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Why States Rebel

Understanding State Sponsorship of Terrorism

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Abbreviations

ANO	Abu Nidal Organization
ASD	Alliance Security Dilemma
BSO	Black September Organization
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CINC	COW's National Material Capabilities
COW	Correlates of War
DC	Defence Companies (Syria)
DEM	<i>Deutsche Mark/</i> German Mark
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone between Syria and Israel
EAC	Expanded Uppsala Armed Conflict Database
EEA	Export Administration Act
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FPE	Foreign Policy Executive
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GAP	<i>Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi /</i> Southeastern Anatolia Project
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GID	General Intelligence Directorate (Syria)
GSD	General Security Directorate (Syria)
GTD	Global Terrorism Database
IAF	Israel Air Force
IDF	Israel Defence Force
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IRA	Irish Republican Army
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
KDPI	Kurdish Democratic Party Iran
KDPS	Kurdish Democratic Party Syria
MTCA	Military Training and Cooperation Agreement
MEK	<i>Mojahedin-e-Khalq/</i> People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran
MID	Militarized Interstate Dispute data
NC	National Command (Ba'th Party)
NCR	Neoclassical Realism
NPF	National Progressive Front (Syria)
NSF	National Salvation Front (Syria)
NWC	National Water Carrier (Israel)

PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command
PIJ	Palestinian Islamic Jihad
PKK	<i>Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan/</i> Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLA	Palestinian Liberation Army
PLF	Palestine Liberation Front (Syria)
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RC	Regional Command (Ba'th Party)
RG	Republican Guards (Syria)
SANA	Syrian Arab News Agency
SCP	Syrian Communist Party
SF	Special Forces (Syria)
SLA	South Lebanese Army
SSD	Sponsorship Security Dilemma
START	National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TGS	Turkish General Staff
USD	US Dollar

1 Introduction: Internationalizing intrastate conflict

*"The results brought out by the inquiry no longer permit the Imperial and Royal Government to maintain the attitude of patient tolerance which it has observed for years toward those agitations which center at Belgrade and are spread thence into the territories of the Monarchy. Instead, these results impose upon the Imperial and Royal Government the obligation to put an end to those intrigues, which constitute a standing menace to the peace of the Monarchy."*¹

Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum to Serbia, July 1914

*"We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."*²

George W. Bush, September 2001

1.1 Why states interfere – an empirical puzzle

Many have argued that external and especially military intervention is a major factor for the prolongation of intrastate wars. As observed in the prominent cases of the Second Congo War (1998-2003) or the Chadian Civil War (1965-1979), also the provision of assistance to groups violently challenging the domestic status quo reduces the conflict parties' willingness to settle the conflict, impedes societal reconciliation processes and further exacerbates tensions.³

The ultimatums heralding in World War I (1914-18) and the war in Afghanistan (2001-present) both refer to governments tolerating or even actively supporting political violence or terrorist activity against other countries, a policy that is in general described as *state sponsorship of terrorism*. There can never be full certainty as to what extent this factor initiated these wars or other crises. Nevertheless, it played a major role in justifying and legitimizing the internationalization of local conflicts and the resort to interstate violence.

As external backing is seen as a key factor preventing conflict resolution and infringes *ceteris paribus* the principle of state sovereignty, those who intervene in intrastate conflicts risk ending up in the international pillory. Likewise, if assistance does not reflect popular sentiments of solidarity with the insurgents in the supporting state, interference can also backfire domestically.

¹ Leopold Berchtold, "The Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, 22 July 1914," in *Modern European History, 1871-2000: A Documentary Reader*, ed. David Welch (London: Routledge, 1999).

² George W. Bush. "Address to the joint session of the 107th Congress." *Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush, 2001-2008* (2001): 65-73. Published electronically September 20. <http://1.usa.gov/1hLhIVD>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

³ Patrick M. Regan, "Third-party Interventions and the duration of intrastate conflicts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46, no. 1 (2002); David E. Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution: How external states can prolong civil wars," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010).

In this context, whether an intervening state receives praises as a liberating force—or curses as responsible for turmoil and chaos—lies in the eye of the beholder. While Libyan rebels enthusiastically waved Qatar’s flag as an act of expressing gratitude for Doha’s support of their successful uprising in 2011, demonstrators in several towns burned flags and even a doll representing Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani only two years later expressing outrage over what they understood as Qatar’s blatant interference in Libya’s internal affairs.⁴

This indeterminacy has been particularly prominent in the case of state sponsorship of terrorism. The term ‘terrorism’ is widely accepted to describe the illegal and illegitimate use of violence. It is also frequently used—independently of regime type or cultural affiliation—in order to denounce competitors to a legitimate status quo. Subsequently, no government or social entity would associate itself with either terrorism or its support.⁵ Yet, as an indisputable and specific definition of what constitutes an illegitimate act of violence, does not exist so far, differentiating between ‘struggle,’ ‘resistance,’ ‘repression,’ ‘asymmetric warfare,’ and ‘terrorism’ as well their state and non-state perpetrators is intrinsically tied to the dominant international and domestic discourse.

Reasonable allegations of counterproductive intervention in intrastate conflict marked the apex of Syria’s tarnished international reputation before the outbreak of the civil war in 2011 shifted the focus towards domestic politics. Only months before European statespersons denounced President Bashar al-Asad as a ‘butcher’ and a ‘wretched tyrant’ in the course of the Syrian government’s massive crackdown on internal dissent, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton referred to the president as a “reformer.”⁶ Until then, criticism centered mainly on Syria’s rejectionist stand against Israel and subsequent doubts concerning the peaceful aims of its alliance with Iran, assumed non-compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and an overall opposition to the assertive U.S. Middle East policy after 2001. With regard to the issue at hand, Syria experienced a massive international backlash in 2005 over its interference in Lebanon’s domestic affairs. In addition, Syria’s assistance to many non-state actors classified as being terrorist organizations, such as the Palestinian Hamas and Islamic Jihad, or the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), contributed to a ‘pariah’ reputation, reflected in Syria’s continuous designation

⁴ Cecily Hilleary. "Examining Qatar's Arab Spring Largesse." Voice of America (2013). Published electronically April 29. <http://bit.ly/18f9Y1P>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁵ Grant Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy," in *Inside terrorist organizations*, ed. David Rapoport (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 237. In 2013, for instance, Syria’s President Bashar al-Asad publicly denounced the Turkish government’s siding with the opposition as supporting terrorism. "President al-Assad stresses necessity of differentiating between Turkish people's stances in support of Syria's stability and stances of Erdogan's government which insists on supporting terrorism." SANA (2013). Published electronically March 7. <http://bit.ly/1fB7PDG>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁶ "Assad 'the butcher' must go, says France's Fabius." France 24 (2012). Published electronically August 16. <http://f24.my/IZx0nl>. Accessed January 21, 2014; "Cameron calls Assad 'a wretched tyrant' as he calls for tougher sanctions on Syria." Daily Mail (2012). Published electronically January 19. <http://dailym.ai/1dhmukT>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Hillary Clinton. "Interview With Bob Schieffer of CBS's Face the Nation." (2011). Published electronically March 27. <http://1.usa.gov/IPmMGF>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

as a state sponsor of terrorism on the part of the U.S. government since 1979 as well as its inclusion into the infamous 'axis of evil' in 2002.⁷

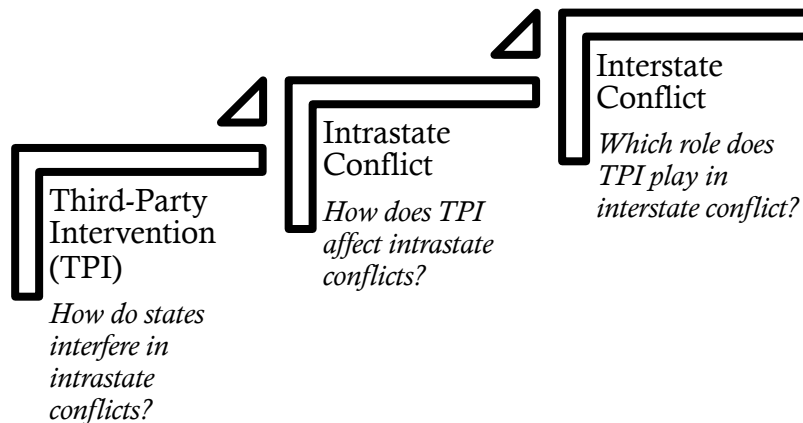


Figure 1: Third-Party Intervention in contemporary conflict research

As illustrated by **Figure 1**, this study brings together three major contemporary issues of international relations: intrastate conflict, third party intervention, and interstate relations. By examining state sponsorship of terrorism as a type of third-party intervention by means of forming alliances with non-state conflict parties, it links international and domestic incentives for specific foreign policies with formal and informal limitations political leaders have to take into consideration when adjusting to security challenges. First, it argues in a neoclassical realist tradition that state sponsorship emerges under specific conditions of mutually reinforcing external and internal security dilemmas and constitutes thereby a third way between balancing an international rival through alliance formation on the one hand and armament on the other. Second, the study assumes that both extent and shape of sponsorship policy trace back to specific interplay patterns between external and internal security challenges. Examining Syria's support policies between 1964 and 2006, the analysis explores the formation and development of sponsorship relations in order to gain a deeper understanding of a process, which has not yet been systematically traced.

1.2 State of research

In the context of international law and the 1937 *Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism* by the League of Nations, early debates on state support of terrorism focused on the question of bilateral and multilateral extradition treaties and expanded their scope to the question of refugees after World War II.⁸ Given an increasing number of aircraft hijackings in the 1960s, the UN member states signed numerous conventions outlawing attacks on civil aviation, expanded

⁷ U.S. Department of State. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001." (2002). Published electronically May 21. <http://1.usa.gov/1aT3UDI>. Accessed January 31, 2014; "US expands 'axis of evil'." BBC News (2002). Published electronically May 6. <http://bbc.in/MoXy3n>. Accessed January 21, 2014.

⁸ Ben Saul, "The Legal Response of the League of Nations to Terrorism," *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 4, no. 1 (2006).

in the following decades by treaties on hostage taking, proliferation of weapons, bombings, and financing of terrorism.⁹ As a unilateral measure of sanctioning a breach of these conventions, the 1979 *Export Administration Act* (EAA) provided the president of the United States with the rights to control exports inter alia for reasons of national security. Subsequently, the Department of State established a list of *State Sponsors of Terrorism*, designating governments actively assisting terrorists and exposing them to unilateral political and economic sanctions.¹⁰

Reflecting the increase in political debates in the early 1980s, sponsoring terrorism as a means of covert warfare became a constant, though not particularly emphasized, part of many academic books dealing with the overall phenomenon of international terrorism.¹¹

Under the sway of the Cold War, it is not surprising that Western academics and journalists mainly examined the issue in the context of superpower rivalry. In particular, they focused on governmental support to radical-leftist and anti-Western groups and suggested a military approach as the appropriate political response.¹² Tending to overestimate and -emphasize the level of threat posed by state sponsorship of terrorism, such works sparked criticism by other scholars of political violence. These emphasized, by contrast, not only the need for solid scientific definitions, but also a thorough assessment of the sponsor's strategic motivations and political risks that come along with supporting terrorist groups.¹³ Particularly, two points of criticism raised by Grant Wardlaw in 1988 influenced the recent research agenda at least indirectly and the study at hand directly: First, he demanded to "distinguish between providing support, training and finance to terrorist groups and setting up and directing them for specific policy purposes"¹⁴ on the analytical level. Thereby, he called not only for a more differentiated assessment of sponsorship types but also for their reconnection to the backer's motivation—internationally and domestically. Second, Wardlaw rejected the idea of terrorist groups as mere tools or puppets. In contrast, he stated that "even those terrorist groups closely associated with particular states may operate ac-

⁹For an overview of UN Treaties against terrorism, see United Nations, <http://bit.ly/11CtsP>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹⁰Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001). 158; Christopher J. Donovan, "The Export Administration Act of 1979: Refining United States Export Control Machinery," *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review* 4, no. 1 (1981).

¹¹Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Pillar, *Terrorism*; Magnus Ranstorp, ed. *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the art, gaps and future direction* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Andrew Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorism Research," in *Research on Terrorism. Trends, achievements and failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Frank Cass, 2004); Alex P. Schmid, ed. *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research* (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹²Yonah Alexander and Ray S. Cline, *Terrorism as state sponsored covert warfare* (Fairfax: Hero Books, 1986); Michael Stohl and George A. Lopez, eds., *The state as terrorist: the dynamics of governmental violence and repression* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1984); Neil C. Livingstone and Terrell E. Arnold, eds., *Fighting Back. Winning the war against Terrorism* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1986); Harry H. Jr Almond, "The Use of Organized Groups by States as Vehicles to Promote their Foreign Policy," in *Terrorism, Political Violence and World Order*, ed. Henry Hyunwook Han (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

¹³Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy."; Walter Laqueur, "Reflections on terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 65, no. 1 (1986).

¹⁴Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy," 251.

ording to their own agenda part of the time, and sometimes this will not be in the direct interest of their sponsor state.”¹⁵

State sponsorship of terrorism lost its global political appeal after 1990 and became an issue mostly in area studies dealing with transnational operating insurgencies and proxy warfare.¹⁶ However, amid the rise of Hamas and Hizballah, the phenomenon gained new attention as a key source of group survival and vigor.¹⁷ This resulted in an increased body of literature in the realm of political science, international relations, and security studies, particularly regarding Iran and Syria, which have been identified as the main backers of terrorism in the Levant.¹⁸ Nevertheless, publications remained often limited to either journalistic assessments, loose descriptions as part of foreign policy studies, or narratives of the groups’ international sources of support.

In general, studies on state sponsorship of terrorism suffer from a lack of reliable data and the indicated struggle for a common definition of terrorism in both academia and politics.¹⁹ Moreover, political and academic debates diverge, broadly speaking, into three strands schools of thought:

1. The largest group of analysts has turned to the concept of external insurgency support and involvement in intrastate conflict, particularly in the so-called Third World. Recent studies on, for instance, the interrelation between external rebel support and civil wars or the likelihood of interstate conflict to escalate came along with intensified research on the involvement of third parties, particularly states.²⁰ The understanding of state-sponsored terrorism as a type of

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See, for instance, Sean K. Anderson, "Iranian State-Sponsored Terrorism," *Conflict Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1991); Süha Bölükbaşı, "Ankara, Damascus, Baghdad, and the regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish secessionism," *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 14, no. 4 (1991); Marius Deeb, *Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Magnus Ranstorp, "Hizbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 3 (1993); Daniel Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001); Victoria Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan, and the Unending War* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003); Alexander Evans, "The Kashmir Insurgency: As Bad as it Gets," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 11, no. 1 (2000).

¹⁷ Christopher Paul, "How Do Terrorists Generate and Maintain Support?," in *Social Science for Counterterrorism. Putting the Pieces Together*, ed. Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009), 120; Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*.

¹⁸ See Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria: Bashar al-Asad and the first years in power* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); Shahram Chubin, *Iran and its neighbours: the impact of the gulf war* (London: Centre for Security and Conflict Studies, 1987); John Calabrese, *Revolutionary Horizons. Regional Foreign Policy in Post-Khomeini Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "The foreign policy of Syria," in *The foreign policies of Middle East states*, ed. Raymond A. Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "The foreign policy of Iran," *ibid.* For the second group, see Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: the untold story of the militant Islamic movement* (New York, NY: Nations Books, 2007). Chapter 7; Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah. Politics & Religion* (London: Pluto Press, 2002). Chapter 4; Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God," in *Terrorism Financing and State Responses. A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Muhammad Muslih, *The Foreign Policy of Hamas* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999).

¹⁹ For instance, regarding an explicit encouragement to conduct terrorist acts in contrast to other means of political violence

²⁰ Regan, "Third-party Interventions."; Idean Salehyan, "Transnational Rebels - Neighboring States as Sanctuary for Rebel Groups," *World Politics* 59, no. 2 (2007); Navin A. Bapat, "The Internationalization of Terrorist Campaigns," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24, no. 4 (2007); Idean Salehyan, "No shelter here: rebel sanctuaries and international conflict," *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 1 (2008); Belgin San Akca, "Supporting Non-State Armed Groups: A Resort to Illegality?," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 4 (2009).

covert warfare is featured prominently in nearly all of these studies, while a significant number also addresses issues of cooperation and bargaining between the group and its sponsor.²¹

2. Since 1994, a second school of thought debates state sponsorship of terrorism in context of the so-called *rogue states*. These works often cite sponsorship in tandem with policies of internal repression and human rights violations, the development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missile delivery systems, and jeopardizing Western interests in key regions.²²
3. A third group of scholars, which emphasizes the domestic characteristics of state sponsors and gained importance in the mid-1990s, focused on both failed states involuntarily providing a safe haven for terrorists and others being indifferent towards terrorist activity within their territory for domestic reasons.²³

On September 9, 2001, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon caused a shift in the literature on terrorism towards al-Qaeda and other transnational networks operating mainly independent of state support. Hence, active state support gradually relegated from the mainstream agenda of terrorism research. According to a study conducted in 2006 by Lum et al., only 2.6 percent out of 4,458 peer-reviewed articles on terrorism were dealing with state-sponsored terrorism; accounting for six times less articles than those dealing with WMD.²⁴

Such a strong bias in favor of counterterrorism measures such as policing and tracing both in scholarship and research funding came to the detriment of social science research on terrorism.²⁵ According to Paul Wilkinson, for instance, this imbalance explains why questions concerning the specific connections between terrorist movements and sponsoring states have remained mostly unaddressed.²⁶ Taking on this gap in academic terrorism research and against the background of the outlined relevance of sponsorship in the context of intrastate conflict, this study will examine the specific relations, ties, and interactions between sponsoring states and sponsored terrorist groups.

²¹ Ranstorp, "Hizbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions."; Kathryn Haahr-Escolano, "Iran's Changing Relationship with Hezbollah," *Terrorism Monitor* II, no. 19 (2004); Daniel Byman and Sarah E. Kreps, "Agents of Destruction? Applying Principal-Agent Analysis to State-Sponsored Terrorism," *International Studies Perspectives* 11, no. 1 (2010).

²² Petra Minnerop, "Rogue States - State Sponsors of Terrorism?," *German Law Journal* 3, no. 9 (2002); Anthony Lake, "Confronting Backlash States," *Foreign Affairs* 73, no. 3 (1994): 46; Robert S. Litwak, *Rogue States and U.S. Foreign Policy: Containment after the Cold War* (Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000); Ulrich Schneckener, "Iraq and Terrorism. How are 'Rogue States' and Terrorists Connected?," *SWP Comments* 3, (2003). <http://bit.ly/1bkjndB>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²³ Daniel Byman, *Deadly connections: states that sponsor terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Chapter 8; Robert I. Rotberg, "The Challenge of Weak, Failing, and Collapsed States," in *Lashing the Dogs of War. Conflict Management in a divided World*, ed. Chester A. Crocker, et al. (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008).

²⁴ Cynthia Lum et al., "The Effectiveness of Counter-Terrorism Strategies," *Campbell Systematic Review* 2(2006): 8; Alex P. Schmid, "The Literature of Terrorism," in *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research*, ed. Alex P. Schmid (London: Routledge, 2011), 461; Alex P. Schmid and Bradley McAllister, "Theories of Terrorism," *ibid.*, *Routledge handbooks*.

²⁵ Paul Wilkinson, "Research into Terrorism Studies: Achievements and Failures," in *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction*, ed. Magnus Ranstorp (New York: Routledge, 2007), 319.

²⁶ Wilkinson cites, for instance, the work of Daniel Byman and Magnus Ranstorp *ibid.*, 320.

1.3 Theoretical overview

In order to establish predictions for state sponsorship of terrorism, respective studies have frequently resorted to instruments of foreign policy analysis (FPA).²⁷ Moreover, analysts utilize realist approaches, while focusing on national interest and cost-benefit calculations under conditions of interstate rivalry.²⁸ Others, such as Daniel Byman, comprise alternative or complementary triggers of support, including ideology and domestic politics.²⁹ However, as most studies refer only implicitly to the theoretical framework of their assumptions and analyses, they have contributed little towards a reflection of their explanatory prowess. In order to trace the process between motivations and the relation between those who sponsor and those who are sponsored, this study systematically integrates systemic and unit-level approaches in an explorative and supplementary manner.

For decades, state-centered structural realist thinking has dominated the study of international politics and alliance formation.³⁰ So far, however, state sponsorship of terrorism constituted a blind spot for structural/neorealist studies, despite two striking parallels: First, policy is understood as a means to challenge an unfavorable imbalance of power and second, policy failure, e.g. an unwanted conflict escalation, as its potential outcome. With regard to the latter point, structural realism claims that deviations from the path laid out by the system are punished. If sponsorship indeed represents such a deviation, the U.S. bombing raid on Libya after the 1986 'La Belle' attack or cruise missile strikes targeting Sudan and Afghanistan after the U.S. embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998, constitute cases of punishment. This suggests, that the mere suspicion of state-sponsored terrorism has significant potential to escalate interstate conflicts.³¹

In this case, what seems to be a cheap strategy to manipulate the international and domestic power evaluations of others can also come at a high price—including immaterial (pariah status) and material (embargos, military interventions) sanctions. Arguing that foreign policy is primarily a response to systemic incentives with the aim to maximize the state's security, while the antic-

²⁷ Ronald D. Crelinsten, "Counterterrorism as global governance: A research inventory," in *Mapping Terrorism Research. State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction*, ed. Magnus Ranstorp (New York: Routledge, 2007), 221f.

²⁸ Stephen M. Saideman, "Discrimination in International Relations: Analyzing External Support for Ethnic Groups," *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 1 (2002); Zeev Maoz and Belgin San-Akca, "Rivalry and State Support of Non-State Armed Groups (NAGs), 1946–2001," *International Studies Quarterly* 56(2012).

²⁹ Byman, *Deadly Connections*; Schmid and McAllister, "Theories of Terrorism," 209-211.

³⁰ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Revolution: International politics before and after Hiroshima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

³¹ Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy."

ipation of costs is influential for its specific implementation, this study is employing a neoclassical realist approach in order to link security calculations to sponsorship of terrorism.³²

Neoclassical realism (NCR) operates in various fields of International Relations (IR) and FPA, blending elements from both classical realism in the spirit of Hans Morgenthau and neorealism as established by Kenneth Waltz.³³ Its application to a study on state sponsorship of terrorism is of great interest for mainly three reasons. First, NCR explicitly takes up the Waltzian claim that states can do “any fool thing”³⁴ and addresses the question *why* states decide to pursue foreign policies that are initially seen as irrational, e.g. teaming up with non-state and outlawed actors instead of forming interstate alliances, which are perceived as being less aggressive.³⁵ Second, NCR started out as a “theory of mistakes”³⁶ and was at the outset reduced to explaining why states fail to successfully adjust to systemic constraints. As it has managed to overcome this *stigma* and is frequently used to augment the overall explanatory strength of realist approaches in FPA, it is expected to constitute an explicative tool and at least the onset of an eligible model of state sponsorship of terrorism.³⁷ Finally, as competing explanations from the realm of realism and *Innenpolitik* approaches have constituted a crucial point of departure for NCR, it is expected to serve as a framework for a moderate variety of explanations regarding the occurrence and nature of state sponsorship of terrorism.³⁸

³² *Theory of International Politics*: 126.

³³ Gideon Rose first coined the term *neoclassical* in order to describe a *fourth* school of foreign policy theory, besides *Innenpolitik* or liberal approaches emphasizing the impact of unit-level factors on foreign policy on the one hand and the offensive and defensive variations of realism highlighting the supremacy of systemic factors on the other hand. Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” *World Politics* 51, no. 1 (1998): 146. See also Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997); ———, “Liberal International Relations Theory: A Scientific Assessment,” in *Progress in international relations theory: appraising the field*, ed. Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001); Jack L. Snyder, *Myths of empire: domestic politics and international ambition*, Cornell studies in security affairs (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991). The explicit emphasis of NCR on a state’s placement in the system as the main driver for scope and ambition of its foreign policy thereby serves as a guarantee to remain part of the *realist family*. In contrast, the inclusion of unit-level factors serving as filters for systemic incentives constitutes as major and not undisputed departure from structural realism. Andrew Moravcsik and Jeffrey W. Legro, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?,” *International Security* 24, no. 2 (1999): 27f. For their classical realist and structural realist roots, see Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1948); Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); ———, *Theory of International Politics*.

³⁴ ———, “Evaluating Theories,” *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 4 (1997): 915.

³⁵ In this study, rational behavior is understood as the choice of means, consistent with the ends and the available information, as defined in Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 4.

³⁶ Randall L. Schweller, *Unanswered threats: political constraints on the balance of power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006). 10.

³⁷ Norrin M. Ripsman, “Neoclassical realism and domestic interest groups,” in *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, et al. (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 192f.

³⁸ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro et al., “Introduction: Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy,” *ibid.* (Cambridge), 2; Peter Trubowitz, *Politics and Strategy: Partisan Ambition and American Statecraft* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). 2-5.

1.4 State sponsorship of terrorism

1.4.1 Definitions

None of the many definitions of terrorism, which have been debated in politics and academia in the past decades, receives undisputed recognition. This has been especially the case, as the everyday use and political designation is highly subjective and strongly connected to societal, interstate, and intrastate enmity.³⁹ This study follows the definition by Bruce Hoffman as well as Schmid and Jongman, as their definitions are not only based on a thorough evaluation of terrorism literature but also touch on the main foci of current debates: *goals, targets, and perpetrators*.⁴⁰

Terrorism

Hoffman defines terrorism as the “deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change [...]. It is meant to instill fear within, and thereby intimidate, a wider ‘target audience.’”⁴¹

Schmid and Jongman also stress that the “group or class, whose members' sense of security is purposefully undermined, is the target of terror.”⁴² Paralleling Hoffman’s claim that “terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little,”⁴³ Schmid and Jongman assert that political change is the main goal of terrorism. It can be achieved by either immobilizing the target “in order to produce disorientation and/or compliance” among societal groups or mobilizing “secondary targets of demands” (like governments or political parties) and “targets of attention” (mostly public opinion) to make them favor the perpetrator’s interests.⁴⁴ Although many authors and government institutions stressed the civilian and non-combatant character of a terrorist attack’s victims, it is the—*a priori* unpredictable—separation of the targeted group into victims and audiences that plausibly classifies an act of political violence as terrorism.⁴⁵

Regarding the repercussion of terrorism, it should be noted that the likelihood of falling victim to a terrorist attack is very low in most places of the world. Nevertheless, terrorist attacks have a significant impact on society and state-society relations, as they challenge the monopoly of force

³⁹ Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman, *Political terrorism: a new guide to actors, authors, concepts, data bases, theories and literature*, 3. expanded and updated ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2008); Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy," 244f; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*: 32; Richard Jackson, "Knowledge, power and politics in the study of political terrorism," in *Critical Terrorism Studies: A new research agenda*, ed. Richard Jackson, et al. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 70; Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorism Research," 2-9.

⁴⁰ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*; Schmid and Jongman, *Political Terrorism*.

⁴¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*: 40f.

⁴² Schmid and Jongman, *Political Terrorism*: 1f.

⁴³ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*: 41.

⁴⁴ Schmid and Jongman, *Political Terrorism*: 1f.

⁴⁵ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 46f.

and increase domestic polarization.⁴⁶ Employed in long campaigns and embedded in larger insurgencies, terrorism can hurt targeted states economically if they negatively affect tourism and direct foreign investment. If attacks provoke disproportional state repression, it can also harm their international reputation.⁴⁷

The designation of non-state actors challenging the status quo as *terrorists* or *freedom fighters* has become a constant source of political and academic contestation, far more in fact than the classification of an act of violence as *terrorism*.

First, Hoffman's claim that only non-state actors employ terrorism has been highly disputed, especially in the context of statist repression in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.⁴⁸ Throughout history, a large number of governments have used indiscriminate violence against their own citizens, yet primarily in the context of non-military domestic repression, which does not aim at political change but rather on securing the *status quo*.⁴⁹

Second, departing from an act of terrorism based on the criteria mentioned above, one might end up in a 'duck test' situation.⁵⁰ This frequently leads to the designation of groups operating in a military manner or aim at controlling territory, but either used terrorist tactics in the past or resort to them sporadically as a supplement.⁵¹ Hence, both on the list of terrorist organizations of the U.S. State Department and the European Union, one might find groups whose classification as terrorist is highly contested.⁵²

International law provides us with a similar picture. Numerous UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) regulate the member states' obligation in the fight against terrorism although there is

⁴⁶ Magdalena Kirchner, *Allianz mit dem Terror. Iran, Israel und die libanesische Hisbollah 1979-2009* (München: AVM, 2009). 43f; Anthony H. Cordesman. "Terrorist and extremist movements in the Middle East: the impact on the regional military balance", Center for Strategic and International Studies (2005). <http://bit.ly/19a8BnA>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁴⁷ Alexander Refflinghaus, *Deutsche Türkeipolitik in der Regierungszeit Helmut Kohls, 1982 bis 1998. Regierung, Bundestag, Presse* (Berlin: Köster, 2002); Bruno S. Frey et al., "Calculating Tragedy: Assessing the Costs of Terrorism," *Journal of Economic Surveys* 21, no. 1 (2007): 7; Volker Nitsch and Dieter Schumacher, "Terrorism and international trade: an empirical investigation," *European Journal of Political Economy* 20(2004).

⁴⁸ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*: 40.

⁴⁹ Schmid and McAllister, "Theories of Terrorism," 203f; Alex P. Schmid, "Glossary and Abbreviations of Terms and Concepts Relating to Terrorism and Counterterrorism," *ibid.*, 690; David Claridge, "State terrorism? Applying a definitional model," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 8, no. 3 (1996): 50-52.

⁵⁰ In 2002, Israeli Minister of Defense Ehud Barak responded to the question whether the president of the Palestinian National Authority, Yasser Arafat, was a terrorist by stating that Arafat "happens to behave like a terrorist, he looks like one, he walks like one, he quacks like one, so maybe he is really a terrorist." James Reynolds. "Why is Israel calling Iran a nuclear duck?", BBC News Middle East no. 7 March (2012). <http://bbc.in/1nEi0vv>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁵¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*: 35f.

⁵² Council of the European Union, "COUNCIL DECISION 2012/333/CFSP of 25 June 2012 updating the list of persons, groups and entities subject to Articles 2, 3 and 4 of Common Position 2001/931/CFSP on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism and repealing Decision 2011/872/CFSP," *Official Journal of the European Union* 55, L 165(2012); U.S. Department of State. 220f.

little consensus on *who* to designate as a terrorist.⁵³ If they just reflect political will and ideological enmity, why are designations relevant after all?

With regard to the subject of investigation, the formal blacklisting of a group as terrorists by another entity is significant particularly as it causes or increases conflict between this entity and the group's backer.⁵⁴ If the group of designators is not limited to directly targeted states, the domestic and international leeway to retaliate will expand.⁵⁵ Therefore, the classification of a group as a terrorist organization in this study is based on two key criteria: A considerable use of terrorist violence, independent of other forms of political coercion used, and the formal designation as a terrorist group by other governments.

State Sponsorship

It has to be stated that *state sponsorship of terrorism* is a political term, described by the U.S. Department of State as the repeated provision of "support for acts of international terrorism."⁵⁶ However, reports explaining the designation of particular states as sponsors point out that not the support of individual acts of terrorism constitutes the decisive factor, but the support of groups labeled as terrorist organizations.⁵⁷ Elsewhere, it is explicitly claimed that "state sponsors of terrorism provide critical support to non-state terrorist groups."⁵⁸

This understanding is also shared by Daniel Byman, whose definition "a government's intentional assistance to a terrorist group to help it use violence, bolster its political activities, or sustain the organization"⁵⁹ constitutes the basis of the one used in this study. By stressing the intentional character of assistance, he excludes cases of sponsorship, where groups exploit "ungoverned, under-governed, or ill-governed physical areas"⁶⁰ inside failed states. In addition, he distinguishes rigidly between governmental and societal support. Third, concerning the immediate aim of assistance, he specifies the rather vague idea of supporting acts of terrorism to backing a specific group.

Therefore, it should be maintained that the actual term 'state sponsorship of terrorism', which dominates the political debate is in itself misleading: While it implies a direct relation between

⁵³ The Security Council Committee. "The List established and maintained by the 1267 Committee with respect to individuals, groups, undertakings and other entities associated with Al-Qaida." Al-Qaida Sanctions List (2013). <http://bit.ly/1n5Uy7i>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁵⁴ Salehyan, "No shelter here."

⁵⁵ Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy," 244f; Salehyan, "No shelter here."

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of State. 171.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 171-175.

⁵⁸ ———, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002," (2003).

⁵⁹ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 10.

⁶⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001". 80.

the state and the terrorist attack (as in the case of *state terrorism*), the phenomenon examined in the following should be more precisely understood as *state sponsorship of terrorist organizations*.⁶¹

Both definitions, however, do not provide the underlying motivations of states to align with terrorist organizations. In a third attempt to define state sponsorship of terrorism, Yonah Alexander and Ray Cline highlight this point and describe sponsorship as the “deliberate employment of violence or the threat of use of violence by sovereign states (or subnational groups encouraged or assisted by sovereign states) to attain strategic and political objectives by acts in violation of law.”⁶²

Taking into account all three definitions, this study defines state sponsorship of terrorism as

A government’s intentional support of terrorist organizations—depicting groups that use (or threaten to use) indiscriminate violence on a considerable basis in order to attain certain political ends and are formally designated as such by at least one country.

As stated above, terrorism might be one of the most contested political terms around, carrying exclusively hostile and illegitimate connotations of political action. Whether an act of political violence is described as terrorism in most cases does not result from an assessment of objective characteristics, but from *a priori* judgments whether the aims of the perpetrator are perceived as legitimate and justifiable. In the context of state sponsorship of terrorism, this is reflected in international sanctions, as well as in the designation of states as pariah or rogues.⁶³ While the question of how these labels emerge in international relations and whom they are imposed on is dealt with in recent social constructivist and role theory works, the following research targets the back end of this nexus by inquiring under what conditions sponsorship relations occur.⁶⁴

In order to introduce the empirical puzzle of this study and before turning to the motivations of sponsoring states, it seems vital to take a closer look at what is known (and not known) about the patterns of state support.

1.4.2 Pyramid or rag rug? Patterns of sponsorship revisited

In their 1986 assessment of state-sponsored terrorism as a policy of covert warfare, Alexander and Cline distinguished consecutive forms of state support: ideological encouragement (1), which was followed by ideological direction (and influence on target selection) (2). Thus, (1) and (2) form the basis for a cooperative relationship that includes (3) “intelligence, diplomatic, or even

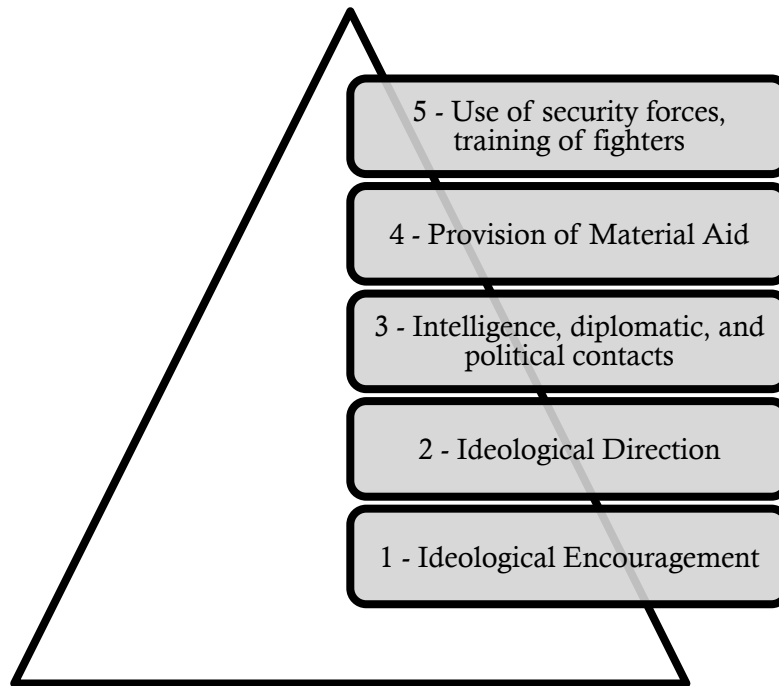
⁶¹ However, due to the prominence of the term in terrorism literature and political debates, both terms will appear interchangeably in the remainder of this study.

⁶² Alexander and Cline, *Terrorism*: 32.

⁶³ Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy."

⁶⁴ For constructivists and role theory scholarship on the issue, see Martin Senn, *Wolves in the Woods: the Rogue State Concept from a constructivist perspective* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2009); Marijke Breuning, "Role theory research in international relations: state of the art and blind spots," in *Role theory in international relations: approaches and analyses*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, et al. (London: Routledge, 2011), 33.

high-level political contacts.”⁶⁵ Building on (3), a sponsoring government provides material aid like sanctuary, propaganda or logistical support facilities (4). The highest level of support is reached when states decide to use their own security forces to arm and train the groups’ fighters (5). This implies that sponsorship policies occur in a pyramidal form similar to the one in **Figure 2**, starting from mere ideological inspiration and reaching a climax in military assistance.



Source: Alexander and Cline. Terrorism as state sponsored covert warfare: 74f.

Figure 2: Forms of state sponsorship of terrorism (Alexander & Cline)

Post-Cold War studies have attached lesser importance on ideological guidance. By contrast, the provision of sanctuary, which brought Turkey and Syria to the brink of war in 1998 and severely deteriorated US-Pakistan relations in the course of the death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011, came to the fore of the debate.⁶⁶ Another issue discussed in the context of the 9/11 attacks was that several governments, which had no record of rhetorically or materially supporting al-Qaeda, had turned a blind eye on fundraising or recruiting efforts for years (e.g. Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan).⁶⁷

In 2005, Byman published his inquiries of the specific frequency of occurrence of sponsorship components in 38 instances of support between 1990 and 2005. Out of all occurrences, military support and financial assistance were the most common (30), followed by the provision of sanc-

⁶⁵ Alexander and Cline, *Terrorism*: 47f.

⁶⁶ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*: 83-100; Schmid, *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research*; Salehyan, "No shelter here."

⁶⁷ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 219-258.

tuary in 27 cases. Diplomatic backing, however, has been less common with only 16 instances.⁶⁸ His findings suggest that states rather apply ‘rag rug’-patterns in their sponsorship strategy, picking different options from a range of policy alternatives and re-assembling them in a tailor-made manner. In order to illuminate this nexus, the issue at hand will be briefly examined in the cases of Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

Since 1979, the U.S. Department of State repeatedly designated the three countries as state sponsors, inter alia due to their support for especially ethno-nationalist and leftist groups.⁶⁹ Although these governments, according to Byman, provided assistance in all four dimensions outlined above, **Table 1** illustrates significant variances regarding specific patterns of support, which imply several interesting aspects for further investigation:

Table 1: State support for terrorist groups since 1990 (Byman)

Terrorist Group	Training and Operations	Money, Arms, Logistics	Diplomatic Backing	Sanctuary
IRAQ				
PKK				✓
Palestinian Leftists (PL) ^a		✓	✓	✓
MEK	✓	✓		✓
LIBYA				
Palestinian Islamists (PI) ^b		✓		
PL	✓	✓	✓	✓
New People’s Army ^c		✓		
IRA	✓	✓		
SYRIA				
PI				✓
PL	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hizballah	✓	✓		✓
PKK	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 54-58.

^a Consisting of ANO, PLF, PFLP, PFLP-GC, and other Palestinian leftist groups.

^b Hamas, PIJ.

^c Communist Army of the Philippines.

Iraq, for instance, provided all affiliated groups with sanctuary but only Palestinian leftist (PL) groups received diplomatic backing and no other than MEK training and operations. In the Libyan case, all affiliated groups received money, arms, or logistics. Again, only PL groups found

⁶⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁶⁹ Iraq had been temporarily removed from the list between 1982 and 1990 in order to allow for U.S. arms sales in the first Gulf War; removed for good in 2006. See U.S. Department of State. "Rescission of Libya's Designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism." Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs no. May 15 (2006). <http://bit.ly/1bhI0EC>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

sanctuary and diplomatic backing. Syria allowed all four groups it supported to use its territory as an area of retreat and shelter. By contrast, only PL groups and the PKK received mentionable diplomatic backing. If all four types of support are instrumental in guaranteeing a group’s survival, why did all three government provide some form of support to all of them and treated others differently? How can the exceptional position of some groups be explained? To put it more generally, and as illustrated by **Figure 3**, how can we explain different patterns of sponsorship provided by the same government (G_x) to different terrorist organizations ($T_{1,3}$)?

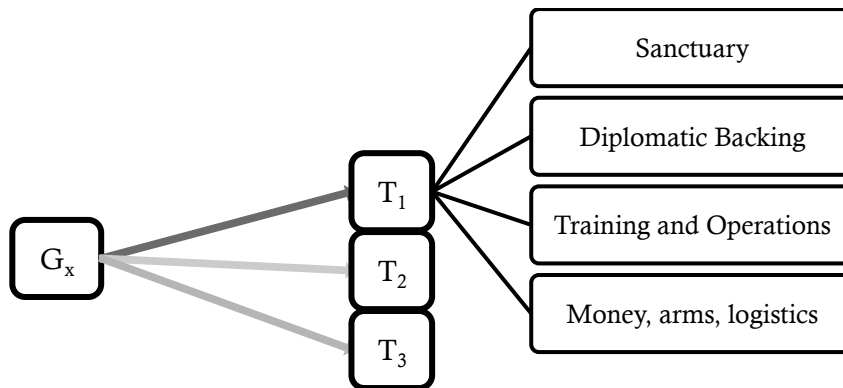


Figure 3: Distribution of support among different groups

A second issue stems from a cross-country comparison of support patterns. Although Iraq and Syria both supported the PKK after 1990, Syria’s assistance extended to all four forms of backing. Likewise, PL groups enjoyed substantial support from both states whereas Iraq gave no significant support to Palestinian Islamist (PI) groups. In contrast, Libya assisted PI groups with money, arms, and logistics, as Syria did, but provided no sanctuary. How can we explain variances among different governments ($G_{1,3}$) in their respective pattern of assistance to the same organization (T_x) (see **Figure 4**)?

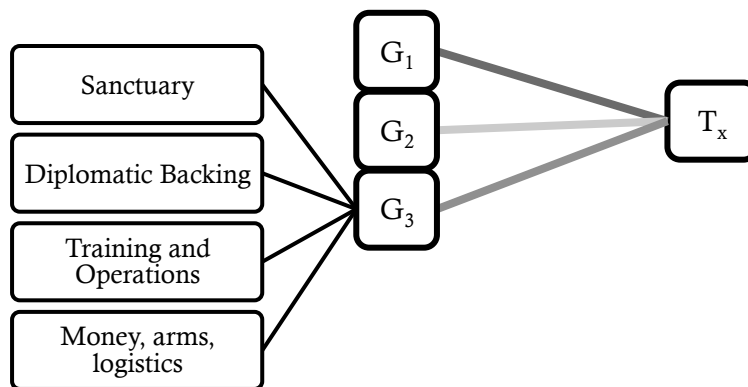


Figure 4: Distribution of support among different governments

Although Byman stressed the importance of a government's extent and degree of support given as necessary for "judgments on the scope [...] of state support,"⁷⁰ his examinations disregard potential explanations for the observed variances of sponsorship patterns, especially over time. From **Table 1**, there is no information to be derived on either the actual duration of assistance in the observation period or its degree.⁷¹ The impression that assistance remained highly stable in all dimension, has been challenged by empirical observations. Libyan authorities, for instance, closed ANO offices in 1999 after more than a decade of close cooperation and the relations between Syria and Hamas improved substantially throughout the 1990s.⁷² How can we explain such variances in sponsorship, as **Figure 5** indicates them, over time?

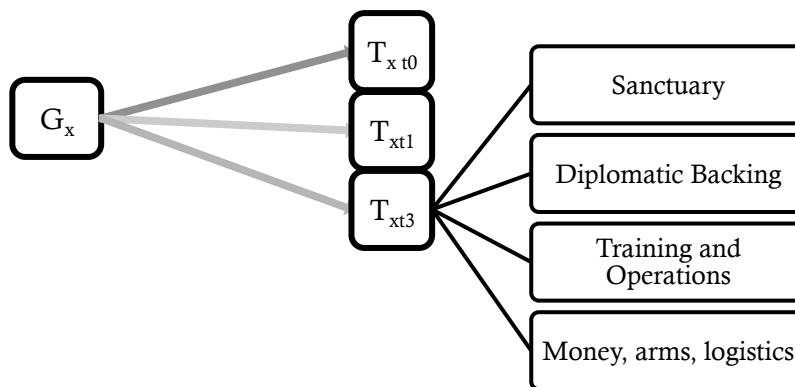


Figure 5: Distribution of support over time

Byman argues that two factors determine a state's support for a terrorist group over time: State *capacity* (high/low) and *policy* (support/oppose).⁷³ While capacity is of particular interest in cross-country studies (**Figure 4**), it is expected that policy plays a much bigger role in shaping both the level and spectrum of support in single-country and longitudinal studies (**Figure 3, Figure 5**).

Despite the elaborate gathering of a wide range of sponsorship incitements, Byman does not investigate the specific conditions that facilitate the emergence of respective policies, which are on their part expected to determine specific patterns of sponsorship.⁷⁴ From these gaps, three research questions are derived that will be addressed in the following and examined by resorting to theory-guided foreign policy analysis.

⁷⁰ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 54.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷² Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: the untold story of militants, martyrs and spies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007). 145; Ian Black. "Most wanted terrorist flees to Iraq for sanctuary." *The Guardian* (1999). Published electronically January 8. <http://bit.ly/1bR9lO3>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁷³ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 11.

⁷⁴ Destabilizing or weakening a neighbor, projecting power, change regime, shape opposition, enhance international prestige, export political system, aid kin, and military aid, see also *ibid.*, 27f.

1.5 Research questions

Although state sponsorship of terrorism is more than a mere ‘weapon of the weak,’ used by small states to compensate for lacking aggregate power, it is a comparatively rarely implemented form of security policy. Hence, in order to address the question *under what conditions governments decide to support terrorist organizations as a supplement or alternative to e.g. armament or interstate alliance formation*, state sponsorship of terrorism and apparent cost-benefit calculation of potential or actual backers will be examined parallel to other forms of security seeking policy.

Dealing extensively with questions of state security in international politics, neorealism constitutes the theoretical point of departure of this study, yet will be augmented in the young neoclassical tradition with the unit-level variable *state-society relations*. As will be examined in greater detail in the following section, neorealism provides us with a set of systemic incentives to states seeking security under conditions of anarchy, yet is not determinant about the particular policy states choose in order to achieve their ends. Neoclassical realism, however, introduces intervening unit-level variables that are likely to constrain or enlarge a state’s policy choices. Therefore, it seem to be helpful in order to explain why different units “behave differently despite their similar placement in the system” and at times fail to produce “outcomes that fall within expected ranges” that structural realism derives from their international conditions.⁷⁵

Once established, the focus of interest in sponsorship relations turns to the question of *management, particularly in comparison to interstate alliance politics*. To what extent does the way states interact with their non-state partners reflect the specific character of this cooperation?

Again, the examination departs from neorealism, which tells us that the international system’s anarchic nature induces a system of self-help that in turn provides incentives for a constant reevaluation of security-seeking policies. These incentives lead at times to increased commitment, yet can also trigger defection and realignment with former enemies. In order to apply realist expectations about state behavior to sponsorship, the non-state nature of the alliance partner, and the informal and secretive character of agreements, it is vital to accommodate them with assumptions about interstate alliances.

If one links the process of alliance evaluation to actual policy output, the question arises *how to explain increased commitment, shifts in sponsorship emphases, and realignment by the supporting state*.

Under the precondition that significant patterns of interstate alliance management also occur in relations between states and non-state actors (NSA), it is to be expected that factors determining alliance behavior towards statist partners also influence sponsorship commitment. In accordance

⁷⁵ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 72.

with NCR, international security dilemmas influence alliance management to the extent as to what domestic constraints allow for and their interplay produces specific commitments.

1.6 Research design

Alongside these questions, this study establishes a new framework to conceptualize state sponsorship of terrorism. Assuming in a positivist and neoclassical realist research tradition that the world is 'out there' and can be explained, it suggests a causal chain between relative international power and policy adjustments on the one hand and the function of domestic politics as a corresponding conditional variable on the other.⁷⁶

As mentioned in section 1.2, quantitative studies on third party intervention gained prominence and carved out a wide range of relevant unit-level factors. The positive correlation between external rebel support and civil war duration or the likelihood of interstate conflict escalation proclaimed in these studies underlines the relevance of sponsorship for core questions of international security.⁷⁷ Remarkably, Cunningham et al. found significant support for three hypotheses exhibiting strong parallels to assumptions about alliance politics. First, rebel support is more likely to occur if the group's target is in turn backed by another state, thereby increasing the power resources of the adversary vis-à-vis the group as well as a potential sponsor. Second, this likelihood increases if the targeted state is involved in interstate rivalry, suggesting that rebel support is one of the strategies employed by the adversary.⁷⁸ Third, rebels are likely to receive external support if they have transnational-ethnic or ideological-constituencies.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, in order to gather analytical and empirical knowledge on sponsorship policy and establish—though contingent—generalizations about the mechanisms at work, the following examinations employ the method of structured focused small-N comparison for mainly two reasons.⁸⁰

Despite quantitative efforts to carve out determinants of *why* state support occurs and to a lesser extent influences interstate relations, the question of *how* states interact with supported groups has

⁷⁶ For a discussion of the neoclassical realist research agenda, see Taliaferro et al., "Introduction," 20-21; Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," 154; Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 1 (2010): 143; Sten Rynning and Jens Ringsmose, "Why Are Revisionist States Revisionist? Reviving Classical Realism as an Approach to Understanding International Change," *International Politics* 45(2008): 34.

⁷⁷ Regan, "Third-party Interventions."; Salehyan, "Transnational Rebels."; ———, "No shelter here."

⁷⁸ This argument has been further specified by the study of Zeev Maoz and San Akca by emphasizing dyadic conflicts between the supporting and the targeted states Maoz and San-Akca, "Rivalry and State Support."

⁷⁹ In an extended version of the Expanded Uppsala Armed Conflict (EAC) Data, the authors provide information on military capabilities and political opportunities of non-state actors in civil wars. Data includes more than 200 instances of external rebel support yet go far beyond the recording of non-ambiguous occurrences of state sponsorship of terrorism, in particular by defining non-state actors only in contrast to international organizations without any explicit assumptions about different methods of combat applied by them David E. Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two: A Dyadic Analysis of Civil War Duration and Outcome," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4 (2009). See also ———, "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups," *International Organization* 65, no. 04 (2011): 26.

⁸⁰ Andrew Bennett and Alexander L. George, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

received little systematic and theory-based attention.⁸¹ In order to fill this gap, this study aims to uncover elements of interdependence between the sponsoring state and its protégé as well as their particular adjustment policies to what Glenn H. Snyder termed an *Alliance Security Dilemma* (ASD). Given the high complexity of such processes and the specific context of outlawed, mostly opaque, and informal policies observed in this study, process-tracing is expected to offer a significant analytical contribution to their understanding.⁸²

Moreover, neoclassical realist studies frequently resort to qualitative methods when seeking to explain policy variations over time as establishing causality requires an in-depth examination of the processes and interactions at hand.⁸³ When studies aim to develop theories and intend to establish comprehensive and thorough knowledge about complex processes, they frequently resort to case studies, allowing for a more specific uncovering of the mechanisms at work as well as the effect of the explanatory variables.⁸⁴

Given its explorative nature regarding both theory development and empirical evidence, this study relies on mainly deductive, yet also inductive elements of process tracing.⁸⁵ As current research on state sponsorship of terrorism offers few and unspecific explanations of policy variation, chapters 1, 1, and 4 develop a new model of explaining sponsorship with neorealist alliance theory at its core. Understanding sponsorship as ‘deviant’ in the context of alliance policy, evidence from empirical cases of sponsorship are used to formulate specific explanations and predictions on the processes suggested by the new hypotheses. In order to assess whether the process suggested by the newly established framework is reflected in the empirical evidence, on the one hand, and to maintain the possibility of falsification, on the other, the suggested explanation will be comparatively tested against independent evidence in three within-case studies.

The comparatively long sponsorship history of the Syrian Arab Republic, established in 1961 after Syria’s disassociation from its union with Egypt, provides us with a rich number of potential

⁸¹ This is particularly relevant, as existing historical studies have pointed out significant variances in commitment that were not necessarily accompanied by the immediate collapse of the alliance. See, for instance, Byman, *Deadly Connections*; Kirchner, *Allianz mit dem Terror*; Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of its lesser rural Notables, and their Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999); Patrick Seale, *Abu Nidal: A gun for hire* (New York: Random House, 1992).

⁸² Fabrizio Gilardi, "Interdependence," in *Designing Research in the Social Sciences*, ed. Martino Maggetti, et al. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012), 155-158. One can hardly dismiss that the choice of a small-N approach is to a certain extent owed to an overall comparatively small number of historical cases of this particular policy and an endemic lack of both secondary sources as well as access to primary sources. Nevertheless, in the context of theory-guided process tracing, small-N comparisons allow for an assessment of complex causal processes if systematically tied to the causal predictions derived from the theory. Peter A. Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics," in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahony and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 391f.

⁸³ Taliaferro et al., "Introduction," 20; Rynning and Ringsmoose, "Why Are Revisionist States Revisionist?," 34; Norrin M. Ripsman, *Peacemaking by democracies: the effect of state autonomy on the post-World War settlements* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 13.

⁸⁴ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1997), 54.

⁸⁵ Andrew Bennett, "Process Tracing: A Bayesian Perspective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 703f.

cases. First, the fact that it supported reportedly over a dozen of different groups directly and many more indirectly by tolerating their presence in areas under Syrian military occupation in Lebanon between 1976 and 2005, allows for various patterns of comparison under relatively stable conditions and the control of socio-cultural, geographic, and ideological factors. Second, Syria's specific sponsorship policies exhibited remarkable variation between fierce resistance to international pressure to cease support and compliance with these pressures. Third, a rich body of literature on Syria's foreign and security policy has accompanied its prominence in the debate on security in the Middle East, sponsorship, and rogue states. This constitutes a significant aspect for case selection given the opaque nature of sponsorship as well as the limits of primary data collection.⁸⁶

Constituting not only prominent cases but also at a first glance highly dynamic processes, three sponsorship alignments are traced in chapters 1, 6, and 7. In the first case, Syria aligned in the mid-1960s with the main competitor of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the ethno-nationalist and leftist Fatah organization, against Israel. However, even before the alliance reached an all-time low in 1976, when Syrian troops directly clashed with Palestinian forces in Lebanon, Damascus' commitment to the group experienced some significant variances both in terms of material and immaterial dimensions. In a similar manner, Syria's alignment with another leftist and ethno-nationalist group, the Kurdish PKK, against Syria's northern neighbor Turkey since 1979, exhibited a specific commitment mix of public denial and opaque material support. Moreover, the alliance also found a dramatic end in the expulsion of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in October 1998 in the context of Syria's realignment with Turkey. In contrast to the first two cases, the alliance between Syria and the Islamist and nationalist Hizballah, experienced a nearly uniform upwards trend after the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1989/90. Despite even military retaliation by Israel and heavy international pressure particularly after 9/11, Damascus displayed an even decreasing willingness to end its backing.

⁸⁶ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*: 78-88. Syria's foreign policy had been assessed, for instance, by Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle powers in a penetrated regional system* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Ehteshami, "The foreign policy of Iran."; Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "The foreign policy of Syria," *ibid.*; Chubin, *Iran and its neighbours: the impact of the gulf war*, Hooshang Amirahmadi and Nader Entessar, *Iran and the Arab world* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Fred H. Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war: Thirty years of confrontation* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Raymond A. Hinnebusch, "Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad," *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 1, no. 1 (2009); Eyal Zisser, "Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Assad," *Jerusalem Issue Brief* 4, no. 2 (2004); Jubin M. Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran: diplomatic alliance and power politics in the Middle East* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006); Radwan Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria: Intelligence services, foreign relations and democracy in the modern Middle East* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010); Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv, "On a short leash: Syria and the PLO," in *Syria under Assad: domestic constraints and regional risks*, ed. Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Fred Halliday, "Iranian Foreign Policy since 1979," in *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, ed. Juan R.I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

1.7 Outline of the study

The argument and a respective frame of analysis is developed in Chapter 2, 3, and 4 and is put to the test in chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Chapter 2 examines realist thinking on foreign policy analysis, particularly balancing behavior as well as alliance formation and management. Based on this focus, two approaches are evaluated: In general, neoclassical realism, which addresses a state's autonomy in foreign policy decision-making, serves as a framework for the main antecedent condition activating the causal action between systemic incentives and sponsorship commitment.⁸⁷ Additionally, Snyder's theory of alliance politics, linking the incentives from the external security dilemma to specific strategies of alliance formation and politics is used to establish the independent variable.⁸⁸

Chapter 3 applies the previously established assumptions about interstate alliance politics to state sponsorship of terrorism. In a first step, it addresses potential obstacles for realist approaches to the issue, such as the non-state nature of terrorist organizations as well as the informal and opaque character of such alignments. Subsequently, it examines the costs and benefits of sponsorship against the background of the states external security environment and incentives from domestic politics. Finally, an analytical framework will be established, suggesting a causal chain between the external security dilemma and specific sponsorship policies in both the presence and absence of the antecedent condition. Chapter 4 turns to the research design, the operationalization of hypotheses and variables, and the case selection.

The case studies are presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7. In all three sections, initially the respective patterns of conflict between Syria and its adversaries (Israel and Turkey respectively) will be examined. In a second step, against the background of Syria's alliance with Fatah, the PKK, and Hizballah, an assessment will be established for each case whether or not there is a strong incentive for either fearing alliance abandonment or entrapment. Finally, an examination of state-society relations will provide patterns of autonomy and regime vulnerability. In the remainder of the chapters, Syria's specific alliance commitments to each group will be studied with regard to both material and immaterial assistance.

Chapter 8 summarizes the findings and conclusions reached in this study and outlines avenues for further research. In addition, it discusses the theoretical and policy-relevant implications of this research.

⁸⁷ Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*; Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*; Muthiah Alagappa, *The National Security of Developing States. Lessons from Thailand* (Dover: Auburn, 1987); Steven R. David, *Choosing Sides: alignment and realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

⁸⁸ Snyder, *Alliance politics*; ———, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984).

2 Realist alliance theory and the quest for the optimum balance

Realist studies on alliance formation and management depart generally from an understanding cooperation as an outcome of external balancing and resource aggrandizement vis-à-vis other states.¹ Furthermore, many of them resort—more or less systematically—to domestic factors in order to explain specific alliance politics. Especially neoclassical realist scholars have focused on such unit-level factors and contributed significantly to the development of a realist school of FPA. Taking both perspectives into account, it is assumed that sponsorship occurs as other types of foreign policy under specific conditions of international and domestic politics.²

As the application of realist thinking on alliances to the phenomenon of state sponsorship of terrorism has been limited so far, the following section will turn to two theoretical issues.

1. To what extent is realist alliance theory, established with interstate alliances in mind, able to comprehend statist alignments with non-state actors in general and with those labeled as terrorist organizations in particular? Arguably that this is the case if corresponding cost-benefit calculations and effects can be observed.
2. Do the conditions of alliance formation and management, which neoclassical realists emphasize, also occur in state-NSA-relations? If so, the interplay of international and domestic politics is expected to bear a specific commitment outcome that is reflected in the abovementioned dimensions of support.

In order to address these issues, this chapter consecutively turns to several questions prominent in current debates in IR. The first section examines neorealist thinking on foreign policy and the role of domestic politics in policy formulation and implementation. In order to move from an assessment of indeterminateness on to a set of analytical instruments, neoclassical realism will be introduced as a distinct school of foreign policy theory, which gives particular importance to unit-level factors and aims at establishing causal linkages between systemic incentives, domestic politics, and actual foreign policy behavior. In a final specification, the study applies realist expectations about incentives and respective behavior to states facing internal security threats. This is of particular importance as one of the core interests of this study is to examine the link between domestic security considerations and foreign policy in general and state sponsorship in particular.

The second theoretical section turns to interstate alliance formation as a specific form of foreign policy and a first proxy for a state's decision to align with a terrorist organization. Under what

¹ ———, *Alliance politics*; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

² In 1991, Steven R. David briefly implied a potential linkage between domestic power distribution and external rebel support in an overall realistic framework, his *omnibalancing* approach, however, remained centered on interstate alignment. Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 241.

conditions do states choose alliances over other forms of security seeking and if so, how is such a decision related to domestic security calculations? The examination of this question initially centers on Snyder's assumptions of a state's costs- and benefit ratio regarding alliance formation, which will be supplemented by bottom-up approaches tying foreign policy decision-making to regime security. In a similar manner, now focusing on alliance management and commitment, Snyder's concept of a structurally inbuilt security dilemma in alliances will be augmented with assumptions over domestic factors inducing a certain type of alliance policy.

2.1 Neorealism: A theory of foreign policy constraints

Neorealism's contribution to FPA is not without controversy. Despite its broad application, a major point of criticism has been its systematic neglect of domestic politics and therefore a lack in explanatory power regarding specific policy choices.³ In order to also examine the value of realist thinking on international politics for the study of state sponsorship of terrorism, the following section will address both issues.

2.1.1 Foreign policy in neorealism: Sealing Pandora's (black) Box?

Although realist scholars as well as advocates of other IR-schools have excessively debated the question whether neorealism is a theory *explaining* specific foreign policies, realists share a similar *understanding* of their emergence.⁴

In the realm of neorealism, foreign policy is a function of three imperatives stemming from the structure of the international system and the conditions of anarchy. First, the main feature of international politics is state power, consisting of the following items: "size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability, and competence"⁵ and its distribution in the system. Second, policy outcomes are not determined, yet framed by the state's placement in the system based on its power capabilities. Since Waltz claims that "the fate of each state depends on its responses to what other states do,"⁶ he suggests a process of evaluation of the state's own placement in the system as well as that of others. Third, the state is admonished to transfer this judgment into the mentioned response, foreign policy, in a

³ Kenneth Waltz, "International politics is not foreign policy," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (1996); Colin Elman, "Horses for courses: why not Neorealist theories of foreign policy?," *ibid.*

⁴ Waltz himself stressed several times that in contrast to his theory of international politics, which examines the international conditions and constraints states have to deal with, theories of foreign policy are based at the unit-level and conversely tell why states at times exceed the limits posed by the system and deviate from the path laid out for them. In 1997, he once more rejected the idea that structure determines state behavior, but claimed that structures, on the one hand, "encourage states to do some things and to refrain from doing others" and that they are "likely to be rewarded for behavior that is responsive to structural pressures and punished for behavior that is not," on the other Waltz, "Evaluating Theories," 915. Therefore, Rathbun's assessment of structural realism as a theory of constraints and incentives seems to describe Waltz' own understanding most fittingly. For a debate of neorealism's role in FPA, see Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy.,"; Brian Rathbun, "A rose by any other name: Neoclassical realism as the logical and necessary extension of structural realism," *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 304; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 103-128_72.

⁵ ———, *Theory of International Politics*: 131.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

process of adjustment and adaptation. Although structural realism does not explain how foreign policies emerge, it sheds some light on the main parameters of foreign policy making under the conditions that states find imposed on them in international politics. This becomes even more apparent when turning to the role of domestic politics in foreign policy.

2.1.2 In-, not outside the box: Taking domestic politics seriously

Neorealism assumes that the international system encourages similarly placed states to behave in a similar way due to strong incentives for functional similarity and emulation of successful practices. The transformation of this encouragement into state behavior, however, is a process to be found at the national level, thereby exceeding the realm of structural realism.⁷ Unit-level factors come into play only if they impede effective self-help and thus provoke a punishing response by the system.⁸ Such a situation emerges if ideas or internal fragmentation prevent states from clearly perceiving and assessing systemic constraints.⁹ Domestic politics even cause functional dissimilarity, if states cannot mobilize the resources needed to pursue a certain strategy and thus fail to respond accurately to systemic constraints.¹⁰ Following up on this conjunction, the next section deals with both NCR as a form of realist thinking on international politics and domestic assertiveness as a key intervening variable.

2.2 Neoclassical realism: A theory of mistakes

In view of the apparent gap between systemic incentives and actual foreign policy and the Waltzian assumption that unit-level factors serve as an intervening variable between structure and state behavior, a new group of realist scholars emerged in the first half of the 1990s.¹¹ These neoclassical realists aimed at systematically increasing the explanatory power of neorealism in FPA by shedding light on the process of “how systemic incentives were translated through unit-level factors into foreign policy,”¹² without giving up on the constraining force of the international system and the imperatives on state behavior stemming from it.

As outlined above, structural realism assumes that ‘foolish things’ will result in policy failure.¹³ NCR follows this assumption, yet aims to explore the causes and the likelihood of non-responsive behavior.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 72; Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 127; ———, “The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism,” in *Progress in international relations theory: appraising the field*, ed. Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003).

⁸ Waltz, “Evaluating Theories,” 334; Rathbun, “A rose by any other name: Neoclassical realism as the logical and necessary extension of structural realism,” 310-312.

⁹ Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Realist Environment, Liberal Process, and Domestic-Level Variables,” *International Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1997): 19-20; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 22.

¹⁰ Schweller, “The Progressiveness of Neoclassical Realism,” 335f; Rathbun, “A rose by any other name: Neoclassical realism as the logical and necessary extension of structural realism,” 340f.

¹¹ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 72.

¹² Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy,” 153f.

¹³ Waltz, “Evaluating Theories,” 915.

Moreover, neoclassical realists contrast the observed foreign policy behavior systemically with the path laid out by structural realism, addressing the question “how and under what circumstances will domestic factors impede states from pursuing the types and strategies predicted by balance-of-power theory and balance-of-threat theory?”¹⁴ Therefore, NCR offers a “theory of mistakes” as Schweller put it, “provided that one were to consider the policy choice solely in terms of the international strategic setting.”¹⁵

2.2.1 Neoclassical realism and the state

Claiming that the unitary actor is a rather rare phenomenon in international politics, neoclassical realists ascribe great importance to domestically generated incoherence and, congruently, the inability of states to both sustain functional similarity and effectively adapt to systemic constraints at all times, which, in the short run, generate non-conformist policy choices.¹⁶ The question arises, if the *black box* is gone, is there still a coherent conception of the state?

NCR follows the Hobbesian idea of state formation as the only lasting exit from the hostile conditions of pre-societal anarchy and Gilpin’s assessment that conflict groups are the “building blocks and ultimate units of social and political life.”¹⁷ Building on both the *Leviathan* and Max Weber’s classical definition of the state, stressing its claim for domestic sovereignty, neoclassical realists conceive the state as being autonomous from society to a certain extent.¹⁸ This *top down* conception of the state constitutes the main difference between NCR and liberal IR-theory, which views the state not as an actor but a “representative institution” constituting “a critical ‘transmission belt’ by which the preferences and social power of individuals and groups in civil society [...] are eventually translated into state policy.”¹⁹ How does this understanding of state-society relations reflect on FPA?

While NCR asserts on the one hand that the foreign policy executive (FPE)²⁰ epitomizes the state, it argues on the other hand that it is—due to its access to privileged information—“frequently more aware of the national interest and the dictates of the international system than are other domestic

¹⁴ Taliaferro et al., “Introduction,” 1.

¹⁵ Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 10. Apart from explaining *mistakes*, an increasing number of scholars acknowledge NCR as an approach also suitable for understanding, explaining, and predicting *ordinary* foreign policy choices. See, for instance, Ripsman, “Neoclassical realism and domestic interest groups,” 192f; Balkan Devlen and Özgür Özdamar, “Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Crises,” in *Rethinking Realism in International Relations. Between Tradition and Innovation*, ed. Annette Freyberg-Inan, et al. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 136f.

¹⁶ Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 11; Taliaferro et al., “Introduction,” 7f.

¹⁷ Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” in *Neorealism and its critics*, ed. Robert Owen Keohane (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), 305.

¹⁸ Taliaferro et al., “Introduction,” 24f. They understand autonomy of states in a structural realist matter as the “extent that their domestic political structures should allow them, *ceteris paribus*, to construct and pursue policies independently of societal forces and public opinion.” Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*: 43.

¹⁹ Moravcsik, “Liberal International Relations Theory: A Scientific Assessment,” 163.

²⁰ In most cases, this unit is likely to comprise the head of government, the respective ministers, as well as other officials charged with making foreign and/or security policy Taliaferro et al., “Introduction,” 25; Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*: 44.

actors.”²¹ Therefore, in a structural realist *best-case* scenario—meaning a state acting as a unitary actor—the FPE possesses the “ability to commit the resources of the society and, with respect to a particular problem, [...] the authority to make a decision that cannot be readily reversed”²² even in times of opposition stemming from society and other political institutions.

Where neorealism sees adjustment and emulation at times as “unproductive for all and unavoidable for most,”²³ NCR sees a high chance that the FPE fails to extract the resources from their societies needed for the appropriate response. Be it “foreign policy autonomy,”²⁴ “national political power,”²⁵ “state mobilization capacity,”²⁶ or “state power,”²⁷ neoclassical realists pay great attention to the difficulties states have if they want to develop and implement adjusting policies (Figure 6, Figure 7).

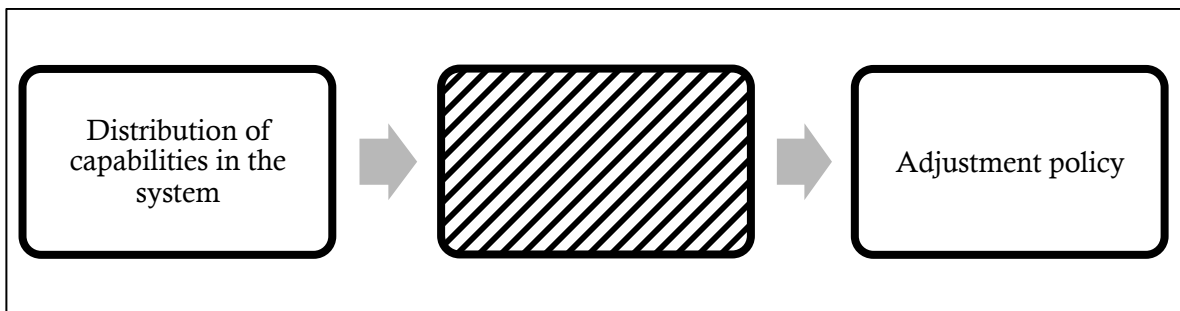


Figure 6: "Broken" causal chain in neorealist FPA

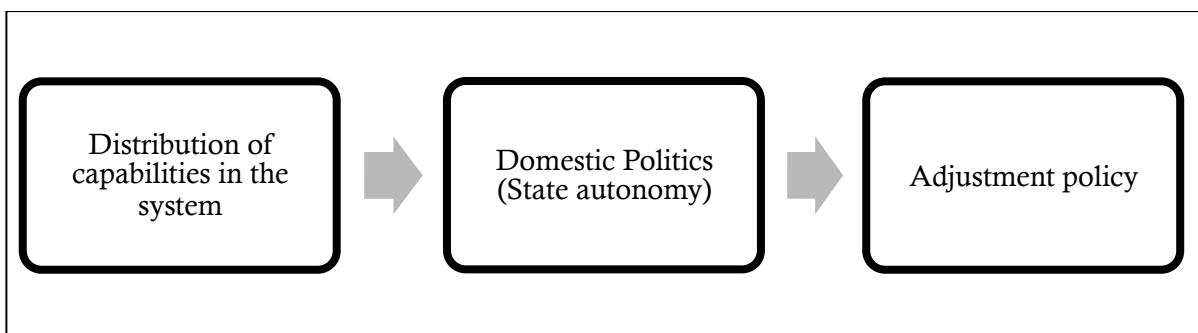


Figure 7: Causal chain in neoclassical realist FPA

²¹ Taliaferro et al., "Introduction," 25-27.

²² Margaret G. Hermann et al., "How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy Behavior," in *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, ed. Charles F. Hermann, et al. (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 311; see also Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*: 43; Taliaferro et al., "Introduction," 25.

²³ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 107.

²⁴ Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*: 43.

²⁵ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful adversaries: grand strategy, domestic mobilization, and Sino-American conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). 11.

²⁶ Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 13.

²⁷ Fareed Zakaria, *From wealth to power: the unusual origins of America's world role* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998). 9.

Thus, NCR claims that a state's relative autonomy in state-society relations determines whether it functions as a unitary actor and is able to respond in an effective manner to systemic incentives.²⁸ Thereby, it offers a theoretical framework useful to trace the process between structural incentives and actual foreign policy, especially in non-democratic states.

2.2.2 Third World only? Neoclassical realism and regime vulnerability

Among the first scholars challenging the realist idea of strong and unitary states and the narratives of national security and interest reflecting the actual reality of international relations, were Joel S. Migdal and Mohammed Ayoob. In the context of their *Third World Security* approach, they linked a state's adjustment capacity to state-society relations.²⁹ This notion has strongly influenced early NCR works, which especially adopted the assumption that the endemic lack of a domestically generated legitimacy to rule in many developing countries serves as an *explanans* for deviant foreign policies.³⁰

Steven R. David asserted that Third World states share a distinct security outlook where "internal threats [...] are far more likely to challenge a Third World leader's hold on power than threats from other states."³¹ Moreover, the relevance of military coups, civil wars, and revolutions to political rule in these countries has not declined to date. On the contrary, the substantial shift from inter- to intrastate wars, which David identified as being especially prevalent in the Third World, has manifested itself as a global trend in the past two decades, peaking in 2011 when only seven out of 186 violent political conflicts were classified as interstate crises.³² Departing from this observation, regime vulnerability, defined by Joe D. Hagan as the "likelihood that the current leadership will be removed from political office,"³³ becomes a key feature of foreign policy decision-making.

Competing ethnic, tribal, religious, and other allegiances prevent the formation of a coherent definition of national interest shared by a significant majority. In addition, domestic power fragmentation prevents a "merging of state and society as common expressions of a set of shared values."³⁴ Moreover, if political power and mobilization capacity are built on a narrow popular base,

²⁸ Taliaferro et al., "Introduction," 25-28.

²⁹ Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Problematic of the Third World," *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991); Joel S. Migdal, "Internal Structure and External Behaviour: Explaining Foreign Policies of Third World States," *International Relations* 4(1972).

³⁰ David, "Explaining Third World Alignment."; ———, *Choosing Sides*; Edward E. Azar and Chung-in Moon, *National security in the third world. The management of internal and external threats* (Aldershot, Hants: Edward Elgar, 1988); Adeed Dawisha, "Arab Regimes: Legitimacy and Foreign Policy," in *The Arab state*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, "Domestic sources of alliances and alignments: the case of Egypt, 1962-73," *International Organization* 45, no. 3 (1991); Richard J. Harknett and Jeffrey A. VanDenBerg, "Alignment theory and interrelated threats: Jordan and the Persian Gulf Crisis," *Security Studies* 6, no. 3 (1997).

³¹ David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," 11f.

³² Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, ed. *Conflict Barometer 2011* (Heidelberg: 2012), 3.

³³ Joe D. Hagan, "Regimes, Political Oppositions, and the Comparative Analysis of Foreign Policy," in *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, ed. Charles F. Hermann, et al. (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 346.

³⁴ Christopher Clapham, *Third World Politics. An Introduction* (London: Croom Helm, 1985). 42.

a situation emerges where political institutions are weak and rulers see the state they command as distinct from society.³⁵ As the incentives for political leaders to make significant concessions in order to broaden loyalty are significantly lower than for merely shifting allegiance from one to another, stronger, social force, the legitimacy of rule is likely to remain scarce and contested.³⁶ Hence, continuous competition occurs among various social groups for the state as the main source of power and economic wealth. One effect of this competitive domestic environment is the involvement of social forces in politics laying the groundwork for what Samuel Huntington called a *praetorian society*.³⁷

Understanding internal politics in Third World states as a reproduction and *microcosm* of international politics, David applies the determinants of the international structure to the domestic arena.³⁸ In the same way as international anarchy, the absence of strong political institutions creates incentives for a politicization of social forces, sparking to a certain extent processes of emulation and self-help, manifested, for instance, in the emergence of militias. Hence, the following section will turn to the question whether and to what extent these domestic conditions affect foreign policy in general and the causal chain as illustrated by **Figure 7**.

Regime type and autonomy

David asserts that Third World leaders enjoy substantially higher levels of flexibility in foreign policy, given the small circle of actual decision-makers and the little influence weakness of both political institutions and public opinion.³⁹ This seems plausible if one has assertive, charismatic, and domestically unchallenged dictators, such as Uganda's Idi Amin or Iraq's Saddam Hussein and their adventurous foreign policy endeavors in mind. As their respective decision to go to war with Tanzania (1978/79) and Iran (1980-88) resulted in international counterbalancing, military defeat and exile, or the erosion of authority over the state's territory, it is questionable whether they serve as examples of successful adjustment policies. Is there a link between regime type and a state's ability to assess and respond to systemic incentives?

Particularly in the works of Norrin Ripsman, state autonomy plays an important role in democratic foreign policy decision-making.⁴⁰ According to him, the limited risk of immediate electoral reprisal or governmental defeat grants the foreign policy executive in representative democracies a comparatively high degree of structural autonomy from domestic opposition.⁴¹ In contrast,

³⁵ Harknett and VanDenBerg, "Alignment theory and interrelated threats," 121f; David, *Choosing Sides*: 13.

³⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *Political order in changing societies* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968). 197; Alagappa, *National Security*: 9; David, *Choosing Sides*: 13.

³⁷ *Political order in changing societies*: 195.

³⁸ ———, *Choosing Sides*: 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴⁰ Ripsman, *Peacemaking by Democracies*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 44. Nevertheless, most democratic governments face significant mobilization hurdles regarding particular issues such as military intervention. This becomes obvious if we compare for instance support for participation in the

states that generally lack mobilization capacity are also less able to commit the resources needed for autonomous policy implementation. Hence, states built on a narrow power base and facing societal competitors are expected to be less effective in mobilizing those resources from society that are necessary for policy implementation.⁴² Additionally, the intervention of social forces in politics impedes a coherent assessment of systemic incentives and limits the choice of policies concerning expected domestic costs.⁴³

Given the centrality of state-society relations and their aim to combine an alternative notion of state and security with structural realist thinking about international politics, Third World studies provided a clear point of departure for NCR, especially in the context of foreign policy analysis.⁴⁴ Throughout the years, however, NCR also turned to—though significantly lower—mobilization hurdles and facilitators in democratic states, for instance the public’s aversion against external action or disagreement among elites about the existence and nature of external threats and opportunities.⁴⁵ To what extent mobilization hurdles are present and play a role in alliance formation and management, will be assessed momentarily.

2.3 “Whoe’er would form eternal bonds...” - Alliance formation

Among realist IR-scholars, there is wide agreement that alliance formation is a strategy in the quest for security and driven by expediency.⁴⁶ Neither Third World security nor NCR challenge this notion. However, there is disagreement particularly on the implicit monopoly of expediency directed at external security and, if not, the expected interaction of security seeking, which entails alliance formation.⁴⁷ Hence, the following section examines internal and external incentives for alignment before turning to their cost/benefit ratio and interplay.

2001 intervention in Afghanistan and the 2003 intervention in Iraq among the German population. Whereas in a *Deutschlandtrend* survey in October 2001, some 64 percent supported German military assistance to the U.S. in Afghanistan, 82 percent demanded in a similar survey in August 2002 that the government should not participate militarily in a potential intervention in Iraq. See Infratest dimap. "Deutschland-Trend Oktober." (2001). <http://bit.ly/1gDKF38>. Accessed January 31, 2014; ———. "Deutschland-Trend August II." (2002). <http://bit.ly/1gDJvoj>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁴² James D. Morrow, "Arms Versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security," *International Organization* 47, no. 2 (1993): 216; Azar and Moon, *National security in the third world*: 84.

⁴³ Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats. A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security* 29, no. 2 (2004): 174.

⁴⁴ Eric A. Miller, *To balance or not to balance: alignment theory and the Commonwealth of Independent States* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*; Barnett and Levy, "Domestic sources of alliances and alignments."; T. Clifton Morgan and Kenneth N. Bickers, "Domestic discontent and the external use of force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 36, no. 1 (1992).

⁴⁵ Steven E. Lobell et al., *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power*; Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*.

⁴⁶ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 166; Barnett and Levy, "Domestic sources of alliances and alignments," 371.

⁴⁷ David, *Choosing Sides*: 7; Barnett and Levy, "Domestic sources of alliances and alignments," 378.

2.3.1 The external security dilemma

Despite neorealism's indeterminacy regarding specific policies, the majority of realist scholars agrees on what causes alliance formation, whether "what others do,"⁴⁸ "external threat,"⁴⁹ or "conflict with an outside party."⁵⁰ Hence, at the core of both balance-of-power and balance-of-threat theory and their dependent variables *balancing* and *alliance formation*, lays the systemic distribution of power capabilities and threats to state security.⁵¹

As outlined above, neorealism argues that states tend to form alliances in response to systemic power imbalances that could lead to agonizing domination by others or even to falling prey to their expansionist policies.⁵² Under the conditions of anarchy, incomplete information about the power capabilities and intentions of others generate a sense of (potential) threat and shared interests, a motive of alliance formation. If specific conflicts of interests arise between states and manifest themselves in aggressive behavior (or the attribution of bellicose intentions), counteralliances are likely to occur and persist.⁵³

When states respond to systemic incentives, their power accumulating strategies vary mostly between internal efforts and external endeavors, including at least two more actors.⁵⁴ In his study on alliance politics, Snyder divided these efforts into four substitutable strategies of national security: armament (equivalent to Waltz' internal efforts), alliances and military action (as external efforts), and settlement.⁵⁵ Which means of power accumulation will be used by a particular state is not determined by structural realism, but states evaluate and outweigh their respective costs within the systemic constraints they face.⁵⁶

In general, armament is expected to reward states by maintaining their autonomy, whereas they need to sacrifice significant values of domestic well-being.⁵⁷ Military action could prevent the adversary from further expansion and reduce the pressure for increasing one's own capabilities, yet carries the high risk of losing tangible material assets. While alliance formation is expected to be less burdensome on states' resources, allies risk autonomy losses and—given the uncertainty about the intentions of others—ending up alone as a result of engaging with an unreliable partner.⁵⁸

Drawing on systemic incentives, Snyder recapitulated that alliances are likely to occur if the potential partners "both feel sufficiently threatened by some third state or alliance" and "believe

⁴⁸ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 127.

⁴⁹ Ole R. Holsti et al., *Unity and disintegration in international alliances: Comparative Studies* (New York: Wiley, 1973). 28.

⁵⁰ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 1.

⁵¹ Stephen M. Walt, "Testing Theories of Alliance Formation: The Case of Southwest Asia," *International Organization* 42, no. 2 (1988); George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1962).

⁵² Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 131; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 18-22.

⁵³ ———, *The Origins of Alliances*: 25f; Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 50f., 61.

⁵⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 118.

⁵⁵ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 5f; ———, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 461.

⁵⁶ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 118.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 106f; Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 6.

⁵⁸ ———, *Alliance politics*: 6; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 30f.

they can do better in an alliance than they could do by themselves."⁵⁹ A purely systemic approach, however, can provide only insufficient insight into the conditions under which states come to such a conclusion.

2.3.2 The domestic security dilemma

Assessing a state's domestic environment is inevitable in order to grasp the security gains, benefits, and tradeoffs in alliance formation.⁶⁰

Armament and preparing military action require all states to extract greater resources from society, be it through increased taxation or conscription of potential soldiers. As arming spares governments costly concessions to potential allies, is much more reliable and can take place comparatively fast, it can be a cheaper answer to an external threat, if resources can be mobilized easily.⁶¹ To what extent do domestic politics influence a state's calculation in this context?

If leaders feel compelled to give high importance to risks of internal overthrow by societal competitors and lack mobilization capacity, they are also limited in their foreign policy choices. Moreover, foreign policy reflects strategies of political rulers to secure or expand their position in the domestic system.⁶² Hence, among armament, military action, and alliance formation, vulnerable states are expected to tend towards the latter one. On the one hand, this tendency results from the risk that large sophisticated armies might split course and overthrow the government by force. On the other, vulnerable states also lack available material and immaterial resources e.g. the capacity to recruit loyal soldiers outside of their societal power base.⁶³ In some cases, vulnerable regimes even deliberately reduce their military capability vis-à-vis external forces by creating sophisticated parallel militaries in order to prevent coups by the regular military. Where the latter therefore lacks combat skills and the best equipment available, the former might not be available for interstate military operations.⁶⁴

Given the domestic costs of arming and their limited mobilization capacity, vulnerable states are expected to choose alignment over arms buildup when responding to an external threat.⁶⁵ This trend is even reinforced in the case of highly fragmented societies. If competing allegiances exceed demarcated borders, leaders have to fear that in cases of interstate war, some societal groups will prefer to bandwagon with the external threat instead of defending a state in whose survival

⁵⁹ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 144.

⁶⁰ See also Morrow, "Arms Versus Allies."; Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, "Domestic sources of alliances and alignments: the case of Egypt, 1962-73," *ibid.*45, no. 3 (1991).

⁶¹ James D. Morrow, "Arms Versus Allies: Trade-Offs in the Search for Security," *ibid.*47, no. 2 (1993): 231.

⁶² Harknett and VanDenBerg, "Alignment theory and interrelated threats," 120; David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," 235.

⁶³ James T. Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: its practice and consequences in the Middle East," *International Security* 24, no. 2 (1999): 144; Randall L. Schweller, "Unanswered Threats. A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *ibid.*29(2004): 179.

⁶⁴ James T. Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing: its practice and consequences in the Middle East," *ibid.*24(1999): 165; Azar and Moon, *National security in the third world*: 84.

⁶⁵ Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 61; Alagappa, *National Security*.

they have no interest.⁶⁶ Hence, if societal fragmentation impedes a consistent assessment of the external threat and a corresponding resource mobilization, leaders are expected to refrain from arming and turn most likely to alliance seeking.⁶⁷

2.3.3 A simple equation? Costs and benefits of alliance formation

Snyder suggests that states enter alliances “if the benefits of doing so are greater than the costs” and that these are “measured from the security and autonomy enjoyed in the pre-alliance alignment pattern.”⁶⁸ Thus, the following section takes a closer look at the specific patterns of benefits and costs that states are expected to face once interstate alignment has emerged.

2.3.3.1 Tying the knot: Benefits of alliance formation

According to Snyder, states can benefit from alliances in several ways: First, they can enhance their capability for deterrence and defense against external attacks. Second, they can spare national resources if credible deterrence alleviates pressure for armament or even war. Third, alliances allow for increased influence over befriended states, in particular regarding potential rapprochements between them and the adversary.

In addition, Snyder argues that regimes might be able to strengthen themselves vis-à-vis internal opponents by allying.⁶⁹ For instance, Walt suggested that states lacking domestic legitimacy are more likely to seek alliances based on a shared ideology in order to bolster internal support through affiliation with a popular movement.⁷⁰ In addition, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita argued that political leaders are likely to forge external alignments that promote and export the state’s religious or cultural beliefs or enhance national security as part of a domestic cooptation strategy.⁷¹ Hence, domestic politics can be decisive for the question with *whom* to align.

In cases of manifest internal conflict, influence over one’s allies gains further importance. On the one hand, external alignments can entail direct material assistance, transformable into domestic power resources.⁷² At times, allies also provide a direct source of domestic state power vis-à-vis

⁶⁶ Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 51f. Though refraining from publicly designating its 1.6 million Arab citizens (as of 2012) a *fifth column* of PLO and others, these concerns might have been decisive for the Israeli government’s decision to exempt over 20 percent of its population from military conscription since 1954. See Laurence Louër, *To be an Arab in Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). 13.

⁶⁷ Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 54; Alagappa, *National Security*: 22.

⁶⁸ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 43.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 43f.

⁷⁰ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 39f. See also Bruce Gilley, “The meaning and measure of state legitimacy: Results for 72 countries,” *European Journal of Political Research* 45, no. 3 (2006): 499; Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *The international politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). 20.

⁷¹ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The logic of political survival* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005). 29.

⁷² Development aid, for instance, allows the government to redistribute resources and prevent *hunger revolts* without having to reduce regime-securing measures or increase resource mobilization like taxation. According to numbers from the African Development Bank, 27 sub-Saharan countries met at least 25 percent of their public expenditures from development aid in 1999, seven of them even 75 percent and more. Deborah A Brautigam and Stephen Knack, “Foreign Aid, Institutions, and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52, no. 2 (2004): 258. See also David, *Choosing Sides*: 95f; Michael Mastanduno et al., “Towards a Realist Theory of State Action,” *International Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (1989): 466.

internal challengers, by delivering weapons, riot-gear, or even committing troops.⁷³ On the other hand, states can pressure their allies into denying support to their domestic adversaries. For example, although providing in theory a convenient source of backing for the Islamist uprising against secular rule in Syria, Iran’s Revolutionary leader Ruhollah Khomeini turned down requests even for moral assistance in order not to jeopardize his anti-Iraq alignment with Hafiz al-Asad.⁷⁴

However, these observations raise a question that deserves further attention in current realist debates. Are realist assumptions of interstate alliance politics useful to grasp alignment dynamics against domestic challenges?

Security of Others: Alliances targeting non-state actors

According to Walt, an alliance’s defining feature is a military commitment “against some external actor(s).”⁷⁵ Snyder also emphasizes this ‘other-orientation’ as the distinctive feature between alliances and other international institutions, yet claims that they are explicitly directed at “states outside their own membership.”⁷⁶ In order to broaden the explanatory scope of alliance theory, it is argued that bilateral agreements targeting sub state forces like transnationally active terrorist networks or violent uprisings should not be excluded from alliance politics quite so easily.

