The Limits of Human Development in Weak and Religiously Fractured States

The Case of Lebanon

Martina Ponížilová

Deploying Lebanon as a case study, this work considers the concept of human development in the context of a weak and failed state to provide insights into ways of enhancing the implementation of development strategies. Lebanon serves as an example of a weak state characterised by sharp religious cleavages. Lebanon's weak statehood is examined in connection with practices to promote human development, which is very limited due to weak state institutions and the insufficient distribution of basic goods and services. As a result, the role of state institutions in implementing development policies and providing services to citizens is taken over by non-governmental organisations, religious institutions and even political parties. This study argues that providing development aid and services based on religious affiliations and political loyalties only exacerbates domestic societal tensions and deepens religious divisions. It proposes an alternative model of 'functional networking' as a strategy to fulfil human development based on support and emphasising cooperation in securing livelihoods. This model has the potential to overcome fracture lines in a society.

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Introduction

Weak, failing or failed states are, to varying degrees, incapable of fulfilling their commitments to their citizens because weak statehood has a direct influence on the provision (or the non-delivery) of public goods by the state. Due to this dysfunction – and in some cases the absence of a central government, the ineffectiveness of government institutions and the lack of financial, technical and human resources - segments of the population have limited or no access to basic social and health services. In such cases, the role of provider of services and at least some basic public goods may be assumed by foreign and/or local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donors, local religious and political organisations or civil society groups.

These actors often stumble on the problem of insufficient financial resources and other obstacles introduced by an unsupportive central government and local representatives. Many resources allotted for development in conflict-ridden areas, for aid to people in need or for improving the standard of living of people in neglected areas, are, thus, simply "lost" en route from donor to recipient. One way to avoid ineffective and corrupt state institutions, and thus compensate (at least temporarily) for their lack of basic functions like providing services to their citizens, is to supply development resources directly to NGOs, which can distribute aid and resources according to the specific needs of citizens. In so doing, these NGOs can ensure that resources are used with maximum effectiveness directly in the places where they are most needed. This study aims to explore this broad theme.

This situation applies to Lebanon, which is the focus for the second and third parts of this discussion. Taking the example of the inability of Lebanon's state institutions and government to control their territory and provide citizens with crucial services, this work identifies the benefits that a functional networking approach could have in a country characterised by severe social fractures and a history marred by civil war. When internal conflicts and on-going disputes fully exhaust public resources and weaken or almost completely disintegrate state institutions, non-state actors become the main agents for delivering development policies.

The fundamental problem with having religious organisations or political parties provide services is that these groups tend to distribute aid mainly to members of their respective religious communities and

constituencies. As a result, they do not contribute to the development of the whole society and to raising the standard of living of all citizens regardless of religious beliefs, political sympathies or ethnicity. Such an intentionally selective method of distributing aid actually helps to sustain and deepen cleavages in a society, creating a basis for further inequalities among individual groups of citizens and potentially leading to social collapse. Societies need to be motivated in some way to unite and stand together. Such an approach, based on creating functionally-focused groups of people who are in need of financial or technical aid from donors and NGOs, has the potential to build mutual trust between individual groups (e.g. Lebanese religious communities) and develop their cooperation.

The 'Functional Networking' Approach[1]

Functional networking was created for use in weak state environments, which by their nature cannot provide a stable national framework for development strategies. Therefore, this model favours small-scale, local solutions and emphasises both the day-to-day livelihood of families and individuals and the involvement of civil society and NGOs. NGOs should become the main implementers of development activities, which ideally include both the cooperation of local populations and external experts and workers with contacts to financial resources. Where local populations lack awareness of or interest in civil society participation, NGOs from third countries can be the impulse which sparks their involvement; putting pressure on individuals across various social groups to participate should be the most important role of these external actors. For this strategy to succeed, however, it is absolutely imperative that these local populations are involved as early as possible.

NGOs may, thus, enter a region with only relatively broadly defined goals based on their preliminary research. Implemented projects must, however, be local and prepared by working with local needs, initiatives and ideas. This is an essential condition if local populations are to become involved in implementing various activities, interested in sustaining results and able to take responsibility for implementing projects and to show at least a basic degree of integrity in dealing with the goods or property entrusted to them.

To enable development cooperation in practice, there is an implicit need to categorise individuals into various groups which are then addressed by some development policy. Although unfortunately unavoidable, this is a harmful practice as it gives preference to social factors over 'functional' ones. It is not appropriate to categorise individuals according to their gender, ethnicity, religion or memberships of clans or regions. This reinforcement of existing social groups is a hindrance to the development of society as a whole. Societies in weak states are often divided, and supporting these rifts promotes disintegration and social cleavage rather than integration. This can lead to the creation of an uncooperative and closed system, a situation which is not only ineffective for strengthening society and the state but potentially dangerous since it may inadvertently escalate latent conflicts.

The functional networking approach counters the demand for nation-building with a call for the building of a society based on support for associations of individuals who make their livings in a similar manner (e.g. associations of fishermen, etc.) and who define their own needs and cooperate to improve their working conditions. Support for these associations must be based on the operation and successful guarantee of the livelihoods of those involved, and not on ethnicity, religion or gender. Here donors and NGOs have a crucial role to play by supporting the formation of such groups on a local scale, setting the gradual overcoming of social barriers as a condition for resource provision and, at the same time, acting as mediators in any disputes among members. Such activities can be arduous and long-term and they often lead to dead ends. On the other hand, overcoming social differences through shared work towards a common goal can result in the building of a unified, pluralistic and non-fragmented society.

Inspired by the liberal tradition of international relations, the functional networking approach is based on the assumptions that prosperity is in the shared interests of all people and it can be achieved through long-term cooperation among the widest possible variety of stakeholders to achieve this end. This cooperation can also help to overcome stereotypes and build trust. This aspect of functional networking is absolutely vital in divided societies since it will allow for the lifting of the international community's disciplinary hand so that the society functions independently.

