

## The reformation of the security sector in Lebanon: Consociationalism, securitization or democratization<sup>1</sup>

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**ENG Abstract.** Traditionally, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) have been more devoted to the control of Lebanese population than to the national defence. At the same time, the control of both the LAF and the many other existing security agencies have been divided among the different political parties according to quotas of confessional affiliation, applying the traditional consociational Lebanese model. Moreover, there are other non-state actors keeping important weaponry, although some of them (as in the case of Hezbollah) cooperate with the LAF in a very peculiar model of governance. Since the withdrawal of the Syrian troops in 2005, the country is split concerning how to tackle a security sector reform. While some actors only wanted to preserve the status quo (with Syrian and Iranian support), other only want to disarm Hezbollah (backed by the US and Saudi Arabia). The objective of this paper consists of assessing the degree to which the past reforms have contributed to the creation of a security sector adapted to the requirements of a democratic system and able to guarantee domestic peace, political neutrality and national defence.  
**Keywords:** security sector reform, Lebanon, consociationalism, Lebanese Armed Forces, borders.

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## 1. Introduction

If anything characterizes the Middle East is the presence of strong security devices under the rigid control of the authorities, in the case of the Lebanon it can be talked about a clearly peculiar and differentiated model, closely related with the characteristics of the consociational political system that exists within the country. This Lebanese model is far from the Weberian concept of a State who owns the monopoly of the legitimate violence within its frontiers and of the Lebanese Armed Forces in charge of the defence of its sovereignty over any type of exterior threat. On the very contrary, the agreements that were the origin of the start of the First Lebanese Republic are based, overall, in the extreme fear of the different agents to the possibility of the state-owned institutions accumulated an excessive amount of power in their hands, making them capable of defying the control that the powerful men of the country (zu'ama) practiced over their respective confessional communities. This was conveyed in all the public policies, characterized by two fundamental tendencies: the attempts of the parties to capture the institutions, establishing fees of confessional recruitment, and the establishing of the mechanism of public-private collaboration which will limit the capacity of those same institutions in the expression of their own autonomy of political action (Fakhoury Mühlbacher, 2007: 77-80).

With the Syrian victory in the civil war, the Taif Agreement (1989) allowed Damascus to perform a reform in the security sector that meant the survival of multiple agencies, but under the Syrian control due to the presence of numerous military units and the secret intelligence service of such country. In this context, the militias of the parties were officially disbanded, even if they preserved certain minimum structures (several hundred of men in each of them, gifted with light weapons). The exception was Hezbollah, as this Shia militia played an important role in guarantying the denominated "security zone" of the South of the country (Picard, 1999).

After the "Cedar Revolution" (2005), the Syrian troops had to abandon Lebanon, so in this way the new security sector reform was needed. However, the climate of division within the country and the mutual distrust have led to the same reform being greatly blocked. While the LAF have experimented a certain reconstruction and have regained a great part of its prestige for a great deal of Lebanese, the proliferation and capture of the security agencies on the hands of different parties have continued, resulting in the difficulty to achieve coherent politics and to avoid the partisan instrumentalization (Nerguizian, 2009: 11). On the other hand, the old tendency of the public-private collaboration in the security management has come back, as while Hezbollah has maintained (and improved) its military component, developing a discrete cooperation with the LAF in the fight against the Salafist jihadism, other parties have strengthened their private militias. All of this allows the talk of the Lebanon as a State characterized by a peculiar model of governance of the security sector in its region, in which the consociational character of the political regime and the strong role of the confessional communities have completely influenced the functioning of the institutions and security agencies. Those institutions and agencies have had serious difficulties to perform a concerted action in the fulfilment of their attributions, leading to a competition between them. The only exception have been the Lebanese Armed Forces, which have experimented a historical evolution in favour of a wider social representativity and national integration (Barak, 2009). On the other hand, the survival of certain collaboration between the public and the private has been a permanent characteristic of the Lebanese security sector over time, which leads to the difficulty to end this situation, due to the lack of confidence that exists between the different Lebanese parties and their reluctance as they believe themselves to be strong state-owned institutions that can undermine the social control exerted by the traditionalist leaders in their communities (Van Veer, 2015). Anyhow, if the country wants to advance in the path towards the democratization, a new profound reform of the security system will be needed so it guarantees the empire of the law and avoids its use to the particular will of different leaders and parties.

