

# Explaining the Omani National Counterterrorism Strategy

Hani ALBASOOS\*

Alanood ALFARSI\*\*

*Received:* 09/28/2020

*Accepted:* 12/03/2020

*Citation:* ALBASOOS, A., ALFARSI, A., “Explaining the Omani National Counterterrorism Strategy”, Middle Eastern Studies, 13-1 (2021): 1-21

*DOI:* 10.47932/ortetut/698388

**Abstract:** The Sultanate of Oman has been consistently able to maintain its stability of security and stay away from the claws of terrorism, increasing the efficiency of its national counterterrorism strategy. This article explores local and international reports that measure Oman’s current terrorism’s status, and the reasons behind Oman’s ability to stay terrorism-free, particularly in light of the ever-increasing number of terrorist attacks and incidents in the Arabian Gulf region and the appearance of terrorist groups in nearby states. This research endeavors to analyze the existing knowledge to clearly understand the Omani approach and strategy in counterterrorism. The data collected for this research are extracted from semi-structured interviews and from policy analyses achieved through observing procedures, reviewing related legislation, and a detailed review of all previously associated policies. This research is exploring how the Sultanate of Oman defines terrorism, examining the elements of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy, and understanding the different phases of the Omani counterterrorism strategy. It recommends that the Sultanate of Oman should maintain a defensive approach to its national counterterrorism strategy to face terrorism and ensure its stability of security.

**Keywords:** Oman, National Security, Terrorism, Counterterrorism, Strategy

\* Associate Prof., Department of Political Science, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, hani.adam@squ.edu.om, ORCID:0000-0002-2873-7325

\*\* Researcher, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, alunood.alfarsi@gmail.com, ORCID:0000-0001-7988-0722

# Umman Ulusal Terörle Mücadele Stratejisini Açıklamak

Hani ALBASOOS\*

Alanood ALFARSI\*\*

*Geliş tarihi:* 28/09/2020

*Kabul tarihi:* 03/12/2020

*Atf:* ALBASOOS, A., ALFARSI, A., “Umman Ulusal Terörle Mücadele Stratejisini Açıklamak”, Ortadoğu Etütleri, 13-1 (2021): 1-21

*DOI:* 10.47932/ortetut/698388

**Öz:** Umman Sultanlığı sürekli olarak güvenlik istikrarını korumakta ve ulusal terörle mücadele stratejisinin etkinliğini artırarak terör faaliyetlerinden kendini korumaktadır. Bu makale, Umman’ın terörizmle ilgili durumunu değerlendiren yerel ve uluslararası raporların ışığında, özellikle Körfez bölgesinde artan sayıda terörist saldırı ve olayların olmasına ve yakındaki devletlerde terörist grupların ortaya çıkmasına rağmen Umman’ın terörizmden uzak kalma yeteneğinin arkasındaki nedenleri araştırmaktadır. Bu araştırma, Umman’ın terörle mücadele yaklaşımını ve stratejisini açıkça anlamak için mevcut tecrübeleri analiz etmeye çalışmaktadır. Bu araştırma için toplanan veriler, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden, süreçleri gözlemleyerek yapılan politika analizlerinden, ilgili mevzuatın gözden geçirilmesinden ve bağlantılı tüm politikaların ayrıntılı incelemesinden elde edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Umman ulusal terörle mücadele stratejisinin unsurlarını inceleyerek ve Umman terörle mücadele stratejisinin farklı aşamalarını anlayarak, Umman Sultanlığı’nın terörizmi nasıl tanımladığını araştırmaktadır. Umman Sultanlığı’nın terörizmle yüzleşmek ve güvenlik istikrarını sağlamak için ulusal terörle mücadele stratejisinde savunmacı bir yaklaşım sürdürmesini tavsiye etmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Umman, Ulusal Güvenlik, Terörizm, Terörle Mücadele, Strateji

\* Doç.Dr., Sultan Kabus Üniversitesi, Umman, hani.adam@squ.edu.om, ORCID: 0000-0002-2873-7325

\*\* Araştırmacı, Sultan Kabus Üniversitesi, Umman, alunood.alfarsi@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-7988-0722

# إعلان استراتيجية عُمان الوطنية لمكافحة الإرهاب

العنود الفارسي\*\*

هاني البسوس\*

تاريخ القبول: 03/12/2020

تاريخ الاستلام: 28/09/2020

اقتباس: البسوس، هـ، الفارسي، ا، «إعلان استراتيجية عُمان الوطنية لمكافحة الإرهاب»، دراسات الشرق الأوسط، (2021) 1-13:21-1

معرف الغرض الرقمي: 10.47932/ortetut/698388

## الملخص

تحتفظ سلطنة عمان باستمرار على استقرارها الأمني وتتجنب برائن الإرهاب من خلال زيادة فاعلية الاستراتيجية الوطنية لمكافحة الإرهاب. هذه المقالة تبحث الأسباب التي تقف خلف مقدره عمان على تجنب الإرهاب، رغم الاعتداءات والعمليات الإرهابية المتزايدة لاسيما في منطقة الخليج العربي وظهور جماعات إرهابية في الدول القريبة، وذلك في ضوء التقارير المحلية والدولية التي تقيم وضع عمان فيما يتعلق بالإرهاب. هذه الدراسة تحاول تحليل التجربة الحالية من أجل فهم واضح لنهج واستراتيجية عمان في مكافحة الإرهاب. البيانات التي تم جمعها لهذه الدراسة تم الحصول عليها من المقابلات شبه المنظمة والتحليلات السياسية التي أجريت من خلال المتابعة ومراجعة التشريعات ذات الصلة والفحص التفصيلي لجميع السياسات المتعلقة بالأمر. تستكشف هذه الدراسة كيف عزفت سلطنة عمان الإرهاب من خلال دراسة عناصر الاستراتيجية الوطنية لمكافحة الإرهاب في عمان وفهم المراحل المختلفة لهذه الاستراتيجية. وتوصي بأن تواصل سلطنة عمان نهج دفاعي في استراتيجيتها الوطنية لمكافحة الإرهاب من أجل مواجهة الإرهاب وتحقيق الاستقرار الأمني.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** عمان، الأمن الوطني، الإرهاب، مكافحة الإرهاب، الاستراتيجية

