



State Sponsored Terrorism and Its Effects on Lebanese Policy and Politics

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Abstract

How does state sponsored terrorism affect Lebanese policy and politics? How does it affect the stability of fragile state? Does terrorism cause such weak or fragile government to fail prematurely and/or does it enhance the probability that such government will stay in office longer than they otherwise would? Using a duration model on a sample of 53 Lebanese governments between 1943 and 2015, I find that state sponsored terrorism exacerbates the likelihood of government failure for some governments but not others. The main principal finding is that right-oriented governments are able to keep their hold on power more than left-wing governments when confronted with state sponsored terrorism. However, both types of governments will most likely collapse when faced with the pressure of state-sponsored terrorism and consequently, they fail to deliver adequate services to its citizens which leads to its erosion of public support and eventually collapse.

Keywords: State Sponsored Terror, Government Duration, Partisanship, Fragile States, Failed State, Weak State.

Introduction

What are the political consequences of transnational terror attacks on a rather weak state such as Lebanon? While research demonstrates that transnational terror attacks have economic consequences such as reducing growth, we know less about how terror attacks affect domestic politics in fragile states. If terror attacks affect domestic politics, do these attacks affect all government institutions equally? To address one aspect of this broader question, I ask how state sponsored terror events and their resulting casualties influence the durability of governments. Specifically, I examine whether state sponsored terror attacks lead to governments failing prematurely or staying in office longer than they might otherwise. The research question examines how state sponsored terrorism carried out by outside forces influences Lebanese government policies, politics and durability.

My focus is whether state sponsored terror events have an extraordinary influence on the ability of governments to not only survive but also able to deliver public services and maintain its responsibilities towards its citizens. Does the Lebanese government face greater risk of failure under the pressure of state sponsored terrorism?

To do this, I develop and test a set of hypotheses related to terrorism and government turnover. The first hypothesis suggests that Lebanese governments are likely to fail prematurely in the face of a state sponsored terror attack as the attack can be interpreted as a form of foreign policy failure, or a critical event. Thus, while terror attacks may be critical events for some

governments, other governments are unlikely to fail given how the public perceives the incumbent and any potential governments that would form as replacements.

Before proceeding to explain and answer these questions a more common definition of terrorism must be clearly introduced as a lack of definition of terrorism creates more problems than it solves and therefore, labeling an act as terrorist quickly becomes meaningless. In order to avoid the multitude of definition used for terrorism, a common definition will be used as a departure from the disagreements among commentators or analysts and partially because some definers seek to exclude groups that they support or to include groups that they wish to denounce. Political leaders and their sympathizers may also have different needs and agendas but, I decided to use a relatively neutral definition which recognizes the basic fact that terrorism is a tactic used by many different kinds of groups. My definition includes six major elements introduced by Alan Collins. First, there must be a use of violence or threat of violence, by an organized group to achieve political objectives. Such violence is directed against a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims, who are often innocent civilians, while a government can be either the perpetrator of violence or the target. Then, terrorism as a weapon of the weak, it is considered an act of terrorism only if one or both actors are not a government and terrorism. While all of the elements are included, they are managed, controlled and directed by a foreign state and hence it is called state sponsored terrorism.

State sponsored terrorism and insurgency are asymmetric tactics applied to achieve broader political or other objectives and could create catastrophic consequences. To explain the complicating distinction of terrorism from insurgency is the fact that one person's insurgent, who might have local political sympathy or external support against an occupying power, is often another person's terrorist. Terrorism is designed to achieve a political objective by using violence against civilians to generate fear. Its objectives have evolved over time but the principle purpose of a terrorist attack is to destroy a target, as well as to create fear in an audience by perpetrating dramatic and shocking acts. The use of terror has been commonplace as a means of securing power and stability for governments. It is most often associated with a political objective and is intended to have a psychological repercussion beyond the actual target. Sean Kay further explains that state sponsored terrorism is often conducted by organizations within a chain of command and most often perpetrated by a subnational group of non-state entity that seeks to overcome power disparities in order to shape a public agenda.

But does a fragile state or weak state allow foreign powers the flexibility to use terror against its rivals? How does such policy of state sponsored terrorism affect Lebanese policy and politics? First, we need to explain and distinguish between a failed state, weak state and a fragile state. First, what is meant by a failed state is a nation in which the government has lost political authority and control and is unable to fulfill the basic responsibilities of a sovereign state. A weak state is where social and political structures have collapsed to the point where the government has little or no control. Stability and prosperity are crucial pillars of a strong state but weak or fragile states have lost control of and much of its monopoly of violence as it find its legitimacy eroded greatly during times of periods of state sponsored terrorism.

