



Competing for Lebanon's Diaspora: Transnationalism and Domestic Struggles in a Weak State¹

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Just as state strength influences relationships between state and society and among social forces within a national territory, so does it shape relationships between states and their emigrants and diasporas across territorial borders. Scholars debate how transnational migration affirms or challenges the dominance of the nation-state. When sending states are weak, however, diaspora–homeland linkages can undermine the role of the state in a way that is not transformative, but sustaining of the status quo. Examining Lebanon, this paper explores how domestic actors extend their struggles to vie over and through kin abroad. Three realms of competition are paramount: demography, votes, and money. The resulting transnational outreach reproduces a politics in which both expatriates and the state function as resources as much as actors.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of transnationalism has inspired a rich body of research on the enduring relationships that migrants and diasporas forge to their countries of origin.² Early studies focused on the causes, types, and dimensions of linkages initiated by migrants themselves. Subsequent work has increasingly devoted attention to the role of sending states. This scholarship has considered if and how transnational migration transforms the

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²Scholars debate definitional boundaries between migrant, expatriate, and diaspora. As outreach to Lebanese abroad encompasses all such categories, all of these terms are used as appropriate throughout the essay.

nation-state and how nation-states in turn shape the contours of transnational migration. In particular, a lively debate has weighed the extent to which intensified cross-border exchanges challenge the primacy of states as the central unit of the international system, or instead testify to their ongoing domination of the flow of people and goods.

Within this research program on transnational migration and the nation-state, an important subset of works focus on sending states' outreach to their citizens abroad. Many scholars recognize that states' policies and programs targeting emigrants are fundamentally shaped by their domestic political systems (Østegaard-Nielsen, 2003c; R. Smith, 2003; Brand, 2006; Lyons and Mandaville, 2012). Different governmental structures and contexts affect the opportunities and constraints within which actors engage the diaspora. In this regard, some analyze the effects of regime type in general and transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, in particular (Itzigsohn, 2000; Levitt, 2001a; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003; Østegaard-Nielsen, 2003a; M.P. Smith, 2003; R. Smith, 2003; Smith and Bakker, 2008; Waterbury, 2010; Lafleur, 2013). Democratic institutions are pertinent because they generate incentives for competing homeland politicians and political parties to seek support from citizens abroad (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Smith, 1994; Tölölyan, 1996; Graham, 1997; Laguerre, 1998; Smith, 1998; Goldring, 1998; Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999; Itzigsohn, 2000; Levitt, 2001a,b; Guarnizo, 2001, 2003; Ogelman, 2003; Østegaard-Nielsen, 2003a,b,c; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003; M.P. Smith, 2003; Smith and Bakker, 2008; Lyons and Mandaville, 2012; Lafleur, 2013).

Electoral democracy is not the only state feature contributing to the competitive dynamics that propel domestic political actors to reach out to the diaspora. Also key in this regard is state strength. In a comprehensive review of the concept, Soifer and vom Hau (2008: 220) explain that scholars typically conceptualize state strength as the extent and evenness of a state's capacity to maintain a monopoly of violence, enforce contracts, control its populace, regulate institutions, extract resources, and provide public goods. The issue of state strength is implicit in much of the research on sending states. Nonetheless, few scholars consider it explicitly. Østegaard-Nielsen (2003a: 5) notes that states manifest a range of "capabilities" to translate their rhetoric about diaspora outreach into actual policies. Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003: 599) likewise cite "the capacity of state institutions to make and implement credible policies" as one contributor to divergence in sending states' policies toward emigrants. Variation

in capacity thus explains why Brazil has extended state services to emigrant communities further than has Haiti. Identifying similar logics in Middle Eastern cases, Brand (2006: 222) argues that variation in states' capacities help explain differences in institutions charged with expatriate affairs. She calls for further exploration of her finding that states that are "relatively more secure in their sovereignty vis-à-vis 'the people'" appear more likely to launch such institutions than those that are not.

These analyses identify state capacity as an important cause of variation in transnational policies across sending states. Yet we are left to wonder about the significance of state weakness for transnational practices *within* a given country. In a much-cited article, Levitt (2001a: 211) posited that an important question for future research is "How do the activities of strong states compare with those of weak ones?" More than a decade later, we still lack sufficient answers. How does state weakness affect the character of homeland-diaspora relations? What are the social, political, and economic implications of those relations for the country left behind?

This paper argues that just as state strength shapes the relationship between state and social forces within a given national territory, so does it influence the character of ties among a nation's social forces across territorial borders. In weak states, a range of domestic actors may be even more significant in shaping linkages to emigrants than are state agents and policies. Such actors are multiple and none can claim the sovereign, compulsory status of a state. In consequence, the primary character of their outreach to diasporas is unlikely to be the quest for "management" and "control" characteristic of sending state outreach as much as complex webs of competition for advantage back home. Unlike states, homeland domestic actors are not likely to view emigrants as members of a national polity over whom to reassert dominion. Such actors are more prone to see them as resources, bargaining chips, and turf to utilize in their struggles with each other for power and standing.

Scrutiny of state strength, and its implications for domestic competition over and through diasporas, calls for a reframing of some aspects of debates on transnationalism. One recurrent debate concerns the extent to which contemporary migration gives rise to new relationships that challenge the dominance and sovereignty of the nation-state. When sending states are weak, however, deficient state power is the norm. In such settings, diaspora-homeland linkages are likely to evade or circumvent control by the sending state. Yet this is not a new situation associated with

the era of globalization as much as a continuation of long-standing patterns in the relationship between state and society. Transnational practices are integrated into these patterns and buttress them. They hence contribute to undermining the nation-state, but do so in ways that are reinforcing of the status quo rather than transformative.

Lebanon offers an excellent case in which to probe these patterns because it is distinguished by a rich history of emigration on the one hand and a famously weak state, on the other. As one commentator put it, "Leaving the country is as Lebanese as apple pie is American" (interview with author 2008a). Mass migration from Lebanon began before statehood, and has spanned five continents since the early decades of the twentieth century. While Lebanon's current population is four million, a leading scholar estimates its worldwide diaspora at six million (interview with author 2008c). Of these, some 400,000 to one million are Lebanese citizens (Kasparian, 2009).

State weakness is no less a defining feature of Lebanon as a country. By tradition and design, the Lebanese state serves as a forum for inter-communal bargaining and power-sharing more than an autonomous apparatus with interventionist powers in its own right. State weakness is the context for intense and varied kinds of competition in Lebanon's fragmented domestic landscape. In the social realm, the country consists of 17 recognized sectarian-confessional groups that continually maneuver to protect and advance their power relative to each other. In the political realm, political parties form and break complex coalitions as they jockey for their share of public resources. In the economic realm, the country's service-based, *laissez-faire* economy sees firms battling for the external clients and investors on whom their survival often depends. In these multifaceted domestic struggles, a diversity of groups look to compatriots and kin overseas as sources of leverage. Typically, these groups neither are nor aspire to be state agents that represent the nation as a whole or assume a monopoly of coercive authority. In Lebanon's weak state, real power lies not in shouldering the tasks of the state, but in extorting power from it or despite it. Transnational relations with the diaspora are a part of that contestation for power, as is nearly every domain of public life.

Subsequent research can compare these dynamics in a larger range of countries and identify how they vary in accord with their states' relative capacity and autonomy from social groups. By contrast, the value of an in-depth look at Lebanon lies precisely in the pronounced character of both emigration and state weakness in this case. Analysis can take advan-

tage of those elements in order to bring fully into the spotlight the working of the connections between them, which can be difficult to detect in settings where they are less marked and thus operate with greater subtlety. To that end, this study draws upon five months of research in Lebanon in 2008 and 2010, during which more than 100 interviews were conducted with analysts, activists, businesspeople, and resident and expatriate citizens. Further corroboration is found in a range of published and unpublished sources in Arabic, French, and English.

Analytically, this investigation is framed with reference to a robust body of work in political science on state strength. That literature offers valuable ways of defining, theorizing, and analyzing a concept that is of great relevance for transnational migration, yet which the field does not typically engage. Empirically, the study focuses on three major realms of competition in Lebanon: social competition over demography, political competition for votes, and economic competition for money. In these realms, emigrants and the sending state do not occupy starring roles as initiators of new relationships as much as those of supporting actors or even props in storylines spun by domestic actors. More than serving as engines of change, they tend to be incorporated into social, political, and economic struggles in ways that both illustrate and reproduce the existent weakness of the state left behind.

