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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Securitisation gaps: Towards ideational understandings of state weakness

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Abstract

This article contributes a securitisation-based, interpretive approach to state weakness. The long-dominant positivist approaches to the phenomenon have been extensively criticised for a wide range of deficiencies. Responding to Lemay-Hébert's suggestion of a 'Durkheimian', ideational-interpretive approach as a possible alternative, I base my conceptualisation on Migdal's view of state weakness as emerging from a 'state-in-society's' contested 'strategies of survival'. I argue that several recent developments in Securitisation Theory enable it to capture this contested 'collective knowledge' on the state: a move away from state-centrism, the development of a contextualised 'sociological' version, linkages made between securitisation and legitimacy, and the acknowledgment of 'securitisations' as a contested Bourdieusian field. I introduce the concept of 'securitisation gaps' – divergences in the security discourses and practices of state and society – as a concept aimed at capturing this contested role of the state, operationalised along two logics (reactive/substitutive) – depending on whether they emerge from securitisations of the state action or inaction – and three intensities (latent, manifest, and violent), depending on the extent to which they involve challenges to state authority. The approach is briefly illustrated through the changing securitisation gaps in the Republic of Lebanon during the 2019–20 'October Uprising'.

Keywords: State Weakness; Securitisation; Copenhagen School; Bourdieu; Lebanon

Introduction

For much of the post-Cold War period, approaches to state weakness – and failure – were dominated by institutional conceptualisations inherently wedded to 'objective', Western notions of the role of the state in society.[1] The state's primary purpose was defined in terms of measurable 'good governance', as the provision of a set of public goods, disproportionately refined and operationalised in *Western* capitals, universities, and think tanks, based on *Western* ideas regarding the purposes of statehood. The state's success in the delivery of these public goods could be measured objectively, through baskets of indicators pertaining to security, politics, the economy and social welfare, as still apparent in metrics like the Brookings Institution's *Index of State Weakness in the Developing World* and the Fund for Peace's *Fragile States Index*.[2] This positivist approach to the

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[1] See, for example, Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner, 'Saving failed states', *Foreign Policy*, 89 (1992), pp. 3–20; Robert I. Rotberg, 'The new nature of nation-state failure', *The Washington Quarterly*, 25:3 (2002), pp. 85–96; Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004); Stephen D. Krasner, 'Sharing sovereignty: New institutions for collapsed and failing states', *International Security*, 29:2 (2004), pp. 85–120.

[2] Stewart Patrick, '"Failed" states and global security: Empirical questions and policy dilemmas', *International Studies Review*, 9:4 (2007), pp. 644–62; Susan E. Rice and Stewart Patrick, 'Index of State Weakness in the Developing World', available at: {http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/02_weak_states_index.aspx} accessed 9 November 2011; Fund for Peace, 'Fragile States Index', available at: {http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/} accessed 28 February 2018.

phenomenon was extensively criticised from a wide range of perspectives[3] – even at its height – and now appears to now have reached an impasse, with some going so far as to assert that, having become theoretically incoherent, empirically thin, and politically charged, it 'cannot serve either informed analysis and explanation or informed policy and, thus, should be abandoned'.[4]

Several authors have argued that the solution to this impasse could consist in rejecting the Western templates of statehood within established approaches to state weakness, in favour of a purely ideational treatment of the state.[5] Their perspective charges the orthodox, institutionalist models of the state – and their related conceptualisations of state weakness and failure – with having neglected the *ideational* elements of statehood in favour of objectively measurable benchmarks that do not travel well, or say very little in very different cultural contexts. Nicolas Lemay-Hébert and others therefore point to Durkheim's distinctly ideational definition of the state as 'the very organ of *social thought*', comprising 'the *sentiments, ideals, beliefs* that the society has worked out collectively and with time'[6] as an alternative to the predominantly Weberian approaches to the state as, primarily, a set of *institutions* enjoying a monopoly of legitimate violence over a population and territory.

Such an explicitly *interpretive, legitimacy-centred* approach, they argue, would allow scholarship to move away from the universalist generalisations associated with the traditional 'institutionalist' approaches, by acknowledging the entanglement of states and their societies through a wide variety of possible social contracts.[7] This would open the way towards open-ended approaches to state weakness and state-building, sensitive to local conditions and demands, not wedded to the top-down impositions of norms – based on distinctly Western conceptions of good governance and ideal-type statehood – that might not travel well in the Global South,[8] a point also made by recent 'localist' approaches to peacebuilding.[9]

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[3]See, for example, Michael J. Mazarr, 'The rise and fall of the failed-state paradigm', *Foreign Affairs*, 93:1 (2014), pp. 113–21 (p. 113); Aidan Hehir, 'The myth of the failed state and the war on terror: A challenge to the conventional wisdom', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:3 (2007), pp. 307–32; Patrick, '"Failed" states and global security'; Olivier Nay, 'Fragile and failed states: Critical perspectives on conceptual hybrids', *International Political Science Review*, 34:3 (2013), pp. 326–41; see also Michael Wesley, 'The state of the art on the art of state building', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 14:3 (2008), pp. 369–85; Pinar Bilgin and Adam David Morton, 'Historicising representations of "failed states": Beyond the Cold-War annexation of the social sciences?', *Third World Quarterly*, 23:1 (2002), pp. 55–80; David Chandler, 'The Responsibility to Protect? Imposing the "liberal peace"', *International Peacekeeping*, 11:1 (2004), pp. 59–81; David Chandler, 'Bosnia: The democracy paradox', *Current History*, 100:644 (2005), pp. 114–19; David Chandler, 'Back to future? The limits of neo-Wilsonian ideals of exporting democracy', *Review of International Studies*, 32 (2006), pp. 475–94; Beate Jahn, 'The tragedy of liberal diplomacy: Democratization, intervention, statebuilding (Part 1)', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:1 (2007), pp. 87–106; Beate Jahn, 'The tragedy of liberal diplomacy: Democratization, intervention, statebuilding (Part 2)', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 1:2 (2007), pp. 211–29.

[4]Susan L. Woodward, *The Ideology of Failed States: Why Intervention Fails* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 24–5.

[5]Sonja Grimm, Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, and Olivier Nay, '"Fragile states": Introducing a political concept', *Third World Quarterly*, 35:2 (2014), pp. 197–209; Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, 'Rethinking Weberian approaches to statebuilding', in David Chandler and Timothy D. Sisk (eds), *Routledge Handbook of International Statebuilding* (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2013), pp. 3–14; Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, 'Statebuilding without nation-building? Legitimacy, state failure and the limits of the institutionalist approach', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3:1 (2009), pp. 21–45.

[6]Lemay-Hébert, 'Rethinking Weberian approaches to statebuilding', p. 9.

[7]Lemay-Hébert, 'Statebuilding without nation-building?', p. 29.

