Border management in an era of 'statebuilding lite': security assistance and Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty

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Borders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have traditionally been simultaneously hard and soft. They are hard inasmuch as low levels of formal trade and integration, coupled with regional conflicts and centralized state systems, foster rigid and military control of external borders. They are also soft, however, since colonial border demarcation entailed arbitrary division of social groups, and created fluid borderlands where tribal links and cross-border exchanges have rendered non-state governance models resilient and durable. In the wake of the Arab upheavals in 2011, we have witnessed increased pressure on regional borders, and subsequent militarization of borders and borderlands. We have also observed increased cross-border activity, and in some cases a *de jure* or de facto challenging of formal borders,[1] which further adds to the question of how changes at the border structure Middle East sovereignty processes. While, as Fawcett explains elsewhere in this special issue,[2] the western state model and its borders may have proved durable, challenges 'at the border' are likely to have implications for governance and sovereignty processes in composite political systems.

In discussing the Middle East, as in debates elsewhere on hybrid political orders,[3] some have advocated using the term 'hybrid sovereignty' to describe the coexistence of non-state and state forms of authority.[4] In this view, governance modalities are expressed and felt differently from in the western state, and elements of both formal and non-formal governance structures interact and overlap within a social space. Hybridity is also covered in the literature on peacebuilding as well as in the broader discourse on security governance, where terms such as 'hybrid

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[1] Raffaella A. Del Sarto, 'Contentious borders in the Middle East and North Africa: context and concepts', *International Affairs* 93: 4, July 2017, pp. 767–87.

[2] Louise Fawcett, 'States and sovereignty in the Middle East: myths and realities', *International Affairs* 93: 4, July 2017, pp. 789–807.

[3] Volker Boege, M. Anne Brown and Kevin P. Clements, 'Hybrid political orders, not fragile states', *Peace Review* 21: 1, March 2009, pp. 13–21, DOI:10.1080/10402650802689997.

[4] Gökhan Bacik, *Hybrid sovereignty in the Arab Middle East: the cases of Kuwait, Jordan, and Iraq* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Sara Fregonese, 'Beyond the "weak state": hybrid sovereignties in Beirut', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30: 4, 2012, pp. 655–74.

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peace'[5] and 'hybrid security governance'[6] are proposed to capture how domestic actors borrow selectively from international assistance 'packages', and where mixed or 'hybrid' orders combine elements of domestic and external governance. These approaches contribute to a broader understanding of domestic agency, and successfully rectify the 'weak state' or deficit perspectives. But they fail to capture, first, the emergence of a more pragmatic approach to security assistance based less on norms and rules, and second, the empowerment of subnational actors enabled by global discourses on security practices.

This article examines external actors' engagement in border control processes, and asks how donors reconfigure the relationship between the external border and the state in cases of 'hybrid sovereignty'. This amounts to a reading of security assistance as a form of statebuilding, yet with one important difference from past iterations: whereas statebuilding as witnessed in its heyday in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Liberia and East Timor was founded on roughly coherent strategic concepts such as security sector reform (SSR), rule of law, institution-building and so forth, and whereas political commitment to these (supposedly) coordinated processes was considered a necessary condition, the current version of security assistance takes place without (much) formal domestic political involvement. Therefore, analyses of SSR according to a norm diffusion approach have problems explaining the lack of explicit norms in contemporary security assistance. Moreover, technical approaches to procedural 'uptake' of specific practices fail to recognize the inherently political nature of empowering subnational security actors. International security assistance—defined here as activities aiming to 'organize, train, equip, rebuild/build and advise foreign security forces and their supporting institutions from the tactical to ministerial levels'[7]—is typically initiated by individual donor countries, rather than taking place within a formally coordinated framework, and establishes direct and often informal links with subnational domestic security agencies. In this way, security assistance in general and border management in particular become depoliticized and decentralized, allowing each donor to pursue its own priorities and normativities. It is pragmatic and ad hoc. It follows non-transparent patterns of implementation, and it is directed by parallel strategic priorities rather than cohesive reform objectives. As a consequence, its effects are increasingly difficult to evaluate and analyse.

Assemblage approaches help to define the fuzzy linkages that exist. Following on from Saskia Sassen's work on how the dual processes of state disassembly and (global) reassembly create new forms of social interaction practices that reconfigure distinctions between public and private, and between global and local, Abrahamsen

[5] Roger MacGinty, 'Hybrid peace: the interaction between top–down and bottom–up peace', *Security Dialogue* 41: 4, 8 Jan. 2010, pp. 391–412; Anna K. Jarstad and Roberto Belloni, 'Introducing hybrid peace governance: impact and prospects of liberal peacebuilding', *Global Governance* 18: 1, 2012, pp. 1–6.

[6] Ursula C. Schroeder, Fairlie Chappuis and Deniz Kocak, 'Security sector reform and the emergence of hybrid security governance', *International Peacekeeping* 21: 2, 15 March 2014, pp. 214–30.

[7] United States Government Accountability Office, *Building partner capacity: key practices to effectively manage department of defense efforts to promote SA*, GAO-13-335-T (Washington DC, 14 Feb. 2013). There are competing and/or overlapping terms, notably NATO's 'military capacity-building' and the EU's 'security sector support/reform'.

and Williams propose 'global security assemblages' as a means to analyse how a 'range of different security agents and normativities interact, cooperate and compete, to produce new institutions, practices and forms of security governance'.[8] Treating contemporary security assistance as a global security assemblage allows us to focus on how different agents and the normativities they espouse interact and compete in contexts described as 'fragile'. Such 'fragile' contexts are particularly relevant as sites of global security assemblages: they are defined as weak and characterized by patterns of 'hybrid sovereignty', in which state and non-state actors interact in ways that defy conventional expectations based on the sovereign nation-state. The current intensification of security assistance, necessitated by global discourses of transnational terrorism, migration and the danger of failed states, is in need of alternative and critical analyses that move beyond evaluations that concentrate on 'success' or 'failure'. This article conceptualizes these practices as 'statebuilding lite', with the aim of understanding how global security assemblages are constituted in the post-2011 Middle East. In contexts of 'statebuilding lite', external normativities and subnational interests collude and collide, with often unintended impact on composite systems of 'hybrid sovereignty'.