The problems that have led to the weakening and failure of states such as Lebanon can stem from a depletion leadership, global economic developments, and a whole host of local issues. This

threatens the nature and stability of the governmental system, where local warlords make common cause with crime syndicates, where smugglers help finance perpetual violence, and where business investments and much humanitarian aid is deflected into the coffers of the warring factions. And, most grimly, civilians make the most accessible and lucrative targets. Violence in weakening or failed states, in short is where control over resources and territory relies on fear more than it depends on legitimate government.

What causes state failure? Can the symptoms be detected early enough and will the global community design the political determination to act on the recognition? Should outside powers unilaterally intervene, or should the global community design intervention mechanisms in order to prevent other states from using terrorism to advance their interests? David Carment, Stewart Prest and Yiagadeesen Samy's collaboration highlights and explain the terms of "failed state" and "fragile state."

The authors suggest we should use the latter, which is more inclusive and perhaps also less controversial. Fragile states are on the brink of collapse in any one or more – of the three areas: effective and responsive governance, authority over people and territory, and capacity of the economy and resource mobilization. Fragile states around the world today that suffer from political, social, and economic instability, as well as from the lack of legitimacy of their authoritarian regimes. States can become vulnerable to a high degree of fragility and states that attack and abuse their own citizens and subjects are highly likely to suffer from irreparable social stress and economic decline.

Fragile states: is when a state suffers from weaknesses in multiple areas of political and social performance but is especially weak in economic capacity as declared by Trauschweizer and Miner. The definition of "fragility" the authors used was called Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project (www.carleton.ca/cifp) rests upon conceptualizations and measures that are relative. Some states may be strong by certain measures and weak by others. But failed states are states that have typically fallen into complete collapse brought on by "manmade" calamity, such as civil war or a mismanaged economy, sometimes exacerbated by environmental degradation or natural disasters.

These states are, despite international efforts, utterly incapable of managing their political and economic space. Fragile states are states that are experiencing or have experienced large-scale violence and suffer from internal challenges to their authority structures. Lebanon's civil war which lasted from 1975-1990 became a failed state and heavily depended on Syria to keep the peace among the warring factions in two-thirds of the country as Israel maintained its occupied zone in southern Lebanon. During that period and since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War, Lebanon found itself limited to defend itself against Israeli aggression, contain the Iran-Syria backed group and deliver public services.

Fragility is a measure of the extent to which the actual institutions, functions, and political processes of a state accord with the strong image of sovereign state, the one reified in both state theory and international law. The three core structural parameters for understanding fragility are authority, legitimacy, and capacity. First, there is the development or economic capacity problem. "Capacity" refers to the potential for a state to mobilize and employ resources toward

productive ends. States lacking in capacity may prove unable to respond effectively to sudden shocks such as natural disasters, food shortages, or refugee flows. They may not have sufficient resources to feed, clothe, and educate their population.

Due to the weakness or fragility of nation-states like Lebanon provide the possible links between foreign governments and terrorist organizations which will most likely have lethal consequences. No country openly supports terror groups but some governments look the other way as the group recruits, raise money or control territory, while others try to exploit the presence of the group on its territory to extract concessions from the United States.

Nation-states can provide a wide range of backing to terrorist groups including recognition, sanctuary, arms, training and money. States sponsor terrorists for a variety of reasons. The most important is a strategic interest: terrorists offer another means for states to influence their neighbors, topple a hostile adversary regime; counter U.S. hegemony, or achieve other aims. Iran helped disrupted the Middle East Peace Process and creating a security dilemma for Israel and the United States by backing Hezbollah. Iran, Israel and Syria have supported and continue to support opposing militants in Iraq, Lebanon and Syria, because such support for terrorist groups is cheaper than developing conventional military capabilities which allow states to influence events far beyond their borders.

States reduce or end their support for terrorist groups due to the changes in their own goals, because of outside pressure, or change in the terrorist group itself. State-sponsored terrorism literally implies a state's use or support of terrorism against another state or against its own people. Lebanon has experienced the deadly coordinated violent strategy by Iran-Syria-Hezbollah where a long list of assassinated politicians, security officials and religious figures who opposed their policies. The Lebanese government unfortunately found itself incapable and often sidelined from executing public policies.

Since terrorism has essentially become an international phenomenon over the last three decades, the expression 'state-sponsored terrorism' is now commonly used to describe a state's support of international terrorism. Any country that deliberately employs terrorism or aids and abets terrorist groups as an instrument of its foreign policy against another country is categorized as a state sponsor of terrorism or simply a terrorist state. State sponsored terrorism is not necessarily a specifically new international phenomenon, but its use for reasons to topple regimes, change the political map and the consequences of its use are more lethal than ever before.