Societal groups, especially competitors for political power, play a major—at times even decisive—role in neoclassical realist thinking on interstate alliances.⁷⁷ Hence, if recalling the supremacy of security seeking as a source of alliance formation, the assumption that sub state actors can be targets of interstate alliances implies an understanding of national security that includes regime security. A corresponding notion can be found in Snyder’s definition of national security, which comprehends not only *political* security in the sense of independence and sovereignty, and *physical* security, subsuming material costs of war but also the security of “governments against internal violent overthrow.”⁷⁸ This fits in with the assertion of David and others that especially vulnerable states see interstate alignment as an external source of domestic power resources.

However, alliance formation should not be understood as a one-way street. The threat of government overthrow might be decisive for one ally whereas the other might not consider it a major

⁷³ See also David, *Choosing Sides*: 23f.

⁷⁴ Hanna Batatu, "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *MERIP Reports* 110(1982): 13; Henner Fürtig, *Der irakisch-iranische Krieg 1980 - 1988. Ursachen - Verlauf - Folgen* (Berlin: Akad.-Verl., 1992). 125f.

⁷⁵ Stephen M. Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival* 39, no. 1 (1997): 157.

⁷⁶ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 4.

⁷⁷ Harknett and VanDenBerg, "Alignment theory and interrelated threats.;" Miller, *To balance or not to balance*; David, *Choosing Sides*.

⁷⁸ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 5.

threat.⁷⁹ The events in the course of the uprisings in the Arab World since 2011 exemplify this dynamic in a very impressive manner (**Table 2**). Both Tunisia's former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011) and Egypt's Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) had been strong and valuable allies of the Western countries for decades before mass protest and realignment by the security forces swept them away from power without significant support by their allies. In contrast, Saudi Arabia sent some 1,000 troops to suppress protests in Bahrain, and both Iran and Russia strongly supported pressured Syrian President Bashar al-Asad materially and politically in his crackdown on domestic dissent.⁸⁰ In a third case, the French military intervention helping the Malian authorities to regain control over the north in January 2013 was not a consequence of the expulsion of government forces by Tuareg rebels in early 2012 but the latter's replacement by the Islamist groups Ansar Dine and al-Qaeda in Maghreb.⁸¹

Against the background of these observations, one might argue that not the threat of government overthrow was decisive for external support against domestic competitors, but the others' calculation whether regime change would come along with an unfavorable international realignment. To a certain extent building on U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's theory of "falling dominoes,"⁸² it can be assumed that domestic competitors for political rule serve only as a secondary target of interstate alliances, if their success might trigger international realignment and thus a security threat for the ally. This calculation, however, does not restrain pressured governments to divert resources obtained from allies to fight off external rivals against domestic enemies.⁸³

Table 2: External intervention and the risk of realignment (2011-2013)

Conflict	Risk of international realignment	Pro-government intervention by traditional allies
EGYPT	-	- ^a
TUNISIA	-	- ^b
BAHRAIN	✓	✓ ^c
SYRIA	✓	✓ ^d
MALI	-/✓	-/✓ ^e

^a West, moderate Arab States

^b West, moderate Arab States

^c Saudi Arabia, GCC

^d Russia, Iran

^e Only after threat of Islamist takeover emerged

⁷⁹ ———, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 467.

⁸⁰ Caroline Hawley. "Gulf states send forces to Bahrain following protests." BBC News (2011). Published electronically March 14. <http://bbc.in/LDUYGx>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁸¹ Robyn Dixon and Jane Labous. "Gains of Mali's Tuareg rebels appear permanent, analysts say." Los Angeles Times (2012). Published electronically April 04. <http://lat.ms/1dWnQjn>. Accessed January 31, 2014; International Crisis Group. "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform." Africa Report 201, (2013). Published electronically April 11. <http://bit.ly/1bdovA1>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁸² "The President's News Conference, April 7, 1954." The American Presidency Project (1954). <http://bit.ly/1kyucLS>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁸³ One of the most drastic examples of this is probably Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons supplied by European companies, and backed by the United States in the context of the Iran-Iraq War, against Kurdish and Shia civilians, claiming the lives of some 100,000 people in 1988/89. See Kelly Motz and Gary Milhollin. "The Means to Make the Poisons Came From the West." New York Times (2003). Published electronically April 13. <http://nyti.ms/WTJTWf>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

Having both international and domestic security challenges in mind, alignments might be cheap in contrast to internal balancing. As they definitely do not come for free, especially in the case of vulnerable states, the following section will turn to the potential costs of interstate alignment.

2.3.3.2 *Fatal attraction: Costs of alliance formation*

Alliances incur certain costs, at times directly neutralizing potential benefits. If they trigger the formation of counter alliances, allied states run the risk of sacrificing tangibly higher resources in the case of conflict escalation, if they need to help another ally or find themselves being dragged into a war with the opponent by an ally all too confident of one's support. Furthermore, alliances put constraints on the state's freedom of action and the formation of alternative alliances. Implicitly, Snyder also identifies a risk of alignments weakening the allying regime's domestic position, which will be further specified as follows.⁸⁴

First, external alignments against a rival state can exacerbate domestic conflict, deepen societal frictions, and reduce likelihood of internal conciliation. During the Persian Gulf Crisis 1990/91 for instance, the traditionally strong ties between Amman and the Washington threatened to further deteriorate Jordan's already strained relations with its Palestinian citizens, making up for approximately half of the total population and supporting Saddam Hussein. Subsequently, King Hussein sided in a limited though unprecedented departure from previous alignment patterns with Iraq.⁸⁵

Second, alliances generally require their members to resolve conflicting interests and subsequent policy concessions can be at times met with refusal by relevant domestic actors.⁸⁶ As especially asymmetrical alignments grant allies leverage, leaders that compromise in intra-alliance bargaining face charges of "deliberate undermining of state sovereignty."⁸⁷ This is most likely to be the case if an ally's commitment involves the presence of foreign troops, support bases and facilities, as well as over flight rights.⁸⁸ Exemplified by the cases of Japan, Saudi Arabia, and West Germany in the 1960s and 70s, the articulation of domestic protest can range from mass demonstrations to violent attacks on state officials and the ally's representatives.⁸⁹

Third, weak regimes might find themselves at risk in alliances promoting transnational unity. As these endorse allegiances beyond the state, other members of such a unity movement can easily interfere in the state's domestic affairs. Suffering defeat in the struggle over the movement's lead-

⁸⁴ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 44.

⁸⁵ See also Harknett and VanDenBerg, "Alignment theory and interrelated threats."

⁸⁶ Morrow, "Arms Versus Allies," 231.

⁸⁷ Alagappa, *National Security*: 22.

⁸⁸ Barnett and Levy, "Domestic sources of alliances and alignments," 375; Alagappa, *National Security*.

⁸⁹ See also Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cultural norms and national security: Police and military in postwar Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). 155; Sherifa Zuhur, *Saudi Arabia* (Santa Barbara, C.A.: ABC-CLIO, 2011). 106-108.

ership is also likely to further undermine the leader's autonomy and to reduce the state's power resources.⁹⁰

Hence, vulnerable states will be particularly concerned by the autonomy losses and concessions of formal interstate alliances, despite the fact that they provide for power resources vis-à-vis internal competitors in the short run. In 1958, for instance, the Syrian leadership agreed to join the United Arab Republic, initially aiming to decrease the domestic threat of Communist overthrow and to cash in on the Pan-Arab popularity of Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser. As they miscalculated particularly the domestic repercussions of the concessions they had made to Cairo, the government did not survive the Union's collapse only three years later.⁹¹

2.3.4 Conclusion: Alliance formation in a multifaceted security environment

The last section centered on several questions. Under what conditions are states generally likely to form alliances with others in contrast to arming unilaterally against an external rival? To what extent are these conditions applicable to vulnerable states lacking legitimacy and thus autonomy in foreign policy decision-making? Given the presence of substantial and structural hurdles to resource mobilization in these countries, they tend towards alignment instead of internal arms build-up. For them, alliances entail security gains in both the international and domestic arena; yet they also carry significant risks at the same time.⁹² Hence, in order to increase the explanatory power of realist approaches to alliance formation by vulnerable states, the external security dilemma, which sets important incentives for state behavior needs to be complemented by a second, domestic security dilemma (**Figure 8**).

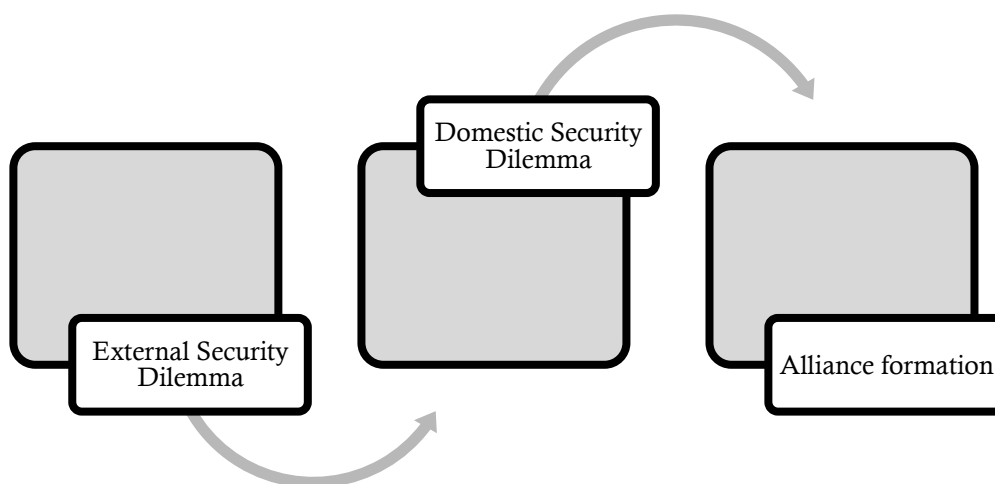


Figure 8: Neoclassical realism's causal mechanism in alliance formation

⁹⁰ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 36; Mary Ann Tétreault, "International Relations," in *Understanding the contemporary Middle East*, ed. Jillian Schwedler and Deborah J. Gerner (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 141f., 149.

⁹¹ Adeed I. Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980). 54f; Ritchie Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars* (London: Longman, 1992). 189f; Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The history of an ambition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992). 155-158.

⁹² Harknett and VanDenBerg, "Alignment theory and interrelated threats," 117.

As this study addresses not only the emergence of sponsorship relations but also their evolvement over time, one should keep in mind that alliance formation does not override the anarchic nature of the international system. By contrast, uncertainty about the intentions even of alliance partners continues to prevail and influences how states manage their alliance policies.⁹³ Therefore, the following section will initially turn to Snyder's concept of the *security dilemma in alliance politics* and continue to examine the role of autonomy and regime vulnerability in alliance management.⁹⁴

2.4 “... should weigh if heart to heart responds.” - Alliance management

According to Walt, “there is nothing sacred about an existing alliance, no matter how successful or long-lived it has been.”⁹⁵ Once an alliance is established, all of its members have an interest in maintaining cooperation. Yet, under the prevailing conditions of anarchy, states continue to aim at maximizing their security benefits and controlling potential or actual alliance costs.⁹⁶ This implies that the trade-off between security gains and autonomy losses has not been eliminated either and likely to spark intra-alliance conflict if the conditions change under which it has been formed.⁹⁷

2.4.1 The alliance security dilemma

Alliance formation arises from highly specific conditions. Therefore, outside shocks, such as the rise or demise of the external threat, the emergence of alternative policy options, or a change in the power capabilities of at least one ally set incentives for states to reestablish the initial “optimum mix.”⁹⁸

As outlined in section 2.1.1, states find themselves in a dilemma between security seeking and autonomy retaining, which are to a certain extent incompatible in alliances. Hence, Michael Mandelbaum observed that if the level of external threat increases, states might fear that their allies will “stand aside rather than fulfill a commitment to fight when the war actually begins,”⁹⁹ in short abandonment. This is especially the case if a state sees itself as highly dependent on the ally, regarding both the perceived level of threat posed by the adversary and alternative options to deal with the security challenge.¹⁰⁰ If the ally's commitment to cooperation remains vague and unspecified and its strategic interests in the state's security are low, abandonment fears are likely to increase.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 4.

⁹⁴ ———, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics.”

⁹⁵ “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” 170.

⁹⁶ ———, *Alliance politics*: 165f.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 180f.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* See also Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse.”

⁹⁹ Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations: The search for national security in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988). 101.

¹⁰⁰ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 167; Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations*: 101.

¹⁰¹ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 169f.

When the level of external threat declines, states tend to fear entrapment, meaning, “one ally will entangle another in a quarrel in which the second has no substantial take,” thus increasing the risk of “fighting an unwanted and unnecessary war.”¹⁰² Although a jointly perceived threat is crucial for alliance formation, external threats are seldom equally distributed among alliance partners. Hence, entrapment is likely to be feared by the ally which perceives itself as being less exposed to the threat but might be compelled to fight for the ally in case of conflict escalation, either because of respective treaties or strategic interests in the latter’s security. This concern is likely to increase if there is disagreement among the allies of how to meet the external threat.¹⁰³

Both the risk of abandonment in times of need and entrapment in someone else’s war play a significant role regarding the choice between internal and external balancing and among alternative alliance partners. Once alliances are formed, how do states respond to these risks?

In brief, states fearing abandonment are expected to increase their material and public commitment to the alliance and take a firmer stand against the opponent, whereas those concerned about entrapment are likely to relax their commitment and preserve the option to realign with the adversary. As these risks are likely to vary contrariwise, alliance partners find themselves in a dilemma: Policies aiming at reducing abandonment tend to also decrease one’s bargaining leverage and are likely to increase the risk of entrapment as a strong commitment could encourage the partner to become more assertive towards the alliance’s opponent. Moreover, strong alliance commitment impedes the chances for a potential realignment with the opponent. In turn, limiting the scope and specificity of one’s commitment to the ally seems to be an adequate strategy to avoid these negative outcomes (entrapment), as it might relax the external security dilemma and increase intra-alliance bargaining power. However, this strategy could raise fears of realignment among its partners and correspondingly the risk of abandonment for oneself.¹⁰⁴

Mutual in-/dependency on military assistance, firm, and credible/vague commitments of support, and common/conflicting interests in juxtaposition to the adversary, determine whether the alliance security dilemma (ASD) is severe. As these factors are presumably shaped by the allies’ security environment in general and the nature of the external threat in particular, the following section turns to their interplay with the ASD.

2.4.2 How the security dilemma influences alliance management

In international politics, when arguing that alliance formation could trigger counteralliances, structural realists resort to John Herz’ concept of a security dilemma.¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, states are inclined to pre-emptively strive for security by acquiring power, among them alliance formation.

¹⁰² Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations*: 101.

¹⁰³ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 168-171, 186f; Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations*: 101.

¹⁰⁴ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 181f.

¹⁰⁵ C.f. Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's status-quo bias: What security dilemma?," *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (1996).

As this is perceived by others as decreasing their security, counteraction is likely to occur and the “vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on.”¹⁰⁶ Given the lack of information about a rising power’s intentions, states can ameliorate the security dilemma by standing firm and thus deterring a presumably aggressive power from attacking or by conciliating a benign power. Mis-perception of intent, however, is costly as virtual status quo powers forced into the defensive might respond with a firm policy and aggressive adversaries might interpret appeasement as weakness and feel emboldened to further make demands.¹⁰⁷

Balance-of-threat theory revealed that states tend to strengthen their alliance commitment when facing an opponent harboring apparently aggressive intentions and that these alliances erode if these conditions (or their perception) are no longer given or more attractive alternatives present themselves.¹⁰⁸ However, it provides us with little systematic insight about the side effects of structural changes (or those of perceptions) on alliance management between formation and failure. In order to discern mutual side effects of the security dilemma and the alliance dilemma, Snyder conceptualizes a *composite security dilemma*, which combines a state’s strategies in opposition to its adversary and its ally respectively.¹⁰⁹ From this, we can draw two main assumptions:

First, if a state perceives the alliance’s opponent as aggressive, it tends to strengthen its commitment to the ally in order to deter it from attacking and to reduce the risk of abandonment by bolstering its reputation for loyalty among current and potential allies. Yet, a strong commitment is accompanied by a loss of intra-alliance autonomy and an increased risk of entrapment. Moreover, other costs of alliance formation tend to manifest themselves.¹¹⁰

Second, if the state perceives accommodation and conciliation as the most appropriate strategy, weakening its commitment to the alliance is likely to reduce tensions with the adversary, puts substantial constraints on the ally, and reduces the risk of entrapment. Furthermore, a state providing only a vague and low commitment to an alliance can also alleviate the general costs of alliance formation.¹¹¹ However, low alliance commitment increases the risk of security losses, either in form of abandonment by the ally or a substantial loss in its reputation, thereby reducing the availability of future allies.¹¹²

Assuming that the nature of the external security dilemma sets the main policy incentives and preferences, this approach clearly follows neorealist thinking of alliance formation and develop-

¹⁰⁶ John H. Herz, "Idealist Institutionalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2, no. 2 (1950): 157f.

¹⁰⁷ See also Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 193; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 27f; Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 175.

¹⁰⁸ Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse."

¹⁰⁹ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 194.

¹¹⁰ Foreclose realignment options, solidify adversary alliance, increase tension, and cause counteralliances *ibid.*, 194f.

¹¹¹ Preserving realignment options and dividing adversary alliances

¹¹² Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 194f.

ment. The latter's strong influence on FPA is also reflected in the claim that misperception of the adversary's intentions entails policy failure.¹¹³

A second, implicit, causal chain, which allows for states to direct their policy against the adversary to intra-alliance relations points to alternative reasons for states to employ policies contradicting systemic incentives. Although Snyder explicitly excluded domestic politics from his theory of alliance formation and politics, he argues, "Systemic structure [...] must pass through a domestic political prism."¹¹⁴ Hence, the implicit assessment that domestic political change may cause realignment at times independent of systemic shifts fits in particularly with neoclassical realism.¹¹⁵ Under which conditions domestic politics are likely to influence the ASD and thus offer an alternative explanation for alliance management will be examined as follows.

2.4.3 Domestic politics in the alliance dilemma

Chapter 2.1.2 examined the constraints domestic politics impose on a state's response to the security dilemma. In a similar vein, the following section turns to the interaction between the ASD and domestic politics, particularly in the context of vulnerable states. By linking the risks emerging from the ASD (abandonment/entrapment) with the security needs of domestically challenged governments, specific alignment patterns of vulnerable states will be conceptualized.

First, they share a strong tendency towards external balancing as their lack in internal mobilization capacity and relative military weakness limits policy alternatives (See 2.3.2). Second, their need for military assistance against an adversary additionally concerns resources to repress or co-opt domestic dissent, thereby aggrandizing their demands, expectations, and dependence regarding the alliance. Third, the abovementioned strategy to increase internal support by joining a broader ideology-based movement further narrows alliance options. Hence, if vulnerable states join alliances, they are very likely to find themselves in a disadvantageous position, pointing towards a desire to reduce abandonment risks. Where one might expect a subsequent bias towards formal agreements and willingness for intra-alliance concessions likely to entail autonomy costs, the risk of increased domestic dissent stemming from them pressures vulnerable states into a preference for informal and vague commitments. Hence, high degrees of dependence in order to meet various security needs and a bias towards vague patterns of obligations provide the allies of vulnerable states with significant leverage in intra-alliance relations. These domestically generated fears of entrapment are expected to increase if the state values the threat of domestic overthrow higher than an external threat. For instance, Jordan's King Hussein confirmed in retrospect, that

¹¹³ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 28; Robert Jervis, *Perception and misperception in international politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976). 84.

¹¹⁴ *Alliance politics*: 131.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 131f; Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 47f.

the primary reason he entered the 1967 War was not the external Israeli threat but domestic Palestinian dissent.¹¹⁶

According to Snyder, states can boost intra-alliance bargaining power by issuing credible threats of realignment.¹¹⁷ Yet again, the credibility of these threats is likely to be undermined by the presence of domestic threats. Generally, realignment entails an—at least temporary—reduction of military power due to expected cuts in external arms supplies and considerable amounts of time to adapt to new weapons systems and, at times, new military doctrines.¹¹⁸ These security risks further increase if social forces affiliated with the former ally oppose the realignment. Be it for ideological reasons or out of fear to lose a key external source of domestic power, these groups will consider the state’s refusal to fulfill the obligations emerging from the alliance as an act of treason.

The assumption that the ASD is more severe for vulnerable states fits in with NCR emphasizing that domestic politics exert substantial influence on how states translate systemic incentives into actual policies. If states have to devote a substantial amount of resources not only to the effects that changes in their international security environment have on intra-alliance relations (and vice-versa) but also to how they affect domestic security, coherent responses to the external threat are less likely to occur.

2.4.4 Conclusion: Risk management in alliances

As much as other forms of external state behavior, alliance politics are a means to adapt to security challenges. Hence, changes in alliance policy between realignment and strong commitment are expected to result from shifts in a state’s security environment, disarranging the optimum balance between the risks of external balancing, once the decisive factor for alliance formation, and the state’s efforts to restore it.¹¹⁹ As outlined in the previous section, vulnerable regimes are—in contrast to other states—admonished to attribute greater significance to the potential costs of abandonment and entrapment also in the domestic realm.

When assessing the alliance politics of vulnerable states, the complexity of security challenges they face plays a key role. This is especially the case, as their subsequent difficulty to restore the optimum balance of risks implies a high likelihood that they will choose alliance strategies mis-

¹¹⁶ Samir A. Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). 41.

¹¹⁷ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 168.

¹¹⁸ David, *Choosing Sides*: 27f. Whereas the normalization of Turkey-Soviet relations in the late 1970s increased the coup-proneness of the U.S.-affiliated army resulting in an actual overthrow of the civilian government in 1980, the Islamic Republic of Iran survived the fundamental realignment in 1979 as a coup in July 1980 failed, yet lost military strength given both the cessation of US-arms and technology supplies, and military purges. Sinkaya, Bayram, Interview by the Author, Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Department of International Relations, Ankara, July 9, 2012. See also Gökhan Çetinsaya, "A Tale of Two Centuries: Continuities in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy," in *Contentious issues of security and the future of Turkey*, ed. Nursin Atesoglu Guney (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 13f; David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1990). 367; Robert W. Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia, 1991-2000: the Kurdish and Islamist questions* (Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda Publishers, 2001). 67.

¹¹⁹ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 191.

matching the international threat. Hence, also forging alliances with terrorist organizations as a functional equivalent to interstate alignments is expected to occur in situations where a severe interstate alliance dilemma is present in concurrence with regime vulnerability.

In order to examine this idea more specifically, the following chapter will turn to the question under which conditions state sponsorship of terrorism alleviates the multiple dilemmas vulnerable states find themselves in when committing to interstate alliances. If such a policy serves as a functional equivalent to external balancing, security gains at the expense of external and domestic competitors should emerge from it. Hence, as a result of the prevalence of the international system's anarchic structure, a similar dilemma is expected to occur also in sponsorship relations, influencing the way states balance the respective risks of abandonment by the group and finding themselves entrapped in interstate escalation.

3 Realism and state sponsorship of terrorism

In the previous sections, the argument was established that states lacking relative autonomy in foreign policy questions, particularly in connection with regime vulnerability, face significantly higher costs stemming from the autonomy losses caused by alliance formation. Simultaneously, they exhibit a high tendency to commit to alliances if security challenges emerge given their weak resource extraction capacity and political risks of internal mobilization. As this strong tendency towards external balancing reduces vulnerable states' bargaining power in intra-alliance relations, they are likely to find themselves frequently in a dilemma between the risks of abandonment in times of need and entrapment in a war which is not in their interest. In this context, state sponsorship of terrorism appears as a form of external balancing, allowing the state to meet various security needs and control its dependence on the group, thereby reducing both the risk of abandonment and entrapment.

Hence, the following section will first turn to the question whether sponsorship, which is generally used to describe clandestine and informal agreements with non-state actors can be understood as an alliance in the sense of Snyder's theory. This is of particular interest regarding these agreements' function as external enemy deterrent and conveyance of reliability to one's allies. Second, it addresses the question of applicability in a more in-depth manner, exploring potential costs and benefits of sponsorship, particularly in comparison to interstate alliances.

Regarding the question, how sponsoring states manage such alignments once they have been established, it should be kept in mind that anarchy prevails and both risks continuously influence sponsorship policies. Therefore, section 3.3 turns to respective strategies of state sponsorship of terrorism and their underlying risk patterns in order to assess whether and to what extent they reflect the idea that allies seek to reestablish the initial optimum balance of security and autonomy.

3.1 Informality and secrecy in alliance politics

To what extent are *informal* and *secretive* alignments with *non-state actors* likely to entail an abandonment/entrapment dilemma similar to those in formal interstate alliances? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to address significant differences between alliance and alignment/ententes debated among realists, particularly concerning the question of *formality*, *publicity*, and *membership*.¹

¹George Modelski, "The Study of Alliances," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 7, no. 4 (1963); Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 6-9; Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 12f.

3.1.1 Formality: From shaking hands to signing treaties

Many realist scholars addressing questions of alliance policy have listed both formal and informal arrangements under the term “alliance”² or “alignments.”³ In contrast, Snyder argues that only “formal associations of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership,”⁴ should be considered alliances and subsumed all informal arrangements under the term alignment. Whereas the former entails “specificity, legal and moral obligation, and reciprocity,”⁵ in a formalized manner, the latter group consists of mere expectations about the future behavior of others, stemming from the “perceived interests, capabilities, and observed behavior of other states.”⁶

In order to emphasize this difference, Snyder stresses two points. First, formal alliances “introduce a sense of obligation,” which arises both from “the legal status of the contract as a treaty” and a “moral convention that promises should be kept.”⁷ Second, states find themselves pressured to fulfill such formalized obligations, particularly in order to maintain the credibility of their future commitments.⁸ Yet, to what extent does the saying ‘if it's not written, it didn't happen!’ apply to the reality of alliance politics? Moreover, does it have to be expanded to ‘if it's not written, it *won't* happen’?

Stephen Walt and Robert Kann have addressed this question explicitly and concluded that substantial obligations are also likely to emerge from informal ententes.⁹ Remarkably, this notion is also adopted by Snyder, stating

*“The political reality of alliances is not different in kind from that of tacit and informal alignments; it lies not in the formal contract but in the expectations that are supported or created—not only between the partners but also among all interested bystanders, including especially opponents.”*¹⁰

He further softens the rigor of his formal/informal separation by claiming that even the most formal alliance commitments are likely to create expectations of support and solidarity that go beyond the narrow and precisely specified contingency of the actual contract.¹¹

Informality reduces, on the one hand, the expected reputation costs of non-fulfillment and the risk of entrapment, depriving the ally of both a guarantee that it will receive support in the case of conflict escalation and a signed treaty to pressure its partner into contract fulfillment.¹² On the

² ———, *The Origins of Alliances*: 1.

³ David, *Choosing Sides*: 29.

⁴ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 12; Robert A. Kann, “Alliances versus ententes,” *World Politics* 28, no. 4 (1976).

¹⁰ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 188; Kann, “Alliances versus ententes,” 621.

other hand, a risk of entrapment emerges from vague commitments as well, as states might feel inclined to prove their loyalty by supporting the ally in all contingencies.¹³

3.1.2 Publicity: Can a secret deter anyone?

Particularly realists have emphasized deterrence as a key function of alliances.¹⁴ To what extent is this compatible with, for instance, Martha Crenshaw's claim that state sponsorship of terrorism is a "means of deception and denial"¹⁵?

Partially or completely secretive alliances have repeatedly occurred in interstate relations, especially throughout the 18th and 19th century. The formality of secret alliance treaties, bearing signatures of high-ranking state officials, served as a guarantee of alliance loyalty while its secretive character offered a possible back door for realignment without losing credibility as a potential ally for others.

Deterrence, a convenient side effect of public alliances replaced deniability as the main objective of alliance formation in the 20th century.¹⁶ Credible deterrence reduces fears of both abandonment and entrapment, sending signals of predictability to others about the alliance's *red lines*. If these are crossed and deterrence fails, however, allies in public confederations find themselves in a severe alliance dilemma.¹⁷ Kann argues that states tend to resort to secrecy or at least vagueness, fearing both entrapment and losing international credibility by breaching the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*.¹⁸ This is especially the case if the risk of conflict escalation is high.

In modern times, it remains doubtful whether allies can achieve complete secrecy given the high number of people generally involved in such agreements. Additionally, there is the risk that the agreement's content might be leaked if allies disagree about how to meet the common security threat. One ally might decide to publicly allude to the cooperation in order to pursue a *standing firm* strategy. Hence, if known to actual and potential confederates as well as enemies, informal alliances are likely to function as a means of external balancing.

Having shown that the intended and unintended effects of alliance management deviate from the *classical* alliance, it is suggested that states employ the four additional strategies of alliance management displayed in **Figure 9** when aiming at restoring the optimum balance between entrapment and abandonment.

¹³ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 188.

¹⁴ See also Kann, "Alliances versus ententes," 616; Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 43.

¹⁵ Martha Crenshaw, "Terrorism and Global Security," in *Lashing the Dogs of War. Conflict Management in a divided World*, ed. Chester A. Crocker, et al. (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2008), 73.

¹⁶ Kann, "Alliances versus ententes," 612-615.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 616f.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 619f.

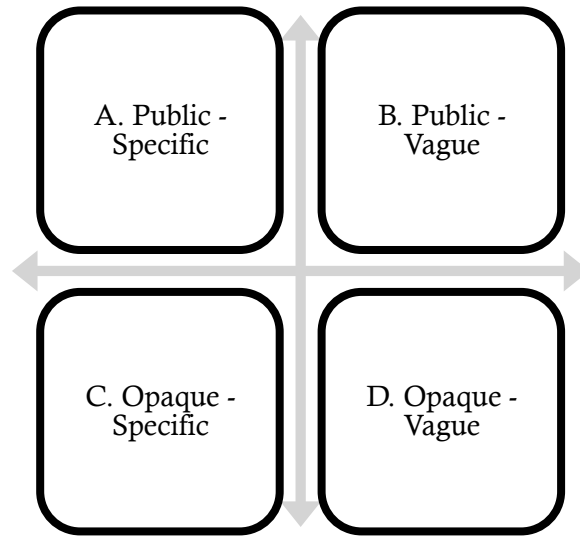


Figure 9: Patterns of alliance management

In the context of alliance formation, formality, and publicity both generate deterrence and reliability (A). They are also accompanied by costly autonomy losses with a very high risk that if deterrence fails, allies will have to follow up on their promises and mobilize corresponding resources or hazard reputation losses.

While informality and secrecy allow for reduced autonomy losses and entrapment costs (C), security gains are expected to occur primarily if informality is accompanied by public endorsement of the alliance (B), thereby creating deterrence and expectations of loyalty. If an agreement is both opaque and formal (D), it increases the relative costs of realignment for the other.¹⁹

It was maintained that both informal and secretive alignments reproduce the effects of formal and public alliances on the ASD and thus the international security environment. It is, therefore, plausible to treat them as functional equivalents to formal alliances. However, as anarchy prevails, no single strategy fully eliminates either entrapment or abandonment risks.

3.2 When your best friend is said to be invisible: Non-state actors in alliance politics

Apart from the criterion of formality and a security (military) purpose, Snyder asserts that only states can form alliances, thereby explicitly excluding “connections between governments and

¹⁹ Strongly related to the concept of plausible deniability, opaque policies occur if their content carries substantial material and reputational costs, both internationally and domestically, and is unlikely to generate consent in these arenas. The fact that they are nevertheless pursued, for instance in the context of Israel’s nuclear deterrence, points to dissent in state-society (or intra-alliance) relations about how to address an external threat and opacity thus serves as a substitute for support-generated autonomy in foreign policy decision-making Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel’s Bargain with the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). 45f.

nongovernmental entities such as revolutionary groups.”²⁰ However, as these also occur almost exclusively in the context of security—and the ability to sign treaties binding under international law should be a secondary criterion given the debate outlined in the previous sections—further reasoning for this exclusion would be desirable. Hence, the following section will elaborate on two points frequently mentioned in this context: the role of non-state actors (NSAs) in international politics and assumptions about their receptiveness of systemic incentives.

3.2.1 Non-state actors in international politics

Since the 1960s, an extensive body of literature focuses on the increasing role and importance of NSA’s in international politics in general and global governance in particular, thereby challenging the primacy of states.²¹ Others pay attention to the question of states’ delegation of authority to international and intergovernmental organizations.²² In most cases, an assessment of the prominence of NSAs in international politics has been accompanied with criticism of state centered realism and the claim that its neglect of non-state entities causes a growing rift between parsimony and explanatory power.²³

However, IR-literature has rarely explicitly discussed, whether NSAs can be alliance partners. Therefore, a first step will be the examination of their general role in international politics from a realist perspective and its reflection in alliance studies. Second, the examination turns to the debate on terrorism, focusing on the challenge that transnationally operating violent NSAs pose to a realist understanding of international affairs and adequate state responses. If it is plausible that coherent adaptation is easier for states if the terrorist threat becomes attributable by state involvement, sponsorship constitutes a functional equivalent of external balancing.

To begin with, neorealist scholars have never denied NSA’s existence in international politics. According to Waltz, “states are not and never have been the only international actors” and the

²⁰ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 4.

²¹ For a debate on NSAs in international relations, see Muhittin Ataman, "The Impact of Non-State Actors on World Politics: A Challenge to Nation-States," *Alternatives. Turkish Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 1 (2003); Bas Arts, "Non-state actors in global environmental governance: New arrangements beyond the state," in *New Modes of Governance in the Global System. Exploring Publicness, Delegation and Inclusiveness*, ed. Mathias Koenig-Archibugi and Michael Zürn (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); James N. Rosenau, "Change, Complexity, and Governance in a Globalizing Space," in *Debating Governance. Authority, Steering and Democracy*, ed. J. Pierre (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Richard Higgott et al., eds., *Non-State Actors and Authority in the Global System* (London: Routledge, 2000); Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State. The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 93; Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972).

²² Joseph Jupille et al., "Integrating Institutions: Rationalism, Constructivism, and the Study of the European Union," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 1-2 (2003); Joseph Jupille and James A. Caporaso, "States, agency, and rules: the European Union in global environment politics," in *The European Union in the world community*, ed. Carolyn Rhodes (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Darren G. Hawkins et al., eds., *Delegation and agency in international organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006).

²³ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, "Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction," *International Organisation* 25, no. 3 (1972); Florian T. Furtak, *Nichtstaatliche Akteure in den internationalen Beziehungen. NGOs in der Weltpolitik* (München: Tuduv Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997). 13-18; James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence. Essays on the Transnationalism of World Affairs* (New York: Nichols, 1980); William C. Olson and A.J.R. Groom, *International Relations then and now. Origins and trends in interpretation* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 1991). 264-268.

“importance of non-state actors and the extent of transnational activities is obvious.”²⁴ Nevertheless, an international-political system, allowing NSAs to rise stems from the major actors’ deliberate decision to “change rules that no longer suit them.”²⁵ Accordingly, the importance of NSAs is limited to processes within the international system and challenges the central role of states only if they “develop to the point of rivaling or surpassing the great powers.”²⁶ This notion is deep-rooted in realist scholarship.²⁷

Remarkably, and despite their criticism of structural realists’ straightforward projection of their assumptions on how states adapt to structural changes while generally emphasizing the importance of *Innenpolitik* features in alliance politics, neither David nor other representatives of Third World studies contest state-centrality in alliances.²⁸

Regarding the role of terrorist organizations in international politics, scholarship substantially increased after 9/11.²⁹ While the political relevance of this phenomenon is widely undisputed, the debate rekindled whether particularly neorealism could serve as a framework for understanding; a question of high relevance given the frequent use of terms prominent in realist thinking—most prominent the *war on terror*.³⁰ On the one hand, realism can hardly explain the emergence of terrorism without reducing it to a side effect of at least partial state failure (like transnational crime). On the other hand, several realist scholars have claimed that the mere presence of transnational terrorist actors neither replaces states as the main actors in the system nor overrides anarchy and the incentives it places on targeted states.

Stephen Walt, for instance, claimed that especially to the actions of al-Qaeda, states have responded predictably.³¹ This became especially evident in the approach of the U.S. government af-

²⁴ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 93f.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 95. This last point clearly refers to Keohane and Nye’s criticism of state centric approaches as inadequate frameworks of understanding change, claiming that “transnational actors **sometimes** prevail over governments” Keohane and Nye, *Transnational Relations and World Politics*: 386. (Emphasis added by the author)

²⁷ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 12; Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 4; Kent E. Calder, *Pacific alliance. Reviving U.S.-Japan relations* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009). 70; Ole R. Holsti et al., *Unity and disintegration in international alliances : comparative studies*, Comparative studies in behavioral science (New York: Wiley, 1973). 4; Joanne Gowa, *Allies, Adversaries, and International Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). 30f; Bruce Russett, "An Empirical Typology of International Military Alliances," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 2 (1971): 262f.

²⁸ David, *Choosing Sides*: 29.

²⁹ Klejda Mulaj, ed. *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics* (London: Hurst & Company, 2010); Andrew Blum et al., "Nonstate Actors, Terrorism, and Weapons of Mass Destruction," *International Studies Review* 7, no. 1 (2005); Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorism Research."

³⁰ Even structural realists themselves further fanned this debate. John Mearsheimer, for instance, responded to the question what realism had to say about terrorists “not a whole heck of a lot.” “Through the Realist Lens’. Interview mit Harry Kreisler (08.04.2002).” (2002). <http://bit.ly/1bhIRVX>. Accessed January 31, 2014. See also Robert H. Jackson and Georg Sorensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, 3 ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). 254f; Keith L. Shimko, *International Relations: Perspectives and Controversies*, 3 ed. (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2010). 301f.

³¹ Stephen M. Walt. "Balancing American Power in the Post-9/11 World." Interview with Harry Kreisler (2005). Published electronically November 15. <http://bit.ly/1j2wxAI>. Accessed January 30, 2014; Mearsheimer, "Through the Realist Lens'. Interview mit Harry Kreisler (08.04.2002)".

ter 2001, employing “ostracism, coercion and elimination typical of all-out war”³² as the appropriate means to fight al-Qaeda. Thereby, Washington treated its non-state enemy largely equivalent to an aggressive and openly hostile state, including preemptive military action and endorsing interstate alignments against terrorist groups, sponsoring states, and societal sympathizers. Moreover, it pushed for national and international legislation allowing for a maximum in foreign policy autonomy to implement these policies.³³ A similar approach accompanies long established and recent counter-terrorist efforts by Israel, Russia, and Turkey.³⁴ Despite all these efforts, the threat of transnational terrorism remains far from eradicated. In turn, most criticism of lacking effectiveness draws on the notion that *war* implies military action in order to restore an imbalance of international power and regain national security.³⁵

From a realist point of view, the war on terror reflects a substantial mismatch between the security challenges that states targeted by terrorism face and the strategy employed in response—a crucial feature of policy failure. In order to shed more light on this argument, the following section turns to the threat terrorism poses to national security and gives a brief realist explanation for the ineffectiveness of military strategies.

3.2.2 How terrorism affects national security

To assess the ability of terrorism to weaken and thus deter others from attacking, it’s necessary to take a look at its possible impact on those capabilities that are seen as essential to measure a state’s relative power position in the international system.³⁶

In contrast to other forms of political violence, terrorism is not aiming at defeating the enemy on the battlefield. Rather, its goal is to put those members of the targeted groups that are not immediate victims of the attack “in a state of chronic fear (terror).”³⁷

Despite different opinions about the material effects of terrorism, analysts largely agree on its impact on targeted societies and thus a state’s political capabilities. First, according to a study by Frey and others, the state of fear in areas affected by terrorism significantly reduces the people’s subjective well-being.³⁸ Second, by challenging the state’s monopoly on the use of force and demonstrating its inability to provide universal security and protection of the physical integrity of

³² Alyson B.K. Bailes and Daniel Nord, "Non-State Actors in Conflict: A Challenge for Policy and for Law," in *Violent Non-State Actors in World Politics*, ed. Klejda Mullah (London: Hurst & Company, 2010), 441f.

³³ *Ibid.*, 442.

³⁴ Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005). 9-16; Michael Stohl, "Demystifying the Mystery of International Terrorism," in *International Terrorism. Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed. Charles Kegley Jr. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1990), 88; Ümit Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, vol. 5, Ankara Paper (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Tzipi Livni. "Statement by Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni to the Knesset." Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006). Published electronically August 8. <http://bit.ly/1bkixxI>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

³⁵ Matt Bai. "Kerry's Undeclared War." *New York Times Magazine* (2004). Published electronically October 10. <http://nyti.ms/1gDJi4L>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Bailes and Nord, "Non-State Actors in Conflict," 442.

³⁶ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*: 130.

³⁷ Schmid and Jongman, *Political Terrorism*: 2.

³⁸ Frey et al., "Calculating Tragedy," 17.

its citizens, it may harm the fundamental basis of control and legitimacy of the political leadership.³⁹

Prompted to restore order within their borders or areas relevant to their security, states can find themselves manipulated by terrorists to deviate from initially preferred policies. Domestically, the government might decide to restrict political liberties or release convicted criminals from prisons in exchange for hostages. Internationally, good examples could be the withdrawal of military deployments (e.g. USA from Lebanon in 1985 or Spain from Iraq in 2005), changed interstate alignment patterns or costly wars on areas of mere peripheral value to their national security.⁴⁰ If societies limit their government's choice of political strategies by demanding better protection and at times even revenge, terrorism has a significant influence on the state's political capabilities.

Several studies on the economic costs of terrorism have presented a rather mixed pattern of findings: Apart from insurance claims and costs to rebuild infrastructure destroyed by terrorist attacks, there are significant negative effects on tourism in targeted countries. However, the effects vary considerably between targeted countries and the strategies pursued by the terrorist group attacking them.⁴¹ Additionally, the inflow of foreign direct investment declines in affected countries due to higher costs for foreign-owned firms to protect their employees and their ability to move to more secure countries more easily than local enterprises.⁴² Countries affected by terrorism trade significantly less than others and terrorist campaigns influence saving and consumption behavior of the targeted population.⁴³

Some studies have shown that there is only a small negative association between terrorism and economic growth, especially in OECD countries. However, it makes a difference, as governments are more likely to divert their spending from investment to public expenditures securing them from terrorism.⁴⁴ According to governmental sources, Turkey spent more than \$300 billion due to infrastructural damage caused by terrorist attacks and increased military spending during the first 25 years of its on-going conflict with the PKK.⁴⁵ Although recent figures on national counterterrorism spending in the EU have not been published yet, an estimate can be made by looking at the fact that only the EU's total estimated spending on non-military counterterrorism measures increased between 2002 and 2009 from approximately €5.7 million to about €93.5 million.⁴⁶ As

³⁹ Central Intelligence Agency. "Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency." (no date). <http://bit.ly/li8yXud>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Jutta Limbach, *Terror - eine Bewährungsprobe fuer die Demokratie* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2004). 2; Wardlaw, "Terror as an instrument of foreign policy," 245.

⁴⁰ Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*: 14.

⁴¹ Frey et al., "Calculating Tragedy," 7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7f.

⁴³ Nitsch and Schumacher, "Terrorism and international trade."; Frey et al., "Calculating Tragedy," 13.

⁴⁴ ———, "Calculating Tragedy," 13.

⁴⁵ "PKK terrorism costs Turkey over \$300 bln." *Today's Zaman* (2008). Published electronically July 23. <http://bit.ly/1eio6PW>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁴⁶ Wim Wensink et al., *Estimated Costs of EU Counterterrorism Measures* (Brussels: European Parliament Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, 2011). 10. These numbers are especially interesting, as

can be seen, the effects of terrorism are considerable and it is highly unlikely that any government would remain deedless facing such a challenge.

Yet, whether *war* is the appropriate answer to such a threat is another story, becoming especially apparent when comparing the effects of terrorism to those of comparable phenomena, such as transnational crime.⁴⁷

Therefore, even high-ranking U.S. foreign policy makers such as Richard Holbrooke and John Kerry, have repeatedly called for an understanding of the struggle against terrorism not as a war in the literal sense but as a metaphor comparable to the *war on poverty*. Hence, policy success is likely to be the result of “winning the ideological struggle so that people stop turning themselves into suicide bombers.”⁴⁸

3.2.3 Shadow boxing? Realism and the war against terrorism

*“Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.”*⁴⁹

George W. Bush, September 2001

When U.S. President Bush declared a *war on terror* in 2001, analysts were quickly to remind the public that this was not the first time the U.S. government had chosen to do so.⁵⁰ But whereas Ronald Reagan mainly targeted “outlaw states,” such as Iran, Libya, and Cuba in a form of balancing aggressive state behavior in 1984, it is questionable whether military state action against a NSA constitutes an adequate response to systemic incentives.

Walter Laqueur, for instance, clearly followed a neorealist notion, when stating that “the power of the state is infinitely greater than that of terrorists, and it will always prevail, provided there is the determination or ruthlessness to do so.”⁵¹ Hence, bearing in mind Bruce Hoffman’s claim that terrorism tries to “create power where there is none,”⁵² it appears plausible that the “shocking demonstration of power”⁵³ analysts observed in the context of 9/11 did not reflect an actual shift in the systemic distribution of power capabilities but rather the *mirage* of such a process.

they do not include military spending in the context of the war on terror, which is overshadowing corresponding numbers from the United States and others.

⁴⁷ According to Louise Shelley, also organized transnational crime is “penetrating political institutions, undermining legitimate economic growth, threatening democracy and the rule of law and contributing to the [...] eruption of small, regionally contained, ethnic violence.” Louise I. Shelley, “Transnational Organized Crime: An Imminent Threat to the Nation-State?,” *Journal of International Affairs* 48, no. 2 (1995): 488f.

⁴⁸ Bai.

⁴⁹ Bush. 68.

⁵⁰ David C. Wills, *The First War on Terrorism: Counter-terrorism Policy during the Reagan Administration* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003). xv,83f.

⁵¹ Walter Laqueur, “Reflections on Eradication of Terrorism,” in *International Terrorism. Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed. Charles Kegley Jr. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1990), 209.

⁵² Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*: 41.

⁵³ Bailes and Nord, “Non-State Actors in Conflict,” 441.

States that respond militarily to terrorism as an attempt to alter material power structures by the means of symbolic violence adhere to what Robert Jervis had described as the *deterrence model* of interstate conflict management and Randall Schweller as *overbalancing*.⁵⁴ In this context, states assume that conciliatory moves, such as negotiations with terrorists, will be taken for weakness by the adversary and encourage it to push for further concessions.⁵⁵ Firmness, on the other hand, is likely to deter the potential aggressor from attacking (further).⁵⁶ In the political reality of counterterrorism, Israel's former ambassador to the UN, Benjamin Netanyahu, expressed this latter notion impressively in 1986, stating, "the terrorist objective, of course, is not negotiation, but capitulation."⁵⁷

Others also argue that deterrence is doomed to failure as terrorists "lack a return address against which retaliation can be visited"⁵⁸ and are seen by many as irrational and insensitive to systemic incentives encouraging security seeking.⁵⁹ Under these circumstances, also cooperation with terrorist organizations in the context of sponsorship seems highly unlikely, as the strategies of encouragement and restraint employed by states in the context of alliance management would be ineffectual.⁶⁰

By contrast, many scholars have rejected the notion of terrorist organizations as "madmen"⁶¹ and attributed them sufficient rationality to form "alliances"⁶² or "coalitions"⁶³ between each other. According to Snyder's concept of deterrence by punishment, which had been applied to counterterrorism by Trager and Dessislava, targeted states can successfully deter a terrorist organization if both sides prefer the *status quo* to counterterrorist attacks.⁶⁴ Given the anti-*status quo* orientation of most terrorist groups, deterrence can only be achieved if retaliation puts at risk non-political ends being valued more by the group than the political gains achieved from attacking, such as

⁵⁴ Jervis, *Perception and misperception*; Schweller, "Unanswered Threats," 167.

⁵⁵ Jervis, *Perception and misperception*: 58f; Stohl, "Demystifying the Mystery of International Terrorism," 88.

⁵⁶ Jervis, *Perception and misperception*: 346.

⁵⁷ Benjamin Netanyahu, "Terrorism: How the West can win," in *Terrorism: How the West can win*, ed. Benjamin Netanyahu (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1986), 201.

⁵⁸ Richard K. Betts, "The Soft Underbelly of American Primacy: Tactical Advantages of Terror," in *September 11, Terrorist Attacks, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. Demetrios James Caraley (New York: Academy of Political Science, 2002), 45.

⁵⁹ Demetrios James Caraley and Alexander A. Cooley, "September 11: An Overview," *ibid.*, 14; Ruth Wedgwood, "Al Qaeda, military commissions, and American self-defense," *ibid.*, 162.

⁶⁰ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 4.

⁶¹ Stohl, "Demystifying the Mystery of International Terrorism," 87-89; Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorism Research," 1; Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," in *International Terrorism. Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed. Charles Kegley Jr. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 117.

⁶² Abdel Aziz M. Shady, "The Alliances of violent Non-State Actors and the Future of Terrorism in Africa," in *South African Army Vision 2020. Security Challenges Shaping the Future South African Army*, ed. Len le Roux (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2007); Doron Zimmermann, "Terrorism transformed: The 'New Terrorism', impact scalability and the dynamic of reciprocal threat perception," *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 3, no. 1 (2004).

⁶³ Ely Karmon, *Coalitions between Terrorist Organizations: Revolutionaries, Nationalists and Islamists* (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 2005).

⁶⁴ Robert F. Trager and Dessislava P. Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism: It Can Be Done," *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2005/06); Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). 15.

“life, liberty, property, and social standing.”⁶⁵ For example, Hizballah’s transformation into a political force in Lebanese domestic politics since the mid-1990s made the group more responsive to Israeli threats to carry the war to Lebanon. Hence, the group largely has refrained from firing rockets into Israel since the 2006 war.⁶⁶

The rise of NSAs in international security politics posed a challenge to the explanatory power of realist scholarship in the past decades. However, it has not invalidated realism as a framework for understanding how states respond to the actions of others, especially under conditions of incomplete information about the capacity and intentions of others. Particularly the elusive power a state faces in the context of terrorism makes it difficult to counter the threat in an adequate manner, thereby risking engaging in a costly strategy of overbalancing. By singling out specific targets and thereby encouraging disagreement over the nature and proximity of the threat among potential allies, terrorism impedes interstate cooperation.⁶⁷ In this context, military action might even backfire if third parties—not convinced of the latter’s aggressive intentions—understand the state’s balancing efforts as a pretext for expansionist moves.⁶⁸ In the case of the war on terror, the most outspoken criticism came from Iran’s president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad calling the 9/11 attacks “a big lie and a pretext for the war on terror and a prelude to invading Afghanistan.”⁶⁹ Such a backfiring effect also entailed the 2003 war on Iraq—an example for unilateral military retaliation against alleged state supporters of terrorism.⁷⁰

Regarding the key question whether NSAs can be included in neorealist alliance theory, one might conclude the following: Providing that sponsors see themselves in a position to put restraint on the group by issuing credible threats of realignment or encourage it by increasing the group’s perception of one’s loyalty, they are expected to manage sponsorship for terrorist organizations in a way corresponding to interstate alliances. Supposedly, this is most likely to be the case if their support is decisive for securing a group’s capacity to attack their political targets and the mentioned non-political ends. Thus, the remainder of this chapter turns to the question under what conditions such a leverage arises, how state sponsorship of terrorism relates to the support-

⁶⁵ Trager and Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism," 95. See also Ulrich Schneckener, "Armed Non-State Actors and the Monopoly of Force," in *Revisiting the State Monopoly on the Legitimate Use of Force (Policy Paper 24)*, ed. Ulrich Schneckener and Herbert Wulf Alyson Bailes (Berlin: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), 2007), 13; Trager and Zagorcheva, "Deterring Terrorism," 91f.

⁶⁶ Rafael D. Frankel, "Keeping Hamas and Hezbollah Out of a War with Iran," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (2012): 56.

⁶⁷ Charles A. Kupchan, "New Research Agenda? Yes. New Paradigm? No," *Zeitschrift für internationale Beziehungen* 11, no. 1 (2004): 104.

⁶⁸ Jervis, *Perception and misperception*: 347; Jon B. Alterman, "How Terrorism Ends," *United States Institute of Peace Special Report* 48(1999): 3.

⁶⁹ Mike Green. "Ahmadinejad says U.S. is lying about Sept 11 attacks." Huffington Post (Online) (2010). Published electronically March 7. <http://huff.to/1n5ULra>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁷⁰ Conor Cruise O'Brien, "Impediments and Prerequisites to Counter-Terrorism," in *International Terrorism. Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed. Charles Kegley Jr. (New York: St. Martins Press, 1990), 203; Kupchan, "New Research Agenda," 104f.

ing state's cost/benefit calculations vis-à-vis international and domestic security challenges, and how states respond to entrapment and abandonment risks in such alliances.

3.3 Sponsorship as a functional equivalent to interstate alliances

The following section turns to four previously reviewed realist assumptions on interstate alliances and applies them to state sponsorship of terrorism.

First, neorealists claim that states form alliances in order to strive for increased security and, particularly, as a deterrent against external actor(s) posing a threat to all potential allies. Although the group's motivation to enter an alliance with a potential sponsor will be of secondary importance in this study, their potential security gains from the alignment will be assessed in order to unveil the leverage state sponsors are expected to have over their protégés. Second and third, Snyder and others have carved out the costs and benefits states have to calculate before entering an alliance instead of internal balancing. In turn, David and others, stress the need to supplement these calculations by domestic security calculations in order to increase the explanatory power of realist approaches. Hence, this section discusses the security trade-offs expected in the context of state sponsorship in comparison to those present in interstate alliances. The fourth section develops a classification of supporting strategies.

3.3.1 What terrorist groups need support for

*"To be effective, an underground organization needs a stream of money and information, new recruits, printing facilities, secret medical help for the wounded, transportation, places to hide, and—more than anything else—the readiness of the surrounding population not to give its members away. Many, many people must give it at best tacit support."*⁷¹

Uri Avnery, August 1997

Experts argue that the life expectancy of terrorist organizations is relatively low. This is not only the case because of counterterrorism efforts and persecution but also because they are prone to internal conflict and often fail to establish solid structures of support.⁷² According to Uri Avnery cited above and the famous analogy of Mao Zedong about guerilla warfare that "the people are like water and the army is like fish,"⁷³ the surrounding population plays a key role in securing the group's survivability and the effectiveness of its attacks. On the assumption that effectiveness in this context equates to being able to plan, organize and launch violent attacks on instrumental

⁷¹ Uri Avnery, "Water for These Fish: The Minds and Hearts of Palestinians," *New York Times*, August 8 1997.

⁷² Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*: 241; David C. Rapoport, "Terrorism," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, ed. Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan (London: Routledge, 1992), 1067.

⁷³ Edward L. Katzenbach, Jr. and Gene Z. Hanrahan, "The Revolutionary Strategy of Mao Tse-Tung," *Political Science Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (1955): 328.

targets over a longer period of time, four imperatives are placed at the center of attention: Surviving, Training, Attacking, and Recruiting (STAR, **Table 3**).⁷⁴

Table 3: Non-political values terrorists hold

SURVIVING:	Apart from internal fragmentation and the erosion of its community of support, persecution and military retaliation pose the biggest and immediate threats to the survival of a terrorist organization. To avoid extradition, punishment, and destruction of organizational infrastructure, they need constituencies providing cover or even deterring targeted groups from retaliating against detected culprits.
TRAINING:	The individuals recruited have to be politically, ideologically, and militarily, instructed.
ATTACKING:	As one important part of the definition of terrorism is the instrumentality of the targets of violence, access to the targets selected is vital for success and survival of the group.
RECRUITING:	In order to survive, terrorist organizations need to have a certain political appeal and the organizational infrastructure, e.g. offices, in order to recruit a sufficient number of potential fighters and generate a pool of sympathizers and supporters from their respective community.

Beyond the support of the local population, there are several sources of external backing likely to increase the group’s life expectancy and efficiency significantly, touching on all four imperatives.

External support has a strong effect on the dynamics of insurgency and a targeted state’s capability to overcome a terrorist challenge—politically or militarily.⁷⁵ Especially in the case of salient transnational identities—among others tribal, ethnic, religious or ideological—, terrorist organizations are likely to find a supporting population outside the borders of the targeted state.⁷⁶ Among those societal transnational constituencies, diaspora communities play the biggest role especially in funding terrorist organizations with a similar ethnic or religious profile in their respective homelands.⁷⁷ A second group of constituencies are ethnically or religiously similar communities in neighboring or even foreign countries willing to provide a safe haven for the group’s fighters, support its organizational structure with private donations, or pressure their governments not to engage actively in counterterrorism initiatives.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ See also Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 59-75.

⁷⁵ Cunningham et al., "Explaining External Support," 710.

⁷⁶ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*: xivf.

⁷⁷ Good examples for such constituency constellations are the Kurdish community in Germany and the PKK in Turkey as well as descendants of Irish immigrants in the U.S. supporting the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. See Henri Barkey, "Under the Gun: Turkish foreign policy and the Kurdish question," in *The Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1990s: its impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, ed. Robert W. Olson (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 76f; Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*: xiv; Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 246.

⁷⁸ Included in this group might be among others Kurdish communities in northern Syria or societal sympathizers in Saudi Arabia for Islamist insurgencies e.g. in Chechnya or Kashmir. See ———, *Deadly Connections*: 229; Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: the PKK and the Kurdish fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007). 100; Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*: 71-82.

The transition between societal and governmental support is often seamless. In most cases, governments enable external societal support due to their inability to control or put a halt to it, taking on a role of passive facilitators turning a blind eye to local fundraising, recruits crossings borders on their way to training camps or operations, or fighters seeking security from persecution.⁷⁹

Moreover, intentional state support for terrorist organizations should take the STAR-imperatives into account to a much larger extent when formulating policies of assistance. In this context, analysts have frequently identified four specific types of external state sponsorship: *hosting*, *military support*, *financial assistance*, and *endorsement*. To what extent they touch on the group's non-political values will be examined as follows.

3.3.1.1 Hosting

Governments that actively host terrorist groups on their territory or connive to unobstructed sheltering of terrorists in areas under their control have revealed a mixed idea of groups *recruiting* members within their borders in the past. In the second half of the 1980s, Iran, for instance, objected PKK's propaganda work among local Kurds out of fears of separatism, while Pakistan actively encouraged the recruitment of Afghan refugees into the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan. In a similar vein, Saudi Arabia became, tolerated by the government, a major recruitment base for al-Qaeda in the late 1990s.⁸⁰ Furthermore, having a safe haven allows the political leadership of the group to develop transnational recruitment strategies and *train* these recruits in facilities out of reach of most counterterrorism measures. Additionally, hosting plays an important role for groups planning and preparing *attacks* abroad, especially when it includes providing the organization with travel documents or access to embassies. Finally, due to the principle of sovereignty, a statist host can deter most targeted states from retaliating militarily and restrict persecution by rejecting to extradite suspects or fugitive fighters.⁸¹

3.3.1.2 Military support

By providing terrorist organizations with intelligence and weapons, or tolerate arms deliveries to groups operating within their borders, governments not only increase the effectiveness of terrorist *attacks* but also indirectly their appeal to potential *recruits*. In the case of Fatah, enrolment reportedly increased from 2,000 to nearly 15,000 in three months after the first demonstration of its fighting power at the Battle of Karamah in March 1968, where it had enjoyed substantial assistance by Jordanian troops.⁸² A statist military supporter can either *train* fighters directly through members of its own security forces, like the Iranian Revolutionary Guards that instructed Hizbal-

⁷⁹ ———, *Trends in Outside Support*: xv; Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 219-258.

⁸⁰ Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's endless war: State failure, regional politics, and the rise of the Taliban* (Washington, D.C.: University of Washington Press, 2001). 152f; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 121f; Thomas Hegghammer, "Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalization in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 4 (2006).

⁸¹ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 65f; Salehyan, "No shelter here."

⁸² Philip Robins, *A history of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). 128; CIA Intelligence Report, "ESAU L: The Fedayeen," ((Declassified document), 1971).

lah fighters in Lebanon after 1982, or allow groups operating within its borders to hand their expertise on to other groups in training camps on territory controlled by it.⁸³ By choosing the latter strategy, Syria, for instance, enabled the Japanese Red Army, the German Red Army Faction, and others to receive training by Palestinian factions in the Bekaa Valley during its military occupation of Lebanon.⁸⁴ Additionally, a government can also tolerate groups to build up training facilities by themselves and run them autonomously, as seen in Afghanistan before the 9/11 attacks.⁸⁵ Finally, military support can also increase a group's capacity to *survive* retaliation by targeted states. In the Lebanon war in summer 2006, Israel was not able to destroy Hizballah's military capability as prior arms deliveries by Iran allowed the group to retaliate with heavy missile fire at towns in northern Israel.⁸⁶

3.3.1.3 Financial support

Governments that offer financial patronage to a group help it to build up and sustain the necessary infrastructure to *recruit* new fighters. In addition, financial assistance enables the organization to deepen its roots in its respective community by establishing social programs or launching propaganda and media campaigns. In 1991 for instance, Iran reportedly supported the establishment of Hizballah's al-Manar TV-station with \$1 million.⁸⁷ External funding also allows terrorist organizations to acquire weapons from third parties, fake IDs, vehicles, or hideouts rented in the targeted area, further increasing the effectiveness of *attacks*.⁸⁸ States can also help groups financially that need to build up and run *training* facilities or cover the allowances of fighters. Finally, financial support increases a group's longevity, bolstering its organizational structure and enabling its members to evade punishment.⁸⁹

3.3.1.4 Endorsement

Public meetings with high-ranking government officials emphasize the mutual commitment and support whereas public manifestations of solidarity can also help to lift a group's political aims to the international agenda.⁹⁰ States that explicitly support terrorist organizations by backing their goals diplomatically assist it generally in two ways. First, sponsoring regimes can use their domestic regional or even global influence to endorse a group's political aims and picture their attacks as legitimate acts of resistance or struggle against an illegitimate enemy and thus limit the

⁸³ Magnus Ranstorp, "The Hizballah Training Camps of Lebanon," in *Making of a Terrorist. Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes*, ed. James Forest (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006), 248f.

⁸⁴ Anat Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence: The Institutionalization of a Popular Struggle* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 185.

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001". 10.

⁸⁶ Shai Feldman, "The Hezbollah-Israel War: A Preliminary Assessment," *Middle East Brief* 10(2006).

⁸⁷ Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah: Financing Terror Through Criminal Enterprise." Hearing of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate (2005). Published electronically May 25. <http://bit.ly/1gDIP2q>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Ranstorp, "Hizballah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," 317.

⁸⁸ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*: xvii.

⁸⁹ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 60f.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61f.

targeted country's leeway to persecute or retaliate against the attack's perpetrator (*surviving*).⁹¹ Second, the recognition of the group's cause by state leaders is likely to increase its appeal among the sponsoring state's residents and their readiness to join the ranks of the organization (*recruiting*) or to financially support them through societal donations, thus funding the group's build-up of infrastructure for *training* and *attacking*. Both effects are reflected in Turkey's increasing endorsement of Hamas since Khaled Mashal's first official visit to Ankara in early 2006. Refusing to label Hamas a terrorist organization, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other officials repeatedly called Israeli military retaliation against Hamas "terrorism" and, in November 2012, Israel a "terrorist state."⁹² Simultaneously, Turkish societal actors like the *IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation* stepped up their support for Hamas, including the donation of some \$25 million for infrastructure projects in Gaza and, most prominently, the Gaza flotilla in May 2010.⁹³

Conclusively, substantial security gains for terrorist organizations resulting from their alignment with states in all four dimensions of state support can be maintained, as illustrated in **Figure 10**.

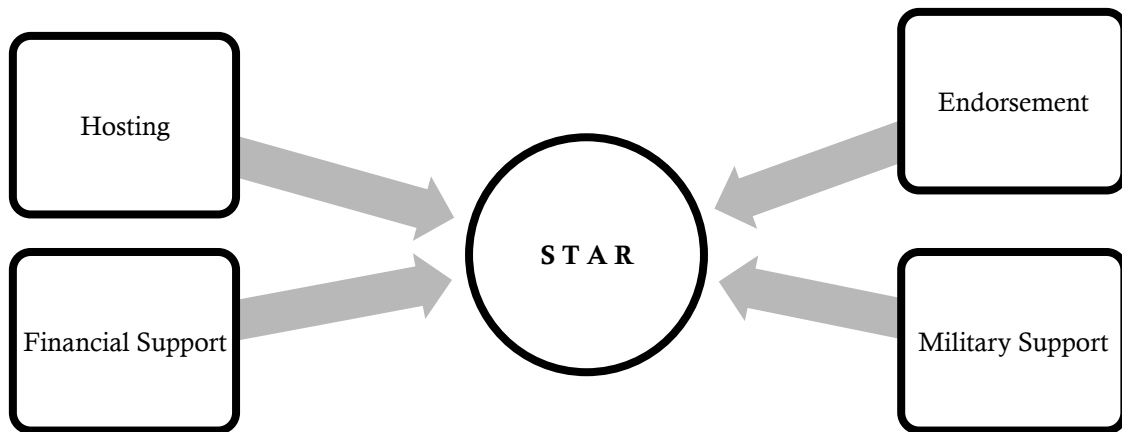


Figure 10: Security gains of state sponsorship

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 4 (2007): 110; Emre Peker. "Turkey Labels Israel a 'Terrorist State'." *Wall Street Journal* (2012). Published electronically November 19. <http://on.wsj.com/UBqwcq>. Accessed January 31, 2014; "Turkey's Erdogan: Hamas is a political party, not a terrorist group." *Haaretz* (2011). Published electronically May.12. <http://bit.ly/YZHdXK>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁹³ Nicolas Pelham. "Gaza: A Way Out?", *New York Review of Books* (2012). Published electronically October 26. <http://bit.ly/VAb95m>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

3.3.2 A bird in a gilded cage: The alliance security dilemma from a terrorist perspective

As the material capabilities, political power, and influence of states exceed those of societal supporters by far, they constitute those external constituencies most helpful and valuable to terrorist organizations.⁹⁴ In contrast to societal supporters, which are in most cases forced to limit their support to material—especially financial—assistance and political lobbying, states are able to provide a much wider range of support. It is therefore expected that active state support gives protégés a comparative advantage over ‘independent’ groups in all four stages of military or political activity (STAR) mentioned above.

3.3.2.1 Costs of sponsorship for the supported group

In the context of the alliance theory outlined above, the decisive role of statist backing for the group’s non-political values (STAR) provides sponsors with substantial leverage in intra-alignment relations. Before turning to the question how sponsoring states adjust support strategies to their specific security needs, this section addresses the security risks for the group stemming from the alignment. It may be argued that these are not only quite considerable but also resemble those that especially vulnerable states face when forming alliances (see 2.3.3.2)

First, a group’s affiliation with a state is likely to foreclose receiving support from other governments if they are in conflict with the group’s main backer. Despite many moderate Arab states exhibit officially a hostile stand against Israel, their understanding of Hizballah as an instrument of Iranian hegemony seeking explained, for instance, Saudi Arabia’s unprecedentedly harsh criticism of the group during the 2006 Lebanon War.⁹⁵

Second, state support puts substantial constraints on the group’s freedom of action, both due to a general need for coordination in alliances and (most) states’ capacity and willingness to control the group’s activity.⁹⁶ For instance, Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan, increased control over Palestinian refugee camps on their territory after 1965 and prevented cross-border raids into Israel, in order to avoid military retaliation.⁹⁷

Third, concessions regarding the timing and targeting of attacks might also undermine the group’s reputation among its constituency and weaken it against both targets and rivals. If the group belongs to a larger movement, support provides its adversaries with an argument to expose the organization as a mere puppet of a foreign power without a genuine legitimacy to act on behalf of its proclaimed constituency.⁹⁸ In the case of the exiled Iranian Mojahedin-e-Khalq Organ-

⁹⁴ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*: 10f.

⁹⁵ Hassan M. Fattah. "Arab League criticizes Hezbollah for attacks." *International Herald Tribune* no. July 17 (2006). <http://nyti.ms/1gDIGfa>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁹⁶ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 75f.

⁹⁷ Kurz, *Fatah and the Politics of Violence*: 40.

⁹⁸ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 77.

ization (MEK), the group's failure to find broad support among the local population resulted to a large extent from its known alignment with Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88).⁹⁹

Hence, it should be highlighted that terrorist groups are also able to extract security gains from engaging with a statist backer which exceed the benefits of other options by far. Relying on societal backers or criminal activity in order to maintain sufficient levels of effectiveness requires a much more sophisticated organizational structure and mobility and is—if not occurring as a side effect of state failure—highly unlikely to be successful without at least passive state support. However, sponsorship entails autonomy losses that at times even threaten the group's very existence of the group. As in the case of interstate alliances, this is most likely if the sponsor's security environment changes considerably and realignment looms.

3.3.2.2 *When terrorists fall prey to international politics*

As anarchy prevails, terrorist groups enjoying state support face the constant risk of falling prey to interstate conciliation and rapprochement. Transferring again Snyder's ideas on alliance management to informal alliance politics, one can distinguish between four forms of statist abandonment:¹⁰⁰

First, states can officially end their support of the group because of realignment with the former adversary. In 2009, for instance, Iraq expelled MEK from its territory due to a rapprochement with Tehran after the ousting of Saddam Hussein.¹⁰¹

Second, states can also abrogate cooperation with the group without immediately realigning with the adversary if international and domestic costs of support outweigh the benefits stemming from it. Such de-alignments occurred, for example, in the course of the 1983 expulsion of the Abu Nidal Organization from Iraq or the ban of Hamas in Jordan in 1999.¹⁰²

In contrast to these practices of official termination of cooperation, other forms of abandonment do not require a specific act of abrogation:

Third, sponsors can *de facto* abandon their protégés by deliberately failing to fulfill specific (though mostly vague) commitments. For instance, Iran refrained from entering the wars in Lebanon 2006 and Gaza 2008/09, despite strong rhetoric support for Hamas and Hizballah and agitation towards Israel.

⁹⁹ Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, *Eternal Iran: continuity and chaos* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). 99; Walter Posch, "Irak unter Saddam Hussein: Das Ende einer Ära?," *Schriftenreihe der Landesverteidigungsakademie Wien*, no. 3 (2002): 70; Michael Rubin, "Monsters of the Left: the Mujahedin al-Khalq." *FrontPageMagazine.com* (2006). Published electronically January 13. <http://bit.ly/HvaMO>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 182.

¹⁰¹ Jane Arraf. "Invited by Saddam: Iranian opposition members refuse to leave Iraq outpost." *Christian Science Monitor* (2009). Published electronically April 7. <http://bit.ly/1aT1Yeu>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Jeremiah Goulka et al., *The Mujahedin-e Khalq in Iraq: A Policy Conundrum* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009).

¹⁰² David Hirst. "Jordan curbs Hamas." *The Guardian* (1999). Published electronically November 22. <http://bit.ly/1luEYqs>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Seale, *Abu Nidal*: 123.

Fourth, states can disappoint expectations raised from a general ideological, political, or ethnic kinship by failing to provide support for the group in conflict with its adversary. On this end of the continuum, we find cases of attacks on the group tolerated by the ally, as for example Iraq's indifference towards both Jordan-PLO clashes in 1970 and the 1982 Syrian crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in 1982.¹⁰³

With regard to the research questions addressing the causes of such policy shifts, it is additionally necessary to examine the relation between state sponsorship and the sponsor's security environment and the respective cost/benefit calculations.

3.3.3 State sponsorship and the security dilemma

Although terms like 'axis of evil' suggest a sense of irrationality, there is a broad consensus that state sponsorship of terrorism is no "uncaused" policy, strongly connected to interstate relations, and an instrument of national security policy.¹⁰⁴ Hence, the following section examines the benefits and costs of sponsorship, especially in contrast to other internal and external forms of balancing international and domestic security threats.

3.3.3.1 Benefits of sponsorship

State sponsorship of terrorism is considered a cost-effective alliance for several reasons: Providing a group with the necessary capability to attack does not require much, as, for instance, the belts used in suicide attacks are available for some \$5,000.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, even high financial support like the estimated \$50 to \$100 million Iran reportedly provided to Hizballah in 2003 made up for only 3 percent of its overall military expenditure that year.¹⁰⁶ By comparison, Iran's assistance for the pressured Syrian president Bashar al-Asad against the internal uprising and respective international sanctions amounted to an estimated \$1 billion between mid-2011 and early 2012.¹⁰⁷ In the context of sponsorship, particularly weak military powers can gain significant concessions from their adversaries without having to increase defense spending or employ military action.¹⁰⁸

Finally, teaming up with a terrorist organization cannot only deter opponents from retaliating against the group but also from attacking the sponsoring state if they fear in return terrorist cam-

¹⁰³ Samir al Halil, *Republic of fear: The politics of modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). 21; Barry Rubin, *Revolution until victory? The politics and history of the PLO* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). 52, 132; Ephraim Karsh, "Saddam and the Palestinians," *Commentary* December 2006(2002): 59.

¹⁰⁴ San Akca, "Supporting Non-State Armed Groups," 593; Byman, *Deadly Connections*; Cunningham et al., "Explaining External Support."

¹⁰⁵ Ulrich Schneekener, "Selbstmordanschläge als Mittel asymmetrischer Kriegsführung," *SWP Aktuell* 2003, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 88; Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodhan. "The Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric War. Iran." Center for Strategic and International Studies. <http://bit.ly/1djqCiP>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹⁰⁷ Barak Ravid. "Syria documents show Iran helping Assad to sidestep sanctions." *Haaretz* February 12, (2012). <http://bit.ly/1gDhbhe>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," 241. For instance, despite declining Syrian military expenditure throughout the 1990s and a balance of power in favor of Israel, the latter was repeatedly signaling its willingness to make tangible concessions including a partial return of the annexed Golan Heights, demanding in return primarily an end to Syrian support to anti-Israeli terrorism. See Daniel Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*, Policy Papers (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1996). 82.

paigns against their own citizens in return. As in the context of other alliances, sponsors can virtually overcome substantial geographic distances and compensate, for instance, a lack of aircraft carriers or long-range missiles.¹⁰⁹ Accordingly, sponsorship alignments played a role regarding both the expected costs of an Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear facilities and a Turkish or international military intervention into Syria in the course of the ongoing civil war.¹¹⁰

As in the case of interstate alliances, alignment provides states in most cases with increased influence over the organization, especially if it is operating on territory under the sponsor's control. In order to maintain Iranian assistance, for instance, the PKK leadership comparatively spared Tehran from rhetorical condemnation as an occupier of Kurdish lands and praised in 1990, despite its secular-Marxist outlook, the accomplishments of the Islamic Revolution.¹¹¹ Furthermore, states can use their intra-alignment leverage to preclude a rapprochement between the group and the targeted state, inter alia by diverting assistance to radical factions or encouraging internal overthrow. Correspondingly, Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad and other rejectionist Arab leaders supported anti-Arafat factions within PLO in order to prevent the leadership from realigning with the pro-Western Arab moderates after the 1979 Camp David Accords.¹¹²

In addition, sponsorship provides governments with both material and immaterial ability to strengthen themselves against domestic opponents. On the one hand, terrorist campaigns including assassinations can literally demobilize domestic opposition and deter still undecided parts of the targeted group from joining it. In a crackdown on domestic Kurdish dissent in the early 1990s, for instance, both Iraq and Iran reportedly resorted to MEK and Hizballah respectively as a recruitment pool for mercenaries.¹¹³ On the other hand, if the group is part of a larger movement enjoying substantial support among society and key domestic players, leaders can bolster their domestic position by championing the group's cause and sideline oppositional forces as harming the national cause.¹¹⁴ In Jordan, for instance, the political and socioeconomic integration of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees had failed after 1948 and their criticism of the monarchy mounted throughout the 1960s.¹¹⁵ Hence, pressured King Hussein aimed at boosting his do-

¹⁰⁹ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 38.

¹¹⁰ Frankel, "Keeping Hamas and Hezbollah Out of a War with Iran."; Francesco F. Milan. "Deterrence and diplomacy: Turkey and the Syrian crisis back." *Aspenia Mideast Flashpoints* (2012). Published electronically October 18. <http://bit.ly/li8zJHw>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Jon Hemming. "Kurd militants threaten Turkey if it enters Syria." *Reuters* March 22, (2012). <http://reut.rs/GHENhy>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹¹¹ Bölükbaşı, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 36; Kurdistan Workers' Party. "Chapter Two: Kurdish Society." *PKK Party Program* (1998). <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/51/169.html>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹¹² Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry*: 301-305; Kirchner, *Allianz mit dem Terror*: 36.

¹¹³ Eli Lake, "Iranian Group asks State to lift Terror Designation," *The New York Sun*, April 15 2005; Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran. Roots and Results of Revolution*, updated ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). 268f.

¹¹⁴ Mark Gasiorowski, "Regime Legitimacy and National Security: The Case of Pahlavi Iran," in *National security in the third world: the management of internal and external threats*, ed. Edward E. Azar and Chung-in Moon (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1988), 237.

¹¹⁵ Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*: 41.

mestic popularity by endorsing the Palestinian's 'popular liberation' war, declaring, "We're all Fedayeen."¹¹⁶

Despite its informal character as well as the involvement of NSAs, sponsorship touches on all benefits of interstate alliance formation to a certain extent. In order to compare them systematically with formal interstate alignments, this section turns to the question whether such alignments also parallel the negative consequences of interstate alliance formation.

3.3.3.2 Costs of sponsorship

*"Unlimited, I repeat, unlimited solidarity."*¹¹⁷

Gerhard Schroeder, September 2001

Just as other forms of capability aggregation, sponsorship is expected to trigger counterbalancing measures on the side of their adversaries. First, it could cause counter alliances to emerge: Iranian and U.S. cooperation against the Taliban regime, for instance, was largely unexpected prior to the 9/11 attacks and Iraq's support for the Muslim Brotherhood intended to pressure Syria into realignment in the Iran-Iraq War, but pushed it even closer towards Iran.¹¹⁸ In a broader sense, sponsors risk to be excluded from the community of shared values and face regional or international isolation as well as economic and political pressure and sanctions.¹¹⁹

Regarding increased armament by their adversaries as a second unintended consequence of alignment, the negative effects of sponsorship might vary: In most countries, counterterrorism measures are implemented by members of security services, police officers, and judges. Thus, increased spending on policing and intelligence should rather be the case than conventional or even offensive weapons. West Germany, for instance, increased its total spending for domestic security between 1969 and 1975 from approx. DEM3 to DEM6 billion in reaction to the Red Army Faction's bombings and other attacks on government officials and public institutions.¹²⁰ Military expenditure, by contrast, remained relatively stable, increasing from DM8.7 billion in 1969 to DM11.4 billion six years later.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Fuad Jabber, "The Arab Regimes and the Palestinian Revolution, 1967-71," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 2, no. 2 (1973): 82; David Hirst, "King Who Rules From the Heart," *The Guardian* 1993.

¹¹⁷ Gerhard Schroeder. "Statement by Chancellor Schroeder to the German Bundestag on the Terrorist Acts Carried out in the United States." Plenarprotokoll 14/186 (2001). Published electronically September 12. <http://bit.ly/1fyVP6o>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹¹⁸ Martin Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik unter Präsident Hafez Assad. Balanceakte im globalen Umbruch* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2001). 193f; Fadil Rasoul, *Irak - Iran: Ursachen und Dimensionen eines Konflikts* (Wien: Böhlau, 1987). 103.

¹¹⁹ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 278-284; Joseph H. Campos, *The state and terrorism: national security and the mobilization of power* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007). 13; George W. Bush. "Presidential Address to the Nation." (2001). Published electronically October 7. <http://bbc.in/1fmp6yK>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹²⁰ Wolfgang Hoffmann, "Terror treibt die Kosten. Warum Anarchisten die besten Lobbyisten von Polizei und Justiz sind," *DIE ZEIT*, May 2 1975.

¹²¹ U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, *World military expenditures and arms transfers, 1968-1977* (Washington, DC: United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, 1980). 43.

However, this effect is completely reversed if the targeted state perceives terrorist attacks as a threat that can at least be reduced by military force.¹²² Counterterrorism/-insurgency policies that include air or even drone strikes against training camps and the long-term deployment of troops in potential areas of retreat lead to growing military spending that not only increases the overall military power of the targeted country but also its offensive capabilities. Turkey, for instance, shifted its strategy towards the PKK dramatically in 1993, redeploying mass contingents of troops and sophisticated weaponry from the Greek-Turkish border area to the southeast, the immediate neighborhood of Syria, the PKK's most crucial external supporter at that time.¹²³ As such an understanding of fighting a *war* on terror paves the way for a predominantly military strategy it is likely to increase if a link between the terrorist challenge and an international backer has been successfully established.

*"There will be no sanctuary for terrorists. We will defend our people, our interests and our values."*¹²⁴

William H. Clinton, August 1998

In some cases, counterbalancing can also take the form of interstate escalation, boosting the sponsor's commitment costs substantially.

The risk of interstate escalation is even higher if the group's confidence, enhanced by the state's backing, causes it to act heedless and aggressively towards the adversary. In September 1970, radical PLO factions backed by Syria stepped up their campaign against the Jordanian king, including an assassination attempt and the coordinated hijacking and destruction of international passenger planes in Jordan. In order to protect PLO forces from the wrath of King Hussein in ensuing clashes, Syria intervened militarily and suffered heavy losses to its ground forces. In addition, a regional war including Israel could be averted in the very last minute.¹²⁵

Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon in 1982, the U.S. bombing of Libya in 1986, and the U.S. missile strikes against Sudan and Afghanistan in 1998 show that states targeted by terrorist attacks have more than once decided to escalate latent conflicts with states they suspect to actively assist the perpetrators.¹²⁶ Sponsors run the risk of sacrificing vast resources, including the lives of

¹²² I would like to thank my colleague Philip Lorenz for bringing this thought up.

¹²³ U.S. Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2001". 52f; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 130.

¹²⁴ William J. Clinton, "Address to the nation on military action against terrorist sites in Afghanistan and Sudan, August 20, 1998," in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, William J. Clinton III (1998, Book II)* (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1998), 1462.

¹²⁵ Richard A. Mobley, "U.S. Joint Military Contributions to Countering Syria's 1970 Invasion of Jordan," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, no. 55 (2009): 163-166.

¹²⁶ Regarding the risk of sanctions, it is worth noting that nearly all of these retaliatory strikes occurred in reference to UN Charter Article 51, providing for the right to self-defense. See also Salehyan, "No shelter here."

their citizens, even if the targeted population tends to see military strikes against them as disproportionate because the fatalities generally exceed the number of victims of the terrorist attack.¹²⁷ Nevertheless, several studies on the *rally-'round-the-flag* effect have stressed that foreign policy latitude of the state is generally higher in the context of an immediate security threat in general and recent terrorist attacks in particular.¹²⁸ The events after 9/11 showed, how the disclosure of a deliberate backer could help governments to rally domestic as well as international support for a military campaign and for turning "anger to resolution."¹²⁹ In January 2002, more than 89 percent of the U.S. population supported the attack on Afghanistan and amid a major PKK offensive in the second half of the 1990s, a majority of the Turkish population approved of military coercion to pressure Damascus into ending its support for the group.¹³⁰ In a similar vein, only after PKK operations launched from northern Iraq killed 13 Turkish soldiers within one week in early October 2007, the parliament granted the government the right for trans-border operations for the first time since 1974.¹³¹

As alliances, sponsorship puts certain constraints on the backer's freedom of action and policy options both in the domestic and the international arena. In the context of path dependency, this is especially the case if the regime has linked support to its legitimacy and self-image. In Pakistan, for instance, governmental assistance for Muslim rebels operating in India's disputed Kashmir province became not only an instrument to bolster domestic legitimacy, but also to mobilize religious sentiment behind the political leadership. Despite high international pressure in the context of the war on terror, then-president Musharraf referred to these domestic constraints as crucial during his address to the nation on January 13, 2002, declaring, "No Pakistani can afford to sever links with Kashmir. We will continue to extend our moral, political and diplomatic support for Kashmiris."¹³² Furthermore, this domestically generated 'obligation to commit' limited the government's freedom of action regarding any substantial concessions granted to India, least of all a rapprochement or realignment.

Approaching Snyder's final feature of alliance costs, governments might weaken their own domestic position through sponsorship. Such costs occur if the government violates international or

¹²⁷ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 287.

¹²⁸ Yitzhak Nakash, *Reaching for power: the Shi'a in the modern Arab world* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹²⁹ Bush, "Presidential Address to the Nation". See also Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 2 ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹³⁰ Frank Newport, "Taking the War Beyond Afghanistan: Americans Generally Support Military Action in Iran, Iraq, and the Philippines," *The Gallup Organization* February 4(2002); Mahmut Bali Aykan, "The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998: A Turkish View," *Middle East Policy* 6, no. 4 (1999): 48.

¹³¹ Funda Keskin, "Turkey's Trans-Border Operations in Northern Iraq: Before and After the Invasion of Iraq," *Research Journal of International Studies* 8, no. November (2008): 70; Jürgen Gottschlich, "What Turkey Wants From Iraq - and the US." *Der Spiegel* (2007). Published electronically October 18. <http://bit.ly/1nEiUs7>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹³² Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 175-177; International Crisis Group. "Kashmir: The View from Islamabad." *Asia Report* 68 (2003). Published electronically December 4. <http://bit.ly/1fBbxgx>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

even national law by supporting a group designated as terrorist organizations. Although impeachment proceedings against U.S. President Reagan for breaching the 1982 Boland Amendment, outlawing the *Contras* in Nicaragua as well as their external backing, did not exceed several hearings and the appointment of a special persecutor, his popularity dropped significantly in the aftermath of the *Iran-Contra* affair.¹³³ Furthermore, support can also cause domestic costs if assistance to the group is not contrary to national law, but if there is substantial dissent about whether the alignment serves the national interest. At times, Iran's high and vocal commitment to the violent Palestinian struggle against Israel sparked substantial protests among the youth and public figures. Corresponding demands regarding Hizballah reoccurred in the course of the 2005 earthquakes, as residents complained that the government "would be quicker in sending support if the earthquake had been in Gaza or southern Lebanon," as well as in the course of the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah War.¹³⁴

Putting these observations in perspective, numerous parallels to the costs and benefits of interstate alliances examined in chapter 2.3.3 can be maintained. As it requires limited state resources and offers strong incentives for both sides to keep commitments generally opaque, sponsorship also strongly resembles the policy of external rebel support as a means to balance an external threat often preferred by domestically vulnerable states.¹³⁵ Furthermore, this policy is in a much stronger sense related to interstate conflict and increases both the risk of counterbalancing and the escalation of latent conflicts.

The calculations regarding the domestic arena present us with a likewise mixed pattern as both in the international realm as well as in the context of interstate alliances: On the one hand, sponsorship is a policy understood as "evil" in a nearly universal sense, given the negative connotation of the terrorist act (see 1.4.1). Hence, state sponsors not only breach international but also national law and risk domestic reputation losses. As there is no consensus on the question of *who* is a terrorist, on the other, governments can boost their legitimacy by supporting freedom fighters if key groups in society share their notion of who is *not* a terrorist. Nevertheless, a state's deliberate exposure to counterbalancing is likely to threaten this consensus and to trigger societal rejection of the concessions that come along with sponsorship. **Table 4** concludes these findings as follows.

¹³³ Frank Newport et al. "Ronald Reagan From the People's Perspective: A Gallup Poll Review." Gallup News Service (2004). Published electronically June 7. <http://bit.ly/1eqMT2J>. Accessed January 31, 2014; "Articles of Impeachment introduced, but given no chance of passage," *Associated Press*, March 5 1987.

¹³⁴ Michael Slackman. "Turmoil in the Middle East: Tehran; In the Streets, Aid to Hezbollah Stirs Iranian Fear and Resentment." *New York Times* (2006): 6. Published electronically July 23. <http://nyti.ms/1brHyJD>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Karim Sadjadpour, "How Relevant is the Iranian Street?," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2007): 79, 154.

¹³⁵ Maoz and San-Akca, "Rivalry and State Support."; Cunningham et al., "Explaining External Support."; David, "Explaining Third World Alignment," 241.

Table 4: State sponsorship of terrorism: Expected costs and benefits

	Benefits	Costs
EXTERNAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enables states to weaken/reap concessions from adversaries while conserving power resources - Creates “proximity by proxy,” thereby increasing offensive capabilities of the sponsor - (Open) alignment can deter an adversary from conventionally attacking by issuing credible threats of ensuing terrorist campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Triggers external counterbalancing (sanctions, reputational loss, military action, counteralliances) - Triggers internal counterbalancing and increases offensive military capabilities of the target - (Open) alignment can increase the targeted state’s resolve and popular support for retaliation
DOMESTIC SECURITY ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases the state’s domestic power resources to repress (paramilitary force) - Increases the state’s domestic power resources to co-opt by invoking transnational solidarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases domestic polarization if there is no legal or societal consensus about support - Path-dependency limits options for realignment as betrayal of the transnational cause
EXTERNAL/DOMESTIC SECURITY ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows for increased influence/control over a larger insurgency movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High risk of entrapment into the intrastate conflict

3.4 When do states decide to sponsor?

As in the case of interstate alignment, there is no structural feature, which definitely conveys when states choose sponsorship over other forms of security policy. Furthermore, these strategies are not mutually exclusive. Yet again, this study suggests integrating the unit-level factor of autonomy in general and regime vulnerability in particular as a conditional variable in order to explain why states resort to sponsorship in contrast to directly confronting their adversaries.

As other forms of external balancing, sponsorship allows for relative power gains and a simultaneous preservation of national resources, which is especially vital for vulnerable states lacking internal mobilization capacity. Moreover, the mostly informal and secretive character of this cooperation reduces the risk of international reputation loss, which could foreclose alternative alliance options and entail counterbalancing. While complete secrecy minimizes the deterrent character of sponsorship, exposure carries a high risk of becoming an international pariah or even target of military retaliation.