This paper analyzes these dynamics in six sections. The first situates this investigation in the study of transnational migration and state strength, respectively. The second introduces relevant aspects of the Lebanese case. The following three sections each examine a main realm of competition for the Lebanese diaspora. The final section concludes.

TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION AND WEAK STATES

Traditional approaches to assimilation theory tended to envision migration as a unidirectional journey in which migrants sought integration in the country of settlement and their ties to their homeland waned. In a new perspective, scholars in the 1990s developed the concept of transnational migration to capture “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton, 1994: 7). This perspective inspired a wealth of research on a diversity of cross-border linkages. Yet it also came under critique for imprecise terms and methodologies, exaggerating the scope or emancipatory potential of the phenome-

non, and overstating the extent to which it represented something truly new (Kivisto, 2001; Castles, 2002; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004; Foner, 2007). Responding to this criticism, proponents of a transnational approach acknowledged that past generations of migrants had also sustained cross-border relationships (Portes, 1996, 2003; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007; Vertovec, 2009). However these works also argued that modern technological advances have enabled such relationships to attain an intensity, frequency, and diversity that renders the transnationalism of today qualitatively different from other historical eras. At the same time, scholars undertook to fine-tune concepts and craft research designs focused on explaining variation and producing more pointed predictions about causes and consequences (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007: 142).

One prominent focus of this evolving research on transnational migration became the role of sending states. Early studies concentrated on the ways that migrants' grassroots initiatives contributed to lives and relationships that "unbound" nations from territory (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994; Guarnizo, 1994; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999; Levitt, 2001b). Some proposed that transborder activity, viewed against the larger backdrop of globalization, seriously challenged the status of the nation-state as the foremost entity of the world system fusing people, land, and government (Soysal, 1994; Kearney, 1995; Appadurai 1996; Sassen, 1998; Joppke, 1998, 1999). Even if migration did not indicate "the demise" of the nation-state, its effect in deterritorializing community and citizenship levied a threat to conventional understandings of sovereignty, governmental control over the flow of people and goods, and the assumed potency of the link between nation and state.

Other scholars criticized the conclusion that transnational migration undercut the state. They produced a wealth of empirical investigations that documented sending states' projects and policies to co-opt, discredit, control, celebrate, and aid migrants, as well as encourage and/or channel their remittances and investments (Shain, 1989; Graham, 1997; Goldring, 1998, 2002; Mahler, 1998; Smith, 1998; Glick Schiller, 1999; Roberts and Lozano-Ascensio, 1999; Laguerre, 1998; Levitt, 2001a; Østegaard-Nielsen, 2003a,b,c; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003; R. Smith, 2003; Willis, Yeoh, and Abdul Khader Fakhri, 2004; Brand, 2006; Baker-Cristales, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2008; Gamlen, 2008; Iskander, 2010; Waterbury, 2010). These studies demonstrated the continued power and salience of

sending states. Emphatically expressing this perspective, Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) argued that migrants' cross-border exchanges do not undermine states' fulfillment of the basic functions that they have always fulfilled, namely regulating territorial borders and political membership. In their view, states remained the primary actor shaping options for migrant social action; indeed, they held that what some called "transnational" was better understood as "trans-state."

This research on sending states offered, in Lafleur (2013: 9)'s words, a "counterweight to the transnational perspective on migration" because it put "greater focus on the role of the state as an agent." Synthesizing both sets of research, scholars today increasingly advocate a middle approach between that emphasizing either transnationalism "from above" or "from below" (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998). They recognize that states and grassroots migration are inseparably intertwined and call for both to be treated as interactive parts of transnationalism (Waldinger, 2008; Vertovec, 2009; Riccio and Brambilla, 2010; Lyons and Mandaville, 2012). New debates tend to concur that migration does not necessarily marginalize sending states. Instead, they concentrate on identifying how it influences fundamental aspects of statehood.

In this respect, several writers argue that homeland incorporation of migrants is redefining notions of nation, citizenship, political membership, sovereignty, and the relationship between state and citizen (Laguerre, 1998; Ong, 1999; Bauböck, 2003; M.P. Smith, 2003; Smith and Bakker, 2008). Some view "transformation" as so defining of transnationalism that they employ it as the central theme organizing their investigations of its implications for politics and society (Al-Ali and Koser, 2002; Vertovec, 2009). Heisler (2001: 229) suggests that migration challenges notions of identities, borders, and order in international relations because it "disturbs the sense of boundedness." According to Held *et al.* (1999: 32), "Migration has transformed the domestic political milieu ... the collective strength and pattern of alliances of political actors has changed; and migration has reshaped political interests and perceptions of these interests." Vertovec (2004: 978) regards larger processes of globalization as the main source of transformation of nation-states, but insists that "forms of migrant transnationalism do importantly contribute to significant shifts affecting the nation-state model," as well. Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003: 606) argue that state policies toward emigrants "are reinventing the role of states outside of territorial boundaries and in this way reconfiguring traditional understandings of sovereignty, nation, and citizenship."

Others recognize a balance between transformation and resilience in the role of states. Willis, Yeoh, and Abdul Khader Fakhri (2004: 3) posit that “what this transnational moment involves is not the death of the nation-state *per se* but rather a reconfiguration.” Fitzgerald (2008: 13) agrees that mass emigration demonstrates neither the decline of the nation-state as a way of organizing politics nor its unaltered strength, but rather cracks in the still-robust principle of state sovereignty. Brand (2006: 26) examines state institutions charged with expatriate affairs “in the context of the historical development of the principle of sovereignty, as it has been shaped and reshaped over time.” Seen in this light, the state always “responds by reasserting itself, resisting or reconfiguring the intrusion or attempted ap/expropriation of aspects of its sovereignty.” The outcome is both a reassertion of sovereignty and a reshaping of what sovereignty means.

Directly or indirectly, much of these queries about state sovereignty and transformation are intertwined with the issue of the state's strength as an entity. Nevertheless, they rarely devote explicit attention to the task of defining and theorizing what it means for states to be strong or weak. In many instances, they presuppose that states have basic capacities that they actually may not. For example, Graham (2001: 91) comments that “states retain high degrees of power in the organization of political space and activities” but may not seek such control in economic and social arenas. In weak states, however, states might not wield high power even in the political sphere. Martiniello and Lafleur (2008: 653–54) identify immigrant political transnationalism as that which occurs “when activities are conducted by migrants or when the state authorities of the sending country interfere.” In weak states, however, meaningful interference from countries of origins may come less from governmental officials than non-state actors or groups.

In analyzing sending states' experiences with contemporary mass migration, we ought not take for granted their “stateness.” States' real and effective authority *vis-à-vis* social forces within their borders, no less outside them, ought to be treated as a variable to be evaluated rather than a property to be assumed. To guide such a critical assessment, it is useful to engage a robust literature not typically referenced in studies of transnational migration: work in political science on state strength. Thoroughly reviewing relevant works, Soifer and vom Hau (2008: 220) note that most scholars analyze state strength in terms of state capacity. Research emphasizes three dimensions of such capacity: states' relative autonomy from,

and authority over, societal actors (Skocpol, 1979; Bates, 1981; Nordlinger, 1981; Evans, 1995; Waldner, 1999), the professionalization of their bureaucracies (Weber, 1968; Skowronek, 1982; Geddes, 1994; Evans and Rauch, 1999; Carpenter, 2001), or the ability to project power over distance, spatially and socially (Skocpol, 1979; Herbst, 2000). These different aspects in turn are related to the degree that states possess the “infrastructural power” to exercise control and implement policy choices throughout the territory that they claim to govern (Mann, 1993).

