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Lebanese–Palestinian Governance Interaction in the Palestinian Gathering of Shabriha, South Lebanon – A Tentative Extension of the ‘Mediated State’ from Africa to the Mediterranean

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ABSTRACT *This article offers a qualitative case study of the interaction between Lebanese state institutions and Palestinian authorities concerning the unofficial Palestinian camp of Shabriha. It particularly highlights the indirect nature of these interactions and the brokering role of Lebanese political parties. Governance in Shabriha is conceptualized as a manifestation of a ‘mediated state’, a notion that has been instrumental in understanding governance in sub-Saharan Africa but has not yet been applied to the Mediterranean. Based on empirical insights from Shabriha, the article offers a tentative reconsideration of the mediated state concept in order to extend it to scholarship on Mediterranean politics and governance.*

Introduction

This article offers a case study of the governance interaction between local Lebanese state institutions and Palestinian authorities in the unofficial refugee camp (or ‘gathering’) of Shabriha, south Lebanon. It particularly highlights the mediated nature of this governance interaction and the role of Lebanese political parties in it. Empirically, the Lebanese state and the Palestinian non-state do not interact directly, but have most of their meetings and communications arranged via the Lebanese political parties. These parties represent the local state, but also have their own (non-state) militias, welfare institutions and administrations. This simultaneous

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independence from and overlap with state institutions allows Lebanese political parties to facilitate, and shape, the interactions between the Palestinian non-state and the Lebanese state. Theoretically, this pattern of mediated interaction between Palestinian non-state governance actors and Lebanese state institutions reflects Lebanon's broader political logic of sectarian oligopoly. In Lebanon, the state provides security, welfare and representation to the population partly through the country's political parties and interaction between the Lebanese state and the Palestinian non-state reproduces this pattern (with political parties manoeuvring themselves between state and non-state governance actors).

I use the concept of the mediated state to further analyse this phenomenon of indirect governance interaction in Shabriha. The concept of the mediated state was developed by Menkhaus (2006) to theorize mediated governance arrangements in sub-Saharan Africa. In a nutshell, the mediated state suggests that to maintain control over (either spatial or political) 'hinterlands', state institutions 'partner with, co-opt, or sub-contract to whatever local nonstate authorities they can find', as shown by dynamics in, for instance, Somalia (where the state governs through 'coalitions of business groups, traditional authorities and civic groups') and Kenya (where the government forged a formal relationship with 'a collection of local nonstate actors led by a women's market group' to maintain the rule of law) (Menkhaus, 2007: 78, 74; 2008: 23). It makes a crucial contribution to understanding governance in hybrid political orders by stressing not merely the simultaneity, but also the relatedness of state and non-state governance systems. The idea of the mediated state shows that state institutions need not necessarily compete with other loci of authority, but often opt for a more pragmatic form of engagement that allows them to govern with or through, rather than against, non-state (armed) governance actors. As such, the concept may also hold relevance for the Middle East, where state sovereignty is often described as 'softening' (Ramadan, 2008), 'virtual' (Picard, 2012) or 'hybrid' (Bacik, 2008; Fregonese, 2012).

However, the concept of the mediated state is under-developed, partly because it exclusively draws on African cases. Consequently, not only might analyses of governance in the Mediterranean benefit from adopting the insights offered by the mediated state, the concept itself could in turn gain from an enrichment by case studies from regions beyond sub-Saharan Africa. While primarily offering a case study of mediated governance in Shabriha, then, by presenting an in-depth analysis of the workings of Lebanese state institutions and political parties through the lens of an originally Africanist concept, this article also seeks to further the conceptual linkages between the Mediterranean and the wider world by offering a foundation to open up an 'Africanist' concept to scholars working on the Mediterranean.

Based on the case study set in Lebanon, a country often described in terms of its 'states-within-the-state' (Atzili, 2010), I propose two reconsiderations of the mediated state that could make a start with addressing the core weaknesses that undermine its wider applicability to the Mediterranean: the absence of an actual conceptualization of mediating actors and the state/non-state dichotomy underlying the concept. First, the centrality of political parties in my case study suggests that the mediated state concept might benefit from acknowledging the (potentially) political nature of mediating

actors. Second, I propose to see these ‘re-politicized’ brokers as twilight institutions, actors that exercise public authority on behalf of the state but also, and at the same time, independently from it (Lund, 2006: 689). Ultimately, in this article I aim to begin to outline a more comprehensive, not exclusively African, approach to mediated stateness that might benefit further studies of Mediterranean governance.

The Lebanese state and the specific case study I draw on are both unique. However, the amalgamations of the concept as suggested here (re-politicizing our understanding of governance and conceptually embracing state–society overlaps) resonate for the entire Mediterranean, where the state has been ‘misunderstood’ as a ‘conveniently unitary actor’ (Tripp, 2001: 211 in Murphy, 2001: 6). The re-conceptualization I propose goes some way in showing not merely *that* but exactly *how* the state ‘contains a whole host of different institutions and practices which act, not in a single interest, but according to a variety of separate logics and dynamics, some compatible, others obviously contradictory and incoherent’ (Owen, 2001: 238 in Murphy, 2001: 6–7). The article’s argument speaks to two debates in particular. First, by stressing the indirect ties between the state and its constituencies, the mediated state concept can shed more light on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion concerning the Mediterranean’s marginal communities – such as refugees (Puig, 2013) and (semi-)nomads (Chatty et al., 2013: 412) – and spaces – for instance the ‘heterotopias’ of north and south Lebanon (Volk, 2009: 264; Salti & Chabaan, 2010) and other border areas (Meier, 2013; Obeid, 2010). Second, the debate on the mediated state ties in with discussions on neoliberal governance in the region (Guazzone & Pioppi, 2012; Murphy, 2001) – in particular the question of ‘how state power is being re-articulated but also challenged at sub-national levels’ in the context of neoliberal reforms and how this affects ‘local patronage networks, public accountability and state–society relations’ (Bergh, 2012: 303). Neoliberalism ‘tends to legitimize the bypassing and disempowerment of elected local governments in favour of private sector agents or “civil society organizations”, often co-opted by the ruling elites’, a dynamic that is also at the heart of the mediated state thesis (Bergh, 2012: 306; see also Allès, 2012: 404).