The quality of a nation's national security policy is affected both by the capacity of military forces and by the purposes to which they are directed. The stronger state have a much greater practical stake in the security of the weaker than has yet been recognized for reasons that have not yet been fully understood. In the realist paradigm, the nation-state is traditionally the central actor in the international system, and the quest for power is the key means to advancing security. Realists conclude that the key objective of states is survival, and power is the means to that end. States will thus calculate their interests in terms of power and the international situation that they face according to Sean Kay.

The diffusion of global power provides new avenues for states, sub-state groups, terrorists, and individuals strive to shape global security in their favor. But why state sponsored terrorism? Steinbruner argues that conventional military conflict may no longer be the most useful way to win wars, and it could even be a liability if not used with precision. (p. 207).

Hence, states turn to state sponsored terrorism to gain leverage during future conflicts if and when they unfold as in the case of Iran nuclear deal. It is taken as evident that national security became an empty concept, and the only way to ensure a world without conflicts is to install collective security encompassing the whole planet. Victor Segesvary argues that the experience of World War II led the victorious powers to recreate an international organization, the United Nations, in a soon bipolarized world of alliances. This system was based on the assumption that states behave prudently and rationally – a totally irrational assumption he argues. Since states such as Iran which feels threatened by the United States and Europe, to ensure its survival, Tehran began to arm, train, finance and guide armed groups in the Middle East and beyond which serve as its first line of defense.

An example of a once-collapsed state is Lebanon, which had disintegrated before Syria's intervention in 1990 provided security and gave a sense of governmental legitimacy to the shell of the state. Lebanon today qualifies as a weak, rather than failed, polity because its government is credible, civil war is absent, and political goods are being provided in significant quantities and quality. Syria provided the security blanket at least until its forced withdrawal in 2005, denies fractious warlords the freedom to aggrandize themselves, and mandates that the usually antagonistic Muslim and Christian communities cooperate.

The fear of being attacked preemptively by rivals, or of losing control of critical resources, is alleviated by Syria's imposed hegemony since 1975. Within that framework of security, the Lebanese people's traditional entrepreneurial spirit has transformed a failed state into a much stronger one. Although the phenomenon of state failure is not new, it has become much more relevant and worrying than ever before. In less interconnected eras, state weakness could be isolated and kept distant. Failure had fewer implications for peace and security. Now, states like Lebanon pose dangers not only to themselves and their neighbors but also to peoples around the globe as they provide the safe haven for terror groups who would use the government's weakness to plan, plot and carry out attacks.

Preventing states from failing and resuscitating those that do fail are thus strategic and moral imperatives in an effort to rescue them from becoming a safe haven for terrorist organizations. Failure and weakness can flow from a nation's geographical, physical, historical, and political circumstances, such as colonial errors and Cold War policy mistakes. More than structural or institutional weaknesses, human agency is also culpable, usually in a fatal way. Destructive decisions by individual leaders have almost always paved the way to state failure. This outcome is troubling to world order, especially to an international system that demands -- indeed, counts on -- a state's capacity to govern its space. Failed states have come to be feared as "breeding grounds of instability, mass migration, and murder" (in the words of political scientist Stephen Walt), as well as reservoirs and exporters of terror.

The road to state failure is marked by several revealing signposts. On the economic side, living standards deteriorate rapidly as elites deliver financial rewards only to favored families, clans, or small groups. Foreign-exchange shortages provoke food and fuel scarcities and curtail government spending on essential services and political goods; accordingly, citizens see their medical, educational, and logistical entitlements melt away.

Corruption flourishes as ruling cadres systematically skim the few resources available and stash their ill-gotten gains in hard-to-trace foreign bank accounts. On the political side, leaders and their associates subvert prevailing democratic norms, coerce legislatures and bureaucracies into subservience, strangle judicial independence, block civil society, and gain control over security and defense forces. They usually patronize an ethnic group, clan, class, or kin. In the case of Lebanon, it is located in a rough neighborhood and sandwiched between Syria, Israel and now an overextended Iran, the land of the cedars find itself divided and controlled by outside powers. As these two paths converge, the state provides fewer and fewer services.

Overall, ordinary citizens become poorer as their rulers become visibly wealthier. People feel preyed upon by the regime and its agents -- often underpaid civil servants, police officers, and soldiers fending for them. Security, the most important political good, vanishes as terrorism and political assassinations rise.

