



'FORCING THE LEBANESE BACK TO DIALOGUE'

***Hezbollah's Role in the May 2008 Beirut Clashes
Analysed from a State-Building Perspective***

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Cover image: Detail of Hezbollah's flag flying over Beaufort Castle, in formerly Israeli-occupied South Lebanon. Photo: author.

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INTRODUCTION

When Hezbollah-led anti-government fighters clashed with pro-government forces on the streets of Beirut in May 2008, Lebanon's political crisis was expected to escalate, with the Islamic resistance movement Hezbollah either taking over or severely undermining the Lebanese state. Yet, instead of further escalation, what I call 'the May 2008 Beirut clashes' eventually resulted in a comprehensive political deal that "brought a new head of state to Lebanon, revised the country's electoral formula [and] reactivated its parliament and other state institutions" (Saab 2008:93-94). These outcomes suggest that, although understanding Hezbollah is instrumental in understanding these clashes, structural problems underlying the Lebanese state can also help account for the event.

The current political situation in Lebanon has its roots deep within history. The most relevant events influencing the May clashes, however, are those that have sprung from the murder of Lebanese ex-president Rafiq Hariri in February 2005 (el-Masri 2008:80). The Cedar Revolution caused by the murder forced Syria to withdraw from Lebanon, which Syria had semi-governed as a protectorate since the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1989. This development brought to the fore a latent socio-political division within Lebanon, between a more 'pro-Western' – March 14 – and a so-called 'pro-Syrian' – March 8 – camp.¹ The former is led by Hariri's son Saad, the latter is mostly spearheaded by Hezbollah. The divide was deepened by the 2006 Summer War between Israel and Hezbollah, that catapulted the issue of Hezbollah's weapons to the political forefront. Furthermore, the two political blocs disagreed on how to deal with the investigation of the Hariri murder: March 14 was in favour of an international tribunal while March 8 opposed it. This dispute, among other things, led Hezbollah to demand the establishment of a national unity government in which it would hold veto power. March 14 did not share this desire and refused to withdraw from the government, which then became incapable of functioning effectively. The political impasse deepened when Hezbollah stepped up its efforts to bring down the government by organizing "massive demonstrations and a prolonged sit-in that paralysed parts of Beirut" (International Crisis

¹ The March 14–March 8 dichotomy is, in fact, coined by March 14 and only grudgingly subscribed to by March 8. The terminology links the distinction between the two political blocs to the dates of the anti- (14 March) and pro- (8 March) Syrian manifestations. But it does not reflect the real division along anti- and pro-Syrian lines as apparent in 2005. What March 14 – the anti-Syrian bloc – now calls March 14 does in fact not include some groups and parties that protested against Syria on March 14, 2005 (most notably the Free Patriotic Movement). I will, however, adhere to this terminology as it is the most widely accepted way to address the opposing camps.

Group 2007:2). A situation emerged in which “street politics have replaced institutional politics” (International Crisis Group 2006:1).² This reflected a development especially volatile in a country consisting of eighteen recognized religious communities (of which the Maronite Christians, the Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims and the Druze have traditionally been the largest and most politically influential).³

It is within this context of societal unrest, mounting political frustrations and a deadlock on the institutional level that the events of May 2008 should be placed. After a series of government decisions unfavourable to Hezbollah:

On May 9, 2008, following the orders of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Lebanese Shia militiamen launched a series of armed assaults in Beirut and plunged parts of the country into sectarian confrontations reminiscent of the 1975-90 civil war. [...] Within half a day, the battle of Beirut was over, and no one doubted that Hezbollah would emerge as the victor. The temporary but forceful seizure of West Beirut surprised sympathizers and enemies of Hezbollah alike. (Saab 2008:93)

After 8 days of fighting that left 71 people dead, the government annulled the decisions against Hezbollah and the political crisis forming the context of the clashes was resolved through the Doha Accord (Human Rights Watch 2009:486).

The significance of the event and considerable journalistic investigation notwithstanding, thus far there have been few academic analyses of the clashes. This apparent void is regretful because the event may be indicative for Lebanese politics and society – it has not been the first time that street violence broke a political deadlock – and could be related to Lebanon’s ongoing state-building process. Therefore, seen in the context of state-building theory, the importance of this event goes through but beyond understanding Hezbollah and analysis of the event might shed light on how state-society relationships can influence political systems and processes of state-building. Thus, the aim of my research is to place the May 2008 Beirut clashes into a coherent analytical framework evolving around the concept of state-building, wherein Hezbollah’s role will provide a central topical focus.⁴

² The 2005-2008 political crisis is further explored in Appendix B.

³ In one of the most recent researches into the issues, Muhammad Faour estimates that in 2005 the Maronites made up 19% of the population (of little over four million), the Shi’ites 34% and the Sunnis 21.3% (2007:912).

⁴ State-building – creating and refining mechanisms and institutions – is not the same as nation-building - inventing and strengthening a confining identity that inspires loyalty (Ziadeh 2006:xx). While the notions are related, I focus on the former.

1. Topical debates

The events of May 2008 engender renewed academic discussions on the place Hezbollah occupies within the Lebanese state and on the nature of the Lebanese state and its interaction with society. These are then the relevant topical debates that inspire my research: 1) the events of May 2008, 2) Hezbollah's position within the Lebanese state and 3) the nature of the Lebanese state and its relation with society.

Academic accounts related to the first debate agree on the fact that the main explanatory factor regarding the clashes is the political crisis that Lebanon had been in for over a year. They also seem to regard an analysis of Hezbollah's strategies as the key to explaining the event. What is striking, however, is that many analyses are characterised by either a lack of empirical data or quite coloured empirical data.⁵

Rather than spending much time on establishing what actually happened during the clashes – something that remains disputed – these accounts immediately moved on to the debate about the nature of Hezbollah and its role in Lebanon. This debate is characterised by two main sub-debates: one about whether Hezbollah should be perceived as a sectarian (Shi'ite), national (Lebanese) or international (Iranian/Syrian led) actor and the other about what its chief priority (and thus its ultimate nature) is.⁶ Unfortunately, these are misleading distinctions: it is neither fruitful to see Hezbollah as only one of the entities described above, nor to present the different faces of the organization as disconnected aspects. However, the quest to holistically account for the principles, structures and strategies of Hezbollah has not been taken up by many yet. Nevertheless, Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders have come up with an interesting analysis of Hezbollah as a 'meaning making network' and Peita Davis has cast new light on Hezbollah by presenting it as a state-building actor (2005 and 2007).

This leads to the third topical debate about the nature of the Lebanese state. Although the Lebanese state and its related political system have been extensively described and researched, there seems to be a lack of attempts to link this state and state-building context with specific events. The content and consequences of Lebanon's state (formation) are not, to my knowledge, regularly used as an explanatory framework.

⁵ This became clear during several exploring interviews.

⁶ Does Hezbollah primarily aim at destroying Israel (International Crisis Group 2006:13)? Or is its goal to emancipate the Shi'ite community in Lebanon (Kingston and Zahar 2004:86)? Or perhaps Hezbollah's chief concern is establishing a Lebanese Islamic republic (Early 2006:115)?

With the debates addressed above in mind, the specified aim of my research is to place the May 2008 Beirut clashes, and particularly Hezbollah's role in them, into the broader context of the Lebanese state-building process. First, considering the May clashes, I reconstruct what happened so as to be better able to incorporate the event into the existing body of academic knowledge. Second, with regard to the nature of Hezbollah, I aim to contribute to the above presented debate by giving more substance to the newly reached conclusion that Hezbollah should be conceptualized as a holistic actor. I will also explore how this new perception of Hezbollah can help explain Hezbollah's modus operandi concerning specific events. Third, regarding the debate on the Lebanese state, I will provide a clearer conception of the linkages between societal developments and the dynamics of state-building and go beyond the strong/weak state dichotomy.

2. Theoretical debates

I approach the May 2008 clashes from a political perspective for two main reasons. First, and foremost, it is in the political realm that Lebanon's main predicament seems to be, with the country hovering between joining "the ranks of 'strong states'" and plunging "once again into Hobbesian 'wars of all against all'" (Ziadeh 2006:xiv). Additionally, national politics appears to be the main driving force behind Hezbollah's strategy and objectives (Davis 2007:11). Second, although comfortable with and protective of the multidisciplinary nature of Conflict Studies, I am previously educated as a political historian and am predominantly interested in the associated macro-analytical approach.⁷

Furthermore, I approach the event from a domestic angle. Politics in general, and politics in Lebanon specifically, is an interplay of both internal (national) and external (regional and international) dynamics. Nevertheless, due to the scope of this thesis and the nature of my research question, I will approach the May 2008 Beirut clashes from a national angle. There are several rationales for doing so, each related to my specific theoretical framework of state-building. The first reason is linked to the specifics of the Lebanese context. I agree with Hanna Ziadeh that the most rewarding approach towards the analysis of conflict in Lebanon is that which

without neglecting the pressures exercised by regional and international factors, [puts] emphasis on uncovering the immediate relation between an essentially – if at varying

⁷ Although, as Chapter 1 will testify, I wholeheartedly place myself among Anthony Giddens' structurationists, any macro-political approach has an inevitable tendency to structuralism (1984).

degrees – Lebanese failure of system that precludes the emergence of a new system and plays a major role in defining the contours of the new compromise (2006:21).

The second reason concerns Hezbollah. Davis rightly notes that “the centrality of domestic politics in Hizbullah’s motives is often underplayed in the literature [while] Hizbullah is a uniquely Lebanese phenomenon whose state building is determined by the ebbs and flows of domestic politics” (2007:40). Third, although I am not writing this thesis with policy contemplations in mind, the fact that there is a proclaimed need for “a greater understanding of the political economy of state-building, including a greater appreciation of the incentives, challenges and opportunities that various domestic actors face” strengthens my case for a domestic approach (Fritz and Menocal 2007:44).

The core of the analytical framework guiding my research is the concept of state-building. Since my approach of the concept is the subject of Chapter 1, I will at this point merely motivate my choice for a state-building perspective. I opt to approach the May 2008 Beirut clashes from this particular theoretical perspective because, first, it is a logical outcome of the political and domestic approach motivated above. Second, there is a realistic expectation of a contribution to this particular theoretical field, as there seems to be a chronic neglect of the state’s analytical value as an explanatory factor concerning specific socio-political events. This envisioned contribution will be to the theory of state-building. My research focuses on the analysis of state-building as a concept rather than on the policy side of state-building processes, because, while state-building is now a major issue of concern, it still “lacks conceptual clarity” (Fritz and Menocal 2007:4). The attempt to fill this lacuna is propelled by grounding the concept of state-building in a broader analytical current dealing with state-society interaction. And, also, by offering a way to operationalize ‘state-building’ towards more tangible problems without getting lost in policy debates that are often based on ideology rather than on data.

3. Research Puzzle

The above introduced subjects, foci and objectives culminate in the following research puzzle:

How can Hezbollah’s role in the May 2008 Beirut clashes be explained from a state-building perspective?

This question consists of several constituent parts, which generate the following five sub-questions:

1. How can the concept of state-building guide an analytical framework relevant to my research puzzle?

This question is addressed in Chapter 1, where I set out to establish my analytical framework.

2. What were the nature and dynamics of the May 2008 Beirut clashes?

This question will be the core of Chapter 2, where I shed light on the direct triggers of the fights, their dynamics, their outcomes and consequences, and the structural issues underlying them.

3. What role did Hezbollah play in the May 2008 Beirut clashes?

This question yields a description of Hezbollah's actions and statements before, during and after the event, as well as insight in Hezbollah's objectives considering the clashes, and will also be dealt with in Chapter 2.

4. What is the nature of Lebanon's state-building process?

This question is answered in Chapter 3, by addressing the historical development of the Lebanese state and by placing the May events in this continuum.

5. How can Hezbollah be conceptualized in the context of Lebanon's state-building process?

This question forms the substance of Chapter 4, which aims at understanding Hezbollah's objectives, appreciating its strategies and tactics and comprehending Hezbollah's position vis-à-vis the Lebanese state.

4. Methodology

Given the nature of my puzzle, my methodology is qualitative, based on extensive literature research, document analysis and semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants selected through a 'chain,' non-probability, sampling process (David and Sutton 2004:151-152). Where the relevance and substance of literature research are considered relatively self-explanatory, my perspective on the data collection techniques of document analysis and, especially, interviewing may warrant some more elaboration.

In the context of my research, document analysis entails the study of primary sources particularly relevant to some, or all, of the sub-questions.⁸ Among them are constitutional documents – such as the 1943 Lebanese constitution; the 1989 Ta’if Agreement ending the 1975-1990 civil war and ‘updating’ the constitution; and the 2008 Doha Agreement ending the May 2008 Beirut clashes – that will mainly be relevant with regard to the fourth sub-question. In addition, I used newspaper articles – mainly of the sole Lebanese newspaper in English, the *Daily Star* – that covered the prelude to, and the dynamics and aftermath of, the May events and are thus relevant regarding the second and third sub-questions.⁹ These same sub-questions are partly answered through the analysis of the speeches, or more accurately their transcriptions, that Nasrallah – Hezbollah’s Secretary General – gave before and after the May clashes. Sub-question five is served by the investigation of other speeches Nasrallah gave and Hezbollah’s various election programs.

Concerning the interviews I have conducted, it is important to establish who I intended to interview.¹⁰ First, academics: those people working on issues similar or related to my own subject, who were in the position to not only share their factual information with me, but their analysis of this information as well. Second, I aimed to talk to journalists: the people who were actually on the streets of Beirut during the event and could thus provide me with eye-witness accounts. Third, I hoped to interview politicians: the people – or at least their representatives – making the decisions related to May 2008. Obviously, my primary interest went out to Hezbollah officials and representatives. Although it proved challenging at first, I did in the end – with more than a little Lebanese manoeuvring and patience – manage to talk to the director of Hezbollah’s think tank, Dr. Ali Fayyad, the chief of Hezbollah’s media relations office, Dr. Ibrahim el Mousawi, and Hezbollah MP, Ali Mokdad. I also interviewed several people within the opposition bloc close to Hezbollah. Fourth, I worked to meet representatives of several relevant NGOs and think tanks working on state-building, political reform and political analysis in Lebanon.

For my interviews, I selected thirty-three people through a mixture of ‘snowballing’ and ‘purposive sampling’ (David and Sutton 2004:152). Initially, I listed ten people I planned to

⁸ For an overview of all documents studied, I refer to Appendix A.

⁹ This newspaper has a generally recognized bias in favour of the March 14 camp. However, by taking this partiality into account, copying its perspective can be avoided. Therefore, also concerning the fact that I do not read Arabic and the time frame (or the budget) did not allow for the investigation of Arabic newspapers with the help of a translator, there is considerable added value in this endeavour. Especially since I did manage to interview journalists working for Arabic newspapers and thus accessed their account of the events too.

¹⁰ For an overview of all the people I interviewed, I refer to Appendix A.

interview, an inventory that quickly grew during my first weeks in Beirut. Fortunately, these interviewees provided me with so many new contacts that I was only able to interview half of them. This gave me the luxury of being able to pick and choose among the ever growing database of potential contacts. The interviews I took were semi-structured: I neither engaged in survey-style hyper-structured interviews, nor followed a completely loose, purely 'participant-guided' approach (Legard et al 2003:139). I used an interview guide consisting of several topics that ideally should be, and mostly were, discussed. The exact phrasing and order of the questions, however, was tailored to the interviewee. It seemed wise to approach an American University of Beirut assistant professor and a Hezbollah official with a customized lexicon.

Above, I have motivated my choice of topic, approach, questions, theoretical focus and methodology. In the following present the intricacies and arguments surrounding the Lebanese state, Hezbollah and the May 2008 clashes and the subtle yet undeniable dynamics that connect them in the realm of state-building.

Ahlan wa sahlán, welcome.

CHAPTER 1: PRACTICE AND IMAGE

State-building as an analytical framework

To answer the research puzzle launched in the Introduction, I will participate in various academic debates, both topical and theoretical. In the context of my research question, these debates are intricately linked. This first chapter, however, focuses on the theoretical queries related to my research. Here, I present the theoretical glasses the vision of which will be laid down in the subsequent chapters. The first part of this chapter is dedicated to my position within the theoretical field of state-building and the creation of a tailored theoretical framework. In the second part of the chapter, an operationalizing framework is created from this theoretical framework to provide a bridge between the theory and my specific research. Combined, these theoretical and operationalizing approaches constitute my analytical framework.

1.1 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1.a States and state-building: a theoretical context

Since the early 1980s, political and social scientists have made an effort to “bring the state back in” in an attempt to balance the society-centred ways of explaining politics and governmental activities which were then characteristic of political science and sociology (Skocpol 1985:4). This endeavour was explicitly not aiming to replace a ‘society-centered’ perspective on social and political life with a ‘state-centered’ approach. Rather, it sought to create a new equilibrium between the two. Considering the renown of *Bringing the State Back In*, the authors seem to have been successful in their quest. However, the need to reinforce the explanatory value of the state remains: “Practically and conceptually, the ‘state’ is again under siege. Less than two decades after its ‘rediscovery’ by scholars, the central unit of analysis in international relations and comparative politics seems once again in crisis” (Milliken and Krause 2002:753).

One of the scholars most dedicated to keep academic focus on the state is Joel Migdal. He stresses that to revive the state as a constructive analytical concept, theorists should not see the state as the antipole of society, but instead embrace the state as “part of society, with many characteristics not very different of those of other social organizations” (Migdal 2001:63). Moreover, we need to move away from teleological assumptions about the

inevitability of Western ideal-types of the state (Migdal 1988). The state is “a work in progress” and always the object of development, but this need not be a linear development (Milliken and Krause 2002:753). Often, a tension is conceived between the state as a *concept* and state-building as a *process*. Whereas the state is often associated with security and stability, state-building is frequently linked to unpredictability and instability. This contradiction, however, is misleading, because the idea of the state as a fixed object proves untenable when following Migdal in understanding the state as interactive and dynamic. Thus, the state, in theory and reality, cannot be understood outside its particular state-building context.¹¹

Traditionally, the point of departure of any attempt to define the state is the “Weberian pinnacle in which a rationalized central bureaucracy enjoys a monopoly of organized violence over a given territory and population” (Milliken and Krause 2002:755).¹² Most definitions – either agreeing or disagreeing with, but nonetheless building on, Weber – center around the functions and foundations of states. Uri Davis, for example, defines the state by arguing that all states rest on the three interrelated foundations of law, conscription and taxation (2000:56). Milliken and Krause, conversely, focus on the three core functions of the state as providing security, representation and welfare (2002:756). In this respect, the distinction between the constitutive domain of the state – related to issues like a state monopoly of violence, the rule of law and the functioning of an administrative and fiscal system – and the output domain – the range of public services that a state provides – made by Verena Fritz and Rocha Menocal is constructive (2007). It satisfactorily captures the interaction between the foundations (or constitutive domain) and functions (or output domain) of states (2007:5).¹³ This interaction takes place in relation to society and materializes in a political system, a notion that will be addressed later in this chapter.

¹¹ One could argue that state-building is part of what ‘the state’ entails, but for the sake of a dynamic perspective, I conversely propose to perceive every state as a stage in its specific state-building process.

¹² Although there is a risk, as assistant professor Karim el Mufti noted in our interview on 26 March 2009, of over-centralizing the Weberian perspective on the state, I do not agree with his position that Weber’s is a useless definition in Lebanon’s case. I think the Weberian definition is broad enough to serve to establish whether a certain entity is a state without excluding non-Western or pluralist societies.

¹³ A similar distinction surfaces in many conceptualizations of the state, if often indicated through a different terminology. Frances Stewart, for example, distinguishes between three manifestations of state failure – (a) authority failure; (b) service failure; and (c) legitimacy failure – that correspond with the constitutive, output and political system categories. (2008 in: Overbeek et al. 2009:2)

The problem with some of the definitions presented above, however, is that they present an ideal that does not suit the reality of most modern states, particularly in the ‘third world.’¹⁴ To acknowledge this difficulty, I follow Migdal’s definition of the state as

a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by 1) the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory, and 2) the actual practices of its multiple parts (2001:16).

This definition uniquely recognizes the tension between the *de jure* and the *de facto* reality of states. The second part of the definition refers to the actual practice of the state. It draws attention to what the state *de facto is*, namely the sum of a constitutive domain, an output domain and a political system. Thus, this definition expresses the need to explore the functioning, or dysfunctioning, of these various elements of the state. The first part of Migdal’s definition introduces the concept of the image of the state, which entails both the perspective on the state and the ambitions for the state that state actors have. Such an image is often inspired by Weber and reflects what the state – its constitutive and output domains and its political system – *should* be and is *de jure* presented to be. Additionally, this part of the definition links the state with society: ‘image’ does not refer only to the image projected on the state by statesmen, it also relates to the perspective that societal actors have on the state and their ideals and ambitions for the state.

Some definitions of the state explicitly address the *de facto* practice of the state, like Katia Papagianni’s that centres around several roles the state can play (in Overbeek et al. 2009:6). Other definitions of the state include just the *de jure* image of a state. Babafeni Akinrinade, for instance, defines the state as “an entity having exclusive jurisdiction with regard to its territory and personal jurisdiction over its nationals” (2009:14 in Overbeek et al. 2009:5). Then there are definitions that stress the societal images of the state, “the relationship between the institutions of governance and the territory’s citizens or population” (Call and Wyeth 2008:7 in Van der Molen and Stel 2009:4). I approach the state through Migdal’s definition because it is the only one I found that integrates the reality of the state and the variety of images applied to that reality.

¹⁴ This touches upon the ‘logic of importation’ Bertrand Badie writes extensively about. He observes that the forced implementation of Western political system in the third world “designates the transfer into a given society of a model or practice of a political, economic, or social nature, that was invented and developed in a historical context foreign to it and that derives from a fundamentally different social order” (2000:91).

This definition of the state can be further elucidated by a related definition of *state-building* as the state's ability to accumulate and institutionalize social control. State-building is an attempt to make the practice of the state correspond as much as possible with a specific image of the state. It refers to a process in which state actors try – but not necessarily succeed – to institutionalize procedures and extend institutions. State-building, however, is shaped not only by statesmen, but also by other societal organizations. It is a long-term, non-linear and conflict-ridden process that is contested and reframed by a multitude of actors and developments within society (Fritz and Menocal 2007:13).¹⁵ States are thus not only “formations but are constantly *becoming* as a result of these struggles over social control“ (Migdal 2001:49-50). Social control, according to Migdal, is the currency societal actors compete over and that allows them to influence state-building. Such social control manifests itself in three ‘markers’: compliance, participation and legitimacy (Migdal 2001:52).

1.1.b State-in-society: contextualizing the context

Thus, the capacity for state-building is related to the structure of society (Migdal 1988:33). This implies, as Kees Biekart stresses, that state and society are two sides of the same coin and need to be theorized in that sense.¹⁶ The relation between state and society is of specific consequence in the context of violent conflict, because state-society interrelations shape forms of violent collective action (Skocpol 1985:25). When recognizing the state as more than an arena within which societal actors pursue their goals, but rather as one of these actors in a societal arena, how to ascertain the various sorts of interaction between the two spheres (and how to assess their conflict proneness) becomes a crucial question.

To answer this question, ‘society’ needs to be defined, something Migdal surprisingly abstains from. He merely vaguely establishes society as an abstract field within which the contact between ‘societal forces’ takes place (Migdal 2001:107). However, noting the general lack of clear definitions on society, Migdal is not alone in this deficiency. I propose to define society as the arena in which political, social, religious and cultural actors and structures interact and collide. This definition launches the issue of inclusion and exclusion into the theoretical framework, since it generates the question which issues, actors, structures and interests in society are allowed to participate in the process of state-building. Who decides on,

¹⁵ Although this process is always affected by outside actors and developments, here it does not refer to state building as an externally engineered intervention by donor organizations (Van der Molen and Stel 2009:6).

¹⁶ During the workshop *Intervention and Peace-building. Models of state building and society building in different post-conflict contexts*. 29 January 2009. Clingendael Institute, The Hague, the Netherlands.

and outlines, their inclusion or exclusion? In what way will they still be able to influence the process if not acknowledged or included to begin with? How are actors, in turn, influenced by their inclusion or exclusion? Because they determine much of the state-society dynamic, these considerations are of extreme importance in the analysis of any state-building process.

There are many forms the relationship between state and society can take. These relationships between societal forces are mostly recursive (Migdal 2001:128). Badie might be right when he poses that a state “derives part of its identity from its ability [...] to construct itself apart from society,” but the greater part of both the state’s images and practice are shaped in relation to society (2000:49). My starting point here is that the social control needed to build a state is constantly shaped, disputed and dispersed among a variety of societal actors, including the state (Overbeek et al. 2009:15). Each of these actors seeks to mobilize people and resources and aims to impose a set of rules in order to model the practice of the state to match its ideal image of the state. In this process, in addition to state institutions, non-state – ‘twilight’ – institutions often emerge, which sometimes support the state, but oppose the state at other times (Lund 2008 in Overbeek et al. 2009:15). Two main types of state-society interaction can be distinguished. First, states influence society. As David Laitin convincingly shows, state actions – if pursued by a sufficiently strong state apparatus – can shape long-term political cleavages within a society and structure the hierarchy of socio-cultural divides (1985:312). Second, societies influence states and provide the state with both support and constraints. The survival of local control in the form of communal strongmen, for example, influences the state by undermining a strong political center and leaving the state struggling for consolidation rather than development (Migdal 2001:54-56). I shall both analyse how the Lebanese state-building process has influenced Hezbollah (a significant societal actor) and what roles the Lebanese state plays facing societal challenges (from, particularly, Hezbollah).

