

**WINKING AT HUMANITARIAN NEUTRALITY:
THE LIMINAL POLITICS OF THE STATE IN LEBANON**

Introduction

This paper will examine the ways in which local and refugee populations perceive state enmity during the internal and temporary displacement that followed the July 2006 war in Lebanon, and the prolonged refugee inflow into the country from 2011, following the political and humanitarian crisis in Syria. I will illustrate how war-stricken Lebanese citizens' and Syrian refugees' perceptions of state enmity are countered by the Lebanese state's liminal politics in these two "catastrophes" that have hit Lebanon during the last decade, and to which a large number of humanitarian actors have responded. Common perceptions of state enmity, triggered by the liminal politics of the Lebanese state, generate an interspace where the voices of local citizens who were displaced by the July 2006 war, and of Syrian refugees who relocated to Lebanon from 2011, echo each other.

Here, I approach liminality as a deliberate political approach of the Lebanese state that preserves its agency but is practically translated into acts of repression and neglectfulness towards both local and refugee populations. In this sense, liminality can be described as a performative act rather than the ontological nature of the state or its actual positionality. I suggest that in times of emergency and crisis, the state adopts liminal politics, while in practice, myriad (in)formal, contradictory, and multiscalar powers interact to profoundly shape and rule over life on the ground. As I will illustrate, I think of the state's liminal politics of being between one existential state and another – that is, at the *limen* (Bryant 2014, 126) – not as an inactive passiveness, but rather as the specific character of the Lebanese state's agency.

To support my argument, I draw on local newspaper archives, municipality bulletins, participant observation, and more than 300 semi-structured interviews with humanitarian organizations, governmental actors, and aid recipients¹ in Lebanon in a discontinuous timespan from 2011 to 2016. The fieldwork for this study was conducted in Beirut's southern suburbs (locally called Dahiye – “the periphery” – in the Lebanese dialect) and the villages of Akkar (in northern Lebanon), areas largely characterized by poverty and social vulnerability. The urban area of Dahiye is run by distinct municipalities and hosts enclaves of illegal housing. Historically, outsiders have referred to this area as a rebel territory, the place of rural migrants from South Lebanon who gave rise to an unaddressed phenomenon of urbanization in these rural peripheries (Harb 2006). Dahiye's demographic geography is hybrid due to the continuous arrival of regional refugees and the recent gentrification of some districts in the aftermath of the July 2006 war. Fieldwork for this study has only been conducted in the eastern part of Dahiye, which covers the districts of Haret Hreik, Borj al-Barajneh, al-Ghobeiry, ash-Shiyyah, Msharrafeye, Ruwess, and Bi'r al-'Abed.² As connected to the capital Beirut, in Dahiye the population increased from 50% in 1959 to 70% in 1970 (Makhoul and Harrison 2002, 615). Akkar, with nearly 500,000 inhabitants and 254,000 Syrian refugees according to the 2017 UNHCR statistics, is a region mostly composed of rural hamlets with the highest poverty rate in the country of nearly 65% (Moushref 2008). Local poverty, absence of state services, a pseudo-feudal architecture of labour, and the predominance of rural livelihoods led outsiders to view this region as backward (Gilsenan 1996; Abi-Habib Khoury, 2012). Fieldwork for this study has been conducted in the main town of Halba and in the villages of al-Bahsa, Bebnin, Bellanet al-Hisa, al-'Abdeh, and Wadi Khaled.

The increasing presence of the “aid industry” (Redfield 2013, 26) in Lebanon due to its cyclic history of displacement has transformed domestic social spaces into humanitarian transnational spaces. Dahiye is a highly urbanized conflict zone that has historically been

exposed to war, and Akkar became the destination for Syrian nationals seeking refuge from war and violence since 2011. Reflecting the idea of state enmity as liminality, humanitarian neutrality and impartiality (Blondel 1991),³ which traditionally characterize service provision and assistance in crisis settings, match the existential need of the Lebanese state to perform as an entity positioned in a space of in-betweenness, in that any *faux pas* would endanger its stability. The current Lebanese government policy of power-sharing is in fact a colonial product of the creation of “Great Lebanon” by France at the time of the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and the Sanremo Agreement (1920).⁴ Moreover, Lebanon coped with the Syrian army’s control and oppression (1976-2005) as well as Israeli invasions and military attacks throughout Lebanon’s recent history (those of 1978, 1982, 1996, and 2006 were among the most morally and materially destructive), which challenged the country’s stability. On the one hand, Akkar is a rural area with poor local infrastructure that has been chronically neglected by both state and non-state actors (Makhoul and Harrison 2002; Moushref 2008). Local unemployment rates are high, and many locals seek employment in the Lebanese military (Zakhour 2005; Abi-Habib 2012). On the other, the diversified urban poverty of Dahiye (an area to which the national army seldom has access) does not consist of mere material deprivation, but also stigmatization as a poor, working-class Shiite area lacking in social esteem (Deeb 2006; Harb 2006). Indeed, locals who no longer suffer from material deprivation have ended up making their historical exclusion into a token of empowerment.⁵ Beyond the damage that any war causes, both areas have been sites of socio-political mobilization and transnational mobility (Gilsenan 1996; Saad 1996; Khater 2001; Kobeissi 2009) that have played an important role in determining the local configurations of spatial control, but which fall outside the scope of this article. Aside from the undefinable human cost, both areas have partially “benefited” from the emergencies because humanitarian

interventions have drawn greater international attention to chronically disadvantaged areas and have generated a rapid mobilization of resources and social services.

In this complex scenario where the role of the central state during crisis is apparently marginal, people's perceptions of the Lebanese state rivaling them is compounded by their emotional proximity to it in both Dahiye and Akkar. In fact, any concept of the state in Lebanon must take into account the ambivalence of its citizens, who look at it with resentment due to its neglectful or repressive behavior, but at the same time as a desired provider of resources and services – the so-called “seductive” character of the state (Jeffrey 2013). So to speak, the state in Lebanon is “awaited” (Mouawad 2015, 54). In this way, the state becomes a frustrated individual aspiration that defines citizens' and refugees' culturally peculiar “orientation to the future” (Appadurai 2004, 60). As will become evident in my historical review, the liminal politics of the state entails political agency rather than passivity, such as carrying out nepotistic and repressive practices.

The Morphology of Power and the State's Liminal Politics in Crisis Management

While Lebanon is often depicted as a warring “land of chaos” (Kosmatopoulos 2011, 124), Lebanese politicians have tried to preserve domestic stability despite the current whirlwind of the Syrian crisis, even though their strategies for achieving this stability have varied significantly (Trombetta 2014). It is noteworthy that the Lebanese confessional system has historically been based on the principle of convenient balance and power-sharing (Firro 2002; Kerr 2006); diverse actors such as non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, and state institutions contribute to the maintenance of a socio-political *status quo*. In this scenario, the state can be framed as a human achievement of order and control, rather than a natural expression of political power (Jeffrey 2013).