If successful, consensual functional networking, established and enforced using the economic emergencies of average citizens, can spill

over into other branches of social life. A society which overcomes its internal antagonisms for the sake of livelihoods and prosperity can serve as motivation for the strengthening the state. The strengthened state can then gradually take over the role which external NGOs would otherwise fill under the functional networking approach.

To a certain degree, functional networking can stand in for a deficient state authority in distributing resources, protecting safety, securing livelihoods and providing an array of services. A significant portion of this burden falls on donors, who ensure that money makes it to needed areas according to their priorities, but NGOs also play the role of the central authority on a micro level. The benefits of the model have been highlighted above, but we should also consider the desperate situation of some local citizens who, lacking education, property or forms of social networks, have the opportunity to gain at least partial independence and ensure a dignified livelihood. Furthermore, it is likely that weak states will have no objections to such activities happening in their territory as this reduces the pressure on them to provide a complete range of services and goods.

Lebanon´s Weak Statehood and Deep Social Divisions

Lebanon is known as one of the most democratic and liberal states in the Middle East. The fragile democracy – flawed as it is – that exists in the country today reflects a long tradition. If it is at all possible to speak of state unity in Lebanon, then we should at the same time mention how difficult it is for the country to maintain this situation since it is threatened on almost a daily basis by political and social conflicts among the members of its confessional communities. Some authors therefore highlight the structural weakness of Lebanese sovereignty,[2] which is caused on the one hand by a history of weak governments, and on the other by the way that regional powers (particularly Syria) have intervened in Lebanon's internal affairs and to a lesser or greater degree influenced domestic political developments. The weakness or ineffectiveness of state institutions results, then, from the inclination of past government representatives to minimise state interventions in the workings of the economy (at times under pressure from business elites) and society.[3] Hilal Khashan, a professor at the American University of Beirut, locates the causes of weak state authority in the current political system set up by party leaders at the time when an independ-

ent Lebanon was being formed in 1943. This was a system that aimed to keep the central government weak enough to allow individual religious communities to act independently.[4] Such a partisan political system ensured that state power would be maintained by individual religious sects.

For many decades, religious diversity has been a distinct characteristic of Lebanese society,[5] and roughly 18 recognised religious denominations presently coexist in Lebanon. This diversity was reflected in the division of political power and state functions among the most influential religious communities during the creation of the sovereign state.[6] In spite of Lebanon's relative political stability and speedy economic development from the time of independence until the 1970s,[7] the fragile, carefully maintained confessional system collapsed under large waves of Palestinian immigrants and pressures from abroad, notably, Israel, Syria and Western (etc) along with other factors.

The Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) seriously affected the country's development and population in a number of ways. Although independent Lebanon was a relatively rich state thanks to its developed financial and business sector, the Lebanese economy took a serious blow during the civil strife. There were significant declines in the economy, and debt grew on the back of the steadily climbing costs of the war and the funds needed to repair devastated infrastructure, public buildings and residential areas. During the 1990s, the country became more and more dependent on foreign aid.[8] It was average citizens, naturally, who suffered the most, losing their loved ones, homes and educational and work opportunities as their quality of life plummeted. Some areas and segments of the population were, however, afflicted more than others, aggravating the hostility among various communities. The Taif Accord, which formally ended this civil conflict, actually reinforced these religious quarrels.[9] Instead of focusing on the creation of a secular civil society and avoiding the further collapse of the confessional system, the Accord dealt mainly with the division of power among various sects.[10] Although the division of political roles according to religious affiliations was done to avoid disputes over power among these communities' representatives, the effect was to make the state more vulnerable. Any change in the balance of power between individual communities or feelings of injustice and oppression directed from one group to another could lead to conflicts – the civil war was just one, albeit the most convincing, of any number of examples.[11]

Religious divisions in Lebanese society not only make cohabitation more difficult and lie behind many past disputes and conflicts, but also represent a serious barrier to human development. The long and bloody civil war left scars not just in the Beirut, the country's capital, but in other cities and especially in the memories of those who survived; memories which recall the deeply ingrained animosities and mistrust of an era when various parts of the capital and subsequently the whole country were ruled by sectarian militias that created semi-autonomous areas, each possessing its own economic, political and social systems.[12] This situation led to the reinforcement of mutual suspicions and even greater religious segregation.

The low level of political mobilisation among the Lebanese population and practical non-existence of civil society have also proved extremely problematic.[13] Today's civil society groups and NGOs do not seem to interact with the political system and, thus, the impact of these organisations on political processes is marginal at best.[14] In contrast with the situation in Western countries, these organisations do not exert pressure on the government, political parties or other political actors in an effort to reflect citizens' interests and are therefore completely cut off from political decision-making. As such, they prove highly ineffective.

State authority is also weakened by another significant factor, strong clientelism, which is allowed and strongly supported by the sectarian political system. The basis of this clientelistic behaviour is loyalty to one specific political leader known as *za'im* in Arabic, who provides his followers with certain services in exchange for their support in elections. The *za'im* is the leader of the local community (sometimes the same as the religious community) and often possesses his own armed group which protects his interests.[15] Corruption and an overall lack of transparency are serious problems in Lebanese politics, and they extend to the administration of funds from development aid.[16]

In addition, politicians prioritise the interests of their own religious communities over those of the entire country, leading ultimately to the weakening of state institutions and state loyalty. Brogan reiterates that it was mainly the provisions of Lebanon's founding National Pact which – by strengthening the autonomy of religious communities at the expense of state authority – shaped prevailing loyalties to specific religious communities over the state as a whole.[17] Although average citizens gladly assert that they are not Arabs but Lebanese, identifica-

tion with the Lebanese state itself is relatively weak. Khashan confirms that citizens of Lebanon are not defined by their affiliation to the state but by the strength of their identification with their own sect.[18]

Paradoxically, this sectarian division of society can also diminish state authority externally because of the influence which foreign powers and/or neighbouring states have on individual communities. Iran, for example, draws on heavy financial and military support and the ideology of the Iranian revolution to exert influence on Hezbollah's policies and thus indirectly on the Shiite community. It was, however, Syria which for the longest time attempted to influence domestic political processes including the selection of a president with allied opinions. Syrian troops were stationed in Lebanon for three decades until they were forced to withdraw in 2005 when the assassination of ex-PM Rafiq Hariri gave momentum to the so-called Cedar Revolution.

