

The Politics of Militant  
Group Survival in the  
Middle East

—  
*Resources, Relationships,  
and Resistance*

Ora Szekely



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*To my parents, Beatrice Beach Szekely and Yoram Szekely*

*Thank you.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began with a question—and a conflict—that I encountered entirely by accident. In June of 2006, while a graduate student at McGill University, I headed to Beirut for an internship with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, where I planned to spend the summer doing research on the barriers to integration faced by the Palestinian community in southern Lebanon. But events, in the form of the July War, intervened. First in Beirut and then from Amman, I watched along with the rest of the region as Hizbullah demonstrated far greater resilience than anyone (other than possibly Hizbullah themselves) had predicted. I found this all the more fascinating for the stark contrast it posed with the behavior of most of the combatants in the Lebanese civil war, on which I had written my MA thesis at the University of Chicago. Conversations that summer with friends in Beirut and Amman and in graduate seminars at McGill when I returned to Montreal in the fall led me to focus my research on the issues at the heart of this book: the political roots of militant group resilience, the role of nonstate actors in shaping both local and regional political narratives, and the interconnected histories of the nonstate actors at the center of the Arab–Israeli conflict.

When I returned to the Middle East in December of 2008 and again in June of 2012 to conduct field research, first for my dissertation and then for the book it would become, I was extraordinarily privileged to be able to draw on the expertise and support of colleagues and friends across the region. Some I have known for many years, and others I met for the first time while conducting research. Although I cannot name all of you here, I am grateful to all of you for your friendship and insight. Particular

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interviews took place. I have changed or omitted the names of some of those who I interviewed or who helped me in Syria out of concern for their safety, but not out of ingratitude. I thank them and many others for their insight. However, any errors contained herein are solely my own.

Ora Szekely  
Providence, Rhode Island

May 2016

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## ACRONYMS AND INITIALIZATIONS

ALF	Arab Liberation Front ( <i>Iraqi-sponsored Palestinian militia</i> )
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
IAF	Islamic Action Front ( <i>Political party of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan</i> )
IAF	Israeli Air Force
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
LAA	Lebanese Arab Army ( <i>pro-LNM faction of the Lebanese army that split in 1976</i> )
LAF	Lebanese Armed Forces ( <i>Lebanese state military</i> )
LF	Lebanese Forces ( <i>Christian militia during the Lebanese civil war</i> )
LNM	Lebanese National Movement ( <i>leftist coalition during the Lebanese civil war</i> )
MNF	Multi-National Force ( <i>stabilization force sent to Lebanon after Israeli invasion</i> )
PA	Palestinian Authority ( <i>post-Oslo Palestinian governing entity in West Bank and Gaza</i> )
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command
PLA	Palestine Liberation Army ( <i>the PLO's official armed force</i> )
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council ( <i>the PA legislative body</i> )
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestinian National Council ( <i>the PLO legislative body</i> )
PPSF	Palestinian Popular Struggle Front
PSP	Progressive Socialist Party ( <i>leftist Lebanese party, mainly Druze</i> )
SLA	South Lebanon Army ( <i>Israeli military proxy in south Lebanon</i> )

SSNP	Syrian Social Nationalist Party
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon ( <i>UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon</i> )
UNRWA	United Nations Relief Works Agency ( <i>UN agency responsible for Palestine refugees</i> )

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## Introduction

At roughly nine in the morning on July 12, 2006, two Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers named Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev were captured by fighters from the Lebanese militant movement Hizbullah while on patrol near the Israeli–Lebanese border. Such incidents, while infrequent, were hardly unusual and at first, the episode seemed likely to prove nothing more than another of the semi-regular exchanges between Hizbullah and the IDF in which combatants were captured or fire exchanged. At the offices of the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) where I was working that summer, business continued normally through the afternoon, although there was a great deal of speculation about the likely Israeli response. One of my Palestinian co-workers who lived in Sidon and now faced a more than usually aggravating evening commute rolled her eyes in exasperation and said “stupid Hizbullah.” The general consensus seemed to be that Israel would likely bomb a power plant or two and that would probably be that.

It wasn't. By morning, the Israeli air force had bombed Beirut's Rafik Hariri International Airport, leaving massive craters in the runway and halting all commercial flights in and out of Lebanon. The following night, we were awakened by the crash of bombs falling on Beirut's southern suburbs from the Israeli F-16s circling the sky. It quickly became apparent that this would not be the limited exchange we had anticipated. I heard Lebanese friends from a range of backgrounds opine, some with optimism and some with dismay, that Hizbullah had bitten off a great deal more

than it could chew and that this time the IDF might seriously cripple or even destroy the organization. Various Israeli politicians and military figures (including Defense Minister Amir Peretz) made public statements threatening to do exactly that.<sup>1</sup>

And yet when a ceasefire was finally negotiated after 34 days, not only had Regev and Goldwasser not been recovered<sup>2</sup> but Hizbullah had managed to strike civilian targets inside Israel (including Haifa, Israel's third largest city) and had badly damaged one of the Israeli ships in the blockade of Beirut in an expertly staged televised strike. Hizbullah's fighters had even managed to repel IDF forces from the southern village of Bint Jbeil. A decade later, the organization maintains a military presence in southern Lebanon. At times, it has even offered tours of battle sites.

This outcome is all the more surprising when cast in contrast with earlier conflicts which pitted the IDF against another of its nonstate adversaries in south Lebanon: the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). On June 6, 1982, in response to the PLO's repeated shelling of northern Israel from southern Lebanon, the IDF invaded Lebanon with the stated goal of pushing the PLO north of the Litani River. As in 2006, the IDF's stated intention was to remove its enemy's capacity to operate against Israeli targets from southern Lebanon or even remove it from Lebanon entirely. As in 2006, the plans were hastily drawn up and executed with minimal oversight from the civilian government. But the outcome in 1982 was quite different. Within weeks, the IDF had surrounded Beirut, and by September, the PLO had been forced to evacuate from Lebanon. The organization's political leadership retreated into exile in Tunisia having lost its last military base in a country bordering historical Palestine.

The contrast between 1982 and 2006 illustrates a much larger question concerning the outcomes of asymmetric conflict and the behavior and effectiveness of militant groups. Nonstate military actors (be they rebel groups, terrorists, insurgents, militias, or guerrillas) have a built-in advantage in comparison with their state adversaries in that the former's goalposts tend to be far wider. To "win," the conventional military must evict its nonstate adversary from the territory in question, or better yet, destroy it altogether. The second outcome is relatively rare; more common is the first, in which the militants are gradually cornered, isolated, or expelled into a neighboring state. But for the militant movement itself, the goal is much simpler. By merely managing to survive its enemy's attempt to eradicate it in a particular territory, it both prevents its adver-

sary from achieving its goals and retains the ability to keep pursuing its own. In other words, counterinsurgent forces need to win. Nonstate actors only need to not lose.

And yet, the ability of some nonstate actors to “not lose” in the face of a far stronger conventional adversary’s attempt to drive them from a particular territory stands in marked contrast to the failures of other, seemingly similar, groups to do so. This book seeks to explain why some nonstate actors are able to survive their confrontations with far more powerful conventional adversaries, while others, fighting the same adversary, in the same environment, find themselves disabled, exiled, or dismantled entirely. In particular, it focuses on those organizations that have confronted Israel in the conflict ecosystem composed of Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territories.

I argue that the key to each organization’s ability to survive its confrontations with its adversaries—that is, both to resist the assault and to recover afterward—lies less in the resources at its disposal than in the strategies by which it acquired those resources and the relationships it developed as a result. Those who used coercion against local civilians and external sponsors found their ability to survive compromised. Those that relied on providing service as a military proxy or the provision of services to civilians had a slightly better result. Those that successfully created political narratives that established them as the legitimate representatives of local and regional political and ethnic constituencies were the most successful of all.

There is, of course, extensive scholarship on both the question of nonstate actor behavior and the Arab–Israeli conflict more broadly. Hizbullah, Hamas, Amal, and the PLO have themselves all been the subject of a great deal of study. But the existing work on the topic tends to attribute the greater resilience of some groups—that is, their ability to survive an attack by a far more powerful force and to prosper afterward—either implicitly or explicitly to either their material assets or their social endowments. This book instead locates the explanation for the very different trajectories of these four organizations in the ways in which each went about pursuing both material resources and non-material resources, through the construction of particular sorts of identities and relationships at both the local and regional levels.

These organizations form a natural set for comparison because they exist within the same “conflict ecosystem.” A conflict ecosystem is a transnational, multi-actor, geographically bounded system in which the various actors are interconnected and conflict is organized around a set of common ideological and/or ethnic cleavages, though these may be contested

and can change over time. There are a number of such systems currently in existence. One example is what might be termed the Great Lakes conflict ecosystem, which includes Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda. It has encompassed multiple interconnected conflicts including the Rwandan Civil War and genocide, the Burundian Civil War, the first and second Congo Wars, and what (as of this writing) may become a new Civil War in Burundi. Another example (discussed in Chap. 6) is the developing conflict ecosystem encompassing Syria, Iraq, and several neighboring states.

This book focuses on the ecosystem defined by the interconnected web of conflicts and sub-conflicts formed by that segment of the protracted Arab–Israeli conflict involving Israel and its principal nonstate adversaries. Neither purely a Civil War nor an international conflict, this conflict has taken place between, within, and across the borders of Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. It has also at various points drawn in other regional powers, including Iran, Egypt, and the Gulf states. And, most importantly for this book, it includes a range of nonstate actors who, while often in adversarial relationships with one another, are nonetheless linked both historically and ideologically. The conflict's current configuration dates to the defeat of the combined Arab militaries in 1967 which led to the emergence of the PLO as an influential and autonomous actor in the system. The status quo was reinforced in 1979 when the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty effectively took pan-Arab military action off the table, establishing asymmetric war as the dominant form of warfare in the conflict. The PLO's presence in south Lebanon had a powerful influence on Amal when it emerged in the early 1970s. Amal in turn gave rise to Hizbullah, and Hamas was influenced by the legacies of both the PLO and Hizbullah when it was founded in 1988. By comparing how each of these four nonstate actors attempted to carve out space for itself within the ecosystem and to acquire the political, financial, military, and social resource they needed, we can understand which strategies will lead an organization to most successfully adapt to its environment and which will be most likely to carry negative consequences in the long run.

The metaphor of the ecosystem serves as a useful way of analyzing this sort of complex conflict. Any given ecosystem will contain a set of organisms that interact with one another, competing for resources, and sometimes attacking one another. Organisms within the ecosystem will adapt either well or poorly to their environment. Those who have adapted well,

thrive. Those who have adapted poorly, do not. Shocks to the ecosystem (a forest fire, the arrival of a new species) can change the value of certain adaptive traits, rendering what was once an advantage a disadvantage. And if one organism is removed from the system (because of an external shock, because a larger predator catches up with it, or because it succumbs to its own poor adaptation), this may open up space for a new organism to emerge. Sudden change may lead to a surge in the emergence of new organisms vying to fill the newly available niche, creating bursts of competition after which new actors may emerge as powerful participants in the system.<sup>3</sup>

All of these characteristics have their parallels in the conflict ecosystem. Various participants in these systems (both states and nonstate actors) compete with one another for resources, both financial and military. External shocks to the system (an invasion by a new regional power or a global change such as the end of the Cold War) can change the utility of certain characteristics or behaviors for actors who had previously adopted them. But while biological evolution is driven by competition, selection, and adaptation over long periods of time (shaped in part by the way the genetic dice land), individual organizations exercise far more agency in shaping their own chances of survival. They are able to choose the strategies by which they acquire resources, strategies which, in admittedly unexpected ways, determine both the sort of organization they are likely to become, and how likely they are to be able to survive a confrontation with a much more powerful adversary.

### THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM: MATERIAL AND SOCIAL ENDOWMENTS

One could be forgiven for thinking, based on the treatment of the question in both the media and the scholarly literature on Civil War, that the answer to the question of why some militant groups are better able than others to survive in the same environment is both self-evident and rather uninteresting: that an organization's chances of survival are determined by the resources at its disposal. For instance, a brief survey of the coverage of the July War in the *New York Times* indicates, perhaps unsurprisingly, that Hizbullah's weapons are mentioned as an explanation for its success more than any other factor.<sup>4</sup> This assumption is mirrored in the academic literature concerning the behavior, loyalties, alliances, and success (or otherwise) of guerrillas, rebels, militias, terrorists, and other nonstate military

actors. The question of how a nonstate military actor came to possess these resources in the first place often goes unasked, and if it is, the answer generally focuses solely on the source of the resources, rather than the means by which the organization obtained them from that source.

Part of the problem is that whether the resources in question are material assets (e.g., weapons and wealth) or non-material assets (like political influence and prestige), the assumption is often that possession of these assets is a fixed trait of the militant group. Rich organizations are simply rich; poor organizations are simply poor. Much of the work exploring the role of natural resource wealth in prompting the onset of armed conflict and the emergence of armed groups treats the presence of natural resources as an automatic trigger for certain types of rebel group behavior, rather than starting point for a range of policy choices.<sup>5</sup> Weinstein, for instance, has argued that access to material resources when the movement is first getting started makes it more likely that it will use them to recruit mercenary fighters who will brutalize civilians.<sup>6</sup>

The emphasis on the resources a movement “has” in its earliest days extends beyond material assets like money and guns to non-material assets like popular support. Legitimacy, public sympathy, and local knowledge are treated as though they were assets waiting in the ground to be mined by whichever movement is, by virtue of its ethnic or political identity, qualified to retrieve them. The identities that give organizations access to these political resources, and the connection between them and a particular identity profile, are taken as already fixed at the time the organization is formed. To employ a slightly different metaphor, political or ethnic identity is framed as a kind of birthright that allows the militant group blessed with the right kind of identity profile to pull the metaphorical political resource sword from the stone. Conversely, those who have the wrong sort of identity profile—who practice the wrong religion, speak the wrong language, or are of the wrong national origin for the context in which they hope to operate—have little chance of accessing these valuable non-material resources. Much of the work on social movements (including work on both resource mobilization<sup>7</sup> and political opportunity<sup>8</sup>) assumes that mobilization is based on fixed and inherent identity traits. Even the “greed versus grievance” literature, which does explore the origins of material assets, takes the identities which can potentially motivate rebellion as fixed and always available for mobilization.<sup>9</sup> Economic modeling of militant group behavior that treats behavior such as the provision of social services as a means of strategically isolating movement adherents still relies

on an implicitly essentialist assumption of the role of ethno-religious identity in drawing them toward those groups in the first place.<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately, this logic leaves a number of questions unanswered. What are we to make of those movements that do begin life with ample material resources and use them not (as predicted by Weinstein) to recruit opportunistic and abusive mercenaries, but rather to develop institutions through which to attract committed fighters or establish a broader political reach? Hezbollah has done precisely that, using its financial resources to establish a presence in the Shi'ite community (in part via its social service network) that has given it the luxury of extreme selectivity in recruiting fighters.

Second, why is it that two groups, fighting on the same territory, with similar access to that territory's resources, or perhaps with access to similar amounts of funding from other sources, nonetheless behave very differently and exhibit different rates of success? If survival were dependent only on the available material resources, there should be no difference in their ability to survive. And perhaps more puzzlingly, why is it that two militant groups made up of people from the same local population, both claiming to represent the same ethnic group, fighting on the same territory, and surrounded by the same community, vary so much in their behavior and ultimate success?

And, most significantly, where do the identities that allow groups access to these various political resources come from? Assuming that one fixed ethnic or political identity is the non-negotiable birthright (or curse) of every nonstate military actor is not only a rather unsatisfying way of approaching the question but also fails to recognize one of the most significant contributions of the last three decades' worth of scholarship on nationalism and ethnic conflict: the very real role of militant and political movements in framing, shaping, and assigning identities for their own purposes.<sup>11</sup>

To treat communal identities as assets which exist entirely independently from the organizations that make use of them, as "things" which nonstate actors either "have" or not, misses an important step in the process. Rather than starting from the assumption that some groups are blessed with useful social endowments while others are not, it is more appropriate to treat identity formation as a process engaged in strategically. The historical narratives and identity traits that define how nonstate actors perceive themselves and their place in the world shape both which people the nonstate actor is able to imagine as members of its constitu-

ency, and which people are able to imagine the nonstate actor as an organization to whom they might give their support. A group which creates a narrow ascriptive definition for itself has a smaller potential constituency than a group with a broader ascriptive definition, and groups that are able to change the way they imagine themselves have a wider choice in terms of which strategies are imaginable, and therefore available, to them. Support for or hostility toward a particular organization from any given subset of the civilian population is never entirely predetermined—it is always, to some degree, up for grabs.

In short, the problem with structural arguments such as those above is that they begin the causal chain too late, taking as fixed the existence of identities that must in reality be produced and acquired, just as material resources must be.<sup>12</sup> The resources that militant organizations have, be they material or non-material, are important, but I am interested in taking a step backward in the causal process to understand how they come to possess these resources to begin with, by examining their foreign and domestic policy choices.<sup>13</sup> In practice, “taking a step backward” means asking not just which resources a militant movement needs to do its job or what the impact is of those resources on the movement’s behavior, character, and prospects but also how the movement managed to acquire those resources in the first place.

### THEFT, BARTER, OR GIFT

As they set out to pursue their goals, whatever those may be, nearly all militant groups will discover that they need to acquire a range of both material and intangible assets. These are, overwhelmingly, acquired from two (human) sources: state sponsors and local civilian constituents. Because neither neighboring states nor local civilians are likely to provide these resources absent any interaction or communication with the militant group in question, it follows that the movement itself must exert some effort in pursuing the resources it needs. Whether seeking backing in a local election or better anti-aircraft guns, nonstate actors have three broad strategic options in acquiring these resources: they can obtain them by theft, through barter, or as a gift. The different policies that go into implementing these strategies each produce different results and lead to more productive or less productive relationships for the militant group at the regional and local levels. These policy choices shape how the organization is able (or unable) to adapt to its environment, determining its ability to

survive confrontations with more powerful adversaries, and ultimately to thrive (or not) in the ecosystem in which it finds itself.

As with the process of evolution in the natural world, the process of resource acquisition and organizational adaptation is not teleological. There is no “authentic” version of itself toward which any one organization is evolving. The more successful domestic strategies will be those based on a group’s ability to market itself and its mission to potential constituents by manipulating or even altering the dominant ideological and ethno-communal cleavage in the conflict ecosystem, and, to a lesser extent, on the provision of social services to the community. Strategies based on coercion of civilians, however, are far less successful and ultimately harmful in their effects on the organization employing them. In obtaining resources from sponsor states, strategies based on coercion will be less successful than those based on service as a military proxy, which in turn will be less successful than those based on (a successful) marketing of the group’s larger project to potential sponsors. In other words, it isn’t just what a group has that matters—it’s how it got it in the first place.

### TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

There are several terms which bear further explanation here. I use the term “nonstate military actor” because it serves as a catchall for the wide range of similar—but not identical—groups referred to in the scholarship on Civil War, including “rebels,” “guerrillas,” “insurgents,” “militias,” and “terrorists.”<sup>14</sup> These organizations can range in complexity from small militias to large, complex proto-state actors with political wings and substantial affiliated social service networks. They can be purely local, regional, or transnational. Many have offices and military bases in multiple states, and some exercise greater political influence than some governments.

But there are nevertheless boundaries around the term. First, though these groups may be sponsored by a patron state and aspire to take over the government of the target state, they are not the same as a state military (as the term “nonstate actor” obviously implies.) Second, nonstate military actors are not non-violent; each has, by definition, a military component. Finally, along similar lines, the groups under examination are not mafias. Their projects are first and foremost political, and the use of violence is intended to do more than simply enrich the leaders of the group, although that may be an important part of its purpose as well.<sup>15</sup> In sum, as used in this book, “nonstate actors” refers to *armed*,

*politicized, non-state organizations which use violent (and sometimes non-violent) means to advance a particular political program.*

The second term that needs defining here is the dependent variable, “survival.” For nonstate actors in conflict with a powerful state adversary, survival has both a territorial and operational component. For a nonstate actor to be said to have survived, it must retain a presence in the territory in question. But this alone is not quite sufficient; if fighters remain but are effectively disarmed and demobilized, then the movement cannot be said to have successfully survived its encounter with its adversary. Survival is therefore defined as “*retaining the capacity to operate against enemy forces from or in the territory from or in which the militant movement wishes to operate.*” This definition sets the bar high enough that it allows for a fair comparison between different nonstate actors. It is also clearer and more measurable than permanent “victory,” which is much harder to identify with any great certainty because the nature of insurgency and guerrilla warfare means that it is often unclear when hostilities are finally over.

Practically speaking, survival has two components: resistance and recovery. *Resistance* refers to the group’s ability to defend itself militarily and hold territory during the conflict. But in order to survive—to retain the capacity to operate against the adversary in the area from which it wishes to operate—the militant group also needs to be able to *recover* from the conflict both militarily and politically. That is, it needs to be able to retain its access to the territory in question and maintain at least enough political control in the area that it can continue to operate there. Moreover, because conflict with a powerful state adversary is by definition costly in terms of fighters and weapons, recovery also means being able to recruit new fighters and obtain more weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and other materiel to replace what it expended. (This component of recovery underscores the importance of building durable relationships.) Survival means not just resisting the initial assault but recovering afterward—not only living but also living to fight another day.

Because it contains these two components, survival is not a purely dichotomous variable. A group which is able to resist militarily but only partially able to recover politically may be able to continue to operate in the territory in question, but in a constrained or limited fashion. Likewise, a group which is badly damaged militarily but able to recover politically may have to shift to a new or more limited form of military confrontation. These forms of survival can be thought of as limited or constrained survival.

Measuring both resistance and recovery in an abstract sense is made difficult by the variation that exists among militant groups and counter-insurgent militaries. But broadly speaking, “resistance” can be considered successful if the militant group is able to deny the counterinsurgent military its objectives in a given territory until the counterinsurgent force withdraws. Recovery can be considered successful if the militant group is able to continue pursuing its objectives in that territory after the military conflict itself has ended.

### *Resources*

In order to survive—or indeed, to function at all—every nonstate military actor (like any other organization) requires a range of resources.<sup>16</sup> Some are self-evident; weapons are obviously important, as is funding. Materiel and provisions are also clearly necessary, as well as a base of operations. But nonstate actors also require a range of equally crucial non-material resources. While it is difficult to wage a guerrilla campaign without guns or money, it is likewise difficult to do so without access to intelligence, political cover, basic training, or local knowledge. This is particularly true given the nature of guerrilla warfare; because nonstate military actors rarely possess superior force of arms, they tend to rely heavily on stealth, superior local knowledge, and the possession of greater resolve than their conventional military opponents. These non-material assets can also be conceived of as resources.

Scholars and practitioners of insurgency and counterinsurgency have long seen both non-material and material resources as important. Che Guevara and Mao Tze Tung in their respective classic works on the subject emphasize the significance of non-material resources such as familiarity with the land and local information, as well as material resources such as food, transportation, ammunition, and reliable shoes. Similarly, the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual lists safe havens, medical support, financing, assistance with logistics and training, provisions, the recognition of legitimacy, intelligence, transportation, active participation in “actions on behalf of insurgents,” and non-cooperation with counterinsurgent forces as important assets.<sup>17</sup> Scholars of insurgency list similar resources; Metz and Millen argue that insurgencies require manpower, funding, materiel, sanctuary, and intelligence to operate,<sup>18</sup> while Bell cites public support, training in guerrilla tactics, room to maneuver, and a secure base as crucial.<sup>19</sup> Byman et al. list safe haven, safe transit,

financial resources, “political support,” training, weapons, fighters, intelligence, organizational competence, and ideological inspiration.<sup>20</sup> Finally, Bob adds access to and sympathy from transnational activist networks to the list.<sup>21</sup> In general, the members of various militant factions interviewed for this book tended to emphasize non-material assets, particularly popular support. One former fighter with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) said bluntly that “without justice, you’re a gangster.”<sup>22</sup> When pressed, they also listed specific military assets and office space as being important. In sum, material resources can include money; fighters; weapons; supplies, including food and clothing; safe havens, both inside and outside the country; and safe transport of supplies and fighters. Non-material resources include intelligence and local knowledge; political support; international, regional, and local legitimacy; the ability to produce and distribute propaganda (including access to the media); ideological inspiration; organizational competence; training, including discipline and cohesion; and the ability to recruit new members.

Many of these assets (like discipline, local knowledge, and even wealth) are often framed as being inherent traits of particular militant groups. I am arguing instead that they ought instead to be viewed as assets to be acquired, and that the process of acquisition is important to examine. If a militant group is said to “be well armed” and therefore not in need of weapons, it seems reasonable to ask how and at what point it acquired them. Moreover, ammunition, supplies, and even soldiers must be continuously replaced, meaning that even a militant group which somehow began its career well-armed must find a way of remaining so. This is relatively uncontroversial. But the question of whether we ought to consider intangibles like discipline or tactical expertise “resources” to be acquired or inherent characteristics is somewhat trickier. Under certain circumstances, these may indeed be inherent characteristics of the organization, perhaps because they were attributes of its founders and early recruits and therefore became norms within the organization. Yet it is a rare group of fighters that requires no training or indoctrination whatsoever, and both “training” and “indoctrination” can be conceived of as resources. Most organizations need some external aid to develop these attributes. There are also non-material assets like legitimacy that must be acquired externally to have any meaning.

More complicated still is the question of ethno-communal identity; should this be treated as trait which militant groups either have or don’t have, or a resource which they can take steps to acquire? This is particu-

larly significant because, just as certain material resources (money) can be used to obtain others (guns), so too can certain non-material assets (local legitimacy or communal authenticity) be used to obtain others (intelligence, loyalty). This book takes the position that nonstate actors *can* exercise a great deal of agency in constructing whichever identities they believe will be most advantageous in this area, although not all necessarily do so.

### *Sources of Resources*

If these resources must be obtained from an external source, where, then, are they acquired from? The answer is from local civilians and sponsor states. Practitioners of both counterinsurgency and guerrilla warfare from General Louis-Lazare Hoche to the World War II-era *Small Wars Manual* and General David Petraeus, and from T.E. Lawrence to Mao Tze Tung and Che Guevara have emphasized the role of the local population in supporting insurgent groups.<sup>23</sup> This is echoed in much of the academic work on the subject as well.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, there is also a great deal of work by both scholars and practitioners of insurgency and counterinsurgency discussing the importance of foreign state sponsorship for nonstate actors.<sup>25</sup> Byman et al. find that of 74 insurgencies conducted during the 1990s, state support had a considerable impact on 44,<sup>26</sup> and Harbom and Wallensteen find that it was a factor in 80 out of 111 Civil Wars fought between the end of the Cold War and 2004.<sup>27</sup> Supporting states may be neighbors with a grudge against the rebel movement's state antagonist, regional powers seeking to increase their influence, or superpowers seeking a proxy against an ideological enemy during the Cold War. Sometimes, one such sponsor will act as a conduit for aid from another, as in the case of regional powers who acted as distributors of superpower aid during the Cold War.

Of course, it is conceivable that some militant groups may be able to access forms of (primarily financial) support that are not contingent on either foreign or domestic relationships. Some lucky militant groups do come into existence in areas with ready access to highly lucrative and easily lootable natural resources, that is, those which require no initial investment in the form of industrial infrastructure to acquire.<sup>28</sup> This most commonly means alluvial diamonds, which are easily removed from riverbeds and require little extractive capacity. Other groups may manage to acquire speculative funding from large corporations willing to invest in what are sometimes called "booty futures" or the promise of access to

natural resources after the militia in question has conquered the territory containing them.<sup>29</sup> The other potential source of material resources that falls outside my model is through self-sustaining economic investment. This can include both legitimate and illicit or criminal economic activity. This is not uncommon, and several of the organizations under discussion here have dabbled in both. But in order to do so, all of these groups required both the cooperation of the public and start-up funding from their patrons.

While access to these resources can be helpful, neither natural resource wealth nor economic investment are major focuses of this book for several reasons. The first is that with the possible exception of lootable resources like alluvial diamonds, exploiting the existence of natural resources requires militant groups to have already developed a level of organizational capacity that is in and of itself generally the result of other resources acquired through state sponsorship and in some cases local relationships. Profit-generating resources that require infrastructure to extract (heavy metals, non-alluvial gemstones, oil) generally require initial funding beyond the reach of most militia groups. Seizing already functioning oil wells is an exception, but such wells still require civilian expertise to operate. In other words, extractive capacity matters, and that capacity is often a by-product of other relationships. Those resources that may be the exception are found in very specific circumstances.

Similarly, the ability to generate income through legal or illicit economic activity requires an initial investment that most newly emerged nonstate actors will not be able to make without outside help. Whether the business in question is legal or illegal, it is rare that a militant group comes into existence with either already established, meaning it would need to either take over an existing criminal network or business, or invest resources in establishing them. Many militant groups do both of these things, but both require initial capital, which must somehow be acquired, bringing us back to the beginning of my argument.

Second, with regard to natural resources in particular, given that they are tied to specific territory and that this book is focused on comparing organizations fighting in the same region, they represent a constant, not a variable. If two organizations have access to alluvial diamonds but one outperforms the other, then, while the diamonds may be a useful funding source, they cannot explain variation between them.

But perhaps most importantly, this book is focused on the role of relationships. It is not that these factors don't matter—they do, and have

been the focus of a great deal of impressive scholarship. This book's focus simply lies elsewhere.

## FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY CHOICES

Support, whether in the form of material or non-material resources, is not automatic from either local constituents or foreign sponsor states. Obtaining resources requires that militant groups take some initiative. This means that these organizations must decide how they will convince domestic constituents or state sponsors to provide the resources they need. The strategy each group chooses matters a great deal. It determines (1) which sorts of resources the organization will be able to obtain, (2) how long it will be able to go on obtaining them, and perhaps most surprisingly, (3) how the group is able to use these resources once it has them. In addition to these direct consequences, there are also unintended side effects that stem from the nature (both positive and negative) of the relationships that nonstate actors develop as a result of the strategies they choose. While coercion may be easiest in the short term, it is marketing which will produce the most durable relationships and therefore the most reliable support. Service as a military proxy carries both costs and benefits, as does the provision of social services to civilians. There are also more effective and less effective versions of each strategy. The combinations of strategies that nonstate actors pursue has a strong shaping effect over time. Broadly speaking, organizations which pursue successful policies domestically but unsuccessful policies abroad will look different from those who do the opposite versus those who are successful or unsuccessful at both.

### *Domestic Strategies*

Local support matters to militant groups a great deal. A militant group's work will be far easier if it can convince civilians in the area in which it wishes to operate to provide at least passive support, by tolerating its activities. Better yet, if it can convince them to actively support its cause, this can offer real advantages in the form of both material and non-material resources.

There is of course some variation across the civilian population. Militant groups may apply different approaches to those they see as potential constituents versus those they see as supporting their adversary or as adversaries themselves. Support from those they see as constituents certainly

matters, but the goodwill, or at least lack of hostility, of the population at large can be a valuable asset as well. It may shape state policy, enable or limit access to important resources, or mobilize or limit armed opposition from other actors. In this, strategic choice matters a great deal: a militant group that is able to turn adversaries into supporters will have an advantage over one which turns supporters into adversaries.

Militant groups can choose among three broad domestic resource acquisition strategies: they can acquire them by stealing, bartering, or receiving them as a gift. Broadly speaking, coercion is eventually damaging to organizations that try to use it, while marketing, if done successfully, is most useful. Service provision falls somewhere in the middle.

### *Coercion*

Coercion of civilians can take different forms. It may involve expropriating land, homes, farms, businesses, natural resources, or vehicles; stealing food, clothing, or other equipment; or levying “taxes” on businesses or individuals. In its more extreme forms, it can involve kidnapping civilians for ransom, or torturing, murdering, and raping some people to instill fear in others.<sup>30</sup> It can also include abducting children to use as child soldiers or forced labor. Sometimes coercion can simply be about inducing compliance in the civilian population as a way of maintaining control over territory—using the threat of violence (including sexual assault) to forcing villagers to allow a militant group to hide guns in their basements, for instance.

True, looting, extortion, and rape are sometimes ends in and of themselves, rather than the means to fund a larger mission.<sup>31</sup> But there is evidence that this is not always the case; coercive extraction has become more common since the end of the Cold War, when superpower funding became less available, indicating that coercion is being used to replace other sources of funding.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, even if looting is an ends in and of itself for individual fighters, if that constitutes their salary then it represents an important source of funding for the militia’s leadership, which might otherwise have to find other ways of paying its troops.

Coercion can be a useful short-term strategy in that it requires little time for preparation, and often little effort, if local civilians are unarmed. But because it is likely to damage a group’s long-term chances of acquiring non-material resources, it is ultimately counterproductive.<sup>33</sup> While intelligence can perhaps be obtained by force, it may be much harder to acquire

*accurate* intelligence that way. Coercion, as warned by Che Guevara and others, is also not terribly useful for acquiring political resources like legitimacy, votes, or political access.<sup>34</sup> And, it can backfire; coercion can motivate civilians to join the organization's opponents<sup>35</sup> or to support state counterinsurgency operations. Moreover, in a purely material sense, this form of access to resources can become unsustainable. If the militant group moves beyond basic predatory warlordism and onto more extreme measures (massacring villages or even just running people off their land), at a certain point there will be no more crops to steal and no more villagers to steal from. In sum, while coercion may be useful for acquiring some forms of material support from civilians, this is true only in the short term.

### *Service Provision*

Service provision directed at civilians tends to take the form of social, charitable, or public services. Like states, many nonstate military actors are complex organizations which include social service networks that can provide services such as child care, medical care, education, and even infrastructural maintenance. All of these services have the added benefit of providing "day jobs" for fighters or their family members.<sup>36</sup> Some choose to provide services solely to members of their own communities, while others may provide them more broadly, for a range of reasons.<sup>37</sup> These services can also hold a non-material appeal: for people who feel marginalized or abandoned by their government, the experience of being treated with respect and recognized as deserving of services at all can be quite powerful and may well outlast the schools and clinics themselves.

Service provision by militant groups carries many of the same potential benefits and pitfalls as the provision of services by a state. As with the provision of public goods by states, service provision is most successful for militant groups when it serves to demonstrate the movement's overall competence and capacity to govern.<sup>38</sup> Mampilly has argued, convincingly, that "rebel rulers" who can provide security, a mechanism of dispute resolution, and other goods, like education and health care, acquire greater legitimacy and public consent, rendering it easier to hold territory.<sup>39</sup> The administration of charities and social services also serves to provide additional information for those trying to decide whether they're better off with the current government or with those trying to replace it. If all civilians have ever seen a militia do is fight, they may have little reason to think it will do a better job of governing than the incumbent regime. The competent provision of services can serve as valuable evidence to the contrary.

On the other hand, such services can prove ineffective or even damaging to those providing them if the provision of these services comes to function as a form of patronage. In this, militant groups face the same potential pitfalls as the regimes they seek to challenge. The scholarship on rentier economics argues (broadly speaking) that the extraction of “rents” from oil sales, foreign aid, or remittances renders the authoritarian state autonomous from the public, which rather than paying taxes becomes the beneficiary of patronage. The dispensation of this patronage allows the state to buy off dissent and forestall calls for reform, while creating a system in which access to public goods becomes a matter of personal connections rather than a benefit to which all citizens are entitled. Corruption becomes not a by-product of bad governance, but rather an institutionalized system of governance in its own right.<sup>40</sup> In the most transactional version of this relationship, money or other benefits may be offered in exchange for electoral support.<sup>41</sup>

These dynamics can also be a feature of the relationship between civilians and militant groups, if social services are dispensed as a form of patronage.<sup>42</sup> Militant groups who dispense charity or provide access to social services in an explicit exchange for support will find themselves with supporters who have a less durable commitment to the organization because they have little expectation that the movement leadership will prove responsive to their concerns or priorities and may be willing to shift their support elsewhere if another group offers better services. Moreover, the dispensation of patronage in exchange for votes or other forms of political support can risk tarnishing the movement’s reputation among those who are not beneficiaries of the movement’s largesse.

Service provision following first pattern (i.e., the broad, unconditional provision of services as a means of demonstrating competence to govern), is far more effective than the latter (i.e., the limited dispensation of services in an explicit exchange for support.). But even the first approach has its risks. For one thing, unless the organization actively denies services to those it does not consider its constituents, some people will likely use the services for their own sake without actually changing their view of the political project advocated by the organization providing them; even excellent services cannot always overcome strong distaste for a particular ideology.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the form of support generated by social service provision is most likely to be political or ideological rather than material. This is for practical reasons. A civilian community that is impoverished enough

to need things like free medical care or education may not be able to provide much in the way of material support beyond food, shelter, or small amounts of money, which a movement which is well funded enough to build hospitals may not actually need. Conversely, a community poor enough to need those hospitals probably does not have access to the tanks, artillery, and rocket launchers that the movement does need. True, wealthier individuals may donate out of admiration for the movement's charitable services (donations which may constitute an important source of funding for those institutions) but generally speaking, the people served by a militant groups charitable institutions are probably not the same people funding its military operations.<sup>44</sup> That insurgents still attempt to win over the civilian population even when they receive little from them in terms of material contributions demonstrates that there are forms of support they need from them beyond material resources.

The one significant material asset that civilians who are poor enough to need social services *can* provide, of course, is sanctuary. Maintaining the goodwill of the local population can greatly facilitate a guerrilla organization's ability to use their land as a base of operations. Having a farmer's permission to put rocket launchers in her orchards, for instance, makes it less likely that she will tell counterinsurgent forces that they're there. Social services are also helpful in inducing civilians to remain in a conflict zone rather than fleeing, allowing all combatants (but most commonly the nonstate actor) to use them as human shields or as camouflage. But for the most part, the provision of services to civilians tends to produce non-material resources. Overall, it is most likely to be successful when it serves as a means of building trust in the movement's competence, evenhandedness, and legitimacy, and least likely to work when it serves as a form of patronage. But even as a form of patronage, it is probably a more reliable means of securing resources than is coercion.

### *Marketing*

The third policy option for nonstate actors seeking to acquire resources domestically is to convince the local population to provide them because they support the organization's goals, not because of what it promises (or threatens) to do for (or to) them. That is, the organization can market itself to the public.<sup>45</sup>

The meaning of the term "marketing" as used here differs somewhat from its use in other contexts. Consumer marketing, often said to rely on

the “four Ps” (product, promotion, place, and price) involves providing a product, making the public aware of its existence, making it available in appropriate ways and pricing it correctly.<sup>46</sup> Political marketing has adapted these concepts to the promotion of political parties and their ideas in order to win elections.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast, whereas marketing (and its subsidiary function, advertising) focuses on the preferences or needs of the potential consumer, seeking both to shape (or create) them and to convince the consumer that a given product will best meet those needs, its more muscular cousin, propaganda, is instead oriented toward the preferences of the propagandist.<sup>48</sup> As Harold Lasswell observed, propaganda is not neutral but rather seeks a particular outcome, a shift in collective attitudes in the direction sought by the propagandist.<sup>49</sup>

The type of marketing I describe here owes something to both commercial marketing and to propaganda. There are certainly commonalities between them: both seek to change attitudes in some way; both rely in part on eliciting an emotional response to do so; both rely on a range of media to carry the intended message.<sup>50</sup> But whereas propaganda seeks to disseminate information about the “seller’s” cause, and commercial marketing seeks to respond to, or create, a need for the consumer, marketing as described here refers to an attempt to alter not just preferences but identities and narratives as well. Effective marketing shapes the way potential supporters see themselves in relation to the organization and the organization in relation to themselves and to the wider political landscape. It not only draws on existing affinities between organizations and potential constituents, it can *create* those affinities where none existed before. This occurs through the process that social movement theorists refer to as “frame alignment.”<sup>51</sup> Frames are what Polletta and Jasper define as “the interpretive packages that activists develop to mobilize potential adherents and constituents.”<sup>52</sup> Frame alignment refers to attempts by a movement’s leadership to construct the movement’s identity in such a way that it resonates with potential constituents’ or patrons’ own identities. It both hinges upon and is a means of group identity construction, that is, a means of “distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘them.’”<sup>53</sup>

Marketing, as the term is used in this book, draws conceptually on commercial marketing, propaganda, and frame alignment. It is defined for the purposes of this analysis as the *manipulation by movement leaders, through a variety of media, of the way potential constituents or patrons see themselves in relation to the movement, and the movement in relation to the*

*broader political landscape.* Done with intention and care, in recognition that the resonance of the organization's mission with the identities and preferences of the target audience is not a foregone conclusion, it can reasonably be referred to as a "strategy."

Not all marketing will be equally successful. Every conflict ecosystem is characterized by a dominant ideological or ethno-political cleavage (and often, by more than one) which cuts across the entire ecosystem. This means that there is often an oppositional or competitive component to the process, in that any militant group seeking to promote itself and its project must situate itself in opposition to its own main adversary, against competing narratives, and against other groups promoting the same narrative. Effective local marketing frames the militant group's mission in a way that resonates with the way people see themselves in relation to those cleavages, while the most successful marketing changes the narrative itself such that it reflects the organization's own goals. Conversely, marketing attempts that do not resonate with the way individuals see themselves in relation to those divisions, either characterizing them in a way that feels irrelevant to the audience in question or failing to address the cleavage at all, are unlikely to be successful.

Admittedly, measuring when marketing has been successful is difficult without drifting into tautology, but both the presence of marketing campaigns and their impact are measurable and observable. While widespread public opinion polling is easier in some regions than others, changes in attitudes can be convincingly indicated by changes in behavior. With that in mind, marketing can be said to have been successful when there is a normative public recognition in the organization's target community that (a) its adversary of choice is indeed an adversary and preferably the primary adversary; (b) that its interpretation of the conflict, rather than that offered by its rivals, is the correct one; and (c) that it is the legitimate representative of the community in articulating and attempting to rectify this grievance.

The first of these tasks is by far the easiest; stating that one opposes a commonly reviled adversary is not a difficult position to take. The second and third are more difficult however. Arguments over which organization is the "legitimate" representative of the community can touch off intra-group competition leading to "ethnic outbidding," a race to the bottom between elites as to who can conform most stringently to norms of ethno-communal authenticity or cultural purity.<sup>54</sup> But it is the middle component, the ability to set the terms of the debate itself, which is arguably

both the most challenging and most important.<sup>55</sup> While it is possible to fail at any of these tasks, unsuccessful marketing campaigns are often those which either ignore this component entirely or are unable to address it.

The specific mechanics of launching a marketing campaign differ from place to place. At its most basic level, marketing requires that the public first hear, then understand, and finally agree with the organization's claims. The process of ensuring that the public hears and understands the militant group's narrative is heavily shaped by available technologies of communication. These can range from face-to-face interaction to print and broadcast media to the use of the internet and related technologies. Historically, both Che Guevara and Mao Tze Tung emphasized the importance of access to printing presses, radio, and face-to-face contact. Since the late 1990s, the advent of new media such as the internet and satellite television has helped nonstate military actors spread their message far beyond their local spheres of influence.<sup>56</sup> Some militant groups, including Hamas and Hizbullah, have their own satellite television stations,<sup>57</sup> while others have made extensive use of online media platforms like Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook to distribute images, writing, videos, and other material.

Yet more traditional tactics remain useful as well. Graffiti is still an effective means by which militant groups can signal its presence in a given territory, even when forced to work underground. Because of their symbolic weight, street protests are also a very powerful vehicle for a militant group to express its message, both to the state (often the group's adversary) and to potential civilian supporters.<sup>58</sup> The ability to mobilize large numbers of protesters is also a means by which a militant group can make the case for its own influence and legitimacy within the community it claims to represent. This is true regardless of the potential for the protests to actually diminish the authority of the state. When Palestinian youth throw rocks at tanks, they do not expect the tanks to be damaged or the authority behind them to surrender; rather, they expect other people to pick up rocks too.

With regard to content, marketing strategies can be divided into three categories: Ethnic appeals, ideological appeals, and performance-based appeals. Ethno-communal affinity is an oft-cited source of civilian sympathy and support for nonstate actors.<sup>59</sup> Organizations which are able to frame themselves as members of a particular identity-based community can gain access to networks that allow them to build trust and credibility far more quickly than they would otherwise be able to, making these ties extremely valuable.<sup>60</sup> But the salience of and boundaries around these identities are often far from fixed. Ethnic identities can contain many

different components and not all will be prioritized equally by all people at all times. Ethno-communal marketing therefore represents an attempt to shift the basis on which ethno-communal identity is constructed in such a way that the organization has access to the largest possible constituency. An organization that shares a common language but not a common religion with a majority of the local population will benefit if ethnic boundaries in the area can be shifted in such a way that the former rather than the latter becomes the most salient trait in determining group identity.<sup>61</sup> Hizbullah, for instance, has had to work to convince non-Shi'ite Lebanese that its Lebanese-ness and Arab-ness trump its Shi'ite-ness. Other organizations may find it to their advantage to press for a prioritization of a transnational ethno-linguistic (Arab) or religious (Sunni) identity rather than a local national identity (Lebanese vs. Palestinian.)

Militant groups may also seek support based not on who they are but on what they believe.<sup>62</sup> That is, they may argue that people ought to support them based on ideological commitment rather than because of shared ascriptive identity.<sup>63</sup> Ideological marketing is less restricted in its potential audience and can hinge on broad domestic political goals that are shared by many who might be less sympathetic to other aspects of the organization's platform or even hostile to its stated ethnic identity; Bayat points out that movement participants can have "partly shared interests," even if they disagree on other matters.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, nonstate actors may attempt to market themselves based on their competence in key areas. One version of this focuses on the group's military performance and claims about the inevitability of its eventual victory. (This can include the implication that since they're likely to win eventually, opposing the movement may be a bad long-term gamble.) Another version of this may focus on the group's competence as governors or administrators, sometimes with reference to their greater honesty or superior moral character relative to their rivals. In either case, however, a distinction should be drawn between actual military performance or administrative competence and the organization's ability to mobilize support by incorporating these characteristics into its messaging. A militant group that is very effective militarily but does poorly at communicating this to the public will not see the same benefits as a group which is gifted at publicizing its successes and "spinning" operations in a favorable way, even if its actual record is less than stellar.<sup>65</sup>

If done well, marketing can be an extraordinarily effective means of mobilizing support. Successful marketing produces a powerful norm of

support within the civilian population, rendering it unthinkable (in the literal sense of “extremely difficult to conceptualize”) for a person to publicly criticize the group which considers her a member of its constituency. The genuine sympathy it produces grants militias durable access to non-material resources such as intelligence and local knowledge, legitimacy, and political support, as well as whatever material resources the civilian population has available. As such, it may prove more effective in the long run and lead to greater overall effectiveness. Of course, not all marketing strategies are equally practical for all nonstate military actors; while all militant groups have at least some of these strategies available to them, there are specific frames that would be difficult for some specific groups to credibly adopt. That being said, the following chapters illustrate that nonstate actors have a surprising degree of flexibility in this regard.

While no relationship is permanent, successful marketing has the potential to build relationships that are more durable and resilient than those based on other strategies. But of course, measuring whether or not marketing has actually *been* successful can be complicated. For marketing to work, the militant group needs to assess both where it stands and where the community sees itself in relation to the dominant cleavage characterizing the conflict ecosystem. It must then not only articulate its opposition to the primary adversary but also convince the public that its solution is the correct one and that it is the legitimate defender of their interests and bearer of their grievances.

It is not always easy to assess whether this process has taken place. Attitudes and political norms are hard to measure, particularly in contexts (such as ongoing Civil Wars) where public opinion polling is impractical or dangerous. There may be documented cases of civilians explicitly referencing the militant group’s marketing project when explaining their support for the organization, but such information isn’t always available. To solve this problem, this book largely takes the approach suggested by Stathis Kalyvas, which is to focus on behavior, rather than attitudes, because the former is far more easily measurable.<sup>66</sup> Marketing can therefore be deemed to have been successful *when the targets of that marketing change their behavior to act in ways that are in line with the militant group’s expressed objectives*. (This also holds true for marketing directed at potential state sponsors, discussed later in this chapter.)

Taken together, militant organizations’ local strategic options and their impact can be summarized as follows. As noted earlier, strategic choice determines the range of resources a militant group will be able to obtain,

the duration of its access, and how the group is able to use these resources once it has them, as well as giving rise to a number of unintended consequences. Coercion, while useful for acquiring material resources in the short term, does not provide long-term access to either kind of resource and can make it harder to make use of the resources the group *does* have: local resentment may, for instance, lead to a lack of actionable intelligence on which to base military actions making use of weapons obtained elsewhere. The negative side effects are many, including loss of support from politicians and a general lessening of ideological leverage over potential sponsors.

The provision of social services, in contrast, provides sometimes quite durable access to non-material assets like legitimacy, intelligence, and the ability to recruit, but can prove less durable if another militant group offering the same or better services appears. It is also less useful for acquiring material assets. Although the provision of services may generate goodwill that can make it easier to use various military assets, it can also divert resources that might otherwise have gone to military purposes. This represents a sometimes unforeseen consequence, as nonstate actors that take on the responsibilities of governing may find themselves in competition with the state in ways neither party welcomes.

Finally, marketing offers the widest access to both material and non-material resources, as it can be directed at both wealthy and impoverished constituents. It also provides the most durable access of the three strategic options and is least likely to impede the militant group's ability to make the most of the assets at its disposal. It can even provide a buffer against possible loss of public favor if the organization is forced to take an unpopular action, although such accumulated goodwill does not last forever.

### *Foreign Strategies*

As with domestic constituents, nonstate actors also face a choice in how they will try to attract sponsorship from potential patron states. As with the approaches taken to local populations, not all of these strategies are equally effective. Coercion tends to be the least effective, and marketing most effective, while service as a military proxy is somewhere in the middle. Each strategy can take different forms, some more effective than others, and all can have unintended consequences.

*Coercion*

While a great deal of policy and media attention is devoted to “state sponsors of terrorism,” not all state aid to nonstate actors is voluntary.<sup>67</sup> Though it seems counterintuitive, it is possible for a militant group to use coercion against a state, particularly if that state is weak, fragmented, or failing.

As with the coercion of civilians, coercion of states can take different forms. It can include theft of money or aid supplies or the use of violence, including assassination (or the threat thereof). It can also take the less direct form of threats to damage the government’s domestic legitimacy or regional reputation. (The latter can be particularly useful in forcing states to provide funding or arms.) The majority of “involuntary support,” however, tends to come in the form of sanctuary, when a weak state finds itself unable to prevent a militant group from using its territory as a base of operations.<sup>68</sup> This type of coercion can take different forms. Perhaps the militant group simply appears on the state’s territory one day and refuses to leave; perhaps it takes over a refugee camp and sets up a “state within a state”; perhaps it makes a side deal with local political leaders, circumventing the authority of the central government; or perhaps it convinces its regional allies to pressure the state into allowing the militant group in. A “safe haven” is crucial for the conduct of successful insurgency, particularly in the early stage when the group is most vulnerable.<sup>69</sup> Sanctuary in many ways makes the acquisition of all other forms of support possible;<sup>70</sup> it facilitates fundraising,<sup>71</sup> provides space for training and storage of weapons, and may even cause counterinsurgent forces to think twice before pursuing rebels across an international border. More than one member of a Palestinian armed faction interviewed in Damascus reported that one of the most valuable assets provided (in this case, voluntarily) by the Syrian government was office space.<sup>72</sup> It is therefore unsurprising that nonstate actors sometimes set up shop in territory in which they are not entirely welcome.

Part of the appeal of this strategy is that it can be implemented relatively quickly, making it an attractive choice for a nonstate actor facing a sudden or escalating threat. But militant groups may also turn to coercion if they find that they need a specific asset from a specific state and the state in question is refusing to provide it. This is more likely to be true of sanctuary than it is of other assets. Money and guns are essentially fungible, in that money from one source is as good as money from another, and two

identical guns work just as well regardless of where they were obtained.<sup>73</sup> But this is not the case with territory. A militant group may have a strong preference for a particular piece of territory because of proximity to the border with its adversary state,<sup>74</sup> or because there is a population of refugees who it views as constituents living in the area,<sup>75</sup> or because it is geographically conducive to training, or simply because it is difficult to reach and easily defensible through guerrilla tactics.<sup>76</sup> If the government of the state in which this territory is located refuses access, this can make coercive tactics remarkably tempting.

Yet coercing a state has significant drawbacks. For one thing, it has limited utility—while a territorial base may be obtainable through coercion, other material resources (such as weaponry and financial support) may be harder, although not impossible, to acquire in this fashion, and non-material resources nearly impossible. (Declarations of support by the leadership of a state that is quite obviously being forced to host a militant group against its will tend to ring somewhat hollow.) Coercion may be useful if the organization is receiving all other necessary resources from other sources, and just needs a conveniently located safe haven, but this can extract a heavy price down the road when the militant group finds itself in need of non-material support.

### *Proxyhood*

The second means by which nonstate actors obtain resources is by trading for them. In the case of potential state sponsors, this takes the form of service as a military proxy. Broadly speaking, states seek out military proxies as a means of pursuing their goals without incurring the costs of direct military engagement themselves.<sup>77</sup> These goals can range from simple political influence in the target state to the fomenting of internal rebellion and political disorder (i.e., chaos for its own sake) to the actual overthrow of an enemy regime.<sup>78</sup> Sponsors do, of course, often have a choice between potential nonstate clients, and a potential proxy may be more appealing if it demonstrates at least a minimal level of competence (such as a record of successful attacks) but sponsors can also offer training to make up for any shortfalls in this area. There are certainly cases of states sponsoring militias who had little prior experience at the outset<sup>79</sup> or even creating their own proxies out of whole cloth.

A relationship built on an exchange of military services for sponsorship provides access to a wider range of resources than does coercion.

States sponsoring a military proxy are particularly likely to offer military aid in the form of funding, weapons, supplies, and training, although not necessarily sanctuary on their territory. They may sometimes, though not always, also offer non-material support such as public political advocacy and propaganda, although this is obviously less true of sponsors who have acquired a military proxy because of a desire for plausible deniability.

However, there can be significant drawbacks to this strategy, far more severe than those incurred through the provision of social services to civilians (which in some ways constitutes a parallel policy). The first issue is one of durability; proxy relationships can prove unreliable in the long term because support is not so much bought as rented. While from the outside these relationships may appear similar to those based on shared ideology, a relationship based solely on a rather utilitarian exchange of support for service is quite different from a relationship based on genuine sympathy with the movement's goals. Support that is contingent on the state's need for a proxy may be withdrawn if the need for a proxy is diminished. Moreover, like guns and money, absent a distinctive ideological commonality, military proxies are basically fungible—one nonstate actor can frequently set off bombs in an enemy capital just as well as another, and if a more effective or less expensive client appears, the patron may abandon its original client in favor of the new one.

The second problem is somewhat more severe, and that is the problem of unintended consequences. Proxyhood often forces a nonstate military actor to give up a portion of its autonomy. However much the interests of the sponsor state may overlap with its proxy's, there will almost certainly be some difference between them. If forced to choose between furthering its own interests or those of its clients, the state will very probably put its own interests first and ask its proxy to do so as well. This presents the organization's leaders with a choice, between focusing on their own goals or those of the patron whose sponsorship may be necessary to achieve them. If they choose the former, they may alienate a valuable patron, but if they choose the latter, they risk damaging mission creep, a loss of legitimacy in the eyes of civilian constituents, and a loss of status and popular support relative to their peer organizations.<sup>80</sup> If the movement's preferences stand in direct opposition to its sponsor's, the problem can become even more severe. A movement being asked not only to shift its focus in another direction but also to take action in direct opposition to its own interests faces a still more acute dilemma, one to which there is often no good solution.

This leads to a third potential pitfall of this type of state sponsorship. Conflict between the interests of the sponsor and the goals of the militant movement can produce dangerous rifts within the organization, as some factions advocate greater autonomy while others remain loyal to their patron. The danger of factionalization is compounded if the nonstate actor is sponsored by more than one state, in which case it may find itself pulled in several directions at once. This can be a particular problem for movements with bases and training camps in multiple states, the commanders of which may become particularly reliant on or genuinely loyal to their hosts. The danger of schism is of course less severe if the movement's various sponsors are allied with one another or at least have similar foreign policy preferences. But if the sponsor states are rivals (or allies who have a falling out), their rivalry may lead to conflict between the individuals or factions most loyal to each state within the client organization, to its detriment. In this sense, sponsorship has the very real potential to warp, divide, and fragment the same militant group it is meant to benefit.<sup>81</sup>

### *Marketing*

Just as organizations can market themselves to potential civilian constituents, so too can they market themselves to potential state sponsors. The components of successful marketing to sponsor states are in many ways similar to those of marketing aimed at a domestic audience. The militant group must convince the potential sponsor state of three things: that the militant group's adversary is in fact deserving of hostility; that the organization's interpretation of why it is deserving of hostility is the correct one; and that that the organization is a more legitimate representative of the grievances it is articulating than are any of its rivals. Doing all of this successfully is difficult. States can be harder to convince than civilians that another state should be openly treated as an enemy, which is what offering open support to its nonstate adversary often amounts to, partly because the stakes for publicly adhering to this view are rather higher. (Think, for instance, of the difference between a cab driver in Cairo expressing the opinion that the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt is a mistake and the Egyptian foreign minister doing so.) However, if the potential patron is already hostile to the militant group's adversary, that can smooth the process considerably. As with domestic marketing, it can be the second of these three components, the need to convince the sponsor state that the militant group's reading of the nature of the ethnic cleavage is correct,

that can be the most challenging. A militant group whose political project relies on a nationalist narrative will have a harder time convincing a patron state that sees things in pan-religious terms to offer its support, unless it can frame the issue in a way that resonates for both parties.

The mechanics of marketing to sponsor states are a bit different than those of marketing to the general public. Most militant groups seeking state support can and do use public channels like the media to bolster their image at a regional level (particularly given the advent of transnational forms of media like the internet and satellite TV). In this sense, marketing to sponsor states is linked to the success of marketing to civilian constituents. However, there is also a great deal of private lobbying which takes place, of necessity, behind closed doors.<sup>82</sup>

As with attempts by militant groups to market themselves to the civilian community, marketing strategies aimed at sponsor states tend to make use of three closely related (and even overlapping) approaches: appeals to ethno-communal ties, appeals to common political orientation, and appeals based on the legitimacy that support for the group can confer. There is evidence that the first of these approaches can work very well; Saideman has argued that ethnic ties can shape foreign policy in powerful, if sometimes unexpected, ways while Gleditsch finds that transnational ethnic linkages increase the probability of external support for insurgency.<sup>83</sup> In its more extreme form, irredentism, such sympathy can lead to sponsorship of the militia as a proxy for the state's own ethno-political territorial ambitions.<sup>84</sup> However, appeals to ethno-communal sympathy will likely be most successful if the nonstate actor can frame itself as the ethno-communal kin of the sponsor state. This is not always simple; while I view ethnicity as a category that is constructed, rather than fixed, this construction is based on a menu of traits (such as language, religion, or geography) which, while sizeable, is not infinite.<sup>85</sup> The Irish Republican Army, for example could construct itself as being Irish, Catholic, Irish-speaking, or even European, but would be hard pressed to construct itself as Korean, Ukrainian-speaking, or Hindu.

Ideological appeals, on the other hand, are somewhat more flexible, because ideological frames are available to a wider range of organizations. They appear in the literature for the most part in the context of the Cold War, when being (or claiming to be) communist or anti-communist was often enough to produce lucrative superpower sponsorship. With the end of the Cold War, many of these organizations rebranded in an effort to find other sources of funding and ideological legitimacy.<sup>86</sup>

A third and particularly effective approach is to appeal to a state's desire for ethnic or ideological legitimacy and prestige. This kind of marketing is rooted in the group's ability to establish itself in the eyes of both leaders of other states in the region and their citizenry as being able to confer a particular kind of ideological legitimacy. That is, for this kind of marketing to be effective, the group must establish a broadly accepted norm by which support for the group in question and for the cause it purports to represent constitutes an ideological litmus test for regimes in the region. In this sense, marketing approaches directed at states can be seen as linked to those directed at civilians; this legitimacy derives in large part from perceived public support. Sponsorship of a popular client allows the state to shore up its ideological credentials while simultaneously justifying the suppression of dissent at home. Similarly, militant groups may be able to attract sponsorship by appealing to a state's desire for increased regional prestige, particularly if its rivals already have client militias fighting in the same conflict.<sup>87</sup> Deft exploitation of the pressure states experience as a result of regional ideological norms and political orthodoxies can be most lucrative for the nonstate actor who is clever enough to do so.

Overall, marketing strategies are more likely to produce durable material and non-material support than either coercion or service provision. A sponsor state that is invested in its client's success will be more likely to provide material aid such as weapons and training, while also being motivated to advance the group's cause internationally, as this will, in turn, boost the state's own ideological prestige and domestic legitimacy. This is one significant distinction between marketing based on the offer of legitimacy and the provision of material services or goods—the latter are essentially fungible, while legitimacy is often tied to a particular militant group.<sup>88</sup>

In sum, as with domestic policy-making, a militant group's foreign policy choices shape the range of resources it acquires, how long it will be able to maintain access to those resources, and how well it can use them once it has them. There are also unintended side effects of each strategy, which are particularly acute with regard to foreign sponsorship. Coercion can be useful in the short term, especially for gaining access to territory, although it is generally only useful against weak or fragmented states. It is rarely sustainable over the long term, however, and can alienate both ordinary citizens and political elites who might otherwise have been sympathetic to the movement's goals. If this leads to a loss of access to crucial territory, it can render the movement's other resources useless. Acting as a

military proxy can also be an attractive short-term strategy and tends to be somewhat more durable than coercion. It also provides access to a wider range of resources. However, these relationships can also prove difficult to maintain in the long term in the absence of additional ideological or ethno-communal ties. They can also carry hidden risks: the preferences of the sponsor state can lead to mission creep, and competing pressures from multiple sponsors can lead to fragmentation within the organization.<sup>89</sup> Marketing is ultimately the most successful; if done well, it can give the movement real leverage over its sponsor, leading to durable access to a range of resources. This approach also offers a great deal more flexibility and autonomy than the other two strategies.

### STRATEGY CHOICE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTER

Understanding the strategies that nonstate actors use to acquire both material and intangible resources can help us to understand the differences between organizations in the same conflict ecosystem and to categorize them based on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of their domestic and foreign policy. An organization which implements a highly successful strategy toward its civilian constituents but fails to do the same with regard to its foreign sponsors will look very different from an organization which is ineffective in building local relationships but very effective at doing so at the regional level.

Sorting organizations in this way allows us to generate a useful typology. A group which uses only coercion against both potential patrons and local constituents is unlikely to find itself able to achieve many, if any, of its objectives, and will prove vulnerable to attacks from both state and nonstate adversaries. These are the organizations that belong in quadrant A of Fig. 1.1 (see Page XX). A group which is successful at domestic policy but implements a weak foreign policy based on coercion or a highly constrained proxyhood (quadrant B) will evolve into local militia, which may have substantial domestic weight but little ability to spread its influence or ideology at the regional level. Such groups may not be particularly effective militarily but can often absorb significant losses politically. Even if they avoid using coercion, they are often so constrained by their role as military proxies that they have little independence, limiting their ability to make choices in their own best interests. Their obverse are those organizations in quadrant D, which are successful with regard to their foreign policy, winning generous friends and admirers abroad, but less so at the local

level. These organizations may be very successful in shaping regional ideological debates and securing political influence and even financial backing, but find it difficult to implement their policies locally, given their failure to win local support. As these three quadrants show, there are multiple paths to and degrees of ineffectiveness, but some policies are more certain to prove ineffective than others. (To paraphrase Tolstoy, “every unhappy militia is unhappy in its own way.”) Finally, there are those fortunate organizations in quadrant C which have successfully implemented policies enabling them to build strong relationships at home and abroad. These organizations are capable of both military resistance and political recovery. Over time, as they strengthen both their military capacity and political and bureaucratic institutions, they will come to resemble something between a state and a militant group, an entity that can be termed a proto-state actor.

This schema is not meant to be a perfectly quantifiable measure of the probability of success for a given militant group, but rather a way of structuring broad comparisons between different organizations. Nor does it constitute a perfect typology, in that the categories of strategies outlined here are not entirely mutually exclusive; rather, they constitute general forms of behavior whose consequences shape the character of the organizations which employ them.<sup>90</sup> It is more useful to think of both axes as spectrums rather than dichotomous measurements. No nonstate actor uses only a single strategy to obtain foreign and domestic support; rather, they employ a mixture of strategies within which one is dominant and therefore has the greatest impact on the movement’s ability to acquire and use resources and therefore on its chances of survival.

This schema is also useful in that it can help us understand variation in effectiveness not only between different militant groups but also by the same militant group at different times. An organization that moves from one set of strategies to another can move from one quadrant to another, demonstrating a greater (or lesser) ability to survive confrontations with its adversaries.<sup>91</sup>

To summarize my argument thus far, the dependent variable, survival, is tied to the nonstate actor’s ability to obtain a range of material and non-material resources. But access to these resources is not automatic: they must be provided by the group’s domestic civilian constituency and its foreign state sponsor(s). The strategies militant groups employ to acquire these resources at home and abroad determine the kinds of resources they are able to acquire, how durable access to those resources will be over the long term, and how it will be able to use them. But these strategies

also carry with them unforeseen costs and can shape the organization in unanticipated ways.

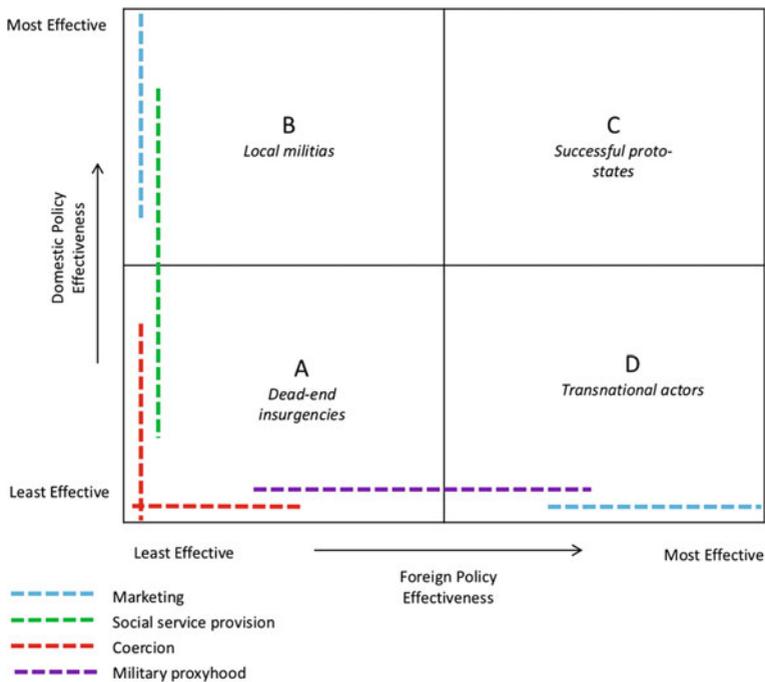
The remaining chapters will develop this argument by comparing the performance of four interconnected organizations in the conflict ecosystem created by the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine. In the 1970s and 1980s, despite its successful foreign policy, the PLO relied heavily on coercion in Jordan and Lebanon, alienating the Jordanian military, a large swathe of the political elite in Lebanon, and subsections of the civilian population in both countries. In doing so, it squandered what had been a real opportunity to reframe the identity narratives in each context to its own advantage. This left the PLO unable to resist or recover from its confrontations with the Jordanian and Israeli militaries. Amal, founded in south Lebanon in the 1970s, learned from the PLO’s mistakes, constructing a new, Shi’ite, ethno-political narrative of resistance mixed with economic and social reform which it promoted via marketing and service provision. But Amal’s eventual collapse into a proxy for Syria limited its wider influence. When Hizbullah split off from Amal in the early 1980s, its early policy was very different; during the Civil War the organization was highly coercive, which antagonized Syria and ultimately led to its effective expulsion from southern Lebanon by Amal by the end of the decade. In the postwar era, however, Hizbullah changed its strategy to one that relied primarily on service provision and a reframed marketing approach that emphasized the group’s credentials as a Lebanese resistance group. Similarly, when it emerged in Gaza during the first intifada, Hamas relied on a potent mixture of marketing and service provision. Based on these strategies, Hamas and Hizbullah were able to both resist and recover from their recent confrontations with the IDF, although Hizbullah has been more successful in doing so (Fig. 1.2).

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND CASE SELECTION

Because I am interested in understanding not only whether nonstate actors survive under particular circumstances but also how they do so, this book is concerned with establishing causal mechanisms rather than just broad correlation. For this reason, it employs a comparative methodology. Specifically, I use cross-case comparison of four cases which vary on the dependent variable, and in two of them (the PLO and Hizbullah) within-case comparison to test for other potentially relevant independent variables.

I selected my cases with a number of considerations in mind. The first was methodological, specifically the need for variation on the dependent, as well as independent, variable. One of the strengths of qualitative research is that it allows for the possibility that a researcher may be ambushed by a previously unimagined but deeply important variable.<sup>92</sup> Variation on both variables maximizes the chances of this occurring. Ensuring variation on the dependent variable, survival, was made easier by the fact that it is not purely dichotomous. Organizations adapt to their surroundings in different ways which may be more or less successful, and so while absolute survival or non-survival is of course possible, there is also quite a bit of gray territory in between.

The second reason for my case selection is empirical: The PLO, Amal, Hizbullah, and Hamas are four of the most significant resistance organizations in the conflict ecosystem comprised of Israel and its principal



**Fig. 1.1** A typology of nonstate military actors based on foreign and domestic policy choices

nonstate adversaries, the territories which they use as bases, and their foreign sponsors. There are both linkages and parallels between them. The PLO helped train Amal’s early fighters, Amal gave rise to Hizbullah, and Hamas learned a great deal from Hizbullah (and from the PLO as well.) Over the course of nearly 50 years, all four made similar claims to represent the legitimate face of “resistance” in the Arab–Israeli conflict ecosystem. Each faced attempts by a much more powerful conventional military to remove their capacity to operate in a particular territory, with dramatically varying results, ranging from full survival to complete defeat.

This leads to the third reason behind my case selection, which is theoretical: taken together, these four organizations represent the range of the types of organizations found in each quadrant of Fig. 1.1. Each organization reflects a different combination of resource-seeking strategies.

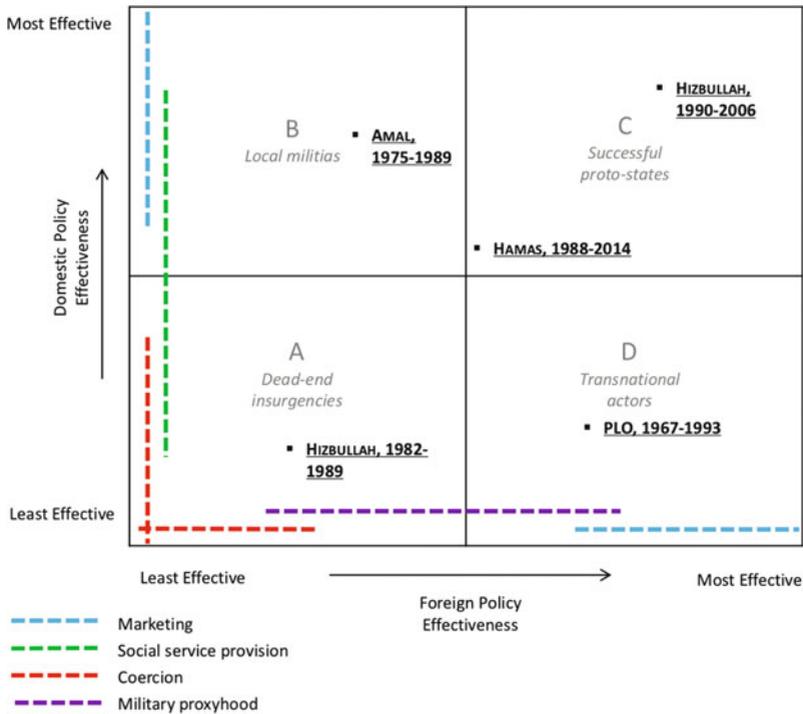


Fig. 1.2 Comparing the PLO, Amal, Hamas, and Hizbullah, based on their foreign and domestic policy choices

Some were consistent, while others changed over time. The variation in outcomes experienced by the same actor at different times indicates that even the same movement, fighting in the same territory, against the same adversary, will experience a different outcome when it implements different policies.