Citizens, especially those who have known more prosperous and democratic times, increasingly feel that they exist solely to satisfy the power lust and financial greed of those in power and their allies. In the last phase of failure, the state's legitimacy crumbles. Lacking meaningful or realistic democratic means of redress, protesters take to the streets or mobilize along ethnic, religious, or linguistic lines as evident in the current rubbish crisis. Elected officials become paralyzed to effectively execute public policies. Such state failure threatens global stability because national governments have become the primary building blocks of order. Once the system comes to a halt, demonstrations spread, disorder rises and threat to public safety and security poses a fertile ground for terrorism.

Certainly not all states are created equal. Their sizes and shapes, their human endowments, their capacity for delivering services, and their leadership capabilities vary enormously. More is required of the modern state, too, than ever before where each is expected to provide good governance; to make its people secure, prosperous, healthy, and literate; and to instill a sense of national pride. States also exist to deliver political goods -- i.e., services and benefits that the private sector is usually less able to provide in weak states. Foremost is the provision of national and individual security and public order.

That promise includes security of property and inviolable contracts, an independent judiciary, and other methods of accountability. A second but vital political good is the provision, organization, and regulation of logistical and communications infrastructures. A nation without well-maintained arteries of commerce and information serves its citizens poorly. Finally, a state helps provide basic medical care and education, social services, a social safety net, regulation and supply of water and energy, and environmental protection. When governments refuse to or cannot provide such services to all of their citizens, failure looms and increase lawlessness and terror attacks.

Strong states control their territories and deliver a high order of political goods to their citizens and offer high levels of security from political and criminal violence, ensure political freedom and civil liberties, and create environments conducive to the growth of economic opportunity. They are places of peace, order and productivity. In contrast, failed states are tense, conflicted, and dangerous and they share the following characteristics: a rise in criminal and political violence; a loss of control over their borders; rising ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural hostilities; civil war; the use of terror against their own citizens; weak institutions; a deteriorated or insufficient infrastructure; an inability to collect taxes without undue coercion; high levels of corruption; a collapsed health system; rising levels of infant mortality and declining life expectancy; the end of regular schooling opportunities; declining levels of GDP per capita; escalating inflation; a widespread preference for non-national currencies; and basic food shortages, leading to starvation.

To add to Lebanon's ills, I must include the rising migration of tens of thousands for young Lebanese abroad in search of jobs and better lives. Failed states also face rising attacks on their fundamental legitimacy. As a state's capacity weakens and its rulers work exclusively for themselves, key interest groups show less and less loyalty to the state. The people's sense of political community vanishes and citizens feel disenfranchised and marginalized. The social contract that binds citizens and central structures is forfeit. Perhaps already divided by sectional differences and animosity, citizens transfer their allegiances to communal warlords. Domestic anarchy sets in. The rise of terrorist groups becomes more likely.

Due to the current status of weakness, Lebanon faced increasingly multiple challenges include its inability to provide security, develop a rudimentary local police force, patiently trained local administrators across departments, reintroduced legal codes and methods, or help to rejuvenate and regularize existing economies. But once stability and confidence have been at least partially restored, the transitional administration and international agencies can together focus on four primary and parallel objectives: jump-starting the economy, restoring the rule of law, re-creating political institutions, and rejuvenating civil society. The fundamental economic requirements also include establishing fiscal and macroeconomic stability, paying civil servants and police officers, and creating jobs. Without those accomplishments, a new probity, and a sense of coming prosperity, the local economy will languish and continue to rely on opium exports for cash. Crucial foreign investment, as well as aid from developed-world donors, will be conspicuously absent. As the hub of the banking industry in the Middle East, Lebanon has seen an outflow of capital to the Gulf, Europe and North America.

The Lebanese legal system is cumbersome in adjudication and most court decisions are based on political association of the accused. The court system is in need of major reform but reintroducing the rule of law can be done in stages, over time, but citizens will mostly not support reconstruction efforts until they are certain that legal redress will be available. A functioning court system should be among the first political institutions to be reborn. A police force, a central bank, and the repair of roads and telephone networks to link cities and towns are also essential. Together, such initiatives will reestablish a sense that a new government exists and has begun to work for, rather than against, the people.

Police personnel, judges, bureaucrats, and parliamentarians will have to be trained or retrained. Defense forces have to be reconfigured and their chiefs reoriented. Strong local leadership cannot be assumed but must be nurtured and strengthened. In Lebanon, old political families continue to rule from behind the scene and will most likely oppose any major reform. However, sadly such political structure incapable of reform domestically and it would take foreign pressure to make any real changes.

When a state fails or collapses, it destroys trust and mutilates its institutions. That is why sustained state rebuilding requires time and enduring economic and technical commitments by the local leadership and foreign powers. Rich nations must promise not to abandon Lebanon's state rebuilding efforts before the tough work is finished -- before a failed state has functioned well for several years and has had its political, economic, and social health restored. State building trumps terror but as Lebanese history suggest, progress will only be made if foreign and especially neighboring powers do not stymie progress. If state building is done on the cheap, or if the big powers walk away from the failed states too soon and decide that the long slog of reconstruction is for others, then the real war against terror will not have been won.