The structure of this work is the following: the first part is a reference to the main resources of the theoretical framework that is going to be used; in the second, the historical characteristics of the governance of the security sector in the First Lebanese Republic and the impact of the very same in the civil war will be exposed; then, the problem for the reform of the security sector in the Second Republic, especially those that have to do with the disband of the militias, will be analysed; after that, the impact of the Syrian departure and the civil war in the neighbouring country will be analysed; finally, some conclusion over the specificity of the Lebanese security model and its possible reform will be extracted.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The concept of governance of the security sector and its reform sets its focus in the matter of the implication of the different social actors of the very same, establishing a bond with the democratization of the country and the contribution to which the different sections of the security sectors can perform over the same. In addition, it is closely related to the matter of the monopoly of the legitimate violence, in Weberian terms, and to that of how that monopoly can be undermined lately as a consequence of the tendency to the privatization of the same due to factors such as the impact of the globalization or the recent implicature of the international community in those aspects related to the security (for instance, the intervention of international actors in post-conflict scenarios). In this manner, while some authors have referred to such cases as "weak States", other have developed the concept of hybrid regimes, understanding those as the ones in which there is a coexistence of the estate-owned and non-estate-owned forms of government (Boege et al., 2009). In this context, both the proliferation of substate actors who employ the force as well as the private agencies, in which the State delegates certain security activity, are produced (Bryden, 2006; Wulf, 2007). As a consequence, Concepts such as "hybrid peace" and "governance of hybrid security" are used (Richmond,

2015; Schroeder et al., 2014).

The studies on the security sector in the Lebanon are significantly more abundant than those existing about this topic in other Arab countries, which has been undoubtedly influenced by a decisive factor: the fact that the Lebanon is a plural country with high levels of freedom of speech and with a vibrant academical investigation. Nevertheless, a great inequality is to be mentioned, as the majority of those investigations have focused on the role of the LAF, while the rest of agencies have received less attention. Consequently, there are studies that have mainly focused on the sociological evolution of the composition of the LAF from their foundation to the present day, including aspects such as their confessional, social, clan-based, or geographical provenance. There has also been an emphasis on their ideology, their vision of the nation or their perception of security, in addition to the role that such institution has carried out from the civil war up until now (Kechichian, 1985; Sigaud, 1988; Mc Laurin, 1991; Barak, 2006; Gaub, 2007).

After the "Cedar Revolution" (2005) different investigations have been published about the global development of a reform in the security sector with the intention of consolidate the changes in the political system (Belloncle, 2006; Sayigh, 2009). On their behalf, other studies have focused on the reform of the institutions and specific agencies, such as the LAF or the Internal Security Forces (ISF) (Nerguizian, 2009). The main problem is that some of the initiatives of the reform simply focus on how to achieve the strengthening of the political position of either of the two coalitions (8th and 14th of March) that are competing for the power, without paying much attention to how build a security sector that protects the national sovereignty, the human rights and freedoms, guaranteeing the empire of the law. In this sense, the technical proposals of a reform are therefore mixed up with the interests of the political confrontation. In other words, on some occasions the reform of the security sector can be used not to strengthen the democratic control of the security device, but to strengthen their capacity of combat over a determined enemy, adopting the perspective of securitization (Wulf, 2011: 304-2).

Finally, there should be an emphasis on the studies devoted to the role that different international actors have played in the Lebanese security sector. We cannot forget that since 1978 a section of the United Nations (the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, UNIFIL) exists and it is deployed in the South of the country, trying to avoid conflicts with Israel. Moreover, the presence of troops belonging to different nationalities (Israeli, Syrian, North American, French...) has been frequent. All those actors have developed a tissue of a more or less complex relations with the institutions and the Lebanese political groups, in a way that their influence has been notable in the evolution of the conflict. In this area, the amount of the studies is very broad, being significant that while the contingents of the United Nations have maintained a difficult but tolerated present by the Lebanese actors, the purely national contingents have suffered serious difficulties when legitimizing their power, what has produced on the long term their departed in complex circumstances. In any case, the presence of the UNIFIL has granted the rise of a hybrid security model characterized by the collaboration on long term between those forces and local actors (Newby, 2016). At the same time, other international actors have tried to have an influence on the reform of the security sector in Lebanon through help and collaboration programs (Tholens, 2017).

The concept of the securitization was launched several decades ago by authors belonging to the Copenhagen School, applying such concept to a process by which in first place the existence of a threat of existential character is identified at a discursive level, for any good considered as worthy to be preserved by a community. In other words, this movement of securitization would imply the social construction of a threat in front of an audience, for which a certain capacity of power and influence would be necessary. The second step would imply the adoption of exceptional measures justified by the existence of such a threat, by which a determined topic would abandon the political sphere and would be fully dealt with inside the security sphere, with the exception of what that would imply (Waeber, 1995; Taureck, 2006).

In the case of Lebanon, the different political groups tend to use the mechanism of securitization as a way to keep its political base united, and to impede changes that result prejudicial for their particular interests. In spite of the ending of the civil war over thirty years ago, the lack of trust between political groups and communities is still visible, what reinforces the position of supremacy of the current confessional parties (consolidated during the civil war thanks to their military role) and avoids the rising of interconfessional alternatives that promote profound reforms of the political system and the Public Administration. Equally, the action of the different world powers have reinforced this strategy of securitization, focusing its action in extending their own influence in the political-administrative structures of the country instead of pursuing their own independence and service of the national interests (Fakhoury Mühlbacher, 2007: 391-418).