The influence of foreign governments on domestic politics is also connected with the martial power (or rather powerlessness) of Lebanon, which has very limited military capacities. During the civil war and afterwards, the Lebanese army was seen as a very weak and poorly organised institution incapable of protecting Lebanon's territory or its population.[19] Another blow to state authority came from the presence of militias within its borders. Weak statehood is not a consequence of the activities of Hezbollah's militant offshoots; it is rather its cause. However, the fact that this movement controls certain areas of Lebanon and its armed members have been active in this territory for some time, serves further to undermine state. The Hezbollah resistance is currently the only armed, non-state group in the country, as well as the sole group capable of defending Lebanese territory against an external attack – it actually has more modern arms technology and better training than the official Lebanese army[20] and demonstrated its military capabilities in the Summer War against Israel (2006).

In contrast to the armed, non-state actors which central governments struggle against in other countries, Hezbollah has shown no anti-state tendencies; it is not striving to overthrow the government *by force* or attempting to declare an independent state or autonomous area in the territories where it operates (though it does in reality rule those areas).[21] Although the disarming of all sectarian militias was called for under the Taif Accord, Hezbollah was allowed to keep its weapons due to its armed resistance against Israel,[22] an arrangement approved

by all former governments. This raises questions about whether Hezbollah's militias actually disrupt the sovereignty of Lebanon – after all, the central government has acknowledged both Hezbollah's existence and its anti-Israeli strategy, and the areas the group dominates seem to be outside the control of the national government and official army.

Given that Hezbollah has repeatedly deployed its militants to achieve its own (non-state) goals, the argument that its military activities do disrupt state sovereignty since they happen without the consent or directions of the government is valid. The Lebanese state has actually (if not always willingly) accepted Hezbollah's activities *ex post facto* since it was not capable of stunting the movement's growth from the outset. The government was left with basically no choice but to come to terms with Hezbollah so long as its activities stayed limited to the fight against Israel and defending Lebanon against Israeli attacks. If government decisions limit Hezbollah's political power and threaten its operations, the movement will not hesitate to use armed force to apply pressure and enforce or defend Hezbollah's interests.[23] That the Lebanese army has no control over Hezbollah's armed forces and the organisation unlawfully intervenes in the democratic process are obvious signs of the disruption of state sovereignty.[24]

One point should be made clear. Both Hezbollah's armament and the social services that it provides are manifestations of Lebanon's weakness. If Lebanon were a strong state with effective civil and military institutions, it could crack down on the unwarranted operations of militant groups within its territory. But the state's political authority, like the military capabilities of former governments, has been insufficient, and it has proven helpless to remedy the situation. We can complete the overall picture of Lebanon's weak statehood by considering the ineffectiveness of its institutions when it comes to ensuring basic services and distributing goods to the population.

Human Development in an Institutionally Weak Lebanon

The Lebanese government has experienced problems not only in ensuring public safety, but in distributing public goods. Since the civil war ended in 1990, Lebanon has struggled to meet its population's basic needs: of these, security and power supply issues are foremost and the cost of living falls next in line. The country's development plan has

been one of the most important tools called on by several of its governments to stabilise domestic life. The slogan 'balanced development,' which aims to reduce regional inequalities, has been invoked by many politicians going as far back as the 1950s.[25] Despite the painstaking (and unfortunately often only rhetorical) efforts of Lebanese politicians to make changes in this area, the practical impact has been felt by only some of the population; by the first half of the 1970s, the overall standard of living had risen, but differences in the development of individual regions had not lessened, and in some cases, they had widened.

Since 1990 when the new Lebanese constitution took effect, both the central government and local authorities have been faced with a lack of adequate human and financial resources and technical equipment to ensure essential services to the population. Among the causes of this is the failure of the central government to intervene in the ineffective operations of local authorities and so pressure them to improve the living standards of their population.[26] In 1992, the Lebanese government, led by Rafiq Hariri (1992-1998, 2000-2004), attempted to launch widespread rebuilding of the war-torn country. The government first focused on reconstructing the capital, and Beirut began to see significant progress in the revival of its devastated centre. Even so, this development neglected both the southern suburbs inhabited by the majority Shiite population and the countryside, which had been crippled by the war just as seriously as the capital.

In addition to the building of better infrastructure, the post-war reconstruction delivered major investments in the healthcare and education systems. Initially, the country's relatively high economic growth allowed for similar development programmes, but later growing state debt[27] and a simultaneously weakening economy[28] forced the government to draw its resources mainly from western governments and donors from the Arab world.[29] Lebanon became largely dependent on foreign aid. According to some estimates (exact numbers cannot be obtained due to the non-transparent appropriation of funds), foreign aid made up as much as 25% to 35% of the state budget.[30] The government's efforts to improve the economic situation and fulfil development goals were blocked not just by economic problems and political disputes, but by a high level of corruption, ineffective state administration and intermittent armed conflicts such as the one between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006. Combined with the small-scale battles

that raged between the Lebanese army and the Fatah al-Islam group in the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp a year later, these conflicts caused great damage to infrastructure and put mounting pressure on the country's economy.

