USING SMALL POWERS TO GREAT EFFECT: 
HOW STATES USE INSURGENT PROXIES TO ACHIEVE FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

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USING SMALL POWERS TO GREAT EFFECT: HOW STATES USE INSURGENT PROXIES TO ACHIEVE FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

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ABSTRACT

Taking sponsorship of a foreign insurgency to be an instrument states have available for achieving foreign policy objectives, I consider how state sponsors could best manipulate their support to maximize control of the proxy group. Building on research that models the state-sponsor–insurgent relationship using a principal-agent framework, I identify two key vulnerabilities to which the state-sponsor is exposed: adverse selection and agency slack. As an original contribution to the literature on state-sponsorship of insurgency, I articulate reasons why certain forms of support would be most conducive to overcoming these problems and illustrate how South Africa and Iran used those kinds of support to influence the behavior of their proxies, Renamo and Hizballah. Two specific recommendations follow from this analysis: first, analysis and prediction of insurgent behavior should take into account the aims of the state driving the insurgency. Second, in order to defeat the state-sponsors’ strategy, counter-insurgents should focus on interdicting forms of support that increase the proxy’s responsiveness. By breaking the bond between the principle and agent, the counter-insurgent can affect a decrease in external support, which will ultimately lead to the insurgent’s isolation and defeat.
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I. The Relevance of the State-Sponsor’s Interests to the Study of Insurgency

Insurgency is the most prevalent form of warfare in the world today. No less than 28 of the 33 conflicts taking place throughout the world can be classified as insurgencies.\(^1\) The United States’ recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought this issue to the fore domestically, and there is now a wealth of academic literature that analyzes insurgent dynamics. The growing focus scholars and policy-makers are placing on the way insurgents think and work reflects the mounting sense that wars between states are on the decline, and that for the foreseeable future most wars will involve guerrilla cells fighting over local concerns. But are we giving these groups too much credit? Since 1980, 75% of insurgencies have been externally supported, and research shows that those that are not have little chance of succeeding.\(^2\) So, have we really witnessed a decline in interstate warfare over the past 30 years? It seems, rather, that states are not shying away from attacking each other; they are just doing so more discreetly. Accordingly, if insurgent groups are often being used as pawns in interstate power struggles then what we really want to know is how states are using insurgents to further their policy objectives.

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\(^1\) This claim is based on an evaluation of the 33 conflicts identified by Foreign Policy. See Ayvan Farzaneh, Andrew Swift, and Peter Williams, “Photo Essay: Planet War,” Foreignpolicy.com (22 February 2010), accessed 8 March 2011, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/02/22/planet_war](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/02/22/planet_war). The five conflicts that I do not consider to be insurgencies are: Kashmir, Korea, Iran, Mexico, and Gaza. Both the number of ongoing conflicts and the identification of each conflict as an insurgency are subject to debate. I could have used a variety of sources and criteria. All 28 of the conflicts identified in the 2010 Ploughshares Armed Conflict Report could be considered insurgencies. See Ploughshares Armed Conflict Report 2010, ploughshares.com, accessed 11 Feb 2011, [http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-TitlePage.html](http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-TitlePage.html).

\(^2\) According to a recent quantitative analysis of 52 cases performed by Connable and Libicki, only 18% of insurgencies that did not receive external support succeeded. See Ben Connable and Martin C. Libicki, *How Insurgencies End*, (Santa Monica: Rand, 2010), 62.
Aim and Scope of the Thesis

There is a wealth of academic literature exploring insurgency from the insurgent’s perspective, but there are comparatively few analyses of how state-sponsors use proxies to further foreign policy objectives. Idean Salehyan of the University of North Texas recently noted this gap in the literature. In a recent edition of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, he observes: “We do not have a proper theoretical or empirical grasp of why states choose such a strategy [state-sponsorship of insurgency] over direct warfare or why states use rebel patronage in tandem with direct attacks. Analysts must address why states—in whole or in part—delegate to proxy forces, the costs and benefits of doing so, and how external support changes the nature of the insurgency.”3 I take up this challenge by addressing how states can and do use proxies to advance their interests, with a special emphasis on how states can calibrate their support to overcome problems inherent to this approach. I do not intend to address, however, the question of why states choose this strategy. Answering that question would require looking at variables such as the state’s values, how its bureaucracies function, and what its other strengths and weaknesses are. That is beyond the scope of this thesis.

I follow Saleyhan in treating insurgency-sponsorship as an instrument of state policy. I take it to be one option states have available for getting what they want from a rival or defeating an adversary through indirect means. A state may choose this strategy as an alternative to more traditional approaches such as diplomacy, direct military intervention, or economic sanctions; or, it may sponsor a rebel group as part of a more comprehensive strategy that includes these more traditional forms of state-to-state interaction. Using an insurgent group has certain clear

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advantages. To name a few: the state does not risk its own soldiers; it can immediately withdraw from the conflict when its interests change; it can avoid costs associated with governing the defeated adversary’s territory; the indigenous fighters have greater local knowledge and motivation; and it can keep the intervention secret. When a state pursues its objectives by sponsoring an insurgency, however, it sacrifices a degree of control over the way the conflict is waged. This diminished control is the price the state pays for an otherwise economical policy instrument; the insurgent, after all, wants to use the outside support to pursue its own goals. My aim in this work has been to determine how states can exert influence over the groups they sponsor through the particular forms of support they elect to provide. After reviewing several diverse cases of proxy war, I have found that state sponsors appear to gain the most influence through ideological indoctrination, organizational aid, military training, embedded advisors, materiel and political support, and intelligence.4

Identifying these seven mechanisms is important because it suggests significant ways for defeating both insurgents and the objectives of their sponsors. Traditional counter-insurgency theory and doctrine focus on the insurgent’s strategy. As Sun Tzu famously wrote, “What is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy’s strategy.”5 Most of the counter-insurgency literature treats the insurgent as the enemy, so it is his strategy that they try to understand and defeat. External support is generally analyzed in terms of how it helps or hurts the insurgent

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4 Outside support comes from a multitude of sources, but contributions from states have the most impact. Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, David Brannan, Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements, (Santa Monica: Rand, 2001), xiv. This thesis could be broadened to include other sources of external support such as diasporas, religious sympathizers, or international terror networks. However, the logic of state-sponsorship is likely to differ significantly given that its support is driven predominantly by geo-political calculations rather than fealty, and because states are generally in a position to provide markedly greater support than other external actors.

advance its goals. But my findings suggest that sometimes the external sponsor’s strategy is
driving or sustaining the conflict. I therefore argue that counter-insurgents should take the state-
sponsor’s strategy into consideration as well, recognizing that a dynamic relationship exists
between the strategies of the sponsor and insurgent. This analysis will thus help policy-makers
and military commanders plan counter-insurgency efforts by shedding light on the crucial link
between state-sponsors and their proxies.

U.S. counter-insurgency strategy currently emphasizes a population-centric approach and
treats outside support as peripheral. Advocates of the population-centric counter-insurgency
approach commonly argue the state should focus on stripping the insurgent group of the support
it needs from the population by demonstrating the government’s capacity and willingness to
address the underlying problems the insurgents are rallying behind. By building government
capacity, the counter-insurgent can win the population to the state’s side, depriving the insurgent
of the support it needs to threaten the government. This population-centric strategy, however,
presumes that insurgency is actually driven by the domestic concerns portrayed in insurgent
propaganda and that popular support is necessary for insurgent success. In many cases, that will
in fact be the case and this strategy might be appropriate. In other cases, however, the meddling
of outside sponsors could be driving the conflict and a strategy that hinges on building domestic

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6 David Galula whose work has been highly influential in shaping U.S. counter-insurgency doctrine serves as a good
example. He includes his discussion of outside support in his chapter on the prerequisites for a successful
International, 2008), 25-28. See also, Jeffrey Record, Beating Goliath: Why Insurgencies Win. (Dulles: Potomac
Books, 2007); Bard O’Neill, Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse. (Dulles: Potomac Books,
2005), and Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan, Trends in Outside
Support for Insurgent Movements, (Santa Monica: Rand, 2001).

7 The classic texts of population-centric counter-insurgency include: Galula, Counterinsurgency Warfare, 2008;
John A. Nagl, Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counter-insurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam,
(Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005); Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-24, Counterinsurgency
(Washington: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2006).
support would fail to address the insurgency’s underlying cause. At the very least, foreign interference is likely to play an important role in many future insurgent conflicts and a population-centric counter-insurgency strategy will be incomplete if it is not complemented with a strategy for depriving the insurgent of outside support. By expanding our ability to anticipate strategic decisions states are likely to make in regard to sponsoring rebel groups in other countries, decision-makers and leaders can exploit potential vulnerabilities. When an insurgent is dependent on a sponsor, the insurgent’s behavior may not always be directed by its own best interest; it must strike a bargain with its sponsor who is often struggling to gain influence over the insurgent’s operational choices. As a result, the counter-insurgent may be able to drive a wedge between them.

I begin by analyzing the state-sponsor – proxy relationship as an instance of more general principal – agent (P-A) theory in an effort to explicate the key challenges states face getting their proxies to act in their interest. Using historical examples, I hypothesize that the specific forms of sponsorship listed above seem to provide the sponsoring state with the most leverage over its proxy. This discussion will help the reader understand why some states are able to use proxies to their advantage, while others fail to achieve their goals.

