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Local Elections and Service Provision under Lebanon's Postwar Party Cartel

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1. Introduction

In the aftermath of civil war, empowerment of local political institutions is often framed as an effective way to promote democratic accountability and improve the quality of governance. Scholars and policymakers highlight the need to reinstitute free and fair elections at the local level following conflict.[1] Others show that the devolution of basic social service provision to the local level can improve governance quality in contexts where the central state has previously broken down or been subverted by private providers of order.[2] Together, local elections and policymaking can promote a new postconflict equilibrium where citizens participate in the reestablishment of everyday democratic governance.[3]

In many settings, however, local political institutions are associated with authoritarian durability, suggesting they do not act as a panacea for troublesome governing contexts. For example, under single-party rule in Mexico, the governing party selectively distributed funding for service provision to loyal local governments and denied them elsewhere to punish electoral opposition.[4] As Sosnowski argues in this volume, the Syrian regime has used similar strategies to punish localities that supported the opposition. Further, the Moroccan case illustrates how the pursuit of decentralization can be a strategy to co-opt opposition parties and broaden

the regime's support base.[5] Even in electoral democracies, devolution of governance is often associated with clientelism and the creation of subnational authoritarian enclaves, thereby decreasing elite accountability in subsequent electoral cycles.[6] The wide range of outcomes associated with decentralization and local governance, irrespective of regime type, suggests that specific institutional features of center-local relations—rather than the mere presence of democratically elected local leaders—must be taken into consideration.

Lebanon is a postconflict state, where democratic local elections and the devolution of governance responsibilities coincided with a poor governance track record. At the same time, electoral opposition to Lebanon's small set of governing parties—what I characterize as a "party cartel"—has been very limited since the end of the civil war in 1990.[7] Prior explanations of poor governance in Lebanon focus on the prevalence of clientelism as an alternative to programmatic spending, on the country's ethnic diversity, or on the tendency of consociational power-sharing institutions to heighten elite gridlock.[8] By contrast, this chapter argues that the longstanding institutions that delimit the relationship between central and local authorities have handicapped electoral opposition at its local roots. Within this system, party-cartel-affiliated local governments have been given the resources necessary to govern, while opposition areas have not.

This chapter presents empirical evidence supporting this argument. It shows that a core component of the party cartel's strategy has been to selectively reward local electoral strongholds with access to basic governance goods. Local elites who opposed the party cartel were not afforded these privileges, and thus, electoral opposition was hampered and became increasingly limited over time. As a result, in practice Lebanon's multiparty, procedural democracy came to function as an electoral autocracy.

This chapter has important implications for scholars of postconflict state-building, particularly in places where transitions out of conflict involve some sort of elite pact. In these contexts, local elections are quite susceptible to elite capture. Though drawn from a democratic context, the argument presented in this chapter also applies to other polities in the post-Ottoman sphere, where legacies of heavy central state control over local authorities remain intact. This form of deconcentrated but not fully decentralized governance is common throughout the region and has played an understudied role in regime durability.[9] In this sense, although Lebanon is often exceptionalized in studies of the Middle East due to the uniqueness of its consociational, national-level democratic institutions, its

local political landscape is comparable to those of other regional states and should be further considered for comparative analysis.

The chapter also speaks to core debates in the comparative politics literature over how ethnic identity affects governance quality and political stability. Counter to the prevailing narrative, the chapter suggests that *interethnic cooperation*, not only conflict, plays a crucial role in postconflict polities where ethnic identity predominates. Additionally, the chapter's findings are relevant to scholars of ethnic consociationalism, including power-sharing arrangements implemented after a civil war. While some consociational societies are well-governed, the Lebanese case highlights how certain institutional arrangements pair particularly poorly with ethnic power-sharing. Specifically, heavily centralized authority over local governments in Lebanon has compounded the tendency of consociationalism to produce "elite cartels" that have pernicious effects on governance.[10]

This chapter proceeds in three parts. The first section outlines how legacies of state-building in Lebanon during the late Ottoman and early independence eras shaped ties between the central and local levels of government. This led to many responsibilities being conferred onto local governments. Next, the chapter charts the evolution of elite strategies after the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90). In the war's aftermath, a cohesive party cartel comprised of several parties formed, initially intended to prevent future violence. However, over time, it evolved to exclude outside electoral challengers, much like an economic cartel. The third section presents evidence from two original surveys showing that Lebanon's key parties competed in local elections in the postwar era as a united cartel, forming alliances and largely avoiding competition, despite different policy preferences. The chapter then shows that local-level party cartel control is associated with higher-quality governance. Finally, the chapter concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for the viability of electoral opposition in Lebanon.

2. Local Governance in Lebanon before and after the Civil War

Local municipal councils in Lebanon were initially conceived in 1861 following an outbreak of violence in the broader Levant.[11] During the remainder of the Tanzimat (1839–1876), a series of reforms produced a contractual relationship between Ottoman central authorities and local elected councillors. Central elites provided the resources necessary for

local councillors—largely drawn from the landed elite and heads of families—to reinforce their societal dominance. In return, councillors assured local order, settled communal disputes, and provided information to central elites as necessary.

Two trends subsequently unfolded as Ottoman rule gave way to the French mandate (1923–1946) and early independence eras. First, prominent clan-based elites in the regional urban centers of Tripoli, Sidon, Jounieh, Baalbek, and elsewhere consolidated control over municipal governments and their attendant fiscal resources, allotted via the central state.[12] Second, legislation further expanded municipal responsibilities from 1922 through the tenure of Fouad Chehab (1958–64), during which time the number of new municipalities grew exponentially.[13]

By the Chehabist era, municipal councillors maintained chief responsibility for everyday governance—no small task in rapidly urbanizing areas like Tripoli or Baalbek. Yet the central state's ability to fund and implement larger-scale development projects remained heavily vested. Therefore, MPs and government members in Beirut were able to dictate the terms by which Lebanon's periphery was governed—an institutional arrangement similar to the contemporary one this chapter later describes.

However, the key difference between pre– and post–civil war central control over municipalities lies in the degree of central *coordination* of governance strategies. While MPs and ministers forged ties with the local governments of their respective hometowns, they rarely intervened in the governance of areas outside their narrow personal purview and the capital, Beirut. National parties and factions, such as the Kataeb Party, the Progressive Socialist Party, and the National Bloc, did not coordinate to systematically compete across municipal elections.[14] In summary, central elites' interventions in local affairs were rarely orchestrated in coordination with one another or across multiple municipalities as part of an overarching strategy.

Center-local relations rapidly changed following the start of civil conflict in Lebanon in 1975. Following a brief cessation of conflict in 1977, the central state passed two key laws expanding the scope of municipal responsibilities and formalizing regular financial transfers from the newly created Independent Municipal Fund. The first piece of legislation (Decree-Law 118 of 1977) broadened both the range of duties for which municipalities held sole responsibility and the duties they managed alongside the central state. The second piece of legislation (Decree-Law 1917 of 1979) created an autonomous municipal fund to be dispersed by the central state to local governments. Though renewed violent conflict in 1979 prevented

the enactment of both laws for several decades, these laws formed the legal foundation of center-local ties in the postwar (1990–present) era.

When the war resumed in 1979, municipalities were entirely untethered from the central state. Lacking requisite aid from the center, municipalities either ceased functioning or kept going by other means. Various municipalities continued to operate via the beneficence of wealthy locals or, in some cases, via newly created parties and militia groups.[15] This patchwork of informal local order remained in place until the end of the conflict in 1989.

