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INSURGENT DIPLOMACY AND THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF REBELLION

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MORGAN L. KAPLAN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Acronyms

ADF	Arab Deterrent Force
ALF	Arab Liberation Front
ANC	African National Congress (South Africa)
ANM	Arab National Movement
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
COIN	Counter-insurgency/Counter-insurgent
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DA	Democratic Alliance
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (also PDFLP)
DRET	Democratic Republic of East Timor
DFSE	Delegation for Service in the Exterior (East Timor)
EEC	European Economic Community
ELF	Eritrean Liberation Front
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (United Kingdom)
FLN	National Liberation Front (Algeria)
FRETILIN	Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GPRA	Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDF	Israel Defense Forces

ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham
KDI-I	Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party (Iraq)
KDP-PC	Kurdistan Democratic Party – Provisional Command (Iraq)
KDP-PL	Kurdistan Democratic Party – Provisional Leadership (Iraq)
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government (Iraq)
MIT	National Intelligence Organization (Turkey)
MNA	Algerian National Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLF	National Liberation Front (South Vietnam)
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress (South Africa)
PCP	Palestine Communist Party
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command
PLA	Palestine Liberation Army
PLF	Palestine Liberation Front
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PLO-CC	Palestine Liberation Organization – Central Committee
PLO-EC	Palestine Liberation Organization – Executive Committee
PNC	Palestinian National Council

PNSF	Palestine National Salvation Front
PPP	Palestinian People's Party
PPSF	Palestinian Popular Struggle Front
PSF	Palestinian Struggle Front
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (Iraq)
PYD	Democratic Union Party (Syria)
UAK	United Arab Kingdom
UAR	United Arab Republic
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United National General Assembly
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
USG	United States Government
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YPG	People's Protection Units (Syrian Kurdistan)
WAFA	Palestine News and Info Agency

Abstract

From Benjamin Franklin's mission to Paris in 1776, to Yasser Arafat's speech at the United Nations in 1974, to Syrian opposition lobbying today, acts of insurgent diplomacy have defined memorable and important events in international politics. International diplomacy is a ubiquitous feature of insurgent politics because it is intrinsically linked to how rebel groups pursue third-party political and military support. When rebels have the capacity to engage with outside actors, groups rarely hesitate to do so in the hopes of advancing their cause at home.

However, although war-time diplomacy is central to insurgent politics, scholars still cannot explain the substantial variation in insurgent diplomatic strategy. For example, rebel groups may privilege interactions with some international actors, while actively avoiding relations with others. Rebels may also seek international support for a diverse set of political-military objectives, from competition with local rebel rivals to combating the counter-insurgent state. Furthermore, rebel groups can use diplomacy to solicit very different types of assistance at different points in time, from political recognition to military intervention. As such, this dissertation asks: *What are the different strategies of diplomacy rebel groups use to solicit third-party assistance, and when do rebels employ one strategy over another?* To answer these questions, I develop a unique framework for understanding what the different types of insurgent diplomatic strategy are, and provide a theory to explain when and why certain strategies are employed over others.

Insurgent diplomatic strategy is comprised of two key characteristics: 1) who the primary targets of diplomacy are, and 2) what type of intervention rebel groups solicit from these actors. These characteristics tell us where insurgents will focus their diplomatic attention and what they hope to gain from these relations. With regards to who rebels target diplomatically, I distinguish

between two types of third-parties: the international allies and adversaries of the counter-insurgent (COIN) state. With regards to what rebels want, I distinguish between two types of intervention: direct and indirect intervention, differentiated by the degree of involvement or belligerency requested of third-parties.

In short, I argue that insurgent diplomatic strategy is a function of the local threat environment rebel groups face at home. How rebel groups approach the international system is primarily driven by intra-insurgent politics and the domestic balance of power between rebels and their enemies. More specifically, I argue that a group's diplomatic strategy is determined by the degree of fragmentation within the broader insurgent movement and the extent to which rebels are militarily viable in the conflict zone.

The degree of movement fragmentation affects the types of political-military problems groups are trying to solve, and subsequently the type of third-party actor they must solicit. When an insurgent movement is fragmented, groups primarily seek outside support to undermine or better position themselves vis-à-vis rival rebel groups. In this context, groups will solicit support from the COIN state's international adversaries, who are uniquely capable of influencing intra-insurgent affairs as existing or potential supporters of the broader insurgency. Alternatively, when the movement is united and focused on undermining the COIN state itself, groups request support from the COIN state's allies because these actors have unique leverage over the central government, which may be reliant upon its allies for political and military support. When a movement is allied – meaning groups are cooperating but not in full strategic agreement – groups will engage the COIN state's allies and adversaries simultaneously, albeit for divergent purposes.

The military viability of a group determines the type of intervention groups solicit from outside actors by influencing how much support groups need and the risks they are willing to

accept to acquire those needs. While groups may lose some strategic independence by receiving indirect support from outside sponsors (e.g. arms, training, finances), groups are often able to manage third-party expectations and safe-guard strategic autonomy. However, when outside actors directly intervene to undermine the COIN state or rebel rivals, groups often lose control of their military and political fates through the introduction of a more powerful actor in the conflict zone. Therefore, I predict that when a rebel group is capable of sustaining its own military campaign, it will only solicit indirect intervention from third-parties. However, once a group fears it is no longer capable of engaging its rivals in combat, it will ask outside actors to directly intervene to coerce the state or rebel rivals.

To test my argument, I examine the international diplomatic strategies of the Iraqi Kurdish (1958 to 1990) and Palestinian national movements (1959-1988), using process-tracing and within-case analysis. Together, these chapters examine seventeen discrete periods of insurgent diplomatic strategy, tracing how notable shifts in insurgents' local threat environments affected their diplomatic strategies abroad.

The case studies make use of 63 original interviews with 48 Kurdish and Palestinian officials, as well as primary-source archival documents, collected in Erbil, London, Ramallah, and Washington. In Iraqi Kurdistan and the West Bank, I interviewed current and former Kurdish and Palestinian officials who were involved in their respective movements' international diplomacy from the 1960s to 1990s. In addition to secondary sources, I examined primary documents from the U.S. National Archives at College Park, Maryland, the National Security Archive at the George Washington University, and the British National Archives in Kew. Perhaps most importantly, I employ documents from the personal archive of a former high-level Kurdish diplomat at the University of Exeter. This archive provided unparalleled access to

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Chapter 1: Introduction

When rebels look beyond their borders, they see a powerful and complex system of international actors and goods. They see state and non-state actors, international institutions and non-governmental organizations, business corporations and influential individuals. Furthermore, they see a diverse set of services, resources, and relations that, if appropriately harnessed, can fundamentally affect the balance of power within the conflict zone.¹ However, not all third-parties are uniformly capable of helping rebels perform all tasks, and not all types of aid are uniformly costly or beneficial from the rebel's perspective. How do rebel groups approach the international system for support and why? More specifically, what strategies of internationalization and diplomacy do rebel groups use to transform international assistance into domestic success?

In short, I argue that how rebel groups approach the international system is fundamentally driven by intra-insurgent politics, the domestic balance of power between rebel groups and their enemies, and post-conflict considerations. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that rebels always seek broad international support to undermine the central government,² I demonstrate that insurgent diplomacy – from the search for legitimacy and recognition, to the solicitation of arms and military intervention – is as much about intra-insurgent politics as it is about competition with the central government. Furthermore, rebel groups have deliberate preferences for the types of intervention they receive and from whom they receive it.

¹ On how pro-rebel intervention can disproportionately increase the likelihood of success for rebels, see Gent 2008. On how bringing in neighboring third-parties can also increase rebel prospects, see Zartman 1993; and Salehyan 2009.

² For example, see Mitchell 1970; Heraclides 1991; Clapham 1996; Connelly 2002; Weldemichael 2013a, 2013b; Coggins 2015; Doyle 2015; Jones and Mattiacci 2015; and Huang 2016.

Diplomacy, like violence, is not itself a strategy but a tool that can be used in a strategic manner. There are a number of ways groups can approach international actors, as well as numerous types of appeals they can make. Observing that a group engages in international dialogue tells us very little about how and why it is being used. For example, the African National Congress pursued recognition from the United Nations and Organization of African Unity in the 1970s. However, for what purposes? Was it to pressure the South African regime, or to sideline its revolutionary competitor, the Pan Africanist Congress? Furthermore, when the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) solicited arms and influence from regional actors in the 1950s, did they intend to point those rifles at the French army, or rival rebel factions, such as the Algerian National Movement? And when the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front sought support abroad, was it to undermine Saigon or its communist competitors in North Vietnam?³

Other fascinating puzzles emerge. Perhaps most intriguing, rebels sometimes solicit help from the international allies of the very state they are fighting against. For example, the FLN sought engagement with the United States in its war against the French,⁴ and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) strived to gain help from the United States despite its overwhelming support for the Israel.⁵ Given how unpopular such maneuvers could have been perceived at home and the low likelihood of success, it seems counter-intuitive to focus precious time and resources on soliciting aid from the ally of one's enemy.

Insurgents also appear to be picky about the types of aid they receive, and sometimes discourage offers of direct military intervention. Take, for example, appeals from the Kurdistan

³ Brigham 1998.

⁴ Connelly 2002.

⁵ Chamberlain 2012.

Regional Government and Shia militias in present-day Iraq. Despite sharing a 1,000km border with the Islamic State, Kurdish forces have actively sought heavy weapons and training, but eschew more direct forms of interference. In a September 2014 interview with a Kurdish media outlet, the head of foreign relations for the Kurdistan Democratic Party stated, “We just need armaments and training; we don’t need boots on the ground from any country to fight this war for us.”⁶ Iranian-backed Shia militias were also willing to accept American aid but unwilling to accept deeper involvement. In June 2015, after speculating an increase in U.S. troops in Iraq, one Shia commander was quoted saying, “They can send us weapons and intelligence reports about Daesh [the Islamic State], but we don’t want their planes or their soldiers here.”⁷ Just a few months prior, Shia militias protested direct American involvement in the spring campaign for Tikrit, remarking, “We don’t need the American-led coalition to participate in Tikrit. Tikrit is an easy battle, we can win it ourselves.”⁸

The empirical fact is that insurgents can and do have preferences for what types of support they want, from whom they want it, and for what purposes. Why do rebels sometimes solicit help from the international friends of their enemies, but other times focus intently on the target state’s adversaries? Why do rebels sometimes turn down powerful offers of outside support, but other times beg outside actors to become directly involved?

These puzzles motivate the main questions examined in this dissertation: *What are the different strategies of diplomacy rebel groups use to solicit third-party intervention, and when do*

⁶ Whitcomb, Alexander. 2014. “KDP Official: ‘We Do Not Need Boots on the Ground from Any Country.’” Interview on *Rudaw.net*. September 9, 2014. <<http://rudaw.net/english/interview/21092014>>

⁷ Siegel, Jacob. 2015. “Iraqi Militias Threaten U.S. Over Friendly Fire Incident – but Did it Ever Happen?” *The Daily Beast*, 6 June 2015. <<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/10/iraq-militias-threaten-u-s-over-friendly-fire-incident-but-did-it-ever-happen.html>>

⁸ Nordland, Rod, and Helene Cooper. 2015. “U.S. Airstrikes on ISIS in Tikrit Prompt Boycott by Shiite Fighters.” *The New York Times*, 26 March 2015. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/27/world/middleeast/iraq-us-air-raids-islamic-state-isis.html>>

rebels employ one strategy over another? To answer these questions, I develop a unique framework for understanding what the different types of strategies of diplomacy are, as well as a theory to explain when and why certain strategies are employed over others. Two characteristics of insurgent diplomacy capture the broader contours of how rebel groups approach the international system: 1) who the primary targets of diplomacy are, and 2) what type of intervention rebel groups solicit from these actors. These characteristics tell us where insurgents will focus their diplomatic attention and what they hope to gain from these relations. With regards to who rebels target diplomatically, I distinguish between two types of third-parties: the international allies and adversaries of the counter-insurgent (COIN) state.⁹ With regards to what rebels want, I distinguish between two types of intervention: direct and indirect intervention, differentiated by the degree of involvement or belligerency requested of third-parties.

I argue that insurgent diplomatic strategy is a function of the local threat environment rebel groups face at home. More specifically, whether groups pursue the allies or adversaries of the COIN state is determined by the *degree of fragmentation* and intra-rebel competition within an insurgent. When a movement is united, rebel groups pursue third-party support to undermine the central government, which incentivizes rebels to seek help from the COIN state's own allies. However, when a movement is fragmented, rebel groups pursue support to undermine rival rebel groups, which incentivizes groups to seek help from the COIN state's adversaries. When a movement is allied – meaning groups are cooperating but not cohesive or in full strategic agreement – groups will engage the COIN state's allies and adversaries simultaneously, albeit for different purposes.

⁹ I purposefully exclude neutral third-party actors for reasons explained below. See “Assumptions and Scope Conditions.”

Whether groups solicit direct or indirect intervention is a function of a group's *military viability* to sustain itself in combat. When a group is militarily viable, it will only seek indirect forms of intervention to ensure continued support without the deep involvement of an outside actors. However, when a group becomes militarily non-viable, it will also seek more direct forms of intervention because the increased need for outside support makes the introduction of a powerful third-party more acceptable.

My theory and hypotheses are tested through in-depth case studies of the Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian national movements. Using a wide-array of primary source material – including original interviews with Palestinian and Kurdish officials, archival documents on the foreign policies of both movements, and journalistic sources – and secondary source material from the historical literature, I analyze over sixty years of insurgent diplomacy.

The Iraqi Kurdish case study (1958-1990) addresses a number of unique empirical puzzles. Why was Kurdish diplomacy focused intently on soliciting assistance from Iraq's superpower allies before a sudden turn toward Iraq's adversaries in 1964? Why did the Kurds refrain from soliciting direct intervention for nearly seventeen years before calling in Iranian military intervention in the winter of 1974/5? Why did the Kurds mostly shun engagement with Iraq's allies between 1975 and 1985 after nearly fifteen years of engagement, only to focus on Iraq's regional adversaries in Damascus, Tripoli, Ankara, and Tehran? Why then, after ten years of discounting Iraq's allies, did the Kurds re-engage with Baghdad's supporters in 1985? Finally, what explains the rare calls for direct intervention in 1978 and in 1987?

The Palestinian case (1959-1988) addresses its own set of puzzles related to Palestinian solicitation behavior. Why was early Palestinian diplomacy so focused on intra-movement recognition wars between Fateh and the PLO, and between the PLO and Jordan? Why were the

primary targets of such diplomatic jostling Arab states which were already sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and not third-parties that had leverage over Israel? Why did the PLO suddenly divert its diplomatic focus to Israel's allies in Western Europe and the United States in 1974, and why was Yasser Arafat so persistent on gaining American assistance when this goal seemed so difficult to attain? Furthermore, what explains the sudden and short-term deviations from this approach in 1976 and 1983, when Israel's adversaries once again became the primary targets of Palestinian diplomacy? Finally, why did Palestinian groups refrain from soliciting direct intervention, only to change this preference briefly in 1970, 1976, 1982, and 1983?

Together, these chapters examine seventeen discrete periods of insurgent diplomatic strategy. They trace show how notable shifts in insurgents' local threat environments affected their diplomatic strategies abroad. While the extent of rebel unity and division drove groups' preferences for which third-parties to solicit, groups' military viability determined the type of aid they would ask of international actors.

The remainder of this chapter will proceed as follows. First, I further develop the concept of insurgent diplomacy, including how it works and its role in rebel foreign policy. Second, I provide an overview of my theory of insurgent diplomatic strategy and its alternatives. I also highlight the argument's main contributions to the literature, as well as its limits. Third, I describe the empirical strategy employed to test my argument, as well as the data used to fuel these tests. Finally, I provide a roadmap for the remainder of the dissertation.

What is Insurgent Diplomacy and How Does It Work?

Addressed in a number of historical works,¹⁰ the subject of insurgent diplomacy has begun to gain attention in the social sciences, with most in agreement that rebel outreach is

¹⁰ There are only a handful of books and articles that directly address the diplomatic practices of rebel groups. Most of these studies are historical works on specific insurgent movements and are extremely valuable for gaining a

geared towards the solicitation of some form of support, whether it be material, financial, martial, or political.¹¹ International diplomacy is thus a ubiquitous feature of insurgent politics because it is intrinsically linked to how and why rebel groups pursue third-party aid and intervention. By making appeals to third-party actors – whether they be states, international organizations, NGOs, or other rebel actors – groups hope to gain a relative advantage over their rivals in both political and military might.¹² Therefore, when rebel groups have the capacity to engage with outside actors, groups rarely hesitate to do so in the hopes of advancing their cause at home.¹³ Other scholars have begun to unpack the mechanisms and tactics of persuasion that explain the efficacy of insurgent diplomacy in attracting international support.¹⁴ The spirit of insurgent diplomacy has also been addressed by research on how rebel groups alter their behavior in order to appeal to international audiences.¹⁵

I define insurgent diplomacy as *the systematic exchange of communications and information between rebel groups and third-party actors in order to persuade or prevent a*

nuanced understanding of the history and politics behind the use of international diplomacy by armed non-state actors. Yet these studies often stop short of providing a generalizable theory or systematic examination of the various types of diplomatic strategies groups use, as well as why certain strategies are chosen over others. For example, see Kirisci 1986; Thomas 1996; Brigham 1998; Connelly 2002; Chamberlain 2012; Weldemichael 2013a; and Doyle 2015.

¹¹ Coggins 2015 and Huang 2016, for example, discuss the prevalence of international diplomacy within the context of intra-state war and offer explanations for why groups engage in international diplomacy. Also see, Heraclides 1991; Clapham 1996; Bob 2005; Jones and Mattiacci 2015; and Asal et al. 2015.

¹² For foundational work on third-party intervention, see Modelski 1964; Mitchell 1970; and Pearson 1974. For why rebels, like states, seek third-party alliances for balance of power considerations, see Vinci 2009.

¹³ Huang 2016, for example, argues that capacity is an important factor determining whether groups engage in international diplomacy.

¹⁴ Much of these arguments are focused on the politics of transnationalism and social movements. For example, Keck and Sikkink's research on transnational advocacy networks, as well as Clifford Bob's work on rebel marketing creatively discuss how both armed and unarmed non-state actors go abroad to solicit external support for their domestic struggles (Keck and Sikkink 1998; and Bob 2005). These works build upon previous works on social movements, which discuss the politics of issue framing and persuasion, such as McAdam et al. 1996. Also see, Heraclides 1991; Kirisci 1986; Paschell 2014; and Jones and Mattiacci 2015. Relatedly, on why third-parties agree to assist foreign rebel actors. See Byman and Kreps 2010; and Salehyan et al. 2011.

¹⁵ Kuperman 2008; Stanton 2009; Mampilly 2011; and Fazal 2014. While these are not studies on the international diplomacy of rebel groups, they do engage with the fact that rebel groups are actively attuned to the global community and attempt to solicit resources from international actors. Also, see Reno 1998.

*change in third-party behavior.*¹⁶ The third-party behavior in question is any form of intervention or assistance geared towards affecting the domestic balance of power in an intra-state conflict. Nearly every political, military, and economic action (or inaction) taken by a third-party in reference to an ongoing conflict is a form of intervention. Even the stance of neutrality can alter the capabilities and behaviors of belligerents.¹⁷ As historian Matthew Connelly wrote about the Algerian War, France was “so dependent that Washington had merely to remain silent and do nothing to exert pressure on French policies.”¹⁸ But how can diplomacy help insurgents gain third-party intervention in their favor?

In order to persuade a third-party to support a non-state armed actor, groups must demonstrate that their support will advance both parties’ interests. As previous scholars have noted, an *alignment of interest* is a critical factor for why third-parties decide to support foreign rebel groups.¹⁹ Interest alignment ensures that supporters are both the benefactors and beneficiaries of intervention,²⁰ and that resources will be used in a manner consistent with the third-party’s goals.²¹ As such, insurgent diplomacy is a process by which rebel groups reveal information to third-parties in order to demonstrate an alignment of strategic interests.²² This does not mean that such information need be accurate. States and rebels frequently bend the truth in their interactions. But so long as an alignment is demonstrated – and believed – relations can

¹⁶ Reyko Huang defines rebel diplomacy “as a rebel group’s conduct of foreign affairs during civil war for the purpose of advancing its military and political objectives” (Huang 2016, p. 2). My definition is influenced by earlier definitions of inter-state diplomacy, in particular, Watson 1982. For excellent introductions to diplomacy, see Berridge 1995; Wiseman 1999; Barston 2006; and Kinne 2013.

¹⁷ Poast 2015.

¹⁸ Connelly 2002, p. 121.

¹⁹ Salehyan et al. 2011 refers to this as “preference congruence.” For a discussion on alliances and alignment of interests between states, see Wolfers 1959, p. 4.

²⁰ Bob 2005, pp. 14-5.

²¹ Salehyan et al. 2011, p. 715.

²² For further discussions of the tactics behind this process of persuasion, see Kirisci’s discussion of “issue-linkage” and Bob’s discussion of “matching/framing.” See Kirisci 1986; and Bob 2005.

form and assistance may be forthcoming. This is why scholars of transnational solicitation highlight the importance of issue-framing and marketing. To win support, groups must tailor the content of their appeals to resonate with the norms, beliefs, and interests guiding those they seek support from.²³

But why is insurgent diplomacy even necessary for third-parties to better understand rebel goals and preferences to begin with? After all, shouldn't international actors – especially state actors with diplomatic and intelligence apparatuses – have the capacity to understand rebel intentions? The short answer is that understanding rebel intentions is immensely difficult, even for the most intelligence-savvy states.²⁴ In the 1960s, for example, the United States was distrustful of General Mullah Mustafa Barzani, the head of the Iraqi Kurdish national movement. The intelligence community referred to him as the “Red Mullah,” implying that he was simultaneously a communist and Islamic leader. However, Barzani was neither a communist nor a mullah. He was simply named Mullah, and although Barzani spent over ten years in exile in the Soviet Union, that experience actually made him skeptical of the Soviets.²⁵ In fact, Barzani was wildly pro-American. It took a number of Kurdish-American interactions to dispel these rumors. The information gap was worse before technological advancements made cheap and efficient communication possible. However, one can look at current attempts by the U.S. to vet rebel groups in Syria to realize just how difficult it is for states to understand complex insurgencies in the 21st century.²⁶

²³ Kirisci 1986; Keck and Sikkink 1998; and Bob 2005.

²⁴ This point is briefly addressed by Salehyan in his discussion of information asymmetries in how states select rebel proxies, Salehyan 2010, p. 502.

²⁵ Korn 1994.

²⁶ Alexander, David. 2015. “U.S. Begins Vetting Syrian Rebels for Military Training: Pentagon.” *Reuters*, 27 February 2015. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-usa-idUSKBN0LV2K620150227>>

States are best equipped to gauge the preference of other states, namely through the use of inter-state diplomatic institutions.²⁷ In fact, the proliferation of formal diplomatic institutions (i.e. resident missions and formal diplomatic exchanges) was driven by states' desires to maximize their understanding of each other's actions and intentions. Hosting foreign missions allow states to receive immediate clarifications regarding others' policy choices and actions. Likewise, by sending representatives abroad, states can gain a deeper understanding of others' domestic and foreign policies.²⁸ In a world of pervasive uncertainty,²⁹ diplomatic exchange is one of the primary means by which states gather information to understand each other's intentions, preferences, and capabilities.³⁰

However, states and international organizations are not equally equipped to engage with and understand non-state actors – especially armed non-state actors that operate clandestinely.³¹ This task is considerably more difficult when states must distinguish between multiple autonomous factions fighting within the same conflict.³² If the third-party does not have a diplomatic mission in the conflict zone, they will have even less access to reliable information on rebel groups preferences.³³ Thus, for states to better understand rebel goals and intentions, lines of communication must be established with the insurgents themselves.³⁴

²⁷ Even with these institutions in place, it is incredibly difficult to assess cross-border intentions. See Mearsheimer 1993.

²⁸ Watson 1982; Berridge 1995; Barston 2006; and Kinne 2013.

²⁹ Waltz 1979; and Mearsheimer 2001.

³⁰ As Lieby and Butler 2005 note, diplomatic institutions may function similarly to international institutions as laid out by Keohane 1984.

³¹ Knopf 2011.

³² For example, as Paschel 2014 demonstrates, even transnational social movement organizations find it especially difficult to distinguish themselves to international actors. Also, see Salehyan 2010, p. 510.

³³ Berridge 2012. On diplomacy as a form of intelligence collection, see Berridge 1995; Herman 1998; and Shulsky and Schmitt 2002.

³⁴ Knopf 2011; and Zartman and Faure 2011.

Similarly, in the absence of diplomatic ties, rebel groups have minimal capabilities to gauge third-party preferences on intervention, and few opportunities to make their intentions known to outside actors in credible ways.³⁵ Rebel organizations are not endowed with the informational tools necessary to navigate the international political arena, just as states are not well-equipped to navigate foreign sub-state politics. Groups use diplomacy to communicate with third-party actors in the hopes of demonstrating an alignment of interest and eliciting outside support.

Rebel diplomatic networks and institutions for sharing information with international actors can emerge in a number of ways. Rebels can engage third-parties directly or through intermediaries;³⁶ face-to-face or through letters, telegrams, texts, and tweets.³⁷ They can build embassies and information offices in foreign capitals or simply send roaming diplomats abroad. Groups can employ public diplomacy campaigns to mobilize foreign populations or appeal straight to third-party leaders.³⁸ Rebels can also frame their appeals for third-party support in many different ways. They can say they are fighting against communism, capitalism, imperialism, occupation, or in favor of democracy, human rights, and self-determination. They can tightly tailor their appeals for each international actor they approach, arguing how they can help with a specific problem in exchange for aid.³⁹ Regardless of the tactics and frames used, rebel groups develop and cultivate information-sharing between themselves and third-party

³⁵ Jones and Mattiacci 2015.

³⁶ Kirisci 1986. On the use of professional lobbyists by armed non-state actors, see Brannen, Kate. 2014. "From Kirkuk to K Street," *ForeignPolicy.com*, 13 August 2014. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/13/from-kirkuk-to-k-street/>>; and McGreal, Chris. 2012. "Iranian Exiles, DC Lobbyists and the Campaign to Delist the MEK," *The Guardian*, 21 September 2012. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/21/iranian-exiles-lobbyists-delist-mek>>.

³⁷ For example, see Jones and Mattiacci 2015; McLaughlin 2003; Seib 2012; and Van Laer and Aelst 2010.

³⁸ For more on public diplomacy of non-state actors, see Sharp 2005; Khatib 2012; Hocking 2005; Melissen 2005; and Kaplan 2015b. Also, for more general takes on transnational rebel activism, see Checkel 2013; Asal et al. 2015; and Keck and Sikkink 1998.

³⁹ For example, see Keck and Sikkink 1998; Bob 2005; and Kirisci 1986.

actors to clarify their intentions, learn about the preferences of third-parties, and build trust if necessary. To paraphrase James Scott, insurgent groups engage in diplomacy to make their politics legible to outside actors.⁴⁰

Of course, insurgent diplomacy is not the only way for groups to make their preferences known. A common argument is that rebel groups can use violence to signal their intentions. A cornerstone of the terrorism literature, this argument states that the strategic use of violence can demonstrate group intentions and capabilities because their words may not be perceived as credible.⁴¹ However, while violence is certainly a costly signal in this literature, violence is still viewed as a signal-of-last-resort: militants would rather be taken at their word.

Diplomacy can also communicate rebel preferences in a credible manner. First, insurgent diplomacy itself can be considered a costly signal. Not only does the endeavor consume precious resources that could be used to fight the target state, but there can be serious audience costs – from domestic and international actors – once a group takes its cause abroad.⁴² Second, by learning about group preferences through official rebel representatives – as opposed to ambiguous bombings, seedy propaganda machines, faceless spokesmen, or popular media – third-parties are better assured that the information being revealed is credible because it can be directly traced to rebel decision-makers. Third, the information groups reveal can become more credible if dialogue is iterated over time.⁴³ While it is difficult for groups to demonstrate their goals and preferences to outside actors through the fog of war, diplomacy provides an avenue for

⁴⁰ Thomas 1996.

⁴¹ Kydd and Walter 2006, p. 58.

⁴² Fearon 1994, 1997.

⁴³ Keohane 1984; and Axelrod and Keohane 1985.

groups to use their words to make their intentions known. One simply cannot ignore what Bridget Coggins calls the “strategic use of talk.”⁴⁴

Looking at the bigger picture, international diplomacy can be viewed as a unique component of a rebel group’s foreign policy. Like states, insurgent groups can have foreign policy goals and grand strategies to advance their interests.⁴⁵ There are three basic instruments that states and rebels use to accomplish their foreign policy objectives: military, economic, and diplomatic.⁴⁶ The literature on international rebel behavior is overwhelmingly devoted to how and why rebel groups use violence at home and abroad,⁴⁷ and there has been a turn toward understanding the international economic activity of rebel groups.⁴⁸ Yet there has been limited attention to how rebel groups employ international diplomacy to advance their domestic objectives.⁴⁹ For example, the political science literature on the Palestinian national movement overwhelmingly focuses on the use of terror, but overlooks the fact that Palestinian guerrillas were some of the most experienced and well-traveled diplomats in the history of rebellion.⁵⁰

In sum, insurgents are capable of maintaining relations with foreign regimes, businesses, NGOs, and diaspora communities, and groups have proven themselves to be capable transnational travelers – mobilizing across borders and building support networks abroad.⁵¹ The diversity and degree to which groups engage abroad indicates that rebels have clearly defined foreign policy goals and agendas. Insurgent foreign policies advance groups’ domestic objectives

⁴⁴ Coggins 2015.

⁴⁵ For a related discussion, see Weldemichael 2013a, 2013b.

⁴⁶ This insight comes from John Mearsheimer’s lectures on American Grand Strategy at the University of Chicago.

⁴⁷ Bapat 2007; Rosendorff and Sandler 2005; Kydd and Walter 2006; and Salehyan 2009.

⁴⁸ Reno 1998; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; and Ross 2004.

⁴⁹ The exceptions are a new wave of research on insurgent diplomacy. For example, see Bob 2005; Coggins 2015; Jones and Mattiacci 2015; and Huang 2016.

⁵⁰ Kirisci 1986 and Pearlman 2009 are notable exceptions.

⁵¹ Salehyan 2009; and Checkel 2013.

through the careful manipulation of international actors, using military, economic, and diplomatic tools. I focus intently on the diplomatic tools at groups' disposal.⁵²

The Argument

The conventional wisdom is that insurgent groups engage in diplomacy to gain international legitimacy and recognition to improve their position vis-à-vis the central government.⁵³ Rebel groups are believed to send their appeals far and wide, hoping to gain whatever assistance they can muster.⁵⁴ However, as demonstrated above, rebel groups have deliberate preferences and strategies to manage the types of aid they acquire and from whom they acquire it. What are the different strategies of diplomacy rebel groups use to solicit third-party support, and when do groups employ them?

An insurgent's diplomatic strategy is comprised of two important characteristics: 1) who groups seek assistance from, or the primary *target of diplomacy*; and 2) the *type of intervention* solicited. With regards to who groups target, insurgents can choose between soliciting the international allies or adversaries of the COIN state. From these actors, groups can solicit direct or indirect intervention, differentiated by the degree of belligerency third-parties take against a group's enemies. Together, these characteristics produce four distinct strategies of diplomacy: "legitimizing rebellion," "outsourcing rebellion," "cornering the market," and "outsourcing rivalry" (see Table 2.1, Chapter 2).

Which strategy rebel groups choose to employ is driven by the domestic threat environment groups face at any given point in time. A group's threat environment varies by both degree and kind. This includes who groups are primarily fighting against (the central government

⁵² Reyko Huang refers to this as "rebelcraft." See Huang 2016.

⁵³ Clapham 1996; Connelly 2002; Weldemichael 2013b; Coggins 2015; Doyle 2015; Jo 2015; Huang 2016; among others.

⁵⁴ This is an implicit assumption from the literature.

or rebel rivals) and their military capacity vis-à-vis their enemies. These factors condition rebel preferences for the types of intervention they seek and from whom. More specifically, variation in rebel diplomatic strategy is a function of: 1) the *degree of fragmentation* within the broader insurgent movement; and 2) the *military viability* of rebel groups.

Whether the broader movement is more fragmented or united affects the types of political-military problems groups are trying to solve, and subsequently the type of third-party actor they must solicit. When an insurgent movement is fragmented, groups primarily seek outside support to help undermine or better position themselves vis-a-vis rival rebel groups.⁵⁵ In this context, groups will solicit support from the COIN state's international adversaries, who are uniquely capable of influencing intra-insurgent affairs as existing or potential supporters of the broader insurgency. Alternatively, when a movement is more united and focused on undermining the COIN state itself, groups will request support from the COIN state's allies because these actors have unique leverage over the central government, which may be reliant upon its allies for political and military support.⁵⁶ Finally, when a movement is allied – meaning multiple groups are cooperating at the strategic-level but not operating as a cohesive unit – groups will simultaneously engage the COIN state's allies to undermine the central government and the COIN state's adversaries in pursuit of intra-movement goals.

The military viability of a group shapes the type of intervention groups solicit from outside actors by influencing how much support groups need and the domestic risks they are willing to accept to acquire those needs. While groups may lose some strategic independence by receiving indirect support from outside sponsors (e.g. arms, training, finances), groups are often

⁵⁵ Krause 2014.

⁵⁶ Snyder 1984; and Pressman 2008.

able to manage third-party expectations and safe-guard their strategic autonomy.⁵⁷ However, when outside actors directly intervene to help undermine the COIN state or rebel rivals, the soliciting group can lose control of its military and political fate through the introduction of a more powerful actor in the conflict zone. Rebels not only risk losing autonomy and agency during the conflict, but also ceding post-conflict spoils to the intervening third-party. Therefore, I predict that when a rebel group is capable of sustaining its own military campaign, it will only solicit indirect intervention from third-parties. However, once a group fears it is not capable of engaging its adversaries in combat, groups will ask third-parties to directly intervene.

Alternative Explanations

My argument is that insurgent diplomatic strategy is driven by intra-movement dynamics and the military viability of rebel groups. However, there are at least five alternative arguments that can explain the type of diplomatic strategy employed by rebel groups.

First, some may argue that diplomatic strategy is solely driven by where rebels think they are most likely to succeed in gaining support.⁵⁸ In other words, rebels are going to focus intently on those who are most willing to help them, and they will solicit the types of intervention they believe will be offered. The implication is that insurgent diplomatic strategy is not driven by what rebels want, but what they can get.

A second alternative is that strategies are driven by the diplomatic capabilities of individual rebel groups. Groups exhibit wide variation in the sophistication, breadth, and institutionalization of their diplomatic capacities. Furthermore, some strategies of diplomacy,

⁵⁷ Borghard 2014.

⁵⁸ As will be shown in Chapter 2, my theory partially subsumes this argument because the degree of movement fragmentation affects the incentives/opportunities for rebels to solicit certain actors, as well as the incentives/opportunities for certain actors to engage with rebels. Furthermore, rebels often approach those who they know are unlikely to help their cause and these actors often don't.

particularly those targeting the COIN state's allies, likely require greater capacity than those targeting the COIN state's adversaries. Reaching out to the international ally of the central government may require hefty investments in public relations campaigning that weaker groups may not be able to afford or execute.⁵⁹

A third, and related, argument is that insurgent strategies follow a linear and natural progression. As a conflict progresses, groups may be more likely to solicit more direct forms of intervention and focus more on the COIN state's allies. The premise is that the longer a conflict drags on, the more rebels realize they are unlikely to succeed and thus require more direct assistance. Furthermore, as a conflict reaches its natural stopping point, the COIN state's allies may be a more valuable intervenor in the final stages.⁶⁰ As a result, diplomatic strategy should steadily progress from soliciting indirect intervention from the COIN state's adversaries to soliciting direct intervention from the COIN state's allies over time.

A fourth alternative is that insurgent strategies are driven by transnational ideological, ethnic, and religious ties.⁶¹ Akin third-parties may be viewed as the natural interlocutors and allies of the opposition, and thus groups should devote the bulk of their diplomatic attention to maintaining and strengthening ties with these actors. Furthermore, groups may view direct intervention as more reliable since transnational kin will be viewed as more trustworthy. This argument is related to the first alternative – that groups only solicit assistance from those perceived to be most willing to help.

⁵⁹ While diplomatic capacity may be an important factor explaining when campaigns are successful in soliciting intervention, I argue that capacity has little effect on rebel strategy formation.

⁶⁰ This argument may engage with works on which types of mediators are preferred to settle intra-state conflict. For example, see Touval and Zartman 1989; Kydd 2006; Greig and Regan 2008; and Gent and Shannon 2011.

⁶¹ Mitchell 1970, pp. 184-192; Heraclides 1991, p. 39; Saideman 2002; Salehyan et al. 2011, p. 720; and Carment and James 2000.

Finally, some may argue that the null hypothesis is itself reasonable: rebel groups have no “strategy” of diplomacy at all. Since rebel groups are eager for all types of support and from any willing actor, diplomatic attention is hardly focused but is spread far and wide with no strategy in mind.⁶²

Contributions to the Literature

This research contributes to our understanding of insurgent diplomatic behavior, as well as the international politics of rebellion more broadly. My argument builds upon the nascent literature on insurgent diplomacy in three important ways. First, much of the existing work assumes that insurgents have a single or “fixed” diplomatic strategy and view other potential strategies as competing theories. For example, some argue that rebel groups use diplomacy to gain international legitimacy,⁶³ while others view insurgent diplomacy as a means to gain material or economic benefits from outside actors.⁶⁴ Yet it is neither necessary nor accurate to portray rebel diplomacy as uni-causal or mono-strategic. My research is premised on acknowledging and conceptualizing the multiple logics that drive insurgent diplomacy, as well as theorizing how groups select among disparate strategies of diplomacy.

Second, those works that do conceptualize multiple diplomatic strategies do not provide reliable frameworks for thinking about variation in rebel diplomatic behavior, nor a systematic theory to explain when and why groups are more likely to employ certain strategies over others.⁶⁵ My research, however, neatly classifies rebel diplomatic strategies and provides a theory and testable hypotheses to explain variation in the strategies employed.

⁶² This is a common, if unintended, framing in some historical accounts of insurgent diplomacy.

⁶³ Clapham 1996; Coggins 2015; and Huang 2016.

⁶⁴ Byman 2007; and Mampilly 2011.

⁶⁵ Clapham 1996; Bob 2005; and Coggins 2015.

Third, while scholars recognize that rebel groups solicit external support to advance their conflict-level goals vis-à-vis the state,⁶⁶ there has been no corresponding analysis of how groups can manipulate international politics to advance their movement-level objectives vis-à-vis other rebel actors.⁶⁷ This is because existing work on insurgent diplomacy assumes rebels to be unitary actors. My work alternatively demonstrates how fragmented rebel politics and *intra-insurgent politics* can have a large effect on the international behavior of rebel groups.

In addition to improving our understanding of an important yet understudied phenomenon, there are three broader implications of my research. First, this dissertation directly addresses critical gaps in the literature on third-party intervention in civil war. Much of foundational literature on intervention initially acknowledged that the internationalization of civil conflict involved two actors: appealers and intervenors.⁶⁸ More contemporary works seem to have overlooked this early acknowledgement of appealer politics in favor of studying intervenor politics. As scholars now examine third-party decisions to intervene in intra-state conflict,⁶⁹ my research sheds light on the often ignored “demand-side” politics of third-party intervention. Furthermore, even these early works do not explicitly discuss rebel appeals and preferences, and simply discuss when appealers appeal and intervenors intervene. This work, however, examines rebel appeals directly, focusing on variation in how groups appeal and why.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Kuperman 2008; and Salehyan et al. 2011.

⁶⁷ For potential early exceptions, see Clapham 1996; Thomas 1996; and Freij 1997. Clapham’s early and brief discussion of insurgent diplomacy, for example, noted that leaders of “weak organisations with poorly defined goals...had to devote much of their diplomatic effort to securing their own position,” while leaders of “a powerful structure with widely shared goals...could use diplomacy in pursuit of common goals of the movement itself” (Clapham 1996, p. 223). Clapham is vague, however, on whether he is speaking about intra-group or intra-movement dynamics and this is the extent of his theorization on how local dynamics may affect insurgent diplomacy.

⁶⁸ Eley 1972, p. 246. For other foundational works addressing when intervention was likely, see Mitchell 1970; and Pearson 1974. Also see Heraclides 1991 for an early understanding of rebel solicitation of third-party support.

⁶⁹ Regan 2002; Regan and Aydin 2006; Balch-Lindsay 2008; and Salehyan 2010.

⁷⁰ Mitchell 1970 and Modelski 1964 are vague as to what type of domestic actors they are speaking about, but appear mostly focused on the state.

Second, my work advances a burgeoning research agenda that focuses on the nexus between domestic and inter-state politics. Although scholars have examined how states forward their international goals by intervening in the domestic politics of other states,⁷¹ my research explains how non-state actors advance their domestic goals by intervening in international politics.⁷²

Third, this project encourages scholars to rethink rebel-state relations. Instead of viewing rebel groups as mere “proxies” that are manipulated by powerful states, it is often the rebels who manipulate the politics of outside states to advance their own domestic goals. By focusing on rebel preferences and appeals for third-party intervention, we can see that insurgent-third-party alliances are not simply mandated by powerful intervenors but often involve pre-alliance negotiations in which rebels have notable agency. As such, I hope to build on the work of contemporary historians and political scientists who view rebel groups as first-order actors in world politics.⁷³

Assumptions and Scope Conditions

Before discussing the empirical strategy, there are a number of important scope conditions and assumptions that require further specification. I outline seven scope conditions and four assumptions that will clarify my argument and empirics.

With regards to scope conditions, it is first necessary to clarify what is to be explained. The argument does not explain or predict when rebel solicitation will succeed, or what the content of forthcoming interventions look like. The focus is on what strategy of diplomacy groups choose to engage in, regardless of the outcome of that campaign. This approach allows

⁷¹ Downes and Monten 2013; and O’Rourke 2013.

⁷² Keck and Sikkink 1998.

⁷³ Vinci 2009; and Chamberlain 2012.

me to better isolate and examine the demand-side politics of solicitation. The focus is more on rebel preferences and appeals for support rather than the outcomes of such requests.

Second, I focus my attention on explicit solicitation campaigns. Some insurgents have extensive diplomatic networks that require continuous engagement to maintain these relationships. But mundane day-to-day acts of engagement are not the focus here. The focus is on large-scale, delimited diplomatic campaigns that are carried out to achieve specific rebel foreign policy goals.

Third, the primary unit of analysis is at the group-level and across time. A central theme of this project is the need to disaggregate insurgency to its core units: autonomous rebel groups. By focusing on the preferences and behaviors of individual groups, we can better account for the effects of intra-insurgent politics on rebel decision-making. The implication is that groups within the same conflict can have disparate strategies of diplomacy at the same point in time, and that the same group can employ different strategies at different points in time.

Fourth, I am only concerned with violent or armed non-state actors. Rebel groups are often preceded by social or political organizations, and rebels may eventually de-militarize.⁷⁴ While non-violent state actors can certainly engage in international diplomacy,⁷⁵ the focus here is on groups that use military coercion as their primary means of achieving their objectives.⁷⁶

Fifth, to enter the analysis, groups must achieve a certain degree of political-military capacity. There are many nascent insurgent organizations that dissipate early and smaller

⁷⁴ Staniland 2014. For scholarship on how and when militant groups transition to politics, see Weinberg 1991; Cronin 2009; Berti 2011; and Acosta 2014.

⁷⁵ Keck and Sikkink 1998, most famously.

⁷⁶ Of course, opposition movements frequently transition violence and non-violence (Tarrow 1989 and Pearlman 2011). However, once political faction turns to armed opposition, it is coded as a “militant” organization. For an elaboration on the macro- and micro-dynamics that cause socio-political organizations to turn to violence, see Weinberg 1991; Della Porta 1995; Goodwin 2001; and Staniland 2014. For cross-comparisons on the tactics between violent and non-violent resistance, see Chenoweth and Stephan 2011.

organizations that have minimal influence on the broader insurgent context. While international diplomacy may be employed by these groups,⁷⁷ I limit my analysis to groups that are born with significant political-military capacity – often due to splits from existing rebel groups – and groups that become “major” players in their conflicts.⁷⁸

Sixth, the diplomacy in question is strictly international and excludes rebel dialogue with the COIN state.⁷⁹ Dialogue and negotiation between rebel groups and the state – even within the context of war and outside the context of settlement – is ubiquitous and extremely important for understanding how rebel groups use dialogue to achieve their political goals.⁸⁰ However, such behavior falls outside the scope of my study. The focus here is on how insurgents harness international power and politics to their benefit.

Seventh, insurgent diplomacy takes place during war and up until a peace agreement is signed.⁸¹ While engagement with international actors during peace processes falls within the scope of insurgent diplomacy,⁸² the vast majority of insurgent diplomacy exists *outside* the context of peace talks. In fact, rebel groups often have to “talk their way in” to negotiations, meaning rebel diplomacy is more frequently a precondition or cause of rebel participation in peace talks.⁸³ Furthermore, as this dissertation demonstrates, insurgents do not always engage

⁷⁷ Byman 2007, for example, argues that early or “proto-insurgencies” are often the most eager to look abroad for start-up resources. Another reason for this limitation is because immensely weak organizations are either unlikely to have the capacity to engage in active campaigns of diplomacy, or will be subject to certain constraints in decision-making that are unique to their poor position of power.

⁷⁸ I measure major rebel groups by their relative size as a function of membership and resource endowments. This approach reflects the operationalization of “major” groups by Krause 2014.

⁷⁹ Coggins 2015, however, includes engagement with the COIN state in her definition of rebel diplomacy.

⁸⁰ For theoretical and empirical examples of insurgent-COIN state dialogue, see Lynch 2011; and Staniland 2012.

⁸¹ The core component of insurgent or rebel diplomacy is the fact that it is a “wartime” strategy (Huang 2016, p. 2).

⁸² For an important study on when groups pursue negotiations, see Pearlman 2009. For the canonical work on spoiling tactics, see Stedman 1997.

⁸³ Knopf 2011, p. 11.

third-party actors with the hopes of making peace, but so they can better improve their chances of making war.⁸⁴

In addition to these scope conditions, I also make a number of important assumptions. First, I assume insurgents – strong or weak, united or fragmented – are always incentivized to engage in some form of international diplomacy. Even if rebels are united and on the verge of defeating the central government – perhaps the most likely case in which we should not see insurgent diplomacy – there are still incentives to try to appeal to important third-parties. First, even if rebels are on the path to victory, getting outside actors to pressure the COIN state to capitulate early can save tremendous costs to the winning insurgency. Second, these actors would still be interested in gaining the support and recognition of international actors as they near achieving the goals.⁸⁵ This assumption distinguishes this study from those that argue that whether groups engage in rebel diplomacy is itself a question worth of examination.⁸⁶ It is true that not all groups conduct large-scale, war-time diplomacy. However, insurgent diplomacy is not defined by its size. Whether groups engage in large, observable campaigns is a function of capability and opportunity, not preference.⁸⁷

Second, I make the assumption that each case comprises of four types of actors: rebels, the COIN state, the COIN state's allies, and the COIN state's adversaries. This is, of course, a theoretical simplification. Not all intra-state conflicts involve a central government or a COIN state actor (e.g. Somalia). In these cases, there certainly would not be COIN state allies or adversaries. Furthermore, while some states have clear international allies and adversaries, others

⁸⁴ Huang 2016 and I share in this conception.

⁸⁵ Coggins 2014.

⁸⁶ Huang 2016; Mattiacci and Jones 2016; and Weldemichael 2013b. I argue, however, that since most groups are expected to engage in diplomacy, the larger question is not when but how and why.

⁸⁷ Huang 2016 (p. 8) concludes that only 39% of groups engage in diplomacy, but I expect this figure will increase significantly if the coding conditions are relaxed and cases are further analyzed.

do not. In the theory provided in Chapter 2, rebel incentives to solicit the COIN state's allies and adversaries are grounded in the fact that they hold influence and leverage over the COIN state and rebel actors, respectively. However, not all states are equally dependent upon external actors – and thus subject to foreign influence – and not all rebellions are equally reliant upon third-party support.⁸⁸ For example, while great powers or regional powers have allies, there are likely few third-parties that the leverage needed to trigger a major change in their behavior. Nonetheless, I assume that all COIN states have to *some degree* an ally that maintains at least some influence over their behavior.⁸⁹ Furthermore, even if rebels don't have clear COIN state adversaries willing to support an insurgency by virtue of a common enemy, there are always potential sources of support to be found.

Finally, and relatedly, I have chosen to scope out a formal theorization of insurgent engagement with neutral actors. First, it is difficult to argue that true third-party neutrality exists in intra-state conflict because inaction is itself a form of intervention. Second, neutral actors are most often used as intermediaries to gain access to COIN allies and adversaries. As such, engagement with “neutral” actors are addressed in the empirical chapters, but there is less value in theorizing insurgent diplomacy beyond the COIN state's allies and adversaries.

Data and Research Design

Methodology

To test my argument, I examine the various international diplomatic strategies employed by the Iraqi Kurdish (1958-1990) and Palestinian national movements (1959-1988) over the course of nearly sixty years of conflict. The theory presented provides a clear causal argument, linking rebel groups' military capacity and movement structure to distinct diplomatic strategies.

⁸⁸ See Weinstein 2007.

⁸⁹ For an argument that even great powers can be restrained, see Ikenberry 2001.

To evaluate the accuracy of my theory, I employ time-slice analysis of changes in a rebel military capacity and movement cohesiveness to determine whether there is a corresponding change in the group's international diplomatic strategy. Careful process-tracing can also reveal whether the mechanisms of change highlighted above actually explain these correlations. When rebel groups solicit aid, are rebels explicit that they prefer one type of aid over another? Furthermore, when groups seek intervention, are they explicit about whether it is intended to be used against the state or rebel rivals? Lastly, is there evidence that groups strategically target certain third-parties depending on their expected ability to solve specific movement- or conflict-level problems? Overall, if valuation on the dependent variable does not correspond with the expected valuation on the independent variable, my theory suffers from short-comings. However, even if my predictions are correct, I must still confirm that the mechanisms I have outlined are responsible for those valuations.

Another test to the validity of my argument is to evaluate whether rebel strategies of diplomacy vary at all over the course of a given conflict. A central premise of my argument is that rebels employ multiple approaches to international diplomacy. However, if all groups use one continuous strategy of diplomacy, employed for one clearly defined purpose, my theory will be undermined. An example of such a uni-causal argument is that rebel groups employ insurgent diplomacy solely to secure political recognition from outside actors to compete with the COIN state. These theories focus explicitly on the "legitimization" benefits of international diplomacy vis-à-vis the central government. For example, Clapham argues that "the ultimate objective of insurgent diplomacy is to secure parity with the representatives of the target state itself in the capitals of major powers, a goal which was normally pursued through escalating levels of

access.”⁹⁰ If these theories are correct, we should see groups solely concerned with campaigns to secure global recognition, regardless of changes in the independent variables. Furthermore, intra-insurgent politics should not emerge as an important variable in groups’ diplomatic strategies. My theory would be similarly undermined if groups consistently lobbied one type of third-party actor or solicited the same type of assistance in all cases.

With these goals in mind, the broader empirical strategy is based upon two complementary methods of case comparison: The most-different-systems and most-similar-systems case designs, which allow us to assess a theory’s external and internal validity, respectively.⁹¹ A most-similar-systems case design is particularly useful for examining the internal validity of an argument. If a change in independent variable, X, leads to the predicted change in the dependent variable, Y, in multiple cases under similar conditions, then we can be confident in the internal validity or causal relationship of our theory. This is because the only characteristics of a case that vary are the independent and dependent variables in question.⁹²

Tests for internal validity are accomplished in Chapters 3-6 through the use of within-case comparisons. I trace how changes in groups’ domestic threat environment caused shifts in rebel diplomatic strategy in *seventeen unique cases* – 8 Iraqi Kurdish and 9 Palestinian – covering sixty years of rebellion. The Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian case studies are themselves divided into two distinct chapters covering unique phases of each conflict to control for substantive changes in the case environment. Isolating case-comparisons in this manner allows

⁹⁰ Clapham 1996, p. 225. For other arguments on legitimacy, see Coggins 2015; and Huang 2016.

⁹¹ George and Bennett 2005.

⁹² It is important to note that employing a most-different- or most-similar system design does not help to identify the precise causal relationship between the variable. In order to be confident in our theory’s predictions, we must be able to assess whether a change in X leads to a change in Y for the precise reasons or mechanisms described by theory. Confidence in theory’s causal logic requires careful process-tracing between changes in the independent and dependent variables.

me to approximate a most-similar-systems case design by examining the variables under controlled conditions.

Assessing the external validity of one's findings is best accomplished through a most-different-systems case design. If a change in independent variable, X, leads to the predicted change in the dependent variable, Y, in cases that are highly dissimilar, then we can have a greater degree of confidence in the external validity of our theory. Although the Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian cases are not directly compared to one another, the most-different-systems design is accomplished through case selection. Although covering roughly the same historical time period, these cases examine insurgent diplomacy across two very distinct contexts, providing a degree of generalizability for any positive findings.

In fact, the two cases are diverse along a large set factors that may be considered *theoretically relevant* to the argument in question.⁹³ This includes characteristics related to the dependent and independent variables, as well as variables that may have an independent effect on the diplomatic strategies employed.

Beginning with the dependent variable, insurgent diplomatic strategy is defined by the targets of diplomacy groups engage with and the types of intervention they solicit. At the broadest level, Iraqi Kurds and Palestinians targeted similar sets of characters: the United States, Western Europe, the Soviet Union, Arab League countries, Iran, etc. But Palestinians relations with Israel's adversaries were unique compared to Kurdish relations with Iraq's adversaries. As Norton and Greenberg critically note, "What distinguishes the PLO from virtually every other national liberation organization is the fact that it has more than twenty-two ethnically, religiously, and linguistically similar states in support of its basic goals."⁹⁴ Because of this Iraqi

⁹³ Mill 1843.

⁹⁴ Green 1989, p. xii.

Kurds and Palestinians faced significantly different constraints and opportunities for engagement, despite operating within a similar set of regional actors.

Palestinian politics was aggressively co-opted by Arab regimes, making the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often synonymous with the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was a blessing and a curse for the Palestinians. While Arab support gave Palestinians a boost in power and opportunity, this came with an overbearing effort by Arab regimes to constrain and often undermine Palestinian politics.⁹⁵ The PLO struggled tirelessly to keep itself independent of Arab allies. The Kurds, on the other hand, had no such access to co-ethnic states, were often viewed as a side-show in Middle Eastern politics, and had to navigate international politics alone. While the Iraqi Kurds were still wary of regional politics and manipulation, the rules governing Kurdish-regional relations were significantly different than those governing Palestinian-Arab relations. In short, while both national movements engaged with similar targets of diplomacy, the nature and context of these engagements were quite unique.

With regards to characteristics related to the independent variables – military viability and movement fragmentation – there are also notable differences. The Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian national movements had divergent military strategies and base-line military capabilities. The Iraqi Kurdish *peshmerga* and Palestinian *fedayeen* fought two very different wars. Iraqi Kurds generally engaged in guerrilla warfare, controlling and holding territory within the contested zone. At one point, in 1974/5 the Kurds even engaged in offensive conventional tactics, taking the fight to Iraqi plains.⁹⁶ Although Kurdish groups did occasionally engage in acts of sabotage and kidnapping, they rarely resorted to acts of terrorism. Furthermore, the near entirety of anti-Baghdad fighting took place within Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan. The Palestinian

⁹⁵ Macintyre 1975.

⁹⁶ ARR 1974, No. 7, pp. 126-127.

fedayeen, however, mostly engaged in cross-border raids, acts of sabotage, and one-off terror attacks within the contested territory, but were largely unable to engage in guerrilla warfare. The Palestinian *fedayeen* and PLO did control territory and developed extensive governing capacity – in Jordan before 1970 and Lebanon before 1982 – but sustained guerrilla and conventional campaigns within Israel-Palestine were largely unheard of.⁹⁷ Part of this has to do with varying geography and state capacity. Israeli counter-insurgent capacity far exceeded Iraq's, and while the Kurds benefited from the rough mountainous terrain along the Turkish and Iranian borders, the Palestinian Territories and surrounding areas did not lend themselves to easy cover, concealment, and defense.

Second, while the Iraqi Kurdish movement was almost always operating under severe resource constraints, the opposite was true for the PLO. As Rashid Khalidi once described, Arafat in the 1980s was “now a head of state in all but name, more powerful than many Arab rulers. His was no longer a humble revolution movement, but rather vigorous para-state, with a growing bureaucracy administering the affairs of Palestinians everywhere, and with a budget bigger than that of many small sovereign states.”⁹⁸ One could not say this about the Kurds during the period under analysis. Simply put, the Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian movements were differentially capable in ways that could affect each their sources military viability.

With regards to movement fragmentation, the two movements operated in vastly different organizational fields. Whereas the Iraqi Kurdish movement comprised of several, comparatively sized indigenous rebel groups, the Palestinian case involved scores of ideologically and ethnically diverse factions – that were sometimes directly tied to external states – and there was a

⁹⁷ The major exceptions being a failed insurgency in the West Bank after the 1967 war, and the equally disastrous 1970-1971 Jordanian civil war and 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

⁹⁸ Khalidi 1986, p. 29.

clear hierarchy of power and prestige between the groups.⁹⁹ Perhaps the most important difference was the existence of the PLO as a quasi-state-like umbrella organization.¹⁰⁰ One-part autonomous organization, one-part vehicle for Fateh dominance, and another party symbol of the Palestinian nation, the PLO occupied a unique space in liberation politics. Although the Iraqi Kurds later established the Kurdish Front in 1987, the organization never held the type of independent sovereignty, power, recognition, and authority the PLO commanded.

The second set of characteristics worth considering are those that may have an independent effect on rebel strategy choice. First, it is possible that insurgent groups engage in different types of diplomacy depending on the COIN state regime-type. Some scholars, for example, have argued that whether rebel groups fight against democratic or authoritarian regime can affect their domestic and international behavior.¹⁰¹ Regime-type is controlled by the case design since the Iraqi Kurds fought against an authoritarian regime while the Palestinians fought against a government that while authoritarian to those under occupation, was democratic in relation to its own citizens.¹⁰²

Second, it is possible that insurgent goals can affect strategies of diplomacy. Although both cases are self-determination struggles, there are important distinctions. The Iraqi Kurdish case can be classified as separatist, while the Palestinian case is classified as both separatist and center-seeking. It was not until 1988 that the PLO formally recognized Israel's right to exist. Prior that point, in 1974, the PLO had adopted the 10 point-program which effectively accepted a two-state solution, but it was dubbed the "phased program" because it left the door open for an

⁹⁹ Krause 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Wendy Pearlman has a wonderful description of the relations between the PLO and its member factions. See Pearlman 2011, pp. 71-3.

¹⁰¹ Fazal 2014; and Stanton 2009.

¹⁰² For example, see Ron 2003.

eventual capture of the entire Israeli state.¹⁰³ Furthermore, there continued to be a number of important groups within the PLO that openly advocated center-seeking goals through December 1988. The Kurds, on the other hand, never espoused the goal of controlling all of Iraq.

Strategies of diplomacy may also be affected by the size and vigor of a movement's diaspora community. While Palestinian populations outside Israel-Palestine are numerous and dispersed across the globe, the Kurdish diaspora was relatively small during most of the period and concentrated in Europe and the United States.¹⁰⁴ Relatedly, the level of diplomacy and international attention achieved by both groups are drastically divergent. Whereas Kurdish diplomats operated mostly in secret and had minimal support for long-distance and sustained diplomatic campaigns, the Palestinians developed a massive, public diplomatic network spanning the entire globe. When the PLO held dozens of information offices and embassies abroad, the Kurdish groups could boast nearly none. All this leads to the simple fact that while the world hardly knew what the Kurdistan Democratic Party or Patriotic Union of Kurdistan was – let alone a Kurd – the PLO, regardless of one's politics was a global, household name.

In sum, both groups conducted diplomacy abroad to gain the critical support needed for their movements, but they did so in very different ways, under very distinct contexts, with disparate access to resources, and to varying degrees of success. As such, the Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian cases provide a useful approximation of the most-different-systems design to provide confidence in the extent to which my argument travels.

¹⁰³ Miller 1983, pp. 33-4; and Sayigh 1997a, pp. 342-3.

¹⁰⁴ For more information on the early Kurdish diaspora, see "A Conference on the Role of the Kurds in Sweden Among Kurds Abroad in their Homeland," 2000, EUL MS 403/4/139.

Data Sources

Data for the case studies are primarily based on original author interviews and primary-source archival documents, collected through field work in Iraqi Kurdistan, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, the United Kingdom, and Washington, D.C. I also rely on important secondary-source material, such as important historical works and regional news sources.

For the Iraqi Kurdish case study, I make use of 37 semi-structured interviews with 28 current and former Kurdish diplomatic officials in Iraqi Kurdistan, Europe, and the United States.¹⁰⁵ The bulk of these interviews were conducted during two trips to Iraqi Kurdistan in the summers of 2014 and 2015. Most of my interviewees were current or former officials who were either themselves high-level Kurdish diplomats during the period in question, or were in a position of power to understand the policy decisions taken at the time. Interviewees represented multiple sides of the Iraqi Kurdish liberation movement, including members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the Gorran movement (most of whom are formerly PUK), and a handful of independents and Islamic partisans.¹⁰⁶

In addition to author interviews, I use primary source archival documents relating to Kurdish international diplomacy and internal party politics. Two archives are of particular importance. The first is the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series, provided by the U.S. State Department. FRUS documents were critical for understanding the extent and content of Kurdish appeals to the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the Kurdish ties to Iran and Israel. The second is the personal archive of Omar Sheikhmous, collected and stored at the Special Collections Archives at the University of Exeter. Sheikhmous

¹⁰⁵ The interviews were conducted mostly in English, with the exception of two interviews in which an interpreter was present.

¹⁰⁶ I used two separate IRB protocols for my human subjects research: IRB14-0603 for research on Iraqi Kurdistan, and IRB14-0386 for research on Palestine.

was a founder of the PUK and deeply involved in Kurdish international affairs from the 1960s until the mid-1980s. The files include minutes of PUK leadership meetings, private letters between Kurdish leaders, and most importantly, external letters between Kurdish leaders and foreign governments, political parties, international and non-governmental organizations, and private individuals, all in English, Arabic, and Kurdish.¹⁰⁷ The benefit of this archive is that it provides a deep and unparalleled understanding of rebel deliberations and decision-making concerning international relations.¹⁰⁸ I also consult documents from The National Archive at Kew, London, and the U.S. National Archives in College Park, Maryland for background.

The Palestinian case study makes use of 26 original interviews with 22 current and former Palestinian officials, most of whom were either privy to political decision-making at the highest level or were themselves participants in Palestinian diplomacy. The interviews were semi-structured and mostly conducted in English, with the exception of three interviews with an interpreter present. These interviews were conducted over the course of two research trips to the West Bank in the spring of 2014 and 2015. Participants included members of Fateh (majority of interviewees), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Palestine People's Party, Palestine Liberation Front, and independents. Interviewees ranged from mid- to mostly high-level officials within their own factions or the PLO, including individuals who had extensive access to the head of Fateh and the PLO, Yasser Arafat. While some of the interviewees were Palestinian diplomats at one point, others were selected because of their intimate knowledge of PLO decision-making. Nearly all interviewees asked to be on-the-record. However, out of an abundance of caution, I have chosen

¹⁰⁷ I thank Ali A. from the University of Exeter for his incredible translation and research assistance.

¹⁰⁸ The down-side is asymmetrical access to information on PUK decision-making, compared to our understanding of the KDP. The result is that whereas some parts of the Iraqi Kurdish case focus intently on KDP foreign relations, others focus more heavily on the PUK.

to keep the names of interviewees anonymous. I have randomly assigned each interview a number so readers can recognize quotes and citations from the same interview and individual.

I also make use of nearly 15,000 primary-source documents on PLO diplomacy taken from National Archives in Kew, London. These documents include correspondence between mid- to high-level British Foreign Office officials, intelligence reports and assessments on internal PLO politics and PLO diplomacy, and international, inter-agency dialogue between British and foreign diplomats concerning engagement with the Palestinian national movement. Perhaps most importantly, these documents detail Palestinian engagement with Western Europe from the late-1960s onward. Although the overwhelming focus is on British-Palestinian dialogue, these documents include assessments of PLO relations with other states around the world. In addition to helping unpack the broader patterns of Palestinian diplomacy, these documents provide intricate detail of actual dialogue between Palestinian and British officials, and how British officials “interpreted” the conversations. In short, we can observe see the learning process by which the British come to understand Fateh and PLO intentions.

Other archives consulted are the National Security Archives at the George Washington University and the U.S. National Archives at College Park, Maryland. While the latter archive is used mostly for background, I make use of the National Security Archives in Chapter 6 when discussing the 1982 Israeli siege of Beirut. Through documents released under the Freedom of Information Act at the request of John Boykin for his own research,¹⁰⁹ this archive detailed the negotiations for the evacuation of PLO forces from Beirut during the summer of 1982.

Finally, the Palestinian chapters rely upon global and regional news storied compiled in the *Arab Report and Record* (ARR) series, as well as memoirs of participants and secondary-

¹⁰⁹ Boykin 2002.

source biographies, articles, and books. The ARR is particularly useful in that it is able to capture major PLO-related events and travel on a bi-weekly basis from 1966 to 1978.

Roadmap for the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is comprised of six chapters, including a theory chapter, four empirical chapters, and a concluding chapter. The theory chapter (Chapter 2) lays out the main argument in greater detail by unpacking the underlying assumptions and mechanisms driving the causal logic. The primary goal of this chapter is to furnish the contours of insurgent diplomatic strategy, demarcate the scope of the argument in question, and most importantly, to provide hypotheses and predictions that can be tested empirically.

The theory chapter is followed by four empirical chapters. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the diplomatic strategies of the Iraqi Kurdish national movement from 1958 to 1990. The chapters divide the conflict into two distinct time periods. Chapter 3 looks at Kurdish diplomacy from the foundation of the Iraqi Republic in 1958 and onset of war in 1961, through the collapse of the Kurdish insurgency in March 1975. Chapter 4 examines Kurdish diplomacy from the March 1975, through the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

Splitting the case study into two chapters allows for a better approximation of a most-similar-systems design. The more external factors that can be controlled for, the better causal leverage can be harnessed for internal validity. Because the conflict environments were vastly different before and after 1975, I conduct within-case comparisons for each phase independently. For example, from 1958 to 1975, the Kurdish movement was largely united and fought from a position of strength. However, from 1975 to 1990, the Kurds were substantially fragmented and operated from a position of relative weakness compared to the previous era. Furthermore, while the dominant political crisis in Iraq before 1975 was the Kurdish rebellion, the rebellion was

absorbed and overshadowed by the Iran-Iraq War thereafter. Finally, the 1975 collapse of the Kurdish movement created a normative shift in how the Kurds viewed third-party support. Prior to 1975, the Kurds were eager solicitors of foreign support. However, when their supporters failed to save the rebellion in 1975, the Kurds became incredibly skeptical of third-parties.¹¹⁰ While this did not affect groups' broader strategies of diplomacy, it did create a new cynicism toward third-party assistance.

The task of both chapters is to assess how movement fragmentation and military viability affected Kurdish groups' international strategies of diplomacy. How did movement unification and fragmentation affect who groups targeted for support and for what purposes? Was the type of intervention solicited affected by changes in groups' military capacity? In short, what concerns motivated diverse appeals for third-party support? Each chapter examines four distinct time periods – based on the values taken on the independent variable – to examine whether my predictions on insurgent diplomatic strategy hold.

Chapters 5 and 6 examine the international diplomacy of the Palestinian national movement from 1959 to 1988. Chapter 5 examines the Palestinian national movement from the emergence of Palestinian guerrillas in the late-1950s to the recognition of the PLO by the United Nations in 1974. Chapter 6 examines Palestinian diplomacy from 1974 through the PLO's formal renunciation of terrorism and recognition of Israel in December 1988. The Palestinian case study is also divided into two chapters covering distinct phases of rebellion. While, the pre-1974 era was dominated by intra-Palestinian competition, the post-1974 era represents a more cohesive phase of the opposition. Furthermore, the post-1974 period is unique because of the perpetual possibility of peace negotiations in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. As a

¹¹⁰ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

result, separating the Palestinian case study into two phases for within-case comparison allows for a more tightly controlled environment.

These chapters trace the major shifts in Palestinian diplomatic strategy to the state of intra-Palestinian politics and groups' military viability. The Palestinian case, however, is analytically more complex than the Iraqi Kurdish case. There is a tremendous amount of information from many sources, change` on the dependent and independent variables under observation are frequent, and domestic political dynamics – intra-Palestinian and intra-Arab – are complex. As such, I focus more on specific episodes of diplomatic campaigning, rather than a broad overview of groups' diplomatic strategies over the entire period.

In Chapter 7, I conclude with a broader assessment of my empirical findings, discuss lingering questions about insurgent diplomacy, and unpack the policy implications of my work. Furthermore, this chapter moves beyond the question of rebel strategic choice, to discuss when their strategies are most likely to succeed. This will help us understand what the ultimate effects of diplomacy are on a given conflict, and when we can anticipate these effects to occur. Finally, the chapter discusses the broader generalizability of my findings and concludes with thoughts for future research on insurgent diplomacy.

Chapter 2: Theory

From Benjamin Franklin's mission to Paris in 1776, to Yasser Arafat's speech at the United Nations in 1974, to Syrian opposition lobbying today, acts of insurgent diplomacy have defined some of the most memorable events in international politics. International diplomacy is a ubiquitous feature of insurgent politics because it is intrinsically linked to how rebel groups pursue third-party political and military support. When rebels have the capacity to engage with outside actors, groups rarely hesitate to do so in the hopes of advancing their cause at home.¹

However, although war-time diplomacy is central to insurgent politics, scholars still cannot explain the substantial variation in *insurgent diplomatic strategy*, or the ways in which diplomacy is employed by groups over time. For example, groups may privilege interactions with some international actors, while actively avoiding relations with others. Rebels may seek international support for a diverse set of political-military objectives, from competition with local rebel rivals to combating the counter-insurgent state. Furthermore, rebel groups can use diplomacy to solicit very different types of assistance at different points in time, ranging from mere political recognition to military intervention. As Alexis Heraclides recognized nearly a quarter-century ago, the costs and risks associated with soliciting and receiving third-party intervention incentivizes groups to be "selective in their choice of target and in the content of their appeals."² In other words, not only must rebels choose to divert finite resources away from military tasks in order to engage in international diplomacy, they must also choose *how* to expend their diplomatic efforts.

¹ Huang 2016, for example, argues that capacity is one of the primary factors determining whether groups engage in international diplomacy.

² Heraclides 1991, p. 39.

This dissertation explains the strategic choices rebel groups make when deciding how to engage with international actors during intra-state war. It is about what groups believe international actors can offer them and how rebels work toward attaining third-party benefits. The central questions to be examined are: *What are the different strategies of diplomacy rebel groups employ to solicit third-party assistance, and when do rebels prefer to employ one strategy over another?* Strategies of insurgent diplomacy are not static, but variable and tailored to address the specific challenges rebel groups face at home. In short, I argue that insurgent diplomatic strategy is a function of the local threat environment groups face at home. How rebel groups approach the international system is primarily driven by intra-insurgent politics and the domestic balance of power between rebels and their enemies.

A group's international strategy of diplomacy – the dependent variable in question – is comprised of two key characteristics: *What* type of intervention rebels want, and *from whom* they want it. I argue that a group's diplomatic strategy is determined by the degree of fragmentation within the broader insurgent movement, and the extent to which rebels are militarily viable in the conflict zone. When an insurgent movement is deeply fragmented, they are more likely to solicit the counter-insurgent (COIN) state's international adversaries for assistance in solving intra-insurgent disputes. However, when an insurgent movement is more united, they will solicit the COIN state's allies for assistance in solving the broader conflict-level dispute with the state. With regards to the type of aid solicited, when rebel groups are militarily viable – or capable of engaging their enemies in combat – they are more likely to solicit indirect forms of assistance, such as arms, aid, and political recognition. However, when rebel groups become non-viable, they are more likely to solicit more direct forms of intervention, such as coercive diplomacy, sanctions and military assaults on the state or rebel adversaries.

The remainder of this chapter will proceed as follows. First, I discuss the main characteristics that differentiate strategies of diplomacy from one another. Second, I unpack my theory explaining when and why insurgents choose between different strategies across time. Third, I discuss how the concepts of strategic change and success fit within the theoretical framework provided.

Dependent Variable: Insurgent Diplomatic Strategy

Insurgent diplomatic strategy is a function of *what* rebels want and from *whom* they want it. We can therefore categorize insurgent diplomatic strategy as the interaction of two variables:

1) the type of intervention being sought, and 2) the primary target of diplomacy.

Type of Intervention

The type of intervention rebel groups seek are differentiated by how involved the third-parties are expected to become in a conflict.³ I distinguish between two types of third-party intervention – **direct** and **indirect** – based on the interaction of two characteristics. The first is whether the intervention is intended to increase the absolute power of the soliciting group, or decrease the absolute power of the group’s adversary (target state or rival rebel group).⁴

³ Salehyan 2010 takes a similar approach, albeit from the perspective of intervening states, not rebel groups.

⁴ A related concept is Kai He’s conception of positive and negative balancing between states. Positive balancing is when a state increases its own power, and negative balancing “refers to a state’s strategies or diplomatic efforts to undermine a rival’s power” (He 2012, p. 157). Whereas He is talking about the types of action a given actor makes vis-à-vis its rivals, my theory is about what rebels ask *other actors* to do to affect the balance of power between themselves and their rivals. An important distinction is also that negative balancing does not always involve directly undermining an enemy’s power. For example, He includes giving weapons to an adversary’s enemies as a way to conduct negative balancing. Direct intervention, as discussed in this paper, requires getting a third-party actor to actively and *directly* challenge one’s adversary. Finally, He’s state-centric theory makes different predictions than those proposed here. He argues that the greater the threat from a rival, the more likely a state is to positive balance to avoid confrontation; the lower the threat, the more likely a state is to try to undermine its rival’s power. Instead, I argue that when rebels face extreme threats due to military non-viability, they solicit outside actors to directly undermine their rivals, and vice versa. These conflicting predictions have to do with the different political-military scenarios under consideration. For He it is about the best way to balance threats without provoking enemies. For rebels, it is about the best way to balance against active threats, in consideration of principal-agent and post-conflict dynamics between rebels and their third-party supporters.

Although distinct, both actions achieve the same broader objective: to alter the relative balance of power in favor of the group soliciting assistance.⁵

This framework neatly incorporates traditional genres of assistance. For example, political intervention geared towards increasing a group's independent power can be achieved through third-party recognition. On the other hand, political intervention geared towards decreasing the absolute power of an adversary can include public condemnation, or engaging adversaries in coercive diplomacy on the group's behalf. With regards to economic intervention, third-parties can increase a group's economic resources by giving it monetary aid or allowing the group to raise funds within its borders. Alternatively, third-parties can directly decrease a rival's economic resources by applying monetary sanctions. From a military perspective, third-parties can increase a group's power through provisions of arms and training, as well as loaning soldiers to fight under the group's command. However, third-parties can also actively undermine a group's adversaries by terminating arms contracts, establishing naval blockades and no-fly zones, and even direct combat.⁶

The second factor contributing to whether an intervention is direct or indirect is the degree to which the third-party actively engages the group's adversary on its behalf. In other words, to what extent do third-parties become actual belligerents in the conflict? Active belligerency can be measured from high to low, based on how directly the intervention causes a change in the adversary's power. For example, recognizing a rebel group can undermine a

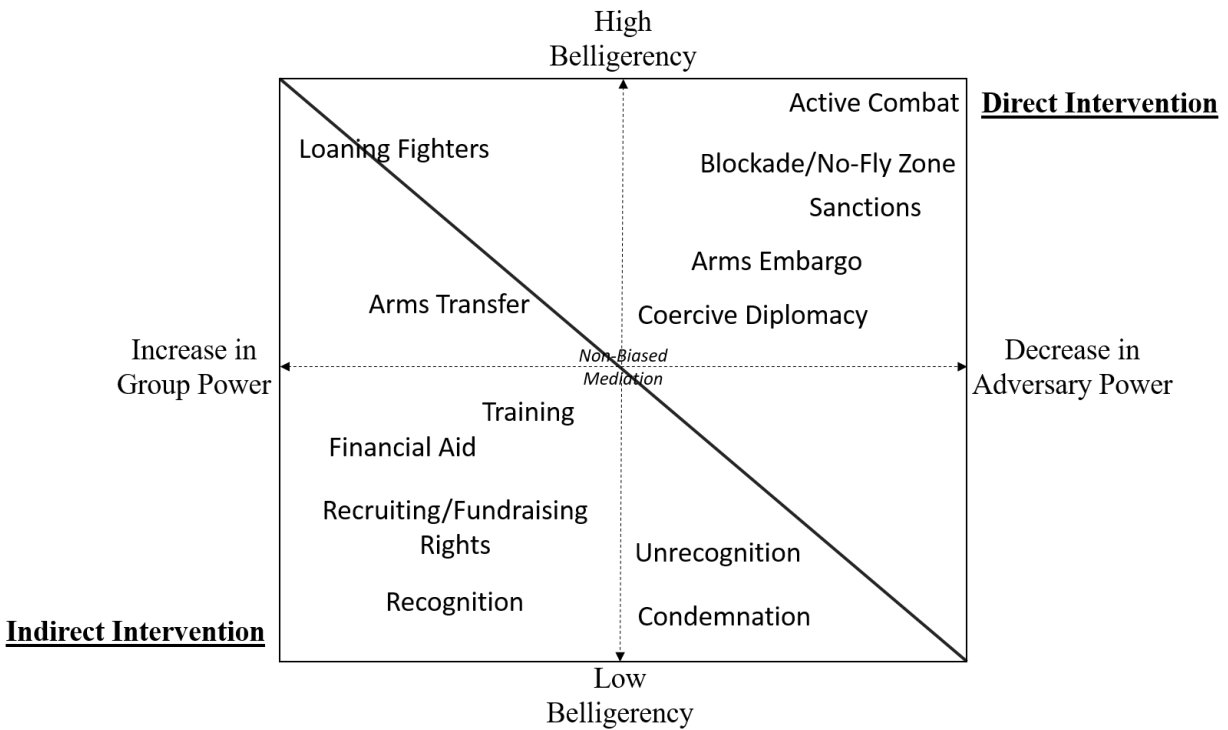
⁵ See He 2012, 167-8. The distinction between these two types of interventions are also related to the neorealist discussions of internal and external balancing (Waltz 1979, p. 168). When insurgents use diplomacy to attract indirect intervention, they are essentially pursuing a strategy akin to "internal balancing." Although resources are being solicited from outside actors, the group is ultimately making *itself* more powerful and therefore a more formidable, autonomous foe. However, when groups ask for direct intervention, they are evoking external balancing by enlisting the help of independent allies. For an application of classic balancing to rebel alliance politics, see Vinci 2009, pp. 57-60.

⁶ For an overview of various intervention types, see Regan 2002a; Regan and 2006; and Heraclides 1991, p. 49.

group's adversary, but only indirectly: recognition leads to greater prestige and legitimacy for the group, which may lead to more international aid and higher recruitment rates, which can translate to an increase the group's power, and only then, decreases the relative power of the adversary. For similar reasons, public condemnation of a group's adversary is a far less direct form of intervention than if the same actor attempted to actively pressure the adversary to change its policies by political, economic, or military coercion. Accounting for the degree of third-party belligerency is necessary because some acts which decrease an adversary's power can be less belligerent than those that increase the power of rebel groups. For example, the provision of heavy weapons to rebels will be seen as far more belligerent than if the third-party publicly condemned the COIN state.

In sum, indirect intervention is when a third-party increases a rebel group's power in ways that involve a low level of belligerency toward the target of intervention. Direct intervention is when an outside actor decreases the absolute power of a group's adversary in ways that involve a high level of belligerency toward the target of intervention (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Direct vs. Indirect Intervention



Note: Intervention types to the *left* of the solid-diagonal line are considered forms of indirect intervention, while intervention types on the *right* of the solid-diagonal line are considered forms of direct intervention.

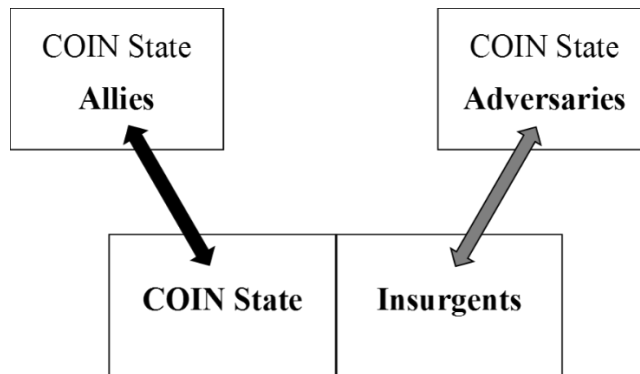
Target of Diplomacy

The primary target of diplomacy is defined as the third-party actor that soliciting rebels hope will provide the intervention. This excludes intermediary third-parties that may be approached to help rebels gain access to the prospective intervener.⁷ In addition to being designated a prospective intervener, primary targets can be identified as those receiving increased levels of engagement as part of a clear *diplomatic campaign* to win their support. This distinction is key because primary targets are not always the only actors that rebel groups engage with at a given point in time. Regular diplomatic activity, even for states, involves the constant maintenance of diverse relations among all engaged actors.

⁷ For a related discussion on indirect avenues of access, see Kirisci 1986.

One can distinguish between two sets of primary targets: **allies** and **adversaries of the COIN state**.⁸ Allies are those parties that actively support – politically, fiscally, or militarily – the COIN state, while adversaries are actively or potentially hostile to the COIN state. By virtue of these relations, adversaries of the COIN state are also likely to be the natural allies of the insurgency. Disaggregating targets of diplomacy in this manner provides a “master cleavage” for thinking about third-party actors, and is applicable to states, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and foreign rebel groups alike.⁹ Figure 2.2 illustrates the positioning of these targets of diplomacy and their positioning vis-à-vis local belligerents.

Figure 2.2: Targets of Diplomacy and their Relations to the Conflict



Note: The solid black arrow indicates an alliance relationship. The grey arrow signifies that while COIN state adversaries may be sympathetic to the rebellion, they are not automatic supporters and thus represent both active and potential supporters.

Relatedly, there are a number of “dual-allegiance” actors that are simultaneously adversaries of the COIN state and allied with the COIN state’s allies. These actors may be primary targets as adversaries of the COIN state, as well as intermediary targets toward engagement with the COIN state’s allies. For example, Saudi Arabia is an adversary of Israel,

⁸ I purposefully scope out neutral actors. First, neutral actors are most often used as intermediaries to gain access to specific targets of diplomacy. Second, some may argue that neutrals may be useful targets of diplomacy, regardless of whether movements are united or fragmented. If this is the case, then targeting neutrals does not offer observable variation to assess in terms of insurgent strategy.

⁹ Kalyvas 2003.

but it is also an ally of the United States, Israel's principal ally. When examining engagement with dual-allegiance actors, it is important to determine *why* their support is being sought – because of their direct leverage over intra-insurgent politics, or their indirect influence over the COIN state by way of the COIN state's allies.

Four Strategies of Insurgent Diplomacy

Taking into account both what rebels want (direct or indirect intervention) and from whom they primarily want it (COIN state allies or adversaries), we can distinguish between four strategies of insurgent diplomacy (Table 2.1).

When a rebel group solicits indirect intervention from the COIN state's allies, the strategy is called **“Legitimizing Rebellion.”** For example, a rebel group can ask the COIN state's allies to publicly recognize the insurgency or condemn the central government. When a rebel group solicits indirect intervention from the COIN state's adversaries, the strategy is called **“Cornering the Market.”** For example, a rebel group can ask the COIN state's adversaries to proclaim the group the sole legitimate representative of the insurgent movement, or to provide it exclusively with arms, training, and financing to help the rebel group dominate its rebel rivals. When a rebel group solicits direct intervention from the COIN state's allies, the strategy is called **“Outsourcing Rebellion.”** For example, a rebel group can ask the COIN state's allies to use coercive diplomacy against the central government to pressure it into capitulating to rebel demands or even threaten non-lethal punishment such as sanctions. Finally, when a rebel group solicits direct intervention from the COIN state's adversaries, the strategy is called **“Outsourcing Rivalry.”** For example, a rebel group can ask the COIN state's adversaries to directly undermine rival rebel groups by ceasing the provision of arms or financing to other rebels, or by directly asking them to engage their rivals in combat.

Table 2.1: Insurgent Strategies of Diplomacy

		<i>Target of Diplomacy</i>	
		COIN State Allies	COIN State Adversaries
<i>Type of Intervention</i>	Indirect	Legitimizing Rebellion	Cornering the Market
	Direct	Outsourcing Rebellion	Outsourcing Rivalry

Now that we know the contours of insurgent diplomatic strategy, we turn to the explanations for insurgent strategic choice. What determines whether groups focus their diplomatic attention on the allies of the COIN state or its enemies? When do rebel groups seek outside support to increase their own political-military power, and when do groups ask outside actors to directly engage their adversaries? These are the important questions that define a rebel group's strategy of diplomacy.

The Determinants of Diplomatic Strategy

Now that we have defined the dependent variable in question, we can explain the conditions in which insurgents would be more likely to engage in one strategy over another. In short, I argue that to understand the contours of insurgent diplomatic strategy abroad, it is essential to understand the domestic motivations and constraints behind the use of distinct strategies. How rebel groups approach international politics is directly linked to the *local threat environment* groups operate in at any given point in time. More specifically, the balance of power between rebel groups and their adversaries, as well as intra-insurgent competitive dynamics drive the logic behind insurgent strategic choice. Variation in insurgent strategies of diplomacy is thus a function of two variables: 1) the **military viability** of a rebel group, which

affects the type of intervention groups' pursue; and 2) the **degree of fragmentation** within the broader insurgent movement, which influences groups' primary targets of diplomacy.

The remainder of this section will proceed as follows. First, I describe the primary independent variables. Second, I unpack the causal logic behind how local political-military considerations shape the pursuit for assistance abroad, and offer testable hypotheses to be examined in the remaining chapters. Third, I provide an overview of the main predictions for when we should see specific shifts in insurgent diplomatic strategy.

Independent Variables

Military Viability: The first independent variable is the military viability of a rebel group, which can affect the type of intervention rebels solicit. For the sake of theoretical and empirical clarity, I treat military viability as dichotomous variable. There are three of ways to operationalize military viability *ex ante*, based on both aggregate and relative measurements of rebel power. First, if a rebel group has recently suffered a major military defeat and finds itself avoiding engagement with the COIN state or rebel rivals out of concern of annihilation. Second, even if a group has coercive capacity, it may ultimately be pushed outside the conflict zone and isolated from those it wishes to coerce. The Algerian FLN and Western Saharan Polisario, for example, were pushed to the fringes of the contested zone and isolated by a defensive barrier.¹⁰ A third way to operationalize a group's military capacity is the relative balance of power between itself and adversaries. Extreme asymmetries that would force groups to believe that serious engagement could be disastrous signals a low level of rebel military capacity. All three conditions are independently sufficient to code a group militarily non-viable.

¹⁰ See Staniland 2005/6; and Bapat 2007.

Military viability is relative to specific conflict-dyads, or who a given group is primarily competing against at any given point in time. For example, if a group's primary threat is the COIN state, then military viability is measured as a group's viability vis-à-vis the central government. However, if a group's primary threat is a rebel rival, then a group's military viability is measured vis-à-vis its rivals.¹¹ If a group is locked in intra-insurgent war, then the rebel-rebel balance of power is critical. However, if a group is focused on undermining the state, then the rebel-state balance is critical.

Finally, it is important to note that a militarily non-viable group does not necessarily mean a group is politically non-viable. Insurgent groups often have external leadership and diplomatic structures that can sustain political operations from a position of safety abroad.¹² Although a group may be incapable of coercion themselves, the political wing can still solicit outside assistance to help reverse a bad military situation.

Degree of Fragmentation: The second independent variable is the degree of fragmentation within the broader insurgent movement. I distinguish between three types of movements: **united**, **allied**, and **fragmented**. A movement is considered to be united when there is only one notable rebel group (i.e. hegemony),¹³ or when all relevant groups decide to fuse or centralize their decision-making and command structures under one leadership. It is thus theoretically possible to have a united movement when multiple insurgent organizations are present. The key characteristic of united movements is that they represent a complete unity of

¹¹ It is therefore theoretically possible that a rebel group can be viable in its campaign against insurgent rivals, and simultaneously non-viable vis-à-vis the central government.

¹² Kaplan and Staniland 2013. Also, see Lischer 2005; and Salehyan 2009.

¹³ Krause 2014.

purpose and action, solidified by all relevant parties placing decision-making power in a joint leadership or when decision-making is entrusted to one leading rebel group.¹⁴

A movement is considered to be fragmented when there are at least two rebel groups actively competing for control the movement. The defining feature of fragmentation is not the number of relevant rebel groups in operation, but an active challenge for leadership of the movement. This is measured by either direct military confrontation between two groups – with one group being the recognized leader of the insurgent movement – or when a group, or constellation of groups, declares itself to be an “alternative” to the existing leadership of the movement. In short, a movement is fragmented when there is a real and credible attempt to capture the leadership of the insurgent movement by a second actor.