In the heart of the paper, I use two paradigmatic cases fought over the last 30 years to illustrate the P-A dynamic in insurgencies – South Africa’s sponsorship of the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo) in Mozambique and Iran’s sponsorship of Hizballah in Lebanon. I chose these cases for three reasons: the extent of the external influence, the success of the intervention, and the diversity of the two cases. It is sometimes difficult to discern the impact of external support on a particular insurgency because the insurgents’ propaganda usually
promotes its activities as free of foreign influence. Both Renamo and Hizballah are clear cases of tremendous state support, so there is very little controversy over the question of sponsorship.\textsuperscript{8} In both of these cases, the state-sponsor’s objectives in supporting the insurgency were met to a reasonable extent, so lessons can be learned from their success. These two cases are sufficiently distinct from one another that they illustrate different approaches. South Africa was dealing with an apolitical insurgent group to which it bore no affinity, while Iran’s relationship with Hizballah was characterized by their shared Shia radicalism. These two cases, thus, provide a rich and diverse set of examples that can help illustrate the mechanisms states can use to control their proxies. I follow these case studies with policy recommendations that follow from my research. Specifically, I suggest that counter-insurgents should use this knowledge of how state sponsors manipulate their proxies, to interdict support that is vital for maintaining the proxy’s usefulness to the sponsor. By reducing the proxy’s utility to the sponsor, the counter-insurgent can reduce the sponsor’s interest in continuing the relationship, leaving the insurgent isolated and vulnerable. Finally, I conclude by discussing some further lines of research that are suggested by this thesis.

\section*{II. Principal–Agent Analysis of the Challenges Faced by the State Sponsor}

This is the first effort to use the P-A model to analyze how states leverage particular forms of support to influence the behavior of their proxies. This analysis adds specificity to previous work done on the kinds of support that increase state-sponsors’ influence over their proxies. Very few authors address the efficacy of different types of support from the sponsor’s

\textsuperscript{8} For a rare argument that scholars have radically overestimated South Africa’s contribution to the Renamo insurgency see David Hoile, \textit{Mozambique, Resistance and Freedom}, (London: Santa Monica Institute, 1994).
point of view, and most who do, touch on it only briefly. Typically, authors write vaguely of the precariousness of the insurgent’s relying on an outside state’s support, noting the sponsor can withhold support when its interests shift or when it disapproves of the insurgents’ actions. In his 2010 Georgetown Masters Thesis, Albert Kirkpatrick offers a rare discussion on the topic. Building on the literature that takes the insurgent’s dependence on the state-sponsor to be the sponsor’s sole source of leverage, he argues that money and weapons are the types of support that yield the most long-term influence.\(^9\) While it is reasonable enough to conclude that the insurgent group’s dependence on its sponsor provides the sponsor with leverage it can use to influence the group’s behavior, the state-sponsor has available other, subtler, forms of influence. The present analysis takes advantage of the P-A model to generate a range of options state-sponsors have for influencing their proxies that is more robust than previous discussions of the issue that emphasize only the insurgent’s dependent position.

The P-A model is designed to account for relations between delegating powers (principals) and proxies responsible for carrying out the duties assigned by the principal (agents). The principal has specific tasks it needs accomplished for which the agent is well-suited, and which would be costly for the principal to perform itself. This leads the principal to contract these tasks out to an agent in return for providing operational necessities and compensation. The principal also entrusts the agent to make the appropriate decisions to satisfy the task since the agent supposedly has the requisite expertise and the principal does not usually want to be burdened with the costs of micro-management. The principal consequently grants the agent a degree of autonomy, and in so doing sacrifices some control over the process. Agents usually

already have an interest in conducting the assigned work, but lack the resources to run the operation without a sponsor. In theory, the relationship is mutually beneficial. In reality, however, the principal must take steps to ensure the agent is working for it since the agent has interests of its own.

States that delegate important tasks to proxies in this way face some structurally similar problems. The two most prominent are: adverse selection and agency slack. The problem of adverse selection is related to choosing an appropriate agent. It results from the principal’s limited knowledge of the agent. At the beginning of the relationship the sponsor typically does not have a clear understanding of the agent’s capabilities or intent. The second problem deals with actions taken by the agent after the relationship has been established. In the pursuit of its own ends, an agent may act contrary to the interests of the principal, producing what is known as ‘agency slack.’ I will now take a closer look at how these two problems affect state-sponsors of insurgency.

A state-sponsor can go wrong in two ways when choosing a proxy: it might choose a group whose goals are out of synch with its own, or it might choose a group that lacks the capacity to fulfill the sponsor’s needs. An example of the former is Cuba’s support for the Marxist insurgency in the Congo in 1965. Hoping to incite a Cuban style revolution, Che Guevara traveled to the Congo with a small contingent of experienced and motivated guerillas to assist insurgent forces led by local strongman Laurent Kabila. Guevara had very little

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10 Two additional problems, which are generated from the principal’s side of the relationship, are multiple principals and collective principals. When multiple authorities within the delegating state have established a relationship with the agent, the agent can play them off of each other; this is the problem of multiple principals. When more than one principal is contracting with the same agent to perform related tasks, the interests of those various principals must first be reconciled; this is the problem of collective principals. I will leave aside the latter two, principal-side, problems in the remainder of this work and focus exclusively on adverse selection and agency slack.
knowledge of the situation on the ground before he arrived, but assumed the righteousness of the 
Communist cause would be enough to spark a popular revolution. He quickly discovered, to his 
disappointment, Kabila was more interested in drinking and carousing than in establishing a 
Marxist state.\textsuperscript{11} State sponsors, thus, must be careful to back only groups committed to 
accomplishing the tasks with which they have been entrusted. This is often a gamble because the 
sponsoring state typically lacks adequate intelligence of the fledgling insurgent group’s 
intentions. The 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco illustrates the second way a state sponsor can select 
adversely. The United States deployed a force of over 1,300 anti-Castro guerillas in an 
amphibious assault on Cuba with the expectation that they would overthrow the regime. The 
anti-Castro forces were not supported by a domestic opposition movement, which might have 
rallied local resistance or distracted Castro’s armed forces. They were defeated in two days.\textsuperscript{12} 
Thus, when choosing to use an insurgent proxy as an instrument to achieve a specific foreign 
policy objective, the state must ensure the insurgent group is sufficiently powerful to accomplish 
its task.

Similarly, agency slack can manifest itself in two ways. The insurgents might be 
secretive or deceptive in using external support in ways that further their own interests at the 
expense of the sponsor’s, or the insurgent proxy might plainly devolve into a ‘Frankenstein’ – a 
dangerous monster with a mind of its own – that causes unexpected blowback against the 
sponsor.\textsuperscript{13} The Chinese encountered the first problem when they supported the South

\textsuperscript{11} Saleyhan, “The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations,” 5. 
\textsuperscript{12} Christopher Andrew, For the President’s Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from 
\textsuperscript{13} Creating a Frankenstein, however, might not be an entirely bad move for a state-sponsor. On the one hand, the 
sponsor sacrifices control over the proxy. This is undesirable because there is no guarantee the insurgents will 
pursue the strategic objectives the state-sponsor wishes. In fact, the insurgent may turn against the sponsor itself, as
Vietnamese Communist insurgents, the Vietcong, from 1962-1970. Despite ostensibly remaining loyal to the Chinese Communist Party, the insurgents drifted increasingly further from Beijing’s strategic and ideological vision through the course of the conflict. The Communist regime that took power in 1972 was not the regime envisioned by Chinese Communist leaders when the war began. As an example of a Frankenstein, in the early 1990s Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) created Lashkar e-Taiba (LeT), an Islamist terror organization, in order to provide Pakistan a proxy to attack India. By 2008, LeT was no longer concerned with Pakistan’s interests, and executed a terrorist campaign against India that caused unexpected blowback against its sponsor. The Mumbai attacks on 26 November 2008, in which LeT militants killed 162 and wounded over 300 in a coordinated bombings throughout India’s largest city, appeared at least in part to be an attempt to provoke a larger conflict between India and Pakistan. Had India responded, the circumstances of the confrontation would not necessarily have been to Islamabad’s advantage.

General solutions to the problems of adverse selection and agency slack are frequently discussed in the literature. Principals can address the adverse selection problem by instituting screening measures that ensure the personnel working for the agent share the principal’s ultimate

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when the PLO disregarded its sponsor’s sovereignty and established what amounted to a state within a state in Jordan after taking safe-haven there when Israel expelled it from the West Bank following the Six Day War in 1967. Also, by losing control over its proxy, the sponsor loses influence over the peace process since it no longer appears to have the ability to stop the violence. That is, it has become irrelevant. The sponsor, therefore, needs to at least create the illusion that it maintains influence over the insurgents. On the other hand, the sponsor typically does not want to be accountable for the insurgents’ actions. This, after all, is one of the key benefits of outsourcing the conflict to the proxy. The sponsor, therefore, needs to make it appear as if the insurgents are acting autonomously. Losing control over the insurgents and gaining accountability for the insurgents’ behavior are the Scylla and Charybdis between which the state-sponsor must steer a course. Depending on its specific needs – negotiating power over a rival state, protection against a wayward proxy, or deniability – a state-sponsor may prefer a respectable proxy over whom it has clear influence or a Frankenstein that it can unleash against its enemy with reckless abandon.

goal.\textsuperscript{15} Agency slack can be addressed through oversight mechanisms such as directly monitoring the agent, or delegating out supervision to another agent.\textsuperscript{16} In “The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations,” Salehyan proposes some ways a state-sponsor specifically might address the problems inherent to P-A dynamics.\textsuperscript{17} He suggests screening agents based on shared ethnicity, religion, and language to address the problem of adverse selection.\textsuperscript{18} Agency slack, he suggests, can be addressed through embedded trainers and advisors who oversee agent behavior, as well as by providing extensive training and indoctrination.\textsuperscript{19} Lastly, the state-sponsor can sanction behavior out of line with its agenda. The state, for example, can cease providing resources, or expel the group if it is taking safe-haven in the state’s borders.\textsuperscript{20} Screening, monitoring, and sanctioning are the keys to controlling an agent. What seems unique about the state-sponsor – proxy relationship is that, optimally, these control mechanisms are part and parcel of the support the state provides. There is a logical distinction between the state’s efforts to control and support its proxy; in theory, the state could approach these as two separate problems. In the next section, however, I demonstrate that the state has numerous means at its disposal to control its proxy through the support it provides.