This notion of societal pressure on the state leads to the eroded, but to some extent useful, concept of states-within-states that indicates the transformation of societal actors into state-like actors:

States-within-states can be placed within the larger category of sub-state groups, units inside state borders that operate beyond state control and challenge state authority. Sub-state groups are *below* the state but still part of the state entity - they require the resources of the state to survive. (Kingston in Davis 2007:11)

Often selected parameters for states-within-states are the extension of force, the control over a certain amount of territory, the capacity to generate revenue and a functioning administration and infrastructure (Davis 2007:52-53).

States-within-states are narrowly related to another useful model, that of the fragile state. My analytical framework is not specifically geared towards explaining state fragility. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to notice that when a certain equilibrium between the state and other societal actors gets unhinged, as can be argued is the case with a state-within-a-state, this points towards the vulnerability of that state. Such a 'fragile state' is, according to Ali Fayyad, unable to govern the country's territory, or to ensure the safety of its citizens; it cannot preserve and protect the state's legal system; and fails to provide public services, or to create appropriate conditions for their provision (2008:7-16). Moreover, because the political system loses its ability as a channel for conflict-resolution, the state will not be able to prevent conflicts from evolving into violence. Thus, institutional weakness or dysfunction is an important condition for state fragility, and for violent conflict.

The practice of state-building is shaped by the collision of the differing state-images various societal actors pursue. Neither the options available for tailoring and strengthening state institutions in the constitutive domain, the output domain and the political system, nor the pace and direction of the process aimed at moulding these institutions, can be satisfactorily analysed without taking into account the influence society has on the state and the relation the state aims to have with society. This means that any exclusive focus on the societal actors and issues included in the process at the expense of those excluded, is detrimental to a holistic analysis, as it uncritically follows, rather than questions, the status quo. Subsequently, there is a tension between the need for a stable state and a parallel need to permanently renegotiate the form and functioning – i.e. the practice – of the state in relation to society.

1.1.c The political system: the organization of states within societies

State-building is thus the result of a drive by various state and non-state societal actors to shape the practice of the state as a response to the images these actors have of the existing state and in light of images they cherish concerning an ideal state. It is therefore crucial to place state-building in the context of state-society interactions. Below I establish how such interactions are formalized and institutionalized, how the state might be organized in relation to society.

The core of the organization of state-society interactions is, many political scientists argue, the so-called ‘social pact’ that refers to granting a governing regime the right and capacity – i.e. the social control – to exercise its authority (Fritz and Menocal 2007:12). Regarding state-society interaction, there are two ways of analysing states (Skocpol 1985:8). The first is concerned with the capacities of states to realize goals and sees states as agents. The second approach looks at the impact of states on the content and workings of politics and sees states as structures. I focus on the latter: states are important because of the goal oriented activities of state officials, but, in the context of my research, the state is even more important because of how “its organizational configurations [...] affect political culture, encourage some kinds of group formation and collective political actions (but not others), and make possible the raising of some political issues (but not others)” (Skocpol 1985:21). Thus, state-building can shed light on how the changes in the practice and images of states affect certain paths of action of particular societal actors in relation to specific events.

A social pact manifests itself in a ‘political system’: a negotiated agreement binding together state and society and regulating their interaction by offering a political power-sharing arrangement. A political system is meant to provide the necessary social control for the state, by ensuring society’s compliance with, participation in, and legitimation of the state. A political system is partly determined by a ‘regime’ or ‘political culture,’ the governing set of political standards (or rules of the game) at a certain point in time (Maktabi 2000:147). For example, the social pact and political regime often demand the creation of a political system that respects Montesquieu’s *trias politica*. This principle marks a separation between the legislative, executive and judicial powers where the parliament makes the laws, the government puts them into operation and the court interprets them (Spindler 2000:1). The executive is thus, among other things, concerned with managing the output domain of the state and the judiciary, *inter alia*, upholds the constitutive domain of the state. Both, however, can only function by the grace of an effective legislative that is the core of any political system.

A useful way to distinguish between different political systems is Nils Butenschon’s division between singularism and pluralism (2000:17). What separates these from each other is whether the organizational principle of the state is based on collective or individual membership. Pluralism then refers to “a conception of the national community as composed of separate subgroups without programmatic predominance to any of these groups” (Butenschon 2000:22). Through such a system, the state facilitates politics of compromise

that give different groups a say in the political decision-making process and focuses on inter-group bargaining. Within the spectre of pluralist political systems, David Horowitz distinguishes two approaches: the centripetal and the consociational (2008). Both accept the existence of 'ethnic' cleavages and attempt to manage their effects. The centripetal approach is majority based, but aims at inter-ethnic governments by allocating electoral incentives to parties that are willing to appeal to voters outside their ethnic constituency (Horowitz 2008:1216). The pluralist political system most closely resembling the Lebanese case, however, is the consociational approach in which: "Consensual democracy replaces majoritarian democracy, and opposition is necessarily located inside government. Group vetoes on ethnically divisive issues mean that much government action is precluded or accomplished only when veto players can be compensated" (Horowitz 2008:1216).

These various political systems not only "conduct decision-making, coercive, and adjudicative activities in different ways, but also give rise to various conceptions of the meaning and methods of 'politics' itself, conceptions that influence the behaviour of all groups and classes in national societies" (Skocpol 1985:22-23). Before one of these political systems becomes embedded in society in that way, however, various phases have to be passed in a process of normalization and internalization. This rooting of a political system in society can be considered a part of state-building. Ultimately, the specificities of a political system, and its societal anchoring as the organizing mechanism of the state, could very well be the most indicative aspects of the conflict proneness of a process of state-building. Even more so because of the inherent tension between two functions of political systems, state-building and power sharing:

State-building calls for considerable concentration of power, authority, autonomy and competence in state political and bureaucratic institutions. Democratisation [but also other forms of (communal) power sharing], on the other hand, has an inherent tendency to disperse power and slow down decision-making processes through the creation of multiple veto players and checks and balances. (Fritz and Menocal 2007:39)

1.1.d Stability versus flexibility and inclusion versus exclusion

The main concepts of the theoretical framework presented above are summarized in Figure 1:

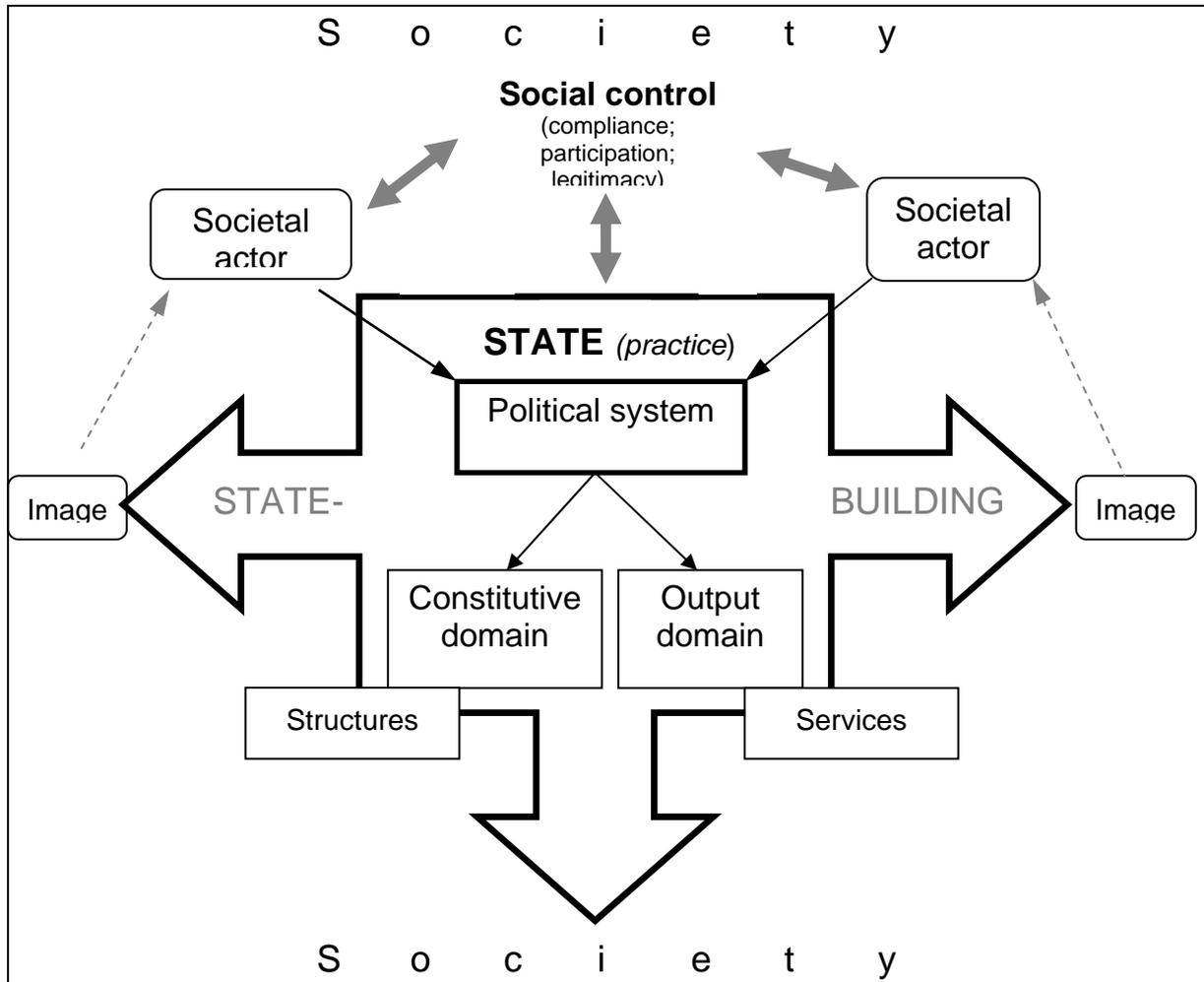


Figure 1: A theoretical framework of state-building.

Related to this framework are the dichotomies between a need for stability and the necessity of change, and the problematic of inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, stability is needed to generate and regulate constructive interaction between the state and other societal actors. On the other hand, room for change is necessary to guarantee that the relationship between state and society retains its legitimacy. Within a state-building process, therefore, relatively static periods will be followed by periods of major transformation and vice versa. In line with Migdal's definition of the state, the dichotomy between stability and change needs to be addressed with regard to practice as well as image. With regard to the former, I look at how instances of change and moments of stability have interacted in the shaping of Lebanon's

constitutive domain, its output domain and its political system and I investigate how this dynamic has influenced Hezbollah. Concerning the latter, I mainly explore to what extent the Lebanese state is perceived as a static or malleable reality by Hezbollah and how this has been changing during Lebanon's state-building process.

A logic similar to that of the stability and change dilemma influences the dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, it seems preferable to include a multitude of actors, interests and issues in any development shaping the state (especially in a pluralist system managing an ethnically heterogeneous society like Lebanon). This, however, severely slows down decision-making processes. To prevent such paralysis, on the other hand, the exclusion of some of the actors and issues thus seems necessary. I define the state as part of society, but while all societal actors influence processes of state-building, this does not mean these actors are all explicitly included in state-building. Again, both the practice of and images on this dilemma need to be assessed. I thus investigate how and when, in practice, Hezbollah has been included and excluded in the Lebanese state-building process. Additionally, I explore how this development has shaped Hezbollah's image of the current Lebanese state as well as its vision for an ideal Lebanese state.

The state-in-society approach furthered here, contains elements of collective action theory – as presented by, for example, Anthony Oberschall – because the capabilities of societal actors to exercise influence on state-building depend on their potential to mobilize social control (2004). This relates to the practice of state-building. My approach towards state-building also holds aspects of Vivienne Jabri's critical discourse analysis theory, because the struggle that is state-building entails varying meaning-making projects (1996). These projects are influenced by – and in turn shape – the images societal actors have concerning the direction of state-building. The combination of these two theories is possible in the overarching theoretical current of structurationism, as presented by Anthony Giddens (1984). Structurationism perceives social life as taking place at the juncture of structures and agency. On the one hand, people and their actions are seen to be influenced by the social and political structures institutionalized in their world. On the other hand, these structures are created and reinforced by people's agency and are thus not static. It is the dialectic between the two – structures influencing agency and agency influencing structures – that can help explain the dynamics addressed by social science. Structurationism also incorporates the notion of social control furthered by Migdal. Giddens' concept of 'power,' the transformative capacity of agents concerning structures, signifies the same ability of societal actors to influence state-

building. Such power not only manifests itself through coercion, but “is typically at its most intense and durable when running silently through the repetition of institutionalized practices” (Giddens 1985:9). State-building, a state aiming to accumulate and institutionalize social control, then, is shaped by existing societal and political structures as well as by the agency of societal actors that seek to influence state-building. With regard to my research, the relevant structure is the Lebanese state, while the main element generating agency is Hezbollah.

Lastly, some attention regarding terminology is in order. While state-building is often equated with policy, I use it as a theory. I cast state-building as a perspective rather than an objective. For me, the question is not what kind of state Lebanon should be building after the civil war or how the Lebanese should do this. The questions (multiple) are how this history affects the functioning and the development of the state and how this state-building dynamic in turn influences current political and social events and helps determine the actions and considerations of the actors in it – in my case the role Hezbollah played in the outburst of violent conflict in May 2008. It is my objective to use state-building as a tool to help explain a specific event and the role of a specific actor. I nevertheless hold on the term state-building, laden as it is with connotations I do not subscribe to, rather than talk about ‘stateness’ or ‘state-society interaction.’ Because, first, only state-building has the inherent reference to a development needed to explain my case – stateness can come in various degrees, but has no inbuilt suggestion of process. And, second, because only state-building provides the tangible handhold needed to anchor analysis – something riskily lacking with the fleeting notion of state-society interaction.

1.2 AN OPERATIONALIZING FRAMEWORK

I have defined the state as a dialectic between practice and image. The practice of the state entails the functioning the constitutive domain, the output domain and the political system. The image of the state refers to the various ways state and non-state societal actors perceive the practical reality of a state, as well as their ideals for the state. State-building, then, is the attempt, by a multitude of actors, to synthesize the practice of the state with the images of the state cherished by these actors. In order to do so, societal actors – including the state – vie for social control. Social control consists of the realization of compliance with, participation in and legitimation of institutions and customs (either belonging to the state or to other societal organizations). State-building is thus inherently part of societal dynamics. It can be further understood by looking at which actors and issues are included, or excluded, in the state-

building process and by assessing which elements of the practice and the images of the state have been flexible and which have been stable. Theorized in this way, state-building can be placed in the context of structurationism, a theory that focuses on the dialectic between structures – the constitutive domain, the output domain and the political system of the state – and agents – state and non-state societal actors. In line with this theoretical framework, below I present an operationalizing framework.

When selecting tangible parameters to guide my research into a specific case of state-building, I tackle both the practice and images of state-building. The first step of my operationalizing framework concerns the practice of state-building and aims to determine how the output and constitutive domains of the state function and change and how the political system works and transforms.

With regard to the constitutive domain, Weber's hallmarks provide a good reference. I look at the existence and development of the state's territorial delimitation; its monopoly of violence; of a state-implemented rule of law; and of the state's administrative and fiscal system. How have these issues changed? When have they been flexible and when have they proved stable? Who were the actors included and excluded in realizing them? Have they developed towards or away from enforcement by the state?

Considering the output domain, I selected three indicators from a broader spectrum of social services: health care, education and utility provision. The latter refers to the provision of electricity and drinking water, the collection of garbage, the construction and maintenance of infrastructure and related services. These indicators are of specific relevance in Lebanon, where the literature showed them to be subject of fervent debate. How does the provision of these services function? Has it changed or been stable? Is the provision of health care, education and utilities monopolized by the state or is it fractionalized, with multiple organizations providing them? Which actors have been included and which have been excluded from service provision? And in what direction is the output domain developing, towards or away from centralization by the state?

Regarding the political system, following Fritz and Menocal, I decided on three indicators to determine its functioning and the direction of its development (2007:60). The first is the constitution. To what degree is the allocation of power between various societal actors been settled in a constitution? What has been included and what is excluded? In what way has been

or is this settlement stable or flexible? Another indicator are elections. Who are the actors participating in elections and how have they varied? What are the issues mobilizing political parties and people for elections and how have they been changing? How have the rules and practices that guide elections developed? A final indicator of state-building in the realm of the political system is political mobilization. Are people mobilized through political state institutions, such as parliament or cabinet, or outside these institutions? Has this been stable or flexible? Who have been included in these institutions and who has been excluded?

These indicators say something about the current reality of the elements of the state, whether they are flexible or stable; inclusive or exclusive; fractionalized or monopolized. More important, they reveal the direction the state is going and thereby indicate the nature of the state-building process. However, these indicators do not yet explain why a state-building process takes the specific shape and direction it does. To be able to yield such an explanation, the operationalizing framework has to address the perspectives on state-building that societal actors involved in state-building hold, as well as these actors' ideal images of the state. Thus, step two of my operationalizing framework combines the indicators presented above with Migdal's markers for social control: compliance, the degree to which societal actors acknowledge the state; participation, to what extent actors actively take part in the state; and legitimacy, to what degree societal actors positively appreciate the state.

The direction of state-building influences the images of the state that societal actors embrace. These images – perspectives on the existing state and hopes concerning its future form – subsequently determine the degree of compliance, participation and legitimacy these societal actors grant the state. This, in turn, determines the degree of social control a state can muster and shapes the direction of the state-building process. It is important to note that different levels of compliance, participation and legitimacy will be bestowed on different elements of the state: a societal actor may, for example, comply with the constitutive domain of the state, participate to some degree in the output domain of the state, and yet grant no legitimacy to the political system of the state.¹⁷ What is more, within the output domain, for instance, a societal

¹⁷ The OECD distinguishes various forms of legitimacy, that illustrate how different forms of legitimacy are given to different domains of the state. Embedded legitimacy derives from prior state-formation and applies to the constitutive domain. Performance legitimacy derives from effective service delivery and is related to the output domain. Process legitimacy derives from an effective political system with a satisfactory power-sharing arrangement and pertains to the political system. (2008:17 in Van der Molen en Stel 2009:7)

actor can comply with state provision of health care, while simultaneously refusing to participate in, or grant legitimacy to, education services offered by the state.

The indicators that help assess the interaction between the practice of state-building and the various images of the state held by socio-political actors, are recapitulated in figure 2.

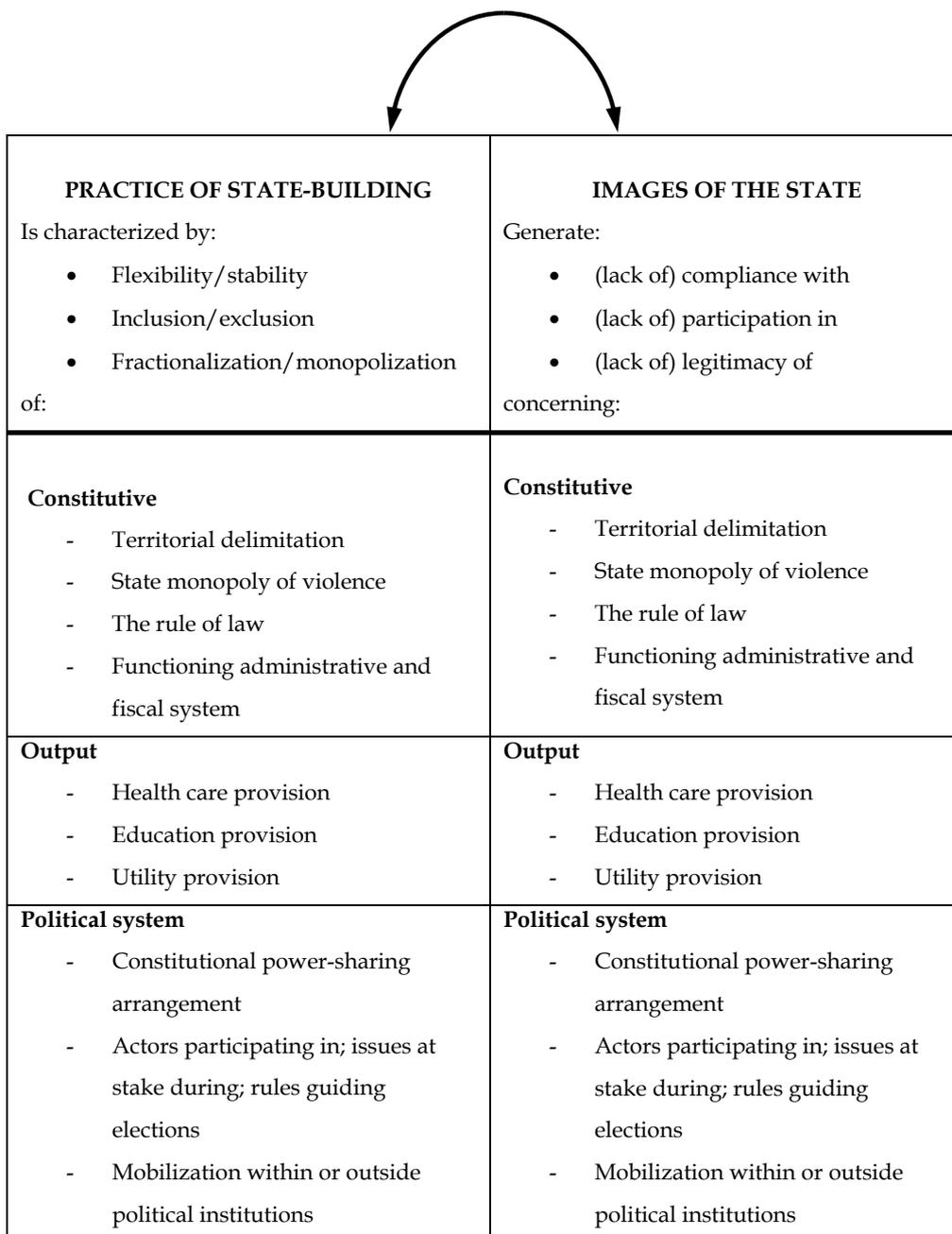


Figure 2: An operationalizing framework of state-building.

The analytical framework laid down in this chapter, provides the leading theme throughout the remainder of my thesis. In Chapter 2, I analyse the May 2008 Beirut clashes in light of this framework and determine upon which of indicators of the practice and image of state-building the event touches. In Chapter 3, I address the practice of the Lebanese state-building process. Additionally, I evaluate how this practice has been shaped by exploring to what degree societal actors comply with, participate in, and grant legitimacy to the state. In Chapter 4, I highlight a specific image concerning the Lebanese state-building process, namely that of Hezbollah. I assess in what way Hezbollah complies with, participates in and grants legitimacy to the Lebanese state and how this is related to its perspective on the current Lebanese state and its ambitions for a future Lebanese state. The interaction between this practice of Lebanon's state-building process and Hezbollah's image of and position in this process allows me, in the Conclusion, to explain the role Hezbollah has played during the May 2008 Beirut clashes.

CHAPTER 2: COUP D'ÉTAT OR LANCING THE BOIL?

*Hezbollah's role in the May 2008 Beirut clashes*¹⁸

Surrounded by a ring of mountains like a concert band shell, Beirut has great acoustics. So the roiling street battles on May 8 between Hizballah militiamen and supporters of the Lebanese government echoed through the city with a drumroll of rocket explosions and a chorus of machine-gun fire that sounded like the symphonic overture to civil war. When an early-summer thunderstorm began that night, it seemed as if the heavens themselves were taking up the ominous theme. (Butters 2008a:1)

Chapter 1 elaborated on the context of state-building that influences on the ground events. In this chapter, I present such an event: the May 2008 Beirut clashes. I determine the nature and dynamics of the clashes, thereby answering my second sub-question. Also, I establish the role Hezbollah played in the event, addressing sub-question three. Before moving on to analyze the event, it is important to establish what actually happened. This, however, is not as clear-cut as it seems. The landscapes of media, politics and even academia in Lebanon are polarized and biased and the troubles of journalism in the heat of battle are many.¹⁹ There seems, for example, to be a general failure to distinguish between cadres, members and supporters of Hezbollah, while not any bearded guy wearing a yellow bandana represents Hezbollah's party line.

2.1 PROLOGUE: POLITICAL CRISIS

The May 2008 Beirut clashes should be seen as the climax of a long episode of political conflict. It is within this political crisis that preceded the May events, that structural explanations for the clashes can be found. Due to the restricted scope of this thesis, however, an extensive discussion of this crisis can only be offered in Appendix B. Below, the core issues and events of this episode are analysed.