According to the criteria suggested in these works, many countries of contemporary emigration, overwhelmingly from the “Global South,” are weak states. Migdal (1988: 28) argues that they are weak in part because their societies are strong. He envisions society in much of the developing world as a landscape filled with multiple and heterogeneous groups, including villages, ethnic groups, linguistic groups, religious communities, tribes, families, neighborhoods, informal network of friends and associates, political movements, and businesses. All of these entities exercise social control, in the sense of the power to mobilize people, deliver what they need to survive, and subordinate them to certain rules of life. The state is not necessarily the most powerful of these competing centers of power in society. It is one organization among many. Sometimes it is effectively subverted, challenged, penetrated, or circumvented by others.

State strength thus fundamentally molds relations between the state and social forces. In addition, it shapes relations among social forces themselves. Its impact is effective within its own national territory as well as in any state-society and society-society ties that stretch beyond it. Adamson (2005: 43–44) considers the significance of such dynamics for conflict and security. She argues that weak states lack domestic institutional channels for redress of political demands, which pushes non-state political entrepreneurs to mobilize violence across territorial borders. Likewise in more everyday and peaceful realms of public life, state weakness influences incentives and opportunities for non-state entrepreneurs to engage in transnational activities. This carries implications for the character of the resulting homeland–diaspora linkages. In particular, four implications deserve note.

First, in weak states, a range of domestic political actors may be even more significant in shaping relations to emigrants than are state agents and policies. When a state lacks the autonomy or capacity to design and implement coherent policy toward nationals abroad, more space opens for non-state political actors to spearhead transborder outreach on their own. Existing research does not neglect the transnational activities of non-state

political groups, especially homeland political parties (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton, 1994; Smith, 1994; Tölölyan, 1996; Graham, 1997; Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999; Laguerre, 1998; Smith, 1998; Goldring, 1998; Itzigsohn, 2000; Levitt, 2001a,b; Guarnizo, 2001, 2003; Ogelman, 2003; Østegaard-Nielsen, 2003a,b,c; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003; M.P. Smith, 2003; Smith and Bakker, 2008; Lyons and Mandaville, 2012; Laffleur, 2013). These works offer a foundation of knowledge about how domestic groups other than states seek relationships with and support from emigrants. However, it is often assumed that these domestic actors' primary goal is acquisition of state power or that their maneuvers are important primarily due to their effect on state practices. For example, Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003) and Laffleur (2013) examine political parties as independent variables explaining variation in the outcome of state policies toward emigrants. In weak states, however, parties may play a role in shaping society and politics independent of their impact on the state. Sometimes their greatest impact stems precisely from their ability to circumvent the state. In another work, Smith and Bakker (2008: 5, 25, 47, 78) use the term "state-centered" to encompass political parties, partisan political elites, and civil society groups, as well as national, regional, and local governments. That domestic actors are state-based, however, does not necessarily imply that they are "state-centered," as opposed to centered on society-level contests in which the state is not the primary focus, objective, or frame of reference. In any setting, political parties are typically politically engaged, power-driven, and resource seeking. The degree to which they are oriented toward the state, however, varies by political structures, in general and the strength of the state, in particular.

Second, state weakness has similar implications in the economic realm. Early research on transnational migration often focused on the role of migrants as entrepreneurs and drivers of new economic relationships and resource flows (Durand, Parrado, and Massey, 1996; Landolt, Autler, and Baires, 1999; Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999; Landolt, 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 2002). Many later works directed attention to the efforts of sending state to attain, direct, and invest migrants' monetary transfers (Guarnizo, Sanchez, and Roach, 1999; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003; Østegaard-Nielsen, 2003c; Fitzgerald, 2008; Smith and Bakker, 2008; Portes, 2009; Kapur, 2010; Iskander, 2010). Indeed, Portes (2003: 878) argues that sending states' primary motivation for engaging emigrants is to ensure inflows of remittances. However, a certain degree of state capacity and authority is requisite for design and implementation of effective

policies in this regard. In weak states, meaningful governmental leadership and intervention might go absent, and economic outreach from the sending country to emigrants is hence likely to be left to non-state interests. Some research documents transnational activity on the part of homeland private sector actors, such as cases in which service, financial, and manufacturing corporations in the country of origin target migrants (Guarnizo, Sanchez, and Roach, 1999; Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999; Guarnizo, 2003). Nonetheless, as Guarnizo (2003: 689) writes, “We know very little about how corporate capital vies for the control and exchange of the resources that migrants transfer to their homelands.” Scrutiny of weak states puts these vying dynamics in the spotlight.

Third, and following from the prior two implications, the primary motif of weak sending countries’ outreach to emigrants is less the cohesive assertion of authority than a multifaceted competition for advantage. States are defined by their claims to being centralized, sovereign, and compulsory political organizations (Weber, 1968). When states lead homeland engagement of citizens abroad, the resulting relations may be distinguished by the quest for control, management, and demonstration of the robustness of the institutional authority unique to states (Brand, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2008). Their development of such relations may be largely oriented toward maintaining sovereignty vis-à-vis society or the international system. By contrast, when state weakness leaves non-state groups to drive outreach to emigrants, the overriding motivation for that outreach is likely to be competition with rivals back home. Domestic political actors are multiple and lack claims to hegemony over society. Their efforts to build and project power thus bring them to vie with each other for limited resources. Strong states can regulate contestation and pluralism among such groups; in weak states, little may prevent them from becoming intense, consuming, and unwieldy. This is especially the case in “divided societies” where ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups exist in some degree of active or potential conflict with each other. Under those circumstances, social groups continually search for means with which to better their relative standing. This search may take them beyond national borders, especially if compatriots or kin abroad offer sources of social, political, or economic power.

Fourth and finally, these relationships peculiar to weak states suggest a need to modify debates regarding the transformative dimensions of transnational migration. As outlined earlier, debate often turns on whether cross-border migrant linkages represent a new phenomenon that chal-

lenges the nation-state or instead the extension of age-old dynamics that affirm or even bolster it. Analysis of state strength casts doubt on the assumptions framing this query. When sending states are weak, deficient state sovereignty is the status quo, not a new situation associated with transnational trends. If diaspora–homeland linkages appear to circumvent or undermine the role of the state, this is hence not a new consequence of globalization. Rather, it is a continuation of long-standing patterns in which subnational forces other than the state wield effective social control. Investigation of this implication of state weakness answers Levitt (2001a: 211)'s call to go beyond “either-or questions” that miss “the nuanced, complex reality ... within transnational social fields.” As she writes, “Too much attention is focused on whether or not transnational migration brings about political and social change and not enough attention is paid to actual individual and institutional practices.” Study of transnational practices in weak states goes beyond questions of transformation/no transformation and instead suggests how structures of society, politics, and economy are reproduced in ways that are both distinctly contemporary and reinforcing of past patterns.

THE CASE OF LEBANON

The Lebanese state is weak due to both history and design (Binder, 1966; Hudson, 1968; Picard, 2002; Traboulsi, 2007). A system of confessional power-sharing was instituted in the mid-nineteenth century and sustained under French colonial rule. Upon independence in 1943, leading Maronite Catholic and Sunni Muslim politicians forged the “National Pact.” This unwritten agreement affirmed Lebanon to be a consociational democracy in which governmental and bureaucratic offices would be distributed among religious communities. A weak state was fundamental to this political order. Confessional elites were fearful that an empowered state apparatus might interfere in confessions' private affairs or that their rivals might seize it and use it against them. A weak state would better guarantee their power within their respective communities. At the same time, it seemed to offer a context in which leaders would cooperate with each other in a shared interest in maintaining social peace.

The corollary to the weakness of the Lebanese state in relation to strong subnational communities was its non-interventionism in the economy. Dubbed a “merchant republic” Lebanon has been the foremost—if not the only—*laissez-faire* economy in the developing world (Gaspard,

2004: xix). Many other newly independent states embraced economic dirigisme as a strategy for fostering industry, manufacturing, and development. Lebanon's founding fathers, by contrast, saw little role for the state in the functioning of a healthy economy. Themselves merchants eager to protect commercial interests, these elites argued that the secret to Lebanon's prosperity lay in its unique position to serve as a center for trade and services bridging East and West. As Gates (1998: 86) writes, "Planning was not a part of this [economic] strategy. The issues of promoting long-run economic growth, structural change, equity, among others, were avoided."