The article consists of two parts. The first introduces my case study. In the second, I discuss the potential conceptual contribution of this case study by exploring how my findings can be understood through the lens of the mediated state and how they, subsequently, might help extend the concept’s relevance to the Mediterranean. The article wraps up with a conclusion.

The Case: Lebanese–Palestinian Governance Interaction in Shabriha

Lebanon is often considered a ‘weak’ state and has known various examples of state collapse (Atzili, 2010; Fregonese, 2012; Menkhaus, 2009: 6; Roberson 1998: 1).

It has long struggled with the task of asserting itself as sovereign, in the Westphalian sense, over all its territory. First as a colonial state (1918–43), then through a lengthy civil war (1975–90), Israeli occupation (1982–2000) and Syrian tutelage (1990–2005). (Long & Hanafi, 2010: 676)

A socio-economically marginalized and politically disenfranchised Palestinian refugee community constitutes roughly 10 per cent of Lebanon's population (Chabaan et al., 2010). Not only can Palestinians in Lebanon not vote or work in state agencies, they are also legally discriminated against in the labour market and, since 2001, cannot own real estate (Suleiman, 2006). In fact, the unified posture of Lebanon's judicial, legislative and executive institutions on 'the Palestinian issue' are arguably an exception to the often-cited weakness of the Lebanese state. In any case, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon is intricately linked with the country's struggle for sovereignty, a linkage that consecutive Lebanese governments have used to securitize the Palestinian refugee file (Hanafi, 2011: 35; Klaus, 2000: 69; Picard, 2012: 249; Sayigh, 1997). The Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon, suffering statelessness in anticipation of international recognition of a Palestinian state, constitutes a protracted 'non-state'. Nevertheless, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) enjoyed virtual hegemony in south Lebanon from 1969 to 1982 and the Cairo Agreement – 'one of the most contentious moments in the history of the Lebanese state' – that prohibits Lebanese security forces from entering the Palestinian camps (and sanctions Palestinian organizations to carry arms there) continues to be observed (Czajka, 2012: 240). Consequently, many Lebanese perceive the Palestinian camps as 'states-within-the state' (Atzili, 2010: 768; Meier, 2010; Ramadan, 2008: 666). Below, I discuss the interactions between Lebanese state institutions and Palestinian governance actors concerning Shabriha gathering that hosts approximately 2,000 inhabitants and is located near the city of Sur (Tyre) in south Lebanon. Shabriha is not one of Lebanon's 12 'official' refugee camps that are administered by the United Nations (UN) and recognized by the Lebanese state. Shabriha is a gathering, an 'unlawful' Palestinian settlement established outside the camp boundaries on Lebanese land. I describe the practical and theoretical implications of the camp–gathering distinction elsewhere (Stel, 2014). Here it suffices to note that because the gatherings fall outside both the Lebanese state's political mandate (as Palestinians are not Lebanese citizens) and the UN's territorial mandate (as gatherings are not camps), governance in the gatherings can be seen as taking place in an institutional vacuum.

Inside the gathering, a 'Popular Committee' (PC) installed by the PLO is responsible for governance, mostly consisting of service provision, conflict mediation and co-ordination with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Lebanese authorities. The Lebanese state in the surrounding area is represented by several institutions, most pertinently the municipality (on whose land the gathering is – illegally – built); the police and army; the national electricity company *Électricité du Liban* (EDL);¹ and in some instances national-level institutions such as the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). Two Lebanese parties dominate south Lebanon: Hizballah and Amal.

My empirical findings are based on a qualitative analysis of 140 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with communal and political leaders, state representatives, residents, NGO staff and analysts targeted via purposive and snowball sampling. Interviews focused on five specific instances of Lebanese–Palestinian governance interaction, discussed below as 'vignettes'. I also explored respondents' more

generic understandings of governance interaction in Shabriha so as to ensure comprehensiveness. These data were collected throughout a five-month fieldwork period in 2013 during which I also conducted three focus groups and collected documents and observations (Stel, 2014).

A Description: How Does Mediated Governance Interaction in Shabriha Look?

Elsewhere (Stel, 2014), I have comprehensively described governance interaction in Shabriha across a range of indicators as predominantly informal, irregular, asymmetrical, politicized, hierarchical and contested. In this article, I focus on one specific aspect of governance interaction in Shabriha, namely its indirect, mediated nature.

In Shabriha, direct communication and meetings between Lebanese state governance actors and Palestinian non-state governance actors did occur: the PC sometimes petitioned the mayor or it would call or visit EDL. Mostly, however, coordination between Lebanese state and Palestinian non-state institutions was indirect; mediated by the *mukhtar*, a sub-municipal authority in charge of the Lebanese village (also called Shabriha) located next to the gathering, NGOs and, most prominently, Lebanese political parties. Respondents stressed that the direct relations that did exist were between Lebanese (Amal and Hizballah) and Palestinian (Fatah and Hamas) political parties, which would respectively connect with the municipality (or other state institutions such as the police and utility companies) and the PC. They explained that if the PC needs something, it contacts the local PLO/Fatah representative. This representative would then decide to either (horizontally) contact the relevant Lebanese political representative in Sur or (vertically) pass the request on to his superiors in Beirut who would then address their relative Lebanese counterparts. The Lebanese political representative in question would subsequently contact his 'people within the state institutions', whether ministers, mayors or employees, to get the job done.² The head of the national Union of PCs explained: 'We cannot talk with state employees directly. Our direct relations are with the political leaders who can affect these employees.'³ An NGO worker confirms that 'political parties remain more important than municipalities. Palestinian bodies will lobby with political parties that will then pressure the relevant functionary in the municipality'.⁴ Even the Lebanese–Palestinian Dialogue Committee (LPDC), the government's diplomatic body for dialogue with Palestinian leaders, follows this logic:

We always go through the political parties. If the municipality belongs to Amal, I talk to President Berri [leader of Amal and speaker/'president' of Parliament]. [. . .] You have to see who is supporting this municipality, Amal or Hizballah, and go to them.⁵

Indeed, the interaction between Lebanese and Palestinian governance actors in Shabriha is mediated to such an extent that, as one Lebanese analyst mused, 'Lebanese factions versus Palestinian factions might indeed be more relevant than municipality versus PC'.⁶

These general accounts were reflected in the vignettes studied. After the PC's requests to EDL for a new electricity transformer for the camp repeatedly fell on deaf ears, a Lebanese Member of Parliament (MP) eventually exerted the needed pressure on EDL and the transformer was provided. The PC even issued a written statement saying that this was the result of 'the establishment of a liaison between EDL and the Popular Committee of Shabriha' by the MP in question. When Shabriha mobilized against a highway that would cause the eviction of several households, a 'highway committee' contacted representatives of Palestinian political parties in the hope that these would subsequently address their Lebanese counterparts who might then take the matter up with their ministers. A representative of an NGO that lobbied against the highway admitted he never actually contacted the responsible state institutions:

We didn't reach this step. Because when we met with Bahia Hariri [MP for the Mustaqbal party] and Amal and Hizballah, all said it would stop and there was no need any more to meet the CDR and the engineers. And they get their orders from the politicians anyway.⁷

During a waste management crisis, it was Lebanese political leaders, alarmed by Palestinian politicians, who eventually pressured the Union of Municipalities to continue to accept 'Palestinian' waste. In the process of resolving a conflict between Palestinian and Lebanese youth in Shabriha about the alleged harassing of a Palestinian girl, Lebanese politicians played a similar role by 'reigning in' local state authorities after they had been alarmed by Shabriha's Palestinian political leadership about possible escalation. During a spree of illegal building in Shabriha, Lebanese political figures played a more diffuse role, but respondents agreed that the very possibility for Palestinians to act against an explicit state ban on building was provided by the Lebanese parties' acquiescence:

Under the table each party let their followers know to go ahead. And then in some instances the police would come to stop them, but someone [affiliated with the parties] would intervene to tell the police to look the other way.⁸

While such mediated interaction is likely to be specifically prevalent in Shabriha because it is an unofficial camp and therefore lacks the institutional resources associated with the UN,⁹ and while characteristics of governance interaction are case-specific, the mediating role of political parties in Lebanese–Palestinian governance interaction is acknowledged in some literature (El Ali, 2011: 35; Knudsen, 2011: 98), and by my respondents, for other cases as well. When I asked a member of a PC from another camp whether his PC met with the mayor, district governor or provincial governor, he answered: 'No, only with the political leaders from Amal and Hizballah.'¹⁰

The centrality of mediation by Lebanese political parties in interactions between Palestinian governance actors and Lebanese state institutions, moreover, was confirmed by respondents affiliated with Hizballah and Amal. As Khalili (2007: 290)

notes, 'strengthening ties with Palestinian groups' is the key objective of Hizballah's Palestinian Affairs Committee (Czajka, 2012: 239; Knudsen, 2011: 98). A national spokesperson of Hizballah who previously served as an MP described his party as 'the channel between the Palestinians and the state'.¹¹ He elaborated that Hizballah 'talks with the state' on the Palestinians' behalf, 'because they will find it difficult to talk to the state'. He indicated that Hizballah has communication structures with Palestinian parties on each level of its party hierarchy to further this mediating role. Khalili (2007: 282) highlights the structural co-ordination between 'Hizbullah-controlled municipalities' and other institutions providing services to the Palestinians. To do so, respondents explained, Hizballah created liaison officers to maintain relations with the camps and inform Hizballah's leadership about the issues that are to be taken up with the relevant state institutions – ranging from the army to the provincial governor, the minister of interior and civil servants at ministerial financial departments (Norton, 2007: 477). Hizballah's liaison for south Lebanon told me, for instance, that a leader from one of the camps in the south always contacts him to arrange permission with the army intelligence for foreigners to enter the camp.¹²

Like Hizballah, Amal has 'a person responsible for the Palestinian file who meets with parties and committees'.¹³ A local Amal leader mentioned that the party has specific 'committees' for most of the camps in the south.¹⁴ An Amal MP told me he was petitioned by both Palestinian parties and Palestinian individuals, for instance with requests to intervene on their behalf with the Lebanese security services.¹⁵ Amal's 'Palestinian liaison' for south Lebanon testified to the facilitating role his party plays for Palestinian parties, repeatedly mentioning how Amal utilizes its 'presence in the Government' to help Palestinian parties communicate with state institutions.¹⁶ For the Palestinian governance actors in Shabriha, such dynamics are particularly relevant considering the strong presence of Amal in the neighbouring village, for instance in the person of the *mukhtar*.¹⁷ A communal leader associated with Amal elucidated: 'I help them with the state, with anything they want from the state. You know my relation with the state in the south, with Nabih Berri, with the highest policeman.'¹⁸

An Analysis: Why Does Governance Interaction in Shabriha Look the Way It Does?

Above, I described how Lebanese political parties function as a mediating entity in the governance interactions between Palestinian authorities and Lebanese state institutions. In analysing why this interaction is mediated in the first place and why, subsequently, it is mediated by political parties, two further, and inter-related, questions present themselves. First, why would Palestinian actors turn to these parties rather than directly to state institutions? Second, why would Lebanese political parties play the role of gatekeeper to the state for the actors representing Shabriha's Palestinians, who have no voting rights and are thus not part of their electoral constituency?