Using Selective Support to Address Problems Inherent to the P-A Dynamic

In \textit{Trends in Outside Support to Insurgent Movements}, Georgetown Professor and insurgency expert Daniel Byman and his Rand colleagues evaluate the usefulness of various

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 246.
\textsuperscript{17} Salehyan, “The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations,” 2010.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 505.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 505.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 506.
types of support from the insurgent’s perspective. What I propose to do here is evaluate the various forms of support from the state-sponsor’s perspective. As the preceding discussion shows, the P-A model is a useful way of analyzing the problems states face in dealing with the insurgent groups they sponsor, in part because it exposes tensions built into the relationship. I argue that a state-sponsor’s ability to manipulate the behavior of its proxy will depend on how it overcomes the problems inherent to the P-A dynamic, which can be addressed directly through strategic and tactical selection of the particular forms of support it provides. Specifically, I suggest that forms of support that allow the principal to screen its recipients, allow for direct oversight, or that limit the options the agent has for formulating an independent strategy will work best for the principal. Forms of support that increase the agent’s capacity without consideration of its intentions will yield the least control. Providing AK-47s, for example, will work better than giving money because the insurgent could buy land mines, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), Surface to Air Missiles, etc – weapons appropriate to a strategy in which the principal may not necessarily be interested.

The insurgents’ needs differ from case to case and the circumstances that would allow the state-sponsor to provide one form of support (e.g. safe haven) in one instance may not be present in other cases. Thus, the particular forms of support that will work best can be expected to vary from conflict to conflict depending on circumstances, goals, and strategies. Each form of support provides the state-sponsor with an opportunity to exert influence and no particular type of support is in itself essential. What is decisive is that the state-sponsor provide it in the right manner. The key is for the principal to incorporate control mechanisms into the support itself.

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21 Byman et. al., “Trends in Outside Support For Insurgent Movements,” 2001, chapter 6. According to their research, the most useful types of support are: money, safe haven, and direct military or political support. Training, weapons, fighters, intelligence, organizational aid, and inspiration are evaluated as having lesser impact.
Adverse Selection

The problem of adverse selection is that the sponsor does not know whether the potential proxy has the capabilities it needs, or if the group’s objectives suitably overlap with its own. The state-sponsor, however, need not be passive; it can use its support to mold the group to fit its needs. In their early phases, insurgent groups often are ideologically and militarily malleable.

The following types of support, I suggest, will help the state-sponsor overcome the problem of adverse selection:

1. Ideological indoctrination – Ideology is most important in the earliest phases of an insurgency when the rebels are trying to generate popular support and attract new members. Later in the conflict, insurgents tend to be more willing to compromise with the government for the sake of making political gains, but early on the rebels are still receptive to ideological messaging that clarifies the purpose for which they are fighting. Indoctrination should focus on the movement’s present and future leaders. Ultimately it is they who will determine the direction the rebel group is going to take once it obtains power, so the state-sponsor should ensure that the group’s core leadership is responsive to its demands. The Pakistani ISI understood the importance of ideology when it began sponsoring the insurgency against India in Kashmir. The uprising began in 1989 as a nationalist movement, but after Pakistan’s intervention the conflict took on a distinctively Islamist character. Kashmir’s struggle for self-determination, thus, became linked with the Pakistani-backed global jihad movement.22 Pakistan was thus able to use ideological indoctrination as a means to expand its strategic depth in South Asia.

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2. Organizational aid and leadership cultivation – While they note the value of this type of support, Byman and his co-authors list it as one of the minor forms of support from the insurgent’s perspective because a strong insurgent group must eventually organize itself.\(^{23}\) The organizational weakness of the group, however, is an opportunity for the sponsor. The state is in a position to broker deals between various factions in a way that favors those factions most sympathetic to its own agenda; similarly, it can focus its support on individual leaders it believes will prove most reliable. The state’s choices about when and where to send aid also could have an impact on the identity the group establishes for itself; the state can effectively transform a local movement into a nationwide rebellion by spreading its support over a wider geographic span. The state can use assistance with recruitment and propaganda to further its advantage by using it to screen potential members and promote its own message. Thus, by carefully manipulating its organizational aid, the state-sponsor can shape the raison d’être of the insurgent. Following the fall of Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime in Iraq in 2003, the Sadrist insurgent group Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) was susceptible to this sort of manipulation from Iran. JAM was a loosely organized militia, led by a young cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, whose only qualification was that he was the son of a prominent Ayatollah who had been martyred at the hands of Saddam’s assassins. Iran helped organize the group into a formidable resistance movement capable of inflicting significant casualties on U.S. led Coalition forces. Further, Iranian intelligence established relations with some of Muqtada’s senior lieutenants, providing training, arms, and money directly to those most sympathetic to Tehran. These “special groups” existed within the mainstream insurgent

group, but could be used by Iran to conduct special operations. Additionally, Iran could use its influence over these special groups to pressure Muqtada to follow its guidance. In this way, Iran leveraged its organizational support to ensure the Iraqi insurgency served Tehran’s interests.

3. Military Training – Perhaps the surest way a principal can ensure its agent has the capacity to effectively perform the missions it wants them to carry out is for it to establish those capabilities itself. Does the state want a proxy capable of assassinating political enemies? Then train assassins. Does it want to destabilize its neighbor with terrorist attacks? Then train suicide bombers and car bomb makers. Does it want to gather intelligence on its enemy? Then train intelligence collectors. Autocracies, it should be noted, have more leeway than democracies in using military training to their advantage. The states most notorious for training insurgents, Pakistan and Iran, have no qualms about training insurgents to perform acts that would not be acceptable for their own troops to conduct, such as suicide bombings, assassinations, and kidnappings. In January 2007, weeks after Coalition forces in Iraq arrested four officers from Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force (IRGC-QF), an Iranian sponsored Special Groups kidnapping cell executed a highly sophisticated kidnapping operation targeting U.S. soldiers in Karbala. A few months later a U.S. reconnaissance satellite discovered a training camp in Iran housing a mockup of the


25 When President Eisenhower determined Fidel Castro was a threat to U.S. security and needed to be eliminated, the head of the Cuban operations task force, Richard Bissell, entertained the idea of outsourcing the mission to the mafia since the United States had no trained assassins at its disposal. This attests to the self-imposed limits democratic nations place on themselves. Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only*, 252.

targeted complex. This is a very specific example of how a state sponsor can tailor its insurgent training to meet its own interests.

Agency Slack

The problem of agency slack refers to the potential for gaps to widen between the principal’s interests and the agent’s over the course of the relationship; this leads the agent to take advantage of its sponsor’s contributions while advancing only its own narrow set of objectives, often secretly, and sometimes at the principal’s expense. Both Byman and Saleyhan point out that the state is in a position to punish this sort of deviance by withholding or reducing support when it discovers what its proxy is doing. This sort of sanctioning behavior is likely to be most effective in the later stages of the conflict if the insurgents have become dependent on the support. In addition to disciplining its wayward proxy, the state-sponsor has a number of other means at its disposal for reducing agency slack:

1. Embedded advisors – The presence of embedded advisors serves two purposes. First, these representatives of the sponsoring state will be able to observe rogue activity, or perhaps deter it. Second, they will be able to bias their advice to persuade the insurgents to act in ways that are conducive to the sponsoring state’s objectives. Pakistan’s ISI again sets the standard for using embedded advisors. The close relationship between the ISI and Afghan insurgents allows Pakistan to closely monitor their proxy’s behavior and respond when that behavior does not align with Islamabad’s preferences. In February 2010, Pakistan arrested a number of Taliban leaders including its military commander,

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Mullah Barader, presumably because they were considering negotiating with the Afghanistan government.\(^{28}\) The arrests have continued, and a number of Taliban leaders have also been assassinated through April 2011.\(^{29}\) Pakistan is able to target defiant leadership due to the intimate relationship the ISI enjoys with the insurgent leadership. According to interviews with Afghan insurgents, the ISI has representatives in the Quetta Shura, the supreme council of the Afghan Taliban.\(^{30}\) Pakistan thus can influence the strategic direction of the insurgency through direct participation in its leadership council’s decision-making process.

2. Materiel support – Insurgents will only conduct the sort of missions for which they are equipped. Insurgents undoubtedly need weapons to win, but the weapons they have will influence the kinds of military operations they will conduct. Therefore, the state-sponsor can supply weapons designed to win tactical conflicts that fit into the state-sponsor’s strategy. These weapons may be less than ideal for satisfying the insurgents’ strategic objectives, but if its sponsor gives it to them, they are very likely going to use them. This goes for communications equipment, transportation, medical supplies, and any other materiel. Near the end of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, Saddam Hussein increased materiel support to the Iranian insurgent group the Mujahidin e-Khalq, arming it with tanks and rockets, in order to strike a decisive blow against Iran at the moment most advantageous to Baghdad. Following the fall of Baghdad in 2003, Iran influenced the post-invasion insurgency by providing RPGs and EFPs designed to damage heavily armored vehicles with the expectation that the insurgents would focus their attention on

U.S. forces rather than more lightly protected government forces. When Iranian-provided weapons were used to assassinate two Shia governors in southern Iraq in 2007, Iran became more conservative in its distribution of lethal aid in order to ward off unwanted internecine conflict between Iraq’s rival Shia factions. Thus we see how choices a state sponsor makes about the provision of materiel support can help it achieve its own strategic goals, not just the insurgent’s.

3. Political support – The state-sponsor is in a position to champion the insurgents' cause both in the international community and with the host government. Often the state-sponsor’s recognition of the insurgent faction as a legitimate political movement limits the response that the host nation and international community can take against it. The advantage for the sponsoring state, in turn, is that it can tailor the perception of the insurgent’s cause to suit its own interests. Even if a gap has opened between the insurgent and its sponsor as the conflict enters its terminal phase, the sponsor should already have assured himself a seat at the bargaining table. Egypt gained legitimacy in the eyes of its own population as the result of its recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Championing the Palestinian cause in international fora is a tactic that several states to include, Egypt, Jordan, and Iran, at various times, have used to bolster their own standing in the region.