### **3. The security sector in the First Lebanese Republic. Consociationalism and the public-private collaboration**

The security sector in Lebanon has presented some historical characteristics closely related to the particular political model existing in the country. This way, the consociationalist structure led to the attempt of controlling the different institutions with responsibilities in the matter of national security by different political groups, at the same time that their number multiplied with the objective that each group had its own agency. Nevertheless, the hegemonic role of the Maronite Christian parties in the politics of the country was visible in its control of the main security institutions. Among them, the role of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), which presented a great weakness when considering resources and personnel for guaranteeing a national sovereignty in such a convulse territory as the Middle East during the Second World War. Precisely the LAF were born in 1945, quickly being involved in the Arab Israeli war of

1948-49 even if their actions were limited. From that moment, their goal focused entirely on the preservation of the interior order, avoiding being compromised in their neutral image. A truly clear example was constituted by not participating in the combats between the side of the President Camille Chamoun and the opposition in 1958. This attitude focused on not choosing a side has guaranteed the LAF a significant and protagonist role in politics, not following the usual formula in the Middle East of the coup d'état, but as an intermediate option that allows to overcome the phases of a lack of agreement in the designation of candidates for certain magistratures. The presidential election of the general Antoine Chehab in 1958 constituted a precedent for other similar situations (Gendzier, 2006). Nonetheless, the position of Chief Commander of the LAF necessarily belonged to a Maronite Christian, being mainly people from such confession the ones who dominated the military hierarchy, as the Sunni did not estimated this type of professional career, while the Shia found their obstacle to access the Military Academy in their lack of education, other factors related to the social capital of each individual should be considered such as the belonging to determined families, clans or geographical regions which favoured the possibilities of being recruited in the officiality. This Maronite predominance created a tension between the defence of a Lebanese national identity and the influence of a Maronite identity that saw the components of such a community as the natural leaders of the Lebanese State.

If the officiality was predominantly Maronite, a great deal of the troops that conformed the Army was composed by Sunni and Shia Muslims, who did not trust the political preferences of their officials. Moreover, the Army was divided into twelve brigades, characterized by its confessional composition and their unified geographical providence, existing for example the Mountain Druze Brigade. In other words, the LAF lived in an unstable equilibrium that tried to be tolerated by Antoine Chehab through the promotion of a Lebanese nationalism that, without defying the status quo, allowed at the same time the creation of a more opened and integrator State. Specifically, the LAF were gifted with a recruitment process in which a major emphasis was set on respecting the demographic fees of the respective communities, in addition to favoring a geographical and social providence which is more opened (Barak, 2006: 79-80).

The phenomenon of Chehabism, however, raised the concerns among the Maronite elite, as it favoured the concentration of power that defied the traditional equilibrium existing in the country. To that it also contributed to an activity of the military intelligence (named Deuxième Bureau), which developed a discrete but constant intervention in the political life in the country. For all of that, the Maronite elite opted in 1970 to stop that military influence with the presidential election of Suleiman Franjeh. The new President succumbed to the temptation of using the LAF in the repression towards the opposition in the 1970s, in addition to try to stop the activities of the Palestinian fighting force installed in the country in the last few years, for which the LAF developed a close collaboration with the Maronite militias. In that moment, on the one hand, the Lebanese State experienced a clear loss in the monopoly over the legitimate violence, leaving such violence distributed among diverse actors. On the other hand, the LAF were losing their image of neutrality and were coming closer to the interests of the Maronite parties, grouped in the Lebanese National Resistance Front. The consequence of that last factor was the fragmentation of the LAF, originating a split (the denominated the Lebanese Arab Army) in 1976 and the later integration of a great number of their troops in the different militias (Barak, 2009: 100-109).

What remained of the LAF was converted into an instrument of the public service of the Phalangist country after the election of Amin Gemayel as the President of the Republic in 1982, actively participating in the fight against rival militias. Nevertheless, in 1988 the internal disputes between the Maronite leaders caused the until the Chief Commander of the LAF, the General Michel Aoun, to fight against the Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea in a fight that concluded with the Syrian victory in the Civil War and the passing of the Taif Agreement (1989). During the Civil War, the privatization of the security sector was almost complete, with militias that divided the territorial control of the country and established enclaves in which they developed the habitual functions of a State, including the maintenance of the public order and the defence of the territory against external challenges, even if a great number of their energies were devoted to defeat other rival militias belonging to their same confession, leaving the LAF completely aside (Picard, 1999: 3).