In its seven decades as an independent nation-state, Lebanon has experienced recurrent crises and tumultuous transformations, paramount among them fifteen years of devastating civil war. Nevertheless, the rules of the political and economic game envisioned at its founding have largely persisted. The state functions as a pie to be divided among competing leaders as much an independent actor extracting resources, providing public goods, and exercising social control. Confessional elites use the state to improve their positions vis-à-vis each other on the one hand, and bolster their power within their own communities, on the other. Their competition arguably limits the capabilities of the state more than the state controls their competition.

These salient aspects of Lebanon's socio-political landscape – the weakness of the state, the openness of the free market, and the fragmentation of the nation into sectarian groups – have shaped the country's relationship to emigration. For nearly a century and a half, labor outmigration has relieved unemployment and offered access to income vital for both individual families and the country as a whole (Pearlman, 2013a, 2013b). In comparison to many other emigration states, however, the Lebanese state has not played an active role in organizing outmigration, channeling remittances, or establishing a strategic stance toward expatriate communities. Brand (2007: 6, 8) explains:

Despite a clear recognition of the emigrants' and their descendants' real and potential contributions, the Lebanese state has largely failed to marshal their energies ... The Lebanese government did not produce successive economic or development plans through which one might trace or piece together a coherent state policy toward émigrés ... Successive governments did realize the importance of the role of the emigrants, both in Lebanon and abroad ... Nevertheless ... efforts ... were superficial and uncoordinated.

In the absence of a national policy to regulate diaspora involvement and inflows of migrant capital, engagement of the diaspora – like most

arenas of Lebanese public life – is the turf of battles among groups other than the national government. Non-state groups compete over émigrés on their own terms and for their own goals. In turn, the resources that they extract from Lebanese abroad strengthen their autonomy at the expense of the state. The upshot is that the transnationalism of domestic competition has the effect of integrating migrants and diasporans into domestic struggles in ways that reproduce existent patterns of politics. Some of the distinguishing features of contemporary Lebanon, such as sectarianism, vote-buying, and freewheeling private enterprise, might confront greater pressure to reform or transform if they did not receive infusions of participants, resources, or other kinds of support from Lebanese abroad. Such infusions are ongoing in part because homeland groups undertake concerted efforts for that purpose. This comes to the fore in transnational competition in three critical realms.

DEMOGRAPHY

In Lebanon, demography typically refers to the numerical size of each of the country's sectarian communities. Mount Lebanon, the central core of the country during Ottoman times, was predominantly Maronite Catholic. One fourth to one third of the Mountain's population emigrated between 1860 and 1900, and continued at rates between 3,000–15,000/year until World War I (Himadeh, 1936; Khater, 2001). Christians' share of the population underwent further decline in 1920, when territories with Muslim majorities were added to the Mountain to establish French Mandate Lebanon in its modern borders. Thereafter, a major preoccupation of Christian leaders was fear that the shrinking of their community would undercut what they saw as the Christian character of the country.

To compete demographically with their Muslim counterparts, Christian leaders turned to the diaspora (Maktabi, 1999; Brand, 2007; Jaulin, 2009). They worked to authorize the right to dual nationality in the 1926 constitution to ensure that emigrants naturalized abroad would be counted in the Lebanese citizenry. They likewise included expatriates in several politicized censuses beginning in 1922 (Farha, 2008). On the eve of the 1932 census, they pushed through legislation that overrode the Treaty of Lausanne's stipulation that only those in residence in August 1924 could claim Lebanese citizenship. In consequence, one fourth of the Lebanese population established by the census were migrants residing abroad (Jaulin, 2009). Of these, 73 percent had departed Lebanon before 1924 and

85 percent were Christian (Maktabi, 1999: 238). The inclusion of émigrés had the effect of increasing Christians' share of the population to 58.5 percent. As established by the census, 34 percent of all citizens were Maronite Catholic, 18 percent Sunni Muslim, and 16 percent Shi'i Muslim.

In this politicization of the census, the state was not an authoritative decision-maker defining national membership on the basis of studied criteria, public needs, or an overarching national identity. Rather, it was more akin to a playing field for partisan competition. The weak state would not recuperate an autonomous impact in this realm; averse to instigating civil conflict, Lebanese governments chose never to carry out another census. Today Lebanon is the only United Nations member state that has failed to conduct a census since World War II (Faour, 2007: 910).

Emigration thus contributed to a gap between actual and official demographics, which was only partially disguised by leaders' inclusion of émigrés in demographic tallies and subsequent decisions not to update those tallies. Still, it was official demographic statistics that served as the foundation for Lebanon's consociational system. In 1946, politicians agreed to grant each religious community a share of state offices based on the demographic figures determined in 1932. Maronites were thus awarded permanent control of the top leadership position, presidency of the Republic, as well as command of the armed forces. Sunnis were given the secondary post of prime minister, and Shi'a that of speaker of the Chamber of Deputies. Positions in the government, parliament, and civil service were divided between Christians and Muslims on a ratio of six-to-five. Mirroring Christians' greater power in government was their consolidation of preeminence in local development, health, education, access to public funds, and positions at the crowning heights of the economy (Labaki, 1988; Hamdan, 1997).

By the 1970s, many Muslims, as well as leftist groups charged that the predominantly Christian elite enjoyed political and economic privileges disproportionate to their share of the population. The 1975–1990 civil war began as a battle between defenders and challengers of the sectarian system and the distribution of power within it. It ended with an agreement to alter the Christian-Muslim ratio of government seats to 50:50 and transfer many powers from the Maronite president to Sunni prime minister. Yet even that revision remained out of sync with demography. The gap between the 1932 census and the country's reality

widened over the decades due to rates of both fertility and emigration (Faour, 2007), though labor migration has been roughly equal across major sectarian groups since the 1970s (Kasparian, 2009). Though estimates differ, one scientific study establishes that, as of 2005, Maronites represent approximately 22 percent of the population, with Sunnis and Shi'a each representing 26–28 percent (Faour, 2007).

Despite these imbalances, elites in post-civil war Lebanon tend not to invoke demography to contest the sectarian distribution of political posts directly. Nonetheless, the demographic question remains just below the surface of politics. Correspondingly, competition over the diaspora does, as well. Paralleling patterns that Lafleur (2008) shows in Italy, Mexico, and Belgium, Lebanese groups adopt divergent positions toward emigrants based on their perceptions of their demographic profile and socio-ideological allegiances. Due to 150 years of Christian-heavy outmigration, it is thus Christian Lebanese who have typically taken the lead in looking to the diaspora as a resource to bolster their social presence within Lebanon's borders. The Catholic Bishops Council, Maronite Church Synod, Vatican Synod for Middle East churches, and other Christian institutions frequently express concerns about the outmigration of their co-religionists (Khoury, 2003; Hourani, 2003; Donohue, 2010). In addition, some propose concrete measures to connect migrants and their progeny to the homeland. Maronite parliamentarian Nematallah Abi Nasr proposed a series of legislative measures, such as adding new parliamentary seats for expatriates (Hourani, 2003), facilitating expatriates' recuperation of lapsed citizenship (Naharnet 2010), or creating an identification card that extends new rights to Lebanese descendants around the world (Ryan, 2008).

These are not state undertakings designed by state agents for state purposes, but efforts strongly driven by and identified with just one of the diverse social groups constituting the Lebanese social fabric. One of the most serious of these initiatives focused on the citizenship status of Lebanese abroad. At the forefront of that effort was Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir, Maronite Patriarch from 1986 to 2011. In 2006, Sfeir and others established the Maronite Foundation in the World and endowed it with a mandate to "reestablish sectarian balance by urging Maronites and other Christians around the world to preserve their Lebanese patrimony by officially reclaiming their Lebanese identity and citizenship" (Maronite Foundation, n.d.). The Foundation began work in 2008 by commissioning a study to determine how it could best attempt to utilize the diaspora to stem Christians' demographic decline. Research identified two interven-

tions. The first was to convince Lebanese citizens abroad to register marriage, birth, and other vital events with the Lebanese government, as necessary to establish the patrimonial lines through which nationality is legally transmitted. The second was to increase the numbers of Lebanese descendents around the world who attain Lebanese citizenship (interview with author 2010e).

