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Inflection Points: Agenda Setting and American Foreign Policy toward Islamist Groups

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Political Science

by

Leah Amelia Halvorson

2013

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Inflection Points: Agenda Setting and American Foreign Policy toward Islamist Groups

by

Leah Amelia Halvorson

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, Los Angeles 2013

Professor Steven L. Spiegel, Chair

This dissertation addresses why U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups has varied over time. Although recent scholarship has improved our understanding of how non-state actors, particularly terrorist groups, operate, not enough work has attempted to understand how states devise policies toward non-state actors. It builds on previous work to go beyond analyzing U.S. policy toward the broad concept of “Political Islam”, and instead addresses U.S. policy over time and toward specific groups. I examine two militant and two nonmilitant case studies: the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, Palestinian Hamas, and Lebanese Hezbollah. Employing John Kingdon’s garbage can model of agenda setting, I argue that variation in U.S. policy toward these groups is a function of policy entrepreneurs linking a new solution (ranging from engagement to confrontation) to a problem (the Islamist group) in the context of policy windows of opportunity. These agenda setting processes explain why U.S. policy toward Islamist groups appears to change suddenly after periods of stasis.

The dissertation of Leah Amelia Halvorson is approved.

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CHAPTER ONE

Applying John Kingdon's Garbage Can Model of Agenda Setting

Introduction

Combating Islamist groups became a major American policy priority following 9/11. However Political Islam was on the U.S. policy radar long before the attacks and it was not always cast in negative terms. Sometimes it was viewed as a strategically valuable force for advancing American interests. After World War II, The U.S. embassy made numerous friendly contacts with key Islamic leaders in Egypt in the normal course of obtaining information about local political conditions. A U.S. embassy official worked with Hassan Al Banna, the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and talked about the possibility of cooperating against the communist threat.¹ The U.S. relied on Islamist groups during the Cold War against the spread of Communism, supporting the Afghani Mujahidin against the Soviets in Afghanistan.² President Carter also reached out to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during the Iranian hostage crisis, in hopes that the General Guide could convince Khomeini to release the hostages. Relations with Islamist groups became more complicated and contentious during the 1980s, although the Reagan administration was still committed to the Cold War binary that distinguished between “good” (meaning anti-communist) and “bad” (anti-U.S.) Islamists. Lebanese Hezbollah, for example, fell into the latter category, as it was responsible for numerous terrorist attacks, including the 1983 bombing of the U.S. marine barracks in Beirut, which resulted in the deaths of 241 Americans.

As more Islamist groups formed and began to spread across the Middle East after the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. feared that Islamic

¹ Khalil Al-Anani, “Is ‘Brotherhood’ with America Possible?,” *Arab Insight* 1 (2007): 12.

² Maria do Céu Pinto, *Political Islam and the United States: a Study of U.S. Policy Towards Islamist Movements in the Middle East*, 1st ed, Durham Middle East Monographs Series (Reading [England]: Ithaca Press, 1999).

radicalism would sweep across the region. Arab governments like Egypt, attempting to bolster their own power, often used the specter of Islamic radicalism as a way to convince the U.S. to increase economic aid, and give them a free hand to repress domestic Islamist rivals.³ As the fear of Islamists increased and became a higher policy priority, one might have expected a more uniform Political Islam policy to emerge in the U.S. In reality, the U.S. treats each group differently. Sometimes American policymakers have engaged with a moderate Islamist group, and sometimes not. The U.S. has engaged in low level talks with one militant Islamist group, while consigning similar group to pariah status.

As a result, variation in U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist political groups has been inconsistent. Groups that share organizational characteristics and ideological commitments are often treated very differently. For example, in recent years (before the Arab Spring revolutions of early 2011) the U.S. occasionally engaged with the nonmilitant Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, but rarely and usually in an unofficial capacity. The U.S. has had more contact with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood through its political wing, the Islamic Action Front. U.S. policy has also been aggressively focused on containing Hamas and Hezbollah, two militant Islamist organizations, although the approach to each group is quite distinct. In the case of Hamas, the Bush administration's "Freedom Agenda" insisted on open elections, which inadvertently contributed to a political crisis in which Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary election. Shortly thereafter, the Bush administration backtracked on Middle East democracy promotion, opening the door for regional allies to crack down on moderate Islamist parties such as the

³ This was especially true under President Hosni Mubarak's tenure. In the 1990s he faced a true Islamist uprising from groups like Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya during which they bombed tourist sites like Deir el-Bahri near Luxor in November 1997 that killed over 60 people, and in response Mubarak repressed them. These efforts also extended to the Muslim Brotherhood, even though they were not part of the insurgency.

Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's political wing, the Islamic Action Front.

New uncertainties have emerged in the wake of the revolutions of 2011, which have dramatically altered the regional political environment with respect to Islamist groups and concomitantly, American policy. Congressional hearings expressed fears about the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood playing a more prominent role in the post-Mubarak era, and these fears intensified when Mohammed Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, was elected President of Egypt in 2012.⁴ The Jordanian Islamic Action Front has been a major component of the demonstrations seeking political reforms in Jordan and was offered a spot in government. Hamas still rules Gaza, and Hezbollah has veto power in the Lebanese government, which allowed the group to play a critical role in the formation of the new Lebanese cabinet. These developments amount to a major shift in U.S. fortunes in the region, and therefore provide an opening for variation in U.S. policy.

This study explains why U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups has varied over time. Drawing on John Kingdon's theory of agenda setting⁵, I argue that variation in U.S. policy toward these groups is a function of policy entrepreneurs taking advantage of a window of opportunity to link a new solution (ranging from engagement to confrontation) to a problem (the Islamist group). These processes explain why U.S. policy toward Islamist groups appears to change suddenly after periods of stasis or incremental change. They also explain why U.S. policy

⁴ He resigned his official membership in the Brotherhood when he was elected, in a move to distance himself from the organization. Nevertheless, he is widely regarded as a "Brotherhood President". See David D. Kirkpatrick, "Named Egypt's Winner, Islamist Makes History," *The New York Times*, June 24, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/25/world/middleeast/mohamed-morsi-of-muslim-brotherhood-declared-as-egypts-president.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

⁵ Kingdon's theory is alternately referred to as a "multiple streams" model or a variation of the garbage can model of agenda setting.

became more hostile toward some Islamist groups, even as they renounced violence. I will address four case studies in this project, two of which are militant and two which are not: The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, Palestinian Hamas, and Lebanese Hezbollah.

In addition to analyzing the agenda setting processes which dictate American policy toward these groups, this study also has secondary objectives. It will demonstrate that other theoretical frameworks that are commonly applied to foreign policy questions do not adequately explain U.S. policy toward Islamist groups. These explanations include threats to American security interests, bureaucratic competition, public opinion, the beliefs of key policymakers, and the nature of the group. Another, broader goal of this project is to better understand how the U.S. formulates policies toward non-state actors and whether the U.S. assesses threats posed by non-state actors in the same way it would conventional states. Although recent scholarship has made strides in understanding how non-state actors, particularly terrorist groups, operate, not enough work has attempted to understand how states devise policies toward non-state actors. This dissertation will build on previous work to go beyond analyzing U.S. policy toward the broad concept of “Political Islam”, and instead address U.S. policy over time and toward specific groups. As non-state actors become increasingly relevant and capable of affecting the international community, understanding how states relate with them will become even more important.

From Bureaucratic Politics to the Garbage Can Model of Agenda Setting

Theories of foreign policy often assume that the output of the system is a function of a unified, uncontested conception of the national interest. As a result, these models are frequently unable to explain why foreign policy changes when interests do not. The bureaucratic politics literature strongly disputes the assumptions of the dominant rationalist or realist model of foreign policy. For these bureaucratic theorists, governments are not unitary actors solely reacting to external, systemic forces.⁶ And foreign policy problems are not necessarily addressed in a linear fashion, reflecting a uniform conception of the national interest.⁷ While accepting that policymakers set out to behave rationally and search for appropriate solutions as problems emerge, bureaucratic politics scholars believe that the reality of governance is much messier, which explains why policies might appear inconsistent or evolve in fits and starts.

Bureaucratic processes are often disorganized and unsystematic. As Henry Kissinger wrote, “I think that if one wants to understand what the government is likely to do, one has to understand the bureaucracies of the problem.”⁸ In terms of foreign policy, he argued, “Foreigners looking at American policy have a tendency to assume that anything that happened was intended and that there is a deep, complicated purpose behind our actions. I wish this were true, but I

⁶ See Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2006). See also Morton Halperin, “Introduction,” in *Readings in American Foreign Policy: A Bureaucratic Perspective*, ed. Morton H. Halperin and Arnold Kanter (Boston: Little brown and Company, 1973), 2–3.

⁷ As Henry Kissinger wrote, “There isn’t any clear notion of what the American national interest is, and this presents a great problem. Most of the traditional concepts of balance of power just don’t apply to the contemporary theory of national interest. To develop criteria in this sort of intellectual vacuum is very difficult.” Henry Kissinger, “Bureaucracy and Policymaking: The Effects of Insiders and Outsiders on the Policy Process,” in *Readings in American Foreign Policy; a Bureaucratic Perspective*, ed. Arnold Kanter and Morton Halperin (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 93.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

don't believe it is. In fact, I think that in any large bureaucracy it probably cannot be true..."⁹ He added, "When the bureaucracy is as large and fragmented as it is, decisions do not get made until they appear as an administrative issue. One cannot convince a high level official that he has a problem until it appears unambiguously in the form of an administrative conflict."¹⁰ Thus for the bureaucratic school, to understand foreign policy decisions, one must understand the bureaucratic dynamics that generated the decision. In this context, bureaucratic politics theorists argue that decision makers possess "bounded rationality"¹¹, meaning that they make limited rational judgments within a series of constraints. They may not have access to all the relevant information and have little time to devote to every issue that emerges. As a result, decisions may be suboptimal, but the best they can do under the circumstances.¹² Policymakers are confronted by numerous competing demands on their time and attention, so they can only focus on a limited set of agenda items.

While this school of thought has found a natural home in studies of domestic policy at the federal as well as local level, there has been some resistance to applying it to foreign policy questions¹³. International Relations scholars have treated foreign affairs as a separate domain with fundamentally different causal mechanisms. The underlying assumption is that domestic politics are irrelevant to foreign policy, perhaps because Presidents (rather than Congress) dominate foreign policy given that they have more autonomy, or that public opinion is not

⁹ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰ Ibid., 87.

¹¹ See Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, 2nd ed, Chicago Studies in American Politics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), xxiii.

¹² See Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior; a Study of Decision-making Processes in Administrative Organization* (New York: Macmillan Co, 1947). In contrast to the rational and omniscient "economic man", Simon argued that the "administrative man" tries to find a satisfactory solution, or whatever will "satisfice".

¹³ Important exceptions to this include Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*; Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

activated when it comes to foreign affairs.¹⁴ Politicians also often feel it is taboo to admit that foreign policy decisions might be affected by “politics”. But bureaucratic politics theorists maintain that policymakers are primarily motivated by domestic political concerns, not only in terms of public opinion, but more broadly, they are sensitive to public pressure by prominent individuals, interest groups, constraints imposed by Congress, and their sense of the “national mood”. These concerns apply to both domestic policy and foreign policy decision making, although the specific nuances or procedures may vary depending on the domain.

An important subset of bureaucratic politics theory is the agenda setting literature, which focuses on the notion that policymakers can only address a limited number of issues. In this view, policies change when they make it to the decision agenda. Otherwise, through inertia, policies remain unchanged or problems go unaddressed.

As one former U.S. State Department official explained¹⁵,

“ My theory of policy is that what is in motion, stays in motion unless acted on by an outside force. There are two types in government, the type who thinks his job is to protect policies and the type who thinks his job is to change policy and the number of people who want to protect policy far outweighs the number of people who want to change it. You see that in the policy on containing Saddam in the Gulf War started by the first Bush administration. It was continued by Clinton for eight years without change and when the second Bush administration came in, the policy was about to collapse. I’m not saying that’s what motivated the senior members of the administration, but for me as a member of the Foreign Service, I could see that something had to change and my concern was if the UN sanctions regime collapsed, it would be incredibly damaging to U.S. attitudes toward the future utility of the UN. This is one of the reasons why I didn’t see any

¹⁴Philip J. Powlick and Andrew Z. Katz, “Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus,” *Mershon International Studies Review* 42, no. 1 (1998): 29–61.

¹⁵ In the process of researching this dissertation, I interviewed nearly two dozen current and former U.S. officials from the State Department and the Pentagon, Congressional staff, and representatives from nongovernmental organizations. To protect their anonymity, but at the same time to distinguish interviews, I used a coding system based on a random number generator to identify interviews. In each footnote, the interview will be listed by the random number code and the date the interview took place.

alternatives to what Bush was doing; I wasn't happy about it, but I was worried sanctions would collapse."¹⁶

Something needs to draw policymakers' attention to an issue so that they define it as a problem that requires a solution, but how does this process work? One of the most influential theories that addresses this question is John Kingdon's adaptation of the garbage can model of agenda setting.

The Garbage Can Model of Agenda Setting

John Kingdon's theory posits that policy, the product of the bureaucratic system, is a function of a series of processes: agenda setting, the specification of alternatives, an authoritative choice, and final implementation.¹⁷ His framework analyzes the first two elements, which are pre-decision processes, in order to understand why some issues receive the attention of decision makers, while some linger in obscurity. When an issue is elevated to the decision agenda¹⁸, government officials take action, resulting in policy changes, although how the final decision is made is not what concerns Kingdon. The focus of his study is, "how they got to be issues in the first place".¹⁹

An issue arriving on the decision agenda is not the product of a simple process and is often fraught with uncertainties. A "rational" decision process would observe that a problem exists, then identify a solution consistent with the national interest and apply it. But this systematic thought process is time and research intensive. It also requires a clear sense of the

¹⁶ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #89, April 16, 2012.

¹⁷ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), 3.

¹⁸ Kingdon distinguishes between the government and decision agenda. A government agenda is the set of concerns that receive attention and the decision agenda is a subset of the government agenda that are being considered for an "active decision". Ibid.,4.

¹⁹ Ibid., vii.

national interest, but participants do not always agree about how to define or what would maximize the national interest. As Morton Halperin notes, “Seldom do participants, in fact, in engage in such research to determine what is in the national interest. The problems are too difficult, and time is short.”²⁰ Instead, policymakers must draw on ideas that have already been generated in policy circles and assess their political viability.

Kingdon modifies the garbage can model (GCM), developed by Cohen, March and Olsen, to conceptualize this policy process and apply it to the federal government.²¹ The original model used universities as an example of what Cohen, March and Olsen called “organizational anarchies”, which means that members don’t receive clear directions to guide their choices and are often uncertain about who is in charge. In a university, participants often lack a complete understanding of the university’s overarching goals in a way that would help shape their decisions. Often administrative procedures are opaque and projects will have multiple people working on them, only to have participants change mid-project. The GCM posits three features endemic to organized anarchies: problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. Problematic preferences means that there is no clearly defined set of preferences or goals that guide decisions; instead, the organization is more like an amalgam of ideas or as Cohen, March and Olsen argue, “it discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences”.²² The second characteristic, unclear technology, means that although the organization continues to operate, each member does not fully understand its procedures.

²⁰ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*.

²¹ See also Padgett for an early example of applying to the Cohen, March, and Olsen version of the garbage can model: John F. Padgett, “Managing Garbage Can Hierarchies,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (1980): 583–604.

²² Michael D. Cohen, James G. March, and Johan P. Olsen, “A Garbage Can Model of Organizational Choice,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1972): 1.

Participants engage in trial and error, but are not guided by a clearly understood organizational procedure. Although participants might understand the details of their own jobs, they might not understand how their job fits into the overall organizations. The third property of organized anarchies is fluid participation, which means that members of the organization float in and out of specific projects and domains. Members are therefore unsure of who should make the final decision. “As a result, the boundaries of the organization are uncertain and decision makers for any particular kind of choice change capriciously.”²³

Cohen, March, and Olsen use the metaphor of a disorderly garbage can to represent the opportunity to make a choice. As problems and solutions are generated, participants dump them into a “garbage can” and wait for an opportunity for them to converge.²⁴ The garbage can represents an environment in which ideas evolve and are paired with other ideas, resulting in combinations that often appear incongruous.²⁵ Solutions, problems, participants, and choice opportunities become attached or detached at various points which results in erratic and unconventional problem solving. Unlike a rational choice explanation, problems, solutions, choice opportunities and potential participants coexist in separate, independent streams within the garbage can. As Kingdon explains, “People do not set about to solve problems here. More often, solutions search for problems. People work on problems only when a particular combination of problem, solution, and participants in a choice situation makes it possible.”²⁶ In this organizational environment, participants don’t make choices in a rational, linear fashion. As Jonathan Bendor explains it, choices “arise from dynamic organizational processes that are

²³ Ibid.,1.

²⁴ Ibid.,2.

²⁵ Jonathan Bendor, Terry M. Moe, and Kenneth W. Shotts, “Recycling the Garbage Can: An Assessment of the Research Program,” *The American Political Science Review* 95 (2001): 171.

²⁶ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 91.

complex, highly contextual, and unpredictable, driven more by accident and timing than individual intention.”²⁷

John Kingdon’s variation of the model has become the most widely known application of the theory. He used it to explain agenda setting at the federal level, specifically regarding transportation and health care policy. His modification of the GCM reduced the policy streams to three: problems, policies and politics.²⁸ Like the Cohen, March, and Olsen version, the streams develop largely independently of one another, in their own specific domains within the garbage can.

The Problem Stream

The first is the problem stream in which issues become defined as problems requiring a solution. They come to the attention of policymakers in a few different ways. One way is when there is a change in well-known indicators, for example, if the percentage of individuals living at or below the poverty line increases substantially, policymakers become aware of a poverty problem. Problems can also become prominent because of feedback from constituents or experts about a failing policy.

A focusing event can also call attention to a problem. Crises or disasters make the problem visible and move the problem up on the list of priority problems to address. They are often followed by commissions to investigate what caused the crisis along with public demand for the government to “do something”. For example, Hurricane Katrina²⁹ drew attention to the

²⁷ Bendor, Moe, and Shotts, “Recycling the Garbage Can: An Assessment of the Research Program,” 171.

²⁸ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 92.

²⁹ For an interesting treatment of Katrina as a focusing event, see Joshua Farley et al., “Opening the Policy Window for Ecological Economics: Katrina as a Focusing Event,” *Ecological Economics* 63 (2007): 344–354.

poorly designed levy system in New Orleans and inadequacies in the FEMA emergency response. 9/11 served as a focusing event for issues like terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, bringing these topics higher on the decision agenda. Sudden, random acts of violence like the New York train shooting in 1993, Columbine in 1999, Virginia Tech, in 2007 Tucson in 2011, Aurora, Colorado in July 2012, and a Connecticut elementary school in December 2012 were followed by public debates about gun control and in some cases led to legislative action. As President Clinton reacted to the 1993 shooting, he said that he hoped the tragic events would, “give some more impetus to the need to act urgently to deal with the unnecessary problems of gun violence in the country.”³⁰ The Three Mile Island nuclear accident sparked demonstrations around the world, led to investigations by a Presidential Commission and the House of Representatives, and invigorated the anti-nuclear power movement. Likewise the West Virginia coal mine collapse in 2010 led to queries over the safety of coal mining. And the I-35 Minneapolis bridge collapse in 2008 drew greater scrutiny of the nation’s faltering infrastructure.

While these examples relate to events that shape and refine choices and choice sets in the domestic realm, the streams model is likely even more powerful when applied to international non-state actors. The four cases in this study will consider developments in the problem stream that attract attention to each Islamist group, leading officials to view the group as a problem requiring a solution. For example Hezbollah engaged in a series of attacks, airplane hijackings, and hostage takings throughout the 1980s, which kept them on the American policy radar as a problem group that demanded a solution.

³⁰ Maureen Dowd, “Death on the L.I.R.R.: The White House; Moved by Killings, Clinton Urges Action on Gun Legislation,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1993.

The Policy Stream

The second stream in the model is the policy stream, which contains processes related to the emergence and evolution of policy alternatives within the community of academic experts, think-tanks, advisors, and key members of Congress. This is the stream that generates solutions. These policies or “solutions” might be issues that scholars are personally invested in or want to advance. For example, Brookings and the Carnegie Endowment for Peace have been advocating for engagement with moderate Islamist groups, even though this advocacy is not necessarily associated with a particular problem requiring an immediate solution.

Another example of activity in the policy stream is the establishment of the Project for the New American Century (PNAC) in the late 1990s. Neoconservatives formed this think-tank believing that the United States’ military dominance was dwindling. The think-tank advocated for increased defense spending akin to the Reagan era and ideas generated by this organization are believed to have been influential with President George W. Bush administration officials. The evolution of ideas generated by the policy community can be lengthy. The PNAC seems to have recognized this long term process by remarking about the prospects of military transformation according to the think-tank’s goals, “Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor. Domestic politics and industrial policy will shape the pace and content of transformation as much as the requirements of current missions.”³¹ Thus, given that this evolutionary process can be quite long term, most policy ideas that reach the

³¹ Thomas Donnelly, *Rebuilding America’s Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century* (Washington, D.C: The Project for the New American Century, September 2000), 51. See also the discussion by Farley et al., “Opening the Policy Window for Ecological Economics: Katrina as a Focusing Event,” 347 about how the election of George W. Bush as well as the 9/11 attacks helped raise the PNAC’s goals higher on the decision agenda.

decision agenda are not “new”. As Henry Kissinger wrote, “Most ideas that masquerade as new ideas in Washington have been around for quite a long time”.³²

Kingdon relates this stream to Darwinian evolutionary processes and argues that policy alternatives swim around in this policy “primeval soup” in which ideas germinate, transform, and combine and recombine with other ideas to generate new ones. Akin to John Stuart Mill’s marketplace of ideas, solutions are subject to a process of “softening” in which they are scrutinized and vetted by others. Ideas survive in the policy stream when they meet standards of technical feasibility, if they are compatible with the values of issue specialists, and they withstand the anticipation of future constraints such as budget limitations.³³

The case studies here will address developments in the policy stream to determine what ideas were available when each Islamist group was defined as a problem requiring a solution. For example, what were the key intellectual debates and what were the preoccupations of think-tanks, prominent scholars, key congressmen and women, and administration advisors? Decision makers use the policy stream to draw ready-made solutions to problems as they reach the decision agenda.

The Political Stream

The third stream in the model is the political stream and it represents things like the public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, the partisan distribution in Congress, and changes in administration.³⁴ This is the stream which dictates what is politically tenable. While the first two streams help explain what problems are recognized and what solutions are

³² Kissinger, “Bureaucracy and Policymaking: The Effects of Insiders and Outsiders on the Policy Process,”89.

³³ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 145.

³⁴ *Ibid.*,152.

available, the third stream explains whether the politics at the time are conducive to a particular pairing of problem and solution. Kingdon explains that this stream is about bargaining among different political actors, including Congress and members of the bureaucracy and therefore in comparison to the other streams, is more structural. Individuals in this stream make judgments about what is politically possible by making judgments about the national mood. They look to the media, constituent communication, and visits to their districts. They also interact with organized interest groups and unelected members of the bureaucracy and gain a sense of the viability of particular policy ideas from communication with these groups.

Events in government also affect the viability of policy ideas: turnover in Congress or at the administration level changes the nature of the participants and therefore changes the agenda items. Interestingly, Kingdon's empirical evidence suggests that elections themselves were not that important for the agenda; however a change in administration did have a strong impact.³⁵ In terms of mass public opinion or the national mood, Kingdon suggested that this is more important for the agenda, rather than the alternative specification.³⁶ As Kingdon explained, "Proposals that cannot muster sufficient Hill support or that meet with administration opposition tend to be dropped, even though they might be perfectly logical solutions to the problem at hand."³⁷

Politicians also try to gain a sense of the national mood. In 57% of Kingdon's interviews, public opinion was judged to be important.³⁸ But gauging the national mood is not a precise science for public officials, especially when it comes to policies that are not heavily scrutinized

³⁵ Ibid.,65.

³⁶ Ibid.,73.

³⁷ Ibid.,183.

³⁸ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 69.

by the public on a day to day basis. Therefore polls, for example, would not be useful for many important issues. Kingdon argues that policymakers consult the media to assess the general public mood³⁹ But although officials may watch media coverage closely, in the empirical research Kingdon conducted, he found media was not a strong match for the issues that actually ended up high on the decision agenda.⁴⁰ However, Baumgartner and Jones find that media coverage as well as congressional hearings are associated with policymakers' concerns.⁴¹ Baumgartner and Jones' account is more convincing on this issue because their study addresses a much longer time period, whereas Kingdon's empirical findings reflect only a four year period in the late 1970s. Moreover, my interviews confirm that media is an important source for Congress because it gives them a sense of how much political space they have, how much political capital they would have to expend, and how much they may be constrained by public sentiment on a particular issue.⁴²

Some argue that elites control what attracts media attention. For example, Powlick and Katz find that media coverage on foreign affairs is a function of elite debate.⁴³ Wood and Peake, however, find that media attention affects the extent to which presidents pay attention to an issue, but Presidents don't affect the media's issue attention.⁴⁴ There are also those who view the relationship between public opinion and policy as reciprocal. While officials try to affect public opinion, they are at the same time responsive to the public's preferences.⁴⁵ Regardless of where

³⁹ Ibid.,156.

⁴⁰ Ibid.,61-64.

⁴¹ Baumgartner and Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, 49.

⁴² Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #720, August 5, 2011.

⁴³ Powlick and Katz, "Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus."

⁴⁴ Dan Wood and Jeffrey S Peake, "The Dynamics of Foreign Policy Agenda Setting," *American Political Science Review* 92, no. 1 (1998): 173–184.

⁴⁵ See Powlick and Katz, "Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus", 30 for a more extensive discussion of this literature.

one falls in this debate, no one disputes that media at least to some extent reflects issues of public concern and that officials pay attention to media coverage to gain a sense of what the public is thinking about.⁴⁶ Thus, the case studies will include data on media attention as an indicator of public attention.

Congress, furthermore, plays an important role in the political stream as a reflection of the national mood and a place to publicly weigh competing arguments. Individuals in Congress, such as committee chairs, can also serve as policy entrepreneurs, advocating a particular policy option. But while prominent members of Congress that achieve sustained public attention can have an agenda setting influence in foreign affairs, Congress as a whole is largely a constraint on Presidential power. Senator John Tower spoke to this issue in hearings following the Marine Barracks Bombing, "...while the Congress of the United States can act in a negative way in the foreign policy realm, we can inhibit the initiatives of a President, we can limit his options, but we are virtually incapable of proposing ourselves, as a Congress, a long-range, comprehensive, and sustained U.S. foreign policy. That is to say, we can inhibit the implementation of a policy formulated by the administration; we cannot offer the constructive alternative of presenting a comprehensive foreign policy of our own."⁴⁷ The importance of Congress in the foreign policy domain has changed over time. Halperin and Clapp explain that after the Vietnam War, Congress exerted more influence in foreign policy decision making by way of the legislative process as well as growing committee staff.⁴⁸ One way Congress expresses its foreign policy preferences is

⁴⁶ The New York Times and the Washington Post are the main sources Washington officials consult about natural disasters. See Thomas A. Birkland, *After Disaster: Agenda Setting, Public Policy, and Focusing Events*, American Governance and Public Policy (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1997).

⁴⁷ *Policy Options in Lebanon: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 98th Cong. (Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, January 11, 1984), 7.

⁴⁸ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 38.

by inserting them in defense authorization or appropriations bills. Given that Congress both channels public sentiment and constrains the executive branch, the case studies will include data on Congressional hearings that mention the Islamist groups. This will help give a sense how much attention Congress has paid to each of the Islamist groups over time.

Connecting the Streams: Windows of Opportunity and Policy Entrepreneurs

Given that the three streams originate and evolve independently of one another, how do they ultimately become joined within the garbage can? To explain this process, Kingdon added two concepts to the GCM: policy windows of opportunity and policy entrepreneurs. According to Kingdon, advocates of particular policy solutions wait for the opportunity to link their proposed solution to a problem. These policy windows are rare and short lived. Some examples of windows of opportunity include a change in administration, a change in relevant political actors, such as a new committee chair, a sudden shift in the national mood, a problem becomes unusually pressing, legislation comes up for renewal, or a high profile crisis emerges.⁴⁹ Windows open suddenly, perhaps due to an exogenous shock, and officials must act quickly to take advantage of it. If no one capitalizes on the window within a matter of weeks or months, it closes and the opportunity is lost. The effects of a window that participants have capitalized on can be felt for many years. For example, 9/11 served as a catalyst for major changes to counter-terrorism policy, which continued to be made throughout the Bush administration. Halperin and Clapp's seminal study on bureaucratic politics aligns with this view:

“In general, once an issue has been defined and participants have developed a stand, those desiring change are likely to raise the issue when the events, as they perceive them, either provide opportunities for change therefore absent or increase the cost of continuing

⁴⁹ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 176.

to operate without change...In other cases, ideological thinking might be the motivating factor for a group to seek a particular decision. They watch constantly for an opportunity to present their desired decision as a solution to a president's or secretary's problem. The neoconservatives in the second Bush administration saw the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq as the long-term answer to securing a more benign environment for Israel in the Middle East. They used concerns about the al Qaeda terrorist threat after 9/11 and Saddam's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction to argue the urgency of attacking Iraq.⁵⁰

Robinson and Eller describe how new policies emerge when the policy streams coalesce, "The national political system only creates new policies when these independent streams flow together. Only when a prominent problem can be linked to a viable policy consistent with national mood at a time when elected officials can make a decision will policies emerge."⁵¹ Kingdon describes his model as "pre-decision", but as Zaharidis explains, these agenda setting processes can also be used to understand the final decisions. In this view, when the streams join, policy change is more likely.⁵²

As the streams come together, often it is policy entrepreneurs who draw on these developments in the policy streams to make the final coupling of problems to solutions. These are advocates who are willing to devote resources to promote an issue in return for possible future gain.⁵³ This could be anyone, but it must be someone who has the capacity to gain public attention and has political connections or negotiating skills. For example, Senator Ted Kennedy could be regarded as a policy entrepreneur on health care reform because he consistently used his seniority in the Senate as a platform and was a prominent, powerful voice on the issue. Policy

⁵⁰ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 100-101.

⁵¹ Scott E. Robinson and Warren S. Eller, "Participation in Policy Streams: Testing the Separation of Problems and Solutions in Subnational Policy Systems," *The Policy Studies Journal* 38, no. 2 (2010): 202.

⁵² Nikolaos Zahariadis, "To Sell or Not to Sell? Telecommunications Policy in Britain and France," *Journal of Public Policy* 12, no. 4 (1992): 355-376.

⁵³ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 187.

entrepreneurs are most often portrayed as individuals calling for a policy change or actively advocating for a specific objective.

For the purposes of this study, I expand this conception of policy entrepreneurs to include individuals who act on an issue when it has yet to achieve high level policy attention, but nevertheless require a decision. Thus, local diplomats or mid-level bureaucrats may take the initiative to pair a problem to a solution. In this case, this might be individuals who make decisions in the course of their duties based on what they believe is the best policy choice in a given situation. They may lack specific direction from superiors in Washington and therefore have freedom over the decision process. Halperin argues that in a sense, diplomats make policy, "... ambassadors and military commanders in the field can easily come to feel that it is their responsibility in certain situations to effectively shape policy toward the country to which they are assigned or the zone of conflict where their forces are engaged. They view "Washington" as an irrelevant meddler rather than the source of instruction and guidance."⁵⁴ Given the potentially instrumental role played by local diplomats, not only in the implementation of the policy, but also possibly in the formation of it, including diplomats in the definition of policy entrepreneurs is important.

Players

Although some actors are more important than others when it comes to agenda setting processes, no one actor is dominant. Elected officials such as the President have more of an effect on identifying which problems will be addressed, while the policy community, bureaucrats, issue specialists, and think-tanks have more of an effect on the specification of

⁵⁴ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 279.

alternatives.⁵⁵ Congress crosses both domains, and has an impact on both which problems are considered, as well as potential solutions. Hearings, for example, can serve as part of the “softening” process, even if they do not directly lead to legislation.⁵⁶ According to Kingdon’s empirical findings, interest groups are also important, although it depends on the issue area⁵⁷ and although they may be able to raise an issue to the agenda, they may not be able to control the outcome.⁵⁸ In general, players and processes in this model can act both as stimuli or as constraints.⁵⁹

Applications of the Kingdon Model

Kingdon’s model has been employed by a number of scholars, although mostly to explain domestic policy. Liu et al.⁶⁰ applies Kingdon’s multiple streams framework at the local level. Robinson and Eller test Kingdon’s model in local educational policymaking.⁶¹ Birkland’s study examines natural disasters as focusing events.⁶² Applications of the model to the foreign policy domain are rare. I was only able to find one example, a study by Durant and Diehl, which modified Kingdon’s study to apply to the foreign policy domain, although this is a theoretical,

⁵⁵ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 20.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 53. This notion might be frustrating for those who want to assign primary responsibility to a particular set of players, but for Kingdon, the process involves several different players in combination. He explained, “For a number of reasons, a combination of sources is virtually always responsible. One reason is the general fragmentation of the system. The founders deliberately designed a constitutional system to be fragmented, incapable of being dominated by any one actor. They succeeded. Thus a combination of people is required to bring an idea to policy fruition. In our discussion for the difference between the agenda and the alternatives, we also noticed that a variety of sources is needed. Some actors bring to the policy process their political popularity; others, their expertise. Some bring their pragmatic sense of the possible; others, their ability to attract attention.” *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁹ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 93.

⁶⁰ Xinsheng Liu et al., “Understanding Local Policymaking: Policy Elites’ Perceptions of Local Agenda Setting and Alternative Policy Selection,” *The Policy Studies Journal* 38, no. 1 (2010): 69–91.

⁶¹ Robinson and Eller, “Participation in Policy Streams: Testing the Separation of Problems and Solutions in Subnational Policy Systems,” 202.

⁶² Birkland, *After Disaster*.

rather than empirical study. They argue that for the model to be more useful in foreign affairs, it should recognize the more hierarchical elements of this domain and that officials may be more prone to adopt ideas that have not been “softened”.⁶³ Given the paucity of empirical studies that use the Kingdon model in foreign affairs agenda setting, this dissertation can help fill in the gap.

Although Kingdon’s model is widely respected, it has also been subject to criticism. One strain of criticism argues that the model lacks testable claims, but as Robinson and Eller argue, it does provide falsifiable propositions about how the policy process operates.⁶⁴ Another strain of criticism argues that the streams model is subject to so many random elements (windows of opportunity, focusing events, etc), it cannot make predictions about future policies.⁶⁵ Mucciaroni, in his study of tax reform and deregulation, argues that the theory is too indeterminate because it operates at too high a level of generality; it neglects structural features of the system⁶⁶, and places too great an emphasis on the independence of the policy streams. Kingdon has a response to many of these charges, one of which is that unpredictability is not equivalent to randomness. The coupling of specific policy streams may be erratic, potentially nonlinear, and fail to fit rational choice expectations, but that does not mean the process is completely arbitrary. Kingdon argues that processes within the three streams reduce randomness. For example, in the policy stream, not all ideas have an equal probability of success. Some survive and some grow increasingly irrelevant based on their feasibility or close

⁶³ Robert F. Durant and Paul F. Diehl, “Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policy: Lessons from the U.S. Foreign Policy Arena,” *Journal of Public Policy* 9, no. 2 (2010): 183.

⁶⁴ Robinson and Eller, “Participation in Policy Streams: Testing the Separation of Problems and Solutions in Subnational Policy Systems”, 203.

⁶⁵ Anthony King, “Review of Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies,” *Journal of Public Policy* 5, no. 2 (1985): 281–283.

⁶⁶ Bendor et.al. makes a similar argument. They hold that no matter how disorganized a system may be, organized anarchies still have authority structures that generate “control opportunities”. Bendor, Moe, and Shotts, “Recycling the Garbage Can: An Assessment of the Research Program”, 173.

adherence to the values of the specialist community. Moreover, some couplings are more probable than others, for example, a window of opportunity may emerge without the presence of a viable alternative which results in a problem going unsolved. Furthermore, there are limits on the political system which constrains the potential outcomes. For example, if advocates in the Department of Defense propose an expensive new weapons technology during an economic crisis, the probability of success is more limited.

In general, even Kingdon's most vociferous critics still recognize the importance of the model. Mucciaroni acknowledged in his own critique of Kingdon, "Nevertheless, these shortcomings do not diminish the strengths of the garbage can model. It captures much of the complexity, fluidity, and unpredictability of agenda-setting and highlights the important role of chance, innovation, and human agency in policy making."⁶⁷

Measuring the Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable is variation in U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups. This study identifies three aspects of U.S. foreign policy which may vary over time. The first component is the level of engagement with Islamist groups. This includes the number of formal diplomatic meetings at high or low levels, as well as informal social meetings. It also includes public, but non-diplomatic meetings; for example, former diplomats meeting with Islamist group members in an unofficial capacity. Engagement can also come in the form of contact between U.S. sponsored NGOs and members of the Islamist group. For example, the International

⁶⁷ Gary Mucciaroni, "The Garbage Can Model and the Study of Policy Making: A Critique," *Polity* 24, no. 3 (Spring 1992): 482. See also King, "Review of Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies", 281-3 for a highly critical review that still describes Kingdon's book as "important".

Republican Institute has met with the Islamic Action Front to discuss poll numbers and upcoming elections.

The second way to measure variation in U.S. foreign policy is the level of financial linkage with the Islamist group. This includes State Department designations which affect whether U.S. funds can go toward any member of a specific Islamist group. It also affects USAID programs and includes efforts to cut off the group's funding or charity programs by way of U.S. law enforcement mechanisms. For example, after the first World Trade Center bombing, legislation was passed to substantially restrict Foreign Terrorist Organizations' access to fundraising networks in the U.S. And 9/11 was a major catalyst for variation in U.S. policy, leading to new agencies, and more restrictive legislation to counter terrorist financing, among other efforts.

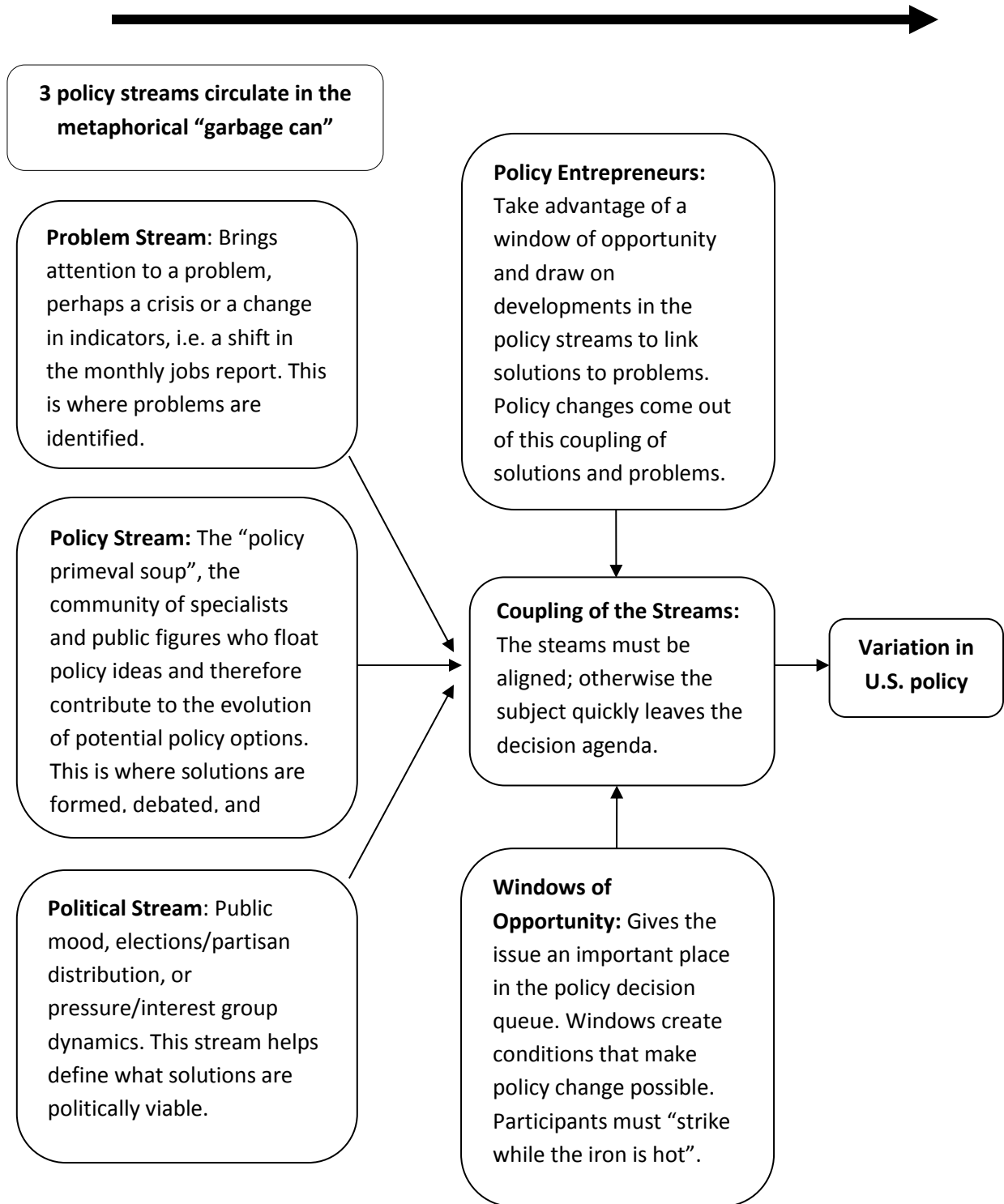
The third way to measure variation in U.S. foreign policy is the amount of pressure the U.S. exerts on allies regarding Islamist groups. Examples include diplomatic efforts to get Hezbollah on the European list of terrorist organizations, and pressure by multiple U.S. administrations on Syria to stop funding Hezbollah.

The independent variable is agenda setting processes, which attempts to operationalize John Kingdon's garbage can model. Although Kingdon's model can't anticipate future policy changes because it depends on the emergence of stochastic events (windows of opportunity, policy entrepreneurs, etc.), it can explain why policy changes took place at a given time. As Kingdon wrote, "The separate streams come together at critical times. A problem is recognized, a solution is developed and available in the policy community, a political change makes it the right time for policy change, and potential constraints are not severe...Policy entrepreneurs play

a major part in the coupling at the open policy window, attaching solutions to problems, overcoming the constraints by redrafting proposals, and taking advantage of politically propitious events.”⁶⁸ Figure 1.1 provides an illustration of Kingdon’s model as it relates to variation in U.S. policy toward Islamist groups.

⁶⁸ Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 173-174.

Figure 1.1: The Garbage Can Model and U.S. Policy toward Islamist Groups



Rival Explanations

Aside from Kingdon's model, there are a number of viable theories of foreign policy which could plausibly explain U.S. policy toward Islamist groups. Five models embody the core alternative frameworks which might be used to challenge the utility of the Kingdon model. The following section provides a survey of each of these alternative theories. Each case study chapter will demonstrate that American policy toward Islamist groups is an agenda setting problem best explained using Kingdon's variation of the garbage can model and that the rival explanations are insufficient to the task. I will give an account of each model, in order to establish why Kingdon's model best explains American policy toward these groups.

The Bureaucratic Competition Model

The first alternative to the Kingdon model's explanation of American policy toward Islamist groups is the bureaucratic competition model. It argues that policy is the outcome of bargaining behavior among bureaucrats seeking to maximize their respective utilities. George Appleby did pioneering work in bureaucratic politics in the 1960s, Aaron Wildavsky in the 1960s, and Francis Roukey in the 1980s⁶⁹, but one of the most influential formulations of this paradigm comes from Graham Allison.⁷⁰ Allison argues that bureaucratic position matters in the

⁶⁹ David C. Kozak, "The Bureaucratic Politics Approach: The Evolution of the Paradigm," in *Bureaucratic Politics and National Security*, ed. David C. Kozak and James M. Keagle (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1988), 3–15.

⁷⁰ Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*; Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," in *Theory and Policy in International Relations*, ed. Raymond Tanter and Richard H. Ullman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

decision process. Important to his theory are “action-channels”, which are “regularized means of taking governmental action on a specific issue.”⁷¹

Allison posits three different models to explain the Cuban Missile Crisis: the rational actor model, organizational model, and the government politics model. He finds the government politics model best explains the Cuban Missile Crisis and this model came to be known as bureaucratic politics. The idea is that the rational agent must assess competing alternatives and will choose whatever maximizes the payoff. The organizational model, by contrast, sees organizations as a “constellation of loosely allied organizations on top of which government leaders sit.”⁷² Key concepts for the organization model include standard operating procedures, and central coordination and control. The government politics model highlights the rules of the political game and how agents can influence outcomes. Out of this comes the axiom, “where you stand depends on where you sit”.

For Allison, structure is important because it selects who the players will be and who will implement the decision. Allison’s government politics model views policy as an outcome of bargaining games undertaken by key players in high level government agencies. Halperin likewise suggests that structure is important to policymaking because it establishes certain “rules of the game”, such as “who must sign off?” and “how high up must an issue go?”⁷³

Sometimes decision makers struggle to ensure their decisions are implemented by the bureaucracy. For example, it is useful to consider how much leverage the President has and how

⁷¹ Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 169.

⁷² Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999), 167.

⁷³ Morton Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 1974), 104.

much cohesion exists within his policy circle. Aberbach and Petersen⁷⁴ note that George W. Bush and his close associates were concerned about administration cohesion and controlling the output of Cabinet agencies. They worried Cabinet members would “go native” and divert from the administration’s goals.⁷⁵ Additionally, if a policy conflicts with an agency’s core mission or political culture, or an agency has a large external constituency that can help resist a policy, bureaucrats may not implement Presidential mandates.⁷⁶ Bureaucrats may delay implementation or outright resist it.⁷⁷ This suggests that sometimes the executive is unable to control policy, even if he uses all the power available to him.

Thus, as Rosati⁷⁸ argues, there is no single, all powerful player in the bureaucracy, although the President may have comparatively more power than other players. Under certain circumstances, the President can make radical changes to the system. For example, President George W. Bush initiated the largest reorganization of the federal government since World War II, creating the Department of Homeland Security, and making counter-terrorism a top priority for many government agencies.⁷⁹

Even though the Presidency both constitutionally and practically may seem to be the most powerful player in the game, according to this view, other actors are also important and

⁷⁴ Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Petersen, eds., “Control and Accountability: Dilemmas of the Executive Branch,” in *Institutions of American Democracy: The Executive Branch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 525–554.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 539.

⁷⁶ Colin Provost and Paul Teske, “Extraordinary Powers, Extraordinary Policies?,” in *President George W. Bush’s Influence Over Bureaucracy and Policy*, ed. Colin Provost and Paul Teske (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 2.

⁷⁷ George A. Krause et al., “Coordinated Action and the Limits of Presidential Control over the Bureaucracy: Lessons from the Bush Presidency,” in *President George W. Bush’s Influence Over Bureaucracy and Policy: Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 81–101.

⁷⁸ Jerel A. Rosati, “Developing a Systematic Decision-Making Framework: Bureaucratic Politics In Perspective,” *World Politics* 33 (1981): 234–252.

⁷⁹ Peter J. May and Samuel Workman, “The Paradox of Agency Issue Attention: The Bush Administration and Homeland Security,” in *President George W. Bush’s Influence Over Bureaucracy and Policy: Extraordinary Times, Extraordinary Powers*, ed. Colin Provost and Paul Teske (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 123–146.

impact the President's power. The President still must compete with other agencies for influence. Depending on the President, this competition can produce mistrust of bureaucrats. Some Presidents have been particularly suspicious of the bureaucracy's willingness to comply with Presidential directives; Nixon, for example, had especially high standards for partisan and ideological loyalty.⁸⁰

Bureaucratic politics can explain why policies are sometimes inconsistent.⁸¹ A theory like Graham Allison's would argue that a policy is generated by agencies grappling for influence, and therefore is the output of a competition, rather than an individual.⁸² The democratic political process involves compromise, so the final policy outcome may be something that no one actually wants, itself a Frankenstein of worst best options.⁸³ Bureaucratic politics can also lead to policy failure because of tendencies to delay, inability to coordinate and share information, and self-preservation, tendencies leading to redundancies.⁸⁴ This model can serve as a potential explanation for why U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups appears to be so ad hoc. It matters not only who has the power to make decisions, but also who may be competing for that power. For example, if the State Department was competing with the

⁸⁰ Joel D. Aberbach, "Clashing Beliefs Within the Executive Branch: The Nixon Administration Bureaucracy," *The American Political Science Review* 70 (1976): 456–468.

⁸¹ Bureaucratic politics can also explain foreign policy decisions that are perplexingly antithetical to the national interest. Halperin and Tsou make this point with respect to U.S. commitments to the Matsu Islands in the Taiwan Straits. The islands were not required for Taiwan's defense. "The United States has gone to the brink of war more than once to defend territory which is only remotely related to its national security interests. The formulation of United State policy with regard to the islands of Quemoy and Matsu illustrate both that the sources of particular national security policies and defense commitments are often only distantly related to their public justifications and that the reasons offered by the President and subordinates for a particular course of action may be only tenuously connected to what they believe. Morton H. Halperin and Tang Tsou, "United States Policy Toward the Offshore Islands," in *Readings in American Foreign Policy: A Bureaucratic Perspective*, ed. Morton H. Halperin and Arnold Kanter (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1973): 334.

⁸² Roger Hillsman, *The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs: Conceptual Models and Bureaucratic Politics* (Edgewood Cliffs, NY: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1987).

⁸³ Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy*, 2006.

⁸⁴ Charles F. Parker and Erik K. Stern, "Blindsided? September 11 and the Origins of Strategic Surprise," *Political Psychology* 23 (2002): 601–630.

Department of Defense over defining our Islamism policy, then the policy that emerged would not be a function of either department, but rather a compromise.

The case studies will show that the Bureaucratic Competition Model is not adequate to explain American policy toward Islamist groups. First, the model is often used to explain only crisis decision-making, and not long-term policy formulation or routine policy matters.⁸⁵ Therefore it would be problematic to use this model to explain incremental variation over long periods of time. Some policy outcomes are not a function of one particular decision moment, but might be the result of a long term evolving process.⁸⁶ Bureaucratic wrangling is also often treated as a stable property of decision-making, rather than a dynamic, changing process that depends on the structure and context of the specific decision.⁸⁷ In terms of Islamist groups, American policy is highly contextual and therefore some individuals may have influence over the issue that exceeds the authority officially given to their position in the hierarchy. Moreover, U.S. policy toward Islamist groups is generally not a domain that features bureaucratic wrangling or competition. Aside from the distribution of foreign aid, money isn't involved. Agency budgets are not affected by whether or not the U.S. engages with an Islamist group and given how controversial the issue is, bureaucrats generally shy away from the issue, rather than clamoring for influence over it. One former State Department official described it as a "hot potato" issue.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Erik Stern and Bertjan Verbeek, "Whither the Study of Governmental Politics in Foreign Policymaking?," *Mershon International Studies Review* 42 (1998): 205–255.

⁸⁶ Margaret G Hermann and Charles F. Hermann, "Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How: An Empirical Inquiry," *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (1989): 361–387.

⁸⁷ Thomas Preston, "Understanding and Evaluating Bureaucratic Politics: The Nexus Between Political Leaders and Advisory Systems," *Political Psychology* 20 (1999): 49–98.

⁸⁸ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223, January 27, 2012.

The Security Model

The classical realist view would argue that U.S. policy toward Islamist groups is a function of the group's threat to American security interests, including alliances and broader security goals such as promoting Arab-Israeli peace. Therefore, according to this view, variation in threats posed by the group would correspond with variation in U.S. policy.

Realism is the dominant theoretical perspective in International Relations and perhaps the most naturally applicable to foreign policy questions; the classical version contains three core assumptions. First, states are unitary actors that operate in an anarchic environment. Second, according to Legro and Moravcsik, realists assume that states have “fixed and uniformly conflictual goals”.⁸⁹ The ultimate aim of any state is to maximize its national interest, defined as power or as E.H. Carr notes, “Politics are, in one sense, always power politics.”⁹⁰ This means that for the classical realists, life is a perpetual struggle for survival. The third assumption is that states compete for control over material capabilities. E.H. Carr, and later Morgenthau, emphasize the distinctiveness of the international political domain, namely that material capabilities are independent of perceptions and preferences. The domain of international politics is therefore governed by objective laws grounded in the natural human propensity to dominate.⁹¹

Kenneth Waltz's neorealist innovation was to argue that systemic forces (structure) determine international behavior.⁹² For Waltz, the definition of structure has three components.

⁸⁹ Jeffrey Legro and Andrew Moravcsik, “Is Anybody Still a Realist?,” *International Security* 24 (1999): 12.

⁹⁰ E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1939), 102.

⁹¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, ed. Kenneth Thompson and David Clinton, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1985), 11. For a more complete discussion of realism than what I offer here, see Stephen G. Brooks, “Dueling Realisms,” *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (1997): 445–477.

⁹² Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979).

First, structure is defined by the ordering principle, for example anarchy or hierarchy. Second, structures are defined by the functions of the units and third, by the distribution of capabilities across units.⁹³ Within this structure, states are concerned about survival and given the potential for conflict in an anarchic world, they will assess other states' potential for aggressive behavior and try to counteract dangers.⁹⁴ States respond to the aggregate power of other states by balancing against a rising power or bandwagoning with a more powerful state.

Other variants of realism take a different approach. Defensive realists argue that international anarchy is not inherently conflictual, unlike offensive realists like Mearsheimer who depict international relations as fundamentally hostile. Rational security seeking states can learn from the behavior of other states, and avoid conflict, while still responding to the occasional, though rare, external threat.⁹⁵ Examples of defensive realism include Steven Van Evera, Jack Snyder, and Stephen Walt. Another branch of realism, neoclassical realism, introduces additional variables like state preferences and decision making. For example Fareed Zakaria⁹⁶, in his critique of defensive realism, argues that expansion is a function of both the international and domestic capacity of the state, what he calls state centered realism. An example of his concept of domestic capacity of a state would be an increase in federal power at the expense of the provinces.⁹⁷ An increase in federal power would be an indication of greater centralized government capacity. Legro and Moravcsik⁹⁸ criticize defensive realism and the

⁹³ Ibid, 100-101.

⁹⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (1988): 615–628.

⁹⁵ Gideon Rose, "Review: Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51 (1998): 144–172.

⁹⁶ Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁹⁷ Ibid.,103.

⁹⁸ Legro and Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?".

neoclassical realists because they provide space for elite belief systems and misperception, which they argue deviates from the core assumptions of realism.

Political Science theorists have applied realist assumptions almost exclusively to questions about states and have largely ignored non-state actors. Realist theorists either dismiss non-state actors as the domain of comparative politics and transnationalism, or make an argument like Bergesen and Lizardo⁹⁹, who claim that terrorism may be a sign of hegemonic decline. At best, realists try to explain terrorism, but I have not been able to find work that uses realist assumptions to understand how states interact with or perceive non-state actors.

Although realists argue that international relations is best understood by viewing states as the primary agents of action, realist logic can also be applied to non-state actors that amass enough power and capability to threaten the interests and security of other states, that is to say that non-state actors can have the gravity of states. When non-state actors remain purely benign domestic players and do not challenge the goals and interests of the U.S., foreign policymakers largely ignore them. An intriguing contribution by Stephen Walt¹⁰⁰ argues that state behavior in the international environment can be seen as a response to threats posed by other states, namely aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability, and offensive intentions.¹⁰¹ The type of threats outlined in his work could usefully be applied to the threats posed by non-state actors as well.

But as the following chapters will demonstrate, the security model is not sufficient to explain American policy toward Islamist groups. The security model would anticipate that as a group develops greater military capacity and engages in violence against American allies, then

⁹⁹ Albert Bergesen and Omar Lizardo, "International Terrorism and the World-System," *Sociological Theory* 22 (2004): 38–52.

¹⁰⁰ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security* 9 (1985): 3–43.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

U.S. policy should automatically become more hostile to the group and cut off diplomatic contacts. But archival evidence shows that during the Cold War, diplomats engaged in frequent contacts with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood when the group was at its most violent. Moreover, U.S. policy became more ambivalent toward the group in the 1990s, even though they had renounced violence in the 1970s. Thus, even if the security model can provide some insights, it cannot fully explain variation in American policy.

The Leadership Model

The leadership perspective argues that Presidents and the Presidential inner-circle (i.e. key advisors, cabinet members, and the National Security Council) are the primary forces defining U.S. foreign policy. The President's personality and beliefs (sometimes called the mental map¹⁰² or 'operational code') outline the foreign policy approach. All other factors like congressional influence or interest groups may constrain what the President can do, but they do not provide the content, goals, and priorities which define foreign policy. Some examples of this approach include Spiegel (1985), an analysis of U.S. decision-making on the Arab Israeli conflict, and Glad (1989), an assessment of Carter's handling of the hostage crisis. Other work on the beliefs of foreign policy elites includes Rosenberg, Rosati, Greenstein, Walker, and Larson.¹⁰³ This perspective sees a decision-maker behind every policy action, rather than large

¹⁰² Alan K. Henrikson, "The Geographical 'Mental Maps' of American Foreign Policy Makers," *International Political Science Review* 1 (1980): 495–530.

¹⁰³ Philip J. Rosenberg, "Presidential Beliefs and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Continuity During the Cold War Era," *Political Psychology* 7 (1986): 733–751; Jerel A. Rosati, "Continuity and Change in the Foreign Policy Beliefs of Political Leaders: Addressing the Controversy over the Carter Administration," *Political Psychology* 9 (1988): 472–505; Fred I. Greenstein, "Taking Account of Individuals in International Political Psychology: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Indochina," *Political Psychology* 15 (1994): 61–74; Steven G. Walker, "Psychodynamic Processes and Framing Effects In Foreign Policy Decision-making: Woodrow Wilson's Operational Code," *Political Psychology* 16 (1995): 697–717; Deborah W. Larson, "The Role of Belief Systems and Schemas in Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *Political Psychology* 15 (1994): 17–33.

scale structures or processes.¹⁰⁴ While a structure-based theory would argue that a leader's decisions mirror the distribution of power, the leadership approach would give causal weight to ideas, beliefs and psychological schemas. In this sense, it is important who is making the decision, not just the nature of the strategic environment. Individuals come to the table with a series of beliefs, assumptions and cognitive styles that independently affect the policy outcome.

Larson¹⁰⁵ describes some potential pitfalls of this approach; one important one emerges when employing content analysis to derive a leader's beliefs and biases. Most significantly, psychological schemas or beliefs can't be directly observed, so the scholar must derive them from primary sources through inference.¹⁰⁶ Also, the documents might be ambiguous, or the content could be limited, exaggerated or not fully representative. But these limitations can be overcome if the primary investigator responsibly analyzes the documents, not expecting them to be perfect descriptions of leaders' state of mind. It is also useful to use several different sources to study the same phenomena, which may help enrich the explanation, and avoid unjustified analytical leaps.

This approach could be applied to the present research question by arguing that each President comes into office with a specific set of beliefs or assumptions about Islamist groups. Alternatively, the experience of formulating policy toward Islamist groups triggers latent beliefs, so the President effectively discovers his/her preconceived beliefs. His "Operational Code" defines U.S. policy toward Islamist groups and major changes occur only when administrations

¹⁰⁴ Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis: Classic and Contemporary Theory* (Lanham, MY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007); Mark Schafer and Stephen G. Walker, "Democratic Leaders and the Democratic Peace: The Operational Codes of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton," *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006): 561–583.

¹⁰⁵ Deborah W. Larson, "Problems of Content Analysis in Foreign-Policy Research: Notes from the Study of the Origins of Cold War Belief Systems," *International Studies Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (1988): 241–255.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

change or some seminal event occurs that alters the President's basic belief system. For example, an incoming President may have preconceived notions about Islamist groups, perhaps equating them all with Al Qaeda, which would clearly affect the perception of threat associated with such groups. More generally, a President may have a specific cognitive style or method of rationalizing competing claims, i.e. "Islamist groups are largely charity organizations" and "Islamists groups are terrorists who cloak themselves in charity activities" are very different definitions of Islamist groups. Depending on which definition a policymaker uses, the policy outcome will reflect the preferred definition.

However the four case studies will prove that the leadership model is insufficient to explain American policy toward Islamist groups. First, for extended periods in American history, Islamist groups were not a high priority for the President or cabinet officials, so local diplomats made decisions in the absence of high level attention to the issue. Second, while Presidential beliefs are relevant, they act in concert with events which bring the issue to the decision agenda, and are constrained by the political context in which they are situated.

The Domestic Politics Model

This view tries to open the "black box" of domestic politics to argue that the domestic political environment (public opinion, interest groups, political structure) determines foreign policy outcomes. Examples of this literature include Souva and Rhode¹⁰⁷, Baum¹⁰⁸, Krosnick¹⁰⁹,

¹⁰⁷ Mark Souva and David Rohde, "Elite Opinion Differences and Partisanship in Congressional Foreign Policy, 1975-1996," *Political Research Quarterly* 60 (2007): 113-123.

¹⁰⁸ Matthew A. Baum, "Going Private: Public Opinion, Presidential Rhetoric, and the Domestic Politics of Audience Costs in U.S. Foreign Policy Crises," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (2004): 603-631.

¹⁰⁹ Sawmya Anand and Jon A. Krosnick, "The Impact of Attitudes Toward Foreign Policy Goals on Public Preferences Among Presidential Candidates: A Study of Issue Publics and the Attentive Public in the 2000 U.S. Presidential Election," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 33 (2003): 31-71.

and Burnstein.¹¹⁰ Decision makers determine the best policy by assessing public opinion on specific issues. They make choices based on the benefits of remaining consistent with popular opinion, or the costs of deviating from it.

There are a number of different ways scholars have introduced public opinion as an explanatory variable for policy decisions. The democratic peace literature¹¹¹ argues that the nature of domestic political institutions affects how states make decisions in the international environment. In particular, democratic states are less likely to fight one another because they are more directly accountable to their population than autocratic governments. Other similar studies include Gowa,¹¹² Chan,¹¹³ and Gordon.¹¹⁴ James Fearon's study uses domestic political institutions as a way to model whether states are likely to back down in an international dispute.¹¹⁵ He finds that democracies, which have higher "audience costs" are less likely to back down in an international dispute and therefore their threats are more credible. He argues this could mitigate the security dilemma among democratic states, explaining the empirical regularity that democracies are unlikely to fight one another.

Those who believe that domestic and international politics are linked disagree about the precise role that public opinion plays in determining foreign policy outcomes. Some believe that

¹¹⁰ Paul Burnstein, "The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda," *Political Research Quarterly* 56 (2003): 29–40.

¹¹¹ Kenneth A. Shultz, "Do Democratic Institutions Constrain or Inform? Contrasting Two Institutional Perspectives on Democracy and War," *International Organization* 53 (1999): 233–266.

¹¹² Joanne Gowa, "Democratic States and International Disputes," *International Organization* 49 (1995): 511–522.

¹¹³ Steve Chan, "In Search of Democratic Peace: Problems and Promise," *Mershon International Studies Review* 41 (1997): 59–91.

¹¹⁴ Michael R. Gordon, "Domestic Conflict and the Origins of the First World War: The British and the German Cases," *The Journal of Modern History* 46 (1974): 191–226.

¹¹⁵ James Fearon, "Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 577–592.

leaders can manipulate public opinion, rather than simply react to it.¹¹⁶ Others like Spiegel¹¹⁷ argue that public opinion constrains a policymaker's choice, but does not determine it. This means that a leader may have a smaller set of options, but the President would still be the dominant player directing the policy outcome. Finally, scholars like Foyle¹¹⁸ argue that public opinion has conditional importance. If a leader *believes* public opinion matters, then it will be relevant, but it does not necessarily exert an independent effect on decisions.

One could use this approach to argue that the President of the United States depends on favorable public opinion for his political survival and will act more forcefully against Islamist groups when the domestic political climate demands it. This might be especially true immediately following an attack like the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, or 9/11. Public opinion might also be activated during or immediately following a critical conflict event in the Middle East, such as the Iran Hostage Crisis between November, 1979 and January, 1981. When Islamist groups are less prominently in the public consciousness and public opinion hasn't been activated, the President could exert more independent judgment, perhaps becoming less (or more) hard-line on them.

Like the previous explanations, the case studies demonstrate that domestic politics explanations are insufficient to explain American policy toward Islamist groups. Although public opinion, interest groups and the political structure are key parts of the puzzle, from Kingdon's

¹¹⁶ John H. Aldrich and John L. Sullivan, "Foreign Affairs and Issue Voting: Do Presidential Candidates 'Waltz Before a Blind Audience'?" *The American Political Science Review* 83, no. 1 (1989): 123–141; Richard Sobel, *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam: Constraining the Colossus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹¹⁷ Steven L. Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

¹¹⁸ Douglas C. Foyle, *Counting the Public In: Presidents, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

perspective, they form the basis of the political stream, these explanations lack insight into how and why issues come to be defined as problems by decision makers. Some policy entrepreneurs, for example, affect public opinion by advocating for something they believe in, rather than acting solely as the mouthpiece of public opinion. Furthermore, several scholars have found that public opinion is not activated on issues related to international relations and therefore policymakers have a relatively free hand to define U.S. policy. Powlick and Katz explain that for the most part, public opinion in foreign affairs is latent, but policymakers remain vigilant about the “dog that could bark”.¹¹⁹ Thus, officials think about potential public opinion and are therefore constrained by it. Powlick and Katz argue that latent public opinion becomes activated by public debate among foreign policy elites, that is, members of the executive branch, members of Congress, leaders of interest groups, and experts from think-tanks, the media, or universities.¹²⁰

The Nature of the Group

One final alternative to the garbage can model is that the nature of the Islamist group determines U.S. foreign policy. This view would suggest that foreign policy toward Islamist groups is shaped by the unique characteristics of a given group. The implication is that if the group has unfavorable characteristics and subsequently changed, then U.S. foreign policy toward that group would vary. Some of the most important group characteristics that scholars point to

¹¹⁹ Powlick and Katz, “Defining the American Public Opinion/Foreign Policy Nexus”, 31.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 34. Jonathan Mermin makes a similar argument with reference to U.S. intervention in Somalia. He argues that, “Finally, journalists appear to have set the volume of coverage on the evening news through de facto collaboration with politicians. The claim that Somalia appeared “daily” on American television in the period before U.S. intervention turns out to be greatly exaggerated. Instead, the coverage is in proportion to the interest Somalia had sparked in Washington.” Jonathan Mermin, “Television News and American Intervention in Somalia: The Myth of a Media-Driven Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 3 (1997): 389.

include: whether the group engages in violent tactics,¹²¹ its legal status within its home country and whether it is excluded,¹²² if the group is internally democratic,¹²³ and if it willingly participates in the political process.¹²⁴

But this perspective cannot adequately explain U.S. Foreign policy toward Islamist groups because it cannot explain why U.S. policy has been inconsistent. For example, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice explained the U.S. does not deal with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood because it is illegal¹²⁵ but then U.S. House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer met with the Muslim Brotherhood's parliamentary leader in April of 2007.¹²⁶ In the case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, sometimes we have been friendly with them and sometimes not, but the nature of the group has remained fairly constant ever since it renounced violence in the 1970s.

In summary, while the five alternative frameworks offer limited insights into the research questions, Kingdon's model is the only one that can satisfactorily explain the highly contextual, nonlinear progression of American policy toward these groups over time.

¹²¹ Mohammed M. Hafez, *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

¹²² Khalil Al-Anani, *The Myth of Excluding Moderate Islamists in the Arab World* (Washington, D.C: The Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, March 2010).

¹²³ Larry J. Diamond, "Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5 (1994): 4–17; Mehran Kamrava and Frank O'Mora, "Civil Society and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Latin America and the Middle East," *Third World Quarterly* 19 (1998): 893–916.

¹²⁴ Daniel Brumberg, *Democratization Versus Liberalization in the Arab World: Dilemmas and Challenges for U.S. Foreign Policy* (Carlisle, PA: Army Strategic Studies Institute, July 2005); Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹²⁵ Joshua Stacher and Samer Shehata, "Hear Out Muslim Brotherhood," *The Boston Globe*, March 25, 2007, sec. Editorial.

¹²⁶ Associated Press, "Hoyer Meets Official From Egypt's Banned Muslim Brotherhood," April 7, 2007.

Relevant Literature

Over the last twelve years, there has been a growing interest in the etiology of non-state actors, in particular transnational Islamist groups. For obvious reasons, Al Qaeda has captured the international public's imagination. Other groups with more regional or local effect also have received scholarly attention among political scientists, area specialists, and sociologists. Scholars have asked why and how they emerge, what makes them more powerful, and why they engage in terrorism.¹²⁷ Other scholars worry that globalization distributes benefits and burdens unequally, angering non-state actors and producing more terrorism.¹²⁸

It is more difficult to find scholarly studies of American foreign policy toward Islamist groups, a subject which has captured the attention of journalists, but not many academics. As a result, there are very few studies that address variation in U.S. foreign policy over time. More typically, area specialists address case studies of Islamist groups broadly, using historical evidence to analyze the ideology, origin, and growth of the group within its domestic political context. Some examples of these types of studies of Hamas include Hroub¹²⁹, Abu-Amr¹³⁰, Milton-Edwards & Farrel¹³¹, and Mishal & Sela.¹³² Historical case studies of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood that take this approach include Mitchell¹³³ and Phelps Harris.¹³⁴ Some of

¹²⁷ Bergesen and Lizardo, "International Terrorism and the World-System."