\* أستاذ مساعد، قسم العلوم السياسية، جامعة السلطان قابوس - عمان، 0000-0002-2873-7325، ORCID: hani.adam@squ.edu.om  
\*\* باحثة، جامعة السلطان قابوس - عمان، 0000-0001-7988-0722، ORCID: alunood.alfarsi@gmail.com

## Introduction

The Sultanate of Oman has become the only Gulf country free of terrorism. Oman has been able to stay away from the claws of terrorism and increase its national counterterrorism strategy's efficiency through its preventive and defensive policies.<sup>1</sup> This is achieved despite terrorism surrounding Oman, both physically and ideologically, with terrorist and extremist thought patterns. This is drowning the region under an Islamic or a nationalist cloak.<sup>2</sup> And yet, the Sultanate of Oman can maintain its security stability through its national counterterrorism strategy utilizing several policies enforced by a collection of authorities and forces that are working collectively and individually to combat terrorism.<sup>3</sup> Keeping in mind the importance of international cooperation in countering terrorism, Oman is working with other states both regionally and globally through collective security, to ensure secure and peaceful environment.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, this research explains the status relating to terrorism in Oman and helps assess the success of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy in maintaining the state's security stability. Consequently, it results in a better understanding of the Omani counterterrorism strategy. Thus, it is crucial to discuss Oman's definition and consideration of terrorists and terrorism and investigate the evidence for the success of Oman's approach to counterterrorism. The research investigates the level of stability with which national security is maintained in Oman and examines the different factors that affect security stability.<sup>5</sup>

## Research Objectives

This research aims to explore the approach that the Omani national counterterrorism strategy adopts in the achievement of a high level of security.

To explore how the Sultanate of Oman defines terrorists and terrorism, and

To examine the elements of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy, and to understand the different phases of the Omani counterterrorism strategy.

---

1 The Jamestown Foundation, *Oman as a Counterterrorism Model for the GCC States* (May 27, 2016).

2 Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index: Measuring the impact of terrorism* (Sydney, Australia, 2019).

3 A. Albalushi, *Official from the Oman Public Prosecution* (Interview by the Author, April 23, 2019)

4 Houchang Yari, *Professor of Military and Strategic Issues and International Relations* (Interview with the Author, Dec. 12, 2018)

5 M. Hadji-Janev and M. Bogdanoski, *Handbook of Research on Civil Society and National Security in the Era of Cyber Warfare* (Information Science Reference, 2016).

## Research Question

How is the Sultanate of Oman managing its national counterterrorism strategy to defy terrorism and ensure its security-stability?

How does Oman consider terrorism and terrorists?

What are the elements of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy?

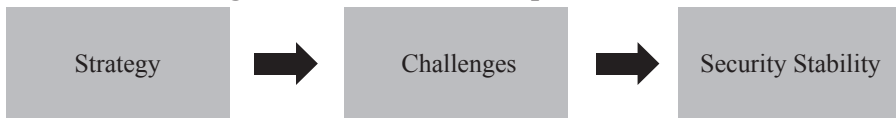
## Research Hypothesis

The Sultanate of Oman adopts a national defensive realistic approach to orchestrate its counterterrorism strategy and ensure its security stability.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This research discusses the Sultanate of Oman's management of its counterterrorism strategy to eliminate terrorism threats and maintain its security and stability. The latter is proven to be affected by two significant factors in different ways. The first factor (independent variable), being the terrorist threats that address the state and reduce the security stability of the Sultanate of Oman. Whenever terrorist threats occur, they require a state response and multiply security unrest, negatively affecting security and stability. Therefore, the relationship between terrorist threats and security-stability is opposite to each other: whenever the risks increase, the stability decreases.<sup>6</sup> The second independent variable is the effectiveness of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy and its ability to maintain security stability. This strategy consists of both policies and the use of counterterrorism authorities such as agencies and forces. Whenever the strategy is rightly implemented, this will decrease the terrorist threat's volume and increase security stability via indirect causation.<sup>7</sup> In a hierarchal matter, having a strategy comes on top of the necessities to achieve security and stability. The better the strategy is in denying terrorism of all types from entering the state, the less the security threats are, and the more secure and stable the country is (Office of Counterterrorism).

**Figure 1: The initial conceptual framework**



<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Yari, interview

Realism is the most theoretically acceptable paradigm in security studies. According to Hans Morgenthau,<sup>8</sup> realism is a paradigm that shows the world as it is rather than showing how it should be. Morgenthau located the roots of conflict and war in human nature as he believed that states' actions reflect the social nature of the people in that state. He attached great importance to power, either physical or mental, stating that, "Power may comprise anything that establishes and maintains the power of man over man ... from physical violence to the most subtle psychological ties by which one mind controls another."<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Waltz founded the more modern Neorealism theory that conversely considers the causes of conflict and war. This theory would be the international system itself and measures power not in one person's ability to affect others, but in terms of the size of the population and geographical territory of the state and the capability of its resources, economy, and military and political stability.<sup>10</sup> Both Morgenthau and Waltz perceive the international arena as a competitive and hostile stage where power, in its different definitions, is the center of interest of states. As such, power is the main subject of analysis in their theories.