The maintenance of this socio-political order has in fact been observable in the compensation policies pursued by Hezbollah in the post-war reconstruction after the 2006 war, which was aimed at preventing social mobilization against the clientelism of Lebanese political elites, who look for followers in return for everyday access to welfare (Cammett 2014; Baumann 2016, 636; Nucho 2016). The same effort is observable in the actions of Akkar-based NGOs that seek to satisfy the chronic needs of both local communities and Syrian refugees to avoid the emergence of frictions between national groups sharing space and resources (Carpi 2016). Due to repeated states of emergency, non-state actors in the country have come to form a sort of “hyper-governance” (Bhatt 2007), which emerges as a form of sovereignty alongside the Lebanese state. Such non-state organizations behave as a para-state by offering “good governance” through humanitarian relief, education, health, and development. International humanitarian interventions and their growing politics of neutrality develop informal powers that are accountable in the international scenario and preserve social order (Vazquez-Arroyo 2013). Against this backdrop, in the eyes of my local and refugee interlocutors, the everyday workings of humanitarianism after the 2006 war and during the Syrian refugee influx from 2011 preserve and value the liminal politics of the Lebanese state.

In this framework of frequent states of emergency, the Lebanese state has been shaping a politics of *super partes* – a legacy of Lebanese confessional consociationalism (Corm 2006) – in reflection to the emerging sovereignty of humanitarian actors. Being a “consociational” (Apter 1961, 24) ruling entity, the Lebanese state’s political culture is fragmented, and its stability is maintained – and at the same time challenged – by its multiple memberships (Lijphart 1969, 209). A consociational entity is defined as an arena in which “the leaders of rival subcultures may engage in competitive behaviour [...] and aggravate political instability but may also make deliberate efforts to counteract the unstabilizing effects of cultural fragmentation” (Lijphart 1969, 212).

As this paper will make evident, the respondents' accounts point to a state (in Dahiye) and an international humanitarian system (in Akkar) of neutrality and anti-politicization, while accomplishing the basic political functions of a state. In this sense, the state seeks to build an objective and impartial image among a crisis-triggered competition over aid provision; indeed, states have increasingly been undertaking governmental practices through the development of humanitarian rhetoric in recent decades (Carpi 2014). In the same vein, "catastrophization" has become the latest form of governmentality, ceasing to be exclusively nongovernmental (Ophir 2010, 77) and increasingly involving the central state, which relies on emergency resources to provide everyday welfare (Eng and Martinez 2017).

Against the "new global danger of increasingly open borders" (Duffield and Waddell 2004, 24), the stability of the state has clearly been prioritized in Lebanon's national political agenda (Fukuyama 2004, 92). In this sense, contemporary humanitarianism seems to contribute to the maintenance of the geopolitical order, while purporting to have a people-centered approach, and hinging on the bio-political values of human dignity, protection, and survival. Lebanon is no exception to this; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has often been prohibited from starting income-generating activities for the Syrian refugees in the country on the basis of government warnings regarding the high unemployment rate among local people. Moreover, in order to avoid social disorder, the Lebanese government prohibited marches and demonstrations from taking place on International Refugee Day in June 2014.⁶ With regard to this, scholars have proposed that Lebanese state sovereignty is fragmented, rather than absent (Stel 2016; Ramadan and Fregonese 2017) and, moreover, that "the absent state imagery acts like the opium of the citizens where the practices of ruling elites are masked by the state idea to undertake their own political projects [...] and systems of rule" (Mouawad 2015, 107). I likewise contest this idea of absence by identifying a hybrid space through which diverse power holders play out.

Amongst the latter, the central state performs a liminal politics that conveniently meets the international humanitarian principle of neutrality embraced by most of the international agencies which intervened in Lebanon's crises. As a result, liminality is rather an emanation of agency and violent presence.

In anthropology, however, liminality is primarily tackled in relation to the either the mobile or the marginal individual: it can be a mobile existential state through which individuals have experiences that can transform their identities, realign social hierarchies, or reinforce power inequalities (Ghannam 2011, 791). As such, liminality can be both a source of limitations and constraints and a negation of all of them (Turner 1967, 97), as benefiting from an in-between state of being; because the liminal is a concept that brings the spatial and the temporal together, it is often thought of as a way of being neither here nor there (Turner 1967), which some scholars have identified as anti-structural, as a transitional stage between the pre- and the post-liminal (Van Gennep 1960). An example of this is Tillery's children's summer camp, which is described as a liminal environment with its own rituals and metaphoric processes (Tillery 1992, 380). Against this backdrop, I assert that liminality is at the core of Lebanon's state politics and particularly emerges in "transitional stages" (Tillery 1992, 381) that are labeled as crises, rather than identifying it in the margins, therefore differently to Turner's concept of "conditions outside or on the peripheries of the everyday" (Turner 1974, 47). As such, while it conceptually exemplifies the "ambivalence of political subjectivity" (McConnell 2017, 139) towards other actors inhabiting the political scene, the Lebanese state's liminal politics practically produces perceptions of enmity among citizens and refugees resettled within its boundaries.

Against the background of the Lebanese state performing liminal politics in a scenario whereby multiple actors produce and share agency in times of crisis, I will now turn to the

relationship between the central state and the two geographic sites in which I conducted research in order to clarify the motivations behind people's perceptions of state enmity.

Dahiye and the Lebanese State: a Complex Relationship

Although Dahiye is a demographically mixed area in origin, and only become predominantly Shi'a in the late 1980s (Hourani 2015, 190), its relationship with the state is largely informed by Shiite political history in Lebanon. The relationship between Lebanese Shi'a and the central state is influenced not only by a long history of legislative under-representation in the Lebanese Parliament, but also by acts of state violence and subtle disinvestment in the community through, for example, uncompleted urban projects.

During the years of King Faisal's rule (Harb 2010), the French colonial mandate was to oppose Shiite control of the area (1918-1920) because they considered Lebanese Shi'a to be fierce opponents as allied with "anti-western" Syria (Firro 2006). In 1926, unlike the Sunni community, the Shi'a supported the Beirut-based government's adoption of the country's first national constitution to reciprocate the state's recognition of the Ja'fari school of jurisprudence in the same year. It was only after 1969, when the Shi'a Higher Council became operational and the Shi'a achieved greater autonomy from Sunni political dominance, that the community produced an urban-based middle class and a new generation of political *élites* who soon came to represent important segments of Dahiye's contemporary demography (Harb 2010).

The perception of state enmity among my interlocutors in Dahiye stems from historical experiences, in that the state has long since opposed Dahiye's admission within Lebanese society. The Lebanese Shi'a community migrated in increasing numbers from the south to Dahiye in the 1980s, suffering not only displacement and destruction, but also isolation and abandonment at the hands of its own government. In addition, the Lebanese government was

seen to be adopting a compliant attitude toward its southern neighbor Israel, when Lebanon's agricultural exports declined by 50 percent due to the acceptance of Israeli imports into the country in 1983 (Saad 1996, 195). The same state attitude towards Israel was also observed during *ḥarb tammūz* (the "July war" between Lebanon and Israel), and it aroused similar public contempt.⁷

In the southern suburbs of Beirut, people's perception of state enmity was also nurtured during Israel's "Operation Peace for Galilee" (1982) carried out under the direction of then-Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who ordered the invasion of West Beirut. The Christian Phalangist leader Amin Gemayel tried to restore authority over this area and destroyed 400 illegal dwellings in Ouzai, where the militia of the Lebanese Shiite party Harakat Amal violently confronted Gemayel's troops. In this area, armed groups were used to "parasite state institutions, tax the residents and redistribute their resources to the clientele" (Picard 1999).