4. Intelligence – At the operational level, a state can provide actionable intelligence on targets it wants hit, regardless of how these operations would impact the insurgent's strategy. At the strategic level, it can provide misleading information concerning the host state's capabilities and intentions in order to heighten the group's threat perception and
increase its sense of dependence. Evidence of states using this particular mechanism of control is harder to find than the others due to the secretive nature of intelligence communications. However, as mentioned above, the highly specialized training Iran provided for the insurgents who conducted the January 2007 kidnapping operation targeting U.S. soldiers included detailed intelligence on the targeted compound. Iran wanted the target to be hit, and provided the training and intelligence to make it happen.

III. Case Illustrations: Renamo and Hizballah

This section begins with a brief overview of the Renamo insurgency that took place in Mozambique between 1976 and 1992 and the Hizballah insurgency that commenced in Lebanon in 1982 and is ongoing. These overviews will include a discussion of the interests the insurgent groups’ key sponsors South Africa and Iran, respectively, had in the conflicts. Other sponsors played important roles in these conflicts, but their involvement will be treated peripherally in this section. I will then discuss how South Africa and Iran leveraged their support to establish and maintain influence over their agents, ensuring the insurgents acted in their sponsors’ interest. I will first look at how each state-sponsor handled the problem of adverse selection, and then discuss how they dealt with agency slack. This analysis, however, does not assume the principals involved necessarily took the actions they did in a self-conscious effort to address the problems of agency. In some cases, the principals did in fact appear to take measures with the

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31 In Renamo’s case, there is little difficulty abstracting South Africa’s involvement from other state-sponsors because the only other significant sponsor was Rhodesia from 1976 to 1980, and South Africa’s involvement did not begin in earnest until Rhodesia’s ended. Since Rhodesia’s and South Africa’s roles were sequential it is easy to distinguish the impact each had on Renamo’s behavior. The case of Hizballah is more challenging. Syrian support is vital to the organization and it overlaps with Iran’s support. This raises the problem of collective principals discussed in the previous section.
explicit intention of securing a degree of control over their agent, but in other cases, the controlling affect of the sponsor’s behavior was most likely fortuitous. What is important for the purposes of this study, however, is not the principal’s intentions, but the impact of its support.

**Overviews of the Mozambican and Lebanese Insurgencies**

*Renamo in Mozambique*

From 1980 to 1992, Renamo was a South African sponsored insurgent group that plagued the newly formed post-colonial government in Mozambique, preventing Mozambique from threatening Pretoria’s geo-strategic ambitions. The insurgent group’s own political agenda was vague at best during its early stages, a fact that has given rise to the widely held view that Renamo was little more than a puppet of its outside sponsors – Rhodesia from 1976 up until its dissolution in 1980 and South Africa after that. Renamo formed immediately after Mozambique gained its independence from Portugal in 1976 when disenfranchised members of the colonial regime and cast-outs from the victorious Frente de Libertação de Moçambicana (Frelimo) party escaped to Rhodesia. Rhodesia took this as an opportunity to create a proxy it could send inside its neighbor’s borders to assist in its counter-insurgency efforts against the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), the armed wing of the anti-Rhodesian

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Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Rhodesian intelligence organized Renamo into a small-scale rebel group that could destabilize areas under ZANU’s control and provide intelligence support to Rhodesian forces crossing into Mozambique to confront ZANLA insurgents. While under Rhodesian control, Renamo did not represent a threat to Maputo. As the apartheid regime in Rhodesia was ending, Rhodesian intelligence transferred control of the organization to South Africa, which was facing a similar problem with Mozambique-based anti-apartheid insurgents. South African advisors had already established a relationship with Renamo at this point, but they had not played an important role in shaping the organization. When South Africa took over primary sponsorship in 1980, however, it radically transformed Renamo into a large-scale insurgent organization, which Pretoria used as an agent for advancing its foreign policy objectives inside Mozambique.

South Africa had three objectives in Mozambique that it was expecting Renamo to achieve on its behalf. First, it wanted Renamo to serve as a retaliatory force that could intimidate Maputo into ceasing its support to anti-South African insurgents. Second, it believed the group could cause sufficient economic trouble to ensure the failure of the communist experiment in southern Africa; thus, minimizing Soviet involvement in the region. Third, it aimed to use Renamo as a means to sever Mozambique’s economic ties to other nations in the region in order to keep them each individually dependent on South Africa and isolated from each other so that

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35 Young, “The MNR/Renamo: External and Internal Dynamics,” 496.
they would be unable to unite against apartheid South Africa. This last reason was perhaps the most important. South Africa was counting on the “Front Line States,” a confederation of southern African states seeking democratic rule in the region, being more interested in economic development than in opposing apartheid. Pretoria’s foreign policy, thus, aimed at forming a “constellation of states” centered around South Africa – which would provide managerial expertise, capital, and technology, while each of its neighbors provided raw materials and labor. South Africa, consequently, wanted more than to just destabilize Mozambique’s economy, it wanted Renamo to prevent Mozambique’s ports from benefiting other Front Line States as well. Pretoria, however, did not want Renamo to take over Mozambique because it did not want to be burdened with having to prop-up a Renamo-led government.

While the apartheid regime in South Africa collapsed during the period it was sponsoring Renamo, this was not due to any failure to get Renamo to do its part in Mozambique. Overall, South African Special Forces were adept in controlling the insurgents, and Pretoria was effective in using Renamo as its agent. The keys to South Africa’s success, as we shall see, were its ability to shape Renamo through its organizational support and military training, and to limit agency slack through embedded advisors and materiel support.

*Hizballah in Lebanon*

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the newly emerging Islamic regime in Iran was able to influence the hearts and minds of its Shia brethren in conflict-ridden Lebanon and use them to advance Tehran’s own objectives in the Levant. From 1975 to 1990, Lebanon was engulfed in a sectarian civil war that saw Sunnis, Shias, and Maronite Christians struggling for political

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dominance, while outside actors such as Israel, the PLO, Iran, and Syria treated Lebanon as a battlefield for their own conflicts – dramatically influencing the dynamics of the civil war. When the war began in 1975, the Shia were an underrepresented minority in Lebanon’s confessional political system. The Christians had the most control over the government and were well supported by the Phalange militia. The Sunni population was championed by PLO fighters who had been expelled from Israel and took safe haven in Lebanon where they had veto power over the government and were provoking destabilizing retaliatory strikes from Israeli forces. Initially, the Shia were represented by the comparatively moderate and religiously tolerant militia Afrwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya (or The Brigades of the Lebanese Resistance, or AMAL). After the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, where the majority of Shia lived, a more radical party – the Party of God, or Hizballah, became the primary vehicle for Shia power in Lebanon. With Iranian and Syrian support, Hizballah was able to push the occupying forces out of Lebanon and establish a basis for Shia power in Beirut. In sharp contrast with Renamo, Hizballah’s ideological objectives were strongly stated at the outset; the group aimed to establish a religious government subordinate to the Islamic clerics ruling Iran.

In 1979 religious zealots led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established a Shia theocracy in Iran that was deeply alienated from its neighbors who feared Iran would attempt to radicalize their own Shia populations and provoke them to overthrow their Sunni-controlled governments. These fears were well founded as the new Islamic regime in Iran considered exporting the revolution throughout the Islamic world to be both an ideological and strategic imperative. The conflict in Lebanon represented a crucial opportunity for the Islamic Republic to spread its revolutionary ideals beyond its borders, establish itself as an important regional
actor that could project power into Israel and manipulate Lebanese power dynamics, and acquire increased military strength through a heavily armed militia proxy. All of these aims were to be accomplished through control over its agent Hizballah.

Iran’s relationship with Hizballah is often considered the paradigm for how a state should exert influence over a proxy insurgent group. While Hizballah established itself as the predominant political actor in Lebanon, fundamentally transforming the sectarian power dynamics in favor of the Shia, Iran was also able to capitalize on its agent’s success and satisfy many of its foreign policy goals. As we will see, Iran astutely leveraged organizational aid, military training, ideological indoctrination, political and materiel support, intelligence, and embedded advisors to drastically reduce problems of adverse selection and agency slack.

**Support that Addresses Adverse Selection**

*South African Support to Renamo*

In a sense, Pretoria did not select Renamo since the Rhodesians delivered the group to it. This, however, did not spare South Africa the problems of adverse selection confronted by any principal entering a relationship with an agent. Pretoria had decided to implement an ambitious foreign policy scheme that would entail delegating significant responsibilities to its new agent, so it needed to know that Renamo was up to the task at the outset. Many of the rebels had military backgrounds, either with the Portuguese Special Forces or with Frelimo, so South Africa at least knew its proxy had some basic military capacity. But South Africa lacked any strong ties to the group since it was not connected to the insurgents by religion, ethnicity, politics, or even race. Hence the South Africans could not count on Renamo assuming the role of a natural ally, but
rather had to settle for a strategic partner. As we will see, South Africa had little difficulty exploiting the upper hand in its relationship to shape the insurgent organization to meet its needs.

Renamo’s lack of ideological direction worked to South Africa’s advantage, even if it would clearly be attributing too much cunning to Pretoria to suggest it set out deliberately to contract an agent lacking a concrete political program. Renamo’s early membership had little reason to resist Pretoria’s strategic guidance because it was not committed to any objectives of its own. By all accounts, ideological indoctrination was not part of a new recruit’s initiation into the organization. Furthermore, political ideals were rarely discussed and were not considered important. Had South Africa invested in a proxy that truly sought economic reform or to respect the traditional ethos of the villagers, as Renamo superficially claimed, it would have had a much more difficult time persuading them to wreak the sort of havoc on the countryside that it did.

According to William Minter, a Georgetown University African Studies professor who interviewed over 30 former Renamo insurgents, none of the ex-fighters considered themselves part of a political movement; rather, they saw themselves as part of an army. A rebel army without a cause is certainly a tempting weapon for a nation wanting to cause problems inside its neighbor’s borders. Thus, in this instance, the principal did not need to ideologically indoctrinate its agent in order to convince it to fight for the principal’s objectives, it could rely on the agent’s own lack of a competing vision.