In exploring such 'statebuilding lite' processes, the Lebanese case is instructive. Seen for decades as a pariah state, a weak state or even a non-state, and as a void in the otherwise state-centric Middle East, Lebanon has in fact emerged as a bulwark against escalating instability in the Levant, and has proved more resilient than expected.[9] This has come about despite the serious spillover effects from the Syrian war, in terms of both the influx of refugees and a rekindling of sectarian conflicts that mirrors and is directly related to the Syrian war. Lebanon is also a battleground in the broader Middle East competition for influence; and security assistance, authorized under UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1701, which calls upon the international community 'to support the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon within its internationally recognized border',[10] must be seen in this geopolitical context, dominated by Iranian–Saudi/US struggles for control. Since 2006, substantial amounts of security assistance have propped up the Lebanese armed forces, the police, intelligence and other security agencies. This support accelerated significantly after 2011, as the Middle East unravelled and strategic priorities of countering jihadism on the one hand and Iranian influence on the other gave renewed impetus to security assistance in the region. Security assistance is now undertaken by nearly every European and North American embassy in Beirut. The *modus operandi* is one in which each donor digs its own niche, supporting 'its' agency among the myriad of security actors, in what can best be described as a security assistance 'bonanza'—intense and multidirectional external engagement delivered in an unregulated and

[8] Saskia Sassen, *Territory, authority, rights: from medieval to global assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Rita Abrahamsen and Michael C. Williams, 'Security beyond the state: global security assemblages in international politics', *International Political Sociology* 3: 1, 2009, p. 3.

[9] N. Noe, 'Confronting the Islamic State: Lebanon's tenuous success amidst growing threats', in J. Barnes-Dacey, E. Geranmayeh and D. Levy, eds, *The Islamic State through the regional lens* (London: European Council of Foreign Relations, 2015).

[10] UNSC Resolution 1701, 11 Aug. 2006.

uncoordinated fashion without overall political direction. Local security institutions, locked in a delicate system of sectarian power-sharing, are keen to exploit the momentum, and each agency has its 'diplomatic corps' of liaisons to ensure flows of security assistance.

This security assistance bonanza is aided by the polarized and unstable political situation in Lebanon. Political instability and inability to govern effectively are in part endemic to the system of power-sharing among Lebanon's sects that has prevailed since the civil war, but has seen further polarization and paralysis since the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, which led to street violence and the formation of two competing political alliances. Since 2011 this split has deepened: one set of parties, the so-called March 8 Alliance including the Shi'a party Hezbollah, supports Assad, while a second camp, the March 14 Alliance, spearheaded by the Sunni-based Future Movement led by the current Prime Minister Saad Hariri, Rafik Hariri's son, demands a break with Lebanon's historically strong ties to Syria. The polarization has severe effects on Lebanese socio-political life, and in the context of security assistance it is notable how much of the 'niche approach' is determined by subnational politics and individual liaisons with the donor community. In this polarized political environment, external support for 'border management' has consequences for the relative influence of subnational security institutions and the politics they profess. Support for one security institution will have a knock-on effect on the politico-sectarian balance that defines the Lebanese state. It will also have consequences for broader questions of governance: the Lebanese state's capacity to govern effectively is hampered by both political deadlock and economic constraints, and this leads to an increasing reliance on security governance as the main manifestation of the state. In the absence of a comprehensive strategy for reforming the security sector, external security assistance is likely to exacerbate this imbalance.

The core of this article draws on around 25 interviews conducted by the author with Lebanese security officials, donor representatives and political analysts during 2015 and 2016. Given the opaque nature of the topic, participants' views are key to disentangling how the external and the domestic become intertwined in the case analysed. The article first defines the conceptualization of security assistance as 'statebuilding lite', before discussing how global discourses of territorial control, counterterrorism and migration management are manifested in Lebanon. Finally, it analyses the findings from research in 2015 and 2016 on the effects on Lebanese sovereignty processes of a small EU-financed project on integrated border management (IBM), and observes how the EU concept of 'integration' has accommodated to the hybrid Lebanese context. In conclusion, the article reflects on the implications of this analysis for broader debates on the relationship between borders and sovereignty in the changing Middle East region.

Security assistance and border management in an era of 'statebuilding lite'

Controlling international borders has become an increasingly diverse practice. Far from witnessing their declining importance, we are seeing logics of control over globalized flows in people, goods and intangible assets reshaping the policy and practice of managing borders, eventually redefining the relationship between territory and sovereignty.[11] Such a transformation moves beyond linear logics, leading to processes where territorial border zones are seen as creating a security continuum, even a 'Möbius ribbon' which erases the distinction between inside and outside, rather than affirming any fixed point of separation.[12] Moreover, we may observe how borders have become 'mobile', inasmuch as 'rebordering' processes are to be seen across everyday life, and not only at the external territorial border.[13] Global–local assemblages, in which the global enters into the local in ways that defy conceptions of sovereign power and the state, are increasingly at the forefront of research into post-national practices.[14]

In parallel to this transformation of the nature and effect of border processes there exists a plethora of actors seeking to influence the border control practices of other states. A complex web of actors are increasingly involved in border management programmes across the globe—from ad hoc training and equipping of border patrols in geopolitically significant regions to long-term capacity-building of customs organizations, border guards and intelligence agencies. To some extent, border management has become an umbrella term, encompassing the entire gamut of strategic priorities, including counterterrorism, the fight against organized crime, migration management and protection of territorial sovereignty. Given the deeply transformative rebordering processes that are taking place alongside the surge in global flows of people, goods and capital, there is a need to analyse the effects of such border management practices on the political order in their respective domestic contexts. Describing the current practice as 'statebuilding lite'—to encompass the ad hoc, bilateral and pragmatic security assistance modalities that have replaced comprehensive statebuilding policies—acknowledges the changing character of contemporary security assistance, while still recognizing how external actors and their normativities enter into local contexts. Describing the current situation as a 'bonanza' implies that so much security assistance is being proffered, and so little formal political steering and coordination is involved, that

[11] Peter R. Andreas, 'Redrawing the line: borders and security in the twenty-first century', *International Security* 28: 2, 2003, pp. 78–111; Stuart Elden, *Terror and territory: the spatial extent of sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); David Newman, 'Boundaries, territory and postmodernity: towards shared or separate spaces', in M. Pratt and J. Brown, eds, *Borderlands under stress* (London: Kluwer, 2002); Sassen, *Territory, authority, rights*.