The Foundation's work proceeds on both fronts. It reaches out to diaspora Lebanese with appeals and offers of logistical assistance. It has established offices in world cities, made visits to major expatriate communities, and developed contacts with Lebanese Maronite parishes and clergy across the globe. A cornerstone of its outreach is a full-service website (Maronite Foundation, n.d.). There, a page titled "Check if you are Eligible for Lebanese Citizenship" encourages people of Lebanese origin to submit their name and father's name. The Foundation will then investigate their case and inform them if they have a legal claim to a Lebanese passport. With another click, applicants can download forms in English or Arabic, including those required to register marriage, divorce, proof of cohabitation, or family status. Another click offers a "Practical Guide" instructing applicants that they need only complete the appropriate paperwork, send it to the nearest Lebanese embassy, ask for their application file's tracking number, and forward that number to the Maronite Foundation. The Foundation will then "shepherd" applications to a rightful conclusion.

The Foundation's website, and likewise the glossy pamphlet that it distributes in multiple languages, market the advantages of Lebanese citizenship. These feature a long list of legal entitlements, such as the right to inheritance, free education, property ownership, voting, consular protection, and repatriation to Lebanon, should the need arise. Lebanese around the world can benefit from Lebanon's lack of income tax for most professions, moderate fiscal governance of holdings and offshore companies, and banking confidentiality. Yet the greatest advantage of Lebanese citizenship, this literature explains, is personal. "We are urging each and every eligible individual to act now to take advantage of their birth right," the Foundation declares. "If the children of those outside Lebanon are to have a sense of the values and heritage that is theirs by birth, then the most valuable gift to be given to them is to make connection to their roots" (Maronite Foundation, n.d.). It implores expatriate parents not to deprive their children of citizenship rights, carefully allaying one fear they might have against doing so: Lebanon's compulsory military service, it notes, was abolished in 2005.

In countries with stronger states, it is the state that takes the lead in overseeing matters of citizenship, presumably seeking to extend and extoll national membership as serves state needs. In the context of Lebanese state weakness, however, a private religious body takes it upon itself to play this role. The Maronite Foundation even carries these efforts into the sphere that seems most quintessentially reserved for the state: diplomatic outreach to other states. Attempting to reach émigrés in more targeted ways, it nourishes communication with the embassies of foreign governments in Lebanon, some of which grant the Foundation access to their immigration records in order to facilitate its locating of Christian migrants (interview with author 2010e). The Foundation also uses the civil registry of the Lebanese Ministry of Interior. As time allows, staff members examine its rolls village by village and attempt to identify who from the list may have migrated. For example, their suspicions might be aroused by someone born in the 1950s who, according to the registry, never married or had children. While this person might be single, there is a possibility that he or she left the country and neglected to register vital events.

Upon gathering several such examples, the Foundation will call a village dignitary, who often knows all residents personally and can ascertain if those in question have emigrated, to where, and whether they maintain contact with the village. Armed with such information, the Foundation may attempt to contact the migrants directly and offer assistance in obtaining citizenship for any children or grandchildren born abroad. Based on the sum of its efforts, the Maronite Foundation succeeded in registering nearly 20,000 Lebanese in 2009 and continued at rates at least as high in 2010 (interview with author 2010e). A page of its website labeled "success stories" offers testimonies such as those of Adele Masters from South Africa and Sandra Constantino Chuaire of Columbia, both of whom thank the Foundation for helping them move from the ranks of Lebanon's diaspora to those of its citizens.

Struggles in Lebanon are thus the impetus for new transnational connections between the homeland and its émigrés. The agents forging these linkages are organizations firmly rooted in Lebanese soil, acting to increase their power in that context. The diaspora serves as the medium and target for their efforts. Non-state homeland groups seek to mobilize nationals and descendants abroad as a resource that fits squarely within existent sectarian attitudes and structures. The resulting cross-border contacts are thereby integrated into the sustaining of sectarianism as the paramount framework of Lebanese society and politics. This perpetuates a

tradition older than independent statehood itself. From the colonial era until the present, groups in Lebanon have integrated their kin abroad into existent categories of domestic pluralism and contestation. This has helped buttress those categories and the relationships founded upon them.

Competition over demography in the Lebanese case highlights the struggle of sectarian actors to increase their power vis-à-vis other sectarian actors. Their efforts do not center upon the state. When they do involve state institutions and practices, their purpose is not to uphold state interests as much as utilize the state as a tool to advance the interests of their group. These dynamics stand in contrast to those typical in stronger states. Smith and Bakker (2008: 77–78) analyze partisan contestation in Mexico and conclude that it demonstrates that “the state has not withered away as a disappearing relic of the end of modernity. Instead ... [s]tate policies, legitimating discourses, and institutional practices ... are key elements through which transnational citizenship is being constituted...” Though their focus on “politically constructed state policies” is similar to that examined here, the dynamics prominent in the Lebanese case are very different. In Lebanon, it is not state but private practices that “are key elements” driving transnational citizenship. In consequence, the effective power of the state sometimes appears to “wither” – relative not to migrants, but to the domestic actors over which it ostensibly rules.

VOTES

As heated as struggles over émigrés in the social sphere of demography are those over émigrés in the political realm of votes. In Lebanon’s majoritarian block vote and multimember district electoral system, seats in parliament are allocated to electoral districts on a confessional basis. Only candidates of a given confession may contest seats designated for that confession, though all voters may cast ballots for as many candidates as there are seats. Citizens over the age of 21 are automatically eligible to vote in elections. Regardless of actual residence, citizens must vote in person in the electoral district of their father or husband’s ancestral home.

Estimates suggest that 600,000 to one million of the country’s 3.2 million registered voters reside overseas (interview with author 2010a). With some 20–30 percent of the eligible voting population at stake, elections generate intense competition for the diaspora. This takes various forms. The first is efforts to bring expatriates back to Lebanon to cast ballots. This entails extending overseas the patterns of vote-buying that

are already pervasive inside Lebanon. The offer of monetary inducements at election time is endemic due to weak regulations on campaign spending and even weaker mechanisms of enforcement (Mattar, 2004; Khazzaka, 2005; Gilbert, 2009; Worth, 2009). They are facilitated by particularities in Lebanese electoral law, such as the lack of a uniform pre-printed ballot, which enable the clientelist monitoring on which vote-buying depends (Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes, 2004). As a component of vote-buying strategies, candidates have long helped voters reach polling stations by offering them free transport to their familial villages. For decades, this tactic targeted those who had migrated from the countryside to Lebanon's cities. With the increasing ease of communications and air travel, as well as ever-rising levels of money in politics, it has also become prevalent in targeting Lebanese abroad.

Like political parties in other emigration countries, Lebanese political parties make contact with potential expatriate voters in a variety of ways. All major parties have networks, news outlets, or organizational branches abroad. These rally and sustain émigrés' support with ongoing activities, from a "Greet'n Meet" in Ottawa organized by the Lebanese Forces Students Association of North America to a birthday celebration of Syrian Social Nationalist Party founder Antoine Saad, sponsored by party activists in the Ukraine. Lebanese politicians also pay frequent visits to their supporters around the globe, where they participate in meetings, conferences, dinners, and fund-raising events. Party websites are an essential tool of communication with expatriates, but no less important is informal, person-to-person networking. For example, in a company in the Gulf that has dozens of Lebanese employees, one employee affiliated with a party might take on the task of lobbying his or her colleagues on the party's behalf (conversations with Lebanese citizens, Beirut, summer 2010).

These and other outreach mechanisms go into high speed during campaign seasons, becoming increasingly intense the more closely that elections are contested. They reached unprecedented proportions during the June 2009 parliamentary elections, with saw heated competition between two rival political blocs: the March 14th coalition, led by the main Sunni-led party, Saed Hariri's Future Movement, and the March 8th coalition, led by the two main Shi'i-dominant parties, Amal and Hezbollah. The two largest Maronite-led parties were split between these coalitions, with the Lebanese Forces allied with March 14th and the Free Patriotic Movement joining March 8th.

