320. Stroll and Peri, "Oman: 2020 Vision", 58.

321. Valeri, "Simmering Unrest and Succession Challenges", 6.

322. Maryam bint Belarab bin Mohammed al-Nabhani. "Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman through Implementing Total Quality Management: The Ministry of Education Central Headquarters - a Case Study." 20.

influence “An efficient and competitive private sector; a diversified dynamic globalized economy; well-developed human resources; sustainable development within a stable macro-economic framework.”³²³ By broadening the private sector, the Sultanate seeks to diversify the economy, particularly by expanding its ports, growing manufacturing, and developing the tourism sector.³²⁴ Diversification efforts have also expanded into sectors such as gas-based industries, information technology, and mining, mineral extraction, and production from these materials.³²⁵ Agriculture, health and insurance, and banking and finance are also major growing sectors.³²⁶

The Sultanate additionally benefits from trade deals by remaining neutral to the likes of Iran and Saudi Arabia. To keep the nation in good standing as a GCC member, as one author explains, Oman opts for a “business first, politics second” stance.³²⁷ A report in 2011 that revealed that 80% of the public-sector comprised of Omanis, in stark comparison to the 20% of Omanis working in the private-sector,³²⁸ prompted “Omanisation” as a key component of a strategy overhaul to promote the employment of Omanis and to increase the amount of Omanis working in the private sector.³²⁹

The tourism sector has been targeted for further job creation and economic stimulation by emphasizing the development of luxury hotels and expat communities, extensive coastlines, and a tranquil environment. Collaboration between ministries such as The Ministry of Heritage

323. al-Nabhani, “Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman“, 13.

324. Graeme Buckley and Gary Rynhart. “The Sultanate of Oman: The Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises : An ‘EASE’ Assessment.” Geneva: International Labour Office, 2011. 14.

325. al-Nabhani, “Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman”, 19.

326. Alfred Strolla and Phaninder Peri, “Oman: 2020 Vision,” *World Finance Review*, May 2016, 59, <http://www.worldfinancereview.com/issue/Oman.pdf>.

327. Byrne-Diakun, “Lessons in the Exercise of Soft Power”.

328. Buckley and Rynhart, “The Sultanate of Oman: The Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises”, 106.

329. al-Nabhani, “Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman”, 22.

and Culture (MOHC) and the private sector has made investments in job creation, all while preserving Oman's cultural communities, thus its national and cultural identities, and ultimately its financial status. The management of the Nizwa Fort (Oman's most visited national heritage monument) was handed to Omran, a major developer of the tourism, heritage, and urban development sectors, as part of this collaboration scheme.³³⁰

Furthermore the government works to create an environment in which civilians do not rely on the government to provide their employment and entrepreneurship is seriously encouraged. The Directorate General for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME) and the Cisco Entrepreneur Institute have both worked with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to provide consultation and training along with Stanford and Cornell University-devised programs for entrepreneurship education to fortify individuals choosing to assume their own ventures. Education is at the crux of positive employment numbers, but prior to 1970 such outlets were inconceivable. Oman had just three primary schools (and no secondary schools) at which 900 boys were enrolled.³³¹ Otherwise, boys and girls were taught to recite the Holy Quran and assessments were based on ones' ability to recite the Holy Quran by memory. The Arabic language and trivial mathematics were occasionally taught, although independently from a structured education system.³³² Due to this, several Omanis had fled to live abroad, but after Sultan Qaboos took power, many of these learned individuals replied to the Sultan's call to return to assist in the nation's development. After the coup d'etat in 1970, the education sector began to transition to a modern schooling system by the direction of the government to develop more rigid curricula and level systems.³³³ The education sector has made a point to

330. "About Omran." Omran. Accessed March 29, 2018. <http://omran.om/omran/about-omran/>.

331. Hunt and Phillips, "Without Sultan Qaboos, We Would Be Yemen", 646.

332. al-Nabhani, "Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman", 27.