At present, the situation is only slightly better, and improvements have only reached certain areas. High government spending is not reflected in reduced poverty across the population,[31] and nor has it improved the quality of services in public education institutions or the healthcare system.[32] Moreover, the lack of good quality public services is hitting rural areas and the peripheral regions of cities hard - some of these regions lack sufficient water supplies and proper sewage systems, while electricity blackouts take place regularly in the capital. The state has also failed to coordinate the work plans of state institutions and offices, and it has not prevented their mandates and authorities from overlapping. This has had a dampening effect on not just the effective distribution of public goods but the fulfilment of development programmes. Despite the extensive funds provided to Lebanon through foreign resources, the state has not been able to ensure timely and effective completion of the projects financed by these foreign donors.[33] Naturally, postponing the deadlines of individual projects has also inflated their cost substantially.

On top of these obstacles, which make the provision of good quality public goods impossible and any development slow, it is necessary to highlight the corruption and nepotism made possible by minimal or non-existent checks on state institution operations and public resource distribution. One commentary puts it, '(c)hecks and balances are replaced with reciprocal political consent and politicians tolerating each other's misdeeds.'[34]

The geographical distribution of public goods in Lebanon does not match the economic needs of individual regions,[35] and it has not led to a balanced decrease in poverty, on the contrary. Salti and Chaaban observe that 'public funds have been channelled along a vector remarkably consistent with political concern, for sectarian balance.'[36] The influence of political decisions on the allocation of development aid resources is one reason for vast discrepancies in the progress of individual regions; this is clear, for example, in the quality of education and health services. Closely connected with the country's often mentioned development problem are the different living standards

of individual religious communities. These interregional differences are significant and underscore the markedly unequal access of citizens to the social welfare system. In more developed areas such as Mount Lebanon (home to a Christian majority), the number of absolutely indigent citizens is as much as ten times lower than in the long-neglected southern (Shiite majority) and northern (Sunni majority) regions of Lebanon.[37] For example, Shiites living mainly in the impoverished southern suburbs of Beirut (as opposed to the modern and wealthy central business district), southern Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley have largely been ignored as a group by the state.[38]

The lower living standards, tougher economic situation and lesser political power of the Shiite community in comparison with Lebanese Sunnis and Christians, all date back to the foundation of an independent Lebanon. Those who dominated the economic and business sector were more often affiliated with the Sunni and Christian communities while the Shiites, who at the time mostly inhabited rural agricultural areas, formed an economically weaker group. Their lower standard of living was also the outcome of inferior access to education and importantly a lack of clientele ties.[39] This was all determined by the division of state political power at a time when Shiites lacked proper political representation in political decision-making. The fact that the Shiites came out of the civil war as the most demographically and militarily unified of all the religious communities helped to strengthen their political power – even so, the Taif Accord and its provisions on changes in the political system failed to reflect the growth of the Shiite population in recent decades.

Another factor that clearly worsened the social and economic situation of the Shiite community – already facing significant poverty after the civil war – was the position in which they found themselves on the front lines during conflicts with Israel. The Shiite community was forced to bear the greatest suffering and damage while remaining more or less neglected by the government. As a consequence of the war and various other conflicts, Shiites moved from rural areas of Beka'a and south Lebanon into cities, particularly Beirut. This steep increase in Shiite populations in the southern suburbs of the capital actually led to even lower standards of living for this community.[40] Khashan points out that while Shiites should not be seen as a community lacking political representation since they are properly represented in the country's bureaucratic and political system[41] (and Hezbollah remains the only

armed group in the country), their socio-economic status is still only improving very slowly.[42]

Vast differences in living standards across sects, much like the different degrees of their political representation and their unequal access to resources, have been the cause of many past inter-community disputes. If the potential causes of these schisms are to be eliminated in the future, then improving living and work conditions for the most disadvantaged groups of the population will be crucial - and a condition for their non-violent cohabitation.

The lack of government efforts to improve conditions for Shiite citizens and its favouring of Beirut's development at the expense of southern Lebanon caused Hezbollah to emerge as a significant distributor of basic services to a mostly Shiite population. Hezbollah quickly proved its competence in this role, which theoretically should have belonged to the state; the movement was able to provide a wide range of social services which citizens otherwise had no access to due to the incapability of state institutions. Moreover, Hezbollah carried out this work much more effectively than government authorities, and unlike the latter, it was not plagued by a corrupt past. In regions inhabited by Shiites (initially Baalbek and Nabatieh and later Beirut's southern suburbs), Hezbollah filled the vacuum that appeared in the absence of government authority, and the movement began to provide a network of health and welfare services that actually became more extensive than the state welfare system in other parts of Lebanon.[43] In addition to providing education in their own schools and healthcare in a number of their own hospitals,[44] clinics and health centres, Hezbollah began to take care of the post-conflict reconstruction of villages and suburbs and the rebuilding of infrastructure as well as affordable living and waste disposal, and it provided aid to the families of soldiers killed in battle. In doing so, Hezbollah elements were easily able to plug the gap in the distribution of basic public goods and services (including security) that was created due to the impotence or practical absence of state institutions and military forces.[45] Hezbollah remain one of the most effective and important providers of social services in the country. It is this very marked success of Hezbollah which underscores the incapacity of the Lebanese government and its state institutions.[46]

Next to Hezbollah, the most significant political organisation (in terms of size and financial resources)[47] which also provides extensive social programmes is the Sunni Future Movement, which reigns over

many Sunni charity institutions. Rafiq Hariri, who once headed this organisation (it is now led by his son Saad Hariri), created the largest representative body of the Lebanese Sunni community from the Future Movement.[48] Like Hezbollah, Hariri's foundation (a charitable wing of the Future Movement) was largely a reaction to the insufficient state welfare system of the period.[49] The foundation built and now runs a number of schools, including one university, in Sidon and Beirut. It has already provided thousands of students – including non-Sunnis – with generous scholarships over two decades (1978-2000). In addition to schools, this movement has constructed clinics and runs the public hospital Rafiq Hariri Government Hospital. In brief, its emergence makes clear that minimal state interventions into the social welfare system create enough space for many non-state actors to occupy the void caused by the absence of state control.

