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Muslim Responses to Western Intervention: A Comparative Study of the Crusades and Post-2003 Iraq

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In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to various groups within conflicts that can be described as proxies or irregulars or, to use a term often employed within academic studies, "violent non-state actors" (VNSAs).[1] One reason for this increased focus is the growing number of VNSAs in modern conflicts. More important factors, however, seem to be the growing influence and widening geographical reach of VNSAs and the increasing use of various asymmetrical forms of warfare that challenge existing preconceptions of both the nature of warfare and the legal frameworks surrounding definitions of conflict. This change in approach has been demonstrated most clearly, and to the greatest extent so far, by various Islamist groups, particularly al-Qaeda and, most recently, ISIS, through their global networks, their attacks on cities around the world, and their use of digital media to reach a global audience.

Yet despite their increase in significance and numbers in the contemporary world, and the consequent increased focus on them in current scholarship, VNSAs have always existed, and have been active throughout history, in all regions of the world. Examples include those primarily interested in profit, such as pirates and bandits, or those attempting to realize more political goals, such as the Maccabees or Hereward the Wake. Unsurprisingly, such actors also appear in the annals of Islamic history; as well as al-Qaeda, ISIS, and various other modern Islamist groups, such forces include the Barbary corsairs of the early modern period,[2] the Anatolian frontier *ghāzī* warriors of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,[3] and the various jihad warriors who fought on the Arab–Byzantine frontier

1 There have been dozens of examples of such studies in the last decade; see, for example, *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, ed. Klejda Mulaj (London, 2010).

2 Adrian Tinniswood, *Pirates of Barbary: Corsairs, Conquests and Captivity in the Seventeenth-Century Mediterranean* (London, 2011); Jacques Heers, *The Barbary Corsairs: Warfare in the Mediterranean, 1480–1580* (London, 2003).

3 Claude Cahen, *The Formation of Turkey* (London, 2001), pp. 227–33; idem, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey* (London, 1968), pp. 303–14; Spirios Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor* (Berkeley, 1971), esp. pp. 133–42, 258–85.

in the Umayyad and early ʿAbbāsid periods.[4] Of course, these were operating before the Westphalian "nation-state" idea had been developed, and so were not VNSAs in the same sense that the term is used today. However, even before 1648 there was the idea that violence needed to be legitimated by the "state," even though this was not the "state" as we understand it today; for example, the codification of the rules on jihad during the ʿAbbāsid period was, to a large extent, a response to individual Muslims carrying out raids on Byzantine territory that upset the balance of power between the two sides and interfered with and disrupted the caliphate's relations with Byzantium.[5]

While these examples have all been essentially offensive forces, there have also been numerous examples of VNSAs being involved in Islamic resistance movements in more defensive ways, which can be defined as reacting to outside, non-Islamic invasions of regions defined as Muslim lands: examples of such include resistance to Byzantine attacks on Syria, such as those of the eighth to eleventh centuries,[6] to the *Reconquista*,[7] to the Portuguese in Goa,[8] and to British rule in India.[9]

Given this, it will be useful to compare the responses of various Islamic VNSAs to invasion from across the centuries. This is not just something to be carried out for its historical interest, but a way in which it should be possible both to gain a better understanding of Islamic societies and to contribute to modern public policy debates. It has become rather axiomatic that, in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the Coalition forces planned successfully how they would defeat the Iraqi army, but failed to design any strategy for governing the country in the post-war period, and failed to anticipate the type of insurgent response that followed.[10] If broad patterns of reaction by Muslims to invasions can be observed throughout history, it should be possible to better predict how Muslims will respond should an Islamic country be invaded in the future.

In order to make a first step in this direction, I first examine how Muslim VNSAs responded in what is perhaps the example *par excellence* of non-Islamic

4 See Michael Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies in the Jihad and the Arab–Byzantine Frontier* (New Haven, CT, 1996).

5 Paul L. Heck, "'Jihad' Revisited," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32 (2004), 95–128.

6 Bonner, *Aristocratic Violence*; Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), pp. 139–87.

7 See, for example, Hugh Kennedy, *Muslim Spain and Portugal* (London, 1986), passim.

8 See, among others, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History* (London, 1993); Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, *The Portuguese in the East: A Cultural History of a Maritime Trading Empire* (London, 2008).

9 Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (New York, 2002); M. Naeem. Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918–1924* (Leiden, 1999).

10 Ali Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq. Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (New Haven, CT, 2007), pp. 97–131; Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory. The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York, 2005), pp. 25–36; Patrick Cockburn, *The Occupation* (London, 2006), pp. 67–99.

invasion of a Muslim region, the period of the Crusades in the Middle East, c. 1097–1291, an episode that is still used, on both sides, as an analogy when referring to current issues. I shall then compare these responses to those from more modern conflicts, particularly the Iraqi insurgency, in order to see to what extent the two mirror each other, and how that can then inform us about patterns resistance, at least in general terms. Finally, I shall briefly employ models from political science to try to provide explanations for why Muslims reacted as they did during the Crusades, to make some further contribution to knowledge in that field.