333. al-Nabhani, "Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman", 28-29.

seek quality education, having found that education is crucial in alleviating poverty and inequality in the workforce. The Philosophy of Education was established to ensure the continuance of quality and modernizing education. The Philosophy was derived from the following sources: derivatives from Islam, thoughts and values of His Majesty the Sultan, tenants of the Basic Statute of the State, heritage and civilization of Oman, the characteristics and attributes of Oman, future visions, modern educational values, the proper staging of education for maturing individuals, and the desire to reinforce global awareness, empowering values, and the understanding of international conventions, charters, and a depth of major international issues.³³⁴ Since, the Philosophy has been updated and revised to facilitate educational development.³³⁵

By 1994, Oman began education development programs to change, adapt, and balance the demands of various groups and to deliberately instate a purpose and direction for the budding nation.³³⁶ In modern day, Omanis are no longer escaping poor conditions or restrictions, and instead students are engaging in constructive study abroad and foreign exchange programs. In 2002 alone, approximately 20,000 Omani students studied abroad, over half being women, and the students studied in forty-five different countries.³³⁷ Study abroad programs and exchanges are mutually beneficial for the individual and the state by contributing to the nation's good standing in the international community, the willingness of external nations to collaborate with the Sultanate, and the ability for individuals to achieve a diversified education and global awareness. In May 2017, the Caledonian College of Engineering (CCE) in Oman signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of South

334. "Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman", 15-17.

335. "Philosophy of Education in the Sultanate of Oman." Sultanate of Oman: The Education Council, 1438 AH 2017. 11. <https://mohe.gov.om/userupload/PDFs/انجليزى-عمان-20%سلطنة20%في20%التعليم20%فلسفة20%.pdf>.

336. Bhatia and Ghanem, "How Do Education and Unemployment Affect Support for Violent Extremism?", 15.

337. al-Nabhani, "Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman", 23, 27.

Carolina to support “research and development, academic exchange, exchange of research information, educational and training courses, publication opportunities, the training of key staff in teaching and learning, and student exchange”³³⁸ as just one of many initiatives to advance student education and global connections. Dr. Salim Al Aرامي, a member on the Board of Trustees at CCE, explains that the aim of the partnership was to invest in Oman, to increase global awareness, and diversity both teaching and learning.³³⁹ The University of South Carolina has reciprocated, most recently revising its cooperation and bonds in 2016, and again in 2017 in a meeting between top officials.³⁴⁰ Through student study abroad programs, particularly one of which focused on “Media and Culture of the Mideast”, U.S. journalism students were introduced to the media environment in the Middle East by visiting with government, education, and public relations organizations.³⁴¹ Additionally, the students experienced the local culture, religion, history, and traditions through their various travels to religious institutions, such as the Sultan Qaboos Mosque and engaging in Q&A sessions, and attending lectures, such as one held by the al-Amana Centre. The students also visited the museum, Bait Al Zubair, and were given the opportunity to go to events at the Royal Opera House, and so on. The student worked hands-on to produce their own media portrayals as they filmed through their travels.³⁴² Likewise, Omani students have carved their own space in the United States at the University of South Carolina (USC) through the establishment of the

338. “CCE to Collaborate with Top University in USA.” Caledonian College of Engineering University College. Accessed March 20, 2019. <http://www.cce.edu.om/newsDetails.aspx?news=1031>

339. “CCE to Collaborate with Top University in USA.”

340. “SQU, University of South Carolina Review Ties.” SQU Events. Accessed March 20, 2018. <https://www.squ.edu.om/squ-events/Article-Details/ArticleID/4027/SQU-University-of-South-Carolina-Review-Ties>.

341. Study Abroad Office. “Off to Oman.” University of South Carolina College of Information and Communications, May 24, 2016. https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/cic/journalism_and_mass_communications/news/2016/off_to_oman.php#.WrFNJmbMyb8.