The Internal Security forces (ISF) are the main political force of Lebanon, created in the 19th century and which experimented an important development during the French term of office, maintaining a nature of paramilitary force, as they were gifted an appreciable armament and possess an education obtained in the Military Academy. Their composition clearly projected a Shuni predominance (under the Prime Minister's control), compensating in this way the Christian predominance in the LAF. The ISF faced serious difficulties when adapting to the fulfillment of their functions, to which the strong division of the police forces into different agencies did not help. In 1953, the General Directorate of the ISF was created through the Legislative Act 1953-1959, while in 1959 the General Directorate of the General Security (DGSG) through the Legislative Act number 139, which were mainly concerned with the gathering of the information in the fight against the criminal activities, in addition to carrying out the matters related to the frontiers, ports and airports. The role of these security agencies was reduced almost fully during the Civil War, as the militias took over the control of the public order in their enclaves, completing this way the tendency towards the privatization of the security sector in the country (Saliba, 2012: 16-7).

#### **4. The Second Lebanese Republic. The disarm, demobilization and reconciliation**

With the military victory in Syria and the Taif Agreements, the Lebanese security sector was reconstructed from the

Syrian interests, but without defying the traditionality of the Lebanese consociational model. Much on the contrary, Hafez al-Assad knew how to use some of the characteristics of such a model clearly in his favour, as they allowed the reinforcement of his power over the neighbouring country. At the end of the war it meant the disarmament (voluntarily or by force) of the different militias. Some of them gave the weapons in exchange for a distinguished position in national politics and so that their leaders kept the fortunes obtained during the conflict. Some of the militiamen were integrated in the LAF or other security agencies, while others searched for their comeback to civilian life (Picard 1999).

However, it cannot be talked about a process of complete disarmament since the different militias maintained some combatants (normally, a couple hundred), as well as some light weapons, even if they avoided showing it in public. On the other hand, Hezbollah was exempt from that disarmament, as the Israeli occupation in the meridional Lebanon was turned not the justification for such occurrence. In fact, Hezbollah turned into an extremely useful instrument for Damascus as their operations undermined the Israeli occupation in the South, which wanted to convince Tel Aviv of the necessity to negotiate with Assad the Golan Heights. For that reason, Hezbollah started receiving Syrian weapons as long as it was used against Israel (Siegman, 2000). In fact, the Shia maintained during this phase this compromise, which fomented its image of personification of the Lebanese resistance against Israel, something recognized by the different Lebanese governments as "Army, Country and Resistance". As the materialization of this pact between Damascus and Hezbollah, the Lebanese Army did not deploy in the South of the Litani river, while the clashes between Hezbollah and the Israeli troops repeated with frequency, establishing between them an "equilibrium of mutual deterrence" based on some rules of the game which have changed overtime (Malka, 2008).

Another factor to bear into mind, was that in the Palestinian camps, the militias of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) kept their weapons, in such a way that the security inside the same continued being in their hands. The problem was, on the one hand, the existence of some internal disputes inside the own organizations of the PLO (some of them under a clear Syrian influence), while, on the other hand, the leadership of the own PLO between the refugees started experimenting a clear decline as the process of the Oslo Accords started showing its limitations, specially the one of not giving an answer to the petition over the right to return to Palestine. This provoked the emergence of alternative forces (especially Hamas) that rejected the Oslo Accords and adopted an Islamist ideology in their fights against the Israeli occupation. Soon in the refugee camps some of those groups appeared, being meaningful those closer to the Salafist international jihadism, which do not focus their attention on the fight against Israel, but they wanted a double objective: the Islamization of the customs of the refugee camps and the participation in any fight at a global scale that supported a global Yihad. In other words, while the Lebanese State greatly ignored the needs of the Palestinian refugees, involved in a state on constant marginalization, the refugee camps turned into centres of formation and recruitment of Salafist jihad militiamen, developing strong relationships of cooperation with Lebanese organizations of the same ideology who took advantage of the emptiness in the security of the camps and the support of some clergies to strengthen their presence in Lebanese territory and to participate in violent actions in other scenarios (Iraq, Chechenia, Afghanistan...). When said groups tried to defy the state, the result was a direct confrontation with the LAF, as it occurred with the region of Akkar with the denominated "Dinniyeh group" in 1999 (Rougier, 2015).<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the ISF, these experienced an important transformation, as Damascus exerted great control over them. The same were mainly integrated by Shuni police officers (providing job vacancies for members of such communities which were close to the Shuni politicians that collaborated with Syria). On the other hand, due to the strong implicature in this maintenance of the public order, the ISF turned into a kind of auxiliary force in the fulfilment of this duty. At the same time, the decree 1157 of 1991 created the Section of Information, which adopted the characteristics of an intelligence agency differentiated from the Deuxième Bureau of the Army and the General Security. During the presidential mandate of Émile Lahoud, the decision of the General Security, which until then was directed by a Christian, to be directed by the Shia was

taken, in exchange that the Christian received the control of the denominated State Security, an agency created in 1983 by Amin Gemayel. Subsequently, this agency has officially been abolished, although its existence has continued in a discrete manner. The General Security was fundamentally concerned with the aspects joint with the information, highlighting the manner of the relations with the Palestinian refugees, an especially sensitive topic due to the presence of those in different armed factions (Gaub, 2007; Saliba, 2012: 14).