All of these parties wooed expatriate voters by offering them complimentary plane tickets, or even organizing charter flights to transport large numbers at once. Though public commentaries estimated that as many as 120,000 expatriates were flown to Lebanon to vote in the 2009 elections, air traffic studies suggest that the airport saw only 25,000–48,000 more arrivals than normal (Qifanabki, 2009; *The Monthly*, 2009). Most analysts agreed that Future was most implicated in the complimentary transport of expatriate voters. A German weekly reported that Hariri's brother used his own Nuremberg-based travel agency to book free flights, if not also induce voters with cash advances and offers of Lebanese identity cards for children born abroad (Adnkronos International, 2009). In an office rented in a local mosque, volunteers for the Future Movement in Calgary used donations from corporate sponsors to match Lebanese nationals with tickets to Beirut. "A lot of people [would] love to vote but they cannot vote because of funds ... so those companies are making it easy for them," the coordinator explained (CBC News, 2009). On the other side of the globe, the government of Saudi Arabia was likewise believed to be making large contributions to fly March 14th voters home to cast ballots (*Economist*, 2009).

Politicians' battle for every vote brought them into interesting bargains with citizens abroad (conversations with Lebanese citizens, Beirut, summer 2010). One Lebanese woman in London received a call from a party representative offering her a free trip home. She responded that she would accept only if her son could accompany her. Mother and child were soon on their way to Beirut. When some Lebanese nationals in Boston obtained free tickets for the elections, rumors quickly spread among networks of friends and family that were akin to pressing news about a lottery or going-out-of-business sale. Expatriates with no previous involvement in politics asked around until they obtained the phone number of the local party representative and then pressed to get in on the deal.

A second way in which Lebanese parties compete for votes through competing for the diaspora is electoral reform. In 2005, the government appointed experts and civil society figures to form the "National Commission for a New Electoral Law" and entrusted it with proposing changes to the electoral system in place since 1960. Known as the Boutros Commission, it submitted a new draft electoral law to the Cabinet the following year. Among the major revisions that the Commission proposed was authorization of non-resident absentee voting (Ekmekji, 2012). Parliament included this provision in a new electoral law that it approved in 2008

(D. Khoury, 2008). The law stipulated that non-resident voters register with a Lebanese embassy or consulate, after which the Ministry of Interior would match them to the home electoral district toward which their ballots would be counted. Based on the number of voters, embassies and consulates would mount polling stations on their premises or in other appropriate locations (Law No. 25; Articles 104–114). Before these procedures could begin, however, the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants would need to examine the logistics of implementation. The former expressed its readiness for the task. The latter stalled, missing its 2009 deadline to prepare a study on the mechanisms of non-resident voting.

These ups and downs on external voting could not be attributed to the activities of migrants themselves or to state interests. They were a result of competition among domestic political actors. The overseas voting proposal became intertwined with another proposed change, to lower the voting age from 21 to 18. This was also recommended by the Boutros Commission but was not included in the 2008 law passed by parliament. Parliament did return to the issue as a separate measure in March 2009, however, at which time it voted unanimously to amend the constitution to lower the voting age. In accord with constitutional procedures, it forwarded the proposal to the Cabinet, which approved it, formalized a draft constitutional amendment, and returned it to parliament for its final endorsement. When parliamentarians met to consider the amendment in February 2010, however, twice as many abstained as voted in favor. Parliament thereby failed to approve an initiative that it had launched itself less than a year earlier. As of this writing, voting age reform remains frozen. In spring 2012, expatriate voting was finally approved, to begin in the 2013 parliamentary elections. Due to confusion and lack of publicity or interest, however, only 10,000 expatriates ultimately registered to vote (Anderson 2013). Regardless, parliament postponed the 2013 elections 17 months.

Most observers viewed the long hold-up on external voting and lowering the voter age as the outcome of sectarian bargaining. It was widely understood that Christian political and religious leaders advocated non-resident balloting on the assumption that it would increase the number of Christian voters. Shi'i-majority political parties, on the other hand, were the main advocates of expanding franchise to citizens over 18 on the calculation that it would mainly benefit their constituents. Christian members of parliament withheld positive votes on the voting age amendment,

which sealed its defeat (*Agence France Presse*, 2010). Correspondingly, the Shi'i Minister of Foreign Affairs delayed taking the steps needed to implement overseas voting. The quid pro quo of overseas voting for youth franchise echoed Levitt and de la Dehesa's (2003) analysis of several Latin American cases in which domestic political actors weighed the expected costs and benefits of potential state policies toward emigrants and supported or opposed them on that basis. It likewise recalls Lafleur (2008: 421)'s finding that rival political parties in Italy, France, and Belgium consented to initiatives on external voting only after reaching political bargains that effectively neutralized their impact and guaranteed that they would not alter the existing domestic balance of power.

A closer look at the Lebanese case, however, reveals even more intricate political maneuvering at play. The seeming exchange of overseas voting for youth franchise did not follow a strictly sectarian logic. Among those who abstained from the voting age amendment in 2010 were not only Christian Deputies, but also most Sunni legislators from the Future Movement. Though Muslim communities would gain most from lowering the voting age, Future parliamentarians likely saw little benefit in a measure that did not give the March 14th coalition any clear advantage over March 8th. Future may have calculated that it could instead extract political capital vis-à-vis Christian voters if it took a stance that aided Christian members of their coalition (Bluhm, 2010). Given that Christian Lebanese had become swing voters with an important role in deciding elections, that was an astute political move.

Alternatively, the March 14th coalition might not have been courting Christian supporters as much as bargaining with March 8th on other matters, such as its then pending budget proposal and economic reforms. According to this view, the rival blocs were continually making political deals and the deal that would decide the voting age amendment was simply yet to reach fruition (Bluhm, 2010). The same dynamic may have been at play among Christian and Shi'i members within the March 8th coalition. When the Free Patriotic Movement's Michel Aoun pushed for overseas voting and Amal's Nabih Berri called for lowering the voting age, they were simultaneously bargaining with each other over a host of other partisan concerns both large and small, and both substantive and related to sheer power politics. Each party nursed the leverage it gained from its ability to extend or deny support for the priorities of other parties. At the same time, all had an eye on opinion among their core constituents. Each may thus have adopted the stance of ardent champion of its respective

religious community for the sake of appearances and public relations, whether or not its preferred legal reform had realistic prospects of coming into force or would make any difference if it did. Similarly, they resisted any weakening of that image that it might suffer if it conceded the reform championed by other communities.

As in much of Lebanese politics, therefore, contestation that appeared to be sectarian in character was potentially more aptly understood as political horse-trading. Furthermore, much of the competition that seemed to be between sects was actually occurring within sects. To encourage cross-confessional cooperation, the Lebanese electoral system was designed such that only co-religionists directly vie for parliamentary seats allotted to their confession. Unless the constitution was amended to change confessional quotas, increasing the number of voters from any sect would not increase their presence in parliament. Expatriate participation in elections might tilt the sectarian vote count in a handful of districts where, due to population flight during the civil war, the population of registered voters was out of sync with the resident population. Yet that was the exception to the norm. Since a 2008 electoral reform, most electoral districts were increasingly mono-confessional. Hence, Christian voters determined the winner of most races between rival Christian candidates. Even hundreds of thousands of new Christian voters from the diaspora would not give Christian-dominated political parties any advantage over non-Christian parties. Why then did they push for overseas voting?

One interpretation is that the struggle for overseas voting did not reflect competition between Christian and non-Christian political movements as much as among Christian parties themselves. This competition had two dimensions. First, the two main Maronite parties may have both wagered that non-resident votes would help it outdo its rival. Both collected meticulous data on voter rolls for all relevant districts, went to lengths to identify potential voters anywhere in the world, and assessed their capacity for overseas outreach in relation to that of others. If parties raised their voices in favor of overseas voting, they were likely judging that it was to their comparative advantage—or that they would suffer if they did not take up that cause while their rival did. Second, the two largest parties might have embraced overseas voting not as a tactic against each other as much as a shared strategy against independent political candidates (interview with author 2010a). Of the 128 parliamentarians elected in 2009, at least 40 were not formally members of any political party (IFES,

2009). More than 70 percent of these independents were Christians, many of them members of traditionally prestigious families or individuals with local power bases.