342. Study Abroad Office. “Off to Oman.”

Omani Student Association and thorough involvement in USC's Office of International Student Services' International Education Week, among other events.³⁴³ Despite these comprehensive endeavors that are expanding globally, providing education still challenges the Ministry of Education because of Oman's highly diverse, and in certain regions, formidable terrain.³⁴⁴ Due to this, reaching Oman's Bedouin population that continues to live in remote desert and mountainous areas is an endeavor which Oman has to keep working at to ensure that all citizens can fulfill their right to an education.

Conclusions

Although Oman was emerging from an extended period of repressive rule under the former sultan, warfare, rebellion, and waves of uncertainty from conflict in Dhofar, the new government did not take to a fanatical stance in attempt to defensively safeguard its leadership or to undermine potentially threatening populations or individuals lingering in the south. The Sultanate still does not try to provoke citizens or external actors, and despite strife in the surrounding areas, Oman does not take beyond necessary means to prevent radicalization, extremism, and terrorism. By enabling modernization, maintaining the status quo, positioning itself as a mediator for open dialogue, and bolstering vital economic, education, religious, and security sectors, the nation has so far preserved an overall satisfied population. Some observers perceive this as enforced tolerance,³⁴⁵ whereas Sultan Qaboos sees the "tolerance, good conduct, rejection of bitterness, warding off sedition and abiding by customs and values based on fraternity, cooperation, and love among all" as the natural disposition of Oman and those who live there. The Sultan in his speech to the Oman Council expresses the word of God: "...do

343. Study Abroad Office. "Off to Oman."

344. al-Nabhani, "Developing the Education System in the Sultanate of Oman", 13.

345. Brown, "Official Islam In the Arab World".

thou good to thee and seek not mischief in the land”.³⁴⁶ As an adherent to Islam, he recognizes the importance of homes, schools, and mosques as educational centers, or what he calls “nurturing incubators”,³⁴⁷ as vital for conserving God’s creations:

...it will act as a fence protecting them from falling into the abyss of intruding ideas that call for violence, extremism, hatred, fanaticism, being opinionated and non-acceptance of the others, as well as other extreme ideas and opinions that lead to the tearing up of the society, draining its vital powers and leaving it in ruins and utter destruction, God forbid.³⁴⁸

The Sultan of Oman’s quiet demeanor has raised certain questions, but overall the country has been left out of mass media. Whether this is due to certain rights abuses of journalists, a reality that the citizens of Oman face, there is general consensus that the Sultanate has prioritized the needs of individuals within the country. Oman works well as a model for the recommendations of the Atlantic Council due to certain factors, such as its commitment to external assistance for providing impactful training and situational preparedness, its sustained role as a go-to figure for diplomatic relations, and Oman underscores the values of CVE and RVE agendas without exalting the counter-terrorism agenda as a be-all and end-all. As a religious society that celebrates Islamic values across education, policymaking, and society in general, Oman has equally emphasized “secular” (an emphasis in *The Philosophy of Education* of the importance of the sciences and technology as vital intellectual matters to the development of the nation) and universal values (the fostering of respect, global awareness, and the acceptance of all people) that are fundamental to its balanced society.

Certain factors of the Omani model are transferable to other nations, and others are not. Although its lessons in moderation and autonomy are beneficial, The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs explains that the reflections of Ibadism on Oman’s governance is more

346. Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, “Royal Speeches Delivered by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos“, 57.

347. Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, “Royal Speeches Delivered by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos“, 57.

348. Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, “Royal Speeches Delivered by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos“, 57.

so based on “heritage” and thus it has a natural ability to flux in the lives of Omanis.³⁴⁹ As other nations are not Ibadi-majority, governing and religious practices might not resonate as well due to differences in religious tenants and traditions. So as much as this is a regional challenge, generally it’s a matter of nations finding out what works best for the collective, but it goes without saying that a government that connects to its people and forges reciprocity and trust fares better than one that uses coercive scare tactics. Like any other nation, Oman’s system is neither perfect nor is free from criticism, but as the Atlantic Council’s Final Report states, “the Middle East is not condemned to the current cycle of conflict” and Oman has shown overall shown its resistance to what has become commonplace elsewhere.³⁵⁰ The young nation is still taking its first steps, but the steps which it has taken, and the ways which individuals are striving, show that this is a case agreeable to the Atlantic Council’s notion that societies must wholeheartedly condemn the violent trends of terrorism that the international community continues to face. This has meant foregoing certain ‘liberties’ for the sake of stability and peace, so the question remains for other nations to ponder: is living in fear from terrorism, its precursors, and consequences truly considered living in freedom?

349. Brown, “Official Islam In the Arab World”.

350. Albright, et al., “Middle East Strategy Task Force Final Report of the Co-Chairs”, 101.

CONCLUSIONS

*“Extremism, under whatever guise, fanaticism of whatever kind, factionalism of whatever persuasion would be hateful poisonous plants which will not be allowed to flourish.”*³⁵¹ - Sultan Qaboos, National Day Nizwa, 18.11.1994

This case study found the following regarding the implementation of the institutional and legal frameworks and their contribution to countering radicalization and deterring terrorism:

1. By working to eliminate the populations grievances’ from the onset of 1970, Sultan Qaboos was able to bind the figurative and literal divisions created by borders, poor infrastructure, limited resources and technology, and the overall abandonment from the previous rule.
2. Oman does not specifically target countering radicalization, extremism or terrorism. Instead the Sultanate has targeted the needs of its civilian population and continues to revise its governance and frameworks to meet the evolving needs of the country.
3. Despite diverse terrains and Oman’s major cities being at opposite ends of the nation, there are collective norms that continue to work. Generally the country has preserved its traditions, values, and customs to sustain the integrity of the nation’s history. Modernization has been embraced at a vigilant but steady pace.
4. The balance of religion and government shows that religion does not need to be a driving force of conflict in the Middle East. Actors, rather than religion, should be to blame.³⁵²
5. The general Omani population prefers its status quo of peace. Maintaining the security environment is a priority for the majority no matter the costs. This case study encapsulates the sentiment of the Omani government and people towards extremism and terrorism. Whether it is perceived as a harmonious and accepting nation, or a charming police state

351. “Tolerance. Understanding, Coexistence - Oman’s Message of Islam.”

352. Global Post. “Mitigating Sunni-Shia Conflict in ‘the World’s Most Charming Police State’.” Public Radio International, April 8, 2015. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-08-04/mitigating-sunni-shia-conflict-world-s-most-charming-police-state>.

that enforces a state of tolerance,³⁵³ data continues to demonstrate that Oman has a clean slate when it comes to terrorism.

6. As a mediator, negotiator, and forger of its own path, the Omani government has displayed its ability to work with nations comprised of various religious beliefs and practices, such as Iran, Israel, the United States³⁵⁴ and governments and institutions with differing security environments and agendas from its own. These are not roles that every nation or institution can assume but this stance has fared Oman well.

Oman has implemented and maintained its frameworks without taking a fanatical response to neighboring crises and tensions. Recognizing the role that religion plays in its community, and furthermore recognizing the feasibility of partnerships, whether its cohort's agenda fully aligns with its own, Oman has been able to govern the population and meanwhile forge innovative foreign policy. By first and foremost protecting its security environment, particularly through the practice of non-interventionism, not accepting refugees, and uninvolving itself in either political or religious tensions, Oman has consequently not made any foes by assuming neutral functions.

This final portion considers the future of Sultanate moving forward and potential issues that could contest the research question and findings of this case study. One of the two foremost concerns is the Sultan's eventual and inevitable demise. Citizens and government leaders alike are asking, *what comes next?* Who will take over the leadership and how will they direct the course of the country? What will be the reaction of the people? Can the Sultanate maintain a peaceful, stable environment? The Sultan's health problems have already forced him to take an eight-month leave of absence for medical care in Germany. Since, anxiety has become more

353. "Waking Up Too." *The Economist*, June 23, 2012. <https://www.economist.com/node/21557354>.