There were three main concerns pinning the two political camps in Lebanon – March 8 and March 14 – against each other. First, there was the issue of Hezbollah's weapons. Since the

¹⁸ Although the most serious fighting occurred in the Chouf Mountains, due to the scope of this thesis I focus on the events in Beirut, since these are most directly relevant regarding my state-building perspective.

¹⁹ Author's interview Human Right's Watch researcher Nadim Houry, 9 April 2009.

2000 Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon, March 14 – spearheaded by Hariri’s Future Movement and dominating the government – argued there was no need for Hezbollah to remain armed. March 8, on the other hand, found Hezbollah’s weapons were still needed as a deterrent against Israeli aggression. This matter gained renewed significance after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, in which both sides saw a reconfirmation of their stand. Second, there was heated disagreement about the international tribunal set up to try Rafiq Hariri’s assassins. For March 14, the realization of this tribunal was an absolute priority. March 8, however, criticized it as an unwanted Western influence and promoted a national court instead. Third, the two camps disagreed about a candidate for the presidency, which resulted in a presidential vacuum that lasted for over a year. March 8 then started to press for a ‘national unity cabinet’ in which the March 8 opposition would have a guaranteed representation of more than one third of the seats in parliament, with which it would be able to veto important government decisions. Initially, attempts were made to overcome these disagreements through state institutions, but these proved unsuccessful. The crisis then escalated and spilled into the streets, where followers from both sides engaged in violent clashes over neighbourhood control and participated in mass demonstrations.

The theoretical framework presented in Chapter 1 helps to further understand the crisis. The nature of the constitutive domain of the Lebanese state seems a structural determinant of the political crisis. Although Lebanon’s external borders are relatively undisputed, its internal borders are not, something apparent in territorial turf fighting by sectarian groups. The crisis revolved around the issue of a state monopoly of violence, too. March 14 framed its objections against Hezbollah as being about the sovereignty of the state and the illegitimacy of armed non-state actors. Conversely, Hezbollah sought to protect its armed position in the country, implicitly aiming to expand the notion of a monopoly of violence from including only the state to including both state and resistance. The crisis also concerned the political system, as Hezbollah introduced idea of the national unity cabinet as a constitutional requirement. Hezbollah thereby aimed to change, if not the constitutional power-sharing arrangement itself, than at least its interpretation. Additionally, political mobilization increasingly took place outside state institutions, potentially signalling their erosion. Lastly, although the output domain does not seem to have been at stake in the political crisis, the competition between Hezbollah and March 14-led state organs during the relief and reconstruction work after the 2006 war points towards a fractionalization of the provision of social services.

2.2 WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

In this context of expanding societal unrest, political paranoia and paralyzed institutions, on 5 May 2008, the Lebanese government took three related, and quite fateful, decisions. First, the government reallocated Wafiq Shouqair, the security chief at Lebanon's international airport; second, it announced an examination of the surveillance system of the airport; and, third, it ordered an investigation into Hezbollah's 'illegal' communications network and the trial of those responsible for it. On 7 May, the March 8 opposition co-opted a cost-of-living strike as a platform to protest against these government measures. During the strike, armed men supposedly belonging to the various parties associated with the opposition blocked the main traffic routes. Fighting then erupted between March 14 and March 8 gunmen in West Beirut. That afternoon, Nasrallah declared the government measures a 'declaration of war' on the resistance against Israel. A response speech by Hariri in which the infamous measures were partially withdrawn was all but ignored and the fighting resumed during the evening, when opposition troops overran positions defended by government supporters. On 9 May, West-Beirut was under the control of the March 8 fighters and the residences of March 14 prominents were surrounded.²⁰ That evening, the opposition fighters handed over their positions and captives to the Lebanese army. In the weekend, fighting spread throughout the country, specifically to Tripoli and the Chouf area, where brutal combat ensued.²¹ On 15 May the government and the opposition agreed to a 'National Dialogue' and five days later an official agreement was reached in Qatar.



Figure 3: Roadblock made of garbage bins.
Photo: Nicolien Kegels.

²⁰ See Map 1 of Beirut in Appendix C.

²¹ See Map 2 of Lebanon in Appendix C.

2.2.a Provocation or miscommunication? The decisions triggering the clashes

That the 5 May government decisions were able to trigger such massive fighting was due to the crisis the country was in already, but was also because of the hidden implications of these decisions. Concerning the reshuffling of Shouqair, who was widely recognized as ‘pro-Hezbollah,’ two things are noteworthy. On the one hand, constitutionally, the government has the right to “appoint, dismiss, and accept the resignation of state employees in accordance with the law.” On the other hand, the decision has a less apparent significance, as expressed by Heiko Wimmen:

It is almost impossible even for second-tier politicians to move unnoticed, in particular within a state institution such as the airport, where the Lebanese system of sectarian allotment of state employment makes sure that supporters of all political groups are present on all levels – unless, of course, the reassignment was part of a larger campaign to systematically replace opposition supporters with government loyalists in key state institutions (2008:4).

In this sense, the opposition perceived this matter as affecting not just an individual, but the communitarian balance of the country.²²

However, the government’s measures, and Hezbollah’s response to them, were inspired by strategy as much as principal, as illustrated by the decision to investigate the airport security system. It was a public secret that Hezbollah had installed cameras at the airport in order to monitor the runways. Hezbollah does so because its headquarters are situated in the southern suburbs of Beirut bordering the airport and are thus vulnerable to an Israeli attack.²³ The government, however, reasoned that these cameras might also be used to target planes carrying March 8’s political opponents and thus acted to remove them.

The third decision targeted Hezbollah’s independent landline telephone network that allows the organization to communicate free from Israeli or government tapping (and so, for example, helped Hezbollah win the 2006 war against Israel) (Blanford 2008). Before, the government recognized the network as part of the national resistance and thus legitimate. But in May 2008, the cabinet claimed things had changed because Hezbollah had expanded the network to areas not directly relevant to the resistance (Schenker 2008a). Moreover, the government accused Hezbollah of presenting a challenge to the sovereignty of the Lebanese state by competing with the state over revenues from private cellular lines (Wimmen 2008:5).

²² Author’s interview with political advisor of Amal, Ali Hamdan, 16 April 2009.

²³ Author’s interview with journalist Robert Fisk, 11 March 2009.

The statement that those responsible for the network would be prosecuted, which was perceived by Hezbollah as an arrest warrant for Nasrallah, further aggravated matters.²⁴

In retrospect, the question surfaces as to why the government issued these evidently provocative measures. As the International Crisis Group notes: “While these decisions could have been taken a long time ago, they were not, reflecting an unwritten *modus vivendi* between March 14 forces and Hizbollah” (2008:3). So was this a calculated challenge, as Jean Shaoul suggests (2008)? On some level, it certainly appears so. Journalist Mahmoud Harb offers that the government saw a confrontation as inevitable and opted to have it on its own terms.²⁵ The confession of March 14 leader Walid Joumblatt that he deliberately pushed his allies to take the decisions, substantiates this position.²⁶ Furthermore, it seems that the government was falsely allayed by Hezbollah’s previous refusal to react to provocations with violence out of fear for *fitna* – inter-religious strife between Sunnis and Shi’ites.²⁷

2.2.b Dynamics

The May 2008 Beirut clashes were unprecedented in post-civil war Lebanon. Never before were “militants openly in control of pro-government areas of West Beirut” (Butters 2008b:1). The city was shocked when it “heard real shooting, real bombardment.”²⁸ But who shot and bombarded whom?

The opposition, as defined by Hezbollah’s el Mousawi, mainly comprises the Amal Movement, the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP) and Hezbollah itself.²⁹ Hezbollah clearly was the one indispensable actor within the opposition forces: it led the operation, planned and fought the decisive battles, and coordinated the other groups.³⁰ Nevertheless, after the first few hours of heavy fighting, Hezbollah regulars apparently limited themselves to coordinating the snipers and manning the walkie-talkies.³¹ This dynamic is explained divergently by my interviewees. Those related to March 14 are convinced that Hezbollah hides behind its allies, washing its hands, while “we know very well that they wouldn’t move a millimetre without

²⁴ Author’s interview with Hezbollah MP Ali Mokdad, 21 April and 1 May 2009.

²⁵ Author’s interview, 25 March 2009.

²⁶ Author’s interview, 23 March 2009.

²⁷ Author’s interview with Fida Itani, 22 March 2009.

²⁸ Author’s interview with researcher Rabih Haber, 25 March 2009.

²⁹ Author’s interview, 23 April 2009.

³⁰ Author’s interview with Notre Dame University assistant professor Simon Haddad, 30 March 2009.

³¹ Author’s interview with former International Crisis Group researcher Patrick Haenni, 7 May 2009.

Hezbollah's consent or Hezbollah's turning a blind eye on them."³² March 8 supporters conversely argue that Hezbollah in fact controlled the other fighters and thus prevented serious excesses.³³ The truth lies in between: while without Hezbollah, other opposition groups would not have been able to stage a fight like the one in May 2008, Hezbollah's presence indeed inspired more discipline than normally shown by these groups.



Figure 4: Damage after gunfights. Note the SSNP flag. Photo: Nicolien Kegels.

Having squared the opposition side, an even more ambiguous query emerges at the side of the 'pro-government Sunni gunmen' (Blanford 2008:1). Since it was not the army fighting for the government, who were the men that did defend the government's position? Robert Fisk told me that the Murabitoun, the Sunni militia active during the civil war, re-surfaced.³⁴ Others talked about a new Sunni militia under the guise of a security company. Then again, March 14 leader Hariri assured me that the existence of March 14 militias was nothing more than "a lie Hezbollah started to believe itself."³⁵ Nevertheless, Borzou Daraghi and Raed Rafei convincingly show the rise of the Secure Plus company over the year 2007 "to an organization with 3,000 employees and unofficial associates on the payroll, mostly poor Sunnis from the country's north," and ties between this organization and Hariri's Future Movement seem highly likely (2008:1). Interestingly, this means that the May clashes were not a fight between a state-actor and a non-state actor, but a confrontation between two coalitions of (armed) extra-state societal actors, March 14 and March 8. This refutes the March 14 government line that, probably as a result of the devastating defeat of the pro-government fighters, denies the battle ever took place (Wimmen 2008:12). The fact remains,

³² Author's interview with Democratic Renewal Movement youth secretary Ayman Mhanna, 18 March 2009.

³³ Author's interview with Hezbollah think-tank director Ali Fayyad, 15 April 2009.

³⁴ Author's interview.

³⁵ Author's interview, 9 April 2009.

however, that the pro-government combatants were no match for the opposition – leading a Hezbollah fighter to dub the operation a ‘fieldtrip’ (Butters 2008a:1).

Having addressed the parties that did fight, analysing the party that did not, appears equally telling. The Lebanese army was present but refrained from acting, other than taking over captives taken by Hezbollah and preventing them from re-entering the battle (Daraghi and Rafei 2008). While there were reported cases where the army facilitated the March 8 combatants – delivering messages for Hezbollah and clearing streets when asked to do so – the stories of the army actively supporting Hezbollah are unconvincing. Overall, the army mostly just did not do its job.

Behind this condoning army, Hezbollah’s strategy was, I propose, based on three tiers: clear targeting, swift execution and careful planning. The opposition was relatively disciplined – although brutalities did occur – in going after specific objectives. These objectives were mainly to temporarily shut down the vast Future party media network; to isolate March 14 government leaders; and to raid the offices of several ‘private’ security companies.³⁶ Essentially, the operation was a rout, aimed at fighting armed government supporters rather than civilians.³⁷ The remarkable speed of the operation, Wimmen notes, was crucial: “it means that they caught everybody unaware, that everybody was faced with established facts [...]. Before anyone could go in and do anything and condemn them, they had already, first, withdrawn from the ground and, second, started a process of reconciliation.”³⁸ Furthermore, Hezbollah planned the operation well in advance and had been scouting and expanding its presence in West Beirut for months.³⁹

Despite Hezbollah’s tactical thoroughness and its often expressed wish to keep the event political in nature, a sectarian undertone to the events was evident. Many of the opposition fighters acted in sectarianly offensive ways, with witnesses reporting that people “destroyed cars and shops, proffered anti-Sunni insults” (International Crisis Group 2008:5). This sectarian aspect is directly linked to territorial considerations that generally profess that traditionally Beirut is not a Shi’ite city, with West Beirut specifically being the heartland of Sunni dominance. This development is especially noteworthy in the context of decade long migration process of Shi’ites who moved to Beirut. A process that has accelerated relentlessly after the 2006 war, altering the demographic make-up of many areas and causing considerable

³⁶ Author’s interview with UNDP specialist Hassan Krayem, 14 March 2009.

³⁷ Author’s interview with Lebanese American University assistant professor Bassel Salloukh, 18 March 2009.

³⁸ Author’s interview with the analyst, 12 March 2009.

³⁹ Author’s interview with American University of Beirut assistant professor Karim Makdisi, 7 May 2009.

struggles over neighbourhood control – which has radical consequences in a country polarized along sectarian lines.⁴⁰

2.2.c Objectives of and consequences for Hezbollah

It should be clear that Hezbollah and its allies militarily prevailed in the May 2008 Beirut clashes (Shadid 2008:1). Yet, Hezbollah seems to be reluctant to talk about the event, which might be related to the divergent consequences the clashes had for Hezbollah.⁴¹

The clashes revealed some of Hezbollah's limitations, according to professor Habib Malik.⁴² Hezbollah's weapons are a source of strength and support when used against Israel, but can easily backfire when used internally. Nasrallah apparently realized this very well when he emphasized that his "party from the very first day clearly declared that its weapons were pointed at this enemy [Israel]. My weapons are to defend the country, and all Lebanese" (August 2006 in Noe 2007:402-403). Nevertheless, the promise to never use the weapons of the resistance against fellow Lebanese was broken in May 2008, something that severely undermined Hezbollah's trustworthiness for many Lebanese. Hezbollah's excuses that "there are exceptions to every rule;" that "because the government decisions targeted the resistance and the resistance is defending Lebanon and so protecting the resistance is the same as protecting Lebanon;" and that Hezbollah "limited itself to the light weapons their adversaries also used while abstaining from employing the heavy weapons used against Israel" if anything angered many Lebanese more.⁴³ Thus, after the clashes "outside its own constituency, Hezbollah is seen more than ever as a Shiite militia brutally defending its parochial interests rather than those of a self-proclaimed national resistance" (International Crisis Group 2008:2-3). Nevertheless, within the Shi'ite community, Hezbollah's popularity remains unquestioned and might even have grown (Alagha 2008b:10).

This popularity is partly the result of the many communication channels Hezbollah has at its disposal to get its perspective on the clashes adopted by their rank and file.⁴⁴ Hezbollah's perspective leans on two basic arguments: that the operation was 'clean' and that it was inevitable. Hezbollah spokesperson Mokdad emphasizes the minimal casualties in Beirut

⁴⁰ This also partly explains why the traditionally Christian Eastern parts of Beirut were kept out of the clashes.

⁴¹ Author's interview with human rights lawyer Nabil Halabi, 4 April 2009.

⁴² Author's interview, 20 March 2009.

⁴³ Author's interviews with Ali Fayyad, Ibrahim el Mousawi and Hezbollah representative Rafic Nasrallah, 11 April 2009.

⁴⁴ Author's interview with Ayman Mhanna.

were a result of Hezbollah's controlling all those involved.⁴⁵ Although this reeks of propaganda, it coincides with the view of Human Rights Watch director Nadim Houry that "as far as these types of things go, it was relatively disciplined" and that the amount of human rights violations was unexpectedly low.⁴⁶ Hezbollah's argument that the confrontation was necessary, is based on the belief that the government aimed to annihilate Hezbollah's manoeuvring space: while the offending decisions "would have probably been of little immediate effect in Hizbullah's eyes [...] they were only a prelude to further demands that would hit the core of its military structures and therefore had to be nipped in the bud" (Wimmen 2008:6). Overall, Hezbollah does not see its actions as constituting an attack as much as restoring a natural balance.⁴⁷

First, as Nasrallah explained in his speech on 8 May 2008, Hezbollah acted to protect the weapons and the infrastructure of the resistance. Second, El Mousawi admits Hezbollah acted out of fear for Future dominance.⁴⁸ Fisk suggests that "Hezbollah would not have come out into the streets had Saad [Hariri] not taken to a militia, but they had to prove that his militia was worth nothing."⁴⁹ More importantly, Hezbollah's desire to break the political deadlock can be seen in light of its fear of March 14's increasing dominance as well. 'Breaking the deadlock' meant nothing so much as 'installing a new (unity) government.'⁵⁰ Malik's characterisation of the event as "the painful but necessary lancing of a stubborn boil in order to get on with the business of political compromise," fits this perspective.⁵¹ Fourth, analysts suggest that Hezbollah sought to reopen the Ta'if Accord which regulates the distribution of power among sectarian groups (Salem 2008:3). This supports Hariri's conviction that the May 2008 events were an attempt from Hezbollah's side to instigate a civil war, which would then ultimately be settled by providing the Shi'ite community with more political power.⁵² All in all, it was Hezbollah's ambition to realize its "basket of conciliatory demands" voiced throughout the crisis – consisting of the acquisition of veto power in a national-unity government; the establishment of a new electoral law; and the election of Michel Suleiman as president (Rabil 2008). In the process, Hezbollah send the message that:

⁴⁵ Author's interview. This position is strengthened by the eye witness testimony of journalist Itani who claims he saw Hezbollah fighters shooting Amal combatants looting and vandalising.

⁴⁶ Author's interview.

⁴⁷ Author's interview with Rafic Nasrallah.

⁴⁸ Author's interview.

⁴⁹ Author's interview.

⁵⁰ Author's interview with journalist Ferry Biedermann, 11 March 2009.

⁵¹ Author's interview.

⁵² Author's interview. Hezbollah itself, however, says it remains committed to the Ta'if Accord (speech Nasrallah 8 May 2008).

there is government, but there are areas of the country that are under my control, and some things that are under my control, as Hezbollah, and you can't touch them. So what happened was partly a reaction to March 14 government decisions, but partly an occasion to change the situation and change the balance of power.⁵³

2.2.d A coup d'état or the lancing of a boil?

March 14, and many analysts with it, has sought to brand Hezbollah's actions as a coup d'état. According to Robert Rabil, Hezbollah attempted to take over the state (2008). The International Crisis Group notes that "the *mufti* – the most prominent Sunni religious authority – characterised Hizbollah as an occupying force" (2008:2-3). And Andrew Butters argues that "the Lebanese government went further to accuse Hizballah of orchestrating a Syrian and Iranian-inspired coup attempt" (2008d:1). In my interviews, the notion of a coup d'état came up often too.⁵⁴ Internationally, this discourse is also taken over, as illustrated by Condoleezza Rice's condemnation of Hezbollah's operation as "undermining the legitimate authority of the Lebanese government and the institutions of the Lebanese state" (Shaoul 2008:3-4). Hezbollah, however, persists it does "not want to take over power, nor do we want to start a coup" (speech Nasrallah 8 May 2008). It even turned the table on the governing coalition by accusing March 14 of executing an American orchestrated take-over of the state (speech Nasrallah 26 May 2008).

To go beyond this 'naming and framing,' it is crucial to establish that Hezbollah actually went to great lengths to avoid the impression that it was targeting the state. Thus, "Hezbollah supporters did not appear in uniform as organized forces and avoided attacking government buildings or clashing with the Lebanese army. Indeed, in a matter of two days Hezbollah evacuated their positions and left the streets of West Beirut" (Zisser 2009:5). In fact, Hezbollah seemed concerned to leave as little fingerprints as possible in any case, where possible leaving its allies to do the work. Moreover, Wimmen argues, by bringing in the army, Hezbollah stayed "within the framework of a legal institution" (2008:12). Everyone agrees that Hezbollah has the means to take over the state. That Hezbollah chose not to, says something about its goals: "If we wanted to stage a coup, you would have woken up this morning in prison, or in the middle of the sea. We do not want that. It is a political issue, with a political solution" (speech Nasrallah 8 May 2008). Even if it did not, however, the fact that

⁵³ Author's interview with Carnegie Endowment director Paul Salem, 7 April 2009.

⁵⁴ In the author's interviews with Nabil Halabi and Ayman Mhanna.

Hezbollah could have staged a coup has implications in itself, most important of which is an inherent threat to the state's sovereignty: "Hezbollah really is the more sovereign entity, because *it* sets the rules, not the Lebanese state [...] the state cannot tell Hezbollah what to do, Hezbollah can tell the state what to do."⁵⁵

The discourse notwithstanding, the May clashes were not simply a 'battle for the state' as Amal Saad-Ghorayeb advocates (in Blanford 2008). Even more than a confrontation over who rules the state it was a confrontation over what rules determine the Lebanese state. The episode bears upon the constitutive domain of the state, because the issues at stake were related to territorial control (by the state, but even more so by communities within the state); the meaning of a monopoly of power (with the army refusing to stand up for the government); and the functioning of an administrative system and the collection of revenues (something the government thought threatened by Hezbollah's independent telephone network). The events also touch upon the political system, as they lay bare the fragility of constitutional power-sharing arrangement and the bankruptcy of many institutions when it comes to regulating political conflict.

2.3 EPILOGUE: THE DOHA AGREEMENT

During the clashes, an Arab diplomatic delegation travelled to Beirut and held several meetings with Lebanese leaders that, on 15 May, led to an agreement between March 14 and March 8 that ended the fighting and forced the government to reverse its decisions (Rabil 2008). This agreement called for a national dialogue to be held in Doha, Qatar, on the formation of a national unity government, the drafting of a new electoral law and the election of Suleiman as president. Consensus was reached on these issues on 21 May, 2008 in the Doha Agreement. Having shown above how the May events and the political crisis heralding them are related to state-building, I continue to analyse to what extent the Doha Agreement was inspired by various state-building considerations.

First, in Doha, the national unity government with the 'blocking third' for the opposition was realized. Concerning this new form of government, no decisive mention was made of the duration of its validity: whether or not the concept was meant to endure after the June 2009 elections, is unclear.⁵⁶ Second, the Doha Agreement provided a new law to regulate the upcoming elections. It substituted the unpopular 2000 law that was based on the larger

⁵⁵ Author's interview with Paul Salem.

⁵⁶ Author's interview with Bassel Salloukh.

administrative unit of the *muhafazat* (governorates) with the 1960 law that adopted the smaller administrative unit of the *qaza* (districts) as electoral regions. In this way, the widespread call for more proportional representation was ignored. “The electoral changes agreed to in Doha are not true reforms. The changes will serve merely to solidify the current parties’ dominance” (Katrib 2008:1). However, at least, as Ayman Mhanna admits, “Now everybody has agreed on the rules of the game and everybody has agreed that this is the electoral law that will govern the elections.”⁵⁷

Third, by “inviting the parliament to convene within 24 hours to elect consensus candidate General Michel Sleiman,” the Doha Agreement also ended Lebanon’s presidential vacuum. This atypical consent on a presidential candidate notwithstanding, according to Rabil, the situation was not wholly unproblematic (2007). Analyst Oussama Safa explains that while article 49 of the constitution dictates first rank officials – which Suleiman was before he became president – have to resign their position two years before they can run for president, the parliament elected Suleiman without amending that provision.⁵⁸ In theory, this means that the president is vulnerable to blackmail and thus unable to act independently.

The fourth issue addressed in the agreement, is the commitment of parties to abstain from the use of weapons and violence in order to obtain political benefits. While, as Anthony Shadid and Alia Ibrahim state, it is highly questionable whether this statement could be the basis of a disarmament process, it is significant that the text deals with “armed groups’ relationships to the state” (2008a:1). Nevertheless, many interviewees cautioned me not to overrate Doha, warning that it was a solution to a specific crisis rather than a truly comprehensive accord. Thus,

the Lebanese dilemma continues unabated, summed up in the question of how best to ensure political stability in the country; whether it might be best to try and patch-up and regenerate existing state institutions, in tandem with a solution to the current political stalemate gripping the country, or whether there is an alternative solution. (Fayyad 2008: 62)

Often, the Doha Agreement is seen from the perspective of ‘who won.’ Nasrallah may declare Doha “not a victory of one group over another but of Lebanon,” but many feel that Hezbollah did translate its military victory into a political one (speech Nasrallah 26 May 2008 and Schenker 2008b). Hezbollah’s ‘basket of demands’ was delivered (Shadid and Ibrahim 2008b). Moreover, the issue of Hezbollah’s disarmament is generally conceived to be

⁵⁷ Author’s interview.