[12] Didier Bigo, 'The Möbius ribbon of internal and external security(ies)', in M. Albert, D. Jacobson and Y. Lapid, eds, *Identities, borders, orders: rethinking international relations theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

[13] Peter Andreas and Thomas J. Biersteker, *The rebordering of North America: integration and exclusion in a new security context* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[14] See Sassen, *Territory, authority, rights*; Brenda Chalfin, *Neoliberal frontiers: an ethnography of sovereignty in west Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

subnational actors have begun competing for resources. This bonanza is driven on the donors' side by their geopolitical interests as well as by their desire to be perceived as engaged and effective in global 'hotspots'; and on the recipient side, it is driven by the ability of subnational security agencies to establish direct links with external sources of funding and support. Such sources can enhance the domestic standing of the agency or unit, and of the politics it professes.

In many contexts where international interventions in border management take place—in unstable countries where so-called 'porous' borders are considered to pose threats to global security—the existing situation is often one of soft frontiers rather than fixed hard borders. In these circumstances, the aim of border management programmes is often to change open-ended spaces along the external rim of the state into hard and controllable boundaries—albeit with flexibility to allow the passage of 'desirable' goods and people for purposes of trade and economic integration. Border management strategies are thus neo-liberal and 'soft' in principle, but often expressed in rigid and 'hard' manifestations.[15] Border management as a part of security assistance should therefore be treated as a set of ideas that emerges in one context and is transferred to another, and which encompasses strategic donor priorities as well as normative structures.

The following sections of the article will first outline how border management as a global practice enters into, gets localized in, and eventually produces a political effect in Lebanon, and then elaborate on how a micro-study of the EU IBM project provides an example of how donor normativities are co-opted by subnational actors in the hybrid security environment.

Security assistance in Lebanon after 2011

Security assistance in Lebanon must be seen as part of the geopolitical struggle for wider domination in the Middle East. After the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in 2005, and the ensuing conflict between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006, UNSC Resolution 1701 authorized international assistance to support the 'territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence' of Lebanon, and reinforced the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mission with robust peacekeepers.[16] Subsequent security assistance programmes have proliferated, and have been intensified and redirected since 2011. Security Assistance Monitor's data show that US military aid alone in the period 2010–2016 amounted to just over $1 billion,[17] while other donors such as China, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom are also present. This security assistance must be seen as driven primarily by strategic interests in the region, and only to a lesser extent by any vision of consolidation of the Lebanese

[15] See Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola, 'Neoliberalizing border management in Finland and Schengen', *Antipode* 45: 5, 2012, pp. 1318–36; Matthew B. Sparke, 'A neoliberal nexus: economy, security and the biopolitics of citizenship on the border', *Political Geography* 25: 2, Feb. 2006, pp. 151–80.

[16] UNSC Resolution 1701.

[17] See http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Lebanon/ (all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 26 May 2017).

security sector. Iranian and Syrian support for Hezbollah remains a major concern for US and Saudi interests in the region, and the Sunni–Shi'a competition over domestic political influence renders security assistance an important vehicle in the wider Middle East game.

Iranian support for Hezbollah over three decades has created a robust, cohesive and resilient politico-military force, widely considered the strongest in the country.[18] The Lebanese armed forces (LAF), on the other hand, have historically been loosely structured, poorly equipped and politically divided, and in some parts of the country, notably in Hezbollah-controlled areas as well as along the Syrian border, are considered to amount to nothing more than an expeditionary force in their own country.[19] The weakness of the LAF reflects that of other national institutions, which are locked in the delicate politico-sectarian system set out in the Taif peace agreement of 1989 that settled the long Lebanese civil war. While the LAF's self-styled image as the only truly national institution has some merit, inasmuch as it is a relatively close-knit cross-sectarian (though not non-sectarian) entity, it is riven by many of the same tensions that afflict other Lebanese institutions: competition between sects for influence, dependence on complicated political horse-trading processes, and restrictions stemming from the geopolitical Iranian–Saudi/US competition. Security assistance to the LAF, and indeed to any other Lebanese security agency, therefore reflects a strategic policy choice to counter Hezbollah and ultimately Iranian influence, while seeking to influence force structures that do not directly challenge the Shi'a group's domestic interests. In addition to this approach of incrementally developing aspects of LAF capacity with the aim of gradually working towards an effective and truly national military force, at least three other concerns dictate foreign security assistance, determined principally by US policies for the Middle East: first, maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge, which implies restrictions on the kind of weaponry delivered; second, enhancing the counterterrorism capacities of the Lebanese security institutions, aimed at containing spillover from the Syrian conflict specifically, and spearheading regional efforts to combat jihadism generally; and third, enhancing centralized territorial control in so-called 'weak states'.

Global priorities and discourses of border management

In this context of regional Iranian–Saudi/US competition for influence, border management in Lebanon offers a number of significant avenues through which we can come to understand global–domestic interlinkages. In fact, it has been argued that the post-2011 prioritization of border management and control has enabled

[18] See e.g. Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), where the militia *cum* political party and social service provider is presented as the single most powerful player in Lebanon. Author interviews with political analysts in Beirut during four field visits during 2015 and 2016 support this view, although with the caveat that its military engagement in Syria in support of Bashar al-Assad has challenged some of its legitimacy among non-core sympathizers.

