Terrorism: Is it on the Decline?

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TERRORISM: IS IT ON THE DECLINE?

A Thesis

Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Government
The College of William and Mary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Christine McCrorey
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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Approved, August 1994

David Dessler
David Leblang
Donald Baxter
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, family and friends who provided me with encouragement and support throughout my academic career. I especially wish to thank my parents who have taught me the importance of education and encouraged me in all my pursuits.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of terrorism by Syria, Libya and Iran in light of the changes in the structure of the international arena. Factors such as the U.S. raid on Libya, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli peace conferences have altered the costs and risks associated with sponsoring terrorism. New economic, political and military costs have diminished the expected returns of the leaders of Syria, Libya and Iran in pursuing their goals through state sponsored terrorism.

It is suggested that state sponsored terrorism by these states will decline as the costs and risks involved in sponsorship increase and as the political power of the state decreases. The power and size of the individual state will determine the extent that these factors influence the continuation of state sponsored terrorism. Weaker states will be more susceptible to the increased risks associated with state sponsorship of terrorism.

The results reveal varying degrees of commitment to state sponsored terrorism by Syria, Libya and Iran, in relation to their political power. Syrian and Libyan terrorism have declined as the costs of such sponsorship have increased. The political power of Iran permits this state to ignore these costs and continue to sponsor terrorism. The hypothesis that the political power of a state helps determine its willingness to sponsor terrorism fits the cases of Syria, Libya and Iran.
TERRORISM: IS IT ON THE DECLINE?
INTRODUCTION

State sponsored terrorism has been defined by several scholars, such as Cline and Alexander, in a vein similar to Clausewitz's definition of war, as a continuation of policy by other means.¹ States such as Syria, Libya and Iran have used state sponsored terrorism as a continuation of both domestic and foreign policies. State sponsored terrorism permits states to pursue policy that is beneficial to the interests of the state. The sponsorship of terrorism by Syria, Libya and Iran allows these states to pursue a continuation of their foreign and domestic policies without the financial and political costs and risks involved in direct confrontations or in open warfare. The leaders of these states must believe that the sponsorship of terrorism will be beneficial, rather than detrimental to the interests of the state. Therefore the costs or risks involved in sponsoring terrorism must not be greater than the political goal being sought.

Syria, Libya and Iran consider sponsorship of terrorism as a legitimate means of achieving their goals. They chose to sponsor international terrorism because they believed their

sponsorship would allow them to further their goals. However, changes in the international arena and the reaction of the international community to terrorism have altered the costs and risks involved in sponsoring terrorism. The political and economic needs of states such as Syria, Libya and Iran, as well as the fear of military reprisals, outweigh the potential political gains to be achieved through the continuation of state sponsorship of terrorism. New economic and political needs have begun to dictate the need for new policies with respect to state sponsored terrorism.

The United States' raid on Libya, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli peace conferences contributed to increasing risks and diminishing returns associated with the sponsorship of terrorism. The costs involved in sponsoring terrorism began to exceed the potential gains of the policy. According to terrorist expert Brian Jenkins, "sanctions, the threat of force, and even the use of force probably has [had] a useful effect in at least introducing into the calculations of state sponsors that this activity is not entirely cost free, that they do run risks."

The number of incidents of international terrorism in the late 1980s supports Jenkins' belief. Incidents of international terrorism began to decline during this period.

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"Since 1976, the incidence of terrorism worldwide never fell below 400, until 1992, when the number of terrorist attacks worldwide was reported to be 362." There were approximately 35% fewer incidents than the 567 incidents reported in 1991. States which had once pursued state sponsorship of terrorism began to see the need to balance the costs and gains such a policy could bring. Economic needs forced these states to try to improve their international image. Political goals forced these states to turn toward the diplomatic process in pursuit of their goals rather than a policy of sponsorship of terrorism.

Overall the raid on Libya, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli peace conferences have affected the number of terrorist incidents which have occurred in the past few years. However, the degree to which these factors have affected individual states differs. An analysis of the state sponsored terrorism of Syria, Libya and Iran will reveal the differing degree to which these factors influenced the continuation of state sponsored terrorism. I believe the power and size of the individual state will determine the extent of their continued state sponsored terrorism. The three states to be examined in this analysis reveal varying degrees of political, economic and military power. The increased costs and risks and the

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4 Ibid., 7.

5 The population, Gross National Product and total armed forces estimated in 1991 for each country are as follow: Syria, population 13 million, GNP $13 Billion, and Armed Forces 404,000; Libya, population 4.5 million, GNP $27
diminishing returns associated with continued state sponsorship of terrorism will have more effect upon weaker states. These states are more susceptible to the increased risks. More powerful states can afford to ignore the increased risks and continue their state sponsorship until such time as the power of the state weakens and/or the costs become too great to ignore.

This analysis will examine how these factors have influenced the state sponsorship of international terrorism of Syria, Libya and Iran, as the economic and political costs of sponsorship began to outweigh the possible benefits of pursuing such a policy. Whether or not these states continue to sponsor international terrorism depends on their political needs and their political power.

First this paper will define the concept of state sponsored terrorism and the influences upon it in a changing world structure. Then it will examine the history of Syria's, Libya's and Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism, identifying the reasons for sponsoring terrorism; the organizations supported and the means of support; involvement in terrorist incidents; and any indications and/or reasons for declining involvement in international terrorism.

The use of terrorism to pursue political, religious and secular goals may offer less chance for the successful

Billion, and Armed Forces 85,000; and Iran, population 58 million, GNP $36 Billion, and Armed Forces 528,000. The point here is to establish the relative size of these states, with Iran being the largest, followed by Syria and then Libya. The Middle East and North Africa 1993, 39th Edition (London: Europa Publications, 1993), 446, 675, 839.
achievement of Syria's, Libya's and Iran's goals and ambitions, given the increased costs involved. The uncertainty of the global situation and its strategic implications may make these choices less rational than they had previously been. However, the ultimate factor in determining which states may continue to sponsor terrorism may simply be the political power and position of the state in the region and in the international community.
CHAPTER ONE
THE CONCEPT OF STATE SPONSORED TERRORISM

Defining Terrorism

The term "state sponsored terrorism" remains difficult to define. In this paper the term will be defined as the use of force by private individuals sponsored by a sovereign power, to pursue the political goals of the sponsoring state. The debate over such a definition raises questions as to its applicability to the covert and intelligence policies of western states, since the definition of state sponsored terrorism differs according to who is defining it. Shireen T. Hunter writes that "States define terrorism according to their own viewpoint, i.e. whether or not they are victims of terrorism. Western powers, or first world nations are more likely to condemn the actions of third world countries, i.e. mideastern powers as terrorists, than they would be to define the actions of their allies as terrorist."¹ Third world nations do not see terrorism in the same light and are more likely to define these actions as "paramilitary action' as 'resistance to occupation,' or as part of a 'war of national

¹Hunter, 20.
liberation."² The leaders of Syria, Libya and Iran would not define their sponsorship of these groups as terrorist, but rather as a legitimate means to pursue political, ideological and religious goals.

State sponsored terrorism does differ from other types of force used by sovereign states. Force used by terrorists is not necessarily aimed at particular targets but rather at the destabilization of a political power or a power's influence in a region. Civilians, rather than military personnel or installations, are often the targeted victims of terrorism.