354. Global Post. "Mitigating Sunni-Shia Conflict in 'the World's Most Charming Police State'." Public Radio International, April 8, 2015. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-08-04/mitigating-sunni-shia-conflict-world-s-most-charming-police-state>.

tangible as rumors, emotions, and uncertainty runs rampant.³⁵⁵ Oman's history and current standing is telling of the nation's rapid and sustained successes, but without the glue that bound the once divided nation, certain issues of surrounding war and extremist ideologies could threaten Oman's security, stability, and triumphs, especially as a succession plan has not been legitimately announced to the public.

The second foremost concern is that Oman could contribute to its own downfall, by marring its efforts with social pressures, state censorship of media, and continuing human rights abuses. There is much ambiguity whether the state of peace correlates with human rights, which goes back to this idea of enforced tolerance. Without trying to speculate, this section serves to suggest that infringing upon the legal rights of civilians could affect the counter-terrorism environment by creating grievances. This ties into concerns over the media and censorship because many topics are considered taboo for journalists to report on including matters of the Sultan's personal affairs, government affairs, and certain topics of religion. Journalists have been subject to arrest for crossing these boundaries, including three journalists who were recently sentenced in September 2016 for publishing allegations of judicial corruption thus disrupting the public order of the state.³⁵⁶ According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, zero journalists have been killed, zero were targeted for murder, and zero were murdered with impunity.³⁵⁷ Whether the media has censored events of violent extremism in the nation is unknown though Oman's rules are very strict when it comes to not disturbing the public order: this has effected individuals other than journalists, and despite the many

355. Basma Mubarak Said. "The Future of Reform in Oman." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 9, no. 1 (December 16, 2015): 51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2015.1118913>.

356. "Oman Sentences Three Journalists to Prison." Committee to Protect Journalists, September 26, 2016. <https://cpj.org/2016/09/oman-sentences-three-journalists-to-prison.php>.

357. "Oman." Committee to Protect Journalists. Accessed March 4, 2018. <https://cpj.org/mideast/oman/>.

protections and freedoms of the state, by continuing these rigid practices there is always the possibility that civilians will push back against the government.

The Oman 2017 Safety and Crime Report provided by the United States Department of State Bureau of Diplomatic Security rates Oman's crime and safety situation as "medium" based on the non-violent property crimes. Violent crimes remain rare.³⁵⁸ The Crime and Safety Report explains that unemployment and displaced third-country national workers contribute to increasing numbers of financial crimes.³⁵⁹ In the report's section "other areas of concern" certain "allegations of suspicious activities" were reported. The threat of terrorism in Muscat has been rated a medium threat despite reporting that "no indigenous terrorist groups known to be operating in Oman"; "no instances in which U.S. citizens or facilities in Oman have been subject to terrorist attacks"; and, "instances of anti-American or anti-Western sentiment in Oman are rare".³⁶⁰ Muscat has been rated as a low-threat in regards to political, economic, religious, and ethnic violence. The report only states that "...spontaneous and/or planned public demonstrations can take place..."³⁶¹, as might occur in any society that observes local or global events, but also reports that Oman is, "...an important regional counterterrorism partner...works actively to prevent terrorists from conducting attacks within Oman and from using the country for safe haven or transport of weapons and material".³⁶² In 2014 there was an anonymous posting on an extremist website, which according to the report, "...encouraged attacks against American and other Western teachers in the Middle East", although it is not

358. Christian J. Schurman, Sandy Cowie, and Thomas G. Scanlon. "Oman 2017 Crime and Safety Report." Overseas Security Advisory Council - Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Oman Crime and Safety Report. Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of State, January 23, 2017. <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=21091>.

