International donors, NGOs, and the geopolitics of youth citizenship in contemporary

Lebanon

Introduction

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001[1], ushered in a period of intense, if not

unprecedented, intervention by the United States and other Western powers in the Middle

East. This intervention began with massive military invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan but soon

included 'softer'—and what some foreign-policy practitioners called 'smarter'—forms of

involvement designed to foster wholesale societal transformation in the Arab/Muslim world.[2]

A key component of the 'smart power' strategies pursued over the past decade has been the

funding of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dedicated to the promotion of

democracy. Support for democracy promotion by the U.S. government, as well as by other

Western[3] governments and philanthropic organizations, has been based on the assumption

that the region's instabilities stem from a democratic deficit and a deep attraction to

authoritarianism within Arab and Muslim culture. What is needed to create security in the

region, from this perspective, is a profound shift in values and socio-political norms among the

region's people.

Critical-geopolitics scholarship has been highly skeptical of the aims and suppositions

underlying democracy-promotion activities, as well as the effectiveness of these activities in

addressing the region's conflicts. Bali and Rana[4], for instance, describe democracy promotion

as part of a long-running project among U.S. policymakers to exercise strategic power in the

Middle East and to maintain a geopolitical political order favorable to its own interests. As an

alternative to realpolitik, Bali and Rana explain, the commitment to democracy conforms to

America's conceptualization of itself 'as a chosen community, enjoying a historically redemptive

mission'.[5] Yet the supposed aims of democracy promotion—to bring freedom and peace to the

region's inhabitants—sits uneasily with America's continued support of autocratic regimes,

whom U.S. policymakers cast as forces of 'moderation' despite their obvious repressiveness.

This article is situated in these critical assessments of Western, and especially American,

intervention in the Arab World and the broader Middle East. Yet it also attempts to reach

beyond the broad critiques of Western foreign policy and the 'War on Terror' that have been

the hallmark of critical-geopolitics literature on the Middle East since 9/11.[6] Here, we take a

step toward examining the ways that Western geopolitical agendas actually take shape in local

contexts by offering a qualitative analysis of NGOs in Lebanon. This analysis interrogates the

kinds of democratic citizenship that NGOs are attempting to create and explores how NGOs

critically engage with and/or resist Western democracy-promotion strategies.

Our focus on NGO activities, and our concern with the kinds of outcomes NGO activities might

produce in local contexts, reflects and draws upon feminist approaches to critical geopolitics.

One strand of feminist geopolitics has been to explore the ways in which geopolitical discourse

translates into everyday political practices in places that are subject to foreign-policy

intervention. Toward this end, feminist scholars have sought to shift the focus of enquiry from

foreign-policy discourse and the 'disembodied practices of statecraft' to the sites and subjects of domination, linking the 'discursive realm of representation to the lived realities of individuals and communities'.[7] Following these insights, we examine the localized contexts in which real, identifiable people put into play, but also contest, the geopolitical visions of powerful state actors. In doing so, we highlight the ways in which a wide variety of actors, including voluntary organizations, are the means by which geopolitical relationships unfold in the course of everyday life.

Our discussion draws on fieldwork conducted in Lebanon, a country whose instability—typically attributed to its complex confessional composition—has on many occasions invited the intervention of foreign powers. Western interest in Lebanon has increased in recent years with the deepening of a regional rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Eager to see pro-Western interests hold sway in Lebanon and to dampen the power of militant pro-Iranian groups like Hizbullah, the U.S., Britain, the European Union, and others have poured hundreds of millions of dollars of aid into the country. International agencies and Western donor states work through local NGOs to implement the dual goals of democratization through civil society and free-market economic development.[8] Youth-oriented initiatives, in particular, serve to assemble and to normalize certain citizenship ideals that are seen as crucial to achieving democracy and development, including 'active citizenship', global consciousness, tolerance of diversity, and acceptance of individual responsibility.[9] By submerging sectarian-based political differences amongst Lebanese youth, NGOs and their funders attempt to create a unified, stable nation and a reliable 'partner' in the Middle East.

While focusing on the key role of Western-funded NGOs in shaping political life in the Middle East, our analysis suggests that Western governments are limited in their ability to achieve particular ends in the region through civil society. NGOs, we emphasize, operate in a complex, pluralistic political environment marked by multiple sources of political legitimacy, authority, and sovereignty[10]. Confronted by local political realities, local NGO directors routinely question the efficacy of their work and seek ways to circumvent the conditions placed on them by Western funders. Their own critical assessment of Western-funded civil society, we suggest, calls into question the extent to which democracy promotion can secure Western geopolitical interests, much less enforce Western political supremacy.

Democracy, civil society and the politics of NGO activity

The funding of democracy promotion activities by Western aid agencies and donors in the Arab/Muslim world must be situated in much broader patterns of NGO development worldwide.   The rapid proliferation of NGOs and the increasingly prominent role of NGOs in governance, especially in 'post-conflict', 'divided' or 'transitional' societies, began to capture the attention of scholars in the early 1990s in the wake of dramatic political transformations in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and South Africa, amongst other contexts. For some scholars, the proliferation of NGO activity has been indicative of the empowerment of non-state actors under conditions of globalization. McGann and Johnstone[11], pointing to the role of NGOs in shepherding the post-socialist political transformation of Eastern Europe and to the influence of

NGO activists at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, describe NGOs as challenging traditional political institutions and power-brokers, as providing an alternative to 'bloated' and 'unresponsive' bureaucracies, and as addressing vital global issues that cannot be addressed adequately by nation-states. NGOs, some also suggest, have brought an element of democratic participation to what had been top-down development practices in the Global South. While these authors have expressed concerned about the 'crisis' of NGO 'accountability' in the societies in which they operate, they suggest that overall, NGOs have had a profound and largely positive role in re-shaping world politics.

At the same time, however, a large body literature has taken a more skeptical view of NGOs and the roles they have come to occupy in impoverished and politically unstable countries. Criticisms of NGOs are wide ranging and often touch on the insensitivity and obliviousness of Western aid workers and consultants, who often 'parachute' into difficult situations for short-term assignments in order to boost their résumés, and on the tremendous social, economic, and political dislocations caused by the intrusion of foreign aid organizations in poor countries. Far from grassroots forms of empowerment, NGOs, from this perspective, serve as instruments of foreign donors, who, for the most part, are committed to neoliberal ideology and who remain wedded to neo-colonial assumptions of Western superiority. [12]

In recent years, these critical accounts have given more particular attention to the workings of the so-called 'democracy industry', which has been instrumental in disseminating a relatively standardized set of democratic 'best practices' as a means of fostering societal reconciliation

and long-term stability in post-conflict settings worldwide.[13]   The democracy industry, which

includes private- and state-funded foundations and myriad independent consultants and

democracy professionals, implements particular understandings of democratic citizenship and

civil society that, critics charge, serve the economic and geopolitical interests of donor states

and organizations more than those of local communities.[14] The following discussion elaborates

on these arguments, examining the particular ways that Western donors and NGOs articulate

and implement democracy and citizenship.

Democracy Promotion and the Formulation of Citizenship in Post-Conflict Societies

For those promoting democracy in unstable, divided settings, civil society is the key to

addressing social fragmentation, building a functioning *demos*, ensuring state responsiveness to

citizens' needs, and boosting state legitimacy; for this reason, funders of democracy initiatives

prioritize the 'improvement' and 'strengthening' of civil society and the formation of norms and

attitudes that are conducive to participation in civil society.[15] At a practical level, however,

Western donors tend to construe civil society in rather limited terms, privileging local NGOs as

agents of desired political transformation.[16] Indeed, to a considerable degree, the presence of

NGOs has become the key indicator of the development of democracy in transitional

societies,[17] with organizations such as the Open Society Institute and Civitas explicitly framing

democratization in terms of the development of NGOs. To foster NGO-based civil society,

funders train local professionals who become well versed in the language and terminology of

'active citizenship' and democratic participation. In countries like Lebanon, it is common for

these local professionals also to have lived and perhaps to have been educated in the West.