Lebanon's war-ending Ta'if Agreement (1989) is frequently characterized as having instituted a "no victor, no vanquished" policy, whereby nascent militias-turned-political-parties were granted immunity for their war-era activities.[16] In reality, the agreement's enactment under Syrian auspices entailed clear winners and losers. During the Syrian occupation era, which lasted until 2005, coalitions were formed, comprising most other political factions, along with various independent elites who were largely allied with the Syrian regime. After 2005, formerly excluded parties were reintegrated into the national government, coalescing into a stable "party cartel" of six key parties.[17] With minor exceptions, these parties formed national unity governments thereafter.

Crucially, Lebanon's postwar party cartel system extended to the local level as well. Lebanon's major governing parties competed in *national* elections, often fiercely, but have usually agreed to unity governments. However, parties formed a series of electoral alliances, virtually eradicating interparty competition at the *local* level. For example, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, two parties that draw predominantly Shia Muslim support, agreed to a formal electoral alliance in 2004 that extended to the municipal level. The two major Christian parties, the Lebanese Forces and Free Patriotic Movement, agreed to a similar municipal alliance as part of the Maarab Agreement (2016). Alliances were also forged between parties of different ethnic identities. In diverse locales like Beirut, all or almost all the major party cartel members have formed joint electoral lists against "independent" or, by 2016, "opposition" lists, even though these parties maintain conflicting policy stances.[18]

On paper, center-local relations in Lebanon were not fundamentally altered after the civil war. Per the legislation from 1977 and 1979, along with supplementary legislation, municipalities received regular transfers from the central government and were required to seek its permission for any development work above a low, nominal threshold, varying by municipal size. The approval process usually went as follows. A municipal

council first proposed a general plan and funding structure, which must be approved by the Ministries of Interior and Municipalities (MOIM) and Finance (MOF). Next, the MOIM and MOF designated one or more other ministries to review the plans pertaining to specific sectors. For example, plans for a new landfill facility usually required review from the Ministries of Environment and Public Works. Finally, once the nature of the project was agreed on, contract bidding (if relevant) would be handled by either the Office of the Minister of State Administrative Reform or the Council for Development and Reconstruction.

In the postwar era, Lebanese ministerial leadership has been roughly allocated based on party vote shares in national elections. In most post-2005 cabinets, parties in the cartel were represented through ministerial leadership at some stage in the approval process for local government work. In other words, municipal work would probably involve a party cartel member at some point, and a municipality's collective requests to the central government (over a six-year term) would probably involve mostly or exclusively party cartel members.

As a result, the party cartel maintained heavily centralized control over the resources necessary for local authorities to perform everyday governance tasks. These resources were not only financial but also bureaucratic—even if they independently raised the necessary funding, municipalities needed permission from the central state when any work exceeds a low financial threshold. Bureaucratic authority was granted, or not granted, at the near-total discretion of ministerial leadership.[19] As one municipal councillor said, "If you do not have the parties' support, any little thing will delay a project. It just takes one person being told not to sign a document, to delay, to put some roadblocks up against an idea. And then it does not get done."[20]

This chapter presents two key pieces of evidence related to Lebanon's postwar party cartel. First, it provides novel descriptive evidence that Lebanon's party cartel functioned as a cohesive regime in *local elections*. Second, it shows that party cartel control is positively linked to the quality of *local governance goods*, particularly public or quasipublic goods that are less efficiently targeted at specific individuals.

3. Theorizing Lebanon's Predatory Governance System

Postwar Lebanon has performed exceptionally poorly in providing basic social services. Before its 2019 economic crisis, Lebanon was an upper-

middle-income country, with its infrastructure ranked 113th out of 137 countries.[21] Around this time, however, the quality of electricity provision ranked fourth worst in the world, and Lebanese citizens consistently paid monopoly prices for additional electricity via private generators during frequent blackouts.[22] Public water provision was similarly inadequate.[23] Likewise, healthcare was largely privatized and often only accessible through partisan connections.[24]

Poor service provision in Lebanon has also been coupled with high levels of elite predation. The country maintained the third-highest debt-to-GDP ratio in the world by 2018.[25] Scholars have documented how incumbent elites' siphoning of state resources has led to excessive spending, with minimal benefits conferred on the Lebanese people.[26] To that point, a survey indicated that 99 percent of Lebanon's population believed elite corruption to be a pervasive problem.[27]

The simultaneous stability of Lebanon's postwar party system—specifically, the total lack of new party entry—is even more surprising given the tendency of unconsolidated and/or postconflict contexts to produce high levels of elite turnover and unstable party systems.[28] The emergence of moderately stable multiparty systems in such contexts is often heralded as reassurance against the possibility of future violence or autocratization.[29] On the other hand, strong parties alone do not promote postconflict democratic practices: transitions out of conflict can also give rise to single-party hegemony at both local and national levels.[30]

The Lebanese case does not fit cleanly into such characterizations. Lebanon's postwar party cartel was strong in that members, as of the 2018 MP elections, were not fundamentally challenged by outside party competitors, winning most of the national and local races. Yet parties within the cartel were not different faces of the same coin. They competed in national elections within two broader umbrella factions—the March 14 Coalition and the March 8 Coalition—and were ideologically opposed on numerous issues. They also represented different ethnic constituencies. Given these distinctions, their local- and national-level cartel behavior deserves a framing distinct from those generally associated with either democratic party systems or single-party autocracies.

Party cartel systems have emerged in various developing contexts, including Bolivia and Indonesia, almost always after civil conflict and/or regime change. Such collusion is often justified to the public, sometimes via a formal elite settlement, as safeguarding against the threat of future violence and state breakdown. Such agreements, in theory, lengthen elite time horizons by guaranteeing major players a seat at the table, limiting

incentives to defect and engage in antisystemic political action.[31] That said, party cartel systems limit the accountability-enhancing effects of electoral competition, essentially narrowing the voters' choice set to one cohesive faction. As a result, party cartel systems tend to produce regressive policy-making, particularly welfare-state retrenchment and elite rent-seeking.[32] In some cases, party cartel systems have quickly plummeted in popularity and been ousted from power within a few electoral cycles.[33]

How did Lebanon's party cartel system remain in power? Existing scholarship identifies three key factors with applications to various other postconflict and/or diverse contexts. These are (a) civil war–induced incentives for elite predation and rent-seeking, (b) consociational power-sharing institutions, and (c) how diversity impedes voter coordination against extant elites and fosters patron-clientelism. This chapter discusses each of these explanations in turn, highlighting their validity while also arguing that they do not completely explain the Lebanese experience.

Scholars show that legacies of violence can lead to predatory elite behavior. The threat of future violence shortens elite time horizons and encourages short-term rent-seeking.[34] Excessive state predation is, theoretically, a suboptimal behavior, even for elites themselves—who, in failing to invest in their populations, rob themselves of future taxation revenue. However, this is only true if the elites see the existence of the state and their roles in it as stable.[35] Indeed, as previously mentioned, the danger of elite uncertainty is one of the reasons why international observers have lauded power-sharing arrangements like Lebanon's.

This chapter argues and empirically demonstrates that this theoretical framework is less appropriate for the Lebanese case. Either Lebanon's elite have been so fractious that they loot the state instead of cooperating, or they actively cooperate to engage in predation; however, these mechanisms are at odds with one another. Evidence presented in this chapter points to the latter collusive behavior by demonstrating that elites in Lebanon have actively cooperated in political competition, even at the local level, and have predictably attained power where they do so. If this is true, theories linking the *lack* of elite cooperation to Lebanon's current deleterious state should be called into question.