⁵⁸ Author’s interview, 6 April 2009.

dismissed once more: “this is the biggest achievement of May, now they still negotiate about disarming Hezbollah, but it’s mostly talking for talking, it’s not really on the agenda anymore.”⁵⁹ Hariri nevertheless expressed his hopefulness about the agreement, claiming that “with veto comes responsibility.”⁶⁰ Jounblatt added that giving Hezbollah a veto third was less of a concession than it seems because the main reason to refuse to do so – stopping March 8 from blocking the international tribunal – dissolved when the tribunal was accepted by the United Nations and thus became a *fait accompli*.⁶¹

The Doha Accord illustrates that more structural matters about the nature and direction of the Lebanese state were a concern in the Doha negotiations as well and can thus be expected to have played a role in the May clashes.⁶² First, with regard to the national unity government clause, researcher Teije Donker explains that Lebanese politics heavily depends on the power of convention.⁶³ The introduction of the concept of the national unity government could therefore signal Hezbollah’s ambition to influence the political system. Second, “Election law is the introducing step toward establishing a state, and remakes its authority, government and institutions” (Nasrallah 26 May 2008). The clause concerning electoral law thus also reflects a change in the political system. Third, the reference in the Doha Agreement to the use of weapons to further political gains, is related to both the rule of law and the state monopoly of violence. This reference indicates that aims to shape the constitutive domain of state-building also influenced the clashes. Moreover, the Doha Agreement specifically mentions issues related to state sovereignty, monopoly of violence, social contract and the rule of law and thus pays extensive discursive homage to the idea of state-building. It prohibits

the use of weapons or violence or taking refuge in them in any dispute whatsoever and under any circumstances, in order to ensure respect for the national partnership contract, based on the Lebanese people’s commitment to live with one another within the framework of the Lebanese system, and to restrict the security and military authority over Lebanese nationals and residents to the state alone so as to ensure the continuity of the coexistence formula and civil peace among all the Lebanese; and the parties pledge to all of the above. Implementing the law and upholding the sovereignty of the state throughout Lebanon so as not to have regions that serve as safe havens for outlaws, out of respect for the supremacy of the law, and referring all those who commit crimes and contraventions to the Lebanese judiciary.

⁵⁹ Author’s interview with Nadim Houry.

⁶⁰ Author’s interview with Robert Fisk.

⁶¹ Author’s interview.

⁶² Had these issues not been of importance to the actors involved in the clashes, they would not have been incorporated in the agreement that settled these clashes.

⁶³ Author’s interview, 2 April 2009.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The May 2008 Beirut clashes were not a ‘battle for the state.’ Instead of showing that Hezbollah was fighting to topple the government – as proposed by the ‘coup d’état discourse’ – Hezbollah’s behaviour indicated a clear wish to avoid such an impression. The fighters did not target state institutions and instead of occupying territory, they withdrew after the fighting and left the area to the army.

In another way, however, the event was related to state-building, because the clashes were the ultimate confrontation between diverging positions of two societal actors about what kind of state Lebanon should be. This contrast manifested itself with regard to the constitutive domain of the state and the political system organizing the state. A look at the political crisis preceding the May events, shows that this is not surprising: the main issues that fuelled the crisis were also related to the constitutive domain and the political system. Concerning the constitutive domain, there was a discrepancy over the desirability and feasibility of a state monopoly of violence. Additionally, a political-sectarian struggle over territorial control of certain neighbourhoods pervaded both the crisis and the clashes. Concerning the political system, the contrast between the images of the state of March 14 and of March 8 meant that both camps held different views on the desirability of the then-existing constitutional power-sharing arrangements, which was reflected in a moral and practical impoverishment of many state institutions.

Thus, a twofold state-building related motivation seems to have driven Hezbollah towards and during the clashes. On the one hand, Hezbollah desired to introduce a new political convention into the political system by forcing the concept of the veto third upon the current power-sharing arrangement. And, on the other hand, Hezbollah wanted to protect its armed resistance operation, which ultimately leads to a reassessment of the monopoly of violence for the state. The Doha Agreement confirms the centrality of these objectives by officially ‘granting’ Hezbollah’s ‘request’ for a national unity government and by explicitly addressing the desirability of a monopoly of violence without condemning Hezbollah’s undermining of it.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The fact that the Doha Agreement does not mention any shift in the distribution of positions among sectarian groups (the acknowledgement of the opposition’s veto is predominantly a political issue), suggests that Hezbollah’s aim to ‘re-open the Ta’if Accord,’ as supposed by March 14, was either non-existent or not realized.

The struggle for the state has moved to the heart of the confrontation between the two political blocks (Rabil 2008). This development suggests that the Lebanese state was neither stable enough to defy discording positions, nor flexible enough to incorporate them. From an inclusion-exclusion perspective, it generates the query, which will be addressed in Chapter 4, about the ways in which Hezbollah ensures its place at the virtual tables where the decisions about the character and course of the country are taken. From an agency-structure angle, a dialectic between Hezbollah as an actor and the Lebanese state as a context emerges as seminal and will be explored in the subsequent chapters.

That the context of the Lebanese state is relevant with regard to the May clashes, is further illustrated by Simon Haddad, who explained to me that the brotherly hugging at Doha of men who had seemed archenemies before was hardly astounding.⁶⁵ All of them, according to Haddad, in the end saw that a violent confrontation was the only way to break political deadlock. When I asked Nabil Halabi how this could possibly be the case, he told me the “problem is not related to Doha or any other agreement, the problem is the Lebanese system.”⁶⁶ The political system, however, does not seem to be the only problem, other domains of the Lebanese state seem frail too:

Lebanon may have pulled back from the abyss of all-out civil war, but remains situated in the neighbourhood of equally if not more dangerous conflicts that tend to radiate out and involve and engulf countries and societies where state power and cohesion are weak. (Wimmen 2008:9)

That the fragility of the Lebanese state is a crucial factor in determining Hezbollah's role in the May 2008 Beirut clashes, is further exemplified by the discussed territorial dimension of the clashes. The situation in which various socio-political groups challenge each other over neighbourhood control can only surface under circumstances in which these socio-political groups have mustered a degree of social control with which they can defy the state. How and why these circumstances have emerged, and how they have to a certain extent made the Lebanese state a contested and conflict-facilitating entity, will be the subject of the following chapter.

⁶⁵ Author's interview.

⁶⁶ Author's interview.

CHAPTER 3: PHOENIX OR COCKROACH?

Lebanon's state-building process

Chapter 2 concluded with the observation that it was apparently the very nature of the Lebanese state that helped to nurture the conflict that initiated the May 2008 clashes. In this chapter, I explore how and why this situation emerged. In doing so, I answer sub-question four about the nature of Lebanon's state-building process.

3.1 THE HISTORY OF LEBANON'S STATE AND SOCIETY

The central concept to understand Lebanon's society, is sectarianism (sometimes labelled confessionalism) that signifies the division of society into religious, 'sectarian,' communities. The importance of religion in Lebanon's society thus results from its role as a system of social reference, more than from its role as a spiritual force. Sectarianism manifests itself, among other things, in segregated neighbourhoods and regions: Beirut is divided in a Sunni West, a Christian East and a Shi'ite South and the rest of Lebanon is similarly separated. This separation corresponds with "high levels of group consciousness and a negative propensity for inter-group interaction" (Haddad 2002:291-292).⁶⁷ In fact, sectarianism refers to the fractionalization of social control between Lebanon's various communities. This fractionalization breeds a structural elitism: because society is organised along sectarian lines, citizens have historically depended on sectarian leaders for protection and provision. In turn, political players have "to show off their prowess by claiming allegiance of their communities" (Ziadeh 2006:173).

The multi-polar power structure inherent in sectarianism was potentially detrimental to Lebanon's state-building process. The fractionalization of social control made it impossible for one societal actor to enforce state-building, and the segregation of societal actors prevented consensual state-building (Saouli 2006:707-708). This was still the case in 1926, when the Lebanese Republic saw the light, and in 1943, when it declared its independence from France. The new state was organized through a political system centred around an inter-sectarian power-sharing formula, as expressed in the verbal 'National Pact,' that stipulated that the president of the republic should be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni

⁶⁷ In Lebanon, the media – important to gain social control –, for example, are segregated and every sect has its own TV channel (Zayani 2006:253).

Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shi'ite Muslim (Barak 2003:305).⁶⁸ As this division of power reflects, the Lebanese state was created by France as a response to “persistent lobbying by the leaders of the Maronite Christian community” (Barak 2003:305). At the time, however, the majority of the Muslim population of ‘Lebanon,’ preferred the incorporation of Lebanon in a ‘Greater Syria.’ Thus, at its inception the Lebanese state was disputed. Important societal actors did not comply with the idea of the Lebanese state, initially refused to participate in it and regarded it fundamentally illegitimate. Even the societal actors that did engage with the state, harboured feelings of antagonism towards it and did not seriously strive to assemble social control for it (Barak 2000:23).

In 1958, president Fuad Chehab attempted to break with this tradition by developing the Lebanese state and providing it with strong institutions (Barak 2000:10). Chehab, in fact, was successful in cementing the state in the constitutive domain and extending its reach in the output domain. But when the traditional sectarian power brokers united against Chehab, they revealed “Lebanon’s lack of a bourgeoisie with the will and capacity to take the lead in building a modern state” (Petran 1987:59). Although compliance with, and participation in, state institutions grew, the degree of social control of Chehab’s state remained problematic because it could not amass legitimacy in the eyes of crucial societal actors.

The 1975-1989 civil war – which concerned, among other issues, the identity of the Lebanese state and the institutional quotas allotted to each community – further exposed and expanded the weakness of the Lebanese state (Barak 2000:20). The state lost control over its territory and turned into “a patchwork of sectarian homogenous pieces of areas and neighbourhoods in which clan lords and their affiliates ruled by alternating terror and welfare service, administrating the system of taxes and social infrastructure ordinarily managed by the state” (Wärm 1998:28-29). This predicament, according to Oren Barak, was caused by the ‘immobilism’ of the 1943 power-sharing system and the consecutive lack of an effective institutional framework that could uphold the constitutive and output domains of the state (2003:310).

Lebanon, however, survived. This was partly due to the continuity manifested by the institutions of the political system during the conflict:

The president and the government, although lacking control over the state’s entire territory, nevertheless continued to represent it both internally and externally, at least until late 1988.

⁶⁸ For an overview of Lebanon’s political system, I refer to Appendix D.

The same was true with regard to parliament: even though elections (last held in 1972) could not take place, its members met during the conflict, elected five presidents, debated and approved laws, and ratified and annulled agreements and treaties, including the compromise that facilitated the war's termination. (Barak 2003:319).

By the end of the war, alternatives to the state – partition or annexation – had lost their appeal to societal actors, though this did not change the fact that the state was eroded as a practical reality. The state had lost much of its ability in the constitutive and output domains, and its political system ceased to work effectively. Increasingly few societal actors complied with or participated in the state's institutions. Nevertheless, the state remained a focal point for society, and retained its ultimate legitimacy, because almost all societal actors harboured an image of their ideal state that prescribed the survival of the existing Lebanese state.

However, what was still needed was consensus on the relation between the semi-autonomous communities and the state (Ziadeh 2006:139). This was provided for in the Ta'if Accord that was incorporated into the constitution in 1989. The accord offered concrete measures to revive Lebanon's political system by means of a new power-sharing formula and thus presented an opportunity to muster more social control for the state.⁶⁹ Ta'if, however, also introduced a major inconsistency into Lebanon's state-building process by simultaneously disavowing and enshrining sectarianism. The accord states that all Lebanese are equal before the law and proclaims that political sectarianism should be abolished. Nevertheless, it also discriminates on a sectarian basis, allocating certain posts to certain communities, and fails to set a schedule for the decreed desectarianization. Ta'if's references about the constitutive issues of territory and the monopoly of violence, however, are less ambiguous:

Considering that all Lebanese factions have agreed to the establishment of a strong state founded on the basis of national accord, the national accord government shall draft a detailed one-year plan whose objective is to spread the sovereignty of the State of Lebanon over all Lebanese territories gradually with the state's own forces.

This image, however, did not become practice. In an effort to generate more compliance, participation and legitimacy for the state by including all influential societal actors, warlords were invited to join the first post-war government as ministers of state (Mallat 1990:6). This, however, did not strengthen the state: "The guns are replaced by portfolios in Cabinet and

⁶⁹ The main measures agreed on were that: (a) executive power, earlier the prerogative of the president (a Maronite), was transferred to the government and the premier (a Sunni) and, to a lesser extent, to the speaker of the parliament (a Shi'ite) and (b) instead of the 6:5 ratio in favour of Christians in all formal institutions, a ratio of 1:1 between Christians and Muslims was adopted (Barak 2003:324).

seats in Parliament, although the idea of power and of patronizing is very much the same” (Wärn 1998:33).

A new chance for the Ta'if Accord was generated by the end of the 'Pax Syriana' in 2005. After Syria intervened in the Lebanese civil war in 1976, it had never left and “throughout the years of Syrian hegemony over Lebanon, Damascus filled the organs of the formal public sector with its own loyalists” (Rabil 2008:1). Additionally, Damascus supported the emergence of an informal public sector outstripping the state in the provision of services. Finally, Syria excluded all societal actors hostile to its role in Lebanon from the political system and acted as the final arbiter on any major political decision (Wärn 1998:33). All this had its effect on the practice as well as the image of the Lebanese state, as it created a situation in which the state could depend on a significant degree of compliance, but lost its participatory appeal and legitimacy.

The history of the Lebanese state solidifies Migdal's claim that states are formed by their encounters with other powerful societal organizations (1988:180). The practice of Lebanon's state-building process was shaped by images societal actors had of the state and its ideal form. The development of the Lebanese state also shows that a state can return from the brink of collapse if this serves the interests of crucial socio-political actors – if it coincides with their images of the state. This leads Wimmen to conclude that “those communities *are* the state, their leaders are the bricks out of which the whole system is built.”⁷⁰ Thus, sectarianism determined Lebanon's state-building process, which “was mostly a complex political engineering of a state-system that could give to the various communities the access to central power they sought and needed in order to legitimise their claims of representation” (Ziadeh 2006:169).

3.2 LEBANON'S STATE-BUILDING PROCESS

3.2.a The constitutive domain

With regard to territorial delimitation, the first indicator for the state's constitutive domain, analysts from both of Lebanon's political camps agree that Lebanon deals with a lack of sovereignty.⁷¹ Until 2000, this was especially striking in the form of the Israeli occupation. However, Lebanon's border with Israel is still disputed; Israel repeatedly violates Lebanese airspace; and various smuggling operations penetrate Lebanon's borders. Moreover, the

⁷⁰ Author's interview.

⁷¹ Author's interviews with Ayman Mhanna and Ibrahim el Mousawi.

Lebanese government is not able to monopolize control over its border and, in the South, shares boundary command with Hezbollah. Additionally, as the May clashes showed, unofficial but heavily disputed internal borders, that demarcate sectarian neighbourhood control, testify of the instability of territorial control by the state. Apparently, societal actors do not comply with the state's exclusive control over its external or internal borders.

A related issue is the lack of a state monopoly of violence. Lebanon's army is multi-sectarian and is cherished as a symbol of national unity (Simon and Stevenson 2001:33). The role of the army in the May clashes, however, shows the paralyzing effect of this wishful thinking. Instead of defending the state, the army was pinned down by its sectarian logic. Not only because individual soldiers often adhere to sectarian leaders rather than their army superiors, but also because certain sections – most notably the Internal Security Forces (ISF) – operate largely autonomous. The opposition, for example, “regards the ISF as little more than an official militia, dominated by pro-government and pro-American officers and composed of mostly Christians and Sunnis” (Butters 2008a:1). It thus seems that the idea of a state monopoly of violence does not resonate with the images many societal actors hold. This explains the development towards a positive societal appreciation of the army as *an* armed actor, but not necessarily of the state as *the sole* armed actor within society. This is related to the issue of Hezbollah's armed resistance status, discussed in Chapter 4.

Another indicator of the constitutive domain is the rule of law. Two examples serve to illustrate the state's deficit in social control concerning this issue. First, in theory, a constitutional council exists to test the constitutionality of all laws. However, due to a failure to appoint its members, this council has not been functioning for years. This has left the country without a body to deal with complaints about, for example, the course of elections (Kimbrell 2009). Second, the judiciary at large struggles with a reliability problem. Lawyer Halabi sketches the image of a severely politicized system, where “every politician owns a judge.”⁷² Moreover, while there is a unitary criminal law code in Lebanon, the application of civil law is, in some instances, determined by sectarianism. A striking example is the absence of civil marriage. Lebanese can only marry before their community and related rules concerning divorce and inheritance vary per community. This situation signals a fractionalization of law and suggests that many societal actors do not imagine the allotment of justice the prerogative of the state.

⁷² Author's interview.

The final indicator of the constitutive domain regards the functioning of the administrative fiscal system. Many interviewees mentioned that the Lebanese Central Bank has recently won wide respect for being vastly less corrupted than most state institutions. Nevertheless, the system is only inclusive of elites – who are making magnificent, and unfair, returns by subscribing to state bonds used to finance the mounting national debt (Leenders 2006:2). Furthermore, while the tax collection system functions in that it is complied with and participated in, it holds little legitimacy for most societal actors. In fact, here, the state is often perceived as a thief, which prevents the state from acquiring social control in this realm.⁷³ The lack of legitimacy of state taxing correlates with a perceived failure of the state to use tax money to provide services.

3.2.b The output domain

The state's social control concerning the constitutive domain is thus related to its social control regarding the output domain, defined as the provision of social services. In Lebanon, this provision mainly happens by sectarian communities.

After its independence, the Lebanese state began to build a system of public health provision. This development, however, was unsuccessful. During the civil war, the number of public hospital beds fell dramatically and private hospitals, led by both profit and non-profit societal organizations, filled the gap (Sibai and Sen 2006:2). But while the state proved unable to directly provide health care, it did finance health care provided to citizens through private hospitals. However, this separation between the financing and the provision of health care resulted in the loss of control of state agencies over the sector (Sibai and Sen 2006:3). In 2008, an estimated 1,500 beds were available in state hospitals, compared to around 14,500 functioning beds in Lebanon's 175 private hospitals (UNHCR 2008:1). Access to these hospitals is, mostly, sectarianly exclusive, as illustrated by a doctor in a Sunni hospital who commented that "as Sunnis we must take care of Sunnis before any other sect" (UNHCR 2008:2). Thus, the provision of health care in Lebanon has grown very fractionalized. Yet, it is also flexible in adapting itself to the loss of social control of the state in this sector.

As with health care, the provision of education in Lebanon exemplifies the state's lack of social control in the output domain. According to the constitution, sectarian groups have the right to establish their own educational institutions. This resulted in the coexistence of three

⁷³ Author's interview with Mahmoud Harb.

school systems: state schools; private non-fee-paying schools, which are partly funded by the Ministry of Education; and private fee-paying schools (UNCRC 2000:62). The latter are run by various societal actors and the state helps to meet their costs by awarding grants to state employees. Traditionally, the level of education in state and private non-fee-paying education is lower than that of private fee-paying education (UNCRC 200:62). Another reason for the status of these private schools, which represent seventy per cent of all pupils, is that many of them are run by sectarian organizations that are well-known and widely trusted (UNCRC 2000:80). However, from the 1960s on, several decrees were issued to strengthen state education in Lebanon (Harik 1999). This has led to a diminishing of the geographical separation of the different types of education. Private fee-paying schools, which were concentrated around the capital, are now expanding in the outlying regions and more state-schools, traditionally predominant in peripheral areas, are opened in central Lebanon (UNCRC 2000:66). Nevertheless, Lebanon's education provision remains fractionalized – schools use different instruction languages, curricula, textbooks and methods – and exclusive – on financial, geographical and sectarian grounds (UNCRC 2000:80).

The most striking, but by no means only, example of the Lebanese state's unfruitful attempt to develop its social control concerning utility provision, is the situation in Beirut's southern suburb.⁷⁴ The state has long neglected garbage collection, drinking water provision and the maintenance of sewer systems in parts of its capital and Hezbollah has filled this gap (Harik 2004:84). Furthermore, after the heavy bombardment of the suburb in 2006, a struggle over reconstruction between the state and Hezbollah emerged. It soon became apparent that the state's involvement would be limited to paying financial compensation, while the actual reconstruction would be left to contractors (Fawaz 2007:23). This situation is in line with the post-civil war reconstruction of the country, where public efforts were concentrated in large-scale development projects – such as the redevelopment of Beirut downtown and the construction of an international airport – that were supervised and executed by private businesses rather than by the state's municipalities (Fawaz 2007:23). For example, throughout Lebanon, solid waste treatment and water supply is predominantly managed by the Council for Development and Reconstruction, a Sunni organization that emerged during the civil war as a replacement for the Ministry of Planning (CDR 2007). The sectarian nature of the CDR means that it almost exclusively subcontracts companies of the same sectarian background.⁷⁵ Thus, while the state is active in the provision of utilities by financing it, due to a combination

⁷⁴ Rabih Haber, in our interview, said similar situations existed in the Beqaa and the South.

⁷⁵ Author's interview with Oussama Safa.

of privatisation and sectarianism, the state is not visible as such, and fails to obtain compliance, participation or legitimacy in this domain.

The result of Lebanon's state-building process in the output domain is that social services are not just provided *by* sectarian leaders. They are also provided *through* these leaders, as services are often generated from state resources, but are funnelled to the population through their sectarian communities. The above described Council for Development and Reconstruction is but one example of this phenomenon. Other major development institutions, such as the Council of the South and the Fund of the Displaced, were also "exclusively handed to major confessional groups. These then financed confessional leaders, or their party or political circles surrounding them" (Fayyad 2008:71). Widespread corruption – as illustrated by the limping state-run electricity company and the failed National Security Fund – is one of the most catastrophic outcomes of this sectarianism-privatisation dialectic (Leenders 2006:2). The social control of the state further dwindles because of the inequality between the various communities when it comes to service delivery (Zisser 2009:6). And so societal fragmentation reinforces itself and "Lebanese people don't grow up believing in the state [...] And that is why they turn to confessional communities for security and protection."⁷⁶

The question then becomes how these sectarian leaders have gained and maintained their position as intermediaries between state and citizens (Early 2006:119). According to Migdal this is because the unravelling effects of the colonial era necessitated a new form of social structuring that colonial rulers could only realize through rallying social control (1988). To do so, these statesmen needed connections with local 'strongmen' who had direct access to and influence on the population (Migdal 1988:141). In this way, state leaders became dependent on sectarian leaders to maintain social control. Vice versa, these strongmen became dependent on the state because they needed its resources to shore up their own social control. A vicious circle emerged: to increase their abilities in the output domain, statesmen would need to undercut the local bases of social control of the very strongmen they depend upon to uphold national social control. In such situations, strongmen often become the implementers of state policy, thereby "capturing parts of the state" (Migdal 1988:256). Strikingly, Lebanese sectarian strongmen have gone beyond being implementers. They have become the politicians

⁷⁶ Author's interview with Ibrahim el Mousawi.

making state policy in cabinet and – in addition to their parallel service provision independent of the state – simultaneously implement this policy as sectarian representatives in society.

3.2.c The political system

The role of sectarian communities as connecting state and citizen that characterizes Lebanon's output domain is enshrined in Lebanon's political system.⁷⁷ In the words of Hezbollah's deputy Secretary-General Na'im Qassem: "being part of the executive governmental body assists in securing a certain portion of the lot that is the subject of allocation" (2005:202).

Looking at my first political system indicator, it seems that the Lebanese constitution indeed traditionally has been "the textual means for a tangible political aim: the perpetuation of [...] a certain division of the national fortune and an allocation of the political, economic and social privileges" (Ziadeh 2006:19).⁷⁸ Thus, Lebanon's constitution regulates that 'grade one posts and their equivalents' (i.e. the highest ranking public service positions in, for instance, the judiciary and the military) must be distributed equally between Christians and Muslims. Yet, the debate on Lebanon's political system is unsettled. March 14 argues that Lebanon needs a Westminster-like system with the majority ruling and the minority in opposition. Conversely, March 8 promotes the consensus-based system that traditionally had the upper hand in Lebanese politics.⁷⁹ The Lebanese political system is renowned under the term 'consociationalism.' According to Arend Lijphart, who coined the phrase:

Consociational democracies share four general characteristics. First, political elites representing all significant segments of the plural society must participate in some form of grand decision-making coalition. Second, a mutual veto must exist, allowing elites of each group to challenge decisions detrimental to their particular groups. Third, proportionality must be the standard principle of political representation, civil service appointments, and the allocation of public funds. Fourth, each segmental group must be allowed to run its own internal affairs. (1977:25-53 in Seaver 2000:250)

Elite accommodation institutionalized in devices that can produce stability – but also instate social control in these elites rather than the state – is thus the core of consociationalism. Although Lebanon is generally considered *the* exemplar of consociationalism, Michael Hudson argues that consociationalism is a prescription for, rather than a description of,

⁷⁷ See Appendix D.

⁷⁸ The constitution was amended six times before 1990 (Maila 1992:120).

⁷⁹ Author's interview with Bassel Salloukh.