Such professionals may be particularly well equipped to meet the requirements of external

funders and donors—a crucial advantage in a highly competitive funding environment.

Alex Jeffrey[18] describes the process of developing, institutionalizing, and professionalizing local

NGOs within a framework created by donors as the 'gentrification of civil society'. Current

scholarship identifies a number of tensions relating to state legitimacy and democratization

that are produced by gentrified civil society. Perhaps most importantly, the gentrification of

civil society promotes the conflation of a particular form of governance (i.e. governance

through community) with the development and functioning of an autonomous public sphere.

The term 'NGO', in this regard, is somewhat deceptive, suggesting, as it does, independence

from governments and governance. A great deal of NGO activity, in fact, is directed by state

and quasi-state agencies and/or is encouraged as a substitute for state provision of services

within a neoliberal policy context.[19] This involvement of NGOs in governance can be expedient

insofar as services can be delivered efficiently and disentangled from existing patronage

networks.   But critics argue that the folding of NGOs into systems of governance tends both to

compromise state legitimacy and to prevent NGOs from expressing political dissent, which is

the very purpose the civil society is intended to support.[20]

Promoting 'universal' values, moreover, often means dampening, or excluding, those practices

and political identities that might threaten coexistence and consensus. Likewise, fostering civil,

non-violent dialogue can mean glossing-over contentious historical narratives and memories, as

practitioners and donors are wary of rekindling conflict. These tendencies are especially

evident in programs that focus on children and youth. Such programs – delivered through

school curricula, organized youth activities, and 'leadership seminars' –seek to replace divisive

communal identities with notions of citizenship that revolve around individual responsibility,

empowerment, and community service.[21] These citizenship discourses might make sense in a

post-conflict society where group antagonisms have abated but not completely disappeared.

Yet by submerging conflicting values, practices, and perspectives, NGOs risk creating a civil

society that, while perhaps 'civil', is depoliticized and detached from the messiness of everyday

political life.[22]

In sum, the promotion of democracy through NGOs is a fraught process, and critics have

indicated a number of tensions that emerge from NGOs' efforts to transform political life in

transitional settings: while attempting to reconcile antagonistic groups and to build consensus,

NGOs may sideline certain voices and restrict political life; while seeking to build state

legitimacy, NGOs may undermine that legitimacy by assuming governing functions; and while

promoting active citizen participation and empowerment, they may discourage the dissent that

might lead to more substantive political changes. These criticisms speak, on the one hand, to

the influence that NGOs exercise in shaping political relationships and structures of governance

in transitional societies. But on the other hand, they indicate some significant limitations that

NGOs—and hence, donor agencies—may face in effecting political transformation. For

instance, by pushing aside very real political differences and identities in the quest to foster

tolerance and consensus, NGOs may render themselves incapable of dealing with these

differences in a way that is meaningful to people.[23] Some scholars have noted the particular

skepticism among young people toward NGO democratization discourses, which bear little

relation to their daily experiences and observations of social differences and inequalities.[24]

More broadly, local NGOs, by aligning themselves with donor aims and orientations, may limit

their own relevance and legitimacy, especially if donors demand that NGOs not associate with

particular groups.[25] Bars on serving people affiliated with certain political organizations does

not delegitimize these organizations or make them any less relevant in terms of the provision of

security, representation, and patronage. Local NGOs may struggle for credibility if they are

unable to engage with such groups, making donor aims difficult or impossible to implement. Of

course, NGOs can circumvent donor restrictions by engaging with ostracized groups, but this,

again, will undermine rather than support the geopolitical agendas of donor states. In short,

and perhaps unsurprisingly, the political circumstances generated by NGO activities are far

more complicated and ambiguous than smart-power advocates have recognized, and we must

question the notion that Western aid agencies are straightforwardly directing political

outcomes in the places where they operate.[26]

NGO activity in the Arab World and Lebanon

These critical discussions of NGO activities in transitional societies have particular relevance to

contexts in the Middle East. As described earlier, the promotion of democracy through NGOs

became an important component of Western foreign policy in the Middle East following the

9/11 attacks, though we can trace current democratization strategies to the end of the Cold

War, when Western states seized upon civil society as a means of fostering pro-Western political orientations in the region. At that time, Western states and institutions—particularly in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, and Canada—began to seek partnerships with pro-democracy organizations in the Arab world while continuing to support authoritarian regimes that aligned themselves with Western interests in return for military hardware and development assistance. Most activity in the 1990s was carried out by large, publicly funded institutions like the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the International Democratic Institute (IDI) (both created by the U.S. Congress during the Reagan Administration to promote democracy and free enterprise in the post-colonial world), the German *stiftungen* (party-affiliated foundations), the UK-based Westminster Foundation for Democracy, and Canada's International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development. The stated aims of most of these 'democracy brokers', as Carapico[27] calls them, was to promote electoral and judicial reform, civil society, democratic participation, and economic liberalization. Funders typically would identify local partners to implement programs, which usually involved training workshops, conferences, and seminars on democratic procedure and/or research and documentation on elections and human rights. Western-backed Arab rulers, for their part, alternately sought to co-opt NGOs and to control and curtail their activities.

 These activities assumed greater urgency in the Middle East after 9/11. For the U.S. national security establishment, in particular, the 9/11 attacks represented an existential struggle between radical Islam and Western freedoms and democracy. In the wake of the attacks, the Bush Administration redoubled America's drive to promote democracy, positing that the active

support of democratic reform in Arab countries would turn the tide against Islamic extremism and terrorism and secure U.S. energy interests, as well as Israel's security.[28] The Obama Administration has reiterated the U.S. commitment to financial support for organizations in the Arab world that promote democracy, human rights, civic engagement, and free elections, though advocates of smart power have heavily criticized Obama for what they view as half-hearted support for pro-democracy movements in the region since the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. These critics have been dismayed by the reduction in assistance to the region and the Administration's seeming shift toward narrower 'security' goals after more than a decade of involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.[29] Still, the NDI and IRI continue to have an active presence in the Arab world, along with the National Institute of Peace, an organization created by Congress to promote 'conflict management' in volatile regions, and the Middle East Partner Initiative (MEPI), an agency created by the State Department in 2002 to support activities relating to democratic participation, electoral reform, and civil society. Important U.S.-based private foundations working on democracy in the Arab world include the Open Society Foundations, the Ford Foundation, and AMIDEAST, an independent non-profit organization focused on educational exchanges between the U.S. and Arab countries. European and Canadian quasi-government institutions have also ramped up their presence in the Arab world and have been joined by a variety of independent foundations such as former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Faith Foundation, which has recently called for greater involvement in the Middle East to counter the supposedly destabilizing influence of radicalized Islam.[30]

NGO activity, and sectarianism in Lebanon

Over the past decade, these and many other agencies and foundations have increased their profile in Lebanon, a country with a long history of Western institutional involvement, especially through Catholic and Protestant missionaries. In dedicating resources to civil society in Lebanon, many donors have been explicit about their desire to address what they view as the country's troublesome sectarian political structure—a structure which Western powers themselves helped to fashion starting in the 19th century.[31] This political structure, which divides key political posts and electoral seats by sect, was agreed upon by Lebanon's elites in the 1940s as a means of sharing power between the country's Christians, Sunni Muslims, and Shi'a Muslims.   As Weiss[32] notes, Lebanese commentators have alternately defended the sectarian system as solution to the problem of multi-confessional coexistence and denounced it as a tool of foreign intervention and domination. Following the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), which was partly fought along sectarian lines, political leaders expressed their commitment to a non-sectarian political system as the only means of achieving lasting peace; but the peace agreement forged after the war largely maintained the pre-civil war political order, albeit with a shift in the balance of power from Christians to Muslims. Nonetheless, politicians take every opportunity, however disingenuously, to display their commitment to a multi-sectarian coexistence and to accuse their political opponents of fomenting sectarian discord.[33]