### POTENTIAL CRITIQUES

There are a number of possible alternate explanations that may be raised as critiques of the argument laid out in this book. One such potential critique is that it is not the nature of the militant group itself which determines its chances of survival, but rather the nature of its adversary. And indeed, an additional advantage of focusing my comparison on organizations within a single ecosystem is that it allows me to take seriously the nature of the adversary. The organizations included here often fought the IDF either at the same time or in rapid succession; the IDF which fought the PLO in 1982 was much the same as the army fighting Hizbullah in 1985, and the IDF that bombed Beirut in 2006 was the same IDF that bombed Gaza in 2009. And yet, there is some variation in the outcomes of these episodes.

But, purely hypothetically, what if the PLO's poor performance against the IDF is simply because the latter is better at fighting nationalist Palestinians than it is at fighting Islamist Palestinians or Shi'ites? Unlikely as this might be, looking at the performance of the organizations at the extreme ends of the spectrum—the PLO and Hizbullah—against non-Israeli adversaries, that is, the Jordanian military and Amal, addresses this issue.

A less facetious critique is that in comparing Palestinian and Lebanese militant groups, it is possible that I am failing to account for the role of “home field advantage.” In south Lebanon, the Lebanese militias had access to networks of clan and family affiliations that the Palestinians did not. Perhaps the PLO was at a disadvantage in southern Lebanon simply because it was fighting in an area in which it was not surrounded by Palestinians.

Accepting for the moment the premise of the criticism, that there is such a thing as “home turf,” I would make the following observations in response. First, this argument does not explain variation over time in Hizbullah's performance. Despite its impressive record from 2000 onward, Hizbullah performed poorly in south Lebanon in the late 1980s, despite being a Shi'ite organization fighting on Shi'ite territory. Meanwhile,

the PLO was not particularly effective even when fighting in a majority Palestinian context in Jordan, where even many officers in the Jordanian military were of Palestinian origin. This suggests that having local ties is not enough to either guarantee success or doom an organization to failure. Second, the idea of “home field advantage” does not explain why two organizations claiming to represent the same constituency in the same area would not do equally well; why was Amal more successful than Hizbullah in the 1980s and less successful later on? Finally, it is worth pointing out that for a solid decade, the PLO *was* able to mobilize significant support from the Shi’ites of south Lebanon, despite not having access to clan or family ties there. The evidence does not suggest that “home field advantage” matters in a consistent or deterministic way.

The more honest answer to this objection though is that this book does not fundamentally accept the premise that “home field advantage” is something that a militant group has from the outset. It is rather a narrative which the organization constructs (or fails to construct) for itself, based on how many people watching the game it is able to convince that it is, in fact, the home team. I do not deny that it was somewhat easier for Amal and Hizbullah to construct a narrative that meshed with that they already believed about themselves than it was for the PLO to do so in south Lebanon, but that does not mean that such a thing was inherently impossible. Early Shi’ite support for (and even membership in) the PLO certainly suggests otherwise.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Much of this book is based on interviews conducted in 2009 and 2012 in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. Because it is impractical to conduct a random sampling of militia fighters, I instead sought to interview members of every major PLO faction (Fatah, the PFLP, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or DFLP) as well as some which have since broken with the mainline of the PLO leadership (the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front, PFLP-General Command (GC), and Fatah al-Intifada). In the case of major factions (Fatah, the PFLP, the DFLP, and PFLP-GC), I interviewed multiple officials at different levels, from neighborhood fighters to the former head of the PLO in Lebanon, and from political officials who had never seen combat to seasoned veterans of Black September and the Lebanese Civil War. I also took this approach with Hamas, although my ability to interview Hamas members

was hampered by the fact that much of its political leadership was either in Israeli prisons or living underground while I was doing field research. (It was not possible, for a range of reasons, to interview anyone currently carrying arms for Hamas.) I likewise interviewed members of every major Lebanese political party, including both the allies and adversaries of the organizations profiled here. This included members of the Kataeb (at multiple levels within the organization), al Mustaqbal, al Tayyar al Watani al Hurr, Amal, and the Communist Party. While Hizbullah's media office did not give me clearance to interview its political leadership on the record, I was able to attend a number of Hizbullah's political events, including rallies, election events, and a major conference. While not the main focus of my research, I also interviewed Israeli veterans of Operation Peace for Galilee and Operation Litani, as well as current and former members of the Jordanian military and government. These interviews were supplemented with interviews with journalists, diplomats, United Nations (UN) and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff, and analysts from Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Iran.

In selecting interview subjects, I used a snowball sampling approach, working through an existing network of friends, acquaintances, and former colleagues in the NGO, government, and media sectors, using my existing contacts to make new ones. (This was to guarantee both my safety and that of my interview subjects.) I also cold-called several high-ranking interview subjects including the Palestinian Minister of the Interior in Ramallah, the Secretary General of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in Amman, and several members of the Lebanese parliament. To complement my interviews, I made extensive use of print and broadcast media sources, websites and literature produced by the relevant factions, and US government documents released both formally and via WikiLeaks.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The remaining chapters will each focus on one of four major interconnected actors in the conflict ecosystem created by Israel's protracted conflict with its nonstate adversaries, examining how the strategies they pursued in establishing their domestic and foreign relationships shaped their ability to survive in this environment. Chapter 2 focuses on the PLO, comparing its experiences during the brief Jordanian Civil War of 1970 known as Black September with its experience in Lebanon, concluding that it made similar mistakes in both environments. Chapter 3 describes the rise of Amal, which

provided an alternative narrative of Shi'ite resistance, finding that the organization's reliance on patronage toward the Shi'ite community and from the Syrians gave it staying power but little broader influence. Chapter 4 addresses Hezbollah, comparing its policies during the Civil War with the far more effective approach it took later. Chapter 5 deals with Hamas, which in some ways tried to replicate Hezbollah's postwar reinvention of itself and the IDF's attack on Gaza in 2009. Chapter 6 explores the implications of this model both theoretically and as it might be applied to other conflict ecosystems. I conclude with some broader conclusions drawn by comparing all four cases in greater depth.

In its exploration of the sometimes unforeseen impact of strategic choice on nonstate military actors, this book makes four broad theoretical contributions. First, the experiences of the groups analyzed here demonstrate that ethno-communal identities which are often taken as fixed organizational assets are in fact very much resources to be obtained, or not, by militant groups seeking to mobilize them to their own advantage. In this, it explicitly challenges the notion of "home field advantage," one of the core assumptions in much of the existing work on Civil War.

Second, it demonstrates that state sponsorship can have sometimes problematic consequences for a militant group's organizational cohesion and overall effectiveness, particularly if the relationship is based on mercenary calculations regarding shared enemies and the interests of the sponsoring state rather than on a shared political project. Third, the domestic outcomes experienced by the movements included here show that the positive and negative consequences experienced by militant groups for the provision of social services parallel the consequences for states of either good governance or the establishment of neo-patrimonial structures. A militant group that treats service provision as a form of patronage will suffer for its choice, while one which takes the provision of services as an opportunity to prove its competence to govern will benefit from doing so. Finally, this book will demonstrate that the use of coercion, bribery, and violence are of limited use in the long term and ultimately prove detrimental to organizations that use these tactics. Real and enduring support cannot be bought or stolen; it must be earned.

## NOTES

1. Frenkel, "Peretz: Aim Is to See Off Hizbullah."
2. Goldwasser and Reggev's bodies were returned to Israel in a prisoner exchange in 2008.

3. The metaphor of the conflict ecosystem has been used by other scholars, notably David Kilcullen, to describe the nature of insurgency and counter-insurgency at the local level. Kilcullen characterizes the conflict ecosystem as including multiple actors, from NGOs to militia factions, all of whose behaviors and interests must be understood and accounted for in order for the counterinsurgent force to successfully contain its insurgent adversary. Kilcullen, “Counterinsurgency Redux.” I use the metaphor differently; rather than focusing on the actors in one local conflict, I use it at the regional level to describe the interconnected network of state and nonstate actors in a particular protracted conflict.
4. Based on a Factiva search of 186 New York Times articles containing the search phrase “Leban\* AND (Hizbullah OR Hezbollah OR Hizballah) AND Israel\*” from July 12 through October 14, 2006.
5. Ross, “How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from 13 Cases”; Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War”; Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War.”
6. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*, 21.
7. McCarthy and Zald, “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory.”
8. McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*; Meyer, “Protest and Political Opportunities.”
9. Collier and Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War”; Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner, “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War”; Collier, “Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity.”
10. Berman, *Religious, Radical and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*.
11. See, for instance, Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*; Brass, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*; Brubaker and Laitin, “Ethnic and Nationalist Violence”; Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*; Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia”; Kuran, “Ethnic Dissimilation and Its International Diffusion”; Saideman, Dougherty, and Jenne, “Dilemmas of Divorce: How Secessionist Identities Cut Both Ways.”
12. One exception is Metelits, “The Logic of Change.”
13. For the sake of brevity, this book uses the terms “foreign policy” and “domestic policy” with regard to the choices militant groups make with regard to resource acquisition. There are, of course, many other components to both domestic and foreign policy, but I am concerned with a few specific components. It is also worth noting that in some cases, “foreign policy” may refer to relations with the government hosting the organization in question, in which case such policy is “foreign” in name only.
14. There is some overlap between these labels, and not all of them describe comparable categories. “Terrorist” and “guerrilla” refer to groups who use

- particular tactics. “Rebel” and “insurgent”, on the other hand, define the group by its enemy rather than its choice of tactic. “Militia” is the broadest of the above categories, though it does carry very specific connotations in both the American and Lebanese contexts. Nonstate military actors as a whole can and do use conventional, guerrilla, and/or terrorist tactics, and their primary opponents can be both internal and external.
15. There are, of course, organizations masquerading as militias who are in reality merely organized crime syndicates. By the same token, groups which have sincere political grievances are often dismissed as criminals as a means of delegitimizing their grievances. Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*; Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?”
  16. Both the scholarly literature and work by practitioners address the question of resources in some depth. For a more theoretical treatment, see Bell, *The Myth of the Guerrilla: Revolutionary Theory and Practice*; Metz and Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response*; Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*; Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; and Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual: US Army Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*; US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual* offer an excellent counterinsurgent perspective, while Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*; Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*; and T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* provide the insurgents’ perspective.
  17. US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual: US Army Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*, 104–5.
  18. Metz and Millen, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century: Reconceptualizing Threat and Response*.
  19. Bell, *The Myth of the Guerrilla: Revolutionary Theory and Practice*.
  20. Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*.
  21. Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media and International Activism*.
  22. Interview, Maher, PFLP (former).
  23. North, “General Hoche and Counterinsurgency”; Callwell, *Small Wars: A Tactical Textbook for Imperial Soldiers*; US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual: US Army Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*; Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*; Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare*; T.E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.
  24. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*; Chaliand, *Guerrilla Strategies: An Historical*

- Anthology from the Long March to Afghanistan*; Johnson, “Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict”; Salehyan and Gleditsch, “Refugees and the Spread of Civil War.”
25. Writers such as Guevara and Mao tend to minimize the importance of outside help, perhaps because of their interest in portraying their own movements as resulting from a groundswell of popular support.
  26. Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 9.
  27. Harbom and Wallensteen, “Armed Conflict and Its International Dimensions, 1946-2004”; Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*; Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism*; Salehyan, “No Shelter Here: Rebel Sanctuaries and International Conflict.”
  28. Lujala, Gleditsch, and Gilmore, “A Diamond Curse?”
  29. Ross, “How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from 13 Cases.”
  30. Indeed, Kalyvas notes that civilian fear of militias is one reason why it is inaccurate to conceptualize the choice to support or not support a given group as an election. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*.
  31. Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*; Collier, “Rebellion as a Quasi-Criminal Activity”; Ross, “How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from 13 Cases.”
  32. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.
  33. US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual: US Army Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*; Johnson, “Civilian Loyalties and Guerilla Conflict,” 652.
  34. Guevara, *Guerrilla Warfare*, Trans. by J.P. Morray, with an introduction by I.F. Stone: 78.
  35. Humphreys and Weinstein, “Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War.”
  36. Ibid.
  37. Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*.
  38. Szekely, “Doing Well by Doing Good.”
  39. Mampilly, *Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War*. See also Cammett and Issar, “Bricks and Mortar Clientalism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon.”
  40. Anderson, “The State in the Middle East and North Africa”; Beblawi, “The Rentier State and the Arab World”; Bellin, “The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East”; Lujala, Gleditsch, and Gilmore, “A Diamond Curse?”; Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*; Ross, *The Oil Curse*.
  41. Albertus, “Vote Buying With Multiple Distributive Goods”; Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes, “Vote Buying in Argentina”; Vicente, “Is Vote Buying Effective?”

42. Arguments suggesting that terrorist groups benefit from the provision of social services because the substandard education they offer isolates adherents and leaves them dependent on the movement are ultimately unconvincing in the Arab–Israeli conflict ecosystem. Many members of Palestinian and Lebanese militant groups, including many of those interviewed for this book, are highly educated (in some cases, holding PhDs or medical degrees from Europe and the USA) and have a range of professional options available to them.
43. There is also evidence that sometimes people choose to use services provided by a given group because they already sympathize with them and prefer to associate with fellow supporters, in which case support for the group produces patronage of its services, not the other way around. (While this has its own benefits, in that it likely encourages in-group cohesion, it is less likely to broaden the movement’s base of support.) Clark, *Islam, Charity and Activism: Middle Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan and Yemen*; Berrebi, “Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians.”
44. Kilcullen, “Counterinsurgency Redux.”
45. The importance of “winning hearts and minds” is recognized throughout the literature on insurgency and counterinsurgency, although the nuts and bolts of the process are less thoroughly explored. Murphy and White, “Propaganda: Can a Word Decide a War?”; Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media and International Activism*; Ford, “Speak No Evil: Targeting a Population’s Neutrality to Defeat an Insurgency”; Hoffman, “The ‘Cult of the Insurgent’: Its Tactical and Strategic Implications”; Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*; Johnson, “Civilian Loyalties and Guerrilla Conflict”; United States Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual: US Army Field Manual No. 3-24 / Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3-33.5*.
46. Kotler and Zaltman, “Social Marketing.”
47. McGarry, “The Propaganda Function in Marketing”; Harrop, “Political Marketing.”
48. O’Shaughnessy, “Persuasion, Myth and Propaganda”; O’Shaughnessy and Baines, “Selling Terror.”
49. Lasswell, “The Theory of Political Propaganda,” 626. Edward Bernays, the father of modern public relations, concurs, though he (perhaps unsurprisingly) views propaganda in a more favorable light, as a necessary mechanism for the functioning of democracy through which the better informed educated the less informed, enabling them to make more efficient decisions. Bernays and Miller, *Propaganda*.
50. O’Shaughnessy, “Persuasion, Myth and Propaganda”; McGarry, “The Propaganda Function in Marketing.”

51. While there is some difference between nonstate military actors and “social movements” as understood by sociologists, this literature does offer insight into some aspects of political organizational behavior.
52. Polletta and Jasper, “Collective Identity and Social Movements.”
53. Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*; Snow, Zurcher, and Eklund-Olson, “Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment”; Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment.”
54. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*; Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*; Gagnon, “Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia”; Kuran, “Ethnic Dissimilation and Its International Diffusion.” This has the secondary effect of solidifying communal boundaries. While this can be useful for elites, it can also spark an ethnic security dilemma, although this is often the explicit intention of the leaders of militant organizations Saideman and Zahar, *Intra-State Conflict, Governments and Security: Dilemmas of Deterrence and Assurance*; Jack Snyder and Jervis, “Civil War and the Security Dilemma.”
55. The contested nature of the boundaries demarcating different communities of solidarity is investigated in greater depth by Gould, *Insurgent Identities*.
56. Hoffman, “The ‘Cult of the Insurgent’: Its Tactical and Strategic Implications”; Kilcullen, “Counterinsurgency Redux”; Payne, “The Media as an Instrument of War”; Lynch, *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*; Lockyer, “The Relationship between the Media and Terrorism.”
57. Al Aqsa and Al Manar, respectively.
58. Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*.
59. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*.
60. Polletta and Jasper, “Collective Identity and Social Movements,” 286. In some ways, this process echoes the narrative of identity formation articulated by Anderson (1983).
61. Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*.
62. I have consciously avoided the much wider question here of why nonstate actors fight in the first place. Are they engaged in a genuine attempt at remaking the political order based on what Arendt calls the “social question”? Are they echoing and re-echoing earlier revolutions in France and Russia? Or are they merely thugs who are out to enrich themselves, as some of the “greed versus grievance” literature seems to suggest? Because it is what civilians believe about nonstate actors that matters most for my purposes rather than what these organizations privately believe about

themselves, I assume that a given nonstate actor's stated motives are as believable as civilians find them to be.

63. Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*.
64. Bayat, "Islamism and Social Movement Theory." Bayat also uses Hizbullah as an example of this phenomenon.
65. Hoffman, "The 'Cult of the Insurgent': Its Tactical and Strategic Implications," 312.
66. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. This point is also made by Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay, "'Draining the Sea': Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare."
67. For instance, the US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual distinguishes between "active" and "passive" support for insurgency. See also Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism*; Salehyan, "No Shelter Here: Rebel Sanctuaries and International Conflict."
68. Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism*; Kalyvas, "The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War."
69. Salehyan, *Rebels Without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics*; Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*; Salehyan, "No Shelter Here: Rebel Sanctuaries and International Conflict."
70. Byman, *Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism*.
71. Salehyan, "No Shelter Here: Rebel Sanctuaries and International Conflict."
72. Interview, Abu Khalil, PFLP, Damascus. This was echoed by Mohamed B.
73. There may well be bureaucratic or logistical barriers that make some currencies or banking systems preferable over others, but money itself is, by its very definition, fungible.
74. Salehyan, *Rebels Without Borders: Transnational Insurgencies in World Politics*.
75. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*.
76. Fearon and Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War."
77. Salehyan, "No Shelter Here: Rebel Sanctuaries and International Conflict." Salehyan further hypothesizes that this means we should see a decrease in interstate war between states that were already members of a rival dyad.
78. Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*.
79. American sponsorship of various paramilitary movements in Latin America during the Cold War provides a number of examples in this area, the Bay of Pigs invasion being among the most noteworthy.
80. Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*.
81. Szekely, "A Friend in Need: The Impact of the Syrian Civil War on Syria's Clients (A Principal-Agent Approach)."
82. The biographies of Middle Eastern leaders like Hafez al Asad and King Hussein recount any number of clandestine meetings with various militant

groups with whom they were not officially in communication. (See, for instance, Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*; Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*.) This was echoed in conversations with PLO officials.

83. Gleditsch, “Transnational Dimensions of Civil War”; Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*.; Saideman, “Explaining the International Relations of Secessionist Conflicts: Vulnerability Versus Ethnic Ties.”
84. Moore and Davis, “Transnational Ethnic Ties and Foreign Policy”; Saideman and Ayres, *For Kin or Country: Xenophobia, Nationalism, and War*; Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*.
85. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*; Saideman, Dougherty, and Jenne, “Dilemmas of Divorce: How Secessionist Identities Cut Both Ways”; Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*.
86. Kalyvas, “‘New’ and ‘Old’ Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?”; Metz, *Rethinking Insurgency*.
87. Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*.
88. That is not to say that legitimacy cannot be conferred by other militias as well; the ability to confer legitimacy on a sponsor may not be fungible, but it is obtainable.
89. For further discussion of this issue, see Szekely, “A Friend in Need: The Impact of the Syrian Civil War on Syria’s Clients (A Principal-Agent Approach).”
90. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.
91. A militant group that changes both its strategies could conceivably move from being ineffective in one way to being ineffective in a completely different way.
92. Eckstein, “Case Study and Theory in Political Science”; Mahoney, “Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics.”

## The PLO

In September of 1970, a young *fedayi* fighting with the PFLP-GC unexpectedly found himself hosting Yasser Arafat in his office in the Jabal Hussein refugee camp in Amman. War had broken out between the PLO and the Jordanian Armed Forces, a conflict that would eventually become known, especially to Palestinians, as Black September. Fatah's headquarters had come under heavy shelling, and so Arafat and some of the other PLO leadership relocated to the PFLP-GC's somewhat more secure offices. The young man (who is now known as Abu Jihad, the deputy secretary general of the PFLP-GC) was tasked with following the coded radio communications between the different PLO factions and keeping track of the number of Jordanian army units defecting to the Palestinian side. This was expected to be quite high, and as the reports began coming in from across the country, there initially seemed reason to be optimistic. But the young officer soon realized that at least some of the factions were providing information that was not entirely accurate. He described one exchange with Arafat as follows:

“From Ahmed to Khaled, salaam aleykum.” I ask[ed] him [Arafat] “what [does] that mean, please?” He said “one battalion from Jordanian army will be with us.” Ok! We are very happy. The second, one battalion! The third, one battalion! In the end, I told Abu Ammar [Arafat], “Abu Ammar—I collect all the battalions. It is the Jordanian army twice!”

Over the course of the ten-day conflict, it became obvious that despite the apparent advantages that the PLO had in Jordan—Jordan was a Palestinian-majority country, and the PLO believed it could count on support from Syria, Iraq, and Egypt—that the expected defections were not coming and that the PLO had badly miscalculated. It had mishandled its relations with the Jordanian public, discounting the impact of its behavior on public opinion and overestimating the effectiveness of its attempts to market the Palestinian cause to the public at large. It would subsequently repeat these mistakes in its next host country, Lebanon. Lebanon's ethnic fragmentation left large swathes of the civilian population and political establishment predisposed to view the PLO as potential allies. But as in Jordan, the PLO discounted the interests of its both adversaries and allies when those did not mesh with its own agenda, resorting to coercion to achieve its goals.

The PLO's foreign policy during this period was somewhat more effective. The organization was able to position the Palestinian cause such that it granted the movement substantial leverage over the various Arab states, granting the organization access to important funding and sometimes military support. But at the same time, many of the PLO factions became increasingly bound to the Arab states for which they served as military proxies, which had a distorting effect on the organization's structure and cohesion. Ultimately, the PLO's foreign policy produced powerful and at times beneficial alliances that allowed it to survive the defeats of 1970 and 1982, but at the cost of being forced to relocate ever farther from historical Palestine.

In combination, these policies place the PLO in the bottom left quadrant of the diagram proposed in Chap. 1. It was far more successful on a regional level than on a local level. This is not to say that the PLO was a failed organization; it had a great many significant successes, the most important of which was to keep the Palestinian national issue alive after 1967, even while in exile. But it does mean that the organization the PLO became by the 1980s as a result of these decisions was far less resilient than other organizations in the same ecosystem.

## IN THE BEGINNING: THE ORIGINS OF THE PLO

Understanding the emergence of the PLO (and indeed, of the larger conflict ecosystem under examination here) requires some brief background on the Palestinian predicament. With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Britain was mandated by the League of Nations to gov-

ern the territory which now comprises Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories. The territory to the east of the Jordan River (the “East Bank”) became the Emirate of Transjordan, ruled with British backing by Emir Abdullah I. Palestine, to the west of the Jordan, became the focus of both Zionist Jewish national aspirations and those of the native Palestinian Arab population. With the Arab rejection of a UN plan to partition the territory, civil war erupted in November of 1947. When the British mandate officially ended on May 15, 1948, the Jewish government unilaterally declared the existence of the state of Israel. The following day the combined Arab armies (most significantly Egypt, Syria, and Jordan) attacked. By the end of the war, Jordan had taken control of the West Bank, Egypt occupied Gaza, and the state of Israel had been established on the rest of the territory. A total of 750,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and other Arab states. For Palestinians, these events are known as the *nakba* or catastrophe.

By the early 1960s, there was growing nationalist sentiment among young diaspora Palestinians. The Arab League member states, eager to find a vehicle for these aspirations which would not threaten their own regimes, established the PLO at the 1964 Cairo Summit, within a firmly Arab-nationalist framework. Its first chairman was Ahmed Shuqairy, a noted diplomat and lawyer. Shafiq al Hout, a founder of the PLO and its representative in Beirut and at the UN for three decades, described the decision as follows:

The resolution at the Arab league was almost two lines, very humble, two lines asking Mr. Shuqairy, as I said, to find a way out for these Palestinian people, for representation. These two lines, by the will of the Palestinian people ... and the good leadership of Shuqairy ... we established this PLO that became a very well-known political body. ... We managed to make the maximum of the Arab Summit Conference resolution.<sup>1</sup>

In the aftermath of the Six-Day War in 1967 (also known as the June War), the PLO emerged as a more independent and increasingly powerful organization. Under the Nasserist pan-Arab ideology that had dominated Arab politics since the early 1950s, the Palestinian issue was subsumed within the broader Arab Nationalist project. But the weakening of this ideology after the failure of joint Arab military action in 1967 provided an opening for the PLO to become more independent. This transformation was further facilitated by changes in the organization’s leadership. Factions that had previously scorned the PLO, like Fatah, founded

in 1959 in Kuwait by Yasser Arafat<sup>2</sup> and Khalid Al Wazir (better known as Abu Jihad), and George Habash's Arab National Movement (which would eventually morph into the PFLP)<sup>3</sup> joined the organization at its 1968 annual meeting, becoming the first and second largest factions, respectively. The following year, Arafat was elected as chairman.

Fatah explicitly prioritized the liberation of Palestine over the pan-Arabist project; its ascendance heralded a new set of priorities for the organization.<sup>4</sup> These priorities would be reflected over the next two decades, with varying degrees of success, in its both domestic and foreign policies.

### FOREIGN RELATIONS

Over its lifetime, the PLO has had a range of foreign allies, sponsors, and unwilling hosts. From the 1960s through the 1980s, the most important of these were probably Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, but its relationships with the other Arab states were also significant. In general, the PLO was more successful in marketing itself to the latter than to either Jordan or Lebanon, although its relationships with the Gulf states often veered toward the coercive. In approaching the "leftist" regimes, particularly Syria, the PLO emphasized their shared ideology (a more successful strategy for some factions than others) and its rising regional prestige. However, some of these relationships, notably with Syria, were also predicated on its ability to act as a military proxy against Israel. In combination, these relationships helped shape the organization in ways both positive and negative. While the PLO's foreign relationships contributed to its endurance (at least at a regional level) over time, they also produced what would turn out to be damaging internal divisions.

#### *An Uneasy Partnership: The PLO and the Arab States*

The PLO's relationship with the Arab states was exceptionally complicated. At times, the various factions' positions as military proxies for various regional sponsor states proved damaging. But at its most effective, the movement was able to position itself as the authentic representative of both the Palestinian cause and Arab resistance more broadly and thereby allowing it to confer legitimacy upon its foreign sponsors.<sup>5</sup> This became a valuable source of leverage. Shafiq al Hout recalled:

At a certain time, when we were at the top of our struggle, in the 60s and 70s, believe me, each Arab leader used to feel that Arafat shares half of his authority in his country, because the people were really very supportive and sympathetic in their expressions of their solidarity, so, I mean, the Arab regimes didn't have much of a choice but to like us or to pretend that they like us, to support us or to pretend that they support us.<sup>6</sup>

The story of the post-1967 PLO's relationship with its foreign allies begins in 1968 in a small village in the Jordan Valley named Karameh. For several years, the Palestinian forces had been launching raids against Israel from the area, provoking punishing Israeli reprisal attacks. On March 21, the IDF launched one such assault on the village of Karameh, attacking with close to 9000 armored troops in M-48 Patton tanks and 1200 infantry, supported by additional paratroopers. They were met with an unexpectedly robust response by 80 Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) fighters, 200–250 Fatah fighters, and 30 PFLP guerrillas,<sup>7</sup> accompanied by the Jordanian 1st Infantry Division, as well as tank and artillery battalions. The combined forces mounted a successful defense, and by the time the IDF was forced to withdraw, three Israeli tanks had been captured.

Despite the much higher casualties on the Jordanian–Palestinian side, the 100 captives the IDF took with them when they withdrew, and the fact that the Jordanian forces had done most of the heavy lifting, Karameh was framed as a victory for the fedayeen. The narrative of the successful defense of Karameh (which actually means “dignity” in Arabic) by the brave fedayeen provided a potent contrast to the humiliating defeat in 1967, and did a great deal to raise both Palestinian civilian morale and the movement's reputation in the Arab world more generally.<sup>8</sup>

The PLO's leadership was more than willing to trade on the spike in the movement's regional prestige that followed Karameh. PLO leaders Salah Khalaf and Farouk Qaddoumi embarked on a diplomatic (and fundraising) tour of the Arab states. In Cairo, they established a relationship with Muhammad Hussein Haykal, Nasser's closest advisor, who became an advocate for the PLO there. In Saudi Arabia, they met with King Faisal, who offered to help “as discreetly as possible,” telling the Palestinian leaders “we don't expect either praise or criticism from you.” In Sudan, they received promises of support for the PLO in general, if not for Fatah on its own.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the Gulf leaders were privately (and sometimes not so privately) worried about the PLO's new assertiveness. Fatah prioritized the liberation of Palestine over either the pan-Arab project or the interests of

the other Arab states, while leftist organizations like the PFLP and DFLP opposed monarchy as a system of government in principle. Nor was the PLO shy about using its reputation as cudgel; in 1976, when the PLO was having difficulty in raising its usual annual funds from the Gulf states, PLO leader Abu Iyad gave a public speech in Kuwait castigating both Kuwait itself and its wealthy expatriate Palestinians, stating “Whether they like it or not, they will pay!”<sup>10</sup>

The various PLO factions were also able to make use of the “Arab Cold War” that pitted the Soviet-oriented “progressive republics” (Syria, Algeria, Libya, and in the 1960s and 1970s, Sudan, Egypt, and Iraq) against the Western-allied monarchies (the Gulf states, Morocco, and Jordan) to extract support from the various participants. While based in part on mutual interest, these relationships also contained elements of proxy service. The progressive republics favored a more confrontational stance against Israel (at least in theory), and distrusted what they perceived as the monarchies’ pro-Western orientation.<sup>11</sup> These states tended to support organizations like the PLFP, PLFP-GC,<sup>12</sup> and DFLP. To balance against their rivals, the Gulf states tended to back the comparatively conservative Fatah. Other groups had been created out of whole cloth by their patrons, including the Syrian-sponsored Al Saiqa and the Iraqi-sponsored Arab Liberation Front. But even some factions that emerged independently and acquired sponsorship later (such as the PFLP-GC) took on the agendas of their sponsors in ways that proved damaging to the PLO as a whole.

The PLO’s relationship with Syria bears particular discussion, given its impact on the PLO’s performance in Lebanon, and to a lesser extent on its chances in Jordan. Over time, Syrian relations with the PLO vacillated, sometimes unpredictably, between cordiality and conflict, to the frustration of the PLO’s leaders. In the early 1960s, the Syrian government declined entirely to host a meeting of Palestinian leaders to discuss the establishment of a Palestinian national movement.<sup>13</sup> When the PLO actually was established, the regime was initially supportive, but after a dispute over the degree of the new movement’s policy independence, it became much more hostile and eventually banned Shuqairy from Syria altogether. Arafat himself was arrested in Syria in 1966 and imprisoned for nearly a year.<sup>14</sup> This would set the tone for the subsequent decades.

Syrian policy toward the PLO was driven in part by internal Syrian politics, which in the 1960s were characterized by deep rivalries and frequent coups. In February 1966, a group of radical military officers overthrew

the previous regime, after which two major factions emerged. The first centered on Salah Jadid, Assistant Secretary General for the Syrian General Command (for whom President Nureddin Atassi was essentially a puppet). Jadid was ideologically committed both to socialism as an economic system and to the broader “resistance” project against Israel. The second was led by Minister of Defense Hafez al Asad. A pragmatist to his core, Asad sought political and economic stability above all else. After 1967, tensions grew as Jadid continued to push for deeper Syrian involvement in the fight for Palestine. After the Battle of Karameh, seeking to capitalize on the fedayeen’s prestige, Jadid sponsored the establishment of Al Saiqa, (or “thunderbolt,” an acronym in Arabic for “Vanguard of the War of Liberation”), a Syrian-controlled Palestinian militia answerable to Jadid himself rather than to the Syrian military, which remained loyal to Asad.<sup>15</sup> This meant that the PLO’s alliance with Syria was in reality an alliance with Jadid’s faction in the Syrian regime.

Asad, in contrast, strongly believed in a pan-Arab military solution to the conflict with Israel. Moreover, the cautious Asad was increasingly alarmed by Jadid’s advocacy, in meetings with Egypt and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), of a war with Israel for which Asad was certain that neither Syria nor Egypt was prepared. After the coup of November 1970 (itself linked to Black September), which put Asad in power until his death in 2000, the PLO lost a great deal of its ideological leverage over the Syrian regime. Though the PLO continued to use the rhetoric of Arab unity in its approach to Syria, in practice Syria pursued its own objectives, in concert with the PLO when possible, but in opposition to it if necessary.

In some ways, their interests converged; Syria valued the PLO’s role in maintaining pressure on Israel through its attacks against civilian targets in the north, in the hopes that this might push the Israelis toward negotiations for the return of territory lost in 1967 (specifically the Golan Heights). This became even more important after the Israeli–Egyptian peace treaty effectively removed the option of pan-Arab military action, and therefore any chances that this territory might be regained by conventional warfare.

But at other times, their interests obviously conflicted. Syria’s priorities in Lebanon have generally been to maintain a stable balance between the various parties, to prevent any from growing strong enough to pose a serious threat to its influence, and to prevent any Israeli intervention. When these interests were threatened by the prospect of a victory by the

PLO and its leftist allies (the Lebanese National Movement, or LNM) against the Christians in 1976, Asad dispatched 15,000 Syrian troops to Lebanon. The LNM was denied its victory, and rightist militias took their revenge in the form of a massacre of Palestinian civilians in Tel al Zaatar. Those Palestinian factions closest to the regime supported the intervention, while others opposed it. In short, the relationship with Syria was unpredictable and often had unexpected consequences.

Finally, the PLO's relationship with the communist states bears a brief mention as well. China offered direct diplomatic recognition of the PLO, complete with an embassy, and negotiated with the organization directly, rather than through an intermediary. The USSR was slightly more reserved in the early 1970s; though it referred glowingly to the fedayeen as "partisans," it tended to provide the PLO with weapons through other Arab states, rather than directly.<sup>16</sup> The relationship warmed somewhat after the Rabat summit of 1974, and in 1976, it provided the PLO with a mission in Moscow (later upgraded to an embassy). The USSR and eastern bloc states were also an important source of training for PLO officers, and of postsecondary education for tens of thousands of young Palestinians.<sup>17</sup>

The USSR also provided enormously important political resources. In addition to the backing provided by the Arab League and non-aligned movement, the support of the Soviet bloc states was instrumental in granting the PLO its prized observer status in the UN General Assembly.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, support from the USSR provided an important counterweight to American support for Israel. In the end, however, Soviet support was tempered by the overarching Soviet preference for regional stability. Shafiq al Hout recalled a meeting at the UN with Soviet foreign minister Andre Gromyko during which, in Hout's words, Gromyko said plainly "look, guys, we are ready to support you to an extent, to a great extent, but we will not go on to a third world war because of you."<sup>19</sup>

### *At Home Abroad: Relations With the Host States*

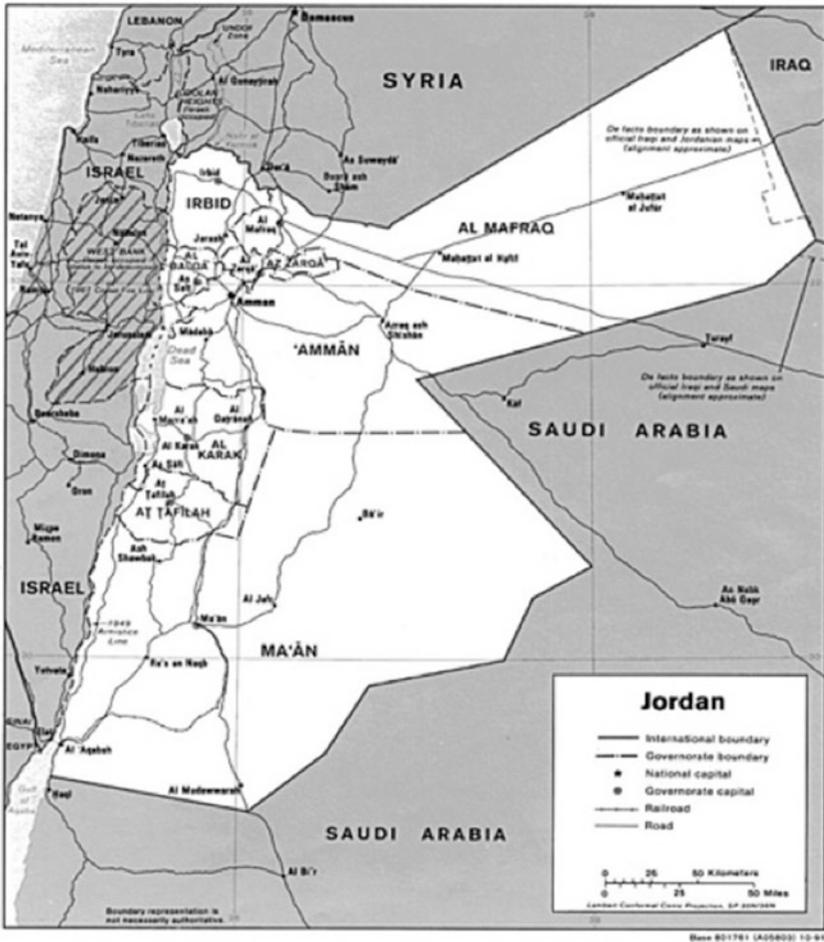
The PLO's relationships with the governments that hosted it, particularly Jordan and Lebanon, were, if anything, more complicated than its relations with its other foreign patrons. In both Jordan and Lebanon, the PLO badly misplayed the hand it was dealt, overestimating the success of its marketing and its ability to coerce various components of the state. The implosion of both relationships would cost the movement a great deal.

*Jordan*

With its long border with Israel and majority Palestinian population (due to the refugee inflows of 1948 and 1967), Jordan was the obvious base for the PLO in the 1960s. King Hussein was extremely reluctant to host the movement, but under pressure from Egypt, he agreed. Even before the June War, the PLO leadership began to make requests which conflicted with Hussein's own project of strengthening the monarchy's authority in Jordan. Ahmed Shuqairy asked King Hussein to establish a PLO-led Palestinian force under the command of Palestinian officer Muhammad al-Sha'er,<sup>20</sup> as well as the right to tax Palestinian citizens of Jordan, and to hand out weapons in West Bank towns bordering Israel, all of which Hussein rejected. This convinced many in the PLO that his support for the movement was shallow at best, and that his real priority was to hang on to the West Bank and Jerusalem. The relationship further soured in 1966, when the IDF attacked the West Bank village of Samu'a, and the Jordanian government was blamed for failing to protect its inhabitants (Map 2.1).

But it was the twin shocks of the June War and the Battle of Karameh that shifted the relationship toward open conflict. In the days and weeks after Karameh, the various PLO factions received thousands of new volunteers, most of whom they had no time to either train or indoctrinate. The Jordanian army resented the praise heaped on the fedayeen, believing that they themselves deserved much of the credit for the victory.<sup>21</sup> Tensions soon rose when Israeli shelling of fedayeen installations near the border led the PLO to relocate most of its bases to the refugee camps in and around Amman. These soon became the sites of skirmishes between the army and the fedayeen.<sup>22</sup> At first, Arafat's election as chairman of the PLO seemed to promise an improvement in relations, given his pragmatic approach in his dealings with the government. Hussein, in a conciliatory gesture, allowed the PLO to set up positions near the Jordan River.<sup>23</sup> But the king's requests that fedayeen be tried in Jordanian, rather than PLO courts, and that they abstain from recruiting young men of military age (who would otherwise presumably go into the Jordanian army) were ignored,<sup>24</sup> and the relationship worsened still further.

This was compounded by the fact that Arafat's pragmatic approach was not shared by all PLO factions. By the beginning of 1970, the PFLP and DFLP were calling openly for the overthrow of the Hashemite regime. There were also frequent incidents of theft of and assault on



**Map 2.1** Jordan (Courtesy of the Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas, Austin)

government property; at one point a group of fedayeen made off with 42 cars belonging to the Ministry of Agriculture.<sup>25</sup> In another episode, fedayeen launched an attack on the central post office in downtown Amman.<sup>26</sup> Jordanian army officers were subject to harassment, and many began going to work in civilian clothes rather than their army uniforms.<sup>27</sup>

By the beginning of 1970, relations had reached a nadir. Throughout the winter and into the spring, sporadic clashes occurred between the army and the fedayeen. Although the king was publicly conciliatory, repeatedly backing down from confrontation, and in one instance personally intervening to prevent a column of tanks from attacking fedayeen positions in Amman, he also began quietly arming and training special units of the army composed mostly of those from Bedouin clans known to be loyal to the crown. Indeed, some Palestinians later suspected that the king's plan had always been to eventually lure the PLO into a confrontation.<sup>28</sup> After the PFLP hijacked three international aircraft, two of which were forced to land at Dawson's field outside of Amman, Hussein quietly raised the salaries of the military and placed loyalist generals in key positions.<sup>29</sup>

In sum, in the years before Black September, the PLO used coercive tactics to intimidate the Jordanian government and military with the aim of acquiring further leeway to use Jordan as a base of operations. For some factions, the ultimate goal was the removal of the monarchy entirely. This infuriated the army, alienated some potential supporters, and ultimately provoked a backlash.<sup>30</sup> Why, then, did the PLO leadership allow its forces to behave in such a counterproductive fashion? Arafat was nothing if not a survivor and was clearly aware that this strategy was problematic. The answer lies, at least partially, in the divisions within the organization. While "leadership" is sometimes posited as the most important predictor of insurgent success,<sup>31</sup> the internal divisions within the PLO were in many ways beyond Arafat's control or that of the various faction leaders.

### *Lebanon*

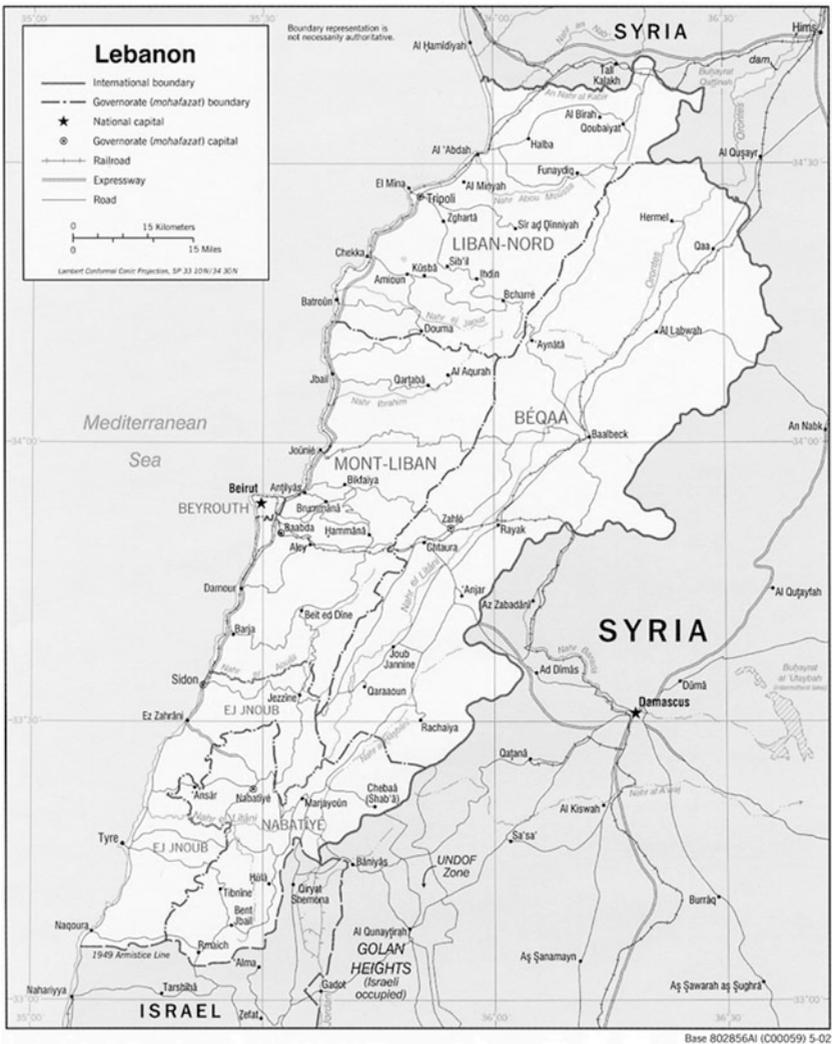
When the PLO leadership relocated to Lebanon, its approach to the Lebanese state was in some ways similar to the approach it had used in Jordan. Palestinian fighters had been active in southern Lebanon since the 1960s. It established bases along the Israeli-Lebanese border (so many, in fact, that the area became known as Fatahland) and began launching attacks against Israel, for which, as in Jordan, Israel retaliated. In December of 1968, two PFLP fighters attacked an El Al plane in Athens.<sup>32</sup> In retaliation, Israeli commandos blew up 13 Middle East Airlines planes and an oil tanker at Beirut's airport.

As in Jordan, the PLO's military activity generated conflict with some factions in the Lebanese government. In 1964, the first fedayeen were arrested for attempting to cross into Israel and in 1965, the first

Palestinian fighter died in a Lebanese prison, sparking popular protests in support of the PLO. Later that year, Arafat himself was arrested. In 1969, the Lebanese army moved to rein in the fedayeen, but the arrival of Al Saiqa troops from Syria and increased PLO pressure in other areas of the country, followed by Syrian forces on the border and pressure from other Arab states, forced the army to back down. This led to the signing of the Cairo Agreement, which gave the PLO greater freedom to operate and guaranteed access to its supply lines from Syria as long as it refrained from interfering in internal Lebanese affairs and maintained discipline among its forces.<sup>33</sup> But maintaining discipline became increasingly difficult after the PLO's defeat in Jordan, when 15,000–30,000 Palestinians, including thousands of armed fedayeen, flooded into Lebanon (Map 2.2).

Unlike the Jordanian regime, which was a relatively cohesive monarchy despite the split between East Bankers and West Bankers, the Lebanese state by the mid-1970s was intensely fragmented. Under the unwritten 1943 agreement known as the National Pact (*al meythaq al watani*), the presidency is reserved for a Maronite Christian, the Prime Ministry for a Sunni Muslim, the position of Speaker of the Parliament for a Shi'ite Muslim, with the ratio of seats in the parliament fixed at 6:5 favoring the Christian community. By the 1960s, almost all of the Lebanese political parties had armed wings and many politicians (most of whom were hereditary elites, or *zu'ama*,) were also militia leaders. The various Maronite groups were eventually more or less united (often less rather than more) under the banner of the Lebanese Forces. The Shi'ite party Amal (the subject of the next chapter) grew out of the Movement of the Dispossessed, a semi-leftist social-cum-political movement in the south. The Druze had the leftist Progressive Socialist Party (PSP). Other leftist and quasi-leftist parties included the communists, the Nasserites, and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP). This fragmentation makes it somewhat difficult to discuss PLO policy toward “the Lebanese state” as a whole; rather, it had separate relationships with the various factions that composed the state. This was obviously exacerbated when the civil war broke out in 1975. By the time it ended in 1990, having cost 150,000 lives, displaced a third of the population and destroyed much of the country's infrastructure and economy, every faction had fought almost every other faction. By the late 1980s, most had splintered and begun fighting among themselves.<sup>34</sup>

The PLO's relationship with the Christian political leadership veered between veiled distrust and overt hostility. The Christian parties were routinely referred to as “isolationist” and “defeatist” in speeches by Palestinian



**Map 2.2** Lebanon (Courtesy of the Perry-Castañeda Library, University of Texas, Austin)

leaders and on Palestinian radio, and at times as being in league with the “imperialists.”<sup>35</sup> For their part, the Maronite leadership’s attitude was shaped by several factors. One of these was alarm at the rise of pan-Arabism in the late 1950s, which led to a brief civil war over Lebanon’s position regarding the United Arab Republic in 1958. A second was the threat to Maronite political and economic dominance (historically justified by a demographic balance that by the 1950s had changed radically) posed by the mostly Sunni Palestinian refugees. Third, Fatah’s increasing control of the south was a sore point for many Christian politicians for reasons of both security and principle. From the point of view of this segment of the government, then, the PLO’s very presence in Lebanon was the result of coercion.<sup>36</sup>

These fears found expression in violence by Maronite militias (known as the Phalange) directed not only at the PLO itself but also toward unarmed Palestinian refugees. On April 13, 1975, Phalangist militiamen massacred 27 Palestinian civilians on a bus in the Ayn Rummaneh neighborhood of Beirut, marking the onset of the war. Throughout the war, Palestinian civilians were often the targets of violence at the hands of the Phalange. An Israeli veteran who served with some of the Christian militiamen (who some of the IDF soldiers called “aftershave soldiers” because of their habit of dousing themselves in Aqua Velva and dressing quite nattily even in combat) recalled a joke one of them told him: “‘Do you know what’s the difference between one Palestinian dead and all Palestinians dead?’ I didn’t know and he said like this: ‘One Palestinian dead is pollution, and all Palestinians dead is a solution.’ That I remember until today.”<sup>37</sup>

If the Maronite right were the PLO’s adversaries in Lebanon, in the leftist parties the Palestinians found enthusiastic allies. For some, this relationship was a matter of ideological commitment to the broadly leftist aims of most PLO factions. For others, it was about sympathy with the plight of the Palestinians, both as fellow Arabs and on general humanitarian grounds.<sup>38</sup> But there was also an instrumental component to this relationship. The Lebanese leftist parties had a predominantly Sunni, Druze, and in some cases, Shi’ite membership (though some, notably the communists and SSNP, also included many Christians). These communities were the most disadvantaged by the allocation of political power under the National Pact, which was increasingly viewed as demographically unjust. Therefore, for both ideological and communal reasons, many of the leaders of the Muslim left saw the PLO, a predominantly Muslim, leftist, armed force, as a source of leverage with which to push for reform of the National Pact. Not all Muslim

community leaders were wholeheartedly enthusiastic—both the Sunni and Shi'ite religious leadership were suspicious of the PLO's secularism and felt that it threatened their influence. But even the Mufti of Beirut is supposed to have once said “*Al filistiniun al jaysh al sunna*” or “The Palestinians are the army of the Sunnis.”<sup>39</sup>

If the Maronite right were the PLO's adversaries and the Muslim left its allies, it was the PLO's relationship with the Shi'ite components of the Lebanese state that underwent the most drastic change over time. Although the Shi'ite *zu'ama* tended to be quite conservative, during the 1960s and 1970s a new Shi'ite leadership emerged in the form of the Movement of the Dispossessed founded by Musa Sadr, and its associated militia, Amal. Like the left, Amal initially saw in the PLO a potential ally who might help reshape a political and economic status quo that disadvantaged the Shi'ites above all others. Early on, Fatah helped train Amal's fighters, and in the earliest stages of the war, Amal was part of the pro-PLO LNM.

Eventually, though, the two parted ways. As Amal grew larger, more powerful, and more established, it came to increasingly resent the PLO's control over the south. Amal and its followers would have greatly preferred that the Lebanese military, which was largely Shi'ite, and not the PLO or the Christian militias, be the dominant military power in Lebanon, and came to view the PLO's authority in the south as increasingly coercive. By 1982, the two parties were openly at loggerheads. While refraining from criticizing Palestinian resistance in principle—particularly as the end of resistance would have meant the acceptance of the permanent settlement of Palestinians in the south of Lebanon—Sadr did publicly condemn the consequences of its military activity in the south:

The launching of Palestinian operations from the south villages leads to Israeli reactions against those villages, which leads to resentment of the Palestinian resistance among the villagers, which leads to various developments on the ground, including clashes between the Amal movement and other parties. ... The launching of operations from the villages or the presence of bases in the villages frightens the villagers. It is natural for them to be afraid that Israel will someday retaliate and bomb their villages. Instead of being in the center of the village, a base should be far from the village, and not easily visible.<sup>40</sup>

But despite these objections, the PLO insisted on maintaining its positions in the south. This meant that the PLO's policy toward what was now the dominant force in the Shi'ite community had shifted toward coercion.

In sum, the fragmentation of the Lebanese state produced a corresponding variation in PLO policy toward its different components. Broadly speaking, it was hostile toward the Maronite right, enjoyed a close relationship with the left, and swung between the two in regard to the Shi'ites.<sup>41</sup>

### *The Consequences of the PLO's Foreign Policy*

The PLO's foreign policy had both positive and negative effects on the organization. Successful marketing is about the successful creation and manipulation of a narrative. For the PLO's marketing to both its regional allies and host states to be successful, it would have needed to convince them that its view of the regional conflict was correct and that alternative narratives were not. This would mean convincing these states that (a) Israel was the primary regional adversary; (b) the conflict was, as claimed by the PLO, principally about reasserting Palestinian national rights; and (c) the PLO was the correct organization to lead this particular fight.

The PLO was able to accomplish this at least in part. Its marketing was far more successful with regard to its regional patrons than it was in convincing its somewhat reluctant hosts (or, as will be discussed later in this chapter, many of the citizens of those states). While its proxy relationships with its sponsors were likewise somewhat successful, they were also, by their very nature, imperfect; while it was able to acquire weapons and funding from its sponsors, access to both at times proved to be unreliable, and the pressures of serving as a military proxy carried unfortunate consequences for PLO's internal cohesion. And perhaps most damagingly, the organization's coercive approach to the Jordanian regime and parts of the Lebanese government ultimately backfired. Nevertheless, the PLO's policy toward its regional patrons was ultimately more successful than unsuccessful, and certainly more so than its policy toward local civilians. For this reason, it can be considered a "quadrant D" organization, a transnational nonstate actor.

### *Regional Allies*

The outcome of the PLO's approach toward the Arab states was largely positive, generating both material and non-material support. The pressure to be seen as supportive of the Palestinian national cause did lead many of the regimes in the region to provide generous assistance to the PLO. (Indeed, a number of those interviewed for this book were acutely aware that the ideological power of the Palestinian cause was largely responsible for the support they received from the Arab states.)<sup>42</sup> The Gulf states primarily provided funding. During the Palestinian delegation's visit to Saudi Arabia in 1968, for instance, King Faisal agreed to set up popular committees to collect donations for the Palestinian cause (specifically for Fatah), which the government would then match, and to garnish 7 % of the wages of Palestinian workers in Saudi Arabia as taxes to be paid to the PLO.<sup>43</sup> The Syrians provided the most by way of direct military assistance, putting pressure on the Lebanese state on behalf of the PLO in 1969 and 1973, and intervening in Jordan in 1970. Libya provided both materiel and training, including Soviet-made tanks, mounted artillery, anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons, rocket-propelled grenades, and land mines.<sup>44</sup> They also provided training, as did Egypt.

The latter was a particularly important asset given the surge of inexperienced volunteers after Karameh and the depletion of Fatah's officer corps during the battle. Fatah attempted to set up its own cadre training school in 1968, and though this was ultimately unsuccessful, one class of officers was trained at its camp in Hama, Syria in 1968, and many went on to a second training course in Algeria. The lack of trained officers could be partially bypassed by recruiting experienced Palestinian soldiers who had fought in other Arab militaries; the PFLP in particular drew on disillusioned Syrian Nasserites.<sup>45</sup> But the foreign training camps, while by most accounts dismal places, were an important form of support nonetheless.

The Arab states also provided less tangible but equally crucial forms of support. Libya, Syria, and Iraq could be counted upon to provide regular rhetorical support in the Arab media. More subtly, the ideological power wielded by the fedayeen also bought the silence of regimes or individuals, particularly in the Gulf states, who might otherwise have been sympathetic to the Jordanian monarchy's position in the 1960s or the objections of Lebanon's conservatives in the 1970s. It was Nasser who pressured Jordan to allow the fedayeen increasing leeway in operating on Jordanian territory, though this

was tempered by his desire to prevent the PLO from becoming too independent. Similarly, Arab pressure induced the Lebanese government to sign the Cairo Agreement, securing the PLO's position in Lebanon. Finally, Arab support also helped the PLO gain international legitimacy; the recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in Rabat in 1974 helped to secure the backing of the non-aligned states for the vote granting the PLO its coveted observer status in the UN General Assembly.

But these relationships were also problematic. To begin with, there were resources they were unwilling to provide: most crucially, under no circumstances would either Syria or Egypt, both of which bordered Israel, provide a base of operations. As early as 1969, Hafez al Asad asked Chief of Staff Mustafa Tlas to "coordinate" with the PLO to ensure that no attacks were launched from Syrian territory<sup>46</sup> and Egypt was removed from the equation altogether when it signed the Camp David accords in 1978.

A more profound problem was the way in which these relationships encouraged schisms within the PLO and distracted the organization from pursuing its own objectives, rather than those of its sponsors, sometimes at the same time. A frequent complaint by the PLO members interviewed was that their Arab allies seemed less interested in helping the PLO achieve its goals than in using the movement to further their own interests.<sup>47</sup> At times, those interests included conflict with other powers in the region, putting the PLO in sometimes difficult positions. Openly siding with Iraq in the Iran–Iraq war poisoned the PLO's relationship with Iran and complicated its relationship with Amal, both of which had been important to the organization's own interests.<sup>48</sup> Worse, because Lebanon served as a theater in which the Middle East's regional rivalries were contested, those rivalries sometimes produced infighting between PLO factions backed by rival states; the virulent intra-Baath rivalry between Syria and Iraq, for instance, occasionally led to clashes between Syrian-allied and Iraqi-allied factions. Perhaps most disastrous was the schism over Syria's intervention in Lebanon in 1976, which pitted Syrian clients like Al Saiqa and the PLFP-GC against "loyalist" factions like Fatah and the PFLP. This created deep rifts in Palestinian politics which, despite the eventual rapprochement between the PLO and the Syrian regime, were never entirely resolved. One Fatah official interviewed for this book, when asked whether the PLO had made any mistakes, opined that not assassinating Ahmed Jibril, head of the PFLP-GC, was one of them. The resulting internal conflict hampered the PLO's preparation for its military confrontations, coordination, and decision-making during those confrontations and resilience afterward.

*The Host States*

The PLO's relationships with its ambivalent hosts, Jordan and Lebanon, yielded less positive results. The use of coercion against the Jordanian state did, at least initially, help the organization acquire a base of operations in Jordan. It was able to establish bases for training in various locations around Jordan, including the Jordan Valley, which were tremendously useful while they lasted. Coercion was also useful in procuring more minor military assets, like vehicles. Yet at the same time, this strategy prevented the PLO from accessing far more important non-material assets, like political backing, from the Jordanian government itself or, crucially, from the Jordanian military. To the contrary, by the spring of 1970, the army was champing at the bit to retaliate, and Hussein found himself facing intense resistance to his continued orders to stand down. In one episode, a tank battalion set off for Amman from the Jordan Valley and King Hussein and his cousin Sharif Zaid bin Shaker, commander of the Third Armored Division, had to personally intercept the tanks and order them to turn around.<sup>49</sup> Hussein himself described it as follows:

We had thousands of incidents of breaking the law, of attacking people. It was a very unruly state of affairs in the country and I continued to try. I went to Egypt. I called in the Arabs to help in any way they could—particularly as some of them were sponsoring some of these movements in one form or another—but without much success, and towards the end I felt I was losing control. In the last six months leading up to the crisis the army began to rebel. I had to spend most of my time running to those units that had left their positions and were going to the capital, or to some other part of Jordan, to sort out people who were attacking their families or attacking soldiers on leave. I think that the gamble was probably the army would fracture along Palestinian–Jordanian lines. That never happened, thank God.<sup>50</sup>

This last observation of Hussein's touches on a key point. The two greatest challenges for the PLO in Jordan were the Jordanian army's greater numbers and its superior arms. To survive Black September with their position in Jordan intact, the PLO would have needed to neutralize the army's superior numbers by provoking widespread defections among Palestinian officers and soldiers, of whom there were many. Defections by officers in a position to hand weapons over to the PLO would help it overcome the issue of superior arms. This was what the monarchy feared and what the PLO leadership expected.<sup>51</sup> But actual defections were far

fewer than expected or feared by either party. Had the PLO found a more inclusive way of framing itself, perhaps focusing on common Arab interests and acknowledging the role of the Jordanian military at Karameh, or reaching out more effectively to Palestinian officers, it might have been able to break the unity of the Jordanian military and successfully topple the monarchy. But by the summer of 1970, there was little chance of such an outcome. While some officers did defect, these were not sufficient to turn the tide in its favor.

After relocating to Lebanon, the PLO's differing policies toward different political factions produced, perhaps predictably, differing outcomes. Many rightist Christian politicians were increasingly frustrated at the PLO's use of Lebanon as a base against Israel over their objections, leading some to conclude that an alliance with Israel might prove useful. On the other hand, the PLO's approach to the leftist leadership, a combination of marketing along multiple axes and the provision of military backing, was far more successful, allowing the two to forge a strong alliance that provided the PLO with a range of material and political resources. Although the PLO did much of the heavy lifting, the LNM fought alongside it against the Lebanese Forces and other antagonists.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, this relationship also facilitated the PLO's use of West Beirut as a political headquarter and other areas as military bases. Finally, the split between the LNM and the Maronite parties over the issue of the PLO often left the government deadlocked, which was ultimately to the PLO's advantage. Even the Lebanese military fractured under the protracted sectarian pressure of the war. The first schism came in January of 1976, when Ahmed Khatib, a Sunni officer, mutinied and joined the LNM's forces, taking with him several thousand predominantly Sunni troops and much of the army's heavy weaponry. The second came when Major Saad Haddad formed his forces in the south into a separate command, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), which served as a proxy for the IDF in southern Lebanon.<sup>53</sup>

But as with the PLO's foreign sponsors, this relationship carried costs as well. Though the Lebanese left did not "sponsor" the PLO in the same way that Syria or Libya did, the costs of the relationship were similar in that involvement in Lebanese politics proved a dangerous distraction. Hamzeh al Bishtawi, a veteran member of the PLFP-GC in Bourj al Barajneh, said frankly that as a revolutionary organization, they should have stayed on the border to face the enemy, rather than coming into the cities.<sup>54</sup> Hamad M., a former PLA officer, explained:

One of the greatest mistakes was we had interfered a lot in internal life. ... We were made to interfere, because we were employed to interfere. ... By local leaders, by ethnic leaders, by group leaders ... by fighting leaders, by contesting leaders, and by the end of the game, we were the only persons to lose. It was one of the most bitter issues about the role of the Palestinians in Lebanon. ... Why do we have to fight with the Druze against the Maronites? Why? Why do we have to fight with some party against the other?

The PLO, said Hamad, learned to adapt itself to both domestic and foreign pressures, “but the price sometimes was too heavy to bear. We lost Tel el Zaatar, Qarantina, Hat al Ghrawameh, Jisr al Basha, [all sites of massacres of Palestinians] because of this.”<sup>55</sup>

Finally, the PLO’s initial policy toward the Shi’ite leadership, of marketing its cause in a way that resonated with Shi’ite political grievances and offering training to Amal in its early years, at first yielded positive results. In the PLO’s early days in Lebanon, Sadr’s political blessing greatly facilitated its operations in the south. Amal’s leaders were also in an excellent position to provide local intelligence, and some southerners fought alongside the Palestinians against Israel. As Amal’s influence grew, the alliance became increasingly beneficial at the national level.

But the PLO never succeeded in connecting the popular legitimacy of the Shi’ite leadership to support for the PLO in the way that it had with the left. The PLO became increasingly coercive in seeking to maintain its positions in the south over Amal’s objections, but as Amal grew stronger toward the end of the 1970s, it was difficult for the PLO to maintain its access either to the political support it needed from the new Shi’ite political elite or to the southern territory over which Amal exercised growing control. The open hostility that eventually developed between the two parties proved costly in 1982.

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS

What is perhaps most striking about the PLO’s approach toward civilians in Jordan and Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s is the degree of continuity in its policy. In both contexts, while the organization had a well-developed social service apparatus and engaged in vigorous political outreach toward the Palestinian refugee population, it was less interested or successful at reaching out to the Jordanian or Lebanese public (though there were exceptions in both places).

It is of course tempting to see the PLO's defeat in both contexts as stemming from their status as "outsiders" in Jordan and Lebanon, but this is far too simplistic. The sympathies of the Jordanian public, of both Palestinian and Jordanian origin, were very much "up for grabs" in the years leading up to Black September, and in Lebanon the internal political divisions meant that many Sunnis and even many Shi'ites were prepared to view themselves as having more in common with the Palestinians than with the Maronites. But this goodwill was eventually lost, in large part due to coercive behavior by individual fighters combined with an inability on the part of the leadership to connect with these audiences.

The position of the Palestinians themselves in both Jordan and Lebanon was determined in large part by local political divisions. In 1950, eager to cement his hold over the West Bank and Jerusalem, King Abdullah I extended Jordanian citizenship to the residents of the West Bank, including the refugees. But Palestinian–Jordanians still experienced significant economic and political discrimination, and divisions between East Bankers and West Bankers represented an important political cleavage, if not the only one. The divisions in Jordan were minor, however, in comparison with the ethno-communal and political fragmentation characterizing Lebanese politics. Moreover, Palestinians in Lebanon were far more marginalized politically than they were in Jordan and there was a far starker distinction between the Palestinian and Lebanese audiences in Lebanon than between Jordanian–Jordanians and Palestinian–Jordanians in Jordan. But despite the differences between the position of Palestinians in Jordan and Lebanon, the policy and behavior of the PLO in both states was quite similar.

### *Jordan*

In Jordan, there was broad public sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians in general, among both East and West Bankers. Support for the fedayeen in particular, however, changed over time and across communities. Neither the Palestinian–Jordanian nor Jordanian–Jordanian community was (or is) economically or politically homogenous. To begin with, Palestinians of different classes had (and have) very different relationships with the Jordanian state. In addition to the 1949 law granting Jordanian citizenship to West Bank residents, Abdullah I sought to incorporate the Palestinian middle class, with their civil and commercial expertise, into the economic and social life of the country.<sup>56</sup> By the 1960s, many (though far from all) saw no conflict between holding Jordanian citizenship and

maintaining a Palestinian identity and commitment to the liberation of Palestine.<sup>57</sup> This was particularly true for those who believed, after 1967, that Hussein's plans to negotiate with Israel for the West Bank represented the best chance to regain the lost territory.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, in Jordan, those of West Bank and East Bank origin were not as starkly segregated as they were in Lebanon. This meant that policies meant to either appeal to or intimidate Palestinian–Jordanians or East Bankers often ended up impacting members of both communities, with somewhat unpredictable consequences for the PLO.

But there are some features of the Palestinian experience in Jordan that differ from the (general) experience of East Bankers. It is undeniable, for instance, that Palestinians as a group faced considerable political discrimination. Prior to 1967, the West Bank lagged behind the East Bank in terms of economic development. Representation in the *Majlis al Nawab* (the parliament) was weighted in favor of East Bankers, and as only land-owners had suffrage in the early days of the kingdom, refugees were disproportionately disenfranchised.

The situation was exacerbated by the arrival of over 300,000 new Palestinian refugees in 1967 (many of whom had previously been displaced in 1948) from the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>59</sup> Most found themselves in the already crowded refugee camps. Unlike the Palestinian upper class who had prospered in the last 20 years and who were involved in the national postwar recovery effort after the June War, those in the refugee camps remained alienated and disenfranchised.<sup>60</sup>

Nor was the “Jordanian–Jordanian” population homogeneous. The most obvious division was between the northern towns of Irbid, Jerash, and Salt, and the rural and semi-nomadic Bedouin tribes of the southern and eastern deserts. The former had more in common culturally (and even linguistically) with the northern Palestinian cities of Nablus, Haifa, and Jaffa than they did with southern Jordanian Bedouin.

There were also political divisions. Some East Bankers on the left supported the fedayeen for ideological reasons, the most notable example being DFLP leader Nayef Hawatmeh, whose family came from Salt. King Hussein's suspension of many political freedoms in 1957 and 1963, and bans on several opposition parties in 1957 and 1960, outraged both East Banker and Palestinian progressives. In the aftermath of Karameh, members of the banned parties formed a coalition which publicly declared sympathy with the fedayeen.<sup>61</sup> By March 1970, leftist political and community leaders of both Palestinian and Jordanian origin had organized as

the “National Front” in alliance with the fedayeen against the king and his supporters.<sup>62</sup> In short, communal divisions in Jordan, while significant, were far blurrier than those in Lebanon, and there were a number of significant communal, economic, and geographic cleavages which could have been exploited to improve the PLO’s position.