¹²⁸ Erik Wibbels, "Dependency Revisited: International Markets, Business Cycles, and Social Spending in the Developing World," *International Organization* 60 (2006): 433–468.

¹²⁹ Khalid Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, D.C: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000).

¹³⁰ Ziad Abu-Amr, "Hamas: A Historical and Political Background," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 22 (1993): 5–19; Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

¹³¹ Beverly Milton-Edwards and Stephen Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010).

¹³² Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

¹³³ Richard Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

the historical studies of Hezbollah include Hamzeh¹³⁵ and Jaber.¹³⁶ Historical studies of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood tend to focus on the role the state has played in constraining and co-opting the Islamist opposition. Examples of this work include Wiktorowicz,¹³⁷ Moaddel,¹³⁸ Antoun,¹³⁹ Tal,¹⁴⁰ and Shull Adams.¹⁴¹

The rest of the Islamist group literature tends to generally fall into four other categories. First, there are studies that question whether Islamist groups can be reliable members of a democratic polity and work within the system.¹⁴² Second, some scholars like Gunning¹⁴³ and Azani¹⁴⁴ take a social movement approach to explain why particular Islamist groups grow over time and whether they succeed or fail at accomplishing their specified goals. Third, policy analysts speculate over whether Islamist groups are or will become moderate.¹⁴⁵ Finally, government research bureaus and independent policy analysts examine the extent to which

¹³⁴ Christina Phelps Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood* (London: Mouton & Co. Published for the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1964).

¹³⁵ Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004).

¹³⁶ Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). A sympathetic account of the group.

¹³⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Limits of Democracy in the Middle East: The Case of Jordan," *Middle East Journal* 53 (1999): 606–620; Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Salafi Movement in Jordan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (2000): 219–240; Quintan Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001).

¹³⁸ Mansoor Moaddel, "Jordanian Exceptionalism: The Alliance Between the State and the Muslim Brothers," in *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism*, ed. Mansoor Moaddel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 292–319.

¹³⁹ Richard T. Antoun, "Fundamentalism, Bureaucratization, and the State's Co-optation of Religion: A Jordanian Case Study," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006): 369–393.

¹⁴⁰ Nachman Tal, *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005).

¹⁴¹ Linda Shull Adams, "Political Liberalization in Jordan: An Analysis of the State's Relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood," *Journal of Church and State* 38 (1996): 507–528.

¹⁴² Marc Lynch, *The Brotherhood's Dilemma* (Waltham, MA: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, 2008); Nathan Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?*, Middle East Series (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2006); Glenn E. Robinson, "Can Islamists Be Democrats? The Case of Jordan," *Middle East Journal* 51, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 373–387; Wiktorowicz, "The Limits of Democracy in the Middle East: The Case of Jordan."

¹⁴³ Jeroen Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence* (London: Hurst & Co, 2007).

¹⁴⁴ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

¹⁴⁵ Michael Herzog, "Can Hamas Be Tamed?," *Foreign Affairs* 85 (2006): 83–94; Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Islamists and Local Politics: A New Reality," *Third World Quarterly* 21 (2000): 739–759; Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* 86 (2007): 107–121.

Islamist groups receive outside support, and the nature of their military and material capabilities.¹⁴⁶

Although there is a great deal of work analyzing these groups, there is very little scholarly work explaining U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups. However, I was able to find two studies Pinto¹⁴⁷ and Gerges¹⁴⁸ that broadly consider U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups, but neither offers an explanation for variation in American policy toward specific groups; both look at U.S. policy toward the groups at specific snapshots of time and both studies were published before 9/11. Gerges¹⁴⁹ tries to explain the American “fixation” on Political Islam and surveys U.S. policy debates on the subject. He finds that strategic calculations, culture, ideology and history affect U.S. approaches to Islamist groups¹⁵⁰. Pinto¹⁵¹ argues that America’s approach to Political Islam depends on the nature of the group and whether its behavior is consistent with U.S. interests¹⁵² but this study, like Gerges, does not generally compare cases over time.

Two other important studies contribute to the literature on U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups, although both analyze exclusively nonmilitant Islamist movements. The first is a

¹⁴⁶ Casey. L. Addis, *Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations* (Washington, D.C: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 2009); Kenneth Katzman, *Hizballah: A Radical Militia in Lebanon* (Washington, D.C: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 1993); Jonathan Schanzer, *Hamas Vs. Fatah* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008); Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Emile El Hokayem, “Hizballah and Syria: Outgrowing the Proxy Relationship,” *The Washington Quarterly* 30 (2007): 35–52; Barbara Slavin, *Mullahs, Money, and Militias: How Iran Exerts Its Influence in the Middle East* (Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace, 2008).

¹⁴⁷ Pinto, *Political Islam and the United States*.

¹⁴⁸ Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6; 229.

¹⁵¹ Pinto, *Political Islam and the United States*.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 156.

Master's thesis by Bueler¹⁵³, which compares the U.S. approach to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood with the Moroccan Justice and Development Party (PJD). He finds that the U.S. treats the PJD as a moderate movement and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as radical because the PJD "seems more willing to comply with U.S. programs, interests and foreign policy agenda in their relative political contexts."¹⁵⁴ It is also useful to note that the Moroccan government legitimizes the PJD, while the Egyptian government has generally opposed the Muslim Brotherhood in the years leading up to the Arab Spring.

What this important study misses is variation in U.S. policy within cases. Sometimes the U.S. has been willing to talk to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, and other times it has not. What explains this variation? A broader study that compares different administrations would allow us to generate claims about policy trends regarding these groups. Additionally, while Bueler's work is extremely useful, he articulates U.S. interests in rather general terms. A more specific description of what U.S. interests are implicated in U.S. policy toward Islamist groups would help deepen our understanding of how policymakers generate foreign policy in this domain.

A useful descriptive, non-academic study by the Congressional Research Service¹⁵⁵ assesses U.S. policy toward nonmilitant Islamist organizations in the Arab world. This report tries to explain why the U.S. tends to distrust all Islamists. Sharp argues somewhat paradoxically that the involvement of Hamas and Hezbollah in the electoral process made policymakers suspicious of their intentions, and at the same time, Arab regimes capitalized on this fear by

¹⁵³ Matthew J. Buehler, "The Making of Moderates: U.S. Relations with Islamist Movements in Morocco and Egypt" (University of Texas, Austin, 2010).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵⁵ Jeremy M. Sharp, *U.S. Democracy Promotion Policy in the Middle East: The Islamist Dilemma* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, 2006).

casting even moderate Islamists as extreme.¹⁵⁶ Like previous studies, it does not explain variation in U.S. policy over time.

My project advances the discussion in the following ways. First, this study addresses both militant and nonmilitant cases as two classes of Islamist groups. Second, it addresses variation in U.S. foreign policy over time, across administrations and offers a theoretical explanation for this variation. Finally, my study builds on Gerges and Pinto by considering U.S. policies post 9/11.

Research Design and Case Selection

This study uses a comparative and within-case study method. Using a comparative method focusing on Islamist groups in the Middle East eliminates confounding variables that might emerge using Islamist groups from different regions of the world and gives me freedom to explore conditions that might be unique to the region. This analysis also includes within-case, across-time comparison, providing two levels of variation. Within-case analysis also provides internal comparison, making the causal inferences stronger.¹⁵⁷

Some might question the external validity of the small-n approach, but this project begins from a standpoint that small-n studies are an important starting point before generalizing to other domains. To find what Henry Teune calls “System-Specific Indicators”, a small-n case study approach is the most appropriate first step in finding ways to operationalize the question in other contexts¹⁵⁸ and assess rival explanations.¹⁵⁹ Additionally, King, Keohane, and Verba have

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵⁷ Stanley Lieberon, “Small N’s and Big Conclusions: An Examination of the Reasoning in Comparative Studies Based on a Small Number of Cases,” *Social Forces* 70 (1991): 307–320.

¹⁵⁸ Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1970).

demonstrated that while small-n case studies may have a limited number of cases, this does not entail a correspondingly small number of observations. Rather, each case contains a huge number of observations, providing theoretical leverage to a study like the present one, which has four cases¹⁶⁰. Small-n case studies have other advantages, including a unique ability to assess complex causal chains and equifinality (different causes could yield similar results).¹⁶¹

This case study attempts to serve a theory building purpose, and fits with Eckstein's formulation of a heuristic case study, as he describes it, "serving to find out."¹⁶² To my knowledge, there is no existing study that theorizes why U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups has varied over time. This study can contribute to theory building by studying a series of cases in which the U.S. devises policy on non-state actors. Broader conclusions can be drawn from this study to understand the relationship between states and foreign non-state actors.

Islamist groups can be defined as Islamic social movement organizations that have religious, social service, political, and sometimes militant elements. While not all Islamist groups are Arab, many of the most famous and established groups are. The Arab groups provide the richest dataset for a project of this kind, although future studies may consider non-Arab Islamist groups to determine if the findings of this study continue to hold. Moreover, there are religious parties that are Islamist, but would otherwise not fall into the category of Islamist group; one such example is the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), the Islamist ruling party. Although the AKP espouses Islamist principles, it does not have an established independent

¹⁵⁹ Arend Lijphart, "The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research," *Comparative Political Studies* 8 (1975): 158–77.

¹⁶⁰ Gary King, Robert O. Koehane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 52.

¹⁶¹ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development* (Boston: MIT Press, 2005).

¹⁶² Harry Eckstein, "Case Studies and Theory in Political Science," in *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1975), 104.

social service network. Moreover, Islamist groups like Hezbollah and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood may have political wings, but the political agenda is one part of their larger organizational goals.

The Islamist group case selection was based on an effort to avoid selection bias.¹⁶³ In particular, I steered away from choosing groups like Al Qaeda that specifically formed in reaction to American foreign policy, or publicly claim as such.¹⁶⁴ I also chose two sets of groups: militant and nonmilitant, so the study can observe what impact violence may have on shaping U.S. policy. One might ask why the cases are restricted to Islamist groups, rather than a mix of non-state actors such as Sinn Fein, the Tamil Tigers, or the Michigan Militia. First, Islamist groups possess important common characteristics that make them well suited for an across-case comparison. They all have social service elements, providing medical care, welfare, religious services, education, and in some cases legal assistance to the local community. They are all religious organizations and their political platforms are informed by the religious commitments they espouse. Finally, Islamist groups are useful test-cases for understanding U.S. foreign policy because there has been observable variation in their importance to U.S. foreign policy priorities, ranging from low importance (1970s, among other periods) to extremely high importance (post 9/11).

In the process of drawing inferences, this study must also grapple with whether these cases are typical, or outliers among Islamist groups. By performing within-case comparison, it is perhaps more feasible to determine what is typical within that case, rather than between cases.

¹⁶³ Barbara Geddes, "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," *Political Analysis* 2 (1990): 131–50; David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insight and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 49 (1996): 56–91; Douglas Dion, "Evidence and Interference in Comparative Case Study," *Comparative Politics* 30 (1998): 127–45.

¹⁶⁴ For more on selection bias, see King, Koehane, and Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry*.

King, Keohane and Verba suggest we can examine cases in which two different units are “homogenous”, that is, “when the expected values of the dependent variables from each unit are the same when our explanatory variable takes on a particular value.”¹⁶⁵ This assures a high degree of unit homogeneity.

For each case (within and between cases), I use process tracing, a method formulated by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, which outlines the chain of events to identify the causal mechanisms, comparing the dependent variable before and after key events.¹⁶⁶ This method looks at each step, even extremely small steps, in the causal chain of events to examine how (and if) the independent variables affect the dependent variable. It provides the means to identify any intervening variables and how they behave relative to the other variables. But what if there is an endogeneity problem in which the dependent variable causes some of the key events I use in the before-and after comparison? Process tracing contains a means to prevent this problem by closely following the causal chain of events.

The cases chosen for this study are not entirely independent. For example, Hamas emerged from the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood/Islamic Action Front is also an outgrowth of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah has recently collaborated with Hamas, and both Hezbollah and Hamas receive support from Iran and Syria. Process tracing can help identify what kinds of links exist among the cases, and what types of learning or diffusion of ideas occurs across the groups. Although challenging

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.,91.

¹⁶⁶ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development*, 81.

to do, I attempt to determine the origin of observed variance, whether it comes from the independent variables or the relationship between the groups.¹⁶⁷

Data

The main purpose of this project is to explain variation in U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups. Why does the U.S. talk to some groups and not others? Why does the U.S. stop talking to one group once there is a history of engagement with them?

To evaluate among competing explanations, the study examines four main sources of historical data: policymakers' memoirs, declassified government documents using original archival research, public statements (speeches, interviews, comments in the media) by political elites, and original interviews with present and former members of the bureaucracy. The materials therefore come from both primary and secondary sources. This approach provides the opportunity to compare administrations, and uncover how policymakers devise strategies to address issues specific to non-state actors. To this end, this study examines U.S. policy beginning in the 1940s and concludes in the first term of the Obama administration.

Conclusion

This dissertation explains why U.S. foreign policy toward Islamist groups has varied over time. Drawing on John Kingdon's garbage can model, it contributes to existing literature on U.S. policy by arguing that agenda setting processes provide the best explanation for American policy toward Islamist groups. Chapter two discusses American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Chapter three analyzes U.S. policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 34.

Chapter four addresses U.S. policy toward Hamas and Chapter five explains U.S. policy toward Hezbollah, and Chapter six offers conclusions and summarizes the argument. In addition to applying Kingdon's model, each case study chapter shows that the common alternative models are insufficient.

In general, this project contributes to our understanding of the relationship between states and non-state actors by applying Kingdon's model in a new way. Although recent scholarship has made strides in understanding how non-state actors, particularly terrorist groups, are formed and operate, more work is needed to understand how states devise policies toward non-state actors. Several scholars analyze U.S. policy toward the broad concept of "Political Islam." This study differs because it suggests that U.S. policy is specific to individual groups, but also situated within the larger American political context. The project builds on work by Gerges and Pinto to go beyond analyzing U.S. policy toward "Political Islam", a catchall concept that includes a multitude of diverse groups, and instead address U.S. policy over time and toward specific groups. As non-state actors become increasingly powerful political actors, capable of influencing the international community, it becomes even more important to understand how states relate to them.

CHAPTER TWO

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest Islamist group to emerge from the Middle East and remains the most influential. The question of whether the U.S. should engage with the Brotherhood has at times been extremely controversial, while at other times the issue has received very little attention by U.S. policymakers. In this context, the relationship between the United States and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has varied from regular engagement during the Cold War to ambivalent engagement after the Cold War, then to a short period of disengagement after 9/11, and finally to high-level engagement after the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011. What's interesting is that periods of disengagement do not correspond with the group's militancy. For example, American contacts with the Brotherhood were frequent and regular during the Cold War. Even when the group was accumulating offensive military capability and engaging in violence, American policymakers merely took a cautious, "wait and see" approach, and maintained routine contacts with Brotherhood members. The U.S. actively engaged with the group during its most militant phases, but during relatively benign periods, when the group had foresworn violent tactics, the United States refused to have diplomatic contacts and expressly forbade American funds from being channeled to Brotherhood projects. The George W. Bush administration, for example, imposed a restriction on financing the Brotherhood even though the group has never been listed on any of the various terrorist lists maintained by the State Department and the Department of Treasury. Overall, American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood has shifted markedly over time, but thus far, no studies have adequately explained these policy changes.

John Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting can help explain why U.S. policy has varied over time. This chapter will demonstrate how policies ranging from engagement to disengagement came to be considered appropriate solutions to the problems associated with the

Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Drawing on Kingdon's model, I explain variation in American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as the result of policy entrepreneurs linking solutions (including engagement, ambivalent engagement, disengagement, limited engagement, and full recognition) to the problems associated with the Brotherhood in the context of policy windows created by the end of the Cold War, the 9/11 attacks, and the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011.

There have been four main phases with respect to American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood outlined in Table 2.1: regular engagement, which entailed routine meetings between U.S. officials and members of the Muslim Brotherhood, ambivalent engagement, which involved meetings between U.S. officials and Brotherhood members, but only in their capacity as independent members of parliament, disengagement (2001/2005)/limited engagement (2005-2008), which included a four year period in which meetings were discouraged and financial constraints placed on the group, followed by a three year period of limited meetings with Brotherhood members of parliament, and finally, full public recognition, which entailed high level contacts between the U.S. and Brotherhood members.

Table 2.1: U.S. Policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

Window of Opportunity	Streams	Policy
	<u>Streams</u> : Was not widely defined as a problem for the U.S.	Regular Engagement (Early 1940s-1990)
End of the Cold War	<u>Problem Stream</u> : Algerian election-Islamic Salvation Front victory, Meridian House Speech, Allies rejected engagement <u>Policy Stream</u> : Key officials argued for caution regarding Islamist groups, emergence of taboo against contacts <u>Political Stream</u> : Growing concerns in Congress and general public over Political Islam	Ambivalent Engagement (1990-2001)
September 11 Attacks	<u>Problem Stream</u> : 2005 MB contests elections and performs well <u>Policy Stream</u> : Global War on Terror, Freedom Agenda, some think-tanks beginning to advocate engagement with nonviolent Islamist groups <u>Political Stream</u> : Anti-Islamist climate	Disengagement (2001-2005) /Limited Engagement (2005-2008)
Arab Spring Revolutions	<u>Problem Stream</u> : 2011 Revolutions start in Tunisia and spread to Egypt <u>Policy Stream</u> : Policy review in 2009 on Political Islam, pro-engagement perspective pervasive in administration, liberal think-tanks and academics arguing for engagement, conservatives arguing against engagement <u>Political Stream</u> : Key members of Congress opposed to engagement, but no concrete steps to stop it	Regular Engagement (2011-present)

Section one will provide an overview of the organization, including its origins and influence, violent tactics, important thinkers, and involvement in politics. Section two will discuss the first policy window: the end of the Cold War. It will show how this policy window made it possible for American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to move from

engagement to ambivalent engagement, given ongoing developments in the three policy streams. The next section will address the second major policy window: 9/11. It will explain how 9/11 made it possible for U.S. policy to move from ambivalent engagement to a disengagement strategy, drawing on changes in the policy streams. Finally, the last section will address the third major policy window: the Obama Administration and the Arab Spring. It will demonstrate how the Arab Spring revolutions created an opportunity for American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to shift from disengagement to full diplomatic recognition, given what was also happening in the three policy streams within the American political context.

Overview of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al Muslimin) is the most important Islamist group to emerge from the Middle East. It has achieved political and social power within Egypt, and spawned branches in neighboring countries like Syria, Jordan, and the Palestinian Territories as well as an international umbrella organization called the Global Muslim Brotherhood.¹⁶⁸ The Egyptian branch of the Brotherhood is commonly regarded as the progenitor of all modern Islamist movements, both militant and nonmilitant. Smaller splinter groups with a more radical, violent agenda have been inspired by or grew out of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Examples include Jama'at al Faniyya al Askariyya, Takfir wa al Hijra,¹⁶⁹ Al Jihad, and Jama'a Al Islamiyya. The Egyptian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood officially renounced violence in

¹⁶⁸ Regarding the Syrian branch, see Hanna Batatu, "Syria's Muslim Brethren," *MERIP Reports* 110 (November 1982): 12–20. See also Shmuel Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle East and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1998) and Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?* regarding the Jordanian branch.

¹⁶⁹ Saad Ibrahim translates these names as The Technical Military Academy Group and Repentance and Holy Fight. See Saad Eddin Ibrahim, "Anatomy of Egypt's Militant Islamic Groups: Methodological Note and Preliminary Findings," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 12 (1980): 423–453.

the 1970s and although there is some disagreement about the long-term intentions of the group, most mainstream scholars currently believe that it is a conservative, nonmilitant organization.

The Brotherhood was formed in 1928 by school teacher Hassan Al Banna as a reaction to British colonialism and what he regarded as a western and secular assault on Islamic tradition. The context for Al Banna's ideological agenda can best be understood in the background of the British presence in Egypt. Starting in 1882, Egypt became a British protectorate so the United Kingdom could secure its access to the Suez Canal, a crucial expedited route to its colonial holdings in India. The Canal's informal sobriquet was "The Highway to India", and it was vastly important to the British for economic purposes. Although Egypt did not technically qualify as a colony, the British government engaged in practices that angered local Egyptians and fostered widespread resentment, as they effectively dominated Egyptian finances and politics. When Egypt obtained its independence in 1922, it did not acquire full sovereignty because British troops remained. It wasn't until the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that the British were required to remove their troops, but even this agreement allowed them to retain enough soldiers in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal Zone.

Hassan Al Banna formed the first branch of the Muslim Brotherhood among disaffected Egyptian workers in the Suez Canal Zone city of Ismailia, a potent symbol of British power in Egypt. In addition to British colonial excesses in Egypt, Al Banna also witnessed a series of dramatic upheavals in the Middle East, including the Ottoman defeat in World War I, which instigated the end of the Caliphate¹⁷⁰ and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, European

¹⁷⁰ The Caliphate is a juridical term referring to both the office of the Caliph, the political head of the Islamic community, and the territorial jurisdiction of the Caliph. The Caliphate was in the hands of the Ottoman Empire until Kemal Ataturk officially abolished the institution in 1924.

pseudo-colonies or “mandates” in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, the Kemalist revolt in Turkey, which brought a secular military regime to power, and growing ideological currents of nihilism, anti-traditionalism, and secularism¹⁷¹ that challenged traditional Egyptian religious practice.¹⁷² Amid so much political and social turmoil, Al Banna feared that Muslim youth would be steadily drawn away from Islam toward secularism. He reacted by launching a conservative counteroffensive in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Muslim Brotherhood drew on pre-existing social institutions to organize, building networks in schools, coffee houses, and mosques. Mitchell describes Al Banna’s strategy of developing relationships with the Ulema (Islamic religious leaders), important local Sheikhs, social clubs and religious societies to build the Muslim Brotherhood from established social networks.¹⁷³ The Brotherhood also provided social services to the poor including food, education, and health care while propagating its religious agenda. The Brotherhood’s core ideology during this period was to eliminate British influence, call for the individual to follow Islamic tradition, the government to be based on Shari’a (Islamic law), and the return of the Caliphate. Al Banna claimed to be opposed to political parties, but at the same time flirted with the political process. This ambivalence has remained a recurring theme within the Muslim Brotherhood, with some arguing that the mission should be to provide services outside of the political process, and others advocating for active political engagement.

¹⁷¹ Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁷² Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, 4.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5

Violence, Ideology, and Politics

The Brotherhood began militarizing a subset of the organization called the “Special Apparatus” in the 1930s and after Al Banna’s brother met the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Huseini, the Brothers contributed forces to the first Arab revolt in 1936. According to Ian Johnson’s research, Al Banna received large sums of money from Nazi Germany to establish the special apparatus.¹⁷⁴ In addition to participating in the first Arab Revolt, the organization was also involved in the 1948 war. They sent battalions to Palestine beginning in October, 1947 and participated in the Egyptian campaign after the second truce broke in October, 1948.¹⁷⁵ While the Egyptian monarchy was still in power, the Brothers were implicated in the assassination of Egyptian Prime Minister Nukrashi, and Al Banna was subsequently assassinated by the regime in retaliation. By December, 1948 the Brotherhood was dissolved by the Egyptian government out of fears that it was planning a coup.

In general, 1945-1965 marks the most violent period for the organization; during this time, the special apparatus was involved in assassination attempts, bombings of British targets, and other politically motivated killings.¹⁷⁶ Although there was an initial period of relative toleration of the Brotherhood after the Free Officer’s coup in 1952, tensions rose between the revolutionary regime and the Brotherhood throughout 1952 and 1953. After the Brotherhood was implicated in the assassination plot against Nasser, he severely cracked down on the group. It wasn’t until after the 1967 war that the Brotherhood began to regroup, although it continued to

¹⁷⁴ Ian Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West* (New York: Mariner Books, 2010), 109.

¹⁷⁵ Mitchell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, 58.

¹⁷⁶ Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Egypt’s Islamic Activism in the 1980s,” *Third World Quarterly*, *Third World Quarterly* 10 (1988): 632–657.

maintain a low profile for the next decade. The organization was forced underground, with many of its key members imprisoned.

After coming to power, President Anwar Sadat relaxed restrictions on the Brotherhood to shore up support against Marxists and Nasserists. But the Brotherhood rejected Sadat's Open Door policy (also known as the Infitah), which sought to empower private industry and reduce the dominance of the public sector. They also vehemently opposed the 1978 Camp David Accords with Israel. Further complicating matters, the movement also suffered from an internal split: followers of Sayyed Qutb's theories advocated violence, while the older guard who had languished in prison had moderated their approach to violence.¹⁷⁷ In the 1970s, the Muslim Brotherhood officially renounced violence. Al Jihad, an independent splinter group, assassinated Sadat in 1981 commencing the state of emergency that remained intact for the next thirty one years. Emergency law gave the President sweeping powers, such as the capacity to refer virtually any crime to a military court. Mubarak made use of this provision in his battle with Islamists in the 1990s, and other oppositional forces.

Influential Thinkers

The most important thinker to define the ideological framework of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was its founder, Hassan Al Banna. He sought to transform Egyptian society from the bottom up by focusing on educating individuals in the Islamic way of life and develop a community of adherents through a growing network of social service provisions. His perspective focused on long term social change, and evidence of this strain of thought is present in the discourse of the modern Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The ultimate aim, as expressed in his

¹⁷⁷ Tal, *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan*.

work, *Five Tracts* was to expand beyond the borders of Egypt, Islamize the world, and restore the Caliphate. Hasan Al Hudaibi, Al Banna's successor, publicly advocated a nonviolent approach, but at the same time he struggled to contain the militant special apparatus when he took over as Supreme Guide. He was held responsible for ordering violent attacks and it was under his watch that the Brotherhood plotted to kill Gamal Abdul Nasser. But as the crackdowns continued, the mainstream Brotherhood turned steadily toward nonviolent tactics, while a more radical, explicitly revolutionary ideology emerged in the 1960s. Sayyed Qutb, a member of the Brotherhood, outlined in his book, *Milestones*, a more radical jihadi ideology that gained traction among Islamic extremists. He criticized the "jahaliya" societies that are ignorant, godless, and sexually permissive. Qutbism called for a swifter, violent, top-down approach to Islamizing Egyptian society and out of this strain came the extremist groups like Jama'a Islamiyyaa.

Politics

Prior to the Arab Spring, the Egyptian political process was largely closed to any real opposition, although the Muslim Brotherhood began to dip its toes into the electoral waters in the 1980s. The group began to project itself as a legitimate political player, willing to engage in democracy. Meanwhile, Hosni Mubarak's strategy regarding the Brotherhood was a slight departure from Nasser and Sadat. Broadly speaking, Tal argues that Mubarak mixed accommodation and control during the first ten years, but after an uptick in radical Islamist violence in 1993, his strategy changed from containment to confrontation.¹⁷⁸ Islamists were steadily gaining ground at different levels of Egyptian society and the Brotherhood's social service network only served to facilitate this trend. In general, Mubarak sought to balance

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Islamists and secularists, while attempting to isolate the more extreme, radical Islamists. But this strategy often created a confusing series of reversals. For example, the 2005 election was relatively freer than previous elections and won the Brotherhood 88 seats in Parliament. It wasn't long before Mubarak initiated a crackdown and a series of legislative maneuvers to mitigate the Brotherhood's influence. The state also tried to control the Islamic message by co-opting the clerics. Mubarak nationalized mosques, managed the content of sermons, and used Al Azhar, the nation's foremost religious institution, to advocate for the regime.¹⁷⁹

Although the Muslim Brotherhood has been technically outlawed since 1954, it achieved electoral success by running members as independents, or allying with other opposition parties. Despite his ideological ambivalence about political parties, Hasan Al Banna was interested in running for seats as early as the 1940s, in 1942 and 1948, but the period of the Brotherhood's serious electoral participation began in earnest in the 1980s.¹⁸⁰ The Brotherhood learned to ally with other parties after Election law 114/1983 effectively excluded independents and forced them to collude with the Wafd party. The regime was caught off guard when the Brotherhood–Wafd alliance won 8 seats in the People's Assembly in 1984. The growing influence of the Brotherhood became clearer in 1987. They joined the socialist labor and liberal parties in a tripartite alliance that won 36 seats in the People's Assembly.¹⁸¹ Not long after this electoral success, the Brotherhood boycotted the 1990 elections, citing widespread fraud.

¹⁷⁹ Tamir Moustafa, "Conflict and Cooperation Between the State and Religious Institutions in Contemporary Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32 (2000): 10.

¹⁸⁰ Mona El-Ghobashy, "The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2009): 373–395.

¹⁸¹ Joel Campagna, "From Accommodation to Confrontation: The Muslim Brotherhood in the Mubarak Years," *Journal of International Affairs* 50, no. 1 (1996): 278–304.

The 2000s represent a major shift in Egyptian electoral politics. In response to domestic and international pressure to democratize, the 2000 parliamentary elections were comparatively freer and fairer, winning the Brotherhood 17 seats.¹⁸² 2005 was another landmark election. Mubarak had been under domestic pressure to step down during a flood of public protests in 2004 under the banner of the Kifaya (Enough) movement. The U.S. also pressured Mubarak to open up the presidential elections to real competition, under the auspices of the Bush administration's Freedom Agenda. In this context, Secretary Rice cancelled her June 2005 visit to protest the incarceration of opposition leader Ayman Nur. Amid these pressures, Mubarak finally acquiesced to multi-candidate competitive presidential elections.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, Mubarak harassed his opponents and subjected them to excessive campaign restrictions, which cast a shadow over the first contested presidential elections in Egyptian history. On the parliamentary side, the Brotherhood won 88 seats in the People's Assembly, solidifying the Islamists as the biggest opposition block against the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP).

In 2006, fearing greater Brotherhood gains, the government postponed local elections and in 2007 it passed constitutional amendments which made it extremely difficult for Islamists to participate. The amendments outlawed religious parties, eliminated judicial oversight of elections in favor of a regime appointed committee, and permitted only registered political parties to campaign.¹⁸⁴ The constitutional changes also gave Mubarak additional security-related

¹⁸² Omayma Abdel-Latif, "Egyptian Electoral Politics: New Rules, Old Game," *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 88 (2001): 273–279.

¹⁸³ Human Rights Watch, *From Plebiscite to Contest? Egypt's Presidential Election*, Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper, 2005.

¹⁸⁴ Myriam Benraad and Mohamed Adelbaky, *Transition in Egypt: Radicals on the Rise*, Policywatch #1588 (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2009), <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/transition-in-egypt-radicals-on-the-rise>. See also Amr Hamzawy and Mohammed Herzallah, *Egypt's Local Elections Farce: Causes and Consequences*, Policy Outlook #40 (Carnegie Endowment for International

powers and the ability to dissolve parliament.¹⁸⁵ The 2008 local elections were riddled with fraud, harassment, and corruption. The Brotherhood boycotted the local elections, contributing to the exceedingly low 5% voter turnout and as expected, the NDP garnered 95% of the vote.¹⁸⁶

In this contentious environment, the Brotherhood deliberated over the merits of becoming an official political party and finally came out with an official party platform in the summer of 2007. Historically the Brotherhood rejected parties as a divisive Western concept, maintaining that all Muslims should act under the same banner and with the same goals. In spite of this belief, the Brotherhood still competed in elections and accepted the rules of party politics, all without official party status. 2007 appears to be a departure from this perspective. The Brotherhood released a preliminary party platform, which dissatisfied many because of its vagueness on some issues and its more conservative and controversial positions on women and the Coptic minority.

The 2011 Revolution toppled the Mubarak regime and ushered in a new phase for Egyptian electoral politics. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood formed its own political party, the Freedom and Justice Party and began planning to field candidates in the 2012 parliamentary elections. As the most organized and well established group in Egypt, the Brotherhood performed extremely well in the parliamentary elections, taking 235 seats (47.2%), which meant that along with the Salafists, Islamists controlled the majority of the parliament.¹⁸⁷ Brotherhood leaders also claimed that they did not intend to field a presidential candidate, but reneged on this pledge and Khairat Al-Shater ran. However, he was disqualified from participation because of

Peace, April 2008), <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2008/04/14/egypt-s-local-elections-farce-causes-and-consequences/al6>.

¹⁸⁵ Laurence Caromba and Hussein Solomon, "Understanding Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood," *African Security Review* 17, no. 3 (2008): 120.

¹⁸⁶ Hamzawy and Herzallah, *Egypt's Local Elections Farce: Causes and Consequences*.

¹⁸⁷ BBC, "Egypt's Islamist Parties Win Elections to Parliament," January 21, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16665748>.

his past criminal convictions. The alternative Brotherhood candidate was Mohammed Morsi, chairman of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party. He was one of the top two performing candidates in the first round of the elections, receiving approximately 25% of the vote. In June, Morsi won the run-off election, becoming the nation's fifth President and the first to come out of Muslim Brotherhood ranks, although he resigned from his position with the FJP after winning the election.

Policy Window 1: End of the Cold War

During the Cold War, American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was open and regular engagement, but after the fall of the Soviet Union, American policy shifted to ambivalent engagement. What could explain this variation? Drawing on Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting, I submit that the end of the Cold War constituted a window of opportunity making it possible to change American posture toward the Brotherhood. Recall that windows of opportunity open suddenly and their effects are felt immediately. Participants must act quickly to take advantage of the new political context that makes new policies possible. The fall of the Soviet Union was just such an opportunity. In this context, developments in the policy steams reflected ambivalence in the American political context surrounding the rise of Islamist groups, which helped redefine the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as a potential problem but also a potentially useful contact. The uncertainties about the group led officials to apply an adaptable solution: ambivalent engagement.

To understand the shift in American policy from regular engagement to ambivalent engagement, it is necessary to outline how the U.S. approached the group at the end of World War II and throughout the Cold War. Government reports mention the Muslim Brotherhood as

early as 1942 and there is evidence of contacts between the United States and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in September, 1943, even as military intelligence reported that the group was unfriendly to U.S. servicemen. Military intelligence expressed concern about reports that U.S. servicemen were being taken by Muslim Brotherhood taxi drivers into the Arab quarter of town and then robbed. The report asserted that only U.S. servicemen had been targeted.¹⁸⁸

Military intelligence documents and State Department correspondence suggest that the group was relatively new to U.S. officials starting in the early to mid-1940s, and that the group was seen as both opportunistic and potentially dangerous. One U.S. intelligence document mistakenly described the Brotherhood as a secretive group led by King Farouk, indicating that officials were not completely familiar with the intricacies of the organization. Intelligence officers routinely referred to the Brotherhood in the context of activities labeled as “fifth column,” encompassing any groups or individuals who appeared to be actively undermining the Egyptian regime, spying for the Axis, or otherwise damaging Allied efforts. For example, American intelligence staff collected information on a chapter of the Muslim Brotherhood that was believed to have been stealing arms from allied troops stationed in the Suez Canal Zone. One attaché reported, “The group has a sub-organization formed for the theft and collection of firearms. Rifles and pistols are stolen from Allied troops who are frequently careless in leaving their guns unattended in the town while they barter with the native shopkeepers. It is said that a substantial arsenal has now been collected.”¹⁸⁹ Intelligence officials were actively collecting

¹⁸⁸ Naval Liaison Officer, “Egypt-Government-Political Forces-Fifth Column Activity” (Declassified Intelligence Report, Intelligence Division Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Serial 15-42, September 16, 1942), Declassified General Correspondence 1917-1941; Military Intelligence Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs . Record Group 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

information about the group, including acquiring details about secret meetings of the group's top leaders.

One of the main concerns expressed by U.S. officials during the early to mid-1940s was that the group exhibited fanatical tendencies. A report issued in October, 1943 expresses worry over growing Ikhwan fanaticism, as well as its nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments.¹⁹⁰ Another report describes "fanatical speeches" by Brotherhood members to recruit new members.¹⁹¹ And the U.S. military received information from the British detailing Hassan Al Banna's fascination with Nazi and Fascist organizations and how he used them as a model for the subgroups of the Ikhwan: the Gawala and the Katiba, corresponding to the Nazi Brown Shirts and Black Shirts.¹⁹² In 1944, The Cairo embassy received over three hundred copies of a form letter from various branches of the Brotherhood. It was such a large number of letters that the embassy requested extra Arabic translators to assist. The letters introduced the group, stated its position that Palestine belongs to the Arabs, and protested the American position on Palestine. The embassy's analysis of the letter suggests that the State Department was concerned about the nature of the organization's ideology. One of the more anti-Brotherhood assessments came from J.E. Jacobs, the Charge d'Affairs, who reflected,

The danger of the Ikhwan is the fanatical principles which it professes. According to the Brotherhood in as much as Egypt is a Moslem state it should be governed by Koranic law, everything non-Moslem should be detested. Latterly the society has divided its members into various semi-military classes: soldiers, a name borne by all members; legionaries, young and athletic members who must report to their branches once a week

¹⁹⁰ "Defense Security Summary of Egyptian Affairs," October 12, 1943, Declassified General Correspondence 1917-1941; Military Intelligence Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs . Record Group 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² "P.I.C. Paper No. 49: The Ikhwan El Muslimeen," February 27, 1944, Declassified General Correspondence 1917-1941; Military Intelligence Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs . Record Group 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

where, after readings from the Koran, they are given training by retired army officers; a third division of scouts composed of young and particularly fanatical members who wear a special uniform and each carries a Koran and a green banner...Its future activities are uncertain; they could become inconvenient or even dangerous in view of its fanatical religious character.¹⁹³

Early 1940s military intelligence briefings opined on the nature of the threat posed by the Brotherhood. Analysts tended to regard the Brotherhood as a subversive element in Egyptian society that could potentially cause a great deal of trouble, but did not necessarily constitute a direct threat to U.S. interests. Army and Navy intelligence sources often took a wary “wait and see” attitude. A June 1943 report reflects this attitude. After dismissing the influence of communists in Egypt, the analyst argued that Islam and Nationalism have counteracted communistic thought.¹⁹⁴ Commenting on the Wafd- Brotherhood alliance,¹⁹⁵ the analyst pointed out that there are advantages and disadvantages from a security point of view, although the Wafd is more likely to be influenced by the fanaticism of the Brotherhood than the Wafd could exert a moderating effect on the Brotherhood.

Analysts also collected information on the military capacity of the Muslim Brotherhood. The British supplied the Military Intelligence Division (MID) with information about the group’s access to weapons. A report issued in February, 1944 stated, “The militant and xenophobic character of the Ikhwan and the fact that there are throughout Egypt a large number of arms that could be brought into use should feeling be sufficiently aroused to make the Ikhwan

¹⁹³ J.E. Jacobs, “Fanatical Moslem Society: Ikhwan El-Muslimin (Moslem Brotherhood)” (United States Department of State, April 29, 1944), Declassified Communique from Cairo Embassy Charge d’Affaires to the Secretary of State., National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁴ “The Changing Security Aspect of Egyptian Affairs,” June 12, 1943, Declassified General Correspondence 1917-1941; Military Intelligence Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs . Record Group 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁵ The Wafd is one of Egypt’s oldest opposition parties and the Brotherhood-Wafd relationship has been contentious over the years. Arabic for “delegation”, it emerged out of Saad Zaghloul’s delegation to Paris in 1919, which advocated for Egyptian independence from Britain. Zaghloul formed the Wafd party after he returned from exile in 1923. See Al Ahram’s overview of the party’s history, “Wafd Party,” *Ahram English*, November 28, 2011, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/33/104/24940/Elections-/Political-Parties/Wafd-party.aspx>.

a potential danger that cannot be discounted”.¹⁹⁶ But the Brotherhood also suffered from organizational weaknesses, and this influenced U.S. officials’ assessments of its potential threat. One fascinating September, 1943 intelligence briefing summarizes a report which had been prepared for the Office of Strategic Services by a Brotherhood member active in the group’s administration. Some of the challenges the report highlights were the organization’s excessive dependence on Hassan al-Banna, administrative and coordination defects, a lack of follow-through on social service projects, no monetary compensation for members, and “disillusionment and doubt.”¹⁹⁷ What’s striking is that a Brotherhood member was willing to be so detailed and candid in his assessment of the group’s liabilities, especially with intelligence officers from a Western nation.

Military intelligence kept a watchful eye on the Brotherhood and made special note when the group appeared to take advantage of political opportunities, whether domestic or international. Following a bread and sugar shortage in mid-June, 1942, the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) identified increased Brotherhood activities, and suggested a possible link to the German offensive in the Western Desert.¹⁹⁸ And a March, 1944 communique from the American Ambassador in Cairo presents the Brotherhood as a cynical, self-interested

¹⁹⁶ “P.I.C. Paper No. 49: The Ikhwan El Muslimeen.”

¹⁹⁷ “Some Defects of the Ikhwan El Muslimin” (Office of Strategic Services, September 10, 1943), Declassified General Correspondence 1917-1941; Military Intelligence Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs . Record Group 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁹⁸ T.V. Cooper, “The Political Situation in Egypt” (Office of Naval Intelligence, Serial 430-42, June 10, 1942), Declassified General Correspondence 1917-1941; Military Intelligence Division; Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs . Record Group 165, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

organization, “prepared to auction its loyalty to the highest bidder” because of the Wafd-Brotherhood alliance, and allegations that the group received government subsidies.¹⁹⁹

Despite U.S. reservations about the group, meetings between embassy officials and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood took place throughout the 1940s and 1950s. There appears to have been no taboo against contacts with the group whatsoever, even as the group engaged in violent activities against foreigners, including bombing British targets.²⁰⁰ This was true even amid rumors of a potential coup d’etat in late November, 1950 and Ambassador Caffery suspected there was a “dangerous possibility” that the Brotherhood might form an “unholy alliance” with discontented Army officers.²⁰¹

During this same period, an embassy officer stated in a meeting with the Egyptian Minister of Interior that the Brotherhood was as dangerous as Communism and that its ideology could provoke a revolution.²⁰² A similar sentiment was expressed later that year in a Foreign Service dispatch which argued,

The newly revived Ikhwan-al-Muslimin (Moslem Brotherhood) is in many ways just as dangerous as its Communist counterpart on the left. In some ways it is even more dangerous as it has a religious appeal to the Moslem which Communism lacks. Its creed of violence, its xenophobia, its fanaticism are all elements which give cause for alarm. Even more alarming are recent reports that the Ikhwan is cooperating with other

¹⁹⁹ Alexander Kirk, “Airgram to the Secretary of State,” March 13, 1944, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁰ Stanton Griffis, “Airgram from Cairo Embassy to the Secretary of State,” October 29, 1948, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File number 883.43/10-2948, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰¹ Jefferson Caffery, “Reemergence of Moslem Brotherhood Society” (Foreign Service Dispatch 1066, November 6, 1950), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/11-650, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰² Jefferson Caffery, “Seraggin and Wafdist Attitude Toward Revival of Ikhwan Al Muslimin (the Moslem Brotherhood)” (Foreign Service Dispatch 2173, March 14, 1951), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/3-1451, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

organizations, including the Communists. Out of such an unholy alliance no good can come, either for Egypt or the Western world.²⁰³

Concern about the group's militant capacity reached the level of Secretary of State in May, 1951. Dean Acheson sent a memo to the Cairo embassy requesting more information about armed guerilla groups in Egypt, based on a British intelligence briefing which reported that Brotherhood guerilla bands were engaging in terrorism against the British in the Canal Zone and stealing weapons from them, even skirting minefields to do so. The British also argued they were communists. Acheson asked for information from the embassy about whether the report was accurate and if the group indeed posed a threat to Egypt's stability.²⁰⁴ A year later, Acheson sent a memo to the Cairo embassy asking Ambassador Caffery to clarify whether British accusations were true that the Muslim Brotherhood was responsible for the Free Officer's Coup.²⁰⁵ Thus, the Muslim Brotherhood received high level attention throughout the 1940s and 1950s and was even regarded with suspicion, but the group was never ultimately defined as a problem that required action, nor was it problematic for diplomats to engage in open and frequent meetings with Brotherhood leaders and rank-and-file members.

For example, while expressing concerns about the militant capacity of the group, and its fanatical ideology, State Department officials had at least two meetings with Muslim Brotherhood representatives in 1952 in the normal course of diplomatic reporting. One high level meeting took place between embassy officials and Sheikh Al Baquri, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood Executive Council. The embassy reporting officer wrote that he asked Sheikh

²⁰³ "Stability Vs. Instability in Egypt" (Foreign Service Dispatch 355, August 13, 1951), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/8-1351, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁴ Dean Acheson, "Airgram to Ambassador Jefferson Caffery," May 22, 1951, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/5-2251, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁵ Dean Acheson, "Telegram to Ambassador Jefferson Caffery," July 24, 1952, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/7-2452, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Baquri about the Brotherhood program, number of members, Brotherhood perspective on other parties like the Communists, and what the Brotherhood thought about the United States. Baquri said that the membership was only 100,000, but that the majority of the Egyptian population supports the group. He also noted that the Brotherhood was opposed to political parties and communist doctrine and that the only dispute between the Brotherhood and the U.S. was over Palestine and American support of Israel.²⁰⁶

Another meeting between a high level Brotherhood member and a U.S. embassy political officer took place in December, 1952 between embassy Counselor Robert McClintock and Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide Hasan Al Hodeibi. The issue of the Brotherhood's militant activities played a central role in the discussion. Hodeibi denied rumors that the Brotherhood was planning guerilla actions against foreign targets in Egypt and also claimed to be opposed to Communism. He said that that the rumors of militant activity were generated by enemies of the Brotherhood and/or the RCC.²⁰⁷

Embassy officials met with Al Hudaibi once again in 1953 in the Supreme Guide's apartment/office. The discussion reflected animosity between the Brotherhood and the regime and the conclusion the political officer drew from this meeting was that the Brotherhood was not involved in some of the recent political maneuvers of the regime.²⁰⁸ A late summer meeting took place between Mr. Elting, embassy political officer, and Supreme Guide Hudaibi. The discussion

²⁰⁶ "Conversation with Sheikh Al Baquri, Executive Council, Muslim Brotherhood" (Foreign Service Dispatch 544, January 26, 1952), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁷ Bruce McClintock, "Views of Supreme Guide, Moslem Brotherhood, on Current Political Situation" (Foreign Service Dispatch 1203, December 24, 1952), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/12-2352, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²⁰⁸ Jefferson Caffery, "Muslim Brotherhood Probably Not Involved in Republic Move" (Foreign Service Dispatch 2849, June 23, 1953), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/6-2353, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

covered Communism and Brotherhood attitudes about the constitution, but one interesting judgment made by the political officer was that Hudaibi was “only moderately fanatical on the subject of Islam.”²⁰⁹

Meetings with rank and file members were largely about information gathering, rather than proactively advocating for American policy objectives. A May, 1953 meeting between an embassy political officer and a low level member revolved around the organizational structure of the Brotherhood.²¹⁰ Another Brotherhood member revealed that the organization was still occupied with combatting British influence in Egypt, but that the group was not capable of undertaking an attack against the British on its own. It would probably use guerilla tactics if it had Army support. He also revealed that he had seen a large new cache of 100 weapons, but was cagey about the particular timing of an operation, were it to take place. Cairo political officers also conversed with Hudaibi’s son-in-law, an influential Hudaibi advisor, in August, 1953 and learned that the Brotherhood retained strength among lower levels of the military, but did not intend to seek high political office.²¹¹ Another meeting with Mahmoud Makhoulf, a relative of the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood on August 18, 1953 revealed confusion on the part of Political Officer Elting that Hudaibi had not been more open during previous meetings, given the embassy’s understanding that the Brotherhood wanted more contact with the U.S.²¹² A meeting held in March, 1954 between an embassy political officer and a member of the Ikhwan

²⁰⁹ Jefferson Caffery, “Transmitting Memorandum of Conversation with Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood” (Foreign Service Dispatch 318, August 5, 1953), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/8-553, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁰ Jefferson Caffery, “Organizational Structure of the Muslim Brotherhood” (Foreign Service Dispatch 2347, May 14, 1953), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 874.46/5-1453, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Jefferson Caffery, “Conflicts Involving Muslim Brotherhood” (Foreign Service Dispatch 534, August 27, 1953), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 611.74/8-2753, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

supplied the State Department with information about the target of the Brotherhood's enmity- he argued that the Brotherhood's opposition was Nasser specifically, and not the regime. He also said the organization was not planning to engage in violence.²¹³

The State Department also met with a member of the Brotherhood responsible for disseminating Brotherhood propaganda. Although the meeting description does not include the political officer's assessment of the information, the Brotherhood member revealed details about the secret apparatus and claimed that members of the armed groups did not attend Brotherhood events. The structure was such that one member would only know two or three other members of the armed group in order to protect the cell from destruction by the government.²¹⁴ What's remarkable about this meeting is the candor with which the Brotherhood member used with the embassy political officer and his willingness to reveal sensitive information about the Brotherhood's inner workings. It also demonstrates that even when the group was engaged in violent tactics, contacts between the U.S. and the Brotherhood were frequent and open.

At least two meetings took place between the embassy and a Muslim Brother in January, 1955, only a few months after the extensive crackdowns against the Brotherhood following the assassination attempt against Nasser. Thus, at least during this period, the illegality of the group did not prevent the U.S. from meeting with it. A State Department cable reports that the organization laid low, but had begun to slowly disseminate anti-regime literature.²¹⁵ In March of

²¹³ Jefferson Caffery, "Ikhwan Tactics and Thinking Concerning the Present Situation" (Foreign Service Dispatch 2180, March 13, 1954), . General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/3-1354, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁴ Caffery, "Conflicts Involving Muslim Brotherhood."

²¹⁵ Jefferson Caffery, "Brotherhood Confused and Inactive But Not Destroyed" (Foreign Service Dispatch 1319, January 6, 1955), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/1-655, National Archives, Washington, D.C. and G. Lewis Jones, "Brotherhood Fugitives Sentenced to Death" (Foreign

that year, Brotherhood members told the embassy that the government had reached out to members in prison and the Dispatch speculates that the regime anticipates problems with Israel and that it may need assistance from the Ikhwan to defend Egypt.²¹⁶ Meetings in April and June supplied the State Department with information about whether the Brotherhood was still active. One dispatch concluded that, “the greatest change is the recognition the Muslim Brotherhood’s part that they are not in a position to injure the regime.”²¹⁷ In July, a meeting with a member of the Muslim Brotherhood revealed that the organization was once again talking about “assassination”²¹⁸ and Ambassador Byroade commented that this is considerably important. Clearly there was no taboo against talking with the Brotherhood, even though it presented a potential militant threat.

Meetings continued into the late summer and fall, discussing potential leadership changes, and how successful the regime was in defeating the organization. This suggests that even when the organization was most isolated from the regime, there was no taboo against American diplomats engaging with the group. For example, in one meeting, the Brotherhood member explained that the destruction of the branch in Sharkia was a significant blow to the organization because it was strategically located to obtain weapons.²¹⁹ A State Department memo from November, 1957 remarked that, “little has been heard from the Brotherhood since

Service Dispatch 1430, January 22, 1955), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/1-2255, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁶ Henry Byroade, “Muslim Brotherhood Leaders Reportedly Refuse to Discuss Terms with Regime” (Foreign Service Dispatch 1843, March 25, 1955), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/3-2555, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Henry Byroade, “Brotherhood Plans Propaganda Attack Against Regime During Pilgrimage” (Foreign Service Dispatch 92, July 19, 1955), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/7-1955, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²¹⁹ Alexander Schnee, “Regime Continues to Suppress Ikhwan Al Muslimun and Ikhwanis Deep Up Efforts to Maintain Clandestine Organization” (Foreign Service Dispatch 261, September 6, 1955), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/9-655, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[the crack-down following the assassination attempt].”²²⁰ Indeed, if contacts waned, it was because of the Brotherhood, not the United States.

The Cold War and the “Religious Factor”

It may seem perplexing that the U.S. actively engaged with a militant organization, about which diplomats and officials expressed deep concerns- especially given contemporary sensitivities surrounding meeting with militant organizations. But American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during this period must be viewed within the larger context of Cold War policy and what came to be known as the “Religious Factor”. The Truman and Eisenhower administrations were both committed to containing and ultimately rolling back Communism. To this end, the National Security Council under the Truman administration authorized covert action involving, “propaganda, economic warfare; preventative direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage”.²²¹ This psychological warfare was meant to manipulate public opinion in foreign countries and ultimately turn the tide against Communism. In 1953, Edward P. Lilly’s memo, “The Religious Factor”, suggested specifically using Islam as a weapon in the psychological war against Communism. Islam and Islamist organizations provided a natural contrast to communist ideology which was, of course, atheistic.

The U.S. government targeted the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, in particular Said Ramadan, to achieve this aim. Ramadan, son-in-law to Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan Al Banna, was a prominent member of the organization who was exiled from Egypt for his involvement in the organization. He moved to Saudi Arabia and later Switzerland, forming the

²²⁰ “Prevailing Attitudes Toward Present Egyptian Government” (Foreign Service Dispatch 115, December 28, 1957), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/12-2857, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²²¹ Johnson, *A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West*.

Islamic Center in Geneva, which was a mosque and social service center. He was a frequent international traveler and public intellectual. After Ramadan was invited to a Princeton University conference on Islam, the White House invited him to meet with the President on September 23, 1953. He was listed in the President's appointment book among several Muslim delegates as, "The honorable Saeed Ramahdan, Delegate of the Muslim Brothers" and there is a photograph of Ramadan and Eisenhower together.²²² U.S. diplomats and the CIA continued to meet with Ramadan, but he was hesitant and they were unable to convince him to establish an official partnership.²²³ Awareness of Ramadan as a potential resource to advance American interests continued into the 1960s. For example, in 1961, the Department of State forwarded a letter to the Embassies in Amman, Cairo, and the Consul in Geneva (where Ramadan was residing), praising Ramadan as an influential Islamic voice that could be a useful American diplomatic contact.²²⁴

In 1957 the Operations Coordinating Board established an Ad Hoc Working Group on Islam. One of the elements of its "Outline Plan of Operations" recommended developing ties with Islamic reform organizations. It points out that the Soviet and Chinese communists were making more efforts to exploit Islam for their political purposes and that Islam can affect the balance of power.²²⁵ This suggests that although U.S. officials may have had reservations about the Brotherhood, it was still seen as a force to be reckoned with and a possible bulwark against Communism. It was also important to U.S. officials to prevent Islam from being exploited by communist powers.

²²² Ibid., 117.

²²³ Ibid., 119.

²²⁴ Melvin Manfull, "Memorandum for Mr. Arthur Schlesinger Through McGeorge Bundy: Tom Dammann's Comments About Dr. Said Ramadan," December 20, 1961, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/12-1161, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²²⁵ "Inventory of U.S. Government and Private Organization Activity Regarding Islamic Organizations as an Aspect of Overseas Operations" (Operations Coordinating Board, May 2, 1957), Declassified Document Reference System.

There's not much archival evidence regarding U.S. policy toward the Brotherhood in the 1960s, perhaps because the group went underground after Nasser cracked down on them. But in the 1970s, the group began to reemerge and officially renounced violence. Interviews and secondary evidence shows that throughout the 1970s and 1980s, American policy toward the Brotherhood remained relatively friendly. The U.S. engaged in formal dialogue with Omar Al Tilmisani, who served as the Brotherhood Supreme Guide between 1972 and 1986. One significant example of U.S. - Brotherhood cooperation took place during the Iranian Hostage Crisis. The American embassy reached out to Supreme Guide Al Tilmisani and asked if he would request a meeting in Tehran with Khomeini to discuss the hostage issue. Tilmisani agreed and made the request. Khomeini's response said that Tilmisani could come to Tehran, but Khomeini refused to address the hostage issue with him.²²⁶

Routine talks during the 1980s were run by a political counselor in the embassy and the conversations would take place every three or four months. There would be a note taker and interpreter attending the meetings.²²⁷ Congressional staffers also met with Brotherhood members and socialized with them at embassy gatherings. But sensitivities were beginning to emerge about meeting with Egyptian Islamists beginning with Sadat's assassination. For example, at one embassy dinner, a congressional staffer was seated next to Boutros Boutros Gali, his wife, and a Brotherhood member. The Brotherhood member ended up asking the staffer not to inform Boutros Gali's wife that he belonged to the Brotherhood.²²⁸ Nevertheless, evidence from State Department cables confirms ongoing talks with the Muslim Brotherhood during this period. A memo from September, 1986 details the first meeting between an embassy political officer and

²²⁶ Al-Anani, "Is 'Brotherhood' with America Possible?" 12.

²²⁷ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #555, July 25, 2011.

²²⁸ Former Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #196, June 29, 2012.

the Muslim Brotherhood leadership since the death of Supreme Guide Al Tilmisani in May of that year.

The Brotherhood replied swiftly to the U.S. embassy request for a meeting, although the organization asked the diplomat to obtain clearance from the Egyptian Ministry of Interior in order to avoid problems, something that Al Tilmassani never did in the several meetings he had with U.S. diplomats. The embassy did not want to establish a precedent in order to engage in such meetings, so went directly to the meeting without permission from the Interior Minister.²²⁹ ”We do not intend to get in the middle between the shaky MB leadership and GOE. Beyond its own concerns, Talmassani’s successors may be attempting to use us to test whether the MININT is ready to bestow legitimacy upon the MB. Through casual low key contacts in the Foreign Ministry, we intend to make clear that our normal diplomatic work here includes contracts across the wide spectrum of Egyptian society. We shall continue to pursue contacts with the MB, making clear to them also that we have reminded the MFA of our general approach.”²³⁰ This statement is significant for a number of reasons, first because this took place during Mubarak’s presidency and he was staunchly opposed to foreign embassies meeting with Brotherhood members. This means that U.S. officials were willing to risk the enmity of an important U.S. ally, one who was instrumental in maintaining the Camp David Accords, in order to maintain contacts with a non-state actor within its borders.

But the 1990s witnessed a change in American policy from open and regular engagement to ambivalent engagement. Contacts were episodic, usually at a low level²³¹ and when they came

²²⁹ “Muslim Brotherhood: Eager for U.S. Contacts, Fearful of GOE” (State Department, Cairo, September 16, 1986), Wikileaks.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #237, February 15, 2012.

to President Mubarak's attention, he pushed back hard. One former U.S. official explains that, "When they were allowed by Mubarak into the parliament, the Cairo embassy started to talk to Muslim Brotherhood members of parliament, but always at a low level of political officer to not give them diplomatic recognition. Mubarak was extremely sensitive to us engaging them; he was always threatening that if he opened the political space, the Muslim Brotherhood would fill it."

²³² The embassy tried to keep the contacts secret, using information from the meetings for the annual human rights report. ²³³ Amidst rumors that the U.S. held meetings with the Brotherhood, President Mubarak railed at the U.S. in a televised interview for engaging with "terrorists".

There is evidence that the embassy was meeting with the Muslim Brotherhood in 1997 and discussed the suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood with Ikhwan members after its success in syndicate elections in 1995, which continued through 1997. The discussions took place over the course of two separate meetings, November 6 and 9. ²³⁴ Noteworthy is a comment by an embassy official about the Brotherhood attempts to be engaged in the democratic process. He regarded the Muslim Brotherhood's interest in party-politics as a tactical move, rather than a true adoption of democratic ideals.

By the late 1990s, engaging with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood became more of a problem. Talks with the Brotherhood stopped in 1998, according to a former U.S. official, because of an uptick in terrorism committed by groups like Islamic Jihad in the mid-1990s. ²³⁵ The official argued that perhaps it was too hard to make distinctions between the Egyptian Islamist groups and that the U.S. wasn't persuaded that it was important enough to fight

²³² Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #799, February 28, 2012.

²³³ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #909, April 25, 2012.

²³⁴ "Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood: Down But Not Out" (State Department, Cairo, November 12, 1997), Wikileaks.

²³⁵ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #555.

Mubarak's policy. "The U.S. was at the height of its relations with Egypt, rolling fast on economic development projects and engagement with the Brotherhood was not a priority."²³⁶ But the official explained that unofficial meetings between political officers and members of the Brotherhood may have taken place without official sanction. Interestingly, during this period, no formal cables were distributed to the embassy instructing diplomats to shun the group.²³⁷

It is clear that a policy shift took place after the end of the Cold War. What had once been an open diplomatic relationship between the U.S. and the Egyptian Brotherhood became much more ambivalent, resulting in far fewer meetings and sometimes none at all. What could explain this variation?

Applying Kingdon's model to this case reveals that the end of the Cold War served as an important window that altered the strategic environment and made it possible for the U.S. to change its policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Analyzing developments in the policy stream reflect a conflicted approach to the Brotherhood. It was regarded both as a potentially serious problem, but also a useful contact. These contradictory impulses led officials to a new solution: ambivalent engagement.

Problems, Policies, and Politics after the Cold War

Recall that developments in the problem stream draw attention to an issue and raise it higher on the decision agenda. Focusing events such as Hurricane Katrina can serve this purpose. In terms of the Muslim Brotherhood, there were important changes in the problem stream that drew American policymakers' attention to the group as a problem requiring a solution. In this

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

case, the shift in U.S. policy from open engagement to ambivalent engagement, started with the 1991 Algerian election. American officials were alarmed by the victory of Algerian Islamist party the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in 1991. The U.S. stood back as the military annulled election results and the country descended into civil war. There is some dispute about how to explain the U.S. reaction to this election. Some interpreted the lax U.S. response as a green light for the military to cancel the election.²³⁸ Others think this view assigns too much responsibility to the United States, when France was the most important foreign power in the Algerian context, given its colonial past, and the U.S. deferred to France.²³⁹ The latter view fits more closely with the evidence, particularly given that in the first few years following the coup, the United States maintained surreptitious, but regular contacts with members of the FIS in both the U.S. and in Europe.²⁴⁰ Moreover, as William Quandt noted, the U.S. was not especially friendly with the Algerian junta in the early 1990s; for example, it supported the 1995 Sant'Egidio Platform/Platform of Rome, which was a framework for peace between the Islamists and the Algerian military regime.²⁴¹

Nevertheless, the election brought Political Islam higher on the American decision agenda. U.S. officials were concerned about the significance of the election and the potential power of Islamist groups. Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Edward Djerejian's Meridian House speech in June, 1992 spoke to some of the underlying fears held by

²³⁸ One example of this view is John P. Entelis, "Democracy Denied: America's Authoritarian Approach Towards the Maghreb – Causes & Consequence" (presented at the XVIIIth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Quebec, 2000).

²³⁹ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #237. See also Bradford Dillman, "Round Up of the Unusual Suspects: U.S. Policy Toward Algeria and Its Islamists," *Middle East Policy* 8, no. 3 (September 2001): 126.

²⁴⁰ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #909. See also William B. Quandt, "U.S. and Algeria: Just Flirting," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 2001, <http://mondediplo.com/2002/07/08algeria>.

²⁴¹ "The St. Egidio Platform for a Peaceful Solution of the Algerian Crisis," accessed December 20, 2012, http://www.santegidio.org/news/rassegna/00000/19980530_peaceworks2_EN.htm.

U.S. policymakers. He noted, “Uncertainty regarding this renewed Islamic emphasis abounds. Some say that it is causing a widening gap between western values and those of the Muslim world....If there is one thought I can leave you with tonight, it is that the US Government does not view Islam as the next “ism” confronting the West or threatening world peace. That is an overly simplistic response to a complex reality. The Cold War is not being replaced with a new competition between Islam and the West.”²⁴² He went on to say, however, that, “While we believe in the principle of ‘one person, one vote,’ we do not support ‘one person, one vote, one time.’”²⁴³ His testimony in front of Congress in May, 1993 reflected a similar sentiment. “Quite frankly, Congressman, we’re very suspect of those groups who advocate democratic processes and procedures only to use that democratic process to come to power, and then once in power, to destroy the very process by which they arrived in power...So religion is not the concomitant of our policy, but extremism is.”²⁴⁴

Most scholars of U.S. policy toward Political Islam see the Meridian House speech as the preeminent statement on U.S. policy toward Islamist groups and regard it as a direct response to the rise of the FIS in Algeria. However, the Meridian House Speech was only coincidentally timed with the Algerian election. New post-Cold War realities drew attention to the issue of Political Islam, as the threat from the Soviet Union waned. In this context, the State Department convened a group of academic scholars on Islam and the Middle East to analyze the issue; discussions also took place between top level State Department officials and intelligence and

²⁴² Edward P. Djerejian, “The U.S. and the Middle East in a Changing World,” accessed October 27, 2011, <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/briefing/dispatch/1992/html/Dispatchv3no23.html>.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Edward P. Djerejian, *Statement Before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa* (Washington, D.C., 1993).

policy experts. The Meridian House Speech was based on these meetings.²⁴⁵ Although the speech was not a direct response to the FIS victory, it had a major, long-term impact on the debate in the U.S. about Political Islam. The combination of the Algerian election and the attention his speech received led to shifts in the problem stream. Political Islam moved higher on the decision agenda and attracted greater policy attention.

Another important development in the problem stream was that relations with regional allies made engagement with Islamist groups more difficult. As one senior U.S. official explained, “Bilateral relations with the autocrats got very uncomfortable if they saw high level contacts, especially between the U.S. and Islamist leaders, that would be Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, and Jordan....But at the same time, I thought it was important to maintain contacts at a lower level. It was episodic at the lower level. I think that was a wise policy...These exchanges are not to hold hands, it’s to convey our conception of pluralism and the rule of law and that they should not to hijack the democratic process.”²⁴⁶ Thus, on the one hand, U.S. allies pressured American officials not to conduct talks with local Islamist groups, but at the same time, policymakers recognized the value of such contacts.

Events in Egypt also made American policymakers even more sensitive to the issue of Islamic radicalism. Groups like al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Islamic Jihad engaged in a violent insurgency against the Egyptian regime during the 1990s, which involved attacks on police, tourists, and in one case, the assassination of a government official, parliamentary speaker Rifaat el-Mahgoub.²⁴⁷ 1993 was an especially violent year, with over 1,000 Egyptians killed or

²⁴⁵ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #237.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ “Senior Official Shot Dead,” *The New York Times*, April 12, 1993, A3.

wounded in attacks. One of the most prominent terrorist attacks occurred in 1997 in Luxor. al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Jihad Talaat al-Fath murdered 70 people, including 62 tourists at an archeological site.²⁴⁸

While the Muslim Brotherhood was not involved in the Islamist insurgency of the 1990s, this violence further contextualized Mubarak's resistance to U.S. contacts with the Muslim Brotherhood, and American ambivalence toward the group. The Ikhwan was nonviolent, but the Mubarak regime regarded it as a political threat to his regime, and in the course of fighting other jihadi groups, Mubarak claimed the Brotherhood were "terrorists". Moreover, the U.S. had its own experience with a terrorist attack in 1993. The first World Trade Center bombing increased suspicion of Islamist groups in general and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular. For example, Senator D'Amato remarked during a Senate debate about the attack, "the authorities have indicated that at least one of the perpetrators has been identified. It would appear that it is a person who is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the father organization of the terrorist group Hamas."²⁴⁹

The policy stream also reflected a growing suspicion among public intellectuals, think-tanks, and key officials about the growth of Political Islam. Remember that the policy stream represents the domain in which solutions are debated and perfected. During the 1990s, the policy stream was rife with debates about the issue of Islamic extremism and these discussions reflect the administration's high level attention to the issue. In a 1994 speech at the Washington Institute, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake argued, "There should be no doubt; Islamic extremism poses a threat to our nation's interests...What distinguishes Islamic extremism is that

²⁴⁸Douglas Jehl, "70 Die in Attack at Egypt Temple," *The New York Times*, November 18, 1997, A1.

²⁴⁹Alfonse D'Amato, *Senate Congressional Record* 103rd Congress (March 4, 1993):2408.

it uses religion to cover its real intentions—the naked pursuit of political power.”²⁵⁰ Lake echoed this emphasis on rejecting violent groups in another speech, “From Containment to Enlargement” at Johns Hopkins University.²⁵¹ Members of Congress also expressed reservations about Islamist groups and these comments reflected increasing sensitivities about the issue of Islamism. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, chair of the Subcommittee on Africa, and a leading congressional voice on Political Islam, spoke during an April, 1995 hearing, “We are here to discuss the actions of those who distort the concept of a “Muslim Brotherhood”, invoke God’s name in vain, and utilize the Koran to justify their acts of terrorism... These are the ones we oppose. These are the ones we must protect ourselves from. This is the focus of our hearing. Islamic militancy has emerged as one of the most serious threats to Western security.”²⁵²

While there were strong opinions in the policy stream touting the dangers of Islamic extremism, there also were advocates at the senior level of the U.S. government who supported engagement. For example, officials met with Rachid Ghanouci, a Tunisian Islamist, and also invited Hassan Turabi, and Islamist from Sudan, to the United States for discussions in the interest of reaching out to Islamists. As one former U.S. official who was instrumental in this decision noted, “I thought in the wake of the fall of the Berlin wall, the end of Communism and the end of the zero sum game in the Middle East between the United States and the Soviets, we had to expand our contacts and knowledge base with various political forces, so I initiated that and we had very interesting exchanges. They were short lived because there was opposition to

²⁵⁰ Anthony Lake, “Remarks by Tony Lake, National Security Advisor to the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy,” *Federal News Service*, May 17, 1994.