Methodological Problems

Before examining the evidence, it will be useful to highlight two main methodological problems related to this paper. The first of these surrounds the nature of the source material. For most historical events of the modern era a vast quantity of evidence survives, in the form of government documents, letters, newspaper reports, interviews, and so on. For the medieval period the evidence is much more restricted: for Latin Europe, for example, the evidence consists primarily of chronicles, and, if the historian is lucky, letters, charters, and archaeological remains. Yet for the Islamic world in the crusading period the situation is even less favorable, as no charters or letters from this period survive, with archaeology providing, in this context at least, essentially no data. Most of the surviving sources detailing the actions of Muslim VNSAs from an Islamic perspective are a limited number of chronicles written decades or even centuries after the events they describe.[11] The problem this sparsity of material poses for this paper is compounded by the fact that those who composed these texts – almost exclusively members of the religious classes and the bureaucracy – were principally concerned with the rulers of society and their peers. With the vast majority of Islamic society, those who were outside those elite circles, they were unconcerned, and so these, who constituted the main backbone of the various VNSAs that existed, come into view only when they happen to do something particularly noteworthy or out of the ordinary, or when it is possible to read between the lines of the Arabic texts.[12] This Arabic-Islamic material can, however, be supplemented by material from the Latin sources, as these are not concerned about the divisions within Islamic society, and which provide some useful additional information – in fact, for the beginning of the crusading period, contemporary evidence for Muslim

11 For a list of these, see Carole Hillenbrand, "Sources in Arabic," in *Byzantines and Crusaders in Non-Greek Sources*, ed. Mary Whitby (Oxford, 2007), pp. 283–340.

12 For medieval Arabic-Islamic historiography and its problems, especially related to its bias in favour of societal elites, see *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant*, ed. Alex Mallett (Leiden, 2014); Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge, 2003); Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, 1996); Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2nd edition (Leiden, 1968).

responses comes primarily from Latin Christian texts.[13] Thus, there is a serious shortage of evidence for this period, and any conclusions drawn must be highlighted as being both tentative and general.

The second methodological problem relates to exactly how, in the context of the medieval Middle East, it is possible define a "non-state actor." In the modern period a number of general types have been identified, including: national liberation movements; insurgent guerrilla bands that are engaged in a protracted political and military struggle aimed at weakening or destroying the power and legitimacy of a ruling government; terrorist groups that spread fear through the use of violence; militant groups "made up of irregular but recognizable armed forces [. . .] operating within an ungoverned area or a weak, fragmented or failing state"; and mercenary militias.[14] Yet these are all defined with reference to the modern nation-state. The concept of the "nation-state," however, has no real meaning before the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, and in many parts of the world not for a long time after that. In the medieval Middle East, and here focusing primarily on the area of Syria under the theoretical control of the ʿAbbāsid caliphate, there was no such thing as a "state," and power was instead manifested in a person, one who held their position of authority "as the property or patrimony of a dynasty."[15] Consequently, this seemingly leads to the problem that the state was merely one person, and so everybody else, i.e. virtually the whole population, was a non-state actor. That position, however, is untenable. Both the administrative apparatus and the religious classes were primarily geared towards enforcing the ruler's will, and thus the "state" can be said to have been something related to the individual who wielded power in a specific location, and state actors were people who had ties of some type to the ruler, such as members of the bureaucracy, or people appointed to important religious positions by the ruler, such as a city's *qāḍī* (religious judge). On the other hand, there were many in society who had no direct relationships with the "state," as they were not directly employed or given their positions by it; these included merchants, tradesmen, women, ascetics, and slaves.

It becomes more difficult to define what is and is not a VNSA when the focus moves towards groups who were usually armed. In the medieval Islamic world, there were a number of these: the *jaysh* were made up of regular soldiers who were paid a wage no matter whether they fought or not, and were linked to the service of the ruler. Consequently, they were similar to some extent to a modern standing army, though with loyalty given to the ruler rather than the state. The same is the case with the *ʿaskar*. *Mamlūks* were technically slave-soldiers, but

13 Alex Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions to the Franks in the Levant, 1097–1291* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 8–9.