So, does the weakness of the divided Lebanese government encourage state sponsored terrorism where armed militias pose a serious challenge to that country's policies and politics? Lebanon was once called the "Pearl of the Middle East" due to its stability, economic and social development, vibrant tourism industry and large foreign direct investments. Scholars and policy makers believed that once the civil war that begun in 1975 ended the state's monopoly of power, arms, policies, and decisions.

However, since the civil war which ended in 1990, that country has succumbed to decay of state power struggle and consequently became a fertile ground for armed groups carving their own regional autonomies. There is no doubt that there are numerous challenges to state-building that arise after civil wars including risks of ethnic conflict, challenge to economic development, and regional instability. Do the Lebanese government's structurally weak institutions and divided elite constantly put that state in the center of regional rivalries and instability? Does that state's weakness prevents it from effectively protect its borders, channel ethnic, social and ideological competition and hence erodes its effectiveness? Fragile or weak states are often characterized by massive economic inequities, territorial fragmentation, rise of militias and violent competition for resources. Such loss of control usually creates a power vacuum for elements which could form and threaten the security and regional stability.

In approaching this concept of 'failed state' as an empirical problem, I wish to challenge the commonly accepted idea that it is merely an effort to address the issue of state sovereignty. But, to find out whether the weak Lebanese state has demonstrated to be too ineffective to rein in armed groups that will not only challenge its authority, but drag that tiny nation into conflict unable to control or win. Is this government too divided and weak that the government itself often finds itself at the mercy of armed wings of political parties? If the state is weak, fragmented and fragile, I expect its loss of legitimacy, inability to militarily protect its borders, maintain law and order throughout its territory, provide security, maintain monopoly on heavy weapons and control armed groups. Hence, such society becomes too fragmented or weak state

and becomes a fertile ground for violence which in turn negatively affects public policies and politics.

While it is true that Lebanon may have been ruined by 15 years of civil war, but it is far wealthier than its big neighbor, Syria; it enjoys a degree of political liberty; and, by the region's standards, its society is tolerant. Also, Lebanese are much better educated and Western oriented than many of the countries in the region. Under a power-sharing deal that ended the war in 1990, the central government is weak and rarely has one. Parliamentary elections have been delayed since 2013 for lack of an election law; and politicians have been squabbling over a new president and that position has been vacant since April 2014. Since this early July, the Lebanese government is facing a "rubbish crisis" where demonstrators from across the country have effectively shutting down government institutions, throwing a monkey ranch in the political process and preventing the current administration from executing any policies.

Socially and politically Lebanon is divided by a number of different religions and sects, which makes state-wide government difficult especially when each of these sects heavily depends on a foreign patron. Shi'a Islam, Sunni Islam, Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Druze are the largest of the 18 different religions or sects officially recognized in the country. At different times Palestinian and now also Syrian and Iraqi refugees have been added to the already existing groups. Moreover, Lebanon is located in a complex region; where external forces especially Israel, Iran, Syria and others try to influence internal politics tipping the balance of power in their favor often using terrorism including assassination.

In addition to the already divided society where mistrust have always ran high, Lebanon was heavily affected by the outbreak of the Jordanian civil war in 1970, after which Palestinian refugees, including members of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) were deported from the country and used south Lebanon as a base to launch attacks against Israel. Of course the Lebanese government found itself militarily too weak to defend against Israeli aggression or control its territory in keeping the Palestinian fighters in check. In 1982, Israel conquered southern Lebanon for self-defense purposes. Israeli occupation worsened relations with the mostly Shi'ite community living in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah rose to prominence as an anti-Israeli occupation organization, and was supported by both Iran and Syria.

After the civil war ended in 1990, all Lebanese sects agreed to give up their weapons—with the exception of Hezbollah, which considered it its duty to free the territories occupied by Israel. This militant group is more powerful than the government itself and has dragged Lebanon to wars several times with Israel and now in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. It is Hezbollah with their allies with the open support of Iran and Syria which has prevented the Lebanese political establishment from electing president for over a year. Such control by one party violates the Lebanese constitution and increase the political and social tension in an already boiling region. This allows for a heightened insecurity and slows down government progress in offering social services.

The question remains, has the civil war in Lebanon really ended or are there some remaining unresolved issues? Despite the fact that the civil war is officially over, the problems in the

Lebanese society that led to the war have not been resolved to this day and the political atmosphere is still tense among the political groups and religious sects.