Regardless of this debate state sponsored terrorism is not associated with random acts of violence, but rather with the political goals of the sponsoring state. With the sponsorship of terrorist organizations, states are pursuing specific policy goals. "Terrorism is a political phenomenon aimed at achieving politically determined goals."³

The reasons for sponsoring terrorist groups depend upon the state, but generally they fall into at least one of the following categories: a political reason such as removing or destroying the influence of another state in the region or the ability to covertly pursue goals; a religious reason such as the spread of Islam; or a secular reason such as to fulfill the ambitions of a ruler for Pan-Arab unity or territorial


³Hunter, 21.
gains. State sponsored terrorism allows states to pursue these goals with relatively little risk of retaliation for these actions, since they can easily deny involvement.

Accordingly state sponsored terrorism as a foreign policy of states has continued to increase, since it has permitted states to pursue political objectives at a relatively low cost. As one author writes "states will continue to employ foreign policies of terror as long as they continue to justify its use and conclude that there is likely to be a favorable outcome."

The means by which states employ foreign policies of terror differ according to the economic situation of the sponsoring state. State sponsorship can take the form of direct financial aid to terrorist organizations; training in weaponry, assassination methods, explosives or intelligence gathering; and providing transportation, intelligence and means of communication. Often states sponsoring terrorist groups use their diplomatic privileges as a means of funneling weapons and information to terrorists. Sponsorship can also vary according to the involvement of the sponsoring state in directing the terrorist action. Some states actually control

4Ibid., 21.


the actions of the terrorists they sponsor while others simply provide the terrorist organizations with the means by which to pursue their actions. In either case the sponsoring state is pursuing a policy objective in its sponsorship of terrorism.

Identifying the sponsors of terrorist organizations is difficult. There is little direct evidence linking states to terrorist groups or to specific terrorist actions. States which sponsor terrorist groups do so because sponsorship allows them to secretly pursue their political goals with little chance of being connected to the terrorist actions. Regardless of the difficulty in identifying sponsors of terrorism, Syria, Libya and Iran are still considered to be the worst offenders, and thus they remain on the United States Department of State list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Changes in the International Community

Though Syria, Libya and Iran are still considered to be the worst offenders of state terrorism, the changes in the makeup and balance of power in the international arena in the past decade have had a profound impact on the sponsorship of terrorism by the these states. The Cold War permitted many state sponsors of terrorism to balance the risks of sponsoring terrorism with the potential gains if terrorism had the desired effect. The antagonism and political uncertainty between the two superpowers allowed states such as Syria, Libya and Iran to play each superpower against the other in pursuing their goals. The Cold War created an atmosphere of uncertainty regarding how state sponsored terrorism may have
been viewed by the superpowers. Thus little action was taken against these states.

During the 1970s and 1980s the Soviet Union was considered a sponsor of terrorism, providing financial aid, training and weapons to terrorist groups. Many believed that the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries were leading benefactors of global terrorism.\(^7\) Syria, Libya and Iran each at some time received support and, in some cases, political and military backing from the Soviet Union.\(^8\) The United States, while condemning this practice, did not act against such a power because of the uncertainty generated by the Cold War atmosphere, and the lack of cooperation among the European powers. The United States did not want to risk antagonizing any of these countries and pushing them further into the Soviet camp. Neither power was willing to risk losing influence in this region by action against state sponsors of terrorism. Thus Syria, Libya and Iran were for many years able to pursue their sponsorship of terrorism without much cost.

However, in the early 1980s with the presidency of Ronald Reagan, the United States began to pursue a much more forceful and deterministic policy against international terrorism and state sponsored terrorism. Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's blatant support of terrorist organizations and his open hostility


\(^{8}\)Cline and Alexander, Terrorism: As State Sponsored Covert Warfare, 15.
towards the United States made Libya an easy target of U.S. condemnation of state sponsored terrorism. Between 1979-1986, the United States and Libya confronted each other several times over this issue. In 1979 Libyan demonstrators sacked and burned the U.S. embassy in Tripoli. After this attack the United closed the embassy. In August 1981, the United States shot down two Libyan aircrafts during maneuvers in the Gulf of Sidra. In November 1981, President Reagan revealed a Libyan plot to assassinate him and several high ranking government officials. In December 1985, Libya was suspected of involvement in the massacres at the Rome and Vienna airports. In January 1986, the United States broke off all remaining economic relations with Libya and froze all Libyan assets in the United States. In the spring of 1986, the U.S. and Libya again confronted each other in the Gulf of Sidra. Libya fired at American planes and the U.S. retaliated by attacking the base and sinking three Libyan patrol boats.9

In each case the Soviet response to the confrontation was lukewarm in support of Libya. Libya's apparent isolation, internationally and in the Middle East, permitted the United States the flexibility it needed in confronting Libya's state sponsorship of terrorism. The United States' actions against Libya which culminated in the bombing raid in retaliation for Libyan involvement in a terrorist attack, stood as a warning to other state sponsors of terrorism. The Soviet Union's lack of response also provided an indication of the diminishing

political rivalry between the two superpowers and the possibility of cooperation between the two powers in the fight against terrorism.

The United States' action against Libya also contributed to building an international consensus for the condemnation of terrorism and the use of sanctions against state sponsors. Following the bombing raid, the European nations agreed to cooperate in the fight against terrorism. The cooperation of the international community and the lack of any retaliatory action in support of Libya signaled to other nations that state support for international terrorism would no longer be risk free. Economic sanctions became a means of punishing those states that continued to sponsor terrorist organizations. Accordingly in the second half of the 1980s the European community broke off diplomatic relations with Syria, Libya and Iran for their support of international terrorism. The United States and the international community began taking a much more active and forceful stand against sponsors of terrorism.

The thawing of relations between the superpowers and the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union also influenced the ability of states, who formerly had depended upon the Soviet Union for aid, to continue to sponsor terrorism. These states no longer received the same amount of financial aid or military equipment from the Soviet Union, nor could they count on the backing of the Soviet Union in case of retaliatory measures by other states. Syria, which had long been a recipient of Soviet aid, saw a dramatic decrease in its
delivery of weapons. Between 1980 and 1984, Syria received an annual rate of weapons transfer of $2.9 billion, but between 1985 and 1989 this had decreased to an average of $1.3 billion.\(^\text{10}\) The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War greatly diminished the ability and the inclination of the former Soviet Union to provide support to states sponsoring terrorism.

The prospect or hope of the success of the Arab-Israeli peace conferences also seemed to decrease the need to risk the costs involved in sponsoring terrorism. The conferences which began in October 1991 started a process of peace which lead to the historic agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization in September 1993. Though the peace conferences are only the beginning of a long process, they do for the first time offer the prospect of a peaceful resolution. An end to the Arab-Israeli conflict which was acceptable to both parties could result in decreased support for terrorist organizations which sought the resolution of the Palestinian problem. States which sponsor such terrorist organizations may find a diplomatic resolution less costly and as effective. Even states which sponsor the most radical of the Palestinian terrorist groups, which seek the destruction of Israel, may accept the impracticality of such an event and recognize the benefits of a diplomatic resolution. Syria, in particular, may discontinue the support of terrorist

organizations if a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict resolves the issue of the Golan Heights.