Throughout the years of the Lebanese Civil War, the reputation of the state, which had significantly improved under the reforms of former President Fouad Chéhab (1958-1964), quickly collapsed (Khazen 2000). A statement issued by the Shi'a Community Supreme Council in December 1983 articulates this clearly:

"The southern suburbs are pounded as if their inhabitants were not citizens of this country. The state by its actions in the last few days has committed suicide by seeking to eliminate its own citizens."

Analogically, state planning in Dahiye proved to be a combination of coercive and violent urban policies with the aim of modernizing Beirut's periphery⁸ (Fawaz and Harb 2010, 23). The 1990s Solidère Project, which was started by assassinated Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri and developed into one of the largest corporations in the Middle East (Becherer 2005), generated disaffection and hostility among the Shi'a who inhabited the *centre ville* because

they were relocated to other areas such as Dahiye. This experience made many Dahiye residents highly skeptical of state intervention in their residential areas, unlike the public acclamation that followed Hezbollah's accomplishment of its promises in the post-2006 war reconstruction (Mac Ginty 2007, 475; Fawaz 2014; Hourani 2015, 196). In this framework, from a historical perspective, Hezbollah has both endangered its existence through and benefitted from a successfully self-crafted image of an actor acting separately from the state, even when working as a majority party within the state apparatus (as per the latest May 2018 elections). Moreover, Hezbollah's positionality *vis-à-vis* the Lebanese state sheds light on a generalizable complex relationship between political parties and state institutions, which, in scholarly and media accounts, are seldom referred to as a single entity.

On the one hand, locals in Dahiye tend to interpret any form of state planning as threatening and suspicious; on the other, however, Lebanese state agencies are biased against any collective movement by residents who have historically been assumed to be hostile and violent, traits that can only be addressed by imposing discipline. The construction of the airport road in 1998 is only one of several attempts to marginalize the area, allowing drivers to take alternative routes (Deeb 2006). In sum, Dahiye has cultivated a feeling that it is the object of state enmity, given that the state has historically appeared to protect Dahiye's outsiders. During his discussions with government and Solidère officials, anthropologist Najib Hourani (2015, 188) claimed that war-stricken Shi'a were not represented as victims of war at all, "but rather as the carriers of a pre-modern ignorance and fanaticism that destroyed the cosmopolitan nation [...]. They were described not as refugees (*muhajjarin*), but rather as invaders or occupiers (*muhtallin*) of others' property, and of cosmopolitan Beirut."

Hezbollah's campaigns have constantly been conducted against an anti-central state political backdrop, even in periods when the prime minister seemed to be sympathizing with their coalition, like the government of Najib Miqati (2011-2014). In this regard, Hussein, a

resident in the Dahiye suburb of Haret Hreik, told me: “Saiyyd Hasan Nasrallah [the leader of the Hezbollah party] will sooner or later offer our military forces to the state, but not yet... He has said this government does not sympathize enough with *us*.”⁹ In its campaigns, Hezbollah has often used an anti-central state rhetoric, that is presenting the party and its outstanding networks of service provision as the best alternative to a wavering and lax state (Fawaz 2009, 330; Mac Ginty and Hamieh 2010, 50; Hourani 2015, 191). The rapid success of the party’s reconstruction strategy after the July 2006 war constituted a “victory against Israel and the Lebanese government, which Hezbollah accused of collaborating with the enemy” (Fawaz 2009, 329), and an act of resistance that institutionalized “an already accepted ideology” (Nuwayhid et al. 2011, 514). However, the state itself has seemed to delegate to and trust Hezbollah as a private actor, in terms of planning responsibilities (Fawaz 2009, 324), and Hezbollah cannot be defined as a pure anti-state actor (Mac Ginty and Hamieh 2010, 60).

Even though Dahiye’s residents are familiar with state neglect, the interviews conducted nevertheless reveal their “desire” (Aretxaga 2003) for a more assertive social contract with the central state. Hezbollah’s welfare system is, therefore, not conceived as the “only possible state” by the residents, and it is not even deemed a sufficient alternative to the central state.

The words of an elderly shop assistant in Laylaki¹⁰ are meaningful in this regard:

“Hezbollah did a lot for us after the July war. But, we didn’t get any support from the state. Everything is useless without an efficient state; Hezbollah can keep on providing everything to us, but nothing is going to change without official state support.”

The southern suburbs of Beirut – which can be considered a slum, being over-crowded, badly planned urbanistically, and poorly serviced (Mac Ginty and Hamieh 2010, 49) – faced particularly difficult challenges during the reconstruction following the 2006 war (Mac Ginty

2007, 464). During the 2006 Israeli attacks on Lebanon, the rift between the Lebanese government and Hezbollah widened. For instance, the Mouawad Ministry¹¹ explicitly hoped that the Israeli government led by the Prime Minister Ehud Olmert would weaken Hezbollah in the course of the conflict¹² in the hope that this would reduce its political sway in the aftermath of the war. During the post-war reconstruction, the government and Hezbollah established a kind of undeclared partnership, since local people gave financial donations to the Hezbollah-initiated Wa'd Project, which was also funded by the government (Fawaz 2009, 327; Fawaz and Harb 2010, 29). After the July 2006 war, the failure of the state to quickly remove the war debris reinforced Dahiye residents' dependence on Hezbollah's provision of housing (Hilal 2008, 71). The state's delay in providing cash payments destined for those afflicted by the war was similarly interpreted as a lack of sympathy.¹³

Nevertheless, while Hezbollah remains the only welfare provider in Dahiye and there seems to be the only alternative to the disorder that the enduring Syrian conflict may bring to Lebanon, its municipal governance is questioned to a certain extent by the locals with whom I spoke, who also said that Hezbollah's effectiveness is limited. For instance, the kidnapping of Syrian citizens from Dahiye in August 2012 by the Moqdad family¹⁴ suggested Hezbollah's restricted control on the ground (Deeb and Harb 2012). The day following the kidnappings, the party's leader, Hasan Nasrallah, announced in a televised speech that the party "did not control the situation on the street" (Deeb and Harb 2012). These events serve to showcase the muddled relations between Dahiye's inhabitants, Hezbollah's governance, and the Lebanese state, along with the ways in which the sites of power change situationally.

'Offering Lebanon to Israel on a Silver Tray'

The dizzying divide between the state and Hezbollah during the July 2006 war was made clear by the two groups' respective public rhetoric, which informed local attitudes towards

the intervention by the international community into crisis-stricken Dahiye. During the conflict, the Lebanese state gave some local residents the impression that it was “willing to offer Lebanon to Israel on a silver tray”¹⁵ in order to weaken Hezbollah,¹⁶ and was playing a kind of negotiating role between Israel and Hezbollah via the international community (Presidency of the Councils of Ministers in Lebanon 2007). As a result of this policy of the government, the perception of the state in postwar Dahiye was extremely negative. Furthermore, some scholars have discussed that the 2006 Wa’d reconstruction project, established by Hezbollah through the NGO Jihad al-Binaa, was implemented and financed not only *without* the government’s help, but also *despite* the obstacles it put in place (Alamuddin 2010).