²⁵¹ Anthony Lake, “From Containment to Enlargement,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* 60, no. 1 (October 15, 1993): 13.

²⁵² Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, “Prepared Testimony of the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen Chairperson Subcommittee on Africa Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives Hearing on “The Threat of Islamic Extremism in Africa,” *Federal News Service*, April 6, 1995.

dealing with these groups, especially in the context of terrorist groups and whether they were linked to these groups. It became difficult to maintain contact.”²⁵³

The Algerian crisis in particular was discussed extensively by public intellectuals throughout the early to mid-1990s.²⁵⁴ One example is a policy memo published in November 1995 by James Philips of the conservative Heritage Foundation. Entitled, “The Rising Threat of Revolutionary Islam in Algeria.” It argued that the FIS was a threat to U.S. interests and that America should not engage in dialogue with the group.²⁵⁵ That same year, Ambassador Djerejian published a paper for the Baker Institute for Public Policy; he became the founding director of the nonpartisan think-tank in 1993 after leaving the State Department. In it he suggested, as he had in the past, that Islam is not the next post-Cold War “ism” and that it cannot be treated monolithically. He noted with favor the inclusion of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Jordanian Parliamentary elections. He also called for a “coherent policy framework toward Islam” and “instead of building walls, we need to build bridges.”²⁵⁶ Along with Djerejian’s speeches and congressional testimony while serving in the State Department, this piece represents one of the earlier formulations of the argument for engaging with and encouraging the democratic participation of moderate Islamist parties.

²⁵³ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #237.

²⁵⁴ Articles appeared in mainstream foreign policy journals such as *Foreign Affairs* debating the future of Political Islam. See Leon T. Hadar, “What Green Peril?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 27–42. and Judith Miller, “The Challenge of Radical Islam,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 43–56.

²⁵⁵ James Philips, *The Rising Threat of Revolutionary Islam in Algeria* (The Heritage Foundation, November 9, 1995).

²⁵⁶ Edward P. Djerejian, *United States Policy Toward Islam and The Arc of Crisis* (Rice University: The James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, 1995).

Congressional and media attention to the Brotherhood began to increase during this period. Figure 2.1²⁵⁷ shows how congressional attention to the Muslim Brotherhood rose during the early 1990s as Islamist parties began to enter electoral politics and in some cases performed quite well. Figure 2.2²⁵⁸ offers another perspective on congressional attention, in this case toward Islamic fundamentalism. Note the rise in attention beginning in the 1990s. This peak also corresponds to increased media attention to Islamic fundamentalism, reflected in Figure 2.3,²⁵⁹ which shows attention rising dramatically throughout the 1980s and peaking in the early 1990s.

²⁵⁷ I searched the GPO website for congressional hearings prior to 1998 that mention the Muslim Brotherhood (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/home.action>). For hearings taking place after 1998, I searched Lexis Nexis/Proquest Congressional. I am grateful to Baumgartner and Jones' work, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, which inspired me to use congressional hearings and media data to represent attention to Islamist groups.

²⁵⁸ For this figure, I gathered congressional hearings data using the Lexis Nexis/Proquest database and the GPO website using the following terms: Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic radicalism, Islamist extremism, and Islamic extremism.

²⁵⁹ Media attention is represented by the number of New York Times articles that mention the Muslim Brotherhood. I gathered this data by searching Proquest Historical (for articles up to 2007) and Lexis Nexis (2007-present) for articles that mention the group. I chose *The New York Times* as an exemplar of media attention because it is one of the most widely respected news sources in the United States, having won more Pulitzer Prizes and Citations than any other U.S. newspaper.

Fig. 2.1: Congressional Hearings Mentioning the Muslim Brotherhood

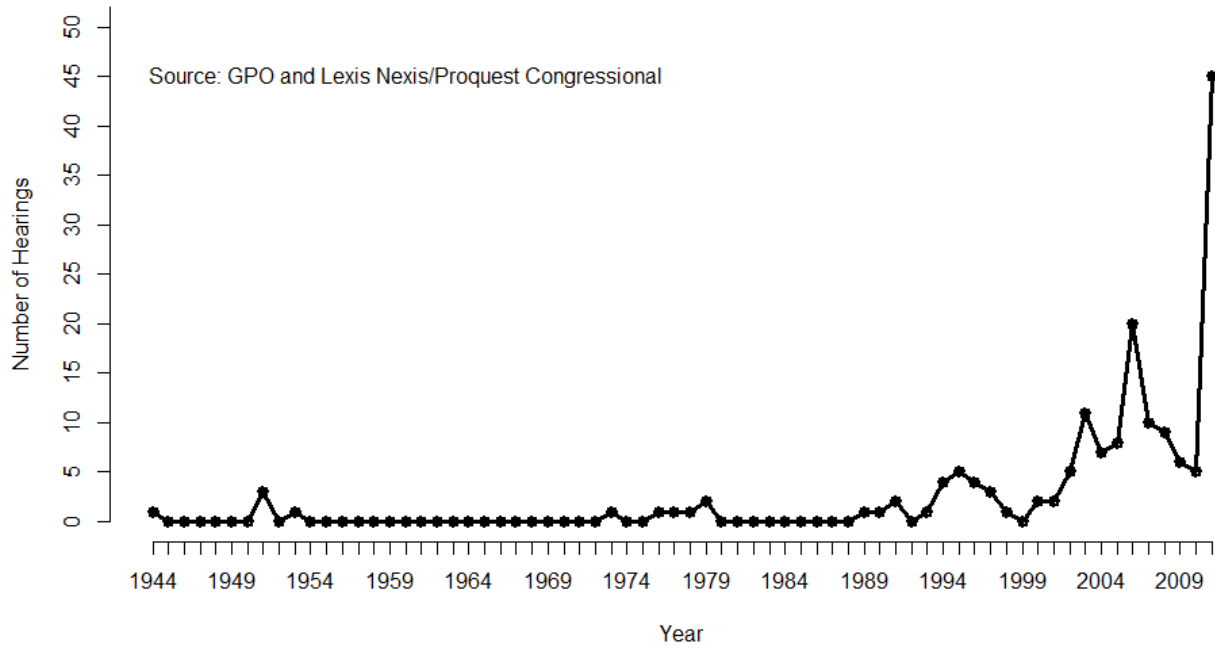


Fig. 2.2: Congressional Hearings Mentioning Islamic Fundamentalism

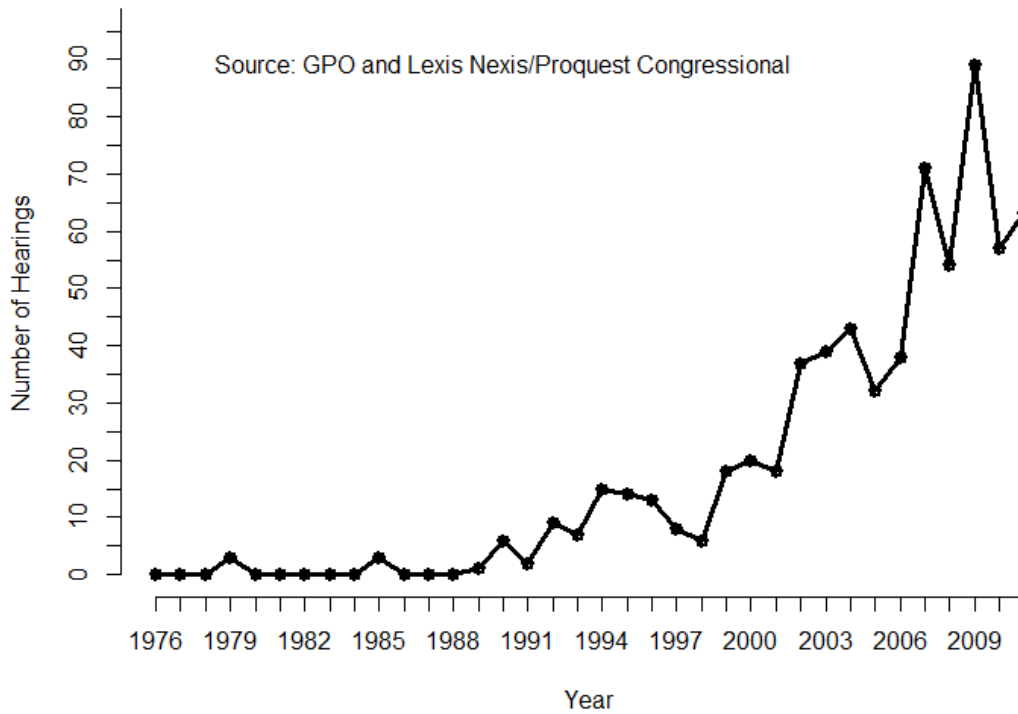
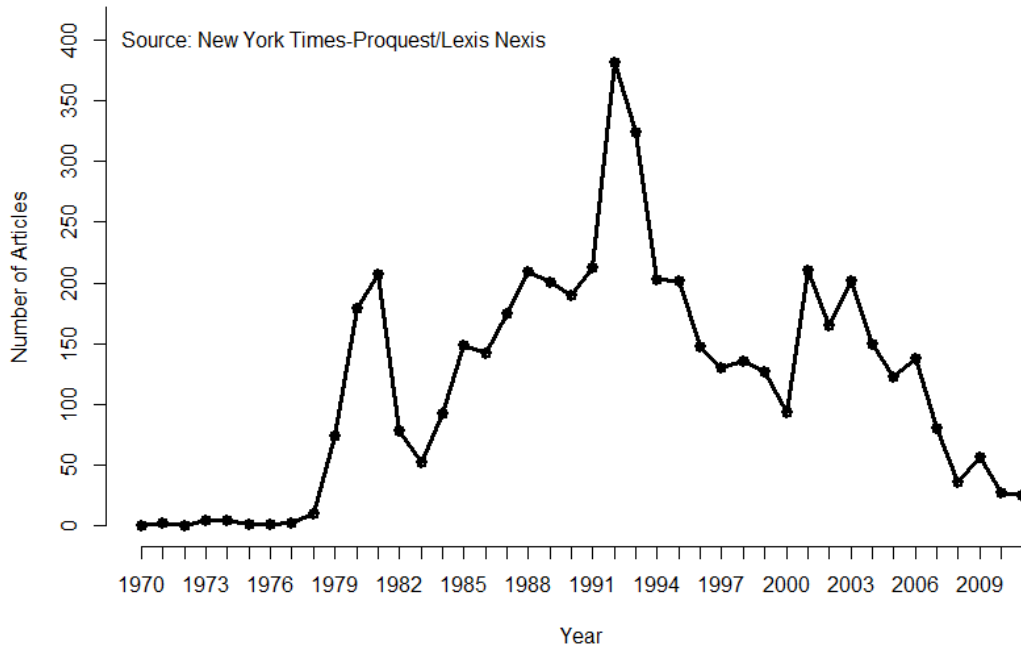


Fig. 2.3: Media Attention to Islamic Fundamentalism



In sum, American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood shifted from open engagement to ambivalent engagement because a window of opportunity was created at the end of the Cold War that led the U.S. to reassess its policy toward Islamist groups. During the Cold War, American policy toward the Brotherhood was enfolded in a larger anti-Soviet, anti-Communism strategy, but after the Cold War, new debates emerged about the dangers of Islamic extremism. Within the American political context, developments in the policy streams suggest rising doubts among U.S. policymakers about the potential dangers associated with Islamist groups and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular. At the same time, strong voices still advocated for engagement. These competing conceptions of how the U.S. should approach the Brotherhood help explain why U.S. policy became ambivalent toward the Brotherhood.

Policy Window 2: September 11, 2001

Following the 9/11 attacks, American policy toward the Muslim Brotherhood shifted to disengagement, and then in 2005 the U.S. resumed meeting with independent Brotherhood parliamentarians in a limited capacity. Applying Kingdon's model, this section will argue that 9/11 served as a window of opportunity making it possible for a more suspicious approach to the Muslim Brotherhood. Developments in the policy streams also helped draw attention to Islamist groups in general, while helping to paint the Brotherhood as a problematic group that required a different approach. As such, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of the Muslim Brotherhood to a solution of disengagement from 2001-2005 and limited, unofficial engagement from 2005-2008.

After 9/11, American diplomats did not meet with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. The anti-Islamist atmosphere made contacts extremely controversial. Additionally, the Brotherhood had an adversarial relationship with the Egyptian regime and U.S. diplomats were concerned that meeting with the group would harm bilateral relations with a key regional ally during a period of heightened sensitivities. At the same time, the Brotherhood at this point was boycotting the U.S. government²⁶⁰, so, as one former U.S. official described it, "Both sides were doing this odd diplomatic kabuki on engagement with one another- they [did so] for ideological reasons...We did not boycott them, though. That belief would be mistaken."²⁶¹ In 2005, however, relations began to change. According to a former State Department official,

In 2005 you have an odd moment where the Bush administration suddenly gets serious rhetorically about bringing democracy to the Middle East. The idea of engaging with Islamist parties was not a component of that because we are still talking about a period

²⁶⁰ The Brotherhood implemented a unilateral policy of not meeting with U.S. in protest over the Iraq invasion.

²⁶¹ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #641, July 17, 2012.

where Islamist entities are viewed with skepticism on the part of the administration, but what did happen around that time, and exact causes could be debated, but in 2005 the Brotherhood had a spectacular electoral victory, winning 20% of seats in People's Assembly. The U.S. government starts to have contact with the MB at this time, but what the U.S. is doing is meeting in their capacity as members of parliament, as independent candidates in their institutional capacity.²⁶²

What this indicates is that the Freedom Agenda generated a dilemma for the Bush Administration: the policy advocated open, democratic elections, but the electoral outcomes were sometimes undesirable. In the case of Egypt, the unintended consequence of the Freedom Agenda was to bring more members of the Muslim Brotherhood into Parliament, but since these members were officially "independent", rather than holding seats as Brotherhood members, U.S. officials could have meetings with Brotherhood members who were willing to have contact with American officials. This meant that U.S. embassy officials could obtain information from Brotherhood MPs as part of the normal course of diplomatic reporting, but the meetings were limited and there was an awareness that political sensitivities over contacts with the group remained high.

A 2007 memo details a conversation between an embassy political officer and a Muslim Brotherhood parliamentarian and reflects the post 2005 policy of limited, unofficial engagement. The Brotherhood member lamented the lack of contact between the group and the U.S. government in the last several years. The embassy official said that the U.S. would be willing to engage with any parliamentarians,²⁶³ but there was a clear prohibition against meeting with Brotherhood members who were not members of Parliament. Even meetings with parliamentarians were surreptitious, unofficial and unsanctioned by the Mubarak regime.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ "Contact with Muslim Brotherhood Parliamentary Leader" (State Department, Cairo, March 20, 2007), Wikileaks.

Democratic Congressman Steny Hoyer, for example, met with a key member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Saad El Katatni, in the U.S. Ambassador's home during a reception with other Parliamentarians in attendance.²⁶⁴ This meeting drew international media attention and in response, U.S. officials reiterated that American policy toward the organization had not changed.²⁶⁵

There is also evidence that American policymakers tried to prevent U.S. funds from reaching the Brotherhood, even though the group was not a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization with the attendant financial restrictions associated with it. In March, 2008 a cable described a political officer's visit to a DRL [State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor] funded governance project, which was supported by a U.S. based NGO. The Ambassador noted that a segment of the participants in the session were from the Muslim Brotherhood, with ties to the Brotherhood parliamentarians. He pointed out that preventing U.S. funds from aiding anyone linked to the Muslim Brotherhood would be very difficult,²⁶⁶ which implies he received direction from Washington that U.S. funds should not go to the Brotherhood.

Problems, Policies, and Politics after 9/11

The anti-Islamist climate that immediately followed 9/11 contributed to pairing the problem of the Muslim Brotherhood with a different solution: disengagement. The Post-9/11 political environment tended to conflate all Islamists groups and the Egyptian Brotherhood was seen as the common denominator among extremists. For example, in 2003, Richard Clarke,

²⁶⁴ Associated Press, "Hoyer Meets Official From Egypt's Banned Muslim Brotherhood."

²⁶⁵ "U.S. Democrat in Brotherhood Meeting," *Al Jazeera English*, April 8, 2007, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2007/04/200852513547767970.html>.

²⁶⁶ "Possible Muslim Brotherhood Sympathies Among Participants in USG Funded Project" (State Department, Cairo, March 7, 2008), Wikileaks.

former counterterrorism coordinator, testified that “the common link” between groups like Hamas and Al Qaeda is the Muslim Brotherhood.²⁶⁷

In the political stream, numerous Congressional hearings and debates expressed widespread concerns about the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. In September, 2006, Democratic representative Marcy Kaptur talked about the Muslim Brotherhood as “an amorphous, dangerous, unpredictable movement.”²⁶⁸ While debating the U.S. aid package to Egypt, Democratic Representative David Obey decried Egypt’s closed political system because it empowered the radical Muslim Brotherhood. He went on to say, “And if they [Egypt] continue to do that, they are going to wind up with the only viable opposition being the Muslim Brotherhood, the most radical of the forces in the country. That will be disastrous for Mr. Mubarak. It will be disastrous for his government. It will be disastrous for the American people, and it will be disastrous for the entire region.”²⁶⁹ Republican Senator John Kyle in 2007 said, “we should be clear that militant Islam, though bound together by common ideology, comes in various stripes, including...groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, which cloaks its radical ideology in a new veneer of tolerance while its activities support terrorist groups like Hamas and many others.”²⁷⁰ Overall, developments in the policy streams served to support the U.S. administration’s approach to the Brotherhood beginning with disengagement immediately after 9/11. Policymakers viewed the Brotherhood as a danger and in the anti-Islamist climate after 9/11, it became associated with terrorism in general. In this context, policy entrepreneurs chose disengagement. When officials resumed limited contacts with the group in 2005, it generally did

²⁶⁷ Richard Clarke, “Prepared Statement of Richard A. Clarke, Former National Counterterrorism Coordinator, National Security Council,” *U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (October 22, 2003), 88.

²⁶⁸ Marcy Kaptur, “Global Terrorism,” *Congressional Record, U.S. House of Representatives* (September 26, 2006).

²⁶⁹ David Obey, “Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2007,” *Congressional Record, U.S. House of Representatives* (June 8, 2006).

²⁷⁰ John Kyl, “War on Terror,” *Congressional Record, U.S. Senate* (July 9, 2007).

not receive widespread attention, except when prominent U.S. officials, like Representative Steny Hoyer, met with Brotherhood members

An important development began to take place toward the end of the Bush administration. Idea softening regarding the prospects of engaging with the Brotherhood began to emerge both in official circles, as well as in the policy stream. In 2007, for example, there were discussions in the State Department about putting together a workshop on the Muslim Brotherhood, what its chief beliefs were, and whether the U.S. should be engaging with it.²⁷¹ Throughout 2005 into 2007, scholars in the leading foreign policy journals debated the merits of engagement with the Brotherhood.²⁷² Articles favoring contacts with Islamists included Shadi Hamid's piece in *Democracy*, "Parting the Veil"²⁷³ and Leiken and Brooke's essay in *Foreign Affairs*.²⁷⁴ Regional experts at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace like Amr Hamawy, Marina Ottaway, and Nathan Brown argued for greater mutual understanding between the Brotherhood and the West,²⁷⁵ and that engaging with moderate Islamists is critical for reforming autocratic Arab regimes.²⁷⁶

But these ideas failed to gain traction until Barack Obama assumed office and the Arab Spring revolutions began. Those advocating a rejectionist approach to the Brotherhood were ubiquitous in the policy stream, exemplified by Republican candidate Mitt Romney's campaign

²⁷¹ Former State Department Policy Planning Staffer, Confidential Interview #297, February 16, 2012.

²⁷² For a discussion of what he terms the "acomodationists" and "confrontationalists" regarding engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood during this period, see Steven Brooke, "U.S. Policy and the Muslim Brotherhood," in *The West and the Muslim Brotherhood After the Arab Spring*, ed. Lorenzo Vidino (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 2013), http://www.fpri.org/docs/West_and_Muslim_Brotherhood.pdf.

²⁷³ Shadi Hamid, "Parting the Veil," *Democracy: A Journal of Ideas* (Summer 2007): 38–47.

²⁷⁴ Leiken and Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood."

²⁷⁵ Amr Hamzawy, Marina Ottaway, and Nathan Brown, *What Islamists Need to Be Clear About: The Case of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood*, Policy Outlook (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2007).

²⁷⁶ Amr Hamzawy, *The Key to Arab Reform: Moderate Islamists*, Policy Brief (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 2005).

statements. In one of the Republican debates held at the Reagan library, the candidates were asked about how each of them would capture Bin Laden. Romney replied, “We'll move everything to get him. But I don't want to buy into the Democratic pitch that this is all about one person -- Osama bin Laden -- because after we get him, there's going to be another and another. This is about Shia and Sunni. This is about Hezbollah and Hamas and Al Qaida and the Muslim Brotherhood. This is a worldwide jihadist effort to try and cause the collapse of all moderate Islamic governments and replace them with a caliphate. They ultimately want to bring down the United States of America.”²⁷⁷ In Romney’s remarks, it is clear there was still a dominant theme in the policy stream that the Brotherhood was part of a global jihadist network and indistinguishable from designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations. In this context, the ideas in favor of engagement did not succeed immediately, but in keeping with Kingdon’s model, the stirrings of “idea softening” began before the Obama administration assumed office. Advocates needed to seize a window of opportunity for the idea of engagement to gain a strong foothold and produce a policy change.

Policy Window 3: The Obama Administration and the Arab Spring

The Obama administration came in with a new pro-engagement perspective and quickly began to reassess U.S. policy toward Islamist groups. Although contacts had resumed in 2005 in a limited capacity, the Bush administration did not proactively reach out to the Brotherhood. The Obama administration, however, undertook an initiative to analyze U.S. policy toward Islamist groups and in the wake of the Arab Spring, changed official U.S. policy to full diplomatic

²⁷⁷ *Republican Presidential Candidates Debate at the Ronald Reagan Library and Museum in Simi Valley, CA* (The American Presidency Project, May 3, 2007), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=74350#axzz1tbSfYUZR>.

engagement. Drawing on Kingdon's model, this section will demonstrate that the Obama Administration pro-engagement approach along with the Arab Spring created a window of opportunity making it possible for the U.S. to shift its policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to full diplomatic engagement. Developments in the policy streams led policy entrepreneurs to link the problem of the Muslim Brotherhood to a new solution: engagement.

While in the process of reviewing U.S. policy toward Islamist groups, an effort that began in 2009, the official policy remained similar to the Bush administration. For example, there is evidence of an unofficial meeting with Parliamentary block leader and Muslim Brotherhood spokesman Saad Al Katatni in February, 2010²⁷⁸, but only in his capacity as a parliamentarian. In January, 2011, White House Spokesman Robert Gibbs told reporters that the Obama administration had no contact with the Muslim Brotherhood and would only do so if it had assurances that the group would be nonviolent, respect the democratic process, and follow the rule of law.²⁷⁹ The Muslim Brotherhood already met those conditions, so the statement reflects some of the political sensitivities surrounding American engagement with the group.

The administration initiated a major review of U.S. policy toward Political Islam. The assessment examined the Brotherhood's views on issues like democracy, jihad, and the United States. As one former U.S. official explained,

There had been such a sufficient critical mass of questions over whether the U.S. government had this policy right, so we needed to take a look at whether we might want to in the future adjust the policy either as part of a broader initiative to prompt political reform in the Middle East, or just look at whether the U.S. government has this policy right. ..[The] broad thrust of U.S. policy on this question was still to varying degrees

²⁷⁸ "Egypt: New Round of Arrests" (State Department, Cairo, February 11, 2010), Wikileaks.

²⁷⁹ Paul Richter and Peter Nicholas, "U.S. Open to a Role for Islamists in New Egypt Government: But the Muslim Brotherhood Must Renounce Violence and Support Democracy, the White House Says," *The Los Angeles Times*, January 31, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jan/31/world/la-fg-us-egypt-20110201>.

largely shaped or haunted by the early 1990s Djerijian speech, in one form or another, it was still a pallor hanging over this entire question. In the intervening 20 years, a number of Islamist parties had made the decision to enter the political process, contest elections, and were well established mainstream players in a good number of national settings. There was a realization that these groups were becoming a fixture in the political setting and maybe we should look at whether the U.S. government can appreciate that reality.²⁸⁰

The policy reassessment took on a different character when the NSC decided to examine the issue of political reform in the Arab world and as one U.S. official explained, “what that would look like, what the fallout would be and the interagency policy committee that was looking at that quickly hit on issue of Political Islam as one of the key pieces.” State Department officials in Washington reached out to regional embassies to ask about the nature of their contacts with Islamists. The idea was to develop, “Something that would look like a strategy to increase U.S. contact with Islamists as political reform. It was still notional and hypothetical: medium to long-term.”²⁸¹

Problems, Policies, and Politics

The Egyptian revolution of 2011 presented a huge shift in the problem stream, creating a completely new political context for America’s policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Suddenly the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was much higher on the decision agenda, therefore the Arab Spring served as a focusing event regarding U.S. policy toward the Muslim Brotherhood. It abruptly became possible for a member of an Islamist party to replace one of America’s strongest regional allies. The events of the Arab Spring were reactions to longstanding grievances, such as authoritarianism, poor economic performance, and undemocratic political systems. In Egypt, growing dissatisfaction with the Mubarak regime reached a breaking point at the end of 2010.

²⁸⁰ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

In 2011, the region was rocked by a series of political revolutions that began in Tunisia and spread across the Middle East. Concerned that Mubarak's regime would follow, U.S. officials spoke publicly in defense of Egypt's stability. For example, at a January 25, 2011 news conference, Secretary of State Hilary Rodham Clinton said, "We support the fundamental right of expression and assembly for all people and we urge that all parties exercise restraint and refrain from violence...Our assessment is that the Egyptian government is stable and is looking for ways to respond to the legitimate needs and interests of the Egyptian people."²⁸² Ultimately the Mubarak regime fell amid continued demonstrations in Tahrir Square and the American relationship with the Muslim Brotherhood rose to the top of the decision agenda.

The radical change on the ground made the Obama administration's policy review profoundly relevant. A former U.S. official explained, "[it] stopped being a notional project and stopped being analytical and the U.S. might itself choose to shift and evolve its policy on our own terms and at a time of our choosing to a different footing based on events on the ground. [It was a]...need it now, need it next week kind of policy initiative, rather than longer term, 'let's look at the possibilities.'"²⁸³ This statement is indicative of a dynamic that Kingdon identifies. Sometimes solutions are debated long before a problem is fully acknowledged or recognized. In this case, the administration had been reviewing the policy when a sudden political shock took place, making the solutions generated in the policy review immediately relevant.

²⁸² Reuters, "US Urges Restraint in Egypt, Says Government Stable," January 25, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/25/ozatp-egypt-protest-clinton-idAFJJOE7000KF20110125>.

²⁸³ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223. For additional analysis of the Political Islam policy review, see Scott Wilson, "Obama Administration Prepares for Possibility of New Post-revolt Islamist Regimes," *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/03/AR2011030305531.html>.

Publicly, the Obama administration initially made assurances that U.S. policy had not changed with respect to the Brotherhood. In a conference call between NSC staffer Dan Shapiro and members of major U.S. Jewish groups, the administration said there had been no change to the policy of non-engagement²⁸⁴ Obama himself responded to fears of the Brotherhood in an interview with Fox News, “I think they’re a faction in Egypt. They don’t have majority support in Egypt. But they’re well organized. There are strains of their ideology that are anti-U.S. There’s no doubt about it”²⁸⁵.

The Obama administration attempted to tread carefully around the sensitivities related to the Brotherhood, but was still basically pro-engagement. One senior official said, “We shouldn’t be afraid of Islam in the politics of these countries. It’s the behavior of political parties and governments that we will judge them on, not their relationship with Islam”²⁸⁶. The official went on to say, “If our policy can’t distinguish between Al Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood, we won’t be able to adapt to his change. We’re also not going to allow ourselves to be driven by fear.”²⁸⁷

In the policy stream, media, academics and the think-tank community generated a flurry of arguments about how the U.S. should deal with the prospect of a Muslim Brotherhood led government. Media outlets opposing engagement cited U.S. interests in preserving the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty and the links between the Brotherhood and Hamas. Other think-tanks argued in favor of engagement with the Brotherhood. For example, Bruce Reidel, of the

²⁸⁴ Hilary Leila Krieger, “US to Jewish Leaders; We Won’t Recognize Muslim Brotherhood,” *The Jerusalem Post*, February 4, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=206712>.

²⁸⁵ Anne Kornblut and Peter Wallsten, “White House Walks Fine Line on Muslim Brotherhood,” *The Washington Post*, February 8, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/08/AR2011020801312.html>.

²⁸⁶ Wilson, “Obama Administration Prepares for Possibility of New Post-revolt Islamist Regimes.”

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

Brookings institution published an article, “Don’t Fear Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood’ in late January, 2011. But within the bureaucracy, there was very little resistance to a change in U.S. policy. When one U.S. official who worked on formulating the policy floated the idea of a policy change within the State Department, he found that various agencies might have had specific questions, for example, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor had concerns about protecting minorities, but no one disputed that the U.S. should engage with the Brotherhood.

The think-tank community had a significant impact on the decision to initiate the policy review. According to a former U.S. official,

The decision to embark on this thought exercise that began in 2009 was very much a response to a cumulative body of advice that the administration had been receiving, not just this administration, but the academic and think-tank worlds had for years been saying our inability to think rationally about Islamists is a blind spot and we need to do something about this. So in the 12 years I’ve been living in Washington D.C., as I would have contact with successive administrations and make this point myself, I saw over time when I first started to make this point it raised eyebrows and by the end, even at the end of the Bush administration when I talked to senior State Department officials, they would say yes I know this is a ridiculous policy, we need to do something. So I do think there is a cumulative effect of advice from think-tank and academics on the decision to go ahead with this policy rethink and help shape it. A number of think-tanks in the D.C. area had been acting as proxy spaces for Islamist engagement, for example, the Carnegie Institute for International Peace.²⁸⁸ From the period 2005 to 2008 they would very regularly invite as guest speakers fairly senior figures from Islamist parties in the Middle East who would give talks and then Carnegie folks would invite State Department people to those talks so that would allow contact between the U.S. government and Islamist but not official meetings.²⁸⁹

Interest groups and pro-Israel advocates expressed serious concerns about the potential rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and American engagement with the group. Josh Block, senior fellow at the Progressive Policy Institute who served as the spokesperson for the American Israel

²⁸⁸ Note that Washington think-tanks continued to host Islamists for public events as the Obama administration became more open to engagement. One example is Georgetown’s Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, which hosted members of the Brotherhood’s newly formed Freedom and Justice Party, in 2011.

²⁸⁹ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223. For an example of pro-engagement think-tank piece, see Al-Anani, *The Myth of Excluding Moderate Islamists in the Arab World*.

Political Action Committee (AIPAC) between 2001 and 2010, published a piece that was critical of the Muslim Brotherhood entitled, “Nine Questions about the Muslim Brotherhood,”²⁹⁰ Some of this article was picked up by other media outlets, including *The New York Times*. In AIPAC’s “Frequently Asked Questions about the Muslim Brotherhood,” one of the main concerns the group expressed was the likelihood that the Brotherhood would abrogate the Camp David Accords.²⁹¹

In the political stream, congressional voices were particularly vocal about the potential dangers posed by the Egyptian Brotherhood, especially as the Arab Spring revolutions unfolded, and the Obama administration was sensitive to these pressures. That did not mean, however, that Congress chose to exert concrete pressure on the subject. A U.S. official close to the issue explained,

My sense was that from the point of view of the White House, U.S. domestic political sensibilities were key in how they viewed this issue; they felt the President was already exposed when it came to the question of his relationship to Islam and Muslims and were wary of favoritism to Islamist parties. There is very little understanding of the nuances of Islamist parties in the U.S. For many in Congress, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas are seen as the same thing, and of course we were also about to enter into an election year. The administration’s political opponents would not want to make the issue easy. In an election year where the President’s national security record is strong, they would look for any excuse to go after them on something, like “the Arab Spring into Islamist Winter” is a narrative they would love to tell. There was real concern about U.S. public opinion and the U.S. domestic discussions were important.²⁹²

While there were political sensitivities surrounding engagement with the Egyptian Brotherhood, namely that members in Congress conflated the Brotherhood with other groups like

²⁹⁰ Josh Block, *Nine Questions About the Muslim Brotherhood* (Washington, D.C.: Progressive Policy Institute, February 4, 2011), <http://www.progressivepolicy.org/2011/02/nine-questions-about-the-muslim-brotherhood/>.

²⁹¹ *Frequently Asked Questions About the Muslim Brotherhood* (The American Israel Political Action Committee, February 2011),

http://www.aipac.org/~media/Publications/Policy%20and%20Politics/AIPAC%20Analyses/Issue%20Memos/2011/02/FAQs_The_Muslim_Brotherhood.pdf.

²⁹² Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223.

Hamas and Al Qaeda, at most, the pressure was at the strategic level, not in terms of tactical decisions.²⁹³

The public debate about U.S. policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was particularly heated in early 2011. The President took hits from across the political spectrum, but criticisms were especially strong from the right.²⁹⁴ Hearings in February, March, and April were filled with objections to engagement. Republican Representative Sue Myrick argued, “The Brotherhood isn’t a danger because they are terrorists, but because they push an extremist ideology that causes others to commit acts of terrorism.”²⁹⁵ And Republican House Foreign Affairs Chair Ileana Ros-Lehtinen suggested that any new aid to Egypt should be predicated on the exclusion of the Brotherhood from the new government.²⁹⁶

Members of Congress doubted the Brotherhood’s commitment to nonviolence and moderation. Sue Myrick, Republican Representative and Chair of the House Intelligence Subcommittee on Terrorism argued that the group might have renounced violence just to gain power in government.²⁹⁷ Democratic Representative Barney Frank said in the course of congressional debate, “I also feel it is important to express my grave concern about the Muslim Brotherhood and their stance against preserving a peaceful relationship with Israel. According to

²⁹³Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #720..

²⁹⁴ Conservative media figures such as Monica Crowley, Bill O’Reilly, Sean Hannity, and former Bush advisor Karl Rove frequently used the Obama administration’s opening to the Brotherhood as a source of criticism. See “Obama Administration Recognizes Egypt’s Dangerous Muslim Brotherhood: Transcript from Hannity,” *Fox News*, June 30, 2011, <http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/hannity/2011/07/01/obama-administration-recognizes-egypts-dangerous-muslim-brotherhood>.

²⁹⁵ “Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood Seeks Political Party Status,” *CNN*, February 2011, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-02-15/world/egypt.muslim.brotherhood_1_egypt-s-muslim-brotherhood-opposition-group-islamic?_s=PM:WORLD.

²⁹⁶ Josh Rogin, “The Cable: Congress Prepares ‘Middle East Stability’ Funding Package,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, February 15, 2011,

http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/02/15/congress_prepares_middle_east_stability_funding_package.

²⁹⁷ Sue Myrick, “Opening Statement Before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Subcommittee on Terrorism, HUMINT, Analysis, and Counterintelligence, U.S. House of Representatives” (April 13, 2011).

its charter, Mr. Chairman, the Muslim Brotherhood seeks to impose Sharia law, restore the Islamic caliphate and conquer non-Muslim or ‘infidel states....Mr. Chairman, I am bewildered by what President Obama has done when he has called for the Muslim Brotherhood to have a “seat at the table” in the new Egyptian government.”²⁹⁸ Republican Representative Steven Chabot, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia, in an interview with the Jerusalem Post said, “I think we ought to be very clear that the MB should not be part of a future government in Egypt.”²⁹⁹ And Republican House Majority Leader Eric Cantor said to the Jerusalem Post that, “Obviously the force of the Muslim Brotherhood is very concerning. It’s an organization that seems to be very much tilted toward doing all kinds of things that would threaten US interests and Israeli interests and the interests of freedom overall.”³⁰⁰

Administration officials took notice of comments made in Congress, especially threats to cut off assistance to Egypt. As one former U.S. official explained,

I think there was a concern that in the aftermath of Egypt and Tunisia, once Islamist parties had done well, there would be a whole new round of pressure coming from Congress for the administration to explain why this happened, how could we let this happen? So far that hasn’t happened insofar as the domestic presidential campaign and domestic economic woes is occupying everyone’s attention and where there do continue to be questions about what to do about Egypt, for the time being there is breathing space in Congressional Affairs. Since those comments by Ros-Lehtinin and her colleagues, we haven’t heard much on direct pressure. The Senate did impose some measure of conditionality on U.S. military assistance to Egypt, but none of that conditionality specifically mentions the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.³⁰¹

Thus, even though key members of Congress expressed fears about the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, there were no legislative efforts to forbid the administration from engaging

²⁹⁸ Barney Frank, *Congressional Record, U.S. House of Representatives* (February 16, 2011).

²⁹⁹ “U.S Must Keep Muslim Brothers from Egypt Gov’t,” *The Jerusalem Post*, March 6, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=210923>.

³⁰⁰ Gil Shefler, “Eric Cantor ‘Worried’ over Situation in Egypt,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 15, 2011, <http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=233783>.

³⁰¹ Confidential interview with former U.S. official (Interview 223), January 27, 2012.

with the group. Congress has the power to constrain the President, but did not pursue concrete measures to block contacts with the Brotherhood. However, given that several prominent members of Congress spoke publicly in opposition to U.S. contacts, the administration attempted to finesse the shift and associate it with compelling changes on the ground.

Although important elements of the policy stream rhetorically opposed engagement, developments in the other streams, along with the window created by the Obama administration and the Arab Spring produced a major policy change. In June, 2011, the U.S. government announced that it would officially engage with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Secretary Clinton said, “We believe, given the changing political landscape in Egypt, that it is in the interests of the United States to engage with all parties that are peaceful, and committed to non-violence, that intend to compete for the parliament and the presidency.”³⁰² “We welcome, therefore, dialogue with those Muslim Brotherhood members who wish to talk with us.”³⁰³ In October, senior U.S. officials met with members of the Brotherhood’s new Freedom and Justice Party at the JFP headquarters in Cairo. Attendees included Dr. Mohamed Saaad Katatni, the head of the FJP, Prem Kumar from the NSC, and Amy Destefani, from the U.S. embassy.³⁰⁴ In April, 2012, Muslim Brothers met with National Security Council members Steve Simon and Samantha Power in Washington, D.C. White House spokesman Jay Carney was pressed about the issue of whether these meetings were with low or mid-level members of the NSC and he replied,

³⁰² Arshad Mohammed, “U.S. shifts to closer contact with Egypt Islamists.” Reuters. 6/30/11 Arshad Mohammed, “U.S. shifts to closer contact with Egypt Islamists.” *Reuters*, June 20, 2011 Accessed 12/20/2012 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/30/us-usa-egypt-brotherhood-idUSTRE75T0GD20110630>

³⁰³ Nathan Brown, “What does the U.S. want to talk to the Brotherhood About?” National Interest. 8/9/11. Accessed 8/10/11 <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/what-does-the-us-want-talk-the-brotherhood-about-5721>

³⁰⁴ Sarah Sheffer, “Egypt, Senior US officials meet with Muslim Brotherhood” 10/6/11. Accessed 10/16/11 <http://bikyamasr.com/44923/egypt-senior-us-officials-meet-with-muslim-brotherhood/>

Look, they are not -- they are mid-level members of directorates at the National Security Council. They're excellent people and experts. They probably do not, in most people's estimation, outrank Senator John McCain or Senator Lindsey Graham, who also met with members of the Muslim Brotherhood, or Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns who met with members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Our policy is clear and is the same, which is that in the aftermath of Egypt's revolution, we have broadened our engagement to include new and emerging political parties and actors -- because it's a fact that Egypt's political landscape has changed and the actors have become more diverse, and our engagement reflects that. The point is that we will judge Egypt's political actors by how they act, not by their religious affiliation.³⁰⁵

Since then, Secretary of State Clinton has met repeatedly with President Mohammed Morsi, although he is no longer an official member of the Muslim Brotherhood since assuming office in June, 2012. Senator John F. Kerry, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, also met with leaders of the Freedom and Justice Party, along with U.S. Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, in early 2012.³⁰⁶ The notion of high level diplomatic contacts with Muslim Brotherhood leaders became less controversial once Morsi became President. For example, Secretary Clinton worked with him directly in November, 2012 to help negotiate a truce between Israel and Hamas over the conflict in Gaza. While Clinton visited both Jerusalem and Cairo, Morsi played a critical role in brokering the agreement by serving as an interlocutor between Israel and Hamas.³⁰⁷ But while diplomatic contacts became less of a “hot potato issue”, the relationship between the United States and a Muslim Brotherhood-led Egypt remained a contentious issue. In September, 2012, for example, Representative Kay Granger tried to hold up

³⁰⁵ Jay Carney, “White House Press Briefing,” April 5, 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/05/press-briefing-press-secretary-jay-carney-4512>.

³⁰⁶ David D. Kirkpatrick, “Overtures to Egypt’s Islamists Reverse Longtime U.S. Policy,” *The New York Times*, January 3, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/middleeast/us-reverses-policy-in-reaching-out-to-muslim-brotherhood.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

³⁰⁷ “Egypt and Morsy Proved ‘Pivotal’ in Gaza Cease-fire Talks,” *CNN*, November 22, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/20/world/meast/egypt-gaza-morsy/index.html>. See also Ethan Bronner and David D. Kirkpatrick, “U.S. Seeks Truce on Gaza as Enemies Step Up Attacks,” *The New York Times*, November 20, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/21/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-conflict.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

the Obama administration's emergency aid package to Egypt because of Morsi's former affiliation with the Brotherhood.³⁰⁸

The U.S. relationship with Egypt also became campaign fodder in the last half of 2012; Representative Michelle Bachman, running a tight race against a Democratic challenger, raised the specter of the Muslim Brotherhood by accusing one of Secretary Clinton's top aides, Huma Abedin, of being associated with the group. Bachman, along with Congressmen Trent Franks, Louie Gohmert, Tom Rooney, and Lynn Westmoreland also sent letters to the Director of National Intelligence, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice and the Department of State³⁰⁹ calling for an investigation into Muslim Brotherhood infiltration into the U.S. government.³¹⁰ Westmoreland explained the reasoning behind the letters, "The Muslim Brotherhood may not have the name recognition of al-Qaeda or the Taliban, but that does not mean they don't have the potential to be just as deadly."³¹¹ Some of the concerns raised in the letters include Secretary Clinton providing permission for Tariq Ramadan, grandson of Brotherhood founder Hassan Al Banna, to enter the U.S. and that the State Department waived aid restrictions on the Palestinian Authority which, after a unity agreement, included Hamas, an affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood.³¹² The accusations against Huma Abedin were rejected by prominent Republicans, including Senator John McCain and

³⁰⁸ Steven Lee Meyers, "Emergency Aid to Egypt Encounters an Objection," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2012, A11.

³⁰⁹ See Office of Representative Michelle Bachman, "House Members Seek National Security Answers from Inspectors General," Press Release (Washington, D.C., June 13, 2012), <http://bachmann.house.gov/press-release/house-members-seek-national-security-answers-inspectors-general>.

³¹⁰ Chriss Lisee, "Rep. Michele Bachmann's Muslim Brotherhood Claims Draw Fierce Fire," *The Washington Post*, July 18, 2012, http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-07-18/national/35486435_1_muslim-brotherhood-bachmann-islamist-group.

³¹¹ Office of Representative Michelle Bachman, "House Members Seek National Security Answers from Inspectors General."

³¹² "Letter to Ambassador Harold W. Geisel, Deputy Inspector General, Department of State, from Representatives Michelle Bachman, Trent Franks, Louie Gohmert, Tom Rooney, and Lynn Westmoreland," June 13, 2012, http://bachmann.house.gov/sites/bachmann.house.gov/files/UploadedFiles/IG_Letter_Dept_of_State.pdf.

House Speaker John Boehner, but the attention that the controversy garnered, as well as the more general calls for investigations into those linked to the group, suggests that the relationship between the U.S. and the Brotherhood continued to face significant domestic opposition.

The controversy over engagement with the Brotherhood in the wake of the Arab Spring revolutions is an ideal case for Kingdon's model, particularly regarding how windows of opportunity operate as catalysts. Several individuals in Congress had been arguing for a more assertive approach to the Muslim Brotherhood since the 1990s, especially Representative Ros-Lehtinen. She consistently advocated this position as she assumed the Chairmanship of the House Foreign Affairs committee and when the Arab Spring revolutions erupted, she linked her long held position to the current situation. Meanwhile, others who had long been pushing for engagement, such as Washington think-tanks and members of the career bureaucracy, similarly saw the Arab Spring as a chance to change the course of American policy toward the Brotherhood. This dynamic fits well with Kingdon's conception of how policy entrepreneurs capitalize on windows of opportunity, marrying long-term ideological commitments to current events.

Conclusions

Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting can help explain why U.S. policy has varied over time. This chapter demonstrated how various levels of engagement came to be considered appropriate solutions to the problems associated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Drawing on Kingdon's model, I explained variation in American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood as the result of policy entrepreneurs linking solutions (ranging from engagement to disengagement to full diplomatic recognition) to the problems associated

with the Brotherhood in the context of policy windows created by the end of the Cold War, 9/11 and the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011.

Alternative theories are unable to sufficiently explain variation in U.S. policy for a number of reasons. First, the security explanation is inadequate because the periods in which the Brotherhood posed the largest threat to the U.S., that is, when the Brotherhood used violence against western targets, the U.S. regularly engaged with them. Moreover, starting in the 1990s and increasingly after 9/11, contacts halted, even though the Brotherhood had renounced violence in the 1970s. Thus, as the group became less of a military threat, relations between the U.S. and the Brotherhood became more strained. Second, domestic public opinion also fails to fully explain U.S. policy. For example, there was a great deal of public outcry about U.S. engagement with the Brotherhood after the Egyptian revolution of 2011, and the administration was sensitive to it, yet policymakers still decided in favor of engagement. Third, the beliefs of key policymakers are clearly important to the decision process, but this explanation does not account for windows of opportunity that make new problem/solution pairings possible. For example, immediately after 9/11, the range of policy options relative to Islamist groups became more limited. Open and friendly engagement with even nonviolent Islamist groups became less politically tenable.

Fourth, Graham Allison's theory of bureaucratic politics also fails to sufficiently explain American policy toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, primarily because there is so much ambiguity over who has jurisdiction over Islamist policy and there is no evidence that any particular segments of the bureaucracy are competing with one another. Finally, the nature of the group is important to explaining U.S. policy, but does not fully explain it. This is true because

the U.S. engaged with the Muslim Brotherhood during periods in which it was banned and using violent tactics. And during periods in which the ideological program became comparatively more moderate, the U.S. chose not to engage the group.

CHAPTER THREE

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood

American foreign relations with the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood have been comparatively warmer than with the Egyptian branch, with occasional periods of disengagement. U.S. policy has not followed a consistent pattern with the Brotherhood and its political offshoot, the Islamic Action Front. For example, during the Cold War, officials were suspicious of the group and kept it at arm's length, but without completely shunning it. Americans thought it was a potential bulwark against communist influence, but at the same time, could potentially turn against U.S. interests. After the end of the Cold War and throughout the 1990s, embassy officials in Amman met regularly with Brotherhood members in the course of normal diplomatic contacts to ascertain the group's ideological commitments, internal structure, program goals, and broad social appeal. They also wanted to secure American interests by correcting false impressions about the United States.

Relations became more complicated throughout the 2000s and steadily more contentious. The increasingly tense relationship is exemplified by an embassy cable which explains that an unofficial decision was made after September 11, 2001 to cut-off relations with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The cable offers a few different explanations, including the idea that relations after 9/11 had become "taboo", and the U.S. government had experienced push-back from the Jordanian intelligence directorate, which discouraged U.S. engagement with the Brotherhood.³¹³ Clearly the dynamics of the relationship between the U.S. and the Jordanian Brotherhood have changed over time, but the evidence does not paint a consistent picture of U.S. strategy with respect to the group, nor does it suggest that U.S. policy toward the Brotherhood is the product of a rational, long-term, strategic decision making process. Overall, U.S. policy has

³¹³ "Re-engaging with Jordan's Islamist," State Department Amman, September 6, 2009.

ranged from regular engagement during the 1990s, to disengagement after 9/11, and finally reengagement at the beginning of the Obama administration. What would explain this variation?

U.S. policy toward Islamist groups is highly context specific. As such, John Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting is particularly well suited to explaining why American policy has shifted over time. This chapter will demonstrate how various policies came to be considered appropriate solutions to the problems associated with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. By analyzing developments in the three policy streams, I explain variation in U.S. policy as the result of political entrepreneurs linking solutions to the problems associated with the Muslim Brotherhood within the context of windows created by 9/11, and the Obama Administration.

Table 3.1 illustrates the three phases of U.S. policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood and the corresponding windows of opportunity that made policy change possible: wary pragmatism, which viewed the group cautiously as a possibly useful bulwark against Communism, progressive disengagement, which involved a retreat from contacts, and reengagement, defined as proactively seeking out diplomatic meetings with Brotherhood members.

Table 3.1: U.S. Policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood

Window of Opportunity	Streams	Policy
	<u>Streams:</u> Low levels of attention, was not widely defined as a problem that required a change in policy	Wary Pragmatism (1940s-2001)
September 11 Attacks	<u>Problem Stream:</u> Brotherhood spoke out against the War on Terror, strongly opposed the 2003 invasion, boycotted U.S. goods, visited Zarqawi's home, pressure from King Abdullah <u>Policy Stream:</u> Global War on Terror and Freedom Agenda <u>Political Stream:</u> Anti-Islamist	Progressive Disengagement (2001-2009)
Change to Obama Administration +Arab Spring Revolutions	<u>Problem Stream:</u> 2011 Revolutions start in Tunisia and spread to Egypt and Jordan also experiences demonstrations calling for reform <u>Policy Stream:</u> Policy Review in 2009 on Political Islam, pro-engagement perspective pervasive in administration, liberal think-tanks and academics arguing for engagement, conservatives arguing against engagement <u>Political Stream:</u> Key members of Congress opposed to engagement, but no concrete steps to halt it	Reengagement (2009-present)

Section one will introduce the organization, including its origins, unique characteristics, and ideological commitments. Section two will survey American policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, starting in the Cold War up to the first policy window, 9/11, at which point American policy shifted from engagement to disengagement. Section three will show how this policy window made it possible for American policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood to shift, given changes within the three policy streams. The final section will address the second significant policy window: the Obama administration. It will illustrate how the onset of the

Obama administration and its pro-engagement perspective made it possible for U.S. policy to move from disengagement to reengagement.

Overview of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood is the most important opposition group in Jordan. It evolved out of the Egyptian Ikhwan, but like other Brotherhood branches across the region, it is independent and tailors its objectives to the specific social and political circumstances within Jordan. The group is actually a blend of what was originally two separate groups, the West Bank Muslim Brotherhood, which was started by Hasan Al Bana's son-in-law, Sa'id Ramadan in Jerusalem in the late 1920s, and the Transjordanian³¹⁴ Muslim Brotherhood, which Haj 'Abdullatif Abu Qurah, a wealthy merchant, formed in 1945³¹⁵ primarily as a means to engage in jihad against Jews in Palestine. Later, its ideological program broadened to include other issues, such as Islamizing Jordanian society and fighting corruption. The Amman branch started to develop informally as early as 1934³¹⁶ and the group coalesced officially in 1945 when King Abdullah I approved it as an officially sanctioned charity. The King supported the Brotherhood's emergence as a solely religious organization³¹⁷ and even installed a Brotherhood member in the cabinet. King Abdullah I remarked about the group, "Jordan is in need of the Brotherhood's efforts."³¹⁸ The West Bank and Transjordanian branches merged when Transjordan annexed the West Bank after the 1948 war, producing the group known today as the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The blend between the two groups reflects a persistent tension within Jordanian

³¹⁴ Jordan used to be the Emirate of Transjordan when it was a British protectorate. The Emirate became independent in 1946 and declared itself the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in 1951.

³¹⁵ Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan*.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

³¹⁷ Marion Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999): 46.

³¹⁸ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, 96.

society: West Bank vs East Bank. Palestinians want to play an important role in Jordanian politics, but that worries native Transjordanians who don't want to relinquish control to the Palestinian majority. Further complicating matters is Hamas, another offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which commands support among Palestinians within Jordan.

Relationship with the State

The Jordanian Ikhwan has always been legal, originally as a charity organization, and later as a political party, the Islamic Action Front. The relationship between the group and the regime is sometimes described as “symbiotic”³¹⁹ in the sense that the regime has been able to guarantee a loyal opposition, while the group has had freedom to advance its religious and political aims within certain limits. The King has provided limited political space to moderate groups and parties that don't threaten his control over the state.³²⁰ The Brotherhood is allowed to operate and is granted limited freedom to criticize government policies, but this freedom is predicated on the group's overall support for Hashemite rule. The advantage this gives the King is to channel Islamic activism into a nonviolent arena and advance the regime's Islamic credentials, while containing the more radical movements.³²¹

Although relations between the regime and the Brotherhood are not openly hostile, this should not be interpreted as an entirely friendly alliance. The monarchy has carefully monitored Brotherhood activities and occasionally exerted limited repression such as arresting of Brotherhood leaders in order to contain its influence.³²² King Abdullah I, for example, was

³¹⁹ Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan*.

³²⁰ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, 3 and 39.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

³²² Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?*

aware that the group rejected his policies on Palestine, and he was suspicious of the strong ties between the group and the radical Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Hussein.³²³ As a result, the group had to request permission to establish new branches; the government also regulated when and whether the group constructed new buildings.³²⁴ Both King Hussein and King Abdullah II continued the practice of keeping the organization legal, but constraining its power, using various methods to prevent it from acquiring a majority in parliament and exerting pressure when the group came too close to “red-line” issues, such as criticizing the Monarchy, which is illegal in Jordan.

The Brotherhood solidified its role as loyal opposition when it sided with King Hussein in the 1957 coup attempt by Nasserists, Nationalists, and Prime Minister Al Nabulsi. The King subsequently banned political parties and imposed martial law; the Brotherhood managed to escape the ban, not only because of its technical status as a charitable society, but also because it had demonstrated its allegiance to the King. The Brotherhood supported the establishment of martial law in order to contain Nasserism, which they had come to oppose after witnessing Nasser’s crackdown against the Egyptian branch.³²⁵ The Brotherhood also stood with the regime in the civil war of 1970-71, when Palestinian nationalists engaged in assassination attempts and airline hijackings in an effort to wrestle control of Jordan from the King.³²⁶ This was a particularly significant moment in Brotherhood-monarchy relations because the group was willing to side with the regime against fellow Palestinians. Although the top members of the

³²³ Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan*, 47.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

³²⁵ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, 97.

³²⁶ Jeremy Sharp, *Jordan: Background and U.S. Relations* (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, July 21, 2011): 11.

Brotherhood leadership are East Bankers,³²⁷ the rank and file members are Palestinian. The Brotherhood doesn't have legitimacy among the tribes as a religious organization and isn't trusted by them.³²⁸ Therefore, when the Brotherhood backed the regime, it signaled its loyalties were first to the Kingdom of Jordan, risking the enmity of its Palestinian compatriots.

Elections and Social Services

They have also participated openly in elections and held important posts in government. The King nominated a Brotherhood sympathizer, Ishaq Al Farhan, to the powerful position of Minister of Education in the early 1970s, which provided the organization with an entrée into the educational system.³²⁹ They fielded between 2 and 4 candidates in the parliamentary elections of the 1950s and 1960s, but it wasn't until martial law was lifted in 1989 that they launched a significant electoral effort. In the 1989 parliamentary elections, 22 of the 29 Brotherhood candidates won seats, 27.5% of the total seats in Parliament.³³⁰ Moreover, the Ikhwan has proven it is capable of participating in the democratic process by forming opposition coalitions, even with partners it formerly had tense relations with, such as leftists and nationalists.

Not only does the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, participate in elections, it also practices democratic principles within its internal party structure. Brown argues that, "Indeed, the IAF may be the most democratic party in the region in terms of its internal operations."³³¹ The leadership polls the membership to make key

³²⁷ This term refers to indigenous, non-Palestinian Jordanians. This population heavily supports the monarchy and typically receives favored government jobs, including police and security positions. See Nicholas Seeley, "If Change Comes to Jordan, It Won't Start in Amman," *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 18, 2012, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2012/1218/If-change-comes-to-Jordan-it-won-t-start-in-Amman>.

³²⁸ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #744, July 24, 2011.

³²⁹ Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan*, 32.

³³⁰ Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?*, 11.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

decisions, in particular with regard to boycotting elections, which it did in 1997 and 2010.³³² But while the group may be committed to democratic processes, it does not advocate all of the rights and personal freedoms commonly associated with liberal democracy if they conflict with its interpretation of Islamic principles.³³³ The Jordanian Brotherhood is more socially conservative, for example, than other moderate Islamist groups such as the Moroccan PJD.³³⁴ In addition to calling for the application of Shari'ah, a typical ideological commitment of Islamist parties, the Brotherhood opposed implementing a quota for women in parliament. The group also advocates banning alcohol, nightclubs, and has argued for mandatory head covering, as well as segregating men and women in the classroom.³³⁵

Like other Islamist groups, the Jordanian Brotherhood is also purveyor of charitable social services. It operates smaller clinics as well as large hospitals. The group has tried to keep these services independent of the government by abstaining from government funding and charging for services if the patients can afford it. The Brotherhood also runs Islamic schools, Quranic study centers, youth social clubs, and charities.³³⁶ The Al Afaf Charitable Society is one organization whose President is a Brotherhood leader. It was formed in 1993 to promote chastity, marriage and advance Islamic values. To this aim, the organization provides match making services, performs mass weddings, offers marriage related loans and conducts educational

³³² Nathan Brown and Amr Hamzawy, *Between Religion and Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010): 52.

³³³ Carrie Wickham, "The Problem with Coercive Democratization: The Islamist Response to the U.S. Democracy Reform Initiative," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights* 1, no. 1 (2004): 5.

³³⁴ The PJD is the Moroccan Justice and Development Party. It is a moderate Islamist party that won a majority victory in the parliamentary elections of November, 2011, which were held in the wake of the Arab Spring.

³³⁵ Mona Yacoubian, *Engaging Islamists and Promoting Democracy*, Special Report (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, August 2007): 8.

³³⁶ Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Jordan Feels Change Within as Muslims Pursue Agenda," *The New York Times*, December 26, 1992, A1.

workshops.³³⁷ The social services provided by the Brotherhood and related organizations help solidify its support within the Jordanian populace.

Ideology

Ideologically, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood is Islamist and proclaims itself as moderate.³³⁸ There is some disagreement among scholars about whether it actually qualifies as a moderate organization, given its response to the peace process and rhetorical support for violent tactics in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as the Iraq war launched in 2003.³³⁹ The 1954 platform outlined by Secretary General Muhammed ‘Abd Al Rahman Khalifah was more radical than the first one submitted by Abu Qurah. It included statements like, “The Muslim Brotherhood refuses to accept any system which does not support Islamic principles”, “The Muslim Brotherhood will not support any government until it implements shari’ah of God in Jordan.” and “The Muslim Brotherhood considers the Palestinian problem an Islamic problem and will mobilize all material and spiritual forces for the liberation of Palestine from world Jewry and the international crusaders.”³⁴⁰

Despite Khalifah’s program outline, the group has never advocated regime change and has always claimed it is reformist, not revolutionary. Indeed, in recent years, members of the Brotherhood’s political party, the Islamic Action Front have tried to depict the IAF Charter’s emphasis on Shari’ah as an expression of universal principles like freedom and human rights that

³³⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz and Suha Taji Farouki, “Islamic NGOs and Muslim Politics: A Case from Jordan,” *Third World Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (August 2000): 693.

³³⁸ Brown and Hamzawy, *Between Religion and Politics*, 3.

³³⁹ Ibid.72.

³⁴⁰ Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan*.

apply to everyone.³⁴¹ In practice, IAF members in parliament have tried to implement Islamic law in Jordan by focusing on a rather limited agenda, for example, condemning a visiting ice-skating troupe's costumes,³⁴² and attempting to outlaw alcohol. The ideology of the movement has not changed significantly since its inception. It seeks to slowly inculcate Islamic law, without advocating regime change.³⁴³

The Brotherhood adopted Hasan Al Banna's theory that education is a means to Islamize society from the bottom up and the importance of reviving Islamic rule, but it never used violent tactics like the Egyptian group did in the 40s and 50s; indeed it has explicitly rejected violence in Jordan. Nevertheless, the group does advocate violence against occupation, and this explains why Brotherhood leaders have spoken out in support of both Intifadas and Hamas, as well as rhetorically supporting jihad against American targets in Iraq after the U.S. invasion in 2003. The group has never advocated violence within Jordan because it does not regard the country as occupied by outside forces. But Brotherhood statements supporting violence against U.S. targets call into question whether the group is truly moderate.

Some of the important elements of its ideology stems from its unique position relative to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Brotherhood in Jordan is much more focused on the Palestine problem because Jordan is home to millions of Palestinian refugees who hold a tenuous position as both citizens and outsiders. Some estimate the Palestinian population in Jordan is between 50% and 55% of the total population, although some argue the number is closer to 60%.³⁴⁴ The

³⁴¹ Chatham House, "Islamist Parties in Jordan: Perspectives on Governance and Relations with the West," Meeting Summary, January 8, 2007, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/108378>.

³⁴² Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?*, 5.

³⁴³ Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan*, 38.

³⁴⁴ The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East reported that as of January 1, 2012 there are 2,047,367 registered Palestinian refugees (approximately 33% of the total Jordanian population), but this

Brotherhood is strongly opposed to the peace process, most importantly the Jordanian-Israeli treaty of 1994, which normalized relations between the two states. The Brotherhood actively seeks to annul the treaty.

The Brotherhood's ideology also has anti-colonial strains, first expressed in terms of anti-British rule during the Mandate period after World War I, and later expressed in terms of anti-American attitudes when the U.S. replaced the British as hegemon in the region. For example, in 1956 the Brotherhood pressured King Hussein to expel British officer Sir John Bagot Glubb, known as "Glubb Pasha", who had been the leader of Transjordan's Arab Legion since 1939. They accused Glubb Pasha of de facto ruling Jordan and forcing the King to join the Baghdad Pact. Amid riots and demonstrations, the King relented, expelled Glubb Pasha, and removed Jordan from the Pact.

As British influence waned and the U.S. became a major player in the region, the Brotherhood began to regard the U.S. as another imperial power. A Brotherhood editorial by Yuuf Al-'Azm said, "America has finally removed the veil which covered its face and has proved to be an imperialist state. It is an invisible and slow type of imperialism disguised in economic projects, financial and technical assistance, to be followed by control, exploitation, and human destruction."³⁴⁵ The Brotherhood also rejected a U.S. aid offer in 1957, using the slogan, "No reconciliation [referring to Israel], no dollar, no atheism, and no imperialism."³⁴⁶

does not reflect those of Palestinian origin who have not registered as refugees. "UNRWA Statistics: Jordan Field of Operation," *The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East*, accessed December 21, 2012, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=253>. Mainstream journalistic accounts report the population of Jordanians of Palestinian origin ranging from 50-60%, see Lamis Andoni, "Jordan Is Not Palestine," *Al Jazeera English*, July 4, 2010, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2010/07/2010748131864654.html>. Also see Ethan Bronner, "Tribesmen in Jordan Issue Urgent Call for Political Reform," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2011.

³⁴⁵ Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan*, 69.

³⁴⁶ Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?*, 5.

Anti-American fervor continued within the organization into the 1990s and 2000s. For example the Brotherhood paper Al Ribat, referencing President George H.W. Bush's "New World Order" rhetoric argued, "The United States- the leader of the new world order that was devised to suppress nations, plunder their wealth and break their will- is still persisting in bolstering its hegemony over our Arab and Islamic nation....That this plotting targets the rising Islamic awakening is no secret to anyone, since this awakening represents an impregnable bulwark in the face of plans that aim at humiliating the nation, fragmenting its ranks, controlling its wealth, and creating infighting and sedition among its sons."³⁴⁷

Thus, the Jordanian case is significantly different than the Egyptian case in the sense that the organization has always been legal and from the beginning, renounced violence. But it also shares an Islamist and Anti-American ideology that concerns American officials and complicates U.S. strategy. These ideological strains have led some scholars to dispute the depiction of the Jordanian Brotherhood as moderate, however the bulk of academics that specialize in Islamist groups categorize the Jordanian branch as moderate, indeed, even more moderate than its Egyptian counterpart because it has never been violent, and has consistently sided with the regime against challengers like the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Boulby, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Kings of Jordan*, 120.

³⁴⁸ Shmuel Bar of the Institute of Policy and Strategy, represents this view. He goes so far as to argue that the Jordanian branch is more radical than its Egyptian counterpart. But overall, the academic consensus is that the Jordanian Brotherhood is moderate. This view is exemplified by Jillian Schwedler's book, *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. For a sample of Shmuel Bar's views, see Joanna Paraszczuk, "Jordanian Security Concerned over Rising Terrorism," *Jerusalem Post*, October 23, 2012, <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=288900>.

American Policy During the Cold War: Wary Pragmatism

American policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood during the Cold War could best be described as wary pragmatism. Policymakers thought of them as a potentially dangerous group, but one that could be co-opted to serve our interests in American efforts to contain Communism. Declassified State Department cables from the 1950s exemplify American Cold War policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood. Although no specific meetings between U.S. officials and Brothers are outlined in the documents, broad conclusions can be drawn from the evidence about how U.S. policymakers regarded the group.

First, embassy officials were keenly aware of the Brotherhood as a major non-communist player in the Jordanian political scene. Paul Greene, Counselor at the Amman embassy, reported on the strength of the group, the number of branches (19), overall size of the membership (6,000), funding (extensive) and support base (primarily merchants and landlords).³⁴⁹ The embassy also discussed the Brotherhood with top Jordanian ministers in the course of regular diplomatic contacts with the government. One meeting between Ambassador Lester D. Mallory and the Minister of Interior discussed internal security in Jordan and the Brotherhood was one of the main topics, in particular that the government was keeping a close watch on the Jordanian group and supporting Egypt in its efforts to contain the Egyptian branch.³⁵⁰ The Interior Minister

³⁴⁹ "The Moslem Brotherhood in Jordan" (Foreign Service Dispatch 216, January 3, 1955), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/1-355, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁵⁰ L.D. Mallory, "Statements of the Minister of Interior Regarding Security in Jordan" (Foreign Service Dispatch 191, November 27, 1954), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/11-2754, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

also assured American officials that Jordan would not grant asylum to escaping Egyptian Brothers after Nasser executed several Brothers.³⁵¹

American officials were deeply suspicious of the Brotherhood's claims that it was a nonviolent, moderate organization. One dispatch describes the group as having "fascist inclinations and while they are willing to bide their time, they expect to take over the state."³⁵² Some officials recognized that the Brotherhood did not outwardly advocate regime change,³⁵³ but they weren't sure if this was sincere. They felt that although the group rejected violence publicly, this was actually just a temporary, cautious measure. Greene notes, "Force and violence are conspicuous by their absence from the catalog of means. The absence is believed to be a matter of caution, rather than an indication that violence is foresworn. Islam is not noted for pacifism, and Brothers are even less pacifist minded than ordinary Moslems."³⁵⁴ The embassy also received intelligence reports that the Jordanian government had confiscated an arms shipment from the Egyptian Brothers to their Jordanian counterparts in the summer of 1954. Moreover, the embassy expressed concern about the Brotherhood's Scout movement, which was a quasi-militaristic organization of men³⁵⁵ who the embassy believed received military training "in various parts of the country in a semi-clandestine manner."³⁵⁶

The State Department also kept a watchful eye over the Brotherhood's contribution to civil disturbances, believing the group was a source of instability in Jordan. Many reports

³⁵¹ Paul Greene, "Reaction in Jordan to the Hanging of Egyptian Muslim Brothers" (Foreign Service Dispatch 201, December 14, 1954), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/12-1454, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁵² "The Moslem Brotherhood in Jordan."

³⁵³ Milton Carl Walstrom, "Civilian Opposition in Jordan: Why Opposing and Why Weak" (Foreign Service Dispatch 104, December 9, 1958), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/12-958, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁵⁴ "The Moslem Brotherhood in Jordan."

³⁵⁵ Although they were referred to as "scouts", they were actually adults.