14 Mulaj, *Violent Non-State Actors*, pp. 3–4.

15 The way power was distributed at the time thus rather reflected the famous statement by Louis XIV of France that "L'état, c'est moi." See Sami Zubaida, "The Legacy of Islam: Shariʿa, Individual Rights, and Communal Rights," in *Citizenship in the Arab World*, ed. Roel Meijer and Nils A. Butenschøn (Leiden, 2016), forthcoming.

they were paid for their military service in the form of cash and/or *iqtās* (the tax-rights to a certain district), and this remuneration was not dependent on military service; again, their loyalty was to a ruler/master rather than any state or spatial region.[16] Another term encountered in the source material is *jund*, which originally meant soldiers who received pay which was provided by a land-tax, but came to mean just armed forces in general, and can thus be said to encompass all the above.[17]

All these violent actors so far can be classified as state actors, as they were paid by and lived within the framework of a governmental system and bureaucracy based on rule by an individual. However, a number of significant actors fell outside such a classification. First there were volunteers, *muṭṭawiʿa*, who fought alongside and sometimes in the same army as the various "professionals," but who did so only for the duration of campaigns, received less pay, and did not have to fight unless they wished to.[18] Another group was the Turkomen, nomadic Turks who had settled in regions of Anatolia, the Jazira, and the Caucasus, and who were ethnically related to the Turkish rulers of the various cities of Syria. These participated on campaigns only when they wanted to, and primarily did so to gain booty for themselves.[19] Finally, there were the *ghāzī*s, religious frontier-warriors who lived on booty gained during campaigns, from non-war activities between them, and in pious foundations which provided them with food and lodging.[20] Because these groups were outside the ruling structures, formed only informal and ephemeral alliances with governmental forces, and received no fixed income for their services, these are the groups here defined as VNSAs. Despite the limitations in the quantity of evidence, and the potential for problems resulting, there is still a significant quantity of primary material that can be brought to bear on this discussion.

Actions by Muslim VNSAs during the Period of the Crusades

The sources demonstrate a number of ways in which such "non-state" Muslims responded to the Frankish presence throughout the crusading period. Perhaps the clearest way in which this was manifested, at least in the case of traditionally "non-combatant" Muslims, was through their participation in resistance to Frankish sieges of Muslim-held cities. Such resistance could take a number of forms. Most obvious were those acts carried out against the besieging forces by the ordinary townspeople. For example, during the prolonged siege of the city of Antioch in 1097–98 during the First Crusade both regular and irregular forces worked together in the attempts to resist the Franks.[21] Such also occurred during

16 Andrew C. S. Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire* (Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 225–28.
17 Dominique Sourdel, "Djund," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, ed. P. J. Bearman et al., 11 vols. (Leiden, 1954–2002), hereafter cited as *EI2*.
18 Claude Cahen, "Djaysh," in *EI2*.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta per Francos*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1996), p. 192.

the Frankish siege of Damascus during the Second Crusade in 1148,[22] of Ḥamā in 1177/8,[23] and of the Egyptian city of Damietta in the Fifth Crusade.[24] The specific way in which such resistance could be manifested varied, but usually included firing arrows at the besiegers from inside the city, participating in sallies against the Franks outside the city and, in the case of Muslims living in the surrounding regions, attacking the Franks who were foraging in the hinterland. Yet it was not purely through such acts of physical violence that resistance to sieges was carried out by VNSAs. Individuals were also involved in the construction of weapons that could prove to be vital in the resistance, and the rebuilding of parts of the city that had been damaged by the Frankish assault. All these actions are seen very clearly during the Frankish sieges of Nicaea in 1097,[25] the protracted siege of Tyre (1111–24),[26] and Ascalon in 1153.[27] For all these there are detailed surviving accounts from which information can be gathered, but, given that the general pattern seems to repeat itself across the period, it can be assumed that such resistance was also seen in the many other Frankish sieges during this period, for which the surviving evidence is not so plentiful.

Another method by which Muslims attempted to resist the Franks was to send appeals to other parts of the Islamic world to request help in their struggle with the Franks; these calls for aid were usually sent to Muslim rulers. Such appeals are primarily seen during the first decades of the crusading period, when the Muslims were on the defensive against the Franks, and often in dire straits. The earliest such appeal that is reported comes from 1097/98, before the fall of Jerusalem, when a group of Muslims from Syria went to Baghdad to bewail what was happening in their lands.[28] The people of Aleppo sent an appeal to Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqī, the ruler of Mosul, during the Frankish siege of the city in 1124–25,[29] those of Ḥomṣ sent for help to Damascus in 1102,[30] and the people of Cairo asked Saladin for help in 1169.[31] One of the most dramatic examples of this type of plea for assistance was that made by a group of people from Aleppo, which included merchants, Sufis, and religious scholars, to the caliph and sultan in Baghdad in 1110 in response to the ravaging of Aleppan territory by the Franks. When the help they had demanded did not seem forthcoming they invaded the sultan's mosque, ejected

22 Usāma b. Munqidh, *Kitāb al-iʿtibār*, ed. Phillip K. Hitti (Princeton, 1930), p. 95.
23 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fi'l-taʾrīkh*, ed. ʿUmar Tadmurī, 11 vols. (Beirut, 2006), 9:429–30.
24 Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk*, ed. M. M. Ziyāda and S. A. F. ʿĀshūr, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1934–73), 1/1:206, who suggests that the townspeople were much more vigorous in their defensive efforts in the place than the professional soldiers.
25 Guibert of Nogent, *Dei gesta,* p. 146.
26 Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl taʾrīkh Dimashq*, ed. H. F. Amedroz (Leiden, 1908), p. 180.
27 William of Tyre, *Chronicon*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1996), 2:799.
28 Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa'l-umam*, s.n., 6 vols. numbered 5b–10 (Hyderabad, 1938–40), 9:105.
29 Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab min taʾrīkh Ḥalab*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār, 12 vols. (Beirut, 1988), 4:1963–64; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 8:695–96.
30 Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl taʾrīkh Dimashq*, p. 142.
31 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 9:339.

