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# Foreign Policy Analysis and Armed Non-State Actors in World Politics: Lessons from the Middle East

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The study of armed non-state actors (ANSAs) has grown exponentially in the last two decades. This article explores the foreign policy of ANSAs as a new empirical domain for foreign policy analysis (FPA) by drawing on various examples from the Middle East to show the merit of this area for novel empirical and theoretical studies. The article identifies the domain of ANSAs' foreign policy showing how FPA research has so far remained state-centric and almost completely ignores ANSAs. While the external engagement of ANSAs were examined within the scholarship on civil wars, FPA can be adapted to provide systematic scholarly understanding of this phenomenon. Finally, the article explores how studying ANSAs' foreign policies can revitalize FPA and drive its agenda into new directions.

El estudio de los actores armados no estatales (armed non-state actors, ANSAs) ha crecido de manera exponencial en las últimas dos décadas. Este artículo examina la política exterior de los ANSA como un nuevo dominio empírico para el análisis de políticas exteriores (foreign policy analysis, FPA) haciendo uso de diferentes ejemplos de Medio Oriente con el fin de demostrar el mérito de esta área para los novedosos estudios empíricos y teóricos. El artículo identifica el dominio de la política exterior de los ANSA, el cual demuestra cómo la investigación del FPA hasta ahora se ha mantenido enfocada en el Estado y casi ignora por completo a dichos actores. Si bien la participación externa de los ANSA se analizó dentro de los estudios sobre las guerras civiles, el FPA se puede adaptar para brindar un entendimiento académico y sistemático de este fenómeno. Finalmente, el artículo examina de qué manera el estudio de las políticas exteriores de los ANSA puede revitalizar el FPA y orientar su agenda hacia nuevos rumbos.

L'étude des acteurs armés non étatiques s'est développée de manière exponentielle ces deux dernières décennies. Cet article explore la politique étrangère des acteurs armés non étatiques en tant que nouveau domaine empirique pour l'analyse de la politique étrangère en s'appuyant sur divers exemples issus du Moyen-Orient afin de montrer les mérites de ce domaine pour de nouvelles études empiriques et théoriques. Il identifie le domaine de la politique étrangère des acteurs armés non étatiques en montrant comment les recherches en analyse de la politique étrangère sont jusqu'ici restées centrées sur les États en ignorant pratiquement complètement les acteurs armés non étatiques. Bien que l'engagement extérieur des acteurs armés non étatiques ait été examiné dans les recherches sur les guerres civiles, l'analyse de la politique étrangère peut être adaptée pour offrir une compréhension intellectuelle systématique de ce phénomène. Enfin, cet article explore la manière dont l'étude des politiques étrangères des acteurs armés non étatiques peut

revitaliser l'analyse de la politique étrangère et mener son programme à de nouvelles orientations.

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### Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have highlighted a shift in the power of polities in the international system. The predominance of the state as a conceptual and practical pillar has declined in the face of the rising centrality of non-state actors in the conduct of international relations. Non-state actors, possessing military capabilities operating outside the direct hierarchical control of the state, are increasingly defining trends in global and regional politics (Mishali-Ram 2009; Aydinli 2015). While the agency of non-state actors has long been recognized in IR (Keohane and Nye 1977; Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2010), there are yet gaps in scholarly understanding of these actors and their role in world politics. Armed non-state actors (ANSAs thereafter) not only challenge state authority in the international system through the use of violence and military means, but there is substantial evidence of ANSAs maintaining foreign relations and carrying out what looks like foreign policy with other states and non-state actors during both war and peace times. This article examines ANSAs' actorness and foreign relations as a new area of inquiry for foreign policy analysis (FPA).