³⁵⁶ "The Moslem Brotherhood in Jordan."

suspected a Brotherhood role in demonstrations and other forms of political strife. Even when there was no apparent Brotherhood involvement, officials believed they would eventually intervene. One report on demonstrations against the Baghdad Pact noted, "...little direct evidence of participation by the Muslim Brotherhood and Liberation Party, although it is assumed they would not fail to participate in anything tending to disrupt security."³⁵⁷ Dispatches expressed concern about an attack on a Baptist hospital in January, 1956, which the mission staff claimed was Brotherhood members and communists. The embassy regarded this as an anti-Western attack, exemplifying Brotherhood "fanaticism and xenophobia" and worried that this attack was a reflection of national Brotherhood policy.³⁵⁸

Other Muslim-Christian incidents were reported, specifically in the context of Brothers stirring up trouble. U.S. officials thought the disturbances were possibly at the behest of the British, who wanted to demonstrate that the King should not have dismissed General Glubb. This seems unlikely, given how vehemently anti-British the Brotherhood was, but this speculation fits into a larger framework of American suspicions about the group's intentions. Other reports discuss Brotherhood involvement in pre-election violence³⁵⁹ and clashes between Brothers and nationalists while celebrating the termination of the Anglo-Jordanian treaty.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁷ "Disturbances in Jordan" (Foreign Service Dispatch 219, December 31, 1955), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/12-3155, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁵⁸ "Attack on Southern Baptist Hospital at Ajloun" (Foreign Service Dispatch 246, January 24, 1956), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/1-2456, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁵⁹ Alan Wolfe, "Further Developments on National Elections" (Foreign Service Dispatch 99, September 15, 1956), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/9-1556, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁶⁰ "Joint Weeka No. 35 for State, Army, Navy and Air Depts from SA-Section 1" (Foreign Service Dispatch 234, March 22, 1957), 1, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/3-2257, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

American officials did not want the Brotherhood to have a prominent place in parliament. Alan Wolfe, Vice Consul at the embassy, expressed concern about “extremists” gaining seats in the 1956 elections, “If a skillful job of rigging is not done, a violent upheaval might occur. If on the other hand, an insufficient amount of control on extremists is exercised, a pro ESS parliament is virtually certain, particularly in view of Nasser’s prestige over Suez...it would undoubtedly include some Communists and Moslem Brothers plus a large number of Baathists.”³⁶¹

The embassy made a point to compare the Egyptian and Jordanian branches indicating an awareness that they were ultimately separate organizations, but with important ideological and organizational similarities. Officials reported that the Jordan branch did not share the same level of “religious fanaticism” or “political animation of its Egyptian counterpart”³⁶², but depending on the relative strength of the group and events in the region, the Jordan branch would occasionally flex its muscles by initiating demonstrations and disturbances.³⁶³ The embassy also falsely believed that the Jordanian Brotherhood was formed by the radical Haj Amin Al Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, in the early 1930s, so this association may have increased the suspicion over the group’s intentions within Jordan.

Problems, Policies, and Politics During the Cold War

During most of the Cold War, up until the Islamic revolution in Iran, policymakers did not deem the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood a high priority “problem”, but it still kept a

³⁶¹ Richard H. Sanger, “Further Developments Affecting Jordanian Elections” (Foreign Service Dispatch 106, September 22, 1956), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 775.00/9-2256, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁶² “Joint Weeka No. 2 for State, Army, Navy and Air Departments from SA-Section 1” (Foreign Service Dispatch 102, September 24, 1953), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 774.00/9-2453, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

³⁶³ “Recent Activities on the Left-Wing Front” (Foreign Service Dispatch 319, March 11, 1954), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, File Number 785.00/3-1154, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

watchful eye on the group. The dominant concern was containing Communism and militant nationalist groups, and therefore any dealings with non-state actors were viewed through this lens. Would the group act as a counterweight against communists? Were they allies of local communists? Any affinity between Islamists and communists or shared behaviors would be cause for concern. Until the Islamic revolution in Iran, Islamism itself wasn't seen as a global problem in the same way that Communism was; indeed, sometimes it was seen as a bulwark against Communism. As one former U.S. official explained, "One of the things I found to be most profound when I was first working in the Pentagon and State Department [during the Cold War] was that Islamist groups were not an issue at all. At that point international terrorism was mostly focused on nationalist groups, primarily Palestinian, but also other groups."³⁶⁴

Perhaps the most important feature influencing the American decision about whether the Jordanian branch constituted a problem was that American officials had experience with its influential Egyptian counterpart. Therefore Islamist activity was already on the policy radar. And given the occasional disturbances created by the Jordanian Brotherhood in the form of demonstrations, it was seen as an irritant and potentially something more serious if the regime did not properly contain its influence.

As the appeal of Arab nationalism waned in the wake of the 1967 war, Islamism became increasingly popular in the region. Although the Amman branch of the Brotherhood lost influence over the West Bank Brothers, after the 1967 war, the position of the Jordanian Brotherhood strengthened within Jordan, which coincided with a hardening ideological position; it became more strongly anti-American and it was opposed to Jordan's role in the peace process

³⁶⁴ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #244, February 17, 2012.

following the Yom Kippur War.³⁶⁵ Brothers were arrested after protesting Nixon's visit to Jordan; they protested Sadat's trip to Jerusalem and Egyptian-Israeli negotiations. Later, they briefly flirted with the Islamic regime in Iran.³⁶⁶ The Islamic revolution helped boost the popularity of the Jordanian Brotherhood because it generated broader awareness of Islam and galvanized the general Islamization of Jordanian society. Moreover, the Brotherhood retained strong ties to Hamas, an outgrowth of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza, which appeared during the first Intifada.

In this context, American policymakers were wary of non-state actors, but still maintained a pragmatic approach. A former U.S. State Department official reflected on this period, "... as time passed...we had Iran become the Islamic Republic and the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979. There was the takeover of Mecca by radical people who were the precursors, but not connected, to what later became Jihadism...Clearly we looked upon groups that we'd now see as Islamist (then that term wasn't even used) as potential allies. They were religious, they hated atheism, and they were against the Soviet invasion and we were against the Soviet Union...The focus...was totally different."³⁶⁷ This perspective applied to the Brotherhood because although the Jordanian branch was much less powerful on a regional level than its Egyptian counterpart, it was the most important political actor within Jordan. Consequently, the available options for dealing with the Jordanian Brotherhood leaned more heavily toward pragmatism.

³⁶⁵Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan*, 34.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 35

³⁶⁷ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #244.

Into the 1980s, U.S. officials reached out to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to have meetings, but Brotherhood members did not always oblige. A former U.S. official said, “When I asked if we could have a chat, he [a leading Islamist] refused. The shoe was on the other foot. Throughout my time in government, Islamists were very reticent to talk to Americans.”³⁶⁸ After the Brotherhood won a plurality in 1989, U.S officials met with Brotherhood ministers who were members of the government. There were no signals from Washington preventing embassy officials from meeting with the Brotherhood during this period. As one former U.S. official explained “It just didn’t come up... Most of the restraints were self-imposed by missions”.³⁶⁹ The relaxed attitude toward meeting with the Brotherhood in Jordan contrasts with the strict injunctions against U.S. diplomats meeting with members of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). If diplomats violated this prohibition, they risked their career. That didn’t mean that U.S. officials weren’t troubled by the Brotherhood’s influence in Jordan. One former U.S. official said, “We were concerned that Islamists got a plurality of 37%, had there been a majority, the King would have probably been obliged to appoint them as Prime Minister...If the King had been concerned, the U.S. government would have been concerned. But it didn’t alter our conduct.”³⁷⁰ The issue of meeting with Islamists drew less scrutiny once the first Iraq war erupted. As a former State Department official explained, “Of course the Iraq war broke out and that tended to basically submerge everything else, so the Islamic thing became less of an issue.”³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #854, February 8, 2012.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 854.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

After the Cold War, embassy officials continued to be open to engagement with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. This approach further reflects the context specific nature of American policy toward Islamist groups. According to one former U.S government official, “Any group that used violence, whether [or not] it was designated formally as a terrorist group, that was a group that we would not have contact with at that time. But we had no overriding policy beyond that. The way we would put it, we did not have “one size fits all” policy.”³⁷²

The way this approach manifested itself with the Jordanian Brotherhood was that embassy political officers would meet with members of the movement, whether in their role as leaders of the Islamic Action Front party, or members of the Muslim Brotherhood. One meeting, for example, took place in May, 1997 between American Political officers and IAF Secretary General, Ishaq Farhan. Officials asked him about the IAF’s plans for an Islamist government and its interpretation of Shari’ah, such as whether the group would advocate cutting off a thief’s hand.³⁷³ Other meetings discussed the relationship between the MB/IAF and Hamas³⁷⁴ and internal divisions within the movement between Hawks and Doves.³⁷⁵ These meetings were held with varying levels within the Muslim Brotherhood hierarchy, including members of the IAF, members of the party’s policy planning committee, and the IAF’s overall leadership.

Conversations were so open and candid between the U.S. and the Brotherhood that Brothers were even willing to express concerns they had about growing extremism within their ranks. Most notable during this period is a request by a Muslim Brotherhood representative for

³⁷² Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #909.

³⁷³ “The Islamic Action Front: Sometimes a Platform Is More Trouble Than It’s Worth” (State Department, Amman, June 5, 1997), Wikileaks.

³⁷⁴ “Jordanian Islamists’ Relationship with Hamas” (State Department, Amman, September 21, 1998), Wikileaks.

³⁷⁵ “Political Islam in Jordan: Struggling for the Soul of the Muslim Brotherhood” (State Department, Amman, April 2, 1998), Wikileaks.

the U.S. to intervene with the Jordanian government on its behalf and convince the King to stop his hard line approach to the Islamists. He is quoted in a State Department cable, "Clinton came to Sharm al Sheik and told Arab governments that the way to fight extremism is more jails, more police. This is wrong. To right extremists within a popular movement like the Islamists, you must support the moderates. When you punish the moderates, you end up with situations like Algeria and Egypt. We have not had that problem until now. The King can still walk down the street without fear of being assassinated. But that will change- we are heading in that direction."³⁷⁶ Note that some Brotherhood members were open with the U.S. and willing to meet, but others avoided the U.S. assiduously.

Engagement, however, did not mean that U.S. officials took a complacent approach to the group. There were sensitivities about meeting with Islamists in Jordan, although not as intense as in the Egypt case. The close relationship between the U.S. and the King meant that the U.S. was inhibited in reaching out to Islamists out of a desire not to alienate the regime. Channels remained open, but primarily at a low diplomatic level.³⁷⁷ The embassy also paid close attention to the relationship between The Brotherhood and Hamas, as well as its level of participation in the formal political process. State Department officials described the group as pragmatic and conservative, while also committed to working within the system. They also noted there is no chance of the IAF gaining power given the King's limits on the group, so the group's platform remains vague and unfocused.³⁷⁸ Officials made note of the staunchly anti-peace process ideology of the group, but situated it within the limited political space within which the Brotherhood was allowed to operate. According to embassy reports, the King had taken a firm

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #237.

³⁷⁸ "The Islamic Action Front: Sometimes a Platform Is More Trouble Than It's Worth."

approach with the Brotherhood's anti-peace process activities, but did not challenge the group on traditionally "Islamic" issues. This meant that the King allowed the group slightly more space to advocate on social issues, such as its bid to outlaw alcohol.³⁷⁹ Embassy officials were conscious of elements of the Islamic Action Front platform that are specifically anti-West or anti-Israeli, although these ideological issues did not stop U.S. officials from meeting with the group.³⁸⁰

In the 1990s, the Jordanian Brotherhood engaged in some behaviors that gave American policymakers reason to consider it a problem, but not enough to justify shunning them. The group vehemently opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq and subsequent sanctions. The Jordanian population had a more pro-Iraq orientation and the Islamic Action Front capitalized on this by making Iraq an important part of their political program.³⁸¹ Indeed, one of the most significant grievances the Brotherhood has against the U.S. is American policy with respect to Iraq. The Brotherhood claimed that the American invasion was a "crusade", meant to secure oil, destroy Arab unity, and bolster Israel.³⁸² Although the Brotherhood previously opposed Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime because of its secularism, the group took a pro-Saddam stance in response to the American presence in Saudi Arabia, which is the location of vitally important Islamic landmarks. They also organized anti-American demonstrations, and preached against the invasion during Friday sermons.³⁸³ A Brotherhood spokesman claimed that "The battle is not

³⁷⁹ "Muslim Brotherhood Goes on the Wagon" (State Department, Amman, February 24, 1992), Wikileaks.

³⁸⁰ "The Islamic Action Front: Sometimes a Platform Is More Trouble Than It's Worth."

³⁸¹ Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?*, 16.

³⁸² Iyad Barghoudi, "The Islamists in Jordan and the Palestinian Occupied Territories," in *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, ed. Laura Guazzone (Reading: Garner Publishing Ltd., 1995): 151.

³⁸³ Tal, *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan*, 192.

between Iraq and the United States but between Islam and the Crusaders...not between Saddam and Bush but between the leaders of the transgressors and the Prophet of Islam.”³⁸⁴

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood also rejected the Madrid process, as well as subsequent negotiations and agreements, particularly the Israeli-Jordanian treaty of 1994. The group was limited in how much it could do to reject the treaty, since it was a royal initiative,³⁸⁵ so Islamic Action Front MPs avoided the parliamentary vote altogether. Some Brothers spoke out publicly against the treaty, despite government limits. For example, in 1994 Abdul Munem Abu Zant defied a government prohibition and spoke during a Friday sermon, criticizing the treaty. Later he alleged that he was assaulted by the police after his sermon.³⁸⁶

The group also maintained its strong ties with Hamas and praised its violent tactics to disrupt the peace process. Jordanian Brothers spoke in support of Hamas’ suicide attacks in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv in early 1996. They issued a fatwa (a religious edict) justifying the suicide attacks, which included the following statements, “Regarding the warmongering Jews, it is a religious decree...and an obligation to fight and banish them from Palestine...Islam permits resistance to the invader and aggressor even if it leads to the death of soldiers or civilians...Regarding acts of sacrifice, this is a legitimate act and forms the holy war...Islamic religious thought encourages acts of sacrifice like these on Palestinian soil.”³⁸⁷

The Clinton administration placed a high priority on the Arab-Israeli peace process and groups that opposed or disrupted it were not regarded favorably. Policymakers were increasingly

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 193.

³⁸⁵ Brown and Hamzawy, *Between Religion and Politics*, 53.

³⁸⁶ Wiktorowicz, *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*, 61..

³⁸⁷ Tal, *Radical Islam in Egypt and Jordan*, 224.

concerned about extremism in the region, and carefully observed links between groups like Hamas and the Jordanian Brotherhood. At the same time, the Jordanian Brotherhood was a legal organization that was actively involved in politics; indeed, it performed extremely well in the 1989 parliamentary elections, but did not do as well in the 1993 elections after the government passed a controversial districting law, which disempowered the Brotherhood in some of its electoral strongholds.

Recall from chapter two that it was during the early to mid-1990s that the American political climate became increasingly concerned about the growth of Political Islam. Some examples of this debate include Samuel Huntington's thesis that a "clash of civilizations" was the next phase of international conflict; that is to say, instead of conflicts between nation states, modern wars will be between civilizations, namely Western and Islamic civilizations.³⁸⁸ He asserted that Islam has "bloody borders", meaning that along the civilizational fault-lines, Muslims engage in conflict with non-Muslim populations. The term "clash of civilizations" actually first appeared in a 1990 article by Bernard Lewis entitled, "The Roots of Muslim Rage", which speculated about why the Muslim World rejects Western civilization.³⁸⁹

After Huntington's article appeared, the media adopted the "clash of civilizations" meme into the late 1990s. For example, one *New York Times* article titled, "The Red Menace is Gone. But Here's Islam," argued that the end of the Cold War left space for a new ultimate enemy and, "one threat has resonated in the public mind: Islamic holy war."³⁹⁰ Clearly the rise of Political Islam had captured the American public's attention. Meanwhile, prominent individuals like

³⁸⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22. See also Samuel P. Huntington, "If Not Civilizations, What? Paradigms of the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 5 (November 1993): 186–194.

³⁸⁹ Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990.

³⁹⁰ Elaine Sciolino, "The Red Menace Is Gone. But Here's Islam," *The New York Times*, January 21, 1996, sec. 4:1.

former Secretary of State James Baker argued for a cautious approach to these groups, drawing on the events of the early 1990s as evidence of the dangers posed by Islamist organizations participating in elections.³⁹¹

The conversation about Islamism was conflicted, with some high level administration officials arguing for a more amicable approach to Islamist groups. Assistant Secretary of State Pelletreau, for example, derided the broadly anti-Islamist perspective advocated by some public intellectuals and U.S. officials. Pelletreau was a strong voice rejecting the clash of civilizations thesis, and continued to repeat his argument for a case-specific approach to Islamist groups in speeches, interviews,³⁹² symposia,³⁹³ and congressional testimony. In a 1996 address he argued,

“...we have no one-size-fits-all policy toward Islam. In fact, we don't even have a policy pigeonhole called "political Islam."...Given this diversity [of Islamist groups], it would be a mistake to rely on shorthand formulas or sweeping generalizations to assess how Islam affects our varied interests in the Middle East. If we treat Islamic political activism as a monolithic political movement implacably or unalterably opposed to the West, we run a risk of alienating the broader Muslim world and paralyzing our own ability to act with discrimination and effectiveness. Such an attitude would make many enemies where there are, in reality, only a handful. And we would be promoting the sort of "clash of civilizations" that would serve the extremists' interests more than our own.”³⁹⁴

The call for a more nuanced treatment of Islamist groups was reflected in a State Department working group on Political Islam, which began during this period and has met periodically since then. Career bureaucrats, members of the intelligence community and NSC staff developed papers on an approach to Islamist groups, but this did not result in a coherent policy formulation, mainly because the working group concluded that each organization was

³⁹¹ “Looking Back on the Middle East: James A. Baker III,” *Middle East Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (September 1994), <http://www.meforum.org/233/looking-back-on-the-middle-east-james-a-baker-iii>.

³⁹² See “Robert H. Pelletreau, Jr.: Not Every Fundamentalist is a Terrorist,” *Middle East Quarterly* (September 1995): 69–76.

³⁹³ Robert H. Pelletreau Jr, Daniel Pipes, and John L. Esposito, “Symposium: Resurgent Islam in the Middle East,” *Middle East Policy* 3, no. 2 (June 1994): 1–21.

³⁹⁴ Robert H. Pelletreau, “Dealing with the Muslim Politics of the Middle East: Algeria, Hamas, Iran” (address presented at the Council on Foreign Relations, New York, May 8, 1996).

different and should be treated on its own merits.³⁹⁵ But this effort does reflect that the policy stream was not uniformly anti-Islamist.

Overall, the contentious nature of this public debate made diplomats sensitive about engaging with Islamist groups, but in the case of the Jordanian Brotherhood, there were several pragmatic benefits to maintaining contacts and maintaining contacts with the group remained a priority at senior levels of the state department.

In the Jordanian context, U.S. policymakers saw the Brotherhood as a source of information and a weathervane for extremism within Jordan, as well as the region. Contacts provided an opportunity to assess fractures in the movement, and its larger ideological aims. Thus, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was a *problem* because it opposed U.S. policies, but the selected *solution* was not to disengage. Policy entrepreneurs, meaning the diplomats on the ground in conversation with other elements of the bureaucracy, developed and maintained contacts with the group in hopes of advancing U.S. interests.

All of this sets the context for a major change in American policy. In 2000, before the Al Aqsa Intifada broke out, there were a series of visa issues in which top Muslim Brotherhood/IAF Islamists were refused entry to the U.S. when previously they had been granted five year visas.³⁹⁶ This, along with the outbreak of the second Intifada marks the beginning of increasingly sour relations between the United States and the Jordanian Brotherhood. But the major window of opportunity for a change in policy was the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center.

³⁹⁵ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #909.

³⁹⁶ "Political Islam in Jordan: Opposition Mostly from Within the System" (State Department, Amman, August 3, 2003), Wikileaks.

Policy Window 1: September 11, 2001

The first major shift in U.S. policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood took place after 9/11, moving from regular engagement to disengagement, as contacts became increasingly taboo. Applying Kingdon's model, this section will argue that 9/11 served as a window of opportunity making it possible for an increasingly hostile policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood. Developments in the policy streams helped policymakers identify the organization as a problem that needed to be addressed. In this context, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of the Muslim Brotherhood to a solution of disengagement.

Although the decision was not immediate, in the aftermath of 9/11 the U.S. government unofficially decided to stop engaging with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. This meant that the embassy's political section did not actively arrange meetings with the Brotherhood and if they received meeting requests, the embassy would ignore them. While there were periods in which the Brotherhood assiduously avoided contact with the U.S. for their own reasons, they occasionally made efforts to reach out to the embassy and resume contact.³⁹⁷

For a brief period between June, 2002 and May, 2004, contacts between the U.S. and the Brotherhood resumed, although in general, engagement with Islamist groups during this period was considered highly problematic. American political officers wanted to gain a greater understanding of the Islamists, as well as correct misperceptions about United States policy amid rising Anti-Americanism in the region.³⁹⁸ They convinced the Brotherhood/IAF representatives to commit to future contacts and U.S. officials believed that the meetings had the King's

³⁹⁷ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #744.

³⁹⁸ "Islamic Action Front Leaders to U.S.: Dialogue, Yes; Agreement, No" (State Department, Amman, June 20, 2002), Wikileaks.

blessing. The embassy commented in 2002 that, “Recent months have seen the restoration of contacts between the Embassy and moderate leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood opposition and its political arm in Jordan, the Islamic Action Front. The Islamist political leadership has committed to continued dialogue with the Embassy and to additional meetings... The GOJ has generally supported the Embassy's advocacy on behalf of U.S. interests. We have no better regional partner on counter-terrorism than Jordan.”³⁹⁹

A July 17, 2002 meeting between Special Coordinator for Public Diplomacy, Ambassador Christopher Ross and IAF's Head of the Shura Council Abdul Latif Arabiyat, Secretary-General Sheikh Hamza Mansour, and Deputy Secretary-General Jamil Abu Bakr generated a significant amount of public backlash in Jordan. “[The meeting] received considerable attention from other weeklies, including a scathing editorial by a former leftist parliamentary deputy against the IAF and its mother organization, the Muslim Brothers Movement. This prompted the IAF to issue a press release explaining its reasons for accepting the meeting...”⁴⁰⁰ JMB/IAF members began refusing invitations to meet after there was pushback from inside the Brotherhood by those who regarded contact with the U.S. as “speaking with the enemy”⁴⁰¹. There is evidence, however, of meetings continuing to take place into December, 2003.⁴⁰²

In 2003, the IAF called for a boycott against U.S. soldiers in response to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, although embassy officials did not believe it would produce a large scale

³⁹⁹ “Jordan: Engaging Islam” (State Department, Amman, July 17, 2002), Wikileaks.

⁴⁰⁰ “IAF Press Release Responds to Press Criticism of Meeting with Ambassador Ross” (State Department, Amman, July 31, 2002), Wikileaks.

⁴⁰¹ “Hamza Mansour and the IAF/MB: Moderate Leadership Stretched Between Its Following and the GOJ” (State Department, Amman, September 25, 2002), Wikileaks.

⁴⁰² “IAF MP Complains About U.S. MEPP Policy, GOJ Discrimination” (State Department, Amman, December 2, 2003), Wikileaks.

reaction. An embassy cable quotes a Brotherhood paper, “Following the government's explicit announcement on the presence of hundreds of US soldiers in the country...it has become necessary not to offer any services to those soldiers since they are part of the US-British buildup, which announces day and night its intention to invade Iraq.”⁴⁰³ The group demanded that Jordanian citizens refuse to provide services to U.S. soldiers, such as food, housing or leasing land. In May, 2004 Brotherhood/IAF members cut off contact with the U.S. after the Abu Ghraib scandal in protest. After that point, embassy cables suggest that political officers were meeting with former, but not active members of the Islamic Action Front in order to obtain information about the group.⁴⁰⁴ This practice continued into 2006.⁴⁰⁵

Contact with the Brotherhood became steadily more taboo during the post-9/11 period and as one senior U.S. official recalled, “There was a visceral negative attitude toward anything that had the word Islamic in it.”⁴⁰⁶ Thus, after 9/11, the U.S. and the Jordanian Brotherhood shunned each other to varying degrees. Sensitivities were heightened in U.S. policy circles regarding meeting with Islamist groups, and at the same time, the Brotherhood was strongly alienated by American policy in Iraq.

Problems, Policies, and Politics after 9/11: Developments in the Policy Streams

Kingdon's model helps explain why the bureaucratic political climate helped contribute to a change in policy from engagement to disengagement. Developments in the problem stream

⁴⁰³ “IAF Urges Citizens Not to Cooperate with U.S. Troops” (State Department, Amman, March 6, 2003), Wikileaks.

⁴⁰⁴ “Islamists Weigh in Against the U.S., Israel, and France” (State Department, Amman, January 15, 2004), Wikileaks.

⁴⁰⁵ “Pragmatists Lead Muslim Brotherhood's Leadership Race, But Feel Pressure After Hamas' Victory” (State Department, Amman, February 16, 2006), Wikileaks.

⁴⁰⁶ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #744.

helped draw attention to Islamist groups, and redefine the Jordanian Brotherhood as a problem requiring a new solution. In the policy stream, pressure from key figures who were strongly opposed to Islamist groups helped prevent U.S. funds from going toward Brotherhood activities and focusing the Freedom Agenda on combatting extremism. And the political stream included a bipartisan concern over Islamic extremism, within the context of a broad preoccupation with terrorism.

The September 11, 2001 attacks led to a major paradigm shift in American policy circles, including the U.S. approach to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. Islamism jumped to the top of the policy priority list and although the Bush administration argued that the ensuing Global War on Terror was not a war against Islam, the administration made fewer distinctions among Islamist groups. In reference to this tendency, Senator John Kerry commented in a Senate hearing, “If we truly want to empower Muslim moderates, we must also stop tolerating the casual Islamophobia that has seeped into our political discourse since 9/11.”⁴⁰⁷ The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, among other groups, made a clear statement after 9/11 denouncing the attacks.⁴⁰⁸ But senior members of the Bush administration tended to view the problem in absolute terms. One U.S. official explained, “9/11 just had an enormous impact on prejudice. It made the gray area go away; it made everything black and white. Muslims and Islam became threats. It was far more difficult to do anything at all with the MB, everybody in those countries were the bad guys.”⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ John F. Kerry, *Opening Statement: Engaging with Muslim Communities Around the World*, 2009.

⁴⁰⁸ “Muslim Scholars and Intellectuals Condemn Attacks in New York and Washington,” *Al Quds Al-Arabi*, September 14, 2001.

⁴⁰⁹ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #744.

Other developments in the problem stream contributed to American perceptions that the Brotherhood could not be trusted. Capitalizing on regional sentiment, the Brotherhood opposed the Global War on Terror and spoke out against the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. At the same time that the U.S. needed Jordan's assistance with counter-terrorism efforts, Brothers argued that insurgency against U.S. targets in Iraq was legitimate. Some even glorified Zarqawi's actions against the U.S. and attended a mourning service in Zarqawi's family home after he was killed.⁴¹⁰ The Brotherhood also called for a boycott of U.S. goods and services.

A segment of a State Department cable from 2009 represents this period well, "The cutoff of relations between the USG and the Islamists came at the same time as the Muslim Brotherhood was drifting away from its status as part of the Jordanian establishment and towards its current outsider position. It also coincided with the rise of Hamas, the invasion of Iraq, and the dissolution of parliament. The combination of a shrinking arena for political expression in Jordan, new geopolitical realities in the region, and the absence of a working dialogue with the USG led to a hardening of the policy positions and public rhetoric of the JMB and IAF." ⁴¹¹

There were some other issues that were worrisome for American officials, which led them to distrust the Jordanian Brotherhood. First, they continued to be disturbed by links between Hamas and the Brotherhood. Officials expressed concern about the Muslim Brotherhood's extreme reaction to the assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin and how it might affect U.S.-Jordanian relations. One embassy cable reads, "The perception that Yassin's killing was "made in the USA" adds a special problem for Jordan's officials, who are widely seen as U.S. agents in the region. With the assassination providing fodder for the IAF, which is

⁴¹⁰ Brown, *Jordan and Its Islamic Movement: The Limits of Inclusion?*, 10.

⁴¹¹ "Re-engaging With Jordan's Islamists" (State Department, Amman, September 10, 2009), Wikileaks.

steadily assuming the mantle of prime defender of the Palestinian cause (and anti-normalization) in Jordan, supporters of sound Jordan-U.S. relations are on the defensive and finding little positive to work with to rebut extremists.”⁴¹² Following the Hamas parliamentary victory in 2006, embassy officials commented that the election had a significant impact on Jordanian politics, specifically emboldening the Brotherhood/Islamic Action Front, leading them to suggest the possibility of a Brotherhood majority in the Jordanian parliament. Although noting a history of pragmatism in the Jordanian Brotherhood, officials observed a growing assertiveness after the Hamas victory.⁴¹³

Brotherhood behavior also appeared to run counter to important U.S. interests. In 2002, the State Department was engaged in efforts to encourage moderation and combat extremism, but officials felt the Muslim Brotherhood’s anti-American rhetoric worked against these aims.⁴¹⁴ The group had repeatedly used anti-U.S. rhetoric to bolster support in Jordan and had done so with respect to U.S. policy toward Iraq, Iran, support for the peace process, and the Abu Ghraib scandal, among other issues. And, as I previously mentioned, in March, 2003, IAF members called for a boycott on U.S. soldiers to protest the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Officials also pointed out that the group is strongly opposed to the Israeli-Jordan peace treaty. The rhetoric didn’t concern embassy officials as much as efforts the group might use to effect Jordanian relations with Israel in a concrete way. One example illustrates this dilemma. The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood gained influential positions in the Bar Association, despite the fact that the Bar Association contained few Islamists. Brothers used their position in the Association to disbar a lawyer, Shawkat Obeidat, who defended a normalizer, in other words, someone who supported

⁴¹² “Jordanians Unite to Protest Yassin Killing” (State Department, Amman, March 23, 2004), Wikileaks.

⁴¹³ “Jordanian Islamists After the Hamas Victory” (State Department, Amman, February 2, 2006), Wikileaks.

⁴¹⁴ “Jordan: Engaging Islam.”

normalized relations between Jordan and Israel. A Brotherhood leader in the Bar Association suggested that Obeidat could be added to the list of suggested lawyers for Islamist clients if he dropped the case. When Obeidat refused, the Bar Association revoked his license. The Brotherhood also affected Jordanian-American relations from the margins. The Brother-led Bar Association initiated an anti-American protest at the Palace of Justice, which meant that a USAID judicial reform project completion ceremony had to be delayed.⁴¹⁵

One event in 2006 reflects how some extreme members of the IAF have drawn suspicion about their level of moderation. Four IAF members of parliament visited Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's funeral tent and spoke favorably of him after his death. Given Al-Zarqawi's prominent position in Al Qaeda and his role in violent attacks within Jordan, the government viewed this behavior as inciting violence. The four were arrested, but refused to apologize, suggesting that elements in the Brotherhood are not as moderate as the group tries to project.

Another factor leading American policymakers to regard the Brotherhood as problematic was pressure from King Abdullah II. One former U.S. official noted that "As a government, it is easier to say we talk to legal groups and we don't talk to illegal groups, but there is an underlying pressure from regimes on us not to have conversations with groups they think are undermining their authority, in this case, it was the IAF."⁴¹⁶ The King questioned U.S. contacts with the Brotherhood, which strained the U.S.-Jordanian relationship. The Jordanian General Intelligence Directorate (GID) had previously tried to block contacts and caused trouble when the U.S. talked to unapproved groups. For example, in late 2007, embassy officials met with imams in Zarqa. Shortly thereafter, the GID warned the embassy of a threat to one of the political counselors, but

⁴¹⁵ "How Islamists Infiltrated Jordan's Bar Association" (State Department, Amman, June 10, 2008), Wikileaks.

⁴¹⁶ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #744.

the embassy ultimately concluded the threat was manufactured by the GID because of the meeting. Between 2007 and 2009, the GID kept the Islamists on a tight leash and embassy officials felt that re-engagement during this period “would have been difficult politically.”⁴¹⁷

The taboo against talking with Islamist groups coincided with a major development in the policy stream, the Freedom Agenda, which was the soft power plank of the Global War on Terrorism. In addition to the efforts to dismantle terrorist groups, the Bush administration advanced the Freedom Agenda in order to combat the underlying conditions which cause terrorism. While democracy promotion had always been on the American policy agenda to some degree, other interests continually superseded it, such as pursuing regional stability in the Middle East or holding back Soviet advances in the region. American policy therefore often favored authoritarian allies, even though American policymakers wanted to encourage democratization and institutions were in place to promote it. For example, the State Department Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor was founded in the mid-1970s with a focus on humanitarian issues, and renamed in the mid-1990s to include democracy as one of its principle objectives.

After 9/11, there was a sense that Islamism and terrorism were products of the constrained political space and that if people in the region had a greater say in their governments, democracy would “drain the swamp” of terrorism and radical Islamism.⁴¹⁸ As such, the Bush Administration rolled out the Freedom Agenda in 2002 in the context of the Global War on

⁴¹⁷ “Re-engaging With Jordan’s Islamists.”

⁴¹⁸ This term, which became a common phrase among political analysts discussing the objectives of the Freedom Agenda, originated in a quotation by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who argued in a news conference shortly after 9/11 that the best way to eradicate terrorist networks was to “drain the swamp they live in.” “Rumsfeld: U.S. Must ‘Drain the Swamp’,” *CNN*, September 19, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/18/ret.defense.rumsfeld/index.html>.

Terrorism. In her memoirs, Former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice described the thought process related to the policy.

The decision to cast aside the “stability over democracy” mind-set toward the region became the last element of our foreign policy response to 9/11 and the final piece of the Bush Doctrine. The evolution of our thinking- from the tactical goal of pursuing Al Qaeda to creating a strategic agenda for freedom in the Middle East- did not take place overnight.”⁴¹⁹ “...the absence of decent political forces had left a void, which had been filled by extremists who had become the outlet for “politics” in countries experiencing a “freedom gap”. Only the emergence of democratic institutions and practices could defeat terrorism and radical Islam. We knew the path would not be easy and there would undoubtedly be trade-offs in the short term. The United States could not radically reorient its foreign policy, refusing the deal with friendly authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt on matters of strategic importance. The Freedom Agenda was meant to be a long term strategic shift in the way we defined our interests, not just a genuflection toward our values.”⁴²⁰

Thus, U.S. decision makers did not conceive of American regional interests as objective and undisputed. They were heavily contested within policy circles and the Freedom Agenda was the outcome of long term debates about the definition of American interests in the region and how to best achieve them. This conception of interests is consistent with Kingdon’s theory, which suggests that the dialogue among political actors as well as the overall political context is crucial in explaining the evolution of American policy.

The practical outcome of the Freedom Agenda included a series of programs such as MEPI (Middle East Partnership Initiative), the MEFTA (Middle East Free Trade Agreement) Initiative, and the multilateral BMENA (Broader Middle East and North Africa) Initiative. These programs were intended to promote the emergence of democracy, although the policy lacked coherence from the beginning. This is reflected in a statement by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Scott Carpenter who was in charge of MEPI when it was first implemented,

⁴¹⁹ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor: A Memoir of My Years in Washington* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), 325.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 328.

“we don’t know yet how best to promote democracy in the Arab Middle East. I mean we just don’t know. It’s the early days...I think there are times when you throw spaghetti against the wall and see if it sticks.”⁴²¹

MEPI was the flagship program of the Freedom Agenda and was actually authored by the Vice President’s daughter, Elizabeth Cheney, in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. She fought for a decision making role in the distribution of democracy promotion funds and according to a Brookings study by Tamara Cofman Wittes, “the MEPI office- thanks to bureaucratic battles waged by Elizabeth Cheney-won a role in determining the allocation of USAID’s funds for democracy and governance in the Middle East and became a hub for interagency discussion of policy under the Freedom Agenda.”⁴²² The administration also chose the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau because Bush officials regarded the agency as too heavily committed to the status quo ante. Scott Carpenter, formerly one of Elizabeth Cheney’s top aides, explained, “The innovation of the Bush administration was to try to create a bureaucratic counterweight to business as usual, within the Near East regional bureau.”⁴²³

Cheney, in her position at the State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, had a central role in determining where MEPI and USAID democracy funds went. One former State Department official said that Cheney personally forbade the International Republican Institute (IRI) from training any Islamists in their democracy programs and required them to sign a letter

⁴²¹ David Finkel, “U.S. Ideals Meet Reality in Yemen,” *The Washington Post*, December 18, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/17/AR2005121701237.html>.

⁴²² Tamara Cofman Wittes, *Freedom’s Unsteady March: America’s Role in Building Arab Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 89.

⁴²³ Quoted by Laura Rozen, “Freedom Fighters: The State of the Bush Administration’s Democracy-Promotion Push,” *Mother Jones*, January 11, 2008, <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2008/01/freedom-fighters-state-bush-administrations-democracy-promotion-push>.

vowing not to do so.⁴²⁴ Other officials in the State Department, even those who were more senior than her in the bureaucracy, were reluctant to cross her, given her connection to the Vice President's office. According to one former U.S. official, Elizabeth Cheney specifically said that she was not going to spend U.S. tax money to train Islamists.⁴²⁵ The dynamic in the NEA bureau reflects the rigidity that emerged in American politics after 9/11, making it no longer feasible to engage as openly with Islamists, even legal parties, as it had been in the past. The Bush administration's neoconservative ideology also contributed to a political environment which did not advocate engagement with the Jordanian Brotherhood. Officials favored a hawkish approach to terrorism, and given the administration's reluctance to distinguish between different Islamist groups, the Jordanian Brotherhood was associated with the same type of Islamic extremism the Administration was trying to combat. In effect, the Freedom Agenda intentionally bypassed the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood.

However, when directly asked whether the U.S. government pushed the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to withhold resources from the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, NDI representatives did not point to U.S. pressure as much as to the reluctance of the group to be associated with an American organization. One NDI staff member explained,

The MB has not approached NDI-Jordan for assistance for the same reasons that they have not approached NDI-Egypt. NDI Jordan does have a handful of contacts within the MB that they maintain but, again, we do not work directly with the MB there....there is some skepticism associated with international (and especially American) organizations working with political groups and movements, and the motives behind our work. The MB has not approached [NDI] for the assistance that we provide to other parties so that they can remain free from any allegations that they have ties to western organizations and government funding which would compromise their political stance. We have invited MB representatives/members to take part in our program activities, but if any MB members

⁴²⁴ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #290, April 13, 2012.

⁴²⁵ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #744.

have participated, they have done so solely as independents. That said, we have not had any pushback from the USG on potential work with the MB since they are not a government-designated terrorist organization. If we were working with them and they began advocating for campaigns of violence, we would suspend our assistance.”⁴²⁶

While the NDI did not describe any pushback from the U.S. government in terms of working with Islamist parties, multiple sources report that Elizabeth Cheney’s worked to prevent U.S. funds from going to Islamists, including the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, embassy officials in Amman did not support providing U.S. funding for the group because of its hostility to the United States. “Post does not advocate assistance programs to IAF or MB members. Public statements attributed to the MB have at times appeared to favor terrorist acts against Israel and/or resistance to the US in Iraq.”⁴²⁷

The political stream was favorable to disengagement from the Jordanian Brotherhood and Islamists in general. The nature of this political environment is exemplified by the large number of congressional hearings on terrorism, terrorist financing, and Islamic extremism. A sampling of 2007 Homeland Security hearings include, “The threat of Islamist Radicalism to the Homeland” (March 14, 2007), “The Internet: A Portal to Violent Islamist Extremism” (May 3, 2007), “Violent Islamist Extremism: Government Efforts to Defeat it” (June 27, 2007).

Policy Entrepreneurs

Because policy toward non-violent Islamist groups is so unstructured and fluid, decisions are not typically made by one particular individual. Rather, often policy entrepreneurs are the officials on the ground, deciding how to match the given problem (Islamism) with an appropriate solution (engage or not engage). In the post-9/11 environment, policy entrepreneurs decided to

⁴²⁶ NDI Staffer, Confidential Interview #152, July 29, 2011.

⁴²⁷ “Political Islam in Jordan: Opposition Mostly from Within the System.”

slowly close off contact with the Brotherhood. One U.S. official expressed the conflicting mandates a policy entrepreneur may have to balance, “You may get caught in contradictory guidelines that are not in a formal cable. You may get pressure from the government to broaden contacts in Jordanian society, but no reference is specifically to the Muslim Brotherhood. They might say at the same time let’s not enhance the prestige of the Brotherhood so much, so maybe you shouldn’t be out there so much. It isn’t written down and it contradicts. What do you do? Use your judgment. Who is giving me the guidance, based on rank and position? It’s very hard to know what the policy is. In a broad way, yes you know, but how you carry it out, that is very much left to the field.”⁴²⁸

In sum, American policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood shifted from engagement to disengagement during this period because a window was created by 9/11. In that context, policy entrepreneurs drew on developments in the policy streams to pair the problems associated with the Jordanian Brotherhood to a new solution: progressive disengagement.

Policy Window 2: The Obama Administration and the Arab Spring

After the Obama Administration took office, American policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood changed from disengagement to a new era of engagement. Why did this shift take place? Drawing on Kingdon’s model, this section will argue that the incoming Obama administration constituted a window of opportunity, making it possible for a more open approach to the Jordanian Brotherhood. Developments in the policy streams also helped paint the Jordanian group as a less problematic organization that should be included in the more pro-

⁴²⁸ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #744.

engagement policy. In this context, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood to a new solution: reengagement.

The Obama administration came in with a new approach to Political Islam and Islamist groups, one that emphasized engagement over isolation. This perspective is reflected in the President's June, 2009 speech in Cairo, "So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, and who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. This cycle of suspicion and discord must end. I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition."⁴²⁹ This change in tone also corresponds with the administration's 2009 initiative to reassess U.S. policy regarding Political Islam, which I discussed in chapter 2. Administration officials felt that a sufficient number of questions had emerged over whether U.S. policy toward Islamist groups was appropriate given their growing political relevance in the region over the last twenty years.⁴³⁰

In February, 2009 IAF member Ruheil Gharaibeh traveled to the U.S. for a conference and also met with congressional staffers in order to send a signal that the Islamists were willing to resume contacts with the United States. The visit stirred controversy within Jordan over the U.S. relationship with Islamists. In analyzing the controversy, an embassy cable indicates that "Post does not meet with IAF officials, who hold six seats in Parliament. The IAF Secretary

⁴²⁹ Barack Obama, "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁴³⁰ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223.

General sent POTUS a congratulatory message via the U.S. embassy to the President on January 21, urging him to be "open to suggestions and willing to debate the political forces that represent the Islamic world,"⁴³¹ but the embassy intentionally chose not to reply to the letter.

An important September 2009 diplomatic cable announced the shift in orientation toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. The goal was to re-establish contact with Jordanian Islamists in order to build embassy capacity for reporting and information gathering about Jordanian political parties. Relations with the Islamists had deteriorated after 9/11 and slowly became off-limits. The Ambassador discussed the U.S. initiating contacts with the Jordanian Brotherhood with government officials in order to float the idea and did not meet with substantial resistance, although the Jordanians asked the embassy to wait for the right timing, suggesting the end of the Parliament's session and Ramadan. U.S. officials did not want to damage relations with the Jordanian government in the process of reestablishing contact with Islamists.⁴³² Additionally, after Mohammed Dahabi left the GID [The General Intelligence Directorate], the King loosened restrictions on Islamists and limited the extent to which GID officials were allowed to interfere with their activities. U.S. embassy officials also viewed this development as a window of opportunity to resume contact with the Brotherhood.

The embassy decided to reengage with the Islamists by reaching out to "known moderates" in the Brotherhood and slowly build trust. Important to this aim was delicately handling the rift in the Brotherhood between those in the Brotherhood who favored engagement with the U.S. and those who rejected it. Eventually officials hoped to expand contacts to both

⁴³¹ "Islamist Figure Sparks Debate Over Engaging the U.S." (State Department, Amman, March 16, 2009), Wikileaks.

⁴³² "Re-engaging With Jordan's Islamists."

doves and hawks within the movement, with the ultimate aim of developing a range of relationships across Jordanian society. Officials recognized the importance of gathering information about the full political environment in Jordan, while also providing an opportunity to correct misunderstandings of U.S. Policy. These goals were deemed worthy enough to overcome the taboo against meeting with the Brotherhood, which had emerged in the post-9/11 climate. The Ambassador explained that, “Through careful cultivation of contacts within the Islamist movement combined with occasional reassurance of our intentions with the Jordanian government, the taboo surrounding contact with the JMB and IAF can be broken. Breaking that taboo will allow us to reinstate the politically important series of relationships which will in turn improve our knowledge and understanding of Jordanian political life.”⁴³³

The window created by the incoming Obama administration operated somewhat differently for the Egypt and Jordanian cases. In the Egypt case, the opening provided by the pro-engagement Obama administration was not sufficient to overcome domestic sensitivities related to engaging with the group. It took the change in administrations along with the Arab Spring revolutions to catalyze a major shift in policy. But in the case of Jordan, the U.S. began to open relations with the group before the Arab Spring. The revolutions were important in the Jordanian context, however, because they served to accelerate the policy change that had already begun. Moreover, events in the policy streams helped cultivate a political environment that was amenable to increased diplomatic contacts with the Jordanian Brotherhood.

⁴³³ Ibid.

Developments in the Three Policy Streams (Problems, Policies, and Politics)

The transition to the Obama administration marked a major shift, this time to a pro-engagement orientation. The distance from the events of 9/11, the unpopularity of the outgoing Bush administration, the global financial crisis, and most importantly, the Arab Spring, created a new set of conditions that affected how American policymakers defined the problem of Islamism with respect to the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood.

The new administration came in with a distinctly pro-engagement perspective. Officials describe this as a change in tone and emphasis. For example, the “Global War on Terror” became the “Overseas Contingency Operation”. Some depict this change in tone as a dramatic shift and indeed it does mark a departure from the Bush administration’s rhetoric. Nevertheless, it is important to note that idea softening regarding Political Islam began toward the end of the Bush administration, as I explained in the previous chapter. This softening involved some rhetorical changes. For example, in March and April, 2008 the State Department and the Department Homeland Security informed their staff that they should no longer to use certain words when referring to terrorism. A memo was generated by the Extremist Messaging Branch at the National Counter Terrorism Center entitled, “Words that Work and Words that Don’t: A Guide for Counterterrorism Communication.” In it, officials were instructed to use the term “violent extremism”, not “jihad”, and to avoid terms that would offend Muslim audiences. “We are communicating with, not confronting, our audiences,” the memo explained. “Don’t insult or

confuse them with pejorative terms such as 'Islamofascism,' which are considered offensive by many Muslims."⁴³⁴

Although idea softening began toward the end of the Bush Administration, it took the window of opportunity presented by the Obama administration to induce a substantive policy change. The new administration was decidedly pro-engagement, and this orientation led officials to seek a new policy regarding Islamist groups, but the “when” and “how” were still in dispute. The Arab Spring solved the question of timing. It brought a sense of urgency to the issue, causing the administration to quickly launch its new engagement policy in response to the rebellions.

The Arab Spring rebellions served as a major shift in the problem stream, drawing attention to U.S. policy toward Islamist groups and the potential for these groups to emerge as key players in post-revolution governments. As the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes fell, it became a real possibility that Islamists would play a more prominent role in the new governments, perhaps even lead them. Jordan was not immune to the disturbances, although the demonstrations did not reach the same size or intensity as in other countries. The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood led some of these demonstrations, demanding political reforms, specifically an end to the “one person one vote” election law, which required Jordanians to vote for one candidate, rather than a party list. In response, King Abdullah II quickly announced an economic package, named a new Prime Minister, and formed a new cabinet. He also set up his first meeting with the Brotherhood in 11 years and offered them portfolios in the new government,

⁴³⁴ Associated Press, “‘Jihadist’ Booted from U.S. Government Lexicon,” April 25, 2008.

but they rejected the offer.⁴³⁵ The U.S. demonstrated support for the Jordanian government by increasing its annual aid package by an additional 100 million dollars. In a phone call between President Obama and King Abdullah, the President reportedly assured him of U.S. support, but encouraged immediate reform. According to a White House statement, the President said, “Democracy will bring more- not less-stability in the region.”⁴³⁶

In this new international context, the range of acceptable options for dealing with Islamist groups broadened. Engagement with the formerly taboo Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood became possible. As one former U.S. official explained, “At the end of the day,[in terms of] a shift in policy of this sort, and the administration has gone far to say this is not a shift, but the reality on the ground changed and we had to change how we did business.”⁴³⁷

Developments in the policy stream also set the foundation for a shift in U.S. policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood and other Islamist groups. Think-tanks and prominent academics had been arguing for engagement with moderate Islamists for decades. In the 1990s, a major element of the policy stream challenged the democratic credentials of Islamist groups and argued that they would commandeer the political process. But even during this period, scholars like Glenn Robinson began to argue that the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood had advanced the cause of democracy in Jordan by advocating for a more open political process.⁴³⁸

Into the 2000s, think-tank scholars began to argue more forcefully in favor of recognizing the distinction between moderate and extreme Islamist groups. The Rand Corporation published

⁴³⁵ Hani Hanzaimah, “Islamists Reject Portfolios in New Gov’t,” *The Jordan Times*, February 7, 2011.

⁴³⁶ Paul Richter, “Obama Reassures Jordan King of U.S. Support,” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/16/world/la-fg-obama-mideast-20110216>.

⁴³⁷ Confidential interview with former U.S. official (Interview #223), January 27, 2012.

⁴³⁸ Robinson, “Can Islamists Be Democrats? The Case of Jordan.”

a study in 2003 arguing for the U.S. to empower “Civil, Democratic Islam” as a way to counter extremist groups. Other examples of what Kingdon calls “idea softening” in which think-tanks floated the idea of engagement include Mona Yacoubian’s article for the United States Institute of Peace in August, 2007.⁴³⁹ Another example is a *Foreign Affairs* piece by Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke of the Nixon Center, which argued that the debate about the Muslim Brotherhood had become too polemical; instead, they emphasized that the Brotherhood was a moderate Islamist organization. Leiken and Brooke argued, “U.S. policymaking has been handicapped by Washington’s tendency to see the Muslim Brotherhood -- and the Islamist movement as a whole - - as a monolith. Policymakers should instead analyze each national and local group independently and seek out those that are open to engagement. In the anxious and often fruitless search for Muslim moderates, policymakers should recognize that the Muslim Brotherhood presents a notable opportunity.”⁴⁴⁰

In 2010, Khalil Al-Anani published a paper for Brookings and made a similar argument, “The United States has long shown confusion in its policies toward Islamist political movements in the Middle East. By conflating moderates and hardliners, and believing that moderate Islamists pose a threat to U. S. strategic interests in the region, the United States has opted to support regimes that limit democratic participation.”⁴⁴¹ Although there continued to be anti-Muslim Brotherhood arguments in the media and in some prominent think-tanks, those who advocated opening to the group were gaining more traction.

⁴³⁹ Yacoubian, *Engaging Islamists and Promoting Democracy*.

⁴⁴⁰ Leiken and Brooke, “The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood,” 107.

⁴⁴¹ Al-Anani, *The Myth of Excluding Moderate Islamists in the Arab World*.

As 9/11 became a more distant memory, arguments that distinguished between Islamist groups, and between Islam and terrorism, became more successful in the policy stream. For example, toward the end of the Bush Administration, the liberal think-tank The Center for American Progress criticized the use of the word Islamofascism and emphasized the negative impacts of Islamophobia.⁴⁴² Pro-engagement scholarship began to emerge in more conservative journals as well, such as a piece by Robert Leiken in *The National Interest*.⁴⁴³ And in the wake of the Arab Spring revolutions, scholars like Matthew Duss argued for engagement as the most prudent policy option.⁴⁴⁴ Although pro-engagement voices had been advocating a shift prior to the Obama administration, the window created by a change in administration, along with the Arab Spring revolutions was essential for these arguments to break through.

In terms of the political stream, for the first two years of the Obama administration, the partisan distribution favored the President. But in 2010, the Democrats lost the House and when the Arab Spring began in 2011, new Republican committee chairs took the opportunity to hold hearings about the dangers of Islamist groups taking advantage of the Arab Spring. The political stream did not favor opening to Islamist groups like the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. Particular concern was expressed about the various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood. In testimony for a hearing before the House Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities, Professor Sebastian Gorka notes, “Today we no longer live in a Westphalian threat environment,

⁴⁴² Annika Carlson and Sarah Dreier, *Crib Sheet on “Islamofascism”* (The Center for American Progress, October 24, 2007), <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/religion/news/2007/10/24/3632/crib-sheet-on-islamofascism/>. See also Wajahat Ali et al., *Fear, Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America* (The Center for American Progress, August 26, 2011).

⁴⁴³ Robert Leiken, “To Talk or Not To Talk? That Is The Question,” *The National Interest* (April 25, 2007), <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/to-talk-or-not-to-talk-that-is-the-question-1555>.

⁴⁴⁴ Matthew Duss, *Recognizing Reality in the Middle East: Secretary Clinton Opens Dialogue with Islamist Political Parties in Egypt and Tunisia* (Center for American Progress, July 1, 2011), <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2011/07/01/9951/recognizing-reality-in-the-middle-east/>.

where the nationstate is the primary enemy. As Philip Bobbitt has noted, groups such as Al Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, or the Muslim Brotherhood do not fit neatly into the national security apparatus we built over the last hundred years.”⁴⁴⁵

On April 13, 2011, a Subcommittee of the House Select Committee on Intelligence conducted a rare public hearing on the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, followed by a closed hearing that featured testimony by members of the Executive branch about threats posed by the Brotherhood and the U.S. response. As chairwoman Sue Myrick explained, “Open hearings are rare for the House Intelligence Committee and its subcommittees, but Chairman Rogers and I feel that this important issue should be discussed in front of the American people. As governments are shaken in the Arab Spring, intelligence agencies across the world are studying what kind of governments would follow in a new geo-political landscape across the Middle East. Central to this discussion is the Muslim Brotherhood.”⁴⁴⁶ She added, “... when we talk about the threat the Muslim Brotherhood poses, we must not merely look at whether they are violent or non-violent. We must also look at the extremist ideology they espouse and whether it leads to radicalization and ultimately acts of terrorism.”⁴⁴⁷ Later in her statement, she argued, “The federal government does not have a comprehensive or consistent strategy for dealing with the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated groups in America. Nor does it have a strategy for dealing with the Brotherhood in Egypt or the greater Middle East. A lack of understanding about the group has lead (sic) to a classic case of government disorientation—we have heard the full spectrum of views on, and approaches to interaction with, the Brotherhood from various

⁴⁴⁵ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives*, 112th Cong. (Statement of Sebastian Gorka, June 22, 2011).

⁴⁴⁶ *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, HUMINT, Analysis, and Counterintelligence of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, United States House of Representatives*, 112th Cong. (Opening Statement of Representative Sue Myrick, April 13, 2011).

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

government officials. This inconsistency makes me feel like our government is playing checkers while the Muslim Brotherhood is playing chess.”⁴⁴⁸

Ranking member Mike Thompson’s opening statement reflected a counterweight to the Chair’s suspicions about the group, suggesting that congressional suspicions about the Brotherhood were not uniform. He argued, “...this hearing must not become a witch hunt. This hearing is not about the vast majority of Egyptian citizens who protested peacefully in Tahrir Square. Nor is this hearing about the millions of law-abiding Muslim-Americans who contribute to American society.” He added, “But, let’s be clear: the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is not a State Department-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and according to the written testimony, it renounced violence years ago.”⁴⁴⁹

Ten years after the 9/11 attacks, concerns about terrorism were more distant. Thompson’s dissenting comments represent an overall shift in the national mood from the immediate post-9/11 era, which although still concern about terrorism, was not as preoccupied with linking Political Islam and terrorism together. While prominent members of congress and elements of the conservative press⁴⁵⁰ spoke out against the dangers of the Brotherhood, these pressures did not stop the administration from moving forward with a policy of engagement. The anti-engagement rhetoric in Congress and among political elites did not translate into concrete legislative action that would halt reengagement with the Jordanian Brotherhood.

Policy Entrepreneurs

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ For an example of this, see “Obama Administration Recognizes Egypt’s Dangerous Muslim Brotherhood,” *Hannity* (Fox News, June 30, 2011), <http://www.foxnews.com/on-air/hannity/2011/07/01/obama-administration-recognizes-egypts-dangerous-muslim-brotherhood>.

In this policy environment, U.S. officials chose to reestablish contact with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. In the sense of Kingdon's model, policy entrepreneurs attached the problem (Islamism) with a new solution (reengagement). In terms of the actual decision makers, the new policy was drafted in the State Department, but had to be vetted by the White House. It was a controversial, "hot potato" issue and according to one former U.S. official, "the higher up on the bureaucratic structure you go, the more risk averse [people are]. As the policy reached undersecretary or deputy secretary for clearance, there was more and more hand wringing. Not about whether the U.S. should begin to engage Islamists. Everyone agreed; it was more a question of how fast we should move forward, is this the right way of doing it, etc. Once it got over to the White House and senior levels of NSC, the best we were ever going to get from them was an apathetic shrug of the shoulders. We were never going to get a strong blessing from the White House; at best we were looking for them not to say no."⁴⁵¹

In sum, this chapter has demonstrated that U.S. policy toward Islamist groups is highly context specific and that Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting is the best way to explain why American policy has shifted over time. This chapter explained how various policies came to be considered appropriate solutions to the problems associated with the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood. By analyzing developments in the three policy streams, I explained that variation in U.S. policy is the result of political entrepreneurs linking solutions (engagement, disengagement, and reengagement) to the problems associated with the Muslim Brotherhood within the context of windows created by 9/11, and the Obama Administration/Arab Spring.

⁴⁵¹ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223.

Rival Explanations

I will demonstrate in this section that rival theories are unable to sufficiently explain variation in U.S. policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, beginning first with the classical realist/security model. The realist argument would expect that as the group becomes more or less threatening to U.S. security interests, American policy will change. But the Jordanian Brotherhood has always been nonviolent and has never posed a security threat to the U.S. It also poses only a slight risk to our diplomatic interests. It is unlikely they would ever win a majority, even if the Jordanian parliamentary system were to adopt proportional representation. Moreover, when they have achieved positions of power, they spent their time on moral issues like alcohol and dance clubs.

Second, the Graham Allison bureaucratic politics model also fails to explain our policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood. This theory is unable to explain variation within administrations. Additionally, it is not at all clear who has the final say on U.S.-Brotherhood policy. The notion of organized anarchy fits better than the static vision of agencies or individuals competing for influence over the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood policy.

Third, the domestic politics explanation offers some insight into American policy toward the Brotherhood, but it tends to ignore the role played by the policy entrepreneurs in interpreting conflicting mandates. Public opinion also may not be clear on a particular issue, or officials may find ways around it. For example, one American official said, “The words Muslim Brotherhood scare people in the general public, so we say we reach out to the political party. Some people in the press question our engagement with the Muslim Brotherhood and we respond that we engage

the established political party.”⁴⁵² Additionally, interviews with former U.S. officials also point to the dialectic process between the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau, assistant and deputy assistant secretaries of state, embassy officials, and the NSC in formulating policy. Although public opinion plays a role, it is not the primary element defining U.S. policy toward the Brotherhood.

Fourth, the beliefs of key policymakers are important, but responsibility for determining policy toward the Jordanian Brotherhood has not been consistently assigned to one department or individual. During some periods, such as the 1980s, the decision was at the bureau level and hadn’t risen to the attention of the White House. Local diplomats had total autonomy to decide whether to engage with the group. Finally, the nature of the group is inadequate to explain U.S. policy because while U.S. policy varied over time, the nature of the group remained essentially the same (Islamist, nonviolent, and legal).

In conclusion, the policy change from disengagement to reengagement can be explained in the context of a window created by the incoming Obama administration and the Arab Spring revolutions, which made a more cooperative policy toward the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood possible. Moreover, developments in the policy streams made it viable for policy entrepreneurs to attach a new, more pro-engagement, solution to the problem of the Jordanian Brotherhood. In the problem stream, the Arab Spring drew immediate attention to Islamist groups and ratcheted up the priority for addressing U.S. policy toward these groups. In the policy stream, potential solutions to the Muslim Brotherhood problem were debated in an environment that was much more favorable to Political Islam and less preoccupied with terrorism. The political stream, however, continued to be suspicious of Islamist non-state actors, but these voices were not strong

⁴⁵² U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #460, August 4, 2011.

enough to dissuade policy entrepreneurs from pursuing engagement. As a result, policy entrepreneurs were able to match the problem of the Jordanian Brotherhood with a different solution than the Bush administration: reengagement.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hamas

The relationship between the United States and Hamas has grown steadily more contentious since the group appeared during the first Intifada. At first, the United States maintained contact with the group as part of a broader effort to obtain information about Islamist groups in the region,⁴⁵³ but in the Spring of 1993, the State Department announced the end of informal talks between the U.S. and Hamas. As Hamas played a spoiler role in the Israeli Palestinian peace process,⁴⁵⁴ the United States started to engage in containment efforts, mostly in the form of financial regulations that stopped the flow of money to Hamas.

These efforts became even more pronounced after 9/11, as the fervor to contain terrorist groups was at its highest. For example, Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act, giving more power to the department of Treasury to block transactions of suspect organizations.⁴⁵⁵ The President also issued Executive Order 13224, which allowed the U.S. Government to freeze assets of terrorist groups and individuals. In 2006, after the surprise Hamas victory, American policy became even more assertive, cutting off all contact with the Hamas controlled Palestinian Authority and halting all USAID funds. The U.S. government along with the Quartet held that Hamas must meet a series of conditions in order to be recognized: renounce terrorism, acknowledge Israel's right to exist, and respect previous agreements made by the PLO. Additionally, the Bush administration tried to convince Hamas' state sponsors to stop funding the group, which included an unsuccessful Colin Powell visit to Syria in 2002. U.S. officials also applied diplomatic pressure on allies to target Hamas charities and list Hamas as a Foreign

⁴⁵³ James P. Wooten, *Hamas: The Organization, Goals, and Tactics of a Militant Palestinian Movement* (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, August 19, 1993).

⁴⁵⁴ U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #563, September 7, 2011, 563.

⁴⁵⁵ Carrie L. Folendorf, "Breaking Terror's Bank Without Breaking the Law: A Comment on the USA Patriot Act and the United States Financial War on Terrorism," *Journal of the National Association of Administrative Law Judges* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 481–501.

Terrorist Organization. The Obama administration has largely continued Bush administration policies with respect to Hamas, although the rhetorical tone and orientation of the administration is substantially more pro-engagement in general, but not to Hamas in particular.

American policy toward Hamas has clearly grown increasingly aggressive over time. Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting can help explain why U.S. policy has varied. This chapter will demonstrate how policies ranging from engagement to adversarial opposition came to be considered appropriate solutions to the problems associated with Hamas. Drawing on Kingdon's model, I explain variation in American policy toward Hamas as the result of policy entrepreneurs linking different solutions to the problems associated with Hamas (spoiler in the peace process and terrorism) in the context of policy windows created by the Clinton administration's commitment to the Oslo peace process and 9/11. There have been three main approaches to Hamas outlined in Table 4.1: engagement, which entailed open meetings between diplomats and members of Hamas; containment, which involved efforts to constrain Hamas' funding sources, forbid diplomatic contact, and list it as a terrorist organization; and adversarial opposition, which included efforts to undermine and isolate the Hamas led government, pressure allies to list the group as a terrorist organization, and a more aggressive attempt to eliminate Hamas' funding sources.

Table 4.1: U.S. Policy toward Hamas

Window of Opportunity	Streams	Policy
	<u>Streams</u> : Low levels of attention, was not widely defined as a problem	Engagement (late 1980s-1993)
Peace Process	<u>Problem Stream</u> : Hamas attacks/spoiler in peace process, first World Trade Center Bombing draws attention to terrorism; <u>Policy Stream</u> : Growing concerns about Islamism and terrorism, support for harder line; <u>Political Stream</u> : Anti-Hamas	Containment (1993-2001)
September 11 Attacks	<u>Problem Stream</u> : Hamas' use of terrorism, 2006 Parliamentary Victory; <u>Policy Stream</u> : Global War on Terrorism, Freedom Agenda; <u>Political Stream</u> : Anti-Hamas	Adversarial Opposition (2001-present)

Section one will provide an overview of the organization, including its origins, external support, charity operations, political activities, and violent tactics. Section two will discuss the first policy window: the Clinton administration and its commitment to the peace process. It will show how this policy window made it possible for American policy toward Hamas to move from engagement to containment, given ongoing developments in the three policy streams. The final section will address the second major policy window: 9/11. It will explain how 9/11 made it possible for U.S. policy to move from containment to a strategy of adversarial opposition.

Overview of Hamas

Hamas has a dual meaning: it is an acronym for Harikat Al Mutawama al Islamiya, which in Arabic means “Islamic Resistance Movement” and the word Hamas means “zeal”. Its slogan, according to its 1988 charter, is “Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Qur’an its

Constitution, Jihad its path and death for the sake of Allah its most sublime belief.”⁴⁵⁶ Hamas’ charter describes the group as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, although it is not governed by the Brotherhood and its modus operandi is centered on the Palestinian resistance, as opposed to other Brotherhood branches which have a more general focus. The larger objective of the group is to create an Islamic state within the territory of mandate (pre-1948) Palestine and eliminate Israel entirely, but in the short term it seeks to force Israelis out of lands conquered in the 1967 war. One major element that distinguishes Hamas from the Muslim Brotherhood is that Hamas rejects the Brotherhood’s claim that one must first Islamize society before engaging in jihad.⁴⁵⁷ Hamas also uses violence, while the Muslim Brotherhood has renounced violent tactics since the 1970s.

The origin of Hamas can be found in the early days of the first Intifada. The uprising was triggered by a traffic accident in which an Israeli driver killed four Palestinian refugees. On December 9, 1987, Palestinians riots erupted and then spread throughout Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. On the same day that the Intifada broke out, a small group from the Palestinian Branch of the Muslim Brotherhood held a meeting to form its own resistance organization.⁴⁵⁸ The meeting attendees were leaders from the Islamic Center of Gaza and they became the founding members of Hamas, including Ahmad Yassin, a teacher, and Abd Al Aziz Al Rantisi, a physician. As the Intifada raged on, Hamas steadily gained more clout while the PLO began to moderate its stance with respect to Israel. In 1988, the PLO announced that it recognized United Nations resolutions 224 and 338, and renounced violence. Hamas, however,

⁴⁵⁶ “Hamas Charter,” 1988,

<http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/www.thejerusalemfund.org/carryover/documents/charter.html>.

⁴⁵⁷ Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*: 30.

⁴⁵⁸ Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza*: 63.

advocated violent resistance to Israel and attacked the PLO for negotiating with the enemy. For example, Hamas criticized the PLO when it supported the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, and the PLO's subsequent participation in the peace process led to clashes in the early 1990s between Hamas and Fatah, the largest component of the PLO. As Gunning describes it, "Hamas became the faction of choice for those opposed to the peace process."⁴⁵⁹

External Support

The group is considered to be a terrorist organization by the U.S., the European Union, and Israel, but it also has the support of regional actors including Syria, Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia (through Islamic charities) and at various points Jordan and Qatar. While Hamas is not operationally a global organization like Hezbollah, its fundraising draws on resources from Sunni governments that Hezbollah does not, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar.⁴⁶⁰ Although Hamas is a Sunni organization and Iran Shi'ite, the doctrinal differences have been overlooked in favor of a shared objective in fighting Israel. An official Hamas delegation visited Iran in the Fall of 1991 and in early 1992, the group opened an office in Tehran.⁴⁶¹ Iran provides Hamas funding, arms, and training, both directly and indirectly (through Hezbollah).⁴⁶² Hamas also opened a Political Bureau in Amman, followed by representation in Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon, as well as contacts with Gulf states like Saudi Arabia.⁴⁶³ Hamas, furthermore, has benefited from Fatah's strategic errors. Gulf States cut off their support for the PLO after Yasser Arafat backed Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, channeling more Gulf funds to Hamas.⁴⁶⁴ Moreover,

⁴⁵⁹ Gunning, *Hamas in Politics: Democracy, Religion, Violence*: 39.

⁴⁶⁰ U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #63A, July 29, 2011.

⁴⁶¹ Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*: 178.

⁴⁶² Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*: 177.

⁴⁶³ Azzam Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2009): 78.

⁴⁶⁴ Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*: 63.

Hamas profited from the increasingly poor reputation of Fatah as a corrupt organization, tainted by cronyism. As Fatah became more heavily involved in the peace process, it received more international donations and was therefore less dependent on local revenue. This created a pseudo-rentier like scenario in which Fatah had less incentive to be responsive to the local population. Hamas filled in this gap as the Islamists retained a reputation for honesty and lack of corruption.