Why Do Palestinian Non-state Governance Actors Turn to Lebanese Political Parties? As my vignettes showed, Palestinian governance actors need interaction

with Lebanese state institutions in order to realize services (such as electricity, waste collection and housing), justice (like compensation for evicted households) and security (through conflict mediation). Respondents, however, stressed that the state bureaucracy works in a hierarchical and formal way that, for various reasons,¹⁹ excludes the Palestinians as a people, because they are not granted Lebanese citizenship, and as a governance actor, because their main local governance entity, the PC, is not officially recognized. The fact that the Lebanese state does not formally recognize PCs means that state institutions cannot officially deal with them, reflecting what a Lebanese analyst dubbed the ‘no-policy-policy’ of the Lebanese state vis-à-vis the Palestinians.²⁰ Direct state/non-state interaction, according to Klaus (2000: 42), is thus ‘prevented by a complete absence of any clearly defined programmatic state guidelines for dealing with the refugees’. A representative of a Palestinian NGO explained: ‘The municipality is the representative of the Ministry of Interior here. They have to implement state policy and this prevents them from really helping us.’²¹

Political parties have no such qualms. Indeed, Knudsen (2011: 98) argues that the (informal) relations Palestinians have with Lebanese parties, ranging from ‘consultative to clientelistic’, are a direct result of their lack of civil rights that deprives Palestinians of official representation in the state system. Shabriha’s PC turned to Lebanese parties explicitly as gatekeepers to the state. It did not expect political parties to pay for the electricity divider, it wanted them to ‘pressure’ EDL; it did not ask the parties to arrange compensation for evicted families, it only requested them to take the case up with the ministers; it did not imagine the parties would solve Shabriha’s waste management problem, but hoped they would ‘encourage’ the Union of Municipalities to address it.

Lebanese parties recognize the tension between Palestinian actors caught in illegality and a state at least nominally bound by the law and have carved out their niche within it. In fact, considering that it is ultimately political parties that make government policy, it is fair to assume that political parties – Amal and Hizballah included – actively maintain the government’s non-recognition of the PCs so as to maintain this niche (Sheikh Hassan & Hanafi, 2010: 27, 42–43). Moreover, echoing the literature that reminds us that the state is far from a coherent entity (Hoffmann & Kirk, 2013: 13; Titeca & De Herdt, 2011: 231), interviewees found the state diffuse, represented by a wide variety of institutions – from the Union of Municipalities in Sour in one vignette to EDL in another, from CDR to the municipality and the army and police. The absence of a stable counterpart for the PC on the side of the Lebanese state is striking (Common Space Initiative (CSI), 2011: 33; El Ali, 2011: 46). Lebanese political parties, in contrast, present a stable, approachable and to some extent reliable counterpart for Palestinian actors, presenting much of the intention, rationality and purpose that states preach but can inherently not practise (Sharma & Gupta, 2006: 8).

While Lebanese parties are not tied down by formal regulations as state institutions are, they nevertheless to some extent embody the state vis-à-vis both non-state governance actors and the population. On the one hand, when Palestinian authorities are dealing with Hizballah or Amal-affiliated ministers, mayors,

managers and *mukhtars*, Hizballah and Amal represent the state vis-à-vis Palestinian representatives. On the other hand, in many interactions with the Palestinians, Amal and Hizballah, political movements with their own institutional structure, act, if not in opposition to the Lebanese state, then at least seeking to protect their independence towards it (Picard, 2012: 264–265).

It is this simultaneous independence from and overlap with state institutions that gives Lebanese political parties the possibility and incentive to facilitate interactions between the Palestinian non-state and the Lebanese state. A Hizballah leader told me that people go to parties because this feels more direct to them: ‘people consider that the mayor or anyone takes his decisions from his political leaders anyway, so they prefer to talk to these political leaders directly’.²² Nabih Berri, for instance, is not merely the leader of Amal, he is also the speaker of Parliament, one of the most powerful positions in the state. One Lebanese man from Shabriha commented that: ‘Berri is the head of the Parliament, he can suggest a law and he can convince the MPs to agree and vote for it; he is the state and he is the ruler of the south.’²³

Why Do Lebanese Political Parties Care to Function as Mediating Entities?. Interaction between the PC and Lebanese political parties is far from equal; the process was often described as the PC ‘petitioning’ for favours with the parties.²⁴ Nevertheless, Hizballah and Amal have several motivations to be a broker between the Palestinians and the Lebanese state beyond mere philanthropy. These motivations are sometimes ideological; evoking a shared resistance against Israel and a pan-Arab or pan-Islamic solidarity with the plight of the Palestinians (Høigilt, 2007). At other times, they are instrumental, whether electoral (gaining votes from a small minority of naturalized Palestinians), political (acquiring legitimacy in ‘the Arab street’ and showcasing control over ‘their’ region of south Lebanon) or military (securing the support of Palestinian armed groups in anticipated war) (Khalili, 2007; Knudsen, 2011). Klaus (2000: 88) documents that Palestinians indeed ‘actively supported those political parties or personalities who were willing to voice their needs in Lebanese public and Parliament’. In the words of a Palestinian from Shabriha, interactions were initiated ‘to solve problems and build relations that benefit them in the future if there is war’.²⁵

Shabriha’s Governance Interaction as the Manifestation of a Mediated State

Menkhaus (2007: 78) defines a mediated state as a political order ‘in which the government relies on partnership (or at least coexistence) with a diverse range of local intermediaries and rival sources of authority to provide core functions of public security, justice, and conflict management in much of the country’. Following this, the described instances of interaction in Shabriha could be seen as a manifestation of a mediated state on two levels. First, as evidenced above, empirically, interaction between state and non-state governance actors is indirect, mediated. In Menkhaus’ jargon, the Lebanese state has negotiated a particular form of extension of its governance via the bridging institution of the political parties. State and non-state governance actors do not contest each other, or operate in isolation, but constitute

each other; through the mediating parties, Palestinian governance is ‘connected to the state through complex means’ (Mallet, 2010: 74).