Extensive scholarly literature also investigates how consociational systems based on elite power-sharing hinder or enable certain types of predatory elite behavior. Some scholars argue that consociationalism, if implemented correctly and without pernicious foreign influence, enhances the representational aspects of electoral democracy and reassures against

minoritarian rule.[36] For reasons already discussed, power-sharing is often promoted in post–civil war pacts between elites representing different groups.[37] On the other hand, consociationalism definitionally promotes the formation of an "oversize coalition," limiting competition along ethnic or confessional lines.[38] In other words, some degree of cartelization is usually guaranteed through consociational formulas, particularly at the national level.

With that said, consociationalism is not deterministically responsible for the formation of Lebanon's postwar party cartel. Lebanon's consociational formula has not limited competition within ethnic groups or the formation of a government comprising only some parties or factions from said groups. Additionally, consociationalism dictated nothing about the terms of competition or representation at the *local* (i.e., municipal) level. Councillors have been elected on a simple, majoritarian basis, with open-list voting and no ethnic quotas—most Lebanese municipalities are ethnically homogeneous.[39] In other words, party cartel collusion in local electoral competition has been a product of elite strategy, not consociationalism.

Finally, scholars argue that diversity (power-sharing aside) can impede voters' efforts to coordinate around electoral alternatives to incumbent elites.[40] In Lebanon, for example, alternatives to dominant ethnic party cartel members failed to generate significant electoral support.[41] Relatedly, the literature on identity-based or ethnic parties finds that such organizations rely on patron-clientelism or other forms of particularistic exchange at the expense of programmatic policymaking.[42] The proliferation of clientelism in postwar Lebanese politics is empirically well proven.[43]

However, explanations for Lebanon's poor governance track record focusing on ethnic diversity or ethnic parties fail to consider alternatives to the current party cartel system. Indeed, some of the most viable, if short-lived, challenges to the party cartel have emerged via ethnocentric defectors from within the cartel parties themselves. Such opposition figures situate themselves as anti-cartel through *greater* reliance on ethnic out-bidding, not less.[44] In other words, slightly better performing, but also clientelist and ethnocentric, candidates could have been potential sources of competition for the party cartel. The question, then, is why these alternatives were rarely viable, even on a local scale.

In the following sections, I present evidence demonstrating how Lebanon's party cartel has used local control to reward loyalty and punish opposition as part of a unified strategy. I first present original data demonstrating that governing parties competed as cartels in local elections,

which translated into high victory rates. I then show that cartel-controlled municipalities were governed more effectively, and that these local advantages extended to the realm of programmatic politics.

4. Evidence of Cartel Behavior in Local Elections

Party cartel behavior at the *national* level in Lebanon is empirically established. However, it is not documented at the *local* level; systematic data regarding candidate and list partisan affiliation is not publicly available for the just over 1,000 municipal governments. The state institution responsible for local electoral administration (the MOIM) only began publicly releasing candidates' names and vote totals in 2010. Similar data was released for the 2016 local elections, but no data has ever been published about local party competition. Therefore, municipal council candidates' party affiliations (or lack thereof) and electoral lists are not systematically available for any local election.

To understand how Lebanese parties compete in local elections, I partnered with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies to implement an original telephone survey of Lebanese mayors. Between two and four months after the 2016 municipal elections, enumerators called mayors (using publicly available phone data) and asked them to report the number of electoral lists that ran in their municipality, the political affiliation of each list, and the number of seats won by each list. Mayors then provided contact information for one to two other municipal councillors, who (if reached) were asked the same questions to cross-check answers. Responses were validated with media reports in English and Arabic wherever coverage was available. The total number of candidates was also cross-checked with MOIM data.

An elite survey approach via telephone was taken instead of alternative strategies (in-person and/or citizen surveys). The questions were straightforward, objective, and few. Therefore, systematic reporting of biased, false answers was not a significant concern. Additionally, the survey was comprehensive across all municipalities (n = 1,019 in 2016); a citizen survey of vote choice would not have produced a holistic picture of governance in all peripheral areas, nor would citizens have been better poised to accurately answer these questions. Finally, a phone survey was more economical than in-person interviews, given the geographic span.

Figure 4.1 summarizes patterns of party competition in Lebanon's 2016 municipal elections, looking separately at urban and peri-urban munici-

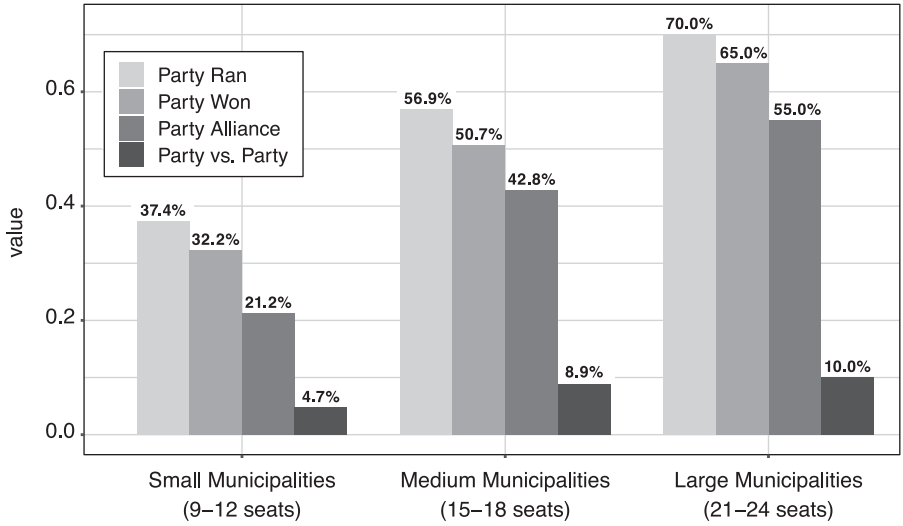

Figure 4.1. Party Cartel Competition in Local Elections (2016)
"Party" in this figure refers to a member of the party cartel. Data on party competition in municipal elections come from a postelection (2016) survey of municipal councillors conducted and analyzed by the author in partnership with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.

palities where local governance duties were more extensive.[45] Municipalities were allotted between 9 and 24 councillor seats based on population size, estimated (due to lack of census data) using voter registration data. The largest cities and towns include Beirut, Tripoli, Sidon, Sour, Baalbek, Jounieh, Jbeil, and Zahle, all with 21 seats or more (with only Beirut and Tripoli allotted 24). Most municipalities with fewer than 15 seats (listed as "small" here) are rural and contain fewer than 5,000 residents. Municipalities between 15 and 18 seats ("medium") are typically rural or peri-urban, ranging most widely in size. If parties have limited resources (campaign funding, human capital, etc.) to invest in local elections, we should expect them to concentrate those efforts chiefly in the municipalities governing the largest voter bases. Indeed, figure 4.1 demonstrates that the party cartel competes across municipalities of all sizes (44% on average), but predominantly in medium-sized (57%) and large (70%) municipalities.

Why did parties select into competition in some municipal races but not others? The cross-sectional nature of these data makes it difficult to conclusively pinpoint strategies. That said, qualitative evidence from the author's fieldwork points to resource constraints and size of the local voter base as two factors parties use when determining party support. For

example, an elections expert affiliated with one of the party cartel members stated in an interview that "in rural areas, electing a municipal council is less relevant politically" because of population size. But in larger urban locales, "municipal elections act as a pilot for Parliamentary elections. Politicians can see how effective they are on the ground—they can see if they have a chance."[46]

Figure 4.1 demonstrates that the party cartel (labeled "Party" in the figure) maintained high victory rates where it competed, winning 32% of all small councils (86% victory rate), 51% of all medium-sized councils (89% victory rate), and 70% of the largest cities and towns (95% victory rate).[47] These victories were attained overwhelmingly against "independent" lists comprised of locally prominent families who eschewed sponsorship by a political party. Less frequently, parties competed against local elites without national party affiliation but with some national prominence, often from serving as MP and/or minister (e.g., former interior minister Michel El Murr and former justice minister Ashraf Rifi). In a small number of cases, other national parties that opposed or sometimes operated outside the party cartel (e.g., the National Bloc, Communist Party, the Kataeb Party, and the Marada Movement) also competed in elections. Collectively, these actors formed the core of council leadership in areas not governed by the party cartel.