Finally, a movement is considered to be allied when there are multiple autonomous insurgent groups that are either in cooperation to focus on the common enemy (i.e. the COIN state), or actively agree *not* to challenge the existing movement leadership. An allied movement structure is defined by the presence of either formal or informal institutional ties that allow rebels to co-exist and sometimes cooperate against the common enemy.¹⁵ This middle category of allied movement structures is thus one in which multiple autonomous groups exist, but choose not to challenge each other for movement leadership because of either a tacit understanding of cooperation, or a more formal alliance agreement between these actors.¹⁶ While groups may still

¹⁴ My definition is related to Pearlman 2011 and Bakke et al. 2012 in that unity hinges on the formal and informal institutional arrangements that bind various actors and produce cooperation between them, and not the presence of a singular rebel group. Wendy Pearlman, for example, defines cohesion as “the cooperation among individuals that enables unified action. As with atoms or molecules, cohesion results when the forces assisting cooperative behavior exceed the forces encouraging competitive or antagonistic behavior. It is the capacity for internal command and control that enables a composite social actor to act as if it were a unitary one.” (Pearlman 2011, p. 9). Furthermore, cohesion is “when a sufficient portion of adherents is governed by a single leadership, institutional framework, and sense of collective purpose” (Pearlman 2011, p. 11).

¹⁵ Bakke et al. 2012, p. 269.

¹⁶ For more on intra-insurgent alliance politics, see Christia 2012.

try to improve their position in the insurgent movement, or advance their particular policy goals (if they differ from others), groups refrain from actively challenging the status-quo of the movement leadership.

These measurements build upon to Peter Krause's distinction between hegemonic, united, and fragmented movements from his study on insurgent success.¹⁷ However, there are important differences between our conceptions of insurgent movement structure. Most importantly, the defining characteristic of movement structure for Krause is the number of rebel groups in a given conflict and the distribution of power between them. Alternatively, my distinction between united, allied, and fragmented movements is not driven by the balance of power between groups, but by the quality and content of relations between rebel actors. This is often driven by the presence or absence of formal and informal institutions that promote cooperation among various groups.¹⁸ It is not a given that groups within multi-party insurgencies will be locked in intense opposition to one another. My definition of allied movements allows for cooperation across all groups towards achieving conflict-level goals, even if those groups continue to advance their own self-interests simultaneously.¹⁹

Finally, I must define what an "insurgent movement" is to begin with. One can simply look at the Syrian Civil War (2011-present) to appreciate the conceptual difficulty in defining an

¹⁷ Krause 2014, pp. 76-77. For Krause, when there is a single dominant group, a movement is "hegemonic." When there are two or more groups, intra-insurgent competition becomes a given and is only somewhat mitigated by whether these groups are in alliance with one another. A rebel movement is characterized as "united" when all rebel groups are in an alliance, and "fragmented" when they are not. For Krause, alliances between rebel groups matter but their effect on insurgent behavior is minor compared to the distribution of power. Krause therefore argues that united and fragmented movements are more alike in their effect on rebel behavior because both movement-types involve multiple actors. I argue, alternatively that the degree of institutionalization between rebel actors has more influence on rebel behavior than the distribution of power between them. Therefore, I argue that the larger distinction is between allied and fragmented movements.

¹⁸ Those making similar institutional-based arguments for measuring movement cohesiveness and fragmentation include, Bakke et al. 2012; and Pearlman 2011, pp. 9, 14.

¹⁹ It is for this reason that I believe the greater distinction is between allied and fragmented movements, as opposed to allied and united.

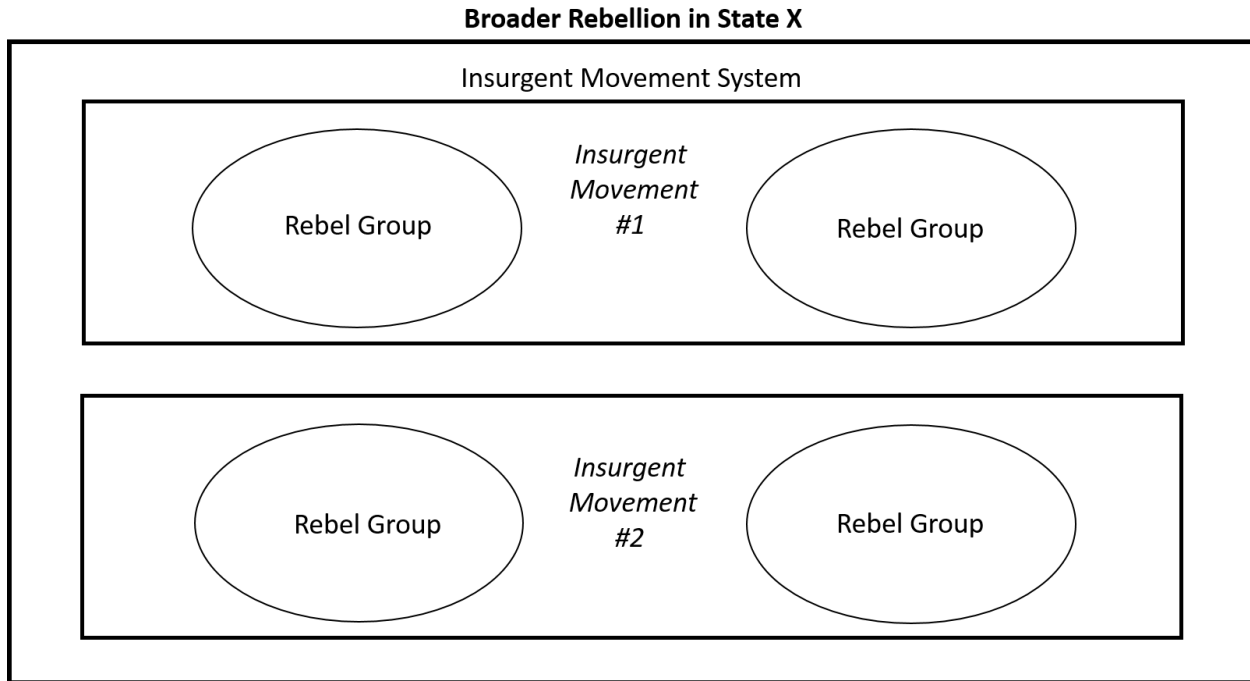
insurgent movement. Are all rebels fighting against the Bashar al-Assad regime part of the same insurgent movement? Are those groups hoping to capture Damascus and rule all of Syria fighting the same war as those that seek more autonomy from Damascus? Is the Islamic State, seeking to carve out its own sovereign domain, fighting the same war as all the others?

In short, I define an insurgent movement as a unique set of rebel groups that fight for the same general war aims, against the same common enemy, and with the same constituent population in mind.²⁰ For example, Kurdish separatists in northern Syria and moderate center-seeking groups like the Free Syrian Army do not share the same movement. One could also argue that Islamist groups occupy their own insurgent movement, as seeking to establish a Caliphate in Syria is distinguishable from both the moderate rebel opposition and Kurdish separatists in the north.²¹ In sum, there can be multiple groups within a given movement, and more importantly, *multiple* insurgent movements within a given conflict (Figure 2.3). This definition is not exhaustive and the murkiness of rebellion makes the classification of distinct movements difficult. The point is simply that we should attempt to distinguish between these explicit movements, and measure fragmentation at the movement level.

²⁰ For similar conceptions, see Bakke et al. 2012; and Kaplan 2014.

²¹ This definition is influenced by social movement theory, which recognizes that multiple like-minded organizations form a distinct social movement, which can itself exist among other distinct movements in the same society. For example, see McCarthy and Zald 1977, pp. 1218-1220; and Zald and McCarthy 1979, p. 2.

Figure 2.3: Defining Insurgent Movements



Predictions and Hypotheses

Having defined the dependent and independent variables, we can now put the causal story together to explain when and why rebels engage in certain strategies of diplomacy. The basic argument is that the degree of movement fragmentation will have a strong effect on who rebels target diplomatically, while variation in military viability will affect the types of intervention rebel groups seek from these actors. I unpack these causal relationships below and demonstrate how they determine which strategy of diplomacy rebels choose to employ to advance their goals.

Movement Fragmentation and Target of Diplomacy

There are several mechanisms by which the degree of movement fragmentation can affect who rebel groups choose to solicit. Rebel groups may ask themselves three questions: Which third-parties have the greatest capacity to solve the most pressing issue at hand? Which actors are most incentivized to offer such assistance? And which actors are more or less risky to engage with? The degree of movement fragmentation affects how rebel leaders answer these questions,

and these answers collectively compel rebels to solicit certain types of third-party actors over others. In short, the more fragmented an insurgent movement, the more likely groups are to target the COIN state's adversaries for assistance. Alternatively, the more a movement is united, the more likely groups will target the COIN state's allies for assistance.

Mechanism 1: The first mechanism connecting movement fragmentation to diplomatic targeting is the third-party's capacity for intervention. Allies and adversaries of the COIN state are differentially capable of helping rebels achieve different types of goals. Therefore, the key to understanding who groups target for assistance is understanding what they need assistance for.

Broadly speaking, insurgents can solicit outside assistance to address two types of threats: combating the COIN state and undermining intra-insurgent rivals. Insurgent movements are rarely comprised of a single, unitary rebel organization.²² Often times, groups find themselves locked in intra-movement competition for power and influence,²³ and in some cases, directly engaged in military confrontation with their rivals.²⁴ Rebel groups can thus face a two-front struggle – one at the *conflict-level* vis-à-vis the state, and the other at the *movement-level* vis-à-vis rebel rivals.²⁵ During periods of intra-rebel competition, groups are more likely to focus

²² See Bakke et al. 2012. For a useful introduction to the literature on insurgent fragmentation, see Pearlman and Cunningham 2012. For insights from the social movements literature, in particular “resource mobilization theory,” see McCarthy and Zald 1977; Zald and McCarthy 1979; Jenkins 1983; and Della Porta 1995.

²³ For example, see Bloom 2005; Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson 2007; Pearlman 2011; Christia 2012; Krause 2013; and Jaeger et al. 2015. On how competition affects peace negotiations and spoiling, see Stedman 1997; Kydd and Walter 2002; Cunningham 2006; Kydd and Walter 2006; Pearlman 2009; and Findley and Rudloff 2012.

²⁴ Bakke et al. 2012; Cunningham et al. 2012; Fjelde and Nilsson 2012; Staniland 2012a; Nygard and Weintraub 2013; Pischedda 2014; and Schulhofer-Wohl 2014.

²⁵ Frisch 2009, p. 1062. This discussion builds on Krause's distinction between whether groups pursue “strategic” goals vis-à-vis the state or “organizational goals” within the broader insurgent movement, see Krause 2013, pp. 271-278. I prefer the term “conflict-level goals” to “strategic goals” because solving movement-level crises is not unrelated to a rebel group's broader strategic objectives. This is especially true if rebels are as concerned about post-conflict power-sharing because sidelining rivals is highly strategic in the long-run. Furthermore, as Krause notes, rebels are more likely to succeed when organizational goals are attained, and thus combating rebel rivals can be a productive first step toward achieving conflict-level goals if intra-insurgent competition is solved through that competition. Also see Pearlman 2011, pp. 14-5. Pearlman 2009 also provides excellent analysis on how intra-insurgent dynamics can affect strategic-level behavior.

on achieving movement-level at the expense of their conflict-level goals.²⁶ I further argue that movement fragmentation not only affects how groups distribute their efforts at home, but importantly, how groups engage with international actors in pursuit of assistance abroad.

When insurgent movements are fragmented, rebel groups seek outside support to help address movement-level threats vis-à-vis other rebel groups. With this goal in mind, *the COIN state's adversaries have the greater capacity to help insurgents solve intra-movement challenges*. These actors have significant influence and leverage over insurgent politics because they are often those who control the fiscal and military supply lines to the rebellion. COIN state adversaries have the ability to prop-up certain groups or stifle others by simply boosting or severing assistance.²⁷ Such actors may also be willing to physically protect their local allies in the field, either by deterring a rival's attack or even by eliminating a group's rival through direct military engagement. Furthermore, third-parties can confer political legitimacy upon certain rebel factions. For example, during the Cold War, public support from the United States, Soviet Union, China, Egypt, or India, could bring increased prestige if a group subscribed to one of their respective ideologies. If one of these actors publicly recognize a group as a movement's "sole legitimate representative," it could sideline other groups who compete for the same distinction.²⁸

On the other hand, the allies of the COIN state are markedly less capable of helping rebel groups settle intra-movement disputes. These actors are not as politically tied to the opposition and therefore have little sway in intra-insurgent politics. Furthermore, allies of the COIN state do not – and likely will not – provide resources to the movement and therefore have less leverage and capacity to determine which group becomes dominant. Groups are simply less likely to

²⁶ Frisch 2009; Pearlman 2011; and Krause 2014.

²⁷ This is especially true if there is only one or a handful of actors responsible for supporting the entire movement.

²⁸ See Pearlman 2009; and Thomas 1996, p. xii. On the pursuit of recognition, see Coggins 2011.

appeal to the allies of the COIN state when they are trying to settle movement-level disputes because they are in a limited position to help rebel groups bolster position or undermine their rebel rivals.

When movements are united, rebels are focused intently on solving conflict-level goals vis-à-vis the state.²⁹ With this goal in mind, *the international allies of the COIN have the most influence and leverage over the COIN state, making their assistance most effective.* Powerful allies are often critical in propping up the COIN state during civil war, as well as protecting it from external pressure.³⁰ Rebels can take advantage of COIN state allies' unique position by either soliciting these actors to help legitimize their grievances, or even to apply pressure on the COIN state to capitulate to rebel demands.³¹ Should rebels convince the COIN state's own allies to pull the rug from under them, it could be a major windfall for the rebellion.

On the other hand, the COIN state's adversaries have less leverage over the COIN state because they are not critical sources of political, military, or economic support. While adversaries can apply some pressure on the COIN state – largely through the threat to escalate support for rebels – the COIN state can likely ride out such pressure with the support of its allies. Take, for example, the subsistence of the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. Assad has been able to withstand the large-scale, internationally-backed rebellion because his allies in Moscow and Tehran are investing heavily to insure his survival.³² Thus, when rebels are focused on

²⁹ Frisch 2009; Pearlman 2011; and Krause 2014.

³⁰ This argument may have more difficulty predicting the diplomatic patterns of insurgents fighting against great powers. Because these states have few third-party actors who have serious leverage over their decision-making. Of course, even great powers are susceptible to pressure from their own allies – even if weaker – but this condition may make insurgent diplomatic strategy against great powers unique.

³¹ Along similar lines on how alliance structures are just as capable of constraining allies as they are combating adversaries, see Snyder 1984; Weitsman 2004; Pressman 2008; and Gerzhoy 2014.

³² Lynch, Colum. 2015 “Why Putin is so Committed to Keeping Assad in Power.” *ForeignPolicy.com*, 7 October 2015.

< <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/07/putins-russia-is-wedded-to-bashar-al-assad-syria-moscow/>>

undermining the central government, they have serious incentives to solicit support from those who are most likely to affect the capital's decision-making. Of course, this does not necessarily mean rebels will give up relations with the COIN state's adversaries. Rebels simply refocus their diplomatic campaigns to solicit intervention from the COIN state's allies to help achieve conflict-level goals.

When an insurgent movement is allied, rebel groups cooperate to the degree that they are not threatening each other's position of power directly. If there is a leading insurgent group, its leadership is not challenged but acknowledged. Like united movements, in the absence of an explicit intra-insurgent challenge, allied groups can devote their joint diplomatic attention toward undermining the COIN state.³³ However, unlike a united movement, groups are still concerned with promoting their unique political preferences within the collective and maintaining their own autonomous power-base. Maintaining or even enhancing one's own position within the alliance is important for these groups to wield influence in the alliance at present, but also as a contingency should the alliance fall apart during or after the conflict.

As such, during periods of alliance, we can expect rebel groups to engage in two diplomatic campaigns simultaneously: a primary campaign focusing on achieving conflict-level goals by targeting the COIN state's allies, and a secondary campaign focusing on movement-level goals by targeting the COIN state's adversaries. Whereas the former campaign is carried

³³ This is a point of departure between myself and Krause. According to Krause 2014, insurgents are only truly capable of focusing on conflict-level goals when there is only one dominant rebel group. I argue, however, that so long as rebel groups agree to avoid competition for leadership of the movement, they can focus intently on diplomatic campaigns geared toward undermining the COIN state. It is for this reason that while the important distinction for Krause is between hegemonic and united movements (Krause 2014, p. 76), the main distinction here is between allied and fragmented groups.

out by the collective movement leadership, the latter is carried out by group-level actors whose appeals stop short of soliciting aid that would actually challenge the movement's leadership.³⁴

Mechanism 2: The degree of fragmentation can also create incentives for certain third-parties to intervene, which in turn can incentivize rebels to approach them for assistance. *When insurgent movements are fragmented, the COIN state's adversaries are particularly incentivized to intervene in intra-movement politics. However, when movements are united, the COIN state's allies can become more incentivized to engage with their ally's opponents.*

Adversaries of the COIN state have real incentives to become involved in intra-insurgent disputes. For the COIN state's enemies, rebels are often viewed as necessary "allies" or "proxies" in their own strategic calculus, and are thus concerned with the conduct and success of the insurgent movement.³⁵ Should these actors believe a group's rival threatens broader movement success, they may agree to help sideline that rival.³⁶ Alternatively, these actors may be interested in helping to unify or stabilize a newly fragmented movement. Whether these actors hope to back a group's pursuit of hegemony, or help competing parties cooperate, the COIN state's adversaries are particularly receptive to intervention in intra-movement conflict. The

³⁴ Krause predicts that within the context of what he calls united movements, the leading group will have incentives can focus on both movement- and conflict-level conflicts, while weaker groups will focus solely on movement-goals. However, not only is a clear pecking order not always apparent, but weaker groups within an allied movement do not actively strive to "prevent strategic success so as to deny the leader and preserve selective benefits for themselves" (Krause 2014, p. 82). They may seek to gain and maintain benefits for their own group, but in the realm of diplomacy, allied groups should not actively strive to cause strategic failure simply to deny the leading ally its share of club goods. In fact, these weaker groups often recognize that they cannot overtake the stronger group, and thus their diplomacy doesn't seek to undermine the broader movement's initiatives vis-à-vis the COIN state. They simply want to ensure that their specific policy preferences are promoted to maintain or build support for the group individually, and in the best case convince the broader movement to adopt its preferred policies. In short, weaker groups within an allied movement can be the loyal, as opposed to, disloyal opposition. The pursuit of movement-level goals by individual groups does not always undermine the leadership of a movement. In fact, maintaining a loyal opposition can strengthen an insurgency by making it appear inclusive and providing a vent for members to express disagreement short of mutiny. To paraphrase Albert Hirschman, giving weaker groups "voice" may avoid an "exit" from the alliance. See Hirschman 1970.

³⁵ Byman and Kreps 2010; and Salehyan et al. 2011. Pearlman 2011 (p. 19) also notes that movement fragmentation may create incentives for foreign intervention.

³⁶ Even more neutral actors, such as the United Nations or NGOs, face incentives to become involved in intra-insurgent disputes if it can advance their own agenda. See Bob 2005; Stanton 2009; Mampilly 2011; and Fazal 2014.

COIN state's allies, however, have fewer incentives to help resolve movement-level disputes or intervene against other rebel groups on behalf of another. Since united movements may be more effective against the COIN state, allies should avoid acts that would solidify the movement.³⁷

Insurgent movement unity, however, can increase a COIN state ally's receptivity to engage with or even help the rebellion. When an insurgent movement is united, they are more likely to represent a credible threat to the COIN state, demonstrate more clear and authentic grievances, and possibly be open to negotiation.³⁸ In this context, the COIN state's allies may feel it is in their own best interest to at least engage with the opposition. This increasing willingness to engage can be substantially enhanced – and may even lead to pro-rebel intervention – if rebel groups can convince these allies that it is in their best strategic interests to ensure that rebel demands are met. For example, Cold War historians note how nationalist movements threatened the possibility of reaching out to the Soviet Union to get the United States to pressure their French, British, or Dutch allies.³⁹ In sum, demand-side preferences for who rebels target are reinforced by third-parties' incentives to become involved.

Mechanism 3: The third mechanism connecting movement fragmentation to target type are the risks involved in engaging with certain actors. *Rebel groups face few political risks in dealing with adversaries of the COIN state in the context of fragmentation.* Engagement with a powerful adversary of the COIN state – or neutral actors like the United Nations – can boost a group's image or prestige back at home. However, engagement with the COIN state's ally may be politically risky because competing groups could reveal and advertise those ties in an effort to

³⁷ For an argument that fragmentation may lead to more concessions for rebel groups, see Cunningham 2011.

³⁸ For example, see Zartman 2000; and Krause 2014, p. 84.

³⁹ For example, see Wolfers 1959.

delegitimize their rivals.⁴⁰ For example, within the Palestinian national movement, Yasser Arafat was constantly concerned that engagement with Israel or its allies would be exposed by his rivals in the Rejectionist Front, leading to backlash against his leadership.⁴¹ But *although engagement with the COIN state's allies is risky during periods of intra-insurgent competition, groups in united movements have less reason to fear public backlash.* These groups can claim to be acting in the best interests of the movement as whole, and there is a smaller chance another group will condemn the engagement.

In sum, movement fragmentation encourages rebels to seek assistance from the COIN state's adversaries to help achieve movement-level goals, while movement unification encourages rebels to seek assistance from the COIN state's allies to help achieve conflict-level success (Figure 2.4). One caveat, however, is that it should be quite difficult to persuade allies of the COIN state to intervene in favor of insurgent goals. Groups try to gain their support, nonetheless, because successful solicitation could be a major windfall for the rebellion and the effort is worth the risk under the right conditions. The Algerian FLN's diplomatic success over the French with the blessing of Paris' allies, for example, encouraged future revolutionaries to study the merits of risky diplomacy.⁴² Still, although flipping a COIN state's ally is possible, it is admittedly difficult.⁴³ Therefore, when groups appeal to the COIN state's allies for help, they should be prepared to refocus their diplomatic attention back toward the COIN state's adversaries should such solicitation explicitly fail.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ The same, of course, can be said for states that engage with their ally's enemies. For an elaboration of these dynamics, see Zartman and Faure 2011; and Lynch 2011.

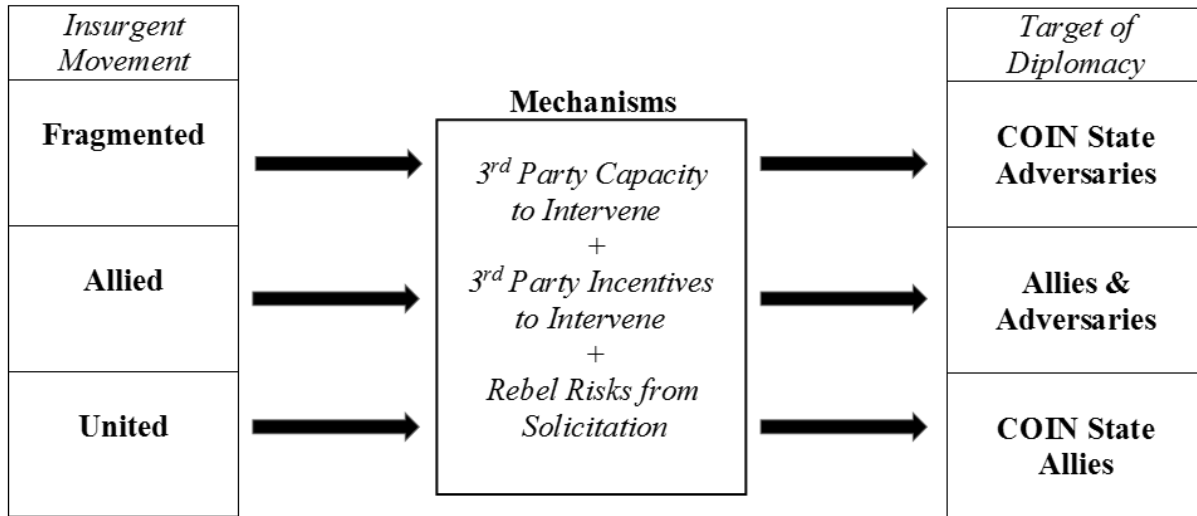
⁴¹ Chamberlain 2012.

⁴² Connelly 2002.

⁴³ For a related discussion on "wedge" strategies in inter-state alliances, see Crawford 2011.

⁴⁴ That rebel groups may appeal to the international allies of their rivals and shift their foreign policy strategies in order to handle internal competition is in some ways akin to Steven David's conception of "omnibalancing" for third-world states during the Cold War. However, whereas omnibalancing predicts that states *depart* from their natural allies in order to balance against internal threats, competing rebel groups do quite the opposite – they

Figure 2.4: Movement Fragmentation and Diplomatic Targeting



Hypothesis 1A: When an insurgent movement is fragmented, the primary target of diplomacy will be the COIN state’s adversaries.

Hypothesis 1B: When an insurgent movement is united, the primary target of diplomacy will be the COIN state’s allies. Should that campaign explicitly fail, groups may refocus their primary targeting back to the COIN state’s adversaries.

Hypothesis 1C: When an insurgent movement is allied, rebel groups will primarily target the COIN state’s allies to achieve conflict-level goals, and target the COIN state’s adversaries to advance movement-level goals in simultaneous but separate campaigns.

Military Viability and Intervention Type

The extent to which an organization is militarily viable influences the type of intervention being sought by rebel groups. I predict that when rebel groups are militarily viable, they are likely to solicit indirect intervention from third-parties. However, if groups become – or are in immediate danger of becoming – non-viable they will be more likely to request more invasive, direct forms of intervention, in addition to indirect assistance.

“double-down” on existing and potential allies in order to dominate the market of rebellion. The condition that makes this reverse relationship possible is that while the central government and domestic opposition have conflicting goals and are supported by opposite poles of international backers, competing rebel groups are often fighting for similar goals and are currently (or potentially) backed by like-minded actors. David 1991. For an early suggestion on applying omnibalancing to sub-state politics, see Freij 1997.

One could argue that groups should always be interested in soliciting more powerful forms of intervention. After all, most rebels are relatively weak and should relish the opportunity to have power outside actors undermine their enemies. Yet intervention is hardly ever costless and can actually be quite risky for soliciting groups. While both direct and indirect interventions involve inherent risks for rebels, direct intervention is exceedingly more dangerous.

When considering what type of intervention to solicit, groups take into account the short- and long-term risks associated with different forms of assistance. In the short-term, groups must consider the inevitable principal-agent dynamics that emerge from gaining assistance from outside actors.⁴⁵ Groups often face a trade-off between the amount of aid acquired from third-parties and the degree of operational and strategic autonomy they possess. For example, supporters may pressure rebels to modify their behavior and goals to better align with its benefactor's preferences in exchange for support.⁴⁶ What recipients gain in support, they may lose in strategic independence and agency.⁴⁷

With regards to long-term risks, rebels must consider how certain forms of intervention affect a group's *post-conflict* politics. For example, inviting a powerful outside actor to intervene militarily or politically runs the risk that these actors will use the initial invitation as way to secure long-term interference in local politics or a permanent military presence.⁴⁸ Furthermore, if the intervention is successful, the third-party may demand excessive compensation or an unacceptable share of the post-conflict political, economic, or territorial spoils.

⁴⁵ For an overview of these risks, see Heraclides 1991, pp. 36-9.

⁴⁶ Snyder 1984.

⁴⁷ Byman and Kreps 2010; Salehyan 2010, pp. 506-8; Salehyan et al. 2011; and Vinci 2009, p. 60. For an early discussion of this dynamic in the case of the Palestinian national movement, see Macintyre 1975. For a broader discussion of the downsides of rebel support from outside actors, see Hughes 2012, pp. 39-47. For a related discussion how third-parties face similar risks of lost authority, see Salehyan 2010, pp. 503-6.

⁴⁸ Rothstein 1968, for example, discusses the domestic political costs of having foreign troops stationed on the soil of weak states.

While indirect intervention involves short-term risks, direct intervention involves more long-term risk. Groups may find it easier to manage and mitigate risks associated with indirect intervention than risks associated with direct intervention. When groups receive indirect intervention, there are inevitable constraints to rebel behavior. But these constraints are less severe and more avoidable when aid is simply transferred to the group because rebels can maintain control over the use of the support. Indirect assistance is ultimately more fungible and controllable, making indirect intervention a less invasive form of assistance.⁴⁹ When third-parties are kept far from the conflict zone, groups are better able to manage third-party expectations and safe-guard autonomy at home.⁵⁰ Furthermore, with third-parties in the background, groups will continue to be perceived as the primary actors on the ground and can therefore reap the reputational spoils of war and peace.

However, when outside actors directly intervene to undermine state or rebel rivals, third-party intervention can have a more harmful effect on a group's current strategic authority and prospects for future gain. First, when third-parties become directly involved in the conflict, groups lose significant military and political control over engagement with their own enemies. Once foreign troops are on the ground, or an outside power engages in diplomatic coercion or negotiations on a group's behalf, it is hard for that group to interject its preferences into that process. This can be particularly risky for groups that fear sudden abandonment by the intervenor, or if the intervenor's goals begin to deviate from the group's.⁵¹ Second, having an outside actor step in to solve a group's disputes means that groups may lose face and prestige at

⁴⁹ Sawyer et al. 2015.

⁵⁰ Borghard 2014, for example, elaborates on some of the dynamics that provide proxy-groups with organizational freedom, in spite of power-asymmetries between sponsors and proxies. Wolfers also makes a similar point with regards to how weak states have a greater opportunity to exploit assistance larger allies, Wolfers 1959, p. 190.

⁵¹ Snyder 1984; and Parent and Rosato 2015, p. 54.

home and abroad. Whatever victories are achieved will now be attributed to the intervening power, not the group which had solicited the intervention in the first place. Finally, should the direct intervention succeed, outside actors may have the ability to dominate the post-conflict political-military environment in dangerous ways. In short, more direct involvement by outside actors brings increased costs and risks to the very groups who solicit support in the first place.

We can therefore assume that rebel groups would prefer to have third-parties channel their support through the group, rather than becoming directly involved in settling intra-insurgent or insurgent-state disputes. If rebel groups can avoid having others fight their political or military battles, they will.⁵² However, there are conditions in which rebel groups do not have the luxury of relying on indirect intervention. When a rebel group becomes militarily non-viable and fears for its survival, it will become increasingly desperate to find more powerful, expedient, and direct means of survival.⁵³ The result is that non-viable groups should be more willing to accept the risks associated with direct intervention than viable groups.⁵⁴ Soliciting outsiders to directly intervene can be critical to the survival and success of fledgling insurgents because it harnesses a

⁵² The mechanisms driving preferences for indirect over direct intervention are related to those mechanisms found in classic debates about alliance politics at the inter-state and inter-rebel level. For example, Parent and Rosato emphasize that states prefer to balance internally rather than seek external allies because of strong preferences for self-help in the international security politics. Barnett and Levy also discuss the important trade-offs between internal and external balancing, primarily within the context of weak states. Finally, the mechanism by which post-conflict concerns influence rebel preferences for assistance is related to how Fotini Christia explains the domestic alliance politics among rebel groups. Groups try to avoid an over-reliance on other rebel actors and engage in “minimum winning coalition” building to ensure a favorable disposition in post-conflict politics. While Christia’s theory helps explain who rebels will align with domestically, the argument here advances similar mechanisms to explain the types or content of alliances rebel groups seek. See Parent and Rosato 2015; Barnett and Levy 1991; and Christia 2012. Also, see Snyder 1984.

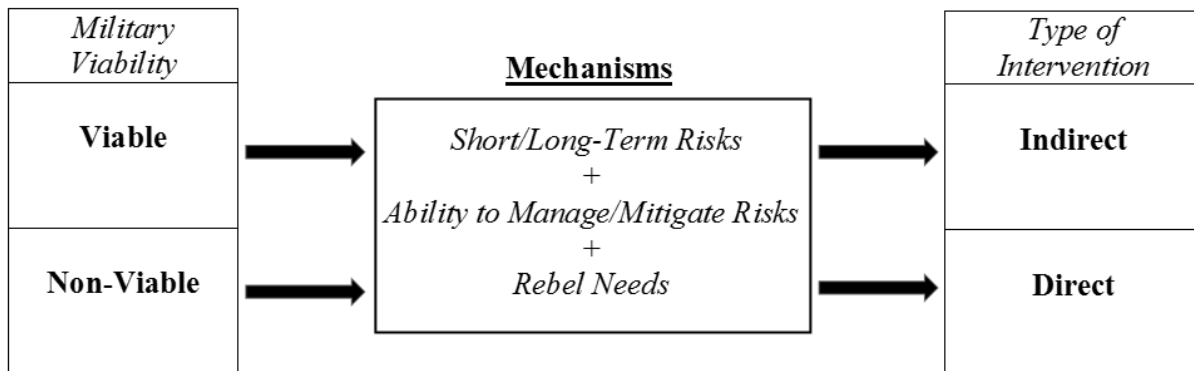
⁵³ For a related discussion on the conditions in which states – particularly, weak states – are more likely to seek external alliances, as opposed to internal balancing, see Barnett and Levy 1991, p. 375-379; and Rothstein 1977. Also, see Parent and Rosato 2015.

⁵⁴ As Wolfers notes on inter-state alliances, “Whether or not a nation shall pursue a policy of alliance is, then, not a matter of principle but of expediency. A nation will shun an alliance if it believes it is strong enough to hold its own unaided or that the burden of commitments resulting from the alliance is likely to outweigh the advantages to be expected,” Wolfers 1959, p. 185.

much larger degree of coercive power and leverage than indirect support.⁵⁵ Simply put, when groups are incapable of independently coercing their rivals, they have little choice but to “outsource” coercive power to third-parties.⁵⁶

In sum, the type of third-party intervention sought is a function of a group’s military viability, which determines both the severity of intervention required and the risks groups are willing to accept for such an intervention (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Military Viability and Type of Intervention Sought



Hypothesis 2: When a rebel group is capable of sustaining its military campaign (*militarily viable*) the group will avoid soliciting direct intervention, but will request *indirect support* from third-parties. However, once a group fears it is no longer capable of engaging its rivals in combat (*militarily non-viable*), groups will ask outside actors to *directly intervene* to coerce its rivals, in addition to soliciting indirect assistance.

We can now answer the question, under what conditions do rebel groups engage in each of the four strategies of diplomacy outlined above? Table 2.2, reveals the answer, and I briefly illustrate examples from each box below.

⁵⁵ For example, existing research demonstrates that direct military intervention by outside actors on behalf of either the state or rebel groups increases the likelihood for a war ending in victory for the actor being assisted. See Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Regan 2002; and Balch-Lindsay et al. 2008.

⁵⁶ This is similar to what Byman and Waxman call “second-order coercion,” in which the armed group would have to “induce or compel the third party to become a coercer itself (or to use brute force) against an adversary” (Byman and Waxman 2002, p. 82).

Table 2.2: Predicting Strategies of Diplomacy

		Degree of Movement Fragmentation		
		United	Allied	Fragmented
Military Viability	Viable	Legitimizing Rebellion	Legitimizing Rebellion (towards COIN allies) & Cornering the Market (towards COIN adversaries)	Cornering the Market
	Non-Viable	Outsourcing Rebellion	X	Outsourcing Rivalry

When a rebel group is militarily viable and part of a united insurgent movement, groups will pursue a diplomatic strategy of “**Legitimizing Rebellion.**” In this context, groups hope to solicit *indirect assistance* from the *COIN state’s allies* to achieve its conflict-level goals vis-à-vis the *COIN state*. Since groups are only seeking indirect support from the COIN state’s allies, this strategy is mostly focused on gaining political recognition from the powerful allies of the COIN state or access to favorable negotiations with the allies own backing. In many respects, this is perhaps the most rebels can ask for from the COIN state’s allies. Since the rebellion continues to represent a military threat to their ally, they are unlikely to provide anything more than political recognition of the opposition. Nonetheless, having the COIN state’s own allies recognize the legitimacy of the insurgency is a strategic asset for rebels, helping them solidify support at home and encouraging support from actors abroad.⁵⁷ On the other hand, offering recognition is not unreasonable if the COIN state’s allies feel they can increase the odds of negotiated settlement.

⁵⁷ Huang 2016.

Given the low-cost nature of this strategy, rebels are likely to persist even if the ally remains unwilling to help.

When a rebel group is militarily viable and part of a fragmented insurgent movement, groups will pursue a diplomatic strategy of “**Cornering the Market.**” In this context, groups use diplomacy to solicit *indirect assistance* from the *COIN state’s adversaries* to help compete with *rival rebel groups*. If a rebel group can convince third-party supporters to make it the sole recipient of outside resources and recognize it as the sole representative of the insurgent movement, the group can effectively gain the resources it needs to sideline rivals and achieve political and military hegemony. This also includes convincing outside actors to deny other groups recognition or resources, but falls short of asking them to directly engage with their rivals. Because groups are still capable of militarily handling rivals in the contested zone, they remain wary of inviting direct intervention to help sideline rivals.

When a rebel group is militarily non-viable and part of a united movement, groups will pursue a diplomatic strategy of “**Outsourcing Rebellion.**” In this context, groups hope to solicit *direct assistance* from the *COIN state’s allies* to achieve conflict-level success vis-à-vis the *COIN state*. Outsourcing rebellion is perhaps the most difficult and counter-intuitive of the strategies, but if effective, it is the most powerful strategy at a group’s disposal. The difficulty is that rebel groups are asking third-parties to directly intervene against its own ally. Since the third-party is still allies with the COIN state, intervention is likely to take the form of political or economic intervention, such as coercive diplomacy or threats of sanctions. Still, getting ‘s COIN state allies to directly intervene on rebels’ behalf is exceedingly difficult. Groups should be willing to turn to COIN state adversaries for direct intervention if solicitation explicitly fails. Although adversaries ultimately have less leverage over the COIN state and can bring about a

messy and risky intervention, groups sometimes have little choice but to solicit the initiation of inter-state war.⁵⁸

When a rebel group is militarily non-viable and part of a fragmented insurgent movement, groups will pursue a diplomatic strategy of “**Outsourcing Rivalry.**” In this context, groups use diplomacy to solicit *direct intervention* from the *COIN state’s adversaries* to combat *rival rebel groups*. When rebel groups are entrenched in existential competition with rebel rivals but lack the military capacity to engage in coercion themselves, groups will solicit direct assistance to engage and undermine their rivals on its behalf. Groups may ask outside actors to kinetically strike their rivals, or physically blockade rivals’ access to resources and the contested zone. Although groups would prefer not to open Pandora’s Box by inciting third-parties to directly settle intra-rebel disputes, a lack of capacity leaves them with little choice.

When a rebel group is militarily viable and part of an allied movement, groups will simultaneously pursue a primary strategy of “**Legitimizing Rebellion**” in pursuit of conflict-level goals and a secondary strategy of “**Cornering the Market**” in pursuit of movement-level goals. Because direct intra-rebel conflict is absent, rebels can focus their diplomatic attention on soliciting the COIN state’s allies. However, we can also anticipate that groups will continue to engage in independent diplomatic campaigns geared towards promoting their unique interests among third-party supporters, as well as gaining political-military resources for their own individual group. The key is that allied rebels hope to advance their own organizational goals *within* the bounds of respectable competition between allies. For example, while insurgents send joint-delegations or broader movement representatives abroad to solicit the COIN state’s allies, individual group representatives may continue to campaigns among the COIN state’s adversaries

⁵⁸ For more on how civil wars can become inter-state wars, see Gleditsch et al. 2008.

to solicit additional money and arms for their individual group. Movement-level campaigns, however, will not use diplomacy as a way to threaten the leadership of those engaging with the COIN state's allies.

Finally, it is theoretically and empirically unlikely for a movement to become allied and non-viable. The reason is because once alliances become truly non-viable in the face of great military pressure, we should expect them either to move closer together for survival (making the movement united) or break apart (making the movement fragmented). According to McLaughlin and Pearlman 2012, whether extreme shocks of military viability lead to increased cohesion or fragmentation is a function of the strength of their institutional ties prior to becoming non-viable. I therefore leave predictions for this category blank.

On Change in Insurgent Diplomatic Strategy

Group strategies can and do change over time. Over the course of an insurgency the military viability of groups can wax and wane, and movements can transition between unity, alliance, and fragmentation. Yet the purpose of this dissertation is not to argue that a given group championed one strategy, while another group championed another. The goal is to explain when different diplomatic strategies are employed by groups over time. Once rebels build the institutional infrastructure necessary to conduct international diplomacy, those institutions can be repurposed to advance alternative strategies. Such institutions include the creation of foreign affairs bureaus, political offices in host-states, the appointment of diplomatic representatives, and the cultivation of political contacts abroad. In other words, the institutional infrastructure of insurgent diplomacy can exist independent of the strategy employed. Should there be a change in

the conflict environment that leads groups to believe that a different strategy must be employed, those same institutions can adapt to serve the new diplomatic goal.⁵⁹

Still, one immediate concern when discussing the origins of change is that of endogeneity. There are four potential types of endogenous relationships that emerge from my theory. The first is that the two explanatory variables are in fact related – fragmentation may be the result of variation in the military viability of rebel groups. While this seems plausible and at times may be true, recent studies demonstrate that the two are likely unrelated. Not only are the origins of insurgent cohesion associated with deep pre-conflict social ties,⁶⁰ but repression or movement collapse does not uniformly lead to fragmentation or cohesion. Whether pressure causes increased fragmentation or cohesion is a function of how deeply institutionalized intra-rebel cooperation is.⁶¹ Although non-viability can exacerbate existing fault-lines of fragmentation under the surface of cohesion, it is not a given.

The second source of potential endogeneity is that the success or failure of a given strategy will affect change on the independent variables. Such a relationship is indeed present. This does not represent any serious theoretical issues, but it does reflect how important international diplomacy is to insurgent groups. For example, if a group is successful at sidelining rivals through a strategy of “outsourcing rivalry,” it may increase the group’s military viability. Alternatively, if a group’s attempt at “legitimizing rebellion” fails, the movement may splinter and groups may return to a strategy of “cornering the market.” In short, groups are constantly

⁵⁹ Of course, some strategies may be considered more difficult or capacity-intensive than others. For example, staging a long-term, wide-scale campaign at the United Nations in New York City to win international recognition is more daunting than sending a handful of representatives to Beijing to persuade the Chinese Communist Party to provide arms and training. Although concerns about capacity and probabilities of success may factor into rebel group’s strategic choices, I assume that all groups capable of conducting international diplomacy have comparable levels of diplomatic capacity, or at least the resources to develop such a capacity. On institutional re-adaptation, see Mahoney and Thelen 2010.

⁶⁰ Staniland 2014.

⁶¹ McLaughlin and Pearlman 2012.

trying to improve their military viability and control over a movement. The extent to which third-party support helps rebels attain these goals (or does not) can influence variation on the explanatory variables and create incentives for groups to adopt new strategies.

A third type of endogeneity comes from the fact that the COIN state may itself be a source of change between rebel group strategies by affecting change on the independent variables. The COIN state can attempt to degrade groups' capabilities and increase fragmentation to ensure that rebels remain focused on movement-level objectives. Furthermore, just as rebel groups use international diplomacy to solicit help from third-parties, COIN states can employ sophisticated counter-diplomacy campaigns to dissuade outside actors from giving rebels what they want.⁶² This relationship can certainly feed into the sources of group viability and movement fragmentation. However, because COIN state actions only appear to influence strategic choice by way of effecting the independent variables in question, COIN state behavior is not likely a confounding variable.

The fourth and most important concern is whether third-parties are themselves the primary drivers of insurgent diplomatic strategy. This would be an issue if third-party preferences for intervention were manipulating rebel preferences for cohesion, *or* more critically, if outside actors were creating unification or fragmentation within rebel movements.⁶³

Regarding the first concern, some may argue that supply-side dynamics alone determine insurgent strategic choice.⁶⁴ In other words, rebels may only ask for what they know they can get and from whom they perceive will be willing to offer it. In practice, supply-side factors have

⁶² I discuss this in greater detail in the conclusion. For more on this dynamic, Ker-Lindsay 2012; Atzili and Pearlman 2012; and Fraiman 2014.

⁶³ For example, Lounsbury 2016, argues that certain intervention types can shape movement cohesion.

⁶⁴ Gent 2007, for example, demonstrates that the extent to which major powers share policy preferences for intervention can indicate which states are more or less likely to intervene. Rebels could then possibly pick up on these dynamics when deciding who to solicit.

some effect on demand-side considerations. Some may see this as a reason to discount demand-side considerations, but this would be premature. First, as explained above, this argument is not entirely inconsistent with the logics of diplomatic targeting. Intra-insurgent politics can influence which types of third-party actors are more or less likely to want to engage with rebels. When rebels are fragmented, COIN state adversaries may have a greater stake and interest in involving themselves in intra-rebel disputes, while COIN state allies may be less interested in engagement. Alternatively, when rebels are united, COIN state allies may see new benefits in engaging with rebel actors. Second, supply-side considerations are more likely to affect who rebels target *within* a certain genre of third-party actor (i.e. COIN state allies or adversaries), but not targeting across types. While movement fragmentation may necessitate that rebels target the broader set of COIN state adversaries for support, supply-side considerations may help dictate *which* of those specific adversaries may be targeted. Overall, supply-side dynamics are just one of several mechanisms that affect insurgent strategic decision-making, and rebel preferences for intervention are derived independent of what groups believe they can get.

The second concern – the possibility that external actors themselves drive the degree of fragmentation within insurgent movements – is a more important issue. This is ultimately a question about the origins of movement fragmentation. Until this point, the origins of movement fragmentation have been treated exogenously, with the implication that its sources are domestic in nature. Of course, it is unrealistic to say that third-parties – whether allies or adversaries of the COIN state – do not strive to influence the degrees of fragmentation within a rebellion. But while natural occurrences in the politics of rebellion, such relations are only problematic if what we perceive as rebel diplomatic advances are externally-driven engagement that is successful in diverting rebels' preferences for cohesion or fragmentation.

However, rebel preferences for cooperation or competition among themselves are quite independent of and resilient to outside pressures. Even in cases in which movement fragmentation is encouraged by outside actors, simple process-tracing reveals that the local dynamics driving movement fragmentation usually precede the decision of who groups will target diplomatically. For example, as will be shown in Chapter 3, the Iranians were clearly interested in helping the Ahmed-Talabani faction splinter from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 1964. However, the deep impetus for fragmentation had been brewing locally for nearly six years prior and the immediate decision to break away from the KDP was based on Jalal Talabani's independent assessment that the Kurds should press their hand against Baghdad, not because they were convinced to do so by the Shah of Iran.

In short, insurgents and outside actors certainly strive to influence each other's domestic politics and preferences towards third-party intervention. But rebel preferences for cooperation and competition – and therefore their diplomatic strategies – are largely derived independent of external pressure.⁶⁵ The diplomatic campaigns described in the Chapters 3-6 demonstrate how local-level divisions drove the impetus for who diplomats targeted and why.

Finally, a note on the effects of successful insurgent diplomacy is necessary. I do not seek to explain when diplomatic campaigns will succeed, nor am I arguing that insurgent diplomacy is the sole or primary *cause* of intervention in all cases where insurgent diplomacy appears successful. Of course, there are many factors that go into third-party's decisions to intervene in an intra-state conflict, as well as the type of intervention they will employ. While this dissertation demonstrates that insurgent diplomacy can elicit critical intervention in a number of

⁶⁵ For some theories on the origins of movement alliances and cooperation, see Bapat and Bond 2012; Christia 2012; Fjelde and Nilsson 2012; among others. For an argument as to whether movement structure type is more or less likely to encourage intervention, see Sung 2015.

important cases, there will always be cases in which the decision to intervene is made independent of a well-executed strategy of insurgent diplomacy.

However, even in cases where the decision to intervene may be over-determined, there are two important reasons why insurgent diplomacy should not be discounted. First, just because insurgent diplomacy is not the primary cause of intervention does not mean it has no causal effect on the outcome whatsoever. For example, although a third-party may desire to intervene abroad, its final decision to do so may be based on whether there will be viable local allies.⁶⁶ Likewise, even if a state decides to support foreign rebels, it must decide *which* group it will give resources to.⁶⁷ In these situations, insurgent diplomacy can reassure third-parties that there are friendly and competent allies on the ground, or make the case for why specific groups should receive foreign aid above others. Second, even if a third-party independently decides to provide assistance, it may not have decided on *how* to intervene. In these cases, insurgent diplomacy can help persuade outside actors to intervene in a way that best advances rebel interests. Overall, third-party decisions to intervene, and the type of intervention to provide is often influenced by the diplomatic appeals of rebel actors, even if they are not solely responsible for these outcomes.

Conclusion

Insurgent diplomacy is the art and politics of solicitation. More importantly, the strategies and motivations behind such diplomacy can vary in notable and interesting ways. I have argued above that how insurgents engage with international actors is contingent upon the domestic threat environment in which they operate. Whether insurgents are primarily threatened by rebel rivals or the state, and whether insurgents suffer from coercive impotency in the conflict zone directly influences who rebels approach for help and why. Another important factor is that rebels

⁶⁶ Andres 2006; and Pape 2012.

⁶⁷ Salehyan et al. 2011.

are deeply concerned with post-conflict politics. Rebels hope to use international assistance to secure a presence in the post-conflict state, but hope to do so free of the very same intervenors they solicited for assistance. It is for this reason that rebels are such picky and strategic solicitors of aid. Next, I turn to the empirical chapters to test my argument and to evaluate its accuracy in light of its alternatives.

Chapter 3: Iraqi Kurdish National Movement (1958-1975)

Introduction

The Kurdish liberation movement has deep historical roots. Chapters 3 and 4 focus, on the contemporary period from 1958 to 1990. Over nearly three decades of rebellion the Kurds appealed to a diverse set of international actors for assistance, as well as requested a wide variation of intervention types. The Kurds primarily targeted Iraq's allies from 1958-1964, 1965-1972, and 1985-1990, but focused intently on Iraq's adversaries for support during the phases of 1964-1965 and 1972-1985. Furthermore, whereas the Kurds usually appealed for indirect assistance through arms, financing, and training, the Kurds solicited direct intervention against Iraq in 1974/5 and 1987-1990, and at some points against intra-Kurdish rivals during the 1975-1980 phase. What explains these dramatic changes in Kurdish foreign policy? Why do the targets of diplomacy change from one phase to the next, and what accounts for sharp turns in the types of intervention solicited?

The argument presented above is that variation in insurgent diplomatic strategy – what type of third-party support rebels want and from whom – is intrinsically linked to the balance of power between rebel groups and their adversaries, as well as intra-insurgent competitive dynamics. More specifically variation in rebel diplomatic strategies are a function of: 1) the military viability of a rebel group; and 2) the degree of fragmentation within the broader insurgent movement.

When a group is capable of sustaining its own military campaign, it should only solicit indirect intervention – whereby outside actors increase a rebel group's independent power through political or military assistance to the group – from third-parties. However, once a group

fears it is no longer capable of engaging its rivals in combat, groups will ask outside actors to directly intervene through political or military engagement with the group's adversaries. Furthermore, when an insurgent movement is fragmented, groups will primarily solicit support from the counter-insurgent (COIN) state's third-party adversaries in order to sideline rival rebel groups. When the movement is united, groups will request support from the COIN state's allies in order to help undermine the central government, but turn back toward the COIN state's enemies when such assistance is not forthcoming. Alternatively, when groups are allied – i.e. cooperating but not in full strategic agreement – they will engage the COIN state's allies and adversaries simultaneously, albeit for divergent purposes. Together, these hypotheses explain rebels' use of four distinct strategies of diplomacy: “legitimizing rebellion” (indirect intervention from the COIN state's allies), “outsourcing rebellion” (direct intervention from the COIN state's allies), “cornering the market” (indirect intervention from the COIN state's adversaries), and “outsourcing rivalry” (direct intervention from the COIN state's adversaries).¹

Case Design

The Iraqi Kurdish rebellion provides a fruitful case to test whether the theory above best accounts for changes in insurgent diplomatic strategy. Over the course of thirty years of rebellion, the Iraqi Kurdish rebellion could be viewed as having passed through eight stages: united and militarily viable (1958-1964, 1965-1974); allied and militarily viable (1985-1987); fragmented and militarily viable (1964-1965, 1980-1985); united and militarily non-viable (1974-1975, 1987-1990); and fragmented and militarily non-viable (1975-1980). As such, we can trace how a change in the Kurdish movement's military viability and fragmentation affected group's appeals for foreign assistance (Table 3.1).

¹ For an illustration of these predictions, see Table 2.2 in Chapter 2.

Table 3.1: Iraqi Kurdistan Case Map (1958-1990)

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable	1958-1964 1965-1974	1985-1987*	1964-1965 1980-1985*
Militarily Non-Viable	1974-1975 1987-1990*		1975-1980*

Note: Time periods with asterisks are examined in the second Iraqi Kurdistan chapter (Chapter 4).

This chapter explains the notable changes in the Iraqi Kurdish liberation movement's international diplomacy from 1958 to 1975 (see Table 3.2), while an analysis of the 1975-1990 phase is reserved for the following chapter. During the first phase (1958-1975), the Kurdish movement begins as cohesive and military viable movement. Therefore, shifts towards insurgent fragmentation and non-viability, and its effects on Kurdish diplomatic strategy, are the primary changes under analysis in chapter 3. Alternatively, in the latter phase (1975-1990), severe fragmentation is the norm, while cohesion and the turn toward Iraq's allies becomes the deviation worthy explaining. The Kurdish case is divided into two chapters to facilitate in-depth examination of each period, and to account for the substantially different contexts in which the Kurdish rebellion operated before and after 1975. Accounting for changes in the broader insurgent environment is important for maintaining a most-similar-systems design, which controls for as many factors as possible, save the causal and dependent variables under analysis.

There are at least three major differences in conflict environment across the two phases that require control. First, during the initial phase, the domestic Kurdish-Iraqi rivalry is the main cleavage along which the conflict is organized. While there was notable third-party intervention during this period, it was geared towards influencing the fight between Baghdad and the Kurds. However, in the latter period, it is nearly impossible to see Kurdish politics outside the context of

the broader competition between Iran and Iraq, who fought a major inter-state war between 1980 and 1988.

Second, whereas in the first phase, the Kurds hold the political and military initiative, the latter period is one in which the Kurds are forced into more reactionary policy-making. While the Kurds began as a robust insurgency in the 1960s until their sudden collapse in 1975, the second phase begins with the Kurds at their weakest and most vulnerable state. The Kurdish-Iraqi war of 1974/5 and the March 1975 Algiers Accord serves as a critical juncture in which the Iraqi Kurds are forced to rebuild their rebellion from scratch. Finally, the experience of the 1974/5 war had a major effect on the broader preferences of Kurdish diplomacy. As a whole, Kurds became highly skeptical of third-party actors – and in particular states – and began more open solicitation with non-state actors.

The first phase of the Kurdish rebellion, and the focus of the present chapter, contains a number of empirical puzzles for investigation. Why, for example, did the Kurds suddenly change their primary target of diplomacy from Iraq's allies to its adversaries between 1964 and 1965? Furthermore, why, after six years of soliciting indirect intervention, did one of the factions call on a third-party to directly undermine its rival? Why does diplomatic targeting shift back towards soliciting indirect intervention from Iraq's allies in 1965, and why do the Kurds give up on this campaign in 1972? Finally, why, after nearly a decade of soliciting indirect intervention do the Kurds suddenly ask for direct military support in the winter of 1974/5?

The case study below demonstrates how shifts in the local threat environment affected the international diplomatic strategies of Kurdish actors. First, I show that transitions between who Kurdish rebels target diplomatically are driven by intra-movement political dynamics. Second, I show that the type of aid Kurdish groups request from third-parties is driven by

groups' ability to engage in self-help behavior as militarily viable actors. Whereas the former explains the major shift in diplomatic targeting in 1964, the latter explains the sudden shift towards soliciting indirect intervention in 1974/5.

Table 3.2: Accounting for Predictions (1958-1975)

		<i>Movement Type</i>	Target of Diplomacy	<i>Military Viability</i>	Type of Intervention
Period 1	1958-1964	<i>United</i>	Allies (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 2	1964-1965	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect/Direct (~)
Period 3	1965-1974	<i>United</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 4	1974-1975	<i>United</i>	Allies/Adversaries (~)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct (✓)

Note: The contents of the columns “Target of Diplomacy” and “Type of Intervention” are the actual observed measurements of these variables. The content in the parentheses denote the extent to which this observation is consistent with my theory’s predictions. A check-mark means “correct,” a tilde means “partially correct,” and an ex-mark means “incorrect.”

Background

Origins of the Contemporary Kurdish Movement

Although there have been numerous Kurdish rebellions against the Ottomans, British, and Iraqi monarchy, this chapter concerns contemporary Iraqi Kurdish politics from 1958 to 1990. Yet the primary movers and movements of Iraqi Kurdish rebellion do not merely enter the scene in 1958, but were part of a growing political field that had been maturing for decades. Mullah Mustafa Barzani² ignited the spark of contemporary Kurdish nationalism in Iraq, and subsequently Turkey, Syria, and Iran as well. In the early 1930s, the Barzani tribe, led by Barzani’s older brother Sheikh Ahmed, waged rebellion against the central government of Iraq. The insurrection, was not nationalist in any sense, but was largely a tribal-level response to

² Following common practice, for the remainder of this chapter, I will refer to Mullah Mustafa Barzani simply as “Barzani.” His children, who would become future leaders of the movement are referred to by their first names, “Idriss” and “Masoud.”

Baghdad's attempt to insert itself in periphery politics. Barzani was arrested for his involvement in the rebellion and later put under house arrest until 1943. Overall, what ultimately brought Barzani to fame, however, was his involvement in the founding of the Republic of Mahabad in Iranian Kurdistan in December 1945, under the auspices of the newly formed Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP, later "Kurdistan Democratic Party").³ Although the Mahabad experiment was crushed by Tehran at the end of 1946, Barzani became a national hero, having served as the military commander of the only Kurdish state to see daylight. He then fought his way out of Iran with only 500 men, and marched 52 days in harsh winter conditions towards the Soviet Union. Barzani became the international symbol for Kurdish nationalism.⁴

The collapse of the Mahabad Republic forced Barzani and his fighters into an eleven-year exile to the Soviet Union. During Barzani's absence from Kurdistan, the KDP political organs spread from Iran to Iraq, and ultimately split into two distinct parties.⁵ Ibrahim Ahmed, the former KDP representative in Iraq, and Jalal Talabani, a young leftist intellectual, headed the party's politburo.⁶ In Barzani's absence, Ahmed and Talabani became the movement's effective leaders in Iraq.⁷ However, the political position of the Ahmed-Talabani faction was hostile to Barzani's leadership. While both groups were Kurdish nationalists, the Barzani's faction was perceived by its adversaries as a rural-tribal organ, leading with an authoritarian bent, while the Ahmed-Talabani faction was viewed by its adversaries as the inexperienced urban-intellectual left, equally ambitious to dominate Kurdish politics.

³ McDowall 2004, pp. 249-254.

⁴ O'Ballance 1996, p. 52.

⁵ Gunter 1999, p. 23.

⁶ Gunter 1999, p. 96.

⁷ Mackey 2002, p. 221.

When Iraqi Prime Minister Abd al-Karim Qasim invited Barzani back from exile in 1958 to help forge a new alliance in Iraqi national politics,⁸ the Ahmed-Talabani faction competed with Barzani for control of the Kurdish liberation movement. Still, because the Ahmed-Talabani faction dominated the KDP's politburo and Barzani held most of the military power, the two factions were forced into a political alliance.⁹

The July 1958 coup initially ushered in a period of high expectations for the Kurdish national movement. The primary policy objective under Qasim's Iraq was one of non-alignment and Iraqi nationalism. This included formal separation from Western security alliances, but also increased distance from Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arabism. Qasim thus focused on an "Iraq first" agenda, which sought to promote autonomous Iraqi goals and to strengthen the notion of Iraqi national identity throughout society. One distinctive way to do this was to forge an alliance with Iraq's Kurds as a counter-balance to Arab nationalist forces.¹⁰ As a result, Qasim invited Mullah Mustafa Barzani back to Iraq from Soviet exile in order to forge a national political alliance, and by 1960 the KDP was legalized in Iraq.¹¹

Qasim's regime also placed a greater focus on support from the Soviet Union and local communists. Although Qasim was a not communist, he developed a policy of non-alignment and sought alternative sources of international support so as not to be completely reliant upon Western aid. As such, Iraq began a long courtship with the Soviet Union, and at times, its local communist counter-parts.¹² Interestingly, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was also itself aligned with pro-Kurdish elements within Iraq. A great number of Kurds were members of the ICP, and

⁸ Franzen 2011, p. 118.

⁹ Stansfield 2003, pp. 67-70.

¹⁰ Tripp 2000, p. 153.

¹¹ McDowall 1997, p. 303; and Tripp 2000, pp. 153-159. Also, see Naftali 2005.

¹² Shemesh 1992, pp. 2-3.

the ICP and KDP cooperated with one another.¹³ Both parties harbored left-leaning, anti-imperialist philosophies that emphasized the national rights of minority groups. Marxist-Leninism was thus a natural meeting point for Arab and Kurdish politics in Iraq. By initially allying with the Kurds and communists, Qasim simultaneously engaged in domestic coalition building and a courtship of Soviet support.

Still, these internal alliances would not last. By 1960, Qasim was already anxious about Kurdish intentions and began to distance himself from Barzani and the KDP.¹⁴ Furthermore, Qasim grew increasingly hostile towards the ICP, particularly after communist elements – along with Kurdish fighters – engaged in a massacre of Turkomen citizens during a rally in Kirkuk in 1959.¹⁵ Tightening the screws on Iraq's Kurds and communists was also met with increasing ire, although not abandonment, by the Soviets.¹⁶ On 11 September 1961, the Barzani clan was in open revolt against Baghdad and the fighting would continue on-and-off until a general ceasefire agreement was reached in February 1964.

With regards to Kurdish politics at the international level, Kurdish diplomacy has deep historical roots prior to 1958 as well. For as long as there has been a notion of Kurdish nationalism and the need for autonomy, there have been instances of Kurdish international diplomacy. Kurdish diplomats could be found at the Paris Peace Conference at the end of the Great War,¹⁷ while Kurdish representatives continued to lobby the British after the mandate period.¹⁸ These early campaigns, however, were mostly based on the initiatives of loosely

¹³ Entessar 2009, pp. 76-8.

¹⁴ O'Ballance 1996, p. 40; and Entessar 2009, p. 81.

¹⁵ Shemesh 1992, p. 4; O'Ballance 1996, p. 40; and Entessar 2009, 79.

¹⁶ Shemesh 1992, p. 4.

¹⁷ McDowall 1997.

¹⁸ Chaliand 1994, p. 55.

coordinated and powerful individuals abroad, and thus did not represent politically organized Kurdish interests.

International Kurdish diplomacy increased with the growth of local political parties in Kurdistan after WWII, the most important being the Kurdistan Democratic Party founded in 1946.¹⁹ However, with only a small diaspora abroad, diplomacy was mostly limited to the initiatives of Kurdish student organizations in Europe and independent Kurdish personalities. With the growth and formalization of Kurdish party institutions after 1958 and the growth of the Kurdish diaspora community in subsequent decades, international diplomacy would become a more central component of Kurdish politics.²⁰

Case Characteristics and Coding

Before delving into the empirical analysis, it is necessary to introduce several case-specific coding considerations to keep in mind. First, when assessing Kurdish diplomatic strategy, I focus on decision-making of the high-level party leaderships and the behavior of those leaders' designated representatives. There were ultimately three types of actors conducting pro-Kurdish diplomacy at the time. First, there were Kurdish student organizations and unions, many of which were directly tied to the KDP. These organizations were responsible for grass-roots activism – raising awareness of the Kurdish cause, staging demonstrations, translating documents, forging ties with other student organizations, and defending the rights of Kurdish activists abroad. The second set of actors were famous Kurdish personalities who used their positions of notoriety to lobby on behalf of the Kurdish cause. These individuals, while they may

¹⁹ Tripp 2000, p. 117.

²⁰ Interview with Mohammed Zebari, July 2014, Salahaddin (Musif), Iraq. Also see, “A Conference on the Role of the Kurds in Sweden Among Kurds Abroad in their Homeland,” 2000, University of Exeter, Special Collections Archives, EUL MS 403/4/139. For an argument on how Kurdish international relations affected the growth of its domestic quasi-state institutions, see Voller 2012.

have had some connection to Kurdish leaders back in Iraq, operated mostly through their own initiatives. The third set of actors were those individuals who can be labeled “official diplomats” of Barzani and the KDP, and representatives of other prominent parties, such as the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). These actors are those who were operating through the direct orders and initiatives of party leaders, with specific diplomatic missions or tasks in mind.²¹ While the first two types of actors are undoubtedly important for the broader political and logistical success of Kurdish diplomacy abroad, focusing on individuals of the latter category – high-level diplomats operating with direct orders from Kurdish party leaders – allows me to better identify the cognizant diplomatic strategies of the groups themselves.

Second, some third-parties can be coded as “dual-allegiance” actors, meaning they supported the Kurds but also provided direct or indirect avenues to Baghdad and its allies. For example, while the Israelis are active supporters of the Kurds during the first period of analysis, they were viewed as an indirect route towards U.S. engagement as Iraq’s aspiring ally in the 1960s. Nasser’s Egypt can also be seen as a dual-allegiance actor, given its general sympathy for Kurdish rights and its on-and-off positive relations with Baghdad. The key to assessing Kurdish engagement with both these actors is assess *why* these actors are targeted – to help solve movement- or conflict-level goals, of which they are directly or indirectly capable of influencing both.

Third, whether the Kurdish movement is coded as united, allied, or fragmented depends on the following criteria. First, I focus explicitly on the relations between two major Kurdish factions: the Barzani and Ahmed-Talabani factions. Both factions technically comprise of the KDP during the first phase of the rebellion. However, after 1975, the factions completely split to

²¹ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

create two separate groups, the KDP (Barzani) and PUK (Talabani). While there were smaller factions in the pre-1975 period, and other Kurdish parties in the post-1975 era, these two groups dominated the movement in terms of size and influence and thus I focus on their behavior intently. Second, the Kurdish movement is considered united when both factions/groups cooperate under the same institutional umbrella and leadership. However, when the factions actively strive to take control of movement leadership, the movement is coded as fragmented. Alternatively, the movement is considered allied when the factions remain autonomous organizations – i.e. not under the same institutional umbrella or in the same party – but have agreed to cooperate against Baghdad and not challenge each other for leadership of the movement.

Examining the Periods


I examine two major shifts in Kurdish diplomatic strategy: 1) the 1964 transition from targeting Iraq’s allies to Iraq’s adversaries, and 2) the 1974 transition from soliciting indirect support to direct intervention. As I demonstrate below, controlling for Kurdish military viability, the 1964 shift can be explained by the temporary break-up of the KDP into two competing, rival factions. Controlling for movement unity between 1965 and 1975,²² the 1974 transition from “legitimizing rebellion” to “outsourcing rebellion,” can be explained by the rapid deterioration of Kurdish forces in their war against Baghdad. I also explain the transition back toward targeting Iraq’s allies in 1965, and a brief campaign of “outsourcing rivalry” during the 1964/5 fragmentation.

²² The period is coded as viable using our established measurement scheme, although Kurdish scholars will not that the period from 1966 to 1970 involved renewed division and conflict between the Ahmed-Talabani and Barzani factions. As I explain below, I code the phase as united because the Ahmed-Talabani faction sided with Baghdad, making the group theoretically outside of the movement and on the side of the government.

Period 1: 1958 to 1964

From the point of Barzani’s return in 1958 and the start of the Kurdish rebellion in 1961, the Kurdish liberation movement primarily targeted the Soviet Union and the United States as potential sources of indirect intervention against Baghdad. Because Iraq was pursuing a non-aligned policy at this time, both superpowers had favorable courtships with Baghdad’s. Intent on gaining leverage over Baghdad, the Kurdish movement required not only armed rebellion but the solicitation of support from those actors backing Baghdad. Kurdish diplomatic strategy during this initial phase is thus one of “legitimizing rebellion”: pursuing indirect support from Iraq’s primary supporters. However, as will be shown below, the winter of 1963/4, marked a drastic shift in Kurdish diplomatic strategy. In spite of increasingly favorable relations with the Soviets, Kurdish diplomacy turned sharply towards a focus on Iraq’s regional adversaries, namely Iran in order to “corner the market” of rebellion. What explains this unexpected shift in Kurdish diplomatic strategy? As will be shown below, the shift in solicitation corresponds with fissures between the Barzani and Ahmed-Talabani factions, as both sides tried to solidify their position as leaders of the Kurdish rebellion (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Change in Threat Environment – Period 1 to 2

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable	1958-1964		1964-1965
Militarily Non-Viable			

Militarily Viable and United Movement

The Kurdish movement between 1958 and 1964 was unified in spite of open disagreement between the two main Kurdish factions: the Barzani faction and the Ahmed-

Talabani faction, which represented the KDP's politburo. Barzani's return to Iraq was not an entirely happy affair in Kurdistan. While Barzani was living in exile, leftist elements of the Kurdish national movement – in particular, Ibrahim Ahmed and Jalal Talabani – dominated the KDP's political leadership in Iraq.²³ Although tensions immediately emerged between Barzani and the Ahmed-Talabani faction, they formed a unified front in advancement of Kurdish goals in Iraq. A significant reason for this alliance was the fact that Barzani's tribesmen and allies represented the overwhelming majority of Kurdish military power. With the politburo needing Barzani's arms and prestige, and Barzani needing the politburo's political clout, the Iraqi Kurdish movement remained unified under the same party institutions.²⁴ Barzani remained the President of the KDP, while the Ahmed-Talabani faction operated the political bureau. Once the war broke out, there was some dispute between Barzani and the Ahmed-Talabani faction over their roles in the rebellion, but the rivals remained aligned with each other until 1964.²⁵

With regards to military viability, the Kurds were able to continuously inflict serious setbacks on the Iraqi government. With nearly 12,000 Kurdish fighters by April 1962²⁶ and upwards of 25,000 by mid-1963,²⁷ Barzani's revolt inflicted a great deal of damage to the Iraqi military and Qasim's political standing. As one State Department memorandum noted at the time, "Kurdish guerrilla fighters are famously tough and elusive and the heavy strain on the Army has created discontent in the Iraqi forces."²⁸ Furthermore, defections of Kurdish fighters

²³ Ghareeb 1981, p. 39.

²⁴ O'Ballance 1996, pp. 42-3; and Stansfield 2003, pp. 67-8.

²⁵ The KDP politburo did not officially join the rebellion at first but signed on shortly thereafter, Stansfield 2003; pp. 69-70; and Randal 1997, p. 136.

²⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," 13 April 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961-1962, Document 247.

²⁷ O'Ballance 1996, p. 66.

²⁸ "Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Grant) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (McGhee)," 3 May 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961-1962, Document 262.

from the Iraqi military continued to replenish Kurdish forces, and soon even the politburo had formed its own fighting force.²⁹ The Kurdish revolt was not only sustainable, but it was serious enough for Baghdad to accept outside assistance through direct Syrian military involvement in northern Iraq to help quell the rebellion.³⁰ The high costs of the Kurdish rebellion led to Qasim's fall in 1963 to a Baathist coup, as well as further changes of power in 1963 and 1964.³¹ Given a militarily viable and united Kurdish movement, we would anticipate that the Kurds would solicit Iraq's allies for indirect support for the purposes of gaining an advantage over Baghdad.

Strategy of Diplomacy

According to sources with intimate knowledge of KDP foreign policy at the time, the primary target of Kurdish diplomacy was the Soviet Union and the United States.³² Barzani³³ “was of the mind that there were only two sides that could be influential in helping movements such as the Kurds. One was Soviet Union...the other one, the big hope – and I am trying to see it from his eyes – was the United States.”³⁴ Mahmoud Othman, a close confidant and personal representative of Barzani noted that “the Kurds were trying very hard during this time to get either the Soviets or the Americans, because General Barzani's point of view, which I think was right to a degree – he said the world is having two main powers, big powers. These two big

²⁹ O'Ballance, 1996, pp. 53-55.

³⁰ “Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Certain Posts,” 21 November 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVIII, Near East, 1962-1963, Document 370; and Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

³¹ “Research Study RNAS-10, Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research,” 31 May 1972, *FRUS*, Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 310.

³² Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq; Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom.

³³ The focus on Barzani's decision-making, as opposed to the politburo or KDP as a whole, is a result of the fact that up until that time, Barzani was the primary decision-maker in matters of policy. Even Talabani, who managed to have a competitive, yet intimate relationship with Barzani, served as a key diplomat for Barzani. As one Kurdish diplomat close to Barzani note, “Let's frankly put it this way – the movement was at least in the beginning for many years, he was the man who overshadowed everything else, including KDP,” (Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq).

³⁴ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

powers have let's say a control over the world. If one of them sponsor our case, then we can get some place.”³⁵ However, it was not just their superpower status that made these actors important targets. Both the United States and the Soviet Union held leverage over Baghdad because Iraq was in the unique position of being supported and courted by both poles simultaneously. As Othman continued, “Both countries were trying to satisfy Baghdad, not provoke Baghdad,”³⁶ and therefore both actors were worthy of pursuit, regardless of ideological leanings.

The Soviet Union, was a particularly important target of Kurdish diplomacy because of its position as a broker between Iraqi and Kurdish national goals. The Soviets had ties to the KDP since the 1940s, but were quickly becoming Baghdad's most important ally in the post-1958 period. Iraq was solidly tied to the West before 1958, but Qasim removed Iraq from the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) in 1959 to allow for simultaneous East-West courtship. Although the intention was never to fully ally with the Soviets, Iraq was eager to receive political and military support from the Soviets. Moscow was, of course, more than happy to court a former American and British ally.³⁷ The Soviet Union began arming the Iraqi military³⁸ but remained receptive to Kurdish interests. The Soviets believed that Kurdish national rights deserved to be dealt with and approved of the left-leaning KDP politburo, which had close ties with the Soviet-backed Iraqi Communist Party (ICP).³⁹ As such, the Kurds found themselves in a difficult but opportunistic position: Iraq's newest superpower ally was also sympathetic to the Kurdish question.

³⁵ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

³⁶ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

³⁷ Shemesh 1992, p. 2.

³⁸ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

³⁹ Shemesh 1992, p. 14.

Although there is minimal information detailing the actual discussions between Kurdish and Soviet officials, there was significant Kurdish diplomacy geared towards the Soviets at this point in time. Soviet officials paid numerous visits to the Kurds inside Iraq, while Kurdish diplomatic missions set out for Moscow.⁴⁰ For example, Barzani spent two to five months in Moscow in 1960 and 1961 alone.⁴¹ The purpose of the visit was to persuade the Soviets to apply pressure on Baghdad for a settlement. As Edgar O'Ballance writes, "Early in November 1960 Barzani left Iraq to visit the USSR ostensibly to attend the annual Revolution ceremonies, but actually to try to persuade the Soviets to put pressure on the Iraqi government to make concessions to the Kurds."⁴² When asked whether the Kurds tried to get the Soviet Union to withdraw aid from Iraq or pressure Baghdad, Othman replied: "They tried, they tried. Especially General Barzani had relations with Soviets. He visited in 1960/1. And Qasim was a bit annoyed by that...It was a bit of two months or something like that. So Kurds were trying through the Soviet Union to pressure Baghdad for a deal."⁴³ The attempt was not successful, however, as the "Soviets were more pressing the Kurds to accept Qasim's conditions."⁴⁴

The fact that Barzani pursued the Soviets for help against Baghdad is particularly important knowing that Barzani had a personal preference for U.S. backing. After nearly 12 years under Soviet guardianship, Barzani was apparently "disenchanted" with their willingness to support the movement.⁴⁵ The Kurds were thus "interested in the Soviet Union because it was a big power and they are in Iraq, but in [Barzani's] mind and heart he was more interested in the

⁴⁰ Tripp 2000, p. 162.

⁴¹ While Gunter argues that Barzani was in Moscow from October 1960 to March 1961, O'Ballance writes that Barzani was in Moscow from November 1960 to January 1961. See Gunter 1992, p. 12; and O'Ballance 1996, p. 41.

⁴² O'Ballance 1996, pp. 41-2. Also, see Jawad 1981, p. 306; and Entessar 2009, p. 81.

⁴³ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁴⁴ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom.

⁴⁵ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

United States. He tried to have relations and he was planning to that.”⁴⁶ Early signs that the Soviets would continue to bolster Baghdad may have led Barzani to focus more on Washington. In fact, it was only later, in 1965, that Barzani would designate his first representative to the United States, Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz.⁴⁷ As Qazzaz himself reflected, “His biggest obsession, I would say, was to be able to get close to the United States...he used every means at his disposal.”⁴⁸

Although Kurdish ties to the U.S. were not nearly as strong as Kurdish ties to the Soviets, the Kurds nonetheless attempted to engage with the Americans.⁴⁹ At this point in time, the U.S. was not Iraq’s adversary, but instead a former ally intent on steering Baghdad away from increasing Soviet influence. Arms shipments from the U.S. to Iraq diminished after 1959, but the U.S. continued to transfer military and financial aid to Baghdad.⁵⁰ Furthermore, while the U.S. was fairly certain that Qassim was not a communist, they did not feel the same about Barzani. The U.S. incorrectly viewed the Kurds as communist proxies.⁵¹ Therefore, it is not immediately clear that the Kurds would view the U.S. as anything other than an existing supporter of Baghdad. The Kurds appealed to the Americans because of the potentiality for the U.S. to have leverage over the Iraqi central government and to improve the Kurdish balance of power vis-à-vis Baghdad.

For the very same reasons, convincing the United States to support the Kurdish cause was not an easy task. The United States had a strong predisposition to view Barzani and the Kurds as Soviet agents.⁵² While Barzani did receive some token financial aid and diplomatic support from

⁴⁶ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁴⁷ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁴⁸ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁴⁹ Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁵⁰ Fukuyama 1980.

⁵¹ “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 14 October 1958, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1962, Document 133.

⁵² Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

the Soviets, and the KDP politburo was ideologically aligned with Marxist-Leninism, the Kurds were hardly Soviet proxies in the region. In fact, anti-Baghdad rebellion was never sanctioned by the Soviets, who preferred good relations between Baghdad and the Kurds.

To overcome this, the Kurds attempted to use diplomacy to allay American concerns about their allegiances and intentions. Beginning around 1962, the Kurds began to engage with the Americans, using Kurdish representatives who were living in the U.S., sending emissaries from Iraq to Washington, and engaging with American officials in Baghdad.⁵³ Many of these encounters took place in Baghdad where the local “5th branch of KDP had relations with the American embassy.”⁵⁴ It is clear from these interactions that the Kurds wanted to dispel the perception that they were pro-Soviet and were thus strategically compatible with the West.

For example, a Barzani emissary told an American official in Baghdad that “In return for support, Mulla Mustafa would promise (1) purge movement of any persons we consider suspect, (2) cooperate with conservative Arab Iraqi elements and bring Iraq back into Baghdad Pact if we wish, (3) give us immediately full information on internal political or military developments in Kurdistan or Arab Iraq.”⁵⁵ To increase the credibility of these statements, the Kurds were also quite open with the U.S. about their existing relations with the Soviets. The Kurds remarked that they “maintain regular contact with the UAR [United Arab Republic]...and USSR Embassy Baghdad. [The Kurdish emissary] said Kurds were not willing ‘burn all bridges to Russia’ unless they have assurances USG will support their movement. He said that he personally is given ID 1,000 per month by Soviet Embassy for certain Communist sympathizers in KDP but money

⁵³ The first known entry of Kurdish emissaries engaging with the U.S. takes place on June 22, 1962. See “Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq,” 22 June 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1962, Document 305.

⁵⁴ Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom.

⁵⁵ “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 20 September 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1962, Document 49.

goes into KDP coffers. Mulla Mustafa does not consider this small sum as assistance to movement.”⁵⁶ Just in case these arguments were not convincing, the Kurds also reminded the U.S. of the alternatives to American assistance: “[The] KDP official said that Mulla Mustafa knows that after downfall Qasim [sic], which he believes imminent, [the] USSR will be anxious help [sic] them with money and arms... Mulla Mustafa prefers cooperate with West rather than with USSR, ‘which he does not trust.’ However, ‘all Kurds are nationalists’ and must win autonomy now or be prepared for racial extinction. Before Kurds will permit this they would take help from USSR or from ‘devil himself’.”⁵⁷ Despite these appeals towards U.S. interests in Iraq, the Americans continued to brush aside Kurdish appeals for assistance, citing Iraqi-Kurdish politics as an “internal Iraqi matter.”⁵⁸

Initial difficulties gaining access to Washington and support from the Soviets may explain why the Kurds began probing of Iraq’s adversaries around 1962 and 1963. Iranian-KDP relations technically began in 1962 – as a joint decision between Barzani and the Ahmed-Talabani faction⁵⁹ – to alleviate a general sense of isolation. According Qazzaz, “We should have reached with Iran because it was the only way forward. It was the only window in the world.”⁶⁰ That year Barzani sent an official representative, Shams al-Din Mufti, to Tehran. However, this initial relationship with Iran remained limited and largely based on the need of solving the logistical puzzle of bringing outside goods into the contested zone. The small trickle of aid that

⁵⁶ “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 20 September 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1962, Document 49.

⁵⁷ “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 20 September 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1962, Document 49.

⁵⁸ “Circular Airgram From the Department of State to Certain Posts,” 2 March 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVIII, Near East, 1962-1963, Document 174. Also see, Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁵⁹ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

⁶⁰ Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom. Others came to a similar conclusion regarding the initial opening to regional actors. See Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

made its way in from the Iranian side mostly made its way to the politburo, which was closer in proximity to the Iranian border.⁶¹ Beyond this, there is little evidence that Kurds targeted the Iranians for support to any substantial degree.

The Kurds also began more formal contacts with the Israelis in 1963 through the Iranians. Another joint-decision between Barzani and the politburo,⁶² the Kurds met with Israeli representatives in 1963 in Paris and initiated a dialogue.⁶³ The Israelis first reached out to the Kurds in 1961, but were initially put off.⁶⁴ While this is clear engagement with Iraq's adversaries, it is critical to recognize that Israel was itself a "dual-allegiance" state – meaning they were simultaneously an Iraqi adversary, but had friendly relations with Iraq's supporters (i.e. the U.S.) – and that the motive behind this engagement was the Kurdish view that Tel Aviv was a gateway to Washington. As noted by Dr. Mahmoud Othman, "the main reason why Barzani insisted on having relations with Israel...that Israel will make United States contact us...Barzani thought that Israel will make him reach the United States and the United States will sponsor the Kurdish question because Israel have their lobby very strong there."⁶⁵ Another Kurdish political figure noted, "He was saying that a way to the United States we must have public opinion in the United States and without Israel it will not be easy. So some relations started with Israel, not directly, through the Kurdish personality well known at the time, Kamran Badrkhan."⁶⁶ Although relations with the Israelis remained small-scale during this period and

⁶¹ O'Ballance 1996, p. 61; Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁶² Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

⁶³ Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁶⁴ Bengio 2012, p. 73.

⁶⁵ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq. Also see, Bengio 2012, p. 74.

⁶⁶ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

some aid began to trickle in through Iran, diplomatic relations were geared towards gaining favor and access to the United States to secure leverage over Baghdad.

In 1963, the Egyptians became another major target of Kurdish appeals. After the Baathist coup in February 1963, which included pro-Nasserist elements, Talabani joined the Iraqi delegation to Nasser to try to secure Egypt's assistance in bringing Baghdad to negotiations.⁶⁷ As journalist Edgar O'Ballance writes, "Jalal Talabani continued to lead the Kurdish delegation, and spent from the 16th May until 3rd June in Egypt unsuccessfully trying to persuade President Nasser to use his influence to help the Kurds."⁶⁸ The timing of this engagement is important because it follows a period of Iraq's improving relations of Nasser. While Qasim tried to distance himself from Nasser, the Baathist coup hoped to gain Nasser's influence and even attempted to form a union with the United Arab Republic and Syria.⁶⁹ Nasser was also valuable because of his ties to the Soviet Union.⁷⁰ Hence, both Baghdad and the Kurds found Nasser to be a useful target of diplomacy towards solving the Iraqi-Kurdish war in early 1963. Although engagement with the Egyptians appear was iterative, the Kurds ultimately found them to be "friendly but unhelpful."⁷¹ Iraqi President Aref was fully aware of these Kurdish-Egyptian deliberations and himself asked Nasser for assistance in the conflict. Nasser wanted no part.⁷²

In short, Kurdish diplomacy at this time was not geared towards Iraq's obvious adversaries but more towards its primary supporters. With the rebellion going well, and the focus

⁶⁷ O'Ballance 1997, p. 64; and O'Ballance 1971, pp. 102-103. See, Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq. An alternative interpretation is that Talabani had gone without Barzani's knowledge, leading to lasting distrust. See, Jawad 1981, p. 115.

⁶⁸ O'Ballance 1971, pp. 102-103.

⁶⁹ Jawad 1981, p. 121.

⁷⁰ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁷¹ "Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State," 20 September 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVII, Near East, 1962, Document 49.

⁷² O'Ballance 1971, pp. 102-103.

on Baghdad, they probably saw little that Iraq's enemies could do to bring about a successful conclusion to the dispute at hand.

Even though Kurdish appeals were largely directed at the two most powerful states in the international system, the type of intervention the Kurds were asking for was rather mild. The Kurds were set on gaining indirect intervention to help the Kurdish rebellion at home, and were less concerned with bringing in outside actors in any heavy-handed way. With regards to the Soviets, the type of intervention solicited and received was rather indirect: the Kurds were not asking the Soviets to undermine Qasim, but simply to encourage him to move closer on Kurdish autonomy demands.⁷³ Some documentation of the Soviet-Iraqi dialogue indicate that the Soviet Union began a substantial effort to bring the two sides to some form of agreement and had applied pressure on Iraq to ease off the Kurds.⁷⁴ At one point, the Soviets threatened Iraq by attempting to bring the Kurdish issue up for discussion at the United Nations⁷⁵ and there are some indications that the USSR was “deliberately lagging in deliveries of military assistance to Iraq” by August 1963, but it is not clear the extent to which this explicit intervention was requested or provided.⁷⁶

Overall, while the Soviets were willing to back the Kurds politically and offer some financial assistance, they would not go so far as to directly intervene in the conflict.⁷⁷ As one scholar notes, “Soviet support was mainly verbal, though there might have been some trickle of material aid in the early 1960s.”⁷⁸ Another Kurdish diplomat at the time also noted that the

⁷³ O'Ballance 1996, pp. 41-2. Also, see Entessar 2009, p. 81.

⁷⁴ Chaliand 1995, pp. 56-59.

⁷⁵ For an account of this incident, see Vanly 1965, pp. 38-9.

⁷⁶ “Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara,” 15 August 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVIII, Near East, 1962-1963, Document 311.

⁷⁷ Shemesh 1992, p. 7.

⁷⁸ Heraclides 1991, p. 142.

Soviets were “supplying weapons...they were helping Kurdish finances but very little.”⁷⁹

Furthermore, increased Soviet political support for the Kurds was a relatively short-lived reaction to Baathist purging of the ICP in 1963. It was in this context that the Soviets instructed the Mongolian government to bring up the Kurdish question at the United Nations, only to have it withdrawn when the Baathists were overthrown later that year.⁸⁰

With regards to the Americans, the Kurds wanted minor forms of indirect intervention as well. The earliest documentation of Kurdish-American appeals did not even discuss military matters. Two of Barzani’s representatives in the U.S. had visited the State Department in June 1962 and merely “stated they aim [to] arouse general international interest in their claims for local autonomy and hope for UN hearing. [They] asked for US ‘moral support’ on humanitarian grounds suffering Kurdish people caused by Iraqi attacks...[They] asked US not be ‘hostile’ if question broached in UN debate.”⁸¹ Nearly three months later, Kurdish appeals to the U.S. Embassy in Iraq were notably more serious, asking for “money now and possibly arms” later, but still represented requests for indirect intervention.⁸²

Part of the reason for such modest demands may have to do with the fact that these actors were indeed allies of Baghdad and thus more heavy forms of direct intervention would be less forthcoming. As Qazzaz explains “I think probably, maybe shrewdly, Mullah Mustafa read that America was not going to his help as they did through Shah...so the second best thing is to at least ask for protection. Send us humanitarian aid, try to get our voice to the United Nations. These kind of things. If you read memorandum and all these things that were sent at the time,

⁷⁹ Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom.

⁸⁰ Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom; and Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁸¹ “Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq,” 22 June 1962, *FRUS*, Volume XVII, Near East, 1961-1962, Document 305.

⁸² “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 20 September 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XVIII, Near East, 1962-1963, Document 49.

pretty much they cover this arena of things. But then, of course, focusing on the actual atrocities, the ferocious nature of the attacks and things.”⁸³ It is also apparent that the Kurds significantly militarily viable given the potent nature of the rebellion. In short, this behavior exemplifies the “legitimizing rebellion” campaign expected.

Period 2: 1964 to 1965

In the shadow of an increasingly bloody rebellion in the north, a successful Baathist coup was launched in February 1963 and then reversed in November of that year. The new regime, headed by President Abdul Salam Aref, was eager to quell the Kurdish rebellion which had continued to undermine the political foundations of previous governments. Aref thus sought to establish a political deal with the Kurds. At the same time, Barzani was eager to give his *peshmerga* some rest after three years of rebellion, and was increasingly unwilling to share political power with the politburo. The politburo’s growing influence during the war convinced Barzani that he had to do something to strengthen his control of the movement.⁸⁴ As such, ceasefire negotiations with Baghdad were settled in the absence of the Ahmed-Talabani faction.⁸⁵ On 11 March 1964, the new pro-Nasser regime concluded a peace accord with the Kurds. The politburo was furious with the unilateral move.

The period surrounding the peace deal, however, engendered a drastic shift in Kurdish diplomatic targeting strategies, from a focus on Iraq’s allies to its known adversaries. I argue that this shift is the direct result of the fragmentation of the Kurdish liberation movement in the winter of 1963/4, which incentivized competing factions to seek support from those actors who could influence which group achieved military and political dominance over the movement.

⁸³ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁸⁴ Jawad 1981, p. 163. Also, see Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁸⁵ Stansfield 2003, p. 71.

