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Born violent: Armed political parties and non-state governance in Lebanon’s civil war

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We know little of the internal governing practices of non-state actors once in control of territory. Some territories have witnessed the establishment of new institutions of public goods remarkably similar to state institutions. This article compares four armed political parties governing territory during the Lebanese civil war. These non-state violent actors established complex political and economic institutions and administrative structures. Despite the wide range of ideologies and identities of these actors, they all converged in their institutional priorities, although not in their capacities or the particular ways of achieving those priorities. Data from interviews and the actions of the armed political parties suggest a combination of ideology and desire for control is causal in generating public institutions, partly attributable to the high degree of citizen activism marking the Lebanese case.

Keywords: violent non-state actors; insurgency; state-building; civil war; public institutions; militia; Lebanon

Spaces of alternative governance outside the purview of recognized states are increasingly being studied, particularly when under the control of violent non-state actors. The belligerent acts of such non-state actors are well known, but with few exceptions we know little of their governing practices and priorities once they control territory. Some non-state groups establish little to no civic institutions; others construct broad governance and law and order administrations, similar to what would be expected of a state. Even in squatter or informal areas where no organized group rules, locally important people take up governance and justice tasks. Indeed, the plethora of institutions in areas outside the control of states has led scholars to question the applicability of the term ‘ungoverned spaces’. As Kingston observed, while anarchy was expected in weak and failing states, some form of alternative governance often arose instead.

The specific institutions such violent non-state rulers create are consequential not only for the population under their control, but also for the fate of these areas after the termination of violence and for the possibility of renewed state sovereignty. Research into the establishment of new governance and social
institutions by such actors has often been marginalized to the benefit of the actors’
vioence, origins, and effects on the international state system. I offer a preliminary
comparative foray into delineating the governing priorities of some violent non-
state actors by analyzing the civil administrations formed by four armed groups
within a single national and temporal context. These militarized political parties
consolidated territory and established administrative and public service institutions
in Lebanon during the civil war (1975–1990). The comparison reveals numerous
patterns of similarities and some differences. While the diverse ideological origins
and fiscal resources of the political parties marked the specific form of the new
governance and public service institutions, the overall priorities of the armed
political parties were similar. These similarities are not explained by convergence
to or imitation of the institutions of the national state.

I first discuss explanations for the institutions developed by violent non-state
actors to interact with the population under their control, and the diverse types
and names of such actors. The comparison focuses on what in the Middle East
are called militias, but more comparatively can be called armed political parties. I
then introduce the major armed political parties involved in the Lebanese civil
war and describe their sources of financing, as this constitutes one explanation for
the behavior of violent non-state actors toward the ruled population. Resources
from the populace were a significant although not predominant proportion of
funding, varying by group. Subsequently, I tackle the substance of institutional
creation by these groups. I take each category of institution in turn and describe
the types of institutions built by the groups. Their institutional activities were
broad, and space constraints permit only a picture of the breadth and type of
institutions of the differing armed political parties. The problems and incapacities
of the armed groups in service provision are likewise outside the scope of the
article; certainly, their public services could not rebuff criticisms of inefficiency
and preferential treatment. Some were worse in this regard than others. However,
the goals and services these non-state actors established and sought to provide are
clear from the comparison. I conclude with insights from the comparison and a
call for more focused, comparative research on the non-state institutions under
which a significant amount of the world’s population lives.

Violent non-state actors and their governance institutions

The category of violent non-state actors is broad and includes groups diverse as
terrorist cells, mafias, and gangs. The motivations and limitations of these
different actors vary accordingly. For comparative and analytic purposes, it is
useful to distinguish between violent non-state actors who are militarily and
hierarchically organize and those who are not, to distinguish between those with
a program for change and those without, and to seek common terms across
regions if possible.

This article discusses politically motivated non-state actors who are
organized in a military fashion, with a hierarchy of command. Specifically,
these actors were the armed wings of political parties. They had both political goals and a clear command structure. Many formally trained their forces, some with training academies. In different literatures and regions, they could be termed guerrillas, insurgents, rebels, resistance movements, or even armed social movements. In the Middle East literature generally, and the Lebanese and Iraqi contexts in particular, this type of armed group is overwhelmingly termed a militia by both local scholars and area specialists. I will call these actors armed political parties (APP), a subset of the broader violent non-state actor category, to avoid confusion and enable cross-regional discussion.  

The use of the term militia in the Middle East signifies the armed section of a political party, separate from the government, or simply an armed and hierarchically organized group. In Iraq, they are called the armed militias of a political party (milishiat musalaha al-ahzab), and the term militia pervades the Iraqi literature. This usage is distinct from historical Anglo-American usages, where the term indicates a citizen detachment of the state’s military or a non-state group serving the state’s goals. Indeed, in direct opposition to historical usage in the United States, militia in the Middle East generally refers to parties not attached to the state. This use of the designation militia is found in other contexts as well. Shultz, Farah, and Lochard define a militia as ‘a recognizable irregular armed force operating within the territory of a weak and/or failing state’. This definition is broad, encompassing armed groups variously serving their own purposes, the furtherance of their sect, ethnic group, clan, tribe, religion, or factional leader, and groups in the service of the state. Fairbanks refers to such armed groups as private armies, distinct from private security companies, in order to avoid the confusion that the term militia generates from the Anglo-American context. Hills discusses the ambiguity of the word militia, its history as a citizen-based and state-supporting actor, and its current broader usage. She delineates three types of militias, including clan and ethnic based.

Whatever label is used, we know little about how such violent non-state actors govern internally or the institutions they create to interact with the population. Groups vary in their mix of protection and predation. Some territories have witnessed the establishment of new institutions for public goods remarkably similar to state institutions; others witness only predation. Scholars have called areas with broad governance institutions states-within-states, proto, quasi or mini-states, or parallel governments. Somaliland, Eritrea, and the Tamils’ state are prominent examples. While the comparison to state-creation is common, no particular end point characterizes such violent non-state actors.