Lebanon's political system (1988:230). What is more, Lebanon's post-war system was specifically designed to balance the multitude of sects opposing each other, not to contain tensions between the two broad political blocs that have co-opted these sects since 2005. Currently, "the polarization is not based on a duality of Christian versus Muslim, it's much more complex, it's sub-confessional. And, as such, it's manifested as a political disagreement, not as a confessional disagreement."⁸⁰ Thus, at this point in Lebanon's state-building process, it seems that the prescription of Lebanon's specific political system does not contain its predicaments anymore – something fatefully illustrated by the May clashes.⁸¹

Lebanese elections, the second indicator of state-building in the realm of the political system, are traditionally not utilized to increase the social control of the state by persuading citizens to comply with, participate in and grant legitimacy to the direction of the state. In fact, they show how the state's social control depends on communities – that have a vested interest in the existing state – rather than on citizens. Concerning the issues featuring in the 2009 elections, Safa notes that "it's sloganeering, it's not programs."⁸² Most competitors present grand foreign policy schemes and address the shortcomings of the state, but do not introduce actual policies to mend these shortcomings. The post-Ta'if electoral system specifying the rules regulating the elections, is based on voting for candidates that represent a certain sect and district. According to Harb, however, this is "not related to any electoral democratic consideration, it's just a compromise between the different forces that divided the electoral zones between them."⁸³ That electoral law is reinvented for every election, is illustrated by the Doha Agreement that, rather than a sincere reform, can be considered an occasional deal regulating the 2009 elections (Qassem 2005:194).

A third indicator of the political system is the degree to which people are mobilized within the political system's institutional framework. Lebanon emerged out of varying institutional traditions, none of which could counter the practice of informal deal-making and many people still put their trust in individuals rather than institutions.⁸⁴ Additionally, the political system struggles with a wild-growth of institutions that were created to satisfy all communities with official positions.⁸⁵ In an attempt at inclusiveness, state-building has thus led to overly

⁸⁰ Author's interview with Hassan Krayem.

⁸¹ Author's interview with Bassel Salloukh.

⁸² Author's interview.

⁸³ Author's interview.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with Saad Hariri.

⁸⁵ Author's interview with editor Michael Young, 14 April 2009.

fractionalized institutions. During the recent political crisis, and ultimately the May clashes, this institutional weakness showed Lebanon

to be the perfect example of a fragile state whose institutions fail to manage and contain political conflicts. These then move outside political confines and turn political division into societal instability, causing those institutions to collapse when incapacity becomes near total paralysis. (Fayyad 2008:56)

The Doha Agreement is a consequence as well as an example of this extra-institutional tradition. Decisions that should have been made in parliament or cabinet were made abroad by sometimes unelected societal actors. This development thereby "*témoignent de la faiblesse des institutions étatiques*" and reinforced the convention of social control being mobilized and utilized outside state institutions (Haenni 2007:81-82). Hezbollah and its allies literally refer to the "lopsided political system" as forcing them outside institutions and into the streets (Saad-Ghorayeb 2007:2). Hezbollah, however, is not alone in its turning to the streets to flaunt social control. 'Street politics' – the mobilization of citizens as protesters instead of voters – has nestled itself within the corpus of the rules of the political game.⁸⁶ This pattern fits the context of the 'Arab state,' in which western-inspired state institutions often fail to function due to a lack of concomitant 'modern' (i.e. Western) societal values and contexts (Fayyad 2008:8).

As the pliability of the constitution, the emptiness of elections and the porosity of state institutions show, "Lebanon, as a system, is accustomed to respecting traditions, following gentlemen's agreements."⁸⁷ Sectarianism has made Lebanon's political system into "a complex system of checks and balances," resulting in a country that can "typically only be governed through a broad consensus of all major political players" (Wimmen 2007:1). Consensus, however, is not always easy to come by and the reality is often typified more by deadlock. Thus, it is convenient to present opponents with a *fait accompli*, to set a precedent that will then acquire normative power relatively quickly because the whole system is held together precisely because of the tradition to respect such 'off-the-table' deals.⁸⁸ This is aptly demonstrated by the May clashes, the core of which was Hezbollah's attempt to force the idea of the one-third veto power on Lebanon's political system, in order to then root it as a

⁸⁶ Author's interview with Patrick Haenni.

⁸⁷ Author's interview with Hassan Krayem.

⁸⁸ Author's interview with Heiko Wimmen.

component of that system. During the 2005-2008 political crisis, the same strategy was apparently used by March 14 to push through the formation of the international Hariri tribunal.⁸⁹ On the whole, the purpose of Lebanon's political system is to balance the interests of societal actors, not to boost the social control of the state (Hourani 1986:14). This unconstructive nature of Lebanon's political system was reconfirmed in May 2008, when the issue of the veto power was catapulted into the system: Michael Young warns that in this way "the system becomes not a positive system but a negative system: 'How do we block things?' not 'How do we advance things?'"⁹⁰

As the epitome of pluralism, Lebanon's sectarian system is extremely fractionalized. It has been inclusive in the sense that no less than ten different communities have officially been represented. However, Lebanon's system has, over the decades, continually recycled the same political dynasties and excluded much fresh blood, drawing a strict dividing line between the established powers and those preaching reform (Moussaoui 2009:1). Similarly, on the one hand, the political system has been stable in its non-development and repeated instances of paralysis, while, on the other hand, it has proved flexible as an instrument of societal actors participating in the state. Recently, two important developments can be discerned regarding the political system of the Lebanese state. First, while the system is sectarian, the 2005-2008 crisis was – while often sectarian in its materialization – in essence political. This generated a discussion, about the (in)appropriateness of the consociational system, that partly fuelled the May 2008 clashes. Second, after Syria's withdrawal, the state has increasingly garnered social control in the realm of the political system. Societal actors more and more aim to participate in both the executive and the legislative areas of the system, even if they do not comply with these channels as the only institutions to 'do business.'

3.3 CONCLUSION

Although Lebanon is often presented as a *failed* state, I reject this label. It obscures "the emergence, complexity and some of the positive features of intertwined formal, informal and alternative governance processes and structures at local and sub-national level which *do* exist" (Duffield 2002 in Overbeek et al. 2009:19). Lebanon can, however, be qualified as a *fragile* state, predominantly because the Lebanese state lacks a neutral class of state-officials. Because sectarian communities are represented by shadow institutions independent from the

⁸⁹ Author's interview with Ali Hamdan.

⁹⁰ Author's interview.

state as well as by political parties related to the state, statesmen and sectarian leaders are often one and the same. As such, sectarian leaders are influencing Lebanon's state-building process in three ways. First, they influence the state through the political system, as political parties. Second, Lebanon's sectarian communities shape the state directly at the level of the constitutive and output domains, as their shadow institutions – militias, judicial bodies, hospitals, schools and garbage collection services – compete with the state over social control. Third, these societal institutions are sometimes used by the state as channels to direct state resources to citizens. These three routes via which societal actors shape Lebanon's state-building process are illustrated in Figure 5.

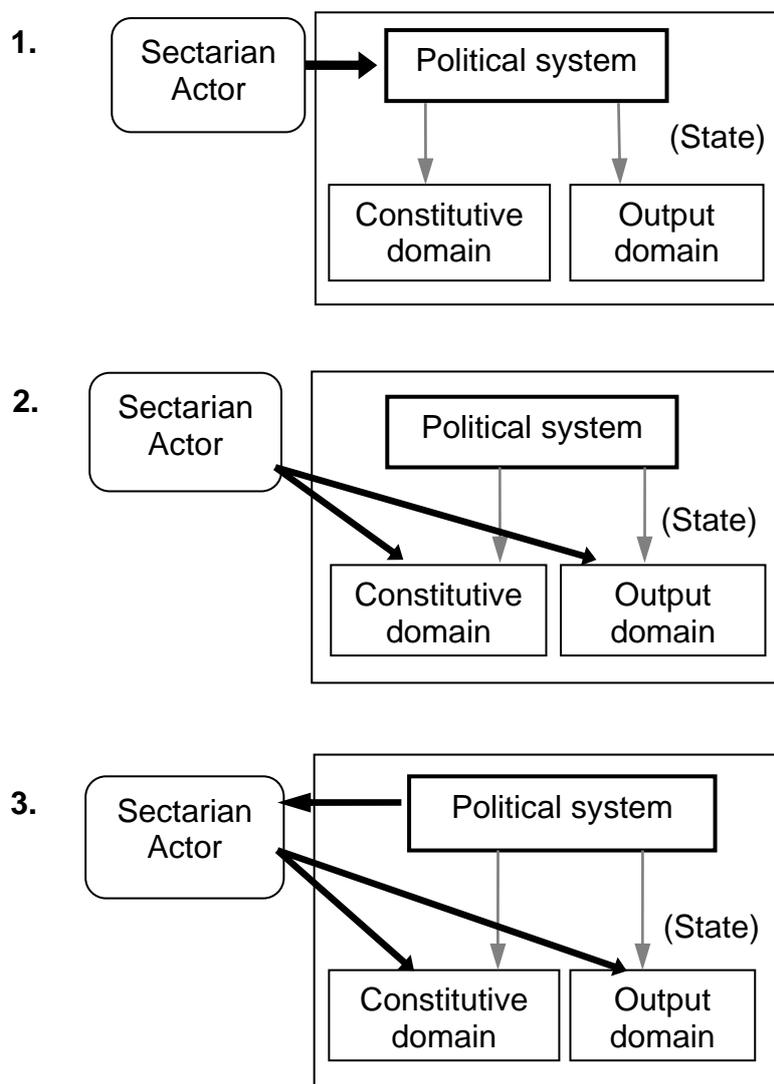


Figure 5: How sectarian communities influence state-building.

In the struggle among Lebanon's societal actors, the Weberian image of the state has perished. Instead, the sectarian leaders that so often contest each other, have a similar image of the state as a facilitating and distributive, but not independent or determining, entity.⁹¹ They share an interest in such a state, because due to the pluralist nature – with the larger communities being of a similar size – of Lebanon's society, none of these communities can ever hope to dominate the state (Kingston and Zahar 2004:94). Instead, they would risk to be dominated by it. As Bassel Salloukh robustly summarizes: "Nobody is interested really in this idea of a powerful, centralized state, it goes against the logic of the sectarian system."⁹² Sectarian leaders apparently rather opt for a state whose degree of social control will never outmatch the sum of the social control of sectarian communities. Thus, instead of aiming to gain social control for the state in order to develop the constitutive domain, the output domain and the political system of that state, sectarian state actors prioritize the expansion of the social control of their sectarian communities and use the state as an instrument to reinforce this sectarian power. That the image of the state, that is shared by the various communities, has been able to shape the practice of Lebanon's state-building process to such an extent, is due to the fact that, in Lebanon, the social control of these sectarian communities has historically been more established than that of the state.

Nevertheless, one should not forget that sectarian strongmen need the state and thus pay lip-service to it, which helps explain the strikingly pro-state-building wording of the Doha Agreement, as quoted in Chapter 2. March 8 calls for a genuine "state building project instead of a power building project" and March 14 named its electoral campaign 'The Day the State Starts' (Sfeir 2009a and NowLebanon 2009). After all, in pluralist societies like Lebanon, the state plays a crucial role, because "unlike in ethnically homogeneous polities, where citizens have numerous spaces for mutual association, in divided societies, formal institutions (political institutions, schools, and security forces) constitute the principal, if not exclusive, meeting grounds between members of various sectors." (Barak 2003:314) In the end, the Lebanese state reflects what Boege et al. call a ' hybrid political order', in which

diverse and competing authority structures, sets of rules, logics of order, and claims to power co-exist, overlap, and intertwine, combining elements of introduced Western models of governance and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions of governance and politics, with further influences exerted by the forces of globalization and associated societal fragmentation (in various forms: ethnic, tribal, religious). In this environment, the 'state' has

⁹¹ Author's interview with Ferry Biedermann.

⁹² Author's interview.

no privileged, monopolistic position as the only agency providing security, welfare, and representation; it has to share authority, legitimacy and capacity with other institutions. (2009:17 in Overbeek et al 2009:23-24)

The May 2008 events, therefore, were not about taking over the state, because – with the Lebanese state being the fragile entity that it is, worthwhile to most societal actors as an instrument to achieve certain things more than as a goal in itself – the state is not such a grand thing to take over. In Houry’s words:

In countries with a strong state, you try to control the center, because once you control the center, you control the country. [...] For example, you control the TV station and tell the population ‘We are your leaders.’ In Lebanon, everyone has their own TV station, it’s too fragmented.⁹³

Nevertheless, in Lebanon, the struggle between societal actors is increasingly determined by the state’s political system, by gaining access to “the state’s coffers and jobs in the administration” (Barak 2002:633). Discarding Badie’s observation that “making claims no longer occurs through an appeal to the state, or even by a frontal attack on the state, but by an identity-based and transnational articulation of those claims,” in Lebanon another development occurred (2000:176):

From 1975 all the way to 1990 the state wasn’t at the centre of the fight, it wasn’t even at stake, no one cared about the state [...] Since 2005 the state *is* at the centre of it, people are struggling for the state, for both [March 8 and March 14] the elections feel existential and this is because they are fighting for the state, they need to control the state in order to define a trend.⁹⁴

According to Karim Makdisi this is largely due to Western ‘statism’ that is imposed on the rest of the world.⁹⁵ Money and international policies now flow through the state, making the state the focal point of politics. While societal actors in Lebanon have not accepted a Weberian state, they have accepted *a* state, testifying of “a ‘hardening’ of the state system, whereby the state, even in its weak [...] form, is ‘here to stay’” (Korany 1987:47 in Davis 2007:61).

In this respect, it is noteworthy that the official instalment of the opposition’s veto power in the Doha Agreement was hardly more than a recognition of a status quo on the ground that persisted even before the crisis. “Hezbollah could always resign and then you have this

⁹³ Author’s interview.

⁹⁴ Author’s interview with Karim el Mufti.

⁹⁵ Author’s interview.

cumulative effect of the various institutions working together [allowing it to] basically jam the whole thing without veto power.”⁹⁶ Apparently, however, Hezbollah felt that this was not enough, that it needed to officially enshrine veto power in the political system.⁹⁷ This confirms the growing centrality of the idea of the state and the need for societal actors to include themselves in the framework of the state. Whether the Lebanese state’s aptitude to survive resembles the endless reincarnation of a phoenix, or the stubborn endurance of a cockroach, is debatable, but Hezbollah too has taken notice of the fact that it needs to be represented and present in the state arena to be able to play the role it anticipates. How it has substantiated that observation is the subject of the next chapter.

⁹⁶ Author’s interview with Heiko Wimmen.

⁹⁷ Author’s interview with Nadim Houry.

CHAPTER 4: HEZBOLLAHSTAN IN THE MAKING?⁹⁸

Hezbollah in the context of Lebanon's state-building process

This chapter seeks to place Hezbollah within Lebanon's state-building process as described in Chapter 3. I assess Hezbollah's place within the practice of the Lebanese state – the extent to which Hezbollah denies or grants the state social control. Additionally, I analyse Hezbollah's image of the Lebanese state – its perspective on and ideals for the state. I thereby address sub-question five about how Hezbollah can be analysed from a state-building perspective.

4.1 HEZBOLLAH AS A SOCIETAL ACTOR

In the early 1980s, Hezbollah, 'the Party of God,' came into existence as, on the one hand, the manifestation of a new religious current within the marginalized Shi'ite community and, on the other hand, an expression of resistance against the 1982 Israeli occupation of Lebanon (Alagha 2005:207). In its early days, Hezbollah was considered a purely militant organization fighting Israel. Later, the Ta'if Accord initiated Hezbollah's adoption of a more gradualist-pragmatic mode (Hamzeh 2004:109).⁹⁹ In the 1990s, Hezbollah's range of activities expanded to include more social and political issues. Furthermore, its struggle against Israel gained widespread legitimacy, even among its political adversaries, when the government acknowledged it as a national resistance project (Harik 2004:47). The 2000s nevertheless presented Hezbollah with two considerable dilemmas (Noe 2007:11). First, the 2000 Israeli withdrawal proved both Hezbollah's biggest success since, and most dire challenge to, its existence. Second, the withdrawal of Hezbollah's foreign patron Syria required Hezbollah to play a more assertive role to defend its interests.

To analyse Hezbollah vis-à-vis the Lebanese state, it is crucial to depart from a holistic perspective on the organization. As Harb and Leenders show, Hezbollah's institutions operate as an "integrated network which produces sets of values and meanings embedded in an interrelated religious and political framework" (2005:173). Nevertheless, three main tiers can be discerned in the organisation that is Hezbollah (Noe 2007:13). First, there is Hezbollah's 'social empire.' Hezbollah's education system with dozens of schools, a health care system with various hospitals caring for half a million people a year, a banking system, marketing chains, and even pension funds and insurance companies, root Hezbollah deep in the hearts

⁹⁸ (Butters 2008c).

⁹⁹ For an overview of Hezbollah's current organizational structure, I refer to Appendix E.

and minds of its constituents (Zisser 2009:3). Interestingly, a 1996-research showed that this constituency did not concur with the social stratification considered typical of radical Islamic movements, suggesting that Hezbollah cannot be characterized as the preserve of the intensely religious (Harik 1996).

Hezbollah's second tier is that of resistance against Israel. The resistance is Hezbollah's unquestioned priority and is presented as religiously required, with Hezbollah regularly reminding "its constituency that it belongs to a *hala islamiyya* [Islamic sphere] and of its mission of resistance" (Harb and Leenders 2005:191). In 1989 Hezbollah was exempted from the disarmament procedure all other militias were put through, and was proclaimed a 'national resistance' (Alagha 2005:63). While this resistance status was reconfirmed in a 2005 cabinet policy statement, Hezbollah's privileged position as such is no longer undisputed in the post-2000 era (Alagha 2009:2). Hezbollah, however, remains convinced of the necessity of its fight against Israel, and recast its resistance as 'deterrent.'¹⁰⁰

Third, there is Hezbollah's political project. Here, Fayyad suggests that it is useful to distinguish between Hezbollah as opposition and Hezbollah as a political party.¹⁰¹ While most Shi'ites no longer identify themselves as marginalized, they still feel politically targeted and count on Hezbollah to protect and represent them (NowLebanon 2007). Since 1989, Hezbollah has become the leading political representative of the Shi'ite community by fulfilling this role (Nasrallah April 2006 in Noe 2007:375-376). Furthermore, to protect both its social and resistance projects, and to amplify its weight as a political party, Hezbollah established the cross-sectarian 'allegiance to the resistance' coalition which is now known as 'March 8' (Qassem 2005:193). Since 2006 this political bloc has often simply been called 'the opposition' (against the more Western oriented March 14 bloc currently leading the government). This alliance consists of Hezbollah, Amal, the SSNP, the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), the Skaff Bloc and the Murr Bloc.¹⁰² Of these, Amal and the FPM are Hezbollah's closest allies. While once the established political representative for the Shi'ites, Amal has lost much of its moral authority. It nevertheless has political experience from which Hezbollah benefits and their alliance permits Hezbollah to speak for the entire Shi'ite community. Hezbollah's relationship with Michel Aoun's FPM as laid down in their 2006 Memorandum of Understanding is more complex. Their dramatically divergent backgrounds

¹⁰⁰ Author's interview with Joseph Alagha.

¹⁰¹ Author's interview.

¹⁰² For more information on Amal and the FPM, I refer to Appendix B. Both the Skaff and the Murr Bloc are relatively marginal Christian parties.

notwithstanding, “victimization and the desire to stamp out corruption” provide a basis for cooperation between the two parties (Alagha 2008a:18). Additionally, the cross-sectarian legitimacy that accompanies this association – allowing Hezbollah to present itself as the leader of a Muslim-Christian front – presents a more opportunistic motivation.¹⁰³

Thus, like Lebanon’s other societal organizations, Hezbollah is a hybrid entity. Hezbollah’s different tiers mutually reinforce each other and conveniently allow Hezbollah to play a multitude of roles within the country. In May 2008, for example, Hezbollah parried accusations that it was operating for mere party considerations with the claim that it acted to protect the resistance (Saad-Ghorayeb 2007:5).

4.2 HEZBOLLAH’S POSITION IN THE PRACTICE OF THE LEBANESE STATE

An analysis of Hezbollah’s position within the Lebanese state should start by addressing what Charles Tripp calls the ‘secular logic of the state’ (1996). Tripp argues that while many Islamist movements have capitalized on the state’s shortcomings, “once engaged in political competition, Islamists will also find themselves trapped by the secular logic, offering concessions and adopting issues alien to their own ideological outlook on the world” (in Wärn 1998:11). This is inevitable because the transformative logic of the state as an organization of worldly power “demands certain reactions and adaptive transformations even from those who believe that the social order should approximate as far as possible the divine order” (Tripp 1996:53).

The history of Hezbollah’s relationship with the Lebanese state is indeed characterised by this secular logic. Initially, this relation was characterized by confrontation. Presenting itself as ‘anti-establishment,’ Hezbollah vehemently rejected any relation with, or connection to, the Lebanese state (Nasrallah September 1992 in Noe 2007:80). Furthermore, in the 1980s Hezbollah “openly revolted against the Lebanese state,” driving state authorities out of its areas of control (Hamzeh 2004:100). This generated a ‘catch 22’ situation in which Hezbollah was partly the result of a weak state and a weak state partly the result of Hezbollah. Confrontation, however, gradually shifted towards a mixture of competition and integration, resembling a path described by Sidney Tarrow as ‘the pattern of institutionalization,’ in which, when the excitement of its disruptive phase dies out, a movement institutionalizes its tactics and attempts to gain concrete benefits through negotiation (1996:101). This increased participation of Hezbollah in the state will be analysed in detail in section 4.3.c. Currently,

¹⁰³ Author’s interview with Ferry Biedermann.

Hezbollah both strengthens and weakens the social control of the state. On the one hand, it competes with the state, both in the output and in the constitutive domain. In that way, Hezbollah neither complies with the state, nor evinces legitimacy for it. On the other hand, Hezbollah acknowledges the state – Nasrallah says that “Lebanon has now a real state” – and thus complies with, at least, the idea of the state as an important societal actor (October 2000 in Noe 2007:253) Also, Hezbollah’s cooperation with the state – on, for example, prison swaps with Israel, where the state “has helped, protected, supported, and coordinated with the resistance” – allows the state to share in the legitimacy Hezbollah generates through the widely supported resistance (Nasrallah January 2004 in Noe 2007:305-306).

Hezbollah’s position within Lebanon generates most controversy regarding the constitutive domain. First, there is the matter of territory. Hamdan argues that allegations that Hezbollah does not allow the state to be ‘present’ in the South and Beirut’s southern suburbs are propaganda, because “almost half of the Lebanese army is in the South of Lebanon.”¹⁰⁴ Halabi, however, argues that Hezbollah forces a hegemonic rule on areas in South Lebanon and South Beirut, “censuring DVDs and stamping out internal opposition.”¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Hezbollah, in its resistance guise, holds sway at the airport and several border-crossings (Schenker 2008a:1).

Even more important is that Hezbollah undermines the state’s monopoly of violence by maintaining a formidable armed force that outmatches the national army and has the potential to prevent or dictate any decision. The 2006 war that Hezbollah (rather than the Lebanese army) fought against Israel, showed Hezbollah’s ability to unilaterally make foreign policy decisions and eroded the boundary between state and non-state violence (de Jong 2007:6). Hezbollah argues that the fact that it is not integrated into the Lebanese army is in the best interests of the Lebanese state as it precludes Israel from holding the Lebanese state responsible for Hezbollah’s actions (Saad-Ghorayeb 2006:4-5). This argument, however, holds no relevance for the use of Hezbollah’s armed force against other Lebanese, as occurred in May 2008. Moreover, Hezbollah’s armed status unhinges Lebanon’s sectarian balance. This, too, was aptly illustrated in the May 2008 clashes in which Hezbollah not only explicated the fact that the Lebanese government is unable to disarm it, but also that it ultimately will not make allowances for other societal actors standing in its way.

¹⁰⁴ Author’s interview.

¹⁰⁵ Author’s interview.

Then there is the issue of the judiciary. Ahmad Hamzeh states that Hezbollah does not only resolve conflicts in areas under its dominance through its own judicial councils, but also enforces these verdicts independently of the state (2004:69). Additionally, Hezbollah is said to undermine the state by acting as a police force that maintains law and order in fights between supporters of other political parties.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, Hezbollah generates substantial revenues from different sources, one of which is the (voluntary) religious levy of its constituents.¹⁰⁷ Matthew Levitt has argued that this financial construction can be seen as Hezbollah's private tax system (2005). Whether or not this is the case, this form of income is accompanied by an extensive administrative structure that incorporates a substantial part of Lebanon's population.¹⁰⁸

Regarding the output domain, much has already been said in Chapter 3 on how Hezbollah competes with – or replenishes – the state's provision of health care, education and utility services. Hezbollah's *Jihad al-Binaa* Association, according to Qassem, refurbished 17,212 homes, shops and public utility structures destroyed by Israel; takes care of waste accumulation and the distribution of drinking water in Beirut's Southern suburbs, reaching 15,000 families; assists with agricultural activities in Lebanon's rural areas; gives educational support for 16,679 students; through the Islamic Health Foundation, manages nine health centres, nineteen infirmaries and provides free health services to 88 schools; and, through the Philanthropic and Social Martyrs' Institution, takes care of 1,284 families of 'martyrs' in addition to the 4,610 families the Islamic Philanthropic Committee takes care of (2005:84-85).¹⁰⁹ A similar dynamic governs all three indicators of the output domain: the state, to some extent, failed to provide health care, education and utility services, which created a niche for Hezbollah to develop its private services.