[19] Aram Nerguizian, 'Lebanon at the crossroads', Statement before the US Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs/Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2014, p. 36.

the LAF to strengthen its position nationally, and that a more cohesive and robust military is emerging.[20] The strategic landscape along Lebanon's borders is unusually complex, with undemarcated borders to the south and the east, UN peacekeepers stationed along the border with its adversarial neighbour Israel, Hezbollah controlling significant portions of territory, and historically fluid borderlands to the north and east. Internationally recognized borders were drawn up by colonial powers in 1920, while the 'Blue Line' along the border with Israel, drawn up in 2000 by the UN, has become the de facto southern border. Both are deeply contested by various sets of domestic and regional actors. The Blue Line leaves a number of issues unsettled, in particular the question of the Shebaa Farms, an area that falls within Lebanon's international borders but outside the Blue Line, and is currently located in Israeli-occupied Syria.[21] While UNIFIL is authorized to control the Blue Line, Hezbollah remains territorially present in the area, engaged in on–off low-intensity confrontations with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Along the eastern and northern borders with Syria, central authorities have never fully exercised control over territorial borders, which for decades were seen as spaces of interaction and exchange rather than frontiers.[22] It is in these fluid borderlands that the current efforts to bolster Lebanese security forces are concentrated, driven by at least three external strategic concerns, and the accompanying global discourses: territorial control, counterterrorism and migration pressures.

The first, territorial control, echoing the global discourse on the problem of 'weak states', prescribes consolidation of central authority: an 'international consensus' has emerged on the need to strengthen the sovereignty of Lebanon. Karim Makdisi discusses the way in which the global 'war on terror' has been localized via a set of UNSC resolutions on Lebanon, and argues that the narrative of the country as a 'weak state' that can be salvaged only by the elimination of Hezbollah and the consolidation of, in Kofi Annan's words, a 'sovereign, independent and democratic' state, opened up a 'violently contested site of representation', which led to internal strife in Lebanon up until the Doha accords in 2008.[23] This discussion on hegemonic discourses of sovereignty is particularly instructive for exploring the centrality of international border management strategies to Lebanon's security priorities. Controlling the borders of Lebanon implies (a) contesting Hezbollah's presence and influence, which is in line with countering Iranian–Syrian influence in Lebanon; (b) extending the central state to its frontier regions, thereby consolidating the 'sovereign, independent and democratic' state and turning fluid borderlands into areas where Lebanese institutions exercise authority, if not legitimacy; and (c) establishing defensive capabilities to protect national sovereignty against external threats. Pride of place in the LAF's new

[20] Waleed Hazbun, 'Assembling security in a "weak state": the contentious politics of plural governance in Lebanon since 2005', *Third World Quarterly* 37: 6, June 2016, pp. 1053–70.

[21] For a discussion, see Daniel Meier, 'The south border: drawing the line in shifting (political) sands', *Mediterranean Politics* 18: 3, Nov. 2013, pp. 358–75.

[22] See Nicholas Blanford, 'Case study: the Lebanon–Syria border', paper presented at conference on 'Rethinking international relations after the Arab revolutions', Université St Joseph, Beirut, 2016.

[23] Karim Makdisi, 'Constructing Security Council Resolution 1701 for Lebanon in the shadow of the "war on terror"', *International Peacekeeping* 18: 2, 2011, p. 16.

border strategy are the newly established land border regiments (LBRs), tasked with patrolling and monitoring the eastern and northern border with Syria, and heavily supported by the United States and United Kingdom in particular.[24] The UK has aided the construction of twelve protected border observation posts along 140 kilometres of the border; these are fitted with remote-control long-range cameras with night vision that generate clear-resolution images at distances of up to 20 kilometres,[25] enabling these borderlands to be monitored in unprecedented ways.

Controlling cross-border movements and smuggling is a major part of countering spillover from Syria, yet it remains an unspoken fact that Hezbollah crosses that border at will. A careful definition of what border management means is part of the localization of global discourses in Lebanon. The commander of the LAF has authorized the establishment of LBR 3 to cover a further 70 kilometres of the border south from Arsal to Tfail, with support from the UK through a £5 million donation.[26] Some of the donated equipment is second-hand, recycled from Northern Ireland, where the UK formerly pursued a strategy of constructing mobile border towers during the Troubles.[27] A fourth LBR is also in the making, and will cover the remaining area between Arsal and Masnaa,[28] completing the military presence and territorial control along the northern and eastern borders. The construction of up to four new LBRs, a major development for a 'weak' army, implies that the LAF has successfully capitalized on the security situation and taken advantage of the momentum provided by the political crisis in Lebanon to increase its military presence.

Although other agencies complain about the LAF being too dominant in border management—as one interviewee said: 'Lebanon relies too much on LAF—it is not normal to rely on the army for border management issues!'[29]—the consensus presented is that the LAF has been able to gain popular and political support for its increased role by emphasizing the volatility of the situation on the ground along the eastern border, and its own self-declared role as the only 'guardian of the nation' in the composite Lebanese society. In addition, its cooperation with external actors, the discursive emphasis on inter-agency 'integration', and the agreement with the EU IBM idea that soldiers now trained in IBM will one day move into civilian agencies,[30] have all augmented its status as the leading Lebanese security agency, including for internal security. However, it is also possible to detect fears that such training will confer on the LAF expertise that will be difficult to withdraw, coupled with tension over competencies at the border crossing points, where the LAF is increasingly intervening at will, in respect of both goods

[24] Author's interview with general in LAF, Yarzeh military base, Beirut, 7 June 2015.
[25] Blanford, 'Case study'.
[26] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Written statement to parliament: gifting of equipment to the 3rd Land Border Regiment of the Lebanese armed forces' (London, 17 Oct. 2014), https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/gifting-of-equipment-to-the-3rd-land-border-regiment-of-the-lebanese-armed-forces.
[27] Author's interview with head of ICMPD Lebanon, Beirut, 28 April 2016.
[28] Blanford, 'Case study'.
[29] Author's interview with external consultant (former GS general) to the EU IBM Lebanon, Beirut, 5 June 2015.
[30] Author's interview with general in LAF, Yarzeh military base, Beirut, 7 June 2015.

and people. Altogether, the discourse of territorial control has powerful connotations for statebuilding processes. This is somewhat paradoxical given that the majority of security assistance takes place outside such official statebuilding frameworks. By referring to UNSC Resolution 1701, and by couching the support to Lebanese security agencies in terms consistent with consolidating the sovereignty of Lebanon, territorial control appears as a pragmatic approach to statebuilding.