Therefore, sponsors might find themselves at times in a conflict of interest between successfully deterring a rival and avoiding international counterbalancing that is quite similar to interstate al-

liances. Nevertheless, these forms of cooperation require a mutual commitment for support to avoid abandonment and defeat; thus, a–limited–mobilization of resources. In contrast to interstate alliances, the concessions that states have to grant their non-state partners are in most cases vague, informal, and thus relatively favorable to the sponsor. Therefore, allying with a terrorist organization can serve as a substitute for both interstate alliances costly in the domestic arena and internal balancing.¹³⁶

This changes remarkably if states, aiming to deter external rivals appease domestic rivals or increase their mobilization capacity, decide to openly align with the group. First, international counterbalancing is likely to be accompanied by domestic costs–indirect concessions–caused for instance by economic sanctions or military retaliation that are expected to undermine the government’s legitimacy and power position among business elites and the army. Second, once the government has established its assistance to the group as a source of domestic mobilization capacity, the costs of realignment might rise to an unprecedented level.¹³⁷ Therefore, it can be maintained that state sponsorship of terrorism bears high resemblance to formal interstate alliances in terms of costs and benefits, despite the fact that it includes NSAs and mostly informal, secretive patterns of cooperation.

In chapter 1.3 and 1, the study consecutively examined those questions that need to be addressed in order to advance realist alliance theory amid rapid changes in the security environment of states. By resorting to neoclassical realism and systematically tying system- and unit-level concepts of the security dilemma together in the context of alliance formation and management, foreign policy analysts can increase the explanatory power of realist approaches to security cooperation beyond the mere justification of policy mistakes (cf. 2.3.4 and 2.4.4). As state sponsorship of terrorism has not been thoroughly examined in the context of alliance theory so far, the previous chapter turned in a systematic manner to theoretical and analytical impediments for a straightforward integration, most notably the opaque and informal nature of cooperation and the non-state character of the ally (cf. 3.1 and 3.2).

Resorting to these determinants of alliance and sponsorship behavior, the following section revisits the research questions raised in section 1.5:

1. Under what conditions do governments choose to support terrorist organizations as a supplement or alternative to e.g. armament or interstate alliance formation?
2. How do states manage their relations with terrorist organizations in comparison to interstate alliance politics?
3. How to explain increased commitment, shifts in sponsorship emphases, and realignment by the supporting state?

¹³⁶ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 30; San Akca, "Supporting Non-State Armed Groups," 595.

¹³⁷ Anat Kurz, Interview by author, Institute for National Security Studies, September 5, 2010. See also Navin A. Bapat, "Understanding State Sponsorship of Militant Groups," *British Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 1 (2012).

Regarding question 1, the previously developed theoretical framework suggests three assumptions, which are also illustrated in **Figure 11**.

The **Neorealist Hypothesis I (N₁)** argues that *the greater the adversary's power capabilities, the greater the tendency for the state to balance against it*. This *balancing* hypothesis is directly derived from Walt's balance-of-threat theory.¹³⁸

The **Neoclassical Realist Hypothesis I (NC₁)** claims that *the greater the state's domestic vulnerability, the greater the tendency to balance the adversary externally*. This *alliance-seeking* hypothesis follows the assumption that regime vulnerability entails a bias towards external balancing.

The **Neoclassical Realist Hypothesis II (NC₂)** assumes that *the greater the state's domestic vulnerability, the greater the tendency for the state to balance the adversary by sponsoring terrorism*. This *sponsorship* hypothesis reflects the contention that domestically vulnerable states are limited in both their internal and external balancing options and find themselves inclined more often than others to form sponsorship alignments.

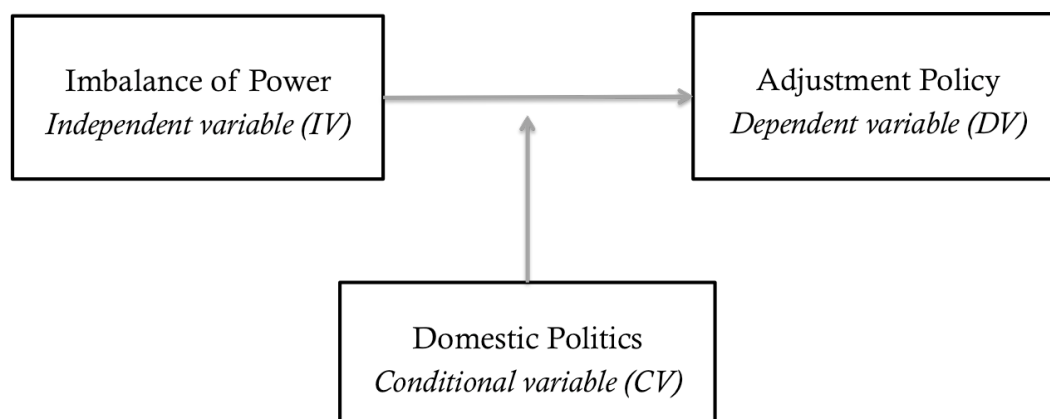


Figure 11: Causal chain suggested by the hypotheses N₁, NC₁, and NC₂

Regarding the questions 2 and 3, it is vital to take again the alliance dilemma into consideration.

3.5 Sponsorship and the alliance dilemma

Once established, states (and terrorist organizations) can expect to reap the benefits of their cooperation. However, these benefits could be short-lived given the substantial risk outlined above. Drawing on Snyder's concept of an alliance security dilemma (ASD), sponsors are assumedly adjusting their sponsorship policy to a *sponsorship security dilemma* (SSD) if changes in their international and/or domestic security environment disrupt the "optimum balance."¹³⁹ The following section provides an analytical framework including specific roles sponsors assume in the context of adjustment.

¹³⁸ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 32.

¹³⁹ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 180f.

3.5.1 Abandonment risks in sponsorship relations

Sponsors are most likely to fear abandonment if the conflict with a significantly stronger external adversary is severe and other responsive measures (such as interstate alignment or armament) are not, or only under substantial domestic risks, available. Such fears mount if the allied group is capable of assisting the state in meeting the threat, enjoys sufficient support from other backers, which allows it to minimize its material dependency on the state, is not bound to a formal agreement, and has little strategic interest in the state's defense.¹⁴⁰ Parallel to interstate alliances, a *policy of standing firm* is likely to emerge from these conditions, comprising increased material and rhetoric commitment to the group.¹⁴¹ In this case, with both public endorsement and material support being high, the state sponsor assumes the role of a *Brother in Arms*.

3.5.2 Entrapment risks in sponsorship relations

In turn, sponsorship might also trigger counterbalancing and interstate conflict escalation.¹⁴² A strategy of standing firm could further increase this risk as it encourages (and enables) the group to become more assertive towards its targets, prompting retaliatory strikes. This is even more the case as these alignments inhibit a variety of conflicting interests with the adversary. For example, despite considerable levels of support for ethno-nationalist Palestinian groups and their actions against Israel, credible doubts concerning Arab commitment to the creation of an independent Palestinian state manifested themselves in the bilateral *land for peace* agreements of 1979 (Egypt) and 1994 (Jordan). If military escalation is not the sponsor's preferred strategy choice and dependence on the group is decreasing, fears of entrapment are likely to occur and lead to a *policy of restraint*, by either withholding support or issuing threats of realignment. This could result from conciliatory overtures by the adversary, a shift in intra-alliance power symmetry in favor of the sponsor, or the emergence of alternative alliance options. Hence, a sponsor gradually denying both material and rhetoric support to the ally is assuming the role of a *Defector*.¹⁴³

Deducted from Snyder's neorealist theory of alliance politics and as illustrated in **Figure 12**, two hypotheses regarding the sponsoring state's policy choices can be established:

The **Neorealist Hypothesis II (N₂)** argues that *the greater a sponsoring state's fear of alliance abandonment, the greater the tendency to strengthen its commitment, stand firm vis-à-vis the adversary, and to take on the sponsorship role of a Brother in Arms*. This *standing firm* hypothesis clearly follows Snyder's assumption that states adjust their alliance commitment to incentives from the ASD.

¹⁴⁰ This could be the case, for instance, if the group does not need the state for strategic retreat or as a rear front against the enemy

¹⁴¹ Kirchner, *Allianz mit dem Terror*.

¹⁴² Salehyan, "No shelter here."

¹⁴³ In contrast to any other state not supporting the group, being designated a *defector* requires—as in the case of defected soldiers—some kind of prior affiliation/alignment with the group.

The **Neorealist Hypothesis III (N₃)** claims that *the greater a sponsoring state's fear of alliance entrapment, the greater the tendency to weaken its commitment, conciliate the adversary, and take on the sponsorship role of a Defector*. Also this *restraining* hypothesis is derived from Snyder's assumption that fears of being inadvertently entrapped in the conflict between its ally and the adversary will reflect in corresponding policy shifts—even to the point of realignment.

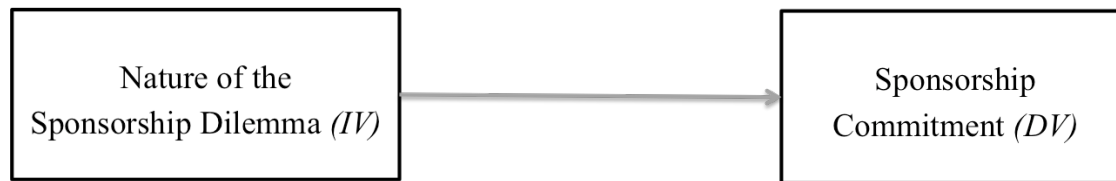


Figure 12: Causal chain suggested by the hypotheses N₂ and N₃

However, as frequently observed in interstate alliance politics as well as in a number of historical cases, most instances of sponsorship lie somewhat between the ideal types of *Brother in Arms* and *Defector*, constituting hybrid types of sponsorship.

In 2001, Paul Pillar straightforwardly tackled this grey area and named the group *enablers*. In a more specified way, Byman distinguished the cases between strong and no support along the state's aggregate capacity and supportive government posture vis-à-vis the group between *weak*, *lukewarm*, *antagonistic*, and *passive* supporters.¹⁴⁴ This study suggests an alternative way of conceptualizing hybrid forms of sponsorship, against the background of the debate on public/opaque and specific/vague alliances in section 3.1.

A first group consists of states that provide significant material support to terrorist groups, yet resort to the concept of plausible deniability in order to avoid exposure, thereby deliberately reducing the deterrent feature of the alliance. These are the *Secret Backers* Martha Crenshaw had in mind, when calling sponsorship a “means of deception and denial.”¹⁴⁵ In contrast, those sponsors representing a second hybrid type, *Fellow Traveler*,¹⁴⁶ publicly praise the group's cause and issue repeated declarations of sympathy. Their material commitment, however, falls dramatically short of the expectations raised by their rhetoric. In this case, the sponsor engages in a strategy of *cheap talk*, which might deter adversaries at least in the short run while at the same time undermining its reputation for loyalty.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 15; Pillar, *Terrorism*: 178f.

¹⁴⁵ “Terrorism and Global Security,” 73.

¹⁴⁶ In 2007, Paul Collier also used this term to describe constituencies of rebel groups, which emerge from a shared understanding of grievance, creating an imaginary bond between the group and its supporters. In a similar sense, sponsors taking on the *fellow traveler*-role also engage in the discourse of grievance generated by the group. In contrast to Collier's understanding, however, *fellow traveling* does not necessarily require material support for the group. See Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). 22.

¹⁴⁷ Dustin H. Tingley and Barbara F. Walter, “Can Cheap Talk Deter? An Experimental Analysis,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55, no. 6 (2011).

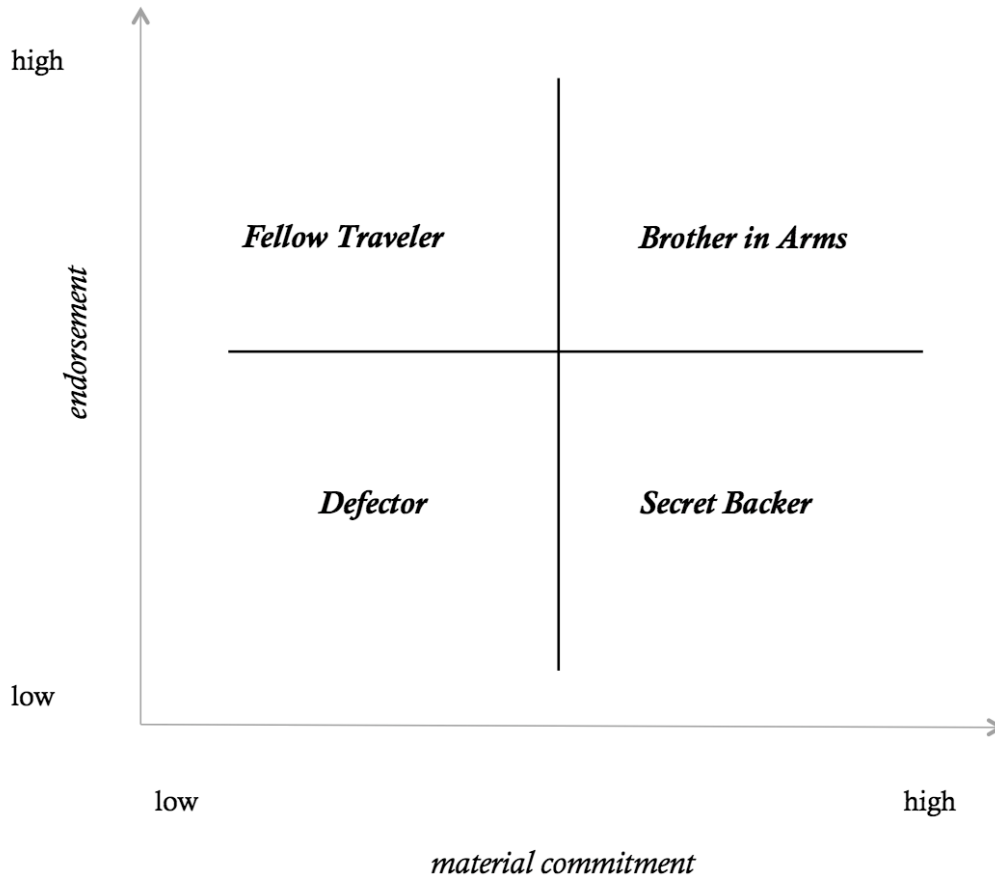


Figure 13: Types of state sponsors of terrorism

Despite its straightforward character, the typology illustrated by **Figure 13** resorts systematically to Snyder's theory of alliance commitment under the conditions of anarchy. In contrast to those established by Pillar and Byman, its close linkage to expediency and functionality allows for a more precise assessment of the underlying causes of different types of sponsorship. In order to address the question how these hybrid types emerge, the following section turns to the sponsor's domestic politics.

3.6 Sponsorship and the domestic alliance dilemma

As in section 2.3.2 and 2.4.3, which established a link between unit-level factors and alliance policy, domestic politics are expected to influence sponsorship policy decision-making.

As in interstate alliances, a strategy of standing firm entails concession granted to the ally and foreclosure of alternative alliance options. Hence, strong support might encourage domestic opposition or alienate key societal backers of the regime, claiming the leader would squander national resources and deliberately put the security of the people at risk, by isolating the country or even risking military confrontation. This is especially vital in the case of vulnerable states that

face substantial constraints to autonomy and hurdles to domestic resource mobilization. Additionally, such an understanding fits in with both the neoclassical realist idea of domestic politics as a response delaying factor and the argument that vulnerable states fear domestic repercussions of formal and specific alliances.¹⁴⁸

Given the enormous power asymmetry between terrorist groups and both their targets and sponsors in nearly all cases, sponsorship a high risk of interstate conflict escalation and international isolation limiting the availability of alternative alliance options. Furthermore, the inherent fragmentation of intra-alliance interests raises entrapment fears and is likely to increase if domestic threats are present. Nevertheless, the sponsor's autonomy to respond to incentives for realignment is likely to be constrained, as withholding support to a group previously praised as a non-terrorist liberation movement could be understood as policy failure (thereby exposing the leaders' incompetence) or even treason.¹⁴⁹ In addition, if leaders aim at bolstering their domestic power resources and opposition to realignment emerges from key societal groups, the group gains further strategic importance for the state and threats of realignment will subsequently lose credibility. Therefore, deducted from both Snyder's theory of alliance politics and neoclassical realism, two sub-hypotheses of N_2 and N_3 regarding the sponsoring state's policy choices can be established (see also **Figure 14**).

The **Neoclassical Realist Hypothesis II (NC₂)** assumes that if the SSD points to abandonment, *the greater the state's domestic vulnerability, the smaller the tendency to strengthen its commitment and to stand firm against the adversary.*

The **Neoclassical Realist Hypothesis III (NC₃)** argues that if the SSD points to entrapment, *the greater the state's domestic vulnerability, the smaller the tendency to weaken its commitment and conciliate the adversary.*

Both the *limited-restraint (NC₂)* and the *limited-resolve (NC₃)* hypothesis follow the neoclassical realist argument that regime vulnerability impedes successful adjustment to systemic incentives and governments take on the sponsorship role of a *Secret Backer* or *Fellow Traveler*.

¹⁴⁸ Steven E. Lobell, "Threat assessment, the state, and foreign policy: a neoclassical realist model," in *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Alagappa, *National Security*: 22f.

¹⁴⁹ Bapat, "Understanding State Sponsorship of Militant Groups."

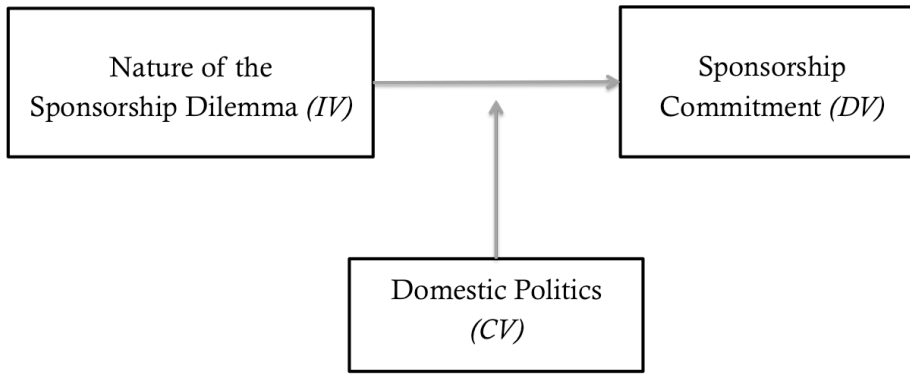


Figure 14: Causal chain suggested by the hypotheses NC₂ and NC₃

As proclaimed in section 1.6, the previous two chapters provided the necessary theoretical basis to establish both coherent explanations for the phenomenon of state sponsorship of terrorism and predictions on causation between a state's security environment and respective sponsorship policies. In order to trace such specific processes of adjustment policies resorting to international, domestic, and intra-alliance dilemmas, the comparative examination of the empirical evidence takes systematic account of the same variables, indicated as follows:

First, the analysis assesses the *external security environment* in general and the severity of conflict with the adversary of the alliance in particular, thereby constituting the independent variable 'nature of the sponsorship dilemma.' Second, it evaluates the *domestic security environment* of the ruling government, specifically the vulnerability of political leadership in the same period of observation, in order to examine the correspondent conditional variable. Third, the analysis turns to the dependent variable, *sponsorship commitment*, in order to determine whether and to what extent the sponsorship role changed over time.

Before applying the method of structured focused comparison to the case of Syrian sponsorship for Fatah, the PKK, and Hizballah, the following section will turn to the operationalization of the variables at play, the methodological design of the analysis, and specific assumptions for the subsequent analysis of Syria's sponsorship policies.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ For a detailed examination of structured focused comparison, cf. Hall, "Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics."; Tulia G. Falletti, "Theory-Guided Process-Tracing: Something Old, Something New," *Newsletter of the Organized Section in Comparative Politics of the American Political Science Association* 17, no. 1 (2006); Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*: 55f.

4 Research design: Assessing state sponsorship of terrorism

In order to establish an analytical framework suitable for examining the above-stated research questions and testing the assumptions derived from the explanatory model, the first part of this section specifies and integrates several hitherto independent strands of analysis.

Operationalizing systemic incentives as independent variable for the neorealist hypotheses, the model resorts to the Waltzian imbalance of power in the case of the *balancing* hypothesis N₁ and to the nature of the ASD developed by Mandelbaum and Snyder regarding the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂ and the *restraining* hypothesis N₃. Indicators for assessing variance of domestic politics as antecedent condition are derived from respective works in comparative politics and neo-classical realist foreign policy analysis. Finally, measures of sponsorship commitment, identified as the dependent variable of all seven hypotheses, are developed along the support dimensions hosting, military support, financial assistance, and endorsement as well as existing measurements of alliance commitment stemming from the work of Snyder and Walt. Additionally, each section presents corresponding methods of data collection and processing. As the empirical analysis in chapters 5 to 7 centers on Syrian support patterns for three different organizations in specific intrastate and transnational conflicts, section 4.4 turns to the selection of cases and examines key specifics of Syria’s external and domestic security environment likely to shape particular sponsorship policies.

4.1 Independent variable: Systemic incentives for alliance behavior

Once alliances are formed, five factors determine whether a state will make entrapment or abandonment a priority and adjust its policy accordingly.¹

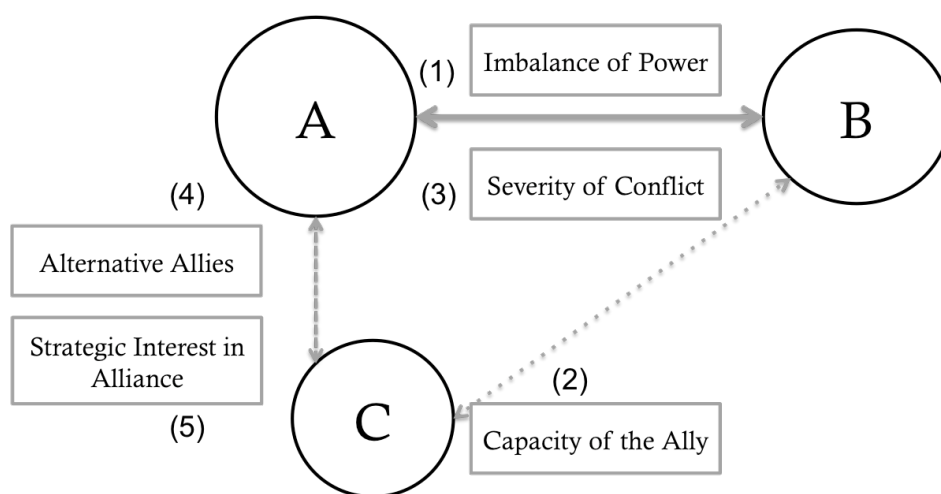


Figure 15: Independent variable ‘nature of the alliance dilemma’

¹ Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 472f; ———, *Alliance politics*: 167; Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations*: 101.

Figure 15 illustrates the interplay of the factors constituting the *alliance security dilemma* (ASD), which will be operationalized in the context of a *sponsorship security dilemma* (SSD) as follows:

The first two are derived from balance-of-power theory, namely an imbalance of power between the state A and the adversary B (1) and the capacity of A's ally C (2). Fears of abandonment are increased if conflict between A and B is severe (3) and if A lacks substantial options to realign (4), either as a result of (3) or the availability of alternative allies. Finally, fears of abandonment are nurtured if A has a strategic interest in maintaining C as an ally, therefore increasing the expected costs if C leaves the alliance (5).

Data regarding the *imbalance of power* (1), the *availability of alternative allies* (4), and *severity of conflict* between the sponsoring and the targeted state (3), are primarily collected from *Correlates of War* (COW) databases. First, annual values for the material capabilities of Israel, Syria, and Turkey in the overall period of observation (1964-2006) are retrieved from COW's National Material Capabilities data set (CINC, version 4.0), updated in 2010.² Second, COW's Formal Alliance data set (version 4.1) provides for data on formal pacts of mutually defense, non-aggression treaties, and ententes existing in the observation period.³ As it is explicitly limited to formal alliances, additional information on informal alignments will be retrieved qualitatively from secondary sources.⁴ Third, the probability of war is conceptualized in the sense of Snyder as "amount of conflict and tension"⁵ between adversaries, emphasizing—in contrast to Walt's 'level of threat'—the role of perceptions and hence the dependency on primary sources and historical subjective interpretation only moderately.⁶ Given substantial limitations regarding the accessibility of archive material and the collection of primary sources, stemming at least twofold from the secretive and politicized character of the issue at hand and language barriers, COW's Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID, v. 3.10) data provides for a first quantitative reference point.⁷ MID supplements COW Inter-State War Data (v. 4.0) by listing incidents "in which the threat, display or use of military force short of war by one member state is explicitly directed towards [...] another state."⁸ Furthermore, MID

² CINC subsumes total and urban population, steel production, energy consumption, military personnel, and - expenditure. See J. David Singer et al., "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965," in *Peace, War, and Numbers*, ed. Bruce Russett (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972).

³ Douglas M. Gibler, *International military alliances, 1648-2008* (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2009).

⁴ See also Raymond A. Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami, *The foreign policies of Middle East states* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002); Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*.

⁵ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 167.

⁶ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 25f. For a discussion on the utility of both approaches, see also William R. Thompson, "Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2001).

⁷ Faten Ghosn et al., "The MID3 Data Set, 1993–2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 21, no. 2 (2004).

⁸ Daniel M. Jones et al., "Militarized interstate disputes, 1816-1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns," *ibid.* 15(1996): 163; Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort to War: 1816 - 2007* (CQ Press, 2010). COW defines war as a "military combat is sufficiently sustained that it will result in a minimum of 1,000 total battle deaths" Jones et al., "Militarized interstate disputes," 171; see also J. David Singer and Melvin Small, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816-1980* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982). For instance out of the two interstate dyads examined in this study (Syria-Turkey and Israel-Syria), only the latter escalated to the level of war in the period of observation, in 1948, 1967, and 1973. MID data, however, lists nearly 200 incidents of conflict in the respective dyads.

data allows for assessing the ‘probability of war’ by distinguishing between both those carrying a threat, display, or use of force and 22 subtypes of actions ranging from “no militarized action” to “begin interstate war.”⁹ As conflicts are likely to be present—and thus influential on alliance choices and politics—before and after they become manifest in a militarized dispute, the study will additionally draw on historical sources and expert interviews. This will be the case especially, if the database indicates the presence of revisionist states, widely considered as being dissatisfied with the prevailing distribution of power capabilities and harboring aggressive intentions towards others.¹⁰

The assessment of the fourth variable, *capacity of the terrorist organization* in relation to the power imbalance between the statist adversaries (2), poses a bigger challenge for the acquisition of adequate data. Based on the STAR-imperatives (see **Table 3**) and the definition of insurgency strength by Cunningham et al., as “effectiveness in targeting the vital interests of the government and tactics that prevent the defeat,”¹¹ the group’s offensive and defensive capabilities constitute a key factor. In this context, power is derived from the group’s ability to attract popular (and external) support and to mobilize forces (recruits, arms), to induce material or immaterial costs on the targeted state, and to escape or resist retaliation. As Cunningham et al. focus on guerilla tactics and direct military confrontation, the offensive capacity of the group through terrorist violence will be primarily assessed through the frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks, derived from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).¹² Additional data on terrorist attacks during the observation period, especially before 1970, is to be gathered from secondary sources. The number of members, frequently used in recent studies on the evolution of terrorist organizations, indicates *strength* in general and *mobilization capacity* both with regards to fighters and non-combatant supporters and is expected to increase in relation to the number of attacks and the presence of an ethnic base.¹³ The capacity of the group further increases if it has a clear central command in contrast to factional infighting and access to a safe haven.¹⁴

⁹ Jones et al., "Militarized interstate disputes," 170f; Faten Ghosn et al., "The MID3 Data Set, 1993–2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description," *ibid.* 21(2004); Faten Ghosn and Glenn Palmer. "Codebook for the Militarized Interstate Dispute Data, Version 3.0." *Correlates of War 2 Project*, Pennsylvania State University no. April 14 (2003). <http://cow2.la.psu.edu>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹⁰ Jones et al., "Militarized interstate disputes," 178.

¹¹ Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two," 573f.

¹² *Ibid.*, 580. GTD is an open-source database comprising detailed information on terrorist events between 1970 and 2011, based on a definition of terrorism as “threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation” START. "Global Terrorism Database Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variables." (2012). <http://bit.ly/1dWnN77>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹³ Brock S. Blomberg et al., *Terrorist Group Survival: Ideology, Tactics, and Base of Operations* (Los Angeles: CREATE Homeland Security Center at the University of Southern California, 2011). 16; Jonathan S. Feinstein and Edward H. Kaplan, "Analysis of a Strategic Terror Organization," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 2 (2010): 282; David E. Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two: A Dyadic Analysis of Civil War Duration and Outcome," *ibid.* 53, no. 4 (2009): 579-581.

¹⁴ ———, "It Takes Two," 575,579.

Finally, the variable *strategic interest in upholding the alliance* (5) is defined by Snyder as a future-oriented interest in “preventing any potential adversary from gaining resources, especially at one’s own expense or the expense of one’s ally.”¹⁵ This could refer to the control of territory or energy sources, if their loss is expected to endanger other aspects of national security in the near or foreseeable future.¹⁶ Drawing on the understanding of regime security as an integral part of national security in vulnerable states, states can extract power resources from external alliances, which are also of highest strategic interest for the state in the domestic arena.¹⁷ Regarding empirical evidence about whether and to what extent these interests are present, data will be qualitatively extracted from relevant secondary sources and expert interviews.

As illustrated in **Table 5**, the separate findings will be integrated in order to assess a general tendency of the SSD.

Table 5: Nature of the sponsorship security dilemma

IMBALANCE OF POWER	High	Low
CAPACITY OF THE ALLY	Sufficient	Insufficient
INTERSTATE CONFLICT	High	Low
ALTERNATIVE ALLIES	Not available	Available
STRATEGIC INTEREST	Yes	No
CONDITIONS INDUCE A PRIMARY FEAR OF	Abandonment	Entrapment

4.2 Conditional variable: Domestic politics

Neoclassical realists argue that these incentives are likely to prevail until changes in the security environment occur, yet ascribe substantial influence regarding the pace and degree of a state’s adjustment to unit-level factors. As a proxy for domestic politics, the analysis at hand will mainly focus on *autonomy*, meaning the level of interference of societal groups in foreign policy decision-making, allowing to a large extent for transferring neorealist thinking about international politics to the domestic arena. Hence, foreign policy autonomy as an indicator for absent or insignificantly low levels of *regime vulnerability* is understood as a condition variable for the causal hypotheses N₁-N₃, in that sense activating or magnifying causation between systemic incentives and specific policies.¹⁸

In contrast to proponents of a liberal democratic peace and others focusing on structural autonomy provided by formal political institutions, recent neoclassical realist studies have stressed the

¹⁵ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 23f.

¹⁷ Mastanduno et al., "Towards a Realist Theory of State Action," 464f.

¹⁸ Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science*: 9-11; Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*: 16f; Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 131.

linkage between regime vulnerability and foreign policy decision making.¹⁹ They assume that state autonomy in foreign policy matters and responsiveness to the systemic incentives decreases if regime vulnerability is high and states find themselves compelled to either increase concessions to pillars of support or broaden their power base.²⁰

According to Bruce Gilley, vulnerability occurs if political leaders lack legitimacy, defined as “high levels of uncoerced support among the population,”²¹ and unintentionally reduce governance effectiveness and popular support by spending resources extracted from society mainly in a way that helps them maintain their rule.²² As legitimacy is a latent variable, it can hardly be measured directly.²³ Thus, the analysis will resort to effect indicators, what state-society relations might look like if the government *lacks* legitimacy, such as the size of internal secret police and number of political prisoners as well as anti-system movements, the use of mercenary soldiers, demonstrations over legal issues or election results.²⁴ Given the fact that vulnerability also reflects the likelihood of a regime overthrow, the state’s coercive power in opposition to domestic rivals constitutes a second indicator (see **Figure 16**).

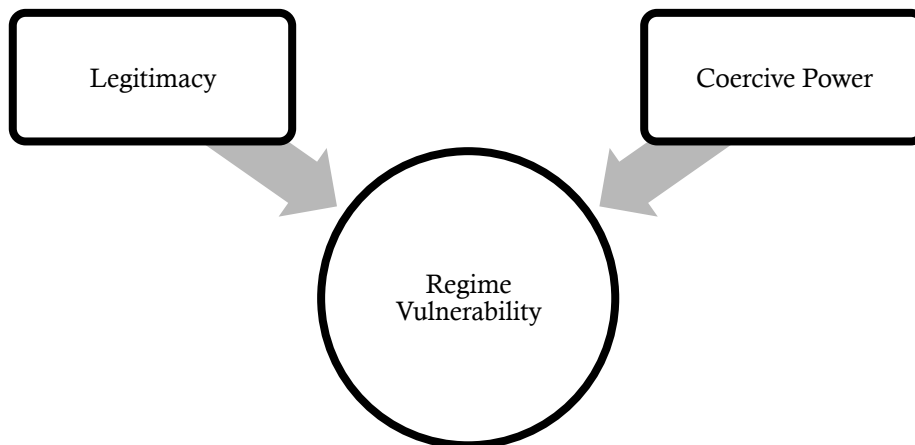


Figure 16: Conditional variable ‘regime vulnerability’

¹⁹ Concerning the former group, see Navin A. Bapat. "State Sponsorship of Insurgency and Internal Politics." University of North Carolina no. unpublished (2010). <http://bit.ly/LotJz1>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Anna Geis, "Diagnose: Doppelbefund — Ursache: ungeklärt? Die Kontroversen um den „Demokratischen Frieden“,“ *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 42, no. 2 (2001); David, *Choosing Sides*: 13. The second group is represented inter alia by Ripsman, "Neoclassical realism and domestic interest groups."; Schweller, *Unanswered Threats*; Morgan and Bickers, "Domestic discontent and the external use of force."; Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The logic of political survival*.

²⁰ Ripsman, "Neoclassical realism and domestic interest groups," 188; Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The logic of political survival*: 29.

²¹ Robert D. Lamb, "Measuring Legitimacy in Weak States," in Graduate Student Conference on Security (March 18) (Georgetown University, Washington, DC2005), 21.

²² Gilley, "The meaning and measure of state legitimacy," 499.

²³ Especially in the case of weak and authoritarian states, indicators of popular support are difficult to trace as surveys and opinion polls like the Arab Barometer are conducted under constricted conditions for both interviewers and interviewees. Results of non-democratic elections are hardly reflecting the actual distribution of opinions and allegiances among societal forces. If not censored and at all accessible, evaluation of local media outlets requires in-depth and costly studies and allows primarily for an evaluation of elite perceptions.

²⁴ Gilley, "The meaning and measure of state legitimacy," 505-509.

Systematically integrating domestic politics into structural realist thinking requires a reformulation of the ‘black box’ into a ‘microcosm of international politics,’ where power is fragmented and processes of *emulation* among social forces can be observed.²⁵ Indicators for the emergence of a domestic system of self-help are inter alia parallel military forces, challenging the army’s monopoly on the use of force and increasing the state’s general advance in material power.²⁶ Additionally, intervention in foreign policy decision-making limits state autonomy and is likely to be the case if societal forces are politicized and imitate the state in policy formulation and implementing. While high degrees of army professionalism, for instance, reduce the likelihood of intervention into politics, such as military coups, emulation can also occur in the case of other social forces like religious institutions or trade unions.²⁷ Although such an understanding of domestic politics requires an in-depth interpretation of historical evidence, it allows for detecting the presence of regime vulnerability prior to the outbreak of domestic conflict.

4.3 Dependent variable: Sponsorship commitment

In order to assess specific sponsorship policies, the study initially draws on the work of Snyder and Walt, as both conceptualize commitment not as mere assistance to another party but also with regard to the sacrifices and concessions the ally is willing to take to fulfill its obligations.²⁸ This is particularly vital as previous works on sponsorship and external rebel support provided a spectrum of support, yet based levels of assistance merely on aggregate measures of arms delivered or troops operating within one’s territory.²⁹

Commitment plays a key role in intra-alignment adjustment policies.³⁰ Besides increasing the level of commitment in the way **Table 6** suggests, Snyder claims that in order to discourage others from realigning, states might also be willing to “renegotiate the alliance contract in the ally’s favor.”³¹ With regard to the sponsorship security dilemma, this might apply not only to an increase in arms deliveries, but also to agreements regarding the group’s freedom to maneuver for instance on the sponsor’s territory or the local population. In contrast, increased control over the group’s actions or pressuring it into moderation is expected to limit the risk of entrapment. Threats of realignment and signaling one’s own unwillingness to accept retaliation against the group as a *casus*

²⁵ For an examination of the praetorian society concept, see also Huntington, *Political order in changing societies*: 197.

²⁶ See also Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing."

²⁷ Although it is highly unlikely that social forces are zero politicized in any country—given for instance the role of religious institutions in the provision of welfare in most countries—their intervention into politics will be deemed as significant, if they occur as constraining factors for governmental foreign policy, at times even conducting ‘parallel’ foreign policies

²⁸ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 149, Table 5.

²⁹ Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support*; Cunningham et al., "Explaining External Support."; ———. "Codebook for The Non-State Actor Data, a Supplement to the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict Data. Typescript." (2009). <http://bit.ly/1eqLN76>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Alexander and Cline, *Terrorism*.

³⁰ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 183-186.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 183f.

foederis (thereby limiting one's commitment to a low level) are further expected to decrease the group's war-proneness.³²

Table 6: Levels of commitment in interstate alliances

Level of commitment	High	Moderate	Low
ALLIANCE INVOLVES...	Extensive security co-operation, active military involvement	Diplomatic coordination and significant risk of military involvement	Symbolic commitment
LOSS OF TANGIBLE ASSETS* TO FULFILL ALLIANCE COMMITMENT	Deliberately sacrificed	Put at risk, sacrificed intangible assets (diplomatic costs)	Avoided

Source: Walt, *The origins of alliances: 149-152*.

* E.g. territory, money or people

As maintained in section 3.3.3.2, sponsors risk military retaliation by targeted states, economic as well as political sanctions by the international community, and being seen as a pariah disregarding international norms both by other states and parts of their own population. Hence, Walt's classification in general seems quite adaptable to a state's commitment to his non-state ally (c.f. **Table 6**). Integrating the abovementioned types of support into this framework of analysis, they will be evaluated with regard to their likelihood to put tangible as well as intangible assets at risk and expected forms of sponsorship policy adjustment.

4.3.1 Hosting

Among the four support dimensions examined, *hosting* plays a decisive role for mainly two reasons. First, previous studies have established a strong link between the presence of extraterritorial rebel bases and violent escalation of interstate conflict.³³ Second, in contrast to other material forms of assistance, plausible deniability is difficult to achieve especially if the group uses the host's territory as a rear front. In the context of the sponsorship dilemma, hosting is highly valued by the group, be it only by overcoming geographical distances for attacking. In order to assess whether hosting indicates a high, moderate or low level of commitment, the following questions need to be asked: (1) To what extent does the group enjoy freedom to initiate military operations against the adversary? (2) What degree of operational freedom does the group enjoy regarding its political activities? (3) To what degree is the host willing to tolerate the group's physical presence within its territory?

³² Ibid., 185f.

³³ Cunningham et al. 6; Salehyan, "No shelter here," 58.

Table 7: Commitment I: Hosting

Level of Commitment	High	Moderate	Low*
ALLIANCE INVOLVES...	Freedom to operate militarily (presence of fighters and bases, cross-border attacks)	Freedom to operate politically (presence of non-military training facilities, offices)	Tolerance of the physical presence of group members devoid of political activity

* A fourth category—no commitment—is occurring in the case of a complete expulsion of the group from the state's territory and indicates realignment by the sponsor.

Concerning hosting policies induced by the sponsorship dilemma, states are likely to grant their protégés higher degrees of leeway, when aiming at discouraging them from defecting. In turn, increased control and a denial of their presence point towards the aim of avoiding entrapment (Table 7).

4.3.2 Military support

The second dimension, *military support*, generally occurs in two forms. In a number of cases, assistance consists of supplies of weapons, intelligence, or even personnel sent to areas outside of its own territory. In other instances, the state's territory is used as a corridor for military assistance by another state, a strategy allowing for deniability and making it difficult for target states to legitimize an extension of retaliation against the group to the sponsor.³⁴

Military resources for training or the preparation of attacks can also be directly employed to the sponsor's own territory. This strategy fits in with the assumption that sponsors aiming at strengthening their commitment are, besides increasing deliveries, expected to make their 'contribution' public in order to gain a reputation for loyalty/resolve. Subsequently, they exhibit readiness to sacrifice diplomatic costs and risk limited retaliation in the sense of a medium level of commitment. In turn, if states want to avoid entrapment, a decrease in material assistance is likely to occur as well as increased efforts to maintain deniability.

The risk of interstate escalation and therefore commitment reaches a peak if military support and hosting take place simultaneously on the sponsor's territory. This is the case as such a policy provides states under terrorist attack with a clear motive and target for retaliatory measures, generally accepted by third parties. In order to avoid entrapment, states might deny the group sophisticated weapons, increase control over training camps or redeploy military facilities and fighters to areas outside of their territory.³⁵ Whereas these cases still point to a moderate level of commitment, given the visibility of hosting, public denial and a minimum of assistance indicate a low commitment (see Table 8).

³⁴ ———, "Transnational Rebels."

³⁵ Chris Smith, "Weapons Transfers to Non-State Armed Groups," UNIDIR Disarmament Forum: Engaging Non-State Actors 1(2008); Schneckener, "Iraq and Terrorism. How are "Rogue States" and Terrorists Connected?"

Table 8: Commitment II: Military support

Level of Commitment	High	Moderate	Low*
ALLIANCE INVOLVES...	Security personnel, military assistance including sophisticated weaponry on one's own territory	Military assistance in areas outside of one's territory <i>or</i> tolerating external assistance, yet limitations on arms supplies, oversight over training facilities	Denial of presence/deliveries

* A fourth category—no commitment—is occurring in the case of an end to both active military support and tolerating arms deliveries to the group passing through one's own territory.

4.3.3 Financial assistance

In contrast to other forms of material support, direct *financial assistance* plays a rather limited role in the sponsorship dilemma. As outlined in section 3.3.1.3, monetary support is crucial in the group's early days, especially if competitors for the constituency's support need to be sidelined. Many of the organizations mentioned in this study have successfully diversified their sources of income, either by receiving direct and indirect funds from several states, private donations or taxation among their constituencies. As such a diversification is likely to come along with increased independence from existing backers, it is expected increase their concerns over abandonment and cause either increased funding or public statements emphasizing one's own contribution and pledging further commitment.

After 9/11, financial assistance to terrorist organizations became a core issue of non-military counterterrorism policies. However, it seems unlikely that such an exposure puts tangible assets at risk (Table 9).³⁶ Moreover, if the group enjoys relatively high levels of financial independence, governmental budget cuts are expected to have only a limited restraining effect on the group.

Table 9: Commitment III: Financial assistance

Level of Commitment	High	Moderate	Low*
ALLIANCE INVOLVES...	-	Explicit financial assistance, Toleration of fundraising among the state's citizens.**	Denial of funding

* A fourth category—no commitment—is occurring in the case of an end to both active funding and tolerating fundraising/taxation by the group among its citizens.

** Since 9/11

4.3.4 Endorsement

As well as financial assistance, *endorsement* by itself is rarely an indicator for high sponsorship commitment as it is unlikely to trigger military interstate conflict escalation and does not require military cooperation. Nevertheless, rhetorical or political backing of a group designated as terrorists carries diplomatic costs when alienating third parties or increase tensions with the adver-

³⁶ Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas, *Terrorism Financing and State Responses. A Comparative Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007); Sean S. Costigan and David Gold, *Terrornomics* (Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).

sary.³⁷ Hence, governments aiming at conciliating the adversary, preventing international isolation, and restraining the ally are likely to refrain from public statements of endorsement. Furthermore, they are expected to publicly question the legitimacy of the group's actions against the targeted state, portrayed as a victim in official rhetoric, and even announce cooperation with the adversary against the 'terrorist' group.³⁸ In turn, states that want to demonstrate their loyalty to the group and discourage it from abandonment are likely to adjust their rhetoric accordingly, emphasizing the legitimacy of the 'resistance' against rogue and repressive rulers and their own contribution to the group's 'struggle' (Table 10).

Table 10: Commitment IV: Endorsement

Level of Commitment	High	Moderate	Low
ALLIANCE INVOLVES...	-	Rhetoric in favor of the group (<i>resistance</i>), confirmation of alliance	Rhetoric condemning the group (<i>terrorists</i>), denial of alliance

Conclusion

Summarizing the findings and considerations from section 4.3.1 to 4.3.4, Table 11 presents the analytical categories that were defined in order to assess specific patterns of sponsorship, once alignments have been established.

Consisting of the specific sacrifices sponsors are willing to make in order to assist the group in achieving its STAR-goals (c.f. Figure 10), their policies reflect either a high, moderate, or low level of sponsorship commitment. In addition, this set of categories also fits in with the four sponsorship types established in 3.5.2.

Whereas the *Brother in Arms* and the *Defector* find themselves at the respective ends of the *high/low* (material) commitment continuum, the hybrid types *Fellow Traveler* and *Secret Backer* stem from a specific mix of *material/immaterial* policy measures. The former either occurs if the initial sponsorship pattern mainly reflects immaterial assistance (*endorsement*) and only a moderate to low level of material assistance or if a *Brother in Arms* reduces its material commitment without issuing public threats of realignment. The latter appears if a *Brother in Arms* aims at maintaining plausible deniability, particularly by reducing the publicity of the alignment in general and its own commitment in particular. This preference for opacity despite at least moderate levels of material support can also be part of the initial sponsorship policy.

³⁷ Taking Turkey's endorsement of Hamas as an example, Khaled Mashal's 2006 visit to Ankara sparked harsh criticism from Israel—including the controversial statement by prime ministry speaker Raanan Gissin: "This situation has deeply damaged the relationships. How would you feel if we hosted Abdullah Öcalan?" Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the Palestinian Question," *SETA Policy Brief* 27 no. 1 (2009); Ali Bulac. "Behind the Scenes of Hamas Meeting." *Today's Zaman* no. 21 February 2006 (2006). <http://bit.ly/1i8Cp7W>. Accessed January 30, 2014.

³⁸ In contrast to the material forms of support, as informality and opacity allow for a policy of "cheap talk," there is no actual need to establish a fourth category of realignment.

Table 11: Overview of sponsorship commitment

Level of Commitment	High	Moderate	Low
<i>ALLIANCE INVOLVES...</i>	<i>Extensive security cooperation, active military involvement</i>	<i>Diplomatic coordination and significant risk of military involvement</i>	<i>Symbolic commitment</i>
<i>LOSS OF TANGIBLE ASSETS TO FULFILL ALLIANCE COMMITMENT</i>	<i>Deliberately sacrificed</i>	<i>Put at risk, sacrificed intangible assets (diplomatic costs)</i>	<i>Avoided</i>
HOSTING	Freedom to operate militarily (presence of fighters and bases, cross-border attacks)	Freedom to operate politically (presence of non-military training facilities, offices)	Tolerance of the physical presence of group members devoid of political activity
MILITARY SUPPORT	Security forces, Military assistance including sophisticated weaponry on one's own territory	Military assistance in areas outside of one's territory OR Tolerating external assistance, yet limitations on arms supplies, oversight over training facilities	Denial of presence/deliveries
FINANCIAL SUPPORT	-	Explicit financial assistance, Toleration of fundraising among the state's citizens	Denial of funding
ENDORSEMENT	-	Rhetoric in favor of the group (<i>resistance</i>), confirmation of alliance	Rhetoric condemning the group (<i>terrorists</i>), denial of alliance
SPONSORSHIP TYPE	BROTHER IN ARMS ____ SECRET BACKER/FELLOW TRAVELER ____ DEFECTOR		

Hence, this classification constitutes not only an analytical tool for comparison, both within and between cases, it also subsequently provides a framework of analysis for studies addressing the three empirical puzzles highlighted in section 1.4.2.

Applying this measurement to empirical cases of state sponsorship of terrorism, a significantly high level of commitment was provided by Afghanistan to al-Qaeda after 1996, including a safe haven and training facilities, allowing fighters to travel freely within its borders and to enter the country without visas.³⁹ Moreover, assistance entailed substantial tangible sacrifices: First, the regime's hosting of al-Qaeda and refusal to extradite the group's leader Osama Bin Laden in 2000 increased international isolation and led to a freezing of its financial resources in December 2000 by UNSCR 1333. Second, military sanctions occurred in August 1998 when the U.S. air force bombed four al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan and invaded the country in late 2001 in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.⁴⁰ Yet, despite strong counterbalancing measures by others and significant security losses between 1996 and 2001, sponsorship commitment to al-Qaeda remained

³⁹ Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 205.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 212-216.

high, indicating the Taliban regime's failure to adjust its policy to systemic incentives for security-seeking.

As indicated in section 3.3.2.2, other backers have proven to be more responsive to external security changes. In November 1983, for instance, Iraq's foreign minister Tariq Aziz summoned the Abu Nidal Organization's (ANO) leadership to a meeting, informed them "that you have become a dangerous burden to us" and called on the group's leader to "leave Iraq the minute you step out of this office!"⁴¹ ANO had held a strong presence in Iraq since 1970, yet in the early 1980s fell prey to Iraq's efforts to overcome the country's strained relations with the Gulf States and the West in general and to obtain their support against Iran in particular. Regarding the occurrence of specific sponsorship roles between 1970 and 1983, Iraq took on the role of a *Brother in Arms* after the October 1973 war in order to undermine regional trends of moderation. According to Patrick Seale, however, the final shift to *defection* in 1983 resulted from a gradual process of policy adjustment reflected in a widening gap between ongoing material support and an official rhetoric of alienation since the 1978 Arab League summit, which points to *secret backing*.⁴²

In order to systematically trace, examine, and understand the underlining dynamics of such processes of resistance and realignment, the study turns to the empirical evidence of sponsorship in the case of Syria.

4.4 The case of Syria

The following analysis will comparatively trace the process of alignment formation and management between the Syrian government, on the one hand, and three different organizations on the other. While two case studies address Syrian state sponsorship of terrorism in the context of its conflict with Israel, examining support for Fatah (1964-76) and Hizballah (1989-2006), Damascus' alignment with the PKK against Turkey (1979-98) constitutes a third case.

Particularly in comparison to its non-Arab neighbors and lacking the vast national resource endowment of other regional states, Syria has been a small power in military, geographic, demographic, and economic terms.⁴³ Hence, both dyads of interstate conflict (vs. Israel/vs. Turkey) exhibited both a clear imbalance of power to the disadvantage of Syria and historical as well as territorial revisionism, entailing systemic incentives for balancing policies. Both dyads experienced periods of conflict de-escalation, for instance in the context of the Israel-Syrian Disengagement Agreement of May 1974 or the 1987 Damascus Agreement with Turkey, and limited tendencies of leveling of the power imbalance, for example in the immediate aftermath of the

⁴¹ Seale, Abu Nidal: 123.

⁴² Ibid., 111-113, 123f.

⁴³ Latif Wahid, *Military Expenditure and Economic Growth in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 116f.

1991 Gulf War. Hence, these subtle trends are expectedly influencing Syria's balancing efforts as the neorealist hypotheses N_1 (*balancing*), N_2 (*standing firm*), and N_3 (*restraining*), suggest.

While the probability of interstate war with Israel was ever-present during the initial period of Syria's alignment with Fatah, both states revealed a strong *status quo* orientation after Syria had established hegemony over Lebanon in the late 1980s. Therefore, international incentives to pressure Israel through Hizballah should be significantly lower throughout the 1990s and 2000s, hinting also to a reduced fear of alliance abandonment reflected in Syria's sponsorship commitment. Although Turkish-Syrian relations were far from cordial throughout the observation period of the third case, Syria's alignment with the PKK, the conflict never escalated to open war and cases of violence occurred only in a sporadic manner. While the general adjustment pressure stemming from the power imbalance and interstate relations points toward a balancing policy aiming at abandonment avoiding, incentives for a high commitment policy are expectedly lower than in the first case.

Before turning to the specific characteristics of the three groups, it is necessary to take different alternative alliance options among the cases into consideration. Throughout the entire observation period (1964-2006), Syria had a record of mostly informal and unsteady interstate alignment patterns against both Israel and Turkey, severed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Damascus' most important international ally during the Cold War.⁴⁴ While this supposedly induced a general fear of abandonment in existing non-state alignments directed against Israel, such concerns are expected to be particularly high in cases of regional isolation, most prominently in the second half of the 1960s (Fatah) and in the run-up to Syria's enforced withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 (Hizballah). In the case of the PKK, Ankara's strong ties to the West and its neutral position in the Iraq-Iran War prevented the emergence of stable interstate alliances throughout the 1980s. Eventually, Turkey's open alignment with Israel in the mid-1990s triggered a moderate regional counterbalancing in favor of Syria, assumedly reducing fears of abandonment by the Kurdish group.

In order to generate expectations about group capacity and Syria's strategic interest in maintaining the alignment as components of the sponsorship security dilemma, it is necessary to highlight the specific features of Fatah, the PKK, and Hizballah. Among the large number of groups reportedly supported by Syria in the context of latent or manifest interstate conflict, these three have successfully weathered heavy military retaliation campaigns by Israel and Turkey as well as factional infighting, commanded at times tens of thousands of core members, and enjoyed com-

⁴⁴ Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: pan-Arabism and political order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

paratively high levels of societal support.⁴⁵ Despite their considerable strength, their capacity remained—as in most cases of intrastate conflicts—insufficient to level the imbalance of power in the interstate conflict dyads. Below the threshold of sufficiency, however, all three groups underwent substantial upward and downside capacity trends, likely to influence the respective nature of the sponsorship dilemma. Yet, there is a strong interdependence between group capacity and sponsorship in all three cases, as the groups were substantially weaker at the outset of Syrian assistance than in later periods of cooperation. While Hizballah’s steady growth throughout the observation period assumedly triggered Syrian abandonment fears, Fatah and the PKK experienced severe internal and external crises likely to reflect in additional Syrian restraint.

In addition, and intertwined with the capacity feature ‘support base’, the presence of Syrian strategic interests constitutes a key factor in all three cases. Whereas all three groups benefitted from strong societal backing, the importance of their direct and indirect constituencies for regime security considerations varied significantly. Both Fatah and the PKK had strong ties to the Palestinian and Kurdish minorities inside Syria and claimed, in addition, to represent transnational movements. Therefore, Syrian championship over these groups provided Damascus with a tool of projecting ‘soft power’ to other states in the region and of preventing them, in turn, from interfering in Syrian domestic politics. Although it lacked a specific popular support base inside Syria, Hizballah constituted an increasingly important proxy and guarantor for Syrian predominance in Lebanon. While diverging interests, particularly in terms of political and territorial revisionism vis-à-vis Israel and Turkey, at times dampened Syrian commitment, all three alignments provided a source of domestic legitimacy and immaterial regional power resources.

Two neoclassical realist hypotheses suggest a bias among vulnerable states both towards *alliance-seeking* (NC₁) in general and *sponsorship* (NC₂) in particular, given their lacking capacity to mobilize sufficient domestic resources against powerful adversaries on the one hand and potential backlashes in the domestic arena over intra-alliance autonomy losses on the other. In the case of Syria, this bias is expected to occur frequently, particularly before 1970.

Reviewing the societal composition of Ottoman Syria with regard to the formation of an independent political entity in 1915, Thomas E. Lawrence warned, “any wide attempt at autonomy would end in a patched and parceled thing, an imposition on a people whose instincts forever and ever have been for parochial home-rule.”⁴⁶ And indeed, most studies on domestic politics in Modern Syria assert that—as in other post-colonial states—the state’s weak mobilization capacity

⁴⁵ On the relationship between membership, organizational structure, and longevity of a group, see inter alia Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How terrorist groups end. Lessons for countering al Qaeda* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008).

⁴⁶ Thomas E. Lawrence. "Syria, the Raw Material." *Arab Bulletin* March 12, (1917). <http://bit.ly/1k0kwfi>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

and regime vulnerability stems from societal dissent over what might constitute a national interest, who should be eligible of commanding the state, and of loyalty and exclusive allegiance to the political leadership.⁴⁷ On the one hand, separatist revolts by the country's compact minorities, such as the Druze, Alawis, and Kurds, reflected domestic opposition to the state as perpetuating Sunni Muslim predominance.⁴⁸ Territorial detachments from Ottoman Syria, on the other, increased Sunni revisionism both towards European powers and the minorities as potential or actual usurpers.⁴⁹ Hence, Syria emerged as a state that found, if at all, little acceptance and where nearly all its constituencies reject formally existing boundaries as artificial.

Under such conditions, and emphasized by most assessments on Syrian foreign policy, regime vulnerability impeding foreign policy autonomy emerged as a constantly present factor shaping foreign policy choices.⁵⁰ Whereas those forces tending towards accepting the status quo in favor of autonomy were swept from power immediately after the 1948 War and old elites were delegitimized, social fragmentation between mostly Sunni Muslims, opting for Pan-Arab unionism, and the non-Sunni minorities, advocating a Pan-Syrian solution, prevented foreign policy consensus and paved the way for military rule established in 1949.⁵¹ Representing a model case of oligarchic praetorianism, the military gained an autonomous status in the following decades and was, according to Amos Perlmutter, "always in a position to overthrow the military oligarchs, who de-

⁴⁷ Although Syria's total population has increased somewhat tenfold since Albert Hourani's assessment in the early 1940s, the overall balance of religious and ethnic minorities has remained comparatively stable ever since: While the vast majority (90 percent) of Syrians are Arabs, the country's 2 million Kurds constitute the largest group of non-Arab Syrians, alongside smaller numbers of Turkmen, Assyrians, and Armenians. Syria's religious mosaic consists of some 74 percent Sunni Muslims (including Kurds), about 11 percent Alawis, 11 percent various Christian communities, 3 percent Druze, and 2 percent Shia and Ismailis. See A.H. Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon. A political essay* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954). 396; U.S. Department of State. "Syria 2012 International Religious Freedom Report." Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (2012). <http://1.usa.gov/li8zvAd>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Minority Rights Group International. "Syria Overview." World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples (2011). <http://bit.ly/1fmmuB3>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁴⁸ Revolting compact minorities were Druze in the Southeast, Alawis in the West, and Kurds in the northeastern Jazira region. Alawis (also called Alawites or Nusayris) are the largest religious minority in Syria and inhabit mainly the Western Latakia province. Their belief is generally assumed to be rooted in a Shiite heterodoxy and rejected both by Sunni and Shiite mainstream doctrines. Among Syria's Sunni majority, Alawis are seen as "non-Muslim, heretical, and idolatrous." Eyal Zisser, "The 'Alawis, Lords of Syria," in *Minorities and the State in the Arab World*, ed. Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor (Boulder, Colo.: Rienner, 1999), 130. See also David Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria* (London: Croom Helm, 1987). 22-28; Mordechai Nisan, *Minorities in the Middle East: a history of struggle and self-expression*, 2nd ed. (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2002). 114-117; Itamar Rabinovich, "The Compact Minorities and the Syrian State, 1918-45," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14, no. 4 (1979); Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon. A political essay*: 137-142; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 20; Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French mandate: the politics of Arab nationalism, 1920 - 1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). 515; Jordi Tejel, *Syria's Kurds: History, politics and society* (London: Routledge, 2009). 33-36.

⁴⁹ In 1920, the predominantly Christian district of Mount Lebanon declared itself independent, also incorporating Muslim populated districts (Sidon, Tripoli, Bekaa Valley). In 1939, the Sanjak of Alexandretta, a former part of the Aleppo District, was integrated into Turkey, in spite of Syrian protest. In 1922/1948, Syrian elites perceived their loss of Ottoman Palestine, as both result of unjust external interference and an act of Jewish betrayal and usurpation. See Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon. A political essay*: 129; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 55-58, 152f.

⁵⁰ Hinnebusch, "The foreign policy of Syria."; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*, Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria under *Hafiz al-Asad: new domestic and foreign policies*, Jerusalem papers on peace problems 15 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1975); Bassel F. Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad" in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. Fred Lawson (London: Saqi Press, 2009).

⁵¹ Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 47-49; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 60f.

pend on the military establishment for support.”⁵² To make matters worse, the army, though suffering from internal fragmentation, had evolved into the “political guardian of the country,” perceiving itself rather as a “savior” than an “arbitrator.”⁵³ Ever since, fragmented domestic power, increasing authoritarianism, and militancy against Israel as the only means of sustaining legitimation created not only *praetorian instability*, but also heavily affected foreign policy decision-making.⁵⁴

Against the background of more than half a century of one-party-rule, Syria has been a popular object of research for studies on the persistence of authoritarian rule.⁵⁵ Indeed, the 1970 coup by Hafiz al-Asad ushered in an era of domestic stability after 21 different governments had taken over power in a literal struggle for Syria since 1946.⁵⁶

The observation period of the Syria-Fatah case encompasses both the time before and after Asad’s ascension to power. As he managed to overcome institutional power fragmentation in favor of the presidency, the conditional variable domestic politics is expected to be especially influential before 1970. Nevertheless, the violent revolt of the Muslim Brethren (1976-82), repeated hints of intra-elite conflict over succession in the 1980s and 1990s, and the continuation of coup-proofing measures after Bashar al-Asad’s accession to power in 2000, support Raymond Hinnebusch’s assumption that praetorianism in Syrian domestic politics after 1970 has been “constrained but not eliminated.”⁵⁷

Particularly reflected in Pan-Arab unification schemes, but also in other instances, the assumption of intra-alliance autonomy losses in order to extract power resources indicated a lack in foreign policy autonomy as suggested in the case of vulnerable states. Moreover, political dependencies, for instance in the context of alignments based on pan-ideology, stood at times in contrast to Syria’s economic reliance on other interstate alignments providing economic domestic power resources, through, for instance, foreign aid.⁵⁸ Moreover, the *sponsorship* hypothesis NC₂ suggests, than Syria resorts to state sponsorship as a means of counterbalancing its adversaries, if caught in a predicament between international adjustment pressure and substantial domestic risks stemming from internal and external balancing and a lack of reliable state allies.

⁵² Amos Perlmutter, *Modern authoritarianism: a comparative institutional analysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). 42.

⁵³ ———, “From Obscurity to Rule: The Syrian Army and the Ba’th Party,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (1969): 844f.

⁵⁴ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 61.

⁵⁵ Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba’thist Syria* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990); ———, *Syria. Revolution from above* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Nikolaos van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba’th Party*, 4 ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); Zisser, *Commanding Syria*; Volker Perthes, *The political economy of Syria under Asad* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 1995); Eyal Zisser, *Asad’s legacy: Syria in transition* (London: C. Hurst, 2001); Patrick Seale, *Asad of Syria: The struggle for the Middle East* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1988); Moshe Ma’oz, *Asad: the Sphinx of Damascus: a political biography* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988); Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 26.

⁵⁶ Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 151f.

⁵⁷ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 13.

⁵⁸ Throughout the 1980s, some 40 percent of public expenditures had to be covered by Arab transfers, making up for almost 25 percent of total financing, Soviet aid, and other foreign loans. See also Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 114f; Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 123.

5 From joint defeat to open war: Syria & Fatah

*"Israeli reaction to hostile Syrian action would have to be directed against both the terrorists and the Syrian regime, itself."*¹

Yitzhak Rabin, September 11, 1966

Within a decade, the Palestinian nationalist *Fatah* rose from a Kuwait-based splinter group, established in 1958, to the "most prominent of the terrorist groups."² Although the goal to destroy the state of Israel and restore pre-1948 Palestine was widely shared among Palestinian insurgent groups, Fatah's 'Palestine First' doctrine constituted a departure from mainstream Pan-Arab unity approaches. After years of challenging the 1964 established Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) claim to represent the Palestinian struggle, on the one hand, and targeting Israel with guerilla raids, on the other, the Fatah leadership headed by Yasser Arafat took over PLO in 1969 and dominated it until his death in 2004.

Until at least 1993, Israeli and other Western officials frequently denounced Fatah as a terrorist organization, based on numerous armed attacks on civilians, bombings, hostage taking, and sabotage acts.³ Furthermore, the term 'terrorist' as a reference to Fatah occurred also frequently in Western politics, academia, and media. This was especially the case in the early 1970s, during the group's "two-year foray into international terrorism."⁴ Although international sanctions for sponsorship were weak in the 1960s, Fatah's terrorist reputation came along with threats of retaliation and increased, for instance, Western support for Israeli complaints over border violations.⁵

The following section will consecutively examine Syria's sponsorship security dilemma as well as domestic politics between 1964 and 1976. Finally, the analysis turns to Syria's sponsorship role and its potential modification over time.

¹ Yaacov Bar-Siman Tov, *The Israeli-Palestinian conflict: from conflict resolution to conflict management* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 166.

² U.S. Department of State, "Intelligence Memorandum No. 2205/66, December 2," ed. U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Vol. 18, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1964–1967 (Washington, DC 1966). The group's name (at times also *Fateh*) means 'conquest' and stems from the acronym for *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Falastini* (Palestinian National Liberation Movement) spelled in reverse. For a thorough account of the group's formation see Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State, the Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997). 80-92.

³ Neither the U.S. nor the EU had officially designated Fatah or PLO as a terrorist organization in the period of observation. This is mainly stemming from the fact that the practice of designation was not established before 1997. Affiliated splinter groups, such as the al-Aqsa Martyr Brigade had been designated in 2005. See also Audrey K. Cronin. "The" FTO List" and Congress: Sanctioning Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations." (2003). Published electronically October 21. <http://bit.ly/1djrjfbZ>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, "Intelligence Memorandum No. 2205/66, December 2.," Yonah Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism: Profiles of Fatah, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command, and Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (Ardsley, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2003); National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "Global Terrorism Database [Data file]." (2012). <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 684.

⁵ See for instance UN Security Council, "1319th meeting [Provisional Verbatim Record]," *S/PV.1319*, November 4 1966.

5.1 Nature of the Sponsorship Dilemma

In order to assess systemic and domestic incentives for sponsorship policies tailored to reduce respective risks of abandonment and entrapment, the following section turns first to the imbalance of power between Syria and Israel and the relative capacity of Fatah. Furthermore, the analysis examines the severity of interstate conflict, Syria's alternative alliance options, and strategic interest in maintaining the alignment. A conclusive section evaluated incentives for specific Syrian sponsorship policies regarding Fatah.

5.1.1 Drifting apart: The power imbalance between Syria and Israel

Regarding the imbalance of power between Israel and Syria, this study takes into account primarily demographic, industrial, and military indicators of power. These are translated in COW's Composite Index of National Capability (CINC), measuring a country's relative share of power capabilities distributed in the international system.⁶

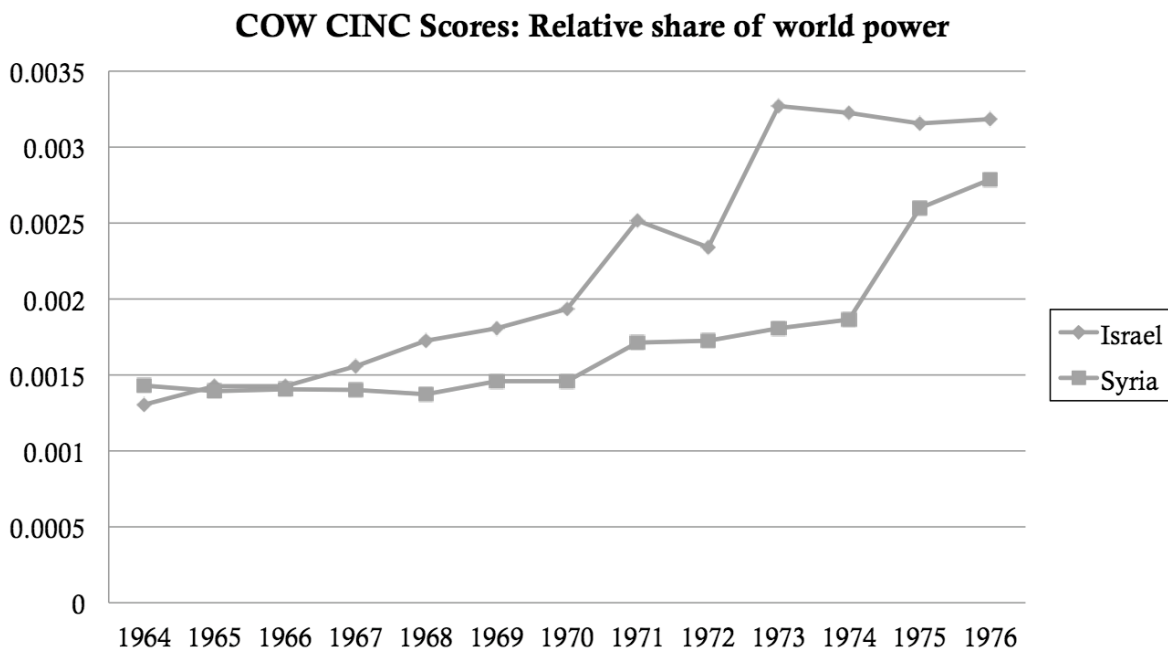


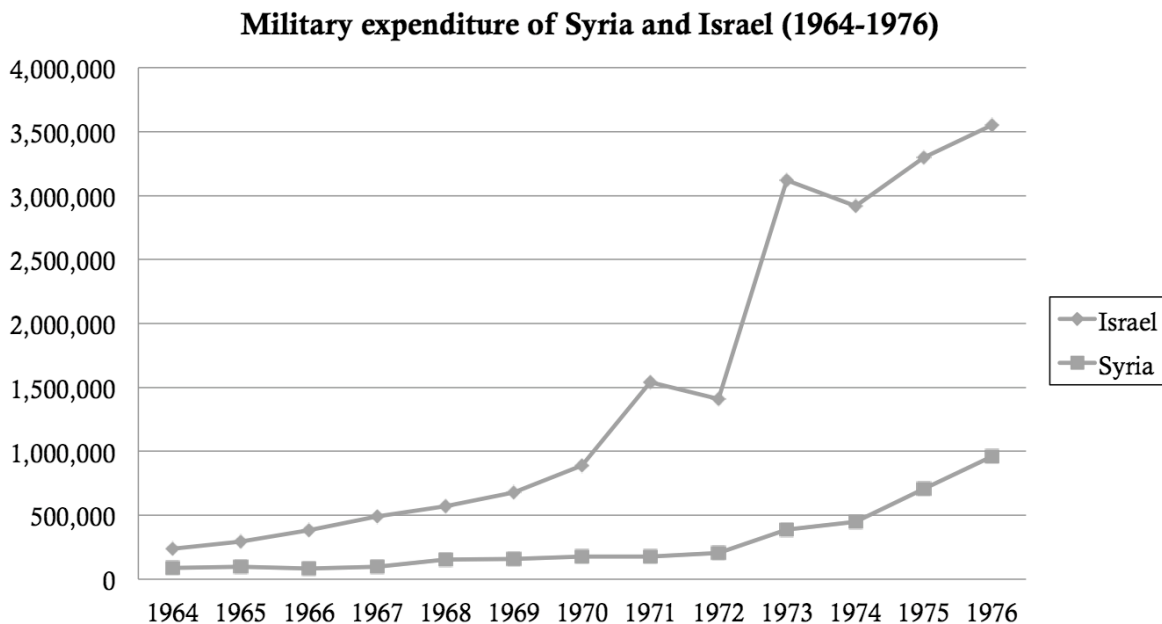
Figure 17: Relative share of world power: Syria and Israel (1964-1976)

According to CINC data, Israel steadily expand its initially small advantage after 1966 and especially in the interwar years, despite a significant increase in Syria's national capability after 1970 and in the aftermath of the October 1973 War (**Figure 17**). Data also indicates that the imbalance of power in favor of Israel peaked in 1973/74. This becomes all the more obvious after taking a closer look at the respective military expenditures in the period of observation (**Figure 18**).⁷

⁶ Singer et al., "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War," Version 4.0.

⁷ Ibid.

While Syria steadily increased its military expenditure, particularly after 1972, it fell short of coming even close to the boost in Israel’s annual spending, which increased sevenfold between 1967 (\$491.6 million) and 1976 (\$3.5 billion).⁸



Source: COW CINC data, thousands of current year U.S. dollars

Figure 18: Military expenditure of Syria and Israel (1964-76)

Moreover, Patrick Seale described Syria’s army in the mid-1960s not only as “ill-prepared for war” but also as a force of some “poorly-trained” and “under-officered” 50,000 soldiers, “equipped ‘on the cheap’” by the USSR.⁹ Only half of its 500 tanks were operational and while the Air Force commanded some 100 MiG-17 jets, Syria possessed neither air defense missiles nor a relevant naval force. Additionally, the army’s chain of command was fragmented and divided on both the officers’ as well as the political level.¹⁰

Israel, in turn, has been considerably weak on the defense, given its unfavorable geographic location and its small size. Yet, as a lesson from the 1956 Suez campaign, Israel strengthened its offensive capabilities by expanding, for instance, its air force and acquired helicopters. Additionally, Israel’s Defense Forces (IDF) developed its tank corps and mobile armored units, expanded its paratroop corps, mechanized the infantry, and created a naval commando.¹¹ In contrast to Syria’s army, IDF was shaped by a coherent military doctrine, able to mobilize about 500,000 reserve soldiers at speed by 1967, and its leadership consisted of a cohesive, professional, and well-trained officer corps. Israel also benefitted from its good relations with the West and subsequent

⁸ Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 117-120.

⁹ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 117.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 199; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 117.

high-technology weaponry deliveries—including the development of nuclear technology.¹² Eventually, Israel manifested this conventional superiority in the 1967 and 1973 wars and strengthened its low defense capabilities by creating buffer zones and occupying areas of strategic importance.¹³ Additionally, Israel's historical ties to Lebanon's Christian communities translated into actual security-political advantage, particularly in the context of the Civil War 1975.¹⁴

Already by the time of the third Arab Summit in Casablanca in 1965, Israel, a territorial and demographical dwarf in the region, had achieved military superiority over its rivals. Based on this assessment, Egypt's president Nasser publicly precluded open war against Israel as the Arab armies lacked "the necessary weapons and training."¹⁵

Regarding systemic incentives for adjustment strategies, the clear imbalance of power in favor of Israel suggests an overall Syrian policy of balancing, especially after 1965 and to an increasing extent between 1967 and 1971, as suggested by the *balancing* hypothesis N₁. In 1973/74, the imbalance of power and therefore systemic adjustment pressure on Syria peaked, yet moderately declined in 1975/76. With regard to existing anti-Israel alliances and as suggested by the neorealist *standing firm* hypothesis N₂, the imbalance induces Syrian efforts to avoid abandonment, especially in the second half of the 1960s and after the October 1973 War.

5.1.2 Bridging the gap? Fatah/PLO's capacity as an ally

*"The Syrians use this weapon of guerilla activity because they cannot face us in open battle, because they are militarily very weak, and they know we are bent upon establishing ... certain facts along the border."*¹⁶

General Aharon Yariv, May 1967

In section 3.2, the assumption that rebel forces meet a state's power capacity to a degree sufficient to fill others' need for assistance was put into question. Also EAC data attributes a strong relative weakness to the case of Israel and Fatah.¹⁷ With an estimated average of 4,500 fighters distributed over several countries, Fatah provided little conventional assistance to Syria in case of an Israeli attack, which is expected to induce entrapment-avoiding policies.

Throughout the observation period, however, the degree of Fatah's inferiority varied significantly and should reflect in Syria's commitment. Hence, the capacity of Fatah will be measured by evaluating the frequency and lethality of attacks on Israel, its membership strength and support base among societal constituencies and third states, cohesion of its command, and its ability to escape or resist retaliation.

¹² ———, *Asad of Syria*: 118; Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 199.

¹³ In the course of the June 1967 War, IDF captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.

¹⁴ Mordechai Nisan, "Did Israel betray its Lebanese allies?," *Middle East Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (2000).

¹⁵ Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 192.

¹⁶ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 126.

¹⁷ Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two."

5.1.2.1 Attacks against Israel

In contrast to other Palestinian groups violently challenging Israel, Fatah's record of terrorist attacks has been a comparatively moderate one.¹⁸ Nevertheless, its campaign against Israel reveals interesting variances: Before the 1967 War, attacks against Israel were only few in number, non-lethal and mostly sabotage acts against the National Water Carrier (NWC) or settlements close to its borders to Jordan and Syria.¹⁹ After the war, Fatah stepped up its activity and targeted Jerusalem and Haifa as well as settlements in the upper Galilee. Instances of cross-border fire and other operations steadily increased after February 1969 yet declined in the second half of 1970. Guerilla attacks carried out by Fatah and others averaged at 24 between March and August 1969, reaching a preliminary peak of 43 in the latter. In contrast to some 50-70 operations per month between January and August 1970 (52 in August alone), the frequency of attacks dramatically declined to eight in October and twelve in December 1970.²⁰

In addition, Palestinian groups increasingly targeted civilians, causing 337 deaths only in 1970.²¹ In the twelve single attacks Fatah could be ascribed to or deliberately claimed responsibility for between June 1967 and September 1970, fighters killed 24 people and injured more than 100 in attacks on Israeli institutions, also in Western Europe and Latin America. Following a deadly bomb blast in Tel Aviv on November 6, Fatah co-founder Salah Khalaf ('Abu Iyad') stated that this was "the start of more and bigger operations within our occupied homeland."²² Especially in contrast to the early 1970s, PLO resorted to violence in order to assert its presence and prevent its exclusion from diplomatic initiatives.²³ Between the September 1970 crisis in Jordan (*Black September*) and the October 1973 War, the number of attacks directly against Israel decreased substantially, as Fatah's radical offspring Black September Organization (BSO) targeted mainly conservative Arab countries.

The average number of cross border attacks carried out by Fatah and other Palestinian groups sunk, in contrast to 1970, to under 20 throughout 1971. After a brief period of increased activity in early 1972 (64 operations between January and mid-March), attacks settled down at an average of seven between April 1972 and January 1973. In the months leading to the 1973 War, Fatah reportedly launched only one to two attacks per month. While citing the wishes of 'friendly states' and clearly Syria as a major determinant of Fatah inactivity, Iyad hinted in January 1973 to external pressure.²⁴ Although Mickolus and other databases list no Fatah attack throughout

¹⁸ See also National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START).

¹⁹ Edward F. Mickolus, *Transnational terrorism: a chronology of events, 1968-1979* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

²⁰ Moshe Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974, Arab Politics and the PLO*, 2 (revised) ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1996). 119.

²¹ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 211.

²² Mickolus, *Transnational terrorism*: 230.

²³ Yezid Sayigh, "The Armed Struggle and Palestinian Nationalism," in *The PLO and Israel: From armed conflict to political solution, 1964-1994*, ed. Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma'oz (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 31.

²⁴ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 214f.

1976, the group resumed both to trans border assaults on Israel and bombings in West-Jerusalem in the context of the Lebanese Civil War, killing some 33 and injuring 127 civilians.²⁵

5.1.2.2 *Support base*

Several of Fatah's founding members, such as Khalil al-Wazir ('Abu Jihad') or Arafat shared close ties to the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had gained popularity by linking political Islam to Palestinian nationalism and Arab unity.²⁶ In 1954/55, they started mounting sabotage raids against Israel from Gaza and calculated that military reprisals might create an "'explosive' atmosphere" likely to increase the "self-awareness" of Palestinian population.²⁷ Fatah quickly established links with other Palestinian guerilla organizations and potential recruits through media outlets.²⁸

Although Fatah raids in 1964/65 inflicted no major military harm on Israel, their presentation in Arab media helped portraying the group as a worthy competitor of the PLO, which found itself heavily constrained by Cairo. Nevertheless, Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan prohibited cross border attacks and denied support to Fatah between 1966 and June 1967. After the war, Fatah shifted its focus to the West Bank and successfully diversified the number of its statist backers. Additionally, the transfer of PLO finances and mass defections from PLO's Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) to Fatah boosted the group's operational strength in late 1967.²⁹

Throughout 1968, both statist and societal support for Fatah soared as well its international reputation as a political force. The group's ability to fight IDF to a standstill in the Battle of Karamah caused the Palestinian refugees to hail the 'rebirth' of their people and according to Fatah sources, thousands of volunteers joined the group within days.³⁰ The Gulf States and Lebanon stepped up their financial assistance substantially, allowing the group to guarantee lifetime support for the families of fighters killed in action. Reportedly, the number of fighters in Jordan alone accounted for some 20,000 by late March 1968 in comparison to approx. 200 about three years earlier.³¹ In addition, Fatah reported in May to have received over 20,000 applications from Egyptians and another 1,500 per week from Iraqi volunteers. Although only one third of the recruits actually completed training, Fatah commanded by June about 2,000 fighters and 12,000 supporters.³² On a political level, improved relations with Cairo resulted in increased media endorsement and mili-

²⁵ *Transnational terrorism*; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START).

²⁶ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 49.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 84f.

²⁹ Ma'oz and Yaniv, "On a short leash," 195; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 91f.

³⁰ Donald Neff, "Battle of Karamah establishes claim of Palestinian statehood," *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* (March 1998).

³¹ Edward Hughes, "A brotherhood of terror," *Time* 91, no. 13 (1968); Thomas Kiernan, *Arafat: The Man and the Myth* (New York, NY: Norton, 1976). 206.

³² Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 181.

tary aid as well as Egyptian pressure on Jordan and Lebanon to tolerate the presence of Palestinian fighters and their increased control over local refugee camps.³³

Despite Fatah's popularity among its Palestinian constituency, its increasing radicalization worsened relations with Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, particularly because of Israeli reprisals.³⁴ In Jordan, violence erupted in September 1970, leaving hundreds of Fatah fighters and several thousand Palestinian civilians dead, and resulted in the shutdown of all PLO offices and confiscation of weapon stores.³⁵ Subsequently, Fatah transferred its fighters to South Lebanon, known as 'Fatahland' when their number rose to up to 20,000.³⁶ After the 1973 war, the Arab Summit recognized PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, entailing a boost in Arab support. Nevertheless, increased tensions with the Lebanese government in the context of cross-border attacks and Israeli retaliation laid the path for renewed violence. By the end of 1976, Fatah had lost some 900 fighters, including many veteran commanders, in clashes with the Lebanese government, loyalist militias, and the Syrian army.³⁷

5.1.2.3 Cohesion of command

Initially directed by a collective leadership (*executive committee*), Fatah's command became increasingly centralized and from 1967 to 2004, Arafat stood out clearly as the group's undisputed leader (and PLO since 1969).³⁸ While EAC data supports this assessment of a clear central command, it indicates that Fatah exercised only a moderate degree of control over the Palestinian insurgency.³⁹

Generally, a lack of consensus regarding the character of any future Palestinian entity, external alignments, as well as the appropriate strategy against Israel, triggered several coup attempts and factionalism within Fatah/PLO. In 1966, for instance, PLA captain Yusef Urabi briefly assumed unilaterally leadership over Fatah—reportedly on the orders of the Syrian General Command.⁴⁰ In the wake of Fatah's formal takeover of PLO in the second half of the 1960s, divisions along ideological as well as strategic lines occurred. While *Fatah al-Islam*, mainly comprising of Jordanian Muslim Brethren, challenged the secular-leftist cadres' dominance in 1969/70, other leftist PLO factions PFLP (est. in 1967), PFLP-GC (1968), and DFLP (1969) disagreed with Fatah in particular on their position vis-à-vis the conservative, pro-Western Arab states, as well as the means to

³³ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 103-108.

³⁴ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 243f; Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism*: 2.

³⁵ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 267-281.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 291; Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism*: 3.

³⁷ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 358f., 408.

³⁸ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 201f; Bassam Abu Sharif, *Arafat and the Dream of Palestine: An Insider's Account* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 13.

³⁹ Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two."

⁴⁰ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 210f.

achieve their nationalist goals.⁴¹ Nevertheless, on February 4, 1969, Arafat became chairman of the PLO and able to politically sideline as well as to outnumber his rivals in the Palestinian arena.⁴² In addition, discord within Fatah centered on alignments and particularly the use of violence. Sabri al-Banna's militant *Fatah-Revolutionary Council* (also known as Abu Nidal Organization) *de facto* replaced mainstream-Fatah in Iraq in the early 1970s. In addition, the imposed 'lack of action' after the Black September caused a crisis in 1972 in Lebanon between a local Fatah branch and the Central Committee as well as within the leadership.⁴³

After 1973, Fatah gained additional Arab resources and increased control over potential breakaway or even revolting factions.⁴⁴ Its formal calls for the establishment of a national authority in any liberated part of the Palestinian territory and the dismissal of violence as the only legitimate strategy strengthened, on the one hand, pragmatist forces and divided, on the other, leftists inside Fatah.⁴⁵ While this increased Fatah's internal cohesion, it caused several radical leftist and rejectionist PLO-factions to temporarily leave the organization.⁴⁶

5.1.2.4 Ability to escape or resist retaliation

Finally, the capacity of a terrorist organization is measured by its ability to escape or resist retaliation by the targeted state, indicated by access to a safe haven, either inside or outside the targeted state's territory.⁴⁷ Although safe havens in Israel's vicinity had become crucial for Fatah since 1964, the degree of protection that they were able and willing to provide varied significantly over time.⁴⁸

Before the June 1967 War, Israel limited its retaliatory strikes to Jordan and Fatah staging camps in the West Bank.⁴⁹ In early 1968, IDF raids lasting for weeks foiled Fatah attempts to establish a safe haven in the Occupied Territories, killing dozens and detaining hundreds of fighters.⁵⁰ In contrast to this material weakness, the popular perception of Fatah's ability to resist retaliation peaked in the aftermath of the Battle of Karamah on March 21, 1968, which left 28 Israeli soldiers dead and 90 wounded.⁵¹

⁴¹ Alexander, *Palestinian Secular Terrorism*: 33f, 41-45; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 153; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 225f.

⁴² Sharif, *Arafat and the dream of Palestine*: 17-19. Ma'oz and Yaniv, "On a short leash," 195.

⁴³ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 234f.

⁴⁴ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 354f.

⁴⁵ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 287-296.

⁴⁶ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 344-351.

⁴⁷ Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two," 575, 579.

⁴⁸ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 194.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 204f.

⁵⁰ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 176.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

According to analysts, Fatah/PLO military bases and supply routes located in Jordan and Lebanon were mostly “plainly observable [...] and thus vulnerable to air strikes and shelling.”⁵² Formally, the Cairo Agreement of November 3, 1969, obligated Beirut to accept the “right of the guerillas to attack Israel’ in return for their obedience to state authorities.”⁵³ However, retaliatory strikes of Israel’s Air Force (IAF) frequently targeting Jordan and Lebanon in 1969 and after 1970 further aggravated tensions between Fatah and the respective governments. In 1970/71, Fatah lost its Jordanian safe haven and relocated many of its fighters to Lebanon. However, already existing dissent over Fatah’s presence in the country and the Palestinians’ repeated violation of the agreement increased. This trend was not only reflected in the government’s refusal to permit air raid shelters in Palestinian camps in 1974 but also increased communal tensions escalating to major Civil War only months later.⁵⁴

Finally, Operation “Wrath of God” (1972-88), a series of assassinations and raids, which included numerous intelligence operations in Western Europe after BSO’s attack on the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, illustrated that retaliatory strikes were not limited to Israel’s immediate neighborhood.⁵⁵

Conclusion

As indicated above, Fatah generally lacked sufficient capacity to level the high asymmetry of power between Palestinian and Israeli forces. However, a more precise examination of the frequency and lethality of Fatah attacks, its power base, and ability to resist retaliatory strikes, indicates variation below Snyder’s threshold. Fatah gained substantial strength after the June 1967 War, overcoming the Arab States’ preference for PLO and even inheriting its facilities, boosting its standing among the Palestinians, and demonstrating at least a partial capacity to resist. In addition, Fatah attacks against Israel became more numerous, peaking between early 1969 and the second half of 1970. Although societal support remained stable, internal factionalism and worsening relations with the frontline states weakened Fatah. Hence, the number of attacks on Israel decreased after a preliminary high in 1972, yet became more deadly and targeted Israeli civilians in a more frequent manner. Before 1967 and especially after the disengagement agreement in 1974, Fatah bases in Syria had been rather safe from Israeli retaliatory strikes in contrast to Jordan, Lebanon, and the Occupied Territories. However, regional backing of the Fatah-led PLO, which had strengthened its control over other Palestinian factions substantially by 1973, boosted

⁵² *Terrorism and Counter-Intelligence: How Terrorist Groups elude detection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). 83.

⁵³ Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma'oz, "The PLO in regional Arab politics: taming a non-state actor," in *The PLO and Israel: from armed conflict to political solution, 1964-1994*, ed. Avraham Sela and Moshe Ma'oz (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 108.

⁵⁴ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 192-194, 358.

⁵⁵ Gal Luft, "The Logic of Israel's Targeted Killing," *Middle East Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (2003); Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York: Grove Press, 1991). 272-277.

after the war. Hence, it is to be adhered that Fatah gained significant strength after the June 1967 War and the October 1973 War respectively. Although a general tendency towards fears of entrapment has to be adhered, Fatah's capacity alleviated this tendency to a certain degree in the respective periods.

5.1.3 Severity of conflict

Understood as a form of counterbalancing, the extent of sponsorship commitment is also influenced by the severity of conflict between the sponsor and its adversary. Thus, a high probability of inter-state war is expected to induce fears of abandonment.