The neutral position that the Lebanese state seemed to stake out during the Lebanese-Israeli conflict generated widespread discontent and resentment on the street in Dahiye. Indeed, according to municipal officials and affiliated service providers, at the time of the July war, party political symbols were visibly removed from public institutions. In the same vein, the project manager¹⁷ of the Ministry of Social Affairs branch in the Dahiye suburb of ash-Shiyyah said that politicians in Lebanon were deliberately dividing people by religion and culture. In other words, only the apolitical and the a-confessional seemed potentially capable of acting in a “humane” manner. Hezbollah’s provision of aid was seen an act of moral and political resistance and evidence of victory and contrasted with the central state’s attempts to uphold a stance of neutrality. The Dahiye municipalities that wanted to distinguish their political orientation from Hezbollah, such as al-Mreije and Hadath,¹⁸ adopted a pro-government rhetoric, contending that the Lebanese state had become far more efficient in the suburbs since the July war.

Dahiye’s public morality, promoted by Hezbollah, aimed to bring to light who had aligned with the party and who had not during the conflict. This process tended to retrospectively

consolidate aid recipients' attachment to their local territory, as an antithetical response to a combination of both state neglectfulness and state enmity. Local relief provision to co-residents in times of conflict has intensified people's intimate attachment to Dahiye, while further "othering" the touristic presence of the international humanitarian apparatus and its purported aim of supporting those affected by conflicts (Mac Ginty 2007; Carpi 2014). Media accounts also show evidence of the longstanding mistrust of some segments of Dahiye's population towards the international community which has rushed to rescue them during crises. A Lebanese press release published in *al-Akhbār*¹⁹ newspaper reported that tons of emergency relief products supplied by the UNHCR had been burned before they could be distributed due to inadequate protection in storage. This was compared to the "smell of corruption" (*rayḥat al-fasād*) in the state-connected High Relief Commission and the total unreliability of United Nations staff, who were seen to have little regard for people's safety.

From a local perspective, international aid organizations did not view the July war as part of the historical (or temporal) continuity of the area and its everyday provision of services. The social response to humanitarian assistance in 2006 led locals to feel a greater entitlement to claim that the territory was *theirs* – an attachment to place that went beyond cycles of crisis and aid provision. This can be contrasted with the temporary exploitation of war-affected areas by the international aid industry, whose temporally contingent interventions in Dahiye complied with the Lebanese state's interests, rather than responding to pre-existing local needs. The departure of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), decided on the basis of its risk management assessment, also served to create greater disaffection towards the "international saviors" in the suburbs. This growing endemic mistrust is captured by 'Ali²⁰ from ash-Shiyyah, who observed: "Nothing dies if it comes from the inside [*mā fy shy bymūt min juwa*]. Corruption and exploitation have increased due to the presence of the foreigners here." Likewise, on the al-Jazeera television channel,²¹ the UN and the US were

often described as “the real criminals” and “people who have always lied.”²² By the same token, Mahmoud,²³ a local resident, denied *tout court* that international NGOs had provided aid in Dahiye during the July war. *Al-Akhbār* journalist Rajana Hammiye²⁴ stated that foreigners visiting Dahiye after *ḥarb tammūz* were usually referred to by locals as *‘aber sabīl* (“passers-by”) – that is, people who leave after fuelling the spirit of the Israeli humiliation – as opposed to *sha‘b al-mankūb*, “the people of the disgrace.” When local residents referred to foreign-funded reconstruction programs, they expressed resentment and suspicion towards the international community as well as the Lebanese state. The emphasis on the temporariness of international humanitarian aid in Dahiye and the state’s abdication of responsibility – or even compliance with the “Zionist entity” – contrasts with the system of mutual care that Dahiye’s communities have developed throughout a history of abandonment. The politicization of aid has a long genealogy in humanitarian thinking, and exclusion from regimes of assistance is normally explained as a politically biased distribution of resources that is directed by higher powers (Mac Ginty and Hamieh 2010). In this respect, the Dahiye scenario appears diverse; on the one hand, one can see Hezbollah’s politics of inclusion and popular empowerment (Roy 2008), which purports to enhance the agentive role of its political membership, while on the other, most of the international humanitarian agencies believe they are operating on pathological subjects, that is victims of war violence and displacement who need to be “healed”, using neutrality as the ultimate approach to uphold morality and social order in times of crisis. Similarly, governmental and other political actors have tended to view each other as using humanitarianism to strengthen, weaken, or contest the claims of their counterparts and to moralize their political agendas (Carpi 2014). Ahmed²⁵ from ash-Shiyyah explained to me how, during the July war, “everyone bringing aid wanted their logo to be shown... and this time, there were definitely more international brands than usual.” This was presented as evidence that humanitarianism in Lebanon is mostly used as an

opportunity to gain political capital while alleviating war-inflicted suffering. In this regard, the words of the ex-Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs Nayla Mouawad in July 2006 reveal how local order is not a developmental stage or status that can be reached once and for all, but rather a relational balance: “I ask the US government to intercede to permit the establishment of humanitarian corridors, to show the Lebanese people that the Seniora²⁶ government is effective.”²⁷ Former Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Seniora was indeed seen as a local agent of the West in the implementation of a “liberal peace” (Mac Ginty 2007, 472).

In this sense, local residents read the ambivalent liminal politics of the attacked Lebanese state as straightforward enmity, offering Lebanese land to Israel on a silver tray. The state’s behavior was associated with what was commonly defined by local citizens as a war-related touristic approach of the international community (*al-harb hiyye siyahat al-mujtama’ ad-dwali*), here embodied by humanitarian agencies on the ground which come to know and work in Dahiye only after war and destruction while ignoring historical continuity. International humanitarian agencies were purportedly showing empathy to people but positioning their practices within a neutral and impartial rubric, that is, respectively, not taking sides in conflicts and being driven by needs to make decisions independently (Mačák 2015, 161).

The Villages of Akkar and the Syrian Refugee Influx

Akkar’s previous history of displacements and the indirect legacy of war often goes unheeded in contemporary accounts of international humanitarian agencies dealing with the Syrian refugee influx. The northern region of the country has long since been home to large numbers of Lebanese migrants (Gilsenan 1996) as well as returnees who resettled in the country at the end of the civil war, while it has also suffered from infrastructural neglect in postwar periods

(Moghnie 2015) because it has been considered to be less affected by the fallout of conflicts with Israel. For instance, no political forces invested in the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp after the 2007 clashes between the Islamist group Fath al-Islam and the Lebanese army (Hassan and Hanafi 2010). These clashes negatively impacted the northern Lebanese economy, while the United Nations Refugee Works Agency (UNRWA) did not hold the type of mandate necessary to rebuild parts of the urban area that used to delineate the camp space (Hassan and Hanafi 2010, 40).

During his visit to Akkar, Sa'ad al-Hariri, leading the *Tayyar al-Mustaqbal* party, stressed the needs of this region and the importance of providing care,²⁸ by symbolically connecting Akkar to the state in the wake of Akkaris' participations in the "Cedar revolution" (Knudsen and Kerr 2013, 3). The latter was in fact sparked by the death of Sa'ad's father Rafiq on February 14, 2005 and by the demonstrations of the Syrian regime's allies on March 8, 2005. During the spring of 2011, the villages of Akkar and the small city of Halba became the first destination for Syrians fleeing shelling by the Syrian government. The region, which ranks lowest in terms of government-provided services in Lebanon (Abi-Khoury 2012), was already hosting a large number of Syrian migrant workers who had arrived prior to the Syrian political crisis (Chalcraft 2009). These villages are mostly rural hamlets where the local political economy has historically been formed by feudal-like relationships, and where Syrians mostly worked as peasants, cleaners, gardeners and constructors. In Akkar, social networks have always been "mechanisms of governance crossing over state boundaries" (Haas 1992), where informal powerholders still retain local sway and authority. This has engendered local "governance without government" (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992), in that the central state normally neglects such areas. The intervention of the international humanitarian apparatus reconfigured the political assemblage governing the Akkar space, in which the central state is only one among several actors seeking to preserve local order.