[8]Lemay-Hébert, 'Rethinking Weberian approaches to statebuilding', pp. 35–7; see also Thomas Risse, 'Governance in areas of limited statehood: Introduction and overview', in Thomas Risse (ed.), *Governance without a State? Policies and Politics in Areas of Limited Statehood:* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. 1–35; Nay, 'Fragile and failed states'; Volker Boege, M. Anne Brown, and Kevin P. Clements, 'Hybrid political orders, not fragile states', *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, 21:1 (2009), pp. 13–21; Seth Kaplan, 'Rethinking state-building in a failed state', *The Washington Quarterly*, 33:1 (2010), pp. 81–97; Oliver Richmond, 'Failed statebuilding versus peace formation', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 48:3 (2013), pp. 378–400.

[9]See, for example, Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd, 'The "local turn" in peacebuilding: A literature review of effective and emancipatory peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly*, 36:5 (2015), pp. 825–39; Cedric De Coning, 'Understanding peacebuilding as essentially local', *Stability: International Journal of Stability and Development*, 2:1 (2013), pp. 1–6; David Roberts,

These two issues – the need for interpretivist approaches to state weakness, and for a move away from Western-centrism, towards local sensitivities and priorities in understandings of weak states – are, in fact, interrelated. For much of the post-Cold War period, a state's legitimacy was assumed to spring from a universally applicable, Western, liberal-democratic, free-market template – hence the positivist assumption that it could be achieved subject to the effectiveness state institutions producing an exogenously defined range of public goods.[10] The ideational, 'Durkheimian' view of the state would allow us to move away from this misconception by implying that workable solutions require a rootedness in local structural conditions and cultural preferences; it implies a legitimacy that needs to be filled in by local participants, their expectations of the state, their own specific hopes and fears – which might differ considerably from their Western, liberal counterparts.

In what comes below, I argue that, properly adapted, Securitisation Theory (ST) – with its central concept of 'securitisation' – provides the appropriate framework aimed at delivering this interpretive, locally rooted perspective. It is an inherently discursive approach, offering a conceptual framework that focuses the scholar's attention on the most important – *existential* – issues within a given society, as apparent in local, culturally specific 'speech acts' identifying threats to referent objects, and advocating emergency action in response; in so doing, it allows for a choice between truly important matters – ones that would carry the potential of *existentially driven* violence – from others. Through what I call 'securitisation gaps', the approach can also be linked to *ideational* conceptualisations of the state, and state weakness or failure – long called for by critics of the more conventional approaches to the phenomenon: the basic underlying idea is to identify instances where groups see the state as a *threat to*, or, alternatively, as a *guarantor of* fundamental – culturally specific, material, or ideational – values.

The following sections will thus move the argument towards this securitisation-based approach to statehood, and state weakness through a double movement. The first section will lay the groundwork for the introduction of such an approach to state weakness by exploring the notion of the state as an *idea*, rather than as a set of clearly bounded, sovereign *institutions* in the existing literature; an *ideational* alternative to the hitherto dominant institutional conceptualisations of statehood will, I argue, bracket the 'objective' aspects of statehood hitherto preferred in the dominant literature in favour of intersubjectivity. Building on this, I will then engage with debates within ST to highlight its link to the ideational notions of statehood outline above, by linking *legitimacy* with *securitisation*. The concept of 'securitisation gaps' – *instances where the security discourses and practices of state and society diverge* – will then be introduced and operationalised in a subsequent section, across two logics – *substitutive* and *reactive* – and three levels of intensity – *latent*, *manifest*, and *violent*.

The framework will then be applied to the complex, post-Civil War politics of Lebanon: more specifically, the most recent instance where large-scale extraordinary measures were taken by various social groups – the 2019 October Uprising – will be analysed as to the place of the state in its underlying security discourses. Having provided an account of the evolving – and culturally

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'Post-conflict peacebuilding, liberal irrelevance and the locus of legitimacy', *International Peacekeeping*, 18:4 (2011), pp. 410–24; Mathijs Van Leeuwen, Willemijn Verkoren, and Freerk Boedeltje, 'Thinking beyond the liberal peace: From Utopia to heterotopias', *Acta Politica*, 47:3 (2012), pp. 292–316; Marianne Stigset, 'Mideast: Lebanese fear ancient factions will clash again', *IPS – Inter Press Service* (29 March 2005), available at: {Nexis UK} accessed 22 April 2020; see also Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 'The State's Legitimacy in Fragile Situations' (Paris, 2010). The value of such an ideational, interpretive approach in tackling Western-centrism was recognised in the later traditional literature through the concept of 'legitimacy gaps' – a lack of state legitimacy in broader society – which remained largely unexplored because of the limitations of posed by their positivist, materialist assumptions. See Charles T. Call, 'Beyond the "failed state": Toward conceptual alternatives', *European Journal of International Relations*, 17:2 (2010), pp. 303–26; Stuart E. Eizenstat, John Edward Porter, and Jeremy M. Weinstein, 'Rebuilding weak states', *Foreign Affairs*, 85 (2005), pp. 134–46.
[10]Robert I. Rotberg, 'Failed states, collapsed states, weak states: Causes and indicators', in Robert I. Rotberg (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2003), pp. 1–24; Francis Fukuyama, 'The imperative of state-building', *Journal of Democracy*, 15:2 (2004), pp. 17–31.

specific – perceptions and expectations of the state, the article will then conclude with considerations for further research.

The ideational state, legitimacy, and securitisation
Revalidating the ideational aspects of statehood

The neglect of the ideational in mainstream, institutional approaches to state weakness is, in fact, puzzling, once one remembers the role of ideas in most mainstream approaches to statehood, including Weber's: after all, apart from being traditionally associated with interpretive, '*verstehen*' epistemologies, Weber talks of a monopoly of *legitimate* violence, injecting his definition with a crucial ideational component. And *legitimacy* – or, as per Weber, the degree to which the state order 'enjoys the prestige of being considered binding'[11] ties in well with Durkheim's 'sentiments, ideals, beliefs', pointed out as crucial to interpretivist understandings of state weakness advocated by Lemay-Hébert and others.

How can one rethink more contemporary approaches to state weakness to fully account for these ideational elements, present in both these foundational approaches to statehood? While, as argued above, these elements were largely absent in conventional, late twentieth-century approaches to state weakness, they did play a part in early – and long-neglected – theorisations of the phenomenon. Ideational elements were thus clearly visible in subsequent conceptualisations of the weak state by Barry Buzan, Kalevi Jaakko Holsti, and Joel S. Migdal, either in their own right, or alongside institutional and material factors. Buzan thus pointed to the 'idea of the state' as 'the most abstract … but also the most central' component in a three-pronged conceptualisation of the state, alongside the purely material, and institutional aspects of statehood.[12] Meanwhile, Holsti clearly articulated the crucial importance of the *ideational* to statehood and stateness in stating that '[i]t is in the realm of ideas and sentiment that the fate of states is primarily determined.'[13]

But it is in Migdal's work that one finds a more contemporary conceptualisation of state weakness that is particularly suited to challenging the mainstream's neglect of the interpretive: he describes the state's primary function, in distinctly ideational terms, as the provision of a collective '*strategy of survival*' for its underlying society, a collection of '*blueprints for action and belief* that help socialised individuals and substate groups make sense of the world around them and survive.[14] While this brackets out the more material, institutional elements underlying the state in favour of an uncompromisingly ideational approach, it also allows for a questioning of the state's role within a society's aforementioned strategies of survival: the extent to which the state features in a society's embedded blueprints for action and belief as the effective guarantor of existential values – as opposed to being left out as either ineffective, or even a threat – becomes an important question.