The foreign engagement of ANSAs have been examined in the context of civil wars from various perspectives, including proxy warfare (Berman and Lake 2019; Moghadam and Wyss 2020), international interventions as negotiated processes between international actors and ANSAs (Bapat 2007; Byman 2007; Bob 2010; Idler 2012; San-Akca 2016; Arves, Cunningham, and McCulloch 2019), the diplomacy of these actors conducted alongside their war tactics (Coggins 2015; Huang 2016), their international activism (Bob 2010), and their digital diplomacy to garner internal and external support (Bos and Melissen 2019; Jones and Mattiacci 2019). Nevertheless, the study of foreign relations held by ANSAs is far from systematic. Meanwhile, FPA has rarely examined ANSAs, and efforts to adapt FPA to the realm of non-state actors have predominantly focused on European Union (EU) foreign policy (Jørgensen 2004; White 1999, 2018) and Globalization in the West (Jørgensen and Hellmann 2015; Baumann and Stengel 2014). This article aims to bring FPA and the study of ANSAs in a fruitful dialogue to explore this new area of inquiry. It argues that adapting an FPA that focuses on the relationship between processes and policy outputs to the study of ANSAs can bring a systematic understanding to ANSAs' foreign policy. In addition, this endeavor would revitalize FPA by adapting its techniques and analytical methods to a "new" arena and allow it to move beyond its state-centric confines.

The article uses the Middle East to illustrate the validity of a research agenda combining FPA and the study of ANSAs. The phenomenon of ANSAs' foreign policy is particularly evident in this region, where a combination of state fragility and conflict created a fertile ground for ANSAs to operate regionally. Several ANSAs developed over the decades and became established regional actors, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. The onset of the 2011 Uprisings led to the extraordinary proliferation of ANSAs in the wake of the wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya. After 2011, some prominent groups, having roots in the pre-2011 conditions, evolved into established groups with an extensive regional network, such as Syrian Kurds through the People's Protection Units (PYG), the Islamic State, Jaysh al-Islam in Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen. In addition, hundreds of small ANSAs emerged in Libya and Syria either operating independently or in the shadow of larger ANSAs. The scope of this article is focused on large, established ANSAs pursuing distinct and autonomous foreign policies at regional and international levels.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section identifies the realm of ANSAs and their foreign policy activities, while reflecting on the limitations within the existing literature. The second section explores how an FPA approach can contribute to a systematic study of ANSAs' foreign policies with illustrations from the Middle East. The third section shows that an engagement between FPA and ANSAs presents an innovative research agenda that could revitalize FPA.

### *The Foreign Policy of Armed Non-State Actors*

Non-state actors have long been recognized as independent and autonomous players in international relations. As early as the 1970s, the interdependence literature showed that international relations are not the exclusive domain of states (Keohane and Nye 1977). In recent years, a growing body of literature have ascribed agency to non-state actors in international relations (Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2010). Criteria differ among scholars on defining a non-state actor. Most approaches toward actorness include a capability for making decisions and implementing them beyond states' borders (Aydinli 2015, 4; Josselin and Wallace 2001, 3–4). Armed non-state actors also generate several definitions. Schneckener (2006, 25) defines ANSAs as those actors “1) willing and able to use violence for pursuing their objectives; and 2) not integrated into formalized state institutions such as regular armies, presidential guards, police or special forces.” The literature has offered concrete frameworks for measuring “non-state actorness” (Dryburgh 2008; Sjöstedt 1977). “Actorness” thus refers to having an autonomous decision-making system, the capacity to implement policies, and the ability to exert influence over others in world politics (Aydinli 2015, 2016). From that perspective, ANSAs' actorness in international relations indicates that these entities are capable of autonomous decisions with discernible consequences for others. Hill (2015, 4) defines foreign policy as “the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually but not exclusively a state) in international relations.” According to Hill's definition, ANSAs are capable of conducting coherent, consistent policies along a strategic line and these policies are “foreign,” in the sense that they are aimed at other actors.

The foreign relations of ANSAs have been examined in several strands within the IR literature and the literature on civil wars. IR scholarship's examination of ANSAs is state-centric, in the sense that the focus remains on the state's loss of monopoly over violence and how ANSAs indirectly influence state foreign policies (Bapat 2007; Moore 2015; Schumacher and Schraeder 2019). Scholarship on civil wars has prioritized the agency of ANSAs and examined their interactions with other actors in and outside the context of war (Idler 2012; Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013). Scholars have often focused on when and why these actors use violence in pursuing their goals at the international level, thereby focusing on terrorism, insurgency, and rebel groups (Chenoweth and Lawrence 2010; Dalacoura 2001; Varin and Abubakar 2017). With the multiplicity of proxy conflicts in the twenty-first century, scholars employ the principal-agent lens to examine why states employ ANSAs as proxies in the form of “conflict delegation” (Salehyan 2010) and the conditions under which ANSAs accept the support from external backers (Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011). An emerging literature is also looking at how some ANSAs outgrow their patrons and become patrons themselves for other ANSAs (Mumford 2013; Moghadam and Wyss 2020; Phillips and Valbjørn 2018). Some scholars also highlight the autonomous nature of ANSAs and characterize the relations with other states as a form of alliance. San-Akca (2016) examines the complex patterns of interactions between states and ANSAs and argues that this process of external state support to rebel groups is not dependent on state actors. Instead, rebel groups play an equally autonomous role with decision-making capacity in seeking and accepting support from states.