Western donors and international agencies have inserted themselves into this shifting, and often confounding, political landscape. Western expenditures increased significantly after

2005, with the emergence of a viable anti-Syrian, anti-Iranian, pro-Saudi, Sunni-led faction

under the leadership of Saad Hariri.[34]   The flow of Western aid has been aimed at countering

the influence of Hizbullah, a militant Shi'a organization with ties to Iran and Syria that is

currently supporting the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war.   As Fregonese[35] notes, Western

states, and especially the United States, have consistently portrayed Hizbullah as a menacing

state-within-a-state, a terrorist organization, and as a major cause of regional instability.[36]

Since 2011, aid flows from the West have increased significantly due to fears of political

instability linked to the Syrian civil war, even as financial commitments to the region overall

appear to be under threat from budget cuts and shifting priorities.[37] A large portion of Western

aid continues to be directed at the Lebanese military, infrastructure projects, and direct

government assistance. Millions of dollars, pounds, and Euros, though, have been dedicated to

bolstering Lebanese civil society, which has mushroomed in size and scope in the past decade.[38]

It is difficult to provide an exact count of Western donor-supported NGOs in the country, as

many organizations are ephemeral due to their dependence on grant income. But our research

has identified more than 400 functioning NGOs in Lebanon today, many of which receive some

measure of Western donor support or are run directly by Western philanthropic organizations

(e.g. Save the Children, World Vision).

In their promotion of civil society in Lebanon, Western donors view themselves as central to

Lebanon's political redemption by fostering a robust, non-sectarian political system and by

instilling the Lebanese people with liberal-democratic values. As fluctuating as the NGO sector

may be, donors see it as helping to create a stable and reliable 'partner' in the Middle East that can resist the influence of Iran and Syria, as well as of radical Islam. As we discuss below, however, Western-funded NGOs compete with other, sectarian-based networks of civil-society organizations—most notably those affiliated with Hizbullah—for influence and legitimacy. So while the sector has a ubiquitous presence in Lebanon, its influence on Lebanese society and Lebanese politics must be interrogated rather than assumed.

The following sections describe the workings of Western-funded NGOs in greater detail, giving particular attention to the ways that NGOs, following donor prerogatives, implement citizenship discourses that emphasize consensus, 'common ground', and incremental change in localities. But we also examine the limitations NGOs face in transforming existing political structures, in part due to the skepticism that NGO directors feel toward donor organizations. NGOs in many ways operate against the grain of Lebanese sectarianism, but they are, at the same time, entangled in the sectarian political system and are forced to compete with others for patronage and legitimacy. This account highlights the lack of alignment between donor aims and on-the-ground political realities in Lebanon (and elsewhere) and questions the ability of Western funders to direct civil society according to their own geopolitical interests. To begin, we provide a brief description of our research.

Sources and data collection

The following discussion draws on information gathered in Lebanon over a 10-month period from September 2010 to June 2011, followed by a second wave of fieldwork from May 2013 to April 2014. This research has been part of an on-going, multi-country project on youth citizenship in divided and post-conflict societies.[39] Here, we draw on semi-structured interviews conducted with employees of 41 NGOs, most of them headquartered in Beirut. These NGOs are among the scores of voluntary, civic, and philanthropic organizations that operate in Lebanon and that receive varying levels of foreign-donor support. The groups we interviewed were focused on a variety of issues— the environment, human rights, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, education, women's empowerment, social media and IT training—but all had some youth-based component, such as a summer camp, a youth leadership training program, or a conflict resolution workshop. Each group we interviewed received at least some funding from a foreign government or quasi-governmental foundation (USAID, MEPI, NED, Anna Lindh Foundation), from international organizations (e.g. the UN or the EU), individual Western embassies (especially Canadian, American, Norwegian, and Italian), and/or independent Western-based NGOs and foundations. Most had received funds from several sources.

We spoke formally with about 48 individuals, though we typically spoke informally to several other people within each organization. During the interviews, we asked study participants to discuss their programming and to explain the importance of youth-based work; we also asked them to tell us about their relationships with funders and their responses to funder directives and priorities. Finally, we asked them to explain their vision for the kind of citizenship and the

relationships between individuals and the state that they hoped to foster through their activities.   Most of our Lebanese interviewees were fluent in English, reflecting the widespread bilingualism (and tri-lingualism) among the middle classes in Lebanon. In a few instances (mainly when dealing with francophone Lebanese), we needed the help of translators, whom we found among the employees of the organization.

In addition to interviews with NGOs in Lebanon, we conducted interviews with a former attaché in the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and sixteen representatives of international organizations based in Lebanon, Europe, or the U.S. We asked for information about the workings of their agencies and their programmatic goals and priorities; we also asked them to comment on whether and how they attempt to instill democratic values in the Arab world, and what they understand to be the aims of civil society, particularly with respect to youth. Finally, we spoke two Lebanese MPs and with seven educational professionals familiar with citizenship and civic education in Lebanon. These individuals provided us with general information about the ways that different political actors have focused on youth programs both to preserve and to eliminate sectarian differences. This information was supplemented by secondary information, including newspaper accounts, organizational reports, and websites.

As we have indicated above, the Western-funded NGO sector in Lebanon is quite large and constantly in flux, with organizations forming and dissolving with shifts in funding streams and programs. The 41 NGOs included in our study should not be regarded as a representative sample of the entire NGO sector, much less of the entire spectrum of civil society in Lebanon.

However, these NGOs do encompass a wide range of organizations in terms of aims, activities, and funding sources, and our interviews provide some indication of the real-world contexts in which donor aims are implemented. In offering a qualitative analysis of NGO activities and the dilemmas NGO directors face in responding to donor priorities, our objective is to illustrate some of the ways that the geopolitical aims of donors intersect with, and at times come up against, local political realities.   There are undoubtedly many other stories to be told about civil society, foreign aid, and geopolitical conflict in Lebanon.

  Respondents were promised confidentiality for themselves.   To protect the anonymity of study participants, we do not refer to any individuals by name, and we have removed, to the best of our ability, information that might identify their organizational connections.

NGOs and the production of youth citizenship in Lebanon

As described above, youth-based programs have emerged as a key priority of Western donors, and most major quasi-public and private philanthropic organizations have some focus on youth. For instance, MEPI lists 'Inspiring Youth' as one of its major aims (along with 'Empowering Women', 'Supporting Democracy Builders', and 'Fostering Economic Opportunity'), describing youth as 'the strongest advocates for positive change in their societies'.[40]   In Lebanon, MEPI has recently partnered with local organizations on youth entrepreneurship projects and on film and social-media projects designed to promote political reform, and it has regularly brought

'civically-minded' students from Lebanon and other Arab countries to the United States for leadership and citizenship training. Similarly, the Anna Lindh Foundation—a European intergovernmental institution that operates in the Mediterranean region and that currently partners with over 80 Lebanese NGOs and cultural/educational institutions—lists as one of its priorities the provision of educational programs for youth to promote 'intercultural dialogue' and citizenship. The Foundation has produced a 'citizenship handbook' for young Arabs to acquire the 'knowledge and skills to play an active role in civic life at the local and international level', and it has supported debate training across the region to encourage young people to 'speak up and be heard'. It also has provided guidance for school textbook writers in the region to 'construct a shared narrative for history education'.[41] Tony Blair's Faith Foundation has also been involved in school-based curriculum development for the purpose of promoting intercultural dialogue. His foundation's 'Face Faith' program, which operates in Lebanon and 18 other countries, uses telecommunications technology to link together students from different religious backgrounds worldwide in order to 'gain the dialogue skills required to prevent conflict' and to combat extremism by 'breaking down religious and cultural stereotypes'.