The main characteristic of these agencies is that they served for the Syrian purpose of applying the principle of "divide and rule", promoting certain competition between the same with the will to elude any strong resistance to the hegemony of Damascus, at the same time as they dispute between them the favour of Hafez al-Assad. In addition to possessing a personal link with those agencies, their own Syrian intelligence was deployed in Lebanese territory, which permitted a rigid control of any threat. On the other hand, the regime of Assad developed an important labour of socialization between the elite of the Lebanese security, which habitually received part of its education in Syria, obtaining even the North American support for these activities (Zaideh, 2011: 80-81).

## **5. The departure of the Syrian troops and the new public-private cooperative model**

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<sup>2</sup> Majmouat al-Dinniyeh was a jihadist group linked to Al Qaeda who launched an attack against the LAF in 1999, being later disjoined (Lion Bustillo, 2017: 109)

However, the named "Cedar Revolution" made visible the difficulties that the forces of Assad had to control the neighbouring country, occurring at the same time as a strong campaign of international pressure so that Damascus withdrew its troops and security agencies, which was completed in 2005. With the arrival of a government mainly in favour of Syria and directed by Fouad Siniora<sup>3</sup>, the circumstances experienced significant changes. The ISF turned into the predilection instrument of the government, due to the clear hegemony of the Hariri family and its Future Movement between the Shuni community and the great mistrust towards other security agencies. In this sense, their intelligence wing constituted the basic instrument in the gathering of information for the new authorities, at the same time that other agencies turned into the main force against the Siniora government in case that the existent political crisis led to an opened civil conflict. Being frequent in this tendency, different ally forces of the Future Movement (the United States and Saudi Arabia) contributed important resources to strengthen the ISF and turned them into a paramilitary militia capable of facing Hezbollah if that was needed (Nashabe, 2009: 9; Sayigh, 2009: 16-17).

For these very same reasons, Iran and Syria strengthened their relationship with Hezbollah, Amal and other groups close to Damascus, as they feared that, once the Syrian powers had retired from Lebanon, a risk existed of the new authorities adopting politics that undermined their influence. In this labour, the control of the Security Service in Beirut's airport, which possesses great importance in guaranteeing the shipping of weapons and other resources. In the same way, it was incredibly important to maintain the monopoly of the force in the South of the river Litani, in a way that the frontier with Israel only had combatants of Hezbollah. This would allow a great flexibility in their activities without any type of governmental control and an absolute capacity of implementing their strategy of dissuasion in a unilateral manner, without giving any response to the authorities. In other words, Hezbollah assumed this way a typically statal function as the control of the frontiers and the dissuasion of external enemies. The Siniora government repeatedly required the ending of this situation through the disarmament of Hezbollah and the deployment of the LAF troops at the South of the Litani. However, this possibility was ruled out not only because of the refusal of the Shia militia, but for the President of the Republic, Émile Lahoud<sup>4</sup>.

Since the Israeli retirement in the meridional Lebanon in the year 2000, Hezbollah (and the own Lebanese authorities) have confirmed that said movement was unfinished, considering that the area of the Shebaa Farms constituted a Lebanese territory still under Israeli control. For that, the punctual military procedures continued on both sides leading to the war of 2006, in which over a month of combat in the Israel troops caused important damages to Hezbollah's militia and to the country altogether, but without a clear victory. The war had a double effect in the country, as while many criticized the highly adventurer behaviour of Hezbollah, a number of citizens also considered that the magnitude of Israeli retaliation and the strength of the resistance had proved that Lebanon had to preserve a power of dissuasion against a not overly respectful neighbor with the Lebanese sovereignty. During the conflict, the LAF did not intervene in the conflict, but certain evidence suggests that they collaborated with Hezbollah in the exchange of information, which was perceived in Washington as a sign of the unreliability of the institution (Sayigh, 2009:9).

This leads us to the complex and delicate equilibrium of action of the LAF in a moment of rigid social and political division of the country. The LAF have always based their prestige on their national and not partisan character, in a way that a support to the Siniora government would have been perceived as deviation from that national identity, behaving as other security agencies. On the contrary, ignoring the new government seemed to deviate from the public opinion, who had come across as critical with the Syrian presence. There exists a great Christian presence in the LAF officials, having great importance derived from the legacy of General Fouad Chehab and his integratory and nationalist vision. In this sense, a great number of those officials reject the idea of joining any party in an armed conflict, as they prefer to stand in the side of those confrontations. From there, in the moments of major internal division, the LAF are reluctant to participate in any sense. This same factor proved that in the Siniora government the LAF were seen as an element with which one cannot count on, so the ISF was preferred to hold the exterior help in regard to weapons (Narguizian, 2009: 10-11).