Militarily Viable and Fragmented Movement

Within a month of the March 1964 peace accord, there were already “reports of dissidence within Kurdish circles in Iraq, of a lack of cohesion between the tribal fighters and the Kurdish party’s educated and more sophisticated cadre.”⁸⁶ Tension between Barzani and the Ahmed-Talabani faction boiled over in July 1964, leading to a nasty divorce between the groups.⁸⁷ Angry that Barzani had negotiated with Aref without consulting the KDP – which preferred to continue the armed rebellion – the politburo leveled accusations against Barzani. Barzani responded by attacking the Ahmed-Talabani faction and driving them into Iran, as well as arresting politburo members loyal to Talabani.⁸⁸ From Iranian sanctuary, the Ahmed-Talabani faction continued to sneak across the border to harass Barzani’s troops. Both sides continued to claim to be the “real” KDP.⁸⁹ The period from 1964 to 1966 is therefore deeply *fragmented*.

However, this was also a time in which the general movement, under Barzani, was considered to be highly *militarily viable*. The Kurds had come into the 1964 peace accord from a position of strength and continued to sustain a considerable threat to Baghdad. It is for this reason that the State Department noted after a December 1964 meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister Najji Talib that “the Kurdish problem fundamentally dominated the Iraqi scene. The Iraqi Government is preoccupied with this issue and has little time or energy to turn to other pressing economic or social issues. He was not sure that they were any closer to a solution now

⁸⁶ “Background Paper Prepared in the Department of State.” 6 April 1964, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 3.

⁸⁷ Tripp 2000, pp. 178-179.

⁸⁸ Marr 2004, p. 129; and Ghareeb 1981, pp. 40-41.

⁸⁹ In fact, one could argue that there was a “three-way split” between the Barzani faction, the former KDP politburo faction, and those Kurdish tribes who had traditionally sided with the Iraqi central government. “Telegram From the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 19 August 1966, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 183.

than they were before the fighting started several years ago.”⁹⁰ Nearly a year later in October 1965, an intelligence report concluded that “neither the Kurds or the GOI appear able to force a military solution.”⁹¹ Furthermore, it was also during this period that the politburo began to develop its own full-time *peshmerga* forces, augmenting its own strength.⁹²

Given the context described above, we would anticipate Kurdish groups to pursue a strategy of “cornering the market,” by turning to Baghdad’s adversaries for indirect support in order to outcompete their rebel rivals. Kurdish diplomacy during this period is indeed geared towards Iraq’s adversaries with the goal to prevail over intra-Kurdish rivalries. However, the types of intervention solicited produce mixed results that must be explained below. In addition to both sides soliciting indirect assistance, the Barzani faction eventually solicited direct intervention from the Iranians to undermine the Ahmed-Talabani faction and settle the intra-movement dispute.

Strategy of Diplomacy

During this period of immense fragmentation between the Barzani and the Ahmed-Talabani factions, the main target of Kurdish diplomacy was Iran. Perhaps most fascinating is that while the Soviet Union was not targeted by either actor to help settle the intra-movement dispute, both because they had some vested interest in the Kurds but also because they were predisposed to favor the Ahmed-Talabani faction. It is also puzzling because this was also a period in which Soviet support for the Kurds was particularly high.⁹³

⁹⁰ “Memorandum of Conversation.” 10 December 1964, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 169.

⁹¹ “Airgram from the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State.” 30 October 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 177.

⁹² O’Ballance 1996.

⁹³ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015. Also see, Jawad 1981, p. 309.

It is during this time period that the Kurds emphasized relations with Iran as a principal interlocutor, forming a guarded relationship that would last nearly a decade. Prior to the split, there was minimal contact between the Kurds and Tehran. The Kurds were in touch with Tehran as early as 1962, yet although the Iranians supported the Iraqi Kurds, aid had been quite minimal. What was going through to Iraq was being used by the politburo, since their areas operation were more easily accessed from Iran-Iraq frontier.⁹⁴ The fact that Iranian aid had originally gone to Ahmed-Talabani faction indicates that Tehran's future support for Barzani was neither predetermined, nor a given.

The split between the Barzani and Ahmed-Talabani factions of the KDP triggered a bidding war for Iranian assistance and a campaign by both sides to "corner the market" of resources. Having made temporary peace with Baghdad, the Kurdish factions were now in a position to settle their long-held disputes that had been pushed aside in the face of greater danger from Baghdad.⁹⁵ The purpose of Kurdish diplomacy therefore shifted over who would control the movement, not how to undermine Baghdad. While both the Barzani and Ahmed-Talabani factions established their external relations through joint decisions in years prior, "when there was the split in between, the fighting and the conflict everything...then one of the reasons was over who should control those outside relations completely."⁹⁶

The split was a long time coming for both actors, and so once fragmentation seemed imminent, the Ahmed-Talabani faction quickly shifted its diplomatic strategy by trying to expand his ties to the Iranians. In February 1964, while Barzani was still negotiating with Baghdad – a move the KDP politburo was against – Talabani secretly visited Tehran, "acquiring

⁹⁴ O'Ballance 1996, p. 72.

⁹⁵ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq. Also, see Pischedda 2015 on this dynamic.

⁹⁶ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

arms without the knowledge of Barzani.”⁹⁷ With Barzani appearing to cozy up with Baghdad, the Iranians were afraid they would lose their Kurdish bargaining chip. In fact, one of Barzani’s motivations for negotiations may have been impending Iran-Iraq negotiations, which would ultimately leave the Kurds vulnerable in the event of a deal. Therefore, the Iranians could consider arming Talabani in order to keep the fight with Baghdad alive.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1964 peace accord, Talabani went on yet another mission to Tehran to try to secure resources to fight Barzani’s faction. As O’Ballance notes, “Talabani led a delegation to Iran in March, to coincide with a visit to that capital by President de Gaulle of France. Talabani had some success in Tehran as the Shah did not want a strong Iraq to develop next door, neither did he want his own Kurds to be infected by the ‘independence bug’, and so was content to see them at each other’s throats. It was suspected that the Shah encouraged Talabani to defy Barzani, and to state openly that his KDP would fight on.”⁹⁸

After the official split in the summer of 1964, which resulted in the politburo being driven across the border into Iran, it was not immediately clear which side would come to control external sources of support. Barzani was of course the stronger faction, having just routed politburo forces with ease, but Talabani was now receiving safe-haven from Iran and the Israelis had apparently ceased supplies to the Kurds to see how the conflict played out.⁹⁹ Just across the border, the politburo was able to harass Barzani’s forces in Iraq and slip back across the border to Iran.¹⁰⁰ Iran’s backing and protection proved to be an unanticipated advantage for the significantly weaker Ahmed-Talabani faction.

⁹⁷ Bidwell 1998, p. 407.

⁹⁸ O’Ballance 1996, pp. 72-3.

⁹⁹ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, June 28, 2016.

In order to break Talabani's advantage and to secure dominance over the movement, Barzani used diplomacy to settle the matter in the fall of 1964. According to multiple sources close to Barzani at the time, Barzani issued an ultimatum to the Shah of Iran: cease supporting the Ahmed-Talabani faction or the Barzani-led KDP will bring a Kurdish revolution to Iran.¹⁰¹ While it is not immediately clear what medium Barzani used to convey this message, nor the exact wording, one interviewee familiar with the contents of the message to the Shah described its contents as follows:

“A very diplomatic, beautiful way, saying, ‘Your obedient friend, the Kurds of Iraq are fed up from the vicious attacks of [those]...who’ve gathered near our borders and directed by certain of your officials without your knowledge against us. Death is the same either side of the border. And if these people continue, we might find it even sweeter to come and die the other side.’ It’s a hidden threat to the Shah saying, I’ll move the uprising to the Iranian side if these people don’t stop their attack... You see, he allows him [the Shah] room to maneuver. ‘Unless these people are moved away from our borders, death is the same either side.’ You know, death is death, whether we die in Iraq or Iran. If we have to die, it’s the same. So we might find it even sweeter to move into your area to die there. That means I’m going to incite the Iranians and move my forces to your side.”¹⁰²

Mahmoud Othman, a close confidant of Barzani, confirmed that “after the fight, politburo people went to the Iranian side. They were near the border and sometime they’re coming creating problems here and there, so Barzani asked Iran, asked Shah, that they should be moved away from those areas.”¹⁰³ Another Kurdish diplomat at the time added “I’m sure contacts between Barzani and the Iranian government definitely included the idea...you have to disavow the Talabani-Ahmed group...From his point of view he was probably correct that he had to truly discredit this group to consolidate himself. Therefore, the people with whom he could deal, then or in the near future, had to make a definite decision – they have to disavow those people.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰² Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰³ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

This act of coercive diplomacy is further confirmed by those affiliated with the Ahmad-Talabani faction as well.¹⁰⁵

The diplomatic coercion was a success and the Shah sent buses to Sardasht to pick up the politburo's forces and moved them to Hamadan, away from the border.¹⁰⁶ The move allowed Barzani to gain dominance over the Kurdish movement and ultimately led to full control of outside support to the Iraqi Kurdish movement. The Israelis resumed their support to Barzani as the only strong force on the field and the Iranians made stronger relations with Barzani.¹⁰⁷ Barzani had become the reality on the ground and "when Barzani took over and the conflict ended in favor of Barzani, all relations came to him."¹⁰⁸ Although the first volley in the struggle for movement hegemony in 1964 was military, the final one was diplomatic.

Intra-Kurdish competition for external support also extended to Egypt. Nasser occupied a central position in both intra-Kurdish and Iraqi politics, and was itself a dual-allegiance state. Abdul Salam Aref, the new president of Iraq after the fall of the Baath, was a Nasserist who had improved relations with Egypt.¹⁰⁹ However, Nasser was himself in favor of a peaceful settlement to Kurdish issues and considered himself a friend of the Kurds.¹¹⁰ In other words, Egypt was sharing good relations with the new pro-Nasserist regime in Iraq but the Kurds saw Nasser as pro-Kurdish, even if also supportive of Baghdad. Winning his approval could go a long way in gaining legitimacy for one faction over the other.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 28 June 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 28 June 2016. While this is the first known documentation of this diplomatic exchange, the move to Hamadan is recognized in other sources, such as Jawad 1981, p. 172.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

As such, just one month after the 1964 ceasefire, “Jalal Talabani and some members of the DPK went to Cairo to try to enlist President Nasser’s support on their behalf against Mulla Mustafa, but they got only vague promises.”¹¹¹ As O’Ballance notes, “At different times both approached President Nasser of Egypt, then probably the most powerful leader in the Middle East, for support, but were refused.”¹¹² Matters were made worse for the Ahmed-Talabani faction, however, when Iraqi Prime Minister Bazzaz “decided to persuade Nasser to condemn the rebel cause,” and by November 1965, Kurdish representatives were forced out of Cairo.¹¹³

Just as noticeable as the Kurdish shift towards soliciting Baghdad’s regional adversaries to help solve its intra-insurgent dispute, is the absence of any solicitation on Baghdad’s allies. There appears to be no evidence that Barzani or Talabani sought to involve the Soviets, for example. The only states that could have an effect on the outcome were those that were themselves already supporting the Kurdish rebellion or could impart legitimacy on one actor over the other. Although Nasser was targeted for in his unique position as being pro-Kurdish and friendly with the Aref regime, the primary focus was on Iran. Not only was Iran backing the Ahmed-Talabani faction, but most weapons were brought in through Iran, including aid which had begun to trickle in from the Israelis.

When the Israelis suspended aid to see who would win the intra-Kurdish war, both the Barzani and Ahmed-Talabani factions were potential candidates for support. It is thus noteworthy that contacts with the Israelis pick up during this phase of fragmentation. Not only did Barzani send a special representative, Ismet Sherif Vanly, to Israel to secure aid, but there

¹¹¹ O’Ballance 1996, p. 117. O’Ballance claims that both factions approached Nasser, although O’Ballance notes that Barzani did not like Nasser much.

¹¹² O’Ballance 1996, pp. 72-3.

¹¹³ O’Ballance 1996, pp. 132-133.

was also speculation that Ibrahim Ahmed made his own trip to Israel at some point.¹¹⁴ Both may have been trying to corner the market of resources, and the fact that Israeli aid was coming through Iran made the combination of diplomacy all the more important. Barzani's victory over the Ahmed-Talabani faction settled the matter of outside aid in his favor. In addition to believing Barzani would make a more manageable ally,¹¹⁵ the deciding factor for the Israelis was the fact that Barzani was able to effectively remove the politburo from the active resistance.¹¹⁶ Israeli aid to Barzani thus began in 1964 and Israeli training of *peshmerga* commenced the following year.¹¹⁷ Israeli support would grow from 1965 to 1975, starting with humanitarian aid and transitioning to arms and instruction.¹¹⁸

At first glance my predictions for the type of intervention solicited seem to provide more mixed results. On the one hand, a significant portion of both groups' behavior reflects a push towards indirect intervention, which makes sense given the overall strength of the movement. Both sides appealed to Egypt, Iran, and Israel for recognition and aid. But after the Ahmed-Talabani faction settled on the Iranian side of the border, Barzani appealed for direct intervention from the Iranians. Although Barzani seemed militarily capable of engaging and likely defeating the Ahmed-Talabani faction in combat – having routed them across the border in the first place – Barzani nonetheless asked the Shah to organize the forced removal of Kurdish forces.

However, the solicitation for direct intervention is consistent with my predictions once we unpack Barzani's military viability in this specific circumstance. First, how viable would Barzani's forces be *if* he were to attack the Ahmed-Talabani faction on Iranian soil? If the

¹¹⁴ Bengio 2014.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹¹⁷ Cooley 2005, p. 82.

¹¹⁸ Bengio 2012, pp. 75-76. Also see Cooley 2005, p. 82.

Iranians would have been willing to fight on behalf of the Ahmed-Talabani faction, Barzani may not have believed he could risk the encroachment. Furthermore, if Iranian sovereignty was a serious enough deterrent, that means Barzani – although strong at home – would have been geographically isolated from his enemy, making it necessary to call in outside assistance.

Overall, after the split between Barzani and the KDP politburo, “Both were busy consolidating their own power bases, each thinking they could outsmart the other.”¹¹⁹ However, it was the Ahmed-Talabani faction which lost most of its international contacts after the split of 1964. As a former Kurdish diplomat and founder of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) recalled “this was one of the reasons why actually the KDP politburo leadership lost the battle with Barzani. Because the international actors that were concerned preferred to deal with Barzani, rather than with them.”¹²⁰ As such, the Ahmed-Talabani faction was limited in its options for outside support and was ultimately forced to reintegrate with Barzani in 1965, and then to side with Baghdad in 1966.¹²¹

Period 3: 1965 to 1974

The crisis within the KDP was unnaturally cut short in March 1965. Peace between Baghdad and Barzani broke down and nearly 100,000 Iraqi troops assaulted the north. In order to meet this threat, Barzani reintegrated the Ahmed-Talabani faction for nearly a year of unified effort under a “reorganized” KDP.¹²² Although the KDP could be considered united once again, the long-held tensions between the factions remained. President Abdul Salam Aref died unexpectedly in a helicopter crash in April 1966, bringing his brother Abdul Rahman Aref into

¹¹⁹ O’Ballance 1996, p. 72.

¹²⁰ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

¹²¹ Fortunately for the politburo, the majority of Kurdish students abroad were pro-politburo but this had only limited benefits. Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015; and Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹²² Jawad 1981, p. 172; McDowall 1997, p. 317-319; and O’Ballance 1996, pp. 75-6.

power, and with him a renewed attempt to bring the Kurds into submission.¹²³ The temporary alliance between the Barzani and Ahmed-Talabani factions was itself short-lived. After a failed attempt at settling with Baghdad through the Prime Minister Bazzaz in June 1966, the Ahmed-Talabani faction – eager to renew its competition with Barzani – sided with Baghdad.¹²⁴ After the 1968 Baathist coup, Baghdad reignited the conflict with Barzani and coordination between the Ahmed-Talabani faction and Baghdad grew deeper.¹²⁵ The fighting would continue until March 1970, when Baghdad finally reached a settlement over Kurdish autonomy. The next four years would be ones of relative peace. The March 1970 Agreement stipulated that the Ahmed-Talabani paramilitary be disbanded, placing Kurdish military power under Barzani’s control.¹²⁶ Losing its life-line from Baghdad, the Ahmed-Talabani faction rejoined Barzani’s KDP, reuniting the movement once again.

The period between 1965 and 1974 covers substantial changes in the politic environment between the Kurds, Iraq, and outside actors. There were numerous Kurdish rebellions and agreements with Baghdad, as well as a number of alliance shifts among Kurdish factions and between the great powers and Baghdad. Yet from the perspective of insurgent diplomacy and the framework in question, the international diplomacy of the Kurdish national movement remained rather consistent. From 1965 to 1975 the Kurdish movement could be coded as united, and it was not until 1974/5 that the movement became militarily non-viable. But because of the length and depth of this particular period, I break up the analysis into two time frames: 1965-1970 and 1970-1974. March 1970 is chosen as a break-point this is when the Kurds signed a major peace

¹²³ For an excellent outline of the numerous phases of Iraqi-Kurdish hostilities, see O’Ballance 1996.

¹²⁴ It is for this reason that Barzani supporters came to call the Ahmed-Talabani group the “sixty-sixers,” *jash*, or “little donkeys.” See Bulloch 1992, p. 128.

¹²⁵ Entessar, pp. 88-9.

¹²⁶ O’Ballance 1996, pp. 89-90.

agreement with Baghdad, which was a major political moment in its own right, but it also signified a major change in the intra-Kurdish politics.

This section explains why, after focusing so intently on Iraq’s adversaries, the Kurdish movement once again turned towards Iraq’s allies in 1965. Furthermore, what explains what appears to be an unanticipated shift in Kurdish diplomacy in 1972 when the Kurds unexpectedly double-down on relations with Iraq’s adversaries despite seven years of soliciting Baghdad’s allies? As will be explained below, we can attribute much this change to shifts in the local threat environment and changing Kurdish incentives (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Change in Threat Environment – Period 2 to 3

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable	1965-1974	←	1964-1965
Militarily Non-Viable			

Militarily Viable and United Movement (1965-1970)

From 1965 to 1966, the movement is clearly coded as united because the Ahmed-Talabani faction rejoined Barzani’s KDP umbrella. They may have done so harboring serious resentment and not all politburo officials were properly reintegrated, but the factions were by-and-large forced back together in a time of need. Less straight forward is the need to code the Kurdish national movement as united from 1966 to 1974.

Despite the temporary alliance between Barzani and the Ahmed-Talabani faction in 1965-66, the Ahmed-Talabani faction could not go back to a long-term unification with Barzani. Denied outside sources of support – won by Barzani in the 1964 intra-Kurdish conflict – and still in major disagreement with Barzani, the Ahmed-Talabani faction turned to Baghdad for

assistance to reengage Barzani.¹²⁷ After receiving indirect support and arms from Baghdad, the Ahmed-Talabani factions began to engage with the Barzani faction militarily.¹²⁸ The new Baath regime that had come to power in 1968 was even more interested in allying with Talabani as a way to undermine Barzani's influence over the Kurdish movement.¹²⁹ Intra-Kurdish clashes, alongside renewed Baghdad-Barzani fighting, continued until the March 1970 when Barzani and Vice President Saddam Hussein signed the Kurdish Autonomy Agreement. As the most comprehensive Kurdish autonomy deal to date, the Ahmed-Talabani faction was only then brought back into the KDP fold.¹³⁰

However, the period between 1966 and 1970 is coded as united based on the established criteria for two reasons. First, although the original Kurdish movement was now officially split between the two factions, the Ahmed-Talabani faction's alignment with Baghdad takes them out of the existing opposition movement. Barzani was able to effectively consolidate his position within the anti-Baghdad opposition, reorganizing the KDP in a manner that left him in control of the party.¹³¹ As Jawad argued, "What followed the conclusion of the agreement was not simply a split inside the KDP, but the beginning of a new era for the whole national movement, during which tribal domination was firmly re-established."¹³² The Barzani-led KDP remained unmoved despite conflict with the now Baghdad-backed Ahmed-Talabani faction.¹³³ Regardless of

¹²⁷ Bulloch 1992, p. 128.

¹²⁸ O'Ballance 1996, pp. 84-5.

¹²⁹ Entessar 2009, pp. 88-89.

¹³⁰ It is worth noting that the split locally was also met by a split diplomatically abroad, with the normally unified Kurdish movement in Europe splintering along political lines as well. Most students within the Kurdish unions and associations abroad were actually more closely aligned with the KDP politburo, and thus the Ahmed-Talabani splinter led to a general fragmentation of the movement abroad as well. See, Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015. Also, see O'Ballance 1996, p. 75; Interview with Siamand Banaa, 22 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and O'Ballance 1996, p. 75.

¹³¹ Jawad 1981, p. 172.

¹³² Jawad 1981, p. 159.

¹³³ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

whether the Ahmed-Talabani faction's decision to join Baghdad was temporary or tactical, the situation left the bulk of the anti-Baghdad movement as a singular force under Barzani. A second, related reason, is that formal Kurdish international diplomacy was almost entirely carried out by Barzani-affiliated diplomats during this period.¹³⁴ In short, Barzani had effectively cornered the market of rebellion both at home and abroad. Although the Ahmed-Talabani faction split from the KDP, its alliance to Baghdad takes them out of the opposition and thus we code the entire 1965 to 1975 phase as having a united movement.

With regards to military viability, like previous years, the Kurds continued to be a formidable fighting force against Baghdad. The Kurds were able to deal debilitating blows to the Iraqi army, such as the 1966 Battle of Mount Handrin in which the *peshmerga* destroyed nearly an entire Iraqi battalion.¹³⁵ Coming off major victories against Baghdad, the Bazzaz government tried to settle with the Kurds in a June 1966 agreement. The agreement was ultimately undone by the Baathist coup in 1968 and fighting resumed. Further accounting for the Kurds favorable balance of power in the north was the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Although Iraq suffered few losses in the war, Iraq had somewhere between 10-25,000 troops stationed in Jordan by 1968.¹³⁶ Baghdad was thus dividing its attention between the Kurds in the north and Israel to the west.¹³⁷ Between both fronts in the summer of 1969, the Iraqis were spread thin and ultimately "in no position to accept military challenge."¹³⁸ Furthermore, by 1969, the Kurds had a combined

¹³⁴ Although the student unions were overwhelmingly pro-politburo.

¹³⁵ O'Ballance 1996, p. 83.

¹³⁶ "Memorandum From John W. Foster of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)," 17 July 1968, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 199; and ARR 1968, No. 18, p. 278.

¹³⁷ "Memorandum From John W. Foster of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow)," 17 July 1968, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 199.

¹³⁸ "Telegram 1925 From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State." May 19, 1969. *FRUS*, Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 17.

strength of nearly 21,000.¹³⁹ In the run-up to the 1970 negotiations, the record was clear – “[The Iraqis] lost militarily. Terribly in ‘69, in February-March, all the way there was a series of battles – they lost every single one of them.”¹⁴⁰

With a militarily viable and unified Kurdish movement, we can anticipate the Kurds to pursue a strategy of “legitimizing rebellion,” focusing on Iraq’s allies in order to undermine the central government.

Strategy of Diplomacy (1965-1970)

Having settled a major episode of internal Kurdish competition, the Barzani-led KDP was now free to focus on its general war against Baghdad. Even if Barzani remained concerned about the Ahmed-Talabani faction, their latter’s fate was now tied to Baghdad. As such, the primary focus of Kurdish diplomacy during this period is on Iraq’s international supporters. The Soviets, Americans, France, and Britain. The Kurds continued, of course, to preserve their relations with Iraq’s adversaries. However, the primary focus was on Iraq’s allies with the goal of gaining international attention and convincing these actors to limit their support for Baghdad.

For example, there appears to have been a flurry of engagement with the U.S. in the spring of 1965, corresponding with the new Iraqi offensive. During this period, well-known Kurdish diplomat and European spokesman for Barzani, Ismet Sherif Vanly, came to the U.S. in the hopes of opening a local office,¹⁴¹ and Shafiq Qazzaz – already in the U.S. was selected as the first permanent KDP representative to Washington. At the same time Barzani was pushing for U.S. attention, the Iraqis were engaged in counter-diplomacy. In May 1965, the Iraqi Foreign

¹³⁹ O’Ballance 1996, p. 90.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁴¹ “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq,” 6 May 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 174.

Minister Najji Talib strongly urged the U.S. government to deport Vanly, as well as to demand that the Iranians cease their support for the Kurds.¹⁴²

The U.S. remained committed to non-involvement in internal Iraqi affairs and continued to turn the Kurds away. The Americans, preferred a calm and stable Iraq, and U.S. diplomats warned the Kurds to be wary of their associations with the Iranians.¹⁴³ By siding with the Israelis and Iranians, the Kurds may squander Arab sympathy should these relations become public.¹⁴⁴

The Iraqi-American relationship in general remained in constant flux. The Bazzaz premiership from September 1965 to August 1966 gave Americans a sign of hope that the Iraqis could lean closer to the West. Recognizing that the U.S. may become closer to Iraq was seen as an opportunity by the Kurds. As Barzani representative to Washington, Shafiq Qazzaz, acknowledged because America “could deal with a more sensible Iraqi government, maybe they could have more influence in terms of the Kurdish-Iraqi relationship...They could be more helpful in the sense that they probably could apply, have the chance to apply some pressure.”¹⁴⁵ The following year, however, Bazzaz was removed from power. Iraq severed diplomatic ties to the U.S. after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Soviet Union financial and military assistance to Iraq increased, and the U.S. became increasingly reliant upon the Shah in the Middle East.¹⁴⁶

Kurdish overtures to the Americans focused on gaining U.S. influence in matters vis-à-vis the Government of Iraq. For example, in 1967, Barzani had sent a letter to the U.S. through his emissary, Mahmoud Othman, asking the U.S. to “employ its influence to urge a final and just

¹⁴² “Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq,” 6 May 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 174.

¹⁴³ “Airgram from the Embassy in Iraq to the Department of State,” 30 October 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 177.

¹⁴⁴ “Intelligence Note From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to Secretary of State Rusk,” 1 September 1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 197.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

¹⁴⁶ Shemesh 1992, p. 12.

settlement of the Kurdish question in Iraq,” and also to assist with humanitarian aid in the north.¹⁴⁷ Later on, demands became more military specific but still indirect.¹⁴⁸ In June 1969, Barzani’s permanent representative, Shafiq Qazzaz, “asked for assistances from the United States Government. He was not very specific, but he said the Kurds needed money to buy arms and other supplies.”¹⁴⁹ More importantly, Qazzaz was quick to mention that “if the Kurds were provided with essential commodities they could handle the Iraqis by themselves and would not need further help.”¹⁵⁰

A diplomatic battle over American support highlights Iraq’s fears and the Kurds’ hopes that the U.S. would turn against Baghdad. At the same time the Kurds were asking for American support, the Iraqis pleaded to the U.S. to pressure the Iranians into giving up support to the Kurds.¹⁵¹ The Iraqi’s believed the U.S. was directly involved in aiding the Kurds, despite American assurances that it was not.¹⁵² At least on the surface, meetings with U.S. officials do not mention the use of American support to undermine Barzani’s rebel rivals.¹⁵³ In one meeting in June 1969, the Kurds explicitly stated that through U.S. assistance, “the Kurds would like to

¹⁴⁷ “Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Read) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow),” 16 February 1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 189.

¹⁴⁸ “Memorandum From the Executive Secretary of the Department of State (Read) to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow),” 16 February 1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 189.

¹⁴⁹ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 13 June 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 259.

¹⁵⁰ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 13 June 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 259.

¹⁵¹ In one example of many, “Charge d'Affaires J. Wesley Adams reported that Iraqi Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs Kadhim Khalaf had called him to the Foreign Office to request ‘in the strongest terms’ that the United States intervene with the Iranians to obtain cessation of the flow of arms from Iran to the Kurds. Adams noted that he made the usual disclaimer regarding the U.S. ability to influence Iran but agreed to forward the request” (“Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy of Iran,” 11 August 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 175).

¹⁵² “Memorandum of Conversation,” 10 December 1964, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 169.

¹⁵³ The first official mention of Talabani in the *FRUS* series is in May 1967. See “Intelligence Note From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hughes) to Secretary of State Rusk,” 1 September 1967, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 197.

cause the downfall of the present Iraqi regime and have it replaced by a government that would be more cooperative with the Kurds.”¹⁵⁴

The Kurds were also interested in slowing weapons transfers from Iraq’s primary arms suppliers, including the British and the French. The common pitch was that foreign weapons were not used for Iraq’s external security, but to wage a war against its own people. For example, the Kurds successfully solicited France to cancel an order of Mirage jetfighters being purchased by Baghdad. Barzani had asked French journalist to pass a note to De Gaulle, explaining the Kurdish movement and encouraging De Gaulle to reconsider. The ploy was apparently a success.¹⁵⁵ In another incident, Barzani sent two top emissaries to meet with the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) in Britain to threaten them over their relations with Baghdad. They said, “you’re selling oil and [Iraq is] using money to buy guns. If you don’t stop supplying Iraq with arms, we attack IPC.”¹⁵⁶ Barzani attacked an IPC installation in the region shortly thereafter.

Of course, this is also a period in which the Kurds began to receive increasing support from the Iranians and Israelis. However, there is no indication that a specific diplomatic campaign focused on the Iranians, while engagements with the Israelis – including a trip by Barzani to Israel in 1968¹⁵⁷ – was seen as a way to gain access to the Americans.¹⁵⁸

The Kurds only received material support from the Iranians and Israelis, as well as fiscal support and training. Although the content and quantity of the aid varied during the time period in question – depending the back-and-forth between Iraq and Barzani¹⁵⁹ – such support was

¹⁵⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 13 June 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 259.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Hemin Hawrami, July 2014, Salahaddin (Musif), Iraq.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Anonymous, June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq. Also, see Cooley 2005, p. 83.

¹⁵⁸ Bengio 2012, pp. 73-76.

¹⁵⁹ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 29 May 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 258.

rather consistent. There is some indication that Iranian troops may have been directly involved in some skirmishes in the north, however, it is likely that this may be pure speculation.¹⁶⁰ For the most part, Iranian aid was limited in such a way so as to keep the Kurds on a short leash.¹⁶¹ Although one could wonder whether the Kurds requested direct intervention from Israel or Iran, this does not appear to be the case. Not only would the Kurds be weary of exposing their links to the Israelis, but when the Israelis offered to send Barzani tanks with Israeli crews to assist in the fighting, “Idriss Barzani said that he preferred to have all Kurdish crews for any tanks and requested that Kurds be trained in the operation of tanks.”¹⁶² This admittedly minor example, demonstrates a preference for indirect, as opposed to direct support from the Israelis.

Militarily Viable and United Movement (1970-1974)

In the face of increasing losses and pressure from the Soviets,¹⁶³ Baghdad settled with the Kurds in 1970. The March 1970 Agreement was the most comprehensive autonomy package offered to the Kurds. The 1970 Iraqi-Kurdish Autonomy Agreement was not destined to hold. Fearing Baathist insincerity, Barzani refused to break off ties with the Iranians and rebuffed efforts to integrate the KDP into a new national unity government under the Baathist regime.¹⁶⁴ Both the Iraqis and the Kurds had reason to seek revision. The autonomy plan was believed to have been imposed on Baghdad and Barzani by heavy Soviet influence. Baghdad dragged its feet

¹⁶⁰ Alexis 1991, p. 141; and “Airgram 386 From the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State,” 22 September 1969, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 261.

¹⁶¹ Randal 1997, pp. 160-161.

¹⁶² “Central Intelligence Agency Information Cable TDCS DB-315/01044-70,” 9 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 267.

¹⁶³ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; “Telegram 928 From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State,” 12 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 53; and “Telegram 1019 From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State,” 19 March 1970, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 55. The ICP also claimed to have played a direct role in helping the KDP and Baath reach an agreement in 1970. See Franzen 2011, p. 189.

¹⁶⁴ Marr 2004, pp. 155; and “Airgram A-38 From the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State,” 2 February 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 297.

implementing the accord and Barzani grew increasingly certain nothing would come of it. Adding to the general feeling of Baathist insincerity were two attempts at Barzani's life between 1970 and 1972, and another on his son, Idris.¹⁶⁵

The first two years following the peace agreement remained relatively calm, with both sides avoiding direct confrontation with the other.¹⁶⁶ Troubles came to a head when it was announced that Baghdad sought a new national unity government, including both the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, along with the Ba'ath. The proposal put Barzani and his *peshmerga* forces into an immediate crisis. The Kurds essentially had two options. They could agree to join the unity government. However, doing so would spell the end of Kurdish nationalist aspirations for generations to come and a more permanent rise of Soviet control in Iraq. Or they could reject the offer, triggering a resumption of armed hostilities with Baghdad and the full weight of the Soviet Union behind her.¹⁶⁷ Although the Kurds could likely hold out for some time against a renewed offensive, they knew they would need more help to resist the combined forces of their enemies.

Refusing to join the unity government, Barzani opted to resist and began a large scale campaign to solicit international assistance in anticipation for the fight. Barzani enlisted numerous emissaries, including his own sons, and renewed contacts with the Iranians, Kuwaitis, Saudis, Jordanians, and most importantly, the Americans. Minor skirmishes ensued through 1973,¹⁶⁸ but escalated to war in March 1974.

¹⁶⁵ Ghareeb 1981, pp. 108; and O'Ballance 1996, p. 92.

¹⁶⁶ Ghareeb 1981, p. 105.

¹⁶⁷ "Memorandum From the Director of Central Intelligence (Helms) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Secretary Rogers, and Secretary Laird," 29 March 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 302.

¹⁶⁸ Entessar 2009, p. 95.

It was also during this time period that international Kurdish diplomacy evolved from an informal movement to formal diplomatic ties.¹⁶⁹ Prior to 1972, Kurdish diplomats could not deal directly with foreign governments, but were instead forced to conduct public diplomacy and back-alley deals with low-level foreign officers. However, once the Kurds became the key to Western opposition to Soviet penetration in the Middle East, access to foreign government officials improved.¹⁷⁰ During this time period, there were a number of high-level Kurdish diplomats operating on behalf of Barzani and the KDP abroad. These included, Mohsin Dizaye and Sami Abdel Rahman,¹⁷¹ Mohammad Dosky,¹⁷² Mahmoud Othman, Masoud Barzani, Idris Barzani, Shafiq Qazzaz, and Siamand Banaa, among others.

At the signing of the 1970 agreement, the Kurdish movement remained as militarily capable as ever, having faced no major setbacks in the previous campaign,¹⁷³ and remained so until the summer of 1974. Whereas the Kurdish movement began with only 600 fighters in 1961,¹⁷⁴ Barzani could now boast up to 25,000 *peshmerga*, as well as nearly 24,000 fighters in reserve.¹⁷⁵ In fact, it was the KDP's "increased military strength" that brought the Baathists to negotiations in 1970.¹⁷⁶ As one March 1973 intelligence assessment noted, "Mulla Mustafa Barzani is stronger now than at any other time in his 12-year struggle against the central government." Yet while some reports concluded that the Iraqi army "could not fight its way out of a wet paper bag," the Kurds were indeed facing a stronger than usual adversary thanks to a vast increase in Soviet military support.

¹⁶⁹ Charountaki 2011, pp. 135-6.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Safin Dizaye, July 2014, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁷² Shareef 2014, p. 140.

¹⁷³ Stansfield 2003, p. 75.

¹⁷⁴ Marr 1992, p. 105.

¹⁷⁵ Franzen notes that the Kurds may have had up to 50,000 *peshmerga*, facing 90,000 Iraqis. See Franzen 2011, p. 189.

¹⁷⁶ Franzen 2011, p. 189.

Fearing a renewal of fighting, even under conditions of preexisting strength, Barzani sought additional aid as a cushion. Part of the issue at first was simply a matter of paying *peshmerga* salaries. As stipulated by the 1970 peace accord, the central government was paying the salary for Barzani's own forces. However, with a fight impending, such aid was cut off and Barzani would require "\$7,200,000 annually just to pay the current force of 15,000 soldiers he claims to have."¹⁷⁷ Barzani was also hoping to increase his forces to 50,000, which would require \$24,000,000 to pay their salaries.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, a fight against the Soviet-backed Iraqis would require serious weapons upgrades and continuous supply lines. While the Iranians were still backing the Kurds in these matters, Barzani hardly trusted the Shah and Iranian assistance had been limited. By 1972, the Kurds would secure American assistance, in addition to Iranian aid. Pre-emptive diplomacy to secure American support vastly improved the Kurds' military position before the outbreak of hostilities, and ensured the maintenance of Kurdish military viability in the run-up to war. As such, the Kurds could be classified as highly *militarily viable*.

With regards to the cohesion of the Kurdish liberation movement, the Kurds were united. Although some Kurdish tribes remained allied with the central government, those in the opposition were united under Barzani's command. Talabani's rank-and-file cadres were reintegrated into Barzani's KDP, and after some time, Barzani eventually let its leadership back in as well.¹⁷⁹ This represented a true unification of the movement. As one Kurdish leader put it, it

¹⁷⁷ "Memorandum From the Chief of the Near East and South Asia Division, Central Intelligence Agency (Waller) to the Director of Central Intelligence (Helms)," 12 June 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 315.

¹⁷⁸ "Memorandum From the Chief of the Near East and South Asia Division, Central Intelligence Agency (Waller) to the Director of Central Intelligence (Helms)," 12 June 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 315.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq; and Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

was a “fusion, not alliance,” which “gave strength and acceptability to the KDP and Barzani.”¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, Talabani was sent to Beirut and Damascus as Barzani’s representative to avoid any further leadership issues.¹⁸¹ The unity emerged largely because the 1970 accord had effectively ended government assistance to the Ahmed-Talabani faction and thus forced the politburo’s forces back into Barzani’s hands.¹⁸² Furthermore, it would have been politically difficult for the old politburo to resist Barzani’s leadership after signing such a far-reaching autonomy agreement.¹⁸³ And as it became clearer that the Baathists would not honor the agreement, the Ahmed-Talabani faction likely recognized the growing threat to the movement as a whole.

U.S. intelligence documents corroborate Kurdish unity. One report indicated that “Our contacts among émigrés in Beirut who claim to have close ties with Kurdish nationalists assert that the bulk of the Kurdish population shares these sentiments and is more behind Barzani than at any time in the past.”¹⁸⁴ Others remarked that “Barzani’s prestige among the Kurds has never been higher. Almost all of the tribes now support him, including such traditional Barzani tribal rivals as the Lolans, the Harkis and the greater part of the Zibaris. In addition the Jalal Talabani faction of the KDP is now completely behind Barzani with Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmed in the north at Barzani’s headquarters.”¹⁸⁵ In short, the consensus was that although Talabani and his

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁸² O’Ballance 1996, p. 90; Bengio 2012, p. 50-53; and Tripp 200, p. 155.

¹⁸³ Bengio 2012, p. 50; Stansfield 2003, p. 74; and Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁸⁴ “Airgram A-38 From the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State,” 2 February 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 297.

¹⁸⁵ “Memorandum From Andrew Killgore of the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco),” 3 April 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 304.

followers may only be temporarily aligned with Barzani, “factionalism [was] not a serious concern of the Kurdish Democratic Party.”¹⁸⁶

Given that the movement was united and militarily viable, we would anticipate that the KDP would engage in “legitimizing rebellion,” by approaching Iraq’s allies for indirect support toward undermining Baghdad.

Strategy of Diplomacy (1970-1974)

Given the unity of the Kurdish movement, we anticipate Kurds appealing directly to Iraq’s major power allies. In this case, that would be the Soviet Union. From 1958, Iraq gradually moved from Western to Soviet influence,¹⁸⁷ and the Iraqis soon found themselves reliant upon the Soviets for the military, economic, and political aid.¹⁸⁸ The Soviet Union also viewed Iraq as increasingly important during this phase. The Soviets had signed a friendship pact with Egypt in 1971, but relations with Sadat grew tense and Egypt expelled Soviet advisors in 1972. Without an Egyptian route to Middle East politics, Iraq was an important runner-up.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, the growth of U.S. support for Iran made Iraq an important counter-weight in the region. The actions of both super powers created a self-fulfilling prophecy by which the alliances between Iraq and the USSR, and the U.S. and Iran, became increasingly fortified.¹⁹⁰ In April of 1972, Baghdad signed a Treaty of Friendship with Moscow and nationalized the Iraq Petroleum Company, declaratively siding with Moscow.¹⁹¹ Moscow had become the unambiguous ally of Iraq, while the U.S. finally became a clear adversary.

¹⁸⁶ “Memorandum Prepared in the Central Intelligence Agency,” 5 September 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 232.

¹⁸⁷ Franzen 2011, p. 185.

¹⁸⁸ “Airgram A-38 From the Embassy in Lebanon to the Department of State,” 2 February 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 297. Also see, Fukuyama 1980.

¹⁸⁹ Shemesh 1992, p. 59; and Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁹⁰ On the build-up of this dynamic, see Jawad 1981, p. 311.

¹⁹¹ Shemesh 1992, pp. 65-75.

However, the Kurds ultimately focused their diplomatic attention on the U.S. and forged an alliance with the Iranians. Later, during the war, the Kurds would renew appeals to Iraq's global and regional allies to try to undermine Baghdad, in addition to doubling down on its relations with Iraq's adversaries. What explains this mixed result?

It is apparent that the eventual focus on Baghdad's adversaries was not a preferred strategy, but a logical adjustment once it was certain that the Soviet Union would back Baghdad. In fact, prior to the 1972 agreement, the Kurds continued to lobby the Soviet Union, hoping that Moscow would use its influence over Iraq to secure the implementation of the 1970 peace agreement. The Kurds even went to Moscow in 1970 to air their grievances to the annual CPSU congress in 1970.¹⁹² Most agree that Barzani tried to engage with the Soviets but had no option but to turn to the U.S. and Iran once the 1972 Friendship Treaty was a forgone conclusion.¹⁹³ As one Kurdish noted of the time, "The Soviets and socialist countries preferred Baghdad. They [the Kurds] had no other options but to strengthen their ties and listen more with other parts."¹⁹⁴

Although the Kurds continued to maintain contacts with the Soviets – sending KDP representatives to Moscow as late as 1974 – the Kurds realized by 1972 that trying to convince the Soviets to pressure Iraq into accepting Kurdish terms was a futile effort.¹⁹⁵ Fearing that the Soviet alliance with Iraq would debilitate the Kurds' balance of power in Iraq, Barzani attempted to have Kurdish considerations built into the 1972 treaty. Yet as Bengio notes, "the Soviets ignored his request."¹⁹⁶ As such, "the agreement 'left the Kurdish national movement with its back against the wall.'"¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Chaliand 1993, p. 168.

¹⁹³ Shemesh 1992, 89; Bengio 2012, p. 67; and Chaliand 1993, p. 168.

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

¹⁹⁵ Ghareeb 1981, p. 167; and Shemesh 1992, pp. 89-90.

¹⁹⁶ Bengio 2012, p. 67.

¹⁹⁷ Bengio 2012, p. 67.

It is worth noting that Barzani had been receiving some aid from the Soviets until 1972, but was quickly suspended once Barzani's ties to the CIA emerged.¹⁹⁸ Even after the split, some left-leaning members of the KDP continued to lobby the leadership in favor of continuing ties with the Soviets, albeit to little success.¹⁹⁹ Diplomatic ties with the Soviets were not cut off until late 1974. The Soviets made a serious effort to convince the Kurds to ally with Baghdad between 1972 and 1974. For example, the Soviets sent high-level representatives to Barzani's headquarters in February 1972 to try to convince Barzani to join the Baath in government.²⁰⁰ By this point, though, Barzani saw the Soviets as a political and personal threat.

In short, with Moscow fully siding with Baghdad, Barzani found the avenue to direct leverage over Baghdad closed. Unable to use Baghdad's own allies against her, Barzani now needed to double down on his existing ties with Iraq's adversaries. "The Kurds were stuck in between because you had on the other side Baath party and Saddam – they were not ready to implement even half of what you agreed with. Soviets were not in a position to press more on Saddam, they were happy with their treaty with Saddam and they just don't wanted to provoke him any more...That's why we're stuck in between..."²⁰¹ By 1973, Kurdish-Soviet relations had begun to thin out.²⁰² As another former Kurdish diplomat put it, "At that time, as far as I know, everyone reached a conclusion that the Soviets have decided on Baghdad and that's it."²⁰³ This dynamic – attempting to appeal to the COIN state's allies first, and then settling for its adversaries should that fail – is predicted by my theory.

¹⁹⁸ Randal 1997, p. 136; Cooley 2005, p. 86; and Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

²⁰⁰ Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," 28 July 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 321.

²⁰¹ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁰² Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁰³ Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

Kurdish diplomacy with the United States picked up in late 1971 and remained extensive throughout the remaining period in question. From November 1971 to May 1972 alone, there were at least six meetings between Barzani representatives in the United States and the Middle East, in which the Kurds solicited help from the U.S.²⁰⁴ The Kurds met with State Department officials, as well as employees from the CIA, providing in depth information on Soviet infiltration into Iraq politics as well as how American support for Barzani could reverse such a trend. The Kurds even warned the U.S. long in advance of the impending the Soviet-Iraq friendship treaty.²⁰⁵ And while the American position on supporting the Kurds remained unmoved during these early meetings, internal debates within the State Department and the CIA reveal a growing sense that supporting Barzani may be the best way to thwart Soviet threats to Gulf security.²⁰⁶

The Americans finally agreed to offer covert assistance to Barzani during a May 1972 meeting between President Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and the Shah of Iran.²⁰⁷ By July, the U.S. was transferring the Kurds money and arms to bolster their defenses. The mission was highly secretive and bypassed approval from internal oversight committees, such as the infamous “Committee of 40.”²⁰⁸ Even on the Kurdish side, only a handful of Kurdish officials were aware of the deal. The result was that some Kurdish diplomats continued to lobby the U.S. government for assistance, unaware that the U.S. was already funding Barzani’s operations.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ This figure is based on the author’s count of meetings recorded in the FRUS online archive.

²⁰⁵ “Memorandum From the Director of Central Intelligence (Helms) to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Secretary Rogers, and Secretary Laird,” 31 March 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 303.

²⁰⁶ “Summary,” *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972; and Charountaki 2011, pp. 136-8.

²⁰⁷ Galbraith 2006, p. 147.

²⁰⁸ Pike 1977.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq; and Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq. For example, on July 27, 1973, Barzani representative Shafiq Qazzaz lobbied the U.S. for support, seemingly unaware that such aid was already being supplied. See “Memorandum of Conversation,” 27 July

The Kurdish pitch for American support was straightforward. With the Soviet-Iraq friendship treaty and the proposed national unity plan in Iraq, the Soviets were steps away from having complete access to Iraq as a client state. From this position, the communist corridor would extend all the way to the Persian Gulf where Soviet actions could threaten the entire region. The Kurds, however, were the last line of defense towards the completion of this plan. Not only would the Kurds resist integration with the Baath, but Barzani believed that armed resistance could bring about the regime's collapse. A new Iraqi regime – bringing Kurds, anti-Baath Sunni, and Shia together – would, of course, be pro-American.²¹⁰ Americans would not only get preferential access to Iraqi oil, but the Kurds would be a willing pro-American ally in the Middle East.²¹¹ As one unnamed Kurdish representative stressed in a meeting with Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms, Colonel Richard Kennedy, and an unnamed representative of the CIA, “in return for the American assistance requested above, Mulla Barzani was prepared to commit his movement and his fighting forces to the policies of the United States Government.”²¹²

The U.S. was beginning to see the benefits of such a scheme. However, what the Kurds did not realize was that while the Kurds and the U.S. saw eye-to-eye on the need to use the Kurdish liberation movement as a bulwark against Soviet control in Iraq, they did not agree on the outcome. Whereas the Kurds saw autonomy in northern Iraq, or a Kurdish-backed regime in Baghdad as the likely outcome, the Americans and Iranians had little faith that the Kurds could

1973, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 226. For more details on the secret nature of the agreement, see Charountaki 2010, pp. 137-138.

²¹⁰ For more in depth analysis on this subject, see Charountaki 2010, pp. 135-136. For more in-depth analysis of U.S., Iraqi, and Kurdish relations during this time period, see Gibson 2015.

²¹¹ “Memorandum From Andrew Killgore of the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco),” 3 April 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 304.

²¹² “Memorandum of Conversation,” 5 July 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 319.

stabilize Iraq or shake Soviet influence.²¹³ The preferred outcome from the American and Iranian perspective was thus to use a Kurdish rebellion to keep Baghdad off-balance. In other words, both a Kurdish defeat and victory could be politically dangerous for the future of Iraq, as well as America's CENTO allies, Turkey and Iran, who would be deeply anxious if Kurdish autonomy emerged in northern Iraq.²¹⁴

The need to bring on the U.S., however, does not appear to be entirely out of want for additional resources. Although the Kurds required an increase in money and munitions to take on Baghdad, the primary reason for soliciting the Americans was the perceived leverage the Americans had over the Iranians, who had been aiding Barzani for nearly a decade. The primary goal of enlisting U.S. support was less to receive major financial or military assistance from the U.S., but mostly as a "guarantee" that Iranian support would continue unabated.²¹⁵ Not only had the Shah smothered the still-born Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1946, but Iranian aid to the Kurds had always been highly variable and conditional.²¹⁶ As one Kurdish diplomat noted in meetings with the U.S., the Shah "blows hot and cold in [sic] his support of the Kurdish national movement. Barzani cannot commit himself to an all-out struggle against the Ba'ath regime in Baghdad on the basis of such unpredictable support."²¹⁷ With American influence, however, the Kurds would feel assured that aid would be forthcoming.

Apparently, the Kurds may have also hoped the U.S. could exert influence over the Soviet Union itself. If the Kurds had little leverage over the Soviets, then the Kurds could try to

²¹³ "Memorandum From Andrew Killgore of the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco)," 3 April 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 304.

²¹⁴ Also see, Shareef 2014, pp. 139-140.

²¹⁵ See Pike 1977.

²¹⁶ Heraclides 1991, p. 142.

²¹⁷ "Memorandum From Andrew Killgore of the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco)," 3 April 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 304.

change Moscow's position through a more powerful actor. During this period of détente, the United States could possibly convince the Soviets to back off. As such, in March 1974, at the critical moment before full-scale hostilities between the Baghdad and Barzani began, Barzani was hoping to meet directly with Kissinger with the hope that "Dr. Kissinger would intercede with Gromyko, to get the Russians to tell the Iraqis not to attack the Kurds."²¹⁸

The appeals to the West were explicitly focused on Kurdish desires to undermine the central government. By 1972, Iraq appeared to be in the Soviet Union's pocket and so the U.S. welcomed an opportunity to give the Baathists problems. The Iranians were also rather explicit about using the Kurds as a proxy to pester the Iraqis.²¹⁹ The Israelis, as always, were happy to cooperate and saw the Kurds as a useful distraction to the Iraqi military.²²⁰ Kurdish appeals also made it clear that the target of intervention was the Baathist regime. In fact, Kurdish diplomats used the point that the KDP politburo was now behind Barzani as a way of selling outside intervention. On multiple occasions, Kurdish diplomats highlighted the fact that the Kurdish movement was united and that the goal was to stage a common front against Baghdad, even with non-Kurdish Arab elements.²²¹

As for what the Kurds planned on doing with outside aid, the Kurds essentially presented three options – all of which involved indirect support to undermine Baghdad, and not rival rebel factions. First, Barzani could use indirect support to maintain a defensive position in northern Iraq and fight off advances from the Iraqi army. The idea was to bleed the Iraqis dry, allowing

²¹⁸ "Backchannel Message From the Ambassador to Iran (Helms) to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Scowcroft)," 18 March 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 242.

²¹⁹ Pike 1977.

²²⁰ Cooley 2005.

²²¹ "Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," 28 July 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 321.

for public opinion to bring down the Baath from within. A second plan of action would be to go on the offensive against Iraqi forces and force a military victory on the plains of Iraq. The third plan, involved the offensive elements of the second, but involved a broader revolutionary front that would include Arab elements.²²² During one meeting at the Hay-Adams Hotel in Washington, D.C. in April 1972, Barzani representative Mahmoud Othman made it clear that Baghdad was the target and that the revolution would be for all Iraqis. Speaking with State Department Iraqi Desk Office Thomas J. Scotese, Othman stated that “Mulla Mustafa Barzani appeals to the U.S. Government for financial and military assistance to enable him to establish in Iraqi Kurdistan an Iraqi government-in- exile consisting of Kurds and Arabs, as a stepping-stone leading to the overthrow of the Iraqi Ba’th Party.” Furthermore, Othman, “on behalf of Barzani, has been in touch with ‘reputable’ Iraqi elements who are opposed to the Ba’thists and who are prepared to cooperate with the Kurds in an attempt to overthrow the Ba’th regime. These Arab elements, however will make no overt commitment to support Barzani until they are assured of U.S. support, both moral and financial.”²²³

The U.S., however, was only interested in the first course of action. Although the Kurds were fierce fighters in the mountains, exposing Barzani’s forces to pitched battles against the Soviet-backed Iraqis could be disastrous. And again, America’s goal was not to bring down the Baath, but merely to relieve Iraq of Soviet influence. From an American perspective, there was no guarantee that even a successful Kurdish rebellion would lead to increased domestic stability. In fact, it may create more instability that would invite deeper Soviet influence. Alternatively,

²²² “Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” 28 July 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 321.

²²³ “Memorandum From Andrew Killgore of the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs to the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Sisco),” 3 April 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 304.

even if the Kurds managed to create a new, unified regime, it would likely have a hard time shaking existing Soviet ties.²²⁴ As such, even though the Kurds preferred the second operation plan – followed by the third – the U.S. continued to deny the Kurds the resources to do anything more than maintain a defensive posture in the north.²²⁵

At this point in time, the Kurds also solicited assistance from other actors in the region, including the Jordanians and Saudis, and to a lesser extent the Kuwaitis.²²⁶ The general purpose, similar to the Kurdish push for American assistance, was to ensure that the Kurds were not completely vulnerable to Iranian influence. However, like the U.S., aid was initially hard to come by.²²⁷

In sum, while the Kurds did engage with Iraq's allies – the Soviet Union – up until 1972, there was in fact more of a focus on Iraq's enemies – the U.S. and Iran – thereafter.²²⁸ This finding corresponds with the predict that when the avenue of leverage through the COIN state's allies is closed, groups will turn back towards a COIN state's adversaries. The critical decision to give up on Iraq's allies happened in the immediate period surrounding the 1972 Soviet-Iraqi agreement. Knowing that the only option was to capitulate to Baghdad or fight, the Kurds decided to buckle down and solicit aid from those actors who had already proven to be useful allies and aligned with the Kurds.

²²⁴ As such, when Barzani hinted that he would declare Kurdish autonomy in April 1974, Kissinger “suggested that Helms point out that the U.S. objective was to give the Kurds capacity for negotiating recognition of their rights by Iraq and to keep the Iraqi regime tied down, but not to divide Iraq with the creation of an unviable Kurdish area that would permanently damage U.S. and Iranian relations with Iraq” (“Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs [Kissinger] to President Nixon,” 11 April 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 246).

²²⁵ For a more detailed account of U.S. decision-making in supporting the Kurds during the early 1970s, see Shareef 2014, pp. 140-144.

²²⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation,” 23 July 1973, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 24.

²²⁷ ARR 1971, No. 2, p. 56; and ARR 1971, No. 14, p. 376.

²²⁸ Also, Ghareeb 1981, p. 161; Chaliand 1993, p. 218; and Randal 1997, pp. 148-153.

With regards to the type of intervention the Kurds sought, appeals were explicitly for indirect intervention – guns, money, and material – up until the summer of 1974. This is not to say that the Kurds were not asking for substantial amounts of money and materiel. In fact, the Kurds were asking for quite more than their interlocutors were willing to offer. The primary sticking point in negotiations between the Kurds and the U.S. over aid had to do with whether the Kurds would be given enough resources to take offensive action against Baghdad, or whether the Kurds would be limited to defensive capabilities. Whereas the Kurds were hoping for the former, the U.S. and the Iranians were pushing for the latter.²²⁹ Yet regardless of whether outside allies gave the Kurds offensive or defensive capabilities, such aid would still represent variations on indirect support. Barzani wanted the money and materiel to wage his own battles, without external interference. As such, there is no evidence that the Kurds asked the U.S. or the Iranians to send in troops or to attack the Iraqis themselves until the closing innings of the war.

Finally, it is worth noting that the onset of hostilities in 1974 led to the creation of a new Kurdish diplomatic institution: a formal “committee of foreign relations” office in Tehran under the auspices of Shafiq Qazzaz and Mahmoud Othman. The purpose of the office was to coordinate external missions abroad, as well as to serve as an information office for outside actors who would be interested in contacting the Kurdish opposition. Having the office in Tehran, as opposed to in Iraqi Kurdistan, made the office accessible to foreign states, reporters, and personalities. In addition to coordinating external missions to the UN, European countries, and the U.S., Qazzaz notes the benefits of the office for public relations:

“We had a representative to contact UN [unofficially], as we did in so many other European countries and America...I was partially responsible for this. I had direct contact with all them, I would say about 24 hours a day, and then later. And this helped because I think in 1974 it was a

²²⁹ “Memorandum From the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Haig) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” 28 July 1972, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume E-4, Documents on Iran and Iraq, 1969-1972, Document 321.

year as I see it characterized by the attention of the outside audience – this included film makers, journalists, humanitarian organizations...At some times, some people used to say that ‘your office is far more busy than the Iraqi embassy’ because so many people were coming in and out...and through that we really developed, if you can – this is not diplomacy, this is I would say PR [public relations].”²³⁰

Still, there was more of a formal diplomatic component. The office was “contacting all the embassies, Western embassies, giving them a brief about the events...once a week. And also dealing with visitors. So he would one day come to him journalists, foreign organization, whatever. He would direct them where to go in Iran...Qazzaz was in charge in Tehran and his office was really very powerful. It was done by the consent of the Shah because the Americans were involved. So they were involved with the lobbying with the different embassies...Embassies he was most associated with was the British, not the French, so almost all the Western – but the French at the time were very pro-Saddam.”²³¹

While the Tehran office at home focused on public relations and initiating contacts with foreign embassies in Tehran, external diplomats were touring European capitals on behalf of the Kurdish rebellion. Once the fighting started, Mohsin Dizaye and Sami Abdul Rahman visited the United Nations and “most of the European states.”²³² The purpose of the meetings was “to get any kind of help from these governments and people of these countries to the Kurds, and to show them what Saddam government doing to the Kurds.”²³³ It was about both gaining legitimacy and gaining material support. The Kurds met with UN officials and provided a memorandum, the American ambassador to the UN, and the Pakistani head of mission. The broader purpose of the UN mission was to gain “either a ceasefire, or to force the Iraqi to treat the Kurds better.”²³⁴

²³⁰ Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

²³¹ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²³² Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom.

²³³ Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom.

²³⁴ Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom.

Period 4: 1974 to 1975

This period, beginning in the summer of 1974, represents a drastic change in the type of intervention the Kurds solicit from its outside actors, from indirect aid to direct intervention. What triggered the Kurds to begin requesting not only outside powers to apply diplomatic pressure on Baghdad to pull back its assault, but also on the Iranians to directly engage with the Iraqis on the ground and in the skies above Kurdistan? This change can be explained by the changing viability of the rebellion (Table 3.5). Furthermore, the target of diplomacy during this phase remains mixed. Although the Kurds did appeal briefly to the Soviet Union and the Arab Union as the war worsened, the Kurds mostly engaged with the Iranians and Americans to bring the conflict to a close.

Table 3.5: Change in Threat Environment – Period 3 to 4

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable	1965-1974 ↓		
Militarily Non-Viable	1974-1975		

Militarily Viable and Fragmented Movement

With regards to the unification of the Kurdish movement, there appears to be no major change between the mid-1974 period and that prior. There were no major splits in the Kurdish movement and the KDP remained unified in the throes of war. What had changed drastically, however, was the military viability of the Kurdish insurgency. Although the early stages of the

war had gone quite well for the Kurds by advancing deep into the Iraqi plains,²³⁵ Baghdad's summer offensive threw the Kurds on the defensive and back into the mountains.²³⁶

As the war continued into 1974 the Kurds began to face greater setbacks and thus began to request greater sources of support.²³⁷ There were a number of changes on the ground that led to the Kurds' position of weakness. First, the Iraqis had far superior weaponry than in previous wars, thanks to the procurement of Soviet planes, bombers, and tanks.²³⁸ Second, the Iraqis managed to hold their lines through the winter of 1974/5, when it previously believed they could not.²³⁹ Third, knowing the Kurds relied heavily on a continuous stream of supplies from Iran, Iraqi strategy was geared towards "cutting off Kurdish supply line [sic] to Iran by creating fortified [sic] line parallel to Iranian border."²⁴⁰ Finally, the Iraqi advance had created a large-scale refugee crisis sending hundreds of thousands of Kurdish civilians to seek refuge with Barzani's forces near the Iranian border. As such, Barzani not only had to care for his own fighters, but for the general welfare of the masses of civilians living in harsh conditions.²⁴¹ Iraqi successes may have also had an unprecedented psychological effect on the Kurdish rebellion. When the Iraqis managed to advance near Barzani's headquarters in Haji-Umran in November 1974, Barzani noted that "this is something that has not happened during the entire history of our movement."²⁴²

²³⁵ ARR 1974, No. 7, pp. 126-127.

²³⁶ ARR 1974, No. 11, p. 222; and ARR 1974, No. 12, p. 250.

²³⁷ Stansfield 2003, pp. 76-77.

²³⁸ "Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Colby to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," 2 November 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 264.

²³⁹ O'Ballance 1996, p. 96; and Interview with Dr. Shafiq Qazzaz, 24 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

²⁴⁰ "Telegram From the Consulate in Tabriz to the Department of State," 4 September 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 261; and Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁴¹ "Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Colby to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," 2 November 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 264. Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

²⁴² "Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Colby to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)," 2 November 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 264.

The rapid decline in Kurdish capabilities began in the summer of 1974 and became increasingly perilous through the winter. At this point, the Kurds realized “they cannot hold fixed positions,” and thus the Kurds were simply “fighting delaying action with resistance becoming increasingly strong as Iraqis push north.”²⁴³ After nearly seven months of war of “genocidal proportion on Kurdistan,”²⁴⁴ and suffering a rapid decline in the balance of power on the field,²⁴⁵ Barzani’s revolt became non-viable from a military perspective.²⁴⁶ As Edmund Ghareeb notes, without Iran’s direct intervention in the conflict, Barzani’s forces would have been destroyed.²⁴⁷ Given a united movement that had suddenly become militarily non-viable, we would anticipate the Kurds to engage in a strategy of “outsourcing rebellion.”

Strategy of Diplomacy

Much like the previous period, Kurdish diplomacy remained relatively mixed, with a greater focus on Iraq’s adversaries (for the same reasons described in the previous phase). However, instead of soliciting indirect aid, the Kurds now solicited direct intervention for a strategy of “outsourcing rebellion.” The Kurds were deeply involved with the Iranians and Americans at this point and battle lines had been drawn. With the situation growing dire, “Barzani requested that the United States intervene with Iraq to stop the military offensive and to begin negotiations with the Kurdish movement. He also requested that the United States

²⁴³ “Telegram From the Consulate in Tabriz to the Department of State,” September 4, 1974. *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 261.

²⁴⁴ “Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Colby to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” 2 November 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 264.

²⁴⁵ Shemesh 1992, p. 127.

²⁴⁶ “Telegram From the Consulate in Tabriz to the Department of State,” 4 September 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 261.

²⁴⁷ Ghareeb 1981, p. 167. Assessing the viability of the Kurdish movement during this period is further complicated by how the movement’s leaders came to view the episode. While descriptions of the events seem dire, most Kurdish politicians will say that the Kurds could have continued fighting even without Iranian assistance. This line is particularly common amongst future members of the PUK, but even next generation KDP members felt that the Kurds were defeated “politically” not militarily. Either way, it is certain the Kurds were facing an unprecedented degree of immobility and destruction.

intervene with Iran to permit the Kurds to continue their minor guerrilla war until the Kurdish problem was resolved in the framework of comprehensive negotiations.”²⁴⁸ In October 1974, Barzani had also made his request for “direct help from the Iranian army to prevent the collapse of the movement” clear to the Iranians as well.²⁴⁹

However, there are instances of the Kurds asking Iraqi allies to step in as well. For example, during the same month, Barzani appealed to the Arab summit in Rabat, sending “conferees a cable asking that they appoint a commission to investigate events in Kurdistan and help ‘end the war between brothers’ and ‘save the Iraqi people.’”²⁵⁰ Earlier that May, the Kurds also appealed via radio for the Soviet Union to put an end to the war.²⁵¹ Finally, as the war was coming to a close in February 1975, and it became apparent that Iran and Iraq were negotiating with the help of others’ good offices,²⁵² “the KDP dispatched a high-level delegation to Cairo to express concerns about a possible deal between a weakened Iraq and Iran that would be detrimental to the Kurdish cause. The KDP delegation asked Sadat to use his influence to preserve Kurdish interests in the event of any Iranian-Iraqi rapprochement.”²⁵³ Overall, as the fight against Baghdad was becoming dire, the Kurds began to throw appeals for direct intervention at both Iraq’s allies and enemies, hoping to receive any help in avoiding catastrophe.

As a result of the changing balance of power, Barzani wrote to Kissinger of his “urgent need for some sophisticated anti-air and anti-tank weapons along with long-range artillery units all of which must be sufficiently supplied with ammunition.”²⁵⁴ Barzani also began to request

²⁴⁸ Bengio 2012, p. 143.

²⁴⁹ Bengio 2012, p. 133.

²⁵⁰ Bengio 2012, p. 132

²⁵¹ Smolesky 1991, p. 87.

²⁵² Interview with Saadi Ahmed Pira, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁵³ Entessar 2009, p. 168. Also see, Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

²⁵⁴ “Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Colby to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger),” 2 November 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 264.

additional money and foodstuffs to take care of those civilians fleeing Iraqi advances. Yet most importantly, in the face of relentless Iraqi resistance, the Kurds called in direct support from the Iranians. According to one U.S. Intelligence report, “Iranian Army units in Kurdish clothing have been intermittently deployed inside Iraq for special missions since July,” while “company-size groups of Iranian 120-mm mortar platoons have been operating on 48-hour missions inside Iraq since August 23.” Furthermore “in response to a Kurdish request of September 12, the local Iranian commander was authorized to deploy them at his discretion, and since October 25 they have been permitted to remain in Iraq for up to 10 days at a time...A battalion of US-supplied 175-mm artillery on the Iranian side of the border has been shelling Iraqi positions around Qalat Dizeh and Raniayah intermittently since August 23...while cross-border shelling since October 26 has been controlled by local Iranian commanders responding to Kurdish requests...An Iranian unit of Soviet-supplied 130-mm artillery has been deployed in the Haji Umran–Rawanduz area of Iraq since the end of October.”²⁵⁵

Individual reports of direct Iranian intervention are numerous and the general perception is that while the Kurds first enlisted direct intervention against Iraq in the summer of 1974, escalation of such intervention continued into the winter. In fact, in addition to two artillery battalions, mortar platoons, and air defense batteries, the Iranians also employed “two Rapier surface-to-air missile units” which presumably downed an Iraqi fighter on November 12.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ “Briefing Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hyland) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Sisco),” 16 December 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 267. According to O’Ballance , 42 Iranian 155mm were seen withdrawing out of northern Iraq into Iran at the conclusion of the war (O’Ballance 1996, p. 98).

²⁵⁶ “Briefing Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hyland) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Sisco),” 16 December 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 267.

What is clear from most sources is that the Kurds benefited from direct Iranian artillery, which was arguably the only thing keeping the Kurdish rebellion from collapse in early 1975.²⁵⁷

Yet it is important to understand whether the Iranian intervention was requested by the Kurds, or imposed upon them. The Kurds appear to have actively requested direct intervention from the Iranians,²⁵⁸ but it is also clear that the Kurds remained hesitant of Iran's intentions. As one Kurdish leader noted, with deeper assistance, "the Kurds became more dependent on Iran and more obedient about the Iranians...So practically the Kurds lost their semblance of decision-making."²⁵⁹ Yet, "when reached a degree when Kurds were in a difficult situation and there was a big fight against them, planes were just attacking, bombarding day and night and so on. Then, at that time, Kurds said, well, let them come whatever way."²⁶⁰

This episode reflects the basic trade-offs of direct intervention. While such intervention may be necessary to meet immediate and immense threats to the movement, they have dire political consequences as well. The fact that Iranians were running the anti-aircraft and artillery systems was a large point of contention. The Kurds had been asking for heavy weaponry – but not Iranian intervention – for months, but the weapons were never provided. As Othman notes, "We were asking for those weapons to reach us, our people to be trained on them, or they were trained already on them. But they came with their equipment so that whenever they want, they withdraw."²⁶¹

Just as the Kurds may have been hesitant to bring in direct Iranian intervention out of fear that they may be ceding operational and political control of the war, the Iranians preferred to

²⁵⁷ Ghareeb 1981, p. 170; and Stansfield 2003, pp. 76-77.

²⁵⁸ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq; Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁵⁹ Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

²⁶⁰ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁶¹ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

intervene in a manner that gave the Kurds as little operational authority over intervention as possible. Instead of just giving the Kurds the heavy artillery supplies they needed, the Iranians offered to be in control of those guns to ensure the Kurds did not gain too much power. As one document notes, “The Shah, with roughly as many Kurds on his side of the border as in Iraq, is interested in keeping Barzani’s rebellion alive but not in seeing it succeed. These interests require that he keep the heavy equipment he supplies the Kurds in the hands of Iranian soldiers.”²⁶² The Kurds were right to be weary of direct support, but they ultimately had little choice after Iraq’s strong summer offensive. While the Kurds were momentarily relieved to have Iranian direct intervention, their worst fears came true.

While assisting the Kurds in the fight against Iraq, the Iranians were busy striking a deal with Iraq to end the Kurdish rebellion. In March 1975, Iraq and Iran signed the Algiers Agreement. Without giving Barzani any advanced warning, the Shah immediately withdrew Iranian troops from Iraqi Kurdistan and closed supply lines. The Shah coldly told Barzani’s representatives in Tehran that they had only a limited time to retreat to Iran for asylum. After that point, the border would be permanently closed.²⁶³ The Kurdish rebellion subsequently collapsed into ruin. As Barzani and his representatives made desperate appeals to the U.S. for a renewal of support, they received almost complete silence.²⁶⁴

Discussion and Alternative Explanations

Kurdish diplomatic targeting clearly follows the logics dictated above. When the movement was united and focused on targeting the COIN state, diplomatic engagement focused

²⁶² “Briefing Memorandum From the Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (Hyland) to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Sisco),” 16 December 1974, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 267.

²⁶³ Marr 2004; and Tripp 2000.

²⁶⁴ Pike 1977.

preeminently on Iraq's international allies. However, during times of fragmentation – such as the 1964 split between the Barzani and Ahmed-Talabani factions – competition at home translated into competition abroad, with a diplomatic focus on Iraq's adversaries. The 1965-1974 period also all provided a unique test of Hypothesis 1B, which states that groups will shift their focus from the COIN state's allies to its adversaries if a campaign for the former explicitly fails. After years of targeting Iraq's allies, there was a targeting shift in 1972 surrounding the signing of the Soviet-Iraqi Friendship Treaty. The agreement convinced the Kurds that Soviet solicitation was futile and propelled the U.S. to become Iraq's explicit adversary. The result was a Kurdish-American-Iranian alliance against Baghdad.

Furthermore, since the Kurdish opposition was predominantly viable during this period, solicitation mostly concerned various forms of indirect intervention. Yet when Kurdish groups were no longer capable of themselves coercing their adversaries – in the winter of 1974/5 against Baghdad, and in 1964 once the Ahmed-Talabani faction sought refuge in Iran – they sought more direct forms of intervention. The theory does correctly predict the change in type of intervention solicited in 1974/5, but the results were somewhat mixed in terms of diplomatic targeting, given an equal focus on Iraq's allies and adversaries. This can be explained by the fact that in 1974 the Kurds were deeply involved in a military struggle backed by the Americans and Iranians, and thus it made sense – given the rapid turn of events – for the Kurds to immediately reach out to its war-time partners for assistance. More importantly, the fact that the Kurds reinstate appeals to Iraq's allies in this dire phase demonstrates Kurdish perceptiveness that Iraq's allies would be most capable in halting the assault in northern Iraq. Still, the question remains: How do other alternative explanations fair in the Kurdish case?

The first alternative argument is that Kurdish solicitation was primarily driven by supply-side considerations. In other words, the Kurds solicited the type of intervention they believed they would receive and from the actors they believed would be willing to provide. First, this argument is not entirely inconsistent with the logics of diplomatic targeting explained in Chapter 2. Intra-insurgent politics can influence which types of third-party actors are more or less likely to want to engage with rebels. When rebels are fragmented, COIN state adversaries may have a greater stake and interest in involving themselves in intra-rebel disputes, while COIN state allies may be less interested in engagement. Alternatively, when rebels are united, COIN state allies may see new benefits in engaging with rebel actors.

Yet the empirical evidence reveals that Kurds did not always pursue support where they assumed it would be provided. Not only were Kurds frequently unsuccessful in their diplomatic campaigns – with Baghdad’s adversaries, and especially its allies – but they appear acutely aware of the low odds of success. The Kurds understood America’s unwillingness to support their aspirations in the 1960s, and later the Soviets in the early 1970s, but solicited their support nonetheless. Even when the Kurds appealed to Iraq’s adversaries, like Iran, the Kurds were consistently aware of the fragility their ties and receiving the aid, even from willing actors like Iran and the U.S. after 1973 was like pulling teeth.

Once again, this is not to say supply-side consideration had no effect. For example, it is possible that these considerations can heavily affect who rebels target *within* a certain genre of third-party actor (i.e. COIN state allies or adversaries), but not targeting across types. While movement fragmentation may necessitate that rebels target the broader set of COIN state adversaries for support, supply-side considerations may help dictate *which* of those specific adversaries may be targeted. For example, the Kurds may have focused their diplomatic attention

on Iran in 1964 because of its increased willingness to assist, but the broader strategy of targeting Iraq's adversary was motivated by intra-insurgent competition.

Second, one could argue that Kurdish diplomatic capabilities shaped its diplomatic strategy. For example, strategies that seek to engage in the COIN state's allies may require particularly sophisticated campaigns and thus groups with weakly institutionalized diplomatic networks may be deterred from engaging in these strategies. Kurdish diplomacy was weakly institutionalized during this period. Although by 1974, the KDP begins to develop a more formal and institutionalized foreign affairs branch, the Kurds had a relatively weak diplomatic capacity. However, this did not deter the Kurds from engaging with the United States early on. When KDP representatives couldn't reach the Americans in Washington, they sought them out in Baghdad.

The third alternative argument – that groups privilege engagement with those actors that are ideologically, religiously, or ethnically similar – also appears unconvincing. For example, Barzani partook in heavy engagement with the Soviet Union during the 1960s and early-1970s, despite his obvious aversion to communism and the Soviet Union. The leftist Ahmed-Talabani faction also approved engagement with the Americans, Israelis, and Iranians despite being ideologically sympathetic with the Soviet Union and the ICP. Furthermore, the Kurds solicited states that were no clear ethnic or religious kin. The Kurds sought assistance from Arab and Shia Iranian actors, as well as Israel (although Israel does have a sizable Jewish Kurdish population). Simply put, cross-ideological, religious, and ethnic engagement makes this alternative explanation unlikely.

Fourth, one could expect diplomatic strategy to follow a linear progression of engagement from Iraq's adversaries to allies, and then building up from indirect to direct intervention. This is also not the case. From the get-go, the Kurds sought primarily sought

engagement with Iraq's allies, and only later in 1964, after three years of rebellion began to put a serious emphasis on Iraq's adversaries. While there is some pattern that the Kurds went from soliciting indirect to direct intervention, this is the result of the changing military viability of the rebellion in 1974/5. Later on, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, the Kurds do shift back to the solicitation of indirect intervention, and so no linear pattern seems apparent.

Fifth, skeptics could argue that diplomacy followed no clear logic and that engagement is made wherever possible. Because it is difficult to demonstrate the absence of strategic intent, this alternative argument is inherently difficult to prove. It is true that the Kurds sought to make their case known widely and encouraged the growth of Kurdish student unions abroad. However, it is clear that there were specific campaigns initiated for the purpose of targeting specific international actors for support. Asking interview respondents about "who the primary targets of diplomacy were" during the early-1960s received the almost unanimous response of the Soviet Union and United States. Furthermore, the Kurds clearly focused on the Iranians during the 1964 split, and there appears to be no evidence that these actors sought Soviet or American help to resolve the intra-insurgent conflict, despite a heavy focus on these actors during times of unity.

Finally, there is the general endogeneity concern that external actors themselves were driving Kurdish military viability and fragmentation. Until this point, the origins of movement fragmentation have been treated exogenously, with the implication that its sources are domestic in nature. Of course, it is unrealistic to say that third-parties— whether allies or adversaries of the COIN state — do not strive to influence the degrees of fragmentation within a rebellion. However, this relation is only problematic if what we perceive as rebel diplomatic advances are externally-driven engagement that *diverts rebels' preferences for cohesion*.

Yet rebel preferences for intra-movement cooperation or competition is quite independent of and resilient to outside pressures. Within the Kurdish case, there are attempts by outside actors to affect a change in movement cohesion, albeit to little effect. While the Iranians were supportive of the 1964 split between the factions, process-tracing reveals that the local processes driving movement fragmentation preceded the decision to shift diplomatic targeting toward Iran. The impetus for fragmentation in 1964 had been brewing for nearly six years and the immediate decision to break away from Barzani was based on Talabani's independent assessment that the Kurds should press their hand against Baghdad. This encouraged Talabani to seek Iran's eager assistance when relations with Tehran (and thus its influence over the Kurds) were quite low.

It is also possible that external actors may themselves strive to affect the military viability of insurgent groups. In fact, this is the precise impetus for insurgent diplomacy – to get third-parties to increase the political and military viability for rebel groups. What is important to distinguish, however, is if third-parties strive to affect a group's viability in order to change its strategy of diplomacy. Looking at the Kurdish case, the Iranians and Americans did try to influence the military viability of the Kurdish rebels. However, this was only after the Kurds had decided to begin engaging with these actors for the purposes of boosting their relative power, not before. Furthermore, when direct intervention was solicited, it was on the rebel groups' initiative, and the third-parties do not seem to have intentionally made the requesting group non-viable. For example, in the winter of 1974, the Iranians were not pleased with having to become more involved in the Kurdish conflict. In fact, it was their escalating involvement that encouraged them to sign the Algiers Accords out of fear of inter-state war with Iran.

In short, insurgents and outside actors certainly strive to influence each other's domestic politics and preferences towards third-party intervention. But rebel *preferences* for cooperation

and competition – and therefore their diplomatic strategies – are most likely derived independent of external pressure.

Conclusion

The analysis above described both long-term trends and short-term variation in how the Kurdish liberation movement employed international diplomacy. At certain decisive moments, the Kurds occasionally engaged in rapid shifts in the target of diplomacy, as well as the type of intervention solicited. The case also addressed potential predictive anomalies and demonstrated how they can be explained through the theory provided.

What is revealed is that internal Kurdish politics and the state of military affairs played a substantive role in determining who the Kurds solicited, and what types of requests were made. What most stands out is how during times of intense intra-Kurdish competition and fragmentation, insurgent strategies of diplomacy are repurposed and refocused to help sideline internal rivals, not the central government. Whereas this main shift in 1964 represents a sharp deviation from Kurdish diplomatic strategy in the context of broader cohesion during the period, the next chapter assesses Kurdish diplomatic strategies during a period in which fragmentation is the norm and moments of cohesion become important shocks to existing politics. Furthermore, whereas this chapter has viewed the Kurdish-Iraqi rebellion as a mostly localized dispute, the following chapter engages with Kurdish diplomatic strategy in the broader context of the Iran-Iraq War.

Chapter 4: Iraqi Kurdish National Movement (1975-1990)

Introduction

The collapse of the Kurdish rebellion in 1975 was complete. Without support from the Iranians and Americans, Barzani announced that the KDP would quit the fight. Some *peshmerga* vowed to continue guerrilla activities, but most fighters and their families retreated to Iran.¹ Others sought refuge in Syria, Turkey, and some in Europe and the United States. The movement then splintered into distinct and competing rebel organizations, with the two primary groups being the KDP-Provisional Leadership (KDP-PL, or KDP)² and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which was created by Jalal Talabani in a firm break from the KDP.

This chapter continues our analysis of the international diplomacy of the Iraqi Kurdish liberation movement. Unlike the previous phase, the Kurdish rebellion between 1975 and 1990 took place in notably different circumstances. In this phase, movement fragmentation was the norm and not the exception, and the Kurds began from a position of weakness as opposed to strength. The collapse of the Kurdish rebellion in the aftermath of the Algiers Accords also influenced how Kurds perceived third-party assistance. Namely, there was a strong sentiment against an over-reliance on external support – particularly from the great powers – which doomed the Kurdish movement in Iraq.³ However, perhaps the most influential structural difference was the context in which the rebellion was fought. Instead of the Kurdish-Iraqi conflict being relatively isolated from larger conflicts in the region, the Kurdish movement became engulfed in the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988).

¹ McDowall 1997, p. 338.

² For the sake of clarity, I refer to the KDP-PL as simply the “KDP.”

³ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015; and Interview with Dr. Kemal Kirkuki, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

Despite these major contextual differences, my theory and its predictions continue to operate. The story of this chapter is how groups within a fragmented movement used diplomacy to try to “corner the market” of resources and “outsource rivalry” to gain movement-level dominance, and how these same groups eventually changed their approach to third-party actors as they grew closer together. From using diplomacy and intervention as a tool of competition and rivalry, by 1985, the groups began employing diplomacy to attain conflict-level goals vis-à-vis Baghdad. Furthermore, calls for direct intervention were limited and reserved for cases in which groups were physically incapable of coercing their enemies.

Case Design

Between 1975 and 1990, the Kurdish liberation movement passed through four unique periods (Table 4.1): fragmented and militarily non-viable (1975-1980); fragmented and militarily viable (1980-1985); allied and militarily viable (1985-1987); and united and militarily non-viable (1987-1990). We can therefore trace how a change in the Kurdish movement’s military viability and fragmentation affected group’s appeals for foreign assistance.

Table 4.1: Iraqi Kurdistan Case Map (1975-1990)

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1985-1987	1980-1985
Militarily Non-Viable	1987-1990		1975-1980

This chapter examines the effect of three changes in the Kurdish movement’s local threat environment (see Table 4.2). First, between period 5 and 6, the Kurdish rebellion goes from fragmented and non-viable to fragmented and viable. Thus, controlling for movement fragmentation, I test how a change in movement viability affected the type of intervention

solicited. Second, between period 6 and 7, military viability is held constant as the Kurdish movement transitions from fragmented to allied, allowing for a focused examination on how a change in movement structure affected Kurdish diplomatic targeting. Third, between period 7 and 8, the Kurdish movement becomes both united and there is a drastic change from military viability to non-viability.

Table 4.2: Accounting for Predictions (1975-1990)

		<i>Movement Type</i>	Target of Diplomacy	<i>Military Viability</i>	Type of Intervention
Period 5	1975-1980	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Indirect/Direct (~)
Period 6	1980-1985	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 7	1985-1987	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Direct (✗)
Period 8	1987-1990	<i>United</i>	Allies (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct (✓)

Note: The contents of the columns “Target of Diplomacy” and “Type of Intervention” are the actual observed measurements of these variables. The content in the parentheses denote the extent to which this observation is consistent with my theory’s predictions. A check-mark means “correct,” a tilde means “partially correct,” and an ex-mark means “incorrect.”

These transitions also account for a number of unique empirical puzzles. After 1975, why did the Kurds aggressively target Iraq’s adversaries diplomatically, yet ignore Iraq’s allies despite so fervently lobbying them in the previous phase? Relatedly, why did the Kurds shift back to soliciting intervention from Iraq’s allies in 1985, despite nearly decade of ignoring these actors? Furthermore, why were the Kurds largely interested in soliciting indirect intervention during the post-1975 era, only to dramatically call for direct third-party intervention in 1987?

The time period covered in this chapter is rather contested from a historical standpoint. Few sources engage these years in much detail, and animosity between Kurdish factions during this period has led to much rumor-making. Fortunately, new sources allow us to better grasp what intra-Kurdish politics looked like during the 1975-1985 period in particular. In addition to

original author interviews, I employ new primary-source documents on the Kurdish rebellion at large, and PUK international diplomacy more specifically. These documents were accessed at the University of Exeter from the personal archive of Omar Sheikhmous, a former founder of the PUK and head of its foreign affairs. The archive includes party publications, correspondence between the internal and external leaderships of the PUK, private letters between rebel leaders, and communications between the PUK and external actors, including states, other rebel groups, international organizations, and non-government organizations. As such, although the focus of the remainder of this chapter is on the international diplomatic strategies of the KDP and PUK, the bulk of the evidence below looks at PUK diplomacy.⁴

Examining the Periods

The analysis below traces Kurdish diplomatic strategy from 1975 to 1990. As a newly weakened and fragmented movement, the Kurdish groups primarily employ strategies of “cornering the market” and “outsourcing rivalry” from 1975 to 1980. However, by 1980, the Kurds remained fragmented but became notably viable. By 1985, the groups remained viable but experienced a major change in movement structure – for the first time in a decade, the Kurds moved toward unity and became allied. Two years later, the movement became fully united but also suffered a major military shock, leading to irreparable military non-viability. How did these changes in the degree of movement fragmentation and military viability affect Kurdish diplomatic strategy? Below, I demonstrate that by-and-large, when Kurdish groups were militarily non-viable, requests for direct intervention were added to their appeals for support. However, when groups were militarily viable, they eschewed calls for direct intervention against their adversaries and focused on soliciting indirect support. Additionally, as the movement

⁴ This chapter hopefully presents an advancement in our knowledge of the Kurdish rebellion during the murky years after the 1975 collapse.

transition from deep fragmentation to alliance and unity, we witness a change in diplomatic targeting from Iraq's adversaries to its allies.

Period 5: 1975 to 1980

The period of time between March 1975 and September 1980 can be viewed as one of both collapse and resurgence for the Kurdish resistance movement. With Kurdish rebels dispersed outside of Iraq's borders, and much of the KDP leadership in Iran, there were few meaningful actors within Iraq immediately after the collapse. Barzani, having already relinquished control of the Kurdish movement, was diagnosed with cancer in 1976 and sought treatment in the United States where he died in 1979.⁵

From the ashes of their defeat and in the midst of harsh restructuring in the north, the Kurdish liberation movement almost immediately began to pick up the broken pieces of the failed revolt. *Peshmerga* slowly returned to Iraq and devoted their energies to bringing arms back into the contested zone. However, this time there would be several independent Kurdish organizations vying for dominance in the region.

Militarily Non-Viable and Fragmented Movement

The period between 1975 and 1980 was clearly one of limited military viability, both between rebel factions and in relation to the state. The majority of *peshmerga* withdrew from the field after the Algiers Accord, and Iraq and its neighbors were intent on keeping the Kurds down. To ensure that the Kurdish rebellion remained quelled, Baghdad constructed a 5-30km wide security buffer along its borders. The result was the relocation of tens of thousands of Kurds, and

⁵ Korn 1994.

the severing of external supply lines to Kurdish insurgents within Iraq.⁶ As one CIA report noted in May 1975, “Armed resistance by Kurds on the scale of 1974 is now out of the question.”⁷

Although reports of renewed resistance emerged in late 1975,⁸ there was no meaningful armed struggle until mid-1976,⁹ and even then military operations were low-level guerrilla attacks and assassination attempts.¹⁰ The Iraqis were certainly concerned of increasing hostilities in the north, but did not perceive it to be a meaningful threat.¹¹ Furthermore, intra-insurgent fighting between the KDP and PUK kept both groups weak in the initial years.¹² The number of *peshmerga* in northern Iraq grew slowly. Even after four years of rebuilding, the PUK only had 2,000 fighters in the mountains.¹³ It was not until Iraqi forces began to disengage from the north in 1979 – in preparation for the war with Iran – that the Kurds truly became viable.

As for the degree of unity within the broader insurgent movement, the Kurdish liberation movement became highly fragmented. The KDP broke into numerous factions, including the complete defection of the Ahmed-Talabani faction from the KDP to form the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The PUK was formed abroad in 1975 by seven Kurdish figureheads abroad. The group was an amalgamation of longstanding leftist groups within the Kurdish movement, and thus operated largely as an umbrella organization. The PUK and KDP soon saw each other

⁶ McDowall 1997, p. 339.

⁷ “Paper Prepared in the Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency,” 1 May 1975, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 286.

⁸ O’Ballance 1996, p. 103.

⁹ ARR 1976, No. 14, p. 447; and McDowall 1997, p. 343-344. Clashes with the Kurds were also previously reported in ARR 1976, No. 5, p. 148. Mohsin Dizaye notes that the renewed KDP insurgency began on the 26th of May, 1976 (Interview with Mohsin Dizaye, 6 July 2015, London, United Kingdom).

¹⁰ “Telegram From the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State,” 4 January 1977, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 325.

¹¹ “Telegram From the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State,” 2 November 1976, *FRUS*, 1969-1976 Volume XXVII, Iran-Iraq, 1973-1976, Document 318.

¹² For example, see Stansfield 2003, p. 88; and McDowall 1997, p. 344.