Collective knowledge on the state and its role in society thus underlies legitimate rule, defined as (to paraphrase Weber) the obedience of societies to commands that have turned into maxims governing their social interaction.[15] But such collective knowledge will not be entirely coherent, and the state's role in the blueprints of various parts of a given society will vary: as Migdal elaborates in his later work on the 'State-in-Society', the state is a Bourdieusian 'field of power', its *ideal-type* '*image*' (as posited by Weber) at times reinforced, at other times undermined by the

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[11]Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Political Organisation* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 125.
[12]Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991), p. 69.
[13]Kalevi Jaakko Holsti, *The State, War and the State of War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 84.
[14]Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and Stable Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 27–9.
[15]Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1922), pp. 16–17.

actual 'practices' of its multiple parts.[16] This results in a view of the state as a paradoxical duality:

> (1) as the powerful image of a clearly bounded, unified organization that can be spoken of in singular terms …; and (2) as the practices of a heap of loosely connected parts or fragments, frequently with ill-defined boundaries between them and other groupings inside and outside the official state borders and often promoting conflicting sets of rules with one another and with 'official' Law.[17]

It is these 'conflicting sets of rules' that I aim to capture through this adaptation of ST's focus on the practices and discourses related to issues of existential import to a given society: its interpretivist framework can be linked to Migdal's radically ideational and agonistic view of the state-in-society and its relationship to society through four interconnected arguments, to which I turn below. Firstly, while often accused of state-centrism, ST has, from the beginning, allowed for securitising actors and audiences outside the state in a variety of issue areas. Secondly, in conceptualising security as a field of discursively instituted practice, recent reformulations of ST have posited a link between these securitisations outside the state, and state legitimacy. Thirdly, recent work has also recognised the imperfect nature of that field of practice, and the relevance of various forms of contestation outside, and against the state: fractures and contradictions can therefore point to deficiencies in state legitimacy, and, hence, to state weakness. Finally, I shall introduce 'securitisation gaps' as conceptual solution to capturing this fracture and contradiction, defining them as *instances where the security discourses and practices of state and society diverge*.

Securitisation and the state

When it comes to its relationship with statehood and the state, ST has – not without reason – been accused of being state-centric, especially in its initial ('classical') iterations.[18] There was, indeed, a strong bias in favour of *state* actors – and a commensurate assumption of *state* legitimacy – in the first applications of 'securitisation'.[19] The approach's foundational text – with its Western-centric and Schmittian biases – does at the very least imply an inbuilt partiality towards individuals of established authority, often identical to those in control of a more or less perfectly sovereign state:[20] in Migdal's above-mentioned terminology, it posited the state as 'image', a clearly bounded, unitary actor whose coherence and sovereignty was, as a rule, assumed.

There is, however, nothing inevitable about ST's state-centrism: both its foundational texts, and subsequent applications – for instance, on ontological security[21] – have provided roles for

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[16]Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 16–17.

[17]Ibid., p. 23.

[18]Bill McSweeney, 'Durkheim and the Copenhagen School', *Review of International Studies*, 24:1 (1998), pp. 137–40 (p. 140); C. Wilkinson, 'The Copenhagen School on tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is securitisation theory useable outside Europe?', *Security Dialogue*, 38:1 (2007), pp. 5–25.

[19]See, for example, Barry Buzan, 'Societal security, state security, and internationalisation', in Øle Wæver, Morten Kelstrup, and Pierre Lemaitre (eds), *Identity, Migration and the New Security Agenda in Europe* (London, UK: Pinter, 1993), pp. 41–58; Jef Huysmans, 'Migrants as a security problem: Dangers of "securitising" societal issues', in Robert Miles and Dietrich Thränhardt (eds), *Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion* (London, UK: Pinter, 1995), pp. 53–72; Øle Wæver, 'Identity, integration and security: Solving the sovereignty puzzle in EU studies', *Journal of International Affairs*, 48:2 (1995), pp. 389–431; Øle Wæver, 'European security identities', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 34:1 (1996), pp. 103–32.

[20]Barry Buzan, Øle Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London, UK: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Michael C. Williams, 'Words, images, enemies: Securitisation and international politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, 47 (2003), pp. 511–31.

[21]Monika Barthwal-Datta, 'Securitising threats without the state: A case study of misgovernance as a security threat in Bangladesh', *Review of International Studies*, 35:2 (2009), pp. 277–300; Monika Barthwal-Datta, *Understanding Security*

securitising actors outside the confines of the state.[22] The potential for a conceptual move away from assumptions of stable Weberian statehood has moreover been enhanced by C. Wilkinson's admonition that the Western scholar take account of the 'thick', local contexts of securitisations, lest (s)he transfer the state-centric luggage of Western social science into situations where the state is *not* the only centre of authority.[23]

This critique has – alongside others[24] – led to the emergence of strongly contextualised variations on the original conceptual framework provided by ST, where, rather than representing largely self-contained speech acts between actor and audience, securitisations have to be seen as embedded in their surrounding social structure, which they both *affect* and *are affected by*. This fundamental insight has widened a split within ST between a poststructuralist, 'philosophical' approach, which, like its 'classical' counterpart, treats discourse as largely freestanding and at most passively constituted by the attendant power structures in a given society, and sociological and constructivist approaches, which view securitisation in much broader, and more broadly contextualised terms, as a Bourdieusian field of practice entangled in a mutually constitutive – some would even say causal[25] – relationship with their more distal context, including power, authority, and legitimacy.[26]

These acknowledged causal entanglements of *discourse and practice* with *context* open up the possibility of tying securitisation to the ideational elements of statehood and state weakness through the notion of state legitimacy. Seeing securitisations as a discursive *field*, rather than individual discursive events or acts – as in classical/poststructuralist approaches – makes them commensurate with Migdal's own Bourdieusian views on the state as a contested and imperfectly bounded strategy of survival; ST's recent linking of securitisation and state legitimacy – 'the most potent factor determining the strength of the state'[27] – and its acknowledgment of securitisations as 'ruptured' and 'agonistic' further reinforces its conceptual affinity with this very ideational approach to state strength, and weakness.

Securitisation, legitimacy, and contestation

Indeed, explicit linkages between securitisation and legitimacy have already been made within the conceptual confines of ST itself: Juha A. Vuori thus sees legitimacy as one of the possible aims of repressive securitisations by the Chinese state,[28] while Thierry Balzacq directly ties securitisation

Practices in South Asia (London, UK: Routledge, 2012); Tsering Topgyal, 'The Tibetan self-Iimmolations as counter-securitization: Towards an inter-unit theory of securitization', *Asian Security*, 12:3 (2016), pp. 166–87.