Violent and predatory behavior can coexist with the provision of such public goods as social services and law and order. Further, no consensus exists why some provide services and others do not. Kasfir maintains that only a minority of armed rebellious groups attempt to secure citizen approval and participation in their governance. Certainly, public goods can only be offered once a group has territorial control, and such services are subordinate to the group’s military priorities and existence.
Existing explanations for the behavior of violent non-state actors who are politically and hierarchically organized include types of resources, control, legitimacy derived from the provision of public goods, international influence, and ideology. Most of these explanations, with the exception of types of resources, are implicit and not developed theoretically. Some types of resources, in the hands of violent non-state actors, are more likely to be looted and generate predatory behavior than other resources. Lootable resources essentially generate short time horizons for the violent non-state actor, who cares little about investing in the populace’s future. Although predation can coexist with institution-building and public services, in much of this literature the ability to transfer valuables across borders easily has led authors to implicitly posit that approval from the population is not necessary for the violent non-state actor, and thus no desire to govern or provide public goods would exist.

Some APPs claim legitimacy in part based on service provision and governance. The establishment of new public goods institutions and services can be part of obtaining popular acquiescence or consent to the group’s rule. As Naylor notes, even states utilize a combination of legitimacy and fear in governing. APPs similarly combine public approval for their goals with the violent ability to implement policies. One scholar defines militias as distinct from warlords precisely by the militia’s interest in establishing public institutions. Linking welfare, the military, and legitimacy is common. Military pensioners and women were the first to receive welfare in the US, when lower classes could get no such support, driven by the interaction of societal actors and political institutions. In Latin America, social welfare, initially provided for supporters of the state, the military, civil service, and courts, was tied to state-building and the alliances promoting economic development. It spread later to the squeaky wheels, organized interests such as urban sectors. Service provision was a form of advertising for the mafia, increasing the legitimacy of drug barons. In Colombia, a drug lord won popularity by funding extensive social projects. In Iraq, a vacuum of services provided the opportunity for APPs such as the Mahdi army to secure legitimacy and popular loyalty from their own social service provision.

In the case of non-state actors who attempt to change society, DiPaolo maintains that their actions imitate the state when governing territory, with the goal of obtaining influence in the international arena. Her analysis excludes many predatory armed actors, such as those that Reno examines, for example. In the Lebanon case, the groups may have imitated the structure of the state, but not the substance of its role in society. The APPs assumed administrative roles outwardly similar to the state’s roles, but provided far more public goods than the state. While they unquestionably sought legitimacy, their primary concern was domestic and identity group legitimacy. The groups did engage in international politics, but as an adjunct to their domestic governance.

The desire for monopolistic control can also motivate the formation of institutions for violent non-state actors such as APPs. Control can encompass law enforcement, a common institution for APPs, and policing the fighters to
regulate their financial and violent activities, and their interactions with the populace.\textsuperscript{33} Public institutions can also be affected by the presence of an ideological project among the APPs. Some APPs have a model of rule, an image of the nation and government, and a political project of identity creation to bring it about. In the service of this political project, they could be concerned with legitimacy and the perceptions of the population. Kingston summarizes that the APPs that created state-like institutions had a unifying national identity ideology, including Somaliland and Eritrea.\textsuperscript{34}

The Lebanese civil war and states-within-the-state

The Lebanese civil war began in April 1975 and officially ended with the signing of the Ta‘if agreement of October 1989. Battles did not cease until a year later. Over 100 armed groups took part at some point. Twenty were major, and only twelve remained in existence at the end of the war.\textsuperscript{35} Most of these actors either failed to consolidate territory and rule for significant periods, or were absorbed by other armed groups. Four of the APPs in the Lebanese civil war established complex political and economic institutions and administrative structures within defined territorial enclaves under their control, de facto mini-states or cantons within the domestic context of the Lebanese state.

Two main coalitions were initially pitted against one another in the war. These sides devolved from advocating economic stances to promoting religious or ethnically separate identities. They homogenized their territory and members accordingly. The anti-status quo side, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), which advocated a secular political system, was leftist, somewhat socialist, and Arab nationalist. It included the Palestinians. The other, the right-of-center Kata‘ib political party or Phalange armed group, later absorbed into the Lebanese Forces, was overwhelmingly Christian, moderately developmentalist within a framework of economically liberal values, and defensive of the confessionally based status quo.\textsuperscript{36} The military coalitions at the start of the war later became a unified hierarchical group or split apart. The Christians consolidated into one generally unified Lebanese Forces (LF). The leftist Lebanese Nationalist Movement (formed in 1969) split into its constituent armed groups, who became rivals, including the Progressive Socialist Party or PSP (Druze), Amal (Shia), and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Later Hezbollah (Shia) developed roughly out of the same path and constituency as Amal.

The parameters of the territorial canton system were laid in the initial phase of the war, 1975–1976. PLO institutions developed in the Lebanese refugee camps earlier, particularly after the 1969 Cairo accord that conceded operational autonomy within the camps to the PLO. This situation lasted until 1982 and the Israeli invasion, when PLO forces were expelled from Lebanon. The high point of PLO institutions in Lebanon was 1977–1982.\textsuperscript{37} The Kata‘ib and then LF’s territory from 1976 to the end of the war was East Beirut. The PSP concentrated on its Druze base in the Chouf Mountains, particularly from 1983 to the end of the war. The PSP
also tried to develop an administration during the first phase of the war when it was under the LNM, but failed due mainly to the plethora of groups and lack of organization and control over them.\textsuperscript{38} Hezbollah’s territory was, and remains, the southern suburbs of Beirut, or what is termed the Dahiyya (suburb). The organization was established between 1982 and 1985. It formed in part in response to consequences of the Israeli invasion of 1982 and announced itself in 1985.\textsuperscript{39}

**Financing the armed groups**

The armed groups survived partly on funds from domestic sources of the governed, but even more from the international arena. Natural resources were not a factor here, although traffic and trade in some prized international goods was, including drugs by almost all the APPs and conflict diamonds for Amal, an APP that lacked a consolidated territory. Instead of being lootable, resources were obtained in the service of waging war and ruling, from which APPs and individuals amply skimmed.