While South Africa did not have to work very hard to cultivate Renamo’s ideological outlook, it invested considerable resources into cultivating its leadership and providing organizational support. South Africa effectively controlled the core cadre of leadership

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guaranteeing responsive individuals were making the important strategic decisions. From the
time South Africa took over sponsorship in 1980 until 1983, Renamo’s headquarters was located
in South Africa, and South African officials directed the general lines of the insurgents’ strategy
in conjunction with Renamo Commander in Chief Afonso Dhlakama and Secretary General
Orlando Cristina. Dhlakama was typically deferential. When South Africa had problems with
Cristina, he was assassinated – allegedly on South Africa’s orders. Evo Fernandes, who South
Africa considered much more dependable, succeeded him. Other insurgent leaders critical of
South African interference also disappeared under mysterious circumstances. Contrasting
Renamo with União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), South Africa’s
other major proxy group in the region at that time, we can see the relative pliability of Renamo’s
leadership. UNITA focused on weakening the Angolan government; it did not concentrate on
economic targets leading to the ruination of the entire country. Renamo, by contrast, was willing
to economically devastate the very nation it purportedly aimed to liberate, helping Pretoria
maintain its economic control over the region.43

The problem of adverse selection refers not only to the agent’s ideological affinity with
the principal, but also its capacity to perform the missions the principal wants. Through
organizational support, Pretoria transformed a relatively small group of bandits and scouts into
the nationwide insurgent organization it needed. Renamo grew from a few hundred members
under the Rhodesians to 5,000 in mid 1981 to as many as 10,000 in 1982.44 This rapid military

40 Ibid., 11.
41 Ibid., 36.
42 Vines Renamo: From Terrorism to Democracy in Mozambique, 21 and 37.
build up served South Africa’s interests as it allowed Renamo to expand its targeting to Mozambique’s developing trade and communication corridors. Mozambique had three major railroads originating in three port cities spread throughout the country: one starting in the northern city of Nacala, which linked neighboring Malawi to the Indian Ocean, and one each in the central coast city of Beira and the capitol Maputo in the south, both of which terminated in Zimbabwe. Disrupting these lines of transportation was vital to Pretoria’s efforts to isolate its neighbors from each other and create the so-called “Constellation of States” centered on South Africa. However, as Political Science Professor Margaret Hall notes, “to bring them all within operational range must have imposed an artificially wide theater of action on the young movement, necessitating an equally artificial dynamic of growth.”

It appears to have been South African organizational support that facilitated this growth dynamic. Under South African direction, Renamo fighters were organized into conventional military units, with a discernable rank structure. Units were in regular radio communication with their central headquarters, which gave Renamo the ability to conduct coordinated large-scale attacks and hasty strategic retreats. South Africa, however, stopped short of providing Renamo the sort of support that would enable it to take control of cities, as that was not what Pretoria wanted. South Africa’s organizational support went beyond fashioning a formidable military structure. The façade of a political agenda was also a South African contribution. It hid South Africa’s hand by making the group appear home grown, provided the group international credibility – especially with the

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46 Minter, “The Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) as Described by Ex-participants,” 11.
United States where it garnered support from anti-Communist hawks, and created a medium through which Pretoria could communicate with Maputo.\textsuperscript{48}

It was not only the organizational support, but also the tactical military training South Africa provided that helped it tailor Renamo to suit its needs at the outset. As Professor Steven Metz notes, “Even if physical evidence of South African ties to (Renamo) are discounted, the tactics of the group suggest that (Renamo) can only be understood as a tool of South African foreign policy.”\textsuperscript{49} South Africa trained Renamo fighters to do more than Rhodesian intelligence prepared them to do. South African Special Forces trained them to be saboteurs and to work communications equipment. A band of fighters capable of little more than banditry and scouting in 1980 grew into a well-organized fighting force in less than two years, as a result of South African training. Under South African direction, Renamo’s tactics became more violent, relying on kidnapping, intimidation, sabotage, and random violence. As some of this bloodshed was aimed at foreign aid workers, this development served to discourage foreign aid and further isolate Mozambique.\textsuperscript{50}

\textit{Iranian Support to Hizballah}

Iran’s sponsorship of Hizballah could be seen as a limit case for using the P-A model, because of the closeness of the relationship. In its early days, the Hizballah insurgents were more of an extension of Iran’s own military forces than a proxy, so the principal, Iran, had relatively few obstacles to overcome to ensure its agent’s actions were in line with its objectives.

\textsuperscript{49} Metz, “The Mozambique National Resistance and South African Foreign Policy,” 497.
\textsuperscript{50} Metz, “The Mozambique National Resistance and South African Foreign Policy,” 496; For Pretoria’s prioritization of foreign aid workers see Young, “The MNR/Renamo: External and Internal Dynamics,” 498.
From its onset, Hizballah openly proclaimed to accept guidance from Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and declared the defense of the Islamic Republic of Iran to be its top priority, even above its own local interests in Lebanon. As Hizballah’s reputed spiritual leader Ayatollah Fadlallah put it, “Hizballah is a lung through which Iran breathes.” This favorable relationship, however, can largely be attributed to Iran’s masterful handling of the problem of adverse selection. Hizballah fighters, afterall, were not Iranian citizens; they were Shia partisans in a sectarian civil war against Christians and Sunnis in Lebanon. It was through Iran’s overwhelming early influence that the group came to be fashioned as an indispensible instrument of Iranian foreign policy. It was due to Iran’s efforts that a small group of religious zealots who initially struggled to cast themselves as the representatives of Lebanon’s near powerless Shia minority emerged as the vanguard of Islamic resistance in the Arab World, capable of seriously threatening Israeli and Western interests in ways Iran often could not.

The ideological influence that Iran exerted over the fledgling band of Hizballah fighters, working to establish their identity and purpose in the early 1980s, can only be understood in the context of the radical new religious world view emerging in Iran at that same time. In 1979 the U.S. backed Shah of Iran was overthrown in a popular revolution, and the radical Shia cleric, Ayatollah Khomeini, returned from exile to take up the mantle of leadership. Though the forces that had risen against the Shah represented a variety of secular and religious perspectives, Khomeini quickly outmaneuvered his rivals and established an Islamist government on the basis of the philosophy of Shia governance he had articulated while exiled in Najaf. The Iranian Republic was thence founded on the principle of “guardianship of the jurisprudent,” or “Velayat

e-Faqih.” This governing philosophy subordinated all aspects of state power to the guidance of the most learned Shia clerics who alone were deemed capable of ensuring that state policy was consistent with the tenets of Islam.52

For reasons of principle and realpolitik, Iran’s emergent Shia leadership was not content with confining its experiment with Islamic theocracy to Iran. Convinced that this worldview was correct, Khomeini’s disciples felt obliged to spread his teachings throughout the Muslim world – especially to other Shia communities – and saw it as their responsibility to help their Shia brethren establish similar governments in their own countries. At the same time, as the only nation in the world with a Shia government of any sort, Iran desperately needed to overcome its political isolation and establish a bridge to the Arab world, which had traditionally ostracized Iran – not only because Iran’s practice of Shiism was considered deviant, but also because Iranians are Persians, not Arabs. So, immediately after establishing Velayat e-Faqih in their own nation, Iran’s radical clerics adopted a policy of “exporting the Revolution.” A military arm called the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force (IRGC-QF) was established with the mandate of inciting and supporting Islamic revolutions throughout the region. Iran’s efforts failed in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iraq, and Kuwait. It was only in war-torn Lebanon that Iran found fertile soil to plant the seeds of Islamic revolution.

The Lebanese Shia were much in need of ideological support when Iran began exporting it in the early 1980s. The Shia community was in disarray following the mysterious disappearance of its primary social, political, and religious leader Musa al-Sadr in 1978, and the

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52 The pretense that any humans, even the most learned religious scholars, could discern Allah’s intentions and govern in his name was a radical break from conventional Shia theology, which considered this notion arrogant and blasphemous. Shia scholars had traditionally embraced secular political leadership that tolerated a multiplicity of religious outlooks since Shias constitute a small minority in most of the Islamic world.
Israeli Defense Forces invaded and occupied southern Lebanon in June 1982. When the Lebanese Civil War began in 1975, the Shia were represented by Amal, which was a militia that had only recently emerged as an extension of al-Sadr’s nationalistic and religiously moderate social political movement. Musa al-Sadr was an Iranian born cleric who was educated in the Najaf Hawza (religious seminary) alongside several other prominent religious leaders who would go on to hold key positions in the Islamic Republic and Hizballah. In the 1960s and 70s, he rose to prominence in Lebanon as the Shia community’s chief social, political, and economic reformer.\(^{53}\) On the eve of the civil war, al-Sadr founded Amal with the objectives of resisting Israeli occupation, improving the plight of Lebanese Shia, and maintaining security in southern Lebanon. Under al-Sadr, Amal sought to advance the Shia cause within the bounds of Lebanon’s confessional political system. Though al-Sadr was himself a prominent Ayatollah with strong Islamist tendencies, he did not envision the Shia seizing political control of the state. After a plane carrying al-Sadr inexplicably failed to arrive as scheduled in Italy after supposedly departing Libya on 31 August 1978, leadership fell to the less charismatic and more secular Nabi Berri. This presented Iran an opportunity to expand its influence within the milieu of Lebanese Shia politics.

The militia’s acceptance of political pluralism and Berri’s willingness to negotiate an accommodation with Israel following its invasion of southern Lebanon had made Amal an imperfect vehicle for spreading Khomeini’s governing philosophy to Lebanon. Amal’s acceptance of the existent political system meant that it was not interested in pursuing the

formation of an Islamic Republic of Lebanon, as Iran surely hoped.\textsuperscript{54} Nevertheless, Iran could have taken the path of least resistance and sponsored Amal despite its deficiencies. Had Iranian decision-makers not been filled with revolutionary fervor, this is likely the route they would have chosen since Amal was a well-established militia that was advancing a somewhat activist Shia Islamist agenda in the Lebanese Shia heartland. Instead, however, Iran backed a faction of the militia’s leadership that prioritized Islamic militancy over nationalist concerns.\textsuperscript{55} Iran thus incited a schism within the insurgent organization that would have seemed to be its natural proxy in the Lebanese conflict. Under the IRGC-QF’s careful guidance, the Islamist faction of Amal broke away in June 1982. Two months later, after the leaders of the breakaway movement met with Ayatollah Khomeini in Tehran to discuss the movement’s future, Hizballah was founded with the objective of importing the Islamic Revolution from Iran. The religious fervor inspired by the Iranian Revolution boosted morale amongst the Shia fighters and helped them rally communal support from a long-oppressed minority who saw in Hizballah a reason to believe the time had come for the Shia to rise in Lebanon.