The local NGO workers in Lebanon whom we interviewed generally share the assumption that that young people are the most receptive to efforts to transform attitudes and social-political behaviors in post-conflict societies.[42] There was, in this sense, a very clear correspondence between donor aims and funding priorities and local NGO orientations. One NGO leader with whom we spoke stated that while often socialized into sectarianism at a very young age, young

people are relatively uncorrupted by Lebanese politics and therefore more open to democratic

practices and norms. Mohammed, a scouting organization leader, states, '…[I]n Lebanon,

where everyone is so busy with power, money, and authority, you have to start with youth.

They are the future of this country, and I think this is the only possible way to make a difference

in a hundred years.' Similarly, Roula states, 'I think that most people are very tired of the

system, but above a certain age, they won't do anything. They'll just go along. The youth are

the ones that want to change things'. A variation on this theme comes from Bassem, who

describes young people as part of the 'text generation'—pragmatic, savvy in social networking,

well-traveled, and familiar with Western culture. They are, he argues, at an 'age of purity and

pragmatism' and 'unpolluted by the political system'.

The NGO-led youth programming that we encountered in our research reflects the

preoccupations of Western civic education theorists, including the need to foster civic

knowledge, civic engagement, leadership, tolerance, and, increasingly, global awareness.[43] Our

interviewees' fluency in citizenship pedagogy comes from attending American educational

institutions in the Arab world, studying abroad, attending conferences, and/or going through

NGO-based training programs. For instance, Bassem, who runs a university-based civic

engagement program, had spent time studying at a U.S. university, where he learned about

service learning and civic-engagement curriculum requirements. He then partnered with a U.S.

university to form a mock international parliament in Lebanon, and parlayed this into a civic

engagement program. Hiba, who has been involved in non-sectarian scouting, in addition to

working toward a degree in education at an English-speaking university, was recruited to

participate in a civic engagement program in London; when we spoke with her, she was

preparing to go the U.S. for a 4-week long program on leadership and citizenship. After

graduating from university, she then was employed by another NGO that offered programming

for youth. This sort of 'career path' is not unusual, as NGOs are part of handful of few sectors

that are growing[44].   A final example is Mohammed, a youth leadership consultant who works

extensively with USAID and international NGOs. Mohammad holds a master's degree in

education from an English-language university and has participated for years in international

scouting leadership training programs; most of his material comes from UNICEF or from U.S.

and European sources, which he accesses over the internet.

The specific terminology used by our interviewees was consistent and centered on the

production of active citizens who act responsibly in their communities and who build bridges

between sectarian communities. Key terms that appear in the interviews include capacity

building, conflict resolution/management, coexistence, mutual respect, and dialogue—all of

which are set in contrast to the divisive and corrupt sectarian politics currently existing in

Lebanon. Our respondents explicitly describe these activities as 'non-political' or as

'depoliticizing', in the sense that they encourage young people to transcend sectarian

differences and sectarian prejudices. Toward this end, many activities funded by Western

agencies and NGOs attempt to bring together young people from different sectarian

backgrounds and meet and interact in controlled settings, with the assumption that greater

contact between groups will diminish stereotypes and hostilities. Bechara, who started

summer camps for young people during the civil war, and who continues to be involved in youth camps and conflict intervention, expresses this view as follows:

> When we live in a ghetto area, you build *fear*. You cannot do anything: you cannot move, live, make a nation, make a future or a common project through fear. Things are much easier when you *know* the other. One objective is to take people from all regions—from Akkar, the South, Beqa'a, Mt. Lebanon, Beirut—and *mix* them. Everyone has to know each other, and the walls of prejudice will come down.

This sentiment was expressed in virtually identical terms (e.g., 'walls of prejudice' and the importance of knowing one another) by an employee at the U.S. embassy and by a UN employee involved in youth citizenship programs.

Many groups create activities that aim to train young people how to discuss controversial issues in a non-aggressive, non-confrontational manner and to reach consensus. This is not to say that program coordinators discourage debate all together; but organizational leaders pick the topics to be discussed and exercise a significant degree of control over debate. An example of this comes from a USAID-funded environmental organization that has initiated several youth-based programs centered on citizenship and environmental stewardship. We quote one of the program directors at length to convey the emphasis on sublimating contentiousness and achieving consensus:

Political tensions were increasing in 2007-2008, so we started a program …to

increase dialogue among young people through experiential learning. We

trained people to debate hot topics—electoral law, economic strategies, the role

of women in society—things that have a lot of conflicting points of view. We

gathered young people from all regions …We tried to encourage a definition of

dialogue that encourages them to think outside the box—to move away from

debate and to move toward dialogue with the aim of finding a solution to a

problem. On the first day, they debate, but then they need to negotiate; they

have to put something on the table that will be accepted by everyone …We don't

always reach consensus, but they at least can identify some points that unite

them…. For people to be accepted into the program, they have to put aside their

political point of view for a few days; they can talk policy, but not politics.

The implication of such an approach is to construct debate as contentions where as dialogue

can promote understanding, reconciliation and healing.

The averseness to debate and the desire to cultivate dialogue, consensus, and common

Lebanese identity among youth are understandable in the aftermath of a civil war marked by

inter-sectarian violence. And interviewees who experienced the civil war are justifiably wary of

sectarian politicians and the raw pursuit of power. Bechara, using the distinction in French

between *le politique*, which he defines as 'community service', and *la politique*, which he defines as 'how to take power and to keep it,' states,

> Our politicians don't have time for us; they keep their power through fear and they put fear in front of their co-religionists. *La politique* in Lebanon is also about clientelism—about buying votes. Many political leaders in Lebanon have NGOs for the purpose of clientelism, for distributing favors and largesse, rather than for the purpose of serving.

Echoing this view, Dina, who participates in an organization dedicated to youth entrepreneurialism and civic engagement and who also runs a university civic engagement program, decries the spread of sectarian politics to university campuses, and supports the decision of the university administration to clamp down on expressions of sectarianism on campus:

> These are students, they are not politicians, and this is a university. I mean, I think it shouldn't be so politicized. …This is a university and these are clubs and these are things that have to do with students. It shouldn't be political. It's a pity that everything should be turned politically in this country. Let something be, just be, you know. Let students just nominate themselves and get elected for their qualities, not because they belong to a party.

For Dina, politics and sectarianism are homologous, and there seems to be no possibility of non-sectarian politics. Importantly, however, there was often a refusal to see the promotion of non-sectarianism (which is different from secularism) as political. Debate, sectarianism and politics – in the minds of most of our respondents – led inevitably to heightened conflict, clientelism, and/or corruption.

For respondents like Dina, the alternative to 'politics' is local action directed, for instance, toward municipal service-delivery. The emphasis on local, incremental change, along with democratic virtues, is present in many of the interviews we conducted, and meshes with ideologies that encourage local communities to be responsible for their own well-being.[45] For instance, Mohammed remarks,

> We have to start change at the local level, at the regional level, before thinking
>
> about changing this whole system, and I believe, brick after brick, we will be able
>
> to have more people who belief in each other, who believe in themselves, and
>
> who believe in developing a value system that starts from not littering from your
>
> car, from driving well, from appreciating the beauty of being alive in a certain
>
> place and space.

Likewise, Dina states,

All the things that we are doing, we're not making this huge difference; maybe

it's just a tiny difference, but you have to look at it maybe ten years from now.

Maybe now it's really nothing compared to the big need, the big gap.   But it's

better than nothing, and then you are setting the environment for people to

start getting more involved and maybe a couple of years down the road, things

will look better.