Scholars also highlighted that ANSAs employ tactics and strategies beyond violence, which can increase their chances of international recognition, a phenomenon called “rebel diplomacy.” Coggins (2015, 107) defines “rebel diplomacy as ‘when rebels engage in strategic communication with foreign governments or agents, or with an occupying regime they deem foreign.’” Huang (2016) similarly found that rebel groups engage in protodiplomacy to attain visibility, credibility, and recognition at the international level in the same way that diplomacy is a form of statecraft. Other scholars also examined how rebels engage in “public diplomacy” not only targeting foreign governments but also external public opinions (Arves, Cunningham, and McCulloch 2019). Bob (2010) examines “rebel marketing,” that is, the use of social media, broadcasting by rebels for the purpose of international branding. Jones and Mattiacci (2019) study the use of twitter as a unique form of public diplomacy through which rebel groups garner support from the international community. Along the same lines, Bos and Melissen (2019) examine both public and digital diplomacy of rebel groups, allowing them to gain more power at the international stage, and thereby enhancing their position in their conflict.

Armed non-state actors’ external relations present a novel area of inquiry for FPA beyond the confines of the nation state. Although many aspects of foreign relations of ANSAs were examined, this domain remains far from systematic. The remainder of this article argues that FPA can provide a framework to study this phenomenon in a systematic manner.

#### *Armed Non-Actors Actors in the Middle East and the Adaptability of Foreign Policy Analysis*

Despite the broad applicability of FPA theoretical and conceptual toolkits, and its constant promise to defy the unitary state actor model, foreign policy analysts have concentrated on decision-making processes within national governments. This section explores how FPA can inform the behavior of ANSAs in the Middle East, and it argues that adapting FPA to the reality of ANSAs would unravel empirical dynamics and present a framework for studying ANSAs’ external relations in a systematic manner.

Armed non-state actors are far from an ideal-type phenomenon. The Middle East provides a rich pool of ANSAs. Some groups have long been established in the region, such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Hamas, and Hezbollah. Since the onset of the 2011 Uprisings, there is a proliferation of ANSAs, matched by the collapse of several states, such as Syria, Libya, and Yemen, in addition to previously weakened states, namely Iraq and Lebanon. Cases from the Middle East show that ANSAs are particularly diverse in their internal structure, size, decision-making process, ideologies, model of governance, and relationship with the regional structure (Berti 2016). Some are tightly institutionalized and operating within a state (e.g., Hezbollah or the Kurds in Iraq), others operate in parallel to states (e.g., the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda). Some of these groups are opposing governments (Jaysh al-Islam in Syria) and/or demanding separate states (such as the Kurds in Syria). Others are operating as quasi-states (such as Hamas and the PLO). While this diversity should not be understated, all these ANSAs are pursuing discernable foreign policy activities with evident consequences for others in the region, and these activities were impacted by decision-making processes and often constrained by the public opinion, material resources, and the regional structure. Surprisingly, many ANSAs are analyzed as unitary organizations, and their decision-making processes are rarely examined (for exceptions, cf. Khalidi 2014; Mintz, Chatagnier, and Samban 2019; Charountaki 2020). Three areas show that ANSAs in their foreign policy actions are diverse in their decision-making process and their relationship with domestic and external environments. Foreign policy analysis, with its eclectic and flexible framework can provide a framework embracing ANSAs’ diversity.