A longstanding interstate conflict in the region, Syria's feud with Israel escalated several times into full-scale war (1948, 1967, 1973). Historical and territorial revisionism on both sides, the unsettled status of up to 140,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria after the 1948 war, the culmination of U.S.-USSR rivalry and its penetration of the region, as well as tensions over the regional distribution of water further aggravated the conflict.⁵⁶

Between 1948 and 1976, MID data (3.10) lists over 40 dispute events, ranging from border violations to sporadic clashes, attacks, and interstate war, and indicates a high probability of war.⁵⁷ After 15 years of low-intensity skirmishes at the mutual border, Israel gained *de facto* sovereignty over several disputed demilitarized zones (DMZ) of strategic and economic importance near the Sea of Galilee in 1964.⁵⁸ The conflict, however, intensified as these territorial gains entailed the initiation of Israel's NWC project in 1963, diverting some 75 percent of the Jordan waters for agricultural and industrial development; a move that was seen as extremely hostile by Syria, which sent troops to the border.⁵⁹ In 1965/66, border clashes increased inter alia, as Israel repeatedly attacked Syrian diversion works of the Jordan River with long-range tank fire and even an air raid.⁶⁰ As if relations could not get any worse, Israel's Chief of Staff, Yitzhak Rabin, threatened to hold Syria accountable for increased Palestinian activity since autumn 1966 and was granted bigger freedom of movement by the government in early 1967.⁶¹ The conflict reached a pre-war peak on April 7, 1967, when clashes between Syrian and Israeli air force and a tank battle resulted in a fiasco for Syria: Six of its jets were destroyed and "victorious Israeli jets swept over the suburbs of Damascus."⁶² Additional alarm bells were set off when Rabin stated after the clash, "the Syrian government needed to be overthrown before Israeli security could be guaranteed."⁶³

⁵⁶ Yonah Alexander and Joshua Sinai, *Terrorism: The PLO Connection* (Crane Russak, 1989). 51.

⁵⁷ Ghosn et al., "MID3 Data Set."

⁵⁸ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 118f.

⁵⁹ Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 191; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 119.

⁶⁰ Yaacov Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East. Syria between Domestic and External Conflict, 1961-1970* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1983). 137-139; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 120.

⁶¹ Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 166; Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 200.

⁶² Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 156.

⁶³ Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 200f; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*.

The June 1967 War resulted in a disaster for Syria, manifested by the loss of the Golan Heights the displacement of some 100,000 local residents (including 17,000 Palestinians), and the weak performance of Syrian troops during the war.⁶⁴ On the one hand, the defeat led to a demoralization and moderation of the Syrian radical factions, no longer rejecting negotiations as a means of conflict solution after 1970 and thus to a decline in dispute events.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Israel's occupation of Mount Hermon exposed Damascus to IDF surveillance and strengthened Syria's revisionism against Israel. In particular, the trauma of defeat convinced Hafiz al-Asad that "expansionism was in Israel's very nature."⁶⁶

The constantly high probability of war after 1967 reflected strongly in several episodes:

In response to an increasing number of attacks, Israeli Air Force (IAF) struck Fatah bases in Syria and Israeli Mirages shot down a Syrian MiG-17 and a MiG-21 on February 24, 1969.⁶⁷ Between April and June 1970, fierce clashes broke out repeatedly on the Golan, involving tanks, artillery, and air force. Again, IAF shot down in total seven Syrian MiGs and the clashes left hundreds of Syrian soldiers injured and killed.⁶⁸ In the following years, Syria repeatedly failed to regain the area by military means.⁶⁹ When Syria intervened on behalf of PLO forces in northern Jordan in September 1970, Israel mobilized forces for a potential ground operation into Syria and the U.S. ambassador in Tel Aviv warned that Israel might "so smash the Syrians that they won't rise again for a long time."⁷⁰ Finally, in the weeks after the Munich Massacre in early September 1972, IAF repeatedly raided villages just outside the capital, army positions on the Golan Heights, and Fatah camps near the Lebanese border and in the Damascus area.⁷¹ On November 21, IAF shot down seven Syrian planes and on January 8, 1973, it attacked numerous military and economic targets in Latakia and Tartus. In the course of the operation, IAF killed some 400 civilians and soldiers and destroyed an army camp, a radar post, and anti-aircraft batteries.⁷²

After the October 1973 War, in which Syria failed to recover the Golan Heights, tensions decreased in the context of the May 1974 Disengagement Agreement.⁷³ Remarkably, both Israel and Syria found themselves on the pro-*status quo* side in the context of the Civil War in Lebanon

⁶⁴ Aaron David Miller, *The Arab states and the Palestine question: between ideology and self-interest* (New York: Praeger, 1986). 48.

⁶⁵ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 138; Eyal Zisser, "Syria and Israel: Toward a Change," in *Regional Security Regimes: Israel and its Neighbors*, ed. Efraim Inbar (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 154f.

⁶⁶ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 142,145.

⁶⁷ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 119; Shlomo Aloni, *Arab-Israeli air wars 1947-82* (Oxford: Osprey Aviation, 2001). 60.

⁶⁸ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 119.

⁶⁹ "Syria shells Israeli bases in occupied Golan Heights," *New York Times*, November 26 1972; Charles Mohr, "Israel and Syria battle third day in the Golan Area," *ibid.*, June 27 1970.

⁷⁰ Mobley, "Countering Syria's 1970 Invasion of Jordan," 165.

⁷¹ Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians. The Clash of Nationalisms* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001). 99f; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 214f.

⁷² ———, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 215.

⁷³ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 154.

1975/76. Hence, in contrast to Jordan in 1970, Israel even tolerated Syria's direct intervention into Lebanon in June 1976.⁷⁴

It can be maintained that between the early 1960s and 1974, territorial revisionism, two conventional wars in six years, frequent border clashes including heavy weaponry and casualties, and a fierce rhetoric provided for a constantly high probability of war. Hence, the Syrian-Israel conflict sets a clear incentive for Syria to prevent allies from abandonment. After 1974, however, tensions with Israel significantly decreased, inducing fears of entrapment in the conflict between Israel and Fatah.

5.1.4 Availability of alternative allies

Once sponsorship alignments are established, intra-alignment dependence declines and fears of entrapment correspondingly increase if other reliable allies are available. To what extent have alternative alliances influenced Syria's leverage over Israel and Fatah in the respective security dilemma?

Syria has been a part of large regional alliance bodies ever since gaining independence, most prominently the League of Arab States (AL). AL, initially established in 1945 as a mediating institution, was re-designed as a collective security system in 1950.⁷⁵ In a corresponding Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty, AL members pledged to

*"Consider any [act of] armed aggression made against any one or more of them or their armed forces, to be directed against them all. Therefore, in accordance with the right of self-defense, individually and collectively, they undertake to go without delay to the aid of the State or States against which such an act of aggression is made, and immediately to take, individually and collectively, all steps available, including the use of armed force, to repel the aggression and restore security and peace."*⁷⁶

However, as the treaty quickly posed a contradiction with the AL members' national interests, it was gradually replaced by ad-hoc and specific alliances such as the defense agreement between Cairo and Damascus in 1966/67.⁷⁷

In January 1964, AL members rejected Syria's call for joint war against Israel and Nasser made it clear that, if Syria would provoke such a war, it would have to face Israel on its own.⁷⁸ The fol-

⁷⁴ Avner Yaviv, "Syria and Israel: The Politics of Escalation," in *Syria under Assad: domestic constraints and regional risks*, ed. Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 171-173.

⁷⁵ COW data classifies AL as an entente, where members pledge consultation in a crisis. In a defense pact, however, members are expected to commit themselves to intervene by military means if any treaty partner is attacked. See Douglas M. Gibler and Meredith Reid Sarkees, "Measuring Alliances: The Correlates of War Formal Interstate Alliance Dataset, 1816-2000," *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 2 (2004); Gibler, *International military alliances, 1648-2008*; J. David Singer and Melvin Small, "Formal alliances, 1815-1939. A Quantitative Description," *Journal of Peace Research* 3, no. 1 (1966); Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Joseph Kostiner, "The Damascus Declaration: An Arab Attempt at Regional Security," in *Regional Security Regimes: Israel and its Neighbors*, ed. Efraim Inbar (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), 109.

⁷⁶ League of Arab States. "Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Between the States of the Arab League." June 17 (1954). <http://bit.ly/1gDMe15>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁷⁷ Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 193; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*; Maddy-Weitzman and Kostiner, "Damascus Declaration," 110.

lowing summer, Syria's disappointment over lacking international support increased when it took the matter to the UN Security Council—without any effect.⁷⁹ By that time, foreign policy makers realized that Syria was neither strong enough to face Israel by itself nor able to convince other states to intervene on its behalf.⁸⁰

Syria's regional isolation after its breakaway from the Union with Egypt (1958-61) aggravated also the weakness of its formal alliances.⁸¹ Even when the Ba'th party returned to power in Iraq in 1968, the political leadership in Damascus refrained from an alignment and its radical left-wing posture strained relations with the conservative-moderate Arab states.⁸² Finally, USSR support increased before the June 1967 War, yet excluded forthcoming military support during the war. As Moscow clearly preferred a political settlement with Israel, it could also not be completely counted on after the war.⁸³

With the exception of Iraq, Syria's patterns of interstate alignment changed considerably after the Asad coup on November 13, 1970. Though merely of proclamatory nature, Arab unionist projects re-emerged in 1971, this time with Libya and Egypt.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Asad searched for a rapprochement with Jordan and Saudi Arabia in order to form a unified Arab front against Israel. This approach bore fruits in 1973, when both Egypt and Syria coordinated their efforts against Israel.⁸⁵ In addition, financial assistance from the Gulf rose from \$7 million in 1968 to \$1.5 billion in 1980.⁸⁶ Relations with the USSR cooled in the coup's aftermath, yet improved by 1973 and contributed to the build-up of the Syrian army. The rapprochement peaked in February 1976, when General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev publicly ranked Syria as one of the most important regional allies of the USSR.⁸⁷

The availability of alternative allies is expected to have a moderating effect on Syria's abandonment fears in its relations with Fatah. Although Damascus had *de jure* been a member of a multi-

⁷⁸ Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 137.

⁷⁹ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 120.

⁸⁰ *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 139.

⁸¹ Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 143-149, 164; Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 189f; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 117.

⁸² After the 1967 War, Syria's conflict with the moderate Arab states went so far that it even boycotted the Arab summit in Khartoum in August, waiving millions of foreign aid and ushering in its almost complete regional isolation by 1969/70. See also Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 137f; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 232; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 144; Ma'oz, *Asad*: 37f.

⁸³ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 49; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 137; Robert O. Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East. Soviet policy since the invasion of Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 34.

⁸⁴ Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 233f.

⁸⁵ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 71.

⁸⁶ Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 236.

⁸⁷ Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 58. On Soviet assistance for Syria in the early 1970, see also Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 212-214, 222f; Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 147; ———, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 144; Robert O. Freedman, "Moscow, Damascus and the Lebanon Crisis," in *Syria under Assad: domestic constraints and regional risks*, ed. Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 227.

lateral defense pact since 1950, its interstate allies repeatedly failed to deliver on the promises of assistance against Israel, thereby increased fears of abandonment by Fatah. This tendency was alleviated temporarily by the Egyptian-Syrian defense agreement on the eve of the 1967 War and Asad's alignment successes after 1970. Amid resumed military cooperation with Egypt in 1973, improved ties to Jordan and the Gulf States, and a somewhat eased dependence on USSR support, incentives for entrapment avoiding increased in the early 1970s.

5.1.5 Strategic interest in upholding the alignment

Independent of the actual adversary, a sponsor's strategic interest in upholding the alignment also shapes the sponsorship security dilemma and creates incentives for abandonment avoiding policies.⁸⁸ In order to examine this interplay, the following section turns to regional and domestic resources linked to Syria's alignment with Fatah.

On April 21, 1988, exiled Fatah founder Khalil al-Wazir was buried in the Palestinian Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. Up to one million people attended the funeral, which followed a personal invitation from president Asad. This had been particularly remarkable as Syria was at that time effectively at war with Arafat-led PLO and the Syrian-Palestinian community itself accounted for only 250,000 people.⁸⁹ Understood in a domestic, regional, and international context, this brief episode illustrates the strategic importance of the Palestinian cause and Fatah as its *de facto* 'sole representative' for the Syrian government.

Since the Arab revolt in the late 1930s, the question of Palestine had been the most important factor of Pan-Arab ideology, carrying expectations of unity and cooperation against Western imperialism.⁹⁰ Hence, the establishment of the state of Israel on what many Syrian's understood as Syrian land boosted politicization also among army officers, and radical nationalist pressure peaked in regime overthrow in 1949.⁹¹ While up to 190,000 refugees from territorial detachments to Turkey and Israel constituted a constant reminder of Syrian-Arab inferiority, granting residential rights and obligations resembling those of Syrian nationals to the refugees established the issue as a domestic factor in Syria.⁹² As radical Arab nationalism became a key instrument of discrediting and delegitimizing both ruling elites and domestic challengers, governments tied their

⁸⁸ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 23f.

⁸⁹ Yezid Sayigh, "Struggle within, Struggle without: The Transformation of PLO Politics Since 1982," *International Affairs* 65, no. 2 (1989): 258; Paul Delaney, "P.L.O. man's rites to be held in Syria," *New York Times*, April 19 1988.

⁹⁰ These aspirations rose due to the formation of the Arab League in 1945, Syrian independence in 1946, and the outcome of the 1956 Suez Crisis. In turn, they Pan-Arabism suffered major setbacks in the loss of Hatay in 1939 and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. See Yehoshua Porath, *In search of Arab unity 1930-1945* (London: Cass, 1986). 162; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 71f; Roger Owen, *State, power & politics in the making of the modern Middle East*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000). 67f.

⁹¹ Walid Kazziha, "The Impact of Palestine on Arab Politics," in *The Arab state*, ed. Giacomo Luciani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 301; Miller, *The Arab states and the Palestine question*: 44f.

⁹² Among the refugees was one of Ba'thism's founding fathers, Alawi philosopher Zaki al-Arsuzi. See Khoury, *Syria and the French mandate: the politics of Arab nationalism, 1920 - 1945*: 513; Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 51; Tétreault, "International Relations," 155; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 97; Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*.

own worthiness to rule to their commitment to the Palestinian cause.⁹³ Subsequently, the Ba'th party portrayed Palestine as a "key issue in the party's struggle in the domestic, Arab, and international domains" after their 1963 accession to power.⁹⁴

The awareness of the strategic importance of a pro-Palestinian alignment became repeatedly evident in regime rhetoric. In November 1965, for instance, members of the Ba'th regional command issued a statement warning that in case of any further delay of "a struggle that will be a real revolutionary experience," "we shall definitely lose the confidence of our people and the confidence of the rank and file of the party."⁹⁵

Beyond potential domestic challengers to Ba'thist rule, Syria linked its pro-Palestinian alignment also to its regional interests. Particularly after the Arab states had *de facto* suspended military action against Israel in 1965, support for Palestinian efforts of popular liberation became the 'touchstone' for commitment to Arab unity. Subsequently, a process of 'outbidding' emerged over championship of the Palestinian resistance.⁹⁶ As a prominent supporting role was also suitable to compensate for legitimacy losses in times of inter-Arab conflict, linking the Palestinian resistance exclusively to the revolutionary camp aimed at preventing the moderate camp from benefitting from the PLO's political successes.⁹⁷ In 1971, also Minister of Defense Mustafa Talas emphasized this linkage when stating that the Palestinian struggle "could not be separated from the current Arab revolution."⁹⁸

In this context, Syria's strategic interest in upholding its alignment with Fatah increased after 1964, as the group gradually replaced PLO, whose formation under the aegis of Cairo had frustrated Syria's claims of representing the Palestinians. In this context, Syria's rejection of the Casablanca summit allowed it to portray itself as the only source of significant Arab support to the Palestinian struggle.⁹⁹ While Syrian exclusive patronage was challenged by especially Egyptian pro-Fatah realignment in the second half of the 1960s, inter-Arab competition over the Palestinian cause somewhat eased in the early 1970s.¹⁰⁰ This has been illustrated not only by Egypt's, Lebanon's, and Jordan's disengagement from the Palestinian struggle in a nationalist turn, but al-

⁹³ Kazziha, "The Impact of Palestine " 303-306.

⁹⁴ Moshe Shemesh, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," *Israel Studies* 2, no. 1 (2006): 16.

⁹⁵ Abraham Ben Tzur, *The Syrian Baath Party and Israel* (Haifa: Givat Haviva, 1968). 10.

⁹⁶ Kazziha, "The Impact of Palestine " 303.

⁹⁷ Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 79f; Miller, *The Arab states and the Palestine question*: 48; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 293.

⁹⁸ Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 79; Eyal Zisser. "Appearance and Reality: Syria's Decisionmaking Structure." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 2 no. 2 (1998). <http://bit.ly/1fBeq0Q>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁹⁹ Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv, *Syria under Assad: domestic constraints and regional risks* (London: Croom Helm, 1986). 194.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 51.

so by Anwar Sadat's claim that Egypt had "spilled more than enough of its blood in the Arab cause."¹⁰¹

Regarding Syria's wider international interests, control over PLO allowed Damascus to reap both reputational and material benefits from other states. First, the Gulf States subsidized Syria as a frontline state in the Arab-Israeli conflict after 1973/74. Second, Syria's handling of the 'Palestinian Card' played a significant role in both the boost in USSR-Syrian cooperation after 1972 and the temporary suspension of USSR arms deliveries in the context of Syria's intervention in Lebanon in 1976.¹⁰²

Summing up, championship of the Palestinian cause had been both a key pillar of regime legitimacy and a contested resource in inter-Arab relations. Incentives for abandonment avoiding peaked in the second half of the 1960s and declined to a certain extent in the early 1970s, due to the disengagement of the moderate camp. However, the Palestinian Card remained strategically important ever since, providing the regime with leverage over domestic competitors and the Palestinian refugees inside Syria, on the one hand, and a tool of influencing PLO's constituencies in other Arab states on the other.

5.1.6 Conclusion

The previous section explored the nature of the sponsorship security dilemma (SSD) between Syria and Fatah during the observation period (1964-76). Comprising and constituting the independent variable of the neorealist (N_{1,3}) and neoclassical realist (NC_{1,3}) hypotheses, the SSD constitutes a crucial point of departure for further examination. In order to emphasize systemic incentives for balancing (N₁) and specific alliance policies between *standing* firm (N₂) and *restraining* the ally (N₃), the SSD's specific nature will be assessed on the basis of the findings in 5.1.1 - 5.1.5.

The first, neorealist, hypothesis N₁ assumes that an imbalance of power induces corresponding adjustment policies. Given the clear and steadily increasing imbalance between Syria and Israel in favor of the latter, it should be maintained that there is a clear and strong incentive for response. This has been especially the case after 1965 and to an increasing extent between 1967 and 1971, peaking in 1973/74 and to a moderately lower degree after 1975. Whether structural realism remains indecisive regarding the precise policy, two expectations regarding adjustment choices can be maintained from the observations made in section 5.1.3 (severity of conflict) and 5.1.4 (availability of alternative allies). First, as established by balance-of-threat theory, the presence of severe interstate conflict is likely to trigger balancing behavior.¹⁰³ Prior to mid-1974, interstate conflict had been endemic and escalated frequently between 1963 and 1973. Second, ad-

¹⁰¹ Owen, *State, power & politics* 72.

¹⁰² Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 154; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 236; Alasdair Drysdale and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991). 153-156.

¹⁰³ In contrast to bandwagoning. See also Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*: 25f.

justment policy choices are highly depending on their availability. Prior to 1972, Syria’s military expenditure suggested limited effects of internal balancing, increasing the pressure on external alliance formation. However, Syria’s patterns of interstate alignment were heavily constrained by fragility, unreliability, and intra-Arab rivalry with little exceptions throughout the 1960s.

By 1965/66, Israel’s material superiority, constant fears of escalation resulting in defeat, and a lack of reliable allies, were assumedly crucial for Syria’s decision to propagate a popular war of liberation as a new military doctrine—with the Palestinian rebels at its center.¹⁰⁴ As conventional war had been *de facto* ruled out as an option, Damascus eventually announced in mid-1966 to be “no less heroic than Hanoi.”¹⁰⁵ Section 5.2 will examine domestic pressures to align with Fatah, as emphasized by the neoclassical realist hypotheses NC₁ (*alliance-seeking*) and NC₂ (*sponsorship*).

Both neorealist hypotheses suggesting either a policy of *standing firm* (N₂) or *restraining* the ally (N₃) turn to alliance management and maintain that the SSD’s nature entails a specific sponsorship policy. **Table 12** concludes these observations as follows.

Table 12: Nature of the sponsorship dilemma I: Syria-Fatah

Indicator	Observation	Induces a general fear of
IMBALANCE OF POWER	High in favor of Israel <i>Peak: 1973/74; moderate: prior to 1965; 1975/76</i>	Abandonment
CAPACITY OF THE ALLY	Insufficient to fill Syria’s need for assistance, vulnerable to retaliatory strikes <i>Limited increased strength 1967-69 and 1973-76 respectively</i>	Entrapment
SEVERITY OF CONFLICT	High <i>Significant ease of tensions after 1973 War</i>	Abandonment/Entrapment
ALTERNATIVE ALLIES	Not available/ Available <i>De facto isolation until 1973- with the exception of 1966/67 (Egypt), ad-hoc cooperation against Israel.</i>	Abandonment/Entrapment
STRATEGIC INCENTIVES	High <i>Alliance provides for control over Palestinian constituencies and domestic power resources</i>	Abandonment

It becomes immediately apparent that throughout the period of observation no trend prevailed clearly. Therefore, Syria’s commitment to Fatah is expected to range between a strong policy of *resolve* and a policy of *restraint*. This comes not as a big surprise, given the long observation period, the instability of Syria’s interstate alignments, the rapid decline of open interstate confrontation

¹⁰⁴ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 120.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 151.

after 1974, and finally the fact that Fatah has never posed a substantial military threat to Israel. Nevertheless, several critical junctures for Syria's sponsorship policies could be identified:

Between 1964 and 1973, incentives for abandonment were dominant, given Syria's regional isolation, high levels of conflict, and Israel's power predominance. Accordingly, the rise of Fatah in the Palestinian arena in 1967 and inter-Arab competition over championship have assumedly increased this tendency. Jordan's and Egypt's disengagement from Palestine, improved inter-Arab military cooperation, rifts within the Palestinian camp eased tensions between the adversaries and an improved Syrian power position point towards increased restraint roughly after 1971 and to a larger extent after 1974.

Having laid out the incentives stemming from the SSD, the following section turns to Syria's domestic politics in order to examine the antecedent condition 'regime vulnerability/autonomy.'

5.2 Domestic politics: The Struggle for Syria

All four neoclassical hypotheses argue that regime vulnerability is a decisive factor regarding the questions when states *seek alliances* instead of internal balancing (NC₁) or choose *sponsorship* (NC₂), and under what conditions they opt for tailor-made alignments policies deviating from policies of *standing firm* and *restraining* (NC₃/NC₄).

Against the background of Syria's instable alliance patterns, one might assume a preference for internal balancing in its efforts to counter the Israeli threat. The steady rise in Syria's military expenditure, increasing from some \$90 million in 1966 to \$150 million (1968), \$388 million (1973), and exceeding one billion in 1977 also supports this assessment. In addition, military personnel tripled between 1966 (80,000) and 1976 (240,000).¹⁰⁶ **Figure 19** and **Figure 20**, illustrating Syria's internal balancing efforts in the period of observation, indicate that they stagnated until the 1967 War—despite increased Israeli power capacities and a high level of conflict. Only after 1971, Syria's internal balancing efforts reflected the Israeli development to a larger degree. In a similar vein, there was no substantial increase in recruitment between 1964 and 1970.¹⁰⁷ It is hence noteworthy, that Syria's increased efforts of internal balancing coincide *not* with the period of regional isolation and high conflict, which had been observed in the 1960s, but with declined tension and improved inter-Arab relations as well as a rise in economical assistance from the USSR and the Gulf States (see also section 5.1.1).

¹⁰⁶ Singer et al., "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War," Version 4.0.

¹⁰⁷ Syria's military personnel spawned between 1970 (75,000) and 1971 (110,000) and made another massive leap from 1974 (130,000) to 1975 (230,000). See *ibid.*

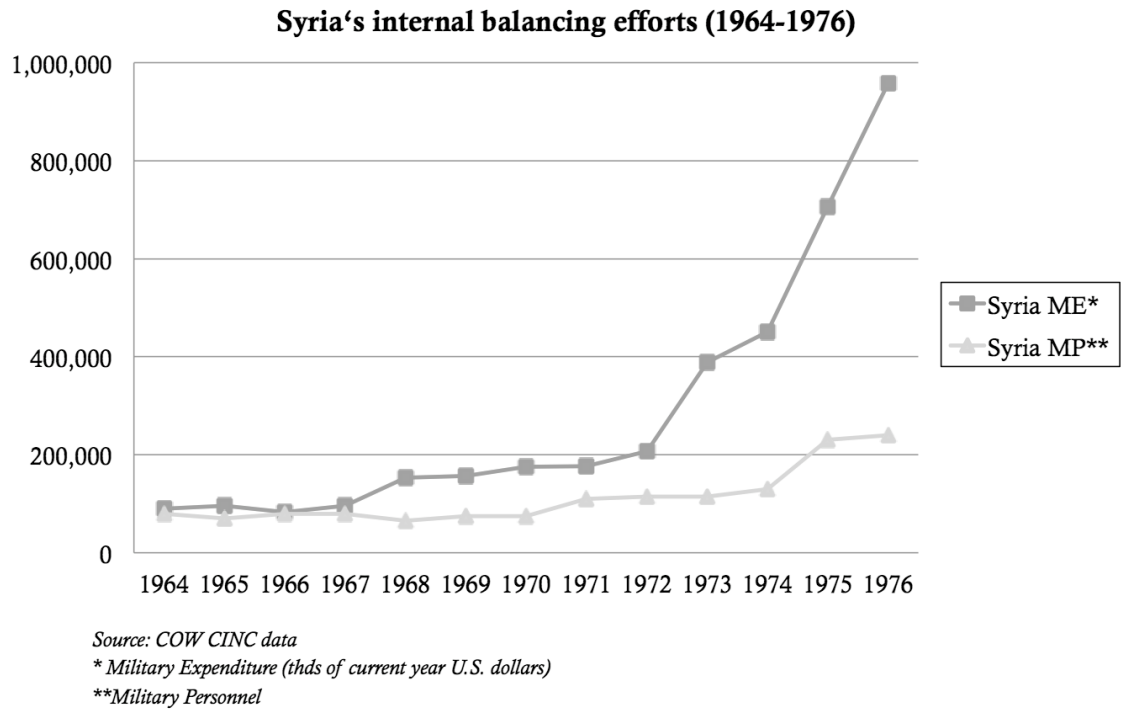


Figure 19: Internal balancing efforts by Syria (1964-1976)

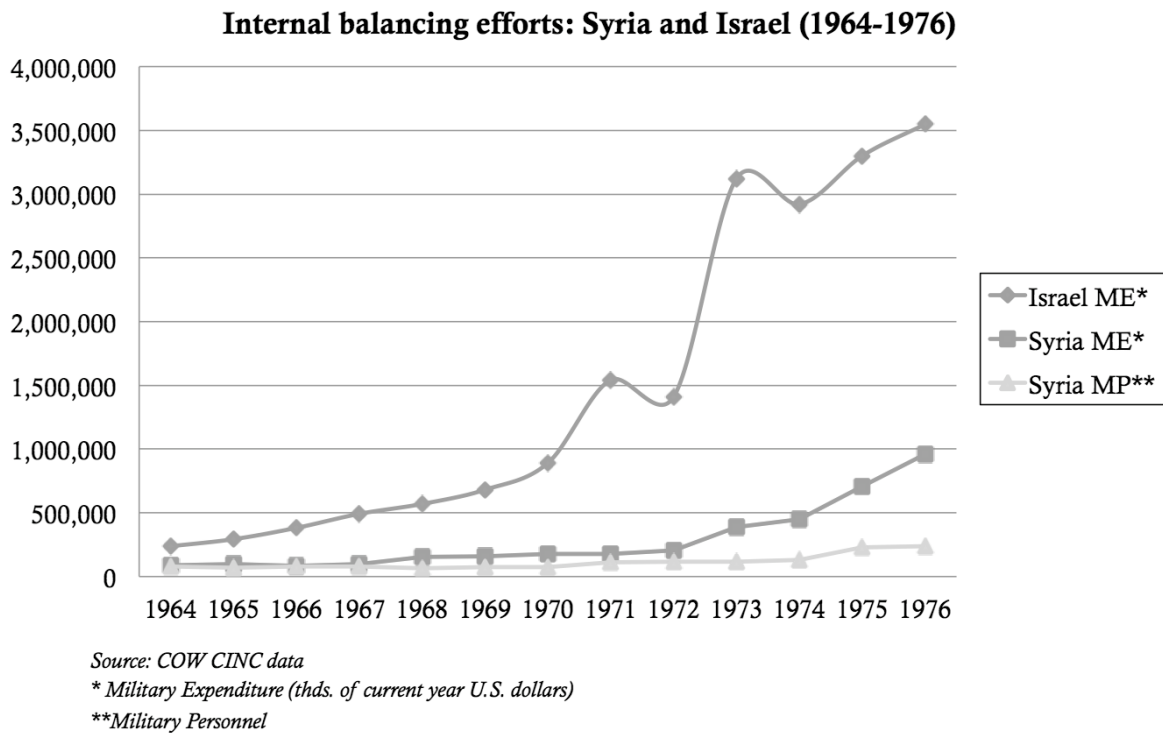


Figure 20: Internal balancing efforts by Syria and Israel (1964-1976)

Under the condition of unfavorable alliance options, the neoclassical realist *alliance-seeking* (NC₁) and *sponsorship* (NC₂) hypotheses emphasize regime vulnerability as a potential explanatory factor for both the observed time lag in internal balancing and the choice of sponsorship in order to compensate a lack in domestic mobilization resources. Whether this has also been the case in Syria between the Ba’thist coup in 1963 and the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1976 will be assessed as follows.

5.2.1 Ties that divide: Ba’thist factionalism and the struggle for Syria 1963-1970

Amid the rise of the Ba’th party in 1963, the popular base of the political leadership was affected by military purges and the fact that authoritarian rule also spread to the economy, weakening especially the agrarian-commercial business elites.¹⁰⁸ The same year, the regime enacted the emergency law and Syria’s record of sharply restricted political rights and civil liberties worsened dramatically.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, after having experienced a radical shift among their power base from predominantly Sunni urban middle class to a rural constituency, the Ba’th leaders found themselves isolated in the political arena and increasingly relied on military repression.¹¹⁰ Endemic corruption and a lack of party discipline reinforced the structural vulnerability of the regime’s nationalist credentials, despite the presence of a mass populist party whose membership increased dramatically between 1963 (some 2,500) and 1968 (approx. 35,000) and that officially resented sectarianism as incompatible with Pan-Arabism and “never experienced”¹¹¹ by the Syrian people. Subsequently, this trend also limited the regime’s ability to mobilize support outside of its own community of trust.¹¹²

Regime vulnerability became manifested in the centralization and radicalization of Sunni Muslim opposition to secular Ba’thist rule, on the one hand, and an encroaching dominance of the religious minorities, on the other. Supported by the traditional notability, Communists, Socialists, and Nasserites, the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood challenged the government in numerous protests and violent clashes in 1964 and 1965.¹¹³ From February to April 1964, for instance, small tradesmen and anti-Ba’th students initiated a wave of demonstrations and strikes in Syria’s urban centers, at times violently repressed by army units. Simultaneously, the regime built up a workers’ militia to suppress further strikes and in January 1965, a special military court condemned eleven men to death that were connected to strikes. To make matters worse, mass capital

¹⁰⁸ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 61; Steven Heydemann, *Authoritarianism in Syria. Institutions and Social Conflict 1946-1970* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999). 106-133.

¹⁰⁹ Center for Systemic Peace. "Polity IV Country Report for Syria 2010: Syria." (2010). <http://bit.ly/MNIop6>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹¹⁰ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 122.

¹¹¹ Comment by Radio Damascus on September 19, 1979, See Nikolaos van Dam, "Middle Eastern Political Cliches: 'Tikriti' and 'Sunni Rule' in Iraq; 'Alawi Rule' in Syria: A Critical Appraisal," *Orient* 21, no. 1 (1980): 52f.

¹¹² Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 135f; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 65; van Dam, "Middle Eastern Political Cliches," 52-55; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 11f.,71; Alan George, *Syria: neither bread nor freedom* (London: Zed Books, 2003). 68.

¹¹³ van Dam, "Middle Eastern Political Cliches," 56; Line Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria: The Rise and Fall of Ba'thist Secularism* (London: Routledge, 2011); Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria*: 83f; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 137; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 128.

flight and a virtual stop of private investments led to a massive deterioration of Syria's economy by late 1964.¹¹⁴

Given the generally high politicization of the army and its dominant role in the Ba'th party and vice versa, intra-Ba'th rivalries became intertwined with those within the security forces after 1963. Hence, a split emerged between the Pan-Arab National Command (NC) and the Syrian Regional Command (RC). While the NC included mostly Sunni civilian leaders such as party's founding members Michel Aflaq and Prime Minister Salah ad-Din al-Bitar as well as military leaders, such as General Amin al-Hafiz, the RC was dominated by radical leftists and the party's military command, increasingly comprised of minorities from the periphery.¹¹⁵

Subsequently, sectarian polarization (as indicated by **Figure 21**) increasingly entailed praetorianism. Thus, a situation emerged in which, "the highest party leaders were isolated from supervising and directing the organisation" and "party loyalty was replaced by loyalty to a person or bloc."¹¹⁶ Accordingly, the military leadership systematically removed Sunni officers from key posts and replaced them with 'trusted' leaders from the minority communities. Chief of Staff Salah Jadid stationed army-units comprised mainly of minorities around Damascus while transferring assumedly unreliable Sunni officers to peripheral areas and the Syrian-Israeli front.¹¹⁷ In a domestic move of counterbalancing the RC, the government aimed at coopting moderate Nasserites and liberals by seeking Western economic assistance. However, as the party left fiercely rejected these efforts, a crisis emerged that resulted in Bitar's enforced resignation.¹¹⁸ Directly facing a major competitor for its own military and political power resources, the NC dissolved the RC on December 19, 1965. It rejected any other allegiance than the one to the party and vowed to eliminate the armed forces' interference in politics.¹¹⁹ Yet, when Bitar publicly suggested sending the army *back to the barracks* in early 1966, the RC's military members staged a coup, ousting him and his remaining allies from the ruling circles on February 23.¹²⁰ Subsequently, Alawi and Druze officers literally eliminated urban Sunni presence from the higher ranks of the military by 1970.¹²¹ Consequently, the Ba'th party eventually overcame the NC/RC-split.¹²² Nevertheless, it was particularly the increased visibility of Alawi minority rule after 1966, which affected regime vulnerability to threats outside of the ruling circles. As **Figure 21** and **Figure 22** show, Druze and Ismaili representation in the power circles decreased throughout the second half of the 1960s. This narrowing of the power base ('Alawization') was accompanied by security repercussions

¹¹⁴ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 25-33.

¹¹⁵ Nikolaos van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria. Sectarianism, Regionalism and Tribalism in Politics, 1961-1978* (London: Croom Helm, 1979). 60.

¹¹⁶ Quoted from a Ba'th party report of October 19, 1965 *ibid.*, 51.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 52f.

¹¹⁸ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 33f.

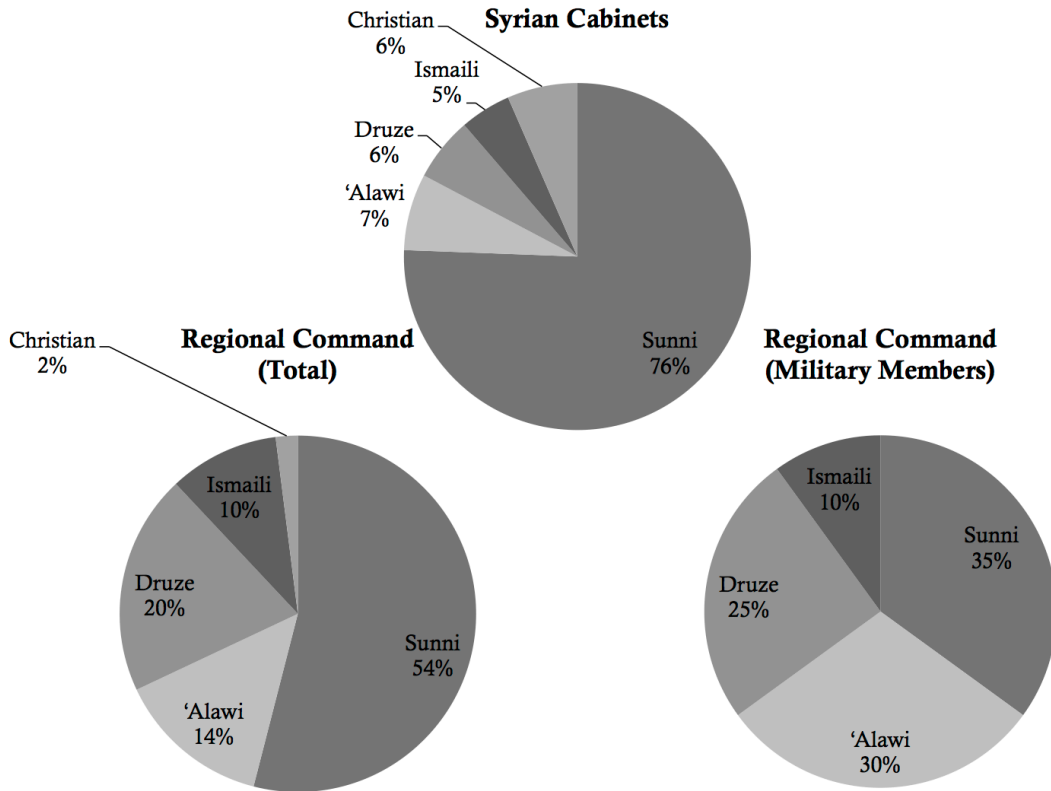
¹¹⁹ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 60.

¹²⁰ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 128f.

¹²¹ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 54-56.

¹²² Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 133.

such as protests and even open revolt of Druze officers between September 1966 and March 1967.¹²³



Source: van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 28f.

Figure 21: Sectarian representation in Syrian politics (9/1963-2/1966)

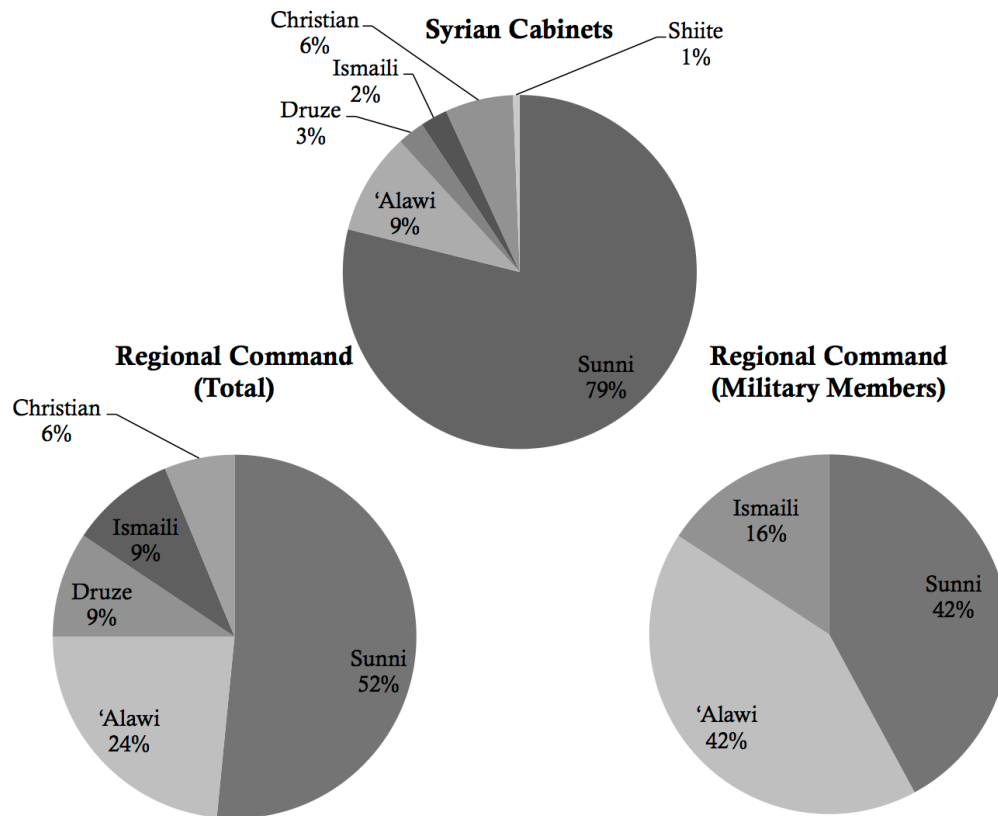
While reducing immediate threats to regime survival, this policy simultaneously narrowed the *community of trust* down to members of the four Alawi tribes.¹²⁴ Yet, as the ratio between potential security forces with an Alawi background and the general Syrian population (14-18/1,000) fell short of the ratio needed for effective policing and repression as established by Quinlivan (20/1,000), the integration of other segments of society became essential for regime survival.¹²⁵ Therefore, socialization, radical agrarian reform, and the encouragement of a massive rural influx to urban centers helped the Ba'thists to win over and consolidate their power base among the rural sector. Additionally, foreign assistance from the Eastern Bloc States and China compensated for lacking domestic investments.¹²⁶

¹²³ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 58f; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 171f; van Dam, "Middle Eastern Political Cliches," 50f; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 112-114; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 42.

¹²⁴ Matawirah, Haddadin, Khayatin, and Kalbiah. See Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria*: 24; Ma'oz, *Asad*: 51; Zisser, "Appearance and Reality: Syria's Decisionmaking Structure".

¹²⁵ Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 136f.

¹²⁶ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 133-136; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 35f.



Source: van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 28f.
 Figure 22: Sectarian representation in Syrian politics (3/1966-11/1970)

Yet, efforts to create allegiance to the state beyond religious and tribal bonds were impeded by fierce resistance of the urban Sunni population to Alawi rule, rejecting the idea of being dominated by a minority perceived as heretic and traditionally inferior.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the party's mobilization capacity remained limited among small wage earners and artisans in the urban centers and domestic opposition to Leninism (Muslim Brotherhood, Nasserites) persisted.¹²⁸ Subsequently, major anti-regime protests took place in early 1967. Increased state control over the economy triggered renewed strikes and protests in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus in May 1967.¹²⁹

In order to weaken its domestic opponents and to increase its acceptance among militant nationalists, trade unions, Communists, as well as Nasserites, the government also radicalized its foreign policy, preparing Syrians for a "protracted mass armed struggle."¹³⁰ These revolutionary nationalist credentials, however, were damaged severely in the 1967 War. First, suspicions emerged that the leadership had held back well-equipped forces from the front and too quickly abandoned

¹²⁷ Ma'oz, *Asad*: 51; Dawisha, "Arab Regimes," 294.
¹²⁸ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 133.
¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 136; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 41f.
¹³⁰ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 135.

the Quneitra border province in order to prevent a potential military coup in the capital.¹³¹ Second, the defeat encouraged the Islamist opposition to step up its anti-regime activities by late 1969. In June 1970, security forces arrested hundreds of union members and the military leadership purged leftists from the armed forces.¹³²

Inside the coalition, praetorianism remained endemic between two largely autonomous forces. On the one side, there was the radical left-wing civilian government and party apparatus, informally led by Jadid, as well as his non-Alawi allies: President Nur al-Din al-Atasi, Chief of Staff Ahmad al-Suwaydani, Colonel Muhammad Rabah al-Tawil, head of the Popular Resistance Forces, and Colonel Abd al-Karim al-Jundi, head of National Security. On the other side, the army emerged under the increasing control of Minister of Defense Asad and Mustafa Talas (Chief of Staff since 1968) into a major domestic force. This was particularly the case as Jadid had loosened his grip on the army after taking over the civilian key post of Assistant Secretary General of the RC in August 1965.¹³³

Disagreement on external alignments after the 1967 defeat further exacerbated elite fragmentation.¹³⁴ The Jadid faction gave priority to Syria's socialist transformation and rejected the idea of any cooperation with the pro-Western Arab states. In contrast, they favored aligning with the Communist bloc in order to gain resources for the domestic socialist transformation.¹³⁵ The other faction, led by Asad, gave highest priority to the struggle against Israel and an end to Syria's isolation in the Arab world. Thus, they preferred a military strengthening to internal transformation and called for cooperation with Egypt, Iraq, as well as the pro-Western kingdoms of Jordan and Saudi Arabia against Israel.¹³⁶

*"The fact that the army is ideological should strengthen its military standards and not weaken them. The struggle for Palestine is near. Therefore it is necessary for us to make all military arrangements to enter into it."*¹³⁷

In one of the first internal publications defending the 1966 coup, the reestablished RC spurned the idea of "excluding the army from politics" as a manipulative tool of world imperialism and

¹³¹ Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria*: 91; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 61; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 136.

¹³² Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 61f., 67.

¹³³ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 106f; George, *Syria*: 70f; van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 83.

¹³⁴ ———, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 62.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹³⁶ Throughout 1968, repeated tensions erupted also over the question, whether the socialist transformation and expansion of the public sector should have priority over military spending and a rather liberal economic policy, encouraging foreign direct investment *ibid.*; Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria*: 92; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 56-59.

¹³⁷ Syrian Regional Command Ba'th Party, "The Party's Crisis and the 23 February Movement (1966)," in *The Struggle for Power in Syria. Sectarianism, Regionalism and Tribalism in Politics, 1961-1978*, ed. and translated by Nikolaos van Dam (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 124.

bourgeois domination, contradicting the anti-imperialist concept of an “ideological army.”¹³⁸ Hence, the interference of the army into politics increased after the February coup as neither Suwaydani, former head of the Military intelligence directorate, nor the Air Force Commander Asad, relinquished their military functions.¹³⁹ In contrast, Asad started in late 1968 to cut the armed forces off from the civilian party leadership by prohibiting direct contacts between military and civilian party sections. Additionally, increased control through military intelligence and the transfer of Jadid’s military supporters away from sensitive positions secured his grip on the army.¹⁴⁰

Throughout 1968, repeated tensions erupted also over the question, whether the socialist transformation and expansion of the public sector should have priority over military spending and a rather liberal economic policy, encouraging foreign direct investment

In order to counterbalance the military wing of the party and reduce regime vulnerability, Jadid increasingly relied on the civilian party apparatus and paramilitary forces, thereby creating a *duality of power*.¹⁴¹ In September 1966, for instance, the militias associated with the Socialist Workers’ Union lost their independence and were forced under the supervision of the party and incorporated in the Popular Defense Army (PDA), now consisting of thousands of students, radical trade unionists, and farm workers.¹⁴² Eventually, the PDA guaranteed not only the Jadid faction’s supremacy over radical socialist groups within the ruling coalition but also expanded the party’s autonomy from the army.

Praetorianism peaked when Asad criticized the increasing influence of the Union’s militia as offensive to the army’s monopoly of legitimate violence and transferred the PDA’s headquarters from the ministry of interior—led by Tawil—to the ministry of defense. In October 1967, the PDA was formally and completely integrated into the regular armed forces.¹⁴³

According to Jabber and others, the establishment and subsequent nurturing of as-Saiqa, a Palestinian guerilla organization under informal Syrian command aimed at counterbalancing both the army’s dominance over Fatah and its monopoly of force inside the country.¹⁴⁴ In addition, Jadid kept control over the intelligence and security services through a steadily expanding system of petty informers, arbitrary arrests, and torture.¹⁴⁵ Eventually, high levels of competition and intra-elite fragmentation resulted in a stalemate where no party “ever managed to become the center

¹³⁸ Ibid., 114f.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 122.

¹⁴⁰ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 85; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 137.

¹⁴¹ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 85.

¹⁴² Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 39-44.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 39,44,48.

¹⁴⁴ Jabber, "The Arab Regimes and the Palestinian Revolution, 1967-71," 85f; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 164; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 157.

¹⁴⁵ ———, *Asad of Syria*: 150.

for national political identity or gain sufficient political and military power to ensure its continued rule.”¹⁴⁶

Efforts of both factions to break off the stalemate to one’s own advantage escalated in early 1969. In what was initially a countermeasure against attempted anti-Asad purges in the northwestern province of Latakia, the army removed Jadid supporters from office in Latakia and neighboring Tartus, nearly eliminated the *de facto* power base of the RC, and occupied radio stations as well as national newspaper offices in Damascus and Aleppo. The army also laid siege on the headquarters of National Security and the General Intelligence Service in March 1969, resulting in the loss of Jadid’s last prominent non-Alawi backer when Jundi committed suicide.¹⁴⁷ As the stalemate was to a certain extent reinstated at the Extraordinary Regional Congress in the same month, Jadid placed Saiqa under RC command in order to secure the group as a potential counterweight to the regular army.¹⁴⁸ A decisive blow to Jadid’s power position was the withdrawal of the USSR from Syria’s domestic arena after Asad and Talas had openly threatened to realign with China. Subsequently, Moscow remained silent amid Asad’s persecution of Syrian Communists, strong supporters of Jadid.¹⁴⁹

In a final round of internal competition, both factions’ efforts to adjust to the duality of power led to regime overthrow: After the Black September fiasco, Asad neutralized Jadid’s last remaining supporters in the army. In return, the latter used his strong basis in the party apparatus to remove both Asad and Talas from their posts during an extraordinary National Party Congress. Popular front organizations and unions backed Jadid, criticizing the army for forming a distinct power center and its interference into politics.¹⁵⁰ However, as the popular organizations were no match for the armed forces and the party lacked the enormous appeal that would have been necessary to launch a popular revolt against the army, Asad’s bloodless coup on November 13 swept Jadid and his supports from power with little resistance.¹⁵¹

5.2.2 One to rule them all: Asad’s consolidation of power 1970-1976

In order to secure domestic hierarchy and subsequently regime security after his coup, Asad established a system of ‘three orbits’ of sectarian kinship, inter-communal cooperation, and Arab nationalism.¹⁵² To attain popular support, Asad quickly aimed at tuning down opposition among the bourgeois and conservative middle class through measures of economic and moderate political liberalization. In March 1972, for instance, he established the National Progressive Force

¹⁴⁶ Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 69.

¹⁴⁷ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 86f; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 151f.

¹⁴⁸ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 88; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 138.

¹⁴⁹ Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 39f.

¹⁵⁰ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 72f.

¹⁵¹ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 163f; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 139f; van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 88; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 232.

¹⁵² “Alawis provide the inner core of the regime; Syrians from other communities envelope and surround it; and Arab sentiment and identity give it its soul, purpose, and legitimacy.” Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 19.

(NPF), a party bloc consisting inter alia of Nasserites and Communists, serving as an instrument to prevent a strong extra-parliamentary opposition.¹⁵³

The ousting of the radical socialists led to growing support among merchants and craftspeople and even some mosques in Damascus. In addition, economic reforms strengthened the private sector and decreased the rate of unionization in the north-central provinces, while rural labor and small landowners in the periphery became a new power base for the regime.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, Asad muted radical secularism and improved relations with the conservative Gulf States. Aligning with their pragmatic-secular Pan-Arabism increased the external legitimacy of the regime among the local population as well as other regional powers.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, fears of Alawi domination under the cover of secularism continued to set strong limitations to the regime's cooptation of conservative elements of society. This became most evident in early 1973, when mass protests and strikes erupted in the north-central cities in reaction to a new constitutional draft not mentioning Islam as the religion of the state. Again, the government decided to put down protest by massive military force in Hama and Homs.¹⁵⁶ While Asad personally continued to portray himself as a member of the Muslim community, including the attendance of prayers in Mosques or even a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1974, the Alawi elites turned to Lebanese Shiite leader Imam Musa al-Sadr to gain collective recognition as a Muslim group.¹⁵⁷ The October 1973 War decreased exogenous regime vulnerability, as it helped to restore Asad's nationalist credentials. Additionally, due to incoming Arab aid, increased oil revenues, and a boost in Western direct investment after 1974 the regime was able to accommodate large segments of society, such as merchants, middle class professionals, and skilled workers.¹⁵⁸

By 1975, however, several factors had contributed to a massive crisis in regime legitimacy. First, corruption and economic mismanagement had weakened the regime's position among the north-central business elites. Second, Asad's overtures to the West and conservative Arab states as well as moderation towards Israel had alienated large segments of Ba'athists, nationalists, and Communists. Third, Syria's record of political freedom had further deteriorated, entailed by a massive

¹⁵³ Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 97; Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*: 47; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 144f; Omran Yahya Feili, "The Status of the Kurds in Syria," in *The Syrian Arab Republic: A Handbook*, ed. Anne Sinai and Allen Pollack (New York: American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East, 1976), 49; Sami Moubayed, *Steel and Silk: Men and Women who shaped Syria 1900-2000* (Seattle: Cune Press, 2006). 169f; Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 30.

¹⁵⁴ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 73,80.

¹⁵⁵ Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 147-149; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 21f; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 41f.

¹⁵⁶ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 145; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 185; Martin Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism," in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. Martin Kramer (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987); Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 90.

¹⁵⁷ In return for Syrian patronage within Lebanon and Shiite domination over local Alawis, Sadr publicly recognized them as Muslims and included the Alawis into the community of the Twelver Shiites in July 1973 Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism.," Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 185f.

¹⁵⁸ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 80-86; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 147.

built up of security services and intelligence.¹⁵⁹ Hence, waves of arrests of initially economically motivated demonstrators, alleged supporters of Jadid, and members of the Muslim Brotherhood substantially weakened regime legitimacy and strengthened especially the latter.¹⁶⁰ Whereas security forces merely threatened to resort to violence in order to put down protests in Aleppo in July 1975, they responded to renewed protests with massive military force between February and April 1976. The regime employed regular armed forces and police, but to an increasing extent also paramilitary units, such as the Defense Brigades and Special Elite Forces. Especially the Brotherhood responded to repression with a series of assassinations and bombings throughout 1976.¹⁶¹

The crisis in neighboring Lebanon played a decisive role for regime vulnerability for several reasons. Stability in Lebanon became literally a lifeline amid the 1975/76 economic downturn in Syria, securing the flow of capital into the banking system and support for its heavy industry. In times of domestic unrest in the north-central towns, which constrained the transport of goods from Damascus to the ports of Tartus and Latakia, access to the port of Beirut became even more important.¹⁶² Large segments of the population, including the Sunni rural constituency, as well as nationalists within the army and the party resented the invasion and Asad's opponents again raised suspicions that his Alawi background made the president a 'natural' traitor of the Arab cause.¹⁶³

Inside the ruling coalition, Asad's main accomplishment in the early 1970s was to end the duality of power, which had been the dominant source of praetorianism in the second half of the 1960s. Asad re-shaped the political system and made the presidency the key power broker in Syrian politics. Possessing strong executive and legislative powers since the revision of the constitution in 1973, elected by popular vote, represented in the main party decision-making processes, and deep-rooted in the defense establishment, the domestic balance of power tended clearly in favor of the president.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, Asad constrained praetorianism through purges and the built-up of parallel armed forces and a military intelligence network commanded by his relatives or personal trustees as well as a strategy of cooptation including generous personal privileges for officers or access to political positions.¹⁶⁵ Asad assigned his Alawi kin, and close relatives such as his

¹⁵⁹ As of 2003, Syria had one of the highest ratios of intelligence service member per adult citizens (153) in the world. Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 24f.

¹⁶⁰ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 152; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 90f.

¹⁶¹ ———, *Why Syria goes to war*: 89-91; van Dam, "Middle Eastern Political Cliches," 56; Khatib, *Islamic Revivalism in Syria*; Batatu, "Syria's Muslim Brethren."

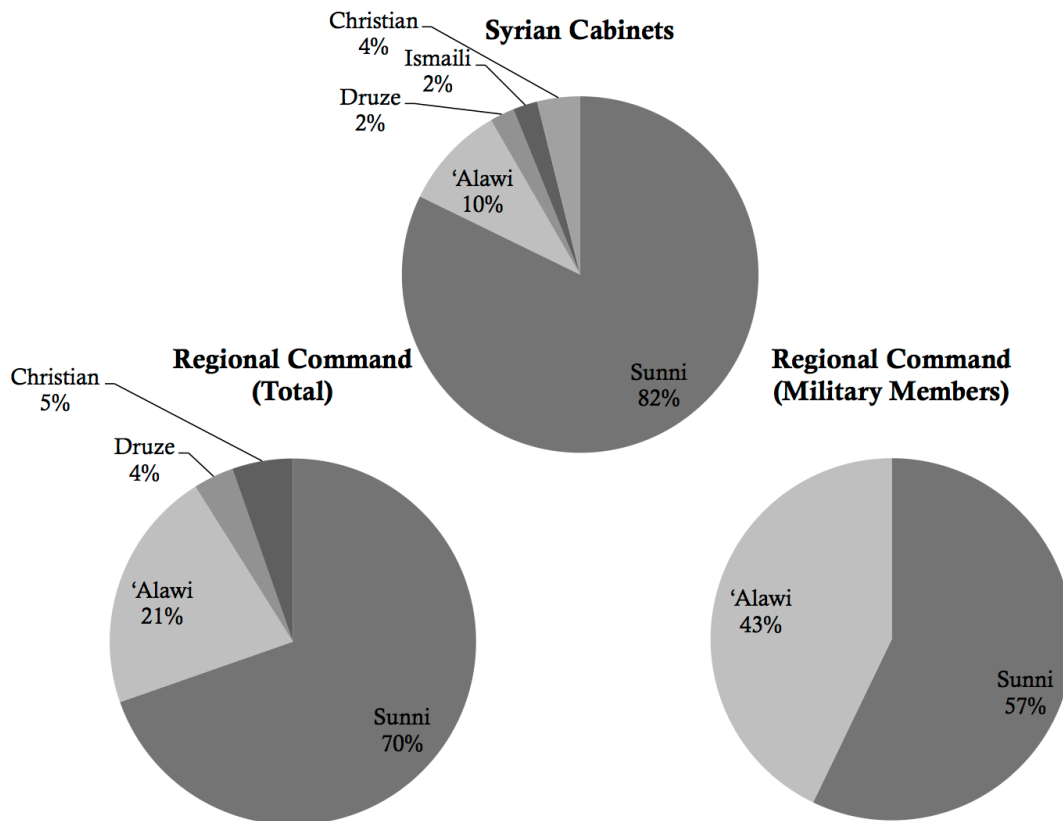
¹⁶² Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 95f; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 20f; Ma'oz, *Asad*: 67; Salwa Ismail, "Changing Social Structure, Shifting Alliances and Authoritarianism in Syria," in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. Fred Lawson (London: Saqi Press, 2009), 15-17; Ellen Lust-Okar, "Reform in Syria: Steering between the Chinese Model and Regime Change," in *Beyond the facade: political reform in the Arab world*, ed. Marina Ottaway and Julia Choucair-Vizoso (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2008), 72.

¹⁶³ Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 178f; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 64-66.

¹⁶⁴ Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*: 48f.

¹⁶⁵ Sunni General Abd al-Rahman Khleifawi, for instance, became prime minister in August 1976 to balance discontent in the army after the intervention in Lebanon and in cases where intra-Alawi opposition did not collapse immediately,

brother Rif'at, to key positions in the military-security complex. In this vein, he tolerated a strong Sunni presence in the highest military ranks (see **Figure 23**) on the one hand, while depriving them of control over potential coup instruments, on the other.¹⁶⁶



Source: van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 28f.

Figure 23: Sectarian representation in Syrian politics (11/1970-10/1978)

Regarding the Ba'th party's potential as a source of threat, Asad formally installed one-party-rule in the 1973 constitution while simultaneously neutralizing opponents within party ranks by co-opting non-Ba'thist forces in the NPF.¹⁶⁷ Party discipline and cohesion especially regarding foreign policy issues was further increased by nearly personal union of RC and NC members, among them Asad himself as Secretary-General of both branches as well as his deputies, Mustafa Talas and Abd al-Halim Khaddam, ministers of defense and foreign affairs respectively, and his brother Rif'at since 1975.¹⁶⁸ Other members have been Chief of Staff Hikmat al-Shihabi and, since 1976, prime minister Abd al-Rahman Khleifawi. As none of these had an independent

the regime accelerated this process by purging for instance Jadid supporters in 1971/72. See also *ibid.*, 54f; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 244; Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing."; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 180; Alasdair Drysdale, "The Succession Question in Syria," *Middle East Journal* 39, no. 2 (1985); Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 70-75; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 74; van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 90.

¹⁶⁶ ———, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 89; Ma'oz, *Asad*: 63; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 19f.

¹⁶⁷ Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 97; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 235; Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*: 45.

¹⁶⁸ Nikolaos van Dam interpreted Rif'at's election to the RC in April 1975 as reflecting the fact that "after 1970, President Hafiz al-Asad relied to an important extent on officers from his own family, tribe or village neighbourhood." *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 102.

power base or was even able to veto foreign policy decisions, policy decisions had a strong consensual character.¹⁶⁹ Hence, Asad was not only able to reduce the rivalry between party and army that had brought himself to power, but also transformed the fragile system of power duality into a pyramidal system of checks and balances securing his predominance.¹⁷⁰

Despite the high levels of violence experienced during the 1976-1982 revolt, most analysts agree on the notion that not external opposition to the regime and the dual structure of domestic competition, but the potential fragmentation of Asad's ruling coalition and especially cracks within the Alawi community constitute the main source of threat to regime survival.¹⁷¹ According to Hinnebusch, the prominence of the Alawi barons as the glue that holds the ruling coalition together paved the way for a major shift from their initial role as guardians of regime survival to "an intensely praetorian incubus in the heart of the state, kept under control only by presidential authority."¹⁷² Furthermore, praetorianism as a threat to the state shifted to the inner circle of the regime, constrained only if presidential authority is strong enough to do so.

5.2.3 Conclusion

The previous section examined Syria's domestic politics in order to assess their expected influence on Syria's sponsorship policies. Generally, it maintained that the regime's narrow societal power base, frequent protests, and an increasingly repressive character of state-society relations, indicate a structural lack of autonomy throughout the entire observation period. While domestic power fragmentation was especially high in the years before the two military coups (1963, 1966), it declined in the respective early post-coup periods. In contrast to the 1966 coup, which maintained the duality of power, the 1970 coup entailed a boost in autonomy through the establishment of presidential monarchy.

The neoclassical realist hypotheses NC₁ and NC₂ trace a state's preference for external alignment to domestic vulnerability. This can be to a certain extent confirmed in the period before the 1966 coup, where no significant internal balancing efforts could be observed despite an increased imbalance of power and severe conflict with Israel. After the 1963 coup, the regime faced both threats from outside the power circles, manifested, for instance, in strikes, clashes, and mass capital flight in 1964/65. Inside the ruling coalition, a fierce struggle emerged between a highly politicized army and civilian leaders over the army's role in politics and external alignments, which resulted in the latter's violent overthrow in 1966.

Briefly increasing internal cohesion, threats outside of the coalition re-emerged in late 1966 and the first half 1967, stemming from protests and revolt in several areas. Inside the power circles,

¹⁶⁹ ———, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*: 46f; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 63.

¹⁷⁰ Eyal Zisser, Interview by the Author, Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv, March 29, 2012.

¹⁷¹ Zisser, "Appearance and Reality: Syria's Decisionmaking Structure"; van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 69.

¹⁷² *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 161.

violent overthrow of the civilian leadership remained a salient threat, especially as the army maintained to be a key political force. The outcome of the June 1967 War reinforced both tendencies. Pitting paramilitary forces against a *de facto* autonomous army, the government facilitated the emergence of a duality of power in 1968. Nevertheless, the internal balance of power tilted towards the army in 1969/1970 and the stagnation of Syria's military personnel until 1970 suggests that Syria's internal balancing efforts remained limited during the years of domestic crisis.

The consolidation of presidential rule and ideological moderation as well as the subsequent attraction of external assistance in the early 1970s translated into an increased internal balancing policy, matching the external security dilemma to a much stronger extent. Although regime vulnerability decreased after Asad's coup and power became centralized, the regime increasingly relied on repression and coup-proofing measures, particularly to contain unrest in the north and segments of the party and the army, which had been alienated by pro-Western foreign policy choices.

Regarding the question, under what conditions domestic vulnerability reinforces incentives for *sponsorship* (NC₂), the observations of section 5.1.4 do not support a strong policy of interstate alliance formation by Syria, especially between 1963 and 1971.

As outlined, power fragmentation nearly constantly entailed conflict over foreign policy issues. Until late 1966, for instance, anti-Nasserite factions undermined an alignment with Egypt. In a similar vein, the army, preferring inter-Arab cooperation, challenged the government after the 1967 War over its alignment with the USSR. Only after 1970, regime autonomy reached a level allowing for external realignment entailing additional material and immaterial domestic power resources. However, domestic criticism of 'anti-Arab' policies after 1974 and Syrian concerns over separate peace agreements with Israel continued to influence foreign policy decisions.

In the 1960s, Syria faced a loose-loose situation, given a severe external security dilemma and simultaneously high costs expected from both internal and external balancing strategies. With regard to its support for Fatah as a balancing substitute, sponsorship incentives expected to be higher in periods of both international isolation and internal vulnerability: Between 1965 and the 1966 coup, between 1968 and the 1970 coup, and after 1973/74. Instead, a stagnation or decline in commitment is expected before the wars in 1967 and 1973, the immediate post-coup periods as well as after 1974, when efforts of internal balancing were facilitated by USSR and Arab assistance.

The final set of neoclassical realist hypotheses turns to alliance management with Fatah and expects deviance from the strategies suggested by the SSD if regime vulnerability is present. The *limited resolve* hypothesis NC₂ claims that a sponsor lacking foreign policy autonomy deviates

from abandonment avoiding policies induced by SSD. By contrast, the *limited restraint* hypothesis NC₃ assumes a contrary deviation, if the SSD points toward entrapment avoiding. In the case of Syria and Fatah, this implies that in the peak times of regime vulnerability (late 64-2/66; 1968-11/70; and to a lesser extent after 1974), the incentives of the SSD were eased/impeded. Subsequently, in contrast to a *Brother in Arms* (max. resolve) or a *Defector* (max. restraint), hybrid forms such as the *Fellow Traveler* and the *Secret Backer* are expected to occur.

5.3 Syria's policy towards Fatah (1964-1976)

Among Fatah's statist supporters, Syria played an exceptional role, mainly for two reasons. First, Syria backed Fatah despite the other Arab states initially sided with the PLO, thereby defying the norm of Arab unity until 1966/67. Second and in contrast to, for instance, Lebanon or Jordan, Syrian support has not resulted from Arab peer pressure, yet reflected a deliberate choice of alignment.¹⁷³ The following section outlines both character and extent of sponsorship.

5.3.1 Hosting

This study measures hosting against the background of the group's freedom to operate militarily, including the presence of fighters and bases and permissions for cross-border attacks, the group's freedom to operate politically, meaning the presence of non-military training facilities and offices, and the government's tolerance of the physical presence of group members devoid of political activity (See section 4.3.1).

*"I said go to the Syrians. I thought that the Syrians, with their new regime, would be the only ones interested in Fatah. They were just as impatient as Arafat [...]. And I was right."*¹⁷⁴

Hazim al-Khalidi, September 1964

Although authors differ strongly on both the specific date when contacts were established and the role of hosting in the early stages of the alliance, they agree on two main points. First, mutual interests emerged shortly after the establishment of the PLO on May 28, 1964, challenging both Fatah's and Syria's claim to represent and champion the Palestinian struggle. Second, it was the army and the military intelligence directorate that initially provided informal support for Fatah.¹⁷⁵

While reports indicate that Arafat set up his main base in Damascus already in 1964, Syria's initial hosting policy remained somewhat ambiguous.¹⁷⁶ Under the guidance of Sulayman Faqr, a

¹⁷³ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 123f.

¹⁷⁴ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 197f.

¹⁷⁵ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 105; Jillian Becker, *The PLO: the rise and fall of the Palestine Liberation Organization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984). 41.

¹⁷⁶ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 105.

Syrian army colonel who was in charge of “Palestinian guerilla agitation against Israel,”¹⁷⁷ and endowed with Syrian funds and organizational aid, such as fake passports, Fatah toured refugee camps in the neighboring countries, in order to recruit new fighters. However, suspicions regarding Fatah’s historical ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian background of numerous group leaders delayed public and formal relations with the political leadership.¹⁷⁸

Official policy changed to a certain extent after the eighth National Ba’th Party Congress in April 1965, as Fatah gained the support of Salah Jadid. In January 1966, for instance, the government permitted a public funeral of a Fatah fighter in Damascus, thereby waiving for the first time plausible deniability regarding the group’s presence in Syria.¹⁷⁹ Although providing the group with a rear front against Israel became a key feature of Syrian support, Damascus repeatedly demonstrated its determination to restrict guerilla activity and avoid overt involvement. For instance, Fatah received no permission to establish camps and guerilla bases on Syrian soil and authorities repeatedly detained Fatah commandoes on their way to enter Israel without prior approval.¹⁸⁰

After the 1966 coup, power fragmentation increasingly influenced the specific mix of restriction and encouragement. Though defending them publicly, Syrian officials continued to deny responsibility for Fatah military operations against the background of Israeli retaliatory threats. On May 12, for instance, Minister of Defense Asad publicly refused to argue over Fatah, “since we know nothing about it.”¹⁸¹

Authorities continued their efforts to control Fatah’s movement within Syria and particularly prevent badly timed cross border attacks. In addition, this policy reflected in intra-Palestinian frictions. In 1966, Chief of Staff Suwaydani tolerated a coup attempt against Arafat and jailed the group’s leadership temporarily to exert stricter control over its operations.¹⁸² While still imprisoned, Fatah reached a formal agreement with Asad, which not only accelerated their release but was also accompanied by its formal transfer from the intelligence to the army command (Operations Division of the Syrian General Staff).¹⁸³ In this context, Fatah gained substantial freedom of movement, both concerning cross border operations—in rare cases even from Syrian territory—and training, initially in army camps and since late 1966 in their own training camp near Hama, set up with the permission of the ministry of defense.¹⁸⁴ Additionally, the government facilitated the recruitment of fighters and started to publicly defend immediate cross border attacks from Syrian

¹⁷⁷ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 203.

¹⁷⁸ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 124f.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁸⁰ Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 7; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 125; Shemesh, “The Fida’iyyun Organization’s Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War,” 16; Becker, *The PLO*: 46.

¹⁸¹ Shemesh, “The Fida’iyyun Organization’s Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War,” 17.

¹⁸² Becker, *The PLO*: 46f; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 127; Kiernan, *Arafat*: 211f; Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 51.

¹⁸³ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 127f; Shemesh, “The Fida’iyyun Organization’s Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War,” 17.

¹⁸⁴ Ma’oz and Yaniv, *Syria under Assad*: 194; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 128; Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle within. Towards an independent Palestinian State* (London: Zed Books, 1985). 38f.

soil.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, governmental pressure and restraining measures on cross border operations remained present, especially after the military agreement with Egypt since November 1966.¹⁸⁶

The devastating outcome of the June 1967 War increased Syria's caution against Fatah. Hence, Suwaydani, President Atasi, and others, strongly objected Fatah plans to resume attacks in July, fearing resumed escalation while Syria was militarily exposed. Therefore, the group transferred weapons and fighters to the Occupied Territories and established new headquarters in Nablus. In order to facilitate this process, the army set up a command post at Daraa, next to the Jordanian border.¹⁸⁷

In Syria, where up to 600 fighters were reportedly present by late 1967 in camps under the supervision of the Operations Division, restrictions on Fatah activity increased especially after a sharp rise in guerilla attacks on the Golan in early 1969.¹⁸⁸ On May 4, for instance, Asad issued a ministerial decree prohibiting PLO-fighters to wear arms, carry weapons, or use military vehicles outside of their camps without army permission. Additionally, the decree foresaw limiting both guerilla contacts with the Syrian population and its combat activity. Already in September 1968, the use of travel passes issued by the guerilla had been prohibited, and the task of issuing passes and security control of the guerillas was transferred to of military intelligence—in particular its Department 235, also known as National Bureau of Guerilla Control or the "Palestine branch."¹⁸⁹ While the ministry of defense formally permitted Fatah to operate in Syria, it also subordinated its fighters and recruitment efforts under strict army control. Cross border operations, for instance, required a written permission by Asad himself and intelligence was entitled to examine Fatah camps and offices.¹⁹⁰

Alongside with the loss of PLO-bases and a large number of fighters, the Black September crisis resulted in the expulsion of some 150,000 Palestinians from Jordan in 1970. Damascus showed strong reluctance to accept especially the reentry of fighters into Syria and pressured them to relocate to Lebanon.¹⁹¹ The following year, Syria took in PLO units fleeing amid renewed clashes, yet only under strict army control.¹⁹² However, PLO-bases in Syria remained active and accessible until 1975 and officers continued to use the Damascus airport to travel to training destinations

¹⁸⁵ In order to counterbalance both Palestinian anti-Ba'thist activism and the growing Asad- Fatah alliance, the 9th Ba'th Party Congress established a second Palestinian guerilla organization in September 1966, the *Vanguards of the Popular Liberation War* (as-Saiqa) ———, *The PLO*: 39; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 128. See also Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 44; Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 51; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 66.

¹⁸⁶ ———, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 18.

¹⁸⁷ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 157f.; Ma'oz and Yaniv, "On a short leash," 195.

¹⁸⁸ Kiernan, *Arafat*; Ma'oz and Yaniv, "On a short leash," 195.

¹⁸⁹ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 187f.; Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 121.

¹⁹⁰ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 120.

¹⁹¹ Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 13.

¹⁹² Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 81.

in Eastern Bloc states.¹⁹³ For those remaining in Syria, restrictions on cross border attacks increased after the October 1970 coup, and authorities foiled several planned attacks against Jordan.¹⁹⁴ In July 1971, existing limitations were expanded and Fatah's operational freedom gravely restricted. Army control over the PLA increased and cross border raids required the army command's approval based on information on targets and the attackers' identity. By that time, traveling was only allowed with passes issued by Department 235. Additionally, Syrian intelligence demanded access to every guerilla facility at any time and the recruitment of Syrian nationals required prior approval. In a major shift from previous hosting policies, Damascus *de facto* banned also political activity inside Syria. Hence, publications needed official approval and Palestinian political demonstrations, particularly outside the camps, required permission.¹⁹⁵

Tensions over Fatah's presence and activity increased on the eve of the October 1973 War. After the Munich Massacre in September 1972 and subsequent Israeli reprisals against Syria, the government pressured the group to withdraw its bases from the border area by January 1973. Cross-border operations required the personal and explicit approval of the President.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, the government expelled 15 Fatah leaders from Syria after they had participated in anti-government demonstrations in March 1973 and arrested another twelve in the course of a rally organized by the Palestinian Student Federation against restrictions of guerilla activity in other Arab countries.¹⁹⁷ Finally, authorities closed Fatah's broadcasting station in Daraa on September 14 in the course of Syria's rapprochement with Jordan.¹⁹⁸

5.3.2 Military support

Direct military assistance carries a high risk of military retaliation and thus indicates a high level of commitment. According to the measurement in section 4.3.2, support is understood as moderate if provided outside of Syria or consisted only of tolerating third-party weapon deliveries. In cases of low military commitment, Syria is expected to aim at plausible deniability while tolerating Fatah's own acquisition of weaponry.

In the early stages of cooperation, Syria provided military support primarily informally by individual members of the army and security services, most prominently Suwaydani, Asad, and Khalid al-Jundi, head of the workers' militia. In 1964/65, they provided Fatah with a modest amount

¹⁹³ Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 99.

¹⁹⁴ Malcolm H. Kerr, "Hafiz Asad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics," *International Journal* 28, no. 4 (1973): 705; Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 80f; Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 214. In order to neutralize domestic threats and preempt military escalation with Israel, Asad also transferred the supervision of as-Saiqa from the party to the army and purged it from former Jadid supporters and hardliners. See Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 52.

¹⁹⁵ R. D. McLaurin, *Foreign policy making in the Middle East: domestic influences on policy in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Syria* (New York: Praeger, 1977). 258; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 289.

¹⁹⁶ Israeli Air Force raided villages just outside Damascus and positions on the Golan Heights Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 99f; Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 121; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 312.

¹⁹⁷ Kerr, "Hafiz Asad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics," 705.

¹⁹⁸ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 210,213.

of explosives and other weapons taken from the arsenals of the military intelligence and workers' militia.¹⁹⁹ On the eve of Fatah's first cross border raid, members of the Syrian-Palestinian commando battalions boosted its operational capacity by joining the group's ranks under the aegis of military intelligence.²⁰⁰

As the government adopted a more benevolent stance vis-à-vis Fatah in April 1965, military support increased substantially. First, Asad and other officials facilitated external weapon deliveries and helped the group, for instance, to transfer Chinese and Algerian arm shipments, either through the port of Latakia or airbases and provided them with storage facilities.²⁰¹ Second, Syria became more active in assisting Fatah in recruitment of fighters, training, and the establishment of bases in- and outside the country. As asserted by Fatah leader Abu Iyad in late 1965, Suwaydani and Asad helped Fatah to establish two training camps in Hama, some 300km away from the border to Israel, and at Maysaloun close to the anti-Lebanon mountains not far from the capital.²⁰² Additionally, the group received a live ammunition training area in the Syrian Desert.²⁰³ In April and May 1965, military intelligence established two Fatah bases in Qalqilya and Jenin in the West Bank, close to the 1949 Armistice Agreement Line with Israel.²⁰⁴ Although IDF destroyed the camps on May 25, Syrian intelligence assisted Fatah in opening further recruitment offices in camps in Jordan and shipping some 200 recruits off for training in the Syrian camps.²⁰⁵

While military assistance moderately increased after the 1966 coup, Syrian personnel continued to participate in Fatah cross border sabotage acts.²⁰⁶ Various state and party institutions—such as the Republican Guard and the ministry of interior—provided Fatah with a steady supply in more sophisticated weapons and ammunition, mortars, mines, and explosives as well as training in their use and Syrian passports.²⁰⁷ In general, Fatah held training under the supervision of the Operations Division, mostly in the army's camps.²⁰⁸ Besides the facilitation of recruitment by expanding pro-Fatah broadcasts in Syrian radio programs, the army command supported operations directly.²⁰⁹ In the aftermath of the June 1967 War, Syria initially continued to grant Fatah substantial freedom to enhance its militarily capabilities. For instance, the group scavenged in the

¹⁹⁹ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 126.

²⁰⁰ Shemesh, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 5.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 16; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 124; Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 86; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 105, 124-126.

²⁰² Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 118; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 124; Shemesh, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 16.

²⁰³ ———, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 65.

²⁰⁴ Becker, *The PLO*: 46; Kiernan, *Arafat*: 204.

²⁰⁵ ———, *Arafat*: 206.

²⁰⁶ Shemesh, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 18.

²⁰⁷ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 128; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 66; ———, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 18.

²⁰⁸ Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 51; Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 87; Shemesh, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 17.

²⁰⁹ Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 51.

abandoned Golan Heights for arms and supplies left by the armed forces and amassed some 6,000 weapons while passing heavy weapons and munitions on to the army. Additionally, Syria became a logistics base and arsenal for Fatah weapons from Algeria and other Arab states, China, and the USSR.²¹⁰

Intra-elite frictions soon influenced also Syria's military support. While Asad provided Fatah with additional light weapons from army stocks and a modest amount of equipment in order to conduct operations in the Occupied Territories, Suwaydani and Jadid chose a more restrictive position and authorities repeatedly confiscated Fatah weapon stores.²¹¹ Although Jadid permitted Arafat to take over facilities and fighters of rival Palestinian factions, he granted military support only under the condition that the group would not attack Israel directly from Syria.²¹² In mid-1968, the group ran a 'special qualification course' at the Hama Camp and the following spring, Fatah expanded its presence in the border area.²¹³ Additionally, it established another training camp near Tartus and received small numbers of 82mm mortars, RPG-7 anti-tank rocket launchers, and 122mm rocket launchers.²¹⁴ Some minor restrictions came along with Asad's May 1969 decree, prohibiting Fatah members the right to carry weapons outside the camps without permission from Department 235.²¹⁵ When Fatah-led PLO came under pressure in Lebanon in late 1969, Syria massed troops along the mutual border and sporadically shot artillery and mortars in order to cover and bolster the influx of Palestinian fighters. Damascus also provided logistical support and deployed army personnel to PLO forces.²¹⁶

The major litmus test for the steadfastness of Syria's military commitment occurred in September 1970, yet surprisingly not in the context of an Israeli attack. Under pressure from Israeli retaliatory attacks and heavy PLO interference in Jordanian domestic affairs, King Hussein decided to expel the guerillas by force. The crisis escalated to a civil war on September 17, when the Jordanian army attacked PLO-positions in Amman and Irbid.²¹⁷ As Iraq declined Syrian requests to intervene on behalf of the PLO with its troops stationed in Jordan and arms deliveries were not sufficient, Syria deployed at least 16,000 troops, 170 T-55 tanks, and heavy artillery in order to establish a liberated area in northern Jordan, on September 20. Syrian forces quickly advanced, deployed some 300 tanks in the area and took the PLO stronghold Irbid as well as two key cross-

²¹⁰ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 156; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 118.

²¹¹ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 156.

²¹² Kiernan, *Arafat*: 215f.

²¹³ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 118; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 183-185.

²¹⁴ ———, *Armed Struggle*: 187.

²¹⁵ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 120.

²¹⁶ R. D. McLaurin, "The PLO and the Arab Fertile Crescent," in *The International Relations of the Palestine Liberation Organization*, ed. Augustus R. Norton and Martin H. Greenberg (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 56.

²¹⁷ Owen, *State, power & politics* 75; Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli wars*: 212-215; Mobley, "Countering Syria's 1970 Invasion of Jordan," 161.

roads.²¹⁸ However, Fatah's safe haven quickly collapsed when Syrian troops withdrew from Jordan on September 23, having suffered up to 1,500 casualties and lost over 120 tanks, and armed personnel carriers.²¹⁹

Moreover, at least two aspects are fundamental to grasp the actual extent of commitment. In order to maintain plausible deniability, most of the intervening Syrian tanks were initially equipped with Palestinian as-Saiqa fighters or operating under the cover of the PLA's *Hittin* Brigade. Subsequently, the government denied that Syrian forces were involved after all and claimed that only Palestinian forces entered Jordan.²²⁰ In addition, the army thwarted a full Palestinian mobilization by closing down all branches of as-Saiqa inside the country.²²¹ Despite these limitations, Syria deliberately committed to an unprecedented extent not only intangible assets by military attacking a fellow Arab country, but also sacrificed its own military equipment and hundreds of troops. Hence, this episode contributed strongly to the widespread perception among Syria's leaders of themselves as the only sincere protectors of the resistance.²²²

Syria's commitment sharply declined as the Jordanian-Palestinian crisis continued. While Damascus responded to afresh fighting with substantial political pressure on Amman, its policy of military assistance evolved into the opposite direction.²²³ Against the background of the presence of some 9,000 fighters loyal to the PLO in Syria, Asad prohibited Fatah recruitment of Syrians already in early 1971.²²⁴ Moreover, when Jordanian security forces prepared themselves for a final assault on PLO strongholds in the north in the following months, Syrian authorities seized and confiscated a major arms shipment from Algeria destined for Fatah, including Chinese tanks, armored troop carriers, artillery guns, light arms, ammunition, and personal equipment for some 7,500 fighters.²²⁵ In turn, the focus of Syria's military assistance shifted to southern Lebanon, where Damascus continued to provide various kinds of support including logistical-operational assistance for attacks against Israel.²²⁶ It is further worth noting that authorities released most of

²¹⁸ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 144; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 157f; Mobley, "Countering Syria's 1970 Invasion of Jordan," 163f.

²¹⁹ There is strong consensus among observers that it was mainly the risk of conflict escalation with Jordan's tacit allies Israel and the US, which deterred especially Asad from giving air support to Syrian ground forces facing Jordanian artillery fire and airstrikes. See van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 67; Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 13; Ma'oz, *Asad*: 39; Ma'oz and Yaniv, "On a short leash," 195f; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 155-159; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 164; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 264f; Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 96; Mobley, "Countering Syria's 1970 Invasion of Jordan," 166.

²²⁰ Miller, *The Arab states and the Palestine question*: 48; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 264f; U.S. Department of State, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran, September 19," ed. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Vol. 24, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969-1972; Jordan, September 1970 (Washington, DC1970).

²²¹ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 69.

²²² Hafiz Asad, "Speech delivered to the Syrian provincial councils on 20 July 1976," in *The War for Lebanon: 1970-1985*, ed. Itamar Rabinovich (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

²²³ Kerr, "Hafiz Asad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics," 705.

²²⁴ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 288; Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry*: 291; Owen, *State, power & politics* 76.

²²⁵ Kemal Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," in *The future of Turkish foreign policy*, ed. Lenore G. Martin and Dimitris Keridis (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 258; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 288.

²²⁶ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 214; Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 165.

the seized armored troop carriers after July 1971 and in the context of Fatah-Lebanon tensions.²²⁷ When clashes erupted in spring 1973 between PLO fighters in Lebanon and government forces, Asad declared himself solidary with the PLO and sent Saiqa and PLA units to their support.²²⁸ Additionally, Syrian arms and equipment deliveries to PLO continued after the October 1973 war in huge quantities.²²⁹ In January 1976, only months before the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, Christian forces attacked Palestinian refugee camps and Asad ordered two battalions of Syrian-controlled PLA to cross into Lebanon despite protests from Beirut.²³⁰ Shortly thereafter and in order to maintain the status quo in Lebanon, Asad put heavy pressure on the PLO to end its alliance with oppositional forces and reportedly threatened to withdraw Syrian support. In order to demonstrate its resolve, the Syrian command banned ships from docking at Tripoli in order to cut off PLO from supplies and reinforcements on April 3. As Arafat refused to comply with Damascus' demands, Syrian troops entered Lebanon in June 1976 and directly fought the Palestinian forces.²³¹

5.3.3 Financial support

The following section turns to both direct financial assistance provided by Syrian officials and their tolerance of alternative financial sources, such as external funding, tax collection from Palestinians residing in Syria, and other revenues.

Although the literature frequently mentions financial assistance alongside other forms of Syrian support, there is comparatively little specific evidence for substantial and direct funding.²³² In turn, Damascus has no record of disrupting the influx of financial assistance from the Gulf States, donations from the Palestinian diaspora, and funds collected among the residents of Gaza and the West Bank. In general, Syria assumed a facilitating role, stemming most likely from its own economic weakness, the provision of military and logistic services in contrast to financial transfers, Fatah's diversification of sources, and the Gulf States' readiness to disburden the frontline states financially especially after 1967.²³³

Between 1964 and early 1966, Fatah received funds from both wealthy Palestinians living in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia and Syrian authorities, enabling it to pay its recruits a monthly stipend of

²²⁷ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 216.

²²⁸ Kerr, "Hafiz Asad and the Changing Patterns of Syrian Politics," 705; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 313f; McLaurin, "The PLO and the Arab Fertile Crescent," 36.

²²⁹ Ma'oz, *Asad*: 126.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 126f.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 129f; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 384.

²³² Kiernan, *Arafat*: 215f; Barry Rubin, *The Truth about Syria* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 39; Sela and Ma'oz, "The PLO in regional Arab politics: taming a non-state actor," 114; Raphael Israeli, ed. *PLO in Lebanon. Selected Documents* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1983), 2.

²³³ Eyal Zisser, Interview by the Author, March 29, 2012. See also Barry Rubin, *The Arab States and the Palestine Conflict* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1981). 10. Reportedly, it were particularly members of the Qatari and Kuwaiti ruling families as well as wealthy Saudi Arabians that provided funds to Fatah in its early days. See Mobley, *Terrorism and Counter-Intelligence*: 66; Sela and Ma'oz, "The PLO in regional Arab politics: taming a non-state actor," 103.

some £18.²³⁴ Although, Faqr promised the group “unlimited funds,” direct Syrian financing ceased after the Fatah leadership was jailed in 1966. Subsequently, the group was forced to increase fundraising among the Palestinians in Lebanon, reportedly also gaining revenues from illicit arms and drug trades.²³⁵ After the June 1967 War, Damascus resumed to provide the group with direct funds in the context of the generally increased assistance.²³⁶ Financial pressure on the Syrian budget remained limited, however, as Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Kuwait established a fund of \$378 million for Egypt and Jordan at the 1967 Khartoum summit.²³⁷

Fundraising on Syrian soil, was curtailed by Asad's May 1969 decree, prohibiting the collection of contributions in Syria in any form whatsoever.²³⁸ Fatah's financial dependence on Syria further decreased with the stronger presence of the organization in the Occupied Territories, larger amounts of funding from the Gulf States after 1967 and in the course of PLO's political consolidation and administrative concentration since the early 1970s.²³⁹

5.3.4 Endorsement

The final section turns to Syria's rhetorical-political assistance. Despite the abovementioned lack of formal consensus on Fatah's classification as a terrorist organization, the threat of political sanctions and reputational losses for openly supporting Fatah were present in two instances—yet in different directions. On the one hand, the pre-1966 Arab consensus to prevent Palestinian cross-border attacks on Israel portraying support to Fatah as hazardous to the Arab cause and pro-Egyptian press accused the group of being connected to “the agents of CENTO and Israel.”²⁴⁰ Jordan's crackdown on the Palestinians in 1970/71, on the other, isolated King Hussein as a ‘traitor’ of the Arab cause and revealed that also non-support could be seen as harmful to united Arab action.²⁴¹

Endorsement as an inherent component of Syrian sponsorship occurred for the first time in 1965. By that time, only Syrian and pro-Syrian Lebanese media published Fatah's military communi-

²³⁴ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 209; Rubin, *The Truth about Syria*: 39.

²³⁵ Mobley, *Terrorism and Counter-Intelligence*: 66; Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Yasir Arafat: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). 30,58; Kiernan, *Arafat*: 212,203.

²³⁶ ———, *Arafat*: 215f.