Alongside the prioritization of territorial control and consolidation of sovereignty, most of the early post-2011 US security assistance was aimed at developing counterterrorism capabilities for the fledgling Lebanese Army and other security agencies.[31] Besides Hezbollah, a number of Palestinian 'militias' are present in the Palestinian refugee camps scattered across the country, and the 2007 battles between Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese Army in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in north Lebanon served as a stark reminder of the potential threat to national stability posed by the system of hybrid governance, as well as of the grave incapacity of the Lebanese state when confronted with internal security threats. Subsequent efforts to bolster the LAF have centred significantly on counterterrorism, which since 2011 has been increasingly about controlling jihadist elements in the traditionally poor Sunni communities in the north-east, as well as improving intelligence capabilities throughout the territory.

The presence of cells of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its claimed attacks on mainly Hezbollah targets have also created momentum for strengthening Lebanese counterterrorist capabilities. In 2016, with ISIS under pressure on a number of fronts, there were fears that an eventual retreat might point in the direction of Lebanon, which is seen as weaker in both security and political terms than alternative states in the region.[32] Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, therefore, the Lebanese Army has increased its presence throughout the country, and some say that it has increased its firepower by as much as 30–40 per cent.[33] The intense training and robust equipment—modest helicopters for mobility, Cessna aircrafts for surveillance and reconnaissance, enhanced firepower with Hellfire missiles, M198 Howitzers and M-60A3 and M48A5 tanks—have given the LAF a growing reputation as a credible force.[34] Counterterrorism is, however, part of the rebordering process, whereby the internal–external divide becomes blurred and the many security agencies in Lebanon compete over competence. The process has effectively authorized an increasingly omnipresent Lebanese Army, with a role in internal security that has expanded significantly since 2011. Using counterterrorism, and its relative success in preventing escalation of violence, to further consolidate its position as 'the only truly national institution' in Lebanon, the LAF has effectively tapped into global discourses and international funds to enhance its role in domestic security affairs. In particular, the raging battles along the northern border during 2012 and 2013, and Hezbollah's offensive in the

[31] Nerguizian, 'Lebanon at the crossroads'.
[32] Author's interview with retired LAF general, Beirut, 14 Dec. 2016.
[33] Basem Shabb, *The Syrian conflict and the ascendancy of LAF* (Washington DC: Middle East Institute, 25 Nov. 2014), http://www.mei.edu/content/article/syrian-conflict-and-ascendancy-lebanese-armed-forces.
[34] Shabb, *The Syrian conflict*.

Qalamoun mountains on the eastern border during 2014, have enabled the army to build up a presence, with emerging patterns of authority in the border areas.[35] This emergence of a 'real world security and border regime' along the Lebanese–Syrian border is allowing the LAF to be more than 'an expeditionary force in its own country'.[36] Yet it also brings to the fore the contested objective of security assistance: while external, primarily US, support for counterterrorism ultimately aims at countering Hezbollah's role in the country, and its control over vital cross-border supply lines, the LAF is largely content with targeting radical Sunni and Palestinian militias, viewing Hezbollah as a complementary military force that will be crucial in the event of a military confrontation with Israel.[37]

Finally, in the architecture of localized manifestations of global threats in Lebanon, the influx of up to 1.5 million Syrian refugees is considered a threat to the country's stability, economy and socio-political structures. The great pressure that the presence of Syrian refugees has created on Lebanese communities, and the lack of sufficient international funds to aid the Lebanese in adequately catering for their needs, have led to an increasingly demeaning discourse presenting Syrian refugees as a direct threat to national security. In mid-2014, official data from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that the number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon had reached 1 million. Around the same time, elections in Syria took place, in which Syrians in Lebanon were allowed to vote. The combination of a politicized Syrian presence in Lebanon and the passage of the 1 million threshold led to a turning-point in perceptions of Syrian refugees, and adoption of more restrictive policies.[38] In 2014 the LAF engaged in battles around Arsal in the Bekaa valley, in order to retake the area from Salafists who sought to expand their territory in Syria. In these operations, dozens of LAF soldiers were captured, leading to claims that Syrian settlements served as breeding grounds for Salafism and to an increased perception among the Lebanese public of a link between security and migration.

Data, albeit from before these events, show, however, that there is a discrepancy between people's perceptions of insecurity related to Syrian refugees and their own experiences of crime or other threats posed by refugees.[39] Consequently, perceptions of insecurity in combination with substantial donor assistance have largely permitted the army to tackle many of the issues related to refugees, which in turn has not only securitized migration but *militarized* the handling of migrants, including the use of notorious military courts to clamp down on Syrian refugees for crimes allegedly linked to national security.[40] Besides the fact that the army is not trained to handle vulnerable people or perform internal security tasks, such a militarization of migration management has the effect of consolidating the global

[35] See Blanford, 'Case study'.
[36] Nerguizian, 'Lebanon at the crossroads', p. 35.
[37] Nerguizian, 'Lebanon at the crossroads'.
[38] Filippo Dionigi, *The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon: state fragility and social resilience*, LSE Middle East Centre paper series no. 15 (London: London School of Economics, Feb. 2016), p. 15.
[39] International Alert, *Lebanon security threats* (Beirut, 2013).
[40] Human Rights Watch, *'It's not the right place for us': the trial of civilians by military courts in Lebanon* (New York, Jan. 2017).

migration–security nexus. Promoted by European states, the EU, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and international NGOs involved in 'soft' security, donor assistance for migration management is devolving on the Lebanese Army, police, intelligence agency and customs. Each donor wants a piece of the pie, regardless of whether that creates competition or collaboration. Lebanon's migration management has emerged as a key site in security and development assistance, and the boundaries between these fields are increasingly blurred.