As a demonstration of the resources and scope of the APPs, the PLO spent around $300 million for its organization and constituent militarized groups, and at the PLO’s height had an annual budget estimated to be larger than that of the Lebanese state.\textsuperscript{40} Its standing army numbered 14,000.\textsuperscript{41} In 1982, the LF had revenues surpassing $100 million.\textsuperscript{42} By the end of the war, the LF equaled the size of the state’s military, with 10,000 troops, and surpassed the state in weapons, equipment and parts, and tax resources.\textsuperscript{43} Hezbollah received about $100 million annually from Iran until the end of the war, and the PSP, the poorest and smallest of the bunch, had an armed force of 5000 in the mid 1980s. Its civilian administration then employed 3000, and had a civil budget of $200 million.\textsuperscript{44} Its income in 1989 was estimated at $4.4 million.\textsuperscript{45}

All the APPs taxed to varying degrees, except for Hezbollah, which instead received religious tithes (the \textit{khums}) and donations from its populace.\textsuperscript{46} All held investments and businesses, had control over at least one of the 15 ports, and charged fees associated with the transit of goods and people in and out of their territory through the checkpoints – in states, these would be customs duties and visa fees. This control of all trade and movement allowed the APPs to monopolize basic goods. Some siphoned money and arms off of the Lebanese state and international humanitarian organizations. All had external funders. Many of these funding sources necessitated coordination between the differing APPs, which occurred routinely through direct personal networks. The cooperation among APPs, part and parcel of what some have termed a militia economy,\textsuperscript{47} complicates theses of ethnic hatred since groups as adversarial as the LF and the Syrians cooperated.

Although not furnishing the bulk of APP money, taxes and revenue from domestic sources such as businesses and donations were important for the APPs, evidenced in the amount of time and attention spent on such institutions and relationships. Naylor determined that the LF’s system of taxation could be one of ‘the world’s most complex and thorough systems of parallel taxation’.\textsuperscript{48}
Restaurant bills were taxed, cinema and theater tickets assessed a fixed percentage, industries, stores, pharmacies, bakeries, and groceries were taxed separate amounts depending on the business volume. Fees accompanied administrative tasks typically undertaken by the Lebanese state, such as birth and death certificates, but which could not be completed due to the restriction of movement. The PSP taxed businesses and real estate in its territories, and the PLO charged for a range of administrative services and permits for business activities. Diasporas also provided funding for the APPs, usually through remittances and donations. The LF had ‘embassies’ abroad to raise money, and the PLO taxed the income of Palestinians working in the Gulf. A significant amount of money was raised this way, between tens of millions of dollars and $2 billion annually, contributing to a consumption economy.

Illicit activities took advantage of the international economy. The LF allowed Italian companies to dump radioactive waste for a fee, and a piracy scam was quite profitable. Particularly at the start of the war, property was confiscated in the downtown areas and the Beirut harbor looted. Banks were robbed, and government and army property and artifacts from the National Museum were stolen. Financial speculation continued to provide windfalls during the war. Banks closely allied to Christian APPs failed, due probably to embezzling funds channeled to an APP, and currency speculation benefited all the APPs as banks collapsed and the Lebanese currency depreciated.

The trajectory and priorities of governance institutions

Populations living in APP territory in Lebanon received varying amounts of public services including security, welfare, social insurance, healthcare and education, law and order, clean streets, public beaches, and even consumer protection. Despite the wide range of ideologies and identities of the APPs, they all converged in their institutional priorities, although not in their capacities or the particular ways of achieving those priorities. Defying theories of path dependency, these APPs departed radically from the Lebanese state’s example, although often conforming to the organizational form of the Lebanese state. The Lebanese state was noticeably lacking in the provision of law and order and public welfare goods. Further, the APPs have usually been depicted sui generis, as unique phenomena following historically distinct paths. Yet the ideologically center-right Christian LF engaged in the same blanket services as the others, the Druze socialist organization and the Palestinian developmentalist one. Under the banner of Islam, Hezbollah now furnishes a similar set of services, albeit more thoroughly and efficiently. Traveling through Lebanon in the 1990s, I heard the strange statement in East Beirut that life had been better during the war. Given the violence of the armed parties, this statement is senseless absent recognition of the services provided by the APPs and not provided by the Lebanese state.

After the consolidation of territory and homogenization of the population, forcing minority populations out, the APPs settled into their separate areas. These
The consolidation of territory was an initial necessary but not sufficient step in establishing governance and services. The priority of institutions roughly corresponds to Rotberg’s hierarchy of political goods. The APPs initially focused internally, on institutions dealing with their own fighters including policing them and providing for their welfare. Fighters began as volunteers, compensated for their services by economic opportunities afforded by their coercive roles, namely, smuggling, looting, embezzling from trade and duties, bribes, and ransoms. As the armed groups became more institutionalized, regulating the fighters became a top priority not only to avoid alienating the population but also to insure hierarchical command. To protect the populace against its own members, regular salaries were paid to the fighters and a police force was established to control the use of coercion. Health care and varying other public goods including unemployment insurance, welfare, price regulation, and employment for the rest of the populace in their territory followed. Policing and social services for fighters provided the impetus for initial administrative development, which soon expanded with the desire to spur the economy, regulate civilian disputes, and secure revenue. Governing and cultural institutions were next, institutions that were directed toward the ruled population in general and not the soldiers.

While the first regularized institution for the APPs was policing their own fighters, the second category of institutional creation was social services, furnished first to fighters and their families. Many fighters were completely dependent on the APP organization, particularly the large base of displaced or refugees which feed the fighters’ ranks. Welfare and social services grew out of the need to feed, care for, and house the fighters. In part, salary provision and health care assured less graft and private use of force, fundamental to centralizing coercive power. Such welfare, provided through military employment, was extended to the families of fighters, particularly since many fighters’ families were refugees. Welfare soon went beyond the immediate needs of war and spread to responsibility for the populace’s welfare. Other public goods followed, including provision of electricity and water. Alongside these social services came fund-raising from the population. The APPs instituted taxation, customs duties, fees, and initiated investment schemes and businesses themselves.

The next two categories of institutional creation were governance and cultural institutions. Welfare and policing necessitated some administration, justice institutions, and reach into the economy of the country. Revenue gathering also pushed the institutionalization of governance and administration, as taxation went hand in hand with regulation of the private sector and detailed databases of business and revenue. Governance styles and institutions differed by the ideological stance of the APP, its history, capacity, and relation with the population. All held an idea of their ideal state prior to consolidating territory. The LF and PSP delineated programs for social, education, and health issues early in their tenures, the PLO modeled itself after the socialist republics and
Hezbollah took the Islamic Republic of Iran as its model. For those who derived significant income from the populace, all save Hezbollah, their administrative wings were pushed by revenue-gathering functions, taxation, customs, and accounting in their new business ventures. Some generated additional institutions in line with either their ideologies or the populace’s own efforts, in an attempt to retain a monopoly of power.