²³⁷ Although the U.S. State Department repeatedly raised concerns about the funding of Fatah by the mentioned donor states as endangering the Middle East Process, they remained a steady source of revenues for the group. See U.S. Department of State, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassies in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya, April 23," ed. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1972*, Vol. 24, Middle East Region and Arabian Peninsula, 1969–1972; Jordan, September 1970 (Washington, DC1969); ———, "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iran, September 19.," Rosemarie Said Zahlan, *Palestine and the Gulf States* (New York: Routledge, 2009). 37-40,50; Mobley, *Terrorism and Counter-Intelligence*: 66; Rubin and Rubin, *Yasir Arafat*: 24,61.

²³⁸ Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 120.

²³⁹ Jamil Hilal and Mushtaq Khan, "State Formation under the PNA: Potential Outcomes and their Viability," in *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance during a Social Transformation*, ed. Mushtaq Khan, et al. (London: Routledge, 2004), 97.

²⁴⁰ CENTO = Bagdad Pact (Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom). See Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 59.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

qués and helped distributing them, while the other frontline states issued statements indicating their strong disapproval of Fatah attacks.²⁴² In April 1965, a report submitted by the Ba'th Party's Palestinian Branch in Lebanon, recommended public endorsement as a means to prepare both the Palestinian and Arab public opinion for moral and material participation in the subsequent war of liberation.²⁴³ On a political-diplomatic level, Syrian officials backed Fatah against Jordanian protests over the establishment of staging centers in the West Bank, threatening that any interference would be considered a "subversive act [...] and would bring wholesale Syrian wrath down on Husayn's head."²⁴⁴ In addition, Syrian official papers designated the West Bank under Jordanian annexation even as the "Palestinian sector of Jordan."²⁴⁵ Already in January 1965, Radio Damascus started to broadcast Fatah communiqués and even established a program called 'Palestinian Corner', encouraging constant guerilla activity against Israel.²⁴⁶ In the remainder of the year, Syrian media repeatedly praised the group's armed wing al-Asifa as the fulfillment of Arab aspirations and called on all Arab states to encourage and assist the insurgents in their campaign against Israel.²⁴⁷

Although endorsement remained generally high in the context of fierce anti-Israel rhetoric after the 1966 coup, it reached a peak between mid-1967 and 1970. First, Radio Damascus expanded its Palestinian program.²⁴⁸ Second, Jadid received Arafat in the latter's first meeting with an Arab leader in September 1967 and asked even him to deliver a speech at a Ba'th party conference.²⁴⁹ Third, Damascus publicly praised Fatah's 'victory' in the Battle of Karamah in March 1968, reinforcing the image of the Palestinian *David* and boosting Fatah's mobilization capacity.²⁵⁰ Finally, and with the most far-reaching consequences, Syria and Egypt pressured Lebanon into accepting the 1969 Cairo agreement, granting Fatah/PLO substantial autonomy and freedom of movement both among the local Palestinians as well as regarding attacks on Israel.²⁵¹ Inside Syria, however, Asad's May 1969 decree put strict limitations on the distribution of information or the possibility to hold parades.²⁵²

When some 200 Palestinians and Jordanians died in violent clashes in Jordan in February 1970, Syria announced to take the Palestinians' side in case of further escalation.²⁵³ Subsequently, when fighting resumed in September, Jadid and Atasi publicly endorsed the idea of a military interven-

²⁴² Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 123; Kiernan, *Arafat*: 201.

²⁴³ Shemesh, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 14f.

²⁴⁴ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 204.

²⁴⁵ *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 66.

²⁴⁶ Shemesh, "The Fida'iyyun Organization's Contribution to the Descent to the Six-Day War," 15.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 151f; Ma'oz and Yaniv, "On a short leash," 194f.

²⁴⁹ Kiernan, *Arafat*: 215f.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 218.

²⁵¹ Sela and Ma'oz, "The PLO in regional Arab politics: taming a non-state actor," 113f; Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 190-194; McLaurin, "The PLO and the Arab Fertile Crescent," 56.

²⁵² Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 120.

²⁵³ Alexander and Sinai, *Terrorism*: 11.

tion and called upon the Syrian population to defend their Palestinian brethren. In a similar vein, the General Federation of Workers' Union called for the overthrow of the "agent military regime" in Amman by the hands of the "Arab Palestinian Revolution and the Jordanian masses."²⁵⁴ In order to downplay Syria's abandonment of the Palestinians in the Black September crisis, officials claimed that the PLO itself had refused an offer of Syrian parachute units and neglected the need to protect the Palestinian refugees in Irbid.²⁵⁵ In a similar vein, Asad refrained from publicizing his opposition to the intervention, fearing that his domestic rivals could easily portray it as a "clear betrayal of the Ba'th commitment to the Palestinians."²⁵⁶

A strong vocal commitment to the Palestinian cause remained a constant pattern of Syria's Fatah policy also after the October 1970 coup. In March 1971, for instance, Asad stated, "Syria is the lung from which Palestinian activity draws breath."²⁵⁷ At the same time, the government severely criticized BSO's campaign against Jordan and attacks on Israeli targets outside the region as "adventurist" and "not a part of the armed struggle."²⁵⁸ Officials also strongly rejected the revisionist slogan "the road to Filastin passes through Amman."²⁵⁹ Nevertheless, Syria exerted strong political pressure on Jordan to end local repression of guerilla activity in July 1971, inter alia by temporary closing the mutual border and breaking off bilateral relations from August 1971 until September 1973, in order to push Amman to allow not only the return of PLO fighters to Jordan but also renewed cross border attacks on Israel.²⁶⁰ In a similar vein, Syria supported Fatah's claim to control all Palestinian fighters operating in southern Lebanon in July 1972.²⁶¹ Regarding international attacks, the regime pressured Fatah through its media outlets in early 1973, to put "an end to such actions but, where they are carried out, to avoid declaring responsibility at all."²⁶²

It is worth mentioning that Syria's endorsement of Fatah's political goals had been far from absolute support, especially on the eve of the 1973 War. For instance, the government downsized the Palestinian-Jordanian conflict as a "secondary" struggle likely to distract the group from its campaign against Israel.²⁶³

After the 1973 war, Syrian fears of falling prey to an Egyptian-Israeli separate agreement and renewed conventional escalations reflected in Damascus' endorsement policy.²⁶⁴ On the one hand, it supported PLO's claim to be the sole representative of the Palestinians and stressed the group's

²⁵⁴ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 68.

²⁵⁵ Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians*: 96.

²⁵⁶ Bar-Siman Tov, *Linkage Politics in the Middle East*: 164.

²⁵⁷ Ma'oz, *Asad*: 121.

²⁵⁸ This policy is closely related to the fact that Syria had become the main target of Israeli retaliation inter alia the 1972 Munich Attack. Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 215f.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 208f.

²⁶¹ McLaurin, *Foreign policy making in the Middle East*: 259.

²⁶² Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 216.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 210.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 277.

independence in order to strengthen its own position in potential negotiations over the return of the Golan Heights.²⁶⁵ On the other hand, government officials repeatedly referred to Palestine as 'Southern Syria' and endorsed political unity, thereby objecting the immediate creation of a Palestinian political entity at a time when Jordan or Israel could easily co-opt it and Syria was not ready to give up its own territorial revisionism.²⁶⁶ This conflict of interest peaked in 1976, when Asad reportedly told Arafat:

*"There is no Palestinian People, no Palestinian entity, there is only Syria! You are an integral part of the Syrian people and Palestine is an integral part of Syria. Therefore it is we, the Syrian authorities, who are the real representatives of the Palestinian people."*²⁶⁷

The rapid shift of endorsement policy in the course of the Lebanese Civil war reflects best in Asad's speech in front of the provincial councils on July 20, 1976.²⁶⁸

After denouncing sectarian strife in Lebanon as a plot against Arab unity and Islam, Asad called attacks on the Palestinians as "a red line", which Syria "would absolutely not allow anyone to go beyond," and confirmed arms and ammunition deliveries "in large quantities."²⁶⁹ The president also extensively reported Fatah's betrayal of the Palestinian cause, "for the sake of their tactical or strategic objectives" and rejected any connection between "the fighting of Palestinians in the highest mountains of Lebanon and the liberation of Palestine." Moreover, Asad stressed several times the high tangible sacrifices Syria had made in order to support and protect the Palestinian resistance from Israeli retaliation, including risking a deterioration of inter-Arab relations.²⁷⁰ While denying the PLO's claim for sole representation by calling them "those who say that they represent the Palestinian question," Asad confirmed Syria's exceptional position as the only country not limiting its commitment to mere talking. In contrast, Syria was "sacrificing its sons, economy, land and everything so that [...] the struggle for the Palestinian question may continue."²⁷¹ Despite a temporary rapprochement in the late 1970s, attempts to strip Arafat off of his credentials as the legitimate leader of the Palestinian resistance, while at the same time upholding the credibility of its own commitment continued to remain a frequent pattern of Syrian endorsement policy vis-à-vis Fatah.²⁷²

²⁶⁵ McLaurin, *Foreign policy making in the Middle East*: 259; Ma'oz, *Asad*.

²⁶⁶ In August 1982, Asad called the equivalence of Palestine and Southern Syria "an eternal fact." Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 130f; Sela and Ma'oz, "The PLO in regional Arab politics: taming a non-state actor," 114f; Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974*: 279f.

²⁶⁷ Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 131; Ma'oz, *Asad*: 121.

²⁶⁸ Reproduced by Itamar Rabinovich, *The War for Lebanon: 1970-1985* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). 201-236.

²⁶⁹ Asad, "Speech delivered to the Syrian provincial councils on 20 July 1976."

²⁷⁰ Miller, *The Arab states and the Palestine question*: 85.

²⁷¹ Asad, "Speech delivered to the Syrian provincial councils on 20 July 1976."

²⁷² Throughout the first half of the 1980s, for instance, officials repeatedly denounced Arafat as a "traitor," "agent of Satan," a "prostitute," and a tool of the United States. See Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 136f.

5.3.5 Conclusion

*“It is perhaps one of the bitterest ironies of Palestinian history that the PLO’s most consistent patron and the staunchest defender of Palestinian nationalism should also turn out to be its most determined adversary.”*²⁷³

In 1976, the Syrian-PLO alliance was in shambles and Damascus’ commitment to the group had reached an all-time low. By tacitly aligning with Israel and its Lebanese partners, Syria *de facto* abandoned its ally for over a decade and denied any form of material or political support—with one noteworthy exception: Even at the peak of military conflict, Asad never denounced Arafat or Fatah as terrorists or publicly questioned the legitimacy of the violent campaign against Israel.

As Miller implied by referring to Syria as a *patron* turning into an *adversary* and evidence suggests strongly, there have been significant changes regarding the nature of Syrian sponsorship. To what extent did these patterns match the sponsorship roles *Brother in Arms*, *Secret Backer*, *Fellow Traveler*, and *Defector*, on the one hand, and the hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework, on the other?

As maintained in section 5.1.6, the SSD suggested a general tendency to avoid abandonment by Fatah between 1964 and 1973, which is expected by hypothesis N₂ to entail a policy of standing *firm*. Stemming from the generally insufficient capacity of Fatah to meet Syria’s need for assistance, the brief Egyptian-Syrian military cooperation, and improved relations to the Arab World after 1970, this trend was to a moderate degree reversed especially before the June 1967 War. According to the restraining hypothesis N₃, this should reflect in a policy shift towards entrapment avoiding. In contrast, regional isolation, regime vulnerability, and Fatah’s increased strength enhanced the tendency suggested by the sponsorship hypothesis NC₂ for a strong sponsorship commitment especially in the pre-coup years 1965/66 and 1968-1970.

NC₂ can be confirmed to the extent that limitations on both external and internal balancing an increasing Israeli threat coincided with the initiation of institutionalized material support for Fatah since April 1965. However, fears of entrapment stemming from Fatah’s weakness both materially and in the Palestinian arena slowed down incentives for a strong commitment and resolve. Hence, Syria took the role of a *Secret Backer*, aiming at keeping a low profile regarding Fatah’s presence as well as direct operational cooperation and at maintaining a substantial level of plausible deniability by prohibiting cross border raids.²⁷⁴ In a steady transformation to a *Brother in Arms*, Syria protested the Arab League’s endorsement of PLO as well as its 1965 decision to not support asymmetric warfare against Israel. Moreover, it exerted political pressure on neighboring Jordan and Lebanon to allow Fatah raids into Israel, thereby sacrificing diplomatic assets. These costs decreased substantially in 1966/1967, when Nasser and the moderate Arab States shifted

²⁷³ Miller, *The Arab states and the Palestine question*: 82.

²⁷⁴ Israeli warnings of retaliation for attacks imply that secrecy had failed. However, a state’s classification as a secret backer is based on its efforts to keep the alliance a secret, not the success of this policy.

their backing from PLO to Fatah. At the same time, facing increasing reprisals by Israel, Damascus stepped up its military support to a high level. Starting in late 1966, Syria publicly defended cross border attacks and bolstered Fatah's military presence on Syrian territory. Alongside with logistical support, Fatah received more freedom to operate and assistance in increasing its profile among Palestinians throughout the region. Besides Fatah's increased capacity, regime vulnerability even enhanced the SSD's incentive for resolve, as the post-1966 government aimed at boosting its domestic legitimacy by the means of endorsing the 'struggle for Palestine.'

However, the credible risk of entrapment and external alliances (Egypt, USSR) induced the constant use of measures of restraint. While cross border operations were generally prohibited and military training supervised by the Operations Division, the army increasingly restrained Fatah infiltrations into Israel particularly after the Egyptian-Syrian military agreement. Another indicator of Syria's unwillingness to fully expose itself as a *Brother in Arms* and robust tendency towards the middle of the sponsorship spectrum (*Secret Backer/Fellow Traveler*) has also been the practice of indirect hosting in Jordan and Lebanon since 1965, while prohibiting attacks via the Golan Heights after 1967. In order to restrain the group after the war, President al-Atasi issued an unprecedented threat of re-alignment by warning Fatah leaders "if you insist on this course, we will regretfully have to eliminate you."²⁷⁵

At the peak of regime vulnerability in the late 1960s, Syria temporarily returned to the role of *Brother in Arms*, when conflicts in Lebanon and Jordan impeded its preferred strategy of indirect hosting. PLA forces under Syrian command directly engaged in military action in order to guarantee PLO's presence in and operational freedom in Lebanon. Additionally, military commitment peaked in the course of Syria's intervention in northern Syria, particularly as tolerating the potential elimination of its Palestinian ally would have been perceived as policy failure threatening regime survival. Although regime vulnerability impeded a policy of entrapment avoiding, suggested by the SSD, the latter strongly influenced Syria's sponsorship. The army, for instance, issued substantial restraint by preventing full-scale escalation, Palestinian mobilization, and the relocation of thousands of radicalized PLO fighters to Syria. Hence, in the course of the crisis, Syria gradually turned into a *Fellow Traveler*, unwilling to go to war on behalf of Fatah. Nevertheless, Fatah's ongoing strategic importance as the principal of the Palestinian cause and the severe external security dilemma with Israel prevented *defection*.

The positive shift in regime vulnerability and efforts to return to conventional external balancing after 1971 increased the looming trend towards restraint after the 1970 coup. Damascus prevented Fatah not only from recruiting Syrians, but also publicly condemned its radical offshoot BSO, when it threatened to foreclose a Syrian rapprochement with the moderate Arab States and trig-

²⁷⁵ Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*: 157.

ger badly timed conflict escalation with Israel. Internal weakness, competition in the Palestinian arena, and the decision of especially Egypt to disengage from the Palestinian cause decreased Fatah's strategic leverage over Syria and thus incentives for entrapment avoiding. This reflected in Syria's repeated decision to cut PLO off from arms supplies destined for campaigns against Jordan and Lebanon in 1971 and 1976 respectively. After Damascus had suffered another military defeat in 1973 and gained alternative sources for internal balancing, tensions in Lebanon posed a substantial risk of Israeli intervention and Syrian entrapment. Accordingly, Syria dramatically turned towards *defection* from the alliance in June 1976.

It remains somewhat puzzling that Syria's rhetorical re-alignment from calling Fatah the 'fulfillment of our dreams' in 1965 and resolutely challenging its right to represent the Palestinians in 1976 did not come along with an openly appeasing rhetoric against Israel or a denouncement of Fatah as terrorists. Quite the contrary, Syrian officials repeatedly accused the group of *abandoning the cause*, in order to achieve selfish goals undermining Arab unity and sovereignty. By challenging the legitimacy of Fatah's claim to lead the Palestinian uprising against Israel, Syria aimed at reducing the risk of entrapment while at the same time maintaining the 'Palestinian Card'—entailing a reputation of resolve against Israel. Due to this strategic impediment to realignment and the ongoing lack of regime legitimacy, Syria remained a *Fellow Traveler*.

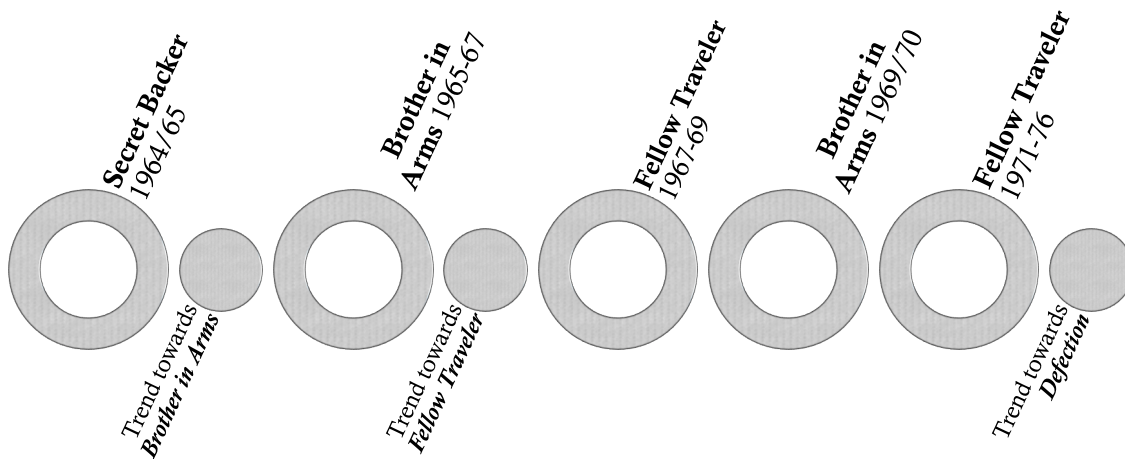


Figure 24: Patterns of Syrian sponsorship commitment to Fatah

6 The outstayed welcome: Syria & the Kurdistan Workers' Party

*"Recalling the past, [Syria] should not even think of playing the PKK card."*¹

Ahmet Davutoglu, October 2011

Before Turkey's foreign minister implied the collapse of bilateral cooperation against the PKK in the context of the Syrian Civil War (2011-), the expulsion of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan from Syria and the subsequent Adana agreement in late 1998 had constituted the crowning achievement of Ankara's efforts to pressure Damascus out of supporting the group.² Hence, the following chapter will examine first the international and domestic factors shaping Damascus' security environment between 1979 and 1998 and second the nature of Syria's alignment with the PKK.

Founded in late November 1978, in the middle of domestic turmoil and polarization in Turkey, the PKK initially called for a national-revolutionary overthrow of the state and an "independent, united, democratic Kurdistan."³ The group violently challenged the Turkish state for the first time in a parallel attack on military barracks in southeastern Semdinli and Eruh, killing one soldier and two police officers on August 15, 1984.⁴

Although most of the over 1,000 attacks reportedly perpetrated by the PKK between 1984 and 1997 followed a similar pattern, already this first assault exhibited to a remarkable degree key features of terrorism. As former PKK-commander Sari Baran stated, the group aimed not at a high number of casualties but at gaining popular support.⁵ By attacking soldiers indiscriminately, the PKK hoped to disrupt the link between the army and the local population and convincing the local population of its capacity.⁶ Although then-prime minister Turgut Özal initially downplayed the group as 'bandits', the term 'terrorist' soon dominated the Turkish public discourse.⁷ Internationally, the EU and the U.S. designated the PKK a terrorist organization since the mid-1990s.

¹ Aydin Albayrak. "PKK card may exacerbate already strained ties between Syria and Turkey." Today's Zaman (2011). Published electronically October 30. <http://bit.ly/v3QVpt>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

² For an overview of Turkish-Syrian relations, see Oezden Oktav, "Water Dispute and Kurdish Separatism in Turkish-Syrian Relations," *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 34(2004); Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*; ———, "Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War: Kurds and Water," *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 2 (1997); Muhammad Muslih, "Syria and Turkey. Uneasy Relations," in *Reluctant neighbor: Turkey's role in the Middle East*, ed. Henri J. Barkey (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996); Bülent Aras and Hasan Köni, "Turkish-Syrian Relations Revisited," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2002).

³ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 46f. Throughout the 1990s, however, it moderated its stance to a certain extent, calling repeatedly for a federalization of Turkey and cultural autonomy. See also Gülistan Gürbey, "The Development of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey since the 1980s," in *The Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1990s: its impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, ed. Robert W. Olson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 22f.

⁴ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 80f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 79f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁷ Özdam, Interview by the Author, May 29, 2012. See also *ibid.*, 125f. This also reflects in the prominent role of separatism in Turkish anti-terrorism laws. According to the anti-terror law passed in 1991, terrorism is defined *inter alia* as any act aiming at "damaging the indivisible unity of the State with its territory and nation." Kurdish Human Rights Project. "Turkey's Anti-Terror Laws: Threatening the Protection of Human Rights." Briefing Paper (2008). Published electronically September 11. <http://bit.ly/11WZ8UV>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

Although Washington outlawed the group only in 1997, earlier reports and statements indicate a corresponding view.⁸ Quite remarkably, Syria declared the PKK a terrorist organization already in 1993.⁹ Hence, beyond Turkish threats of retaliation, Syria's support for the PKK exposed it to a set of formal and informal international sanctions. Most prominently, the alignment became part of Washington's rationale for not removing Syria from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, thereby exposing it inter alia to restrictions on foreign assistance as well as a ban on defense exports and sales.¹⁰

6.1 Nature of the sponsorship dilemma

The following section examines the sponsorship security dilemma (SSD) Syria faced when supporting the PKK. Therefore, it examines consecutively Syria's external security environment, in particular with regard to Turkey, the group's material capacity, and strategic interests in upholding the alignment.

6.1.1 A clear superiority: The power imbalance between Turkey and Syria

"Turkey has a clear superiority over Syria as regards a comparison of the two countries' armed forces."¹¹

Sükrü Elekdag, 1996

Taking merely the assessment of Elekdag, himself a former Turkish undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, into consideration, one might expect a clear Syrian policy of abandonment avoiding. In order to also supplement this statement with data in a longitudinal analysis, this section initially resorts to the CINC Index, measuring Syria's and Turkey's respective relative share of world power.

As **Figure 25** clearly shows, Turkey's demographic, industrial, and military capabilities exceeded the Syrian power resources by far throughout the entire observation period. Accordingly, the imbalance of power in favor of Turkey steadily increased after a short low in the context of internal crisis 1978-80 and peaked in 1998 after a significant boost in 1993/94. At first glance, this imbalance is a clear case. Turkey is nearly five times bigger than Syria in population and territory, a

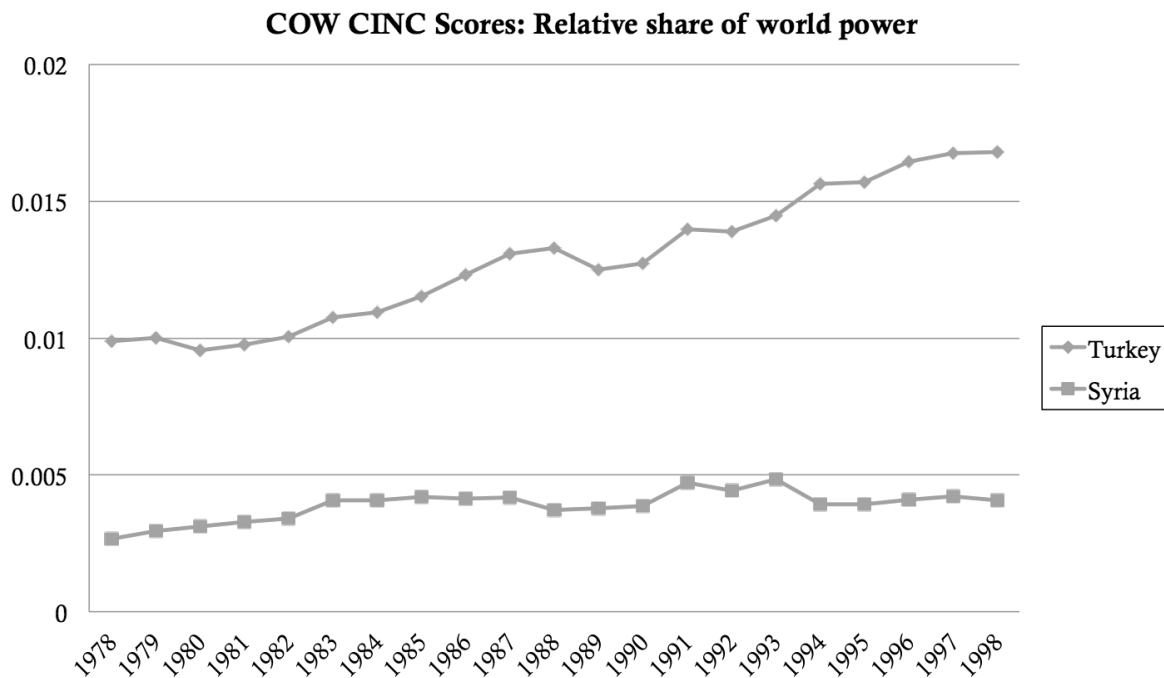
⁸ U.S. Department of State. "Patterns of Global Terrorism 1996." (1997). Published electronically April 30. <http://1.usa.gov/1n5WdtO>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁹ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 77.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of State. "Country Reports on Terrorism 2012." (2013). Published electronically May 30. <http://1.usa.gov/1i8z499>. Accessed January 31, 2014. In contrast to Syria's assistance for Abu Nidal Organization, however, international outrage over support for PKK remained limited. Peterson Institute for International Economics. "Case 86-1. US v. Syria (1986– : Terrorism)." Case Studies in Sanctions and Terrorism (2012). <http://bit.ly/1n5UEMe>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹¹ Sükrü Elekdag, "2 1/2 War strategy," *Perceptions* 1, no. 1 (1996): 8f.

strong ally of the U.S., and NATO-member state.¹² Singling out military expenditures, however, provides a much more dynamic picture:



Source: COW CINC data

Figure 25: Relative share of world power: Syria and Turkey (1978-1998)

As **Figure 26** indicates, Syria’s military expenditure increased steadily between 1979 and 1987 and even exceeded Turkey’s in the period between 1983-87. Ever since—with the exception of 1991—Turkey has spent substantially more on the military than Syria. Nevertheless, the temporary reduction in governmental spending affected the imbalance of power to a rather marginal extent given Ankara’s re-engagement of the US after 1979.¹³

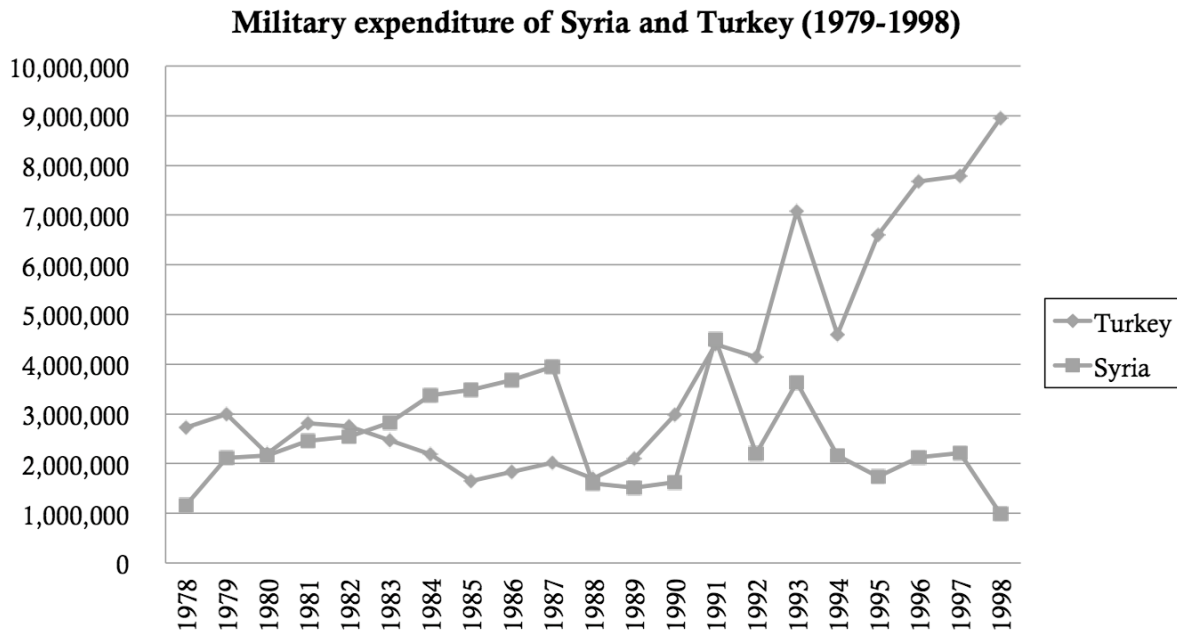
In contrast, several external shocks hit Syria’s military capacity in the observation period. In the course of Israel’s invasion into Lebanon in June 1982, Syria lost not only some 29 SAM batteries, but also about the same number of MiGs and 35 other planes.¹⁴ According to intelligence reports, Soviet and Warsaw Pact arms deliveries and military aid to Syria significantly declined since the

¹² Cagri Erhan, Interview by author, Ankara University, European Union Research Center (ATAUM), May 18, 2012. See also Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 60,74; Alan Makovsky, "Turkish-Iranian Tension: A New Regional Flashpoint?," *PolicyWatch* 404(1999).

¹³ In an effort to compensate for the loss of Iran as its main regional ally, Washington nearly tripled its military aid from some \$181 million in 1979 to over \$700 million in 1985 and lifted the arms embargo imposed on Turkey in the context of the 1974 occupation of Northern Cyprus. Additionally, both countries signed a new Defence and Economic Cooperation Agreement (DECA) in March 1980, accompanied by a boost in military aid and the financing of Turkey’s modernization of air defense, defense industry program, and nearly a dozen airfields in eastern Turkey. After 1986, Turkey received additional transfers of military material from European NATO states. Yasemin Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999). 61-64; Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 81; William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2000). 164f.

¹⁴ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 381f.

early 1980s, paralleled by a steep rise in foreign debt and economic instability.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Syria remained strongly dependent on these deliveries, accounting for some 95 percent of all arms transfers in 1990.¹⁶



Source: COW CINC data, thousands of current year U.S. dollars

Figure 26: Military expenditure of Syria and Turkey (1978-98)

Only after receiving up to \$5 billion from the Gulf States for supporting the US-led alliance against Iraq in 1991, Syria was able to partially restore its air force capability and increased its military expenditure. The end of the Cold War, however, came along with the loss of its most important international backer and Syria had massive difficulties to renew and modernize its weapon systems.¹⁷ In addition, one should keep in mind, that up to one fifth of Syria's land troops were stationed in Lebanon or committed against Israel in other forms.¹⁸

Especially after 1993, the escalation of its conflict with PKK affected Turkey both economically and militarily. In order to put down the insurgency, Ankara spent an annual \$7 billion, accounting for some four percent of Turkey's GNP at that time and deployed almost half of its total

¹⁵ Those systems delivered and the presence of Soviet defense troops between 1982 and 84 were mostly aimed at deterring Israel from large-scale attacks on Syria. Director of Central Intelligence. "Soviet Foreign Military Assistance." Interagency Intelligence Memorandum 1 May, (1987). <http://1.usa.gov/1eqOTrB>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 115f.

¹⁶ Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 213.

¹⁷ Elekdag, "2 1/2 War strategy," 8f; Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy*: xvi; Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 122.

¹⁸ Senior staff member, Interview by the Author, NATO Center of Excellence: Defense Against Terrorism, Ankara, May 30, 2012. See also Elekdag, "2 1/2 War strategy," 9.

armed forces to the southeast.¹⁹ Furthermore, reports about mass human rights violations against the local population strained Turkey's relations with its NATO partners and Western Europe, resulting, for instance, in the temporary restriction of U.S. and German arms deliveries.²⁰ In contrast, a boost in relations with Egypt (including security protocols) and Iraq in the first half of the 1990s and the *Military Training and Cooperation Agreement* (MTCA) with Israel in 1996 improved Turkey's security outlook.²¹

Regarding the systemic incentives for adjustment strategies, the clear imbalance of power in favor of Turkey suggests as the neorealist hypothesis N₁ an overall Syrian policy of *balancing*. Adjustment pressures on Syrian decision-makers have increased especially in the early 1980s, between the demise of the USSR in the late 1980s and the end of the Gulf War, and since 1994. However, the general tendency for abandonment avoiding in anti-Turkish alliances expected by the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂ was to a certain extent attenuated between 1983 and 87, as well as in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War.

6.1.2 Added value: The PKK's capacity as an ally

Given the high asymmetry of power in favor of Turkey, the SSD model attributes increased importance to the PKK's capacity. To what extent was the group capable of challenging Ankara's supremacy of power and of subsequently alleviating the interstate power imbalance?

Although EAC data indicates that the power imbalance between the PKK and Turkey has been smaller than the one between Israel and Fatah, PKK's power vis-à-vis Turkey is nevertheless categorized as weak, again suggesting a general Syrian policy of avoiding entrapment.²² And yet, the PKK's strength and its ability to inflict not only severe damages on Turkey but also entrap its security forces in a costly war on its own territory varied substantially over time.

6.1.2.1 Attacks against Turkey

Initially, the PKK attacked primarily civilian state officials to demonstrate its capability and "physically separate the Kurdish regions from the rest of the country."²³ Afterwards, the group employed mostly conventional guerilla tactics and targeted security personnel stationed in the region, but also resorted to hostage taking and attacks on pipelines and infrastructure.

¹⁹ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 202f; Henri Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK: A Pyrrhic Victory?," in *Democracy and Counterterrorism. Lessons from the Past*, ed. Robert Art and Louise Richardson (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 2007), 359; Elekdag, "2 1/2 War strategy," 7; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 65.

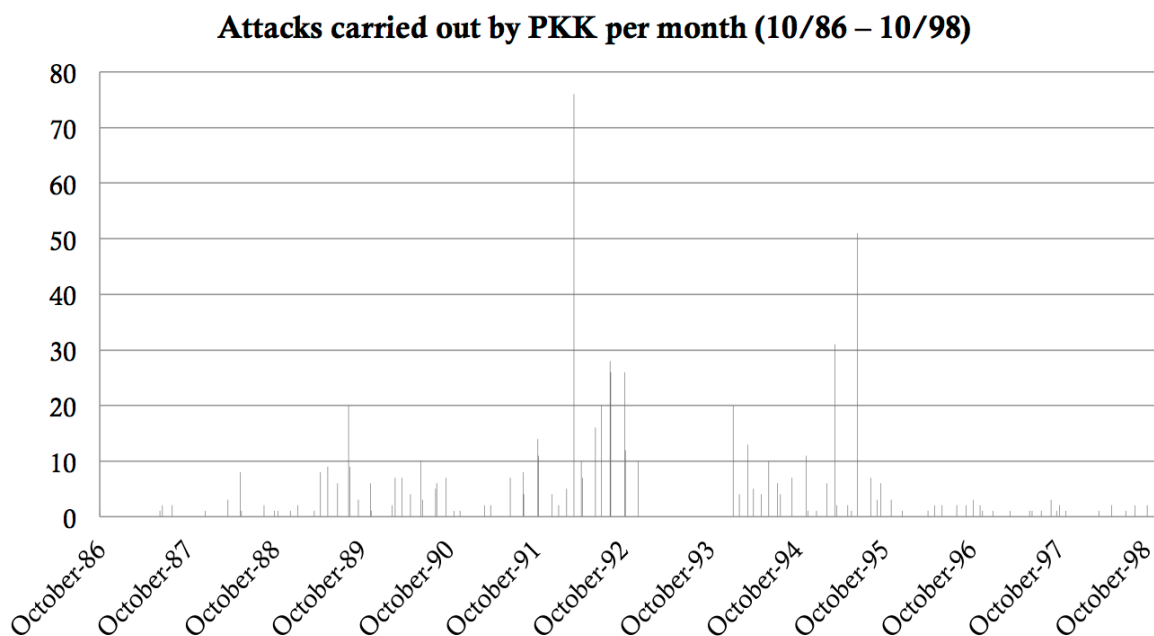
²⁰ Erhan, Interview by author, May 18, 2012. See also Philip Robins, "More Apparent than Real? The Impact of the Kurdish issue on Euro-Turkish relations," in *The Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1990s: its impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, ed. Robert W. Olson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 123f; Elekdag, "2 1/2 War strategy," 7; Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 360; Alain Gresh, "Turkish-Israeli-Syrian Relations and their Impact on the Middle East," *Middle East Journal* 52, no. 2 (1998): 191.

²¹ The agreement, signed in February 1996, included cooperation, technological transfers, joint trainings, and the modernization of Turkey's air force as well as the denouncement of PKK as a terrorist organization by Israel. Erhan, Interview by author, May 18, 2012. See also Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 300; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 131.

²² Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two."; Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 344.

²³ ———, "Turkey and the PKK," 349.

Between October 1986 and the PKK's expulsion from Syria in October 1998, GTD database lists 699 incidents of terrorism carried out by the group.²⁴ From taking a closer look at this data (**Figure 27**), it is possible to deduce that while the PKK has been responsible for an average number of six attacks per month, three periods indicate a significantly higher frequency of attacks. Between May 1988 and October 1990, PKK stepped up its campaign against the armed forces (TAF), reaching a preliminary peak of 20 attacks/month in August 1989. After a relatively quiet period, the PKK resumed to a higher level of attacks between July 1991 and December 1992, raising not only their frequency to an average of 16 per month, yet also peaking in March 1992 with 76 different attacks.²⁵ A third and final period of above average numbers of attacks was between January 1994 and August 1995, peaking in July 1995 with 51 incidents. After 1995, the number of attacks rapidly declined.



Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "Global Terrorism Database [Data file]." (2012).

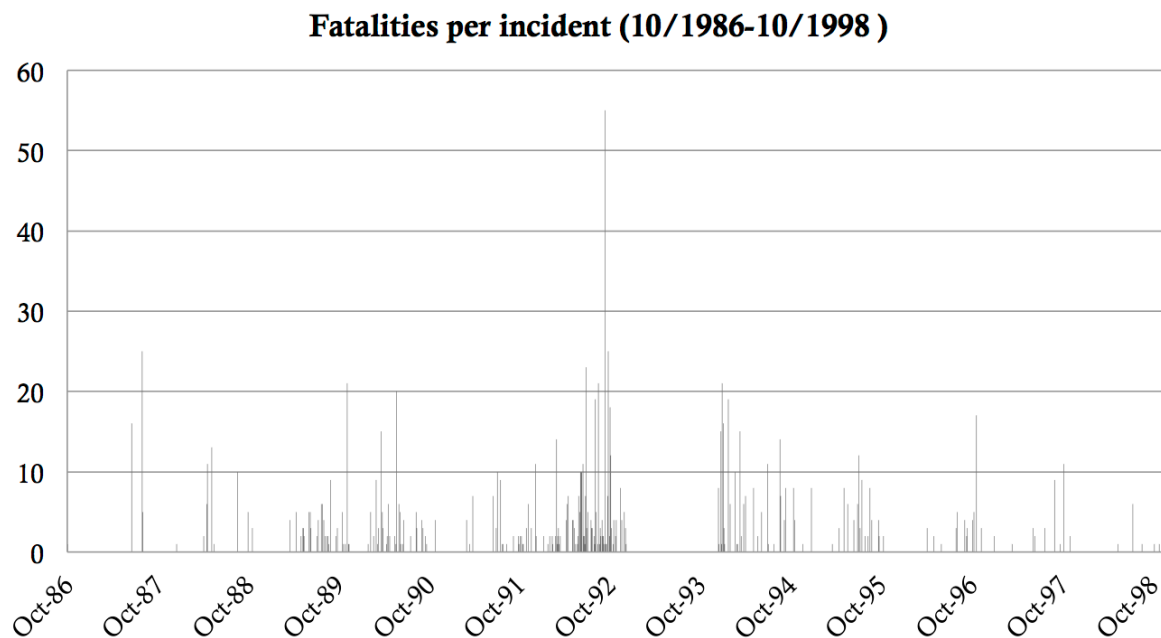
Figure 27: Attacks carried out by the PKK 1986-98 (frequency)

In the 1990s, the PKK's focus shifted gradually from southeast Turkey to the West. First, attacks increasingly reached the urban centers. Between 1991 and 1998, GTD lists over 50 terrorist incidents in Istanbul, where only a single attack had taken place throughout the 1980s. In addition, the group targeted Ankara as well as southern centers. Second, it carried out some 145 attacks in

²⁴ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START).

²⁵ On March 20, 1993, Öcalan unilaterally declared a 25-day ceasefire, which was also extended on April 16 and officially lasted until June 8. Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 212-214.

Western Europe between 1992 and 1995, most of them against Turkish institutions and state officials in Germany, which further increased international pressure on Turkey to solve the issue.²⁶ According to the Turkish General Staff (TGS), the number of PKK attacks steadily declined from 3,328 (1994) to 1,500 (1996), and 589 (1998).²⁷



Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "Global Terrorism Database [Data file]." (2012).

Figure 28: Attacks carried out by the PKK 1986-98 (lethality)

In the course of the attacks listed by GTD, PKK assaults killed 1,423 civilians and off-duty personnel between 1986 and 1998. According to government sources, the death toll since 1984 had reached nearly 27,000 by late 1998, including 3,900 soldiers, 1,200 village guards, and 250 police officers.²⁸ While this reveals that the PKK did not only resort to terrorism but also confronted the armed forces in conventional gun battles, GTD data indicates a steeply increasing death toll from terrorist attacks, illustrated in **Figure 28**.²⁹

The overall damage exceeded the loss in security personnel by far, especially in the period between 1993 and 1995, when the conflict claimed over 10,000 lives. Militants and security forces killed nearly 5,000 civilians between 1984 and 1998; both parties detained or kidnapped tens of

²⁶ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START); Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 352.

²⁷ Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," 304.

²⁸ The remaining casualties were 17,900 PKK rebels and 4,615 civilians. See Deutsche Presse-Agentur. "Clashes with Kurds claim 23 in Turkey." International News November 24, (1998). www.lexisnexis.com/de/business. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²⁹ While some 130 people were killed in attacks between October 1986 and April 1989, 1,294 died in the following nine years: 997 in the period from mid-1989 to the unilateral cease fire in 1993 and 426 between 1994 and late 1998

thousands. In addition to the economic collapse of the Southeast, security operations inside and outside the country swallowed billions.³⁰ In contrast, the death toll between August 1984 and June 1990 had amounted for 1,771 people.³¹ These numbers strongly underline the assumption by experts that after the end of the Cold War, the PKK had indeed become a significant threat to Turkey.³²

6.1.2.2 Support base

Starting out in 1979 as “an insignificant grouping of Kurdish nationalists,”³³ experts estimated the PKK by 1996 to be the “biggest guerilla insurgency in the world.”³⁴ Within the next three years, however, the number of PKK fighters located in Turkey declined sharply.³⁵ This development strongly contrasts with the PKK’s rise throughout the 1980s, linked to the group’s ethnic base, ideological constituencies, and external backers.³⁶

While its anti-religious Marxist-Leninist ideology was initially impeding recruitment among pious Kurds and the government undermined PKK mobilization efforts by coopting Kurdish tribes in the mid-1980s, Ankara’s violent and indiscriminate repression of the insurgency after 1984 enhanced a Kurdish national consciousness.³⁷ By 1985, fighters inside Turkey accounted for only 200, but forced military conscription among the local population increased their number to more than 1,000 after 1986.³⁸ Membership additionally boosted in early 1990, when widespread pro-

³⁰ According to the TGS, it was \$4 million per day in mid-1997 Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy*: xvii; Deutsche Presse-Agentur; Gürbey, “The Development of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey since the 1980s,” 18f; Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey’s Kurdish question* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998), 220.

³¹ Among them were 692 PKK fighters, 330 security forces, 78 village guards, and 671 civilians. Bölükbaşı, “The Regionalization of Turkey’s Kurdish Secessionism,” 15f.

³² Özdağ, Interview by the Author, May 29, 2012.

³³ Bölükbaşı, “The Regionalization of Turkey’s Kurdish Secessionism,” 16.

³⁴ Franz Schurmann, “Kurdish Leader Is Key Player,” *Pacific News Service/San Francisco Examiner*, September 5 1996.

³⁵ According to TGS, their number declined from some 10,000 in 1994 to 4,000 in 1999. Additionally, the counterinsurgency had reduced the share of PKK fighters within the country from 65 percent in 1994 to only 25 percent in 1999. Kirisci, “The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy,” 304; Michael Radu, “The Rise and Fall of the PKK,” *Orbis* 45, no. 1 (2001): 47; Barkey, “Turkey and the PKK,” 343.

³⁶ Although official accounts are rare and hardly independent, recent studies suggest that the number of Kurdish citizens of Turkey has substantially increased from 3.1 million in 1965 to 7.1 million in 1990, and about 14 million in 2008. Most of them were historically located in the structurally underdeveloped southeastern and eastern areas, bordering Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Influenced by the Iraqi Kurds’ struggle for autonomy since the 1960s and targeted by increased state repression after the 1980 military coup, which literally eradicated the political and cultural identity of non-Turkish minorities, they constituted the main support base for PKK. Another major support base for PKK had emerged from mass Kurdish labor emigration as well as a wave of refugees after 1980, especially to Germany and France. According to the German ministry of interior, PKK held at least 11,000 sympathizers among the 500,000 Kurds in Germany in 1997. According to the ministry, PKK was able to mobilize much more for rallies, propaganda (most prominently by a Kurdish-language satellite TV station), fundraising, and recruitment. Veysel Ayhan, Interview by author, International Middle East Peace Research Center, July 25 2012. See also Servet Mutlu, “Ethnic Kurds in Turkey: A Demographic Study,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 4 (1996): 533f; Barkey, “Turkey and the PKK,” 347,352; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 85; Paul K Davis et al., *Understanding and Influencing Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2012). 100; Radu, “The Rise and Fall of the PKK,” 54f.

³⁷ ———, “The Rise and Fall of the PKK,” 51; Davis et al., *Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*: 100-105.

³⁸ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 97,116f.

tests erupted in the Kurdish areas and were violently suppressed by security forces.³⁹ By the end of 1992, the number of PKK fighters in the Southeast reached 10,000.⁴⁰

For several reasons, the PKK's support base among the Kurds of Turkey somewhat diminished in the first half of the 1990s. First, harsh violence against dissidents and alleged collaborators led many to question PKK rule as a political alternative. Second, whereas the collapse of the USSR opened a window of opportunity for moderation and internal reform, the group lost its appeal as a liberation movement, while actively contributing to the preservation of tribal structures and collaborating with governments repressing their own Kurdish population. Third, Kurdish mass migration to the West in the early 1990s deprived the PKK of a local source of recruitment.⁴¹

Especially after 1986, international sources of support, especially from states with a significant Kurdish population gained importance. The PKK had lost many of its fighters in clashes with the armed forces since 1984 and the establishment of the village guard system in Turkey as well as tensions with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders had aggravated PKK access to their Turkish and Iraqi constituencies (see also section 6.1.2.4). Despite severe limitations on political activity among Iranian Kurds, PKK reportedly exchanged money, weapons, and logistic resources against assistance in trans-border smuggling after it had established a permanent presence in Iran's northwestern West-Azerbaijan region in 1986/87.⁴² Syria's Kurds became another major base of recruitment, food, money, and shelter, especially given the close social and economic ties between the Kurds on both sides of the border and the marginalized and fragmented character of local Kurdish groups.⁴³

A final base of support had been governmental backing, besides Syria allegedly by Iran, Armenia, Bulgaria, Russia, the Republic of Cyprus, and especially Greece, whose government refused even in March 1999 to condemn the PKK as a terrorist organization.⁴⁴ Russian support for the PKK, for instance, decreased after the Cold War to mere political endorsement such as tolerating conferences and the establishment of a 'Kurdish House' and reached an all-time low in February 1999, when Interior Minister Sergei Stepashin refused to give sanctuary to Öcalan, stating, "no

³⁹ Ibid., 140-144.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 171f.

⁴¹ Svante Cornell, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics," in *Dangerous Neighborhood: Contemporary issues in Turkey's foreign relations*, ed. Michael Radu (New Brunswick, London: Transaction, 2003), 133; Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 345; Radu, "The Rise and Fall of the PKK."

⁴² Nihat Ali Özcan, Interview by the Author, Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), Ankara, May 28, 2012. See also Kerim Yildiz, *The Kurds in Syria: the forgotten people* (London: Pluto Press, 2005). 15f; Menashri, *Iran*: 89f.

⁴³ In addition, the vision of an independent Kurdish state attracted also higher educated and socialists Kurds, traditionally affiliated with the Syrian Communist Party (SCP) Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 100f; Gary Gambill, "The Kurdish Reawakening in Syria," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 6, no. 4 (2004): 1; Radu, "The Rise and Fall of the PKK."

⁴⁴ Cornell, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics," 134; Davis et al., *Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*: 111; Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 351f; Tozun Bahcheli, "Turkish Policy toward Greece," in *The Politics of Modern Turkey*, ed. William Hale and Ali Carkoglu (New York: Routledge, 2008), 182f.

terrorist will be granted political asylum."⁴⁵ In another example for state support, Iran facilitated the transfer of fighters from Lebanon to Iraq in 1982 and allowed the group to use its territory as a rear front, but also a safe haven with training centers, meeting spots, and hospitals, since 1986.⁴⁶ Thereby, Iran enabled the group to reach targets in northeastern Turkey.⁴⁷ After the capture of Öcalan, Iran reduced, yet not fully suspended its assistance. In early 2000, foreign minister Kemal Harrazi stated, "We reject the PKK terrorist organization and do not approve of its activities."⁴⁸

6.1.2.3 Cohesion of command

Ever establishing the group in 1978, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan made his name literally a synonym for the party's leadership and dominated its political as well as military agenda.⁴⁹ While EAC data confirms the group's clear central command even after more than a decade of Öcalan's imprisonment, it also indicates that the PKK failed to exert full control over all Kurdish constituencies.⁵⁰

In order to consolidate his predominance within the party, Öcalan quickly gained a notorious reputation of sidelining and even physically eliminating dissidents and potential rivals. Attempts to establish rival groups such as, for instance, Ali Ömer Can's 'PKK Refoundation' in 1991, were quickly repressed.⁵¹ Reports of mass purges among recruits mounted, peaked in the late 1980s when university students joined the PKK in large numbers and questioned the autocratic nature of the leadership.⁵² Despite its negative reputational repercussions, internal repression prevented factionalism and strengthened the organizational capacity of the group.

Nevertheless, dissent over the appropriate strategy emerged particularly in the early 1990s. As civil unrest erupted in the Kurdish areas during the Gulf War, several commanders such as Semdin Sakik advocated a popular uprising. In contrast, Öcalan aimed at forcing the state militarily into negotiations.⁵³ Hence, amid resumed army operations after the PKK pledged a unilat-

⁴⁵ "Russian Minister Says No Asylum for Ocalan." Reuters (1998). <http://bit.ly/1biwdWj>. Accessed January 31, 2014., see also Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 198; Cornell, "The Kurdish Question in Turkish Politics," 134f; Oktay F. Tanrisever, "Turkey and Russia in Eurasia," in *The Politics of Modern Turkey*, ed. William Hale and Ali Carkoglu (New York: Routledge, 2008), 223.

⁴⁶ Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, "Born from the Left: the Making of the PKK," in *Nationalisms and Politics in Turkey, Political Islam, Kemalism and the Kurdish Issue*, ed. Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden (Oxford & New York: Routledge, 2011), 130; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 17; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 120.

⁴⁷ ———, *Blood and Belief*: 120; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5.

⁴⁸ Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," 287. On Turkish allegations of ongoing Iranian support for PKK, see Oktav, "Water Dispute," 108; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 66.

⁴⁹ See also Ali Kemal Özcan, "The Nature and Resource Field of the Kurdish Resistance in Turkey: A Dormant Resource," *Middle Eastern Studies* 41, no. 3 (2005): 405; Davis et al., *Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*: 106f; Radu, "The Rise and Fall of the PKK," 49.

⁵⁰ Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two."

⁵¹ Radu, "The Rise and Fall of the PKK," 50; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 89-96; Chris Kutschera. "Disarray inside PKK." *The Middle East* (May 2000). <http://bit.ly/1j2zLnU>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁵² Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 134-140.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 180.

eral cease-fire in April/May 1993, Sakik ordered rebel units in Diyarbakir to 'assert' PKK authority, resulting in the murder of 33 unarmed off-duty soldiers as well as four teachers.⁵⁴ Another rift occurred in the mid-1990s as Öcalan's directions from Damascus mismatched the strategic and military challenges amid full-scale TAF operations in Turkey and northern Iraq.⁵⁵ Although tactical dissent did not manifest itself in offshoot organizations, the centralization of power was accompanied by a substantial decline in PKK's capacity to adjust to conflict dynamics.

Externally, the PKK had largely marginalized or coopted other leftist Kurdish political groups in Turkey by the early 1980s.⁵⁶ Indiscriminate army violence and PKK retaliation against alleged collaborators undermined early government successes to recruit 13,000 local Kurds into a pro-government militia ('village guard'). Only in 1987/88, a policy shift towards political and cultural moderation as well as intra-Kurdish strife boosted the number of guards especially in the areas bordering Iran and Iraq.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the group maintained its popularity and exceptional position in the Turkish-Kurdish realm as intra-Kurdish competitors, such as the right-wing Kurdish nationalist Hizbollah party in the early 1990s, failed to consolidate themselves and the group managed to take control over the legal Kurdish parties since 1991.⁵⁸

In contrast to Fatah, the PKK never gained the status of a Kurdish "sole representative" and Öcalan's claim for Pan-Kurdish leadership found a strong competitor in Massoud Barzani, leader of Iraq's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), who even denounced the group as "earning the hatred and disgust of all the Kurdish people."⁵⁹ Yet, amid the rise of Kurdish nationalism after 1991 and infighting between Iraqi Kurdish factions, the PKK's campaign attracted many Kurds from neighboring countries and it gained a reputation as the "standard bearer for Kurdish nationalism around the Kurdish world,"⁶⁰ while simultaneously denouncing their rivals as "leeches" and "collaborators."⁶¹ However, PKK's military defeat and the creation of a *de facto* unified Iraqi Kurdi-

⁵⁴ Ibid., 213f.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 239-243.

⁵⁶ Davis et al., *Public Support for Insurgency and Terrorism*: 101; Gürbey, "The Development of the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey since the 1980s," 25-28; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 61f., 71f.

⁵⁷ Enrollment in these areas had reached a preliminary low at 6,000 in 1987, peaking in 1995, with some 67,000 guards. Remarkably, their number was significantly smaller in the provinces bordering Syria. Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds. An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War* (Leiden: Brill, 2007). 65f; David McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*, 3rd rev. and updated ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004). 425; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 98.

⁵⁸ ———, *Blood and Belief*: 304; Mark Muller, "Nationalism and the Rule of Law in Turkey: The Elimination of Kurdish representation during the 1990s," in *The Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1990s: its impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, ed. Robert W. Olson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996). For information on Hizbollah, see Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish question*: 71-73.

⁵⁹ McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 425. See also Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 91.

⁶⁰ Emrullah Uslu, "The Kurdistan Workers' Party turns against the European Union," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 19(Spring 2008): 118.

⁶¹ Michael Gunter, "Kurdish Infighting: The PKK-KDP Conflict," in *The Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1990s: its impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, ed. Robert W. Olson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 53f.

stan in the second half of the 1990s, turned the tide again in favor of Barzani and Jalal Talabani (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), denouncing Öcalan as “enemy of the Kurds.”⁶²

6.1.2.4 Ability to escape or resist retaliation

A final indicator assessing PKK’s capacity is the group’s ability to escape or resist Turkish retaliation. In this context, safe havens located both on territory controlled by the targeted state and in neighboring countries played a decisive role.⁶³

In the early 1980s, the PKK was not able to actively resist Turkish policing measures, but to tactically retreat into Syria or Iraq. In response to increased military state pressure, the PKK transformed its military wing in 1986 from the *Vietcong*-styled guerilla Kurdish Liberation Union to the Kurdistan People’s Liberation Army, whose structure resembled a conventional army.⁶⁴ This tactical shift allowed the PKK to prevent the armed forces from entering or permanently regaining “semi-liberated zones” in many southern and eastern provinces, thereby creating a safe haven on Turkish soil.⁶⁵ In August 1991, for instance, PKK forces defended positions in northern Iraq in a conventional battle with the Turkish army lasting for several days, boosting its military reputation.⁶⁶

In response, the government resumed a campaign to eradicate PKK as a force in the Kurdish areas in August 1993, primarily through a mass deployment of up to 300,000 security forces to the Southeast.⁶⁷ Additionally, TAF established smaller rapid response teams in order to reach targets even in mountainous areas, increased the frequency of attacks, improved the coordination of air-ground operations, strengthened its fire support elements, and dispatched heavy cannon, artillery units, and large numbers of helicopters.⁶⁸ In a parallel campaign against potential sympathizers, authorities hit the PKK’s local logistical support base, by burning down villages and orchards.⁶⁹

As the PKK fighters found themselves deprived of food and shelter in Turkey by the mid-1990s, external safe havens in Iraq, Syria, and Iran gained significant importance.

⁶² Uslu, “The Kurdistan Workers’ Party turns against the European Union,” 118; Gunter, “Kurdish Infighting,” 58.

⁶³ Many PKK members sought and found also refuge in Western Europe (especially Germany, France, and Sweden). In contrast to Israel, Turkey refrained from carrying out retaliatory strikes outside its immediate neighborhood.

⁶⁴ Barkey, “Turkey and the PKK,” 357; Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey*: 61f.

⁶⁵ Hakkari, Van, Bitlis, Bingöl, Mus, Batman, Siirt, Sirnak, and Diyarbakir. See ———, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey*: 62.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 62f.

⁶⁷ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 130; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 52; Barkey, “Turkey and the PKK,” 360.

⁶⁸ Considerably, the helicopters increased the mobility of security forces, which were now able to fly 2,700 troops in one night to any target as far as northern Iraq. Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 52f; Radu, “The Rise and Fall of the PKK,” 57; Barkey, “Turkey and the PKK,” 359.

⁶⁹ In this context, security forces evacuated and destroyed more than 2,300 villages and burnt down 2.5 billion acres of forest. The escalation of violence forced over 2 million Kurds to flee to northern Iraq or migrate to Western Turkey. See ———, “Turkey and the PKK,” 360.

Until today, northern Iraq has been a key pillar of the group's "strategic depth," especially as the Iran-Iraq War created a power vacuum in the Kurdish populated area.⁷⁰ In 1983, the KDP and the PKK signed a 'Principles of Solidarity'-accord and the latter established camps in the Qandil and Dohuk mountains.⁷¹ Between 1987 and 1994, however, the PKK's security situation in northern Iraq worsened significantly. On the one hand, the KDP-PKK alliance collapsed over TAF incursions into northern Iraq as well as PKK attacks against Kurdish civilians and even KDP members.⁷² Turkey, on the other, was able to expand its influence over northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War, manifested in the deployment of up to 5,000 troops.⁷³ After clashes in 1992 had left up to 5,000 PKK fighters dead, resumed KDP/PUK infighting, eventually allowed PKK to reestablish its presence in PUK-controlled areas after 1994.⁷⁴ Although tens of thousands of Turkish soldiers repeatedly entered northern Iraq in 1992, 1995, and 1997, TAF failed to eradicate PKK's presence there.⁷⁵

Since 1986, Iran served as a safe haven for pressured PKK fighters escaping from Turkey.⁷⁶ After the Gulf War, however, a moderate rapprochement between Ankara and Tehran limited the group's access to Iran. Under considerable diplomatic pressure from Turkey, Iran repeatedly tolerated cross-border operations and signed two security protocols in early 1993 and mid-1994, agreeing to take measures against the PKK and to facilitate the bombing of camps in border districts.⁷⁷ Subsequently, authorities repeatedly denied logistical and military assistance to the PKK and extradited dozens of fugitive fighters between 1992 and 1996. In 1996 alone, Iran conducted more than 20 anti-PKK operations.⁷⁸ As bilateral relations deteriorated in the context of Turkey's security agreement with Israel in 1996, reports over resumed material assistance and new camps

⁷⁰ Ibid., 351; Yilmaz Ensaroglu, "Turkey's Kurdish Question and the Peace Process," *Insight Turkey* 15, no. 2 (2013).

⁷¹ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012.

⁷² These incursions were based on the "right of hot pursuit" and a bilateral security protocol between Iraq and Turkey that was signed in 1984 and lasted until 1989. See Radu, "The Rise and Fall of the PKK," 52; Keskin, "Trans-Border Operations in Northern Iraq," 63f. A subsequent alignment with KDP's rival PUK also failed quickly due to their rapprochement in 1988. See Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 106.

⁷³ Gunter, "Kurdish Infighting," 53; Keskin, "Trans-Border Operations in Northern Iraq," 60; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 14.

⁷⁴ Gunter, "Kurdish Infighting."

⁷⁵ Keskin, "Trans-Border Operations in Northern Iraq," 62; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 14; Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 362.

⁷⁶ Besides agreeing to provide government authorities with names, code-names and other information about new recruits, PKK also had to refrain from any "propaganda" or "organizational political activities" among Iranian Kurds, cooperating with the Iranian KDP, and from conducting any military actions on Turkish territory closer than 50km to the Iranian border. See also Nihat Ali Özcan, "PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) tarihi, ideolojisi, ve yöntemi," *ASAM yayımları*, no. 3 (1999): 231f., Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5; Nihat Ali Özcan and Özgür Özdamar, "Uneasy Neighbors: Turkish-Iranian Relations since the 1979 Islamic Revolution," *Middle East Policy* 17, no. 3 (2010): 108; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 120f.

⁷⁷ Oktav, "Water Dispute," 106; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 16; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 59.

⁷⁸ Bülent Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy towards Iran: Ideology and Foreign Policy in Flux," *Journal of Third World Studies* 18, no. 1 (2001): 110; Michael M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the future of Turkey* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 56-59.

mounted. In the course of TAF Operation “Hammer” in northern Iraq in late 1997, hundreds of fighters were reportedly sheltered in the Iranian border town of Urmia.⁷⁹

Conclusion

Despite the fact that it was able to resist and absorb conventional attacks in the early 1990s to a significant extent, the PKK was no match for TAF throughout the entire observation period and therefore incapable of filling Syria’s material need for assistance in balancing Turkey. Nevertheless, the PKK was able to politically exploit indiscriminate state repression and consolidate its predominant position in the Turkish-Kurdish realm. In contrast to its relative vulnerability in northern Iraq, western Iran provided PKK with a real safe haven between 1986 and 1992. Thus, Syrian entrapment fears are expected to have been steadily alleviated since 1983/84 after the PKK had found a rear front and shelter in northern Iraq and took up their campaign in southeast Turkey. Between 1988 and 1992, the group’s capacity reached a climax in membership and internal cohesion, operational vigor as well as local and regional support. In contrast, the PKK’s clear military inferiority after 1993 sent strong incentives for a policy of entrapment avoiding.

6.1.3 Severity of conflict

Section 4.1 suggested that a sponsor is likely to initiate and increase its commitment if conflict with the targeted state is severe. Hence, the following section will turn to bilateral relations between Syria and Turkey in the observation period.

Historically, bilateral tensions originate in Damascus’ key role in the Arab Revolt (1916-18) against Ottoman rule. Pan-Arabism has been a crucial part of Syria’s self-conception and enduring fears of Turkish domination, manifested in the loss of the Ottoman Sanjak of Alexandretta, which became the Turkish province of Hatay in 1939, were present among elites even in times of good bilateral relations.⁸⁰ In the 1950s and 60s, the East-West conflict additionally exacerbated these tensions.⁸¹ Bilateral relations worsened substantially in the early 1980s over the distribution of the Euphrates and Tigris waters, as Turkish irrigation systems and major dam projects, such as the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), became a massive threat for Syrian agriculture.⁸²

⁷⁹ Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," 286; Aras, "Turkish Foreign Policy towards Iran," 109; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 46-65; Gunter, *The Kurds and the future of Turkey*; Özcan and Özdamar, "Uneasy Neighbors," 108.

⁸⁰ In 1960, for instance, the United Arab Republic resolved to “take all steps necessary and popular to ensure the recovery of Alexandretta.” Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 97f. Oktav, Oezden Zeynep, Interview by the Author, Yildiz Technical University, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul, May 11, 2012. See also Khoury, *Syria and the French mandate: the politics of Arab nationalism, 1920 - 1945*: 512f; David Kushner, "Conflict and Accommodation in Turkish-Syrian Relations," in *Syria under Assad: domestic constraints and regional risks*, ed. Moshe Ma'oz and Avner Yaniv (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 94f.

⁸¹ ———, "Conflict and Accommodation," 85f; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 27f; Mehmet Öcal, *Die türkische Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik nach dem Ende des Ost-West-Konflikts (1990 - 2001)* (Schenefeld: EB-Verlag, 2005). 211f; Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy*: 141; Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 173.

⁸² Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 75; Murat Güneçlioglu, "The Changing Nature of Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Globalization Perspective," *Bogazici Journal* 25, no. 2 (2011): 154; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 92.

Although the conflict never escalated to a war, empirical evidence indicates substantial variation in conflict dynamics. Between 1987 and 1998, numerous confrontations took place.⁸³ In March 1987, for instance, Turkish officials threatened to punish Syria “in a severe manner” and Coskun Kirca, Turkey’s ambassador to Canada, warned to take all “necessary means” against “that hostile country.”⁸⁴ Only three months later, Turkish jets looking for PKK camps and bases overflowed Syrian territory in order to demonstrate Ankara’s resolve.⁸⁵ The 1987 Damascus protocol, addressing mutual security and water interests, contributed only temporarily to easing tensions, as Turkish guarantees did not meet Syria’s water demands.⁸⁶

Tensions increased again in autumn 1989. Turkish officials stepped up their rhetoric vis-à-vis Syria and President Özal publicly threatened for the first time to turn off the Euphrates’ water flow across the border if Syria would not comply with the Damascus Protocol.⁸⁷ Only weeks later, two Syrian MiG-21 fighter jets entered Turkey’s airspace and shot down a surveying plane, killing five civilians. In response, Ankara announced to interrupt the southward Euphrates’ flow for an entire month in January 1990 and repeatedly reduced it in the following years.⁸⁸

As the number of PKK attacks increased, Turkish officials threatened in early 1992 to attack the group’s bases in areas under Syrian control in Lebanon. The following year, Dogan Güres, Chief of the General Staff, warned that the army was planning ‘deadly strikes’ on PKK leaders, including those based in Damascus. In addition, foreign minister Hikmet Cetin openly called for increased cooperation with Israel against Syria. In a brief period of de-escalation during Syria’s temporary suspension of assistance to PKK in mid-1992, Syrian foreign minister al-Shar’ praised bilateral relations on August 1 as at their best level since both states’ independence.⁸⁹ As cooperation failed, Defense Minister Mustafa Talas denounced Turkey’s policy as harmful to Arab interests and responded with navy exercises for a potential attack from the sea as well as large-scale ground force maneuvers in October. In order to ease tensions, President Asad personally received a high-level delegation from Ankara only a few weeks later, calling for further cooperation.⁹⁰ In January 1994, TAF repeatedly entered Syrian territory pursuing PKK fighters and Ankara signaled that Damascus could count on “receiving an unhindered supply of water only so long as

⁸³ Ghosn et al., "MID3 Data Set."

⁸⁴ At the same time, TAF carried out a major operation against PKK positions in northern Iraq, signaling government decisiveness Daniel Pipes and Adam Garfinkle. "The Quiet Crisis: Turkish-Syrian Relations." Prepared for the Central Intelligence Agency November, (1989). <http://bit.ly/1bhKAyY>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Aras and Köni, "Turkish-Syrian Relations," 53f; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 92.

⁸⁷ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 302; Pipes and Garfinkle.

⁸⁸ Since 1990, when GAP’s first part was finished, Turkey has been able to block 40 percent of the flow of the Euphrates water to Syria. See René Klaff, *Konfliktstrukturen und Außenpolitik im Nahen Osten: das Beispiel Syrien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1993). 58. See also Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 130; Pipes and Garfinkle; Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 303; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 92; Aras and Köni, "Turkish-Syrian Relations," 53.

⁸⁹ Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 61f.

⁹⁰ Robert Fisk, "Turkey threatens to bomb Kurdish guerrilla camp," *The Independent*, 25. March 1992, 17; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 61-63; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 130-132.

they maintained friendly amicable relations.”⁹¹ Again, Syria called for a comprehensive approach and increased consultations throughout the following months.⁹²

Border fortifications and troop concentration by both states reflected increased tensions since 1995.⁹³ On a diplomatic level, Prime Minister Tansu Ciller threatened to “teach Damascus a lesson they would never forget.”⁹⁴ In April and May 1995, officials warned, “those who harbor enmity against us should fear our enmity,” explicitly calling Syria “hostile.”⁹⁵ The following year, TAF infiltrated Syrian territory in several hot-pursuit operations and shelled Syrian positions allegedly serving as hideouts or bases for PKK-operations. In addition, Turkey held extensive naval and ground maneuvers and signed the MTCA with Israel in February.⁹⁶

Syrian officials harshly criticized the agreement. In June 1997, for instance, Vice President Khaddam labeled it “the greatest threat to the Arabs since 1948.”⁹⁷ Shortly after, Turkish Foreign Minister Mesut Yılmaz openly warned that Turkey would resort to a military strike if Syria would not cease assistance for PKK.⁹⁸ In response, Syrian officials denounced a joint naval maneuver by the U.S., Jordan, Turkey, and Israel as “provocative and dangerous”⁹⁹ and the latter’s alliance as “unacceptable.”¹⁰⁰ Throughout October 1998, high-ranking Turkish officials openly announced to have lost their patience with Syria and called bilateral relations an “undeclared war,” while both countries massed troops along the border, where Syria additionally installed one quarter of its 120 Scud-C missiles.¹⁰¹ Although, it was Syria making a bold move towards de-escalation by expelling Öcalan and signing the Adana agreement on October 20, Turkey quickly sent conciliatory signals by postponing further naval exercises with Israel, re-opening the mutual border, and calling for the enhancement of bilateral trade.¹⁰²

⁹¹ ———, *Why Syria goes to war*: 131.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 132.

⁹³ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 93.

⁹⁴ Olson, “Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War,” 177f; Zisser, “Appearance and Reality: Syria's Decisionmaking Structure”. 657.

⁹⁵ Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 64.

⁹⁶ According to the agreement, the Israeli Aircraft Industries modernized 54 Turkish Phantom F-4E aircraft and Israel in turn granted Turkey massive credits. Turkey also upgraded its weapons technology by purchasing further equipment from Israel and both parties agreed on investing \$150 million in the production of missiles and engaging in joint training exercises. These exercises did not only include trainings on electronic warfare for Turkish F-16 pilots but also long-range flying practice for Israeli pilots in Anatolia. Zisser, “Appearance and Reality: Syria's Decisionmaking Structure”. 657; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 125; Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy*: 144f; Volker Perthes, *Vom Krieg zur Konkurrenz: regionale Politik und die Suche nach einer neuen arabisch-nahöstlichen Ordnung* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000). 158f.

⁹⁷ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 94.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy*: 145.

¹⁰⁰ Ofra Bengio and Gencer Özcan, “Changing Relations: Turkish-Israeli-Arab Triangle,” *Perceptions* 5, no. 1 (2000): 137-9.

¹⁰¹ Damla Aras, “Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill,” *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (2012): 42; Aykan, “The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998,” 177.

¹⁰² Aras, “Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill,” 42; Aykan, “The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998,” 178; Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 304-307; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 112-115.

Summing up, one can maintain a mixed pattern of conflict intensity and its subsequent effect on Syria's sponsorship security dilemma. Despite ideological and revisionist rivalry, interstate conflict became manifest only in 1987, aggravating the incentive for a policy of resolve set by the imbalance of power. Incentives for abandonment avoiding were also present between 1989 and 1992, as threats and military maneuvers increased the risk of interstate conflict escalation. After gradually declining due to conciliatory measures and common interest in containing the Kurdish momentum in Iraq, conflict intensity increased again in 1995, pointing towards a policy of resolve until 1998.

6.1.4 Availability of allies

As outlined above, abandonment fears and incentives for a policy of resolve decline if other allies are available. Therefore, the following section turns to Syria's ability to form alternative interstate alliances against Turkey.

Given the *de facto* insignificance of the Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation Treaty since the 1967 War (c.f. 5.1.4), COW's Alliance data set (v. 4.1) lists only Syria's Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the Soviet Union between October 1980 and 1991.¹⁰³ Since 1979, the USSR increased the amount of military aid and weaponry to Syria substantially and assistance experienced a boost after 1982, including SAM-5 and SS-21 missiles.¹⁰⁴ However, USSR's growing unwillingness to support Syria in its goal to reach strategic parity with Israel and economic difficulties after 1985 reflected in a sharp decline of arm shipments from some \$2.4 billion in the first half of the 1980s to \$1.3 billion in the second, as well as in a partial withdrawal of military advisors.¹⁰⁵ Shifting its aid focus from parity to reasonable defensive sufficiency, Moscow refused to provide Syria with modern SS-23 missiles in 1989/90 and other arms deliveries subsequently fell down by 94 percent compared to the 1986-89 period. After 1993, however, relations substantially improved, reflected in military agreements and the Syrian acquisition of MiG 29, T-72 tanks, some 1,000 anti-tank rockets, and 300 Scud missiles.¹⁰⁶

The historical legacy of Ottoman rule and Turkey's good relations with Israel limited Ankara's regional power position.¹⁰⁷ To what extent was Syria able to exploit Arab suspicion vis-à-vis Turkey and form corresponding alignments?

¹⁰³ Gibler, *International military alliances, 1648-2008*; Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 92.

¹⁰⁴ ———, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 75,151,171,185f; Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 224f.

¹⁰⁵ Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 1; Michael Sharnoff, "The Syria-Soviet Alliance," *inFocus Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (2009); Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 263-267; Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 400; Ephraim Karsh, *The Soviet Union and Syria: The Asad Years* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1988): 89f.

¹⁰⁶ Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 403-406.

¹⁰⁷ The importance of these conflict lines became quite visible in the context of the Cyprus Crisis in 1974. Erhan, Interview by author, May 18, 2012; Hasan Köni, Interview by author, Istanbul Culture University, Department of International Law, May 30, 2012. On Arab-Turkish relations, see also Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy*: 49f; Kemal H. Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 524; Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 170,182.

Although the dispute over the distribution of the Euphrates' waters in the early 1980s also soured Turkey's relations with Bagdad and brought Iraq closer to Syria, an ensuing alignment fell out quickly due to intra-Ba'th rivalry. In addition, Ankara's neutral position in the Iran-Iraq War curtailed joint military cooperation against Turkey.¹⁰⁸ After a period of estrangement due to Syria's siding with Iran and its ongoing conflict with the PLO in Lebanon, Syria revitalized its relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the context of the 1991 Gulf War and re-entered the Cairo-Damascus-Riyadh axis.¹⁰⁹ Although this process did not entail a broad anti-Turkish alliance in the Arab World, Damascus successfully lobbied Egypt and the GCC States to openly support Syria in its protest against the construction of new GAP dam and water pollution in late 1995, and further complicate the finalization of credit agreements for Turkey.¹¹⁰ Yet, the Arab States revealed little interest in conflict escalation, given the potential dilemma of an Arab Fellow fighting against a U.S. ally.¹¹¹

Finally, Syria's alliance with Iran, initially formed against Israel and Iraq, became a main factor in Damascus' regional policy after 1979. Against Turkey, however, evidence presents a less clear picture of alignment cooperation.¹¹² Turkish-Iranian relations soured after the Islamic Revolution as well as in the context of repeated Turkish military incursions into northern Iraq since 1986.¹¹³ Economic interests and Turkey's neutral position in the Iran-Iraq War, in turn, limited hostility throughout the 1980s.¹¹⁴ Although relations worsened in the early 1990s over a more assertive Turkish policy towards ethnic Turks in the region (including Iran's Azeri minority) and the looming alliance with Israel, on the one hand, and Iran's alleged efforts to export the revolution and

¹⁰⁸ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also ———, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 172f; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 11; Ilter Turan, "The Water Dimension in Turkish Foreign Policy," in *Turkey's Water Policy: National Frameworks and International Cooperation*, ed. Ayşegül Kibaroglu, et al. (Heidelberg: Springer, 2011), 187. On Syrian-Arab relations at that time, see also Uri Bar-Joseph, "The Paradox of Israeli Power," *Survival* 46, no. 4 (2004-05); Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land. A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press 2006); Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry*: 301; Kenneth M. Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). 523-549; Seale, *Abu Nidal*: 126-28; ———, *Asad of Syria*: 346f; Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 325.

¹⁰⁹ See also Hinnebusch, "The foreign policy of Syria," 155-157; Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 209.

¹¹⁰ Turan, "The Water Dimension in Turkish Foreign Policy," 186; Oktav, "Water Dispute," 105; Damascus Declaration States. "Damascus Declaration states issue communiqué." December 29, (1995). <http://bit.ly/LDZXqX>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹¹¹ Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 305.

¹¹² Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 207f.

¹¹³ Eyal Zisser, "Syria," in *Middle East Contemporary Survey*, ed. Bruce Maddy-Weitzman (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), 656; Elekdag, "2 1/2 War strategy," 7; Çelik, *Contemporary Turkish foreign policy*: 134; Özcan and Özdamar, "Uneasy Neighbors," 108-112; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 65; Oezden Oktav, "Changing Security Perceptions in Turkish-Iranian Relations," *Perceptions* 9, no. 2 (2004): 106.

¹¹⁴ Turkey's neutral position undermined not only the international trade embargo in the context of the hostage crisis but also foreclosed U.S. air attacks on Iran from Turkey. In the first half of the 1980s, Turkey became one of the most important trading partners for Iran. Sinkaya, Interview by the Author, July 9, 2012. Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also Menashri, *Iran*: 367; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 13; Unal Gundogan, "Islamist Iran and Turkey, 1979-1989: State Pragmatism and Ideological Influences," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7, no. 1 (2003).

support to the PKK, on the other, Tehran showed no interest in forming an explicit anti-Turkish alignment with Syria.¹¹⁵

Although Syria was able to lobby Arab political support via the historical narrative of anti-Turkish Arabism and received arms and economic assistance from Russia and Iran, none of its statist allies openly committed to Damascus against Turkey throughout the entire observation period. Hence, this lack of reliable interstate allies expectedly nurtured existing abandonment fears in Syria's alignment with the PKK, particularly when Iranian-Syrian relations worsened in the second half of the 1980s over conflicting interests in Lebanon, and Soviet military assistance declined. Under these conditions, the neorealist hypothesis N₂ expects a policy of *standing firm*. Prospects of interstate alignment as an adequate balancing strategy against Turkey reoccurred only in the mid-1990s, when Turkey's military agreement with Israel brought Syria and the Arab States, as well as Iran closer to each other.

6.1.5 Strategic interest in upholding the alignment

The assumption that abandonment fears increase if the sponsor has a strategic interest in upholding the alignments points to benefits exceeding counterbalancing a common adversary (c.f. section 2.4.2). Hence, the following section turns to international and domestic power resources Syria aimed at gaining exclusively from supporting the PKK, against external and internal rivals.

In contrast to the Palestinian issue, Kurdish demands for a homeland did not coincide with Syrian territorial revisionism, as the 1920 Treaty of Sevres incorporated several areas into French Syria, which were previously claimed by the Kurds as parts of their autonomous region.¹¹⁶ At the height of Pan-Arabism in the mid-1950s, Damascus even demanded the return of Kurdish populated areas in southern Turkey while simultaneously taking measures of excluding Kurds from the political and cultural landscape of Syria.¹¹⁷ Understanding Kurdish nationalism as a significant threat to Syria's territorial integrity and contradiction to Arab nationalism, the government repressed any potential vehicle for secession, such as the teaching of the Kurdish language and

¹¹⁵ Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 14; Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy 1774-2000*: 305. On Iranian support for PKK, see also Bölükbaşı, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 35f; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 130; Kirisci, "The Kurdish Question and Turkish Foreign Policy," 286; Gunter, *The Kurds and the future of Turkey*; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 56.

¹¹⁶ Kurds, mainly residing in the northeastern Jazira province bordering Turkey and Iraq as well as the northwestern border area of Kurd Dagh, account for some ten percent of Syria's population and form the largest non-Arab community. Although Damascus had been a center of Kurdish nationalism in the late 1920s, suspicion among Syrian elites stemmed from their opposition towards the Arab Revolt and Pan-Arabism as well as their cooperation with the Ottoman Empire, France, and allegedly Israel. On the Kurds in Syria's domestic politics, see McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 136,467f.; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 100; Feili, "The Status of the Kurds in Syria," 63; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 61.

¹¹⁷ In 1962, authorities revoked the citizenship of some 120,000 Kurds. As of 2004, over 235,000 Kurds felt the repercussions of this policy, deprived of key citizen rights—with compulsory military service being the only exemption Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 97f; Gambill, "The Kurdish Reawakening in Syria," 2; McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 474; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 91; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 160.

press, and restricted political activity. Besides military purges, authorities subsequently denied access to police and military academies to Kurdish applicants.¹¹⁸

Given the dominance of Arabism as a source of regime legitimacy, supporting Kurdish nationalism was likely to backfire domestically as undermining Syria's Arab identity.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, supporting demands for autonomy in Turkey and Iraq shielded Syria to a certain extent from its neighbors playing the Kurdish card against Damascus and increased its own influence in northern Iraq. In this regard, the alignment gained strategic importance especially when Turkey made progress in appeasing its own Kurdish population or aligning with the Kurdish parties in Iraq. In contrast, Ankara's support for Bagdad against the local Kurds and military incursions into northern Iraq facilitated the Syrian-brokered KDP/PKK cooperation and the steady mobilization of Kurdish nationalism against Syria's statist rivals.¹²⁰ After the Gulf War, Turkey's rapprochement with the Iraqi Kurds increased PKK's strategic importance as a tool of containing Turkish influence in northern Iraq.¹²¹ Given constantly high levels of violence in Turkey's and Iraq's conflicts with the Kurdish groups, PKK's role as a spoiler for a Turkey/Iraqi-Kurdish realignment was of minor necessity. However, the PKK's importance for Syria in order to maintain influence over northern Iraq increased during the presidency of Turgut Özal (1989-93) and in mid-1995, when the Drogheda Peace Talks almost led to a military agreement between Turkey and KDP/PUK.¹²²

Inside Syria, violent Kurdish anti-government protests erupted almost on a regular basis in Damascus, Qamishli, and Afrin after the government had impeded the public celebration of the Kurdish Newroz Festival in 1986 and after Öcalan's arrest in early 1999.¹²³ To what extent has the alignment contributed to contain the domestic threat of Syrian Kurdish nationalism?

Throughout the 1970s, President Asad broadened his power base *inter alia* by coopting the Kurds. Besides including the predominantly Kurdish Syrian Communist Party (SCP) into the NPF and announcing the end of resettling Arabs in Kurdish areas, he reintegrated Kurds in the minor ranks of the security apparatus. They gained particular importance in elite divisions, such as the Special Units and the Defense Companies, which were repeatedly employed to quell Sunni anti-

¹¹⁸ In 1963, Damascus sent 6,000 troops up north to assist Bagdad in fighting the Barzani revolt. In this context, a Syrian official called the Kurdish question "a malignant tumor [...] in a part of the body of the Arab nation" and suggested an "anti-Kurdish propaganda campaign." McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 475. See also Gambill, "The Kurdish Reawakening in Syria," 2; van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 47f; Quinlivan, "Coups-Proofing," 140.

¹¹⁹ Hence, and despite the fact that Syria's first three military leaders between 1949 and 1954, Husni al-Zaim, Sami al-Hinnawi, and Adib al-Shishakli had a Kurdish background, there has been little if at all evidence for a publicly displayed pro-Kurdish sentiment among foreign policy makers Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 78; van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 41.

¹²⁰ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 422.

¹²¹ Muhittin Ataman, "Özal Leadership and Restructuring of Turkish Ethnic Policy in the 1980s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 4 (2002): 127-130.

¹²² Gunter, "Kurdish Infighting," 56f.

¹²³ Gambill, "The Kurdish Reawakening in Syria," 3.

regime protests in the urban centers.¹²⁴ In addition, authorities employed a three-fold strategy to contain Kurdish ethno-nationalism: First, the government refused to lift restrictions on the teaching of the Kurdish language, Kurdish publications, the use of Kurdish in the work place and—since 1992—registering children with Kurdish names. Second, previous Arabization policies between 1973 and '76 had disrupted trans-border Kurdish ties.¹²⁵ Third, the government openly supported the Kurds of Iraq, even by demanding autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan in the early 1970s.¹²⁶ Thus, bolstering the PKK's position in northern Syria, especially after the regime's fall-out with the SCP in the early 1980s, fragmented the Syrian Kurds and created a balance of *proxy* power, preventing a monopolistic position of any Kurdish faction inside Syria.¹²⁷

Finally, the alignment served as a powerful tool of diverting Kurdish nationalism in Syria towards the struggle for a "true Kurdistan" in Iraq and Turkey.¹²⁸ Remarkably, the PKK explicitly assisted Damascus in this strategic aim in its 1978 party program, emphasizing the liberation of 'Turkish Kurdistan' and explicitly postponing the expansion of its struggle to other areas.¹²⁹ In 1995, the PKK even denied the existence of what Syrian Kurdish nationalists termed 'Syrian Kurdistan,' portraying it as "a small part in the west of southern Kurdistan [northern Iraq; MK]" and an "extension of the borders of northwestern Kurdistan [Turkey; MK]."¹³⁰ The following year, Öcalan stated in an interview that the Kurds living in present-day Turkey, Iraq, and Iran will be living together in freedom one day, again ignoring Syrian Kurdish demands for self-determination in any entity less than a *Greater Kurdistan*. Hence, he adopted the government line that "Syria had no Kurds of its own and that those living there were refugees from Turkey."¹³¹

Concluding, the domestic and regional strategic interests of Syria's alignment with the PKK provide a significantly less clear pattern than in the case of Fatah. While it became an important tool for containing Kurdish nationalism *inside* Syria, supporting it *outside* Syria threatened to hurt the regime's Arab nationalist credentials and economic interests. In addition, no international out-bidding war emerged among the group's statist backers, limiting Syria's ability to exploit the alignment in order to attain external power resources.¹³² In contrast, the alliance threatened to

¹²⁴ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 61f.67; Feili, "The Status of the Kurds in Syria," 64; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 118.

¹²⁵ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 61-64.

¹²⁶ In a substantial deviation from previous policies, the Ba'th party issued resolutions in 1971 and 72, suggesting autonomy for the Kurds in Iraq. *Ibid.*, 72f.

¹²⁷ According to Tejel, this was also accompanied by PKK's de facto take over of parts of Syria's northwestern Kurd Dagh province, even replacing portraits of Asad with those of Öcalan and Barzani. *Ibid.*, 77f.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 73; David McDowall, *The Kurds of Syria* (London: KHRP, 1998). 69f.

¹²⁹ Bölükbaşı, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 17; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 100-109.; 255.

¹³⁰ Kurdistan Workers' Party. See also Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 95.

¹³¹ Hans Leyendecker and Volkhard Windfuhr. "Ich bin die erste aller Tauben. PKK-Chef Abdullah Öcalan über das Kurdenproblem und die Deutschen." *Der Spiegel* no. 48 (1996). Published electronically 25 November. <http://bit.ly/1bhKq68>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 78.

¹³² Suggested by analysts, the only exception was Russia, pressuring Syria in the mid-1990s to maintain support for PKK. Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012.

damage Syria's nationalist credentials in times when it was anyway accused of betraying its Arab brethren by siding with Iran and later the U.S. against Iraq.

Domestically, assistance did not serve as a tool of generating outright regime support but rather as an instrument of appeasing particularly Kurdish parts of society. As such, its importance increased especially in late 1982, when Jalal Talabani, who had previously tried to establish himself as the leader of the Syrian Kurds, negotiated a cease-fire with Saddam Hussein and when the united Kurdish front eroded in the second half of the 1980s. In contrast, the PKK gained additional importance for Damascus when PUK/KDP achieved autonomy in northern Iraq and the uprising of the Turkish Kurds threatened to spill over into Syria in 1991/92.¹³³ With regard to the SSD, evidence in the context of strategic interests suggests a moderate tendency for abandonment avoiding, given the domestic and regional limitations for a public alignment with the Iraqi and Turkish Kurds as well as the perceived threat of Kurdish nationalism inside Syria.

6.1.6 Conclusion

In order to capture incentives for Syria's specific sponsorship policies, the SSD indicators examined in 6.1.1 - 6.1.5, this conclusive section highlights tendencies towards alliance formation and alliance management as well as potential trend reversals between 1979 and 1998.

First, the clear imbalance of power in favor of Turkey set a strong incentive for a Syrian adjustment policy throughout the entire observation period, which considerably increased in the second half of the 1980s and after 1994. By the mid-1980s, the issues "*Water*" and "*Kurds*" had become increasingly conflictual, reflected in mutual military threats. Subsequently, the generally non-violent conflict escalated sporadically in hot-pursuit operations and cross border shelling after 1994. Eventually, military cooperation between Israel and Turkey as well as increased saber rattling in the mid-1990s further increased incentives for *balancing* (N₁).