Figure 4.1 also provides evidence that governing parties acted as a cartel, frequently allying and rarely competing against one another. In small municipalities, governing parties allied with one another in 21% of all races, or 57% of all races in which at least one party competed. This increased to 43% in medium-sized municipalities (75% of partisan races) and 55% in large municipalities (79% of all partisan races). Crucially, cartel parties also seldom competed with one another (i.e., cartel breakdown). This happened in 5% of all small municipalities (13% of partisan races), 9% of medium-sized municipalities (16% of partisan races), and 10% of large municipalities (14% of partisan races). Interestingly, the likelihood of cartel breakdown did not increase as the municipal competition stakes increased: in the largest cities and towns, the cartel is equally likely to split.[48]

Figure 4.2 provides more specific evidence of cartel behavior, looking at alliances by party dyad. The number in each box represents the percentage of races in which two parties allied, conditional on both selecting to compete in any given municipality. Several features of these specific party alliances stand out. First, parties rarely systematically opposed one another: The only party dyad that resulted in alliances less than half of the time was between the (Sunni Muslim) Future Movement and the

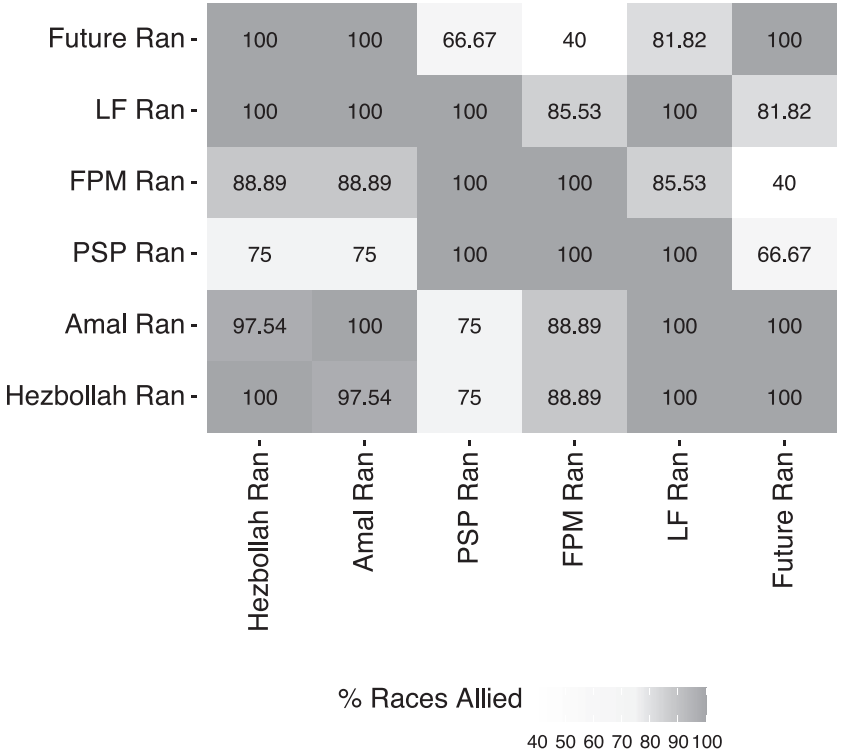

Figure 4.2. Cartel Alliances by Party Dyad (2016)
Data on party competition in municipal elections comes from a postelection (2016) survey of municipal councillors conducted and analyzed by the author in partnership with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. Party names included in the table are abbreviated as follows: Amal Movement (Amal), Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), Future Movement (Future), Hezbollah, Lebanese Forces (LF), and Progressive Socialist Party (PSP).

(Christian) Free Patriotic Movement (i.e., they were allied in 40% of total races in which both parties ran, including Beirut, where they allied). Apart from the FPM-Future Movement anomaly, parties allied across the board at high rates. Co-ethnic parties rarely competed where multiple parties existed for a given ethnic group (i.e., the Christian and Shia Muslim communities). The two governing Christian parties, the Lebanese Forces and Free Patriotic Movement—despite being ideologically opposed—allied in 86% of all municipal races. The two major Shia parties, Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, allied in almost every race where both competed (98%). Other patterns of interethnic party cooperation are also notable; despite broad ideological opposition, the Future Movement and Hezbollah allied, as did Hezbollah and the Lebanese Forces. The Druze Progressive Social-

ist Party, a monopsonist of the ethnic group, also allied at high rates with other parties.

These data provide new insights into local-level party behavior in Lebanon. Despite long-standing (and publicly stated) ideological opposition, governing parties competed across municipalities according to the logic of a nationwide cartel. This cartel is not infallible, but it rarely breaks down. The following section addresses why this cartel behavior matters for the quality of local governance, specifically in the realm of programmatic service provision.

5. Evidence of Party Cartel Control over Programmatic Governance

In this section, I present evidence that Lebanon's party cartel used central government control to systematically reward and punish different *local* governments. The chapter previously discussed how long-standing institutional arrangements in Lebanon devolved significant authority over governance to the municipal level while ultimate bureaucratic control over local governance remained vested in the central state. I argue that these center-local relations allowed Lebanon's democratically elected, multiparty cartel to treat local governments much like a single-party autocracy—selectively facilitating local governance in cartel-controlled municipalities and neglecting opposition-controlled municipalities.

As with data on municipal electoral competition, systematic information on the quality of municipal governance is scarce in Lebanon. Few municipalities collect this information, and surveys done in larger or more urban municipalities are not standardized across contexts. The Central Administration for Statistics conducts a regular Household Living Conditions survey, but disaggregated data are not made publicly available and do not pertain specifically to local governance quality. A national census has not been conducted since 1932.

To attain data on local governance and perceptions thereof, I conducted a nationally representative survey in Lebanon (n = 1,500) between September and December 2019. The Lebanese Local Governance and Elections Survey contained questions about the quality of services provided by municipalities, participation in municipal elections, perceptions of the municipal council, and partisan affiliation and participation in national elections. The survey sampled residents from 79 municipalities, including the capital of each electoral district.[49]

Survey respondents were matched to the municipality in which they

TABLE 4.1. Comparison of Survey Respondents by Party Cartel Control

Variable	No Party Cartel (sd)	Party Cartel (sd)	Difference (p)
Socioeconomic			
Age	41.67 (14.85)	41.63 (15.67)	0.03 (0.967)
Education	6.43 (2.98)	6.63 (3.22)	0.20 (0.221)
Gender	0.45 (0.5)	0.46 (0.50)	0.01 (0.678)
Unemployed	0.20 (0.4)	0.25 (0.44)	0.05* (0.016)
Economically secure	0.44 (0.50)	0.48 (0.50)	0.04 (0.162)
Ethnosectarian			
Sunni	0.35 (0.48)	0.27 (0.45)	0.08** (0.001)
Shia	0.15 (0.36)	0.35 (0.48)	0.20*** (0.000)
Christian	0.39 (0.49)	0.33 (0.47)	0.07** (0.008)
Druze	0.10 (0.30)	0.04 (0.19)	0.06*** (0.000)
Political			
Party supporter	0.44 (0.50)	0.44 (0.50)	0.01 (0.835)
Voted (2016)	0.45 (0.50)	0.52 (0.50)	0.07** (0.009)
Observations	750	750	

Note: * $p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Data come from a nationally representative survey of Lebanese citizens conducted by the author from September to December 2019. "Education" is measured on a scale of 1 to 11; all other variables are binary. "Gender" refers to the percentage of the sample identified as female. "Ethnosectarian identity" refers to the categorization of the respondent in official state documentation. "Party supporter" indicates whether the respondent identified as feeling very or somewhat close to a national political party.

primarily reside (using the municipal-level data previously discussed) and about which they answered local-governance-related survey questions. The survey included an even number of respondents from cartel-controlled (N = 750) and opposition-controlled (N = 750) municipalities. Table 4.1 presents descriptive data for each of these two subgroups. Across most demographic measures, respondents from cartel- and opposition-controlled municipalities did not differ significantly. Respondents from each pool were of similar age, gender, education, and socioeconomic status, though cartel-controlled areas had a slightly higher unemployment rate (25% versus 20%, $p = 0.05$). This provided some reassurance that demographic differences predating the cartel's formation drove neither the cartel's selection into competition nor subsequent electoral popularity.