¹³ Although the PUK did limit the number of fighters during this early period. See Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

as the zero-sum rivals and direct competition between the two groups ensued.¹⁴ Even the rump of the KDP split into multiple factions.¹⁵ The primary organization renamed itself the KDP-Provisional Leadership (KDP-PL, later just the KDP) and was led by Barzani's sons, Idriss and Masoud, while another group, the KDP-Provisional Command (KDP-PC), was led by Dr. Mahmoud Othman.¹⁶

The PUK was the first to put *peshmerga* back in the field in June 1976, although the KDP was close behind.¹⁷ The KDP competed with the PUK both for social presence in northern Iraq, as well as the import of arms and materiel back into Kurdistan. Although the two groups occasionally agreed to ceasefires, they frequently clashed militarily.¹⁸

The post-1975 world was also one in which the KDP and PUK fought and lobbied foreign actors separately. As one Kurdish politician and former diplomat explained, "They lived separately abroad, organized separately, lobbied separately. They were not unified, though there were contacts. They weren't attending each other's festivities... Each side had to build its own lobby. They had good relations with different MPs and different parties."¹⁹ Another PUK official confirmed that "you have competition everywhere, in all fields and that includes the diplomatic relations."²⁰ Ultimately, the period between 1975 and 1980 was one of fragmentation and intra-insurgent competition. Both the KDP and PUK had to rebuild their presence within Iraq from scratch, while simultaneously fighting one another.

¹⁴ Interview with Anonymous, July 2014, Sulaimani, Iraq.

¹⁵ McDowall 1997, pp. 343-344.

¹⁶ There were other smaller Kurdish organizations, but these are purposefully left out of the study because of their small size, or their alignment to one of the two main groups.

¹⁷ "PUK, An Idea Born at a Café," *The Kurdish Globe*, 5 June 2010. Some claim that the KDP was actually in the field by May 1976, but this is not confirmed. Stansfield 2003, p. 86.


¹⁸ For more on the direct causes and consequences of intra-Kurdish violence, see Pischedda 2015, Ch. 3.

¹⁹ Interview with Safin Dizaye, July 2014, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁰ Interview with Abdul Razzaq Mirza, July 2014, Sulaimaniya, Iraq.

With the Kurdish movement deeply fragmented and militarily non-viable, we anticipate that Kurdish groups would employ a strategy of “outsourcing rivalry,” by which groups solicit help from Iraq’s adversaries for direct intervention to stifle their insurgent rivals.

Table 4.3: Change in Threat Environment – Period 4 to 5

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable			
Militarily Non-Viable	1974-1975		1975-1980

Strategy of Diplomacy

The Iraqi Kurdish approach to international actors shifted in 1975 from a focus on undermining Baghdad to out-competing rival rebel factions for leadership of the movement. The primary third-parties the KDP and PUK turned to were Iraq’s primary adversaries in the region and non-state backers of the rebellion because these actors had the resources and leverage to influence the ultimate balance of power within the movement. Competition for outside support was particularly crucial at this stage because the Kurds had to rebuild themselves from the ground up. As such, cornering the market of external support, in addition to getting other actors to directly outsourcing, was necessary.

The result was that the KDP and PUK became locked in heavy international competition over support from Syria, Libya, and to some extent Turkey, Iran, and the Palestinians. As groups were “fighting inside...they were competing outside and they were against each other outside.”²¹ As one PUK leader reflected, “It was a hard time. Each side trying to condemn the other and

²¹ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

show that he is right and other is wrong.”²² This is not to say that outside actors intended ensure one side dominated the other. While this may be true for non-state supporters of the Kurdish rebellion, external state support for the Kurds was mostly based on their desire to undermine Saddam Hussein, not to pick an intra-Kurdish hegemon.²³ States like Turkey and Iran were often happy to keep the Kurds at odds with each other.²⁴ It is for this reason that counter-veiling support systems ultimately helped build both groups, without allowing one to dominate the other.

As will be shown, the PUK’s diplomatic strategy was to “corner the market” of external resources as the Kurds rebuilt their organizations, and partake in “outsourcing rivalry” when unable to handle their own military affairs. The PUK made consistent pitches of support framed in zero-sum terms: support should go explicitly to the PUK, not the KDP. The PUK focused much of its diplomatic attention on left-leaning, socialist actors in its campaign to rebuild itself. To insure that these actors did not also support the KDP, the PUK frequently espoused its progressive ideology to potential supporters, and actively framed the KDP as pro-Zionist, American-imperialist, and SAVAK-tied because of its past alliances.

An early target of diplomacy for both groups was Baathist Syria. By 1975, the Syrians had strongly adversarial relations to Baghdad. Although the Syrians helped Baghdad fight the Kurds in the mid-1960s, Syria now saw Iraq as a threat to its position in Arab politics. Following the 1968 Baathist coup in Iraq, and the subsequent split within the party, the Syrian and Iraqi regimes saw each other as ideological rivals.²⁵ These issues were further compounded by the

²² Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²³ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁴ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

²⁵ Shemesh 1992, p. 10.

Syrian invasion of Lebanon in 1976, which Baghdad was staunchly against.²⁶ The Syrians thus welcomed an opportunity to undermine their Baathist rivals.

With the Iranian and Turkish border areas largely sealed, Syria also became the main point of entry and exit for Kurdish fighters and supplies.²⁷ As one KDP politburo member noted, Syria was critical because it was “another way to Lebanon, to Egypt, to Libya, even to Europe.”²⁸ Through Syria, for example, both groups were able to establish relations with Libya, which became an important financier and arms supplier.²⁹ Given Syria’s incentives and capacity to help the Iraqi Kurds, Damascus became a major focal point of diplomacy for the emerging groups.³⁰ In Syria, Talabani readily established ties with President Assad, whom Talabani knew from his previous diplomatic missions in Beirut and Damascus.³¹ Strong connections to the Palestinian national movement, through George Habash, Nayef Hawatmeh, and Yasser Arafat, also helped seal relations between the PUK and Syria, as well as Libya.³² In Damascus, the PUK joined a coalition of groups keen on undermining Baghdad.³³

However, Kurdish outreach with Damascus was not limited to the PUK. Although, the PUK and Syrian Baathists shared common ideological ties, relations between the KDP and Syria quickly followed. The Syrians were primarily intent on undermining Baghdad by any means. The Syrians were thus open to working with the KDP if it served their geostrategic purposes.³⁴

²⁶ ARR 1976, No. 14, p. 446.

²⁷ “Telegram From the Interests Section in Baghdad to the Department of State,” 2 November 1976, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVII, Iran, Iraq 1973-1976, Document 318.

²⁸ Interview with Fazil Mirani, 29 June 2015, Salahaddin (Musif), Iraq.

²⁹ Interview with Rizgar Ali, August 2014, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015; Interview with Abdul Razzaq Mirza, July 2014, Sulaimaniya, Iraq; Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

³⁰ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

³¹ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015; and Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

³² Chaliand 1993, p. 219. Also, see Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

³³ Interview with Fazil Mirani, 29 June 2015, Salahaddin (Musif), Iraq.

³⁴ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

One KDP liaison to the U.S. reported as early as August 1976 that they had been approached by the Syrians as a potential alternative to their supporting the PUK.³⁵

Yet joint-support for the KDP and PUK only increased their competition for resources. KDP and PUK *peshmerga* were fighting one another in northern Iraq and confiscating weapons destined for the other. As one PUK member noted, as the “KDP was trying to come to the area, talk with the Syrian government, be part of the opposition,” the “PUK was trying to open the border to send weapons to the *peshmerga*.”³⁶ From the Syrian perspective, an anti-Baghdad front was being squandered by intra-insurgent bickering. The Syrians and Libyans therefore tried to convince the groups to cooperate and change the focus of their attacks.³⁷ Although “nine months of conflict ended as a result of a meeting between KDP leader Massoud Barzani and PUK’s Talabani in Damascus” in March 1977,³⁸ the ceasefire between the groups quickly broke down.³⁹ The Syrians and Libyans continued to fund both competitors.⁴⁰

Nearby, the Turks were largely passive observers to Iraqi Kurdish politics after 1975.⁴¹ However, because the Kurds were forced to navigate the Turkish border region to transfer arms, men, and material from Syria, Turkish soil became incredibly valuable for the groups. Control of the border region was critical for both groups and the area became the primary location of intra-rebel violence as both strived to keep the other isolated from outside support.⁴² As a result, the

³⁵ “Telegram From the Embassy in Iran to the Department of State,” 3 August 1976, *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Volume XXVII, Iran, Iraq 1973-1976, Document 314.

³⁶ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

³⁷ Chaliand 1993, p. 221; Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq; and Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

³⁸ “PUK, An Idea Born at a Café,” *The Kurdish Globe*. June 5, 2010.

³⁹ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁴⁰ One reason for this may have been the fact that the Syrian regime itself was fragmented between those who supported the KDP and those who supported the PUK. See Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁴¹ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁴² For more on this, see Pischedda 2015, Ch. 3.

border region became the primary location of intra-rebel violence,⁴³ making Ankara the occasional target of diplomacy during intra-Kurdish flare-ups.

There is some speculation that the KDP maintained ties to Ankara and that the KDP may have had an advantage in the area by enlisting local Kurdish tribes to provide intelligence on PUK movements. As one PUK source noted that, “Turkish collaborators’ main task was to prevent PUK from getting access to Syria and bringing weapons from Syria, physically.”⁴⁴ There is also speculation that Turkish intelligence (MIT) helped the KDP at this time, which would insinuate that the regrouping KDP engaged in “outsourcing rivalry.”⁴⁵ However, little is known about how the Kurds interacted with Ankara and these relations remain guesswork.⁴⁶ Regardless of whether accusations of KDP-Turkish relations are true, what is important is that the PUK *believed* the KDP was outsourcing rivalry and thus Turkey became an important target of diplomacy in the battle for early supremacy.

One significant clash in the summer of 1978 created a flashpoint for PUK diplomacy in the struggle against the KDP. KDP forces ambushed a large PUK column in southern Turkey that was on its way to retrieve a shipment of arms. In addition to the scores of PUK forces killed in the assault,⁴⁷ the KDP was believed to have executed two senior members of the Kurdish rebellion who were now fighting for the PUK.⁴⁸ It was also speculated that some 400 PUK

⁴³ For more on this, see Pischedda 2015.

⁴⁴ Interview with Anonymous, June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁴⁵ Talabani has accused the KDP of receiving help Iranian and Turkish intelligence in its return to Iraqi Kurdistan. See Stansfield 2003, p. 90.

⁴⁶ Stansfield 2003, pp. 86, 90; and O’Ballance 1996, pp. 104-107. It is worth noting that even if such relations existed, most PUK members admit they existed without the direct support from the Turkey’s leaders. Furthermore, any existing KDP relations with local tribes would likely have been the result of a lapse of state control in the border region, not an active policy.

⁴⁷ Gareth Stansfield puts the number at 700, but a PUK document lists only 100 having been killed. See Stansfield 2003, pp. 87-88; and “Letter to Prime Minister Ecevit,” 6 July 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/154.

⁴⁸ Stansfield 2003, pp. 87-88.

peshmerga were then taken prisoner by the KDP and that Turkish intelligence played a role in bringing these prisoners under KDP control.⁴⁹

The attack dealt a heavy blow to the new organization and it is speculated that it took the PUK years to recover from the set back.⁵⁰ Unable to respond militarily and enraged by the episode, the PUK appealed to Ankara to directly intervene on its behalf. Similar to the message Barzani sent the Shah regarding the Ahmed-Talabani faction in 1964, the PUK wrote a letter to Turkish Premier Ecevit. Although it is not clear whether the Prime Minister received the letter, an effort to deliver the letter through Amnesty International was made.⁵¹ In the letter, the PUK argued that the KDP were agents of the CIA and SAVAK who are using Turkish territory to attack PUK forces. They further argued that there was evidence that Turkish commandos and MIT were involved in the events surrounding the ambush. Since PUK *peshmerga* were being held captive on Turkish soil, the Turkish government was responsible for their fates. The letter then appealed for the Turkish government to “intervene immediately” to ensure the return of the prisoners.⁵² This appeal is a clear example of outsourcing rivalry. In the midst of intense intra-insurgent conflict, a weakened PUK cut off from its partisans appealed to an external actor to get the KDP to settle an existing dispute. Although the result of the incident is unclear, or if the letter ever found its intended target, the strategic intent is clear.

While there are no known letters to other third-parties regarding the incident, we know that PUK leaders did discuss the need to get the Palestinians and other “friends of Kurdistan” to

⁴⁹ “Letter to Prime Minister Ecevit,” 6 July 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/154.

⁵⁰ Pishedda 2015, p. 99, citing local Kurdish sources on the matter.

⁵¹ “Letter from PUK to Amnesty International,” 20 August 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1146.

⁵² “Letter to Prime Minister Ecevit,” 6 July 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/154.

help return those captured members. Also discussed was the need to send a delegation to Turkey to convince the Turks to reconsider their policy towards the KDP.⁵³

By the late-1970s, the Iranians transitioned back toward an adversarial position with Iraq, making itself another target of competitive Kurdish diplomacy. Tehran at first honored its agreement with Baghdad, making it hard for Iraqi Kurds to organize on Iranian territory. In addition to suppressing public organization, the Shah arrested a number of prominent KDP members, and sealed its border with Iraq.⁵⁴ However, once it became apparent that Iraq would not honor the agreement and Iran began to face their own Kurdish problems, Iran re-involved itself with the Iraqi opposition,⁵⁵ making Iran a stage for intra-insurgent competitive diplomacy.

The KDP were the first to target Iran for support and began a fresh working relationship with Tehran. Seeking to outcompete the KDP, this encouraged the PUK to target the Iranians as well. The PUK was in contact with the Iranians as early as 1975 to persuade them not to support the new KDP leadership.⁵⁶ Upping the ante, the PUK eventually offered to cooperate with Tehran under the condition that it sever relations with the KDP. However, the Iranians insisted that both parties cooperate, causing the PUK to refuse Iranian assistance.⁵⁷ The government was not the only Iranian actor the PUK could solicit for support. The PUK thus reached out to a growing Iranian opposition, including the Iranian KDP (KDP-I) and other revolutionary forces.⁵⁸ As the revolution picked up steam, Talabani recognized the benefits of securing relations with

⁵³ “Minutes of the Meeting of the Leadership of PUK Outside of the Country,” 16 July 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/682.

⁵⁴ Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Fazil Mirani, June 29, 2015, Salahaddin (Musif), Iraq; and Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁵⁵ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁵⁶ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, June 28, 2016.

⁵⁷ McDowall 1997, p. 345.

⁵⁸ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq; and Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015

Ayatolla Khomeini. Although ties to Khomeini go as far back as 1974,⁵⁹ the PUK sent a letter to Khomeini while he was still in Najaf in 1978.⁶⁰ Once in Paris, Talabani sent two prominent PUK's diplomats to Paris to meet with Khomeini to express solidarity with the opposition.⁶¹ In short, while the KDP was securing help directly from the Shah, the PUK was securing support from the other side of Iranian politics in the competition for external support. Both parties solicited Iranian actors trying to corner the market of external support.

At first, the new revolutionary government that came to power in February 1979 had good relations with both the KDP and PUK.⁶² However, despite the PUK's initial contacts with Khomeini, the regime eventually exclusive gave support to the KDP because the PUK sided with a new Iranian Kurds rebellion.⁶³ This shift toward exclusive Iranian support for the KDP triggered another campaign by the PUK to reestablish relations with Tehran at the KDP's expense. On two or three occasions Talabani travelled to Tehran to negotiate a deal but failed.⁶⁴ In a letter sent on June 11, 1979, the PUK reminded Khomeini that the KDP should be treated with caution because of their historic ties to the CIA, Mossad, and SAVAK. Alternatively, they reminded Khomeini that the PUK supported the revolution long before the KDP.⁶⁵ In another undated letter from the time, the PUK issued a joint declaration condemning the KDP's participation in suppressing the KDP-I. The target of the letter appears to be other revolutionary

⁵⁹ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015

⁶⁰ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁶¹ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁶² Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁶³ Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁶⁴ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

⁶⁵ "Letter from PUK leader to Ayatollah Khomeini," June 11, 1979, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403, Box 4, No. 1084.

groups in the region, asking them to join in the condemnation of the KDP.⁶⁶ At one point, the PUK even tried to use Syrian and Libyan influence to convince the Iranians to back the PUK.⁶⁷

The Soviet Union became a minor supporter of the Kurds and relations were sought out early on. Part of this approach is a function of an immediate falling out between the Soviet Union and Iraq. There were essentially two big losers of the Algiers agreement – the Kurds and the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ Having stifled the Kurdish rebellion and secured peace with the Iranians, Baghdad eliminated its two greatest threats. Without these threats, Soviet support became unnecessary and Baghdad began a strategic realignment toward the West. As one PUK leader explained, after the Algiers Accords, “Saddam Hussein changed the direction. He was with the Arabs, left, Soviets. Suddenly he changed his direction with Saudi, America, Shah. At that time, the Shah was against all Arabs, so all these countries are against Saddam.”⁶⁹ The Soviets thus transitioned quite rapidly from an ally to adversary of Iraq, making it politically viable for the Kurds to request and the Soviets to offer support.⁷⁰ The Soviets reached out to the Kurds and the PUK reached back. As one PUK member noted, “Mam Jalal met Primokov [Soviet FM] in Damascus and Primokov informed him, ‘the Russians are interested to support you...and we are against the Algiers agreement.’”⁷¹

Part of the PUK strategy for securing Soviet aid was conditioned on demonstrating an alignment of interest with the socialist camps and discrediting the KDP-related factions. For example, in July 1978, the PUK sent a formal letter to the Central Committee of the Communist

⁶⁶ “Draft of a Joint Declaration Draft of a joint declaration condemning Iraqi KDP’s cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran,” Undated, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/193.

⁶⁷ Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

⁶⁸ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁶⁹ Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁷⁰ Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁷¹ Interview with Saadi Ahmed Pira, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq. Adel Murad also noted that relations with the Soviets continued after the collapse (Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq).

Party of the Soviet Union with an explicit pitch for support at the expense of the KDP. Framing the Middle East as a struggle between pro-Zionist, American-imperialist elements against “democratic” forces, the PUK argued that they were a progressive party, they were under attack by the conservative Iranian-backed KDP. The PUK asked the Soviet Union to help the Kurdish movement defend itself against “imperialist” elements, of which the KDP was involved.⁷² This letter was drafted less than a week after the PUK leadership discussed the need to solicit help from the Soviet Communist Party to build a front against the KDP.⁷³ At the same time, the KDP also positioned itself to gain support from the Soviets. In addition to trying to frame itself as a “progressive” organization, the KDP disavowed Barzani’s previous relations with the Americans to appease the Soviets.⁷⁴

Not all PUK diplomacy was within the confines of the region. In Europe, PUK diplomacy was focused on foreign political parties – not governments – that had adversarial relations with the Iraqi Baath. In particular, the PUK engaged with social democratic parties and the Socialist International, which at the time had poor relations with the Saddam regime.⁷⁵ For example, in one letter the PUK sent a broad appeal to socialist parties across Europe for collaboration against Baghdad. The letter concludes, saying, “We are desperately in need of all forms of aid. Financial, material, medical, and other forms. We appeal to you to do your best in solidarising with our

⁷² “Letter from PUK to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” 22 July 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/756.

⁷³ “Minutes of the Meeting of the Leadership of PUK Outside of the Country,” 16 July 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/682.

⁷⁴ Shemesh 1992, p. 171.

⁷⁵ Interview with Saadi Ahmed Pira, June 18 & 28, 2015, Erbil, Iraq; Interview with Saadi Ahmed Pira, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Omar Sheikmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

movement.”⁷⁶ In another letter to a party conference in Montreal, the PUK argues that progressive fronts should support the PUK since the Barzani clan was tied to U.S. imperialism.⁷⁷

Part of this broader competition for support against the KDP, PUK diplomacy was geared towards differentiating itself from the KDP. The PUK paid close attention to how the foreign media portrayed the group and frequently wrote letters to correct factual errors. For example, in one letter the PUK dispelled the notion that the group was founded with Soviet support and the misconception that the PUK was aligned with the Barzani’s.⁷⁸ In other letters, the PUK asks various media sources and international human rights organizations to come to Iraq and investigate the situation for themselves.⁷⁹ Early PUK publications were also intended to explain the split with the KDP both to internal constituents and outside actors.⁸⁰

Overall, targeting Iraq’s allies was a far secondary feature of Kurdish diplomacy during this period of rebuilding and fragmentation. Still, there are a few instances where the PUK appealed to Iraq’s allies in order to pressure Baghdad. The biggest example of this occurred in 1978 in response to a new political alliance involving Iraq, Algeria, Libya, Syria, South Yemen, Iraq, and the PLO, formed as a common front against the Camp David peace accords.⁸¹

This new alliance was alarming because the front included some of Iraq’s notable adversaries and thus the Kurds’ existing supporters. In January 1978, the PUK sent a letter to Algeria President Houari Boumedienne hoping to drive a wedge between the alliance. The PUK

⁷⁶ “Letter of PUK foreign relations committee to leadership of socialist and communist parties in Eastern Europe,” 10 October 1979, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/712; and “Letter on behalf of PUK to socialist and communist parties in Europe,” 10 October 1979, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1093.

⁷⁷ “PUK USA letter to the participants of the international conference in Montreal,” 21 April 1976, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1200.

⁷⁸ “Statement by PUK,” 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/379; and “Letter from the editor of the Middle East Journal to PUK,” 25 June 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/156.

⁷⁹ “PUK letter to The Times of London,” 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/382.

⁸⁰ “Revolution in Kurdistan (The essential Doc of PUK),” 1977, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/5/17.

⁸¹ Ismael and Ismael 1991, p. 205.

argued that Iraq was creating another “Palestine” in Kurdistan, instead of actually focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Algerians should therefore intervene with Iraq in support of the Kurds.⁸² A similar letter was sent to Arab heads of states,⁸³ and another was sent to preempt warming relations between South Yemen – an existing PUK ally⁸⁴ – and Baghdad. In the letter, the PUK discussed Baghdad’s abuses, and once again, painted the KDP as a Zionist, American-imperialist organization with ties to SAVAK. Playing on this framing, the PUK offered a partnership against imperialist forces, which by the PUK’s assertions, included the KDP.⁸⁵

The PUK also contacted the PLO to express solidarity and – in an apparent bluff – offered to suspend anti-Baghdad activities to form a common front against Israel. In return, the PUK asked the Palestinians to get the Iraqis to stop its aggression toward Kurdistan.⁸⁶ Unable to sway the new front, the 9th Arab League Summit was held in Baghdad in November 1978. In response, the PUK issued a statement calling the Arab Summit in Baghdad an attempt to divert attention from Baghdad’s creation of another Palestine in Kurdistan, and called on progressive Arab forces to mediate between the Kurds and Baghdad.⁸⁷ In sum, while we would expect groups to focus more on intra-insurgent competition at this time, it appears that this was more a response to sudden shock that existing sponsors and potential allies were suddenly realigning

⁸² “PUK telegram to Heads of Arab states,” 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/380. In February 1978, the PUK discussed sending a delegation to Algeria to explain the situation of the Kurds and to solicit pressure on Iraq into respecting Kurdish rights. See “Letter between PUK leaders,” UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1031. An October PUK memo seems to indicate that such a delegation would be sent in the short-term. See “Letter between external leaders of the PUK,” UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1037.

⁸³ “Letter by PUK to heads of states of Arab countries,” 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1120.

⁸⁴ Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

⁸⁵ “Letter to UN General Secretary Kurt Waldheim,” 17 August 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1074.

⁸⁶ “Letter from PUK foreign relations committee to leadership of PLO,” 11 March 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1136.

⁸⁷ “Press statement by PUK on Arab summit in Baghdad,” 30 October 1978, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1181.

with Iraq.⁸⁸ In other words, these were preemptive attempts to maintain existing supply lines and to keep Iraq's enemies from becoming its allies.

Given the weak state of Kurdish groups at this point in time, we anticipate the Kurds engaging in “outsourcing rivalry” – appealing for direct intervention to help undermine rebel rivals – in addition to “cornering the market” behavior. There is at least one major instance of such diplomacy with the PUK request for support from Ankara to intervene with the KDP in 1978. Much like when Barzani solicited the Shah's help to route the Ahmed-Talabani faction from Iranian soil – the PUK likely reverted to direct intervention because it would have been too vulnerable to attempt a rescue of the prisoners themselves in Turkish territory. This is especially true after the major degradation of power from the ambush. Additionally, there has also been some speculation that the KDP may have asked Turkey and Iran to directly undermine the PUK to ensure KDP control of the border areas, but these appeals remain unproven.⁸⁹ Turkey was a perilous point of entry for PUK men and material, and Iran was known to withhold Syrian arms intended for the PUK.⁹⁰ Still, there is no explicit evidence of these claims against the KDP.⁹¹

In addition to these campaigns, we mostly see requests for indirect support from Iraq's regional enemies. This behavior is still predicted by my hypotheses – i.e. military non-viability causes groups to solicit direct intervention, but it does not discourage groups from soliciting indirect intervention – but cornering the market does seem to outshine outsourcing rivalry. As a result, I cautiously view this as a mixed result in favor of my predictions. There can be two explanations for prevalence of “cornering the market” behavior. First, as explained above, this

⁸⁸ Most Arab countries were against the Algiers Accord which placated non-Arab Iran.

⁸⁹ Stansfield 2003, p. 86.

⁹⁰ Ghareeb 1981, p. 184.

⁹¹ Alternatively, some have argued that it may have been the PUK which had the tacit approval of the Turks. O'Ballance 1996, p. 107.

could be due to simply missing data on “outsourcing rivalry.” There are many rumors that the KDP and PUK engaged heavily in such outsourcing at this time, but hard evidence is difficult to place. Second, the majority of this period may actually fall outside my argument’s scope conditions. Since we anticipated that new groups may behave differently – given the need to rapidly acquire resources at the start – they were scoped out. However, the PUK was itself a new organization in 1975 and the KDP also had to rebuild itself from scratch.

Third, and finally, any reluctance to engage in “outsourcing rivalry” may be explained by the general feeling that an overreliance on outside support is what had brought the Kurds into trouble in the first place. If only the Kurds had relied on domestic support networks, and not solely Iranian supply lines, then the Kurdish rebellion would have never collapsed in March 1975.⁹² Of course, the PUK and KDP eagerly solicited aid from the Syrians, Libyans, and others, but the groups were still fearful that intervention that would encroach too much on domestic Kurdish politics. As such, the groups may have been predisposed to overwhelmingly seek indirect support regardless of the conditions.

Period 6: 1980 to 1985

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 sent shockwaves through the region and none felt it more severely than Baghdad. Fearful that the revolutionary regime would ally itself with Iraq’s suppressed Shia majority and believing that the new regime was weak, Saddam Hussein saw an opening to strike.⁹³ The resulting Iraqi assault sparked what would become one of the longest and bloodiest conflicts in contemporary Middle East history: the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988). However, while the Kurds in Iraq remained deeply fragmented, they had effectively used the inter-war years to develop their forces within northern Iraq. How did this increase in Kurdish

⁹² Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

⁹³ Marr 2004, pp. 182-3.

military viability influence their patterns of solicitation? Furthermore, how did continuing competition between the groups influence the targeting and content of their appeals?

Militarily Viable and Fragmented Movement

The Iran-Iraq War deepened the rivalry between the groups. Although some of the smaller groups dissolved into the two poles or at least joined them in broader alliances, the Kurdish movement formed two distinct and adversarial sides. Contributing to this growing animosity was the intense intra-rebel fighting in northern Iraq in the previous period. The result was a geographic segregation of the groups. The KDP successfully established itself in north Iraqi Kurdistan near the Syrian and Turkish borders, while the PUK established its base of operations in southern Iraqi Kurdistan. During the war, the two primary Kurdish groups sided with different alliances. The KDP aligned more closely with Iran, Iraqi socialist organizations, and the Iranian *mujahideen*, while the PUK sided with the ICP, Kurdish Socialist Party, and the KDP-I.⁹⁴ The alliance structures pitted the two organizations against one another in the north. It was not until the winter of 1985/86 that the PUK and KDP began the gradual process of collaborating.⁹⁵

However, the Kurds had grown in strength and numbers in the late-1970s and became increasingly more powerful after the Iranian revolution. Both groups brought in forces and weapons from the outside, albeit with setbacks here and there.⁹⁶ Saddam Hussein – who became President of Iraq in 1978 – viewed the Kurds in the north as a minor threat, at least compared to Iran and in light of intra-rebel fighting. As such, although the Iraqis occupied Kurdish population centers, they ultimately left Kurdish military affairs alone.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ O'Ballance 1996, p. 130; and Chaliand 1993, p. 221.

⁹⁵ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

⁹⁶ For more details on these events, see Pishedda 2015, Ch. 3.

⁹⁷ Interview with Abdul Razzaq Mirza, July 2014, Sulaimaniya, Iraq.

The Iranian revolution and onset of the Iran-Iraq War boosted the military viability of both groups. The revolution created space for the PUK to align with other guerrilla organizations and to build powerful grass-roots networks,⁹⁸ while the KDP found an ally in the Khomeini regime. Furthermore, the months preceding the Iraqi assault created opportunities for *peshmerga* to strengthen their hold on the north and expand liberated territories. With the impending assault on Iran, Saddam had sent the majority of his troops south. As the Iraqis withdrew from strategic positions in the north, Kurdish guerrilla organizations rushed to fill the vacuum.⁹⁹ As one PUK official noted: “We became much stronger than before and the Iraqi government more or less was in retreat. They were afraid of the mobilization force of the Iranian government among the Shiites, and they were preparing for the war...So they left us in peace more or less to a certain extent. According to the documents that later on became known, Saddam Hussein did not consider us to be a big threat, ‘so let them be in these mountains like wild goats and we can deal with them later on.’”¹⁰⁰

Even when Iraqi forces stormed north to repel an Iranian counter-attack in 1983, the various Kurdish groups remained intact and operable in the field. This was also led to an increase in *peshmerga* forces as Kurdish draftees fled north to avoid conscription in the Iraqi army.¹⁰¹ The PUK and KDP grew even stronger after 1985, once the two groups agreed to at least avoid open

⁹⁸ Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015.

⁹⁹ Chaliand 1993, p. 220; Cody, Edward. 1980 “Iraq Advances Slowly Toward the Gulf; Syria Criticized Iraq Hostilities, Shatters Arab Unity Denunciation Shatter Arab Unity,” *The Washington Post*, 8 October 1980; Interview with Omar Sheikhmous via Skype, 8 March 2015; Interview with Rizgar Ali, August 2014, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Saadi Ahmed Pira, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Anonymous, July 2014, Sulamaniya, Iraq.

¹⁰¹ Randal, Jonathan. 1988 “Kurds Have no Friends,” *The Washington Post*, 9 September 1988. According to O’Ballance as many as 48,000 Kurds had deserted the Iraqi army by 1983. See O’Ballance 1996, p. 133. Also, on deserters, see Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

hostilities against one another.¹⁰² Together, the Kurds would be able to field some 25,000 *peshmerga* against Iraq by 1988.¹⁰³

Given such a fragmented but militarily viable Kurdish movement, my theory predicts Kurdish groups would solicit indirect support from Iraq’s enemies to help combat their rebel rivals, and refrain from soliciting direct intervention or engaging with Iraq’s allies. In other words: “cornering the market.” Kurdish diplomatic strategy largely follows this pattern.

Table 4.4: Change in Threat Environment – Period 5 to 6

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable			1980-1985 ↑
Militarily Non-Viable			1975-1980

Strategy of Diplomacy

As a fragmented movement intent on gaining dominance over their rivals, the Kurds focused on soliciting support from Iraq’s adversaries.¹⁰⁴ The KDP increased its ties to Iran, while

¹⁰² McDowall, David. 1985 “Third World Review: Kurds in the way/Rival Independence Movements along the Turkey Iraq border,” *The Guardian*, 14 June 1985; Randal, Jonathan. 1986. “Kurds Claim Victory in Battle With Iraq,” *The Washington Post*, 23 May 1986.

¹⁰³ Tyler, Patrick. 1988. “Kurdish Guerrillas Pose Growing Threat to Iraq; Rival Factions Unify, Gain Iran’s Backing,” *The Washington Post*, 19 February 1988.

¹⁰⁴ Former Kurdish diplomats and those familiar with Kurdish foreign relations during this period frequently say they were trying to get in touch with Western powers and Saddam’s allies in order to undermine Baghdad. However, access to internal documents from the PUK provide a clearer and more nuanced picture of Kurdish diplomacy. Although the archive contains a number of documents on attempts to engage with Iraq’s allies, the overwhelming majority of foreign policy-related documents and intra-party discussions revolve around securing aid from Syria, Libya, and other anti-Saddam actors, as well as some neutral supporters like NGOs and church groups. In other words, although the Kurds were likely hopeful of convincing Saddam’s allies to cut back support to Iraq, the core of at least PUK diplomacy was clearly on intra-Kurdish competition and engagement with Saddam’s adversaries to corner the market of resources. This is not to say that interviewees were misrepresenting the facts of the time. It is more likely that in reflecting on the past and of the decade in a broader sense, interviewees may have chosen to focus more on the conflict vis-à-vis Saddam. For these reasons, I base my analysis on interview notes but rely more heavily on primary-source archival documents that may more accurately reflect Kurdish strategy at the time. Since these are PUK-affiliated documents, most of the analysis that follows reflects this perspective.

the PUK and KDP both maintained ties to the Syrians and Libyans, at least through 1984.¹⁰⁵

Reflecting on the Iran-Iraq War, Dr. Othman described the diplomatic atmosphere: “the PUK was going to Iran, KDP was going to Iran. Other parties were going and each one on his own, of course. To Damascus, to Turkey, to any place. Usually when you go there you want support for your party, you don’t want support for other party... The right thing is that you behave as a people, go all together. But that didn’t happen.”¹⁰⁶ This fragmented and competitive diplomacy also affected the success of Kurdish diplomacy “because each party was doing on his own, usually against each other and that was very bad for the Kurdish issue.”¹⁰⁷

One of the main targets of diplomacy at this time was Libya, Iraq’s staunch inter-Arab competitor.¹⁰⁸ As mentioned above, Libya was an important supplier of money and material for the KDP and PUK, making it an important forum for intra-rebel resource competition. The PUK in particular needed this aid more than ever given the combination of growing intra-rebel warfare,¹⁰⁹ poor finances,¹¹⁰ and the need for Libyan funds to purchase more weapons.¹¹¹ Yet the

The few efforts to reach Saddam’s allies fell on deaf ears and were not the focal point of Kurdish diplomacy at the time. Most of the international community had come to side with the Iraqis in the war and the Kurds found few opportunities to speak internationally. Interviewees themselves noted that soliciting Baghdad’s allies had nearly no likelihood of success, especially as a divided movement. Most interactions within states that were allied with Baghdad did not focus on ruling governments but usually opposition parties that were themselves anti-Baghdad. Nearly every interviewee discussing the subject lamented that the Kurds were completely shunned and ignored by these governments from the start, and thus were relegated to indirect appeals through public opinion often through the various Kurdish student organizations abroad. As one interviewee noted on relations with Europe, “Basically we worked on the political parties, the World Council of Churches, and independent personalities. That is during the 80s. We realized the relationship between Iraq and the West is far too strong for us to try to establish relations with the governments” (Interview with Anonymous, June 2015, Erbil, Iraq). Also, see Schmidt 1991. The Iraqis were being backed by the French, Americans, Soviets, British, Saudis, Turks, and others, and thus the Kurds had few options to turn to for outside support (Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq).

¹⁰⁵ McDowall 1997, pp. 345-351; Cody, Edward. 1982. “Kurds Join Other Rebels in Effort to Overthrow Iraqi Rulers,” *The Washington Post*, 6 January 1982; and Randal, Jonathan. 1986. “Kurds Claim Victory in Battle with Iraq,” *The Washington Post*, 23 May 1986.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁰⁸ “Letter from PUK leadership to external leadership,” 8 April 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/693.

¹⁰⁹ Pishedda 2015, Ch. 3.

¹¹⁰ “Letter from PUK leadership to external leadership,” 7 September 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/697.

¹¹¹ “Letter from PUK leadership to external leadership,” 8 April 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/693.

big point of contention that required Libyan assistance was the fact that Libyan aid destined for the KDP and PUK was only being received by the KDP.¹¹² Arms for both actors were being shipped through Tehran. However, while the Iranian authorities made sure these weapons were received by the KDP – with whom they were aligned – they withheld the disbursement of weapons for the PUK.

The leadership discussed the need to engage with Libya on this matter and at least two letters were sent to Qaddafi in March and April 1982.¹¹³ In the first letter, the PUK complained that Libyan aid was being withheld in Iran and asked Qaddafi to use his influence on Iranian authorities to make sure the weapons reached their intended recipients. They also hoped Qaddafi could help secure the release of PUK prisoners being held by Tehran.¹¹⁴ In the next, the PUK reminded Qaddafi that it was the PUK which had relations with Libya first – possibly in reference to the KDP – and then reminisced about Talabani’s visit to Libya the previous year. Once again, they explained the urgent need for such support and complained of the withholding of Libyan assistance in Iran.¹¹⁵

In 1983, as the Iran-Iraq War shifted north and intra-rebel fighting increased,¹¹⁶ the PUK became more desperate for support.¹¹⁷ While the KDP was able to maintain its alliance with the Iranians, the PUK was trapped between hostile Iraqi, Iranian, and KDP forces. In light of these events, the PUK leadership meetings discussed the need to engage with Libya and send another emissary to ask for indirect assistance. They also discussed the need to make similar appeals to

¹¹² “Letter from PUK leadership to external leadership,” 7 September 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/697; “Letter on behalf of PUK to Moammar Ghadafi of Libya,” 11 March 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/705; and “Letter from PUK representative to Ghadafi al-dam,” 30 April 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/706.

¹¹³ “Letter from internal to external PUK leadership,” 7 September 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/697.

¹¹⁴ “Letter on behalf of PUK to Moammar Ghadafi of Libya,” 11 March 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/705.

¹¹⁵ “Letter from PUK representative to Ghadafi al-dam,” 30 April 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/706.

¹¹⁶ “Memorandum of PUK to all Iraqi political movements,” 10 February 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/702.

¹¹⁷ Gunter 1992, p. 38.

the Syrian-backed opposition.¹¹⁸ There is no evidence, however, that the PUK asked Syria or Libya to directly undermine the KDP for them. The PUK simply wanted to increase its own organizational power through indirect intervention.

Libya and Syria were not the only targets of diplomacy at the time, but other Baghdad adversaries were. For example, in early-1983, in response to the KDP attack on PUK headquarters – which apparently violated a previous agreement between the opposition groups – the PUK called on other Iraqi opposition groups to pressure the KDP to stop its aggression and to refrain from helping the KDP.¹¹⁹ Another message that year called on opposition groups to cooperate as a front against Barzani.¹²⁰ The PUK even went as far as to contact North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in pursuit of support. Using an anti-West framing, the PUK appealed, “Respected comrade, Our people is in desperate need of your excellency’s moral and material solidarity and support.”¹²¹

These appeals for greater assistance made strategic sense. Crushed between two enemies, the PUK would soon be forced to do the unthinkable – negotiate with Baghdad. Eventually, the PUK negotiated a ceasefire with Saddam and began discussing the terms of a broader autonomy agreement.¹²² In return for arms and a new autonomy deal, Talabani would help Baghdad keep the KDP in check.¹²³ Although the alliance was hardly foreign, it was still premised on the principal of intra-insurgent competition.

¹¹⁸ “Letter between top PUK leaders,” 9 January 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/701. It is unclear whether imperialism here means the KDP, Baghdad, or both.

¹¹⁹ “Memorandum of PUK to all Iraqi political movements,” 10 February 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/702.

¹²⁰ “Proposal for cooperation between Kurdish movements in all parts of Kurdistan,” 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/692.

¹²¹ “Letter from PUK to Chairman Kim Il Sung of North Korea,” 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/723.

¹²² O’Ballance, 1996, p. 134.

¹²³ Drozdiak, William. 1984. “Iraq is Fearful of Kurdish Aid to Iranian Drive,” *The Washington Post*, 27 March 1984.

The détente between the PUK and Baghdad broke down in 1984, creating a unique diplomatic issue for the PUK. The first issue was how to reinitiate Syrian and Libyan support after being cut off because of the deal with Saddam. When PUK-Baghdad talks failed, it was not a given that the PUK renew its war against Saddam.¹²⁴ But the PUK could not trust Saddam and the renewal of war would risk losing all the material gains it was receiving from Baghdad as a result of the ceasefire.¹²⁵ The PUK claimed to have at least quadrupled its number of fighters and had nearly a year of funds, but surpluses could rapidly diminish in the field.¹²⁶ As a result, the PUK campaigned in an effort to convince its old suppliers that aid should be resumed. In attempts to renew its network of aid, the PUK had met with Syrian representatives three times by the end of 1984.¹²⁷

To protect itself further, the PUK engaged in a second major campaign to negotiate an alliance with Iran and there was a discussion of normalizing relations with the KDP to avoid another two-sided squeeze.¹²⁸ By early 1985 the PUK and KDP were exchanging letters regarding a process of “normalization.”¹²⁹ This is not to say relations were already warm between the two. In fact, one proposed meeting never took place due to mistrust over whether to meet on the Iraqi or Iranian side of the border, where each had its own advantage.¹³⁰ Appeals to outside NGOs still included the pitch that they should supply the PUK, but not the KDP.¹³¹

¹²⁴ It was apparently the Turks that pressured Saddam not to sign a settlement with the PUK.

¹²⁵ “Letter between top PUK leaders,” 2 December 1984, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/5/1351; and “Letter from internal to external PUK leadership,” 5 June 1984, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/795.

¹²⁶ “Letter between top PUK leaders,” 2 December 1984, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/5/1351.

¹²⁷ “Letter from external PUK leader to internal PUK leadership,” 15 December 1982, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/866.

¹²⁸ McDowall, pp. 346-351.

¹²⁹ “Letter from internal PUK leadership to European Committee (external leaders),” January 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/749.

¹³⁰ “Letter from internal PUK leadership to European Committee (external leaders),” January 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/749.

¹³¹ “Letter between external leaders of the PUK,” 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/369.

But more tellingly and in line with a strategy of “cornering the market” for rebellion, the PUK was simultaneously debating whether to make moves towards rapprochement with Iran in order to outplay the KDP. As one internal document noted, the KDP was interested in talks with the PUK because of some strained relations with Iran and Tehran-backed factions. Therefore, the PUK would be wise to exploit this tension to gain better relations with Iran.¹³² The Iranians, after all, could be quite receptive to such an alliance should it lead to the end of PUK support for the Iranian opposition.¹³³ The PUK – along with Baghdad – was aiding the KDP-I, which was itself pinning down over a third of the Iranian army in the north.¹³⁴ If the PUK withdrew its support for the KDP-I, Iran could better focus its attention on the Iraqi military.

Relations between the PUK and KDP were warming and they soon began to avoid direct hostilities with one another.¹³⁵ However, the biggest fear for the PUK was not being duped into unification by the KDP, but by Tehran. An early assessment from one PUK leader in September 1985 warned that aligning with Iran could be dangerous because of Tehran’s proclivity to try to dominate the Kurds, not aid them.¹³⁶ As a result, during negotiations with Iran and the KDP, the PUK continued to ask the Syrians and Libyans for assistance in order to keep the option of not aligning with the Iranians open. The PUK met with Libyan representatives in 1985 only to get

¹³² “Letter from an internal PUK leader to external PUK leader,” 19 January 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1282.

¹³³ “Letter from PUK internal leadership to the European Committee of PUK,” 3 April 1986, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/737.

¹³⁴ Bertolino, Jean. 1982. “Kurds Fight Khomeiny for Autonomy,” *Guardian Weekly*, 5 September 1982.

¹³⁵ As late as September 1985, the PUK was still using interviews as an opportunity to demonstrate its relevance over the KDP. However, instead of declaring KDP an enemy, they simply describe it as having less power than the PUK. See, “Interview with Jelial Talabni,” September 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1087.

¹³⁶ “Letter from PUK office in Tehran to external PUK leader,” 8 September 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/968.

the cold shoulder,¹³⁷ and the PUK leadership continued to discuss the need to send delegations to Damascus and Tripoli in 1986 to explain their fear of getting into bed with Tehran.¹³⁸

During this period, the PUK did not entirely ignore relations with states aligned with Iraq. There are some instances of the Kurds asking Iraq's allies for direct intervention, albeit to little success.¹³⁹ Still, most diplomatic engagements in countries aligned with Iraq were inter-party talks with the PUK's ideological allies and thus adversaries to the Baath. This included meetings with various socialist parties in France, Germany, and Sweden.¹⁴⁰ The PUK was, after all, a member of the Socialist International. Furthermore, most of these campaigns were carried out by various student unions and Kurdish organizations in Europe and the U.S.,¹⁴¹ which had decisively less power and authority than official Kurdish diplomats. In fact, there were so many independent Kurdish organizations operating in Europe at the time that it likely made it very difficult for politicians to keep track of their proposals or take them seriously.¹⁴²

One exceptional appeal to Iraq's supporters was a letter to Indira Gandhi in 1983. The letter, sent on the occasion of the Seventh Summit of Non-Aligned Countries, asked the summit to "intervene, forcefully, to stop this process of suppression against the Kurdish people in Iraq, and it's [sic] liberation movement."¹⁴³ There were also new emissaries dispatched to Europe, like the KDP's Hoshyar Zebari, but the initial mission was regionally focused. As one Kurdish

¹³⁷ "Letter from external PUK leader to Political Bureau of the PUK," 18 April 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/873.

¹³⁸ "Letter from PUK internal leadership to the European Committee of PUK," 3 April 1986, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/737; "Letter from member of PUK leadership to European committee of PUK," 16 June 1986, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/885; and "Letter between High-level PUK leaders," 3 January 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/843.

¹³⁹ O'Ballance 1996, p. 139; and Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

¹⁴⁰ "PUK message to the 1981 annual congress of the socialist party of France," 1981, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/383; and "Letter between PUK leaders," 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/369. There were also ties to Bruno Kriesky of Austria, but the only exchange noted in the files appears to be about coordinating to ensure the safety of Austrian nationals in the area. See "Letter from PUK to Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky," 12 February 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/699.

¹⁴¹ Interview with Fazil Mirani, June 29, 2015, Salahaddin (Musif), Iraq.

¹⁴² Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁴³ "Letter from PUK to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India on the occasion of the summit of the non-aligned countries," 6 March 1983, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/725.

politician described it, Zebari's mission to London in the early-1980s was simply to cultivate ties within Middle Eastern communities abroad.¹⁴⁴ However, that would soon change – the period of fragmentation was coming to an end.

Period 7: 1985 to 1987

One of the most striking turns in Kurdish international relations occurred in the mid-1980s. Throughout the post-1975 period and during the Iran-Iraq War the PUK and KDP focused their diplomatic attention on Iraq's regional adversaries, including Syria, Iran, Turkey, and Libya and other anti-Baghdad revolutionary parties. However, in 1985, after nearly a decade of minimal attempts to engage with the United States, and minor relations with Iraq's allies in Europe, the Kurds begin a campaign to solicit support from the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union as Iraq's backers against Iran. How can we account for this dramatic change in Kurdish foreign policy? I argue that this shift in diplomatic targeting can be explained by the gradual unification of the Kurdish liberation movement. As a newly allied movement in 1985 – and transitioning toward unity – the Kurds became less distracted by internal competition and were able to focus their attention on undermining Baghdad. Doing so would require the assistance of Iraq's own allies.

The transition period between alliance and unity was seamless and rapid. Furthermore, there is minimal data unique to the 1985-1987 period. As a result, the following assessment of the 1985 period should be analyzed together with the 1987-1990 analysis.

Militarily Viable and Allied Movement

The winter of 1985/6 marks a turning point in intra-Kurdish relations: growing ties between the KDP and PUK led to an informal and open alliance against Baghdad. As one KDP

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Anonymous, June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

official recalled, in 1985, “Talabani came across to Iran and a conference in Tehran, and then at least we were not against each other in public relations, although we are competing with each other.”¹⁴⁵ By 1986 several Kurdish groups, including the PUK and KDP, jointly announced a more formal alliance to cooperate against Baghdad. As a reward for the unity, the PUK began to receive support from Iran.¹⁴⁶ The result, was a gradual but notable shift in the international diplomatic strategy of the Kurds – from using diplomacy to “cornering the market” rebellion to using diplomacy to solicit assistance in undermining Baghdad.

Although there was a change in movement type, there was no change in military viability at this point. If anything the alliance made the Kurds stronger. Given an allied and militarily viable movement, my theory predicts the Kurds to engage in a primary campaign of “legitimizing rebellion” to undermine Iraq, and to a secondary campaign of “cornering the market” (Table 4.5). While evidence on the primary target of Kurdish appeals is apparent, there are only minimal details examining the content of Kurdish appeals at this time. Based on the few pieces of evidence we have, the Kurds appeared to engage in “outsourcing rebellion,” meaning the prediction that the Kurds would primarily target Iraq’s allies is correct, but the prediction on intervention type is not. As such, this period can be coded as a partial anomaly for the theory’s predictions. However, it would require additional evidence on the content of Kurdish appeals from 1985 to 1987 to determine this definitively.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Anonymous, June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁴⁶ McDowall 1997, p. 351; and Gunter 1992, p. 39.

Table 4.5: Change in Threat Environment – Period 6 to 7

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1985-1987 ←	1980-1985
Militarily Non-Viable			

Strategy of Diplomacy

The historic shift towards Iraq’s allies is apparent as early as the winter of 1985. In November, the PUK drafted an address to Gorbachev and Reagan attending the Geneva Summit. Unlike previous appeals to international actors and especially the Soviet Union, the tone has changed. Instead of blasting anti-imperialist elements – a common reference to the KDP – the appeal was on behalf of the “Kurdish people” and carried no anti-American sentiment. Instead, they ask both of the great powers to “practice your possibilities of influence, with the governments that rule over Kurdistan to abandon their hard policies of oppression (including wars of genocide) against the Kurdish people: and refrain from providing these states with economic and military capabilities, that serve their aggressive intentions, rather than the establishment of peace and security in the region.”¹⁴⁷ The message was followed up by a general letter sent to the UN, the Vatican, and other NGOs, asking for “immediate means of pressure to put an effective end to this war of genocide against our defenceless people by a member country of the United Nations and a signatory to its charter and the International Declaration on Human Rights.”¹⁴⁸ Once again, the intra-Kurdish framing is completely absent from the letter.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ “PUK’s address to the Geneva Summit Meeting,” 11 November 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1082.

¹⁴⁸ “Appeal by PUK to international public opinion,” 30 March 1986, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/744.

¹⁴⁹ There was also an apparent meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands at the end of 1985 to protest against the Iraqi regime. See “Letter between PUK leaders,” 24 December 1985, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/976.

Yet the Kurds were largely militarily viable at this point in time, making such appeals for direct intervention somewhat surprising. There can be two explanations for this. First, since the above appeals were rather public, the syntax calling for direct intervention may have simply been grandiose in order to draw greater attention to the conflict and Saddam's atrocities. Secondly, as mentioned above, although the Kurds were temporarily allied with Iran, both groups were uncomfortable with the. Therefore, appeals for others to directly intervene may have been away to invite more favorable outside actors into the conflict.

Period 8: 1987 to 1990

The years surrounding the end of the Iran-Iraq War were the darkest for the Kurds. Although the PUK, KDP, and other groups united together against Saddam, they paid a horrible price. Having both the KDP and PUK united and in support of the Iranians, Saddam was bent on quashing the Kurds. In 1987, Saddam initiated the infamous *Anfal* campaign, which wreaked unprecedented destruction upon the north. After *Anfal*, Masoud Barzani, head of the KDP, admitted that the "Kurdish question cannot be solved with military means."¹⁵⁰ The alternative means he was referring to was diplomacy – not negotiation with Saddam, but the solicitation of outside actors to turn on Iraq. In response, the Kurds launched a major campaign to get Iraq's own allies to directly undermine Baghdad's efforts. This diplomatic strategic change can be explained by two notable changes in the Kurdish threat environment: the Kurdish opposition was now united, making Iraq the primary threat, and the Kurds became drastically non-viable from a military standpoint.

¹⁵⁰ McDowall 1997, p. 369.

Militarily Non-Viable and United Movement

With regards to the degree of fragmentation within the movement, the Kurds were unambiguously united by 1987. Steps toward reconciliation had begun after the collapse of negotiations between Saddam and Talabani in 1984, but there was no formal unification until 1987. The union was initiated by the Kurds but facilitated by the Iranians, along with Syrians and Libyans.¹⁵¹ Under the auspices of the Iranians, the Kurdish Front was agreed upon in mid-1987 and implemented in May 1988.¹⁵² It represented a united military and political effort within Iraq and abroad. Although Kurdish representatives abroad continued to represent their own factions, they coordinated and worked together to draw attention to Saddam's atrocities.¹⁵³

The unification of the Kurdish liberation movement was closely related to the fact that these groups were becoming increasingly non-viable.¹⁵⁴ Up until 1987, with the start of the *Anfal* campaign against the Kurds, the groups proved to be formidable. Up until the spring of 1987, the Kurds held significant amounts of territory in the north.¹⁵⁵ Although the PUK was in a tough position in the mid-1980s and attempted to side with Baghdad to avoid a loss of power,¹⁵⁶ the PUK maintained its autonomous strength and bargaining position throughout. Yet, the weight of *Anfal* forced the Kurds to withdraw from the field. Those *peshmerga* that remained were further forced to break into smaller units of 10-20 *peshmerga* to avoid capture.¹⁵⁷

Reminiscent of 1975, the death knell for the Kurdish rebellion was the peace agreement signed by Iran and Iraq in August 1988. Once again, the Kurds were left on their own. They not

¹⁵¹ Thurgood, Liz. 1986. "Iraqi Kurds Join Forces with Iran/Gulf War," *The Guardian*, 19 November 1986.

¹⁵² Stansfield 2003 p. 92.

¹⁵³ Interview with Anonymous, July 2014, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁵⁴ Stansfield 2003, p. 92.

¹⁵⁵ Bulloch and Morris 1992, p. 159.

¹⁵⁶ O'Ballance 1996, p. 134.


¹⁵⁷ Interview with Rizgar Ali, August 2014, Erbil, Iraq.

only bore the full brunt of Iraq’s forces, but Saddam was now bent on destroying the north.¹⁵⁸ *Anfal* decimated the Kurdish rebellion and the Iraqi army razed thousands of Kurdish villages, and indiscriminately killed tens of thousands of Kurdish men, women, and children.¹⁵⁹ By the end of 1988, the north was shattered. Iraqi chemical attacks on Kurdish population centers brought the region into physical and psychological collapse. As a result of the *Anfal*, even the united Kurdish resistance became incredibly weak.¹⁶⁰ One former PUK official reflected that the KDP and had PUK forged the alliance just to show the world the Kurds still had some influence after such a defeat – enough power to be taken seriously, but more importantly, to be helped.¹⁶¹

Overall, the period between 1987 and 1990 was one in which the Kurdish movement was united, albeit completely militarily non-viable. Given this context, we would expect Kurdish diplomacy to pursue a strategy of “outsourcing rebellion,” targeting Iraq’s allies to elicit direct intervention against the Iraqi regime. This prediction is precisely what takes place.

Table 4.6: Change in Threat Environment – Period 7 to 8

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1985-1987	
Militarily Non-Viable	1987-1990		



Strategy of Diplomacy

The military option was off the table for the Kurds. As Bulloch notes, “Guerrilla activity in Kurdistan had come to a halt, enabling the Iraqis to pursue unchecked a policy of destruction

¹⁵⁸ Morris, Harvey. 1989. “Kurds Plan to Move their Struggle to Iraqi Cities,” *The Independent*, 18 November 18 1989.

¹⁵⁹ Marr 2004, p. 200; and Bulloch and Morris 1992, p. 159.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁶¹ Interview with Omer Saed Ali, July 2014, Sulaimani, Iraq.

and forced deportations. The only option open to Kurdish leaders was a new political initiative to bring the plight of their people to world attention. To do this, Barzani embarked on a frustrating tour of Western Europe.”¹⁶² Talabani also “ventured out of Iraq for the first time in eight years to accuse the Iraqi Government of President Saddam Hussein of genocide for its use of chemical weapons in attacks on Kurds.”¹⁶³ Talabani toured Europe and made a controversial trip to the U.S. where he met with officials from the UN, the U.S. State Department, Congress, and the media.¹⁶⁴ He was “trying to draw attention to the Kurdish struggle...and he was attending many conferences.”¹⁶⁵

The unambiguous focus of Kurdish diplomacy was to undermine the Saddam regime by getting Iraq’s own supporters to turn their backs on Baghdad.¹⁶⁶ Evidence of this is found not only in conversations with Kurdish officials, but in nearly every interview conducted with the Kurds during this period. Those countries receiving the full force of Kurdish diplomacy were Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union – all allies of Iraq during the war. The U.S. backed Saddam’s regime in the fight against Iran starting in 1984 – when the Iranians appeared to have the upper-hand in the war¹⁶⁷ – and the Soviet Union followed suit. The French had been arming Iraq 1960s, while the British remained close their former mandate.¹⁶⁸ In an unprecedented wave of Kurdish diplomacy, representatives took to the U.S., U.K., and France to stage widespread appeals to stop Western support for Saddam.¹⁶⁹ The major framing was that

¹⁶² Bulloch and Morris 1992, pp. 6-12.

¹⁶³ Sciolino, Elaine. 1988. “Kurdish Chief Gains Support in U.S. Visit,” *The New York Times*, 22 June 1988.

¹⁶⁴ Sciolino, Elaine. 1988. “Kurdish Chief Gains Support in U.S. Visit,” *The New York Times*, 22 June 1988; Teimourian, Hazhir. 1988. “Kurds Accuse Iraq of Killing Civilians in New Gas Attacks,” *The Times*, 19 October 1988.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁶⁶ Lawrence 2008, p. 40; and Interview with Dr. Najmaldin Kareem, Erbil, Iraq, July 2014.

¹⁶⁷ The U.S. was still allied to Iraq even after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Randal 1997, p. 79.

¹⁶⁸ Shemesh 1992, pp. 12-3.

¹⁶⁹ Lawrence 2008.

Saddam Hussein was a war criminal at home, and a larger threat to humanity and Western interests. His army not only threatened, but other Western allies, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Syria.¹⁷⁰ Talabani famously travelled with a large book of villages destroyed by *Anfal* and presented it at meetings in London and Washington.¹⁷¹

The goal of the Kurds' diplomatic mission was not to get increased arms, material or finances from these actors. Instead, the Kurds needed direct intervention from Iraq's own allies.¹⁷² The demand was for outright liberty from Saddam.¹⁷³ If the Kurds could convince Iraq's allies to abandon their support for Saddam and to compel him to stop the onslaught of *al-Anfal*, then the Kurds could maybe be saved.¹⁷⁴ The other motivating goal was to ensure that the Kurdish question was addressed in the impending peace talks between Iran and Iraq. With the strong memory of the Algiers Accords, the Kurds knew that without a Kurdish solution in the agreement, Iraq would be free to punish the Kurds. The fear, of course was correct. Just a week after signing a ceasefire with Iran, Saddam attacked the Kurds.¹⁷⁵

At first, the PUK had written to Chinese representatives begging for gas masks, military coats, and medicine to protect against mustard gas.¹⁷⁶ Eventually, requests for help became more direct in asking for outside intervention. In May 1987, a letter was sent to the General Secretary of the United Nations, rebuking a recent UN fact-finding mission that failed to mention the gas attacks. Calling Saddam's war a "genocide," the Kurds asked the UN to "Intervene urgently and

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Dr. Kemal Kirkuki, June 19, 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁷¹ Quill 2008, p. 40; and Interview with Dr. Najmaldin Kareem, Erbil, Iraq, July 2014.

¹⁷² For a detailed account of these proceedings, see Lawrence 2008 and al-Bayati 2011.

¹⁷³ Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁷⁴ One interesting exception is from an interview in which Talabani explicitly states that the Kurds would not want the Iranians to come further into Iraqi Kurdistan. See Randal, Jonathan C. 1988 "Kurdish Rebel Leaders Reassess Iran Alliance; Guerrillas Fear New Iraqi Assaults," *The Washington Post*, 4 May 1988.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁷⁶ "Letter from external PUK leader to Chinese embassy in Stockholm," 4 May 1987, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/916.

act according to the powers invested in your office, by all possible means to stop this alarming danger that is hanging over our defenseless people, whether by informing the Security Council, dispatching another fact-finding mission, or declaring the United Nations' open condemnation of such acts by the government of Iraq.”¹⁷⁷

In April 1987, the PUK sent a letter to Premier Gorbachev, urging his help to stop the campaign against the Kurds. Directly playing to the Soviet's position as Baghdad's ally, the letter argued that, “Because the Soviet Union is the major supplier of Iraq with weapons, and because Iraq is able only with the help of the Soviet weapons to prolong war against the people of Kurdistan and against the people of Iran, therefore we appeal to your great peace-loving country...to issue orders to the concerned authorities to prohibit export of Soviet weapons to Iraq...[and] use your personal good offices to urge Iraq stopping its attack with chemical weapons against the people of Kurdistan.”¹⁷⁸

The great powers, however, were uninterested. The general sentiment from Kurdish diplomats was that much of the international community was united behind Saddam against Iran.¹⁷⁹ While they would make some gains in London and Paris, they would ultimately lose out in Washington and Moscow.¹⁸⁰ Saddam Hussein was a recognizable evil, but a key ally against revolutionary Iran.¹⁸¹ As such, while Kurdish diplomats were able to meet some public officials, the campaign was ultimately one of public diplomacy, hoping to turn the tide of public opinion and thus parliaments abroad.¹⁸² They also had to try tactics of getting other states to appeal to Iraq's allies for them. For example, in a letter to the Swedish Foreign Minister in April 1988, the

¹⁷⁷ “Letter from PUK to UN General-Secretary Perez de Cuellar,” 15 May 1987, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1211.

¹⁷⁸ “Letter from PUK to Gorbachev,” June 1, 1987, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403, Box 4, No. 1215.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Fuad Hussein, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁸⁰ Bulloch and Morris 1992, p. 7.

¹⁸¹ Galbraith 2006, p. 34.

¹⁸² Interview with Dr. Najmaldin Kareem, July 2014, Erbil, Iraq.

Kurds asked in desperation that even if Sweden couldn't personally help, then "On the occasion of your excellency's planned meetings with the foreign ministers of both super-powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, I beg and urge your excellency to bring our people's plight and the Iraqi war of genocide against it for serious discussions in these forthcoming meetings. There is no doubt that serious political pressures by the international community, especially, the super-powers, against the government of Iraq is deeply needed for the survival of our nation."¹⁸³

Kurdish diplomats in Washington and London worked the phones, made media appearances, gave Congressional testimony, and tried desperately hard to reach government officials, but the Reagan administration would not budge.¹⁸⁴ In the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War, the united yet militarily non-viable Kurds continued to appeal for Western intervention. One exception of success was that France allowed the Kurds to hold an international conference in Paris in October 1989. Attended by numerous international actors, including participants from the U.S., Canada, Australia, Britain, and the Soviet Union. Danielle Mitterrand, the wife French President Francois Mitterrand, was key in securing support for this initiative.¹⁸⁵

Still, the overall lack of success in moving the international community must have been frustrating. As many Kurdish politicians recognized, the unified approach to the international community allowed the Kurds to be more efficient and affecting abroad than ever before. The Kurds were able to pool their contacts and experience to work the media and strive for meetings with foreign officials. When "Kurds go together, they have one framework. And when someone goes outside, they talk as [Kurdistan] Front, and that was important. Not each party going on its

¹⁸³ "Letter from PUK leadership to the Swedish Foreign Minister Sten Andersson," 5 April 1988, UE-SCA, EUL MS 403/4/1078.

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Dr. Najmaldin Kareem, July 2014, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Adnan Mufti, 18 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq; and Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq. Also see Marcus 2007, p. 126.

own. When somebody says, 'I'm representing the Kurdistan Front,' it gave it more importance. When united...they care more for it."¹⁸⁶ As another KDP-affiliated diplomat described the united diplomacy, "we were an impressive force...I could feel it and I could see it, we were on our way up."¹⁸⁷ As Dr. Othman put it, "Together, you could do anything. Go to enemies, go to allies, you will have an importance. They take you seriously. But when each party was so on, of course the other side doesn't take the issue seriously and tries to create more problems between this party and that party."¹⁸⁸ Yet even as a united movement in the aftermath of *Anfal*, Othman recalls being shunned in Washington just like each time before.¹⁸⁹

What ultimately changed Kurdish luck was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Once Saddam invaded Kuwait, all the doors to the Kurds swung open. Talabani mentioned in one interview, "A door has been opened for the Kurds after the Gulf crisis, this has brought a new chance to explain the Kurdish problem."¹⁹⁰ As such, "since the invasion of Kuwait, Mr. Talabani and other leaders have been visiting European capitals, lobbying for the Kurdish question to be on the agenda if an international conference on the Middle East is held."¹⁹¹ Jalal Talabani's view that "eagerness of Arab and Western capitals to overthrow Saddam has increased chances of support not only for Kurdish guerrillas but also for other anti-government rebels in Iraq," encouraged the Kurds to approach Saudis and Kuwaitis for support.¹⁹² In 1990, Hoshiyar Zebari (KDP) was dispatched to Europe, Barham Salih (PUK) to the United States (from London), and Mohammed Tofiq (PUK) to London.¹⁹³ Whereas before the Kurds would

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 28 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Siamand Banaa, 27 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Dr. Mahmoud Othman, 19 June 2015, Erbil, Iraq.

¹⁹⁰ Goldenberg, Suzanne. 1990. "Kurds would not fight Iraq," *The Guardian*, 27 November 1990.

¹⁹¹ Goldenberg, Suzanne. 1990. "Kurds would not fight Iraq," *The Guardian*, 27 November 1990.

¹⁹² Cody, Edward. 1990. "Moves Against Saddam Encourage Iraqi Dissidents; Kurds, Others to Meet in Search of Unity – Illusive Until Now in Years of Opposition," *The Washington Post*, 17 September 1990.

¹⁹³ Interview with Mohammad Tofiq, July 2014, Sulaimani, Iraq.

have to meet in small cafés with low-level foreign policy officials to conduct informal diplomacy, now the Kurds were being sought for intelligence and support.

Discussion and Alternative Explanations

Kurdish diplomatic strategy generally follows the predictions laid out above. During the period of immense fragmentation (1975-1985), Kurdish diplomacy overwhelmingly targeted Iraq's adversaries and supporters of the opposition. There were numerous attempts by the PUK to compete with the KDP internationally, and the two groups jointly targeted the same third-parties in attempts to corner the market of resources. However, their transition toward alliance and unity that began in late-1985 triggered a notable shift in diplomatic targeting toward Iraq's allies. This shift takes place prior to the onset of the *Anfal* campaign and thus at a time when the Kurds were still militarily viable.

With regards to type of intervention requested, the record here is positive though to a lesser degree. Periods 6 (1980-1985) and 8 (1987-1990) match our predictions perfectly. When the Kurdish movement was militarily viable in period 6, there were no instances of soliciting direct intervention. Furthermore, when the movement was incapacitated in 1987, there is a drastic shift toward soliciting direct intervention.

My predictions for the type of intervention solicited are more mixed for periods 5 and 7, partially due to data limitations. Given the complete collapse of the Kurdish movement in March 1975, I predicted that the non-viable Kurds would solicit direct intervention heavily against their rivals. There was indeed one major case of this solicitation when the PUK asked the Turks to intervene on their behalf against the KDP, and there are unconfirmed rumors that the KDP may have similarly asked regional actors to help stiffly the PUK on their behalf. Yet it is still the case that the KDP and PUK heavily engaged in indirect intervention by trying to “corner the market”

of resources. This does not work against my predictions, since we do not expect non-viable groups to cease appeals for indirect aid, but the overwhelming focus over direct intervention is worth consideration. As mentioned above, there are four possible explanations for this positive but mixed result. The first could simply be that a fuller understanding of Kurdish diplomacy during this opaque period would reveal that “outsourcing rivalry” was the dominant strategy. Second, after falling victim to the sudden withdrawal of third-party support during the 1974/5 war, Kurdish parties were overly sensitive to by the risks associated with direct intervention, regardless of the benefits. This emotion is spoken about frequently in interviews on the period. In short, even if there was a strategic preference to solicit direct intervention, it may have been stifled by the traumatic experience of 1974/5. Third, Kurdish parties may have been more viable than the available evidence illustrates. Finally, it is possible that the Kurdish rebellion was so weak in 1975 that the case should have been scoped out of the analysis. As mentioned in Chapter 1, groups that have hardly any military capacity may follow different logics of solicitation.

Period 7 (1985-1987) had the opposite issue. The newly allied *peshmerga* were militarily viable, yet the content of their appeals were for more direct forms of intervention. As mentioned above, however, the language of these appeals is not entirely clear and so it is difficult to decipher the to the precise type of intervention requested. It is possible that the intensification of the conflict in the north and growing fears of abandonment by Iran may have contribute to this deviation from our predictions, but it is difficult to tell without more data points. Still, I conservatively code the prediction for intervention type as incorrect for this period.

In total, my theory’s predictions are mostly successful for the Iraqi Kurdish case as a whole. Of the eight periods under analysis, my theory correctly predicted Kurdish groups’ strategies of diplomacy in four periods (periods 1, 3, 6, and 8), and made near perfect predictions

in three others (periods 2, 4, 5). These near perfect predictions are those in which one of the two characteristics defining rebel diplomatic strategy – target of diplomacy and intervention type – was predicted correctly, while the other received a mixed or inconclusive result. There were no cases in which both characteristics were incorrectly predicted and only one in which one of the characteristics was predicted incorrectly (period 7).

Table 4.7: Accounting for Predictions (1958-1990)

		<i>Movement Type</i>	Target of Diplomacy	<i>Military Viability</i>	Type of Intervention
Period 1	1958-1964	<i>United</i>	Allies (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 2	1964-1965	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect/Direct (~)
Period 3	1965-1974	<i>United</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 4	1974-1975	<i>United</i>	Allies/Adversaries (~)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct (✓)
Period 5	1975-1980	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Indirect/Direct (~)
Period 6	1980-1985	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 7	1985-1987	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Direct (✗)
Period 8	1987-1990	<i>United</i>	Allies (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct (✓)

Note: The contents of the columns “Target of Diplomacy” and “Type of Intervention” are the actual observed measurements of these variables. The content in the parentheses denote the extent to which this observation is consistent with my theory’s predictions. A check-mark means “correct,” a tilde means “partially correct,” and an ex-mark means “incorrect.”

Looking at the counter-arguments for the 1975-1990 era, the theory does a better job of explaining insurgent diplomacy than its alternatives. The first alternative explanation is that insurgent diplomacy is entirely driven by what rebels think they can get and from whom they believe will offer it. Once again, this pure supply-side argument does not receive strong support. Although aid was more likely to come from the Syrians and Libyans at this time – due to their own inclination to support the rebellion – it was not always forthcoming. After the failed

negotiations with Baghdad in 1984, the PUK continued to appeal to the Syrians and Libyans to restart the alliance but to no effect. Furthermore, the Kurds knew the Syrians and Libyans would be difficult to persuade, but made attempts nonetheless. The same could be said for their solicitation with the Turks for direct intervention in 1978. There was no reason to believe the Turks would accept the PUK's request, especially if the PUK believed the Turks were helping the KDP. Most obvious, however, is that the united Kurds were fully aware of America's unwillingness to pull the rug from under Baghdad in 1988, but tried to get U.S. support nonetheless. The same can be said for the type of intervention requested, as it was not apparent that the Turks or Iraq's allies would be eager to directly engage the KDP and Baghdad, respectively.

The second alternative argument – that groups privilege engagement with those actors that are ideologically, religiously, or ethnically similar – is unconvincing once again. While there are certainly periods in which the Kurds engage heavily with ideological allies – for example, PUK relations with socialist-oriented states and parties from 1975 to 1985 and Iranian KDP – there was also frequent engagement with the those whom the Kurds were not naturally tied. For example, both the PUK and KDP solicited support from Iran's Khomeini (the PUK even before the revolution), despite being secular political organizations and of a different religious sect. The KDP, jointly appealed to the Soviet Union despite its aversion to communism in the late-1980s, while the PUK jointly appeals to the United States, despite frequently railing against “American imperialism” in their diplomatic correspondence prior to unification. The Kurds allied with ethnic kin across borders, Arabs, Persians, Turks, and others at different stages, as well as Christian church organizations in Western Europe.

Third, one could expect Kurdish diplomatic strategy to follow a linear progression, from targeting Iraq's adversaries to Iraq's allies as support for the movement grows, and from indirect to direct intervention. In fact, this is the progression taken during this period. However, considering the overarching pattern of Kurdish diplomacy beginning in 1958, the pattern fades, since Iraq's allies were initially targeted in two periods between 1958 and 1975. And furthermore, there was a transition from soliciting direct to indirect intervention around 1975, before returning to direct intervention again. Furthermore, the progression to soliciting Iraq's allies was not the result of growing support for the rebellion from Iraq's adversaries. It was driven by the changing focus on Baghdad, at a time when outside support for the Kurds was not at all robust. Furthermore, the pitch for direct intervention was not the final touches of a campaign geared toward bringing Saddam down, it was the desperate appeals of a movement and a people that thought they would be utterly crushed.

Fourth, skeptics could argue that diplomacy followed no clear logic and that engagement was made wherever possible. Once again, it is true that the Kurds sought to make their case known widely and encouraged the growth of Kurdish student unions abroad. However, the interview and archival evidence makes it clear that there were clear campaigns initiated for the purpose of targeting specific international actors for support. Examining the minutes of PUK leadership meetings from 1975 to 1985 reveals long debates about engagement with specific, anti-Baghdad actors, such as Syria, Libya, Iran, and South Yemen. Furthermore, once the Kurds begin reunification in the mid- to late-1980s, it is clear that Britain, France, the U.S., and the Soviets are explicitly targeted on the basis of their support for Baghdad, and Iraq's adversaries receive far less attention.

Fifth, one could argue that the KDP and PUK's diplomatic strategies were a function of their diplomatic capabilities. For example, soliciting Iraq's allies may involve more capabilities than soliciting Iraq's adversaries. However, Kurdish diplomatic capacity was just as strong prior to 1985 and 1987 as it was after. Although there was a public diplomacy flurry with the onset of the *Anfal* campaign, there was no obvious windfall of increased diplomatic capacity.

With regards to potential endogeneity concerns – that third-parties were themselves pushing rebel preferences for targeting and intervention requested, there is little evidence of this. There are, of course, numerous attempts by outside actors to affect a change in movement cohesion, albeit to little effect. For example, the Syrians and Libyans went to great lengths to get the KDP and PUK to ally from 1975 to 1977, but both groups preferred to compete and dodged unification attempts. The Iranians similarly tried to bring the PUK into alliance with the KDP early into the Iran-Iraq war but ultimately failed to persuade the PUK to share Iranian-backing with the KDP. Once the Kurdish movement began to unite, the impetus was local for both the KDP and PUK. The KDP was itself open to a new alignment, and the PUK sought to support from Iran to take advantage of straining KDP-Iranian relations and to save itself from another two-front war. Furthermore, outside actors do not seem to have been actively trying to shape the type of interventions being sought by them. Iraq's allies were not keen on being asked to directly undermine Baghdad, and there is no evidence that third-parties actively tried to manipulate the strength of the Kurdish movement to change the nature of its appeals.

Conclusion

The Kurdish case developed over the previous two chapters has demonstrated how changes in the internal balance of power and intra-insurgent politics can ultimately affect the nature of insurgent diplomacy and rebel foreign policy. When the Kurdish movement was deeply

fragmented, groups expended their diplomatic efforts towards the solicitation of help from Iraq's adversaries. Alternatively, groups turned to Iraq's allies when the movement was united and focusing on undermining Baghdad. The case also showed that the types of intervention the Kurds requested over time tended to vary with the military viability of each group. But how do these relationships hold across other cases. The next two chapters take an in-depth look at Palestinian insurgent diplomacy from 1959 to 1988.

Chapter 5: Palestinian National Movement (1959-1974)

Introduction

The Palestinian national movement is perhaps one of the most international movements of the post-WWII era, both in terms of the geographical arena in which the conflict was fought and its broad global appeal. Emerging at a time when the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) demonstrated how a “diplomatic revolution”¹ could effectively twist the arms of major powers, Palestinian leaders were keenly aware of the power of internationalization. As historian Paul Chamberlin aptly noted, the Palestinian *fedayeen* waged a truly “global offensive.”² It is for this reason that there is such a vast literature on Palestinian resistance and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Existing studies of Palestinian diplomacy and foreign policy are largely historical and are often studied as part of PLO strategy more broadly. These works take three general approaches to studying Palestinian diplomacy. The first set views Palestinian diplomacy as a long, progressive, and wholesale campaign to gain global recognition of Palestinian rights and foreign support. These studies may recognize that the Palestinians solicited different actors for different purposes, but in general, view diplomacy as one large-scale endeavor for international support.³ Second, some studies acknowledge the fact that there were unique campaigns and stages of Palestinian engagement abroad, but view diplomacy as solely pertaining to Palestinian attempts to participate in peace negotiations. As such, these works only differentiate between whether Palestinians wanted to or were able to pursue negotiations and to what degree.⁴ Third, there are

¹ Connelly 2003.

² Chamberlin 2013.

³ Kirisci 1986, Chamberlain 2013; Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 119; Kurz 2005; and Miller 1983, pp. 97-8.

⁴ Al-Yousif 1993; Mohamad 1994; Lahteenmaki 1994; and Pearlman 2009.

studies that recognize that PLO foreign policy was not always about peace talks alone. However, these studies focus more on the determinants of PLO policy preferences, and less on how the PLO actually implemented its foreign policies through diplomatic channels.⁵

While these works are insightful and valuable, the analysis below advances and challenges these approaches. First, looking at Palestinian diplomatic strategy as a whole, there was not a steady and widespread march toward international recognition and peace talks. There were multiple diplomatic campaigns geared towards different issues. Sometimes these campaigns operated simultaneously, and other times one campaign derailed the appeals from another. The PLO, for example, would frequently delay its diplomatic efforts with the Israel's allies in the U.S. and West Europe to engage in regional campaigns to settle intra-movement disputes. Even the famous campaigns for third-party recognition were driven by completely different political-military considerations before and after Yasser Arafat's visit to the United Nations in 1974. As a result, different campaigns targeted substantially different third-parties.

Second, it is often overlooked that Palestinian diplomacy was about much more than gaining legitimacy and access to the peace process. It was a way to solicit arms, money, materiel, and even direct military intervention.⁶ Even campaigns for recognition were as much about sidelining internal rivals as it was about gaining leverage and victory over Israel. Once we take into account the scope of insurgent diplomacy defined in this study – and including its uses for intra-insurgent competition and the solicitation of all varieties of aid – we see that international diplomacy was a critical feature Palestinian politics long before the movement's interests in a negotiated settlement in the early-1970s. For nearly every type of political-military problem the Palestinians faced, they employed a unique diplomatic campaign to help solve that problem.

⁵ DiGeorgio-Lutz 1993; and Noor 1998.

⁶ For notable exceptions, see Norton and Greenberg 1989; and Dannreuther 1998.

Diplomacy was not only critical to Palestinian politics during the campaigns for recognition and negotiations, but indispensable to settling armed and political disputes throughout the entire contemporary period. The next two chapters illustrate these points through a detailed examination of how Palestinian diplomatic strategy varied over time.

The following chapters continue to test the theoretical argument developed in Chapter 2 by examining how and why Palestinian strategies of insurgent diplomacy varied over time. To reiterate the main argument, variation in rebel groups' strategies of diplomacy is intrinsically linked to the domestic threat environment rebels face. Variation in rebel diplomatic strategies are thus a function of: 1) the military viability of a rebel group; and 2) the degree of fragmentation within the broader insurgent movement. When a group is capable of sustaining its own military campaign, it should only solicit indirect intervention (e.g. recognition, arms, training, money) from third-parties. However, once a group fears it is no longer capable of engaging its rivals in combat, groups will ask outside actors to directly intervene. Furthermore, when an insurgent movement is fragmented, groups will solicit support from the counter-insurgent (COIN) state's third-party adversaries in order to sideline rebel rivals. When the movement is united, groups will try to request support from the COIN state's allies in order to help undermine the COIN state and only turning to the COIN state's enemies when such assistance is not forthcoming. Alternatively, when groups are allied – i.e. cooperating but not in full strategic agreement – they will engage in the COIN state's allies and adversaries simultaneously, albeit for divergent purposes. Allies are sought to help solve conflict-level goals vis-à-vis the COIN state, and adversaries are sought to resolve intra-movement disputes.

Like the Iraqi Kurds, the Palestinian national movement provides a useful case to test the theory's predictions. Wide variation on both the dependent and independent variables allow for

numerous tests of the proposed hypotheses, while also holding potential confounding variables constant. Palestinian factions vacillated between requests for indirect intervention – in the hopes of keeping domineering Arab regimes and rebel rivals at bay – to full requests for direct military and political intervention from both regional and Western actors. Furthermore, there are periods in which Palestinian groups are clearly focused on engaging with Israel’s allies, times in which groups are completely engrossed in intra-Arab diplomacy with Israel’s adversaries, and at other times waging simultaneous diplomatic campaigns with both actors.

Case Design

Chapters 5 and 6 cover the period of time from the emergence of the first autonomous Palestinian guerrilla groups around 1959 to the PLO’s formal recognition of Israel and renunciation of the armed struggle in 1988.⁷ During this period, the Palestinian movement passed through nine stages: allied and militarily viable (1974-1976, 1977-1982); fragmented and militarily viable (1959-1970, 1971-1974); united and militarily non-viable (1982-1983); allied and militarily non-viable (1984-1988); and fragmented and militarily non-viable (1970-1971, 1976-1977, 1983-1984). As such, we can trace how a change in the Palestinian movement’s military viability and fragmentation affected group’s appeals for foreign assistance (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Palestinian Case Map (1959-1988)

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1974-1976* 1977-1982*	1959-1970 1971-1974
Militarily Non-Viable	1982-1983*	1984-1988*	1970-1971 1976-1977* 1983-1984*

Note: Time periods with asterisks are examined in the second Palestine chapter (Chapter 6).

⁷ By autonomous, I mean indigenous Palestinian militant organizations that were not directly to or created by the Arab League or its parts. See Sayigh 1997a, Ch. 3.

The first and present chapter explains notable changes in insurgent diplomatic strategy from 1959 to 1974 (Table 5.2), while the next chapter covers the era from 1974 to 1988. Dividing the case study in two allows for a more in-depth analysis of each period of Palestinian diplomacy, and also controls for the substantially different contexts in which the Palestinian movement operated. Accounting for systemic change in the conflict environment is important for maintaining a most-similar-systems design, which controls for as many factors as possible beyond the theory's causal and dependent variables. There are at least four general distinctions between the two phases of the Palestinian national movement.

First, during the initial phase (1959-1974), Palestinian political organizations were born in a state of internal competition and fragmentation. In the initial phase, different factions were still trying to settle who would lead the Palestinian national movement. Yet many of these questions were settled by 1974 after the Fateh-dominated PLO was recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people by nearly all sympathetic actors. As a result, in the latter period (1974-1988), the Palestinian movement was largely allied and predisposed toward coordination. These unique contexts mean that my analytical focus shifts between the chapters: whereas I initially hone in on the transition from using diplomacy to solve movement-level goals to conflict-level goals, the latter chapter focuses on when the pursuit of conflict-level goals reverts back toward movement-level goals.

Second, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, and the initiation of a decades-long peace process completely changed the conflict environment. Fearing the end of Arab militarism toward Israel and a broader peace process that excluded the Palestinians, the movement was forced into a ceaseless debate on the merits of joining or shunning participation in peace talks. These debates not only colored Palestinian politics abroad but also reshaped the contours of intra-movement

debate. As a result, after 1974 the PLO began to view armed struggle as a necessary but not sufficient condition for victory. The armed struggle had become complementary to the pursuit of a political and diplomatic settlement.⁸

Third, although both phases exhibited substantial intra-movement violence, the nature of these battles changed between the phases. During the first phase, an intra-movement war was fought between the PLO and Jordan at a time in which the PLO was not yet recognized as the dominant actor. The main residence for the *fedayeen* at that time was Jordan, where large portions of the population were sympathetic Palestinian refugees who held Jordanian citizenship. However, after 1971, the *fedayeen* (“those who sacrifice themselves,” or Palestinian guerrillas) shifted their center of operations to Lebanon. Unlike in Jordan, Palestinians living in Lebanon were largely quarantined to refugee camps and the influx of Palestinians changed the delicate ethno-political balance of power. As a result, much of Palestinian politics in the post-1974 period is directly tied to the broader crises of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the main intra-movement competitor became Syria.

Fourth, the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut in 1982 marked another momentous change in the conflict environment. The PLO’s military defeat and expulsion from Lebanon effectively ended the armed struggle for most Palestinians. Until this point, the armed struggle was seen as at least complementary to the achieving a settlement with the Israelis, but now even this card was largely taken off the table. For the first time since the founding of the movement, the Palestinians could not maintain a robust presence along Israel’s borders. The political context changed dramatically when that opportunity came to an end.

⁸ Sayigh 1997a, p. 322; Kurz 2005, pp. 79-103; and Interview #21, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

This chapter addresses a number of unique empirical puzzles. For example, what explains why Palestinians primarily employed strategies of “cornering the market” – i.e. soliciting Israel’s adversaries for indirect political, military, and economic support – for the first decade of the conflict, but then suddenly partake in “outsourcing rivalry” from September 1970 to July 1971? During this period, the Palestinians uncharacteristically sought direct intervention from Israel’s adversaries, despite continuous fears of overwhelming outside influence on the movement. Furthermore, what explains the immediate cessation of this strategy and speedy reversion back towards “cornering the market” for the remainder of the era? Before 1971, the Palestinians were asking outside actors to directly coerce the Jordanians, but after, the main goal was to use diplomacy to solicit recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. What explains these swings in diplomatic strategy? One also notices very distinct campaigns for recognition before 1968 and after 1971. Whereas the latter campaign is focused on undermining the Jordanians, the former is focused inward between Palestinian actors.

Below, I demonstrate that since the Palestinian movement was continuously fragmented, there was a consistent pattern of solicitation from Israel’s adversaries over the course of the entire period. However, I also show that the nature of these appeals changed over time, depending both on who the primary intra-movement competitors were, as well as the degree to which the various actors were militarily viable or not. As I argue below, the Palestinian *fedayeen* first emerged as a viable movement in the 1960s, but became substantially weakened during the first intra-movement war in 1970-1 with Jordan. This loss of viability explains why the Palestinians transitioned to “outsourcing rivalry” despite employing a “cornering the market” strategy during the previous decade. It was only after the Jordanian military threat subsided in July 1971, that the PLO was able to focus once again on sidelining the Jordanians through

indirect support. Because movement fragmentation does not vary during this phase of the conflict – meaning it is controlled – this chapter is designed to test how different conditions of Palestinian military viability influenced the types of intervention sought from outside actors. A summary of the case and its predictions are presented below in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Accounting for Predictions (1959-1974)

		<i>Movement Type</i>	Target of Diplomacy	<i>Military Viability</i>	Type of Intervention
Period 1	1959-1970	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (~)
Period 2	1970-1971	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct (✓)
Period 3	1971-1974	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)

Note: The contents of the columns “Target of Diplomacy” and “Type of Intervention” are the actual observed measurements of these variables. The content in the parentheses denote the extent to which this observation is consistent with my theory’s predictions. A check-mark means “correct,” a tilde means “partially correct,” and an ex-mark means “incorrect.”

Background

Origins of the Palestinian National Movement

The analysis begins in 1959, but the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict precede this date. Traditional introductions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often begin with the onset of Jewish immigration to Ottoman-era Palestine, beginning in substantive numbers in the late-1880s. Over the decades, additional waves of immigrants arrived, some propelled by anti-Semitism in central and eastern Europe and others pulled by growing Zionist ideology among the global Jewry. After World War I, Jewish immigration to the new British Mandate of Palestine increased. As the Jewish population grew, tensions between local Palestinian Arabs and Jews often escalated into volleys of violence.⁹ Both sides developed paramilitary organizations to

⁹ Tessler 1994, Ch. 1, and Ch. 2-4; and Kirisci 1986, p. 1.

engage each other, but also to coerce the British into accepting favorable policies and withdraw from Palestine altogether. Attacks on the British – by Jewish organizations like Irgun and Lehi,¹⁰ and Palestinian groups like Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam’s Black Hand, as well as a general uprising during the 1936-1939 Arab revolt – helped convince the British that the costs of maintaining the mandate were too high to sustain.¹¹

It soon became apparent that the only way to limit the spiral of violence and disorder between Jews, Arabs, and British in Palestine would be to partition the territory. The first formal proposal in favor of partition emerged from the 1937 Peel Commission, which was carried out by the British. The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946, reversed this position, concluding that Palestine should remain one entity and calling for Palestine to accept an additional 100,000 Jewish refugees from Europe.¹² The next year the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was released. The 1947 Partition Plan called for the termination of the British Mandate and for its territory to be divided into three entities: a Jewish state, a Palestinian state, and an internationally administered territory governing Jerusalem. The partition was generous to the Jewish population. The Jewish state received 56.47% of Mandatory Palestine,¹³ despite Jews comprising only a third of the population.¹⁴

When the United Nations voted to adopt the partition plan in November 1947, civil war broke out between the Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine. The British announced that they would abandon the Mandate within the year and Jewish forces eventually routed the Palestinians,

¹⁰ For more on the origins of these organizations, see Van Creveland 1998.

¹¹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 2.

¹² Tessler 1994, pp. 241-257.

¹³ “UN Partition Plan,” Israel and the Palestinians: Key Documents, *BBC News*, 29 November 2001.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/middle_east/2001/israel_and_the_palestinians/key_documents/1681322.stm>

¹⁴ Calculated from “Report to the General Assembly, Vol. 1,” Supplement No. 11, United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, 3 September 1947.