[22]Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, *Security*, pp. 75–9, 100–03, 123–4, 145–50.

[23]C. Wilkinson, 'The limits of spoken words: From meta-narratives to experiences of security', in Thierry Balzacq (ed.), *Securitisation Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (London, UK: Routledge, 2011), pp. 94–115 (p. 96).

[24]Matt McDonald, 'Securitization and the construction of security', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14:4 (2008), pp. 563–87; Thierry Balzacq, 'The three faces of securitization: Political agency, audience and context', *European Journal of International Relations*, 11:2 (2005), pp. 171–201; Nicole J. Jackson, 'International organizations, security dichotomies and the trafficking of persons and narcotics in post-Soviet Central Asia: A critique of the securitization framework', *Security Dialogue*, 37:3 (2006), pp. 299–317.

[25]Holger Stritzel, 'Towards a theory of securitization: Copenhagen and beyond', *European Journal of International Relations*, 13:3 (2007), pp. 357–83 (pp. 368–73); Holger Stritzel, 'Securitization, power, intertextuality: Discourse theory and the translations of organized crime', *Security Dialogue*, 43:6 (2011), pp. 549–67 (pp. 549–56); Stefano Guzzini, 'Securitisation as a causal mechanism', *Security Dialogue*, 42:4–5 (2011), pp. 329–41; Gilberto Carvalho Oliveira, 'The causal power of securitisation: An inquiry into the explanatory status of securitisation theory illustrated by the case of Somali piracy', *Review of International Studies*, 44:3 (2017), pp. 504–25 (p. 514).

[26]Thierry Balzacq, Stefano Guzzini, Michael C. Williams, Øle Wæver, and Heikki Patomäki, 'Forum: What kind of theory – if any – is securitization?', *International Relations*, 29:1 (2015), pp. 96–136; Øle Wæver, 'The theory act: Responsibility and exactitude as seen from securitisation', *International Relations*, 29:1 (2015), pp. 121–7.

[27]Migdal, *State in Society*, p. 53.

[28]Juha A. Vuori, 'Illocutionary logic and strands of securitization: Applying the theory of securitization to the study of non-Democratic political orders', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14:1 (2008), pp. 65–99.

to Weber's views on legitimacy, when he makes the claim that security practices emerging from securitisation depend largely on the presence of legitimate authority.[29] But, as we have also seen above, the assumed presence of such legitimate authority within the state is problematic: viewed as the adherence to the state as a 'strategy of survival', it is, more often than not, fractured between different, competing forms of social organisation, and, hence, discourse and practice.

The presence of such fracture and contestation is also acknowledged in the literature on securitisation – even if it hasn't yet been tied directly to 'legitimacy'. Holger Stritzel, for instance, asserts that 'discursive fields can be understood as only imperfectly constituted and severely ruptured',[30] while Balzacq and others similarly point to the importance of contestation in various forms – resistance, desecuritisation, emancipation, and resilience – in contemporary, 'thickly contextualised' understandings of ST, which is viewed in inherently agonistic terms.[31] The imperfect, contested nature of securitisation-as-a-field implies the possibility of alternative forms of legitimacy, and alternative, *non-state* sources thereof: just as in ideational approaches to state weakness and failure, the legitimacy of the state as provider of security can no longer be assumed – indeed, in a world of imperfectly constituted, contradictory security discourses and practices, non-state actors can, and do play a role in resolving the securitisations of a given society.

ST's acknowledged entanglement and contestedness of securitisation and legitimacy thus opens ST as a possible interpretive way out of the impasse of 'conventional' approaches to state weakness called for by the likes of Lemay-Hébert and Sonja Grimm, by providing a means of assessing the nature of state legitimacy much more directly. In such an inherently ideational, securitisation-based approach to stateness and state weakness and failure, securitisations become a proxy for Durkheim's dispositions, or Migdal's contested strategies of survival, all three of which are inextricably linked to state legitimacy, and, through it, statehood itself; divergences in these dispositions, strategies and, indeed, securitisations – which I have decided to refer to as 'securitisation gaps' – similarly come to underlie legitimacy gaps, and through them, state weakness/strength, and failure.

To reiterate, *securitisation gaps* are *instances where the security discourses and practices of state and society diverge*; they contain two basic logics, and occur over three intensities. In terms of their *logics*, firstly, securitisation gaps can be *substitutive* or *reactive*, depending on whether they emerge from an inability of the state to address a society's securitisations, or the securitisation of its policies as threats by that society. Furthermore, securitisation gaps occur at three different levels of intensity: they can remain *latent*, strengthen into *manifest* securitisation gaps, or escalate into the *violent* level, depending on whether the underlying securitisations advocate continued obedience to the state, or involve an element of disobedience, or even intentionally lethal violence. The following section will aim to develop these concepts in-depth, with the aim of providing a fundamentally intersubjective approach to state weakness that addresses the charges of Western-centrism levelled at the dominant literature, and eventually opens the way towards conceptualising polities that fall outside the often-reified Weberian mould.

Introducing securitisation gaps

First, a caveat on what securitisation gaps are *not*: they do not aim to neatly classify states into categories like 'weak', 'failed', or 'strong'. This tendency of the mainstream, positivist approaches was extensively attacked in the critical literature for, among others, opening the road to a delegitimising, interventionist stigmatisation of 'failed' and 'weak' states and societies in the Global South.[32] Instead of identifying 'weak states', I aim to operationalise 'state weakness' as an

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[29]Thierry Balzacq, 'Legitimacy and the "logic" of security', in Thierry Balzacq (ed.), *Contesting Security: Strategies and Logics* (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1–9.
[30]Stritzel, 'Securitization, power, intertextuality', p. 551.
[31]Balzacq (ed.), *Contesting Security*.
[32]Bilgin and Morton, 'Historicising representations of "failed states"'; Chandler, 'Back to the future?'.

underlying structural characteristic of statehood, comprising ideational ruptures in the body politic that could affect states of any size, and of any strength: the starting assumption is that, while some states are more coherent than others, *no* state will be perfectly coherent, and that *weaknesses* can be found anywhere, although they might differ in intensity. It is the nature of these weaknesses, not the nature of the states themselves that demands categorisation here.

The identification and categorisation of these weaknesses as *securitisation gaps* starts with finding and classifying the divergent securitisations by social groups with alternative strategies of survival by examining the role of the state within them. Within these divergent securitisations, is the state seen as a threat to established values, or, alternatively, is it seen as ineffective in addressing any such threats? The narrating of the state as either threatening or ineffective will, respectively, allow for the distinction between ideal-type *reactive* and *substitutive logics* in securitisation gaps. A second question will relate to the *extent* to which the extraordinary measures advocated in response to the threatening or ineffective state diverge from the 'strategies of survival' mandated by the state. Are they presented as conforming to the state's legal-institutional framework? Or are they acknowledged by their securitising actors, and accepted by their audiences as going against or ignoring state authority? Do they involve the justification of sustained lethal *violence* as legitimate? The *intensity* of securitisation gaps – latent, manifest, violent – will depend on how the securitising social groups resolve these questions.