The PLO’s effectiveness in exploiting those potential footholds in public opinion was mixed at best. The marketing of the overall PLO political project to civilians in Jordan, particularly those of Palestinian origin, were based on two interwoven narratives: The first presented the fedayeen as the standard bearers of Arab honor and as the best chance for the realization of Palestinian national aspirations in the aftermath of the defeat in 1967, an approach whose effectiveness greatly increased after the Battle of Karameh, and the second on the reframing of Palestinian identity itself. In the 1950s and 1960s (and even today), this was heavily shaped by the experience and memory of the *nakba*. In the narrative offered by the Arab nationalists, Palestinians themselves were cast in the role of victims in need of rescue by the Arab states. But the PLO offered a new alternative, in which Palestinian-ness was reframed as a source of pride, both in the exploits of the fedayeen and in Palestinian heritage more broadly, and as an inspiration for resistance, characterized by a connection to the land and aspirations to return. It was during this period that the black and white kuffiyeh was adopted as a symbol of Palestinian resistance by faction leaders like Arafat (although the use of the kuffiyeh as a resistance symbol has its roots in the 1936 Arab Revolt). The PLO and its member organizations across the region encouraged the new identification of Palestinian-ness with resistance rather than victimhood (particularly because, within this narrative, the fedayeen themselves represented the difference between the two). Fatah Radio played a major part, playing martial songs that glorified armed resistance, the guerrilla and the Kalashnikov. It was also around this time that the practice of creating posters of pictures of recent martyrs became common, a means both of promoting the group’s prowess in and of itself and of competing with other factions for glory and recruits.<sup>63</sup>

The idea of the PLO as the restorer of Palestinian dignity is closely tied to the second means by which the PLO reached out to Palestinian civilians: service provision, through a broad network of quasi-governmental institutions. This was particularly true in the Palestinian refugee camps, where access to Jordanian government services was more difficult.<sup>64</sup> Though UNRWA was (and is) charged with the protection of and provision for all

Palestinian refugees, there remained space for services to be provided or augmented by the various factions. George Habash, founder of the PLFP, was originally a doctor and ran a free clinic in the early 1950s, though by 1957 he was involved in politics full time.<sup>65</sup> The PLO itself operated schools, clinics, orphanages for the children of fallen fedayeen, vocational training centers, and a Palestinian Red Crescent was established alongside the Jordanian Red Crescent. While these services were less developed during this period than they would become later on in Lebanon and Syria, they were still an important means for the PLO of establishing legitimacy in the eyes of the camp residents.<sup>66</sup>

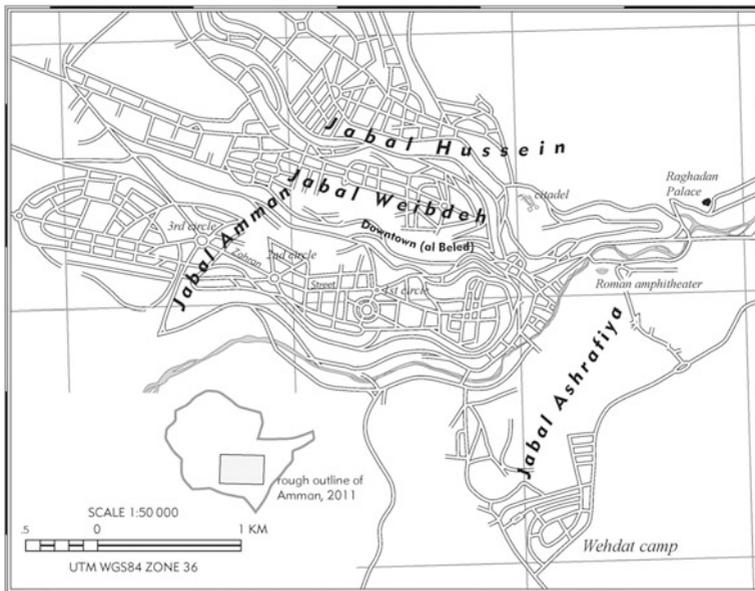
If some East Bankers might have been receptive to the PLO's marketing approach, their use of service provision more or less missed this community entirely. In contrast with the PLO's establishment of what amounted to a state within a state in the Palestinian neighborhoods of Amman, Irbid, and Zarqa, there was far less by way of service provision to the southern towns and rural areas inhabited primarily by people who had lived in Jordan before 1948, much less to the Bedouin population. Fatah did establish a small southern command in addition to the larger central and northern commands, and to assuage the mistrust of the local Bedouin communities, Fatah offered free medical services and in some cases backing to specific clans in their disputes with their historical rivals. The PLA even went so far as to install a Bedouin sheikh as "political leader" of the southern sector. But overall, this policy was limited, directed at the weaker, smaller tribes rather than the large powerful families who made up the backbone of the armed forces.<sup>68</sup>

What would ultimately prove most damaging to the PLO's position in Jordan was their use of coercion. As the fedayeen became more confident in their position in Jordan, they behaved increasingly coercively toward the civilian population. While Palestinians certainly experienced this as well, the PLO's coercive behavior was particularly directed at those living in large cities, outside the refugee camps. As Abu Jihad of the PFLP-GC recounted:

Now I can say that it was bad, because a lot of Palestinian organizations arrest people, steal from people. Jordanian security, Jordanian army, Jordanian forces push people to be angry [with the] Palestinian movement. We feel at that time that we are the real authority in Jordan. Everywhere, in Amman, Irbid, the [Jordan] valley, everywhere the Palestinian movement was the authority, not the Jordanian authority.<sup>69</sup>

Control over Amman itself was divided. The city is laid out across multiple hills, with neighborhoods west of the downtown core (the *beled*) identified by their proximity to a series of traffic circles along the main east–west artery (see Map 2.3). First Circle is closest to the city center, with the numbers increasing to the west. The areas east of the beled, such as Hai Nazal, Jabal Nasser, Ashrafiyeh, and Jabal Hussein, were heavily Palestinian and were certainly controlled by, and likely sympathetic to, the PLO. The area between the beled and Second Circle (Jabal Amman) was controlled by the fedayeen, with checkpoints at First and Second Circles; it is unclear where the sympathies of the inhabitants lay. The downtown commercial center was also controlled by the fedayeen, though, again, it is unclear what the business community in the beled thought. The areas from Third Circle westward remained under the control of the Jordanian security forces.<sup>70</sup>

As their control over the city expanded, abuses by the fedayeen increased. Teenaged boys in balaclavas manned checkpoints and drove through the



**Map 2.3** Amman, 1971. (After Jordan Tourism Authority, 1971, courtesy of the Library of Congress. Drafted by Patrick Carr)<sup>67</sup>

city with guns pointing out of the car windows or simply slung over their arms. They were widely accused of casual extortion, walking armed into hotel bars or restaurants and demanding that the patrons “donate” to the cause.<sup>71</sup> The attacks on “official” targets, like the downtown post office, must also have alienated the large swath of the Jordanian–Jordanian (and Palestinian–Jordanian) population who had friends or relatives in the civil service, the largest employer in the country.<sup>72</sup>

More serious charges included kidnapping, torture, and execution of suspected collaborators.<sup>73</sup> A study published by the Jordanian ministry of defense in 1970 attributed 43,397 crimes to fedayeen, including rape, illegal arrest, theft, illegal entry into homes, murder, kidnapping, assault on civilians, and forgery. Given its source, this figure is undoubtedly exaggerated, but even rumors of these events would have provoked resentment and anger from Ammanis (as they were no doubt intended to).<sup>74</sup> Former fedayeen interviewed acknowledged that there was some bad behavior on the part of the Palestinian fighters in Amman as well as other cities like Zarqa and Irbid, such as “using arms, [undisciplined] behavior, blaspheming, not paying tribute to the people’s beliefs, especially in Ramadan ... for example, if you [were] smoking in Ramadan in the street, people would not accept it, you are defying their beliefs, or if you drink liquor, arak. There were many things like that.”<sup>75</sup> But several former fighters reported that while some fedayeen had engaged in bad behavior, the worst abuses were in fact the work of mukhaberat (secret police) infiltrators, designed to create a rift between the fedayeen and the civilian population and to discredit them in the eyes of the citizens of other Arab states.<sup>76</sup> Given the general practices of the Jordanian secret police, this is very credible. The Kataeb al Nasir (the Victory Battalions), a faction responsible for many of the clashes with the security forces, were probably actually government provocateurs.<sup>77</sup>

But even if the mukhaberat was responsible for many of the worst abuses, the Palestinian factions themselves were not blameless, as acknowledged by many of those interviewed. Some of this was unintentional, the result of the sudden influx of untrained recruits after 1968, who received little formal training due to a shortage of officers after 1967. But other incidents, like the establishment of checkpoints or seizure of territory in Irbid, were part of a larger effort to extend Palestinian control over (rather than merely access to) key territory as well as to establish the PLO’s authority at the expense of that of the Jordanian state. The extortion described above was both a form of intimidation

by badly trained recruits and a means of obtaining funds. This stands in contrast with the policy pursued in the refugee camps and poorer Palestinian neighborhoods, as Abu Iyad acknowledges:

Our own behavior wasn't terribly consistent either. Although we tried to appeal to the entire population without regard to national origin, we tended to neglect the Jordanians in favor of the Palestinians. Proud of their force and exploits, the fedayeen often displayed a sense of superiority, sometimes even arrogance, without taking into consideration the sensibilities or interests of the native Jordanians.<sup>78</sup>

### *Lebanon*

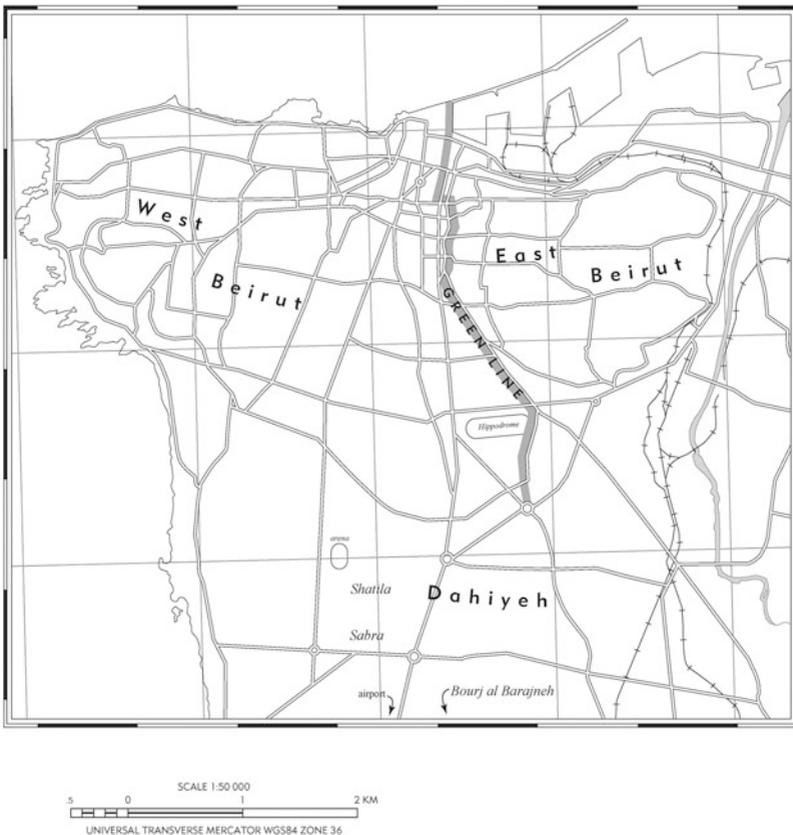
The domestic audiences the PLO faced in Lebanon were very different from those in Jordan. As previously described, Lebanon's political system distributed political power based on a complex set of ethnic power-sharing arrangements known as the National Pact. After the arrival of the (predominantly Sunni Muslim) Palestinian refugees in 1948, many Christian politicians feared that granting them citizenship would shift the country's demographic balance, which by 1948 was already tipping away from the Christians. Therefore, while Palestinians in Jordan received citizenship in the context of Abdullah I's attempt to solidify control of the West Bank, in Lebanon, Palestinians were denied citizenship and systematically excluded from Lebanon's political and economic life, through restrictions on where they could live, work, and travel.<sup>79</sup> This separation meant that PLO's presence and behavior was perceived and experienced very differently by members of the Palestinian and Lebanese publics.

#### *The Lebanese Public*

As in Jordan, in the late 1960s the Lebanese population was broadly sympathetic to the Palestinian national project; a 1969 poll by al-Nahar put popular sympathy at 80 %. However, there was also a widespread sense that Lebanese sovereignty had to be preserved. When President Charles Helou stated that Lebanon must "recognize our obligations toward the Palestinian struggle and support it, but only within the limits of our capabilities, which we alone are entitled to determine in light of the imperatives of our national sovereignty and security," Al-Nahar found that "49.5 % fully supported Helou's message, 20.5 % were supportive, but with reservations, 19.8 % were against, and 10.3 % had no opinion."<sup>80</sup>

On a day-to-day level, Lebanese civilians in different parts of the country had different experiences of the PLO's presence, as did Palestinian refugees. Though the PLO did not control territory in East Beirut, its relationship with the Christian community there and on Mount Lebanon was overtly hostile. The fighting between the Phalange and the LNM/PLO alliance was characterized by massacres on both sides (Map 2.4).

In West Beirut, which the PLO used as a base for its political operations with the blessing of its allies in the LNM, the PLO used a mixed strategy, which appeared to be largely ad hoc. Many in the area were



Map 2.4 Beirut, 1982 (Drafted by Patrick Carr)<sup>81</sup>

generally sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians and to the PLO's larger project, the promotion of which was aided by its LNM allies, who viewed Sunni interests in Lebanon through a leftist, pan-Arabist lens. On the other hand, the conservative Islamic leadership, who felt their position was threatened by the ascendance of the left in internal Sunni politics, provided a powerful counterweight. The provision of services was more limited; though the PLO did sometimes intervene to ensure that services were available (for instance, connecting the area to the power station at Jiye after it was cut off from the East in the summer of 1976),<sup>82</sup> the area was mostly looked after either by the Beirut municipality or by residents themselves.<sup>83</sup>

That said, the residents of West Beirut also suffered a great deal of the violence that accompanied the escalation of the civil war in the early 1980s. There were frequent clashes between the factions of the LNM, such as the Nasserites and the SSNP, as well as between individual Palestinian factions.<sup>84</sup> One particularly egregious example occurred in 1978 when the PFLP-GC drove a truck packed with explosives into a seven-story apartment building, one floor of which contained the offices of a rival faction, producing 200 civilian casualties.<sup>85</sup>

Looting and theft were also serious problems. Even PSP leader Kamal Jumblatt, a great supporter of the Palestinians, stated to his biographer:

We had reason to regret the chaos created by the Palestinians and nearly all the other parties, the tendency to unbridled self-indulgence and looting ... as far as public and private property was concerned, they often behaved like migrating nomads or Bohemians. They had been perverted by ideology and the poor education they must have received from their families and schools. Stealing a car was known as "pulling a car." Stealing a house or a carpet was called "requisitioning." The problem with poorly understood left ideologies is that they can provide an excuse for just about every one of man's cardinal sins.<sup>86</sup>

Of course, not all of the violence experienced by the residents of West Beirut during this period was the fault of the PLO; a great deal of it was initiated by its adversaries, including much of the worst violence directed against civilians. Some of the behavior of its allies was equally problematic; with Jumblatt's assassination in 1977, the LNM (at least temporarily) lost its center of gravity, and the PLO took over much of the supervision of the various Lebanese militias in West Beirut. Given Fatah's relatively free hand

in arming these groups, neighborhood militias (and checkpoints) proliferated. Some exploited the breakdown of authority to engage in “theft, extortion and smuggling.”<sup>87</sup> Others were more civic-minded and took charge of maintaining the infrastructure in their areas as best they could.

Outside of Beirut, the PLO’s relationships with civilians in the south were of particular importance. If the former provided valuable office space, the latter was crucial territory from which to launch attacks against Israel. Given that Shi’ite political mobilization tended to occur within a generally progressive framework, at least early on, Shi’ites were inclined to be sympathetic to the PLO and to the domestic Lebanese political project (reform of the National Pact) espoused by the LNM.

But the PLO proved unable to produce the sort of normative shift whereby support for the PLO’s (or LNM’s) political project became a component of group identity for Shi’ites in southern Lebanon. In the 1960s and 1970s, this was not outside the realm of possibility. There is no inherent reason why Shi’ite, rather than Arab, or pan-Muslim, identity, should have been prioritized as a basis for political mobilization—after all, for decades it had not been. Moreover, identity politics did not function in the same way across all Lebanese communities. Regional ethnic politics did not prevent a PLO alliance with the Druze-dominated PSP, for instance, despite the fact that Druze citizens of Israel are drafted into the IDF. In other words, contrary to the primordialist assumption that certain identities are permanently and inherently salient in fixed and limited ways, the political implications of ethnic identity are highly contingent. There was certainly space for the PLO to form the sort of relationship with the Shi’ites of south Lebanon that they formed with Sunnis and Druze.

That this failed to happen was in large part a result of the coercive behavior of the PLO itself. The PLO leadership used force to overcome objections to its behavior and authority in Tyre, Sidon, Nabatiyeh, and other cities. Troops were forcibly billeted with local families,<sup>88</sup> and news reports filed after the PLO had departed included accounts of PLO fighters seizing private homes and farms for use as bases, as well as stealing jewelry and electronics during house-to-house searches “for American spies.” The theft of cars was also common; one woman explained “If you pay 7000 pounds, you will get your car back. If you pay 14,000, you will get somebody else’s.”<sup>89</sup> Misbehavior by fedayeen was particularly frustrating to local officials and police officers; behavior such as driving a tank into a small village in order to buy a pack of cigarettes was a constant reminder that they had lost the ability to enforce the law.<sup>90</sup>

Moreover, as in Jordan, the PLO's attacks against Israeli targets produced punishing retaliatory strikes which forced many residents of the south to flee northwards. Those who stayed behind were unable to cultivate their land because of the cross fire. The brief 1978 invasion dubbed Operation Litani produced 220,000 refugees, destroyed 6 villages, and damaged 82, further souring public opinion on the PLO which was blamed by many for the invasion. By the spring of 1982, a combination of Israeli attacks, PLO operations, and open fighting between the PLO and Amal had resulted in the depopulation and eventual seizure of several villages by members of the PLO-allied Joint Forces. In response, the Higher Shi'ite Council spoke out against the PLO's actions:

The Higher Islamic Shi'ite Council ... urgently asks all responsible for this grave aggression in the Palestinian resistance and the Nationalist Movement to stop the shelling of the villages immediately to pull the gunmen out of them and to withdraw the weapons directed at them. ... The people of southern Lebanon, who have been mobilizing themselves to confront Israeli aggression and who have been preparing themselves to receive Israeli bullets, are now facing Arab bullets, which are supposed to be directed at Israel, and are being displaced from their homes not by Israelis but by fellow Arabs.<sup>91</sup>

The accusation that Palestinian guns which should be aimed at Israel were now being aimed at the residents of the south represents a repudiation not only of the idea that support for "resistance" meant support for the PLO and its presence in south Lebanon but also of the PLO's claim to the mantle of resistance at all. It would be a mistake to interpret this as sympathy for Israel or for Israeli aims; it was, after all, Israeli fire that was driving residents of the south from their homes. Rather, the reaction of the Shi'ite leadership demonstrates that frustration with the PLO's behavior was significant enough to overcome previous sympathy for its aims.

The PLO leadership was aware of the effect the bad behavior of its fighters was having on its relationship with the Lebanese public, and it did take steps to try to curb these abuses. As early as 1976, the Palestinian Revolution Command and the LNM issued a joint statement describing steps to end "all acts of looting, chaos and kidnapping and to punish everyone who violates the cease-fire decisions or commits any act of disorder or sabotage." These included the withdrawal of all "armed civilians" from the streets, a ban on attacks on Lebanese army positions as well as "private and public establishments," the handing over of all stolen property to the PLO-LNM higher military committee, and the establishment of a field court to try viola-

tors. Security in West Beirut was declared the responsibility of the Palestine Liberation Army.<sup>92</sup> To make the point that the new anti-looting policy was serious, 38 carloads of stolen goods were confiscated and the cars carrying them burned.<sup>93</sup> Similar measures were suggested following clashes in Sidon in 1979.<sup>94</sup> But curbs on abusive behavior proved difficult to enforce. Most factions wished to preserve their autonomy, and the central PLO leadership was unwilling to risk alienating them over this issue. Even when disciplinary action was taken, prison terms were usually short and Arafat himself was reluctant to enforce death sentences.<sup>95</sup>

The relationship with the communities of the south was not uniformly negative; indeed, fighters who behaved exceptionally badly were probably a minority, if an extremely noticeable one. Many PLO factions did try to build good relations with civilians in the area. Some Palestinian leaders described how the fighters from their factions would help villagers with the olive harvest. (This was especially true of the PFLP.)<sup>96</sup> Other actions were more calculated, such as purchasing the harvests of farmers whose crops were destroyed or who couldn't get them to the market, and offering compensation to people whose homes had been destroyed.<sup>97</sup> The PLO Social Affairs Institution paid a stipend to Lebanese and Palestinian families who lost family members due to "hostile action."<sup>98</sup> Finally, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) offered free treatment to tens of thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians who had been injured in Phalangist or IDF attacks in the areas under its control and free treatment to all Lebanese civilians in the border zone (in direct competition with the Israeli policy of doing the same).<sup>99</sup> While these policies were similar to those later put in place with great success by Hizbullah (and to the PLO's own provision of social services in the Palestinian refugee camps), they were ultimately less successful in improving the PLO's reputation for the simple reason that they likely would not have been necessary absent the havoc wrecked by the PLO's military activity. There is a difference between proactive provision of services before the outbreak of a conflict and those which are reactive and only provided in the context of that conflict. The provision of the second is not a substitute for the first.

### *The Palestinian Public*

If in Jordan the PLO had tried to establish its authority over the Palestinian refugee camps, in Lebanon it essentially began the construction of a state in exile. The PLO's various sub-factions engaged in an active process of

trying to market their political project to the Palestinian civilian community. Today, the refugee camps in Lebanon are plastered with posters of the various factions, some more recent, some decades old. Between the political posters, pictures of martyrs, and the graffiti, the walls of Lebanon's camps serve as a vivid illustration of the complexity of Palestinian politics. In the 1970s, most of the larger factions had their own newspapers and regularly produced pamphlets and manifestos detailing their political programs and military exploits. They also held (and hold) parades, anniversary celebrations, and lectures as a means of sharing their message with the wider public. Many have youth groups as well. Despite the difficult economic and security situation, the camps in Lebanon were and are home to a robust civil society.

The PLO was highly successful at creating an internalized norm of politicization and support for the organization within the community. Young men in particular experienced pressure to join a faction, which though only briefly codified into law remained strong. Resentment at the position of the Palestinian people generally and in Lebanon in particular certainly provided some motivation.

However, rather puzzlingly, the question of why an individual would choose to support or join one specific faction did not seem particularly important to many of the PLO officers interviewed for this book. Generalized resentment might explain why an individual would become radicalized, but not why she or he would choose one faction over another. Some (notably the DFLP) said that their supporters followed them because of their focus on the needs of the community.<sup>100</sup> Others cited their emphasis on resistance against Israel (like Fatah al Intifada)<sup>101</sup> or pragmatic nationalism (Fatah and Fatah al Intifada).<sup>102</sup> The affiliations of friends and family also play a role, although it is noteworthy that different political affiliations within the same family are more common in Palestinian families than Lebanese, or indeed in most of the Arab world.<sup>103</sup> Still others said that it came down to personal conviction, although specific doctrine appears to have played a less of a role than character and behavior. One former fighter with the PFLP recounted that when he joined the PFLP at 17, he didn't know much about Marxism and only a few quotes from Mao. As a Palestinian nationalist, he was actually opposed to communism because of the USSR's early support for Israel, but he chose to join the PLFP anyway because he trusted and admired its leaders. He was impressed with George Habash because of the free clinic he

ran in the Jabal Hussein refugee camp in Amman, and respected the Palestinian Marxists in general because of their efforts against the government in Jordan.<sup>104</sup>

The PLO's second major outreach strategy in the refugee camps was the provision of financial support and social services. Some of this was more political than material. When control of the camps shifted from the *Deuxième Bureau* (Lebanon's secret police, whose policing of the camps had been rather draconian)<sup>105</sup> to the PLO after the 1969 Cairo Agreement, the lot of those inside improved significantly. The PLO also did a great deal to improve the conditions of Palestinian workers, as well as gaining them access to health care and education, and increasing the freedom of movement for Palestinians in Lebanon.

By the mid-1970s, the range of services offered by the PLO had broadened, changing the relationship it had with Palestinian civilians. The PLO's financial position had improved, as it began to diversify its financial holdings, investing in industries from banking to mining in Africa to tourism. The oil boom generated an additional influx of cash. This transformed the PLO from a recipient of civilian donations to a major provider of aid.<sup>106</sup> Even those who were somehow able to work in well-paid professions such as medicine and engineering still received, rather than contributed money to, the PLO. Throughout the 1970s, the organization increasingly assumed the functions of a welfare state for Palestinians in Lebanon. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (an organ of the PLO) opened its first clinic in Lebanon in 1969. By 1982, it was operating ten hospitals and 30 clinics in the refugee camps, two physiotherapy centers, a residential rehabilitation center, an orthopedic workshop, a nursing school, and many pharmacies. An additional 47 clinics were run by other Palestinian factions, which also ran youth centers, sports leagues, and kindergartens. Medical care for the needy was paid for by PLO funds. Lebanese laws banning Palestinians from many forms of employment meant that the PLO became a (if not the) major employer of Palestinians in Lebanon. This effect was magnified as the PLO bureaucracy expanded enormously in the 1970s, employing 8000 people and managing a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars. SAMED (the Palestinian Martyrs Works Society) operated 46 factories and workshops in Lebanon, employing 5000 people, with earnings reported at 40 million dollars.<sup>107</sup> The PLO had shifted from being the recipient of popular support to the distributor of patronage.

*Unexpected Consequences: The Impact of the PLO's Domestic Policies*

The consequences of the PLO's domestic policies were uneven at best, and ultimately did not position the organization to withstand the challenges it experienced in its host states. As stated in Chap. 1, successful marketing means that the targets of that marketing come to believe three things: that the organization's adversary is their own primary adversary, that the organization's interpretation of the conflict is the correct one, and that it is the legitimate representative of the community in both articulating and attempting to rectify this grievance. For its marketing to succeed in Lebanon, PLO would have needed these diverse audiences to recognize Israel as an adversary (and preferably as *the* adversary), accept the PLO's narrative regarding the conflict with Israel and the centrality of the Palestinian cause to Arab politics, and, perhaps most importantly, convince people that it was the legitimate party to prosecute a (costly) war to rectify these grievances. By this metric, the PLO's marketing to the Jordanian, Lebanese, and Palestinian publics was only partially successful at best. Its provision of social services was more effective in drawing Palestinians in Jordan and Lebanon into its orbit, but also had unexpected consequences for the movement's relationship with its most important constituency. And in the end, its use of coercion in both Lebanon and Jordan proved disastrous.

For Palestinians living in the refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon, the PLO's approach was very successful. In Jordan, the framing of the fedayeen as the bearers of Arab and Palestinian pride after Karamah drew many closer to the movement and helped increase its legitimacy and political influence. It even generated small amounts of (largely symbolic) financial support. Oraib Rantawi recalls:

I remember I was a kid, when some people came to the camps, collecting half JD, 15 piaster, something like that ... some rich people also, support from the Palestinian people, and women even donate their jewelry. At that time it was a very, very inspiring movement, very, very strong relationship between the organization and the people.<sup>108</sup>

It also helped them gain new recruits. As noted above, after the Battle of Karamah, the Palestinian factions experienced a surge of volunteers. The majority (roughly two-thirds) joined up with Fatah, followed by the

PFLP (whose main camp could train at most a quarter of its volunteers). Even though two-thirds of the trainees dropped out in the first weeks of training, by June the number of fighters had reached 3000, an increase of 300 %.<sup>109</sup>

But this turned out to be a mixed blessing; most of the new fighters had little or no military experience, and the sudden influx was well beyond the factions' absorptive capacity. It therefore contributed to what would prove to be the PLO's largest problem, the coercive behavior of its fighters toward other segments of the Jordanian (and Lebanese) civilian populations. Despite broad sympathy in Jordan for the organization's goals and for the Palestinian people (a majority of Jordanians being of Palestinian origin), the PLO's coercive tactics in Amman and elsewhere alienated the population. Abu Odeh suggests that by February 1970, much of the population, including the Palestinian middle class, had grown tired of the conduct of some of the fedayeen.<sup>110</sup> This ultimately cost the PLO the legitimacy and political support that might have tipped the scales in their favor later on. Overwhelming support from the civilian community might have translated into sufficient support among members of the armed forces that a schism in the army or at least widespread defections could have been provoked. Instead, the fedayeen's behavior gave the king and his army domestic political cover to crack down.

In Lebanon, the PLO repeated the mistakes it had made in Jordan. In the short term, the PLO's use of coercion against Lebanese civilians worked as it was supposed to; forcible billeting provided housing for soldiers, and they were certainly able to obtain space for bases even without the consent of the area's civilians. The opportunity to loot helped recruit and pay soldiers, although the objects looted (carpets, jewelry, and so forth) weren't always particularly useful to the PLO war effort.

Ultimately, though, this approach backfired, for two reasons: First, coercion did not provide the PLO with the non-material resources it needed from civilians, and second, the access it did provide to material resources proved less than durable. The PLO was able to acquire little by way of political support or legitimacy from civilians in the south. Local resentment also made it harder for the PLO to retain access to territory; after Operation Litani, some villages went so far as to create local militias to prevent the reestablishment of PLO positions on their land.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, it contributed to the growing rift between Amal and the PLO. While the PLO was able to acquire some material resources by coercion, its access to others was temporary at best.

Perhaps more interesting is the contrast between the relationship that the PLO of the 1960s had with its civilian constituency compared with that of the PLO of the 1970s. The PLO's growing network of social service institutions seems to have had both positive and negative effects. If service provision is most effective when it serves as evidence of the movement's qualifications to govern, and least effective when it evolves into a top-down patronage network, in the PLO's case, its provision of services was a combination of both. While it did draw Palestinian refugees into the movement's orbit, some officers were disquieted by the change in their relationship with civilians, feeling that this was a reversal from the model of popular support prescribed by the classic guerrilla tacticians.<sup>112</sup> They viewed those who were receiving regular support or employment from the PLO in Beirut as *less* committed than supporters from the early, poorer days: "You have to differentiate between those who are willing to give everything, and those who are waiting, really, [for] some benefits. Therefore, the issue of corruption within the PLO start [ed] to become a major issue, affect[ing] every part of the life of the Palestinians there."<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, the development of patronage networks meant that loyalty to one's superiors was rewarded over competence and commitment to the movement's detriment.

This change also influenced the kinds of recruits the PLO was able to attract. Many did join for ideological reasons; the officers interviewed for this project all expressed a genuine commitment to the cause the PLO purported to represent and to the betterment of their fellow Palestinians. Others saw in the PLO a chance to regain some of the dignity lost due to the position of Palestinians in Lebanon. But other fighters were simply looking for a regular salary (the PLO being the only option in this regard for many refugees) or in some cases to the chance to loot. These characteristics may partly explain the poor performance of some units in 1982.<sup>114</sup>

This can perhaps be read as a variation on Weinstein's argument. Rather than attracting more brutal combatants, the influx of cash instead meant that the PLO attracted, in the aggregate, lazier fighters, less effective bureaucrats, and less committed civilian supporters. It also echoes the predictions of much of the literature on patrimonialism and the rentier state, which was essentially what the PLO had become.<sup>115</sup> The PLO created a state apparatus that was largely unaccountable to the public and therefore vulnerable to corruption and alienation from the public. In this, it closely resembled its various state patrons. But as a government permanently in exile, the PLO faced an additional barrier to its legitimacy, which in the

long run would have serious consequences for its position in the West Bank and Gaza. And yet, when compared with Hizbullah, the PLO spent comparatively little on its civilian constituency. This suggests that if the money being spent changed the relationship between the PLO and its civilian supporters in terms of the kind of recruits it was getting, the precise nature of that change is perhaps traceable less to the money itself, and more to the perceptions of the organization on the part of those receiving it.

## OUTCOMES

In both Jordan and Lebanon, the PLO's flawed relationships with the local civilian population, the political enemies they'd made in both contexts, and the internal fragmentation caused by the organization's relationships with its external sponsors meant that the organization proved ill-prepared to either resist militarily or recover politically from the counterinsurgent campaigns directed against it. In both contexts, the organization was unable to leverage those advantages it did have, and was forced to withdraw, first from Jordan to Lebanon and then from Lebanon to Tunisia.

### *Black September*

The first signs that a major conflict was about to erupt in Jordan came on September 15, 1970, when the fedayeen declared the establishment of a "liberated zone" in Irbid. That evening, King Hussein secretly informed the USA that he intended to take steps to "establish law and order," and the following day, he dismissed his civilian Cabinet in favor of a military government. Similarly, Arafat put all Palestinian forces on full combat alert and sent a message to the Arab heads of state requesting immediate intervention.<sup>116</sup> Open war broke out on September 17. Clashes broke out across Amman, particularly in and around the refugee camps, Jabal Amman, and Jabal Weibdeh.<sup>117</sup>

The army clearly had the upper hand; in comparison with the PLO's 20,000 fighters, less than half of whom were fully trained and equipped, King Hussein had quietly built his military forces up to 65,000 well-trained, fully armed soldiers, (including heavy artillery that the PLO could not match) with 10,000 additional police and security forces.<sup>118</sup> Arafat escaped from the Jabal Hussein refugee camp (disguised either as a woman or as a Kuwaiti sheikh, depending on which version of the story

one believes), and was escorted by President Jafer Numeiri of Sudan and Prince Saad Abdullah Sabah of Kuwait to Cairo for a hastily convened Arab summit.<sup>119</sup> By the morning of the 18th, despite PLO's resistance, the army had begun to reassert control over Amman and Zarqa.<sup>120</sup> By the 21st, although the fedayeen remained active in Jabal Weibdeh, the city center, and parts of the refugee camps,<sup>121</sup> the army controlled most of Amman as well as the rest of the country.

The army's success was due in large part to the fact that it remained remarkably unified. The PLO's best hope had always been to split the army and inspire mass defections among the Palestinian officers. In this, they failed. Some Palestinian military officers did defect to the PLO (and were reorganized as the Yarmouk Brigades of the Palestinian Liberation Army), but the rate of defection was insufficient to change the outcome of the war.<sup>122</sup> Abu Iyad, Arafat's second in command, put their number at close to 5000, but Jordanian government sources placed it at only a few hundred who were mostly young Palestinian draftees.<sup>123</sup>

It is also unclear to what degree the defections that did occur were motivated by sympathy for the PLO itself, sympathy with the Palestinian struggle in general, or objection to a specific order. Refusal to shell a refugee camp full of unarmed civilians is not the same as commitment to, or even sympathy for, the PLO's political project. Whatever the motives of those who did defect, ultimately, the chain of command remained intact, and the majority of the army remained loyal to the King.

The PLO's international political assets proved more reliable. Throughout the crisis, Arafat relied heavily on the Arab League to put pressure on the Jordanian regime. On the 18th, the Arab League called for a ceasefire and mediation by the newly formed "four nation committee" composed of Sudan, Egypt, Libya, and Algeria. (Given that all four of these states were sympathetic to the fedayeen, it is perhaps unsurprising that Hussein rejected this request.<sup>124</sup>) The PLO was particularly hopeful of Iraqi and Syrian aid.<sup>125</sup> But although the American government initially believed that Iraqi intervention was more likely,<sup>126</sup> ultimately the Iraqi forces stationed in Jordan as part of the United Arab Command did not involve themselves.<sup>127</sup>

It was instead the PLO's relationship with Syria that offered the organization its best chance of survival. In fact, had Arafat managed to win over both factions in the Syrian regime, rather than just the more radical faction led by Salah Jadid, things might have gone quite differently. At first, the pro-intervention faction appeared to have the upper hand, and Syrian sup-

port seemed likely to turn the tide in favor of the fedayeen. On September 18, 30 “volunteer” Al Saiqa fighters and 300 Syrian tanks painted with the insignia of the PLO (probably to offer plausible deniability)<sup>128</sup> crossed the border and shelled Jordanian positions.<sup>129</sup> This posed a real threat to the Jordanian regime. Though Syrian numbers were not much greater than the Jordanians (the Jordanian military had 500 British Centurion tanks and the Syrians 700 Soviet T-54 and T-55s), the border area was closer to Syrian staging areas than to Jordanian bases, making it far easier for the Syrian forces to resupply<sup>130</sup> and Syria vastly outstripped Jordan in both strategic depth and the overall size of its military.

Tank battles on the border and the road to Irbid produced heavy losses on both sides. By the evening of the 20th, Syrian forces had captured Irbid and the Jordanian army faced 100 Syrian tanks in the north, with another 60 waiting to cross the border. King Hussein reached out for help, first to the British and then to the Americans.<sup>131</sup> On the 21st, he made a desperate appeal to the US Ambassador:

Situation deteriorating dangerously following Syrian massive invasion. Northern forces disjointed. Irbid occupied. This having disastrous effect on tired troops in the capital and surroundings. After continuous action and shortage supplies Military Governor and Commander in Chief advise I request immediate physical intervention both air and land as per the authorization of government to safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Jordan. Immediate air strikes on invading forces from any quarter plus air cover are imperative. Wish earliest word on length of time it may require your forces to land when requested which might be very soon.<sup>132</sup>

Most noteworthy in Hussein’s plea to the Americans are the words “from any quarter.” This has been widely interpreted as a reference to the Israelis, or at least, it was by the Americans. Kissinger contacted Ambassador Yitzhak Rabin to inquire as to whether Israel might be willing to intervene to save the Jordanian monarchy.<sup>133</sup> Overnight, Israeli reserves were mobilized, and two mechanized infantry brigades deployed to the Golan Heights as a signal to the Syrians that Israel was prepared to involve itself.<sup>134</sup>

In the end, though, this proved unnecessary, due to internal political rivalries in Syria. While Jadid had adequate control over the Syrian military to order the invasion of Jordan, the real military decision-making rested with Hafez al Asad, who had opposed the operation from the beginning and refused to authorize air cover for the Syrian tank columns, leaving them vulnerable to Jordanian airstrikes.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps buoyed by assurances

of American support, the Jordanian military moved an additional 80 tanks to the area to reinforce the 90 already present and decided to make use of its small air force, comprised of 18 British Hawker Hunter fighter jets, against the Syrian tank columns.<sup>136</sup> The Syrians lost a total of 120 tanks (between 30 and 60 of them to mechanical failure)<sup>137</sup> as compared with Jordanian losses of between 75 and 90 tanks.<sup>138</sup> By the evening of the 23rd, in the absence of any defense against the Jordanian air assault, the Syrian tank columns began withdrawing back to Syria.<sup>139</sup>

With the Syrian withdrawal and the clear superiority of the Jordanian military, the end of the confrontation was, in hindsight, imminent, though Arafat seemed to believe otherwise. Under pressure from both Nasser and the Arab League delegation which arrived in Amman on the 24th, Hussein negotiated a ceasefire with one of Arafat's lieutenants, which allowed those in the refugee camps to go out to buy food and many militants to escape the city.<sup>140</sup> The Arab League, particularly Nasser and Numeiri, also continued to pressure Hussein to allow the PLO to continue to use Jordan as a base.<sup>141</sup> On September 27, Hussein traveled to Cairo to sign a ceasefire with Arafat. The terms included the withdrawal of both sides' forces from Amman; the release of prisoners; the return of military and civilian conditions in other towns to their pre-conflict state; the return of authority to the police; and an end to the military government. It did not call for the expulsion of the PLO from Jordan or for its disarmament. At 9:25 pm, Arafat passed the order to the fedayeen to cease all operations. The next day, Gamal Abdel Nasser died of a heart attack.

That the fedayeen found themselves so outmatched raises the question of why the King had not acted sooner. One answer is that he was afraid of a schism in the army and therefore waited to act until the takeover at Irbid presented him with no other choice. The interpretation advanced by American decision-makers at the time was that the king waited as long as he did out of a fear of alienating Palestinian citizens of Jordan; once the fedayeen had lost public support, he felt free to act.<sup>142</sup> (This lends some credence to the belief, espoused by many in the PLO, that the Jordanian intelligence services framed them for at least some of the abuses perpetrated against civilians in the months before the conflict). On the other hand, the fedayeen did retain a good deal of public support, even during the war, especially in the refugee camps. Former fighters recall being fed and given shelter by civilians even at great personal risk. But while these actions may have saved the lives of individual fighters, they weren't enough to save the PLO as a whole.

Although the agreement in Cairo on the 27th marked the end of major hostilities, skirmishes continued between the army and the fedayeen much as they had before the war. But the odds had now tipped strongly in favor of the Jordanian military, due to the weakening of the PLO's forces and the increased leeway given to the army by the government. On October 13, Arafat was forced to sign a second treaty, the Amman Agreement, which substantially restricted fedayeen activity and eroded the privileges they had been able to retain in Cairo.<sup>143</sup> In March, the army expelled the PLO from Irbid, and in early April, they were removed from Amman to the hills around Ajloun, where, on July 13, the army launched a final offensive. By July 19, the last of the fedayeen were expelled from Jordanian territory. It is probably a sign of the level of animosity between the two sides that the last Palestinian fighters to surrender chose to cross the border and surrender to the Israelis instead.<sup>144</sup>

### *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon*

Operation Peace for Galilee proved to be an even greater disaster for the PLO than Black September had been. The Israeli operation pushed the PLO first out of south Lebanon, and then out of Beirut; in the midst of a punishing bombardment of the capital, the PLO's allies on the Lebanese left begged it to evacuate, and eventually the leadership agreed. In September, the PLO leadership was evacuated from Beirut to Tunis. But as in Jordan, this outcome was not predetermined. True, the IDF greatly outnumbered and outgunned the Palestinian forces. But the difference in numbers between the PLO and the IDF in 1982 (40,000 vs. 85,000, if we include the PLO's Syrian allies and its Lebanese adversaries) is still smaller than that between the IDF and Hizbullah in 2006 (30,000 IDF forces by the end of the war vs. 10,000 Hizbullah fighters, including reservists). Moreover, as is often repeated in the literature on guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency, guerrilla conditions do not always favor the strong. Rather, the roots of this outcome lie in the strategies the PLO pursued to acquire resources from the Lebanese state and civilians in south Lebanon, and in its relationships with its various Arab sponsors.

At 11 am on June 6, over 75,000 IDF troops with 1240 tanks and 1520 armoured personnel carriers crossed the border into Lebanon.<sup>145</sup> Their Christian allies numbered around 6000, with a further 10,000 available reservists.<sup>146</sup> The PLO's forces included 15,000 full-time fighters, some 6000 of which were stationed in the south, and 4500 of whom were

well-trained regular fighters. The PLO had only around 60 tanks in the area, many of which were no longer mobile.<sup>147</sup> In and around Beirut, the PLO fielded around 8000 fighters, equipped with only 24 T-34 tanks, 100 anti-tank guns, guided missile launchers, and between 150 and 200 mortars, artillery, howitzers, and rocket launchers, as well as some SAM-7s, four ZSU-23-4 anti-aircraft vehicles, and hundreds of machine guns. In addition, the well-equipped Syrian forces in Lebanon numbered around 25,000.<sup>148</sup>

Two plans for an invasion had been developed the previous fall, code-named “Big Pines” and “Little Pines” based on the scope of their respective objectives.<sup>149</sup> On paper, Operation Peace for Galilee was ambitious but limited; its stated objective was to push the PLO 40 kilometers north of the border.<sup>150</sup> (The ostensible reason for the invasion was the assassination of the Israeli Ambassador to the UK by the Abu Nidal Organization, but given that Abu Nidal was at war with the rest of the PLO, this was clearly an excuse.) The invasion took the form of a multi-pronged attack, with units advancing through the south, up the coast, over the mountain, and through the Bekaa. By the afternoon of June 6, Nabatiyeh had fallen, and by the next day, Tyre. As the invasion progressed, Sharon, without proper Cabinet authorization and likely without the fully informed consent of Prime Minister Menachem Begin, gradually expanded its scope. When the IDF took Damour on the 9th, it became clear that Beirut had become the target of the invasion. On the 20th, in violation of at least the spirit of the guidelines laid out by the Cabinet, Sharon ordered the army to take Aley, a Druze town on Mount Lebanon slightly southeast of Beirut.<sup>151</sup> By the 24th, IDF units held positions on the mountain and in East Beirut and had established a naval blockade. In the last days of July and the first days of August, Sharon attempted to smash the PLO once and for all through a massive air and artillery bombard of West Beirut, killing hundreds of PLO fighters, as well as Lebanese and Palestinian civilians.<sup>152</sup>

PLO fighters did resist the advance, particularly in areas where they were able to hole up in more defensible rough terrain. Overall, though, the response to the invasion was not well planned. Moreover, (as in Jordan) the ability of the PLO command in Beirut to communicate with the field was hampered by imperfect radio communication.<sup>153</sup> Richard Gabriel (who is otherwise quite sympathetic to the IDF) notes that two-thirds of the PLO fighters in the south and nearly all of the PLO leadership evaded death or capture. While this is an achievement in its own right, it probably also reflects the propensity of some PLO units to retreat.<sup>154</sup>

As the IDF advanced northward, many of the PLO leaders frankly expected that they would die in Beirut; one officer recounted calling his brother in Damascus to ask him to take care of his family when he was gone. But the organization was spared total eradication, due in large part to the efforts of American diplomat Philip Habib. On August 21, the siege ended with the PLO's evacuation from Lebanon. The leadership departed for the Syrian coastal town of Tartus, while Arafat refused out of principal to exit via any of the Arab states and instead went to Athens via Cyprus, and then to Tunis. By September 1, the evacuation was complete. Though in later years some factions returned to Lebanon and to this day many have offices in the various refugee camps, their *carte blanche* to operate openly in the south had been revoked.

The consequences of the PLO's coercive approach to civilians in south Lebanon became evident almost immediately when the IDF received an apparently warm welcome from some residents of the south. Nissim Levy, an author and former Israeli intelligence officer who helped recruit informants in the area recounted:

The people of south Lebanon accept us, with flowers ... and they support us, they share with us the fight against the Fatah because the Palestinians were their enemy. ... I remember that I said "it reminds me of the movies, when the allied forces arrive to Paris in the second world war, when all the people are going in the streets, and throwing flowers, and shout, and everything. ... People came with lists of names of people that were working with the Palestinians, and they show us where the Palestinian fighters are."<sup>155</sup>

While this is obviously only one possible reading of the events surrounding the invasion, it is reflective of the widespread belief within the IDF (accurate or not) that the Lebanese were essentially being held hostage by the PLO, and that the invasion was therefore intended to rescue Lebanon from an occupying force. Prime Minister Menachem Begin went so far as to publicly frame the invasion as matter of preventing "genocide" against the Christian Lebanese.<sup>156</sup>

In hindsight, this was clearly far too simplistic a description of Lebanon's complex political landscape. One of the participants in Operation Peace for Galilee interviewed attributed the initial welcome they received in the south, where they were indeed greeted with showers of rice and flowers, to a "Middle Eastern" habit of praising the conqueror, while others cited the Lebanese entrepreneurial spirit. Within days of the invasion, merchants in

south Lebanon were accepting shekels, and a thriving black market soon developed, trading in Marlboro cigarettes, whiskey, perfume, and cheap consumer goods. Car stereos were particularly prized, as was hashish.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, regardless of what the actual attitudes of the public were toward the PLO and IDF, it is unclear to what degree these attitudes affected the IDF's intelligence-gathering capacity. Levy stated that the ability to recruit informants had nothing to do with the level of local support for Fatah or any other faction (which perhaps reflects the sometimes coercive methods the IDF used to recruit informants). That being said, none recalled the civilian population mounting much by way of resistance in defense of the PLO. One PLO veteran remembered:

I remember a year before the invasion, in 1981, they [the PLO] bombed Saida [the Arabic name for Sidon] with heavy artillery ... and for very stupid reasons, a clash between some of the security people from Abu Iyad group and some of the Lebanese in Saida, and things developed in a very bad way, and they use heavy weapons, in order to keep control in Saida at that time. And when the Israeli invasion happened we expected Saida to fight, defending the Palestinians—why? Why they should fight when that happened?<sup>158</sup>

Amal's reaction was similar. The PLO's feud with the Shi'ite militia meant that when the IDF invaded in 1982, the most significant guerrilla force in the south had no interest in fighting alongside the Palestinians. Amal units did fight alongside Syrian units,<sup>159</sup> but not alongside the PLO itself.

For their part, the Christian militias, some of which had been secretly working with Israel since 1976,<sup>160</sup> actively cooperated with the IDF. During the invasion, the Lebanese Forces and other Christian militias fought alongside the IDF, coordinated with them, and provided the IDF with information, although many IDF soldiers felt that the Christian militias simply wanted them to do their work for them.<sup>161</sup>

Even the PLO's alliance with the left proved insufficient to save it. The LNM fought with the PLO against the IDF advance and participated vigorously in the defense of Beirut. Individual members of many factions later engaged in acts of resistance against the Israeli occupation of the city<sup>162</sup> and assisted in the formation of neighborhood defense militias to provide security and basic services during the siege. But ultimately, in the face of the Israeli bombardment of Beirut, the LNM's leaders reluctantly asked the PLO to leave:

The Lebanese leaders ask us and beg us, and said “Please, you must leave Beirut” ... all of them, they [were] crying ... Abu Ammar [was] crying also. Because they tell us “please, please, please we give you Lebanon, we give you all Lebanon, give us Beirut ... save Beirut.” We told [them] that “ok, we are ready to go to our camps,” ... We ask them that, “ok we are ready to go there and to announce that—to ask Israel, please, all Palestinian leadership now in al Fakani and Shatila and Sabra and Bourj al Barajneh, and all Palestinian people now in these places. Please if you want to bomb, bomb us, not Beirut.” Therefore they cried.<sup>163</sup>

Finally, there is the question of how the PLO’s relations with the Arab states shaped the outcome of the invasion. As noted above, while these relationships resulted in substantial material aid, the rivalries between these states often translated into parallel rivalries between their client factions and therefore divided loyalties within the PLO and a general lack of cohesion among the various Palestinian factions. This partly accounts for the frequency with which PLO forces tended to retreat, and the poor communication between the different factions in the face of the advance.

Moreover, during the invasion itself, when the PLO most needed its sponsors’ support, they proved unreliable. This was particularly true of Syria. Although Syria was the sole Arab state to engage in direct military action in 1982, this was hardly voluntary. Unlike the intervention in Jordan in 1970, which Salah Jadid initiated both out of ideological support for the PLO and for domestic political reasons, in 1982 Syria found itself in the path of a conflict it had not sought. Syria’s primary interest was in ending that conflict as quickly as possible, whatever the result for the PLO. Accordingly, though Syrian troops stationed in Lebanon participated in the defense against the Israeli advance early in the war, Asad agreed with alacrity to an American- and Soviet-brokered ceasefire on June 11 and thereafter declined to offer much by way of political support or any form of military support to the PLO. Syrian soldiers were ordered back to their barracks, and, perhaps more damagingly, the Syrian government confiscated the shipments of desperately needed weapons and supplies sent by Algeria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen, as well as China, the USSR, and several Eastern Bloc states. The government also confiscated Fatah arms stored in Damascus, including thousands of pistols and assault rifles, mortars, missiles, anti-tank weapons, and ammunition, and discouraged attacks by Fatah from within its area of control in the Bekaa.<sup>164</sup> While access to these weapons might not have saved the PLO,

they might well have extended the length of time it was able to resist the IDF's advance, and perhaps helped to secure more favorable terms of evacuation.

## CONCLUSION

There are obvious similarities between the PLO's experiences in Jordan and Lebanon. In both contexts, the PLO used coercive tactics to establish a base in a state that was at best ambivalent about hosting it. In both contexts, the leadership was unable to restrain fighters from abusing civilians and used coercive tactics to gain resources from and establish authority over civilians it didn't see as its constituents. It also had similar relations with its foreign sponsors, based on a mixture of service as a military proxy and a rather successful marketing campaign based on the normative power of the Palestinian cause, although this did little to sway most in the Jordanian government or certain factions in Lebanon.

The most interesting difference in the PLO's policy-making during its years in Jordan versus the later period in Lebanon is probably with regard to Palestinian civilians. In Jordan, in the years before the oil boom, when the movement was far less wealthy, it was much more dependent on its civilian constituents for support, and relied on ideological and ethno-communal appeals to maintain support. In later years, however, it shifted to a strategy based more on the provision of services and financial support *to* the refugee community, even to those who could perhaps have afforded to be donors themselves. This produced a change in the sort of fighters the movement was able to recruit, although not to a noticeable reduction in support within the refugee community more broadly.

This explains both the factionalization in the organization and the difficulty it had coordinating when under extreme pressure in both Lebanon and Jordan. The PLO's miscalculation as to the likelihood the Jordanian army would split (as illustrated by the confusing communications that the young Abu Jihad found himself transcribing for Yasser Arafat during Black September) as well as the lack of communication between different factions. It also explains the split in the PLO itself in the context of the Syrian intervention in 1976, and the lack of coordination and high level of defection in 1982.

More generally, this has some implications for our understanding of the adaptation of nonstate actors to their environment. For one thing, it suggests that an overreliance on service provision to cement relationships with civilians can lead to the wrong sort of relationship over the long

term, unless it is tempered by ideological or ethno-communal marketing. Perhaps more interestingly, it suggests that while sponsorship by multiple regimes may help an organization “hedge its bets,” it can also lead to internal fragmentation. The PLO was able to rely on other Arab states for support even when Jordan and Lebanon were reluctant to provide it or when Syria decided to withdraw its own support. It also prevented the central PLO leadership from becoming too beholden to any one state’s interests, although individual factions did become so. On the other hand, having multiple sponsors can create dangerous internal divisions. Indeed, even the interests of one sponsor can be enough to create a schism if they conflict strongly enough with the movement’s core mission. A more pessimistic reading, then, is that all forms of proxyhood carry potential pitfalls.

In sum, the PLO’s domestic and foreign policy shaped the organization in ways that were ultimately detrimental to its ability to both resist and recover from its military confrontations in Jordan and Lebanon. That being said, it is important to recognize the organization’s major achievements: the PLO deserves much of the credit for keeping Palestinian national aspirations alive for over 50 years and, a decade after the expulsion from Beirut, bringing them close to realization at Oslo.

## NOTES

1. Interview with Shafiq al Hout, (former) PLO Representative in Lebanon and Palestinian Representative to the UN.
2. Arafat’s given name was Muhammad Abdul-Rauf Al-Qudwa Al-Husseini. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 215.
3. The PFLP, DFLP, and PFLP-GC share much of the same DNA, but are fundamentally separate. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, the three major leftist factions briefly came together as the PFLP in an attempt to counterbalance Fatah’s influence, but pre-existing ideological differences quickly led them to separate again. Ahmed Jibril’s PFLP-GC split off in August of 1968, and Nayef Hawatmeh’s DFLP split off in February of 1969. Interviews, Salah Salah, former PLFP officer and head of AJIAL NGO in Beirut, and Oraib Rantawi, former Palestinian activist and journalist, and head of the Al Quds Center in Amman.
4. Interview with Edward Kattoura, Fatah, Lebanon.
5. Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power, and Politics*, 47.
6. Interview, Shafiq al Hout.

7. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 178.
8. Terrill, "The Political Mythology of the Battle of Karameh."
9. Iyad and Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle*, 63.
10. Particularly telling are the conversations Abu Iyad recounts in which various Gulf leaders told him quite frankly that they sympathized with the position of the Phalange in Lebanon. *Ibid.*, 172-74. This was echoed by Fatah members in interviews.
11. Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, 229-30.
12. Some may question the inclusion of the PFLP-GC as a leftist organization, but in the 1960s it probably qualified.
13. Interview, Abdel-Razzak al Yehya, Minister of the Interior, Palestinian Authority, Ramallah.
14. Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalisms*, 87.
15. Efrat and Bercovitch, *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, 211.
16. Interview, Shafiq al Hout.
17. Interview, Mohamed B.
18. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 244.
19. Interview, Shafiq al Hout.
20. Interview, Abdel-Razzak al Yehya.
21. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 231.
22. Cooley, *Green March, Black September: The Story of the Palestinian Arabs*, 104.
23. Interview Abdel-Razzak al Yehya.
24. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 184.
25. Interview, Oraib Rantawi.
26. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 235.
27. Interview, Patricia Salti.
28. Interview, Hamad M.
29. Bailey, *Jordan's Palestinian Challenge 1948-1983*, 51.
30. Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, 315-16.
31. See for instance Moyer, *A Question of Command: Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq*.
32. In an interview, one of the two PFLP fighters involved in the attack stated that they never had any intention of targeting civilians, and that El Al was considered a legitimate military target.
33. Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation.*, 165-66.

34. For a much more detailed treatment of the Lebanese Civil War from a range of perspectives, see Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon*; Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*; Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation.*; El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976.*
35. "Arafat's Statement"; "Palestinian Describes Fighting."
36. Interview, Michel Metni, Achrafiyeh office director, Tayyar al Watani al Hurr.
37. Interview, anonymous IDF reservist and OPfG veteran.
38. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East.*
39. Interview, Michel Metni.
40. "Amal Leader Discusses Other Parties in Interview."
41. This was also broadly true of their relationship with the Sunni elite, though, as noted above, these were in some ways constrained by the pro-PLO sentiments of their constituents.
42. Interviews with Khaled Abd al-Majid, Secretary General (Damascus), PPSF; Shafiq al Hout; and others.
43. Iyad and Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle*, 63.
44. Interview, Abu Jihad, Deputy Secretary General, PFLP-GC. Khaled Abd al-Majid reported that the Syrian and Libyan regimes were both generous and supportive. (Interview, Khaled Abd al-Majid, PPSF.) One Israeli soldier who served in both Operation Litani and Operation Peace for Galilee reported that the PLO seemed better armed in 1982 than they had four years earlier.
45. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 180-83.
46. Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalisms*, 100.
47. Interviews with Salah Salah, Oraib Rantawi, and others.
48. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 325.
49. Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, 315-16.
50. Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, 316.
51. Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process.*
52. Jumblatt was always careful, however, to keep the fighting out of the Druze territories on Mount Lebanon.
53. Hamizrachi, *The Emergence of the South Lebanon Security Belt: Major Saad Haddad and the Ties with Israel, 1975-1978*, 50-73; Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation.*, 214-15.
54. Interview, Hamzeh al Bishtawi, PFLP-GC, Beirut.
55. Interview, Hamad M., Damascus.

56. Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process*.
57. Interview, Marwan Qassem, Foreign Minister of Jordan (former.)
58. Interview, Hamad M.
59. UNRWA describes the 1967 exodus as “140,000 people, already registered refugees with UNRWA, together with about 240,000 citizens of the West Bank.” UNRWA Website, “Jordan Camp Profiles.” <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=100>
60. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 42–43.
61. This was led by Suleiman Nabulsi, a member of the senate from Salt Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 229–30.
62. Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process*, 175.
63. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 196.
64. There are ten refugee camps in Jordan. The largest, “the New Camp” (known locally as Wehdat), is in Amman.
65. In an interview, a former PFLP member responsible for a high profile operation in the late 1960s said that it was Habash’s personal commitment as exemplified by his free clinic that made him decide to join the PFLP.
66. Interview, Oraib Rantawi. As Dr. Rantawi put it, in the Jordanian years, there was “no luxury lifestyle, no five-star hotels” for the leadership. That would come later.
67. Maps of Amman from this period are not easy to find. This one is based on a tourist map produced by the Jordanian Tourism Authority, held by the Library of Congress. It was drafted for me by Patrick Carr.
68. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 181–82.
69. Interview, Abu Jihad.
70. Though heavily built up now, in the 1970s this neighborhood was on the edge of the city. This account is based largely on anecdotal conversations with friends in Amman.
71. Interview, Patricia Salti.
72. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 243.
73. Cooley, *Green March, Black September: The Story of the Palestinian Arabs*, 109.
74. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 244.
75. Interview, Hamad M.
76. Interviews with Salah Salah and Oraib Rantawi.

77. Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power, and Politics*, 47.
78. Iyad and Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle*, 75.
79. For further detail on the position of the Palestinians in Lebanon, see El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967–1976*; Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon*.
80. El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967–1976*, 151.
81. This map was also drafted by Patrick Carr.
82. For its trouble, the PLO was accused by Camille Chamoun of interfering in the administration of Lebanese public utilities. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 402; “Junblatt Denies PLO Interference in Utilities.”
83. There were complaints that West Beirut was neglected while East Beirut received the bulk of city services. “Al-Wazzan on Opposition, PLO Arms, Arab Help.”
84. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 137.
85. Interview, Oraib Rantawi.
86. Junblat and Lapousterle, *I Speak for Lebanon*, 111.
87. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 128–36.
88. Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*, 244.
89. Shipler, “Lebanese Tell of Anguish of Living Under the PLO,” 1.
90. Interview, Oraib Rantawi.
91. “Shi’ite Council Statement.”
92. “Palestinian-Nationalist Meeting.”
93. “Cars Burned.”
94. “VOP Reports ‘Regretful’ Clashes in Sidon, 25, 26 Aug.”
95. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 139–42.
96. Interview, Abu Khalil. It was independently verified to me that the PFLP, alone of the major PLO factions, continued to pay its former fighters pensions in south Lebanon and by and large did enjoy a better relationship with local people than other factions.
97. LL2000 to those whose homes were destroyed in the Israeli attacks during the summer of 1981, and LL1000 to people whose houses were damaged. This was on top of LL19 million in previous compensation payments. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 140.
98. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 409.
99. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 141.
100. Interview, Ahmed Mustafá, DFLP, Bourj al Barajneh.

101. Interview, Abu Tha'er and Abu Issam, Fatah al Intifada, Bourj al Barajneh, Beirut.
102. Interview, Abu Tha'er and Abu Issam; Ahmed, Fatah, Bourj al Barajneh.
103. Interview, Khaled Abd al-Majid. I have observed this as well.
104. Interview, Maher.
105. Interview, Hamad M.
106. Interview, Oraib Rantawi.
107. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 140.
108. Interview, Oraib Rantawi
109. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 181.
110. Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process*, 175.
111. Brynen, *Sanctuary and Survival: The PLO in Lebanon*, 133.
112. Interview, Abu Jihad.
113. Interview, Oraib Rantawi.
114. Not all recruits joined voluntarily. In 1976, the PLO instituted a policy of conscription for all Palestinian men between 18 and 30. This policy was widely unpopular and very loosely enforced. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 402–3.
115. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*; Anderson, "The State in the Middle East and North Africa."
116. US Dept. of State, "248. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon: SUBJECT Jordan/Hijacking Situation."
117. US Dept. of State, "253. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)."
118. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 263.
119. The more common version of this story is that Arafat was dressed as a woman, but Abu Jihad, the PFLP-GC officer from whose office Arafat departed, assured me he was in fact dressed as a Kuwaiti.
120. Hess, "Battles Go On in Jordan, Army Claims Some Gains; U.S. Stressing Diplomacy."
121. Randal, "Guerrillas Still Reject Cease-Fire," A1.
122. That the PLO had insisted for a time that fighting with the PLO be considered an alternate form of military service could perhaps have had the effect of weeding out at least some enlisted soldiers who might have defected had they been in the army.
123. Pace, "Jordanians Accuse Syria on Deserters," 10.

124. US Dept. of State, "263. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon."
125. US Dept. of State, "256. Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)."
126. US Dept. of State, "252. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan (152449. Ref: Amman 4845.2)" Footnote 2 to this telegram states that "In telegram 4845 from Amman, September 16, 2315Z, Brown suggested that Hussein was overly concerned about possible Syrian intervention."
127. US Dept. of State, "303. Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting." Abu Iyad himself later claimed to have heard a recording of a phone call in which the Iraqi Defense Minister mentioned a nonintervention agreement with King Hussein. Iyad and Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle*, 85.
128. Ramet, *The Soviet-Syrian Relationship since 1955: A Troubled Alliance*, 56.
129. 272. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon. Washington, September 19, 1970.
130. US Dept. of State, "281. Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting."
131. US Dept. of State, "275. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon"; US Dept. of State, "282. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State."
132. US Dept. of State, "284. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State (4988)."
133. US Dept. of State, "289. Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) and the Israeli Ambassador (Rabin)."
134. US Dept. of State, "303. Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting."
135. Drysdale and Hinnebusch argue that Asad was deterred from providing air cover by the threat of Israeli and US intervention. Talhami suggests that Asad was also concerned about being the "odd man out" if the issue were later settled through mediation, while Efrat and Bercovitch argue that this was a calculated attempt to humiliate Jadid. Asad himself later claimed that he wished to maintain good relations with Jordan to preserve Jordan's military for later confrontation with Israel, the actual enemy. Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*, 178; Efrat and Bercovitch, *Superpowers and Client States in the Middle East: The Imbalance of Influence*, 210–11; Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*; Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalisms*,

96. The failure of the mission in Jordan certainly facilitated the successful coup launched by Asad three months later.
136. US Dept. of State, "304. Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting."
137. US Dept. of State, "313. Minutes of a National Security Council Meeting."
138. US Dept. of State, "326. Minutes of a Washington Special Actions Group Meeting."
139. "Israel Analyzes Air War in Jordan," 17; Lawson, *Why Syria Goes to War: Thirty Years of Confrontation*. Shlaim states that Israeli phantom jets flew low and fast enough over the Syrian columns to generate sonic booms, as a warning against further involvement in Jordan. Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace*, 333. However, this episode is absent from news accounts and from transcripts of discussions within the American administration.
140. US Dept. of State, "316. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon."
141. US Dept. of State, "328. Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to President Nixon. Subject: The Situation in Jordan."
142. US Dept. of State, "272. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon."
143. Among other things, it enjoined them to obey Jordanian traffic laws. The fedayeen were notorious for their reckless driving.
144. Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 241.
145. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 524.
146. Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*, 248.
147. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 524.
148. *Ibid.*, 409.
149. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 1984, 43.
150. Government of Israel. Va`adat ha-hakirah la-hakirat ha-eru`im be-mahanot ha-pelitim be-Berut., *The Beirut Massacre: The Complete Kahan Commission Report*, 1983.
151. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 1984.
152. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 530-37; Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation.*, 260-62.
153. Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon: Confrontation in the Middle East*, 70.

154. Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon*, 116.
155. Interview, Nissim Levy, author and former IDF intelligence officer.
156. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a second (perhaps less conscious) influence on the perceptions of Israeli soldiers was what they saw as the cultural similarity of Lebanon to Israel. One soldier recounted his delight at tuning in to a Beirut radio station to find that it was playing Earth, Wind, and Fire, just like the radio stations in Tel Aviv.
157. Interview, Yuval Shaul, veteran of Operation Peace for Galilee. He also noted that they regularly purchased meat, tea, coffee, and vegetables from local merchants.
158. Interview, Oraib Rantawi.
159. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 526, 528.
160. Hamizrachi, *The Emergence of the South Lebanon Security Belt: Major Saad Haddad and the Ties with Israel, 1975–1978*, 63.
161. Interviews with IDF reservists.
162. There is a still a plaque commemorating the spot where an SSNP fighter shot an Israeli soldier who was ordering a hamburger at the Wimpy Burger on Rue Hamra in West Beirut.
163. Interview Abu Jihad.
164. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 528.

## Amal

In early July 2012, I found myself sitting in the office of Dr. Salim al Sayigh, a very senior member of the Kataeb party, at University la Sagesse in Furn al Chebak in Beirut. As was perhaps to be expected of a senior member of a Maronite-dominated political party that has long stood in vocal opposition to both Hizbullah and the Lebanese left, he had some very strong opinions on the former's role in Lebanese politics. He was openly suspicious of Iranian intentions and opposed to continued Syrian influence in Lebanon. Given all of this, I was surprised to see that he had a photo on his shelf of none other than Imam Musa Sadr, founder of the Movement of the Dispossessed, the Amal militia, and arguably, in an indirect way, of Hizbullah. When I asked about it, he told me the photo had been given to him by Sadr's sister, who he admired a great deal for her charitable work in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the presence of Sadr's picture in the offices of a man whose career had been spent in opposition to Amal's political allies in many ways sums up the contradictions inherent in Amal's political project, particularly during the years of the civil war.

Despite never having experienced the sort of cataclysmic confrontation with either Israel or other states in the region that the PLO, Hizbullah, and Hamas have, Amal warrants inclusion here for several reasons. To begin with, it serves as a kind of evolutionary link between the PLO and Hizbullah. Amal's early fighters were trained by the PLO (especially Fatah), although relations between the two quickly became strained and then adver-

serial. Hizbullah grew out of Amal itself, although especially in the 1980s it represented a radical departure from Amal's original mission and identity. Perhaps more importantly for the theory advanced in this book, however, it provides an excellent example of a locally focused militant group (i.e., a quadrant B organization). With its less-than-successful foreign policy and strong local focus, Amal was able to survive the challenges of the late 1970s and early 1980s, but never to grow beyond the Lebanese context.

This chapter begins with the emergence of the Movement of the Dispossessed in south Lebanon in the 1960s, and the formation of the Amal militia in the early years of the civil war. It examines Amal's, and in particular Sadr's, relations with both the Shi'ite public and the wider Lebanese audience, as well as the Lebanese state, the PLO, and eventually, Syria and Iran, and how these relationships enabled the organization to adapt to the changing circumstances of the Lebanese military and political arena during the civil war. The chapter concludes with Amal's ability to weather the sudden changes that occurred at the end of the 1970s, and its establishment of control over wide areas of the south following Operation Litani in 1978, setting the stage for the emergence of Hizbullah in 1982. This chapter will not deal in any great detail with Amal's experiences in the late- and postwar periods both because these are covered in detail elsewhere in this book, and because Amal's earlier years provided a more substantial test<sup>1</sup> for its endurance than did the later years of the war or the postwar period.

The story of Amal's early years is the story of how being Shi'ite came to matter again as a political identity in south Lebanon, of how it supplanted the leftist ideology touted by the PLO and the pan-Arabism of the Sunnis in Beirut, and led to mobilization by the Shi'ites of the south and the Bekaa in favor of explicitly Shi'ite, rather than Muslim, interests. The (almost accidental) process by which the movement put down roots in the villages of the south lent it a staying power that even Hizbullah took far longer to develop. At the outset, Amal was very weak relative to the other Lebanese militias. It had fewer fighters and far fewer guns. But its capacity to mobilize fighters was impressive, and the organization would prove to have remarkable staying power, outlasting many other movements and establishing a permanent base of support in the Shi'ite community. At the same time, however, it became overly reliant on Syrian support and acted in support of Syrian policies perhaps to the detriment of its own, losing focus over the long term. While its foreign policy remained relatively consistent over time, its domestic policy shifted from an emphasis on identity-based marketing to what was essentially a patronage system.

Unlike the other organizations included in this book, Amal did not regularly confront the IDF. While this was not overtly stated, by the late 1970s, its major adversary was rather the PLO, and in the late 1980s, Hizbullah (a conflict which is addressed in the following chapter). It was able to emerge victorious from both of these conflicts. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to outline the means by which Amal developed its base of support in south Lebanon, challenging the narrative of “resistance” set forth by the PLO as well as the existing narratives concerning Shi’ite identity in Lebanon and setting the stage for the emergence of Hizbullah in the mid-1980s. It will also examine the ways in which Amal adapted to its environment in the early years of its existence. Its domestic policy was, by and large, more successful than its foreign policy, although by the mid-1980s the former had become overshadowed by the latter as it became increasingly dominated by the Syrians and their ambitions in Lebanon. Both to its benefit and detriment, Amal always retained a more local focus than the other organizations included in this book, and in this sense provides a useful contrast. What it did it did well, but it lacked the ability (demonstrated in later years by Hizbullah) to grow further.

### AMAL’S ORIGINS

The Amal movement announced its existence to the world entirely by accident. In July of 1975, an explosion at a training camp in the Bekaa valley resulted in the deaths of 27 people, forcing its leader Imam Musa Sadr to acknowledge that despite his anti-war rhetoric, his movement now had its own militia, which he hastened to insist was for purely defensive purposes.<sup>2</sup> But in 1978, while on visit to Libya, the imam vanished, never to be seen again. Although the Libyans claimed he had departed for Rome as scheduled, he never arrived. Despite many demands from the Lebanese, Syrian, and Iranian governments as well as from Amal itself, his fate was never conclusively determined. After Sadr’s disappearance, Amal came under the leadership of Hussein al Hussein, Sadr’s deputy. Hussein was then marginalized by the Syrians, and Nabih Berri became the organization’s head, which he has remained since then, becoming speaker of parliament in 1992 (replacing Hussein who had by then distanced himself from Amal).

Just as understanding the PLO’s political program requires some discussion of the Palestinian refugee crisis, so too does understanding Amal’s emergence and longevity—as well as its contribution to the discourse of resistance in Lebanon and the emergence of Hizbullah a decade

later—require a brief discussion of the history of the Shi'ites in Lebanon. Lebanon's Shi'ites have historically lived primarily in the Bekaa valley and south Lebanon (which Shi'ites also refer to as Jabal 'Amil). While the Bekaa contains some fertile farmland, farming in south Lebanon was difficult at best. Under Ottoman rule, the economic life of the region was dominated by the tobacco board (the *regie*) and small farmers had little chance of improving their position. Politically, southern Lebanon experienced alternating periods of repression and neglect and the region lagged far behind Mount Lebanon, the Bekaa, and the larger cities by most measures of development.<sup>3</sup> Compounding the neglect by the Ottoman authorities was the near total domination of political life by a few powerful families (or *zu'ama*) who maintained what was essentially a feudal system and contributed to the perpetual underdevelopment of the region. Several of them were appointed *multazims*, or tax collectors, by the Ottoman rulers, which solidified their position both politically and economically.<sup>4</sup>

When Lebanon became independent in 1943, very little changed for the Shi'ites of the south. The *zu'ama* (particularly the Asad family, whose patriarch, Kamal Asad, held the position of Speaker of the Parliament in the 1950s) preferred to maintain things as they were, leaving little to no space for upward mobility within the Shi'ite community. The clergy were largely apolitical and highly dependent on the wealthy families for their livelihoods and members of parliament from the south were likewise tightly controlled by the *zu'ama*.<sup>5</sup> Well into the 1960s and even 1970s, the Shi'ite community lagged far behind the rest of Lebanon economically. According to a survey conducted in 1960–1961, 30 % of the localities in south Lebanon and the Bekaa valley were considered “destitute” or “poor.”<sup>6</sup> Shi'ites were more likely to work in the agricultural or informal sector and less likely to be found in white collar jobs and there were far fewer Shi'ites engaged in secondary or higher education. By 1971, average income for Shi'ites was LL4532, while the national average was LL6247.<sup>7</sup> Economic inequality was compounded by political inequality. The division of power under the National Pact underrepresented the Shi'ites twice: as Muslims, they were underrepresented relative to the Christians, and as Shi'ites they were underrepresented relative to the Sunnis.

In the mid-1950s, however, Lebanon's Shi'ite community began to experience a number of significant changes. The first was a broad trend toward migration, both within Lebanon and abroad. Since independence, changes in the state budget had removed what economic support there had been for agriculture. In the 1950s and 1960s, a decline in the tobacco sector and

an increase in less labor-intensive citrus production coupled with increased mechanization of agriculture led to a reduction in agricultural jobs. This in turn contributed to a new wave of economic migrants, both to Beirut and to West Africa where generations of young Lebanese Shi'ites had gone to seek their fortunes and send money home.<sup>8</sup> Increasing insecurity in the south (as described in the previous chapter) was also a major contributing factor.