Though Syria, Libya and Iran continue to sponsor terrorist organizations, the changes in the attitude of the international community; and events such as the raid on Libya, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli peace conferences, have influenced these states' desires and capability to continue such sponsorship.
CHAPTER TWO

SYRIAN TERRORISM: A TOOL FOR ASSAD'S AMBITIONS

Syria, under the leadership of Hafez Assad, has been a major sponsor of international terrorism. Syria's sponsorship of terrorism has taken many forms, from direct involvement in terrorist actions to supplying arms, and a safe haven for known terrorists and terrorist organizations. Though the degree of Syrian sponsorship has varied, the reasons for sponsoring terrorism have always been political. Assad has used terrorism as an instrument of policy in order to pursue specific political and secular goals.¹

Syrian sponsorship of international terrorism has focused on three main goals: first, to oppose any solution, which did not include Syrian involvement, to the Arab-Israeli conflict; second, to prevent regional groupings which could threaten Syria's security; and finally, to establish its position within the region politically and territorially.² State sponsored terrorism, for Assad, has been a continuation of policy directed at increasing the political power of Syria and meeting the territorial ambitions of Assad.

¹Hunter, 29.
²Ibid.
In pursuit of these goals, Syrian terrorism has for the most part been focused on the Middle East, though occasionally Syria's use of terrorism has extended beyond this region. Much of Syria's terrorist activity has been directed against Israel with whom it shares a border, though it has also been directed at other nations, such as the United States, France and Great Britain, who stand in the way of Assad's ambitions and political goals. Syria views Israel as an intruder in the region, particularly after Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights. Syria has used terrorism against Israeli targets in the hope of altering Israel's position with regard to the Golan Heights. Syria has also pursued terrorist actions against Israel in order to obtain Israel's acceptance of Syria's role in Lebanon. Lebanon, which was partitioned off from Greater Syria in 1943, remains an area of great interest to Syria. Assad has used terrorism in Lebanon to assure that Syria will have a dominant role in that country and with the aspirations of one day again including that region in a Greater Syria.

The sponsorship of terrorism permits Assad to pursue his ambitions and goals within the region. As a State Department spokesman notes "Damascus utilizes these groups to attack or intimidate enemies and opponents and to exert its influence in

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5Ben-Meir, A15.
the region. Yet at the same time, it can disavow knowledge of their operations." The political goals and aspirations of President Assad are the sole motivating factors in Syria's use of terrorism. State sponsored terrorism in the past has allowed Assad to pursue and in many ways achieve political and territorial goals at a negligible cost. Accordingly terrorism simply becomes a continuation of policy by a means which is cost effective.

Syrian Support of Terrorist Organizations

Syrian support of international terrorism has been diverse and far reaching. Syria has supported many non-Syrian terrorist organizations in pursuit of its political goals, but it has also used its own intelligence services. Syrian support of international terrorism includes support of both Palestinian and non-Palestinian groups. Terrorist organizations which are known to have received Syrian support include the Abu Nidal Organization; Sa'iqa; Eagles of the Revolution; Hezbollah; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC). Syria also permits the Revolutionary Guards of Iran access to the Bekaa Valley.

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7Hunter, 29.

Syria provided different levels of support and assistance to each of these groups, according to its political needs and aspirations. Accordingly Syria's support of these terrorist organizations was provided only until they became a liability or the political cost of sponsorship exceeded the benefits received. Syrian sponsorship of each of these terrorist groups was determined by the ability of these groups to help meet the political goals of Assad.

Syrian support for many of these terrorist organizations was provided in the form of an extensive infrastructure for recruiting and training of terrorists. Within the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, which is controlled by Syria, Syria has established terrorist training camps. Syria has permitted many of the above-named groups access to these camps. Syria has also provided passports, weapons, and training to members of these groups. Syria, with the assistance of the Soviet Union, has become a major source of arms for terrorists.9

Syria, unlike other states within the region, has not been able to provide these terrorist organizations with direct funding. Thus for the most part Syrian sponsorship has consisted of arming and training these terrorist groups. Syria has contributed to the support of many of these groups by permitting them to establish headquarters in Syria. Syrian intelligence has also worked closely with some of these organizations. "Syria has developed in the last decade or so perhaps the best organized and most elaborate terrorist

9Kidder, "State Sponsored Terrorism, 17."
apparatus in the region under the guidance of President Assad."\textsuperscript{10}

Syria has provided support to two of the most violent terrorist organizations, the Abu Nidal Organization and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. Syria's association with these two organizations has been extensive. The Abu Nidal Organization is a "rejectionist and extremely violent Palestinian terrorist group," which opposes all political resolutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict and believes that the destruction of Israel is the only solution.\textsuperscript{11} The Abu Nidal Organization established its headquarters in Damascus in 1983. Syria provided Abu Nidal with logistical support and permitted it to maintain training camps in the Bekaa Valley. Syrian sponsorship of the Abu Nidal Organization has included providing the group with travel documents and allowing terrorists to use Syria when departing on missions.\textsuperscript{12}

Syria permitted the Abu Nidal Organization to maintain their headquarters in Damascus until 1987. Until that time, Syrian political objectives had, to some extent, matched those of the Abu Nidal Organization, as both Syria and Abu Nidal wished to see a decrease in or destruction of Israeli power within the region. Syria wanted to weaken Israel in order to

\textsuperscript{10}Moshe Ma'oz, "State-Run Terrorism in the Middle East: The Case of Syria," \textit{Middle East Review} (Spring 1987): 11.


\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Office of Public Communications, Department of State Bulletin}, (February 1987): 74.
increase its own power within the region and in order to regain lost territory. The Abu Nidal wanted to see the destruction of the Israeli state, in order to establish an independent Palestinian state. Syria supported the Abu Nidal Organization in order to fulfill its own political goals and the Abu Nidal Organization did carry out attacks that pursued these goals. The Abu Nidal Organization assassinated several Jordanian officials on behalf of Syria's effort to abort the Arafat-Hussein accord over the West Bank. However, by 1987 the costs of supporting Abu Nidal were far greater than the benefits received. As a result of Syrian connections to several terrorist attacks in 1985 and 1986, and Syria's support of international terrorism, Syria had come under attack by the international community. The Abu Nidal Organization was linked to several of these incidents. Accordingly in 1987, Syria appeared to sever ties with the Abu Nidal Organization when it kicked the group out of Damascus.

Syrian sponsorship of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command was also a result of the similarities between the political objectives of the group and of Syria. The PFLP-GC also seeks the destruction of Israel and condemns any political resolutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus Syrian sponsorship of this group also permitted Syria to pursue its political goals and

13Drysdale and Hinnebush, 195.
14Department of Defense, Terrorist Group Profiles, 26.
aspirations in the region.

Another terrorist organization supported by Syria is the Sa'iqa organization. This organization was formed by the Baath Party in Syria in order to "manipulate the Palestinian liberation movement to achieve Syrian political goals."\textsuperscript{15} Sa'iqa seeks the elimination of Israel and the extension of Syrian power in the region. This terrorist organization has been employed directly by Syria to "attack regime opponents" outside of Syria.\textsuperscript{16}

It is apparent by analyzing the organizations that Syria supported and the extent of Syrian sponsorship for these groups, that Syrian political goals and ambitions were the guiding factor in determining support. Organizations which presented a means of furthering Syrian political goals were supported, but only until such time as the costs did not exceed the benefits. Syria did not indiscriminately support any Palestinian terrorists groups, but only those which Assad thought could contribute to the political influence and power of Syria.

**Syrian Involvement in Terrorist Incidents**

Syria has been involved in or linked to terrorist incidents in both the Middle East and in Europe. Much of Syrian involvement in terrorist incidents has occurred in the Middle East and has been directed against moderate Arabs,

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 29.