Some empirical findings suggested that these results were not driven by social desirability bias, i.e., those living in cartel-controlled areas rating the performance of their local government more favorably for partisan reasons. Interestingly, cartel-controlled municipalities were not associated with higher rates of self-reported party support (44% support for one of the governing parties across both subgroups). In other words, party cartel

control over the respondent's municipal council did not appear to make them more likely to profess support for or membership in the cartel. That said, party cartel control was associated with significantly greater voter turnout, as of May 2016. Respondents from opposition areas reported having voted at a rate of 44%, compared to 52% in cartel-controlled areas (p = 0.01). Therefore, while party cartel control was not associated with higher rates of self-reported partisanship, it was associated with higher levels of formal political participation—specifically voting.

Party-cartel-controlled municipalities were associated with better governance quality. The survey looked specifically at the provision of *programmatic governance goods* instead of individual clientelist transfers and vote-buying, as was the focus of prior political science research on Lebanon. Of course, even nominally programmatic goods can be awarded based on political support; indeed, this is the argument this chapter develops. That said, the analysis focused on the provision of relatively nonexcludable goods at a communal (i.e., municipal) level, and on municipal actions that were not individually beneficial. Some additional analysis looked at overall perceptions of municipal council performance, leaving open the possibility that respondents could interpret performance through the lens of programmatic goods provision, clientelism, or some combination thereof.

Figure 4.3 presents descriptive differences in the quality of governance reported by survey respondents in cartel- and opposition-controlled municipalities. In the column on the left, respondents were asked to evaluate their local government using the following language: "On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 representing very poor performance and 10 representing excellent performance, how would you rate the performance of the municipal council in the municipality where you live?"

Figure 4.3 shows that respondents in cartel-controlled municipalities reported significantly better performance (5.8 out of 10) than their counterparts in opposition-controlled municipalities (5.1 out of 10, or about a quarter of a standard deviation less, p = 0.001). That said, general ratings of municipal council performance may have been driven by other subjective factors that covaried with party cartel control. These include the personalities of councillors selected by the cartel, their ties to the local population, clientelist linkages, and preexisting partisan support. To address some of these issues, I also investigated more specific measures of local governance that, while not immune to certain forms of response bias, were more objective in nature.

The first evidence pertains to road quality, as road maintenance is one of the core responsibilities of municipal governments. The survey asked

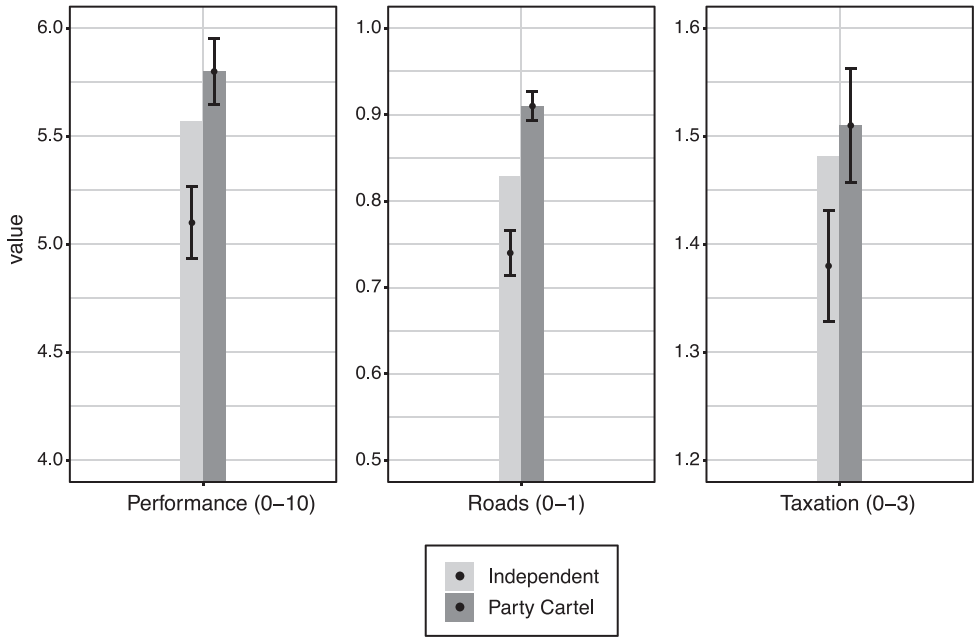

Figure 4.3. Descriptive Differences in Local Governance Quality by Party Cartel Control
Dots represent point estimates. Bars represent 90 percent confidence intervals. Data on party competition in municipal elections comes from a postelection (2016) survey of municipal councillors conducted and analyzed by the author in partnership with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. Individual-level data comes from a nationally representative survey of Lebanese citizens conducted by the author in September–December 2019. "Performance" measures how the respondent rated the overall performance of their municipality (1–10 scale). "Road quality" measures whether respondents reported major or minor structural problems in the main road of the municipality where they live (0–1). "Taxation" refers to whether and how respondents were asked to pay taxes to the municipality where they live in the past year. Respondents reported no requests (0), a public announcement (1), a public announcement and personal request from the municipality (2), or an announcement, personal request, and subsequent follow-ups (3).

respondents to evaluate the "most commonly used or main road" in the municipality where they live, with the option to report a road with many structural problems (cracks, potholes, etc.), a few structural problems, or no structural problems. The variable was dichotomized to indicate whether respondents reported a paved road with minor versus major structural problems (few residents report none). Figure 4.3 shows that respondents from cartel-controlled municipalities also experienced better road quality. Respondents in cartel municipalities reported major road problems (as opposed to minor/none) at a rate of 9%, compared to 25% elsewhere (just under half of a standard deviation difference, $p = 0.001$).

Next, the survey considered the quality of municipal administrative capacity, specifically the degree of local taxation capacity. The survey asked respondents how their municipality ensured residents paid annual municipal taxes, with the following options: (a) nothing; (b) a collective announcement posted in a public place; (c) a private message; or (d) a private message and follow-up thereafter. These responses were coded on a scale of 0 to 3.

I examined municipal taxation requests because they served as a measure of whether the party cartel allowed a municipality to govern. Municipalities had very limited ability to tax: the legislation governing local taxation (Decree Law No. 60 of 1988) specified a limited range of municipally taxable items.[50] Municipalities were prohibited from imposing new taxes, and the central government determined tax rates. When municipalities brought in tax revenue, they still had to seek approval from the central state for all municipal work above the financial threshold, as previously discussed.[51] In other words, the central state put a very low cap on local taxation capacity, such that local governments could not become self-sufficient, and the generated income could only be spent with the central state's approval.