When not engaged in menial labor, the Syrian nationals who were living in Akkar before 2011 were generally employed in the Syrian national army, which had been active in Lebanese territory since 1976, with the alleged motivation of protecting Lebanon's stability following the 1975-1990 civil war (Abi-Khoury 2012). Even though Syrian President Bashar al-Asad withdrew his troops in April 2005 in response to international and local pressure, Lebanese citizens nowadays still tend to identify Syrian laborers with their "Leviathan" regime, leading to a complex relationship between the former military occupation and current refugeehood. I will now show how today's Syrian refugees perceive the Lebanese state's and the international humanitarian apparatus's enmity in similar ways to the Lebanese who were displaced during the July 2006 war.

The Lebanese state, historically at the mercy of Syrian political decisions, pursued a continuous politics of balance out of its need to survive and preserve political order. However, the liminal politics that the Lebanese state tends to embrace in times of crisis stands in contradiction with its repressive acts. For instance, assassinated Lebanese journalist Gibran Tuani wrote in November 2000 about the Lebanese state crushing protesters at the University of Saint-Joseph in Beirut who were voicing their opposition to the Syrian occupation. Moreover, although there are many complexities to this issue that fall outside the scope of this article, the Lebanese government had supported the *Pax Syriana* in Lebanon until the Syrian troops' withdrawal in 2005.

Likewise, the governmental response to the Syrian crisis and the subsequent refugee influx has been rather controversial, falling between anti-refugee acts and a normative liminal politics. Since the very beginning of the crisis, the Lebanese government has regarded the Syrians as temporary residents and in legal documentation has employed the term "displaced" – *naziḥūn* – rather than "refugees" – *lajy'ūn*, consolidating the fact that Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Indeed, a ministry of social affairs official,

Makram Malaeb,²⁹ declared that the Lebanese government's intention was certainly not to let refugees feel "comfortable," but rather to prompt them to resettle elsewhere, or return to Syria in safe conditions. The government has followed the same anti-naturalization (*tawfīn*) narrative for Syrians as it has done for Palestinian refugees, who have only sporadically been allowed to obtain Lebanese citizenship.³⁰ The spectre of *tawfīn* in Lebanon has consequently cemented crisis repertoires caused by long-term refugedoms and political failures to prevent the emergence of new, unwanted citizens.

The so-called Ba'bda Declaration (issued in June 2012) normatively asserted Lebanon's neutrality and disengagement from the Syrian crisis. Unlike the 2003-2006 Iraqi crisis, during which a memorandum of understanding was swiftly signed between the Lebanese government and the UNHCR, Lebanon did not adopt any formal policy vis-à-vis the Syrian displacement until late 2014 (Janmyr 2017). While the previous Lebanese minister of social affairs, Abou Fa'our, had initially followed a *de facto* relatively open-door policy in line with a humanitarian approach,³¹ others leading politicians such as the then-minister of the interior, Marwan Charbel, showed reticence and even racism towards the Syrian newcomers, suggesting that the Lebanese border be closed in early 2012. On a similar note, Gebran Bassil, at that time energy minister, who was affiliated with the 'Aoun-led Free Patriotic Movement,³² had already called for Syrians to be denied entry and for the repatriation of those who were already inside Lebanon in September 2013.³³ The temporary acceptance of Syrian refugees to Lebanon continued periodically until January 2015, when the decision was made to restrict entry to those refugees who had a hotel booking or 1,000 USD in cash (Janmyr 2017; Dionigi 2017).³⁴

In order to cope with the refugee influx and uphold public accountability, Lebanon's government strategy has made use of external resources, while simultaneously denying the scale of the Syrian crisis.³⁵ Most local parties that have provided aid to Syrian refugees

belong to the Sa‘d Hariri-led March 14 coalition, which sympathized with some segments of the Syrian opposition, such as Arab Gulf NGOs. The March 14 coalition has a long history of providing assistance and reconstruction support in times of crisis. For instance, the Future Movement intervened as an aid provider during the July 2006 war, as well as in the wake of the Beirut street clashes in May 2008, when it distributed \$1.2m in direct compensation to those affected by the violence, especially in the Tripoli neighborhood of Bab at-Tabbaneh (Mac Ginty and Hamieh 2010, 55).

Those who support the Syrian opposition, and who have helped Syrian refugees in Akkar, have voiced their perception of state enmity. For example, the administrative head³⁶ of the Lebanese NGO ‘Akkarouna has argued that the Lebanese state allocated greater funding to the displaced of the July war than to Syrian refugees fleeing violence and persecution. Furthermore, Lebanon’s High Relief Council, which is funded by the government, stopped giving financial assistance to the Syrian refugees and supporting those who helped refugees in Akkar due to a supposed lack of resources. Similarly, in the interviews I conducted, local residents highlighted that the central government had consistently stopped projects sponsored by Lebanese parties that are generally sympathetic to the Syrian opposition.³⁷ The Lebanese state therefore is not perceived to be neutral with regard to the Syrian conflict, but in practice, that performance of neutrality even produces enmity towards the people of Akkar’s and the Syrian refugees by aligning with the Assad regime.³⁸

A recurrent theme of Arab Gulf-funded NGOs that provided aid to Syrians in Akkar³⁹ was instead state enmity as a form of passivity – a nuanced effect of liminality - towards crisis and crisis-stricken victims. Until late 2013, some local exponents of the March 14 coalition declared that they would give assistance to the Syrians “mostly due to the absence of services provided by the state. *We* are the only human beings here who are doing something for our Syrian brethren.”⁴⁰ The anti-state rhetoric of the residents of Akkar parallels the Dahiye anti-

state rhetoric, despite the diverse political environments. Similarly to Dahiye, however, this anti-stateness is not a clear-cut stance, but rather the product of the perception of state enmity combined with individuals' frustrated attempts to befriend the state. I will now turn to Akkar's humanitarian economy, where both the state and the international humanitarian apparatus are thought to be "winking at each other" in their liminal preservation of the socio-political order.

The Local Reception of Syrian Refugees in Akkar

In the Akkar region, both official and informal access to resources is mostly guaranteed by local *zu'amā'*,⁴¹ *makhātir*,⁴² and other local authorities (such as a governmental representative called a *mandūb*, or a commissioner in charge of managing local affairs, known as a *mas'ūl*, meaning "responsible"). In this realm of multiple actors, it is the municipality's *mukhtār* who provides the list of beneficiaries to the international NGOs and UN agencies. If a cleavage between the central state and local powerholders was identifiable prior to the arrival of international humanitarians, foreign aid providers have reinforced the locally entrenched pseudo-tribalism and clientelism because they generally have to rely on local gatekeepers to gain safe and quick access to local communities and refugees (Mac Ginty and Hamieh 2010). As Feras told me in Bebnin,⁴³ international aid organizations are believed to "wink at our old local leaders, who all have an interest in monitoring the aid distribution process in the absence of the state. What is the result? The beneficiary group is still selected according to their corrupt criteria." A UNICEF worker in the area, expressed a similar idea:⁴⁴

"The local authorities provided me with a list of people who were entitled to receive financial support for their children's schooling materials. After the distribution, several people came to me, complaining that they hadn't even heard about this possibility of help."