The American authorities have taken into consideration those same factors in their politics towards the Lebanese security sector, concentrating their help in those institutions close to March 14th and ignoring the rest, trying to alter this way the power equilibrium in the sector and the national politics. Since the "Cedar Revolution" a North American help program to the LAF has been developed with the objective that in the future they could fight against Hezbollah. However, the reluctance of the LAF to play that role and the collaboration of their Intelligence Service with Hezbollah during the War of 2006 against Israel started the discontent of the Bush Administration. In addition to that, Israel has often acted as an actor with enough power to forbid any significant improvement of the military capacities of the LAF that would allow them a rise of their dissuasive power (surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank missiles...) (Narguizian, 2009: 26-29). Curiously, this factor maintains the LAF in a position of weakness, which reinforces the argument of Hezbollah that their resources are necessary to guarantee a capacity of Lebanese dissuasion against any threat to its sovereignty. Since the summer of 2006, in spite of the LAF deployment in the South of the country (following the Resolution 1701 of the Security Council, promoted by Washington), the United States decided that the security agency that would receive the majority of the help would be the ISF, clearly marginalizing the LAF and depriving them

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<sup>3</sup> The new Lebanese government was majorly composed by members of the Coalition March the 14th, which included parties like the Future Movement of the Hariri family, the Lebanese Forces, the Phalange, or the Socialist Progressist Party. But some members of the rival Coalition, March the 8th mainly composed by Hezbollah and Amal, were also present. In the latter compromise between Hezbollah and the biggest Christian party, the Free Patriotic Movement, has created a power equilibrium between both coalitions, in such a way that the result have been some governments of national concentration in which decision making is complex.

<sup>4</sup> A key area in the collaboration between Syria and Hezbollah in the frontier between both countries, which was clearly out of Beirut's authorities' control.

of essential resources to fulfill their labour (Sayigh, 2009: 8-9). Curiously, there was not a clear intervention to improve the actuation of the ISF in the matter of defence of the human rights and the empire of the law, areas in which the reform would have been less controversial and would have counted with a major support of the civil society (El Mufti, 2015: 5).

The LAF focused their attention on the fight against the international jihadism, whose growth has been favoured by the existing general poverty, to which it should be added the presence of Palestine refugee camps, in which that radicalization has been visible due to the lack of results in the process of Arab-Israeli peace and the situation of marginalization in which that community lives in Lebanon. The Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, close to Tripoli, was the scenario in 2007 of the emergence of one organization, Fatah al-Islam, devoted to extend the jihadist action against the United States and Hezbollah, which lead to a direct confrontation with the LAF which caused a significantly high number of victims in both sides and among the civil population. Since then, this and other Palestine camps have provided combatants for Salafist jihadism on a regional scale (Rougier, 2015: 82-170).

The tensions on the control of the security sector were visible after the government crisis of 2007 and the abandonment of the same done by the ministers close to March the 8th (which included a mix of Shia, questioning the fulfillment of the National Pact). The decisions of the Siniora government of May of 2008 for which the telephonic line of internal communication of Hezbollah and the Security Service in the airport were under its authority, which lead to the arrival of militias of Hezbollah, Amal and the National Socialist Syrian Party to Western Beirut, and those groups fought against the combatants of the Future Movement and the Popular Socialist Party druse for the control of the neighborhoods that are key to the governmental powers. The different security agencies opt not to take a part in the fight, as their intervention could have led to a generalized confrontation (Narguizian, 2009: 18-19). In this sense, the role of the Chief Commander of the FAL, General Michel Suleiman, followed the traditional patterns of Chehabism, guaranteeing the neutrality of the institution and avoiding its partisan use. In this context, the victory of the militias of March the 8th was clear in Beirut, even if in the Chouf and in Tripoli the equilibrium of the forces was different. The leaders of March the 14th opt to recognize the military superiority of Hezbollah, and this implied the quick ending of the combat. At the same time, the Shia militants avoided provocations and were immediately retired, which lead to a negotiation with Qatari mediation. The final result, the Doha Accord, recognized that one third of the government could block any proposal, which satisfied the interests of March the 8th as that guaranteed that there would not be any other significant reform in the security sector that was not based on the consensus. At the same time, this very same blocking minority was a guarantee for their own March the 14th as a future in which their rivals held the parliamentary majority (as it happened soon after). In other words, the status quo that would prevail, avoiding significant disruptions to the power equilibrium.

The Syrian Civil War has had a profound impact in the evolution of the security sector, as the armed confrontation in the neighboring country has filtered into the own Lebanese territory, leading to an action of collaboration by several different groups with their allies in the other side of the frontier. All these activities possessed an illegal character, defying the control that Beirut's authorities supposedly had on the frontiers. However, those who carried out said actions were often members of parties integrated in the own government and institutions. In other words, in spite of the Declaration of Baada (2012) expressing neutrality and dissociation from the Lebanon during the Syrian war, the Lebanese political powers were not in any manner neutral and tried to collaborate with those Syrian actors that were more useful for their interests (Salem, 2012: 12-14; Lion Bustillo, 2014: 218-225).