Charity, Politics, and Violence

Hamas is a multidimensional organization. It contains a political and a militant element, while also offering extensive social services to the local population. It provides medical, religious and educational services to people in Gaza, the West Bank and within refugee camps. Although there is some dispute about the extent of the linkage between the political wing and the militant wing, the Ez Ed Din Al Qassam Brigades (European countries have argued that the two sides can be treated separately), Hamas provides monetary compensation to the families of suicide bombers, thereby incentivizing suicide attacks. In the 1980s, under Sheikh Yassin, Hamas also informally helped resolve disputes and adjudicating small claims, so its influence reached into the judicial sphere.⁴⁶⁵ Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, Hamas engaged in both politics and violence: it participated in elections, sometimes winning against Fatah, while also perpetrating suicide bombings throughout the territories. It has claimed responsibility for hundreds of suicide attacks against Israeli civilians since the 1990s, with hundreds of fatalities, and has developed an increasingly sophisticated arsenal, including the Qassam rockets it launched into Israel during the 2008 war, Operation Cast Lead. Its popularity, however, has not

⁴⁶⁵ Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*: 236.

always been consistently high. In 1996, for example, polling data showed that only 3.2 percent of Palestinians trusted Sheikh Yassin, while 41 percent trusted Yasser Arafat.⁴⁶⁶ But when the Oslo process began to fail and Camp David stalled, Hamas grew in popularity and military strength.⁴⁶⁷

Ideologically, Hamas shares the conservative Islamist commitments of its parent organization, including the spread of Islamic education in order to Islamize society. In addition to the religious elements of Hamas, it is also a militant Palestinian nationalist organization. The charter promises to wage jihad against Israel and in the long term, Hamas seeks to create an Islamic state in historic Palestine, which it believes is an Islamic Waqf (Islamic religious endowment). Nationalism, for Hamas, is not just political, but it is also a religious mandate. The group rejects the Israeli-Palestinian peace process because, as its charter states, “For renouncing any part of Palestine means renouncing part of the religion; the nationalism of the Islamic Resistance Movement is part of its faith, the movement educates its members to adhere to its principles and to raise the banner of Allah over their homeland as they fight their Jihad...”⁴⁶⁸ This means that Hamas has rejected internationally sponsored negotiations, most notably, the Oslo process.

Hamas’ use of violence is an important part of its overall strategy. Suicide terrorism is one unique feature of the group. It became official Hamas policy starting in 1994 and this was the first Palestinian group to employ the tactic.⁴⁶⁹ Throughout the 1990s, Hamas was responsible for so many attacks that it is widely believed to have contributed to the 1996 defeat of Labor’s Shimon Peres in favor of right wing Likud candidate Beyamin Netanyahu, whose platform

⁴⁶⁶ Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*: 83.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁴⁶⁸ “Hamas Charter.”, Article 13

⁴⁶⁹ Conal Urquhart, “Hamas in Call to End Suicide Bombings,” *The Guardian*, April 8, 2006.

rejected the Oslo process. The total number of attacks that Hamas is responsible for is in dispute, but the Council on Foreign Relations uses the figure of 350 attacks since 1993.⁴⁷⁰

Hamas claims that it targets Israel and does not want to widen the conflict to include the West or the United States, although approximately two dozen Americans have died as a result of Hamas attacks, and American policymakers have expressed concern that it would attack the United States or U.S. interests in the future.⁴⁷¹ Sheikh Ahmed Yassin said after 9/11 that Hamas was not interested in joining Al Qaeda's war against the United States, "We in Hamas: our battle is on the Palestinian land. We are not ready to move our battle out of the occupied Palestinian territories."⁴⁷² But after the assassinations of Shiekh Yassin, the State Department issued a travel warning for American travelers in Gaza due to threats his successor, Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, made, vowing revenge against Israel and the United States.⁴⁷³ This threat, which he withdrew a day later, is part of a larger context of bellicose rhetoric Hamas leaders have used against the United States, but so far Hamas has not attacked the U.S.

Policy Window 1: The Clinton Administration and the Peace Process

American policy toward Hamas was initially low-level engagement, but then changed to containment during the Clinton administration. Why did this shift take place? Adapting Kingdon's model to the case of Hamas, I will argue that the Clinton administration constituted a window of opportunity, given Clinton's strong commitment to the peace process. Developments

⁴⁷⁰ Bryony Jones, "Q&A: What Is Hamas," *CNN*, November 24, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/16/world/meast/hamas-explainer/index.html>.

⁴⁷¹ Senator Robert C. Byrd's expressed concerns about Hamas attacking the United State in a March, 2004 Senate hearing. *Department of Homeland Security Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2005: Hearing Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 108th Cong.* (Senator Robert C. Byrd, March 23, 2004).

⁴⁷² Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*: 89.

⁴⁷³ Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*: 203.

in the policy streams also helped redefine Hamas from a potential problem to a serious one that required a diplomatic response. In this context, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of Hamas to a new solution: containment.

To understand the evolution of U.S. policy toward Hamas, it is important to examine how U.S. officials initially treated the group. Hamas' activities during the first Intifada drew American attention to the organization, but Hamas was not a high priority for diplomats. At that time, U.S. policymakers were much more concerned about secular Palestinian militant groups, but they were aware of the Islamists in the Palestinian territories and paid attention to their relative influence in the course of normal diplomatic reporting. The State Department maintained contacts with Hamas as early as 1989, but when pressed on the issue, the State Department released a statement in October of that year, which said, "American diplomats have contacts with a wide range of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. However, contrary to a recent report in *The Jerusalem Post*, the U.S. does not take a position on which Palestinians or groups from the occupied territories should participate in talks with Israel." ⁴⁷⁴

There was a concern emerging at that time, however, about the influence of Islamism, although this was overwhelmed by a greater attention to secular nationalist groups. ⁴⁷⁵ A cable from the Jerusalem consulate presents an early State Department assessment of Hamas and argues that Islamic fundamentalists challenge the hegemony of the secular Palestinian groups. ⁴⁷⁶ The consulate expressed uncertainty about Hamas' strength, but described it as a "factor to be reckoned with in considering the future of the Intifada on the West Bank" and noted that it might

⁴⁷⁴ "U.S. Denial," *The Jerusalem Post*, October 24, 1989.

⁴⁷⁵ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #799.

⁴⁷⁶ "Fundamentalism and the Intifada: Defining the Issues" (State Department, Jerusalem Consulate, September 23, 1988), Wikileaks.

serve as a spoiler in any future peace process. By 1990, the Soviet Union had collapsed and with it, militant leftist groups that benefited from Soviet support.⁴⁷⁷ Religious groups like Hamas began to fill the ideological vacuum. American diplomats seem to have been aware of this shift in fortunes. One State Department cable observed that Hamas was capitalizing on anti-American sentiment in the wake of the Gulf crisis and U.S. troop presence in Saudi Arabia, along with the stalled peace process.⁴⁷⁸

Some West Bank Palestinians speculated that Israel bolstered Hamas and other Islamists in order to counter the appeal of the secular PLO and split the Palestinians. To justify this claim, West Bankers argued that Hamas members distributed literature and gave interviews with the press without Israeli interference, some individuals who had previously collaborated with Israeli officials were observed participating in Hamas events, and finally, Hamas members were rarely detained in comparison to the number of PLO members arrested. But embassy officials dismissed this charge, arguing that while Israeli officials might be ignoring Hamas activities, there is not enough evidence to suggest they are actively supporting Hamas.⁴⁷⁹ Indeed, Israel eventually outlawed Hamas and as a State Department cable from September, 1989 reported, “Earlier in the uprising, some Israeli occupation officials indicated that Hamas served as a useful counter to the secular organizations loyal to the PLO. A number of Palestinians loyal to the PLO alleged that the IDF was using Hamas for such a purpose. Outlawing the organization indicates that the IDF no longer sees—if it ever did—utility in allowing Hamas to operate. The Israelis may have been particularly troubled over the difficulty of penetrating the organization. As

⁴⁷⁷ Paul Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001): 42.

⁴⁷⁸ “Fatah and Hamas Claim Reconciliation” (State Department, Jerusalem Consulate, September 25, 1990), Wikileaks.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

Hamas has directed more violence against alleged collaborators, it is likely that the occupation authorities decided action was needed to discourage its further growth.”⁴⁸⁰ This suggests that American policymakers were aware of the violent activities Hamas engaged in, as well as the potentially growing influence they could have, particularly in the Gaza strip, but the group had not yet registered on the American policy radar as a major threat.

As the Intifada continued, embassy officials became aware of a shift in fortunes as Hamas gained more local and regional influence, while the PLO began to lose favor among Palestinians and its Gulf patrons. The PLO made an important strategic error by supporting, or at least not clearly condemning Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, thereby improving the fortunes of its competitor Hamas. Arafat’s decision produced a split in the PLO leadership and led to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from Kuwait.⁴⁸¹ During the summer of 1990, Fatah, the main faction of the PLO, and Hamas were engaging in a series of clashes and dueling leaflets. By September of that year, according to a State Department cable, the groups issued a joint leaflet announcing their reconciliation. What makes this communique significant is that the reconciliation, “strongly favors Hamas positions and programs” and “the leaflet, which appears to give greater stature to Hamas and a degree of parity with Fatah (which it had not had in the past), is widely viewed here as a reflection of gains made by the Islamic fundamentalists in the occupied territories vis-à-vis the PLO secular nationalists following the breakdown in the Peace Process and the eruption of the Gulf Crisis....A Fatah member active in

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ “Angry Welcome for Palestinians in Kuwait,” *BBC News*, May 30, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1361060.stm>.

the discussions....told a local Palestinian journalist that the document was virtually dictated by Hamas".⁴⁸²

The United States engaged in fact-finding contacts with Hamas in the early years of the group's existence, even when it was engaging in violence. In October, 1989, the Jerusalem Post reported that the U.S. was engaging in diplomatic contacts with Hamas officials in Amman, "with a view to incorporating two fundamentalist representatives from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the proposed Cairo talks with Israel".⁴⁸³ There were at least two meetings in January and February 1993 between U.S. officials and Hamas representatives in Amman, but a third meeting was cancelled when Hamas requested a meeting with the American Ambassador, Roger Harrison.⁴⁸⁴

The Jerusalem Post also reports that

[Hamas spokesman Ibrahim Ghousheh] succeeded in establishing a dialogue with the US after the [1992] deportation of the 415 Hamas activists to south Lebanon. Several of the deportees were connected to the US. Dr. Mahmud Azhar, a Gaza physician, participated in a Hamas congress in Kansas City, Missouri. He later was among those invited to the first meeting between Palestinian leaders and US special envoy Dennis Ross in Jerusalem in May 1989.... The US Embassy sent a political officer to Hamas headquarters and Ghousheh briefed the diplomat on the organization's position. The conversation then veered into other areas, including Hamas positions on the Arab-Israel conflict and Islamic fundamentalist movements around the Middle East.⁴⁸⁵

Other reports described the 1993 meetings both as a discussion about the deportees and informational sessions to learn about Hamas in general.⁴⁸⁶ Hamas leader Muhammed Nazzal claimed that Hamas tried to educate the United States about the organization to prevent Hamas

⁴⁸² "Fatah and Hamas Claim Reconciliation."

⁴⁸³ "U.S. Denial."

⁴⁸⁴ Voice of Israel- Israeli-Palestinian Affairs, "Israeli Radio on Reported US-Hamas Contacts in Jordan," *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, March 4, 1993.

⁴⁸⁵ Steve Rodan, "Meet Mr. Hamas," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 24, 1993:14.

⁴⁸⁶ Barghoudi, "The Islamists in Jordan and the Palestinian Occupied Territories":156.

from being listed as a terrorist organization.⁴⁸⁷ In April, 1993, the State Department issued its list of organizations known to use terrorist means and included Hamas.⁴⁸⁸ Interestingly, Assistant Secretary of State Pelletreau, in a 1996 speech for the Council on Foreign Relations, said that he had met with leaders of Hamas who rejected violence. Although he did not indicate when his meetings took place, this statement suggests that at some point, U.S. officials distinguished between violent and nonviolent members of the organization.⁴⁸⁹

Such contacts were consistent with the general American policy of reaching out to non-state actors in order to acquire information about the local political climate. Some diplomats describe this policy forming as a result of lessons learned from the Islamic revolution. The Shah discouraged diplomats from making contact with opposition groups and as a result, embassy officials were reliant on the Iranian government and SAVAK, the Iranian secret police, for information. Former Ambassador to Pakistan Robert Oakley explained, "So the order came from Washington that we wouldn't talk to these people...It was a gag order, and it left us ill-placed to deal with the situation once the Shah was gone."⁴⁹⁰ Similar to American policy toward the Egyptian and Jordanian Muslim Brotherhoods, there were no top-down restrictions on contact and as a result, U.S. ambassadors had decision autonomy. Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East in the Reagan Administration, explained this policy toward Islamic groups, "In 1988, I asked all our posts to contribute ideas on how to enhance our information."⁴⁹¹ The Iraq invasion of Kuwait generated another push from Washington to make contact with Islamist groups. One U.S. diplomat explained why, "We wanted to explain that our position

⁴⁸⁷ Voice of Israel- Israeli-Palestinian Affairs, "Israeli Radio on Reported US-Hamas Contacts in Jordan."

⁴⁸⁸ See also Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*: 194-197.

⁴⁸⁹ Pelletreau, "Dealing with the Muslim Politics of the Middle East: Algeria, Hamas, Iran."

⁴⁹⁰ Jane Friedman, "U.S. Weighs Talks with Terrorists," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 29, 1993: 3.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

[against Iraq] was not anti-Islam but to contain aggression... We wanted to find out more about their views. And they weren't hostile to us."⁴⁹²

But these contacts with Hamas were a major source of contention for Israel, the PLO, as well as Washington policymakers. U.S. diplomats did not deny that contacts with the group had taken place, but they were described as “contacts” and not official dialogue. One diplomat in Amman said, "We were going after them to the extent that we were interested in talking... We sent them the lowest-level official that we possibly could. We wanted to know something about them."⁴⁹³ Congress reacted negatively to reports of contacts. A statement by Senator D’Amato reflects this sentiment, “Additionally, on Wednesday it was revealed that the State Department has just put a halt to its meetings with Hamas in Jordan, Jerusalem, and Tel Aviv. This is outrageous. We do not meet with the PLO, and we should not meet with Hamas. Why were our diplomats meeting with these murderers? Both groups commit murder and outrageous acts of terrorism. We exclude the PLO and we must exclude Hamas.”⁴⁹⁴ In the context of brewing controversy over U.S. contacts with the group, in March, 1993, the United States suspended its contacts with Hamas and as State Department spokesman Richard Baucher explained, "We don't have a political dialogue and given our current situation we have instructed our embassies not to continue the contacts."⁴⁹⁵

At this point, American policy toward Hamas began to shift to containment. For example, in 1994, in the wake of numerous Hamas suicide attacks, Clinton initiated an international summit to address the issue of terrorism and how it was undermining the peace process. In

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Rodan, “Meet Mr. Hamas.”: 14.

⁴⁹⁴ D’Amato: 4239.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid. See also Wooten, *Hamas: The Organization, Goals, and Tactics of a Militant Palestinian Movement*: 7.

January 1995, he issued Executive Order 12947 to block funding and freeze assets of designated organizations that disrupted the peace process and Hamas was listed as a Specially Designated Terrorist organization. And counterterrorism legislation passed in 1996 designated Hamas as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

The policy window afforded by the Clinton administration and its commitment to the peace process allowed policy entrepreneurs to link the problem of Hamas as a spoiler to a new solution: containment. Containment in this context meant that U.S. policymakers not only halted all diplomatic contacts with the group, but they also acted to prevent any U.S. funds from reaching Hamas. The shift from engagement to containment can best be understood by addressing the developments within the policy streams that allowed policymakers to join this problem and solution together.

Problems, Policies, and Politics during the Clinton Administration

The Problem Stream

Recall that events in the problem stream draw attention to an issue and determine if it comes to be defined as a problem, requiring a solution. The Clinton administration drew on developments in the problem stream that helped redefine Hamas from a potential problem into a spoiler in the peace process and a terrorist organization. A State Department official described American policy during this period,

Once Arafat signed the Oslo accords in 1993, there was an intense conflict between Hamas and Fatah. The PLO was making peace with Israel so we shared common adversary at that time. There was always in that period and beyond, going into the Bush administration, very much a calculation that you didn't want to do things that would help Hamas because it would hurt the PLO. We wouldn't want do anything that would strengthen Hamas because it would be at the expense of Fatah and the PLO. Hamas was

seen then as it is seen today as a terrorist organization committed to armed struggle and destruction of Israel, antithetical to our policy of promoting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. They're the enemy of peace so from a policy point of view, there was no reason to have anything to do with them and from a policy point of view there was a huge down side, both in terms of the congressional reaction there would be in the U.S. and it would hurt the Palestinians who were engaged in peacemaking.⁴⁹⁶

Although the PLO had once been an enemy of the United States, Hamas was now considered the main target of American hostility. The same official explained,

There was a time when we went through this with the PLO before it was taken off the terrorism list and there was a moment when Andy Young, the Ambassador to the UN shook hands with the PLO representative and it caused a huge furor in the U.S., so no foreign service officer would get themselves into that position and no political appointee would be put in that situation [with Hamas]. But in those days Hamas was not knocking on the door.... You had a situation in which once the PLO decided to make peace with Israel and renounce terror, there were good guys and bad guys, we had good guys to support and bad guys to fight. [In terms of] Hamas, we were never prepared to accept a more nuanced approach to them.⁴⁹⁷

As Hamas escalated its efforts to oppose the peace process, the American government viewed the organization as an increasing threat. This explains why Secretary of State Madeline Albright's testimony before the Senate Appropriations committee placed Hamas within the same category as Hezbollah, the PKK, and Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers.⁴⁹⁸ As one senior State Department official described this period, "The threat increased during the Intifada in 99 and...going back, in 1996 where they stepped up terrorism against the peace process and contributed to election of Netanyahu and defeat of Peres, [Hamas was] much more of a threat to our interests and that became more the case in the [second] Intifada where again, they were the leading edge of the terrorism. They were the suicide bombers, and so they were becoming a greater threat to the whole peacemaking structure that we had struggled so hard to build from

⁴⁹⁶ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #799.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ *Hearing Before the Counterterrorism and Infrastructure Protection Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 106th Cong., 1st Sess. (Testimony of Madeline Albright, February 4, 1999).*

1993 on. They were seen as the enemy. Accommodation was never considered, and the Israelis were already taking harsher measures against them so we didn't have to."⁴⁹⁹

Secretary of State Warren Christopher's May 1996 speech in front of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy emphasized both that terrorism was a high priority for the administration and this priority was closely linked to defending the Middle East peace process. "As such, terrorism is a threat to our national interests—not simply in the Middle East, but around the world. President Clinton has rightly identified terrorism as one of the most important security challenges we face in the wake of the Cold War..... America's most critical role, however—and the one I want to focus on today—is defending the Middle East peace process and the peacemakers against the vicious attacks of their enemies. Terrorists and their supporters are now engaged in a systematic assault on Israel and the peace process."⁵⁰⁰

This speech reveals important aspects of American policy during this period. First, the peace process was a major policy priority during the Clinton administration, reaching the presidential level. Hamas' efforts to disrupt it weighed heavily in American decisions to designate it as a terrorist organization and cut off nascent contacts. Second, Hamas' militant activities such as the repeated suicide bombings also posed a threat to Israel's security interests, and given the strong alliance partnership between Israel and the United States, policymakers had little incentive to maintain contacts and far more incentive to contain the group. Finally, the Clinton administration also favored empowering Fatah and the PLO, Palestinians who

⁴⁹⁹ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #799.

⁵⁰⁰ Warren Christopher, "Address to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy Annual Soref Symposium," *Congressional Record* (May 24, 1996): E895.

participated in and supported the peace process. Maintaining contacts with a rejectionist group would undermine the legitimacy of the administration's Palestinian partners.

American officials reacted viscerally to Hamas' use of suicide bombings as a tactic. Secretary of State Albright reflects on this issue in her memoirs, "I had many conversations with Arab leaders who argued that anti-Israeli groups like Hamas and Hezbollah shouldn't be considered terrorists...I was told, 'They're only doing what American patriots did in their war for independence against Britain.'" I replied, "I don't remember George Washington and Paul Revere telling their sons to blow themselves up in order to kill British children."⁵⁰¹

Although the group engaged in violent tactics before the signing of the Oslo Accords, in 1994 the attacks began to escalate significantly. And then four suicide bombings within a three week period in Spring of 1996 brought the peace process to a crisis point.⁵⁰² In March, 1996 President Clinton responded by initiating a "Summit of the Peacemakers" in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, followed by a two day conference in Washington to support the peace process and denounce terrorism. He followed the summit with a visit to Israel. All of the regional leaders were invited to Sharm al-Sheikh except Iran, Iraq, and Libya and twenty-nine attended, including Saudi Arabia. Lebanon and Syria declined.⁵⁰³ In a news conference with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak following the Summit, Clinton specifically referred to Hamas, "We also discussed a matter of great urgency, the absolute necessity to combat Hamas and all other extremist groups using terror to perpetuate hatred. We agreed that the same courage is needed to fight the enemies of peace that Chairman Arafat showed in making peace. I want to reaffirm that

⁵⁰¹ Madeline Albright, *Madam Secretary* (New York: Miramax Books, 2003): 377.

⁵⁰² Serge Schmemmann, "Summit in Egypt: Clinton; A Force of 10,000 Guarding Clinton," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1996: A1.

⁵⁰³ Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004): 248.

the United States will stand with all friends of peace. Terrorists must not be allowed—must not be allowed—to intimidate the peoples of this region into abandoning the peace process. At this moment of opportunity, those who perpetuate violence pose the greatest threat to the Palestinian people and to all Arab people.⁵⁰⁴ One outcome of the summit was the promise to cut off funding for Hamas and to accomplish this aim, participants formed a working group to develop recommendations.⁵⁰⁵

In addition to the Sharm al-Sheikh effort, there were other ways that the United States exerted pressure on allies to help contain Hamas. American officials applied pressure on Jordan to curtail Hamas activities within its territory and eventually Jordan expelled Hamas entirely.⁵⁰⁶ Secretary of State Albright also pressured Yasser Arafat to make arrests and rein in Hamas in her first meeting with him. “I said that we needed to see actions, not promises, and that terror was every bit as destructive to the Palestinians cause as it was to Israel. He responded by agreeing to develop a plan for dismantling the terrorist infrastructure of Hamas- a plan about which we would never stop haggling.”⁵⁰⁷ President Clinton also personally pushed Arafat to contain Hamas, for example when he met with Egyptian President Mubarak and Yasser Arafat in October, 1994 in Cairo, Clinton asked Arafat to more assertively fight Hamas terrorism and promised to help address Palestinian concerns about Israel’s delayed turnover of territory to Palestinians that had been allocated for their control under the terms of the Oslo agreement.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ William J. Clinton, “The President’s News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Cairo,” ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (The American Presidency Project, October 26, 1994), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=49371>.

⁵⁰⁵ John F. Harris and John Lancaster, “Clinton, Others at Summit Warn Middle East Terrorists; New Mood of Peace Seen Despite Lack of Firm Steps,” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1996: A01.

⁵⁰⁶ Tamimi, *Hamas: Unwritten Chapters*: 78.

⁵⁰⁷ Albright, *Madam Secretary*: 297.

⁵⁰⁸ William J. Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004): 625.

Moreover, the Clinton administration coordinated with G-8 partners to reduce Iran's support for Hamas and other groups that target the peace process.⁵⁰⁹

Another important development in the problem stream that affected U.S. policy toward Hamas relates to the priority the Clinton administration assigned to counterterrorism in general. Thus, the administration's decision to move from engaging in limited talks between diplomats and Hamas to isolation and containment can be seen as a product of the broader bureaucratic political environment in which this decision was situated. The administration increasingly recognized the importance of counterterrorism, although Coll describes counterterrorism budgeting and policymaking during the first two years of the administration as "dispersed and confused".⁵¹⁰ This fits with Kingdon's model, suggesting that even when individual members of the bureaucracy acknowledge the importance of a policy priority, matching problems with solutions is not always a linear and systematic process. Often it requires an external shock to make a substantial change. In this case, it was a collection of shocks. The first World Trade Center Bombing in February, 1993, generated a swift response from the top levels of the American government to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators, although this event alone did not generate a substantial change in the institutional approach to terrorism. It did, along with other terrorist attacks however, help to bring the issue of terrorism higher on the agenda for President Clinton and Richard Clarke, National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terror*, 1999.

⁵¹⁰ Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004): 318.

⁵¹¹ Richard A. Clarke, *Your Government Failed You* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008): 207.

It wasn't until the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995 that the sense of urgency increased enough to generate a terrorism policy review in the National Security Council and a major piece of new counterterrorism legislation.⁵¹² The Oklahoma City Bombing in April 1995 occurred only a month after the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway that killed 13 people and injured thousands, which led the administration to focus on U.S. vulnerability to terrorism and WMDs.⁵¹³

These attacks drew administrative attention to the issue of terrorism and triggered changes to U.S. counterterrorism policy that ultimately affected policy toward Hamas. In June 1995 the administration issued Presidential Decision Directive 39, "U.S Policy on Counterterrorism", which focused on the WMD/Terrorism threat. Benjamin and Simon describe it as "probably the first major policy document to address head-on the threat of "asymmetric warfare".⁵¹⁴ It also created structural changes to manage the terrorism threat, namely centralizing counterterrorism policy within the White House. Under the authorities of PDD-39 and later PDD-62, Richard Clarke, counterterrorism director at the NSC, focused on threats like Osama Bin Laden, but the implications of these Presidential Decision Directives and the shift in the administration's focus with respect to terrorism, had broader implications. Richard Clarke gained greater influence in the administration as a result of these directives; he was named the first National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and could now attend meetings with the foreign policy cabinet when terrorism was discussed.⁵¹⁵ Terrorism was seen as not simply a law

⁵¹² Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*: 318.

⁵¹³ Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror* (New York: Random House, 2002): 227.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 230

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 233

enforcement matter, but a major national security problem.⁵¹⁶ The change of emphasis is exemplified by presidential efforts in 1995 and 1996 to work with other countries to prevent them from harboring terrorists, and increasing the FBI and CIA counterterrorism budgets.⁵¹⁷

This change in emphasis that raised terrorism higher on the decision agenda impacted Hamas policy dramatically. Hamas was swept up in the broader reforms to counterterrorism policy, and specific policies were formulated to address Hamas. For example, in 1995, Clinton issued Executive Order 12947 to freeze the assets of those who disrupt the peace process and Hamas was included on that list.⁵¹⁸ The Executive Order created the designation, “Specially Designated Terrorists”, and prohibited financial transactions with these groups. The list is maintained by the Treasury Department and twelve organizations were initially named, including Hezbollah and Hamas.

These moves demonstrate that Hamas came to be viewed as a terrorist organization in the broader context of evolving American counterterrorism policy. In 1995, counterterrorism was a significant feature of the State of the Union address and attacks by Hamas were prominently featured in the speech. The President promised to introduce counterterrorism legislation, and specifically mentioned the Hamas suicide attacks against Israel, without actually directly naming Hamas. “I know that in the face of such evil, it is hard for the people in the Middle East to go forward. But the terrorists represent the past, not the future. We must and we will pursue a comprehensive peace between Israel and all her neighbors in the Middle East.... And tonight I call on all our allies and peace-loving nations throughout the world to join us with renewed

⁵¹⁶ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *9/11 Commission Report*, July 22, 2004, www.9-11commission.gov/report/index.htm, 108.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁵¹⁸ Jim Zanotti, *Hamas: Background and Issues for Congress* (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, December 2, 2010): 41.

fervor in a global effort to combat terrorism. We cannot permit the future to be marred by terror and fear and paralysis.⁵¹⁹ Hamas was seen both as part of the administration's counterterrorism goals, as well as a dangerous threat to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

In the wake of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, Clinton proposed new counterterrorism legislation, which ultimately affected Hamas. But the partisan debates surrounding this legislation reflect that although the political stream was opposed to Hamas, policies that affected the group were subject to the push and pull of the policymaking process. Therefore, anti-terrorism legislation that included Hamas was not necessarily easy to pass during this period. "The Omnibus Counterterrorism Act of 1995", introduced by President Clinton, became fodder for partisan debates and the final legislation didn't pass until a year after the Oklahoma City Bombing. Clinton was disappointed with the resulting Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (1996)⁵²⁰ and in his radio address on April 13, 1996 he spoke about it,

Under pressure from the Washington gun lobby, House Republicans took that bill apart piece by piece. Well, now it's time they put it back together. America cannot afford to settle for a fake antiterrorism bill. We need the real thing. And on my watch, I'm determined to get it. This is what real antiterrorism should have: First, we need explicit authority to prevent terrorist groups like Hamas from raising money in the United States for their dirty deeds...yet the Republicans in Congress continue to oppose this commonsense initiative. Why? Because the Washington gun lobby told them to. One Republican Congressman had another reason, an unbelievable one. He actually told his own committee chairman, "I trust Hamas more than my own Government."⁵²¹ Well, I don't. And I don't think most Americans or most Members of Congress in either party do.⁵²²

⁵¹⁹ William J. Clinton, "State of the Union Address" (Washington, D.C., January 1995).

⁵²⁰ *The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act*, 1996, <http://www.fas.org/irp/crs/96-499.htm>.

⁵²¹ This refers to comments made by Representative Henry Hyde (R-IL) in which he said he heard one of his Republicans say, "I trust Hamas more than I trust my own government".

⁵²² William J. Clinton, "The President's Radio Address," ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (The American Presidency Project, April 13, 1996), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=52673>.

A minor controversy erupted over what Congressman allegedly made this comment, but what makes this address significant is that President Clinton used Hamas as the prototype for the sort of organization the legislation should combat. He also ridiculed any legislator that would take a soft approach to the group.

The most important aspect of the resulting legislation regarding U.S. policy toward Hamas was the new process of officially identifying groups as terrorist organizations. The Anti-terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) amended section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to create the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation. After an extensive inter-agency vetting process including the Departments of Justice, Treasury, State, the FBI and intelligence agencies, the first groups were designated and added to the list in October, 1997. 30 groups were listed, including Hamas and Hezbollah.

The conditions authorizing the Secretary of State to list an organization as an FTO are threefold: first, the organization must be foreign, second the organization must engage in terrorist activity and third, the terrorist activity must threaten the security of United States citizens or U.S. national security.⁵²³ Once a group is listed as an FTO, the Treasury Department can block financial assets and the Justice Department can assess whether deportations should be initiated. Members of the organization can be denied visas or deported immediately.

The designation serves multiple purposes; it stigmatizes the group, draws attention to the group's activities, provides a diplomatic tool when dealing with other countries that may engage with the group, and provides clarity for U.S. government agencies for coordinating policy with

⁵²³ *The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act.*

respect to the group.⁵²⁴ The AEDPA also allowed U.S. citizens to initiate civil suits against state sponsors of terrorist organizations who cause personal injury or death. It wasn't until the AEDPA that knowingly financing a group on the list became a criminal offense with consequences including up to ten years in prison.⁵²⁵ The Clinton administration froze about \$100,000 worth of Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad, but did not freeze assets from other FTOs.⁵²⁶

In terms of the diplomatic implications of the FTO status, diplomats do not have contacts with designated groups. There is some confusion over whether contacts are actually legally forbidden, but even if they were legal, official policy is to not meet with these groups. As one former U.S. official explained, "If you've got something like that, people don't mess around. You could lose your security clearance. There are plenty of ways to be punished; if you disobey orders, that is grounds for dismissal. It shows you think you are above the rules. I'm not aware of anyone who ever had any contact with a terrorist organization."⁵²⁷

The August 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania ratcheted up the level of administration attention to terrorism and urgency to take action against terrorist groups. The anti-terrorism climate trickled down to all groups designated as terrorist organizations, including Hamas. An example of the level of importance accorded to counterterrorism is when Richard Clarke created a unit of the Counterterrorism Security Group to handle incoming threat reports. This decision led to the inclusion of a flood of unfiltered intelligence reports in the Presidential

⁵²⁴ Audrey Kurth Kronin, *The "FTO List" and Congress: Sanctioning Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations* (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, October 21, 2003): 2-3.

⁵²⁵ Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*: 93.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 96

⁵²⁷ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #89.

Daily Briefing.⁵²⁸ Counterterrorism was also increasingly referred to in terms of “war”. For example, Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, wrote a memo in December, 1998 arguing, “We are at war. I want no resources or people spared in this effort.”⁵²⁹ Counterterrorism funding between 1998 and 2001 increased by 40%, but the issue was overshadowed by other concerns like the threat of a rising China, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. A former U.S. official explains, “These concerns fit better into the existing intellectual framework of US strategy. Policymaking is about making choices, and often between undesirable alternatives, with unclear information and with insufficient resources”.⁵³⁰ Thus, while counterterrorism policy changed dramatically in the 1990s, reforms were made in fits and starts, which helps explain why the U.S. approach to Hamas appears uneven and nonlinear.

The Policy Stream

Developments in the policy stream included debates about new emergent threats in the post-Cold War era, especially in the form of spreading extremism and terrorism from non-state actors. This helped contribute to the change in U.S. policy toward Hamas from engagement to containment. In a major policy speech, Anthony Lake, assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, spoke about American priorities in the post-Cold War era, focusing on extremism as a source of future threats.⁵³¹ Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox’s remarks in front of the Denver Council on Foreign Relations in September 1996 described why he thought terrorism became a higher priority. “The fall of the Soviet Union and

⁵²⁸ Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*: 418.

⁵²⁹ The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *9/11 Commission Report*: 357.

⁵³⁰ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Rethinking Sovereignty: American Strategy in the Age of Terrorism,” *Survival* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 129.

⁵³¹ Anthony Lake, “The Middle East Moment; At the Heart of Our Policy: Extremism Is the Enemy,” *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1994: C1.

the end of the Cold War did not, alas, bring forth the “End of History” or a new dawn of world peace and harmony. Instead, this change brought into sharper focus serious global problems and threats...Perhaps none of these issues has caused Americans more anxiety than terrorism...Terrorism...is an ancient evil, and American interests have been targeted by terrorists abroad for years. But now, the threat seems to loom larger, perhaps because the threat of conventional war against the U.S. has declined, and because we’ve recently been struck by two major terrorist acts at home- the World Trade Center and Oklahoma City Bombings.”⁵³²

In September 1995, Secretary of State Warren Christopher’s UN speech emphasized that the post-Cold War threats are increasingly from non-state actors.⁵³³ And in January, 2000, in Clinton’s last State of the Union Address, he ad-libbed that the major threat to the United States in the future would be non-state actors. “I predict to you, when most of us are long gone, but sometime in the next ten to twenty years, the major security threat this country will face will come for the enemies of the nation-state: the narco-traffickers and the terrorists and the organized criminals who will be organized together, working together, with increasing access to ever more sophisticated chemical and biological weapons”⁵³⁴ Although Hamas was not linked to such activities, these statements reflect a climate that was growing increasingly sensitive to the dangers posed by violent non-state actors. These concerns were not limited to one particular party. Both democrats and republicans expressed concerns about the growing threat of non-state actors.

⁵³² “Ambassador Philip C. Wilcox, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Remarks Before the Denver Council on Foreign Relations, Denver, Colorado, September 12, 1996,” in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft, vol. 1 (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007): 207.

⁵³³ “Warren Christopher, Secretary of State, Address to the 50th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, New York, September 25, 1995,” in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft, vol. 1 (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007): 128.

⁵³⁴ William J. Clinton, “State of the Union Address” (Washington, D.C., January 27, 2000).

Another development in the policy stream was that American officials began to see Hamas as a uniquely problematic organization. One former U.S. official distinguished between American perceptions of Hamas and other, nonmilitant Islamist groups, both in terms of its militancy, and the threat it poses to Israeli interests. He continued,

Hamas is different because of the context of the Palestinian issue. Hamas became the enemy of peace and Hamas also became the enemy of Fatah.... It was a zero sum game; if you were willing to legitimize Hamas by engaging with them, you were not only going to be facing intense opposition from Israel and Israel supporters in Congress, but from Palestinians. So even those who might say we don't have to do everything Israel wants, those guys who were more sympathetic to [Fatah] were engaged in a war with Hamas, so Hamas is a very different case. Hamas supported the armed struggle, they were militants, and they supported the destruction of Israel, which was different than Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the Muslim Brotherhood in Turkey. You see it today. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt said we will respect the peace treaty with Israel; the Muslim Brotherhood has rejected militancy, the very things that Hamas refuses to do.⁵³⁵

Clearly Hamas' militancy was an important issue for the administration, but violence alone cannot entirely explain U.S. policy, especially since diplomats engaged with the group until 1993, and the group had been violent since 1987. In keeping with Kingdon's model, once a critical mass of U.S. policymakers became aware of Hamas' militancy and started to pay more attention to it, the group came to be seen as a problem, requiring a solution.

In this context, administration officials also rejected the notion that militant groups may have a legitimate political wing. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expressed this perspective in testimony before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee in February, 1999, "Some say Hezbollah is not terrorist, because it has a political agenda. But that is sophistry. As long as it advocates indiscriminate violence and assassination, it is terrorist. The same is true of

⁵³⁵ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #799.

other groups, such as Hamas, the PKK, and Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers. ⁵³⁶ European countries were more willing to make a distinction between various wings of these organizations, but American policymakers refused to do so.

It is also significant that during this period, the prohibition against U.S. officials speaking with members of Hamas emerged. The notion of cutting off contacts with a non-state actor was not new to American policymakers. Indeed, a strong precedent existed with American policy toward the PLO.⁵³⁷ This helps explain some of the political sensitivities associated with the prohibition against contacts with groups like Hamas, even though the precise legalities of the policy were uncertain. In the case of the PLO, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger signed a secret memorandum of understanding with Israel in 1975, in which the U.S. agreed not to recognize or negotiate with the PLO until it acknowledged Israel's right to exist and accepted UN resolutions 242 and 338.⁵³⁸ The U.S. later mandated that the PLO renounce terrorism. The PLO met these conditions in late 1988 and official, direct contacts with U.S. diplomats resumed.

However, engagement with the PLO remained highly controversial. Secretary of State James Baker did not want to assume responsibility for the dialogue.⁵³⁹ Pro-Israel advocacy groups were strongly opposed to the U.S. reestablishing contacts with the PLO and asserted that the group still posed a threat. The American Israel Political Action Committee's journal, *Near East Report*, contained several highly critical essays about the American rapprochement with the

⁵³⁶ "Madeleine K. Albright, Secretary of State, Testimony Before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies, Washington D.C., February 4, 1999," in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft, vol. 1 (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007): 136.

⁵³⁷ For a detailed description of U.S.-PLO relations, see Stacie Leigh Pettyjohn, "Talking with Terrorists: American Policy Toward the PLO, Sinn Fein, and Hamas" (Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2009). See also Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan*.

⁵³⁸ "Israel-United States Memorandum of Understanding," September 1, 1975,

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/mou1975.html>.

⁵³⁹ Pettyjohn, "Talking with Terrorists: American Policy Toward the PLO, Sinn Fein, and Hamas.", 378

PLO during the late 1980s.⁵⁴⁰ As these debates were taking place, Hamas began to appear on the American policy radar. In the 1990s, as Hamas continued to engage in violent attacks against Israeli targets, AIPAC's journal shifted focus and devoted more critical attention to the threats posed by Hamas.⁵⁴¹ The controversy around establishing contacts with the PLO contextualizes the pressure group sensitivities associated with engaging with Hamas. There was already a precedent for outlawing contacts with non-state actors in the region. It further demonstrates that policies emerge in the midst of what Kingdon calls a "policy primeval soup" in which ideas circulate and reappear, under new circumstances.

The Political Stream

The political stream also created conditions that favored a shift from engagement to containment. There was a bipartisan consensus in Congress advocating for an aggressive stance against Hamas, exemplified by strongly anti-Hamas statements surrounding the first World Trade Center Bombing. In March, 1993, 57 senators signed a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher expressing support for the Secretary's inclusion of Hamas in the State Department's annual report on terrorist organizations. The letter noted, "The militant Islamic Hamas, which supports violent tactics, is a dangerously destabilizing force in the Middle East. It is clear that this group rejects the peace process and supports violence... Additionally, the group is irrevocably opposed to Israel's existence. ... Israel is not the only country that is threatened by the increasing support for militant Islamic fundamentalist groups similar to Hamas which use

⁵⁴⁰ "Pelletreau Meets with PLO Terrorists," *Near East Report* 33, no. 5 (January 30, 1989): 18–19 ; "U.S. Talks with Terrorist," *Near East Report* 33, no. 28 (July 10, 1989): 114–116 ; "No Talks with Terrorists," *Near East Report* 33, no. 30 (July 24, 1989): 122–123; "The U.S.-PLO Dialogue- One Year Later," *Near East Report* 33, no. 50 (December 11, 1989): 207–208.

⁵⁴¹ "Hamas Challenges the PLO," *Near East Report* 34, no. 31 (July 30, 1990): 142; "The Hamas Threat to Peace," *Near East Report* 37, no. 2 (January 11, 1993): 6–7.

terrorist tactics. Violent fundamentalist Islamic organizations are a destabilizing force throughout the Middle East. In the last year, these groups have grown in strength in the region, particularly in Egypt, Algeria, and Tunisia. Like Hamas, these groups are supported by Iran. ⁵⁴²

An interesting example of the sensitivities surrounding Hamas in Congress revolved around a 1993 Congressional Research Service report. Congressman Charles Schumer, along with the Anti-Defamation League, pressed the Congressional Research Service to revise the title of its background publication on Hamas from “Hamas: Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?” to “Hamas: The Goals and Tactics of a Militant Palestinian Organization”. The Congressman argued that the other title made it appear that the group was not a terrorist organization and changing the title would be more consistent with U.S. policy, given that in April, 1993, the group was added to the State Department’s list of terrorist organizations. ⁵⁴³

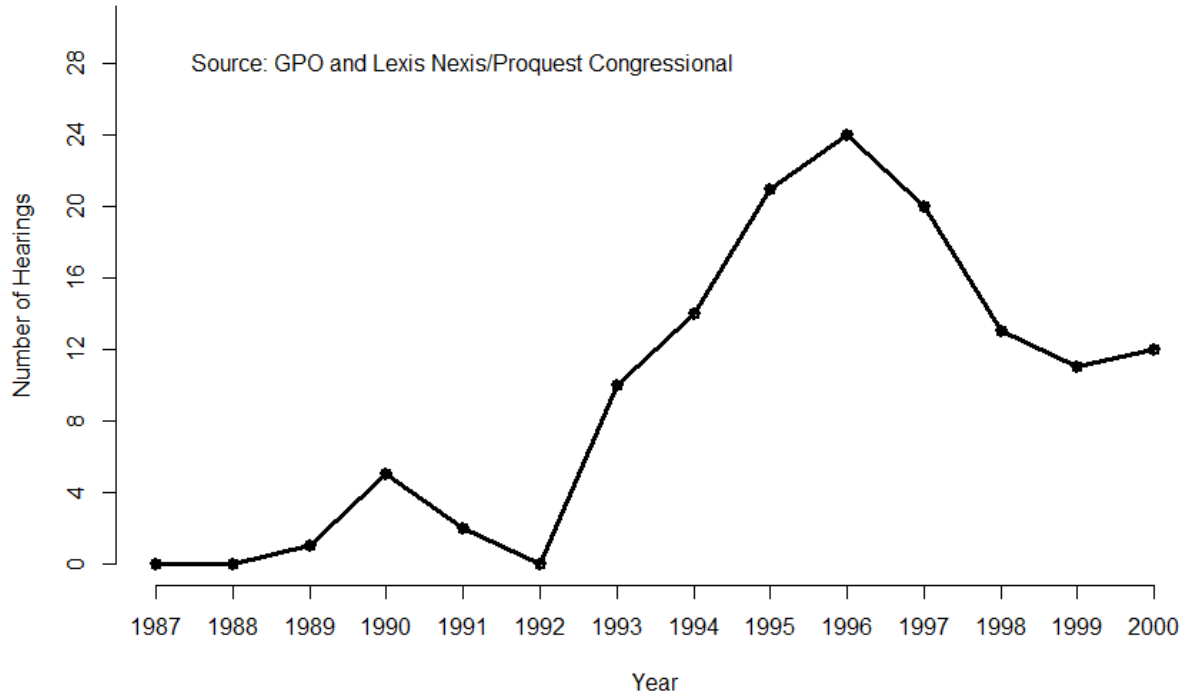
In terms of the level of attention paid to Hamas in political circles, Figure 4.1 ⁵⁴⁴ shows how congressional attention to Hamas rose abruptly beginning when U.S. contacts with the group became more controversial. It also corresponds with the Clinton administration’s involvement with the peace process as well as its counterterrorism efforts.

⁵⁴² “Letter to Warren Christopher,” *Congressional Record, U.S. Senate* 103rd Congress (March 18, 1993): 5550-5551.

⁵⁴³ Charles Schumer, *Congressional Record, U.S. House of Representatives* (October 14, 1993): 24746.

⁵⁴⁴ For this figure, I searched the GPO website for congressional hearings prior to 1998 that mention Hamas in any search field (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/home.action>). For hearings taking place after 1998, I searched Lexis Nexis/Proquest Congressional.

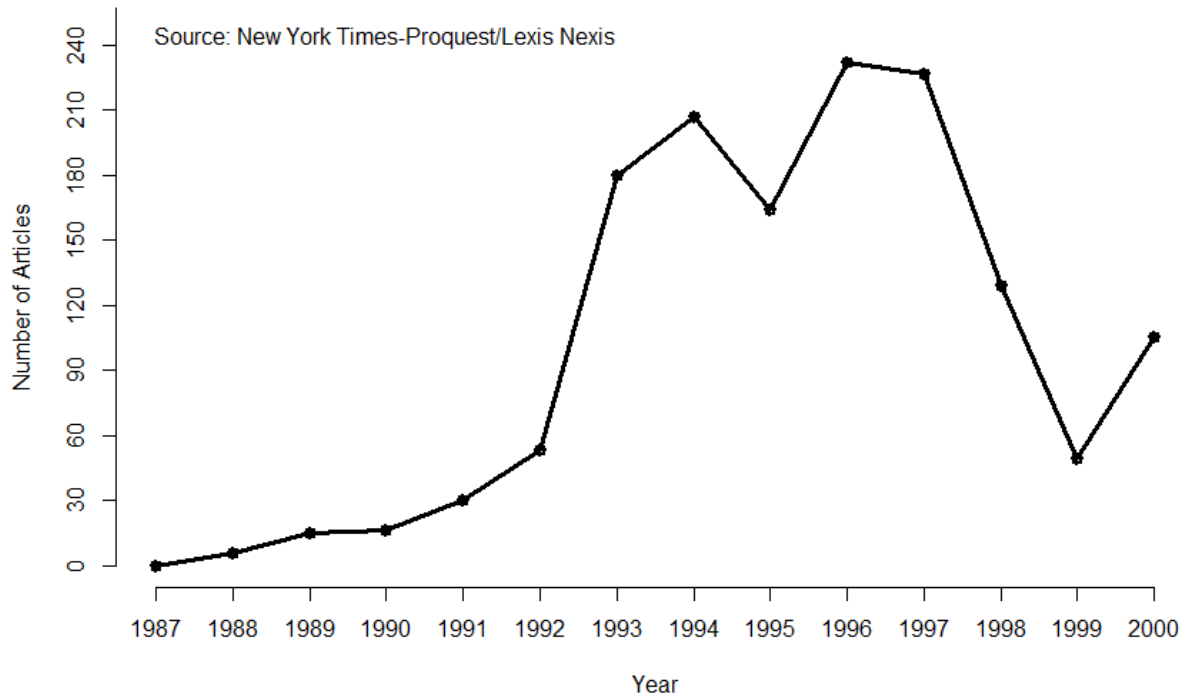
Fig. 4.1: Congressional Hearings Mentioning Hamas 1987-2000



Moreover, Figure 4.2⁵⁴⁵ reflects media attention to the group during this period, based on the number of New York Times articles mentioning the group. This figure illustrates that as American policy became more assertive, the group appeared in media discussions more frequently.

⁵⁴⁵ Media attention is represented by the number of New York Times articles that mention Hamas. I gathered this data by searching Proquest Historical (for articles up to 2007) and Lexis Nexis (2007-present) for articles that mention the group.

Fig. 4.2: Media Attention to Hamas 1987-2000



In sum, American policy toward Hamas shifted from low-level engagement to containment during this period because a window was created by the Clinton administration's commitment to the peace process. In that context, policy entrepreneurs drew on developments in the policy streams to pair the problem of Hamas (as spoiler of the peace process and terrorist organization) to a new solution: containment.

Policy Window 2: September 11, 2001

After 9/11 American policy toward Hamas changed from containment to adversarial opposition. Why did this shift take place? This section will argue that 9/11 constituted a window of opportunity making it possible for a more aggressive approach to Hamas. Developments in the policy streams also helped paint Hamas primarily as a terrorist organization that should be

included in the broader Global War on Terrorism. In this context, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of Hamas to a new solution: adversarial opposition.

An important component of the Global War on Terror was to block funding to terrorist groups. Building on efforts that began under the Clinton Administration, the Bush Administration made further strides in undermining Hamas funding sources by adding it to a series of terrorist lists in addition to the FTO designation. On September 23, 2001, President Bush issued Executive Order 13224, which named Hamas a “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” organization. Pointing to continued threats to the United States’ national security, foreign policy and economy, the Executive Order “declare[d] a national emergency to deal with that threat” And “...because of the pervasiveness and expansiveness of the financial foundation of foreign terrorists, financial sanctions may be appropriate for those foreign persons that support or otherwise associate with these foreign terrorists”.⁵⁴⁶ In a practical sense, this meant that if a U.S. NGO wanted to distribute a grant, it would have to obtain certification that the recipient organization did not support any associated individual, subsidiary, group or entity that appears on the list.⁵⁴⁷ If a U.S. business or NGO was found to have done business with an associate of a group on this list, consequences might include millions of dollars in fines or imprisonment. Hamas was also listed on the Terrorism Exclusion List, which had immigration implications. The list was generated from the USA Patriot Act of 2001 and gave the U.S. government the authority to deport or deny visas to non-citizens who materially support designated organizations.

⁵⁴⁶ “Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism: Executive Order 13224,” September 23, 2001, 13224, <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/eo/eo-13224.htm>.

⁵⁴⁷ “Acquisition & Assistance Policy Directive, USAID Policy Directive,” December 31, 2002, http://transition.usaid.gov/business/business_opportunities/cib/pdf/aapd02_19.pdf.

The financial war on terror initially targeted Al Qaeda, but then expanded to include other terrorist groups, among them was Hamas and affiliated charities. After Bush froze the assets of the Holy Land Foundation for its links with Hamas, he spoke about the financial war on terror. “The message is this: Those who do business with terror will do no business with the United States or anywhere else the United States can reach.”⁵⁴⁸ He cited a recent Hamas suicide attack and argued that money the group raised in the United States “pays for murder”. In the same news conference, Attorney General John Ashcroft added, “...with this action, we go beyond the Al Qaeda network to target groups whose violent actions are designed to destroy the Middle East peace process. The suicide bombings in Israel over the weekend and previous attacks claimed by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad over the last few years leave no doubt about the urgency of stopping terrorism in all its forms, whether the terrorism emanates from Afghanistan or from the West Bank and Gaza.”⁵⁴⁹ What’s noteworthy in Ashcroft’s comment is that he essentially said the financial War on Terror shifted to subsume groups that harm the peace process.

In 2002, the United States worked hard to convince the EU to designate Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organizations with the view to cutting off all financial aid to the organizations.⁵⁵⁰ The Bush administration did not distinguish between the military and political wing of Hamas. Therefore, American officials took issue with the EU for recognizing the political wing and only designating the Izzadin al Qassam brigades as a terrorist organization.

⁵⁴⁸ George W. Bush, “Remarks on the Financial Fight Against Terror,” ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (The American Presidency Project, December 4, 2001), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=64057>.

⁵⁴⁹ George W. Bush, Paul H. O’Neil, and John Ashcroft, “U.S. Government Freezes Holy Land Foundation Funds, News Conference, The White House, December 4, 2001,” in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft, vol. 3 (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007): 959.

⁵⁵⁰ “Designating Hamas and Hezbollah: Approaching EU Capitals” (U.S. Department of State, Secretary of State Communique to EU Embassies, December 7, 2002), Wikileaks.

Talking points issued in a memo from Secretary of State Colin Powell to American embassies in Europe suggested that posts emphasize the dangerous activities of two groups, Hamas and Hezbollah, and urge European allies to list them as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Allies should also be asked to consider the group's activities in formulating bilateral relations with Hamas and Hezbollah's main sponsors: Iran and Syria.⁵⁵¹

Like its predecessor, the Bush administration rejected the distinction between the military and social service/political wing of the organization and requested that the EU countries to do the same. American diplomats in Europe were instructed to communicate that Hamas receives a significant amount of its funding from Europe, along with regional support. They were also told to emphasize that funding potentially supports terrorist activities and that Hamas "poses an unusual and extraordinary threat to the Peace Process in the Middle East, which the United States views as critical to its national security, foreign policy and/or economic interests, through the incitement of terrorism and overt terrorist activities."⁵⁵² In addition to pressuring European allies to designate Hamas as an FTO, in 2002, Bush tried unsuccessfully to cut the link between Syria and Hamas by sending Colin Powell to meet with President Assad.⁵⁵³ During the meeting, Secretary Powell tried to extract promises from Syria to shut down Hamas' offices in Damascus, but his efforts did not bear fruit.

One of the unexpected outcomes of the policy to dismantle Hamas' funding architecture was to make Hamas even more dependent on funds from Iran. This was a cause for concern among American diplomats. In 2006, the Jerusalem Consulate reached out to contacts in Fatah

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of Militias, Martyrs, and Spies* (New York: IB Taurus, 2007): 157.

and the PA to ask if media reports that Iran pledged \$250,000,000 USD to the Hamas government were valid.⁵⁵⁴ Before the U.S. launched its more aggressive campaign against Hamas in the post-9/11 era, the group received funds from charities in several Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, European countries such as Germany, and charities in the United States. But by 2007, the U.S. Treasury reports that it blocked \$8,658,832 in Hamas financial assets. Compared to other groups, this is quite a significant amount. The only group with a larger amount of blocked funds on the list was Al Qaeda at \$11,324,361, while Hezbollah was at \$437,281.⁵⁵⁵

A second feature of the War on Terror that affected U.S. policy toward Hamas was the Freedom Agenda. The focus was to encourage elections in order to “drain the swamp” of extremism in the Middle East. A State Department memo from September, 2005 details how U.S. policy in Gaza was designed to reduce extremism. “Gaza, the stronghold of the radical Islamist terrorist organization HAMAS, presents exceptional challenges for USG efforts to combat violent extremism. Our strategic approach is to promote Palestinian democracy, strengthen the rule of law, reform the security sector, offer economic alternatives, and encourage progress toward a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. To this end, we have in place USAID programs, funded at \$1.7 billion since 1993 for the West Bank and Gaza; the US Security Coordinator mission, led by General Ward; the Wolfensohn economic reform mission; and the full range of MEPI and public diplomacy programs, exchanges, and grants.”⁵⁵⁶

Elections were a key focus of the Freedom Agenda, and in that context, the Bush administration did not prevent Hamas from participating in the 2006 PLC elections, despite

⁵⁵⁴ “Iranian Financing for Hamas?” (State Department, Jerusalem Consulate, March 2, 2006), Wikileaks.

⁵⁵⁵ Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 169.

⁵⁵⁶ “Gaza: Combatting Extremism” (State Department, Tel Aviv, September 27, 2005), Wikileaks.

concerns expressed by Israeli policymakers and members of Fatah. But when Hamas won the majority of seats in the Palestinian election, American policymakers were stunned. After an initial hesitation, the U.S. responded aggressively by isolating Hamas, cutting all funding to the Palestinian Authority, providing additional weapons and training to Fatah, and refusing to recognize any unity government that included Hamas.

Overall, the shift from containment under the Clinton administration to the substantially more aggressive adversarial opposition approach under the Bush administration can be explained in the context of the post 9/11 window and developments within the three policy streams. In the problem stream, Hamas came to be associated with the broader war on terrorism. In the policy stream, the available solutions were debated in an environment that was extremely sensitive to issues of Islamist terrorism and non-state actors. And in the political stream, the bipartisan consensus remained substantially anti-Hamas. As a result, policy entrepreneurs were able to match the problem of Hamas with the new solution: adversarial opposition.

Problems, Policies, and Politics after 9/11

Developments in the problem and policy streams created conditions that linked Hamas with the war on terrorism. Although terrorism by non-state actors was considered a potential problem by Bush officials prior to 9/11, great powers were the primary preoccupation. During his campaign, George W. Bush formed a team of foreign policy experts led by Condoleezza Rice who referred to themselves as the Vulcans. The group included figures like Paul Wolfowitz, Dick Cheney, and Richard Armitage who ultimately received prominent positions in the administration. The Vulcans were associated with neo-conservative ideology honed during the Cold War, and this perspective favored a strongly militaristic approach to foreign affairs.

Richard Clarke describes the focus of this group as “state-to-state relations” and “Transnational threats and non-state actors had not been important issues on their agenda then [in 1992 when George H.W. Bush lost to Bill Clinton], and they were not in 2001, either”.⁵⁵⁷ Bob Woodward provides a similar description, “Armitage was pleased to see realism in a presidential campaign. He thought that terrorism, and potential actions by rogue states such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, could be trouble, but not lethal. The big issues in defense policy were the great power relationship with Russia, China, and India.”⁵⁵⁸

This quickly changed after 9/11, as statements and speeches by prominent officials in the policy stream demonstrate. Bush described the 9/11 hijackers as “evil cowards” and that “The American people need to know that we’re facing a different enemy than we have ever faced. This enemy hides in shadows, and has no regard for human life. This is an enemy who preys on innocent and unsuspecting people, then runs for cover.”⁵⁵⁹ And in remarks he made at the signing of the PATRIOT Act, he described the law as essential to “preventing more atrocities at the hands of the evil ones”.⁵⁶⁰ The National Security Strategy released in 2002 argued that, “Traditional concepts of deterrence will not work against a terrorist enemy whose avowed tactics are wanton destruction and the targeting of innocents; whose so-called soldiers seek martyrdom in death and whose most potent protection is statelessness.”⁵⁶¹ And Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s December, 2005 Op-Ed in the Washington Post expresses this shift in

⁵⁵⁷ Clarke, *Your Government Failed You*, 164.

⁵⁵⁸ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2006): 8.

⁵⁵⁹ George W. Bush, “Remarks During Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team, The Cabinet Room, September 12, 2001,” in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft, vol. 1 (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007): 248.

⁵⁶⁰ George W. Bush, “Remarks at the Signing of the PATRIOT Act, Antiterrorism Legislation, October 26, 2001,” in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft, vol. 2 (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007): 887.

⁵⁶¹ “The National Security Strategy of the United States,” September 2002, georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/.

thinking, “Since its creation more than 350 years ago, the modern state system has always rested on the concept of sovereignty. It was assumed that states were the primary international actors and that every state was able and willing to address the threats emerging from its territory. Today, however, we have seen that these assumptions no longer hold, and as a result the greatest threats to our security are defined more by the dynamics within weak and failing states than by the borders between strong and aggressive ones.”⁵⁶² Interestingly, the Clinton administration had already begun to emphasize the dangers of non-state actors. In the course of trying to distinguish itself from its predecessor, the Bush administration tried to focus on great power dynamics instead. However, the 9/11 attacks forced Bush officials to abandon this course and formulate a strategy for addressing non-state actors.

9/11 proved to be a critical juncture which brought counterterrorism to the top of the American political agenda and with it, attention to groups that employed terrorism as a tactic. This shift included a more aggressive stance toward Hamas, which had already been identified as a terrorist group by the Clinton administration. 9/11 signaled a paradigm shift, triggering a radical transformation in the priorities and structure of the American government, all with a heightened attention to counterterrorism.

Hamas initially appeared to be sensitive to the new climate because it stopped suicide bombings in the weeks following 9/11 and spoke out against the attack, but ten weeks later the group resumed attacks against Israeli targets. The second Intifada began in September, 2000 and suicide bombings were one of the tactics employed by Hamas in the conflict. Osama Hamdan, a key Hamas leader explained the decision to briefly halt suicide bombings, “We condemned 9/11.

⁵⁶² Condoleezza Rice, “The Promise of Democratic Peace,” *The Washington Post*, December 11, 2005.

We have condemned these acts in Iraq. But I will answer in one way: we don't have jets, we don't have tanks. So we made the decision. It is one of the ways we resist...there is nothing wrong with our way, because we are under occupation”⁵⁶³ But having been the victim of a massive suicide attack on 9/11, American officials did not easily see the distinction between the type of violence Hamas engaged in and Al Qaeda attacks. This contributed to the administration turning even more strongly against Hamas, adopting an adversarial opposition approach, both in terms of finances and immigration.⁵⁶⁴

Another development in the problem stream which affected American policy toward Hamas was the Bush administration's approach to the peace process. While the George W. Bush administration initially tried to distance itself from the Clinton administration's intense involvement in the Israeli Palestinian peace process, it ultimately advanced its own peace plan, the Roadmap to Peace, in 2003. President Bush described a mid-2003 ceasefire as “useless because Hamas has to be destroyed,”⁵⁶⁵ suggesting a much more assertive approach to Hamas. From the beginning, Hamas rejected the plan and continued to engage in suicide bombings; after one prominent bombing President Bush placed six Hamas leaders on the Treasury's list of Specially Designated Terrorists. In announcing this decision, President Bush mentioned the Hamas attack on August 19th and reiterated that the group threatened the Israeli Palestinian peace process.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³ Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 148.

⁵⁶⁴ U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #63A.

⁵⁶⁵ Steven. R. Weisman, “A Sense of Harmony Felt Within Diplomatic Circles,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 2003.

⁵⁶⁶ George W. Bush, “Statement on the Designation of Hamas Leadership and European Funding Sources Under Executive Order 13224” (U.S. Government Printing Office, August 22, 2003).

In reference to the same announcement, Treasury Secretary John Snow also pointed to the importance of the peace process, “‘ Hamas’ leaders and those who provide their funding again have the blood of innocents on their hands...Empty words cannot wash them clean. As they resist the road map for peace, Hamas is devastating the dreams of the Palestinian people for freedom, prosperity, and an independent state.” The memo attached to the Treasury Department’s Office of Public Affairs announcement specifically pointed to the harm Hamas had done to the Road Map process, the Bush administration’s April, 2003 contribution to the Israeli Palestinian peace process.⁵⁶⁷

The 2006 Hamas electoral victory was another important development in the problem stream which contributed to American policymakers identifying Hamas as a problem that required a more aggressive solution. In January, 2006, Hamas won 74 out of 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections. This meant that Hamas would have the power to form the new Palestinian Authority cabinet, with Mahmoud Abbas, the leader of Fatah, serving as President. The U.S. did not bar Hamas from participating in the legislative elections; indeed, it encouraged elections to take place, despite pressure from Congress. In December, 2005, the House passed Resolution 575 which said that terrorist organizations should not be allowed to participate in Palestinian elections until they met a series of conditions: “recognize Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish State, cease incitement, condemn terrorism, and permanently disarm and dismantle their terrorist infrastructure.”⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ *H.R. 575: Asserting That Hamas and Other Terrorist Organizations Should Not Participate in Elections Held by the Palestinian Authority, and for Other Purposes*, 2005, <http://beta.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-resolution/575/text>.

American officials at the highest level were caught off guard by Hamas' ascendancy and admitted that although they believed the election would be close based on data from a well-established Palestinian pollster, they did not anticipate that Hamas would be victorious.⁵⁶⁹ In a May, 2005 news conference Bush said that, "As the elections go forward, of course we want everybody to participate in the vote....I don't think they're [Hamas] going to get elected, because I think Palestinian moms want their children to grow up in peace just like American moms want their children to grow up in peace. As a matter of fact, I think the people that campaign for peace will win."⁵⁷⁰

The unwavering American support for holding the Palestinian elections with Hamas as a participant is somewhat perplexing, given the context of the Global War on Terrorism. But recent work by Kurtzer et al. suggests that it was a combination of both President Bush's personal commitment to elections, and Mahmoud Abbas' confidence that Fatah would win, which produced a more permissive American approach.⁵⁷¹

The initial American diplomatic response to Hamas' victory was to send a message to Hamas from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice through Russian interlocutors (Russia had relations with Hamas at this time) saying that the group must meet conditions set by the Middle East Quartet (UN, the EU, Russia, and the US), which included renouncing violence, recognizing Israel's right to exist, and accepting previous agreements that the Palestinian Authority made

⁵⁶⁹ U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #63B, August 6, 2010.

⁵⁷⁰ George W. Bush, "The President's News Conference With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority," ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (The American Presidency Project, May 26, 2005), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=73644>.

⁵⁷¹ Daniel C. Kurtzer et al., *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace, 1989-2011* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2013), 198.

with Israel. If Hamas met these conditions, the U.S. was willing to change its position on engagement with Hamas. As Secretary Rice explains in her memoirs,

At the end of the evening, Lavrov [Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov], told me that he would deliver to Hamas our message: “Find a way to accept the Quartet’s conditions.” In an afterthought he asked, “What will you do if they comply?” I thought about it for a second. “If they do,” I answered, “The United States will have to reconsider its position too.” Only the President and Steve [National Security Advisor Steven Hadley] ever knew that the message had been passed. We would have had a difficult decision to make had Hamas accepted the conditions. But it didn’t.⁵⁷²

Thus, American policymakers were faced with a dilemma. The Freedom Agenda was based on the premise that extremism was the result of the lack of free elections, but in this case, a free and fair election brought an enemy to power.

Bush declared that “a political party that articulates the destruction of Israel is a party with which we will not deal”.⁵⁷³ In April, 2006, U.S. diplomats in Israel were told to cease all contact with members of the Palestinian Authority. There was some question over whether the U.S. would engage with non-Hamas members of the P.A.; all were off-limits except offices controlled by Mahmoud Abbas.⁵⁷⁴ As one U.S. official explained, “We made a conscious decision: If someone is under the authority of the prime minister, we weren’t going to deal with them, regardless of what their affiliation is. Obviously this limits our relationship with the Palestinians - we used to deal across the board, with a whole range of ministries on a whole range of things. We’re not able to do that anymore, which is unfortunate.”⁵⁷⁵ This meant that any U.S. government affiliated NGOs were forbidden from contact with Hamas.

⁵⁷² Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor*. (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012), 419–420.

⁵⁷³ Aaron D. Pina, *Fatah and Hamas: The New Palestinian Factional Reality* (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, March 3, 2006).

⁵⁷⁴ Ilene R. Prusher, “U.S. Ending Years of Gaza Civic Work,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 30, 2006, World 1.

⁵⁷⁵ Prusher, “U.S. Ending Years of Gaza Civic Work.”

The U.S. immediately cut off all financial aid to the Palestinian Authority, although food and humanitarian aid could still be dispensed to non-Hamas affiliated NGOs. A flurry of legislative action followed the election. On January 31, 2006 fifteen Representatives introduced a bill in the House, HR 4688, requiring the President to verify that the Palestinian Authority was not controlled by a FTO before Congress would authorize aid to be meted out to the PA.⁵⁷⁶ One of the more significant pieces of legislation was the Palestinian Antiterrorism Act, which was introduced in the Senate in March, 2006 and passed in December.⁵⁷⁷ It halted all aid to the PA unless the President certifies every six months that the PA is not controlled by Hamas or,

unless the Hamas-controlled PA has publicly acknowledged the Jewish state of Israel's right to exist and is adhering to all previous agreements and understandings with the United States, Israel, and the international community, including agreements and understandings pursuant to the Roadmap; and (2) the Hamas-controlled PA has made demonstrable progress toward purging from its security services individuals with ties to terrorism, dismantling all terrorist infrastructure and cooperating with Israel's security services, halting anti-American and anti-Israel incitement, and ensuring democracy and financial transparency.⁵⁷⁸

It also limited contacts between the United States and Palestinian officials. A complication associated with this legislation is that a PA government might contain Hamas technocrat officials who are not officially aligned with the movement, which became an issue after the Palestinian Reconciliation Pact in May, 2011. The U.S. was amenable to contacts with non-Hamas members of the Palestinian government “on a case-by-case basis”⁵⁷⁹, while Congress continued to impose funding restrictions to prevent Hamas from obtaining access to American aid.

⁵⁷⁶ *H.R.4668 : Limitation on Assistance to the Palestinian Authority Act, 2006.*

⁵⁷⁷ The House version and subsequent amendments introduced by Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen attempted to make these restrictions even more stringent, although the House version of the act as well as the amendments failed to pass.

⁵⁷⁸ *S. 2370, Palestinian Antiterrorism Act, 2006*, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/109/s2370>.

⁵⁷⁹ Reuters, “U.S., Israel to Keep Ban on Palestinian Aid, The Globe and Mail (Canada),” March 19, 2007, A13.

The American government was also strongly opposed to the February, 2007 Mecca Accords, which was an agreement arranged by Saudi Arabia to end the military clashes in Gaza between Fatah and Hamas. As Kurtzer et al. argued, the Mecca agreement posed a serious threat to Secretary Rice's efforts to arrange talks between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The administration subsequently tried to convince Abbas to pull out of the power sharing deal with Hamas.⁵⁸⁰ The Mecca agreement collapsed four months later in June, 2007, as civil war erupted between Fatah and Hamas. The conflict resulted in a bifurcated Palestinian government: Fatah controlled the West Bank and Hamas controlled Gaza.