In the resulting bonanza—which, as noted above, takes place without overarching coordination and is driven primarily by strategic interest rather than any well-defined national security strategy—donors carve their way into their respective 'niches', competing but also cooperating in the densely woven politico-security landscape in Lebanon. Donor cooperation in the crowded security assistance realm in theory takes place within the framework of the International Support Group for Lebanon, established by the UN secretary-general with the then Lebanese President Michel Sleiman in 2013 to mobilize support for Lebanon's stability, sovereignty and state institutions, and consisting of China, France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, together with the European Union and the Arab League. This mechanism is intended to ensure that security assistance projects do not overlap, and that recipients are embedded in a national security strategy, yet it is a common perception that it is simply allowing donors to do what they wish under the rubric of coordination. In the meantime, the security sector expands and deepens its presence, while political crises continue to hinder effective governance and comprehensive reform. The International Crisis Group reported from the besieged Lebanese border town of Arsal in 2016:

> Beyond the Arsal case, which is troubling in its own right, lies the bigger story of the state's gradual abdication of its duties. As its performance on governance and representative politics grows more dismal by the day, it increasingly falls back on security measures devoid of any serious political, humanitarian or developmental component.[41]

Security assistance in contexts of 'statebuilding lite' has the potential to lead to a legitimization of dysfunctional public policy, and to leave governance in the hands of non-state actors straddling the distinction between illegal and legitimate.

Support for border management is a broad and multifaceted activity, and the US, France and the UK are the main donors in this sector, with weak coordination mechanisms other than informal contact at a personal level. One smaller project is an EU scheme for integrated border management. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)—a 'favoured partner' of the EU on border management issues—was selected for a 36-month project on introducing EU IBM in Lebanon; this project came in on the tail end of a German-led Northern Border Pilot Project that had run during 2007–2008.[42] Targeting

[41] International Crisis Group, *Arsal in the crosshairs: the predicament of a small Lebanese border town* (Beirut and Brussels, 23 Feb. 2016), p. 2.

[42] The budget for 2012–18 is €14 million ('Programme: ICMPD Lebanon', EU IBM Lebanon, http://www.eu-ibmlebanon.com/en/programme).

LAF, general security, customs and the internal security forces (the police), its story illustrates how EU normativities encounter the hybrid security landscape of Lebanon, and demonstrates how domestic agencies tap into global discourses of sovereignty, terrorism and migration in order to attract funding and assistance from external donors.

EU normativities meet 'statebuilding lite'

EU IBM is commonly presented by its proponents as a package of technical standards that enhance legal flows of goods and people, while introducing techniques and equipment that enable enforcement of stringent border control over illegal flows of both. However, it is also deeply political, especially in contexts of 'hybrid sovereignty', in which the cohesion and legitimacy of the state apparatus are contested. Border management is not merely about effectiveness, but concerns core issues of governance, authority and discourses of power. EU IBM, while building on the US concept of IBM as it developed after 9/11, seeks to introduce coordination within border agencies and integration between the different agencies dealing with border control, as well as to ensure international coordination through regional and international mechanisms.[43] The concept originated in the context of the 'borderless' Schengen area within the EU, and has gradually been rolled out also in the EU's 'neighbourhood': in the western Balkans, where it is seen as a statebuilding tool;[44] in Turkey, where it has been an enlargement mechanism;[45] and also in central Asia and the 'southern neighbourhood', in respect of which the 2009 *Guidelines for integrated border management in EC external cooperation* outlines, over 136 pages, the specificities of EU best practices in the field of border management, including risk analysis, data protection and fighting corruption.[46]

The Lebanese case should correspond to the concept of IBM in the context of SSR, where democratic control and oversight are central to implementation,[47] but it is crucial to note the absence of these features in the case of EU IBM in Lebanon—in line with the 'statebuilding lite' hypothesis. As EU officials point out: 'In Lebanon we call it IBM because we like to call it so. In practice we are just telling them the obvious.'[48] This 'obvious' approach to border management centres on a technical approach to ensure inter-agency cooperation and intra-

[43] Peter Hobbing, 'Integrated border management at the EU level', CEPS working document (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2005).

[44] Gemma Collantes-Celador and Ana E. Juncos, 'The EU and border management in the western Balkans: preparing for European integration or safeguarding EU external borders?', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 12: 2, June 2012, pp. 201–20.

[45] Deniz Sert, 'Turkey's integrated border management strategy', *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 12: 1, 2013, pp. 173–9; Asli S. Okyay, 'Turkey's post-2011 approach to its Syrian border and its implications for domestic politics', *International Affairs* 93: 4, July 2017, pp. 829–46.

[46] European Commission, *Guidelines for integrated border management in EC external cooperation* (Brussels: EuropeAid Cooperation Office, 2009).

[47] Marina Caparini and Otwin Marenin, *Borders and security governance: managing borders in a globalized world* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2006).

[48] Author's interview with senior official in DG Migration and Home Affairs, Brussels, 17 March 2015.

agency coordination, facilitated by standard operating procedures such as contingency planning, on neatly defined roles in respect of the border crossing points (BCPs), and on establishing basic mechanisms of communication and information-sharing between border agencies. Given the volatile security situation, the hybrid security landscape and the deeply political nature of building a unitary sovereign state in Lebanon, these objectives touch on very sensitive issues.

The main aim of the EU IBM project is to facilitate communication between the agencies involved in border control. The four security agencies that are designated as 'beneficiaries' under the EU IBM project are the LAF; general security (GS); customs; and the police, i.e. the internal security forces (ISF).[49] Of these four, the LAF and GS have been most successful at using the EU IBM discourse to enhance their domestic standing. The LAF, operating under the ministry of defence, officially manage the border *between* the BCPs, and as we have seen above constitute the main actor in both external and internal security in Lebanon. The GS, reporting to the ministry of the interior, is the intelligence agency responsible for the control of *people* on Lebanese territory. Its ranks are akin to military ranks, and its recruits train in the same academy as LAF soldiers. GS are in control of the movement of people across the five official land crossing points with Syria (Arida, Aboudieh, Boukayaa, Kaa and Masnaa), as well as through the international airport in Beirut and at the seaports. GS has a good reputation among the 'internationals' for being professional and committed, and has a neatly structured internal organization, which makes it 'easier to cooperate with than some of the other agencies'.[50] Contrary to the multi-sect LAF, the head of GS is according to the Lebanese constitution a Shi'a Muslim, and the agency is accordingly seen as affiliated with Hezbollah—although the actual practical links between the two entities are not straightforward. The current head of GS, Abbas Ibrahim, is seen as a figure who seeks to depoliticize the agency, giving it influence beyond a strictly sect-based role;[51] this further enhances donors' willingness to support it. The way donors are currently working with GS to strengthen its capacities—through training and equipment, particularly at BCPs and at the airport, but also via sophisticated intelligence technology—may yield more influence to the primarily Shi'a agency in the medium term.