Initially, that intervention had a discrete character, based on the transference of weapons, combatants, and money through the frontiers, in addition to the training labours in Lebanese floor to Syrian combatants. These activities were developed by both the allies of Bashar al Assad (as Hezbollah) and the opposition (the Future Movement, jihadist groups). However, the growth of the Syrian crisis and the direct threat of the defeat of the baasist regime led Hezbollah to fulfil a much active role, sending combat units and summing the main role in the Syrian conflict. In that new role, the labour of controlling the frontier is to be highlighted as they wanted to avoid the use of the same by opposing Syrian militias situated in the area of the Qalamoun Mountains, which often filtered in the Lebanese territory with the objective of resting, rearm themselves and come back to Syria to continue with their actions. The area of the city of Aarsal turned into the predilect space for these types of activities, where a majority of the Shia population perceived as a natural ally of the jihadist combatants belonging to organizations such as Islamic State and the Jabhat al-Nusra.

In fact, from that area the jihadist combatants started to launch attacks against members of Hezbollah, the Shia community and against the LAF, which were accused of collaborating with Hezbollah in the closing of the frontiers. On their behalf, this last militia started ambushing both sides in the divisional lines, while the LAF focused on its surveillance. This division of the power brought very positive results when preventing new infiltrations and weakening the jihadist presence in the Bekaa Valley, but the price to pay has been an important discontent between the Shuni population in the area which considers that the LAF have been too tough in the fight against Salafist jihadism while they would ignore the weapons on Hezbollah's power (Lion Bustillo, 2017: 121; International Crisis Group, 2016).

Another cross-border space in which the impact of the war in Syria has been significant is the Akkar district, where the highly impoverished Shia population has experimented a strong radicalization, emerging this way diverse Salafists preachers who have cheered to help their Syrian co-religionists in their fight against Assad's regime, turning the Syrian conflict into a confessional dispute. The impact of this evolution has been very negative for the public order, as groups that have hugged the Jihadist flag have arisen, sending combatants in Syria and developing attacks in Lebanese territory, mainly against the LAF and against members of the Alaouite minority, especially in the city of Tripoli, in which the intercommunal tensions have reached a very high point (Lefèvre, 2014). In this area, where there

are no combatants of Hezbollah, confrontations have occurred between jihadist militants against the Democratic Party (of Alaouite confession). Here the Army has opted for an active intervention, carrying out important operations against jihadist cells, in occasions linked to Jabhat al-Nusra or the Islamic Estate, obtaining important success, even if their image has been deteriorated in certain Shuni areas (Lion Bustillo, 2017: 122-124).

The change of sign in the Syrian Civil War in favour of Bashar al Assad has been consequence of several factors, but it should be highlighted that from 2014 the frontier with the Lebanon experimented a growing control on behalf of the authorities of both countries and Hezbollah's militia, due to the weakening of the Salafist jihadism. In this sense, it should be mentioned that in the last months the position of the LAF in the country's frontiers is much stronger than what they had been in the last half century. The Northern and Eastern frontier have registered a deployment of the new frontier infantry regimes, whose construction of diverse observational points and advance operation bases has been facilitated, as well as the construction of numerous control spots in said areas (Nerguizian, 2017: 12-13). In this reinforcement of their capacities, the role of the United States and the United Kingdom has been key, as they brought important resources for the fight against transnational jihadism. That lead to important success in the summer of 2017, when an offensive lead by Hezbollah against the cross-border occupied by Jabhat al-Nusra in the proximities of Aarsal was followed by an attack in the LAF against the defences of the Islamic State situated in a Northern position. The global result of the offensive has been the definitive eradication of both organizations of the Lebanese territory and the perception of the LAF has been turned in a much more reliable force in matters related to guaranteeing national sovereignty against the jihadist threat.

And one of most important characteristics in the security sector was in the Lebanon in the last few years has been the important role carried out by the help programs brought in a purely bilateral manner by diverse countries, which include strong powers such as the United States, Russia and China, to regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, to which should be added the Irani support to Hezbollah as well as covered programs of different countries destined to hold the militias of different countries. The North American help has been closely linked to the fight against terrorism, due to the worrying expansion of the Islamic State in the region during the Syrian Civil War, having a special emphasis in assuring a territorial control that impedes such expansion, even if a long-term objective would be impede the arrival of military material for Hezbollah coming from Iran (Tholens, 2017: 870-875).

However, the fact that this help responds not to the national interest of Lebanon, but to the different powers involved, leads to certain occasions in which an elevated level of unhappiness is shown for the acting of the Lebanese administration. A truly clear example has been the position of Saudi Arabia, promising in 2014 an important amount of money with the will of modernizing the LAF with the supposed aim of contributing to the strengthening of the institutions and the independence of the country. This money would be destined to the buying of the French armament, which would serve to modernize the obsolete equipment that certain units possess. However, when the Lebanese government decided to stand back in the sentence of the Arab League against the Syrian regime, the Saudi authorities announced the withdrawal of said help (Azakir, 2016). A new Saudi intromission act occurred when the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri was held back in Riad and forced to resign, so that later (due to the significant Lebanese protests) he was authorized to come back and assume his role once again. The cause of this accident would have been the annoyance of the Saudi monarchy because Hariri would have an excessively soft behaviour against Hezbollah (Barnard and Abi-Habib, 2017). In other words, any reform of the security sector will have to bear in mind not only the national power equilibriums, but also the pressure of the different powers, who want to take care of their interests in the region.