These, and many other youth leaders, excluded youth who were involved in political parties

and sectarian activities from their organizations' activities—or at least required them to remain

silent about their party and sectarian affiliations. While some leaders of NGOs did allow young

people who were involved in parties to participate, they struggled to articulate or to imagine a

form of politics that was not rooted in parties or sectarianism.

The goal of much NGO activity is, then, to avoid politics and to replace still-salient political

divisions with exercises in consensus-building and incremental change. This goal is

implemented through activities designed to activate youth citizenship at the local level—to give

young people the sense that they are empowered within their local communities. This

requires, first and foremost, that young people learn to set aside sectarian identities and values

and to think of themselves as citizens.

The limits to citizenship formation as a geopolitical practice

We have seen the NGO directors in Lebanon actively implement an internationalized, Western-formulated liberal-democratic discourse through their activities. Their explanations of their organizations' aims and methods bear witness to the pervasiveness of the idea of (neo)liberal citizenship as a remedy for sectarian dysfunction. This is not to say, however, that these discourses are simply and unproblematically translated into political change in Lebanon per the vision of the Western democracy industry or per the strategic aims of donor countries. First, as much as NGOs seek to displace sectarianism and to re-formulate citizenship in Lebanon, they remain very much embedded in existing political structures and relationships. Indeed, the fact that they receive funding from Western sources that openly support pro-Saudi factions while being openly hostile to Hizbulllah implicates NGOs in the very sectarian political structure they wish to dislodge.[46] NGOs and their patrons, in this sense, should be counted among, and not apart from, the array of actors and institutions that exercise political power and sovereignty in Lebanon, including the numerous local foundations and philanthropic organizations that are affiliated with particular sectarian political parties or political figures. Instructive cases are the Rene Mouwad Foundation, named for a Christian politician assassinated in 1989, and the Hariri Foundation, founded by former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri (father of Saad Hariri) during the civil war to provide scholarships. While these organizations describe their philanthropic work as 'non-sectarian', they are widely understood to be components of extensive sectarian patronage networks that include mass media, scout troops, youth movements, housing developers, and even university faculties[47].

NGO directors, of course, are fully aware of their own embroilment in Lebanese

sectarian politics, and they are deeply ambivalent both about the role of Western

funders and about their own role in Lebanese society.[48] Some interviewees, for

instance, remark upon the corruption endemic in the system of NGO sponsorship.

Karim, who runs social media training workshops for young people, states:

> Many calls for proposals come up related to social media, so we get approached
>
> from various international organizations, that they want us to be with them on
>
> some proposal.   All the activity, everything, we'll be doing; they will only be
>
> doing administrative stuff related to the project. They will give us 40% or 35% of
>
> the total project. So, like, 65%, will go to the international organization just to
>
> support their international staff and their operation costs…And they will get
>
> millions of dollars to do this just because they know someone in some
>
> department that they did some project before.

Other interviewees, while arguing for the need to bolster the state's legitimacy by wresting the

provision of social services away from sectarian parties, are uneasy with the takeover of the

state by a civil society constituted almost entirely by NGOs.   Rashid, for instance, states,

> We don't believe in the concept of state because we don't have a state; we have
>
> political confessional leaders who have their inner state. Having said that, the
>
> problem is that the state in Lebanon has been replaced by civil society. Civil

society, due to the generosity of the West, managed to play the role of the state

and forgot about its role as being a watchdog.

Still others express frustration at the timidity of NGO politics and the emphasis on leadership

skills, character development, and consensus over more substantive forms of participation and

debate. Hiba, for instance, states, 'We help them be more of community helpers; more of

having communication, leadership, social skills. …They become better planners, organizers;

they become better many things, but there's no program for activating their citizenship and

belonging to their country'.

These concerns and frustrations speak to the ambivalence NGO directors feel, and the

limitations they face, in attempting to create political alternatives in Lebanon. They also point

to the ways that NGO leaders at times circumvent or subvert Western geopolitical priorities.

For instance, while some of our respondents have been willing to sign funding contracts with

U.S. donors barring them from dealing with Hizbullah members, almost all of those with whom

we spoke disparaged this policy of exclusion, arguing that Hizbullah is a legitimate actor in

Lebanese politics and civil society.[49] Describing the time his pro-democracy group was

approached by USAID to lead a peace dialogue project, Rashid states,

> They wanted us to sign a paper that Hizbullah is a terrorist organization…But I
>
> don't believe that Hizbullah is a terrorist organization…If I'm going to rule out the

people who are supporting Hizbullah from the dialogue, who am I going to

dialogue with?

With the U.S. maintaining a hostile posture toward Hizbullah, the NGOs it supports have been

largely closed off from Shi'a Lebanese communities, who constitute the largest segment of the

Lebanese population. One of our contacts at the U.S. Embassy admitted as much, noting that

efforts by the embassy to engage Shi'a communities in language and American cultural

programs had been more-or-less rejected by these communities.   For this very reason, some of

the organizations with whom we spoke purposely did not solicit funds from U.S. agencies and

turned instead to what they perceived to be more 'neutral' funders like the Norwegian

embassy. Sometimes, as well, they accept money from other agencies that receive U.S. funding

if the intermediary does not impose the restrictions on Hizbullah.

Equally subversive is the questioning of the wisdom and desirability of anti-sectarianism.   Ali,

for instance, remarked on the small but vocal anti-sectarian political movement that organized

a series of marches and demonstrations in Beirut in the Spring of 2011. This movement was not

funded or directed by Western funders, though it did enjoy the support of many NGOs, and it

carried a familiar set of messages about liberal-democratic political reform. Ali, while

personally sympathizing with the movement, observes that those calling for an end of the

sectarian system and the establishment of a secular state are themselves promoting a group-

specific position and one that does not speak to many ordinary Lebanese, who are deeply

insecure about their economic and political position in the country. He notes that secularism

and anti-sectarianism in the pre-civil war period was a position largely supported by Lebanon's Orthodox Christian communities, and, in his opinion, continues to be associated with a limited segment of the population.   When asked if he sees current anti-sectarian leaders as different from the earlier generation, he remarks,

> I see the same people. I see the people who are Hamra and Gemayze [two relatively cosmopolitan and affluent parts of the Beirut]. I don't see that they are recruiting people in Chiyya [a poor Christian neighborhood that abuts a large Shi'a suburb]. Maybe they were honest in being secular, but they couldn't move toward the other sects. This is the same as Jumblatt.[50] He wanted to be secular, but he couldn't. He couldn't go out from his sect. And I believe that those people are still carrying that. There is individuality; there are also people who have lived outside Lebanon and they know what a secular system is. But what I'm saying is that the secular country is still far away from the people. If they [anti-sectarian activists] want to do a demonstration, [they should] carry banners that answer the people's needs, not ideologies.

There is, then, some sentiment among our interviewees that sectarianism serves a purpose and is meaningful to people, and that it cannot and should not be attacked or dismantled. In other words, despite their personal commitment to societal transformation in Lebanon, they do not seem entirely convinced about the feasibility or even desirability of the anti-sectarian politics that have been so central to Western donors' investments in Lebanon.