Securitisation gaps: Logics and intensities

As implied above, divergences between the security discourses of the state and those of specific social groups can emerge in two ideal-type ways: either the state fails to address the security concerns of those groups, or it adopts policies that, in clashing with the same, may lead to the state itself being securitised as a threat. In the first instance – which I will refer to as a securitisation gap's *substitutive logic* – the state will be viewed as unresponsive to the security concerns of parts of its citizenry: social groups will securitise threats and expect their state to respond – in vein. In the second instance – which I will refer to as a securitisation gap's *reactive* logic – an over-active, often captive or predatory state will be seen as infringing on the security of such social groups: its actions will be securitised as a *threat* in distinct sections of society. In both cases, this may result in extraordinary measures that challenge state authority: circumventions of the state through kinship networks or vigilante groups ensuring economic or physical security, or instances of more direct resistance through civil disobedience or armed insurrection.[33]

A securitisation gap's *intensity*, on the other hand, will depend on the type of measures taken by social groups in response to the perceived threatening or negligent nature of a given state. Two questions can be asked when looking at securitisation gaps: firstly, whether or not the underlying securitisations of state action or inaction result in measures being taken that challenge the state's authority; and, secondly, whether these measures include an element of intentionally *lethal violence.* The first question refers back to the distinction made in the broader literature between securitising *moves* – where referent objects are securitised *without* eliciting extraordinary measures – and *acts* – where such extraordinary measures do occur. In ST's 'classical', state-centric approaches, this division is relatively clear: most states provide internal legal procedures that allow for the relatively distinct identification of exceptions to everyday rules made by their agents in response to emergencies. This latter approach can be transposed to securitising moves *against*

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[33]This insight has actually, been implicitly or partially addressed in the existing Copenhagen School literature. Floyd, for instance, refers to 'securitising requests', when substate groups appeal to figures of authority to securitise perceived threats to themselves, and take appropriate extraordinary measures. Stritzel and Chang, Topgyal and others have referred to 'counter-securitisations', where groups or individuals respond to securitisations by themselves securitising in response. See Rita Floyd, 'Parallels with the hate speech debate: The pros and cons of criminalising harmful securitising requests', *Review of International Studies*, 44:1 (2017), pp. 43–63; Holger Stritzel and Sean Chang, 'Securitisation and counter-securitisation in Afghanistan', *Security Dialogue*, 46:6 (2015), pp. 548–67; Topgyal, 'The Tibetan self-immolations as counter-securitization'.

the state within society at large: taking the state, its laws, and its institutions as providing the rules for everyday social relations, the securitising acts underlying securitisation gaps can be deemed to occur when social groups end up counteracting or circumventing these rules – as expressed in their rejection of state authority in addressing relevant threats – thus taking these issues outside the realm of 'everyday politics', into their own, decentred version of 'prepolitical immediacy'.[34] Failing this, the securitisation gaps remain latent, with their underlying issues, at most, ordinarily politicised.

The second question – on the presence or absence of *violence* within those extraordinary measures taken – emerges from the importance of the monopoly of legitimate violence for the stability of the state, and, more broadly, from the significance of peaceful social relations for the 'good life' in any given polity. Seen from that perspective, illegality or extra-legal 'extraordinary measures' encompass a wide range of possible courses of action, going from entirely pacific acts of defiance, to violent intra-state conflict: whether or not the securitising actors within a given social group successfully advocate illegal extraordinary measures that are, in addition, *intentionally lethal* thus becomes an additional, productive distinction to make.

The result is a three-tiered scale of intensity for securitisation gaps, ranging from *latent* – when securitising moves may or may not be made, but any measures taken by social groups in response to a threatening or negligent state remain firmly within the state's legal-institutional realm; over *manifest* – when the securitising moves turn into *acts*, and emergency measures taken in response to state-related threats challenge state authority; to *violent* – when these adopted emergency measures contain an element of sustained, intentional *lethal* violence. Combined with the two – reactive and substitutive – logics – the framework thus comes to encompass a range of phenomena taken by substate actors, ranging from legal efforts at self-help or protest (in case of latent gaps) over illegal but non-violent forms of subversion and resistance like civil disobedience (in case of manifest gaps) to violent episodes, including vigilantism and armed insurgencies (in case of violent gaps). A summary of these logics and intensities, along with relevant examples, is provided in Table 1.

How does one operationalise the above framework? There are, after all, an almost infinite number of social groups, issue areas, and securitisations where divergences between state and society could be identified. In fact, the combination of gaps, logics, and intensities with several pre-existing elements of ST – scale, and sectors – could help both direct and structure a research design aimed at practical application. Social groups can encompass anything from a village community, over small activist groups, to large-scale, national opposition movements; their numerous securitisations can occur over a wide range of issues. How does one create order out of this potential chaos?

When it comes to scale,[35] it is up to the scholar, within a given context, to decide just how 'micro' he or she intends to go, as long as the choice allows for the identification of the basic elements of securitisation: securitising actors, audiences, referent objects, and extraordinary measures taken in defence of those objects. In extremely fractured societies, or in cases where the often unheard, latent securitisations of small marginalised groups are in focus – Lene Hansen's telling silences[36] – going down to the very local level – and using ethnographic methodologies – may be productive; in other cases, where nationwide processes are the point of concern, the analyst might choose a more 'macro' approach, capturing the larger fissures between a given society and the state through the analysis of media or elite and counter-elite discourses. In any case, this would be a decision for the analyst to make, within the specific contexts of a given society, and according to the particular requirements of his research question.

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[34]Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, *Security*, p. 29.

[35]Barry Buzan and Øle Wæver, 'Macrosecuritisation and security constellations: Reconsidering scale in securitisation theory', *Review of International Studies*, 35:2 (2009), pp. 253–76 (pp. 255–9).

[36]Lene Hansen, 'The Little Mermaid's silent security dilemma and the absence of gender in the Copenhagen School', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29:2 (2000), pp. 285–306.

Table 1. Securitisation gaps – logics and intensities.

	REACTIVE	SUBSTITUTIVE
LATENT	Politicisation or (failed) securitising moves directed against the state as threat, resulting in counter-measures not challenging state authority.	Politicisation or (failed) securitising moves directed against state inaction as a threat, resulting in counter-measures not challenging state authority.
	Reformist/federalist/regionalist political parties, civil society and lobbying groups aimed at limiting state authority/activity.	Reformist/federalist/regionalist political parties, civil society and lobbying groups aimed at expanding state authority/activity; legally sanctioned self-help.
MANIFEST	Securitising acts directed against the state as threat, resulting in non-lethal extra-ordinary measures challenging state authority.	Securitising acts directed against state inaction as a threat, resulting in non-lethal extra-ordinary measures challenging state authority.
	Anti-systemic, separatist legal political parties; civil disobedience; nepotism, corruption, tax evasion; illegal (non-violent) parties/organisations…	Self-help groups; nepotism, patronal systems, corruption, tax evasion…
VIOLENT	Securitising acts directed against the state as threat, resulting in lethal extra-ordinary measures challenging state authority.	Securitising acts directed against state inaction as a threat, resulting in lethal extra-ordinary measures challenging state authority.
	Armed insurrections, (anti-state) terrorism, coups, revolutions…	Vigilantism, (inter-sectarian) terrorism, civil war…

Sectors would be a second way of adding structure and focus to any analysis: included precisely for this purpose in the overall framework of ST, they would enable the scholar to further order his or her research design, either by limiting its scope to a specific range of sectors, or by using sectors as 'analytical devices'.[37] After all, the political, military, economic, societal, and environmental sectors identified in the approach's foundational literature elucidate a set of very different issue-specific contexts within which securitisations occur, and using these as a structuring device could therefore prove fruitful in elucidating the perceived role of the state in each of these.