Iran overcame the problem of adverse selection largely through ideological indoctrination. The two nations’ senior Shia clerical leaders studied together in Najaf and formed close ties that predated the revolution in Iran and civil war in Lebanon. Through regular interaction between the religious scholars of Lebanon and Iran in the Najaf seminary during the 1970s, the clerics who would go on to rule Iran implanted the ideas that would ensure Hizballah’s future loyalty before the insurgent group even existed.\textsuperscript{56} It was not a coincidence

\textsuperscript{54} Ranstorp, \textit{Hizballah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis} p. 31.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, 30.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 26.
that Iran knew which leaders it could turn to for advancing its agenda, even at the Lebanese movement’s own expense. Hizballah’s founders Abbas al-Musawi and Subhi al-Tufayli, for instance, had spent almost a decade studying theology in the Najaf Hawza before returning to Lebanon, and Hassan Nasrallah – the organization’s future secretary general – was a student of Khomeini in Najaf. Further, the Islamist beliefs of these clerics led to a certain dismissive attitude toward national identity; thus, Raghib Harb who was Hizballah’s leader in southern Lebanon, and who proclaimed his home to be an embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, assisted in drafting an early version of Iran’s constitution after Khomeini assumed power. These leaders were openly deferential to Iranian interests and Hizballah’s political manifesto published in 1985 recognized Khomeini as the movement’s leader.

Iran also used organizational support to address the problem of adverse selection. The IRGC-QF and several of Iran’s diplomats played indispensable roles in establishing the group’s organizational structure. Many commentators draw special attention to the role played by Iran’s Ambassador to Syria, Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, in creating Hizballah. Organizational support and military training helped Iran ensure Hizballah would be capable of the missions Tehran would assign. For this reason, Iran provided considerable training in conventional military tactics. If the group were to threaten Israel, it would need to be more than a local sectarian militia. Hence, under the IRGC-QF’s mentorship, Hizballah developed a military structure, and its fighters learned to fight as professional soldiers. The IRGC-QF, furthermore,

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57 Ibid., 46.
58 Ibid., 26 and 38.
59 Ibid., 41.
60 Ibid., 38.
61 Ibid., 79.
was largely responsible for Hizballah’s rapid expansion into southern Lebanon, which was strategically significant to Tehran because of its proximity to Israel.62

Iran’s organizational support included establishing the means to produce and disseminate propaganda, which Iran was in turn able to use to promote its own message. As the internationally recognized terrorism expert Magnus Ranstorp notes, “The establishment of an efficient Hizb’allah propaganda-machinery (through its al-Ahd newspaper, its television-station al-Manar, as well as its radio-station Voice of the Oppressed) served to reinforce Iran’s visible and direct influence over the movement as well as Hizb’allah’s own achievements and popularity.”63 Over the long term, Iran’s influence over the message promulgated by Hizballah’s propaganda wing has served to antagonize Lebanese Shia toward Israel and the West, and to see Iran as leading the struggle for justice and equality.

After it gained some experience fighting Israel, Hizballah was able to train regular militiamen at its own camps, but it continued to send its elite for special training in Iran.64 Further, Iran most likely trained Hizballah operatives to conduct kidnapping operations. Hostage taking was a central component of Hizballah’s strategy from 1982 to 1992, and this was an important means through which Iran could project power in the region.65 Hizballah’s kidnapping operations were closely coordinated with senior Iranian political and military leadership.66

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62 Ibid., 38.
63 Ibid., 39.
65 Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizballah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*, 1, 70.
66 Ibid., 85, 93.
enabled Iran, for instance, to pressure France to reduce its support to Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war by directing Hizballah to target its kidnapping campaign against French citizens.

South Africa and Iran took different routes to overcoming the problem of adverse selection with respect to Renamo and Hizballah, respectively. Through Hizballah, Iran was able to hijack the Shia Islamic movement in Lebanon during the civil war and contorted it into an extension of its own Islamic Revolution. In the absence of a natural ideological ally, Pretoria used the next best thing – an ideological blank slate. This reduced the adverse selection problem and future difficulties with agency slack because South Africa did not have to compete with a movement with a strong sense of direction. Organizational support and military training, however, played an important role in both cases. Neither South Africa nor Iran passively accepted the agent it was presented, rather each transformed its proxy into a force capable of meeting its needs. South Africa re-organized the nascent insurgent group it took over from the Rhodesians by giving it a military structure, a communications network, a national level reach, and a political façade, all of which vastly increased the group’s potential. South Africa also provided the requisite training for Renamo fighters to conduct sabotage missions, coordinate attacks, and neutralize soft targets. Providing these forms of support was a necessary step in fashioning Renamo into an organization capable of accomplishing the broader range of objectives assigned it by South Africa including: the destruction of Mozambique’s economic infrastructure, and the severing of transportation routes vital to other Front Line States. Iran was similarly proactive in using organizational support to ensure its agent could do what Tehran wanted. Iran was not content with the degree of overlap between its interests and that of its
initial agent, Amal, so it encouraged a schism and sent a large IRGC-QF contingent to mold the new group, Hizballah, into the organization it wanted.

**Support that Addresses Agency Slack**

*South African Support to Renamo*

South Africa primarily used embedded advisors to address agency slack, although it also influenced Renamo’s behavior through materiel support. There is comparatively scant evidence of political or intelligence support. The lack of political support, however, served Pretoria’s interest in much the same way that it benefited from the vacuity of Renamo’s ideology.

South Africa sporadically used five-man Special Forces teams to train and direct Renamo fighters, gather intelligence, and conduct specific missions. The high degree of influence South African advisors had over Renamo leaders was revealed by the “Gorongosa Documents.” These diaries written by the personal secretary of Renamo President Afonso Dhlakama and discovered after Renamo’s headquarters in Gorongosa was overtaken, provide accounts of the guidance South African advisors were providing Renamo. For example, after consultation with South African intelligence officers visiting a Renamo base in October 1980, Renamo’s leaders agreed to focus on targets of economic interest to South Africa. In November, the insurgents conducted a major attack against the oil pipeline connecting Beira to Mutare, Zimbabwe, a move that increased Zimbabwe’s oil dependence on South Africa. More generally, as insurgency expert Steven Metz argues, “In order to reinforce the economic dependence of Zimbabwe and Malawi on South Africa the transportation corridor between Mutare in Zimbabwe and the Mozambican

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port of Beira became the primary target of guerrilla raids." While, to some degree, targeting economic assets could be seen as normal behavior for an insurgent group, Renamo’s fight was with Frelimo, not the Zimbabweans or Malawians. The details of the decision-making, furthermore, suggest Renamo leaders were more influenced by their foreign advisors than their own strategic interests because they wanted that support to continue. Dhlakama, for instance, was very reluctant to order attacks on the Beira oil pipeline and the Beira-Malawi railway, judging the tactical gains would not be worth the price in men. He nevertheless yielded to his South African handlers.

If South Africa’s use of embedded advisors to get its way was manifest, its use of materiel support was subtler. The primary weapon South Africa provided the insurgents was the AK-47 assault rifle. South Africa could have supplied heavier weapons that would have enabled Renamo to engage government forces in decisive battles, but Pretoria chose not to do so. Small arms were all that was necessary for conducting the sort of operations South Africa wanted the insurgents to engage in. South Africa did not want the group to fight conventional military battles, but rather to terrorize the population and strike “soft” economic targets. Given these goals, the AK-47 was the optimal weapon to provide. South Africa also provided ample communications equipment and training. This enabled Renamo to operate effectively at a national level, and also allowed South African intelligence to closely monitor Renamo’s activity. Minter notes an entry in the Gorongosa Diaries stipulating, “two Renamo men will be trained in

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ultra-secret communications between Renamo and Pretoria." Not surprisingly, South Africa balked at Renamo’s attempts to bring in communications equipment offered by U.S. right wing groups, which would have reduced South Africa’s control. However, it is not only the materiel support that South Africa provided Renamo that influenced its behavior, it is also what it withheld. Under the Rhodesians, rank and file fighters received food and stipends. Despite South Africa’s redoubling Rhodesia’s investment in the insurgent organization, it chose to cut this perk. As a consequence, Renamo was compelled to ravage the population in line with South Africa’s interests.

Pretoria’s political support for Renamo was tepid. While Pretoria helped Renamo set up a political front so the insurgents could establish a semblance of legitimacy on the world stage, it did nothing to help the group advance any political goals. It did not lobby for Renamo in international fora or push Maputo to recognize the legitimacy of Renamo’s cause. South Africa provided just enough support for the organization to distinguish itself from a group of bandits, but not enough to enable Renamo to effect political change. So, as a beleaguered Mozambique prepared to make concessions to end the insurgency, there was no one to whom to capitulate but South Africa. Consequently, it was Pretoria that played the lead role in the 1983 peace talks that culminated in the Nkomati Accord in March 1984. The accord called for each side to stop sponsoring the other’s insurgency. South Africa was amenable to the agreement at this point because its destructive regional policy was devastating its own economy; the West was

72 Minter, “The Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) as Described by Ex-participants,” 11.
73 Ibid., 14.
75 Hall cites a Renamo defector who claims South Africa encouraged the group to develop a political leadership and program to attract national and international credibility. See Hall, “The Mozambique National Resistance Movement,” 43.
pressuring it to cease hostilities rather than risk provoking Soviet intervention; and it wanted Mozambique to discontinue its support to ANC guerrillas.\(^{76}\) Brokering the peace in Mozambique would furthermore help establish South Africa as a regional power. Renamo, by contrast, had no interest in settling with Maputo and accepting a subordinate position in the government at this time. Renamo leadership wanted to continue the insurgency and, for the first time, refused to follow Pretoria’s game plan.\(^{77}\)

Differences between Renamo’s and South Africa’s leadership over making peace with Maputo, however, were needless. South Africa never had any intention of holding up its end of the agreement with Maputo. In fact, as its intelligence officers were promising Renamo continued support even as Prime Minister Botha was signing the accord.\(^{78}\) In anticipation of the agreement, the South Africans had already provided Renamo with a large stockpile of materiel so that South Africa could ostensibly honor its end of the bargain with Maputo and cease sending aid for a brief period of time.\(^{79}\) After about six months, support resumed sporadically and often through the intermediary of Malawi. Nevertheless, Pretoria seemed to lose a degree of control after shipments of weapons and supplies slowed down.\(^{80}\) In October 1984, Renamo’s spokesman openly accused Pretoria of “betrayal” for its failure to fully support its political goals.\(^{81}\) While South Africa may have intended to continue supporting Renamo clandestinely, it is possible this intention was not made sufficiently clear to Renamo.