Governance projects were capped off by attempts to create a culture for the ethnic or religious group each represented. All engaged in the cultural production of political identity typical of states and intended to create an emotional attachment, including the rewriting of history textbooks, and the promotion of songs, museums, and festivals binding the populace to the new political entity. These projects, which were elaborated and put into practice after the consolidation of the other institutions delineated above, defined the APPs from the outset and arguably set them off other actors that did not seek to generate state-like institutions.

The effects of all these institutions outlasted the institutions themselves. At a minimum, the superior efficiency and provision of public goods discredited the Lebanese state by comparison, according to observers. Even further, senses of communal identity were solidified and new civil administration institutions increased the autonomy of the cantons, and after the war, the separation of religious confessions. In the following, I sketch the various types of institutions created by the four armed groups.

### Policing and law and order

The earliest institutions in the LF were established to prevent crime and examine security concerns. This Joint Command Council later became a police force and military court system in 1978. The LF also regulated traffic. In the PSP, leader Kamal Junblatt (Druze) set up the Popular Administration in 1976 in response to the flood of their allied LNM fighters into Druze territory. The local residents, many of them Christian, turned to the Druze leader for protection against the incoming fighters. The first priority for this Popular Administration was investigating complaints against fighters, but it was further intended as a model for organizing public services. After the end of the Popular Administration, with the PSP leader’s death, a subsequent governing experiment, the Civil Administration of the Mountain (CAOM), also prioritized policing. A police force was established, regulating the activity of party members, quarrels between residents, and complaints against businesses. Where party members were concerned, punishment was quick.

The PLO used the Palestinian Armed Struggle Command as a police force. It then established a revolutionary court in 1972 to prosecute violations by armed forces and serious crimes by the populace, and to mediate factional disputes. The Popular Committees, composed of members of the various factions, acted like municipality governments and handled lesser crimes and ordinary dispute
mediation. Like the LF, they had a traffic police. Revolutionary courts prosecuted criminals, but verdicts were affected by factional infighting. In Hezbollah, the relatively higher pay scale reportedly made fighters less prone to prey on the population, but the organization nevertheless established units to monitor actions of party leaders. Like the other groups, a main job of Hezbollah was mediation, or preventing intracommunal squabbles that threatened the social order. The organization established a judicial system and mediation to deal with the problem of blood feuds. In the event that mediation was unsuccessful, solutions would be forcibly imposed on the parties to avoid vendettas escalating into tit-for-tat murders. The organization mediated over 200 such feuds from its establishment in the early to mid 1980s till the early 2000s, enacting reconciliation rituals involving both parties and paying a handsome amount of the compensation itself.

Welfare and social services

The LF developed a large social service network, much of it on the backs of the Popular Committees. The Popular Committees began with the Kata’ib or Phalange party (absorbed into the LF), and were continued in the LF. They were local initiatives from the civilian chapters of the party to provide services to the populace. The LF regularized and centralized these volunteer committees. Each had 11 subcommittees in charge of a wide range of municipal duties from garbage collection and health care to justice. By 1978 there were 142 such committees. In 1977, the Popular Committees opened a Department of Consumer Protection, checking meat, drugs, and foodstuffs. In 1987, the LF opened the Social Welfare Agency to aid the needy. Basic goods like wheat were subsidized. With 35 branch offices, the agency aided 25,000 families on a regular basis. Toward the end of the war, popular displeasure and skyrocketing inflation resulted in the LF attempting to improve its public image through increased social services. The LF at this time had some 4000 civil servants in its employ.

The range of service institutions established by the LF was broad. The LF founded the National Solidarity Foundation, a social service institution furnishing employment, low-cost housing, health care, and schooling assistance, among other services. Numerous other organizations were founded and staffed by volunteers, including the provision of psychological services for the young to deal with the war. The Gamma group composed of businessmen and academics was established with the goal of boosting the economy. The LF established summer camps for children to escape the war, programs to combat drug use, emergency phone centers, and establishments to treat emotional effects of the war, in addition to public beaches, consumer protection agencies, and career guidance for youth. Prices on goods were monitored to prevent over-pricing, and fuel stations were inspected to ensure they delivered the advertised quality of fuel.

For the PLO, the main services from the start revolved around caring for orphans, refugees, and the wounded, since their base population were all
refugees. From the beginning of the war to 1982, the number cared for by the PLO’s Social Affairs Department in Lebanon increased by nearly 20,000 families. Orphanages served around 850 children. PLO social institutions concentrated on education and childcare, including extensive prenatal and postnatal care, kindergartens, and orphanages. The group also had eight hospitals. In education, programs included vocational and technical education, which included women, summer camps, sports, and literacy drives. Dental care was also provided. Prosthetic services were advanced to the degree that they were manufactured in the camps. Significant benefits accrued to fighters and their families, including trips abroad, university education, and housing. Pensions were provided, as were funds for families of dead soldiers, and some for civilians killed. Responsibility for infrastructure also fell to the PLO, including water, electricity, garbage, and bomb shelters.

About two-thirds of the Palestinian labor force was employed in the PLO and its institutions. The Palestine Martyrs Works Society (SAMED) ran industrial and agricultural enterprises, producing a range of items from military uniforms to toys, blankets, and handbags. Five thousand workers were employed in SAMED factories, and six times more received training there. Even more worked on experimental farms. Over 3000 employees were in social services, and a few thousand more in the institutional administration of the PLO itself, in addition to 3000 or so paid military forces. All told, the organization employed some 10,000 in these non-military jobs directly, and reportedly three times that amount indirectly.