The U.S. role in the run up to the war is a subject of some controversy. One perspective, advanced by journalist David Rose who interviewed a series of State Department and Pentagon officials, is that the United States essentially facilitated a coup attempt in a covert program to arm and train Fatah, convinced Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the UAE to supply lethal weapons and provide training, and pushed President Abbas to dissolve the Hamas-led government.⁵⁸¹ Another perspective is that security assistance to the recognized PA was just a continuation of U.S. aid policy. David Wurmser, former chief Middle East advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney, ascribes to the first interpretation. He resigned a month after the alleged coup attempt, and he described the events as a "dirty war" to secure control of the PA under the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas. According to a State Department Talking Points memo published alongside David Rose's article, the U.S. pressured President Abbas to take a

⁵⁸⁰ Kurtzer et al., *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace, 1989-2011*, 215–216.

⁵⁸¹ David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell," *Vanity Fair*, April 2008.

confrontational approach with Hamas.⁵⁸² When pressed about the allegations that the administration tried to destabilize the Hamas government by arming Fatah, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice did not deny it, but instead described it as “the professionalization and the training and equipping of Palestinian forces.”⁵⁸³

According to Rose’s report, the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia was holding up military aid to the PA and the delay angered Mohammed Dahlan of Fatah who complained to General Dayton and Secretary Rice. The solution was to go around Congress and provide aid through other means. Secretary Rice made calls to regional allies and asked them to provide money and arms to Fatah. According to a State Department official, “Those in charge of implementing the policy were saying, ‘Do whatever it takes. We have to be in a position for Fatah to defeat Hamas militarily, and only Muhammad Dahlan has the guile and the muscle to do this.’ The expectation was that this was where it would end up—with a military showdown.”⁵⁸⁴

Whether the U.S. intended to provoke a civil war or not, a major element of U.S. policy toward Hamas was isolation and contacts with the group continued to be taboo.⁵⁸⁵ The level of sensitivity around talking with Hamas is exemplified by the controversy over former President Carter’s meetings with Hamas members in April, 2008. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said, “We counseled President Carter against going to the region and particularly against having contacts with Hamas...[the administration] wanted to make sure there would be no confusion

⁵⁸² “Talking Points Memo”, quoted in “The Gaza Bombshell,” *Vanity Fair*, April 2008.

⁵⁸³ David Samuels, “Grand Illusions,” *The Atlantic*, June 2007. See also Milton-Edwards and Farrell, *Hamas: The Islamic Resistance Movement*, 283–284.

⁵⁸⁴ State Department Official, quoted by Rose, “The Gaza Bombshell.” For additional discussion of this issue, see Kurtzer et al., *The Peace Puzzle: America’s Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace, 1989-2011*, 202–203.

⁵⁸⁵ Note that based on an interview with Jacob Walles, Consul General of Jerusalem from 2005-2009, Kurtzer et al. reported that, “...the administration failed to execute its own plan.” [with respect to the idea of providing Fatah military support via Arab allies]. Kurtzer et al., *The Peace Puzzle: America’s Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace, 1989-2011*, 216.

and there would be no sense that Hamas was somehow a party to peace negotiations."⁵⁸⁶ There was also a strong reaction in Congress condemning Carter's visit. The House passed a resolution on April 16, 2008 that former Presidents should "refrain from freelance diplomacy against...stated United States foreign policy".⁵⁸⁷ A day later, a Congresswoman from Tennessee spoke in the House protesting Carter's visit arguing that, "Islamofascist terrorism is the plague of our time. Every American official, past and present, should stand ready to help destroy it and to eradicate its philosophy of hate. My constituents feel that by meeting with Hamas, Mr. Carter, a former President, undermines the critical goal and only goads the enemy further."⁵⁸⁸

Operation Cast Lead, the December 2008-January 2009 conflict between Hamas and Israel, was another development in the problem stream which had important implications for the American view of Hamas. This conflict was the culmination of Hamas' growing influence in Gaza, the end of a ceasefire, and escalating rocket attacks against Israel. After the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas' power increased along several dimensions, politically in terms of winning the 2006 Parliamentary election, and territorially, after the 2007 civil war with Fatah that left Hamas with control of Gaza. Moreover, with support from Iran and other regional allies, Hamas' military capability increased. The Washington Institute estimated that in 2008 Hamas had 15,000-16,000 fighters and improved Qassam rocket technology. To this end, Hamas had devoted resources to rocket research at the research and development center at the Islamic University in Gaza City.⁵⁸⁹ Although Hamas was defeated in Operation Cast Lead and much of

⁵⁸⁶ Steven R. Weisman and Robert F. Worth, "Carter Trip Didn't Help Peace Talks, Rice Says; Meeting with Hamas Seen by U.S. Officials as Sowing Confusion," *The International Herald Tribune*, April 24, 2008, 4.

⁵⁸⁷ H.R. 329: *Expressing the Sense of Congress That Former Presidents and High-ranking Political Figures Should Refrain from Freelance Diplomacy*, 2008, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/110/hconres329/text>.

⁵⁸⁸ Marsha Blackburn, *Congressional Record, U.S. House of Representatives* (April 17, 2008), H2455.

⁵⁸⁹ Yoram Cohen and Jeffrey White, *Hamas in Combat: The Military Performance of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement*, Policy Focus (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 2009).

its new infrastructure destroyed⁵⁹⁰, the conflict attracted high levels of American media and Congressional attention and served to intensify anti-Hamas attitudes in American policymaking circles. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 illustrate that attention to Hamas increased markedly around this period.

The political stream also set the background for a more aggressive approach to Hamas. As one congressional staffer described it, “With Hamas and Hezbollah, there is a visceral reaction.”⁵⁹¹ Key legislators such as House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair, Republican Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinin and Democratic Congressman Ackerman lobbied for policy change. Indeed, the strongly anti-Hamas bipartisan consensus continued from the Clinton administration. For example, the House passed several resolutions condemning Hamas activities, including House Resolution 285 in June 2003, which criticized the EU for not designating Hamas as a whole as a terrorist organization. The House Financial Services Committee held a hearing in March 2003 during which Chairwoman Sue Kelly linked Iraq with Islamist groups including Hamas, Hezbollah, and Al Qaeda.⁵⁹² Although claims of links between Saddam Hussein and groups like Al Qaeda, Hamas and Hezbollah were proven to be false, the belief was held by prominent members of the U.S. government. Later that year, the same committee held a hearing on the Hamas Asset Freeze and comments by members suggest that there was strong opposition to the idea that Hamas may have separate political and military wings. Democratic

⁵⁹⁰ For example, the research center at Islamic University in Gaza City, the Hamas headquarters in Gaza City, and weapons storage facilities.

⁵⁹¹ Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #720.

⁵⁹² *Progress Since 9/11: The Effectiveness of the U.S. Anti-Terrorist Financing Efforts: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services, United States House of Representatives*, 108th Cong., March 11, 2003, 3.

Congressman Ackerman argued that such a distinction is “dangerous and ludicrous”, describing Hamas as a “political tumor which threatens the entire Palestinian body politic.”⁵⁹³

Following Hamas’ 2006 electoral victory, the House Committee on International Relations held a hearing on the subject and key members of the committee, Republican Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Democratic Congressman Gary Ackerman (who became ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia in 2011) used emphatic rhetoric to condemn Hamas. Congressman Ackerman was particularly vociferous in his condemnation of the group and argued that if the United States were to legitimize them by recognizing the Hamas led government, it would signal that Islamic fanaticism is a “path to power”. He went on to say, “Hamas must not only fail, but must be seen to fail if there is to be any hope of peace in the Middle East.”⁵⁹⁴

Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen has been an especially strong voice on the issue of U.S. policy toward Hamas and other Islamist groups. She was a major supporter of the House resolution to forbid Hamas from participating in the 2006 election. “The participation of Islamist jihadist organizations, such as Hamas, in Palestinian elections will destroy any hope for peace and security for Israel, and for peace, democratic governance, and economic growth, and prosperity for the Palestinian people.”⁵⁹⁵ There are other members of Congress who have

⁵⁹³ *The Hamas Asset Freeze and Other Government Efforts to Stop Terrorist Funding: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services, U.S. House of Representatives*, 108th Cong., September 24, 2003, 5.

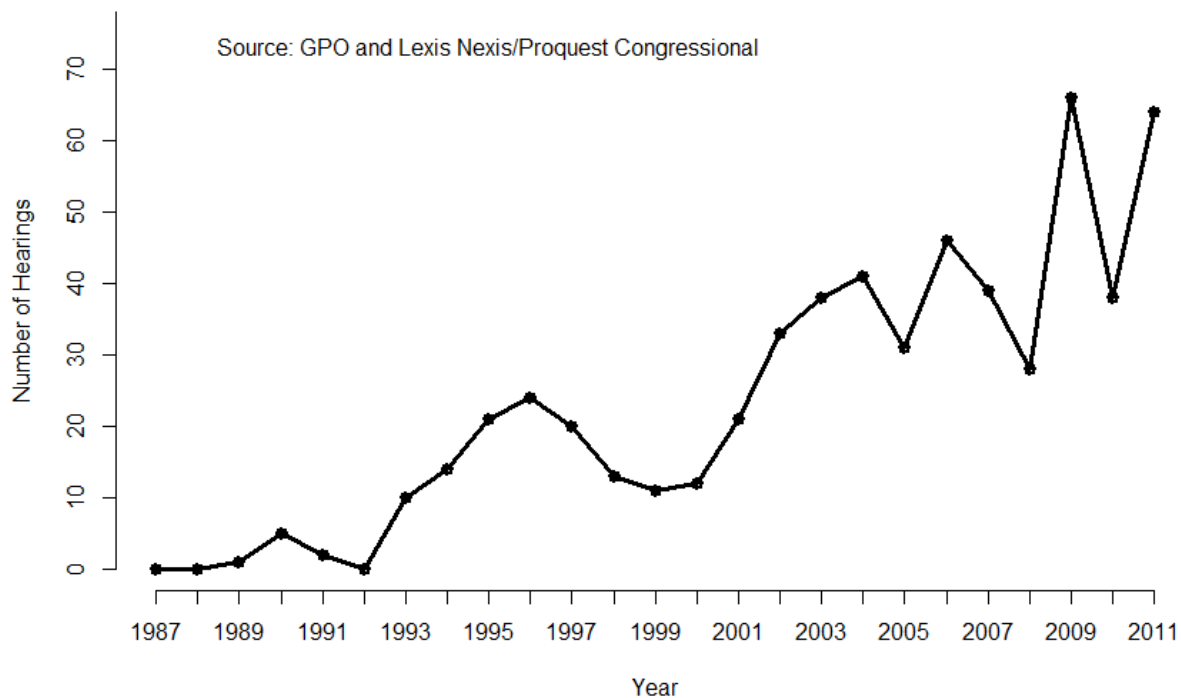
⁵⁹⁴ *Palestinian Authority Elections: Implications for Peace, Regional Security, and U.S. Assistance: Hearing Before the Committee on International Relations, United States House of Representatives*, 109th Cong., March 8, 2006.

⁵⁹⁵ Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, *Congressional Record, U.S. House of Representatives* (December 14, 2005), H11638.

worked over the years to ensure that no U.S. aid gets to Hamas, for example Democrats Nita Lowey and Nancy Pelosi.⁵⁹⁶

Figure 4.3⁵⁹⁷ provides a visual representation of how much attention Congress paid to the issue of Hamas after the 9/11 attacks. Notice the peaks in congressional attention in 2006, which corresponds with the Hamas parliamentary victory, the peak in 2009, which relates to the Operation Cast Lead conflict in Gaza that occurred during the winter of 2008/2009, and finally the peak in 2011, which is associated with the Arab Spring revolutions.

Fig. 4.3: Congressional Hearings Mentioning Hamas 1987-2011

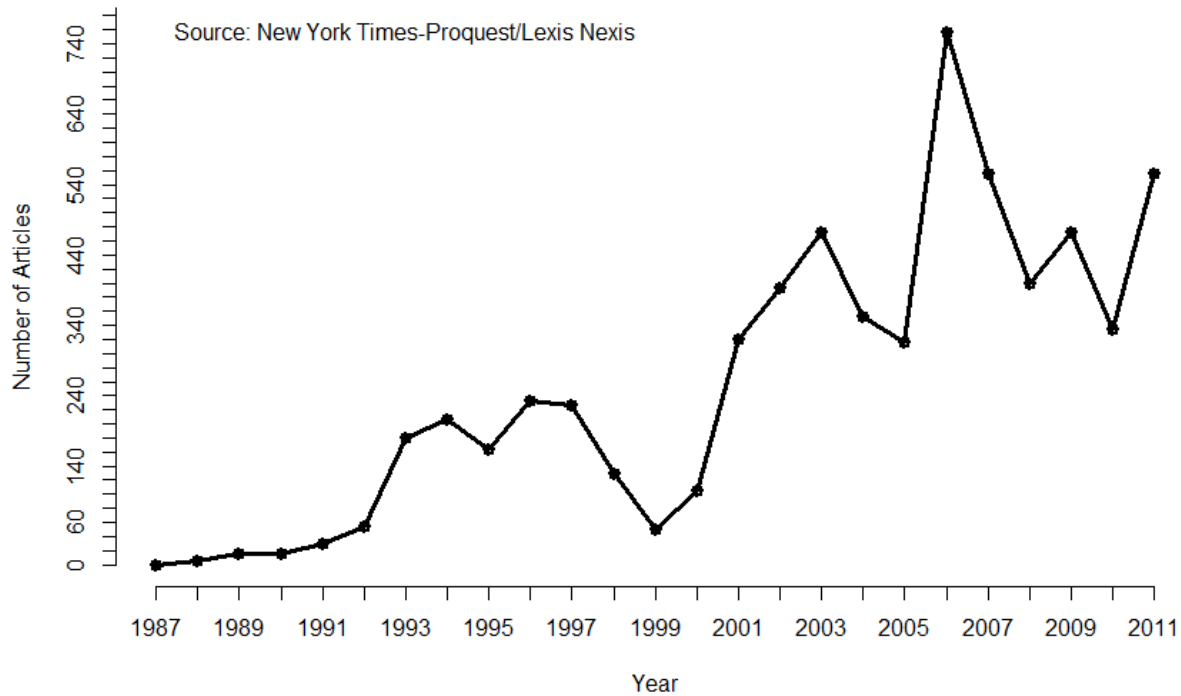


⁵⁹⁶ Former Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #196.

⁵⁹⁷ GPO website for Congressional hearings prior to 1998 that mention Hamas (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/home.action>). For hearings taking place after 1998, Lexis Nexis/Proquest Congressional.

Figure 4.4⁵⁹⁸ represents media attention to Hamas, which also surges after 9/11, in 2006, the winter of 2008/2009, and finally the Arab Spring revolutions in 2011.

Fig. 4.4: Media Attention to Hamas 1987-2011



Overall, the Bush administration’s more aggressive policy toward Hamas was made possible by the window of opportunity generated by 9/11. Meanwhile, vents in the policy streams moved Hamas higher on the policy agenda and a strongly anti-Hamas Congress supported the administration’s assertive approach. The Obama administration went on to pursue essentially the same policy as its predecessor.

⁵⁹⁸ Proquest Historical (for articles up to 2007) and Lexis Nexis (2007-present) for articles that mention the group.

The Obama Administration

The Obama administration has taken a more nuanced rhetorical approach, although substantively, the policy toward Hamas has not changed from Bush era policies. U.S. officials still point to the Quartet principles as the main criteria for Hamas to be recognized and the administration does not support reconciliation efforts between Hamas and Fatah without these conditions being met.

But Obama's more cautious language toward Hamas, beginning with his seminal speech in Cairo in June, 2009, may be the beginning of idea softening on the issue of engagement with Hamas. In 2009, when asked about whether his administration would engage with Hamas given his openness to engaging Iran, he replied, "Well, let's just underscore a point here. Iran is a huge, significant nation-state that has, I think, across the international community been recognized as such. Hizballah and Hamas are not. And I don't think that we have to approach those entities in the same way." He added that Hamas must recognize Quartet principles, " , then I think the discussions with Hamas could potentially proceed". His rhetoric regarding the group, while critical, left room for the possibility of changing relations. For example, he said, "At some point, though, they may make a transition. There are examples of, in the past, of organizations that have successfully transitioned from violent organizations to ones that recognize that they can achieve their aims more effectively through political means, and I hope that occurs."⁵⁹⁹ Furthermore, conversations are beginning to take place at the State Department about the possibility that Hamas may become like Sinn Féin, with a more pronounced distinction between the military and political wings. And some officials have started to ask State Department lawyers about the

⁵⁹⁹ Barack Obama, Interview with Michele Norris and Steve Inskeep of National Public Radio, June 1, 2009, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PPP-2009-book1/pdf/PPP-2009-book1-Doc-pg748.pdf>.

limitations associated with the FTO designation and what that means in terms of potential contacts with the group.⁶⁰⁰ Some media accounts, have also reported that President Obama was urged by his advisers to initiate low-level talks with Hamas, recognizing that the policy of isolation had been counter-productive.⁶⁰¹

Given the Obama administration's comparatively more pro-engagement emphasis, some former policymakers and think-tank scholars have begun to suggest the possibility of opening to Hamas, although the concept is still taboo among decision makers. Some examples of the public debate surrounding engagement with Hamas include a 2009 Foreign Affairs piece by Richard Haas and Martin Indyk that advocated for low level contacts between the U.S. and Hamas if a reconciliation agreement is made between the Palestinian factions and the ceasefire remains steady.⁶⁰² This is quite different from previous calls for talks because it did not list further conditions. And in early 2011 amidst the Arab Spring, Peter Beinart argued for a shift in U.S. policy toward Hamas,⁶⁰³ however this was heavily criticized by journalists like Jeffrey Goldberg, of the Atlantic.⁶⁰⁴ Additionally, pro-Israel pressure groups are not uniformly opposed to all engagement with Hamas. J Street, for example, supports unofficial or indirect contacts with Hamas to advance the peace process.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁰ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #223.

⁶⁰¹ Suzanne Goldenberg, "Obama Camp Ready to Open up Dialogue with Hamas," *The Guardian (London)*, January 9, 2009.

⁶⁰² Richard Haas and Martin Indyk, "Beyond Iraq: A New U.S. Strategy for the Middle East," *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 1 (February 2009): 41.

⁶⁰³ Peter Beinart, "What Israel Is Afraid of After the Egyptian Uprising," *Daily Beast*, February 7, 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/02/07/israels-fears-about-the-egyptian-uprising.html?cid=hp:mainpromo6>.

⁶⁰⁴ Jeffrey Goldberg, "Peter Beinart and the Hamas Question," *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 24, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/04/peter-beinart-and-the-hamas-question/256304/>.

⁶⁰⁵ "Resolution of the Conflict Will Involve Hamas," *J Street Blog*, accessed April 4, 2013, http://jstreet.org/blog/post/resolution-of-the-conflict-will-involve-hamas_1.

But the political stream remains staunchly anti-Hamas, especially on the right. A statement from Congressman Poe in January, 2009 reflects a strongly anti-Hamas perspective in Congress. “Hamas worships death. Israel worships life. ...The moral canyon that separates Israel from Hamas is best described by Hamas’ own motto, and I quote, “We love death more than the Jews love life.” Hezbollah and Hamas, these twin tribes of terror, must be stopped.”⁶⁰⁶ And in March, 2009, Representative Ros-Lehtinen, Speaker John Boehner, Republican Whip Eric Cantor, Mike Pence and Thaddeus McCotter recommended that the Senate cut off funding for the UNRWA and the PA out of concern that the monies would support Hamas projects.⁶⁰⁷ Some legislators even view Hamas as a threat to the United States. In March, 2010, Senator LeMieux commented, “I worry, and what keeps me up at night, is that terrorist threats could come from the south, with a combination of Iran, Venezuela, Hamas, and Hezbollah, to our country.”⁶⁰⁸ Sentiment in Congress made an impact on the administration, at least in terms of its willingness to include Hamas in early efforts related to the Israeli Palestinian conflict. As one U.S. official explained, “There was a concern that it would have to be explained to folks on the hill and it would carry a lot of negative repercussions.”⁶⁰⁹

Moreover, in April, 2011 Representative Peter King, Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, sent a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder criticizing the administration for choosing not to indict the Council on American Islamic Relations, a charity organization believed to be linked to Hamas, in the terrorism financing case *United States v. Holy Land*

⁶⁰⁶ Ted Poe, “Moral Clarity: Israel V.s Hamas,” *Congressional Record, U.S. House of Representatives* 111th Cong. (January 14, 2009): H299.

⁶⁰⁷ *Congressional Record, U.S. Senate* 111th Cong. (March 9, 2009): S2893.

⁶⁰⁸ *U.S. Government Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate*, 111th Cong. (Statement of George LeMieux, March 10, 2010): 32.

⁶⁰⁹ Former State Department Policy Planning Staffer, Confidential Interview #297..

Foundation. When Hamas and Fatah reached a tentative unity agreement in May, 2011, 10 Democratic Senators sent a letter arguing against working with a Palestinian government in which Hamas was a part. The House also passed a resolution in May, 2011 blocking aid to a Palestinian government that included Hamas.⁶¹⁰

In sum, the policy change from containment to a much more aggressive approach can be explained in the context of a window created by 9/11 which made a more belligerent policy toward Hamas possible. Moreover, developments in the policy streams made it viable for policy entrepreneurs to attach a new, more aggressive, solution to the problem of Hamas. In the problem stream, terrorism was higher on the decision agenda and Hamas came to be associated with the war on terrorism. In the policy stream, potential solutions to the Hamas problem were debated in an environment that was rife with fears of Islamist terrorism and non-state actors. And in the political stream, the bipartisan consensus continued to be vehemently anti-Hamas. As a result, policy entrepreneurs were able to match the problem of Hamas with a different solution than the Clinton administration: adversarial opposition.

Conclusions

American policy toward Hamas has clearly grown more hostile over time. Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting can help explain why U.S. policy has varied over time. This chapter demonstrated how policies ranging from engagement to containment to adversarial opposition came to be considered appropriate solutions to the problems associated with Hamas. Drawing on Kingdon's model, I explained variation in American policy toward Hamas as the

⁶¹⁰ *H.R. 244: Expressing the Sense of the House of Representatives That a Palestinian Government Which Includes Hamas Should Be Prohibited from Receiving United States Aid Until That Government Publicly Commits to the Quartet Principles*, 2011.

result of policy entrepreneurs linking solutions to the problems associated with Hamas in the context of policy windows created by the Clinton administration's commitment to the Oslo peace process and 9/11.

The alternative explanations cannot adequately explain this variation because U.S. policy toward Hamas has been highly contextual, drawing on developments within American policy circles. First, a realist explanation is insufficient because it cannot explain why the U.S. engaged in low-level contacts until as late as 1993, even while the group was widely known to use violent tactics against an important U.S. ally. Second, the leadership model is also inadequate because it ignores important contextual factors in the political environment that contributed to placing Hamas higher on the decision agenda. Third, Graham Allison's bureaucratic politics model is ill-suited to explain U.S. policy because there wasn't a great deal of competition over which agency or individual should set U.S. policy toward Hamas.⁶¹¹ Fourth, domestic politics is a subset of the garbage can model, but cannot independently explain American policy toward Hamas. Indeed, Lynn Kuzma's study of public opinion and terrorism demonstrates that although the general public saw terrorism as a serious threat, public attitudes about the issue generally remained constant from the mid-1980s into 2000, despite prominent attacks such as the first World Trade Center bombing. So a public opinion/domestic politics explanation would not be able to account for why policy varied in the period before 9/11. And finally, the nature of the group is inadequate to explain U.S. policy because at key junctures in which U.S. policy varied, the basic characteristics of the group remained constant.

⁶¹¹ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #641.

CHAPTER FIVE

Hezbollah

Perhaps more than any other Islamist group, the relationship between the United States and Hezbollah has been deeply troubled from the beginning. America's first introduction to the group was when they attacked U.S. targets in Lebanon in the 1980s, including the U.S. embassy and the Marine Barracks at the Beirut Airport. They also engaged in a series of kidnappings of Americans and hijacked TWA flight 847. Before 9/11, Hezbollah was responsible for more American deaths than any other terrorist group. One might expect that the period in which U.S. policy toward Hezbollah would be at its most assertive should have been when the group was actively attacking the U.S. in the 1980s, but unlike France, the U.S. never took military action against the group and was hamstrung by divisions between the State Department and the Department of Defense. The Reagan administration formulated an intensified counterterrorism policy that was focused on state sponsors of terrorism and enlisted the help of international allies to discredit terrorism as a tactic.

The next major shift in American policy toward Hezbollah took place in the 1990s. In the context of the Arab Israeli peace process, the Clinton administration moved to a more group-oriented policy toward Hezbollah, forbade contacts with members of the group, directed intense efforts to block the group's financial resources, and enacted broader counter-terrorism reforms. The third shift in U.S. policy took place after 9/11, when the American approach toward Hezbollah grew even more assertive and the Bush administration included Hezbollah in the Global War on Terror. The U.S. pressured allies to list the group as a terrorist organization, and pushed Syria, Lebanon, and Iran to contain the group. With the ascendancy of the Obama administration, American policy toward the group has remained essentially the same.

John Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting can help explain why U.S. policy toward Hezbollah has varied over time. This chapter will illustrate how policies such as focusing on state-sponsored terrorism, the shift to a more group-oriented approach, the emergence of a taboo against contacts with the group, and an increasingly aggressive attack on Hezbollah funding sources came to be viewed as solutions to the problems related to Hezbollah. Kingdon's model will serve as the framework for explaining variation in American policy toward Hezbollah by arguing that policy entrepreneurs linked a range of increasingly assertive solutions to the problems associated with Hezbollah in the context of three key windows of opportunity: the attacks on the embassy and Marine Barracks, Clinton's commitment to the peace process, and the 9/11 attacks. Table 5.1 illustrates the inflection points at which American policy toward Hezbollah has changed.

Table 5.1: U.S. Policy toward Hezbollah

Window of Opportunity	Streams	Policy
Embassy and Marine Barracks Bombings (1983-1984)	<p><u>Problem Stream:</u> Attacks drew attention, hostages, and hijackings throughout 1980s;</p> <p><u>Policy Stream:</u> Competing visions of the best solution- Shultz vs Weinberger Doctrine, fears of another Vietnam,</p> <p><u>Political Stream:</u> Congress and public advocated for swift withdrawal, constraints by Congress limited the expansiveness of counter-terrorism reforms</p>	No retaliation +State Based Counterterrorism reforms+ confused no-concessions policy+ contacts ok (1983-1993)
Peace Process (1993-2000)	<p><u>Problem Stream:</u> Hezbollah conflicts with Israel including Operation Accountability and Operation Grapes of Wrath, Hezbollah terrorist attacks,</p> <p><u>Policy Stream:</u> Key Clinton officials advocated strong hand with Hezbollah and the peace process as solution to terrorism, think-tanks and academics debated rise of Islamism</p> <p><u>Political Stream:</u> Anti-Hezbollah and support for counterterrorism legislation, but Congress acted as a constraint by limiting the President's proposed counterterrorism reforms</p>	Group-Oriented Counterterrorism+ No contacts (1993-2001)
September 11 Attacks	<p><u>Problem Stream:</u> Hezbollah's use of terrorism, discovery of group's presence in Latin America and fundraising in United States, Cedar Revolution- Hezbollah seen as source of instability, 2008 confrontation between Hezbollah and Lebanese government;</p> <p><u>Policy Stream:</u> Global War on Terrorism, Freedom Agenda;</p> <p><u>Political Stream:</u> Anti-Hezbollah and Congress supported strong counter-terrorism legislation</p>	Subsumed in Global War on Terror (especially financial)+ no contacts (2001-present)

The first section will explain the origins of Hezbollah, where it receives support, the charity and social services it provides the Shia community in Lebanon, its political activities, and its use of violence. The next section examines the first policy window: Hezbollah’s attack on the

U.S. embassy and Marine Barracks. It will illustrate how these events opened a window of opportunity for the U.S. to formulate a policy, but when confronted by challenges in the policy streams, the U.S. generated a muted response. The next section will show how Clinton's commitment to the peace process made it possible for U.S. policy to move to a more group-oriented approach to the group, prohibiting contact with members of the organization, attacking sources of funding, and enacting broader counterterrorism reforms. The final section will discuss the last policy window: 9/11. It will demonstrate how the effects of 9/11 created the conditions for U.S. policy to become even more assertive, associating the group with the broader Global War on Terror, targeting Hezbollah's funding in a more intense manner, and pressuring allies to list the group as a terrorist organization. In the conclusion, I will explain why the alternative theories fail to perform as strongly as the Kingdon model.

Overview of Hezbollah

Hezbollah emerged out of the Lebanese Shi'ite community, which has been historically disadvantaged within Lebanese politics. As far back as Ottoman rule, Shi'ites suffered disproportionate persecution relative to other groups. The Ottoman millet system granted relative autonomy to Sunnis, Christians, and Druze, but the Ottomans considered Shi'ite's heterodox, and therefore subjected them to discriminatory policies.⁶¹² Lebanon's confessional system, which assigned political representation based on demographics, also contributed to a growing sense of Shi'ite alienation. Shi'ites composed a negligible percentage of slots in Parliament, the military, and the bureaucracy. For example, Shi'ites held only 3.2 percent of high level civil service

⁶¹² See Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon Under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 7–8 and Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 55.

positions in 1946 and it wasn't until 1982 that Shi'ite presence began to match Maronites and Sunnis.⁶¹³ As demographic patterns changed, the confessional system was unable to accommodate a sudden population surge among Shi'ites, especially given that an official census has not been conducted since 1932. Population growth was so dramatic that Shi'ites were estimated to be the largest confessional community beginning in the 1980s, a dramatic shift from minority into a significant demographic force.⁶¹⁴ After the Lebanese civil war, the Ta'if Agreement granted the same number of Parliamentary seats for Muslims and Christians, but Shi'ites still believed they were underrepresented relative to their population.

While the Shi'ite population increased, its economic status did not improve. Many Shi'ites who had settled in southern Lebanon and the Beqaa were unable to break the cycle of poverty and as a result, Shi'ite dominated regions became centers of economic hardship. The weak Lebanese central government did not alleviate their poverty.⁶¹⁵ Moreover, the Lebanese civil war exacerbated the already precarious position Shi'ites held relative to other ethnic groups. Kramer notes that the breakdown of the state and rampant violence during the civil war period created deprivation that overwhelmed the political discrimination they had previously experienced.⁶¹⁶ As a result of fighting between the Palestinians and Israelis, Shi'ite refugees moved from southern Lebanon into the southern Beirut suburbs and lived in cramped and deplorable conditions.

⁶¹³ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 12.

⁶¹⁴ Yusry Hazan, *The Shiite Community in Lebanon: From Marginalization to Ascendancy*, Middle East Briefs (Waltham, Massachusetts: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, June 2009), 2–3.

⁶¹⁵ Hiya Harik, "The Ethnic Revolution and Political Integration in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 3 (July 1972): 313.

⁶¹⁶ Martin Kramer, "Hezbollah: The Calculus of Jihad," in *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies and Militance*, ed. M. Marty and R.S. Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 539–56.

The Shi'ite community originally did not oppose the 1982 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon which ousted the PLO, ending the Palestinian "state-within-a state" that made southern Lebanon the target of Israeli military retaliation. But soon Israel lost Shi'ite support when efforts to expel the PLO killed Shi'ite civilians and created more refugees who moved into destitute sections of Beirut. Moreover, the Israeli invasion was followed by an extended occupation of Southern Lebanon as Israel tried to create a buffer zone against attacks originating from Lebanon. The Shi'ites came to believe they were being specifically targeted. Many Shi'ites thought that the subsequent damage and loss of life were consistent with their history of oppression and persecution and this sense of alienation contributed to the birth of militant groups that eventually developed into Hezbollah.⁶¹⁷

In this context of Shi'ite alienation, Imam Musa al-Sadr, a prominent Lebanese cleric, began to reinterpret Shi'ite tradition as one of resistance, rather than submission and his movement began to develop mass appeal.⁶¹⁸ In 1974, Al Sadr created the Movement of the Deprived, which was intended to be a nonviolent Shi'ite advocacy group. Quickly, however, the organization developed military ambitions under the name Afwaj al Muqawamah al Lubnaniyya: the Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance. (Amal)⁶¹⁹ When Al Sadr mysteriously disappeared during a trip to Libya, he became a symbol of martyrdom for the Shi'ites and his death provoked an increase in Shi'ite involvement in militant groups. In 1982, Sayyid Husayn al Musawi was disenchanted by Amal leader Nabih Berri's decision to join the National Salvation Committee, which he felt was un-Islamic. In June of that year, al Musawi created a more militant break-away group, Islamic Amal. It was at this point that Iran dispatched the Pasdaran to the Beqaa,

⁶¹⁷ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 16 and 19.

⁶¹⁸ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, 168–169.

⁶¹⁹ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 21.

providing training, supplies, and religious education to Islamic Amal and other militants. Later that year members of Islamic Amal merged with other Islamist groups such as Lebanese al-Da'wa to form Hezbollah.⁶²⁰ Hezbollah was initially a loose coalition of militant Shi'ites who saw themselves as advocates for the deprived Shi'ites, as well as resistance fighters against the Israeli presence in southern Lebanon.

External Support

Over time, the interests of the Lebanese Shi'ites became loosely aligned with the political ambitions of Syria and Iran. Syria's military was unable to match Israel's, as demonstrated by defeats in 1967, 1973, and 1982. Syria instead turned to supporting terrorism in the form of Hezbollah in order to put pressure on Israel regarding the Golan Heights, territory they lost in the 1967 war.⁶²¹ Additionally, Syria occupied Lebanon from 1976 until 2005, which helped facilitate this proxy war against Israel. Iran also wanted a foothold in the region, a tool against Israel, and a target population for exporting the Islamic revolution. Shi'ite clerics already shared an ideological affinity with Iranian clerics, not only because of the powerful demonstration effect associated with the Iranian Revolution in 1979, but also because Lebanese Shi'ite clerics studied with Iranian ulama in the 1970s in Najaf and Qum. These clerics shared such a personal and ideological connection with Iranian clerics that the Lebanese clerics vowed to follow the theological and political guidance of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.⁶²² Given this context of shared ideological and strategic interests, Iran knitted the various sects underneath the Hezbollah umbrella together to form a coherent group by providing

⁶²⁰ Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1997), 25–26.

⁶²¹ Daniel Byman, "Confronting Syrian-Backed Terrorism," *Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 100.

⁶²² Graham Fuller, "The Hizballah-Iran Connection," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2007 -2006): 143.

organizational assistance, as well as weapons, training, and tactical help funneled through the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp.⁶²³ This would not have been as successful without Syria's help. Syria was situated to provide logistical and military help because it occupied Lebanon after the civil war, ostensibly as a peacekeeping force. During the occupation, it granted Iran access to Lebanese Shi'ites.

Hezbollah's primary source of funding comes from Iran. Various estimates range from \$60-100 million U.S. dollars per year.⁶²⁴ At various points, Iran has tried to cut funding in order to contain Hezbollah or because of limited resources,⁶²⁵ but it never completely eliminated its support. Some argue that recent international sanctions on Iran have depleted its capacity to fund Hezbollah. Israeli intelligence reports suggest that the sanctions have resulted in cuts to Hezbollah's budget, although other journalists have argued that the source of funding is the Imam al-Rida Foundation, which is not affected by sanctions.⁶²⁶ The Iranian Supreme Leader oversees most of the funding because he controls the budgets for foundations and charities that funnel funds to Hezbollah allows the group to keep its funds in Iranian banks.

But Hezbollah is not entirely dependent on Iran for its funding. Another source of financing comes from Shi'ite communities that pay the khums (1/5 of one's annual income) which is then distributed to Hezbollah activities.⁶²⁷ Hezbollah also solicits donations from

⁶²³ Ibid.

⁶²⁴ Steven Hecker, "Hezbollah Response to an Israeli Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon," in *The Last Arab-Israeli Battlefield? Implications of an Israeli Withdrawal from Lebanon*, ed. Patrick Clawson and Michael Eisenstadt (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000), 14.

⁶²⁵ Yaakov Katz, "Iran Said to Have Cut Hizbullah Aid by 40%," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 16, 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=199611>.

⁶²⁶ Paige Kollock, "Iran Sanctions No Threat to Hezbollah," *Now Lebanon*, June 12, 2010, <http://www.nowlebanon.com/Arabic/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=176633>.

⁶²⁷ Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, "Hezbollah Calls for National Unity Government," *Morning Edition* (National Public Radio, August 14, 2007), <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12768980>.

Shi'ite communities across the world via members of the Association for the Support of Islamic Resistance. This includes Latin America, Africa, Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere. The tri-border region in South America is a particularly fruitful fundraising area because it is relatively lawless and Hezbollah can engage in smuggling and fundraising with a free hand. Some estimates of total funds raised in South America suggest tens of millions of dollars.⁶²⁸ Hezbollah also engages in legitimate business practices; for example it runs supermarkets and is involved in real estate development, small businesses, and investments.⁶²⁹ The group has made a concerted effort to diversify its funding sources, such as forging \$100 U.S. dollar bills. Incidentally, its counterfeiting is considered some of the best in the world. Hezbollah uses the fake notes to fund their activities, but also dumps it into Western economies to devalue the currency and harm the economy.⁶³⁰

Hezbollah has also been involved in drug trafficking, poppy and cannabis cultivation, and importing materials to make heroin,⁶³¹ cigarette smuggling and car theft rings. For example, in 2004, a multi-million dollar cigarette smuggling ring run by Hezbollah was discovered by the FBI in North Carolina.⁶³² The group has profited from African conflict diamonds as well.⁶³³ Given Hezbollah's global enterprises, it is important to note the difference between Hamas and

⁶²⁸ Jeffrey Goldberg, "In the Party of God," *The New Yorker*, October 14, 2002, 22.

⁶²⁹ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 64.

⁶³⁰ Paul Kaihla, "Forging Terror How Rapid Advances in Scanning, Printing, and Other Technologies Have Made Counterfeiting a Potent New Weapon of Holy War," *CNN*, December 1, 2002, http://money.cnn.com/magazines/business2/business2_archive/2002/12/01/333256/index.htm.

⁶³¹ "U.S. Seizes \$150m Linked to Hezbollah Money-laundering," *BBC News*, August 20, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19327919>.

⁶³² Sari Horowitz, "Cigarette Smuggling Linked to Terrorism," *The Washington Post*, June 8, 2004, A01.

⁶³³ John Rollins, Liana Sun Wyler, and Seth Rosen, *International Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Security Threats, U.S. Policy, and Considerations for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, January 5, 2010), 26.

Hezbollah in this respect. Hezbollah is a powerful operation with global capabilities.⁶³⁴ As one State Department official described it, “We don’t see Hezbollah planning an attack [against the U.S.], but the capability is there. The biggest global threats are Al Qaeda and Hezbollah; they have the capability, are far more professional, far more embedded, and have a permanent presence.”⁶³⁵

Like its funding, Hezbollah receives the bulk of its military weapons from Iran, with the cooperation and assistance of Syria. Unlike other militias that emerged during the Civil War, Hezbollah retained its arms. The Ta’if agreement required individual militias to disarm but with Syria’s help, Hezbollah managed to avoid that fate with the justification that Israel still occupied southern Lebanon. The group also retained its arms following the Israel withdrawal in 2000 as Iran continued to supply Hezbollah with weapons and tactical training. It is reasonable to believe Hezbollah would be dependent on continued supplies and training, but some suggest that Hezbollah has so much combat experience that the IRGC (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Council) training has become obsolete and instead, Hezbollah should actually be training IRGC members.⁶³⁶ The military capability Hezbollah demonstrated in the 2006 war suggests this interpretation has merit.⁶³⁷

Charity, Politics, and Violence

When Hezbollah first declared its objectives in the mid-1980s, it rejected participation in politics because it would legitimate the current Lebanese regime and without a major overhaul of

⁶³⁴ U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #63B.

⁶³⁵ Ibid.

⁶³⁶ Andrew Exum, *Hizballah at War: A Military Assessment*, Policy #63 (The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2006), 7.

⁶³⁷ Mark Mazetti and Thom Shanker, “Arming of Hezbollah Reveals U.S. and Israeli Blind Spots,” *The New York Times*, July 19, 2006, . www.nytimes.com/2006/07/19/world/middleeast/19missile.html.

the government, would constitute a “scarecrow opposition”.⁶³⁸ But as the group evolved from a primarily guerilla operation into a broader socio-political organization, it began to embrace electoral politics. Hezbollah first entered the Lebanese parliamentary system by participating in the August and September 1992 elections, winning eight seats and allied groups winning four. In 1996, they won ten seats and in 2000, eight. Following the 2005 Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah made great gains in the polls under the aegis of the Resistance and Development Bloc, more commonly referred to as the March 8th alliance.⁶³⁹ In this election, Hezbollah won more seats in Parliament (14 out of 128), and acquired two positions in the Lebanese cabinet.⁶⁴⁰

In May, 2008, a battle between the Lebanese government and Hezbollah resulted in a political compromise that gave Hezbollah and its allies 11 cabinet seats, another political victory for the group which effectively gave them a veto. Another victory for Hezbollah came in the 2009 parliamentary elections, which were also a great success for the March 8th alliance. The coalition won 57 seats, 12 of which went to Hezbollah. The next important development was in January, 2011, when the unity government collapsed after months of paralysis. Complicating matters, the March 8th alliance wanted to prevent the indictment of Hezbollah members by the UN Special Tribunal on Lebanon investigating the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri.

⁶³⁸ Joseph Alagha, ed., “Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed in Lebanon and the World,” in *Hizbullah’s Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 45.

⁶³⁹ The name refers to a series of demonstrations which took place after the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on February 14, 2005. Believing Syria to be responsible for the assassination, anti-Syrian demonstrations erupted, leading to Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon. On March 8, 2005, pro-Syrian forces including Hezbollah, demonstrated in support of Syria’s role in Lebanon and this coalition came to be known as March 8th. In response, anti-Syrian demonstrations broke out on the one month anniversary of Hariri’s assassination and this coalition received the March 14th moniker.

⁶⁴⁰ Eban Kaplan, “Profile: Hasan Nasrallah,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, August 11, 2010, <http://www.cfr.org/lebanon/profile-hassan-nasrallah/p11132>.

The outcome of the political crisis was a newly constituted government under the leadership of pro-Hezbollah Prime Minister Najib Mikati and 18 seats in the cabinet for Hezbollah and its allies. This means that for the first time Hezbollah held a place in the ruling coalition,⁶⁴¹ controlling two ministries and allied groups controlled another 16. Consequently, Hezbollah and its allies could block cabinet decisions.⁶⁴²

One basis for Hezbollah's popularity is the extensive network of social services it provides, which has generated grassroots support particularly among the Shi'ite populations of the southern Beirut suburbs and the Beqaa. Before the war with Israel in July of 2006, southern Lebanon was almost exclusively controlled by Hezbollah and the central Lebanese state was virtually nonexistent. Gal Luft described it as "Hezbollahland,"⁶⁴³ in which Hezbollah constituted a state within a state. One significant outcome of the July 2006 war was that Lebanese Armed Forces deployed to southern Lebanon, in effect, dethroning Hezbollah as the single indigenous military power south of the Litani river. Nevertheless, Hezbollah retained its arms and remained a significant purveyor of social services. One indication of Hezbollah's influence was that after the 2006 war, the group dominated reconstruction efforts, promising \$10,000 USD grants to families in Southern Lebanon for expenses like rent, food, and furniture.⁶⁴⁴ Among other services it offers, throughout the Shi'ite dominated areas, Hezbollah runs three hospitals, 17 medical centers,⁶⁴⁵ provides private loans, as well as micro-financing initiatives. The organization also engages in activities commonly associated with a sovereign

⁶⁴¹ Lina Khatib, "Hizbulah's Political Strategy," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 53, no. 2 (May 2011): 61.

⁶⁴² Reuters, "Lebanon Gets Hezbollah-led Cabinet After 5 Month Lag," June 13, 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/13/us-lebanon-government-idUSTRE75C48K20110613>.

⁶⁴³ Daniel Byman, "Should Hezbollah Be Next?," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 6 (December 2003): 60.

⁶⁴⁴ John Kifner, "Hezbollah Leads Work to Rebuild, Gaining Stature," *The New York Times*, August 16, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/16/world/middleeast/16hezbollah.html>.

⁶⁴⁵ Hamzeh, "Lebanon's Islamists and Local Politics: A New Reality," 740.

state: court rulings, conflict mediation and funding education. Some have estimated the education budget for Hezbollah is approximately \$3.5 Million USD per year, which provides schooling for roughly 23, 000 Lebanese students.⁶⁴⁶

In addition to its political and social influence, Hezbollah's appeal among the Lebanese Shi'ites can also be understood by examining the group's message. Hezbollah issued its first manifesto, called "The Open Letter" in 1985, outlining its main objectives and grievances. The "Open Letter" rejected defining Hezbollah as an organized party and instead depicted it as part of the Muslim global community, connected to all other Muslims in the world. As such, although the group's primary interests are focused on Lebanon, it also regards issues that affect Muslims in other countries as part of its agenda. The group has a distinctly Islamist character, as the manifesto makes clear, and is profoundly connected to Iran both in terms of resources and ideology.⁶⁴⁷

The group described itself as militant, but also constrained by Islamic law. Hezbollah adheres to the concept of wilayat al-faqih, which is a Shi'ite doctrine that gives religious authority over other Muslims to an Islamic Jurist (faqih). In contrast to Sunni theology which is largely decentralized, Shi'ite doctrine holds a more hierarchical conception of religious authority. While some Shi'ites do not believe this principle translates into governmental authority, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini argued that it did and used this concept as a core

⁶⁴⁶ John Waterbury, "Hate Your Policies, Love Your Institutions," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 1 (February 2003): 58.

⁶⁴⁷ "The Hezbollah Program- An Open Letter," *The International Institute for Counterterrorism*, originally printed in *Jerusalem Quarterly*, Fall, 1988, accessed July 19, 2012, <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/4/Default.aspx>.

constitutional principle of the Islamic Republic of Iran. That Hezbollah adheres to wilayat al-faqih, further reveals the connection between the group and the Iranian clerical leadership.⁶⁴⁸

One element of the 1985 manifesto calls for an Islamic state of Lebanon and this tenet of the group's platform remained in place until the second manifesto was released in 2009. This version removed any reference to an Islamic state, perhaps reflecting a broadening of the group's political ambitions. Interestingly, the 2009 manifesto also removed references to the wilayat al-faqih, although it continued to advocate for a privileged relationship between Lebanon and Iran. Other speeches and public statements by Hezbollah leaders reference wilayat al-faqih, so the group has not entirely abandoned the notion. Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah explained the omission by describing the 2009 manifesto as a political statement rather than a religious or ideological document.⁶⁴⁹

A major distinguishing feature of Hezbollah's ideological commitments is its staunchly anti-American agenda. The 'Open Letter' says, "American is behind all our catastrophes."⁶⁵⁰ Although other Islamist groups like the various branches of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas are broadly anti-Western and oppose American support for Israel, Hezbollah is closer to Al Qaeda in the centrality of anti-Americanism to its core ideology. Hezbollah essentially declared

⁶⁴⁸ As the manifesto argues, "No one can imagine the importance of our military potential as our military apparatus is not separate from our overall social fabric. Each of us is a fighting soldier. And when it becomes necessary to carry out the Holy War, each of us takes up his assignment in the fight in accordance with the injunctions of the Law, and that in the framework of the mission carried out under the tutelage of the Commanding Jurist" Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Joseph Alagha, ed., "Nasrallah's Press Conference: 30 November, 2009," in *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 143.

⁶⁵⁰ Alagha, "Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed in Lebanon and the World," 41.

war against the United States⁶⁵¹ for its support for Israel, American troop presence in Lebanon, as well as the hegemonic role it has played in Lebanon and the Middle East overall.⁶⁵²

The specific grievances against Israel include its longstanding occupation of southern Lebanon, its invasion of Lebanon in 1982 which extended to Beirut, bombings which killed Lebanese citizens, and the killings of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in September 1982,⁶⁵³ After Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah maintained that the Israel still unlawfully occupied the Sheba'a Farms, a tract of land which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 war. Hezbollah believes this piece of land is Lebanese, while the U.N. defines it as disputed territory between Syria and Israel.⁶⁵⁴

In order to achieve its ideological aims, Hezbollah has made violence an essential component of its tactical repertoire. Many regard Hezbollah as the progenitor of modern suicide terrorism and it has been associated with some of the highest profile terrorist incidents of the 20th century, including the 1983 Marine Barracks Bombings, the bombings of the American embassy in 1983 and 1984, the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in 1985, as well as a series of hostage takings throughout the 1980s, into the early 1990s.

Policy Window 1: Embassy and Marine Barracks Bombings

American policy toward Hezbollah was initially incoherent as the administration struggled to devise a strategy in response to Hezbollah attacks on American targets. While military action was considered, the U.S. ultimately did not retaliate. A covert response was also

⁶⁵¹ The Open Letter declares Hezbollah's three main enemies as the United States, France, and Israel.

⁶⁵² "The Hezbollah Program- An Open Letter."

⁶⁵³ Alagha, "Open Letter Addressed to the Oppressed in Lebanon and the World," 42.

⁶⁵⁴ Steven N. Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, "Declawing the 'Party of God': Toward Normalization in Lebanon," *World Policy Journal* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 32.

considered, but ultimately rejected. And a secret arms-for-hostages deal went public, calling into question the administration's commitment not to negotiate with terrorists. On the other hand, the Reagan administration successfully changed the American counterterrorism infrastructure. What explains the administration's approach toward Hezbollah? Adapting Kingdon's model, I will argue that the Marine Barracks Bombing provided a window of opportunity, making it possible to revise American counterterrorism policy and begin a process of enlisting international allies in combatting terrorism. Developments in the policy streams helped define Hezbollah as a serious problem requiring a solution. Policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of Hezbollah to a new solution: intensified counterterrorism. But other developments in the policy streams made the initial response to Hezbollah problematic. The Reagan administration suffered from a lack of consensus on military action. And with respect to the hostages, in desperation, it wavered from its "no concessions" policy.

Hezbollah first came to the attention of American policymakers when it attacked United States targets in a series of suicide bombings, hijackings, and hostage takings beginning in 1983. Before this point, the U.S. had no policy toward the group because officials were not aware of its existence. The first major attack took place on April 18, 1983. A suicide truck bombing destroyed the bottom floors of the U.S. embassy in Beirut, killing 63 people, 17 of whom were Americans. Although it was initially unclear who the perpetrators were, U.S. officials quickly associated the attack with pro-Khomeini Shi'ite guerilla groups. Reagan, on the day he heard about the attack, wrote in his diary that the first indication was that Iranian Shi'ites were responsible.⁶⁵⁵ According to declassified Beirut embassy cables, three different organizations took credit for the bombing: the Jihad Islamic Organization, the Arab Socialist Unionists and the

⁶⁵⁵ Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 145.

Vengeance Organization of Sabra and Shatila Martyrs.⁶⁵⁶ The name “Hezbollah” does not appear in the diplomatic record at this point; indeed, the group had not fully coalesced yet, but diplomats were aware that the bombing could have been perpetrated by individuals linked to the Islamic Amal Force, a breakaway group from Amal which along with other Shi’ite factions eventually became known as Hezbollah.⁶⁵⁷

Six months later, on October 23, 1983, two suicide truck bombs were detonated at the Beirut International Airport housing complex for the Multinational Force, one in front of the American marine barracks and one in front of the French military barracks. The bombs killed 241 U.S. Marines and injured more than 100 others. Like the previous attack, it was not immediately clear who was responsible. When asked in an interview who perpetrated the attack, Secretary of Defense Wienberger demurred, arguing that there were a number of possibilities, including disparate groups in Lebanon, Syria, or Iran.⁶⁵⁸ But a DIA report identified Hezbollah by name, “These attacks are probably the work of the pro-Iranian Lebanese Shia Hizb Allah (Party of God), led by Muhammed Husayn Fadlallah. This group was probably responsible for the April car bombing of the American embassy. It has also been responsible for much of the sniping directed at the marines.”⁶⁵⁹

The Reagan administration was shocked by the bombings and struggled to generate a sensible response. The President quickly met with the NSC to devise a strategy and settled on a plan for the Sixth Fleet to bomb Hezbollah installations in the Bekaa. The President issued

⁶⁵⁶ “American Embassy Beirut Bombing,” June 28, 1983, 1–5, Executive Secretariat NSC Cable Files Records. Beirut Explosion April 18-May 12, 1983, 2, Box 5, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

⁶⁵⁷ “American Embassy Beirut Bombing.”

⁶⁵⁸ “Secdef Appearance on ‘Face the Nation’,” Executive Secretariat NSC Country Files Middle East, Near East, South Asia Folder, Lebanon Marine Explosion 10/23-11/3 1983 Box 41, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

⁶⁵⁹ “DIA Spot Report,” December 14, 1983, Executive Secretariat NSC Country File Middle East, Near East, South Asia Folder, Lebanon Marine Explosion 10/23-11/31 1983 (1) Box 41, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

NSDD 111, which changed the rules of engagement in Lebanon. The Joint Chiefs opposed the change, arguing that tactical judgments by military commanders on the ground could lead to war with Syria. They felt this should be a decision made in Washington.⁶⁶⁰ NSDD 111 also included provisions for the U.S. government to pressure Syria regarding dissident groups in Lebanon. The administration viewed Syria as the key player who could have the most influence on the situation and wanted Donald Rumsfeld, who was Presidential envoy to the Middle East at the time, to talk to Syria about it.⁶⁶¹ The U.S. Ambassador also met with the Syrian chief of Staff, but these efforts to exert pressure did not yield results; Syria's intransigence added considerable tension to the American-Syrian relationship. The American Ambassador recounted one such meeting in a declassified embassy cable, "Then I took up probable Iranian connection to bombing and laid this squarely at Syria's door. I said that Iranian presence in Lebanon was possible only because SARG permitted it and sustained it logistically. Syria had the power to get the Iranians out. We had repeatedly asked them to do so, and their continued presence in clearly a trouble-making role in Lebanon indicated SARG acquiescence in their activities."⁶⁶²

NSDD 111 also called for diplomats to enlist the help of local Druze and Shia leaders to contain Hezbollah. This translated into diplomatic pressure on Walid Jumblatt and Nabih

⁶⁶⁰ "NSDD-111 on Lebanon and the Middle East: Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense from John A. Wickham, Jr. Acting Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff," November 4, 1983, Executive Secretariat NSC Country File, Middle East and Near East and South Asia Folder, Lebanon Chronology (1) Box 41, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

⁶⁶¹ "Strategy for US Actions in Lebanon Based on Discussions of the CMF Staff: Somewhat Random Notes from 4 January 1984," January 4, 1984, Crisis Management Center NSC Records, Folder: Lebanon Documents (1 of 9), Rumsfeld Cables II, Box 8, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

⁶⁶² "Ambassador's Discussion with Syrian Chief of Staff Shihabi on October 23 Bombing of Marine Headquarters in Beirut," December 14, 1983, Executive Secretariat NSC Country Files Middle East, Near east and South Asia Folders, Lebanon Marine Explosion 10/23-11/31/1983, (9) Box 41, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

Berri.⁶⁶³ American officials held several meetings with Nabih Berri in particular, during which they pushed him to exert his influence over fellow Shi'ites and reign in Hezbollah.⁶⁶⁴ In one of these meetings, an American official warned Berri about Amal's close relationship with Hezbollah. He said to Berri, "You know Nabih, there's a Chinese proverb. *He who resides on the back of the tiger ends up in its belly.* From that point further, anytime I would go at him about Hezbollah, he would say yes...the tiger, the tiger."⁶⁶⁵

The administration was divided about the military response. According to National Security Advisor Robert MacFarlane's account, the Sixth Fleet retaliatory strike had already been authorized by the President, but Defense Secretary Weinberger cancelled it.⁶⁶⁶ Weinberger had long advocated for U.S. withdrawal and the attack on the Marines confirmed his belief that the U.S. should not have become involved in Lebanon. He was wary of a military response if it meant civilian casualties that could complicate alliances with Arab states or draw the U.S. into a quagmire. Secretary of State Shultz, by contrast, wanted a more aggressive response. The President's memoirs relate the decision not to retaliate differently than MacFarlane's interpretation. Reagan wrote that the intelligence was inconclusive on who exactly was responsible for the bombing, so he decided to cancel airstrikes.⁶⁶⁷ The loss of innocent life was a primary concern, so intelligence experts were asked to uncover more information, but the Israelis

⁶⁶³ "National Security Decision Directive Number 111," October 28, 1983, 3, Executive Secretariat NSC Country File Middle East and Near East and South Asia Folder Lebanon Chronology (1) Box 41, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

⁶⁶⁴ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #373, February 2, 2012.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Robert McFarlane, PBS Frontline: Target America, September 2001, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/mcfarlane.html.

⁶⁶⁷ Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1990), 463.

and the French went ahead and bombed the same targets the U.S. had been considering.⁶⁶⁸ The divisions within the cabinet led to significant policy paralysis.⁶⁶⁹

Reagan was reluctant to order a withdrawal, but eventually did so in February, 1984. Reagan's memoirs suggest that the Marine Barracks Bombing was a key element of his decision to withdraw, in particular, the irrationality of the Islamic Fundamentalist ideology which motivated the attack. He wrote that he was worried about abandoning the U.S. commitment to Israel and that an American withdrawal could serve as an invitation for the Soviets to replace the United States as the most influential player in the region. But he pointed to the religious element of the attacks, which had no obvious solution."... The irrationality of Middle Eastern politics forced us to rethink our policy there. How do you deal with a people driven by such a religious zeal that they are willing to sacrifice their lives in order to kill an enemy simply because he doesn't worship the same God they do? People who believe that if they do that, they'll go instantly to heaven?"⁶⁷⁰

In 1984, a covert option against Hezbollah was considered, specifically by Robert Oakley in the State Department and Clare George, Deputy Director of Operations at the CIA. The idea was to give a unit of the Lebanese military training and assistance, but according to Oakley, the assistance was never distributed because the unit was deemed too undisciplined.⁶⁷¹ The U.S. was blamed for a subsequent failed assassination attempt against Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, commonly referred to as the spiritual leader of Hezbollah, when eighty civilians were killed and hundreds injured. Vincent Cannistraro, former Director of NSC Intelligence, verified that the

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., 463–464.

⁶⁶⁹ McFarlane, PBS Frontline: Target America.

⁶⁷⁰ Reagan, *An American Life*, 62.

⁶⁷¹ Robert Oakley, PBS Frontline: Target America, September 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/oakley.html>.

U.S. had not ordered the assassination. However he admitted that the Lebanese security service had been trained and supplied by the U.S. and the C.I.A.⁶⁷² Bob Woodward reports the incident differently, arguing that CIA Director William Casey ordered the assassination. He explained, “Diplomacy was not functioning. And Reagan wanted action. And Casey went off the books on his own, and worked it out with the Saudis to pay two million dollars to get...people to build this car bomb that killed eighty innocent people in Beirut [in 1985] and not Sheik Fadlallah.”⁶⁷³

Problems, Policies, and Politics in the Aftermath of the Embassy and Marine Barracks Bombings

A series of focusing events in the problem stream reinforced the notion that Hezbollah was a major problem requiring a solution. The group remained high on the administration’s decision agenda as it perpetrated more bombings, hijackings, and hostage takings throughout the 1980s, into the 1990s, although the administration still struggled with how best to react. After the Marine Barracks Bombing, the next major attack was on September 20, 1984 on the U.S. Embassy Annex, killing 24 people and injuring the U.S. Ambassador, among others. Two days later, in his diary, President Reagan remarked, “It is virtually impossible to retaliate without risking killing many innocent people. I’ve told George S. to let Syria know that we are convinced this couldn’t happen without their tacit approval and we d—n well will keep this in mind if it

⁶⁷² Vincent Cannistraro, PBS Frontline: Target America, September 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/cannistraro.html>.

⁶⁷³ Bob Woodward, PBS Frontline: Target America, September 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/target/interviews/woodward.html>.

continues to happen.”⁶⁷⁴ He also received intelligence that Hezbollah was planning more attacks against U.S. targets, so there was continuing, high level attention to the problem of Hezbollah.⁶⁷⁵

Hijackings and Hostages

Hezbollah also engaged in airline hijackings and kidnapped Americans throughout the 1980s. The hijacking of TWA Flight 847 on June 14, 1985 is one of the most prominent examples of Hezbollah’s activities during this period. The flight from Athens to Rome was diverted to Beirut and held for 17 days and resulted in the death of Robert Dean Stethen who was shot and his body was flung onto the airport tarmac. The main demand was the release of the Dawa 17, who were Shi’ite prisoners convicted of embassy bombings that took place in Kuwait in 1983. But the President did not want to meet Hezbollah’s demands. He wrote, “There was no way we could do that. This was something nonnegotiable on our part: We want our hostages back, but we couldn’t ask another country to go easy on convicted terrorists at the same time that we were asking the world to crack down on terrorism.”⁶⁷⁶ The President met with national security advisors on June 16 and emphasized the policy not to negotiate with terrorists. The administration also decided to involve Amal as a mediator and on June 17th, National Security Advisor Robert MacFarlane called Nabi Berri, the leader of the Amal, and spoke with him for half an hour on the subject.⁶⁷⁷

The American Ambassador was also involved in these efforts. The Administration sought Syrian help to release the hostages as well, hoping they would exert pressure on Hezbollah. This

⁶⁷⁴ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 268.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁶⁷⁶ Reagan, *An American Life*, 523.

⁶⁷⁷ “Summary of Events: The Hijacking of TWA Flight 847,” June 30, 1985, 2, White House Office of the Press Secretary, John Poindexter Files, Folder: TWA 847 Hijacking, 6/85-7/85 (6 of 8), Box 2, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

track was pursued through the embassy and the U.S. envoy to Lebanon. Meanwhile, Israel released Shi'ite prisoners from Atlit prison, but argued that the release was not linked to the demands made by the hijackers because they had decided to release them before the attack and that the hijacking had interrupted the process. There was a great deal of effort to ensure this decision was not depicted as a “deal” for releasing the hostages, but former State Department coordinator for counterterrorism during the 1980s, Robert Oakley, described it as an “implicit” deal with the Israelis that the U.S. would not admit to directly.⁶⁷⁸ The President meanwhile decided to let the diplomatic option play out, hoping for a swift resolution.⁶⁷⁹

On Sunday June 30, 1985, Syria reported that they convinced Hezbollah to release the TWA hostages. This agreement, however, did not include the release of seven other American hostages that Hezbollah had kidnapped before the TWA hijacking. Nevertheless, the Administration's relief was palpable and in a televised address from the Oval Office, Reagan vowed to take action against the perpetrators. “The 39 Americans held hostage...are free, safe, and at this moment, on their way to Frankfurt, Germany. They will be home again soon...We will not rest until justice is done. We will not rest until the world community meets its responsibility: We call upon those who helped secure the release of these TWA passengers to show even greater energy and commitment to secure the release of all others held captive in Lebanon. And, we call upon the world community to strengthen its cooperation to stamp out this ugly, vicious evil of terrorism.”⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁸ Oakley, PBS Frontline: Target America.

⁶⁷⁹ “Summary of Events: The Hijacking of TWA Flight 847,” 4.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., 7.

The administration never directly retaliated for Hezbollah's attacks and kidnappings, although it did move the Sixth Fleet near the Lebanese coastline to signal a military threat to Hezbollah in 1987.⁶⁸¹ However, it did pursue legal means to prosecute Hezbollah members who participated in specific attacks. For example, the administration pushed for West Germany to extradite Muhammed Hamadi, one of the TWA Flight 847 hijackers and when they refused, the U.S. helped prepare the prosecution's case for the West German courts.⁶⁸²

Although the U.S. was able to secure the freedom of the TWA hostages, the administration was consumed by the remaining seven hostages. The Beirut embassy saw the release of the TWA hostages as a chance to get Syria to advocate for the release of the seven remaining hostages in Hezbollah custody. "This reinforces our belief that now is the time for President Reagan to urge Asad to obtain the release of the seven kidnapes. For this message to be effective, it must be accompanied by a warm expression of gratitude for his role in obtaining the release of the TWA Hostages."⁶⁸³ These efforts failed, however, and securing the release of seven other hostages who had been kidnapped before the TWA crisis was a top priority at the highest levels of the American government.⁶⁸⁴

Reagan in particular was highly motivated to find a solution to this hostage crisis, especially given that the first hostage crisis played such a significant part in Carter's defeat in his 1980 reelection bid. Reagan wrote, "No problem was more frustrating for me when I was president than trying to get the American hostages home. It was a problem I shared with Jimmy

⁶⁸¹ Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*, 145.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 154.

⁶⁸³ "Recommendations for Mobilizing Asad on Behalf of Our Interests," July 1985, 4, U.S. Department of State Cable, Embassy Damascus, Collection Crisis Management Center, NSC Records. Beirut Hostages Folder 3/3 Box 1, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

⁶⁸⁴ George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 666.

Carter, a problem that confronted me when I entered the White House and that was with me when I left it.”⁶⁸⁵ The President was actively involved in the hostage issue and attended to minute details. He remarked on the release of individuals and was extremely sensitive to the perception that the administration was not doing enough. In his diaries he wrote, “Sat. good word one of our hostages- Father Jenco was released in Lebanon & turned over to the Syrians. Now on Sunday he’s in W. Germany on his way home. The Hisballah sent a video tape out with him on which one of the remaining hostages- Jacobson dressed me & our govt. down for, as he put it, not lifting a finger to try & get their freedom.”⁶⁸⁶

Former officials describe the high level preoccupation with the hostages as creating a sense of desperation, which laid the groundwork for the arms for hostages deal, later known as the Iran-Contra Scandal. ⁶⁸⁷ This marked a departure from the administration’s “no concessions policy”, although Reagan vociferously denied this. Beginning in August, 1985, the deal entailed the Israeli government selling TOW anti-tank missiles to a set of Iranians believed to be “moderate” and in return, the Iranians would pressure Hezbollah to release the American hostages. Meanwhile, Israel would purchase more TOW missiles from the United States to replenish its store. The scandal broke in 1986 when it was discovered that funds obtained from the sale of the missiles were illegally channeled to support Nicaraguan contras who were battling the Sandinistas. The President pled ignorance of the Contra plot, but felt the arms exchange was

⁶⁸⁵ Reagan, *An American Life*, 490.

⁶⁸⁶ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 427.

⁶⁸⁷ In a December 7, 1985, Secretary of State Casper Weinberger met with President Regan, along with Secretary of State Shultz, Don Regan, John McMahon, Robert McFarlane and John Poindexter. In this meeting, according to Weinberger’s notes, “President sd (sic) he could answer charges of illegality but he couldn’t answer charge that “big strong President Regan passed up a chance to free hostages.” Caspar W. Weinberger, “Diary,” December 7, 1985, Iran Contra at 25: Reagan and Bush “Criminal Liability Evaluations”, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 365. November 25, 2011, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB210/14-Weinberger%20Diaries%20Dec%207%20handwritten.pdf>.

justified, even though key advisors like George Shultz and Casper Weinberger had objected to the plan.⁶⁸⁸

The Iran-Contra scandal generated a credibility problem for American foreign policy, especially with respect to the arms embargo against Iran, which was strongly advocated by the U.S. The fiasco also solidified the U.S. commitment to do nothing remotely close to negotiating with terrorists. It was in this context that George H.W. Bush assumed the Presidency, but the climate had changed. First, the hostage issue held a less prominent place on the foreign policy agenda, even though Westerners were still being kidnapped, such as Lt. Col. William Higgins. The fall of the Soviet Union and the first Gulf War drew high level policymakers' attention away from the hostage issue and changed the regional strategic environment. The Bush administration had signaled an opening to Iran in the President's inaugural address in which he said, "good will begets good will", and when the UN envoy Giandomenico Picco became involved to negotiate a hostage exchange, the last American hostages were finally released.⁶⁸⁹

The Policy Stream

Although there were many key actors arguing for an aggressive anti-terrorism approach to Hezbollah and other similar groups, there were several strains in the policy stream which complicated the American approach. The first major issue was that Vietnam cast a large shadow over the proceedings, making policymakers more sensitive to American involvement abroad. Reagan appears aware of this dynamic when he writes about the Marine Barracks Bombing in his diary. He thought the press was trying to give the bombing the "Vietnam treatment, but I

⁶⁸⁸ Reagan, *An American Life*, 510.

⁶⁸⁹ Ranstorp, *Hizb 'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*, 139 and 167.

don't think the people will buy it."⁶⁹⁰ Moreover, one of the reasons why he wanted secrecy over Grenada was because of post-Vietnam sensitivities.