This migration helped to loosen the power of the *zu'ama*, who had far less to offer in terms of the distribution of patronage for those who had left their ancestral villages. At the same time, most Lebanese (then and now) vote where they are “from” rather than where they actually live, meaning that the new migrants who were less dependent on the largess of the traditional elites by virtue of having left their ancestral villages still voted in the communities where those elites had previously been unchallenged. Moreover, by the 1950s, many of those who had gone to work in West Africa were returning to south Lebanon with new wealth and new aspirations. These people were not only less dependent on the traditional elites, but also now found their ambitions thwarted by them. All of this combined to render the Shi'ite community ripe for internal reform.<sup>9</sup>

The Lebanese state was also changing in the 1960s. Under President Fuad Chehab, Lebanon underwent a brief period of state-building, during which a nascent bureaucracy and new state institutions began to replace the system of patronage through which the *zu'ama* had mediated access to the state.<sup>10</sup> Civil society was also undergoing a rapid expansion both in the Shi'ite community and across Lebanon. There was a significant increase in the number of family associations, local benevolent associations that provided welfare services, and emergency aid for members, from 5 in the 1930s to 77 by the 1960s. Other institutions such as sports clubs and youth clubs began to proliferate as well.<sup>11</sup>

These factors—historical disenfranchisement combined with economic, political, and geographic upheaval—rendered the Shi'ite community ripe for political and social mobilization. But early on, much of this mobilization took place within the framework of the left rather than in an explicitly Shi'ite communal framework. Young, politicized Shi'ites were most likely to join the Communist Party or one of the other leftist factions. In the 1960s, many began joining the various Palestinian militias and political parties then setting up shop in south Lebanon. For some, joining these organizations was a matter of genuine ideological commitment, but for many, it was more because the militias provided a steady paycheck in an economically depressed region.<sup>12</sup> In this, too, their experience mirrored that of Lebanon's Palestinian refugees.

It was to this rapidly changing community that Musa Sadr, a charismatic and politically astute clergyman of Lebanese descent raised in Iran, arrived in 1959 to take over as chief cleric in the southern city of Tyre. Indeed, more than many of the Lebanese militias, Sadr's leadership was central to Amal's character in its early years. Sadr set about trying to improve the lot of Lebanon's Shi'ites, by pressing for economic and social development initiatives by the state and social reforms at the local level. Strongly anti-communist, Sadr championed a discrete Shi'ite communal identity as part of the broader Lebanese mosaic, separate from both the larger category of "Muslim" into which the Shi'ites were often sorted,<sup>13</sup> and from the Communist, Baathist, and Nasserite parties which had previously claimed their loyalty. The combination of a growing political consciousness, and growing economic discontent meant that the Shi'ite community, particularly in southern Lebanon, was very receptive to Sadr's political project.

A major shift toward the institutionalization of a separate Shi'ite identity as a basis for political mobilization and representation separate from the power of the Shi'ite *zu'ama* was the creation of the Higher Shi'ite Council. It was created in response to pressure from Sadr and his followers in 1967 and formally came into being in 1969, with Sadr as its first head. A very Lebanese solution to the complaints of the Shi'ite community, it facilitated mobilization and representation based on sectarian identity, rather than on broader ideological principles (such as Nasserism or socialism). Given the structure of the Lebanese system, this provided a greater voice for the Shi'ites who until then had been represented as "Muslims" by a Sunni leadership whose main constituents were the Sunnis of Tripoli and Beirut, and whose concerns were quite different from those of the residents of the south and the Bekaa.<sup>14</sup> It also represented an alternative authority within the Shi'ite community to the traditional power of the *zu'ama*.<sup>15</sup> Sadr was elected as its first head in 1969.

Not all responses to this new political project were positive; the *zu'ama* of the south were openly hostile both to the Chehabist state-building project and to Sadr's goals. Among those Shi'ites who were politicized, many remained oriented toward the secular political parties, such as the Baathists and communists—only a fraction were followers of Sadr and his movement. Nevertheless, Sadr's political project continued to gather steam throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. By the early 1970s, the *Harekat al Mahrumin* or Movement of the Dispossessed, led by Sadr, was gaining ground politically in the south. Despite the improvements in infrastructure during Chehab's presidency, the south remained under-

developed, as did the Bekaa. By 1974, Baalbek, the largest town in the Bekaa valley, had 10,000 inhabitants and only one government school.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, south Lebanon was experiencing escalating chaos and violence as the PLO's activities there led to punishing retaliatory attacks by Israel, which caused enormous suffering for the civilian population. After the 1969 Cairo agreement essentially granted the PLO *carte blanche* to operate in the area, the situation became even more chaotic. Paralyzed by internal divisions over policy regarding the PLO, the government was unable to act (see Chap. 2)

The Movement of the Dispossessed was initially non-violent, focused on improving the political and economic position of Shi'ites, particularly those in the impoverished south. But by the early 1970s, events in Lebanon were pushing the Shi'ites toward a more violent form of political mobilization mirroring the course taken by other communities in the country. As Israeli reprisal attacks against PLO targets in south Lebanon continued (and, after 1970, increased), the Shi'ites increasingly bore the cost of the PLO's actions in terms of both lives lost and damage to property. After the October War in 1973, Musa Sadr began openly advocating for the Shi'ites to arm to defend themselves, although as early as March he had famously proclaimed that "arms are the adornment of men."<sup>17</sup> In 1974, at a speech in Baalbek, Sadr openly criticized the government for its inability to protect the people of the south, asking "what does the government expect ... except rage and revolution?"<sup>18</sup>

In July of 1975, three months after the outbreak of the civil war and five days after Imam Musa ended a hunger strike protesting the spiraling violence in Lebanon, the explosion at the training camp in the Bekaa occurred. This forced Sadr to acknowledge that a militia had been created attached to the Movement of the Dispossessed. The name Amal, which means "hope" in Arabic and is an acronym for Al Afwaj al Muqawama al Lubnani (the Islamic Resistance Brigades), was (rather hurriedly) chosen. Once the militia was established, it began to expand rapidly, but without any real organization and with very little centralized control, leading to increased friction with both the left-wing LNM and its ally, the PLO, although Amal was at least nominally a part of the former and allied with the latter.

Further complicating matters, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Amal experienced a succession of major shocks. In 1978, Israel invaded Lebanon under Operation Litani, generating massive casualties in the south and leading to the establishment of the SLA, the IDF's proxy. Soon after, in 1978, Musa Sadr disappeared while on a visit to Libya, leaving the orga-

nization leaderless. The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 put in power a regime which, while supported by Sadr and his ideological heirs, advocated a political project that was at odds with Amal's own. And the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, while removing the PLO from the south, also caused a great deal of upheaval eventually culminating in the emergence of a powerful Shi'ite challenger: Hizbullah. Nabih Berri eventually took control of the organization, and under his leadership it became a far more conventional Lebanese political party.

While there was a great deal of continuity in most of its relationships, the party's approach to the Shi'ite community did evolve, leading to a change in the organization's character. While these do not constitute the same concentrated attempt at eradication that the other organizations faced, they were a very real challenge for the movement. Amal's ability to weather these shocks and largely maintain its political power into the late 1980s is rooted in the very successful renewal and even reinvention of Shi'ite identity that the organization undertook in the 1960s, and its sponsorship by Syria later on.

### AMAL'S DOMESTIC POLICY

In contrast with the chapters on the PLO, Hizbullah, and Hamas, this chapter begins with Amal's domestic rather than foreign policy because as a primarily local organization, understanding the former is crucial to understanding the latter. Amal faced three important domestic audiences. Its most important constituency were the Shi'ites, but those of other confessions mattered as well, and constituted the second audience to which Amal had to appeal. (In this, I include Palestinian civilians as well.) The third "audience" was the Lebanese political establishment, which Musa Sadr was able to manipulate masterfully.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, Amal's approach to the Shi'ite community during this period took the form of an ambitious and extremely successful marketing campaign, complemented by the establishment of an almost equally successful social service network. Likewise, Sadr was at first able to successfully promote his movement to the non-Shi'ite public, and to many of Lebanon's political elites, as non-threatening and firmly within the Lebanese political tradition. Eventually, these relationships became far more conflictual, but by then Amal was able to maintain the space it had carved out for itself.

### *The Shi'ite Community*

In its early years, Amal's approach to the Shi'ite community in Lebanon took the form of a tremendously ambitious political project the intent of which was to entirely reorient the way Shi'ites saw themselves as a community, in relation to both the Lebanese state and the wider world. In this, it was remarkably successful. As will be discussed in Chap. 4, Hizbullah's later success was based at least in part on the narrative produced by Musa Sadr and his movement. By rendering Shi'ite identity politically salient in the Lebanese context, he made possible—and arguably, inevitable—Shi'ite political and military mobilization on a grand scale. Sadr and his organization relied heavily on the narrative of resistance as a Shi'ite endeavor, and in so doing contested the narrative articulated by the PLO that framed “resistance” as an exclusively Palestinian project, or at least as being most properly led by the PLO. Amal also provided services to the Shi'ite community and openly criticized the failure of the Lebanese state to do so. The combination of these approaches enabled it to plant deep roots in the community, which in turn gave Amal a high degree of resilience to changes in its environment.

In its political program, Amal was typical of Lebanon's political parties in that its goals were articulated on behalf of Shi'ites as a “confessional” grouping. Amal represented a vehicle for Shi'ites to advocate for Shi'ite interests and preferences separately from those of the smaller but more economically and politically powerful Sunni Muslim community. While this represented a departure from the status quo in the 1960s, it fit comfortably within the existing Lebanese political framework. Where it differed from the other Lebanese parties was in its specific demands, which were both broader and more concerned with development and inequality at the sectarian level. For instance, one of Amal's most consistent demands, at least on paper, was the abolition of confessionalism, a position shared by some other parties, though interpreted very differently.<sup>20</sup> But in general, Amal constituted a Shi'ite addition to the Lebanese system, rather than a departure from it.

This leads to a second pillar of Amal's ideological program: its advocacy for the strengthening of the Lebanese state and military. Sadr, and other Amal leaders after him, repeatedly argued that final authority in the south should lie with the Lebanese military, rather than with any of the militias. Sadr himself, and later Amal as a movement, also strongly opposed any proposed partition or division of Lebanon, while simultaneously rejecting the rightist Maronite narrative of Lebanon as a “Phoenician” rather than Arab state.<sup>21</sup> Ali Hamdan, Nabih Berri's close aide, put it succinctly, saying

that for Amal, Lebanon “is a final state for all Lebanese.”<sup>22</sup> That is, that Lebanon’s borders and independence were non-negotiable.

This position points to a third important characteristic of Amal’s political program: Amal was (and is) a movement that sought to advocate for the interests of Shi’ites in Lebanon, rather than for Shi’ites in general—it was not a transnational movement, or a pan-Shi’ite movement, but a specifically Lebanese party. In this, it had far more in common with the Maronite and Druze militias than with pan-Arab, ideologically driven parties like the Nasserites or, for that matter, with Hizbullah. But unlike many of the other sectarian militias in Lebanon (especially the Maronites and the Druze), Amal was not a creation of the Shi’ite *zu’ama* or an extension of their ancestral privilege. Rather, it was founded by outsiders, who advocated a political program quite at odds with the preferences of the noble families of the south and the Bekaa. While under Berri’s leadership, it eventually became as patronage-based and personalistic as any of the other factions (and arguably more than most), its origins were different.

Therefore, one feature which set the early Amal apart from many of the other political organizations in the 1970s was its emphasis on communal *economic* grievances.<sup>23</sup> In 1974, the Higher Shi’ite Council (under Sadr’s leadership) issued 12 demands directed at the Lebanese state. These included more equal distribution of development funding, funding for water, education, infrastructure and health care projects, economic aid for tobacco farmers and the agricultural sector more generally, tourism projects in Tyre and Baalbek, a survey of mineral deposits across Lebanon, amnesty for building code violators, a new system for the allocation of municipal funds, and lastly, “general improvement of conditions in Beirut’s suburbs.”<sup>24</sup> (That the plight of the Shi’ite IDPs in Beirut’s southern suburbs, known as the Dahiyeh, was both the last and least detailed item on this list suggests that at this stage Amal was far more oriented toward the historically Shi’ite rural areas than toward Beirut. This would eventually change.)

The most striking feature of Amal’s ideology in its early years, though, was the degree to which Musa Sadr used the organization, both in its earlier incarnation as the Movement of the Dispossessed and later Amal itself as a means of reinventing Shi’ite political identity in Lebanon. Ajami argues that Sadr took the traditional Shi’ite themes of persecution, martyrdom, and sacrifice, rooted in the foundational Shi’ite narrative of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein at the hands of the perfidious Umayyad leader

Yazid, and both reinterpreted them as a call for struggle and liberation and connected them to modern political grievances, such as the perpetual underdevelopment and economic marginalization of south Lebanon.<sup>25</sup> In one of his more famous speeches in 1974, Sadr explicitly rejected the (derogatory) word *matawalah*, by which Shi'ites had commonly been referred to in Lebanon, saying "Our name is not matawalah. Our name is men of refusal (*rafidun*), men of vengeance, men who revolt against all tyranny ... even though this may cost us our blood and our lives."<sup>26</sup> In other words, he was calling explicitly for the construction of a new Lebanese Shi'ite identity based on communal interest, solidarity, and mobilization, and rejecting both the narrative of perpetual Shi'ite victimhood, and the Shi'ite community's former position at the margins of the established pan-Arabist organizations.

The narrative of resistance was an important part of this reinvention, just as it had been for the Palestinians. Speaking critically of Amal, Khalil al Khalil (former ambassador to Iran and son of Sadr's longtime adversary the former speaker of parliament Kazem al Khalil) credited their stated opposition to Israel for Amal's increased popularity:

Lebanon is rather sensitive to the Palestinian issue. Why? Because, you know in the Arab world and Lebanon in particular—not in particular but all the countries surrounding Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and so on—until now, people have learned, they grow up from childhood that the enemy is Israel. So you don't need to be convinced. You are convinced by nature—by the nature of being citizen of this state ... you are convinced that the only enemy you have is Israel, so once you take a position against Israel everybody welcomes this because it's an inner inertia, it doesn't need convincing or effort to bring support for this work that you do against Israel, so this is a very important element.<sup>27</sup>

This does not, however, explain why Amal might be more appealing than the Palestinian resistance organizations who were at that time directly engaged in military action against Israel, and to which many young Shi'ites already belonged. Amal's appeal lay at least in part in the effort they represented to reclaim the idea of "resistance" in south Lebanon from the Palestinians, by arguing that if anyone had the right to "resist" in the area, it was the Shi'ites themselves.<sup>28</sup> This dovetailed with the increasing criticism that Sadr and other Shi'ite leaders leveled at the PLO throughout the 1970s; Sadr felt that the PLO's leftist ideology rendered them ill-suited for true resistance because they "lacked a sense of martyrdom."<sup>29</sup> By con-

trast, Shi'ite tradition provided an ideological blueprint that was uniquely well suited to the narrative of resistance, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom.

The very nature of the social project being attempted by the Movement of the Dispossessed meant that it was most effectively promoted via grassroots social networks and Sadr's own sermons. Shared social practices, like the public celebration of Shi'ite religious festivals, were also an important vehicle for both building the movement and creating an increased sense of Shi'ite identity.<sup>30</sup> Sadr also took more overtly political steps to encourage social solidarity and political mobilization among Shi'ites: notable examples include the general strike called in 1970 to protest the lack of state protection for residents of the south after a particularly damaging Israeli raid, and a hunger strike (by Sadr himself) in a mosque in Beirut in protest against the spiraling violence of the early days of the civil war.<sup>31</sup> In the close-knit communities of south Lebanon, this was quite effective (although the audience for these events was as much the broader Lebanese public as the Shi'ite community itself).

But there were, of course, divisions within the Shi'ite community. Most obviously, there was the geographic, political, and social division between the south and the Bekaa valley. While the south was composed largely of agricultural villages dominated by the hereditary nobility, the Bekaa saw itself as much tougher, dominated by large clans, many of whom were (and are) quite independent. Ajami suggests that the clans of the Bekaa saw the southerners as overly complacent and passive, while the southerners saw those from the Bekaa as unruly outlaws.<sup>32</sup> This was a gap which Sadr found himself trying to bridge, and which neither Amal nor Hizbullah has been entirely successful in overcoming.

A second source of variation was with regard to social class. For the most part, the Shi'ite *zu'ama* were suspicious of and hostile to the modernizing project that Amal represented and Sadr himself advocated. Foremost among the opponents of the new movement was Kamal al Asad, head of the Asad clan and probably the most important *za'im* in the south. Also openly hostile were the Khalil family of Tyre; the family's current patriarch described Sadr to me as "a first class lip service man," and asserted that he was "Iranian, not Lebanese."<sup>33</sup> The Khalils and the Asads fundamentally distrusted Sadr and his movement and the threat to their position that he represented. In the 1970s, after the general strike mentioned above, in a gesture meant to indicate the government's seriousness about development in south Lebanon, a new body was established called the Council of the South, with budget of 30 million Lebanese lira intended for economic

development. Once Kamal al Asad took over the leadership, however, it quickly developed a reputation for corruption.<sup>34</sup>

But by the mid-1960s, many of those who had left a generation before to do business in West Africa were now returning to Lebanon with new wealth and ambition. Others had left their villages for Beirut, in search better educational and economic opportunities. To these people, as well as the more progressive members of the *zu'ama* (of whom there were some), Sadr's call for social mobilization, political modernization, and economic development was deeply appealing.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, as a political alternative to the leftist organizations dominated by Sunnis and the Palestinian militias then present in the south, Sadr's movement represented a way of encouraging young Shi'ites to "return to their roots." In short, the movement was able to attract a wide, grassroots following in the rural south through its Shi'ite revivalist message, as well as support from the new Shi'ite elite through the opportunity it represented for political empowerment of those who had been previously excluded by the *zu'ama*.

Closely intertwined with the narratives of social justice and resistance being promulgated by Sadr and his followers was the provision of services, including security, especially in the south. Indeed, the Movement of the Dispossessed can be understood as a self-help organization as much as a political movement. In conjunction with the political awareness fostered by Sadr and his followers, there was a growth in civil society organizations and community associations across south Lebanon in the 1960s. Some of this occurred independently of the Movement of the Dispossessed, of course, but some of it was deliberately encouraged by Sadr and his followers.

At the same time, a large part of Sadr's political project focused on both the strengthening of the state and improving the position of the Shi'ites within the existing Lebanese system. The Movement of the Dispossessed and the Higher Shi'ite Council put a great deal of effort into lobbying the state on behalf of the Shi'ite community for the services to which they argued the Shi'ites were entitled as Lebanese. In other words, rather than simply building a separate service infrastructure (as they and many other militias would eventually do when the state essentially abdicated many of its responsibilities during the war), these organizations also served the Shi'ite community by acting as advocates, which the hereditary elites had largely failed to do because of their preference for the status quo.

When Amal emerged as an armed movement separate from the Movement of the Dispossessed, it began providing a different kind of service: security. The presence of the PLO in southern Lebanon not only led

to retaliatory strikes by the IDF but also exposed civilians in the area to the abusive behavior of some of the fedayeen (see Chap. 2). Amal acted to protect civilians and at times to try and prevent the establishment of PLO positions near civilian areas, both of which brought it into conflict with the PLO.<sup>36</sup> (Tensions were also exacerbated by clashes in and around the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut.<sup>37</sup>) Sometimes, advocacy and security provision overlapped; after Maronite militiamen committed a massacre in the village of Khiyam in 1977, killing 21 people, survivors who fled the village for Beirut pled their case to Musa Sadr himself, who in turn protested to President Elias Sarkis and the Arab League.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, in its early years, first as the Movement of the Dispossessed and then as Amal, the movement's approach to the Shi'ite community was a potent mixture of marketing and the provision of important services. Under Sadr's leadership, Amal was able to carve out a space for Shi'ite political mobilization in the Lebanese context, convincing many Shi'ites to understand themselves and their relationship to both their community and the state very differently. Amal then successfully mediated between those who now saw themselves as constituents and the state in ways that validated its legitimacy, competence, and authority in powerful ways.

### *Other Audiences*

Although Amal was focused on courting support in the heavily Shi'ite south and (to a lesser extent) the Bekaa valley, Sadr was a canny enough politician to realize that relations with the non-Shi'ite public in Lebanon still mattered. In its early days, the Movement of the Dispossessed clearly benefited from Sadr's reputation as being outside of Lebanon's fractious ethnic politics. He was able to claim and hold the moral high ground by eschewing violence, at least officially, until forced to reveal the existence of the Amal militia in 1975. Amal's image among non-Shi'ites in the south and across the country also benefited from Sadr's personal reputation for tolerance and moderation as he actively worked to break down long-standing Shi'ite taboos against inter-sectarian contact. Ajami recounts on episode in which, after being contacted by Christian ice cream vendor who was distressed that his sales were suffering due to the largely Shi'ite population's reluctance to buy from a non-Muslim, Sadr very deliberately and publicly bought an ice cream from him during a Friday afternoon stroll after prayers.<sup>39</sup> Stories like this one gave Sadr a reputation for kindness and tolerance that garnered him real sympathy and admiration across Lebanon's sects. When he launched a hunger strike to protest the spiral-

ing violence in the early months of the civil war, a group of Christian and Shi'ite women in south Lebanon began a similar hunger strike together, in solidarity. This helped contribute to the image of the Movement of the Dispossessed as holding a kind of moral high ground apart from the other political parties in Lebanon, and perhaps helps explain the presence of his picture in the office of a member of the Kataeb politburo.

In contrast, the relationship between Amal and the Palestinians was much more difficult. As noted in the previous chapter, the relationship between the PLO and Shi'ite civilians in the south became quite hostile by the early 1980s. This was also true of the relations between Amal and Palestinian civilians in Beirut. Because of the proximity of the Palestinian and Shi'ite refugee communities—the two groups often lived in the same overcrowded neighborhoods—tensions sometimes arose. By the late 1970s, this had begun to generate struggles for control and occasional clashes of interest, sometimes with tragic results. An early indicator came during the Syrian intervention in 1976. During the siege and massacre of the Palestinian settlements of Tel al Zaatar and neighboring Nabaa by Christian militias with the tacit blessing of the newly arrived Syrian occupation forces, the Shi'ites in the refugee camp found themselves caught between the Palestinians, who saw them as collaborators with the Syrians, and the Maronite militias. When Amal negotiated with the Maronites for some of its leaders and their families to be evacuated from the camp leaving the Palestinian to their fate, the Palestinian leadership was outraged.<sup>40</sup>

To fully contextualize Amal's relationship with the Palestinian public in early years of the civil war, it is necessary to discuss the far more severe violence that took place during the War of the Camps in the mid-1980s. When the PLO began to reappear in the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut in 1984, Nabih Berri warned ominously that he would not allow a return to the Palestinian "state within a state" which had existed prior to the Israeli invasion of 1982.<sup>41</sup> That spring, Amal launched a vicious attack on Beirut's refugee camps. Between April 28 and May 7 alone, 68 civilians were killed and 340 wounded.<sup>42</sup> Amal fighters and Shi'ite units of the Lebanese army surrounded Sabra and Shatila, as well as Bourj al-Barajneh, establishing a siege that, for Bourj al Barajneh, would last three years. The Red Cross was unable to evacuate civilians, leaving residents trapped under Amal's bombardment. Rumors began to circulate that there had been a massacre; some who managed to escape the camps told of Amal militiamen gunning down the wounded in Sabra's Gaza hospital, of medical staff attacked and in one case killed for trying to protect patients, and of piles of bodies that had been shot once, execution style,

in the back of the head. Amal members were discovered driving trucks disguised as Red Cross vehicles full of bodies to be disposed of outside of the camps.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, Amal categorically denied that a massacre had taken place,<sup>44</sup> but some Western journalists also argued that most casualties had been the result of indiscriminate fire rather than face-to-face executions.<sup>45</sup> So great was the concern about the possibility of the resurgence of the PLO in the Shi'ite areas of Beirut that on June 11, Shi'ite gunmen actually hijacked a Beirut-bound plane in Amman, demanding the removal of all Palestinians (not just combatants) from the three major refugee camps in Beirut.<sup>46</sup>

While this violence took place slightly later than the period on which this chapter is focused, it does reflect not only the animosity which developed between the PLO and Amal but also the suspicion with which the Shi'ite movement came to view Palestinian civilians. This level of violence is not reflected in Amal's formative years and it seems unlikely that the imam himself, by all accounts a gentle person, would have endorsed this sort of brutality. But if Amal was not explicitly hostile to the Palestinian public in its early years, nor did it view them as a potential constituency. As a party oriented toward the Lebanese political system, focused on the communal rights of Shi'ites, the Palestinians were of secondary concern to the Amal movement.

### *Amal's Role in Lebanese Politics*

As noted in the previous chapter, by the late 1960s, the Lebanese government had become sufficiently factionalized that it is difficult to treat it, or any party's relations with it, with any degree of uniformity. As a general rule, though, Amal was explicitly in favor of strengthening the Lebanese state and mostly refrained from attempting to coerce its political rivals.

One running theme in Amal's early political program was an interest in empowering the Lebanese state to take a greater role in guaranteeing the security of south Lebanon. In this sense, Amal was a conservative movement, if not a rightist one. As the security situation deteriorated in the south in the 1970s, Sadr openly called for the Lebanese military to take charge of the region, thereby rejecting the alternative proto-state structures created first by the PLO in "Fatahland" and later by Israel in the "security belt."<sup>47</sup> By the end of the 1960s, especially after the PLO came under Fatah's leadership, Palestinian operations against Israel were resulting in waves of Israeli reprisal attacks that created massive flows of

(mostly Shi'ite) internally displaced persons (IDPs).<sup>48</sup> After a particularly damaging attack in May of 1970, Sadr called for a general strike across Lebanon in solidarity with the south. In a speech announcing the strike, he advocated an explicitly statist message saying that the people of the south (and by implication, the Shi'ites) didn't want charity as a response to a particular crisis, as if they were outsiders, but rather the long-term development aid and provision of security from the state to which they were entitled as Lebanese.<sup>49</sup> (It is perhaps a painful irony that this same development aid was in later decades handed out by Amal under Berri as a form of patronage conditional on political support.) In a similar vein, part of Amal's official program was support for the Lebanese army and a demand that it be made responsible for security in the south.<sup>50</sup> This may in part be due to the fact that the majority of the enlisted soldiers, if not the officer corps, in the Lebanese military were Shi'ite, but by and large Amal pursued a policy toward the state characterized not so much by Amal trying to market its own policies to the state, as trying to market the idea of a strong state to the state itself.

But as much as Amal might have liked the state to function as an efficient and impartial unitary actor, in the years leading up to the civil war and certainly after its onset, the Lebanese state was simply too fragmented for this to be possible. This meant that, as for the PLO, Amal's policies toward the various components of the Lebanese state were both complicated and sometimes contradictory. In general, Amal sought to frame itself in such a way as to avoid conflict with all parties while refusing to act as a proxy for or junior partner to any of them. Too weak in its early years to coerce the other factions into providing it with funding and arms, Amal instead sought to gain political acceptance and to carve out a space from which to advocate for Shi'ite interests in Lebanon.

The Shi'ites had been largely excluded from the political wrangling that characterized Lebanese politics in the decade before the civil war. As noted in Chap. 2, the primary rivalry was between the largely Maronite right and the mostly Sunni and Druze left. For these parties, the fight was about larger questions, like whether Lebanon should be a part of the Arab world and its political struggles, or whether it was essentially separate (as some right-wing Maronites argued). It was also about the division of power under the National Pact which privileged the Maronites over other communities, although there was little acknowledgment that the Shi'ites were far more disadvantaged under this distribution of power than were the Sunnis.

Sadr, a political pragmatist, tried to steer a middle path between the two. On the one hand, prior to the outbreak of the war and even in its first months, Amal was officially allied with the LNM and had cordial relations with at least some factions of the PLO at least some of the time. Both were progressive organizations, broadly defined, and many of Sadr's political goals in terms of economic reform meshed with those advocated by the LNM. But despite this alliance, Sadr's movement was ideologically quite different from the LNM; he advocated for social justice based on religious justifications or simply for its own sake, rather than using the language of Marxism—indeed, he was avowedly anti-communist.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, Sadr's support for the strengthening of the Lebanese state and armed forces was at odds with the left's general opposition to the state, at least in its current form. Of course, as the state's institutions weakened during the early 1970s and neared collapse with the onset of the civil war, the concept of the-state-as-rescuer clearly became a much harder sell. Nevertheless, this attitude toward the Lebanese state would remain relatively constant. Unlike either the PLO or Hizbullah, Amal never advocated the overthrow of the Lebanese system, but instead sought more influence within it.

One very real source of tension between Amal and the other factions in the Lebanese government was their competition over political legitimacy and, practically speaking, recruitment. Amal represented a source of direct, if unacknowledged, competition with the leftist movements for members. The SSNP, Ba'ath party, communists, and other leftist factions had long attracted large numbers of Shi'ite adherents; indeed, as noted previously, these parties represented the major vectors of political mobilization for Shi'ites in Lebanon prior to Sadr's launching of the Movement of the Dispossessed and even well into the civil war. After all, the Shi'ites were by far the most disadvantaged under the existing system, and it is perhaps unsurprising that calls for reform, greater economic equality, and an abolition of the National Pact (all part of the LNM's general program) should resonate with them.<sup>52</sup>

But Amal in its early years sought to construct a different sort of movement, based on Shi'ite identity, which rejected out of hand both the atheism of the left and its Sunni-dominated, pan-Arabist identity politics. Luring young Shi'ites away from these organizations was clearly part of Sadr's purpose in launching his movement.<sup>53</sup> More specifically, by the mid-1970s, Sadr was strongly critical of the left's willingness to spend Shi'ite lives for what he did not view as a Shi'ite cause, famously remark-

ing that Jumblatt was willing to “fight the Christians to the last Shi’ite.” In this sense, he steered a path of “neither east nor west, only Islam” that presaged the approach taken by Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran by the end of the decade.<sup>54</sup>

Sadr’s project in some ways should have put Amal at odds with the Maronite right, who wished above all else to preserve the status quo, but he sought to avoid overtly alienating the Maronite leadership. He declined to call for a new census in 1970, for instance, knowing that while this would clearly be to the advantage of the Shi’ites by offering proof that they constituted the single largest demographic, it would also alarm the already skittish Maronites, who were by that point clearly a minority. Moreover, in framing Amal as an alternative Muslim movement, oriented toward Lebanon explicitly rather than the rest of the Arab world, Sadr was able to present his movement as an appealingly less threatening alternative to the pan-Arab Muslim left.<sup>55</sup>

For a time, Sadr managed to successfully balance between the LNM and the Maronite right. In a speech at the American University of Beirut in 1970, before a largely pro-Palestinian student audience, he finessed the issue, stating that the Palestinians had the right to launch attacks against Israel from Lebanon, but should do so in coordination with the Lebanese state. At the same time, he said that if Israel couldn’t stop the PLO from launching attacks, then why should it expect the Lebanese army to be able to do so?<sup>56</sup> As Ajami puts it, “He positioned himself, or tried to, between the Maronites who opposed the Palestinian armed presence in the country and the Sunnis who offered the Palestinian their support. Now and then he talked of the shared dilemma of the disinherited Palestinians and the Shi’a.”<sup>57</sup>

But by the 1970s, this balancing act was no longer so feasible, and Amal began to shift away from the PLO (and the left) and toward the Maronites. The Maronites were becoming increasingly concerned both about their position in Lebanon and about the country’s broader trajectory, laying the blame for both on the Palestinians and the Lebanese left. During this period, Sadr began moving closer to President Suleiman Franjiyeh, who was seeking a Shi’ite ally not only against the LNM but also against his adversaries within the Maronite community.<sup>58</sup> A US state department officer wrote in a cable to Washington in 1974 that at a dinner with Sadr, he found him relatively “moderate” with regard to Franjiyeh, despite his open criticism of the government in general, writing further that

Imam [Musa Sadr is] currently cutting a broad swath in the Lebanon and in Beirut. In the former he is conducting nearly daily meetings with Shi'a faithful, the length and breadth of the Bekaa. In Beirut he is meeting constantly with political leaders, principally Maronite, and several of the latter have told me that there is a definite Maronite campaign to save the imam from the left and assist him in his current campaign for reforms.<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, Shi'ite opinion in the south was beginning to turn against the Palestinians and relations with the LNM were fraying. Amal's decision to side with the Syrians during their intervention in Lebanon in 1976 (discussed later in this chapter) further harmed relations with the left, and by extension, with the Palestinians. So for a time, Sadr's attempt to frame Amal in ways palatable to both the right and left was relatively successful. It helped the movement to gain a place at the Lebanese political table and avoided conflict (for the most part) with the other political leaders. It even helped generate support for reforms like the establishment of the Council of the South. Had Sadr tried to directly confront either side, the nascent Shi'ite movement might have found itself in far more difficult circumstances.

### *The Impact of Amal's Domestic Policy*

Amal's early domestic policy was extremely successful. Most significantly, Sadr managed to mobilize the Shi'ite population based on a Shi'ite identity—while this is now taken for granted as being politically salient, it had been far less true before Sadr and the Movement of the Dispossessed made it so.<sup>60</sup> If successful marketing for a militant group means convincing its audience that its narrative of political contention is the correct one and that it is indeed the appropriate representative of that community and its grievances, Amal was, in its early years, extremely effective at marketing itself. In contrast with the PLO, which had advocated a narrative that identified the IDF as the principle adversary and promoted a combination of class-based and Arab identity-based interests, Amal was able to successfully convince many Shi'ites that their interests lay elsewhere. More impressively, it was able to do so without overtly antagonizing the other political factions in Lebanon. Rather than trying to coerce the state into giving the Shi'ite community what Amal's leaders argued they were entitled to, Sadr was able to deftly steer a middle course between the other political factions and to claim a seat at Lebanon's political table that the Shi'ites had long been denied.

The emergence of a politicized Shi'ite identity in Lebanon was an important outcome in and of itself. It laid the groundwork not just for Amal's operations but also for the emergence of Hizbullah in the 1980s. But it also had concrete and immediate benefits. By the time Israel launched Operation Litani in 1978, Amal had established a broad base of popular support across southern Lebanon and throughout the expatriate community in West Africa. Official membership was quite low, but local militias would often form for defense of a particular village and begin referring to themselves as members of Amal without actually going through the group's official recruitment process or being incorporated into its command structure. This allowed Amal to grow its ranks very quickly. On the other hand, this also meant that the movement's central leadership did not have a great deal of control over the process. Timur Goksel, the former spokesman for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in Lebanon who is very familiar with Amal, characterized this as both a strength and a weakness:

It became the most amazing grassroots movement. ... It was a very popular movement, they could mobilize up to ten fifteen thousand guys with guns within half an hour. But without any idea why they are mobilized or which direction they are going. No command structure, their organization has always been very weak ... but their popularity ... what a waste of potential, unbelievable.<sup>61</sup>

So, while "membership" in the movement was widespread, the central command at times had little direct control over some of the fighters. In some ways, this was similar to the PLO's experience in the aftermath of the Battle of Karameh in 1968; like the PLO, Amal suddenly received a large number of recruits and had trouble training them and integrating them into its command structure. But unlike the PLO, Amal's immediate problem was that their fighters were disorganized, rather than coercive.

This was partly a product of the isolation of individual villages, and partly an unexpected consequence of the enthusiasm with which Sadr's message of renewal and mobilization was greeted. Norton notes that the diffuse support base the movement's grassroots approach generated meant that it was militarily rather weak, at least as compared with some of the other militias and in particular the Palestinians. This gave it limited coercive power relative to its rivals, and left them largely concerned with local security and defense.<sup>62</sup> (By 1981, Berri was sufficiently concerned at the lack of control

over new recruitment that the process was suspended altogether until the central leadership was able to reassert some degree of authority over it.) On the other hand, these local militias did have sufficient capacity that they were able to prevent the PLO from reestablishing some of the positions near villages in the south that they were forced to abandon during Operation Litani, suggesting that they were not entirely ineffective.

The other component of Amal's approach to the Shi'ite community, the provision of services, also changed over time. When service provision is most effective, it functions as a kind of demonstration model of the state the organization claims to be capable of building, if given the chance to govern. This can allow the movement to build support that extends beyond those actually using the services it provides. This was the case in Amal's early years, when the Movement of the Dispossessed gained the admiration of both Shi'ites and non-Shi'ites, though Sadr's personal charisma likely had a great deal to do with this.

But when the provision of services devolves into the simple distribution of patronage, it has a far less positive impact. When a movement becomes less accountable to its constituents, it may lose access to intangible assets like political legitimacy, and it may find that the fighters it recruits are less committed. This was the PLO's experience in the 1970s and 1980s, and became Amal's experience as well in the early 1980s as, under Berri's leadership, the movement came to rely increasingly on political and financial patronage. In this sense, Berri's leadership resembled a reversion to the politics of Lebanese feudalism that Sadr had upended. (In this, it was hardly unique among the Lebanese political parties.) Berri and the rest of the Amal leadership used their ability to allocate public funding in south Lebanon (or not) to reward those loyal to them. American diplomatic cables reveal that both Amal's allies and adversaries believed that municipalities supportive of Amal were more likely to receive government development aid, while those supportive of Hizbullah might receive somewhat less.<sup>63</sup> Today, Amal is viewed by many Lebanese as extremely corrupt, but still represents the main secular alternative to Hizbullah. While this may be unlikely to inspire the same passionate devotion that Sadr himself once did, or that Hizbullah would prove able to in later decades, Amal nevertheless retains a strong position in intra-Shi'ite political competition. However, the shift away from marketing and toward patronage helped to entrench its status as a purely local organization.

As for the other audiences to which Amal addressed itself in its early years—Lebanon's non-Shi'ite inhabitants and the Lebanese state itself—the results were mixed, but largely positive. At least initially, Sadr's moderate approach seemed to convince many non-Shi'ite Lebanese that the

movement did not represent a serious threat to their interests. This may have been less true of the Palestinian public, but given that the territory that Amal was focused on in those years was primarily in the south, its relationship with the Palestinian public was less important.<sup>64</sup>

The careful balancing that Sadr managed between the different factions of the Lebanese government provided important breathing space for the movement in its early years by convincing potential rivals that it did not represent a threat to their interests. This was particularly effective with regard to the Maronites. The cordial relationship that this enabled Amal to build with the other Lebanese factions ultimately allowed it to retain its independence from the PLO in a way that other leftist parties were unable to do. Its positive relationship with the military in particular proved beneficial in that it removed a potential barrier to the growth of Amal's influence in the south.

In sum, Amal's domestic policy in its early years was focused primarily on those it saw as its "real" constituency, but did not neglect the important matter of reassuring those in other communities that it posed no threat either to their interests or to the broader Lebanese political system. This provided Amal literal and metaphorical space in which to grow. It was able to build real loyalty within the Shi'ite community and to successfully challenge the power and influence of the Shi'ite *zu'ama*. In its domestic policies, at least, Amal was quite successful during this period.

#### FOREIGN RELATIONS (AT HOME AND ABROAD)

Of course, Amal's domestic policy is only part of the story. Its relationships with foreign actors were also an important part of the equation. The most important of these relationships, in its early years, were with Syria and the PLO, although Iran also played a role. But "important" in this case does not necessarily mean "successful"; both relationships had substantial effects on Amal's evolution and later behavior, but neither was entirely positive in its consequences for the movement. The relationship with the PLO proved extremely useful in Amal's early days, but then transformed into one of open hostility, while Amal's relationship with Syria was based heavily on its role as a military proxy for Syrian interests in Lebanon. While this proved beneficial in the short term, it ultimately stunted Amal's prospects for growth in the long term. In general, while Amal's domestic relationships were such that they helped the organization put down firm roots that contributed its overall political resilience, its foreign policy was far less effective and prevented the movement from growing beyond the Lebanese context.

*The PLO*

The relationship between the PLO and the Amal movement, by turns cooperative and conflictual, ultimately became a competition over ownership of the narrative of “resistance” in Lebanon. Early on, there appeared to be significant common ground between the two organizations. Farid el Khazen describes the relationship as one of “solidarity by default,”<sup>65</sup> but this may understate matters somewhat. Members of several Palestinian factions recounted feeling genuine solidarity with the people of south Lebanon, although they also acknowledged the coercive behavior described in the last chapter.<sup>66</sup> Musa Sadr himself spoke of an alliance between “those deprived in their homeland and those deprived of their homeland,” that is, the Palestinians and the Shi’ites.<sup>67</sup> Both saw themselves as organizations that represented those disenfranchised by the status quo in 1970s Lebanon.

Both because of these commonalities and because of geographic proximity (given that the PLO was then effectively based in south Lebanon) when it was first established, Amal looked to the various Palestinian militias in the south for training and support. For the most part they relied on Fatah, partly because it was the single largest faction and partly because the other Palestinian factions tended to “pair up” with those Lebanese parties with whom they felt some ideological affinity.<sup>68</sup> (The leftists supported the communists, etc.) In this sense, Fatah may well have believed that what they were helping to establish was a mainstream Shi’ite militia that would help to balance the influence of the leftist parties, which Fatah (and in particular Arafat himself) spent a great deal of time trying to restrain. Given that Amal initially appeared to be a moderate leftist party with a mildly populist orientation, and that many Shi’ites were already part of the constellation of organizations that comprised the Lebanese left, this was not an unreasonable expectation.

Conversely, Fatah was an important ally for Amal. Most immediately, given the power the Palestinian armed factions then had in the south and Amal’s relative weakness, having the assent of the PLO leadership made organizing the new militia far easier. But Palestinian support was not merely passive; Fatah officers helped train new Amal recruits. In fact, one of the 27 casualties in the explosion that forced Sadr to acknowledge Amal’s existence was a Fatah officer who had been doing exactly that. A less deliberate but equally valuable form of assistance were the experienced Shi’ite fighters who joined Amal after gaining important combat experience as members of Fatah or other Palestinian groups (albeit in some cases out of financial need rather than conviction).

But very quickly, the relationship turned sour. Israeli reprisals had always been a source of contention between the Shi'ite leadership and the Palestinians, and Sadr's insistence that the Lebanese state should exercise final authority in the south certainly stood in opposition to Palestinian preferences, stated or not. As Israeli reprisals escalated in the early 1970s and violence increased in the south after the onset of the civil war, Sadr and the Higher Shi'ite Council became increasingly incensed at what they saw as the disproportionately high cost that the Shi'ites of south Lebanon were being asked to pay in the service of Palestinian national goals. In 1973, Sadr bluntly told an officer at the US embassy that "our sympathy [for the Palestinians] no longer extends to actions which expose our people to additional misery and deprivation."<sup>69</sup>

The real break between the two came with the Syrian invasion in the summer of 1976. Despite earlier statements in support of the Joint Forces (the coalition composed of the PLO and its Lebanese allies), Amal backed the Syrian invasion. This was perhaps unsurprising; Israeli reprisal attacks against PLO positions in the south had created enormous suffering for civilians in the area and had contributed to the growing migration of IDPs to the "belt of misery" surrounding Beirut. Amal's leaders calculated that the Syrian intervention would lead to greater security and stability for the south and openly supported the invasion, putting the movement in direct conflict with the PLO.<sup>70</sup> In June, Palestinian forces went so far as to shell both the Higher Shi'ite Council offices and the home of Musa Sadr himself,<sup>71</sup> and in August Palestinian and communist fighters occupied Amal offices in Beirut and in the south.<sup>72</sup> But the Syrian invasion changed the distribution of power on the ground in Lebanon, empowering those factions loyal to Syria.<sup>73</sup> Amal was now in a far stronger position than it had been with regard to the PLO, and better positioned to assert itself both politically and militarily.

Relations continued to deteriorate in the late 1970s as it became clear that Amal's hope that the Syrian intervention would result in some peace and quiet for the beleaguered south would not be fulfilled. Palestinian operations continued from south Lebanon, with the tacit blessing of the Syrians, and more Israeli reprisal attacks followed. Norton goes so far as to suggest that this was a deliberate policy on the part of the IDF intended to drive a wedge between Amal and the PLO. Norton recounts hearing anecdotes in which the fedayeen, rather than the Israelis, were positioned as the villains, and the Lebanese the victims. "More than a few times I heard people in meager surroundings mutter 'the basis of

the problem is the *fida'iyin*', whereas ten years earlier, they would have proclaimed 'the basis of the problem is Palestine.'"74 Sadr criticized the PLO's role in provoking Operation Litani in 1978<sup>75</sup> and voiced open opposition to its power in the south: "The Cairo agreement did not give the south to the Palestinians. ... The Cairo agreement gave them the right of military presence and of infiltration through the south deep into the occupied territories in order to carry out *fedayeen* operations, but not the right to fire rockets."<sup>76</sup> Nabih Berri later stated: "The people of the south, including the Shia, have given the Palestinian cause more than all the Arabs combined have given it. They have given the cause their land, their children, their security, their orchards—everything but their honor and dignity."<sup>77</sup>

All of this led Amal to shift from a policy toward the PLO based on a shared political project to one based more on coercion. As the situation in the south escalated, the Shi'ites grew increasingly frustrated with their position in the line of fire between the IDF and the PLO. In the years after Operation Litani, clashes became more common between the two militias. On the one hand, villages began to form local security forces to maintain security and prevent incursions by the IDF and their Lebanese proxy force, the SLA. These local forces were often by default affiliated with Amal, or at least saw themselves that way, and did not see the PLO as representing or protecting their interests.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, open clashes erupted between Amal forces and various PLO factions as Amal attempted to establish its own sovereignty over south Lebanon. Hostilities were particularly frequent between Amal and the Nasserite and Iraqi-backed Palestinian factions, given their hostility to Syria and therefore to Amal as its client and ally. By the summer of 1980, hostilities had become sufficiently severe that Arafat himself flew back from the Fourth Fatah Party Congress in Damascus to mediate between the Nasserites and Amal.<sup>79</sup> The Israeli invasion of 1982 in this sense represented a kind of *deus ex machina* which put the simmering tensions between the two parties in stasis until they erupted again in the form of the War of the Camps in 1985.

But in addition to the sporadic military conflict between the two, there was also a consistent ideological rivalry that was more enduring than the military conflict. This was the competition over which constituted the legitimate resistance in south Lebanon. Particularly telling is a statement by Musa Sadr as related by Karim Pakradouni:

Shortly before his disappearance he said to me “The Palestinian resistance is not a revolution. It does not seek martyrdom. It is a military machine that terrorizes the Arab world. With weapons, Arafat gets money; with money he can feed the press; and thanks to the press he can get a hearing before world public opinion.” And then he added: “The PLO is an element of disorder in the south. The Shia have finally gotten over their inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Palestinian Organization.”<sup>80</sup>

### *Syria*

In June of 1975, in what was probably the first official indicator of the growing alliance between Amal and the Syrian government, Sadr appeared at a graduation ceremony for Fatah cadets at a military academy in Syria.<sup>81</sup> Almost from the beginning, Syria was Amal’s most important foreign sponsor. But while the two did share some objectives, the relationship was based primarily on Amal’s position as a proxy for Syria in Lebanon. This meant that while foreign sponsorship was extremely valuable for Amal, the nature of proxy service meant that it also had a stunting effect on the organization’s growth over time.

Amal’s role as a Syrian proxy in Lebanon was framed, at least in part, by Syria’s preferences regarding Lebanon’s civil war and Lebanese politics more generally. Syria had long felt that political developments in Lebanon fell within its sphere of influence and had sought to cultivate relationships with various Lebanese factions to exert its influence. Because the Syrian regime feared that any instability in Lebanon could prove contagious, Asad’s overriding preference with regard to Lebanon was for stability, and preferably a stability dominated by Syria. Leftist ambitions to overthrow the status quo entirely seemed increasingly at odds with this agenda. Throughout 1975 and into 1976, the Syrian regime watched with growing concern as the Palestinian militias and their leftist allies seemed increasingly poised to disrupt, destabilize, and perhaps permanently alter the Lebanese balance of power.<sup>82</sup> While this would have benefited some Lebanese and proved detrimental to others, for Syria, such a change was simply too risky a prospect and raised profound concerns about the reliability of the LNM and PLO as allies. Given these concerns, it is therefore not terribly surprising that Syria sought to cultivate a relationship with the Shi’ites instead.

Accordingly, the character of the alliance was based for the most part on Amal’s ability to further the Syrian desire for balance and stability in Lebanon. Amal sided with the Syrians during the invasion in 1976 largely out of frustration with the PLO, but this certainly coincided with Syrian

preferences. As Syria settled in for what would be a protracted stay in Lebanon, cooperation with Amal proved to be an indirect but efficient means of extend Syrian control in the south. At times, Amal also acted as a Syrian proxy against the various Iraqi-sponsored Palestinian militias, such as the Arab Liberation Front.<sup>83</sup>

In the earlier days of this relationship, when it suited their purposes, the Amal leadership was sometimes willing to go against Syrian preferences—when Sadr once backed Fatah in a disagreement with Al Saiqa, a Syrian official reportedly said in exasperation “We suddenly realized that our friend and ally, Imam Musa, was a check that bounced.”<sup>84</sup> But episodes like this became far less common as the organization grew ever closer to Syria under Berri’s leadership.<sup>85</sup>

But there was also a genuinely ideological component to the relationship that predated Sadr’s disappearance and Berri’s tenure as party head. To begin with, Sadr himself had been a valuable ally to Hafez al Asad because he could provide an Islamic legitimacy that Asad badly needed. The Asads are members of Syria’s Alawite minority, a Muslim sect which emerged as an offshoot of Shi’ite Islam in the ninth century, members of which constitute about 12 % of the Syrian population. In the 1970s, with the strengthening of the Muslim Brotherhood in Syria, the regime faced increasing pressure from a largely Sunni opposition which, among other things, raised the question as to whether the Alawites were in fact Muslims at all. This represented a serious threat to the regime. It was therefore profoundly helpful when, in 1974, Sadr declared the Alawite sect to be a form of Twelver Shi’ism.<sup>86</sup>

More broadly, Asad was predisposed to be supportive of those he saw as fellow challengers to Sunni political power. By strengthening Lebanon’s Shi’ites against the largely Sunni LNM, Asad hoped to prevent an ascendant Sunni movement in Lebanon from strengthening his own domestic Sunni opposition.<sup>87</sup> In this sense, Amal’s identity as a Shi’ite movement challenging the Sunni monopoly over Muslim political mobilization in Lebanon resonated with Asad’s frustration with Sunni domination of pan-Arab politics in the wider Middle East. Sadr was able to leverage this in building the relationship with Syria.

For Amal itself, the relationship with Syria was also important simply by virtue of its singularity. While the Movement of the Dispossessed enjoyed a great deal of admiration in Lebanon in its early years, Amal did relatively little to market a broader political program on a regional level and so attracted relatively little support, political or otherwise, from others in the region. This represented a contrast with the PLO which was deeply frustrating to

the Shi'ite leadership. The Palestinian cause had a great deal of emotional resonance across the Arab world that the PLO was able to convert into political influence, but the suffering of Lebanon's Shi'ites did not apparently have the same power to mobilize support on a regional level. Sadr and later Berri both became increasingly angry and frustrated that the residents of south Lebanon were apparently expected to endure ever greater levels of suffering in support of the Palestinian resistance while receiving relatively little sympathy from the other Arab governments for their own experience of dispossession. In an interview with *Le Matin* in 1982, Berri responded to the interviewer's repeated questions about the Palestinians in Lebanon by asking:

Why talk about the Palestinians only? Is the problem faced by the Palestinians the only problem in Lebanon? I am aware of the tragedy they are experiencing, but does my people's tragedy count for nothing? In view of what has just happened in southern Lebanon, with thousands of casualties and tens of thousands of refugees and homeless people and the destruction of Burj al-Barajneh [then a Shi'ite area], let no one, not even a Palestinian, come to say to me: "My problem is more important than yours."<sup>88</sup>

Syria, however, appeared to represent a welcome exception to the idea that the rest of the Arab world cared little for the problems of the Shi'ites. This rendered the relationship both exceptional and, from Amal's perspective, irreplaceable.

### *Iran*

There is a final foreign relationship that bears mentioning, at least briefly, and that is Amal's relationship with Iran. Prior to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Amal's relationship with the Shah's government is best described as "complicated." There were, of course, allegations by various of Sadr's adversaries and rivals that he had been dispatched to Lebanon by the Shah, or that he was an agent of the SAVAK (the Persian acronym for the Organization for Intelligence and National Security, the Shah's notoriously brutal secret police) or the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).<sup>89</sup> There is little evidence to suggest that the latter was true.<sup>90</sup> But Sadr did manage to maintain at least a cordial relationship with the Iranian government throughout the 1960s and received some funding from Iran to "further his efforts in Lebanon."<sup>91</sup>

By the early 1970s, however, the relationship had changed. Sadr was upset by the Shah's position during the October War in 1973. In 1974, he began to openly oppose the Shah's government, choosing instead to back

the revolutionary project advocated by Ayatollah Khomeini from his exile abroad.<sup>92</sup> Many of Khomeini's allies, most notably Mustafa Chamran, later minister of defense in Iran, spent years in exile in south Lebanon during which they formed relationships with Sadr and his movement, perhaps inclining him more toward sympathy with their ambitions. But after the revolution and Sadr's disappearance in 1978, it became clear that Amal's goals were not Iran's goals: Amal was, as noted above, focused on the position of Shi'ites in the Lebanese context and in adjusting the existing system to improve their position. The movement was not, and had never been, interested in an Islamic revolution in Lebanon. For that, Iran would have to wait for the emergence of Hizbullah in 1982.

### *The Impact of Amal's Foreign Policy*

The consequences of Amal's relationships with the PLO, Syria, and Iran both helped it establish itself as a local actor in Lebanon and ensured that it would have difficulty growing much beyond the Lebanese context. Amal's earlier, positive relationship with the PLO, based on what was at least perceived as a shared ideology, ensured that the movement had space to grow and develop in PLO-controlled south Lebanon. Its later coercive policy did help Amal to establish its dominant position in the area. By laying claim to the mantle of the "legitimate" resistance, Amal mounted a major ideological challenge to the PLO's own legitimacy and carved out an important sphere of influence for the Shi'ites in Lebanese politics. On the other hand, by cutting itself off from the Lebanese left, Amal lost a chance to be part of a larger regional political movement, as well as losing access to the regional ideological legitimacy that an alliance with the PLO was able to confer. Nevertheless, by the 1980s, Amal had little to lose and a great deal to gain by confronting the PLO in the south. But it is worth noting that Amal was not facing the kind of existential threat that the PLO or even Hizbullah would later face; had this been the case, its feud with the PLO might well have come back to haunt it.

The relationship with Iran, especially after the revolution, was limited enough that it did not carry the powerful consequences for Amal that the relationship with Syria did. Amal's unwillingness to change its basic character in pursuit of an alliance with the Islamic Republic was probably more a strength than a weakness and likely helped it to preserve much of its base. Those who would have preferred that the movement do so ultimately departed to form Hizbullah (as discussed in the next chapter) leaving the movement's core character largely unchallenged.

It is the effects of Amal's relationship with Syria that are by far the most significant for the movement's development. In one sense, Syrian sponsorship proved immensely useful to Amal. Especially after the Syrian army invaded in 1976, it proved to be powerful ally. Using its authority in Lebanon, Syria strengthened Amal's position relative both to the other Lebanese parties and to the Palestinians. This only intensified with Nabih Berri's ascendance, given his strong relationship with the Asad regime. With regard to more tangible forms of support, Syria provided both arms and funding.<sup>93</sup>

But there were also limits and costs associated with this relationship, as well as unforeseen consequences for Amal's overall character. First, the Syrian alliance quickly put Amal at odds with the LNM. Amal's decision to side with Syria during the invasion in 1976 created a rift with the Lebanese left. This was a trade-off that Amal was willing to make; the break would likely have occurred in any case, as the Shi'ites were by that stage already resentful of the behavior of the Palestinian fighters and increasingly unwilling to tolerate the consequences for southern villages of PLO raids against Israel. Nevertheless, Amal did experience some repercussions for its decision to prioritize the alliance with Syria, most notably its temporary expulsion from West Beirut in the summer of 1976.<sup>94</sup>

Far more serious was the mission creep and loss of autonomy that came along with Amal's status as a Syrian proxy. One of Amal's major assets in its early years was the moral high ground that it had inherited from the Movement of the Dispossessed under Sadr's leadership. But as the organization moved closer to Syria and Syria cemented its hegemony over Lebanon, Amal became far less independent, gained a reputation for corruption, and lost much of the legitimacy that it had in its early years. It is difficult to imagine Nabih Berri, for instance, going on a hunger strike to protest intra-Lebanese violence or being joined in doing so by Christians as a gesture of solidarity. While the organization was able to retain its grassroots base and much of its control over large areas of the south and parts of Beirut, its objectives fell ever more closely in line with Syria's. This had a strong impact on its overall character. Any ambitions to become a transnational organization or to promote a broad political project beyond Lebanon that Amal might have had—which, given Sadr's charisma and revivalist political project might not have been out of the question—were ultimately rendered impossible by its relationship with Syria and the prioritization of Syrian interests. Nonetheless, within Lebanon itself, Syrian sponsorship provided Amal with ample influence, backed by funding and arms, to establish itself as a powerful local actor.

### THREE CHALLENGES

Between 1978 and 1979, Amal faced three significant shocks: Operation Litani, which Israel launched against the PLO in south Lebanon in the middle of March, 1978; Musa Sadr's disappearance in Libya at the end of August; and the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. None of these events represented an existential threat to the movement, but taken together, they represent a period of turbulence. Amal emerged from this period with its position in Lebanon more or less intact, despite the changes in the movement produced by Berri's ascendance as its leader in 1980. On the other hand, while it demonstrated a great deal of local resilience, its influence did not spread beyond Lebanon, or indeed, beyond the Shi'ite community, an outcome which might have been different had Amal been more effective at marketing itself at a regional level.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Operation Litani represented Israel's first major attempt to actually remove the threat posed by the PLO by pushing it north of the Litani River and out of range of Israeli targets. While this was the culmination of years of conflict, the immediate cause for the operation was a raid on the Israeli coast by Fatah fighters, which led to a clash at a roadblock north of Tel Aviv resulting in 36 Israeli casualties, 34 of them civilian. Nine out of the ten fedayeen were killed as well. In response, the IDF invaded on March 14 with 25,000–30,000 ground forces and 300 tanks, and remained for three weeks.<sup>95</sup> The operation inflicted high casualties and significant physical destruction on south Lebanon and yet was only partly successful for the IDF. The PLO was pushed out of many of its positions temporarily, but not permanently.

Amal was able to navigate these challenges surprisingly successfully. Most immediately, the organization was able to exploit the power vacuum created by the PLO's (temporary) evacuation from some areas by solidifying their own influence. That said, this also led to further strain in relations with the PLO; when fedayeen attempted to retake their previous positions near southern villages, this sometimes led to clashes with local defense militias, many of whom were affiliated with Amal.

The PLO's evacuation in 1978 was, however, temporary. Operation Litani's more lasting effects were the establishment of a buffer zone along the border referred to by the IDF as the "security belt" and the appearance of two new actors in the south: UNIFIL and the SLA. UNIFIL was created by UN Security Council resolution 425, although the fact that it has remained in Lebanon since 1978 perhaps stretches the definition

of the word “interim.” It was intended to oversee the withdrawal of IDF forces after 1978 and to maintain quiet along the Israeli–Lebanese border. The IDF was meant to hand over control of the territory it had captured south of the Litani to UNIFIL, which would in turn guarantee stability in south Lebanon. Instead, the IDF handed control of 23 of the villages it had captured directly to the SLA. The SLA, led first by Saad Haddad and then by Antoine Lahad, was established by the IDF to act as their proxies in south Lebanon. SLA fighters were notorious for their abuse of civilians, and many southerners were conscripted into joining against their wills, although despite this the organization received significant support both from the IDF and from some factions in the Lebanese government.<sup>96</sup> As far as Amal was concerned, the SLA represented a threat both to its own authority in the south and to the authority of the Lebanese state.

Amal’s response to these new actors demonstrates that, especially in 1978, it was able to adapt successfully to changes in its immediate environment. While the SLA would prove to be a long-term adversary, Amal was able to manage the conflict fairly successfully. Its broad base of support, the result of its very successful political marketing in the Shi’ite community as well as the historical provision of services through the Movement of the Dispossessed, meant that it was never a serious drain on the pool of potential recruits for Amal (though the SLA’s own unpopularity was likely of greater importance). Syrian support likewise helped Amal maintain its presence in south Lebanon even as the PLO returned to the area.

Moreover, the pragmatic approach fostered by Sadr, including the general interest in supporting the expansion of “legitimate” authority, presented a basis for what would come to be a very positive relationship with UNIFIL. Had Amal reacted to the UN forces the way that Hizbullah eventually did, with suspicion and hostility, it could have found itself up against not only the PLO and SLA but the well-armed and well-trained UNIFIL as well. Instead, Amal fostered a positive working relationship with UNIFIL. Timur Goksel noted that Sadr’s declaration that UNIFIL soldiers were to be treated as “Shi’a brothers” “set the whole course” for UNIFIL’s relations with Amal. Goksel suggested that there was a strategic component to this approach—as the most powerful force in the south, UNIFIL represented a powerful ally for Amal.<sup>97</sup> But this alliance was made possible because of the careful course that Sadr set for his movement, between the Maronites and the Palestinians, allying with the Syrians but maintaining a focus on Lebanon.

The second major shock of 1978 was Sadr's disappearance in Libya. As noted previously, in August of 1978, Musa Sadr traveled to Libya to raise funds for Amal and for development in south Lebanon more broadly. He gave an interview on August 30, and the next day left his hotel with some of his staff for a meeting with Qadhafi. He was never heard from again.<sup>98</sup> Although Sadr had become somewhat less influential politically in Lebanon after 1976, he remained an immensely important figure within Amal and for the Shi'ite community at large. This made his disappearance potentially very dangerous for the movement; it could have resulted in political infighting or a gradual collapse in which fighters were gradually reabsorbed into the other leftist militias (although the ties that many of these groups had to Libya may perhaps have made this unlikely<sup>99</sup>).

Instead, Amal was able to use Sadr's disappearance to revitalize the organization, at least in the short term, by mobilizing the Shi'ite community to demand the imam's release. The Lebanese government became involved, sending a delegation to Libya and holding an extraordinary Cabinet meeting to discuss Sadr's disappearance.<sup>100</sup> In January, six Amal members hijacked an airplane en route to Amman, demanding the release of Musa Sadr, although they eventually surrendered and released all 73 hostages, in exchange for being allowed to hold a news conference explaining their demands.<sup>101</sup> Key in negotiating their release was Hussein al Hussein, then speaker of the parliament and head of Amal.<sup>102</sup> A similar hijacking followed in September of 1979, in which the three gunmen surrendered in Iran after guarantees were made that a message would be broadcast on the radio, communicating their accusation against Qadhafi in Sadr's disappearance.<sup>103</sup> Most notably, in September of 1978, a convoy of close to 200,000 people "in cars and busses and tractors" crossed into Syria to petition the pan-Arab summit being held in Damascus for information as to Sadr's whereabouts, holding signs reading "Oh Arabs, where is the imam?"<sup>104</sup>

If Sadr's disappearance galvanized the Shi'ite public in Lebanon politically, it also would prove powerful symbolically. The above reference to the fate of "the imam" at the hands of "the Arabs" could easily be a reference to the martyrdom of Hassan and Hussein, Ali's grandsons, at the hands of the Umayyad caliph Yazid. Moreover, Sadr's disappearance, and the mystery surrounding his fate, closely echoes the story of the Mahdi, or the 12th Imam, who vanished into occultation as a child in the ninth century. This was a motif that in many ways fit with Sadr's own melding of religious and political narratives. Sadr's image adorns Amal's bill-

boards, posters, websites, and other forms of publicity. (It is likewise used by Hizbullah, although somewhat less so.) Rather than collapsing entirely, Amal was able to use the crisis presented by Sadr's disappearance as a catalyst for further mobilization.

But for all the mobilization that Sadr's disappearance produced, it also demonstrated the limits of the movement's leverage at a regional level. The Arab regimes, many of which privately loathed Qadhafi, did not immediately rush to support Amal in demanding Sadr's release or at least information about his fate. That Amal activists resorted to hijacking airplanes and petitioning the pan-Arab summit in person indicates the degree to which the Shi'ite movement in Lebanon remained largely just that—a Shi'ite movement, not an Arab movement, with influence limited largely to Lebanon. It is difficult to imagine a similar reaction if Arafat, for instance, had disappeared under similar circumstances.

Finally, the third major change which occurred in 1979 was the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Again, the organization's response is reflective of its overall character. On the one hand, Amal managed to successfully balance between maintaining its independence and cultivating a cordial relationship with the new Islamic republic. Due in part to the relationship with Syria, first Hussein al Hussein and later Nabih Berri were able to maintain Amal's independence from Iran, and maintain Amal's local and communal focus. At the same time, relations between them were certainly positive, and Khomeini very publicly pushed the Libyans to provide more information about Sadr's fate.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, however, in maintaining this focus rather than exploiting the massive political and ideological impact of the revolution in Iran, Amal missed an opportunity to increase its regional influence. Those who sought to do so eventually left the organization entirely to form Hizbullah, which would eventually eclipse Amal even in Lebanon.

## CONCLUSION

The picture of Musa Sadr in Salim al Sayigh's office is emblematic of the particular role that Amal played (and plays) in Lebanese politics. Hassan Nasrullah, Abbas Mousawi, and other leaders of Hizbullah appeared—and appear—threatening and divisive to the leaders of Lebanon's Christian community. This is likewise true of the past and present Palestinian leadership. But Sadr—despite having been born in Iran—managed to create a movement that fit uniquely well in the Lebanese context. The Movement

of the Dispossessed, and even Amal itself, was able to carve out a space for Shi'ite mobilization and representation in Lebanon that did not directly threaten the system in the way that Hizbullah, or the Palestinians, or even the radical Sunni left, did.

But in championing the renewal and reconstruction of Shi'ite identity, the Movement of the Dispossessed was quite revolutionary. In the 1940s and 1950s, while the Lebanese national identity was being debated by the Maronites and Sunnis, the Shi'ites found themselves largely excluded from the conversation, represented only by the landed elites who had little interest in changing the existing system. "Shi'ite" identity was subsumed within a larger "Muslim" identity and specific Shi'ite interests went largely unaddressed. If Shi'ites did mobilize, they did so as part of the leftist organizations, rather than as Shi'ites, per se. By creating an explicitly Shi'ite political narrative, drawing on both traditional themes of dispossession and martyrdom, and newer themes of empowerment, mobilization, and social justice, Sadr and the movement he founded radically altered the political options for mobilization presented to the Shi'ite community. This in turn made possible the emergence of Hizbullah and profoundly challenged the Palestinian claim to the mantle of the "resistance." If Amal was essentially a local organization, it still had an impact on other actors in the larger conflict ecosystem.

Ultimately, with Nabih Berri's ascendance after Sadr's disappearance and Syria's increasing control over the organization, much of the moral high ground claimed by Musa Sadr was lost, and Amal became just another Lebanese militia. This strongly illustrates the dangers of proxyhood, given that it was Amal's increasing reliance on and subservience to Syria and its preferences that resulted in this change, although the movement's increasing corruption and reliance on patronage to maintain the support of its constituents was also a major factor. If the organization had been primarily a local militia in the 1970s, in the 1980s it became even more so. But the political project begun in Amal's early years still gave it an enormous amount of staying power, as would be demonstrated in the 1980s when it was thrown into direct conflict with a new Shi'ite rival—Hizbullah.

## NOTES

1. The fighting between Amal and Hizbullah that characterized the late 1980s was also such a test. It is the subject of Chap. 4.
2. "Formation of Resistance Organization Announced."
3. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Modernization in Lebanon*.

4. Particularly powerful in the South were the Khalils of Tyre, the Usairans of Saida, the Asads of Tayybi, and the Al Zains of Nabatiyeh. Norton, *Amal and the Shi`a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 20; Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Modernization in Lebanon*, 130–32. Ajami makes the point that due to Jabal `Amil's isolation from the wider Arab world and the disenfranchisement of Lebanon's Shi'ites, the "Arab Awakening" that accompanied the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and led to a new Arab political consciousness across the Middle East had little impact on Lebanon's Shi'ites, particularly those of the south. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 57–58.
5. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 64–77.
6. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Modernization in Lebanon*, 65.
7. Norton, *Amal and the Shi`a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 17–18.
8. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Modernization in Lebanon*, 67; Norton, *Amal and the Shi`a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 21.
9. Norton, *Amal and the Shi`a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*.
10. For more on this period in Lebanese history see El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*; Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*.
11. Norton, *Amal and the Shi`a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 34.
12. *Ibid.*, 36.
13. In much of the early reporting on the war by Western newspapers, the conflict is framed as being between "Moslems" and "Christians"—there is relatively little distinction made between Sunnis and Shi'ites. Even otherwise excellent scholarship from the 1960s, such as Hudson's *Precarious Republic*, tends to use this framework.
14. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 113–14.
15. *Ibid.*, 119. This was echoed by Lokman Slim in an interview.
16. Norton, *Amal and the Shi`a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 47.
17. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 179.
18. Norton, *Amal and the Shi`a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 47.
19. It may seem like splitting hairs to consider Amal's policy toward the PLO to be "foreign" policy and its policy toward the various Lebanese factions "domestic" policy, given that all of these factions were armed and all participated in the civil war. But for all its involvement in Lebanese politics, the PLO was not, nor did it consider itself to be, a Lebanese political party. Palestinian civilians, in contrast, were long-term residents who do represent a part of the domestic Lebanese audience. Despite being denied Lebanese citizenship, by the 1970s, many families had been resident in Lebanon for two generations and had never lived anywhere else.
20. Until 1982, its official demand was the end of confessional allocation of all but the top three posts in the government (the president, the prime minister,

- and the speaker of the parliament, a post traditionally held by a Shi'ite). Norton suggests that the party's real goal by the 1980s was not the abolition of confessionalism but the allocation of political power through proportional representation, a move that would benefit the Shi'ites as the single largest sect. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 82–83.
21. *Ibid.*, 75–76.
  22. Interview, Ali Hamdan, Amal. Hamdan referred to Sadr's broader political aims as a "Shi'a agenda," and noted that by now, most of these have become mainstream and some included in Taif.
  23. El-Khazen, "Lebanon—Independent No More: Disappearing Christians of the Middle East," 260–64.
  24. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 78–79.
  25. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 137–44. This reinterpretation also extended to a more inclusive view of women's participation in politics with reference to the heroic actions of Imam Hussein's sister, Sayyida Zaynab.
  26. *Ibid.*, 156.
  27. Interview, Khalil al Khalil, Ambassador of Lebanon to Iran (former.)
  28. El-Khazen, "Lebanon—Independent No More: Disappearing Christians of the Middle East," 307.
  29. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 43.
  30. *Ibid.*, 41.
  31. "Southern Lebanese Declare Strike."
  32. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 128.
  33. Interview, Khalil al Khalil.
  34. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 44.
  35. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 99.
  36. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 167.
  37. "Amal, Fatah Organizations Battle."
  38. AP, "Moslems Accuse Christians of Slaughter in Lebanese Town."
  39. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*.
  40. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*, 405.
  41. US Embassy, Beirut, "Another 'War of the Camps' in the Offing?"
  42. "Heavy Shelling Rocks Beirut."
  43. Homan, "Firing Bars Red Cross at Camps."
  44. "Amal Denies Massacre of Beirut Palestinians."
  45. Fisk, "Syria Imposes a Shaky Peace after 600 Die in Battle of the Camps."
  46. Hijazi, "Beirut Hijackers Demand Departure of Palestinians."
  47. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 75.
  48. Those displaced by war technically become refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention only when they cross an international border. Those displaced within their home country are internally displaced persons, or IDPs.

49. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 124.
50. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 67.
51. US Embassy, Beirut, "Imam Musa as-Sadr."
52. A point convincingly made by Traboulsi. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*.
53. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 13–20.
54. *Ibid.*, 42.
55. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 178–79.
56. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 125–26.
57. *Ibid.*, 162.
58. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 180.
59. US Embassy, Beirut, "Imam Musa as-Sadr."
60. In this, there is a parallel with the PLO, which likewise deserves a great deal of credit for its role in preserving the idea of a Palestinian national identity.
61. Interview, Timor Goksel, UNIFIL (retired.)
62. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*.
63. It is worth noting, however, that the same cable suggests taking seriously a "third way" being proposed by none other than a member of the Asad clan in south Lebanon. While this may have been a genuine overture, the writer of the memo appeared unaware of the historical context behind his informant's antipathy for Amal and the bias that this might produce.
64. Later on, when Amal decided that any sort of Palestinian militancy represented a threat to its interests, its approach to Palestinian civilians obviously changed and became far more violent, resulting in some damage to Amal's reputation.
65. El-Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967–1976*, 44.
66. Interview, Abu Khalil. See also Iyad and Rouleau, *My Home, My Land: A Narrative of the Palestinian Struggle*.
67. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 180.
68. Interview, Abu Jihad.
69. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 162.
70. "Shi'ite Council Statement."
71. "Radio Reports Shi'ite Council Premises Shelled."
72. "Shi'ite Leader on Lebanese-Palestinian Relations."
73. Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 174.
74. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 51.
75. *Ad-Dustour* "Shi'ite Leader on Lebanese-Palestinian Relations."
76. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*; *ibid.*, 403. Sayigh argues convincingly that this policy preference stemmed in part from a fear that

- if Lebanon were to fragment, the Shi'ite areas would in the end be given to the Palestinians.
77. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 60.
  78. *Ibid.*, 50.
  79. *Ibid.*, 66.
  80. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 178.
  81. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 367.
  82. Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 280.
  83. Abukhalil, "Syria and the Shiites: Al-Asad's Policy in Lebanon," 9–10.
  84. Calis, "The Shiite Pimpernel."
  85. Interview, Mohammed Ali Moqalled, Communist Party of Lebanon. Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel*.
  86. Abukhalil, "Syria and the Shiites: Al-Asad's Policy in Lebanon," 9.
  87. Deeb, "Shia Movements in Lebanon: Their Formation, Ideology, Social Basis, and Links with Iran and Syria," 687.
  88. "Barri Says Shi'ites Will Be 'New Palestinians.'"
  89. This was a major theme in my conversation with Khalil al Khalil, 2012.
  90. The diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks make no mention of any such relationship, in any case.
  91. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*.
  92. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 194.
  93. Abukhalil, "Syria and the Shiites: Al-Asad's Policy in Lebanon," 10.
  94. *Ibid.*, 9–10.
  95. Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for the Palestinian State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993*, 426.
  96. *Ibid.*, 428.
  97. These were so positive that Amal's leadership insisted that a clause be included in the Damascus Agreement (which ended the fighting between Amal and Hizbullah in 1989) that UNIFIL soldiers were to be off limits as targets. Interview, Timor Goksel.
  98. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 183.
  99. Gage, "Lebanon's Shiites Growing Assertive Against Palestinians; Shiites Could Tip Scales, Shiite Villages Destroyed."
  100. "Mission Leaves Beirut to Investigate As-Sadr Case"; "Cabinet Discusses Disappearance of Imam As-Sadr."
  101. "Six Moslem Hijackers Yield Lebanese Airliner."
  102. "MEA Hijacking Ends Peacefully; Hijackers Surrender."
  103. "Alitalia Hijackers Surrender in Iran."
  104. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 185.
  105. *Ibid.*, 195–96.

## Hizbullah

When Hizbullah captured Israeli soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser on the morning of July 12, 2006, the organization almost certainly did not expect the massive military operation that the IDF launched in response. The raid marked the beginning of a 34-day war that left approximately 1200 Lebanese and 121 Israelis dead and thousands of homes damaged or destroyed, along with a sizeable portion of the country's bridges and electrical infrastructure. But while the war was catastrophic for Lebanon, its outcome was positive for Hizbullah. Because it was able to deny the IDF its stated objectives, the movement claimed the war as a "divine victory." By the end of the war, neither Goldwasser nor Regev had been retrieved (their bodies were returned in a prisoner swap in 2008) and Hizbullah scored a number of small but highly publicized "victories," such as retaking the town of Bint Jbeil and on one occasion hitting one of the Israeli ships blockading the coastline—a strike which Nasrullah announced on Al Manar moments before it occurred. But most significantly, in the aftermath of the war, Hizbullah was, if anything, more politically powerful than ever; it was able to launch a massive sit-in in downtown Beirut that December which ended 18 months later with the occupation of West Beirut by forces affiliated with Hizbullah's political coalition, and an unprecedented level of political power being granted to the movement and its allies in the Cabinet. In short, Hizbullah was able to both successfully resist the IDF

assault and recover from it afterward. Its ability to do both of these things is rooted in its extremely effective foreign and domestic policy.

But this was not always the case. Of the four organizations examined in this book, Hizbullah experienced the most dramatic evolution over time. If by the mid-2000s Hizbullah had become the consummate survivor, in the 1980s it was almost the opposite. By 1989, Hizbullah was politically isolated, criticized even by other Shi'ites for its extremist tactics and ideology, and had been pushed out of the south not by the IDF, but through a series of confrontations with Amal, backed by Syria. Though the organization maintained a strong base in the southern suburbs of Beirut and near absolute dominance of the town of Baalbek, it was unable to reach its primary adversary, the IDF. The contrast between its behavior and effectiveness during this period and the period from 2000 to 2006 demonstrates that organizations which change their strategic approach to civilians and sponsor states can likewise improve their performance. While in its earlier years it arguably belongs in quadrant A, after the war it moved firmly into quadrant C. It shifted from a group with a problematic domestic policy and a foreign policy not much more effective than Amal's to an organization with a highly effective domestic policy which was also able to far more effectively balance its own needs against those of its sponsors—that is, it transformed itself from a militia in increasingly dire straits to a successful proto-state actor. This dramatic shift makes for a compelling contrast with the other organizations in this book, which demonstrated far less impressive learning curves.

### THE ORIGINS OF HIZBULLAH

The emergence of Hizbullah in the early 1980s was the result of a particular confluence of events in Lebanon and throughout the larger Arab–Israeli conflict ecosystem. These can be broadly categorized as (1) the politicization of Lebanon's Shi'ites in the 1960s, (2) the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, (3) the schisms which developed within Amal in the early 1980s, and (4) the Israeli invasion in 1982.

The first of these factors, as discussed in the previous chapter, represented a significant change in Lebanese politics. By mobilizing Shi'ites as Shi'ites, Musa Sadr (perhaps inadvertently) laid the groundwork for the establishment of a more militant Shi'ite movement, although at least in its early years, Hizbullah's pan-Shi'ite orientation differed strongly from the specifically Lebanese political program Sadr advocated.

The second major event was the Islamic Revolution in Iran.<sup>1</sup> In 1979, the Shah's regime was overthrown and replaced with a theocracy under

the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Many of the men who became leaders in the new regime had spent years in exile in Lebanon, while others had studied alongside Lebanese clerics in Najaf, in Iraq. The close personal relationships produced during these years helped to establish Hizbullah's ties with the new Iranian regime.

At the same time, Hizbullah's emergence was facilitated by the deep schisms within Amal that developed in the early 1980s. Because the Islamic Revolution offered an alternative political narrative to the local, communitarian Shi'ite politics that Amal represented, it created an opening for those within the organization who advocated a more pan-Shi'ite, ideologically driven approach. This was particularly attractive to those who had ties to the revolutionaries in Iran and were interested in a movement allied with them, rather than with Syria. This coincided with rising dissatisfaction among Amal's more radical members with Berri's leadership after Sadr's disappearance. Some became followers of Ayatollah Mohammed Fadlullah, who advocated a pan-Shi'ite, rather than pan-Lebanese, political ideology.<sup>2</sup> These two groups would form the core of Hizbullah.

The final "ingredient" was the Israeli invasion in 1982. The PLO's evacuation created a power vacuum which Amal alone proved insufficient to fill, particularly as it was primarily oriented toward the Lebanese political arena, not explicitly toward anti-Israeli resistance.<sup>3</sup> But far more significant than the expulsion of the PLO alone was the Israeli decision to remain in Lebanon; by remaining in the south rather than withdrawing as it had in 1978, it generated first resentment, then active resistance among many southern Lebanese, and especially among Shi'ites. As early as 1982, a "Khomeini inspired" anti-Israeli resistance movement had begun to appear in south Lebanon, focused on attacking both IDF forces and those who collaborated with them.<sup>4</sup> As Ehud Barak noted in an interview in 2006, "When we entered Lebanon ... there was no Hizbullah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shia in the south. It was our presence there that created Hizbullah."<sup>5</sup>

While it is difficult to pinpoint a precise date when Hizbullah was "founded," the summer of 1982 is closest to being accurate. In June, Hussein Mousawi, a member of the Amal command council, founded a splinter group in Baalbek called Islamic Amal. In August, a contingent from Amal's more radical faction (including Subhi Tufayli, Hizbullah's first secretary general; Sheikh Raghieb Harb, one of its first military commanders in the south and one of its most celebrated martyrs; and Ayatollah Fadlullah) attended a conference in Tehran at which Khomeini himself encouraged

them to form an Islamic resistance in south Lebanon. They eventually joined Mousawi in Baalbek, along with members of the Islamic wing of Fatah (such as Imad Mughniyeh) and Lebanese followers of the Iraqi radical group Hizb al Dawa who had studied in Najaf and Qom, student followers of Fadlullah, and unemployed militia members looking for a new group to join following the PLO's departure. They were also joined by 1500 Iranian Revolutionary Guards (or *pasdaran*) as well as clerics dispatched from Iran to promote Khomeini's religious and political doctrine.<sup>6</sup>

After a great deal of debate and consultation with Khomeini, it was decided that the new organization would be called *Hizb Allah*, or Party of God, based on a Qu'ranic verse which reads, "The *party of God*, they are victorious."<sup>7</sup> When Nabih Berri decided that Amal would join the National Salvation Committee convened by President Sarkis in 1983 to broker an agreement between Israel and Lebanon, its ranks increased as some Amal members defected in protest, including high-ranking members like Mustafa Diranim, Amal's chief of security and head of its resistance wing.<sup>8</sup> In April and October of 1983, the group effectively announced its existence to the world with the high-profile bombings of the US embassy and marine barracks in Beirut, respectively.<sup>9</sup> But despite this flamboyant beginning, during this period, Hizbullah was far from the effective organization it would become in later years. It had trouble attracting broad political support in the Shi'ite community in the south, alienated Syria, and by the late 1980s had been all but pushed out of southern Lebanon by Amal.

But in the years between the end of the civil war and the outbreak of the July War, both Lebanon and Hizbullah underwent profound and fundamental transformations. In October of 1989, in the Saudi Arabian city of Taif, the (surviving) members of Lebanon's pre-war parliament met to negotiate an end to the war. The resulting agreement slightly redistributed political power among Lebanon's sects while retaining the framework of the National Pact, and created a new status quo in Lebanon, characterized by Syrian domination of Lebanese politics as well as continuing conflict between Hizbullah and the IDF in the south. In 1993, Israel launched Operation Accountability, which lasted a week and produced 300,000 Lebanese IDPs.<sup>10</sup> In the spring of 1996, a sharp escalation in hostilities culminated in Operation Grapes of Wrath, which killed 150 Lebanese civilians and displaced more than 400,000.<sup>11</sup> The majority of the casualties came when IDF shelling hit a UNIFIL base in the village of Qana which was sheltering civilians, killing 106. The most significant event was the

Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, which was claimed as a victory by Hizbullah.

The postwar status quo was entirely upended five years later. Former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri had become increasingly critical of the way the new Syrian president Bashar al Asad and his Lebanese proxy President Emil Lahoud were handling the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. When Hariri was assassinated by a car bomb on the corniche in Beirut on February 14, 2005, massive anti-Syrian protests erupted, countered by pro-Syrian protests led by Hizbullah. Under international pressure, the Syrian army withdrew from Lebanon that April, having occupied much of the country nearly continuously since 1976. In the aftermath of the Syrian withdrawal, the political spectrum was split between the pro-Syrian “March 8th” coalition composed of Hizbullah and Michel Aoun’s Taysar al Watani al Hurr (the Free Patriotic Movement), and the March 14 coalition, led by Hariri’s Sunni Future Movement.<sup>12</sup> A year later, Hizbullah was able to weather the July War and emerge with its position in postwar Lebanon more firmly established than before, as essentially codified in the Doha Agreement in 2008.

In sum, Hizbullah’s history can be divided into three major periods: the first, between 1982 and 1990, was defined by the civil war. The second, from 1990 to 2008, was defined by Hizbullah’s response to the postwar order in Lebanon. Since then, the movement has arguably entered a third phase, which has come to be strongly defined by its engagement with the Syrian civil war, which is beyond the scope of this book. The focus here will rather be on the contrast between its performance in the battles it faced at the end of the civil war versus its confrontation with Israel in 2006, which demonstrates that organizations which shift their domestic and foreign policies can experience dramatic changes in their military and political resilience.

## FOREIGN RELATIONS

In its early years, far more than the PLO, Hizbullah was rather limited in its choice of potential external sponsors. This was partly because, unlike the PLO, Hizbullah never enjoyed much in the way of superpower sponsorship, and therefore could not easily hook itself into existing networks of either US or Soviet clients. The movement adhered to Khomeini’s principle of “neither East nor West, only Islam.”<sup>13</sup> This meant that it not only attacked American targets in Lebanon but also opposed communism on

ideological grounds. In practical terms, this led the movement to attack Communist Party members in south Lebanon<sup>14</sup> and to publicly “blacklist” the Soviet Union in 1985 over Soviet support for UNIFIL, a threat that apparently led the Soviet embassy in Beirut to increase its security.<sup>15</sup> This meant that Hezbollah’s remaining options in terms of foreign sponsorship were Syria and Iran.

### *The Civil War Years (1982–1990)*

Although the organization would eventually enjoy close relations with both states, in its early years, Hezbollah’s relationships with its sponsors were each quite different. While its relationship with Iran was rooted in a shared communal and ideological identity, both of which were in turn the result of a shared process of political evolution, its relationship with Syria in the 1980s was characterized by mistrust and mutual antipathy. The former was based heavily on ideological marketing and service as a military proxy, while the relationship with Syria was, to the degree that Hezbollah could manage it, based on coercion. The costs of the latter did not quite outweigh the benefits of the former, but the combination of the two approaches was far less successful than the policies that Hezbollah would pursue later on.

#### *Iran*

Even from the beginning, there were close ideological affinities between Hezbollah and the regime that took power in Iran following the Islamic Revolution. This was no accident; the same theological and political ideologies that produced the Iranian revolution led the emergence of Hezbollah. This ideological affinity was bolstered by, and in part stemmed from, the personal connections between its members and members of the Iranian regime. Many had studied together in Najaf and Qom, or met in Lebanon while the Iranians were in exile from the Shah’s regime in the 1970s.

A central component of their shared ideology was acceptance of the authority of the *wali al faqih*,<sup>16</sup> or the “jurist theologian,” a doctrine promoted by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He himself filled this role until his death in 1989, when it was assumed by his successor, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini. According to Shi’ite theology, after the death of the prophet Muhammad, religious authority passed to a line of 12 imams who, while

not prophets, were nevertheless morally infallible and capable of perfect understanding of the Qur'an, hadith, and sunnah.<sup>17</sup> They therefore had a divine mandate to rule over the Muslim community. With the passing of the last imam into "occultation"<sup>18</sup> in 941, the imams' religious, but not political, authority passed to the *mujtahids*, or jurists. These jurists are considered worthy to serve as role models for other Muslims, and one who is chosen as a model is known as a *marja' taqlid*.<sup>19</sup> Though by tradition, mujtahids are not considered divinely mandated to rule, Ayatollah Khomeini argued that if a mujtahid should set up an Islamic state, then the imams' authority to rule and adjudicate, though not their divine investiture, would pass to that mujtahid. It is this authority, currently invested in the Iranian state, which is referred to as the *wilayet al faqih*, while the person who holds it as head of that state is the *wali al faqih*.<sup>20</sup>

Acceptance of the authority of the jurist–theologian (and the necessity of this authority for the construction of an Islamic order on earth) is a central component of Hizbullah's ideology. The *wilayet al faqih* is not theologically synonymous with the government of Iran in particular; it could, in theory, exist in any state which established a (Shi'ite) Islamic government.<sup>21</sup> However, in practice, because the Iranian revolution and the resulting state were inseparable from the *wilayet al faqih*, at least in Hizbullah's early and more doctrinaire years, this gave the government of Iran a high degree of control over the organization. Abbas Musawi stated quite bluntly "Hezbollah's supreme leader is Imam Khomeini. ... He spells out the movement's line and issues directives of the Party of God because he is the only spiritual chief capable of reflecting on any subject."<sup>22</sup> Most of Hizbullah's leaders chose Khomeini as their *marja'* until his death in 1989.

The Iran–Hizbullah relationship was also based, especially during this period, on Hizbullah's utility as a proxy for Iran in Lebanon. Sponsoring Hizbullah allowed the Islamic Republic a level of influence in Lebanese Shi'ite politics that it had not had before. (Amal, given its priorities and character, wasn't really an option, as discussed in the previous chapter.) Hizbullah served as a proxy for Iran's broader foreign policy objectives as well, including its hostility to Israel, the USA, and their allies.

Hostility to Israel was central to Khomeini's ideology even before he assumed the leadership of Iran; in a speech in February of 1978, he complained that Israel had been created by the USA and UK as a means to harm the Shi'ites, and had reduced Lebanon to "its present miserable state." In September of 1979, he referred to Israel as a "cancerous

tumor” in the Middle East which was “battering and slaughtering our dear Palestinian and Lebanese brothers.”<sup>23</sup> This stance was partly a matter of trying to make common cause with the Arab Middle East after the Shah’s long alliance with Israel and the USA, and partly linked to a wider doctrine of hostility to the West.<sup>24</sup> Hizbullah (or at least, cells that would later become part of Hizbullah) proved useful in this as well, carrying out the bombings of the US embassy and marine barracks in Beirut, as well as an attack on the French paratrooper barracks, also in October of 1983.<sup>25</sup> The lists of demands issued following the kidnappings of foreign nationals in Beirut often included not only the release of Lebanese prisoners held in Kuwait or Israel but also the unfreezing of Iranian funds in the USA.<sup>26</sup> In short, the relationship between Iran and Hizbullah was, from the very beginning, based on both shared interests and shared ideology.

### *Syria*

In contrast, Hizbullah’s relationship with Syria, when not openly hostile, was almost entirely pragmatic, based on a common enemy, in the form of Israel, and a common friend, in the form of Iran. Indeed, Hizbullah’s radical political agenda and ideological rigidity, as well as its extreme tactics, at times led to open hostilities with the Syrian government (and its agent, Amal).

From the Syrian perspective, there were reasons to both support and oppose Hizbullah. On the one hand, Hizbullah made an appealing proxy against Israel for Syria as well as Iran, and after the PLO’s departure, Syria found itself in need of another means by which to exert pressure on Israel’s northern border. Syria was also closely allied with Hizbullah’s main patron, Iran; alone among the Arab states, Syria supported Iran when Iraq was invaded in 1980, beginning the Iran–Iraq war.<sup>27</sup> Both were engaged in protracted rivalries with the Gulf states, and both shared a deep enmity for Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. In short, the alliance was strategically important for both states.

This did not, however, automatically translate into Syrian support for Hizbullah. In fact, during this period Hizbullah’s goals were often fundamentally at odds with Syria’s, which led to open hostility between the two. Syria could not support the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon,<sup>28</sup> and though it might in principle have agreed with Hizbullah regarding the desirability of expelling all foreign troops from Lebanon, its tactics in pursuing this goal were deeply worrying to the stability-seeking Syrian government.

In its early years, Hizbullah's tactics veered toward the extreme, including both kidnappings and hijackings. These threatened not only internal Lebanese stability but also Syria's reputation, as they usually occurred in territory under its control. Particularly embarrassing were the kidnappings in 1987 of an American journalist and the son of the Lebanese defense minister from West Beirut<sup>29</sup> and the February 1988 abduction (and eventual murder) of Colonel William Higgins of the US Marine Corps. Moreover, despite its general acquiescence to Hizbullah's presence in its zones of influence in Lebanon (especially the Bekaa), Syria was not entirely sanguine about the movement's increasing control of these regions. In this sense, Hizbullah's approach toward Syria can almost be seen as coercive, although this is perhaps the wrong term, given the greater strength of the Syrian forces. It might be more accurate to say that it repeatedly flouted Syrian authority.

### *The Postwar Years (1990–2006)*

After the war, in conjunction with Hizbullah's shift toward a policy of "Lebanonization," the organization's foreign policy underwent a dramatic change, shifting from open hostility to proxyhood in the case of Syria and toward greater independence in the case of its relationship with Iran. Hizbullah's ideology did not move any closer to the secular Ba'athism of the Syrian regime, but the two parties were able to come to an accommodation that resulted in a relationship that proved mutually beneficial and surprisingly durable.

#### *Syria*

After the war ended, Hizbullah's approach to Syria changed drastically. Whereas before it had viewed Syria as a barrier to its radical political agenda for Lebanon, after the war it came to view the Syrians as powerful potential allies. (This view was encouraged by the Iranians as well.) As Hizbullah moderated both its political goals and the means by which it pursued them, Syria found the organization less threatening and was more willing to entertain an alliance, which was ultimately established based on Hizbullah's service as a proxy for Syria in the Lebanese context.

After the Taif agreement was signed in 1990, Lebanon came under what is sometimes called the "Pax Syriana." The country remained

occupied by 15,000 Syrian troops, Syrian military intelligence served as a sort of shadow government, and little occurred in Lebanon without Syrian acquiescence. The Syrian regime extracted a great deal of wealth (particularly from the Casino du Liban) impeding the government's postwar reconstruction efforts.<sup>30</sup> Anti-Syrian political parties were banned and their leaders arrested or exiled. Emile Lahoud, elected president in 1998 (and whose term was extended in 2004 through the amendment of the Lebanese constitution), was effectively a Syrian puppet.

Syria's objectives in Lebanon after the war were much the same as they had been in earlier decades: to maintain both stability and Syrian hegemony. At the same time, it sought to maintain pressure on Israel across Lebanon's southern border (rather than the Syrian–Israeli border). Therefore, while establishing a relationship with Syria required that Hizbullah demonstrate that it did not threaten either Lebanese stability or Syrian influence therein, as long as it did so convincingly, Syria was strongly supportive of Hizbullah's military activities against Israeli forces in south Lebanon. In other words, to forge a relationship with Syria in the postwar environment, Hizbullah needed both to reassure Syria that it had moderated and to demonstrate that it would make an effective military proxy against Israel. These imperatives occasionally collided: 1993's Operation Accountability, for instance, produced potentially destabilizing flows of displaced persons from the south. For the most part, however, Hizbullah was able to successfully build a new relationship with Syria based on its usefulness as a military and political proxy in Lebanon. (This was also made possible by the internal reform that Hizbullah implemented in 1991, discussed later in this chapter.)

Hizbullah made an appealing proxy for several reasons. Syria's conflict with Israel had, if anything, become a more pressing motivation after the failure of the Madrid negotiations and the beginning of the Oslo process. Syria believed that Israel had less incentive than ever to open negotiations leading to the return of the Golan Heights. Hizbullah represented an important source of pressure on Israel and coordinated much of its military activity in southern Lebanon with the Syrians.<sup>31</sup>

Hizbullah also acted as a political proxy for Syria in Lebanon. Blanford describes the postwar Syrian policy in Lebanon as "we hold Lebanon or there will be chaos"<sup>32</sup> and argues quite convincingly that Rafik Hariri's massive reconstruction project was threatening to Syrian hegemony. (Given the role of Saudi banks in financing the project, it also represented an increase in Saudi influence, which was unwelcomed in Syria given the

enduring rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran.) Hizbullah provided a powerful balance to Hariri's political clout. It was logical, then, that in the aftermath of Hariri's assassination, it was Hizbullah which led the pro-Syrian demonstrations in an (unsuccessful) attempt to counter massive protests calling for Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon.

### *Iran*

Hizbullah's relationship with Iran also underwent an adjustment with the end of the war, albeit a far less dramatic one. There were two catalysts: the death of Ayatollah Khomeini and Hizbullah's new policy of "Lebanonization," a reorientation toward engagement with Lebanese politics. But through the changes in both the Iranian regime and the party, the relationship held. Though Hizbullah's funding was decreased, it was not otherwise strongly affected by the factional jockeying in Iran and largely avoided the schisms which plagued other movements (like the PLO) whose relationships with their sponsors were purely a matter of proxyhood.

With Khomeini's death in 1989, the revolution in Iran began to enter a moderating phase under the pragmatic President Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani. This had an immediate impact on Hizbullah. Under Rafsanjani's leadership, funding was dramatically reduced from the five to ten million a month Hizbullah had been receiving under Khomeini's leadership. In the case of some agencies, funding was reduced by as much as 90 % as the movement's funding bodies in Iran became contested territory in the power struggle following Khomeini's death.<sup>33</sup>

The divisions in the Iranian government were mirrored by those within Hizbullah itself. In October 1989, an "extraordinary conclave" of Hizbullah's leadership was held in Tehran to debate the question of electoral participation. President Rafsanjani supported the decision to participate, while the rival Iranian faction led by Ali Akbar Mohtashemi opposed it. Abbas Mousawi and Hassan Nasrallah aligned more or less with Rafsanjani while the hardliners, led by Tufayli, sided with Mohtashemi.<sup>34</sup> Tufayli himself later stated that participation was pushed by the new government in Iran over the objections of some of those in Hizbullah, himself chief among them.<sup>35</sup>

In 1997, Hizbullah came closer to schism than it had ever been when Tufayli, whose radical faction was increasingly dissatisfied with the process of Lebanonization, launched the Revolution of the Hungry, an attempted general strike in the Bekaa valley which he accused Hizbullah's leader-

ship of ignoring at the expense of the south. This criticism resonated with many in the region, encouraging Tufayli sufficiently that he ran against Hezbollah in the Bekaa in 1998. This ultimately backfired, however; Tufayli was expelled from the movement that year and the reforms begun by Mousawi and pursued by Nasrallah became further entrenched.<sup>36</sup> This shift was facilitated—and indeed, made possible—by the election of the relatively moderate Mohammed Khatami as Iranian president in 1997. His government supported Nasrallah’s policy of participation in Lebanese politics,<sup>37</sup> and in January of 1998, Iranian envoys arrived in Lebanon to meet with Nasrallah and offer assurances that the party still had the full backing of the Iranian government.<sup>38</sup> In sum, Hezbollah’s relationship with Iran continued to be based on a shared ideology, despite changes in the leadership on both sides.

### *The Impact of Hezbollah’s Evolving Foreign Policy*

The approaches that Hezbollah took to its respective sponsors yielded very different results. Its relationship with Iran had a high degree of continuity, based on a shared commitment to the political ideology laid out by Khomeini. The relationship did change somewhat after the war, affording Hezbollah a slightly increased degree of independence, but it remained largely consistent. A more significant change was in the relationship with Syria, which shifted from open hostility to profitable collaboration after the end of the war. This helps to explain the very different outcomes experienced by Hezbollah in the face of challenges earlier in its career versus later on.

From the beginning, Hezbollah’s close relationship with Iran provided substantial material and non-material resources. Beginning with the dispatch of 1500 revolutionary guards in 1982, Iran provided training to Hezbollah’s fighters at camps in the Bekaa and in Iran.<sup>39</sup> Iran also supplied weapons, including both small arms and more substantial weaponry (like Soviet-made surface-to-surface missiles).<sup>40</sup> The most substantial asset Iran provided during this period, though, was funding, at times as much as five to ten million dollars a month.<sup>41</sup> This made possible much of Hezbollah’s activity during its early years. Musawi himself acknowledged that it was Iranian funding that financed Hezbollah’s bombings, abductions, and air-plane hijackings.<sup>42</sup> And while neither Hezbollah’s social service network nor its media and public relations machine were as well developed during the 1980s as they would become after the civil war, it was Iranian funding that allowed the seeds of both sets of institutions to be planted during this

period. Funding for the Martyrs Foundation and the Foundation for the Oppressed (major Iranian-funded charities in Lebanon) alone averaged 60 million dollars a year throughout the 1980s.<sup>43</sup> Iranian funding also contributed to the operation of Hizbullah's newspaper, *Al Ahd*, and its two radio stations.<sup>44</sup> By the middle of the decade, Iran had established offices in Beirut explicitly for the payment of Hizbullah staff salaries.<sup>45</sup>

Of course, this relationship was not without its difficulties. The most significant was arguably the limits Iranian sponsorship imposed on Hizbullah's participation in Lebanese politics. Because of the nature of Khomeniist ideology, there was little room for compromise or negotiation with other parties, particularly the Maronites, and Iranian sponsorship increased the distrust with which Hizbullah was viewed by other Lebanese. Moreover, in focusing on Iran's interests, Hizbullah was impeded from developing its own political identity in the Lebanese context.

A second problem was the issue of factionalism. Though Hizbullah as a whole was, in theory, unswervingly loyal to the authority of the *wilayet al faqih*, in practice, because of the personal history shared by the individuals involved and the varying levels of radicalism in both contexts, particular factions within Hizbullah became allied with particular factions in the Iranian regime. Sometimes, this was to Hizbullah's advantage. When Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, who represented the most radical faction in Iran, was attempting to defend his position against the powerful parliament chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in the late 1980s, he backed Hizbullah as a means of doing so, leading to an increase in support for the movement. But what was given for political reasons was also sometimes withdrawn for political reasons; after Hizbullah activists pushed too hard for his liking by kidnapping the charge d'affaires of the Syrian embassy to Iran in 1986, Rafsanjani moved to take over the office through which the hardliners in the Iranian government provided funding to Hizbullah as a means of both reigning in Hizbullah and countering his domestic rivals.<sup>46</sup>

During the postwar period, Hizbullah's relationship with Iran remained close, though it did change somewhat, due largely to internal Iranian politics. After Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989, a new group of pragmatists led by Rafsanjani was ascendant in Iran. Funding to Hizbullah decreased sharply from its high point during the 1980s. At the same time, Hizbullah began to orient itself more toward Lebanese politics and developed a more independent identity. Like the PLO before it, Hizbullah began to invest in businesses both in Lebanon and abroad that it hoped would generate sufficient income to fund its social programs.<sup>47</sup>

But despite these changes, Hizbullah still received a great deal of financial, military, and political support from its primary patron. It still relied heavily on Iran for funds to operate its rapidly expanding aid network, through Iranian funding bodies like the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, which distributed \$95 million to Hizbullah between 1988 and 2002, and the Martyr's Foundation. Jihad al Binaa, Hizbullah's construction company, was financed directly through Iran's Bank Saderat.<sup>48</sup>

Hizbullah also continued to depend on Iran for its military funding and supplies. While Hizbullah is highly secretive regarding its armaments, the weapons used during the July War give some indication as to the breadth of Iranian support. In addition to small arms and Katyusha rockets, Hizbullah also fielded anti-tank and anti-ship missiles (C-802s), UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones), and long-range rockets capable of hitting major Israeli cities like Tiberius and Haifa.<sup>49</sup>

Hizbullah's relationship with Iran provides an interesting source of contrast with the PLO. The latter's relationships with its various sponsor states contributed to its factionalization, internal conflict, and military inefficiency, while Hizbullah's relationships with its sponsors, particularly Iran, did not produce the same dynamics. This can partly be attributed to the different foundations of their respective relationships; whereas the various PLO factions often found themselves fighting their sponsors' battles among themselves, by the time Hizbullah faced its first major internal challenge—Tufayli's defection in 1997—it had become strongly institutionalized in its own right, and Iran's sponsorship had become less about providing Iran with greater regional leverage (through hostage taking, for instance) and more about the advancement of a shared political project, though this had always been a major factor in the relationship. Iran, therefore, had an interest in seeing the schism healed as quickly as possible.<sup>50</sup> Ultimately, Tufayli and his supporters were isolated and constituted no real threat to the cohesion or effectiveness of Hizbullah itself.

In contrast, Hizbullah's relationship with Syria changed substantially over time, producing very different outcomes during and after the war. In the civil war years, relations with Syria were often, though not exclusively, hostile. During those periods when the two were on good terms, Syrian favor brought substantial benefits, including permission to use Baalbek as a base of operations and the use of Syrian facilities there for training.<sup>51</sup> In a sense, even though the Bekaa valley is Lebanese territory, Syria can be said to have provided safe haven there to Hizbullah. Moreover, because of its control over Lebanon's borders, Syrian cooperation was important

in facilitating the flow of arms and fighters between Iran and Lebanon, and much of the coordination between the two was actually conducted through the Iranian embassy in Damascus. The Iranian ambassador worked closely with the head of Syrian Military Intelligence in Lebanon, Ghazi Kanaan, who in turn worked closely with Hizbullah, including its Special Security Apparatus, the division responsible for security and intelligence matters.<sup>52</sup> The embassy in Damascus also handled coordination between the *pasdaran* stationed in the Bekaa and the base the Syrians had allowed Iran to set up in the border village of Zebdani.<sup>53</sup> All of this was extremely useful, but it was largely the result of the Iranian–Syrian alliance, rather than of Hizbullah’s own relationship with the Syrians.

Over time, Hizbullah’s violations of what Syria saw as its authority in Lebanon led to conflict. Hizbullah’s expanding presence in the Bekaa led to clashes with Syrian forces early as May 1984.<sup>54</sup> The Syrian government even went so far as to request the departure of the *pasdaran* stationed there.<sup>55</sup> In response, Hizbullah members demonstrated against Syria and tore up pictures of Hafez al Asad in Baalbek’s main square.<sup>56</sup>

In 1985 and 1986, Syria began moving to contain Hizbullah both by requesting that Iran rein in its proxy and by expanding its own military presence in West Beirut. The latter, however, served only to increase tensions, leading to clashes that culminated in a massacre of 18 Hizbullah fighters in their barracks by Syrian soldiers.<sup>57</sup> This event, called the Al Basta massacre, had a chilling effect on Syrian–Iranian relations. In 1986, clashes erupted when Syrian forces attempted to rescue foreign hostages being held by Hizbullah in Baalbek, resulting in casualties on both sides and the kidnapping of two Syrian officers. To end the escalating violence, Syria took the unusual step of blocking all roads in and out of Baalbek.<sup>58</sup> Hizbullah’s attempts to force the Syrians to allow the movement free reign in what Syria saw as its territory (albeit in Lebanon) resulted in a net loss for the organization.

In contrast, Hizbullah’s new approach to Syria after 1991 brought substantial benefits. In exchange for coordinating militarily and politically with Syria, the Syrians gave Hizbullah *carte blanche* to operate in Lebanon. Furthermore, the Syrian regime brokered an agreement between Hizbullah and Lahoud’s government under which, in exchange for Hizbullah’s behaving as a “loyal opposition,” the Lebanese state would sanction the movement’s military operations.<sup>59</sup>

Syria continued to provide the geographic link between Iran and Lebanon through which flowed fighters, money, and weapons, but as the relationship stabilized, Syria also began to provide weapons and funding

independently of Iran. After the death of Hafez al Asad in 2000 and the installation of his son Bashar as president, Syria began supplying Hizbullah with improved weaponry, including 220 mm and 302 mm rockets and anti-tank missiles.<sup>60</sup> Some at the US embassy in Damascus believed that not only was Syria *a* source of weapons for Hizbullah, but it was also Hizbullah's *most important* source of weapons during the July War.<sup>61</sup> While it is difficult to assess this assertion, it is likely safe to conclude that Syria was providing some degree of military support.

On the other hand, Syria still constrained Hizbullah in many ways. The most serious constraint was the so-called Syrian Ceiling, the unofficial limit the Syrians placed on the number of seats any one party could hold in parliament at a time, in a bid to prevent any from growing too powerful or upsetting the postwar sectarian balance of power. Hizbullah did benefit from Syrian patronage in the 1992 elections, when Syria packed the Lebanese parliament with pro-Syrian politicians. But the movement also did well in the municipal elections of 1998, which were not subject to Syrian interference, suggesting that without the "Syrian ceiling," Hizbullah might have done better against Amal.<sup>62</sup> In the 2000 parliamentary elections, at a time when Hizbullah was immensely popular due to the Israeli withdrawal, Syria forced it to share a ticket with Amal, lessening the total number of seats Hizbullah took (though Hizbullah did support Hariri as a candidate for Prime Minister against Syria's preferred candidate, Salim al Huss). When Hizbullah performed a little bit too strongly for Syrian preferences in the 2004 municipal elections, riots which were very likely instigated by Syrian intelligence broke out and the police opened fire on the largely pro-Hizbullah crowd, creating a political crisis both for Hariri's government and for Hizbullah itself.<sup>63</sup>

Syrian preferences also sometimes forced Hizbullah to take positions it might have preferred to avoid. One example was the vote which Syria forced through the Lebanese parliament in 2004 to extend Lahoud's term as president beyond constitutional limits.<sup>64</sup> The decision was opposed by Lebanese across the political and religious spectrum, including many Shi'ites, and a joint statement against the move was issued by Sheikh Abdel-Amir Qabalan, president of the Higher Shi'ite council, and Sheikh Mohammed Qabbani, the Sunni Mufti.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, because of its relationship with Syria, Hizbullah supported the decision, suggesting that perhaps the question of a continued Syrian presence in Lebanon should be resolved instead through a referendum (an oblique reference to Shi'ite demographic plurality).<sup>66</sup> While there are some indications that Hariri was

seeking a rapprochement with Hizbullah, and may even have privately achieved one with Nasrallah,<sup>67</sup> the potential for public cooperation was severely limited by Hizbullah's dependence on Syria.

In sum, Hizbullah's approach to Iran was consistently based on a shared set of values which Hizbullah was able to leverage to acquire substantial military and financial support. While this lessened in the 1990s, the movement still received significant aid. The fact that Hizbullah was ultimately more successful in the second phase of its existence than it was earlier on when it was receiving significantly more money from Iran strongly suggests that it is not merely *having* material resources that matters but also how they were acquired and used. Meanwhile, Hizbullah's relationship with Syria provides a blunt example of the pitfalls of attempting to coerce a state. Its attempts to barrel past Syrian objections to its behavior in Lebanon in the 1980s yielded disastrous results in the form of an additional and unnecessary adversary and a distracting conflict in Beirut. By shifting this relationship to one based on service as a military proxy, Hizbullah was able to gain valuable material and political resources. But this relationship also demonstrates that the loss of autonomy that comes with proxyhood can be costly in its own right.

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Foreign relations are, of course, only part of the puzzle. If Hizbullah's foreign policy changed in the postwar period, its domestic policy was even more dramatically different. In the 1980s, Hizbullah's radical ideology alienated many Lebanese, including many Shi'ites, and it refused outright to participate in Lebanese politics. After the war, however, the organization refashioned itself into an immensely successful political party. This left it far better positioned to handle the challenge posed by the July War and its aftermath than it had been the challenges posed during the last years of the civil war.

### *The Civil War Years (1982–1990)*

Hizbullah's narrow self-definition in its early years was detrimental not only to its relationship with Syria but also to its relationship with much of the Lebanese public. Hizbullah's civilian audience can be divided into Shi'ites and non-Shi'ites. The organization's approach to the former consisted of a mixture of service provision and marketing and to the latter mostly of coercion. While the support it was able to build among civilians

in Beirut helped it to establish a base there, it was far less successful in the south. Though Hizbullah did make some effort during this period to market itself to other communities, because of its narrow and radical ideology and rejection of the Lebanese state this was not very successful.

Hizbullah's early objectives and ideology are perhaps most clearly articulated in a document issued on February 16, 1985, called "the Open Letter." Its central principles are adherence to the authority of the wali al faqih, a pan-Islamic (rather than Lebanese) political orientation, and hostility to Israel, the USA, and their allies. Based on these principles, the letter lays out three explicit objectives: the expulsion of the Multinational Forces (MNF) from Lebanon; bringing the Phalange "to justice"; and the voluntary establishment of an Islamic government in Lebanon.<sup>68</sup>

For Hizbullah's marketing to be successful, it would have to convince its target audience not only of the validity of this project but that Hizbullah itself was the appropriate entity to implement it. In this, it was only partly successful within the Shi'ite community and almost entirely unsuccessful outside it. Its provision of services was more successful in that it laid the groundwork for the reputation for competence and honesty that the movement would acquire later on, but this approach was largely limited to the Shi'ite community; to those outside it, Hizbullah was mostly a violent and coercive force whose political goals directly contradicted their own hopes for Lebanon's future.

### *Lebanese Politics*

Perhaps the most drastic change in Hizbullah's domestic policy over time was with regard to its engagement with the Lebanese political system. In its early years, Hizbullah was openly hostile to the Lebanese state (which by the mid-1980s was close to collapse) and to most of Lebanon's political factions as well. Naim Qassem, one of Hizbullah's founders, later explained the organization's refusal to involve itself in Lebanese politics in the 1980s as stemming from its military focus during its early years, as well as a need to build itself up in secret while clarifying its ideology and objectives.<sup>69</sup> There were also strong objections in the Shura Council to participation in a non-Islamic government, which were not overcome until the end of the civil war. This self-imposed isolation prevented the movement from making alliances with other parties and led to (perhaps unsurprising) hostility between the movement and the Maronite and leftist parties.

A more interesting, and ultimately more damaging, rivalry was the one with Amal. The hostility between the two stemmed in part from the hostility between Hizbullah and Amal's chief patron, Syria, but there were ideological differences between them as well. Amal accepted the idea of a secular state, while Hizbullah did not. Amal was also committed to improving the position of Shi'ites within the existing system, while Hizbullah wanted to abolish that system altogether.

Moreover, just as Amal had represented a rival to the leftist groups' hold on Shi'ite political loyalties in the 1960s, Hizbullah now challenged Amal's influence in the Dahiyeh and south Lebanon. In villages where it had successfully protected the population from the IDF, the PLO, or both, Amal retained a great deal of loyalty, but in other areas Hizbullah began to press for greater influence, particularly after 1985 when the IDF withdrew to the "security zone." The relationship was increasingly characterized by mutual accusations and recriminations, and by the latter half of the decade, these tensions had begun to escalate to direct confrontations. In a direct challenge to Hizbullah's legitimacy, Amal fighters confiscated Hizbullah's weapons<sup>70</sup> and at times, the two even exchanged fire.<sup>71</sup> With William Higgins' kidnapping in 1988, it erupted into open warfare. Amal members (presumably acting on Syrian orders) conducted house-to-house searches in an unsuccessful bid to rescue the missing colonel, and in the process detained a large number of Hizbullah members. Serious fighting erupted in which Syria backed Amal against the Hizbullah. By April, despite Hizbullah's growing presence in Beirut's southern suburbs, Amal had almost entirely driven them from south Lebanon. Hizbullah's attempt to wrest political dominance in the Shi'ite community from Amal by force backfired badly.

### *The Shi'ite Community*

Hizbullah's interactions with the civilian Shi'ite public were very different from its belligerent stance toward Amal. The movement's early policy in this area somewhat resembled its later approach, combining social services with political marketing. The framework for Hizbullah's social service network was established in Lebanon well before the organization itself was founded. In the 1960s, Lebanon's relatively liberal association laws led to the establishment of a large number of NGOs, which assumed many of the functions abandoned by the Lebanese state during the civil war.<sup>72</sup> In Hizbullah's case, this dynamic was magnified by

decades of government neglect in the Shi'ite regions combined with the arrival of tens of thousands of Shi'ite IDPs to Beirut's southern suburbs. Backed by Iranian funding, Hizbullah stepped in to fill this vacuum, both through direct charitable donations and later through the establishment of social service institutions. By 1987, seven branches of the Martyrs Committee had been set up around Lebanon, providing charitable aid and vocational training, particularly to the families of dead fighters.<sup>73</sup> Between 1982 and 1986, Hizbullah's Financial Aid Committee distributed over \$90 million to those whose family members had been killed or wounded.

In the latter half of the decade, Hizbullah expanded its efforts to include the development of social service institutions. In 1984, the first seeds of the movement's social service network were planted with the establishment of early versions of the Islamic Health Committee and Jihad al Binaa, a non-profit construction company tasked with repairing Lebanese homes and businesses damaged by the IDF, though neither was registered with the government until 1988.<sup>74</sup> In 1986, the Islamic Health Committee was established, which opened two major hospitals in the Bekaa and the Dahiyeh, as well as medical centers and pharmacies around the country.<sup>75</sup> In 1987, Al Emdad was founded to support those affected by the Israeli occupation of the south.

Hizbullah also began establishing kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, and seminaries.<sup>76</sup> These, not surprisingly, adhered to Hizbullah's religious ideology (as schools run by other religious-communal institutions did to their respective doctrines). The movement also sponsored youth activities, such as the Islamic Scouts. While these services were not nearly as extensive or well developed as they would become in later years, they were still a significant step in Hizbullah's construction of its relationship with the Shi'ite community.

During this period, Hizbullah also began marketing its political project to the Shi'ite community. As Norton notes, Shi'ite support for Hizbullah was far from predetermined. Even before the emergence of Amal or Hizbullah, Shi'ites in Lebanon had a variety of political groups from which to choose. Though Nasserite Arab nationalism had never been particularly popular, the SSNP and Baath parties both had large numbers of Shi'ite members, as did the various leftist groups. And of course, Amal offered a specifically Shi'ite outlet for political mobilization.

Of these groups, Amal represented the most direct competitor with Hizbullah, and so one of Hizbullah's first tasks was to distinguish itself

from Amal. This was not particularly difficult; ideologically, they were very different. (Indeed, as noted above, many of Hizbullah's early members were disaffected former Amal members.) Hizbullah was oriented toward Iran and the larger Shi'ite world, while Amal was oriented explicitly toward the Lebanese context. Hizbullah therefore advocated the remaking of the Lebanese state altogether, while Amal wanted to improve the position of the Shi'ites within the system. The difference between them was not simply one of tactics or policy but of fundamentally divergent worldviews. Of course, Hizbullah was sometimes aided in its bid to increase its market share by Amal's own actions. Nabih Berri's decision to participate in the National Salvation Committee was, as noted above, deeply unpopular and weakened Amal's standing in the eyes of many Shi'ite civilians. The brutal War of the Camps against the PLO in 1985 was also unpopular, weakening its appeal relative to Hizbullah, which stayed out of the fighting.<sup>77</sup>

The increasing brutality of the Israeli occupation of the south also increased Hizbullah's appeal. Even after the IDF's withdrawal south of the Litani in 1985, its "iron fist" policy of curfews and free-fire zones alienated the public. The SLA's treatment of civilians, particularly the practice of press-ganging Shi'ites into service, further helped Hizbullah's case,<sup>78</sup> and due to increasing public resentment against the IDF's tactics and behavior, attacks on Israeli targets served as a form of marketing in and of themselves. Of course, they also had the potential to alienate the public, as such attacks, like those launched by the PLO in earlier years, produced Israeli reprisals that were devastating to the civilian population.

But though disaffection with Amal and anger at the IDF were helpful, Hizbullah still had to make a case for its own program. In part, it did so using a narrative similar to Sadr's, emphasizing motifs such as self-sacrifice, piety, and resolve. It also made use of communal narratives, publicizing its work to improve the conditions of Lebanese Shi'ites.<sup>79</sup> But whereas Sadr's approach had been to use these themes to make claims on the Lebanese state for the Shi'ites as Lebanese citizens, Hizbullah rejected the state entirely, calling for self-defense rather than defense by the state, and self-service rather than state services.

Practically speaking, Hizbullah used a range of vehicles to disseminate its message. Some were conventional media outlets, including the newspaper *al Ahd*, founded in 1984, and two radio stations, the *Voice of the Oppressed* and the *Voice of Islam*.<sup>80</sup> But Hizbullah also relied on more grassroots means of promoting its program. This involved working through its network of mosques and *husseiniyehs* (Shi'ite religious-cum-community-cum-educational centers)

as well as its schools and youth groups. Processions and in particular funerals were also a way for Hizbullah to demonstrate the costs they were willing to incur in their fight against not only Israel but also other militias. Martyrs are not subject to normal Muslim funerary rites and may instead be “buried in their blood.” Accordingly, Hizbullah would parade the bodies of those who had been killed fighting in the south through the Dahiyeh in open coffins. Given that clashes with Amal were responsible for many of these funerals, this had the effect not only of demonstrating Hizbullah’s resolve but also of raising tensions with Amal.<sup>81</sup>

It should also be noted that Hizbullah’s behavior in some Shi’ite areas was quite coercive, particularly with regard to its enforcement of what it considered to be Islamic standards of dress and behavior. After establishing itself in Baalbek, the movement enforced its social standard by force, including bans on alcohol, loud music, and mixed dancing.<sup>82</sup> The degree of local resistance to these policies is difficult to gauge, as the Bekaa in general and Baalbek in particular were already somewhat conservative, but these reforms were hardly subject to a public referendum.<sup>83</sup>

#### *The Non-Shi’ite Public*

Hizbullah’s approach to Lebanese outside the Shi’ite community was very different. If the organization’s approach to those it viewed as potential constituents was primarily focused on marketing and service provision leavened with coercion, its approach to the non-Shi’ite public was exactly the reverse. It was characterized far more heavily by coercion, and though it did attempt to market its program more broadly, this was hampered by its narrow framing of itself as a Shi’ite movement seeking the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Its overtures to other communities were colored by this project, and as such, were not particularly well received. The moderates in the party stated repeatedly that they wished to see the Lebanese public choose an Islamic system *voluntarily* and emphasized that Hizbullah therefore needed to win the trust of the rest of the population. However, the militant wing of the organization (dominant in the 1980s), represented by Abbas Musawi, took a more radical line. Statements such as “As Muslims, we don’t believe in the existence of a separate country called Lebanon, we relate to the entire Islamic world as our homeland” and “We are ready to overthrow the regime in Lebanon in order to establish a just regime. Whoever rules over Lebanon must adhere to the laws of Islam”<sup>84</sup> indicated a rejection of Lebanon’s national identity that was anathema to many Christians, and indeed to many Muslims and Druze.

Hizbullah took explicit issue with what it termed the “phalangist regime,” meaning the Maronite-dominated government in Lebanon.<sup>85</sup> While Amal, and especially Sadr himself, had sought to end the Christian dominance of Lebanon’s politics based on economic and communitarian grievances, for Hizbullah, this was also a theological matter: Under a strict interpretation of Islamic law, Christians (and Jews) are accorded the status of protected minorities who are allowed to practice their religion freely but not to rule over Muslims. Citing this principle, Hizbullah’s hardliners called for the demolition of the existing political system, and encouraged Christians to convert to Islam, although they offered reassurances that no one would be forced to do so.

Hizbullah did make some effort to find common political ground with other Lebanese and with the rest of the Arab world, ironically through the issue of resistance against Israel, calling for the liberation of Jerusalem, but this was not terribly successful in shifting public opinion in its favor.<sup>86</sup> Its rigidity and rejection of the Lebanese political system meant that other communities viewed it with deep suspicion.

The use of violent coercion against civilians as a means of enforcing its political and moral authority while extending its control over the Bekaa, the south, and parts of Beirut was also harmful to Hizbullah’s reputation. This behavior helped convince many Christians and Sunnis that any promises that the organization would not impose on an Islamic state by force should not be trusted. Hizbullah enforced standards of behavior it considered Islamically appropriate in both Shi’ite areas, such as Baalbek, and mixed areas, such as West Beirut. In the winter of 1984, leaflets distributed by Hizbullah began to appear in the Hamra and Ras Beirut neighborhoods warning residents against the possession of alcohol and demanding that women begin wearing chadors, warning that there would be consequences for ignoring these “suggestions.”<sup>87</sup> These were not idle warnings; during Ashura in 1984 “about a dozen” bars and nightclubs were bombed or otherwise destroyed. In a single evening, a group of over 100 women wearing chadors attacked bars and bingo parlors in West Beirut, destroying furniture and smashing bottles of alcohol.<sup>88</sup>

### *Postwar Domestic Policy Changes (1990–2006)*

Hizbullah’s domestic policies evolved significantly after the end of the civil war as it reformulated its approach to relations both with its Shi’ite constituency and with Lebanon more broadly. The postwar status quo, as

codified in the Taif Accords and enforced by Syria, presented Hizbullah with a choice: they could continue to focus solely on resistance activities, eschewing participation in the reconstituted government, or they could initiate a radical shift by choosing to participate in the elections, thereby acknowledging the legitimacy of a multi-sectarian, non-Islamic political system.

Both positions had passionate adherents. The former was championed primarily by Subhi Al-Tufayli, the party's first secretary general. Under his leadership, the movement's initial postwar position was that while the movement would not reject participation in Lebanese politics *per se*, it rejected the sectarianism preserved under Taif, which it opposed in any case because the agreement called for all parties but the army to disarm.<sup>89</sup> In contrast, electoral participation was cautiously supported by Abbas Mousawi, who replaced Tufayli as secretary general in May of 1991. Mousawi produced a four-point political program, which included continued resistance against the IDF, the end of inter-communal strife, engagement with Lebanese politics, and increased emphasis on charitable work.<sup>90</sup>

This program ultimately moved the organization toward a less confrontational relationship with the government. Hoping to regain access to the positions in the south it had lost in its fighting with Amal, Hizbullah also began handing over military control of Beirut's southern suburbs to the army, which had the secondary effect of undermining Amal's claims that Hizbullah acted only in its own interests and against Lebanon's. When Hassan Nasrallah succeeded Mousawi as secretary general in 1992 (following the latter's assassination by the IDF), he continued the reformist trajectory.

The decision to participate in the electoral process was officially made in 1992 by a 12-man committee, selected from within the Shura council, which voted 10–2 in favor of electoral participation (though the decision was also submitted to Ayatollah Khamenei for approval).<sup>91</sup> While the ascendance of moderates in Iran and Syria's thawing relations with the USA in the context of the Gulf War both weighed in favor of the decision, there was also a pragmatic domestic logic at work; the hope was that it would bring the party official recognition and a podium from which to spread its ideas, as well as more prosaic assets like influence over the national budget.<sup>92</sup> Ultimately, though the decision remained unpopular with Tufayli's faction, it was welcomed by most members of the organization.<sup>93</sup>

*The Shi'ites*

Hizbullah's approach to the Shi'ites evolved in important ways after the war. Hizbullah expanded its provision of social services and, more importantly, reframed its political program: if the message in the 1980s was that Hizbullah was intent on overthrowing the Lebanese state for the social and spiritual benefit of the Shi'ites, whether they wanted it to or not, the post-war message was that Hizbullah was the most effective and most authentic representative of Shi'ite communal interests in the existing Lebanese political context. This approach would turn out to be a resounding success.

After the end of the civil war, Hizbullah's social service network grew substantially. Because of the breakdown of the state during last years of the civil war, the movement had increasingly taken responsibility for infrastructure maintenance within its sphere of influence. Rather than returning these responsibilities to the state after the end of the war, this policy was entrenched and expanded. Jihad al Binaa built 25 power stations between 1988 and 1993, dug a number of wells, provided drinking water, and repaired sewer lines. Hizbullah also built 24 heavily subsidized (though not free) schools between 1988 and 1993 in the south and the Bekaa, and began the construction of a sizeable health services network. Two major hospitals (Bir al Abed Hospital in Beirut and the Imam Khomeini Hospital in the Bekaa) were built in the mid-1990s, as well as a range of clinics and pharmacies providing subsidized prescriptions, all funded by Iran.<sup>94</sup> Mosques and religious centers were staffed and constructed. Hizbullah began providing direct financial support to needy families and to those with serious health problems, and offered interest free loans for housing, business, and education.<sup>95</sup>

By the mid-2000s, Hizbullah's service network was solidly institutionalized within the party's bureaucracy and remains so today. Its services fall under the purview of the Health Unit, the Social Unit, and the Education Unit, which in turn report to the Executive Council. The Social Unit oversees Jihad al Binaa, the Foundation for the Wounded (which cares for wounded fighters), the Martyrs Foundation, and the Khomeini Support Committee. The Education Unit oversees both the provision of scholarship funds and the administration of a large number of schools. The Health Unit oversees three hospitals, 12 smaller health centers, 20 infirmaries, 20 dental clinics, 20 "civil defense departments," as well as a number of "social health programs."<sup>96</sup> The organization has a virtual monopoly on the provision of social services in the areas under its control. Sympathetic local municipal government members in the south ensure that if Hizbullah

is opposed to a particular development project, regardless of whether it is being proposed by an international NGO, the UN, or a local Lebanese organization, it won't have much chance of being implemented.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to its broader social service programs, some of Hizbullah's services specifically address the consequences of its own military activities. The movement had a vested interest not only in retaining the good will of the civilian population but also in encouraging them to remain in the south. To this end, it provided services such as mobile medical clinics for those who were unable to reach medical care because of the fighting<sup>98</sup> and worked with farmers in the south to prevent their agricultural calendar from being too disrupted by "resistance activities."<sup>99</sup> Through Jihad al Binaa, which had teams permanently stationed in some areas, it guaranteed the reconstruction of any house destroyed in its fighting with Israel; after Operation Accountability in 1993, Jihad al Binaa repaired all 6000 homes destroyed in the fighting, at a cost of 8.7 million dollars (provided by Iran).<sup>100</sup>

The motivations for Hizbullah's provision of social services to its Shi'ite constituency are the subject of some debate. Critics characterize these services as a deliberate and utilitarian attempt to bring civilians closer to the organization for ideological and political reasons.<sup>101</sup> In contrast, staff at Hizbullah's organizations state that their work is a matter of religious conviction and has no strings attached, political or otherwise. In reality, both motives are probably operating. "Islamically correct" behavior is encouraged but not required of the recipients of Hizbullah's services; I have met non-Shi'ites and even non-Muslims who use the services Hizbullah administers. Hizbullah denies that it pays women to wear the chador, an indicator of adherence to Iranian-style Shi'ism, and in fact, even some of the women working in Hizbullah's media relations office wear a headscarf and abaya or jilbab instead.<sup>102</sup> In Hizbullah's schools, boys and girls are separated after age seven, and girls are encouraged, though not required, to wear hijab of some sort. It is also worth remembering that the causal relationship between support for a militant group and use of its social services can go both ways—movement adherents may make use of certain services (particularly schools) because they *already* support the movement and its values, and therefore prefer to affiliate with its institutions.<sup>103</sup>

On the other hand, Hizbullah is not in the business of anonymous charity provision. Hizbullah's logo is liberally splashed across its projects around the country, and in the Dahiyeh one is surrounded almost constantly with Hizbullah banners and billboards. Even during the civil war,

water tanks funded by Iran and installed by Hizbullah featured portraits of the Ayatollahs Khomeini and Khameini. None of this necessarily means that the movement is not sincere in its contention that the provision of these services is a pious end in and of itself, but it is clear that Hizbullah is aware that providing social services has reputational benefits.

The second major change in Hizbullah's approach to its Shi'ite constituency in the postwar period was in its marketing strategy. The organization seemed to recognize much more explicitly that its main competitor for Shi'ite support was Amal, and that it needed to reach past arguments centered simply on communal identity and instead focus on what made it a better representative of Shi'ite interests than its rival. Hizbullah had two specific tasks in this regard: to demonstrate that it could competently represent Shi'ite interests in a peacetime context, and to balance the preferences of those interested in a purely Islamic political project (i.e., Hizbullah's traditional base) with those who preferred a secular democratic state.

Ultimately, Hizbullah was able to accomplish both. Its "openness policy" toward the central government was reassuring to those who supported the existing political system, and the shift to the more conventional political project signaled by Hizbullah's participation in the elections of 1992 was intensely popular across the Shi'ite community. After the elections, Hizbullah's vocal opposition to confessionalism from within the government further reassured those who had worried that the movement might be co-opted and corrupted.<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, while Hizbullah's leaders took pains to put the feuding of the 1980s in the past, they still sought to establish a strong social norm of support for Hizbullah within the Shi'ite community. This was partly accomplished through the social services described above, and partly through the above political reforms, but equally significant was the way in which it, like its predecessors, made use of the resistance narrative—that is, how it publicized and interpreted its military actions against the IDF and their Lebanese allies. After all, Hizbullah's raids against Israeli targets continued to produce retaliation that caused enormous suffering in the south; what they sought to change was the public's response.

There were three specific narratives articulated by Hizbullah which seem to have shifted public opinion: "Hizbullah's exercise of restraint"; "the brutality of the Israeli military"; and "Hizbullah's extraordinary military effectiveness." While none of these was manufactured out of whole cloth, these narratives became reified over time and certainly took on a life of their own.

For instance, Hizbullah's level of restraint in its dealings with the Israelis did indeed increase in the early 1990s, particularly after the "understandings" (informal rules of engagement) it arrived at with the Israeli army after the operations of 1993 and 1996, under which both sides agreed to refrain from striking the other's civilians, and this does seem to have been a strong legitimizing factor.<sup>105</sup> However, Hizbullah's show of restraint would have been far less powerful in garnering public support, and could perhaps have been seen as a sign of weakness, had it not been explained as a deliberate decision made for the public good.<sup>106</sup> Arguably, the greatest boost to Hizbullah's prestige came with the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. Hizbullah has framed this outcome as a victory for the movement born of self-sacrifice against nearly overwhelming odds, which is celebrated every spring with a massive commemorative ceremony in Beirut.

Hizbullah's media apparatus, like the message it transmitted, became highly polished over the course of the 1990s. Its posters and banners are sleek and modern, its slogans politically adroit, and its billboards eye-catching, much like those of the other Lebanese parties.

The most significant development came in 1991, when its satellite television station Al Manar (*the Beacon*) went on the air. In Lebanon, each major party has its own television news station: LBC is affiliated with the Kataeb, OTV with the Tayyar, Future TV with the Hariri family's Future movement, and NBN with Amal. Like these stations, Al Manar has been an important platform for Hizbullah to express its domestic political program, though it also hosts members of other political factions on roundtable programs and holds live debates during election season.<sup>107</sup> But Al Manar has also achieved a degree of prominence outside Lebanon that is unmatched by other stations.<sup>108</sup> Anne Marie Baylouny reports that interview subjects in both Jordan and Lebanon indicated high levels of trust in the station's accuracy, particularly with regard to issues involving Israel and Palestine, which it covers in great depth.<sup>109</sup> And of course, it also provides regular coverage of Hizbullah's military operations, occasionally in the form of montages set to martial background music. Some of this footage included shots of dead Israeli soldiers, and the station was blamed by some Israeli policy-makers for helping to turn the public against the mission in Lebanon.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to these large-scale productions, Hizbullah-affiliated mosques and husseiniyehs continued to be powerful means of spreading the movement's message and recruiting new members day to day.

Since the 1990s, Hezbollah has run youth groups, Islamic schools, and the 60,000-strong Mahdi Scouts scouting organization. These activities serve as powerful socialization experiences, and for some (though far from all) as gateways to Hezbollah's political and military activities.<sup>111</sup> This dynamic extends into community life more broadly as well; the movement holds rallies and other large-scale public events which are attended by entire families, which feature full stage sets, a choir and band (all male), and fireworks. Particularly telling are the groups of teenagers outside the rallies, boys on one side of the parking lot and girls on the other, sending text messages back and forth and giggling, while a couple of adults kept a discrete eye on things. These events are not just political events for Hezbollah but also social events for the community, indicating just how deeply embedded a role Hezbollah plays in Shi'ite Beirut and elsewhere (Image 4.1).



**Image 4.1** The Hezbollah choir performs at an event commemorating Imad Mughniyeh's death. Beirut, February 2009. Photo by author

*The Non-Shi'ite Public*

Hizbullah's principal challenge with regard to the non-Shi'ite community after the civil war was to recast itself in a less threatening light, changing its image from that of an ideologically narrow Shi'ite militia to that of a pragmatic Lebanese nationalist group using violence in defense of, rather than against, the state. It was therefore crucial to reassure non-Shi'ite Lebanese that Hizbullah was not attempting to replicate the Iranian revolution in Lebanon, a theme which its leaders began to emphasize in interviews and speeches.<sup>112</sup> It instead began to frame itself primarily as a Lebanese "national resistance." The narrative of Hizbullah-as-resistance is particularly important because it distinguishes the movement from the other armed movements which participated in the civil war and were forced (unlike Hizbullah) to disarm under the terms of Taif. (I once saw a sign at a Hizbullah rally, in English and clearly intended for foreign journalists, which read "The Resistance Is Not A Militia.") In an interview with the center-left newspaper *Al Safir*, Nasrallah said:

When Hezbollah was established in the wake of the invasion and started its resistance against the occupation, it did not fight and give martyrs for Iran's sake in the strict regional sense, it fought for Lebanese territory, defended Lebanese citizens, and confronted an enemy behaving aggressively against the Lebanese people. I would like to ask, if we want to judge whether or not a given party is genuinely Lebanese: Is there a greater or more important yardstick than one's defense of the land and its people?<sup>113</sup>

He then went on to reiterate what had become Hizbullah's official position on the establishment of a Sharia-based system of government in Lebanon, namely that while Hizbullah of course believed that this was the best option for Lebanon, such an outcome must be the will of the majority of the Lebanese, meaning not merely 51 % of the population, but a majority of both Muslims and Christians. Both Fadlullah and Nasrallah stated repeatedly that Hizbullah had no interest in attempting to overthrow the current system of government by force.<sup>114</sup>

When the movement did criticize the Lebanese political system, it couched these criticisms as condemnation of sectarianism, in an overture to other groups who opposed the National Pact. Some of this was out of political necessity; because of the redistricting which occurred under Taif, Hizbullah (like all other political factions in Lebanon) found itself forced to appeal to those outside the Shi'ite community and to include

non-Shi'ites on its party lists, though for the most part, this “electoral cooperation” was merely a new variant of Lebanon’s tradition of political horse trading. But other gestures appear to have been real attempts at outreach; in 1997, for instance, Hizbullah’s Central Information Unit issued a booklet (in both Arabic and English) titled “A reading in Papal Guidance: Hizbullah’s Perspective,” which was an analysis of the papal guidance communicated to Lebanese Christians by Pope John Paul II, and which included an open letter to the pope praising him for his encouragement of coexistence, sentiments echoed in a speech by Muhammad Ra’d, head of Hizbullah’s political council.<sup>115</sup> Appeals to Sunnis generally took to form of appeals to a shared national identity and shared national grievances, such as the freeing of prisoners held in Israel and the return of IDPs to their homes. It is of course impossible to tell to what degree this is lip service to the idea of inter-communal coexistence and to what degree it constitutes a genuine commitment, but Hizbullah clearly stands to gain greatly from the end of the sectarian political system.

The party also engaged in more subtle but equally potent signaling. One example is the movement’s flag, which, prior to 1998, included the slogan *al thawra al Islami fi Lubnan*, “the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon.” After 1998, however, the word *thawra*, revolution, was replaced with the word *muqawama*, or “resistance.” Similarly, in 2001, Hizbullah’s newspaper, *Al Ahd*, changed its name to the less religious *Al Intiqad*, “the Critique,” and redesigned its front page to more closely resemble those of other Lebanese newspapers, though its website still features memorials to dead Hizbullah fighters. Hizbullah also changed the aesthetic of its campaign materials, removing all religious paraphernalia from polling stations in Christian and mixed areas in 1998.<sup>116</sup>

It also attempted to change the visual message of its public demonstrations; after 1995, these featured an increased proportion of Lebanese flags and banners relative to those of the party, though these were still prominently represented. By 1997, this was official policy.<sup>117</sup> Even today, Hizbullah’s skill at subtly shaping its message to suit its audience remains striking. At a rally in February of 2009 to commemorate the martyrdom of Imad Mughniyeh attended almost exclusively by core Hizbullah supporters, Hizbullah flags and banners were the overwhelming motif, and officials handed out yellow Hizbullah scarves bearing the faces of Hizbullah leaders assassinated by the IDF. In contrast, at a rally held two months later to commemorate the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon attended by supporters of Hizbullah’s various allied political parties

(including non-Shi'ites), officials handed out Lebanese flags only.<sup>118</sup> The organization exerts strict control over its image in the press, with a well-run media relations office through which all requests for interviews or other contacts are processed.

Of course, Hizbullah also benefited from public outrage regarding the IDF's military operations. The high civilian death toll accompanying Operation Grapes of Wrath, particularly the Qana massacre, galvanized public opinion, especially among Christians, against the IDF and, for some, in favor of Hizbullah.<sup>119</sup> In a similar vein, its behavior following the IDF withdrawal in 2000 offered a clear contrast with the SLA. While the SLA had held captured enemy fighters in the notoriously brutal Khiam prison (which was turned into a museum after 2000), former SLA members were mostly handed over to the Lebanese justice system, receiving on average between six and eighteen months of jail time, along with a prohibition on returning to their villages for two years (which they would likely have been unable to do in any case). Men who had traveled to Israel were sentenced to two years, while all women were acquitted. Leaders (tried mostly in absentia) received longer sentences of around 15 years. (Many remain in exile in Israel to this day.) For the most part, Hizbullah forces refrained from reprisals against Christians in the formerly occupied zone, even holding meetings with Christian leaders to reassure them that their communities had nothing to fear.<sup>120</sup>

The second means by which Hizbullah has somewhat improved its reputation among (at least some) non-Shi'ites is by virtue of its social service network. While Hizbullah's social service network primarily benefits Shi'ites, it also serves those from other communities, particularly in areas with mixed populations. Palestinians, particularly in Beirut, have historically had a hostile relationship with Amal largely because of the violence they suffered during the War of the Camps. And yet in Bourj al Barajneh, I heard open admiration expressed for Hizbullah, even by those who held extremely negative views of Amal and Shi'ite politicians in general. This is partly because of Hizbullah's strong stance against Israel, but also because of the services it provides in the area. In addition to the services themselves, the competent management and sheer scale of Hizbullah's charitable works have also won them admiration for their competence as administrators.

Of course, Hizbullah still used coercion against non-Shi'ite civilians as well. It aided and abetted Syrian hegemony in Lebanon until 2005, a state of affairs strongly opposed by many Christians and Sunnis, although there

were political leaders and parties of every ethno-communal group who allied or simply cooperated with the Syrians. Hizbullah has also used the threat of force to maintain a monopoly over the provision of security and use of force in the areas under its control, including Palestinian refugee camps in and around southern Beirut, which could certainly be viewed as coercive. Moreover, that Hizbullah retains its weapons when no other militant group does so does add an implicit threat to its dealings with its political opponents, as became clear during the Hizbullah takeover of West Beirut in 2008 (discussed in greater depth in the conclusion to this chapter). However, when compared to their behavior between 1982 and 1990, and the PLO's between 1970 and 1982, Hizbullah's behavior does appear comparatively less coercive on a day-to-day basis.

### *The Impact of Hizbullah's Evolving Domestic Policy*

Hizbullah's very different domestic policies produced very different results. In the 1980s, its use of marketing was only moderately successful; except within some parts of the Shi'ite community, it was unsuccessful in convincing its multiple audiences of either its narrative regarding Lebanon's problems (the Lebanese political system and the threat posed by Israel) or the solution to those problems (an Islamic Republic and Hizbullah itself, respectively). When it changed that narrative later on, its marketing became far more successful. Likewise, while its social services reached only the Shi'ite community in the 1980s, and can perhaps be understood as a form of patronage, in the postwar period it was able to use service provision not only as a way of drawing potential constituents into the movement's orbit, but, more importantly, of advertising its generosity, honesty, and bureaucratic competence.

In the 1980s, Hizbullah's alienation of the wider Lebanese public severely constrained its ability to achieve its military and political objectives, even though its growing influence in the Shi'ite public sphere did have some significant assets. The latter were genuinely beneficial; though Hizbullah needed little by way of financial or military support (getting all that it needed from Iran) and had no interest in winning seats in Lebanon's government, it did need the acquiescence of the public to its military and political activity in Shi'ite areas. In this, it was far more successful in Beirut than in the south; by 1986, it was sufficiently secure in the Dahiye that the area had become the movement's base of operations.