<<https://unispal.un.org/DPA/DPR/unispal.nsf/0/07175DE9FA2DE563852568D3006E10F3>>

creating the precursor of a greater conflict to come.¹⁵ When the British Mandate ended in May 1948, the State of Israel was immediately declared. To make complex matters short, “British troops left, thousands of Palestinian Arabs were expelled or fled and Arab armies invaded Israel.”¹⁶ The conclusion of the 1948 war was a resounding victory for the Israelis. By the end of the conflict, the State of Israel had significantly augmented its territorial control beyond the land designated in the UN partition plan.¹⁷ The biggest losers were not invading Arab armies, but the local Palestinian population. Egypt gained the Gaza Strip and Jordan captured the West Bank (annexing the territory in 1950), but the Palestinians did not receive a state and 700,000 Palestinians became refugees in the areas surrounding Israel.¹⁸

Palestinian refugee populations are critical for understanding the rise of the Palestinian national movement, and the Palestine Liberation Organization in particular. The majority of the leadership and rank-and-file of the various *fedayeen* groups that emerged in the 1960s were themselves refugees from the 1948 war. The Palestinian national movement was in many ways a movement of refugees and until the mid-1970s, the movement was viewed as distinct from local Palestinian politics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.¹⁹ In fact, the political leadership in the West Bank was often perceived as a potential alternative to the PLO.²⁰

¹⁵ Morris 1988, p. 13. For more the definitive, detailed analysis of the 1947-1949 period, see Morris 1988.

¹⁶ “Nov. 29, 1947: U.N. Partitions Palestine, Allowing for Creation of Israel,” *The New York Times*, 29 November 2011. <<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/nov-29-1947-united-nations-partitions-palestine-allowing-for-creation-of-israel/>>

¹⁷ According to Yezid Sayigh, by October 1948, the State of Israel had expanded to 78% of mandate Palestine. See Sayigh 1997a, p. 3.

¹⁸ “General Progress Report and Supplementary Report of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine,” United Nations General Assembly, 23 August 1951; and Morris 1988, p. 1. <<http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/b792301807650d6685256cef0073cb80/93037e3b939746de8525610200567883?OpenDocument>>

¹⁹ Khatib 2010, Ch. 2. Also, see Cobban 1984; Aburish 1998; Hroub 2000; and Sayigh 1997.

²⁰ Amos 1980, p. xvii.

From 1948 to the early 1960s, the campaign to reverse the status quo and establish a Palestinian state in the bounds of the former British mandate was dominated not by indigenous Palestinian groups, but by Arab states. Principal among them were Egypt and Syria. The two states competed for control of regional politics, and the Palestine question was subsumed within Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab ideology. Palestine was viewed as part of the broader Arab nation, and thus it was the duty of the Arab world to liberate Palestine. Syria and Egypt formed the United Arab Republic in 1958, but the union was dissolved in 1961.²¹

During the 1950s, a number of Palestinian paramilitary organizations were formed under the auspices of Arab regimes to stage limited raids into Israeli territory. These fighters, or *fedayeen*, are most often associated with those groups operating out of Egypt.²² At the same time, the Arab National Movement (ANM) – a non-armed political movement led by George Habbash in Lebanon – formed the backbone of Palestinian political organization and was loyal to Nasser's pan-Arabism.²³

The rise of autonomous armed *fedayeen* groups began to coalesce in the late-1950s from a network of politically active and militarily-experienced Palestinian refugees. Perhaps the most significant of these groups was the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, or "Fateh." Founded sometime between 1959 and 1962, Fateh was a direct challenge to the Arab nationalist movement that was claiming to represent and fight for Palestinian liberation.²⁴ New armed groups affiliated with the ANM also began to emerge in the late-1960s, creating a front of organizations with varying degrees of Marxist-Leninist ideals. For example, the Popular Front

²¹ These early *fedayeen* were affiliated with both Nasser and his rivals in the Muslim Brotherhood. See, Sayigh 1997a, pp. 25-33; and Miller 1983, pp. 16-22.

²² For more on these early *fedayeen*, see Sayigh 1997a, pp. 58-70; and Drory 2005. On the Fateh leaderships early ties to these *fedayeen* groups, see Aburish 1998, pp. 17-31; and Quandt 1973, pp. 56-8.

²³ Miller 1983, p. 19; and Sayigh 1997a, pp. 31-2.

²⁴ Sayigh 1997a, p. 80-92; Hroub 2000, p. 26; and Abu Iyad 1981, p. 29.

for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), headed by George Habbash, was established in 1967 from a number of smaller ANM-affiliated groups. The PFLP split into a number of factions, including the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF) in 1967, the PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC) in 1968, led by Ahmed Jibril, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) in 1969, led by Nayef Hawatmeh.²⁵ Other important *fedayeen* groups include those that were seen as proxies of Syria and Iraq. For example, Saiqa, was a large Syrian-affiliated *fedayeen* group established in 1966. And the Arab Liberation Front (ALF) was created by Iraq in 1969 as a response to the creation of Saiqa and general Syrian support for the *fedayeen* movement.²⁶

The rise of armed groups outside the orbit of pan-Arabism was seen as a great threat to Egypt's Nasser. When Fateh began its first sabotage campaigns against Israel in 1964 – with Syrian assistance and crossing through Lebanon and Jordan – Nasser had to act. Under the auspices of the Arab League and with Nasser's personal backing, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in May 1964. The PLO was created explicitly to counter challenges to Nasser's leadership by the Syrians and Palestinian elements like Fateh, as well as to co-opt the powerful revolutionary forces picking up the banner of Palestinian nationalism.²⁷ The creation of the PLO, with Ahmed Shuqayri as chairman, triggered a bitter competition between the growing *fedayeen* movement – largely represented by Fateh – and the PLO for control of the movement.

The competition between Fateh and the PLO was over political and military leadership of the Palestinian opposition. Fateh saw “themselves as proponents of Palestinian nationalism” and sought to “shake off the Arab sponsorship” of the movement.²⁸ In addition to political

²⁵ Quandt 1973, pp. 59-64.

²⁶ Quandt 1973, pp. 64-7. Also, see Pearlman 2011, p. 69.

²⁷ Kurz 2005, pp. 35-7; and Quandt 1973, p. 50.

²⁸ Interview #23, 8 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

competition, the PLO and its affiliated Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) were also competing with the *fedayeen* for military recruits. As one scholar observed, “The gains of the new organization became losses for the existing ones. The leaders of the stronger guerrilla organization, Fatah, estimated that they lost up to 80-90% of their cadres to the new organization.”²⁹ The *fedayeen* “competed with the PLO over the same resources of normative and political legitimacy.”³⁰ It was not until the *fedayeen* captured the political institutions of the PLO in 1968 and 1969 that the PLO-*fedayeen* rivalry was settled.

In addition to the *fedayeen* and the Egypt-backed PLO, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was the third main actor competing for domination of the Palestinian national movement, particularly after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The Jordanians claimed political representation over the Palestinian question, as well as the physical sovereignty of Palestinian territories. The West Bank was formally annexed by the Jordanians in 1950 and the Jordanian population was largely Palestinian as a result of the refugee crises in 1948 and 1967.³¹

The Palestinian national movement was subject to a significant third-party pressure and interference. The *fedayeen* and the PLO were rebels without a territory, deeply embedded with Arab powers that continuously sought to control or stifle independent Palestinian power. Still, the Palestinian national movement was remarkably capable of operating in spite of and often in defiance of those states that held leverage over the movement. The Palestinian movement was almost in a constant state of movement in its attempts to ensure that no single actor dominated its policies.³²

²⁹ Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 58.

³⁰ Kurz 2005, p. 57.

³¹ On Palestinian-Jordanian relations, see Braizart 1998.

³² Miller 1983; Norton 1989, pp. 1-7; McLaurin 1989; Quandt 1973, p. 56; Amos 1980, p. 265; and Rubin 1994, p. 149.

Case Characteristics and Coding

Before turning to an examination of Palestinian diplomacy, it is necessary to describe some case-specific coding considerations and unique case characteristics that may affect our analysis. First, unlike the Iraqi Kurdish movement, Palestinian groups not only faced competition for movement hegemony from rival rebel groups, but also from powerful states in the region. Some states voiced direct claims to Palestinian land, while others sought to control the fate of the Palestinian national movement. The three states that fall in this category are Jordan, Egypt, and Syria, or “confrontation states,” given their shared borders with Israel. Just like rival rebel groups, competing Arab states kept the Palestinian movement from focusing on conflict-level goals. As Fatch’s Khaled al-Hassan concluded, “to reform our thinking respecting the way to fight our enemy we ought to decrease the mental efforts we spent on protecting ourselves from our Arab brothers to the lowest possible degree.”³³ Because individual *fedayeen* groups and the collective PLO faced direct competition from these states over control of the anti-Israel opposition, I include Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian as intra-insurgent competitors.

Second, there are a number of “dual-allegiance” states that were adversarial to Israel, yet simultaneously allied to the West. In other words, some third-parties were adversaries of the COIN state, but also maintained influence with the COIN state’s allies. These states – including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco – could be solicited to undermine intra-insurgent competitors directly or Israel indirectly.³⁴ Therefore, when analyzing Palestinian diplomacy with dual-allegiance third-parties, I delve deeper into why these actors are being approached –

³³ Translation of an interview published in *Replica* (No. 1624), “The Palestinian Resistance...Its Mistakes....Problems.....Present and Future: A Frank Dialogue with Khaled Al Hassan,” 1 December 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/51, p. 9. (324).

³⁴ Miller 1983, pp. 66-7, p. 73.

because of their leverage over intra-insurgent politics, or their ties to those who have leverage over the primary target, Israel.³⁵

Third, there is a need to distinguish between distinctive diplomatic campaigns and the use of diplomacy for the basic maintenance of existing relations. The Palestinian national movement was able to construct a large network of diplomacy around the world, largely with the help of a vast diaspora community.³⁶ By August 1981 alone there were 74 PLO-affiliated offices around the world³⁷ and “Arafat travelled in perpetual motion among Arab capitals, preserving his connections and making deals.”³⁸ However, the analytical focus is on explicit diplomatic campaigns, in which specific actors are targeted for specific purposes. As such, I do not dwell on the study of day-to-day Palestinian diplomacy, but focus on unique events and crises that precipitated large-scale diplomatic actions.

Fourth, there is a greater need to focus on acts of diplomacy and decisions taken by the highest level of Palestinian leaders, such as Yasser Arafat (Fateh), George Habbash (PFLP), and Nayef Hawatmeh (DFLP), as opposed to those of their deputies or lower figures. Lower-level officials had significant operational independence. However, this also meant that decision-making power at the strategic level was consolidated in the hands of a few high-level actors. Arafat, as head of Fateh and later chairman of the PLO, in particular, was known to have almost complete control of PLO decision-making.³⁹ Studying the acts of lower-level figures can also be

³⁵ Kirisci 1986 discusses the use of intermediaries for access to various actors more broadly.

³⁶ As Miller notes, by 1983 alone, the PLO had “some form of diplomatic representation in more than 100 countries, consistent support from the United Nations, and the recognition of influential European and Asian states” (Miller 1983, p. 98).

³⁷ J.F. Holding to Heads of Chancery, “PLO Diplomatic Representation,” 24 August 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/99, pp. 2-6. (2777-2782).

³⁸ Rubin 1994, p. 128.

³⁹ This was particularly true as the PLO continued develop institutionally with Arafat and Fateh in control. See Sayigh 1997a, pp. 455-60; and Sayigh 1989, pp. 258-262.

misleading because these individuals were often experimented with various policies before deciding whether to officially implement that policy.⁴⁰

With regards to coding considerations, whether the Palestinian movement is coded as united, allied, or fragmented also requires further specification. This is necessary because of the unique presence of the confrontation states and PLO as an inter-group umbrella organization – both of which are absent from the Iraqi Kurdish case.⁴¹ I code the Palestinian movement as “fragmented” when at least one actor – confrontation state (Egypt, Syria, or Jordan) or major autonomous rebel organization (Fateh, PFLP, DFLP, Saiqa)⁴² – either directly challenges the leadership of the Palestinian movement through military confrontation or by establishing an “alternative” organization intended to explicitly replace the existing leadership. Fragmentation requires a real, credible challenge that goes beyond an actor simply voicing displeasure at the leadership or suggesting that a new leadership should be formed.

As for what constitutes the leadership within the Palestinian case, the PLO and Fateh are jointly coded as leading organizations through most of the case study. Between 1964 and 1968, the PLO was the leading organization because of its powerful position within the Arab League. After the 1968 *fedayeen* take-over of the PLO, both Fateh and the PLO are synonymously coded as the leadership because of Fateh’s overwhelming control of PLO institutions and decision-making. The one exception is from 1959 to 1964, when the PLO was not yet in existence. During

⁴⁰ There are countless examples of Arafat allowing his deputies to make both inflammatory and conciliatory comments in order to see how external and internal actors respond. One notable example is the use of Bassam Abu Sharif’s two-state peace proposal in 1987 as a way to test the waters on peace negotiations with the West. See Morris 2009 (p. 124), who himself refers to this maneuver as sending out “trial balloons.” Another figure helping Arafat in this regard was the PLO representative to London, Said Hammami, who “was considered to be very close to Yasser Arafat, and it was believed that Arafat used him to test ideas in front of a western audience before they were adopted by the PLO” (ARR 1978, No. 1, p. 29).

⁴¹ The one exception would be the formation of the Kurdistan Front in the late 1980s.

⁴² Groups other than Fateh, PFLP, DFLP, and Saiqa were significantly smaller in terms of membership. For example, see Amos 1980 (pp. 325-33) on group sizes in 1970 and 1979. Also see, Miller 1983, p. 126.

this period, the confrontation state, Egypt, is coded as the leader of the Palestinian national movement given President Nasser's dominance over the Palestinian question in Pan-Arabism. The rise of the *fedayeen* in the early 1960s was a challenge to Nasser's leadership and Pan-Arab ownership of the Palestine question.⁴³

The Palestinian movement is considered "allied" when at least one of the major actors – confrontation state or rebel group – actively disassociates itself from the leadership, leaves the PLO's institutions, or condemns the leading group's policies, *but* there is no active challenge to the leadership of the movement. In other words, the actors still cooperate at the broadest level despite open disagreement. One proxy for such disagreement is when at least one of the major Palestinian groups removes itself from the Palestinian National Council (PNC) or PLO Executive Committee (PLO-EC). PNC meetings are where official PLO policy is discussed and ratified, while the PLO-EC is the highest decision-making body within the PLO. Both organizations are comprised of representatives from the major Palestinian constituencies.

The Palestinian movement is coded as "united" when no confrontation state is actively challenging the PLO/Fateh for control of the movement, and all the major Palestinian rebel groups are in PNC and PLO-EC attendance.⁴⁴

⁴³ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 80-92.

⁴⁴ Even with this definition it is hard to get clean measurements of what would represent a period of fragmentation within the Palestinian national movement. Part of the issue is that rebel politics and violence operate on multiple levels, both within and between different Palestinian militant organizations and factions. The relatively large size of groups like Fateh, the large degrees of autonomy among lower-level factions within these groups, and wide physical distances between factions and their leadership often means that local-level politics operates independently of inter-group or PLO-level politics.

For example, while the rank-and-file of different groups sometimes exchanged gunfire, the leaders of these Palestinian groups rarely gave explicit orders to engage other PLO-affiliated groups militarily. Furthermore, while the rank-and-file of Rejectionist groups like the PFLP were aggressively against PLO diplomacy with the West and its leadership publicly railed against such engagement, these groups still maintained an allegiance to the PLO at the highest level of authority by not creating an alternative leadership. Furthermore, while certain factions within Fateh were also anti-negotiation, Yasser Arafat frequently risked mutiny from lower-level opposition to engage in negotiations.

Even within a given militant group, there was often extreme tension and sometimes infighting. However, so long as that tension did not lead to a splintering of the group's leadership, such contention is outside the scope of

Finally, with regards to analyzing the dependent variable – insurgent strategy of diplomacy – the unit of analysis is the diplomatic strategies of individual rebel groups. In theory, this would include all major independent rebel organizations, such as Fateh, the PFLP, DFLP, Saiqa, and the PLO.⁴⁵ In practice, however, the following chapters mostly consider the diplomatic strategies of the PLO and Fateh alone. While I sometimes examine the independent acts of diplomacy carried out by smaller *fedayeen* groups and confrontation states, the core focus

consideration because it did not affect the broader contours of Palestinian movement cohesion or fragmentation at the strategic level. In short, I am making the argument that movement fragmentation must be measured at the inter-group level, as opposed to intra-group level, because the former has the most proximate impact on the dependent variable in question. To use an analogy from international relations, I am choosing for methodological reasons to treat autonomous rebel organizations as “black boxes” (Vinci 2009; Waltz 1979; and Mearsheimer 2001).

This is not to say that local- and faction-level politics is not critically important in shaping PLO policy and decision-making. In fact, the potential for intra-group revolt or mutiny in response to engagement with the West, Jordanians (post-1970), and Egyptians (post-1977) was ever-present in Arafat’s mind. However, such considerations did not change the broadest contours of PLO diplomatic strategy in the sense of PLO preferences over who to target diplomatically, for what types of intervention, and to serve what political-military purposes. What it did change, however, was the risks involved for Arafat when engaging with sensitive subjects and actors, how public Arafat was willing to be regarding these engagements, and the conditions under which final agreements with third-party actors could be completed. For example, while the PLO sought engagement from the Americans during most of the 1974-1988 period, Arafat was constantly constrained in his ability to meet American and European conditions for recognition. The Americans wanted Arafat to first recognize Israel’s right to exist and accept UN resolutions that ignored Palestinian rights. Only then would the Americans and European states formally recognize the PLO and secure its place at the negotiation table. However, Arafat knew that if the PLO made these unilateral concessions, lower-level factions would accuse him of treason. But Arafat’s inability to agree to these conditions did not change the fact that the PLO still did not required and seek American involvement to help settle its conflict-level goals. Lower-level politics did not affect groups’ target of diplomacy, but it did affect its likelihood of success. During periods of movement alliance and cohesion, Arafat continued to reach out to the West in order solicit recognition, just on terms he felt the PLO could afford.

Finally, I do not dispute the fact that faction-, local-, or even personal-level Palestinian politics is not critical for understanding many aspects of the Palestinian political and historical narrative. The simple fact that local-level politics – particularly within Lebanon and the Palestinian territories – had its own economic, social, and martial microcosm of relations, as well as its own unique connection to PLO-level politics, highlights the deep importance of studying *fedayeen* politics at the sub-group level (e.g. Parkinson 2013). The point here is simply that dynamics at this level of analysis did not affect PLO-strategic decision-making on the dependent variable under analysis, and thus must be simplified for the sake of clarity.

In short, we are interested in measuring fragmentation at a very specific “unit of analysis,” namely competition at the inter-group and leadership level. Inter-group competition or violence between actors at the factional or personal-level, or any intra-group competition or violence that does not successfully create a splintered faction that claims to represent an alternative leadership, is *not* measured as fragmentation in this study.

⁴⁵ Although the PLO is an umbrella organization – and is itself comprised of independent Palestinian groups – the PLO is itself coded as an autonomous organization.

throughout the case studies is on the international diplomatic strategies of Fateh and the PLO independently before 1968, and the PLO and Fateh synonymously thereafter.⁴⁶

Examining the Periods

Below, I examine two major shifts in Palestinian diplomacy. The first takes place between periods 1 (1959-1970) and 2 (1970-1971). In the former period, Palestinian groups

⁴⁶ The reason for this decision is the following. First, as the leading organizations within the Palestinian movement, Fateh and the PLO (separately and jointly) have the most active and clear foreign policy power and presence. In addition to their size, both organizations encompass a wide range of political preferences and ideologies. After 1968, when most of the *fedayeen* organizations joined the PLO, and 1974, when the PLO gains overwhelming recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, it becomes clear that to understand Palestinian diplomacy, one must focus on the PLO and the faction – Fateh – that runs it. As one British Foreign Office report concluded, “Most of the PLO’s offices abroad are run by al-Fatah members or sympathisers. This results from a decision taken in 1973 to unify foreign representation; other groups maintaining separate offices were expected to close them down and most have done so. The PFLP and DFLP however maintain offices in certain counties (e.g. PDRY) which are sympathetic to them” (J Hancock to Mr Crosby, “Can the PLO Deliver,” 5 March 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/24, p. 1 [12432]) Palestinian interlocutors also noted that Fateh was almost in complete control of PLO foreign policy and official PLO representatives were almost always Fateh members (Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank; and Interview #14, 13 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.). The result was that most external actors had reason to view Fateh and the PLO as representative of the movement abroad. As one British official instructed in December 1980, “Members of organisations other than Fatah should be treated with caution and not cultivated, but they need not be shunned if the occasion demands an exchange” (R O Miles to P R H Wright, “Contacts with the PLO,” 17 December 1980, TNA FCO 93/2476/70, p. 1 [7361]). To use an analogy, if one were to view Palestinian diplomacy from 15,000 feet up – the way states often see rebel politics – you were more likely to see Fateh and the PLO, as opposed to other actors.

In short, when it came to general relations between the Palestinian national movement and third-party actors, Fateh and PLO representatives were in near total charge of policy-formulation and execution. This is a particularly appropriate assessment during periods of movement alliance and unity, since one could assume that decision-making was done with the consultation of a diverse set of actors within the PLO Central Committee and Executive Committees. Even if certain factions voted against specific policies, their participation in the discussion and continued allegiance to the PLO despite policy disagreement validates the perception of the PLO as being representative at the international level.

Of course, we know that other Palestinian groups did conduct their own diplomacy independently. Such diplomacy at the party-level is important for groups to maintain support and relations abroad. Even Fateh maintained autonomous delegations and offices abroad (D A S Gladstone to D A Gore-Booth, “PLO,” 10 April 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/18, p. 1 [9233]). However, when it came to matters of PLO policy, it was Fateh and/or PLO representatives that spoke for the movement. Therefore, when the movement is “united” or “allied” it is most productive to trace PLO/Fateh diplomacy and decision-making. The theory still dictates that it would be important to evaluate the independent solicitation tactics of secondary groups during “allied” or “fragmented” periods. In the analysis below, there is some documentation of travel by these secondary groups during such periods. However, since our theory expects all groups will engage in similar diplomatic behavior during periods of alignment or fragmentation, it is still enlightening to focus intently Fateh.

Finally, there are two practical reasons to focus mostly on Fateh and the PLO. First, while there is abundant data on Fateh/PLO strategic decision-making and diplomacy, there is significantly less so for the PFLP, DFLP, Saiqa, ALF, or other groups. Second, even if the data were readily available for all groups, an assessment of each individual organization’s diplomatic strategy over three decades would present an unmanageable empirical and analytical task for this dissertation.

engaged primarily in the diplomatic strategy of “cornering the market,” by which groups sought indirect intervention from Israel’s adversaries to help sideline intra-movement rivals. However, in the second period, the Palestinians engage in “outsourcing rivalry,” by which groups sought military intervention from Israel’s adversaries to directly undermine their threatening adversaries. As I demonstrate below, this change in diplomatic strategy can be explained by a sudden change in Palestinian military viability during the fighting between the PLO and Jordan from September 1970 to July 1971. The second shift occurs immediately after the conflict ends and the threat to the Palestinian leadership subsides. The result is a return to a strategy of “cornering the market.”

Period 1: 1959 to 1970

At the beginning of the Palestinian national movement, numerous actors were competing for control of the movement. As such, we can see multiple, simultaneous diplomatic campaigns being carried out by these actors as they strived to undermine each other. The analysis below unpacks how each of these competitive dynamics and Palestinian military viability manifested into nearly a decade of “cornering the market” campaigns. Although movement fragmentation does not change, I demonstrate how in each case, the primary target of diplomacy were Israel’s adversaries since only they had the influence and leverage necessary to help intra-movement actors settle their disputes.

Militarily Viable and Fragmented Movement

The Palestinian movement began fragmented with multiple actors vying for dominance over the movement. During the first period in question – between 1959 and 1970 – there were at least three actors making credible claims to control the Palestinian national movement. First, from the late-1950s onwards, there were the independent *fedayeen* organizations – most

prominently Fateh – which sought to create a Palestinian armed struggle independent of Arab state control. Second was Egypt and the Egyptian-backed PLO after 1964, which sought to be the sole and primary leader of the Palestinian national movement. And third was the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which claimed to represent that Palestinian people and sovereignty over the West Bank. Once the *fedayeen* and PLO merged in 1968, the existential threat from Jordan remained. As a result, intra-movement competition for control of the Palestinian movement was a constant during this period.

With regards to military viability, both the PLO and Fateh were weak but viable during this period, especially relative to each other. Even as the *fedayeen* began operation against Israel in 1964, neither group suffered military defeat of any kind and both maintained access to the contested zone. It is true that in the first few years of the armed struggle (1964-1967) the *fedayeen* were forced to rely upon simple acts of sabotage, and were susceptible to round-up by local intelligence and police forces. However, Fateh's power-base and ability to project power was never seriously obstructed. In fact, it continued to grow in the face of incredible odds.⁴⁷ To some extent, the PLO was less viable than Fateh because it was not initially in control of its own coercive institutions. Although the PLO created its own Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), it was divided and stationed within confrontation states, which held overwhelming control over its use until 1968.⁴⁸

After 1968, any doubts concerning Palestinian viability are thrown out the window. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, Fateh accumulated some 6,000 weapons left astray and *fedayeen* factions began to organize themselves into cohesive military units.⁴⁹ By the time competition

⁴⁷ Kurz 2005, pp. 38-9; and Yaari 1970.

⁴⁸ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 113-9, 133, 241.

⁴⁹ Sayigh, 1997, pp. 156-162.

turned toward the Jordanians, the *fedayeen*-controlled PLO was a formidable force. In fact, one could argue that 1968 to 1970 was the watermark of guerrilla strength during this era. Not only did the *fedayeen* number in the tens of thousands, but they were receiving arms and resources from numerous external actors.⁵⁰ The movement had taken control over large swaths of the Jordan river valley and parts of major cities like Amman and Irbid. From 1,000 guerrilla troops at the start of 1968,⁵¹ the *fedayeen* grew to nearly 25,000 fighters, 10,000 of which were full-time rebels and another 15,000 militiamen.⁵² As Palestinian historian Yezid Sayigh has argued, by 1969, “the guerrilla movement had become a substantial force in Jordan,” with high volumes of recruits striving to join its ranks.⁵³

In the absence of any immediate threats to organizational survival, but locked in an existential competition for control of the movement, competing actors are expected to engage in a diplomatic strategy of “cornering the market,” soliciting indirect intervention from Israel’s adversaries to outcompete the other. Below, I dissect the analysis into three different sets of competition and diplomatic campaigns. First, competition between Fateh, Egypt, and the PLO (1959-1968). Second, between the PLO and Jordan (1964-1968). And third, between the *fedayeen*-controlled PLO and Jordan (1968-1970).

Strategy of Diplomacy: Fateh vs. the PLO

Fateh’s diplomatic strategy during the period from 1959 to 1968 was explicitly geared towards confrontation with pan-Arabism and the PLO after 1964. As such, Fateh’s solicitation

⁵⁰ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 175-83.

⁵¹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 177.

⁵² Amos 1980, pp. 57-8. British intelligence documents also confirm this 10,000-15,000 but note it may be lower. See Middle East Section, FCO Research Department, “The Effects of the September Crisis in Jordan on the Fedayeen Movement,” 23 February 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/9, p. 1, 6 (457, 462); P.J.E. Hazelton to Wheeler, “The Fedayeen Crisis in Jordan and the Aftermath,” 1 January 1971, TNA FCO 51/186/1, p. 1 (563). Also, see Sayigh, 1997, p. 263.

⁵³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 181.

campaigns strived to dominate the rising Palestinian national movement by soliciting indirect aid – both material and political – from Israel’s adversaries. While Fateh’s early “cornering the market” campaigns overwhelmingly appealed to Algeria, Syria, the Gulf, and China, there were hardly any appeals to Israel’s allies in the United States and Western Europe.

Syria was one of the first targets of Fateh diplomacy. Damascus was adversarial to Israel but also in heated competition with Cairo for influence over Palestinian affairs. Some scholars pinpoint the first meeting between Fateh representatives and Syria to late-1961. As contacts grew, Syria allowed Fateh to train, recruit, and receive arms on Syrian soil.⁵⁴ By late 1963, Fateh officially moved its headquarters from Kuwait to Damascus,⁵⁵ and soon received training privileges.⁵⁶ The success of gaining indirect support from Syria partially motivated Nasser’s own decision to create the PLO that year as the Syrian-*fedayeen* became a serious challenge to Egypt’s dominance of the movement.⁵⁷

The second major target of Fateh diplomacy in the pre-PLO period was Algeria. Arafat reached out to Algiers through Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), who was able to make inroads because “some Algerian leaders had known Arafat in Cairo when they were living there in exile.”⁵⁸ As a result, “Arafat was already invited to come to Algeria in December 1962,” where he met Algerian President Ben Bella and his chief-of-staff Houari Boumedienne.⁵⁹ Although “Ben-Bella replied that he could not help Arafat in his military activities without Nasser’s consent,” the Algerians did offer to train small amounts of Fateh troops.⁶⁰ Algerian aid steadily increased and Algeria became one of the most consistent supporters of the Palestinian *fedayeen*

⁵⁴ Sayigh 1997a, p. 103.

⁵⁵ Sayigh 1997a, p. 104-5.

⁵⁶ Yaari 1970; Iyad 1981, p. 42; and Aburish 1998, p. 59.

⁵⁷ Miller 1983, p. 22.

⁵⁸ Yaari 1970, p. 37. Also see Aburish 1998, p. 55.

⁵⁹ Yaari 1970, p. 37. Note, some interviewees put the date at 1963.

⁶⁰ Yaari 1970, p. 37.

movement. Securing Algerian support was also a political watershed for Fateh. Given its recent victory over the French, the FLN was viewed as the symbolic leader of all national liberation movements. Since Fateh was the only group to have “received Algeria’s blessings,” it gave Fateh a major prestige and legitimacy boost over its rivals.⁶¹

The third major target of Fateh diplomacy was China. Using Algerian connections, Arafat visited Beijing in 1964, where Abu Jihad opened yet another diplomatic office.⁶² Although material support was not large,⁶³ having the diplomatic support of another revolutionary power promoted Fateh’s *bona fides* as a revolutionary actor. Fateh delegations visited China in regular intervals thereafter, and Arafat visited China again in 1966 and 1970.⁶⁴

Because China and Algeria were Fateh’s earliest and most public supporters, they also became the primary targets of diplomacy for the newly-founded PLO in January 1964. In fact, one of the first acts of diplomacy conducted by Ahmed Shuqayri as Chairman of the PLO was to meet with the Chinese ambassador to Cairo.⁶⁵ Furthermore, “In March, 1965 a twelve-man delegation led by Shuqairi visited China and plans were laid to establish a mission in Peking.”⁶⁶ Shuqayri also turned his attention to Algeria. When Fateh was given permission to open an official office in Algiers in April 1968, the PLO responded by announcing “that it would seek guerrilla training from Algerians” as well.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Yaari 1970, p. 37. Also see, Kurz 2005, p. 42.

⁶² Interview #17, 30 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁶³ Abu Iyad 1981, pp. 66, 70-2.

⁶⁴ Arab Report and Record (ARR).

⁶⁵ Israeli 1989, p. 144.

⁶⁶ Middle East Section, Joint Research Department Memorandum, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation: Summary,” 15 November 1966, TNA FO 370/2872, p. 19-20 (62-3). The office was officially opened in May of that year. See Middle East Section, Joint Research Department Memorandum, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation: Summary,” 15 November 1966, TNA FO 370/2872, p. 29 (71).

⁶⁷ ARR 1968, No. 8, p. 101.

What emerged was a game of diplomatic tit-for-tat between the PLO and Fateh across the Arab and Islamic world for recognition and support. Where one had an office, the other tried to open one as well. Yet the PLO went further, trying to gain recognition from as many sympathetic nations as possible so as to boost its credibility vis-à-vis the *fedayeen*.⁶⁸

The PLO gained low-level but widespread diplomatic recognition abroad, largely because of its official membership in the Arab League. Once Arafat realized it couldn't outcompete the PLO through recognition wars, Arafat decided that Fateh must "control the PLO because it was already recognized by all the Arab world and most the Muslim world, and this would give Fateh the strength in opposition to work ahead against the occupation."⁶⁹ By 1965 alone, the PLO had representatives in most Arab capitals, Khartoum, Belgrade, Geneva, New York, Chile, Peking, and Gaza as part of the Arab League, and even had separate offices in Washington, Lahore, and Jerusalem.⁷⁰ In short, Fateh needed to capture the PLO's own institutions to co-opt its legitimacy and dominate the Palestinian national movement. Gaining leadership of the PLO became Fateh's primary goal for the next four years.

Fateh and the other *fedayeen* avoided a strategy of "outsourcing rivalry" and calls for direct intervention, and instead engaged "cornering the market." However, the PLO did initially appeal for direct intervention in addition to indirect support. In other words, the PLO engaged in "outsourcing rivalry" for a short period of time. This partial deviation from my prediction may be attributed to the fact that while the PLO was not under military threat at the time, it was not in enough control of its military apparatuses and therefore could not have settled intra-movement

⁶⁸ Interview #17, 30 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank; and Interview #6, 11 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁶⁹ Interview #13, 28 May 2015, Nablus, West Bank.

⁷⁰ Middle East Section, Joint Research Department Memorandum, "The Palestine Liberation Organisation: Summary," 15 November 1966, TNA FO 370/2872, p. 29 (71).

competition alone. As mentioned above, PLA divisions were initially controlled by host regimes and were not much use to the PLO.⁷¹

Early on, the PLO “called upon Arab regimes to curb al-Asifa’s [Fateh’s] independent actions.”⁷² Together with the Egyptians, the PLO solicited other states to crack down on Fateh’s political and military behavior. In December 1965, Nasser called on regional actors to stop *fedayeen* groups from attacking Israel and asked for assistance building the PLA.⁷³ Nasser began arresting Fateh members in Egypt, Jordan began cracking down on *fedayeen* operations, and Lebanon refused to publish Fateh communiques.⁷⁴ As late as 1968, Egypt, Jordan, and the PLO were coordinating to prevent Fateh from carrying out attacks against Israel.⁷⁵

In response to the PLO’s attempts to get other states to directly stifle its actions, Fateh responded with its own diplomatic campaign to lift the siege. As William Quandt observed, “Fatah had called upon the Arab countries to ‘stop the persecution of the Liberation Movement forces in the different Arab states.’”⁷⁶ As the third Arab League Summit met in 1965, Fateh issued its own communique to the summit, criticizing the PLO’s ties to Egypt and stressing that Fateh should not be excluded from any meeting that included the PLO.⁷⁷ A year later, Fateh made a more forceful appeal “to be allowed to act from all Arab territories,’ to be given arms and to have (operative in most Arab states) on publication of its communiques lifted.”⁷⁸

In 1966, Fateh realized that if it was going to beat the PLO’s leadership, it would have to convince the PLO’s own backers to shift sponsorship to the *fedayeen*. Naturally, this meant that

⁷¹ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 113-9, 133.

⁷² Kurz 2005, p. 39.

⁷³ Kurz 2005, p. 40.

⁷⁴ Shemesh 1996, p. 59; and Abu Iyad 1981, p. 44.

⁷⁵ ARR 1968, No. 3, p. 43.

⁷⁶ Jabber 1973, p. 165.

⁷⁷ Shemesh 1996, p. 81.

⁷⁸ Shemesh 1996, p. 81.

Fateh would have to seek support from Egypt. Adding Egyptian support to its current repertoire of backers – including Syria, North Africa, and the Gulf – could effectively corner the market of support and resources for Fateh. As Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Arafat’s deputy and later head of PLO intelligence, reflected, Fateh representatives were sent “to make contact with the Egyptian authorities whose influence – as we had learned – could be decisive in several states in the region.”⁷⁹ The Egyptians could also be a useful counter-balance to the Syrians who had become increasingly overbearing patrons.⁸⁰ When the Syrians arrested a number of prominent Fateh members in the spring of 1966,⁸¹ Fateh sent Khaled al-Hassan to Cairo to try to secure help from Nasser. A second trip was made in September of that year by Farouq Qaddoumi, Khalid al-Hassan, and Abu Iyad. In October, Arafat was finally able to meet Nasser in person.⁸²

Securing Egyptian support was not a given. Nasser was initially skeptical of the *fedayeen*, as a rival to the Cairo-backed PLO. Abu Iyad thus described the diplomatic process more as an interrogation of Fateh’s ideas and tactics, rather meetings on how to move forward with relations.⁸³ Sensing Fateh’s growing success in cornering the market of support for the Palestinian national movement, Nasser hoped the *fedayeen* would merge with the PLO.⁸⁴ Shuqayri continuously tried to coopt the *fedayeen*, but Fateh refused to be absorbed. Believing it was the rightful alternative to the PLO leadership,⁸⁵ Fateh continued to reject proposals to merge

⁷⁹ Abu Iyad 1981, pp. 46-8.

⁸⁰ Yaari 1970, 74-77, 86; and Sayigh 1997a, pp. 125-6.

⁸¹ For more information on this incident, see Sayigh 1997a, pp. 127-9.

⁸² Heikal 1996, p. 300. Also, see Shemesh 1996, p. 61; Sayigh 1997a, 129; and Rubin 1994, pp. 11-2.

⁸³ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 62. In fact, just a year prior, Fateh had tried unsuccessfully to meet with Egyptian officials over the arrest of Fateh members in Gaza. See Shemesh 1996, p. 59.

⁸⁴ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 64. Also, see Middle East Section, Joint Research Department Memorandum, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation: Summary,” 15 November 1966, TNA FO 370/2872, p. 32 (76).

⁸⁵ Shemesh 1996, p. 80.

with the PLO and expanded its diplomatic campaign targeting the PLO's primary supporters (i.e. Israel's adversaries).⁸⁶

The 1967 Arab-Israeli War was a major turning point in Nasser's responsiveness to Fatah's advances. After the Arab defeat, "in late September 1967, Fatah launched a propaganda campaign in the Beirut press intended to create an image as an independent organization and an alternative to the PLO."⁸⁷ To ensure that guerrilla successes were not attributed to the PLO, Fatah sent a memo to Arab foreign ministers denying rumors that the *fedayeen* were under PLO control.⁸⁸ Fatah even took the opportunity to send numerous delegations to the primary supporters of the Palestinian movement – Algeria, Iraq, Syria, and Egypt – to beg for the opportunity to resume activity along Israel's borders.⁸⁹ Slowly, Nasser lost interest in Shuqayri's leadership and began to provide support for the *fedayeen*, including arms, finance and training.⁹⁰

Shuqayri noted Fatah's advances toward Nasser and "after the June war, Shuqayri had sent a message to Arafat through PLO representative Sa'id Kamal proposing that they should run the PLO jointly."⁹¹ But momentum was already in the *fedayeen*'s favor and "after a year's hesitation the Fatah executive committee decided to reject the offer, remove Shuqayri, and take over the running of PLO, allowing the other Fedayeen movements nominal participation. It was anticipated that this would increase Fatah's influence and give it greater control over the activities of the PFLP and the PDFLP."⁹² By December 1967, Shuqayri was forced to step down as chairman of the PLO and Yahya Hamouda took over as interim head of the organization.

⁸⁶ Shemesh 1996, p. 91.

⁸⁷ Shemesh 1996, p. 92.

⁸⁸ Shemesh 1996, p. 91.

⁸⁹ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 53.

⁹⁰ Heikel 1996, p. 310.

⁹¹ D.J.F. Barwell, "PLO-Fatah Relations, 7 June 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/35, p. 2 (9195).

⁹² D.J.F. Barwell, "PLO-Fatah Relations, 7 June 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/35, p. 2 (9195).

Fateh thus realized that the best way to secure leadership over the Palestinian movement was not to defeat the PLO, but to capture its institutions. After all, the PLO came with an established bureaucratic infrastructure, finances, military divisions, and importantly, diplomatic representation from around the world and recognition from the Arab League. If Fateh could simply capture its “established machinery,” Fateh would be in effective control of a recognized Palestinian resistance.⁹³ Arafat “saw that the organization, with its diplomatic missions, political institutions and money, could be a useful vehicle. In fact, it might provide the key both to consolidating Fatah’s influence and to building up support from the Arab states which, after all, had founded the organisation in the first place.”⁹⁴

The 1968 Battle of Karameh – in which Fateh and the Jordanians stiffly resisted an Israeli cross-border raid – created the right conditions for Fateh to overcome the PLO with Nasser’s blessing. As a British foreign affairs officer noted at the time, “What [Arafat] really wanted was something he valued higher than all the money and arms pouring in: official recognition of Fatah by the Arab regimes...and that meant prising [sic] open a door that had consistently remained closed to him, that of President Nasser of Egypt.”⁹⁵ Arafat was able to secure a critical meeting with Nasser in April 1968 and Nasser publicly signaled his support for Arafat by bringing him to Moscow to meet the Soviet leadership.⁹⁶

With Syria and Egypt jointly supporting Fateh,⁹⁷ the final diplomatic showdown was in place. “Representatives of the PLO travelled extensively during the first half of 1968,” while Fateh’s “leaders traveled between Arab capitals, establishing relations with state leaders and

⁹³ Shemesh 1996, p. 94. Also, see Quandt 1973, p. 54.

⁹⁴ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 58.

⁹⁵ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 55.

⁹⁶ Walker and Gowers 2003, pp. 55-6. Also see, Heikal 1996, p. 302.

⁹⁷ McLaurin 1989, p. 18.

government officials.”⁹⁸ At the fourth Palestinian National Council (PNC)⁹⁹ meeting in July 1968, the *fedayeen* gained effective control of the PLO, and in 1969, Arafat was elected Chairman of the PLO at the fifth PNC meeting.

In sum, the period before 1968 was one of heated competition between the *fedayeen* organizations – primarily Fateh – and the PLO for control of the Palestinian movement. The fight was more diplomatic than it was physical. The PLO and Fateh used diplomacy to compete over diplomatic representation, military support and training, and recognition as the leader of the Palestinian national movement. While some countries recognized representatives of Fateh and the PLO, some chose to represent their preferred entity only (e.g. Saudi Arabia and South Yemen recognized Fateh, but not the PLO).¹⁰⁰ As one Palestinian diplomat described the period, “there was official representation and unofficial representation.”¹⁰¹ In the end, Fateh came out on top over the original PLO leadership. Most importantly, though, such domination was achieved not by random diplomacy, but through the explicit targeting of Israel’s adversaries.

Strategy of Diplomacy: Shuqayri’s PLO vs. Jordan

At the same Fateh and the PLO were trying to corner the market of support, the PLO was also competing with Jordan for similar reasons. Once again, it was Israel’s adversaries who were viewed as having the most leverage to settle these intra-movement dispute. Both actors appealed directly to the Arab League and its constituent states to help sideline the other’s claim to represent the Palestinian people. Propaganda attacks between the two forced the Arab League to mediate a media ceasefire in January 1966.¹⁰² But this did not stop Shuqayri’s attempt to keep

⁹⁸ Kurz 2005, pp. 57-8.

⁹⁹ The PNC is the legislative body of the PLO with representatives from all its member factions and groups.

¹⁰⁰ Interview # 16, 2 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank; and Interview #1, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁰¹ Interview #1, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁰² ARR 1966, No. 1, p. 5.

the Jordanians from controlling or speaking for the Palestinians, and vice versa.¹⁰³ As Arab leaders met in Cairo in June 1966, the meeting became dominated by PLO criticisms of King Hussein. Arab representatives helped settled matters in the PLO's favor by securing an agreement for the PLO to operate on Jordanian territory.¹⁰⁴ The Jordanians continued to focus their diplomacy on the Arab League, where it believed competition with the PLO could be settled. In July, for example, Jordanian Prime Minister, Wasfi al-Tal, "announced that Jordan is to bring up the question of the status and definition of the PLO at the fourth Arab Summit conference...and will also ask the conference to draw up a clear-cut plan on defining the entity concept and its role and task in each Arab country."¹⁰⁵ Shuqayri responded aggressively, saying that "the battle for the liberation of Palestine must begin with the liberation of Jordan from its present regime."¹⁰⁶

The bitter diplomatic competition continued through 1967. The Jordanians sent letters to the Arab League saying it could not recognize the PLO and would not attend any meetings with Shuqayri present. Shuqayri returned fire and "asked the Arab League for a referendum in Jordan to decide whether Jordanians had confidence in him and the PLO."¹⁰⁷ When it was rumored that the Arab League would freeze PLO assets, Shuqayri toured Beirut, Cairo and Baghdad to preempt such action.¹⁰⁸ In short, at the same time Fateh was trying to use indirect diplomacy to corner the market of resources from the PLO, the PLO was partaking in a simultaneous campaign to corner the market of resources from Fateh and Jordan, from the same set of international actors.

¹⁰³ ARR 1966, No. 9, p. 99; and ARR 1966, No. 11, p. 123.

¹⁰⁴ ARR 1966, No. 12, p. 144.

¹⁰⁵ ARR 1966, No. 13, p. 148.

¹⁰⁶ ARR 1966, No. 14, p. 159.

¹⁰⁷ ARR 1967, No. 3, p. 47.

¹⁰⁸ ARR 1967, No. 18, p. 301.

Strategy of Diplomacy: Arafat's PLO vs. Jordan

When the *fedayeen* took over the PLO in 1968 they inherited the ongoing dispute with Jordan. The Palestinian movement continued to be fragmented as whole mostly because of Jordanian hostility to the PLO. With regards to intra-PLO relations, after 1969, relations between the various *fedayeen* groups were considered more allied than fragmented. The groups were not physically fighting one another and were cooperating at the broadest level, but they still competed for positioning within the Palestinian movement. The PFLP, for example, was particularly influential during this period.¹⁰⁹ As one scholar notes, “Even after Arafat’s election as chairman of the PLO in February 1969, his control over the movement...was tenuous at best. The multifarious factions, including Arafat’s own Fatah, were still in a battle for publicity, member and funds.”¹¹⁰ The PFLP, for example, would not participate in the new PLO Executive Committee (PLO-EC)¹¹¹ established in 1969, and continued to boycott PNC meetings led by Fatah.¹¹² Groups within the PLO were only loosely tied, with the PLO representing nothing more than an umbrella organization. There were attempts to get the various Palestinian revolutionary groups to enhance military cooperation during this period, but these institutions never amounted to anything tangible.¹¹³ Still, there was no notable fighting between the groups

¹⁰⁹ Miller 1983, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 61.

¹¹¹ Heikal 1996, p. 303.

¹¹² Quandt 1973, p. 71.

¹¹³ For example, the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command was formed in February 1969, but didn’t include the PFLP. However, as one British document cited, the “PASC never did much real military co-ordination. Its main job was to act as arbitrator should more than one Fedayeen organization claim credit for the same operation” (C.P. Carter to C.W. Long, British Embassy Amman, “The Fedayeen After the Civil War,” 4 February 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/4 p. 1 [479]). It was not until February 1970 with the United Command that the major *fedayeen* groups were under one roof, and again with the creation of the Central Committee in May 1970 (Shemesh 1996, p. 165; Quandt 1973, pp. 71-3; Joint Research Department Memorandum, “Arab Guerrilla Organisations,” 15 November 1966, TNA FCO 17/1615, p. 21 [148]).

Competition between the *fedayeen*-controlled PLO and the Jordanian government, however, increased. The Jordanians felt that the *fedayeen* threatened the physical control of its territory, as well as political control over Palestinian politics. Tensions rose further with the announcement of the Rogers Plan in December 1969, which called for peace negotiations with Israel. These talks intended to exclude the Palestinians as an independent political entity and it was assumed that the Jordanians would speak on behalf of Palestinians. Such a process was therefore viewed as a direct threat to the PLO.¹¹⁴ As one Palestinian leader expressed at the time, “The movement’s struggle against the reactionary regime [i.e. Jordan] is at present its central struggle.”¹¹⁵ Given Jordan’s direct challenge to the PLO’s leadership over the Palestinian movement, the post-1968 period continues to be coded as fragmented.

This period, therefore, witnessed significant diplomacy with Israel’s adversaries for indirect intervention, primarily through the solicitation of diplomatic recognition. Arafat visited Algeria in late-January 1969 to secure financing from the Algerians, but also had Boumedienne publicly state that “Arab countries had no right to make concessions in the name of the Palestinian people or to have over Palestine to Israel,” in direct reference to Jordan.¹¹⁶ Boumedienne helped get PLO delegations invited to regional conferences and continued to urge Muslim countries to allow PLO offices to be established in their capitals.¹¹⁷

Moving into the new year, Arafat took a diplomatic tour of the Gulf in January and April 1970 to secure “financial assistance from all Arab countries in order to keep the P.L.O. from becoming aligned with any one of them.”¹¹⁸ He also participated in a Fateh tour of East Asia in

¹¹⁴ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 70-1; and Sayigh 1997a, pp. 253-4.

¹¹⁵ Interview with George Habash (PFLP) in Maksoud 1973, p. 75.

¹¹⁶ ARR 1969, No. 3, p. 49. This is not a quote from Boumedienne himself but ARR’s paraphrasing.

¹¹⁷ ARR 1969, No. 18, p. 398.

¹¹⁸ Letter from A.C. Goodison, British Embassy, Kuwait, “Visit of Yasser Arafat to Kuwait,” 15 January 1970, TNA FCO 8/1392/1 p. 1 (22); and Telegram from Mr. Mansley, Doha to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 20 September 1970, TNA FCO 18/1299/8 p. 1. Also, see Letter from D.E. Tatham, British Embassy, Jedda, “Arab

March 1970,¹¹⁹ and in July Arafat visited Damascus “to gain fresh...support for the Palestinian commando movement.”¹²⁰ In August, Arafat visited Baghdad, Cairo, and Tripoli to discuss how to unify the resistance.¹²¹

With regards to contacts with Israel’s allies during this period, there was some diplomatic attention paid albeit at much lower levels. Fateh representatives began soliciting meetings in London and Paris in the late-1960s and early 1970s, but these meetings were largely arranged at the initiative of individual representatives, operating without any specific diplomatic campaign in mind. In fact, Fateh appears to have been somewhat hesitant to focus its diplomacy on Israel’s allies. The first Fateh office in Europe was established in Paris in 1968,¹²² but at the initiative of the Algerians who thought Fateh should publicize their case to Europe.¹²³ Representatives were sent to London and Rome at this time, but there is no indication of any explicit campaign beyond laying the groundworks for future contacts.¹²⁴ Fateh representatives also sent low-level representatives to the United States (where there had been a PLO office since 1965), Canada and Latin American during this period as well.¹²⁵

Guerilla Organisations,” 10 March 1970, TNA FCO 18/1299/6, p. 2. Such aid was promised to the PLO at the Rabat Summit of 1969. See ARR 1970, No. 1, p. 38; and ARR 1970, No. 5, p. 151.

¹¹⁹ ARR 1970, No. 7, p. 229.

¹²⁰ ARR 1970, No. 15, p. 463. Fateh representatives also visited China, North Korea, and Vietnam.

¹²¹ ARR 1970, No. 16, p. 486. It is worth noting, though, that even the individual *fedayeen* groups continued to employ diplomacy on their own behalf, and not always for the advancement of the PLO as a whole. For example, Arafat visited Libya in March to thank Qaddafi for his support. Yet although Arafat was visiting as the head of the PLO, his statement was technically provided by Fateh (ARR 1969, No. 6, p. 120). George Habbash of the PFLP visited Baghdad independently to try “to bring about unity of the Arab commando organisations” (ARR 1969, No. 21, p. 466). Notably, this incident occurred just after the Baghdad-sponsored, Arab Liberation Front (ALF) decided to increase its cooperation with the PLO, and so Habbash was trying to exploit a growing split in the ALF (ARR 1969, No. 21, p. 466). The PFLP also sent its own delegation to Abu Dhabi to raise money (ARR 1969, No. 22, p. 482). Apparently, the PFLP even sent its representatives to the United States on a number of occasions between 1968 and 1970 to promote the Palestinian cause the PFLP’s position within it (Interview #25, 31 May 2015, Jericho, West Bank).

¹²² Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 58.

¹²³ ARR 1969, No. 4, p. 70.

¹²⁴ A.C. Elweli to Mr. Daly (Eastern Department), “Interview with Abu Ammar/Yassir Arafat/Official Spokesman of the Al-Assifa Forces of al-Fatah (June 8th, 1968),” 28 June 1968, TNA FCO 17/55/74, p. 2 (8269).

¹²⁵ Interview #20, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

British archival documents give some insight into these initial Fateh contacts with Israel's allies. These meetings, taking place in late-1969 in Amman, were largely informational. The Palestinians simply tried to explain what Fateh was, its goals, and how the *fedayeen* movement was structured. Most importantly, the meetings sought to convince the British that Fateh was organizationally and politically distinct from radical *fedayeen* groups like the PFLP.¹²⁶ These meetings were apparently a success. The presiding British official concluded that "we should, I think, try to encourage both the press and those in Britain...to distinguish between Al Fatah, which is going out of its way to emphasise its disapproval of wanton terrorism, and the PFLP, a small group which does not present a threat."¹²⁷

Perhaps more revealing, the Fateh emissary highlighted the purely informal and informational nature of the contact. It was the Fateh representative who "said that Fatah as a mass movement was interested in contacts with people not with governments...Secondly, he said that for Fatah to have official contacts with foreign governments would be breaking the tacit agreement which exists between Fatah and the Jordanian government...This, however, may have been for the record, for he did subsequently say that it might be worth contacting the West Germans and talking to them, but that he would have nothing to do with the Americans."¹²⁸

At the same time the PLO was competing with Jordan for recognition among Israel's adversaries, it was *not* seeking recognition from Israel's allies. Still, the British, in fact, welcomed this informal but "useful dialogue" because it allowed the British "to keep in touch

¹²⁶ J.A. Shepherd to Leonard, "Conversations with 'Ahmad' of Al Fatah," Received on 16 October 1969, TNA FCO 17/691/2 p. 2 (505); Letter from C.D. Lush to Richard, British Embassy, Amman, "Embassy Contacts with Al-Fatah," 3 October 1969, TNA FCO 17/691/1, p. 2. (507); and D. Gore-Booth to Mr. Pike, "PLO," 28 December 1972, TNA FCO 17/1611/43, p. 1 (701).

¹²⁷ J.A. Shepherd to Leonard, "Conversations with 'Ahmad' of Al Fatah," Received on 16 October 1969, TNA FCO 17/691/2, p. 2 (505).

¹²⁸ Letter from C.D. Lush to Richard, British Embassy, Amman, "Embassy Contacts with Al-Fatah," 3 October 1969, TNA FCO 17/691/1 p. 1 (506).

with what is now virtually one of the pillars of the state, and, as the form of current Palestinian nationalism, a movement which may one day be a government. But, most important, this link has already enable us to sort out tactfully the Fedayeen and individual British subjects and in this respect it may prove invaluable in the months ahead.”¹²⁹

In sum, the main competitors for Palestinian dominance all focused their diplomacy intently on Israel’s adversaries – primarily within the Arab League – in the hopes of securing the resources and leverage needed to dominate the movement. Although the PLO strived to spread its diplomatic institutions far and wide, its major campaigns focused on undermining the *fedayeen* movement and King Hussein of Jordan, and thus its primary interlocutors were Arab League countries. As one Palestinian diplomat at the time noted, “With the PLO under Shuqayri, the Political Department was one of the major departments in the PLO and started really the official representation – Arab countries first, Islamic countries, friendly countries.”¹³⁰ On the other hand, Israel’s allies in the United States and Western Europe were largely ignored. This is because the both the PLO and the West were simultaneously uninterested in serious engagement at the time.¹³¹ Diplomatic attention would not turn toward the West until Jordanian competition was effectively sidelined.

Period 2: 1970 to 1971

Until this point, the Palestinians primarily focused on the solicitation of indirect intervention from Israel’s adversaries. However, this period experienced a large change in diplomatic strategy from “cornering the market” to “outsourcing rivalry.” This section explains this dramatic change.

¹²⁹ Letter from C.D. Lush to Richard, British Embassy, Amman, “Embassy Contacts with Al-Fatah,” 3 October 1969, TNA FCO 17/691/1 p. 2. (507)

¹³⁰ Interview #6, 11 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹³¹ Interview #1, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

Occasional skirmishes between the *fedayeen* and Jordan erupted during the previous period, but the main showdown emerged when left-leaning groups like the PFLP began to directly call for the overthrow of the Jordanian government.¹³² The threat was taken seriously in Amman. The Jordanian population was a majority Palestinian and PLO guerrillas occupied significant swaths of the Jordan River valley and critical neighborhoods in the capital. Once Jordan signaled its support for the Rogers Plan, left-leaning groups openly threatened the regime, culminating in an assassination attempt on King Hussein and the hijacking of multiple aircraft to a Jordanian airstrip.¹³³ On September 16, 1970, King Hussein decided to bring the Palestinian guerrillas to heel and launched an all-out assault to crush the movement.

The Palestinian guerrilla movement was militarily strong going into Black September, with September 1970 being the watermark of guerrilla strength. Tens of thousands of fighters controlled large swaths of Jordanian territory, mostly in the Jordan River valley, but also in major city centers like Amman.¹³⁴ Prior to the war, guerrillas were producing their own arms, munitions and explosives.¹³⁵ Many in the Palestinian leadership thought they could withstand a military confrontation with the Jordanian regime.¹³⁶

Yet the Palestinian-Jordanian civil war from September 1970 to July 1971 led to a quick and marked change in PLO military strength. Palestinian rebels went from highly viable to militarily non-viable in a shockingly rapid period of time. Controlling for movement fragmentation, we can witness how a change in military viability changed the PLO's diplomatic strategy from "cornering the market" to "outsourcing rivalry" (Table 5.3).

¹³² Sayigh 1997a, p. 255

¹³³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 255-261.

¹³⁴ Amos 1980, pp. 57-8.

¹³⁵ ARR 1970, No. 7, p. 229.

¹³⁶ Sayigh 1997a, p. 255.

Table 5.3: Change in Threat Environment – Period 1 to 2

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable			1959-1970
Militarily Non-Viable			1970-1971

Militarily Non-Viable and Fragmented Movement

The onset of Black September did not mark a major change in the structure of the Palestinian national movement, broadly defined. The PLO and affiliated *fedayeen* continued to engage with the Jordanians in head-to-head competition over control of the Palestinian agenda. What changed, however, was the degree of the physical competition. Skirmishes between the *fedayeen* and the Jordanians were not uncommon in the lead up to Black September, but the September 16 escalation was unprecedented. The Jordanians attacked PLO positions with the intent to destroy the guerillas and drive them out of Jordan. Within just a matter of days, the Palestinians were in a dire position. Not only did “the Jordanian army also enjoyed a clear superiority in numbers and armament” (approximately 65-75,000 Jordanian forces vs. 9-10,000 *fedayeen*), but apparently the guerrillas hadn’t planned “fallback defence plans” should the confrontation backfire.¹³⁷ As Abu Iyad himself noted, “Curious as it may seem, we were totally unprepared for the ordeal even though it had been months in the making. Up to the very last minute, a number of Resistance leaders persisted in the conviction that King Hussein wouldn’t dare...The headquarters of Fatah’s military command were occupied by the king’s army in a matter of minutes.”¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 262-3.

¹³⁸ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 81.

By the time an Arab delegation arrived in Jordan to invite King Hussein to the negotiating table – just days into the conflict – the *fedayeen* were already running out of ammunition and withering under the Jordanian offensive.¹³⁹ When the ceasefire was struck on September 27, 3,000 were dead in just over ten days of fighting,¹⁴⁰ with over 600 Jordanian and 910 PLO guerrillas killed.¹⁴¹

At this point, the Palestinian guerrillas were mostly pushed out of the major population centers in Amman, Irbid, and Zarqa. The remaining *fedayeen* forces were gathered in northwest Jordan near the cities of Jerash and Ajlun. The guerrillas were not fully destroyed, but they were heavily routed and the Jordanians continued to hold the initiative.¹⁴² And while the Jordanians could rearm and regroup, “Palestinian combat strength, on the other hand, declined substantially as demoralized guerrillas and militiamen left the ranks.”¹⁴³ The result was that the *fedayeen* were militarily non-viable throughout the period and through the final Jordanian assault on PLO forces in July 1971. After just three days of fighting in July 1971, the remaining Palestinian guerrillas were soundly defeated. Of about 3,000 guerrillas believed to have been in Jordan prior to the final assault, 4-600 were killed, 600 captured, and another 6-700 driven to Iraq and Syria.¹⁴⁴ The Palestinian guerrilla movement would have nearly collapsed if not for the PLO presence in

¹³⁹ Aburish 1998, p. 111; and Sayigh 1997a, p. 266.

¹⁴⁰ Walkers and Gowers 2003, pp. 77-9. Yezid Sayigh puts the figure somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 (Sayigh 1997a, p. 267).

¹⁴¹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 267.

¹⁴² Middle East Section, FCO Research Department, “The Effects of the September Crisis in Jordan on the Fedayeen Movement,” 23 February 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/9 p. 4 (460); and A.D. Doyle, Defence & Air Attache, British Embassy, Tel Aviv, “Fedayeen,” 29 July 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/34 p. 1 (389).

¹⁴³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 275.

¹⁴⁴ A.D. Doyle, Defence & Air Attache, British Embassy, Tel Aviv, “Fedayeen,” 29 July 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/34 p. 2 (391).

Lebanon. Of the 10,000 full-time guerrillas in Jordan prior to September 1970, only 3,000 remained after the war.¹⁴⁵

In short, the onset of Black September marked a new threat environment for the Palestinians. Although intra-movement competition remained unchanged, the conflict with the Jordanians escalated to a point in which the *fedayeen* were simply not able to withstand the assault alone. Given a fragmented and militarily non-viable PLO, my theory predicts a change in diplomatic strategy from “cornering the market” to “outsourcing rivalry.”

Strategy of Diplomacy

Realizing the *fedayeen* could not survive the assault, the PLO began a large-scale campaign to solicit direct third-party intervention to keep the Jordanians from destroying the guerrilla movement. As such, the PLO engaged in a diplomatic strategy of “outsourcing rivalry,” targeting Israel’s adversaries. On the same day the assault began, Yasser Arafat sent an emergency appeal to all the Arab leaders to intervene.¹⁴⁶ As one historian noted, “as Jordanian shells rained on PLO headquarters, Arafat appealed to Arab heads of state for immediate intervention.”¹⁴⁷ Nasser put heavy diplomatic pressure on King Hussein to halt the attack, and as a show of force, Nasser deployed the Egyptian branch of the PLA to Syria.¹⁴⁸ Although the force didn’t go further, the Syrians launched their own armored attack on northern Jordanian under the PLA flag. That force was routed by the Jordanian air force and was ultimately pulled back as a result of internal Syrian political issues.¹⁴⁹ Hoping to maintain the direct intervention, “the

¹⁴⁵ A.D. Doyle, Defence & Air Attache, British Embassy, Tel Aviv, “Fedayeen,” 29 July 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/34 p. 2 (391).

¹⁴⁶ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 81

¹⁴⁷ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 75.

¹⁴⁸ Shemesh 1996, p. 144.

¹⁴⁹ Interview #15, 3 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank. Also see, Sayigh 1997a, pp. 265-6.

Palestinian leadership in Amman pleaded with the Syrian command to maintain its advance on Irbid for another 24 hours but to no avail.”¹⁵⁰

Gulf states were also a primary targets of Palestinian diplomacy during the war because of their financial leverage over the Jordanian regime. On September 19, just three days into the conflict, the PLO called for a general strike in Kuwait to pressure the Kuwaitis to suspend financial support to Jordan.¹⁵¹ Those funds were suspended in October.¹⁵² Fateh also visited Qatar during the height of the conflict to ensure continued support. According to a British diplomatic document, “Local Fateh leaders...have urged [Qatar] to send messages of restraint to King Hussein and the Guerrillas.”¹⁵³ Nasser finally intervened by organizing a summit of Arab leaders on September 22. He smuggled Arafat out of Jordan and mediated an agreement between King Hussein and Arafat on September 27.¹⁵⁴ The next day, Nasser died of a heart attack.

After the initial ceasefire, fighting between the Palestinian guerrillas and Jordanians began again in November and December 1970.¹⁵⁵ Sensing the need to keep relevant third-parties involved, Arafat toured Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco in order to “to inform the Arab governments of the latest developments...in the struggle of the Palestinian people.”¹⁵⁶ By December, Arafat was making direct appeals to the new President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, and Syria’s Assad for direct intervention in the fighting.¹⁵⁷ Sadat himself appealed to King Hussein

¹⁵⁰ Sayigh 1997a, p. 265.

¹⁵¹ Mr. Goodison to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Kuwait Internal Situation,” 19 September 1970, TNA FCO 8/1392/8, p. 1. (5).

¹⁵² A.C. Goodison, British Embassy in Kuwait, “Palestinians in Kuwait,” 4 October 1970, TNA FCO 8/1392/10, p. 1.

¹⁵³ Telgram from Mr. Mansley, Doha to Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 20 September 1970, TNA FCO 18/1299/8 p. 1 (32).

¹⁵⁴ Heikal 1996, p. 305; and Dannreuther 1998, p. 44.

¹⁵⁵ Sayigh 1997a, p. 275.

¹⁵⁶ ARR 1970, No. 21, p. 627.

¹⁵⁷ ARR 1970, No. 22, p. 654.

to put an “end to the fighting between Jordanian troops and guerrillas.”¹⁵⁸ Arafat then sent a Fateh delegation to meet with Qaddhafi, and took another tour of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in mid-December.¹⁵⁹ The goal of these trips was both to secure aid for the guerrillas, but also to ensure continued political support for the *fedayeen*.¹⁶⁰

The same diplomatic pattern maintained in the new year. Arafat appealed yet again to Arab heads of states to help stop the “abominable crime being committed against the Palestinian revolution,” and Algerian President Boumedienne sent a “message to all Arab heads of state asking them to save the Palestinian people from being massacred.”¹⁶¹ The diplomatic campaign to outsource rivalry continued unabated in February with yet another message by Arafat to Arab heads of state “to put an end to the torture and suffering of the Palestinian people.”¹⁶² The regional tour continued through May, including stops in Tripoli, Baghdad, Beirut, Cairo, Algiers and a meeting with the Saudi Minister of Defense to secure support for the Palestinians.¹⁶³

In the weeks prior to the final showdown with the PLO, King Hussein went on his own diplomatic tour of the Gulf. While the trip was publicly viewed as a way to drum up financial support for the Kingdom, it was believed that the primary purpose was to convince Gulf countries to stop support to the *fedayeen*.¹⁶⁴

The final assault on the *fedayeen* began in July 1971, triggering a major diplomatic push by the PLO leadership to secure direct third-party intervention. The PLO Central Committee sent broadcasts to Arab ambassadors updating them on the fighting, and the PNC sent a telegram to

¹⁵⁸ ARR 1970, No. 24, p. 688.

¹⁵⁹ ARR 1970, No. 24, p. 690, 702.

¹⁶⁰ D. Wigan, British Embassy, Kuwait, 4 January 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/7 p. 1 (470).

¹⁶¹ ARR 1971, No. 1, p. 30.

¹⁶² ARR 1971, No. 3, p. 85.

¹⁶³ ARR 1971, No. 6, p. 184; ARR 1971, No. 9, p. 240, 254; and ARR 1971, No. 10, p. 257, 279.

¹⁶⁴ From D.A. Amman, Received on 3 June 1971, TNA FCO 17/1410/27 (8654).

Qaddhafi, “appealing for Libya’s support ‘to stop the new bloodbaths’ in Jordan.”¹⁶⁵ On July 15, 1971, Abu Iyad met with Sadat, Qaddhafi, and Syrian and Sudanese ministers at the seaside city of Masr Matruh in Egypt. Abu Iyad asked “them to intervene urgently to stop the massacres of the Jordanian army,” and Qaddhafi cooked up a plan to use the Egyptian Airforce to intervene, but this plan never came to fruition.¹⁶⁶

The PNC met in Cairo during the crisis and agreed to send a “message to Sadat and other Arab heads of state calling on them ‘to prevent any further massacre in Jordan and to adopt the necessary measures to halt the massacres before the situation deteriorates.’”¹⁶⁷ As Arafat scrambled to Damascus for talks on Jordan, the PNC asked Arab governments to expedite payments to the PLO, and the Algerians tried to convince the Syrians to let heavy weapons reach guerrilla forces.¹⁶⁸ More delegations were sent to Baghdad, and Sadat tried further negotiations to stop the fighting.¹⁶⁹

The PLO’s calls were answered too late by the Saudis, who began to organize a ceasefire. However, the Saudi proposal for mediation in Jeddah triggered its own debate within the PLO between those refusing to negotiate with Hussein and those who thought the Saudis could bring Amman to heel.¹⁷⁰ Others were also afraid that subjecting themselves to Saudi mediation was a double-edged sword since Riyadh had financial leverage over both Amman and the PLO. Putting themselves under the guardianship of such a powerful actor could be dangerous for PLO strategic independence.

¹⁶⁵ ARR 1971, No. 13, p. 353.

¹⁶⁶ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 94. Also see, O’Neill 1978, p. 191.

¹⁶⁷ ARR 1971, No. 13, p. 366.

¹⁶⁸ ARR 1971, No. 13, p. 367.

¹⁶⁹ ARR 1971, No. 14, pp. 378, 381.

¹⁷⁰ Alan Gouilly to Miss V.E. Beckett, British Embassy, Beirut, “The Palestinians and the Jeddah Conference,” 11 September 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/37 p. 1 (374).

As a result, the Palestinians at first tried to avoid the mediation process altogether. Instead of initially going to Jeddah for talks, “Palestinian delegates [were] being sent to various Arab capitals to explain the Palestinian Revolutionaries point of view.”¹⁷¹ A PLO delegation was sent to Baghdad in August, for example, to espouse the virtues of establishing “democratic rule” or a guerrilla take-over in Jordan.¹⁷² The PLO was right to fear Saudi interference. Saudi leverage was applied on the PLO as the Saudis “threatened to cut off all subsidies to the PLO if they continued in their refusal to go to Jeddah [sic].”¹⁷³

The PLO was simply too desperate to resist the Saudi proposal for bringing the conflict to a close and “the Jordanians [were] vulnerable to Saudi...pressure because of their need to preserve Saudi financial aid.”¹⁷⁴ In the end, the PLO decided to participate in Saudi mediation “because Saudi Arabia can exert more pressure on Jordan than any of the other Arab regimes.”¹⁷⁵ The loss of military viability for the PLO had forced the movement to soliciting direct intervention through a strategy of “outsourcing rivalry.” A cold settlement was finally reached between the *fedayeen* and Jordan in September 1971.¹⁷⁶

Period 3: 1971 to 1974

The period after July 1971 represents yet another shift in the military viability of *fedayeen* movement (see Table 5.4). Although seriously weakened, the *fedayeen* were now out of

¹⁷¹ Alan Gouilly to Miss V.E. Beckett, British Embassy, Beirut, “The Palestinians and the Jeddah Conference,” 11 September 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/37 p. 1 (374).

¹⁷² ARR 1971, No. 15, p. 426.

¹⁷³ Shemesh 1996, p. 149; and A.J. Sindall to Miss V.E. Beckett, British Embassy, Beirut, “The Palestinians and the Jeddah Conference,” 18 September 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/39 p. 1 (371).

¹⁷⁴ Phillips, Priority Telegram No. 334, “Visit of King Feisal’s and President Sadat’s Emissaries to Jordan,” 1 July 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/22 p. 1 (425).

¹⁷⁵ “Arab World: Rival Trends Reported Inside Fatah Organization,” 14 October 1971, TNA FCO 17/1375/45 p. 8 (343).

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Sami al-Attari (Saiqa) cited in Maksoud 1973, p. 135.

Jordan's cross-hairs and began doubling-down their capacity in Lebanon.¹⁷⁷ The Jordanians, however, did not just want to defeat the guerrillas physically, but also politically. Given their mutually exclusive claim to represent the Palestinian people, the broader movement remained deeply fragmented and engrossed in competition. But given the physical distance between these actors in the aftermath of Black September, the competition between the PLO and Amman turned diplomatic. With a newly viable guerrilla movement and deep fragmentation, the PLO began a fresh campaign of “cornering the market” of pro-Palestinian resources and support.

Table 5.4: Change in Threat Environment – Period 2 to 3

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable			1971-1974 ↑
Militarily Non-Viable			1970-1971

For most observers, the period between 1971 and 1974 is a period of major change in PLO strategy, from an explicit focus on armed struggle to an openness to negotiated settlement with Israel and the West. In this campaign, many cite the PLO's push for global recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.¹⁷⁸ Diplomacy was an effective tool for garnering indirect political support for the Palestinian movement during these years. However, contrary to the conventional wisdom,¹⁷⁹ I argue that Palestinian diplomacy was not geared toward general international recognition. Instead, Palestinian diplomacy through 1974

¹⁷⁷ For more background on the Palestinian and PLO presence in Lebanon, see Sayigh, 1997, pp. 189-94; Gilmour 1983, pp. 86-7; and Khalidi 1986, pp. 20-1.

¹⁷⁸ Miller 1983, pp. 32-3; and Kurz 2005, pp. 82-3.

¹⁷⁹ Kirisci 1986, for example, examines PLO diplomacy as a general strategy of access to international actors and dialogue on the Palestine question. Also see Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 119; and Miller 1983, pp. 97-8.

was focused explicitly on Israel's adversaries, with the objective of defeating the Jordanian challenge to the PLO. This is because only the primary supporters of the Palestinian movement had the political leverage to confer the legitimacy of sole representation upon any potential leadership. Although the results of this campaign provided the foundation and conditions for broader Palestinian diplomacy with Israel's allies, the primary focus of Palestinian diplomacy during this period was Israel's adversaries.

This push for diplomatic recognition from Israel's adversaries was seen as the key to PLO political survival against intra-Arab competition. As one Palestinian official noted, Black September triggered a "radical shift in the balance of forces, which I think forced the Palestinian movement in general to have more, shall we say, involvement, interest in diplomatic work. Because diplomatic work was shown at that time as a kind of 'protection' ...of the PLO after losing sanctuary in Jordan. Political protection, that is instead of completely [being] eliminated, this was a sort of, shall we say, maintaining the minimum."¹⁸⁰ Scholars of the PLO note similar patterns. As Shemesh writes, "Having lost the military campaign, the PLO in July 1971 began to wage a political campaign over its right to represent the Palestinians."¹⁸¹

The campaign also shifted from cornering military and economic aid to political support because recognition became the focal point of the competition. Two events exacerbated the PLO's urgency for recognition during this period. The first was an announcement by King Hussein for a United Arab Kingdom (UAK) in March 1972. The initiative called for the occupied West Bank and the East Bank of Jordan to be unified as a federation under the auspices

¹⁸⁰ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁸¹ Shemesh 1996, p. 151.

of Amman.¹⁸² With the Jordanians threatening to re-annex Palestinian territories, the UAK initiative triggered a shift in the content of the PLO's official goals.¹⁸³

To combat this approach, the PLO began a years-long debate on what would be called a Palestinian “mini-state” or “phased-program.” The PLO's initial goal was to maintain an armed struggle until *all* of Palestine had been liberated. This new approach called for the PLO to govern *any* territory immediately liberated from the Israelis.¹⁸⁴ It was referred to as a mini-state because the initial state would be just a fraction of what the PLO had originally sought. However, it was also termed the phased-program because the PLO wouldn't officially give up the goal of liberating all of Palestine – it would just achieve its goal one liberated piece at a time. After all, it would be unwise to let Jordan attain sole control of Palestinian territories simply because the PLO was intransigent by demanding all of Palestine at once.¹⁸⁵

As one high-level Palestinian People's Party official noted of the time, the pursuit of recognition “was very important...for the challenge of Jordan especially. Jordan was not accepting the idea that the PLO is the sole representative of the Palestinians...But the main problem was with Jordan because they think the West Bank belongs to Jordan. My opinion is *that between 1968/9 until 1974, this was the diplomacy: how to take the recognition of the representation from Jordan and to use other Arab countries for support of this.* This is what happened in 1973.”¹⁸⁶ In other words, the Palestinians knew that only the Arab League and supporters of the movement could approve the official transfer of recognition from the Jordanians to the PLO.

¹⁸² Braizat 1998, pp. 144-5.

¹⁸³ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 140. Also, see Pearlman 2011, p. 81.

¹⁸⁴ Miller 1983, pp. 33-4; and Sayigh 1997a, pp. 342-3.

¹⁸⁵ Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁸⁶ Interview #21, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

While the concept of a mini-state goes back to the 1960s,¹⁸⁷ scholars agree that the debate only picked up steam after the announcement of the UAK.¹⁸⁸ The debate was polarizing within Fatah and the PLO as a whole. While many were “convinced that the emphasis of the PLO must change from armed struggle to diplomacy,”¹⁸⁹ others saw it as nothing short of treason.¹⁹⁰ The phased-program was finally ratified as the “10-point program” at the 1974 PNC with the participation of nearly all *fedayeen* groups.¹⁹¹

The second factor catalyzing the Palestinian campaign for recognition was the 1973 October War. The PLO knew this would be the last conventional Arab-Israeli War and it became clear that Arab powers would use the war as a platform for negotiated settlement.¹⁹² This settlement, of course, threatened both the legitimacy and goals of the PLO. If confrontation states like Syria, Egypt, or Jordan negotiated peace bilaterally, they could break-up Palestinian territories under the auspices of different Arab actors, who may govern in place of the PLO. Furthermore, negotiations implied *de facto* recognition of Israel, which would undermine the PLO’s territorial claim over all of the former Palestinian mandate.¹⁹³

The result was “Fatah began to develop a strategy to thwart a unilateral Jordanian initiative, gain increasing recognition among Arab states and the international community, and prepare the ground for possible participation in any future negotiations.”¹⁹⁴ Gaining sole recognition for the PLO also meant Fatah could keep other groups tied to the PLO and its institutions. As one Palestinian communist official noted, “if you get sole representation, then it

¹⁸⁷ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 138.

¹⁸⁸ Khatib 2010, p. 39.

¹⁸⁹ McLaurin 1989, p. 29.

¹⁹⁰ See Interview #1, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank; and Al-Hout 2011, p. 127.

¹⁹¹ Shemesh 1988, pp. 287-293; and Al-Hout 2011, p. 120.

¹⁹² Interview #20, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁹³ For example, see Kurz 2005, pp. 79-80; and Gresh 1985, p. 133.

¹⁹⁴ Miller 1983, p. 33.

means other groups want to be inside the PLO...So this can put them all inside and give more power for the leaders of the PLO itself, so it works.”¹⁹⁵

In short, analyzing the content of Palestinian diplomacy leading up to Yasser Arafat’s visit to the United Nations in November of 1974 demonstrates that the pursuit of recognition was more about combating intra-movement threats to the PLO’s legitimacy and goals than it was focused on undermining international support for Israel.¹⁹⁶ The concluding episode in New York was an important step on the pathway to squaring off with Tel Aviv, but the event was mostly the capstone of a hard-fought diplomatic campaign over Israel’s adversaries, not its allies. The reality is that the major diplomatic event of this period was the Rabat Arab Summit in 1974, in which the PLO was unanimously recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Such recognition was critical only because it came from a community of states who had the capacity and incentive to uphold the PLO’s diplomatic victory over Jordan.¹⁹⁷ The event effectively sidelined the Jordanians for the time and would lead to a period of alliance thereafter.

Militarily Viable and Fragmented Movement

The Palestinian liberation movement continued to be fragmented between 1971 and 1974. The main line of fragmentation was between the PLO and Jordan. As mentioned above, the UAK initiative threatened to keep the PLO from political control of the Palestinian territories and was

¹⁹⁵ Interview #21, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁹⁶ Pearlman 2009 and I are in partial agreement here. While Pearlman and I agree that intra-movement politics motivated Fateh’s interest in gaining support from the UN, her theory argues that the goal was to negotiate and settle (also see Pearlman 2011, p. 81). However, it appears that the goal was neither to negotiate or settle at this point in time and place. Diplomacy geared toward that objective would soon follow with direct appeals to Israel’s allies in Western Europe and the United States.

¹⁹⁷ “Which ended in proclaiming the PLO the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the October 1974 Arab summit conference in Rabat” (Sela and Ma’oz 1997, p. 109).

intended to be a direct political attack on the PLO's leadership of the Palestinian movement.¹⁹⁸ The second threat was the initiation of the peace process after the October War. Peace initiatives posed a direct challenge to the PLO precisely because the United States sought to keep the PLO out of the settlement. The Egyptians, and later the Jordanians, were approached for settlement, with little or no reference to Palestinians as anything more than "refugees."¹⁹⁹ Any agreement for peace that did not directly address the Palestinians as an independent political entity would be a direct blow to the PLO. Furthermore, the Jordanians were advocating their right to represent Palestinians at peace talks.²⁰⁰ It is within this context that the PLO took a strong stance against Egyptian and Jordanian overtures for peace, and began its own internal debate on whether to attend peace talks.²⁰¹

But while the PLO as a whole remained at odds with the Jordanians, relations between the guerrilla factions actually improved. The events of Black September and the October War had cross-cutting effects on fragmentation *within* the PLO. On the one hand, the political decisions facing the PLO deeply divided the various factions, within Fateh itself and with leftist groups like the PFLP.²⁰² There was animosity over the perceived recklessness of the Marxist groups during Black September, as well as sharp disagreement over whether the PLO should attend peace talks or pursue a "mini-state" at all.²⁰³ In other words, there was a growing divergence in policy preferences between the groups. On the other hand, the groups grew more

¹⁹⁸ Miller 1983, p. 95, The move challenged the PLO in the West Bank and empowered local West Bank leadership. As Amos (1980, p. xvii) notes, the West Bank leadership was seen as an alternative to the PLO in their own right.

¹⁹⁹ Tessler 1994, pp. 480-9.

²⁰⁰ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 143.

²⁰¹ Should they have agreed to attend, it could signal weakness and upset the more maximalist elements in the opposition. On the other hand, participating as an independent political entity would win them pieces of land the Palestinians were hoping to regain.

²⁰² There was also a growing challenge from the local West Bank leadership. See Miller 1983, p. 95.

²⁰³ For example, see Sayigh 1997a, Ch. 12 and pp. 334-42.

cooperative under the Fateh-dominated PLO.²⁰⁴ This growing acceptance of Fateh leadership can be explained by two factors: the growing power differential between Fateh and other *fedayeen* organizations, and the need to maintain a united front against the Jordanian threat.

In the aftermath of Black September, Fateh emerged as the immediate leader of the movement, with the PFLP – viewed as the most significant rival to Fateh – significantly weakened. As Yezid Sayigh notes, the events in Jordan “allowed the dominant guerrilla group, Fatah, to confirm the PLO as the central body for Palestinian decision-making and policy formation, against the opposition of the enfeebled left. The significance of this development soon became clear as Arafat and his colleagues in Fatah sought to translate Palestinian sacrifices into political gains, above all into Arab and international recognition.”²⁰⁵ One example of this growing cooperation was the creation a unified media output, Wafa, in June 1972.²⁰⁶

Cooperation between the groups rose and fell between July 1971 and November 1974, but the broader trend was towards increased cooperation at the leadership-level.²⁰⁷ The growing unity of the PLO can be found in intra-PLO meetings and conferences leading up to Arab League Summit in Rabat and the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) meetings in 1974. The PFLP was once again attending PLO-EC meetings in February 1974,²⁰⁸ and the leaders of nearly all major guerrilla organizations agreed on the joint Palestinian program that May.²⁰⁹ The core supporters of the phased-program – Fateh, DFLP, and Saiqa²¹⁰ – managed to get the remaining, albeit

²⁰⁴ “Arab World: As Results of Cairo Meetings Are Announced, Commandos Up Against Two Missions: 1. Unity And Wider Leadership: 2. Combating King Hussein and His Schemes,” 13 April 1972, TNA FCO 17/1611/15, pp. 1-2 (790-3).

²⁰⁵ Sayigh 1997b, p. 30.

²⁰⁶ ARR 1972, No. 11, p. 295.

²⁰⁷ ARR 1973, No. 6, p. 145.

²⁰⁸ A.C. Thorpe to P.A.E. Long, British Embassy Beirut, 19 February 1974, “Palestinians,” TNA FCO 93/485/24 (1844).

²⁰⁹ F. Gallagher to P.A. Long, British Embassy Beirut, “Palestinians,” 14 May 1974, TNA FCO 93/486/72 (1187).

²¹⁰ Wright to FCO, “Palestinians,” 13 February 1974, TNA FCO 93/485/26, p. 1 (1855).

skeptical groups to come on board at the 12th PNC in Cairo.²¹¹ Yet the more radical groups – namely the PFLP, PFLP-GC, and the ALF – quickly changed their minds after the vote, reversed support for the phased-program, and formed a “Rejectionist Front” against the pursuit of a negotiated settlement.²¹² But even as the Rejectionist groups withdrew from the PLO-EC and Central Committee, they continued to participate in the PNC and never *actually* left the PLO.²¹³

This is not to say that all PLO-affiliated groups were unified or even cooperative to a great extent.²¹⁴ But these actors did come together for major policy-decisions that affected the whole movement, and even during periods of immense disagreement, Rejectionists did not argue for the overthrow of the PLO leadership. Even at the height of disagreement of peace talks, the PFLP and Fateh did not break off ties. In this way, dissenting factions within the PLO became what one could call the “loyal opposition” to the PLO’s moderate forces.²¹⁵ As Rubin writes, the PFLP and DFLP “saw their mission as preventing Arafat from betraying the revolution,” but not betraying the PLO itself.²¹⁶ Another scholar on Israeli-Palestine concurs that Rejectionists did not undermine the PLO’s authority, but they did “with the support of key Arab states, act independently and set the limits that Fatah cannot easily ignore.”²¹⁷ The result is that while Palestinian movement as a whole was “fragmented” because of competition between the PLO and Jordan, relations between PLO-affiliated groups were “allied.”

Still, while Arafat’s push for PLO recognition primarily concerned competition with Jordan for dominance of the Palestinian movement, it was also a way to increase its capacity to

²¹¹ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 141.

²¹² Abu Iyad 1981, p. 142.

²¹³ ARR 1974, No. 18, p. 415; and Pearlman 2011, p. 82.

²¹⁴ This is not to say there weren’t internal issues – the debate was extremely heated. There was low-level fighting within Fateh, including a PLO office blown up in Beirut, (see ARR 1972, No. 19). These small ruptures, however, remained contained.

²¹⁵ Interview #18, 14 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

²¹⁶ Rubin 1994, p. 157.

²¹⁷ Miller 1983, p. 47.

control other *fedayeen* groups. The more powerful the PLO, the more powerful actors that recognized her legitimacy, and the more resources it acquired from outside actors, the more difficult it would be for competing organizations to exist outside of its institutional structure and the greater incentives there would be to cooperate.²¹⁸ Since Fateh ostensibly dominated the PLO, increasing PLO strength meant increasing Fateh dominance over the movement.

With regards to the military viability of the Palestinian movement, the PLO quickly recovered from Black September. Although seriously weakened, the PLO leadership was transferred out of Jordan, and the *fedayeen* augmented their military capacity in Lebanon and Syria.²¹⁹ By mid-1972, there were 5,000 Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon,²²⁰ and by the end of the year Lebanon received an influx of 15-30,000 Palestinians, including the families of guerrillas.²²¹ Furthermore, “Despite their decline as a military factor in the Middle East after September 1970 and July 1971, the Fedayeen retained a residual capacity to threaten Jordan’s economic well-being.”²²² In Lebanon, the Palestinians continued to represent a significant and powerful threat. With direct intra-movement violence gone, the Palestinians would not require direct intervention against the Jordanians. Instead, the focus was on soliciting indirect intervention in the form of recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people from Israel’s adversaries.

Strategy of Diplomacy

The PLO pursued an explicit strategy of “cornering the market” during this period. After the 1971 ceasefire, PLO diplomacy returned to the search for indirect support against intra-

²¹⁸ For a theoretical elaboration of this dynamic in the context of the PLO, see Pearlman 2009.

²¹⁹ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 290-1.

²²⁰ Sayigh 1997a, p. 312.

²²¹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 291.

²²² Quandt 1973, p. 141.

movement rivals. The targets of diplomacy were thus largely those states within the Arab League and other actors adversarial to Israel. The first major diplomatic campaign was to challenge the UAK initiative, which was announced in March 1972.²²³ As one scholar writes, “The PLO saw in the United Arab Kingdom proposals a direct challenge the very *raison d’etre* of the organization and lobbied diligently – and in the end effectively – to prevent its deligitimization.”²²⁴ The strategy manifested itself in a push for recognition at a number of progressively important international institutions, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, Arab League, and eventually the United Nations.

In addition to targeting Egypt because of its dominance over intra-Arab politics, the broader campaign was aimed at all actors that were supportive of the Palestinian struggle, including reactionary and conservative Arab regimes. The conservative Arab states in the Gulf were important targets of diplomacy because of their ideological alignment with Jordan. Turning these actors toward the PLO would thus be a serious blow to Jordan’s claims to represent Palestinians. But reactionary regimes – such as Libya, Iraq, and Syria – were also powerful elements in their own right and could signal diversified support for the PLO leadership.²²⁵

In late March, Arafat visited Iraq to discuss what he called King Hussein’s “treacherous plan.”²²⁶ That month, the PLO publicly rejected the UAK proposal and called for a new Arab summit to directly address the topic. The Palestinians were hoping a major diplomatic conference among Israel’s adversaries could help solve this intra-movement discord, and Arafat “toured Arab capitals to explain the Palestinians’ attitude towards the Husain Plan.”²²⁷ From

²²³ ARR 1972, No. 5, p. 111.

²²⁴ McLaurin 1989, p. 28.

²²⁵ Kirisci 1986, pp. 152-3.

²²⁶ ARR 1972, No. 6, p. 139.

²²⁷ ARR 1972, No. 6, p. 156.