The above need not mean that Hezbollah prevents its followers to participate in the state. Presenting alternative structures – whether borders, armed forces, courts, administrations, health care institutions, schools or garbage collection businesses – to the state, however, does keep social control away from the state. It signifies an only partial compliance with the state, namely as *a*, but not *the* actor in this domain; reduces participation in the state; and suggests an illegitimacy of the state. This leads me to the state-within-a-state discussion that Hezbollah

¹⁰⁶ Author's interview with Patrick Haenni.

¹⁰⁷ For a more extensive analysis of Hezbollah's income, see Appendix E.

¹⁰⁸ Author's interview with Joseph Alagha.

¹⁰⁹ Interestingly, Hezbollah has won the UN Best Practices Award to the Ghubayri municipality for the provision of social services (Leenders 2006:7).

often features in. Based on Ian Spears' definition, Davis concludes that Hezbollah can be regarded a state-within-a-state:

(1) The extension of force: Hizbullah maintains monopoly over the means of coercion in the south, and as a result, the state cannot viably challenge the group. (2) Territory: the dispersed nature of the Shiite population means that Hizbullah is unable to enforce a well-defined border within Lebanon and therefore cannot safeguard its own territorial integrity. However, as the organisation has not indicated that it desires separation from the state, a contiguous territory is not essential for its state building process. (3) Capacity to generate revenue: generous funds from Iran shield Hizbullah from this requirement, but its businesses, investments, and alleged criminal activities generate considerable semi-independent revenue to satisfy this criterion. (4) Administration and infrastructure: Hizbullah's well established infrastructure and administration is the "hardware" of its state building venture. (2004:17 in 2007:52)

My concern, however, is not so much with the degree to which the state-within-a-state label fits Hezbollah¹¹⁰ – and it can be argued that it does not do so very snugly, as the territorial component is unconvincing and as some other characteristics, like mandatory taxation, are missing – but with the label itself and Hezbollah's perspective on it. The term is far from neutral, and the debate surrounding it hardly takes into consideration contextual factors explaining the situation. El Mousawi explains:

Hezbollah is building a lot, but not a state per se. It is not challenging the state but supplementing it. And yes, it sometimes plays the role of the state in that it provides services that the state should provide but doesn't. But it never erected its own taxation system, it never built its own judiciary and it did not create its own security apparatus.¹¹¹

Branding Hezbollah a state-within-a-state without addressing the reasons why it operates the way it does, is academically insufficient. Below, I investigate how the practice of Lebanon's state-building process has shaped Hezbollah's image of the state, which, in turn, can be expected to have influenced the position Hezbollah takes in Lebanon.

¹¹⁰ If it fits, it would not be the first state-within-a-state situation Lebanon witnessed. Before the civil war, the PLO established a state-within-a-state in South Lebanon, much of the Biq'a, and West Beirut (El Khazen 2000). During the war, almost all militias constituted a state-within-a-state to some extent. In 1979, major Haddad briefly established 'the State of Free Lebanon' in the Israeli-Lebanese border area (el Khazen 2003:610). Later, there was the Dinniye episode wherein "a small band of radical Sunni Islamists based in the northern-Lebanese town of Dinniye declared an Islamist mini-state" (Noe 2007:253).

¹¹¹ Author's interview.

4.3 HEZBOLLAH'S IMAGE OF THE LEBANESE STATE

4.3.a Perspective

Hezbollah sees the Lebanese state as having failed to uphold its territorial delimitation vis-à-vis Israel. This means, for Hezbollah, that the state has squandered its right to a monopoly of violence.¹¹² Seeing the resistance as a delegate of society, Fayyad argues that “when the state fails in carrying out some of its functions, society must help the state in carrying them out, even if the state doesn’t ask” (in Saad-Ghorayeb 2006:4). Hezbollah does not hold the state’s judicial system in high regard either, pointing at the widespread corruption among judges and dryly noting that fighting corruption is apparently even more difficult than resisting Israel (Alagha 2005:179). And while Hezbollah acknowledges that the state’s fiscal system works, it criticizes the lack of output that is generated from the taxes that are collected.

Regarding the output domain of the state, namely, Hezbollah finds the state lacking when it comes to the provision of health care, education and utility services. Nasrallah laments that “there are Lebanese citizens who only feel authoritative presence through policemen and tax collectors and authority’s development, services and care find no way to them” (speech 26 May 2008). Again, according to Hezbollah, the state, because it failed to provide necessary public services, can now no longer claim the exclusive right to provide these. Mokdad stresses that Hezbollah has no innate ambition “to carry any security or management responsibility,” but also insists that, considering the historical marginalization of the Shi’ites, it would have been immoral of Hezbollah had it not acted to fill this gap.¹¹³

Considering the political system, Hezbollah has consistently denounced political sectarianism as a pillar of the Lebanese model. Nevertheless, Hezbollah sees Lebanon as a consociational democracy. Fayyad believes “that consensus is Lebanon’s inevitable fate” and is convinced that this “does not mean the establishment of a new political system, but rather a shared understanding of the spirit of the constitution, and an honest interpretation of a constitutional and political reality” (2008:64). For Hezbollah, the main task of the political system is therefore to balance the interests of the various of societal actors: “the Lebanese system is built exactly to prevent dominance by one community” (Nasrallah September 2000 in Noe 2007:81).

¹¹² Author’s interview Ali Fayyad.

¹¹³ Author’s interview.

In Hezbollah's eyes, however, the political system has not always succeeded in this. In its early days, Hezbollah saw the Lebanese state as unjust, exactly because it was dominated by 'political Maronism' (Alagha 2005:125). After the civil war, the Lebanese state ceased to be regarded as inherently oppressive, but since 2005, Hezbollah has recognized a new threat to the balancing qualities of the Lebanese political system in the form of 'Harirism' (Alagha 2005:195). During the 2005-2008 political crisis, Hezbollah became convinced that March 14, often narrowed down to Hariri's Future Movement, "doesn't care for any consultation, and doesn't care for unity and doesn't care for partnership with all the components of the Lebanese community."¹¹⁴ Hezbollah believes that the Future Party and its allies would go all the way to dominate the system in order to use the state to further its specific goals – which are contrary to those of Hezbollah. Malik confirms that "the March 14 group and their external backers, principally the United States and Saudi Arabia, are the ones who wrecked political equilibrium in Lebanon."¹¹⁵ In their quest to "essentially monopolize everything," Hariri's movement has not hesitated to use any material and financial means at its disposal.¹¹⁶ March 14's preference for a majority-minority system that would do away with the consociational core of Lebanon's current system, is seen by Hezbollah as yet another manoeuvre to gain dominance over the state.

All things considered, Hezbollah perceives the Lebanese state as inadequate, maintaining that "the Resistance is not the cause of the state's weakness, but its consequence" (Saad-Ghorayeb 2007:14). It seems, however, that Hezbollah's problem is not so much with the actual weakness of the state: Hezbollah appears perfectly happy to mind its own business, as described in section 4.2. Hezbollah's problem with the weakness of the state is that it is used as a reason to fault Hezbollah's activities in the various domains of the state, instead of a reason to praise it for these activities (Mousalli 1995:92). By filling the vacuum the state has left, Hezbollah feels that it has actually helped the state to survive as its actions surely prevented "an uprising or revolt by the Lebanese people against the state."¹¹⁷ This image of a weak state notwithstanding, by stating the threat of March 14 dominating the political system, Hezbollah also acknowledges the growing centrality of the state in the interaction between Lebanon's various societal actors.

¹¹⁴ Author's interview with Ali Hamdan.

¹¹⁵ Author's interview.

¹¹⁶ Author's interview with Habib Malik.

¹¹⁷ Author's interview with Ibrahim el Mousawi.

4.3.b Ideal

To unravel Hezbollah's ideology, it is crucial to distinguish between its religious ideology, its political ideology and its political program (Alagha 2005). Hezbollah's religious ideology rests on three pillars: "1) belief in Shi'a Islam; 2) *wilayat al-faqih* (guardianship of the jurisprudent or jurisconsult)¹¹⁸; and 3) *jihad* (struggle) in the way of God" (Alagha 2005:13). The importance of this religious ideology is hard to overestimate, as it inspires Hezbollah's social work as well as its resistance against Israel and ultimately defines Hezbollah's nature. Hezbollah's political ideology is also directly generated from this religious ideology and is based on a holistic notion of Islam as manifested in the 'three Ds:' Islam as *din* (religion), *dunaya* (way of life), and *dawla* (state) (Ayubi 1992:68 in Wörn 1998:3). This political ideology is firmly rooted in a Shi'ite interpretation of Islam in which "a wide margin was left to accommodate change, and keep pace with any place and age" (Qassem 2005:29). More specifically, Hezbollah's political ideology is based on ayatollah Khomeini's interpretation of Shi'ism that divides the world into 'oppressed' and 'oppressors' and in which both armed and unarmed *jihad* have a central place (Hamzeh 2004:38).

This political ideology has, from 1989 onwards, been converted into a concrete political program. Concerning the constitutive domain, Hezbollah prioritizes the establishment of internal safety and security, which should be generated by external readiness to face Israel. It wants to establish "Lebanon as a resistant state, which means building a strong state that can consolidate the rule of law and face the Israeli threats and terrorism" (*Daily Star* 2008b). As such, Hezbollah rejects any plans for dividing the country into federal states (Sfeir 2009b). Regarding the output domain, Hezbollah works for a better provision of social services for all Lebanese citizens, with a focus on 'the oppressed' (i.e. the Shi'ites) (Fayyad 2008:42). Concerning the political system, Hezbollah's vision of Lebanon as a consensual democracy practically means – as became clear during May 2008 – that it wants constitutional recognition of its ideal of a national unity government with a veto right for the opposition. Regarding electoral law, Hezbollah wants to introduce proportional representation; limit the influence of "political money and sectarian fanaticisms;" and promote equal opportunities for using the media (Memorandum of Understanding 2006). Furthermore, Hezbollah works to establish a Higher National Council to eliminate political sectarianism from state institutions (Shanahan 2006:5).

¹¹⁸ One of Khomeini's vital innovations of Shi'ism which, in short, has it that the *ulama* were to govern the state (Esposito and Voll 1996 in Wörn 1998:18).

To realize this political program, Hezbollah successfully participated in Lebanon's political system since 1992.¹¹⁹ In its election programs Hezbollah conveys a considerable role for the state in realizing its goals of resistance and social service provision. Regarding the constitutive domain, Hezbollah pleads for the state's participation in the resistance project, thereby covertly addressing the dilemma of a state monopoly of violence and state sovereignty. In the output domain, Hezbollah not only presents objectives regarding health care, education, agriculture and infrastructure, but also presents state policies that could yield these results. Concerning the political system Hezbollah has, throughout all its election programs, called for the establishment of "real political institutions that cannot be summarized in individuals, nor emptied by the dominance of parties or groups," thereby defending the mediating quality of the system.

The goals as presented in its election programs are, tellingly, influenced by Hezbollah's participation in Lebanon's state, as they are indeed altered by the state's 'inherent secularism.' While the core of Hezbollah's political ideology is the creation of an Islamic state in Lebanon, Hezbollah has not included this aspiration in its political program and, when asked, emphasizes it would only work for an Islamic state through democratic means (Qassem 2005:31). Moreover, Nasrallah has openly stated that he realizes that a democratically chosen Islamic state in Lebanon is utterly unfeasible (August 2006 in Noe 2007:401). A stance that is, according to Mokdad, confirmed by the Hezbollah's alliance with the FPM, the largest Lebanese Christian party.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the issue remains a prickly one, as it obviously pains Hezbollah's representatives to explicitly abandon the cause of an Islamic state (Hamzeh 2004:4).

4.3.c Modus operandi

More important than the content of Hezbollah's election programs, however, is the fact that Hezbollah participates in elections at all. This illustrates that the development of the Lebanese state, as perceived by Hezbollah, has influenced Hezbollah's strategies. In its attempt to realize its image of the state – that, at least, allows or, at best, supports Hezbollah's religiously inspired resistance project and service provision – Hezbollah has moved from non-participation to representation in parliament and, eventually, cabinet.

¹¹⁹ An extensive examination of Hezbollah's election programs and practices is provided in Appendix F.

¹²⁰ Author's interview.

Hezbollah's participation in the political system is part of its so-called Lebanonization, "a simultaneous process of rationalization and nationalization" (Noe 2008:4).¹²¹ The initial instigator for Hezbollah's participation in elections was the reincarnation of the Lebanese state after the civil war. Parliament, rather than the militia-battlefield, became the best way to obtain resources for the Shi'ite community and access to decision-making (Davis 2007:50). In 2000, another incentive was added to this motivation as the end of the Israeli occupation meant that Hezbollah could no longer depend on the self-evidence of the relevance of its resistance mission. In the hope that a continuation of the resistance could be guaranteed through the state, Hezbollah extended its political project by stepping up its role as opposition leader. According to Lara Deeb, Hezbollah actively used its 2000 victory over Israel in the creation of a national narrative that presented Hezbollah's sacrifice for Lebanon as a way to incorporate the organization into the state (2008:376). Then, in 2005, Syria's withdrawal prompted Hezbollah to join cabinet. The exit of Hezbollah's patron meant Hezbollah needed to ensure new channels to resources and influence. That the state could now provide these, owed to the fact that Syria's departure boosted state-building by granting renewed legitimacy to the political system and increasing efficiency in the output domain.

Hezbollah's participation in the political system is therefore informed more by practical than by ideological reasons (Qassem 2005:190). Hezbollah began to see the state, most specifically its political system, as obtaining a more significant position in Lebanon's society. As such, the state presented both a potential threat to, and opportunity for, the realization of Hezbollah's goals. But while Hezbollah now complies with the state as a central societal actor and participates in the state's political system, it does not necessarily perceive this system, or the state as a whole, as legitimate. As illustrated by the 2008 clashes – when Hezbollah showed that it felt that its representation in government was worth fighting for – the political system has become yet another sphere for Hezbollah to further its goals (Davis 2007:50). The May events, however, also demonstrate that while Hezbollah respects the Lebanese constitution, or at least its interpretation thereof, and participates in elections in accordance with the law, Hezbollah does not exclusively mobilize its constituents through state institutions. The state's political system, for Hezbollah, constitutes only one of many means to

¹²¹ This development has manifested itself in, for example, the changes in the orientation of Hezbollah's weekly *Al-'Ahd* (later *al-Intiqad*), conveying a 'secular' image by dropping the Quranic legitimisation and removing the portraits of Khumayni and Khamina'i; and the donning of Lebanese rather than party flags in demonstrations in 2004 and 2005 (Alagha 2005:49).

an end. As the practice of Hezbollah's functioning in the Lebanese state illustrates, it still largely furthers its goals independently from the state, rather than through the state.

In fact, Hezbollah perceives its participation in the political system as a necessary evil, a stance characterized by Patrick Haenni as *le politique en negative*.¹²² According to Heanni, Hezbollah got involved in the state not so much to promote its goals, but to prevent others, currently March 14, from hampering the realization of these goals. This is illustrated by Hezbollah's tendency to relinquish parliamentary seats to its allies. In 2006, Nasrallah even suggested that Hezbollah need not be included in a new government at all, as long as the opposition obtained enough seats to have a veto right. This statement encapsulates Hezbollah's "dual approach to the state: a desire not to make policy but to thwart aspects of it; not to be sullied by governmental decisions but protected from them" (International Crisis Group 2006:13). As demonstrated by the potential role for the state as outlined in Hezbollah's electoral programs, Hezbollah can imagine a part for the state in the execution of Hezbollah's activities. That this would be a supporting role, is suggested by its independent behavior as a societal actor. So far, Hezbollah may have adopted a discourse supporting a 'strong, just and capable' state, but its actual practices have not revealed serious effort to realize such a state.¹²³

Of course, this 'negative' posture towards the state is not static. In fact, it can be said to have been changing already since Hezbollah participated in cabinet. Increasingly, Nasrallah seems to demonstrate a will to govern, stating in May 2009 that Hezbollah is able "to govern a country that is 100 times larger than Lebanon" (Sfeir 2009b). Currently, however, it seems that, most of all, participation in the state allows Hezbollah to keep a close eye on its Lebanese rivals while pursuing its own objectives outside the state. Mhanna suggests that Hezbollah thereby aims to simulate the role Syria played until 2005.¹²⁴ El Mousawi acknowledges this, saying that when "the Syrians withdrew from Lebanon and left a strategic vacuum everyone wanted to fill, everyone was surprised when it turned out it was Hezbollah that was in the position to actually do so."¹²⁵ In the end, Hezbollah seeks neither coup d'état nor secession: "Unlike insurgent groups who seek to either take over or separate from the state, Hizbullah's state building requires it to play the "political game" – in which the group uses the propaganda tools of "national unity" rather than discussing 'Hizbullahland'" (Zisser 2000:10 in Davis 2007:67). I thus disagree with Zisser's claim that Hezbollah seeks power

¹²² Author's interview.

¹²³ Author's interview with Ali Kadri.

¹²⁴ Author's interview.

¹²⁵ Author's interview.

through democratic means, exploiting the fact that the Shi'ites constitute the largest community in the country (2009:2). Hezbollah uses participation in a democratic state to buttress the power it already has, but has not displayed much tendency to actually seek new power by this way.

4.4 CONCLUSION

“Without grasping the nature of the state, it may be futile to try to understand the nature of the Islamist movement in question” (Wärn 1998:12). As one of Lebanon's most important societal actors, Hezbollah can be expected to influence Lebanon's state-building process in the three ways introduced in Chapter 3. First, as a political party, and part of the opposition, Hezbollah directly influences state-building through its position in Lebanon's political system. Additionally, it influences state-building from outside the state, as a resistance force and social provider. Finally, as a societal representative of the Shi'ite community, together with Amal, it is able to influence state-building because it functions as a gateway for state services and resources. In keeping with my research puzzle, however, the most relevant question is not how Hezbollah influenced state-building, but how state-building influenced Hezbollah. In this chapter, I have shown that the particularities of Lebanon's state-building process have determined Hezbollah's *modus operandi* in three main ways.

First, the Unweberian nature of the Lebanese state, that is a result of how the sectarian make-up of Lebanon's society has influenced Lebanon's state-building process, has meant a generous amount of autonomy for Hezbollah in the development of its organization. As Hezbollah's position in the Lebanese state shows, Hezbollah has been able to evolve into a societal actor that develops activities independent from the state socially, concerning the output domain of the state, and military, regarding the constitutive domain of the state. As such, Hezbollah's “success is measured more by the large measure of autonomy it has from government authorities in political and security affairs than from the power it exercises in government” (El Khazen 2003:617).

This position of Hezbollah as a societal actor in the Lebanese state, in itself, does not grant Hezbollah a unique position among Lebanon's other societal actors. All of these have established ties with other states than their own to generate money and political back-up.¹²⁶ In the sense that its own private institutions are more powerful than state institutions, Hezbollah does not significantly differ either from, for instance, the Future Movement. A pro-state-

¹²⁶ Author's interview with Rafic Nasrallah.

building discourse hiding an anti-state reality also characterizes all societal leaders. While, as Salloukh stresses, Hezbollah “is much more capable of utilizing the system than some of the other parties and actors, they didn’t create the system, this is the way Lebanon is.”¹²⁷ Where Hezbollah differentiates from other societal actors is the scale on which it is armed. Safa sees this as problematic because “it makes other communities in Lebanon want to do the same.”¹²⁸ But even here, Hezbollah may not differ dramatically from other political parties. Perhaps it is merely in a different stage of its development. Houry proposes that the position Hezbollah takes today resembles the role many other parties played earlier.¹²⁹ Political movements such as Jomblatt’s Progressive Socialist Movement and Berri’s Amal Movement are older than Hezbollah and shed the bigger part of their state-like armed identity at the end of the civil war. Being what Barak calls a ‘newcomer,’ Hezbollah may only just be arriving at this point in its historical development (2003:312).

The second way Lebanon’s state-building process has shaped Hezbollah’s current position and strategy is by generating a ‘hybrid’ state, as described in Chapter 3, that owes its existence mostly to its role as mediator between various societal actors. Hezbollah, however, has always been afraid of a distortion of this mediating role of the state. In fact, the image that Hezbollah has traditionally had of the Lebanese state, is that of an entity controlled by its societal rivals, initially the Maronites and currently the Sunnis. Hezbollah fears that other actors will high-jack the state to its disadvantage. And as the practice of Hezbollah’s position in the Lebanese state shows, much of its endeavours indeed exist by the grace of a ‘weak’ (i.e. mediating rather than determining) state. To counter this potential threat of the state being dominated by other societal actors, Hezbollah now participates in the political system in order to protect its autonomy from the state from ‘the inside.’ This *politique en negative* means that Hezbollah does not so much use the state to reach the goals it proclaims in its programs and Nasrallah’s speeches, but rather to ensure, preferably through its political allies rallied under the banner of the opposition, that state policy will not thwart these goals. As such, Hezbollah aspires to a position within the political system that allows it to block, but not necessarily to control, other actors. Hezbollah has not opted to participate in the political system of Lebanon’s ‘hybrid state’ to take over the state or even to dominate it. Hezbollah is very much aware of Lebanon’s ‘famous ungovernability,’ but, more importantly, as its current position in

¹²⁷ Author’s interview.

¹²⁸ Author’s interview.

¹²⁹ Author’s interview.

the Lebanese state shows, it does not need to take over the state to realize its goals (Butters 2008b).

The importance of participation in the political system of the state, that now determines Hezbollah's stance, is further enhanced by a third development in Lebanon's state-building process: the growing centrality of the state in post-war Lebanon, the fact that more resources are now distributed through the state and more decisions are taken within the arena of the state. This dynamic necessitated Hezbollah to participate in the state not only to protect its independent social and military missions, but also to prevent missing out on social control that is increasingly being distributed through the state. The state, thus, is seen by Hezbollah not only as a threat to its autonomy, but also as a potential source to gather social control to sustain its autonomous projects.

This is the paradox that Hezbollah faces: it needs to include itself in the state, for the reasons explained above, and simultaneously has the ambition to stay aloof from that very state so as to avoid its secularizing and corrupting dynamics. Nevertheless, Hezbollah has shifted from confronting the state to competing *with* the state in the constitutive and output domains and competing *within* the state in the political system. Still, Hezbollah does not seem to see or accept the fact that its autonomous posture – whether justified or not – in itself inevitably undermines the state. Clearly, though, it does. However, as this chapter has shown, Hezbollah's undermining the state is not so much an objective of its behaviour as it is a consequence of its reaction to Lebanon's specific state-building process. Whether the same can be said of Hezbollah's actions during the May 2008 clashes will be the subject of the Conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The history of Lebanese state-building holds several precedents for the May 2008 clashes. At the eve of Chehab's strong-state-project, the Kataeb party staged a violent take-over of Beirut, demanding a place in the government (Petran 1987:53). Then, the pre-civil war period brought a situation eerily similar to that of the 2005-2008 crisis, with

An armed sub-state actor confronting Israel against the will of the government, social and sectarian tensions enacted in conflicts over foreign policy, a state unable to impose its authority over parts of its territory, an army unwilling or incapable to interfere, significant parts of the population opposed to this situation and losing trust in the state and the security forces (Wimmen 2007:12).

During the civil war, another analogous event occurred when the Gemayel government signed a peace treaty with Israel against the will of the Lebanese National Movement, which then "simply occupied West-Beirut" and forced the government to renege on its decisions.¹³⁰

It is within this context that I have placed my research question: how can Hezbollah's role in the May 2008 Beirut clashes be explained from a state-building perspective? I argue that the analytical framework adopted throughout this thesis can help to explain Hezbollah's role in the May clashes in three distinctive ways. First, the development of Lebanese state-building importantly determined Hezbollah's objectives for playing the role it did in May 2008. Second, the direction of Lebanon's state-building influenced Hezbollah's behaviour during the clashes. Third, the specificities of Lebanon's state-building process have generated the possibility for Hezbollah to play the role it did in the May clashes.

Instead of culminating in a Weberian state, Lebanon's state-building process produced a hybrid order in which the state's main function, through its political system, is to maintain the balance between various societal actors. Recently, this function has gained extra importance, as Lebanon's state-building process has yielded a more central position for the Lebanese state in the interaction between societal actors. Hezbollah, however, perceives the state as failing to ensure the balance between Lebanon's societal actors. Hezbollah has always seen the state as being dominated by its societal rivals, who will use state policies to thwart Hezbollah's social and military projects. Because Hezbollah's main concern is the continuation of its social

¹³⁰ Author's interview with Heiko Wimmen.

service provision and resistance mission, it wants to prevent such a situation. Now that the political system has developed in such a way that it provides the main avenue for Hezbollah to safeguard its autonomous operations, Hezbollah needs to be present, or at least represented by ‘the March 8 opposition,’ in the political system in order to succeed. In the context of that political system, Hezbollah’s priority is to maintain, or restore, the mediating quality of Lebanon’s political system so as to prevent other societal actors from being able to use the state against Hezbollah. In this sense, Hezbollah does not necessarily oppose or fear a strong state, but it does feel threatened by a strong state ‘Lebanese style,’ i.e. prone to domination by one politico-sectarian current.