Second, the dynamics described also reflect a mediated state in a theoretical sense. Governance interactions between the Palestinian non-state and the Lebanese state replicate the political logic of this state, rather than present a parallel or different system of governance. Being systematically included in punitive law-making while simultaneously being excluded from legal rights, Lebanon’s Palestinians are caught in a ‘state of exception’ vis-à-vis Lebanese citizens (Hanafi, 2011: 36; Ramadan, 2008: 666). To a large extent, however, the above-described Palestinian–Lebanese governance interaction mirrors intra-Lebanese governance constellations. This suggests that regarding the specific issue of governance mediation by Lebanese political parties, the Palestinian state of exception is a matter of degree rather than quality. A Palestinian leader stressed that ‘in Lebanese areas as well, if the electricity doesn’t work, they go to the parties who then pressure the municipality’.²⁶ A Lebanese analyst noted that

the Palestinians don’t have a relation with the Lebanese state, because the Lebanese don’t have a relation with the Lebanese state. All have relations with Lebanese parties, which are more efficient, because here in Lebanon we belong to communities and political leaders, not to the state.²⁷

This argument that Lebanese state structures dictate Palestinian–Lebanese governance interaction in Shabriha does not mean to reify a state ‘logic’ or argue that this ‘system’ is static (Hagmann & Péclard, 2010: 553; Hoffmann & Kirk, 2013: 35–36). Nor does it seek to revive a state-centric perspective posing that it is only state ‘structures and activities [that] condition and configure what may appear to be socio-economic phenomena’ (Evans et al., 1985 in Lund, 2006: 674). What I aim to highlight is that the central characteristic of the Lebanese state – its oligarchic, sectarian delegation of power to political parties that are simultaneously state and non-state – is also the single most important characteristic of governance interactions between Lebanese state institutions and Palestinian non-state governance authorities.

The mediating position of political parties that incorporate and represent the state as well as the non-state is a direct result of Lebanon’s sectarian political system. Lebanese society is organized along the lines of 18 recognized religious communities that each have their regional strongholds, political parties, welfare institutions and armed militias (Cammatt & Issar, 2010; Harik, 1994; Picard, 2012). Political organization in Lebanon institutionalized such sectarianism. The Lebanese state is organized through a consociational political system that centres on an inter-sectarian power-sharing formula. The system includes corresponding sectarian quotas guiding the allocation of all public positions: in Lebanon, socio-economic redistribution is inherently sectarian (Klaus, 2000: 29). Consequently, the Lebanese state structure is informed by a quest for inter-communitarian balance that has resulted in endemic clientelism (Atzili, 2010: 761; Cammett & Issar, 2010), not least because the sectarian political system resulting from ‘series of compromises between the French mandatory power and the indigenous elites’ was designed to

accommodate much of the patriarchal and feudal patronage networks that predated it (Joseph, 1997: 89; Makdisi 1996: 23).

Political parties, in this structure, are the main vehicle of sectarian and clan-based patronage networks; they are 'the citizen's main administrative representative within the Lebanese state' (Vloeberghs, 2012: 246). This function has only been furthered by the 'cantonization' and 'militia politics' of the Civil War (El-Khazen, 2003; Harik, 1994; Makdisi 1996: 28). As such, parties in Lebanon differ markedly from the civil representational organizations defined primarily by broad popular membership and parliamentary activity that political parties are considered in most of western Europe (El-Khazen, 2003). As Catusse and Karam (2010: 15) note, in the Middle East, the word party is much more associated, or even interchangeable, with notions of 'clubs', 'clans', 'militias' and 'confessions'. And while parties may have 'little real power over the political destiny of their societies', their existence 'as structures within clientelist organizations, as tributaries to communitarian or tribal considerations', makes them elementary in connecting citizen and state nonetheless (Catusse & Karam, 2010: 11).

Scholars on the Lebanese state seem to agree with this linchpin role of (sectarian) political parties. Ramadan (2008: 666) states that 'sovereignty in Lebanon is highly conditional, distributed among different groups and actors along religious lines'. Fregonese (2012: 659, 670) perceives Lebanon as 'a constellation of hybrid sovereignties', in which governance is shaped by the 'hybridizations between state and nonstate actors'. She particularly highlights that 'the blurring of practices of state and nonstate actors [take place within] the administration' and singles out Lebanon's political parties as the vehicles for the 'tight circular connections between state and nonstate actors' (Fregonese, 2012: 656, 657). With regard to Hizballah, for instance, Fregonese (2012: 668–669, *italics original*) stresses that it 'became a hegemonic actor ... not simply in *opposition* to the state, but in close coordination with it'; that it is 'simultaneously a political party ... , an armed resistance movement, a provider of social services, and a provider of infrastructure: it is simultaneously part of the state, nonstate, and state-like'.

In effect, and as I elaborate in the next section, Ramadan and Fregonese describe Lebanese political parties as 'twilight institutions' that are at one and the same time governing in the name of the state and autonomously from it (Lund, 2006: 689). Their conceptualization of Lebanese parties as amalgamated state *and* non-state actors that are central to upholding the institutional structure of the Lebanese state underwrites the patterns of Lebanese–Palestinian governance interaction mediated by political parties observed in my case study. Political parties, at once parasitic on the state and constitutive of it, are the political oil in the institutional machinery of the state; they are an essential ingredient to maintain the 'purposeful fiction' of the 'public/private divide constitutive to the will to statehood' (Joseph, 1997: 73).

The mediated interactions between Palestinian governance actors and Lebanese state institutions presented, then, are a result of the particular sectarian and oligopolistic structuring of Lebanon's state system. Klaus (2000: 50) demonstrates that, from the beginning, 'the refugees received aid in the first place not from the state but from communal institutions'. She also shows that during the one centralist period

of Lebanon's history as an independent state – the years from 1958 to 1964 under President Chehab that were characterized by an attempt to strengthen the Lebanese bureaucracy and limit the extra-parliamentary power of political leaders – there was direct and formal interaction with the Palestinian representatives in Lebanon (ratified in the Cairo Agreement) (Klaus, 2000: 58).²⁸ This was, however, the exception to the rule that the 'ineffectiveness of the administrative governmental apparatus ... was also reflected in the absence of any further plan of how to deal with the Palestinian refugees' (Klaus 2000: 141). Instead, as was the case for Lebanese citizens, Palestinians' 'integration within the state system had happened qua loyalty towards a local [political] leader' and Palestinian 'leaders continued to keep relations with Lebanese parties and politicians' (Klaus, 2000: 25, 92). Ultimately, 'the conditions of Palestinian presence in Lebanon would be a mirror of Lebanese society itself' (Klaus, 2000: 146).