Baghdad, Arafat visited Saudi Arabia – where much of the Palestinian population actually supported the UAK initiative – Kuwait, and then Egypt.²²⁸

In April, Sadat responded to PLO appeals by breaking ties with Jordan over Hussein's proposal.²²⁹ Using this intra-Arab leverage, Arafat claimed that "President Sadat had dealt King Husain a heavy blow by his decisive attitude towards the plan for a United Arab Kingdom and by breaking off diplomatic relations. Arafat asked the Arab states for co-ordinated action against Husain's proposal."²³⁰ The touring did not stop that month. Pressing ahead, Fateh delegations were sent to Algeria, Libya, and Morocco, and talks were held with the Iraqis and Syrians.²³¹

The Palestinians also increased attention towards the Soviet Union, which was generally supportive of Palestinian national aspirations.²³² The PLO sent a delegation to Moscow "to explain to Soviet leaders the resistance movement's attitude towards King Husain's plan for a United Arab Kingdom."²³³ The PLO even tried using its budding ties with the British as a way to gain a political victory over the Jordanians. The British had special ties to the Jordanians going back to the mandate period, and so PLO representative Said Hammami asked the British for open political support. The British, however, were concerned that this would harm their relations with the Jordanians.²³⁴

To counter the UAK initiative, there was a debate concerning the creation of a Palestinian government-in-exile.²³⁵ The idea was supported by Sadat and Qaddafi, and "Qaddafi had urged Arafat to press Egypt and other Arab states to recognize such a government

²²⁸ ARR 1972, No. 6, p. 156. This was also followed by a trip to Eastern Europe.

²²⁹ ARR 1972, No. 7, p. 174.

²³⁰ ARR 1972, No. 7, p. 199.

²³¹ ARR 1972, No. 8, pp. 201, 223.

²³² Interview #22, 31 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

²³³ ARR 1972, No. 9, p. 245.

²³⁴ Douglas-Home to Beirut, "Your Telegram No 300: Palestinian Government in Exile," 30 October 1972, TNA FCO 17/1627/36 pp. 1-2 (850-1).

²³⁵ ARR 1972, No. 18, p. 455; and ARR 1972, No. 19, p. 492.

as soon as it was formed.”²³⁶ Although this non-solicited proposal was brushed aside by the PLO, it was believed that widespread recognition of a Palestinian government could undermine the Jordanian plot.

In May 1972, Fateh delegations visited Morocco to secure public support for the *fedayeen*, and Qaddafi began acting as a diplomat for the Palestinians.²³⁷ While Arafat visited Qaddhafi, Fateh’s Khalid al-Hassan met with the Algerians and Moroccans, cultivating support and gaining funds.²³⁸ In addition to trips to Cairo and Kuwait,²³⁹ Arafat went on yet another North African tour in late-August 1972, and it was rumored that he met with the Saudis – who were trying to mediate between the PLO and Jordan – in Tunis.²⁴⁰

After his reelection to chairman of the PLO at the 11th PNC in Cairo, Arafat toured North Africa, led a delegation to Iraq,²⁴¹ and held more meetings with the Syrians.²⁴² Fateh delegations toured Eastern Europe, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia,²⁴³ and repeated this general pattern of soliciting intra-Arab and socialist countries for support and recognition.²⁴⁴

With the 4th Non-Aligned meeting coming up in Algiers, the PLO saw an opportunity to stage a political victory against the Jordanians. Getting such a diverse set of countries to recognize the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people would bring the

²³⁶ Paul Balfour to FCO, “Jordan/Israel,” 25/26 August 1972, TNA FCO 17/1627/8 p. 6 (907); and Paul Balfour to FCO, “Sadat’s Call for Palestinian Government-In-Exile,” 30 September 1972, TNA FCO 17/1627/5, p. 1 (914).

²³⁷ M.A. Marshall to D.F.B. Edey, British Embassy Rabat, “Delegation From El Fatah,” 10 May 1972, TNA FCO 17/1609/7 (980).

²³⁸ ARR 1972, No. 12, p. 319.

²³⁹ ARR 1972, No. 14, p. 365.

²⁴⁰ ARR 1972, No. 16, p. 393, 416-7.

²⁴¹ ARR 1973, No. 2, p. 46.

²⁴² ARR 1973, No. 3, p. 71. The Iraqis also became targets of diplomacy for the for both PDPFLP and PFLP-GC. See ARR 1973, No. 3, p. 72; and ARR 1973, No. 4, p. 96.

²⁴³ ARR 1973, No. 4, p. 96; and ARR 1973, No. 5, pp. 118-120.

²⁴⁴ ARR 1973, No. 6, pp. 145-6; ARR 1973, No. 7, pp. 170-1; ARR 1973, No. 8, p. 194; ARR 1973, No. 10, p. 243; ARR 1973, No. 11, p. 264; ARR 1973, No. 12, pp. 286-7; ARR 1973, No. 13, p. 309; ARR 1973, No. 14, pp. 333-4; and ARR 1973, No. 15, p. 357. Sometimes the precise purposes of these trips are not stated, but they are clearly implied.

PLO one step closer to cornering the market of recognition. Furthermore, since the Non-Aligned Movement was sympathetic to the Palestinian revolution, gaining the support of these actors could increase the credibility of the PLO's leadership of the movement.

There was a clear uptick in PLO "diplomatic activity," which was "aimed at sounding out the attitudes of Arab countries towards the Palestinian Resistance Movement."²⁴⁵ Arafat visited Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Korea, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq in the months thereafter, and had talks with King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and representatives from the Romania, Vietnam, and East Germany.²⁴⁶ In July alone, Arafat visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait, with the Saudi trip explicitly framed as a way to boost Saudi support because the Palestinians believed they were becoming too "pacific."²⁴⁷

In August 1973, Arafat went on another Arab tour, meeting with Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Egyptian officials, while PLO envoys were dispatched to Morocco and Algeria.²⁴⁸ Fateh visits to Damascus explicitly concerned "Arab co-ordination at the forthcoming non-aligned nations summit in Algeria."²⁴⁹ Hani al-Hassan of Fateh, for example, visited Morocco in August 1973, where British authorities speculated the visit to be "part of a PLO effort in preparation for the Non-Aligned Conference in Algiers. Their particular aim would be to get full participant status and they would want the Arab States to press for this...Hence Hassan's visit to a number of Arab States and Yasser Arafat's to the others."²⁵⁰ A visit by Arafat to Cairo was particularly

²⁴⁵ M.A. Marshall to F.D. Robins, British Embassy Rabat, "Visit of Yasser Arafat," 24 January 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/2 p. 1 (9260).

²⁴⁶ ARR 1973, No. 4, p. 96; ARR 1973, No. 6, p. 145; ARR 1973, No. 11, p. 264; ARR 1973, No. 13, p. 309; and ARR 1973, No. 14, p. 333-4.

²⁴⁷ H.B. Walker to D.A. Gore-Booth, British Embassy, Jeddah, "PLO/Fatah," 18 July 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/55, p. 2 (9163); Adams to E.N. Clair, "PLO/Egypt," 19 July 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/52 (9166).

²⁴⁸ ARR 1973, No. 15, p. 357; and ARR 1973, No. 16, p. 380.

²⁴⁹ ARR 1973, No. 16, p. 380.

²⁵⁰ S.C. Cotton to F.D. Robins, British Embassy, Rabat, "Visit of a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Emissary," 15 August 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/67 (9147).

important where he discussed “issues to be raised at the Non-Aligned Conference, particularly the elevation of the 14-man PLO delegation from observer to full membership.”²⁵¹

In the weeks before the conference, both the PLO and the Jordanians picked up the diplomatic pressure. The Jordanians met with Syrian and Egyptian officials in Cairo about renewing diplomatic relations – severed during Black September – while Arafat pressed on with diplomacy in North Africa. On his tour, Arafat issued a stern warning to “those states ‘trying to open themselves to King Husain,’” clearly implying Damascus and Cairo.²⁵² In the end, the Non-Aligned Conference in September 1973 was a success. The PLO was recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and was granted observer status.²⁵³

The October War of 1973, fought between Egypt, Syria, Israel, and Jordan, added an extra sense of urgency for the PLO. In the aftermath of the war, the Palestinians were shocked by the attention Egypt and Jordan paid to the opening of a peace process. Jordanian interests were particularly threatening to the PLO.²⁵⁴ As the United States and the world prepared for peace talks, a debate raged in the PLO as to whether it should participate in talks if invited. While participation would give *de facto* recognition to Israel, not attending would strengthen Jordan’s claim to represent Palestinians and increase its chances of recapturing the West Bank.²⁵⁵

As the PLO deliberated whether to attend Geneva talks, it continued its push for recognition from Israel’s adversaries. If the leading international actors opposed to Israel could formally and publically agree that only the PLO could determine the fate of Palestinians, then the Jordanians would be discredited. The war was thus “followed by the diplomatic effort

²⁵¹ D.R. Thomas to D.A. Gore-Booth, British Embassy, Cairo, “Egypt/PLO,” 4 September 1973, TNA FCO 93/180/71 (9341).

²⁵² ARR 1973, No. 17, p. 401.

²⁵³ ARR 1973, No. 17, p. 403.

²⁵⁴ For more on how this dynamic influenced PLO diplomatic preferences, see Braizat 1998, pp. 148-150.

²⁵⁵ D.E.S. Blatherwick to Mr. Williams and Mr. Craig, “The PLO and the ‘Question of Palestine’,” 18 September 1974, TNA FCO 93/505/48 p. 1 (2424).

culminating in the recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians.”²⁵⁶ This effort manifested itself in two ways – first, the push for recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people from the Arab League, and second, from the United Nations. Both of processes were interwoven with one another and occurred nearly simultaneously. However, the campaign for the Arab League was most critical. While some view the Rabat summit as simply the build-up to Yasser Arafat’s historic UN General Assembly (UNGA) visit, the analysis here indicates that the main achievement was Rabat. Arafat’s visit to New York and U.N. recognition of the PLO was the capstone of a successful campaign against the Jordanians. It also marked the beginning of an entirely new campaign because the PLO’s diplomatic successes had effectively ended movement-level fragmentation (see Chapter 6).

Intra-Arab diplomacy by the PLO was operating at high frequency following the 1973 war. An Arab League conference was held in late-November in Algiers, where the issue of Palestinian representation address.²⁵⁷ The Jordanians threatened not to attend the summit if the Arab League recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.²⁵⁸ As a result, the PLO was only recognized as “legitimate” but not sole representative.²⁵⁹ The Jordanians tried to undermine exclusive support for the PLO by offering to work in close cooperation with the PLO in peace talks, but few took the bait.²⁶⁰ Arafat continued his tour of Arab states, shuttling between Tripoli, Cairo, Tunis, Baghdad, and Damascus, and the PLO sent a delegation to Yugoslavia.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ F.X. Gallagher to G.B.J. Williams, British Embassy, Beirut, “Palestinians,” 2 November 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/315 p. 1 (1415).

²⁵⁷ ARR 1973, No. 21, p. 529.

²⁵⁸ ARR 1973, No. 22, pp. 547-8.

²⁵⁹ ARR 1973, No. 22, p. 552.

²⁶⁰ ARR 1973, No. 23, pp. 570-4.

²⁶¹ ARR 1973, 23, p. 574; and ARR 1974, No. 1, pp. 16-7. More delegations were sent to African states as well.

Egypt's disengagement agreement with Israel in early-1974 sent another shockwave through the Palestinian movement and Cairo suddenly became a threat to the PLO agenda. Arafat briefly turned his attention away from Jordan and toward ensuring the Egyptian agreement did not derail the PLO's political position. This involved a diplomatic push by Fateh's Khaled al-Hasan, who visited Algeria and Morocco, and a separate PFLP delegation visiting Algeria. Said Kamal of Fateh went to Saudi Arabia to discuss the importance of the upcoming Islamic Conference in Lahore and Arafat himself met with Saudi ambassadors in Beirut.²⁶²

After the Islamic Conference in February 1974 – in which the PLO was recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people – Arafat began yet another tour of the Gulf states, getting Bahrain to agree to open an independent PLO office.²⁶³ Even more Palestinian-Arab meetings were held in the coming months,²⁶⁴ and the victory at the Islamic Conference was also followed by a PLO visit to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Mogadishu.²⁶⁵

There was still a sharp division within the PLO on how to proceed, with the PFLP and other Rejectionist factions against attending Geneva. So long as they remained divided on the issue, the PNC would not meet to issue a joint declaration.²⁶⁶ The Rejectionists carried out their own diplomacy at this time, meeting with Arab heads of state after Fateh staged visits and held their own conferences on why the PLO should not pursue negotiations.²⁶⁷

The Palestinian guerrillas finally came together in June 1974 for a critical PNC meeting in which the 10-point plan was approved. Although there were formal reservations by the ALF,

²⁶² ARR 1974, No. 3, p. 58.

²⁶³ ARR 1974, No. 4, pp. 75-6.

²⁶⁴ ARR 1974, No. 5, p. 94; and ARR 1974, No. 6, p. 117.

²⁶⁵ ARR 1974, No. 11, p. 240.

²⁶⁶ ARR 1974, No. 8, pp. 160-1.

²⁶⁷ ARR 1974, No. 10, p. 211.

PFLP, and PFLP-GC, the PFLP was in attendance and it was the first time the PLO-EC had representatives from the PFLP-GC.²⁶⁸ Unanimous approval for the plan was short-lived, however, and the vote was interpreted differentially by the various groups. Still, the vote in favor of the moderate PLO agenda encouraged conservative states in the Arab League to push for PLO recognition at the Arab summit.²⁶⁹

The Jordanians and the Palestinians scrambled to secure support ahead of the Arab League Summit in Rabat. On June 20, the Jordanians sent representatives to Damascus with “a message from King Hussein in connection with Palestinian representation at Geneva.”²⁷⁰ When Arafat strategically arrived in Damascus the next day, however, he was received warmly by Assad and the Baath party declared the PLO to be the “sole and lawful representative” of the Palestinian people.²⁷¹

The PLO suffered a minor setback in July following a joint Egyptian-Jordanian statement that implied a lower recognition status than was originally proposed by the Egyptians. Arafat launched into a diplomatic tour of North Africa and Syria, where Arafat sought assurances from Assad that he would support the PLO as the sole representative.²⁷² Arafat also met with Qaddhafi, who agreed “that the [Egypt-Jordan] communique was contrary to a decision by the Algiers Summit Conference which regarded the Palestinian Organisation as the legitimate and only representative of the Palestinian people, including those in the Hashemite Kingdom of

²⁶⁸ ARR 1974 No. 11, pp. 238-9.

²⁶⁹ Egyptian preferences for the phased plan are discussed in great detail by Shemesh, although he likely exaggerates the role the Egyptians played in getting the plan passed at the PNC. See Shemesh 1988, pp. 285-288.

²⁷⁰ J.D.B. Shaw to J.N.O. Curle, British Embassy, Mogadishu, “Contacts with Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 31 December 1974, TNA FCO 93/486/365, p. 1 (1131).

²⁷¹ J.D.B. Shaw to J.N.O. Curle, British Embassy, Mogadishu, “Contacts with Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 31 December 1974, TNA FCO 93/486/365, p. 1 (1131).

²⁷² ARR 1974, No. 14, p. 312.

Jordan.”²⁷³ Arafat was believed to have sent a message to the secretary general of the Arab League for an urgent meeting to discuss the communique an affront to the Algiers accords.²⁷⁴

The Egyptians caved under pressure, walked back their statement with the Jordanians, and together with Syria, issued a joint statement recognizing the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.²⁷⁵ Egypt, Syria, and the PLO then began meeting to coordinate their strategy for the upcoming Arab Summit in Rabat.²⁷⁶ Arafat also visited with the Saudis, who confirmed their recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.²⁷⁷ The building blocks for Arab League recognition and sidelining Jordan were taking shape.

The final diplomatic push immediately before the Rabat summit is described as intense:

“Neither the Jordanians nor the Palestinians were in a mood to compromise. In the Jordanian corner, Prime Minister Zeid al-Rifai, ‘left no stone unturned to prevent recognition of the PLO’...For the Palestinians, Farouk Kaddoumi...urged on by Arafat, who aimed abuse down the telephone at the Arab leaders, he thumped the table, threatened to inflict public embarrassment on the others by walking out, and ensured that his henchmen in the conference committees did not shift in their insistence on PLO demands...By the next day, thanks also to the lone support of Egypt’s Foreign Minister, Kaddoumi’s blunderbuss tactics had paid off. The Arab foreign ministers adopted the PLO’s proposals without discussion and transmitted them to the summit.”²⁷⁸

At Rabat, the PLO was unanimously recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, including a positive but reluctant vote from Jordan. As a senior member of the DFLP noted “Rabat was the moment where the PLO had a clear cut on this question: That Jordan has nothing to do anymore with the Palestinian question.”²⁷⁹

²⁷³ G.H. Boyce to F.X. Gallagher, British Embassy Tripoli, “Visit to Libya by Yasser Arafat,” 25 July 1974, TNA FCO 9/487/180 (1657).

²⁷⁴ F. Gallagher to G.B.J. Williams, British Embassy, Beirut, “Palestinians,” 23 July 1974, TNA FCO 9/487/175 (1662).

²⁷⁵ ARR 1974, No. 15, p. 338. This was apparently a major accomplishment as the Syrians were not fully in favor of the PLO’s push for sole recognition. See Interview #16, 2 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁷⁶ D.E.S. Blatherwick to Mr. Williams and Mr. Craig, “Palestinians and the Arab States,” 23 September 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/275, p. 1 (1489).

²⁷⁷ ARR 1974, No. 16, p. 362.

²⁷⁸ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 122.

²⁷⁹ Interview #16, 2 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

With the Rabat decision secured, the PLO turned its attention toward the UN. British archival documents pinpoint the decision to push for a UNGA discussion on Palestine as early as June 1974, based on a consensus decision between PLO moderates and Rejectionists.²⁸⁰ Other documents – citing meetings with Palestinian representatives – indicate that “the main aim of the PLO in requesting the inclusion of the question of Palestine on the UN agenda this year had been to put ‘the people of Palestine’ firmly in a UN Resolution and thus into the negotiating process at Geneva. They wanted a resolution which affirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and set up the PLO as the ‘sole representative of the Palestinian people.’”²⁸¹ In short, the strategy was still about ensuring that the PLO would own representation of the Palestinian movement. Just weeks after Rabat, on November 22, the PLO was recognized by the UN as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, the overall shift in diplomacy after Rabat and the UN was pronounced: the PLO began turning its diplomatic attention West. Although the PLO would remain vigilant to keep the Jordanians at bay, Arafat signaled that “widening international alliances in order to put pressure on Israel” was now newly on the agenda.²⁸² The PLO from this point forward became obsessive in its search for American support,²⁸³ despite the fact that New York was considered to be “enemy territory.”²⁸⁴ Arafat’s speech at the UN was its first notable push towards engaging with the U.S., and Arafat noted that he “had alluded in [his] UN speech to the burden the American people bear as a result of the American assistance to Israel taken out

²⁸⁰ D.E.S. Blatherwick to Mr. Williams and Mr. Craig, “The PLO and the ‘Question of Palestine,’” 18 September 1974, TNA FCO 93/505/48 p. 1 (2424).

²⁸¹ D.E.S. Blatherwick to Mr. Williams, Mr. Craig, and Mr. Coles, “Meeting with PLO Representatives,” 20 September 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/271, p. 2 (1497); and Wright to FCO, Beirut, “PLO,” 5 November 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/316 (1414).

²⁸² ARR 1974, No. 23, p. 565.

²⁸³ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 118.

²⁸⁴ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 115.

of their taxes.”²⁸⁵ His speech walked the fine line of appealing to the normal third world constituency, but also to the American people directly.²⁸⁶

The other major targets of diplomacy outside the Arab League during this period was the Soviet Union and socialist countries in Eastern Europe. Although not directly adversarial to Israel, the Soviet Union was a major supplier of arms and resources in the Arab world – particularly to Egypt and Syria – and generally sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. Because of its influence over Arab League powers, Soviet support for the PLO would be an important force multiplier in its competition with Jordan.²⁸⁷ As one DFLP official noted, “Gradually...by virtue of interests shall we say, there was more focus on what was called the Socialist Bloc.”²⁸⁸

The Soviets were at first skeptical of the Palestinian guerrillas. The Soviets preferred moderation and saw spectacular acts of terror by some *fedayeen* groups as destabilizing.²⁸⁹ When Yasser Arafat was first brought to meet the Soviet leadership in 1968 by Nasser, the Soviets were unenthused by the stunt. The Soviet Union was particularly at odds with the PFLP, given its widely publicized hijackings. When closer relations were established, Arafat was the primary point of contact as head of the PLO and Fateh. “No doubt other leaders like Habash and Hawatmeh were received...but they were not received as leaders.”²⁹⁰ When Arafat and other PLO representatives visited the Soviet Union in coming years – Arafat visited Moscow again in 1970 and 1971²⁹¹ – they were usually received through the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee to avoid offering undue recognition. When Sadat chose to expel Soviet advisors from

²⁸⁵ Robinson to FCO, “P.L.O.,” 21 November 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/331, p. 2 (1383).

²⁸⁶ Richard, “Arafat’s Speech to the Assembly on 13 November,” TNA FCO 93/507/199, p. 1 (1994). Also see, Wright to FCO, Beirut, “My Tel No 715: Palestinians,” 28 November 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/340 (1371) on the balance between East and West reactions to UNGA.

²⁸⁷ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁸⁸ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁸⁹ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁹⁰ Interview #22, 31 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁹¹ Reppert 1989, p. 112; ARR 1970, No. 3, p. 110; and ARR 1971, No. 21, p. 593.

Egypt in June 1972, Arafat conspicuously returned to Moscow for talks with the leadership.²⁹² The Soviets also encouraged the PLO to engage with Eastern Europe,²⁹³ and the PLO increased its diplomatic activity in Eastern Europe and the Far East during 1972.²⁹⁴

Relations between the PLO and Soviet Union grew steadily but it was not until 1973/4 that the Palestinians secured more official recognition from the Soviets. Increasing engagement emerged from cross-cutting factors. On the one hand, the Soviets were more interested in working with the PLO. The PLO was becoming a powerful, independent political actor in its own right, and the Soviets believed relations with the PLO could be an avenue into Arab politics.²⁹⁵ A former Fateh representative recalled how the PLO pitched relations to the Soviets: “If we have our state, or our independence as Palestinians, we will be the bridge between the Middle East and the Western [sic]. This is [Arafat’s] language.”²⁹⁶ Trouble between Moscow and Cairo in 1972²⁹⁷ made the Soviets especially eager for a new point of entry to Middle East politics.²⁹⁸ As a result, “By September of 1972, Fatah leadership was reporting that the Kremlin had agreed for the first time to directly supply weapons to the group.”²⁹⁹ Arafat toured Eastern Europe in February 1973, including East Germany, Bulgaria, and Hungary.³⁰⁰

By mid-1973, engagement with Moscow and other socialist states picked up. Arafat held talks with representatives from Cuba and Yugoslavia in May,³⁰¹ Romania in June,³⁰² and the

²⁹² ARR 1972, No. 14, p. 365; and Dannreuther 1998, pp. 51-2.

²⁹³ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁹⁴ ARR 1972, No. 3, p. 73; ARR 1972, No. 6, p. 155; and ARR 1972, No. 7, p. 198.

²⁹⁵ Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁹⁶ Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁹⁷ Reppert 1989, p. 113.

²⁹⁸ Reppert 1989, p. 112.

²⁹⁹ Reppert 1989, p. 112.

³⁰⁰ ARR 1973, No. 4, p. 96.

³⁰¹ ARR 1973, No. 10, p. 243.

³⁰² ARR 1973, No. 11, p. 264.

PLO agreed to open an office in East Berlin in July.³⁰³ Arafat visited Moscow again in mid-August.³⁰⁴ These meetings were strategically explicit. London representative Hammami told his British interlocutors that “the purpose of Yasser Arafat’s recent visits to Eastern Europe had been to get approval from other bloc countries” for “the establishment of a Palestinian state comprising the West Bank and Gaza with its capital in Jerusalem,” or the 10-point program.³⁰⁵ Seeking their approval for the phased-plan was a way to ensure they would not support the alternative – Jordanian representation and sovereignty of the West Bank. Soon, “Relations between the PLO and East European countries were good. The Russians, and most of their neighbours, acknowledged that the PLO could speak for the Palestinians as a whole.”³⁰⁶ While engagement with the Soviets was important for out-maneuvering the Jordanians, it is important to recognize that engagement with the other global power – the United States – was not.

From the perspective of Fateh, the Soviets could be used as rhetorical leverage over leftist PLO factions. Arafat also believed the Soviets could help gain recognition at the United Nations and other forums where they wielded influence.³⁰⁷ This is *not* to say that the Palestinians saw the Soviets as a critical avenue towards settlement with Israel, or even large-scale resources. Resources from the Soviet Union were scarce compared to other third-parties. As Amos observed, “The U.S. is the greatest potential source of leverage vis-à-vis Israel...The U.S.S.R. supplied the wherewithal for a possible military solution, but the U.S. was the key to a diplomatic solution.”³⁰⁸ As such, the Soviets were only useful for solving intra-movement competition for the PLO.

³⁰³ ARR 1973, No. 14, p. 333.

³⁰⁴ R.B. Bone to D.A. Gore-Booth, “Yasser Arafat,” 12 September 1973, TNA FCO 93/180/74, p. 1 (9337); and ARR 1973, No. 15, p. 357.

³⁰⁵ D.A. Gore-Booth to RB Bone, “Palestinians,” 13 August 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/63 p. 1 (9154).

³⁰⁶ D.J.F. Barwell, “Discussions with Sa’id Wasfi Kamal,” 31 July 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/65 p. 2 (9150).

³⁰⁷ For example, see Dannreuther 1998, pp. 59-66.

³⁰⁸ Amos 1980 p. 265.

Interactions with the Soviet Union became more pronounced in the aftermath of the October War and the dialogue surrounding peace talks. The Soviets scrambled to get the Palestinians involved in the Geneva process, and Arafat visited Moscow in November under heavy pressure from the Soviets to offer his own peace proposal.³⁰⁹ A PLO delegation was sent to Yugoslavia shortly thereafter.³¹⁰ Hoping to play an active role in Geneva, the Soviets wanted to use PLO participation to parlay their own seat at the table. Like the PLO, the Soviets could be cut out of the peace process if Egypt, Syria, or Jordan made bilateral peace with Israel using American mediation.³¹¹ The Soviets thus invited leaders of the various PLO factions to Moscow in November 1973 to promote the adoption of the “mini-state” approach.³¹²

Palestinian-Soviet interactions grew even closer after the announcements of U.S.-brokered disengagements between Egypt and Israel in January 1974, and between the Syria and Israel in May.³¹³ April saw more discussions between the PLO and the Poles, as well as growing ties with Romania.³¹⁴ In May, the Soviets continued to pressure for a united front in favor of talks,³¹⁵ while in June the Palestinians sent messages to the Socialist International and a delegation to Romania.³¹⁶

The summer of 1974 involved another PLO tour of socialist countries. Arafat led his first “official” visit to Moscow, where the PLO was given permission to open an official mission,³¹⁷

³⁰⁹ ARR 1973, No. 21, pp. 526-7.

³¹⁰ ARR 1973, No. 23, p. 574.

³¹¹ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 56-7.

³¹² Dannreuther 1998, pp. 52-3. Also see, D.A. Gore-Booth to Miss Toulmin, “Translation of Editorial in ‘Le Monde’ of 6 August 1974,” 7 August 1974, TNA FCO 93/487/212 (1609).

³¹³ Dannreuther 1998, p. 5.

³¹⁴ ARR 1974, No. 8, pp. 160-1.

³¹⁵ ARR 1974, No. 9, p. 187.

³¹⁶ ARR 1974, No. 12, p. 267.

³¹⁷ ARR 1974, No. 14, p. 311; and ARR 1974, No. 15, p. 336.

Kaddoumi visited Prague, while Arafat traveled to East Berlin and Poland.³¹⁸ Arafat then visited China, while Kaddoumi toured the Eastern bloc.³¹⁹ That October, before the Rabat summit, a large delegation led by Yasser Arafat visited Romania³²⁰ and Hungary, where they secured recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.³²¹

As alluded to above, the buildup to the UNGA summit also involved targeting non-aligned countries who were themselves critical of Israel, and whose support could help secure the PLO's place as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Non-aligned countries – particularly those in Africa – and non-Arab Islamic countries became secondary, albeit important targets of diplomacy. One scholar of PLO-African relations noted that “Arafat was working Africa to boost his prestige where he was welcomed as a head of state... Working Africa to ensure recognition and support for himself against his rivals within the PLO and his opponents in the Arab world.”³²² As such, “some of Arafat's visits to Africa take place when his standing in the international arena has declined, when splits within the PLO have become serious, and he fears that this status as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian might be undermine.”³²³ This period of intense competition between the PLO and Jordan, and between moderates and rejectionists within the PLO, was one such occasion.

In the push for recognition, diplomacy with these non-Arab actors picked up in 1972 and escalated after the October War. In 1972, the PLO announced the opening of offices Uganda,

³¹⁸ AJM Craig to MJ Richardson, British Embassy, Amman, “Arafat in Moscow: July 31 – August 4,” 16 August 1984, TNA FCO 93/487/259, p. 1 (1521); AC Thorpe, “Alexandria Communique,” 27 September 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/293 p. 2 (1452); MB Nicholson to PJ Barlow, “Visit to Prague of PLO Delegation,” 15 August 1974, TNA FCO 93/487/237, p. 1 (1559); I.L. Blackley to Paul Le Breton, “Visit to East Berlin By Y. Arafat and Delegation, 14 August 1974, TNA FCO 93/487/234 p. 1 (1564); and D.G. Manning to MT Jones, British Embassy, Warsaw, “PLO Visit to Poland,” 7 August 1974, TNA FCO 93/487/222 p. 1 (1589).

³¹⁹ ARR 1974, No. 16, p. 362.

³²⁰ ARR 1974, No. 19, p. 442.

³²¹ “The Middle East: Arafat's Visit to Hungary,” 16 October 1974, TNA FCO 93/488/309, p. 1 (1427).

³²² Oded 1990, p. 1-2.

³²³ Oded 1990, p. 15.

Nigeria, Congo, and Senegal, and carried out trips to Uganda and Sri Lanka.³²⁴ 1973 was a watershed for PLO diplomacy as twelve African states broke diplomatic ties to Israel.³²⁵ This not only provided an opening for Palestinian diplomats to move in – literally taking over former Israeli embassies³²⁶ – but it also made these states more valuable in solving intra-movement competition now that they had a stake and influence in its outcomes as Israel’s new adversaries. The Islamic Summit Conference in Lahore and the OAU meeting were other attempts to reach constituents that could promote the PLO’s position over Jordan’s.³²⁷ As one interlocutor noted, “we developed excellent relationships with...Africa, Asians, Latin Americans. Relationships flourished after ‘73, but they had started before ‘73.”³²⁸

What is clear from this period is the overwhelming emphasis on diplomacy with Israel’s adversaries and neutral actors, compared to minimal and half-measure interactions with Israel’s allies in Western Europe and the United States. The PLO continued to openly threaten U.S. interests and encouraged other Arab actors to do so as well.³²⁹ This is not to say that there were not interactions with Israel’s allies at all – there were. There was a PLO office in New York in 1965, an office in Paris in 1968, and lower-level Fateh representation in other Western countries. In 1971, a PLO office in Geneva was also discussed as a way to get closer to the UN and the West.³³⁰ However, a few clarifications are in order.

First, early PLO diplomacy outside of the region was mostly run on the independent initiative of designated diplomats, without serious policy oversight by Arafat.³³¹ Furthermore,

³²⁴ ARR 1972, No. 13, p. 342; and ARR 1972, No. 21, p. 547.

³²⁵ ARR 1973, No. 4, p. 96.

³²⁶ See Oded 1990.

³²⁷ ARR 1974, No. 4, pp. 75-6.

³²⁸ Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³²⁹ ARR 1972, No. 2, p. 46.

³³⁰ ARR 1971, No. 15, p. 426; and J K E Broadly to D A Gore-Booth, “PLO Representative in Geneva,” 1 March 1974, TNA FCO 93/485/37A, p. 1 (1837).

³³¹ Interview #6, 11 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

meetings were mostly informational in nature. This is noted in British documents on early meetings with PLO representatives,³³² and the same could be said for engagement with the Americans. Kissinger had apparently initiated contact with Arafat through Sadat, and there were meetings between the PLO and CIA representatives as early as 1973, but the Palestinians were convinced that the U.S. was simply interested in acquiring information on the PLO.³³³ The talks were abandoned by March 1974.³³⁴

Second, engagement with Israel's allies were often done at the suggestion of others and less from independent PLO decision-making. For example, in December 1973, the French asked Arafat to send a representative to Paris for discussions, in addition to the existing PLO representative in Paris.³³⁵ This implied that previous engagements were not as high-level or strategically meaningful; hence the French desire to upgrade to a representative directly tied to Arafat. In meetings with the British, Said Kammal pushed the idea of Arafat visiting Britain, or at least sending a direct representative as requested by the French.³³⁶ But it is not clear whether this prodding was at his own initiative or Arafat's.

Much like how the Algerians pushed the Palestinians towards the French in 1968, PLO engagement with Western Europe was also pushed by Tunisia in August 1973. President Bourguiba advised the "PLO to concentrate more on improving their relations with Western European states, as he believed that the only way to influence Israel into a more flexible posture lay through the West. His thesis, so I inferred, was that once the West Europeans could be persuaded that the Palestinians were both moderate and reasonably united, then they would think

³³² J.A. Shepherd to Leonard, "Conversations with 'Ahmad' of Al Fatah," Received on 16 October 1969, TNA FCO 17/691/2 p. 2 (505); and Letter from C.D. Lush to Richard, British Embassy, Amman, "Embassy Contacts with Al-Fatah," 3 October 1969, TNA FCO 17/691/1, p. 2. (507).

³³³ Heikal 1996, p. 305. Also see, Walker and Gowers 2003, pp. 101-2.

³³⁴ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 114.

³³⁵ R.S. Faber to AJM Craig, "PLO," 12 December 1973, TNA FCO 93/180/93, p. 1 (9288).

³³⁶ R.S. Faber to AJM Craig, "PLO," 12 December 1973, TNA FCO 93/180/93, p. 1 (9288).

it worthwhile trying to persuade the Israelis to compromise.”³³⁷ In short, the PLO had to be told to focus on the West, given their fixation on intra-Arab politics. This makes sense in 1973 given the state of intra-movement competition. Bourgiba’s logic and strategy would only be useful in the next phase of Palestinian diplomacy, once intra-movement rivalry had mostly been resolved.

Third, initial contacts with the West were mostly logistical, not political. For example, direct contacts between the U.S. and the PLO began in the early-1970s, but with regards to U.S. concerns about the security of American personnel in the Middle East. It is well-known, for example, that deputy CIA director, Vernon Walters, met with PLO officials in Morocco in November 1973. An attack on the American ambassador in Khartoum prompted the meeting, whereby the U.S. demanded security assurances from the PLO.³³⁸ There was also cooperation between the PLO and U.S. and British personnel in Beirut. It makes strategic sense that these contacts remained highly secret for both actors, and especially the PLO. The PFLP, after all, used apparent “secret contacts” with the U.S. as its official excuse for withdrawing from the PLO-EC in late-1974.³³⁹

Still, by the end of this period there is a noticeable and real shift toward engaging with Israel’s allies. This is because by 1974, the PLO was beginning to finally sideline the Jordanians. Jordan had to first be firmly sidelined, however, before the PLO could primarily focus target Israel’s allies. As British officials noted, “As for Geneva, I gained the impression that the PLO would probably find a way of getting there in spite of 242 and all that, *providing the problem with the Jordanians could be resolved.*”³⁴⁰

³³⁷ D.J.F. Barwell, “Discussions with Sa’id Wasfi Kamal,” 31 July 1973, TNA FCO 93/179/65 p. 3 (9151).

³³⁸ Rubin 1994, p. 39; and Walker and Gowers 2003, pp. 101-2.

³³⁹ ARR 1974, No. 18, p. 415.

³⁴⁰ P.H.G. Wright to A.J.M. Craig, British Embassy, Beirut, “Said Hamami,” 15 June 1974, TNA FCO 93/486/98 p. 1 (1142), emphasis added.

After the Jordanians conceded recognition at Rabat, the Palestinian movement entered a new phase from “fragmentation” to “alliance.” This meant the PLO could focus as much on undermining Israel, as it did keeping rivals at bay. To undermine Israel, the Palestinians knew that they would have to approach the United States and Western Europe, as allies of Washington. During the run-up to the UNGA meeting, the PLO had sought out Western European support for the PLO invitation, although not for recognition.³⁴¹ As Yezid Sayigh noted, the Palestinians had mixed objectives: one of them being to “safeguard its political gains and enhance its diplomatic status,” and the other to “induce the United States to place the establishment of a Palestinian state on the negotiating agenda.”³⁴² The Palestinian push to attend the UNGA can thus be seen as: 1) a capstone of a years-long campaign to out-manuever the Jordanians for dominance of the Palestine question, and 2) the first salvo in a new political campaign to win support from Israel’s largest and most powerful ally, the United States.

Prior to this point, the PLO and the Americans appear uninterested in each other. Engagement with the Americans would be too risky for Arafat, given fragmented PLO politics, and the U.S. was not convinced the PLO represented the whole Palestinian movement.³⁴³ While the idea for a Palestinian “mini-state” and the call for engagement with the West had been around for years, Arafat and the PLO could not afford a shift in diplomatic strategy until intra-movement rivalry was solved. As one Palestinian official with intricate knowledge of these proceedings noted, intra-movement “competition actually impeded the final decision [to pursue negotiations], rather than affected it. Just slowed it down. But there was, from the beginning, very wide consensus in different factions, Fateh, DFLP – except for the Rejectionist Front – that

³⁴¹ ARR 1974, No. 18, p. 415.

³⁴² Sayigh 1997b, pp. 30-1.

³⁴³ Amos 1980, p. 273.

there is a necessity, an objective necessity for a change in strategy. So it was mainly a question of the relations of the PLO...with the outside world and surrounding environment.”³⁴⁴

After the UN meeting, Arafat turned his sites on engagement with Western Europe and even regional talks focused on the prospects of a negotiated settlement.³⁴⁵ The final campaign of 1973/4 was ultimately about securing the PLO’s dominance as the leader of the Palestinian movement. As one high-level DFLP official noted:

“In the Middle of the ‘70s, it was not a question of, shall we say, furthering negotiations with Israel. It was rather a question of accepting the PLO as a negotiator with Israel. That was a different priority, as we say, and needed different kind of diplomatic work. This is why the Soviet Union was important at that time. They were P5 with the Chinese. And to a certain extent, they acted as proponents of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians and that was the main issue in the middle of the 70s. Whether the PLO was accepted as the representative of the Palestinians, or whether the old set-up [Jordan and Egypt]...*No negotiations and no process [was] going on so we didn’t need people that are capable of convincing the Israelis to offer the necessary concessions. You rather needed powers that gave you diplomatic support in order to consolidate your position in the future.*”³⁴⁶

Recognizing that different targets of diplomacy could solve different political-military problems, the important third-party powers for the Palestinians during this period were themselves adversarial to Israel. However, as the next chapter shows, engagement with Israel’s allies became the priority given the structure of the Palestinian insurgent movement, with “events closer to home created a formidable distraction for Arafat and his comrades.”³⁴⁷

Discussion and Alternative Explanations

From 1959 to 1974, the Palestinian national movement looked inward. While the *fedayeen*, PLO, and confrontation states worked toward undermining Israel, their primary attention focused on competition for intra-movement resources and leadership. The result was that for the first fifteen years of rebellion, Palestinian diplomacy focused intently on Israel’s

³⁴⁴ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁴⁵ Walker and Gowers 2003, pp. 130-1.

³⁴⁶ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank, emphasis mine.

³⁴⁷ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 133.

adversaries – namely, members of the Arab League. Because the movement was fragmented during entire time period, we can isolate the causal relations between military viability and the type of intervention solicited. As shown, the Palestinian national movement was militarily viable, except from September 1970 to July 1971. During the Black September, a previously powerful *fedayeen* movement became vulnerable to collapse under the weight of Jordan. The result was a shift from primarily soliciting indirect to direct intervention. The period thus transitioned between “cornering the market,” “outsourcing rivalry,” and back again.

In general, the theory predicts Palestinian diplomatic strategy well in the early phase of the national movement. One minor anomaly was that the PLO did seek to Arab assistance to directly stifle the *fedayeen* in the early years. This could be because while the PLO was itself viable, its leadership did not yet control its coercive wing of the PLO (i.e. PLA) and had to rely on others.

But what about alternative explanations? The first alternative – that the Palestinians only sought support and intervention from those they believed would be willing to offer it – is indeterminate. On the one hand, a rising Fateh did target states it thought would be most willing to help: Algeria, Syria, and China. However, the imperative for selecting these states were based on competition with the PLO. Algeria had positive relations with Nasser who was the main opponent to the *fedayeen*. Gaining Algerian support would be a direct challenge to the Cairo. Soliciting Syrian assistance was based partially on practical considerations of proximity to the contested zone, but also because of its adversarial relations to Nasser. In short, Fateh diplomacy was significantly driven by its competition with Cairo, and after 1964, with the PLO.

More importantly, though, the Palestinians did not only seek support from those they believed would offer it. A critical counter-point is Fateh’s decision to engage with Egypt after

the 1967 war. Not only was Nasser actively hostile to Fateh, but early engagements were far from productive and Nasser treated dialogue as an interrogation.³⁴⁸ It was not obvious that Nasser would support Fateh at that point in time. However, Fateh's imperative to outcompete the PLO leadership made the move central to its diplomatic strategy.

A second alternative explanation is that the Palestinians only sought support from their ethnic, ideological, and religious kin. At first glance, this may appear to be an important driver of Palestinian diplomacy. Because there were well over a dozen Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa supporting Palestinian rights, the solicitation of co-ethnics is over-determined. Still, both the PLO and Fateh competed diplomatically by targeting a diverse set of actors outside the region. Both targeted China and the Soviet Union extensively, despite neither being communist organizations, and the PLO sent representatives as far as Latin America. Even from an ideological standpoint, Fateh's pursuit of aid from Nasser is poignant. Fateh was fundamentally against Nasser's pan-Arabism, but sought his assistance nonetheless because it was necessary to secure control of the movement.

A third alternative is that Palestinian diplomacy followed a natural progression, from Israel's adversaries to allies, and from indirect to direct intervention. Before the Palestinian movement could focus its diplomacy toward undermining Israel, it did have to settle its intra-movement disputes. This progression, however, is a function of the fact that the Palestinian movement was born fragmented, not united. In fact, as we will see in Chapter 6, when the newly allied movement becomes fragmented, there is a shift in targeting back towards Israel's adversaries. Furthermore, while there is a progression from indirect to direct intervention against

³⁴⁸ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 62.

intra-movement rivals from 1959 to 1970, there is a transition away from direct intervention after 1971 once the PLO is stabilized.

The fourth alternative argument, that Palestinian diplomacy was not focused but solicited support far and wide, once again has no merits. Certainly, there was general focus on bringing global attention to the Palestinian question, but explicit campaigns were more focused than this. For example, Arafat did not appeal to any actor or all actors to save the PLO from Black September – it was the Arab League specifically. The campaign to get Egyptian backing in the late-1960s was explicit because only Cairo could pull the rug out from under Shuqayri. Furthermore, the PLO did not seek recognition from anyone to outcompete the Jordanians. It was the Arab League and other institutions which the Jordanians themselves were a part of that mattered most.

Even the PLO's UN campaign was largely geared towards sidelining the Jordanian claim to represent the Palestinian people. Since Jordan openly hoped to represent Palestinian interests in UN-sponsored peace talks, it was critical for the Palestinians to receive recognition from the UN itself. This competitive dynamic is recognized by scholars like Wendy Pearlman, who argue that the UN campaign was largely driven by intra-movement competition.³⁴⁹ However, while Pearlman argues that the PLO actively sought to participate in Geneva talks in order to benefit from a successful peace process, the analysis above demonstrates that the PLO was not interested in the actual talks. The goal was simply to sideline Jordan, not engage in peace talks, which would have been political suicide given the internal debate in the PLO. In fact, it is only *after* Jordan was sidelined, and the movement became allied in 1974, that Arafat felt it was possible to use diplomacy to position the movement for negotiated settlement. This objective became real, it

³⁴⁹ Pearlman 2009.

was not the UN that was targeted, but the United States and Western Europe. This is because the UN had little to no leverage over Tel Aviv.

A fifth alternative argument is that strategic choice was driven by changes in Palestinian diplomatic capacity. Some may argue that certain types of diplomatic strategies – i.e. those targeting the COIN state’s allies and soliciting direct intervention – would require greater capacity than others. Once again, there appears to be little evidence in favor of this argument. Although Palestinian diplomatic capacity increased steadily over the course of the 15-year period in question, there was no notable change from targeting Israel’s adversaries to allies because of this change. The PLO did transition toward targeting Israel’s allies near the very end of this period but the decision was based upon the PLO’s growing security as the movement’s hegemon. In fact, the PLO did have the capacity to build offices in Western Europe and Washington in the 1960s and did so. But the fact that the PLO refrained from focusing on these actors as part of their primary diplomatic strategy demonstrates that capacity was not driving Palestinian preferences for engagement.

Finally, there is the concern that third-parties were themselves driving the PLO’s diplomatic strategy, either directly or by manipulating movement fragmentation or group viability. Surely, there were attempts to alter movement fragmentation. When the *fedayeen* were a threat to the PLO, Nasser tried to bring them into the PLO to create a more united movement. However, this had no effect on Fateh’s decision to cooperate. Instead, Fateh doubled-down on its attempt to overtake the PLO. Although the *fedayeen* eventually joined the PLO, it was in reality a take-over in which the previous leadership was deposed. And though Nasser supported the move, it was only after he became convinced that Shuqayri’s leadership was untenable and the *fedayeen* had won the competition for Palestinian support. Finally, while third-parties like

Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon certainly sought to make the *fedayeen* non-viable during this period, it was not with the intention that these actors would go out and seek direct intervention in response. Nor are there any cases of third-parties actively striving to weaken the PLO so that it would be reliant upon direct intervention.

Conclusion

Overall, the contemporary Palestinian national movement spent its first fifteen years competing amongst itself. Whether it was between the various *fedayeen* guerrilla groups, between the PLO and the *fedayeen* as a whole, or between the PLO and Arab states trying to control the movement, intra-Arab conflict dominate Palestinian politics. Aside from the 1970-1971 Palestinian-Jordanian war, the military effort was focused on challenging the Israelis. However, the main political struggle was at the intra-movement level, and thus the vast majority of Palestinian diplomacy was geared towards resolving these issues.

The various belligerents each sought support from Israel's adversaries, hoping to corner the market of recognition and resources so as to dominate the movement. Within the context of movement fragmentation, members of the Arab League, Islamic countries, and the non-aligned movement were willing, and most importantly, capable of dictating the outcomes of this competition. As such, these actors became the perfect targets of solicitation. So long as each group could hold its own, only indirect intervention was sought. However, when defeat was on the horizon, the strategy of diplomacy changed from "cornering the market" to "outsourcing rivalry," appealing for direct intervention. The *fedayeen* were constantly weary of an over-reliance on outside supporters, but when it was necessary, they had no choice but to put their fates in the hands of others.

Chapter 6: Palestinian National Movement (1974-1988)

Introduction

This chapter continues our analysis of the Palestinian national movement and its strategic use of diplomacy. Like the previous chapters, I intend to show how different threat environments affected how Palestinian insurgents employed diplomacy abroad. More specifically, I look at how variation in intra-movement fragmentation and competition, and the military viability of Palestinian guerrillas, influenced what type of intervention these actors sought, from whom, and for what purposes.

Yet the political-military environment in which the Palestinian movement operated was substantially different in the post-1974 era. First, the peace process became an ever-present condition of Middle East politics. Since October 1973, the international community has endeavored to bring the belligerents of the Arab-Israeli conflict into a negotiated settlement. At the 12th PNC in June 1974, the PLO decided that it would strive to be part of that process but continuously failed to gain entrée to peace talks. One reason was that the primary gatekeepers – the United States – refused to include the PLO in deliberations. The other is that the PLO leadership was deterred and distracted from engagement by internal Palestinian politics, and occasionally, direct threats to from its rivals.¹ In addition to intra-PLO pressure from Rejectionist Front forces, Syria replaced Jordan as the biggest intra-movement challenger in the post-1974 era. Second, whereas the previous chapter examined an era in which the Palestinian movement was fragmented and predisposed toward competition, the period from 1974 to 1988 involved greater cooperation and co-existence. This does not mean there were not heated disagreements

¹ Miller 1983, pp. 40-64.

over the PLO's foreign policy – there was indeed incredible tension. However, these tensions only occasionally translated to direct challenges to the movement's leadership, and episodes of deep fragmentation and competition are deviations from general movement alliance.

The story of this chapter is of the growing PLO strategy of diplomatically targeting the United States and its allies to help solve conflict-level goals vis-à-vis Israel, and the powerful episodes of intra-movement fragmentation that disrupted this trend. Since the movement was almost never fully united but mostly allied, individual groups maintained secondary campaigns targeting Israel's adversaries to promote their own positions within Palestinian politics. As such, Fateh and the PLO often employed two simultaneous campaigns – using one hand to address conflict-level goals and the other to manage intra-movement politics. During periods of alliance, the conflict-level campaigns were preeminent over campaigns inspired by movement-level considerations. The analysis below also examines the different types of intervention solicited by the Palestinian movement. As a rule, the PLO sought indirect forms of intervention – transfers of arms, money, training, recognition – to keep third-parties out of local politics. Yet on occasion, the PLO was compelled to solicit direct intervention to save the movement from. Wars between Syria and the PLO in 1976, the PLO and Israel in 1982, and the Fateh versus mutineers in 1983 all involved calls for direct intervention.

Case Design

The threat environment changed frequently during this phase of the Palestinian revolution, providing excellent conditions to test the argument presented. During this phase, the Palestinian movement passed through six periods (Table 6.1): allied and militarily viable (1974-1976, 1977-1982); united and militarily non-viable (1982-1983); allied and militarily non-viable (1984-1988); and fragmented and militarily non-viable (1976-1977, 1983-1984).

Table 6.1: Palestinian Case Map (1974-1988)

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1974-1976 1977-1982	
Militarily Non-Viable	1982-1983	1984-1988	1976-1977 1983-1984

As such, we can trace how a change in the Palestinian movement’s military viability and fragmentation affected group’s campaigns for foreign assistance. More importantly, there are a number of consecutive periods in which “movement type” remained constant, while “military viability” changed, and vice versa. For example, although periods 7 through 9 involve a non-viable Palestinian movement, movement type changes from united, to fragmented, and allied over the four-year period. Similarly, although Israel’s allies were the primary targets of diplomacy during periods 6 and 7, military viability was variable. (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2: Accounting for Predictions (1974-1988)

		<i>Movement Type</i>	Target of Diplomacy	<i>Military Viability</i>	Type of Intervention
Period 4	1974-1976	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 5	1976-1977	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct/Indirect (✓)
Period 6	1977-1982	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 7	1982-1983	<i>United</i>	Allies (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct/Indirect (✓)
Period 8	1983-1984	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct/Indirect (✓)
Period 9	1984-1988	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Indirect (×)

Note: The contents of the columns “Target of Diplomacy” and “Type of Intervention” are the actual observed measurements of these variables. The content in the parentheses denote the extent to which this observation is consistent with my theory’s predictions. A check-mark means “correct,” a tilde means “partially correct,” and an ex-mark means “incorrect.”

Looking more broadly at the case, there are a number of unique empirical puzzles that will be addressed below. First, there is a major change in Palestinian diplomatic strategy in 1976 from “legitimizing rebellion” to “outsourcing rivalry.” Despite large-scale efforts to transition Palestinian diplomacy toward the West for indirect intervention vis-à-vis Israel, the focus of PLO diplomacy became dominated by appeals to Israel’s adversaries for direct intervention. After nearly a year of such engagement, the PLO finally transitioned back towards its earlier strategy of “legitimizing rebellion” again in 1977. This pattern largely continued through 1982, although given the allied nature of the movement, there were a number of secondary campaigns geared toward “cornering the market” among Israel’s adversaries. There was yet another shock to Palestinian diplomatic strategy in 1982 when the Palestinians transition from “legitimizing rebellion” to “outsourcing rebellion.” Instead of soliciting indirect intervention and simple recognition from the West, the Palestinians were now asking these actors to directly intervene to undermine the Israeli position. Just a year later, Palestinian diplomatic strategy took another wild swing from soliciting direct intervention from Israel’s allies, to soliciting direct intervention from Israel’s adversaries in a strategy of “outsourcing rivalry.” Finally, in 1984, the PLO ceased to engage in “outsourcing rivalry,” and once again focuses on engaging with Israel’s allies in order to achieve conflict-level goals. What explains these wide variations in diplomatic targeting and intervention requests?

The case study below examines the extent to which my theory of insurgent diplomacy can explain these shifts in Palestinian foreign policy. First, I demonstrate that periods in which the PLO are focused intently on Israel’s allies are those in which the movement is at least allied and capable of focusing on conflict-level goals. However, when the movement is experiencing a major challenge to the leadership, primary diplomatic targeting is compelled away from Israel’s

allies and towards its adversaries. Second, I demonstrate that Palestinian requests for direct intervention only emerge when the groups are in physically dire positions. Absence a real existential crisis, the Palestinians are content with soliciting indirect intervention. Finally, I demonstrate that when movements are allied, groups engage in a careful diplomatic balance: groups' primary efforts are geared toward solving conflict-level goals, but also make secondary, measured appeals to advance their intra-movement position without upsetting the current leadership hierarchy.

Examining the Periods

The analysis covers five major shifts in Palestinian diplomatic strategy over the course of six periods of analysis. First, I examine how and why diplomacy focused on “legitimizing rebellion,” only to turn toward “outsourcing rivalry” in 1976. Second, I demonstrate the shift back towards a primary focus on “legitimizing rebellion” in 1977. Third, I assess the sudden change from “legitimizing rebellion” toward “outsourcing rebellion” in 1982, and how this fed into the fourth major change in 1983 toward “outsourcing rivalry.” I then conclude by assessing why the Palestinian movement was able to shift its focus back towards engaging Israel’s allies from 1984 through the end of the armed struggle in 1988.

Period 4: 1974 to 1976

The PLO visit to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) marked a drastic change in Palestinian diplomacy as the diplomatic world burst open for the Palestinians.² The PLO opened more offices abroad, third-parties were less hesitant engage with the PLO, and at a broader level, the PLO became more acceptable as legitimate international actor. By 1975, there

² Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank; Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank; and Interview #17, 30 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

were PLO representative offices in nearly 40 countries.³ UN recognition had given previously hesitant states a “legal pretext to open and upgrade relations.”⁴ The perceived unity within the PLO also contributed to these successes. The unanimous vote in favor of the 10-point plan in June 1974 signaled cooperation and moderation, making dialogue with the PLO more palatable. Yet the specific actors the PLO wanted to engage with most – the United States and Western Europe – continued to deny an upgrade of engagement and recognition. This denial presented an important hurdle for the PLO. With Arafat in firm control of the PLO and the Jordanian threat sidelined, the PLO was now focused on challenging Tel Aviv. Yet only Israel’s allies could help force the Israelis into a favorable agreement. This period traces Palestinian diplomatic strategy in pursuit of support from Israel’s allies.

Militarily Viable and Allied Movement

From 1974 to 1976, the Palestinian movement was allied. Despite the creation of the Rejectionist Front in 1974 – in which the PFLP, PFLP-GC, and ALF gradually withdrew from the PLO Executive and Central Committees to protest the pursuit of negotiations – the groups never actually left the PLO nor created an alternative to the PLO.⁵ Even as they openly challenged Arafat’s policy decisions, these groups continued to send representatives to Palestinian National Council (PNC) meetings and maintained contact with the PLO leadership.⁶ The opposition did deter Arafat from pursuing his preferred foreign policy in full, but Arafat’s leadership in the international arena was not challenged. In short, Rejectionist tensions with moderate parties were *intra*-PLO politics and not direct threats to the PLO itself.

³ Miller 1983, p. 35.

⁴ Interview #17, 30 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁵ Although Pearlman 2011 views this period as one of movement fragmentation, Pearlman does recognize that the Rejectionist groups never actually parted with the PLO and were able to occupy a space in between competition and cohesion. My coding of this period as “allied” captures this tension. See Pearlman 2011, p. 82.

⁶ ARR 1974, No. 18, p. 415.

One senior Palestinian People's Party (PPP) official described this competitive but cooperative relationship. When asked to what extent Palestinian communists competed or cooperated with Fateh after 1974, the official replied:

"It was both... There was some competition and we don't agree with many of the strategies of the PLO at the time. But for us, *it was clear in 1974 that we have to support the PLO even if we are not inside*... Many Palestinian movements support the PLO, even if they are inside or outside, or they have this place or that in the PLO. And Mr. Arafat himself, he find how he can solve many problems with other groups, so it was a mechanism of unity and competition. But the key word was that the PLO was the psychological nation or motherland of the Palestinian. It's a compensation for the loss of land. So the PLO is a land, a nation, a motherland for the Palestinian, more than this faction or that faction.⁷

With regards to non-rebel rivals, the confrontation states were largely quiet during this period and the PLO faced no major threats to its leadership. The Jordanians were frustrated over the events of 1974, but knew it couldn't challenge the overwhelming consensus recognizing the PLO.⁸ Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria were also cooperating with the PLO and helped the PLO regulate its differences with Amman.⁹ As such, this period is one of alliance within the Palestinian movement, but not fragmentation nor unification.

With regards to military viability, the PLO was once again in a favorable position by 1974. It was three years since Black September and in that time the movement had grown significantly in Lebanon. The PLO was a formidable force that controlled a large area south of the Litani River, called "Fatehland" by PLO supporters and detractors alike. The activities of the PLO in Lebanon elicited frequent Israeli retaliation, while its growth threatened to overturn the political balancing act in Lebanon.¹⁰ The rise of the PLO in Lebanon mirrored its growth in Jordan and made regional actors nervous. Although the PLO did not pose an existential threat to Israel, its coercive capacity was not negligible. There was a "reduced armed struggle, but linked

⁷ Interview #21, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁸ Sela and Ma'oz 1997, p. 109; and Miller 1983, p. 35.

⁹ ARR 1974, No. 21, p. 497; ARR 1975, No. 1, p. 65; and ARR 1975, No. 2, p. 91.

¹⁰ For example, see Tessler 1994, pp. 405, 450, 496; and Sayigh 1997a, pp. 291-2.

with a political advance. An important card, especially [with] our troops in Lebanon and in Syria. We have a real power.”¹¹

Given an allied and militarily viable movement, we anticipate two strategies being employed. By the PLO as a whole, we expect a diplomatic strategy of “legitimizing rebellion,” or the solicitation of indirect support from Israel’s allies to address conflict-level goals. However, we also anticipate PLO-affiliated groups to engage in “cornering the market” to promote or maintain their own position within the movement.

Table 6.3: Change in Threat Environment – Period 3 to 4

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1974-1976 ←	1971-1974
Militarily Non-Viable			

Strategy of Diplomacy

Two diplomatic strategies were employed simultaneously during this period: “legitimizing rebellion” and “cornering the market.” The first, dominant strategy – legitimizing rebellion – was employed at the conflict-level as the PLO and Fateh focused their diplomatic attention on gaining access to the United States. Having won the intra-movement competition of representation, the PLO shifted its campaign from winning the support of Israel’s adversaries to gaining support from Israel’s own allies. As one Fateh diplomat noted, “The recognition of the PLO...became a much more irrelevant question after Abu Ammar’s [Yasser Arafat] visit to the UN in 1974.”¹² Another high-level DFLP member argued that “From 1970 to 1974, it was

¹¹ Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹² Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

mainly a quest for international protection in order to survive. And then from 1974 onwards, it was a quest for international recognition in order to be accepted as a party to the peace process which was taking its first cautious steps that time.”¹³

The objective was not to strike an agreement with the Israel, but simply to gain recognition from and access to the Americans, who could subsequently pressure Tel Aviv.¹⁴ In other words, the PLO wanted indirect intervention from the Americans. The Palestinians believed the only way to get Israel to make concessions was to convince the United States to throw its weight behind the Palestinians. Without American political and military support, Israel could not withstand the broad international pressure pushing her to negotiate with the PLO. A senior DFLP official described the shift:

“1973, 1974, and afterwards...the emphasis actually shifted to Western countries, rather than Soviet Union and socialist party. Because of the changes that followed the Egyptian treaty of peace with Israel and the new international climate that was created especially after the beginning of what they call a ‘peace process.’ Because it was a very shabby sort of peace process, but still. *So this called for more activity in the Western countries that played an important role, or a more important role, in facilitating this process, in addition of course to the Soviet Union.* But the Soviet Union took a position that, since 1974, was almost identical with the PLO, so it was *more work* that needed to be done in order to win support in the other countries, and especially in the West.”¹⁵

The Palestinians knew they would need to access the Americans. In 1975, Kissinger announced the U.S. government would not recognize or officially meet with the PLO until it formally recognized Israel’s right to exist and accepted UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 242.¹⁶ That year a bill was passed in Congress to the same effect.¹⁷ When asked about

¹³ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁴ Amos 1980, pp. 273, 261.

¹⁵ For example: “And of course there was also since 1974, there was the work in the so-called non-aligned block. That was given much attention because that was what you might call the cover that the PLO found in the UN and the other institutions and international institutions. So there was this line of action also that was given more attention than previously” (Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank).

¹⁶ UNSCR 242 was legislated after the 1967, providing the framework for a peace process in which all negotiating actors recognized the other’s right to exist.

¹⁷ Quandt 2010, p. 278.

the PLO's strategy after 1974, one high-level official close to Arafat noted, "We were just trying to contact the Americans... Trying to convince them of our cause – the just cause – that we want a state after Arafat's speech on the 1967 borders. But this was all just talks and [we] never got a response."¹⁸

One senior Palestinian diplomat argued that the 10-point program in 1974 was specifically geared toward opening relations with the West specifically:

"Now how to make a program which could open for you the possibility – not anymore to speak with those who are with you. To speak with those who are not with you, but they are not against you... So it was decided in the Arab League, after the program of the ten points, to appoint PLO representatives in the offices of the Arab League... to have a representative for the PLO... Gave you the possibility in order to open a dialogue, not anymore [with] the more leftist groups, but with the constitutional parties with the West."¹⁹

Western Europe was viewed as a useful target, both because of its own alignment with Israel, but because it was seen as an indirect route to Washington. The result was a pronounced diplomatic shift toward Western Europe, facilitated by the Arab League.²⁰ After 1974, the British deduced that PLO policy was: "(a) gain U.S. recognition, and thus alienate Israeli's principal ally... (b) as an alternative and complement, to gain European recognition... If the U.S. could be maneuvered into supporting some form of Palestinian entity, or some form of Palestinian rights, then the U.S. would put pressure directly on the Israelis on behalf of the resistance."²¹ As PLO scholar Lahteenmaki noted, "Experts tend to agree that, in the last resort, only the Americans, and not the Europeans, have real leverage over Israel. However, for the PLO the EU constitutes a welcome pressure group to exert influence on the United States and Israel."²²

¹⁸ Interview #7, 5 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁹ Interview #1, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank, emphasis added.

²⁰ Miller 1983, p. 35.

²¹ Amos 1980, pp. 273, 261.

²² Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 149.

While the PLO had some independent access to Western European capitals during this period, the Palestinians mostly relied on the good offices of the Arab League for access.²³ Not only did the Arab League actively promote the inclusion of Palestinian delegations during the onset of Euro-Arab talks during this period, but there was an official PLO representative attached to each Arab League office in Western Europe.²⁴ One former PLO diplomat noted, “We were in the Arab League offices. It was an agreement with the Arab League – within each office in West Europe, a Palestinian should be responsible for that time...I am talking now of our representation of the PLO in Western Europe, because in other countries, it was officially a PLO office.”²⁵ He also noted, however, that within a few years, most of these offices would become independent of the Arab League.²⁶ For example, in late-1975, the PLO opened its own official office in Paris.²⁷ In short, the Arab League provided what Kemal Kirisci would call “indirect access” to Western Europe and subsequently the Americans as well.²⁸

Strengthening contacts with Europe took time. A former Palestinian diplomat with knowledge of the European campaign noted the modesty of the early mission. As he recalled, “the first objective was to inform, to have friends, to clarify...Second is to be recognized.”²⁹ Another noted that at first “it was more than a contact as an interrogation! And we were really very calm. And we know that some diplomats contacting us, they were not really diplomats. But knowing that, we had but the same language. We were very clear. Even in the seventies, contacting let me say not only Americans, Europeans.”³⁰

²³ Interview #17, 30 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁴ Interview #1, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁵ Interview #6, 11 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁶ Interview #6, 11 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²⁷ ARR 1975, No. 20, p. 592.

²⁸ Kirisci 1986, p. 78.

²⁹ Interview #14, 13 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁰ Interview #17, 30 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

Even though Europe pushed its own initiative for a peace process, the PLO remained focused on gaining access to Washington and saw European recognition as a stepping-stone toward that goal. As one Fateh official explained, the “National Council declared we should recognize a Palestinian state on any meter Israel withdraw on [10-point plan]. This is the goal. How can we achieve it? Can we do it by violence only or by political feat? How can we succeed if we have no real communications with Europe and the States? *To reach the cooperation with the States, we should start with Europe. Step-by-step.*”³¹ In addition to Europe, dual-allegiance states like Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia also be used as stepping-stones to the U.S.³²

There were some direct meetings with low-level American officials at the time, facilitated by European or Arab states.³³ Beirut, in particular, was an important space for diplomacy with the West. Beirut hosted Western European and American embassies, making it an easy place for Palestinians to meet foreign dignitaries in an informal manner.³⁴

While the PLO leadership strived to access to the U.S., its member groups still engaged in independent diplomacy to promote their own position and agendas. This secondary diplomacy did not, however, target Israel’s allies. Instead, movement-level diplomacy continued to privilege engagement with Israel’s adversaries. One particular sub-set of Palestinian groups that hoped to use movement-level diplomacy to promote their position within the broader movement was the Rejectionist Front.

These groups appealed to sympathetic members of the Arab League to help augment their arguments in the debate over PLO participation in the peace process. For example, after the 1974

³¹ Interview #13, 28 May 2015, Nablus, West Bank.

³² Rabie 1995, p. 15.

³³ Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁴ Interview #2, 1 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank; and Interview #16, 2 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

UNGA meeting, Rejectionist Front factions sent a delegation to Libya and Iraq.³⁵ The Libyans eventually terminated aid to the PLO to solidarize with the Rejectionists.³⁶ When the PFLP-GC and the ALF withdrew from the PLO Executive Committee in the summer of 1975, Arafat visited Baghdad – a major supporter of the Rejectionists – perhaps to ensure his position within the PLO leadership.³⁷ The PFLP also called on radical states like Iraq, Libya, and South Yemen to publicly support the Rejectionist cause.³⁸ Importantly, though, the intention of these engagements was not to secure help in capturing the PLO or Arafat's leadership. It was about advancing Rejectionist policy within the PLO. In fact, the PFLP continued to profess that it would rejoin the Executive Committee if only the PLO would adopt a more Rejectionist stance toward to conflict settlement.³⁹ The Rejectionists and moderate PLO members continued to meet to discuss rapprochement during this time.⁴⁰

Even Fateh and non-Rejectionist factions used diplomacy with Israel's adversaries to promote party-level goals as well. For example, the DFLP sent its own delegations to North Korea in late-1974,⁴¹ and Saiqa and Fateh sent independent delegations to East Asia in the summer of 1975. There were also numerous meetings with communist countries regarding PLO-Jordanian rapprochement,⁴² including a visit by Farouk Qaddoumi of Fateh to Peking in 1976. Still, much of this diplomacy appears to be a simple relationship maintenance among existing supporters. Looking more broadly at the Palestinian leadership – and especially Yasser Arafat – the main focus was of the Palestinian national movement was gaining access to the U.S.⁴³

³⁵ ARR 1975, No. 1, p. 65; and ARR 1975, No. 2, p. 92.

³⁶ ARR 1975, No. 12, p. 376.

³⁷ ARR 1975, No. 15, p. 453.

³⁸ ARR 1975, No. 16, p. 481.

³⁹ ARR 1975, No. 3, p. 123; and ARR 1975, No. 2, p. 93.

⁴⁰ For example, see ARR 1975, No. 10, p. 323.

⁴¹ ARR 1974, No. 23, p. 566.

⁴² ARR 1975, No. 1, p. 65.

⁴³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 322.

A more specific movement-level campaign by moderate and Rejectionist factions took place in early-1975.⁴⁴ When Cairo agreed to mediation with Israel, it threatened Arab unity on settlement for the Palestinians.⁴⁵ The threat to the PLO was less severe than Jordan's since the Cairo was not claiming to represent the Palestinian people, nor trying to control Palestinian territory. Instead, it simply threatened to undermine the strength of the PLO's bargaining position.⁴⁶ Since this presented an on-side movement-level threat – albeit not a direct challenge to the PLO – the PLO launched a regional campaign to ensure that its position in the peace process was not forfeited.

The primary targets were Israel's allies and the Arab League in particular. Qaddoumi traveled throughout North Africa in the spring of 1975, explaining why the PLO opposed a "separate peace," and a PNC delegation travelled to Iraq to express its position regarding the Americans.⁴⁷ While Qaddoumi called for an Arab League summit to discuss the Egyptian approach,⁴⁸ Arafat toured the Gulf, "to try to preserve the solidarity of the Rabat conference and to bring about united Arab action to confront coming events."⁴⁹ Arafat visited with Saudi and Syrian officials to ensure their support for the PLO,⁵⁰ and meetings with Soviet representatives discussed the need for Arab unity behind the PLO's approach to peace talks.⁵¹

When the Sinai Agreement was signed between Israel and Egypt in September 1975, the PLO condemned the act, saying it violated the Arab League's commitment to unity on the Palestinian question. The PLO demanded all Arab states – Iraq, Algeria, and Libya in particular

⁴⁴ ARR 1975, No. 4, p. 142.

⁴⁵ ARR 1975, No. 4, pp. 152-3; and ARR 1975, No. 17, p. 511.

⁴⁶ Sayigh 1997a, p. 323; and ARR 1975, No. 21, p. 620.

⁴⁷ ARR 1975, No. 5, p. 180.

⁴⁸ ARR 1975, No. 6, p. 206. A second call for a summit was made months later. See ARR 1975, No. 11, p. 347.

⁴⁹ ARR 1975, No. 7, p. 234.

⁵⁰ ARR 1975, No. 16, p. 481.

⁵¹ ARR 1975, No. 8, p. 263; and ARR 1975, No. 9, p. 294.

– confront Egypt and met with Iraqi officials in Lebanon.⁵² Arafat targeted these states in particular because they were supporters of the Rejectionist agenda. By gaining support from these countries, Arafat was able to siphon external support away from his main detractors and secure Fateh’s position. The episode actually brought the Rejectionists and Fateh closer together and the two began talks on holding another PNC.⁵³ Arafat continued the campaign with a tour of the Gulf and North Africa, while PLO officials held meetings in Aden, Somalia, and Algiers to boost ties to pro-Rejectionist states.⁵⁴ Meetings with the Soviet Union and socialist countries were also geared towards ensuring continued support for the PLO’s in the aftermath of the Egyptian-Israeli agreement.⁵⁵

Although the Rejectionists were relieved with the leadership’s opposition to Egypt, they hoped Arafat would condemn peace talks outright. Arafat merely criticized Egypt for moving unilaterally.⁵⁶ Therefore, in response to these PLO-Soviet meetings, Rejectionist groups conducted their own tour, including PFLP visits to Baghdad and Libya, and PFLP-GC visits to Libya and Algeria.⁵⁷ Once again, the Rejectionists were careful not to imply a break from the PLO entirely. George Habbash, “denied that the Rejection Front was splitting the Palestinian movement and stressed the front’s position of rejecting all political settlements ‘will result in true, profound and rooted national unity and greater political effectiveness.’”⁵⁸

Overall, during period 4, the Palestinian national movement became allied for the first time, which resulted in a substantial change in its international strategy of diplomacy. No longer

⁵² ARR 1975, No. 17, p. 511.

⁵³ ARR 1975, No. 18, p. 539.

⁵⁴ ARR 1975, 18, p. 539; ARR 1975, No. 19, pp. 563-4; ARR 1975, No. 20, p. 592; and ARR 1975, No. 22, p. 648.

⁵⁵ ARR 1975, No. 21, p. 619; ARR 1975, No. 22, p. 648; ARR 1975, No. 23, p. 674; and ARR 1975, No. 24, pp. 705-6. Soviet relations also picking up at this point (1974-1982), but this was also apparently about gaining access to West. See Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁵⁶ ARR 1975, No. 15, p. 452; and ARR 1975, No. 16, p. 481.

⁵⁷ ARR 1975, No. 24, p. 705; ARR 1976, No. 2, p. 60; and ARR 1976, No. 4, pp. 133-5.

⁵⁸ ARR 1976, No. 1, p. 25.

having to worry about intra-movement rivals trying to take control of the movement, the Fateh-led PLO was able to focus on undermining the COIN state, and thus began targeting Israel's allies in pursuit of indirect intervention. In short, the Palestinians were pursuing a primary strategy of "legitimizing rebellion," while also focusing on secondary movement-level goals.

Period 5: 1976 to 1977

The PLO's push for recognition from the West was severely briefly in 1976 by an intra-movement war. The Lebanese Civil War began in April 1975 after a failed assassination attempt on Pierre Gemayal, leader of the Maronite Phalange, which triggered fighting between Palestinian and Maronite Christian groups in Beirut. Lebanese leftist factions joined ranks with the PLO in the conflict. At first, only the leftist PLO factions did most of the fighting while Fateh tried to mediate.⁵⁹ However, the conflict soon broadened. The Palestinian-Lebanese left alliance scored a number of victories against the Maronites, threatening to remove them from the political arena. Syrian foreign policy in Lebanon was straightforward: maintain the peace by balancing the country's political-military forces. Should the Maronites be defeated, the delicate balance would collapse. As a result, Syria invaded Lebanon in June 1976 against the PLO-Left coalition. Facing the attack, Fateh and the rest of the PLO joined the fight.⁶⁰

Militarily Non-Viable and Fragmented Movement

Syrian intentions during the conflict were clear: Assad wanted to install a new pro-Damascus PLO leadership. As a result, Yasser Arafat and the PLO itself became a target of the Syrian invasion.⁶¹ Saiqa, the Syrian-backed *fedayeen* group, also splintered in favor of Damascus and was kicked out of the PLO Executive Committee.⁶² Given the intra-movement violence

⁵⁹ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 184

⁶⁰ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 358-366, 373-84; and Gilmour 1983, pp. 126, 129-130.

⁶¹ Rubin 1994, p. 50.

⁶² ARR 1976, No. 7, p. 235; and Abu Iyad 1981, p. 188.

between Saiqa and the PLO, and the PLO and Syria (a confrontation state) – with the expressed purpose of replacing Arafat’s leadership – the Palestinian movement was fragmented.

Although fighting in Lebanon began in April 1975, the PLO was militarily viable up until the June 1976 Syrian invasion. In fact, the PLO was quite formidable prior to this point. After all, Palestinian prowess prompted the Syrian invasion in the first place. The fighting prior to the Syrian intervention also led to material gains in favor of the PLO. After seizing Lebanese army barracks, “Fateh now received 122 and 155 millimetre howitzers and 130 millimetre guns, armoured cars, guided anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft cannon, support vehicles, and large quantities of ammunition from army stores.”⁶³

But the invading force was overwhelmingly more powerful than the PLO. Before the Syrian invasion, the number of pro-Syrian forces in Lebanon was already 17,000.⁶⁴ The Syrians then invaded with somewhere between 12,000 and 30,000 well-equipped forces.⁶⁵ Once the invasion began, it became apparent the PLO could not easily meet the Syrians head-to-head. The PLO was forced to withdraw from a number of locations to avoid contact, fearing direct confrontation could lead to another Black September.⁶⁶ As scholars note, “from the outset, the Palestinian-Lebanese alliance was caught on the wrong foot by the superior Syrian force.”⁶⁷ As a result, the invasion rendered the PLO militarily non-viable.

Given a fragmented and militarily non-viable movement, I anticipate that Palestinian groups to employ a diplomatic strategy of “outsourcing rivalry.” In other words, groups should solicit direct intervention from Israel’s adversaries to undermine the Syrian assault (Table 6.4).

⁶³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 379.

⁶⁴ Sayigh 1997a, p. 385.

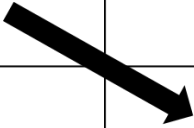
⁶⁵ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 198; Gilmour 1983, p. 138; and Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 151.

⁶⁶ Abu Iyad 1981, pp. 195-6.

⁶⁷ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 151.

Table 6.4: Change in Threat Environment – Period 4 to 5

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1974-1976	
Militarily Non-Viable			1976-1977



Strategy of Diplomacy

Facing intense intra-movement competition, and in a position of extreme vulnerability, the PLO opted to engage in a strategy of “outsourcing rivalry.” In this process, the PLO appealed directly to those actors with influence over the movement and the Syrian’s in particular – i.e. Israel’s adversaries – for direct intervention to undermine the Syrian advance. The targets of diplomacy were two actors with unique leverage over Damascus: the Arab League and Soviet Union. While the Soviet Union was as Syria’s primary arms supplier and super power ally, the Arab League could confer of legitimacy or disgrace upon Syria’s actions and the Gulf maintained monetary leverage.⁶⁸

As the *Arab Report and Record* describes, “Increased Syrian military action on 6 June brought a new spate of Palestinian appeals for Arab support. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat telephoned several Arab heads of state and sent messages to all of them, describing the Syrian attacks. Sourani [PLO representative in Cairo] called a meeting of Arab ambassadors in Cairo and Qaddoumi asked Mahmoud Riyad [SG of the Arab League] to convene an Arab League meeting immediately.”⁶⁹ An Arab League meeting was subsequently held in Cairo, where the decision was made to create an independent Arab force to keep the peace in Lebanon. The PLO

⁶⁸ Dawisha 1980, p. 135-6.

⁶⁹ ARR 1976, No. 11, p. 368. Also, Sayigh 1997a, p. 393.

was in favor of the plan,⁷⁰ but the Syrians were not ready to quit the assault and so the appeals continued. The General Command of the Palestinian Revolution called on the Arab League “to act on decisions taken on 9 June to withdraw Syrian troops from Lebanon...It also asked Iraq, Libya, and Algeria to ‘take tangible and practical steps’ to stop the Syrian invasion and asked the Soviet Union and socialist countries to ‘intervene speedily’ to support the Palestinian revolution and Lebanese nationalist movement ‘by various means’.”⁷¹

On June 19 Arafat sent yet another “message to Arab heads of state and to Mahmoud Riyad, calling for the rapid implementation of the Arab League decision to send an Arab peace force to Lebanon.”⁷² Two days later, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Arafat met in Riyadh. The PLO’s diplomatic behavior during the June invasion was clear: “Arafat spent most of the period under review shuttling between different Arab states in an attempt to persuade them to put pressure on Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon.”⁷³

On June 22, the battle of Tal al-Zaatar began when Christian militias sieged the Palestinian refugee camp.⁷⁴ The *fedayeen* were outmatched. As Abu Iyad admitted, even Maronite leaders “knew full well that we had no efficient way of liberating the Tal Zaatar and Jisr al-Basha refugee camps and the Nabaa Muslim quarter, which were entirely encircled by Christian separatist forces. Technically speaking, we had enough forces to launch a counteroffensive and break the siege. But despite the cease-fire concluded a few days before with the Syrian army, the Syrians paralyzed us as much in the north as in the south. It would

⁷⁰ ARR 1976, No. 11, p. 368.

⁷¹ ARR 1976, No. 11, p. 367.

⁷² ARR 1976, No. 12, p. 397.

⁷³ ARR 1976, No. 12, p. 298.

⁷⁴ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 190.

have been disastrous for the Resistance to withdraw from the positions it occupied across from the Syrian forces.”⁷⁵

In July, after another major Syrian offensive, the PLO “appealed to the Arab states to intervene to save the revolution.”⁷⁶ Arafat sent more messages demanding for “the Arab states to put an end to the massacre of the Palestinians and progressive forces in Lebanon.”⁷⁷ The call was not vague. It was in favor of dispatching “an Arab force to Lebanon to enforce a ceasefire, provided that the force had, as a priority, the relief of the besieged Tal-az-Zaatar refugee camp.”⁷⁸ Sadat was particularly targeted, and the PLO sent letters to the International Committee of the Red Cross and World Council of Churches for aid.⁷⁹

Not to ignore another pressure point on Assad, Arafat visited Moscow in July and met with Soviet representatives in Lebanon.⁸⁰ The PLO sent an open letter to the Soviet Union “seeking the support of the Soviet Union and its intervention with the Syrian regime to get it to withdraw from Lebanon.”⁸¹ The Syrians knew that Soviet support could tip the balance in the PLO’s favor and so the Syrians visited Moscow in July 1976, refusing to give up their campaign. The Soviet Union, however, declared support for the PLO and began to withhold arms from to the Syrians.⁸² Syria and the PLO then reached an agreement on July 29, 1976, but once again, it did not end the fighting.⁸³

⁷⁵ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 190. Sayigh also describes the futile Palestinian position during the siege (Sayigh 1997, pp. 395-8).

⁷⁶ O’Neill 1978, p. 166.

⁷⁷ ARR 1976, No. 13, p. 435.

⁷⁸ ARR 1976, No. 13, p. 435.

⁷⁹ ARR 1976, No. 13, p. 435.

⁸⁰ ARR 1976, No. 14, p. 469.

⁸¹ Dannreuther 1998, p. 78; and Abu Iyad 1981, p. 194.

⁸² Dannreuther 1998, pp. 70-3, 79-80; and Abu Iyad, pp. 193-4.

⁸³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 399.

Without Arab support, Tal al-Zaatar succumbed on August 12. Just two days before the collapse, Arafat sent “an urgent plea to Arab heads of state” appealing for them to intervene, and one day before, he sent another desperate message to Sadat. Egypt renewed its public support for the PLO leadership and the Soviets pressured the Syrians to let up. As a gesture of support, the PLO was admitted as a full member of the Arab League on September 6, giving Arafat a legitimacy boost against the Syrians but not the intervention he needed.⁸⁴

Syria launched another offensive on Palestinian positions in late-September, triggering another flurry of solicitation. As Abu Iyad recalled, the situation was dire: “We were virtually left to ourselves when the Syrians launched their vast offensive on September 28 to dislodge the Palestinian-Progressive forces from the positions they occupied in the Upper Metn.”⁸⁵ The result was that “the entire leadership of the Resistance favored a withdrawal of the Palestinian-Progressive joint forces, especially since we wanted to avoid a confrontation with Syria which would be politically disastrous in the long run.”⁸⁶ In the end, the Palestinians “instructed [its] military leaders in the Upper Metn to retreat as soon as the Syrians launched their offensive. In so doing we were able to avoid futile loses.”⁸⁷

Arafat sounded like a broken record as he “sent an urgent message to Arab heads of state, condemning the Syrian attack and calling on them to ‘intervene immediately to stop this dangerous operation.’”⁸⁸ The Syrians were explicit in their calls for Arafat to be removed from the leadership, while the PLO pressed on with a number of high level meetings with Soviet leaders and envoys.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ ARR 1976, No. 17, p. 556.

⁸⁵ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 194.

⁸⁶ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 195.

⁸⁷ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 196.

⁸⁸ ARR 1976, No. 18, p. 583.

⁸⁹ ARR 1976, No. 18, p. 584.

The Syrians continued the push against Arafat on October 1 with an assault on towns near the main Palestinian command. Although the PLO managed to resist, the momentum was in Syria's favor as it swept south. Arafat made increasingly desperate appeals for Arab leaders to "exert their efforts, using all ways and means, to stop these new military operations, which the Syrians are carrying out against our forces and people."⁹⁰ When the assault continued on October 12, "Arafat telephoned various Arab chiefs of state begging them to intervene."⁹¹ Finally, two days later, Arafat managed to reach the Saudis who offered mediation. On October 16 talks were announced.⁹²

Third-party pressure eventually came down on the Syrians and the assault came to a halt. In October, an Arab League summit was held in Riyadh where it was agreed that an Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) would be created to maintain the peace in Lebanon. A follow-up conference was held in Cairo a week later.⁹³ Saudi and Egyptian pressure was critical to bringing about the meeting. According to some sources, "There were also reports that Syria had reversed its earlier decision, not to attend, because of Egyptian threats to send troops to Lebanon to fight on the side of the Palestinians against the Syrians."⁹⁴ Another report alleged that the intervening party would include Algerian and Iraqi forces as well. Arafat also helped create the consensus against Syria, traveling to Libya to escort Qaddafi to the summit. After the agreement was set, Arafat focused his diplomacy toward securing volunteers for the ADF.⁹⁵

It appears, however, that Saudi pressure had the strongest affect. As Abu Iyad recalled, "the Saudi monarch then brought to bear the entire weight of his financial and political

⁹⁰ ARR 1976, No. 19, p. 616.

⁹¹ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 196.

⁹² Abu Iyad 1981, p. 196.

⁹³ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 197.

⁹⁴ ARR 1976, No. 20, p. 643.

⁹⁵ ARR 1976, No. 20, pp. 643-6.

influence.”⁹⁶ The talks in Riyadh and Cairo ended the violence between Damascus and the Palestinians in Lebanon, and the PLO and Damascus put their differences aside rather quickly.⁹⁷

In sum, period 5 witnessed a drastic change in Palestinian diplomatic strategy from “legitimizing rebellion” to “outsourcing rivalry.” The reason for this substantial change was that the primary threat to the PLO shifted from Israeli counter-insurgency to direct confrontation with Syria. Furthermore, given the tremendous asymmetry of power, the PLO suddenly became militarily non-viable against the Syrians and was thus compelled to soliciting direct intervention from Syria’s own supporters (i.e. Israel’s adversaries).

Period 6: 1977 to 1982

After the PLO’s brush with the Syrians in 1976, the primary focus of PLO diplomacy returned to the bigger picture: the peace process. There were two aspects of the peace process that became critical for the PLO. First, gaining access to the talks, which required recognition of the PLO by the United States. As explained above, this became the underlying goal of the PLO since 1974. The second task was ensuring that Egyptian overtures for peace did not undermine the PLO’s position in the peace process. In 1977, Sadat announced that Egypt would pursue peace with Israel, making an unprecedented journey to Jerusalem. In 1978 Egypt and Israel signed the Camp David Accords under the auspices of the United States, followed by a formal peace treaty in 1979.

Both tasks required unique campaigns of solicitation from different actors. Together, the campaigns worked toward the same goal: gaining access to the peace process, with the PLO recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. At the conflict-level, this required intense targeting of Israel’s allies to gain access to negotiations. At the movement-

⁹⁶ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 196.

⁹⁷ Abu Iyad 1981, pp. 197-8.

level, this required targeting Israel's adversaries to ensure that in the event of such talks, the PLO would continue represent the Palestinian people and its territories. Overall, the period between 1977 and 1982 represents one of the most important and extensive periods of Palestinian diplomacy. It was during this time that engagement with Western Europe reached unprecedented levels and the PLO made headway with the Americans. By the end of this period, the Palestinians were on the verge of achieving recognition from the United States.

Militarily Viable and Allied Movement

The period between 1977 and 1982 is one of the most difficult to assess. The movement was not only increasing the volume of international engagement, but the number of issues Palestinian diplomats had to address were growing. On the one hand, the PLO focused its attention on securing recognition from European and American actors. Yet at the same time, there were multiple intra-movement issues that required diplomatic maneuvering to manage. These movement-level issues were important, but never fully challenged the leadership of Fateh and the PLO. In short, after the Syrian assault ended, the movement became allied once again.

Broadly speaking, the general trend in the Palestinian national movement was towards greater movement cohesion. At the March 1977 PNC meeting, Arafat was reconfirmed as leader of the movement,⁹⁸ and the Rejectionist PFLP and ALF began attending PNC and PLO Executive Committee meetings.⁹⁹ As a result, the general view was that the new Executive Committee finally “enjoyed the confidence of the entire Palestinian people.”¹⁰⁰

Egypt's decision to engage in peace talks created a focal point for alliance between moderates and Rejectionists. With the two camps in agreement, competition for Palestinian

⁹⁸ D.E.S. Blatherwick to Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Tomkys, “PLO,” 4 March 1977, TNA FCO 93/1131/39 p. 2(3767).

⁹⁹ D.E.S. Blatherwick to Mr. Wheeler and Mr. Tomkys, “PLO,” 4 March 1977, TNA FCO 93/1131/39 p. 2(3767); and ARR 1977, No. 6, p. 226.

¹⁰⁰ ARR 1977, No. 6, p. 226.

leadership was usually low. A conference in Tripoli near in late-1977 brought the independent PLO-affiliated groups, the PLO and Syria together in opposition to Egyptian politics. Even the PFLP stated that it would be willing to rejoin the PLO Central Committee and Executive Committee on a full-time basis.¹⁰¹ In one report documenting a rare visit to the Soviet Union by George Habbash, it was noted that “the PFLP has been seen to be making determined efforts to try to patch up its differences with Yasser Arafat and his supporters. Habbash also recently visited Syria, where he had not been since 1968 when he was imprisoned in Damascus...All this is of course taking place against the background of the general trend towards reconciliation of past differences in the region in the wake of President Sadat’s peace talks.”¹⁰²

In mid-1978, Fatah began to address concerns regarding its leadership more openly, meeting with various factions to encourage unity.¹⁰³ By the fall, a more formalized unity plan was agreed upon by the groups.¹⁰⁴ The PLO was for the time allied and strongly so. As West Bank mayor, Elias Fraij, was quoted, “Bitterness over ‘the Camp David sellout’ has turned Palestinian moderates into rejectionists and swung opinion in the occupied territories ‘one hundred per cent’ behind the PLO.”¹⁰⁵

Support for Arafat strengthened and the January 1979 PNC pushed the theme of cooperation further. The British noted that “the need to heal the rift between al-Fatah and its supporters and the Rejection Front factions...dominated the session.”¹⁰⁶ At the conference, the Rejectionist Front expressed its support for Arafat despite continued disagreement over PLO

¹⁰¹ ARR 1977, No. 23/24, pp. 1013-4.