In this framework, aid becomes a new resource within the local network of political clientelism (Cammett 2014), which thrives in the historical absence of the central government in the northern region of Lebanon. In response, most of the international humanitarian apparatus has justified their cooperation with local leaders – and, in some cases, the tendency to avoid cooperation with the central state – by arguing that their goal is not to change Akkar’s society, but rather to maintain a neutral – and, liminal – position within the humanitarian space.⁴⁵ Among my interlocutors, the local perception of state enmity was therefore accompanied by the refugees’ belief that the political neutrality of international humanitarian agencies was actively feeding into state enmity.

I observed how small Lebanese villages feel bewildered at the hands of the transnational governance that has emerged as a result of the Syrian refugee influx. Some locals aspire to state centralization and to counter external interventions, in that they believe they are “offering” their land to the international humanitarian apparatus. External actors tend to rely on Akkar’s pre-existing, fiefdom-like power structures and reinforced decentralized forms of governance to gain access local villages and communities. In a region that has long tried to capture the friendlier “face of the state” (Obeid 2010), many locals voiced their disaffection with both local powerholders and the international humanitarian apparatus that relies on their gatekeeping. Fadi, a Syrian from Homs who had relocated to Wadi Khaled, affirmed:⁴⁶

“I don’t trust these new organizations that came here, saying that things will get better with them. I have fought with the *mukhtār* face-to-face, because I was not given enough. I have five kids to feed! He used to listen to my requests until a few months ago... but now he feels empowered and blessed by the West, because *they* also need his help. I know they all do business based on the Syrian suffering, while they wink at each other.”

In this hybrid space co-governed by international and local structures, the role of local

powerholders is necessarily incorporated into the humanitarian apparatus, in a region where state funding has only reluctantly been pumped in. A pressing need among humanitarian structures, as well as host governments, is the ability to calm local tensions, which are commonly believed to have increased after the influx of refugees. In fact, rather than viewing the Syrian refugees as victims of human rights violations, the international humanitarian industry - based on the traditional aim of international aid organizations to maintain a geopolitical balance while professing “civilizational geopolitics” (Jeffrey 2008) - has constructed Syrians as deserving humanitarian victims. Against this backdrop, most of the refugee interviewees perceived the neutrality of international humanitarian actors as a tacit alliance with the Lebanese host state, and a reinforcement of the legitimacy of the Asad regime. As a result, the humanitarian actors have sought to demonstrate that their intention is not to eradicate the real source of problems in Syria. This response confirms this idea of humanitarianism winking at local powers:

“They [the staff of an international NGO in Halba] said their role is not to take sides at all, when I asked for medication. They are the same as the state. I have an injured hand, as you can see... I was fighting with the Free Syrian Army [FSA], and they know that.”⁴⁷

As the liminal politics of the Lebanese state, the humanitarian compliance with the former, and a reinforced local clientelism have emerged, both local citizens and Syrian refugees in the Akkar region have reconfigured and articulated their perceptions of the enmity of the governing bodies.

Conclusion

As Lebanon witnesses a continual rescaling of power, both local and refugee populations draw on a similar repertoire of crisis created by chronic abandonment, a perception of state

enmity, and frustrated aspirations to befriend the state. The Lebanese state constructs an apparent liminal positionality within crisis settings; however, in the eyes of denied citizens and fabricated humanitarian victims, it appears practically aligned with the situational enemy. In the context of the state “offering Lebanon to Israel on a silver tray,” local political forces other than the central government and other than international humanitarian actors seem to be the only possible protection system against instability and neglect. Likewise, the official neutrality politics of many international humanitarian agencies in Akkar satisfy the existential need of the Lebanese Dionysian state to maintain domestic stability *vis-à-vis* the crisis of the Syrian Apollonian state: a liminality officially marked by the 2012 Ba‘bda Declaration. However, as outlined in this paper, apparent state liminality is actually operationalized through repressive acts and violent neglect. Indeed, historical experience has shown how the Lebanese state reinforces its own agency as a full-fledged political actor by aborting change and adopting a politics of repression. In my hermeneutics of enmity, the state is therefore experienced as antithetical to the social and political efforts of citizens and refugees – a fickle figure, so to speak, winking at Israel over history and at Syria before and after the 2011 the political crisis. Thereby, what my local and refugee interlocutors have described as a convenient complicity between the Lebanese state and the international humanitarian apparatus is not an exclusive relationship between state and non-state actors. As my research experience in the two field sites has shown, such a perceived complicity - which I have named “state enmity” in this article - rather reflects how local and refugee populations configure the historical positionality of the Lebanese state in regional geopolitics, as well as Lebanon’s state-to-state relationships.

Acknowledgments

I am highly indebted to Dr Sara Fregonese (University of Birmingham) for her invaluable feedback on an earlier draft of this article.

References

Abi-Habib Khoury, Roula. 2012. Rapid Assessment on Child Labour in North Lebanon (Tripoli and Akkar) and Bekaa Governorates. Beirut: USJ and ILO.

Alamuddin, Hana. 2010. "The Reconstruction Project of the Southern Suburb of Beirut." In *Lessons in Post-war Reconstruction: Cases Studies from Lebanon in the Aftermath of the 2006 War*, edited by H. Harithy, 22-46. NY: Routledge.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2004. "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition." In *Culture and Public Action*, edited by V. Rao and M. Walton, 59-84. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Apter, David E. 1961. *The Political Kingdom in Uganda. A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Aretxaga, Begoña. 2003. "Maddening States." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 393-410.

Baumann, Hannes. 2016. "Social Protest and the Political Economy of Sectarianism in Lebanon." *Global Discourse* 6(4): 634-649.

Becherer, Richard. 2005. "A Matter of Life and Debt: The Untold Costs of Rafiq Hariri's

New Beirut.” *The Journal of Architecture* 10(1): 1-42.

Bhatt, Chetan. 2007. “Frontlines and Interstices in the Global War on Terror.” *Development and Change* 38(6): 1073-1093.

Blondel, Joan. 1991. “The Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent: Their Origin and Development.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 31(283): 349-357.

Bryant, Rebecca. 2014. “Living with Liminality. De Facto States at the Threshold of the Global.” *Brown Journal of World Affairs* XX(II): 125-143.

Cammett, Melanie. 2014. *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Carpi, Estella. 2014. “The Political and the Humanitarian in Lebanon. Social Responsiveness to Emergency Crisis from the July 2006 War to the Syrian Refugee Influx.” *Oriente Moderno* 94: 402-427.

- 2016. “Against Ontologies of Hospitality. About Syrian Refugeehood in Northern Lebanon.” *Middle East Institute*. Available online at: <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/against-ontologies-hospitality-about-syrian-refugeehood-northern-lebanon>.

Chalcraft, John. 2009. *The Invisible Cage: Syrian migrant Workers in Lebanon*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Corm, Georges. 2006. *Il Libano Contemporaneo. Storia e Società*. Milano: Jaca Book.

Deeb, Lara. 2006. *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Deeb, Lara and Harb, Mona. 2012. "Sanctioned Pleasures. Youth, Piety and Leisure in Beirut." *MERIP* 245(2012). Available at: www.merip.org/mer/mer245/sanctioned-pleasures, accessed February 2, 2018.