But on the other hand, even toward the end of the decade, the group still faced real reservations from even the Shi'ite public. Hizbullah's radical approach remained suspect to those who supported Amal's more secular, Lebanese-centric project, and its enforcement of Islamic behavioral standards was not universally popular. But perhaps most significantly, Israeli reprisals for the movement's attacks on the security zone continued to bring further suffering on the already battered south. In that part of the country, the movement failed to win the level of support it acquired in Beirut, laying the groundwork for the difficulties it would face against Amal later in the decade.<sup>121</sup> The movement also had difficulty in recruiting, especially early on, although this eased later. Even Mousawi (perhaps inadvertently) acknowledged this, stating proudly in an interview in 1987 that the movement's membership had expanded because parents were no longer so resistant to their children joining Hizbullah, and civilians in the south had become less afraid of Israeli reprisals.<sup>122</sup>

Outside the Shi'ite community, Hizbullah sought and received little by way of legitimation or alliance with other factions or communal groups and therefore had little influence on the decision-making of the Lebanese state, and little legitimacy as a serious party in the Lebanese context. Both its extremist rhetoric and its use of coercion tarnished the movement's reputation among Christians and Sunnis and made it seem less reasonable even than the other Lebanese militias. While the use of coercion helped maintain a base in West Beirut, this approach clearly alienated those who lived in the area. In an interview with the *Washington Post*, one resident of the neighborhood complained openly about Hizbullah's behavior: "We had a free life before ... now the Shi'ites are here and they think differently. They give orders, especially Hezbollah, about drinking and dressing and other things. We're Moslem too, but we don't like anyone giving us orders."<sup>123</sup> Although Hizbullah was, in some cases, able to overcome the hostility its earlier behavior produced, this was not universal, and left the movement with a great deal of work to do to repair the damage done to its reputation by its behavior in its early years.

And yet, to a degree, it was able to do so. Hizbullah's shift in its domestic policy choices, with regard both to its base and to the wider Lebanese public, led to a sea change in its overall effectiveness. Its improved position in the Shi'ite community yielded increased political power both in general and relative to Amal, the ability to launch operations against Israel and the IDF without fear of a public backlash, and a strong norm of support

in the Shi'ite community, while its improved position in Lebanon in general provided valuable room to maneuver and contributed to its political resilience.

One source of Hizbullah's improved position in the Shi'ite community was its decision to participate in the electoral process. Electoral participation signaled that the movement had become a different kind of organization and helped improve its market share relative to Amal, eroding the latter's support among the Shi'ite middle class (a process helped by Amal's own reputation for corruption). By the time the 2004 municipal elections were held, they had become by far the more popular Shi'ite party.<sup>124</sup>

Hizbullah's leadership was inclined to attribute its success to popular support for its "resistance" (i.e., military) activities. Accordingly, it based some of its campaign materials on this narrative: one election poster from the 1996 election read "They resist with their blood; resist with your vote." Nasrallah said plainly in an interview "We hold the opinion that the people who voted for us in 1992 did not do so due to the services we gave ... but due to support of the resistance." This belief was based partly on Hizbullah's own polling but was shared by other Lebanese politicians. Rafik Hariri, for instance, felt that Operation Grapes of Wrath had done a great deal to increase Hizbullah's popularity.<sup>125</sup> Hizbullah had managed to turn a potential liability into an enormous asset, reinforcing its position in the Shi'ite community and giving the group greater leeway in its military operations at the same time.

By 2003, the movement had clearly managed to generate a solid norm of support within the Shi'ite community. Polling of Lebanese Shi'ites found that 80 % of respondents supported Hezbollah retaining its arms indefinitely and supported its military activities. Seventy percent wanted to see the party grow, and 62 % endorsed its activities "in general," 54 % said that the party had the right to use violence against the state and 75 % said they would side with it in a confrontation with the government. On the other hand, 67 % generally disapproved of the use of violence to achieve the party's objectives, suggesting that it is the strong communal norm of support for the movement that produces acquiescence to violence against the state, not admiration for violence that produces support for the movement.<sup>126</sup> One attendee at a Hizbullah rally in Beirut in May of 2009 enthusiastically enumerated five specific reasons he supports Hizbullah: he comes from an environment in which "everyone loves Hizbullah"; his parents and everyone he knows love Hizbullah; Hizbullah "protects me against any enemy"; he "doesn't see anything

bad in them”; and “religion.” When asked about Amal, he said that while the first four reasons also applied to them, the fifth, religion, was specific to Hizbullah.

Community support, while valuable in its own right, also helped Hizbullah acquire financial and strategic assets. Wealthy Shi’ites both abroad and in Lebanon gave *zakat* (charitable donations) to fund Hizbullah’s social services, although this funding dwarfed the support it received from Iran. The movement’s popularity has virtually guaranteed the acquiescence of civilians to the presence of Hizbullah fighters in their villages and farms in the south. Hizbullah could have gained access to these areas by coercion, as the PLO had in the 1970s. But by relying on the provision of social services and the establishment of public support for the movement’s political and military project, rather than coercion, as the PLO had done, Hizbullah was able to convince civilians to remain on their land, providing camouflage for Hizbullah’s fighters, and valuable local intelligence. Their approach ultimately proved more successful.

Second, the strong norm of support for Hizbullah in the Shi’ite community facilitated its ability to recruit fighters domestically. This has meant that it has not had to rely on foreign fighters (i.e., Iranians) and therefore has maintained its status as an indigenous resistance movement. Moreover, Hizbullah’s fighters, while well paid, by all accounts are also committed to the movement’s goals, which has likely contributed to their effectiveness.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, because of its prestige, Hizbullah is able to recruit and promote based on skill (rather than mere willingness) producing what is arguably the most meritocratic of the militant groups in Lebanon. This dynamic provides an interesting counterpoint to the argument made by Weinstein that wealthy movements will use their wealth to recruit mercenary fighters rather than committed ones.

Hizbullah’s widespread public support had the secondary effects of making it difficult for the SLA to recruit Shi’ites and lowering morale in the SLA’s ranks. It was also able to recruit spies within the SLA from among those who had been press-ganged into joining, and publicized the names of SLA officers along with threats as to what would happen to them following what Hizbullah believed to be an inevitable Israeli withdrawal. This led to desertion not only by Shi’ites but also by Christians. Given that in the later years of the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon the IDF relied heavily on the SLA, this was a significant advantage for Hizbullah.<sup>128</sup>

Finally, it was at least in part because of the powerful norm of support for the movement in the Shi'ite community that Hizbullah was able to avoid a confrontation with the Lebanese military over its arms in the years leading up to the July War. After the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, Hizbullah's retention of its arms became an increasing source of political tension. Yet the army was reluctant to confront Hizbullah due in part to its popularity among Shi'ites, who comprise roughly one-third of the military; fears of a schism similar to those the army experienced during the civil war may have had a restraining effect.<sup>129</sup> In sum, Hizbullah's improved relationship with its Shi'ite base provided it with invaluable material and non-material assets to which it had not had access in its earlier years.

Hizbullah was also able to generate an increase in, if not actual support, at least respect from many Christians and some Sunnis, though far from all. In 1996, polling by the American University of Beirut found that 62 % of respondents (which included a representative sampling of Lebanese from all confessions) would vote for a "member of the resistance" suggesting that the organization had in fact gained a measure of respect outside its base. (Interestingly, only 19 % said they would vote for a "militia leader" indicating that Hizbullah's bid to frame themselves as distinct from the other Lebanese militant groups was successful.)<sup>130</sup>

After 2005, Hizbullah formed a political alliance (the March 8 coalition) with a major Christian political party, the Tayyar al Watani al Hurr (or Free Patriotic Movement). This alliance allowed them a much more powerful voice in Lebanese politics. While largely an arranged marriage of political expediency, even a purely pragmatic alliance would not have been possible in the absence of a change in the way the movement was perceived by Christian Lebanese. Polling of Christians in Metn (one of the most divided Christian electoral districts) in 2007 found that 46.5 % of Maronites, 58 % of Orthodox, and 49 % of Catholics were in favor of the memorandum between the Tayyar and Hizbullah, while about a third of each community opposed it, and the remainder were uncertain.<sup>131</sup> The director the Tayyar's district office in Achrafiyeh explained what he saw as the positive attitude among Christians to the Tayyar's alliance with Hizbullah as stemming from a variety of factors. He cited Hizbullah's exceptionalism, noting that they "never killed or touched any Christian" and that when the IDF withdrew from the south, they refrained from reprisals against Christians in the area. He also noted that in a similar situation, the Lebanese Forces, the Tayyar's main political rival in the Christian community, would have behaved very differently (a contention which

has substantial historical precedent). He even went so far as to compare Hizbullah's men to Buddhist monks, in that they exhibit a high degree of calmness, piety, and self-control, though he also acknowledged that this trust had a great deal to do with the trust that the Tayyar's membership has in the decisions made by its own leader, General Michel Aoun.<sup>132</sup> Whatever its basis, this alliance would prove instrumental in the movement's ability to recover politically following the July War.

While this increase in public acceptance—or at least a decline in outright panic—yielded mostly non-material benefits, in a few instances, non-Shi'ite Lebanese voluntarily donated important material resources. The surge in Christian support during Operation Grapes of Wrath is one example. Hizbullah officials recount being greeted warmly on the street in the Maronite neighborhood of Achrafiyeh, joint Muslim and Christian demonstrations were held in support of Hizbullah along the former green line, and the government rallied behind Hizbullah by refusing to agree to an international condemnation of the organization in exchange for an international condemnation of Israel. (Syrian influence may have had a great deal to do with this as well.) Even more surprisingly, Christians from the north and east of the country were among the many callers to Radio Nur inquiring as to where they could donate money to the resistance, or even find recruiting centers. In response, Hizbullah placed advertisements in a number of papers, outlining a variety of donation options, including the cost of a bullet, a rocket, or even outfitting a single fighter, as well as telephone and fax numbers through which would-be donors could contact the organization. A few Christian donors even donated thousands of dollars with the explicit request that the money be spent on Katyushas.<sup>133</sup> While these are anecdotes, rather than indicators of a broad trend, they are significant in that they demonstrate how much the movement's image had changed since the end of the civil war.

But this approach has not always been entirely successful. More conservative members of the organization do occasionally make statements which contradict its conciliatory line, as when Ibrahim al Amin, the head of Hizbullah's parliamentary delegation, said, in the context of the 1996 elections, "Hezbollah's entry to parliament does not symbolize a change in the organization's plan, working towards the establishment of an Islamic republic in Lebanon."<sup>134</sup> Moreover, there are still those who distrust Hizbullah. Albert Kostanian, the Kataeb's campaign manager for the 2009 elections and a member of its politburo, said bluntly that the Kataeb remains concerned about Hizbullah's intentions and loyalties because of its religious ties to Iran:

Naim Qassem himself stated ... all strategic decisions of Hizbullah are taken by the Wali al Faqih, and Hassan Nasrallah reasserted that principle in a public speech, saying that he is proud of being a follower of the Wali al Faqih and that the latter takes all strategic decisions. So here we have a problem, because what happens if Israel or the USA attacks Iran? Will Hizbullah retaliate from Lebanon or no? From who is Hizbullah getting orders? ... So here we have a clear problem with Hizbullah, because we don't know what is Hizbullah's agenda, who is controlling Hizbullah's agenda. ... We clearly accept Hizbullah in Lebanon, because despite its foreign links, it is a legitimate Lebanese party, we cannot deny Hizbullah any legitimacy, it has its supporters, it's not really a foreign implant in Lebanon ... they are legitimate because they talk on behalf of the majority of Shi'ites so we are not saying abolish Hizbullah or we must ban Hizbullah, we are saying that we have a problem with its loyalty and we must define what is loyalty and talk about it so we could avoid maybe further clashes between us and them.<sup>135</sup>

For some members of anti-Syrian political parties, Hizbullah's relationship with Syria remains suspect, and Iran's influence remains cause for concern. This has been a bone of contention between the Christian parties of the March 14 bloc (the Kataeb and Ouet) and those of the March 8 movement (the Tayyar and Marada). A public debate between members of the two held by Al Manar during the 2009 electoral campaign frequently devolved into arguments over whether Hizbullah could be trusted and whether Syria or Israel posed the greatest danger to Lebanon. What had changed since 1990 was that, at least among Christians, the question of Hizbullah's role in Lebanon was now a subject for debate, rather than a foregone conclusion.

In sum, by 2006, Hizbullah had managed to acquire a wide range of assets from its foreign sponsors and domestic constituents. While it retained access to funding, training, and weaponry from Iran, it had a greater degree of autonomy and a greater freedom to maneuver politically than it had in the past. While it remained somewhat constrained by its proxy relationship with Syria, this relationship also provided valuable political leverage, allowed them to conduct their military operations in the south more or less without interference, and provided weaponry as well. Militarily, Hizbullah's forces exhibited increasing levels of professionalism and restraint. Between 1995 and 2000, the ratio of Hizbullah casualties to IDF/SLA casualties decreased from 5:1 to 2:1.<sup>136</sup> In the 1990s, new principles of military engagement were developed that prioritized stealth over the flashier tactics of the 1980s, low Hizbullah casualties over high Israeli losses, and explicitly stated that "the population is a treasure—nurture it!"<sup>137</sup>

Domestically, Hizbullah's improved reputation helped them acquire a valuable alliance with the Taysar, while the powerful norm of support it was able to generate within the Shi'ite community granted significant political leverage and helped the organization to acquire a number of concrete military advantages, including a ready pool of recruits and a check on the ability of the Lebanese army to intervene against them. This led to very different outcomes for Hizbullah in the civil war and postwar periods.

## THE CIVIL WAR

By the time the civil war wound to an exhausted close at the end of the 1980s, Hizbullah had experienced both meaningful successes as well as the failure of its primary objective. During the civil war, it greatly expanded the territory under its control in the Bekaa, especially in the ancient town of Baalbek; by 1989, it controlled most of the town's social, economic, and political institutions, from its currency exchange to clothing and grocery stores to gas stations and pharmacies.<sup>138</sup> The movement also increased its presence in the Dahiyeh during this period, and by the middle of the decade was able to use the neighborhood as a base of operations, although this led to bitter clashes with Amal in 1988 and 1989.<sup>139</sup>

Hizbullah's military performance was also effective in that they were able to inflict high casualties on Israeli forces (although the casualty ratio remained in favor of the IDF). By 1984, Norton estimates that an Israeli soldier was being killed every three days.<sup>140</sup> The most successful operations were often suicide attacks; it launched close to 30 between 1982 and 1985, including the bombings of the Israeli military headquarters in Tyre in November of 1982 and 1983. Naim Qassem explicitly describes these tactics as being a means of "compensation for military imbalance and infliction of painful losses on enemy ranks," crediting these tactics with the IDF's withdrawal in 1985 to what was known as the "security zone," a strip of territory along the border occupied by the IDF and patrolled by the SLA.<sup>141</sup> Hizbullah's attacks against the MNF, including the bombings of the US embassy, US Marine barracks, and French paratrooper barracks, were also major successes. (Though Hizbullah denied responsibility for the bombings, they were almost certainly carried out by its allies if not by the organization itself.) In turn, the bombings of the embassy and Marine barracks encouraged Reagan's withdrawal of the Marines from Beirut and contributed to the failure of the Israeli-Lebanese peace treaty of 1983 while its campaign of abductions curtailed the mobility of Western men in the city, disrupting foreign intelligence networks.<sup>142</sup>

But despite these successes, largely because of the antagonistic relationship that had developed between Hizbullah and Amal and Syria, by 1989 the former was ultimately unable to maintain a base in south Lebanon. Given its preoccupation with resistance against the IDF presence in the south, this was a serious problem for the movement. Fighting erupted between Amal and Hizbullah in Beirut as early as 1984, partly as a result of Hizbullah's increasing presence in the western area of the city and in the Dahiyeh. Amal viewed the latter in particular as its own territory,<sup>143</sup> and Hizbullah's presence in the former sometimes led other militias to join Amal in attacking Hizbullah positions in West Beirut.<sup>144</sup> The intra-Shi'ite tension in Beirut was further exacerbated by the War of the Camps—Hizbullah refrained from involving itself, and indeed leaned somewhat toward the Palestinian side, increasing tensions with Amal.

Tensions developed between the two factions in the south as well. In the summer of 1987, Amal members broke up a Hizbullah-sponsored pro-Iranian demonstration in Tyre.<sup>145</sup> Within a year the two were clashing openly despite Ayatollah Fadlullah's calls for restraint.<sup>146</sup> Aided by the PLO, which was hostile to Amal given its attacks on the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut, Hizbullah took up military positions in Sidon. Syria, meanwhile, backed Amal both in Beirut and in the south. As fighting spread to Sidon, Tyre, and other southern towns, Amal announced that it would continue the fight until it had removed the "renegades."<sup>147</sup>

And indeed, by the end of the month, Hizbullah forces had been driven from most of their positions in the south. In January 1989, in some of the worst intra-Shi'ite fighting of the war, their remaining forces came under attack in village of Iqlim al-Tuffah.<sup>148</sup> At the end of the battle, Hizbullah was forced to recognize Amal's authority in the area and to agree not to conduct operations there without Amal's permission.<sup>149</sup>

## THE JULY WAR

By 2006, as a result of its vastly improved foreign and domestic policies Hizbullah had become a very different organization, as its performance during the July War demonstrates. In contrast with its performance during the civil war, in 2006 Hizbullah proved able to both resist and recover from the IDF's attack.

From the first night of the war, when the IDF bombed Rafik Hariri International Airport, it was clear that this would be a more serious conflict

that the limited exchanges that had taken place since 2000. After the IDF bombed the home of Hassan Nasrallah on the night of July 14, Hizbullah launched an anti-ship missile at the INS Hanit, a Saar-5 corvette ten kilometers off the coast of Beirut, killing four sailors.<sup>150</sup> Nasrallah's announcement of the attack was broadcast virtually simultaneously on television. The blast was audible across Beirut just as Nasrallah announced the attack on Al Manar.<sup>151</sup>

Over the next week, the IAF continued the bombardment of targets in southern Lebanon and the Dahiye, and civilian casualties (primarily Lebanese) continued to mount. Strikes in the Christian areas of Jounieh and even East Beirut, as well as the increasing severity of the IDF assault, began to solidify public opinion against Israel across the political spectrum. A strike on Qana on July 30 that killed approximately 30 civilians triggered particular outrage.<sup>152</sup>

Also of special importance was the fighting in and around the border village of Bint Jbeil, particularly its outcome. On July 25, as the IDF began its land invasion, Israeli soldiers took control of the village.<sup>153</sup> Five days later, following heavy fighting, they pulled out. While Israeli soldiers reported that they had taken fewer casualties than Hizbullah, IDF Chief of Staff Dan Halutz admitted that the withdrawal was a blow to morale.<sup>154</sup>

Hizbullah also demonstrated that it could strike civilian targets inside Israel with both long-range and Katyusha rockets. In addition to the northern towns (which experienced regular rocket fire regardless), it launched long-range missiles at Haifa, Israel's third largest city, as well as the cities of Tiberias, Afula, and Nazareth, killing 43 civilians in total.<sup>155</sup>

The fighting continued until the end of July, featuring heavy bombardment of southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut, as well as increasing numbers of Israeli troops on the ground; by the end of the war, Israel had deployed almost 30,000. The conflict was finally ended by a UN-negotiated ceasefire on August 14. Whether or not the war was in the long term, a "victory" for Hizbullah or for Israel is still debated. Of the three conditions that the IDF named on July 13 as necessary for an end to the war—an end to rocket attacks, the disarmament of Hizbullah under UN Resolution 1559, and the release of its soldiers—the third was not met until their bodies were returned in 2008, the second has never been met, and the first has been met only partially; while rocket fire from south Lebanon has been reduced since the war, it still occurs.

Furthermore, Hizbullah managed to retain much of its military capacity following the war. Cables from the US embassy in Beirut indicate that

the Israelis were concerned by Hizbullah's capacity to "destabilize" south Lebanon, and in particular with the possibility of Hizbullah acquiring anti-aircraft capabilities.<sup>156</sup> American officials privately admitted that "public estimates put Hizbullah's stockpile as high as 40,000 rockets and missiles, reinforcing assessments by some experts that this build-up may portend a shift in the military balance between Israel and its northern nemesis."<sup>157</sup>

But while the ability to resist militarily is important, so, too, is the ability to recover politically. This Hizbullah was also able to do. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Hizbullah certainly faced criticism, as well as doubts from the public and particularly the leadership of the March 14 bloc regarding its judgment and intentions. But if Israel had hoped to isolate Hizbullah and weaken it politically by turning the population of Lebanon against it, the war had the opposite effect. The widespread damage to the country's infrastructure, the strikes on Christian areas, and of course the high civilian death toll created a groundswell of public outrage against the IDF. Polling in August of 2006 found that 97 % of those polled considered Israel to be an enemy during the recent conflict; even among Maronites, this number was close to 94 %. Meanwhile, Hassan Nasrullah's rating as "the first leader in Lebanon" increased to 31 % in August from 20 % in May. Though a third said that they opposed Hizbullah's abduction of the two soldiers and a similar percentage favored a discussion of the mechanism by which Hizbullah would lay down its arms, a majority supported its actions and wished to see it retain its weapons, though this was somewhat weighted by sect, with the Druze most heavily in favor of forceful disarmament. A separate poll in August by the French-language newspaper *L'Orient-le Jour* found that 51 % of respondents (mostly Christians and Druze) wanted to see Hizbullah disarmed, a substantially higher percentage.<sup>158</sup> In the aggregate, though, Hizbullah's political position after the war remained strong.

Importantly, Hizbullah's ability to survive politically did not rely on coercion. Rather, in addition to tapping into the pan-Lebanese nationalism inspired by the war, the organization relied heavily on its existing support base and status as a resistance movement to justify its actions. More practically, Hizbullah also poured an enormous amount of (mostly Iranian) money into reconstruction efforts, offering each family whose house was destroyed \$40,000 or reconstruction services, whichever they preferred. (Hizbullah also covered the difference in cost if the latter option proved to be more expensive.) To implement this plan, they established a construction company called *Wa'ad*; a total of 92 % of those affected chose to use *Wa'ad*'s services to rebuild.<sup>159</sup>

One incident is particularly illustrative of the role Hizbullah's reconstruction efforts played in shoring up its standing the aftermath of the war. Ayatollah Fadlullah's house stood across from a large church which was badly damaged when Fadlullah's home was bombed during the war. The priest asked both the Maronite patriarchate and the Lebanese government for help in rebuilding, but both were slow in responding. As he was waiting, men from Hizbullah came to the church, and offered, unsolicited, to rebuild the church and to replace its enormous stained glass windows; the church gratefully accepted. Rather than using the war as an opportunity to push Christians out of the neighborhood, Hizbullah instead recognized the chance for a significant public relations coup.<sup>160</sup>

### CONCLUSION

In sum, whereas by the end of the civil war Hizbullah's policies had seriously impeded its ability to achieve its objectives, the changes it instituted after the end of the war left it far better prepared both to resist the Israeli attack and to recover politically from it afterward. This demonstrates that a change in tactics by the same organization can produce drastically different results.

Perhaps there is another explanation. One argument sometimes made is that Hizbullah's performance in 2006 is attributable to the weapons it received from Iran and Syria.

But while Hizbullah's weapons certainly mattered (and it is therefore, as noted above, worth examining how Hizbullah acquired them), the outcome of the war cannot be attributed to force of arms alone. At this stage, comparison with the PLO may be useful. Although smaller than it had been in the late 1980s, the difference in military strength between Hizbullah and the IDF in 2006 was still enormous, arguably larger than or at least comparable to that between the IDF and the PLO in 1982. The IDF initially deployed 10,000 soldiers, while Hizbullah's strength at the start of the war was no more than 2000–3000. By the end of the war, the IDF's numbers had risen to 30,000.<sup>161</sup> Unlike the PLO, Hizbullah had no foreign allies in Lebanon (though those allies ultimately did the PLO little good). While Hizbullah's long-range missiles were useful for strikes against targets in Israel, they were not ideal for waging a ground war. Though it did have a stockpile of anti-tank and anti-ship missiles, as well as artillery, light weapons, and several Iranian-made drones, it did not have access to even the small number of (admittedly unreliable) tanks fielded by

the PLO in 1982 and had nothing in its possession to counter the power of the Israeli air force. If force of arms alone were responsible for a militant group's survival or otherwise, the outcomes of the wars in 1982 and 2006 would have been similar.

Comparison between Hizbullah in its earlier and later years is also instructive on this point. One lesson presented by Hizbullah's evolution over time is that access to material resources does not tell the whole story. Even though it was receiving far more money in the 1980s than it would after Khomeini's death in 1989, Hizbullah was far less effective during that period than it was after it changed its strategy in the 1990s. During the civil war, Hizbullah's ideology and political objectives alienated a sufficiently broad swathe of the public that its political influence, particularly in comparison with Amal, was quite limited. But the transformation that Hizbullah undertook in the early 1990s, when it shifted its message toward a narrative emphasizing nationalist, rather than pan-Shi'ite themes, greatly improved things for the movement. The process of moderation reassured the Syrians and allowed Hizbullah to repair its relationship both with them and with their client, Amal. These changes formed the basis for a new policy that eventually produced powerful and useful local political alliances and a great deal of resilience to both the domestic upheaval and military challenges that occurred in the mid-2000s.

I would argue, therefore, that in 2006 Hizbullah was able to use the arms that it had more effectively and rely on its access to them more confidently than either the PLO in 1982 or Hizbullah itself in the 1980s had been able to do, based on Hizbullah's very different relationships with its foreign patrons and domestic constituents. Its relations with the former produced much higher levels of organizational cohesion than exhibited by the PLO, or even by Hizbullah itself in its early years—by 2006, Hizbullah's patrons were a source of cohesion, not division, within the organization, and both Iran and Syria remained far more reliable backers to Hizbullah in 2006 than they had been to the PLO in 1982. Its rapprochement with Syria was obviously significant as well. This suggests that relationships with foreign patrons are profoundly important, not only in their presence but also in their quality.

An argument could also be made that the outcomes of these cases are different because the intent of the two invasions was different. I find this unconvincing, however, because in both 1982 and 2006, decision-making on the Israeli side was distorted by information asymmetries between the military and civilian branches. In both cases, it was unclear, even within Israel, what the ultimate goal of the war would be. This is evident in

both the contradictory statements made to the Israeli press regarding the aims of the 2006 war and the postwar revelations regarding Ariel Sharon's move to proceed to Beirut in violation of the Cabinet's decisions regarding the war's objectives.<sup>162</sup>

Finally, in response to the perhaps obvious critique that Hizbullah had an advantage that the PLO did not because they were Lebanese fighting on Lebanese territory, I would argue that Hizbullah's history indicates clearly that in its early years, this was hardly an advantage. The group's position in Lebanon, and in the Shi'ite community, was not preordained, either by virtue of their Shi'ite identity or their relationship with Iran. To so argue means ignoring the serious conflicts between and within different Lebanese communal groups, including among the Shi'ites, as well as the successes Hizbullah enjoyed when fighting in predominantly Christian areas. It also means ignoring the fact that in its early years, Hizbullah was far less successful even when fighting in the same context. In the early days of the war, Shi'ite mobilization tended to occur around leftist or communal rather than religious themes; it was Hizbullah's own deliberate reshaping of the dominant political narrative in the Shi'ite community, rather than an inherent identity endowment, which allowed them greater political market share relative to Amal.

Of course, in recent years, Hizbullah has at times used coercive tactics to maintain its position; in 2008, it did so to its detriment politically. When Saad Hariri's government moved to dismantle their independent surveillance network at the airport, Hizbullah responded by occupying West Beirut. The conflict was only resolved through negotiations ending in the Doha Agreement, which revised the terms of the Taif Agreement to give Hizbullah and its allies a greater degree of political power. This led to an increasing degree of distrust of the organization in many quarters, particularly among the Sunnis and Maronites. Were Hizbullah to revert to the wholly coercive tactics of the 1980s, it would likely find its position further compromised, particularly given its current troop commitments in Syria.

But on the other hand, Hizbullah's continued influence in Lebanon indicates that they were not, as the IDF had hoped, crippled by the 2006 war. In the 2009 elections, the March 8 bloc did about as well as it had in 2005, and as a result of the Doha Agreement holds veto power in the Cabinet. Today, however, Hizbullah's participation in the Syrian civil war threatens these gains. If Hizbullah in 2006 represented an example of an organization particularly well adapted to survive in its environment, there is no guarantee that this will hold true in the long term.

## NOTES

1. Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 17–19.
2. Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation,” 15–20.
3. For more on this issue, see Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion*.
4. Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah’s Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel*, 51–53.
5. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 33.
6. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 61–63; Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation,” 23–25; Samii, “A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship,” 35.
7. Hamzeh, “Lebanon’s Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation,” 25.
8. Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 33; Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 50.
9. A Lexis-Nexis search first turns up the name “Hezbollah” in the international press in relation to this episode.
10. Human Rights Watch argues this was deliberately planned to put pressure on the Lebanese government. This is confirmed by public statements by a number of Israeli politicians. See “Human Rights Watch, “Civilian Pawns : Laws of War Violations and the Use of Weapons on the Israel-Lebanon Border.”
11. *Ibid.*
12. The March 8 and March 14 coalitions were named for the dates of the largest pro-Syrian and anti-Syrian rallies, respectively.
13. “Lebanese Shi’ites Urge Islamic Revolution.”
14. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 36–37.
15. “Hezbollah Threat Prompts Tighter Soviet Security.” Hizbullah’s opposition to UNIFIL was linked to its general disapproval of the UN. The Security Council’s vote in favor of a ceasefire in the Iran–Iraq war led Tufayli to call for a “jihad” against the UN in 1987. Goksel recalled that once Hizbullah became active in the south, UNIFIL began to encounter difficulties that had never existed before. Interview, Timor Goksel.
16. Transliterated from Farsi as vali-e faqih. Wilayet al faqih is transliterated as vilayat-e faqih.
17. The words and actions of the prophet Muhammad.
18. In occultation, the mahdi remains in the world, but hidden from the world. According to Shi’ite theology, he will return with Jesus to establish peace and justice on earth.

19. This somewhat resembles the role of the Rebbe in Hasidic Judaism.
20. For an excellent explanation of this, see Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hizbullah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," 30–36.
21. Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," 35–36.
22. "Hezbollah Leader Interviewed on Ties to Iran."
23. Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," 35–36.
24. "VOL: Syrians Training Iranians for 'Terrorism.'"
25. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 72–73.
26. *Ibid.*, 43–44.
27. Patrick Seale suggests that while Asad had some personal sympathy for the struggles of the Shi'ites, he had also welcomed the overthrow of the Shah and saw in the Iranian revolution a regional counterweight to the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood which was a thorn in his side at home. Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 351–53.
28. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*.
29. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 181–82.
30. Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, Lawson, *Why Syria Goes to War: Thirty Years of Confrontation*.
31. This logic is reflected in Syria's position regarding the Shebaa Farms, an eight-square-mile piece of territory occupied by Israel. While Israel (and the UN) argues that the territory is/was Syrian, Syria and Lebanon claim that it is Lebanese, meaning that the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory in 2000 remains incomplete. This interpretation provides Syria with both a basis for maintaining joint Lebanese–Syrian negotiation with Israel and a justification for Hizbullah's retention of its arms.
32. Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, 92.
33. Ranstorp, "Hizbullah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," 321.
34. Samii A.W., "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," 41.
35. Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel.*, 100–101.
36. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 133–35.
37. *Ibid.*, 194.
38. "Iranian Envoy Conveys Backing for Hezbollah, Resistance Source."
39. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 44–45.

40. "Iranians to Install Missiles in Beirut Suburbs."
41. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 150.
42. "Hezbollah Leader Interviewed on Ties to Iran."
43. Ranstorp, "Hizbullah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," 321.
44. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 181. Hizbullah's television station, Al Manar, did not go on air until 1991.
45. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 150.
46. Ranstorp, "Hizbullah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," 317-19.
47. Though by all accounts, these businesses are run far more cleanly than the PLO's were.
48. Samii A.W., "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," 41-42. Bank Saderat describes itself on its website as "the largest bank in Iran." It was nationalized after the revolution, and now does the bulk of its foreign business with Dubai. <http://in.bsi.ir/default.aspx>.
49. Cordesman, "Preliminary 'Lessons' of the Israeli-Hezbollah War," 5-8.
50. As indicated by state radio coverage of the events. "BBC Summary of World Broadcasts."
51. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 179.
52. Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," 38-39.
53. Ranstorp, "Hizbullah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," 310-11.
54. "Syrians Bringing Heavy Artillery Into Al-Biqa'."
55. "Iranians Begin Departure at Request of Syria."
56. "Syrians Encircle Hezbollah Gunmen in Ba'labakk."
57. Boustany, "Syrian Troops Said to Kill 18 In Hezbollah's Beirut Militia."
58. Samii, "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizbullah-Iran-Syria Relationship," 39.
59. Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 47.
60. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 233.
61. Hunter, "Is Now the Time to Raise Hizballah With Syria?."
62. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*.
63. Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, 96.
64. MP Marwan Hamade resigned in protest and was nearly killed by a car bomb soon afterwards.

65. Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, 99. This assessment is also based on conversations I had with a number of people while in Beirut the weekend the vote was taken.
66. Wilson, "Lebanese Wary of a Rising Hezbollah: Fears of Militia's Broader Ambitions Reignite Debate over Its Populist Agenda."
67. Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon: The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and Its Impact on the Middle East*, 97–99.
68. This is phrased as follows: "We call upon all of them to pick the option of Islamic government which, alone, is capable of guaranteeing justice and liberty for all." Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto*, 39–55.
69. Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, 79–80.
70. "Amal Seizes 'Hundreds' of Hezbollah's Rifles."
71. "Fighting Resumes."
72. Flanigan, *For the Love of God: NGOs and Religious Identity in a Violent World*, 22–23.
73. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 70–72.
74. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 156.
75. Ranstorp, "Hizbullah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," 320.
76. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 72.
77. *Ibid.*, 64.
78. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 26.
79. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 63–64.
80. *Ibid.*, 73.
81. Interview, Lokman Slim, Beirut, 2012.
82. Abu Nasr, "Shi'ites Bring Islamic Fundamentalism to Lebanon's Ancient Baalbek."
83. Interestingly, in Tyre, the local Amal commander was elected to enforce more moderate versions of similar rules in a bid to sap Hezbollah's influence. He also banned public gunfire and even dynamite fishing because "people's nerves just can't take it anymore." Blanche, "Shi'ites Ban Alcohol, Mixed Beaches in Ancient City."
84. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 143–44.
85. "Lebanese Shi'ites Urge Islamic Revolution."
86. Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Hezbollah: From Islamic Revolution to Parliamentary Accommodation," 41.

87. "Hezbollah Leaflets in Beirut."
88. Graham, "Islamic Fundamentalism Rises; West Beirut Dons the Chador."
89. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 86.
90. Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 153–54.
91. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 100.
92. Qassem, *Hezbollah: The Story from Within*, 267–269
93. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*. 99–100
94. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 155–64.
95. *Ibid.*, 149.
96. Flanigan, *For the Love of God: NGOs and Religious Identity in a Violent World*, 125.
97. Interview with anonymous official, UNDP.
98. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 158.
99. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 117.
100. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 156.
101. Levitt also argues that Hezbollah's charities are used to launder funds for their military activities. Levitt, *Hezbollah: Financing Terror through Criminal Enterprise*.
102. The abaya is a long black robe, which may be worn open over a long dress or tied shut. The jilbab is a long semi-fitted coat-dress, which comes in a wide range of colors and styles. Both may be worn with any number of styles of headscarf and are common across the Arab Muslim world.
103. For a detailed analysis of the role social service provision plays in Hezbollah's engagement with the Shi'ite community, see Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*.
104. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 109.
105. *Ibid.*, 115. One indicator of support for Hezbollah discussed by Azani is the extraordinarily large turnout at the funeral of Hassan Nasrallah's 18-year-old son Hadi, who was killed in 1997 while fighting against the IDF.
106. See, for example, Nasrallah's lengthy interview with Al Safir in April of 1996 in which he explains the logic behind and contents of the July and April understandings in great detail. Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrullah*, 151–55.
107. I attended one of these electoral debates in Beirut in 2009.
108. LBC stands for Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation. My impression is that the station's popularity owes a great deal to the reality shows and singing contests it broadcasts.
109. Baylouny, "Al-Manar and Alhurra: Competing Satellite Stations and Ideologies."

110. Schleifer, "Psychological Operations: A New Variation on an Age Old Art: Hezbollah versus Israel."
111. Worth, "Generation Faithful: Hezbollah Seeks to Marshal the Piety of the Young."
112. See, for instance, a 1992 interview with Al Watan Al Arabi, in which Nasrallah says point blank "We do not want to impose an Islamic government by force." Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*.
113. *Ibid.*, 69.
114. Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 156; Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 128.
115. Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 158–59.
116. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 129.
117. Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology, and Political Program*, 171.
118. I attended both events.
119. Schleifer, "Psychological Operations: A New Variation on an Age Old Art: Hezbollah versus Israel."
120. Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel.*, 277; Nasrallah, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, 65. Interview with Michel Metni.
121. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 29–30.
122. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 68.
123. Graham, "Islamic Fundamentalism Rises; West Beirut Dons the Chador."
124. Shanahan, "Hizballah Rising: The Political Battle for the Loyalty of the Shi'a of Lebanon."
125. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 106.
126. Haddad, "The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah," 31–32.
127. Norton, "Hizballah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon," 27.
128. Schleifer, "Psychological Operations: A New Variation on an Age Old Art: Hezbollah versus Israel."
129. Nerguizian and Cordesman, "The Lebanese Armed Forces: Challenges and Opportunities in Post-Syria Lebanon."
130. Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*. The fact remains, however, that the leaders of most major Lebanese political parties in the 1990s were former militia leaders.

131. Information International, "Opinion Poll: Memorandum of Accord between Free Patriotic Movement and Hizbullah."
132. Interview, Michel Metni.
133. Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 198–99.
134. Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalization*, 126.
135. Interview, Albert Kostanian, Kataeb. Salim el Sayigh, a highly ranked member of the Kataeb, voiced similar concerns about Hizbullah's compatibility with the Lebanese political system. He viewed Amal, in contrast, as being well integrated into Lebanese politics.
136. Norton, "Hizbullah and the Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon," 30.
137. Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel*, 123.
138. "Hizbullah Strengthens Hold."
139. Kifner, "The Warrens of Shiite Shantytowns: A Most Likely Place for the Captives."
140. Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 81.
141. Qassem, *Hezbollah: The Story from Within*, 49.
142. Harik, "Hizbollah and Today's Battle for Beirut," 37.
143. "RFL on Amal-Hezbollah Clashes in Beirut."
144. "Junblatti, Amal Gunmen Plan Action Against Hezbollah."
145. "Amal Reportedly Confronts Hizbollah Demonstration."
146. "Syrians Assist Amal"; "Fadlallah Urges End to Clashes."
147. "Amal To 'Wipe Out' Hizbollah."
148. "'Critical' Situation in Southern Lebanon Noted."
149. "Hizbollah Official on Recognizing Amal Authority."
150. Amos and News Agencies, "Soldier Killed, 3 Missing after Navy Vessel Hit off Beirut Coast."
151. I was in Beirut and watching Al Manar when the attack on the Hanit occurred.
152. "Israel/Lebanon: Qana Death Toll at 28: International Inquiry Needed into Israeli Air Strike."
153. Katz, "8 Soldiers Killed in Battle of Bint Jbail."
154. Black, Gilmore, and Prothero, "The Day Israel Realised That This Was a Real War."
155. Addario and Myre, "2 Are Killed in Israeli Port as Hezbollah Presses Attack"; Myre, "Hezbollah Launches Longer-Range Rocket as Israeli Attacks Continue."
156. US Embassy, "UNSCOL Williams on UNIFIL Incident, Ghajar." This was, of course, prior to the outbreak of the Syrian civil war.
157. Hunter, "Is Now the Time to Raise Hizbollah With Syria?."

158. Yaliban, "Lebanon: Poll Shows 51% Want Hizbullah Disarmed."
159. Interview with an anonymous UNDP official. I also attended a conference held to celebrate Wa'ad's accomplishments in July 2012. Speakers included representatives from the Iranian and Syrian governments.
160. This story was shared with me by an American journalist with over a decade of experience in Lebanon.
161. Dan Halutz, quoted in "Israeli Army Chief Says Israel Has Tripled Number of Troops in Lebanon." I have made a similar point elsewhere. See Szekely, "Hezbollah's Survival: Resources and Relationships."
162. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 1984.

## Hamas

Dubbed Operation Cast Lead by the IDF, the 2009 Gaza War began on December 28, 2008 with the aerial bombardment of Gaza by the Israeli Air Force (IAF). It was soon followed by a ground invasion. The operation lasted three weeks and took approximately 1300 lives (13 of them Israeli, the rest Palestinian). By the end of the war, though much of Gaza's economy and infrastructure were in ruins, Hamas remained in power in Gaza. When Israel launched Operation Defensive Edge in 2014, Hamas demonstrated that it retained the capacity to continue rocket attacks against Israel, though that campaign proved even more costly for Gaza both in loss of life and destruction of infrastructure. If survival is defined as the ability to both resist and recover, in both conflicts Hamas clearly failed at the first, but succeeded at the second. These conflicts represent an important test for Hamas, just as the July War did for Hizbullah, and Hamas' response to it can tell us a good deal about its character.

Hamas' performance in these conflicts—that is, what it was and was not able to do—was shaped by the organization's decisions regarding its foreign and domestic relationships, both of which, until 2012, demonstrated rather more continuity than those of Hizbullah or the PLO. Its relationships with its primary sponsors, Iran and Syria, were based not only on its utility as a military proxy, but also on its ideological appeal as *Palestinian* military proxy, even if neither state was entirely comfortable with Hamas' Palestinian nationalist and Islamic revivalist political project.

In contrast, its earlier and weaker relationship with Jordan was based on the monarchy's desire both to appease public opinion and to develop a counterweight to the PLO. Likewise, in its relations with the public, Hamas' skillful and efficient provision of social services proved more convincing to many Palestinians than its attempts to market its rather narrow political ideology.

For much of its life span, then, Hamas has been an organization whose domestic policy is far more successful than its foreign policy. In this, and the fact that it emerged from a local social movement focused on social service, it resembles Amal far more than Hizbullah, although it is more often compared with the latter. It has proved remarkably durable politically, but while its military operations have killed a great many Israelis, it has not had the same surprising capacity to confront the IDF that Hizbullah has exhibited. With the very recent exception of its partnerships with Mohammed Morsi's short-lived government in Egypt and perhaps with Qatar,<sup>1</sup> Hamas' relationships with its sponsors have been largely limited to proxy arrangements based on shared enemies (Israel and to a lesser extent the PLO) than on shared ideology, which has limited the utility of these relationships somewhat and rendered most of them impermanent. In this sense, it probably belongs on the border between quadrants B and C, falling somewhere between a local militia and a proto-state actor. It might be most accurately described as an "aspiring proto-state." While it has not adapted as effectively as other actors in the same conflict ecosystem (such as Hizbullah), it has demonstrated impressive resilience over time (Map 5.1).

## THE ORIGINS OF HAMAS

Hamas' roots lie in the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, a religious and political organization founded in Egypt in the 1920s with branches throughout the region. Muslim Brotherhood representatives from Cairo arrived in Gaza in the 1940s, seeking to establish the organization there. They found a solid existing base on which to build; Islamic political activism had been a powerful mobilizing force in Palestine since the 1920s, when opposition to British rule and Zionist immigration was led by Izzedine al Qassem. After his death, his followers helped lead the 1936–1939 Arab Revolt. By 1948, the Muslim Brotherhood had 38 branches across Palestine. However, it was only slightly involved in the war of 1948, and its influence and membership were much diminished by the



ensuing refugee crisis. While the organization continued to exist after the nakba, it had no armed wing and remained largely apolitical. In the West Bank, which was under Jordanian sovereignty, the Brotherhood more or less served as a loyal opposition, and in Egyptian-ruled Gaza it was suppressed after the attempt on Nasser's life in 1954.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Nasser's pan-Arabism constituted the major challenge to political Islam. Particularly after 1967, tensions began to emerge between the secular supporters of new movements like Fatah and the Muslim Brothers, and so in the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza began to mobilize in response to these challenges.<sup>3</sup> In 1973, Ahmed Yassin, a paraplegic preacher and high school teacher founded an Islamic community center in Gaza known as the Mujamma which engaged in charitable works, ran youth sports leagues, and built mosques throughout Gaza.

By the middle of the decade, the Mujamma controlled most of the charitable and professional associations in Gaza. This occurred with the tacit approval from the Israeli government, which hoped that Hamas would counterbalance the power of the PLO and had offered official recognition of the Mujamma in 1978.<sup>4</sup> In 1988, senior Hamas leader Mahmud Zahar went so far as to meet with Shimon Peres to discuss the movement's goals and apparently stated that Hamas would accept Israeli withdrawal from the territories seized in 1967 and Palestinian self-rule as a possible outcome.<sup>5</sup>

But behind the scenes, many younger members of the Islamic Movement pressed for armed insurrection against Israel. In 1983, members of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood convened in Amman for a conference at which it was decided to launch what Tamimi refers to as an "Islamic global project for Palestine." At the same time, and quite separately, funds raised by Palestinians in Kuwait were being secretly funneled to Gaza for the purchase of arms.<sup>6</sup> (This suggests that even prior to the official founding of Hamas, those inside the Palestinian territories appear to have been working separately from those abroad). In 1985, after some false starts, Yassin established a security force called the Majd ("Glory" in Arabic).<sup>7</sup>

Through the 1980s, the Palestinian Islamic Movement's influence grew steadily, facilitated by a recession in Israel which, combined with plunging oil prices, reduced the demand for Palestinian labor, creating a state of economic hardship highly conducive to recruitment. In addition, the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon in 1982 weakened the left, which was to the Islamic Movement's advantage.

Then in December of 1987, the first intifada (which means “shaking off” in Arabic) erupted in Gaza’s Jabalia refugee camp. Though sparked by the death of four Palestinian laborers when their car was hit by an Israeli truck, its roots lay in the increasingly desperate economic and political situation in the West Bank and particularly Gaza. The funerals of the dead men served as focal points for popular anger, and though they were attended by preachers from the Mujamma, these early protests were basically grassroots in nature, forcing both the secular and Islamic parties to play catch-up. The PLO leadership in exile, taken completely by surprise, tried with mixed success to direct the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) from exile in Tunisia.

In the face of this upheaval, the Muslim Brotherhood sought to establish an armed wing of its own.<sup>8</sup> Building on the existing framework of the Mujamma and Majd, the new movement adopted the name “ Hamas” (an acronym for *Harekat al Muqawama al Islamiyah*, or the Islamic Resistance Movement) in February of 1988.<sup>9</sup>

Hamas’ early organizational structure was heavily influenced by the necessities of the intifada itself: the youth wing coordinated strikes and distributed aid, the communications wing was responsible for slogans, graffiti and leaflets, and the intifada wing handled military action.<sup>10</sup> In August of 1988, Hamas released its charter, which codified the group’s status as an entity separate from both the Muslim Brotherhood and the other Palestinian factions. After Hamas began kidnapping Israeli soldiers, Israel finally outlawed the organization in 1989 and arrested hundreds of Hamas members (including Yassin and Zahar). This crackdown necessitated some restructuring with the organization. Most significantly, it led to a shift in Hamas’ center of gravity from the “inside” to the “outside,” particularly Jordan. Meanwhile, in Gaza, a separate military wing, the Izzedine al Qassem Brigades, was established. Their early operations in Gaza targeted actual or accused collaborators with Israel, but in 1992 they began launching attacks against Israeli civilians (primarily through car bombs) and soon expanded into the West Bank. By the mid-1990s, Hamas had 10,000 men under arms.<sup>11</sup>

Hamas’ emergence posed a serious challenge not just to Israel, but to the PLO as well. Despite some half-hearted attempts to convince Hamas to join the organization, its terms for doing so—40 % of the seats in the Palestine National Council and termination of the peace process—were simply impossible for Fatah to accept.<sup>12</sup> In any case, Hamas had little incentive to join, as there were genuine ideological differences between

Hamas and the majority of the factions in the PLO. Hamas' emphasis on Palestinian nationalism through Islamic activism was an ongoing source of friction; as one PLO leader put it, "They may call themselves a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, but this is Palestine and this is about ending the occupation."<sup>13</sup> Relations were worsened by the PLO's declaration of statehood in 1988, and as the intifada escalated, these tensions developed into an open rivalry. After Hamas members were arrested en masse in 1989, conflicts arose between the two factions in Israeli prisons. The rivalry was further exacerbated by their different stances on both the Gulf War (in which the PLO backed Saddam Hussein while Hamas remained neutral), and the Madrid peace talks.

The Oslo process represented Hamas' first major domestic Palestinian political challenge. Despite the fact that many residents of the West Bank and Gaza were supportive of the peace process, Hamas opposed Oslo. While Hamas opposed negotiation with Israel in general (and negotiations that excluded Hamas in particular,) they also felt the gains from Oslo did not justify the sacrifices Palestinians were asked to make. As Musa Abu Marzuq put it, for Hamas "the problem is that [Oslo has] reduced the issue from one of sacred liberation to merely a dream of independence, a dream that a Palestinian policeman will organize traffic."<sup>14</sup> On a practical level, Hamas resented the power that Oslo granted the PLO and particularly Fatah, which essentially took over the institutions of the new Palestinian Authority. The new PA security forces were recruited almost entirely from among the PLA fighters returning to Gaza and the West Bank from Tunis and elsewhere, nearly all government posts were filled with Fatah party loyalists, and Arafat won the 1996 election (which Hamas boycotted) with 88 % of the vote.

But the Oslo process faltered badly in the late 1990s and collapsed completely with the eruption of the second intifada in 2000. This represented a victory for Hamas; it had opposed the peace process, and the failure of Oslo and the violence accompanying the second intifada meant that Fatah's image was tarnished and Hamas' position improved. In 2005, in a bid to avoid the "demographic time bomb" of a growing Palestinian population, Israel withdrew unilaterally from Gaza under a plan spearheaded by Ariel Sharon, evacuating its settlers and troops, though it maintained total control over Gaza's borders. Of equal if not greater significance were the January 2006 elections which put Hamas in office. This not only created a new power center in Gaza, in the form of Ismail Haniyeh's newly elected government, but also led to rapidly escalating clashes between

Fatah and Hamas, which erupted into open warfare in June. When the dust settled, Hamas was in control of Gaza, and Fatah of the West Bank. Israel and Egypt imposed an economic blockade, enforced by the Israeli navy. In response, a complex network of tunnels was constructed under the border to Rafah in Egypt through which both consumer goods, which were tacitly permitted by the Israelis, and weapons, which were not, were brought into the territory.

In navigating these developments, Hamas has had to build and negotiate relationships with both its civilian constituency and its state sponsors. In both cases, it has been forced to offset difficulties in selling its ideological project by engaging in the provision of services domestically and forming proxy relationships regionally. This left it poorly equipped to meet the military challenges it has faced since taking power, but still able to recover in their aftermath.

### FOREIGN RELATIONS

Hamas' foreign policy choices demonstrate the limits of agency for nonstate actors in constructing their relationships. While Hamas would likely prefer to build relations with potential sponsor states based on a shared ideology, for most of its existence no such states have existed, given Hamas' self-framing. Hamas' origins in the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization at odds with many of the Arab governments, have meant that ideological fellow travelers have been difficult for it to find. (One exception was the short-lived Morsi government in Egypt, with which Hamas quickly established cordial relations.) Even the religious monarchies of the Gulf have tended to find Hamas' ideology slightly worrying, given that the model of a democratically elected Islamic state challenges the claim that their own regimes are necessary for the preservation of Islamic government.

Therefore, in seeking allies Hamas has instead chosen to trade on its rivalry with the PLO (specifically, Fatah) and its opposition to the peace process with Israel. In this it shares specific goals, if not an overall ideology, with some states, leading to relationships that were helpful, but ultimately unstable. The earliest of these was Jordan, followed by a partnership with Syria and Iran. Its approach to Jordan was somewhat different from its approach to the latter two states, which is in part a reflection of the difference in its foreign policy goals in the years before and after the onset of the peace process.

### *Jordan*

Hamas' relationship with Jordan was based primarily on a mutually beneficial arrangement with the state itself combined with ideological ties to the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was a limited relationship; Jordan provided neither a military base nor funding or weapons, but it did allow Hamas to use Amman as a political headquarters for a time. The shift in Hamas' center of gravity from Gaza to Jordan was precipitated by the arrest of Ahmed Yassin in 1989. Activists from the USA led by Musa Abu Marzuq arrived in Amman, where a political office had been set up in 1987, and in consultation with the Muslim Brotherhood there, took over the leadership of the organization. The importance of the Amman office was reinforced by Kuwait's expulsion of its Palestinian population, including many members and supporters of Hamas, in 1991 due to Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War.<sup>15</sup>

As it had been for the PLO in the late 1960s, Jordan was a logical choice: Jordan (still) bordered Israel and it (still) had a large Palestinian population sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. The Gulf War also meant that the timing was right. Jordanian support for Iraq (officially framed as "neutrality") had caused a cooling of relations between the monarchy and the USA. When Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated members of the Jordanian parliament organized a pro-Iraqi demonstration during the war (with the palace's blessing), Hamas, despite its official neutrality, was in attendance.<sup>16</sup>

For Jordan, the relationship with Hamas was partly a matter of political utility, and partly a matter of making the best of a tricky political problem. While Hamas didn't go out of its way to try to convince the monarchy of its political program, it did present itself as a useful counterweight against the PLO, which Hussein still viewed with some suspicion (although far less after the advent of the Madrid and Oslo processes). Hamas also represented an increasingly potent source of influence in Palestinian politics, and by hosting them the monarchy could both bolster its position domestically and undercut the influence of the PLO.<sup>17</sup> There was also a practical component to the relationship; given that many Hamas members were in fact Jordanian citizens (by virtue of the nationalization of the West Bank and its inhabitants in the 1950s, including many of those who later moved to Kuwait or elsewhere), forcibly deporting them from Jordan would have required a direct confrontation. The government found it far easier, for much of the 1990s, to allow the organization to operate under the monarchy's preferred restrictions.

Hamas' relationship with the monarchy was not the only one that mattered in Jordan, however. The Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, with which Hamas had long had close ties, was also a factor in the decision to relocate the movement's headquarters to Amman and constituted an important relationship once it arrived. In this, as with the relationship with the regime itself, the timing was fortuitous. The 1989 parliamentary elections in Jordan were arguably the freest and fairest in its history. The Islamic Action Front, the political party affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, won a sizeable number of seats, and when Hamas relocated there after the Gulf War, the IAF was in a position to offer a warm welcome.<sup>18</sup> The two shared the same broad political ideology, and in many cases personal ties, given that many members of Hamas themselves held Jordanian citizenship and had spent time in Amman. This in some ways mirrors the alliance between the PLO and the Jordanian left of the 1960s, but with an important difference; while the power balance between the PLO and the Jordanian left tilted toward the fedayeen from the outset, at the beginning the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan was, technically speaking, in a position of authority over Hamas, as the "hosting" chapter of the organization.

But by the mid-1990s, relations became somewhat strained. This was partly due to friction within the Jordanian Islamic Movement. There was disagreement between the IAF and the Brotherhood itself over whether to boycott the 1996 elections over the peace treaty with Israel, as well as some competition between them for authority. Both sought to draw Hamas onto their side, putting the organization in a difficult position. Moreover, some members of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood felt that the organization should focus on Jordanian issues, rather than Palestinian national ambitions, and that members of Hamas based in Jordan (many of whom were Jordanian citizens) should do the same or relocate to Palestine.<sup>19</sup> But despite these differences, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas still had a great deal in common ideologically, and the relationship between them certainly facilitated the leadership's transition from Gaza to Jordan.

Indeed, overall, Hamas' arrangement with Jordan was beneficial in many ways. For the first time, Hamas' political leadership had a stable base outside of Gaza (and therefore one that was relatively safe from Israeli interference) from which to engage in serious long-term planning and much needed restructuring, given the movement's rapid growth. This included the establishment of five administrative regions and specific policy committees to deal with security, *dawa'* (proselytizing), political activ-

ity, and coordination.<sup>20</sup> Having a headquarters outside Gaza also greatly facilitated communication with the wider world, including a number of regional governments. Ironically, this allowed Hamas to lay the groundwork for its later relationships with Iran and Syria.

At times, the Jordanian government acted as an advocate for Hamas. The most dramatic instance was probably the attempted assassination of Khaled Meshaal in Amman by the Mossad in 1997 when two Mossad agents who had entered Jordan on Canadian passports attacked Meshaal on a street in Amman, spraying a slow-acting poison into his ear. The would-be assassins were apprehended by passersby and handed over to the Jordanian security forces. A furious King Hussein contacted the Netanyahu government to inform them that if they wanted their agents back, the Israelis would have to provide the antidote to the poison used on Meshaal. The antidote was duly provided, and Meshaal survived.

That being said, there were also a number of downsides to the relationship with Jordan, most notably the constraints the government placed on Hamas and the ultimate unreliability of the arrangement. The monarchy believed that the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan represented a potential threat to its own power and that empowering Hamas was, by extension, a political risk. Perhaps more importantly the monarchy was determined, after the events leading to Black September and the conflict itself, that Jordan would never again be the target of reprisal attacks for military operations launched against Israel from its soil.

To this end, the government assertively constrained Hamas from using Jordan as a military base. In 1991, 11 members of Hamas were arrested when \$1.5 million worth of weapons were found hidden in four houses in Amman, although they were later released under a general amnesty.<sup>21</sup> In 1993, an agreement was negotiated setting out the conditions under which Hamas would be allowed to operate in the kingdom. The government allowed several ranking Hamas members into Jordan and officially accepted Hamas' explanation that the arms caches uncovered in 1991 had been intended for defense (potentially of Jordan) against Israel while Hamas agreed that while it would use Amman as a headquarters for media and political activities, it would not operate militarily against Israel from Jordan, or against Jordan at all.<sup>22</sup> But in 1995, a raid on Hamas offices in Amman turned up CDs carrying plans for military operations in the West Bank and Gaza, which, if launched from Amman, would violate the 1993 agreement. In response, politburo members Musa Abu Marzuq and Imad al Alami were deported.

Jordan's readiness to deport Abu Marzuq and Alami is reflective of the broader truth that Jordanian willingness to host Hamas was always conditioned by Jordanian interests, which were often at odds with those of their guests. The most significant of these conflicts was, of course, the peace process. As early as 1991, concerned that the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas might upend the Madrid negotiations, the government excluded the Muslim Brotherhood from the Cabinet entirely.<sup>23</sup> After the signing of the Wadi Araba agreement in 1994, the presence of Hamas' headquarters in Amman put the regime in an increasingly difficult spot.<sup>24</sup> By 1995, senior Hamas members were being arrested or detained by the intelligence services.<sup>25</sup> While the government response to the attempt on Meshaal's life temporarily improved relations, this warming was short lived. In 1999, the Jordanian government closed Hamas' offices in Amman, arrested Meshaal and other Hamas leaders, and deported them to Qatar.<sup>26</sup>

With the loss of its headquarters in Amman, Hamas officially relocated its headquarters to Damascus; by this stage, the organization was already closely allied with Syria, and with Iran as well. But Syria and Iran were in some ways odd sponsors for Hamas. Syria brutally suppressed its own branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, and Iran's Islamic Revolution was explicitly Shi'ite, based partly on narratives of Shi'ite victimization by Sunnis. Both relationships were based heavily on Hamas' utility as a military proxy and a shared antipathy for Israel, although Hamas has also leveraged its increased prestige (relative to Fatah and the PLO) as the new standard bearer of armed Palestinian resistance in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords. For the most part, however, these relationships have been marriages of convenience.

### *Syria*

Syria's sponsorship of Hamas was first and foremost a pragmatic arrangement. As a Sunni Islamist movement, Hamas has little in common ideologically or communally with either the secular, Baathist, Syrian state or its Alawite ruling family. The Baathist regime has long been hostile to the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, bombing their stronghold in the city of Hama in 1982 and killing between 10,000 and 30,000 people. From this perspective, despite whatever sympathy Hafez al Asad or his son, Bashar, might have had for the Palestinian national movement in general, Hamas in particular represents perhaps the oddest choice of all the Palestinian factions as a Syrian client.

But Asad's regime nevertheless had two very good reasons to adopt Hamas as a military proxy. The first was that Hamas was well positioned to launch attacks against Israel, a source of pressure which Syria very much favored after the failure of Madrid. The second was that sponsorship of Hamas gave Syria a powerful means of influencing the domestic Palestinian political arena.

In 1993, in reaction to the Oslo process, Syria formed an organization composed of those factions who rejected negotiation with Israel called the Alliance of Palestinian Forces, meant to serve as a counterweight to the PLO. Earlier coalitions set up by the Syrians (the Rejection Front in 1974 and the National Alliance and Palestinian National Salvation Front in 1984) had been strictly secular-nationalist, much like the Syrian regime itself.<sup>27</sup> But in 1993, perhaps in recognition of Hamas' influence and its status as the most significant armed force opposed to Oslo operating inside historical Palestine, the Islamist parties were included.<sup>28</sup> In comparison with the other, smaller factions, most of which were Damascus-based splinter factions of larger groups whose branches in Palestine remained within the PLO, Hamas added an aura of legitimacy to the new organization.<sup>29</sup> Veiled comments praising Hamas began to appear in the press, by figures as prominent as Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam<sup>30</sup> and even Hafez al Asad himself.<sup>31</sup>

Though Syria and Hamas had little in common ideologically, they did share certain regional interests. Hamas' public rejection of both Madrid and Oslo, as well as its stated neutrality during the Gulf War when the PLO sided with Syria's enemy, Iraq, made it a plausible proxy in a way other factions were not. Moreover, Hamas' actions had already served to further Syria's regional agenda. Its opposition to Oslo had served to block a full Palestinian consensus behind either the peace process or Arafat's leadership of the PA.

Moreover, though Hamas' use of violence was intended to advance Hamas' policy preferences, it also served Syria's. Hamas launched 52 violent attacks against Israel between 1992 and 2000 (the vast majority in 1993 and 1994). After the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000, its attacks on civilian targets inside Israel helped to badly damage the peace process, a development welcomed by Syria since it hoped to prevent a Palestinian-Israeli treaty that would leave Syria as the last to negotiate with Israel.<sup>32</sup> The number of suicide bombings peaked in 2002 (with attacks in general peaking in 2003). While it declined sharply the following year,<sup>33</sup> the move away from suicide bombing did not represent a renunciation

of violence, but rather a shift in tactics. Rocket attacks from Gaza (which numbered 3500 in 2008, employing either mortars or, increasingly, home-made Qassem rockets) allowed Hamas to maintain pressure on Israel and put Palestinian moderates in a difficult position, objectives that served Syria's aims as well.

Finally, Hamas also served as a useful political proxy; after its electoral victory in 2006, it was able to offer Syria greater political access in the Palestinian political arena than it had had since the 1970s. While advancing Syrian interests was not Hamas' main motivation, the result was still that Syria had a strong motivation to continue providing Hamas with resources.<sup>34</sup>

### *Iran*

Hamas' relationship with Iran was similarly based on its ability to act as an indirect military proxy against Israel. If Syria wanted to see the Oslo process derailed, Iran not only concurred, it also welcomed Hamas' ability to divide the IDF's attention with regard to its conflict with Hizbullah in south Lebanon. Hamas also benefited from the fact that the need for a Palestinian proxy was itself a component of Iran's self-image as a state. Iranian support for the Palestinians dates to the days immediately following the 1979 revolution, when Khomeini offered immediate and enthusiastic support to the PLO, giving it the former Israeli embassy as its diplomatic mission in Tehran. One of the many popular stories surrounding Khomeini is that he said to have smiled only once in public—upon meeting Arafat in 1979.<sup>35</sup> Opposition to Israel was a key feature of the new Islamic Republic's doctrine, both because the deposed Shah had been Israel's ally, and because advocating the liberation of Jerusalem represented an important piece of religious and ideological common ground between Iran and the predominantly Sunni Arab states.

But when Arafat chose to support Saddam Hussein's Iraq during the Iran–Iraq war the Iranian–PLO relationship soured, leaving Iran without a Palestinian client. When Hamas appeared, it was a natural (and enthusiastic) replacement. Its rejection of Oslo and its neutrality (at least as compared with the PLO) during the Gulf War further facilitated its membership in the Syrian–Iranian axis. As early as 1990, Interior Minister Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, after criticizing Arafat as “not a person who favors the liberation of Palestine,” said in an interview:

Now if the Palestinians see that an Islamic country like Iran has started to help them practically, and Iran has converted its slogans into action, then the Palestinian masses will follow the Islamic Republic of Iran's model and regardless of what the non-Islamic groups dictate to them, they will follow Iran.<sup>36</sup>

That December, when Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati received the leaders of the rejectionist Palestinian groups (Fatah-Intifada, the PFLP-GC, the communists, Al Saiqa, and several others), he singled Hamas out for special praise in the Iranian press and tacitly identified its struggle with Iran's, stating that the "anti-Zionist struggle will not reach any conclusion without Islam" and that Iran's "efforts toward the Palestinian issue stem from its commitment and its feeling of responsibility."<sup>37</sup> Mohtashemi even framed the intifada (somewhat inaccurately) as being explicitly Islamic in motivation.<sup>38</sup> By 1992, Musa Abu Marzuq had traveled personally to Tehran to brief the government on the situation in the Palestinian Territories,<sup>39</sup> Iran's state media had announced that Iran was providing Hamas with "political backing,"<sup>40</sup> Hamas had been granted a permanent office in Tehran<sup>41</sup> and the Iranian foreign ministry was publicly encouraging the formation of a new Palestinian "rejection front" aimed at isolating the PLO and strengthening Hamas.<sup>42</sup> In 1995, Hamas' announcement that it would hold celebrations of the Iranian-sponsored "Jerusalem Day" inside Palestine was warmly welcomed by the Iranian government.<sup>43</sup> This rhetoric indicates an effort to frame Hamas and the project of Palestinian resistance as reflecting the Islamic Republic's own political values, and sponsorship of Hamas as furthering those values. Doctrinal differences between Sunni Hamas and the Shi'ite Islamic Republic were papered over or ignored. It is impossible to know to what degree these statements were sincere and to what degree they represent a more cynical appeal to a pan-Islamism which the regime has not as a rule embraced, but it seems likely that Hamas appealed to both motivations.

### *The Consequences of Hamas' Foreign Policy*

Hamas' relationships with its sponsors provided a wide range of resources. To begin with, it received funding from both. In 1992, unnamed sources inside the Iranian government acknowledged that Hamas was receiving \$20 million in donations from Iran, five times what it had received in 1989, prior to the cooling of Iran's relationship with the PLO over the Gulf War.<sup>44</sup> Mishal and Sela estimate that though its early funding was mostly internal, by 1995, at least half was coming from Iran.<sup>45</sup>

Second, these relationships provided Hamas with “office space” outside of historical Palestine. This proved invaluable given the limitations that the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank place on the leadership’s operations inside the territories, particularly after the movement’s expulsion from Jordan in 1999. What had been an important but secondary office in Damascus became the group’s new headquarters, where its leadership could strategize, meet with foreign parties, and engage with the media without interference from the IDF. The Syrian regime also provided considerable more leeway in terms of military planning than the Jordanians had.

There are also resources that Syria and Iran collaborated in providing for Hamas. To begin with, inclusion in the Syrian–Iranian political axis increased the movement’s regional political influence by virtue of embedding it an existing alliance network. One side effect of this was that Hamas was finally able to establish a foothold in the refugee camps of Lebanon, where it previously had little presence, because the alliance with Iran granted it space under Hizbullah’s umbrella in the Lebanese political context.<sup>46</sup>

The two also cooperated in the area of training. As early as 1992, reports appeared suggesting that Iran was offering training to Hamas fighters.<sup>47</sup> In a 2008 interview with the late Marie Colvin of the *Times* of London, an anonymous commander of Hamas’ Izzedine al Qassem brigades explained that in early 2006 Hamas began sending its elite fighters (its “best brains”) to Iran to receive training from the Revolutionary Guards. Within two years, 300 Al Qassem brigade fighters had been trained in Iran, and over 700 in Syria (where the trainers themselves had been trained in Iran). According to the commander, after 45 days to 6 months of intense training “They come home with more abilities that we need ... such as high-tech capabilities, knowledge about land mines and rockets, sniping, and fighting tactics.” Much of the training was focused on making the best out locally available materials for the manufacture of weapons. The Shawas 4 mine, for instance, was, according to some sources, developed with Iranian help.<sup>48</sup> This is corroborated by Israeli sources. Yuval Diskin, director of the Shin Bet said frankly:

What we see that is more dangerous than any weapons is the training that Iran has promised Hamas. We know that Hamas has started to dispatch people to Iran, tens with the promise of hundreds, for months and maybe years of training. I see this as the strategic challenge more than any smuggled weapons. You need expertise to use weapons, and in the long run the Iranian training is what is dangerous.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, training in how to make weapons is not the same thing as the provision of actual weapons. Although Iran and Syria have provided Hamas with some advanced arms, it still relies heavily on unsophisticated, homemade Qassem rockets. While these have improved somewhat over the years, they remain unreliable and inaccurate.<sup>50</sup> They also used crude mortars (unguided munitions fired from a tripod), some homemade and some (those with longer ranges) smuggled in through the tunnels, provided directly or indirectly by Hamas' sponsors.<sup>51</sup>

There is evidence, though, that Hamas has received better weapons in recent years. Between 2008 and 2012, they launched several Russian Grads, which have a range of 20 kilometers but can go as far as 40. The IDF has also found exploded Chinese 122mm Weishi-1e rockets as far as Beer Sheba.<sup>52</sup> During Operation Cast Lead, Hamas used anti-tank weapons, RPGs, and hand grenades, in addition to small arms (AK-47s, handguns, etc.) whose provenance is harder to trace. Operation Defensive Edge in 2014 revealed that Hamas had stockpiles of M-302 rockets, also provided by Syria, capable of reaching targets to the north of Tel Aviv. Israeli officials certainly believed, immediately after Operation Cast Lead, that Iran had been actively arming Hamas:

In response to a query on the sophistication of Hamas weapons, [Deputy Chief of Staff] Harel stated that Hamas had Chinese and Iranian made 122mm rockets with a range out to 30 kilometers. The Iranian version of the 122mm was designed specifically for Hamas, as it came in four pieces that could fit through narrow tunnels and be reassembled in Gaza. Harel also stated that sophisticated anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) were found in Gaza, to include the Russian made KONKOURS system. Hamas also had SA-7 surface-to-air missiles and sophisticated improvised explosive devices of all varieties. Lastly, Harel said that Israel has sensitive intelligence that Iran is constructing an additional Hamas-specific missile, based on the Fajr, that will have a range beyond 40 kilometers.<sup>53</sup>

But Hamas' relationships with Iran and Syria proved limited in important ways. Neither was able to provide open and effective political advocacy at the international level. This lack was keenly felt after the foreign aid upon which the Palestinian Authority had relied was cut off and Gaza blockaded by Israel in 2006, creating a painful economic and humanitarian situation. Lifting the blockade would immeasurably improve both Hamas' standing domestically and the quality of life in Gaza, but Syria and Iran lacked the leverage to advocate on Hamas' behalf because of their international isolation.

In addition to the limits on what Iran and Syria could provide, there were also limits on what they *would* provide. Both states were focused on providing Hamas with resources that would help the organization in its pursuit of their shared goals. As with the PLO before it, Syria did not allow Hamas to launch attacks against Israel from Syrian territory, although unlike Jordan it did allow them to plan them there. Moreover, the weapons it has provided have been mostly offensive, aimed at putting pressure on Israel and deterring it from certain actions, rather than defensive, aimed at preventing further harm to Gaza.