¹⁰² Ms. J. Hancock to Mr. Beel, “PFLP Visit to the Soviet Union,” 8 December 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/60 p. 1 (4056).

¹⁰³ ARR 1978, No. 16, pp. 613-8.

¹⁰⁴ ARR 1978, No. 20, p. 759.

¹⁰⁵ ARR 1978, No. 20, p. 795.

¹⁰⁶ Janet Hancock, “The Palestine National Council,” 26 January 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/17, p. 1(6027). Smaller groups like the PLF and PSF were also included in the PNC for the first time.

foreign policy.¹⁰⁷ As Abdul Jawad Salem, the PLO representative in London, told a British representative in November 1979, “all Palestinian organizations including the PFLP of George Habash now recognize the importance of the PLO’s growing diplomatic respectability in the West and opposed military action except within Israel and the occupied territories.”¹⁰⁸

There was only one point in which Fateh’s leadership of the PLO was truly challenged during the period. After the Israeli incursion into southern Lebanon in March 1978, and the subsequent UN ceasefire agreement between the PLO and Israel, some of Rejectionist factions challenged Arafat’s decision to maintain the ceasefire.¹⁰⁹ Seeing this as an opportunity to prove to the West that he could control the PLO and “abide by international agreements,” Arafat speedily deployed a 500-person security force to ensure that other *fedayeen* did not disrupt the peace. This led to an unprecedented and sudden call for Arafat to step down as PLO chairman from the Rejectionist groups. However, the Rejectionists did not go further than words. In April there was a minor mutiny within the lower-ranks of Fateh related to these matters, but these actors were swiftly stifled.¹¹⁰

Still, the general pattern was one of growing alliance within the Palestinian national movement, even among Fateh’s detractors. An April 1980 Canadian Embassy report from Beirut indicated that, “On several occasions recently the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), led by Doctor George Habash, has called for greater inter-Palestinian unity and cooperation.”¹¹¹ Bassam Abu Sharif, spokesman for the PFLP, “expressed the hope that the

¹⁰⁷ An Nahar Arab and International, “Palestine National Council,” 29 January 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/29 p. 1(5995).

¹⁰⁸ A. Heath, “PLO Contacts,” Received on 14 November 1979, TNA FCO 93/2057/64 p.1 (4439). Also see Ms. J. Hancock to Mr. Beel, “PFLP Visit to the Soviet Union,” 8 December 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/60 p. 1 (4056).

¹⁰⁹ J.C. Hancock to Mr. Holmes, “PLO,” 27 August 1981, TNA FCO 93/2811/7 p. 4 (2930), pinpoints the biggest threat to a July ceasefire in Southern Lebanon, but it is not clear if it is in reference to the same ceasefire agreement.

¹¹⁰ ARR 1978, No. 10, p. 386.

¹¹¹ Canadian Embassy Beirut to The Under Secretary of State for External Affairs (Ottawa), “PLO Call for Internal Unity,” 23 April 1980, TNA FCO 93/2471/46 p. 1 (6243).

Palestinian National Council at its next congress would take steps to consolidate inter-Palestinian national unity in order to meet the challenges ahead.”¹¹² Once again, this “bid to reinstate the PFLP followed moves to close Palestinian ranks in the wake of the conclusion of the Camp David Agreement.”¹¹³ In addition to the PFLP’s new push to join the PLO Executive Committee, it was also attempting to include the PLF and PSF as well.¹¹⁴

Movement alliance emerged despite some third-party encouragement against it. In one comical story told by the Bahraini Foreign Minister, Naif Hawatmeh and George Habbash defended Arafat’s leadership to Qaddafi in June 1980: “Qaddafi had been lambasting Yasir Arafat and, getting nowhere, had called for support from Naif Hawatima of the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and George Habash of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. *But these two had said that although they might disagree with Arafat within the PLO Arafat spoke for the whole PLO whenever the PLO were represented at an international conference. At which point Qaddafi had gone bananas at all three Palestinian leaders.*”¹¹⁵

Near the end of the period, the movement was more united than ever. The 15th PNC, held in April 1981, included a PFLP representative who was brought into the Executive Committee “on Arafat’s terms,” and “with a PFLP representative now in, the Committee can claim with greater justification than hitherto to speak for the Palestinian movement as a whole.”¹¹⁶ One

¹¹² Canadian Embassy Beirut to The Under Secretary of State for External Affairs (Ottawa), “PLO Call for Internal Unity,” 23 April 1980, TNA FCO 93/2471/46 p. 1 (6243).

¹¹³ Canadian Embassy Beirut to The Under Secretary of State for External Affairs (Ottawa), “PLO Call for Internal Unity,” 23 April 1980, TNA FCO 93/2471/46 p. 1 (6243).

¹¹⁴ Canadian Embassy Beirut to The Under Secretary of State for External Affairs (Ottawa), “PLO Call for Internal Unity,” 23 April 1980, TNA FCO 93/2471/46 p. 2 (6244)

¹¹⁵ H.B. Walker to W.K.K. White, British Embassy Bahrain, “Freedom-Fighters,” 28 June 1980, TNA FCO 93/2472/78 p. 1(12727). The story was told as an example by an Afghan figure to a British foreign service office in Bahrain.

¹¹⁶ Janet Hancock to Mr. Holmes, “Palestine National Council, 15th Session, April 1981,” 23 April 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/67A p. 1 (12336).

significant result from the unified meeting was that “the call for armed struggle to take priority over political action (the central theme of the Rejection Front policy) has been dropped.”¹¹⁷ The document even called for a condemnation of international terrorism and support for continued dialogue with the Jordanians.¹¹⁸

With the PFLP participating in the PLO-EC, “The return of the second most influential faction after Fatah must be accounted as a success for Palestinian cohesion,” despite their continued differences on policy.¹¹⁹ The 1981 PNC revealed that PLO “unity has been maintained and even strengthened its organisation and its independence from individual Arab States has been reasserted.”¹²⁰ The important thing, once again, was not that there was entire unity of opinion within the PLO. It was simply that despite their differences, even the most critical factions refrained from seeking to replace the PLO’s leadership over these issue. Instead, “Arafat demonstrated how strong his position was at the National Congress in May [sic] 1981, at which he secured endorsement for his policies despite vocal opposition to some of them.”¹²¹

With regards to the confrontation states, there was more of a general détente. In the immediate aftermath of the 1976 Syrian-PLO crisis, Egypt and Syria reconfirmed their recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.¹²² By December 1976, the PLO Central Committee was comfortable enough with Syria to hold a

¹¹⁷ Janet Hancock to Mr. Holmes, “Palestine National Council, 15th Session, April 1981,” 23 April 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/67A p. 1 (12336).

¹¹⁸ Janet Hancock to Mr. Holmes, “Palestine National Council, 15th Session, April 1981,” 23 April 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/67A p. 1 (12336).

¹¹⁹ T.V. Fean to M.K. Jenner, “Palestine National Council,” 28 April 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/73 p. 2 (2872).

¹²⁰ Wright to FCO, “Palestine National Council,” 22 April 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/61 p. 1 (12348).

¹²¹ J.C. Hancock to Mr. Holmes, “PLO,” 27 August 1981, TNA FCO 93/2811/7 p. 4 (2930). The British also believed discussions with Fatah were worthwhile. “Members of organisations other than Fatah should be treated with caution and not cultivated, but they need not be shunned if the occasion demands an exchange.” R.O. Miles to P.R.H. Wright (HMG Ambassador to Damascus), “Contacts with the PLO,” 17 December 1980, TNA FCO 93/2476/70 p. 1 (7361).

¹²² ARR 1976, No. 24, p. 769.

meeting in Damascus to discuss “reconciliation with President Asad.”¹²³ The British viewed the meeting as an indication that “the Palestinian movement seems to have decided to continue with the Arafat leadership.”¹²⁴ Although the Rejectionist groups did not attend the meeting, it was perceived as a step toward intra-movement unity, and “the Council welcomed the restoration of normal relations between the PLO and Syria.”¹²⁵ Syrian-PLO relations normalized further after Camp David. As a sign of reconciliation, the 14th and 15th PNC’s were held in Damascus.¹²⁶ The Syrians did continue to disagree with PLO attempts to negotiations with the West, but its attempt to up-root and redesign the PLO was finished. Finally, the period saw an unprecedented renewal of meetings between Arafat and King Hussain.¹²⁷

This is not to say there was complete harmony between the PLO-affiliated factions and the confrontation states. There were three movement-level issues that emerged, although none created actual fragmentation of the Palestinian national movement. The first was the basic ups-and-downs between Rejectionists and the moderate leadership, which warranted engagement with third-parties to promote each side’s political position. For example, both the 1979 and 1981 PNC meetings involved harsh criticisms to Arafat’s leadership, but Arafat and Fateh were able to secure the votes needed to maintain control.¹²⁸ The main issue continued to be Fateh’s stance on Camp David. Although Arafat was publicly critical of Cairo, the Rejectionists thought that the

¹²³ Craig to FCO, “Meeting in Damascus of the Palestinian Central Council,” 15 December 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/124 p. 1 (3373).

¹²⁴ Craig to FCO, “Meeting in Damascus of the Palestinian Central Council,” 15 December 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/124 p. 2 (3374).

¹²⁵ Craig to FCO, “Meeting in Damascus of Palestinian Central Council,” 15 December 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/123, p. 2 (3377).

¹²⁶ Dannreuther 1998, p. 111; and McLaurin 1989, p. 20.

¹²⁷ A. Heath, “PLO Contacts,” Received on 14 November 1979, TNA FCO 93/2057/64 p. 1 (4439).

¹²⁸ Abu Sharif 2009, p. 112; and Dannreuther 1998, p. 110.

PLO did not go far enough. Even the DFLP agreed with the Rejectionists and subsequently joined their ranks.¹²⁹

Second, in the late-1970's, there was a temporary but serious rift between pro-Syrian and pro-Iraqi groups that led to inter-factional violence. Iraq encouraged the renegade Abu Nidal Organization to attack and harass the PLO, while Iraqi-backed groups like the ALF were encouraged to fight with Syrian groups.¹³⁰ The infighting did not escalate to challenge to the PLO as an organization, but it did require Fateh diplomacy to keep the clashes under control. Even when inter-group skirmishes were at their worst they were mostly between the secondary factions and not a challenge to the PLO leadership. Continued attempts to solve these issues lead to a resolution of hostilities 1979. Although this was period was seen as the “highpoint” of the Rejectionist camp, it never actually sought to take down the existing leadership.¹³¹

Third, there was the issue of Egyptian peace overtures with Israel. Any settlement with Israel that did not include provisions for Palestine would set the precedent that the Palestinians could be ignored. In order for the Palestinians to achieve bargaining power vis-à-vis the Israelis, they required the unified support of the Arab world. However, unlike the Jordanian threat from earlier in the decade, Cairo was not claiming to represent the Palestinian people, nor striving to administer Palestinian lands. In this way, a separate peace between Egypt and Israel, was unacceptable to the PLO, but it did not direct threaten the PLO leadership or its dominance over Palestinian issues. In fact, as the Egyptians bargained for peace, Sadat continued to profess his support for the PLO and strived for PLO access to negotiations and recognition.¹³² Camp David

¹²⁹ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 484-7. In fact, Arafat even instructed PLO members in Cairo to maintain contact with the Egyptians throughout. See ARR 1978, No. 1, p. 30.

¹³⁰ ARR 1978, No. 13, pp. 501-2.

¹³¹ See Sayigh 1997a, pp. 286-94.

¹³² Wern, Christopher. 1977. “Sadat Urges All-Out Drive to Convene Peace Conference at Geneva,” *The New York Times*, 10 November 1977. <<http://www.nytimes.com/1977/11/10/archives/sadat-urges-allout-drive-to-convene-peace-conference-at-geneva.html>>

also had the effect of bringing the Palestinian movement closer together. When the Arab League met in November 1978 to expel Egypt, Bassam Abu Sharif of the PFLP noted that “Now Arafat had the support of the Arab League, and he had made amends with Jordan, but his main goal was to get the United States on his side.”¹³³

With regards to the military viability of the Palestinian movement, the *fedayeen* maintained their coercive power. First, large-scale attacks against the PLO ceased after the negotiations with Syria in October 1976. Periodic clashes involving PLO-affiliated organizations continued within the general context of the Lebanese Civil War, but the PLO grew and maintained effective control in southern Lebanon.¹³⁴ By 1978, it was reported that Fateh alone had 8-10,000 members.¹³⁵ According to another U.S. government document cited in Mohamed Heikal’s book, *Secret Channels*, “Fatah’s arsenal, the most sophisticated in the Palestinian resistance movement, possess a wide range of weaponry from...Kalashnikov rifles and hand grenades to 155-millimetre towed field artillery, surface to air missiles and high-grade explosives.”¹³⁶ The PLO also received some advanced weaponry from East Germany.¹³⁷

The largest threat to the PLO militarily during this period came from the Israelis to the south. Israel launched an invasion of southern Lebanon in 1978, but much to everyone’s surprise the PLO withstood the Israeli incursion. In the face of steady Israeli pressure – directly through the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and indirectly through its local proxy, the South Lebanon Army – the PLO continued to build its arsenal and develop its institutions of rebellion.¹³⁸ The PLO not

¹³³ Abu Sharif 2009, p. 59.

¹³⁴ ARR 1977, No. 4, p. 141; and Sayigh 1997a, p. 420-9.

¹³⁵ Heikal 1996, p. 332.

¹³⁶ Heikal 1996, p. 332.

¹³⁷ ARR 1978, No. 11, p. 422.

¹³⁸ Sayigh 1997a, p. 420-9.

only developed its own rockets, but also received its first set of tanks in 1980.¹³⁹ The group received aid from the Chinese¹⁴⁰ and heavy weapons from the Soviet Union.¹⁴¹ In the summer of 1977, Time magazine, referred to the PLO as one of “the richer revolutionary group in history.”¹⁴² By 1979, the Arab League was providing the PLO with \$100 million annually, in addition to individual pledges from Arab states. It was also claimed that Fateh alone received \$120 million annually, with additional fundraising generating \$15-20 million.¹⁴³ In 1981, Fateh had 9,000 troops in Lebanon, Saiqa had 1,500-2,000, and the PFLP, DFLP, ALF, and PFLP-GC had a combined force of 4,000. The result was that PLO-affiliated groups had a combined force of 18,000, with Fateh in a significantly dominant position.¹⁴⁴

In short, the period from 1977 to 1982 was one in which the Palestinian national movement was structurally allied and militarily viable (Table 6.5). As a result, we anticipate the execution of two simultaneous strategies: 1) a primary strategy of “legitimizing rebellion,” to deal with conflict-level goals, and 2) secondary campaigns of “cornering the market,” to deal with movement-level goals.

¹³⁹ E.W.L. Barlow to Gordon Cheesman (Defence Department), “India and the PLO: Reported Arms Deal,” 22 July 1980, TNA FCO 93/2479/13 p. 2 (7246).

¹⁴⁰ ARR 1977, No. 13, p. 570.

¹⁴¹ ARR 1977, No. 21/22, p. 953.


¹⁴² ARR 1977, No. 13, p. 570.

¹⁴³ M.J. Fuller to Mr. C.O. Spencer, “PLO Finances,” 12 October 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/110, p. 1(2745)

¹⁴⁴ J. Hancock to Mr. Crosby, “Can the PLO Deliver?: Annexure: Tables Showing Strengths of Palestinian and Lebanese National Movement Military Organisations in Lebanon (14 February 1981),” 5 March 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/24, p. 4 (12437); and Moore to FCO, “PLO Attitude Toward an International Force For Lebanon,” 16 April 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/63 p. 1 (12343).

Table 6.5: Change in Threat Environment – Period 5 to 6

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1977-1982	
Militarily Non-Viable			1976-1977



Strategy of Diplomacy

The primary focus of Fateh and the PLO was on advancing conflict-level goals, which involved an effort to convince Israel’s allies that the PLO should be recognized and included in peace talks. The intervention sought was seemingly quite light. But at this point, American or Europeans recognition of the PLO would have been a major victory over the Israelis who were trying to exclude the PLO from the negotiations. As a continuation of the 1974-1976 campaign, Palestinian took two approaches: direct engagement with the United States, and attempts to influence the U.S. through its allies indirectly. The latter involved working through two types of actors: NATO members, which had political pull with the Americans, and Arab League members, who could use energy resources and pre-existing ties to the West to forge a diplomatic path for the PLO.¹⁴⁵ Although Arab League members were Israel’s adversaries – and thus not expected to be targeted for conflict-level purposes – many were “dual-allegiance” actors who were adversarial to Israel, but also had positive relations with Israel’s allies.

After the Syrian-PLO war, the PLO returned its focus on the West and the United States in particular.¹⁴⁶ As the Palestinian national movement became allied, the PLO could once again

¹⁴⁵ Kirisci 1986, pp. 78, 115, 152-3; Amos 1980, pp. 273-5; Interview #6, 11 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank; and Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁴⁶ Some rejectionists, like Qaddafi, however, were quite disappointed in this new focus on the West. See Ibrahim, Youssef M. 1979. “Palestinians in Libya Charge Pressure Against P.L.O.; A Qaddafi-Arafat Dispute,” *The New York Times*, 12 December 1979.

focus its attention on advancing conflict-level goals vis-à-vis Israel. As Arafat told *Time Magazine*, “the war in Lebanon had kept the Palestinians ‘preoccupied for a long time.’”¹⁴⁷ That preoccupation, of course, was *away* from the PLO’s broader goals and diplomacy with Israel’s allies. Immediately after the PLO-Syrian war, the PLO requested a representative office in Washington, and Farouq Qaddoumi traveled to Paris and Rome to discuss the possibility of PLO attendance at Geneva talks.¹⁴⁸ In 1981, the PNC declared the PLO’s main initiative to be continued dialogue with Europe and increasing ties to Jordan in order to access the United States.¹⁴⁹ In short, the diplomatic strategy shifted back to “legitimizing rebellion” from “outsourcing rivalry.”¹⁵⁰

The diplomatic environment was at first conducive to this approach. The new Carter administration appeared receptive to the PLO in ways that no American administration had been before.¹⁵¹ In 1977, the U.S. and the Soviet Union issued a joint-statement in which Palestinian rights were acknowledged – a first for the United States.¹⁵² As early as December 1976, the Chairman of the PNC, Khalil Fahoum, told British interlocutors that the PLO “had been talking to the Americans. The numerous Senators who visit Syria frequently called on him, and while he recognized that they had not executive authority, they were useful message bearers.”¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ ARR 1976, No. 23, p. 744.

¹⁴⁸ ARR 1976, No. 22, p. 712.

¹⁴⁹ Miller 1983, pp. 104-5.

¹⁵⁰ The Palestinians did appeal to Western Europe and the UN in the summer of 1981, however, to help with increasing Israeli attacks in southern Lebanon. See McKernan to FCO, “PLO Views on Situation in Lebanon,” 22 July 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/90 p. 1(2815); From M.A. Marshall to R.O. Miles, “PLO Policy,” 20 July 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/89 p. 1 (2817); and Massamba Sarre to United Nations General Assembly, Security Council, “Letter dated 8 May 1981 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General,” 11 May 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/78, p. 1 (2853).

¹⁵¹ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 89-90.

¹⁵² Dannreuther 1998, pp. 100-3.

¹⁵³ J.H. Bunney to K.D. Temple, British Embassy Damascus, 23 November 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/111 p. 3(3403)

Immediately following the conclusion of Syrian-PLO hostilities in Lebanon, the PLO began a secret and daring diplomatic push with the Israelis in Paris. While the Israelis used the meeting to learn more about the PLO, the PLO used the meeting to boost its image and bargaining position.¹⁵⁴ PLO representatives bragged about PLO strength after the Syrian assault, and noted that “as always when there was ‘a real war’, the strength and importance of the splinter groups – the Rejection Front – had declined drastically.”¹⁵⁵ This latter point was intended to signal to the Israelis that moderate forces were in control. They also used the opportunity to express their frustration with the lack of Soviet support for the PLO during the 1976 war.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, the anti-Soviet critique and the declaration of the moderates’ strength was likely intended to be a signal to the West that the PLO was ready to engage.

Perhaps most interesting is how the Israelis and British assessed PLO strategy from these talks: “*The PLO leadership had realized, therefore, that the only way forward was through the United States, and in the early months of 1977 they would make a major effort to come closer to the US administration.* They realized that nothing can be kept a secret in Washington, and that they would have to make concessions towards Israel in return for movement by the US towards them. They were prepared for this.”¹⁵⁷ The Israelis viewed the discussion as a positive step forward, but also realized that if this was true, then “the Israeli Government might next year find themselves faced with a US Government determined to see progress in the Middle East, a more cohesive PLO anxious and prepared to move, making overtures to the US Administration and

¹⁵⁴ J. Poston to D.E.S. Blatherwick, “Talks Between Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 November 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/99, p. 1 (3426).

¹⁵⁵ J. Poston to D.E.S. Blatherwick, “Talks Between Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 November 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/99, p. 2 (3427).

¹⁵⁶ J. Poston to D.E.S. Blatherwick, “Talks Between Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 November 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/99, p. 2 (3427).

¹⁵⁷ J. Poston to D.E.S. Blatherwick, “Talks Between Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 November 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/99, p. 3 (3428), emphasis mine.

backed by a strong moderate grouping of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Egypt with Syria and Jordan concurring.”¹⁵⁸ What made this strategy particularly alarming was that “[Israeli PM] Rabin himself certainly has no doubt about the degree of Israel’s dependence on the US Administration. So it seems to us that should the US Government decide that it was worth pressing the Israel Government to make concessions, the Israelis might be force to do so.”¹⁵⁹

To consult on these matters, Arafat visited Moscow in April and August 1977. The Soviet leadership had been pushing the PLO to attend peace talks for some time.¹⁶⁰ However, the PLO did not go to Moscow to receive a lecture on the merits of moderation and engagement. The PLO was pursuing diplomacy with the West on its own initiative. It was the Soviets who feared being left out of the peace process if the PLO managed succeed with the Americans. The PLO was likely assuring the Soviets that they would not be left out of the process, as opposed to the Soviets convincing the PLO to engage with the West.¹⁶¹ After meeting with Brezhnev, “In the following months, Arafat consistently attempted to put pressure on the United States to resume the Geneva peace process with the convening of an international conference. During this time, Arafat met with U.S. Congressman Lee Hamilton in Cairo,¹⁶² and the PLO made contact with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance’s entourage during his tour of the Middle East. PLO diplomats further arranged follow-up visits to Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia after the American delegation

¹⁵⁸ J. Poston to D.E.S. Blatherwick, “Talks Between Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 November 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/99, p. 3 (3428).

¹⁵⁹ J. Poston to D.E.S. Blatherwick, “Talks Between Israelis and the Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 November 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/99, p. 3 (3428), emphasis mine.

¹⁶⁰ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 96-8.

¹⁶¹ For an overview of these politics, see Dannreuther 1998.

¹⁶² ARR 1977, No. 13, p. 567.

passed.¹⁶³ King Hassan of Morocco had also arranged a number of meetings between the PLO and the Americans to discuss security concerns in the region.¹⁶⁴

British archival documents described perhaps the most serious set of U.S.-PLO dialogue to date. In 1977, Vance attempted to float a proposal for mutual recognition to the PLO through the Saudis and Syrians. However, the plan was scuttled by the Egyptians who leaked the plan to Arafat before the Saudis and Syrians could pass it along. Cairo purposefully misrepresented the terms of the agreement to be more generous than the Americans had intended. Arafat was apparently excited by the advance, but when the Saudis delivered the actual proposal Arafat felt betrayed, and so did the Americans when Arafat pulled out of the deal.¹⁶⁵

But this did not stop PLO attempts to engage the U.S. A high-level PLO media representative at the time recalled being tasked with soliciting the American ambassador in Beirut: “The American ambassador at the time...wanted to have more political relations, so I was delegated to coordinate contacts with this ambassador. And I met him three or four times in Beirut...In that period 77 or 78. I contacted...I tried to inform, to explain to him political things. I gave him sometimes brochures and some books, and then it stopped. Then it took another higher level, which I was not informed on who to call.”¹⁶⁶

In 1978, sitting U.S. Congressman Paul Findley and Andrew Young, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, met with Yasser Arafat for extensive interviews.¹⁶⁷ The fact that Arafat was comfortable holding these meetings, in spite of Rejectionist disapproval, signals Arafat’s

¹⁶³ ARR 1977, No. 15, p. 662.

¹⁶⁴ R.O. Miles to PS/PUS, “US/PLO Meetings in Morocco,” 21 January 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/5, p. 1 (12285); and G.G.H. Walden to Mr. Miles, “US/PLO Meetings in Morocco,” 19 January 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/4, p. 1 (12286).

¹⁶⁵ M.I. Goulding to Ambassador, “US Contacts with the PLO,” 16 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/32, p. 2(12197).

¹⁶⁶ Interview #7, 5 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁶⁷ Kirisci 1986, p. 108.

confidence in his leadership of the allied movement. Mohamed Rabie, a Palestinian directly involved in Track II diplomacy between the U.S. and the PLO, noted that “from the late 1970s, these meetings involving influential people became so numerous that they could no longer be identified or counted.”¹⁶⁸ Even publicly, Arafat discussed with American media his “interest in maintaining direct contacts with the United States.”¹⁶⁹

A transcript of the January 5 meeting between Congressman Findley, Arafat, and Qaddoumi in Damascus was shared with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Details from the dialogue provide fascinating insights into PLO strategy. Arafat began by expressing his “strong desire to open a dialogue with the United States. He made the trip to Damascus just for this meeting.”¹⁷⁰ Arafat was clear about why he wanted engagement with the United States: it was the United States, not Britain or France, that had the power to bring about a change with the Israelis: “Because the others are not of the same stand – it is the United States who gives arms, it is the United States who gives funds, it is the United States who gives political support, it is the United States who is ready to retreat from their stands, from the Soviet – American Joint Statement.”¹⁷¹

In an attempt at issue-framing, the Palestinians explained to Congressman Findley why the U.S. should engage the PLO openly. In addition to clarifying that the PLO was not exclusively pro-Soviet,¹⁷² Qaddoumi argued that a hypothetical Palestinian state would be “good

¹⁶⁸ Rabie 1995, p. x.

¹⁶⁹ C.W. Long to G.H. Boyce and J.K.E. Broadley, “Palestinians,” 24 November 1978, TNA FCO 93/1560/73, p. 1 (4781).

¹⁷⁰ R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Summary of Meeting with Yasir Arafat,” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/ (4164).

¹⁷¹ R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Transcript of meeting between members of the PLO and members of the U.S. Congress (Damascus, 5 January 1978),” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/2A (4188).

¹⁷² R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Transcript of meeting between members of the PLO and members of the U.S. Congress (Damascus, 5 January 1978),” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/2A (4188-90).

friends” with the Americans.¹⁷³ Arafat expressed that the Palestinians would be content with a mini-state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and that he would even accept a UN force to maintain the peace.¹⁷⁴ Qaddoumi even tried to persuade Findley that Palestinian security was the key to Israeli security: “Because we also understand that if the Israelis would like to survive, we have to survive!” Furthermore, Palestine could be Israel’s bridge to the Arab world.¹⁷⁵ Arafat concluded by imparting an ominous note to President Carter: “I most sincerely hope that you will not further push me into a corner because I would like to maintain my moderate balance. Otherwise I have nothing to lose by my Kufiyah.”¹⁷⁶ When Findley asked how the U.S. could contact the PLO again, Arafat and Qaddoumi proudly reminded the congressman that they could be reached at the UN, the Political Department in Beirut, or any of the 73 offices around the world, including Canada.¹⁷⁷

It is important to note the modest goals of PLO engagement with the Americans. At this point, the goal was less about getting the U.S. to directly undermine the Israeli position, but simply gaining American recognition. In other words, the PLO was soliciting indirect political intervention. Still, recognition alone would be devastating to Tel Aviv. Even public dialogue with the Americans would have been seen as an advancement against the Israelis. After all, “there were channels of communication through which the US Administration and the PLO had

¹⁷³ R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Transcript of meeting between members of the PLO and members of the U.S. Congress (Damascus, 5 January 1978),” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/2A (4208).

¹⁷⁴ R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Transcript of meeting between members of the PLO and members of the U.S. Congress (Damascus, 5 January 1978),” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/2A (4216).

¹⁷⁵ R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Transcript of meeting between members of the PLO and members of the U.S. Congress (Damascus, 5 January 1978),” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/2A (4191).

¹⁷⁶ R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Transcript of meeting between members of the PLO and members of the U.S. Congress (Damascus, 5 January 1978),” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/2A (4237).

¹⁷⁷ R.J.S. Muir to G.H. Boyce, “Transcript of meeting between members of the PLO and members of the U.S. Congress (Damascus, 5 January 1978),” 30 January 1978, TNA FCO 93/1564/2A (4257).

been able to make each other aware of their respective views,” for years at this point, but it was not seen as enough.¹⁷⁸

Getting the Americans to bring the PLO into peace talks was viewed as critical and the effort picked up steam. In September 1979, it was clear that “the PLO’s current interest is in a diplomatic offensive aimed at winning a greater degree of recognition from the West.”¹⁷⁹ Even when the PLO held secret talks with the Israeli Labour Party in December 1980, the Palestinians said they would move forward only if the “Americans participated” as well.¹⁸⁰

One interviewee who worked in PLO media operations in Beirut noted that “1981 was a big turning point. Qaddoumi sent a letter saying now is the time to establish contacts with the U.S. Give the Americans special attention (anyone, church groups!).”¹⁸¹ In a separate meeting, the same interviewee recalled, “I remember that we met with Qaddoumi who was responsible for the foreign policy and political department, and he talked about that. ‘We need the Americans, they hold the keys of everything now, they can pressure Israel.’”¹⁸²

Consistent with his perception, in March 1981, Nicholas Veliotis, the new Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, asked a trusted intermediary, John Edwin Mroz, “to sound Arafat very discreetly on whether he was interested in exploring with the Americans the possibility of starting a dialogue.”¹⁸³ The process revealed to the PLO and Americans that the 1977 attempt at dialogue ended because of Egyptian disingenuousness. This put both sides at ease, and as a trust-building measure, Arafat began forwarding “tidbits of

¹⁷⁸ J.C. Moberly to Mr. Tomkys, “Contacts Between the Americans and the PLO,” 28 March 1980, TNA FCO 93/2478/1, p. 1 (6705).

¹⁷⁹ Carrington to Khartoum, “PLO,” 4 September 1979, TNA FCO 93/2057/52, p. 1 (4460).

¹⁸⁰ A.D. Parsons to Sir John Graham, “Talks Between the PLO and the Israeli Labour Party,” February or September 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/7A, p. 2 (12489).

¹⁸¹ Interview #12, 29 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁸² Interview #19, 11 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

¹⁸³ A.D. Parsons to Sir Jan Graham, “US Contacts with the PLO,” 18 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/32 (12195).

information or advice to the Americans about things that were going to happen in other countries in the Middle East,” and “in each case Arafat’s prediction has been accurate.”¹⁸⁴

The major turning point came in August when Arafat took the initiative and “sent the Americans a list of seven points as the basis for the opening of a dialogue between the US and the PLO.”¹⁸⁵ The goal of these talks were to bring about “a possible framework for a U.S.-P.L.O. agreement.”¹⁸⁶ It was later revealed that “From August 1981 to May 1982, Mr. Mroz had more than 50 meetings with Mr. Arafat, totaling more than 400 hours.”¹⁸⁷ The talks were approved at the highest levels, including Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and President Reagan himself. With Reagan’s permission, Haig communicated to Arafat “that the Americans could not accept all Arafat’s seven points but did not reject any of them outright, that they were encouraged by his message, that they would like the contacts to continue and that they would act as requested with the Saudis.”¹⁸⁸ The talks were surprisingly successful and both sides believed an agreement could be signed by April 1982.¹⁸⁹ A report by the *New York Times* later revealed that in May 1982, the PLO told “Mr. Mroz that it would give its response by mid-June to a suggested American plan for mutual recognition.”¹⁹⁰ However, the entire effort collapsed when Israel

¹⁸⁴ A.D. Parsons to Sir Jan Graham, “US Contacts with the PLO,” 18 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/32 (12197).

¹⁸⁵ A.D. Parsons to Sir Jan Graham, “US Contacts with the PLO,” 18 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/32 (12195).

¹⁸⁶ Gwetzman, Bernard. 1984. “The Reagan Administration Held 9-motn Talks with P.L.O.,” *The New York Times*, 19 February 1984.

¹⁸⁷ Gwetzman, Bernard. 1984. “The Reagan Administration Held 9-motn Talks with P.L.O.,” *The New York Times*, 19 February 1984.

¹⁸⁸ A.D. Parsons to Sir Jan Graham, “US Contacts with the PLO,” 18 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/32 (12199).

¹⁸⁹ A.D. Parsons to Sir Jan Graham, “US Contacts with the PLO,” 18 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/32 (12201).

¹⁹⁰ Gwetzman, Bernard. 1984. “The Reagan Administration Held 9-motn Talks with P.L.O.,” *The New York Times*, 19 February 1984.

invaded Lebanon on June 6, 1982. Some Palestinians speculated that the Israelis had done so partially to undermine the impending agreement.¹⁹¹

Although the U.S. moved toward deeper engagement with the PLO, this was not an inevitable outcome, especially early in this period. The Palestinians did not initially believe they had enough leverage or bargaining power to bring the Americans in without outside help. The result was that the Palestinians pursued two additional lines of diplomacy to target the United States: Western Europe and Arab League states. Since the U.S. and Western European states were NATO allies, the latter should have at least some leverage or influence on American decision-making. Targeting Western Europe also had its own independent benefit. Because they were seen as sympathetic to the State of Israel, gaining recognition from these actors could be a political boost in its own right.¹⁹²

To a lesser extent, working through the Arab League was used to gain access to the United States. First, oil-producing Arab countries could use their own leverage to help the PLO gain access to Western European and U.S. Second, a number of Arab states were themselves allies of the Americans (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt). While they were clearly Israel's adversaries, in transitive manner they could also be very helpful in gaining access to the United States, Israel's primary ally. The key is to understand for what purposes the PLO engaged with Arab League countries: as the final target of diplomacy to settle movement-level goals, or as an intermediary toward Israel's allies to settle conflict-level goals.

¹⁹¹ Gwetzman, Bernard. 1984. "The Reagan Administration Held 9-motn Talks with P.L.O.," *The New York Times*, 19 February 1984; and R.O. Miles to Sir J. Graham, "US Contacts with the PLO," 27 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/35, p. 1 (12186). It is worth nothing that at first, even the British were skeptical of these details, but the facts conform with what was written by the NYT nearly three years later. Also, see Roberts to FCO, "PLO," 19 August 1981, TNA FCO 93/2809/23 (12224).

¹⁹² Amos 1980, p. 273.

Within Western Europe, the major targets of diplomacy for the Palestinians were the British, French, Italians, West Germans, and Austrians. Although Austria technically fell within the socialist camp, Bruno Kreisky was seen as someone who could speak effectively to both sides of the iron curtain.¹⁹³ Kreisky was also useful as a leader of the Socialist International¹⁹⁴ and became an indirect channel between the U.S. and the PLO.¹⁹⁵ While the United Kingdom and others began to work closely with the PLO in their pursuit of recognition, these actors were not always forthcoming and relations had to be cultivated. In a lunch meeting with British officials in Beirut in April 1976, Hani al-Hassan remarked that:

“The PLO were now taking an increasing interest in the attitudes of the USA and the Western countries to the Palestine question... They expected the attitude of the USA to change during the next few months and they hoped that in time the UK attitude would also change... They felt that France and Britain could make their influence felt with the USA in promoting a settlement. They welcomed the opportunity to communicate their views to HMG and that is why Abu Ammar [Yasser Arafat] asked him to attend the lunch.”

The PLO-Syrian conflict temporarily suspended these efforts as PLO diplomacy shifted to meet the immediate intra-movement challenge at hand. However, as soon as the conflict in Lebanon subsided, Qaddoumi requested a meeting with the British at the ministerial level, but settled for a low-level meeting off premises of the Foreign Office.¹⁹⁶ By mid-1977, the British met with PLO officials in Damascus, marking the first official and public meeting between the two.¹⁹⁷ The British conceded, “We cannot escape the fact that our attempt to make the PLO a respectable negotiating partner is *designed to bring pressure to bear on Israel*, given that the Israeli Government is evidently determined to deny the Palestinians self-determination and to

¹⁹³ Stadler 1981.

¹⁹⁴ Heikal 1996, p. 324.

¹⁹⁵ Kirisci 1986, p. 107.

¹⁹⁶ M.S. Weir to J.O.M. Mason, “Contact with the PLO,” 29 December 1976, TNA FCO 93/910/133, p. 1. (3359).

¹⁹⁷ ARR 1977, No. 16, p. 706.

brush the Palestinian diaspora off into Jordan.”¹⁹⁸ In another meeting just months later, PLO representative Zakaria Abdul Rahim explained that “*The PLO look to the Europeans to try to persuade the Americans to soften their policies,*” especially because it would be hard for the PLO to go any further publicly towards the Americans.¹⁹⁹

The French were also important targets for the PLO, and it is reasonable to assume that similar interactions between the British and the PLO took place with the French. One high-level Fateh member recalled, “France and all other Europe countries, they were in favor with Israel. Yes. But at the same time we managed to succeed with them through our representatives there. They managed to send our message to the French people...Even now, I believe now their role is much more, better even to put pressure on the USA to say, ‘This is not right, they need a state.’ They did a lot for us.”²⁰⁰

Arafat also managed to secure a meeting with UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, where he expressed his willingness to recognize UNSC resolution 242 under the appropriate conditions.²⁰¹ Earlier that year, the PLO began its push with the Austrians, writing a letter to Bruno Kreisky – at the time vice-president of the Socialist International – explaining its will to accept a Palestinian mini-state.²⁰² The basic strategy was to convince these actors that the PLO – with the appropriate assurances – could recognize Israel in return for participation in peace talks. If the PLO demonstrated that it was amenable to moderation, European states could recognize the PLO and even encourage the U.S. to upgrade contacts. One of the main actors tasked with carrying out this mission was the PLO’s representative in London, Said Hammami, who “was

¹⁹⁸ R.O. Miles to P.H. Moberly, “Contacts with the PLO,” 1 October 1981, TNA FCO 93/2806/106, p. 1 (6747), emphasis added.

¹⁹⁹ R.E. Palmer to J.Q. Greenstock, “PLO,” 15 December 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/123, p. 1 (2721), emphasis added.

²⁰⁰ Interview #13, 28 May 2015, Nablus, West Bank.

²⁰¹ ARR 1977, No. 16, p. 707; and Sayigh 1997a, p. 415.

²⁰² ARR 1977, No. 3, pp. 101-2.

considered to be very close to Yasser Arafat.”²⁰³ Hammami was ultimately assassinated by the fringe Abu Nidal Organization in 1978 for his diplomatic efforts.²⁰⁴

After years of preparation, and following the conclusion of Camp David accords, the PLO engaged in a major diplomatic campaign targeting Western Europe in 1979.²⁰⁵ As PLO scholar John Reppert noted, “At this time the PLO took steps apparently designed to broaden and perhaps alter its own base of support. The PLO became far more active in Western Europe with Arafat pursuing a publicly announced goal of ‘erasing the terrorist image and achieving legitimacy in the eyes of the world.’”²⁰⁶ A British intelligence report noted, “Yasser Arafat began a campaign in 1979 to gain greater recognition for the PLO in Western Europe.”²⁰⁷ This included an official meeting in July with Kreisky in Vienna, as well as an official meeting with Spanish Prime Minister, Adolfo Suarez. During his meeting with Kreisky, “Arafat insisted on a Geneva-type conference in which the PLO must participate.”²⁰⁸ Bruno Kreisky is often cited as an important intermediary between the PLO and the United States.²⁰⁹

According to a former Palestinian diplomat, these PLO-U.S. relations really picked up in 1981-2 and “Kreisky would pass along messages from Arafat.”²¹⁰ In late-1981, Austria had given “the PLO office diplomatic status, largely because of Chancellor Kreisky’s own close relations with Arafat.”²¹¹ The Kreisky meeting – the first official meeting between the PLO and a

²⁰³ ARR 1978, No. 1, p. 29.

²⁰⁴ Heikal 1996, p. 325.

²⁰⁵ Miller 1983, p. 100.

²⁰⁶ Reppert 1989, p. 121.

²⁰⁷ External Intelligence Bureau, Prime Minister’s Department, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 February 1980, TNA FCO 93/2473/108 p. 5 (6197).

²⁰⁸ Morgan (Vienna) to FCO, “Kreisky’s Meeting with Arafat,” 12 July 1979, TNA FCO 93/2058/45, p. 1 (4679).

²⁰⁹ Interview #22, 31 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

²¹⁰ Interview #22, 31 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

²¹¹ R.O. Miles to J.A.B. Stewart, “PLO,” 11 November 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/114 (2738).

European leader – triggered a cascade of diplomatic successes.²¹² “The Following month Faruq Qaddumi, the PLO’s equivalent of a Foreign Minister, was invited to Brussels and Rome for talks with the Belgian and Italian Foreign Ministers. In August the PLO was accorded an office with full diplomatic status in Turkey.”²¹³

But while Western Europe was warming to the Palestinians, they remained “reluctant, however, to grant official recognition to the PLO before it indicates more clearly it is prepared to accept Israel’s right to exist as a nation.”²¹⁴ Such recognition, however, was exactly what the PLO was soliciting to in order to pry open access to the Americans and pressure the Israelis. The British in particular were stubborn their engagement with the PLO. When Mahmoud Labadi, spokesman for the PLO, visited Britain in November 1979, he blasted British sluggishness: “If we take into account the opening of Western Europe towards the PLO, namely the invitations of Mr Arafat to Vienna, Madrid, Ankara and other western countries on the way, so we think that Britain should recognize the PLO and talk to Mr Arafat even before other countries.”²¹⁵

In fact, the PLO had similar problems with the very same countries that welcomed Arafat so openly. In private, Spanish officials insisted “that Arafat had come at his own suggestion, if not insistence. His visit was not really a departure [of Spanish policy], and it would not lead to any change in Spain’s attitude to the PLO.”²¹⁶ Another document noted that despite the tour, “No

²¹² Miller 1983, p. 36. Kriesky was also particularly useful for making contacts with Jewish figures and the Israelis. See Heikal 1996, p. 343.

²¹³ External Intelligence Bureau, Prime Minister’s Department, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 February 1980, TNA FCO 93/2473/108 p. 5 (6197).

²¹⁴ External Intelligence Bureau, Prime Minister’s Department, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 February 1980, TNA FCO 93/2473/108 p. 5 (6197).

²¹⁵ W.R. Tomkys to Mr. J.C. Moberly, “Contacts with the PLO: Statement by the PLO, Issued By Mr. Mahmud Labadi in Beirut on 29 November 1979,” 19 November 1979, TNA FCO 93/2057/W65 (4437).

²¹⁶ Figgis to Roger, British Embassy Madrid, Arafat’s Visit to Spain,” 25 September 1979, TNA FCO 93/1560/93A, p. 1 (5162). For more assessments on how Western European policy was not likely to change after Arafat’s tour, see R.J. Carrick to Roger, “CIA Liaison Briefing, 11 July: Palestinian Views on Peace Prospects in the Middle East,” 28 August 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/51, p. 1 (5928); and External Intelligence Bureau, Prime Minister’s Department, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation,” 5 February 1980, TNA FCO 93/2473/108 (6191-6193).

member of the nine [EEC members] so far accepted the PLO's claim to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people or 'officially recognized' them."²¹⁷ Still, Arafat's intentions are notable. Meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister, Arafat claimed that all he wanted was to "explain PLO views."²¹⁸ In another sign that European diplomacy was geared toward gaining access to the United States, "the Spaniards had agreed to do what they could to encourage the Americans to start talking to the PLO."²¹⁹

A magazine interview with Issam Sartawi, a close confidant and personal diplomat of Arafat's, revealed more about PLO strategy in Europe. Sartawi explained that France had value because it "[had] taken a pioneering role in asserting the independence of Europe, from the United States."²²⁰ A divergence from the U.S. and the building "of its own defenses" meant that NATO allies – and France in particular – were in a position to move independently of the U.S.²²¹ Furthermore, these states could use their autonomy and strength to nudge their allies in Washington to recognize the PLO.

Interestingly, Sartawi stressed, "I think it becomes quite obvious that the PLO's approach to Europe can in no way be considered a PLO attempt to play up to the United States through Europe. On the contrary.... It's not in our interest and not in the interest of Europe to alter this situation, to alter the development of an independent European course, pushing Europe back

²¹⁷ W.R. Tomsy to J Moberly, "European Contacts with the PLO," 31 October 1979, TNA FCO 93/2063/22, p. 1 (5473).

²¹⁸ Figgis to Roger, British Embassy Madrid, "Arafat's Visit to Spain," 25 September 1979, TNA FCO 93/1560/93A, p. 1 (5162).

²¹⁹ Figgis to Roger, British Embassy Madrid, "Arafat's Visit to Spain," 25 September 1979, TNA FCO 93/1560/93A, p. 1 (5162).

²²⁰ Lydia Georgi, "The Europization of Europe," (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 September 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/53 (5916).

²²¹ Lydia Georgi, "The Europization of Europe," (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 September 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/53 (5916).

towards America.”²²² On the one hand, we know that the PLO was deeply concerned with U.S. engagement. Therefore, Sartawi may have drumming anti-American sentiment for domestic consumption. Yet on the other, developing an independent European initiative could also pressure the United States into engagement. For example, Qaddoumi – in an interview by the same journalist and in the same magazine – “called on the European Economic Community to launch a fresh initiative to take the Middle East crisis back to the United Nations...*The Western European countries, being allies of the United States, are in a position to influence Washington.*”²²³ Of course, this influence was only “to a certain extent,”²²⁴ but the interview explained the logic of PLO diplomacy further: “constant contacts, political pressure, economic pressure, international conferences, the influence of friendly countries on other European countries and the United States – all the possible political and economic means, along with the escalation of our operations inside the occupied territories.”²²⁵ When the interviewer replied, “Do I understand you to mean that the best way to persuade the United States to recognize the Palestinians’ right to statehood is to use Europe’s influence,” Qaddoumi replied, “*Not only Europe. There are also the other friends of the United States – the oil-producing countries and the economic and political pressure they can exert.*”²²⁶

²²² Lydia Georgi, “The Europization of Europe,” (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 September 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/53 (5919).

²²³ Lydia Georgi, “Kaddoumi: What We Expect of Europe,” (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 July 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/45 (5939), emphasis added.

²²⁴ Lydia Georgi, “Kaddoumi: What We Expect of Europe,” (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 July 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/45 (5946). For example, see H. Neil Truscott, Australian Embassy Damascus, Dispatch No. 2.80, “Arafat and the PLO: Which Way Through the Minefield?,” 20 June 1980, TNA FCO 93/2473/131 (6097-6105).

²²⁵ Lydia Georgi, “Kaddoumi: What We Expect of Europe,” (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 July 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/45 (5946)

²²⁶ Lydia Georgi, “Kaddoumi: What We Expect of Europe,” (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 July 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/45 (5947), emphasis added.

Citing an anonymous set of PLO “leaders,” a June 1979 *New York Times* article reached similar conclusions:

“The strategy of the Palestinians, outlined in interviews with leaders in Beirut and with supporters and opponents in Lebanon, Jordan and Israel, is to achieve a more forthright American acceptance of their right to determine their own status. Leaders of the organization say they hope to bring about a ‘coalition of pressures around American interest and American friends’ to achieve their aims. They will, they say, increase the isolation and extremist groups controlled by Iraq and Syria. More than at any other time the Palestinians, often torn by inner discord, appear to have a unity of purpose. The sense of urgency and alarm that the Camp David accords spread among Palestinians has been used by the moderates to bring extremists, who reject any peaceful settlement, into line behind a unified position.”²²⁷

The election of Ronald Reagan in November 1980 triggered yet another push by the PLO to gain access to the Americans through Europe. Mahmoud al-Khalidi, “the PLO ‘Ambassador’ in Damascus,” asked the First Secretary of the Australian Embassy in Damascus “whether the Australians would intervene with the Americans, in order to persuade the new Administration to open an informal dialogue with the PLO.”²²⁸ In a meeting that December between the British Ambassador to Lebanon and Yasser Arafat, the British stressed that, “We should be talking to the Americans, whose influence with the Israelis would be essential, in an attempt to nudge them along and to use constructively our contacts with the PLO.”²²⁹ Arafat did not disagree, but he objected to British requests that the PLO make public its willingness to recognize Israel, believing that the PLO had already made comparable statements.²³⁰

The British were eager to get the Palestinians to recognize Israel and catalyze negotiations with the Americans.²³¹ Since the PLO had become obsessed with securing a

²²⁷ Ibrahim, Youssef M. 1979. “P.L.O., Shaken by Egypt-Israel Treaty, Seeks to Force U.S. to Accept Its Status,” *The New York Times*, 11 June 1979.

²²⁸ P.H.R. Wright to J.M. Crosby, British Embassy Damascus, “Palestinians,” 11 November 1980, TNA FCO 93/2478/5 (6701).

²²⁹ John Graham, “Record of a Meeting with Mr Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, in Beirut on 2 December 1980,” 9 December 1980, TNA FCO 93/2476/65, p. 1 (7371).

²³⁰ John Graham, “Record of a Meeting with Mr Yasir Arafat, Chairman of the PLO, in Beirut on 2 December 1980,” 9 December 1980, TNA FCO 93/2476/65, p. 1 (7371).

²³¹ M.J. Llewellyn Smith to Mr. Bergne, “PLO: Mr. Shawki al Armali,” 8 June 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/56 (2554).

ministerial level meetings with the British, London dangled the prospects of a meeting with Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington to Ahmad Dajani, if only the PLO would give a “clear signal...that they are (a) ready in the right circumstances to abandon the path of violence, and (b) ready to negotiate a settlement with Israel.”²³² As the British noted, “If we are to make any impact on US and Israeli opinion, we need ammunition. This means that we need help from the Arabs, and particularly the PLO.”²³³ Importantly, “Dajani did not, however, contest [the] contention that *if Palestinians aspirations were to be achieved, there was no realistic alternative to working to influence American and above all Israeli opinion.*”²³⁴

The PLO also used Arab League connections to gain access to Europe, mainly through the Euro-Arab dialogue.²³⁵ The British used this dialogue as a cover for meetings with PLO officials,²³⁶ such as a meeting with Ahmed Dajani in The Hague in June 1981.²³⁷ Some Arab states, however, were themselves direct links to the United States. Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, in particular, were fruitful intermediaries. The Gulf was influential because of its control of energy supplies, while Egypt and Jordan had clout through previous engagements with Washington on peace talks.²³⁸ The PLO, therefore, “went to Saudi Arabia, Emirates, and others trying to get access to U.S. recognition.”²³⁹ Scholars also agree that “Arafat has doubtless tried to

²³² J.E. Holmes to Mr. Miles, “PLO Representative in London,” 19 June 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/55 (2555).

²³³ J.E. Holmes to Mr. Miles, “PLO Representative in London,” 19 June 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/55 (2555).

²³⁴ J.C. Moberly to Sir J Graham, “Contacts with the PLO,” 29 May 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/50, p. 2 (2548), emphasis added.

²³⁵ Kirisci 1986, p. 115.

²³⁶ R.O. Miles to A.B. Urwick and M.J. Moore, “Contacts with the PLO,” 30 April 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/29 (2591). Also see Interview #17, 30 April 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

²³⁷ J.C. Moberly to Sir J Graham, “Contacts with the PLO,” 29 May 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/50, p. 1 (2546).

²³⁸ Miller 1983, pp. 113-4.

²³⁹ Interview #22, 31 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

use Saudi access and influence in Washington to gain U.S. support.”²⁴⁰ The U.S. also found these actors to be useful contacts to the PLO.²⁴¹

Oil-producing states were especially useful because of “the economic and political pressure they can exert” on the United States towards recognition of the Palestinian rights.²⁴² In a *New York Times* interview, Shafiq al-Hout argued that “Attacking American interests does not mean throwing bombs at American embassies or blowing up a pipeline... These things would not hurt American interests very much... But it would be very effecting to encourage the oil-producing countries to adopt a policy that would really influence the economics of the United States.”²⁴³ Dajani also mentioned in a meeting with the British that “there were several Arab countries, notably the Saudis, who could act as a channel” to the Americans, in addition to the British.²⁴⁴ The Saudis in return pressured the PLO to maintain moderation, with King Khaled “[warning] Arafat that the PLO should adopt a moderate line as Saudi Arabia was again trying to get the US to put pressure on Israel.”²⁴⁵

Despite general coordination at the international level with the West, the Palestinian movement was not united during this period. Instead, the movement – including confrontation states – as allied and thus one could see two simultaneous strategies of diplomacy in operation. At the conflict-level, the PLO focused on “legitimizing rebellion.” However, at the movement-level, groups continued to jostle over what Palestinian policy should be, as well as general positioning within the movement. The result was a number of campaigns targeting Israel’s

²⁴⁰ Miller 1983, p. 73.

²⁴¹ Dannreuther 1998, p. 99.

²⁴² Lydia Georgi, “Kaddoumi: What We Expect of Europe,” (Journalist account from unknown magazine), Received on 17 July 1979, TNA FCO 93/2054/45 (5947).

²⁴³ Ibrahim, Youssef M. 1979. “P.L.O., Shaken by Egypt-Israel Treaty, Seeks to Force U.S. to Accept Its Status,” *The New York Times*, 11 June 1979.

²⁴⁴ J.C. Moberly to Sir J Graham, “Contacts with the PLO,” 29 May 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/50, p. 2 (2548).

²⁴⁵ ARR 1978, No. 2, p. 73.

adversaries to advance these goals to “corner the market” of support in favor of different factions’ individual positions.²⁴⁶

There were at least three movement-level campaigns targeting Israel’s adversaries during this period.²⁴⁷ First, there was intra-Arab campaigning by PLO affiliated-groups during and after the Camp David Accords to ensure that the Palestinian issue remained the central focus of the peace process. Second, there was the standard diplomacy by Rejectionists groups to keep the platform alive. And finally, there was a flurry of diplomacy in 1977 and 1978 regarding a temporary rift between pro-Syrian and pro-Iraq factions. The result was a set of secondary campaigns targeting Israel’s adversaries to settle lingering disputes, which while not challenging the broader PLO leadership, were quite distracting.

Egypt’s historic move toward peace with Israel in November 1977 deeply upset the balance in the Arab world with regards to the Palestine question. After 1974, it was understood that the Arabs represented a joint-front in prospective peace talks, and in the event of any advances, the PLO would be brought forward to represent Palestinian rights.²⁴⁸ Egypt’s unilateral push for a settlement shocked the PLO and the rest of the Arab world, though the Egyptians made it clear that they did not intend to negotiate on the Palestinian’s behalf. They hoped to use relations with the U.S. to promote, not stifle, the PLO’s representative rights in future talks.²⁴⁹ In other words, Egypt was not challenging the PLO’s position, but it was *perceived* by the PLO to be undermining its bargaining power and positioning in inter-Arab political hierarchy. The result was that in addition to engaging Israel’s allies to pressure Tel Aviv, the PLO staged a

²⁴⁶ There were also basic diplomatic “maintenance” missions conducted by the PLO around the world and among Israel’s adversaries. However, these are not seen as explicit campaigns directly tied to the Palestinian grand strategy.

²⁴⁷ I have chosen not to discuss both intra-Lebanese fighting which involved the PLO, as well as the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

²⁴⁸ Amos 1988, pp. 311-315.

²⁴⁹ Interview #21, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

simultaneous campaign among Israel's adversaries to condemn Cairo to ensure its position as representative of the Palestinian people was maintained.²⁵⁰

Immediately after the announcement that Sadat would go to Israel, the PLO began targeting Israel's adversaries diplomatically in response. In addition to trying to persuade Sadat to change his mind, a high-level PLO delegation met with Assad and the two actors jointly condemned Egypt. Cairo expelled its PLO representatives in response, which encouraged the PFLP to contemplate rejoining PLO decision-making committees in solidarity.²⁵¹ According to Abu Iyad, the PLO toured Arab countries in the aftermath of the announcement but were met with neutrality.²⁵² Cairo invited the PLO to talks but the PLO instead attended an anti-Cairo conference in Tripoli.²⁵³ The conference brought together nearly all PLO-affiliated groups, Syria, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, and South Yemen. Syria and the PLO would be the nucleus of this new "Steadfastness and Confrontation Front," and the PFLP once again stressed its willingness to rejoin the PLO Central Committee and Executive Committee.²⁵⁴ After the Tripoli meeting, the PLO went on a massive tour of the Arab world to inform its leaders of the meeting's decisions.²⁵⁵ Cairo's overtures brought Rejectionist and moderate forces closer together,²⁵⁶ as well as encouraged the PLO to engage with the Jordanians to ensure the other major confrontation state would not join the peace process. In 1977, Arafat began courting King Hussein and the two soon met for the first time since Black September.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁰ It is worth noting that while a number of actors within the PLO levied harsh critiques upon the Egyptians, Arafat avoided abundant diatribe in public and actually continued to engage with the Egyptians throughout the row.

²⁵¹ ARR 1977, No. 21/22, pp. 952-3.

²⁵² Abu Iyad 1981, p. 207.

²⁵³ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 210.

²⁵⁴ ARR 1977, No. 23/23, pp. 1013-4.

²⁵⁵ ARR 1977, No. 23/23, p. 1017.

²⁵⁶ ARR 1977, No. 23/24, pp. 1013-4.

²⁵⁷ McLaurin 1989, p. 29.

The campaign to discredit the Egyptians and promote the PLO's position magnified after the signing of the Camp David Accords in September. The PLO condemned the accords and sent messages to a wide net of Arab and Islamic states, as well as communist and religious leaders explaining the PLO's stance on Camp David. Numerous meetings and conferences were held with regional actors to discuss potential alternatives to the accords.²⁵⁸ George Habbash of the PFLP even attended a meeting of the Steadfastness Front in Syria, despite being on bad terms with Damascus.²⁵⁹ Arafat finally visited Jordan for the first time since 1971 to bring Amman into the Front, albeit to no success.²⁶⁰ Meetings across the region continued, including a tour of the Gulf "to canvas support for rejection of the Camp David agreements."²⁶¹

The PLO approved an Arab League summit to be held in Iraq, with Egypt excluded.²⁶² The summit was a success for the PLO, with all actors condemning Camp David "on the grounds that they harmed the Palestinian cause and contravened resolutions of the Algiers and Rabat summit conferences forbidding unilateral Arab action in settling the Middle East conflict or solving the Palestinians problem."²⁶³ Ultimately, these meetings led to a general improvement of relations between the PLO, Iraq, and Jordan with the help of Saudi mediation.²⁶⁴ Subsequent meetings between the PLO and King Hussein left the Palestinians assured that Jordan would not "join Camp David."²⁶⁵ The meetings continued with Yasser Arafat visiting Kuwait in May 1980,

²⁵⁸ ARR 1978, No. 18-20.

²⁵⁹ The Syrians had arrested Habbash in 1968. See Sayigh 1997a, p. 227.

²⁶⁰ ARR 1978, No. 18, pp. 701-3.

²⁶¹ ARR 1978, No. 19, p. 716.

²⁶² ARR 1978, No. 19, p. 718.

²⁶³ ARR 1978, No. 21, p. 802.

²⁶⁴ ARR 1978, No. 21, p. 804.

²⁶⁵ C.W. Long, "Palestinians," 22 September 1980, TNA FCO 93/2473/116, p. 1 (6169).

and in February, Arafat made his “third visit in less than four months” to Baghdad – rather shocking given his confrontation with Iraq had only recently ended.²⁶⁶

The Camp David Accords also pushed the PLO and Soviets closer together. As Dannreuther notes, in August 1978, Fateh sent its first-ever party delegation to Moscow, and the 1979 PNC highlighted the importance of the socialist bloc in the Palestinian effort. Perhaps most importantly, it is only after Camp David that Moscow finally recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.²⁶⁷ The PLO also sent a delegation to China after the accords,²⁶⁸ and strived to keep a Chinese delegation from visiting Cairo.²⁶⁹

The second set of diplomacy with Israel’s adversaries concerned broader Rejectionist politics. Although the Rejectionist groups were relatively small in number, their political position was popular throughout the movement. Fateh itself contained many left-leaning factions that sympathized with the Rejectionists, despite their final allegiance to Fateh.²⁷⁰ Abu Iyad, Fateh’s second-in-command, for example, was viewed as the group’s leading leftist.²⁷¹ As a result, the Rejectionists had a popular agenda to maintain and although the Rejectionists were still within the PLO, they felt it was their duty to encourage a change in PLO policy.²⁷² Rejectionist diplomacy among Israel’s adversaries was a way to promote their policy vision, voice their concerns, and remain relevant in light of the PLO’s dominant moderate leadership.

For example, after the Syrian-Palestinian war, the Rejectionists held their own conference in Baghdad and the PFLP sent an independent delegation to Aden.²⁷³ The PFLP continued its

²⁶⁶ C.N.R. Prentice to K. Passmore, “Visit of Arafat 3-4 May,” 5 May 1980, TNA FCO 93/2481/8 (7328); and Stirling (Baghdad) to FCO, “Iraq/PLO,” 4 February 1980, TNA FCO 93/2481/1 (7354).

²⁶⁷ Dannreuther 1998, p. 105.

²⁶⁸ Israeli 1989, p. 153.

²⁶⁹ Israeli 1989, p. 155.

²⁷⁰ Sayigh 1997a, p. 351.

²⁷¹ J. Hancock to Mr. Crosby, “Can the PLO Deliver?,” 5 March 1981, TNA FCO 93/2801/24, p. 3(12435).

²⁷² Rubin 1994, p. 156. Sayigh 1997 also frequently refers to the PFLP and the DFLP as the “loyal opposition.”

²⁷³ ARR 1976, No. 23, p. 742.

tour in Libya to discuss Rejectionist policies,²⁷⁴ while Naif Hawatmeh of the DFLP led an independent delegation to Cuba.²⁷⁵ As PLO reconciliation with the Jordanians advanced in 1977, the PSF and DFLP sent delegations to Baghdad, likely to condemn the move.²⁷⁶ Even as the PFLP and ALF momentarily agreed to rejoin the PLO Executive Committee, the PFLP voted against the PNC's new program for diplomacy and dispatched a delegation to Baghdad.²⁷⁷ Again, the spirit of these campaigns correspond with what we would expect from groups within an allied movement. As one report described a visit by George Habbash to Iraq, "he had brought [Palestine] Rejection Front Delegation to Iraq to discuss the threat posed by the Camp David Agreements and also to discuss Lebanese and Palestinian topics," but simultaneously argued that Palestinian unity of policy was within reach.²⁷⁸

Finally, there was a flurry of diplomacy in 1977 and 1978 concerning intra-movement violence between pro-Syrian and pro-Iraq factions (namely, between the PFLP and the PFLP-GC) in Lebanon, and campaign of violence against Fateh by the Abu Nidal Organization, a marginal but potent splinter organization.²⁷⁹ For example, at a summit in Algiers, attended by nearly all *fedayeen* leaders, Fateh asked Iraq to curb the behavior of Abu Nidal.²⁸⁰ Another episode of independent diplomacy took place after the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. When Arafat used stringent measures to keep non-Fateh groups from violating the UN-mandated ceasefire, the Rejectionists and the DFLP – which usually sided with Fateh – called into question Fateh's dominance over the movement and insisted that the PLO be run by a true "collective leadership." These groups remained under the PLO umbrella, but the PFLP did send a rare

²⁷⁴ ARR 1976, No. 24, p. 772.

²⁷⁵ ARR 1977, No. 1, p. 26.

²⁷⁶ ARR 1977, No. 4, p. 142.

²⁷⁷ ARR 1977, No. 6, pp. 226-7. The PSF sent its own delegation as well. See ARR 1977, No. 7, p. 276.

²⁷⁸ A.J.D. Stirling to Tatham, "George Habash," 16 October 1978, TNA FCO 93/1560/63 (4817).

²⁷⁹ ARR 1977, No. 8, p. 326; and ARR 1977, No. 9, p. 372.

²⁸⁰ ARR 1978, No. 3, p. 112.

delegation to Moscow and another delegation to Algiers at the height of these matters.²⁸¹ The DFLP, itself close to the Soviets, issued a joint-communique with the Soviets calling for greater unity within the PLO – interpreted as a new distribution of power – and stronger ties to Moscow. Hawatmeh of the DFLP then visited Algiers on his own initiative.²⁸² The PFLP sent its own delegation to Bulgaria, while Hawatmeh continued onto Cuba.²⁸³

In sum, period 6 involved a notable shift back towards a primary strategy of “legitimizing rebellion” from “outsourcing rivalry,” and a secondary strategy of “cornering the market.” The main change leading to this strategic reversion was that the intra-movement threat to the Palestinian leadership was removed. Instead of being inundated by movement-level issues, the PLO could now refocus its attention to undermining the Israeli government. Doing so would require a focus on Israel’s own allies. However, because the movement was allied and not united, individual actors were still concerned with their place in the movement and thus continued solicited indirect intervention from Israel’s adversaries for basic support.

Period 7: 1982 to 1983

The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon derailed the PLO’s efforts toward gaining recognition from the United States, but also united the Palestinian movement behind the PLO leadership. The events also triggered a rapid collapse in PLO military viability. Although the Palestinians had anticipated an Israeli invasion,²⁸⁴ they did not expect the Israelis to push the offensive to Beirut. The result was a siege of PLO headquarters and the loss of coercive power on the part of the PLO. I argue that this rapid change in the local threat environment encouraged a shift in Palestinian diplomatic strategy from “legitimizing rebellion” to “outsourcing rebellion.”

²⁸¹ ARR 1978 No. 10, pp. 386-7.

²⁸² ARR 1978, No. 11, p. 424.

²⁸³ ARR 1978, No. 14, pp. 537-9.

²⁸⁴ Interview #19, 11 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

Militarily Non-Viable and United Movement

Prior to the June 1982 invasion, the PLO's presence in Lebanon was resilient and robust. In addition to high troop numbers – some 15,000 guerrillas²⁸⁵ – the PLO was able to organize its forces for conventional warfare. Although the strategy was perhaps a poor choice when pitted against the IDF,²⁸⁶ the PLO proved itself capable of resistance in previous skirmishes with the IDF and proxies in the years prior.²⁸⁷

However, the scale of the June invasion surpassed anything the Palestinians could have expected. The Israelis invaded with some 75,000-85,000 men and 1,240 tanks. The PLO on the other hand were only 15,000 strong (only 6,000 of which were deployed in the south).²⁸⁸ Furthermore, instead of a slow, methodological push toward the Litani River as expected, the Israelis rapidly pushed beyond the river, bypassing pockets of Palestinian resistance in urban areas, neutralizing Syrian forces in Lebanon, and staging an amphibious landing near Beirut.²⁸⁹ The PLO called on its fighters to make tactical retreats, knowing they could not stop the assault.²⁹⁰ Once the IDF advanced on PLO neighborhoods in Beirut on June 13, the war was essentially won and the PLO became a defeated military power. On June 26, the Israelis declared that “yesterday’s shelling has brought the PLO almost to its knees.”²⁹¹ The American assessment was that “There are other indications that Arafat may be confused, alarmed, and seeking a way out with safety. The PLO radio today said that they are studying our two points (PLO to hand

²⁸⁵ Dannreuther 1998, p. 115.

²⁸⁶ Miller 1983, p. 2.

²⁸⁷ Khalidi 1986, p. 38.

²⁸⁸ Sayigh 1997a, p. 524.

²⁸⁹ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 524-30; and Tessler 1994, p. 574.

²⁹⁰ Interview #19, 11 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

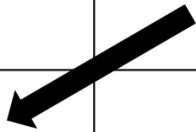
²⁹¹ Alexander Haig to The President, “Situation in Lebanon, June 26,” 26 June 1982, Box 1, John Boykin Collection (JBC), National Security Archive (NSA), The George Washington University (GWU) (4784).

over arms to Lebanese; PLO leaders depart Lebanon safely) and may respond soon.”²⁹² Although the war ended quickly, the siege lasted over two months.

With regards to movement structure, the Palestinian movement was united. Not only were all the *fedayeen* groups together in opposition to the Israeli assault, but all confrontation countries wouldn’t dare challenge the PLO’s leadership during such a time.²⁹³ Given Palestinian unity but non-viability during the siege, we would expect the PLO to engage in “outsourcing rebellion”: asking Israel’s own allies to apply coercive pressure to halt the Israeli position (Table 6.6). The Israeli objective was to destroy the PLO and they clearly had the military initiative to do so.²⁹⁴

Table 6.6: Change in Threat Environment – Period 6 to 7

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable		1977-1982	
Militarily Non-Viable	1982-1983		



Strategy of Diplomacy

Given the rapid change in the threat environment, the united and militarily non-viable movement was compelled to “outsource rebellion” for the first time. This meant getting Israel’s own allies to apply pressure to cease its attack on the PLO because these were the only actors that had the leverage to compel such a change. As Khalidi observed, “Initially the P.L.O.’s

²⁹² Alexander Haig to The President, “Situation in Lebanon, June 26,” 26 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4784).

²⁹³ Arafat, for example, was able to secure “the unanimous approval of the entire Palestinian leadership before” contacting the Americans through the Lebanese to gain support during the conflict (Sayigh 1997a, p. 531).

²⁹⁴ Philip Habib to Secretary of State (Telegram), “Habib Mission: Unilateral Ceasefire and Thereafter,” 11 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU. (4712); and Secretary of State to American Embassy Beirut (for Habib), “Habib Mission: Resolving the West Beirut Problem,” 17 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4835).

diplomatic activity focused on obtaining U.N. action to halt the Israeli advance.”²⁹⁵ The same strategy had worked in 1978 and “most of Israel’s wars had ended within a matter of days by an international consensus operating through the United Nations.”²⁹⁶ PLO delegations were initially sent to the permanent five members of the UN Security Council, and Farouq Qaddoumi went to New York to participate in meetings at the United Nations.²⁹⁷ However, once the Israelis advanced upon Beirut and made it physically impossible for the PLO to operate, the target of diplomacy settled explicitly on Israel’s allies. The primary focus was on the United States, often using its own allies, such as the French and Saudis to exert influence. By this point, the art of reaching out to the Americans to undermine Israeli campaigns was an established tactic:

“When confronted with a major Israeli escalation in the past, the P.L.O. almost routinely request the Arab states, the Soviet Union, the European community, and the non-aligned and Islamic blocs at the United Nations to put pressure on the United States, each in its own way”²⁹⁸ ... “The ‘moderate’ Arab states headed by Saudi Arabia would be asked to use their presumed influence in Washington to press for U.S. action to restrain Israel, while America’s European allies often made similar moves, simultaneously asking nonaligned and Arab initiatives at the U.N. to stop the fighting. The USSR could be counted on to support such a course, and to threaten unspecified consequences should U.N. action not suffice.”²⁹⁹

The French and Lebanese proved to be useful interlocutors, connecting the PLO with the Americans.³⁰⁰ For example, on July 2, Arafat “took the diplomatic initiative...by presenting Lebanese prime minister Shafiq al-Wazzan with a written commitment to the principle of PLO withdrawal from Beirut...which was relayed by Wazzan to US envoy Habib.”³⁰¹ The Saudis and Egyptians were also involved, lobbying on the PLO’s behalf despite their unwillingness to

²⁹⁵ Khalidi 1986, p. 106.

²⁹⁶ Khalidi 1986, p. 106.

²⁹⁷ Khalidi 1986, pp. 102-6, 154.

²⁹⁸ Khalidi 1986, p. 16.

²⁹⁹ Khalidi 1986, p. 106.

³⁰⁰ “Possible Habib Travel to Lebanon,” 11 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4687); American Consulate Jerusalem to Secretary of State, Telegram 1437, 12 March 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4589); American Embassy Beirut to White House and Secretary of State, “For the President from Habib,” 17 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4742); and Alexander Haig to The President, “A Forward U.S. Strategy in Wake of Israel’s Offensive,” 12 June 1982, Box 1, p. 2, JBC NSA GWU (4717).

³⁰¹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 531.

actually accept PLO asylum seekers. A June 25 letter, written by the Undersecretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Nicholas Veliotes noted that:

“The Saudis in particular, as well as the Egyptians, have taken an increasingly firm line, and King Fahd has written the President personally warning of serious complications for U.S.-Saudi relations if Israel attacks West Beirut. We also face an increasing divergency [sic] between our policy and that of the West Europeans. The French have been out in front in Europe and yesterday Mitterand [sic] issued a call for Security Council action to halt the fighting in Beirut and proposing the UN Observers to support the Lebanese in taking over the city. Other Europeans have been increasingly uncomfortable with Israel’s’ s actions and with our inability so far to gain Israeli agreement to stop the fighting. The Soviets have been relatively quiet following their stiff statement last week.”³⁰²

The Americans were frustrated with Israel for deception over its war aims, but also because the invasion threatened to up-end Washington’s efforts to stabilize Lebanon after seven years of civil war.³⁰³ It was indeed the Americans – through the efforts of special envoy Philip Habib – who were able to keep the Israeli siege at bay and ensure the PLO received safe passage from Beirut.³⁰⁴ The Americans, of course, had their own strategic reasons for doing so. First and foremost, the Americans feared a Syrian-Israeli confrontation in Lebanon.³⁰⁵ Second, they were afraid the invasion would undermine the entire Middle East peace process at a time when the Americans were trying to sell themselves “as the sole outside power that can move the region toward peace.”³⁰⁶ Third, the Americans also hoped to dismantle the Palestinian “state within a state” in Lebanon, but they believed that doing so through military means was wrong-headed and short-sighted.³⁰⁷

³⁰² Nicholas Veliotes to Ambassador Stoessel, “Situation on the Lebanon Crisis,” 25 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4782). Also, see American Embassy Beirut to White House and Secretary of State (For the President from Habib), “Message to the President,” 17 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4739).

³⁰³ A.E. Jones to N.A. Veliotes, “Possible Habib Travel to Lebanon,” 11 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4687).

³⁰⁴ Alexander Haig to the President, “Situation in Lebanon, June 26,” 26 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4784).

³⁰⁵ American Consulate Jerusalem to USDel Secretary, “Lebanon Hostilities: Assessment of Situation at COD June 8,” 8 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4676).

³⁰⁶ Secretary of State to USDel Secretary, “Lebanon: Memorandum for the President,” 7 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4647); and American Consulate Jerusalem to USDel Secretary in London, “For the Secretary from Habib,” 7 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4665).

³⁰⁷ American Embassy Damascus to Secretary of State, “Habib Mission: Unilateral Ceasefire and Thereafter,” 11 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4713); Alexander Haig to the President, “A Forward U.S. Strategy in Wake of

In the end, the United States promised the PLO that American troops would help physically separate Israeli and PLO forces as PLO's fighters were evacuated by sea.³⁰⁸ Engagement between the PLO and the United States was critical to this process. The Americans had to walk the fine line of supporting their allies in Tel Aviv, while simultaneously using its own coercive leverage to keep them from crushing the PLO.³⁰⁹ The degree of tension between the allies was intense and State Department documents reveal extreme frustration and gamesmanship between the actors.³¹⁰

In sum, the PLO's diplomatic strategy shifted during the 1982 Israeli invasion from "legitimizing rebellion" to "outsourcing rebellion" in order to compensate for its loss of military viability. As such, the PLO sought not only indirect support, but explicitly asked Israel's own allies to coerce the IDF to a halt.

Period 8: 1983 to 1984

The PLO evacuation from Lebanon signaled the practical end of the armed struggle with Israel. Although some fighters remained in Lebanon and Syria, the PLO leadership was forced abroad, with most going to Tunisia – far from Palestine or its borders. It is frequently argued that at this point the PLO finally accepted that it could only achieve its goals through diplomacy and negotiated settlement.³¹¹ The PLO may have been defeated militarily, but it was still politically

Israel's Offensive," 12 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4716); and Nick Veliotes to Mr. Secretary, "Achieving U.S. Goals in Lebanon," 16 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4735).

³⁰⁸ Tessler 1994, pp. 588-9; Kurz 2005, p. 103; and Sayigh 1997a, pp. 537-3.

³⁰⁹ Secretary of State to USDel Secretary, "Lebanon: Memorandum for the President," 6 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4647-8).

³¹⁰ Secretary of State to USDel Secretary, "Lebanon: Memorandum for the President," 6 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4650-1); American Consulate Jerusalem to Secretary of State, "Assessment Following First Meeting with Begin," 7 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4654-5); and American Embassy Damascus to USDel Secretary and Secretary of State, "Habib Mission: Ceasefire Prospects," 10 June 1982, Box 1, JBC NSA GWU (4707).

³¹¹ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 554; Dannreuther 1998, p. 122; Kurz 2005, pp. 104-5; and Heikal 1996, p. 362.

powerful and Arafat hoped to turn back towards international diplomacy.³¹² For example, a Mossad agent was quoted in one study, noting that “The war in Lebanon had contradictory influences. On the one hand it weakened at least the military arm of the PLO, but on the other hand it strengthened the political side. It did not extinguish the fire of nationalism. It increased it.”³¹³

In the aftermath of the withdrawal, Arafat began engagement with the Jordanians in the hopes of positioning himself for a dialogue with the Americans.³¹⁴ The negotiations with Philip Habib were a trust-building exercise that facilitated dialogue into the post-siege period.³¹⁵ Arafat even told the Americans he wanted “a prize for leaving Beirut,” meaning “official contacts.”³¹⁶ In September, the U.S. announced the Reagan initiative, which offered a settlement of the Palestinian question, but only through Palestinian self-governance in association with Jordan. The PLO surprisingly jumped at the opportunity to engage, but the Syrians were aggressively against it and tried to undermine the Jordanian-Palestinian alliance.³¹⁷

Having barely survived the IDF siege, Arafat and the PLO leadership then suffered one of the most serious incidents of intra-Palestinian fragmentation. In June 1983, just as Arafat hoped to retrain his sights on the peace process, a large-scale mutiny erupted within Fateh. Led by a local Fateh commander in Lebanon, Abu Musa, the group dubbed itself *Fateh al-Intifada* (“Fateh the Uprising”) and directly challenged Arafat’s leadership of the PLO for its failings in the war and its obsession with negotiated settlement. The Syrians, eager for the opportunity to

³¹² Pearlman 2011 (pp. 88-9) has a further discussion on how the loss of Beirut may have contributed to the PLO’s ability to pursue diplomacy.

³¹³ Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 112.

³¹⁴ Rubin argues, however, that the 1982/3 Palestinian engagement with Jordan was an effort to stall Hussain from making a unilateral move. See Rubin 1994, p. 61.

³¹⁵ Interview #18, 14 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³¹⁶ Interview #26, 6 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

³¹⁷ Dannreuther 1998, p. 122.

uproot Arafat's leadership and replace it with a pro-Syrian alternative, backed Abu Musa. The result was large-scale intra-Fateh war in Lebanon.³¹⁸ From unity, the PLO succumbed to extreme fragmentation. To make matters worse, Arafat was incredibly weak during the schism, with most of his loyal troops outside of Lebanon. The next year involved deep intra-movement competition for control of the PLO, and diplomacy as always played a critical role in this process.

Militarily Non-Viable and Fragmented Movement

In June 1983, Abu Musa initiated the rebellion after a volatile meeting of the Fateh Revolutionary Council in Aden.³¹⁹ The goal of the rebellion was to replace the traditional PLO leadership (i.e. Arafat) and to restructure Fateh and the PLO. Policy-wise, *Fateh al-Intifada* demanded a return to the PLO's pre-1974 platform, which disavowed any negotiated settlement.³²⁰ Because the mutiny came from within Fateh – the largest Palestinian faction – and had the stated intention of replacing the movement's leadership, this period is classified as one of movement fragmentation. Fortunately for Arafat, the mutiny was isolated to Abu Musa, Syrian, and Syrian-affiliated factions like Saiqa and the PFLP-GC. The largest Rejectionist groups – such as the PFLP and DFLP – remained neutral and at times actively supported of Arafat.³²¹ Although the Rejectionists were sympathetic with many of Abu Musa's motivations, they did not support the intra-movement militancy. Additionally, Arafat's global popularity could not be easily disregarded.³²² Before the outbreak of violence, Qaddhafi had tried to steer the Rejectionists against the PLO leadership, but “the PFLP and DFLP were unwilling to undermine

³¹⁸ For an overview of these dynamics, see Sayigh 1997a, pp. 551-73.

³¹⁹ Walker and Gowers 2003, pp. 214-6.

³²⁰ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 127-8; and Khouri 1985, p. 459.

³²¹ Khouri 1985, pp. 459-460; and Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 162.

³²² Dannreuther 1998, p. 129.

the PLO, insisting on the need to ‘protect Palestinian national unity, and indeed reinforce it within the framework of the PLO.’³²³

With regard to military viability, the PLO was already incredibly vulnerable after the PLO evacuation from Beirut. Not only had the Israeli assault weakened PLO forces, but the evacuation significantly thinned the *fedayeen* factions. Troops were distributed across the region, with most Rejectionist forces in Syria, and Fateh’s fighters in Tunisia, Yemen, Sudan, Algeria, and Syria.³²⁴ The evacuation dispersed some 8,000 PLO fighters abroad, leaving approximately 8,000 in Lebanon.³²⁵ The leadership was forced into exile in Tunisia, with the exception of George Habbash who at first went to Damascus. As one DFLP official remarked, “in 1982 that was when the PLO and the Palestinian resistance was forced out of Lebanon... which actually cut it off completely from any military activity or to Syria. In this case [they became] liable to be contained by the Syrian political strategies”³²⁶

Thus when the mutiny broke out in June 1983, Arafat’s Fateh was already vulnerable. The mutiny siphoned the ranks of loyal Fateh fighters, and the Syrians – with their power and influence on the ground – came out in support of Abu Musa.³²⁷ The mutineers launched the first attack and staged early victories against Arafat’s forces in the Bekaa Valley.³²⁸ The result was a steady degradation of Fateh’s position, and “for many months it was uncertain if [Arafat] could survive politically.”³²⁹ With his forces on the defensive and the world looking to see whether Arafat would survive the challenge to his leadership, Arafat made the daring decision to slip back into Lebanon, to Tripoli, to personally lead his forces. Although politically poignant, his

³²³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 556.

³²⁴ Interview #18, 14 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank; Kurz 2005, p. 104; and Heikal 1996, p. 362.

³²⁵ Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 112.

³²⁶ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

³²⁷ Khouri 1985, pp. 459-60.


³²⁸ Khouri 1985, p. 459; and Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 216.

³²⁹ Khouri 1985, p. 459.

presence did not reverse events on the ground. By mid-November, 4,000 of Arafat’s troops sought refuge in Tripoli. The Syrian-backed mutineers had them surrounded and sieged.³³⁰

Militarily non-viable and fragmented, my theory would expect Arafat and the PLO to engage in “outsourcing rivalry,” soliciting direct intervention from Israel’s adversaries to help save the PLO from its internal rivals (Table 6.7).

Table 6.7: Change in Threat Environment – Period 7 to 8

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable			
Militarily Non-Viable	1982-1983		1983-1984

Strategy of Diplomacy

For the second time in just a year, Arafat found it necessary to solicit direct intervention to save the PLO from defeat. However, whereas a year prior the Palestinian movement was united in defeat and engaged in “outsourcing rebellion,” Arafat was now “outsourcing rivalry.”

In other words, although the type of aid being requested remained the same, the PLO was soliciting support from a completely different set of actors. When the mutiny began, Arafat “broke off a visit to Romania...[and] rushed to Algeria and then Saudi Arabia in a desperate effort to enlist wider Arab support against Syrian and Libyan backing of the mutineers.”³³¹

Arafat even traveled to Damascus to confront President Assad and was subsequently deported on June 24.³³²

³³⁰ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 221.

³³¹ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 216.

³³² Dannreuther 1998, p. 129.

During this period, Arafat was primarily concerned with two things: First, ensuring his leadership position through pledges of support and recognition from Israeli's adversaries; and second, winning direct intervention to restrain the Syrian-backed mutineers during the summer assault. The three major targets of diplomacy with this regard were the Soviet Union, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. As in 1976, the Soviets were particularly important because they had the substantial leverage over the Syrians as their great power backer. The conflict put the Soviets in a difficult position, however, since they supported Arafat's leadership as well. Arafat was pressuring the Soviets to pick a side.³³³

Knowing that Soviet support could be critical in determining the outcome of the battle for domination, Abu Iyad made two trips to Moscow in June to gain assurances of Soviet support.³³⁴ When the PLO requested explicit support in the conflict, the Soviets gave Arafat only lukewarm assurances. General Secretary of the Communist Party, Yuri Andropov, did contact Assad to encourage him to settle the dispute with Soviet mediation. But this was not a major request on the part of the Soviets.³³⁵ Shafiq al-Hout, the PLO representative to the United Nations, recalled that "In a meeting with the head of the Soviet mission at the UN, we asked for Moscow's help to put pressure on Syria to stop the fighting in Tripoli and help in the evacuation of Palestinian fighters by sea."³³⁶ Soviet mediation did not succeed and the Palestinians continued to push for assistance, with Farouq Qaddoumi visiting Moscow in July. It was not until the fall that the Soviet Union finally came down in favor of the PLO.³³⁷ But according to PLO-Soviet historian Roland Dannreuther, the Soviets were frustrated with Arafat's return to Lebanon and so

³³³ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 128-30.

³³⁴ Dannreuther 1998, p. 128.

³³⁵ Dannreuther 1998, p. 130.

³³⁶ Al-Hout 2011, p. 206.

³³⁷ Dannreuther 1998, p. 131.

Qaddoumi was subject to a stiff meeting with the Soviets that November. Although the Soviets punished Arafat by denying him a visa, Moscow continued, at least publicly, to recognize Arafat's leadership, which was critical.³³⁸

The Saudis were also useful in pressuring the Syrians to announce a ceasefire. Once it became clear Arafat's forces could not succeed against the mutineers, the Saudis sent their Foreign Minister to Damascus to negotiate Arafat's withdrawal from Tripoli³³⁹ and publicly denounced the rebellion, declaring "Arafat's leadership was legitimate."³⁴⁰ In an apparent play on Sino-Soviet competition, Arafat even appealed to the Chinese for help: "it was rumored in Peking that Arab governments who support Arafat pressured the Chinese government to send the emergency help lest the Abu Musa faction take over the PLO, which would then come under direct Syrian and Soviet influence."³⁴¹ Others cite Egyptian and French assistance in arranging Arafat's evacuation from Tripoli.³⁴²

According to Lahteenmaki, Arafat personally visited three countries "in search for international support," including Saudi Arabia, Romania and India, where Indira Gandhi reaffirmed the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.³⁴³ Arafat also instructed PFLP spokesman Bassam Abu Sharif to relay a message to Gandhi: that Arafat was still in firm control of the movement. Gandhi subsequently called Assad, asking him to cease the bombardment of Tripoli.³⁴⁴ Overall, "In the courses of the summer 1983 Chairman Arafat sent messages to several heads of governments, both inside and outside the Arab world, informing

³³⁸ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 132-3. Dannreuther also cites rumors of a diplomatic mission to Moscow by Assad to get Soviet approval for a new PLO leadership.

³³⁹ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 222.

³⁴⁰ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 221.

³⁴¹ Israeli 1989, p. 158.

³⁴² Interview #23, 8 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank; and Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 115.

³⁴³ Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 153.

³⁴⁴ Abu Sharif 2009, pp. 128, 136.

them of the state of affairs of the PLO. He visited personally some heads and representatives of governments, among those outside the Arab world Romania's Ceausescu, the French FM Cheysson and India's Indira Gandhi – the last mentioned in her capacity of Chairman of the Conference of Non-aligned countries...*By approaching those governments, traditionally friendly towards the mainstream of the PLO, Arafat appealed for support to his policies as opposed to the demands of the rebels. Not surprisingly, the rebels were quick to condemn the Chairman's 'Arabizing and Internationalizing' the disputes.*"³⁴⁵ Even the Jordanians announced continued support for the PLO as the sole legitimate representative during this crisis.³⁴⁶

Importantly, the mutiny completely distracted PLO diplomats from its conflict-level goals. As PLO representative Shafiq al-Hout noted of the time, "Instead of devoting our time to invest in our successes...the PLO delegation had to spend its time trying to persuade the Secretary-General to use the international organization's flag to protect Fatah's second exodus from Lebanon in less than a year."³⁴⁷

Once Arafat secured the evacuation of his remaining forces from Tripoli, Arafat made perhaps his most controversial and important diplomatic decision: visiting Cairo and meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The move was shocking and infuriating to much of the Arab world, and even within the PLO. Since making peace with Israel, Egypt was viewed as a traitor. As a result, Egypt was expelled from the Arab League in 1979 and nearly the entire Arab world, including the PLO, severed official diplomatic ties.³⁴⁸ But Egypt had been, remained, and

³⁴⁵ Lahteenmaki 1994, p. 167, emphasis mine.

³⁴⁶ Sayigh 1997a, p. 577.

³⁴⁷ Al-Hout 2011, p. 205.

³⁴⁸ Tessler 1994, p. 648.

would always be the political and military powerhouse of the region. Arafat's trip to Egypt was planned in almost complete secrecy.³⁴⁹

Interviews with one of Arafat's closest advisors at the time and other PLO officials illustrate the logic behind the trip to Egypt. First, the trip served the movement-level goal of effectively sidelining the Syrian regime and the mutineers.³⁵⁰ Although Arafat was beaten militarily, he would not allow himself to retreat back to Tunisia without a new source of support. The only regional actor more powerful than Syria was Egypt, and if Arafat could re-secure its backing and convince the rest of the Arab world to welcome Cairo, Syria's dominance and claim to control the PLO would be crushed. As one high-level PLO diplomat in Europe noted, Arafat "felt if he wanted to fight Fateh in Syria, he needed Egypt."³⁵¹ The Palestinians always needed positive relations with at least one confrontation state to maintain its relevancy,³⁵² and so a move towards Egypt ensured that the PLO could prevail in the absence of Syrian support.³⁵³

One of Arafat's advisors who participated in the Cairo visit explained further how the trip to Egypt helped solve the intra-movement crisis:

"So when we left Tripoli after one year [1982], we lost the balance of power in the Arab world...What I mean by balance of power? That many states were with Assad...They are Rejectionist...So there is no balance of power with us. What we do with Egypt, we change the balance of power toward our side. Which is the weight of Egypt. If Egypt is with you, you succeeded. What could Qaddhafi do? What could Aden do?!...So when we [were] in Cairo, with Hosni Mubarak, Arafat said at that time, 'We should take down the table, upside down.' We change it upside down. And so...now with Egypt support, [Arafat] stay the leader of the PLO and the PLO stayed the sole representative of the Palestinian people."³⁵⁴

³⁴⁹ Interview #15, 3 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁵⁰ Tessler 1994, p. 649.