For the Druze PSP, social services institutions began with help for individuals’ housing and community-based volunteer food provision for the fighters. Care for the dependents of the fighters followed. The civilian administration or CAOM’s Education Committee supplemented teachers’ salaries and provided transport. Parents mobilized to monitor education and fees, which were decided in association with the parent committees. Basic services and education counted at slightly below half of the administration’s budget. The administration employed a few thousand individuals in the middle of the 1980s, and provided loans, monthly aid, scholarships, and stipends to martyrs’ families. To bolster the economy in its territory, the PSP attempted to aid production and build industry, although the area had not been an industrial one before the war. This generated new industrialists. Over 100 industrial firms were established, 29 of which employed more than 25 workers. A total of almost 2000 workers were employed, amounting to almost half of the industrial working class in that region. All told, the PSP employed 15,000–16,000 in its various companies and the administration. In addition to industry, the PSP invested in agriculture including a banana farm in the area of Damour, real estate, and a retail and household goods store chain.

Hezbollah’s social service network is vast; the organization is well known for its provision of welfare. Much of this was spurred by destruction from wars. The party provided basic services, including sewage, water, and electricity. The main
institutions furnishing aid were the Social Services Unit, the Reconstruction Campaign (Jihad al-Bina’), and the Islamic Health Organization. The Reconstruction Campaign rebuilt almost 11,000 institutions including homes, schools, and hospitals, and constructed 78 more anew as of the early 2000s. The Health Units of the Islamic Health Organization benefited an average of 400,000 yearly. Medical visits and tests were discounted, and patient bills subsidized. The Educational Unit provided financial aid, furnishing an average of about $3.3 million annually. Agricultural centers provided aid to farmers and veterinary services in the underserved rural areas. In 1992, Hezbollah established a free transport system, restaurants with free meals for the poor, low-price supermarkets, pharmacies, and clinics. The party has supplied about 7500 small loans a year, more than any other NGO in Lebanon. In 1987, Hezbollah provided 80,000 student grants, aided martyrs’ families, and furnished health and other aid worth $12 million per month. Institutions are split, with one type providing aid to the armed section of the political party and the other for the population generally.

The 2006 Israel–Hezbollah June war spurred even more rebuilding. Hezbollah’s Reconstruction Campaign and its newly established Wa’ad (Promise) organization rebuilt urban areas and apartments in southern Beirut (the Dahiyya or suburb), reportedly distributing $300 million for immediate aid following the 2006 war, to individuals from the various Lebanese sects. For various reasons, the state was a minor player in this reconstruction.

**Expanding administration and governance**

Institutionalization and bureaucratization of policing and social services expanded the reach and potential authority of the armed groups. Both through these institutions and the search for control and revenue, groups administered and governed their populations according to their various ideologies. The relations between the ruled and the armed groups were not democratic; popular involvement and influence occurred either through broad public opinion shifts, individuals with connections, or membership in the political party.

The institutionalization of the LF was reflected in their change of slogan, from *al-quwwat muqawama* (the forces are a resistance) to *al-quwwat mu’assassa* (the forces are an institution). The LF founded the Delta group, an information technology section dedicated to managing their data. This included a detailed listing of all property and businesses under the group’s control along with the estimated earnings. The Gamma group, composed of technical experts, academics, and businessmen, was charged with reconstructing infrastructure, agriculture, and industry. The LF also had missions or ‘embassies’ overseas, in charge of fund-raising, dealing with expatriate Lebanese Christians, and spreading the organization’s point of view.

Like the LF, the PLO institutionalized its rule, becoming even more similar to the statist Arab regimes. The PLO’s local governance came through camp or
popular committees, composed of faction representatives. Numerous and overlapping administrations were established by the factions, which generated competition, multiple services, and institutions for similar functions, and conflict over legitimate authority. These popular organizations, similar to the Arab socialist style, incorporated the populace through profession or life characteristics, such as teachers and professional unions, scout groups for children, and women’s groups.94

The PSP relied for much of the war on its own party offices mediating with the populace, who organized informally. Like the other groups, the PSP became increasingly institutionalized, albeit on a smaller scale than the others. The PSP remained the least centralized of all the armed groups analyzed here, relying upon a decentralized system of existing notables and community officials for justice. Nevertheless, CAOM services spread into consumer protection, examining issues of building codes and expired medicines. Their infrastructure undertakings included repairing and building new schools. The CAOM worked with international and national agencies such as the Council for Development and Reconstruction in Lebanon and Save the Children in this endeavor. They repaired homes and convinced state employees to work for them for additional pay. Telephone employees used CAOM equipment and transport, and CAOM purchased the required inputs. World Vision International helped finance a dairy farm, providing the expertise and one-fifth of the capital. The Italians aided in an experimental farm.95

Like the LF, Hezbollah relied on a combination of new social groups, who were already organizing on their own to provide social services, and also created its own connections with society like the PLO. Unlike the PSP, Hezbollah eschewed dealing with traditional notables and in fact arose partly in opposition to those existing rulers. Hezbollah began by incorporating existing NGOs and civil society social service organizations, all operating within an Islamic framework, into an umbrella network. Adding to this tapped reserve of popular effort, it organized its own party and armed departments, and through these it dealt with the population. The organization is decentralized, more like the LF than the PLO, but still highly regulated.96 It spread into community governance even after the war, and received a United Nations best practices award for its participatory and community development in one municipality within its suburb.97

**Culture and identity**

Spreading their own viewpoint was central to the APPs, and they used the media to achieve a mass effect. Private media exploded during the civil war, with about 50 television stations operating unofficially and even more radio stations.98 The smaller component groups of the umbrella groups had their own stations. The LF had the Radio of Free Lebanon; the Kata’ib had the Voice of Lebanon.99 The LF Information Department also ran a weekly paper and the Lebanese Broadcasting
Company, which continued after the war to become the most popular station in the country, with over two-thirds of the audience, and one of the top Arab stations internationally. The PSP’s radio was Sawt al-Jabal (Voice of the Mountain). The PLO had a radio station, a daily paper, and magazines. Hezbollah created radio stations, the Voice of the Dispossessed in 1986 in the Beqaa, the Voice of Faith in Beirut in 1987, and later a television station, al-Manar, which has been the subject of much international controversy.