He wrote in his memoirs,

Frankly, there was another reason I wanted secrecy. It was what I call the "post-Vietnam syndrome," the resistance of many in the Congress to the use of military force abroad for any reason, because of our nation's experience in Vietnam...I understood what Vietnam meant for the country, but I believed the United States couldn't remain spooked forever by this experience...I suspected that if we told the leaders of Congress about the operation, even under terms of strictest confidentiality, there would be some who would leak it to the press together with the prediction that Grenada was going to become "another Vietnam". We were already running into this phenomenon in our efforts to halt the spread of Communism in Central America, and some congressmen were raising the issue of "another Vietnam" in Lebanon...⁶⁹¹

An additional challenge which complicated the Reagan administration's approach to Hezbollah was that suicide terrorism was an innovation for which U.S. officials were unprepared. Although the tactic wasn't unprecedented, no one in the policy stream had been actively pushing for ways to address it because the method hadn't been prominently employed since World War II Kamikaze bombers. Thus, U.S. officials did not have a well formed set of alternatives specified by the policy community when the attacks drew high level attention to the problem. As a result, the administration scrambled to develop a strategy as key officials took time formulating new doctrinal approaches to terrorism.

One problem was that two competing doctrines emerged within the administration, represented by Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger. Differences between the two cabinet officials produced no consensus on strategy regarding Hezbollah and terrorism, which hampered the American response. Secretary Shultz rejected the Vietnam

⁶⁹⁰ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 192.

⁶⁹¹ Reagan, *An American Life*, 451.

syndrome and the corresponding reluctance to use military force. He advocated a more assertive, proactive approach to terrorism. Indeed, the George W. Bush doctrine's notion of preemptive war borrows heavily from the Shultz doctrine. Efforts to advocate for his position began in earnest in March, 1984 when he convened a group of counterterrorism specialists for a discussion about terrorism. He felt that the administration's thinking on terrorism was confused and that they were unprepared for addressing this new type of warfare.⁶⁹² Shultz describes this period in his memoirs, "At this time, National Security Decision Directive 138 was in preparation. Signed on April 3, the directive was notable primarily for the arguments it stimulated. A passage authorizing operations to "neutralize" terrorists encountered fierce opposition: those opposed argued that it sounded as if it authorized assassination. The word "proactive" was substituted to describe preemptive operations against terrorists: a good word, but the argument disclosed great reluctance even to consider offensive action against terrorists."⁶⁹³

Much of NSDD 138 is still classified, but *The Los Angeles Times* broke the story on April 15, 1984 and revealed that the directive authorized the, "creation and training of FBI and CIA paramilitary teams and Pentagon military squads. The counterterror military units in each of the three military services (such as the Army's "Delta" squads and their intelligence support agency) are now coordinated by the new Joint Special Operations Agency under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which already is preparing a contingency list of potential terrorist targets overseas for quick disruptive actions or reprisal strikes." The article goes on to say, "The most significant aspect of

⁶⁹² Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, 645.

⁶⁹³ Ibid.

the Administration's new anti-terrorism approach, however, has been the acceptance of the principle that violent preemption of a terrorist attack is a legitimate tactic."⁶⁹⁴

In comparison to Shultz, Secretary of Defense Weinberger represented the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of using force against terrorism. In November, 1984, Weinberger gave a speech to the National Press Club in which he espoused his principles on the use of force, which became known as the Weinberger Doctrine. The speech outlined six conditions for use of force: that the U.S. should not engage military forces without vital interests being at stake, if the U.S. does engage it should provide enough troops to win, have clearly defined objectives, constantly reevaluate goals and the resources that have been devoted to achieving them, ensure that the American public supports the mission, and only use military forces as a last resort.⁶⁹⁵

Shultz felt that the Weinberger Doctrine was the epitome of the Vietnam syndrome, which he felt was endemic in Washington. "Caution and worry and inhibition were paralyzing an effective response to terrorism: on Capitol Hill and in the Pentagon, among Democrats and Republicans, on the left and on the right, all too many people of influence and authority seemed to have an endless litany of reasons to refrain from the use of power as an instrument of American foreign policy."⁶⁹⁶ The problem with the disagreements between Weinberger and Shultz is that it produced paralysis in the government over how to handle terrorism in general and Hezbollah in particular.

⁶⁹⁴ Robert C. Toth, "U.S. Acts to Curb Terrorism Abroad: Reagan Signs Directive Endorsing Preemptive Strikes, Reprisal Raids," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1984, 1.

⁶⁹⁵ Casper Weinberger, "The Uses of Military Power" (presented at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., November 29, 1984), <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/military/force/weinberger.html>.

⁶⁹⁶ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, 651.

Another issue that the spate of violence and kidnappings generated was debate about the limits of the no concessions policy. American policymakers did not want to violate it, but some officials had a more flexible conception of it. For example, at the height of the TWA crisis, the President argued that Israel should release the Shi'ite prisoners, which Hezbollah had demanded. At the same time, Israeli officials should emphasize that the decision was not linked to the TWA demands, but had been decided before the crisis.⁶⁹⁷ And he strongly denied that the arms-for-hostages deal was ransom, claiming that the arms did not go to Hezbollah; therefore it did not violate the no concessions policy. The Iran Contra Scandal called into question the administration's commitment to not negotiating with terrorists, and hampered its credibility in cooperative counterterrorist efforts with other countries.

One interesting aspect of this period is the absence of controversy over whether the U.S. should have contact with Islamist groups in general, even Hezbollah. This taboo did not emerge until the 1990s. Even in the 1980s, arguably the most conflictual stages of the U.S. relationship with Hezbollah because the group directly attacked American troops and kidnapped U.S. citizens, there were no rules against engagement.⁶⁹⁸ Another State Department official reflects on the lack of injunctions against contacts in the 1980s, "we were planning on talking to Sheikh Nasrallah and the department itself was going to do it, so even though they had been involved in the bombing of the marine barracks, and perhaps the American embassy, there was no injunction against talking to them. You might have had problems if you were talking to some of the perpetrators, but nevertheless, that was the sort of thing no one in his right mind would have

⁶⁹⁷ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 335.

⁶⁹⁸ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #373.

done, but there was never any instruction from Washington about it.”⁶⁹⁹ The absence of a taboo meant that local diplomats could decide idiosyncratically whether or not to meet with Islamists. For example, a U.S. embassy official met with Imam Musa Al Sadr in 1966 on his own initiative in order to learn about the issues faced by the Shi’a in southern Lebanon.⁷⁰⁰

Indeed, in a set of hearings about Islamic Fundamentalism, Political Islam is seen as a new phenomenon and experts testified that contacts with Islamists should be encouraged.⁷⁰¹ While these comments did not specify Hezbollah, it does suggest a general climate that was not uniformly opposed to contacts with Islamist groups. Congressmen questioned how we could develop good relations with a movement when we disagree with their approach to human rights or if an ally government does not wish the U.S. to engage with the group, but in general, members of Congress did not express an aversion to contacts. Dr. Hermann Eiltz, a former diplomat, testified that he supported congressmen traveling to the Middle East and meeting with Islamic leaders as a way to bridge understanding.⁷⁰²

The Political Stream

Developments in the political stream pushed for a swift withdrawal from Lebanon and immediate resolution of the hostage crisis. However, forces in this stream opposed military engagement, which helps explain why the administration eventually abandoned its promise to retaliate.

⁶⁹⁹ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #854.

⁷⁰⁰ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #237.

⁷⁰¹ See testimony by Hermann Eiltz in, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamic Radicalism: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives*, 99th Cong. (Statement of Hermann Eiltz, 1985), 65–66.

⁷⁰² *Islamic Fundamentalism and Islamic Radicalism: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives.*

Key members of Congress pressed the administration to withdraw the marines and bring them home. Reagan met with the joint leadership of Congress to provide them a briefing on Lebanon. During the meeting, Reagan writes, “Tip [O’Neill] sounded off in a very partisan manner. So much so that Sen. Bob Byrd tried to moderate things. He’s off and away- Tip that is- on “bring the marines’ home.” I almost let go the controls but I didn’t. There is no doubt the Dems. are going to ride this thru the campaign.”⁷⁰³ The administration did try to hammer out a deal with Congress on the issue. “We met later-George Shultz, Cap W., etc. on a compromise we hope Congress will agree to regarding the War Powers act and Congressional approval of the Marines being in Lebanon. Sen. Baker thinks he can get it through the Senate. Among other things it would settle their presence in Lebanon for 18 months.”⁷⁰⁴

One month before the Marine Barracks Bombings, Congress reached a bipartisan agreement to authorize the continuation of U.S. participation in the multinational force in Lebanon, although the debate was often heated. In the markup hearing held in September 1983 by the House Committee on Foreign Relations, Secretary of State Shultz argued that conflict between Congress and the President regarding Lebanon was tantamount to conducting two foreign policies. He went on to say, “To remove the marines would put both the government, and what we are trying to achieve, in jeopardy. This is why our domestic controversy over war powers has been disturbing. The uncertainty about the American commitment only weakens our effectiveness; doubts about our staying power can only cause the aggressors to discount our presence- or to intensify their attacks, in hopes of hastening our departure. An accommodation between the President and Congress to resolve this dispute will help dispel those doubts about

⁷⁰³ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 214–215.

⁷⁰⁴ Reagan, *An American Life*, 446.

our staying power and strengthen our hand.”⁷⁰⁵ Congressman Ted Weiss expressed concerns about the possibly open-ended commitment and Congressman Bonker pointed to the public support component of the issue. Bonker said, “So, I think the administration will have a public relations challenge before it as well as those of us in Congress to make sure that the public fully understands those policies and supports the commitment of troops because whenever the reports come back home about loss of lives and more direct engagements of artillery involving U.S. troops there, then that issue is going to be elevated to a major controversy in this country.”⁷⁰⁶

The reason this debate is significant with respect to U.S. policy toward Hezbollah is that it illustrates the political sensitivities surrounding an American response to the attacks. In essence, even though Hezbollah directly attacked American troops in Lebanon, the specter of Vietnam and fears of a quagmire generated profound pressure from Congress to withdraw from Lebanon, rather than remain and retaliate.

Following the Marine Barracks Bombing on October 23, 1983, Congress pushed for a swift withdrawal from Lebanon. Senators Melcher and Pryor sponsored a Senate Joint Resolution to disengage from Lebanon.⁷⁰⁷ Pryor argued that the attacks changed the nature of the commitment and therefore U.S. presence in Lebanon should be reevaluated. Senator Ted Kennedy advocated Congressional review of the American military presence in Lebanon every three months. The administration responded that the U.S should not withdraw precipitously and this view was reflected in Secretary of State Shultz’s testimony before Congress, shortly after the attacks. He argued that American presence in Lebanon served as a bulwark against Soviet

⁷⁰⁵ *Statutory Authorization Under the War Powers Resolution-Lebanon: Hearing and Markup Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 98th Cong., September 21, 1983, 6.*

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁰⁷ *Authorization for U.S. Marines in Lebanon: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 98th Cong., November 10, 1983.*

involvement in the region through Syria, and that the Marines provided stability to Lebanon to help facilitate national reconciliation.⁷⁰⁸

Congress had authorized continued Marine deployment, but set an 18 month deadline and the authorization could be terminated any time before the deadline with a joint resolution. President Reagan issued a signing statement, rejecting the conditions set by Congress as an unconstitutional limitation on executive power.⁷⁰⁹ But by the end of the year, support in Congress had eroded. As Secretary Shultz reflected, “Congressional support was eroding, and Democratic strategy, led by House Speaker Tip “O’Neill, focused on actual withdrawal of U.S. forces rather than reducing the duration of the mandate voted for in September. Public and congressional concern was mounting. I was convinced that Syria and the Lebanese opposition now believed that Congress would eventually force a U.S. pullout and that this had been a primary factor in Syrian intransigence during December.”⁷¹⁰

Congress also played an important role in crafting new anti-terrorism legislation that ultimately affected U.S. policy toward Hezbollah. Key hearings in the House took place in November, 1983 after the Marine Barracks Bombing, in June, 1984, and in September, 1984, after the bombing of the Embassy Annex. One of the most important elements of the debate surrounding the proposed legislation was whether individual groups ought to be designated as terrorist organizations. H.R. 5613 proposed designating groups as well as states as terrorist entities, but this proposal was highly contentious and was eventually scrapped, only to reemerge

⁷⁰⁸ “Secretary of Shultz Statement to the Hill,” 1983, Executive Secretariat NSC Country File, Lebanon Bombing/Airport Oct. 23, 1983, Middle East, Near East and South Asia Box 41, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

⁷⁰⁹ Ronald Reagan, “Statement on Signing the Multinational Force in Lebanon Resolution,” ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (The American Presidency Project, October 12, 1983), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40624>.

⁷¹⁰ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, 229.

again in the mid-1990s. Congress questioned the definition of terrorist. In one case, Congressman Stephen Solarz from New York sent a letter to the administration with a list of various groups such as the PLO and the IRA, asking if they would be defined as terrorist organizations.⁷¹¹ The administration agreed that defining a non-state terrorist group would be too difficult.

Moreover, Congress pressured the administration to speed up efforts to get the hostages released. For example, in June, 1985, Senator Paul Simon and Congressman George O'Brien sent a letter to the President on behalf of 205 congressional members regarding U.S. efforts to rescue American hostages in Lebanon. The response letter from the White house emphasized the no concessions policy, but that talking with the hijackers was legitimate. "As you know, our policy is that we do not give in to terrorist demands and we do not urge others to do so. This would only encourage further terrorist acts against the international community. The United States will not allow itself to be intimidated by terrorist threats or permit such threats to compromise our fundamental policies and values. This does not mean, however, that we are unwilling to talk. In all of our contacts on these kidnappings, we have stressed our interest in maintaining open lines of communication."⁷¹² Clearly the no-concessions policy was not the same thing as a no-contacts policy. At this point, the notion that communicating with terrorists was coequal with legitimating the group was not yet a widely held belief in policy circles.

Media attention to the hostages during the TWA crisis was so widespread that it amplified the administration's anxiety over the hostages. Secretary Shultz describes this period

⁷¹¹ *Legislation to Combat International Terrorism: Hearing and Markup Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Its Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs and on International Operations, United States House of Representatives, 98th Cong., November 9, 1983, 92.*

⁷¹² "Friedersdorf Memo to Simon and O'Brien," June 20, 1985, Oliver North Files. Hijacking of TWA #847, 6/14/85, NSC Memos, 20 of 3, Box 101, Ronald Reagan Library, Simi Valley, CA.

in his memoir, “The tension was immense, and the television coverage saturated the public. On Friday, June 21, hordes of Hezbollah supporters stormed onto the runway at Beirut International Airport screaming, “Death to America! Death to Israel!” Television captured it all live as it was happening.”⁷¹³

One final development in the political stream deserves comment; the importance of the Iran-Contra scandal to reaffirming American commitment to the “no concessions” policy. While an important theme of the scandal was whether the President knew about Oliver North’s illegal diversion of funds to Nicaraguan Contras, another theme was the notion that by selling arms to Iran through the Israeli’s to secure the release of American hostages, the U.S. had violated its commitment not to negotiate with terrorists. The Tower Commission, which had been established by the President to investigate the scandal, also concluded that the arms-for-hostages deal violated the administration’s stated policies on terrorism.⁷¹⁴ When the scandal first broke in November, 1986, prominent members of the administration and foreign policy elites went on the record criticizing the policy as well as the President specifically. Some of these individuals included Secretary of State George Schultz, who had always opposed the policy, Warren Christopher, Henry Kissinger, Senator Patrick Leahy, Representative Tip O’Neill, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Senator Joseph Biden. Brody and Shapiro’s study demonstrates that as the scandal became increasingly widely known, the elite criticism became more bipartisan.⁷¹⁵ They argue that it was the elite criticism that accounts for the dramatic drop in public support for the

⁷¹³ Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, 660.

⁷¹⁴ Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, eds., “The Tower Commission Report” (The American Presidency Project, February 1, 1987),

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/PS157/assignment%20files%20public/TOWER%20EXCERPTS.htm>.

⁷¹⁵ Richard A. Brody and Catherine R. Shapiro, “Policy Failure and Public Support: The Iran-Contra Affair and Public Assessment of President Reagan,” *Political Behavior* 11, no. 4 (December 1989): 359.

President, in the wake of the scandal. Depending on the poll, public approval for the President dropped between 15 and 21 points.⁷¹⁶

Congress played an essential role in publicizing the Iran-Contra Scandal, as it conducted public hearings in the course of its investigations. The hearings were jointly held by the House Select Committee to Investigate Covert Arms Transactions with Iran and the Senate Select Committee on Secret Military Assistance to Iran and the Nicaraguan Opposition from May to August, 1987. The public furor over the scandal, represented by these hearings, drew attention to the no concessions policy, and helped reinforce U.S. policymakers' commitment to the policy. The notion of negotiating with terrorists became even more forbidden, contributing to the taboo that emerged in the 1990s against not only negotiating with terrorists, but communicating with them as well. Thus, the origin of the norm against talking with terrorists can be traced, at least in part, back to the Iran Contra scandal.

In summary, the embassy and Marine Barracks Bombings opened a window of opportunity for the U.S. to define Hezbollah as a problem requiring an immediate solution. Developments in the policy stream led to confusion over the no-concessions policy and a muted response to the attacks. However, the administration did advance new counterterrorism legislation that was primarily focused on state sponsors of terrorism. With respect to Hezbollah, this meant that the administration targeted Iran and Syria, but did not develop a coherent policy toward Hezbollah itself.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid., 353.

Policy Window 2: Clinton Administration and the Peace Process

One might expect that the end of the Cold War would be a more salient window of opportunity for American policy toward Hezbollah, as it was for the two Muslim Brotherhood cases, but in actuality, the Arab-Israeli peace process and the Clinton administration's staunch commitment to its success provided a more profound opening for policy change toward Hezbollah. During the Reagan and G.H.W Bush administrations, U.S. policy toward Hezbollah was assertive, but it was still permissible for diplomats to have contact with members of the group. Moreover, both the Reagan and G.H.W Bush administrations had a state-oriented focus to counter-terrorism, targeting state-sponsors of terrorism, but reserving group-specific policies for covert action. This changed in the Clinton administration, as it became forbidden to even speak to groups designated as terrorist organizations. The U.S. also shifted to both a macro and a micro approach by targeting both state sponsors of terrorism, as well as individuals and groups.

Why did this shift take place? Adapting Kingdon's model to the case of Hezbollah, I will argue that the Clinton Administration's commitment to the peace process constituted a window of opportunity. Developments in the policy streams helped redefine Hezbollah as high priority problem, requiring a more group-centric approach. In this context, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of Hezbollah to two new solutions: first, a no contacts policy and second, attack the group's resources. It also led to broader counter-terrorism reforms.

The policy window afforded by the Clinton administration's commitment to the peace process made it possible for policy entrepreneurs to link the problem of Hezbollah to a different solution based on a more group-centered counterterrorist policy. Clinton was personally invested in the success of the peace process. Although the Oslo Accords were negotiated without

American knowledge, Clinton presided over their signing in September 1993, and posed with Rabin and Arafat as journalists photographed the famous handshake. Clinton played a central role in later negotiations, such as Wye River in 1998 and Camp David in 2000. He also sent his Middle East envoy Dennis Ross to the region after Camp David in hopes of obtaining a final deal. In the waning days of his administration, he outlined the Clinton Parameters in January, 2001. The high priority accorded to the peace process meant that the administration was primed to take an aggressive approach to groups which threatened its success. In this context, the administration drew on developments in the policy streams to choose from the available solutions, and assess the political viability of those options, ultimately producing a more assertive policy toward Hezbollah.

Problems, Policies, and Politics during the Clinton Administration

Public concern and interest in terrorism peaked in the mid-1980s and then began to fade into the 1990s, eventually prompting cuts to counterterrorism funding.⁷¹⁷ The National Security Strategy of 1990, for example, makes no mention of terrorism, in marked contrast to the post-9/11 National Security Strategies, in which terrorism is a dominant theme.⁷¹⁸ By the time Clinton came to office, high level interest in terrorism had waned and the Administration did not place a high priority on the issue.

But the Clinton administration's attention was sharply drawn to terrorism when the World Trade Center was bombed on February 26, 1993. Additionally in June, the administration

⁷¹⁷ Pillar, *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 201.

⁷¹⁸ "The National Security Strategy of the United States," March 1990, George H.W. Bush Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/national_security_strategy_90.pdf. Contrast NSS 1990 to NSS 2010, which emphasizes terrorism 23 times. See "The National Security Strategy of the United States," May 2010, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf.

learned from an FBI informant that Shiekh Rahman, who had been implicated in the World Trade Center bombing, was planning multiple attacks on U.S. domestic targets including the UN building, and the George Washington Bridge, in what came to be known as a “day of terror.”⁷¹⁹ Rahman was arrested on June 24, 1993 and two years later, Rahman and eleven others were convicted of planning terrorist attacks. Andrew McCarthy, a prosecutor from the U.S. Attorney’s office in New York noted, “The bombing of the World Trade Center and the "day of terror" plot snapped Americans to attention through their unambiguous message: the United States has real enemies, and they live in our midst. Further, those enemies include Islamic extremists.”⁷²⁰ The World Trade Center Attack was a key focusing event for National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, who became a proponent for a much stronger approach to terrorism and extremism in general.

In this context, Hezbollah’s conflicts with Israel throughout the 1990s drew administration attention to the group as a terrorism related problem and associated it with peace process spoiler groups like Hamas. Although Hezbollah was not involved in the Hamas bombings, Hamas replicated Hezbollah’s methods; moreover, Hezbollah was staunchly opposed to the peace process from the very first. In general, the effect of Hamas spilled over to American approaches to Hezbollah-as Hamas came to be defined as a problem, requiring a new, more aggressive solution, Hezbollah, a group the U.S. had substantial terrorism related experience with, also had to be addressed. Although to a lesser degree than the 1980s, Hezbollah continued to engage in violence throughout the 1990s. The remaining American hostages were released in

⁷¹⁹ Andrew C. McCarthy, “Prosecuting the New York Sheikh,” *Middle East Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (March 1997): 9–18.

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*

1992⁷²¹ at the behest of Iran, but Hezbollah periodically attacked Israeli targets, culminating in two major Israeli-Hezbollah conflicts: Operation Accountability and the Grapes of Wrath.

Operation Accountability took place just five months after the first World Trade Center bombing, so the Clinton administration was unlikely to oppose an Israeli military foray that would target a terrorist group. Hezbollah had been firing Katyusha rockets at an Israeli village, the nominal purpose behind Israel's seven day military incursion, but the larger goals were to prevent Hezbollah from using Southern Lebanon as a base for future attacks against Israel, and to encourage the Lebanese government to constrain the group. Prime Minister Rabin asked for American help with the Syrians to end the conflict, so Secretary of State Warren Christopher was dispatched to Damascus. Christopher tried to convince Foreign Minister Farouk Sharato that Syria should stop the Hezbollah rocket attacks. The Syrians claimed they had no power over Hezbollah, but nevertheless, Christopher was able to broker a deal preventing Hezbollah rocket attacks in return for the end to Operation Accountability. Christopher wrote, "the formal parties to the oral agreement were Israel and Lebanon, but I looked to Syria to ensure that the Hezbollah went along."⁷²² "We never knew exactly what the Syrians did, but clearly Hezbollah responded to their direction."⁷²³ This conflict was problematic not only because Hezbollah attacked an important American ally in the region, but Christopher was in the middle of working on the Israel-Syria peace talks, so the 1993 conflict was a threat to the success of those efforts.⁷²⁴

Another important development in the problem stream that drew high level attention to Hezbollah as a problem, requiring an immediate solution, took place on July 18, 1994. Hezbollah

⁷²¹ For more on the hostage crisis, see Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2005), 153–170.

⁷²² Warren Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 220.

⁷²³ Warren Christopher, "A Time to Act," *The Washington Post*, June 28, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/27/AR2006072701420.html>.

⁷²⁴ Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime*, 219.

attacked a Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires and was also implicated in the bombing of the Israeli embassy in London eight days later.⁷²⁵ Recall that 1994 was also a year that Hamas staged increasing numbers of attacks against Israeli targets, marking a major escalation. Meanwhile, Hezbollah was involved in high level international attacks at the same time that Hamas was making headlines with its violent tactics in rejection of the peace process. American policymakers became aware of Hezbollah's global reach, that it had expanded and diversified.⁷²⁶ Given the fraught history between the United States and Hezbollah, its international activities were especially worrisome, particularly as some attacks took place in South America, right on America's doorstep.

As I demonstrated in chapter four, 1995 was an important year for changes in American counterterrorism policy, which reflects the higher priority terrorism achieved on the decision agenda. To briefly summarize, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12947 in January, forbidding financial transactions with groups disrupting the peace process. Hezbollah was on the list. And in February, Senator Joe Biden introduced the Omnibus Counterterrorism Act of 1995. This legislation became particularly relevant in the next two months. In March, Aum Shinrikyo released sarin gas in a Tokyo subway, which killed 13 people and injured an undetermined amount of people, although some estimates suggest as many as 6,000 people were injured.⁷²⁷ And then in April 1995, Timothy McVeigh bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City,

⁷²⁵ Associated Press, "Breakthrough Made in '94 Argentina Bombing: Hezbollah Militant Named in Attack on Jewish Community Center," November 9, 2005, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9983810/ns/world_news-terrorism/t/breakthrough-made-argentina-bombing/#.UNZRU28zqSo.

⁷²⁶ U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #63B.

⁷²⁷ "Fugitive from 1995 Sarin Gas Attack on Tokyo Subway Captured," *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 2012, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/world_now/2012/06/sarin-gas-fugitive-tokyo-subway-captured.html.

killing 168 people and injuring 759.⁷²⁸ These two attacks drew widespread attention to the problem of terrorism and the congressional debate over the antiterrorism legislation. After a lengthy political battle, the bill, which became the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, was finally passed in April, 24, 1996, one year after the Oklahoma City bombing. This legislation included the seminal Foreign Terrorist Organization designation, which was given to thirty different organizations, including Hezbollah. Note that the changes to counterterrorism policy in the 1990s reflect both a macro and a micro approach. Instead of focusing primarily on state sponsors of terror, groups and individual designated terrorists were now targeted.

Another shift in U.S. policy during the 1990s was to solidify a taboo against diplomatic contacts with groups on the FTO list. Although previous administrations held to the “no concessions” policy, they were careful to emphasize a distinction between not negotiating with a terrorist group, and not talking to them. Diplomats were allowed to have conversations with the group and communicate American policy; they were simply forbidden from making deals with the groups. But the effect of the FTO distinction was to establish a taboo against communication and remove autonomy from the local diplomatic missions, even though the statute does not expressly forbid diplomatic contact.⁷²⁹ When asked, several high level U.S. officials were uncertain if it actually violated U.S. law to speak with a group on the FTO list, but nevertheless said that it was U.S. policy not to do so.⁷³⁰

As Congress was finalizing the AEDPA antiterrorism legislation, on April, 11 1996, Israel launched Operation Grapes of Wrath to combat Hezbollah rocket attacks from Southern

⁷²⁸ David Teague, “Mass Casualties in the Oklahoma City Bombing,” *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research* 422 (May 2004): 77–81.

⁷²⁹ There are no documents or other accounts available of meetings between U.S. officials and members of Hezbollah.

⁷³⁰ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #297, and U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #563.

Lebanon, which Hezbollah said was in retaliation for Lebanese civilian deaths. This operation must be seen in a larger context, to understand the American reaction to Hezbollah during this period. In February, 1996, Hamas escalated its attacks against Israeli targets, which threatened Peres's reelection bid in what had become a tight race against Binyamin Netanyahu. The election was to be held in May, 1996.⁷³¹ Recall from chapter four that the Clinton administration gathered world leaders in the Summit of the Peacemakers in March, 1996 in an effort to salvage the peace process by galvanizing international support and condemning terrorism. Thus, the peace process was at a critical juncture and therefore U.S. officials were closely attending to Hezbollah's activities along with those of Hamas.

The larger goal of the operation was to prompt Syria to limit Hezbollah's power, as well as reduce the group's popularity in southern Lebanon.⁷³² When the Israelis mistakenly bombed the Qana UN refugee camp, killing over 100 civilians, these objectives became more remote and the controversy surrounding the attack potentially placed the peace process in jeopardy. President Clinton called for a ceasefire and Prime Minister Shimon Peres requested American help in negotiating the agreement. Christopher began eight days of shuttle diplomacy to Lebanon, Syria, and Israel. This time he met directly with Hafez Al Assad, rather than his foreign minister. The original American plan called for Hezbollah to be disarmed, but Syria rejected this provision because a militarized Hezbollah provided important leverage for Syria.⁷³³ The final result was a written agreement in which Hezbollah was forbidden from attacking northern Israel and Israel was prohibited from attacking civilian targets in Lebanon. Another

⁷³¹ Indeed, President Clinton was particularly incensed by Iran's support for Hamas and Hezbollah during this period. He blamed the Iranian's for Peres's defeat. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, 282.

⁷³² Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short Story* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 85.

⁷³³ Nicholas Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel* (New York: Random House, 2011), 161.

aspect of the agreement included international monitors to identify and address violations. Although there were numerous violations on both sides, the “April Understanding” remained in place until the July, 2006 war.⁷³⁴

What all these developments in the problem stream demonstrate is that while terrorism was not initially a top administration priority, a series of focusing events contributed to the subject’s rise to the decision agenda. Terrorism was a problem because it targeted the U.S., but also because it was detrimental to a key administration priority: the peace process. Hezbollah became associated with this cluster of problems because of the attacks it perpetrated around the world, and the confrontations it had with Israel in 1993 and 1996. Therefore, Hezbollah came to be seen as a major problem, requiring an assertive response.

The Policy Stream

Developments in the policy stream advanced the notion that Islamist terrorism in general, and Hezbollah in particular, required an aggressive response. Key officials in the Clinton administration and civil servants advocated for a more assertive approach to terrorism, and a more targeted strategy with respect to the groups. Anthony Lake was a prominent voice in the administration. He expressed his frustration that the bureaucracy was inadequate to address terrorism because there was no “bureaucratic box” to put it in.⁷³⁵ Richard Clarke, a career bureaucrat, was also a key voice advocating counterterrorism reforms.

Think-tanks and academics also began to argue for a more assertive approach to Islamist groups during the 1990s. One example is a report written by Dr. Stephen C. Pelletiere, submitted

⁷³⁴ “The Grapes of Wrath Agreement,” April 26, 1996, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/GWUnderstanding.html>. For a discussion of the implications of Operation Grapes of Wrath, including the increase in Iranian financial support for Hezbollah, see Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, 279–280.

⁷³⁵ Timothy Naftali, *Blind Spot* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 234.

to Congress on November 10, 1994. The main argument of the report is that Hamas and Hezbollah are a greater threat to American interests than policymakers realize.⁷³⁶ Conservative think-tanks were especially likely to advocate a stronger approach to Political Islam, especially regarding the no-contacts policy. A publication by the Heritage Foundation exemplifies this dynamic. In an October, 1994 article, senior policy analyst James Phillips writes that, “Radical Islamic movements have mushroomed not only in the Muslim world, but also among Muslim immigrants in the West...American diplomats should not meet publicly with radical Islamic leaders because this could undermine the existing government. Nor should Washington permit radical Islamic leaders, such as Tunisian revolutionary Rashid el-Ghanoushi, to visit America unless they reject terrorism. Nor should it pressure any government to enter talks with any group that supports terrorism.”⁷³⁷ Interestingly, the Clinton administration received some criticism from conservative think-tanks regarding his anti-terrorism legislation, specifically the wiretapping aspects and elements that would punish Americans for supporting designated groups, so there wasn’t complete bipartisan consensus on his counter-terrorism reforms.⁷³⁸

The peace process was also situated in the policy stream as a solution to terrorism. Anthony Lake, in a May, 1994 speech for the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, argued that advancing the peace process is crucial to undermining support for extremism. “Progress in Arab-Israeli peacemaking helps put the extremists on the defensive and increases their isolation.” He went on to say, “This widening circle of peace will also help governments find the strength to

⁷³⁶Steven C. Pelletiere, *Hamas and Hizbollah: The Radical Challenge to Israel in the Occupied Territories*, Army War College Report for Congress (Strategic Studies Institute, November 10, 1994).

⁷³⁷ James Phillips, *The Changing Face of Middle Eastern Terrorism* (Heritage Foundation, October 6, 1994), <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/1994/10/bg1005nbsp-the-changing-face-of-middle-eastern-terrorism>.

⁷³⁸ See David Kopel, “Clinton’s Terrifying Response to Terror,” *American Enterprise* 6, no. 4 (July 1995): 70–73.

counter extremism at home as well as abroad. ⁷³⁹ At the same time, the success of the peace process was vulnerable to terrorism, so the U.S. must take a leadership role. Secretary of State Warren Christopher reflected on this issue in a May, 1996 speech, “America’s most critical role, however, and the one I want to focus on today- is defending the Middle East peace process and the peacemakers against the vicious attacks of their enemies. Terrorists and their supporters are now engaged in a systematic assault on Israel and the peace process. Their goal is clear: They seek to kill the very possibility of peace by destroying every Israeli’s sense of personal security.”⁷⁴⁰ He went on to say that, “None of the challenges we now face is more pressing than the fight against terrorism...President Clinton has rightly identified terrorism as one of the most important security challenges we face in the wake of the Cold War.”⁷⁴¹ His speech specifically mentioned Hezbollah as a threat to the peace process, and that America has a responsibility to mitigate that threat.⁷⁴²

Like previous administrations, the “no concessions” policy was in place, forbidding officials from negotiating with terrorists. In hostage situations, the policy did allow contact with the perpetrators. A State Department Fact Sheet from this period reflects this policy stance. “The U.S. government will make no concessions to terrorists holding official or private U.S. citizens hostage....The U.S. government believes that paying ransom or making other concessions to terrorists in exchange for the release of hostages increase the danger that others will be taken. Its policy therefore rejects all demands for ransom prisoner exchanges, and deals with terrorists in

⁷³⁹ Anthony Lake, “Conceptualizing U.S. Strategy in the Middle East: Soref Symposium Keynote Address,” May 17, 1995, 3 and 5.

⁷⁴⁰ Warren Christopher, “Fighting Terrorism: Challenges for the Peacemakers: Address to the Washington Institute for Near East Annual Soref Symposium, May 21, 1996,” in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy*, ed. Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007), 131.

⁷⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, 132.

exchange for the release of hostages. At the same time, it will make every effort, including contact with representatives of the captors, to obtain the release of the hostages.”⁷⁴³

Outside of hostage scenarios, however, once the FTO and SDT designations were established, a taboo emerged during this period against U.S. officials speaking to members of designated terrorist organizations. This included local diplomats, and bureaucrats in Washington. Key officials in the NSC held that speaking to terrorist groups legitimized the actions of the terrorist group. This belief was not uniformly held in the State Department, but evolved into U.S. policy in the context of the spoiler role Hamas and Hezbollah were playing in the peace process. It generated uncertainty about how to deal with scenarios such as a Foreign Service officer attending a conference also attended by members of designated groups. Diplomats erred on the side of no contacts under any circumstances.

This approach was not unprecedented; an earlier prohibition on diplomatic contact with a non-state actor involved the PLO, as discussed in chapter four. American diplomats were forbidden from speaking to PLO members, as mandated by a 1975 agreement between the United States and Israel, signed as part of the Sinai disengagement negotiations and brokered by Henry Kissinger. In 1985, Congress further codified this injunction in legislation conditioning U.S. contact with the PLO on it renouncing terrorism, recognizing Israel’s right to exist, and accepting UN Resolutions 242 and 338.⁷⁴⁴ But although Reagan supported the logic of the policy, he rejected congressional interference in a domain he believed was exclusively the President’s. In his signing statement, he argued, “I am compelled, however, as a matter of

⁷⁴³ Yonah Alexander and Michael B. Kraft, eds., “U.S. Department of State, Fact Sheet: International Terrorism-American Hostages, Bureau of Public Affairs, October 17, 1995,” in *Evolution of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007), 1076.

⁷⁴⁴ *S. 960: International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985*, 1985, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/99/s960>.

principle, to reiterate my refusal to accept any congressional effort to impose legislative restrictions or directions with respect to the conduct of international negotiations which, under article II of the Constitution, is a function reserved exclusively to the President. I will therefore consider sections 717(b) and 1302(b) as constituting only nonbinding expressions of congressional views on these issues.”⁷⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Congress continued to pass legislation forbidding contact with the PLO. For example, the 1989 Foreign Operations Bill also included the provision.⁷⁴⁶ In this domain, Congress attempts to exert itself, but Presidents are reluctant to give Congress power over this issue. In appropriations bills that have restricted U.S. from going to particular groups, President’s demand waivers for national security purposes, so that the executive retains control.⁷⁴⁷

The Political Stream

In terms of the political stream, attention to Hezbollah rose dramatically in the mid-1990s. Figure 5.1 demonstrates that congressional attention to the group, as indicated by the number of hearings that mention the group, peaked in 1995 and 1996. This corresponds with the congressional debates about the anti-terrorism legislation. Figure 5.2 compares congressional attention to Hezbollah as well as Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁴⁸ Note that in the mid-1990s, attention to Hezbollah exceeded other groups, even Hamas.⁷⁴⁹

⁷⁴⁵ Ronald Reagan, “Statement on Signing the International Security and Development Cooperation Act of 1985,” ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (The American Presidency Project), accessed August 10, 2012, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38983>.

⁷⁴⁶ *Pub. L. No. 100-461, § 529, 1989: Prohibition Against United States Employees Recognizing or Negotiating with PLO, Section 529 of the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 1989*, accessed April 27, 2013, <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/100/hr4637>.

⁷⁴⁷ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #244.

⁷⁴⁸ For the purposes of visual clarity, this section will show figures up to 1999. The next section will show attention trends after 9/11.

⁷⁴⁹ Data for Figures 5.1 and 5.2 come from Lexis-Proquest Congressional and the GPO.gov searches for hearings that mention the term. Note for Hezbollah before 1997, the data come from lexis, after 1997, data come from

Fig. 5.1: Congressional Hearings Mentioning Hezbollah 1983-1999

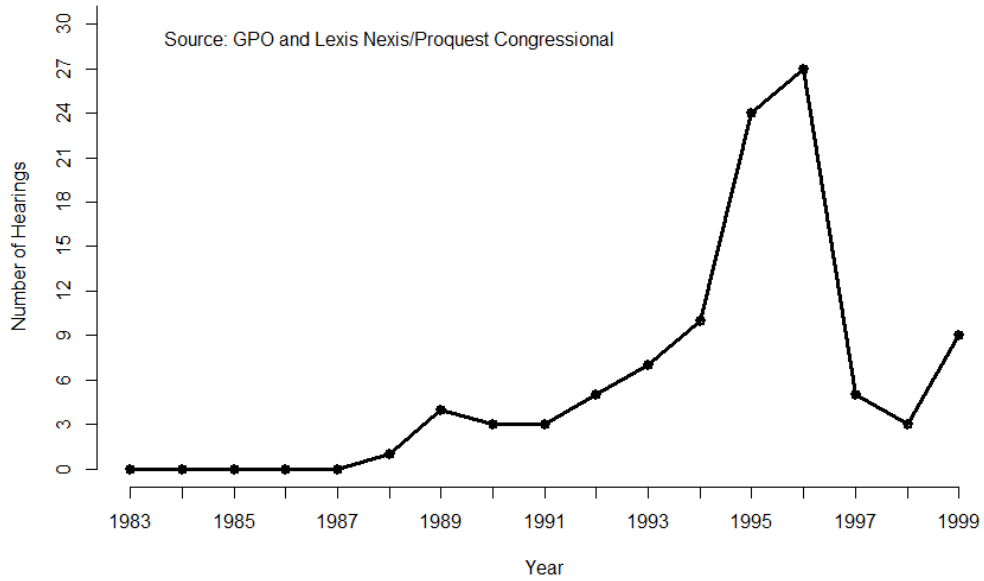
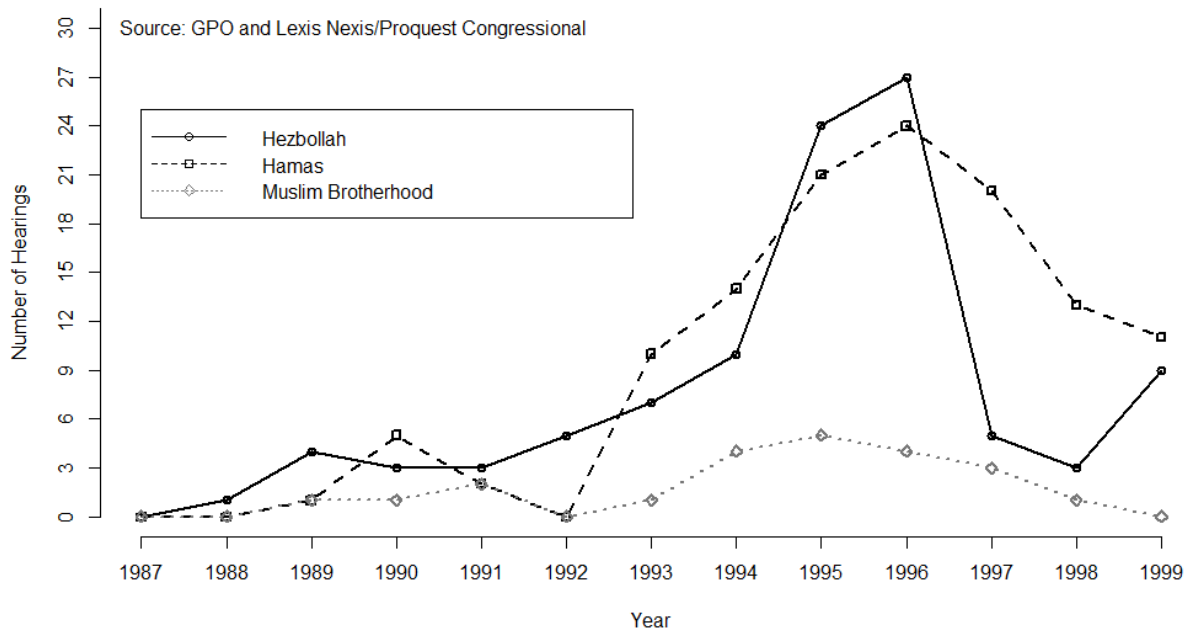


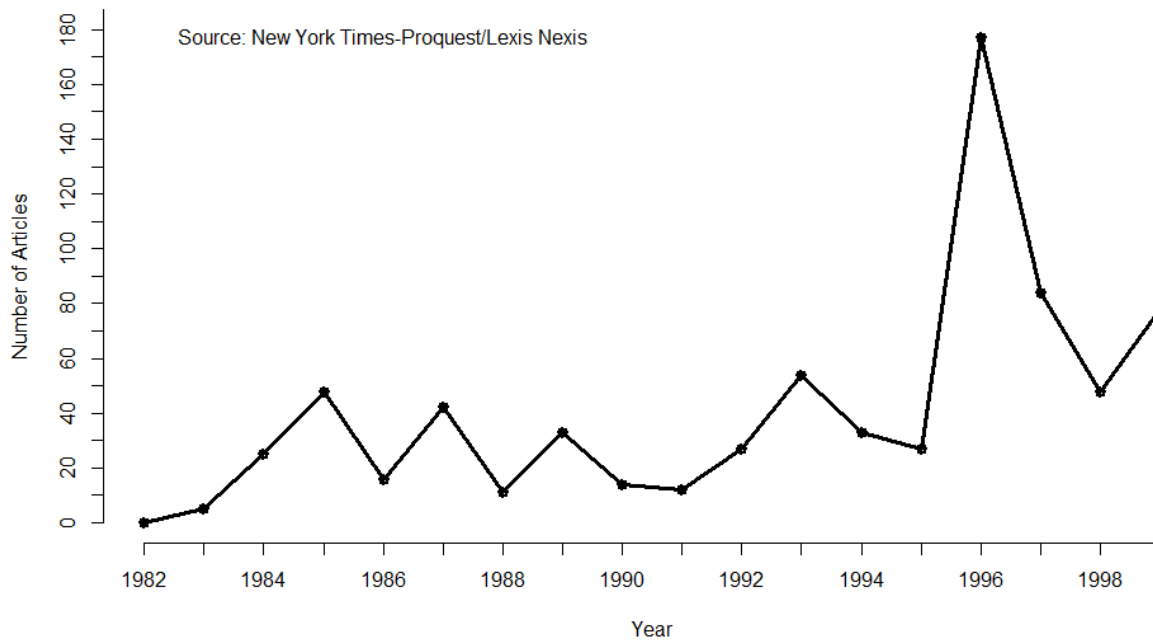
Fig. 5.2: Congressional Hearings Mentioning Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Muslim Brotherhood 1987-1999



gpo.gov, For the Muslim Brotherhood, all the data come from Lexis-Proquest Congressional, and for Hamas, before 1999, data comes from Lexis- Proquest Congressional. After 1998, the Hamas data come from gpo.gov.

The media was also closely attuned to the group during this period. Media coverage increased during the congressional debates on terrorism legislation, but the number of articles mentioning Hezbollah also peaked in 1993, around Operation Accountability, and again in 1996, around Operation Grapes of Wrath.⁷⁵⁰

Fig. 5.3: Media Attention to Hezbollah 1982-1999



Other developments in the political stream helped advance a more assertive policy toward Hezbollah, but not as assertive as the administration would have preferred. While there was bipartisan consensus that Hezbollah was a dangerous problem that required a solution, the political outcome of the counterterrorism debate was a much weaker effort than the administration was advocating. Debates over the 1995 counterterrorism legislation originally proposed by the administration took an entire year and the final output watered down measures that were important to the administration. For example, in his signing statement for the

⁷⁵⁰ Data for figure 5.3 reflects New York Times articles that mention the word Hezbollah. These numbers are drawn from a LexisNexis/Proquest Historical search.

Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, President Clinton complained that the law should have included increased wiretap authority and a longer statute of limitations for terrorism crimes.⁷⁵¹

In sum, this section has demonstrated that the Clinton Administration's commitment to the peace process constituted a window of opportunity. Events in the policy streams contributed to policymakers defining Hezbollah as high priority problem that required a group-centric approach. As with Hamas, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of Hezbollah to new policy solutions: diplomatic isolation and targeting the group's resources. Moreover, the administration pursued broader counter-terrorism reforms that impacted policy toward Hezbollah.

Policy Window 3: September 11, 2001

After the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, U.S. policy toward Hezbollah became even more assertive. Why did this shift take place? Drawing on Kingdon's garbage can model, this section will argue that 9/11 served as a window of opportunity, making a more hostile policy toward Hezbollah more likely. Developments in the policy streams drew attention to Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and associated it with the broader Global War on Terror. In this context, policy entrepreneurs paired the problem of Hezbollah to a more assertive counterterrorism approach, emphasizing the financial war on terror.

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, the G.W. Bush administration expanded on antiterrorism measures undertaken in the Clinton administration, in particular, targeting terrorist groups' financial assets. These efforts constituted the financial plank of the Global War on Terrorism and exemplify an intensifying shift toward targeting individuals and groups, rather

⁷⁵¹ William J. Clinton, "Statement on Signing the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996," ed. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley (The American Presidency Project, April 24, 1996), <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=52713>.

than primarily state sponsors of terrorism. While this shift began during the Clinton administration, 9/11 opened a policy window that launched a second phase of policy reorientation, resulting in a more group-focused strategy. The Clinton administration issued two Executive Orders designating individuals and groups as terrorists, while President Bush issued seven in the first two years of his administration.⁷⁵²

A little over a week after 9/11, President Bush issued Executive Order 13224, which named several “Specially Designated Global Terrorist” organizations, which mandates that the assets of designated individuals or groups be frozen.⁷⁵³ The first names on the list were for the most part members of Al Qaeda and its affiliates, but the list expanded to include hundreds of individuals and organizations. Hezbollah was added to the list on October 31, 2001, including individual members of the group such as Hassan Nasrallah and Imad Mughniyah. On October 10, three Hezbollah members were listed on the U.S. Most Wanted Terrorist List.⁷⁵⁴ Imad Mughniyah, who was implicated in the Marine Barracks Bombing and the TWA Hijacking was listed, along with Hassan Ezzedin and Ali Atwa.⁷⁵⁵ And in 2007, the Qods Force, a subset of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was listed as an SDGT for financially supporting Hezbollah (\$100-\$200 million annually), as well as running Hezbollah training camps.⁷⁵⁶

The Hezbollah television station, Al Manar, was also added to various terrorism lists, including the Terrorist Exclusion List in 2004, a tenet of the October, 2001 PATRIOT Act,

⁷⁵² Rudolph Lehrer, “Comment: Unbalancing the Terrorist’ Checkbook: Analysis of U.S. Policy in Its Economic War on International Terrorism,” *Tulane Journal of International and Comparative Law* 10 (Spring 2002): 346.

⁷⁵³ Folendorf, “Breaking Terror’s Bank Without Breaking the Law: A Comment on the USA Patriot Act and the United States Financial War on Terrorism,” 489.

⁷⁵⁴ “Jerusalem Post: Israeli Official Says Inclusion of Hezbollah in U.S. Terror List Significant,” *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, October 11, 2001.

⁷⁵⁵ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: LB Taurus and Co., 2004), 169.

⁷⁵⁶ Orde Kittrie, “Symposium Article: New Sanctions for a New Century: Treasury’s Innovative Use of Financial Sanctions,” *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law* 30 (Spring 2009): 805.

which forbids designated individuals or groups entry to the United States. Additionally, Al Manar, Hezbollah's television station, was listed as a Specially Designated Terrorist entity in March, 2006 and television companies are banned from transmitting Al Manar in the United States.⁷⁵⁷ The Treasury Department also targeted organizations that funneled money toward Hezbollah. For example, in August, 2006, the U.S. froze the assets of the Islamic Resistance Support Organization. As part of the administration's announcement, the FBI released receipts demonstrating that donors were aware their contributions went to the group's militant activities such as purchasing rockets.⁷⁵⁸ In general the PATRIOT Act made a number of policy innovations to circumvent money laundering by terrorist groups, which by law included Hezbollah. Moreover, at the same time that the PATRIOT Act passed, the Treasury Department initiated an interagency task force called Operation Green Quest, which was designed to detect and analyze the financial systems terrorist groups use to manage and move their funds.⁷⁵⁹ These innovations impacted Hamas and Hezbollah, but not groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, who were not officially designated as terrorist organizations.

In August and September, 2006, the Treasury Department designated Hizballah organizations as Specially Designated Global Terrorist entities: Bayt Al Mal, the Yousser Company for Finance and Investment of Lebanon, and Bank Saderat, an Iranian bank. Treasury

⁷⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Treasury, "U.S. Designates Al-Manar as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity Television Station Is Arm of Hizballah Terrorist Network," Press Release, March 23, 2006, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js4134.aspx>.

⁷⁵⁸ Glenn Kessler, "U.S. Freezes Assets Of Hezbollah Unit; Donations to Militant Group Banned," *The Washington Post*, August 30, 2006, A13.

⁷⁵⁹ Nina J. Crimm, "High Alert: The Government's War on the Financing of Terrorism and Its Implications for Donors, Domestic Charitable Organizations, and Global Philanthropy," *William and Mary Law Review* 45 (March 2004): 1399.

argued that these organizations and institutions served as middle-men between Hezbollah and banks, while Bank Saderat channeled funds to Hezbollah from Iran.⁷⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the U.S. pressured European allies to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization and to cut off diplomatic contact. As with Hamas, the EU countries were willing to make a distinction between the military and diplomatic wings of the group, which meant they would remain in contact with the diplomatic wing. The Bush administration, however, rejected this distinction. The State Department asked embassies to push European allies to cut off contacts with the group, arguing that containing Hezbollah was an important shared goal in the global war on terror. Both Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli foreign minister Silvan Shalom tried to convince the EU to declare the group as a terrorist organization, but these efforts met with mixed results. In 2005, the EU addressed the issue, but could not reach a consensus. France refused, and Germany and the UK felt that without French support, the ban would fail. There are some individual countries that have designated Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. The UK and Australia distinguished between the militant and political wings of the party and later Canada joined them, which meant only the militant wing was declared a terrorist organization.⁷⁶¹

The Bush administration continued the no-contacts policy, which originally began during the Clinton administration; American diplomats were forbidden from speaking with members of the group. As a result, in order to fulfill their reporting responsibilities, local diplomats would meet with Hezbollah allies, members of the media, the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon who

⁷⁶⁰ Jeremy Sharp et al., *Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, September 15, 2006), 24.

⁷⁶¹ Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 80–82.

had a Hezbollah contact, and third party experts who maintained relationships with Hezbollah members.⁷⁶² There have been occasional rumors of contacts between Hezbollah and the U.S. Specifically, Hezbollah claimed American officials approached the group after 9/11 in order to initiate a political dialogue, but the Bush administration denied the report.⁷⁶³ Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Elizabeth Dibble met with a close Hezbollah ally, Trad Hamade, a member of the Lebanese cabinet in 2005 in Washington D.C., although he was not an official member of the group.⁷⁶⁴ Diplomats also met with Hezbollah bloc MPs like George Najm who maintained close ties with Hezbollah, but were also careful to indicate he was not an official member of the group. When Najm offered to act as an intermediary between the U.S. and Hezbollah, the embassy rejected the suggestion and replied that American diplomats are forbidden from meeting with terrorist groups.⁷⁶⁵

In addition to the no-contacts policy, some have suggested that the Bush administration contemplated military action against Hezbollah as part of the broader war on terrorism. For example, in October, 2001, the U.S. moved the USS Roosevelt naval carrier off the coast of Lebanon and press reports indicated that the gesture was in preparation for strikes against Hezbollah training camps in the Bekaa Valley.⁷⁶⁶ And in September 2002, remarks by Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage intimated that the administration believed Hezbollah was in the same league as Al Qaeda and should be targeted as such. In the Q&A session following his speech at the United States Institute of Peace, Armitage said, "'Hezbollah may be the A-team of

⁷⁶² "U.S. Envoy Meets with Hezbollah Ally," *The Independent (London)*, July 18, 2005, 21.

⁷⁶³ Eli Lake, "Hezbollah Signals It's Open to Talks with United States," *New York Sun*, April 11, 2005, <http://www.nysun.com/foreign/hezbollah-signals-its-open-to-talks-with-united/11974/>.

⁷⁶⁴ Ayat Basma, "Lebanese Calls for Direct U.S.-Hizbollah Dialogue," *Reuters*, July 23, 2005.

⁷⁶⁵ "Hizballah Associate Sees a Misunderstood Hizballah, Ready to Talk" (State Department, Beirut, April 3, 2006), Wikileaks.

⁷⁶⁶ Ian Bruce, "Diplomatic Moves Put Hizbollah in U.S. Sights," *BBC*, Reprinted in *The Herald (Glasgow)*, October 11, 2001, 2.

terrorists and maybe al-Qaida is actually the B-team. They're on the list and their time will come. There is no question about it. They have a blood debt to us, which you spoke to [referring to the Marine Barracks Bombing]; and we're not going to forget it and it's all in good time. We're going to go after these problems just like a high school wrestler goes after a match: We're going to take them down one at a time.”

While the Bush administration’s Hezbollah policy was much more group-focused than previous administrations, there was still an element that focused on states, specifically Lebanon, Syria and Iran. With respect to Lebanon, U.S. officials tried to convince the central government to freeze Hezbollah bank accounts and turn over members of Hezbollah on the terrorism lists, in particular, Imad Mugniah.⁷⁶⁷ While American Envoy William Burns publicly praised Lebanon’s cooperation with joint counterterrorism efforts after meeting with President Lahoud,⁷⁶⁸ Lebanon was not entirely obliging. Prime Minister Hariri refused to freeze Hezbollah accounts, citing its status as a resistance movement.⁷⁶⁹ And the Lebanese Central Bank claimed the request was not binding because it did not come from the United Nations.⁷⁷⁰ In a 2005 visit, Condoleezza Rice pressed Lebanon to implement UN resolution 1559, which called for the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias.

Moreover, in a 2006 meeting between the embassy and Michel Aoun, the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement which signed a memorandum of understanding with Hezbollah earlier that year, the Ambassador suggested that links between Hezbollah and the Lebanese state might

⁷⁶⁷ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 173.

⁷⁶⁸ “Tele-Liban TV: U.S. Envoy Discusses Hezbollah, Anti-terrorism Efforts with Lebanese Leaders,” *BBC Worldwide Monitoring Service*, December 14, 2001.

⁷⁶⁹ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 178. See also John Kifner, “A Nation Challenged: Discord; Lebanon to Resist U.S. Sanctions on Hezbollah,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 2001, B4.

⁷⁷⁰ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 182.

cause people to question why the U.S. had not named Lebanon a state sponsor of terrorism. He also tried to convince Aoun to work with the March 14th movement to “corner Hezbollah.”⁷⁷¹

These diplomatic efforts did not yield the desired results. The American aid program, however, was designed to thwart Hezbollah by different means; the idea was that U.S. financial assistance would strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces’ capacity to contain Hezbollah. It would also serve to dilute the effect of Hezbollah’s extensive social service network. This argument was one of the justifications for the nearly \$500 million American reconstruction aid package after the July 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel.⁷⁷²

The U.S. government also attempted to take a much stronger approach toward Syria for its support for Hezbollah. Although Iran provides the bulk of financing for the group, Iran depends on Syrian supply routes to reach Hezbollah sites in Lebanon. Given Syria’s centrality, the Bush administration focused on Syria as the lynchpin of its state-based Hezbollah policy. Although Syria cooperated with the United States regarding Al Qaeda after 9/11 and sharing intelligence, it was not forthcoming with Hezbollah.⁷⁷³ Diplomatic efforts continued in spite of Syria’s refusal. In late 2001, the administration attempted to offer positive inducements. Colin Powell sent a message to Syrian foreign minister Farouk Al-Sharaa promising to launch another effort at negotiations between Syria and Israel.⁷⁷⁴ But the “carrot” approach failed. In April 2002, Vice President Cheney reportedly phoned Syrian President Assad to protest Hezbollah

⁷⁷¹ “Michel Aoun on Hizballah Defense Vision for Lebanon—Don’t Worry, We’re Still Talking” (State Department, Beirut, May 18, 2006), Wikileaks.

⁷⁷² Robin Wright, “U.S. Readies Security Aid Package To Help Lebanon Counter Hezbollah,” *The Washington Post*, December 22, 2006, A29.

⁷⁷³ Warren P. Strobel, “In Syria, U.S. Sees a Foe and a Partner; Damascus’ Support for Hezbollah While Also Helping Pursue al-Qaeda Poses a Policy Challenge,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 22, 2002, A05.; Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 165.

⁷⁷⁴ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 184.

rocket attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel.⁷⁷⁵ And in May 2003, Colin Powell visited Syria and tried to convince Assad to stop supporting Hezbollah.⁷⁷⁶ The U.S. also threatened Syria with sanctions for supporting Hezbollah. In December 2003, Congress passed The Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, which imposed sanctions on Syria unless it withdrew from Lebanon, halted any WMD programs, and ended support for terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas.⁷⁷⁷ And amidst the 2006 crisis, one U.S. plan sought to enlist the help of Egypt and Saudi Arabia in convincing Syria to stop supporting Hezbollah. One senior U.S. official remarked, “We think that the Syrians will listen to their Arab neighbors on this rather than us.”⁷⁷⁸

There were also financial aspects to the Syria strategy. In May, 2004 President Bush issued Executive Order 13338 which blocked the assets of anyone found to be supporting Syria’s efforts to provide “safe haven” to Hezbollah or other groups designated as an SDGT. The order also outlawed arms exports to Syria.⁷⁷⁹ Pursuant to this order, high level individuals in the Syrian government were targeted, such as the Interior Minister and the Director of Military Intelligence.⁷⁸⁰ In August, 2007, Executive Order 13441 declared a national emergency with respect to Syria. It froze assets of and forbade trade with anyone who undermined the democratic

⁷⁷⁵ Karen DeYoung, “U.S. Fears 2nd Front In Mideast Conflict; Israel, Hezbollah Clash on Northern Border,” *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2002, A18.

⁷⁷⁶ Daniel Waken, “Hezbollah Rejects Call to Quit South Lebanon: Under U.S. Pressure, It Tempers Rhetoric,” *International Herald Tribune*, May 12, 2003, 4.

⁷⁷⁷ Steven Goldstein, “Attack May Alter U.S. Strategy; Some Say Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad May Now Get the Kind of Attention Focused on al-Qaeda,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 16, 2003, A11.

⁷⁷⁸ Helene Cooper, “U.S. Plan Seeks to Wedge Syria Away From Iran,” *The New York Times*, July 23, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/23/washington/23diplo.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁷⁷⁹ “Blocking Property of Certain Persons and Prohibiting the Export of Certain Goods to Syria: Executive Order 13338,” *Federal Register* 69, no. 93 (May 11, 2004): 26751.

⁷⁸⁰ Sharp et al., *Lebanon: The Israel-Hamas-Hezbollah Conflict*, 23.

process in Lebanon.⁷⁸¹ Like the E.O. 13338, this order named several Syrian officials, including one who “coordinated Syrian and Hezbollah positions during regular meetings with Hassan Nasrallah.”⁷⁸²

In terms of Iran, the U.S. pursued a sustained effort to initiate international sanctions against Iran to hinder its ability to fund terrorism. For example, in 2006, Congress renewed the Iran Sanctions Act (originally the Iran Libya Sanctions Act), which first passed in the 1990s. Whereas previous versions had a sunset clause, requiring the legislation to be periodically renewed, the 2006 version authorized the sanctions permanently.⁷⁸³ Furthermore, in 2007, the U.S. designated the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps as an SDGT, under E.O. 13224 for its support for terrorist groups, among them Hezbollah.

America’s more assertive policy toward Hezbollah was also evident as the U.S. pursued the Freedom Agenda, a central plank of the Global War on Terror. The U.S. foreign aid program aimed to strengthen Lebanese democracy by bolstering the central Lebanese government and weaken Hezbollah’s influence by ensuring that the group was not the main source of social services for the Shi’ites in southern Lebanon. U.S. assistance increased nearly six-fold between 2005 and 2009.⁷⁸⁴ Additionally, the U.S. supported the Siniora government amidst the Cedar Revolution, but believed Hezbollah was a major threat to its stability. Condoleeza Rice

⁷⁸¹ “Blocking Property of Persons Undermining the Sovereignty of Lebanon or Its Democratic Processes and Institutions: Executive Order 13441,” August 1, 2007, 13441, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2007-08-03/pdf/07-3835.pdf>.

⁷⁸² Treasury Official quoted by Casey Addis and Christopher Blanchard, *Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, January 3, 2011), 23, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/71845.pdf>.

⁷⁸³ Kenneth Katzman, *Iran Sanctions Act* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, October 12, 2007), 3.

⁷⁸⁴ Jeremy M. Sharp, *U.S. Foreign Assistance to the Middle East: Historical Background, Recent Trends, and the FY2011 Request* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, June 15, 2010), 12.

remarked, “The government of Siniora is a good and young democratic government. But the extremists of Hezbollah have put that government at risk and have brought misery to the region.”⁷⁸⁵

To summarize, American policy toward Hezbollah became more aggressive during the George W. Bush administration. This shift from containment to a more hostile version policy can be explained in the context of the post 9/11 policy window of opportunity and developments within the three policy streams. As the following section will demonstrate, in the problem stream, Hezbollah became linked to the broader war on terrorism. In the policy stream, the available solutions were generated in a policy environment that was strongly concerned with Islamist terrorism and threats from non-state actors. In the political stream, there was bipartisan consensus against Hezbollah, given the long history of antagonism between the U.S. and the group. Consequently, policy entrepreneurs were free to match the problem of Hezbollah with a new solution: aggressive containment.

The Problem Stream

A number of events in the problem stream drew attention to Hezbollah in the period following 9/11, which helped define Hezbollah as a serious problem requiring an immediate solution. First, Hezbollah’s support for Palestinian militants and its opposition to the peace process kept the group on the American policy radar. Hassan Nasrallah publicly admitted to supplying Hamas with guns in the first part of the second Intifada, but when smuggling operations were discovered, Hamas asked for money instead, which Hezbollah provided, along

⁷⁸⁵ Condoleezza Rice, “Secretary Rice Holds a News Conference,” *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/21/AR2006072100889.html>.

with training in Hezbollah camps in Lebanon.⁷⁸⁶ Hezbollah was implicated in the Karine A episode in which a shipment of Iranian munitions was discovered en route to the Palestinian Authority. In the context of the Bush administration's efforts to facilitate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Hezbollah was seen as an obstacle and the Karine A incident only served to increase American enmity toward Hezbollah as well as anyone who associated with the group. As Condoleezza Rice remarked in front of the Foreign Relations Committee, "Here you have Hezbollah and other terrorist groups, many of them supported by Syria, trying literally to blow up the process."⁷⁸⁷

Perhaps more troubling for U.S. policymakers was that logistical links were discovered between Hezbollah and Al Qaeda. In mid-2002, U.S. intelligence officials revealed that low level Al Qaeda members had been developing relationships with Hezbollah.⁷⁸⁸ Although the two groups were not traditional allies, The Washington Post reported that the nature of the cooperation was ad hoc, "It includes coordination on explosives and tactics training, money laundering, weapons smuggling and acquiring forged documents."⁷⁸⁹

U.S. policymakers increasingly viewed Hezbollah as a global terrorist threat, not just a Lebanese group, a perception that began to emerge during the 1990s when Hezbollah cells appeared in South America, Europe, and the United States. One particular issue of concern was Hezbollah's growing presence in the Tri-border region of Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. This triple frontier was home to a large Shi'ite diaspora community and provided fertile ground for a

⁷⁸⁶ Ronen Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran: The 30-Year Clandestine Struggle Against the World's Most Dangerous Terrorist Power* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 283.

⁷⁸⁷ Condoleezza Rice, quoted in Steven R. Weisman, "Allies Resisting As U.S. Pushes on Hezbollah," *The New York Times*, February 17, 2005, A1.

⁷⁸⁸ "U.S. Observes al-Qaida Contact with Hezbollah," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 27, 2002, 11A.

⁷⁸⁹ Dana Priest and Douglas Farah, "Terror Alliance Has U.S. Worried; Hezbollah, Al Qaeda Seen Joining Forces," *The Washington Post*, June 30, 2002, A01..

Hezbollah satellite. The terrain is difficult to govern, and organized crime networks have moved in to establish money laundering, counterfeiting, and drug trafficking enterprises.⁷⁹⁰ They also engage in human trafficking and arms smuggling. Hezbollah's presence in the Tri-border area drew more attention in the post 9/11 era, as international counterterrorism efforts became more coordinated. And while there was evidence of Hamas fundraising in South America as well, Hezbollah's presence was seen as more troubling, given the history of intentionally attacking Americans. In terms of fundraising, Hezbollah group engaged in illicit criminal enterprises to raise funds and then transferred it back to Lebanon.⁷⁹¹ The triple frontier also provided a launching base for attacking U.S. and Israeli targets in South America. In 2002, the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay established the 3+1 group on Tri-Border Area security to coordinate counterterrorism efforts in the region. Concern about Hezbollah and Islamist terrorist groups in South America reached high levels in the administration. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, for example, commented on it in his memoirs.⁷⁹²

Hezbollah also generated problems for the American occupation of Iraq, which helped keep U.S. policymakers attuned to the group as a problem that required a solution. As early as April, 2003, U.S. intelligence officials reported that Hezbollah members were entering Iraq through Syria and they believed the group was planning to attack U.S targets, such as the American embassy.⁷⁹³ In addition to sending small numbers of fighters to Iraq, the group also

⁷⁹⁰ Philip K. Abbot, "Terrorist Threat in the Triborder Area: Myth or Reality," *Military Review* 84, no. 5 (October 2004): 51.

⁷⁹¹ Rex Hudson, *Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, December 2010), 9.

⁷⁹² Donald Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011), 629.

⁷⁹³ Don Van Natta Jr. and Douglas Jehl, "Hezbollah Seen Moving into Iraq ; U.S. Accuses Syria of Allowing Units to Travel from Lebanon," *The International Herald Tribune*, April 17, 2003, 4.

helped train members of Moktada Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.⁷⁹⁴ A U.S. military spokesman said that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps employed members of Hezbollah to train Shi'ite insurgents in Iraq, as well as arm them.⁷⁹⁵ Further evidence of Hezbollah's involvement in Iraq emerged when the U.S. arrested Hezbollah explosives expert Ali Musa Daqduq in Basra. He was believed to be responsible for an attack that killed five American soldiers.⁷⁹⁶

Hezbollah was also seen by American policymakers as a source of instability in the aftermath of the 2005 Cedar Revolution and received high levels of attention in policy circles.⁷⁹⁷ Hezbollah was suspected of having assassinated Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, which launched a series of anti-Syrian demonstrations, culminating in Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. The U.S. recalled the American Ambassador to Syria, Margaret Scobey, after the assassination. Policymakers were also concerned about what sort of role Hezbollah would play in the post-Cedar Revolution era and appeared to take a cautious approach, initially softening its rhetoric toward Hezbollah as France and other allies argued that this was an opportunity to move Hezbollah more firmly into the political sphere and out of militancy. One U.S. official remarked during this period, "Hezbollah has American blood on its hands...They are in the same category as Al Qaeda. The administration has an absolute aversion to admitting that Hezbollah has a role

⁷⁹⁴ Michael R. Gordon, "Hezbollah Militants Train Iraqis, U.S. Says; Captured Suspects Describe Camp in Iran," *The International Herald Tribune*, May 6, 2008, 7.; Michael R. Gordon, "Hezbollah Helps Iraq Shiite Army, U.S. Official Says," *The New York Times*, November 28, 2006, 1A.