Consequently, party-cartel-controlled municipalities had greater incentives to tax their residents. Taxation is a costly tactic that local authorities should only be motivated to engage in if it allows them to engage in other activities to boost their popularity, such as providing local services. Conversely, in municipalities where the central party cartel had less incentive to govern effectively, local officials should have fewer incentives to remind residents to pay their taxes and, all else being equal, should avoid engaging in this costly behavior. Figure 4.3 shows that cartel-controlled municipalities were associated with greater taxation efforts than opposition-controlled municipalities. On a 0–3 scale, taxation capacity in party cartel areas measured an average of 1.51 compared to 1.38 elsewhere (0.15 of a standard deviation difference, $p = 0.01$).

This analysis uses a multilevel modeling (MLM) approach to demonstrate differences in the quality of local governance across Lebanon's municipalities. An MLM accounts for both individual- and municipal-level variables and uses municipal-level random intercepts to account for the fact that individual-level variables may (and presumably do) systematically vary across municipalities. This strategy addresses intramunicipality correlations of individual responses. That said, the approach still assumes a lack of correlation between the random municipal-level intercepts and other municipal-level predictor variables.

Table 4.2 presents results from the MLM, demonstrating that the positive association between party cartel control and quality of local gover-

TABLE 4.2. Multilevel Model Results for Local Governance and Party Cartel Control

Local Governance Quality			
	Performance (1)	Taxation (2)	Roads (3)
Constant	4.992***	1.542**	0.994***
	(1.445)	(0.570)	(0.253)
Age	0.014**	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Female	-0.073	0.021	-0.021
	(0.145)	(0.045)	(0.020)
Household SES	-0.051	-0.023	0.024**
	(0.063)	(0.019)	(0.009)
Education	0.015	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.020)	(0.006)	(0.003)
Unemployed	-0.034	-0.094	0.009
	(0.171)	(0.053)	(0.024)
Party supporter	0.126	0.013	0.038*
	(0.134)	(0.041)	(0.019)
Voted (2016)	0.200	0.061	-0.026
	(0.135)	(0.041)	(0.019)
Party cartel win (2016)	1.084*	0.410*	0.165*
	(0.425)	(0.170)	(0.075)
Registered voters (per lk)	-0.005	-0.003	0.00004
	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.001)
N refugees (per lk)	-0.026	0.029*	-0.004
	(0.030)	(0.012)	(0.005)
Municipal SES	-0.063	-0.058	-0.058
	(0.295)	(0.118)	(0.052)
Observations	1,286	1,191	1,290
Log likelihood	-2,848.286	-1,217.255	-341.764
Akaike inf. crit.	5,724.572	2,462.511	711.528

Note: $^{*}p < 0.05$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^{***}p < 0.001$. Data on party competition in municipal elections comes from a postelection (2016) survey of municipal councillors conducted and analyzed by the author in partnership with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. Data on municipal socioeconomic status and refugees comes from the UNHCR (2013). Data on registered voters come from the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. Individual-level data comes from a nationally representative survey of Lebanese citizens conducted by the author in September–December 2019. "Performance" measures how the respondent rated the overall performance of their municipality (1–10 scale). "Road quality" measures whether respondents reported major or minor structural problems in the main road of the municipality where they live (0–1). "Taxation" refers to whether and how respondents were asked to pay taxes to the municipality where they live in the past year. Respondents reported no requests (0), a public announcement (1), a public announcement and personal request from the municipality (2), or an announcement, personal request, and subsequent follow-ups (3).

nance held when a variety of respondent-level and municipal contextual factors were accounted for (see figure 4.4 for coefficient plots). The effect sizes of party cartel control were comparable to the descriptive comparisons previously presented. Cartel control was associated with an overall performance increase of 1.08 ($p = 0.05$), a 17% greater likelihood of good road quality ($p = 0.05$), and a taxation capacity increase of 0.41 ($p = 0.05$). These results included, as controls, a variety of standard individual-level demographic factors, socioeconomic vulnerability, number of Syrian refugees, and number of registered voters associated with each municipality.

Some other results from the MLM are worth noting. Most demographic factors were not systematically associated with perceptions of better governance. Older respondents were more likely to report higher overall municipal governance quality ($p = 0.01$), though the magnitude of the effect was very small. Respondents of higher socioeconomic status were more likely to report better road quality ($p = 0.01$), though again, with a very small effect size. Interestingly, self-reported supporters of the party cartel did not hold more positive perceptions of local governance, though they reported slightly better road quality ($p = 0.05$). Finally, regarding municipal-level contextual factors, the number of Syrian refugees was associated with a slightly higher taxation capacity. This finding, however, was not corroborated across the other measures of the quality of local governance.

This chapter presents two main empirical findings. First, it incorporates a novel elite survey to demonstrate that parties in Lebanon behaved as a united cartel in local elections. Many parties formed nearly ironclad alliances in electoral races across the country, even those that assumed opposed policy positions in national politics. Conversely, cartel parties very rarely competed against one another. Where they decided to run, alone or allied, party cartel members won municipal races against their independent opposition at a very high rate (89 percent). Second, party-cartel-controlled municipalities were reported as being governed better than opposition areas. Cartel municipalities performed significantly better in terms of road quality, taxation capacity, and overall performance, even when a variety of potential individual- and respondent-level confounders were included.

This data does not constitute causally identified evidence that governing parties colluded to reward loyal municipalities and punish local electoral opposition. This caveat noted, this chapter provides novel descriptive evidence that Lebanon's parties employed a cartel strategy in local elections and that cartel control was systematically associated with better local governance. Both findings are consistent with the core argument presented in this chapter: By rewarding loyal local governments with the ability to gov-

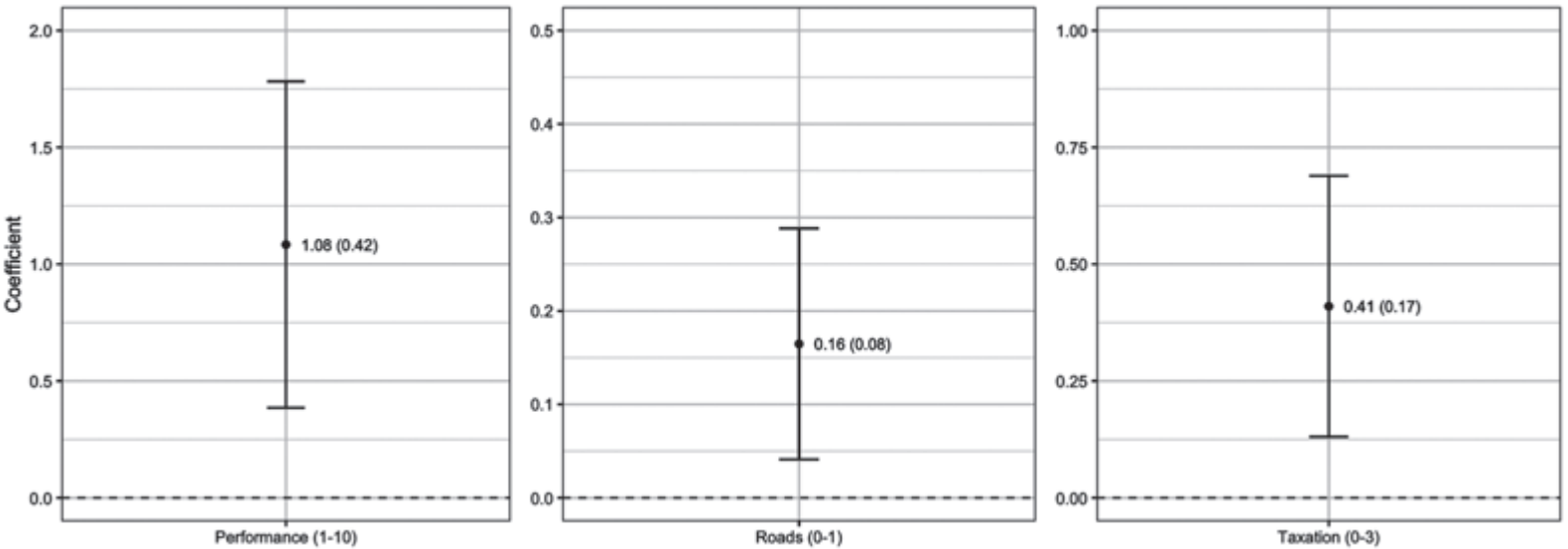

Figure 4.4. Coefficient Plots for Relationship between Local Governance and Party Cartel Control