Identity projects were at the center of these activities. The Lebanese Front titled one of its first documents ‘the Lebanon we want to build’. A ‘Phoenician’ ideology was promoted by the LF, arguing for the essential difference of Lebanese Christians as non-Arabs, and their constitution as a distinct nation. Intellectuals and the clergy were main promoters of these views, creating journals dedicated to Phoenician history that continued after the war. Identity programs extended abroad, for emigrant Lebanese children to learn their heritage through visits to Lebanon. The PLO wanted to create a truly Palestinian national identity among its people. The PLO funded the arts, theater, and traditional crafts. These include the Cinema Production Sector, and Theater and Art troops which toured internationally. Holidays and celebrations focused on the abstract nation, celebrating Land Day, important battles, the fight with the Jordanian regime, and so on. Streets that had been named after the inhabitants’ village of origin were altered to indicate the political faction of the PLO operating there, such as Iqleem Fatah (Fatah) or Maktab Siyasi (PFLP). The new identity could include alterations in personal life. Many PLO factions prohibited polygamy and actively supported women’s ability to choose their marriage partners, intervening against male relatives. In the Druze region, the PSP wanted to create a socialist individual. The new PSP flag took the place of the Lebanese one, and the organization also had its own anthem. Cultural promotion extended to museums. Beiteddine museum was renovated, and an historic town rebuilt. Another museum’s construction began in 1990 (Baalbek). Hezbollah was likewise engaged in a re-creation of the individual, through espousing authenticated religious practices and encouraging both a resistance society and pride, against a background of historical disadvantage. Socially, a hala islamiyya or Islamic condition, was promoted including spaces of approved recreation for youth, and new museums in the south and Beqaa Valley in the 2000s.

Education was central to these efforts. The PSP utilized the public school system but altered the content. Their administration, the CAOM, revised and published history books for the schools under its jurisdiction. New history texts (al-Tarikh) and civics books (al-Tanshi’a al-wataniyya) were prepared for all grades (first through university) to replace the Ministry of Education’s texts. These de-emphasized the Phoenician history that the Christians emphasized and expanded attention to the Druze. The books treated Lebanon as one area within greater Syria. They emphasized socialist values, sacrifice for the country, and scouting. High school military training texts were also provided. New texts were likewise produced in the Palestinian areas. PLO schools used the national curriculum for sciences, but their own texts for national and
historical education. *Tarikh al-Falasteen*, History of Palestine, was a three-volume scholarly work produced by a Palestinian research organization.\(^{114}\) Hezbollah was very active in research institutions and schooling. Its Institution of Islamic Education and Socialization began in 1993, and includes at least 14 schools.\(^{115}\) Likewise, the organization began a research center, the Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation in 1988, publishing a wide array of articles and reports.\(^{116}\)

**Lebanon case conclusions**

The conclusions derived from the current – albeit limited – comparison point to several factors involved in the generation of public institutions in areas controlled by such APPs. The overarching rationale of control combined with popular models of legitimate government held by the population and espoused by the political parties themselves, backed up by citizen efforts to provide social services and potentially compete with the APP.

Despite the diverse ideologies, resources, backgrounds, and national identity conceptions of these APPs, similar types of institutions were established in the same order of priority. These similarities provide initial insight into the priorities of APPs who have governing projects. In the Lebanese APPs, policing institutions developed first, with the goal of regulating the behavior of fighters themselves. While protection and security are fundamental political goods, they are double-edged. An asymmetry of power characterizes the purveyors and purchasers of protection. Specialists in coercion are themselves the chief, but not sole, threat to which they offer a solution – what is known as the protection racket. Internally, the APPs needed to prevent factions within the ranks in addition to not grossly offending the populace. Further, these institutions can maintain uncontested power by avoiding common social and neighborhood conflicts that escalate into violence outside the purview of the APP.

Policing was closely followed by social services, again first for the fighters. Basic policing of the fighters later developed into governing institutions of dispute settlement, courts, and regulatory institutions. The particular institutions that began with the priority of maintaining the fighters and keeping them from committing random acts of violence against the ruled population expanded to institutions of governance and social welfare for the general populace. Educational, cultural, and media institutions to promote a distinct and proud identity were last. Although these cultural institutions were present from the beginning, they were not the focus of investment by the APPs until policing and social welfare were secured.

Scholars and interviewees in Lebanon often posit that a vacuum of governance and services caused the establishment of APP public goods institutions. Social services were needed to prevent problems due to both state collapse and migration into APP areas in Lebanon, Harik states. The amount of need and devastation seem to matter. The PSP coordinated aid between its party
offices and individuals helping the refugees and needy in their area, from 1976 to 1983. The subsequent war with the LF on PSP territory caused large devastation and entailed more systematic and centralized coordination for PSP relief efforts. Similarly, the PLO was solely responsible for caring for the Palestinians in Lebanon, as the state provided nothing and most employment was closed to Palestinians. The PLO indeed was well organized administratively. PLO provisioning included infrastructure, the lack of which also spurred the organization of Hezbollah in the southern Beirut suburbs due to neglect of the state and destruction from the 1982 Israeli invasion. Yet popular need in other areas has not been sufficient to cause the founding of public service institutions. In Africa, extreme devastation generated no collective goods institutions for the populace in areas controlled by violent non-state actors. In Lebanon currently, a lack of such institutions continues and the state makes no attempt to fill this gap. A lack of security may differ from a vacuum of public services, as the absence of law and order allows armed groups to extend their control. In Iraq, the APPs reportedly filled the ‘security gap’.

Instead of sheer need, the desire for complete military control is a more plausible explanation. Data from interviews and the actions of the Lebanese APPs suggest a combination of ideology and desire for control is causal in generating public institutions. Control is enhanced by some of the APP’s public services, as these services have direct military implications. Services can play a controlling and security role. Policing institutions not only aid monopolistic control within a territory but also maintain the military hierarchy within the APP. But control is also multifaceted, and encompasses a role for civil society activism and a desire for legitimacy. The APP’s goal for monopolistic power suggests that potential competition from other actors, violent or not, would spur a desire to eliminate any alternative potential allegiances. The APP would thus furnish the institutions or services itself, incorporating and regulating the other actors. These Lebanese APPs absorbed or co-opted popular social service efforts, and either subsumed or fought APPs competing for governance in their territory. Such a dynamic generates the hypothesis that more active civil societies, or those with the capability of mobilizing, who have clear preferences as is the case in Lebanon, would generate more public goods provision from APPs.