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 30.
Israel and anti-Syrian or independent Palestinians.\(^{17}\) Syria has often used terrorism as a means of weakening or destroying its enemies or anyone who stands in the way of its political objectives. "Damascus makes sure that terrorist operations serve Syrian goals - principally to maintain Assad's dominant position in Lebanon and to block any progress toward an Arab-Israel peace agreement, which inevitably would diminish Syria's importance in the region."\(^{18}\) Accordingly moderate Arabs or Palestinian organizations, which have exhibited any willingness to engage in discussions with Israel regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, have often been the targets of Syrian terrorism. Syrian sponsorship of terrorism was extensive following the Camp David Accords, since Syria was not a participant in this agreement.

Syria used terrorism to discourage or undermine any moves towards peace with Israel that did not include Syria as an active participant. In 1985, Syrian terrorism was directed against Jordan and its president, when Hussein tried to develop a joint Jordanian-Palestinian negotiating position with Israel, which did not include Syria or Syrian involvement in the negotiations.\(^{19}\)

Syria has also used terrorism in order to maintain its dominant role in Lebanon. In 1983 and 1984 terrorist actions supported by Syria were directed against Israeli military

\(^{17}\)Hunter, 29.


\(^{19}\)Hunter, 29.
targets in Southern Lebanon. This terrorist policy in Lebanon was not directed solely at Israel. Syria also pursued terrorist actions directed at removing the influence of Western powers such as the United States and France. Syria was linked to the bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in April 1983, as well as to the suicide bomb attack on the Marine compound in Lebanon in October 1983.

In the mid 1980s Syrian support of international terrorism was suspected in the Rome and Vienna airport massacres by the Abu Nidal Organization in December 1985. It is believed that the terrorists involved in these incidents came from Damascus and were trained in one of the Bekaa Valley training camps, which are under Syrian control. Syria's role in the bombing of a discotheque in Germany, which killed a U.S. soldier, has also been suspected. It has been suggested that the bomb used in this incident was supplied by Syria.

In April 1986, Syria was directly linked to an attempted bombing of an El Al flight from London. The terrorist, when questioned by the British authorities, stated that the incident was masterminded by a colonel in Syria's intelligence service. Syria was also suspected of participating in the Pan Am 103 bombing. The terrorist organization which is suspected

\[^{20}\text{Ma'oz, 12.}\]
\[^{21}\text{Ibid., 12.}\]
\[^{22}\text{Watson, 37.}\]
\[^{23}\text{Ibid.}\]
of this incident, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, has been sponsored by Syria.\textsuperscript{24}

Though Syrian involvement in state sponsored international terrorism has been widely suspected for a long time, no military or political action was directed against Syria until 1986. In 1986, Great Britain broke off diplomatic relations with Syria and economic sanctions were imposed on Syria by Great Britain, the United States and the European community. Syria's relationship with the Soviet Union also prevented action against Syria. The United States was not sure what the reaction of the Soviet Union would be, if military strikes were directed against Syria. Syria's political influence in the region seemed an essential element in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, so western powers such as the United States did not want to antagonize Syria. Syria's geographical location, influence in the region and relationship with the Soviet Union, permitted it to continue sponsoring international terrorism with little cost involved. Assad was able to use terrorism to pursue his political goals and ambitions without being overly concerned with the repercussions involved with such actions.

\textbf{Indications of Decreased Syrian Involvement in Terrorist Activities}

Following the allegations of Syrian involvement in the attempted El Al bombing in April 1986, Syria began to pay the

price for its involvement in sponsoring international terrorism. Economic sanctions against Syria were imposed by the Western powers and these apparently had an effect on Syrian support of terrorism. However, Syria remains on the United States Department of State list of state sponsors of international terrorism. Syria is still suspected of supporting several groups and providing safe havens for them, but since 1986 the United States has found "no evidence that Syrian officials have been directly involved in planning or executing terrorist attacks outside of Lebanon."25 However, the Department of State believes the following groups still maintain training camps in Syria or receive some support: Ahmad Jabril's PFLP-GC, Hezbollah, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Abu Nidal Organization and the Japanese Red Army.26

Regardless of such continued support by Syria, the State Department reports that "international terrorism by Palestinian groups decreased from 17 incidents in 1991 to three incidents in 1992." They attribute this decrease to restrictions placed on these groups' activities by Syria and Libya.27

President Assad has indicated that he is abandoning his sponsorship of terrorism. In 1987, Assad severed his relationship with the Abu Nidal Organization by expelling them


26Ibid., 24.

27Ibid., 13.
from Syria. A diplomat in Damascus at that time stated, that the reason for this action was that "...Syria was cooling its support for terrorists 'not for moral reasons, but because terror causes problems with Western states." The Abu Nidal Organization was not the only terrorist group to lose Syrian support. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command has also lost the favor of Assad, though as of 1991 it still remained in Damascus. However, without Syrian support, the group was experiencing financial and organizational difficulties. There have also been indications that President Assad has ordered those Palestinian extremists remaining in Syria to "limit their activities to supporting the intifada and raiding Israel from Southern Lebanon." 

Reasons for Decreasing Syrian Support of International Terrorism

President Assad has presented an image of a Syrian state which is abandoning its past terrorist activities in favor of economic cooperation and diplomatic solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Syria has been willing to participate in the Arab-Israeli peace conferences. Perhaps a diplomatic peace and the economic and strategic security such a peace could provide has become the present rational choice for

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30Chesnoff, 41.
President Assad. Diplomacy may now be the best way of achieving Syria's political goals, given the economic and political power of the state.

The end of the Cold War has added to the uncertainty of the political situation in the Middle East. Syria, which has long relied upon the political and military support of the Soviet Union has found itself without a patron in the region. Syria has lost its power to exploit the superpower tension in this region. Upon coming to power, Gorbachev began to decrease Soviet military support to Syria. The Soviet government also indicated that it would not support Syria's bid for strategic parity with Israel and began to improve its own relations with Israel. These steps decreased the political and strategic importance of Syria for the Soviet Union in the region. The decreased Soviet military support weakened the position of Syria in relation to Israel and within the region in general. This weakening of Syria's power made it more susceptible to the risks and costs associated with the sponsorship of terrorism.

The transformation of the international arena has required a change in the implementation of Syria's political goals and ambitions. Diplomacy and political resolutions to the relations between Syria and Israel have replaced military or terrorist options, or perhaps as Alasdair Drysdale points

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31 Drysdale, 7.
32 Cobban, xxi.
33 Drysdale and Hinnebush, 8.
out "Syria had never abandoned the ultimate aim of attaining a political settlement." Rather the reason for Assad's policy was "to position Syria to rejoin a serious peace process, if one seemed to be in the cards and Arab solidarity could be reconstructed." Perhaps the political power of Syria in the region now requires abandoning the sponsorship of terrorism. Without the patronage of a superpower or the cooperation of other states in the region, Syria in its present economic state can no longer afford to continue to sponsor terrorism. The interests of the state and its overall political position require the end of state sponsored terrorism.

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34 Drysdale and Hinnebush, 143.
Muammar Qaddafi, the leader of Libya, sponsors terrorist organizations in order to fulfill political and ideological goals. Terrorism under Qaddafi's sponsorship became a means of reacting against Libya's enemies. Qaddafi "has employed terrorism in order to lash out against regime opponents and to further his own foreign policy objectives within the Arab political arena and within worldwide revolutionary movements."  