Party leaders likely reckoned that parties were better able than independents to identify, target, and mobilize potential voters overseas. Parties typically enjoyed greater material and human resources, organizational structure, member discipline, media access, and name recognition. They had greater capacity to establish offices abroad, produce literature, and campaign among the diaspora. This was particularly important for the descendents of migrants who could take advantage of their eligibility to vote but, having not been raised in Lebanon, had few personal ties to local power holders. To the extent that many independents built influence on personal relationships, overseas voting thus might result in a loss for them relative to more institutionalized opponents.

Competition for expatriate votes thus reflected the multiplicity of continually shifting games that were the crux of politics in Lebanon's weak state. These consisted of overlapping spheres of contestation between the country's two main political coalitions, their constituent political parties, and individual political aspirants. In attempt to promote their interests, politicians engaged in bargaining, alliance-building, fights to the last ballot, and seemingly—yet never completely—uncompromising stand-offs. For those struggling for advantage, expatriates represented a resource to be marshaled or, at least, one that they were determined that no one else marshal at their expense. The diaspora was thus integrated as one more piece on the chessboard of Lebanese politics.

The state, as state, did not demonstrate autonomous power in these machinations. The issue of external voting had little to do with a drive to reassert sovereignty or manage membership in the polity. The government attempted to undertake meaningful intervention when it appointed the commission that recommended both overseas voting and a lowered voting age. Nonetheless, it did not have the power to put these recommendations into effect in a timely manner. Furthermore, when the Ministry of Interior voiced its readiness to carry out the tasks need to implement non-resident voting and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs delayed, they were not acting as subordinate branches of state or government. Rather, each followed the political inclinations, if not the sectarian allegiances, of its respective ministerial heads. Given its weakness, the Lebanese state had trouble exercising effective national authority above and independent of the partisan jockeying around electoral

reform. In the absence of state leadership, the role of expatriates in electoral politics thus remained that of votes to be bought more than voters to be empowered.

MONEY

A final realm in which domestic competition unfolds over and through the diaspora is economic. Lebanon has long found a vital source of income in the nation's diaspora and its monetary transfers. In Ottoman Mount Lebanon, remittances were equal to the domestic product (Labaki, 1982–1984). They were essential for keeping families afloat during the civil war, when money sent home by Lebanese working in Arab oil-exporting states totaled some \$120–150 million (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, 1979). Today remittances are estimated to constitute 20 percent of GDP (Banque du Liban, 2010) and double the amount of foreign direct investment (Tohme, 2004; Ratha and Xu, 2008). They are particularly vital due to the country's economic imbalances, as apparent in a national debt equivalent to 171 percent of GDP (Bluhm, 2008) and a youth unemployment rate of 24 percent as of 2013 (Kawar and Tzannatos, 2013). In the words of one economist, "We don't have oil, but [emigrants] are our oil" (interview with author 2010d).

Given Lebanon's weak state and extreme *laissez-faire* economy, the financial flows from diaspora to homeland occur in the absence of meaningful state policy. The Lebanese state has not played an active, or even reactive, role in attempting to elicit, manage, or channel migrant remittances and transfers as many other emigration states have done (Brand, 2006). Rather, it is private and private-sector actors that take the lead in jockeying for a share of migrant monies. Research on other emigration countries highlights some features in the relationship between transnational migration and private economic actors based in the homeland. They show that remittances can serve as a direct and indirect stimulus to economic sectors in communities of origin (Durand, Parrado, and Massey, 1996). In addition, emigrants may desire homeland goods and services, and this invites enterprises to extend markets from the sending country into the diaspora (Guarnizo, 2003). However, zealous homeland businesses might not play the passive role of simply responding to migrant demand. They can also actively undertake to generate migrant demand themselves.

For as long as Lebanese have been migrating, residents back home have sought a share of migrant wealth. One Lebanese writer in the 1930s described, with shamed lament, residents' preying upon émigrés:

It is regrettable that we still view the emigrant as a milking cow. No sooner does he set foot on the soil of the homeland, then we converge upon him; this person is his in-law; that person is the old friend or the family's friend; and I can never forget the village elder and the traditional political boss, the clergy, the sheikhs, and the Shia'a clergy, the associations, brokers, conmen, etc., a series that will not end as long as there is a penny in the emigrant's pockets (Muruwweh, 1938: 310).

These dynamics remain alive today. As one Lebanese-American expressed it in 2010, "They [residents] view us [expatriates] as an ATM machine" (interview with author 2010b). Such commentaries are by no means unique to Lebanon. Smith and Bakker (2008: 62) remark that Mexico's "political class sees el migrante ... as a kind of friendly cash cow." In the context of Mexico's stronger state, however, state planners have also undertaken significant initiatives to channel migrant capital investment into state-initiated projects, such as the much-discussed 3x1 Program for Migrants. In Lebanon's weak state, by contrast, initiatives are left to a plethora of oft-competing private actors.

Most Lebanese émigrés expect to send a portion of earnings to their loved ones back home. This can lead to jostling within extended families, as relatives form different ideas regarding who has due claims to these monies, to how much, and for how long. Furthermore, kin are not the only ones maneuvering for a share. Entire villages and small towns are often active in soliciting charitable contributions from their sons and daughters abroad. Local government councils sometimes produce literature or websites to facilitate that outreach (interview with author 2010f). Neighbors also seek expatriates' aid on a person-to-person basis. A Lebanese born woman abroad explains that residents in her home village come asking for help nearly as soon as they hear that her family has returned for a visit (interview with author 2010c). A typical scene begins when the émigré returns to the family home. Seeing a gate open or a light on, a village resident will come by, inquire about the family's health, offer some fresh milk or eggs, and then put forth a request: money for a child to go to school, help in finding a job, etc. Some of those asking have long since left the village to live in Beirut, but return when they gain word that the expatriate neighbor is back in town.

Competition for migrant monies within families and villages is paralleled by competition in the private sector, at large. This is apparent

in the three major pillars of the Lebanese economy: banking, real estate, and tourism. Lebanese banks engage in a vigorous contest to encourage expatriates to open accounts, and indeed non-resident deposits increased at almost twice the rate of resident deposits between 2008 and 2009 (interview with author 2010d). Of the country's nine largest banks, four make direct outreach to the diaspora on their websites. Their homepages give prominent place to links labeled "expatriates" or "non-residents," where they enumerate benefits and services targeted specifically to them.² Banks compete for expatriate clients in other ways, as well. Bank Audi uses its overseas branches to target Lebanese abroad. Where it lacks branches, it periodically dispatches domestic desk officers to travel and meet with diaspora communities directly (interview with author 2010d). Byblos Bank offers special loans for expatriates to buy finished homes in Lebanon. In 2004, it also announced a pledge to plant a cedar tree, the national symbol emblazoned on the Lebanese flag, in the name of every expatriate who opened a bank account. The bank capped the campaign by organizing an ecological outing during which some 60 expatriates planted trees in a Lebanese nature reserve. The group stopped to buy local products and enjoy "a delicious lunch" at a restaurant that was undoubtedly the envy of other restaurants in the area (Diab, 2005).

Similar dynamics are at play in the real estate market. In 2010, before a new influx of Syrian refugees began affecting the market, an estimated 40–45 percent of demand for residential real estate came from Lebanese expatriates (Bank Audi, 2010; RAMCO, 2010). Throughout rural Lebanon, émigrés have built villas in their home villages as a testimony to their success. In urban centers, they increasingly purchase high-end apartments (Credit Libanais Research Unit, 2008; Bank Audi, 2010; RAMCO Real Estate Advisors, 2010). As struggling Beirutis are pushed to look for smaller apartments further outside the capital, the real estate industry actively seeks to tap into the diaspora market. An executive at one of the country's largest real estate consulting firms remarked, "Banks do a great job of targeting expatriates. We want to see whether we can sell real estate to them, too. Rather than waiting for them to come here after they've decided to make a real estate purchase, we're thinking about how

²See Fransabank, <<http://www.fransabank.com/Fransabank/JumpTo/Expatriates.htm>>; Banque Libano Française, <<http://www.eblf.com/en/listing.aspx?pageid=53>>; Bank of Beirut, <<http://www.bankofbeirut.com/Personal/Expatriates/Pages/default.aspx>>; Credit Libanais, <<http://www.creditlibanais.com.lb/template1.asp?id=159>>

we can go and find them” (interview with author 2010g). To that end, his firm assigned several staff members to research the expatriate market, as well as effective strategies to communicate with and advertise to them. This activist stance recalls initiatives in other emigration countries, such as Dominican construction and real estate firms’ attempts to publicize their services in the New York-based immigrant press (Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999).