Finally, we suggest that the ambivalence felt by NGO directors toward their own activities is also felt by the youth served by NGOs. While we did not collect interviews with youth participants,[51] we did find interesting anecdotal evidence of youth skepticism toward the democratization agenda, hinting at the inability for NGO directors (or donor agencies) to steer young people in a particular direction.[52] An NGO report detailing the outcomes of a USAID-funded program on youth citizenship is illustrative. The report describes the recruitment of young people, mostly through universities and other NGOs, to take part in a 10-day leadership training program; these trainees then participated in a series of citizenship workshops with young people from all over Lebanon focused on 'raising awareness of the values of citizen participation and dialogue, in order to bring people to question their sectarian attitudes'. The report states that when participants were asked to define citizenship, they described the importance of recognizing a common history, common experiences, and a common future. But the report also indicates that there was some significant discord among the participants, who apparently were not convinced by the message of consensus. One participant, according to the report, 'argued that we cannot have a common history because it depends on the way a certain group of people consider the history of certain events.' This individual mentioned a notorious event in Lebanese history when the militia of Phalangist leader Samir Geagea massacred the family and entourage of his rival, Suleiman Frangieh. The individual then suggested that 'the reasons behind this assassination could be viewed differently according to people's different political affiliations; either pro-government or opposition stances'. This set off an argument among the participants, divided between 'people who agreed that the historical facts are the

same while the interpretation according to political affiliation is different, and those

participants who did not feel comfortable with the idea of a shared history or shared anything

else'. The report deemed the event a great success in terms of training young people to think

in terms of consensus, but the obvious contentiousness of this discussion suggests that political

differences within Lebanese society are not easily subsumed by the depoliticizing activities of

NGOs.

In sum, international agents and donors play an important role in Lebanon and other post-

conflict societies through generous funding of NGOs. But it is evident that these influences, on

their own, may not be capable of fundamentally altering existing political systems, identities,

and practices. As both Fregonese and Hazbun[53] have argued, the U.S. and other Western states

have consistently failed to understand or to appreciate the multiply situated nature of political

power, identity, and authority in Lebanon in the Middle East. NGO directors negotiate this

complex landscape on a daily basis and understand it well; while they adhere to the main

tenets of Western liberal-democratic discourse, they are keenly aware of their limitations, and

they question the value of their activities in actually fomenting meaningful change. By the

same token, they look for ways to be more effective by circumventing the restrictions placed on

them by donors' geopolitical agendas.   NGO directors' questioning of, and resistance to, their

circumstances suggests the difficulty in scripting a kind of civil society in post-conflict societies

(and perhaps all societies) in which citizenship is defined in opposition to meaningful social

identities.   Western donors, to be sure, have become important players in Lebanon's political

system; yet their ability to direct geopolitical outcomes by transforming citizenship should not be taken at face value.

Conclusion: Civil society, NGOs, and political futures in Lebanon

This article has sought to broaden our perspective on Western geopolitical practice in the Middle East by considering the production of citizenship and civil society as a geopolitical strategy. In doing so, it has brought the critical geopolitics literature, with its focus on foreign-policy discourse, into conversation with the growing critical literature on foreign aid, NGOs, and civil society. The U.S. and other Western states, we have shown, have tried to effect political change and to produce a favorable political order in the Middle East through the transformation of citizenship. In the case of Lebanon, the transformation of citizenship has targeted the country's sectarian political system, and donors have used local NGOs—most of whom have a sincere desire to encourage sensible political changes and to prevent further conflict—to press their own geopolitical agendas in the region. NGO leaders, in turn, have become fluent in the language of citizenship and democratic citizenship proffered by international organizations and donors. These discourses highlight the importance of civil society and youth as intended agents of wider democratic transformation. While focused on the development of citizenship and democracy, NGO practices tend to promote the de-politicization of youth by shifting political energies away from 'sectarian politics' and toward pragmatic problem-solving at the local scale.

In many ways, NGO activities serve the geopolitical needs of Western states, which are eager to stabilize what they view to be Lebanon's dysfunctional sectarian system. For the U.S. and other Western powers, Lebanon's sectarianism leaves it vulnerable to outside meddling, especially by Iran and Syria. The outcome of Western involvement, however, is neither the stabilization of Lebanon nor the demise of sectarianism. Our interviewees, despite their commitment to a new political reality, are aware of the limitations they face and do not seem fully convinced of the effectiveness of their programs.   Reflecting their own experiences and values, they recognize sectarianism as meaningful and important to Lebanese citizens, if ultimately corrosive to the Lebanese state. At the same time, they recognize Western donors, and especially the U.S., to be active participants in sectarian politics through their support of particular factions, rather than agents of change.

The question that is raised, then, is what kind of citizenship and what of civil society will be created through the efforts of these, and other, organizations? It is tempting but ultimately too simplistic to read the role of NGOs as the tools of Western or international interests. The people who work in those organizations bring their own experiences and values to bear on their work and are deeply aware of the contradictions produced by their activities. Even more, they bring to their work their own analyses of the conflicts that have divided Lebanon and that threaten its future—analyses that do not fully mesh with those of international donors. While leaders of NGOs and international organizations may share values about the importance of working through civil society and the importance of building a new citizen identity for youth in Lebanon, they do not fully agree on the way forward or on the possibilities of non-sectarianism.

The promotion of youth citizenship by NGOs in Lebanon thus bears the imprint of Western

geopolitical interests but is not reducible to those influences. Far from depoliticized, citizenship

in Lebanon remains deeply contested.

Acknowledgments

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[1] Hereafter referred to as 9/11, with the recognition that this shorthand is problematic insofar as it privileges the U.S. perspective on the causes and significance of the al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington. See Peter Hopkins, <u>The Issue of Masculine Identities for British Muslims after 9/11: A Social Analysis</u> (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press 2008).

[2] An example of 'smart power' discourse can be found is Center for Strategic and International Studies, <u>CSIS Commission on Smart Power : A Smarter, More Secure America</u> (Washington, DC: The CSIS Press 2007)

[3] In using the term 'Western' throughout this paper to refer to wealthy, industrialized countries of Europe and North America, as well as Australia, and New Zealand, we do not wish to suggest

that these countries are monolithic in their attitudes and foreign-policy approaches to the Middle East. There have been many occasions on which Western states have been at odds with each other, most notably with respect to the initiation of war in Iraq. Still, there are broad similarities between them in their use of foreign aid to effect regional transformations in the Middle East and elsewhere. Our analysis emphasizes these commonalities; forthcoming publications will address the more subtle distinctions between donor aims and activities.

[4] Asli Bali and Aziz Rana, 'American Overreach: Strategic Interests and Millennial Ambitions in the Middle East', Geopolitics 15/2 (2010) pp. 210-238.

[5] (ibid. p. 213).

[6] Simon Dalby, 'Calling 911: Geopolitics, Security and America's New War', Geopolitics 8/3 (2003) pp. 61-86; Philippe Le Billon and Fouad El Khatib, 'From Free Oil to "Freedom Oil": Terrorism, War and U.S. Geopolitics in the Persian Gulf', Geopolitics 9/1 (2004) pp. 109-137; Aylın Güney and Fulya Gökcan, 'The "Greater Middle East" as a "Modern" Geopolitical Imagination in American Foreign Policy', Geopolitics 15/1 (2010) pp. 22-38.

[7] Jill Williams and Vanessa Massaro, 'Feminist Geopolitics: Unpacking (In)Security, Animating Social Change', Geopolitics 18 (2013) p. 753; see also Jennifer Fluri, '"Foreign Passports Only": Geographies of (Post)Conflict Work in Kabul, Afghanistan', Annals of the Association of American Geographers 99/5 (2009) pp. 986-994.

[8] Yves Dezalay and Bryant G. Garth, 'Legitimating the New Legal Orthodoxy', in Y. Dezalay and B.G. Garth (eds.), Global Prescriptions: The Production, Exportation, and Importation of a New Legal Orthodoxy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2002) pp. 306-344

[9] Azra Hromadzic, 'Discourses of Integration and Practices of Reunification at the Mostar Gymnasium, Bosnia and Herzegovina', <u>Comparative Education Review</u> 52/4 (2008) pp. 541-563; Doyle Stevick, 'Foreign Influence and Economic Insecurity in International Partnerships for Civic Education: The Case of Post-Soviet Estonia', in E.D. Stevick and B.A.U. Levinson (eds.), <u>Advancing Democracy Through Education? U.S. Influence Abroad and in Domestic Practices</u> (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing 2008) pp. 97-128; Lynn Staeheli and Dan Hammett, '"For the Future of the Nation": Citizenship, Nation and Education in South Africa', <u>Political Geography</u>, 32 pp. 32-41.