The neglect of the distribution of public goods and services by the central government is not only a social issue, but a political one as well. Making the social welfare system more effective for the country's population has actually become a strategy for political parties and other organisations set up by these parties.[50] In this way, they attempt to safeguard the support of their followers and voters and also gain new supporters.[51] Khashan notes that 'Hezbollah´s ability to win the hearts and minds of the Shia community was based on providing goods and services that elsewhere in other countries belong to the state.'[52]

The use of social programmes for political gain is not limited to Hezbollah – many Lebanese political parties use this tactic to gain the support of members of their 'own' communities and, during voting periods, to ensure votes from their constituencies. It must also be mentioned that the sectarian political system – and the distribution of services and public goods which it influences – makes these practices even easier. Cammett and Issar claim that in pluralistic societies such as Lebanon, 'social welfare can be a terrain of political contestation, particularly when states fail to provide basic public goods and social services.'[53] This means that raising the level of social well-being in this environment cannot be separated from sectarian politics.

It is also important in this case to emphasise the interconnection between the nature of the political system and the provision of services or distribution of resources. Because the political system is sectarian, all communication and transactions must also take place on a confes-

sional basis, i.e. in terms of relations between state and community representatives on the one hand, and community representatives and community members on the other. There is, thus, no direct relationship between the population and the state (or government). '[W]hen the government interferes on behalf of the people, it happens through sectarian intermediaries,' as one commentator notes.[54] The state's role lies mainly in financing the welfare system (primarily in the areas of education and healthcare),[55] but the task of actually *fulfilling* the basic needs of the population shifts to the representatives of individual religious communities, i.e. sectarian-oriented political organisations. These organisations gain resources from the state and then distribute them throughout their own communities, thus finally gaining the support of the citizenry although the funds that they use come (by an overwhelming majority) from the state treasury. This serves to strengthen loyalties to the individual religious communities and their representatives (e.g. Hezbollah for the Shiite community, the Future Movement for the Sunni community, etc.) rather than the state even though state loyalty is sorely needed in a fractured society like Lebanon. This also explains why religious communities are in fact the most important institutions in the state.

As has been seen, it is common in societies divided along religious lines for the members of a given religious community to be favoured in the provision of welfare services. In the case of Lebanon, access to Hezbollah's extensive social welfare programmes and various services goes first and foremost to the Shiite community (and to a lesser degree to Christians and Sunnis living in Shiite communities) and not to the members of Lebanese society as a whole. Although Hezbollah insists on claiming that it provides its services to all Lebanese citizens in need, Shiites – who form the vast majority of Hezbollah's voting base – are invariably the target population group to which the group delivers its services.[56] One main exception in the area of development and post-conflict aid came with the war with Israel, which allowed Hezbollah 'to polish a populist pan-Lebanese image.'[57] In light of the government's ineffectiveness, the movement began to provide needed reconstruction services indiscriminately to all afflicted groups in the population.

Saab notes that charity work and service are an important and integral part of Hezbollah's strategy as it attempts to establish an Islamic

state in Lebanon.[58] Hezbollah cannot achieve this goal, however, without the support of the majority of the country's citizens and it is therefore expanding the 'target group' for its development and welfare programmes and making efforts to appear to be the protector of the entire country rather than just one religious group. According to Flanigan and Abdel-Samad, employees of Hezbollah's non-profit organizations[59] do not look on their work as merely volunteer or humanitarian activity, but see it as an act of resistance (against Israel) or a jihad-related act.[60] Some Sunnis and Christians have a problem with Hezbollah's welfare programmes for religious reasons – although they need aid, they do not want to incur religious obligations to Hezbollah and thus decide to reject aid from NGOs which are affiliated with Hezbollah. However, not every individual has a choice – in some areas or communities these organisations are the only ones which actually offer such aid and social services.[61]

In contrast with Hezbollah's social programmes, the Future Movement and its charity affiliate, the Hariri Foundation, provide welfare services to both Sunnis and non-Sunnis.[62] Aside from these two institutions, the vast majority (up to 80%-90% according to estimates) of NGOs in Lebanon are religious[63] while only a few are secular.[64] This is again due to the sectarian political system (and, thus, the sectarian social division), which influences the structure of civil society – NGOs wishing to heighten their effectiveness must adapt to the way in which the system functions and therefore be sectarian-based.[65] Religious NGOs are then 'key platforms of social and political expression.'[66] The gaps where the state fails to function are filled by representatives of various communities through political-religious organisations and movements.

This all raises the question of why this vacuum – created by the absence of state institutions – has not been filled by independent, secular and non-political NGOs instead of being taken over by political actors and the organisations they established. Khashan points out that although there are actually a relatively large number (i.e. a few thousand) of NGOs and interest groups in Lebanon, in reality many of them do not function as they should.[67] This stems from various factors including the weak political mobilisation of the population, the highly ineffective nature or practical absence of civil society and insufficient

funding for NGOs, which lack contact with the government and receive no state funding in contrast with the representatives of religious communities.

Functional Networking or 'Hezbollah Style'?

How can human development be assured in a country where the state institutions are largely incapable of providing their citizens with basic services and crucial public goods? The state function of maintaining a social welfare system has been taken over in Lebanon by political parties (and their affiliated organisations and charities) representing individual religious groups. At first glance, it may seem logical for a state with a sectarian political system and strong loyalties to the religious community that social services are taken care of by representatives of individual sects. This system fails, however, to provide access to resources and services to all groups of the population – or all regions of the country – equally. Three factors play a determining role here: first, which religious community citizens belong to, second, whether or not they are supporters of a specific political movement,[68] and whether any NGOs actually function in the areas where they live. In the end, all of these factors affect whether citizens are provided with quality (or any) services. It is vital for human development that all citizens have equal access to all services and aid.