This is the approach I will take in looking at the shifting weaknesses within the brief, and illustrative case study below: throughout the post-Civil War period, the Lebanese state has remained classified as 'weak' from the perspective of much of the 'traditional', positivist literature.[38] While these were extensively critiqued for their familiar failings of Western- and state-centrism, the interpretive frameworks offered in response were often either tailored specifically to the Lebanese case, or insufficiently focused on providing a clear, focused conceptual link between state, discourse/practice, and legitimacy and authority.[39] In applying the 'securitisation gaps' framework to the particularly challenging Lebanese case study, I will illustrate how it provides

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[37]Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde, *Security*, p. 168; see also Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, pp. 73–92; Ole Wæver, 'Securitizing sectors? Reply to Eriksson', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 34:3 (1999), pp. 334–40.

[38]See, for example, Boaz Atzili, 'State weakness and "vacuum of power" in Lebanon', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33:8 (2010), pp. 757–82; Guilain Denoeux and Robert Springborg, 'Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa of the levant?', *Middle East Policy*, 6:2 (1998), pp. 158–73; James A. Piazza, 'Draining the swamp: Democracy promotion, state failure, and terrorism in 19 Middle Eastern countries', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30:6 (2007), pp. 521–39; Oren Barak, 'Lebanon: Failure, collapse, and resuscitation', in Rotberg (ed.), *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, pp. 305–40; Nikolas Kosmatopoulos, 'Toward an anthropology of "state failure": Lebanon's Leviathan and peace expertise', *Social Analysis*, 55:3 (2011), pp. 115–42.

[39]See, for example, Waleed Hazbun, 'Assembling security in a "weak state": The contentious politics of plural governance in Lebanon since 2005', *Third World Quarterly*, 37:6 (2016), pp. 1053–70; Martyn Egan and Paul Tabar, 'Bourdieu in Beirut: Wasta, the state and social reproduction in Lebanon', *Middle East Critique*, 25:3 (2016), pp. 249–70.

room for interpretation that combines an openness to country-specific conditions, with universal adaptability and applicability – within the limitations posed by an article-length study.

Indeed, while 'drilling down' into the small-group level of analysis could be interesting in this particular case, space constraints will limit my perspective to discourses and practices by social groups operating at the *national* level, with sectors used as ordering devices in my accounts of security discourse and practice. After a brief introduction into the post-civil war politics of Lebanon, and a short discussion of the securitisation gaps prevalent at the time – particularly during the previous major bout of political unrest, between the 'Cedar Revolution' of 2005[40] and the Doha Agreement of 2008 – I will turn to the most recent spasm in the Lebanese body politic, the 'October Uprising' of 2019–20,[41] as my main, illustrative case study.

Social media were an important channel of communication throughout the protests; in combination with open-source media reports, they provide a plentiful source for the security narratives emanating from groups associated with the uprising,[42] and for the reactions the country's embattled elites and their supporters (see Table 2). Focusing mainly on the period between the outbreak of the protests on 17 October 2019, and the week immediately following the appointment of a new government under Hassan Diab, on 21 January 2020, I shall aim to illustrate how the securitisation gaps underlying these protests were fundamentally different from what had come before, while also providing varying views of the weaknesses in the Lebanese body politic not necessarily wedded to preconceived *liberal* notions of 'ideal' statehood and political organisation.

Operationalising the framework: Lebanon and its idiosyncrasies

My analysis of Lebanon's most recent period of discord must start from an understanding of the specific nature of the Lebanese state following the 1975–90 civil war. From the Lebanese Republic's inception in 1943, its internal politics have remained organised around ethno-religious constituencies, led by their respective elites through political parties that effectively function as instruments of sectarian mobilisation and patronage.[43] The consociational division of labour between the 18 recognised ethno-religious components of Lebanese society requires a culture of compromise that has often remained lacking during prolonged periods of time: faced with a

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[40]Are Knudsen and Michael Kerr (eds), *Lebanon: After the Cedar Revolution* (London, UK: Hurst & Company, 2012); Abbas Assi, *Democracy in Lebanon: Political Parties and the Struggle for Power since Syrian Withdrawal* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

[41]Kareem Chehayeb and Abby Sewell, 'Why protesters in Lebanon are taking to the streets', *Foreign Policy* (2 November 2019), available at: {https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/02/lebanon-protesters-movement-streets-explainer/} accessed 22 April 2020; André Kerrien, 'Algérie, Liban: la Révolution contre la Montre', *Esprit*, January/February:1 (2020), pp. 29–32.

[42]A list of these groups with the most prominent online presence is provided in Table 2, together with their type and theme, their Facebook and Twitter follower counts, and the number of posts – as a rough indication of their relative 'weight' in the cybersphere. These social media accounts provided the Lebanese with sources of information that circumvented mainstream private and state media largely dominated by the sectarian establishment – a situation extensively securitised by the protestors. Some, including the widely followed 'Akhbar Al Saha' (@akhbarhalsaha) and 'Megaphone' (@megaphonenews) were run by volunteers and aimed at providing 'revolutionary' news – and motivation – to the general public. Others, like those of 'You Stink' (@youstinkleb) and 'Beirut Madinati' (@beirutmadinati) were tied to more established alternative movements to the sectarian political parties. Still others were centred on a particular theme, in particular: 'Li Haki' (@lihaqqi – civil rights); 'Majmouat Shabeb El Masref' (@msmasref – banking reform); Legal Agenda (@legal_agenda – judicial reform); The Public Source (@thepublicsource – long-form essays by public intellectuals); and Tajamo Mehaniyat wa Mehaniyin (facebook.com/LebProAssociation/ – Trade Union Reform). Two more sparsely followed but quite vocal social media channels emanated from Lebanon's radical left: Propaganda (facebook.com/propagandaleb – general information and PR) and Ta'amim Al Masaref (facebook.com/ta2mimalmasaref/ – overthrow of the banking system). Analysis was done manually, focusing on a 'sector-based' grouping of various securitising moves and acts apparent within the posts, and their identification of referent objects, threats, and/or extraordinary measures to be taken in response.