359. Schurman, et al., "Oman 2017 Crime and Safety Report".

360. Schurman, et al., "Oman 2017 Crime and Safety Report".

361. Schurman, et al., "Oman 2017 Crime and Safety Report".

362. Schurman, et al., "Oman 2017 Crime and Safety Report".

specified whether it was actually posted within Omani borders, or let alone targeting Oman.³⁶³ A high level of security awareness, despite no previous or violent action, is urged due to external issues such as civil war in Yemen, its close proximity to Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other vulnerable nations, and accessibility from expansive coastlines and vacant desert borders. War in Yemen poses another risk for Oman: the Sultanate has broken tradition by joining the Saudi-led coalition against terrorism.³⁶⁴ By siding with Saudi Arabia Oman risks slighting its relationship with Iran, although joining the coalition could be seen as a step taken out of necessity as war continues just over its borders, but this equally risks retaliation of Ansar al-Sharia and AQAP although reports have not suggested such contention thus far.³⁶⁵

In final closing, the overall significance of this case study is to represent a country – a conservative, Middle Eastern country surrounded by civil war, extreme religious ideologies, and major political tensions – that for all that is known, has not been a victim of a terrorist attack, has not produced or harbored a terrorist, or has not produced an individual that has left to join a terrorist group. There is a global agenda to stop terrorism in its tracks yet with all of the media headlines pointing fingers and sensationalizing terrorism, not much attention has been paid to this low-profile country. In plain terms, Oman is boring: rich traditions, a colorful cuisine, and an overall happy population do not make the cut for headlining newspapers and literature, but this status is desirable for countries that have only been met by corrupt authorities and angered civilians. This study is exceptionally broad but the purpose of this is to introduce new approaches to countering violent extremism and terrorism that do not actually entail tackling terrorists and organizations. Placing Oman in the center is to realize the multifarious

363. Christian J. Schurman, Cowie, S., and Scanlon, T. G. (2016). *Oman 2016 Crime and Safety Report* (Overseas Security Advisory Council - Bureau of Diplomatic Security). Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of State. Retrieved from <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=19108>

364. Jeremy Luedi. “2017 Preview: Oman Threatened as Risks Multiply.” *Global Risk Insights*, July 1, 2017. <https://globalriskinsights.com/2017/01/2017-sees-threats-for-oman/>.

365. Luedi, “2017 Preview”.

efforts that have directly contributed to alleviating the grievances that could otherwise stem from insecurity and disorder, the absence of a religious or national identity, overwhelming factors of civil war and the mass exodus of civilians, broken state-society relations, and the absolute inability to provide for oneself in a deficient economy that eliminates the opportunity for employment or forbids a quality education. For forty-eight years the Sultanate has endeavored to prop up its citizens, who have reciprocated in preserving their community through support – and at times the rallying cry for change - so they can continue to learn, worship, and engage in a society that is as fortified against extremist ideals as is the endurance of the people.

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: START 45 Years of Terrorism (1970-2015)³⁶⁶