Another critical disadvantage for Lebanon stems from the fact that this system deepens the cleavages across a society which should instead be looking for paths and policies that would help strengthen trust among sect members and foster loyalties to the state rather than to individual religious communities. In so doing, Lebanon could avoid future eruptions of the inter-religious disputes which are today so common in the country.

How can these prevailing practices be ended when the most effective, subsidised and expansive development organisations in the country are political parties (or the NGOs connected to them)? For some of the population, aid from Hezbollah, the Hariri Foundation and similar organisations has surely been beneficial or even fundamental to survival. The positive effect of these actors' development activities to improve the living conditions of conflict-stricken or other disadvantaged

groups cannot be denied. It is true, however, that large segments of the population are denied access to this support. Further, the work of organisations based on political-religious affiliation only adds to hostilities across the entire community; this causes harm to both society and the state in the long run.

Additionally, the methods by which resources and services are provided at present, namely through political organisations which force citizens to perform reciprocal services (e.g. compulsory political activism, voting for a given party in elections, support for specific representatives from a given party, etc.) prevent those who refuse to submit to these conditions from taking up these services and resources. Palmer Harik confirms this fact when she reports: 'People all over would love to have the state provide [for] them because they don't want to be beholden politically, but the state doesn't do it.' For such people, cooperation with secular local or foreign NGOs is an appropriate alternative as these organisations do not demand an exclusive commitment and are apolitical. To provide help, they require that people merely assert some of their own initiative and be willing to cooperate and take responsibility. They do not demand votes or other forms of political or ideological support.

The form of aid which these NGOs provide, i.e. the whole system of functional networking, would therefore allow and support people to be active, and not passive, recipients of aid – a substantial problem for people in Lebanon, according to Khashan.[69] To a large degree, it would encourage them to actively participate in improving their living conditions. The obstacles which these people meet on the path to ensuring a livelihood and employment can be cleared by these NGOs. This system would encourage people to seize the initiative and become active and capable of taking care of themselves in a situation where external aid is initially necessary to overcome certain challenges – challenges which are to a large degree the "product" of weak statehood and non-functional state institutions.

People who are denied access to resources and services for political or religious reasons find themselves in hopeless life situations and need external (financial or technical) aid in order to ensure their own livelihood. For this very reason, such people will be more willing to cooperate with foreign NGOs and act according to their rules, i.e. paying only the "price" of establishing cooperation with their fellow citizens

who are also struggling with similar problems. Through such a process, some barriers between people from different religious communities may gradually be broken down; a process not currently being furthered due to the distribution of aid on a political-religious basis. The present system in which the distribution of resources is controlled by organisations with a political-religious base, is not only deepening the fissures in society, but compounding differences in the development of individuals, communities and whole regions. Functionally-based organisations do not strengthen these hostilities in a society. On the contrary, they have the potential to slowly build trust among members of the population across varying faiths and to establish non-state and civil society associations, initiatives and organisations based on cooperation. It will then be possible to build stronger, more stable and more effective state institutions with the help of such organisations. This could also serve to weaken loyalties to communities and strengthen a national identity that could unite the citizens of Lebanon: this Lebanese identity still needs to be defined.

While Khashan is sceptical about the opportunities for cooperation among citizens across various denominations, he notes that professional groups (e.g. associations of physicists and teachers and various labour unions) that are actually nation-wide rather than sectarian, do exist in Lebanon.[70] Though there are not many of these organisations in light of the reign of religious-political movements, some do exist and operate, giving rise to at least some hope and setting an example for other secularly-, functionally- or professionally-based organisations. Secular (local or foreign) NGOs supervising the distribution of aid from foreign donors can ensure that no individual religious community or region will be given preference over others and that aid will be provided according to needs and not according to political support or religious affiliation. In doing so, a more balanced process of development can be brought to regions and their populations. This will also give individual communities the chance to achieve a more equal standard of living. Decreasing the socio-economic differences in Lebanese society will at once ease tensions in the community and help to avoid sectarian conflicts.

In addition, the funding of members of the population will not be used as a means of gaining political power as is the case at present among many of Lebanon's political parties. Aid and services will cease

to be tools for currying people's favour and increasing political authority, and support and loyalty will wane for those who act in this way. Such a system (ideally combined with a unifying idea) has the potential to decrease religious rifts across a society and overcome the fragile sectarian political system so as to create a space for strengthening state unity – an issue which remains complex and problematic.

In today's Lebanon, sectarianism is still deeply ingrained not only in politics, but in society as a whole. The slightest fluctuations in power relations between communities can therefore reignite sectarian disputes. Prospects for the future are not the brightest, and we cannot expect change to come from the top down, i.e. from the government and state institutions. On the contrary, it should come from the bottom up, from the society itself. In the last few years, civil society groups, often founded by young people, have taken shape in an effort to create a more secular and democratic political system.[71] Above all, this requires a fundamental change in the sectarian political system (together with the political culture still defined by sectarianism) along with the creation of a stronger feeling of citizenship among the people and the revival of civil society.[72] Although some of these groups were not successful and their activities quickly came to an end or had little influence on creating more fundamental change in society,[73] others, for example, those focusing on humanitarian and development aid, have fostered growing unity and cooperation among the Lebanese people.[74] The main initiatives and activities that work towards society-wide change have, thus, come from the younger generation, which is the greatest hope for the future. In contrast to the older generation, young people have not been traumatised by civil war and are more prepared for dialogue, cooperation and changes towards a more democratic and liberal state. We can also expect the number and effectiveness of NGOs striving to transform the political system to grow in the future.