Considering the choice of balancing policies, Syria's remarkable efforts of internal military build up throughout the 1980s and early 1990s correspond to a large extent to the policy of strategic parity with Israel, which engrossed the overwhelming share of the defense budget. The rapid and nearly incessant decline of military expenditure after 1988, amid increasing Turkish capabilities and interstate conflict, indicates a bias towards *external balancing* (NC₁). However, before the formation of specific *interstate* counter alignments against Israeli-Turkish alliance formation in the mid-1990s, allowing Damascus to divert resources extracted from anti-Israel alignments, Syria largely failed to mobilize external statist support against Turkey.

Hence, Syria's incentives for initiating a campaign of proxy warfare (NC₂) against Turkey were, despite material inferiority and a lack of reliable allies, significantly less strong than in the case of Israel because of a less severe interstate conflict. Only by the end of the 1980s, increased interstate

¹³³ McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 348-350; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*.

hostility and material inferiority amid improved Turkish-Arab relations set a clear incentive for aligning with the PKK.

Apart from a general anti-Turkish sentiment among Syrian elites and Damascus' inability to pressure Ankara into a favorable water agreement in 1980 by conventional means, this time lag makes it difficult to identify a clear pattern triggering the initiation of the alignment after Öcalan's arrival in Syria in 1979. Nevertheless, it fits in nicely with two observations made by most analysts: First, that the PKK's initial settlement in areas under Syrian control has been rather the result of passive Syrian support to Marxist and Leftist groups in general, especially as the group did not launch its anti-Turkish campaign prior to 1984. Second, that Syria's relations with the PKK emerged in the context of Damascus' anti-Iraq alignment with Iraqi Kurdish groups.¹³⁴

Regarding specific alliance policies, the neorealist hypotheses maintain that the nature of the SSD comes along with a specific form of alliance management, ranging between a policy of *standing firm* (N₂) and *restraining the ally* (N₃).

Table 13: Nature of the sponsorship dilemma II: Syria-PKK

Indicator	Observation	Induces a general fear of
IMBALANCE OF POWER	High in favor of Turkey <i>Peaking in 1985-88 and after 1993</i>	Abandonment
CAPACITY OF THE ALLY	Insufficient <i>Increased capacity in 1988-1993</i>	Entrapment
SEVERITY OF CONFLICT	Moderate <i>Intensified after the mid-1980s (brief relaxation in 1992-1994)</i>	Entrapment/Abandonment
ALTERNATIVE ALLIES	Not available/ Available	Abandonment/ Entrapment
STRATEGIC INCENTIVES	High <i>After 1982, alliance allows for control over Kurdish constituencies (especially 1989-1993 and since 1995) while avoiding reputational losses from "anti-Arab" behavior, limited domestic power resource</i>	Abandonment

As concluded by **Table 13**, the SSD underwent not only some remarkable changes due to significant variations in Syria's external security environment. While it was possible to carve out some critical junctures, clear-cut tendencies towards either a strategy aiming exclusively at abandonment avoiding, as suggested by the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂, or at entrapment avoiding, as assumed by the *restraining* hypothesis N₃, have not appeared. Hence, Syria's assistance for the PKK is likely to range between the ideal policy types of resolve and restraint.

Given the dominance of Israel in Syria's security outlook, low levels of interstate conflict, the PKK's initial weakness both vis-à-vis Turkey and as a force in the Kurdish political arena, a rela-

¹³⁴ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012.

tively clear incentive of entrapment avoiding in the early 1980s can be maintained. This changed, to a certain extent, amid the increased importance of northern Iraq in the context of the Iran-Iraq War in 1982 and the PKK's ability to both monopolize Turkish Kurdish politics and form a pan-Kurdish alignment.

From the mid-1980s onwards and particularly between 1989 and 1993/94, fears of entrapment based on the PKK's weak capacity were somewhat alleviated by its rapid growth in operational and organizational strength as well as local support infrastructure, rear fronts, and safe havens. As the PKK was still no match for the Turkish army in conventional battle, entrapment risks remained present and constrained Syria's policy of support. However, mounting interstate conflict, the lack of statist allies against an increasingly powerful Turkey, and Damascus' concerns both of spillover effects of rising Kurdish nationalism into Syria and an alignment between Turkey and the Iraqi Kurds, increased incentives for Damascus to adhere to alignment. From 1995 until 1998, general incentives for *standing firm* policies resulted from a renewed deterioration of interstate relations and a clear imbalance of power in favor of Turkey. Kurdish infighting and Ankara's political and strategic shift in 1992/93 threatened, on the one hand, to marginalize the PKK as a military force and increased, on the other, internal friction and heavily affected both local support infrastructures as well as external assistance. Subsequently, the PKK's demonstrated inferiority after 1993 sent clear and strong incentives for a policy of *restraint*, which was reinforced by the newly established statist Arab/Iranian counter-alignment against Israel and Turkey.¹³⁵

The neoclassical realist model outlined above assumes that unit-level factors in general and regime vulnerability/autonomy in particular filter the SSD's incentives. In order to examine whether this antecedent condition has affected Syrian support for the PKK, the following section turns to domestic politics.

6.2 Domestic politics: Power consolidation and a looming succession crisis

The Waltzian assumption that states choose balancing strategies based on availability indicates that a lack of reliable allies increases the tendency towards internal balancing. By contrast, the neoclassical realist *alliance-seeking* (NC₁) and *sponsorship* (NC₂) hypotheses suggest that the lack of regime autonomy entails a bias of vulnerable states in favor of external balancing.

Hence, pressures for armament stemming from a lack of anti-Turkish alliance choices were considerably higher during the Iran-Iraq War—and particular the second half of the 1980s—and significantly lower after the 1991 Kuwait crisis. At least partially, COW data supports this assumption, indicating a steep rise in Syria's overall military expenditure, nearly quadrupling between 1978

¹³⁵ Indeed, Syria was given a clear *taste* of entrapment as Ankara used its battle with PKK as a pretext for a mass deployment of troops in its immediate vicinity, the acquisition of offensive weapons, cross-border operations, and a military agreement with Israel.

(\$1.165 billion) and 1987 (\$3.95 billion).¹³⁶ The following three years, however, military expenditure literally crashed to an average \$1.58 billion (1988-91). Despite a sharp increase in 1991 and 1993 as well as a brief period of stagnation in 1995/96, a general downside trend in Syria's expenditure throughout the 1990s amid Turkey's massive military build up supports the assumption of a decreasing pressure for internal balancing as a result of external alignments. Both trends reflected in increasing and declining numbers of military personnel (see **Figure 29/**Figure 30).¹³⁷

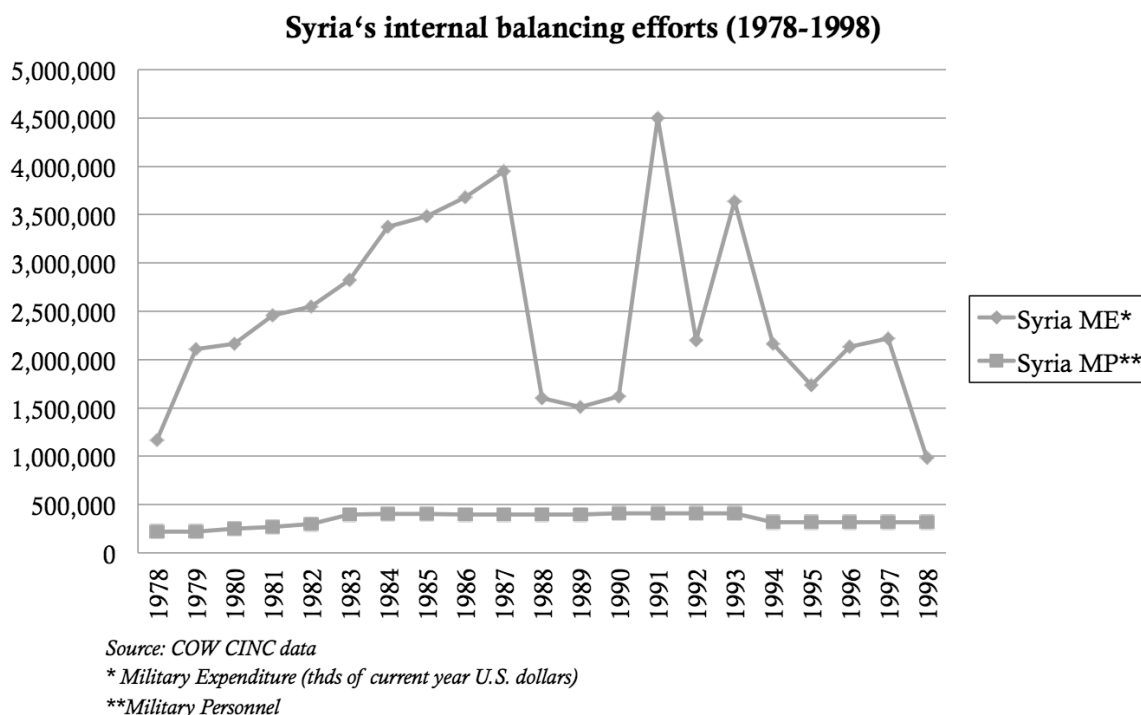


Figure 29: Internal balancing efforts by Syria (1978-1998)

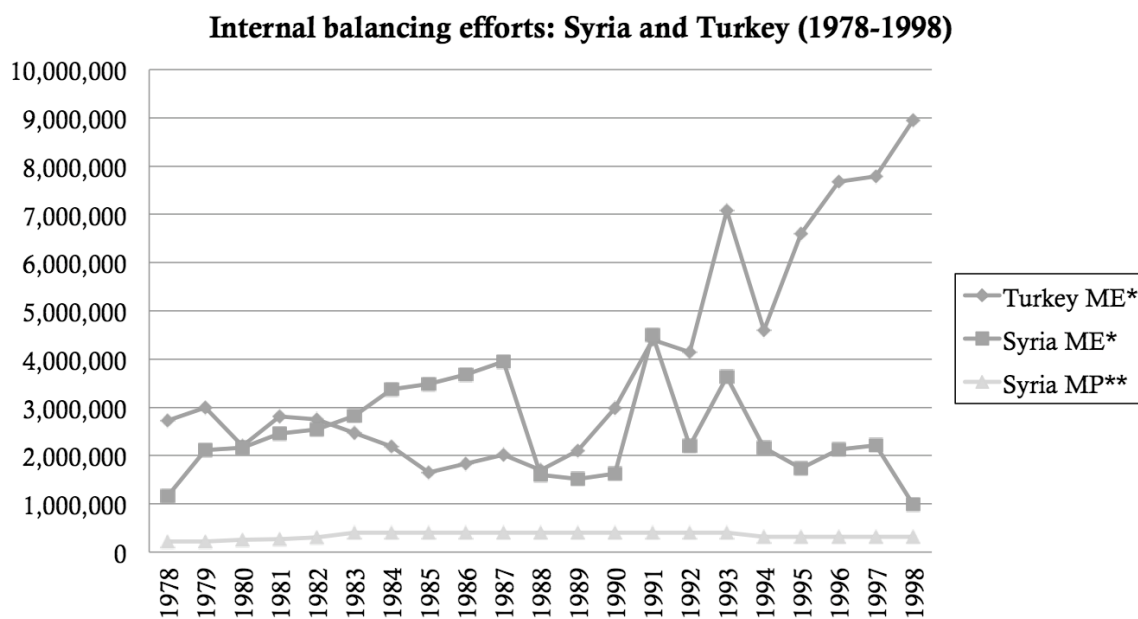
It is an important caveat of this study that aggregate data is only available for overall military expenditure, making the actual direction of armament difficult to access. This is especially vital as, for instance, the geographical deployment of troops suggest that Israel was a much bigger factor in Syrian security considerations than Turkey (see also 6.1.1). Especially in the 1980s, the dynamics of the steep rise in Syria's internal balancing efforts seems somewhat decoupled from Turkey given the fact that its underlying resources resulted from Syria's anti-Israel alignments (see 6.1.4).

As suggested by balance-of-threat theory, the low adjustment pressure throughout the first half of the 1980s given the clear priority of the Israeli threat reflected in the fact that Syria revealed little interest to divert resources extracted from anti-Israel alliances against Turkey. Throughout the

¹³⁶ Singer et al., "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War," Version 4.0.

¹³⁷ Throughout the decade, however, the imbalance of power between Israel and Syria and Asad's explicitly formulated aim of strategic parity seem to be the dominant factor in Syrian armament policy. See Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 122.

1990s, the *alliance-seeking* hypothesis NC₁ suggests that lacking foreign policy autonomy influenced Syria's decision to not adjust to an increased Turkish threat by internal balancing, yet opt for external balancing. Regarding the *sponsorship* hypothesis NC₂, Syria's presumed domestically generated inability to either balance Turkey internally or form statist anti-Turkish alliances in the mid-1990s is seen as decisive for continued PKK support, thereby also pointing towards a potential explanation for Syria's decision to abandon the group in 1998.



Source: COW CINC data

* Military Expenditure (thds. of current year U.S. dollars)

** Military Personnel

Figure 30: Internal balancing efforts of Syria and Turkey (1978-1998)

6.2.1 To Hama and back again (1976-1985)

Despite its successful consolidation of power (see also section 5.2.2), efforts to expand the popular acceptance of the Ba'th regime remained ineffective for several reasons. While measures of political liberalization, such as local and parliamentary elections as well as party pluralism were not associated with actual power sharing, state repression increased after 1970.¹³⁸ In addition, the Ba'th party's transformation into a corrupt and undisciplined network of patronage rapidly reduced its ability to mobilize societal support outside of the coalition's constituencies.¹³⁹ Finally, Syria's intervention in Lebanon in June 1976 severely undermined the regime's domestic position, allowing its rivals to denounce Asad's rule as anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and sectarian.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Center for Systemic Peace.

¹³⁹ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 299.

¹⁴⁰ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 71-73.

The Islamist uprising

Against this background, the regime came under massive pressure by a popular Islamist uprising, which started in 1976 as a campaign of terrorist attacks and evolved into urban warfare in the following years. By 1980, the insurgency had reportedly killed some 300 Ba'thist officials and Alawis in assassinations and bombings.¹⁴¹

The revolt gained momentum, as the Muslim Brotherhood remained the only credible alternative to the Ba'th party, whose economic reforms had hit the urban Sunni middle class of the northern centers, particularly Hama and Aleppo, and the agrarian bourgeoisie. Decrying the army's incapability to recover the Golan due to the regime's subordination to both U.S. and Soviet interests, the 'Islamic Front in Syria,' formed in 1980, also aimed at reaching out to nationalists. Additionally, the Front gained external societal and at times even state support.¹⁴² The group's manifesto united all these sources of support: It called for a "true Islamic state" with remarkably strong elements of liberal democracy, and suggested a restructuring of the army, foreign policy realignment, liberating Palestine by *jihad*, and economic liberalization.¹⁴³

Until mid-1980, the regime ascribed the insurgency to the interference of "al-Sadat and Zionism."¹⁴⁴ In addition, it tried to bolster its power position against the uprising by increasing salaries of bureaucrats and military personnel and announcing economic measures, political liberalization in the NPF as well as a fight against corruption.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, Asad publicly stressed the Muslim nature of his regime and mobilized the workers' militias as well as and thousands of its members against "reactionary violence."¹⁴⁶

These measures failed to have an appeasing effect, especially as the anti-corruption campaign excluded the inner core of the regime, formally coopted segments of the secular opposition started to position themselves as potential alternatives to the regime, and conciliatory moves evolved simultaneously with harsh repression.

In 1980/81, security forces killed over 2,000 insurgents in strikebreaking operations and arrest raids, conducted by tens of thousands of troops led by the Defense Companies (DC).¹⁴⁷ After several major attacks in Damascus in the second half of 1981, the Islamic Front eventually seized the

¹⁴¹ According to Hinnebusch, the Islamic Front even managed to gain control over whole quarters of its Aleppo stronghold in March 1980 and unrest spread to Hama, Homs, Idlib, Latakia, Deir ez-Zor, Ma'arrat-an-Nu'man, and Jisr esh-Shughur. *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 294. See also Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 324-326; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 182.

¹⁴² From Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 282-290.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 282-285.

¹⁴⁴ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 90-97.

¹⁴⁵ See also Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 294; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 325f.

¹⁴⁶ ———, *Asad of Syria*: 328.

¹⁴⁷ Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 294; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 325-328.

city of Hama on February 2, 1982, triggering the decisive battle of the conflict.¹⁴⁸ The government laid siege on the town with some 12,000 soldiers, attacked its quarters with artillery bombardment and helicopter gunships, regained full control over the city after three weeks, and eliminated the Islamic Front as a political force in Syria.¹⁴⁹

After the crisis, Asad attempted to reestablish himself as a national and regional leader. On the one hand, the Ba'th party gained increased importance as an instrument of rallying mass appeal in the context of economic crisis, domestic violence, Syria's regional isolation and military inferiority to Israel.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, the regime employed some 12,000 members as the president's personal bodyguard.¹⁵¹

Demonstrations, strikes, and even violent anti-regime protest indicate low levels of regime legitimacy after 1976, impeding efforts to mobilize foreign policy resources especially from Arab nationalist and Sunni Muslim parts of society. However, sufficient levels of coercive power limited the threat of regime overthrow. First, the centralization of political power since 1970 prevented the emergence of a rival domestic power center. Second, dissident forces failed to form a broad anti-regime alignment, eventually rivaling the state's power position.¹⁵² Third, USSR and Iranian fears of Syria's possible international realignment after regime change boosted external support for the pressured regime in Damascus.

Nevertheless, the repercussions of the Islamist uprising were also felt in the regime's inner core:

Singling out particularly Alawi targets, the insurgency exacerbated sectarian conflict and contributed to a rift in the ruling circles between those opting for reform and conciliation, such as the Sunni prime minister Abd al-Ra'uf al-Kasm on the one side, and hardliners on the other, most prominently among them the president's brother Rif'at al-Asad.¹⁵³ The debate eventually tipped in favor of the latter group for two reasons. First, the massacre of dozens of Alawi military cadets by a Sunni Ba'thist officer in Aleppo on June 19, 1979, and an assassination attempt on Asad by

¹⁴⁸ ———, *Asad of Syria*: 331f.

¹⁴⁹ Fighting reportedly destroyed about a third of Hama's historical old city and claimed the lives of some 1,000 troops and at least 5,000 insurgents and civilians *ibid.*, 333f; van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 111; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 296f; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 244.

¹⁵⁰ Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination. Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). 33.

¹⁵¹ Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 183.

¹⁵² Although there is no account of their number and actual impact, Kurds were present to a significant extent among those Special Forces repressing the Islamist uprising in the north. While this increased prevalent suspicion and resentment vis-à-vis the Kurds among the predominantly Arab opposition despite their shared sectarian identity, it substantially limited the options of a broad Sunni alignment against the regime. This rift between its potential opponents originated in the regime's toleration of a process of Kurdish re-ethnicization in the context of its alliance with the PKK and the Iraqi Kurds. Hence, PKK's regime-sponsored mobilization of a reinvented Kurdish nationalism, for example by organizing previously banned Newroz festivities in Kurdish areas, contributed to a disengagement of the Kurds from the main political arena. Nevertheless, Kurdish anti-government protests were repeatedly repressed and the use of Kurdish in peoples' workplace banned in 1986. McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 477; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 98-106.

¹⁵³ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 90; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 294f; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 326f.

a member of his own presidential guard, increased the perception of their adversaries' intransigence among particularly Alawi members of the ruling elite. Second, the positioning of exiled Ba'th founding figure Salah al-Bitar as a potential alternative and an abortive coup in January 1982, led by Sunni Ba'thist officers, boosted additional fears of a breakaway of the regime's Sunni power base in the party and the armed forces.¹⁵⁴

Hence, whereas the crushing of the Islamist revolt contributed to the regime's external consolidation, it substantially affected the internal balance of power. Amid mass defections of Sunni troops during the Hama campaign, paramilitary (predominantly Alawi) units, particularly DC, commanded by Rif'at al-Asad and the Special Forces (SF), led by Ali Haydar, evolved into key pillars of regime stability and their commanders to self-proclaimed shields of state survival.¹⁵⁵ Especially the DC, a four brigade strong elite force deployed just outside Damascus, whose 55,000 members enjoyed an exceptional position in the army in terms of training, endowment, and equipment, were a decisive force in the conflict.¹⁵⁶ Subsequently, their command gave Rif'at a powerful position in the security apparatus; according to Patrick Seale, one "second only to Asad's in the state."¹⁵⁷

The DC's *de facto* independence of both the ministry of defense and the regular army as well as Rif'at's establishment of a substantial power base among pro-Western (and anti-Communist) forces and the Damascene merchants increased his personal autonomy as a domestic power broker.¹⁵⁸ His increased power capacity reflected in several areas of contention regarding foreign policy. First, opposing the alliance with Moscow, he criticized the strategy of military parity with Israel as harmful to Syria's autonomy. Second, he was highly critical of the president's feud with Fatah and of Damascus' alliance with Tehran, a contradiction to the raging battle against political Islam inside Syria. His close relations to the political leadership of Saudi Arabia and Morocco added to a situation where his policy preferences were highly incompatible with the president's strategies.¹⁵⁹ Hence, by the time the regime had worn down the revolt, a duality of power and renewed praetorianism had emerged—this time at the regime's core.

¹⁵⁴ The coup was evidently planned by followers of Major-General Naji Jamil, Asad's former right-hand man, deputy minister of defense, and head of the Bureau of State Security, who had been sidelined by Rif'at and replaced by Alawi Major-General Muhammad al-Khuly from Air Force Intelligence in March 1978. ———, *Asad of Syria*: 323f; Moubayed, *Steel and Silk*: 60f; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 297; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 182.

¹⁵⁵ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 112f; Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 82; ———, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 297.

¹⁵⁶ David W. Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus. Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005). 49; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 319.

¹⁵⁷ According to Seale, they accounted for one third of Syria's land forces. ———, *Asad of Syria*: 327,434.

¹⁵⁸ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 70,119; Drysdale, "The Succession Question in Syria," 255f; Hinnebusch, *Authoritarian Power and State Formation*: 161.

¹⁵⁹ Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 424f.

The succession crisis 1983/84

“You want to overthrow the regime? [...] Here I am. I am the regime.”¹⁶⁰

Hafiz al-Asad, April 1984

Rif'at's extraordinary power position in particular and the general dominance of the Alawi 'barons' in the security sector became a question of regime security when the president fell seriously ill in November 1983.¹⁶¹ Open political mutiny ensued Asad's decision to transfer authority to a formal committee consisting of six senior Sunni government, party, and army officials. Amid fears of potential power loss, the Alawi-dominated Regional Command (RC) of the Ba'th party substituted itself for the committee.¹⁶² Interpreting the RC's revolt as support to his own claims for leadership, Rif'at became more assertive.¹⁶³ Although the president soon recovered, a rift between Rif'at supporters and his opponents, which also feared an external realignment undermining their domestic position, persisted.

In order to constrain his brother's ambitions, Asad relied on military as well as air force intelligence, paramilitary forces such as the Republican Guard (RG), the Struggle Companies, and the SF, as well as the 3rd Armored Division, ordering them to Damascus on February 26, 1984.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, he deprived Rif'at of *de facto* command over the DC and appointed him, in a simultaneous series of transfers and arrests of his supporters, vice president by decree on March 11.¹⁶⁵

Tensions threatened to escalate, when Rif'at subsequently ordered the DC to move into Damascus, thereby confronting the materially weaker SF and the RG. Only after Asad's personal intervention, Rif'at withdrew his forces from the capital. Besides sending his brother off to exile until 1992, the president had his political and military backers purged from their positions, and dismantled a network of civil society organizations, which Rif'at had built up as an alternative power base to the Ba'th party. In addition, Asad reduced the DC in both size and material endowment, partly demobilized, or transferred to the SF and RG. In 1986, the president's oldest son,

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 436.

¹⁶¹ As, for instance, Hinnebusch points out, the 'barons' were Alawi officers, providing a key power base for the president, as they "combined privileged access to him with positions in the party and control of the levers of coercion. They were, therefore, in an unrivalled position to act as political brokers and, especially in times of crisis, were uniquely placed to shape outcomes" Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 65.

¹⁶² The members of the committee were Khaddam, Talas, Shihabi, Kasm, the assistant secretary general (ASG) of the party's National Command, Abdallah al-Ahmar, and Zuhayr Mashariqah, ASG of the RC. See also van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 119f; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 29.

¹⁶³ For instance, posters of him in commanding poses appeared in Damascus in February 1984. See also Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 428; Drysdale, "The Succession Question in Syria."; Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 148.

¹⁶⁴ At that time, military intelligence was headed by General Ali Duba and air force intelligence by General Mohammad al-Khuly. The president's in-laws Adnan and Muhammed Makhluaf commanded the Republican Guards and the Struggle Companies, Ali Haydar the Special Forces and Shafiq Fayyad the third Armored Division. van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 120f; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*; Drysdale, "The Succession Question in Syria."; Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 148.

¹⁶⁵ Yahya Sadowski, "Cadres, Guns and Money. The Eighth Regional Congress of the Syrian Baath," *MERIP Reports* 134(1985).

Basil, took over security at the presidential palace in 1986 and his cousins Haydar, 'Adnan, and Muhammad al-Assad started to command the Special Units controlling the Damascus area.¹⁶⁶ Regarding external alignment preferences, Rif'at's fall from grace strengthened regime constituencies that were doubtful about a domestic rapprochement with the Sunni business elite and a partial realignment with the U.S. in contrast to a firm commitment to the USSR.¹⁶⁷

Although domestic threats stemming from sources outside the ruling circles seemed less acute after 1982, cooptation strategies paralleled repression throughout the decade. In this context, the Ba'th party's role decreased significantly. Especially the overrepresentation of Alawi members led observers to the conclusion that it no longer constituted a domestic force on its own, having turned into a mere reflection of the army's power structure.¹⁶⁸ Asad further marginalized the party's influence especially in foreign and economic policy issues undermined its constitutional supremacy by increasingly resorting to the NPF as a forum for political debates.¹⁶⁹ Rather than relying on the party as a tool of popular mobilization, the presidency itself became a source of legitimacy. Just after Rif'at's attempted coup, Asad's portrayal in the public gained even a 'sacred' character, including references to immortality and, for the first time in 1984, statues.¹⁷⁰

In addition, the party's downgrading entailed the regime's cooptation of the bourgeoisie through both mass state employment and economic liberalization.¹⁷¹ Though limited both in pace and effect, the opening of Syria's economy in the mid-1980s was a key strategy to woo the private sector and attract foreign investment.¹⁷² During the foreign exchange crisis of 1986/87, for instance, the government strongly encouraged exports and expanded the private sector's role.¹⁷³ This policy of liberalization clearly illustrated the regime's growing inability to mobilize those resources necessary for survival. Hence, pressure to cater to the private sector increased especially amid declining revenues from oil production and external assistance. Hence, economic liberalization allowed the regime to generate resources without strengthening potentially rival power centers on the one

¹⁶⁶ van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 121f; Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 148; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 433-435; Drysdale, "The Succession Question in Syria," 247-250.

¹⁶⁷ Ma'oz, *Asad*: 169; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 421-430, 437; Quinlivan, "Coup-Proofing," 148.

¹⁶⁸ Between 1980 and 1984, the leadership dismissed more than 130,000 of its over 537,000 members, which had joined the party previously as 'supporters,' and rigidly limited access to membership privileges in order to reduce 'indiscipline.' See van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria*: 125-128, 129.

¹⁶⁹ For instance, there has not been a Party Congress between 1985 and 2000. Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 74.

¹⁷⁰ In order to symbolize his personal relation to the Syrian people (after the failure of his biological family bonds during the coup), loyalty contracts signed in blood were reintroduced. Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*: 37f.

¹⁷¹ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 80f., 105f.

¹⁷² Nikolaos van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: politics and society under Asad and the Ba'th Party* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996). 71; Volker Perthes, "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. Eberhard Kienle (London: British Academic Press, 1994). In terms of foreign policy, the emerging business elite has a strong interest in improved relations with other and especially Western countries and the state's ongoing efforts to mobilize against external threats contradict their demands for lesser centralization in the local economy. See also Fred H. Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process: Fillip or Hindrance?," *ibid.*, 139f; Zisser, "Appearance and Reality: Syria's Decisionmaking Structure".

¹⁷³ Nabil Sukkar, "The Crisis of 1986 and Syria's Plan for Reform," in *Contemporary Syria: Liberalization between Cold War and Cold Peace*, ed. Eberhard Kienle (London: British Academic Press, 1994).

hand, while new dependencies on the private sector immediately threatened this newly gained autonomy, on the other.¹⁷⁴

The private sector's accession to the ruling coalition at the expense of its traditional constituencies did not take place immediately. By 1990, however, a consensus on 'controlled' economic liberalization had been established, as economic crises created high pressures for attracting private and foreign investment.¹⁷⁵ Pitted against this rising business elite, however, were the traditional pillars of the regime's old power base in the rural areas and especially the coalition of the military, the party, and the public sector, which had been established in the early 1970s.¹⁷⁶

6.2.2 Constraining praetorianism: A family affair

Given the *de facto* absence of an organized opposition, and the marginalization of the Ba'ath Party and the army as rival power centers, questions of regime security in the 1990s mainly centered on two issues.¹⁷⁷ First, as the president's deteriorating health threatened to ease constraints on intra-regime praetorianism, hereditary succession aimed at maintaining domestic supremacy. Second, the regime continued to coopt the business elite in order to extract economic power resources amid continuously low levels of political freedom.

In the early 1990s, Hafiz al-Asad started to position his first-born son Basil as his successor, who had been appointed a brigade commander in the RG, taken over partially oversight over Lebanon, and was granted substantially more public exposure in state media and official rhetoric.¹⁷⁸ The fact that the looming ascension of a young and inexperienced president remained unchallenged even in the course of Rif'at al-Asad's return in 1992 reflects a high level of political autonomy.

To a certain extent, this had also been a result of increased efforts to bolster Asad's personal legitimacy of president Asad himself through tailor-made policies of political liberalization. For instance, mass amnesties of political prisoners in 1991 and 1995 coincided with a presidential referendum, which Asad won without any competition by 99.99 percent, and the 25th anniversary of his ascension to power. Moreover, throughout the 1990s, the regime became more tolerant towards the expression of religious sentiments and released numerous imprisoned members of the Muslim Brotherhood. As Zisser suggests, this also helped Syria to generate pan-Islamic solidarity

¹⁷⁴ Eberhard Kienle, "The Return of Politics? Scenarios for Syria's Second Infitah," *ibid.*, 120.

¹⁷⁵ Volker Perthes, *Syria under Bashar al-Asad: modernisation and the limits of change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 29f.

¹⁷⁶ Even in 2005, more than 25 percent of the labor force worked in the agricultural sector and another 30 percent in predominantly state-owned or state-protected industry. Flynt L. Leverett, *Inheriting Syria: Bashar's trial by fire* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 5; Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process," 153.

¹⁷⁷ On the situation of the Syrian opposition between 1982 and 1994, the marginalization of the party, and the army, see Hans Gunter Lohmeyer, "Al-dimuqratiyya hiyya al-hall? The Syrian opposition at the end of the Asad era," *ibid.*; Volker Perthes, "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," *ibid.*, 66f; Joseph Bahout, "The Syrian Business Community, its Politics and Prospects," *ibid.*, 76f.

¹⁷⁸ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 153, 158f.

against domestic and external rivals.¹⁷⁹

Intra-regime rivalries surfaced after Basil's sudden death in a car accident on January 21, 1994, and the gradual positioning of his younger brother Bashar as heir apparent. While Bashar was quickly promoted through the military ranks and his power base bolstered by reshuffles promoting young and mostly unknown officers of Alawi background to the divisional command, Rif'at, but also Khaddam and Shihabi brought themselves into position.¹⁸⁰ In response, the president gradually marginalized Khaddam, in the mid-1990s Bashar's main competitor for succession, most prominently in the context of the Lebanon portfolio.¹⁸¹

The looming generational change was pitched to the public and regime constituencies at several occasions, thereby endorsing a public sentiment of continuity *and* change, preferring Bashar al-Asad to a representative of the Old Guard as "a spark of new hope."¹⁸² While the public support of Mustafa Talas and deputy Chief of Staff Ali Aslan for Bashar's candidacy apparently guaranteed continuity, the heir apparent repeatedly engaged in debates of modernization and international integration.¹⁸³

In order to finalize succession, a major reshuffle in the military-security complex took place, entailing a shift in the regime's inner core in 1998. Already in late 1997, reports mounted of violent clashes between Rif'at and Bashar supporters in Latakia, but only in February 1998, Rif'at lost his post as vice president and left for French exile.¹⁸⁴ Along with other members of the Old Guard in the army and intelligence apparatus, the president forced Shihabi into retirement, replacing him with Aslan, while close aides of Bashar rose to key positions in the General Intelligence Directorate (GID).¹⁸⁵ Besides several 'new faces' in the security apparatus, Bashar used an alternative tool—the Syrian Computer Society—to mobilize support among the urban economic elites, from which he recruited many into government and party functions.¹⁸⁶

It is noteworthy, that it was appearance of a new regime constituency, the private sector, which accompanied, if not enabled, this relatively smooth power transition. With regard to regime secu-

¹⁷⁹ ———, "Hafiz al-Asad discovers Islam," *Middle East Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1999); ———, "Syria," 636f; Christopher Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar al-Asad: Clinging to His Roots?," in *Know Thy Enemy: Profiles of Adversary Leaders and Their Strategic Cultures*, ed. Barry Schneider and Jerrold Post (Maxwell Air Force Base: U.S. Air Force Counterproliferation Center, 2003), 228.

¹⁸⁰ The first Alawi baron who fell prey to Asad's succession strategy was the long-serving commander of the Special Forces, Ali Haydar. In July 1994, he was temporarily arrested and later sent into retirement after voicing criticism of hereditary succession. Zisser, "Syria," 635; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 30f; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 29-31.

¹⁸¹ ———, *Asad's Legacy*: 161; ———, "Syria," 634.

¹⁸² Bahjat Suleiman in al-Thawra on January 19, 1997, quote from ———, *Asad's Legacy*: 161.

¹⁸³ Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 61-65.

¹⁸⁴ Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 76-79; Zisser, "Syria," 654.

¹⁸⁵ Khaddam was about to maintain his post as vice president formally until 2005; his *de facto* power position, however, declined in late 1998, when Bashar officially took over the Lebanon portfolio. Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 39; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 154; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 62f.; Eyal Zisser, "Syria's Asad: The Approach of a Fifth Term of Office," *PolicyWatch* 366(1999).

¹⁸⁶ Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 73f.

rity, the rise of the private sector allowed the presidency to maintain autonomous from *traditional* power centers in order to generate domestic and external power resources.¹⁸⁷ The question of autonomy resources became particularly vital, given the low percentage of taxes on government revenues—accounting only for some 25 percent—and the regime’s inability to mobilize sufficient alternative resources, for instance from external alignments or deficit budget cuts.¹⁸⁸

In turn, the class of private entrepreneurs, which had emerged in the course of economic liberalization and controlled *inter alia* more than 90 percent of agriculture, a key sector of Syria’s export-oriented trade policy, became more assertive regarding political liberalization and participation. In May 1990, for instance, representatives of business associations were for the first time elected in large numbers to parliament since 1963—at the expense of the Ba’th party. The following year, the regime launched a ‘second wave’ of liberalization, including a new investment law, welcoming both foreign and private investment in Syria’s industry. The law contained several other investment-friendly measures, such as the waiving of import taxes and restrictions of the private import of hard currency.¹⁸⁹ As an unintended consequence of economic liberalization, the ascension of Syrian private investors, described by Kienle as a group “prone to interfering in politics,”¹⁹⁰ was accompanied by a loss of state autonomy also in foreign policy matters.

Subsequently, this shift in the ruling coalition influenced foreign policy decision-making, as new constituencies opted for a moderation and pro-Western realignment of Syria’s external relations, particularly concerning their sectorial interests.¹⁹¹ Although transfers to the public sector from the Gulf States after the Kuwait Crisis thwarted pressure for accommodation towards the West, which occurred in the context of economic liberalization and the loss of export markets in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the ability of traditional regime constituencies to contain the private sector’s influence declined after 1992.¹⁹²

6.2.3 Conclusion

The neoclassical realist explanatory model, reflected in corresponding hypotheses on the formation of *sponsorship* alignments (NC₂) as well as their management (NC₃/NC₄), suggests that regime vulnerability and autonomy deficits serve as an antecedent condition for Syria’s commitment policies.

¹⁸⁷ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 128; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 22; Steven Heydemann, "Taxation without Representation: Authoritarianism and Economic Liberalization in Syria," in *Rules and Rights in the Middle East: Democracy, Law, and Society*, ed. Ellis Goldberg, et al. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 96f; Kienle, "The Return of Politics?," 116.

¹⁸⁸ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 123; Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 247; Kienle, "The Return of Politics?," 120.

¹⁸⁹ On economic liberalization and ensuing influence of the private sector, see Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 249f; Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 137; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 445f; Perthes, "Stages of Economic and Political Liberalization," 66f; Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 130; Muslih, "Syria and Turkey," 123f; Perthes, *Syria under Bashar al-Asad*: 28.

¹⁹⁰ Kienle, "The Return of Politics?," 121-123.

¹⁹¹ Lawson, *Why Syria goes to war*: 132, 151; Perthes, *Syria under Bashar al-Asad*: 29f; Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*: 51f.

¹⁹² Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process," 148-153.

Between 1976 and 1982, the state underwent a severe legitimacy crisis, stemming from unpopular foreign policy choices, repression of internal dissent, and the Islamist uprising. In 1983, the reliance on the Alawi barons for regime survival enabled—together with the president's deteriorating health—a brief return of praetorianism to the domestic political arena, when Rif'at al-Asad reached for power. Nevertheless, the previously attained centralization of coercive force and political power guaranteed not only regime survival but granted—together with external support from Iran and the USSR—also sufficient levels of autonomy.

The regime's structural lack in foreign policy autonomy also reflected in the course of economic crisis. In response to the economic downturn, the government preferred liberalization and the allocation of new resources through a strengthening of the private sector over diverting funds from the state's growing defense budget, necessary to both appease the army and maintain a public profile of resolve vis-à-vis external enemies.¹⁹³ While especially Syria's massive internal security apparatus points to low levels of regime legitimacy, economic liberalization gradually broadened the ruling coalition and increased the regime's autonomy from traditional domestic power centers.¹⁹⁴

Although moderate measures of political liberalization took place in the early 1990s, the regime took no actual steps of democratic reform or power sharing and it is rather continued repression that explains the absence of publicly displayed dissent.¹⁹⁵ Under these conditions, state autonomy from society has been continuously depending on the nature of the regime's power base.

Given Asad's deteriorating health and difficulties to reach a well-timed hereditary succession, the threat of a renewed outbreak of praetorianism inside the regime's core was ever present throughout the decade, indicated by repeated reshuffles in the security apparatus. By 1992, a new power center had emerged with the ascension of private sector entrepreneurs. While this process increased autonomy from the traditional regime pillars (a party struggling for ideological survival after the end of the Cold War, a security apparatus constituting a massive economic burden, and a far from productive public sector), pressures for external moderation, demilitarization, and integration into the world economy mounted.

The neoclassical realist hypothesis NC₁ claims that vulnerable states share a bias towards *alliance seeking* in their adjustment strategies. In the Syrian case, this reflects, for instance, in the key role of external assistance in military spending and development, such as limited internal balancing efforts against Turkey in times of severe conflict and a highly pressing imbalance of power.¹⁹⁶ In addition, two other factors weakened the government's ability to mobilize domestic resources

¹⁹³ Drysdale and Hinnebusch, *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*: 45.

¹⁹⁴ Eventually, this domestic power shift even paved the way for cuts in the military budget in times of rapidly declining and between 1988 and mid-1990 even absent aid from the Arab states and an external debt crisis. *Ibid.*, 46f.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 36-43.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

against Turkey: The clear priority of Israel as the biggest external threat among all regime constituencies and low levels of popular support for Kurdish nationalism schemes (6.1.1, 6.1.5).

Concerning the *sponsorship* hypothesis NC₂, section 6.1.4 suggested that Syria failed to form stable interstate alliances against Turkey, particularly before the looming Israeli-Turkey alliance in the mid-1990s. Simultaneously, the diversion of external anti-Israel assistance to anti-Turkish measures would have undermined the regime's domestic position.

Hence, incentives to align with the PKK were considerably higher by the end of the 1980s amid the lack of external allies, massive defense budget cuts, and increased interstate conflict with Turkey. While incentives for external balancing increased amid rising tensions, a growing imbalance of power, and limited state autonomy throughout the 1990s, only the threat of a military alliance between Israel and Turkey allowed Damascus to rally external support against Ankara. Given the lack of consensus over policies of cooperation (private sector) or confrontation (public sector, Old Guard) with the West, pressures to realign and cease support of the PKK increased after 1992, especially in times of Turkish overtures and initiatives of economic cooperation.

Throughout the 1990s, policies of resolve and steadfastness against Syria's external enemies as a traditional tool of generating public support gained importance as an instrument to contain the private sector's political ambitions. Whereas, as Lawson concluded in his 1994 study, considerations like these were decisive for Syria's confrontational policy towards Israel in the early 1990s, the window of opportunity of pro-accommodation forces has been presumably bigger in the Turkish case.¹⁹⁷ Despite traditional resentment of Turkey among Syrian elites, the conflict had been substantially less severe until the Israel-Turkey agreement in 1996 and played a minor role in the external threat perception of the Syrian public. In contrast, the perception of Turkey was rather unclear. On the one hand, Turkey became a *natural rival* over both the quantity and the quality of the Euphrates river's water flow and also a threat to regime stability given its ability to block 40 percent of the water flow to Syria since the completion of the GAP project's first part in 1990. This was especially the case when agriculture had become a decisive part of the government's opening policy.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, Syrian-Turkish trade doubled between 1988 and 1993 and in order to assist Syria in the exploitation of its oil and gas reserves, joint projects were established after the liberalization of the energy sector.¹⁹⁹

In late 1994 and early 1995, bilateral trade discussions took place and Syria's Minister of Economy, Muhammad al-Imad, emphasized Syria's interest in improved trade relations, suggesting, for instance, increased Turkish imports of Syrian phosphates as a way of reducing Syria's then

¹⁹⁷ Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process."

¹⁹⁸ Aras and Köni, "Turkish-Syrian Relations," 53; Klaff, *Konfliktstrukturen und Außenpolitik*: 58.

¹⁹⁹ Muslih, "Syria and Turkey," 128; Güneylioglu, "Changing Nature of Turkish-Syrian Relations," 159.

\$300-million trade deficit.²⁰⁰ Hence, with increased bilateral trade and beneficial regional water schemes looming, the international and regional environment indicated, that maintaining the alignment with the PKK would no longer serve Syria's foreign policy interests.²⁰¹

These trends expectedly also influenced Syria's management of its relations with the PKK between 1979 and 1998. Accordingly, both neoclassical realist hypotheses suggest a policy of *limited resolve* (NC₂) or *limited restraint* (NC₃) if Syria lacks the autonomy to implement the *standing firm/restraining*-strategies encouraged by the SSD. In section 6.1.6, the SSD between Syria and the PKK provided mostly a mixed pattern of incentives and rarely a clear signal towards resolve or restraint. Nevertheless, evidence pointed towards a preferred strategy of entrapment avoiding in the first half of the 1980s, shifting slightly towards the other end of the spectrum by the middle of the decade. With regard to internal conflict, this shift expectedly accelerated between 1980 and 1984, towards a policy of *secret backing/fellow traveling*. Between 1989 and 1992/93, the SSD suggested a policy of resolve, yet constrained by the PKK's structural inferiority to Turkey's military. In contrast, the succession crisis amid the rise of a new pro-Western regime constituency in the mid-1990s, alleviated pressures for resolve stemming from the deterioration of interstate relations and a clear imbalance of power in favor of Turkey.

6.3 Syria's policy towards the PKK (1978-1998)

Although Syria has not been the PKK's only statist supporter, there is substantial variation between the group's backers. Iran, for instance, served as a rear front and hideaway for the group since 1986, yet exerted high levels of control over the PKK's activity among local Kurds. In contrast, the establishment of PKK camps and bases in northern Iraq since 1982/83 resulted from lacking state control over Kurdish areas in the course of the Iran-Iraq War. While the presence of PKK fighters and camps in Lebanon was mainly limited to areas controlled by the Syrian army, the group also benefitted from the at least temporary inability and unwillingness of Western European governments to cut the group off from diaspora support and financial assets from drug trade.²⁰² How Syria shaped its alignment with the PKK throughout the observation period will be examined as follows.

6.3.1 Hosting

*"Öcalan's presence in Damascus was the worst-kept secret."*²⁰³

A key factor in Syria's hosting activity has been the *de facto* aggrandizement of its territory due to the stationing of up to 40,000 troops in neighboring Lebanon since 1976. Subsequently, hosting

²⁰⁰ Olson, "Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War," 172f.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 176.

²⁰² Hasan Selim Özertem, Interview by author, International Strategic Research Organisation (USAK), May 9 2012. See also Barkey, "Under the Gun."; Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish question*: 32f.

²⁰³ Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 352.

terrorist groups in the Bekaa Valley located in Lebanon's occupied northeast, allowed for plausible deniability to a much larger extent, especially as Hafiz al-Asad repeatedly downplayed Damascus' influence over Lebanon in public.²⁰⁴ With regard to Syria's hosting policy, the PKK's military presence in Lebanon thus constitutes a case of moderate commitment.

Under increasing pressure from Turkish authorities—and reportedly mediated by Jalal Talabani—, PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan fled to Syria in July 1979, where he quickly got in touch with Syrian intelligence and the president's brother Jamil Asad.²⁰⁵ Reportedly, he and Rif'at became the PKK's main liaison officials after 1980, providing Öcalan inter alia with a residence in central Damascus.²⁰⁶

Although exact numbers are widely disputed, at least 50 fighters followed Öcalan only a few months later and their number increased particularly after the military coup in Turkey in 1980 to some 300 in 1982. Reportedly, Syrian border forces turned a blind eye on the influx of fighters as well as their settling in Syria and Lebanon.²⁰⁷ Although a small group re-entered Turkey in April 1980, the PKK generally refrained from fully redeploying to the area of fighting in southeastern Turkey. In contrast, hundreds of fighters moved from a training camp in the north of Damascus to Palestinian training camps in the Bekaa Valley, among them the Helwe Camp run by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).²⁰⁸

Although Syria's indirect hosting included a toleration of the PKK's political activity in Lebanon, allowing, for instance, some 80 PKK members to gather at the party's first conference at the Helwe camp in July 1981, authorities repeatedly aimed at keeping up deniability.²⁰⁹ First, they restricted trans border attacks from Syrian soil.²¹⁰ Second, they provided PKK fighters operating in Lebanon with Arab, yet non-Syrian, identity cards in order to deny their presence.²¹¹ Opacity became especially crucial after a bilateral extradition agreement signed in June 1981, although Syria refused to reply to Turkish extradition demands regarding PKK members.²¹² The 1982 Lebanon War temporarily disrupted the group's presence in Lebanon and deprived it of its local training grounds.²¹³ Subsequently, Damascus allowed the PKK to seek refuge on Syrian territory, provid-

²⁰⁴ Seale, *Abu Nidal*: 131-33; Jim Hoagland and Jonathan C. Randal, "Syria's Assad Dismisses U.S. 'Threats'," *Washington Post*, May 18 1986.

²⁰⁵ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 49; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 12.

²⁰⁶ Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 59; Ismet G. Imset, *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey 1973-1992* (Ankara: Turkish Daily News, 1992). 32.

²⁰⁷ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 59.

²⁰⁸ Jongerden and Akkaya, "Born from the Left," 130; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 12; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 57; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 76.

²⁰⁹ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 65; Bölükbasi, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 22.

²¹⁰ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 69.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 59f.

²¹² Bölükbasi, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 23.

²¹³ IDF killed 11 PKK militants fighting alongside their Palestinian allies and captured more than 30, who were sent off to Greece—and later Iran—in 1984. Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 76; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 13.

ed access to training facilities, and permitted a second congress in a Palestinian Camp on the Jordanian-Syrian border in late August 1982.²¹⁴

The resettlement of PKK fighters to northern Iraq in September 1982 significantly reduced the group's presence in Syria's sphere of influence, as only the political leadership remained in Damascus. Nevertheless, Syrian intelligence continued to exert substantial control over the group's operations and prohibited, for instance, direct cross border activities.²¹⁵ Additionally, authorities generally restricted the group's freedom of movement accepting, for instance, only identity cards issued by Syrian intelligence and demanded member lists.²¹⁶ In 1983, the government responded to Turkish complaints and pressured the group to generally reduce its presence in Syria and relocate fighters, back to Lebanon. In turn, and especially after Israel's partial withdrawal in 1985, Syrian authorities assisted the PKK in re-establishing and taking full control over the abandoned Helwe Camp, formally renamed to Mahsum Korkmaz Academy and becoming the venue of the third party congress in October 1986.²¹⁷

In 1986, authorities reportedly handed over five PKK fighters over to Turkey.²¹⁸ Despite the fact that Syrian intelligence managed these contacts in a generally opaque manner, they became more frequent, including a personal visit of Jamil Asad to the Academy.²¹⁹ On July 17, 1987, Syria and Turkey formally committed themselves inter alia to improved border security and prevention of activities "carried out on their territories aimed at threatening or undermining the security and stability of the other party."²²⁰ However, whereas Syrian officials pressured the PKK, on the one hand, to infiltrate Turkey from Iraq or Iran, they tolerated, on the other hand, the PKK's training and political activity not only in Lebanon but also on Syria territory.²²¹ By 1987, for instance, the PKK had offices in all predominantly Kurdish areas as well as in Damascus.²²²

The mixed pattern of indirect and opaque hosting policies continued in the early 1990s. In the context of a general Syrian-Turkish rapprochement based on a shared opposition to the possible creation of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, both countries signed a security protocol in May 1992 and another bilateral agreement on security issues in November 1993. In 1991, for instance, authorities briefly detained Öcalan after meetings with Iraqi Kurdish representa-

²¹⁴ Jongerden and Akkaya, "Born from the Left," 136; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 13; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 59.

²¹⁵ Bölükbaşı, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 18; Jongerden and Akkaya, "Born from the Left," 130; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 74.

²¹⁶ ———, *Blood and Belief*: 73f.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99; Seale, *Asad of Syria*: 427; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 59; Jongerden and Akkaya, "Born from the Left," 137.

²¹⁸ Pipes and Garfinkle.

²¹⁹ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 99.

²²⁰ "Protocol of Cooperation on Matters of Security", See Fahir Alacam, "The Turkish-Syrian Relations," *Turkish Review of Middle East Studies* 8(1994/95): 13.

²²¹ Oktav, "Water Dispute," 104; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 99.

²²² Qamishli, Darbasiya, Derik, Ras al-'Ayn, Afrin, Aleppo, and Hasaka, see also Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 77.

tives.²²³ In 1992/93, Syria pressured the group to pull out of the Bekaa Valley, where it had previously enjoyed a relatively free rein and closed the Korkmaz Academy.²²⁴ On November 20, 1993, both states formally committed themselves explicitly to “deny shelter and temporary quartering to all terroristic actions directed towards each other within their respective territories.”²²⁵ Accordingly, Syria's negotiator, General Adnan Badr-al-Hassan, announced a ban on PKK activities and that Damascus would not give shelter or free passage to “those who are against Turkey's interest.”²²⁶ According to Turkish media reports, he also promised, “if caught, Öcalan would be returned to Turkey.”²²⁷

Although a number of reports indicate that the PKK maintained a, though less visible, presence in the Bekaa Valley, the political leadership transferred the center for political indoctrination and other facilities to the Damascus area.²²⁸

Eventually, Syrian authorities further reduced their hosting commitment by pressuring both the group into relocating military cells operating in the border region and closing down a meeting-house in the Bekaa in 1997. Still, the government refused to repatriate him to Turkey.²²⁹ In contrast, Syria stepped up its support for PKK in early 1996 and established two military camps with some 500 fighters about 25 km northwest of Aleppo.²³⁰ Although officials repeatedly denied Turkish charges about the PKK's presence in Syria and Lebanon throughout the first half of 1998, Syrian hosting of the PKK eventually ended in October. After Syrian officials had threatened to arrest and extradite Öcalan to Turkey, he and his fighters left the country. Later this month, Damascus announced his departure as well as the shut-down of PKK camps in Syria and Lebanon.²³¹ In the aftermath of the Adana agreement, Syria went even further, banned PKK political activity inside the country and extradited members with Turkish passports.²³²

²²³ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 269; “Reports that PKK leader arrested on orders of Syrian president “unconfirmed”.” BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (1993). Published electronically December 21. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²²⁴ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 216; Radu, “The Rise and Fall of the PKK.”; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 48; Muslih, “Syria and Turkey,” 126.

²²⁵ Alacam, “The Turkish-Syrian Relations,” 15.

²²⁶ Olson, “Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War,” 171; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 63; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 77.

²²⁷ Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 63.

²²⁸ Ali Kemal Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds: a theoretical analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006). 5, 146, 237; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 254; Aras, “Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill,” 42. In order to defend Syria's unwillingness to expel the PKK for good, an official from the Syrian embassy in Washington reportedly stated that the government had a “moral commitment to people who have been there [Damascus] a long time; we can't just throw them out.” Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 61.

²²⁹ Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 77; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 269.

²³⁰ Close to the Kilis border post, the camps facilitated cross border operations into Turkey. Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 64f; Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish question*: 167; Olson, *Turkey's relations with Iran, Syria, Israel, and Russia*: 106.

²³¹ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 271; Öcal, *Die türkische Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik nach dem Ende des Ost-West-Konflikts (1990 - 2001)*: 219; Olson, 2001 #713.

²³² Aras, “Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill,” 43.

6.3.2 Military support

The following section examines the extent of Syria's military support to PKK. According to the criteria outlined in 4.3.2, support is high if there is evidence for direct military assistance, granted within Syria, and as moderate if provided outside of Syrian territory, for instance in Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. Tolerating arms deliveries by other backers and training under official supervision accounts also for a moderate level of support, while the mere permission to acquire weaponry from other sources inside its sphere of influence constitutes a low level of assistance.

Between 1979/80 and 1982, authorities turned a blind eye and reportedly even encouraged the transfer of hundreds of PKK recruits into Palestinian camps in Lebanon, where they received training in guerilla warfare.²³³ Reportedly, intelligence agents and army personnel were directly involved in the military training, equipping, and ideological indoctrination.²³⁴ According to Turkish sources, Syrian intelligence assisted PKK fighters in 1983 and '84 to enter Turkey near the border towns Cizre and Silopi.²³⁵ Syrian embassies in Western Europe constituted another source of support especially with regard to the PKK's 'out of area'-operations and contact to the Kurdish diaspora.²³⁶

Although Syria's military commitment was generally moderate, given the little resources invested, its importance as a facilitator should not be underestimated. Under Syrian tutelage, PKK gained tremendous organizational capacity, receiving not only military training but also ideological education and expertise on mobilization strategies.²³⁷ Furthermore, after the departure of PLO from Lebanon and the re-establishment of the Helwe Camp, PKK was allowed to run it largely autonomously.²³⁸ The at least perceived impact of Syrian military support reflected in statements from the PKK leadership in the early 1990s, claiming to have trained up to 15,000 guerillas in the camps based in Lebanon and Syria.²³⁹

Although many authors and reports mention Syria as a source of arms used by the PKK, there is little specific evidence on direct weapon deliveries.²⁴⁰ As PKK fighters mostly employed a hit and run tactic against military posts or rival militias, they mainly required small arms, such as gre-

²³³ Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 13; Lyubov Mincheva and Ted R. Gurr, "Unholy Alliances III: Communal Militants and Criminal Networks in the Middle East with a Case Study of the Kurdistan Workers Party" (paper presented at the Annual meeting of the International Studies Association, San Francisco, March 26 - 29 2008), 7; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 55f.

²³⁴ Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 13; Bölükbasi, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 22; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 59; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 76.

²³⁵ Bölükbasi, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 25.

²³⁶ Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 59f.

²³⁷ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 53f.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

²³⁹ At the fifth PKK Congress on October 14, 1994, in Damascus, Öcalan claimed to have trained some 15,000 guerillas in the Syrian-based camps. Andrew Mango, *Turkey and the War on Terror: 'For forty years we fought alone'* (London, Abingdon: Routledge, 2005). 36f.

²⁴⁰ James Ron, *Weapons transfers and violations of the laws of war in Turkey* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995). 140-142; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 186f; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 76f.

nades, rifles, and light machine guns.²⁴¹ Thus, in order to ensure group survival, authorities reportedly supplied PKK directly with small arms in the initial period of cooperation.²⁴² In the following years, tolerating influx of light weapons purchased by the PKK itself on open weapon markets in Lebanon, the Kurdish areas of Iran and Iraq, as well as Western Europe became a focus of Syria's military assistance.²⁴³ However, Syria neither provided nor permitted the purchase of advanced weaponry, such as shoulder-fired SAM (surface-to-air missiles) against Turkish airplanes and helicopters, from other sources. For instance, when the group eventually acquired Russian-designed shoulder-fired missiles—reportedly smuggled from Serbia—in the mid-1990s, Syria's unwillingness to train fighters in their use prevented their employment.²⁴⁴ A third dimension of Syria's military support was permitting local Kurds to join the ranks of the PKK. After 1982, authorities tolerated and facilitated PKK recruitment among Syrian Kurds and actively encouraged it after 1985. Hence, the number of active Syrian PKK members trained at the Helwe Camp increased from only a few in 1985 to some 45 in 1986 and 130 in 1987 and thousands of Syrians joined the PKK throughout the decade.²⁴⁵ After the Gulf War, the government actively encouraged local Kurds to join the organization, by exempting up to 10,000 Syrians from military service and reportedly pressuring Kurdish tribal leaders to fill a 'quota' of recruits. The impact of this assistance reflected in a steep rise in their share of PKK fighters, accounting for up to 30 percent by the mid-1990s.²⁴⁶ In the course of Syria's realignment with Turkey, the government became also increasingly restrictive regarding the PKK's ties with the local Kurds, forbidding them henceforth to engage in the group's activity.²⁴⁷

6.3.3 Financial support

Although many observers mention Syria as a financial resource of PKK in the observation period, there is relatively poor evidence for direct governmental funding.²⁴⁸ Reports on PKK financing

²⁴¹ Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 348-350.

²⁴² Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also Ron, *Weapons transfers*: 140.

²⁴³ A third source emerged in 1991, when both the influx of thousands of refugees into Turkey and abandoned army weapon arsenals in north Iraq, flooded the region with small arms. Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also *ibid.*, 142; Hazhir Teimourian, "Turkey—The Challenge of the Kurdistan Workers' Party," *Jane's Intelligence Review* 5, no. January (1993): 29; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 186f.

²⁴⁴ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012. See also ———, *Blood and Belief*: 99, 188f. On March 25, 1994, Turkish minister of interior, Nahit Mentese announced that the army had seized, for the first time, sophisticated weapons - two surface-to-air missiles (sa-7 type) - in a PKK hideout on mount Ararat in eastern Turkey "Turkey seizes SAM missiles in PKK Hideout." Xinhua News Agency (XNA) (1994). Published electronically March 25. www.lexisnexis.com/de/business. Accessed January 31, 2013.

²⁴⁵ McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*: 479; James Brandon. "The PKK and Syria's Kurds." *Terrorism Monitor* (February 21, 2007) 5, no. 3 (2007). <http://bit.ly/1gDif4E>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 59, 99-109.

²⁴⁶ Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 38; Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 76; Gambill, "The Kurdish Reawakening in Syria," 3f.

²⁴⁷ Aras, "Turkish-Syrian Relations Go Downhill," 43.

²⁴⁸ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012; See also Bölükbasi, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 18; Jones and Libicki, *How terrorist groups end*: 111; Michael Jonsson and Svante Cornell. "Kurds and Pay - Examining PKK Financing." *Jane's Insurgency and Terrorism* (2008). Published electronically March 13. <http://bit.ly/1gDHTec>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Aykan, "The Turkish-Syrian Crisis of October 1998," 175.

rather suggest that Syria took on a facilitating role regarding third party funding, mostly by allied Palestinian groups or local Kurds, as well as revenues from illicit business.

In the initial period of the PKK's presence in Syria's sphere of influence, DFLP, for instance, became an important source of funding, covering not only basic expenses of recruits but also paying up to \$300 as a monthly allowance to each fighter.²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, former PKK members and others, trained in DFLP camps in Lebanon at that time, claimed that this support would not have been possible without the approval of the Syrian authorities.²⁵⁰ In addition, Syria tolerated the PKK's involvement into smuggling, drug trafficking, and other illicit business since the mid-1980s.²⁵¹ Kurdish diaspora communities in Western Europe and their donations constituted a major source of funds already in the initial stages of the group's activities. After 1986, also local Kurds in Syria, Iraq, Iran, and southeastern Turkey gained importance as the group discovered taxation as a potential source of revenues.²⁵² With tacit government approval, PKK also started to collect money in Kurdish villages in Syria and introduced taxes on smugglers in the border area.²⁵³ Hence, despite low levels of direct transfers, the sharp decline in PKK's annual estimated revenue after 1998, from \$200-\$500 million throughout the 1990s to tens of millions in the early 2000s, reveals the importance of Syria's indirect support to the group's fundraising activities.²⁵⁴

6.3.4 Endorsement

*"Syria declares the PKK as a terroristic organization."*²⁵⁵

Joint Memorandum of Minutes on Security Issues, November 1993

Promoting both the goals and means of the group publicly, portraying them as legitimate, and hence risking at least diplomatic frictions with the targeted state, in brief *endorsing* the group indicated a moderate level of sponsorship commitment (see 4.3.4). In addition, endorsement is also present if a backer uses its political weight to convince third parties to support the group at least passively.

In this context, the 1993 Joint Memorandum marks a critical juncture as the first instance of Syria formally designating the PKK a terrorist organization and a low-point in its endorsement poli-

²⁴⁹ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 57.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁵¹ Ümit Özdamak, Interview by the Author, 21st Century Institute, Ankara, May 29, 2012, Hasan Selim Özerterem, Interview by author, International Strategic Research Organization (USAK), May 9, 2012. See also Bölükbaşı, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 17; Jonsson and Cornell; Ron, *Weapons transfers*: 143; Mitchel P. Roth and Murat Sever, "The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as Criminal Syndicate: Funding Terrorism through Organized Crime, A Case Study," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 10 (2007). In the border area to Iraq and Turkey, local security services were permissive towards smuggling and other illegal economic activities, in order to "mitigate the negative economic consequences for Kurdish regions of having been abandoned by the government." Tejel, *Syria's Kurds*: 67. According to the testimony of a high-ranking PKK defector in 1994, Syrian authorities did not only facilitate PKK drug trafficking, but also financially benefitted from it. See Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 37.

²⁵² Özdamak, Interview by the Author, May 29, 2012, Özerterem, Interview by author, May 9, 2012. See also Teimourian, "Turkey," 29-32; Barkey, "Turkey and the PKK," 352; Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 111.

²⁵³ _____, *Blood and Belief*: 100,182f; Jonsson and Cornell.

²⁵⁴ _____.

²⁵⁵ Alacam, "The Turkish-Syrian Relations," 15.

cy. Regarding the extent of this decline, it is noteworthy that Syria had no strong record of publicly supporting either the PKK or calls for Kurdish rights of self-determination in general.²⁵⁶ In addition, Syria's self-obligation as a UN member state, signatory state of anti-terrorism protocols, and member of the Organization of Islamic Conference, committed to "respect the right of self-determination and non-interference in the domestic affairs [...], sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each Member State,"²⁵⁷ limited incentives for publicly endorsing the group.

A remarkable deviation from this policy occurred in 1981, when Syria refused to extradite PKK members, stating that they were "no terrorists, only political refugees."²⁵⁸ Yet, instead of endorsing the PKK's political goals, officials repeatedly denied knowledge of its presence and implicitly agreed to assist Ankara in July 1987, by preventing operations from groups threatening Turkey's "security and stability."²⁵⁹ Although Hafiz al-Asad joined the PKK in a ceremony in the Bekaa Valley in early 1991, officials repeatedly expressed fears that Kurdish national ambitions might lead to a territorial disintegration of Iraq after the Gulf War.²⁶⁰

In 1992, Damascus deliberately limited its scope for denial by agreeing in another bilateral memorandum to consider any organization banned in Turkey as illegal in Syria. In this context, it declared the PKK an outlawed organization and pledged to prosecute its members.²⁶¹ However, as Syria's non-compliance became obvious in the following months, officials resorted again to denial. As reports about the activity of the PKK's radio station from Damascus made it difficult to deny concerning the group's presence in Syria, the government shifted its rhetoric to acknowledging the PKK's presence on the one hand, but maintaining, on the other, that it was not allowed to use force.²⁶²

In the aftermath of the November 1993 agreement of, Syria's state minister for security, Nasir Kaddur, announced in Turkish television:

*"The PKK is considered illegal in accordance with our laws. In brief, the PKK has been banned in Syria...From now on, the PKK or Öcalan may not make use of us or pass through Syrian territory."*²⁶³

²⁵⁶ In November 1968, for instance, Syrian officials had denounced the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq as a "criminal secessionist Barzanist movement" that deserves to be "annihilated" Mufti, *Sovereign Creations*: 164.

²⁵⁷ OIC. "Charter of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference." (1972). http://www.oic-oci.org/page_detail.asp?p_id=53. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²⁵⁸ Bölükbaşı, "The Regionalization of Turkey's Kurdish Secessionism," 23.

²⁵⁹ Alacam, "The Turkish-Syrian Relations.," William Hale, "Turkey," *Middle East Contemporary Survey* 11(1987): 675; Yüksel Sezgin, "The October 1998 Crisis in Turkish-Syrian Relations: A Prospect Theory Approach," *Turkish Studies* 3, no. 2 (2002): 48; Stäheli, *Die syrische Aussenpolitik*: 174.

²⁶⁰ Oktav, "Water Dispute," 102; Yıldız, *The Kurds in Syria: the forgotten people*: 63; Alacam, "The Turkish-Syrian Relations," 15f; Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 59.

²⁶¹ Olson, "Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War," 170f.

²⁶² Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 62.

²⁶³ Olson, "Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War," 171.

In this context, Kaddur became also the first Syrian official publicly denouncing the PKK as “terrorist.”²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, while generally complying with this assessment and repeatedly declaring Syria’s commitment to the territorial integrity of Middle Eastern states, Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar’ refused to denounce the PKK as a terrorist organization in August 1994. In addition, he partly retracted Kaddur’s statement, when he identified the PKK as a “resistance movement” rather than a terrorist group.²⁶⁵ In October 1998, the Syrian government signed the Adana agreement and denounced in this context the PKK again as a terrorist organization.²⁶⁶

Despite low levels of public rhetorical support, Syria endorsed the PKK as a *tacit facilitator*, by both backing it in intra-Kurdish and regional affairs and actively assisting the group in establishing an international network of support. In the early 1990s, Syria tolerated the PKK’s *de facto* take over of parts of the northwestern Kurd Dagh province. Government consent reflected also in the fact that six overt PKK-supporters from this area entered the national parliament in May 1990.²⁶⁷ On a regional level, Asad personally persuaded both Massoud Barzani and the Iranian government in 1982 to tolerate and facilitate the settlement of PKK fighters in northern Iraq.²⁶⁸

Although some analysts claim that Öcalan was strongly constrained and limited regarding his direct personal contacts to politicians outside Syria, Damascus enabled several meetings with foreign diplomats and other officials.²⁶⁹ In summer 1987, for instance, authorities facilitated a meeting between Öcalan and Soviet diplomats in Damascus.²⁷⁰ After the Gulf War, contacts increased as well as their visibility. In October 1991, for instance, Syria permitted a group of Greek parliamentarians, journalists, and retired generals to visit PKK camps and the following spring, they even tolerated a joint press conference with Greek politicians in the Bekaa Valley.²⁷¹ Reportedly, the PKK was free to use Syrian facilities in order to hold party congresses and press conferences.²⁷² Although the government had formally and explicitly committed itself to prevent PKK from holding meetings in its territory in November 1993 and cancelled, for instance, a press conference of Öcalan in Lebanon in September 1994 on short notice, Öcalan continued to hold meetings in Damascus with high-ranking German politicians and intelligence officials throughout

²⁶⁴ ———, “The Kurdish Question and Turkey’s Foreign Policy toward Syria, Iran, Russia and Iraq since the Gulf War,” in *The Kurdish nationalist movement in the 1990s: its impact on Turkey and the Middle East*, ed. Robert W. Olson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 86; ———, “Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War,” 171.

²⁶⁵ ———, “Turkey-Syria Relations since the Gulf War,” 172; Michael P. Hankard and Saruhan S. Hatipoglu. “The Workers’ Party of Kurdistan (PKK).” United States Global Strategy Council (1994). <http://bit.ly/1kytmyJ>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²⁶⁶ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 271; Öcal, *Die türkische Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik nach dem Ende des Ost-West-Konflikts (1990 - 2001)*: 219.

²⁶⁷ Tejel, *Syria’s Kurds*: 67,78.

²⁶⁸ Özcan, Interview by the Author, May 28, 2012; Özdag, Interview by the Author, May 29, 2012. See also Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 15.

²⁶⁹ Barkey and Fuller, *Turkey’s Kurdish question*: 40.

²⁷⁰ Oktav, “Water Dispute,” 104.

²⁷¹ On relations between Greece and the PKK, see “Greece’s long flirtation with the PKK.” *Hürriyet Daily News* (1999). Published electronically February 23. <http://bit.ly/1el0QOz>. Accessed January 21, 2014.

²⁷² Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 59.

September 1995. This reveals at least a deliberate support of PKK's efforts to gain recognition as a legitimate and political organization by the international community.²⁷³

6.3.5 Conclusion

Portrayed as a major Turkish foreign policy success against state sponsorship of terrorism, the Adana agreement represented not only "total Syrian surrender"²⁷⁴ but also a complete realignment and abandonment of the PKK. However, the Syrian *defection* also marked a final point in a bilateral cat-and-mouse game of almost two decades. To what extent fits Syria's sponsorship commitment policy before 1998 in with the three remaining sponsorship types *Brother in Arms*, *Fellow Traveler*, and *Secret Backer*?

Overall, two special characteristics of the Syria-PKK alliance should be maintained—especially in contrast to the case of Fatah (c.f. 5.3). First, as officials praised and attempted to legitimize neither the group's specific political ends and means nor the Kurdish cause, Syria never assumed the role of a *Fellow Traveler*. Public deviations from Damascus' proclaimed policy of non-support, such as official visits to PKK camps in the Bekaa Valley, were in all cases framed in the broader context of an increased material commitment. Second, Syria revealed a substantial unwillingness to sacrifice tangible assets to fulfill their commitment manifested by indirect hosting, operational restrictions, and a lacking record of the active involvement of Syrian security personnel on behalf of the PKK.

In the initial period of cooperation, Syria contributed directly and indirectly to PKK's capacity building, backing it materially, and tolerating political activity. Reportedly, Syrian security personnel has been involved in training and provided logistical support. As there is no evidence of their immediate involvement in PKK operations and given numerous measures aimed at keeping the PKK's presence in Lebanon a secret, there was a strong trend towards the *Secret Backer* role. This strategy included both rhetoric of denial, portraying PKK fighters as unorganized refugees, and increased control on the group's activity when the Lebanon War required an at least temporary withdrawal of PKK forces from Lebanon into Syria.

Within the scope of secret backing, Syria's material commitment increased substantially after 1985 and reached the status of a virtual *Brother in Arms*, placing thousands of Syrian Kurds and potential conscripts for the Syrian army at the PKK's disposal. Additionally, the group's freedom of political maneuver and contacts with regime officials increased. However, this development entailed no fierce or threatening rhetoric against Turkey, yet shallow promises of compliance in matters of bilateral security cooperation.

²⁷³ Ibid., 64; Oktav, "Water Dispute," 106; Olson, "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Foreign Policy toward Syria, Iran, Russia and Iraq since the Gulf War," 91.

²⁷⁴ Ely Karmon, "A Solution to Syrian Terrorism," *Middle East Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1999): 22.

After the Cold War, Syria allowed the PKK to step up its visibility in the Bekaa and the share of Syrian Kurds among the group's ranks further increased.

Hence, despite several measures had pointed towards realignment or at least a return to secretive backing, including the denouncement of the PKK as a terrorist organization in 1992/93 and the closing of the Korkmaz Academy,²⁷⁵ assistance remained substantial and far from opaque in 1995/96.²⁷⁶ In this period, authorities permitted the establishment of camps in the border area, portrayed the PKK as a resistance movement, and tolerated meetings with Western officials. Nevertheless, tensions became visible in reported clashes between the PKK and local intelligence and the closure of PKK's political presence by 1997. Issuing such strong threats of realignment indicated an increasing unwillingness to be drawn into open conflict with Turkey, and resulted in Syria's realignment and *defection* from its alliance with the group in late 1998.

In contrast to the Fatah case, support for the PKK and the Kurdish cause (not to mention a popular war against Syria's northern rivals) played if at all, a little role in domestic politics in general and intra-regime rivalries in particular. A marginalized and fragmented out-group in Syria's political landscape for decades, rallying Kurdish support seemed generally of little importance for the state in constraining domestic praetorianism. This also stemmed from the fact that rivals for power revealed little interest in mobilizing pro-Kurdish sentiment against the regime, especially after the succession crisis in 1983/84, when the key tool of integrating Syrian Kurds into the security apparatus, Rif'at as-Asad's DC, was cut in size and downgraded. Additionally, the reportedly close contacts of Asad's younger brothers Rif'at and Jamil, who even visited the Helwe camp in 1985, weakened the group's value as an asset in Syrian domestic politics after their disposal from the inner power circle.²⁷⁷ As the demobilization of many DC members timely coincided with the active encouragement of PKK mass recruitment among Syrian Kurds, it is likely to have constituted an instrument to deprive potential domestic rivals of Kurdish militias as a power resource. Regarding the expulsion of PKK in 1998, Alain Gresh reports, in contrast, that *ceasing* state support for the PKK was used by then *de facto* leader Bashar as an effective tool of weakening the domestic power position of General Duba, who had been the PKK's main backer in the regime's inner core.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Reportedly, Rif'at Asad, successfully pressured Öcalan to declare the indefinite unilateral ceasefire on April 16 1993. See Özdag, *The PKK and Low Intensity Conflict in Turkey*, 5: 49.

²⁷⁷ Marcus, *Blood and Belief*: 99; Gunter, *The Kurds and the future of Turkey*: 27.

²⁷⁸ Alain Gresh, "Syria: the rise and rise of Doctor Bashar," *Le Monde Diplomatique (English Edition)* 14 July(2000): 58f.

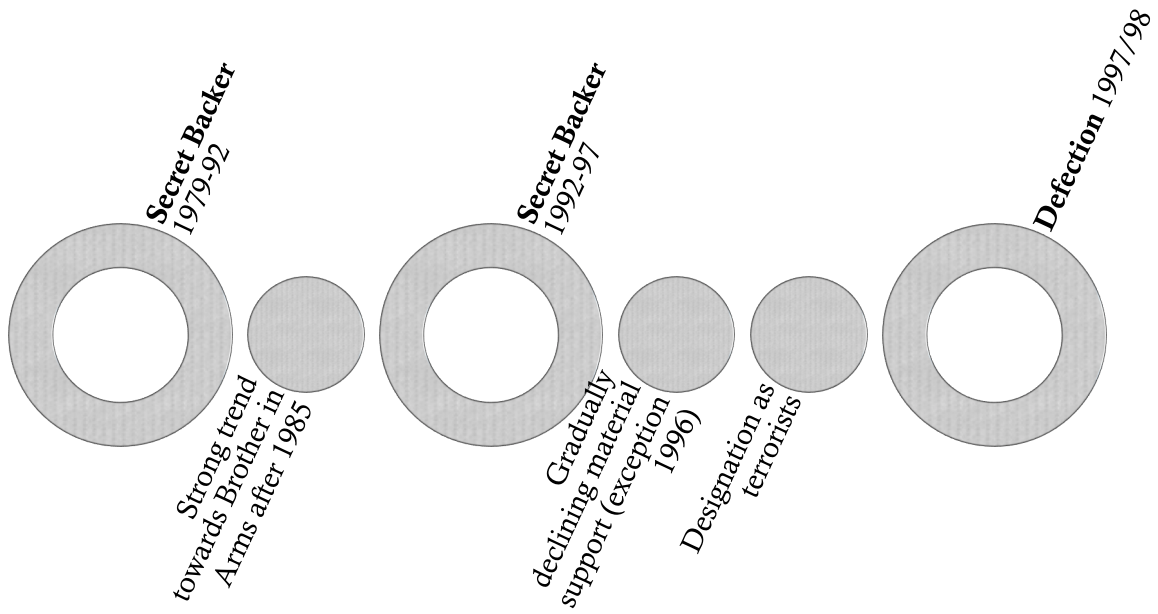


Figure 31: Patterns of Syrian sponsorship commitment to the PKK

7 A shifting balance: Syria & Hizballah

Hizballah emerged in the early 1980s as a Lebanese and Shia Muslim movement supplementing and steadily replacing the PLO as the main non-state actor fighting against the Israeli invasion and subsequent occupation of south Lebanon after 1982.¹ Since the end of the Lebanese Civil War (1976-1990), the group steadily moderated its Khomeini-inspired pan-Islamist opposition to the Lebanese sectarian-confessional system and established—after a period of severe confrontation—a comparatively stable co-existence with its main competitor in the Lebanese-Shia arena, the secular Amal organization. In 1992, Hizballah formally joined Lebanon’s political institutions under the leadership of Hasan Nasrallah. However, the group’s opposition to Israel and bilateral peace schemes (‘Lebanon First’) remained manifest even after Israel’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000, resulting in open war in July 2006.

From what observers initially described as merely one of many Syrian proxies in the Lebanese Civil War, Hizballah rose within two decades to a major political player in Lebanon and the region, at times even described as “stronger than the state.”² Subsequently, some even speak of a ‘shifting balance’ between Hizballah and Syria, likely to influence intra-alignment politics.³

U.S. economic sanctions targeted Hizballah for the first time in January 1995 on the grounds of its opposition to the Peace Process and subsequently, the group was included in the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations established in October 1997.⁴ However, two factors impeded efforts to create an international consensus on denying legitimacy to Hizballah violence. First, both in academic and political discourses, disagreement persists regarding the classification of Hizballah as a terrorist group, based on the fact that it was mostly targeting combatants.⁵ Second, between 1978 and 2000, Israel’s refusal to withdraw from Lebanon as mandated by UNSCR 425 made it *de jure* an occupying force and allowed Hizballah to legitimize its attacks in the context of national resistance.⁶

¹ Or *Hezbollah and Hizballah* (‘Party of God’); for a detailed account of the group’s formation, see Nicholas Blanford, *Warriors of God. Inside Hezbollah's thirty-year struggle against Israel* (New York: Random House, 2011). 50-94; Augustus R. Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*, Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). 27-46.

² Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 414. See also Avi-Ran, *The Syrian involvement in Lebanon since 1975* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991). 148; Bryan E. Early, “‘Larger than a Party, yet smaller than a State’: Locating Hezbollah's Place within Lebanon's State and Society,” *World Affairs* 168, no. 3 (2006).

³ Emile El-Hokayem, “Hizballah and Syria: Outgrowing the Proxy Relationship,” *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2007).

⁴ Juan J. Walte and Lee Michael Katz, “Clinton strikes at terrorism / Freezes assets of Mideast groups,” *USA Today*, January 25 1995; Norman Kempster. “U.S. Designates 30 Groups as Terrorists.” *Los Angeles Times* (1997). Published electronically October 9. <http://lat.ms/1bklPkk>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁵ More than one third of the 86 terrorist incidents listed by GTD between 1989 and 2005 have targeted either Israeli soldiers or SLA militiamen. In contrast, rocket attacks into northern Israel have occurred primarily after 1992 and mostly as retaliatory measures to IDF assaults on Lebanese civilians National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). See also Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 76f.

⁶ ———, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 75-77.

Throughout the decades, Hizballah was involved in numerous acts of violence classified as terrorist actions. Targeting civilians and unarmed UN personnel in kidnapping and skyjacking operations in the second half of the 1980s, conducting suicide bombings killing hundreds in Beirut, Tyre, and Buenos Aires, launching rocket fire against Israeli civilians, and being involved in political assassinations, repeatedly undermined Hizballah's nationalist credentials and contributed to a more broad perception of the group as a terrorist organization.⁷ In the same pace, however, Israel's leeway for internationally tolerated retaliation as legitimate self-defense against both Hizballah and its backers increased and gained unexpected, though implicit, support in July 2006, when Saudi Arabia publicly questioned Hizballah's character as a legitimate resistance.⁸ Hence, the following chapter turns to the question, how the expected variations of Syria's sponsorship dilemma reflected in its commitment in intra-alignment politics towards Hizballah. Furthermore, it addresses the influence of domestic politics on specific sponsorship patterns.

7.1 Nature of the sponsorship dilemma

In order to assess the nature of the Sponsorship Security Dilemma (SSD) in Syria's alignment with Hizballah against Israel as the key factor shaping Syrian sponsorship commitment, the following section turns to Syria's external security environment in the observation period (1989 – 2006). Therefore, it assesses both the respective interstate adversary dilemma and Hizballah's capacity as an ally.

7.1.1 Facing a decisive edge: the power imbalance between Syria and Israel

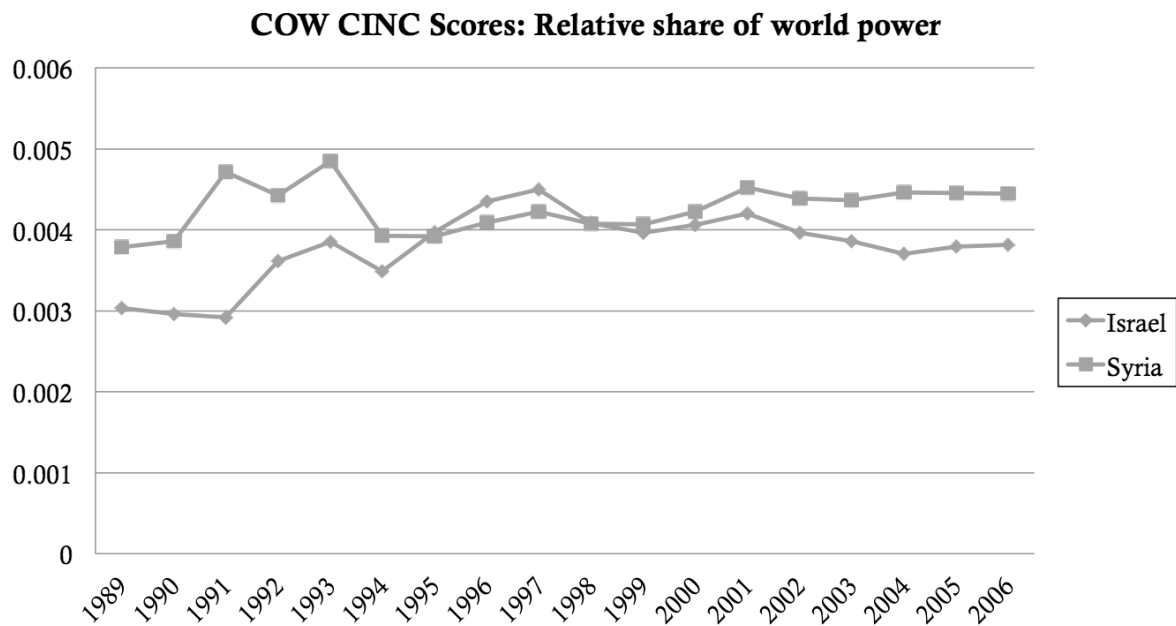
A key assumption of this study's explanatory basis is that a state facing a clear imbalance of power in favor of its rival is likely to give a priority to abandonment risks in alliance politics. In order to assess this imbalance between the End of the Lebanese Civil War in 1989 and the July 2006 War, this section initially turns to Syria's and Israel's relative share of power capabilities distributed in the international system.⁹ In contrast to the 1960s and 70s (section 5.1.1), CINC data draws a rather balanced picture and even a slight tendency in favor of Syria in the respective first halves of the 1990s and 2000s (see **Figure 32**). While particularly demographic factors, such as Syria's rapid population growth and urbanization and its large conventional forces were decisive

⁷ Ibid., 77f.

⁸ In October 2003, for instance, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, rebuffed a Syrian complaint about an Israeli air raid on its territory by stating "Syria has placed itself on the wrong side in the war against terror" Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 142,164f. In a similar vein as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain even designated the group a terrorist organization in 2009 and 2011 respectively Bahgat Korany and Moataz A. Fattah, "Irreconcilable Role-Partners? Saudi Foreign Policy between the Ulema and the U.S.," in *Foreign Policies of Arab States. The Challenge of Globalization*, ed. Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hilal Dessouki (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 373f; Jacques Neriah and Shimon Shapira, "Hezbollah: Profile of a Terrorist Organization," *Friends of Israel Initiative Working Papers*, no. 10 (2012): 21.

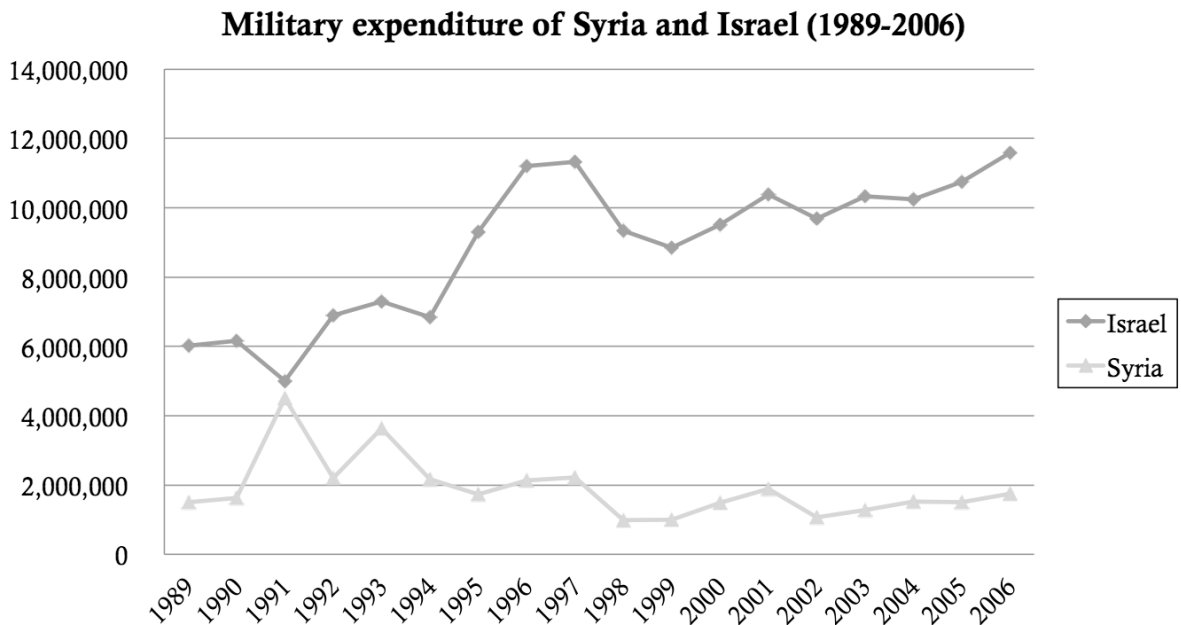
⁹ Singer et al., "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War," Version 4.0.

for the small power gap between both states, it highly contrasts highly with data on the corresponding military expenditure (see **Figure 33**).¹⁰



Source: COW CINC data

Figure 32: Relative share of world power: Syria and Israel (1989-2006)



Source: COW CINC data, Military Expenditure (thds. of current year U.S. dollars)

Figure 33: Military expenditure of Syria and Israel (1989 - 2006)

¹⁰ Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 161; Anthony H. Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006). 330.

With the exception of the immediate post-Gulf War years (1991-93), where aid from the Gulf States eased the pressure on Syria's tight military budget and expenditure rose substantially in 1991 to an almost equally high level, Israel's edge in defense spending became manifest again in 1994 and increased in the following decade.¹¹ In addition, and also not reflected in CINC data, the quality of Syria's military capacity had suffered heavily in the course of the observation period for several reasons.

Most decisively, the end of the Cold War deprived Damascus of its main source of both foreign aid and cheap arms deliveries.¹² Already in November 1989, USSR officials had declared Moscow's unwillingness to further support Syria's aspiration of strategic parity with Israel with free supply of arms.¹³ Against the background of decades of military cooperation, purchasing equipment from other than Russian sources, such as 600km-ranging Scud-C surface missiles from North Korea in early 1991, carried the risk of interoperability problems.¹⁴ In addition, Syria had failed to develop appropriate procurement, maintenance, and modernization strategies on its own, which stands in stark contrast to Israel.¹⁵ By the end of the observation period, Syria's armed forces had become what observers termed a "military museum,"¹⁶ while Israel was attested a "decisive edge in conventional forces"¹⁷ over all of its Arab neighbors, which was also backed by a regional monopoly of nuclear weapons.

A second advantage for Israel concerns the quality and combat strength of military forces. Over the years, endemic corruption, poor training, weak management structures, and a highly politicized and fragmented leadership had created "hollow" forces in Syria.¹⁸ Besides the reshuffling in the military security complex in the mid-1990s, major, though bloodless, purges took place in the first half of the 2000s, additionally weakening Syria's command structure.¹⁹

In addition to peace agreements with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994) and buffer zones in Gaza, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, Israel was able to maintain some ten percent of Lebanon under military occupation between 1985 and 2000.²⁰ Besides a small leverage over Lebanese domestic politics, the occupation and military operations against insurgent forces provided both

¹¹ Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 122; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 62.

¹² Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 122; Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process," 139.

¹³ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 44; Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 333.

¹⁴ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 64f; Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 336.

¹⁵ Israel, maintained a national defense industry, which is capable of producing modern weapon systems ———, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 54f; Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 161.