Qaddafi has used terrorism against Libyan dissidents abroad and against Israelis, Americans and Europeans. Qaddafi's sponsorship of terrorism permitted him to indirectly react against his enemies without fearing the repercussions of his actions. Qaddafi's ultimate goals in sponsoring terrorism have been the achievement of Arab unity, the spread of Arab-Muslim influence and the promotion of Qaddafi's own form of socialism.² Qaddafi believes that Arab unity and a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict can only be achieved with the elimination of the state of Israel through the use of force. Terrorism became Qaddafi's means of using force to attempt to


²Hunter, 23.
destroy or weaken the state of Israel and to combat his enemies abroad. The western nations of the world in particular the United States were also targets of Libyan sponsored terrorism because of their capitalist systems, their relationship with Israel and their involvement in the Middle East. Qaddafi believed that terrorism was a legitimate means of combating Israel's power and western states' influence in the Middle East and thus ultimately a policy which would lead to Arab unity.

Qaddafi believed that sponsoring terrorism was a rational political choice for achieving these goals. Terrorism would weaken or destroy his opponents thus allowing him to achieve his goal at a negligible cost. Libya did not have the military capabilities for challenging its enemies in legitimate warfare. Qaddafi used terrorism as part of Libya's foreign policy. The Cold War and the disunity of the Arab world over the issue of Israel and a resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict permitted Qaddafi to pursue such a policy indirectly without fear of military reprisals.

**Libyan support for terrorist organizations**

Libya's sponsorship of international terrorism has been extensive and ideologically driven. Unlike other state sponsors, Libya has supported a very diverse group of organizations and not simply those groups that might contribute to its political goals. As one author has stated "Libya's contribution to the overall infrastructure of international terrorism was greater than that of Syria and
Iran and possibly of any other country. The Qaddafi regime was the closest thing in existence to a missionary society for world terrorism." 3 In particular Qaddafi has supported any group claiming to be anti-Israeli or anti-American. 4 Qaddafi has sponsored terrorist groups such as the Islamic Jihad, Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Abu Nidal Organization, the Red Brigades, and the Irish Republican Army. The goals of some of these organizations do not necessarily correspond to those of Qaddafi, other than to wreak havoc on western regimes or threaten the stability of regimes. Qaddafi was willing to support most terrorist organizations which he believed were fighting for the same ideological beliefs as he was.

Libya has sponsored international terrorism in many different ways. Qaddafi has provided direct financial aid to many groups. He has also established camps in Libya for training terrorist groups. It is believed that at one time twenty such camps were in existence in Libya. Qaddafi has also provided safe havens for known terrorists, including Abu Nidal; the terrorists involved in the attack at the Munich Olympics and currently the two terrorists wanted in connection with the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103. Libya has also provided terrorist organizations with passports, diplomatic privileges and arms.

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4Cline and Alexander, Terrorism as State-Sponsored Covert Warfare, 17.
Libyan Involvement in Terrorist Incidents

Libya has been linked to many terrorist groups and terrorist incidents in the Middle East and in Europe between 1970 to 1986. Libya's involvement in international terrorism began almost immediately upon Qaddafi's taking power. International terrorism became a tool of Qaddafi's foreign policy.

During the 1980s Libyan links to international terrorism were widely recognized. In the early 1980s Libyan terrorism was directed at Libyan dissidents. Several Libyan dissidents, living in Europe, were assassinated. Attempts were also made to assassinate Libyan dissidents within the United States.\(^5\) Libya was also linked to plots to assassinate Egyptian President Mubarak, former Sudanese President Nimeiri, Chadian President Habre and Zaire's President Mobutu.\(^6\) The Reagan administration, upon coming to office, condemned Libya for its support of international terrorism. Libya continued to sponsor international terrorism in the Middle East and in Europe and insurgent movements in Africa.

Throughout the early 1980s relations between the United States and Libya continued to deteriorate over the issue of terrorism. These problems were intensified by confrontations between U.S. and Libyan forces in the Gulf of Sidra. However, international condemnation against Libya's sponsorship of terrorism began to occur in the mid 1980s,


\(^6\) Ibid.
following several terrorist incidents involving Libya. In 1984 a British policewoman was shot and killed as personnel in the Libyan embassy shot at Libyan dissidents outside of the embassy. In May 1984 a Libyan assassination plot against President Reagan and other top ranking U.S. officials was uncovered.⁷

Libyan involvement in international terrorism reached a peak in 1985. In 1985 and 1986, there was a rash of terrorist attacks in Europe and Libya was believed to have been involved in several of these incidents. In December 1985 terrorists simultaneously attacked the Rome and Vienna airports killing several people. The United States accused Libya of involvement in this attack. Though Qaddafi denied any involvement in this incident, he professed his support for such actions and his willingness to continue to use such measures. Following the terrorist attack at the Rome and Vienna airports the United States imposed economic sanctions against Libya. Throughout the early part of 1986 Qaddafi continued to advocate the use of international terrorism, while the United States sought European cooperation in its fight against Libya. In April 1986 the bombing of a discotheque, frequented by U.S. soldiers, resulted in the death of two people, including a U.S. soldier. Libya was linked to this bombing. In retaliation for this incident the United States bombed Libya. On April 14, 1986 American forces unilaterally conducted an air attack on targets that were

⁷Ibid.
considered part of Qaddafi's terrorist infrastructure in Tripoli and Benghazi.

Following the raid on Libya by the United States, Libya's involvement in international terrorism decreased. However, Qaddafi continued to express his support of international terrorism. At this time he is providing sanctuary to the two Libyan agents suspected in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 and has refused to hand them over to U.S. or British officials.

Indications of Decreased Libyan Involvement in Terrorist Activities

Following the bombing of Libya in 1986, Libyan involvement in international terrorism did decline through 1987. Qaddafi, however, has not given any indications that he has completely abandoned his support for terrorist organizations. Libya still attempts to kill dissidents who are living abroad.8 Libya also continues to host several of the most extreme Palestinian terrorist organizations. Qaddafi permitted the Abu Nidal Organization to establish its headquarters in Libya, after it was expelled from Syria. Libya remains on the United States Department of State list of those states which continue to support international terrorism.

Though Qaddafi continues to stress his support of international terrorism, there have also been some indications

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8Department of Defense, Terrorist Group Profiles, 3.
that he has closed some well-known terrorist training camps in Libya. Qaddafi, at one point, even expressed a willingness to hand over the suspected Pan Am bombers. Though Qaddafi continues to advocate the use of terrorism, he has been less vocal about his support for terrorist organizations. Libya has also not been linked to any recent terrorist incidents. Libya remains hostile towards the United States and western powers, but there have not been any indications of Qaddafi using terrorism against these powers.

Reasons for Decreasing Libyan Support of International Terrorism

The United States' airstrike on Libya revealed the consequences of continued support of international terrorism. Qaddafi can no longer afford to ignore the possible consequences of his support for terrorist organizations. The repercussions of such support may now exceed the benefits that Qaddafi hoped to receive. Relations between Libya and the international community remain hostile. In April 1992, the United Nations imposed sanctions against Libya, as a result of its refusal to hand over the suspected Pan Am bombers. These economic sanctions, as well as the political isolation of Libya in the Middle East and in the international community, have forced Qaddafi to reconsider his sponsorship of terrorism. The economic and political consequences of Qaddafi's sponsorship of terrorism have left Libya with a

weakened economy and a state which is politically isolated. The economic hardships which have occurred as a result of the sanctions have also led to some political unrest. Libya's economy which is dependent upon the exports of crude petroleum, has been weakened by the sanctions and embargoes imposed by the United Nations. The sanctions and the political uncertainty have further hindered the economy by discouraging foreign investors. Libyan officials reported in November 1992 that the economic sanctions have cost the Libyan economy some U.S. $2,500M.