[43]Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Inter-Communal Nation-Building in Lebanon* (London, UK: C. Hurst & Co., 2006); Bassel F. Salloukh, Rabie Barakat, Jinan S. Al-Habbal, Lara W. Khattab, and Shoghig Mikaelian (eds), *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London, UK: Pluto Press, 2015).

Table 2. Social media channels analysed.

Name	Type/Theme	Facebook Followers (Likes/Followers)	Twitter Followers
Akhbar Al Saha	News	80,724/117,019	12,026
Megaphone	News	66,813/91,724	18,536
Propaganda	Radical Left Agitation	7,866/8,525	-
Ta'amim Al Masaref	Radical Left Agitation (focus on Banks)	11,672/13,130	-
The Public Source	Long-Form Issue-Focused Essays	1,192/1,283	3,586
Beirut Madinati	Local Governance Reform/ Anti-Sectarianism	72,396/73,030	15,056
Legal Agenda	(Pan-Arab) Judicial Reform	72,396/73,030	15,056
Li Haki	Civic Rights	20,541/22,964	4,769
You Stink	Environment	315,024/325,654	2,112
Tajamo' Mehaniyat wa Mehaniyin	Workers' Rights/Independent Unions	2,505 / 2,763	-
Majmouat Shabeb al Masref	Banking Reform	23,625/30,183	10,302

constant tug-of-war between competing sectarian interests, the Lebanese state was thus, more often than not, situated in the grey zone between stalemate and collapse, resulting in two civil wars: a brief one, in 1958, and the prolonged, and highly destructive intra-state war of 1975–90.[44]

These underlying tensions were only partially resolved by Syrian- and Saudi-brokered 1989 Taif Accords, which reshuffled the balance of power between the three main sects – Shia and Sunni Muslims, and Maronite Christians – to the detriment of the latter, in a still consociational, and expressly sectarian constitutional framework guaranteed by a 'temporary' Syrian military presence.[45] The preoccupation of the pro-Western prime minister, Rafic Hariri, with Lebanon's – intensely neoliberal[46] – reconstruction, and the relative inability of dissenting political forces to challenge Syria and Hezbollah – which, as the only political party, had retained its arsenal in order to 'resist' Israel's occupation of the south – meant the acceptance of a status quo by Lebanon's political forces for the first decade-and-a-half following the end of hostilities.[47] But by early 2005, that relative intersectarian calm had declined: demands that full Lebanese sovereignty be restored, Syrian troops be withdrawn, and Hezbollah surrender its arms became more vocal. A period of acute internal political instability was subsequently much intensified by Hariri's assassination on 14 February 2005, for which a high-ranking Hezbollah militant would eventually be found guilty by a special UN tribunal, in December 2020.[48]

[44]Edgar O'Ballance, *The Lebanese Civil War 1975–1992* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 1998); Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: The Decline of a State and the Rise of a Nation* (London, UK: I. B. Tauris, 2015).

[45]Imad Salamey, 'Failing consociationalism in Lebanon and integrative options', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 14:2 (2009), pp. 83–105; Faten Ghosn and Amal Khoury, 'Lebanon after the civil war: Peace or the illusion of peace?', *The Middle East Journal*, 65:3 (2011), pp. 381–97.

[46]Hannes Baumann, *Citizen Hariri: Lebanon's Neoliberal Reconstruction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 57–92.

[47]Aurélie Daher, *Hezbollah: Mobilisation and Power* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 62–94.

[48]F. Dionigi, *Hezbollah, Islamist Politics, and International Society* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2014), pp. 137–70; Baumann, *Citizen Hariri*, pp. 121–64; 'Lebanon: UN-backed tribunal sentences Hezbollah militant in Hariri assassination', *UN News*, available at: {https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079892} accessed 21 January 2020.

A very partial and therefore quite misnamed Cedar 'Revolution' immediately followed Hariri's killing.[49] Mostly elite-led, its immediate effects were twofold. Firstly, the country's elite coalesced into two antagonistic camps, a division which would remain relevant in the following decade: between the Sunni-dominated, pro-Western 'March 14 alliance', led by Hariri's second son, Saad, and the pro-Iranian/Syrian 'March 8' coalition, dominated by Hezbollah. Secondly, it led to the election of a pro-Western government and the withdrawal of Syrian troops. But a brief armed conflict over Hezbollah's communications infrastructure in 2008 eventually saw the pendulum swing back in the party's favour, with the March 8 coalition gaining the right of veto within subsequent consociational governments through a guaranteed one third of the seats under the 'Doha compromise' mediated by Qatar.[50] The issue of Hezbollah's arms was also sidestepped through a commitment that they would not be used to resolve internal political differences.[51]

While space constraints prevent a detailed exploration of the securitisation gaps underlying these post-2005 developments, several unifying themes shaping Lebanon's security discourses could be provisionally discerned during these instances of internal instability. A first was the continued *sectarian* nature of Lebanon's securitisation gaps – all talk of 'revolution' notwithstanding. While the defection of the Maronite-dominated Free Patriotic Movement from the March 14 to March 8 coalition in 2006 had cemented the transition away from Lebanon's traditional Christian/ Muslim sectarian divide, according to Karim Knio, 'the sectarian players [had] reformulated and redefined their roles but the sectarian structure they [were] embedded in [was] still intact':[52] notwithstanding their cross-sectarian nature, both dominant coalitions still remained a cobbling together of sectarian movements, rather than paving the way for a more secular political culture.

As a result, securitisation gaps between state and society still opened up depending on which of the competing groups dominated a particular government, or even which sect was seen as dominating a particular government department. This was clearly visible in periods when these gaps turned manifest or violent, as, respectively, in 2005 and 2008: in fact, only the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) enjoying a measure of cross-sectarian respect – as opposed to other, politicised and sectarianised sections of the security apparatus and other state institutions.[53] This fractured and impermanent nature of the Lebanese state also encouraged the Lebanese to circumvent its authority in numerous substitutive securitisation gaps – legal/latent, or illegal/manifest – in their quest for socioeconomic security in a highly neoliberal environment, through private initiative or informal – sectarian – patronage networks.

Secondly, these securitisation gaps were exacerbated by the 'porousness' of the Lebanese state, with the two 'camps' taking extraordinary measures against counterparts they saw as acting as proxies for external forces. For the Hariri camp, the problem was Syria and Iran's influence; for the Hezbollah faction, it was Western meddling – including through the UN Special Tribunal tasked with investigating the Hariri assassination. The state's inability or unwillingness to confront an intensely securitised *Israeli* threat also sustained a violent *substitutive* securitisation gap by handing Hezbollah an argument for its continued militarisation in a 'permanently exceptional' circumvention of the state's usual monopoly of violence, a circumvention successfully

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[49]Vanessa E. Shields, 'Political reform in Lebanon: Has the Cedar Revolution failed?', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 14:4 (2008), pp. 474–87; Ersun N. Kurtulus, '"The Cedar Revolution": Lebanese independence and the question of collective self-determination', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 36:2 (2009), pp. 195–214; Janine A. Clark and Marie-Joëlle Zahar, 'Critical junctures and missed opportunities: The case of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution', *Ethnopolitics*, 14:1 (2015), pp. 1–18.