True, Hamas seems to have been able to avoid any serious loss of autonomy, particularly since the takeover of Gaza in 2007, and the fact that Iran and Syria have fairly similar foreign policy goals has largely protected the movement from the internal tug of war which did such damage to the PLO. But the relationship has nevertheless at times seemed to increase tensions between the Gaza leadership and the headquarters in Damascus (as will be discussed further later in the chapter). Moreover, Hamas has been criticized by other Palestinian factions (notably, and unsurprisingly, Fatah) for acting as a proxy for Syria and Iran at the expense of Palestinian interests. In a criticism also levied at other Syrian clients, a senior Fatah official in Lebanon said bluntly “when I talk about Hamas, I cannot say they are Palestinians, because they are implementing a mandate for Iran, or Syria.”<sup>54</sup> Moreover, as noted above, proxy relationships tend to be most useful in providing material (or militarily oriented non-material) resources, rather than international political advocacy or influence, assets which would perhaps have been helpful during and after the Gaza War.

Finally, Hamas’ relationships with Syria and Iran represent the limits inherent in a relationship that lacks a shared ideological foundation. The partnership between Hamas and the Asad regime proved unable to withstand the shock produced by the onset of the civil war in Syria. The extraordinary violence of the regime’s response to the uprising, the ethnic narrative encouraged by both the regime and some of the rebels, and the views of the Palestinian public toward the war all provided Hamas with a powerful incentive to distance itself from Syria. The siege and bombardment of the Yarmouk refugee camp, home to 150,000 Palestinians as well as Hamas’ offices, further soured relations between Hamas and the regime. Meanwhile, the ascendance of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as well as a newly assertive regional policy from Turkey and Qatar suggested, at least briefly, that a new political axis that might be more ideologically appealing to Hamas was emerging in the region.

By the beginning of 2012, Hamas had relocated its headquarters from Damascus to Doha and Cairo.<sup>55</sup> In February, Ismail Haniyeh gave a speech at the Al Azhar mosque in Cairo in which he stated “I salute the Syrian people who seek freedom, democracy, and reform,” an implicit rebuke to its former sponsor.<sup>56</sup> As of 2016, the relationship between the two seems to have been entirely severed. Hamas’ relationship with Iran was, by extension, weakened as well, though perhaps not entirely destroyed. Given that the Morsi government was overthrown in the 2013 military coup that brought Abdel Fattah al Sisi to power, this has left Hamas in a rather lonely spot with regard to its foreign policy. It is perhaps early to assess how this will shape Hamas’ prospects in the long term, but the collapse of the alliance with Syria is a strong illustration of the fragility of relationships based on a shared enmity rather than a shared ideology.

### DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Despite the changing circumstances in Palestine—from the first intifada to the second, from the onset of the Oslo process to its eventual collapse, and from Hamas’ boycott of the 1996 elections to its victory in 2006—Hamas’ domestic policy has remained remarkably consistent. Its approach to the civilian population in Palestine is based on a combination of marketing and service provision, as well as some coercion, mostly of members of rival factions. Hamas presents an interesting contrast to the movements discussed in previous chapters because its marketing was ultimately far less successful than its provision of social services in improving its wider reputation. The Islamic Movement politicians interviewed for this book often referred to Hamas’ Islamic identity as being a major basis for their support, but in fact what seems to have been more convincing for many voters was its reputation for honesty, and its status as the principal alternative to Fatah, all attributes which its social service network helped to promote.<sup>57</sup>

#### *Marketing*

Hamas markets itself to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as a religious and nationalist resistance movement. Each of these components of its identity has proved important in different ways. While its status as a Palestinian nationalist movement has been more useful abroad, in the Palestinian context it has been its religious identity (and at times, its continued emphasis on violent resistance) that distinguishes Hamas from most of its rivals.

When asked why they believed Palestinians supported their party, all of the Change and Reform members of the Palestine Legislative Council (the Palestinian parliament) interviewed cited the movement's Islamic character as being of paramount importance, and most contended that the majority of Palestinians are religious.<sup>58</sup> One Change and Reform member of the PLC referred bluntly to religion as "part of our heritage," and suggested that even the formerly secular leftist parties like the DFLP, PFLP, and the communists were becoming more religious (though conversations with members of the PFLP and other leftist parties suggested this is not universally true).

There is also a subtle contradiction in the way those interviewed characterized Palestinian society's relationship with Hamas. On the one hand, all of those interviewed contended that Hamas' Islamic orientation reflected the existing and essential nature of Palestinian society, and that in this sense, support for Hamas is a natural expression of the Palestinian national character. On the other hand, most of those interviewed also expressed reformist or revivalist sentiments. Ahmad Ali Ahmad, a Change and Reform legislator from Nablus, told me "The first reason we established the Islamic Movement here [in Palestine] is because it is an Islamic society, but people don't use the same values that are found in the Sunna and Qur'an, and the Islamic history, and we think it's our obligation to bring these values back."<sup>59</sup> When pressed, his description of those values sounded more politically reformist than religiously revivalist, including goals like freedom of belief, protection of life, protection of the mind, property and health, and keeping the "human being as a human."

Those interviewed saw religion and politics—or rather, Hamas' religious and political projects—as inherently linked.<sup>60</sup> One parliamentarian explained that the struggle against the occupation is rooted in Muslim doctrine (and Hamas' political origins in the Muslim Brotherhood) though both are based in Palestinian national aspirations. He told me bluntly, "Palestinians cannot talk about religion only—politics is part of our lives—we eat politics, we drink politics, we breathe politics—because we live under occupation."<sup>61</sup>

This linkage is echoed in the stories of how these highly ranked members of the party came to join themselves. All of those interviewed explained that they chose to join the Islamic movement rather than another Palestinian party because they themselves were already religious and, in some cases, came from a religious family. One related to me that she had been living in Saudi Arabia for many years and become more religious while living there, so that when she returned to Palestine during the outbreak of the first intifada, joining the Islamic movement seemed a natural fit.<sup>62</sup>

The emphasis on Hamas' Islamic character, and the claims made by its legislators regarding the inherently Muslim character of Palestinian society, raise some questions as to how secularists and non-Muslims view the movement and are viewed by it. Change and Reform politicians have made some effort to avoid alienating Christian Palestinians, and the party has stated that it will not force anyone to convert.<sup>63</sup> And yet, the role of Islam in shaping public life as envisioned by Hamas does not likely match the preferences of many Christians, particularly in the West Bank. Mahmoud Ramahi, the Secretary General of the PLC after the 2006 election and a leading member of the Change and Reform slate, told me that he once went to meet a reporter in a restaurant that served alcohol and had enjoyed the man's surprise at his open-mindedness.<sup>64</sup> And yet, he clearly felt strongly regarding the Muslim majority's right to legislate certain issues:

Yes, they [the majority] have to understand that there is minority and they have a right and so and so but the second thing, this minority have to respect the general ... figure of the society. I don't want to tell to the person to not take alcohol—he's free to do that in his house ... but I don't want this to be part of the general life of the people, to be in the restaurants and so and so, but if he want to personally practice his freedom he can do that, respecting the result of the democracy and the others what they want ... if they are a majority they can do anything they want.

While this is somewhat more tolerant rhetoric than one might expect from, for instance, a conservative politician in the United States on the subject of marijuana legalization, the underlying theme is still that "the minority must abide by the will of the majority."

More broadly, the heavily religious themes infusing Hamas' political ideology have drawn criticism from its rivals. A Fatah official interviewed spoke disparagingly of the motivations of Hamas fighters:

We started the military action to achieve political goals, not because we like to fight or we like to die. This is one big difference between Fatah or PLO and Hamas. The second important point is there is two kinds of people who are ready to die: one of them says I am going to die because I want to go to heaven, and there is about 77 nice women waiting for me. ... But I say, I want to die to achieve a better life to my daughters, to my family, to my community. ... The first choice is a selfish choice.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, polling indicates that the characteristics that matter most to Palestinian voters may not necessarily be those which Hamas sees as most important in determining its character. During the second intifada, polling in the West Bank and Gaza found that Palestinians valued Islamic values in their political leaders far less than their willingness to continue in armed resistance against Israel and the need to fight corruption in the Palestinian authority.<sup>66</sup> Integrity and resistance to corruption was again rated as the most important issue by respondents in 2005, while religiosity, while important, was valued to a similar degree as “level of education.”<sup>67</sup> These preferences clearly benefited Hamas, which was appeared in polls to before the election to be viewed as both less corrupt than Fatah and more committed to resistance.<sup>68</sup>

Hamas’ leadership was at least partly aware of the effectiveness of this message. The choice of “Change and Reform” as a name for the Islamic movement’s parliamentary slate reflects this,<sup>69</sup> and Hamas’ honesty and its connection to the community were cited as factors for its popularity by some of the Change and Reform politicians interviewed.<sup>70</sup> And, ultimately, this message proved to be successful with at least some voters; Fatah’s corruption was credited by slightly more than half of those polled after the 2006 elections for having cost them their parliamentary majority.<sup>71</sup>

But despite the fact that these two issues—religiosity and honesty—are apparently viewed as separate by respondents, might there be a practical link between them? Might voters support Islamic parties because they believe that honesty derives, perhaps exclusively, from Islamic values? The fact that Hamas enjoys far greater support than the other major Islamic party, Islamic Jihad—and that Islamic Jihad does not share Hamas’ reputation—suggests that this is not the case, a conclusion echoed by much of the work on the impact of Islamic movements on democratization. Much of the scholarship on this subject finds that a major barrier to democratic change in the Arab world has been the divisions in the opposition between the Islamic parties and the progressives. The latter are generally so alarmed by the prospect of an Islamic government that they prefer to endure the existing authoritarian, yet secular, regime.<sup>72</sup> Overcoming this “suspicion hurdle” requires not only that the progressives believe that the Islamists will respect the rights of others once in power (and respect election results even when they lose), but also that the status quo has become bad enough that a change of regime is worth the risk. Therefore, while there are of course those who support these parties wholeheartedly, for many, support is often more a matter of voting for “change” than voting for Islamic parties’ actual platforms.<sup>73</sup> The

Palestinian election of 2006 was in some ways an example of this dynamic. Hamas was able to convince enough people that they represented a preferable alternative to Fatah to win the election. For some, this was because they were an Islamic party, but for others (and if the previously cited polling is accurate, for a majority) it was in spite of it.

Religiosity and honesty are not the only themes that Hamas emphasizes in its marketing; the themes of armed resistance and martyrdom are also significant. Hamas' charter uses the narrative of armed resistance to link the organization to a longer history of Arab and Islamic resistance against western (and eastern) imperialism:

The Islamic Resistance Movement considers the defeat of the Crusaders at the hands of Salah al-Din al Ayubi and liberation of Palestine, and the defeat of the Tatar in (the battle) of 'Ayn Jalut and the defeat of their forces at the hands of Qatuz and Zhair Baybrus, and the rescue of the world from the destructive onslaught of the Tatar (which destroys) all trace of human civilization, and learns from those (valuable) lessons and wisdom. The current Zionist invasion was preceded by many invasions of the Crusading West and others, including Tatars from the East. As the Muslims confronted those invasions and prepared for fighting and defeating them, they should be able to confront and defeat the Zionist invasion. (Hamas Charter, Article 35)<sup>74</sup>

This was echoed by several of those interviewed; Hamid Bitawi, a senior jurist and Change and Reform legislator cited Hamas' "resistance" during the first and second intifadas as a major source of its popularity. (In this, its rhetoric is quite similar to Hizbullah's.)

The public promotion of Hamas' resistance project has its roots early in the organization's history, most obviously in the organization's choice of a name, and it has remained an important part of the organization's public persona. In 1989 and 1990, the Israeli crackdown on Hamas ironically helped to bolster the organization's image as a credible alternative to the PLO.<sup>75</sup> As time went on, Hamas' continuing military operations against Israel have been one means by which it has differentiated itself from Fatah. Hamas received a further boost to its credibility in 1992 when, at a time when the PLO and other parties, including Syria, were moving toward negotiations with Israel, 415 senior Hamas members were deported by Israel to south Lebanon. Rather than disappearing into the refugee camps of Beirut, they settled near the border and set up an encampment (including an impromptu "university") where they received visitors and addressed the media.<sup>76</sup> Their presence in Lebanon helped both to raise

Hamas' profile outside of Gaza and to attract interest among Palestinians in Lebanon.<sup>77</sup> (It also provided a unique opportunity for Hamas and Hizbullah to communicate, compare notes, and exchange information and tactics, and laid the groundwork for what would be a cordial working relationship in Lebanon for many years.)

Martyrdom remains an important component of Hamas' public narrative as well. In Gaza, Hamas encourages the public celebration of martyrs and martyrdom.<sup>78</sup> Families of suicide bombers are discouraged from openly mourning or criticizing their child or sibling's choice.<sup>79</sup> The Al Qassem Brigades' website has a section dedicated to memorials for fallen fighters, including pictures and videos. Most of these feature young men in uniform, frequently heavily bearded, reading statements explaining their choice to "seek martyrdom" (which generally means to engage in a suicide attack). Older videos, especially from the 1990s, sometimes feature news footage of the carnage accompanying the attack.<sup>80</sup> Martyrdom is particularly important for Hamas in that it serves to connect the resistance component of its messaging to its religious identity. It also serves as a means of demonstrating its greater commitment and devotion to Palestinian liberation than that demonstrated by its rivals.<sup>81</sup>

In promoting these narratives, Hamas has historically used a variety of media. During the first intifada, both Hamas and the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) used leaflets to coordinate general strikes, boycotts, protests and to spread political messages. Hamas in particular emphasized religious themes, though they also urged the boycott of Israeli goods, increases in industrial output, and asked those who were well off to provide for those in need.<sup>82</sup>

Hamas also publishes books, pamphlets, and weekly or monthly magazines,<sup>83</sup> as well as a variety of posters, banners, and billboards. While these are (or, at least in 2012, were) displayed publicly in some parts of the West Bank—in Nablus, for instance—in most of the territory, the only posters are for Fatah and the leftist parties, though there is no shortage of Hamas graffiti. It has a radio station, Al Aqsa radio, and a satellite station, Al Aqsa TV. Modeled on Hizbullah's Al Manar (though not of the same quality), Al Aqsa TV is an important means of sharing Hamas' analysis of ongoing events, particularly in Gaza, though it also helps Hamas reach out to the Palestinian diaspora.<sup>84</sup>

With the increase in internet access in the Palestinian territories and the Middle East more generally, the internet has become an increasingly important medium for Hamas' marketing (as is the case for most militant groups in the region). Video sharing sites like YouTube and its less-established competi-

tors have become a platform for the distribution of videos celebrating Hamas' operations, some produced by the movement itself and others by anonymous admirers. One common for taken by these videos is the *nashheed*. While this term traditionally refers to a cappella chant with simple percussion (thereby avoiding the Salafist prohibition against music) most produced by Islamic militant groups today (including Hamas) take the form of videos of particular military operations or units set to martial-sounding Arabic pop music with lyrics celebrating the group in question.<sup>85</sup> Social media like Twitter, Facebook, and other such platforms serve as a useful means of disseminating this propaganda and provide a virtual gathering place for supporters.

But, particularly in Gaza and the West Bank, face-to-face interactions are also an important vehicle for Hamas' message. Mahmoud Ramahi pointed out the importance of the individuals who serve as leaders of the Islamic Movement: "We can send our program through these people, one-on-one, personally, meet the people, and they understand ... what is my project for the future. This is the first step. To have a contact with a person, personal contact, is the most important." These interactions occur in a range of contexts. Mariam Saleh, Minister for Women's Affairs and member of the Change and Reform parliamentary bloc, cited the importance of Hamas' various social services as an opportunity for the public to meet its members, whose impressive personal qualities in turn draw in new members. Educational institutions, from the kindergartens and primary schools run by Hamas to the Palestinian universities in which Hamas (like all the other Palestinian parties) has established student blocs are also important: "These blocs make conferences, meetings and events. This gives you a chance to meet other people and tell them about your ideas." Educated members of Hamas engage in informal community mediation. But perhaps most important are the mosques; through classes and discussion groups on the Qur'an (for both men and women) the Islamic Movement is able to promote their message, objectives, and values. Though the goal is not overtly political, but rather to teach the Qur'an for its own sake,<sup>86</sup> in the context of Hamas' political project, that is a political act.

### *Service Provision*

This leads to the second strategy through which Hamas engages the Palestinian public: service provision. As noted elsewhere in this book, not all service provision is equally effective. When it serves as a form of patronage and a means of buying popular support, service provision offers at

best a temporary bond between the movement providing it and its potential constituents. Conversely, when provided competently and evenhandedly, it can serve to promote the movement's reputation for fairness and bureaucratic competence well beyond those who are immediate recipients of its assistance. This in turn can help build the movement's case that it might do a better job than those currently in power. Hamas' provision of social services falls squarely into the latter category, and deserves much of the credit for the movement's domestic success.

Hamas' social service network has a long history in Gaza, beginning with the Mujamma in the 1970s.<sup>87</sup> By the early 2000s, Hamas was providing educational services ranging from kindergartens and childcare up through secondary education, and, in Gaza, university education through the Islamic University of Gaza, as well as a range of social clubs, summer camps, and youth activities. In the West Bank, until 2007, Hamas also offered medical care through a network of health care centers and clinics. The organization also provided food aid, some of which was produced by Hamas-affiliated non-profits.<sup>88</sup> Under the mandate of the PA, Hamas (or its members) assumed control of the Zakat committees in both the West Bank and Gaza. In total, Hamas' social service institutions before 2006 consumed a significant portion of their annual budget.<sup>89</sup>

That being said, the funding for these institutions is in some ways separates from the operating funds for the rest of the movement's activities, including its military operations, in that it comes at least in part from civilian donors, both inside and especially outside the Palestinian territories. This includes wealthy donors in the Gulf states, the West Bank and Gaza, and elsewhere, for whom Hamas provides an important link between the needy and potential donors.<sup>90</sup>

In the years before it took power in Gaza, Hamas' services functioned as "value added" on top of what was already being provided by either the Palestinian Authority or UNRWA.<sup>91</sup> One Change and Reform member of the PLC suggested that Hamas's services acted as a complement to UNRWA's, not as a replacement, serving those (especially in Gaza) who were either not registered with the agency or lived in areas where UNRWA could not operate. Statistics compiled by UNDP suggest that Hamas represented only a small share of the total social service sector before its victory in the elections in 2006. In 2004 and 2005, the total share of all assistance received by Palestinians originating from "Islamic charities" hovered between 3 % and 6 %. This number is skewed by the ability of larger agencies like UNRWA and the PA to provide large-scale assistance

such as employment programs, but Islamic charities still accounted for only 13 % of food aid being provided in July of 2005, while UNRWA accounted for 25 % and the PA 19 %. (Approximately 15 % of Palestinians received food aid in 2005, with a higher proportion in Gaza than in the West Bank.) Moreover, there was little difference in the distribution of aid (to refugees versus non refugees, in the West Bank versus Gaza, and in the poverty level of those receiving aid) between the PA and the Islamic Charities.<sup>92</sup>

This has two implications. The first is that because of their relatively smaller scale as compared with other services being provided, Hamas could afford to focus on quality in a way that the PA could not. Second, it suggests that if Hamas received a bump in public opinion because of its provision of social services, it was not because a significant proportion of the public relied on its services to survive, but rather because Hamas' services stood out as being of particularly high quality or because it was particularly good at publicizing its charitable activities.<sup>93</sup> (This finding stands in contradiction to assumptions elsewhere in the literature on Islamic political movements).<sup>94</sup>

All of the Change and Reform members of the PLC interviewed were adamant that Hamas does not make access to services conditional on membership; its social service work is not about recruitment, but rather because the movement's religious values mandate the provision of charity to the poor.<sup>95</sup> Mariam Saleh expressed this as follows:

We don't want to recruit people and we don't register their names to become members in the Islamic movement, this is not what we're doing. The main point for us as the Islamic Movement is to educate people and to raise awareness and to improve the situation of people, economic, culture, everything, especially for women ... our main goal is not to recruit more people or more members, it's to empower the society, and by empowering the society in our vision- because it's based on Islam, and religion—by empowering society, our vision is that we will reach the main goal, liberation.<sup>96</sup>

In other words, Hamas' services were not about patronage. Instead, they functioned as a means of demonstrating the movement's competence. One of the Change and Reform members of the PLC interviewed argued that people who use Hamas' services see that they are "clean, decent, transparent and organized" whereas those run by Fatah and the PA leave much to be desired. Moreover, the rhetoric surrounding the way Hamas runs its services reinforces the narrative of Hamas' lack of corruption

as compared with other parties. One place this difference was obvious, argued Mahmoud Ramahi, was in the spending of donor money, which he argued that other factions had badly mismanaged.<sup>97</sup> He also argued that charities formerly run by Hamas failed within one year after being taken over by the PA, which he attributed to the PA's corruption and misuse of donor funding. Nine of Hamas' 11 medical centers in the West Bank closed within a year of being taken over by the PA.<sup>98</sup> Hamid Bitawi and Ahmad Ali Ahmad told a similar story about an orphanage in Hebron. But far from harming Hamas' influence, these politicians believed that these closures instead served to highlight the greater competence of Hamas as compared with the PA.<sup>99</sup>

Hamas' services are useful for attracting members not because they foster a total immersion in the organization (as Hizbullah's services do), but because they serve to set the movement apart from its domestic rivals and serve as an advertisement for its managerial competence. In other words, in the years before Hamas found itself actually governing Gaza, its social service network served as a demonstration, though perhaps on a deceptively small scale, of its qualifications to do so.

### *Coercion*

Any discussion of Hamas' domestic politics must address the coercive tactics it has used against both its political opponents and ordinary Palestinians. This began with the tactics used by Mujamma followers in the early 1980s to exert their influence over political life and civil society in Gaza. This included attacking liquor stores, billiard halls, cinemas, and bars as well as more political targets. Milton-Edwards reports that when Mujamma candidates failed to take control of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society board of directors in the 1980 elections, they burned down its offices. After the Islamic University in Gaza was founded in 1978, both its board of regents and its student body were soon dominated by Mujamma members who took to shouting down faculty teaching evolution and harassing those who were members of leftist organizations.<sup>100</sup>

When Hamas emerged into the open, it became bolder in using force to assert itself as the UNLU and Hamas jostled for control of the intifada. Strikes called by one group were not always recognized by the other, and at times leaflets were issued exhorting (or threatening) the population to ignore strikes called by rival factions.<sup>101</sup> It also engaged in widespread violence against actual or suspected collaborators with Israel.<sup>102</sup>

In the years leading up to Operation Cast Lead and Operation Protective Edge, Hamas' most overt use of coercive violence was directed at its political rivals, rather than at the public at large, though in Gaza "political rivals" is a gray category, somewhere between civilian and combatant. In the case of the PFLP for instance, the party itself does not pose a serious threat to Hamas in Gaza, and yet various forms of coercion have been directed both at its militant apparatus and at its student groups at the university. A more obvious example were the clashes between Hamas and Fatah in Gaza which followed the 2006 elections in which both sides were accused of atrocities by Human Rights Watch.<sup>103</sup> Clashes with Fatah, whose forces are no more civilians than are Hamas', hardly count as "coercion of civilians," but the use of violence was key in its seizure of power in Gaza.

Since 2007, Hamas has increasingly relied on coercion via its security forces to enforce its vision of a more socially conservative public sphere. Unmarried couples are sometimes harassed by the police, women have been barred from smoking hookah in public, and in one well publicized incident, female lawyers were temporarily barred from appearing in court with their hair uncovered.<sup>104</sup> But in gaining power, although Hamas found coercion useful against its political rivals, it has not relied on coercion alone, either in its approach to gaining power in the first place through the electoral process, or in its outreach to the Palestinian public.

### *The Consequences of Hamas' Domestic Policy*

In the balance, none of Hamas' approaches to the public worked quite as intended. Hamas' deliberate attempts at marketing its political project were probably less effective in gaining it the resources it needed than its indirect marketing based on both the "honest alternative"<sup>105</sup> its politicians offered to Fatah and the competence with which its social services were run. The proportion of the Palestinian public relying on Hamas' services was actually quite small; this meant that, as a simple matter of numbers, the improved reputation that Hamas acquired as a result of its competence at providing those services extended far beyond the immediate recipients of Hamas charity. This reputation was likely a more important factor in attracting support for the movement than either dependence on the services it provided or commitment to the movement's narrow political goals.<sup>106</sup>

It is entirely possible that Hamas' reputation for honesty may have been linked to their religiosity in the minds of some Palestinians, but it is unlikely that this was the sole factor at work. Islamic Jihad is also an Islamic party,

as are the Al Qaeda factions that have struggled to find support in Gaza; neither of these has been able to build up the base of support that Hamas has. If religiosity were the most important factor in determining support, these movements would be expected to have some advantage over Hamas, but thus far, they do not.

This was echoed, perhaps inadvertently, by Hamas politicians themselves. Ahmad Ali Ahmad attributed the Change and Reform list's electoral performance in general and his own in specific to the personal reputations of its candidates. Despite being in prison during the election, he received the highest number of votes of any candidate in the Nablus electoral district. When asked why he thought this was, he said "Because people trust me—they know that when I talk to them, I am defending my ideology and my principles. I don't say one thing and do another." And Mahmoud Ramahi stated bluntly that beneficiaries of Hamas charities do not amount to more than 20 % of the population—the UNDP statistics above suggest that this number is far smaller—but the movement received a far larger share of the vote, meaning that most of those who voted for Hamas were not direct beneficiaries of their social services.

Through this strategy, Hamas was able to steadily increase its political market share in the Palestinian territories and so acquire a range of other important non-material assets, both formally, through elections, and less formally, through the recruitment and deployment of militia forces in and around Gaza. In the decades between the first intifada and the Gaza war, Hamas saw its popularity in the West Bank and Gaza steadily increase relative to the other Palestinian factions, including its chief rival, Fatah. Polling conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research indicates that support for Hamas ranged between 10 % and 15 % from 1993 to 2000. Given that those identifying as "unaffiliated" hovered around 35 % during those years, Hamas commanded a solid percentage of the support of those who supported a political party at all. Moreover, Hamas consistently received the second highest level of support, after Fatah, beating out both Islamic Jihad (which hovered at around 6 % support), and the PFLP (around 3 %). That Hamas was able to quickly outpace more established parties, including other Islamists, indicates that its strategy was at least somewhat effective.<sup>107</sup> With the onset of the second intifada in September 2000, support for Hamas began to rise. Its share of the Palestinian political market reached 20 % by 2002. In Gaza, it had outpaced Fatah by 2004 (at 30 % vs. 18 % for Fatah).<sup>108</sup>

This increase in popular support brought with it a number of concrete benefits, but, paradoxically, all came with limitations resulting directly from the way that support was obtained. One such benefit may have been an increase in Hamas' ability to recruit fighters. Though it seems unlikely that admiration for Hamas' managerial skills was a powerful motivator for young men signing on for "martyrdom operations" (and Hamas does not, obviously, publish data on the number and motivations of its recruits) its commitment to maintaining the armed struggle against Israel after the Oslo Accords may have made it an appealing choice for young men interested in violent resistance. But perhaps the most obvious asset produced by Hamas' increasing prestige was its victory in the January 2006 PLC elections, which handed Hamas a majority of seats in the Palestine Legislative Council. This outcome, while unexpected, carried obvious benefits. Most importantly it contributed to Hamas' eventual control over the Gaza strip, which proved useful for both political and military reasons. Moreover, winning the election accorded Hamas a new degree of international legitimacy (despite the lack of recognition by the USA and many of its allies).

An important caveat in order here: the outcome of the 2006 elections is at least in part an artifact of the Palestinian electoral system. The 132 seats in the PLC are elected through a parallel electoral system. Half are elected through a closed list proportional representation system and half through a majoritarian multi-member constituency bloc voting model. This means that for half of the seats in the PLC, voters vote for the party, and for the other half, they vote directly for the candidate. While Hamas' performance was barely better than Fatah's in the seats elected by PR (receiving 29 seats to Fatah's 28) it fared far better in those seats in which voters elected the candidate directly, taking 45 compared with Fatah's 17. This suggests that while voters preferred Hamas' individual candidates to Fatah's, they were far less enthusiastic about the party itself. One way of interpreting this result is that the personal reputations of Hamas' candidates compared favorably with those of Fatah's, given the latter's reputation for corruption, but that Hamas' political program was not in and of itself enough to win the party votes.

A second reason to be cautious about treating the election results as a clear mandate for Hamas is that Fatah's own electoral strategy was at least partly to blame for its poor performance. While Hamas exercised close discipline over who was and was not a candidate, many Fatah members who were not included ran anyway as independents, splitting the Fatah vote and handing districts to Hamas which it might not otherwise have

won.<sup>109</sup> And yet, however it was accomplished, the electoral victory was clearly an important asset in and of itself, in addition to being an indicator of public sentiment.

But despite winning the election, Hamas did not immediately assume control of the PA government. Clashes broke out between Hamas and Fatah forces in Gaza in March, and by the end of the year, the territory was embroiled in what was effectively a civil war between the two factions. The PLC has been effectively suspended since then, not least because Israeli security forces (aided by the PA) almost immediately arrested most of the Change and Reform MPs in the West Bank.<sup>110</sup> By June of 2007, Hamas was victorious in Gaza and Fatah in the West Bank.

Governing Gaza presented Hamas with new challenges. Having not expected to win the election, Hamas was unprepared to take power. Its position was made still more difficult by the Israeli-imposed blockade and the American and European decision to cut off funding to the PA government in Gaza following Hamas' assumption of power in June 2007. While Hamas had been more than capable of managing its network of charities and services when these functioned as a complement to the services provided by the PA and UNRWA, this experience was insufficient to prepare it not only to take on the task of governing Gaza, but also to do so without the donor funding relied on by its predecessors. While Hamas has continued many of its charitable programs, such as providing aid to orphans, the sick, and the families of fallen Hamas fighters, none of these programs constituted a permanent solution to Gaza's painful economic situation, particularly given the impact of the blockade.<sup>111</sup>

Moreover, it is not clear that Hamas has been able to produce the kind of durable norm of support that Hizbullah, for example, has been able to generate in the Shi'ite community. Pragmatic appreciation for Hamas' managerial competence and admiration for their lack of corruption relative to Fatah is not the same as commitment to, or even acceptance of, Hamas' political project. It is questionable, therefore, how durable this support will prove to be in the long term.

Altogether, by December of 2009, Hamas had at its disposal a range of both material and non-material resources that allowed it to weather the Israeli assault, but perhaps less successfully than Hizbullah had three years previously. By serving as a proxy and playing on both Syria and Iran's need for association with a Palestinian militant group, Hamas received important financial backing beginning in the 1990s. Its fighters also received weapons and training in Syria and Iran, its political wing was granted a base from

which to conduct its political and media operations in Damascus, and its inclusion in the Syrian–Iranian political axis helped it to expand its sphere of influence, not least in Lebanon. Domestically, Hamas approached its civilian constituency through a mixture of marketing and service provision, while using coercive violence against its political rivals. In the end, its attempts at service provision served as a more useful form of marketing than its actual attempts at marketing. Hamas was able to steadily improve its public image, allowing it to recruit members and win the PA election in 2006, and seize control of Gaza in 2007, though Fatah’s own mistakes are also at least partially responsible for the latter outcomes.

However, Hamas’ approaches to its external sponsors and domestic constituents also had certain disadvantages. Hamas’ external sponsors were primarily interested in how its military actions could further their own interests and so offered little by way of international political support, an asset which in any case neither was in much position to offer. Given Hamas’ political and physical isolation even after winning the election in 2006, this was a lack the organization felt keenly. While they did provide Hamas with some weaponry, it was not as extensive as what was offered to Hizbullah, and mostly offensive rather than defensive.

Hamas’ approach at the domestic level has also had mixed results. Both the election results and other polling suggest that Hamas’ popularity is based less on the political project it advocates and more on its perceived competence and honesty, as well as its status as the main challenger to Fatah. Hamas has not created the same unshakable norm of support within its target constituency that Hizbullah was able to in the 1990s and early 2000s. This may prove to be good for Palestinian politics in the long term; political systems in which people will continue to vote for their party no matter what it does tend to be less functional than those in which people vote based on factors such as honesty and competence. But for Hamas itself, this sort of contingent relationship with its constituents is clearly less desirable, as became clear during the wars of 2009 and 2014.

### THE GAZA WARS

In the years after Hamas took power in Gaza, the organization remained in a firmly adversarial posture toward Israel. Throughout 2008, Hamas launched more than 1750 rockets across the border with Israel (though the civilian casualties were very low compared with the number of rockets fired, a total of eight in 2008).<sup>112</sup> Although a six-month truce, or *hudna*,

was agreed between Israel and Hamas in June, it was frequently violated by both sides; Israel complained that Hamas was using the truce to rearm by smuggling weapons into Gaza through the tunnels linking Gaza with the Egyptian town of Rafah, while Hamas considered Israel's continued siege of Gaza to be a violation in and of itself. Israel conducted a military operation in Gaza in early November, seeking to destroy a tunnel.<sup>113</sup> On December 19, Hamas declared the truce over and fired four rockets into southern Israel.<sup>114</sup> By Christmas, rocket fire had intensified against the towns of Sderot and Netivot in the Negev and the coastal city of Ashkelon.<sup>115</sup> On December 28, Israel launched Operation Cast Lead. On the first day of the war, the death toll in Gaza was more than 225.<sup>116</sup>

From the beginning, Israeli officials cautioned that the operation could take weeks or even months. IDF reservists were called up and troops, tanks, APCs, and armored bulldozers gathered at the Gaza border, ready for a ground operation.<sup>117</sup> Within days, civilian casualties were mounting steadily and military and non-military installations and institutions had been destroyed, including the main government building in the center of Gaza City (the Saraya), the Islamic University, and the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>118</sup>

Still, the goals of Operation Cast Lead as expressed by the IDF leadership were far more limited than those expressed at the beginning of the July War, perhaps reflecting a desire to avoid another overambitious conflict which could be framed as a defeat. Publicly, an Israeli official described the purpose of the operation as “making Hamas lose their will or lose their weapons.” Conditions for a truce would include “a complete cessation of rocket fire and mortar fire from Gaza, a ban on armed men approaching the border with Israel, full Israeli control over the border crossings and a mechanism to ensure that Hamas is meeting its commitments.”<sup>119</sup>

But privately, there was some dissent regarding these goals. According to a cable from the US Embassy in Tel Aviv:

[IDF Deputy Chief of Staff] Harel stated there were three options briefed to the national leadership: (1) a limited operation to achieve a better cease fire agreement, (2) the seizure of Rafah and the Philadelphi Strip, and (3) retaking Gaza and destroying Hamas. Harel said that while the decision was made to go with the first option, there was pressure to finish off Hamas while the IDF had the chance.<sup>120</sup>

The message expressed in IDF auto-calls to homes across Gaza was even less measured, stating bluntly “We’re getting rid of Hamas.”<sup>121</sup>

On the morning of January 3, Israel launched the second phase of the operation: the ground invasion of Gaza. Though the military said that they had no plans to reoccupy Gaza, they did say that the “key objective” was to “take control” of rocket launching sites.<sup>122</sup> Despite fighting on its own turf, Hamas was unable to stop the Israeli tank advance which quickly bisected the Gaza strip.<sup>123</sup> Civilian casualties continued to mount, and several buildings sheltering civilians were hit. An UNRWA school sheltering 270 families was shelled, killing 40,<sup>124</sup> and in another incident, 30 members of the same family died when their building was bombed.<sup>125</sup>

Under the pressure of the Israeli assault, cracks began to appear between Hamas’ Gaza leadership and the headquarters in Damascus, as well as within the leadership inside Gaza. By the middle of the month, according to Egyptian and Israeli officials (neither of whom should be considered unbiased,) those in Gaza were ready for a ceasefire. This stand was not matched, however, by Khalid Meshaal’s leadership in Damascus, who one Egyptian official stated were “ready to fight to the last Palestinian,” or at the very least, wanted to see more substantial Israeli concessions.<sup>126</sup> Even as Egypt attempted to negotiate a ceasefire, Meshaal met with representatives from Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Algeria, and other states in Qatar, and adopted a hardline stance in media interviews.<sup>127</sup>

While no permanent agreement was reached, Israel announced a unilateral ceasefire on the night of January 17, 2009, warning that if rocket fire resumed, the IDF would return. This allowed it to withdraw without offering concessions to Hamas. Though some of Hamas’ leaders outside Gaza at first denounced this outcome and vowed to fight on, by the end of the day, they had agreed.<sup>128</sup>

The 2009 conflict was disastrous for Gaza. In addition to the high cost in human life, the war worsened the already difficult economic situation in the territory. It also caused a significant deterioration in Gaza’s humanitarian conditions, with the destruction not only of police stations and government buildings, but also water and sewage infrastructure, farms, greenhouses, and Gaza’s only flour mill.<sup>129</sup> The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimates that 14 % of all the buildings in Gaza were damaged, and estimated the total Palestinian economic losses at \$1.9 billion.<sup>130</sup>

Nor did whatever peace and quiet the end of the war offered to the beleaguered Gazan population last. In November of 2012, Israel launched Operation Pillar of Defense, a weeklong operation which the IDF later described as having been intended to target senior Hamas members and reduce the movement’s capacity to launch strikes against Israel from

Gaza.<sup>131</sup> The operation produced 167 casualties, more than half of which, according to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, were civilian.<sup>132</sup>

Two years later, following an escalation of hostilities over the course of several months (including kidnappings, stabbings, and murders of civilians on both sides), on July 8, Israel launched Operation Protective Edge. Initial airstrikes were followed by a ground invasion a week later. Evacuation orders were given by the IDF for Gaza residents within five kilometers of the border (or, 44 % of Gaza's territory,) but there were few safe areas to flee to. By the time a ceasefire was agreed on August 27, 2200 Palestinians (over half of them civilians) and 73 Israelis (seven of them civilians) had been killed.<sup>133</sup>

As in 2009, the rationale for the war given by the government, this time led by Benjamin Netanyahu, was that it was both a necessary response to provocation (in this case, the murder of three settler youths by Palestinians with some ties to Hamas) and a form of deterrence against future attacks. The phrase used by some policy-makers was "mowing the grass," a metaphor referring to what was seen as a periodic and predictable need to degrade Hamas' capacity through airstrikes.<sup>134</sup> But this came at a tremendous cost to Gaza and its population; IDF bombing destroyed a great deal of the territory's infrastructure. Israeli airstrikes also destroyed schools, UN buildings, and civilian buildings, including most of the Shujaia neighborhood. IDF soldiers were later accused of using deliberate and disproportionate force against civilians.<sup>135</sup>

During the conflict, it became clear that Hamas possessed weapons with a far greater range than those seen in prior conflicts, including the Fajr-5 rocket, with a range of 75 kilometers (capable of hitting Israeli population centers, including Jerusalem and Tel Aviv) as well as Syrian-made M-302 missiles similar to the Khaidar-1 used by Hizbullah during the July War, with a range of 150 kilometers.<sup>136</sup> These were enough to credibly threaten major Israeli cities. The United States even briefly halted all flights to Israel out of safety concerns regarding Ben Gurion airport.<sup>137</sup>

But overall Hamas demonstrated a very limited ability to inflict damage on Israel. Despite launching over 4880 rockets and 1753 mortars,<sup>138</sup> fewer than 250 landed in populated areas.<sup>139</sup> Many were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system, while others were simply poorly aimed. In contrast, the IDF assault had an immense impact on Hamas' military apparatus. Its weapons stores were depleted, it lost both rank and file fighters and some commanders, and in the latter phase of the war, the IDF moved to systematically destroy many of Hamas' tunnels.

Nor was Hamas able to pressure Israel (either militarily or through its allies) to accede to any of its conditions for agreeing to a ceasefire. Early in the war, Khaled Meshaal outlined three such conditions: an end to Israeli attacks on Gaza, an end of the siege of Gaza, and an end to Israeli arrests, detentions, and other actions against “the rights of the Palestinian people” in the West Bank and Jerusalem.<sup>140</sup> Similarly, after rejecting an Egyptian ceasefire proposal in mid-July, Hamas offered a 10-year ceasefire in exchange for the release of prisoner, the opening of the Gaza land border with Israel, and an end to the naval blockade of the port of Gaza (to be replaced by international supervision).<sup>141</sup> When a ceasefire brokered by the Sisi government in Egypt went into effect at the end of August it did, by definition, result in an end to the assault on Gaza, but there was no release of prisoners and the blockade of Gaza remained in place. While Hamas’ leadership structure remained in place and it retained much of its control over Gaza, for Gaza itself, the war was (yet another) disaster.

The question of what sort of outcome these conflicts represent for Hamas—success or failure—is less clear than the outcomes explored in the previous chapters. In part, assessing Hamas’ performance is dependent on an understanding of Israeli objectives. If Israel’s goal had been to wipe Hamas out entirely, we would have to judge them as having been far more effective at resisting than if Israel’s goal was merely to deter them. The rhetoric from Israel’s political and military leadership seems to suggest, though, that the goal of both campaigns was somewhere in between—to cripple or remove Hamas’ ability to launch rockets at Israel, and to deter it from future attacks. The fact that the 2009 war was followed by a second, similar conflict five years later suggests that deterrence was only temporarily successful and that over time, it was able to regain its ability to fire rockets. Hamas also demonstrated political resilience in the aftermath of these conflicts, though Gaza’s recovery has been limited and the damage remains substantial.

### *Resistance*

In 2009, Hamas was not able to offer much by way of resistance to the Israeli assault. Throughout the fighting, it continued to launch missiles at Israeli targets, sometimes as many as 20–30 a day, some with ranges of up to 20 kilometers. But Hamas clearly had little defensive capacity and was entirely unable to prevent or significantly slow either the air assault or the Israeli ground advance. The total casualties for the war were between

1200 and 1400 Palestinians, about half of whom were likely civilians, and 13 Israelis, 3 of whom were civilians. Four of the Israeli military casualties were the result of friendly fire, indicating the ineffectiveness of Hamas' assault, though the low number of civilian casualties in Israel is largely due to Israeli precautions rather than any restraint on Hamas' part.<sup>142</sup>

Similarly, in 2014, the stark asymmetry of the casualties speaks to the military mismatch between Hamas and the IDF. While Hamas proved able to threaten Israeli population centers, even its improved long range missiles were unable to exert sufficient pressure on Israel to influence the latter to end the conflict before it felt ready to do so. This was, at least in part, due to Israel's Iron Dome missile defense shield, but was also due to the quality (if not quantity) of Hamas weapons. Moreover, Hamas proved totally unable to defend Gaza's population from Israeli airstrikes, as evidenced by the high rate of civilian casualties, estimated by the UN to be over half of the total.<sup>143</sup>

Hamas' political alliances proved only slightly more useful. During Operation Cast Lead, Hassan Nasrullah issued statements in support of Hamas, the Arab League condemned the attack on Gaza, and Saudi Arabia addressed the Security Council calling for an immediate ceasefire, lifting of the naval blockade, and opening of the land borders, though none of these demands was met.<sup>144</sup> More usefully for Hamas, the war put Egypt and Jordan, the two Arab states which have peace treaties with Israel, in a difficult position. Syria and Hizbullah moved quickly to criticize Egypt, which had sealed its border with Gaza and traded fire with Hamas fighters, accusing it of complicity with Israel.<sup>145</sup> Jordan, with its large Palestinian-origin population, faced domestic protest, including grassroots activism of the kind rarely seen in Jordan, such as a tent-city set up by young people near the Israeli embassy, and joint demonstrations by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian left calling for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador.<sup>146</sup> None of this protest, however, was sufficient to halt the Israeli attack or to prevent its recurrence five years later.

Hamas' regional position was, if anything, worse in 2014 than it had been five years previously. The sympathetic Morsi government in Egypt had been overthrown by the military and replaced by a junta led by Abdel Fattah al Sisi that was openly hostile to Hamas. Hamas' break with the Asad regime over its response to the Syrian uprising resulted in a cooling of relations with Iran as well. While there was significant international outcry over the civilian casualties in Gaza, Hamas itself had few enthusiastic allies.

### *Recovery*

But success is not only a matter of initial resistance, but also of longer-term recovery. At this, Hamas has been far more successful. At the regional level, the war did generate increased public sympathy for Hamas, at least in the short term. In Jordan in 2009, the Islamic Action Front's spokesman, Jamil Abubaker, told me bluntly, "the truth is, Hamas gained a lot of popularity and sympathy in the Gaza battle, not just here, but in the Arab and Muslim world."<sup>147</sup> But while Arab public opinion matters for Hamas, it is ultimately less important than domestic public opinion, and in this area the outcome of the war was decidedly mixed.

Hamas' control of Gaza was not significantly reduced in the aftermath of either conflict. It is true that from 2009 to 2014, with the exception of the increase coinciding with the brief conflict in 2012, there was a substantial decrease in rocket fire from Gaza. From a high of 1553 Qassem and 1685 mortars in 2008, the number was reduced to 100 Qassem and 50 mortars in 2010.<sup>148</sup> But while this may have been a sign of Hamas' military capacity having been degraded in 2009, it also, paradoxically, indicates the degree of control that Hamas still held over Gaza. While it may have been forced to accept the need to reduce attacks on Israel from Gaza as a result of the war in 2009, its ability to enforce this decision on other actors in Gaza is an indicator that its authority in Gaza remained intact.<sup>149</sup> As of this writing, this has proved to be true in the aftermath of Operation Defensive Edge as well. While Hamas was initially pressured into accepting a power sharing national unity agreement with Fatah, this has not, as of yet, resulted in Hamas ceding much, if any, authority in Gaza, and its position appears as entrenched as ever.

This may be partly explained by the public reaction to both conflicts. Operation Cast Lead had the immediate effect of producing a swell of support for Hamas from civilians in the West Bank. In the first week of January, PA security forces broke up large solidarity rallies in Hebron and Ramallah, confiscating Hamas flags, ripping up pro-Hamas protest signs, and even using tear gas against Palestinian protesters. They even confronted several hundred students gathered to march on the Atarot checkpoint, putting the Fatah government in a very difficult position.<sup>150</sup> Fatah, in contrast, was highly critical of Hamas' behavior before, during and after the war. One of its officials in Lebanon accused them of sacrificing the good of Palestinian civilians for their own interests, saying "I fight to protect my people—I don't put the people in front of me to protect

me.”<sup>151</sup> If the war gave Hamas ammunition with which to criticize the PA for its cooperation with Israel, it also gave Fatah grounds to criticize Hamas for its recklessness.

The response from the Palestinian civilian public was also mixed. While Operation Cast Lead did not create a massive backlash against Hamas, there was still widespread unhappiness about the war and some discontent with Hamas’ handling of its aftermath. Immediately following the war, Hamas received a slight public opinion bump, but not an enormous one; its “market share” increased from 28 % of the population to 33 % between December of 2008 and March of 2009, and positive perceptions of Haniyeh’s government improved from 36 % to 43 %.

But three months after the war, many Palestinians, especially in Gaza, remained dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the territory. Seventy-one percent said that they were worse off than they were before the war, half were dissatisfied with Hamas’ efforts at reconstruction,<sup>152</sup> 80 % described conditions in Gaza as “very bad” or “bad,” and 63 % believed that another electoral victory for Hamas would only worsen the siege. (Those in the West Bank were only marginally more optimistic on all counts).<sup>153</sup> A year after the war, in December of 2009, Hamas and Fatah had more or less returned to their pre-war popularity levels, with 43 % of respondents supporting Fatah and 27 % Hamas. Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that the situation in Gaza was poor, with only 9 % of Gazans describing conditions as at all positive.<sup>154</sup> In polling from 2010, Gazans remained unconvinced by Hamas’ political message, with only 14 % citing the establishment of a pious Islamic society as a priority (as compared with half who prioritize the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the lines laid out during Oslo).<sup>155</sup>

Five years later, the pattern of a short-term surge in support for Hamas during and immediately after the conflict followed by gradual return to the pre-war status quo was repeated. In the immediate aftermath of the war, polling indicated that 79 % of respondents both believed that Hamas had won the war, and that Israel had initiated it. An overwhelming 94 % of respondents were “satisfied” with Hamas’ military performance during the war. Support for Hamas’ rocket attacks against Israel also remained strong, at 88 %, though that number dropped precipitously to 49 % when respondents were asked about launches specifically from populated areas.<sup>156</sup> A month later, though, belief that Hamas had won the war had dropped to 69 %, and only 49 % declared themselves satisfied with Hamas achievements during the conflict.<sup>157</sup> And while four months

after the war, polling found that Hamas would have beaten Fatah in presidential elections, were they to have been held a year later, Hamas would have lost to Fatah, 35 % to 39 %.<sup>158</sup> In short, as in 2009, Hamas was able to more or less recover politically after the war, though the initial spike in support during and immediately after the conflict proved short lived.

## CONCLUSION

In the balance, Hamas' policies rendered it rather more locally resilient than the PLO and more regionally significant than Amal, but rather less effective than Hizbullah overall. While its rebound after the Gaza War can be considered a case of survival, it is a less successful and robust survival than Hizbullah's in 2006. Militarily, Hamas did not mount the impressive defensive operation that Hizbullah did in 2006—it was unable to force an Israeli retreat as Hizbullah did at Bint Jbail, or damage any of its major hardware. But neither was it forced to entirely retreat; it did not, for instance, permanently evacuate the Gaza leadership to Damascus or resign from the government of Gaza, though it did appear close to handing control of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority shortly after the war. Politically it was also able to avoid the public backlash that Hizbullah suffered in south Lebanon in 1988.

As with the other militant groups in the Arab–Israeli conflict ecosystem, Hamas' performance cannot be entirely explained either by some advantage resulting from its “innate” identity characteristics, or by its military capacity. Yes, Hamas was fighting among “its own people,” that is, inside historical Palestine and surrounded by Palestinians. But Hizbullah in 1988 was also on “its own turf” and the PLO in heavily Palestinian Amman was also “surrounded by its own people,” and both of these cases demonstrate decidedly less successful outcomes.

Moreover, in no way did Hamas' status as a Palestinian movement guarantee it the support of the Palestinian public. True, Hamas was (and is) fighting in a context within which national identity—that is, Palestinian-ness—had already been established as the most salient political characteristic for most of its potential constituents, but Hamas is obviously not the only organization with a claim to Palestinian identity in the territory. During the first intifada, it had to compete directly with the UNLU, and its rivalry with Fatah remains the strongest dividing line in Palestinian politics, at least inside the West Bank and Gaza. In choosing to mobilize based on a pan-Islamic identity meshed with a Palestinian nationalist nar-

rative, Hamas attempted to set itself apart from its nationalist and leftist rivals, but this ultimately proved to be less successful than the argument that Hamas represented freedom from corruption. While the Hamas politicians interviewed for this book argued that the movement's Islamic character is its major draw (using language that sounded remarkably similar to claims by PLO officials that Palestinian support for the PLO is a natural feature of Palestinian identity) public opinion polling tells a different story. It was not Hamas' "innate" identity characteristics which helped it to obtain public support, or even the identity it constructed for itself based on an alternative narrative of Palestinian nationalism as rooted in Islam, but rather, characteristics to which it laid claim almost by accident.

Moreover, even if Hamas' status as an Islamic party did help them attract some support domestically, it proved complicated internationally. The Jordanian monarchy and the Mubarak regime in Egypt both viewed their own domestic Islamist movements as threats to their authority (although in Egypt, it was not the Muslim Brotherhood that eventually brought down the Mubarak regime), leading them to view Hamas itself with distrust. Surprisingly, this was not true of Syria, but Syrian support for Hamas was provided in spite of, not because of, the latter's Islamic political project, and in any case the ideological disparities between them rendered the relationship too brittle to survive the Syrian civil war.

Hamas did not enjoy any particular advantages when it was founded in comparison with either the PLO or Hizbullah. Gaza has little by way of natural resources and, like the other organizations discussed in this book, it was forced to look abroad for financial and military assets. Like Hizbullah, Hamas' offensive capacity was greater than their defensive capacity, though Hizbullah's was clearly stronger. On the other hand, Hamas had the advantage of fighting in urban areas, which favor guerilla over conventional tactics, although Gaza's closed borders constrained Hamas' mobility in ways that Hizbullah did not have to contend with. Hamas also experienced far lower rates of desertion than the PLO had, though, again, Gaza's small size and closed borders left few options available to any fighters who might have wanted to do so.

Ultimately, despite the terrible cost to Gaza of the conflicts in 2009 and 2014, Hamas was able to recover from the Gaza War and maintain its position in the territory. But due to the ongoing changes in the region, Hamas' position both domestically and regionally is in flux. In the context of the alliance shifts produced by the Arab Spring and the Syrian civil war, Hamas may need to cultivate new relationships to replace old ones, both at home and abroad, to secure its future.

## NOTES

1. Because these developments are, as of this writing, quite recent, they have not had the chance to shape the organization in the way that its earlier relationships have. They will not, therefore, be the focus of this analysis.
2. Map courtesy of the Perry Castañeda Map Library, UT Austin.
3. Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 31–33.
4. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*; Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*.
5. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 59.
6. Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 45.
7. *Ibid.*, 48.
8. Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, 35; Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 53.
9. Tamimi sets founding of the movement to Dec 14th, with the release of a communiqué by Rantisi announcing Islamic resistance in the context of the intifada.
10. Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*, 30–31.
11. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated the Al Qassem brigades total strength at 10,000 in 2007, and 15,000 if internal Gazan security forces are included in the total, although there is some overlap between them and the Al Qassem brigades. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “The Hamas Terror Organization—2007.”
12. Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, 87–91; Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 63.
13. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 55.
14. *Ibid.*, 71.
15. Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 69.
16. ’Atiyah, “Pro-Iraq Demonstration in Amman Described.”
17. Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 77.
18. *Ibid.*, 72.
19. *Ibid.*, 90–95.
20. Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*.
21. *Ibid.*; Safadi, “Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas Welcome Amnesty.”
22. Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 75–77.
23. Andoni, “New Cabinet Enhances Joint Delegation Prospect.”
24. “False and Rejected Allegations!”
25. Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 84–90.
26. Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*, 132.

27. Strindberg, "The Damascus Based Alliance of Palestinian Forces."
28. 'Abid, " Hamas Spokesman on 'Alliance' Members' Charges."
29. Interview with Mohamed B.
30. "Khaddam: Arafat Has 'Lost Most of His Brain.'"
31. "Al-Asad Discusses Peace, Health, Domestic Issues."
32. Out of 303 attacks launched against Israeli targets between 2000 and 2006, 83 were launched by Hamas, and the organization carried out 35 of 98 were suicide attacks. The next two most prolific organizations were the Fatah-affiliated Al Aqsa Martyrs brigade and Islamic Jihad, each with approximately 50 attacks, about half of which were suicide attacks. Statistics taken from START, "Global Terrorism Database."
33. Partly because of the deterrent effect of the separation wall around the West Bank, partly because of the decline in the intensity of the intifada, and partly due to Hamas' changing role in Gaza after the 2006 election. The effect of the separation barrier is debated.
34. Statistics taken from IDF, "2010 Statistics: Rocket and Mortar Fire from the Gaza Strip as of October 7th, 7 Oct 2010." It would be a mistake to assume that all rocket fire at all times was the result of Hamas operations, but it is safe to say that it was responsible for most of the fire, much of the time.
35. Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*, 137.
36. "Mohtashemi Interviewed on Aiding Palestinians."
37. "Velayati Receives Palestinian Leaders, Sha'aban."
38. "Mohtashemi Discusses Israeli-PLO Accord."
39. "Khamene'i Meets With Hamas Leaders."
40. "Hamas Said to Gain Iran's Backing."
41. "Palestinian Hamas to Open Office in Tehran."
42. "Tehran Seeking New Palestinian 'Rejection Front.'"
43. "Shekholeslam Views Jerusalem Day."
44. "Hizballah, Hamas Delegations Hold Talks in Tehran."
45. For more on the evolution of this relationship, see Mishal and Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence*, 87–90.
46. The spokesman for the PFLP-GC in Bourj al Barajneh, for instance, was openly sympathetic to Hamas. He also refrained from shaking my hand, indicating a stricter level of religious observance than that demonstrated by most secular party members, including members of the PFLP-GC in Syria and elsewhere.
47. "Palestinian Hamas to Open Office in Tehran."
48. Colvin, "Hamas Wages Iran's Proxy War on Israel."
49. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 132.
50. Human Rights Watch, "Rockets from Gaza." Despite launching 1750 rockets in 2008 alone, Hamas was able to kill only five people, two of

whom were Gazan Palestinians killed by accident. Anecdotally, the rocket itself is a length of metal pipe, the fuel is made up of potassium nitrate and sugar, the fuse is a machine gun cartridge, and the warhead is a mixture of fertilizer and TNT.

51. Palestinian weapons deployed against Israeli during Operation Cast Lead, 197.
52. "Rockets from Gaza."
53. United States Embassy, "Cable 09TELAVIV422, IDF DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF DISCUSSES GAZA OPERATION."
54. Interview, Edward Kattoura.
55. BBC, "Deadly Clashes over Syria in Lebanese City of Tripoli."
56. Akram, " Hamas Supports Syrian Opposition."
57. Hamas membership is illegal in the West Bank. Those politicians who are sympathetic to its goals run on the Change and Reform slate. The parliamentarians cited in this chapter are Change and Reform politicians, some of whom also refer to themselves as members of the "Islamic Movement." Most have spent time in Israeli prisons on charges of membership in Hamas.
58. Interviews with Mahmoud Ramahi and Mariam Saleh, both Change and Reform Members of the Palestine Legislative Council, and one additional anonymous member of the PLC.
59. Interview, Ahmad Ali Ahmad, Change and Reform member of the Palestine Legislative Council.
60. This overlap is perhaps to be expected, given that a good deal of Islamic religious doctrine is explicitly concerned with the government of the *ummah*, (or, in English, "Islamic community.") This is reflective of the fact that during the prophet's lifetime, as the nascent Islamic community expanded and migrated from place to place, this was a major concern.
61. Interview, an anonymous Change and Reform member of the PLC.
62. Interview with Mariam Saleh.
63. Interview, an anonymous Change and Reform member of the PLC.
64. Interview, Mahmoud Ramahi, Change and Reform member and Secretary General of the Palestine Legislative Council. Ramahi shook my hand, which is unusual in conservative circles in the Middle East, and particularly among male members of the Islamic Movement.
65. Interview, Edward Kattoura.
66. "PCPSR Palestinian Public Opinion Poll #2."
67. "CPRS - Survey Research Unit: Public Opinion Poll # 16."
68. PCPSR Poll # 17, 7-9 September, 2005. In the same poll, however, respondents placed greater trust in Fatah than Hamas to pursue the peace process, manage the economy, and maintain both national unity and law and order.
69. Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*, 5-6.

70. Interviews with Ahmad Ali Ahmad, Mariam Saleh, and an anonymous Change and Reform member of the PLC.
71. "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #19: Armed Attacks, Palestinian–Jordanian Relations, Negotiations, Elections and Other Issues of Concern."
72. Lust-Okar, "Divided They Rule: The Management and Manipulation of Political Opposition."
73. Tessler, "Do Islamic Orientations Influence Attitudes Toward Democracy in the Arab World? Evidence from Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Algeria."
74. Maqdisi, "Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement (HAMAS) of Palestine."
75. Tamimi, *Hamas: A History from Within*, 61.
76. *Ibid.*, 64–70.
77. Interviews with Hamid Bitawi, judge and Change and Reform member of the PLC; and Ahmad Ali Ahmad, both of whom were among the deportees, and Abu Al Abed, a Hamas political official in Lebanon who cited this episode as being part of what attracted him to Hamas in the first place.
78. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 139.
79. Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement*, 56–57.
80. See the Izzedine Al Qassem Brigades website: <http://www.alqassam.ps/arabic/video1.php?cat=3&cid=456>
81. Similarly, Hamas' political officer in the Bourj al Barajneh refugee camp in Beirut told me that "the relationship is getting stronger with the people because we're still fixed on our opinion and we didn't abandon any of the movement's principles."
82. Mishal and Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground*.
83. When I visited Hamas' political office in Bourj al Barajneh, I was given a copy of their magazine and a 2009 commemorative calendar, as well as some chocolates with the Hamas logo on the wrapper. They were pretty good.
84. Interview, Abu Al Abed, Hamas, Bourj al Barajneh. In a PCPSR poll in December of 2008, 22 % of Gazan respondents listed Al Aqsa TV as the station they watched most frequently, putting it in second place behind Al Jazeera. In the West Bank only 8 % listed Al Aqsa as their preferred station. "PCPSR Survey Research Unit: Public Opinion Poll (30)."
85. See for example Hamas Power, *The Promise*. (Available as of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2016; these videos are frequently removed.)
86. Interviews with Mariam Saleh and Ahmad Ali Ahmad.
87. Since Hamas' victory in the elections of 2006, the picture has become murkier both because it is difficult to disaggregate Hamas' own services from the PA's in Gaza, and because its NGOs were closed down in the

West Bank. Outside the Palestinian Territories, Hamas' service provision is somewhat limited. In Lebanon, for instance, they provide aid to orphans and poor families, especially during the holidays. Interview with Abu Al Abed.

88. Interview, Hamid Bitawi.
89. \$70 million is one commonly held figure for Hamas' pre-2006 annual budget, though it is difficult to find reliable estimates. Wiktorowicz, *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Budgetary figures since 2007 that include the budget for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza are far higher.
90. Interview, Mahoud Ramahi. Ramahi framed this within the context of the Muslim obligation to give zakat, or charity. This was echoed by both the Hamas representative in the Bourj al Barajneh refugee camp in Lebanon and by Zaki bin Rshaid, then the secretary general of the IAF in Jordan.
91. In this sense, its experience was quite different from Hizbullah's; in south Lebanon and the Dahiye Hizbullah really was operating in a vacuum as far as the provision of public services was concerned, though Hizbullah managed to turn this state of affairs to its advantage.
92. Bocco et al., "Palestinian Public Perceptions Report."
93. Szekely, "Doing Well by Doing Good."
94. See, for instance Berman, *Religious, Radical and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*.
95. Interviews with an anonymous Change and Reform member of the PLC and Hamid Bitawi. See also Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector*.
96. Interview, Mariam Saleh.
97. Whether this is true or not is probably less important in terms of how Palestinians respond to Hamas than the perception that it is true. I was struck by the degree to which Hamas members, along with many other Palestinian parties, have adopted the language of transparency and accountability used by international NGOs. In fact, I interviewed Mahmoud Ramahi in a Ramallah hotel lobby, at a conference on transparency and good governance at which Hanan Ashrawi was the keynote speaker.
98. Interview, Mahmoud Ramahi. An alternative explanation, suggested by Rex Brynen, is that these clinics were duplicating services provided by PA clinics.
99. Interviews, Ahmad Ali Ahmad and Hamid Bitawi.
100. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 41–49.
101. See Leaflet no. 11, April 1st, 1988. These leaflets and others are available in Mishal and Aharoni, *Speaking Stones: Communiqués from the Intifada Underground*.
102. Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 119–20.

103. "Gaza: Armed Palestinian Groups Commit Grave Crimes."
104. " Hamas Courts Tell Women Lawyers to Cover Their Hair."
105. Or indeed, their status as the most robust available alternative to Fatah at all, which may explain why their polling numbers have gone down since they themselves have taken office. (See Figure 1.1.)
106. I have made this argument elsewhere as well. See Szekely, "Doing Well by Doing Good."
107. "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #2 Palestinian Elections"; "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #13 Unemployment, Jordanian-Israeli Treaty, Armed Operations, Elections, and Other Issues"; "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #19: Armed Attacks, Palestinian-Jordanian Relations, Negotiations, Elections and Other Issues of Concern"; "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #24: The Peace Process, Performance of the PNA, Performance of the PLC"; "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #29 Performance of the PNA, the Peace Process, the Status of Democracy in Palestine, and Corruption"; "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #35: The Peace Process, Domestic Situation, Economic Situation, Ability to Confront Threats, Presidential Elections and Political Affiliation"; "CPRS Public Opinion Poll #44 The Peace Process, PA Performance, Status of Democracy and Human Rights, Corruption, Reform, Elections for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency, and Political Affiliation."
108. PCPSR, "Survey Research Unit: Public Opinion Poll #13."
109. Interview, Edward Kattoura.
110. Many of those involved with the Islamic Movement who were interviewed for this book had only recently been released from prison.
111. The blockade has seriously limiting fishing and the export of goods from Gaza, and led to an overall reduction of Gaza's GDP per capita by 50% as of 2015. OCHA, "The Gaza Strip: The Humanitarian Impact of the Blockade."
112. Human Rights Watch, "Rockets from Gaza"; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel, "Victims of Palestinian Violence and Terrorism since September 2000."
113. Kershner, "Israeli Strike Is First in Gaza Since Start of Cease-Fire."
114. The Associated Press, "World Briefing: Middle East; Israel: Hamas Formally Ends Truce."
115. Kirshner and El-Khodary, "Gaza Rocket Fire Intensifies."
116. El-Khodary and Bronner, "Israelis Say Strikes Against Hamas Will Continue."
117. Kirshner and El-Khodary, "Israeli Troops Mass Along Border; Arab Anger Rises."
118. Bronner and El-Khodary, "No Early End Seen to 'All-Out War' on Hamas in Gaza."

119. Bronner, "Israel Rejects Cease-Fire, but Offers Gaza Aid."
120. United States Embassy, "Cable 09TELAVIV422, IDF DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF DISCUSSES GAZA OPERATION."
121. Bronner, "Israel Deepens Gaza Incursion as Toll Mounts."
122. Kershner and El-Khodary, "Israeli Troops Launch Attack on Gaza."
123. Bronner, "Israeli Attack Splits Gaza; Truce Calls Are Rebuffed."
124. El-Khodary, "Grief and Rage at Stricken Gaza School."
125. Cowell, "30 Confirmed Dead in Shelling of Gaza Family."
126. Erlanger and Bronner, "As Troops Enter Gaza City, Israel Sees an Opening"; Erlanger and Slackman, "Israel Says Hamas Is Damaged, Not Destroyed."
127. Bronner and Landler, "Israeli Cabinet Appears Ready to Declare a Gaza Ceasefire."
128. al Mughrabi, "Israel Plans Ceasefire, Hamas Vows to Fight On."
129. "Human Rights In Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories: Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict," 18–25.
130. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "PCBS Release Preliminary Estimated for the Economic Losses in Gaza Strip Caused by Israeli Aggression:"
131. "Ceasefire Agreement Comes Into Effect."
132. "B'Tselem's Findings."
133. A UN investigation later found that "2,251 Palestinians were killed, including 1,462 Palestinian civilians, of whom 299 women and 551 children." Human Rights Council, "Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Established pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-21/1."
134. "Mowing the Grass in Gaza."
135. Human Rights Council, "Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Established pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-21/1," 15–17.
136. Cohen, "Hamas Firing Long-Range M-302 Rockets at Israel, Capable of 150-Km Distance."
137. Gordon and Gladstone, "Kerry Claims Progress Toward Gaza Truce, but Hamas Leader Is Defiant."
138. Human Rights Council, "Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Established pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-21/1."
139. "Palestinian Armed Groups Killed Civilians on Both Sides in Attacks Amounting to War Crimes."
140. "Hamas Proposes 10-Year Cease-Fire in Return for Conditions Being Met."
141. Ibid.

142. The numbers of casualties are disputed, with Israel claiming the lower number. The IDF also claims that a minority of the casualties were civilians. "Israel's Gaza Toll Far Lower than Palestinian Tally"; "Human Rights In Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories: Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict."
143. Human Rights Council, "Report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry Established pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution S-21/1."
144. Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, "Prince Saud Al-Faisal's Statement to the UN Security Council Regarding Gaza."
145. Erlanger, "Egypt Pressed on Gaza From Without and Within."
146. At the demonstration I attended any initial solidarity between the Muslim Brotherhood and the leftists quickly dissolved as both sides attempted to drown the other out with rival chants.
147. Interview, Jamil Abubaker, Spokesman, Islamic Action Front.
148. IDF, "2010 Statistics: Rocket and Mortar Fire from the Gaza Strip as of October 7th, 7 Oct 2010."
149. See for example al Mughrabi, "Israel Plans Ceasefire, Hamas Vows to Fight On," and also International Crisis Group, "Radical Islam in Gaza."
150. Erlanger, "In Fatah-Governed West Bank, Solidarity With Hamas."
151. Interview, Edward Kattoura.
152. 35% reported that they were dissatisfied, and 15% certainly dissatisfied with Hamas' reconstruction efforts.
153. "PCPSR Survey Research Unit: Poll No. 31—Press Release"; "PCPSR Survey Research Unit: Public Opinion Poll (30)."
154. At 42 % bad and 31 % very bad.
155. "PCPSR Survey Research Unit: Poll No. 38 - Full Analysis."
156. Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, "Special Gaza War Poll."
157. Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll #53."
158. Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, "Palestinian Public Opinion Poll #54"; PCPSR, "PCPSR Palestinian Public Opinion Poll (56)."

## Beyond the Arab–Israeli Conflict Ecosystem

The foreign and domestic policies employed by the PLO, Amal, Hizbullah, and Hamas resulted in very different outcomes for each of them, both in terms of the types of organizations they became, and in how their character impacted their ability to resist during and recover after various military challenges. Comparison between them generates a number of broad findings not only about the conflict ecosystem described in this book, but also about how organizations in general adapt to the pressures that occur in their respective conflict ecosystems and how those adaptations shape their overall prospects. The purpose of this chapter is to explore those broader conclusions and then briefly apply them to the emerging Syrian–Iraqi conflict ecosystem created by the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONFLICT ECOSYSTEM

Increasingly, warfare no longer takes place exclusively within or between countries. The system of interconnected state and nonstate actors engaged in a series of geographically proximate and politically interrelated conflicts over time that has been profiled in this book is only one of many such systems. Other examples include the conflict ecosystems in the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Taliban-driven conflict ecosystem that straddles the Afghani–Pakistani border, and the Syrian–Iraqi conflict ecosystem, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The typology

generated in this book and the implications it raises for our understanding of nonstate actors are equally applicable to other militant groups in other such conflict systems.

Applying these findings to other cases will be made easier by some brief discussion of the conflict ecosystem as a unit of analysis. Broadly speaking, there are four characteristics which all conflict ecosystems share: they are (1) transnational, (2) multi-actor systems, characterized by (3) interconnection between the various actors, and (4) common ideological and/or ethnic cleavages. The first is perhaps most obvious; while conflict ecosystems are geographically defined, they are not defined by international borders. Like the Arab–Israeli conflict ecosystem, most include multiple interconnected sub-conflicts, which may be intra- or inter-state, or both at once. Fighting takes place both across and within state borders, whether or not the governments of both states are involved. In the case of the conflict ecosystem on which this book is focused, this has included Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and Palestine.

There are a number of mechanisms by which the ecosystem's territorial boundaries are established (or expanded). Though the conflict may begin in a particular state or even a single region of one state, it can spread by a number of mechanisms. Most obviously, if a militant group chooses to base itself in a neighboring state then that territory may become part of the conflict ecosystem with or without the government's consent. The PLO's decisions to operate from Jordanian and Lebanese territory brought those states into the ecosystem. Conversely, Syria's refusal to allow Palestinian military operations from Syrian territory meant that while it was a participant in the conflict as a sponsor state, after 1973 it mostly avoided war being waged on Syrian soil. Similarly, the territorial boundaries of a conflict can also be established by counterinsurgent operations. The Israeli invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 had profound implications first for Amal and then for Hizbullah, which itself was founded at least partly in response to the Israeli occupation that followed Operation Peace for Galilee.

A separate but related mechanism is the phenomenon of refugee flows. While an influx of refugees will not automatically internationalize a conflict, there is evidence suggesting that they have the potential to do so.<sup>1</sup> Militant groups can hide within fleeing groups of civilians (as happened when the Interahamwe fled Rwanda after the genocide by hiding among Hutu civilians). Refugee crises can also give rise to militant groups formed in the diaspora, motivated by resentment at mistreatment by the host state, a desire for resistance against those who turned them into refugees in the

first place, or both. The absence of other forms of employment for young men can render refugee communities fruitful grounds for recruitment by armed groups. This is particularly true of isolated or insecure refugee camps, which prevent refugees from integrating into the host community, as in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

This brings us to the second defining characteristic of conflict ecosystems: they involve a mixture of both state and nonstate actors. The constellation of alliances and adversarial relationships within a given conflict ecosystem may take the form of one counterinsurgent state against several nonstate adversaries, or a multitude of state and nonstate parties, or several states threatened by the same nonstate actor. A single conflict ecosystem will likely shift through several different configurations over time as the actors themselves evolve. Both state and nonstate actors often make temporary alliances of convenience (as the Kataeb and Israelis did, for instance) or sever previous alliances (as Hamas and the Asad regime in Syria did in 2012). New actors enter the system as old actors schism or, in some cases, come together to create new entities entirely.