the *khāṭib* (leader of the prayers), destroyed the pulpit, and prevented the Friday prayers from being said. Upon their appeal here being essentially ignored, they did the same in the caliph's mosque the following week.[32] In all these examples, the people had been forced to look further afield for help as their own government had proved incapable of defending their lands against the Franks, or was seen as being about to submit to or be defeated by them.[33]

Another method by which VNSAs attempted to resist the Franks was by making opportunistic attacks on Frankish troops or non-combatants. These could take one of two forms. The first were attacks made against Franks who can be regarded as non-combatants, which, in the period, were primarily either merchants or pilgrims. Attacks on and killings of pilgrims are recounted in both Latin and Muslim sources. For example, at the beginning of the twelfth century the pilgrim Saewulf complained that the road from the port-city of Jaffa to Jerusalem was dangerous because the Muslims of the region were in the habit of attacking pilgrims journeying along it;[34] in the 1170s the pilgrim Theodoric recounted how his party was forced into a state of fear by the Muslims in the region around Nazareth;[35] and in the mid-thirteenth century the archbishop of Nicosia, Eustorge of Montaigu, wrote that many Latin pilgrims had been killed or incarcerated by the Muslims of the Levant.[36] On the Muslim side, the Egyptian chronicler Ibn Muyassar records how a group of pilgrims were massacred near Tripoli in 1151,[37] while in 1157 the shipwreck of a Frankish ship on the Egyptian coast led to the pilgrims on board being captured and sent to Cairo.[38] Insights into the circumstances surrounding such events can be found in the recollections of Usāma b. Munqidh. He mentions that, in his home-town of Shaizar, a woman captured three Frankish pilgrims, stole their possessions, and had them killed; when a group of Franks became lost near that town they were captured by the townspeople, the men being killed and the women, children, and goods retained.[39] While in Nablus, Usāma met a Muslim who had expended much time and energy in tricking Frankish pilgrims into coming into his home and then killing them.[40] While it is not clear who was involved in such activities in all the examples described, the evidence from Usāma makes it fairly clear that, in at least some, it was "ordinary" Muslims who took it upon themselves to resist the Franks in this way.

32 Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl taʾrīkh Dimashq*, p. 173.
33 Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions*, pp. 31–48.
34 Account of Saewulf in *Jerusalem Pilgrimage*, ed. John Wilkinson (London, 1988), pp. 100–01.
35 Account of Theodoric in *Peregrinationes tres*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout, 1994), p. 187.
36 Letter of Eustorge of Montaigu to the secular rulers of Latin Europe, in *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, ed. E. Martene and U. Durand, 5 vols. (Paris, 1717), 1:1012–13.
37 Ibn Muyassar, *Akbār Miṣr*, ed. Henri Massé (Cairo, 1919), p. 91.
38 Ibid., p. 96.
39 Both of these examples are in Usāma, *Iʿtibār*, p. 129.
40 Usāma, *Iʿtibār*, pp. 139–40.

A related response was that taken by previously quiescent Muslims who were living in Frankish territory. There is evidence that they chose to rise up against the Franks when a Muslim army invaded Frankish territory. This is particularly clearly seen in the Latin writer Walter the Chancellor's detailed description of the fighting that occurred in northern Syria in 1119, when Muslims in the territory of Antioch turned on the Franks during the invasion of the region by the army of Īl-ghāzī, the Artuqid Turkish ruler of Aleppo.[41] The Muslims living in the same area acted similarly following incursions by the troops of Mawdūd, the ruler of Mosul, in 1109–10,[42] while the same occurred around the same time when Ṭughtegīn, the ruler of Damascus, invaded the kingdom of Jerusalem.[43] Muslims voluntarily joining the armies opposed to the Franks did not have to be from the region where the fighting occurred; they could be, in the words of one author, from "all nations, peoples, and languages" of the Muslim world.[44]

On other occasions, it seems that more militarily organized Muslim VNSAs were active against the Franks, and particularly Frankish armies. For example, there are numerous examples of nomadic forces making raids against Frankish military forces or strongholds across the whole crusading period.[45] Similarly, the significant numbers of bandits that were active in Syria during this period – and whose precise identity must remain a mystery – were also involved in attacks on Frankish forces. One particularly clear example of this is again revealed by Usāma b. Munqidh, who recounts how a group of robbers, again from Shaizar, set out against the Frankish camp that was besieging the nearby city of Ḥamā in an attempt to steal whatever they could from the Franks and then burn the Frankish camp.[46] Although this attempt failed, it does demonstrate that loosely organized groups of Muslim bandits/robbers were willing, and did attempt, to

41 Walter the Chancellor, *Bella Antiochena*, ed. Heinrich Hagenmeyer (Innsbruck, 1896), p. 90.

42 Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl taʾrīkh Dimashq*, p. 169.