Dionigi, Filippo. 2017. "Rethinking Borders. The Case of the Syrian Refugee Crisis in Lebanon." *Refugees and Migration Movements in the Middle East* 25: 22-29.

Duffield, Mark and Waddell, Nicholas. 2004. "Human Security and Global Danger. Exploring a Governmental Assemblage." Report from the University of Lancaster (UK) completed with a grant from the Economic and Social Science Research Council's (ESRC) New Security Challenges Programme.

Eng, Brent, and Martinez, José Ciro. 2017. "Struggling to Perform the State: The Politics of Bread in the Syrian Civil War." *International Political Sociology* 11(2): 1-18.

Fawaz, Mona. 2009. "Hezbollah as Urban Planner? Questions to and from Planning Theory." *Planning Theory* 8(4): 323-334.

-2014. "The Politics of Property in Planning: Hezbollah's Reconstruction of Haret Hreik (Beirut, Lebanon) as Case Study." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38(3): 922-934.

Fawaz, Mona, and Harb, Mona. 2010. "Influencing the Politics of Reconstruction in Haret Hreik." In *Lessons in Post-war Reconstruction: Cases Studies from Lebanon in the Aftermath of the 2006 War*, edited by H. Harithy, 2-21. NY: Routledge.

Firro, Kais M. 2002. *Inventing Lebanon. Nationalism and the State under the Mandate*. London: I. B. Tauris.

- 2006. "Ethnicizing Shi'is in Mandatory Lebanon." *Middle Eastern Studies* 42(5): 741-759.

Fukuyama, Francis. 2004. *State Building: Governance and World Order in the Twenty-First Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ghannam, Farha. 2011. "Mobility, Liminality, and Embodiment in Urban Egypt." *American Ethnologist* 38(4): 790-800.

Gilsenan, Michael. 1996. *Lords of Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Haas, Peter M. 1992. "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination." *International Organization* 46(1): 1-35.

Harb, Mona. 2006. "La Dahiye de Beyrouth: Parcours d'une Stigmatisation Urbaine, Consolidation d'un Territoire Politique." In *Les mots de la Stigmatisation Urbaine*, edited by J.C. Depaule, 199-224. Paris: UNESCO.

- 2010. *Le Hezbollah à Beirut (1985-2005): de la Banlieue à la Ville*. Paris: IFPO-Karthala.

Hassan, Ismael Sheikh, and Hanafi, Sari. 2010. "Insecurity and Reconstruction in Post-Conflict Nahr al-Bared Refugee Camp." *Journal of Palestinian Studies* XI(1): 27-48.

Hilal, Nadia. 2008. *Governance and Public Participation in Post-war Reconstruction Projects: Haret Hreik, Beirut as a Case Study*. MA thesis. Beirut: American University of Beirut.

Hourani, Najib B. 2015. "Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Citizenship Agendas: Lessons from Beirut." *Citizenship Studies* 19(2): 184-199.

Janmyr, Maja. 2017. "UNHCR and the Syrian Refugee Response: Negotiating Status and Registration in Lebanon." *The International Journal of Human Rights*.

Jeffrey, Alex. 2008. "Adjudications of 'Civility'. Gentrifying Civil Society." *Geopolitics* 13(4): 740-744.

- 2013. *The Improvised State: Sovereignty, Performance and Agency in Dayton Bosnia*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Kawtharani, Farah. 2015. "A Shi'a Religious Perspective on Lebanese Sectarianism: The Islamic Shi'a Supreme Council under Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din (1978-2001)." *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* VIII (2): 159-191.

Kerr, Michael. 2006. *Imposing Power-Sharing. Conflict and Coexistence in Northern Ireland and Lebanon*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.

Khater, Akram Fouad. 2001. *Inventing Home. Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Khazen, Farid. 2000. *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon: 1967-1976*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

Knudsen, Are and Kerr, Michael (eds.). 2013. *Lebanon after the Cedar Revolution*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Kobeissi, Ola Ibrahim. 2009. *Rural Urban Migration of the Shi'a of South Lebanon to Beirut Southern Suburbs*, MA thesis. Beirut: American University of Beirut.

Lijphart, Arend. 1969. "Consociational Democracy." *World Politics* 21(2): 207-225.

Makhoul, Jihad and Harrison, Lindsey. 2002. "Development Perspectives: Views from Rural Lebanon." *Development in Practice* 12(5): 613-624.

Mac Ginty, Roger. 2007. "Reconstructing Post-war Lebanon: A Challenge to the Liberal Peace?" *Conflict, Security and Development* 7(3): 457-482.

Mac Ginty, Roger and Hamieh, Christine Sylva. 2010. "Made in Lebanon: Local Participation and Indigenous Responses to Development and Post-war Reconstruction." *Civil Wars* 12(1-2): 47-64.

McConnell, Fiona. 2017. "Liminal Geopolitics: The Subjectivity and Spatiality of Diplomacy

at the Margins.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 42(1): 139-152.

Mačák, Kubo. 2015. “A Matter of Principle(s): The Legal Effect of Impartiality and Neutrality on States as Humanitarian Actors.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 97(897/8): 157-181.

Mouawad, Jamil. 2015. *The Negotiated State: State-Society Relations in Lebanon*. PhD thesis. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

Moghnie, Lamia. 2015. *Nahr al-Bared Crisis and Local Responses of Aid: A Focus on Needs Assessment during Emergencies. Lebanon Support Report*. Beirut: Civil Society Knowledge Centre.

Moushref, Aisha. 2008. *Forgotten Akkar. Socio-economic Reality of the Akkar region*. Mada Association, UNDP, Handicap International and EU Humanitarian Aid.

Nucho, Joanne Randa. 2016. *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Nuwayhid, Iman, Zurayk, Huda, Yamout, Rouham, and Cortas Chadi S. 2011. “Summer 2006 War on Lebanon: A Lesson in Community Resilience.” *Global Public Health* 6(5): 505-519.

Obeid, Michelle. 2010. “Searching for the ‘Ideal Face of the State’ in a Lebanese Border Town.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 16(2): 330-346.

Ophir, Adir. 2010. "The Politics of Catastrophization: Emergency and Exception." In *Contemporary States of Emergency*, edited by D. Fassin and M. Pandolfi, 59-88. NY: Zone Books.

Picard, Elizabeth. 1999. *The Demobilization of Lebanese Militias*. Beirut: Center for Lebanese Studies.

Presidency of the Councils of Ministers in Lebanon. 2007. *Lebanon: on the Road to Reconstruction and Recovery*, Second Issue (May 4, 2007). Available at: <http://www.pcm.gov.lb/Admin/DynamicFile.aspx?PHName=Document&PageID=3916&published=1>, accessed January 27, 2018.

Ramadan, Adam and Fregonese, Sara. 2017. "Hybrid Sovereignty and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon." *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 107(4): 949-963.

Redfield, Peter. 2013. *Life in Crisis. The Ethical Journey of Doctors without Borders*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rosenau, James N. and Czempiel., Ernst-Otto. 1992. *Governance Without Government. Order and Change in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roy, Ananya. 2008. "Civic Governmentality: The Politics of Inclusion in Beirut and Mumbai." *Antipode*: 7-10.

Saad, Amal. 1996. *An Analysis of the Factors Conducive to the Group Cohesion and Political Mobilization of the Lebanese Shiites*. MA thesis. Beirut: American University of Beirut.