Lebanese customs, responsible for controlling and taxing goods passing through land, sea and air crossing points, and the ISF, the police agency responsible for countering crime, notably trafficking in drugs and people, are also EU IBM 'beneficiaries'. The customs institution operates under the authority of the ministry of finance, whereas the ISF is under the aegis of the ministry of the interior. The EU IBM project initially worked closely with the customs, as they are seen as vital to the neo-liberal notion of filtering desired goods while prioritizing the fight against organized crime; but there is not much political support for the customs in Lebanon, and an internal conflict between the military and civilian

[49] Lebanese civil defence was in 2015 included as a formal beneficiary, but has little relevance in terms of political influence and so is excluded from the present analysis.
[50] Author's interview with external consultant to the ICMPD EU IBM Lebanon project, Beirut, 5 June 2015.
[51] Author's interview with analyst at Carnegie Middle East Centre, Beirut, 11 Nov. 2015.

branches of the customs department has substantially detracted from the agency's ability to participate in EU IBM activities.[52] While this internal conflict between the 'civilians' and the 'brigades' continues to hamper that agency's activities, the customs brigades work closely with their officer colleagues in the LAF, GS and ISF; they were all trained at the military academy as well as sharing the same operational culture.[53] The ISF, on the other hand, has not so far participated much in EU IBM activities, partly because it is trained and mentored by other international stakeholders. It is seen as a 'Hariri creation', meaning that its legacy of support from the Sunni political party Future Movement, headed formerly by the late Rafik Hariri (and currently by his son, Prime Minister Saad Hariri), has rendered it too politically marginal to gain widespread support in society. ISF is in fact the institution that enjoys the least trust among Lebanese, with under half of the country's citizens overall trusting the police, although the proportions vary from over 90 per cent in Rashaya to just 10 per cent in Tyre, according to perception surveys.[54]

Sovereignty by stealth: EU IBM in contexts of hybrid security

Sovereignty processes imply a broader conceptualization of governance than state governance in the strict sense. In the case of Lebanon, the term 'hybrid sovereignty' has been used to describe the complex interaction of state and non-state political authority, and the ensuing hybrid security situation in which most people live on a daily basis, and which includes formal state security agencies, municipalities, tribal or unofficial community councils, private security companies, militias and religious authorities. For the purpose of capturing how security assistance affects the composite system of security governance in Lebanon, the following paragraphs demonstrate how EU normativities encounter hybridity even at the level of formal state institutions.

The creation of a Border Control Committee (BCC), in which representatives of the four agencies mentioned above, along with representatives of the ICMPD, the IOM and other international stakeholders, meet weekly to discuss the border situation and divide labour in a coordinated manner, is considered a major step towards opening up lines of communication between the four security agencies. As an external consultant to the project (a former general in Lebanon's GS) explained, it would have been unthinkable only a few years ago for representatives of the four agencies to come together and reveal information regarding their activities, let alone coordinate.[55] The BCC has developed into an established framework of cooperation, and has created a modicum of communication between the agencies. This is attributed partly to its head, LAF General Samir Azi, who is seen as a strong

[52] Author's interview with colonel in Lebanese customs, Beirut seaport, 8 June 2015.
[53] Author's interview with colonel in Lebanese customs, Beirut, 27 April 2016.
[54] David Chuter, *Perceptions and prescriptions: how Lebanese people view their security* (London and Beirut: International Alert, Feb. 2015), p. 5.
[55] Author's interview with external consultant to the ICMPD EU IBM Lebanon project, Beirut, 5 June 2015.

figure supportive of the IBM idea, and is respected by all the agencies involved.[56] The fact that the BCC is headed by the army means that it enjoys importance and influence, but also, as indicated above, that the LAF is keen to steer external initiatives in its favour. There is, however, a conspicuous missing element in the BCC in the form of any link with the political level of governance, making it appear a purely technical coordination mechanism, with no political connections—very much in line with the 'statebuilding lite' perspective. The BCC representatives for each security agency are appointed by their respective ministries and by now have an established working relationship. Yet so far this coordination has not trickled down through the system: each agency has many departments, and the bureaucratic structures and 'military mentality' mean that everything and everyone needs authorization—which is inevitably a very time-consuming and complicated process.[57]

Meanwhile, protectionism continues to define interinstitutional relations. In particular, the idea of a shared database, in which the four agencies would share intelligence on threats and operations, has been expressly rejected,[58] indicating the level of competition and mutual scepticism that exists. The issue of intelligence is particularly delicate in Lebanon. Until the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, Lebanese security agencies were largely inhibited from developing intelligence capabilities. The lack of good intelligence became obvious during the 2007 clashes between LAF and Fatah al-Islam in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in north Lebanon, in which '[the security agencies] had no clue' what the situation on the ground was.[59] Since then, all Lebanese security agencies have developed intelligence channels and make active use of grassroots informants, particularly from troubled villages and towns. Yet they operate independently and in parallel, each agency recruiting its own informants, and each agency cooperating with different external intelligence agencies. In such a hybrid security environment, a joint intelligence-sharing database is a completely alien concept. Even when external intelligence agencies express their desire to tap into these localized networks, such access continues to be resisted and traded for special relations rather than absorbed in a national structure. That said, information-sharing and coordination of activities do take place, every day and between all agencies—but according to an informal, verbal and non-linear logic. As any meeting with senior officers will illustrate, there is a consistent reliance on mobile phone communication, with each officer carrying at all times between two and four phones, all displayed on the table in front of him, ringing at intervals. These unscripted lines of communication are the *modus operandi* of Lebanese security operations and cooperation, and evade any attempts at codification and formal procedure, much to the frustration of the EU and other donors. Yet, to some extent, they function effectively for domestic purposes within Lebanon, driven by interpersonal synergy and established patterns of coordination based on experience rather than formal mechanisms. As a customs