The economic situation in Libya required the improvement of economic relations with the western world and the removal of the sanctions imposed by the United Nations. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the uncertainty of the political situation in the Middle East also required the establishment of better political relations with the international community.

Though Qaddafi may continue to express his willingness to sponsor international terrorism, the economic and political reality of such support makes his continued sponsorship unlikely. State sponsorship of terrorism by Libya is no longer a rational political choice. Qaddafi's involvement in terrorism will no longer allow him to achieve his goals. The economic and political situation in Libya has made the costs and risks of sponsoring terrorism far greater than the

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11 Ibid.
benefits received. Libya’s political power has been weakened and Libya is no longer in a position to ignore the international community’s condemnation of its sponsorship of terrorism. The U.S. raid on Libya forced Qaddafi to realize the repercussions of his terrorist policy.
CHAPTER FOUR
IRANIAN TERRORISM: ISLAMIC TERRORISM OR FOREIGN POLICY

The Republic of Iran's sponsorship of terrorism differs in many ways from that of Syria and Libya. Iranian terrorism has been pursued in order to achieve, for the most part religious goals, though political goals have also been pursued. Iran seeks to spread revolutionary Islam. Terrorism is used as an effort "to unify the Muslims and other so-called oppressed of the world, ... and to eliminate the influence of the great powers from the Muslim world."¹

Iran's support of terrorism, though it sometimes seeks both political and religious goals, is an element of the Islamic faith. Some scholars believe that Iran's sponsorship of terrorism should be defined differently from that of other state sponsors. The author of Holy Terror identifies Iran's terrorism as "Islamic terrorism". Islamic terrorism is considered "as an expression of Islamic revival - which must, by definition, lead to the conquest of the entire globe by the True Faith - it bases all its actions on the dictum that the end justifies the means. Recourse to terrorism, therefore, is one means among many that the fundamentalist movement uses and

¹Hunter, 23.
will continue to use in its campaign to create a universal Islamic state and to spread the rule of Islam throughout the world.\(^2\) Terrorism is used as a tool for spreading Islam and for destroying and weakening the effect of Western capitalist influences on the Arab world. Since the Khomeini regime came to power, the government of Iran has sponsored terrorism as part of its foreign policy in order to pursue this goal.

Though religious beliefs remain the main determinant of Iran's sponsorship of terrorism, political decisions have also influenced the use of terrorism. In its war with Iraq, Iran did use terrorism in order to assure the support of neighboring states. Terrorism has also been implemented against western powers, in particular the United States, in attempts to weaken and ultimately to remove U.S. influence in the Middle East region.

Iran's sponsorship of international terrorism seems to be a less rational political choice by its leaders, since the emotional influence of its religion greatly contributes to its implementation. The Islamic component of Iranian sponsorship of terrorism allows the government the ability to distance itself from the Islamic "fanatics," while still benefiting politically from the results and experiencing little fear of the repercussions. In many ways Iran's sponsorship of terrorism can be defined as an Islamic terrorism even though the results of this terrorism do have political repercussions.

Iranian Support of Terrorist Organizations

Iranian sponsorship of terrorism has ranged from direct government involvement to supporting individual terrorist organizations. The Iranian government, under Khomeini, helped organize, plan and implement terrorist plots in the Middle East and internationally."³ Islamic Revolutionary Iran entered the 1980s with two aspects of its foreign policy clearly defined. It intended to encourage the Islamic revolution elsewhere and it was quite prepared to ignore the conventional niceties of diplomatic convention to achieve its policy goals."⁴

Within Iran the Islamic Revolutionary Council was set up in 1981 to spread the Islamic influences of the Iranian revolutionaries.⁵ The Islamic Revolutionary Council was responsible for overseeing several terrorist organizations such as Al Dawa, the Call; Amal Islami, Hope; and Hezbollah, Party of God.⁶ Hezbollah, which operates from Lebanon, has been strongly supported by the Iranian government, and it is considered to be Iran’s most dangerous terrorist group. The Hezbollah was created by Iran, and sections of the organization are directly linked to the Iranian Revolutionary

³Cline and Alexander, Terrorism as State Sponsored Covert Warfare, 15.


⁵Ibid., 16.

⁶Ibid., 16.
Guards. Hezbollah, and its military arm, the Islamic Jihad, seek to spread Islam by undermining Arab regimes which do not follow the dictates of Islam and are being influenced by Western influences in the Middle East. Hezbollah also seeks to establish a Shi'a Islamic state in Lebanon. It opposes the peace talks and works to undermine this process. Hezbollah espouses an intense hatred of any influences that do not support its views of Shi'a Muslim ideology. Hezbollah is headquartered in West Beirut and in the Bekaa Valley. Hezbollah is very closely linked to the Iranian government which provides the group with training, weapons and communication facilities. The group trains in the Bekaa Valley in close association with Iran's Revolutionary Guards. It is believed that Hezbollah and the Revolutionary Guards work together in many terrorist attacks.

Iran also supports terrorism as a center for training, financing and indoctrinating potential terrorists. Iran remains the principal sponsor of extremist Islamic and Palestinian groups. It continues to provide funding, training and weapons to terrorist groups that seek the same religious and political goals; the spread of Islam; the destruction of

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7Department of Defense, Terrorist Group Profiles, 16.
8Ibid., 15.
9Ehteshami and Vavasteh, 38.
10Department of Defense, Terrorist Group Profiles, 15.
11Hunter, 25.
Western influences in the region and the collapse of the peace process.

**Iranian Involvement in Terrorist Incidents**

Iran has been associated with acts of terrorism since Khomeini's rise to power in 1979. "The Iranian regime has practiced state terrorism since it took power in 1979; it is currently the deadliest state sponsor and has achieved worldwide reach."\(^{12}\) Terrorist attacks sponsored by Iran have occurred in the Middle East and in Europe. Terrorist actions sponsored by Iran have ranged from kidnappings, assassinations; attacks against Arab and Islamic threats; attacks on peacekeeping forces; airline hijackings and bombings in Europe.

In the early 1980s kidnappings of western citizens by Iranian backed groups such as Hezbollah or the Islamic Jihad occurred frequently in Lebanon and Iran. In 1983 bombing attacks in Beirut were conducted by Iranian sponsored groups such as Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. The United States and France, in particular, were the victims of several such attacks. In April 1983 a suicide car bomb attack on the U.S. Embassy in Beirut resulted in the death of 49 people. The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for this attack. In October 1983 "kamikazi" terrorists drove trucks carrying explosives into the U.S. Marine and French military barracks in Beirut, killing 241 U.S. soldiers and 56 French soldiers.

The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for this attack. In November and December 1983 car bomb attacks were directed against the Israeli headquarters in Tyre in Southern Lebanon and against U.S. and French embassies in Beirut. Shi'a militias received moral support and probably financial and military assistance as well from the co-religionists in Iran for many of these attacks. In the international community it was believed that the Shi'a militias involved in these attacks were terrorists directed from Tehran.13

Throughout 1984 and 1985 the kidnappings and murders of foreign diplomats and citizens continued to occur in Beirut. Responsibility for many of these actions were claimed by the Islamic Jihad. From late 1984 on, several hijackings by Hezbollah also occurred. In December 1984 Kuwait Air flight 221 to Tehran was hijacked, and 2 U.S. Agency for International Development officials were killed. In June 1985 TWA flight 847 was hijacked by the Hezbollah, a U.S. Navy diver was murdered and 39 U.S. citizens were held hostage for 17 days before their release was negotiated.