[10] We draw here on Sara Fregonese's concept of 'hybrid sovereignty', which highlights multiple loci of power and political authority within the Lebanese political system. We also draw on Hazbun's understanding of Middle East politics as complex, pluralistic assemblages of state and non-state actors. See Sara Fregonese, 'Beyond the "Weak State": Hybrid Sovereignties in Beirut', <u>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</u> 30 (pp.655-674); Waleed Hazbun, 'U.S. Policy and the Geopolitics of Insecurity in the Arab World', <u>Geopolitics</u> 15/2 pp. 239-262.

[11] James McGann and Mary Johnstone, 'The Power Shift and the NGO Credibility Crisis', <u>The International Journal of Not-For-Profit Law</u> 8/2 (2006) pp.

[12] Jennifer Fluri's work on aid workers and NGOs in Afghanistan has provided especially rich accounts of what she calls the 'interlocking spaces of neoliberal economic structures and practices of development, humanitarian aid, geopolitics, and militarism' (see note 6, p. 986). For an overview of the critical literature on NGOs and a lucid discussion of the perverse effects of measures to promote NGO 'accountability', see Jem Bendell, <u>Debating NGO Accountability</u>, Development Dossier produced by UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, UNCTAD/NGLS/2006/1 (United Nations 2006)

[13] For a critical discussion, see Uma Kothari, 'Authority and Expertise: The Professionalisation of International Development and the Ordering of Dissent', <u>Antipode</u> 37/3 (2005) pp. 425-446;

Bryan Garth, 'Building Strong and Independent Judiciaries through the New Law and Development: Behind the Paradox of Consensus and Perpetually Disappointing Results', <u>DePaul Law Review</u> 52 (2002-3) pp. 383-400.

[14] Janine R. Wedel, <u>Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe</u>, (New York: Palgrave 2001); Heather Hindman, 'The Hollowing Out of Aidland: Subcontracting the New Development Family in Nepal', in H. Hindman and A.M. Fechter (eds.), <u>Inside the Everyday Lives of Development Workers : The Challenges and Futures of Aidland</u>, (Kumarian Press 2012) pp. 169-191; Kothari (note 8).

[15] A fascinating case study is provided by Julie Hemment, 'The Riddle of the Third Sector: Civil Society, Western Aid, and NGOs in Russia', <u>Anthropological Quarterly</u> 77/2 (2004) pp. 215-241

[16] Giles Mohan and Kristian Stokke, 'The Politics of Localization: From Depoliticizing Development to Politicizing Democracy', in K.R. Cox, M. Low, and J. Robinson (eds.), *Sage Handbook of Political Geography* (London; Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications 2008) pp. 545-562.

[17] See, for instance, Helmut K. Anheier, <u>Civil Society: Measurement, Evaluation, Policy</u> (London: Earthscan 2004)

[18] Alex Jeffrey <u>The Improvised State: Sovereignty, Performance and Agency in Dayton Bosnia</u> (London: Blackwell 2012).

[19] Mary Kaldor , 'The Idea of Global Civil Society', <u>International Affairs</u> 79/3 (2003) pp. 583-593;

[20] In many strands of democratic theory, civil society is conceptualized as an autonomous sphere or field of action consisting of associations that can mediate in a non-violent fashion between competing interests within society and the state; it is conceived, as well, as a space in

which members of a polity learn to participate as citizens, rather than as clients of the state or of political parties—see, for instance, Peter H. Schuck, 'Liberal Citizenship', in E. Isin and B.S. Turner (eds.), <u>Handbook of Citizenship Studies</u> (London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi : Sage Publications 2002) pp. 131-144. For a more detailed discussion of the meaning of civil society in a context of NGO activity, see Tanya Basok and Suzan Ilcan, 'In the Name of Human Rights: Global Organizations and Participating Citizens', <u>Citizenship Studies</u> 10/3 (2006) pp. 309-327; Jeffrey (note 12); Louise Amoore and Paul Langley, 'Ambiguities of Global Civil Society', <u>Review of International Studies</u> 30 (2004) pp. 89-110.

[21] Katharyne Mitchell, 'Educating the National Citizen in Neoliberal Times: From the Multicultural Self to the Strategic Cosmopolitan, <u>Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers</u> 28/4 (2003) pp. 387-403.

[22] Related arguments are developed in Kothari's critique of participatory development practices and discourses (note 8); also Kaldor (note 13).

[23] (Stevick, note 6; Hromadzic, Azra, note 6)

[24] Susie Weller provides a similar assessment in the U.K. context in '"Teach Us Something Useful": Contested Spaces of Teenagers' Citizenship', <u>Space and Polity</u> 7/2 (2003) pp. 153-171; see also Jacqueline Kennelly, and Jo-Anne Dillabough, 'Young People Mobilizing the Language of Citizenship: Struggles for Classification and New Meaning in an Uncertain World', <u>British Journal of Sociology of Education</u> 29/5 (2008) pp. 493-508.

[25](Hemment, note 10); see also Ian Harper, 'World Health and Nepal: Producing Internationals, Healthy Citizenship, and the Cosmopolitan, in D. Moss (ed.), <u>Adventures in Aidland : the Anthropology of Professionals in International Development</u> (Berghahn Books 2005) pp. 123-138.

[26] Sundstrom makes a similar point in her analysis of Western donors' mixed success in promoting new political norms in post-Soviet Russia. In this case, the role of Western donors and Western-funded NGOs as 'norm entrepreneurs' and 'moral financiers' has been tempered by widespread popular resistance to the norms and morals being promoted. In particular, heavy Western funding of feminist organizations have done little to generate popular support for women's rights beyond the issue of domestic violence. Sundstrom's account suggests that outcomes of NGO and donor activities can be highly variable and ambiguous. See Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, 'Foreign Assistance, International Norms, and NGO Development: Lessons from the Russian Campaign', International Organization 59 (2005) pp. 419-449.

[27] Sheila Carapico, 'Foreign Aid for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World', Middle East Journal 56/3 (2002) pp. 379-395.

[28] The Bush Administration, for instance, created an 'Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy' charged with improving the image of the U.S. in the Arab and Muslim world. Following the second Gulf War, the Bush Administration re-committed itself to the exercise of public diplomacy and 'soft power', directing U.S. embassies in the Arab world to bring together economic development, military aid, rule of law, and civil society—explicitly tying these goals to countering the influence of al-Qaeda, as well as Iran, in the region. For critical discussions see Giles Scott-Smith and Martijn Mos, 'Democracy Promotion and the New Public Diplomacy', in L. Miller and M. Ledwidge (eds.), New Directions in U.S. Foreign Policy (Oxford, UK: Routledge 2009) pp. 225-240; David M. Edelstein and Ronald R. Krebs, 'Washington's Troubling Obsession with Public Diplomacy', Survival 47/1 (2005) pp. 89-104.