The Conceptual Contribution: Bringing the Mediated State to the Mediterranean

Both the tangible mediating role of the political parties described above and the way in which these local governance dynamics replicate broader patterns of a state mediating its power through political parties testify to the relevance of the mediated state as an instrument to understand governance – in Lebanon and, as I argued in the introduction, in the Mediterranean at large.

The Added Value of the Mediated State

The concept of the mediated state was introduced by Menkhaus (2006: 1) in order to better characterize 'the relationship between weak central governments and the non-state polities which can arise in their hinterlands'. Such a mediated state, Menkhaus (2006: 3) argues, is most likely to emerge in situations where state institutions have an interest in providing governance in a specific area, but are not able to. Menkhaus (2006: 5) writes: 'It is at this point that state authorities are most likely to reach out to negotiate with non-state authorities they would otherwise have viewed as rivals to be marginalized or tools to be co-opted.'

The dynamics captured by the mediated state are also recognized by other scholars. Scheye (2009: 5), for instance, suggests that

the post-colonial state is characterized by the 'rule of the intermediaries', a series of networks and polities that substitute and compensate for the lack of authority of the central, legally constituted state and its inability to deliver essential public goods and services.

Migdal's (1988: 144) seminal thesis on the dialectic between 'weak states' and 'strong societies', where 'strongmen' deliver the social stability and mobilization that 'statesmen' need concerns the same practices of mediation. Indeed, the idea of the mediated state is closely related to a wide range of other concepts dealing with the

interdependencies between various governance actors in non-Western political orders. These are, to name only the most cited: the above-mentioned ‘twilight institution’; the ‘hybrid political order’ (Boege et al., 2008); the ‘negotiated statehood’ (Hagmann & Péclard, 2010); ‘governance without government’ (Raeymaekers et al., 2008); ‘real governance’ (Olivier de Sardan, 2008); ‘actually existing governance’ (Mallet, 2010: 76); ‘brokered autonomy’ (Tilly, 2004 in Titeca & De Herdt, 2011: 217); the ‘second state’ (Scheye, 2009); ‘institutional bricolage’ (Cleaver et al., 2013); ‘para-statehood’ (Kraushaar & Lambach, 2009: 12); and ‘diffuse authority’ (Suykens, 2010).

These concepts were developed in response to the many problems of the ‘fragile’ or ‘failed’ state paradigm, most notably its teleological state-centrism and its ideal-typification (Boege et al., 2008; Hagmann & Péclard, 2010: 541). In the wake of this academically unsatisfying but politically powerful discourse, Meagher (2012: 1073) identified a ‘revalorization of non-state forms of order and authority’. These perspectives on governance in non-Western countries agitated against the idea that areas where the state is not the dominant governance actor are ‘ungoverned’ or ‘anarchic’, and that de facto local governance systems present there are therefore ‘of little significance’, mere ‘short-term coping mechanisms’ (Menkhaus, 2007: 102; see also Hoffmann & Kirk, 2013: 5; Mallet, 2010: 74). Reviving Migdal’s (2001) ‘state-in-society’ approach and the work of ‘anthropologists of the state’ (Sharma & Gupta, 2006), scholars emphasize the pluralistic and interactive nature of governance in ‘areas of limited statehood’ (Risse & Lehmkuhl, 2006) and stress the ‘negotiations’, ‘relations’, ‘dependencies’ and even ‘symbiosis’ between state and non-state authorities (Raeymaekers et al., 2008: 8; Scheye, 2009: 11).

The mediated state focuses on the pragmatic relations and interdependencies between state and non-state governance systems and goes beyond merely stating their coexistence. Among the plethora of concepts mentioned above, the mediated state concept is the most explicit in, ‘instead of describing governance exclusively in terms of resistance and opposition’, focusing on the ‘complicity and overlap between state and non-state forms of political power’ (Raeymaekers et al., 2008: 16). This does not mean that the mediated state advocates a return to state-centrism. While the mediated state is often seen as over-valuing state agency, it does not narrowly champion the agency of the state as an actor, but rather demands attention for the influence of the state as a structure. The mediated state suggests that the relevance of the state in hybrid governance lies not in strength in terms of sovereignty, exclusiveness or dominance, but in offering a political logic, or implicit outline, for interactions between state and non-state governance actors. This approach accommodates now broadly shared conclusions that the role of the state, not least in the Mediterranean (Guazzone and Pioppi 2012), has been ‘redefined rather than evaporated’ (Titeca & De Herdt, 2011: 213).

Potential Amalgamations of the Mediated State

Among the proliferation of concepts concerned with hybrid governance, the mediated state thus has a unique potential to conceptualize such dynamics beyond zero-sum state/non-state competition and give due credit to the role of the state without relapsing into state-centrism. Nevertheless, the concept is under-developed.

In his empirical articles on Kenya (2008) and Somalia (2007), Menkhaus himself did not structurally work out the typology of the mediated state that he put forward in a conference paper in 2006. Moreover, the mediated state is built exclusively on African cases, a trait it shares with almost all of the above-mentioned concepts. That the response towards the state failure paradigm came most strongly from Africanists is unsurprising as the fragile state discourse itself was driven by a focus on Africa (Hoffmann & Kirk, 2013: 4; Menkhaus, 2009: 5). However, there are neither convincing ontological nor compelling empirical grounds for such African exceptionalism (Stel & Frerks, 2013: 171). Indeed, despite the exclusive focus on African cases there is no inherent claim apparent in the concept that the mediated state would be a typically African phenomenon. In arguing the exceptionality rather than normativeness of stateness in ‘the North’ (Clements et al., 2007: 48; Risse & Lehmkuhl, 2006: 4), it would be a mistake to limit ‘the South’ to Africa – especially considering the still pressing deficiency of empirical data on hybrid governance (Hoffmann & Kirk, 2013: 41) and the hybrid and contested nature of the state in the Mediterranean.