Nevertheless, the true main point in the Lebanese security will continue being in the meridional frontier, once the Syrian Civil War seems to stabilize and the control of the Damascus regime has been reinforced in the occidental area of the country. The truth is that these last years have been the most peaceful in the area since the decade of the 1960s, as the level of confrontation between the Defence Forces of Israel and Hezbollah has been extremely low. The most usual incidents have consisted in the findings on the hands of the UNIFIL or the LAF in some weapon deposit of the Shia militia in the South of the Litani. On their behalf, the Israelis have continued their violations of Lebanese airspace. However, the direct confrontations have been scarce. A worrying data is that on occasions the latter mentioned have involved the troops of the LAF, proving their closeness with the Israeli forces and the tensions between both countries are likely to lead to an outbreak of those incidents. On their behalf, Hezbollah has preferred to show a low profile in the frontier with Israel in a moment in which their resources were very extended in the Syrian neighbouring territory.

With the progressive return of the combatants of Hezbollah and the great weakening of the Lebanese Salafist jihadism, the equilibrium of powers of the country has changed, as precisely the jihadist threat contributed during these years to form a solid political support in the operations of the LAF against these groups (Van Veer, 2015). Once that was overcome, the LAF are in a complex position. On the one hand, there exists a pressure on Washington's and Riad's behalf, so they adopt a more belligerent attitude towards Hezbollah, completing the control of the frontiers. In other words, these actors are focused on a model of reform of the security sector based on the paradigm of the securitization, in a way that said reform should focus on giving the LAF and other security agencies under the control of March the 14th the necessary resources for the military equilibrium in the country that leans towards their allies. On their behalf, the reform proposed by Iran would be focalised in minor changes in the different security agencies and in a limited reinforcement of the LAF, in such way that these are able to answer to the challenges of small jihadist groups in the regions where the presence of Hezbollah is scarce or nonexistent, but without it achieving an elevated levels that would question the necessity that the Shia militia preserves its weapons as means of dissuasion and defence of the country. Curiously, the North American attitude of impending that the LAF are gifted with the necessary means to

turn into a believable dissuasion strength in the South frontier reinforces the political position of Hezbollah as an essential complement in said dissuasion, in an aspect recognized by both the President Aoun and numerous high officials of the LAF.

On the other hand, the actual tendency of the Trump Administration (along with Saudi Arabia) placing the LAF once again in a confronting position with Hezbollah cannot lead to anything but new national tensions, in addition to obstructing the UNIFIL labour, ignoring the important role conducted by such when lowering the tensions in the frontier. Equally, the attempts of Hezbollah to take actions in a collaborative appearance with the LAF are only minoring the credibility of the same in the Sunni community. In fact, any advance in the convivial of the Lebanon cannot ignore the hybrid character of its security, consisting of a participation of public and private agencies, Lebanese and foreigners, which has its bases in some power equilibriums that already exist, in which in case they were modified in a unilateral manner they will not generate nothing more than a new cycle of violence and instability in the country (Newby, 2016: 15).

## 6. Conclusions

An advance in the construction of a security system that overcomes the rigidity of confessionism and that guarantees its democratic control will require a creation of a trust between the sides that nowadays does not exist, in addition to an essential international agreement that does not seem likely in a moment of great regional volatility. In the absence of that, the efforts of the international community should be focused on improving the professionalism and capacities of the police force with intentions of creating competent judicial police that reinforces the empire of the law and respect towards human rights. Such initiatives would not cause strong rejection by any of the sides and would have the virtue of contributing in a genuine manner to the improvement of the life conditions of the Lebanese. However, until now little has been made in this sense, as it has been evident that some of the donor countries in the security sector have been more worried about the well-being of their own geopolitical interests than the progress in the democratization of Lebanon, acting under the paradigm of the securitization.

On their behalf, any external pressure for the LAF to take sides in the Lebanese political arena only supposes putting the unity and credibility of the only security institution with the support of the majority of the community in danger. Nonetheless, a politic of pragmatic support to gift them of the necessary instruments that guarantee the defence of the country will fulfill the function of reinforcing its credibility regarding the population in a function overly supported by the set of the communities (Geha, 2015).

While the needed national agreement is being built to advance towards a security system which is integrated under the democratic control, in the current circumstances it seems that the model of hybrid governance characteristic of the country will continue being valid in a medium term, so it will be necessary that the international community adapts its contribution of the reform of the security sector to the needs of the Lebanese, having in mind that any alteration of the subtle power equilibrium of the country may lead to its destabilization.

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