\(^{77}\) Ibid.,” 17-19.
\(^{78}\) Ibid.,” 5.
\(^{79}\) Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbours*, 45.
\(^{81}\) Ibid., 19.
Renamo’s behavior post-Nkomati shows there are limits to the state sponsor’s ability to control its proxy by manipulating support. The insurgent cannot be expected to remain passive in response to the state-sponsor’s decisions when those decisions appear to be evidently counter to the insurgents’ interests. Renamo felt abandoned because of Pretoria’s public stance against the insurgency, and concerns about the discontinuation of support. This reduction in both political and materiel support led to reduced control over, and even blowback from, Renamo.

*Iranian Support to Hizballah*

Iran’s success in cultivating Hizballah as a loyal proxy from the outset has minimized, but not eliminated, the need for Tehran to take efforts to reduce agency slack. Hizballah generally acts in Iran’s best interest without too much coaxing because the two share broad strategic goals. The biggest obstacle to Tehran’s control over its willing agent came when Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini died and was replaced by the less inspiring and less religiously qualified Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Khamenei’s questionable religious credentials opened the door to some senior Lebanese clerics to challenge his influence among Lebanese Shia. On the whole, however, Hizballah has accepted Khamenei’s authority and the continuing support that Iran provides the group helps ensure Tehran’s lasting influence.

Iran is able to limit agency slack by means of a special form of support that may be unique to the particular relationship it enjoys with Hizballah: clerical authority. Due to the nuances of Shia theology, every Shiite is required to have a “Source of Emulation” or Marja-i Taqlid to whom he or she looks for guidance in making everyday decisions. Only the most highly regarded Shia clerics in the world are considered Marja-i Taqlid, and typically, Shia
political parties and militant organizations collectively acknowledge a particular Marja-i Taqlid in order to provide the group with religious justification and ideological direction. While he was alive, Ayatollah Khomeini was the undisputed Marja-i Taqlid for Hizballah. Upon his death, some of Hizballah’s clerical leaders, including Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, questioned Khamenei’s qualifications to serve as Marja-i Taqlid, and a greater diversity of opinions has arisen within the ranks of Hizballah as to whom it should turn to for religious guidance. Despite the damage caused by Khamenei’s dubious religious qualifications, this system of clerical oversight has for the most part served Iran’s interests due to the fact that most the Shia religious establishment is based in Iran.

Like Renamo, Iran uses embedded advisors who provide Tehran with direct oversight of Hizballah’s activities. Some of the more advanced weapons that Iran provides Hizballah, particularly its long-range rockets, require direct support from Iranian specialists. The presence of these Iranian military advisors provides Iran a means of control over when and how these strategically vital weapons are used. Simply put, they will only be used by Hizballah when and if Iran sees fit. Hizballah fighters, however, are not averse to working with Iranian advisors.

“When Iran’s emissaries and a contingent of fifteen hundred Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards) arrived in the Bi’qa under the instructions of Khomeini, these young clerics and others rushed to

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82 In an interview, a Hizballah cleric explained that the suicide bombings being conducted by Lebanese youth required a religious ruling, called a ‘fatwa,’ from the supreme authority, in this case Khomeini. See Saul Shaw, *The Axis of Evil: Iran Hizballah, and the Palestinian Terror*, (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 89. Similarly, Ronen Bergman claims that it was Khomeini who authorized Hizballah’s hostage taking operations after Fadlallah maintained there were no legitimate grounds for them. See Ronen Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran: The 3-year Clandestine Struggle Against the World’s Most Dangerous Terrorist Power*, (New York: Free Press, 2008), 95.

pledge their loyalty to Khomeini and assume positions of leadership in Hizballah.” More significantly, members of the IRGC-QF as well as Iranian diplomats served as members of Hizballah’s supreme decision-making body, the Majlis al-Shura – which was in fact created by an Iranian cleric in 1983. Furthermore, the long-term relations Iranian clerics, politicians, and military commanders have cultivated with Hizballah leaders mitigates much of the need to use advisors as a check on agency slack.

The materiel support Iran provides Hizballah has focused on maintaining the organization’s capacity to strike Israel. In particular, Iran has supplied Hizballah with a massive arsenal of rockets and missiles that offer Iran the means to intimidate Israel and deter an attack on Iran’s nuclear facilities. For the most part, however, Iran provides Hizballah with the materiel support it needs to be successful and Tehran does not seem to manipulate its support to bias the group towards particular types of tactics towards which Hizballah would not otherwise be inclined.

Hizballah has been able to thrive in Lebanon’s political sphere largely as a result of Iran’s political backing. It is only because of Tehran’s close strategic relationship with Damascus that Syria permitted the group to flourish despite its initial rejection of the Syrian backed political system. As Hizballah’s and Iran’s interests evolved, the group came to resign itself to the realities of Lebanon’s diverse political spectrum, and it has since gained Syria’s political support.

84 Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizballah, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 25.
85 Ranstorp, Hizballah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis, 45.
86 Shay, The Axis of Evil, 140.
But Iran provides the group with an important intermediary for dealing with Syria, and this continued support gives Tehran additional leverage over Hizballah.  

Intelligence sharing also has fostered Iran’s symbiotic relationship with Hizballah, as operational intelligence on specific targets of interest to Iran provided Iran yet another lever of influence over its agent. As mentioned above, Iran has benefitted from Hizballah’s conducting kidnapping operations and Iran has played a role in the selection and timing of targets. Further, Iran’s involvement in the hostage taking operations extended to the removal of some of the victims to Iran where Iranian intelligence officials interrogated them.  

In both the case of South Africa’s influence over Renamo and Iran’s influence over Hizballah, the potential for agency slack was reduced in large part by the presence of embedded advisors. Unsurprisingly, having a representative of the state present in the insurgent group’s decision-making forums is an effective way of ensuring the insurgent understands what is expected. In the case of Hizballah, the insurgent leaders welcomed the guidance coming from outside, whereas in Renamo’s case, acceptance of this advice was grudging. Materiel support played an important role in providing Pretoria control over Renamo, but not nearly as significant a role in increasing Tehran’s influence over Hizballah. This was largely due to the differences in the sponsor’s objectives concerning the ultimate success of their respective proxies. South Africa did not want Renamo to seize control of the government, whereas Iran hoped Hizballah would institute Velayat-e Faqih in Lebanon. Thus, in contrast with Pretoria’s restrained support to Renamo, Iran provided Hizballah with the highest quality weapons available. Tehran and Pretoria were in very different positions to offer political support to their agents. While both

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88 Ibid., 70.
were regional pariahs, Tehran had one key ally in the neighborhood – Syria – which happened to be vital to Hizballah’s survival. Iran was able to use its diplomatic resources to protect Hizballah and help it reach an accommodation with Damascus. Pretoria, by contrast, had little interest or ability to provide political cover to any of Renamo’s activities. The secretive nature of intelligence work militates against finding an abundance of evidence. Accordingly, there is limited evidence of South African intelligence support to Renamo, beyond intelligence training. For Hizballah there is greater evidence of intelligence sharing, particularly at the operational level.

IV. Policy Recommendations

This thesis addresses matters of interest to decision-makers responsible for countering insurgencies sponsored by adversarial states. Two specific recommendations follow from this analysis: first, analysis and prediction of insurgent behavior should take into account the aims of the state driving the insurgency. Second, in order to defeat the state-sponsors’ strategy, counter-insurgents should focus on interdicting forms of support that increase the proxy’s responsiveness. By breaking the bond between the principle and agent, the counter-insurgent can affect a decrease in external support, which will ultimately lead to the insurgent’s isolation and defeat.

As recent empirical research has found that state-sponsorship is one of the essential determinants of an insurgency’s success, it would be reasonable for counter-insurgents to adopt strategies for severing the relationship between sponsor and proxy. Rather than relying on attempts to coerce the interfering state with a combination of carrots and sticks, the host state or counter-insurgent can cause insurmountable problems in the outside state’s relationship with its proxy, reducing the attractiveness of sponsorship as a policy option. If the counter-insurgent can identify the goals the outside state is trying to accomplish through its proxy, it can work to strip the proxy of the capacities that make it useful to the sponsor. The preceding analysis points to
forms of support that help the sponsor get what it wants out of its proxy, so a counter-insurgency strategy that focuses on interdicting these forms of support would aim at weakening the sponsor’s control over the conflict, thereby reducing its motivation to prolong the relationship.