The role of resources derived from the population is ambiguous. Popular resources through taxation played a role in some Lebanese APPs more than others. The prominent role of domestic financial sources in the Lebanese civil war, including transit fees and taxation, could support the thesis that non-lootable resources generate more attention to popular needs in APP governance. The LF, for example, taxed internal trade more than external trade. Yet Hezbollah from the beginning of the war received, and continues to receive, significant external resources. While the group did not need contributions from the population, this lack of need did not translate into fewer public service institutions. To the contrary, this group has one of the most extensive networks of social services of the APPs. However, popular contributions through labor remittances have
continued to play a role, and as external funding declined after the end of the war, the group has broadened and softened its ideological stance to include, or at least not offend, wider segments of the population. Lack of taxation or resources raised from the population does not indicate that a violent non-state actor would neither need nor desire legitimacy, but a large role for such popular resources may require at least minimal popular approval.120

The Lebanese APPs had developed ideological ideas to care for the populace, justified by rejection of the national model of non-provision of services.121 This fact also separates the Lebanese APPs from many predatory violent non-state actors. They were not attempting to take the money and run, but to rule over their areas by enacting their existing ideology. These APPs were ideological parties before they were APPs, or the APPs developed alongside the political party. They had in mind models of the state they wanted to build, and detailed plans for social and economic institutions were present in their earliest writings.122 The populace was active in the political parties and popular movements from which the APPs sprung. Civil society itself was a mainstay of the new administrations: volunteerism was channeled and formed the basic infrastructure for much of the services. Citizens organizing to provide public goods for themselves elicited a response from the rulers, due to desires for legitimacy and the search for complete military control. Lebanese citizens had high expectations and well-developed conceptions of what they desired of their new government. It bears repeating that positing such a role for popular expectations does not suggest that the APPs were democratic or promoted civil rights and representation. The populace was heavily repressed and thought was policed, a dynamic uniform across the divergent ideologies and APP political parties.

Conclusion: Governance and institutions of violent non-state actors

Increasing numbers of people in failed or weak states are under the rule of non-state actors, yet we know little about the incentives and pressures they face apart from violent and economic considerations. In some cases, a desire to govern and win the populace’s approval is a motivating factor for non-state actors. In contrast to the old idea of a fixed national state fighting an insurgent group whose aim is control of that national state, violent non-state actors can have little aspiration to control or even interact with the national state. Instead, they can establish alternative governing bodies on the territory they rule. Increasingly, non-state actors coexist with a state that has no ability to enforce its law and order functions on the non-state actor.

The institutions non-state governing actors create hold important consequences not only for those they rule, but also for the legitimacy of the national state and attempts at disarmament, stabilization, and reconstruction. This study represents a first cut into that analysis. A comparison of institutional paths of the Lebanese APPs permits analysis of their common trajectories within a single domestic context and culture. Across ideologies, the similar categories of
priorities are a strong indicator of the important role these institutions play. All the APPs departed from the Lebanese state’s night-watchman character and provided sophisticated social services to the populations under their control. The breath of institutions established demonstrates an alternative model of governance from the existing one of minimal government. To some extent, the results aligned with the various ideologies of the APPs. To a greater extent, the services provided by APPs converged on the common basics of policing and welfare, which together maintained their right to rule. The importance of the internal needs of the APP for hierarchy and control is suggested by the similar pattern of institution-building that began with attempts to regulate the behavior of fighters themselves. Citizen activism partly spurred APP efforts to control and regulate their activities, absorbing and providing those services in the process. The new institutions were a mix of innovation inspired by military desires for control, political ideals, and popular initiatives. In turn, such public institutions and social service provision can decrease the legitimacy of the national government, where it still exists, and can solidify the APP’s separatist project over the long-term.123

Disclaimer
The views expressed here are the author’s and not those of any institutional affiliation.

Notes
1. Governing bodies ‘claim to be, perform as, and are recognized as legitimate by some larger public . . . as authors of policies, of practices, of rules, and of norms. They set agendas, they establish boundaries or limits for action, they certify, they offer salvation, they guarantee contracts, and they provide order and security.’ Hall and Biersteker, ‘Emergence of Private Authority’, 4. See the essays in that volume for more on private governance.
2. Ismail, Political Life in Cairo’s New Quarters.
3. Baylouny, ‘Authority Outside the State’; Clunan and Trinkunas, Ungoverned Spaces?
5. Research for this article is from interviews with intellectuals and former members of the APPs, secondary data, and my own experience living briefly in Lebanon during the civil war and crossing the groups’ territories. Subsequent fieldwork includes about a half dozen visits from 1998 to the present.
6. The institutions of governance I refer to here are formally constituted arrangements, involving an administration or bureaucracy, which commit the governing body to formal and regularized interactions with the populace. See also Weinstein’s definition of a rebel government, which includes ‘control over territory, . . . institutions . . . to manage relations with the civilian population, and . . . rules that define a hierarchy of decision making and a system of taxation’ (Weinstein, Inside Rebellion, 164).
7. The observation that institutions were established which served the ruled population should in no way detract from the coercive and repressive actions of these groups.

8. The numerous terms for violent non-state actors are confused, but a full accounting is beyond the scope of this article.

9. The armed groups studied here are neither warlords nor attached to the state. One group could possibly be considered state-supporters, but established itself and its territory separate from and opposed to the state (the LF). Another group comes the closest to being classified as a warlord’s military, but the formal structure and political party history prevent it from being included the warlord category (the Progressive Socialist Party). Some literatures utilize terms that denote the relation of the group to the state, such as insurgents or rebels. In the Lebanese conflict, categories such as rebel or insurgent are imprecise since they were engaged in a multisided civil war and their primary goal was not battling authorities but achieving autonomy from them. Other definitional distinctions are muddied by confusion with the group’s political inclinations; right- or left-wing groups are referred to differently in some literatures. The term guerrilla did not become popular in the Middle East literature with the exception of groups fighting across states, such as the PLO. PLO actions in the Lebanese civil war were primarily intrastate, not international.

10. Personal communication with Professor Abbas Kadhim, Iraq specialist, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, August 2009. See Williams, ‘Violent Non-state Actors’.