The realist theory is the most well-accepted in security studies, as it recognizes states' needs and use of power for survival in the international arena. This research adopts a defensive structural realism approach, which finds its foundation in Waltz's Theory of International Politics, 1979, in which Waltz argues that attaining security in the anarchical structure of the international system requires states to maintain moderate and reserved policies. The defensive structural realist theory argues that states are not naturally aggressive: "The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system."<sup>11</sup> This is the crucial difference between the defensive realism theory and the offensive realism theory, which encourages states to increase their powers vigorously in support of an aggressive expansion of power.<sup>12</sup> Waltz put forward the foundation of defensive structural realism, but the theory was built on Stephen Walt's 'balance of threat' theory in his "The Origin of Alliance," of 1987. Based on Waltz, defensive realism proposes that states which seek to attain sovereignty in the international system will be counterbalanced by other countries that pursue the maintenance of the status quo. Therefore, according to defensive

---

8 H. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred A, 1956)

9 H. Morgenthau, *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970* (New York: Praeger, 1970). pp. 9

10 Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (US: McGraw Hill, 1979)

11 Ibid, pp. 126

12 J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001)

structural realists, aggression is self-defeating in terms of achieving security, which is the state's primary objective.<sup>13</sup>

Based on the above, the Sultanate of Oman provides and adopts the required strategy and policies to safeguard its security but does not aim to remove the source of insecurity. The main security principles of the Sultanate of Oman, as stated in its Basic Law 1996, are that peace is the state's goal, and no organization or group may establish military or paramilitary formations. The main political principles of the Sultanate of Oman are preserving the state's independence, sovereignty, and safeguarding the state's security and stability, and defending the country against every aggression. Besides these are neutrality and non-interference in other states' internal affairs, observance of international and regional covenants and treaties, and the generally recognized rules of international law in a manner that leads to peace and security between states and people (Oman's Basic Law, 1996). These principles can be seen in the defensive structural realism context of working to maintain the state status quo, not to expand its control and power and maintaining its stability through making peace and preserving the state's independence and sovereignty the goals of the country. Non-aggression is seen through the principles of neutrality and non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations and defending the state against every aggression. Looking at the security and political principles that the Sultanate of Oman adopts concerning defensive structural realism's central tenets, the defensive structural realism theory is the most applicable theory for the research.

Defensive policies aim to prevent terrorists, their ideology, weapons, and any equipment that they could use, from entering the state. They deter terrorists from committing acts against the country, from inside or outside of its territory, prevent terrorists from committing acts against other countries, ward off terrorism and defend the state in the event of a terrorist attack, and manage the situation in the best possible way in the event of a terrorist attack. The policies do not aim to pursue terrorists wherever they are to defeat them before they strike.<sup>14</sup> Defensive systems are directed at the entire population or a group with a standard connection, such as foreigners. Still, they are not directed at terrorists themselves in a time of security stability and they are not directed at terrorists themselves in a time of security. If the state is attacked, it will operate its policies against the terrorists, or the suspected terrorists

---

13 J. Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Cornell University Press, 1991) pp. 11

14 B. R. Posen, The Struggle against: Grand Strategy, Strategy, and Tactics. *International Security*, 39-55, (2001).

related to the events.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the methods that defensive policies employ are dependent on collecting and analyzing information and data, international collaboration, military display of state forces. Analyzing the current situation and context of the state, either in the region or on a global level and collaborating internationally with other nations, is crucial to forming a well-based assessment of actual terrorist threats facing the country and ensuring non-intervention of another state's sovereignty. Besides this, national forces are essential in confronting the terrorists and managing the event.

Intellectual security is considered one of the areas of modern security, which emerged with the development of technology and media, which made the world a small village in which the world cultures are intertwined with their local counterparts. Thus, Omani society is not immune to those cultural and religious transformations that affect its belief before its heritage. It has become clear that preserving intellectual security is especially important among young people, as they are at an age where curiosity drives them to embrace different ideas and attitudes completely different from Omani culture and identity. Intellectual security is the safety of a person's thought from deviation, or deviation from moderate understanding of religious, political, and social matters. This leads to preserving public order, achieving security, reassurance, and stability in political, social, economic, and other national security elements.

## Oman's Definition and Perspective of Terrorism

### Definition of Terrorism

The Sultanate of Oman defined terrorism in 2007 by a Royal Decree issued by the late Sultan Qaboos Bin Said.<sup>16</sup> The decree defines terrorism as “any act of violence or threat of violence done by an individual or a group for terrorists with the purpose of:

- Terrorizing people or terrifying them by hurting them or jeopardizing their lives, freedom, safety, honor, or rights, or
- Harming the environment or any public or private owned utility or property, or seizing it, or jeopardizing any national resource, or
- Threatening the regional stability or security of the country or its political unity or sovereignty, or
- Preventing or obstructing the public authorities from exercising its duties, or

15 S. Van Evera, *Offense, Defense and the Causes of War. International Security*, 22, 5-43 (1998).

16 Albalushi, interview



- Disabling the implementation of the provisions of the state's constitution or the laws or regulations

Based on this definition, the elements of terrorism could be the act of terrorism, the terrorist, and the purpose of the action.<sup>17</sup> According to the Royal Decree, the first element, the act of terrorism, should include violence, either by direct use of power or by the threat of using violence. The text was general in terms of the violence target and did not specify terrorism as the same subject of violence. It is not permissible to limit the text to understand that terrorists should themselves be the subject of the violence.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the violence in the terrorist act is either used or threatened to be used. It could be understood as the subject of the terrorist act or any other person related to him.