Neither the supposed unwillingness of citizens to cooperate nor an ineffective civil society will be the most difficult obstacle to overcome—this is reserved for the politicians. If governments are incapable of offering services and public goods, they will leave this task to political and non-governmental organisations. Jawad notes that this is the case in Lebanon, whose government actively encourages local NGOs to provide for social services.[75] Therefore, it is not the central government, but local authorities and political parties which may create barriers for the operation of foreign or local, secular NGOs. Hezbollah, for example,

has great political power not only at a state level, but also at a local level as it controls a large number of districts in south Lebanon, in the southern suburbs of Beirut and in the Bekaa Valley. As Flanigan and Abdel-Samadpoint out, based on this multi-level political power and strong influence in various regions, Hezbollah is able to interfere with the work of NGOs, which need its consent to function in a given area or community.[76] This may obstruct the provision of development aid from foreign NGOs, just as international donors may not always be able to overlook an organisation such as Hezbollah.

Conclusion

Given that the state is the entity responsible for ensuring basic public goods and welfare services to citizens, and it should guarantee them equal access to resources and opportunities, Lebanon has clearly failed in both these respects. Its failure to meet these obligations partly stems from the fact that it has allowed political parties to replace its basic role as the main representative of communities. It has also permitted these political parties to gain citizens' trust and integrate themselves into society. In order to prevent these parties from taking further control over the welfare system and to avoid the subsequent weakening of the state, there needs to be a mutually enriching relationship between human development and strong state institutions.

MARTINA PONÍŽILOVÁ is affiliated to the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Czech Republic and may be reached at: *mponizil@kap.zcu.cz*

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Notes

1 The discussion in this section is adapted from Magda Leichtová, Linda Piknerová and Martina Ponížilová, 'Limits of Development in Weak and

Failed States,' unpublished manuscript.

2 Leonhardt van Efferink (2010), 'How Hezbollah Affects Lebanon's Sovereignty,' PSA Graduate Network Conference 2010, available at:<http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2010/1608_1461.pdf> (accessed June 20, 2012), p. 1.
3 Ibid, pp. 1, 5.

4 Hilal Khashan, interview, July 16, 2012, American University of Beirut, Lebanon.
5 Lebanon is, however, at the same time very ethnically homogenous as Arabs make up the majority of its population.
6 According to the National Pact of 1943, the president of the country should be a Christian Maronite, the head of government a Sunni Muslim, and the head of parliament (Speaker of the House) a Muslim Shiite, and Christians and Muslims should be represented in parliament according to a ratio of 6:5. The Taif Accord (1989) modified this to a 1:1 ratio.
7 A significant exception was the conflict between Maronites and Muslims in 1958, which destabilised the country in this era.
8 For more information, see Ghassan Dibeh (2007), 'Foreign Aid and Economic Development in Postwar Lebanon,' Research Paper No. 2007/37, United Nations University – World Institute for Development Economic Research.
9 Nisreen Salti and Jad Chaaban (2010), 'The Role of Sectarianism in the Allocation of Public Expenditure in Postwar Lebanon,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42: 4, p. 652.
10 In the past, various Lebanese politicians have voiced their support for the establishment of a secular form of democracy in the country. In the spring of 2011, Lebanese protests within the Arab Spring showed the population's desire for changes to the sectarian system, but no reforms have yet taken place.
11 Lebanon's political scene and society have been divided over countless domestic problems and foreign policy issues such as the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005, the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel in the summer of 2006 and most recently the assassination of Wissam Hassan, Head of the Intelligence Bureau of the Internal Security Forces, in October 2012.
12 A. Nizar Hamzeh, (2001), 'Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37: 3, p. 174.
13 Khashan (2012).
14 For NGOs connected with political parties that represent a particular religious community, the situation is slightly different. See the discussion in the following section of the text.
15 Hamzeh (2001), pp. 170–174; Thomas Collelo et al (1987), *Lebanon. A Country Study*, Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress.
16 Committee on Foreign Relations – United States Senate (2010), *Following the Money in Yemen and Lebanon: Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Security Assistance and International Funancial Institution Lending*, 111th Congress, 1st Session, U.S. GPO: Washington, available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CPRT-111SPRT54245/pdf/CPRT-111SPRT54245.pdf>, (accessed

20 June, 2012).

17 Cited in van Efferink (2010), p. 5.

18 Khashan (2012).

19 van Efferink (2010), p. 8.

20 Bilal Y. Saab (2008), 'Rethinking Hezbollah´s Disarmament,' *Middle East Policy*, 15: 3, p. 99, 101.

21 The regions under Hezbollah's control are therefore not a 'state within a state' according to Hafez, cited in van Efferink (2010), p. 11.

22 Even some Palestinian militias were initially allowed to remain armed since they were meant to ensure the security of Palestinian refugee camps.

23 Proof of this includes, for example, the events of May 7, 2008, when the government disconnected Hezbollah's telecommunications network, prompting violent responses from the organisation. Hezbollah temporarily occupied western Beirut and Rafik Hariri Airport using armed force against the state.

24 The current situation is increasingly complicated as since 2011, the government has been led by Najib Mikati, who was nominated by the March 8 Alliance, a coalition of political parties dominated by Hezbollah. Sixteen of the thirty government chairs are now occupied by politicians related to Hezbollah or its allies.

25 Salti and Chaaban (2010), p. 640.

26 Shawn Teresa Flanigan and Mounah Abdel-Samad (2009), 'Hezbollah´s Social Jihad: Nonprofits as Resistance Organizations,' *Middle East Policy*, 16: 2, p. 128.

27 In 2006, public debt reached 180% of GDP in Lebanon. See Committee on Foreign Relations – United States Senate (2010), p. 26.

28 Lebanon's economic expansion took place mainly in the first half of the 1990s, with average economic growth of 6.5% between 1992 and 1995. The subsequent fall-offs are clear from the figures for 1998 (2.6%) and 1999 (0%). See Index Mundi, Lebanon GDP – real growth rate, available at <http://www.indexmundi.com/lebanon/gdp_real_growth_rate.html>, (accessed November 17, 2012)

29 For more information, see Talal Nizameddin (2006), 'The Political Economy of Lebanon Under Rafiq Hariri: An Interpretation,' *Middle East Journal*, 60: 1, pp. 95–114.