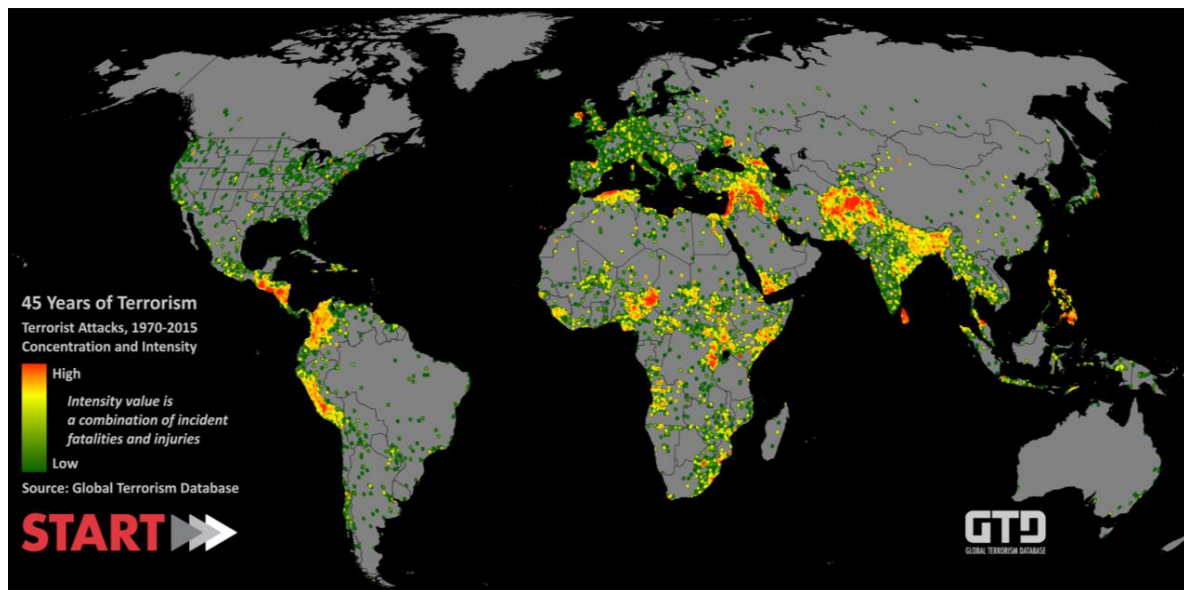
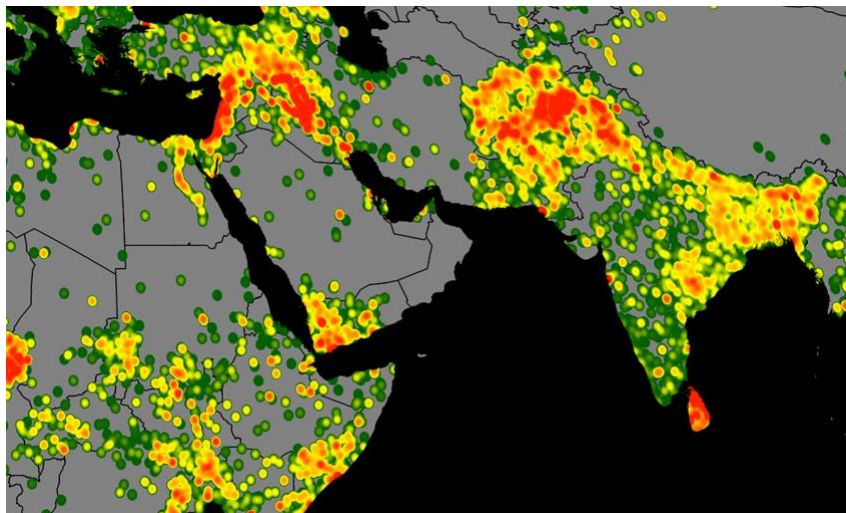


Figure 2: START 45 Years of Terrorism (1970-2015) Oman³⁶⁷



366. "45 Years of Terrorism."

367. 45 Years of Terrorism".

Figure 3: Detailed Map of Oman³⁶⁸



Figure 6: Push and Pull Factors, European Parliamentary Research Service³⁶⁹

Push factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of economic opportunity: poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption • Marginalisation and discrimination: restricted political, social and economic mobility • Poor governance, violation of human rights, and rule of law issues: repressive policies, surveillance • Prolonged and unresolved conflicts: security vacuum, instability, deep-rooted grievances • Radicalisation in prisons: harsh treatment, prison conditions, gang activity, lack of security, drug use
Pull factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual background and motivation: negative experiences with state institutions • Collective grievances and victimisation: oppression, subjugation, foreign intervention • Distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies, and ethnic and cultural differences • Leadership and social networks: charismatic leaders, informal family and social networks

368. Katzman, “Oman: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy”, 3.

369. Göppfarth and Pawlak, “United Nations Response to Violent Extremism”.

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