The second element in the definition, the terrorist, should be a person, either working individually or collectively in a group to carry out the act of terrorism. This text should be analyzed on a legal basis since it is a standard text. Omani legislation has recognized two types of persons: the 'natural person' and the 'juridical person.'<sup>19</sup> The natural person is a human being having a life starting from birth and ending with death.<sup>20</sup> The juridical person is the state or its apparatus, companies, institutions, organizations, and groups of people or money given a juridical personality to obtain rights and handle duties to the limit required to fulfill the objective of their establishment.<sup>21</sup> The juridical person shall have a natural person as a legal representative for expressing his will.<sup>22</sup> By analyzing the terrorist element and since the terrorist should be capable of carrying out acts, the terrorist should definitely be a natural person, as a juridical person cannot carry out any actions. Therefore, the terrorist as an element of terrorism should be a natural person.

The third and final element specified by the text is the purpose of the terrorist act. Therefore, terrorism is an act that requires a particular sense, and without such purpose, the action cannot be considered terrorism.<sup>23</sup> The terrorist act is carried out to terrorize people in their lives or morals, harm the environment or property in any possible way, or threaten the state or its authorities by detaining or jeopardizing their principles or power.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, if an act is carried out with any purpose other than stated, it is not considered terrorism.

---

17 Ibid

18 S. Alismailli, Researcher in Judiciary. (Interview by the Author, July 20, 2018).

19 Royal Decree no.29, *Civil Transactions Law*, Ministry of Legal Affairs (Muscat, 2013).

20 A. A. Sanhoori, *Alwaseet: Explaining the civil law* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) (Bairut, Alhalabi Publications, 2013)

21 Royal Decree no.29

22 Sanhoori, *Alwaseet*

23 Royal Decree no.7, *Criminal Law*, Ministry of Legal Affairs (Muscat, 2018)

24 Royal Decree no.8

Finally, to define whether any act is an act of terrorism or not according to the state of Oman, the presence of the three elements of terrorism should be investigated. The action should include violence directed towards innocent people And the purpose of the action should be to either terrorize people, harm the environment or property, or threaten the state or its authorities.

### **Perspective on Terrorists and Terrorism**

The Omani counterterrorism law<sup>25</sup> defines every action, attempt, or participation in any terrorist act committed with a terrorist purpose as a terrorist crime. Thus, the Sultanate of Oman considers terrorism to be a crime. And from this definition, it can be concluded that the main factors involved in assessing whether a crime is a terrorist crime or not and the single element that differentiates terrorism from any other crime is the intention of the perpetrator while committing acts of violence or threatening to use violence.<sup>26</sup> If the perpetrator has a terrorist intent in his actions, then his crimes are considered as terrorism. Suppose that perpetrator does not have a terrorist purpose his actions are not regarded as crimes of terrorism. Still, they could be considered crimes or violations if the activities are criminalized or prohibited by other state legislations.<sup>27</sup>

Legislation in the Sultanate of Oman has set deterrent penalties for terrorism that could, in some cases, amount to a death sentence. For example, according to Omani legislation, execution is the penalty for establishing, founding, organizing, managing, or leading a terrorist organization.<sup>28</sup> A terrorist organization is defined as an association, body, organization, center, or the like, whatever its name or form, and any branch thereof, that is established for a terrorist purpose. The penalty of being a member or associate with a terrorist organization in any way with knowledge of its objectives shall be imprisonment for a term of five to ten years.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, terrorist organizations shall be dissolved and disbanded with effective measures. All its funds, weapons, tools, documents, etc. which may have been used in committing a crime, or prepared for use therein, shall be confiscated.<sup>30</sup>

According to the Omani Counterterrorism Law, 2007, any associate of terrorist activities is considered a criminal and could face a penalty of a life sentence in jail or imprisonment for not less than ten years if he is found to:

---

25 Ibid

26 Albalushi, interview

27 Alismaili, interview

28 Royal Decree no.8

29 Albalushi, interview

30 Department of Countering Terrorism, *Overview of the Counter Terrorism Legislations in the Gulf and Yemen* (Vienna: United Nations Organization, 2009)

- Use coercion or any other means to force a person to join a terrorist organization or prevent his secession. The penalty shall be death if the acts lead to the death of the victim or any other person, or
- Provide a terrorist organization any funds, weapons, explosives, or other materials that endanger the people's lives or property. Or, knowing the organization's purpose, provide a terrorist organization with documents, or any other means or material or information that could assist the organization in achieving their goals, or
- Provide the heads or members of a terrorist organization shelter or a place to meet. Or convey their messages, or other facilities, knowing the purpose for which they are intended, or
- Seek to communicate with a foreign country or terrorist organization based outside the Sultanate or support them to commit terrorist activities within the Sultanate. Or endangering its property, institutions, employees, or diplomatic representatives, or
- Train one person or more in the use or manufacture of weapons, explosives, and means of communication or methods of warfare, to carry out a terrorist crime, or
- Conceal or destroy the objects used or prepared for use in a terrorist crime.