First, FPA research on leaders in shaping their states' foreign policies can be adapted to investigate how individuals matter in the decision-making process of ANSAs (Rapport 2017). Some scholars examine individual beliefs, identities, images, and personalities for foreign policy can inform scholarly understanding of ANSAs' behavior and their foreign policy decision-making process (Hermann 1988; Görener and Ucal 2011; Dyson and Parent 2018; Kesgin 2020). Other scholars looked at cognitive biases, heuristics, errors, misperceptions, and learning processes (Jervis 1976; Levy 1994; Duelfer and Dyson 2011; Ziv 2017; Flanik 2017). Hezbollah's foreign policy toward the post-2011 Syria crisis is an evident illustration. This decision has been often attributed to Hezbollah's strategic calculations at domestic and regional levels. At the regional level, Hezbollah's alliance with Syria constitutes a geopolitical necessity to sustain its supply routes from Iran (Tokmajyan 2014). At the domestic level, Hezbollah has been facing a critical situation, and the intervention in Syria was a form of exporting the political struggle in Lebanon to other grounds (Saade 2017), that is, diversionary foreign policy. Whereas Hezbollah's foreign actions are overwhelmingly analyzed as a unitary actor, an FPA approach would trace the individuals who are at the heart of the decision-making process, that is, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah. While Hezbollah's official decision body is the Decision-Making Consultative Council (Majlis Shura al-Qarar), Nasrallah has increasingly exerted his influence over the organization, especially after his exceptional performance during the 2006 Lebanon War, which caused a steep rise in his popularity across the Arab world. Unfortunately, this dimension has been hardly studied, and looking at the personal traits of Nasrallah and his perception of the Syria crisis, especially along the evolution of his influence within the party, may enlighten our understanding of Hezbollah's regional and international role after 2011. Similarly, FPA research may inform the foreign policy activities of other ANSAs where influential leaders are at the heart of the decision-making process, such as Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi (1979–2019) in the case of the Islamic State, Usama Bin Laden (1957–2011) in Al-Qaeda, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (1934–2011) in the case of Hamas, Yasser Arafat (1929–2004) in the PLO, and Mustafa Barazani (1903–1979) leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party and its military forces, the Peshmerga, in the insurgency against the Iraqi government until he died in 1979.

Second, ANSAs are not necessarily led by a single leader having the highest bearing on foreign policy choices, but some actors are structured around a small group of decision-makers, and this group dynamic has significant ramifications for foreign policy decisions. Foreign policy analysis shows that psychological and cognitive limitations also applies not only to individual decision-makers but also to group dynamics. The distribution of power within the group, the centrality of particular leaders, complexity of group discussions, and competitions within the group will shape foreign policy decisions (Janis 1982; Beasley 1998; Schafer and Crichlow 2010; Badie 2010; Eder 2019). The decision-making structure within Hamas is a discernible example of a group decision-making process, which resulted in one of the most complex foreign policies. Hamas' decision-making body is the Political Bureau, which has internal leadership within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and two external leaderships—one by Mousa Abu Marzook (in Damascus then in Cairo) and a Kuwaiti group led by Khaled Mashal. Hamas' policies toward Israel and other Arab states has been often the result of the interaction and tensions between internal and external leaderships (Seurat 2015, 31–34). This dynamic led Hamas to one of the most controversial foreign policy choices in the region, such as its alliance choices following the 2011 Arab uprisings, including breaking ranks with the Syria–Iran–Hezbollah axis (Mohns and Bank 2012), then its rapprochement with the axis again since 2018. The influence of this group decision-making structure on Hamas' foreign policy has been hardly studied, and this is a case that FPA toolkit may demystify.

Third, dynamics between ANSAs and their constituency could be further illuminated by engagement with FPA literature on the role of public opinion in foreign policymaking. Whereas ANSAs are perceived to be free from the constraints of public opinion, they are often under pressure from their constituency, which could include the public opinion in their territorial boundaries and regional public opinion. This dynamic is what the civil war scholarship have identified as a distinct field of inquiry, namely “rebel governance” (Arjona, Kasfir, and Mampilly 2015). Armed non-state actors often perform social and political activities that bear high similarity to those performed by states. In this context, ANSAs’ leadership often care about their image and employ resources to mobilize popular consensus behind their decisions. Armed non-state actors’ foreign policy is often subject to these dynamics; leaders are often constrained by the public opinion among the population (and often their diasporas too) they control, and they often manipulate public views behind particular decisions. While the existing scholarship focuses on ANSAs’ control of their constituencies and the civilians under their control, there is little attention as to how these dynamics systematically affects ANSAs’ foreign relations.