43 Ibid.

44 Anonymous, *De excidii Acconis*, in *The Fall of Acre, 1291*, ed. R. B. C. Huygens (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 47–96, 64. This refers to the constitution of the Muslim army that captured Acre, the last Frankish town left in the Levant, in what was effectively the final act of the Crusades in that area.

45 For example, some Turkomen attacked the Frankish town of Banyas, in the vicinity of Damascus, in 1151/52 (Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Dhayl taʾrīkh Dimashq*, p. 317); the German army of the Third Crusade was attacked in both Asia Minor and near Aleppo by various VNSAs, some of whom were nomadic Turkomen (Bahāʾ al-Dīn Ibn Shaddād, *al-Nawādir al-sulṭāniyya wa-l-maḥāsin al-yūsufiyya*, ed. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl [Beirut, 1962] p. 123; *Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi*, ed. William Stubbs [London, 1864], p. 53; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 10:82); and during the Fifth Crusade the Frankish camp outside Damietta was assaulted by a group who are referred to as bandits (although, given the area, it is likely that they were Bedouin or Berbers: Oliver of Paderborn, *Historia Damiatana*, in *Die Schriften des Kölner Domscholasters, Späteren Bischofs von Paderborn und Kardinal-Bischofs von S. Sabina: Oliver*, ed. Hermann Hoogeweg [Tübingen, 1894], pp. 159–280, 245).

46 Usāma, *Iʿtibār*, pp. 85–86. The same writer also highlights a Muslim named al-Zamarrakal, who made a name for himself harassing and stealing horses from the Franks: Usāma, *Iʿtibār*, pp. 43–45.

attack much better-organized and larger Frankish military expeditions, and caused real problems for the Frankish military forces.[47]

Another method by which Muslim VNSAs attempted to resist the Franks was by making financial donations for the cause. While the evidence for this, as for other methods of resistance by the various VNSAs, is scarce, a limited number of examples can be seen. For example, the Andalusī Muslim traveler Ibn Jubayr relates how two Muslim merchants from Damascus gave a part of their yearly profit to ransoming some of their co-religionists who had been taken prisoner by the Franks.[48] Despite the lack of direct evidence, it seems almost certain that this would have been widespread amongst Muslims at the time.[49]

The final example was actions taken against local Christian populations. This seems to have occurred but rarely at first, and in the first decades of the crusading period there is only one example, and this in response to specific circumstances; during the Frankish siege of Aleppo in 1124, a Muslim mob was incited against four churches in the city, and turned them into mosques. This, however, was caused by the Frankish siege and, more specifically, by some particularly inflammatory acts perpetrated by the besieging forces against Islamic religious monuments.[50] However, as Muslims began to see the conflict in more religious terms under Nūr al-Dīn and Saladin in the latter half of the twelfth century and, particularly, following the beginning of Ayyūbid rule in the 1170s, instances of actions taken against local Christians became more frequent and, often, harsher.[51] Even after the Franks had left the Levant, the high level of antipathy that had been aroused against Christians in general continued to be maintained, as there were sporadic but concentrated outbursts of violence against local Christian populations, especially in Egypt, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[52]

The Crusading Period and Post-2003 Iraq: A Comparison

Comparing these means of resistance with those from more modern conflicts, it is clear that all these methods of resistance have been seen recently. Ordinary Iraqis, for example, played a significant part in resistance to Coalition forces

47 See, for example, Ibn al-Furāt, *Taʾrīkh al-duwal waʾl-mulūk*, partial ed. and tr. U. Lyons and M. C. Lyons as *Ayyubids, Mamlukes and Crusaders*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1971), 1:65, who recounts that the Hospitallers had to reinforce their defences in Syria as a consequence of continual attacks by Muslim bandits.

48 Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1907), p. 308.

49 See Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions*, pp. 86–87.

50 Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Zubdat al-ḥalab min taʾrīkh Ḥalab*, ed. Samī Dahhan, 3 vols. (Damascus, 1951–68), 2: 222–27.

51 Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades. Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp. 414–19.