There have been no parliamentary elections since 2009; those due in 2013 were postponed because the parties could not agree on the reform of electoral law, and the presidency as stated earlier have been vacant since spring 2014. In addition, relations with neighboring countries are also still complicated and their influence on Lebanese domestic politics causes concern. In 2005, Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated by what appears to be Syrian, Iranian and Hezbollah involvement creating sectarian tensions.

Since the investigation pointed to Syrian involvement, riots broke out in the streets, calling for the withdrawal of Syrian troops. International pressure following this "Cedar Revolution" forced the Syrian military out of Lebanon. However, the Syrian influence on Lebanon's politics remains strong due to the pro-Syrian groups including Hezbollah, Arab Democratic Party, Baa'th Party and others. To demonstrate their loyalties to Syria instead of Lebanon, they had sent fighters, money and weapons to help bolster Al-Assad declining regime. The Lebanese government once again proved incapable of controlling local groups from interfering in other countries internal affairs.

Both Syria and Iran have close ties with Hezbollah, which helps to influence what is happening in the country. Syrian intelligence controls activity in the Beqaa Valley and it is alleged that the president of Lebanon cannot be appointed without the approval of the Syrian and Iranian heads of state. Due to foreign especially Iranian and Syrian influence over Lebanon, Hezbollah decided to have several conflicts with Israel without the Lebanese government's knowledge or permission. The last major conflict between Israel and Hezbollah took place in 2006 which lasted for over a month and brought United Nation's troops to be stationed in Southern Lebanon. It is precisely that loss of control by the Lebanese government that prompts Hezbollah to form its own policies with coordination of Syria and Iran and not its own government.

The problem is that Hezbollah controls southern Lebanon, the Beqaa Valley and southern districts of the capital city of Beirut where government police and military are not permitted to enter. Hezbollah operates like a state within a state and does not obey the central government, respect its policies or coordinate with it even when members of the government have positions in the cabinet. However, Hezbollah is extremely popular in southern Lebanon because it has also taken on social responsibilities where the Lebanese government has been absent for decades. During the war in 2006, Hezbollah immediately sent builders to rebuild bombed-out houses, and helped the local population in every way.

Hezbollah is difficult to control, because it is an official political party represented in the parliament and has a strong support base among Shi'ites. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that it is considered a proxy of Iran and labeled as a terrorist organization by the United States, the European Union and other states which aims to destroy Israel and has conducted several attacks against Israeli interests across the world.

Following the 2006 war with Israel, a wave of assassinations against Lebanese politicians including government officials with anti-Hezbollah stance gripped the country but the

government was unable to protect its own ministers. Mistrust in the government has been exacerbated by other unresolved security incidents, including the unsolved assassination attempt of MP Boutros Harb, a member of the 'March14' anti-Syrian and Iranian coalition.

On 7 May 2008, deadly clashes between armed wings of rival political parties broke out in Lebanon. The reasons for the deadly conflict was due to the government's decision to dismantle the telecommunications network operated separately by Hezbollah and to remove the security officer in charge at Beirut International Airport, who was believed to be affiliated with the same party, prompted this violent response. That evening, Hezbollah's secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, delivered a televised message, calling upon members of the Resistance to protect its telecommunication networks and to "cut off the hands" that threatens it. (Kosmatopoulos, 2012, 115) This threat was clearly directed at the powerless and incapable Lebanese government.

In the aftermath of the speech, armed groups were deployed around government buildings (Parliament and the president's office), residences of government figures (the prime minister and party leaders), and strategic streets in the capital and elsewhere in order to force the government to withdraw the decrees. After three days of battle between pro-government fighters and Hezbollah the government conceded defeat. This was a victory of sort for the group and it turned afterwards to assassinations and threats against the government and other political parties. So, the rule of the gunman and not the government's constitutional power is what works in Lebanon.

However, Christians, Sunni and Shia, who each make up roughly a third of the four million inhabitants, have found a way of rubbing along despite their divisions at home and the turbulence around them at least for now. But how long would this last as the civil war in Syria ranges on? Once again, Lebanon is, like other Arab states, a sectarian patchwork with different loyalties and perspectives. Its Sunnis share the fury of their Syrian co-religionists against the regime of President Bashar Assad; and its Shia share the fears of the minorities that support Syria's government. Although all parties have supporting and opposing views on the Syrian civil war, Lebanon did not fall into the abyss when Hezbollah entered the war to prop up Mr. Assad. The Lebanese government also survived when Syria's mainly Sunni rebels used northern Lebanon as a transit route for their arms. It has kept going despite the influx of more than one million Syrian refugees, now a fifth of the total population. Hezbollah's direct interference in the Syrian civil war against the wishes and permission of the Lebanese government has been a destabilizing force and invited more violence in Lebanon such as terrorist attacks.