An FPA perspective that problematizes the relationship between foreign policy and the public may also be extended to inform foreign policy actions of ANSAs in the Middle East. Hezbollah’s decision to intervene militarily in Syria in 2013 has caused public discomfort in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world. Nasrallah promoted a public narrative to rally public support for his foray into the Syrian civil war, especially among Lebanese Shia and their regional audience. The complex relationship between the leadership of Hezbollah, the Lebanese public opinion, and the regional public opinion is crucial in understanding the timing of announcing Hezbollah’s intervention and the unprecedented sectarian narratives in the party’s history that was used to rally support behind this decision at domestic and regional levels (Malmvig 2021). Hamas’ foreign policy toward the Syria crisis and its withdrawal from the Syrian–Iran–Hezbollah alliance in 2012 reveals the role of public opinion constraints in shaping ANSAs’ foreign policies. While Hamas relied on Syria and Iran in its resistance against Israel, siding with the oppressive regime of Bashar al-Assad would have costed the group a high price in legitimacy not only among Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank but also among the diaspora and supporters in the Arab world (Abu Amer 2018). Thousands of Palestinians were killed in Syria, and more were detained in Syrian prisons, and the Uprisings also affected attitudes among Palestinians toward the Assad regime. A 2012 poll showed that 80 percent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza were supporting the Syrian protesters (Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research 2012).

#### *Foreign Policy Analysis Revitalized: Lessons from Armed Non-State Actors in the Middle East*

As FPA may be adapted to explain ANSAs’ foreign policy, the endeavor can also reflect back on FPA itself. The post-2011 Middle East order shows that studying ANSAs’ foreign policies systematically can equally revitalize FPA, guide its research agenda into new directions, and extend its tools to actors that are located in between state and non-state hierarchies in world politics.

One of the traditional weaknesses of FPA is its static conception of the state, and its persistent attempt to explain state behavior without addressing the nature of statehood and actorness. While FPA, in its abstract definitions, moved to embrace other types of actors, by replacing “state” with “actors” in textbooks and allowing for “independent actors” in the definitions of the field (Hill 2015; Alden and Aran 2017), the nature of actorness and its impact on policies remain largely omitted. In other words, FPA does not offer examinations of whether the type and nature of state and actorness has inherent impact on foreign policies. Brown and Ainley (2005, 65) argue that this omission impedes a comprehensive understanding of foreign policy, “as we do not have a clear sense of what it is that states are motivated

by, what their function is, and how they work.” The emergence of ANSAs with their foreign policy activities made this weakness within FPA more apparent. Scholars tested whether some ANSAs would behave in the same way as states in the international system. Lemke (2008a,b) for example, demonstrates statistically that ANSAs’ alliance behavior is similar to states, and ANSAs are likely to ally to balance external threats. Nonetheless, many IR scholars assume that different types of states (and actors) lead to different behavior. Scholars examining foreign policies in the Global South often assume that the nature of the state and its history of formation lead to different foreign policy dynamics (Hinnebusch 2015; Salloukh 2017). The question then remains whether the foreign policy of ANSAs will manifest different dynamics due to the different nature of the actor and whether different types of ANSAs lead to varying foreign policy behavior.

To answer these questions, an alternative conceptualization of actorhood needs to be built in FPA theoretical frameworks. Alden and Aran (2017, chap. 5) discerned three types of states—institutional, quasi, and clustered—based on the degree to which states possess “material statehood,” that is, “the institutions comprising states and the extent to which they authority over binding rule making and political force” (Alden and Aran 2017, 102). They show that an explicit conception of the state shows that different states pursue different foreign policies. Building on these attempts to transcend the static concept of the state within FPA, conceptions of actorhood that includes other types of actors, such as ANSAs, can have significant implications for key theoretical developments within FPA.