In addition, any Omani citizen that cooperates or joins a terrorist organization, forces, or armed militias based outside the Sultanate that are using terrorism or military training as a means to achieve its objectives or purposes will be similarly punished, even if the actions are not directed at the Sultanate of Oman.<sup>31</sup> The penalty shall be a life sentence in jail or imprisonment of not less than ten years if the perpetrator receives military or security training. The penalty shall be life sentence imprisonment if the perpetrator participates in any of its terrorist operations.<sup>32</sup> The penalty shall be death or life sentence imprisonment if the perpetrator is a member of the armed forces or paramilitary formations or public security bodies.<sup>33</sup>

The penalty of imprisonment of not less than five years should be applied if a person is found in the Sultanate of Oman's territory after committing one of the crimes stipulated in the Counterterrorism Law abroad. The penalty shall be a life sentence in jail or imprisonment of no less than ten years if the act committed is directed against the Sultanate of Oman or adversely affects its

---

31 Albalushi, interview

32 Royal Decree no.8

33 A. M. Alfarsi, *Official from the Ministry of Defense Specialized in Security Studies* (Interview by the Author, April 20, 2019A)

interests. The same sentence will apply if the person resorts to the Sultanate of Oman's territory, using it as headquarters for preparation or planning to commit one of the crimes stipulated in the Counterterrorism Law against another state.<sup>34</sup> The Counterterrorism Law includes a precautionary article covering any terrorist acts that are not mentioned in the law, which stipulates that any of the felonies outlined in the Omani Penal Law or any other law shall be deemed to be terrorist crimes if committed for a terrorist purpose, and shall be punished by a severer punishment than the one stipulated in the law.<sup>35</sup>

Financing terrorism is a separate crime from committing terrorist acts as per the Omani Anti-Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism Law issued under Royal Decree no.30, 2016. Financing terrorism is a crime whether the terrorist act occurs, and regardless of the country in which the terrorist act was committed or attempted. Even if funds were used to achieve the act or not. The Anti-Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism Law (2016) considers any person to provide or collect funds, directly or indirectly, to be a perpetrator of a crime of financing terrorism. Yet, conditional on his knowledge that it will be used wholly or partly to commit a terrorist act or by a terrorist or terrorist organization. He will face the penalty of imprisonment for ten to fifteen years, and a fine not less than fifty thousand Omani Riyals, but not to exceed the equivalent of the value of the funds provided or collected. It includes financing individuals' travel to commit, plan, participate in or facilitate terrorist acts, provide funding for training in acts of terrorism, or receiving that training. Any person who associates or assists in committing the crime of financing terrorism will be considered a perpetrator. The penalties provided by the Anti-Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism Law (2016) shall be doubled if the perpetrator commits the crime through an organized criminal group or commits the offense by exploiting his powers or authorities in a financial institution, charitable or civil society organization, or repeats the crime.<sup>36</sup>

Based on above information, it is evident that the Sultanate of Oman takes strict action against any person who is proven to have any relationship to terrorists or acts of terrorism.<sup>37</sup> But the connection should first be established in a court of law that considers the terrorist a criminal. This perspective reflects the defensive realism approach that the Sultanate of Oman adopts and considers a basis for its national counterterrorism policy. The offensive realism approach, on the other hand, has another perspective on terrorism.

---

34 Royal Decree no.8

35 Alismaili, interview

36 Alismaili, interview

37 Royal Decree no.8

The offensive counterterrorism approach has been led internationally by the United States of America.<sup>38</sup> Its principles were reflected in the speech that President George W. Bush gave on September 6, 2006, from the White House before the people, the state authorities, and the parliament regarding the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001.<sup>39</sup> The speech was made five years after the terrorist attacks and summarized the American counterterrorism strategy. Analyzing the speech provides an opportunity to understand the American perspective on terrorism, reflecting the offensive realism approach regarding terrorism, and comparing it to the Omani view and position, which adopts a defensive realism approach.

President George W. Bush stated<sup>40</sup> that since the events of September 11, the United States of America has entered a new and dangerous war to prevent terrorists from striking the country again. The United States of America has tracked down the terrorists either in the United States of America or other states worldwide. The United States of America has launched worldwide military operations to destroy any point of gathering or place that the terrorists may use to hide and take refuge in. The American army operations also captured thousands of so-called terrorists from the war fronts, predominantly from Iraq and Afghanistan. The arrested terrorists were either killed immediately or sent to an “environment where they [could] be held secretly and questioned by experts.”<sup>41</sup> Those held were questioned by American military personnel and were later either killed, after all possible information had been extracted from them, or kept in prisons under inhumane conditions.

In this context, the offensive realists’ approach to counterterrorism is based on the principles that terrorism around the world poses a threat to the state’s power, terrorism should be aggressively eliminated before it disrupts the state order, and terrorists are enemies of the country. These principles are evident in the American policies towards countering terrorism. As a result of terrorism around the world posing threats to states and individuals, some countries are following the terrorists and neutralize them in some parts of the world.<sup>42</sup> Regarding the use of aggression to face terrorism and the need to eliminate terrorism before it harms the state, the United States of America has declared war against terrorism based on the pre-emptive strike. It tracked individuals

38 C. Yordán, America’s Quest for Global Hegemony: Offensive Realism, the Bush Doctrine, and the 2003 Iraq War. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 53, no. 110, (2006) 125-157.