⁷⁹⁵ Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Links Iran to Raid That Killed GIs in Iraq; General Also Accuses Hezbollah of Acting as 'Proxy' for Tehran," *The International Herald Tribune*, July 3, 2007, 1.

⁷⁹⁶ "Al-Jazeera TV: Arrest of Hezbollah Figure Could End US-Iran Dialogue on Iraq," *BBC Worldwide Monitoring Service*, July 2, 2007.

⁷⁹⁷ State Department Official, Confidential Interview #656, August 3, 2011.

to play in Lebanon, but that is the path we're going down."⁷⁹⁸ This mixed tone, however, was short-lived, as the events of July, 2006 attest.

When hostilities broke out between Hezbollah and Israel in July, the U.S. took time to call for a ceasefire in hopes that Hezbollah would come out of the conflict weakened. According to some accounts, the Israelis assured Washington of a decisive Hezbollah defeat.⁷⁹⁹ The initially muted reaction from the U.S. and its delayed call for a ceasefire indicate that the Bush administration was waiting for Hezbollah's capabilities to be damaged. Seymour Hersh's *New Yorker* piece on the war quoted a Pentagon consultant who said, "[The Bush Administration] has been agitating for some time to find a reason for a preemptive blow against Hezbollah... It was our intent to have Hezbollah diminished and now we have someone else doing it."⁸⁰⁰ Although Bush officials did not believe the war would result in the complete eradication of Hezbollah, they did believe it was possible to damage it substantially.⁸⁰¹ The outcome of the war was so important to the administration that President Bush described Lebanon as one of three fronts in the Global War on Terrorism, the other two being Iraq and Afghanistan.⁸⁰²

The administration saw Hezbollah as the cause, both of the immediate conflict, and instability in Lebanon in general. In this context, President Bush's statement from the G-8 Summit emphasized UN resolution 1559, specifically that the Lebanese Armed Forces should

⁷⁹⁸ Steven R. Weisman, "U.S. Called Ready to See Hezbollah in Lebanon Role," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2005, 1A.

⁷⁹⁹ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 139.

⁸⁰⁰ Pentagon Consultant, quoted in Seymour M. Hersh, "Watching Lebanon: Washington's Interest in Israel's War," *The New Yorker*, August 21, 2006, www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/08/21/060821fa_fact?currentPage=all.

⁸⁰¹ Elliot Abrams, Hezbollah's Impact on Security and Political Dynamics in the Middle East, September 30, 2010, <http://www.americanprogress.org/events/2010/09/Hezbollah.html>.

⁸⁰² "Bush Calls Lebanon a Front in Terror War," *CNN*, August 14, 2006, http://articles.cnn.com/2006-08-14/politics/transcript.bush_1_hezbollah-lebanese-civilians-syria?_s=PM:POLITICS. See also Kurtzer et al., *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace, 1989-2011*, 204-210.

deploy to the south and all militias should be disarmed.⁸⁰³ Later, in his briefing to members of Congress, Bush said that one of the core points of agreement at the G-8 Summit was “that the world must confront the root causes of the current instability. And the root cause of that current instability is terrorism and terrorist attacks on a democratic country. And part of those terrorist attacks are (sic) inspired by nation states, like Syria and Iran. And in order to be able to deal with this crisis, the world must deal with Hezbollah, with Syria and to continue to work to isolate Iran.”⁸⁰⁴ The ceasefire that the Americans ultimately brokered reflected this belief, although it only partially solved the problem and certainly did not eliminate Hezbollah. In a press conference, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice explained her perspective on the ceasefire,

A cease-fire would be a false promise if it simply returns us to the status quo, allowing terrorists to launch attacks at the time and terms of their choosing and to threaten (sic) innocent people, Arab and Israeli, throughout the region. That would be a guarantee of future violence. Instead, we must be more effective and more ambitious than that. We must work urgently to create the conditions for stability and lasting peace....What we're seeing here, in a sense, is the growing -- the birth pangs of a new Middle East.⁸⁰⁵

Overall, the July war served to elevate Hezbollah onto the U.S. policy agenda, requiring U.S. diplomatic intervention to resolve the conflict. It also provided insight into Hezbollah's arsenal, the extent of which surprised American policymakers. Intelligence officials were caught unaware by the sophistication of the group's attacks, the number of missile launches, and the nature of the missile resources.⁸⁰⁶ In one instance during the war, U.S. intelligence analysts discovered a Syrian cargo plane containing missile launchers and a crate for an anti-ship cruise

⁸⁰³ George W. Bush, “President George W. Bush, Remarks on the UN Security Council Resolution on Lebanon, Washington, 14 August, 2006,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36, no. 1 (August 2006): 160.

⁸⁰⁴ George W. Bush, “President Bush Meets with Bipartisan Members of Congress on the G8 Summit” (Office of the Press Secretary, July 18, 2006), <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/07/20060718-4.html>.

⁸⁰⁵ Rice, “Secretary Rice Holds a News Conference.”

⁸⁰⁶ Mazetti and Shanker, “Arming of Hezbollah Reveals U.S. and Israeli Blind Spots.”

missile. The plane originated in Iran and was meant to resupply Hezbollah, but with the help of Iraq and Turkey, the U.S. was able to effectively block the delivery.⁸⁰⁷

One final development in the problem stream which drew attention to Hezbollah as a high priority problem was a confrontation between Hezbollah and the Lebanese government. In May, 2008, the Lebanese government attempted to close Hezbollah's telecommunications network and remove the head of security at Beirut Airport because he was believed to be too closely tied to the group. Hezbollah viewed this as a hostile move and battles broke out in the streets of Beirut. At one point, Hezbollah seized parts of west Beirut. Bush administration officials at this point were not engaged with Syria, so they approached Egypt, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia to use their influence with Syria and Iran in order to contain Hezbollah and resolve the crisis.⁸⁰⁸

The diplomatic resolution to the conflict was the Doha Agreement, brokered in late May, the results of which gave Hezbollah and its allies veto power in the Lebanese government, with 11 out of 30 cabinet seats.⁸⁰⁹ Perhaps coincidentally, on the same day that the Doha Agreement was announced, Bush spoke to the Israeli Knesset and pointedly criticized the notion of negotiating with terrorists. Bush remarked, "We have an obligation to call this what it is: the false comfort of appeasement, which has been repeatedly discredited by history."⁸¹⁰ Thus, in the context of Hezbollah gaining greater legitimate political influence in Lebanon, President Bush

⁸⁰⁷ John Diamond, "Officials: U.S. Blocked Missiles to Hezbollah; Syria-bound Iranian Plane Had to Turn Back, They Say," *USA Today*, August 16, 2006, 1A.

⁸⁰⁸ Robert Worth and Nada Bakri, "Hezbollah Seizes Swath of Beirut From U.S.-Backed Lebanon Government," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2008, 5.

⁸⁰⁹ Alia Ibrahim, "Lebanese Form National Unity Government; Hezbollah Gains Effective Veto Power; U.S.-Backed Premier Stays," *The Washington Post*, July 12, 2008, A07.

⁸¹⁰ David R. Sands, "Hezbollah Wins Concessions After Fight; Renders U.S. Support of Ally a Challenge," *The Washington Times*, May 16, 2008, A5.

reaffirmed the no concessions policy. Congress also rejected the notion of Hezbollah in the cabinet. The Doha Agreement and Hezbollah's presence in the Lebanese cabinet was clearly a defeat for U.S. policy, which sought to marginalize the group, rather than empower it.

The Policy Stream

Developments in the policy stream in the post 9/11 period were governed by a fierce anti-Islamist intellectual atmosphere that was focused intently on terrorism. Think-tanks, particularly on the right, were galvanized by the war on terror and argued for a strong response to terrorism generally, and in particular, against groups like Hezbollah. For example, a conservative think-tank the American Enterprise Institute argued for expanding the war on terror to non Al Qaeda Islamist groups. The argument for strength permeated policy circles and there was very little dissent against an aggressive policy toward Al Qaeda, and concomitantly, other Islamist groups. Other think-tanks changed their research agenda to focus more specifically on terrorism and Islamist groups. The Center for Defense information, a nonpartisan think-tank that is regarded as somewhat left-leaning, announced in a December, 2001 newsletter that terrorism was intentionally elevated to the top of the organization's agenda after the 9/11 attacks, even though their research typically focused on more traditional security issues.⁸¹¹

While some political elites argued for a more temperate approach to Political Islam and tried to distinguish Islam from the ideology that motivated the 9/11 attack, there were strong voices that rejected this notion. Donald Rumsfeld, for example, argued that it was important to acknowledge the enemy as Islamist extremism as opposed to terrorism in general. In his 2011 memoirs, he wrote, "Islamism is not a religion but a totalitarian political ideology that seeks the

⁸¹¹ Bruce Blair, "Letter from the President," *The Defense Monitor* 30, no. 9 (November 2001): 1.

destruction of all liberal democratic governments, of our individual rights, and of Western Civilization.”⁸¹²

The broadly anti-Islamist atmosphere tended to blend Islamist groups together. As a result, when arguments were posed about what to do about Al Qaeda, often groups like Hamas and Hezbollah were lumped into the same category. Although Hassan Nasrallah denounced the 9/11 attack, in 2002, Condoleezza Rice repeated President Bush’s notion that opposing Al Qaeda necessitated opposing groups like Hezbollah.⁸¹³ Given the fraught history between Hezbollah and the United States, policymakers quickly expanded the Global War on Terror to include Hezbollah. Bob Woodward reported in his description of the first 100 days after 9/11 that both Hamas and Hezbollah were on the agenda not long after the attack. Woodward writes about a September 26, 2001 NSC meeting in which Secretary Powell and President Bush discussed adding the groups to the financial war on terror, particularly in terms of freezing financial assets.⁸¹⁴

In sum, arguments in the policy stream were consistently in favor of a more assertive approach to Hezbollah, and Islamist groups in general. The immediate period after 9/11 in particular, represented a period of agreement across the political spectrum that the U.S. should take a harder line on Hezbollah. Strong anti-Islamist voices that had long been advocating a tougher approach to these groups took advantage of the opportunity presented by the post-9/11 atmosphere.

⁸¹² Rumsfeld, *Known and Unknown: A Memoir*, 353–354.

⁸¹³ Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 174.

⁸¹⁴ Bob Woodward, *Bush at War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 200.

The Political Stream

In the political stream, there was a bipartisan consensus that Hezbollah should be included in the larger Global War on Terror and that the U.S. should take a more aggressive approach to the group. This sentiment was shared by relevant interest groups such as AIPAC, which issued memos to Congress throughout the Bush administration arguing for a hard line on Hezbollah.⁸¹⁵ And in October, 2001, Ariel Sharon also asked Colin Powell to add Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad to the post 9/11 terrorism list as a way to compel Yasser Arafat to combat them.⁸¹⁶ Pressure to expand the Global War on Terror to Hezbollah came from key members of Congress, specifically Senator Bob Graham and Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Democratic Representative Lantos argued in a 2001 House Hearing, “ I am encouraged, Mr. Chairman, by the administration’s efforts to target not just Osama bin Laden but terrorists throughout the Middle East and beyond. I applaud Secretary Powell’s efforts in the midst of this week’s war planning to pressure Syria and Lebanon to surrender Hezbollah terrorists operating in their territories, a policy I recommended in sanctions legislation that was adopted by this body by a vote of 216 to 212 just a few months ago.”⁸¹⁷

Democrat Henry Waxman argued in the same hearing, “There are differences within this movement. It encompasses Sunni versus Shia, or Sunni and Shia. It encompasses Iran and Libya. It includes the Palestinians of Hamas, but also the Lebanese of Hezbollah. I think there is, therefore, an evident movement which requires our attention; and I would agree with what

⁸¹⁵ Some examples of the types of memos distributed by AIPAC include, “Hizballah: A Threat to United States and Israel,” August 31, 2006 and “Hizballah’s Rocket Buildup Poses Serious Threat,” July 17, 2008, http://www.aipac.org/~media/Publications/Policy%20and%20Politics/AIPAC%20Analyses/Issue%20Memos/2008/07/AIPAC_Memo_Hizballah_Rocket_Buildup_Poses_Serious_Threat.pdf.

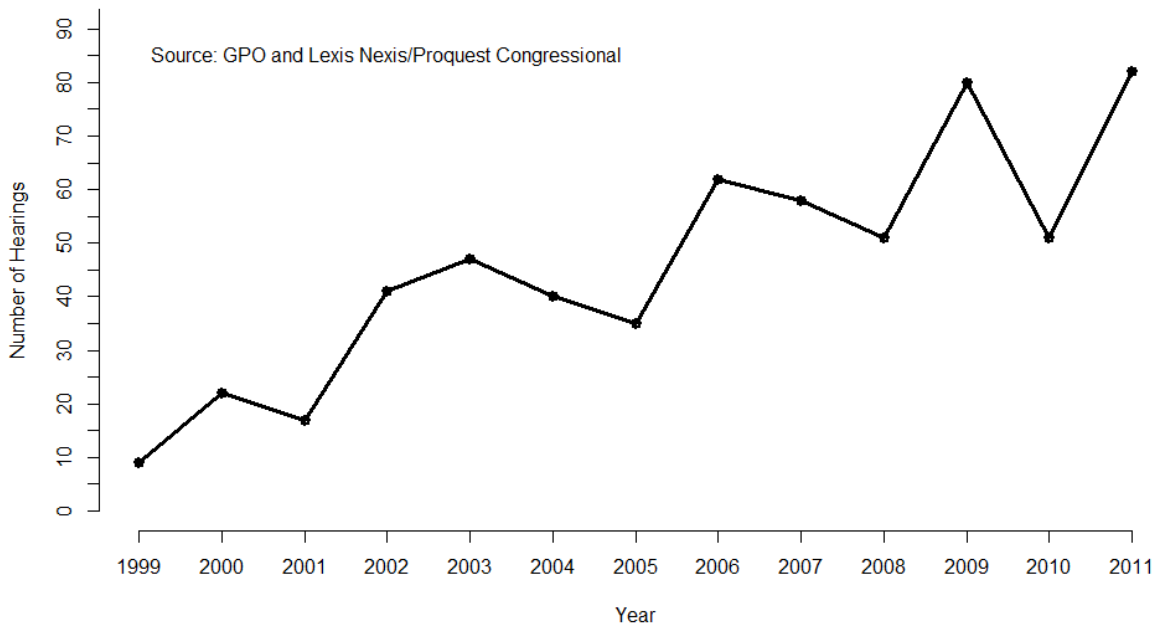
⁸¹⁶ “Voice of Israel: Israel- Sharon Asks US to Add Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah to ‘Terror’ List,” *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, October 3, 2001.

⁸¹⁷ *Preparing for the War on Terrorism: Hearing Before the Committee on Government Reform. United States House of Representatives*, 107th Cong. (Statement of Tom Lantos, September 20, 2001), 5.

Representative Lantos said this morning, which is that if bin Laden goes away or is done away with, that will only be the beginning of the effort that's required.”⁸¹⁸

Other high level civil servants viewed Hezbollah as a major threat akin to Al Qaeda and argued for a more expansive war on terror. In a 2003 hearing on terrorist financing, Alice Fisher, Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Department of Justice argued, “Well, I certainly think that Hezbollah and al-Qaeda and the other terrorist organizations are a significant threat against the U.S., so our efforts certainly don't stop at al-Qaeda, whether it is in terrorist financing or the war on terrorism. We think it is global and that it is broad reaching to all the terrorist organizations.”⁸¹⁹

Fig. 5.4: Congressional Hearings Mentioning Hezbollah 1999-2011

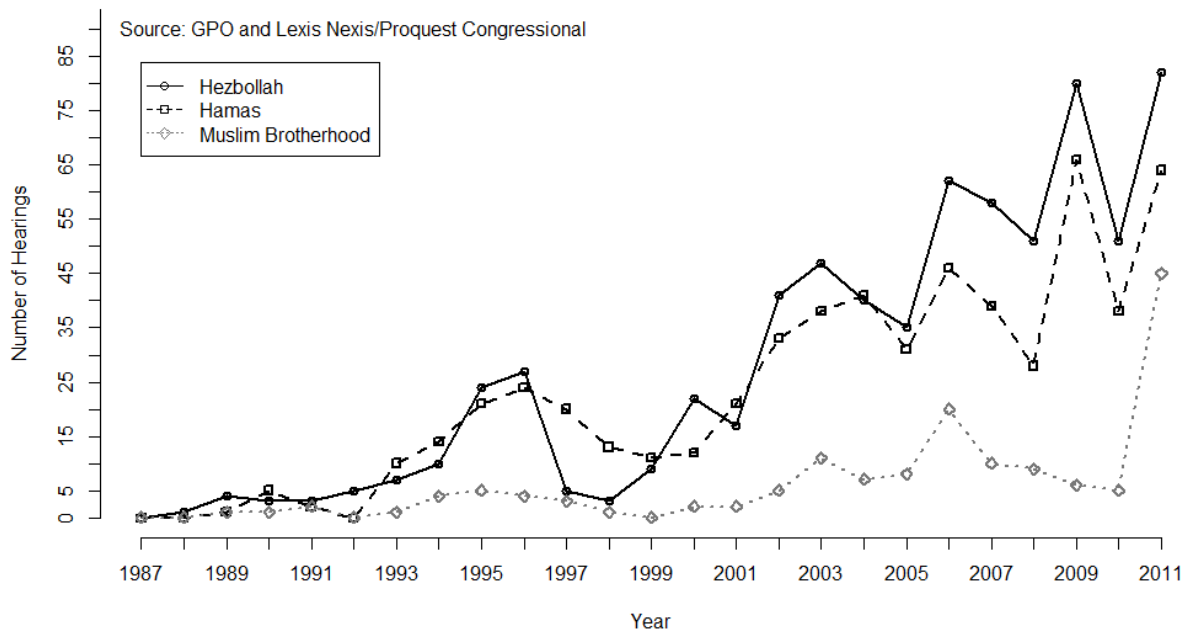


⁸¹⁸ Ibid., 112.

⁸¹⁹ *Progress Since 9/11: The Effectiveness of the U.S. Anti-Terrorist Financing Efforts: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services, United States House of Representatives*, 28.

This consensus corresponds to a period of heightened congressional interest in the group. This is consistent with Kingdon’s model which would expect more attention to an issue before the corresponding policy varies. Figure 5.4⁸²⁰ demonstrates that after 9/11, the number of congressional hearings that mentioned Hezbollah increased dramatically. Figure 5.5⁸²¹ compares level of congressional attention to the other cases during this time period. Note that Hezbollah consistently received more congressional attention than the Muslim Brotherhood or Hamas. Figure 5.6 displays media attention to Hezbollah during this period, indicating that with the exception of the spike in interest over the 2006 war, media attention to the group was increasing in a less dramatic way, possibly suggesting that the fixation on Hezbollah was more concentrated within the Washington beltway.

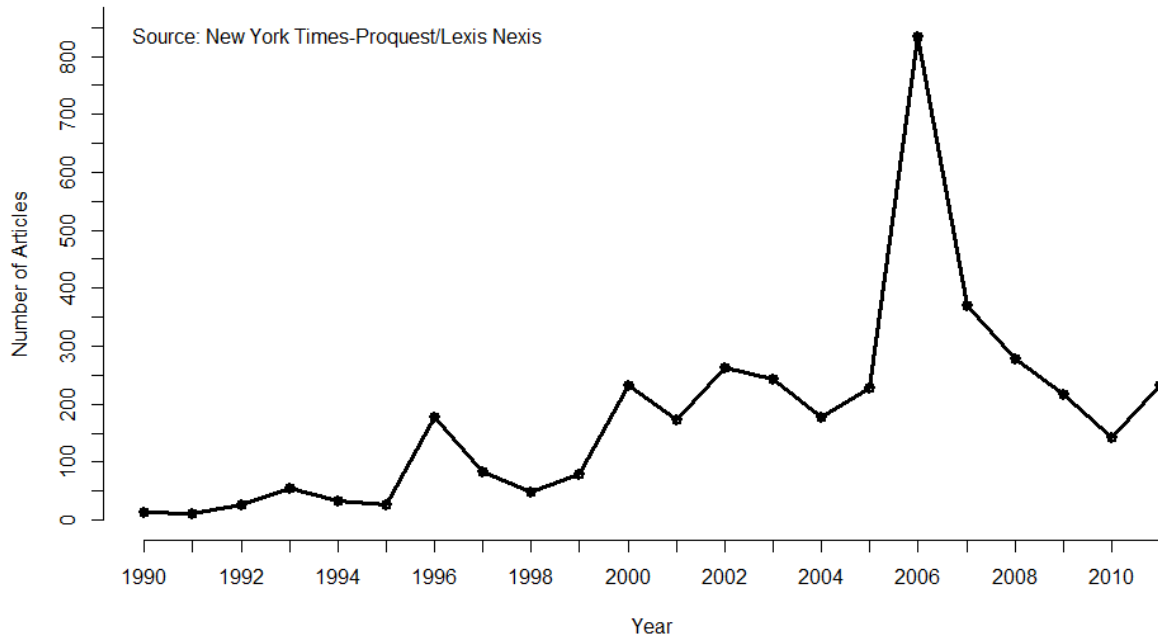
Fig. 5.5: Congressional Hearings Mentioning Hamas, Hezbollah, or the Muslim Brotherhood 1987-2011



⁸²⁰ Hearings data for Hezbollah come from Lexis Nexis/Proquest Congressional and gpo.gov.

⁸²¹ Media data come from Lexis Nexis and Proquest/Historical searches of *The New York Times*.

Fig. 5.6: Media Attention to Hezbollah 1990-2011



Even before 9/11, Congress was primed for a more proactive approach to Hezbollah. For example, the Lantos Amendment, which was a segment of the Foreign Authorization bill for fiscal years 2002 and 2003, eliminated aid to the Lebanese Armed forces unless they deployed troops to southern Lebanon to prevent Hezbollah attacks against northern Israel. Although the amendment was a close vote, it passed. The top Democrat on the committee, Representative Tom Lantos (who eventually chaired the committee) submitted the amendment despite objections by Colin Powell, who argued the legislation would be detrimental to U.S. policy in Lebanon.

The Obama Administration

The Obama administration's pro-engagement perspective did not translate into a different policy toward Hezbollah.⁸²² U.S. officials still regarded the group as a terrorist organization and the taboo against contact with any members was still in place. As noted in previous chapters, the administration undertook a review of U.S. policy toward Islamist groups to determine if it required modification, but sensitivities surrounding foreign terrorist organizations remained high and as a result, the review was focused on groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, rather than Hamas and Hezbollah. One U.S. official generated a paper suggesting a "rethink" on groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, but the issue was so sensitive that in order to float the idea more broadly, his superiors asked that he remove any mention of what agency from which the document originated.⁸²³

In contrast to Hamas, for which the administration had very specific conditions the group could meet in order to justify recognition and engagement, Hezbollah was not even a candidate for engagement unless a member of the group became head of state and even then it wasn't clear how the administration would handle the situation. In an interview during which President Obama was asked if the pro-engagement approach to Iran applied to Hamas and Hezbollah, his reply distinguished between Iran as an important nation-state recognized by the international community, and Hamas and Hezbollah, which are not nations. He went on to say, "... if at some point Lebanon is a member of the United Nations, if at some point they are elected as a head of

⁸²² Former State Department Policy Planning Staffer, Confidential Interview #297.

⁸²³ Former U.S. Official, Confidential Interview #223.

state, or a head of state is elected in Lebanon that is a member of that organization, then that would raise these issues. That hasn't happened yet."⁸²⁴

In practical terms, this meant that American policy toward Hezbollah under the Obama administration was similar to the Bush administration. In May, 2009, Vice President Joe Biden visited Beirut to meet with the leaders of the March 14th coalition, the first VP visit since 1983. In his meetings with Lebanese leaders, he emphasized the U.S. commitment to supporting the Lebanese government; however he said that if Hezbollah were to dominate the June election, it would be more difficult for the U.S. to maintain this support.⁸²⁵ During the visit, he outlined four ways the U.S. was working to undermine Hezbollah's power: first, supplying the Lebanese Army with military equipment. Second, work to convince European allies to help the U.S. pressure Syria to cut off support for the group. Third, take advantage of splits in the Iranian leadership and encourage Iran to stop supporting Hezbollah. Fourth, urge Israel to assist the pro-western March 14th coalition.⁸²⁶

The Obama administration's tough approach to Hezbollah is also exemplified by the continuing economic pressure on the group exerted by the Treasury Department. In a June, 2009, Treasury Undersecretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Stuart Levy visited Beirut and met with Lebanese banking authorities and private sector bankers. During his visit, he pointed out that while Lebanon and the United States might disagree about Hezbollah, a recent article in the Financial Times featuring Hezbollah's admission that it supports Hamas is important

⁸²⁴ Obama, Interview with Michele Norris and Steve Inskeep of National Public Radio.

⁸²⁵ "Lebanon: Vice President Biden Meets March 14 Leaders" (State Department, Beirut, March 29, 2009), Wikileaks.

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

evidence that the Lebanese government should forbid Hezbollah from using Lebanese banks.⁸²⁷ One of the most prominent efforts by the administration to target Hezbollah finances was the identification of Beirut based Lebanese Canadian Bank as a major money laundering tool for a drug trafficking organization linked to Hezbollah.⁸²⁸

Efforts to constrain Hezbollah's access to finances has also been accompanied by a continuing commitment to strengthening the Lebanese state institutions through military security assistance, and USAID programs to support agriculture, schools, and democratic governance. President Bush requested more funds for U.S. assistance to Lebanon after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. Between 2006 and 2009, U.S. foreign assistance to Lebanon amounted to over \$1 billion.⁸²⁹ While it may seem counterintuitive that aid to Lebanon increased as Hezbollah gained veto power in the government, the intention behind the aid was to use soft-power methods to undermine Hezbollah.

The Policy Streams during the Obama Administration

Developments in the problem stream drew continued attention to the group as a problem obstructing American policy objectives in the region. For example, as briefly mentioned in the overview section, in January 2011, the Lebanese unity government collapsed after Hezbollah ministers and their allies resigned when the UN Special Tribunal on Lebanon announced its indictments over the 2005 assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Hezbollah had long dismissed the special tribunal as illegitimate and a U.S. and Israeli conspiracy against the group.

⁸²⁷ "Lebanon: Treasury U/S Levey Discusses Hizballah, Iran, and Reputation of Banking Sector with Lebanese Banking Sector" (State Department, Beirut, June 1, 2009), Wikileaks.

⁸²⁸ Ginger Thompson, "Lebanese Bank Is Accused of Money Laundering," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/11/world/middleeast/11hezbollah.html>.

⁸²⁹ Casey Addis, *Lebanon: Background and U.S. Relations* (Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, February 1, 2011), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R40054.pdf>.

The tribunal implicated four members of Hezbollah in the assassination, including the brother-in-law of Imad Mughniyah.⁸³⁰ It took six months for the Lebanese government to form a new cabinet and the solution increased the influence of Hezbollah, with a pro-Hezbollah Prime Minister and more Hezbollah/ally seats in the cabinet, which assured them veto power.⁸³¹

Two other developments in the problem stream helped keep Hezbollah high on the American policy radar as a problem, requiring a solution. In January 2012 Hezbollah was also implicated in a planned attack in Thailand. Based on a warning from Israel, in January 2012 the U.S. embassy in Thailand issued an emergency notice to U.S. citizens about a possible terrorist attack on tourist sites in Bangkok.⁸³² A suspected member of Lebanese Hezbollah was arrested by Thai police. And in August 2012, the U.S. added Hezbollah to a list of groups sanctioned for supporting the Syrian regime. Although Hezbollah already appears on numerous U.S. terrorism related lists, most prominently the Foreign Terrorist Organization list, this designation by the Treasury department associates the group with the violence the Syrian regime perpetrated against its own citizens in the uprisings that began in Spring, 2011. The sanctions target Hezbollah for training Syrian forces, providing logistical support and helping the regime crack down on protesters. Given that the group's U.S. based assets are already frozen and citizens are prohibited

⁸³⁰ Liz Sly, "U.N. Court Indicts Hezbollah Members in 2005 Assassination in Lebanon," *The New York Times*, August 17, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/un-court-indicts-hezbollah-members-in-2005-assassination-in-lebanon/2011/08/17/gIQAv2KTLJ_story.html.

⁸³¹ "Hezbollah-backed Najib Mikati Appointed Lebanese PM," *BBC*, January 25, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12273178>.

⁸³² Haroon Siddique, "Thailand Arrests Hezbollah Suspect After Terror Tipoff," *The Guardian*, January 13, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jan/13/thailand-arrests-hezbollah-suspect-terror-tipoff>. See also "Emergency Message to U.S. Citizens: Possible Terrorist Threat" (State Department, Bangkok, January 13, 2012), <http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/011312emergencymessage.html>.

from supporting the group, the new sanctions serve a primarily symbolic purpose by publicizing Hezbollah's activities within Syria.⁸³³

Hezbollah's support for the Syrian regime's crackdown on its own people drew censure from the U.S. beginning in August, 2011. President Obama issued an Executive Order prohibiting transactions with the Syrian regime. A year later, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions against Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah along with two other Hezbollah leaders: Mustafa Badr Al-Din and Talal Hamiyah. These sanctions stem from the terms of the August 2011 Executive Order. The administration accused Hezbollah of helping Iranian Al Quds forces train Syrian militants. According to David Cohen, under-secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence in the Treasury Department, "Hezbollah is actively providing support to the Assad regime as it carries out its bloody campaign against the Syrian people," He argued that the designation makes "clear to parties around the world — both domestically and internationally — the true nature of Hezbollah's activities."⁸³⁴ Hezbollah is already listed as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Terrorist Group, so these sanctions primarily served a rhetorical purpose to publicly rebuke Hezbollah for its support for the Syrian regime. Additionally, the administration continued to pressure European allies to list the group as a terrorist organization, particularly during White House terrorism advisor John Brennan's visit to

⁸³³ Josh Rogan, "Treasury Sanctions Hezbollah ... Again," *Foreign Policy Magazine*, August 10, 2012, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/08/10/treasury_sanctions_hezbollah_again.

⁸³⁴ Rick Gladstone and Anne Barnard, "U.S. Accuses Hezbollah of Aiding Syria's Crackdown," *The New York Times*, August 10, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/world/middleeast/us-officials-say-hezbollah-helps-syrias-military.html?pagewanted=all>.

Ireland in October, 2012.⁸³⁵ As the crisis continues, Hezbollah is increasingly seen as part of the Syria problem.⁸³⁶

Arguments in the policy stream were overwhelmingly anti-Hezbollah, with some exceptions. Many suggested that the collapse of the Hariri government in 2011 was a threat to the Cedar Revolution and democratic rule in Lebanon. Conservatives like John Bolton argued that the U.S. should not recognize the Hezbollah dominated government and perhaps step up involvement in Lebanon beyond contributing to the U.N. peacekeeping forces.⁸³⁷ There were some voices in the policy stream advocating a possible opening, but very few and the arguments never captured much support. For example, a CENTCOM “Read Team” paper issued in June 2010 suggested that isolating Hezbollah was not working and that the U.S. should focus on integrating Hezbollah into the Lebanese Armed forces.⁸³⁸ And in 2010, White House Counterterrorism Advisor John Brennan said the U.S. should try to support the moderate elements in Hezbollah.⁸³⁹ Some academics advocated opening up to Hezbollah as a way to work toward its demilitarization and integration into the larger Lebanese polity as its political wing has begun to do.⁸⁴⁰ In spring 2011, the White House issued a National Intelligence Estimate on Hezbollah and a David Ignatius article indicated that it contained arguments for a more nuanced

⁸³⁵ Hilary Leila Kreiger, “U.S. Official Urges E.U. to Name Hezbollah ‘Terrorists’,” *The Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2012, <http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=289437>.

⁸³⁶ State Department Official, Confidential Interview #656.

⁸³⁷ John R. Bolton, “Beirut Calling: Lebanon, Not Egypt, May Determine the Fate of Democracy in the Middle East,” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/feb/03/opinion/la-oe-bolton-lebanon-20110203>.

⁸³⁸ Marc Perry, “Red Team: CENTOM Thinks Outside the Box,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, June 30, 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/29/red_team?page=0,0.

⁸³⁹ David Ignatius, “Obama Weighs Talking to the Taliban, Hezbollah,” *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/obama-weighs-talking-to-the-taliban-hezbollah/2011/03/17/AB4e1vm_story.html.

⁸⁴⁰ See Steven Simon and Jonathan Stevenson, “The Hezbollah Problem: To Defang Iran and Help Lebanon and Israel, We Must Demilitarize Hezbollah, Which Means We’ll Have to Talk to Them.,” *Democracy Journal* (Summer): 41–56.

approach to the group, recognizing the role it plays as a social service and political organization.⁸⁴¹ In response to Ignatius' article, however, the White House denied a change in policy toward Hezbollah and reaffirmed the no contacts policy. In general, even though arguments for opening to Hezbollah existed in the policy stream, they were only held by a small number of advocates, and failed to impact the broader policy.

In terms of the political stream, policymakers remained uniformly anti-Hezbollah. In March, 2011, Congress expressed concern that the Obama administration's request for \$100 million in military and foreign aid that might land in the hands of Hezbollah. Secretary of State Clinton promised to closely monitor the aid so it would not reach the group.⁸⁴² The U.S. halted weapons shipments to the Lebanese Armed Forces, but continued to provide non-lethal military aid.⁸⁴³ Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who has been a prominent voice rejecting U.S. engagement with Islamist groups, sharply criticized the continuation of U.S. aid after the collapse of the Lebanese government.⁸⁴⁴ She advocated for a complete halt to the newly formed Lebanese government saying, "For years, Members of Congress warned that it was unwise to fund a Lebanese government in which Hezbollah participated. It was clear that Hezbollah's influence was growing, and that the Executive Branch

⁸⁴¹ Ignatius, "Obama Weighs Talking to the Taliban, Hezbollah."

⁸⁴² Hillary Rodham Clinton, quoted in, Sara Sorcher, "Lebanon's Government Now Officially Dominated by Hezbollah," *National Journal*, June 13, 2011, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/nationalsecurity/lebanon-s-government-now-officially-dominated-by-hezbollah-20110613>.

⁸⁴³ Adam Entous, "Washington Quietly Halts Arms Delivery to Lebanon," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703806304576241132242232562.html>.

⁸⁴⁴ According to a confidential interview with a state department official, Ros-Lehtinin is leading the charge on this issue and is "gunning for this policy." State Department Official, Confidential Interview #656.

had no long-term strategy to deal with that reality, and no contingency plan to stop U.S. aid from falling into the wrong hands.”⁸⁴⁵

In June 2011 Representative Howard Berman, the highest ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs committee, introduced legislation patterned on the 2006 Palestinian Anti-terrorism Act, which was passed after Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative elections. Except for humanitarian and democracy promotion aid, the Hezbollah Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011 would prohibit all U.S. aid to Lebanon as long as Hezbollah is part of the majority coalition.⁸⁴⁶ This effort began a year earlier, when Berman threatened to halt U.S. military aid to Lebanon in 2010 amidst border clashes between Hezbollah and Israel. In an interview, Representative Berman explained the motivation behind the legislation, “When there is essentially a government in Lebanon where a militia organization that has a political front and that is on our terrorist list is determining the nature of that government, the fundamental nature of Lebanon changes very much, from an election-based democracy into a different kind of country.”⁸⁴⁷ On June 16, 2011, the bill was referred to committee; however, Berman also introduced HATA as an amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012. The only element of the amendment that survived was to prohibit U.S. aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces under circumstances in which the LAF were controlled by a foreign terrorist organization.⁸⁴⁸ Although

⁸⁴⁵ Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, “Ros-Lehtinen Urges Cutoff of Aid to New Hezbollah-Controlled Lebanese Government Also Says U.S. Should Cut Off Funding for Palestinian Authority,” June 13, 2011, <http://archives.republicans.foreignaffairs.house.gov/news/story/?1864>.

⁸⁴⁶ *H.R. 2215, the Hezbollah Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011 (HATA): Summary*, 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/110617_HATA%20Summary,%20HR%202215.pdf.

⁸⁴⁷ Howard Berman, quoted in Josh Rogan, “Berman and Friends Unveil Bill to Cut Foreign Aid to Lebanon,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, June 17, 2011, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/17/berman_and_friends_unveil_bill_to_cut_foreign_aid_to_lebanon.

⁸⁴⁸ Christopher M. Blanchard, *Lebanon: Background and U.S. Policy* (Washington, D.C: Congressional Research Service, November 6, 2012), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R42816.pdf>.

the HATA did not pass, it was not because Congress was taking a more conciliatory approach to Hezbollah. Among the concerns expressed about the legislation, Congressman Steve Chabot criticized the clarity of the carve-outs for democracy and humanitarian aid.⁸⁴⁹ Overall, the debate surrounding the legislation demonstrates that there is strongly anti-Hezbollah sentiment in Congress. Indeed, members of Congress are starting to view Lebanon as indistinguishable from Hezbollah because the group exerts so much influence in Lebanese politics.⁸⁵⁰

Hezbollah also received attention in congressional hearings. For example in July 2011, the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence held a hearing on Hezbollah in Latin America. Ambassador Noriega's testimony detailed the growing role of Hezbollah in Mexico, specifically that the group has trained drug traffickers in the use of weapons and explosives.⁸⁵¹ In another House hearing, Chairman Bob Casey expressed dismay about rumors circulating in the press that the Obama administration might reach out to Hezbollah, pointing to comments by John Brennan, the President's advisor on homeland security and counterterrorism, that the group was "interesting" and the administration was searching for methods to support Hezbollah moderates.⁸⁵² Daniel Benjamin, counterterrorism coordinator at the Department of State, denied that the administration had changed policy on Hezbollah.

Hezbollah came up in both House and Senate Hearings in March 2011. In a hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Democratic Congressman Gary Ackerman

⁸⁴⁹ *To Authorize Appropriations for the Department of State for Fiscal Year 2012 And For Other Purposes* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011).

⁸⁵⁰ Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #720.

⁸⁵¹ *Hezbollah in Latin America: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence Committee on Homeland Security, United States House of Representatives*, 112th Cong., July 7, 2011.

⁸⁵² *Assessing the Strength of Hezbollah: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 111th Cong., June 8, 2010.

reiterated that he believed aid to Lebanon should be held until it was clear the funds would not benefit Hezbollah. Republican Representative Gus Bilirakis also spoke strongly against the use of U.S. tax dollars to support State Department programs focused on building relationships with the Muslim world, which he thought actually supported Islamic extremism.⁸⁵³ This same issue was discussed in a Senate Hearing during which Democratic Senator Casey pressed Under Secretary of State William Burns about U.S. aid to the Lebanese Armed Forces. He wanted assurances the funds would not reach or benefit Hezbollah in particular.⁸⁵⁴ Burns assured the Committee that U.S. funds do not reach Hezbollah and that policy toward the group had not changed. The House Homeland Security Committee also held a hearing in March, 2012 entitled, “Iran, Hezbollah, and the Threat to the Homeland.” Republican Representative Peter King, Chair of the committee, expressed concerns about Hezbollah operatives in the United States engaging in criminal enterprises and posing a threat to U.S. security.⁸⁵⁵

Overall, the Obama administration continued its predecessor’s assertive aggressive approach to Hezbollah, despite its commitment to diplomatic engagement in the region overall. Developments in the political streams kept drawing high level attention to the group and helped policymakers continue to define it as a problem, requiring a solution. In the problem stream, Hezbollah contributed to the collapse of the Lebanese unity government and later gained a more prominent place in the government with a pro-Hezbollah Prime Minister. Additionally, when the

⁸⁵³ *Assessing U.S. Foreign Policy Priorities and Needs Amidst Economic Challenges in the Middle East: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives*, 112th Cong., March 10, 2011, 34.

⁸⁵⁴ *Popular Uprisings in the Middle East: The Implications for U.S. Policy: Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 112th Cong., March 17, 2011.

⁸⁵⁵ *Iran, Hezbollah, and the Threat to the Homeland: Hearing Before the Committee on Homeland Security, United States House of Representatives*, 112th Cong., March 21, 2012. A confidential interview with a Congressional Staffer indicates that members of Congress are paying close attention to Hezbollah’s global activities, tracking the drug smuggling cartels, but there is some disagreement over how much it really matters. Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #720.

Syrian government cracked down on the rebellion in Syria, Hezbollah stood with the Assad regime, even providing training assistance. In the policy stream, the available solutions were generated in a policy environment that was strongly concerned with threats to U.S. interests in the region, particularly from non-state actors. In the political stream, there was bipartisan consensus against Hezbollah, given the fraught history between the U.S. and the group and lingering post-9/11 concerns about Islamist terrorism. Consequently, policy entrepreneurs continued to match the problem of Hezbollah with an aggressive approach.

Conclusions

American foreign policy toward Hezbollah has become more assertive over time, with peaks after the Marine Barracks and embassy bombings, during the peace process, and after 9/11. Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting successfully explains why U.S. policy has changed over time. This chapter discussed how policies toward Hezbollah came to be seen as appropriate solutions to the problem of Hezbollah within the context of three key windows of opportunity. In the context of Hezbollah attacks on the U.S., the Reagan administration pursued an intensified state-sponsor counterterrorism strategy. The Clinton administration favored a more group-oriented approach which included no contacts with any members of the group, attacking Hezbollah's financial sources, and broader counter-terrorism reforms. And following 9/11, the Bush administration attached Hezbollah to the Global War on Terror, which amplified the financial war against the group and included a more intensive effort to gain allied support against Hezbollah. The Obama administration continued these efforts. Meanwhile, developments in the policy streams kept policymakers' attention focused on the group and served as an intellectual incubator for an increasingly assertive policy.

The alternative theories do not offer a sufficient explanation for variation in U.S. policy toward Hezbollah. First, a realist approach cannot explain why U.S. policy became more assertive, decades after the group attacked the United States. A realist theory would predict U.S. policy should have been most assertive in the 1980s, when the group posed an immediate threat to U.S. interests. It also cannot explain why American policy shifted from a more state-based to a more group-oriented policy, nor can it explain the emergence of the taboo against any contacts with group members. Second, the leadership model is inadequate because it fails to recognize the importance of the political context, especially the level of attention paid to the group by other key political actors, such as members of Congress or advocacy groups. The Allison bureaucratic politics model also fails to explain change in U.S. policy because, other than competition between Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger in the 1980s, there were no bureaucratic battles over how the U.S. should approach the group. At best this model could only explain why the U.S. did not take military action against Hezbollah in the aftermath of the Marine Barracks and embassy bombings. It can't explain why it shifted during the peace process and after 9/11.

Next, the domestic politics/public opinion model might be able to explain why Hezbollah received policy attention during these periods, but cannot explain the specific nature of the policy. For example, why did the U.S. pursue such a convoluted policy in the 1980s, and why did U.S. policy move to a more group-focused approach? And lastly, the nature of the group is possibly the most convincing of the alternative theories in this case, but it is also not adequately able to explain the timing of changes to U.S. policy toward Hezbollah, especially after 9/11, with which the group had no involvement. All of this demonstrates that the garbage can model offers the most compelling framework to explain American policy with respect to this group.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Why does the U.S. engage with some Islamist groups and isolate others? And why has that changed over time, even with respect to the same group? My argument has been that American policy toward Islamist groups is best conceived as an agenda setting problem, that is to say, it is the result of processes that bring an issue to the decision agenda. When policymakers' attention is drawn to an Islamist group and the organization comes to be defined as a problem, requiring a solution, American policy changes. Specifically, I use John Kingdon's garbage can model of agenda setting to argue that U.S. policy is a function of policy entrepreneurs capitalizing on a window of opportunity to link a new solution (ranging from engagement to confrontation) to a problem (the Islamist group). Kingdon's model provides the best framework for understanding U.S. policy in this domain, especially given the seemingly erratic, inconsistent, and nonlinear nature of American policy toward these groups. This dissertation also considered Kingdon's theory in comparison to other plausible theoretical explanations. While these alternative theories in many ways offer compelling arguments, none of them were able to sufficiently explain variation in U.S. policy over time within or across cases. In this chapter, I will summarize why the other major theories fail to perform as well as Kingdon's model and offer some final conclusions.

Kingdon and the Garbage Can Model

In comparison to the other models, John Kingdon's model is the most useful in explaining U.S. policy toward Islamist groups along a number of dimensions. First, focusing events clearly played a major role in how policymakers have viewed each of these Islamist groups. With respect to Hamas and Hezbollah, the spate of terrorist attacks in the 1990s, sometimes perpetrated by other groups or individuals, cast a pall over any groups that engaged in

those activities. These sorts of focusing events gave a sense of immediacy, drew attention to the issue, and helped define it as a problem that required a solution. The extent to which policymakers paid attention to an issue also affected who ultimately addressed it. As one former U.S. official stated, “Much of the decisions [about engaging with Islamist groups] are taken by a combination of regional bureaus if they cared and ambassadors and staff on the ground when they didn’t.”⁸⁵⁶ This demonstrates that the decision making on this issue is related to how much policymakers *care* about it, that is, whether they pay attention to it and think it’s important.

In terms of on the ground decision making, high ranking U.S. government officials do not issue instructions very often, which means that in a number of instances, policy entrepreneurship has taken place locally. This fits well into Kingdon’s agenda setting framework, given that local diplomats have more autonomy when the issue does not command the attention of top level officials in Washington. In my interviews, former diplomats reported getting few if any directions on the issue and if they did, often it was unwritten. One problem this has presented is that Washington occasionally generates contradictory messages. This means that in some cases, local diplomats chose to have contacts with Islamist groups to acquire information about the local political situation, but did not report back to Washington that the meetings took place.

One development that the Kingdon model is particularly adept at explaining is the emergence of the taboo against meeting with Islamists. The prohibition came about partly in response to events, but then became self-reinforcing. For example, the establishment of the Foreign Terrorist Organization designation list created an added layer of sensitivity about engagement. U.S. officials do not always know what the legalities are and therefore are reluctant

⁸⁵⁶ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #105, January 25, 2011.

to even mention the possibility of engaging with designated groups. One former U.S. official explained, “One of the complications with Hezbollah and Hamas is that they’re on the designated terrorist list. My read is there’s some ambiguity in exactly what that means in terms of engagement, but it is sensitive enough that people are very shy about it, partially because of political and partially because of legalistic issues.”⁸⁵⁷ The rise of the taboo against contacts reflects the power of path dependence. Once the FTO designation became policy, even suggesting a change in tactics regarding designated groups was discouraged in policy circles.

Another development that Kingdon’s framework is well suited to explaining is the shift from a state-based to a group-based approach to these organizations. In the 1980s, Islamist groups were viewed almost exclusively through the lens of the countries that supported them or the host country the group occupied. When legislators broached the subject of identifying individual groups as terrorist organizations in the 1980s, it was met with significant bipartisan resistance. Beginning in the 1990s, this changed to a more group specific approach, producing legislation that targeted the groups’ financial assets and fundraising capabilities. It was also during this period that we see the emergence of the terrorist designation lists. Kingdon’s theory can explain this better than the alternatives because this shift reflects a change in how U.S. officials defined and therefore approached the problem of Islamist groups. As Islamist groups came to be defined as problems, the solutions were designed to address the specific nuances of these problems, namely non-state actors who depend on international funding and may have an active presence in multiple countries.

⁸⁵⁷ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #105.

Kingdon's model can also help frame the political sensitivities surrounding policy change in general. A policy change from isolation to engagement, for example, is risky, not only because engagement may imply the U.S. regards the group as legitimate, but also because changing policy itself is politically sensitive. One former U.S. official explained, "If the U.S. shifts its policy and begins to engage with a group it once tried to isolate, this is a tactical shift and would be perceived as a sign of weakness, that the U.S. position has softened its approach. A lot of times for these groups, having the ability to engage with other governments does give them legitimacy."⁸⁵⁸ The notion that meeting with a group legitimizes it is not a uniformly held belief in the bureaucracy, but it is still a major concern for many officials who favor isolation over engagement. Legitimizing an Islamist organization becomes controversial once it has been defined as a problem. Then it becomes more difficult to shift to a more amicable relationship with the group.

Another issue that fits well in Kingdon's model is that officials are disinclined to take risks that may threaten their careers, which amplifies the effects of policy inertia. As one former State Department official noted, "Inertia is huge. On some issues it may be larger than others for a variety of reasons because of high turnover, overwork, no time to be innovative because the state department is an exceptionally risk averse culture where people are promoted by doing a good job, not by coming up with a policy that someone might complain about, so that level of status quo path dependence matters a great deal. In many ways you need an external shock to shift those patterns of policy expectations in really fundamental ways."⁸⁵⁹ This perspective links clearly into Kingdon's framework: events interact with the system such that exogenous shocks

⁸⁵⁸ Former State Department Policy Planning Staffer, Confidential Interview #297.

⁸⁵⁹ Former State Department Official, Confidential Interview #105.

force officials to deal with an issue that might otherwise have been avoided. Meanwhile, advocates for a policy change have been formulating and debating their solutions to a problem within the policy stream, creating the basis for a solution set when that problem becomes actionable.

Overall, Kingdon's model is more effective than the other theories in explaining U.S. policy toward Islamist groups because it offers a framework for understanding the policy process. Single factor models such as classical realism do have the advantage of being predictive and easily falsifiable. A theory that American policy is driven by whether the groups use violence or whether they are a security threat is straightforward and easy to test. However, these accounts themselves do not adequately explain U.S. policy. The strength of Kingdon's model is that it tells us what types of factors to look for. Although it is not predictive in the traditional sense, it is a descriptive, explanatory framework that acknowledges the highly contextual nature of policy-making. The other models do identify salient components of the policy making process, but the reality is not as simple as variation in one factor, which then yields a change in U.S. policy. Ironically, much of Political Science theory abstracts so much from political reality that chance events don't play a role in these explanations. Kingdon's model, however, provides a place for the impact of stochastic events on the political process. It recognizes the complexity of the process and provides a framework for explaining how each element fits into the process, which orients us to what matters, how much, and when. It is, therefore, a practical and functional tool for understanding U.S. policy in this domain.

Leadership

The leadership model argues that a new administration brings with it a new set of priorities and preferences that lead to a shift in policy outcomes. Although transitioning to a new administration often provides the impetus for a major change in policy, the leadership model isn't a sufficient explanation because it doesn't take into account the political context the executive faces. The Reagan administration is a powerful example of the importance of political context. Although President Reagan assumed office with a tough-on-terrorism approach, his administration's response to the Marine Barracks and Embassy Annex attacks was tentative and therefore not reflective of this perspective. His administration was deeply divided between the Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense. He also faced pressure from Congress to avoid a quagmire in Lebanon, a holdover from the Vietnam era.

Moreover, the George W. Bush administration is an example of how events can intervene and shape political outcomes. At the beginning of his administration, Bush intended to refocus on great power relationships, but 9/11 changed everything. It forced a reevaluation of American strategy, ultimately producing the Global War on Terror. The new environment demanded that the focal point be non-state actors, particularly Islamist groups. This is a clear example of the utility of Kingdon's conception of windows of opportunity as well as the problem stream. Events can intervene and derail a President's best laid plans.

The shift to the Obama administration, followed by a change in policy toward Islamist groups, appears to be a clear case in support of the leadership model. But upon further examination, it actually better fits the Kingdon model. Obama entered with a new, more open approach to Political Islam and advocated establishing relations with previously isolated groups.

The most prominent group under consideration was the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. But “idea softening” regarding Islamist groups had already begun in policy circles at the end of the Bush administration. There was an emerging groundswell of support for a new approach to these groups, as many career bureaucrats had determined the previous policy wasn’t working. Moreover, developments in the Arab Spring made the issue of engaging the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, a high priority agenda item. In this context, the new administration, along with the Arab Spring, provided a window of opportunity to implement the emergent ideas. If an administration hostile to engaging with Islamist groups had taken office, the proposals made by bureaucrats likely would have gone nowhere. Thus, the shift to the Obama administration was important, but not the only factor which led to a change in U.S. policy toward the Egyptian branch.

There are also periods in which Islamist groups received little or no executive attention, while local diplomats made key decisions over whether to meet with Islamists. This was true for the Muslim Brotherhood cases in particular, as well as Hamas before contacts were officially severed. The importance of local diplomats in the absence of top level scrutiny cannot be denied. In this sense, they operate as entrepreneurs, shaping policy based on the local circumstances, but at the same time weigh what is politically tenable in Washington. Sometimes embassy officials see a pragmatic reason to maintain contacts and simply choose not to report meetings to Washington.

The leadership model might seem comparatively more convincing because several policy shifts took place in the wake of administration changes. But this is not inconsistent with Kingdon’s theory. Shifts to new administrations can serve as a window of opportunity, but what

makes Kingdon's contribution important is that an administration change alone is insufficient. One must also consider the political context, such as the extent to which Congress and the general public attend to the issue, and developments in the problem stream which contribute to policymakers' defining a group as a problem that requires a swift response. In other words, executives have to be responsive to the political climate.

Bureaucratic Competition

A bureaucratic competition perspective would argue that American policy toward Islamist groups is the outcome of competing agencies, vying for control over a given policy arena. However, the case studies did not show much evidence for bureaucratic competition. Part of this may be due to the nature of the issue, which is controversial and sometimes regarded as a "hot potato". Many policymakers would rather avoid the issue due to its contentious nature. Bureaucratic competition came into play in the Jordanian case, although not in a way that Allison's model would predict. For the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood it's not clear who has control over the policy; sometimes the Ambassador has had more influence, while at other points it has been the NEA. When Washington takes an interest, then the Ambassador loses autonomy over the issue. Liz Cheney's influence over the distribution of MEPI funds is an interesting example of the bureaucratic side of the problem, although in Cheney's case, her power and influence exceeded the authority of the position she held. In the case of Hamas, there was no discernible competition or wrangling over who would make decisions regarding Hamas policy. The NSC holds tightly to the portfolio and no one else appears to be vying for control. In terms of Hezbollah, there was conflict between Secretary of State Shultz and Secretary of Defense Weinberger over how to respond to attacks perpetrated by the group. However, this conflict

occurred among the President's inner circle, and therefore would fit into the leadership model, not bureaucratic politics. As a result, major shifts in U.S. policy, such as during the peace process in the 1990s and after 9/11 do not make sense in purely bureaucratic terms.

Security/Classical Realism

The security model, or classical realism, posits that if a group poses a threat to the United States, then American policy will react assertively to quell this threat. This perspective is intuitively powerful and certainly in terms of policymakers' motives, security is central. However, the security model would predict that as a group becomes more powerful and poses a threat to the U.S., then U.S. policy should take more of an adversarial approach. Clearly that is not always the case when it comes to these groups. During periods in which the Egyptian Brotherhood was most violent, such as the 1940s, there was no taboo against contacts with the group. Recall that this was a period in which the group was engaging in what would now be termed terrorism: bombing British targets, assassination attempts, amassing large weapons arsenals, kidnapping American soldiers, etc. Even when officials suspected Brotherhood members were involved in planning a coup against the regime in the early 1950s, they still met with them. Reports from this period indicate that diplomats were concerned about the potential threat posed by the group; however the threat did not translate into a taboo against diplomats meeting with the group members. Counter-intuitively, thirty years after the group renounced violence and established itself as the most important opposition group in the country, meeting with the group was extremely controversial.

The Jordanian branch renounced violence and doesn't pose a credible threat to American interests. Although they speak out against U.S. policy and have occasionally boycotted U.S.

products, they are incapable of obtaining a majority in parliament and when members held political power, they focused on smaller, social issues like banning alcohol and nightclubs. Nevertheless, sensitivities over meeting with the Jordanian branch have varied over time, so the classical realism model doesn't work well for this group either. The group has posed essentially no threat to the United States, and yet sometimes relations between diplomats and group members have been suspended.

This model also doesn't perform well with respect to Hezbollah, the only one of the four cases that has directly attacked U.S. citizens. When the group bombed the U.S. Marine Barracks and the U.S. Embassy Annex, the Reagan administration's response was hamstrung by internal discord. Policymakers were side tracked by disagreements at the top levels of the administration, conflicts with Congress over war powers, as well as the specter of Vietnam. During this period, a simple classical realism model fails to explain the tentative reaction from the United States in the face of a direct attack on U.S. troops and diplomats. Later, U.S. policy became more assertive, long after the period in which the group targeted the United States with bombings and kidnappings. This contravenes the classical realism approach, which would predict a less aggressive policy as a threat from the group becomes more remote. In the 1990s into the 2000s, as U.S. policy more intently focused on undermining Hezbollah, the group began to participate in elections and has become a major political player in Lebanon. It is therefore no longer solely a militant organization, but has diversified along a number of dimensions, including politics and the provision of social services. As the group has adopted a more complex set of objectives, American policy has continued to become more antagonistic toward them.

Of course Hezbollah has remained violent; since its inception it has become a global organization with extensive military capabilities. This growing capability could explain the more hostile U.S. approach over time, but there are several tenets of American policy that this model cannot explain, for example, how the American approach to the group has evolved from macro to micro. In the 1980s, policymakers treated it as a state-based problem, requiring corresponding state-based solutions. The Iran-Contra scandal exemplifies this type of state-based thinking; the plan attempted to trade arms with members of the Iranian regime, via Israel, to free U.S. hostages in Lebanon. In the 1990s, that started to change. U.S. officials began to see Islamist groups like Hezbollah as a problem requiring a group-specific solution, which led to legislation targeting the groups' finances and adding them to terrorist group designation lists. After 9/11, this development continued even further, leading to lists that designated individuals as terrorists.

Moreover, American policy toward Hamas is another case for which the classical realism model is not adequate. The first shift in U.S. policy took place in the context of the Israeli Palestinian peace process. Before that, U.S. officials were openly meeting with Hamas members, even though the group used violent tactics against Israel, a key U.S. ally in the region. After Oslo, American policy became increasingly hostile toward the group. From the 1990s until the present, Hamas has increased its militant capabilities; for example, it has acquired rockets capable of penetrating Israeli borders. Like Hezbollah, this increased capability could explain the more assertive U.S. policy. But the security model can't explain the shift to a group oriented policy, which, as with Hezbollah, affected the U.S. approach to Hamas. Nor can it explain the abrupt increase in hostility toward the group after 9/11, especially since Hamas had been participating in the second Intifada/Al Aqsa Intifada for at least a year prior to the September 11 attack. A strictly classical realist model would have anticipated an aggressive response from the

U.S. when Hamas' capability changed, not in reaction to an attack by Al Qaeda, a group with which Hamas was not affiliated. Instead, according to the logic of the security model, the U.S. should have acted assertively toward Saudi Arabia, given that the majority of the 9/11 attackers were Saudi. The policies that followed 9/11 further reveal how non-state actors are problematic for this model, which has traditionally been applied to states. Calculating the dangers posed by NGOs is more difficult and the threat is comparatively more amorphous than from countries like China or North Korea.

Additionally, the legislative approach to Hamas and Hezbollah starting in the 1990s was fairly similar, even though the groups were and continue to be quite different. Hamas is a local group with some global fundraising activities. It has never intentionally targeted U.S. citizens, although some have been caught in the cross-fire as Hamas attacked Israeli targets. Nevertheless, Hamas comparatively is much more local in its orientation. Hezbollah, by contrast, is a major global organization, perpetrating attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets in other countries. It also operates criminal enterprises around the world, including South America, which is seen by U.S. officials as too close to America's doorsteps. Given these differences, classical realism would expect more disparity between the approaches to Hamas and Hezbollah because it predicts a more assertive approach toward greater security threats. Hezbollah clearly presents more of a security threat to the U.S. than Hamas, but the policy approaches to the two groups are very similar.

Domestic Politics

A domestic politics explanation holds that public opinion drives American politics toward Islamist groups, that is, if public opinion is roused against the group, American policy

will follow suit. The case studies demonstrate that although domestic politics matter, it is felt indirectly through Congress and interest groups, and even those factors do not encompass all of the elements that shape U.S. policy. Kingdon's model situates public opinion and other domestic pressure factors within the political stream, an important component of how policymakers assess whether a policy is politically tenable. In other words, public opinion is part of the overall political climate. A domestic politics explanation for changes in the American approach to Islamist groups would privilege this political stream to explain U.S. policy. However, the evidence suggests that public sentiment is insufficient to explain overall policy changes. Policymakers try to gain a sense of the national mood by consulting the media and conducting polls, but as one former State Department reflected, "I wouldn't say there was a great vehicle to channel public opinion."

When it comes to the violent groups, Hamas and Hezbollah, public sentiment via Congress and interest groups has a greater influence, specifically because they are most strongly associated in the public's mind with a threat to Israel, a major U.S. ally in the region. The same former official went on to say, "My general sense was that anything that has the potential to energize the Israel lobby in the political sphere, people are going to be shy about making bold statements and even engaging on policy that has the potential to be risky politically. The broader groups in Indonesia, Jordan, and Turkey, for example, are only tangentially related to where you're going to get pressure, but Hamas and Hezbollah are directly related to it, so those two groups can't be isolated from the politics of decision making in that conflict."⁸⁶⁰ The most concrete channels for public opinion when it comes to Islamist groups are Congress and issue specific interest groups. A former U.S. official explained, "Public opinion, I think probably

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid.

matters less than the kinds of things you're going to get from an aggressive lobbyist or congressmen or women who feel really strongly about protecting Israel from threats. Those are the kinds of voices you would hear first when taking measure of general public opinion.”⁸⁶¹

Additionally, there are important limitations on the influence of the public mood. In foreign affairs public opinion is often latent, but even when it is activated, the administration sometimes chooses to ignore it or alternatively attempts to shape it. There was a great deal of public controversy over the diplomatic openings toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood following the Arab Spring, but the administration still opted to engage and top officials like Secretary of State Clinton proceeded to make public statements in support of engagement. As one Congressional staffer argued, “I think public opinion moves in both directions. On nascent emerging issues, I think policymakers can move public opinion.”⁸⁶² Additionally, in the case of the Jordanian branch, the policy is determined dialectically between the NEA, the Secretary of State, embassy officials and the NSC, so there are too many institutional factors for public opinion to be the single driving force.

Congress, as a mouthpiece for public opinion, has limited power to dictate policy toward Islamist groups. It can draw attention to the issue through hearings, and it can pass legislation related to the groups such as prohibitions against financial support. But even if legislation is passed, it contains waivers to prevent restrictions on executive power. As one former Congressional staffer explained, “Generally speaking all the restrictions on Islamist groups or terrorist groups almost always have waivers at the end, something to allow the Secretary of State or the President to ignore the restriction. That was the part of the whole thing that was unsavory-

⁸⁶¹ Ibid.

⁸⁶² Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #720.

there would be bloodcurdling language about this group and then it [the legislation] would say that the President for national security reasons could waive it. That's been true for almost everything we do, for example with Iran sanctions, Secretary Clinton can waive them."⁸⁶³

All of this is not to discount the importance of domestic pressure factors, but rather to demonstrate that they are a necessary but not sufficient condition for explaining U.S. policy toward Islamist groups.

Nature of the Group

This perspective would argue that American policy is solely a function of specific characteristics of the group, such as whether the group is internally democratic or if it operates legally within its home country. Intuitively this is one of the most compelling theoretical explanations; however it too fails to adequately explain U.S. policy toward Islamist groups. Violence is the most salient characteristic, but even that is not a uniformly dominant variable that dictates U.S. policy. As I explained while discussing the security/classical realism model, diplomats engaged the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during the period in which it was most violent, but when it was nonviolent and semi-tolerated by the Egyptian regime, contacts were highly sensitive. In terms of groups that currently use violence, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, the fact that they use violent tactics is important, but doesn't explain why U.S. policy has varied. Hamas has changed, building more aggressive capabilities, but at key junctures of changing U.S. policy, the group was not experiencing significant levels of change in military capability. In terms of Hezbollah, policy became more hostile, even as the group remained essentially the same.

⁸⁶³ Former Congressional Staffer, Confidential Interview #196.

The target of the groups' violent tactics is also an insufficient explanation. One may argue that both Hamas and Hezbollah engage in violence against Israel, one of the United States' most important allies in the region, which would explain U.S. policy fluctuations. But if American policy were solely about the groups attacking Israel, then variation in American policy should correspond exclusively with the waves of attacks the groups perpetrated at various points in time, such as the first Intifada. However, American policy shifts at points that are not always associated with violence against Israel; for example U.S. policy toward Hezbollah became more aggressive immediately after 9/11. Moreover, this argument cannot be applied to the Muslim Brotherhood cases. If taken to its logical conclusion, this perspective would predict that the U.S. should have been hostile toward the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1940s and 1950s because it attacked one of the U.S.'s most important allies, Great Britain. As I have demonstrated, American policy toward the Egyptian branch entailed open and friendly contacts with the group during this period.

It is more useful to see the groups' use of violent tactics as features of Kingdon's problem stream. When the groups use violence to the extent that it draws American policymakers' attention, this contributes to officials defining the group as a problem, requiring a solution. But if there is no political will behind this assessment or no available solutions ready to be applied in the policy stream, American policy would not change. The problem stream is an important, but not sufficient element of the agenda setting process.

One might argue that the group's legality is the most central characteristic, but that isn't relevant in the two Muslim Brotherhood cases. With respect to the Egyptian group, the U.S. chose to engage with it during periods in which the group was outlawed and branches

systematically disbanded by the Egyptian government. U.S. diplomats were also sometimes willing to risk the ire of President Hosni Mubarak, one of America's key allies in the region, in order to maintain contacts with the group. Furthermore, the Jordanian branch demonstrates that legality is not the most critical variable, as the group has remained legal and tolerated by the Jordanian monarchy since its inception, while sensitivities over engaging with the group have varied over time.

Group ideology might also inform how American policy is shaped, but this characteristic is relatively stable across all of the groups. Hezbollah's stated ideology has changed somewhat between the first and second open letters, but the elements of the group's ideological commitments that the U.S. would find objectionable have not changed. All of the groups speak out against American policy in the region and sometimes boycott the U.S. Additionally, each group's acceptance of democratic principles or other related humanitarian issues is not a primary factor for U.S. policy. The U.S. maintains contacts with groups and states that are undemocratic and adhere to beliefs the U.S. rejects; these characteristics do not inherently prevent the U.S. from engagement. It might be a concern, but not a determining factor shaping whether the U.S. will engage with the group or pursue a hostile, isolationist policy. One potent example of this is that Marc Grossman, U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, met with Taliban leaders in Qatar in February, 2013 in a move to establish more formal contacts with the group.

Contributions

Overall, this dissertation makes several contributions. The first is that I apply Kingdon's version of the garbage can model of agenda setting in an innovative way. Thus far no one has applied this model to U.S. policy toward Islamist groups in this manner, and rarely has it been

applied to foreign policy questions in general. The second contribution is that I review the differences in American policy toward four important Islamist groups as it has changed over time, something that has not yet been done systematically. This is particularly important because, as the case studies have shown, establishing a policy toward one group can affect policies toward other groups. The nature of the political climate is crucial, as is policy path dependence. As such, analyzing policies toward one group in isolation can lead to distortions. This study avoids this potential problem by addressing multiple cases, both violent and nonviolent. Furthermore, I present four hard cases for testing the models because they are filled with inconsistencies. Kingdon's model is the only one that can explain why policy shifts occurred, while the other theories would have anticipated a more consistent approach to these groups.

One of the larger goals of this project was to understand how the U.S. formulates policies toward non-state actors. Although this is a major foreign policy issue, thus far it has been neglected in the international relations literature. One might argue that this omission is due to the peripheral nature of non-state actors in comparison to other foreign policy concerns. However, these groups have become increasingly central political actors since the Iranian Revolution, and they have certainly not been peripheral in the post 9/11 environment. The subject is, however, multifaceted and highly contextual, demanding more of a framework theory, rather than a simple predictive model such as classical realism. The results of this inquiry suggest that developments in each of the policy streams affect how U.S. officials define and respond to problems. How sensitive is the issue? Have any focusing events drawn attention to the group? What solutions have been generated and debated in the policy stream? Do powerful people care about the issue? All of these considerations impact whether American policy toward an Islamist group will change.

This study also has relevance outside the scope of Islamist groups. It can form the basis of a broader research agenda that would address American policy toward other non-state actors. As the study of international politics evolves, non-state actors have increasingly become relevant political actors that merit serious scholarly attention. The Arab Spring Revolutions are only one example of this dynamic; autocratic regimes fell and citizens attempted to build a new political order. Pre-existing social organizations filled the void in these post-revolutionary states and were often the best poised to campaign effectively and win political office. As a result, the U.S. will continue to interact with non-state actors for the foreseeable future, both as adversaries and as allies. In this context, understanding how the U.S. shapes policy toward non-state actors has intrinsic value because it helps us understand a previously underanalyzed aspect of the policymaking process. But it also has instrumental value because this research can help policymakers become conscious of how non-state actors fit into the agenda setting process and then formulate more nuanced and effective policies in the future.

In closing, Political Islam has been on the U.S. policy radar for nearly seventy years, but to date, scholars have failed to systematically explain why American policy has varied over time. The purpose of this dissertation was to rectify this omission, examining U.S. policy toward specific groups, rather than the broad concept of Political Islam. As non-state actors become even more prominent in the international arena, it is especially important that we reach a deeper understanding, not only of how these groups operate, but also how policymakers engage with them.

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