52 Ibid., pp. 417–18. The Frankish presence was not the only reason for these outbursts; economic, political, and social factors also played a part. However, the memory of the Christian Frankish presence and threat to the Muslim world continued to play a factor in intensifying them, and as a result many Christians converted to Islam.

during the sieges of the city of Falluja in 2004. This not only included the residents of that city taking up arms against the American army that attacked it, but also involved Iraqis from other areas of the country bringing aid, such as blood donations, to its residents.[53]

Messages to Muslims urging them to leave their homes and travel to war zones to help fight the invader have become a stock feature of Islamist propaganda in recent years, particularly by al-Qaeda and ISIS. For example, the latter, in its previous guise as the Islamic State in Iraq, was linked to an internet-based propaganda group called the Jihadi Media Support Battalion, which urged Muslims to leave their homes and go to the territory of the Islamic State in Iraq. It also developed a YouTube channel that contained question-and-answer sessions with followers, while more recently Twitter and WhatsApp have been used to urge Muslims to go to ISIS territory. While this approach utilizes new media technology, its message is one that has been around for nearly 1500 years.[54]

Evidence from the Iraq war shows that partnerships between VNSAs and the remnants of the old Iraqi army were often formed, particularly so between the invasion in 2003 and late 2004. For example, the leader of the "Army of Muhammad" group had been Chief of Staff in the Republican Guard. One of the major manufacturers of car bombs for the insurgents in 2003–4, Abu ʿUmar al-Kurdī, was a former member of the Iraqi *Mukhabarat* (secret police). This was also seen in later years, for example following the execution of Saddam Hussein, when a number of ex-Baʿathists, some of whom were members of the armed forces, took up arms against the Coalition in response to his death. It has also been widely reported that the leader of ISIS, Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, was a former member of the Iraqi Republican Guard.[55]

Opportunistic attacks were made against people seen as being part of the occupying forces, such as the killing of four US military contractors in Falluja in late March 2004, whose bodies were burnt, dragged through the streets of the town, and then suspended from a bridge over the Euphrates, events which led to the first US attempt on the city that year, or the six UK soldiers killed by a mob

53 Allawi, *Occupation of Iraq*, p. 277; Cockburn, *Occupation*, pp. 140–44.

54 See Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Al-Qaeda's Islamic State of Iraq Turns to YouTube," repr. in Reidar Visser, *Volatile Landscape. Iraq and its Insurgent Movements* (Washington, 2010), pp. 93–94; idem, "Islamic State of Iraq Brings Internet Propaganda to the Streets," repr. in Visser, *Volatile Landscape*, pp. 120–22; Allawi, *Occupation of Iraq*, pp. 183–85; Faisal Irshaid, "How ISIS is Spreading its Message Online," BBC Monitoring Online, 19 June 2014: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-27912569, accessed 16 December 2015; Javier Lesaca, "Fight Against ISIS Reveals Power of Social Media," Brookings Institute Online, 19 November 2015: http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/techtank/posts/2015/11/19-isis-social-media-power-lesaca, accessed 16 December 2015.

55 Allawi, *Occupation of Iraq*, pp. 181–82; Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Ex-Baʾathists Turn to Naqshbandi Sufis to Legitimize Insurgency," repr. in Visser, *Volatile Landscape*, pp. 107; Andrew McGregor, "The Abu Omar al-Baghdadi Tapes: Supposedly Imprisoned Iraqi Islamist Claims He Still Leads Fight Against U.S. Occupation," repr. in Visser, *Volatile Landscape*, pp. 148–55.

at Majar al-Kabīr in southern Iraq in 2003.[56] Indeed, one of the main strategists of al-Qaeda, al-ʿUyayrī, who was killed by Saudi security forces in 2003, wrote that at the beginning of a guerrilla campaign it is essential that a fighter can operate independently.[57]

The operations of the various anti-Coalition forces in Iraq post-2003, including, currently, ISIS, have been at least partially bankrolled by wealthy and not-so-wealthy Muslims, particularly in the oil-rich countries of the Middle East. This merely repeats patterns that were seen in the September 11 attacks, that go even further back, at least to the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and that have been seen all over the world.[58] Financial giving in Islam, whether it be in the guise of the obligatory *zakāt* or the more voluntary *ṣadaqa*, has been a central tenet of Islam ever since its beginnings, and, while much of this has been donated and used for what could be called "humanitarian" purposes, a significant minority has been given specifically in order to aid the *mujāhidūn* in their fight against the "infidels."[59] Such was the case during the Arab Conquests of the seventh century, the campaigns of the Umayyads and ʿAbbāsids against Byzantium, the Crusades, and the operations of the Anatolian *ghāzī* warriors of the fourteenth century. With the combination of the tradition of charitable giving and the idealization of historical examples of Muslims who fought using the donated money, it was, and is, inevitable that some Muslims, those with Islamist leanings, would, and will continue to, donate money to modern *mujāhidūn*, as they see it as part of their religious duty for which they will be rewarded in the afterlife.

Finally, there have been numerous examples of Muslim VNSAs taking action against local Christian populations as part of their struggles against occupying forces. These have included bombings of churches in Baghdad on 1 August 2004, 16 October 2004, 29 January 2006, 6 January 2008, 12 July 2009, as well as 45 churches being destroyed, closed, or turned into mosques or jihadi bases in the period 10 June to 29 July 2014.[60]

56 For the events at Falluja, see Allawi, *Occupation of Iraq*, pp. 275–78; Diamond, *Squandered Victory*, p. 229; Cockburn, *Occupation*, p. 140; for Majar al-Kabīr, see North, *Ministry of Defeat*, pp. 25–27. There are dozens of other examples of such attacks scattered throughout the various analyses of the Iraq War.