³⁵¹ Interview #16, 2 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁵² Abu Sharif 2009, p. 132.

³⁵³ Abu Sharif 2009, p. 132.

³⁵⁴ Interview #11, 10 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

The secondary purpose of the trip had its eye towards the PLO's broader goals: gaining recognition from and access to the United States.³⁵⁵ In addition to the Saudis and the Jordanians, Egypt had influence over the peace process, being the only confrontation state to have made peace with Israel under Washington's care. By moving away from the Syrians – who had been trying to stifle the peace process – and toward the Egyptians, Arafat opened a path to settling its conflict-level goals. As Aaron David Miller explained, “Arafat would probably like to establish a primary base in Cairo and enlist Egypt's diplomatic assets in his campaign to gain leverage with both the Israel and the U.S.”³⁵⁶

During this fragmented period, we would expect Arafat to be more concerned with the first reason over the second. Yet in many respects, the two tactics were interlocked. If the PLO – already recognized by the Arab League and the UN as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and with the remainder of the movement behind her – eliminated the Syrian-mutineer threat through Egyptian support, then the movement would effectively become allied again. The mutineers would become nothing more than a local nuisance in Lebanon and the PLO could turn toward engagement with the West. In short, the pivot to Cairo was big enough to both mitigate the movement-level challenge and advance Arafat's conflict-level goals.

For similar reason, the Palestinians also saw support from the Jordanians as necessary.³⁵⁷ As the other major confrontation state, allying with the moderate Hashemite's – who were in favor of negotiated settlement – would relieve Arafat from the jaws of Assad and cement the relationship with Egypt's Mubarak.³⁵⁸ PLO-Jordanian history loomed large and so it was

³⁵⁵ Tessler 1994, p. 649.

³⁵⁶ Miller 1983, p. 81.

³⁵⁷ Sayigh 1997a, p. 577.

³⁵⁸ Rubin 1994, p. 64. Also, see Tessler 1994, p. 649.

necessary to bring the Egyptians on board as powerful counter-weight.³⁵⁹ As one interviewee put it, “Egypt is not a place, it’s a political choice.”³⁶⁰ Describing a similar logic for the turn toward Egypt, another interviewee noted:

“The only Arab channel that was open actually to the Israelis in a direct way was Egypt at that time because it was the only Arab state that had peace treaty with Israel... And to the Americans also, of course ...*At that time, it seems [like a] very illogical jump into the unknown. But I think it was a very premeditated and very well calculated move in order to change places and change coalitions/alliances as far as the Arab countries are concerned, and also to prepare for a change in dealing with the diplomatic or political solution with the Israelis.* What actually, shall we say, proves or supports this line of logic is the fact that after this jump into Egypt, there was a lot of work that was done in order to improve the relations with Jordan, and as you very well know, in 1984 this led to the signing of an agreement with the Jordanians. And the agreement was mainly that the PLO gives the Jordanians a green light to try to reach some kind of an understanding with the Israelis vis-a-vis the future of the West Bank and Gaza.”³⁶¹

The move was incredibly risky. His own party had just suffered a violent mutiny, which Arafat had lost militarily, even if he survived politically. Instead of pandering to the many PLO members who sympathized with Abu Musa’s critique of diplomatic settlement, Arafat visited the country that Palestinians associated with settlement and capitulation most. Arafat was aware of the gamble. As one high-level PLO diplomat put it, Arafat “did something very important and he lost some credibility within the Palestinian camp...[the] whole Palestinian movement was against.”³⁶² But when asked if the move created more or less tension within the PLO, the interviewee replied it had not, “he was strong enough to find a compromise within the PLO.”³⁶³ As Walker and Gowers noted, “That Arafat was willing to risk further fragmenting his movement at this time was a measure of his desperate need for new friends and supporters.”³⁶⁴ Fortunately for Arafat, Egypt was willing to help.³⁶⁵

³⁵⁹ Abu Sharif 2009, pp. 132-3.

³⁶⁰ Interview #18, 14 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁶¹ Interview #15, 3 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank, emphasis mine.

³⁶² Interview #16, 2 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁶³ Interview #16, 2 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁶⁴ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 224.

³⁶⁵ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 225.

Finally, a third reason for the trip to Egypt noted by some interviewees was to bring moderates and Rejectionists closer together. It is difficult to discern whether Arafat had this in mind when he chose to visit Egypt, but the effect is certainly there.³⁶⁶ If there was one thing all actors could agree on, it was opposition to the Egyptians and anger at Arafat for embracing Mubarak. The result was nearly the entire Palestinian movement, including Fateh, formally condemning Arafat in 1984.³⁶⁷ But the joint condemnation oddly served as a point of solidarity between the moderates and Rejectionists, and as Arafat rode out the political storm, he regained an allied movement (minus, of course, the splintered rebels in Lebanon). Not only did the rest of the PLO eventually come on board, but so did the rest of the Arab world. Arab regimes restored diplomatic relations with Egypt in 1987.³⁶⁸

Cairo appreciated Arafat's gesture since it helped break Egypt's isolation from the rest of the Arab world.³⁶⁹ Still, when asked whether the trip was Cairo or the PLO's initiative, an interviewee with intricate knowledge of the trip explained: "No, no, we asked! Because we had an Egyptian delegation in Tripoli...So at that time Arafat insisted to go to Cairo."³⁷⁰ In sum, in addition to sidelining Syria and the mutineers, PLO engagement with Egypt also helped the group retrain its focus on the United States. As an interviewee argued, "We know at the end that if it has solution for our cause it will be through America and Israel...At the end, we need Egypt and we need Israel. We need the United States."³⁷¹

³⁶⁶ Interview #23, 8 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁶⁷ Although this sentiment was expressed by Fateh interviewees, Tessler 1994 (pp. 649-50) argues that this was a misconception as most supported the move.

³⁶⁸ Tessler 1994, p. 649.

³⁶⁹ Interview #23, 8 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁷⁰ Interview #11, 10 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

³⁷¹ Interview #11, 10 June 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

Diplomacy played a key role in Arafat's ability to weather and defeat the mutineers.³⁷² Having survived the leadership challenge of 1983, the wounded PLO finally turned back to diplomacy with the Americans. After the visit to Cairo, Arafat traveled broadly to gain support for his new push with the West, including visits with African leaders.³⁷³ As scholars like Dannreuther note, Arafat was effective in reuniting Fateh with the Rejectionists in the aftermath of the mutiny.³⁷⁴ Even the Soviets – who were initially angered by Arafat's engagement with Cairo – signaled that they would be willing to help the PLO with its diplomatic pursuits if only they would restore ties to the Syrians who were politically sidelined.³⁷⁵

In sum, period 8 involved yet another drastic change in Palestinian diplomacy. Holding military non-viability constant, the Palestinian movement went from fighting the common enemy to fighting an internal one. The result, given extreme movement fragmentation, was a shift in the target of diplomacy from Israel's allies to Israel's adversaries. In need of direct intervention, Arafat swung his diplomatic strategy from “outsourcing rebellion” to “outsourcing rebellion.”

Period 9: 1984 to 1988

Arafat survived the attempt against his leadership but still faced sharp criticism from within the movement. And although the PLO's political infrastructure survived, its military forces were scattered across the Arab world and its offices moved far away to Tunisia. But the events of the last two years were also liberating for Arafat. Although the PLO was weakened, it was no longer burdened by Syria's Rejectionist influence. Furthermore, although the mutineers won the military struggle, they had clearly lost the political challenge for leadership of the PLO.

³⁷² In contrast, others have argued that Arafat won the dispute on the ground through his charisma and ability to rally troops on the ground (Pearlman 2011, p. 90). My analysis shows that the diplomatic component was critical precisely because of Arafat's inability to handle matters locally.

³⁷³ Oded 1990, p. 15.

³⁷⁴ Dannreuther 1998, p. 136.

³⁷⁵ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 135-6.

As a result, the PLO's most lethal detractors became quarantined in Lebanon. As Yazid Sayigh recognized, "The surprise visit by Arafat to Cairo showed that the loss of the territorial base in Lebanon had freed the mainstream Palestinian leadership to undertake controversial steps in pursuit of its diplomatic strategy."³⁷⁶

With this new freedom, Arafat dedicated the next four years to gaining American recognition, with the ultimate goal of convincing the U.S. to bring the Israelis to negotiations. If Arafat could survive the siege of 1982, the 1983 mutiny, and the pivot to Egypt, then Arafat could survive the continuation of its push for American support. Arafat was at the helm of a weakened and troubled movement, but one held quite firmly in his hands.³⁷⁷

Militarily Non-Viable and Allied Movement

From a military perspective, the PLO could no longer be considered militarily viable. First, after the 1982 siege and 1983 mutiny, even the PLO's largest group, Fateh, was hardly in a position for armed confrontation beyond one-off attacks against Israel. Second, with the dispersion of PLO guerrillas and PLO-central in Tunisia, the movement became physically isolated from the contested zone.³⁷⁸ Southern Lebanon was now under the control of the IDF and IDF-aligned local factions, Egypt had peace with Israel, and Jordan and Syria would not allow access to their borders for attacks. The PLO was no longer capable of maintaining any sort of meaningful military campaign and thus could be considered militarily non-viable.³⁷⁹

With regards to the degree of movement fragmentation, this period exhibits one of the most complex dynamics. I ultimately code the 1984-1988 period as "allied." While there continued to be serious opposition to PLO policy – both within and outside the PLO – it is clear

³⁷⁶ Sayigh 1997a, p. 574.

³⁷⁷ Sayigh 1989.

³⁷⁸ Tessler 1994, p. 589.

³⁷⁹ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 542-3

from the 1983 trial-by-fire that Arafat and the PLO were in firm control of the movement, and the other opposition coalitions could not undermine Arafat or the PLO directly.³⁸⁰ The fact that Arafat could weather the 1983 mutiny, visit with Mubarak, and proclaim a new push for diplomacy “revealed the degree to which Arafat had secured his own position within the PLO and Fateh.”³⁸¹ Furthermore, the Rejectionists forces were immensely weakened after 1983 to the point in which Fateh was said to control “80 percent of the organization’s fighting force and about 90 percent of its political positions.”³⁸² The mutineers remained in Lebanon and Arafat’s diplomatic maneuvering relegated them non-competitive.

There is no doubt that Arafat was managing a divided and disturbed opposition coming into 1984.³⁸³ The opposition to Arafat and the PLO took two forms. First, in March 1984, the PFLP, DFLP, PLF and PCP formed the Democratic Alliance (DA), whose platform “rejected dialogue with Egypt, opposed Jordanian representation of the Palestinians, and advocated a closer alliance with Syrian and the USSR.”³⁸⁴ It was a rejection of Arafat’s entire diplomatic strategy. However, much like the Rejectionist Front, the opposition was created in the spirit of and with the ultimate goal of Palestinian unity of action. The goal was to persuade a change in official PLO policy, not to undermine the PLO itself.³⁸⁵ This is made clear by the fact that, almost immediately after its founding, those factions within the Democratic Alliance engaged in unity talks with Fateh. These talks produced the Aden-Algiers Accords, which simultaneously criticized Arafat and PLO diplomacy, but also pledged support for the unity under the PLO and the strengthening of its institutions. In this respect, an agreement was made for greater power-

³⁸⁰ Sayigh 1989.

³⁸¹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 574.

³⁸² Tessler 1994, p. 610.

³⁸³ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Background Brief: Palestine Liberation Organisation,” September 1989, TNA FO 973/603 (7795)

³⁸⁴ Sayigh 1997a, p. 575.

³⁸⁵ Sayigh 1997a, p. 575.

sharing between Fateh and those factions within the Democratic Alliance.³⁸⁶ As Walker and Gowers note, the Accords “laid down ground rules for the future conduct of the PLO’s component factions and contained numerous clauses aimed at ensuring that Arafat would toe the party line on such vexed issues as relations with Egypt and Jordan.”³⁸⁷ In short, it would keep the movement together, even in disagreement.

The second set of opposition actors coalesced under the Syrian-backed, “Palestine National Salvation Front” (PNSF), which was formed in response to the Democratic Alliance. The PNSF was composed of Fateh al-Intifada, Saiqa, PFLP-GC, and the PPSF.³⁸⁸ The goals of the organization were distinct from the Democratic Alliance. Instead of a loyal opposition within the PLO, the PNSF was intended to replace the PLO and Arafat altogether.³⁸⁹ Although the Front hoped to bring the PFLP and DFLP definitively into organization, the two groups refused because of their aversion to Syrian domination of the PLO.³⁹⁰ Even in December 1983, at the height of mutiny, George Habbash of the PFLP made a public call for unity and hoped that “the *official Fateh and PLO leaderships* will devote themselves to challenging Syria.”³⁹¹ The PFLP did eventually join the PNSF for a period of time, but its simultaneous membership in the Democratic Alliance demonstrates that the PFLP was not committed to abandoning the PLO. During this period, PLO historian Yezid Sayigh also continued to view the PFLP as part of the PLO’s loyal opposition. The PFLP’s temporary participation in the PNSF is described as mandatory but not meaningful because the PFLP was based in Syrian territory at the time.³⁹²

³⁸⁶ Sayigh 1997a, p. 575.

³⁸⁷ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 229.

³⁸⁸ Sayigh 1997a, p. 575; and Dannreuther 1998, p. 140.

³⁸⁹ Dannreuther 1998, p. 140.

³⁹⁰ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Background Brief: Palestine Liberation Organisation,” September 1989, TNA FO 973/603 (7796), and Dannreuther 1998.

³⁹¹ J. Fenkins to D.F. Richmond, “Interview with George Habash: The PLO Split,” 15 December 1983, TNA FCO 8/4896/6, p. 1 (11670), emphasis mine.

³⁹² Sayigh 1989, p. 253.

I therefore argue that the PNSF and Syria was not perceived as a meaningful challenge to the PLO at this point. As Sayigh notes, Arafat simply had to focus on the “need to legitimize its political direction internally,” meaning the PLO and the Democratic Alliance.³⁹³ Arafat tried to bring the Democratic Alliance closer to the moderate platform by convening a new PNC, but the Democratic Alliance refused to attend. In a show of confidence, Arafat held the PNC in Amman without the Democratic Alliance.³⁹⁴ In a clever maneuver, Arafat then submitted his resignation to the summit, only to have his resignation rejected by his supporters in attendance.³⁹⁵ The PNC thus strengthened Arafat’s position even further. The PFLP-GC and Saiqa – both members of the PNSF – lost seats on the Executive Committee, and “the PNC confirmed Arafat as the leader of the PLO, and gave him a mandate to continue the relationship with Jordan with a view of establishing a joint negotiating position.”³⁹⁶ As a result, Arafat “persevered over the next few months, publicly reaffirming his willingness...to negotiate directly with Israel at an international peace conference.”³⁹⁷

While the PNSF faded to the sidelines, the Democratic Alliance realigned with PLO moderates, particularly after the collapse of the PLO-Jordanian détente in 1986. After King Hussein torpedoed a joint-negotiation initiative, Democratic Alliance members filled their vacant seats in the PLO Executive and Central Committees at the next PNC in April 1987.³⁹⁸ As Dannreuther notes, the 1987 PNC formalized PLO reunification,³⁹⁹ and according to Bassam Abu Sharif, leaders of the PNC even met in Prague prior to the conference to coordinate the

³⁹³ Sayigh 1997a, p. 574.

³⁹⁴ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 574-5; and Reppert 1989, p. 126.

³⁹⁵ Reppert 1989, p. 127.

³⁹⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Background Brief: Palestine Liberation Organisation,” September 1989, TNA FO 973/603 (7796)

³⁹⁷ Sayigh 1997a, p. 574.

³⁹⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Background Brief: Palestine Liberation Organisation,” September 1989, TNA FO 973/603 (7796); and Dannreuther 1998, p. 148.

³⁹⁹ Sayigh 1989, p. 254; Dannreuther 1998, p. 143; and Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

reunification.⁴⁰⁰ Furthermore, the 1987 PNC signaled conclusively that “the ‘loyalist opposition,’ for such it had become, made clear its preference to operate within the statist structure of the PLO, while the groups that boycotted the PNC relegated themselves conclusively to the sidelines in so doing.”⁴⁰¹

After 1986, Syria and Jordan moved closer together in opposition to the PLO, but they no longer represented a credible threat. The Soviets gave the newly unified PLO its blessing and the Syrians were discredited by this point.⁴⁰² The PNSF failed in its attempt to unseat Arafat and represented a small fringe of the Palestinian national movement. The Jordanians did begin a campaign for separate talks with Israel and renewed its pledge to govern the West Bank, but this did not go far.⁴⁰³ In the early-1970s, such a move would pose a real challenge to the PLO, making the Palestinian movement fragmented. However, by this point the PLO was recognized by nearly all within the pro-Palestinian camp to be the sole legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people, and so this hardly represented a credible challenge. In sum, the Palestinian movement in 1984 could be perceived as allied, and this alliance grew progressively stronger over the course of the period.

With a militarily non-viable, but allied movement, we would expect the PLO to focus on two types of diplomatic campaigns: “outsourcing rebellion” to settle its conflict-level goals vis-à-vis the Israelis, and “cornering the market” as individual groups and alliances within the Palestinian movement advance their own platforms (Table 6.8).

⁴⁰⁰ Abu Sharif 2009, p. 139.

⁴⁰¹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 597

⁴⁰² Dannreuther 1998, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁰³ Dannreuther 1998, p. 143.

Table 6.8: Change in Threat Environment – Period 8 to 9

	United Movement	Allied Movement	Fragmented Movement
Militarily Viable			
Militarily Non-Viable		1984-1988 ←	→ 1983-1984

Strategy of Diplomacy

Without the distractions of major movement fragmentation, the PLO was now in a position to focus on its broader goals vis-à-vis the Israelis. The Palestinians knew the only way to bring the Israelis to negotiations on favorable terms – or to the table at all – was through the pressure and prodding of the United States, its strongest international ally. Targeting the U.S. would have to involve approaching the Americans directly, but also through dual-allegiance actors in Europe and the Arab League as indirect avenues of access.⁴⁰⁴ Arafat dedicated the next four years to gaining recognition from the U.S. and a position in peace talks. However, our predictions are not fully realized. The PLO seems to have pursued a strategy of “legitimizing rebellion,” not “outsourcing rebellion,” at the conflict-level. In other words, while my theory correctly predicts the target of diplomacy during this period, the prediction on the type of intervention requested is less accurate.

As Sela and Maoz recognized, PLO success “required U.S recognition to achieve any negotiated settlement and [the PLO] sought to split the United States from Israel to force Tel Aviv to make major concessions.”⁴⁰⁵ Insurgent diplomacy at this time was not about striking an agreement: “instead of trying to defeat America, the PLO sought to both pressure it and woo it as

⁴⁰⁴ Kirisci 1986; and Rubin 1997, pp. 141-2.

⁴⁰⁵ Rubin 1997, pp. 141-2.

a substitute for making peace with Israel.”⁴⁰⁶ Thus, in 1984 Arafat “wanted to prepare for a new peace initiative whose immediate aim was to secure American recognition of Palestinian rights and clear acknowledgement of the PLO’s status as the spokesman of the Palestinians.”⁴⁰⁷

The route for such a strategy was indirectly through Egypt and Jordan.⁴⁰⁸ Although both were certainly Israel’s adversaries, they were allies to the U.S. Furthermore, the Egyptians already signed Camp David Accords, giving them some influence with the Americans in the process. Amman was useful because of its friendly relations with the West, but also because the Israelis demanded the Jordanians be in charge of negotiations over Palestinian territories.⁴⁰⁹ Therefore, “The pro-Western Hussein was Arafat’s ticket to respectability and even, perhaps, to recognition by the United States.”⁴¹⁰

Although the demand that the Jordanians negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians was intended to challenge the PLO, Arafat used the precondition to his advantage. In February 1985, Arafat and King Hussein signed an agreement to establish a joint-negotiating position and a potential confederation between the West Bank and Jordan.⁴¹¹ The initiative upset the Soviets, who feared the PLO would exclude them from a peace process, and as a result the Soviets tried to block the negotiations. The result was “a stream of Palestinian visitors to Moscow in August and September [1985]. Both supporters and opponents of Arafat and his plan presented their positions to officials in the Kremlin. Simultaneously, King Hussein of Jordan and President Mubarak of Egypt were paying visits to Washington, urging the Americans lend more support to

⁴⁰⁶ Rubin 1994, p. 177.

⁴⁰⁷ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 223.

⁴⁰⁸ Sela and Ma’oz 1997, p. 111.

⁴⁰⁹ Sela and Ma’oz 1997, p.111.

⁴¹⁰ Walker and Gowers 2003, p. 228.

⁴¹¹ Reppert 1989, p. 128.

the Amman plan while the opportunity still existed.”⁴¹² In 1986, the joint initiative broke down and relations between the Palestinians and the Jordanians soured.⁴¹³

At the same time Arafat was pursuing conflict-level goals by talking to the West, the PLO was also engaging with Israel’s adversaries to solve movement-level issues. When the Jordanians broke from the PLO in pursuit of independent negotiations in 1986⁴¹⁴ and violence erupted between pro-PLO and pro-Syrian factions in Lebanon in 1985 (i.e. the “War of the Camps”),⁴¹⁵ the PLO targeted Israel’s adversaries to ensure its position as the sole legitimate representative was not affected. In addition to sending emissaries to Assad to get pro-Syrian factions to stand down,⁴¹⁶ the PLO again looked to the Soviet Union to pressure Assad.⁴¹⁷

Getting Soviet help was not easy. The PLO had damaged its relations with Moscow when it realigned with Jordan in 1984.⁴¹⁸ As such, Moscow only became receptive once the alignment with Hussein was finished. In January 1986, the PLO met the Soviet ambassador to Jordan three times,⁴¹⁹ and after the official break with Jordan in February, the two grew closer together. Arafat was then able to visit Moscow as the head of a PLO delegation for the first time in years.⁴²⁰ As McLaurin writes, “pressures on Syria to relax its war on the PLO were powerful. The Soviet Union actively pursued a compromise at several secret negotiations on the issue. Arab Gulf states as well sought a reconciliation.”⁴²¹ In short, while the PLO strived to engage

⁴¹² Reppert 1989, p. 130.

⁴¹³ It is worth noting that during this entire period, the PLO was engaging in direct and indirect meetings with the Israelis and international Jewish figures of influence. Wanis-St. John 2011, pp. 11, 32; Heikal 1996, pp. 377-9. Rabie 1995, p. 20.

⁴¹⁴ Wanis-St. John 2011, p. 37.

⁴¹⁵ McLaurin 1989, pp. 21-22.

⁴¹⁶ McLaurin 1989, pp. 21-2.

⁴¹⁷ Norton 1989, p. 9; and Reppert 1989, p. 127.

⁴¹⁸ Dannreuther 1998, pp. 139-141.

⁴¹⁹ Dannreuther 1998, p. 146.

⁴²⁰ Dannreuther 1998, p. 158.

⁴²¹ McLaurin 1989, p. 22.

diplomatically with Israel's allies in pursuit of conflict-level goals, the PLO also sought support from Israel's adversaries to secure its position leadership of the movement.

The eruption of the first Palestinian *intifada* in the West Bank and Gaza in December 1987 revitalized the diplomatic process. The *intifada* created greater unity among the Palestinian movement and a condition of crisis for Tel Aviv and Washington.⁴²² The uprising was a revolt against decades of military occupation by the Israelis, as well as the poor socio-economic conditions faced by Palestinians each day.⁴²³ Although local forces led the way, the PLO was eventually able to corral a semblance of ownership over the uprising.⁴²⁴ The *intifada* provided the movement with a new source of leverage and the leadership sought to turn the *intifada* into a gateway for talks with the U.S.⁴²⁵ As British reports note, "It was necessary for the external leadership to devise a credible political programme which would transform the revolt on the streets into momentum for an negotiated settlement."⁴²⁶

This was not an easy task. As one interviewee noted, "by 1987, the PLO and the different Palestinian factions were in the maximum of their international actions, except for the US, of course, which was always antagonistic to the PLO."⁴²⁷ The strategy was thus to get American attention by publicly signaling its willingness to recognize Israel and accept a two-state solution. One plan was devised by Arafat's new political adviser, Bassam Abu Sharif, formerly the spokesperson for the PFLP until 1987. The goal was to publish a manifesto on the two state

⁴²² Melman and Raviv 1989, pp. 13-4. I choose not to include the Islamic groups in my assessment of unity during this period. The reason for doing so is methodological. I have defined an "insurgent movement" as being finite set of groups that share common goals, ideology, and constituency, which means that the Islamists represented their own movement. For a description of how the Palestinian movement became cohesive during the *intifada* period, see Pearlman 2011, p. Ch. 4.

⁴²³ Schiff and Ya'ari 1989, Ch. 3

⁴²⁴ Sayigh 1997a, pp. 615-6.

⁴²⁵ Rabie 1995, pp. 9-10.

⁴²⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Background Brief: Palestine Liberation Organisation," September 1989, TNA FO 973/603, p. 5 (7798).

⁴²⁷ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

solution at *The Washington Post* before May 29, 1988, when Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev would meet in Moscow.⁴²⁸ The manifesto was later referred to as “the most explicit and articulate endorsement so far by the Palestinian mainstream of a two-state solution: a Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel.”⁴²⁹

The logic was that if the document was published before the U.S.-Soviet meeting, it could force the super powers to discuss the Palestinian question at the highest level. As Abu Sharif explained, “I told [Arafat] it was a test of the intentions of the United States,”⁴³⁰ and “it was also meant to show the Americans and the Europeans that the solution to our situation could only come the international resolutions that had already been set down by the United Nations.”⁴³¹ The piece did not make it to the *Post*, so instead, Abu Sharif had it printed and distributed at the Arab League summit in June. The document created a political firestorm and the manifesto was soon picked up by *The Wall Street Journal*. While many within the PLO were infuriated by the peace manifesto, the principles behind the document were ultimately approved at the 1988 PNC that November.⁴³²

The next month marked another major victory for the PLO. On July 31, 1988, Jordan formally renounced its legal and administrative rights over the West Bank, making it nearly impossible for the Americans or Israelis to insist on engagement with Jordan over the PLO.⁴³³ The announcement created a “new impetus to international diplomacy.”⁴³⁴ Furthermore, as number of European countries took interest in Abu Sharif’s manifesto, including Germany, Britain, France, Norway, Finland, which invited him to share his views further. Arafat also

⁴²⁸ Interview #25, 31 May 2015, Jericho, West Bank.

⁴²⁹ Lewis, Anthony. 1988. “Abroad at Home; A Chance to Talk,” *The New York Times*, 23 June 1989.

⁴³⁰ Abu Sharif 2009, p. 170.

⁴³¹ Abu Sharif 2009, p. 167.

⁴³² Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁴³³ Sela and Ma’oz 1997, p. 110.

⁴³⁴ Interview #10, 7 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

traveled to “Romania and Yugoslavia [which] had close ties to both the West and to Israel.”⁴³⁵

Again, the focus of diplomacy was on the Americans. As Abu Sharif writes, “If the U.S. accepted our proposal, we had a better chance of getting our wishes met. U.S. support of Israel was known to everyone, but we also knew that if pressure could be put on Israel to do anything, it would come from the U.S. government.”⁴³⁶ Another interview with a senior PLO and Fateh diplomat explained the targeting of the United States at that time:

“The strategy really started with Anwar Sadat’s example when he considered that 99% of the cards are in America’s hands. That’s why he went to Kissinger and dropped the Russians, the Soviets at the time. To many Arabs that was treason, but it worked! I mean, Sadat was able to get back all of Sinai but got us really nothing. So Arafat thought that maybe we have to do the same and *eventually we have to really get the United States on that peace process because that’s the way you can get the Israelis.*”⁴³⁷

The November 1988 PNC was a milestone in the final campaign to get U.S. recognition. The PNC approved a framework for negotiations and engagement with the Americans. As Sela and Maoz write, “the 1988 PNC meeting was dedicated to changing U.S. policy. In sharp contrast to the past, anti-Americanism was largely absent.”⁴³⁸ Mohamed Rabie also writes that “there was a new sense of unity among all Palestinians, and that all Palestinians favored dialogue with the United States.”⁴³⁹ At the time, there were various back-channel and Track II talks between the U.S. and the PLO. Perhaps the most effective was a dialogue established through the Swedes, begun months earlier in July.⁴⁴⁰ Through these contacts, the PLO and Secretary of State Schultz agreed upon a formula by which the PLO would formally announce its recognition Israel and renounce of terrorism. The U.S., in return, would formally recognize the PLO and a peace

⁴³⁵ Abu Sharif 2009, pp. 173-4.

⁴³⁶ Abu Sharif 2009, pp. 173-4.

⁴³⁷ Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank. Emphasis mine.

⁴³⁸ Rubin 1994, p. 104.

⁴³⁹ Rabie 1995, p. 93.

⁴⁴⁰ Wanis-St. John 2011, p. 44; Abu Sharif 2009, p. 176; and Rabie 1995, pp. 64-69. There were a number of different tracks that are described in further detail elsewhere. For example, see Heikal 1996.

process would begin.⁴⁴¹ Arafat wanted to make the announcement at the United Nations in New York but was denied a visa. As a result, the historic announcement was made in Geneva in December 1988.⁴⁴²

Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to examine what brought Israel to the negotiation table in the immediate period thereafter, it is widely understood that the Israelis went unwillingly and at the behest of the Americans. There is a reason, after all, the Palestinians called their diplomacy a “peace offensive” or “peace attack.”⁴⁴³ Referring to the 1991 Madrid peace talks, one Palestinian diplomat recalled “it was not a voluntary trip” by the Israelis.⁴⁴⁴ Another high-level PLO diplomat noted, “the Israelis did not accept [the PLO’s] hand voluntarily. Mr. Shamir would not want to go to Madrid. Mr. Baker had to pull out of the Senate \$10 billion of loan guarantees to force Shamir to Madrid...So in fact, the Israelis came grudgingly to a peace process that the Americans wanted – after all [the Americans] own the world!”⁴⁴⁵

In sum, period 9 involved a final and critical change away “outsourcing rivalry” to “legitimizing rebellion.” Having sidelined and surpassed the internal opposition, the PLO was able to focus intently on bringing the conflict to a close on their terms. This required getting Israel’s principal ally, the United States, on board. Instead of soliciting direct intervention as expected, though, the PLO only sought indirect intervention. The strategy was a short-term success. The U.S. did recognize the PLO and did help bring Israel to the negotiation table. But these advancements quickly dissipated in the years to come.

⁴⁴¹ See Heikal 1996 (Ch. 10) for more intimate details.

⁴⁴² Interview #5, 25 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁴⁴³ Interview #20, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁴⁴⁴ Interview #20, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

⁴⁴⁵ Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

Discussion and Alternative Explanations

This chapter has covered the major changes in Palestinian diplomatic strategy during the second phase of the conflict. The movement shifted between periods of fragmentation, alliance, and unity, as well as periods of military viability and non-viability. There was thus ample opportunity to test how changes in the threat environment affected Palestinian diplomatic strategy. The first big shift occurred in 1976, when an allied and viable Palestinian movement plummeted into fragmentation and military non-viability due to Syria's attack on the PLO in Lebanon. The result was a rapid shift in diplomatic strategy from "legitimizing rebellion" to "outsourcing rivalry." This involved the solicitation of Israel's adversaries for direct intervention to stem the intra-movement assault on the PLO. Arab League members and the Soviet Union were particularly sought to halt the attack on the weaker PLO. Once the conflict was resolved, and the movement became allied and viable once again, there was a long-term transition back to "legitimizing rebellion," by which the PLO sought indirect intervention – principally, recognition and access to peace negotiations – from the United States and Western Europe, as Israel's principal allies.

In 1982, the long and arduous process of engaging with the West for indirect intervention was snapped when Israel invaded Lebanon and brought the PLO to non-viability. The shift from viable to non-viable and the nature of the threat incentivized the PLO to solicit direct intervention from Israel's own allies. Still down, the PLO then suffered movement fragmentation when a large Fateh faction mutinied in Lebanon with Syrian support. Non-viable and facing an intra-movement challenge, Arafat and the rump of the PLO engaged in "outsourcing rivalry," or direct intervention from Israel's adversaries to gain recognition of Arafat's leadership and active intervention to stem the mutiny. Arafat survived the challenge to his leadership, but the PLO was

effectively non-viable by 1984. As a non-viable group, we would expect the PLO to solicit direct intervention from Israel's allies. Instead, the PLO only sought to gain American recognition of the PLO and a place at the negotiation table. The likely reason for this anomaly is that such a request would have been too unfeasible given its immensely weakened position and nearly a decade of American aversion to pressuring Israel.

By and large, our predictions map on to the Palestinian case well. When the Palestinian movement was allied or united, the leadership was able to focus its attention on soliciting Israel's allies for assistance in attaining its goals. However, when the movement became fragmented, groups shifted their diplomacy toward Israel's adversaries to solicit help in tackling movement-level threats. Likewise, when groups could sustain their own campaigns, they simply sought indirect forms of intervention. It was only in period of military non-viability that direct intervention was sought.

In total, my theory's predictions are quite successful for the Palestinian case as a whole (see Table 6.9). Of the nine periods under analysis, my theory correctly predicted Palestinian groups' strategies of diplomacy in seven periods (periods 2 through 8), and made a near perfect prediction in one other period (period 1). Once again, a near perfect prediction is one in which one of the two characteristics defining rebel diplomatic strategy – target of diplomacy and intervention type – was predicted correctly, while the other received a mixed or inconclusive result. There were no cases in which both characteristics were incorrectly predicted and only one period in which one of the characteristics was predicted incorrectly (period 9).

Table 6.9: Accounting for Predictions (1959-1988)

		<i>Movement Type</i>	Target of Diplomacy	<i>Military Viability</i>	Type of Intervention
Period 1	1959-1970	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (~)
Period 2	1970-1971	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct (✓)
Period 3	1971-1974	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 4	1974-1976	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 5	1976-1977	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct/Indirect (✓)
Period 6	1977-1982	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Viable</i>	Indirect (✓)
Period 7	1982-1983	<i>United</i>	Allies (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct/Indirect (✓)
Period 8	1983-1984	<i>Fragmented</i>	Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Direct/Indirect (✓)
Period 9	1984-1988	<i>Allied</i>	Allies/Adversaries (✓)	<i>Non-Viable</i>	Indirect (✗)

Note: The contents of the columns “Target of Diplomacy” and “Type of Intervention” are the actual observed measurements of these variables. The content in the parentheses denote the extent to which this observation is consistent with my theory’s predictions. A check-mark means “correct,” a tilde means “partially correct,” and an ex-mark means “incorrect.”

But what about alternative explanations that may explain Palestinian diplomatic strategy?

The first alternative is that Palestinian solicitation was purposefully geared towards targeting those eager to provide the support requested. In other words, supply-side considerations dominate demand-side preferences for diplomatic engagement. This is clearly not the case, largely because the main strategy during this period was one of “legitimizing rebellion,” in which the U.S. and Western Europe were the primary targets. These actors were far from offering assistance to these groups, especially at the early stages. The PLO struggled for over a dozen years just to get the United States to recognize itself as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. And although the Europeans slowly opened to engagement, they did not offer the PLO the support it requested. Western Europe made it incredibly difficult for the

Palestinians by demanding policy changes – that Arafat was unable and unwilling to execute – *before* granting any form of recognition. In other words, the PLO faced an uphill struggle in seeking support from Israel’s allies.

The same could be said for engagement with Israel’s adversaries. The PLO’s requests for direct intervention in 1976 went unheeded for months.⁴⁴⁶ Surely, Arafat would have been painfully aware of that no one originally intended to heed his calls – if not from the outset of the war, at least after the first volley of appeals went unanswered. The same could be said for the 1983 mutiny. While many third-parties were quick to support Arafat verbally, the Soviets were indecisive and it was not clear outside actors would directly intervene to help the PLO. In fact, Arafat lost the military battle because third-parties didn’t heed the call for military action. In sum, nearly every diplomatic campaign involved uncertainty that aid would be provided. Furthermore, the campaigns often failed or aid came extremely late, meaning it is unlikely that PLO targeting and intervention requests were based where they would be most successful.

The second alternative explanation is that the PLO privileged engagement with religious, ethnic, or ideological kin. Once again, this argument is indeterminate. The PLO – moderates and Rejectionists alike – appealed heavily to Arab actors, but also heavily targeted the U.S., Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union at different points. Arafat and the PLO engaged heavily with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, despite not officially espousing communist or socialist ideology. Arafat also reached out to his ideological competitors – pro-Rejectionist states – when movement-level competition made these relations an imperative. Many Rejectionists eventually supported engagement with the West, despite their aversion for such behavior.

⁴⁴⁶ Abu Iyad 1981, p. 196

A third alternative explanation is that there was simply no strategy at all. That the PLO engaged in a broad campaign for global recognition and support. However, this is not the case. The PLO was adamant that it needed U.S. assistance to get the agreement it needed with the Israelis. Time and again, the focus on the U.S. and Western Europe is stated as the primary target of diplomacy. Furthermore, it is obvious during periods of fragmentation that the U.S. and Western Europeans were largely ignored. There certainly was a global campaign to raise the Palestinian question and gain broader support, but this was done at a level below the leadership and was not part of central PLO policy. The PLO actively debated and approved whether to engage in specific campaigns with the West or not during PNC meetings in particular.⁴⁴⁷

The fourth alternative is that Palestinian diplomacy followed a natural progression from targeting Israel's adversaries to allies and from indirect to direct intervention. This alternative doesn't hold up to the empirical evidence. PLO targeting was reverted back to soliciting Israel's adversaries on two occasions in 1976 and 1983, and the solicitation of direct intervention was not progressive but dictated by immediate security needs. The Palestinians returned to soliciting indirect intervention after brief campaigns for direct intervention in 1970, 1976, 1982, and 1983.

The fifth alternative argument, that insurgent diplomatic capacity played has an effect on strategic choice, also has little evidence in its favor. The hypothesis here was that some diplomatic strategies, such as soliciting the COIN state's allies or soliciting direct intervention are more likely to require greater diplomatic resources. It is true that Palestinian diplomatic capacity continued to grow throughout the period. The PLO did build more offices abroad, did increase the formality of its institutions, and did engage in more widespread campaigning over time.⁴⁴⁸ However, the PLO was just as intensely campaigning Washington and Western Europe

⁴⁴⁷ For example, see "The PNC: Historical Background," 1987. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16(4): 149-52.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview #7, 5 May 2014, Ramallah, West Bank.

in 1974, before such widespread developments, as they were in 1988. Furthermore, the Palestinians were just as capable of gaining access to such venues as the United Nations before the rapid increase in global recognition as after. There simply is no evidence in the record that hints at the fact that increased solicitation of Israel's allies in this latter phase had anything to do with capacity to engage in such strategies. Furthermore, there is no evidence that appeals for direct intervention in 1976 and 1982 had anything to do with the PLO's perceptions that it finally had the capacity to do so.

Finally, we can assess an endogeneity concern that diplomatic strategy was dictated by third-party actors. First, while a number of actors did attempt to unify and fragment the Palestinian movement – and were occasionally somewhat successful at encouraging a change – preferences for cooperation and fragmentation were largely derived internally. Rejectionist factions occasionally allied with the moderate leadership, despite states like Syria, Libya, and Iraq encouraging otherwise. And the movement often remained deeply divided despite the Soviet Union's best attempts to encourage cooperation between Rejectionists and moderates. Even Israel's supporters, tried to encourage greater Palestinian unity, albeit to no avail.⁴⁴⁹

Of course, Palestinian groups were under incredible pressure to conform to third-party wishes. However, these pressures were not determinate and often defied. There were simply too many potential supporters for Palestinian groups for any group to feel obliged to change its preferences on cooperation. Palestinian diplomacy was about keeping itself free from an over reliance on any particular patron, thus making it free to pursue the policies of its choosing.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁹ The British, for example, tried to ensure Palestinian unity behind the moderate leadership. See, From John Graham to Unknown, 11 March 1981, TNA FCO 93/2805/W18 (2662); and R O Miles to Sir Graham, "PLO," 3 December 1981, TNA FCO 93/2802/119 p. 3 (2729).

⁴⁵⁰ Norton 1989, p. 7.

Finally, it is difficult to think of a case where third-parties sought to weaken Palestinian actors for the purposes of being invited to provide direct intervention.

Conclusion

International diplomacy was perhaps the most important tool at the disposal of the Palestinians. From combating intra-movement challenges to undermining Israel, international dialogue was key. Diplomacy was not only a plausible strategy when the movement was united,⁴⁵¹ but also when the movement was fragmented. It was not only useful as a tool to advance the peace process to achieve conflict level goals, but also to manipulate third-party actors to win, or at least survive, intra-movement challenges. In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, diplomacy was a tool for both war and peace, against both internal and external threats.

The complexities of the various actors within the PLO alone made constant dialogue and briefings with foreign actors a necessity. Arafat frequently had to explain the policies and acts of PLO member groups – who may have behaved contrary to official PLO policy – and he travelled incessantly to ensure the PLO was never beholden to any single actor. As one author aptly noted:

“If the popular personification of the PLO is a gun-toting and keffiyah-wearing guerrilla, a more accurate image would place a pin-striped suit in the guerrilla’s wardrobe. The PLO extols military struggle in its political program and in its pronouncements, and most of its component resistance organizations have gained notoriety through the use of political violence, but it is diplomacy that has eked out a prominent place for the PLO in world politics.”⁴⁵²

The analysis above demonstrates the above statement’s validity. Yet there was a method behind the diplomacy, and the strategies pursued were frequently in fluctuation. Campaigns ranged from soliciting direct intervention to stop existential threats to the PLO, to secret calls for support from the United States, to open competition over representation and recognition.

⁴⁵¹ Pearlman 2011, for example, makes this type of argument to some degree.

⁴⁵² Norton 1989, p. 1.

Sometimes the intended target of successful intervention was Israel, and other times it was rival rebel groups or competing Arab states. Sometimes the Palestinians simply wanted indirect assistance and other times they demanded other actors involve themselves deeply. The local threat environment faced by these groups determined these strategies. Whether the movement was competitively fragmented or united, or whether it was holding its own or on the verge of collapse, international diplomacy was always useful tool in Palestinian grand strategy.

In some ways, diplomacy was a success for the Palestinians, in other ways, it clearly was not. The PLO did achieve nominal goals through post-1988 peace negotiations, including the establishment of the Palestinian Authority on parts of the Palestinian Territories. But many would argue the situation on the ground for many Palestinians has hardly changed. It is worth noting, however, that Palestinian diplomacy helped bring about these negotiations nonetheless and in 1988 the PLO did appear to have significant bargaining power. Much of this bargaining power slowly slipped away thereafter, which may explain poorer outcomes today.⁴⁵³ But looking at intra-movement conflict, it appears that diplomacy was critical. If not for its diplomatic tactics, Egypt may have continued to back Shuqayri's PLO. Jordan may have gained the recognition to represent the Palestinian people, which the PLO desperately needed. Syria may have crushed the PLO in Lebanon in 1976 and again in 1983, and Arafat may have lost control of the movement to Damascus and its proxies. Of course, many factors – including contingency and luck – were involved in these outcomes. But rebel diplomats strove to affect these outcomes the best they could, and at least from at the movement-level, insurgent diplomacy appears to have had a substantive effect.

⁴⁵³ Interview #24, 24 May 2015, Ramallah, West Bank.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

International diplomacy is a critical task for many insurgencies. When rebel groups are pitted against powerful and sometimes numerous opponents, insurgents can harness international power sources to gain advantages at home. Insurgent diplomacy is most often viewed as a way for opposition groups to gain international legitimacy at the expense of the central government. However, as this dissertation has shown, insurgent diplomacy is both about and beyond legitimacy, and the counter-insurgent state. Rebel groups can use diplomacy to solicit political, military, and economic support from third-parties to undermine both the COIN state and rebel rivals. In short, to understand insurgent behavior abroad, we must better understand insurgent politics at home.

The primary task has been to classify different strategies of insurgent diplomacy and explain when each is most likely to be employed. I have argued that diplomatic strategy can be broken down into two components: what rebels want and from whom they want it. Diplomatic strategy is thus the interaction between who rebels primarily target diplomatically, and the type of intervention they solicit from these actors. I argued that rebel groups can distinguish between the international allies and adversaries of the COIN state, and between direct and indirect forms of intervention. Whether groups will want to solicit the COIN state's allies or adversaries for support, and request direct or indirect intervention, is determined by the degree of fragmentation with the insurgent movement and the military viability of rebel groups, respectively. Diplomatic strategy is motivated by intra-insurgent politics, current military needs, and post-conflict fears and desires.

In addition to developing a theory of insurgent diplomatic strategy, I tested my argument against two cases: the Iraqi Kurdish (1958-1990) and Palestinian (1959-1988) national movements. These cases demonstrate the important role that intra-insurgent politics plays in the pursuit of international support. When movements were highly fragmented, groups focused their diplomatic attention toward undermining rival rebel groups. This often involved the solicitation of the COIN state's international adversaries for political and military support. As existing or likely supporters of the rebellion, these actors had the resources and leverage to prop one group over another, as well as the leverage to settle intra-movement disputes. We also found that rebel groups often vary their requests for third-party support. Sometimes they demand simple recognition, other times guns and money, and direct intervention. Yet I found that the solicitation of direct intervention is far less likely than indirect intervention.

Overall, I looked at seventeen unique periods or mini-cases of insurgent diplomatic strategy across nearly sixty years of rebellion. Examining the record, my theory does a strong though imperfect job in predicting insurgent strategies of diplomacy (see Table 7.1). Of the seventeen cases, eleven were predicted with full accuracy (~65%), meaning both the type of intervention solicited and target of diplomacy were clearly and accurately predicted. There were four periods in which one of the two characteristics (type of intervention or target of diplomacy) was predicted with complete accuracy and the other was predicted with "mixed" accuracy (~23%). A mixed prediction is when the prediction mostly followed what was expected, but there was either a short-term deviation from the correct prediction at some point during the period, or there was simply not enough data to definitively code the case one way or the other. These partially-mixed cases are treated as positive though cautionary support for my argument. Finally, there were no cases in which both characteristics of diplomatic strategy were

inaccurately predicted (0%), and only two cases in which one characteristics failed its prediction outright (~12%).

Table 7.1 Overall Accuracy of Predictions

Predictions on Target of Diplomacy/Type of Intervention	Both Accurate	One Accurate/One Mixed	One Accurate/One Inaccurate	Both Inaccurate
Percent (cases/periods)	65% (11)	23% (4)	12% (2)	0.0% (0)

Note: Percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest full integer.

Predictions for the rebel diplomatic targeting (Hypotheses 1A, 1B, and 1C) outperformed predictions for the types of intervention solicited (Hypothesis 2). In the seventeen periods, the target of diplomacy was correctly predicted in sixteen periods (94%), with only one mixed prediction. However, for the type of intervention solicited, there were two periods with inaccurate predictions and three with mixed predictions. This means that the type of intervention solicited was predicted with clear accuracy in twelve periods (71%). As whole, my predictions for both types of intervention solicited and targets of diplomacy performed well, though there is a disparity in accuracy between the two.

Comparing the two case studies, it is worth noting that the Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian cases – although using the same set of broader diplomatic strategies – viewed and used diplomacy quite differently. The most obvious observation is that the movements diverged over the importance of diplomacy as a tool for gaining recognition and signaling legitimacy. Iraqi Kurdish groups were simply not as obsessed with building formal diplomatic offices or securing diplomatic recognition as the Palestinians were. There are two potential reasons why political aid in the form of recognition – as opposed to military, material, or economic aid – is differentially

prevalent. First, whereas the Palestinian movement operated parallel to an internationalized peace process in which indigenous Palestinian groups were an excluded actor, various peace negotiations within Iraq were a domestic matter and in which the legitimacy of Kurdish representation was never in dispute. Second, whereas the Iraqi Kurds did not have to worry about third-party actors claiming to represent or control Iraqi Kurdish territory,¹ the Palestinians constantly had to defend against confrontation states like Jordan, which actively tried to dominate Palestinian territory and politics.

In short, the use of diplomacy to secure political aid, or to signal legitimacy or stateliness, is simply less present in the Kurdish case. This observation is important because some view the purpose of insurgent diplomatic behavior as intrinsically linked to the pursuit of legitimacy and the signaling of a group or movement as a state-like actor.² However, this is not always the case. It is thus important that our classifications of insurgent diplomatic strategy transcend this debate on legitimacy to focus more broadly on what rebels want and from whom they want it, regardless of more fine-grained rebel preferences and behavior. While these differences are certainly interesting and worthy of further examination, I have shown that regardless of these differences, the grand diplomatic strategies within these two diverse cases were driven by similar mechanisms and logics.

The remainder of this chapter – and conclusion of the dissertation – builds on the theoretical and empirical analysis above to discuss the broader implications of this work. Below, I will first address the generalizability of my findings. Second, I move beyond the question of insurgent diplomatic strategy to examine the related question of when these strategies are most

¹ One exception could be Turkish irredentist desires in the Mosul region of Iraq.

² Clapham 1996, p. 225; McConnell et al. 2012; Coggins 2014; Danilovich 2014, Ch. 4; Coggins 2015; Doyle 2015; and Huang 2016.

likely to succeed. Third, I bring the target state into greater focus by illustrating the relationship between insurgent diplomacy and COIN state counter-diplomacy. Fourth, I debate the main policy implications of this work. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of future research on insurgent diplomatic practice and institution-building.

Generalization Beyond Iraqi Kurdistan and Palestine

The Iraqi Kurdish and Palestinian insurgencies engaged with a similar cast of third-parties, operated during the same time period, and generally speaking, fought within the same geographical arena. But this is the extent of their comparability. The groups had divergent military and diplomatic capacities, variable access to the conflict zone, distinct domestic and international foes, and even asymmetrical popularity abroad. The general success of my theory's predictions across these two diverse cases demonstrates the generalizability of my argument and its potential to explain insurgent diplomacy across space and time.

Although space constraints do not allow for a full test of other cases, we can see similar strategic choices carried out by a diverse set of rebel actors in other conflicts. For example, the strategies of diplomacy employed by the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa appear to reflect the logics outlined above. For much of its struggle, the ANC was in fierce competition with its local rival, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Although the ANC and PAC were united for some time under the banner of the United Front, when the union collapsed in March 1962 the groups began to competing internally and externally for diplomatic recognition.³ Such competition for recognition had an explicit target – the international adversaries of Pretoria. As the PAC strived to “assert its separate identity,” the ANC establishing its own separate diplomatic offices in those countries that already supported the armed insurgency.⁴ These

³ Thomas 1996, pp. 40-41.

⁴ Thomas 1996, p. 41

included Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Zambia, and Tanzania.⁵ In other words, once the United Front broke apart, the ANC quickly executed a strategy of “cornering the market” to ensure foreign relations and military support went primarily to the ANC and not the PAC.

The two groups also battled each other fervently for recognition from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – a large collection of African states and actors hostile to the apartheid regime in Pretoria – hoping to be named the sole legitimate representative of the movement.⁶ Thus, much like the early diplomatic strategies of Fateh, the PLO, and Jordan in the 1960s and 1970s, the competing groups used diplomacy with the COIN state’s adversaries to gain dominance over the movement.

Similar diplomatic behavior was also seen in the case of Eritrean secession from Ethiopia. The Eritrean liberation movement was notoriously fragmented during its decades-long struggle.⁷ As part of this competition, Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and its rival splinter group, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), primarily focused their solicitation on Ethiopia’s adversaries in bids to corner the market of resources from one another. The groups’ competitively solicited aid from Arab states in the Middle East, since pan-Arabism was viewed as the natural counter-weight to pan-Africanism in Ethiopia.⁸ Competing Arab states, Iraq and Syria in particular, took advantage of their appeals and “pitted one group against the other to establish the supremacy of their politics in Eritrea.”⁹ Just as the factions were separating from one another in 1969, the two sides raced to ensure that third-party resources from the Middle East came their way. As historian Awet Weldemichael notes, “When pioneer Eritrean nationalist

⁵ Thomas 1996, p. 42

⁶ Thomas 1996, p. 85.

⁷ Heraclides 1991, p. 182.

⁸ Weldemichael 2013a, pp. 154-155; and Heraclides 1991, pp. 189-90.

⁹ Weldemichael 2013a, p. 155.

diplomat Osman Saleh Sabbe broke away from the ELF in 1969, the latter's provisional leadership scrambled to save its Middle Eastern lifeline by dispatching its own delegations. The delegations managed to retain some of the political capital and acumen for the ELF that Sabbe cultivated; however, he continued to maintain his relationships with those same countries for the benefit of the EPLF after the split.”¹⁰

Another interesting point is the timing of Eritrean campaigns for Western support. When the Ethiopian Selassie regime was allied with the West, there was little solicitation from the competing Eritrean factions. These groups had initially taken an anti-Western tone and there was notable lobbying with the Cuban and Chinese.¹¹ However, after the Marxist Derg came to power in Addis Ababa in 1974 and realigned with the Soviet Union, the fragmented Eritreans began appealing directly to the West.¹²

It is worth noting that the Eritreans did make some attempts at soliciting Ethiopia's allies, primarily in the OAU. However, these endeavors did not represent the bulk of the Eritrean's efforts and appear over-shadowed by Eritrean competitive diplomacy. The efforts also did not go far, possibly because of early Eritrean pan-Arab framing tactics, but also because of powerful Ethiopian counter-diplomacy.¹³

In contrast to the Eritreans, the East Timorese separatist movement was quite cohesive. The primary rebel group, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (FRETILIN) even had its own external diplomatic wing called the Delegation for Service in the Exterior (DFSE). Diplomacy was used early on as just “six days after its unilateral declaration of independence on November 28, 1975, FRETILIN dispatched a high-level delegation abroad to

¹⁰ Weldemichael 2013a, p. 157.

¹¹ Heraclides 1991, pp. 192-3.

¹² Heraclides 1991, pp. 188-90, 185.

¹³ Weldemichael 2013a, pp. 188-189.

canvas international recognition for the Democratic Republic of East Timor (DRET).”¹⁴ The main target was initially the Portuguese, the former colonial power in East Timor which had the political influence and leverage needed to help the East Timorese. However, the Indonesians invaded East Timor shortly thereafter, overpowering the weak movement. Although the FRETILIN in its vulnerable state did initially seek basic supplies and aid from the communist camp,¹⁵ the untied FRETILIN ultimately launched a successful diplomatic campaign targeting at Indonesia’s international allies: “By simultaneously shifting its focus to the Indonesian military’s ceaseless violation of Timorese human rights, the resistance won the moral support of Indonesia’s Western allies, isolating Jakarta and breaking its resolve to continue with its occupation.”¹⁶ Despite negative relations with FRETILIN, the Portuguese even helped push the East Timorese agenda through the United Nations.¹⁷

The case is cited as one of diplomatic success for the militarily weak movement. The internal and external leaderships were completely isolated from one another between 1978 and 1982,¹⁸ and in spite of being militarily non-viable – the military struggle was crushed between 1978 and 1979 – the East Timorese were able to engage in large-scale diplomatic campaign of “outsourcing rebellion.” Eventually, the East Timorese were able to convince powerful third-party actors to coerce Indonesia into quitting its occupation of East Timor.

While the FRETILIN established its diplomatic wing and launched a global campaign at the start of the conflict, it took the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) four years to declare the creation of a Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA) to solicit

¹⁴ Weldemichael 2013a, p. 195.

¹⁵ Weldemichael 2013a, p. 196

¹⁶ Weldemichael 2013a, p. 12.

¹⁷ Weldemichael 2013a, p. 196

¹⁸ Weldemichael 2013a, p. 199.

recognition and turn international pressure on France.¹⁹ Why such a disparity in timing? While the East Timorese emerged united, the Algerian insurgency was highly fragmented from the start and it was not until 1958 that the FLN could truly be seen as having a monopoly over its rivals.²⁰ Although other factors were certainly at play, one could argue that the FLN was only able to focus on strategies of legitimizing and outsourcing rebellion once they had effectively sidelined the internal competition.

Although the above examples take place within the context of the Cold War, patterns of insurgent diplomatic strategy are not unique to that era. For example, one can look to the current case of the Syrian civil war.²¹ Since the onset of the Syrian rebellion in 2011, militants fighting the Bashar al-Assad regime have expressed their appeals through an international campaign that combines social media, public and formal diplomacy.²²

At first, representatives of the Syrian National Coalition and Free Syrian Army (SNC/FSA) appealed to third-parties for money, arms, and materiel to increase rebel power. Although the rebellion began at a military disadvantage, many believed the insurgency would grow into a formidable fighting force. Conceived as militarily viable at the time, the FSA initially sought indirect intervention, but avoided requests for direct intervention, which could have diverted prestige away from the FSA and complicated the post-conflict environment. While appeals for indirect support continued, calls for outside actors to directly undermine the Assad regime emerged in March 2012 and become more active through 2013. Such requests for

¹⁹ Connelly 2002, p. 7.

²⁰ For more on these dynamics, see Evans 2012.

²¹ Part of the analysis below is extracted from an unpublished memo written for the Project on Middle East Political Science (POMEPS) “New Political Science Research on Syria’s War” Workshop at the George Washington University, September 18, 2015.

²² Lynch et al. 2014

intervention took the form of calls for a no-fly zone in August 2012,²³ as well as direct military strikes by the U.S. in the summer of 2013.²⁴

Part of this strategic shift towards soliciting more direct forms of intervention can be explained by the diminishing viability of the FSA. Not only were rebel gains grinding to a halt in mid-2012,²⁵ but the rise of competing groups proved to be a great challenge to the FSA.²⁶ The strengthening of groups and coalitions like the Jabhat al-Nusra, the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), the Syrian Islamic Front, and Kurdish militias, began to threaten the FSA's early preeminence. Factional infighting, plus a new Hezbollah-backed counter-offensive in early 2013 helped tip the balance of power against the FSA.²⁷ The FSA movement had thus become less viable, making the need for direct intervention more beneficial than ever. Similarly, Syrian Kurdish calls for outside airstrikes only really emerge in the fall of 2014 when it was feared that the Kurdish border-city of Kobani would be lost to ISIS.²⁸

With regards to diplomatic targeting, the moderate opposition groups in Syria have engaged primarily with the United States, Western Europe, and the Gulf, but have largely avoided Assad's supporters in Moscow and Tehran. In other words, anti-Assad rebels are targeting Syria's

²³ "Syrian Opposition Calls for No-Fly Zone," *Al-Jazeera.com*, 13 August 2012.

<<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/08/2012812233833353319.html>>. An earlier call for a no-fly zone was issued in September 2011 but the Syrian National Council was not involved. See Solomon, Jay and Nour Malas. 2011. "Syrian Opposition Seeks No-Fly Zone," *The Wall Street Journal*, 29 September 2011.

<<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052970203405504576599150728062020>>.

²⁴ "Syrian Opposition Slams Global Apathy and Demands Strikes," *Yourmiddleeast.com*, 11 September 2013.

<http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/news/syrian-opposition-slams-global-apaty-and-demands-strikes_17846>

²⁵ Holliday, Joseph. 2012. "Syria's Maturing Insurgency," Middle East Security Report 5, Institute for the Study of War, June 2012.

²⁶ Barakat, Rabih. 2013. "Free Syrian Army Losing Ground," *Al-Monitor*, 19 December 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/12/end-of-free-syrian-army.html#>>; and Barnard, Anne and Hwaida Saad. 2013.

"Syrian Rebel Infighting Undermines Anti-Assad Effort," *The New York Times*, 12 July 2013.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/13/world/middleeast/syrian-rebel-infighting-undermines-anti-assad-effort.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0>

²⁷ Sharp and Blanchard 2013, p. 2.

²⁸ Pamuk, Humeyra, and Tom Perry. 2014. "Syrian Kurds Say Giving Targets for U.S. Strikes Near Kobani," *Reuters*, 15 October 2014. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-idUSKCN0I41AC20141015>>; and Mohammed, Arshad. 2014. "U.S. Military Says Air-Drops Weapons for Kurdish fighters near Kobani," *Reuters*, 20 October 2014. <<http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-usa-airdrops-idINKCN0I906N20141020>>

adversaries and not its allies. A reason for this is that the rebellion in Syria is deeply fragmented and groups spend as much time competing with each other as they do combating the Assad regime. This competition at home is extended through insurgent diplomacy abroad. Whoever can corner the market of anti-Assad foreign support will have its position strengthened vis-à-vis rival rebel factions. For example, in 2015, Ahrar al-Sham – a moderate Islamic group striving to gain dominance over the moderate opposition – began to appeal to the West in an effort to relabel itself “a mainstream Sunni Islamic group” to be spared the onslaught of coalition airstrikes.²⁹

Yet if Syrian rebels became more cohesive, we could imagine greater diplomatic efforts to engage with Moscow or Tehran. In fact, in the summer of 2011, when the anti-Assad movement was relatively cohesive before the rise of alternative movements, the SNC did begin engagement with Russia. The first SNC trip to Moscow took place in July 2012³⁰ and another took place in early 2014 before the Geneva II talks. When not distracted by intra-insurgent politics, the SNC saw engagement with the Russians as a way to undermine Assad. As one SNC delegate stated before the 2014 meeting, “Your country [Russia] also has an influence on the current regime in Damascus...The purpose of our visit is to persuade Moscow to change its position on the Syrian crisis, to join the side of the Syrian people and hold back its right to veto the sanctions aimed at influencing the ruling regime in Damascus.”³¹

²⁹ Al-Nahhas, Labib. 2015. “The Deadly Consequences of Mislabeled Syria’s Revolutionaries,” *The Washington Post*, 10 July 2015. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-deadly-consequences-of-mislabeled-syrias-revolutionaries/2015/07/10/6dec139e-266e-11e5-aae2-6c4f59b050aa_story.html>

³⁰ Bridge, Robert. 2012. “Syrian National Council in Moscow for First-ever Talks,” *RT.com (Russia Today)*, 11 July 2012. <<http://www.rt.com/politics/syria-russia-lavrov-moscow-talks-912/>>

³¹ Hasson, Diya. 2014. “We Did Not Come to Moscow to Negotiate’ – Syrian National Coalition Leaders,” *Voice of Russia*, 4 February 2014. <http://voiceofrussia.com/2014_02_04/We-did-not-come-to-Moscow-to-negotiate-Syrian-National-Coalition-leaders-2629/>

Relatedly, there also appears to be a recent shift in Syrian Kurdish diplomacy toward a greater focus on Moscow.³² In February 2016, the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) shocked the world by opening its first diplomatic office abroad in Moscow.³³ Although the PYD and its military wing, the People's Protection Units (YPG), are ostensibly allied with the West and had been receiving support from the United States, the Kurds decided to increase diplomatic engagement with Russia. Although there could be several reasons for this shift,³⁴ one may be the growing unity and dominance of the PYD position in Syria. While the PYD initially faced some intra-Kurdish competition on the ground in Syria,³⁵ those groups are now largely sidelined and the PYD-YPG has a serious monopoly on political and military power in northern Syria.³⁶ As such, the Syrian Kurds may be transitioning, towards focusing on conflict-level goals and thus the need to gain the support of Assad's greatest supporters – Moscow.

One could argue that the Syrian case exhibits familiar Cold War dynamics, given competing Russian and American interventions. But regardless of primary international actors involved, I anticipate insurgent diplomatic strategy to follow the same basic logic: Groups seek engagement with and intervention from those actors who have the most leverage over their

³² Meyer, Henry. 2015. "Syrian Kurds in Moscow, Hopeful of Recognition, Rouse Turks' Ire," *Bloomberg*, 20 October 2015. <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-10-20/syrian-kurds-in-moscow-hopeful-of-recognition-rouse-turks-ire>>

³³ Oliphant, Roland. 2016. "Syrian Kurds Open Diplomatic Mission in Moscow," *The Telegraph*, 10 February 2016. <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/12150692/Syrian-Kurds-open-diplomatic-mission-in-Moscow.html>>

³⁴ Kaplan, Morgan. 2016. "Why Are Syrian Kurds Pivoting Toward Moscow?" The Monkey Cage Blog, *The Washington Post*, 12 February 2016. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/02/12/why-are-syrian-kurds-pivoting-toward-moscow/>>

³⁵ "Syria's Kurds: A Struggle Within a Struggle." Middle East Report No. 136, International Crisis Group, 22 January 2013. <[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/136-syrias-kurds-a-struggle-within-a-struggle.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/Middle%20East%20North%20Africa/Iraq%20Syria%20Lebanon/Syria/136-syrias-kurds-a-struggle-within-a-struggle.pdf)>

³⁶ Zaman, Amberin. 2013. "Ankara Concerned as Kurdish PYD Makes Gains in Syria," *Al-Monitor*, 21 July 2013. <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2013/07/kurdish-pyd-gains-syria-concern-turkey.html>>; Wimmen, Heiko, and Muzehher Selcuk. 2013. "The Rise of Syria's Kurds," Sada, Middle East Analysis, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 5 February 2013. <<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/?fa=50852>>; and Stephens, Michael and Aaron Stein. 2015. "The YPG: America's New Best Friend?," *Al-Jazeera*, 28 June 2015. <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/06/ypg-america-friend-isil-kurds-syria-150627073034776.html>>

immediate opponents. Furthermore, rebels must always be sensitive to the long-term risks involved in soliciting direct intervention from outside actors.

Of course, to be more confident of the theory's external validity, scholars must apply the same standards of examination to alternative cases. The argument I have provided is based upon deductive logic and so I anticipate my theoretical predictions to travel across a wide-variety of cases and time periods. I encourage scholars to examine my argument beyond these pages.

Disparate cases that fit the theory should strengthen the generalizability of the argument, while cases in which the theory fails can teach us more about the scope of the argument presented.

From Strategic Choice to Success

The objective of this dissertation was to explain what the various strategies of insurgent diplomacy are, and under what conditions rebels choose to employ one strategy over another. The goal was thus to understand how and why insurgents engage in international diplomacy, but not the circumstances in which diplomatic campaigns are likely to succeed. While understanding rebel preferences and behavior is itself a valuable contribution, the latter question speaks to broader implications. The value of studying insurgent diplomacy can be mediated by the extent to which successful diplomacy can actually affect the balance of power in intra-state wars and outcomes at the conflict- and movement-level.

There are two ways to measure success: Whether a given campaign succeeds in gaining its preferred intervention from its preferred actor, and whether the forthcoming intervention has a positive effect on the group's position vis-à-vis its enemies. Building on the implications and assumptions from my theory of rebel strategic choice, I approach these questions.

When Do Diplomatic Campaigns Succeed?

With regards to whether a given diplomatic campaign will succeed, there are three important factors: 1) issue-framing flexibility, 2) insurgent diplomatic capacity, and 3) group's conflict goals. For solicitation campaigns to succeed, rebels must demonstrate an alignment of interest with the third-party.³⁷ Because diplomacy is an art of persuasion, successful campaigns rely upon effective "issue-framing" and "marketing" strategies.³⁸ Non-state actors – armed and unarmed alike – rely upon these tactics to gain third-party support. They can engage in public diplomacy campaigns;³⁹ talk with international journalists and secure exclusive stories; hire lobbyists and public relations firms in global capitals;⁴⁰ hold rallies and conferences abroad;⁴¹ mobilize diaspora communities;⁴² and more recently, engage in social media campaigns through Facebook, Twitter, and the internet more broadly.⁴³ Whether issue-framing is itself successful may be contingent on exogenous factors that make the process of persuasion easier. For example, rebel groups will likely have an easier time persuading the adversaries of the COIN state's than its allies. Strategic alignment will appear more realistic or obvious to the COIN state's adversaries.

A related factor is the ideological flexibility of rebel groups and the third-parties they solicit. Groups that have singular, rigid ideological foundations will find it difficult to convince

³⁷ Salehyan et al. 2011.

³⁸ For example, see Keck and Sikkink 1998; Bob 2005; and Kirisci 1986.

³⁹ Kaplan 2015b. For more on public diplomacy of non-state actors, see Sharp 2005; Khatib 2012; Hocking 2005; Melissen 2005; and Van Laer and Aelst 2010.

⁴⁰ For example, see Brannen, Kate. 2014. "From Kirkuk to K Street," *ForeignPolicy.com*, 13 August 2014. <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/13/from-kirkuk-to-k-street/>>; and McGreal, Chris. 2012. "Iranian Exiles, DC Lobbyists and the Campaign to Delist the MEK," *The Guardian*, 21 September 2012. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/21/iranian-exiles-lobbyists-delist-mek>>

⁴¹ For example, see Asal et al. 2015; and Keck and Sikkink 1998.

⁴² Checkel 2013.

⁴³ Jones and Mattiacci 2015; McLaughlin 2003; Hocking 2005, pp. 39-40; Seib 2012; and Van Laer and Aelst 2010.

third-parties with differing ideologies of an existing preference alignment.⁴⁴ For example, Marxist groups fighting against an American ally would have a hard time convincing the U.S. of strategic alignment. Groups striving to corner the market may also find that it difficult to simultaneously convince multiple third-parties of an alignment of interest if the third-parties themselves are at odds with each other. Alternatively, ideologically neutral groups or umbrella organizations have greater flexibility to demonstrate alignment with many diverse actors.⁴⁵ Take, for example, Fateh and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). A wide variety of states supported Fateh and the PLO because Fateh was perceived as ideologically neutral, while the PLO represented many groups with diverse ideologies and goals. Fateh promoted its ideological ambiguity and that its ranks were filled with liberals, conservatives, Marxists, moderates, and extremists.⁴⁶ Because of its ideological diversity, the PLO had a large repertoire of issue-frames to choose from. The PLO was thus simultaneously supported by conservative Arab regimes like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as radical states like Libya, Iraq, and Syria.

Also important is the political flexibility within the third-party itself. State regimes are often themselves fragmented, meaning rebels can demonstrate an alignment of interest using a wider set of issue-frames.⁴⁷ For example, when asked how both the KDP and PUK were able to receive support from the Syrian regime simultaneously, one interviewee noted that these groups were supported by different, competing factions within the regime.⁴⁸ Similarly, the Syrian regime was skeptical of Fateh in the early 1960s, but the group was able to secure Syrian assistance from Air Force General Hafez al-Assad directly, who was personally sympathetic to

⁴⁴ Heraclides (1991, p. 40) discusses the importance of ideological flexibility.

⁴⁵ Bob 2005, p. 181.

⁴⁶ Amos 1980, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁷ For example, on internal divisions in states, see Cunningham 2014.

⁴⁸ Interview with Adel Murad, 25 June 2015, Sulaimani, Iraq.

the *fedayeen* at the time.⁴⁹ This ties into the general observation that insurgent diplomacy is as much about relations with foreign parties and factions, as it is with foreign states. Rebels can appeal directly to a government or to its opposition. The latter can either themselves persuade current leaders, or will prove useful once they transition from the opposition to government.

A second factor behind the likelihood of campaign success is a group's diplomatic capacity. Both political and material capacity is required for rebel groups to conduct successful diplomacy abroad. International travel and residency abroad is costly, and it requires serious organizational and political capacity to gain access to foreign actors.⁵⁰ One of the main criteria for gaining access is the diplomatic or political capacity of rebel groups. Beyond financial capital, rebel groups must maintain a political unit independent of its military institutions. For example, rebel groups often have a distinct political wings or an external leadership. Having seasoned politicians who can sell themselves as representatives of an organization, without being fully complicit military activity is critical for international travel and gaining access to states aligned with the COIN state.⁵¹

Having an independent political leadership also ensures that military defeat does not automatically include political defeat. This is particularly important for groups needing to engage in strategies like “outsourcing rebellion” and “outsourcing rivalry,” in which groups are no longer viable militarily. When a group's diplomatic institutions operate independent of the armed wing, or when groups have external political leaderships, the group can continue political campaigning even in the face of military defeat. For example, the African ANC and East Timorese FRETILIN maintained successful international campaigns despite being physically

⁴⁹ Sayigh 1997a, p. 105.

⁵⁰ For example, see Huang 2016.

⁵¹ Coggins 2015.

stifled at home. When military structures began to dissolve, they had well-established political institutions abroad that assumed leadership and used strategic diplomacy to continue the revolution abroad.⁵²

Independent political and diplomatic institutions can emerge when pre-war political organizations become militarized during conflict, or through endogenous institutional growth from rebel groups during war. Militant groups often emerge from pre-existing political organizations, which may continue to operate with relative autonomy.⁵³ When militant groups emerge from existing political organizations, they are sometimes born with existing diplomatic capacity. Groups may also partake in endogenous diplomatic institution building, although this is markedly more difficult. This includes designating a new political wing or external leadership, as well as creating formal diplomatic institutions.⁵⁴ In short, successful campaigns often hinge on whether groups actually have the personnel, resources, and institutions to engage in such behavior during the constraints of war.

A third factor that may affect the likelihood of successful solicitation are the larger goals of an insurgency. Groups intending to overthrow the central government should have more difficulty soliciting the COIN state's allies than groups with separatist aims. While center-seeking rebels require the central government to fall for the rebellion to succeed, separatist groups do not. Separatists can, for example, argue it is in the COIN state ally's best interests to help bring the conflict to a close because it may strengthen the COIN state and its ally in the long term. After all, third-parties do not want their allies fighting costly internal wars, when greater threats may be on the horizon. Furthermore, if a third-party is convinced its ally cannot weather a

⁵² Thomas 1996; and Weldemichael 2013a.

⁵³ Staniland 2014. Also see Weinberg 1991; and Della Porta 1995.

⁵⁴ On the creation of political parties from armed groups, see Acosta 2014.

prolonged conflict, it may be eager to facilitate a bargain to prevent the regime's collapse. In short, separatists can convince the COIN state's allies that it may be necessary to sever limb to save the body. That separatists do not necessarily demand the collapse of the central government creates a larger bargaining space between rebels and the COIN state's allies. Center-seeking rebels, on the other hand, are asking third-parties to be accomplices in their own ally's demise.

From Successful Campaigns to Successful Outcomes

Even if rebels are successful at soliciting the intervention they seek, this does not guarantee that they will successfully undermine the central government or rebel rivals. Success is a difficult outcome to explain in international politics. It often involves the confluence of a number of factors as well as chance. But we can conceive of certain scenarios in which success is *more likely*. Whether forthcoming interventions will allow groups to achieve their conflict- or movement-level outcomes depends on the *market of support* available to the group and its adversaries. This includes the number of outside actors supporting the central government and insurgents, and the extent of their influence over belligerents (Table 7.2).

Whether it is outsourcing rebellion, cornering the market, legitimizing rebellion, or outsourcing rivalry, the objective is to convince outside actors to shift their support away from one's enemies and toward oneself. By denying your adversary – state or rebel – access to outside assistance, you boost your own relative power and place your rivals in a position of vulnerability. Therefore, the task of isolating an adversary from critical sources of support will be most successful when their adversary has *fewer* international allies, who also have *large-scale* influence over the adversary's power.

For example, when trying to undermine a rival rebel faction, a small number of powerful pro-insurgent third-parties is ideal. Although a diverse market of supporters would increase the

odds that some third-party will assist the group, it will be more difficult to convince all third-parties to exclusively support one's own group or be complicit in undermining another. The more outside supporters of the rebellion, the greater chance one's rival can maintain at least one backer who will protect them or keep them afloat. It may be particularly hard for a group to corner the market of external support when the rebellion's backers are themselves in competition with one another. This creates a scenario in which third-parties explicitly back their own local faction and oppose attempts to undermine their proxies.⁵⁵ On the other hand, if there is *only one* main third-party supporter of the rebellion, a group can successfully dominate the movement if it can convince that actor to exclusively sponsor the group or directly undermine its rival.

This logic can also be applied towards competition with the central government. If the target state has only one major international ally, then rebels only need to convince one actor to turn against the target state. However, if the target state has multiple allies, then rebels must convince multiple allies to help apply pressure on the COIN state or support the rebels to have a positive change on conflict outcomes.⁵⁶

The second related factor is how dependent belligerents are on outside actors. For example, if one's adversary is highly dependent on a third-party, then convincing that party to cease its support or to pressure its own ally will have a large effect on the balance of power between actors. However, if a third-party provides minimal support to rebel rivals or the COIN state, then securing their assistance will still have only a small effect on the relative balance of power between the actors. This scenario can emerge, for example, if a group has significant local

⁵⁵ If outside backers collectively also prefer a fragmented movement to united one, then it will be especially difficult to convince all outside supporters that one's group should dominate all others.

⁵⁶ For example, see Beckley 2015 (p. 20) on diversification in alliance strategies. Also, see Schulhofer-Wohl 2012.

support bases that provide it with the resources it needs to be largely self-sufficient from outsiders.⁵⁷

Table 7.2: Effect of Successful Diplomacy on Movement- or Conflict-Level Goals

		Number of Third-Party Supporters	
		Few	Many
Adversary's Dependence on Third-Parties	High	High likelihood of success	Moderate likelihood of success
	Low	Moderate likelihood of success	Low likelihood of success

Peter Krause has argued that groups are more likely to achieve their strategic goals vis-à-vis the central government when a movement is hegemonic.⁵⁸ This is because insurgents focus all their attention on doing what they must to win the broader war. This argument also applies to the case of insurgent diplomacy. When groups are more united, they are more likely to focus on undermining the COIN state, which means they will solicit assistance from those that can have the biggest influence over the central government – the COIN state's allies. However, success is not a given even for united groups focusing on the COIN state's allies. Not only is successful solicitation itself difficult, but helpful third-party intervention does not guarantee broader conflict- or movement-level success.

⁵⁷ For example, see Weinstein 2007.

⁵⁸ Krause 2014.

Counter-Diplomacy in a World of Rebel Diplomats

The diplomatic behavior of the target state has been largely excluded from our analysis thus far. But where there is insurgent diplomacy, there is counter-diplomacy. COIN states can strive to silence rebel voices, pressure international actors to avoid contact with rebel diplomats, and provide alternative issue-frames to convince third-parties *not* to align their domestic enemies.⁵⁹ This, of course, makes the process of insurgent diplomacy more difficult.

But what can my theory say about the broader strategies of counter-diplomacy. When insurgent movements are fragmented, the COIN state should focus its counter-diplomacy on its own international adversaries to ensure no group gains movement hegemony or substantial external backing. Trying to sever the links between rebels and their supporters can perpetuate insurgent fragmentation and keep the opposition weak.⁶⁰

Alternatively, when an insurgent movement is united and focused on engagement with the COIN state's allies, the central government will also focus on its own allies. Facing a cohesive opposition, the COIN may now fear that its own allies are more susceptible to being influenced by these actors and may at least express sympathy for the opposition. They will thus do what they can to block rebel engagement with their own allies, and focus their diplomacy on keeping their existing alliances in place. Take, for example, the behavior of Iraq in the 1960s and the Turks in the 1990s. In both cases, Baghdad and Ankara appealed to the U.S. not to accept Kurdish diplomats or take official meetings with these actors to deprive them of legitimacy.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ker-Lindsay 2012. Also, see Jones and Mattiacci 2015.

⁶⁰ If the COIN state – for whatever reason – prefers to unite, not divide the opposition, then the primary target of diplomacy may remain the insurgency's third-party allies.

⁶¹ "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Iraq," 6 May 1965, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXI, Near East Region, Arabian Peninsula, Document 174; and Lawrence 2008, p. 40.

The Israelis pressured its allies not to recognize the PLO or take meetings with Palestinians, and the French strived to keep the FNL from engaging with Washington.⁶²

This prediction provides a slight corrective to Stephen David's influential work on omnibalancing. David argued that states facing internal opposition will realign themselves with the backers of the opposition to undermine their sources of foreign support. My argument is that such a strategy would make most sense if the opposition was itself fragmented. However, if the opposition is united, we should see these states double-down their diplomatic attention on existing allies to ensure they do not alter their supporter. Overall, one can expect state-led counter-diplomacy to be reactive: wherever and whomever they feel rebel diplomats are trying to reach, they will move their diplomats to engage with similar actors.

Policy Implications

The study of insurgent diplomacy has important policy-implications for third-parties considering involvement in civil wars. Intra-state conflict has come to dominate the way we think about international security today.⁶³ In addition to the horrors at home, local conflicts can undermine or appeal to third-party interests. Civil wars can easily cause spill-over effects that directly threaten the political, economic, and military stability of other states. As such, civil wars frequently become internationalized disputes.⁶⁴

Civil wars created major flashpoints for third-party intervention during the Cold War and continue to have a substantive impact on U.S. security politics in recent decades. Failed states like Somalia and Afghanistan can provide safe haven for destabilizing forces to operate and thrive, making the U.S. a frequent intervenor in these collapsed polities. When domestic unrest

⁶² For example, see Connelly 2002, pp. 201, 256.

⁶³ Gates et al. 2016.

⁶⁴ Gleditsch et al. 2008, and Poast 2015.

emerges in states that are adversarial to the U.S., there are opportunities to extend inter-state rivalry through local proxies. Of course, Washington is not the only country to consider third-party intervention. Nearly every major regional power faces similar threats and opportunities, and must decide how to approach intra-state conflicts that threaten their interests. A better understanding of insurgent diplomacy – how it works and why rebels do it – imparts important advice for policy-makers.

When the U.S. considers intervention of any scale abroad, difficult questions must be answered. Should the U.S. intervene at all? If so, which rebel groups should be supported, and with what type of aid? In multi-party conflicts, potential intervenors may have many factions to choose from. Which faction is most likely going to align with U.S. interests or operate most effectively? Should the U.S. support one faction or many factions? Should the U.S. put boots on the ground and engage the COIN state in coercive diplomacy, or simply provide indirect support to rebels? If the conflict involves an American ally, other questions emerge. Should the U.S. unconditionally back its allies and shun engagement with the opposition? When would the U.S. be willing to encourage regime change or at least use its leverage to help mediate concessions in favor of the opposition? The U.S. does, after all, sometime engage with those opposing its allies and has used its influence to persuade concessions from its own allies. In fact, the U.S. has engaged in regime change against its own allies.⁶⁵ In order for policy-makers to make informed decisions on these questions, they must understand the strategic and organizational motivations driving rebel requests for support.

Iterative engagement with rebel diplomats can help policy-makers sound out the usefulness of potential proxies. It is difficult to assess insurgent intentions from abroad. Being

⁶⁵ O'Rourke 2013; Downes and Monten 2013; Poznansky 2015; and Carson 2016.

able to dialogue with rebel diplomats and leaders can reveal previously undisclosed strategic alignment. Alternatively, engagement can unveil non-alignment where it was previously believed to exist. Dialogue can unearth distasteful information about a group, or it may be apparent the group had been lying about its goals and intentions. This is why the U.S. has heavily invested in “vetting” local rebels fighting against the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria.⁶⁶ In short, third-parties run the risk of making Type I and II errors when reading rebel intentions: They may believe that there is no alignment of interest between themselves and rebels when there is, and they may believe there is an alignment of interest when there truly isn't. Engagement with rebel diplomats can help correct and avoid both of these errors.

Even if engagement with rebel diplomats can convince actors that a strategic alignment is present, there is still the question of whether third-parties should actually provide the aid requested. This is where it is critical to understand the politics driving insurgent requests for assistance. Do insurgents want support to undermine rebel rivals or the central government? Rebel diplomats may say they want money, arms, and materiel to combat the central government, but then to the benefactor's dismay turn those guns against intra-insurgent rivals. Of course, whether intervenors care if their aid is being used to combat rebel rivals depends on what the third-party's own preferences are. If third-parties want to keep the movement united or allied, they should be hesitant to aid rebels that want to destroy their competitors. However, if third-parties believe that one faction should dominate the others, then knowing that intra-insurgent rivalry is driving rebel solicitation may create stronger incentives to support the group. In short, third-parties must ask themselves – and try to discern through engagement with rebel actors – what do rebels intend to achieve with our support?

⁶⁶ Alexander, David. 2015. “U.S. Begins Vetting Syrian Rebels for Military Training: Pentagon,” *Reuters*, 27 February 2015. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-usa-idUSKBN0LV2K620150227>>

Furthermore, even if third-parties become convinced they should assist foreign opposition movements, the question turns to how. Although strategic preferences may align, preferences over what type of support to provide can diverge. While rebels may prefer indirect intervention to avoid over-reliance on foreigners and foreign domination of the post-conflict environment, the third-party may prefer direct involvement because it believes it is most efficient or because they do intend to dominate the current and post-conflict local politics. For example, returning to an example from the introduction, some Shia militias in Iraq were against the use of U.S. airstrikes in the 2015 battle for Tikrit.⁶⁷ It is within reason that the U.S. sought to intervene directly to rob Shia militias of their victory – despite the fact that both actors were on the same side of this particular conflict – and the militias were aware of externality. On the other hand, third-parties may want to intervene indirectly when rebels prefer direct intervention. However, since rebels are *not* incentivized to request direct support unless it is critical, third-parties should heed these calls unless they are willing to let an insurgency collapse.

In short, third-parties can benefit from trying to decipher why rebel groups ask for specific types of support, and why they were specifically sought to provide assistance. Taking into consideration rebel preferences can also help third-parties understand why rebels remain frustrated even after assistance is offered. If the assistance type does not help rebels achieve their explicit goals – and in the manner they prefer – local proxies will be displeased even with the provision of assistance.

Finally, there are general benefits to third-party engagement with rebel diplomats. Opening more direct dialogue with armed non-state actors can help belligerents – and third-party

⁶⁷ Nordland, Rod, and Helene Cooper. 2015. “U.S. Airstrikes on ISIS in Tikrit Prompt Boycott by Shiite Fighters,” *The New York Times*, 26 March 2015. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/27/world/middleeast/iraq-us-air-raids-islamic-state-isis.html>>

mediators – find previously unknown common-ground on which to strike bargains.⁶⁸

Furthermore, even if a third-party decides not to become involved in an ongoing intra-state conflict, diplomatic engagement with rebel representatives can still serve as a major source of intelligence.⁶⁹ Of course, third-parties must always be concerned with recognizing groups that should not be legitimized.⁷⁰ Many groups are composed of unsavory characters, with causes that stand in direct opposition to accepted international norms and principles. However, the danger is in acknowledging these groups, not engagement with them. This is why much engagement with rebel actors remains covert.⁷¹ The fact that the U.S. openly declared the PLO to be a “terrorist organization” did not stop it from engaging PLO representatives in secret. If third-parties are seriously concerned with conflict resolution, finding ways to better understand and engage with rebels of all varieties can be beneficial if done with care.

Future Research

By examining the international politics of rebellion we gain a greater understanding of how and why rebel groups choose to engage with diverse third-party actors. The theory and analysis above has demonstrated that rebel groups are strategic actors who frequently look outside the conflict zone in the search of influence and leverage over their enemies, both state and rebel rivals alike. And in the pursuit of such assistance, groups care deeply about the types of intervention they request from outside actors. At the broadest level, this dissertation has demonstrated that beyond the choice of seeking support, rebel groups have unique preferences for the types of intervention provided and who should provide it. In short, I have argued that in

⁶⁸ Fearon 1995.

⁶⁹ Knopf 2011. On diplomacy as a form of intelligence collection, see Berridge 1995; Herman 1998; and Shulsky and Schmitt 2002.

⁷⁰ Zartman and Faure 2011.

⁷¹ Quinney and Coyne 2008.

order to understand the international politics of civil wars, one must understand both the supply- and demand-side politics of third-party intervention.

There is still more work to be done in understanding how rebels approach international actors. We can learn more about how rebels coordinate military campaigns to coincide with diplomatic advances and vice versa. We can examine what explains variation in the types of diplomatic institutions insurgents deploy and develop, as well as which fine-tuned tactics rebels use to execute their grand diplomatic strategies. We can further dissect the critical politics between the internal and external leaderships of rebel movements and trace how these dynamics shape political and military outcomes during war and in post-conflict politics. Furthermore, we can study how insurgent diplomacy affects the overall success of insurgent movements and the content and quality of post-war governance that forms thereafter.

Most importantly, we can better theorize how insurgent diplomacy and diplomacy at-large plays a role in the broader scheme of international politics. Diplomacy is shockingly under-theorized in the field of international relations. Yet if one looks close enough, one can see diplomacy everywhere. When we speak of states signaling their intentions to avoid conflict,⁷² diplomacy must certainly play a role. When one argues that democracies are better at communicating information and avoiding conflict with other democracies, diplomacy is an inherent feature in this process. When one is speaking of the role of international institutions and iterative dialogue in mitigating the security dilemma,⁷³ one is clearly speaking of iterative diplomacy. When one studies how actors elicit threats and engage in coercive bargaining,⁷⁴ these are forceful acts of diplomacy. When one studies negotiations of any sort, one is dissecting the

⁷² Kydd 2005; and Yarhi-Milo 2013, 2014.

⁷³ Keohane 1984.

⁷⁴ George 1991.

art of diplomacy. When one examines the politics of balancing, one examines the diplomacy of alliance formation.⁷⁵ Finally, when one studies conflict termination,⁷⁶ one is studying the diplomacy of surrender and victory. Behind nearly every dynamic and relationship in international relations is some form of dialogue. This dialogue is not only reserved for states, international institutions, and NGOs, but also to aspiring states and rebels who seek to penetrate, manipulate, and participate in international politics to their advantage.

⁷⁵ Waltz 1979; Snyder 1984; Walt 1987; and Mearsheimer 2001.

⁷⁶ Goemans 2012; and Regan and Aydin 2006.

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