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Rebel politics and the state: between conflict and post-conflict, resistance and co-existence

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ABSTRACT

An important factor shaping the rebel-to-political transition of armed movements in post-conflict settings pertains to the political identity these groups develop in wartime. This political identity is itself a multi-dimensional concept shaped not only by the political ideology, practices and institutions established by the rebel organisation, but also by the relationship with the state and its political institutions. Far from functioning in a vacuum or isolated, rebel groups, especially when operating as alternative providers of governance, build multi-layered networks of relations with the state, the pre-existing traditional society institutions as well as with other domestic and international political actors. The study focuses specifically on two complex armed groups, Hezbollah and Hamas, relying on primary sources as well as in-depth fieldwork on these groups' socio-political institution (In this case field work refers to both in-depth direct observation of the groups' social networks and political infrastructures as well direct interviews and meetings with key stakeholders involved in the administration of those activities. The time-frame for the field work spans between 2008 and 2013). The research tracks their multiple interactions with the state through grassroots activism, institutional politics and governance. Despite their considerable differences, at their cores, both organisations operate in a liminal space between open war and fragile post-conflict setting; between grassroots activism and institutional politics; between armed resistance and political accommodation; and between competition and cooperation with the state. As such, they represent useful starting points to begin deconstructing and problematising existing dichotomies still prevalent in studying both rebel governance and rebel-to-political transitions, including the binary state-non-state opposition. In doing so, the analysis highlights the importance of taking into account the often hybrid and multi-layered political legacies adopted by armed groups during wartime and their impact in shaping their political trajectories as well as the potential roles for these groups in post-conflict settings.

Introduction

The post-cold war international order has seen non-state actors, organisations 'not directly connected to the state but pursuing aims that vitally affect state

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