39 NYTimes, *TRANSCRIPT: President Bush’s Speech on Terrorism*. Accessed March 11, 2020, [https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/washington/06bush\\_transcript.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/washington/06bush_transcript.html)

40 Ibid

41 Ibid

42 P. Toft and John J. Mearsheimer, an offensive realist between geopolitics and power. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 8 (2005)

who were not part of the 9/11 events but who were said to be related to the al-Qaida terrorist group and Taliban and captured them to prevent them from “murdering the American people,” according to President Bush’s statement.<sup>43</sup> This clearly states that many of the people killed or held captive were not terrorists that directly threatened the United States of America. But the United States of America perceived that those persons might conduct terrorist acts against it in the future, which was enough reason to declare war against them to prevent them from doing so. And by declaring war, the United States gave the authority to its military forces to deal with the terrorists throughout the interaction instead of to its law enforcement forces. Finally, regarding the terrorists being enemies of the state, the United States of America treated possible terrorists as enemies. It bombed their houses and shelters, killed them on sight without taking their statements, held them captive without trial, tortured them for information, transferred them from their countries to prisons in other states, and hid them without disclosing information of their whereabouts. These activities were conducted under the laws and premise of war to prevent terrorists from attacking the United States of America.<sup>44</sup>

When comparing the offensive approach in countering terrorism reflected in the American policies, with the defensive system that the Sultanate of Oman adopts, several differences are apparent. The offensive approach perceives terrorism around the world as a threat to the state’s power and believes it should be aggressively eliminated before it harms the state through preventive wars around the world. The defensive approach perceives terrorism as a crime that should be prevented from within the state boundaries without aggression to the supposed or suspected terrorists outside of the state territories. Additionally, the offensive approach considers terrorists as enemies of the state who should be captured, interrogated, and killed by military forces. In contrast, the defensive approach views them as criminals for committing terrorist acts specified by the laws. Considering this, terrorists should be captured by the law-enforcement forces and prosecuted by judicial authorities and imprisoned in prisons, while maintaining their civil and human rights always.<sup>45</sup>

## **The Status of Terrorism in Oman:**

### **International Reports**

Peaceful Oman is the only Gulf country that scored zero on the 2019 Global Terrorism Index. This reflects Oman’s success in countering terrorism

---

43 NYTimes, *TRANSCRIPT*

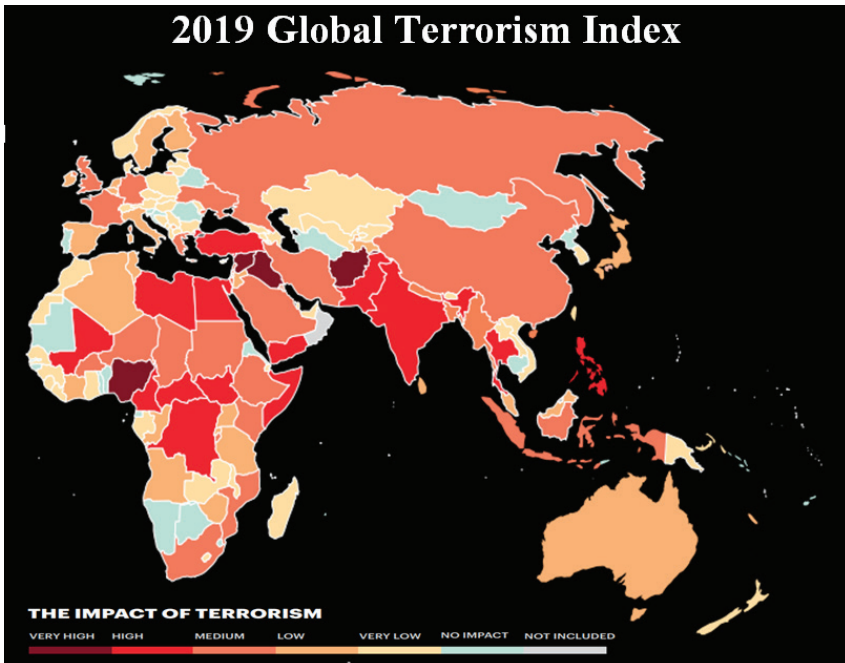
44 Toft and Mearsheimer,

45 Royal Decree no.97, *Criminal Procedure Law*. Ministry of Legal Affairs (Muscat, 1999)

and maintaining its security and stability. The Global Terrorism Index is a comprehensive study prepared by the Institute for Economics and Peace, the “independent, non-partisan, non-profit think tank dedicated to shifting the world’s focus to peace as a positive, achievable, and tangible measure of human well-being and progress.”<sup>46</sup> The Global Terrorism Index analyzes the impact of terrorism on 163 countries worldwide, covering 99.7 percent of the world’s population. The Index is based on the Global Terrorism Database. Their data are collected and collated at the University of Maryland by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism.<sup>47</sup>

The Global Terrorism Index is based on four indicators: total terrorist incidents each year, real injuries caused by terrorists each year, total fatalities caused by terrorists each year, and total damage to property caused by terrorist incidents each year. The country ranking is reached by weighing the four indicators over five years.

**Figure 2: Global terrorism index map (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019)**



46 Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global*, pp. 101

47 Ibid

The Global Terrorism Index map (Figure 1), which was prepared at the end of the year 2019, gives a visual depiction of the geographical positioning of the Sultanate of Oman concerning the location of terrorist incidents during the past five years. The Sultanate of Oman shares land borders with Yemen, which is desperately impacted by terrorism, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is also affected by terrorism. The Sultanate of Oman also faces high levels of terrorism on the eastern side of its maritime borders from India, Pakistan, and Somalia. It faces certain levels of terrorism on the northern side of its maritime borders from Iran.

Another report on the Sultanate of Oman was issued by the United States Department of State, 2018. In that report, the Department of State disclosed that Oman's radicalization and terrorist recruitment were not considered a significant threat to Oman during 2017. The Omani initiative to address violence and domestic radicalization was not explicit in scope or nature. But according to the report, Oman maintained a non-public enterprise and tight control on terrorist recruitment.<sup>48</sup> This report's contents indicate that the Omani counterterrorism policy is not clear to other states and personnel. Still, the results of the policy are evident and satisfactory for maintaining security stability.