During the 2005-2008 political crisis, Hezbollah gradually began to identify Saad Hariri’s Future Movement, and, in extension, March 14, as the major threat to its activities. According to Hezbollah, Hariri and his allies monopolized power within the political system (which, apparently, was far more threatening to Hezbollah than March 14’s growing power outside the political system in the form of a ‘Future militia’). Seeing that the ideologies and programs put forward by Hezbollah and Future were opposing each other, often to the extent that they were mutually exclusive, Hezbollah feared that Future would use its dominant position within the state to cross Hezbollah’s schemes outside the state, specifically the resistance. To prevent this, and to restore the balancing nature of Lebanon’s political system, Hezbollah began to demand a ‘national unity government,’ in which the opposition would have over one-third of the cabinet posts, allowing it to veto major government decisions. This ‘request,’ however, was not granted. In the government decisions targeting Hezbollah’s independent telephone network and its control of the airport, Hezbollah then saw a further confirmation of its conviction that March 14, now indeed leading the government, was out to harm Hezbollah’s autonomous resistance project. In reaction, Hezbollah not only acted to undo the government’s decisions, but also, and more importantly, to prevent any such decisions from being made in the future. It used its armed forces to impose the concept of the ‘national unity government,’ the mechanism it had envisioned to guarantee its autonomy within the state, on Lebanon’s political system. Hezbollah’s image of the Lebanese state-building process as being taken hostage by its societal adversaries thus fuelled its aspiration to obtain a position within the political system that allows it to reverse this development. Had the practice of Lebanon’s state-building process not generated such a negative image, Hezbollah would have lacked the incentives it did to act in May 2008.

That the Lebanese state has gradually become an important body through which resources and communication are channelled, compelled Hezbollah to participate in the state not only to protect its autonomy, but also to prevent missing out on the social control that was increasingly being distributed through the state. The state, thus, is seen by Hezbollah not only as a threat to its societal projects, but also as a potential source to gather social control in order to sustain these endeavours. Thus, to some extent, Hezbollah is inevitably acquiring a vested interest in the state and, to protect that interest, needs to adhere to the 'idea' of the state. While the discourse on the May 2008 clashes is overwhelmingly cast in terms of Hezbollah staging a coup d'état, closer scrutiny of the event revealed that Hezbollah did not aim at taking over the state and actually tried to avoid such an impression. Hezbollah's urge to disseminate respect for the state is, I suggest, a result as well as a manifestation of the growing centrality of the Lebanese state. The increased social control of the state in the political domain dictates that societal actors at least adhere to the image of state sovereignty by not explicitly going against state institutions. Ironically, even while going against the state is seemingly not accepted at this stage in Lebanon's state-building process, acting outside the state against other societal actors apparently is: while Hezbollah vehemently rejects that it aimed to take over the state, it never denied "teaching March 14 a lesson."¹³¹

Hezbollah's ability to do so, is also related to state-building. The way in which the sectarian nature of Lebanon's society has decisively shaped Lebanon's state-building process, has meant that Hezbollah, as well as most other societal actors in Lebanon, could develop a holistic organisation relatively independent from the state. A crucial aspect of this organisation is Hezbollah's armed force, initially created and maintained to fight Israel's occupation of Lebanon. This same armed status, however, allowed Hezbollah to forcefully take over West Beirut on 7 May 2008. Had Lebanon's state-building process not led to a state whose social control is no match for the power of the sum of sectarian communities it was meant to govern, Hezbollah would arguably not have been able to develop the armed force it used in May 2008 in response to the government's decisions. As it is, Hezbollah is locked in a vicious circle in which it clings to its weapons to protect its autonomy and clings to its autonomy to protect its weapons.

Today, Hezbollah participates in, and thereby implicitly complies with and grants legitimacy to, the political system. Hezbollah's guerrilla army and the autonomy with which it functions in areas where it is dominant, however, suggest that Hezbollah does not accept the state's

¹³¹ Author's interview with Robert Fisk.

exclusive social control in the constitutive domain. Hezbollah's impressive social services network, that is seen as competing with that of the state, signifies a similar outlook on the output domain. While the centre of gravity of Hezbollah as a societal actor still lies outside the state – in its social and resistance projects – due to the specific nature of the Lebanese state-building process, Hezbollah's political project is now essential to its existence. Because of the state-building developments described above, Hezbollah needs to be part of the state and its presence in, and influence on, the political system is something to be cherished and defended – even at the cost of losing much of its hard-won trustworthiness and being accused of spawning Sunni-Shi'ite discord – as became apparent in May 2008. And, ultimately, Hezbollah seems to have succeeded in its attempt to protect its status within the political system: while the 2009 elections were convincingly won by March 14, it looks like March 8 will be granted a representation in the government that may exceed one-third of the posts, thus providing Hezbollah and its allies with the veto opportunity that Hezbollah went to war for in May 2008.

Although Hezbollah played a crucial role in the May clashes, this does not necessarily mean it caused these clashes. In fact, to a degree, the clashes as a whole – the fact that they erupted and the issues at stake in them – were also shaped by the particularities of Lebanon's state-building process. This is not to say that state-building single-handedly created these clashes: they were also the result of direct political motivations of specific actors. Nevertheless, structural state-building developments can shed additional light on the event.

Due to the inherent sectarianism of Lebanon's society, the provision of social services in Lebanon has largely continued to take place by and through societal actors. Had these actors not been able to maintain their role as intermediaries between the state and its citizens, they would not have been the hybrid, armed, bodies that they are. Subsequently, they could not have engaged in clashes the way they did in May 2008. This touches upon the constitutive domain of the state, because the autonomy of societal actors undermines the state's monopoly of violence – as was illustrated by the role the army played in the May clashes. While this is most striking in the case of Hezbollah, my investigation showed that other parties were armed too. Had they not been, the May clashes would have had a different face. Furthermore, the political system may have become increasingly relevant over the last few years, but this has not (yet) ended the extra-institutional tradition in Lebanese politics. Lebanon's political system still depends more on conventions – unwritten agreements and accommodations – than

on rules – legally determined guidelines. Additionally, efficient politics in Lebanon still consists of introducing – either peacefully or by force – new conventions into the system. Had the institutions making up Lebanon's political system been able to contain political conflict, the confrontation between March 8 and March 14 would not have been played out the way it was in May 2008. And had the system been less dependent on unofficial conventions, the parties involved in the May confrontation would arguably not have acted the way they did.

1. Topical debates

With regard to the first topical debate distinguished in the Introduction, about the May 2008 events, I located a lack of, and bias in, empirical data. In my thesis, I have addressed both, by, on the one hand, generating new empirical data and, on the other hand, interviewing representatives from both sides of Lebanon's political spectrum. Furthermore, I have contextualized the clashes historically – within Lebanon's post-civil war period, specifically the 2005-2008 crisis – and analytically – within the framework presented in Chapter 1.

Concerning the second topical debate, about the nature of Hezbollah, I have gone beyond the minimalist debates described in the Introduction. Although due to my state-building focus, emphasis was inevitably put on Hezbollah's sectarian and national dimension, I have consistently analyzed Hezbollah as a hybrid and flexible organization operating in varying domains. In line with the upcoming holistic approach towards Hezbollah, I have addressed both discourse and deed.¹³²

In discussing the third debate, on the nature of the Lebanese state, I noted in the Introduction that this debate did not deal with the state as an explanatory framework. I have filled this hiatus by addressing not only the causes of specific dynamics of state formation, but also their consequences. With the state-in-society focus, I went beyond the question of whether or not the Lebanese state is a façade for the projects of societal elites – the failed state dissertation – by addressing the multitude of roles the Lebanese state, as a hybrid political order, does take.

2. Theoretical debate

Concerning the debate about state-building that has been the theoretical context for my thesis, I have elaborated state-building as an analytical concept (as opposed to a policy prescription).

¹³² As advocated by Davis (2007), Deeb (2008) and Harb and Leenders (2005).

In two main steps, I have aimed to generate an analytical vision on state-building that is able to help analyse specific events and actors. First, I created a theoretical framework centered around the state and state-building. I conceptualized the state as a dialectic of image and practice situated in the context of society. The practice of the state – its constitutive domain, its output domain and its political system – is shaped by the ideal of the state that societal actors have. The practice of the state, however, in turn, shapes these actors' perspectives on the state and eventually their ideal of the state. Societal actors are able to influence the process of state-building if they command a substantial amount of social control within society – i.e. if people comply with, participate in and grant legitimacy to the structures and practices these societal actors produce. State-building, then, refers to the extension of the social control of the state, influenced by the images of – i.e. perspectives on and ideals about – the state that both state and non-state societal actors hold.

Second, from my theoretical framework, I drew an operationalizing framework, in which I have presented several indicators to assess the degree of social control a state has been able to muster in a specific realm. In addition, this operationalizing framework offers a way to explore why and how the state has been able to reach this degree of social control. The framework, namely, incorporates the existing images regarding the constitutive domain, the output domain and the political system of the state and thus helps explain why societal actors are (un)willing to comply with, participate in or grant legitimacy to specific realms of the state.

Two broad theoretical conclusions that can be generated from my case-study deserve some final attention. Primarily, it has proven essential to see the state as a part of society. The recognition that the state is *a*, and not *the*, social structure in a country should be at the core of any state-building perspective. The functions and faces of the state are determined by society and societal actors are shaped by the state (Nettl 1969:559). As my specific case-study showed, however, since socio-political actors often coincide with state actors, when appreciating the “social boundaries between the state and those subject to its rules” it is sensible to perceive these ‘boundaries’ as crossings rather than as barriers (Migdal 2001:17). While, in theory, the state is a societal actor in its own right, in practice, if a society fails to generate statesmen actually acting on behalf of the state, a state can become a mere vehicle co-opted by other societal actors. Often, states are thus not weak because not enough time has elapsed for them to become strong, but because fragmented social control perpetuates itself when strongmen have carved out niches within the state (Migdal 1988:265). Furthermore, in

defining the state, it is important not to be too 'Weberian.' Western orientations on the state should be seen as measuring tools rather than ideal types: indicators like territorial integrity, a state monopoly of violence and a central state bureaucracy say something about a state, but they do not have to 'make or break' its 'state status.'

3. Remaining queries

This Conclusion shows that the interaction between analytic frames – addressed in theoretical debates – and real-life situations – the subject of topical debates – leads both to “progressively refined images of social life and to better-specified analytic frames” (Ragin 1994:59). Nevertheless, taking a certain perspective, in this case state-building, does not mean that that perspective will yield a total, all-explanatory vision. Nor is it, in a MA thesis, possible to exhaustively address all puzzles generated by a specific perspective. I will conclude this thesis with some queries that merit future investigation.

First, there is the issue of the importance of the state in the international system. I have repeatedly concluded the importance of the renewed centrality of the state in Lebanon, noting a shift from the state as a notion peripheral to societal actors, to the state as the main hub of interaction between these actors. Why this shift has occurred, however, has been beyond the scope of this thesis, but it would be worthwhile to – in the footsteps of, for example, Badie – track the international forces and dynamics that have globally placed the state in this central position (2000).

Second, while my state-building perspective demanded a national focus on Hezbollah, it would be interesting to link the outcomes of this focus more elaborately to Hezbollah's regional project. Makdisi, for instance, feels that Hezbollah's negative politics is a result of regional developments because Hezbollah feels that “internal struggles are a distraction from the preparation for the regional war it fears.”¹³³ A further exploration of Hezbollah's internal dynamics and structures would hold a similar relevance.

Third, the relation between state-building processes and violence warrants more research. The failing of state institutions in regulating conflict politically begins to explain how conflict becomes violent. However, Charles Tilly's observation that war makes states and states make war reveals a more inherent relation between state-building and violence that is also worth exploring (1985).

¹³³ Author's interview.

Before the clashes Fayyad suggested that “there might even be a chance to turn the current crisis into an opportunity for building the state” (2008:64). Afterwards, Nasrallah announced that the “May 7 events safeguarded Lebanon’s institutions and forced all Lebanese parties back to the dialogue” (Sfeir 2009b). In this thesis, I hope to have shown not only, as these quotes testify, that there is a relation between state-building and Hezbollah’s role in the May clashes, but also how and why this relation has manifested itself.

Shukran, thank you.

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APPENDIX A

Interviewees and Sources

INTERVIEWEES

Ali Fayyad (Beirut, 15 April, 2009) – President of the Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation (Hezbollah's think tank).

Ali Hamdan (Beirut, 16 April, 2009) – Senior advisor for Nabih Berri, who is the Speaker of Parliament and leader of the Shi'ite Amal party.

Ali Kadri (Beirut, 14 March, 2009) – Section chief of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia of the United Nations.

Ali Mokdad (Beirut, 21 April, 2009 and 1 May 2009) – Hezbollah Member of Parliament.

Ayman Georges Mhanna (Beirut, 18 March, 2009) – Parliamentary election observer for the National Democratic Institute and youth secretary of the Democratic Renewal Movement.

Bassel Salloukh (Beirut, 18 March, 2009) – Assistant professor of political science at the Social Science and Education Department of the Lebanese American University.

Ferry Biedermann (Beirut, 11 March, 2009) – Middle East correspondent for *The Financial Times* and *De Volkskrant*.

Fida Itani (Beirut, 22 March, 2009) – Journalist for *Al Akhbar* newspaper.

Habib Malik (Beirut, 20 March, 2009) – Professor of History and Cultural Studies at the Lebanese American University.

Hani Hammoud (Beirut, 9 April, 2009) – senior analyst and political advisor and negotiator within the Future Movement.

Hassan Krayem (Beirut, 14 March, 2009) – Governance policy specialist and program manager at the United Nations Development Program and professor of political science at the American University of Beirut.

Heiko Wimmen (Beirut, 12 March, 2009) – Program manager and deputy director of the Middle East Office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Ibrahim el Mousawi (Beirut, 23 April, 2009) – Chief of Media Relations for Hezbollah.

Joseph Alagha (Nijmegen, 19 February, 2009) – Associate professor of Islamic Studies at the Radboud University Nijmegen.

Karim el Mufti (Beirut, 26 March, 2009) – Assistant professor at La Sagesse University, independent consultant in Political and Strategic Affairs.

Karim Makdisi (Beirut, 7 May, 2009)– Assistant Professor at the Political Studies and Public Administration Department of the American University of Beirut.

Mahmoud Harb (Beirut, 25 March, 2009) – Journalist for *l'Orient le Jour* newspaper.

Michael Young (Beirut, 14 April, 2009) – Opinion editor for the *Daily Star* newspaper, contributing editor of *Reason* magazine.

Muhammad Salaam (Beirut, 14 April, 2009) – Journalist for Future TV.

Munir Katul (Beirut, 22 March, 2009) – Independent blogger and PhD. student at the American University of Beirut.

Nabil Halabi (Beirut, 4 April, 2009) - President of the Lebanese Institution for Democracy and Human Rights.

Nadim Houry (Beirut, 9 April, 2009) – Human Rights Watch's senior researcher for Syria and Lebanon.

Oussama Safa – (Beirut, 6 April, 2009) General director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.

Patrick Haenni (Beirut, 7 May, 2009) – former analyst for the International Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa Program.

Paul Salem (Beirut, 7 April, 2009) – Director of the Middle East Center of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Rabih Haber (Beirut, 25 March, 2009) – Managing director of Statistics Lebanon Ltd. Polling and Research.

Rafic Nasrallah (Beirut, 11 April, 2009) – President of the International Center for Media Studies, Hezbollah representative.

Robert Fisk (Beirut, 11 March, 2009) – Middle East correspondent for *The Independent* and independent author.

Saad Hariri (Beirut, 9 April, 2009) – leader of the Sunni Future Movement.

Simon Haddad (Beirut, 30 March, 2009) – Assistant professor in Political Science at Notre Dame University.

Teije Hidde Donker (Beirut, 2 April, 2009) – Researcher at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

Wa'il Kheir (Beirut, 25 March, 2009) – Executive director of the Foundation for Human and Humanitarian Rights, lecturer on Human Rights and International Law at the American University of Beirut and Hagazian University.

Walid Joumblatt (Beirut, 23 March, 2009) – Leader of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party.

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Taken from Nicholas Noe's *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah:*

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Elegy for Sayyed Abbas Musawi (18 February, 1992) – Speech in Nabi Sheet, a village in the eastern Bekaa region.

After the assassination (27 February, 1992) – Conducted by Ibrahim al-Amine, published in the Lebanese leftist newspaper *As-Safir*.

Victory at the polls (25 August, 1992) – Published in the Lebanese secular newspaper *An-Nahar*.

“Hezbollah is not an Iranian community in Lebanon” (11 September, 1992) – Published in the Lebanese pan-Arab magazine *Al-Watan Al-Arabi*.

The first understanding with Israel (27 August, 1993) – Conducted by Ibrahim el-Amine and George Bakassini, published in *As-Safir*.

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The April understanding (30 April, 1996) – Published in *As-Safir*.

The martyrdom of Sayyed Hadi Nasrallah (13 September, 1997) – Speech in South Lebanon.

On conditional withdrawal (29 March, 1998) – Published in the Lebanese newspaper *Al-Moharrer*.

On Jews (7 May, 1998) – Speech in Beirut, broadcast live on Hezbollah's *Al-Manar* television station.

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“A peaceful resolution is a victory for the resistance” (16 February, 2000) – Published in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram*.

Victory (26 May, 2000) – Speech in Bint Jbeil, a border town in South Lebanon.

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“The Americans have sent us a political bomb” (16 November, 2001) – Published in *Al-Rai Al-Aan*.

“How can you afford that?” (16 February, 2002) – Speech in Nabi Sheet.

On the thirteenth anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's death (4 June, 2002) – Speech at the Iranian Embassy in Beirut.

“Arabs are not red Indians” (22 October, 2002) – Speech to the Islamic Institution for Culture and Education in Beirut.

The impending Iraq war and “Muslim-Christian alignment” (13 March, 2003) – Speech in a southern suburb of Beirut.

Interview with *60 minutes* (20 April, 2003) – Broadcast on American television news program *60 Minutes*.

After occupation (22 April, 2003) – Speech at a ceremony marking the anniversary of Imam Hussein's death.

Prisoner exchange (29 January, 2004) – Speech at Beirut's airport at the welcoming ceremony of Lebanese prisoners released after a prisoner swap with Israel.

They are a group that “lives in the Middle Ages” (2 March, 2004) – Speech in Ashoura, a southern suburb of Beirut.

Letter to the Arab and Islamic *ummas* (30 July, 2004) – Published in a number of regional newspapers.

“You will today decide the fate of your nation and country” (8 March, 2005) – Speech in Beirut.

A message to France (13 April, 2005) – Published in *As-Safir* and the French newspaper *Le Figaro*.

“We will consider any hand that tries to seize our weapons as an Israeli hand” (25 May, 2005) – Speech in Bint Jbeil.

Al Quds day (28 October, 2005) – Speech in a southern suburb of Beirut.

“I assure you once again [Samir], that your hopes are sound and in the right place” (24 April, 2006) – Speech in Beirut.

Interview with New TV (27 August, 2006) – Conducted by Maryam al Bassam, broadcast on the Lebanon-based New TV station.

Further:

Nasrallah justifies riots (8 May, 2008) – television speech broadcasted live throughout Lebanon, transcript taken from YaLibnan Website. www.yalibnan.com (accessed 20 March 2009).

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Hezbollah's 2005 parliamentary elections program

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Daily Star articles:

I have read and analysed relevant articles from the *Daily Star* from the period from May 2008 up until May 2009 (on www.dailystar.com.lb). The actual articles referred to in the body of this thesis have been included in the references.

APPENDIX B

Prologue: Political Crisis

The phasing of the crisis that formed the bedrock for the May 2008 Beirut clashes presents a dilemma: a choice on the starting date of the crisis almost inevitably contains a choice for a specific perspective on the crisis – and in extension the clashes. For example, starting the story in 2000, with the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, might be said to indicate the crisis was mainly about a waning relevance of Hezbollah's weapons. Similarly, pinpointing the roots of the crisis in 2005, with the murder of Hariri and the upcoming 'Harirism,' could suggest that the Sunni community getting adrift triggered the crisis. Having recognized this problem, my personal chronology of the crisis is inspired more by practical considerations – the limited scope of this thesis – than ideological ones.

One seed of the crisis was undeniably sown with the Israeli withdrawal in 2000 that had the paradoxical effect of boosting Hezbollah's popularity to unprecedented heights while at the same time undermining its *raison d'être* of an armed resistance aiming to liberate its homeland.¹³⁴ In 2004, Security Council Resolution 1559, indirectly asking for Hezbollah's disarmament, further challenged Hezbollah's position within Lebanon. The dormant tensions resulting from these developments, however, did not seriously escalate until 14 February 2005 when a car bomb shook Beirut, taking the life of the popular Sunni ex-premier Rafiq Hariri (el-Masri 2008:80). Most Lebanese assumed Syria was behind the attack and one of the results of the tragedy was that the majority of the Sunnis shifted away from their traditional support for Syria (Saouli 2006:713). In the process, Malik argues, Hariri's political heirs monopolized power within the Sunni community and went to great lengths to impose their new found vision on Lebanon.¹³⁵ This argument suggests that the Sunni community was rediscovering itself, just like the Shi'ites, now almost unilaterally identifying with Hezbollah, had done.

Additionally, two other consequences of Hariri's murder proved influential, namely the Syrian withdrawal and the surfacing of the Hariri Tribunal as a political issue. The Hariri assassination generated a massive, cross-sectarian, outrage concerning the Syrian presence and interference in Lebanon dubbed the 'Cedar Revolution' (Shannon 2006). The almost

¹³⁴ Author's interview with Hassan Krayem

¹³⁵ Author's interview.

equally immense Hezbollah-organized demonstration signalling solidarity with Syria notwithstanding, in combination with international pressure the 'Independence Intifadah' forced Syria to pull out of Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanese actors now had to deal with each other without the Syrian referee (Ziadeh 2006:155). Initially, this seemed to work out in the form of the 'Quadruple Alliance' consisting of Shi'ite Hezbollah and Amal, Hariri's Sunni Future Movement and Jomblatt's Druze PSP that was supposed to rule what Salloukh calls 'post-Syria Lebanon' and that supposedly arranged to agree on any significant policy issue before they took it to cabinet.¹³⁶

Eventually, however, the agreement broke down, ironically partly because of another consequence of Hariri's murder, the Hariri Tribunal. Whereas 14 March wanted an international tribunal, 8 March preferred a national tribunal. According to an Amal spokesperson, March 14 pushed through the issue of the tribunal relentlessly, ignoring their promise of agreement-before-cabinet.¹³⁷ Because March 8 could not afford to go against public opinion broadly supporting the tribunal, it decided not to vote against the tribunal, but rather to withdraw their ministers from cabinet (Shannon 2006). Although the March 8 ministers eventually returned, even the 'National Dialogue' initiative of speaker of parliament and Amal leader Nabih Berri ultimately proved unable to resolve the disputes between the two camps and March 8 tuned up their calls for more influence in the cabinet. As journalist Ferry Biedermann recalls, this escalating situation was accompanied by a series of assassinations of politicians and journalists, most of whom were part of the March 14 alliance.¹³⁸

In the summer of 2006, a short but vehement war between Israel and Hezbollah added new fuel to the conflict as it bred further mistrust between March 14 and March 8, the former accusing the latter of provoking Israel unnecessarily and the latter – feeling “stabbed in the back” – blaming the former of secretly supporting Israel rather than the Lebanese resistance (Saad-Ghorayeb 2007:8).¹³⁹ The tension rose further over a difference in interpreting the outcomes of the war and related conflicting visions for the post-war landscape. While March 14 stressed in the Bristol Declaration that “it was time to end the duality of weapons and reaffirm that only the army and legal institutions are entitled to defend Lebanon,” Hezbollah

¹³⁶ Author's interview.

¹³⁷ Author's interview with Ali Hamdan.

¹³⁸ Author's interview.

¹³⁹ Patrick Haenni, who was stationed in Beirut as a field analyst of the International Crisis Group at the time, assured me in our interview that there were objective sources confirming Hezbollah's fears, not in the sense of the government actively assisting Israel, but in the sense of the government abstaining from ending the war as quickly as possible.

saw its strategy confirmed as necessary (adhering to the Israeli aggression) and effective (stating they won the war) (International Crisis Group 2006). The war also brought to the fore a confrontation between the two camps on a more structural level. On the one hand, the destruction spawned by the war undermined the ability of the Lebanese state “to deliver, to be a state, to give prosperity to its people” as it forced the state to spend all its money on reconstruction rather than the provision of a more elaborate range of services.¹⁴⁰ As it happened, even regarding the reconstruction process, the Lebanese state got sidelined by Hezbollah whose civil institutions spearheaded the relief efforts and immediately started rebuilding destroyed homes and handing out cash donations (Schenker 2006). In doing so, the organization strengthened the existing impression that “while the Lebanese state and its institutions suffer from chronic corruption coupled with nepotism and favouritism, Hizbullah is well renowned for its probity, integrity, and transparency in conducting public services and affairs” (Alagha 2008c:6). Indeed, “during the Summer of Rage it had become *en vogue* to allude to the absence of the Lebanese state” (Fakhoury-Mühlbacher 2007:7).