Armed non-state actors in the Middle East offer abundant cases of actors with mystifying characteristics where the nature and type of actorhood affect the conduct of foreign policy. Armed non-state actors’ foreign policy activities are often driven by actors’ struggle for recognition in the international system. The example of Hezbollah’s socialization process in the Middle East reveals how the party’s interaction with Israel and regional actors have shaped the group’s policies in the region over the decades (Saouli 2019; Dionigi 2014). Pace and Pallister-Wilkins (2018) present an account of the relations between the EU and Hamas as two actors in “a state of permanent liminality”—that is, a category between the non-state/state binary involving imitation of state practices. Both actors’ foreign policies were shaped by their social positioning as “in-between categories.” The PLO is another ANSA whose foreign policy practices were driven by the quest for recognition (Norton and Greenberg 1989). Syrian Kurds through the PYD (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat/Democratic Union Party) including their military wing, the People’s Protection Units (PYG), is another example of a quasi-state that maintained a successful foreign policy with other non-state actors and managed to secure assistance from not only other Kurdish movements in the region (Charountaki 2015), but also regional and international powers—namely, Russia, the United States, and European States (Öğür and Baykal 2018).

Related to the question of actorhood is the issue of what qualifies as “foreign” in assessing actors’ behavior. For decades, the study of foreign policy was based on the differentiation between internal and external spheres of states (Waever 1994, 238). In the era of globalization, classical images of foreign policy as a practice conducted by sovereign states seem less and less adequate as the frontiers between internal and external have become blurred. The engagement of ANSAs in foreign policy behavior questions the divide between “external” and “internal” in understanding foreign policy. The need to problematize what is “foreign” and the state-centric focus in FPA is best demonstrated in ANSAs. Would a policy conducted by an ANSA toward another non-state actor or a state within the same territory be considered a “foreign policy”? Is the Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), for example, employing other proxies in Yemen be considered a foreign policy? Is Hezbollah’s policy in employing other ANSAs inside Lebanon be considered a “foreign policy”?



**Table 1.** FPA and ANSAs in the Middle East

FPA toolkits	Examples from the Middle East
Individual decision-making approaches	Nassrallah and Hezbollah (after 2006); PLO under Yasser Arafat; Mustafa Barazani of the KDP
Group decision-making approaches	Hamas; Al-Qaeda after Bin Laden
Public opinion and foreign policy constraints	Hamas' withdrawal from the Iran–Syria axis in 2012
Quasi-state actorness	PYG; Hamas; PLO

These all remain crucial questions in unravelling the complexity of actorness and the study of FPA. Armed non-state actors provide an opportunity for FPA to develop its agenda beyond the nation state and engage with questions on the nature of the state and actorness international relations.

### Conclusion

Armed non-state actors are operating across borders, and they often adopt state-like goals at regional and international levels. Several ANSAs maintain a network of foreign relations and conduct a foreign policy that is often influenced by individual, institutional, ideational, and structural variables while being subject to considerations by the public opinion in their own constituency. This article argued that FPA toolkits may be adapted to explain ANSAs' external behavior, such as the role of individual leadership and group dynamics in decision-making processes and the interaction between ANSAs and the public opinion (see [Table 1](#)). The article relied on cases of established ANSAs in the Middle East and showed that adapting these tools can transform widely known understandings of their behavior in the region. Future research can consider whether FPA toolkits may apply to the foreign conduct of small, less established ANSAs operating in the shadow of other actors, such as the Lebanese Resistance Brigades sponsored by Hezbollah. While the article used the Middle East to show the potential of engagement between FPA and the study of ANSAs, similar patterns exist in other region. Examples include the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that fought the Sri Lankan government between 1983 and 2009, demanding a separate state for the Tamil people while receiving support from India's Intelligence service and allying with of other ANSAs in India;<sup>1</sup> and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) with strong interactions with Cuba, Venezuela, and other ANSAs.<sup>2</sup>

The theoretical eclecticism and process orientation of FPA make it suitable to connect to the foreign policy of ANSAs without degrading the diversity of these actors. Foreign policy analysis offers adaptable, flexible toolkits that embrace the richness and diversity of ANSAs. Foreign policy analysis can unravel some dynamics that are otherwise undetected by pointing the empirical analysis into different directions. In addition, examining the foreign policy actions of these non-state actors reflects on FPA and unravels its weaknesses, some of which present opportunities and avenues for future research. Foreign policy analysis's perennial weakness of not theorizing the "state" has become a pressing issue to uphold the relevance of the field in response to recurrent changes in the international system.

<sup>1</sup> Mapping Militant Organizations. "Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam." Stanford University. Last modified June 2018. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/liberation-tigers-tamil-elam>.

<sup>2</sup> Mapping Militant Organizations. "Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia." Stanford University. Last modified July 2019. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/revolutionary-armed-forces-colombia-farc>.

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