30 Committee on Foreign Relations – United States Senate (2010), p. 26.

31 Post-war reconstruction efforts meant that government spending rocketed from 1.4 billion USD to more than 7 billion USD in 2003. See Salti and Chaaban (2010), p. 641.

32 Ibid, pp. 643, 648.

33 Ibid, p. 649.

34 Ibid, p. 641.

35 It is typical in a pluralistic society for specific groups of citizens to concentrate in certain areas based on their religious (or if relevant ethnic) affiliation. These areas may be city neighbourhoods, suburbs or whole villages or regions.

36 Salti and Chaaban (2010), pp. 637, 649.

37 In 2004-2005, 5-8% of Beirut's population was living in poverty (where the poverty level is set at 4 USD per day per person); in the northern region, the rate was roughly 52% of citizens, while in the south it was 42% and in the Bekaa region, it was 29%. See Heba Laithy and Khalid Abu-Ismail and Kamal Hamdan (2008), *Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon*. Country Study No. 13. UNDP International Poverty Centre, available at <http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/IPCCountryStudy13.pdf>,(accessed July 15, 2012), pp. 45, 47.
38 The article deals only with Lebanese citizens and does not focus on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who generally have very poor living conditions. Most of these Palestinians live in refugee camps, have very poor access to healthcare, welfare services and education and lack any property rights, and a large number of them experience poverty and unemployment.
39 Brogan cited in van Efferink (2010), p. 3.
40 Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009), pp. 126–127.
41 In recent years, the political power of Shiite Hezbollah has grown, and since 2005, its members have become the members of a number of governments.
42 Khashan (2012).
43 Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009), p. 123.
44 Hezbollah also ensures the operation of hospitals, some of which were previously run by the central government, which lacked the financial and technical capabilities to operate them.
45 Hafez cited in van Efferink (2010), p. 11.
46 In 2005-2006, the official government provided for the operation of only five of 160 hospitals, roughly 10% of a total of 453 health clinics and 1399 of a total of 2792 schools. Moreover, these schools lacked sufficient equipment and quality education. See Melani Cammett and Sukriti Issar (2010), 'Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon,' *World Politics*, 62: 3, pp. 390–391.
47 Political organisations have additional sources of financing: contributions from wealthy members of the community, Lebanese donors living abroad, etc. For example, Hezbollah gains funds for its expensive system of services from both Lebanese emigrants and the Iranian government, which according to some estimates may contribute up to 20 million USD per month. Rafiq Hariri, in contrast, used his own resources for many projects and drew on finances which he gained personally from Saudi Arabia. See James B. Love (2010) *Hezbollah: Social Services as a Source of Power*. Joint Special Operations University Report 10-5, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2010/1006_jsou-report-10-5.pdf>, (accessed November 18, 2012), p. 28; Ilene R. Prusher (2000), 'Through Charity, Hizbullah Charms Lebanon,' *Christian Science Monitor*, 92: 103, p. 1; Khashan (2012).
48 Cammett and Issar (2010), p. 400.
49 Hariri began his charity work during the civil war, and established the Islamic Institute for Culture and Higher Education in 1979, which has been the Hariri Foundation since 1984. He supported many Lebanese NGOs in

various regions of the country. His personal interests and efforts to heighten his popularity were behind the geographical expansion of his development projects. See Cammett and Issar (2010), p. 400.

50 The origin of political organisations' involvement in the social welfare system can be traced to the era of the civil war: sectarian militias arranged for services not only to their members, but to the civilians who lived in the territory controlled by these militias. After the civil war, when these militias transformed into political parties, they did not cease to offer these social services. Ibid, p. 390.

51 Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009), p. 128.

52 Khashan (2012).

53 Cammett and Issar (2010), p. 381.

54 Khashan (2012).

55 Cammett and Issar (2010), p. 390.

56 Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009), p. 127.

57 Martin Patriquin (2006), 'Party (of God) Time,' *Maclean's*, 119: 43.

58 Saab (2008).

59 Hezbollah's system of social services is based on a number of organisations: the Social Unit, Educational Unit and Islamic Health Unit. The movement also encompasses other organisations which are connected directly to its resistance activities. These are the Jihad Construction Foundation (Jihad El Binaa), the Martyr's Foundation, the Foundation for the Wounded and the Khomeini Support Committee.

60 Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009), p. 122.

61 Ibid, p. 135.

62 The Future Movement was able to focus on non-Sunni populations since its groups enjoy relatively strong control over Sunni politics. As such, it did not have to compete for influence and position with other Sunni parties. This gave the Future Movement "free rein" to seek out support from outside the Sunni community as well. For a discussion of this point, see Cammett and Issar (2010), pp. 382, 399.

63 In addition to Sunni and Shiite organisations, Christian groups attempt to care for the wellbeing of the population and the members of particular communities, and they make efforts to fulfil basic needs. There are many Christian charities, for example, in East Beirut and other Christian areas.

64 Rana Jawad (2008), 'Religion and Social Welfare in the Lebanon: Treating the Causes or Symptoms of Poverty?', *Journal of Social Policy*, 38: 1, p. 144.

65 Khashan (2012).

66 Esposito, cited in Jawad (2008), p. 144.

67 Khashan (2012).

68 Voters who actively support the political parties that control the distribution of resources, receive more than those who do not show such support. See Cammett and Issar (2010), p. 416.

69 Khashan (2012).

70 Ibid.

71 Proof can be found in the aforementioned protests during the Arab Spring

of 2011, which called for a change to the sectarian system.

72 Alex Klaushofer (2008), 'Lebanon´s Civil Society Movement,' *The Middle East*, 2008/385, p. 60.

73 Many of these organisations were purely Christian. Although they were mostly apolitical, people from other religious communities did not trust them or their actions.

74 Klaushofer (2008), p. 61

75 Jawad (2008), p. 144.

76 Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009), pp. 123, 135.