The newest destabilizing factor is the jihadists who call themselves Islamic State (ISIS). They have grown increasingly assertive on the Syrian-Lebanese border bringing the Syrian conflict to Hezbollah's strong hold in East and South Lebanon. In August 2014, militants from IS and Jabhat al-Nusra, al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, snatched two dozen Lebanese soldiers and beheaded two of the captives in the northeastern town of Arsal. Also, on October 4th-6th Hezbollah clashed on the border with Jabhat al-Nusra an off shoot of Al Qaida, which was fighting to carve out a supply route.

The Syrian conflict has exploded into neighboring Lebanon. Infiltration and cross-border raids carried out by Syrian personnel have caused widespread chaos within the country. The Lebanese government is reluctant to send military troops to the Syrian border as a means of self-defense

and citizens are losing faith in their government. Many fear that Lebanon is slowly turning into a failed state, which is usually defined by several key indicators already mentioned above such as loss of control of its geographical territory and the use of physical force, implosion of the structures of power and authority and the internal collapse of law and order. The current political situation is pushing Lebanon to the collapse of the government and the rise of radicals as it experienced during the long civil war.

Lebanon's gradual loss of control over its geographical territory, the weakening of institutions of law and authority as well as the Syrian spillover one wonders if Lebanon is heading for failed state status again. The weak Lebanese government has led to repeated kidnappings, multiple Syrian incursions resulting in the death of Lebanese citizens, and the widespread use of weapons by non-state actors are just some of the indicators pointing to the slow meltdown of the country's public institutions. In response to the government's inability to protect its citizens from Syrian attacks individuals losing faith in their leaders deployed into the streets and erected multiple roadblocks to provide security for their communities.

"The security situation is definitely spinning out of control due to the government's disagreement on a unified security approach. Public institutions and the state are losing their credibility." (Global Forum) Many citizens wonder why the state is so hesitant to send military troops to protect its borders. Hence, many have lost faith in Lebanon's institutions, including the police, army, judiciary and government. Such government failures could provide the fertile grounds for radical movements which could easily exploit the state's absence. But the government decisions remain slow in coming unless there is a clear consensus among all government figures.

But is Lebanon's governmental structure the cause of such weakness? According to Dr. Hilla Khashan, political science professor at the American University of Beirut said that "Lebanon is a soft state. There was an international decision to build the country in a way that the state will always have limited power in order for different communities to prevail." (Global Policy Forum) The Lebanese system has not worked well since its independence from France in 1943. Some scholars believe that since its inception, "Lebanon's system was not designed to work in the first place. It (experiences) phases of functionality and breakdown, without totally collapsing" according to Dr. Karim Makdessi. (Global Forum) Throughout its short history, Lebanon's sovereignty has always been in the hands of foreign entities where each pulls the levers of power to their advantage during regional conflicts creating a breakdown and instability every few years.

Just how much of a failed state is Lebanon? Why is that the case? And, is it going to get better or worse with the crisis in Syria, Iraq and now Yemen? Based on one of the criteria for weak states we set earlier including the military apparatus where the state should have a monopoly on at least on weaponry within a country is not a concept found anywhere in the Lebanese dictionary. Even after the end of the Civil War in 1990, non-state militias have maintained and even bolstered weapons stocks, stashed in caches around the country and drawn on the slightest provocation by the government and other groups. Robert Springborg, Middle East program manager for the US-based Center for Civil-Military Relations, said that a failure by the Lebanese state to bring rogue arms under control was one of the biggest reasons Lebanon ranks among the world's most failed

nations. “If you have a demanding definition of a state then Lebanon might not make it.” As well as an inability to control its weapons, Lebanon also struggles to control its frontiers not only from Syria but also from Israel’s hundreds of overflights and ground incursions which occurs almost on a daily basis. “A state that does not control its territory is not fully sovereign,” Springborg said. The state is also unable to control illegal contraband such as drugs and arms because the system is based on who you know instead of the rule of law.

Other factor that hampers the Lebanese government’s decision-making process is factionalized elites who have strong loyalty to foreign interests such as Syria, Iran and others. Patrick Galey states that “when local and national politicians engage in deadlock and brinkmanship for political gain, this undermines the social contract.” That is the leadership feel obligated to consult with foreign entities to make major decisions. Certainly, Lebanon’s political arena operates according to few bosses, militias and families and the government operates based on their consensus instead of the rule of law.