Before attempting to identify how the mediated state concept might best be adapted from the African context to the Mediterranean, two fundamental issues first need to be addressed: what is, in fact, a state and are there insurmountable differences between an ‘African’ and a ‘Mediterranean’ state? Both issues are tremendously complex and largely beyond the scope of this article. Here, I limit myself to noting that I follow Owen (2006: 1) in understanding the state as the ‘set of institutions and practices which combines administrative, judicial, rule-making and coercive powers’. What is more relevant for the sake of my current argument, however, is the political system through which the operation of the state is organized. In this regard, it can be argued that African and Arab states display a broad similarity in terms of their neopatrimonialism (Bank & Richter, 2010; Olivier de Sardan, 2008) – a concept which by definition puts a premium on the relations, connections, networks that are at the heart of the idea of the mediated state. While the notion of (neo)patrimonialism is much disputed and often used in ‘too sweeping, too general and too partial a manner’, and a thorough analysis of specific historical trajectories of the formation of political institutions is indispensable, in this article the reference merely serves to establish that the use of Africanist concepts is not anachronistic to the Middle East (Olivier de Sardan, 2008: 6). I agree with Owen (2006: 230, 1) that the Middle Eastern state ‘has been subject to most of the same universal historical processes’ as many African countries, ‘including colonialism, the two world wars, the general emphasis on state-building and development, and then the trend towards more liberal economic policies’ and that, as such, it is useful to see it as part of a broader ‘non-European world’ as this opens up the Middle East to ‘a much larger body of works of comparative political and socio-economic analysis’.

Bringing the Politics Back in: Everyday Mediation. A first limitation that prevents the mediated state’s utility to the Mediterranean is that a clear definition or categorization of the mediating actors so central to the concept has so far been lacking. My case study of Shabriha could provide some clues on how to start

addressing this hiatus. In Shabriha, as well as in Lebanon at large, political parties function as gatekeepers to the state. A former LPDC official mused that municipal employees mostly ‘redirect to the relevant Hizballah or Amal functionary’ and quickly reach ‘ceilings of decision-making to which they cannot go without consultation [of the parties]’.²⁹ This merits adding a political layer to the mediated state to acknowledge the potentially crucial role of political actors in ‘mediating’ a state. Rather than a direct state–non-state–population interaction chain, the relation between state and non-state might go via political parties constituting a ‘fluid frontier’ between state and non-state actors (Hagmann & Péclard, 2010: 549).

A meaningful starting point to include the role of local politicians in mediated governance into our thinking on the mediated state is provided by Berenschot’s (2010) notion of ‘everyday mediation’. Approaching mediation as ‘facilitation of the communication between citizens and state officials’, he shows that, for citizens in his Indian case study, ‘the elements that constitute a state – its employees, its numerous laws and rules – are only experienced through the intervention of political intermediaries, and are thoroughly shaped by the operations of these intermediaries’ (Berenschot, 2010: 890–892). Berenschot shows how politicians and their parties are simultaneously part of the local state bureaucracy and constitute an independent gatekeeper to these state institutions. He sees the mediation of political parties as entrenched at the heart of the state in India:

the mediating activities of politicians ... cannot be seen as an aberration or intrusion into the ‘normal’ operations of the state. On the contrary, I argue that political intermediaries – mediating between bureaucrats, citizens and service providers – are a constitutive part of the state in Gujarat. Political mediation is so deeply entrenched in the procedures, policies and habits that guide the daily functioning of state institutions that we can speak of a ‘mediated state’: the state is embedded in society in such a way that its interaction with citizens is, to a large extent, monopolized by networks whose political (and often also financial) success depends on their capacity to manipulate the implementation of the state’s policies and legislation. (Berenschot, 2010: 884–885)

Berenschot’s account closely resembles Shabriha’s and illustrates that the significance of ‘political’ mediation is not limited to my Lebanese case study. It also suggests that ‘bringing the politics back in’ to the mediated state is pertinent – not least because it helps to remedy implicit connotations of ‘mediation’ with ‘equality’ or ‘symmetry’ (Cleaver et al., 2013: 13; Risse & Lehmkuhl, 2006: 8).

Accounting for State/Non-state Overlaps: The Twilight Institution. A second hurdle to extending the utility of the mediated state to Mediterranean governance is that the concept is often disqualified as state-centric. This is, however, a misrepresentation: the mediated state is demanding attention for, rather than claiming the exclusive relevance of, the explanatory value of state structures for hybrid governance. Yet the mediated state concept lacks a definition or problematization of what ‘the state’ actually is, disregarding a seminal body of literature (Abrams, 1988; Mitchell, 1999;

Scott, 1998). The lingering assumption that state and non-state can be separated either analytically or functionally is problematic as it denies the connectedness between politics and societies. Interaction assumes separate institutions to be connected. Such separations, however, are highly arbitrary and often non-existent. Can we still talk about ‘interaction’ or ‘mediation’ when the conferring entities overlap to the extent that they might be indistinguishable? In the words of a local Amal representative: ‘When we say the state, we mean our people in the organizations of the state. Through our people in the state we can take decisions. In the end, we’re all intersected together.’³⁰

Based on my case study and following Fregonese’s (2012: 661, italics original) de facto identification of Lebanese political parties as twilight institutions – she sees them as ‘hybrid political actors [that] constitute new entities that are *both state and nonstate*’ – I propose not merely to re-politicize the mediated state as suggested above, but to conceive of the political parties acting as mediating entities as ‘twilight institutions’. Lund’s (2006: 689) description of such institutions as being engaged in ‘an ambiguous process of being and opposing the state’ closely corresponds with the role political parties played in Shabriha. It is exactly because they function as twilight institutions that bridge the state and the non-state that political parties could play the mediating role they did; it is their ‘twilight’ nature that enabled them to constitute the buffers and proxies the state needs in its dealings with armed non-state governance actors.