### **National Report**

An official report by the Sultanate of Oman in 2002 to the United Nations stated that no terrorist acts had taken place to date in Oman. There had been no examples of legal convictions or judgments in that regard.<sup>49</sup> The report was an official confirmation that the Omani national counterterrorism strategy was a success to the extent that no terrorist attacks had occurred in the Sultanate of Oman up to that point. However, it is noted that the report used the broad term "terrorist acts," and, according to Sanhoori,<sup>50</sup> if the expression is comprehensive in its general meaning, it is not permissible to limit it to any interpretation, but rather to explain it in general. Therefore, it is interpreted to mean that Oman had not been a target for terrorist attacks. No planning for terrorism had taken place in Oman, and that Oman had financed no terrorism or terrorists.

---

48 United States Department of State, *Country Report on Terrorism 2017*, (Oman, 2018).

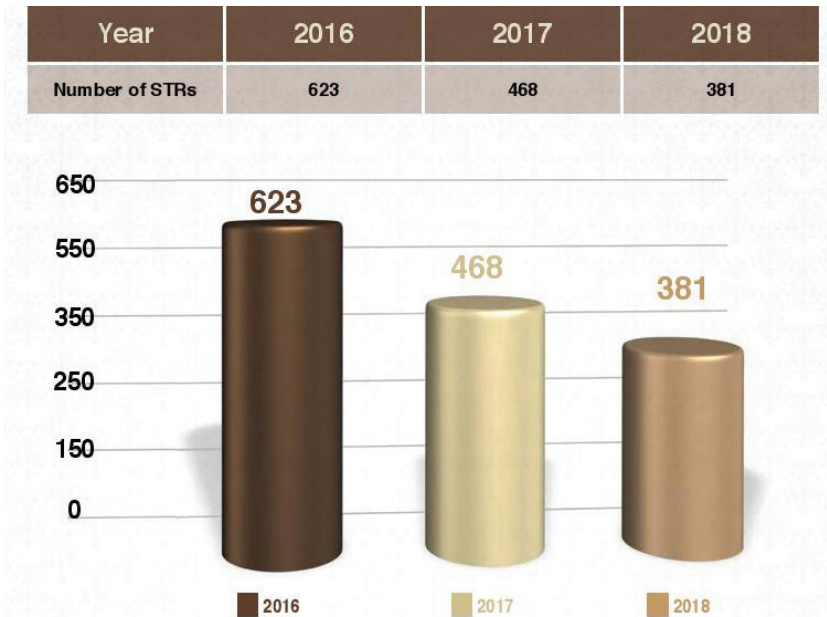
49 United Nations Security Council Counterterrorism Committee. *Letter dated 27 June 2002 from the Chairman of the Security established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001)*. Accessed January 12, 2019, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/454/90/PDF/N0245490.pdf?OpenElement>

50 Sanhoori, *Alwaseet*



As for the current times, a highly significant report from the National Centre for Financial Information was published recently in 2018, regarding the financing of terrorism in Oman. It is clear from the report’s data that the Sultanate of Oman is closely auditing all the financial transactions that are taking place in the state to prevent any transactions that might be related to terrorism. The report from 2018, refers to the fact that terrorism is being financed in new ways, through new forms and new tools to succeed and avoid detection by the Omani authorities. These tools are complicated and unique in terms of the source of funds and their intended beneficiary for terrorist reasons. The National Centre for Financial Information report covers three years between 2016 and 2018 inclusively. And the report sheds light and discusses the methods created by the Omani authorities to prevent terrorist-related acts from occurring.

**Figure 3: Number of reported suspected transactions per year (Royal Oman Police, 2018)**



As per (Figure 2), the number of transactions suspected to be financing terrorism reported to the National Centre for Financial Information decreased by almost half from 2016, where the number of alleged transaction reports was 623, to only 381 cases in 2018.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the improvement in state performance

51 Royal Oman Police, *Report from National Centre for Financial Information*, (Muscat, 2018)

at countering the financing of terrorism was noted year on year through the decreasing number of reported incidents, reflecting the increasing efficiency of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy.

**Table 1: Reporting entities per year (Royal Oman Police, 2018)**

Years	2016	2017	2018
<b>Banks</b>	452	292	212
<b>Money exchange firms</b>	166	171	157
<b>Insurance companies</b>	0	0	1
<b>Competent authorities</b>	5	5	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>381</b>

Concerning the reporting entities of the suspected transactions, (Table 1) shows that commercial banks peaked the criminal reporting through these years in contrast to the other entities such as money exchange firms, insurance companies, and competent public authorities. This is evidence of the efficiency of the financial policies in the Sultanate of Oman, and the accurate reporting system that Oman has in place regarding bank transactions. It also reflects the great level of analysis performed on reported transactions by the Omani authorities and the state’s policies to counter the financing of terrorism. It is essential to mention that the tools used in the suspected transactions changed to some extent over the past years, as the use of cheques and real estate decreased while the use of new tools such as shares, bonds, documentary credit, and gold increased. However, cash is still at the top of the list of transaction tools used to finance terrorism. Regarding the techniques used in the suspected transaction, deposit and withdrawal of cash have been used throughout the last three years. Its percentage increased to 90% of reported transactions. The money transfer technique decreased from 164 cases in 2016 to only 21 cases in 2018.<sup>52</sup>

The 2018 report concluded that none of the suspected transactions were proven to be related to a terrorist act. The Global Terrorism Index also concludes that no terrorist or terrorist-related acts have taken place in the

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

Sultanate of Oman in recent years. Besides this is the lack of any confirmed news from national or international media sources related to any terrorist acts in Oman and supported by the best knowledge of specialists and interviewees interviewed for this study. This all confirms that the Sultanate of Oman has not any recent encounter with terrorism and, therefore, proves the Omani national counterterrorism strategy's success in maintaining security stability in Oman.