¹⁶ Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 153; Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah. The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005). 30.

¹⁸ Wahid, *Military Expenditure* 123; Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 339,347.

¹⁹ ———, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 339f; Robin Hughes. "Country Briefing: Syria - Syria's Dilemma." *Jane's Defense Weekly* (2005). Published electronically September 7. www.janes.com. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²⁰ Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 81.

IAF and IDF with an opportunity to train and test new equipment in a realistic environment.²¹ In contrast, Syria's military unchallenged presence in Lebanon, which particularly coincided with corruption and involvement in smuggling, affected the armed forces' overall strength negatively in a longitude perspective.²²

The neorealist *balancing* hypothesis N₁ suggested that the manifest and clear military imbalance of power in favor of Israel induced a general balancing pressure on Syrian politics, especially before 1990 and to a steadily increasing extent after 1994. As assumed by the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂, Israel's military edge provided a general incentive for policies aiming at abandonment avoiding.

7.1.2 Hizballah's capacity as an ally against Israel

Although many understood Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon as a military success for Hizballah, the group's estimated strength of 3,000 fighters and its classification as 'much weaker' relative to IDF forces in the EAC database suggest that its capacity was unlikely to be sufficient to even the imbalance of power between Syria and Israel.²³ In order to determine whether a subsequent incentive for Syrian policies of restraint has been subject to variations, particularly Hizballah's capacity to inflict damages on Israel and resist retaliation will be assessed as follows.

7.1.2.1 Attacks against Israel

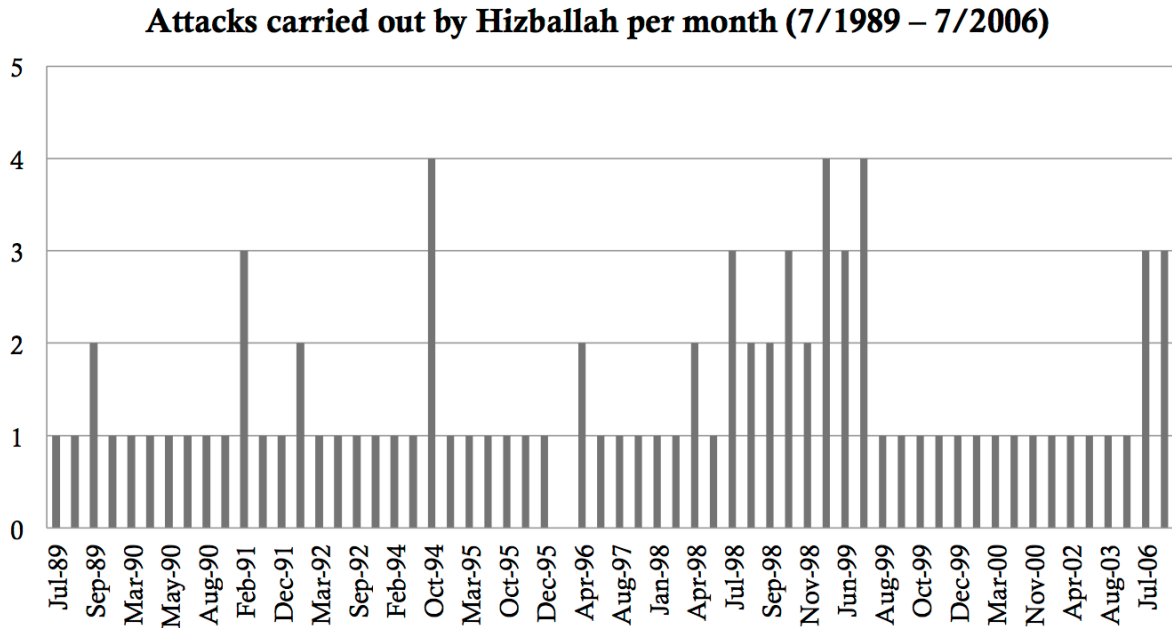
After the Israeli pullback to the security zone in 1985, Hizballah adapted to the subsequent strategic changes and chose a strategy of attrition in the 1990s, employing hit-and-run tactics with small units against patrols of IDF and the South Lebanon Army (SLA). Additionally, it improved reconnaissance and operational planning capacities, thereby strengthening the efficiency of its attacks.²⁴ However, GTD data indicates that both the number of terrorist attacks and their deadliness remained on a comparatively steady level throughout the observation period (see **Figure 34** and **Figure 35**).

²¹ This comfortable position diminished to a certain extent with Israel's withdrawal and the outbreak of asymmetric violence in the Occupied Territories during the Second Intifada in 2000. Gal Luft, "Israel's Security Zone in Lebanon - A "Tragedy"?", *Middle East Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (2000).

²² Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 25f.

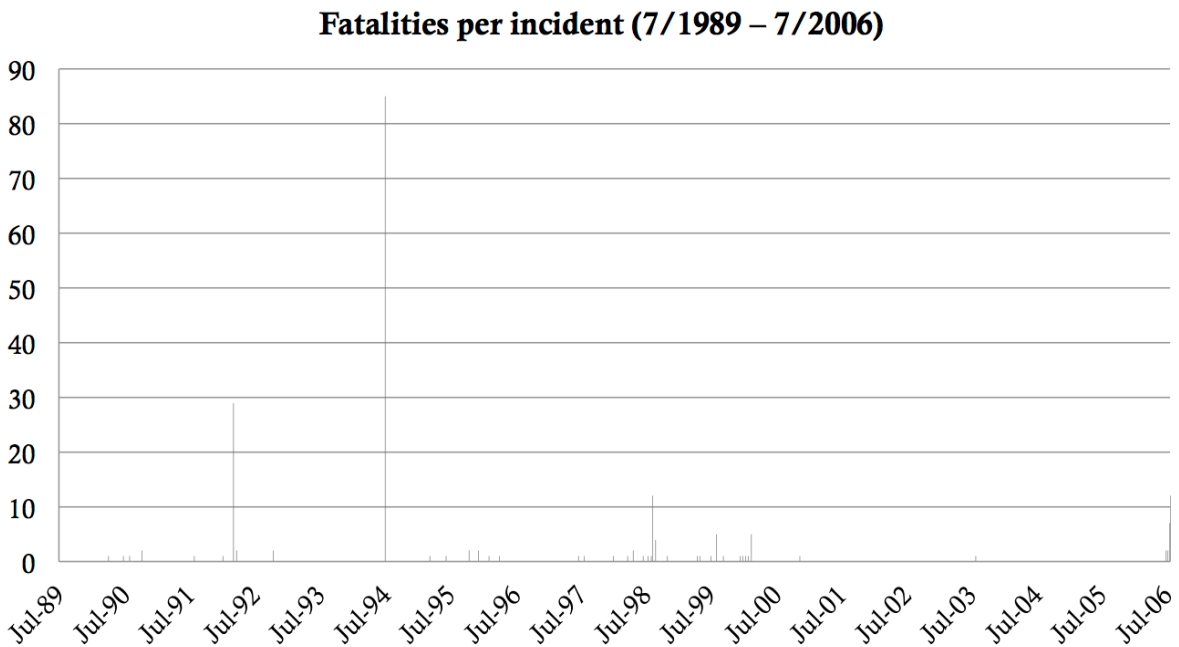
²³ Cunningham et al., "It Takes Two."

²⁴ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 123-126, 85.



Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "Global Terrorism Database [Data file]." (2012).

Figure 34: Attacks carried out by Hizballah 1989-2006 (frequency)



Source: National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). "Global Terrorism Database [Data file]." (2012).

Figure 35: Attacks carried out by Hizballah 1989-2006 (lethality)

Throughout the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, three trends steadily increased Hizballah's ability to attack Israel both in Lebanon and inside its own territory:

First, Hizballah improved its intelligence capacity, military equipment, and fighting tactics. Since 1991, it relied increasingly on Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and roadside bombs. Simultaneously, the group also started to use Sagger antitank and SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles, forcing IAF to temporarily suspend flights of C-47 aircraft in Lebanese airspace and improve the defense of IDF armored vehicles.²⁵ In 2000, Hizballah unveiled its ability to penetrate fortified bunkers with AT-4 Spigot and other anti-tank missiles.²⁶ In the second half of the 1990s, Hizballah carried out hundreds of attacks on security personnel, patrols, and military posts.²⁷ The overall number of IDF casualties rose continuously from 13 in 1992 to 23 in 1995, peaking in 1997 with 39 killed soldiers. By employing a strategy of entrenchment, IDF was able to reduce this number by 1998, yet only at the expense of increasing SLA frontline fatalities and the assassination of a high-ranking IDF commander in February 1999.²⁸ After the withdrawal, the group targeted IDF personnel in the occupied Shab'a Farms, by, for instance, firing anti-tank missiles on IDF positions in March 2002 on a near daily basis.²⁹

Second, Hizballah internationalized the conflict by 1992. In response to the assassination of General Secretary Abbas al-Musawi on February 16, a suicide bombing struck the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, leaving 29 civilians dead and 242 injured.³⁰ Two years later, another suicide attack in the Argentinian capital, this time on the Mutual Israeli Association of Argentina (AMIA), killed 85 people and wounded another 300.³¹ In addition, Hizballah carried the war to Israel's territory. On February 17, the group fired Katyusha rockets into northern Israel for the first time, targeting population centers in the Galilee.³² These attacks hit Israel's public morale severely and undermined the government's efforts to justify the occupation as the only strategy to provide security for northern Israel.³³

Finally, Hizballah boosted its combat strength by employing psychological warfare strategies.³⁴ In 1991, for instance, Hizballah launched its TV-station al-Manar, broadcasting not only pictures

²⁵ Ibid., 132, 129.

²⁶ Ibid., 246, 197f.

²⁷ According to UNIFIL sources, 644 attacks took place in the security zone in 1994 and their number increased to 908 the following year. From 855 attacks in 1997, the number of assaults rose to 1,500 in 1998 *ibid.*, 145-149, 200.

²⁸ Ibid., 211, 224-226.

²⁹ Ibid., 292-297, 322, 312.

³⁰ Ibid., 98.

³¹ Ibid., 115.

³² Ibid., 98f.

³³ Furthermore, the constant alert in Israel's north also caused substantial economic damage. On February 6, 2000, for instance, the government wrongfully anticipated Katyusha fire in response to an IAF raid in Lebanon and ordered a 48-hour state of emergency in the area, accounting for an economic damage of nearly \$5 million. *Ibid.*, 132f., 200, 247f; Luft, "Israel's Security Zone in Lebanon," 14f; Mahdi Ahoiue, "The Middle East Peace Process from the perspective of Revolutionary Iran. Will Tehran ever take part?," *Iran Analysis Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (2004).

³⁴ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 123.

of Lebanese civilian casualties but also of injured and killed Israeli soldiers, as well as clips in Hebrew after 1996, confronting the Israeli public with the price of the occupation.³⁵

7.1.2.2 Support base

*"Hizballah is a movement whose members are Lebanese, its leadership is Lebanese, the decision is Lebanese and it is made by a Lebanese leadership. The movement is fighting on Lebanese soil for the cause of liberating Lebanese territory and for the honor and freedom of the Lebanese people and the nation in general."*³⁶

Hasan Nasrallah, March 16, 1997

In 2002, Richard Armitage, U.S. deputy secretary of state, described Hizballah as "the A-Team of terrorists," based on the group's operational success but also its mobilization base.³⁷ Between the mid-1980s and 1998, Hizballah's support base rose from some 7,000 partisans to about 6,000 trained fighters and some 10,000 active supporters.³⁸ In late 2006, analysts estimated the number of active members as being around 20,000 with additional tens of thousands passive supporters.³⁹

The politically and economically disaffected, yet internally cohesive, Shia Muslim community in the Bekaa Valley constituted Hizballah's core constituency and basis of support and recruitment. Linking promises of Shia empowerment in Lebanese politics and material assistance to impoverished families to fierce resistance against the Israeli occupation served as a catalyst for recruitment among Shia Muslims also in Southern Lebanon.⁴⁰ Throughout the 1990s, Hizballah also established an international network of societal support among Lebanese Shia expatriate communities, particularly in Western Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South as well as North America.⁴¹

Initially, Lebanon's deep societal fragmentation and suspicions of Iranian and Syrian interference limited Hizballah's appeal to other communities. After 1989, however, Hizballah gradually portrayed itself as ideologically flexible and a genuine national party, making amends with the secular, liberal, and multi-denominational state, and attracted additional support from inside and outside of Lebanon.⁴² In 1997, Hizballah was even able to form a new unit of fighters from non-Shia

³⁵ Ibid., 135-137.

³⁶ Eyal Zisser, "Hizballah. Between Armed Struggle and Domestic Politics," in *Revolutionaries and reformers: contemporary Islamist movements in the Middle East*, ed. Barry Rubin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 94.

³⁷ Richard Armitage. "America's Challenges in a Changed World." September 5 (2002). <http://1.usa.gov/1dWp8eg>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Daniel Byman, "The Lebanese Hizballah and Israeli Counterterrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 12 (2011): 917; Leroy Bryant Butler, *Hezbollah: the dynamics of recruitment*. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 2011). 3.

³⁸ Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 40; Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: the story of the party of God: from Revolution to institutionalization* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 117.

³⁹ Butler, *Hezbollah*: 28f.

⁴⁰ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 82. See also Butler, *Hezbollah*: 25f; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 49f; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 81-85, 108, 112f.

⁴¹ Ely Karmon, "'Fight on All Fronts': Hizballah, the War on Terror, and the War in Iraq," *Policy Focus* 46(2003); Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances," 141-148; Costigan and Gold, *Terroronomics*: 33f; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 356.

⁴² Throughout the 1990s, for instance, al-Manar mobilized cross-sectarian resentment of Israel's presence and support among secular and Sunni Muslim Palestinians as well as the wider Arab and Muslim world instead of being an outlet of Islamist propaganda. ———, *Warriors of God*: 134f, 352; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 3f, 48f; Neria and Shapira, "Hezbollah," 21.

communities in Lebanon.⁴³ Three years later, societal support for Hizballah reached a climax with the Israeli withdrawal on May 24, which Hasan Nasrallah declared a “day of victory for all Lebanese.”⁴⁴ Internationally, a wave of admiration on the Arab Street and UN General Secretary Kofi Annan’s decision to meet Nasrallah in Lebanon frustrated Israeli and U.S. efforts to reach international condemnation and isolation of Hizballah.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, the intra-sectarian, national, and international consensus on Hizballah’s exceptional position eroded in the post-withdrawal period. First, Hizballah failed to deliver on its promise to improve the position of their Shia kin inside Lebanon and faced new competitors in the Shia realm.⁴⁶ Second, the absence of broad international support for an Israeli withdrawal from the Shab’a Farms encouraged those in- and outside Lebanon calling for disarmament of Hizballah, as resistance was no longer necessary.⁴⁷ Third, increasing sectarian tensions after the 2003 Iraq War exacerbated Hizballah’s ability to maintain its cross-sectarian profile.⁴⁸ Eventually, the domestic and regional balance shifted against the group after the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri on February 14, 2005, and the July 2006 War. Although fighting Israel to a stalemate was a major military success, several constituencies in Lebanon refused to pay the price for the escalation. Only after a major reconstruction and propaganda campaign and the revitalization of cross-sectarian alignments, Hizballah was able to partially rebuild its nationalist credentials and mobilize non-Shia supporters against international pressure for disarmament.⁴⁹

Internationally, Iran had been a key and constant source of support for Hizballah ever since the group’s formation, providing it generously with arms, money, training, and endorsing it among both the Lebanese Shia and Tehran’s allies in Damascus and Moscow. Throughout the observation period, Iran’s commitment was only moderately reduced and temporarily subordinated to Tehran’s efforts to attract Western support for its economic recovery from the Iran-Iraq war.⁵⁰

7.1.2.3 Cohesion of command

As in the cases of Fatah/PLO and the PKK, EAC data attests Hizballah a clear central command yet only moderate control over its constituencies.⁵¹ Hence, the following section will con-

⁴³ The Saraya Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya (Lebanese Resistance Brigades) launched its first attacks in March 1998, commemorating Israel’s invasion into Lebanon in 1978. Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 101,197,212.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 281f.

⁴⁵ “Annan meets guerrilla chief.” BBC (2000). Published electronically June 20. <http://bbc.in/1fmpfSW>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Zisser, “Hizballah,” 96; Hinnebusch, *The international politics of the Middle East*: 60,237.

⁴⁶ Zisser, “Hizballah,” 97f; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 101.

⁴⁷ Zisser, “Hizballah,” 98; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 303f.

⁴⁸ Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 121ff.

⁴⁹ The Lebanese War 2006 had caused an economic damage of some \$15 billion. See Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 412f.,439f.

⁵⁰ On Iranian support for Hizballah, see also Ranstorp, “Hizballah’s Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions.”; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: chapter 6; Kirchner, *Allianz mit dem Terror*; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 93f.

⁵¹ Cunningham et al. 4.

secutively turn to Hizballah's internal structure and competitors in the realm of Lebanese resistance against Israel.

Since its establishment, Hizballah's collective leadership was highly cohesive.⁵² Furthermore, the leadership institutionalized a key decision-making council (*Majlis al-Shura*) and the position of General Secretary by 1989. These formal institutions as well as corresponding sub-committees and local councils allowed the political leadership to exert control over the military wing.⁵³ Nevertheless, the changed political situation in Lebanon after the end of the civil war exacerbated internal frictions between hardliners rejecting any cooperation with the Lebanese state and pragmatists opting for political integration. Backed by Iran and Syria, the latter group prevailed over the first and Hasan Nasrallah took over the post of General Secretary from Suhbi al-Tufayli in 1992.⁵⁴ In the following years, fluctuation in the leadership structure was limited and stemmed seldom from internal friction.⁵⁵ In what observers consider the biggest internal discord so far, al-Tufayli founded the "Revolution of the Hungry" in 1997, a group criticizing Hizballah for neglecting its Shia kin, and openly challenging it at the ballot box the next year.⁵⁶ However, although Nasrallah's prominent position in the party steadily increased—manifested by his reelection for life in July 2001—open rivalry did not break out.⁵⁷

Regarding command over its constituencies, Hizballah largely benefitted from two developments. First, the vacuum created by the PLO's departure from Lebanon in 1982 allowed for the emergence of a substitute, Lebanese resistance against Israel.⁵⁸ Deprived of a political leadership and the option to resettle in the Galilee after the 1993 Oslo Accords, Lebanon's 300,000 Palestinian residents became a factor merely in domestic affairs and no competitor to Hizballah as a champion of Lebanese resistance against Israel emerged from them.⁵⁹

Second, Hizballah became the strongest force in the Shia realm by the mid-1990s as the acquiescence of Amal, the then leading representative of the Shia community, to the Israeli occupation served as a catalyst for defections to radical and resolute resistance.⁶⁰ While direct infighting in the late 1980s ended in a military standoff, Hizballah's status as legitimate resistance against Isra-

⁵² According to Palmer Harik, the main reason for Hizballah's internal coherence was the shared experience of its leading figures in the Najaf religious seminary under the guidance of Ayatollah Khomeini. Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 53f.

⁵³ Joseph Alagha, *Hizballah's Documents. From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifest* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2011). 154-158.

⁵⁴ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 94,100f; Neriah and Shapira, "Hezbollah," 6.

⁵⁵ Alagha, *Hizballah's Documents*: 158f.

⁵⁶ Azani, *Hezbollah*: 102; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 105f; Alagha, *Hizballah's Documents*: 160; Zisser, "Hizballah," 97f.

⁵⁷ Alagha, *Hizballah's Documents*: 162.

⁵⁸ Numerous young Shia that had fought alongside the Palestinians joined the organization, such as Imad Mughniyah who would later become a key military leader of Hizballah. Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 27f.

⁵⁹ William W. Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997). 309-311.

⁶⁰ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 49f.,64-81; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 302.

el shifted the intra-Shia political balance in the early 1990s.⁶¹ However, Amal continued to be a key force especially in the formal institutions of the state and in the South, thereby constituting an ongoing impediment for outright Hizballah dominance in Shia affairs.⁶²

7.1.2.4 Ability to escape or resist retaliation

After IDF's partial withdrawal from Lebanon in 1985, Israeli land and air forces have repeatedly retaliated against Hizballah, mainly resorting to three strategies. First, decapitation measures, such as the assassination of al-Musawi in 1992, second, targeted air strikes against Hizballah positions in the Bekaa Valley and southern Beirut, and third, major military operations in 1993, 1996, and 2006, intending to set the local population against Hizballah and pressure the Lebanese government to reign in the group.⁶³ Hence, the following section examines whether and under what conditions Hizballah was able to escape or even resist these retaliatory strikes.

As al-Musawi's assassination and several abductions of lower ranking commanders reveal, Hizballah was not able to escape decapitation. However, its attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992 demonstrated a capacity of global retaliation and created an effective deterrent. In the following years, Israel did not cease targeted killings of Hizballah members but refrained from attacking senior leaders.⁶⁴

On a similar note, IAF exposed Hizballah's vulnerability to targeted retaliation in June 1994, when jets and helicopter gunships shot and killed over 40 recruits sleeping in tents and huts in the Ain Dardara Camp located in the eastern Bekaa Valley, assuming that the mere presence of Hizballah's and Syrian air defense systems would deter Israel from attacking.⁶⁵ In addition to another act of global retaliation, the AMIA bombing, Hizballah adapted to its structural vulnerability to air strikes by moving to the more wooded western flanks of the Bekaa and adjusting its training methods to a more flexible structure.⁶⁶ Hence, when IAF bombed inter alia two Hizballah buildings in southern Beirut and a weapons depot in the Bekaa Valley in 1996, the group lost a significantly smaller number of fighters than in the course of a similar operation in 1993 and damage to decisive organizational infrastructure was limited.⁶⁷

Throughout the observation period, Hizballah developed remarkable technological and intelligence capabilities to thwart IDF retaliation efforts. By 1997, the group was, for instance, able to infiltrate SLA and thus detect IDF/SLA cooperation, and to intercept Israeli UAV video trans-

⁶¹ ———, *Faces of Lebanon*: 302-304; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 92.

⁶² Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 304f; Zisser, "Hizballah," 93-97.

⁶³ In this context, Israel conducted strikes inter alia against Lebanese infrastructure in July 1993 (Operation "Accountability"), April 1996 (Operation "Grapes of Wrath"), and July 2006 (Second Lebanon War)

⁶⁴ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 98f.

⁶⁵ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 318.

⁶⁶ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 115f.

⁶⁷ According to Hizballah's head of international relations, Nawaf Musawi, operations had not even inflicted "a scratch" on the group's capabilities. *Ibid.*, 175,155f.

missions, thereby undermining Israeli attempts to emulate Hizballah's guerilla tactics. Finally, Hizballah gained the military capacity to destroy Israeli Merkava tanks with AT-4 Spigot anti-tank missiles.⁶⁸ This increasing capacity to resist retaliation reflected in the narrowing of the fatality ratio between IDF (and SLA) and Hizballah personnel. While in 1990, Hizballah casualties were five times higher than those of Israel and its Lebanese ally, the ratio rapidly sank to 2:1 in 1991, and settled down at a stable level of about 1.5:1 until the Israeli withdrawal in 2000.⁶⁹

In contrast to both Fatah and PKK, Hizballah successfully established a 'balance of terror', enabling it to even deter Israeli retaliation. In July 1993, for instance, Hizballah responded to IAF strikes by firing hundreds of rockets into Israel, raising skepticism inside Israel over the operation's effectiveness.⁷⁰ In response to IAF strikes on Beirut, villages in the South of Sidon, and power plants, in April 1996, Hizballah fired more than 24 Katyushas on a single day into Israel, pressuring the government into a formal agreement.⁷¹ As Hizballah carefully paid attention to refrain from disproportional retaliation, it effectively constrained Israel's leeway of retribution and shifted, according to some observers, even the direction of deterrence.⁷²

After 2000, Hizballah expanded intelligence gathering to northern Israel and established a vast bunker-and-tunnel system in southern Lebanon.⁷³ While the tunnel system strengthened Hizballah's defensive posture in the event of a ground invasion, its secretive character reduced the risk of targeted raids and retained an important element of surprise.⁷⁴ By 2004, Hizballah had also established a heavily secured command and control center in southern Beirut as well as a system of safety locations.⁷⁵ Hizballah's deterrence capacity temporarily collapsed in July 2006, when Israel escalated the conflict, bombing the group's strongholds in south Beirut. Nevertheless, the safety points ensured that propaganda and military operations continued virtually without interruption, enabling Hizballah to prevent IDF victories on the ground and pressure Israel into a cease-fire by steadily increasing the number and range of rockets fired into Israel.⁷⁶

Conclusion

The neorealist hypotheses N₂ (*standing firm*) and N₃ (*restraining*) suggested that if Hizballah was capable of filling Syria's need for assistance in balancing the common rival, fears of alliance entrapment are less pressing. Hizballah's strength in all four STAR-dimensions (See 3.3.1) increased throughout the observation period, reaching an estimated overall peak in the years lead-

⁶⁸ Ibid., 190-200.

⁶⁹ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 315; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 145.

⁷⁰ ———, *Warriors of God*: 147; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 123.

⁷¹ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 155-159.

⁷² Ibid., 328.

⁷³ Ibid., 314.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 335f.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 350.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 380f., 393.

ing to and the aftermath of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. Hence, although the group lacked sufficient material capacity to defeat the IDF in a conventional battle or deter it persistently from retaliating, its 'balance of terror' produced remarkable policy gains until Israel's withdrawal. Apart from Syria's military presence in Lebanon as a potential deterrent, Hizballah's ability to escape retaliation was limited by the lack of areas of retreat outside of Lebanon. However, by adjusting to this vulnerability, Hizballah was not only able to evade and resist retaliatory strikes but also to at least temporarily deter them.

Despite the fact that the general tendency towards entrapment risks, which is inherent to sponsorship of terrorism, is expected to be substantially less strong in the second half of the 1990s, the Israeli withdrawal, 9/11, and regional polarization gradually weakened Hizballah's domestic and international reputation as a legitimate, national resistance. As in the early 1990s, when supporting Islamist and rejectionist Hizballah stood in contrast to a sincere commitment to the Peace Process, supporting the group in times of the waging *war on terror* entailed an increased risk of entrapment.

7.1.3 Severity of conflict

One assumption derived from the explanatory model is that states give a priority to preventing their allies from abandonment policies if both interstate conflict and the probability of war with their adversary are high. Although formally at war since 1948, bilateral relations between Israel and Syria were subject to substantial variation between 1989 and 2006, which this section will examine as follows.

Since Israel's invasion into Lebanon in 1982 and subsequent clashes, no large-scale military confrontations have occurred between both states. Nevertheless, relations remained conflictual throughout the observation period, mostly as territorial revisionism persisted because of Syria's inability to regain the Golan Heights by conventional military means and Hafiz al-Asad's ongoing perception of Israel as an aggressive and expansive entity.⁷⁷ Between 1992 and 1996, however, bilateral relations experienced a moderate thaw in the context of the Peace Talks in general and negotiations over an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan in particular.⁷⁸

The conflict worsened in February 1996, when Israel suspended all land-for-peace talks in response to a series of deadly terrorist attacks and the Syrian government reportedly encouraged Hizballah violence in south Lebanon in order to remind Israel that its security would require a full withdrawal.⁷⁹ Tensions further increased in May 1996, as the new Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, refused to proceed with negotiations from where they had come to a halt and Syrian officials revived their hostile rhetoric. President Asad and Chief of Staff Shihabi de-

⁷⁷ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 103; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 31.

⁷⁸ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 100-109; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 82; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 116.

⁷⁹ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 99; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 150; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 118.

nounced Israel as an aggressor and thief, threatening that it would pay a heavy price for any aggression against Syria.⁸⁰ Negotiations resumed in 1998, yet collapsed in early 2000 inter alia after Netanyahu's successor Ehud Barak had linked their future to Syria reining in Hizballah's operations in south Lebanon.⁸¹

The importance of Lebanon as a factor in the conflict between Syria and Israel reflected in the fact that between 1989 and 2001, the MID dataset lists violent conflict incidents between the adversaries only in the context of the Lebanese-Israeli conflict.⁸²

In 1993, for instance, Israeli air raids killed up to six Syrian soldiers in the Bekaa Valley and Israel's envoy to the Peace Talks, Itamar Rabinovich, warned Syria that retaliation for Hizballah attacks would not necessarily be limited to the group itself.⁸³ Although Israeli officials denied in retrospective to have directly targeted Syrian forces in the course of Operation "Grapes of Wrath" in April 1996, IAF jets hit a Syrian aircraft position in Beirut, killing one soldier and injuring several others.⁸⁴ In addition, Netanyahu repeatedly emphasized Syria's destructive role in Lebanon and aimed at isolating Damascus through a separate agreement with Beirut, while calls for military sanctions against Syria mounted in the security military-complex.⁸⁵ In response to a warning by Israeli officials in August 1996, that further cross-border escalation by Hizballah would elicit retaliatory measures, Syria redeployed parts of its 14th Special Forces Division from Beirut to the Bekaa Valley.⁸⁶

Government transition in both countries in 2000 and the outbreak of the Second Intifadah in the Occupied Territories also affected bilateral relations after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Syria's new president Bashar al-Asad, for instance, repeatedly and publicly rejected the legitimacy of Israel's existence, denouncing it as an abnormal "colonialist-settlement entity."⁸⁷ Israel, in return, shifted the target of retaliation for Hizballah attacks to Syria's military outposts in Lebanon. On April 15, 2001, for instance, IAF fighter planes destroyed a Syrian radar station in the Dahr al-Baydar area of Mount Lebanon, killing four soldiers in the first targeted attack on Syrian positions since 1982.⁸⁸ Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres justified the attack, arguing that as long as Syrian military presence and hegemony in Lebanon persisted, it bore responsibility for at-

⁸⁰ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 121f.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 124f; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 246-251; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 148f.

⁸² Ghosn et al., "MID3 Data Set."

⁸³ Additionally, the mass flight of the southern population amid the military campaign, raised concerns in Damascus that Israel was about to create a *fait accompli* by depopulating the south permanently. Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 150.

⁸⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 84; Zisser, "Syria," 653.

⁸⁵ Karmon, "A Solution to Syrian Terrorism."

⁸⁶ Zisser, "Syria," 653.

⁸⁷ ———, *Commanding Syria*: 152.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

tacks in and beyond the border area.⁸⁹ Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer called the attack a signal for Syria that “the rules of the game have changed.”⁹⁰ Although Syrian officials announced to hold Israel responsible for the attack, Damascus refrained from military action.⁹¹

As Hizballah attacks continued, an Israeli air-to-surface missile destroyed another Syrian radar station in the Bekaa Valley on July 1, wounding three soldiers. Again, Syria limited retaliation to a warning by foreign minister Faruq al-Shar’ that “Israel will be held responsible for the consequences of any further retaliation on the entire region, world security and peace.”⁹²

Driven somewhat into a corner by Israel’s diplomatic success in linking the U.S. *War on Terror* after 2001 to its own non-state competitors, Asad escalated his rhetoric against Israel and declared, for instance, in March 2003 that its existence itself was perceived as a threat.⁹³ Simultaneously, Israel pressured Syria both militarily and diplomatically to reign in its non-state allies in Lebanon and the Occupied Territories. In August, for instance, IAF jets overflew the presidential palace in Latakia and carried out an airstrike against a PFLP camp northwest of Damascus, the first on Syrian territory since 1973, on October 5.⁹⁴ Shortly after, Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon denounced Damascus for tolerating mass transfers of Iranian rockets to Hizballah and the group’s unhindered presence in south Lebanon.⁹⁵

In the following years, both sides chose a more moderate approach to the conflict and officials advocated a resumption of the Peace Process. Although both parties failed to reach a formal agreement, they displayed a clear preference for maintaining the status quo.⁹⁶

In a final round of rhetorical escalation, Asad rejected the continuation of peace talks in January 2006 and accused Israel of attempting to reshape the region. In response, Israel’s Ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman, called Syria part of a “new axis of evil and terror.”⁹⁷ When violence escalated between Hizballah and Israel in July 2006, Israeli officials vowed to hold Syria responsible, as the group was “merely the finger on the blood-stained and long-reaching arms of Syria and Iran.”⁹⁸ In response, Asad called on the Syrian armed forces to prepare for military confrontation.⁹⁹ In the course of fighting, however, Israeli officials such as Defense Minister Amir Peretz,

⁸⁹ Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 156.

⁹⁰ Deborah Sonntag. “Israeli Airstrike deep into Lebanon unsettles Arabs.” *New York Times* (2001). Published electronically April 17. <http://nyti.ms/1c0Q5Ry>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² “Israel attacks Syrian radar station.” *BBC* (2001). Published electronically July 1. <http://bbc.in/1bR8Xit>. Accessed January 31, 2014. See also Morshed Dandash, “Israeli Planes Attack Syrian Position,” *Associated Press*, July 1 2001; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 160.

⁹³ ———, *Commanding Syria*: 153,163f; Salloukh, “Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad ” 163; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 76.

⁹⁴ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 326; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 164f; Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 96.

⁹⁵ Ariel Sharon, “Prime Minister Ariel Sharon speaks to Members of European Parliaments,” (2003).

⁹⁶ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 362; Hinnebusch, “Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad,” 15f.

⁹⁷ Fred H. Lawson, “Syria’s Relations with Iran: Managing the Dilemmas of Alliance,” *Middle East Journal* 61, no. 1 (2007): 43.

⁹⁸ UN Security Council, “5489th meeting [Provisional Verbatim Record],” *S/PV.5489*, July 14 2006.

⁹⁹ Lawson, “Syria’s Relations with Iran,” 45.

repeatedly reiterated another message; they had no intention of drawing Syria into their war with Hizballah.¹⁰⁰

Although territorial revisionism and conflict remained significant features of bilateral relations, the probability of interstate war was comparatively low in the post-Cold War era. On the one hand, this assessment points toward a priority of entrapment risks in Syria's alignment with Hizballah, as the neorealist *restraining* hypothesis N₃ suggested. According to the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂, on the other, incentives for a policy of resolve are expected to have occurred during conflicting times, such as Netanyahu's first term as prime minister or during Israel's political-military initiative to hold Syria responsible for attacks by Palestinian groups and Hizballah (2000-03). Despite diplomatic deadlock and rhetorical hostility, the conflict decreased to a non-violent level after 2003 and again strengthened incentives for a policy of restraint.

7.1.4 Availability of allies

*"No single Arab country can establish a balance of power, however limited, with Israel."*¹⁰¹

Bashar al-Asad, June 2003

As maintained in section 5.1.4 and 6.1.4, the lack of reliable interstate allies, a factor increasing abandonment fears, had been a structural deficit of Syrian foreign policy.¹⁰² Hence, the following section examines whether Syria has been able to form interstate alignments and alliances against Israel after the Cold War.

In 1991, Syria's most important formal alliance, the Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with the USSR, collapsed and a rapprochement was impeded in the following years by disputes over Syrian debts, Moscow's dependence on Washington, and its efforts to improve bilateral ties with Israel.¹⁰³ Relations steadily improved between 1996 and 2001, entailing major arms deals and agreements on foreign aid.¹⁰⁴ In November 2002, however, Moscow's commitment reached an all-time low when it abandoned plans to sell advanced SA-8 surface-to-air missiles to Syria.¹⁰⁵ As indicated already in section 6.1.4, Moscow's changing commitment compelled Syria to reach out for alternative allies, such as the pro-Western Arab States as well as their Iranian and Iraqi rivals.¹⁰⁶ In order to overcome regional isolation, Syria reestablished full diplomatic relations with

¹⁰⁰ Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 114-116.

¹⁰¹ Bashar Asad. "Interview with Al-Arabiya TV." SANA (2003). Published electronically June 10. <http://bit.ly/lil2u4z>. Accessed January 31, 2014. See also Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 164.

¹⁰² ———, *Asad's Legacy*: 71.

¹⁰³ Gibler and Sarkees, "Measuring Alliances."; Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East*: 92.

¹⁰⁴ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 85f; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 52f; Cordesman, *Arab-Israeli Military Forces*: 337; Gary Gambill, "The Military-Intelligence Shakeup in Syria," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 4, no. 2 (2002).

¹⁰⁵ Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 180; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 77.

¹⁰⁶ Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process," 139; Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 156.

Egypt in 1989, signed the Damascus Declaration, calling for security cooperation with the Gulf Monarchies and Egypt in 1990, and joined the US-led alliance against Iraq the same year.¹⁰⁷

However, Syria was not able to divert resources stemming from these alliance patterns directly to its conflict with Israel for several reasons.¹⁰⁸ First, Cairo confined its assistance of Syria against Israel to diplomatic backing.¹⁰⁹ Second, heavy Iranian pressure on Syria undermined multilateral strategic and military cooperation with the Gulf States.¹¹⁰ Third, both the respective peace treaties, which Egypt (1979), the PLO (1993), and Jordan (1994) had signed with Israel, and bilateral tensions, particularly after 1996, impeded joint military cooperation against Israel, frustrating Syrian hopes for a united Arab front in negotiations.¹¹¹ After siding with the anti-Iraq coalition had deprived Syria of a potential ally against Israel, relations with Bagdad improved in the second half of the 1990s. However, although reports indicated plans to improve bilateral strategic cooperation, including military equipment sales, they focused mostly on economic cooperation.¹¹² Although relations improved by the end of the decade, Syria's inter-Arab alignments displayed little resolve vis-à-vis Israel. In contrast, the 2002 Saudi-sponsored Arab Peace Initiative threatened to override Syrian security interests.¹¹³ The post-Cold War axis of Damascus, Cairo, and Riyadh eventually collapsed with the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri and disagreement over the Second Lebanon War reinforced inter-Arab tensions in 2006.¹¹⁴

Despite its domestic fragility, Lebanon became a key Syrian ally in the Arab arena after both countries signed a *Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination* on May 22, 1991. The agreement *de facto* legitimized the deployment of Syrian troops in Lebanon and obliged the latter to not becoming "a transit point or base for any force state or organization that seeks to undermine its security or that of Syria."¹¹⁵ Although Lebanon appeared to be rather helpless regarding Israeli strikes on Syrian positions and opposition to Syria's military presence increased after 2000,

¹⁰⁷ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 50; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 53.

¹⁰⁸ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 55f; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 105.

¹⁰⁹ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 80.

¹¹⁰ Michael N. Barnett, "Regional security after the Gulf War," *Political Science Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (1996-7): 602; Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran*: 288-290; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 108f.

¹¹¹ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 88-92; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 55; William W. Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble," *Middle East Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (2005); Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 159f; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 170.

¹¹² Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 181; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 58,73.

¹¹³ Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 42.

¹¹⁴ Bashar Asad. "Speech of President Bashar al-Assad at Journalists Union 4th Conference." SANA (2006). Published electronically August 15. <http://bit.ly/Lov1Ky>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 124; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 416; Bassel F. Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed," *MERIP Reports* 236(2005); Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."

¹¹⁵ Syrian Lebanese Higher Council. "Fraternity, Cooperation and Coordination Treaty between the Republic of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic." May 22, (1991). <http://bit.ly/1eqOKED>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

Beirut provided Damascus with a buffer zone for Israeli operations against Syria on its vulnerable southwestern flank.¹¹⁶

Since 1980, Syria and Iran maintained an informal and defensive alignment, aimed at neutralizing the increasing offensive capabilities of Iraq and Israel.¹¹⁷ In 1991, Tehran and Damascus further deepened and institutionalized their relations by establishing a Joint Higher Syrian-Iranian Cooperation Committee as well as joint programs to produce ballistic surface-to-surface- and Scud-missiles.¹¹⁸ Relations soured when Syria improved its ties to the Gulf States and entered into peace talks with Israel, which Iran strongly opposed.¹¹⁹ Hence, when a breakthrough between Israel and Syria seemed attainable in mid-1995, Iranian foreign minister Velayati warned Syria that “the more a country gets close to the usurper regime [Israel], the more it will distance itself from us.”¹²⁰

Against the background of the collapse of negotiations and the Israeli-Turkish security agreement of 1996, relations quickly improved. In this context, Iranian officials even pledged to come to Syria’s aid in the case of an attack and after two subsequent visits of Asad to Tehran in 1997, mutual visits of high-ranking officials took place repeatedly in the following four years.¹²¹ Although diverging opinions on U.S. policy in the region since late 2001 initially weakened the alignment, the rapid deterioration of both parties’ relations with Washington paved the way for increased cooperation after 2003.¹²² Subsequently, both countries signed and ratified a *Joint Strategic Cooperation Accord* in November 2005 and established two joint signal intelligence installations in northwestern Syria and in the Golan Heights.¹²³ Reportedly, Iran also provided financial assistance to Syria’s acquisition of Russian air defense systems and delivered military equipment directly to Syria.¹²⁴ The alliance reached a peak in formality and publicity on June 15, 2006, when Iran’s Defense Minister Mostafa Najjar, and his Syrian counterpart Hasan Turkmani announced

¹¹⁶ Throughout the observation period, the Lebanese government provided, for instance, an official cover for Hizballah operations against Israel and in the aftermath of Israel’s withdrawal in May 2000, Lebanese president Emile Lahoud supported Syrian claims that Israel should also withdraw from the Shaba’a Farms. See Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 139f; El-Hokayem, “Hizballah and Syria,” 39f.

¹¹⁷ Jubin M. Goodarzi, “Syria and Iran: Alliance Cooperation in a Changing Regional Environment,” *Ortadoğu Etütleri* 4, no. 2 (2013): 35.

¹¹⁸ Reportedly, Iran also provided military assistance, helping Syria to acquire and develop advanced weaponry and chemical as well as biological weapons *ibid.*, 46f; ———, *Syria and Iran*: 289-292; Zisser, *Asad’s Legacy*: 82.

¹¹⁹ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 183f., 191f; Zisser, *Asad’s Legacy*: 83; Satya Swaminathan, “Syria’s Diplomatic History with Iran,” *Global Forum Journal* 3(Spring 2007): 28.

¹²⁰ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 193.

¹²¹ Zisser, *Asad’s Legacy*: 83; Flynt L. Leverett and Martin Indyk, *The Road Ahead. Middle East policy in the Bush administration’s second term* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2005). 132.

¹²² ———, *The Road Ahead*: 133f; Swaminathan, “Syria’s Diplomatic History with Iran,” 28; Lawson, “Syria’s Relations with Iran,” 40-42.

¹²³ Anthony H. Cordesman, *Israel and Syria. The Military Balance and Prospects of War* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007). 64.

¹²⁴ Farhad Pouladi, “Iran, Syria Sign Defense Agreement,” *Agence France Presse* (2006); Cordesman, *Israel and Syria*: 64.

to have signed a military cooperation agreement „against Israel's threats."¹²⁵ Despite vagueness over specific military components of the agreement, Najjar signaled a strong commitment, declaring that Iran "considers Syria's security its own security, and we consider our defense capabilities to be those of Syria."¹²⁶ Accordingly, during the July 2006 War, Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad threatened to perceive an attack on Syria as an "equivalent to an attack on the whole Islamic world."¹²⁷ However, other high-ranking officials quickly denounced reports of an Iranian intervention as baseless rumors and reported that Tehran would "never militarily" participate in this conflict.¹²⁸

Throughout the observation period, Syria failed to establish a Pan-Arab alliance against Israel as the moderates' pro-Western stance and bilateral peace agreements impeded an Arab commitment to Syria's territorial revisionism and threat perception. These limitations on cooperation, and Syria's increasing isolation in the Arab World—especially against the background of growing sectarianism after 2003—induced fears of abandonment. While the steady formalization and deepening of Syria's alliance with Iran after 1996 alleviated such fears, Iran's support for Hizballah (See 7.1.2.2) assumedly limited Syrian leeway for a policy of restraint.

7.1.5 Strategic interest in upholding the alignment

A final component of the sponsorship dilemma, which induces abandonment fears, is the sponsor's strategic interest in upholding the alignment. According to Snyder, such an interest is present, if the alliance prevents others from accessing resources deemed as important, for instance in order to secure domestic power capacities or scarce economic goods.¹²⁹

Intertwined with the alignment has been Syria's strategic aim of maintaining control over Lebanon, which covers the entire western flank of southern Syria and borders the key regions of central Homs and Damascus.¹³⁰ Besides geographical proximity, it were historical linkages, transnational ties, and territorial revisionism in the context of 'Greater Syria' that made Lebanon also an influential factor in Syrian domestic politics.¹³¹ In addition, dominance over Lebanon served as

¹²⁵ Pouladi, "Iran, Syria Sign Defense Agreement."; Cordesman, *Israel and Syria*: 64; Gibler, *International military alliances, 1648-2008*.

¹²⁶ Pouladi, "Iran, Syria Sign Defense Agreement."

¹²⁷ Lawson, "Syria's Relations with Iran," 45; Nasser Karimi, "Iranian President warns Israel against attacking Syria," *Associated Press* July 14(2006).

¹²⁸ Lawson, "Syria's Relations with Iran," 46.

¹²⁹ Snyder, *Alliance politics*: 23f.

¹³⁰ William W. Harris, "Syria in Lebanon," *MERIP Reports* 134(1985); Bassel F. Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon: A Brotherhood Transformed," *ibid.* 236(2005); Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 81f.

¹³¹ Among Syrian elites, the sense of entitlement over Lebanon is based on the perception of both countries as "one single nation." Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 119. This has also been underlined by the fact that bilateral relations were not dealt with through embassies until 2008 and that not Foreign Minister al-Shar', but Vice President Khaddam, had been charged with the Lebanon portfolio since 1984. Fears of a renewed spillover of sectarian violence in the aftermath of the Islamist uprising constituted a key impediment for cooperation with Hizballah, which called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon in the early and mid-1980s. Therefore, Damascus refrained from publicly including Hizballah in any schemes for a settlement of the Civil War, courted moderate party members, and implicitly tied the group's survival in post-Ta'if Lebanon to abandoning its revolutionary goal and adapt to Lebanon's confessional system. See also Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 119; Hinnebusch, "Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad," 20; Harris,

an economic lifeline and a major source of revenue to Syria.¹³² On the one hand, it enabled Syrian officials to increase their personal wealth, also by means of illicit business.¹³³ Especially after a respective agreement in 1991, it enabled, on the other, the flow of hundreds of thousands of Syrian workers to Lebanon, sending billions in remittances to their families.¹³⁴

Manifested by the 1989 Ta'if Agreement that ended the Lebanese Civil War and formal bilateral agreements, Syria institutionalized its *de facto* overlordship in Lebanon by late 1991, especially regarding foreign relations, defense, and national security.¹³⁵ Especially tacit U.S. approval of a 'pax Syriana' limiting Iran's influence and constraining Hizballah operations against Israel, bolstered international recognition of Syrian hegemony in Lebanon in the first half of the 1990s.¹³⁶ In this context, Syria's dependence on previous informal alignments with sub state entities in Lebanon, declined substantially.¹³⁷ Syrian patronage over Lebanon peaked in April 1996, when Asad negotiated an agreement with Israel on behalf of both Lebanon and Hizballah, whose representatives were not invited to high-level meetings, yet only consulted by al-Shar'.¹³⁸

Inside Lebanon, Syria built its hegemony first on its own military and intelligence apparatus and second on the Lebanese security forces, infiltrated by Damascus loyalists. After 1991, Hizballah served also as a social pacifier and a tool for mobilizing Shia acceptance of Syrian dominance over Lebanon.¹³⁹ Subsequently, the alignment's strategic importance rose to a moderate level between 1992 and 1998, as Damascus successfully balanced both Rafiq al-Hariri's government and Hizballah against each other.¹⁴⁰

"Syria in Lebanon."; ———, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Sadowski, "Cadres, Guns and Money."; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 36-38; Alagha, *Hizballah's Documents*: 17; Hizballah. "The Hizballah Program - An Open Letter." The Jerusalem Quarterly Fall 1988, no. 48 (1988). <http://bit.ly/1eqONjP>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 40; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 137.

¹³² Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad " 166; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 284f.

¹³³ Gary Gambill, "Syria after Lebanon: Hooked on Lebanon," *Middle East Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (2005); Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 127; William W. Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 262.

¹³⁴ Syrian Lebanese Higher Council. "Agreement for Economic and Social Cooperation and Coordination between the Lebanese Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic." September 16, (1993). <http://bit.ly/1exR3F2>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 36; Harris, *Lebanon*: 260.

¹³⁵ The agreements were the Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination of May 1991, and a specific Defense and Security Agreement of September 1991

¹³⁶ Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 114f; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 129f; Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon."; Harris, *Lebanon*: 257f; ———, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Syrian Lebanese Higher Council. "The Defense and Security Agreement between the Republic of Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic." September 1, (1991). <http://bit.ly/1il3DsL>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 153; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 39.

¹³⁷ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 129; Harris, *Lebanon*: 259; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 37; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 43-45; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 93; Harris, "Syria in Lebanon."; ———, *Faces of Lebanon*: 187f; Avi-Ran, *The Syrian involvement in Lebanon since 1975*: 221-224.

¹³⁸ Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon."; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 295f; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 41; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 72; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 116-122.

¹³⁹ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 139; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 281f; ———, *Lebanon*: 258; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 131; Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon."; Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."

¹⁴⁰ ———, *Lebanon*: 258.

In 2000, power transition in Syria and Israel's withdrawal entailed the erosion of societal consensus on Syrian hegemony in Lebanon, serving as an ambivalent catalyst for Syria's strategic interest in its alignment with Hizballah.¹⁴¹ First, Hizballah's attacks on IDF positions in the Shab'a Farms underlined Syria's claim that Israel had not completely withdrawn from Lebanon, intending to justify the ongoing presence of Syrian forces. Second, the group gained importance as a part of Syrian efforts to balance an emerging and increasingly assertive Sunni-Christian-Druze counter alliance to Bashar al-Asad's patronage of personal loyalists in the Lebanese security apparatus.¹⁴² In contrast, the alignment became a major international point of contention between Damascus and Washington after the 9/11 attacks, hurting Syria's reputation as a regional pacifier, and indirectly paving the way for international backing of the anti-Syria coalition inside Lebanon.¹⁴³

Hizballah's strategic importance for Syria in the Lebanese realm skyrocketed in late 2004, when Damascus failed to silence Sunni-Christian-Druze demands for a complete withdrawal of Syrian troops through its own, traditional, channels of influence.¹⁴⁴ Subsequently, Syria relied on Hizballah as a Lebanese nationalist mouthpiece denouncing UNSCR 1559 as an "international diktat with no Lebanese or Arab legitimacy,"¹⁴⁵ an interfaith interlocutor appeasing particularly Druze opposition, and a tool of mobilizing societal support for Syria's presence in Lebanon.¹⁴⁶ Although appeasing the opposition failed particularly after the assassination of Hariri, on February 14, 2005, Hizballah was able to gather some 500,000 people in central Beirut in a solidarity rally on March 8, 2005.¹⁴⁷

Given the collapse of the first two pillars of Syrian control over Lebanon in 2005, Hizballah gained a decisive role in fulfilling Asad's prophecy that "Syria's power and its role in Lebanon do not depend on its presence in Lebanon."¹⁴⁸ Since joining the government in July 2005, the group has become the main protector of Syria's interests in security and economically sensitive as-

¹⁴¹ ———, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 84; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 183; Salloukh, "Syria and Lebanon."

¹⁴² In 2000/01, for instance, mass protest against the Syrian presence could only be suppressed by the use of force Gary Gambill. "Can Syria Put the Lebanese Regime Together Again?", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 3, no. 6 (2001). <http://bit.ly/1djsxnl>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad " 167-169; Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 124f; Harris, *Lebanon*: 264-266; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 145; ———, *Commanding Syria*: 188.

¹⁴³ Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 89f.,109f; APS Diplomat News Service. "Syria: Bashar Aims To Consolidate Power In The Short-Term." *The Free Library* (2000). Published electronically June 19. <http://bit.ly/10Xkhh>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Emma Lundgren Jörum, *Beyond the Border: Syrian Policies Towards Territories Lost* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2011). 119.

¹⁴⁴ Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad " 160-166.

¹⁴⁵ El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 43.

¹⁴⁶ Harris, *Lebanon*: 268.

¹⁴⁷ However, this could not prevent the mobilization of one million demonstrators against Syria and its Lebanese allies on March 14. Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 128; Harris, *Lebanon*: 269; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 43.

¹⁴⁸ Bashar Asad. "Speech of Mr. President Bashar Assad before the People's Assembly." SANA (2005). Published electronically March 5. <http://bit.ly/1il2ly8>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

pects.¹⁴⁹ In addition, Hizballah successfully weakened forces hostile to Syria in early 2006 by aligning with former prime minister and Maronite leader Michel Aoun.¹⁵⁰ Eventually, the outbreak of the July 2006 War reminded the international community not only of Syria's enduring ability to harass Israel but also of its value as a regional pacifier.¹⁵¹

Particularly in the early 1990s, Hizballah's reputation as a Pan-Arab source of admiration among the Palestinian and Syrian public created additional interests among Syria's political leaders. On the one hand, the group supported their criticism of bilateral peace schemes of Egypt, Jordan, and the PLO as a selfish betrayal of Arab unity.¹⁵² By refraining, on the other hand, from criticizing Damascus for its own participation in the peace talks, Hizballah shielded Syria's reputation of steadfastness, a crucial part of regime legitimacy.¹⁵³ In October 1990, for instance, General Secretary Tufayli publicly praised Asad as a "big brother to all men of resistance."¹⁵⁴ His successor, Hasan Nasrallah singled out Syria as one of the few countries strongly supporting the right to self-defense and struggle for liberation, in August 1993.¹⁵⁵ Emphasizing the Arab credentials of the Alawi leaders and bolstering their central role, Syria's commitment to the group also reflected positively in domestic politics.¹⁵⁶ This was particularly the case in the context of bilateral negotiations with Israel over the return of the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel since 1967.

Strong feelings of territorial revisionism among the Syrian population, embodied by the some 130,000 former inhabitants of the area and their descendants, making up for about 500,000 people, severely constrained Asad's leeway in negotiations.¹⁵⁷ Given Syria's failure to achieve complete Israeli withdrawal through either military force or negotiations, the government's commitment to Hizballah gained importance as a tool to appease revisionism by signaling that Syria's leaders were "not asleep" regarding the Golan.¹⁵⁸ Both threads of strategic interests coincided in the context of Syria's losing grip on Lebanon since 2000. Already in his inauguration speech, Bashar al-Asad aimed to divert frustration over Syria's inability to regain the Golan Heights by referring to the Lebanese example and praised steadfastness as "the guarantee that our land will be liberated."¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, he highlighted the decisive role of Syrian assistance, depicting those in

¹⁴⁹ Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad " 172; Jörum, *Beyond the Border*: 131; Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Gary Gambill, "Syria after Lebanon: Hooked on Lebanon," *ibid.*, no. 4.

¹⁵⁰ Harris, *Lebanon*: 270f; ———, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 129f.

¹⁵¹ Harris, *Lebanon*: 271; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 47.

¹⁵² ———, "Hizballah and Syria," 44; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 149f., 82f.

¹⁵³ Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 18; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 40; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 138-143; Byman, *Deadly Connections*: 119; Hinnebusch, "Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad," 20.

¹⁵⁴ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 136.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁵⁶ Harris, "Syria in Lebanon."

¹⁵⁷ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 161-163; Jörum, *Beyond the Border*: 174f., 189f.

¹⁵⁸ ———, *Beyond the Border*: 166-168; Hafiz Asad. "Extract from the President's speech at the 25th Anniversary of the March 8th Revolution." SANA (1988). Published electronically March 8. <http://bit.ly/1bkmeDn>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹⁵⁹ Bashar Asad. "President Assad 2000 Inauguration Speech." *Ibid.*(2000). Published electronically July 17. <http://bit.ly/1bhJY80>.

Lebanon who demanded a separation of ways after the Israeli withdrawal as ungrateful.¹⁶⁰ Simultaneously, the government seized the opportunity to exploit Nasrallah's increased popularity and plastered Damascus with posters featuring him, the late, and the current president, again emphasizing Syria's contribution to Hizballah's success.¹⁶¹

Eventually, the 2006 War resulted in the celebration of Nasrallah as a great Arab hero in mass solidarity demonstrations in Cairo, Amman, and Damascus, signaling the group's potential to overcome sectarian divisions.¹⁶² Along similar lines as in the early 1990s, Hizballah's regional reputation of steadfastness allowed Asad to expose the moderate Arab leaders as "half men" and legitimize Syria's reluctance towards a negotiated settlement as steadfastness instead of a "half solution."¹⁶³

7.1.6 Conclusion

As this section initially indicated, the nature of the SSD in Syria's alignment with Hizballah against Israel was subject to moderate though significant fluctuations in the external security development of both allies. Which general incentives for *balancing* (N_1) and specific alliance management strategies between *standing firm* (N_2) and *restraining* the ally (N_3) can be deduced from the single indicators investigated in 7.1.1 - 7.1.5?

The first hypothesis (N_1) asserts that the greater Israel's power capabilities, the stronger is the incentive for Syria to balance against it. Section 7.1.1 concluded that there had been a manifest and clear imbalance of power in favor of Israel, not only based on its conventional military superiority but also the favorable outcome of peace talks with the moderate Arab states. More precisely, pressure to adjust to this imbalance has assumedly been less strong in the context of the Gulf War and considerably higher since the late 1990s. Although one cannot deduct a specific adjustment strategy from the distribution of international power by itself, an assessment of both the severity of interstate conflict (7.1.3) and the availability of alternative allies (7.1.4) provide information on expected policy choices.

Although territorial revisionism over the Golan Heights and—to a lesser extent southern Lebanon—remained dominant in bilateral relations, direct interstate conflict remained mostly non-

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. In order to highlight the interdependence of Syria's commitment to Arab steadfastness and the Lebanese national struggle, Hizballah General Secretary Hasan Nasrallah presented the outgoing head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon, Rustim Ghazali, an Israeli rifle captured by Hizballah, as a farewell present in April 2005 Seth Colter Walls. "Striking a Syrian Pose?", Weekly Standard (2005). Published electronically November 17. <http://twos.io/1kymNfE>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

¹⁶¹ Already in late 2002, a senior Syrian foreign policy official stated that Asad could not take a public stance against Hizballah, given the enormous popularity of Nasrallah in Syria. Seymour M. Hersh. "The Syrian Bet." New Yorker (2003). Published electronically July 28. <http://nyr.kr/1k0hjwm>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 149; "President al-Assad: National decision higher than international decisions, resistance necessary for peace." SANA (2006). Published electronically August 15. <http://bit.ly/1nEjZQv>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Dan Murphy et al., "In war's dust, a new Arab Lion emerges," *Christian Science Monitor* 98, no. 192 (2006).

¹⁶² Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 147f; Christopher Phillips, *Everyday Arab Identity: The Daily Reproduction of the Arab World* (New York: Routledge, 2013). 53f.

¹⁶³ Asad, "Speech of President Bashar al-Assad at Journalists Union 4th Conference".

violent, thereby easing balancing pressure. While tensions were remarkably low between 1992 and 1996, repeated retaliatory strikes against Syrian positions in Lebanon and even inside Syria increased the risk of conflict escalation after 2001. Besides general incentives for balancing, the question remains, which strategies have been employed. While the substantial gap between Israel and Syria's achievements in military build-ups indicates a limited internal balancing strategy (and even a turning away from the former goal of strategic parity), it implies a preference for alliance formation.

However, Syria was unable to form reliable interstate alliances against Israel in the first half of the 1990s, yet improved its ties to Iran after the collapse of the peace process. Hence, Israel's material superiority, Syria's inability to formalize its alliance with Iran until 2005/06, ongoing Syrian territorial revisionism over the Golan Heights and increased Israeli policy revisionism over Syria's support for Hizballah after 1996 expectedly created incentives for continued Syrian sponsorship for Hizballah after the end of the Cold War. In addition, section 7.2 will examine domestic pressures to align with the group.

Both neorealist hypotheses on alliance management turn to the SSD as the independent variable inducing specific alliance policies, ranging from *standing firm* against the adversary (N₂) to *restraining* the ally (N₃). **Table 14** concludes the findings of 7.1.1 - 7.1.5 as follows.

Table 14: Nature of the sponsorship dilemma III: Syria-Hizballah

Indicator	Observation	Induces a general fear of
IMBALANCE OF POWER	High in favor of Israel	Abandonment
CAPACITY OF THE ALLY	Insufficient to fill Syria's need for assistance, increasing strength after 1991, peaking in 1998-2001	Entrapment (moderate)
SEVERITY OF CONFLICT	Low in the first half of the 1990s, increasing after 1996 and 2001 respectively	Entrapment/Abandonment
ALTERNATIVE ALLIES	Not available/ Available in 2006	Abandonment/Entrapment
STRATEGIC INCENTIVES	High <i>Alliance ensures influence over Lebanon and domestic resources of regime legitimacy (especially after 2000)</i>	Abandonment

As outlined, Syria's security environment changed considerably in the observation period. As reflected by N₃, the SSD induced a policy of *restraint* especially during the first half of the 1990s. Regarding the contention of the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂, it is noteworthy that incentives for policies of resolve and high commitment increased after the Israeli withdrawal. Additionally, Hizballah's increasing strength and its growing prominence in Damascus' efforts to maintain control over Lebanon is likely to have reinforced this trend throughout the 1990s.

However, several factors at times alleviated the impact of this trend reversal. First, revisionism and the strategic importance of the alignment both in the Lebanese realm and with regard to Syria's commitment to steadfastness reduced incentives to restrain Hizballah before 2000. Second, international criticism of the alignment as state-sponsored terrorism after 2000/2001 severed Syria's standing in Lebanon and the international community, thereby making the emergence of increased entrapment fears among Syrian foreign policy decision makers plausible.

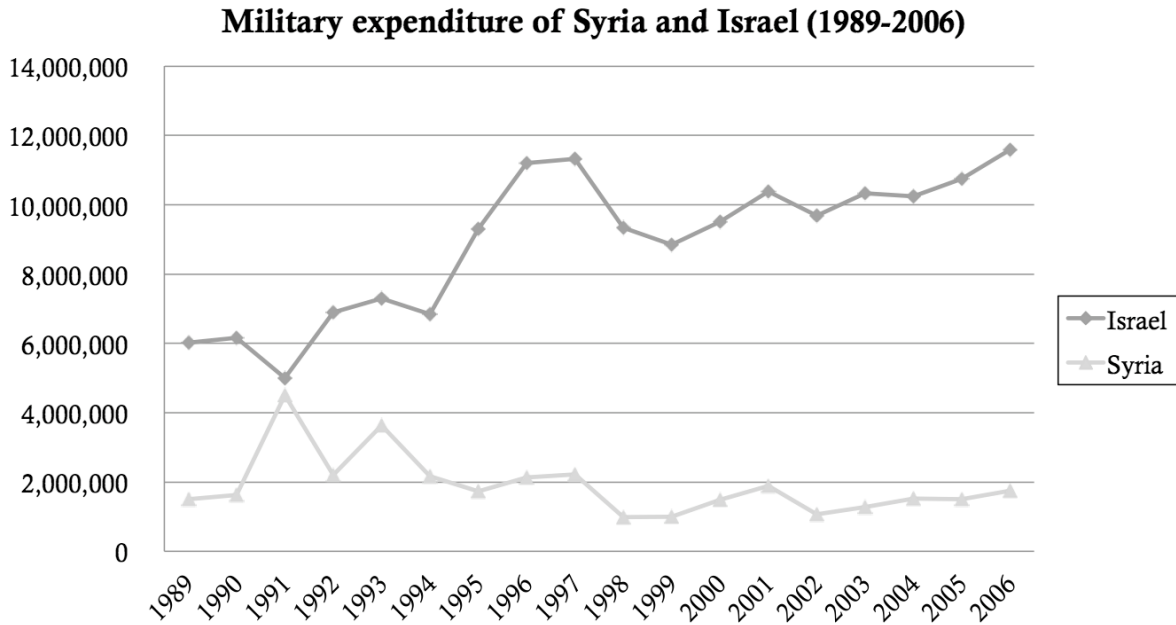
Having laid out the incentives stemming from the SSD, the following section will now turn to Syria's domestic politics 1989-2006 in order to examine the antecedent condition 'regime vulnerability/autonomy.'

7.2 Domestic politics: Power transition and external shocks

The contention that domestic politics in general and foreign policy autonomy in particular serve as an antecedent condition for Syria's adjustment policies is reflected in the hypotheses suggesting *alliance seeking* (NC₁), *sponsorship* (NC₂), and the emergence of hybrid sponsorship policies (*limited resolve*, NC₃/*limited restraint*, NC₄).

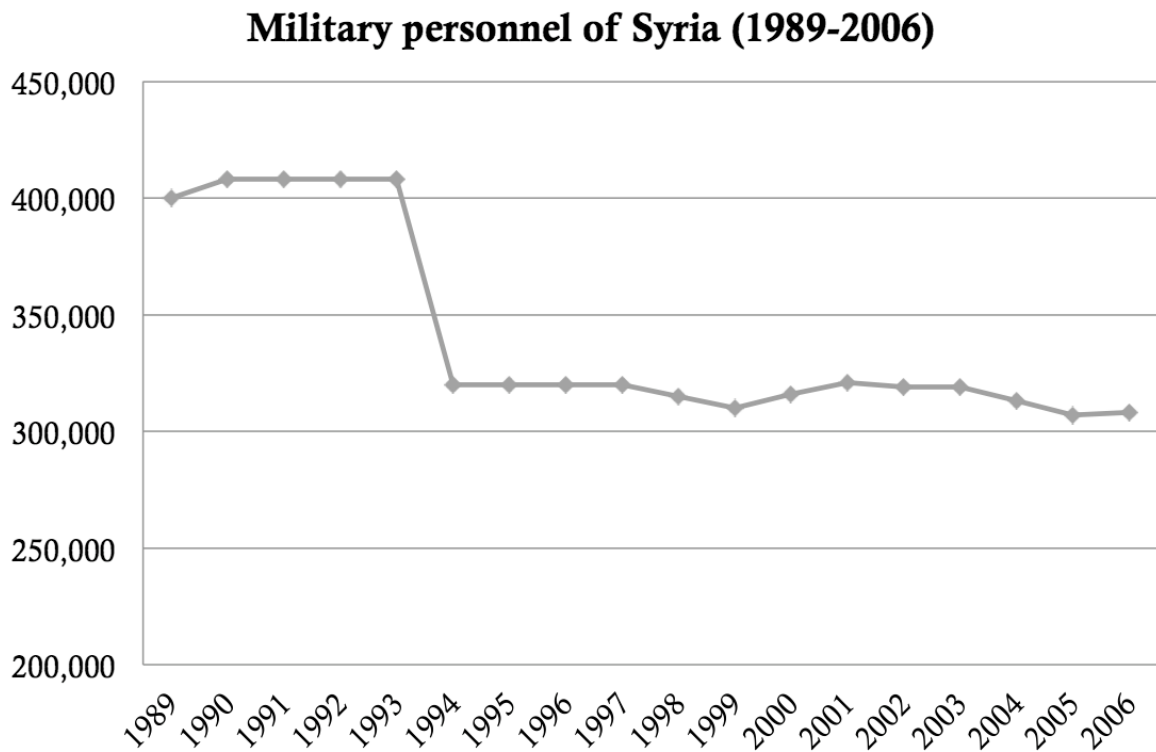
After the Cold War, the end of bipolarity and the peace process made a united Arab military front de facto unattainable and limited Syria's external balancing options until the emergence of a formal military alliance with Iran in the mid-2000s (see 7.1.4). Thus, one might expect a tendency towards internal balancing and military build-up, particularly before and after the 1992-96 negotiation phase. Instead, COW data and **Figure 36** illustrate Syria's efforts of internal balancing through armament in the observation period and indicate a downside trend since 1993 rather than a proportionate reflection of the continuously increasing Israeli military expenditure.

Already in the late 1980s, the USSR had shown a growing unwillingness to maintain its commitment to Asad's strategy of conventional parity with Israel. This development drastically limited Syria's domestic resources available for internal balancing—alleviated only briefly by the influx of \$5 billion in aid from the Gulf States in 1991. Additionally, data indicates that Syria reduced its military personnel from 408,000 to 320,000 in 1993/94 even before an agreement with Israel became attainable, despite a slight increase between 1999 and 2001 (**Figure 37**). As increased internal balancing efforts in the early 1990s and to a lesser extent at the end of the century were intertwined with improved ties to the Arab moderate states and Russia transferring money and arms to Syria, one might find it difficult to clearly distinguish between internal balancing from the internally felt outcome of external balancing. As suggested by the neoclassical realist alliance seeking hypothesis NC1, particularly cuts in military expenditure and personnel point to a tendency for resource-conserving external balancing, either due to Syria's lack in economic capacity to mobilize sufficient resources on its own or a deliberate policy choice not to do so.



Source: COW CINC data, *Military Expenditure* (thds. of current year U.S. dollars)

Figure 36: Military expenditure of Syria and Israel (1989 - 2006)



Source: COW CINC data

Figure 37: Internal balancing efforts of Syria: Military personnel (1989-2006)

Regarding the question whether Syria chose external alignment over internal balancing (NC₁) and state sponsorship of terrorism as a specific form of the latter (NC₂), domestic vulnerability expectedly plays a role as an explanatory factor. This applies to both the observed reverse trend in internal balancing and the choice of sponsorship in order to compensate lacking mobilization resources amid unfavorable alliance options. Hence, the following section addresses both the level of regime legitimacy and coercive domestic power between 1989 and 2006.

7.2.1 The heir apparent

Although neither high levels of political violence nor open intra-regime rivalry occurred after the end of the Cold War, it posed a twofold challenge to regime legitimacy in Syria, depriving the leadership of key external backers, trade partners, and its ideological alliance system.

Regarding the economic power base, a moderate recovery at least temporarily alleviated pressure for liberalization in the early 1990s, due to incoming aid from the Gulf States, continuing trade with the Eastern Bloc, and Syria's new supplementary labor market in Lebanon.¹⁶⁴ Nevertheless, measures of economic liberalization accelerated the rise of the Sunni bourgeoisie to the regime's orbit (see section 6.2.2) since the late 1980s.¹⁶⁵ As their influence increased through respective governmental committees and a merchant and industrialists bloc in the parliament, calls for Syria's integration into the global economy and a moderate stance towards the West emerged.¹⁶⁶ On the one hand, governmental efforts to have, U.S. sanctions in the context of Syria's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism removed, reflected increased representation of the business elite's foreign policy preferences.¹⁶⁷ Their integration increased, on the other, regime autonomy from traditional power centers, as it broadened the regime's power base by neutralizing former anti-status quo forces and constraining the re-entry of political Islam into politics.¹⁶⁸

Given the pressure for political liberalization and the legitimacy crisis of socialism in the early 1990s, political Islam became a force to reckon with. Beyond appeasing policies such as amnesties and a more liberal approach towards religious schools and mosques, Syria's Alawi leaders aimed at entrenching their sect into Syria's mainstream Islam to such an extent that their rule would find acceptance even in a less autocratic domestic environment.¹⁶⁹ In addition, and despite the fact that hundreds of political prisoners remained jailed and both the presence and power of security services unbowed throughout the decade, the government initiated a campaign of limited

¹⁶⁴ Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process," 148-154; Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 99-102.

¹⁶⁵ ———, *Syria*: 130; Muslih, "Syria and Turkey," 123f; Perthes, *Syria under Bashar al-Asad*: 28.

¹⁶⁶ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 104-106.

¹⁶⁷ Kienle, "The Return of Politics?," 121-123.

¹⁶⁸ See also Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 106; Pipes, *Syria beyond the peace process*: 22; Heydemann, "Taxation without Representation," 96f; Kienle, "The Return of Politics?," 116; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 176.

¹⁶⁹ Partially on the grounds of this moderation, Grand Mufti Ahmad Kaftaru, Syria's highest Sunni Muslim religious official, praised Asad in 1996 for his "commitment to Islam." Zisser, "Syria," 637. See also Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 104-107; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 182; Zisser, "Syria," 636; ———, *Commanding Syria*: 58.

rapprochement with leftist political dissidents and the Muslim Brotherhood after 1997.¹⁷⁰

Presidential autonomy, particularly from the Ba'ath party, increased because of the collapse of the socialist ideological self-image and reached a peak in 1991, when Asad decided to join both the Gulf Coalition and the Madrid peace conference without even consulting the party's Regional Command (RC).¹⁷¹ The president's leeway in foreign affairs remained high as the 1993/94 bilateral peace agreements eased popular pressure to gain Pan-Arab achievements from negotiations with Israel.¹⁷² Nevertheless, the party remained an important asset to rally rural Sunnis and civil servants in favor of the regime, in order to balance both the urban bourgeoisie and the Alawi-dominated security apparatus.¹⁷³ In order to alleviate concerns over both liberalization in the public sector and the security apparatus, the leadership constrained demands for rapid economic decentralization and initially showed itself reluctant towards military budget cuts.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, it assured the Alawi barons and other high-ranking officials a fair share of the expected peace dividend from economic liberalization through increased business connections between them and the Sunni merchants.¹⁷⁵

Nevertheless, Asad failed to eradicate praetorianism inside the inner circle and risks of regime overthrow re-occurred in the renewed outbreak of the succession crisis after 1994.¹⁷⁶ His decision to gradually establish hereditary succession was disputable, given Syria's republican identity and the fact that Asad's sons did not maintain a position in the ranks of the military, the party, or among the public that would sanctify their succession.¹⁷⁷ Thus, after Basil al-Asad's death in early 1994, the president established a power base for his second son, Bashar, through rapid and respective military appointments and reshuffles and a media campaign portraying his son as a symbol of hope and the ongoing Arab struggle (see also 6.2.2).¹⁷⁸

Eventually, Hafiz al-Asad *de facto* secured Bashar's rule through a massive purge in the security apparatus in 1998/1999 and the permanent ousting of his brother Rif'at from the inner circle, assumedly after reported clashes between his and Bashar's supporters in late 1997 had raised fears of further escalation.¹⁷⁹ Although the purge sidelined prominent Alawi officials such as General Ali Duba, head of military intelligence, and Muhammad al-Khuly, commander of the Air Force,

¹⁷⁰ Sune Haugbolle, "Imprisonment, Truth Telling and Historical Memory in Syria," *Mediterranean Politics* 13, no. 2 (2008): 268-272; George, *Syria*: 160f.

¹⁷¹ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 105; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 176; Haugbolle, "Imprisonment, Truth Telling and Historical Memory in Syria," 264f; Zisser, "Hafiz al-Asad discovers Islam."; ———, "Syria," 636f.

¹⁷² Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 178.

¹⁷³ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 105.

¹⁷⁴ Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process," 146-153.

¹⁷⁵ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 175f.

¹⁷⁶ Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 109.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 161. Al-Thawra on January 19, 1997, see also Hinnebusch, *Syria*: 109; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 62ff; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 153f.

¹⁷⁹ ———, *Asad's Legacy*: 162; ———, "Syria," 635; Gary C. Gambill, "Syria's Night of Long Knives," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin homepage*. 2, no. 5 (2000).

it significantly narrowed the regime's sectarian power base.¹⁸⁰ First, the gradual transfer of the Lebanon portfolio from Khaddam to Bashar al-Asad and Damascus' prevention of Rafiq al-Hariri's re-election as Lebanese prime minister in 1998 weakened transnational Sunni linkages. Second, the fact that Ali Aslan, an Alawi, replaced Sunni Chief of Staff Shihabi, shortly after, reinforced this tendency.¹⁸¹ Third, Major General Ali Houry, an Ismaili, replaced the Sunni head of the General Security Directorate (GSD), Lieutenant General Bashir al-Najjar, in July 1998. Nevertheless, the simultaneous appointment of Mohammad Nassif Kheyrbek, who was also in charge of the Lebanese Shi'ites, as Houry's deputy, Bahjat Suleiman as head of internal security, and Major General Hasan Khalil as head of military intelligence, secured a strong Alawi presence in the intelligence apparatus.¹⁸²

After nearly four decades in power, Hafiz al-Asad died on June 9, 2000 and both formal and informal mechanisms of succession allowed for a comparatively smooth power transfer to his son, Bashar. Within days, a transitional committee led by Khaddam and the RC appointed him commander of the armed forces and nominated him for president. In addition, the People's Assembly voted in favor of constitutional amendments lowering the age requirement for presidents (Art. 82) and removing a potential loophole for an attempt by Khaddam to stay in power as acting president (Art. 88).¹⁸³ On June 17, the Ba'th Party general congress elected Bashar as secretary-general and nominated him for president.¹⁸⁴ In order to also give power transition a democratic pretext, authorities held both a parliamentary vote on June 27 and a national referendum on July 10 until Bashar al-Asad was eventually inaugurated as president on July 17.¹⁸⁵

7.2.2 Seasons in Damascus

Regime legitimacy moderately increased after 2000, as Bashar al-Asad continued his father's policy of economic and political liberalization, displaying also a remarkable tolerance for calls for political reforms from the civil society.¹⁸⁶ Similarly to his father, Asad aimed at enlarging his autonomy from the security apparatus and other potential rivals in the domestic realm, by generat-

¹⁸⁰ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 166.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 163; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 62f; Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 44ff.

¹⁸² Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, "Syria's Intelligence Services: A Primer," *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* 2, no. 6 (2000).

¹⁸³ In order to establish a sound support basis, the committee consisted mostly of Sunni Muslims, recruited from the top of the official institutions, such as vice president Musharqa, Ba'th assistant secretary general Al-Ahmar, Mustafa Talas, and prime minister Miro. See also Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 65-69; International Crisis Group, *Syria Under Bashar (II): Domestic Policy Challenges*, vol. 24, Middle East Report (Amman/Brussels2004). 5; APS Diplomat News Service; Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 26.

¹⁸⁴ New to the RC were some of his key allies, Sulayman Qaddah, Sa'id Hamadi, Abdullah al-Ahmar, and Bashar's brother Maher al-Asad. See also Gambill, "Syria's Night of Long Knives."; George, *Syria*: 77; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 68; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 167; ———, "A false spring in Damascus," *ORIENT* 44, no. 1 (2003): 42.

¹⁸⁵ Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 68.

¹⁸⁶ In November, for instance, on the 30th anniversary of his father's accession to the presidency, authorities released some 600 political prisoners on the grounds of a new amnesty law and significantly reduced the number of detainees in the following months. See also Zisser, "A false spring in Damascus," 42f; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 84f; Joe Pace and Joshua Landis, "The Syrian Opposition: The struggle for unity and relevance, 2003-2008," in *Demystifying Syria*, ed. Fred Lawson (London: Saqi Press, 2009), 120f; Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar al-Asad," 224-227; Lust-Okar, "Reform in Syria," 71; Center for Systemic Peace.

ing popular support in his own right.¹⁸⁷ Hence, he formally strengthened the role of political institutions such as the People's Assembly and the Judiciary Higher Council and undermined simultaneously the Ba'th party's predominance in the public sphere and the National Progressive Front.¹⁸⁸

Nevertheless, conditions for Syria's blossoming civil society steadily worsened after February 2001, when a secular-liberal opposition movement formed in the context of a new political openness, termed the *Damascus Spring*, exceeded the limits of criticism acceptable to the regime.¹⁸⁹ In the following months, security services closed down civil society forums and arrested even parliamentarians criticizing political stagnation.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the formation of a coherent opposition appealing to the wider Syrian public failed.¹⁹¹

In order to mobilize support among its traditional power base, the leadership resorted again to the Ba'th party and the public sector.¹⁹² Between mid-2000 and May 2004, for instance, Asad decreed three times a substantial rise in civil servant salaries and the necessity of absorbing high numbers of unemployed Syrians amid a substantial economic downturn of the early 2000s alleviated pressures for economic liberalization.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, the party's marginalization as an autonomous political force continued and peaked in July 2003, when the RC announced to cease interfering in daily government affairs and appointments.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, the government exploited anti-Israeli sentiments after the outbreak of the Palestinian Intifada in late 2000 both to discredit the reformist movement, which explicitly endorsed Western values, and to present Asad as a leader of the rejectionist front.¹⁹⁵ Finally, Bashar continued his father's limited appeasement policy vis-à-vis political Islam.¹⁹⁶ Although he refrained from using religious motives in his rhetoric, Bashar attended prayers in Sunni strongholds Aleppo and Hama in late 2002, to show his Muslim credentials and send a message of conciliation.¹⁹⁷ Again, authorities released hundreds of Islamists prisoners and announced in late 2001 to close the infamous Tadmur prison, scene of a regime massacre of some 1,000 Muslim Brethren in 1980.¹⁹⁸ Although membership of the Brother-

¹⁸⁷ Zisser, "A false spring in Damascus," 41.

¹⁸⁸ Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 169f.+184; Zisser, "A false spring in Damascus," 44.

¹⁸⁹ Haugbolle, "Imprisonment, Truth Telling and Historical Memory in Syria," 268-270; Zisser, "A false spring in Damascus."; Moshe Ma'oz, *Washington and Damascus between confrontation and cooperation* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2005). 9.

¹⁹⁰ Zisser, "A false spring in Damascus," 57f; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 175; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 92f; Pace and Landis, "The Syrian Opposition," 21.

¹⁹¹ ———, "The Syrian Opposition," 121f.

¹⁹² Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 172.

¹⁹³ Harris, "Bashar al-Assad's Lebanon Gamble."; Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar al-Asad," 226; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 168, 191.

¹⁹⁴ Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 71-73; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 78.

¹⁹⁵ Zisser, "A false spring in Damascus," 59; ———, *Commanding Syria*: 150f.

¹⁹⁶ In 2000, for instance, he annulled the ban on headscarves in public schools after almost two decades and promulgated a previous decree permitting enlisted soldiers to pray in military camps Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 74f; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 58f.

¹⁹⁷ ———, *Commanding Syria*: 55.

¹⁹⁸ Haugbolle, "Imprisonment, Truth Telling and Historical Memory in Syria," 271; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 176, 189.

hood remained punishable by death and Islamist political activity heavily restricted, limited appeasement enabled the regime to successfully impede a bipartisan alignment between Islamist and secular opposition forces.¹⁹⁹

Eventually, Asad used anti-corruption campaigns and reshuffles to divert popular frustration over non-implemented economic reforms towards the security chiefs.²⁰⁰ As the 1998/99 purge had caused criticism of *Alawization*, the 2001/02 reshuffle broadened the inner circle's sectarian composition. Only three months after Alawi General Ali Hammoud had succeeded Hourri as head of GSD in October 2001, Hisham Ikhtiar, former head of GID's Palestine division and a Sunni Muslim, replaced him. In a similar vein and reviving the traditional allocation of the post of Chief of Staff to Sunni Muslims, Hasan Turkmani replaced Aslan in January 2002. However, the simultaneous appointment of Ali Habib, Head of the Special Forces, as Turkmani's deputy and Hammoud's promotion to interior minister reflected the ongoing dominance of Alawis in the regime's security calculations. Also in 2002, the long-serving heads of Air Force Security and the Political Security Directorate, General Ibrahim Hueiji and Major General Adnan Badr Hasan were removed from their posts, maintaining only their positions in the Ba'th Central Committee.²⁰¹

Against the background of increasing opposition to Syria's presence in Lebanon (see also 7.1.5), the relocation of Ghazi Kanaan, long-serving head of intelligence in Lebanon, to Badr Hasan's post deserves particular attention. Kanaan had enjoyed good relations with Rafiq Hariri and his successor Rustom Ghazali was an affiliate of President Emile Lahoud. Hence, the reshuffle both weakened Hariri and his Sunni Syrian allies and increased the presidency's autonomy in its Lebanon policy at the expense of the intelligence services.²⁰²

In a final step of power consolidation in the inner circle, Asad reconciled high-ranking state officials and their fears over potential losses in political and social status with his policy preference of economic liberalization by facilitating their involvement in the private sector in the early 2000s.²⁰³ The subsequent rise of, amongst others, Asad's cousin Rami Makhlouf but also the sons of ministers Talas and Khaddam, strengthened the internal cohesion of the military-security complex.²⁰⁴ However, the emergence of such a new oligarchy, persistent corruption, and subsequent conflicts over the distribution of benefits stemming from the economic liberalization, threatened the re-

¹⁹⁹ Joshua Landis and Joe Pace, "The Syrian Opposition," *Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2007): 51f; George, *Syria*: 92; Pace and Landis, "The Syrian Opposition," 125.

²⁰⁰ Gambill, "The Military-Intelligence Shakeup in Syria."; Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, "Syria's Praetorian Guards: A Primer," *ibid.* 2, no. 7 (2000).

²⁰¹ Hughes; Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, "Syria's Intelligence Services."; Lust-Okar, "Reform in Syria," 76.

²⁰² Harris, *Lebanon*: 267; Gambill, "The Military-Intelligence Shakeup in Syria."; Gary C. Gambill et al., "Dossier: Emile Lahoud, President of Lebanon," *ibid.* 3, no. 11 (2001); Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 179.

²⁰³ Eyal Zisser, "In the Name of the Father: Is Bashar in Control of Syria?," in *The Middle East: The Impact of Generational Change*, ed. Asher Susser (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center, 2005), 52; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 89.

²⁰⁴ Ismail, "Changing Social Structure, Shifting Alliances and Authoritarianism in Syria," 18f; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 83-85.

gime's alliance with the Sunni bourgeoisie and weakened its distributive power especially in times of economic crisis.²⁰⁵

7.2.3 The emergence of the triumvirate

Encouraged by the 2003 Iraq War, protests demanding political reforms and cultural as well as political rights for the Kurds, occurred in both Damascus and northeastern Syria in March 2004. Although protests failed to attract wider support—partially as the war had revived Arab nationalist sentiment—authorities suppressed them violently by May.²⁰⁶ At the same time, the presidency gained additional foreign policy autonomy in October 2004, when the NPF amended its charter, dismissed the former principle of 'neither peace nor negotiations' with Israel and called for a negotiated solution, including the creation of a Palestinian state.²⁰⁷ By thus incorporating key demands of Palestinian Hamas for a truce, the leadership underlined its ongoing commitment and entitlement to Arab leadership.²⁰⁸ The simultaneous permission of new parties to the NPF signaled, on the one hand, the government's ongoing commitment to the path of limited pluralism and prevented, on the other, the Ba'th party from gaining an advantage over the state in foreign policy decision-making amid a newly discovered Pan-Arab sentiment.²⁰⁹ Another reshuffle in the armed forces ensued the retirement of Defense Minister Talas in May 2004. His replacement with Asad's confidant Turkmani and Ali Habib's promotion to Chief of Staff strengthened the president's personal grip on the military.²¹⁰

In contrast, observers termed Syria's enforced withdrawal from Lebanon in April 2005 the regime's "darkest hours," entailing major challenges to its survival.²¹¹

In the ranks of the party and the security apparatus, Asad resorted to reshuffles, in order to prevent a coup from the inner circle and thereby again narrowed his regime's power base. In early 2005, Asad's brother-in-law, Assef Shawkat succeeded Khalil as head of military intelligence.²¹² Together with the president and Shawkat, Bashar's brother Maher, commander of the RG, eventually formed what Ellen Lust-Okar termed the "triumvirate" as the center of political decision-making.²¹³ Additionally, Asad replaced Sulayman as director of interior security with the son of former intelligence chief Mohammad Nassif Kheyrbek. During a Ba'th Party Conference in June,

²⁰⁵ Ismail, "Changing Social Structure, Shifting Alliances and Authoritarianism in Syria," 20f., 27; George, *Syria*: 159,163f.

²⁰⁶ Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 189f; Pace and Landis, "The Syrian Opposition," 126f. As of 2008, up to 3,000 political prisoners have reportedly remained jailed. See Haugbolle, "Imprisonment, Truth Telling and Historical Memory in Syria," 265.

²⁰⁷ Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 197.

²⁰⁸ Khaled Hroub, "Hamas after Shaykh Yasin and Rantisi," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 4 (2004).

²⁰⁹ Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 97f.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 191.

²¹¹ Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad " 168.

²¹² Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, "Syria's Intelligence Services."; Gary Gambill, "The Military-Intelligence Shakeup in Syria," *ibid.* 4, no. 2 (2002); Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 97f; Sezgin, "The October 1998 Crisis," 58f; Eyal Zisser, "Will Bashar al-Asad Rule?," *Middle East Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (2000).

²¹³ Lust-Okar, "Reform in Syria," 76.

Asad had several members of the Old Guard but also some of his former allies removed from the party's high ranks, most prominently—Abd Al Halim Khaddam.²¹⁴

Outside of the power circles, the withdrawal encouraged opposition groups, pinning their hopes on Western support, to renew their unification efforts. In March 2005, the Muslim Brotherhood issued for the first time statements of solidarity with the Kurds and the next month, secular-leftist groups called for dialogue with all segments of society. Both initiatives strongly hinted at a broadening of the anti-regime coalition, reaching a peak in the issuing of the *Damascus Declaration* calling for democratic change, on October 18, 2005.²¹⁵ Domestic dissent reached a critical level in the context of Khaddam's spectacular defection in December 2005 and subsequent formation of a new opposition coalition, the National Salvation Front (NSF).²¹⁶

By aligning with the Brotherhood, the NSF alleviated fears of Islamic rule and retaliation against regime loyalists in a potential case of regime change. In turn, the alignment bolstered Khaddam's religious credentials, and his Sunni background made him a credible advocate of a nationalist alternative to Alawi family rule. When the NSF reached out to anti-Syrian figures in Lebanon and the *Beirut-Damascus Declaration* made their alignment public in May 2006, regime fears increased that its former backyard could turn into a "beachhead for opposition forces."²¹⁷

In its initial response, the regime accused civil society activists of anti-nationalist treachery, attempting to undermine the state.²¹⁸ Afterwards, authorities intensified repression, for instance by banning oppositional gatherings and pro-democracy forums, arbitrary arrests and travel bans.²¹⁹ Simultaneously, the government launched a massive media campaign, depicting the signatories of the May 2006 declaration as treacherous agents of the West.²²⁰

The 2006 Lebanon War further undermined domestic opposition to the president. First, Washington's clear siding with Israel discredited its Arab, Lebanese, and Syrian allies in their respective domestic realm.²²¹ Second, as the opposition constituted a natural opponent of Asad's key Lebanese ally Hizballah, the group's boost in popularity after the war gave credibility to Asad's claims that the opposition were traitors of the Arab cause in the eyes of the public.²²²

²¹⁴ Among them were also Ali Aslan, Hasan Khalil, Adnan Badr Hasan, former prime minister Muhammad Miro, Abdullah Al Ahmar, and Sulayman Qaddah. See also Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad" 169; Lust-Okar, "Reform in Syria," 76; Robert G. Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East* (Westport: Praeger, 2006). 193; Sami Moubayed, "Syria: Reform or Repair?," *Arab Reform Bulletin* 3, no. 6 (2005); Bassam Haddad, "Syria's Curious Dilemma," *MERIP Reports* 236(2005).