57 Erich Marquadt, "Jihadi Website Advises Mujahideen on Equipment to Bring to Iraq," repr. in Visser, *Volatile Landscape*, pp. 85–87.

58 J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins, *Alms for Jihad. Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2006); Abdul Hameed Bakier, "Jihadis Debate Methods of Financing the Mujahideen Network in Iraq," repr. in Visser, *Volatile Landscape*, pp. 292–94.

59 For charity and financial donation in Islam, see Aron Zysow, "Zakāt," in *EI2*; Thomas H. Wier (Aron Zysow), "Ṣadaḳa," in *EI2*; Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Society* (Cambridge, 2003); Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge, 2000).

60 "Church Bombings in Iraq since 2004," Assyrian International News Agency, first posted 7 January 2008, updated since: http://www.aina.org/news/20080107163014.htm, accessed 16 December 2015. See also McGregor, "The Abu Omar al-Baghdadi Tapes."

Evidence for Resistance by Muslim VNSAs during the Crusades: The Use of Models from Political Science

I would now like to move on to an examination of what can be inferred from modern political science models of VNSAs as to why Muslim VNSAs reacted to the Franks as they did during the crusading period. Direct evidence for the precise motives for their resistance does not exist, for the reasons alluded to earlier, but, using such models, two main aspects can be highlighted: what the methods employed by VNSAs show about the situation in the Islamic world during the Crusades, and what the bases for these methods of resistance were.

In the light of the first of these two aspects, as VNSAs generally "conduct their activities in the context of state weakness, failure or fragmentation,"[61] it may be posited that those who resisted the Franks must have seen their political overlords as too weak to protect them. It has indeed become axiomatic that during the first decades of the crusading period the various polities of the Muslim Near East were fragmented and thus extremely weak:[62] this is also the period when VNSAs seem to have been most active in the struggle against the Franks. Certainly when one looks to the time when the Muslims were unified under a strong, central government, the role of VNSAs seems to have been dramatically reduced.[63]

VNSAs are usually involved in asymmetrical, or non-traditional, warfare (i.e., warfare that does not involve two standing armies facing each other on the battlefield). To achieve this, they employ tactics that accentuate their own strength while proving difficult for their more powerful opponents to counter, making clever use of space, and by deciding where and when to fight.[64] Such is reflected in tactics employed by the Muslims who resisted the Franks through assaults on pilgrims, the destruction of crops, or making raids against villages under Frankish rule, and this is particularly seen in the raids made by Turkoman forces on Frankish territory. In these situations, as in modern conflicts, these VNSAs must have known that they could not have won in any open battle between the two sides, and so had to resort, often rather successfully, to such tactics.

Another primary concern of VNSAs may be to simply ensure the continuation of the conflict, possibly so that it runs over many decades, until their opponent becomes ground down, or their allies are able to take the fight to the opponent.[65] Again, during the Crusades, VNSAs were the main initiators of resistance to the Franks in the early period, engaging in various forms of resistance over a number of decades, after which time there was a shift to more "state"-based resistance

61 Mulaj, "Introduction," p. 2.
62 Hillenbrand, *Crusades*, 31–116, passim; Paul M. Cobb, *The Race for Paradise* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 84–94.
63 See Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions*, passim.
64 Mulaj, "Introduction," pp. 19–20.
65 Ibid.

movements under Zengī, Nūr al-Dīn, and Saladin, as mentioned above. Such an approach is most clearly seen during the sieges of Muslim towns by Frankish forces. For example, during the siege of Aleppo in 1124–25 the townspeople continued to resist the Franks, despite the dreadful conditions they were suffering from, in order to keep the conflict going until help could arrive. This it did, in the form of Aq Sunqur al-Bursuqī, the ruler of Mosul, who brought an army to Syria, chased away the Franks, and was invited to take over Aleppo himself.[66] At other times, however, when no help was forthcoming, VNSAs seem to have fought as long as they could, before giving up and surrendering the city to the Franks.[67]