## **Conclusion**

This study explained the differences between defensive and offensive realism policies regarding the approach and principles and having explored the counterterrorism policies of the Sultanate of Oman. It can be concluded that, in the context of national counterterrorism strategies, the practical application of each approach reflects the nature, aim, direction, and methods of the policies used by the state. The nature of defensive policies results in an organized plan that the government uses to prevent terrorism through peaceful means or defend itself in the face of a possible terrorist attack. Therefore, this paper has demonstrated the Omani perspective on terrorism by providing the Omani definition of terrorism and a description of how the Sultanate of Oman considers terrorism and terrorists from a legal and criminal viewpoint. It went on to illustrate how the Sultanate of Oman is free from terrorism using official statistics and notes the lack of any counterarguments. This study is essential to demonstrate the success of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy.

It is evident that the Omani national counterterrorism strategy is not announced or formally issued by the state, though it can be observed within published policies. This gives the government more flexibility and ability to improve, manage and adjust the strategy without official restrictions. This indicates the broad powers and judgment given to the state authorities and forces. It provides the state with the lead and freedom to choose which policies to implement according to the type and location of terrorist threats. Besides this, it gives the counterterrorism forces the power to make policies more flexible to security requirements and more applicable and realistic, since Omani authorities are best known of their potential in this regard.

The success of the Omani national counterterrorism strategy is reinforced by the results which demonstrate the nonexistence of any confirmed terrorist activity in Oman concluded in national and international reports, along with a decrease in the number of suspected terrorist financial transactions. This research has revealed that Omani counterterrorism strategy aims to prevent the terrorists, their ideology, weapons, and equipment that they could make

use of, from entering the country. It deters terrorists from executing terrorist acts against Oman, from inside or outside of the territory, and against other states directed from the Omani territories. It protects the national assets and the society in the event of a terrorist attack and manages the situation in the best way possible in an attack. The methods of defensive policies adopted by the Sultanate are reliant on collecting and analyzing information and data, international collaboration, military display, and deterrence using the national forces at a time of security stability, and the use of counterterrorism authorities and forces in the event of a terrorist attack occurring.

## Bibliography

A. M. Alfarsi, *Official from the Ministry of Defense Specialized in Security Studies* (Interview by the Author, April 20, 2019A)

Albalushi, A. *Official from the Oman Public Prosecution* (Interview by the Author, April 23, 2019)

Alismaili, A., *Researcher in Judiciary*. (Interview by the Author, July 20, 2018).

Department of Countering Terrorism, *Overview of the Counter Terrorism Legislations in the Gulf and Yamen* (Vienna: United Nations Organization, 2009)

Hadji-Janev M. and Bogdanoski, M., *Handbook of Research on Civil Society and National Security in the Era of Cyber Warfare* (Information Science Reference, 2016).

Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index: Measuring the impact of terrorism* (Sydney, Australia, 2019).

Mearsheimer, J., *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001)

Morgenthau, H., *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred A, 1956)

Morgenthau, H., *Truth and Power: Essays of a Decade, 1960-1970* (New York: Praeger, 1970). Pp. 9

NYTimes, *TRANSCRIPT: President Bush's Speech on Terrorism*. Accessed March 11, 2020, [https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/washington/06bush\\_transcript.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/washington/06bush_transcript.html)

Posen, B. R., *The Struggle against: Grand Strategy, Strategy, and Tactics*. *International Security*, 39-55, (2001).

Royal Decree no.29, *Civil Transactions Law*, Ministry of Legal Affairs (Muscat, 2013).

Royal Decree no.7, *Criminal Law*, Ministry of Legal Affairs (Muscat, 2018)

Royal Decree no.8, *Countering Terrorism Law*. Muscat: Ministry of Legal Affairs (2007).

Royal Decree no.97, *Criminal Procedure Law*. Ministry of Legal Affairs (Muscat, 1999)

Royal Oman Police, *Report from National Centre for Financial Information*, (Muscat, 2018)

Sanhoori, A. A., *Alwaseet: Explaining the civil law* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) (Bairut, Alhalabi Publications, 2013)

Snyder, J., *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Cornell University Press, 1991) Pp. 11

The Jamestown Foundation, *Oman as a Counterterrorism Model for the GCC States* (May 27, 2016).

Toft, P. and Mearsheimer, M., An offensive realist between geopolitics and power. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 8 (2005)

United Nations Security Council Counterterrorism Committee. *Letter dated 27 June 2002 from the Chairman of the Security established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001)*. Accessed January 12, 2019, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/454/90/PDF/N0245490.pdf?OpenElement>

United States Department of State, *Country Report on Terrorism 2017, (Oman, 2018)*.

Van Evera, S., Offense, Defense and the Causes of War. *International Security*, 22, 5-43 (1998).

Waltz, K., *Theory of International Politics* (US: McGraw Hill, 1979)

Yari, H. *Professor of Military and Strategic Issues and International Relations* (Interview with the Author, Dec. 12, 2018)

Yordán, C., America's Quest for Global Hegemony: Offensive Realism, the Bush Doctrine, and the 2003 Iraq War. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 53, no. 110, (2006) 125-157.