The participants themselves can also change over time. They may become more or less effective, and in some cases shift from being nonstate actors to state actors, if they successfully mount a revolution or coup. Or, they may find themselves a kind of permanent local opposition, or a government in exile. Others settle into a middle-ground as proto-state actors, nonstate actors that have taken on many of the functions and behaviors of states without actually assuming the position of an internationally recognized government or conquering all of the territory in a given state. Proto-state actors themselves may or may not have ambitions of statehood; the PLO did, while Hizbullah, at least at present, probably does not.

The sheer number of actors in a given conflict ecosystem can be bafflingly large; contrary to accounts of civil wars that pit “the rebels” against “the government” there are nearly always far more than two sides. The Arab-Israeli conflict ecosystem includes not only the actors discussed in this book, but also any number of smaller militias advocating a range of ideological positions and claiming to represent a range of ethno-communal groups. The most significant of those are probably the Lebanese Forces, a coalition of Maronite militias in Lebanon led by the Kataeb who during the Lebanese civil war fought against the PLO, the PSP, Amal, and at times against themselves. It included Christian militias such as the Guardians of the Cedars, the Marada, and the Tigers, to name only a few. There were also Sunni forces (the Murabitoun) and ideologically

driven parties including Palestinian and Lebanese communists (though not all were active combatants), Baathists (loyal to either Iraq or Syria), Nasserites, and a vast array of Palestinian factions both within and outside the PLO. Alliances among these groups were far from stable; indeed, by the end of the Lebanese civil war, the PLO was riven by internal conflict, Amal was fighting Hizbullah, and the Lebanese Forces were fighting a faction of the military led by Christian general Michel Aoun.

And yet despite this variety, there was also a degree of consistency uniting the participants. The third important feature of conflict ecosystems is that each contains a common ideological and/or ethnic cleavage, or in some cases, cleavages. That is, while each system may contain multiple conflicts, those conflicts are animated by a similar central narrative, or perhaps one of several interconnected narratives. The cleavage that defines the conflict system examined in this book is the conflict between Israel and its nonstate adversaries, which is framed as the fight against terrorism for Israel itself and as “resistance” for Israel’s adversaries, both Palestinian and Shi’ite. There is further conflict among these adversaries as to the meaning, nature, and ideological content of “resistance.” Some participants (such as Jordan) might prefer not to see themselves as implicated in this particular debate at all. Nevertheless, it is this narrative which animates the conflict at its center.

Where the parties differ regarding the dominant cleavage, much of their marketing will be a matter of convincing their potential constituents that their characterization of the conflict is the correct one. New actors seeking to frame the conflict in the way that best fits with their core objectives may offer new narratives that change the terms of the debate, but that debate itself remains a unifying feature of the broader conflict ecosystem, forcing all participants to take a stand one way or the other. In the late 1960s, the PLO’s skillful use of the resistance narrative established it as a major arbiter (and source) of ideological legitimacy in the region. By framing the fight against Israel as a matter of national liberation and resistance against a colonizing oppressor, the PLO tapped into a set of anti-colonial narratives then coming to prominence around the world and offered a successful challenge to the dominant Arab nationalist narrative of the liberation of Palestine as an Arab, rather than Palestinian, problem. They were also quite successful in establishing “resistance” as a narrative capable of conferring legitimacy on other organizations;<sup>2</sup> over five decades, Hamas, Amal, Hizbullah, and many others made use of this narrative, albeit in different ways. More recently, the rising salience of

Islamist politics and the decreasing importance of Arab nationalism have shaped the terms in which the debate over the central cleavage in the conflict has taken place in recent years, but the broader narrative of resistance has remained consistent.

This leads to the final characteristic of the conflict ecosystem as an entity—that the organizations in a given conflict ecosystem are interconnected. The conflict ecosystem described in the previous chapters provides an excellent example. This was partly by virtue of the crowded political landscape of south Lebanon; with so many militant groups occupying the same space, it is perhaps unsurprising that they came into contact with one another. The establishment of PLO bases there in the late 1960s and especially after 1970 brought them into contact with Musa Sadr's Movement of the Dispossessed, whom the Palestinians viewed at first as fellow travelers. When the Amal militia was founded after the outbreak of the civil war, its fighters were trained by Fatah, and Amal too adopted the narrative of national resistance, although its priorities quickly diverged from those of the PLO. In 1982, Hizbullah split off from Amal, meaning that some of Hizbullah's founders had personal connections to Amal and in some cases Fatah as well—Imad Mughniyeh, the architect of many of its early and more spectacular operations, fought with Fatah in the early 1970s. Hizbullah offered yet another take on the narrative of resistance, this time viewed through the Khomeinist lens of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. For its part, Hamas' emergence as an armed resistance movement was shaped partly by the normalization of armed resistance as a feature of (and a major basis for competition in) internal Palestinian politics. When Israel expelled 450 high-ranking Hamas officers from Gaza and the West Bank in 1992 and deported them to south Lebanon, they quickly came in contact with Hizbullah, who offered them as warm a welcome as was possible under the circumstances, paving the way for further cooperation under the umbrella of the Syrian-Iranian alliance in the coming years.

Moreover, organizations in the same ecosystem do sometimes learn from one another over time. Some of this learning can be formal, as with Fatah's training of Amal's fighters or the exchanges that took place between Hamas and Hizbullah in south Lebanon in 1992. In other cases, learning is a matter of emulating what works; Hamas' establishment of Al Aqsa TV appeared to be at least in part inspired by the success of Hizbullah's Al Manar. (While Hamas' social services are also sometimes described as emulating Hizbullah's, this is probably a stretch, given that the Mujamma was established in Gaza well before Hizbullah split off from Amal.)<sup>3</sup> It is

also plausible (though difficult to prove) that the PLO's experience in south Lebanon served as a kind of cautionary tale for Hizbullah regarding the dangers of alienating the civilian population, and therefore the need to blunt the impact of Israeli reprisal attacks as much as possible. And of course, state actors learn over time as well; Jordan's skittishness about hosting Hamas and its quickness to crack down on any perceived military resistance being waged from Jordanian territory is perhaps the most obvious example.

On the other hand, not all states or nonstate actors learn from the mistakes of others, or even from their own mistakes. When I asked PLO fighters and political officers, whether they felt that the organization had learned any lessons from its mistakes in Jordan, and whether it had applied those lessons in Lebanon, most responded ruefully that no, the movement had not done so. Not all foreign and domestic policy choices are equally successful, and many have unforeseen consequences for the organizations that implement them.

### FOREIGN POLICY

As illustrated in the earlier chapters of this book, there are multiple paths to both effective and ineffective foreign and domestic policy. Different strategy choices or mixes of strategies can produce more reliable or less reliable access to political backing and material assets, and certainly produce all sorts of unintended side effects. Broadly speaking, coercion will be less effective than proxyhood which will be less effective than marketing. However, there are additional conclusions that can perhaps be drawn about these strategy choices based on the experiences of the organizations profiled in this book, which may perhaps have interesting implications for policy-makers both in counterinsurgent states and in the leadership of militant organizations.

From a foreign policy perspective, coercion is a losing proposition in the long term. Nevertheless, in the short term, it can be extremely attractive. One of the most important resources that nonstate actors seek from their sponsors is a safe haven. Unlike other resources, individual pieces of territory have a specific and subjective value, meaning that territory is not fungible the way that guns and money are. Therefore, nonstate actors have an incentive to pressure certain states for access to particularly useful areas in which to set up military bases, training camps, or even political offices. Moreover, the need for a base of operations may be more pressing than the need for other resources, especially if the organization is being forced to evacuate a previous base in a hurry.

Both of these dynamics were at work in the PLO's relationship with Jordan and Lebanon. Jordan's long border with Israel and large Palestinian population made it such an attractive base that the PLO was willing to put pressure on the monarchy (through Nasser) to host the organization even though Hussein was far from enthusiastic about doing so. When Jordan expelled the PLO in 1970, this led to a sudden influx of fedayeen into Lebanon without much discussion with or consensus on the part of the Lebanese government (partly because the Lebanese government was incapable of reaching consensus on the issue, or indeed on most issues). But in both cases, coercion proved insufficient to hold on to these bases. In Jordan, the state itself expelled the PLO, while in Lebanon some factions collaborated with the Israelis against it.

A different version of this approach is what might be termed "soft coercion," which occurs when nonstate actors use the normative power of the cause they represent to pressure or shame governments into providing support. This is, of course, the point of intersection between marketing and coercion, and it can be quite effective; this was in part how the PLO managed to squeeze funding out of the Gulf states in the 1960s. This form of coercion seems to be more useful in the long term, although if applied too vigorously it also stands to alienate the states in question.

The second option for nonstate actors seeking a patron is to establish a relationship as a proxy for a powerful sponsor state. This can have both benefits and drawbacks. State sponsorship can provide a crucial boost to a nonstate military actor, particularly in its early years, and the funding and armaments that sponsorship provides can be very useful. In many cases, this may be the most secure way of acquiring resources, provided the relationship can be maintained, which is a significant caveat. Both sponsors and proxies can be fickle. And even if the relationship does endure, it can also carry risks, particularly with regard to organizational cohesion.

Sponsorship by multiple regimes which are at odds with one another can create rifts within the client organization, particularly if the two sponsor states use their clients as proxies to settle their dispute. This dynamic was responsible for some of the internal divisions within the PLO in the 1980s, when the hostility between Iraq and Syria translated to their respective client factions, leading to intra-Palestinian clashes. Divisions within a single sponsor regime can also be reproduced in its client, as demonstrated when the power struggle in Iran following Khomeini's death in 1989 between hardliners and pragmatists was replicated within Hizbullah. The reformists, loyal to the Rafsanjani faction in Iran, led by

first Musavi and then Nasrullah, came into conflict with Tufayli's hard-line faction. As in Iran, where Rafsanjani's faction ultimately prevailed, the moderates in Hizbullah were successful, but Tufayli was ultimately expelled from the movement and in the late 1990s openly challenged Hizbullah, running against the party in the 1998 elections. Although the main body of Hizbullah weathered this episode without permanent division, it could have been deeply damaging.<sup>4</sup>

Even sponsorship by a single highly cohesive state can trigger a schism in its client. The Syrian intervention in Lebanon in 1976 forced both Amal and the Syrian-sponsored Palestinian factions to stand either with the rest of the PLO or with their Syrian patron, creating divisions that were perpetuated in one form or another for decades. One could perhaps argue that the rivalries between the PLO's various factions preceded foreign sponsorship. But even groups whose leaders had a history of rivalry still ended up on the same side of some of these schisms (like the PFLP and DFLP). Moreover, foreign sponsorship clearly made these divisions worse, and contributed to both the eventual open warfare that broke out within the PLO in the 1980s and the War of the Camps between Amal and the Palestinians in 1985.

The third foreign policy option is, of course, to convince potential sponsors to support a given organization because of a normative preference for the cause it purports to represent, and a belief that the organization is the (or at least *a*) legitimate representative of that cause. While the mechanics of such marketing rely partly on the manipulation of local public opinion and partly on the use of the media at a regional level, the first step is to establish the organization's cause as being worthy of support at all.

Not all organizations are equally successful in this regard.<sup>5</sup> The Palestinian organizations have in general been successful insofar as they were able to reinforce the narrative of Israel as a common adversary for the Arab world and to keep the Palestinian issue on the Arab agenda for several decades. For this, the PLO deserves a great deal of the credit. The early PLO leadership, including not only Arafat and his lieutenants but also some of the factional leaders like George Habash of the PFLP, did a great deal to keep the Palestinian issue in the public eye and to make sure it remained a major issue in intra-Arab politics. Shafiq al Hout expressed this as follows:

In the catastrophe of 1948, all our national institutions and political institutions were really destroyed. We lost our ‘POB’—our ‘post office box’—we have no address. It took us 16 years, until May of 1964, when we managed to market the necessity of establishing a political body that represents the Palestinians as such, to be their political reference, to be their POB.<sup>6</sup>

Later in the 1960s and 1970s, even while preserving the status of the Palestinian cause as a matter of pan-Arab concern, the PLO was able to simultaneously claim final authority over that cause as belonging to Palestinians, rather than to the Arab leadership. This was a difficult political balancing act, to say the least. Hamas has subsequently benefited from the work done by the PLO to establish the salience of the Palestinian cause, although it has added a new layer by introducing a political-Islamic component to the narrative.

There is an interesting contrast to be drawn here between the experiences of the Palestinian organizations and the Shi’ites. At a regional level, the Palestinians have been far more successful in promoting their narrative and gaining broad sympathy for their communal grievances than have the Shi’ites. Although Musa Sadr did a great deal of work to publicize the plight of Lebanon’s Shi’ites and to raise money for the Movement of the Dispossessed, after his disappearance Amal was less able to do so (and appeared far less interested in trying to). Even Iran was not particularly responsive to Amal’s political project, given how little it resonated with its own. (The exception, of course, was Syria, and Asad’s biographer, Patrick Seale, attributes this at least in part to Asad’s genuine sympathy for the Shi’ites as underdogs in Lebanese politics.)<sup>7</sup>

Hizbullah was more successful in that its political message at least resonated strongly with Iran’s, which facilitated a strong relationship between the two. But through the 1990s, neither organization was able to promote its message across the wider Middle East. While Hizbullah’s influence in the Shi’ite Arab world may be increasing (particularly if Iranian-backed Iraqi Shi’ite militias become further involved in the war in Syria alongside Hizbullah), it seems unlikely that Hizbullah’s wider political narrative will find much traction in the Sunni Middle East.

What these organizations have in common is that all four position themselves as “resistance” organizations, a characterization that all four have made the basis for their claims to political and ideological legitimacy at both the local and regional levels. Moreover, all four have argued that they rep-

resent *the* legitimate resistance in a given area at a given time. The rivalries between Amal and the PLO, and later between Amal and Hizbullah, were all at least partially about which of them had the “right” to engage in armed resistance in south Lebanon. The rivalry between Hamas and Fatah has had similar overtones, particularly the criticism leveled against Fatah by Hamas for agreeing to participate in the Oslo negotiations. Part of the reason these debates are so significant for the organizations involved is because of the implications they carry for their legitimacy at a regional level.

On the other hand, there are also differences in their regional approaches. The most effective foreign policy choices are those which result in the greatest range of resources with the least reduction in the group’s autonomy, and the least distraction from its core mission. From this perspective, the PLO’s foreign policy was by and large effective, although its relations with some governments in the region were strained, with dire consequences at times. Hamas’ policy, based largely on proxy service, has resulted in less durable relationships. The same is true for Amal, which sacrificed its autonomy for Syrian sponsorship. Hizbullah’s early policy, particularly toward Syria, was extremely ineffective, but the reforms it later undertook yielded much better results.

### DOMESTIC POLICY

As with foreign policy, the domestic policy choices made by the organizations discussed in this book had a range of consequences, intended and otherwise. The least surprising should probably be those associated with coercion. The short-term problems with coercion are the most obvious—eventually, supplies taken by theft run out, and due to either a lack of new supplies to steal or a lack of civilians to steal them from, such resources may not be renewable. In the longer term, coercion can have a ripple effect, leading to further negative outcomes. For one thing, if the position of the military with regard to the nonstate actor is not yet certain at the outset of the conflict—if for instance, the militant group has hopes of provoking military defection or reducing morale—attacks on civilians can harden the positions of individual soldiers and officers against the militia. This was what happened to the PLO in Jordan, when the behavior of the fedayeen alienated Jordanian Jordanians (and even Palestinian Jordanians) in the army and government who might otherwise have been sympathetic to their cause. Extremist behavior can also alienate other militant groups, even those purporting to represent the same con-

stituency. This was Hizbullah's experience in the 1980s in Lebanon, when its attacks on foreign and Lebanese civilian targets embarrassed the Syrians and alienated Amal, leading to intra-Shi'ite clashes that further tarnished both movements' reputations. In other words, not only is coercion, by its very nature, a poor way of acquiring non-material resources like legitimacy and political influence, it can actively *prevent* the militant group from being able to acquire them, even from other domestic sources, because of its impact on local attitudes.

The provision of services to civilians can work either well or poorly for the militant groups providing them. In the least successful version of this strategy, they function as a form of patronage, producing a dynamic that echoes the predictions made by much of the work on rentier economics. The distribution of wealth, political influence, and other resources from the top down may secure civilian backing for the organization, but such support may not be durable in the long term, and stands to distort the movement's relationship with its constituents. After Amal's approach to the Shi'ite community shifted from the ideological project championed by Musa Sadr to a patronage model through which state resources were distributed to Amal supporters, support for the organization became far less robust, and it became less an enthusiastically supported movement than the only available option for secularists who were uncomfortable with Hizbullah's blend of religion and politics. Those not put off by Hizbullah's ideology readily defected. Similarly, some of the (former) PLO members interviewed spoke with regret about the way the wealth the organization acquired in the 1970s distorted its relationship with the Palestinian public. This certainly had an effect on the degree of commitment it was able to expect from its fighters, although there was some variation in this regard across the various factions.

And of course, if it functions solely as a form of patronage, service provision can provide only limited access to assets like money and weapons because of the nature of the socio-economic sector most likely to need free social services in the first place; those who need a free kindergarten for their child are probably in no position to donate a tank. For service provision to be truly beneficial, it must have a much broader effect on public opinion, and reach beyond those who are actually accepting charitable donations or free medical help.

This means that social services are most successful in securing support for an organization when they function less as patronage than as a way of demonstrating the group's competence to govern. Nonstate actors who

are trying to become state or proto-state actors—that is, who are trying to take over the government of a given territory—face an information problem with regard to the public. While they can, and often do, claim that they would do a better job of governing than the incumbent government, civilians have no basis on which to evaluate this claim if all of the organization’s activity has been solely military. The skillset necessary to win battles is not the same as the skillset necessary to govern well. This is where service provision can prove useful as a form of marketing, or, more accurately, as the basis for a marketing campaign. It can serve as evidence of the organization’s ability to do more than just fight. A well-run social service network can serve as a sort of scale-model of the kind of state the group promises to build if given the chance.

Hamas’ experience is particularly illustrative of this dynamic.<sup>8</sup> The percentage of Palestinians using Hamas’ social services prior to the 2006 election was relatively small, by some estimates lower than 10 %. If the dynamic was one of a straight exchange of support for votes, this would have resulted in a far smaller number of votes for Hamas. But as discussed in Chap. 5, polling indicates that honesty and competence are of great importance to Palestinian voters, both of which the effective administration of its charitable organizations have helped Hamas to demonstrate. A person does not have to use social services to admire a particular group for providing them, or for their quality and the competence with which they are administered. In reality, Hamas’ provision of social services has been beneficial not because those who use them therefore vote for Hamas, although they may well do so, but because it also helped Hamas present itself as being a more competent and less corrupt party than its political rivals even among those who *do not* use Hamas’ services.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, Hizbullah has benefited from the perception that it does a better job of caring for the Shi’ite community than the Lebanese state ever has, as well as from the widespread perception that its institutions, some of which are used by those outside the Shi’ite community, are competently managed. And Sadr’s Movement of the Dispossessed used access to services as a means of promoting a particular conception of citizenship, therefore placing itself in the role of “advocate in chief” for the Shi’ite community. In other words, when social services are most effective it is not because they are being traded for votes, which provides a much more limited level of support, but because they are functioning as a kind of marketing: they allow the movement to showcase its ability to perform the functions of the state, and therefore its qualification to govern.

This brings us to the third strategic approach that militant groups may take at the local level: marketing. For many nonstate actors, including the organizations included here, this can include ethno-communal and ideological narratives. One of the substantial contributions of the scholarship on ethnic conflict and nationalism is that political, ethnic, and national identities can be both independent and dependent variables.<sup>10</sup> They are produced by the machinations and aspirations of political elites, broad-based social movements, and the behavior of nonstate military actors. Nonstate actors do not just use political identity, they help to create it. Successful marketing, therefore, allows these actors to shape the boundaries around communities and to determine which identity facets (religion or language, geography or tribe) will prove most salient politically.

Of course, not all marketing will be successful. As discussed in Chap. 1, successful marketing is about creating a set of publicly accepted norms, according to which (1) the organization's adversary is viewed as an adversary by the public as well, (2) its narrative of the conflict between them is fundamentally correct, and (3) the organization is accepted as the right and legitimate party to confront the adversary to address the community's grievances. A movement which convinces the public that its adversary is indeed a problem for the community at large but fails to convince that community that it is qualified to solve their problems, or that cannot convince its potential constituents that its ethnic or ideological narrative of the conflict is correct, has not succeeded in successfully marketing itself to the public.

The second of these tasks—the framing of a convincing narrative to explain the conflict—has often proved the most challenging for the organizations profiled in this book. Each had the choice to appeal to its potential constituents using a broader, regional identity (as Arabs), or a particular national identity (as Lebanese or Palestinians); as members of a disenfranchised socio-political class (as refugees or aggrieved indigenes); or as members of a transnational religious group (as Muslims, or Sunnis, or Shi'ites) which simultaneously constituted an intra-national cleavage (between Muslims and Christians, or Sunnis and Shi'ites). Faced with these options, each group made different choices as to which identity-narrative (religious, nationalist, regional, economic, nativist, or communal) it would emphasize to which constituency (or even whether it would bother trying to explain itself to anyone at all). Because of the nature of identity framing, which often takes the form of a rhetoric of “we-are-thus-and-always-have-been,” the identities assumed and narratives espoused by each of these groups may seem in retrospect to be inherent and primordial. In reality, though, each movement had a range of options from which to choose.

Early on, the PLO needed to address the regional debate over whether the Palestine issue should be framed as a Palestinian nationalist struggle, a pan-Arab problem, a reflection of the broader anti-colonial struggle, or as a religious struggle animated by an Islamic narrative. The PLO ultimately embraced the Palestinian nationalist narrative championed by Fatah. While this was very effective in some ways, in Lebanon, despite broad sympathy for the Palestinian cause and the suffering of the Palestinian people, they were left with a smaller constituency than they needed and faced opposition from those who opposed both pan-Arab nationalism *and* the presence of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Even in Jordan, while the exclusionary practices of the Jordanian state rendered Palestinian-ness the most salient identity trait for many people, it was not sufficient to trigger mass defections in the army and government during Black September.

For Hamas, the primacy of an independent Palestinian nationalism over a pan-Islamic or pan-Arab identity has also proved difficult to negotiate. If the alternative to Fatah's Palestinian nationalism in the 1970s was a pan-Arab nationalism that viewed the Palestinian struggle as an Arab issue, the dominant alternative in the last two decades has been a pan-Islamic nationalism that sees the Palestinian national struggle in a religious context. For some, this can be interpreted to mean that the liberation of Palestine is part of a wider struggle to establish a new Islamic order (although this is not necessarily a goal of all Islamic movements, or necessarily of Hamas itself). However, as the polling discussed in Chap. 5 indicates, most Palestinians still view the Palestinian struggle as a national issue, and not a problem to be subsumed within either a pan-Arab or pan-Islamic narrative. The Hamas politicians interviewed were clearly aware of this conundrum; when asked whether they saw themselves as an Islamic or Palestinian movement first, most refused to prioritize one over the other. Balancing these narratives remains a challenge.

Similarly, Amal's early marketing project was largely a matter of challenging the sorts of identities used for political mobilization in the Shi'ite community in Lebanon. Whereas in the past most Shi'ites had mobilized as Muslims or leftists or not at all, Musa Sadr very effectively established Shi'ite communal identity as a separate basis for political claims-making on the state. However, in the Lebanese political arena of the 1960s, religious affiliation was largely a form of communal identity and basis for communal mobilization, rather than as a form of political ideology in its own right. Shi'ite theology was not advocated as a basis for government. Over time, Amal was less successful at updating its message in order to compete with

Hizbullah. Its decline was compounded by its growing reputation for corruption, which did not mesh well with Sadr's own early message.

All of this left an ideological niche readily available for Hizbullah in the 1980s. Of the four movements examined in this book, Hizbullah has proved the most adept at reinventing itself in response to changing circumstances. During the civil war, Hizbullah saw itself as a primarily Shi'ite, rather than Lebanese, movement (a charge still leveled by its opponents), and advocated a religious, rather than communal, understanding of Shi'ism. To a certain extent it still does so, at least within the Shi'ite community. But in the postwar period, when the movement clearly realized that it needed to find another way of framing itself if it wanted to be successful in the new Lebanese political context, Hizbullah's shift to a narrative focused on resistance in the defense of Lebanon itself allowed it to expand its influence. Hizbullah's experience demonstrates that it is indeed possible for a militant group to reorient itself in response to a shifting political landscape, or even simply because its old approach wasn't working very well.

In sum, while marketing can be a powerful tool for nonstate actors to use in improving their own position with regard to the civilian population, it can also have powerful and perhaps unforeseen effects on the domestic political landscape. This is far less true of coercion or even the provision of social services. The PLO's reliance on coercion and its inability to frame its political project in a way that resonated broadly ultimately weakened its domestic position in Lebanon. Hamas' reliance on service provision to make up for the limits of its own marketing campaign was somewhat more effective, but only because it chose the more effective version of service provision rather than relying solely on patronage. Amal, in contrast, began with a very effective marketing strategy, which eventually collapsed into patronage in the 1980s. Hizbullah, as with its foreign policy, began with a very coercive approach but shifted to a very effective version of marketing and service provision after the war. As with their foreign policy, these varied domestic policies yielded very different outcomes for each movement.

### OVERLAP, INTERACTION, AND PATH-DEPENDENCE

There is, of course, a degree of overlap between the strategies discussed above with regard to both foreign and domestic policy. A militant group may use coercion of one group of civilians (Jordanian army officers' families, or Palestinian refugees) as a form of marketing to another (Palestinian

refugees or Shi'ites in south Lebanon) or even as a basis for recruitment (an opportunity to participate in revenge attacks). This was certainly the case for many of the right-wing Maronite militias in Lebanon, who employed a virulently nativist/anti-Palestinian rhetoric and extraordinary violence against Palestinian civilians as a form of marketing to potential recruits and a means of demonstrating their commitment to their cause. Similarly, coercion of one group of civilians (or even of a host state, if that coercion is sufficiently destabilizing,) can be a form of proxy service for a foreign sponsor. When service provision functions as a means of promoting the organization's overall competence beyond those using services themselves, there is some overlap with marketing, while if there is an implicit threat that services can be withdrawn as punishment for non-compliance, it can veer into coercion.

The interaction between strategies also matters. For one thing, the use of one strategy tends to have an impact on the effectiveness of the others. The use of service provision is likely to produce more lasting loyalty in the civilian context if it is accompanied by publicity explaining *why* the group is providing services, and how the group character implied by those services makes it a better choice than a rival group. On the other hand, a group which behaves coercively toward its constituency while attempting to convince them that it has their best interests at heart may find that its message falls on deaf ears. Likewise, while the provision of services to repair the harm done by the militia's own activities (such as Hizbullah's policy of rebuilding homes damaged by the IDF during the July War) may improve its reputation, damage control is not quite the same as the provision of services for their own sake, although it can insulate the movement from some of the consequences of its actions.

There is also an interaction effect between state support, civilian support, and survival. State support and civilian support produce resources that make survival more likely, but these two factors also have some impact on each other. State funding makes it easier to create social service networks to woo civilian support while popularity among civilians makes a militia more appealing as a potential proxy. Conversely, a militant group that had to use coercion against the state to gain access to a foreign base may find that it has to continue to use coercion against local civilians in order to keep it, unless those civilians are themselves antagonistic to the government.

There is also a feedback effect between the group's ability to survive direct confrontation with a stronger military and its ability to attract

foreign sponsorship and popular support. A group which is seen as “standing up” to a stronger power can use this to appeal to civilians, while the same strong military record can also make an organization much more attractive as a potential proxy. These relationships can also have unintended consequences; foreign sponsors may push for policy choices that can be harmful to the militant group’s own objectives in the long term, and militant groups concerned with their local reputation may end up either pursuing fights they can’t win or curtailing their military activities to avoid harming civilians, shaping its ability (or even will) to resist.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, there is also a degree of path-dependence between the use of coercion and the ability to use other strategies later on. While using coercion early on does not make it impossible to shift to a more successful strategy later, it does make it more difficult. The PLO’s coercive behavior in south Lebanon was enough to outweigh the earlier positive relationship it had had with the local Shi’ite community, and Hamas’ more radical behavior in its early years, particularly with regard to its rivals during the intifada, laid the groundwork for its bitter rivalry with Fatah and other PLO factions later on. Even the behavior of other organizations can have an undesired effect; Jordan’s experience during Black September no doubt informed the government’s squeamishness about hosting Hamas in the 1990s. This is not to suggest that a militant movement cannot change its strategy, or even its character, it is merely to suggest that its behavior early on can have an effect on how easy or difficult it is to use a different strategy later.

### AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION: THE NATURE OF THE ADVERSARY

In seeking to explain variation among groups in the same conflict ecosystem, this book has not thus far engaged directly with what is perhaps the most obvious rival explanation: might it not be the case that the source of variation lies not in the militant groups themselves, but in their state adversary? That is, in the case of the conflict ecosystem under examination here, might it be possible that the greatest source of variation lies not among the militant groups themselves but rather on the Israeli side of the equation?

There are good reasons to take this idea seriously. Militaries, like nonstate actors, learn over time and may make better, or at least better informed, policy as a result. Even within the same military there can be differences in intent between different campaigns, which can obviously have an impact on the result. It could be argued, for instance, that the IDF’s intent in 2006

vis-à-vis Hizbullah was more comparable to its intent in 1978 vis-à-vis the PLO than its intent in 1982. If the IDF was more serious about eliminating the PLO in 1982 than it was about eliminating Hizbullah in 2006, that could explain the greater success of Operation Peace for Galilee in comparison with the July War. After all, the escalation in 2006 was far more gradual and less organized than was the ramping up of troop commitments in 1982. Perhaps this, rather than variation between the militant groups themselves, explains the difference between them.

While I accept that the intent of the adversary varies among different conflicts and that this variation has an impact on the outcome of the conflict, there are nevertheless two factors that suggest that these episodes should be treated as comparable, even taking into account the variation on the Israeli side. The first concerns the internal dynamics of the Israeli political and military leadership, and the second the distinction between resistance and recovery.

Israel's counterinsurgent operations are generally presented by the Israeli government and military as necessary responses to specific episodes described as intentional provocations on the part of its adversaries. In the case of the July War, it was the capture of Regev and Goldwasser. In the case of Operation Cast Lead, of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. In the case of the 1982 invasion, the official proximate cause was the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London by the Abu Nidal group.

But the idea that any one provocation can explain the decision to go to war at a particular time in the context of a protracted conflict is misleading. Gilad Shalit had been held captive for nearly two and a half years prior to the onset of the 2009 Gaza War, and the PLO was actively at war with the Abu Nidal group at the time of the attempt on the Israeli ambassador, thereby making it extremely unlikely that the PLO itself ordered the operation. Moreover, there are many similar episodes that did *not* prompt military responses. In 2000, the capture of IDF soldiers by Hizbullah did not provoke a reaction by the Barak government that was comparable to the July War. In fact, data from the Global Terrorism Dataset demonstrate a period of relative quiet along the Israeli–Lebanese border in the two years leading up to the July War, and significantly greater military activity in the period from 2000 to 2003, for instance.<sup>12</sup>

The commonality across these cases is not the severity of a particular provocation but rather the state of civil military relations in Israel at the time, particularly the competition between different branches of the government. That civil military relations and interagency competition can

impact foreign policy making is well-trodden theoretical ground. In Israel, Yoram Peri warned after Operation Peace for Galilee that the closeness of the military and political spheres, in part because so many senior officers enter politics later in their careers, endangered both.<sup>13</sup> Tyler has similarly argued that the centrality of the military and military service to Israeli public life gives it power and authority which are not easily overridden by the civilian leadership.<sup>14</sup>

This dynamic was particularly exaggerated in both the early 1980s and early 2000s, when the civilian leadership in Israel was especially weak relative to the leadership of the military. The military leadership therefore sought to exploit what it saw as a narrow window of opportunity to address a long-standing security threat without the constraints ordinarily imposed by the civilian leadership. As discussed in Chap. 2, Operation Peace for Galilee represented a significant escalation from the action authorized by the civilian Cabinet. The Cabinet initially authorized the operation to push no further than 40 kilometers into Lebanon, parameters that were vastly exceeded by the advance to Beirut.<sup>15</sup> It remains unclear how aware Prime Minister Menachem Begin was of Sharon's intentions in this regard.<sup>16</sup> There is even some evidence he was unaware that IDF forces had entered East Beirut on June 13th.<sup>17</sup> The decision to cut east and confront the Syrian forces at the Beirut-Damascus highway also violated the parameters set by the Cabinet. Begin, based on Sharon's assurances and those of IDF Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, had assured both the Cabinet and the Americans that no confrontation with the Syrians would occur.<sup>18</sup>

While Begin can hardly be called a weak leader, he did prove unable (and perhaps also unwilling) to reign in Sharon, or the military. The remainder of the civilian government was left essentially without control over the campaign. Sharon's willingness to act in concert with Chief of Staff Eitan in contradiction to the preferences of the elected government ultimately allowed the army to evade civilian control entirely, leading to a far more extensive conflict than had originally been authorized.

Much like Operation Peace for Galilee, the July War occurred under a civilian leadership which at times appeared not fully in control of the military, resulting in an escalation that appeared to happen almost by accident, rather than according to a fully formed plan. A detailed plan for a confrontation with Hizbullah had been in existence since 2000. Called Operation Stone of Fire, it called for a commitment of four army divisions to a ground invasion of Lebanon. But this plan was not implemented.<sup>19</sup> In an echo of the confused planning that characterized Operation Peace for

Galilee, a different plan, called Operation Ice Breaker, favored by Chief of Staff Dan Halutz, was chosen instead.<sup>20</sup> Halutz was the first Chief of Staff of the IDF to come from the air force, and, perhaps not coincidentally, Ice Breaker called for a 72-hour bombardment of Lebanon from the air, rather than a land invasion.

Both the timing and the haphazard escalation of the war were also influenced by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's weakness and relative inexperience in comparison with the military leadership. Olmert became prime minister following Ariel Sharon's stroke in January of 2006. His party, Kadima enjoyed a high degree of support<sup>21</sup>, but Olmert himself did not have the same stature or relationship with the military that Sharon had enjoyed. He had never served as defense minister, and had served in the Golani brigade only briefly before an injury forced him to finish his military service in the press corps. (He later attended officer school at age 35). Moreover, he was weak politically, having been dogged by allegations of corruption since he was the mayor of Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> It is not unreasonable to therefore conclude that Olmert's weakness relative to the military allowed Halutz to pursue his own institutional interests in the prosecution of the war. This was, at any rate, the conclusion drawn by the Winograd Commission, which was tasked with investigating the conduct of the war in its aftermath.<sup>23</sup>

Halutz's proposed plan (which the Winograd Commission condemned as having deliberately misled the rest of the government by leaving out key information) was perhaps all the more attractive to Olmert because, having withdrawn from Lebanon only six years earlier, the Israeli public was not eager to see the IDF return there. It allowed Olmert to appear strong while avoiding the public risks of a ground invasion and high casualties at a time when he had virtually no political capital to expend. In short, as in 1982, the escalation in 2006 was less the result of a deliberate strategy and more a by-product of political interactions within the Israeli government.

In the context of the embarrassment caused by the July War, Operation Cast Lead can be seen as a kind of "do over" for the IDF. The Gaza campaign was far more carefully planned, and the military was very careful not to overstate its aims. Rather than claiming that Hamas would be eliminated (as it had with regard to Hizbullah in 2006), IDF spokespeople spoke of preventing rocket fire into southern Israel and reestablishing Israeli deterrence after the loss in 2006.<sup>24</sup> That being said, like Operation Peace for Galilee and the July War, Operation Cast Lead occurred at a time when the executive was weak relative to the military.

In September of 2008, Olmert was forced to resign on charges of corruption, leaving his recently elected deputy, foreign minister Tzipi Livni, as head of the Kadima party. Her refusal to form a coalition government with the Orthodox parties (due to a dispute over the national budget) automatically triggered new elections to be held in February of 2009. This left Olmert as head of the interim government, but with his authority severely undermined.<sup>25</sup> If his position had been weak with regard to the military in 2006, it was weaker still in 2008. In sum, in all three instances, the civilian leadership was weak relative to the leadership of the military. Particularly in 1982 and 2006, this led to a loss of control over the execution of the mission by the civilian leadership.

All of the above, of course, is more germane to the “resistance” component of survival than the “recovery” component: the strength and intention of the adversary is far more significant in determining the organization’s ability to resist in the short term than to recover politically afterward. The variation in the ability to recover exhibited by the PLO in south Lebanon in 1978 and 1982 versus Amal’s in the same period and Hizbullah’s after the July War speaks to the importance of foreign and domestic policy making before the onset of conflict in determining how (and whether) a movement will be able to bounce back afterward. Although the IDF withdrew in 1978, the PLO found it difficult to retake some of its positions due to local resentment. In contrast, in 2006, Hizbullah found that it was still welcome in the south, despite the damage the Israeli bombardment had caused.

This is not to suggest that the capacity and intent of the IDF was identical in each case, only that it was comparable enough that this cannot alone explain the variation in outcome experience by each organization. Rather, as I have argued here, it was each organization’s choice of resource acquisition strategy and the consequences of these choices that mattered. The PLO’s use of coercion alienated civilians in Lebanon and Jordan, leading to a loss of political leverage in both contexts, although it did have some ideological leverage at the regional level. Hizbullah was able to shift from a coercive strategy to one focused on marketing, and experienced greater success as a result. Amal shifted in the other direction, from an emphasis on marketing based on ideological legitimacy to a position based on local patronage and service as a military proxy for Syria. And Hamas has found that while its ideological marketing has limited leverage, its pragmatic appeal as a more honest alternative to Fatah locally and an opponent of Oslo regionally has helped attract support.

All of these tactics have had consequences for the sort of organization each eventually became. The PLO became a transnational movement, with strong patrons but few local roots in Palestine. Amal eventually became a local militia, with leverage only in Lebanon where it serves as a proxy for Syrian interest. Hizbullah was able to rescue itself from becoming a failed militia and ultimately become an extremely successful proto-state actor. Hamas managed something similar, though its weaker ties both regionally and locally have placed it in a far weaker position.

### THE SYRIAN–IRAQI CONFLICT ECOSYSTEM

While this book has focused on the organizations that inhabit one particular conflict ecosystem, the characteristics described in the preceding chapters are not unique to those movements. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to applying the framework developed in this book to the emerging conflict ecosystem comprising Iraq and Syria, and to ISIS as an actor in that system. My purpose here is not to offer a comprehensive analysis of either the Syrian or Iraqi civil wars or of ISIS itself—that is well beyond the bounds of this book—but rather to demonstrate how the schema laid out in this book might be usefully applied to other conflicts.

Since 2013, a new conflict ecosystem has begun to evolve in the Middle East. It has its roots in part in the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, which gave rise to a range of new nonstate actors and created a venue for a range of ideologies. A decade later, the outbreak of the Syrian civil war allowed several of those actors (and ideologies) to expand and gain control of new territory in both Syria and Iraq. Perhaps the most prominent example is the organization once known as Al Qaeda in Iraq, which has since rebranded itself as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS. In addition to ISIS, this conflict system includes a wide array of other militant groups as complex and diverse as those inhabiting the Arab–Israeli conflict ecosystem. In Iraq, these include the Kurdish KDP and PUK (also known as the Peshmerga); the Shi’ite Mahdi Army (loyal to Muqtada Sadr), the Iran-linked Badr Brigades, and other Shi’ite militias; and a range of Sunni insurgent groups including Islamists, Baathists, and ex-Baathists turned Islamists as well as any number of local defense militias and tribal groupings. In Syria, it has involved the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (the PYD), which is itself allied with the Turkish Kurdish Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK); the loose collection of rebels known as the Free Syrian Army, which at different times has included both secularists and a range of Islamist groups,

including the Al Qaeda affiliated Nusra Front; and various state-sponsored Syrian militias, alongside whom Hizbullah has been fighting.

The accompanying refugee crisis and increasingly transnational nature of the conflict have drawn neighboring states into the conflict as well. This includes Lebanon and Turkey, which have suffered related violence on their territory, and Iran, Jordan, the UAE, and other states which have entered the fray either by backing the Syrian regime and its allies (Iran), supporting the FSA (Turkey and at times several other states), or joining a US-sponsored coalition against ISIS (the Gulf states and Jordan). Russia has become involved as well.

Each of the nonstate actors involved has made foreign and domestic policy choices that have rendered them either more or less able to survive and thrive in their surroundings. The following discussion is focused on ISIS, but a similar analysis could be productively applied to any of these groups.

### *Two Civil Wars*

Much like the conflict ecosystem described in the rest of this book, the Iraqi-Syrian conflict ecosystem is comprised of multiple interlocking sub-conflicts. In this case, the outbreak of the Syrian civil war reinvigorated the conflict in Iraq, while the legacies of the Iraqi conflict substantially worsened the conflict in Syria. The war in Iraq led to over 130,000 casualties between 2003 and 2013,<sup>26</sup> and did enormous damage to the Iraqi infrastructure and economy. By 2007, UNHCR reported that there were 1.2 million Iraqi refugees in Syria and 750,000 in Jordan, with nearly 300,000 additional refugees spread across the Middle East.<sup>27</sup> Despite two successive elections and the withdrawal of American forces in 2011, the conflict continued to simmer with occasional spikes in violence.

Unlike the war in Iraq, the civil war in Syria began as a largely peaceful protest movement against the Asad regime, inspired by protests in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere in the Arab world. But almost immediately the regime responded with violence and within six months the International Committee of the Red Cross had declared it to be a civil war. As of this writing the war in Syria has cost over 350,000 lives, and generated over five million refugees and nearly eight million IDPs. Approximately half the population of Syria has been displaced. The vast majority of the refugees have gone to Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.<sup>28</sup>

While the two larger conflicts are separate in their origins, they have become linked both by their common ethno-communal cleavages (the divi-

sions between Sunnis and Shi'ites and between Arabs and Kurds) and via the actors involved in both.<sup>29</sup> One consequence of the chaos that followed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003 was the establishment of an Al Qaeda affiliate in Iraq, called Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers, led by the Jordanian born Abu Musab al Zarqawi. Also known as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), it renamed itself the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) in 2006 after merging with several smaller Iraqi factions. By the summer of 2011, ISI had dispatched cadres to Syria.<sup>30</sup> In spring 2013, reflecting the group's expanded territorial focus, ISI renamed itself the ISIS.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, ISIS' leadership is still primarily Iraqi, and includes a large number of formerly Baathist Iraqi army officers.<sup>32</sup> In Syria, ISIS conquered territory in the north in mid-2013, consolidating its control over Raqqa by January of 2014 and taking Dayr az Zour in May.<sup>33</sup> In Iraq, protests against the Maliki government's neglect and repression of Sunni communities, ongoing since December of 2012, escalated in Al Anbar province. In January of 2014, the Iraqi army's brutal response to the protests and increasing Sunni frustration with the government in Baghdad provided an opening for ISIS, which took advantage of the unrest to facilitate its conquest of Fallujah and parts of Ramadi.<sup>34</sup> Six months later, its forces took Mosul and swept across northern Iraq. They declared a new caliphate at the end of June, with the organization's leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, as its leader.<sup>35</sup>

ISIS's expansion across northern Syria and Iraq brought the group into contact with a number of minority groups, including Christians, Kurds, and Yazidis, drawing the Kurdish forces into the conflict. In August 2014, tens of thousands of Yazidis fled forced conversion and possible genocide at the hands of ISIS to Mount Sinjar. They were eventually rescued by a combined operation by the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga and the Syrian Kurdish militia the YPG, the militant arm of the Kurdish Democratic Union (or PYD), supported by American air strikes.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, when ISIS forces besieged the Kurdish town of Kobane, it was eventually liberated by a combination of YPG fighters (particularly its women's brigade, the YPJ) and coalition airstrikes.

The participation of these actors in both conflicts has reinforced the salience of the cleavages between Sunnis and Shi'ites, and between Arabs and Kurds. Both are as much products of the conflict as causes of it. Prior to the American invasion, Sunni-Shi'ite relations in Iraq were hardly as conflictual as they are today. Shi'ite soldiers fought loyally against Iran in the Iran-Iraq war, and there were high rates of Sunni-Shi'ite intermarriage (especially in Baghdad and other large cities). It took an enormous

amount of determined violence by both Sunni and Shi'ite militias to make those who had always thought of themselves as Iraqis into Shi'ites and Sunnis, but Iraq's various sectarian militias were persistent, and eventually successful. After years of violence, Baghdad's once integrated neighborhoods are far more homogenous.

Similarly, the Syrian conflict has taken on sectarian overtones. The Asad family's reliance on other members of the Alawite minority has always lent a sectarian tinge to Syrian politics. But these divisions, while central to a number of political crises in Syria's past (the military coup of 1966, the Hama massacre of 1982 following an uprising by the Muslim Brotherhood) were not central to the lives of most ordinary Syrians, particularly in urban areas. The inter-ethnic violence of the civil war has made these divisions far more significant, and led to a politicization of Syria's Kurds that was previously somewhat more muted.

### *ISIS in Transition*

Like any nonstate actor, ISIS has needed to acquire both material and political resources in order to pursue its goals. Early on, ISIS benefited in this regard from the availability of a good deal of "low hanging fruit." When its forces attacked Mosul, the Iraqi army abandoned their posts and their weapons almost immediately, providing ISIS with better and more plentiful arms than they likely would have been able to obtain even with significant state sponsorship. Their conquest of Ramadi in May 2015 was similarly made possible by the retreat of Iraqi forces who had trained for counterinsurgency operations, not long-term ground defense.<sup>37</sup> Just as importantly, in eastern Syria, ISIS was able to take control of a number of oil and natural gas fields which enabled them to begin funding themselves independently from the aid that had previously received from donors in the Gulf.<sup>38</sup> And in Mosul, Tikrit, and elsewhere, it was able to orchestrate large-scale prison breaks in 2013 and 2014, freeing many former insurgents and AQI members and providing a pool of experienced recruits.<sup>39</sup>

But it is less clear how successful ISIS will be in the long run. Whether the Islamic State continues to expand or merely tries to hold the territory it has already conquered, it will increasingly find itself in need of both material and political resources that will be ever more difficult to acquire.<sup>40</sup> This means that to be successful it will need to revisit its foreign and especially its domestic policy.

In the mid-2000s under Zarqawi's leadership, AQI relied almost exclusively on coercive violence to hold territory and prevent civilians from working with American and Iraqi government forces.<sup>41</sup> This did not, however, make the organization particularly popular, and if those who joined the American-organized Anbar Awakening in opposition to AQI were motivated largely by American patronage, AQI gave them few reasons to support the organization.

More recently, ISIS appears to have shifted to a mixed strategy. They have retained their reputation for exceptional brutality against those who oppose them, executing hundreds of members of Sunni tribes who opposed them in northern Iraq and governing the territory they hold with extraordinary authoritarianism.<sup>42</sup> Law and order in ISIS-controlled areas is a strict and violent affair, with stringent and restrictive codes of dress and behavior for women and, to a lesser degree, for men. Criminal penalties are severe—those caught stealing have been punished by having their hands cut off.<sup>43</sup>

But this also hints at the second part of ISIS's domestic approach: the organization also seems to have made some effort to provide governance and services. They have kept some hospitals running (although they have not built new ones, and there is a shortage of doctors). They also collect taxes and have been attempting to provide municipal services, from policing to garbage collection. If ISIS is able to generate genuine public support for its political project, it will certainly facilitate the movement's state-building ambitions, and perhaps demonstrate to a skeptical public that it does indeed represent a feasible or even preferable alternative to the Asad regime. (This is also the approach being taken, with notable success, by the PYD in the three Kurdish cantons it has carved out in northern Syria.) On the other hand, however, much of ISIS's service provision takes the far less effective form of patronage, particularly toward its fighters and political cadres, which generates resentment among the rest of the population. Should it continue in this vein, the "Islamic State" will likely come to reflect the neopatrimonialism that weakened not only many of the nonstate actors discussed in this book, but many of the Arab regimes as well. This, combined with the strictness of ISIS's governance and the difficult conditions imposed by the Iraqi government's attempts to retake these areas, appears to be producing mixed results at best. Reports have appeared of ISIS preventing residents of the cities it holds from fleeing, hardly an indicator of broad public support.<sup>44</sup>

ISIS's regional position is even more difficult. Its approach to nearly all states and nonstate actors—including the Iraqi government, the FSA, the Kurds, the Jordanians, and the Gulf states—has been overtly hostile. While it has mostly avoided direct confrontation with the Asad regime so far, this is a pragmatic and perhaps temporary choice for both and not a sign of an alliance. Similarly, while the Turkish government appears willing to tolerate ISIS's attacks on the Kurds, this does not translate to actual support for the organization. ISIS's view of its regional position is expressed particularly neatly by an image posted by an ISIS sympathizer on twitter (whose handle translates as “youth of the Islamic State”). It depicts a small army bearing the black flags of the Islamic State surrounded by a much larger force bearing the American, Israeli, Iranian, Kurdish, Turkish, Hizballahi, FSA, Syrian regime, and Al Qaeda flags. (The picture is, in fact, a digitally altered still from a scene in the movie *Kingdom of Heaven* portraying the battle between the Crusaders and Salah Al Din's forces at Kerak.) ISIS sees itself as besieged by enemies on all sides.<sup>45</sup> While the idea that Israel and Iran are secretly in league with one another is difficult to take seriously, ISIS is clearly isolated in the region. But in the long term, without at least some allies it will be difficult for the Islamic State to acquire the political, military, and financial resources it will need to sustain itself. The question remains, then, as to whether it will make the necessary policy changes in order to develop better local and regional alliances, or risk becoming a failed militia.

## CONCLUSION

While the idea that regional conflicts are interconnected is neither new nor particularly controversial, understanding these constellations of conflicts as units of analysis is analytically useful. Comparing entire ecosystems with one another in terms of their complexity, the balance of state to nonstate forces, and the balance of strength between the various actors within them stands to provide new insight into conflict dynamics. This may perhaps be an interesting avenue for future research, particularly with regard to the stability of the conflict ecosystem, absent outside influence. (By “stability” in this context I mean resistance to either resolution or escalation.) Are ecosystems with one much stronger state actor and great variety of much weaker nonstate actors more or less stable than those with a smaller number of stronger nonstate actors and a range of weaker state governments? Are systems characterized by one overarching ethnic

or ideological cleavage more or less stable than those with two or three competing cleavages? And, are there strategies for conflict resolution that might be or less effective given the characteristics of a given ecosystem?

Second, this approach can help us understand the outcomes experienced by the various militant groups in each system. By looking at the relative effectiveness of their foreign and domestic policies, we can understand how a given organization evolves into a powerful proto-state actor, a transnational militant network, a local militia, or withers away over time. In addition, this approach can help us make predictions about the likely trajectories of nonstate military actors based on their current policy choices. While the long-term prospects for ISIS are at present hazy at best, evaluating its current foreign and domestic policy choices can perhaps shed at least a little light on the sort of organization it may become. A local power with strong roots but limited regional reach? A transnational actor with minimal local support? A powerful proto-state actor? Or, as many hope, a failed militia? Militant organizations can and do learn from their mistakes and change over time. But those that do not learn or evolve, instead choosing to stick with a losing strategy, are unlikely to thrive in the long term.

## NOTES

1. Salehyan and Gleditsch, "Refugees and the Spread of Civil War."
2. Meier, "The Palestinian Fidâi as an Icon of Transnational Struggle."
3. Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*; Roy, *Hamas and Civil Society in Gaza: Engaging the Islamist Social Sector*.
4. This dynamic can also go the other way, as when the conflict between Amal and Hizbullah put a strain on the relationship between Syria and Iran in 1988 and 1989.
5. Clifford Bob has argued, quite convincingly, that minority groups with apparently similar grievances against the same state may not be equally adept at promoting their respective causes abroad. He compares the Zapatistas of Mexico's Chiapas region and the Ogoni of the Niger delta with other less well known causes and organizations in Mexico and Nigeria respectively. Bob, *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media and International Activism*.
6. Interview, Shafiq al Hout.
7. Seale, *Asad: The Struggle for the Middle East*, 351.
8. The Palestinian factions admittedly have an easier time of it in this regard than most rebel groups because they are campaigning against a state (Israel) which is not interested in competing for the loyalty of the

- Palestinian public and would in any case have little chance of doing so. However, they still have to prove that they can do a better job than their Palestinian rivals or the Arab host states.
9. Szekely, "Doing Well by Doing Good."
  10. With regard to the former, see Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia"; Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*; Posner, *Institutions and Ethnic Politics in Africa*; Saideman and Ayres, *For Kin or Country: Xenophobia, Nationalism, and War.*, and the latter Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.
  11. I do not see any of this as an endogeneity problem, but simply as evidence that these processes reinforce each other over time.
  12. START, "Global Terrorism Database."
  13. Peri, *Between Battles and Ballots*.
  14. Tyler, *Fortress Israel: The inside Story of the Military Elite Who Run the Country—and Why They Can't Make Peace*.
  15. Hefez and Bloom, *Ariel Sharon*, 217–18.
  16. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 1984, 154–55; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State : The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993*.
  17. Schiff and Yaari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 1984, 193–94.
  18. Ibid., 103–4; Hefez and Bloom, *Ariel Sharon*, 218.
  19. Wilson, "Israeli War Plan Had No Exit Strategy."
  20. Chadwick, "The 2006 Lebanon War: A Short History"; Wilson, "Israeli War Plan Had No Exit Strategy."
  21. CNN, "Israeli Media: Kadima Wins at Polls."
  22. Tyler, *Fortress Israel: The inside Story of the Military Elite Who Run the Country -- and Why They Can't Make Peace*.
  23. Winograd Commission, "Official English Summary of the Winograd Panel's Interim Report," 10a.
  24. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Behind the Headlines."
  25. Pedahzur, *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right*, 196–97.
  26. "Iraq Body Count."
  27. UNHCR, "Statistics on Displaced Iraqis around the World."
  28. UNHCR, "UNHCR—Syrian Arab Republic."
  29. There are two additional political cleavages in the Syrian context: the division between those seeking a democratic system and those seeking either the current or a new authoritarian system, and the division over women's rights and position in society.
  30. Amongst these was Abu Muhammad al Jawlani, who became the leader of Jabhat al Nusra, the official Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria, and ISIS's rival.

31. I am grateful to David Siddhartha Patel for clarifying these developments.
32. Patel, "ISIS in Iraq: What We Get Wrong and Why 2015 Is Not 2007 Redux."
33. It was also disavowed by Al Qaeda's central leadership and clashed with the Nusra Front, which fought against ISIS alongside other Syrian factions "Deir ez-Zour becomes jihadist battlefield—Al-Monitor"; Hubbard, "Al Qaeda Breaks With Jihadist Group in Syria Involved in Rebel Infighting."
34. Bergen, "Al Qaeda Controls More Territory than Ever in Middle East."
35. Al Jazeera, "Sunni Rebels Declare New 'Islamic Caliphate.'"
36. Hubbard and Ahmed, "Plight of Iraqi Minorities Worsens with Forced Conversions and Kidnappings."
37. I am again grateful to David Siddhartha Patel for his insight here.
38. Ali, "Showdown Begins between Syrian Army, Islamic State."
39. Peritz, "The Great Iraqi Jail Break."
40. I have made this point elsewhere as well. Szekely, "The Cracks in Islamic State's Business Plan Are Starting to Show."
41. Montgomery and McWilliams, *Al Anbar Awakening, Volume II: Iraqi Perspectives From Insurgency to Counterinsurgency in Iraq 2004-2009*.
42. Moaveni, "ISIS Women and Enforcers in Syria Recount Collaboration, Anguish and Escape"; Patel, "ISIS in Iraq: What We Get Wrong and Why 2015 Is Not 2007 Redux."
43. Anonymous and Hubbard, "Life in a Jihadist Capital: Order with a Darker Side."
44. HRW, "Iraq"; Bradley and Kesling, "Islamic State Prevents Civilians From Fleeing Iraqi City of Ramadi."
45. Twitter user @apobaker999. Available at <https://twitter.com/apobaker999/status/500372862864080899>. This was shared with me by Christopher Anzalone.

## Conclusion

Near the village of Iqlim al Tufah in south Lebanon, in the very spot where Amal scored its important (if temporary) victory over Hizbullah in 1989, high up in the hills where Hizbullah fighters hid in hand-dug tunnels during their long fight against the IDF and SLA in the 1990s, stands the Mleeta complex. Billed by Hizbullah as a “resistance tourism landmark” bearing the slogan “where the heavens meet the earth,” it is a cross between a park, a museum, a shrine, a war memorial, and Disney’s Epcot Center. When entering the park, the first thing that visitors encounter is what appears to be a massive art installation, composed in part of captured Israeli military hardware, with a phrase in Hebrew that translates roughly as “the quagmire of Lebanon” in the center (Image 7.1).

The complex includes an exhibit of captured IDF weapons and materiel and informational posters describing the command structure and capacity of the Israeli military, with multicolored lighting and background music punctuated by recordings of shelling and gunfire. It is also possible to visit the tunnels themselves and learn about the role they played in the resistance. And, there is a small theater showing a documentary on “the Resistance.” The narrative presented therein is extremely instructive. Over newsreel footage, the film’s narrator tells the viewer that “In 1948, Jerusalem becomes the first Arab capital to fall. In 1978, the Zionists invaded Lebanon. In 1982, Beirut becomes the second capital to fall.” Only then does the story of resistance begin, with Hizbullah. Notably,



**Image 7.1** “The Abyss,” Mleeta, Iqlim al Tufah, Lebanon. Photo by author, 2012

there is no mention of the PLO or indeed of Palestinian resistance at all. Resistance, in this narrative, means only Hizbullah, and took (or takes) place only in Lebanon.

This narrative is echoed, with a foreign policy twist, at a second recently constructed tourist destination in south Lebanon: the Iran Gardens in the village of Maroun al Ras. Overlooking the border between Israel and Lebanon, this small park features a café, a resistance-themed paintball range, a children’s playground, and a small reproduction of the Dome of the Rock with the insignia that sits in the center of the Iranian flag embedded in its side and an Iranian flag flying above. In fact, despite the fact that the park has a distinct “liberation of Palestine” theme to it, I saw only a single Palestinian flag, in contrast with the large number of Lebanese and Iranian flags, as well as those of Amal and Hizbullah. The message appeared to be more about the role of Iran and its Lebanese clients in the theoretical liberation of Palestine than about the reality of Palestine itself (Image 7.2).



Image 7.2 Iran Gardens, Maroun al Ras, Lebanon. Photo by Author, 2012

Maintaining control of this narrative has been a key to Hizbullah's success. Losing control of it proved detrimental to the PLO and may prove to be Hizbullah's undoing as its involvement in the ongoing civil war in Syria further complicates its position in Lebanon. Indeed, one way of understanding the internecine conflict between Hamas and Fatah that has divided Palestine since 2006 is as a contest over whether resistance or self-governance should be the central focus of Palestinian politics.

The power of legitimacy and the necessity of actively maintaining that legitimacy are something that Hizbullah has always appeared to understand almost instinctively. But contrary to the narrative presented at Mleeta, it owes a great deal in this regard to the ground laid by Musa Sadr in Amal's early years and to the legacy of the PLO in establishing "resistance" against Israel as a central legitimizing tenet in Arab politics. Between 1992 and 2006, it was highly successful in constructing that legitimacy through its domestic policy, and even at a regional level. The PLO, in contrast, despite the enormous resonance of the Palestinian cause in Arab politics (which it itself helped to develop and maintain) was less successful in doing so, based largely on its coercive behavior toward local governments and populations in the countries that hosted it, if not among Palestinians themselves. Hamas has tried to adapt Hizbullah's approach to the Palestinian context, but with rather different results given that Hamas has found itself in the position of governing Gaza, a development that has both challenged its capacity administratively and led to a rise in coercive behavior toward the public.

This book began with a rather simple premise: that the ways in which nonstate actors acquire resources may be at least as important as the resources themselves in determining how able they are to resist attempts to wipe them out by far more powerful nonstate adversaries and to recover politically from those confrontations in the longer term. In the conflict ecosystem composed of Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, the narrative of the "resistance" has been one of the primary ways in which organizations have sought to market and legitimize themselves to potential sponsor states, local governments, host populations, and potential constituents and recruits. It has been taken up as a banner in turn by the Palestinian organizations, first in Jordan and then in Lebanon, where it was contested, altered, and then adopted by Amal, which advocated a Shi'ite version of resistance that both challenged and borrowed from the Palestinian organizations' narrative. This in turn gave rise to the narrative proposed by Hizbullah, which has helped to shape the Islamic resistance

narrative used by Hamas. It continues to prove resonant, although it is notable that organizations like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State have not, for the most part, adopted this narrative in Syria and Iraq.

While the purpose of this analysis has not been to assess any of these groups' prospects for permanent "victory," the passage of time has served to clarify the extent of Hamas and Hizbullah's abilities to recover from their encounters with the IDF, Amal's political durability (and lessened influence), and provided a more hopeful postscript in the case of the PLO.

## THE RECENT PAST

### *The PLO*

The PLO has undergone a dramatic transformation since the events described in Chap. 2, demonstrating again that reinvention is indeed possible, if difficult. In some ways, while it lost a succession of battles in the 1980s, in the 1990s it came close to "winning the war," or at least winning the peace.<sup>1</sup> The outbreak of the intifada in 1987 and Jordan's "disengagement" from the West Bank in 1988 paved the way first for the Madrid negotiations in 1991 and then the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993. Despite its exile in Tunisia, the PLO retained its status as "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people," and it was in this capacity that Arafat signed the Oslo Agreement, beginning what was to have been a phased transition to an independent Palestinian state. The entity created by Oslo, the Palestinian Authority, (dominated by Fatah) became the primary institution both representing and governing Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

But in 2000, the Oslo process collapsed as the second intifada erupted out of Palestinian frustration with what was perceived as Israeli foot-dragging on the implementation of many components of the Oslo agreement. Disillusionment with Oslo translated into disillusionment with the PA in general and Arafat in particular, who were perceived as working too closely with Israel. At the same time, Fatah's political dominance and perceived corruption caused friction with Hamas. PLO cadres returning from exile in Tunisia in 1993 were perceived as privileged outsiders by many of those who had remained in the West Bank and especially Gaza, particularly members of Hamas.

Arafat's death in 2004 shattered the political entente that had been held together in part through the sheer force of his personal authority. Arafat died without seeing the establishment of a state of Palestine. But it

is due, at least in part, to the sometimes bloody persistence of the organization he led for 36 years that the Palestinian national cause has remained salient. For this, Fatah (and the PLO in general) deserves a good deal of the credit.

### *Amal*

The end of the Lebanese civil war in 1990 changed Amal's position in Lebanon. The effective Syrian hegemony that was created by the Taif Accords brought its client, Amal, a great deal of influence. This was particularly true of Nabih Berri himself. However, Amal's military power has much declined in recent years. Like all the other Lebanese militias, Amal was forced to disarm under the terms of the Taif agreement, though many of its former members joined the Lebanese military or security services. Moreover, Amal's loss of ideological focus in the 1980s, meant that by the 1990s the organization was losing market share to Hizbullah. While it retains the loyalty of secular Shi'ites, particularly upper-middle-class southerners and expatriates in West Africa, this is at least in part because there is little by way of an alternative to either Amal or Hizbullah. Today, the movement has a reputation for corruption, and for distributing state services as a form of patronage to loyal communities.

After the Syrian withdrawal in 2005 and the political realignment that followed it, Amal became an important component of the March 8th alliance and participated in the temporary takeover of West Beirut in 2008 (discussed below). It has not, however, become drawn into the Syrian war in the way that Hizbullah has, remaining instead focused on Lebanese politics. It retains a large share of the Shi'ite seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and Berri remains a powerful figure. Amal banners, posters of fallen Amal fighters, and images of Musa Sadr remain common across south Lebanon and the Dahiyeh, but the mantle of radical Shi'ite "resistance" has been largely assumed by Hizbullah.

### *Hizbullah*

Whatever hopes Israel might have had that the July War would weaken and contain Hizbullah domestically, in its aftermath, Hizbullah appeared politically stronger than ever, particularly among Shi'ites. But what Israel could not do to Hizbullah, Hizbullah nearly managed to

do to itself, by reverting to the use of coercion. In the fall of 2006, Nasrullah called for a power-sharing agreement which would give the March 8th bloc (and therefore Hizbullah) a veto in the Cabinet. In late November, in the face of stalled negotiations, he called for a massive sit-in in Beirut's Martyr's Square.<sup>2</sup> His call was answered by tens of thousands of March 8th supporters. In May of 2008, the situation came to a head when the Lebanese military attempted to shut down Hizbullah's telecommunications network and removed the Hizbullah-affiliated chief of security at Beirut Airport. In response, militiamen from the March 8th coalition parties occupied West Beirut. Clashes broke out in Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Aley, and the Bekaa, and scores were killed.<sup>3</sup> In the end, the government backed down, and Hizbullah retained its telecommunications network and its surveillance of the airport. On May 21, the two sides signed the Doha Accord, creating a power sharing agreement at the parliamentary and Cabinet levels and preparing the way for new presidential elections in 2009.<sup>4</sup> After the realignment of Jumblatt's PSP in 2010, Hizbullah found itself holding an unprecedented degree of influence in the government its founders had once rejected, but its coercive behavior served to reinforce the suspicions of its political adversaries.

Nevertheless, Hizbullah clearly understands that the goodwill of the Shi'ite community is one of its most important assets and has taken steps to retain it. In July of 2012, I attended a conference in Beirut celebrating the work done by Wa'ad, the NGO set up by Hizbullah to handle reconstruction after the July War. A number of themes were apparent in the presentations by the 20 or so panelists (who included members of the Lebanese Cabinet, the Iranian housing minister, and chair of the Syrian Architects' Union who spent most of his speech railing against the enemies of the Asad regime). One of the clearest was an emphasis on following community preferences regarding the scope, conduct, and content of the rebuilding effort, and a broader message that Hizbullah sees itself as responsible for the inhabitants of the Dahiyeh.

Still, with the onset of the civil war in Syria, Hizbullah's domestic position appears once more in jeopardy. Its support for the Asad regime has exacerbated divisions between the Sunni and Shi'ite community, and its participation in the conflict will likely have complicated consequences for the movement in the future.

### *Hamas*

In the aftermath of the second Gaza war, Hamas remains firmly entrenched in Gaza, although the situation in the territory is, if anything, worse. Reconstruction from the 2014 war has stalled and Palestinians continue to live with the aftereffects of the conflict. As of January 2016, reconstruction had yet to begin on the homes of 74 % of those displaced by the war.<sup>5</sup> There is continuing frustration with the blockade and the desperate economic situation in the territory, as well as with what some view as Hamas' increasing authoritarianism.<sup>6</sup> The combination of these factors could well lead to an increase in domestic discontent.

Disagreement over how to handle these issues appears to have touched off a serious dispute, though probably not an actual schism, between the more hardline branch of the movement, based in Gaza, and those abroad. In 2012, rumors abounded that Khaled Meshaal might step down as the movement's leader. Instead, Meshaal was reelected in 2013. But divisions remain as to how the movement ought to approach the issue of reconciliation with Fatah as well as the challenges posed by situation in Gaza.

Moreover, the regional realignment set off by the Arab Spring has posed a serious regional challenge. Hamas' break with the Syrian government, brought about by the latter's brutal repression of the Syrian uprising and particularly the shelling of the Yarmouk refugee camp, at first seemed to indicate the movement's shift toward what then seemed to be an emerging Muslim Brotherhood-dominated axis in the region. But the removal of the Morsi government by the Egyptian military in August of 2013 was a blow for Hamas, and has left the movement largely reliant on Qatar as an external ally. Hamas now faces a series of difficult choices regarding both its foreign and domestic policy.

### CONCLUSION

This book has argued that the ability of a militant group to survive the challenges of its particular environment is shaped as much by the choices it makes in obtaining resources as by those resources themselves. The processes by which organizations obtain resources shape those organizations in ways difficult to control and sometimes difficult to predict, and which ultimately determine how it can use the resources it has obtained.

A comparison of the strategies by which militant movements seek out resources yields some additional conclusions. First, the experiences of the movements described here suggest that proxy relationships can carry

unanticipated drawbacks for both the sponsor state and its client. Sponsors may sometimes find their client (or clients) surprisingly difficult to manage, while client militant groups face a range of dangers, from a loss of autonomy and potential mission creep to a real risk of internal schism.

Second, this book has demonstrated that militant groups face consequences very similar to those faced by states for the provision of either high-quality services or the use of public services as a form of patronage. The first stands to broaden a movement's base of support, while the second warps its relationship with constituents and weakens its position over time.

Third, the analysis presented here suggests that "home-field advantage," far from being a natural asset that some groups simply have and others never will, is rather a resource that organizations create for themselves, based on their ability to manipulate communal narratives to their own advantage. A militant group that is able to skillfully craft a narrative that links its own objectives with local understandings of identity and political interest will have an enormous advantage over a group that does not do so. Militant groups have a great deal of agency in this process; the question is usually whether they are able to recognize it.

Finally, the experiences of the militant groups profiled in this book suggest that coercion, bribery, and corruption are, in the long run, losing strategies of governance. Coercion, ultimately, will prove self-defeating as a strategy because it will alienate those who the movement needs most. Corruption and patronage are far less effective means of distributing services and resources to followers than the responsible administration of quality institutions, which can demonstrate the group's qualifications to a far broader audience.

While sitting in the back of a taxi in Amman in the winter of 2001, shortly after the onset of the second intifada, I found myself listening to my cab driver, a Palestinian Jordanian, speaking in surprisingly admiring terms of then-Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon. Sharon, he declared, was willing to go to absolutely any lengths to defend Israel, no matter the consequences. Of which Arab leader, he asked, could we say the same? They appeared to be far more interested in enriching themselves and hanging on to power. We should be so lucky, he told me, to have a leader like Sharon.

I have heard variations on this particular lament many times (though I believe that was the only occasion on which I've heard a Palestinian speak so admiringly about Ariel Sharon). The question of why Lebanese politics remains dominated by feudal lords and Palestinian politics by the leaders of armed factions is not a new one, nor is it strictly within the scope

of this book. (Israelis, it should be added, find much to bemoan in their own political system). But I think the desire for a political leadership that demonstrates a genuine commitment to its constituency goes a long way toward explaining the admiration directed toward Hassan Nasrullah, for instance. The communities I have described in this project—refugees in Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon, Shi'ites and Palestinians, and even the disaffected middle class and the dispirited post-1982 Arab left—do not respond to their political figures any differently than any other political constituency. A movement which takes the time to convince its constituents that it has their best interests at heart, that its political project is likely to be effective, and that it is competent to manage the affairs of the government is likely to receive more durable loyalty and all the benefits, material and otherwise, that this brings with it, than a group which either treats its constituency as a source of loot or tries to engage in a quid-pro-quo neo-patrimonial exchange. Militant movements that attack civilians and serve as mercenary proxies for outside forces will, ultimately, be weakened by these behaviors, and prove less successful both militarily and politically. Those that take their constituents seriously, that articulate a coherent political project are not only likely to command more popular support, they also stand a better chance of both political and military survival.

## NOTES

1. None of the armed PLO factions has ever been able to reestablish a presence in Jordan, although some have unarmed, relatively toothless political chapters there. The PLO did manage to reestablish itself in Beirut to a limited extent, which was in part what led to the War of the Camps in Beirut in 1985, though it never regained the unfettered access to the Israeli border area it had enjoyed until 1982.
2. "Speech by Hassan Nasrullah."
3. "Beirut Streets 'Calm' After Fighting."
4. Abdullah, Hussein., "Lebanese Rivals Set to Elect President After Historical Accord."
5. OCHA, "Humanitarian Bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory."
6. Milton-Edwards, " Hamas and the Arab Spring."

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