Simply put, the balance of power in Lebanon does not reside in government, but rather in the hands of a few party leaders who each seek influence over or manipulate a particular constituency, demographic or sect for their own personal advantage. Since the power resides with groups and not the government, Nadim Houry, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa, said government and state security apparatuses were unable to protect most people from abuse or discrimination. “The basic function of the state – national protection – has been outsourced to non-state actors. The state does not protect people on its territory.” (Galey) This is especially the case when those foreign interests resort to terrorism, assassinations and other forms of violence and thus preventing the government from taking any strong action. Therefore, most Lebanese feel abandoned by the state and consequently, seek refuge and employment by joining a militia or support party bosses.

According to Robert I. Rotberg, “nation-states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive political goods to their inhabitants. Their governments lose legitimacy, and the very nature of the particular nation-state itself becomes illegitimate in the eyes and in the hearts of a growing plurality of its citizens. (2012, p. 1) the impact of the Syrian refugees on Lebanon is providing a fertile ground for extremists and operates beyond government control. The refugees’ situation is becoming increasingly more difficult as their money is now starting to run out and they have to start looking for the already limited jobs. Since refugees now make up a fifth of Lebanon’s population, they are titling the demographic balance in favor of the Sunnis which many fear a possible risk a renewed civil war. As the Palestinian refugees tilted the balance of power in Lebanon in the 1970s and caused a civil war to erupts, the Syrian crisis serve as a reminder of another possibility especially if the Syrian crisis drags on already in its fifth year. Once again, the government of Lebanon finds itself unable to provide benefits for the Syrian refugees or control them due to their large demographics. However, the government has caved to foreign pressure by allowing more Syrian refugees against the will of its citizens.

Since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah has covertly supported the government of Bashar al-Assad. Alongside Iran, Syria is the biggest supporter of Hezbollah, which is why the

latter's troops are engaged in military activity on Syrian territory. Hezbollah is forced to help its supporters in Syria because Iran sends weapons to Hezbollah via Damascus.

However, the involvement in Syria has to some extent reduced Hezbollah's popularity in Lebanon, because it is feared that it ruins the relationship with the local Sunnis who support the moderate the Free Syrian Army. Many find that supporting the already failed Assad regime is not worth the risk of a potential new civil war. At the same time, the Sunnis have become the largest community in Lebanon, as nearly three-quarters of the Syrian refugees are Sunnis. The Lebanese government once again finds itself too weak in controlling Hezbollah's military activities in Syria which also prompted the Islamic State (ISIS) to broaden its grip over the entire Levant area; its attempts to infiltrate Lebanon have intensified especially among the Syrian refugees. Attempts to invade Lebanon come mainly from the north and east, where the major Sunni cities are located and social tensions are more acute because of the number of refugees with arms and military training. Due to outside pressure and internal divisions and weakness, the Lebanese political establishment is unable to deliver basic services such as collecting rubbish, providing water, electricity, security, and electing president.

Government weakness and Hezbollah's involvement have led to bombings by radical groups in many parts of Lebanon including southern Beirut, where a large number of Syrian refugees live. The attackers carried out the bombings in retaliations to Hezbollah's military involvement in the Syrian civil war. The bombings have created negative feeling towards refugees in the local population but also blamed Hezbollah's military activities in Syria and the government for failing to provide security. Most of the bombings took place in poor areas of Lebanon where corruption, economic inequality and unemployment create a favorable environment for extremist ideas to spread and violence.

If there is a silver lining to the Lebanese governmental crisis is that fear of the extremist movements has helped to create a truly inclusive coalition national government. The current but shaky government include the largest Maronite Christian political parties, moderate Shi'ites, Sunnis and Druze all are active participates. Being in one government, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites are jointly responsible for the security and stability of Lebanon. Therefore, it is likely that tensions between the communities will decrease, but of course that would heavily depend on the Syrian crisis next door, Iranian and Saudi influence on the parties and Hezbollah's constant participation in foreign wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen against the wishes of the weak Lebanese government.

A united front is a good protection against the Syrian civil war being transmitted to Lebanon. However, it is hard to believe that the current government will last long but, so far, they have managed to do well, even in potentially difficult situations. But, a united government is not by any means a substitute for a strong, legitimate and sovereign state. Such polity must have the power to exercise monopoly on arms, decision-making, protect its territory and citizens from domestic and foreign entities and the ability to provide basic services for its citizens. Without the above criteria, Lebanon will continue to be a fragmented nation which serves as confrontational stage for regional powers. Therefore, to move from a state of fragility, the Lebanese state could only be secured from regional crisis if it finds the political will to effectively develop its institutions and respond as one unified entity to its security concerns and

political survival. Until then, this tiny Mediterranean nation-state will most likely remain at the mercy of its neighbors' threats and intimidations and that will negatively affect its policies and politics.

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