Stel, Nora. 2016. "The Agnotology of Eviction in South Lebanon's Palestinian Gatherings: How Institutional Ambiguity and Deliberate Ignorance Shape Sensitive Spaces." *Antipode* 48(5): 1400-1419.

Tillery, Randal K. 1992. "Touring Arcadia: Elements of Discursive Simulation and Cultural Struggle at a Children's Summer Camp." *Cultural Anthropology* 7(3): 374-388.

Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Van Gennep, Arnold. 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Vazquez-Arroyo, Antonio Y. 2013. "How Not to Learn from Catastrophe: Habermas, Critical Theory, and the 'Catastrophisation of Political Life'." *Political Theory* 41(5): 738-765.

Zakhour, Faraj Tawfiq. 2005. *Halba fy nisf qarn 1900-1950*. Halba: Dar Zakhour li'l tab'a, an-nashr, wa at-tawzi'.

¹ These are precisely 68 aid providers in Dahiye and 43 in Akkar, as well as nearly 200 ordinary Lebanese citizens and Syrian refugees. Individual research participants, non-state organizations and local municipalities have been selected for my study on the basis of their participation in aid provision during the July 2006 war and the Syrian refugee influx in Dahiye and Akkar respectively.

² Al-Mreije and Hadath, with a Christian majority and not governed by Hezbollah, claim a different territorial identity, yet they are geographically part of eastern Dahiye.

³ The Swiss businessman Henry Dunant, the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross (1863), started the rhetoric of apolitical humanitarianism. Nevertheless, the current principles of neutrality and impartiality are based on international customary law, rather than domestic legal systems (Blondel 1991).

⁴ The system of the *qaimaqam*, a “sub-governor” during the Ottoman Empire and the 1861 *Mutasarrifiyyah* semi-autonomous administration within Greater Syria (Kawtharani 2015) have also played an important role in giving rise to the current power-sharing model in Lebanon.

⁵ This is linked to the Shiite legacies of victimhood and oppression that constitute what is perceived by most locals to be a sort of “genealogical” bedrock upon which to build their lives’ beliefs and values. Dahiye’s setting presents segregated communities that do not necessarily lack basic resources.

⁶ Interview via Skype with a Beirut-based Italian NGO, October 13, 2014.

⁷ Disaffection with the Lebanese state is longstanding. To provide one among several examples, during Israel’s “Operation Gift” on December 28 and 29, 1968, which demolished Beirut International Airport, the state’s inability to defend the country was made clear and was strongly criticized by Lebanese citizens, who protested on university campuses.

⁸ For instance, the 1996 Elyssar Project, which went unfinished due to financial constraints.

⁹ A conversation with the author held on January 11, 2013.

¹⁰ October 3, 2011.

¹¹ Nayla Mouawad was the Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs at the time of the July war.

¹² Wikileaks cable, July 21, 2006, Beirut. Released on March 15, 2011.

¹³ This led to 75 percent of local residents paying for the Waad project, which was in turn paid for by the Lebanese government.

¹⁴ Al-Moqdad is a powerful local family whose residence is well known in the Dahiye district of ar-Ruwess.

¹⁵ Conversation with Intisar, Haret Hreik, on November 13, 2011, and ‘Ali, ash-Shiyyah, on February 3, 2012.

¹⁶ In fact, Fouad Seniora, who was the prime minister at the time, gave a speech on July 15, 2006 from the Beirut Grand Serail, calling for national unity and blaming Hezbollah for the explosion in violence (Presidency of the Council of Ministers Lebanon 2007, Appendix I, 2-3).

¹⁷ Interview conducted in ash-Shiyyah, October 30, 2011.

¹⁸ Interviews conducted by the author with municipality residents on November 14, 2012.

¹⁹ Ghandour, Tha’ir. *Al-Akhhbār*, September 13, 2006. Arabic edition.

²⁰ February 3, 2012.

²¹ It is worth noting that al-Jazeera was, at the time of the July war, certainly allied with Lebanon, not Israel. However, people in Dahiye used to refer to the channel by highlighting its current political attitude: opposing Hezbollah and the Axis of Resistance, and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood, as became clear after the Egyptian regime change.

²² Conversation with Intisar in her house in Haret Hreik on November 24, 2011.

²³ Conversation with Mahmud, al-Jnah on December 30, 2011.

²⁴ Hammiye, Rajana. *Al-Akhhbār*, September 6, 2012. Arabic edition.

²⁵ Interview conducted on October 30, 2011.

²⁶ Fouad Seniora was prime minister of the Lebanese Republic from 2005 to 2009, when Prime Minister Najib Miqati succeeded him.

²⁷ Wikileaks cable, 21 July 2006, accessed May 11, 2011;

<http://www.cablegatesearch.net/cable.php?id=06BEIRUT2437&version=1314919461>.

²⁸ In this regard, Jamil Mouawad (2015) mentions the November 25, 2010 *as-Safir* article.

²⁹ Discussion held at the Carnegie Middle East Center Conference, Beirut Downtown. June 25, 2013.

³⁰ The Palestinians, however, are the only group considered to be legal refugees in Lebanon due to a bilateral agreement between the government and the United Nations Refugee Works Agency.

³¹ Abou Faour and the predominantly March 14 coalition government have been accused by the Syrian ambassador in Lebanon of helping “terrorists” (referring to the Syrian opposition and many of the refugees). *Daily Star*, February 1, 2014. Accessed March 2, 2015: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Feb-01/246042-syrian-shelling-provokes-outrage-in-lebanon.ashx#axzz3AAUwjRvq>.

³² This political movement has been aligned with the March 8 coalition led by Hezbollah since 2006.

³³ NowLebanon, September 27, 2013. Accessed March 2, 2015:

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/bassil-calls-for-deporting-syrian-refugees>. Abou Faour, in response,

ruled out such a decision.

³⁴ Before then, Syrians were allowed to stay in Lebanon with an ID card for up to one year, on the condition that the permit was renewed every six months.

³⁵ Interview with the leader of an Italian NGO based in Beirut. February 2, 2013.

³⁶ Tripoli, January 10, 2013. *Akkarouna* means “Our Akkar” in Arabic.

³⁷ Conversations with the author held between August 2012 and November 2013 in Halba.

³⁸ The former government of Najib Miqati was, at the time of the interviews, seen as aligned with the Asad regime.

³⁹ Interviews with the Kuwaiti Association in Tripoli, January 14, 2013, and the Qatari Initiative in Tripoli, December 18, 2012.

⁴⁰ These interlocutors expressed their wish to remain anonymous. Tripoli, November 1, 2013.

⁴¹ *Zu‘amā’* are village leaders and members of prominent landed families dating back to the Ottoman period. They usually have more contacts than politicians with their local supporters, and tend to blame the government for the chronic neglect of the region, while casting themselves as protectors of the people.

⁴² Local *makhātir* (the plural of *mukhtār*) represent the formal organisation of power, but they are also powerbrokers who intercede between the villagers and international or local organisations.

⁴³ September 23, 2012.

⁴⁴ Interview conducted in Qobaiyat on February 7, 2013.

⁴⁵ Interview with an international NGO worker in Qobaiyat on December 28, 2013.

⁴⁶ January 19, 2013.

⁴⁷ Hisham, a Syrian refugee and ex-FSA combatant. Al-‘Abdeh, December 24, 2012.