Dots represent point estimates. Bars represent 95 percent confidence intervals. Data on party competition in municipal elections comes from a postelection (2016) survey of municipal councillors conducted and analyzed by the author in partnership with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. Data on municipal socioeconomic status and refugees comes from the UNHCR (2013). Data on registered voters come from the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities. Individual-level data comes from a nationally representative survey of Lebanese citizens conducted by the author in September–December 2019. "Performance" measures how the respondent rated the overall performance of their municipality (1–10 scale). "Road quality" measures whether respondents reported major or minor structural problems in the main road of the municipality where they live (0–1). "Taxation" refers to whether and how respondents were asked to pay taxes to the municipality where they live in the past year. Respondents reported no requests (0), a public announcement (1), a public announcement and personal request from the municipality (2), or an announcement, personal request, and subsequent follow-ups (3).

ern and denying it to others, Lebanon's party cartel functioned as a local-level electoral autocracy despite the constraints of procedural democracy.

6. Discussion and Policy Implications

Scholars and policymakers contend that democratic local elections enhance accountability and service delivery, particularly when the central state has collapsed or experienced intense elite conflict. Local elections are frequently prescribed as a vital component of state-building after a civil war. Yet, the institutional structure of center-local relations rarely functions via a neutral logic of best practices. Instead, as the Lebanese case demonstrates, center-local ties are often used by central states by elites aiming to ensure the continuity of their power.

In postconflict transitions like Lebanon's that result in cohesive elite pacts, I argue that some devolution of authority to local political institutions can be consistent with elite capture and poor governance quality without opportunities for meaningful citizen recourse. I empirically demonstrate that Lebanon's postwar party cartel has extended its central pact into local politics, behaving much like a single-party autocratic regime. The core cleavage in Lebanon's local politics has thus become one of "regime" versus "opposition," in which cartel-affiliated municipalities are afforded better-quality governance than other areas.

These findings have important implications for scholars and policymakers in Lebanon, postconflict contexts, and ethnically diverse societies writ large. The center-local dynamics described in this chapter provide a novel explanation for why postconflict states often fail to thrive, even when active conflict does not recur. In Lebanon, elections were not venues where elites were effectively held accountable for their performance in office. This is particularly surprising at the local level, where electoral opposition entry is often assumed to be easier.[52]

These findings also provide insights into the study of ethnically diverse societies, especially those with formalized ethnic power-sharing institutions. A vast literature characterizes Lebanon as a deeply divided society where ethnic divisions lie at the heart of bad governance and elite corruption. Indeed, numerous scholars have linked ethnic diversity, specifically ethnic power-sharing, to lower-quality social welfare provision and reliance on clientelist practices.[53]

This chapter does not necessarily discount these arguments, but it sheds light on an entirely different political cleavage with relevant implications

for the quality of governance. I have argued that Lebanon's parties engaged primarily in collusion, not competition, in local electoral politics. In this realm, they formed a cohesive political regime, irrespective of local ethnic demographics. Therefore, explanations for the quality of local, everyday governance in Lebanon that rely chiefly on the notion of ethnic division are incomplete. Similarly, the chapter reveals that the previous lack of viable opposition to Lebanon's postwar parties can be explained without assuming a lack of interethnic trust or cooperation. Instead, it underscores that comprehending the persistence of electoral power among Lebanon's postwar parties, despite their limited governance, hinges on a nuanced understanding of center-local ties.

NOTES

1. Kristine Höglund et al., "The Predicament of Elections in War-Torn Societies," *Democratization* 16, no. 3 (2009): 530–57, https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340902884689; Terrence Lyons, "Post-conflict Elections and the Process of Demilitarizing Politics: The Role of Electoral Administration," *Democratization* 11, no. 3 (2004): 36–62, https://doi.org/10.1080/1351034042000238167; Benjamin Reilly, "Elections in Post-Conflict Scenarios: Constraints and Dangers," *International Peacekeeping* 9, no. 2 (2002): 118–39, https://doi.org/10.1080/714002729

2. Dawn Brancati, "Decentralization: Fueling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism?" *International Organization* 60, no. 3 (2006): 651–85, https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830606019X; Philip G. Roeder and Donald S. Rothchild, *Sustainable Peace: Power and Democracy After Civil Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

3. Harry Blair, "Participation and Accountability at the Periphery: Democratic Local Governance in Six Countries," *World Development* 28, no. 1 (2000): 21–39, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(99)00109-6; Derek M. Powell, *State Formation After Civil War: Local Government in National Peace Transitions* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

4. Alberto Diaz-Cayeros et al., "Tragic Brilliance: Equilibrium Hegemony and Democratization in Mexico" (Working paper, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, 2003).

5. Janine A. Clark, *Local Politics in Jordan and Morocco: Strategies of Centralization and Decentralization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

6. Edward L. Gibson, "Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries," *World Politics* 58, no. 1 (2005): 101–32, https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2006.0018; Andrea Rigon, "Building Local Governance: Participation and Elite Capture in Slum-Upgrading in Kenya," *Development and Change* 45, no. 2 (2014): 257–83, https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12078

7. The concept of a "party cartel" is discussed at length in Dan Slater and Erica Simmons, "Coping by Colluding: Political Uncertainty and Promiscuous Power-sharing in Indonesia and Bolivia," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 11 (2012): 1366–93, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012453447

8. Melani Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); Daniel Corstange, *The Price of a Vote in the Middle East: Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Tamirace Fakhoury, "Power-Sharing after the Arab Spring? Insights from Lebanon's Political Transition," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 26, no. 1 (2019): 9–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2019.1565173; Bassel F. Salloukh et al., *Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2015). Per Cammett, Corstange, and others, I refer to core identity-based categories of interest in Lebanon, sometimes referred to as "ethnosectarian," "religious," or "confessional," e.g. Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, Christian, and Druze, as "ethnic." I do so because these categories are descent-based and difficult to alter.

9. For a discussion of deconcentrated authority in Lebanon, see Mona Harb and Sami Atallah, "Lebanon: A Fragmented and Incomplete Decentralization," in *Local Governments and Public Goods: Assessing Decentralization in the Arab World*, eds. Mona Harb and Sami Atallah (Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 2015), 189–228. For a discussion of center-local ties associated with Ottoman rule, see Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

10. For an explanation of elite cartels in consociationalism, see Arend Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21, no. 2 (1969): 207–25, https://doi.org/10.2307/2009820

11. Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

12. Author's fieldwork interviews with former Sidon municipal councillor (2018); two former Tripoli municipal councillors (2017–2018); Tripoli journalist (2018); current Jounieh municipal councillor (2018); and former Baalbek municipal councillor (2018).