Iran was also linked to the assassination of several Iranian dissidents in the 1980s. Iranian involvement was also linked to several bombing campaigns which occurred in Paris in 1985 and 1986. It is believed that these attacks were directed against France because of its support of Iraq in the war between Iran and Iraq.14

13Ehteshami and Vavasteh, 38.
14Department of Defense, Terrorist Group Profiles, 3.
More recently Iran has been linked to the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires. The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for this attack and there is mounting evidence of direct government involvement in this terrorist act.\textsuperscript{15} In 1992 Iranian sponsored terrorism has been linked to over 20 terrorist attacks; mainly against Iranian dissidents and Israeli interests.\textsuperscript{16} In 1992 Iran also hosted a series of high profile meetings with Hezbollah and Hamas in the hopes of destroying the prospects of the Arab- Israeli peace process. Iran’s role in the 1993 World Trade bombing has also been questioned. Iran continues "to be the most active of the state sponsors" of international terrorism.

**Indications of Decreased Iranian Involvement in Terrorist Activities**

There are very few indications of decreased Iranian involvement in terrorist activities. Iran remains on the U.S. Department of State List of State Sponsors of Terrorism. However, unlike Syria and Libya, no evidence of direct links between the terrorists and the government have been proven. The Iranian government, however, is strongly suspected of supporting and perhaps organizing many of the terrorist attacks of the Islamic terrorists such as Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. Regardless of the ability of Western powers to provide evidence of direct involvement of the Iranian


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
government, Iran has been forced to pay the consequences of its sponsorship of terrorism. Iran's relationship with the Western powers dramatically deteriorated with the Iranian Revolution, and the Iranian economy has suffered as a result.

It is believed that Iran continues to sponsor terrorism. It continues to provide funding, training in the Bekaa Valley and safe havens for terrorist organizations. However, at the same time, Iran has tried to distance itself from these terrorist organizations by working to resolve or aid in the resolution of the hostage situation in the Middle East.

The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union has permitted Iran to pursue a new foreign policy. It has sought to improve relations with the United States, the Soviet Union and Western European governments. Iran has tried to improve its relations with the international community by participating in the negotiations for the release of western hostages being held in the Middle East. The United States and the Soviet Union have been somewhat receptive to these rapprochements in order to fulfill their own political or economic goals. In the mid 1980s the United States pursued a public policy of opposition to Iran and a clandestine policy of exchanging arms for hostages, in the hopes of securing the release of the remaining American hostages in the Middle East. This contradictory policy weakened the position of the United States in the eyes of the international community, the government of Iran and of the terrorists themselves.17 The

17Ehteshami and Vavasteh, 39.
Soviet Union also sought closer economic and political ties with Iran after the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union and Iran were both interested in establishing economic ties which would benefit both countries.

Iran was successful in re-establishing relations with the western powers. However, in 1989, relations between Iran and the western community broke down over the Rushdie affair.18 Diplomatic contacts between European Community members and Iran were suspended.19 However, by 1990 diplomatic relations were restored.

Iran has been trying to improve its image in the hopes of soliciting foreign investments and economic ties with the Western economy. As one author writes "Iran's inflation in 1991 was about 50 percent and unemployment stood at 30 percent; its per capital national income was half of what it had been before the revolution."20 The economic and military situation in Iran requires improved relations with the international community. The political situation in the Middle East also remains unclear. Iran still views Iraq as a threat and therefore Iran was willing to support the American


led Arab coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War. With the end of the Gulf War and the retention of power by Saddam Hussein, the government of Iran accepts the necessity of trying to improve or maintain relations with the West and the Soviet Union. They realize their need to improve their diplomatic and economic power position in the region. However "Iran, while desperately courting Western investment and assistance to bail out its failed Islamic economic experiment, remains nonetheless rhetorically and to some extent genuinely hostile to the West, the United States in particular." 

Iran's continued support of terrorism does present a barrier to the improvement of relations with the international community. However, the connection between the Islamic fundamentalists and the terrorist organizations does provide a means for the government to deny its involvement. Though the Iranian government does support these fundamentalist tendencies, it will overlook them to some extent in order to pursue Iran's military and economic interests. "While committed to a theocratic form of government, they recognize that the costs of channeling their revolutionary fervor abroad have made it difficult to pursue Iran's security interests." 

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23 Hadar, 34.
24 Ibid.
Accordingly Iran has sought two different foreign policies, an open policy which seeks to improve its image and standing in the international community and a covert policy which can be easily denied as the workings of Islamic terrorists, which seeks to extend the spread of Islam and the destruction of other influences within the region.

The pursuit of such contradictory policies is a rational choice by the Iranian government. This choice enables Iran to present an image of a government which is moving towards cooperation with the international community while it continues to support Islamic terrorists. Even if the costs of such a covert policy begin to be detrimental to the economic, political and military standing of Iran within the region and within the international community, the religious element of Iran's sponsorship of terrorism may influence the continued sponsorship of terrorism. Iran, unlike Syria and Libya, is not simply seeking political or ideological goals, so Iran's choice in continuing to sponsor terrorism may be an irrational political choice.

Iran's political and military power in the region permits it to continue to pursue a dual policy of seeking improved relations with the international community, while continuing to sponsor terrorism. However, Iran's economic problems may compel it to abandon such a policy. If Iran's economic power continues to decrease and the internal political struggles continue to increase, Iran may be forced to re-examine its
terrorist policy.25 In the future, state sponsored terrorism by Iran may be abandoned, in order to maintain Iran’s economic and political position in the Middle East.

CONCLUSION

Though state sponsored terrorism increased dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s, it declined in the period from 1987 to 1992. The changes in the structure of the international community are an essential element for explaining the decreasing support of states for international terrorism. The raid on Libya, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli peace conferences, as well as the ensuing cooperation between these nations and the European community have increased the risks and costs associated with state sponsorship of international terrorism. As a result states such as Syria, Libya and Iran have been forced to reexamine the benefits and ramifications of continued state sponsorship.

The end of the Cold War began a slow process of decreasing state sponsorship of terrorism. As relations between the United States and the Soviet Union began to thaw, Soviet military support to Syria and Libya began to decrease. Syria and Libya began to feel more isolated in the Middle East and less able to depend upon the backing of the Soviet Union. Iran, which had long depended upon the antagonism between the ____________

1Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1992, 57.
two superpowers in order to maintain financial and military aid, also began to lose its ability to exploit the two superpowers. As a result these nations were less able to ignore the condemnation of the United States, the Soviet Union and the European community with respect to state sponsorship of terrorism. The political structure of the international community had been completely altered and these changes greatly affected the ability of Syria, Libya and Iran to continue sponsoring international terrorism.