The second issue surrounds what the bases for such actions by VNSAs were. Political science models suggest that they can be seen as responses to state policies or reflections of a state's efforts to co-opt VNSAs, or actors who will go on to form VNSAs, into its policies. This is particularly the case when brutal or indiscriminate actions by governments drive people towards participation in or sympathy for VNSAs.[68] This can be seen to have been the case in one specific example from the 1160s, when a group of Muslims in the Frankish-controlled region of Nablus voluntarily left their homes for Muslim territory as a result of their treatment by the Frankish lord of Nablus, and, it seems, became involved in the armed struggle with the Franks from there.[69] Thus, it seems likely that at least some of the attacks by Muslim VNSAs in or near Frankish territory were the direct result of Frankish policies. Far from being passive observers in the events of the period as they may generally appear to have been from their lack of a voice in the sources, the ordinary people who made up VNSAs were politically active and played a significant part in how the conflict developed, as much as and in a manner in which they were able to. VNSAs also aim to provide their communities with order and security, often operating in areas in crisis where the central authority is incapable of delivering security, among many other things.[70] The actors from the crusading period were certainly aiming to provide such for their community, as they attempted to prevent the Franks from invading, or to defend their religion against that of the enemy. The weakness of many Muslim governmental structures at this time – particularly that of Aleppo in northern Syria, which was an area in which VNSAs were very active – meant that there was a lack of state-based security for the Muslims in the area, and VNSAs moved in to fill that gap.

I would like to sum up by highlighting Klejda Mulaj's comment that using war is a natural policy instrument of VNSAs as they seek to meet their aims. Such objectives may include gaining political power; reversing perceived injustices; carrying on a "warrior culture"; gaining materially; or getting religious or

66 Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Bughya*, 4: 1963–67.
67 See Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions*, pp. 121–28.
68 Mulaj, "Introduction," pp. 6 and 13.
69 See Daniella Talmon-Heller, "Arabic Sources on Muslim Villagers under Frankish Rule," in *From Clermont to Jerusalem*, ed. Alan V. Murray (Turnhout, 1998), pp. 103–18, 115–16.
70 Mulaj, "Introduction," p. 7.

spiritual benefits.[71] All of these seem to have been present at times during the Crusades, as has been highlighted: some Muslims, such as those who captured fortresses, were attempting to gain political power; the Frankish invasion was perceived as an injustice that needed to be reversed; a "warrior culture" was embedded in the minds of the Turkoman nomads who fought the Franks; the same actors certainly had material gain in the forefront of their minds; and many who fought did so with the knowledge that death in battle would mean they went straight to Paradise as a martyr.

Thus, it seems that models from political science can help to explain some aspects of how Muslims responded to the Frankish invasion. However, they are useful only up to a point. For, despite these general assessments, ultimately the lack of enough source material is too great a problem to allow modern scholars to go into anything more than general theories on this point. Furthermore, as each conflict is unique, each VNSA operates differently and, as the theater of operations of the Crusades was significant both geographically and temporally, we can provide no more than general, rather than specific, comments on the reasons for VNSA activity.[72]

Conclusion

Two main points can be highlighted from this article. The first of these is how models from social sciences can help in furthering understanding of the motives for the various methods of resistance seen by Muslim VNSAs during the crusading period. Specifically, these models allow a number of conclusions to be reached. Firstly, the fact that VNSAs took a leading role in the struggle with the Franks suggests that there was a clear imbalance of power between the Franks and the Muslims, and particularly so during the first thirty years, when VNSAs were at their most active: an asymmetry of power and resources – reflected in the comparatively easy nature of the Frankish victories of the First Crusade, at least after Antioch – that naturally led to asymmetry in methods of resistance. Secondly, it must have appeared to the Muslims of the time, especially the common people who constituted the VNSAs, that they were facing an existential threat. While precisely how they viewed that threat is unclear, due to a lack of comments in the source material, it must have involved the fear and belief that their lives would have been unrecognizably and completely altered by the presence of the Franks. Finally, the people must have regarded their probability of success in their struggles with the Franks as high; otherwise there would have been no rationale to participating. Of course, this does not necessarily mean success in worldly terms – for the pious Muslim, success would also have included dying in battle, and thereby going straight to Paradise.

71 Mulaj, "Introduction," p. 11.
72 See ibid., p. 21.

The second main aspect to highlight is that the various responses to the Franks from Muslim VNSAs during the crusading period reflect reactions seen in more recent conflicts. Such a conclusion is not, perhaps, surprising. For the periodization developed in the West is not matched by other regions of the world, and in the Islamic world the main temporal split is simply pre-Islamic and post-Islamic. As such, it is not surprising that medieval phenomena of resistance are also seen in the modern era. Furthermore, the idea of the nation-state on which ideas of VNSAs are based does not really apply to the Islamic world; this is, again, a Western invention projected onto the Islamic world, and particularly the Arab world, in the early twentieth century. Instead, the main conceptual category used by Muslims is the *umma*, the worldwide Islamic community, as it has been throughout the history of Islam; it is often on this basis that Muslims act, and this provides an explanation for why so many Muslims from all over the world become involved in resistance movements. This suggests a general pattern surrounding both the means of and reasons for Islamic resistance, and it will be useful to conduct wider studies, both geographically and temporally, to see the extent to which they are manifested at other times and spaces. If it can be shown that such methods are seen elsewhere, it will naturally lead to a further question: if these general patterns of resistance are seen across the Muslim world throughout history, to what extent are they responses specific to Islamic contexts and/or societies, and how far are they simply human reactions, dressed in an Islamic garb?