13. Ziad Abu-Rish, "Municipal Politics in Lebanon," *Middle East Report* 280 (Fall 2016): 4–11. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44578009

14. These parties occasionally endorsed electoral lists in select cities.

15. In the municipalities of Tyre and Sidon, for example, local elites created foundations specifically to fund municipal work in the aftermath of the 1982 Israeli invasion. See author's interviews with two current municipal councillors in Tyre (2018), a former advisor to the Sidon municipality (2018), and a former Sidon municipal councillor (2017). For a broader discussion of militia governance structures during the Lebanese civil war, see Elizabeth Picard, "The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon," in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 258–324.

16. John Nagle and Mary-Alice Clancy, "Power-Sharing after Civil War: Thirty Years since Lebanon's Taif Agreement," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 25, no. 1 (2019): 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2019.1565171

17. These parties are: Amal Movement (Shia Muslim); the Free Patriotic Movement (Christian); the Future Movement (Sunni Muslim); Hezbollah (Shia Muslim); the Lebanese Forces (Christian); and the Progressive Socialist Party (Druze).

18. Since 2005, Lebanese national parties have been divided into two key alliances, March 8 and March 14. These alliances maintain contrasting stances on

Lebanon's regional alliances, orientation toward the United States, and the permissibility of Hezbollah's status as an armed militia within the country. On several occasions, parties have forged more substantial cross-factional alliances or switched between alliances.

19. For a discussion of how ministerial leadership is centralized and allotted to different party cartel members, see Mounir Mahmalat and Sami Zougheib, "Breaking the Mold? Ministerial Rotations, Legislative Production, and Political Strategies in Lebanon," *Governance* 35, no. 4 (2022): 1029–48, https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12644

20. Author's interview with a Tripoli municipal councillor (2017).

21. See McKinsey's 2019 report commissioned by the Ministry of Economy, *Lebanese Economic Vision: Full Report* (Beirut: Government of Lebanon, 2019).

22. See World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Index 2017–2018* (Cologny: World Economic Forum, 2018).

23. Stéphane Ghiotti and Roland Riachi, "Water Management in Lebanon: A Confiscated Reform?" *Etudes Rurales* 192, no. 2 (2013): 135–52.

24. Melani Cammett and Aytuğ Şaşmaz, "Navigating Welfare Regimes in Divided Societies: Diversity and the Quality of Service Delivery in Lebanon," *Governance* 35, no. 1 (2021): 209–31, https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12576

25. Kassim Dakhlallah, "The Dilemma of Public Debt in Lebanon," *ERF Policy Portal*, June 30, 2020, https://theforum.erf.org.eg/2020/06/30/dilemma-public-debt-lebanon/

26. Reinoud Leenders, *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

27. Dima Mahdi and Daniel Sanchez, *How Do People in Lebanon Perceive Corruption?* (Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, 2019).

28. Jessica Gottlieb, "The Logic of Party Collusion in a Democracy: Evidence from Mali," *World Politics* 67, no. 1 (2015): 1–36, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887114000032X; Noam Lupu and Rachel Beatty Riedl, "Political Parties and Uncertainty in Developing Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 11 (2013): 1339–65, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012453445

29. Adam Przeworski, "Institutionalization of Voting Patterns, or Is Mobilization the Source of Decay?" *American Political Science Review* 69, no. 1 (1975): 49–67, https://doi.org/10.2307/1957884

30. Beatriz Magaloni and Ruth Kricheli, "Political Order and One-Party Rule," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010): 123–43, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.031908.220529

31. Lupu and Riedl, "Political Parties and Uncertainty."

32. Dan Slater and Erica Simmons, "Coping by Colluding: Political Uncertainty and Promiscuous Power-sharing in Indonesia and Bolivia," *Comparative Political Studies* 46, no. 11 (2012): 1366–93, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414012453447

33. Donatella Della Porta, "Political Parties and Corruption: Ten Hypotheses on Five Vicious Circles," *Crime, Law and Social Change* 42, no. 1 (2004): 35–60, https://doi.org/10.1023/B:CRIS.0000041036.85056.c6; Steven Levitsky et al., *Constructing Democratic Governance in Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

34. Dougless C. North et al., *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

35. Margaret Levi, *Of Rule and Revenue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); William Reno, "Predatory States and State Transformation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Transformations of the State*, eds. Stephan Leibfried, Evelyne Huber, Matthew Lange, Jonah D. Levy, Frank Nulllmeier, and John D. Stephens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 730–44.

36. John McGarry, "Classical Consociational Theory and Recent Consociational Performance," *Swiss Political Science Review* 25, no. 4 (2019): 538–55, https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12378

37. Caroline A. Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, *Power Sharing and Democracy in Post–Civil War States: The Art of the Possible* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

38. Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy"; Ian Shapiro, *Democracy's Place* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

39. Competition in both municipal and national elections largely occurs *within* ethnic groups, but for different reasons. At the municipal level, this is because most locales are homogeneous. At the national level, this is because seats are allotted on the basis of ethnic identity. In other words, in both cases, electoral competition is already constrained prior to party cartelization. That said, neither constraint prevents the formation of multiple parties representing each ethnic group, which has indeed occurred. These parties choose to engage in collusive behavior as part of an elite pact, not solely due to institutional constraints.

40. For a discussion of and rebuttal to this idea, see Barry R. Weingast, "The Political Foundations of Democracy and the Rule of Law," *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 2 (1997): 245–63, https://doi.org/10.2307/2952354

41. Daniel Tavana and Christiana Parreira, *Lebanon's 2018 Election: New Measures and the Resilience of the Status Quo* (Beirut: Lebanon Support, 2019).

42. Trevor Bachus, "Why Are Ethnic Parties Less Programmatic? Mixed-Method Evidence of Ethnic Endogeneity to Clientelistic Linkages," *Ethnopolitics* (2022): 325–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2020.1790154; Tariq Thachil and Emmanuel Teitelbaum, "Ethnic Parties and Public Spending: New Theory and Evidence from the Indian States," *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 11 (2015): 1389–420, https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015576743

43. Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*.

44. A key example of this is the victory of former justice minister Ashraf Rifi in Tripoli's 2016 municipal elections. Rifi used populist (and frequently ethnocentric) rhetoric to win victory in the elections following his defection from the Future Movement, a governing (Sunni Muslim) party. For a discussion, see Raphaël Lefèvre, "Man of the Moment?" *Carnegie Middle East Center*, November 13, 2017, https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/74703

45. I limit the analysis to the six dominant (post-2005) party cartel members, as summarized previously in this chapter.

46. Author's interview (2016).

47. I code a party or faction as having won a municipal elections race when the majority of council seats were won by candidates from a list endorsed by that party or faction.

48. If the party cartel broke down at higher rates in larger municipalities, it would suggest that interparty coordination is more difficult as local population size increases, a finding with negative implications for the long-term stability of party cartel systems like Lebanon's.

49. The vast majority of the survey was conducted prior to the 2019 protest wave in Lebanon. Only a partial sample of residents in Sidon were surveyed in November and December, after a pause in enumeration because of the protests.

50. Chief among these are rental fees and construction permits, along with attendant sewage and maintenance fees. These collectively constituted 83 percent of all direct fees in 2008—see Harb and Atallah, "Lebanon: Incomplete Decentralization."

51. Bureaucratic centralization, therefore, prevents municipalities from generating enough fiscal autonomy such that they no longer "need" the central state. If centralized bureaucratic control were not an issue, cartel control would not be an equilibrium outcome, as municipalities would have incentives to raise local taxes to fund local development independent of the center.

52. For a discussion, see Roger Myerson, "Federalism and Incentives for Success of Democracy," *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 1, no. 1 (2006): 3–23.

53. Alberto Alesina et al., "Public Goods and Ethnic Divisions," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 114, no. 4 (1999): 1243–84; James Habyarimana et al., *Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009).

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