²¹⁵ Pace and Landis, "The Syrian Opposition," 128-131.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 133f.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 134f.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 123f., 132.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 136f; Landis and Pace, "The Syrian Opposition," 60.

²²¹ ———, "The Syrian Opposition," 64.

²²² *Ibid.*, 64f.

7.2.4 Conclusion

The theoretical framework established above argues that regime vulnerability impeding foreign policy autonomy is a key antecedent condition for adjustment policies. Hence, to what extent and in what direction are the observed trends in Syrian domestic politics, especially those concerning the legitimacy and coercive power of the regime, expected to have influenced both general foreign policy choices and specific forms of state sponsorship of terrorism?

The end of the Cold War and measures of liberalization initially increased the president's structurally high autonomy from traditional rivals for power within the ruling coalition. Additionally, opposition from outside the power circles remained insignificant with little reflection in popular protest. Nevertheless, this preliminary peak in presidential autonomy in foreign policy affairs was to a certain extent limited by two factors. First, the increasing importance and assertiveness of the business elite also regarding foreign policy and alignment choices created a strong incentive for a policy of moderation vis-à-vis the West and Israel. Second, and to a certain extent damping the former incentive, the regime refrained from limiting the power of the praetorian guards and security services. Thereby, it remained dependent on the Alawi barons and the public sector—both strongly reluctant to a rapid political and economic rapprochement—as important constituencies of its power base.

In the second half of the 1990s, the collapse of the peace talks and the regime's rapprochement with political Islam and Iran strengthened forces favoring a policy of resolve, yet improved relations with Turkey after 1998 and the EU as well as the need of economic reform favored the pro-Western stance of the business elite. Nevertheless and given the absence of organized opposition, the focus of vulnerability shifted clearly to the inner core of the regime, in the context of a gradual transfer of power. Major purges in the security sector and an increased presence and visibility of Alawi's in the formal power institutions of the state, pointed to a narrowing of the regime's power base and an increased reliance on the informal power structures, constraining foreign policy autonomy.

In the course of a crackdown on pro-democracy forces in Syria and Lebanon in 2002, regime legitimacy suffered a setback. Until then, Bashar al-Asad's policy of moderate and tailor-made economic and political liberalization and broadening of the sectarian base of the regime had prevented the emergence of a powerful competitor and an opposition able to mobilize sufficient societal support. However, strengthening the formal political institutions at the expense of the party, economically appeasing the Old Guard at the expense of the Sunni business elite, and again narrowing the inner circle of the regime to a mere triumvirate of power eroded to a certain extent the ruling coalition established by his father. This was particularly significant as external developments such as the Second Intifada and the Iraq War renewed Arab nationalist sentiment increasing incentives for a resolute anti-Western stand. Coinciding with Hariri's assassination, these de-

velopments nurtured Sunni revisionist sentiments over Alawi rule in Syria, manifesting themselves in the emergence of a broad opposition movement in 2005/06, reaching the inner core of the regime with Khaddam's defection in late 2005. Hence, regime vulnerability as interplay of threats from inside and outside the power base reached a relative peak in the period between 2004 and mid-2006.

With regard to the *alliance-seeking* hypothesis NC₁ linking domestic vulnerability to a preference for external alignment, Syria's economic troubles alone seem to have set a clear incentive limiting internal balancing efforts. However, and although relations with Israel were the least conflicted in the first half of the 1990s, the regime's structural domestic vulnerability led to ambivalent and particularly vague interstate alignments. While, on the one hand, key constituencies of the regime such as the party, the army, and the public sector continued to constitute an impediment to a pro-Western realignment, the boosted role of the business elite and the private sector on the other hand prevented a full alignment with the Iran-led rejectionist camp.

After the transfer of power, the limited increase of internal balancing efforts reflected Syria's generally worsened external security outlook since 2002. Nevertheless, the deepening and formalization of the Damascus-Tehran alliance hints not only to Syria's limited domestic mobilization capacity in times of economic stagnation, military structures weakened through purges, and estrangement of large segments of the society. Its clear placement in a revived rejectionist front consisting of Iran, Hamas, and Hizballah also provided the regime with additional material and immaterial resources it could cash in on such as societal anti-Western sentiment at the expense of domestic challengers and maintain simultaneously sufficient levels of autonomy particularly from the Ba'th Party.

As suggested by the *standing-firm* hypothesis N₂, the gradual formalization of the Syrian-Iranian alliance throughout the period of observation and the lack of reliable alternative allies—particularly those willing to risk tangible assets in an open confrontation with Israel—, increased incentives for Syria to strengthen its alignment with Hizballah. Although hierarchical power structure inside Syria prevented the outbreak of domestic conflict over external alignments as observed in the 1960s, domestic constraints limited Syria's external international and regional interstate alignment options before the clear anti-Western shift after 2002. Hence, supporting Hizballah became a key asset in attracting power resources from Iran throughout the 1990s without having to give in to systemic incentives for a domestically costly full realignment with the West, assumedly entailing strong and incalculable pressure for liberalization. In the second half of the decade, when the alignment became a burdening factor in Syria's relations with the West, it eased the pressure on Syria to enter a 'dishonorable' peace for economic reasons, undermining the president's personal legitimacy and the regime's nationalist credentials as the citadel of Arab steadfastness. While the formal alliance with Iran partially weakened these credentials and Syr-

ia's claim for Arab leadership particularly in times of high Arab sentiment, Hizbollah provided the regime with a cover of Arab steadfastness against Israel and thus a source of regime legitimacy despite Damascus' *de facto* anti-Arab alignment with Iran.

Turning now to the specific nature of Syria's commitment to Hizbollah, the neoclassical realist hypotheses NC₂ and NC₃ suggest that regime vulnerability is likely to cause deviations from expected policies of resolve or restraint induced by the SSD.²²³ Accordingly, the occurrence of domestically generated deviations from Syria's role as *Brother in Arms* (max. resolve), *Defector* (max. restraint), or hybrid sponsor (*Fellow Traveler/Secret Backer*) is most likely in times of the mentioned conflicting alignment preferences in the first half of the 1990s, Bashar al-Asad's internal power consolidation after 2000, and in the context of Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon.

7.3 Syria's policy towards Hizbollah (1989-2006)

„The party depends on Syria as a geopolitical lung.“²²⁴

Although the military and political success of Hizbollah has been mostly ascribed to its ability to entrench itself to the Lebanese society and reconcile with the state in the 1990s, state support was critical in all four STAR-dimensions.²²⁵ In contrast to the case of Fatah, Syrian sponsorship emerged not in the context of interstate rivalry among various backers but as a division of labor with the Islamic Republic of Iran, strongly reflected in specific patterns of Syrian assistance.²²⁶ Although suspicions over Iran's intentions in Lebanon prompted Damascus particularly in the late 1980s to contain Hizbollah's activity, Syria also waived the chance to disband the group in the context of the 1989 Ta'if Accord.²²⁷ Hence, the following section examines, to what extent the observed changing nature of the SSD shaped both the character and extent of Syria's commitment to Hizbollah.

7.3.1 Hosting

As permitting a terrorist organization to operate militarily on one's own territory and to conduct cross-border attacks carries a high risk of interstate conflict escalation, it requires a high level of commitment. While the limitation of tolerated activities to non-military operations constitutes a moderate level of support, it reaches a low level if the group retains merely a physical presence

²²³ The *limited resolve* hypothesis NC₂ assumes, that Syria will moderate efforts to avoid alliance abandonment in order to balance internal threats despite SSD-incentives for resolve. In turn, the *limited restraint* hypothesis NC₃ states a deviation into the direction of entrapment avoiding if threats to regime survival coincide with SSD incentives for a policy of restraint.

²²⁴ "Hizbollah Again Postpones General Congress." Al-Monitor (2013). Published electronically March 20. <http://bit.ly/li8yFqr>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²²⁵ Surviving, Training, Attacking, and Recruiting, see also 3.3.1.

²²⁶ Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 34.

²²⁷ In 1987, for instance, Syrian troops executed 23 Hizbollah members in West Beirut while simultaneously backing the group's Lebanese rivals under the pretext of maintaining stability in Lebanon. See also *ibid.*, 35, 72f; Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran*: 200ff; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 128; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 90; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 40; Yair Evron, *War and Intervention in Lebanon: The Israeli-Syrian Deterrence Deal* (London: Croom-Helm, 1987). 169.

(See also 4.3.1). Although there have been sporadic reports over a significant Hizballah presence in Syria, joint efforts to establish a safe haven and a rear front generally focused on Lebanon, constituting again a general case of indirect and thus moderate hosting.²²⁸ Hence, the following assessment of Syria's hosting commitment focuses first on Hizballah's armed presence in Lebanon and second on Damascus' tolerance of the group's attacks on Israel from Lebanon.²²⁹

During the observation period, Syria used its presence and influence in Lebanon to shield Hizballah from both Israeli retaliatory strikes and Lebanese efforts to disarm the group in a somewhat ambiguous manner. In the northeastern Bekaa Valley, it permitted the group to establish military bases and training camps while Israel's tacit agreement to not escalate tensions in the area limited the risk of retaliatory strikes.²³⁰ Simultaneously, Syria closely monitored the group's activities through its intelligence headquarters also located nearby and pressured it, for instance, to submit to the formal monopoly of force of the Lebanese army by returning the main army barracks in the Bekaa.²³¹ As Israel's retaliatory strikes against Hizballah and even Syrian positions in the Bekaa Valley between 1992 and 1994 as well as 2001 remained limited, Damascus tolerated the group's presence there until the 2005 withdrawal.

Syria's hegemony over Lebanon and its role as supervisor of the disbandment of the Civil War militias by mid-1991, allowed Damascus to project its hosting capacity to the Lebanese-Israeli border area.²³² In the context of geographically restricted support, Damascus blocked, for instance in 1993, initiatives of the Lebanese government to reestablish the army's monopoly of force and disarm the group in southern Lebanon.²³³ However, and particularly during the negotiation period after 1992, Syrian officials at times limited their hosting commitment. Defense minister Talas, for instance, reportedly promised in 1995 to disarm and even repress the group after an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.²³⁴ After the transfer of the Lebanese portfolio from Khaddam to Bashar al-Asad in the late 1990s and the Israeli withdrawal, Syria boosted its commitment, granting Hizballah an increased military presence in Lebanon and backing the group's *de facto* military, political, and administrative takeover of the border area—and even parts of south Beirut.²³⁵ In order to shield the group from disarmament, Syria strongly supported Hizballah's claim that Israel's

²²⁸ Zisser, Interview by the Author, March 29, 2012. See also Harris, "Syria in Lebanon."; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 121., see also section 6.3.1.

²²⁹ "The Ta'if Accord." Al-Bab (2009). Published electronically June 18. <http://bit.ly/1jcMnZp>. Accessed January 21, 2014; UN Security Council. "Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) [on the political independence and withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon]." S/RES/1559 no. 2 September (2004). <http://bit.ly/1bkjaXX>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²³⁰ Evron, *War and Intervention in Lebanon*: 173f.

²³¹ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 137; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 38f.

²³² Already in the late 1980s, Syria permitted the group to consolidate an armed presence in the area in exchange for disarmament of the group in the rest of the country, particularly in residential Beirut. See also Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 90f; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 133; Harris, *Lebanon*: 259.

²³³ ———, *Faces of Lebanon*: 293; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 137,150; Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents*: 157; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 141.

²³⁴ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 193.

²³⁵ Harris, *Lebanon*: 265; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 160; Gambill, "Can Syria Put the Lebanese Regime Together Again?".

withdrawal was incomplete and reportedly pressured Lebanon to refrain from a redeployment of the Lebanese army to the south.²³⁶ In May 2003, for instance, Damascus rebuffed demands by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, to disarm the group.²³⁷ Syria's tolerance for Hizbollah using southern Lebanon as a front against Israel evolved in a similar way. Although Syrian officials permitted attacks on IDF personnel in the late 1980s, they exerted substantial control over both their "timing and targeting [...] in ways that would convey the message Syria wished to send to Israel and the USA."²³⁸ Throughout the 1990s, Syria tolerated, on the one hand, attacks on Israel inside Lebanon, mandated by the Ta'if Agreement and legitimized by the 1993 and 1996 treaties. On the other hand, Syria found itself obliged as a *de facto* contracting party to the agreements to restrain cross-border attacks into northern Israel.²³⁹ Hence, Syria repeatedly demonstrated its ability to reign in Hizbollah, particularly in 1993/94, pressuring the group to refrain from cross-border attacks, and even obligated the group to put its attacks against IDF positions to a halt in order to ease tensions with the West just before Bill Clinton's 1996 re-election.²⁴⁰

After the IDF withdrawal, Syria granted Hizbollah significantly greater freedom of movement, publicly backed Hizbollah's decision to resume attacks on IDF posts, and pressured the Lebanese government to facilitate the group's military mission.²⁴¹ In late 2000, Asad turned down a request from Israel to put a halt on Hizbollah's attacks in the Shab'a Farms, and although Israel made sure to publicly link air raids on Syrian positions in Lebanon in April and June 2001 to previous Hizbollah attacks, there were no signs of Syrian pressure on Hizbollah to limit anti-Israel operations.²⁴² After the 9/11 attacks of September 2001, Syrian officials periodically restrained Hizbollah activity against Israel and in a meeting with U.S. officials in Beirut in late November, foreign minister al-Shar' even hinted at a temporary limitation of Hizbollah operations.²⁴³ Reportedly encouraged by the president himself, Hizbollah resume attacks on Israel in early 2002.²⁴⁴

Finally, Syria's efforts to maintain plausible deniability as a key benefit of indirect hosting were subject to significant variation over time. In the 1980s and throughout the observation period, Syrian officials avoided being associated with anti-Western terrorism in Lebanon. For instance,

²³⁶ Shmuel Bar, "Bashar's Syria: The Regime and its Strategic Worldview," *Comparative Strategy* 25, no. 5 (2006): 411; Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah*: 188; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 139-143; Harris, *Lebanon*: 265; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 156; Anthony H. Cordesman and Jennifer Moravitz, *The Israeli-Palestinian War: Escalating to Nowhere* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005). 226.

²³⁷ Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 141.

²³⁸ Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 39ff. see also Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 90f.

²³⁹ "The Ta'if Accord"; Zisser, "Syria," 653; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 176.

²⁴⁰ Zisser, "Syria," 655; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 313-317; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 149-152; Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*: 101.

²⁴¹ Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 152-155; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 108; El-Hokayem, "Hizbollah and Syria," 35.

²⁴² Dandash, "Israeli Planes Attack Syrian Position."; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 159-163; Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar al-Asad," 236; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 156; "Damascus vows to defend itself." *Hürriyet Daily News* (2001). Published electronically April 17. <http://bit.ly/1kJabpB>. Accessed January 21, 2014.

²⁴³ Ma'oz, *Washington and Damascus between confrontation and cooperation*: 4; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 185.

²⁴⁴ In this context, particularly Ghazi Kanaan's dismissal from his post in Lebanon removed a key constraint on the group's military activity against Israel. Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 78; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 64, 163.

after the 9/11 attacks, President Asad and others quickly denied having any information when U.S. officials confronted them with reports that Hizballah members designated by Washington as terrorists were operating freely in Syria's sphere of influence.²⁴⁵

Before Syria gradually waived deniability through presenting itself as the only force that could free Israel from Hezbollah's attacks, hosting cease-fire talks and negotiating, in 1996, even on behalf of the group, cooperation retained an opaque character and Damascus managed the alignment through its intelligence apparatus in Lebanon.²⁴⁶ In contrast, Bashar al-Asad's rise to power entailed a boost in publicity of Syria's presence in Lebanon in general and the alignment in particular.²⁴⁷ While Israel's policy shift to holding Syria accountable for Hizballah attacks after 2001 already pointed to increasing Syrian commitment costs, the transfer of the Hizballah portfolio from the military intelligence to the presidency, indicated a low priority of entrapment risks.²⁴⁸ In an unprecedented move in March 2002, Asad held a meeting and direct consultations with Nasrallah before the group resumed its attacks on IDF positions in the Shab'a Farms.²⁴⁹ Under increased pressure from Washington in 2002/03, high-ranking intelligence officers, such as Bahjat Suleiman, head of the GID internal branch, and Hasan Khalil, head of military intelligence, hinted repeatedly to a possible bargain including a stricter Syrian control on Hizballah.²⁵⁰ Also, President Asad argued in 2003, that the solution to Hizballah violence against Israel was not to put pressure on Syria but on Israel to halt inter alia its violations of Lebanese airspace.²⁵¹ In late 2005, however, he sent a strong message of resolve and hosting commitment: Elaborating on failed attempts to blackmail Syria into disarming Hizballah in return for international approval of its ongoing presence in Lebanon, Asad threatened that any further attempts to weaken the alignment would inevitably lead to chaos.²⁵²

7.3.2 Military support

Syria's military support, such as the direct provision of intelligence, weapons, and personnel to Hizballah, will be assessed as outlined in section 4.3.2. Hence, assistance constitutes a high level of commitment if Syria employed military personnel on behalf of the group or provided it with

²⁴⁵ ———, *Commanding Syria*: 136. See also Shaul Bakhash, "Iran's Relations with Israel, Syria, and Lebanon," in *Iran at the Crossroads: Global Relations in a Turbulent Decade*, ed. Miron Rezun (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990), 124; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 122.

²⁴⁶ Until the transfer of power in the late 1990s, Hizballah's main liaison officers were General Ali Duba, head of Military Intelligence, General Ghazi Kanaan, his representative in Lebanon, and vice president Khaddam. See also Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 116-122; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 90f.174f; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 40; Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 81f; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 145.

²⁴⁷ Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 82; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 161.

²⁴⁸ Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 156; Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 81f; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 174f; "Damascus vows to defend itself".

²⁴⁹ ———, *Warriors of God*: 312.

²⁵⁰ Both stressed the importance of diplomatic back channels and remained rather vague in their policy recommendations. Two years later, in June 2005 however, Suleiman, was removed from his post. Seymour M. Hersh, *Chain of Command* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009). 338; Salloukh, "Demystifying Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad " 164f.

²⁵¹ Asad, "Interview with Al-Arabiya TV".

²⁵² ———. "Speech of President Bashar al-Asad at Damascus University." SANA (2005). Published electronically November 10. <http://bit.ly/1djr28R>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

sophisticated weaponry, as both policies entail economic costs and a high risk of conflict escalation.²⁵³ In contrast, military assistance occurs if Syria operated as a military sponsor in a third state, particularly Lebanon, or as a corridor for third party arms supplies. Finally, limiting both direct and third party military support indicates a low level of military support.

Throughout the observation period and in contrast to hosting, military support for Hizbollah took place mainly in coordination with Iran, generating Syria's role as a facilitator and corridor for Iranian support. Besides the aim of bolstering the group's military capacity, this policy aimed at avoiding material costs, maintaining a sufficient level of plausible deniability, and exercising control over Hizbollah-Iranian cooperation in Lebanon to avoid entrapment in an unwanted conflict escalation with Israel.²⁵⁴ Especially after establishing a *de facto* hegemony over Lebanon in the early 1990s, Syria substantially interfered in Hizbollah's relations with Iran. For instance, it obligated Tehran to coordinate its Lebanese policies through the Iranian embassy in Damascus instead of Beirut and all flights to Lebanon, carrying both personnel and material deliveries, were connected via the Syrian capital.²⁵⁵

The quantitative and qualitative boost in Iranian arms deliveries to Hizbollah after 1990 suggests a respective decrease of Syrian restrictiveness on this matter. Reportedly, Iranian Boeing 747s arrived up to four times a month at Damascus airport and Syrian military airfields in the early 1990s, carrying not only ammunition on a large scale but also a total of more than a thousand 122mm Katyusha rockets, AT-4 and AT-3 Sagger anti-tank missiles, rocket-propelled grenades, and even anti-aircraft batteries. As Syrian officials exercised remarkably little care in disguising the shipments' purpose from Western observers, Damascus' commitment to Hizbollah's military build-up experienced an increase during this period.²⁵⁶ Additionally, its own facilitating role in the context of training slightly moved to the upper end of the support continuum. Syria increasingly served as a hub for Hizbollah recruits flying to Iran in order to undergo training on larger scale weapon systems, as for instance air defense systems and artillery rockets, which could not be provided in the Bekaa Valley, an area of easy access for IAF. At times, such specialized trainings also took place in Syria itself.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ In Summer 2013, for instance, Israel called the transfer of chemical weapons from Syria to Hizbollah a „red line“, justifying military strikes on Syrian territory Atilla Shmolfavi. "Israel says will act if WMDs transferred to Hezbollah." Ynetnews (2013). Published electronically September 12. <http://bit.ly/1n5UyV7>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²⁵⁴ Syria had allowed Iranian security forces to enter Lebanon in order to provide training and organizational support to Hizbollah since 1982 and particularly after 1985, serving as the key corridor for arms deliveries. Furthermore, it provided logistical support through its troops for Iranian training of Hizbollah recruits in camps in the Bekaa Valley and by transporting arms originating in Iran from Damascus to Lebanon in Syrian trucks. Simultaneously, Syria insisted on oversight over Iranian support, particularly through intelligence chief Ghazi Kanaan. See also Bakhsh, "Iran's Relations with Israel, Syria, and Lebanon," 124; Neriah and Shapira, "Hezbollah," 9; El-Hokayem, "Hezbollah and Syria," 36; Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran*: 88+144; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 313; Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 38f.

²⁵⁵ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 138.

²⁵⁶ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 132; Ranstorp, "The Hizbollah Training Camps of Lebanon," 254f.

²⁵⁷ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 120.

Although Syria refrained from making an explicit commitment regarding Hizballah's future in Lebanon once an agreement was signed during the peace talks, measures of restraining the group's operations at times also affected Damascus military support policy. In late 1993, for instance, Syria vetoed the deployment of Hizballah tanks and missiles from the Bekaa Valley to the south and temporarily blocked the transit of heavy weapons from Iran to Hizballah.²⁵⁸ However, as this constituted only a small deviation from Syria's general policy of tolerating Iranian resupplies for Hizballah through its territory, its commitment remained at a moderate level.²⁵⁹

Reports over Iranian arms deliveries via Syria mounted particularly after Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" operation in April 1996. In order to resupply Hizballah, Syria facilitated a massive influx of arms, trucked across the border.²⁶⁰ The next year, Syria facilitated a qualitative boost of Iranian arms deliveries, providing the group reportedly with Katyusha missiles having nearly twice the range compared to previously used.²⁶¹ Moreover, and particularly in the first half of 1997, the frequency of jumbo flights from Iran loaded with rockets and anti-tank missiles landing in Damascus reached an unprecedented level.²⁶² Nevertheless, Damascus refrained both in the context of Operation "Accountability" (1993) and in 1996 from militarily intervening on behalf of Hizballah and refused—as in the case of Syrian support for the PKK—to permit the delivery of game-changing, sophisticated weaponry to the group.²⁶³ Hence, military support did not reach a high level.

As in the case of hosting, Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon and Bashar al-Asad's ascension to the presidency constituted game changers also for Syria's military commitment. In the first pledge of military support during his inauguration speech on July 17, 2000, the new president vowed that Syria would "always stand by Lebanon and support it in [...] its brave stand in the face of repeated Israeli threats."²⁶⁴ According to local sources, between May 2000 and December 2001, Hizballah received truckloads of arms and Syria changed from a constraining facilitator to a *major supplier* of arms, providing the group with large quantities of Syrian-manufactured 220 mm

²⁵⁸ El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 38; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 192.

²⁵⁹ Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*: 101.

²⁶⁰ According to Israeli officials and U.S. media reports, the group possessed up to 1,000 Katyushas by August 1996 Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 179; Michael Eisenstadt, *Iranian military power. Capabilities and intentions* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1996). 66; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 321.

²⁶¹ Eytan J. Fisch, "A Chronology of Middle East State Support for International Terrorism, 1997: A supplement to the State Department's Patterns of Global Terrorism," *Research Notes* 1998, 3.

²⁶² *Ibid.*; Charles Newmann. "Iran unquestionably sponsors Hezbollah terrorist activity in Israel." *The Chronicle* (1998). Published electronically February 17. <http://bit.ly/1ju43A4>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

²⁶³ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 337.

²⁶⁴ Asad, "President Assad 2000 Inauguration Speech".

Uragan and B-302 rockets with a range of up to 42 miles.²⁶⁵ In addition, Damascus also transferred highly advanced Russian anti-tank missiles to Hizbollah.²⁶⁶

Although Syria continued to facilitate Iranian shipments to Hizbollah through its airports after 2000, it deviated from its previous policy in two aspects. First, the weaponry delivered from Iran to Hizbollah via Syria became more advanced over the years, carrying a higher risk of conflict escalation.²⁶⁷ Second, through the massive boost in direct arms deliveries, Syria increased its commitment to such an extent that the number of Hizbollah rockets fired at Israel during the July 2006 War stemming from Syrian arsenal reportedly exceeded those of Iranian origin.²⁶⁸ After the war, Syria was again strongly involved in resupplying Hizbollah with weapons. However, its reluctance to commit its own military forces on behalf of the group during the war has to a certain extent limited the shift from moderate to high military support in the course of Bashar al-Asad's presidency.²⁶⁹

7.3.3 Financial support

Since the debate on terrorism financing had gained momentum after the 9/11 attacks, three aspects shape its discussion in international politics. First, the direct transfer of funds, second, governmental tolerance of donations, and, third, a state's deliberate toleration of illicit business in its own sphere of influence.²⁷⁰ According to the measurement established in section 4.3.3, Syria took on the role of a substantial financial backer, if it provided explicit financial assistance and tolerated fundraising or economic activities. In contrast, policy reflected a low commitment if it included substantial cuts in financial support, restrictions on societal support, and efforts to achieve plausible deniability.

Reportedly, Hizbollah's annual budget ranges between \$100 million and \$400 million.²⁷¹ Although there are claims that Syria provides direct financial support to Hizbollah, only a few of them find support in the empirical evidence.²⁷² Moreover, direct financial assistance played—as in the cases of Fatah and PKK—rather a little role in Syria's overall sponsorship portfolio, particular-

²⁶⁵ Uzi Rubin. "Hizbollah's Rocket Campaign against Northern Israel: A Preliminary Report." Jerusalem Issue Brief 6, no. 10 (2006). <http://bit.ly/1fmnoNZ>. Accessed January 31, 2014; Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 337f; Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 138.

²⁶⁶ Deliveries included the AT-13 Metis-M with a range of nearly one mile and the AT-14 Kornet-E, which possesses a range of over three miles, a laser-beam-riding guidance system, and is compatible with both anti-armor and bunker-busting thermobaric warheads. Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 337f; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 161.

²⁶⁷ ———, *Commanding Syria*: 167.

²⁶⁸ Rubin.

²⁶⁹ Neriah and Shapira, "Hezbollah," 8; Harris, *Lebanon*: 271; El-Hokayem, "Hezbollah and Syria," 35.

²⁷⁰ Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances," 134f.

²⁷¹ According to these reports, about \$100 million are direct funds stemming from Iran. See also Michael Freeman, "The Sources of Terrorist Financing: Theory and Typology," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 6 (2011): 462; Harold A. Trinkunas and Jeanne K. Giraldo, "The Political Economy of Terrorism Financing," in *Terrorism Financing and State Responses. A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 10; Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances: Funding the Party of God," *ibid.*, 137.

²⁷² Freeman, "The Sources of Terrorist Financing," 465.

ly against the background of Syrian-Iranian division of labor.²⁷³ Although Damascus' role as a facilitator for third party financial support received increased attention in the context of the 9/11 attacks and resulted inter alia in the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act (SALSRA) of 2003, direct funding of Hizballah was not mentioned in the legislation. There are no indications that direct governmental Syrian support exceeded a low commitment. Nevertheless, Damascus showed no willingness to limit the massive transfer of Iranian money to Hizballah, which peaked in 1995/96.²⁷⁴ The fact, that this period coincides with Syrian-Israeli negotiations, also displays that Iranian assistance allowed Hizballah to diversify their sources of support and maintain a certain level of independence from both conventional fundraising and business and Syria as a source of revenue.²⁷⁵

Syrian support assumedly played a considerable role regarding the sending of revenues from illicit business outside of the region to Hizballah.²⁷⁶ According to U.S. government and media reports, the money partially returned to Lebanon in cash, yet a large amount of it was also laundered and transferred via banks and other informal channels in the early 2000s.²⁷⁷ In this context, it was Syria's dominance over virtually all sectors of Lebanese economy that allowed particularly Hizballah to launder and further distribute donations from sources unwilling to display their identity in public.²⁷⁸

Given increased international pressure on states accused of tolerating terrorism financing after 9/11, Asad and Hariri coordinated their reaction to Hizballah's designation as a terrorist organization and subsequent demands from Washington to freeze its assets. As these consultations were widely perceived as influential for the Lebanese government's decision to decline the U.S. request in November 2001, they indicated an ongoing Syrian commitment to Hizballah's economic survival.²⁷⁹

7.3.4 Endorsement

As outlined in 4.3.4, governmental endorsement of a terrorist organization includes both actively bolstering the group's standing as a legitimate resistance organization in official rhetoric and encouraging others to join the alignment at least passively. In contrast, approval of the group's des-

²⁷³ Zisser, Interview by the Author, March 29, 2012. See also Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 39f.

²⁷⁴ Kirchner, *Allianz mit dem Terror*: 49; Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances," 137; Ranstorp, "Hezbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," 316f.

²⁷⁵ Zisser, Interview by the Author, March 29, 2012. See also Levitt, "Hezbollah Finances," 141.

²⁷⁶ Throughout the 1990s, Hizballah established a network of societal support among Lebanese Shia expatriate communities worldwide, particularly in Western Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and North America, where the group reportedly raised hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars annually through donations and charities.²⁷⁶ In addition, Hizballah has reportedly been involved in the trade of drugs and gained funds through money laundering, smuggling, and extortion. As estimated in the mid-2000s, Hizballah's revenues from illicit business accounted for some \$6 billion in 2001 and by 2007, it reportedly enjoyed financial independence *ibid.*, 144-148; Costigan and Gold, *Terronomics*: 33f.

²⁷⁷ ———, *Terronomics*: 35; Dandash, "Israeli Planes Attack Syrian Position."

²⁷⁸ Gambill, "Syria after Lebanon."

²⁷⁹ Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*: 132; Costigan and Gold, *Terronomics*: 39; David Rudge, "Lebanon to reject request to freeze Hizbullah assets," *Jerusalem Post*, November 7 2001.

ignation as a terrorist organization and its subsequent prosecution point to a low level of commitment. Syria's endorsement for Hizbollah since the initial period of interaction in the 1980s was subject to remarkable variation. When relations reached a low point in 1986/87, regime officials called Syria's violent crackdown on Hizbollah in West Beirut "legitimate self-defense" against "enemies."²⁸⁰ Some twenty years later, Bashar al-Asad publicly declared "if standing by the resistance is a mortifying sin, then it is an honor and a source of pride for the Syrian people."²⁸¹

In order to legitimize Hizbollah's exceptional position among Lebanon's Civil War militias after the Ta'if Agreement, Syrian officials repeatedly praised Hizbollah's attacks as acts of resistance, constituting a Pan-Arab "national duty."²⁸² Moreover, they aimed at downplaying the extent of Syria's support, in order not to undermine the group's nationalist credentials or stir up Lebanese fears over Syrian revisionism.²⁸³

Throughout the 1990s, endorsement strongly reflected Syrian efforts to reconcile its commitment to Hizbollah's campaign against Israel with efforts to maintain its hegemony over Lebanon (c.f. 7.1.5). Syrian officials repeatedly emphasized the group's identity as a legitimate resistance movement and refused reports over a potential realignment after a breakthrough in negotiations with Israel. On the eve of the Peace Process, Vice President Khaddam pledged, "the resistance to Israel in Lebanon will continue until the liberation of the south"²⁸⁴ and vowed again in April 1993 that Syria would never take "any measure which might restrict the national, Syrian, Lebanese or Palestine struggle against Israeli aggression."²⁸⁵ Again in 1996, president Asad portrayed resistance to the Israeli occupation as a legitimate right.²⁸⁶

In contrast, strategic considerations in the Lebanese and Syrian realm also limited endorsement. First, Syrian authorities in Lebanon repeatedly prevented Hizbollah from dominating the Shia camp by pressuring it into an electoral alliance with its secular Shia rival Amal in the 1992 parliamentary elections and even reduced the number of seats attainable to Hizbollah in the 1996 elections.²⁸⁷ Second, Syria also backed the government in constraining Hizbollah activity outside of South Lebanon. In September 1993, for instance, when Hizbollah decried the government for a

²⁸⁰ Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran*: 202; Avi-Ran, *The Syrian involvement in Lebanon since 1975*: 213f; Pipes, *Greater Syria*: 129; Bakhash, "Iran's Relations with Israel, Syria, and Lebanon," 124; Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 132.

²⁸¹ Asad, "Speech of President Bashar al-Assad at Journalists Union 4th Conference".

²⁸² Hafiz Asad. "Extract from the late President's speech at the dinner banquet given by the President and Mrs. Hafez Al-Assad in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Rajiv Gandhi." Ibid.(1988). Published electronically June 4. <http://bit.ly/1bkmeDn>. See also Goodarzi, *Syria and Iran*: 145; El-Hokayem, "Hizbollah and Syria," 39; Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 114.

²⁸³ Reportedly for this purpose, Hafiz al-Asad refrained from holding public meetings with Hasan Nasrallah. El-Hokayem, "Hizbollah and Syria," 38-40. See also 3.3.2.1

²⁸⁴ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 313.

²⁸⁵ Lawson, "Domestic Pressures and the Peace Process," 143.

²⁸⁶ Ehteshami and Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran*: 150.

²⁸⁷ Blanford, *Warriors of God*: 101; Zisser, "Syria," 654; Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah*: 54; Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*: 322; ———, *Lebanon*: 263.

violent crackdown on socio-economic protest in southern Beirut, Ghazi Kanaan intervened on behalf of the latter.²⁸⁸ Third, aware of Syria's troubled history with political Islam, officials initially refrained from emphasizing Hizballah's Islamist character. In an interview in April 1993, for instance, Asad stressed the common goal of liberating occupied land as a base for cooperation, highlighting the fact that Hizballah was "fighting against occupation and colonization."²⁸⁹ Despite the fact that the president continued to refrain from public meetings with Hizballah leaders, authorities eventually invited Nasrallah and Hussein Fadlallah to Damascus to hold meetings with representatives of Palestinian and Jordanian Islamist groups in 1997 in the context of the regime's moderate rapprochement with political Islam.²⁹⁰

In the course of his increased role in Lebanon in the late 1990s, Bashar al-Asad cultivated a personally close relationship with Hasan Nasrallah.²⁹¹ After the death of Hafiz al-Asad, the cordiality of the alignment was inter alia displayed by numerous posters appearing in Syria and Lebanon, featuring the late and the current president as well as Nasrallah.²⁹² In addition, Bashar al-Asad allowed Nasrallah to make a public appearance in the context of his father's funeral in May 2000 in Damascus, invited him to the presidential palace, and reportedly allowed Hizballah fighters to march in Latakia on special occasions.²⁹³

In the context of a generally more hostile rhetoric vis-à-vis Israel, endorsing Hizballah became a bigger part of Syria's official positioning.²⁹⁴ Already in his inauguration speech, Bashar al-Asad had praised Hizballah as "heroic Lebanese national resistance,"²⁹⁵ and during his first major appearance on a regional level, the Cairo Summit on October 21, 2000, he praised Hizballah's victory over Israel as an "Arab experience" and a source of pride, thereby encouraging other Arab leaders to assist the group.²⁹⁶ Although limiting the visibility of support to non-military means in the context of Israeli strikes against Syrian positions in Lebanon in mid-2001, Asad emphasized in July that Syria stands by Hizballah "politically and morally."²⁹⁷

In addition to international consensus on Israel's complete withdrawal from Lebanon, the shift of U.S. policy after 9/11 further limited Syria's leeway of endorsing Hizballah as a legitimate re-

²⁸⁸ ———, *Faces of Lebanon*: 283; ———, *Lebanon*: 261.

²⁸⁹ Patrick Seale, "Interview with Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22, no. 4 (1993): 118.

²⁹⁰ Zisser, *Asad's Legacy*: 202; Eyal Zisser and Paul Rivlin, *Syria: Domestic Political Stress and Globalization* (Darby, PA: Diane Publishing Company, 1999). 16f.

²⁹¹ Besides strategic considerations, many observers ascribe this boost in visibility to Asad's personal and unabashed admiration of Nasrallah's personality. For instance, Asad even used his anti-imperialistic, Arab nationalist and anti-Western rhetorical repertoire as a source of inspiration for his own speeches and public remarks Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 185; El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 42f; Harris, *Lebanon*: 265; Leverett, *Inheriting Syria*: 100.

²⁹² El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 42.

²⁹³ Bar, "Bashar's Syria," 370.

²⁹⁴ Ma'oz, *Washington and Damascus between confrontation and cooperation*: 4ff; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 154.

²⁹⁵ Asad, "President Assad 2000 Inauguration Speech".

²⁹⁶ M. Abdo Al Ibrahim. "President Assad/ Beirut Summit Speech." Ibid.(2002). Published electronically March 27. <http://bit.ly/1fmgeJH>. See also Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 154.

²⁹⁷ "Syrien: "Scharon plant den Krieg"." *Der SPIEGEL* no. 28 (2001). Published electronically July 09. <http://bit.ly/1fyWXH7>. Accessed January 31, 2014; ———, *Commanding Syria*: 160.

sistance force. Nevertheless, Syrian officials made substantial efforts to prevent a consensus on Hizbollah's designation as a terrorist organization.²⁹⁸ Subsequently, Syrian officials portrayed Hizbollah attacks as legitimate resistance operations against what they termed state terrorism by Israel and measures of Lebanese national defense.²⁹⁹ In late 2001, both Asad and foreign minister al-Shar' explicitly rejected the term "terrorist movement" for Hizbollah and denounced the group's designation as "shameful."³⁰⁰ Aiming at undermining Arab support for the group's outlawing, the president argued that there was no difference between IDF soldiers and Israeli civilians in his Arab Summit speech on March 27, 2002.³⁰¹ In this context, Damascus also defended Hizbollah attacks on IDF posts in the Shab'a Farms in late March 2002 as rightful.³⁰²

Endorsement remained high also in 2004. On May 31, for instance, Asad publicly called Hizbollah the "most successful experience against Israel"³⁰³ and when the UN Security Council called for Hizbollah's disbandment, the government again stressed the group's character as a liberation movement.³⁰⁴ Subsequently, official rhetoric fiercely targeted the Sunni-Druze-Christian alignment challenging Hizbollah's position in Lebanon as non-patriotic forces doomed to failure and when pressure on the group mounted after Hariri's assassination in early 2005, Asad publicly vowed to "always stand" with the "patriotic parties," meaning Hizbollah and its allies in Lebanon.³⁰⁵ In November, Asad again publicly supported Hizbollah's claim on the Shab'a Farms.³⁰⁶

In the context of the July 2006 War, officials stepped up their rhetorical support for Hizbollah. Information minister Mushin Bilal, for instance, declared that "Syria supports the Lebanese national resistance in its struggles against Israeli aggression" and that "the resistance will be victorious."³⁰⁷ In early August, foreign minister Walid al-Muallem issued not only fierce threats of retaliation in the case of an Israeli attack on Syria but also vowed to be "ready to be a soldier under the leadership of Hasan Nasr Allah'."³⁰⁸ Subsequently, Syria also criticized UNSCR 1701, calling

²⁹⁸ Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 184f; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*: 163; Hinnebusch, "Syrian Foreign Policy under Bashar al-Asad," 13.

²⁹⁹ Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 164-166; Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 102; Rudge, "Lebanon to reject request to freeze Hizbullah assets."

³⁰⁰ ———, "Lebanon to reject request to freeze Hizbullah assets."; Rabil, *Syria, the United States, and the War on Terror in the Middle East*: 132; Ma'oz, *Washington and Damascus between confrontation and cooperation*: 4.

³⁰¹ Hemmer, "Syria under Bashar al-Asad," 234f; Al Ibrahim.

³⁰² Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah*: 189.

³⁰³ Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus*: 255.

³⁰⁴ Ma'oz, *Washington and Damascus between confrontation and cooperation*: 7.

³⁰⁵ Asad, "Speech of Mr. President Bashar Assad before the People's Assembly". In a more subtle way to endorse Hizbollah in the Lebanese political arena after pressure on the group had increased after the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, no Syrian official—except for the *de facto* sidelined Khaddam—attended Hariri's funeral in February 2005. See Harris, *Lebanon*: 269.

³⁰⁶ Asad, "Speech of President Bashar al-Asad at Damascus University".

³⁰⁷ Ziadeh, *Power and policy in Syria*: 116.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

for the restoration of the Lebanese army's monopoly on the use of force, as downsizing the "historical achievements realized by the Lebanese national resistance."³⁰⁹

After the war, the regional wave of enthusiasm for Hizballah and admiration for Nasrallah as an Arab national hero also reached Syria. Hence, authorities tolerated and probably encouraged the distribution of posters featuring the Hizballah leader alongside Hafiz and particularly Bashar al-Asad.³¹⁰ Subsequently, also rhetorical endorsement reached a preliminary peak. Only two days after fighting had ended in Lebanon, Asad praised Hizballah's achievements as a factor shaping a "new Middle East."³¹¹ In addition, he endorsed support for the group as a deterrent against Israeli aggression, a powerful instrument of achieving peace and restoring legitimate rights, and a *third option* between a hopeless conventional military confrontation and efforts to reach peace through negotiations. While, on the one hand, harshly criticizing the moderate Arab States for their reluctance to support Hizballah, whose resistance is "essential in as much as it is natural and legitimate,"³¹² he claimed, on the other, that the group finds support among "all the Arab people [...] completely and unequivocally."³¹³ In an unprecedented openness, Asad pledged that Syria is "standing by and supporting the resistance," expressed his personal "appreciation and admiration to the men of resistance," and praised Hizballah as "a badge of honour on the chest of each Arab citizen."³¹⁴

7.3.5 Conclusion

„Today, for strategic and ideological motives, Syria is more pro-Hizballah than Hizballah is pro-Syria.“³¹⁵

Throughout the 1990s, Syria exerted a tremendous influence over the group's ideological direction, its political and military activity, and its relations with Lebanese and external actors, while at the same time maintaining high levels of deniability in exchange for protecting Hizballah from disbandment and subsequent extermination as a political force in Lebanon. As Emile El-Hokayem's assessment suggests, particularly a substantial shift in the intra-alignment balance of power between Syria and Hizballah induced the emergence of considerably changed patterns of Syrian support by the mid-2000s. The fact that high-ranking officials pledged allegiance to Hasan Nasrallah as a worthy model of emulation, transferred sophisticated weapons to a non-state actor that derives an important part of its support base from confronting the region's leading military power, and bore humiliating Israeli retaliation and international isolation indicates a significant shift regarding specific sponsorship policies. To what extent do the observed patterns match the

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 119f.

³¹⁰ Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*: 148; Murphy et al., "In war's dust, a new Arab Lion emerges."

³¹¹ Asad, "Speech of President Bashar al-Assad at Journalists Union 4th Conference".

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ El-Hokayem, "Hizballah and Syria," 36.

sponsorship roles *Brother in Arms*, *Secret Backer*, *Fellow Traveler*, and *Defector* and the respective assumptions based on the SSD?

Section 7.1.6 and the neorealist *restraining* hypothesis N₃ maintained that the SSD suggested a general tendency towards a policy entrapment avoiding in the first half of the 1990s, given Hizballah's insufficient capacity to balance the vast power disparity between Syria and Israel and a historically low level of interstate conflict and risk of confrontation. However, the SSD incentives towards restraining the ally were alleviated by parallel enticements for policies of *standing firm*, addressed by hypothesis N₂. Both Syria's strategic interest in ensuring Shi'a acceptance of its hegemony in Lebanon and the lack of interstate allies for pressuring Israel into concessions over the return of the Golan Heights and for balancing its overall military superiority.

With regard to domestic politics, the necessity of balancing rejectionist and pro-Western forces (and ultimately sources of threats to regime survival) inside Syria contributed to an external policy of maneuvering between the Western camp and Iran. Against the background of the assumption established in section 2.4.3 that realignment is likely to carry along substantial domestic costs and the neoclassical realist sponsorship hypothesis NC₂, assisting Hizballah allowed for appeasing those strongly opposing realignment and attracting Iranian support without the expected domestic autonomy losses. Eventually, by formally endorsing the Pan-Arab nationalist goal of anti-Israel resistance and presenting itself as a moderating force, securing Western interests in Lebanon, Damascus was able to maintain autonomy from pro-Western forces demanding not only external realignment but also domestic liberalization. As this rivalry persisted throughout the entire observation period, there was no complete realignment (*defection*) detected in the post-Cold war era. Nevertheless, these conflictual alignment preferences have most likely contributed to the emergence of ambivalent pattern of sponsorship suggested by the neoclassical realist hypotheses NC₂ (*limited resolve*) and NC₃ (*limited restraint*).

Beginning in the second half of the 1990s, several factors gradually strengthened existing incentives for a policy of resolve and high commitment, following the argument of the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂. First, while Hizballah's military and political capacity increased, the power gap between Israel and Syria further widened and alternative allies showed little readiness to support Syria in its gradually worsening relations with Israel. Second, Syria's increasingly assertive interference in Lebanese domestic politics and the gradual erosion of the societal consensus on its presence increased Damascus' strategic interest in the alignment with Hizballah. In contrast, following the *restraining* hypothesis N₃, the formalization of Syria's alliance with Iran in 2005/06 and the fact that the alignment itself became a burden for local and international tolerance of ongoing Syrian hegemony in Lebanon and served as a legitimation basis for Israeli military strikes against Syria, set incentives for limiting its commitment to Hizballah. As reflected by the *limited*

resolve hypothesis NC₂, the comparatively high level of regime vulnerability in the mid-2000 years induced deviation from the general tendency towards abandonment avoiding.

As assumed by NC₂, domestic conflict over external alignments prevented a Syrian realignment in its toleration of Hizballah operations and the patterns of support established after the end of open confrontation in the late 1980s persisted. Particularly before 2000, Syria's policy of indirect assistance through a guarded facilitation of Iranian arms deliveries and trainings in Lebanon also shaped its material commitment. Within the scope of indirect hosting, serving as an indicator for a preference for opacity and a tendency towards the sponsorship type *secret backer*, Syria was able to reduce the risk of being entrapped in direct confrontations with Israel, providing opacity, deniability, and a credible threat of realignment towards Hizballah. Despite sporadic hints towards a potential realignment in 1993, Syria also tolerated Iranian assistance and even supported it logistically in areas under its control. However, the nevertheless present international, strategic, and particularly domestic incentives for a policy of resolve reflected especially in the support dimension *endorsement*. After Hizballah had given up its radical opposition to the Lebanese state, the publicity of Syria's commitment to the group experienced a gradual rise and Damascus refused to consent to attempts of portraying the group as a terrorist organization.

While still hesitant to publicly announce the extent of material cooperation, Hafiz al-Asad and his aides provided the group with a political nationalist cover as a 'legitimate resistance,' constituting a form of moderate endorsement and increased visibility. Decreasing restrictiveness on Iranian arms deliveries and vague public pledges of commitment additionally contributed to the gradual shift towards a *brother in arms*. While demonstrations of Syria's leverage over Hizballah allowed Damascus to reap substantial diplomatic and political benefits, it also found itself increasingly exposed to entrapment costs such as international criticism and Israeli measures of retaliation.

International consensus on the legitimacy of Hizballah's operations was built on Israel's military presence in Lebanon and the emergence of a counter alignment was impeded by Syria's ability to present the alliance as a constructive factor both moderating Hizballah (and Iran) and ensuring domestic stability in Lebanon. In contrast, Israel's (and after 2001 also U.S.) policy of holding Syria responsible for Hizballah operations on the grounds of its dominant role in Lebanon increased the material costs of Syria's hosting commitment.

In the context of these tremendous shifts of Syria's external security environment, measures of appeasing Israel and particularly the U.S. by public signals of restraint in 2001 indicated fears of entrapment. Although material support continued and even increased in the aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal, Syria briefly took on the role of a *secret backer*. As suggested by the neoclassical realist limited restraint hypothesis NC₃, both regional (Second Palestinian Intifada) and domestic

(transfer of power, Damascus Spring) challenges prevented a substantial and coherent shift in endorsement.

Eventually, in the context of a full alignment with the Iran-led rejectionist camp after 2002, Syria's commitment to Hizballah—and particularly the material and immaterial entrapment costs it was willing to tolerate—substantially increased and reached a peak in both material military assistance and publicity. First, the gradual reputation loss of Hizballah as a resistance force after the Israeli withdrawal and its manifestation in UNSCR 1559 demanded increased efforts of Syria to shield the group from persecution. Second, by holding public meetings and repeatedly (and proudly) referring to Syria's contribution to Hizballah's campaign against Israel, Damascus demonstrated an increased willingness to sacrifice at least intangible assets and diplomatic costs for assisting Hizballah, both in the international and regional arena. By the end of the observation period, Syria's commitment included the loss of military personnel and reputation through Israeli retaliatory strikes, which even reached Syrian territory, and punching above its international weight in preventing Hizballah's disarmament after 2000. Hence, Syria deliberately waived the initially high level of deniability indirect hosting had allowed for in exchange for a policy of deterrence and resolve, portraying itself literally as Hizballah's *brother in arms*. The material base of this role, however, remained *de facto* limited as Syria refrained from actively deploying its own personnel against Israel in military confrontations throughout the entire observation period. Furthermore, Damascus revealed no intentions of encouraging Hizballah units to seek refuge in Syria or making its own territory available as a rear front for attacks on Israel.

As assumed by the neoclassical realist hypotheses NC₂ (*limited resolve*) and NC₃ (*limited restraint*), various challenges to regime security modified the impact of respective SSD incentives. Despite the fact that they did not materialize in a significant policy shift (mainly because of Hizballah's increasing importance for Syria in Lebanon and the rapid U.S. shift towards confrontation), officials issued sporadic threats of realignment in order to appease Syria's Western negotiation partners. This deviation from the general tendency of high commitment, addressed by the *limited resolve* hypothesis NC₂, coincided with a brief period of successful pressure from the business elite and civil society forces for particularly economic liberalization, the Damascus Spring. After 2004, however, regime vulnerability and the necessity of appeasing pro-Western forces did not have a restraining but in fact a reinforcing effect on Syria's commitment to Hizballah for several reasons. First, a key element of Syrian-Iranian relations since 1982, Damascus' commitment to Hizballah was instrumental in securing domestic power resources from the alignment with Tehran. Second, not only Syria's strategic interest in the alignment reached a peak in the context of its forced withdrawal from Lebanon. The alignment also successfully prevented the emergence and persistence of a broad Western-sponsored and transnational alliance of oppositional forces in both Syr-

ia and Lebanon as it allowed the regime to rally domestic support along the lines of anti-imperialism and Arab steadfastness.

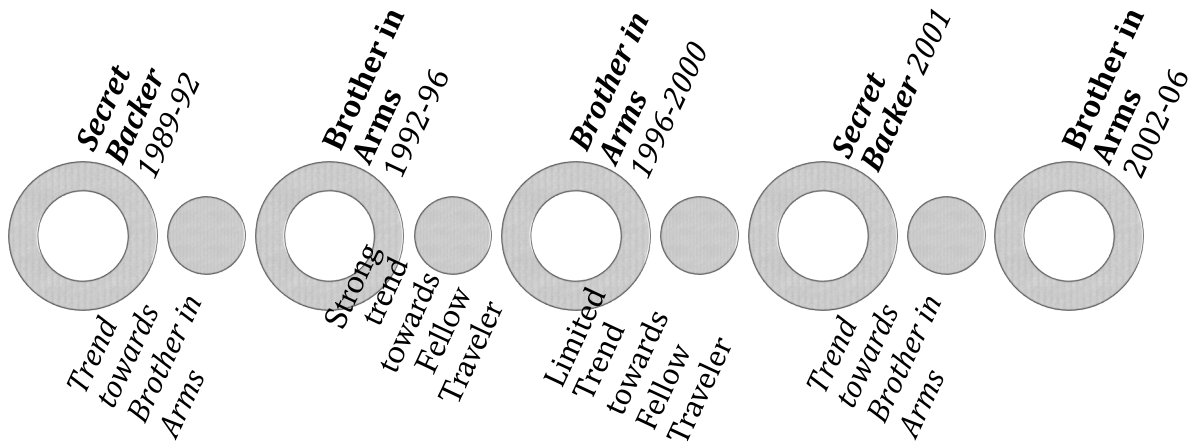


Figure 38: Patterns of Syrian sponsorship commitment to Hizballah

8 Findings and implications

In early 2014, the government of Serbia announced to build a monument of Gavrilo Princip, who struck down the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, on the centenary of the beginning of World War I, praising him as a fighter for freedom against the Austrian occupation and rejected his portrayal as a terrorist.¹ While this episode is unlikely to trigger renewed conflict between Austria and the alleged sponsor of the Archduke's assassins, it highlights that Belgrade can still hope to exploit its involvement in order to bolster its nationalist credentials.

This study was set out to explore the phenomenon of states sponsoring terrorist organizations as a form of third party conflict intervention. Although there is a broad consensus both in the academic and the political realm on the relevance of sponsorship as a factor impeding the settlement of intrastate conflicts, particularly the high politicization of the issue prevented a corresponding boost in theory-based research. Hence, the study sought to answer three questions that occur repeatedly in debates on third party intervention in general and sponsorship in particular:

1. *Under what conditions do governments choose to support terrorist organizations?*
2. *How do sponsoring states manage their relations with terrorist organizations, once an alignment has been established?*
3. *How can variations in sponsorship policy be explained?*

In order to address the question under what conditions cooperation between states and terrorist organization emerges and which decision-making environments entail the occurrence of specific support policy types, the study identified four types of sponsorship (see **Figure 39**). This typology is based on material and immaterial forms of assistance and covers a range of levels of commitment from going to war with the targeted state on behalf of a liberation movement to persecuting the latter as a terrorist organization.

The central argument examined has been that states sponsoring terrorist organizations form and shape these alignments according to their specific international and domestic security environments. Political leaders facing both external and domestic security threats are more inclined to choose resource-conserving policies of adjustment, for instance, alliance formation, as domestic power fragmentation makes it difficult for them to mobilize societal power resources. Hence, supporting non-state actors in conflict with a joint adversary allows these states to reap security gains from weakening the other state and to prevent at the same time autonomy losses from formal and public interstate alliances. Finally, the study argued that vulnerable governments calcu-

¹"A Monument Honoring Gavrilo Princip To Be Built In Belgrade." In Serbia (2014). Published electronically January 23. <http://bit.ly/1kyDtDP>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

late the domestic repercussions of alliance formation. Therefore, sponsorship can serve as a vehicle for broadening the societal power base of the regime by emphasizing transnational kinship, and reduce reputational losses for appeasing or even realigning with the adversary.

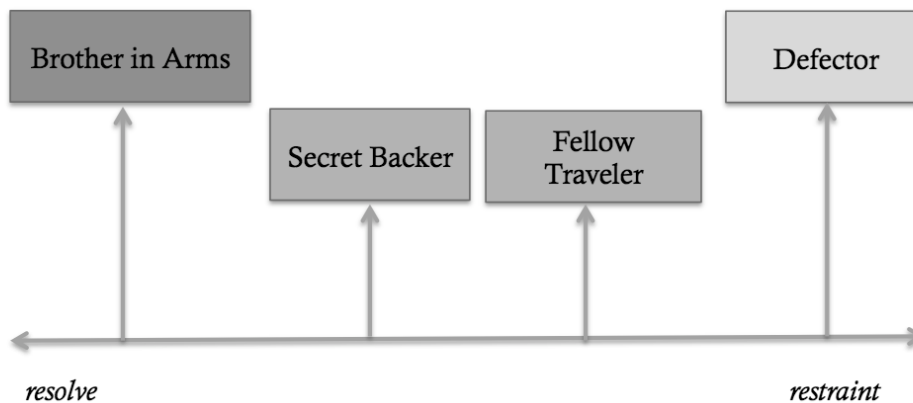


Figure 39: Types of sponsors

In this regard, the argument disagrees with the notion that state sponsorship constitutes an irrational form of foreign policy based on a “rogue” or “evil” ideology, widespread in non-academic discourses. Moreover, it challenges state-centered neorealist conceptions of alliance formation and politics by systematically integrating both non-state actors and domestically generated incentives for specific alliance policies. Particularly, this study developed a neoclassical realist model of sponsorship politics and consecutively tested it as a supplement to neorealist approaches to alliance formation and management. The hypotheses drawn from both models will be reconsidered in light of the case studies.

8.1 Formation of sponsorship

Regarding the first question on the formation of sponsorship, systemic incentives for balancing the targeted state constituted the starting point for both the neorealist *balancing* hypothesis N_1 and the neoclassical realist hypotheses, NC_1 (*alliance-seeking*) and NC_2 (*sponsorship*). As the observation period covered the initiation of cooperation in two of the three cases, they will be assessed in further detail as follows.

Fatah

In the first sequence of the conflict dyad between Israel and Syria, from 1964-76, a gradually increasing imbalance of power in favor of Israel and high levels of conflict intensity until at least 1974 were accompanied by a clear Syrian balancing strategy. Supporting N_1 , a wide range of balancing measures were observed, ranging from a military build-up, calls for a joint Arab war

against Israel in 1964, a formal defense agreement with Egypt in 1966/67, the initiation of a war in 1973, and—eventually supporting Fatah since 1964.

As suggested by NC₁, the substantial time lag in Syria's internal balancing efforts until the early 1970s pointed to several domestic impediments to resource mobilization. Despite the fact that Syria's elites agreed on the perception of threat by Israel and territorial revisionism, frequent purges in the security sector, mass capital flight and economic crisis after the socialist transformation as well as repression of internal dissent eroded societal allegiance to the state. In addition, power fragmentation became manifest in the mid- and late 1960s, when the civilian leadership started to build up paramilitary forces and a highly politicized army eluded civilian control. Only after former Minister of Defence Hafiz al-Asad had managed to establish his presidency as the *de facto* unchallenged power center after 1971, Syria's internal *balancing* efforts reflected the expectations of the neorealist hypothesis N₁ to a larger degree.

The neoclassical realist hypothesis NC₂ claimed that domestic vulnerability, impeding the formation of interstate alliances, is also an antecedent condition for *sponsorship*. And indeed, Syria's expected bias towards *alliance seeking* suggested by hypothesis NC₁ did not reflect in the formation of stable alliances for two reasons. First, Syria's calls for a joint war and Arab military cooperation against Israel were undermined by inter-Arab rivalry and the moderate Arab states' fears of being entrapped in a war between Syria and Israel that would necessary end in defeat. Second, external alignments became quickly an issue of intra-regime and societal contestation and entailed substantial domestic security risks. In 1964/65, for instance, the Ba'th party leadership appeased Egypt by coopting moderate Nasserites, eventually triggering a military coup in February 1966. After the June 1967 War, a Syrian realignment with the Arab moderate states, as favored by the Asad faction, was prevented by the supporters of his main rival Salah Jadid, who prioritized socialist transformation and strong ties to the USSR. However, even after the consolidation of domestic power in the early 1970s, Syria's domestic vulnerability impeded both a solid and cooperative relationship with Ba'thist Iraq or renewed Pan-Arab unity schemes, feared to entail domestic autonomy losses.

Hence, aligning with Fatah as a supplement form of *externally balancing* Israel, as suggested by NC₂, allowed the domestically pressured government to reduce both the costs of direct military confrontation and autonomy losses from interstate alliance formation. As Fatah commanded a major and transnational constituency particularly after 1967, it served as a Syrian tool to prevent the moderate Arab states from realigning with the West. In addition, Damascus successfully exploited the alignment domestically to increase the regime's Pan-Arab nationalist credentials and attract foreign support.

PKK

Also between Turkey and Syria, both an imbalance of power in favor unfavorable to the latter and patterns of interstate conflict could be observed. However, systemic incentives for *balancing* Turkey (N_1) were moderated by the clear priority of the Israeli threat and the costs of occupying Lebanon, which absorbed the lion's share of Syria's military resources and probably also the political leadership's attention, as well as the comparatively low intensity of the conflict. Instead, sporadic outbreak of hostilities was in most cases quickly met with conciliatory moves throughout the 1980s and first half of the 1990s. In the context of the looming Israeli-Turkish alignment in the mid-1990s, Syria increased—as predicted by hypothesis N_1 —its balancing efforts, both by limited military measures and extracting power resources from its originally anti-Israel alignments with Iran and the Gulf States. In 1998, the preliminary settlement of conflict triggered a Syrian realignment with Turkey. While this constituted a factor alleviating the balance of threat and subsequently alliance commitment (as suggested by N_1), alternative explanations are required regarding the starting point of the alignment with PKK as it coincided with internal turmoil inside Turkey and preceded the worsening of bilateral relations over the Euphrates' water.

In comparison to the 1960s, Syria's domestic vulnerability was low in the 1980s and 1990s. Hence, the most important domestically generated impediment to internal balancing against Turkey, as proclaimed by NC_1 , has been the economic crisis in the late 1980s and the low priority of Turkey as a threat compared to Israel. In the late 1980s, a linkage between regime security and systemic pressures emerged in the context of the private entrepreneurs' rise simultaneously in Syria's agricultural sector, heavily affected by Turkey's water policy, and the political arena. The private sector's influence on foreign policy, however, remained limited until the early 1990s, as the outcome of the Islamist uprising and the succession crisis had strengthened those regime constituencies opting for a firm commitment to Syria's alliance with the USSR. In the course of the second succession crisis, however, the business elite, opting for economic liberalization and cooperation with the West and Turkey, gained considerable influence on foreign policy decision-making. As this indecisiveness impeded a coherent strategy of internal balancing, NC_1 suggested that Syria would opt for *alliance seeking*. Yet again, cooperation with its natural ally, Ba'athist Iraq, collapsed quickly due to intra-party rivalry and Bagdad's alleged support for the Muslim Brotherhood.

Seeking an alignment with the PKK, offered, as suggested by hypothesis NC_2 a possibility to pressure Turkey into concessions over water without having to divert Syria's already scarce resources, on the one hand, and abandon its anti-Iraq alignment with Iran for the sake of a broader Arab alignment likely to additionally entail domestic autonomy losses by strengthening pro-Western forces, on the other.

In both cases, sponsorship occurred in the context of an unfavorable imbalance of power, enhanced by interstate conflict, and both internationally and domestically generated limitations on

adjustment policies. Generally speaking, this confirms the widely held assumption, that terrorism—and its sponsorship—constitutes a weapon of the weak. However, this weakness should not be understood merely in the sense of relative power capabilities, but rather as the state's inability to form international alliances and—as particularly emphasized by neoclassical realism—to generate societal consensus for internal balancing against the source of threat perceived by its political leadership.

8.2 Patterns of sponsorship

As sponsorship alignments emerge under specific constellations of the international-domestic security environment, these should reflect in specific cooperation arrangements. Assuming in a straightforward manner that the vast asymmetry of power between sponsor and the organization allows the former to shape commitments tailored to their security aims, the study identified four different types of backers. Two of them, the *Brother in Arms* and the *Defector* resemble strongly forms of interstate alliances and were derived from Glenn Snyder's neorealist alliance security dilemma, which was expanded to include non-state allies (*sponsorship security dilemma, SSD*). The remaining two forms, the *Secret Backer* and the *Fellow Traveler*, have been derived from the neoclassical assumption that domestic politics at times prevent sponsors from adjusting their assistance policies to the incentives laid out by the SSD and cause the emergence of hybrid policy types. As illustrated by **Figure 40**, Syria took on all four roles in cooperating (or non-cooperating) with Fatah, the PKK, and Hizballah.

In all three conflict dyads, a high imbalance of power enhanced by a general Syrian inability to form stable interstate alliances against Israel and Turkey, severe interstate conflict, and a high strategic interest in maintaining the alignments created incentives for providing the groups with substantial material support as suggested by the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂. Nevertheless, the groups' relative weakness in comparison with the targeted states constituted a major caveat for N₂ and set general incentives for reducing support in order to prevent a Syrian entrapment into costly wars, as pointed out by the *restraining* hypothesis N₃. This tendency was strengthened in times of interstate conflict de-escalation, when Syria successfully formed at least informal interstate counter alignments, and when the groups' perception as terrorists by potential allies limited Syrian options of realigning with former adversaries or attracting external support. To what extent have Syria's sponsorship policies illustrated in **Figure 40** corresponded with the specific SSD incentives?

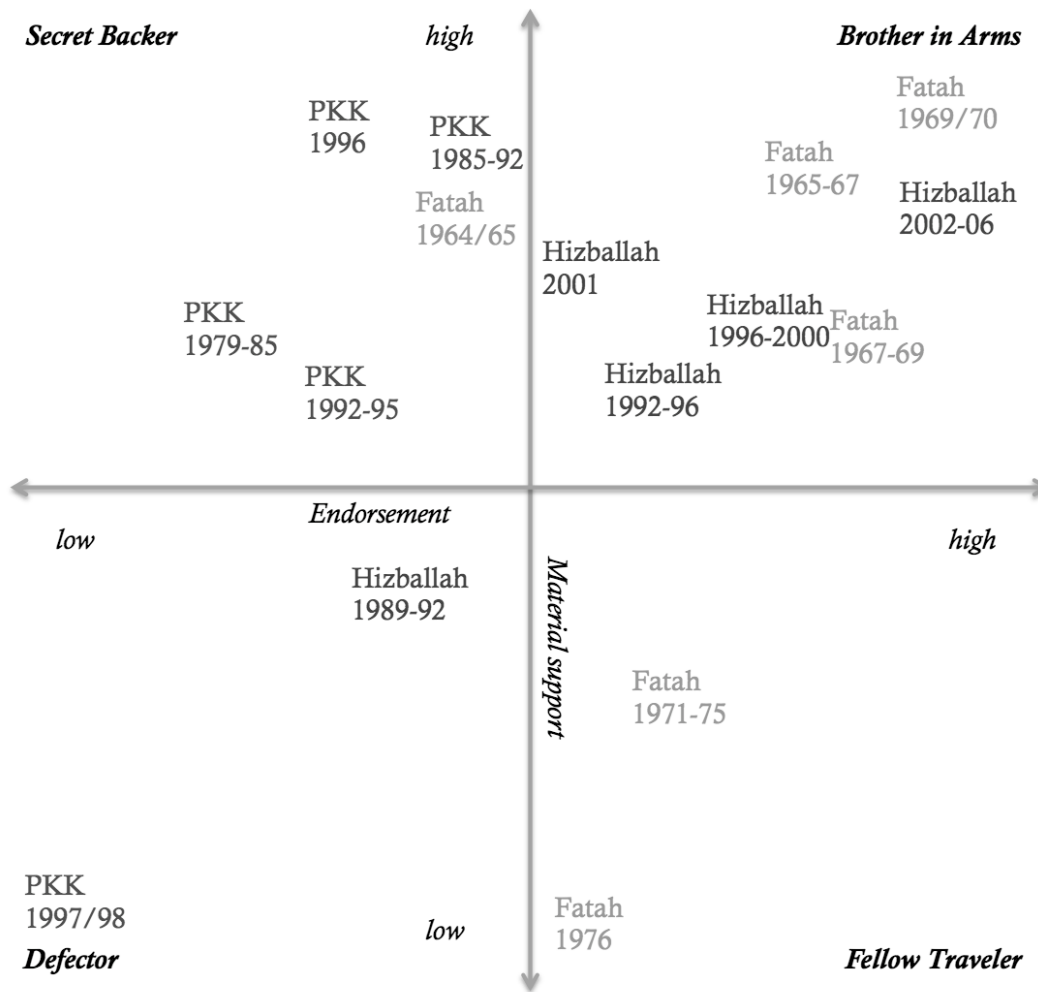


Figure 40: Syrian sponsorship patterns 1964-2006

Fatah

In the case of Syria's alignment with Fatah, initial incentives for a policy of resolve derived from conventional inferiority, regional isolation, and the high probability of war, corresponded with a tendency towards the upper end of the material support spectrum. Before 1965, however, particularly a public endorsement of the group was impeded by Fatah's initial operational and political weakness in comparison to Israel and the PLO. Particularly in the second half of the 1960s, Fatah's rise as the unchallenged representative of the Palestinian struggle, a boost in fighting capacity, inter-Arab rivalry, and Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights and Mount Hermon corresponded with the increasing level of commitment, which peaked in 1969/70, when Syria took on the role of a *brother in arms* and sent its own troops to Lebanon and Jordan.

Eventually, the gradual decline in Syria's material support amid increased criticism when Fatah and its affiliates broadened the scope of their operations to the Arab moderate states and Western

countries in the early 1970s corresponded with Syrian attempts to realign with the Arab states and establish military cooperation against Israel. This tendency of restraint was even reinforced by a significant ease of tensions with Israel after the 1973 war and a limited alleviation of the imbalance of power in favor of Syria. In turn, territorial revisionism, the PLO's recognition as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and the high strategic importance of the alignment as foreign policy asset attracting external support, induced opposite policies.

The neoclassical realist assumption that domestic vulnerability impedes the translation of the SSD incentives into sponsorship policies finds support in three instances. First, Syria refused to side with the other Arab states and particularly Egypt in supporting PLO, on the one hand, and authorities were initially reluctant to formalize ties with Fatah, on the other, which constituted a policy of *secret backing*. This corresponds with the *limited resolve* hypothesis NC₃, as the powerful Regional Command of the Ba'th Party fiercely rejected a pro-Egyptian realignment that would weaken its own domestic power position in favor of Nasserites. Furthermore, Fatah's historical ties to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood created suspicion at the initial stage of cooperation as it coincided with a wave of strikes and popular unrest in 1964/65 encouraged by the Syrian branch of the Brotherhood. Second, the repercussion of the 1966 coup and increased praetorianism also influenced sponsorship policies. Although the SSD set also incentives towards entrapment avoiding in 1966/67, the new leadership boosted its material and rhetorical support to the 'struggle for Palestine' in order to rally popular sentiment against opposition from the sidelined Druze officers as well as the Muslim Brotherhood. In this case, the antecedent condition domestic vulnerability served not as a limitation to resolve. By contrast, the domestically induced lack of autonomy rather reduced the influence of systemic incentives for restraint. Finally, the *limited restraint* hypothesis NC₄ provided an explanation for Syria's hesitance to publicly defect from its alliance with PLO although cooperation had turned into open warfare in 1976. An unprecedented low in the conventional power gap as well as conflict intensity between Israel and Syria, moderation of inter-Arab rivalry and competition over the 'Palestinian Card' set strong incentives for a policy of restraint as reflected in the dramatic decline of material assistance. Although Asad's coup and subsequent power consolidation were accompanied by a boost in foreign policy autonomy, preserving the regime's Arab nationalist credentials through a formal commitment to the Palestinian issue aimed at rallying popular support and contain nationalist, leftist, and Islamist opposition to the regime.

PKK

By contrast, Syrian support for the PKK displayed a generally low level of endorsement, peaking in the group's designation as terrorist in the first half of the 1990s and constituted the only case of defection observed in this study.

Syria's initially limited and indirect material support and efforts to keep the group's presence in the Bekaa a secret corresponded with little pressure for a policy of resolve induced by the SSD. Moreover, fears of entrapment in a war with Turkey, as suggested by the neorealist *restraining* hypothesis N₃, dominated the initial period of assistance as Turkey was weakened by internal turmoil, interstate conflict was moderate and the group lacked a significant capacity. The gradual rise of material support and endorsement in the Kurdish realm corresponded with a shift in the SSD in the first half of the 1980s, thereby supporting the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂. This increased tendency towards a policy of abandonment coincided with several factors; a growing imbalance of power in favor of Turkey, mounting conflict over water distribution, Syria's failure to form interstate alliances against its adversary, and the PKK's rising capacity.

However, as both states repeatedly signaled conciliation and shared an interest in cooperation to contain, for instance, Kurdish nationalism, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Syria carefully managed to keep its realignment options open through plausible deniability.

In the context of the looming Israel-Turkey military agreement in the mid-1990s, relations worsened and conflict reached a level of military maneuvers and even Turkish cross border operations. Additionally, the imbalance of power in favor of Turkey reached a peak also as it had improved its ties to the Kurds in northern Iraq. Although Syria eventually managed to rally informal and political Arab and Iranian support in the water issue and the PKK had suffered tremendously in the course of Turkey's military campaign in southern Turkey and Iraq, the trend towards *resolve* suggested by N₂ corresponded with a temporary boost in material commitment in 1996.

Although the SSD-model was able to explain the general dynamic of Syrian sponsorship, neo-classical realism served as a refining tool for specific sponsorship throughout the observation period. First, the *limited restraint* hypothesis NC₄ finds support as the observation of authorities allowing the PKK to establish a political presence in the Kurdish areas and actively encouraging it to recruit Syrian Kurds alleviated two domestic fears; diverting the focus of Kurdish political activism towards north prevented both the formation of a broad Sunni alignment against the Alawi-dominated regime and reduced the assertiveness of local Kurdish nationalist schemes. Second, the *limited resolve* hypothesis NC₃, clarified, why Syria largely refrained from publicly endorsing both PKK's nationalist aims and using the alignment as a public deterrent against Turkey even in times of high interstate conflict, and remained most of the time a *Secret backer*. Kurdish nationalism was seen as contradictory to Arab nationalism by both regime constituencies and its rivals. Anticipating the potential damage to its Arab nationalist credentials, already weakened by the intervention in Lebanon and Syria's alliance with Iran, Syria refrained from publicly praising the PKK's nationalist cause. Moreover, regime fears that endorsing Kurdish nationalism would be accompanied by renewed political activism of Syria's own Kurdish population prevented a public alignment. Finally, domestic politics played a decisive role in Syria's decision to realign with

Turkey and defect from its alignment with the PKK in 1998. As Hafiz al-Asad had heavily relied on the Sunni business elite, pushing for accommodation and improved trade relations with Turkey, to secure both economic state survival and guarantee hereditary succession, their realignment preference strengthened the incentives for restraint induced by the SSD.

Hizballah

After the Cold War, Syria's power position was enhanced, ties to the other Arab states improved, and a peace process with Israel loomed large. Hizballah, in turn, found itself literally at Syria's mercy in Lebanon and was perceived as a potential spoiler for both Syria's hegemony in Lebanon and improved relations with the West. As these SSD-incentives for a policy of *restraint* (N₃) corresponded with Syria's moderate commitment in the aftermath of the Ta'if Accord, the neorealist model finds support here. Although Hizballah was able to steadily expand its capacity with Syrian assistance after 1992, low interstate conflict and Syria's limited dependence on the group to maintain its dominance over Lebanon prevented a major shift in the SSD towards a policy of resolve. Hence, N₃ also corresponded with Syrian restrictions on cross border attacks during the Peace Process. By contrast, the *standing firm* hypothesis found support in the general trend towards increased commitment, both in material and immaterial terms, when the peace talks collapsed in 1996 and Hizballah had gained substantial strength to counter Israeli reprisals. Syria's unprecedentedly high level of commitment after the Israeli withdrawal corresponded—thereby confirming the *standing firm* hypothesis N₂—with a clear SSD incentive towards abandonment avoiding. These enticements were generated by the worsening of interstate conflict particularly since 2001, which entailed even targeted Israeli military reprisals against Syrian forces, Damascus' increasing regional isolation after 2003, and its strong reliance on a highly capable Hizballah to contain anti-Syrian forces in Lebanon.

Domestic politics influenced Syrian support in three instances. As predicted by the neoclassical hypothesis NC₄, the *restraining* incentives indicated by the SSD during the negotiation period were *limited* by the regime's reliance on Arab steadfastness in order to contain, on the one hand, the steadily growing influence of those societal forces preferring realignment with the West, and to maintain, on the other, support from revisionist regime constituencies. Regime vulnerability also reflected in sponsorship policies in the second half of the 1990s, when a narrowing of the power base in the context of Bashar al-Asad's succession was accompanied by a weakening of those regime constituencies preferring a balance of power in Lebanon through restraining Hizballah, such as Vice President Khaddam or Chief of Staff Shihabi, further increasing SSD-incentives for a policy of resolve. In a similar vein, Syria's support for Hizballah peaked after the 2002/03 Iraq Crisis in the context of international isolation and renewed hostility with Israel, which corresponded with the boost in material commitment in the way the *standing-firm* hypothesis (N₂) had predicted. Moreover, in order to counterbalance the domestic threat of a broad alliance along sec-

tarian lines against the regime, the alignment with Hizballah remained a key source of both rallying popular sentiment of Arab nationalism in favor of regime and containing forces hostile to Damascus in Lebanon.

In all three cases there was a strong, although not perfect, correspondence between the policy incentives of the sponsorship security dilemma and the general direction of Syrian assistance. In addition, the neoclassical assumption that domestic vulnerability would reflect in moderate deviations from the expected sponsorship patterns fit in with the observation that regime fears of the domestic repercussions of SSD-induced realignments produced hybrid forms of sponsorship.

8.3 Theoretical implications

A key finding of this study has been that Syria's sponsorship policies have corresponded strongly with incentives from both international and domestic security environments. Taking into account the known limitations of single country studies in terms of external validity and generalizability, the analysis proved particularly useful for the in-depth exploration of state sponsorship of terrorism as a phenomenon in international relations. Moreover, it proved helpful to both trace the complex causal pathways expected by the neoclassical realist theoretical framework in an explorative manner and refine the hypotheses deduced from it.

Consecutively, the study turned to three general debates in foreign policy analysis. First, whether realist alliance theory is useful to explain states' alignments with terrorist organizations. Second, whether and to what extent domestic politics influence foreign policy choices and the way alliances are managed. Third, whether the interplay of external and domestic security challenges produces specific patterns of sponsorship.

Regarding the question, whether supporting a non-state actor could be considered as a form of adjustment policy to an unfavorable security environment, it should be noted that the findings of the study have been largely consistent with previous neorealist research on interstate alliances. As expected by alliance theory, Syria constantly weighed the adjustment policy of sponsorship against other forms of balancing its adversaries, choosing it at times as a supplement for them. However, Syria's sponsorship policy corresponded largely with incentives for balancing the respective adversary. Under the scope condition that terrorist organizations hold a status quo orientation with regards to non-political ends (STAR), which they value higher than the political gains achieved from attacking, Syrian sponsorship reflected both fears of entrapment induced by the groups' weak military capacity compared to the targeted states and the belief that policies of restraint/resolve would not fall on deaf ears. With regard to Glenn Snyder's alliance security dilemma, the claim of applicability finds further support in security gains and losses that strongly resemble those accompanied by interstate alliances, ranging from deterrence to inciting military counterattacks. Therefore, this theoretical enhancement constitutes an important contribution to

further theory-based research on the interactions between terrorist organizations and states as their potential allies or adversaries. Moreover, understanding the nexus between international power and terrorism is a necessary condition both for explaining the failure of *wars* on terror and for formulating successful counterterrorism strategies.

Although the question of autonomy in foreign policy decision-making affects both democracies and non-democracies, the study primarily turned to structural autonomy lacks generated by low levels of regime legitimacy, on the one hand, and coercive power fragmentation, on the other. At times highly violent domestic dissent, rivalries inside the ruling coalition, and the subsequent importance of external alignments as a source of international and domestic power resources repeatedly reflected in Syria's adjustment policy choices. Carefully weighing competing alignment interests and in order to reduce domestic autonomy losses, Syria refrained from rapid and formal realignments. In addition, Damascus frequently opted for informal alignments with non-state actors whose structural power asymmetry enabled it to shape them according to its specific external and internal security demands. In general, this observation supports the neoclassical realist claim that the domestic decision-making environment influences how states respond to systemic policy incentives, here the alliance security dilemma. Furthermore, it strongly suggests the usefulness of neoclassical realism for foreign policy analysis focusing on non-democratic states. Nevertheless, the model remained indeterminate regarding the expected direction of causality between regime vulnerability and specific alliance choices. While domestic power fragmentation and even praetorianism could explain time lags and incoherent responses to systemic policy incentives, alternative approaches, focusing on the alignment preferences and assertiveness of domestic actors, are expected to provide further insight in this matter.

The sponsorship security dilemma model and its neoclassical realist specification were established in order to explain the formation of specific sponsorship patterns. In contrast to previous research on the issue, strongly focusing on material commitment and the impact of support on the group's fighting capacity, the four sponsorship roles also reflect the sponsor's permanent evaluation of abandonment and entrapment risks against the background of its security environment. Tying in the material and financial costs of assistance with the risk of reputational damages or even interstate conflict escalation, this typology enables a straightforward integration of sponsorship of terrorism into realist alliance theory. In addition, domestic politics were expected to be influential for the emergence of hybrid sponsorship types implying governmental indecisiveness on whether to restrain or to stand firmly by the group.

Although the model was able to explain general trends of sponsorship and the emergence of the four support roles, its explanatory power varied substantially among the dimensions of sponsor-

ship.² Public endorsement and military support corresponded largely with the respective SSD incentives for realignment/resolve. This observation fits in naturally with the assessment of section 3.1.2, that public and specific sponsorship alignments reflect the deterrence/reliability calculations of interstate alliances. Although hosting and financial assistance policies also corresponded with the general sponsorship role induced by the SSD, they were to a much larger extent influenced by the groups' specific needs for assistance, their wish to reduce autonomy losses from the sponsor, and the availability of other societal and statist backers. This indeterminacy of the model was further strengthened by both an endemic lack of reliable data and a strong bias in the literature towards measures of resolve.

As other realist approaches to alliances, the SSD model focuses strongly on dyadic conflict and particularly its neoclassical realist expansion requires further reflection on the interaction of its components. Hence, the SSD model fell, for instance, short of explaining why the improvement of Syria's relations with the Arab states had a restraining effect on sponsorship for Fatah, on the one hand, while the formalization of relations with Iran corresponded with a tendency towards resolve in the alignment with Hizballah, on the other. Whether sponsorship allows the backer to extract external resources from third states or will be accompanied by isolation and a further reduction of alliance options is assumed to influence the cost/benefit-calculations of the sponsoring state yet exceeds the scope of Snyder's *strategic interest* indicator. In this context, the presence of international consensus on the group's terrorist character, strong anti-terrorism norms, and particularly credible threats of their implementation constituted an alternative explanatory factor for restraint in both the PKK and the Hizballah case. In order to avoid collinearity between the antecedent condition regime vulnerability and domestically generated strategic interests as a component of the SSD, particularly the rather vague question of what constitutes a strategic interest needs to be further specified in future research.

8.4 Avenues for further research

Given the explorative nature of this study, further research is necessary for several reasons. On the one hand, testing the applicability of the extended SSD-model to other cases of state sponsorship of terrorism than just Syria is required to increase the external validity of the argument established in the study. On the other hand, by integrating sponsorship policies into the theoretical framework of neoclassical realist foreign policy analysis, it opened new avenues for theory-based research on the issue worth examining in the future.

² For the roles Brother in Arms, Secret Backer, Fellow Traveler, Defector, see 3.5 and 3.6. The four dimensions of sponsorship examined were Hosting, Military Support, Financial Assistance, Endorsement (see 3.3.1).

Beyond the gathering of additional data on the phenomenon of state sponsorship of terrorism, further research should assess other cases of sponsorship and test particularly two key assumptions of the SSD model regarding the nature of both sponsored groups and their backers.

First, the analysis, but also the bulk of previous academic research, considered only groups deemed as rational actors in the sense that they value the STAR-imperatives higher than their political aims. In addition, Fatah, the PKK, and Hizballah exhibited clear and mostly unchallenged hierarchical commando structures. In order to test this study's assumptions that sponsorship alignments occur only if the backer perceives the group as responsive to policies of resolve and restraint, future case studies should include 'leaderless networks' and those organizations having a reputation of seeking martyrdom.

Second, not all state sponsors of terrorism are conventionally inferior to their adversaries and led by authoritarian regimes. Moreover, the PKK case demonstrated clearly that turning against former non-state allies is not necessarily a sign of democratization. The debate on Turkey's alleged support for Jabhat al-Nusra, a jihadist al-Qaeda offshoot fighting in the current Syrian Civil War provides an interesting point of departure for researching the scope conditions for sponsorship by conventionally strong and stable democracies.³ Hence further research should turn to the question if also democratic governments that fail to mobilize, on the one hand, societal resources for systemically induced, yet domestically unpopular, wars, and, on the other, to form interstate alliances against the adversary, resort to state sponsorship of terrorism and which particular patterns of assistance should be expected in this case.

Finally, further research should turn to the repercussion of sponsorship on the conflicts backers seek to exploit.

While the study mainly concentrated on the relation between sponsorship and interstate conflict, it also demonstrated that state sponsorship of terrorism tremendously affects intrastate and transnational conflicts. The direction of this impact, however, might vary significantly and turn out even detrimental to the sponsor's own intentions. As the asymmetric and mostly opaque nature of the alignments grant supporters a high leverage over the group, states can pressure their non-state allies into a conflict behavior consistent with their own policies towards the adversary. In turn, both the initial adversary and non-state competitors can exploit the alignment in order to undermine the group's revolutionary credentials. The detection of external sponsorship limits the group's ability to gain international and societal recognition in accord with the principle of self-determination. It also provides the group's rivals with an increased leeway to escalate against it as an agent of external interference in internal affairs, outlawed by the UN Charter. Therefore, the

³ Murad Batal al-Shishani, "Turkey and Syria's Jihadis: More than free passage?," *Turkey Analyst* 6, no. 10 (2013).

alliance dilemma from the non-state perspective and the group's rationale to seek external support despite expected autonomy and at times security losses needs to be taken into consideration by both potential backers and in the context of future research. In this context, the specific impact of sponsorship on the conflict between the targeted state and the terrorist organization also deserves further attention.⁴

8.5 Policy implications

*"The success of any political solution is linked to putting an end to support funneled to terrorist groups."*⁵

Bashar al-Asad, October 2013

Understanding both the repercussions of state sponsorship of terrorism on international conflict dynamics and the conditions under which it emerges provides policy makers with a strong incentive and a starting point for policy initiatives.

Although many studies have successfully established a link between third party intervention and conflict duration, this study demonstrated that Syrian sponsorship was no one-way-street towards conflict escalation. Particularly in the case of Hizballah, and to a limited extent in the other two alignments, Syria repeatedly constrained the groups' actions in order to avoid a potential backfiring from conflict escalation on its own security situation. Moreover, although it used both Fatah and Hizballah to gain influence over Lebanon and Jordan, Syria repeatedly reigned in both groups when their actions threatened to destabilize its neighbors and to create a pretext for an Israeli intervention. In case of the PKK, Syria's realignment with Turkey nearly resulted in the group's collapse as it facilitated Öcalan's arrest and his death sentence was only commuted to life imprisonment in the course of Ankara's bid to be admitted to EU membership.

As also demonstrated in this study, sponsorship constitutes a tool of exploiting existing conflicts rather than initiating them. Vice versa, the end of sponsorship in the case of the PKK weakened the group only temporarily. As long as conflict prevails, most terrorist groups maintain at least a limited capacity to establish a societal support base, which also makes them attractive partners for alternative statist backers seeking ways of balancing the targeted state and of domestically exploiting the group's popular appeal. Hence, policy initiatives to halt sponsorship need to expand the range of actors they want to address to alternative or additional statist backers, particularly if a division of labor can be assessed, and the group's societal support base.

⁴ Some authors have already turned to the impact of external intervention on civil wars, yet focused mainly on the correlation between external intervention and conflict duration. See Regan, "Third-party Interventions."; Cunningham, "Blocking Resolution."

⁵ "Assad tells envoy Syrians will decide on peace talks." AFP (2013). Published electronically October 30. <http://bit.ly/1n61661>. Accessed January 31, 2014.

Hence, the findings of this study imply that policy makers should focus on creating incentives for a policy of restraint and especially control instead of disrupting the alignment. The SSD model provides a good starting point for two reasons.

First, dynamics of conflict moderation between Syria and the respective target state had a strong effect on sponsorship policies and should therefore receive top priority in policy initiatives. Although domestic impediments to realignment have at times prevented a complete defection, de-escalation entailed in all cases measures of restraint. Second, by turning to the sponsor's strategic interest in maintaining the alignment, one should also take fears of domestic repercussions of reduced commitment into account when pressuring the sponsor into realignment. By pointing out, for instance, that the PKK's campaign is a domestic problem of Turkey or Hizballah a Lebanese nationalist movement, Syrian officials have repeatedly aimed at defining the conflict towards narrow identities. While this allows for plausible denial of material support, it could generally constitute a *back door* for domestically weak regimes to reduce assistance without severing internal security dilemmas.

Ultimately, this study promoted a new understanding of state sponsorship of terrorism as a policy of adjustment to international and domestic security environments and a supplement to armament and alliance seeking. With regard to the central questions raised, it examined specific security conditions that induce states to firstly start sponsoring terrorist organizations and to secondly manage these alignments once they have been formed. Thirdly, providing a framework that explains how sponsorship policy variations emerge and under which conditions sponsorship patterns persists is vital for developing suitable political strategies of containment and engagement. Whether this approach will reflect in more successful policy initiatives despite the elusive power of terrorism, remains to be seen.

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