Conceptualizing political parties as twilight intermediaries does away with the all-too-neat demarcation of state and non-state, formal and informal, as separate entities (Clements et al., 2007: 46; Meagher, 2012: 1073). As Shabriha’s Amal leader summarized: ‘We’re not only a military party against our enemy, we are an organization that works inside the state for the state.’³¹ Indeed, the very fact that the formal state needs twilight institutions to engage with (informal) non-state governance actors in the ‘decentered reworking of state power’ (Fregonese, 2012: 666) reinstates Renders’ and Terlinden’s (2010: 726) observation that the ‘setting and shifting of boundaries between formal and informal spheres have been key instruments in the struggle for power and control’. The ‘Janus face’ of politicians as at once state and non-state (Mallet, 2010: 81) enables them, in the words of Hagmann and Péclard (2010: 551), to operate at both the governance table headed by the state and the governance arena populated by non-state governance actors, granting them their assets as a governance intermediary.

Conclusion

This article introduced a case study of governance interaction between local Lebanese state institutions and Palestinian authorities in Shabriha. It was argued that this case constituted a manifestation of a mediated state both empirically – as interaction between the Lebanese state and the Palestinian non-state was mostly indirect, brokered by Lebanese political parties – and analytically – as this pattern of mediated interaction with the state reflects Lebanon’s broader political logic of sectarian oligopolies.

Subsequently, insights from the case study were taken as a starting point for tentatively extending the acumen of the mediated state to Lebanon and the Mediterranean. By stressing the political identity of the actors mediating between state and non-state governance authorities and embracing the inter-related rather than dichotomous manifestations of the state and non-state ‘faces’ of these political mediators, the article has sought to offer a vantage point for scholars of governance and politics in the Mediterranean to incorporate insights offered by the mediated state into their analyses.

Such insights are expected to be twofold. First, devoting attention to how the structure (of the state system) rather than the power of the state (as an actor) shapes governance interaction, re-emphasizes the ‘idea’ of the state (Lund, 2006: 675) that, despite the relative weakness of state institutions operating as governance actors, continues to provide a crucial context and resource distribution mechanism, also in the Mediterranean (Boege et al., 2009: 92; Cleaver et al., 2013: 13; Lund, 2006; Migdal, 1988, 2001; Sharma & Gupta, 2006). Second, as Bergh (2012: 305) has argued, a “re-politicization” of the debate’ on governance in the Mediterranean is crucial if we are to explore how political and policy dynamics affect ‘the “rules of the game”, i.e. the formal and informal institutions that shape the power bases and patronage networks of local elites and, in particular, what these mean in terms of clientelism and public accountability’.

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Notes

1. Other services are not accessed through the Lebanese state. Shabriha has its own water well; waste is collected by an NGO and education and health care are offered by the (UN).
2. Interview, Former Hizballah MP, Beirut, 26 June 2013.
3. Interview, Bourj el-Shemali camp, Sour, 25 July 2013.
4. Interview, Beirut, 13 September 2012.
5. Interview, Ex-President LPDC, Beirut, 22 July 2013.
6. Interview, Beirut, 23 July 2012.
7. Interview, Beirut, 21 June 2013.
8. Interview, Palestinian NGO, Sour, 22 March 2013.
9. In official, UN-administered camps, moreover, there is likely to be more direct interaction between the PCs and the army and police manning the checkpoints that regulate access to the camps.
10. Interview, Jal al Bahar, 13 June 2013.

11. Interview, Beirut, 26 June 2013.
12. Interview, Deir Qanun, 17 July 2013.
13. Interview, Palestinian liaison officer Amal Sour, Wadi Jilo, 29 June 2013.
14. Interview, Shabriha, 27 July 2013.
15. Interview, Sour, 27 July 2013.
16. Interview, Wadi Jilo, 29 June 2013.
17. Interview, Amal leader, Shabriha, 27 July 2013.
18. Interview, Shabriha, 26 July 2013.
19. Such as the fear of encouraging the Palestinians' 'permanent settlement' in Lebanon that is broadly perceived as a threat to Lebanon's sectarian balance and, hence, peace and stability (Meier, 2010) and the absence of a united Palestinian counterpart (Knudsen, 2011).
20. Interview, Beirut, 28 May 2013.
21. Interview, Al Bas camp, Sour, 18 June 2013.
22. Interview, Beirut, 26 June 2013.
23. Interview, Lebanese journalist, Shabriha, 27 June 2013.
24. Interview, Communal leader, Shabriha, 8 June 2013. The political parties constituting the PLO have historically been closely intertwined with south Lebanon's main political parties and their alternating competition and alliances in controlling the region (Norton, 2007: 477). In the initial absence of their own political parties, Shi'ite Lebanese from south Lebanon constituted a large part of the political membership and armed militias of Palestinian parties operating in Lebanon during the Palestinian Revolution (Shanahan, 2011: 96). Indeed, it was Fatah that trained and armed the nascent Amal Movement in the 1980s (Shanahan, 2011: 107). After the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon by Israel in 1982, however, particularly Amal (in the 1985–87 Camp Wars) has ensured that the state-like service structures and the concomitant patronage networks that the PLO had constructed were destroyed (Sayigh, 1997: 24). As a result, and also following from the marginalizing legislature adopted, the dependence has reversed and the Palestinian political actors are now decisively the junior partners of their Lebanese counterparts.
25. Interview, Shabriha, 11 June 2013.
26. Interview, Bourj el-Shemali camp, Sour, 20 September 2012.
27. Interview, Beirut, 4 June 2013.
28. Jordan and Syria, that were 'centralized and authoritarian', did not see politically mediated governance interaction with Palestinian institutions as they were 'politically better equipped' to directly engage with them (Klaus, 2000: 52).
29. Interview, Beirut, 23 July 2013.
30. Interview, Lebanese Shabriha, 27 July 2013.
31. Interview, Shabriha, 27 July 2013.

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