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**Title of the thesis:** Regional Security in West Asia: A study of sectarianism and Civil Wars in Syria and Yemen post-2011

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### Findings

The study explores how sectarianism and civil wars in Syria and Yemen have shaped the security landscape of West Asia since 2011. It argues that while sectarianism is often seen as a deeply rooted historical divide, it is, in fact, a modern political tool that has gained prominence due to shifting power structures, weakened state institutions, and foreign interventions. The study challenges the notion that these conflicts are driven by ancient animosities, instead showing how political actors have deliberately used sectarian identities to advance their own agendas.

The Arab Spring was a turning point. The uprisings in 2011 disrupted long-standing power dynamics, and in the chaos that followed, sectarian divisions were actively manipulated by both governments and insurgent groups. In Syria and Yemen, sectarianism became a means of rallying support, consolidating power, and justifying violence. This deepened the conflicts, making peace efforts even more difficult.

A crucial shift in the region's security dynamics has been the rise of non-state actors. Groups like ISIS in Syria and the Houthis in Yemen have not only challenged state authority but have also taken on many of the functions of a state themselves—governing territories, controlling resources, and influencing local populations. Their presence has fundamentally changed the nature of power and governance in these war-torn countries, further complicating any resolution.

Beyond the immediate battlefields, the consequences of these civil wars have spilled over into neighboring countries, particularly in the Gulf. Saudi Arabia and other regional powers have found themselves dealing with increased instability, whether through the mass displacement of refugees, the spread of extremist ideologies, or the growing threat of terrorism. The conflicts have also fractured long-standing security arrangements, particularly in the Gulf and Levant, leading to a complex web of overlapping rivalries that make diplomacy and conflict resolution even more challenging.

In the absence of a strong regional security framework, countries have largely acted in their own self-interest, prioritizing regime survival over collective stability. This has only prolonged the conflicts and allowed sectarian divisions to take deeper root. The study also highlights a deeper issue—many of these crises stem from the mismatch between state borders and the identities of the people within them. Syria and Yemen, like much of the region, were shaped by borders drawn without regard for the diverse communities living within them. This artificiality has contributed to internal fragmentation, making governance even more fragile.

Foreign interventions, meanwhile, have often missed the mark. External powers have sought to shape outcomes in Syria and Yemen, but their approaches have largely ignored the complex realities on the ground. While they have played a role in fueling the conflicts, their failure to address local governance and identity issues has meant that instability continues to persist. The study ultimately argues that these internal fractures—not just geopolitical rivalries—are at the heart of the region's enduring security crisis.

At its core, this research reveals a region where sectarianism is not just a cause but also a consequence of conflict, where non-state actors are reshaping political landscapes, and where the absence of a coordinated security approach has left conflicts to fester. The civil wars in Syria and Yemen are not isolated events; they are part of a much larger pattern of instability that continues to redefine West Asia's security order.