Furthermore, as a political price of the “divine victory,” Hezbollah now explicitly demanded the formation of a ‘national unity cabinet’ in which the party aimed for a veto power for itself and its allies (Alagha 2008c:1). Feeling cornered, Hezbollah apparently saw offence as the best form of defence and on 6 November 2006 Nasrallah gave the government a one week ultimatum to form such a unity cabinet before the opposition would take to the streets (Noe 2007:12). Shortly afterwards, the issue of the tribunal resurfaced and six March 8 ministers resigned permanently.¹⁴¹ Hezbollah and its allies claimed that their withdrawal made the cabinet unrepresentative and thereby unconstitutional, referring to the preamble of the Lebanese constitution that states that “There is no constitutional legitimacy for any authority which contradicts the pact of communal coexistence.” According to Saad-Ghorayeb “in Hizbollah’s interpretation this means that all communal groups must be represented in the cabinet. In refusing to dissolve in the absence of Shiite representation, the government is thus ‘usurping’ power and staging a ‘coup’ against the constitution” (2007:3). In addition to withdrawing from the cabinet, Hezbollah’s ally Berri stopped convening parliament,

¹⁴⁰ Author’s interview with Ayman Mhanna.

¹⁴¹ Hezbollah officials stressed that the main reason for the walkout was not the dispute over the tribunal, but the government’s refusal to accept its demand for a veto-wielding share of power (Saad-Ghorayeb 2007:4). As to the question of why the government then did not name new Shi’ite ministers, in our interview Wimmen explained that this was all but impossible due to the political hegemony of Hezbollah and Amal within the Shi’ite community and the official ban by Shi’ite religious authorities on anyone taking a position in the government without their consent.

effectively further blocking the political system. Furthermore, in December 2006, Nasrallah kept his promise and started the announced mass demonstration. Without immediate success, the protest acquired a permanent character when the demonstrators installed themselves in a tent camp surrounding the government buildings in Beirut's city center (Shadid 2006).

Even though Hezbollah representative Fayyad sees the crisis as a "political one par excellence," I agree with the International Crisis Group that at this point Hezbollah had more or less consciously moved the conflict to the streets of Beirut, seeking political guarantees through governmental change (2008:78 and 2006). Generating a situation wherein "*un sorte de tradition politique s'est installée qui consiste à ignorer la loi*" and sectarianism is consciously and directly drawn upon for political purposes (Haenni 2007:83). This was also the moment when "the convergence of a seemingly intractable political dispute, widening distrust, paralysed state institutions, increased resort to street politics, rampant re-confessionalisation and a highly polarised regional context created the most volatile crisis since the end of the country's fifteen-year internal confrontation" (International Crisis Group 2006:17). This is when the political tension developed an institutional dimension and moved in the direction of full-fledged crisis and paralysis. The cabinet was cut short and could only rule by decree, the parliament did not meet, and from November 2007 on the presidency too lost legitimacy, as president Lahoud's term expired but a new president failed to be elected. Wimmen explains that "due to the Lebanese system of sectarian checks and balances, an alliance of the president of the republic and the speaker of parliament is practically capable of blocking or stalling any decision taken by the government indefinitely" and this is seemingly what happened (2007:4). "Everything was blocked, we could not move forward. And since the country was on hold, tension was growing and growing, from week to week, you could see it in the street where patrols of supporters of the different parties started to show up."¹⁴² In this atmosphere, with the 2006 war still fresh in mind, the topic of Hezbollah's weapons gained relevance once more with Hezbollah repeatedly stating that its armed status was not open to discussion and other groups rearming themselves (Nasrallah May 2005 in Noe 2007:349 and Schenker and Exum 2007).

Extensive rounds of shuttle diplomacy headed by representatives of major regional actors from mid-2006 on brought no avail and the institutional deadlock seemed to grow more entrenched. Tensions spiralled out of control on 23 January 2007 when Hezbollah initiated a general strike that was followed by days of street fighting, leaving at least seven people dead

¹⁴² Author's interview with Mahmoud Harb.

and hundreds of people wounded and arrested, before the genie of civil war was put back in the bottle by the political leaders calling for peace and quiet (Alagha 2008c:11).¹⁴³ Here Hezbollah mostly operated as one party in the broader current of the March 8 opposition, together with, among other, the SSNP and Amal. The SSNP, that— unlike Hezbollah — traditionally has a strong presence in West-Beirut, is described by Barak as “a relatively marginal radical movement that envisaged the establishment of a ‘Greater Syria’ in the Fertile Crescent” (2000:8). Based on my interviews, I can say the organization generally has a quite negative reputation. Like the SSNP, Amal has extensive bases in the concerned areas in Beirut, but Amal’s armed wing is considerably bigger and more experienced than that of the SSNP. And due to a shared sectarian background, Amal and Hezbollah have a closer relationship. In the period following the strike, street fights continued to flare up occasionally, demonstrating that the struggle over the control of certain areas Haenni calls a *‘guerre des affiches’* was also a physical, violent, struggle.¹⁴⁴ But it is true that the trauma of the civil war impelled “both Nasrallah and his opponents to act with restraint so as not to be perceived as responsible for the decline of the state into a new civil war” (Zisser 2009:4). Perhaps it was this consideration that led Nasrallah to cast the struggle into a state-building framework: “we are all here to safeguard our state-building project, the establishment of civil calm, and to prevent chaos” (March 2006 in Noe 2007:324).

What is important from a state-building perspective, is that the political crisis engendered a crucial discussion about the political ‘rules of the game’, the modes of political action accepted by society. During the crisis, these rules seemed to change and even disappear, with street politics replacing institutional politics and channels to regulate conflict rendered deficient (International Crisis Group 2006). But as Mokdad shows, appearance deceives: “Even when we had the crisis, there was some agreement between the Lebanese: we do not destroy Lebanon. There is some unwritten agreement about this because everybody wants Lebanon.”¹⁴⁵ Thus, it all comes down to conventions. And in Lebanon, using sectarian street fighting as a tactic in a political struggle is seemingly quite acceptable: “*En d’autres termes, à cinq reprises et un peu moins d’un quart de siècle de vie politique normale, c’est sur le mode de soulèvement populaire et non du scrutin que se déroula l’alternance politique*” (Haenni 2007:85).

¹⁴³ Nasrallah even issued a *fatwa*, a religious decree, stating “From the stance of a national, patriotic, ethical, religious and *shari’a* duty, ... I call on you to fully cooperate with all the measures the Lebanese Army is taking to in order to ensure and uphold peace and stability” (Alagha 2008c:11).

¹⁴⁴ Author’s interview.

¹⁴⁵ Author’s interview.

APPENDIX C

Maps

Lebanon: topography and sectarian make-up.



Figure 6: Map of Lebanon. *NowLebanon*.
www.nowlebanon.com (accessed 4 July 2009).

West Beirut: May 2008 flashpoints.



Figure 7: Map of Beirut. *NowLebanon*.
www.nowlebanon.com (accessed 4 July 2009).

APPENDIX D

The Lebanese Political System

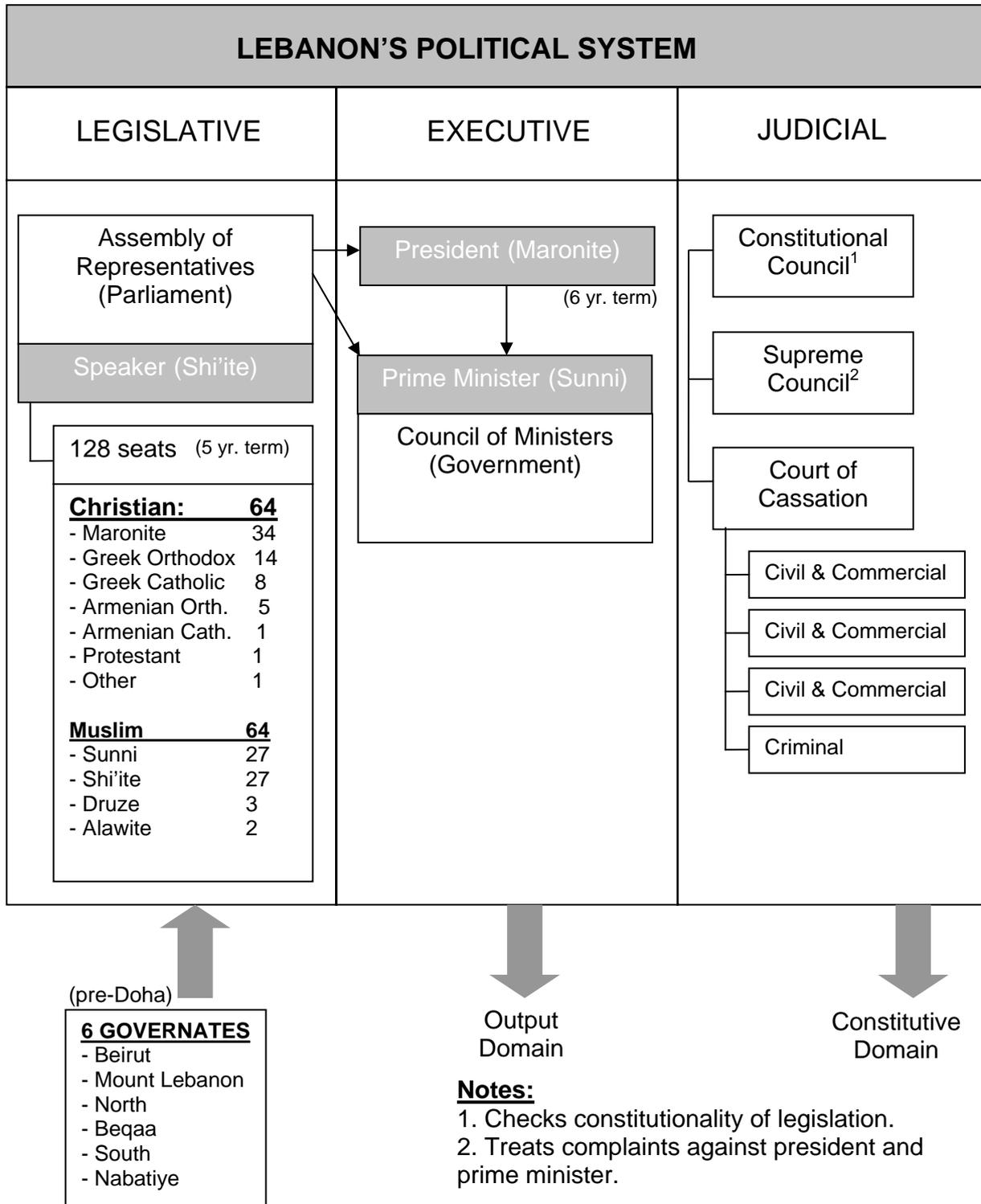


Figure 8: Lebanon's political system.

APPENDIX E

Organizational Structure, Funding and Social Projects Hezbollah

Hezbollah as an organization can be divided in members and affiliates, the latter being those who believe in Hezbollah's resistance project but do not adhere to its religious mission (Qassem 2005:64). While "armed Hezbollah guerrillas number no more than a thousand, the wider political organization is several thousand strong" (Simon and Stevenson 2001:31). The money to fund this project comes from various sources. First, Hezbollah is entitled to collect the religious tax, the *zakat*, of Lebanon's Shi'ites in addition to other religious and private gifts (often from the Lebanese diaspora).¹⁴⁶ Second, Hezbollah is financially funded by Iran – estimates indicate some \$200 million a year – and provided with materials (mostly weapons) by Syria (Levitt 2005:2-5). One implication of this dynamic is that, since as early as the civil war, Hezbollah does not need to exploit government resources to sustain itself as some other groups do. Thus, according to Judith Harik

the direct political effect of the help from Tehran was that Hezbollah could never be viewed as having preyed on the disintegrating Lebanese state, a charge levelled against its major Shiite rival, Amal, and other political parties in Lebanon. In essence, Hezbollah's 'free money' and the disciplined behaviour of its partisans in comparison with that of Amal members encouraged the organization's 'Mr. Clean' image. (2004:82)

Third, Hezbollah has private businesses and investments – some legal, others criminal – to further boost its income (Levitt 2005:8).

The organization is led by the seven-member *al-Shura*, the Council, consisting of the party's primary figures of authority (Qassem 2005:62). This council then elects a Secretary General from among its members – from 1993 on this has been Hassan Nasrallah – as well as his deputy and chairs of the five councils of the party's executive administrative apparatus (Hamzeh 2004:47).¹⁴⁷ These five councils are the *Jihad* Assembly in charge of the resistance activity; the Political Assembly working on political analysis; the Executive Assembly,

¹⁴⁶ Author's interview with Joseph Alagha.

¹⁴⁷ The term 'election' may be misleading here, because, as Hamzeh argues, because "the whole process of election within the Shura Council seems more an appointment process or distribution of responsibilities than an actual election. The Shura Council is too small to allow for a formal election. Equally important, this elitist group is homogeneous; there is consensus over who gets what. As an anonymous source put it to me, 'I elect you so you can elect me and there is no problem'" (2004:47). The election for life of Nasrallah has only been possible after two amendments to the Council's policy, the first of which was to extend its term for three years, while the second provided the Secretary General with the possibility of candidacy even following success in two consecutive elections (Qassem 2005:63).

grouping the unit heads in charge of cultural, education, social, professional and various other groups; the Parliamentary Assembly grouping the party's MPs and overseeing the functions of the Allegiance to the Resistance coalition; and the Judicial Assembly grouping the judicial representatives in different areas who work together with Hezbollah on conflict resolution (Qassem 2005:63).

In addition to the service provision described in Chapter 4, under the auspices of Hezbollah "a well-planned agro-technical program has been carried out in the Baalbek-Hermel area since 1988" and a range of advocacy and empowerment programs has been set up to link extensive fact-finding with grassroots constituents of the party (Harik 2004:87-89). All these services are provided for free.

Lastly, another important aspect of Hezbollah's organization is its media network, consisting of its television channel *Al-Manar*, the *Al Intiqad* newspaper and *Al Nour* radio (Zayani 2006:254).

APPENDIX F

Hezbollah's Electoral Participation

Hezbollah's initial political decree was laid down in the 'Open Letter' published in 1985. This document has four main objectives. First, to denounce what Hezbollah perceived as a "Zionist-Phalangist coordination." Second, to elucidate that in the context of this collaboration between the Lebanese government and Israel, "any opposition, which confronts the present regime, but within the limits fixed by it, is an illusory opposition." Third, the Open Letter presents the realization of a situation wherein all Lebanese citizens "determine their future and choose in all the liberty the form of government they desire" as Hezbollah's political priority. And while Hezbollah calls upon them to pick the option of the Islamic state, the fourth goal of the document is to guarantee the public that Hezbollah does not "want Islam to reign in Lebanon by force, as is the case with political Maronism today." However, the Open Letter "is a program that didn't intend to address in a detailed way Hizbullah's ideology and its modes of action in particular, but what one can do under certain circumstances" (Qassem in Hamzeh 2004:27). Hezbollah's political program only seriously matured when it decided to participate in parliamentary elections.

As the political landscape had changed radically after the end of the civil war in 1989 Hezbollah joined the parliament that was now perceived as the best opportunity to improve the Shi'ites' position in the state block any unfavourable policies (Davis 2007:50). Nevertheless, it took a twelve-member committee specifically formed for this purpose to officially assess the advantages and disadvantages of political participation. Several internal critics feared participation would be considered as a form of acquiescence to the political system's reality, including the responsibility of adopting and defending such a system, and that participation would lead to a re-organization of priorities of the type that would result in abandoning the cause of the resistance in favour of taking part in the internal political game (Qassem 2005:187-188). Eventually, however, Qassem explains, the committee pragmatically decided that "participation in parliamentary elections is an expression of sharing in an existing political structure, Parliament being one of the regime's pillars. It does not, however, represent a commitment to preserving the structure as is, or require the defence of the system's deficiencies and blemishes" (2005:189). It thus seems clear that Hezbollah sees participation as a means towards an end and not as an end in itself, as demonstrated through their listing of its advantages: to use parliament as a political podium; to influence legislation;

to utilize the political network opportunities parliament provides; to blend the resistance into officially and publicly recognized bodies; and to represent an Islamic viewpoint (Qassem 2005:189-190).

In 1992, Hezbollah's election program focussed on two main goals. To establish liberating Lebanon as a national priority and lobby for a more extensive contribution to this operation from the state and the army. And to promote the abolishment of political sectarianism, "one of the gravest ills for the corruption of the system in Lebanon." The program also contains a quite elaborate section dealing with 'administrative, social, and educational issues,' suggesting policies to increase effectiveness and meritocratic selection procedures in the administrative sphere; to spur on agricultural produce, develop infrastructure and introduce a more egalitarian wealth distribution on what is called the development level; to stimulate teacher's training and religious education and the buttressing of mandatory basic schooling as well as the institutions of the Lebanese University when it comes to the educational and cultural levels; and to reinvent national social security programs and insurance mechanisms on the social level. This part of the program clearly testifies of a strong output oriented outlook towards politics, in addition to the detailed constitutive arguments and principles. Based on its 1992 election program, Hezbollah won all the twelve seats on its election list: eight were reserved for party members, and four for affiliated sympathizers: two for Sunni's and two for Christians (a Greek Catholic and a Maronite) (Alagha 2005:43).¹⁴⁸

In its second parliamentary elections program in 1996, Hezbollah adopted a more sophisticated approach towards state-building, moving beyond mere principles against the current state of Lebanese political system towards actual policies and visions for an alternative and a way towards such an alternative. In it, Hezbollah expresses its disappointment "over the results of the state institutions' performance and their alleged attempts of development" and denouncing the consequent "corruption, favouritism, and migration of qualifications." Hezbollah further advocates stronger ties with Syria, a new electoral system, strengthening political institutions and administrative decentralization. Concerning economical and social issues, the output domain, the 1992 statement and

¹⁴⁸ As explained in Chapter 3, the problems concerning Lebanese elections are many – ranging from corruption, fraud, electoral laws that change per election and are tailored so specifically as to influence the outcome severely, unrepresentative districting – and the degree to which their outcomes are thus actually representative or democratic is debatable. This was specifically the case during the Syrian domination in Lebanon, when Syria was said to orchestrate elections to such an extent it nearly secured the outcome before the actual voting took place. In 1996, for example, Hezbollah was more or less forced to strike an electoral alliance with Amal. Nevertheless, elections are there and their legitimacy with the public and importance for political parties has seemingly grown significantly during the last years.

suggestions are worked out more thoroughly, with, interestingly, more attention for the role the state could play in these fields. During the election campaign of 1996, Hezbollah clearly promoted a change in policies: investments should from now on be directed into productive sectors such as industry, agriculture, animal feeding and fishery (Wärn 1998:33). With this approach it had a net loss of two seats, keeping ten seats in parliament.

In 2000, the same issues – resistance and liberation, foreign policy, state-building, socio-economical development, educational and cultural measures – again featured in Hezbollah's election program (with the notable addition of a header 'environment'). Nevertheless, an

important change occurred in 2000 when Hizbullah's entire election program was mainly concerned with socio-economic issues since the Israeli withdrawal dictated an alteration in priorities and strategies. This trend continued with Nasrallah's 2001 domestic political program and reached its peak in Hizbullah's 2004 municipal elections program and its August 2004 'Working Document' of the Central Workers' and Syndicates' Unit. (Alagha 2005:165)

More care seems to be given to include poverty and wealth distribution matters and a shift could be suggested to have taken place away from hard policy propositions towards the suggestion of issues and problematics that should be looked into. In 2000, Hezbollah added two seats to its parliamentary representation, equalling the success of the 1992 elections.

Concerning the delayed elections of 2005, the first without Syrian meddling, Hezbollah's program consists of a mere seven points and radically differs from the longer programs presented before. More attention is given to debated political items – such as the Hariri Tribunal, the Lebanese-Syrian relationship and the continuation of the resistance – than to qualitative policy plans. The output element seems to have been a victim of the topicality of the then current political situation. It further affirms the recourse to the constitutional apparatus and state institutions, while urging the deployment of a national discourse through openness and dialogue in a national framework. Interestingly, after the 2005 elections, in which Hezbollah won two seats arriving at a total of fourteen, Hezbollah not only once more participated in parliament, it also joined cabinet. Hezbollah representative Nawwaf al-Musawi explains that the party did so to involve itself more in the domestic Lebanese political scene in the wake of the Syrian withdrawal (in Alagha 2005:173). In order to fill the vacuum that resulted from the Syrian withdrawal and to stop the Western powers, most notably the US and France, from exercising their influence in Lebanese domestic affairs, Hezbollah found it legitimate to involve itself even further in Lebanon's political system. This was not a light

decision for Hezbollah, which recognized that the complications involved in forming part of the executive government are different from those of parliamentary participation. All ministers, for instance, bear responsibility for government actions which implies Hezbollah's acceptance thereof even if it clashes with the Party's beliefs (Qassem 2005:196). But Hezbollah found that it is possible for any group represented in government to distance itself from full automatic responsibility for all government action and decided to field Hezbollah affiliated Trad Hamadé (Alagha 2005:59).

Thus, in the words of Harik, Hezbollah has adapted well to the rules of the game and has proven to

be simply better at managing the competing ideologies, clan affiliations and local bosses that all co-exist simultaneously and vitally in areas of Shiite concentration, than its rival. This kind of political skill combined with the institutional back-up and religious commitment Hezbollah leaders bring to their tasks, make them very hard to beat in open elections (2004:109).

Hezbollah has created an impressive election machine that links volunteers and professionals with members and voters throughout the country. At one point, the telling tale goes, Hezbollah had ambulances circulating "continuously in Bourj al-Barajneh, transporting patients from Rasul al-Azam Hospital (some of which were born on stretchers to the polls), while mini-vans and other vehicles bore the healthy there" (Harik 2004:104). Moreover, Hezbollah apparently succeeded in reconciling its various branches through its participation in the elections. All Hezbollah's electoral campaigns represent a "consorted effort between its resistance identity, on the one hand, and its socio-economic, intellectual, and cultural work, on the other" (Alagha 2005:168). An additional signature characteristic of Hezbollah's election programs is their promotion of the right of self-determination by freely choosing the form or system of government they deem fit based on mutual agreement. According to Qassem, as long as the Lebanese societal diversity precludes Hezbollah from establishing an Islamic state because the choice of the people is otherwise, then the populace should bear the responsibility of the political system they have chosen: 'Had your Lord willed, everybody on earth would have believed. Will you then compel people to become believers?'" (in Alagha 2005:120).

In the context of the analytical framework presented in Chapter 1 and the Lebanese state-system discussed in Chapter 3, the analysis of Hezbollah's electoral history yields some interesting observations. Concerning the constitutive domain of the state, it is noteworthy that

Hezbollah refrains from directly commenting on matters related to territory or the state's monopoly of violence. However, it does continually, and with great fervency, point out the administrative and institutional weakness of the state. Also, the resistance project plays a prominent role in all programs and some abstract attempt to synthesize this mission more with state policy permeates the programs. Seeing that this is related to the state monopoly of violence, it could be argued that this touches upon the constitutive domain of the state.

When it comes to the output domain, Hezbollah focuses on improving the provision of services and actually – allegedly in great contrast with most Lebanese political parties – lays down sophisticated policy suggestions in addition to boldly stated ideal situations. A tendency that has increased even more after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000. Chapter 3 has shown that Lebanese politics generally fails to actually deal with the provision of services and leaves it to the respective communities, Hezbollah seems to be exceptional in suggesting actual ways to increase the state's role in this domain.

Regarding the political system Hezbollah is quite unambiguous: it principally rejects the current system and pleads for the abolition of political sectarianism.¹⁴⁹ While the tone of this denunciation has become milder over the years, its substance has remained the same and in this field Hezbollah promotes electoral reform and a chance for all Lebanese to choose a new system to their liking. Qassem further hopes that Hezbollah has generated a shift from individual to institution by taking “the step towards providing priority of the programme over the person” (2005:191). The interesting thing is, of course, that over the years Hezbollah has shifted from stating this view from the outside to bringing it to the public from the inside, which – Hezbollah's rhetorical-philosophical elasticity in this regard notwithstanding – indicates it at least accepts the current system as the most legitimate political forum.

¹⁴⁹ Nasrallah speech: “The aim is to establish a balance between rights and responsibilities, to make ability the yardstick for promotion, and to lay down the foundations of a suitable infrastructure headed by competent people. For example, the most competent president of the Central Bank could be someone who is not a Maronite, but rather someone who – thanks to his financial and business acumen – is able to take the country out of the impasse. Why insist on appointing only a Maronite at the head of the Central Bank? What is the logic behind it? The most competent person for the job, and for establishing civil and economic peace in the country, could be a Greek Orthodox, a Druze, an Alawite, or someone from any other minority. The same question could be posed about the Maronite identity of the president of the republic. This is why the elimination of political sectarianism, which we are focusing on, is one of our priorities, and we are very serious about it.” (September 1992 In Noe 2007:89-90)