15. Spears, ‘States-Within-States’.


17. Spears, ‘States-Within-States’; Kingston and Spears, ‘Conclusions and Policy Options’. I do not call these state-building projects, despite their assumption of state-like duties, since that would both impose teleology and reduce APP institutions to a reproduction of the state-building projects of old. As Spruyt notes, a wide range of political configurations is possible (Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors*).


25. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.


32. Ibid., 45.
36. The Kata’ib or Phalange was founded by Pierre Gemayyel in 1936 and modeled after the European fascist parties of the time. His son Bashir would later found the LF as an independent power autonomous of the Kata’ib, encompassing and the other Christian APPs by 1980. The LF shared the ideological outlook of the Kata’ib. On the early Kata’ib, see Stoakes, ‘The Supervigilantes’.
37. Personal Communication, Independent researcher and former educator in PLO institutions.
38. Harik, Public and Social Services, 15. Its leader was also assassinated, and leadership passed to his son. The father, Kamal Junblatt, held strong socialist convictions and ideas for the future of Lebanon. He founded the PSP in 1949. His son was not as developed in this regard.
39. For more on Hezbollah, see Norton, Hezbollah.
42. Zahar, ‘Fanatics, Mercenaries, Brigands’, 120.
46. Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 64.
49. ‘Liban: L’argent des milices’.
52. Dib, Warlords and Merchants, 159, 165 n. 20.
53. For more on the banks during the Lebanese civil war, see Hourani, ‘Transnational Pathways and Politico-economic Power’.
54. Indeed, the individuals were referring to the economic benefits of the militia regime for non-combatants like themselves.
55. The Shia APP Amal was one among other APPs that attempted to rule without possessing delimited territory. Amal was based in southern Lebanon, an area not easily consolidated in contrast to the Beirut suburbs of Hezbollah. In 1982, Amal began to fragment with the Israeli invasion, individual units controlling their villages and monopolizing traffic between zones. The decentralized and weak infrastructure prohibited the regulation of members’ activities. Instead of providing its own welfare and social services, Amal utilized government institutions and relied upon clientelism unlike the other APPs. Picard, ‘The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon’, 310; Norton, ‘Harakat Amal’.
57. Ibid.
58. In governance, I concentrate on APP institutions relating to the civilian population, not internal power and decision-making structures within the APP itself.
59. Harik, Public and Social Services.
60. Barak, ‘Commemorating Malikiyya’, 543; Rae, State Identities and the Homogenisation of Peoples.
61. The comparison with the South Lebanon Army (SLA), funded by Israel and without a domestic constituency, is instructive. While it had territory, radio and television stations, and funded significant social services, the SLA was limited by the inability of the organization to claim legitimate rule.


64. Harik, ‘Change and Continuity’.


66. Personal Communication, Independent researcher and former educator in PLO institutions.

67. Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 107–8, Middle East Briefing, ‘Hizbollah’.


69. Harik, Public and Social Services, 33.


72. Snider, ‘The Lebanese Forces’, 141, 144. For the list of institutions from the LF’s point of view, see Lebanese Forces Official Website, LF Leaders: Bachir Gemayel: Institutions, http://www.lebanese-forces.org/institutions/index.shtml


80. Harik, Public and Social Services, 17.


82. Interview with Kamal Hamdan, economic consultant and writer, Beirut, 26 January 1998.


84. Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 50–5.

85. Ibid.

86. Harik, Public and Social Services.

87. Harik, Hizbollah.

88. ‘Liban: L’argent des milices’, 285. A martyr is considered by the party to be anyone killed by hostile forces, whether a combatant or not. This includes those killed by Israeli action or the opposition Lebanese Christian forces during the war.

89. Harb and Leenders, ‘Know Thy Enemy’.

90. Quilty and Ohrstrom, ‘The Second Time as Farce’.


92. Interview with Sami Baroudi, Professor of Political Science, Lebanese American University, 12 January 1998, Beirut.

93. Sayigh, Armed Struggle and the Search for State, 448.

94. Weighill, ‘Palestinians in Lebanon’, 299. See the chart of organizations in Brynen, Sanctuary and Survival, 40. For more details on the PLO’s development and administration, see Cobban, The Palestinian Liberation Organisation, 13.


96. See the organizational chart in Hamzeh, In the Path of Hizbullah, 46.


98. Figuie´, Le Point sur le Liban, 486.
99. ‘Liban: L’argent des milices’.
100. Zahar, ‘Fanatics, Mercenaries, Brigands’, 118, 133.
101. Dib, Warlords and Merchants, 250.
103. Harik, Public and Social Services, 45; Baylouny, Al Manar and Alhurra.
108. Peteeet, ‘Socio-Political Integration’, 42.
109. Interview with As’ad AbuKhalil, Professor of Political Science, California State University at Stanislaus, Beirut, July 2005.
110. Harik, Public and Social Services, 47.
112. Deeb and Harb, ‘Sanctioned Pleasures’.
113. Interview with As’ad AbuKhalil, Professor of Political Science, California State University at Stanislaus, Beirut, July 2005; Harik, ‘Change and Continuity’, 391–2.
114. According to a researcher on the project, it was more of a scholarly and not a school textbook, and thus was not suitable for the school curriculum. Personal communication, independent researcher and former educator in PLO institutions, Beirut, 17 June, 2005.
115. al–Sabbagh, ‘20 Years Since the Announced Launching of ‘Hizb Allah’.
117. Harik, Public and Social Services, 18.
118. Williams, Criminals, Militias, and Insurgents, 52.
119. Harik, Public and Social Services, also notes this.
120. The actor’s relationship to the state has also been seen as causal. Reno discusses how types of personal networks, combined with specific methods of state rule, can cause only predation. Reno, ‘Politics of Violent Opposition’. In the Lebanon case, personal connections to the state varied among the APPs, but the state had little to provide.
121. Interview with Dr Salim Nasr, Senior Advisor, Civil Society and Public Participation, UNDP, 21 June 2005, Beirut; Personal communication with former Kata’ib member and peace activist, 5 July 2009; Zahar, ‘Fanatics, Mercenaries, Brigands’, 123.
122. The comparison with the SLA, funded by Israel, demonstrates that perhaps without the common pretense of identity or a APP representing its constituency populace, institutions and public goods can be absent since the APP has no credible claim to the allegiance of the population.

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