Developers are also getting in on the action. Recent years have witnessed the emergence of new forms of residential living specifically designed for Lebanese who do or have worked abroad. Beit Misk, a new gated community located in a mountainous area a fifteen-minute drive from Beirut, offers an upscale mix of apartment buildings, villas, and penthouses, as well as a country club, gardens, recreational areas, and shops (Nohra, 2009). Its sleek, English-only website emphasizes the community’s unique blend of tradition and modernity, community and privacy, and natural beauty and urban convenience (Beit Misk n.d.). This and other such communities target expatriates because they capture attributes that they associate with home, while preserving features of life abroad that many grow to appreciate while abroad. They are particularly directed toward Lebanese working in Arab Gulf countries who become accustomed to living arrangements that are isolated and quiet and where, unlike the traditional Lebanese village, everyone arrives a newcomer.

The tourism industry likewise competes for expatriate expenditures. The Lebanese diaspora accounts not only for a large portion of tourists to the country every year, but one that is less deterred by security problems or political instability (Worth, 2007). In the summer in particular, the flooding of expatriates into Lebanon constitutes a seasonal migration in its own right. Hotels, organized tours, restaurants, resorts, and short-term rental apartments actively cater to this market. Two growing sectors, religious tourism and health tourism, do likewise. The latter seeks to convince émigrés to return for cosmetic surgery and other procedures by evoking their sense of trust in doctors back home. Governmental institutions have not been absent from these attempts to lure Lebanese descendants born and raised overseas. Since 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has held a camp for diaspora youth from around the world every summer (Batruni, 2010). In 2010, the Ministry of Tourism joined with two worldwide Lebanese diaspora organizations in sponsoring a ten-day tour of Lebanon for 510 diaspora members. It was crowned, literally and figuratively, with a Miss Lebanon Emigrant beauty pageant (Kfoury, 2010). Nonetheless, these state-sponsored efforts are just more options in

a field already crowded by private initiatives. The ministries' programs thus compete with those of non-state institutions, such as the annual camp that the American University of Beirut organizes for alumni children from abroad (Murr, 2010).

Over the decades, diaspora capital has evolved from a support for Lebanon's balance of payments to a crutch on which the country depends. Citizens and firms compete for this capital, and in so doing generate new and innovative appeals that effectively keep it coming. This helps the country and its people survive, but also reproduces the structural weaknesses of the existent political economy (Pearlman, 2013b). Continually renewed injections of money from the diaspora reduces Lebanon's need to develop a domestic economy capable of producing income and employment; that is, the kind of economy that would lessen citizens' need to emigrate in the first place.

CONCLUSIONS

Social scientific research sheds increasing light on how emigrants undertake grassroots initiatives that influence affairs in their countries of origin. No less important are the ways in which those in the home country enlist diasporas in promotion of agendas of their own. For residents in the homeland struggling for power or wealth, a nation's kin abroad can offer a wellspring of potential bodies, voters, or money. Groups' attempts to access and mobilize those resources transport domestic struggles from sending countries to new geographical terrains. It thereby spawns forms of competition that are transnational in character.

Investigation of groups' competition over and through the diaspora affirms findings in many works on transnationalism. It shows how home countries are not unitary entities but constellations of actors and interests vying for advantage (Graham, 1997: 93). It also demonstrates how their actions and interactions with nationals abroad are rooted in specific contexts of society and politics. As R. Smith (2003: 326–27) argues, homeland groups' interests, and likewise their capacities to act upon them, do not transcend political structure as much as they are a product of the opportunities and constraints that a particular political structure generates. Extending these insights, this article suggests that identification of the arenas in which homeland groups compete for the diaspora can cast light on the nature of the struggles in which they engage. It also reveals the elements that constitute power in those struggles. In consequence, scrutiny

of homeland–emigrant linkages offers insight not only about transnational migration, but also about society, politics, and the economy in sending countries themselves.

These linkages take on new dimensions when sending states are weak. All cases of international migration entail dynamics situated between the transnationalism “from above” driven by states or global capitalism and the transnationalism “from below” propelled by migrants themselves. Yet transnational relationships “from in between” (Smith and Bakker, 2008: 20) or “of the middle” (Mahler and Hansing, 2005) are particularly important in weak state settings, where the real loci of social and political power often reside with organized social forces outside governmental bodies. On the one hand, weak sending states have impaired capacities to undertake the official policies toward emigrants highlighted in many studies, such as those that marshal state resources and decision-making autonomy to manage citizens, control borders, reassert sovereignty, regulate political membership, or obtain revenues for official development projects. On the other hand, the strength of organized non-state actors in such settings might occupy such political, social, and economic space that they restrict opportunities for new initiatives that do not filter through preexisting identities and interests. Such political settings may therefore impede emigrants’ abilities to take their own grassroots initiatives capable of having an independent impact on the homeland.

These relationships fostered in weak state settings run counter to some claims by diaspora scholars. Sheffer asserts, “Diaspora members are quite autonomous in the decisions they make, including decisions about activities on behalf of their homelands” (2003: 206). Shain agrees that diasporas are “not just the homeland’s tail but may dominate the wagging.” (2007: 125). He adds that homeland leaders ignore diasporans at their peril. The Lebanese case also reveals situations in which leaders in the sending country ignore the diaspora at the peril. Yet this is not because the diaspora issues dictate but because it is a source of benefits without which homeland leaders have difficulty protecting and advancing their interests back home. In Lebanon, society is split along sectarian and other cleavages, a dizzying number of political groups battle for office, and a service-based economy is highly reliant upon external funds. Each of these realms of public life produces heated contests in which residents frequently see compatriots abroad as uniquely positioned to offer resources that they need to be competitive. Different groups in the homeland, and differently situated figures within each group, work to attract those

resources using a range of strategies, from online networking to free plane tickets and from legal reform to beauty pageants.

This emphasis on the agency of homeland groups does not imply that migrants and diasporas are merely or always pawns in others' schemes. In Lebanon as elsewhere, migrants have taken initiatives with decisive impacts on their homelands. They have founded political parties, built social movements, served as conduits of new ideas and attitudes, and made lasting contributions to local development and social mobility. Nevertheless, many cross-border relationships originate in the sending state and are deliberately cultivated by actors there.

Future research can delve further into these dynamics by exploring how they unfold in relatively stronger states and comparing them to patterns identified in this article. For example, this study of Lebanon has highlighted realms in which migrants do not proactively engage the homeland as much as they are passively involved due to the active engagement spearheaded by others. These trends resonate with M.P. Smith's (2003) findings from Mexico, where political parties seek to co-opt migrants as clients and funders of state-designed development projects with the goal of benefiting from their loyalty while simultaneously limiting their political autonomy. How do the causes, consequences, and particularities of such homeland enlistment of expatriates differ in the stronger state of Mexico and weaker state of Lebanon? How are they similar? The logic of this article's single case study suggests the hypothesis that competition for the diaspora takes on particularly intense proportions to the extent that states are weak. Comparative case studies can test this hypothesis and highlight other confounding conditions in which it is more or less likely to hold.

The competition of resident Lebanese over and through their diaspora offers a window into the fragmented nature of Lebanon's social and political landscape and its dependency on global capital. It also points to processes helping to reproduce those very states of affairs. The Lebanese experience thus offers a different answer to the question of whether transnational migration affirms or challenges the sovereignty of the nation-state. Technological and other changes unique to the contemporary era *are* intensifying opportunities for diaspora-homeland linkages, as many scholars of transnationalism argue. When sending states are weak, such linkages may circumvent or undermine state control. Yet this is a continuation of patterns that pre-date and are independent of globalization. Transnational practices can thus work against the territorial and institutional hegemony of the nation-state, yet do so in ways that are reinforcing rather than transformative of sending states.

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