[29] See Mark Landler, 'Rice Offers a More Modest Strategy for the Middle East', New York Times (October 26, 2013) for a journalistic account of shifting priorities in the Obama Administration. For a more polemical account of Washington's scaled-back commitment to democracy in the Arab World, and an argument in favor of greater spending to encourage deep political reform,

see Shadi Hamid and Peter Mandaville, 'Bringing the United States Back into the Middle East' The Washington Quarterly 36/4 (2013) pp. 95-105. Hamid and Mandaville, along with other critics, have accused both the Congress and the Obama Administration of being more reactive than proactive in their approach to political transitions in the region. It should be noted that the Obama Administration did include in its 2013 and 2014 budget proposals a new Middle East and North Africa Incentive Fund (or MENA IF, described by some as an 'Arab Spring Support Fund'), designed to capitalize 'on the opportunities and challenges presented by the Arab transitions, providing incentives to countries that are moving to undertake the democratic and economic reforms necessary to provide lasting stability in the region' (See 'Highlights of the Department of State and U.S. Agency for International Development Budget' factsheet, available at

http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1869/FY2014Highlights_FactSheet.pdf). Congress, though, has refused to fund MENA IF, citing a lack of clear programmatic aims. As in the past, the State Department has used other funds to pay for democracy activities in the region. The State Department recently created a special Office for Middle East Transitions to oversee democracy promotion activities.

[30] More specifically, Tony Blair, in a 2014 speech published on the Faith Foundation website ('Why the Middle East Matters'), suggests that what is happening in the Middle East 'still represents the biggest threat to global security of the early 21st Century' and that radical Islam is 'undermining the possibility of peaceful co-existence in an era of globalisation'. Like Shadi Hamid and Peter Mandaville (note 29), he has urged continued active engagement in promoting democratic reform in the Arab world. Available at http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/blogpost/why-middle-east-matters.

[31] Ussama Makdisi, 'Reconstructing the Nation-State: The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon', Middle East Report 200/July-September (1996) pp. 23-26; Laura Robson, Colonialism and Christianity in Mandate Palestine (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press 2011).

[32] Max Weiss, 'The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon', <u>History Compass</u> 7/1 (2009) pp. 141-154.

[33] For a rich description of political performances of cosmopolitanism in Lebanon, see Lucia Volk, <u>Memorials and Martyrs in Modern Lebanon</u> (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 2010).

[34] Saad Hariri served as Prime Minister from 2009 to 2011, when his cabinet collapsed. His position has since been significantly weakened, and he is currently residing outside of Lebanon. A useful overview of U.S. expenditures in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East between 2005 and 2010 is Jeremy M. Sharp, 'U.S. Foreign Assistance to the Middle East: Historical Background, Recent Trends, and the FY2011 request', Report for Congress prepared by Congressional Research Service (2010).

[35] Fregonese (note 7)

[36] For alternative accounts of Hizbullah, see Lara Deeb, <u>An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon</u> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2006); Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, <u>Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities</u> (New York: Columbia University Press 2008); and Mona Fawaz, 'Hezbollah as Urban Planner? Questions To and From Urban Planning', <u>Planning Theory</u> 8/4 (2009) pp. 323-334.

[37] As described in note 29, the U.S. Congress has drastically cut expenditures to the region overall with the draw-down of operations in Iraq. In Lebanon, however, foreign aid of various kinds has increased in the context of unrest in Syria and a growing refugee crisis. In 2012, the U.S. allocated more than $240 million of emergency humanitarian assistance efforts in Lebanon in response to the Syrian crisis. That same year, the U.S. devoted $42.5 million of its total

foreign assistance budget in Lebanon ($317.5 million, including emergency assistance) to

various programs revolving around civil society and conflict resolution. Lebanon was among

the top five recipients of U.S. economic assistance (including all forms of development aid, but

excluding emergency aid) in the MENA region, and also among the top 5 upper-middle-income

country recipients of U.S. economic assistance, in 2011 and 2012 ($115 million and $141 million

respectively). Detailed information about country-specific funding can be found on the USAID

website: http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/data/country.html; also USAID Foreign Assistance Fast

Facts FY 2012, available at http://gbk.eads.usaidallnet.gov/data/fast-facts.html

[38] The most recent World Bank data show the value of all foreign assistance to Lebanon,
including special loans and grants from official agencies and multilateral institutions to have
been 580 million in 2009, 448 million in 2010, 474 million in 2011, and 710 million in 2012.   See
'World Bank Net Official Development Assistance and Official Aid Received (Current U.S.$)',
available at http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ALLD.CD. Along with the U.S., the EU
has been a major contributor of assistance to Lebanon and has incorporated the country into a
wider network of partnerships with Mediterranean countries designed to enhance Europe's
security. A good overview of European 'neighborhood' policies in North Africa and the Middle
East is provided by Raffaella A. Del Sarto, 'Borderlands: The Middle East and North Africa as the
EU's Southern Buffer Zone', in D. Bechev and K. Nicolaidis (eds.), Mediterranean Frontiers:
Borders, Conflict, and Memory in a Transnational World (New York: I.B. Tauris 2010) pp. 149-
165.

[39] See www.youcitizen.org for further details.

[40] See Middle East Partner Initiative, http://mepi.state.gov/mepi/english-mepi/what-we-
do/inspiring-the-next-generation-of-leaders.html

[41] Our interviews with educators indicated that history teaching is very contentious and divisive in Lebanon, and that educational reformers have had little success in creating a universal sense of membership in Lebanese society through standardized curricula. The Anna Lindh Foundation's efforts in promoting societal cohesion through history education are very meaningful in this respect. Interestingly, however, in describing its 'History Teachers' Guidebook', the foundation highlights two chapters in particular, one on teaching about the Crusades and the other on teaching about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One might guess from these chapters that the textbook is aimed equally at diminishing presumed anti-Western hostility as much as it is aimed at smoothing over conflicts within national societies.

[42] Suad Joseph, 'Teaching Rights and Responsibilities: Paradoxes of Globalization and Children's Citizenship in Lebanon', Journal of Social History summer (2005) pp. 1007-1026.

[43] See, for instance, Audrey Osler and Hugh Starkey, Changing Citizenship: Democracy and Inclusion in Education (London: Palgrave 2005).

[44] Some NGOs also use employment in NGOs as a sign of their successful intervention in youths' lives and include it in their annual reports to funding agencies.

[45] Ayman M. Alsayed, 'Discourse Versus Practice in Civic Education for Development: The Case of USAID Assistance in Palestine', in E.D. Stevick and B.A.U. Levinson (eds.), Advancing Democracy Through Education? U.S. Influence Abroad and in Domestic Practices (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing 2008) pp. 75-96; see also Steven E. Finkel, 'Can Democracy Be Taught?' Journal of Democracy 14/4(2003) pp. 137-151; Mohan and Stokke (note 11)

[46] Hazbun (note 7)

[47] See Melani Cammet and Sukriti Issar, 'Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon', <u>World Politics</u> 62/3 (2010), pp. 381-421. Tellingly, the organizations associated with high profile politicians have adopted a language that is virtually identical to that promoted by many international organizations, listing as their priorities local entrepreneurship, democracy promotion, women's and children's empowerment, and the like. The Hariri, Mouwad, and Safadi foundations have all received funding from international donors despite their clear affiliation with sectarian political figures.

[48] Compare with Hemment (note 10). Wedel's comment that 'Aid appears more like a series of chemical reactions that begin with the donor policies but are transformed by the agendas, interests, and interactions of the donor and recipient representatives' is especially apt here (Wedel, note 9, p. 8).

[49] Some Western embassies and groups do support Shi'a organizations and make an effort to work in Shi'a areas; but Shi'a civil society seems to sustain itself mainly through funds from Iran and the wealthy Lebanese Shi'a diaspora in West Africa.

[50] Walid Jumblatt is a leader of the Druze community and of the Progressive Socialist Party.

[51] Interviews with youth participants are an important component of the larger project of which this research is part.

[52] Kallio and Hakli provide a more in-depth analysis of the ways in which young people practice citizenship and exercise political agency in the midst of official and semi-official efforts to steer their participation and subjectivity, Kirsi Pauliina Kallio and Jouni Hakli, 'Tracing Children's Politics', <u>Political Geography</u> 30/2 (2011) pp. 99-109.

[53] Fregonese (note 7) and Hazbun (note 7)