The key types of support the counter-insurgent should focus on disrupting, I suggest, are ideological indoctrination, organizational aid, and embedded advisors.\(^9\) Ideological ties arguably establish the sponsor’s closest bond with the insurgent. A sponsor will be reassured that its proxy will serve its interests when the two share certain key political and societal objectives. As Byman and his Rand colleagues argue, this form of support probably does not help the insurgents very much.\(^9\) However, when a state believes ideological indoctrination is effective, it naturally will be more inclined to invest other types of aid that are more militarily advantageous to the insurgent. Organizational support is the means through which the sponsor fashions the insurgent group into an instrument of its own policy. It can mold the group into a national resistance movement, a terrorist organization, or a thorn in the side of the government. It can establish a responsive network of indebted insurgent cell leaders in locales of strategic significance, or inject a capacity into the group that it may not itself have or be willing to use. Embedded advisors provide the state with a direct means to influence the course of the conflict. They can monitor the insurgents’ behavior, and give strategic direction to suit the state’s interest. However, they are the most visible sign of external interference and could be a political liability to the state if exposed.

Ideological support can be countered in at least three ways. First, it can be directly exposed as a foreign viewpoint. Second, the counter-insurgent can support a competing ideology. Third, points of discrepancy between the insurgent and sponsor can be exploited. Insurgencies tend to thrive only when they have nationalist appeal. Hence, an information operations campaign that tarnishes the insurgents’ reputation by associating it with a foreign ideology can prove highly effective. This approach has met with some success in Iraq, as repeated accusations that JAM is following an Iranian influenced agenda has forced its

\(^9\) Other forms of support are not necessarily less valuable. Training and intelligence support, however, are less vulnerable to interdiction and less damaging if exposed. And, while restricting materiel support is desirable, the counter-insurgent is unlikely to interdict sufficient supplies to make an impact on the sponsor’s strategic relationship with its proxy.

spokesmen to distance the movement from Iran. Promoting a competing ideology is more difficult since this strategy risks tainting proponents of the preferred viewpoint as influenced by the counter-insurgent. For that reason, support should be provided indirectly or clandestinely. For example, preferential treatment could be given to media that cover speeches from moderate clerics, or community development projects could specifically target areas that expressly reject the foreign ideology. Finally, while the outside sponsor is trying to build upon commonality, the counter-insurgent should highlight differences. Pakistan has fostered a culture of Islamic radicalism among anti-Indian insurgent groups in Kashmir, and the religious overtones of the insurgency keep the fighters in Islamabad’s sphere of influence. However, when some foreign members of the insurgency imported a Taliban style governing style in the mid-1990s, local Islamic militants balked. Underscoring the fundamental differences between the outside state’s aims and the local community’s ethos is a means the counter-insurgent has available for driving a wedge between the two.

Counter-insurgents can counter the sponsor’s attempt to use organizational aid to gain leverage over its proxy by targeting organizational nodes central to the sponsor’s strategy. This strategy may involve focusing on individual insurgent leaders, or strategic locations. When choosing which insurgent cells to pursue, the counter-insurgent should prioritize those with foreign ties. Even if these do not necessarily pose the most immediate threat, they have the potential to pose a long-term problem if they can establish a steady stream of support from their sponsor. Targeting these groups also deters others from working with the outside sponsor. If the state sponsor is interested in certain key terrain, the counter-insurgent should prioritize making it a safe-zone. In a best-case scenario, the counter-insurgent would coopt the proxy and turn it against the sponsor. Often the leaders who the sponsoring state identifies as most amenable to its interests are those who are eager for power. If the counter-insurgent can convince them that they stand to gain more power and influence by joining the government, these insurgents would be well positioned to provide useful intelligence concerning the sponsor’s agenda and modus operandi.

Embedded advisors are critical for a state’s minimizing the impact of agency slack. Keeping these foreign agents out of the country is thus a good way to exacerbate problems for the sponsor’s meddlesome foreign policy strategy. Counter-insurgents have a number of means to defend against these agents. It can target them kinetically, enact a more restrictive visa policy, or tighten its border control. When they cannot be kept out, the foreign elements should be exposed as much as possible. Additionally, the counter-insurgent could make them the scapegoats for the insurgents’ destructive policies; as such a move creates political space for the insurgents to enter the political process later. That is, if the government attributes atrocities to foreign influence – as opposed to the group’s indigenous leadership – it is free to extend a peace offer to the group once it renounces its external sponsor.

V. Concluding Summary and Points for Future Research

In addition to these policy implications, this analysis contributes to the body of academic research on insurgency. In the closing section of this thesis I will review the argument I have made for approaching insurgency as a lever that outside states sometimes exploit in the pursuit of their own policy objectives, with the implication that the support it provides the insurgent is designed to further its own ends, rather than the insurgents’. The scope of this project is limited and there are a number of ways the present research project can be expanded. I end this thesis by discussing five areas for future research for which the present thesis has laid some groundwork.

This thesis addressed how state-sponsors leverage their support to influence their proxies’ behavior. I began by defending the view that states who sponsor insurceries are doing so in pursuit of their own objectives, which are often distinct from the insurgents’, and that the often overwhelming impact of state-sponsorship on the outcome of insurceries should therefore lead counter-insurgents to consider insurgency a form of interstate conflict. In other words, it is
sometimes the sponsor’s strategy and objectives that the counter-insurgent should be trying to counter, not the insurgent’s; though often the counter-insurgent will need to consider both simultaneously. Taking sponsorship of a foreign insurgency to be one method among several that states have available for achieving foreign policy objectives, I considered how states can pursue that course of action most efficiently through providing types of support that allow it to influence its proxy. Building on research that models the state-sponsor – insurgent relationship using a P-A framework, I identified two key vulnerabilities to which the state-sponsor is exposed: adverse selection and agency slack. As an original contribution to the literature on state-sponsorship of insurgency, I then articulated reasons why certain forms of support would be most conducive to overcoming these problems and illustrated how South Africa and Iran used those kinds of support to influence the behavior of their proxies, Renamo and Hizballah.

A number of avenues for further research are suggested by the current project. First, quantitative analysis can verify or falsify the claims that the particular forms of support identified in the thesis are the most beneficial to the state-sponsor. Second, this paper looked only at problems in the state-sponsor – insurgent relationship that dealt with adverse selection and agency slack. A similar study could be conducted that looks at the problems of multiple and collective principals. Third, it is reasonable to assume that different states approach the problems of insurgency sponsorship differently. The present analysis identifies strategies that are most likely to be successful, but for a variety of reasons each sponsor is likely to take its own unique course. It may be useful to analyze how particular states, such as Iran, China, or Russia resolve the problems identified by the P-A model. Fourth, the thesis could be expanded to include non-state-sponsors such as terrorist networks or diasporas. Fifth, it would be useful to
evaluate the United States’ own policies for supporting foreign insurgencies. The United States has sponsored numerous insurgent groups in the past, and likely will do so again in the future, so it is important to articulate a strategy of state support that ensures the United States is likely to achieve its goals by means of this particular policy instrument. The present work helps sets the stage for each of these five research problems.

There is a significant demand for empirical research into the efficacy of state-sponsored insurgency as an instrument of state policy. Martin C. Libicki offers a useful synopsis of the results of 89 recent insurgencies in which he offers a straightforward judgment of the conflict’s outcome: government wins, government loses, or mixed results. Libicki’s assessment of the insurgency’s outcome, however, pertains exclusively to the insurgent and host state, and ignores the impact the conflict had on outside actors. This is an important gap in the literature. It would seem a similar analysis of the success or failure of outside sponsorship could be performed yielding quantitative results similar to Libicki’s. By looking at the objectives sought by the external actor and judging whether those goals were attained, we can evaluate how effective insurgency sponsorship is as an instrument of foreign policy. Once a baseline is established for which conflicts were successful, we could further investigate which forms of support were used in those cases. The present thesis maintains that the most helpful types of support for yielding influence to the state-sponsor are: ideological indoctrination, organizational aid, military training, embedded advisors, materiel and political support, and intelligence. Quantitative analysis could test this claim.

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The present research project has simplified some of the problems faced by state-sponsors. It treats states as monolithic entities whose various bureaucracies are working toward a common end, and it views the state-sponsor’s relationship with its proxy in isolation from the relationship the proxy might have with other sponsors. Research into P-A relations, however, already addresses some of the issues raised by these additional variable. It would thus be worth investigating how the state-sponsor – insurgent relationship is affected when multiple authorities within the same state have cultivated relations with the insurgent group; for instance, military Special Forces and an intelligence agency. Similarly, further research can be done on how the P-A dynamic changes when multiple states are sponsoring the same agent, as with Iran and Syria’s sponsorship of Hizballah.

Not all states use insurgencies to their own advantage, while others seem to do so often. It would therefore be useful to conduct a more detailed study of the way habitual sponsors relate to their proxies. Iran is the most obvious example. Iran is presently using state-sponsored insurgents to threaten U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and has historically relied on this approach to threaten U.S. interests in the Middle East. While the unique modus operandi followed by Iran already has been the subject of numerous studies, it would be useful to measure the relative impact of the various forms of support it provides.94

In their groundbreaking work on outside support to insurgent movements, Byman and his colleagues discuss a number of external sponsors in addition to states. Though they acknowledge these actors are less significant, insurgents often receive support from diasporas,

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refugees, religious organizations, and wealthy individuals. In recent years, the growing impact of political Islam has led to the identification of another major source of external support: terrorists. In his 2009 classic, *The Accidental Guerrilla*, David Kilcullen defends the hypothesis that the global Islamic jihad network should be understood as an external support network that aides and co-opt local insurgencies, replacing their concern with local grievances with wider reaching concerns of the Islamic world. The problems these non-state actors face in controlling their proxies and the remedies available to them likely are fundamentally different from those available to states. A separate P-A analysis of those kinds of delegation relationships, hence, would add a unique contribution to the literature on external sponsorship of insurgency.

The United States has sponsored insurgencies in the past (e.g. Nicaragua and Afghanistan) and there is no reason to rule out the possibility that it will do so again. Understanding the conditions that allow for greater control over the group the United States is helping will ensure U.S. policies successfully lead to the fulfillment of its political objectives. Further research into the way various modes of support affect insurgent behavior could contribute to the careful management of any future insurgency support effort. Upon clearly distinguishing U.S. interests from those of the insurgent organization, policy-makers can map out a strategy that will enable the United States to advance its interests without regard to the insurgent’s objectives.

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