Syria, Libya and Iran began to examine the need to improve their international image and their relations with the international community. These states soon found themselves the objects of economic sanctions. Their diplomatic relations with the international community also suffered. For Syria and Libya, the costs of sponsoring terrorism began to exceed the benefits gained. Iran, however, was in a better political position to ignore the costs involved and thus continue to sponsor terrorism. Regardless of Iran's ability to disregard the costs involved, Shireen T. Hunter notes "states engaged in sponsoring terrorism and the perpetrators of terrorist acts have suffered more than have the victims in terms of national and human losses, as well as in terms of power and prestige."²

The economic ramifications of continued sponsorship began to outweigh the expected benefits. The economic sanctions imposed upon these states by the international community began to wreak havoc on their domestic economies. The weakness of

²Hunter, 18.
the domestic economies also posed problems for the political stability of the states, as political unrest and dissension occurred as a result of the economic hardships. The economic situation forced these states to seek much needed foreign investments and economic aid.

Syria and Libya, in particular, have attempted to distance themselves from their previous levels of support for terrorist organizations in the hopes of attracting foreign investment. Iran has likewise sought to attract foreign investments and improve its relations with the international community. However, Iran has not severed its relationship with terrorist organizations. The leaders of Syria and Libya distanced themselves from state sponsorship by such means as closing training camps, severing ties with known terrorists organizations, and by being less outspoken about supporting terrorist movements. Iran, however, continues to be linked to several radical Islamic movements which use terrorist methods to achieve their goals.

The costs of sponsoring terrorism have not been solely economic. There have also been military and political costs. The end of the Cold War has resulted in decreases in the amount of military aid provided to Syria and Libya, in particular from the Soviet Union. The amount of military aid provided to Syria by the Soviet Union decreased dramatically as a result of the thawing of superpower relations. Libya found itself isolated in the region as the Soviet Union began to withdraw its support. The decreases in military aid and the withdrawal of military support have made Syria and Libya
more vulnerable to the repercussions of continued state sponsorship of terrorism.

The end of the Cold War also contributed to security problems for Syria, Libya and Iran. The Middle East is no longer divided into American and Soviet spheres of influence, and the new political uncertainty in the region affects the security of these states. The Iran-Iraq war revealed two potential powers capable of dominating the region. Accordingly it is essential that states such as Syria, Libya and Iran maintain friendly relations with the United States, the Soviet Union and the European community in case of aggression by another state in the region. The Persian Gulf War intensified the need of these states to maintain such relations. Iraq exhibited the intention and capabilities to dominate the Gulf region. The continued sponsorship of terrorism may hinder these states from receiving such military support and thus threaten their security. Accordingly Syria and Libya will probably continue to distance themselves from sponsoring terrorism. Iran, however, has been able to continue her military buildup unhindered. Recent indications, however, have revealed that economic problems have started to slow down this process.\(^3\)

The United States' unilateral raid on Libya in retaliation for its involvement in a terrorist attack stands as a warning of other security problems for states involved in or contemplating similar sponsorship of terrorism. The raid

\(^3\)Sciolino, Al
did seem to have the desired effect on Libya. Libya's subsequent involvement in terrorism decreased. The raid also revealed to Syria and Iran the possible consequences of state sponsored terrorism particularly because the raid catalyzed greater cooperation between the United States and the European community in dealing with terrorism. The raid on Libya revealed the potential isolation state sponsors of terrorism could expect if they continued to pursue such policies. Sponsoring terrorism was no longer risk free. Economic, military and political retaliations are possible consequences for supporting terrorist attacks.

The fear of reprisals, both military and economic, had an effect on Syrian and Libyan sponsorship of terrorism. In the years following the United States' attack, there was a downward trend in the number of terrorist incidents. Syria and Libya both tried to distance themselves from the sponsorship of terrorism. Syria severed its relationship with the Abu Nidal Organization and began to distance itself from the PFLC-GC. Libya also took steps to appear less closely connected to sponsoring terrorism, by closing training camps. In the past several years Syria and Libya have not been directly linked to any terrorist attacks, though they have both been suspected of being involved in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.

The political and economic costs of state sponsored terrorism have not been as great for Iran, because of Iran's power in the region. Iran continues to sponsor terrorism. It has been linked to the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in
Buenos Aires and is suspected of being involved in the bombing of the World Trade Center.

The Arab-Israeli peace conferences have for the first time offered the prospect of a diplomatic or peaceful resolution to many of the political and secular goals of the states sponsoring terrorism. The possibility of a diplomatic solution to many of the issues has helped negate the need to resort to terrorism, particularly since the level of risk involved has risen considerably. A peaceful solution to the conflict could resolve many of Syria’s reasons for sponsoring terrorism. As part of the peace process, Syria hopes to regain the Golan Heights, a goal it has long sought. With the end of the Cold War and decreased Soviet military aid, this goal had become less achievable. The decrease in Soviet aid crushed Syria’s hopes of achieving military parity with Israel and therefore greatly diminished Syria’s hopes for regaining the Golan Heights in a military maneuver, or through terrorist attacks on Israeli targets. The Arab-Israeli peace conferences, however, still offer an opportunity to achieve this goal. The conferences provide Syria, with a means of achieving political and territorial goals without the risks involved in trying to achieve them through terrorism. The peace conferences will not affect Libyan and Iranian support for terrorism. The Arab unity sought by Qaddafi will not be resolved, nor will the spread of Islam sought by Iran. Nevertheless these conferences and the hope of a peaceful resolution should contribute to the general decrease in state sponsored terrorism, since an acceptable resolution to the
Arab-Israeli conflict could decrease the amount of support available to many of the Palestinian terrorist groups.

The United States' raid on Libya, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli peace conferences have all contributed to a decrease in state sponsored terrorism. These four events have forced Syria, Libya and Iran to reexamine their sponsorship of terrorism and the economic and political costs of such sponsorship. The cost of state sponsorship of terrorism for Syria and Libya now exceeds the returns. The realization of the diminishing returns of state sponsorship have become more apparent as a result of the raid on Libya, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli peace conferences. These events have altered the costs and risks involved in sponsoring terrorism, and made the choice of sponsoring terrorism appear less rational.

Accordingly state sponsored terrorism by Syria and Libya should continue to decline. The economic, political and security needs of these states should force them to abandon terrorism as a foreign policy option. The changes in the structure of the international community have altered the risks and costs of state sponsored terrorism and have almost destroyed the possible gains that such support sought. The sponsorship of terrorism is no longer the optimal way to achieve their goals and the costs of such sponsorship have become far too great.

The question of Iranian sponsorship of terrorism remains unresolved. Iran continues to pursue a dual policy of
rapprochement with Western powers while continuing to use terrorism as a policy option. However, economic difficulties and internal political unrest could affect this decision. If the political power of Iran continues to decrease so could its sponsorship of terrorism. A decrease in the political power of Iran could increase the costs and risk of state sponsored terrorism.

This analysis of the state sponsored terrorism of Syria, Libya and Iran has revealed varying degrees of commitment to state sponsored terrorism, in relation to the political power of the states. The hypothesis that the political power of a state helps determine its willingness to sponsor terrorism fits the cases of Syria, Libya and Iran. The weaker states, Syria and Libya, were more sensitive to the factors influencing state sponsorship of terrorism. The costs and risks involved in sponsoring terrorism were too great for these states and thus they began to decrease their sponsorship of terrorism. Iran, the most powerful of the three states, was less susceptible to these factors. Accordingly Iran continues to sponsor terrorism. The variance among the three states’ decreasing use of terrorism does seem to correlate with the political power of the states.

Though this hypothesis was only examined in relation to a small number of cases, it could be used to predict future patterns of state sponsored terrorism in the Mideast and in the international community. This hypothesis could provide a means for examining other states’ potential for sponsoring terrorism.
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