[56] Author's interview with head of ICMPD, Beirut, 28 April 2016.
[57] Author's interview with external consultant to the ICMPD EU IBM Lebanon project, Beirut, 5 June 2015.
[58] Author's interview with head of ICMPD, Beirut, 28 April 2016.
[59] Author's interview with former UNIFIL spokesperson, Beirut, 27 April 2016.

colonel at Beirut port explained: 'I coordinate well with ISF, because I went to the academy with the captain in charge of the Beirut counter-drug division.'[60]

Another example of how EU IBM 'integration' has been reinterpreted in Lebanon is the typical EU approach to strategic doctrine. As part of the first phase of the IBM project, a national IBM strategy was drafted by a partnership between ICMPD and the four agencies; but (as of early 2017) this has not yet been formally approved by the government, and is, according to EU IBM staff, 'dusting away in the drawer of some minister'.[61] This is partly because of the political crises and governance incapacity that characterize Lebanese politics. In the face of issues ranging from a presidential vacuum to a garbage collection crisis, the central government has effectively been unable to govern, and consequently has been unable to take the lead in security governance. However, the national IBM strategy has been approved by the four relevant agencies, and has backing at the institutional level. It is used as a point of reference for their joint activities, and must be seen as having some success in terms of 'integration from below'.[62] Here we may detect a form of localization of the typical EU IBM approach to border management, in which the result is a basic mode of cooperation between the agencies, albeit without approval and engagement on the political level. As the head of the ICMPD acknowledged, there was considerable opposition in the beginning even to the use of the word 'strategy', as it was seen as requiring political involvement of a sort that often complicates matters significantly in Lebanon.[63] The fact that such a national IBM strategy has been produced and agreed on by the four border agencies testifies to a Lebanese approach to effective governance, and it may be observed that it is implemented by the agencies even without the political sanctioning (and financing) originally foreseen.[64]

In conclusion, we may observe that the principle and practice of 'integration' have been taken on board by different Lebanese security agencies. Yet it is clear that integration as a principle is so far removed from Lebanese reality that much of the uptake has been discursive only—successfully used by the relevant security agencies to befriend external donors. As one official in the GS planning department described the situation, working with the EU IBM is like 'operating in two parallel universes', whereby, on the one hand, the GS survives from day to day, with all the politics and daily negotiation this implies, while on the other hand, one is meant to think in terms of this 'very mature concept' of IBM.[65]

Integration as a core EU normative concept for governing borders therefore meets a process of 'sovereignty by stealth', in which invisible fault-lines of domestic governing principles are negotiated without formal scripts or strategic doctrine. In a manner typical of geopolitical hotspots generally and of the *sui generis* Lebanese case specifically, security assistance will enable external actors

[60] Author's interview with colonel in Lebanese customs, Beirut seaport, 8 June 2015.
[61] Author's interview with ICMPD external expert, Masna'a BCP, 11 Nov. 2015.
[62] Author's interview with head of ICMPD, Beirut, 28 April 2016.
[63] Author's interview with head of ICMPD, Beirut, 28 April 2016.
[64] Author's interview with head of ICMPD, Beirut, 28 April 2016.
[65] Author's interview with brigadier-general in GS, Planning Department, Beirut, 6 June 2015.

to influence domestic politics on ill-defined terms, and domestic actors will take advantage of the opportunities provided in ad hoc and instrumental ways.

Conclusion: borders and sovereignty in an era of statebuilding lite

This article has described how security assistance assemblages have emerged in a divided, complex and sectarian Lebanon that is deeply affected by the ongoing war in Syria. To put it crudely, we are confronted with a situation where the Lebanese security institutions operate between the rock of ISIS on the one side and the hard place of IBM on the other. Observers might say it is a bad moment to be expecting integration, professionalism and compliance with IBM standards. Yet research shows that it is precisely the urgency of the situation that has prompted collaboration—if not integration—between the different institutions governing the border area between Lebanon and Syria. In the process, Lebanon has undergone significant change in the way that the periphery relates to the core. Whereas the eastern border has historically been porous, connecting two peoples that some claim were divided by colonial powers, it has increasingly come to be seen as a militarized buffer between the war in Syria and the relative calm of Lebanon. Masnaa border crossing used to be a busy node on the highway between Damascus and Beirut, connecting two centres through overlapping borderlands; now, it is a node on a north–south boundary that divides a 'zone of war' from a relatively stable Lebanon.

In this story, EU IBM and the broader security assistance 'bonanza' that is taking place have contributed to shifting the view of the external rim of Lebanon from one of a frontier to one of an emerging boundary. Frontiers and boundaries are significant elements of state formation, yet their relationship to the centres of power are different: where borders are inward-oriented, defining that which lies within in opposition to that which remains outside, frontiers are outward-oriented, connecting, extending and blurring territory and authority. The Lebanese–Syrian border has in this sense gone over the course of a few years from constituting a *frontier* to constituting a *boundary*. Lebanon's hybrid sovereignty architecture is key to unpacking the capability (or lack of it) of each security agency to profit from the willingness of international donors to strengthen the Lebanese bulwark against expansion of the Syrian unrest. The effect is a militarized and securitized state, featuring empowered and competing security institutions that gain traction throughout the state in the absence of political authority at the central level. Such 'statebuilding lite', circumventing strategic and political channels, and relying on ad hoc and pragmatic coercive state power, is effectively deepening the hybrid sovereignty situation so characteristic of the Lebanese state. In an era of 'statebuilding lite', therefore, the effect is likely to be an enhanced military, whose expanded competences will prove hard to roll back. In Lebanon, the rising importance of the army might have a positive effect on sectarian politics in the short term; but in the long run, a militarization of Lebanese politics is proving to have an adverse effect on the state's governance capacity.