[50]Kurtulus, '"The Cedar Revolution"', p. 9; Ohannes Geukjian, 'Political instability and conflict after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon', *Middle East Journal*, 68:4 (2014), pp. 521–45; Carl Anthony Wege, 'Hezbollah's communication system: A most important weapon', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, 27:2 (2014), pp. 240–52.

[51]Geukjian, 'Political instability and conflict after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon', pp. 535–6.

[52]Karim Knio, 'Lebanon: Cedar Revolution or neo-sectarian partition?', *Mediterranean Politics*, 10:2 (2005), pp. 225–31 (p. 226).

[53]See Aram Nerguizian, 'Between sectarianism and military development: The paradox of the Lebanese armed forces', in Salloukh, Barakat, Al-Habbal, Khattab, and Mikaelian (eds), *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, pp. 108–35.

defended in 2008. The weaknesses within Lebanon's body politic thus remained inextricably entangled with the geopolitics of the wider region, and while the state maintained nominal 'neutrality' – as after the 'Doha Compromise' – much of foreign policymaking remained fragmented and 'outsourced' to Lebanon's various factions.

Last but not least, these securitisations were held in check by an overarching and pervasive 'meta-securitisation' of the civil war itself: the country's elites used the fear of a return to violence as a way of managing intersectarian dissent, and stepping 'back from the brink' – as visible on several occasions between 2005 and 2008, and beyond. Dread of a rerun of 1975–90 proved a powerful dissuasive force in the sectarian brinkmanship of that period.

Towards the 'October Uprising'

During much of the following decade, these sectarian securitisation gaps remained largely intact. Neither Hezbollah's opponents, nor the state were now able to directly challenge the party's retention of its arsenal; in fact, its circumvention of the state's monopoly of violence escalated into its armed involvement – in defiance of the state's proclaimed neutrality, and in concert with Iranian strategic objectives – in the Syrian civil war.[54] The country saw a succession of often tortuously assembled consociational governments, with various ministerial posts and departments parcelled out – as customary – between the sectarian political parties, and the March 8 alliance jealously retaining its veto.[55] The meta-securitisation of the civil war and the continued cohesion of the LAF – albeit in the face of increased disaffection from parts of the Sunni community[56] – helped contain any violent spillover of the civil war in Syria: hostilities between Sunni and Alawite communities in the northern city of Tripoli were successfully contained, as were attacks by Jihadist groups in northern and eastern border regions.

But a new range of issues, and fissures, between the Lebanese state and society emerged as the previous decade wore on. Securitisation gaps in the economic and environmental sectors had largely remained latent in the first decades following the civil war, with the securitisation of the state, or of state inaction on issues like poverty, inadequate services, pollution, or corruption eliciting grumblings of discontent and elements of self-help, and sectarian patronage, but few recourses to overt, large-scale acts of defiance against the sectarian system as a whole, rather than one or the other sectarian 'camp'. This would change from about 2015 onwards: Lebanon's civil society – invigorated in the backdrop of the 2005 Cedar Revolution – moved from the background to directly challenge excesses it saw as emanating from the sectarian system itself. Loosely organised thematic groups like 'You Stink' coalesced around environmental issues, protesting the state's inability to deal with rubbish disposal through acts of civil disobedience – blockades, flash mobs.[57] The resulting mobilisation translated into a more coherent political movement called 'Beirut Madinati', which broadly attacked sectarianism and participated – rather unsuccessfully – in the 2016 local elections.[58]

[54]Zafer Kizilkaya, 'Identity, war, and just cause for war: Hezbollah and its use of force', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 28:2 (2017), pp. 80–105; Zafer Kizilkaya, 'Hizbullah's moral justification of its military intervention in the Syrian civil war', *The Middle East Journal*, 71:2 (2017), pp. 211–28.

[55]Bassel F. Salloukh, 'The Syrian war: Spillover effects on Lebanon', *Middle East Policy*, XXIV:1 (2017), pp. 62–78; Matthew Levitt, 'Hezbollah: Pulled between resistance to Israel and defense of Syria', *CTC Sentinel*, 8:2 (2015), pp. 5–8.

[56]Tine Gade and Nayla Moussa, 'The Lebanese army after the Syrian crisis: Alienating the Sunni community?', in Are John Knudsen and Tine Gade (eds), *Civil-Military Relations in Lebanon: Conflict, Cohesion and Confessionalism in a Divided Society* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 23–49.

[57]M. N. Abiyaghi, M. Catusse, and M. Younes, 'From Isqat An-Nizam At-Ta'ifi to the garbage crisis movement: Political identities and antisectarian movements', in R. Di Peri and D. Meier (eds), *Lebanon Facing the Arab Uprisings* (London, UK: Palgrave Pivot, 2017), pp. 73–91.

[58]Jad Chaaban, Diala Haidar, Rayan Ismail, Rana Khoury, and Mirna Shidrawi, 'Beirut's 2016 municipal elections: Did Beirut Madinati permanently change Lebanon's electoral scene?', *Case Analysis, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Doha, Qatar* (2016), p. 14.

These developments eventually fed into the 'October Uprising' of 2019–20.[59] Tensions had been heightened in previous weeks because of the inability of the Lebanese state to tackle large-scale forest fires devastating the country's precious cedar forests, prompting protests in preceding weeks and days;[60] the uprising itself was subsequently triggered by an economic rescue plan proposed by the latest 'national unity' government led by Saad Hariri, and its inclusion of a tax on instant messaging apps like Whatsapp, used by Lebanese to circumvent their over-priced state-owned telecoms providers.[61]

The resulting *economic* securitising acts – by a wide network of grassroots organisations and activists *not* associated with Lebanon's sectarian centres of power – led to an unprecedented wave of civil disobedience by ordinary Lebanese from a cross-section of society, largely coordinated through social media. They quickly escalated to include a broad range of pent-up existential grievances held by the Lebanese against their state, over a wide range of sectors. Anti- and cross-sectarian narratives made these protests quite different from the previous (Cedar) 'Revolution', indicating a near-complete alienation between the protestors and a state widely seen as either ineffectual, or threatening, across several sectors – the political, economic, and societal, among others. A new set of anti-sectarian securitisation gaps had become manifest, out in the open for all to see.

In the economic sector, securitisation gaps emerged in reaction to the rentier-seeking nature of a collapsing monetary and banking system, the inadequate provision of electricity by state-owned utilities, crumbling infrastructure and plunging living standards more generally.[62] The bloated banking system, considered the pride of Lebanon's economy in previous, less contentious times, was thus routinely described as a 'Ponzi scheme';[63] the Central Bank (BDL) and its 'unaccountable' long-time governor, Riad Salameh, were at the service of an amalgamated financial-political elite in control of the state used for patronage funded by massive public debt,[64] maintained through a 'financial engineering' whose failure now lay at the basis of a 'death sentence' economic collapse existentially threatening all Lebanese, and whose underlying structures had to be overthrown.[65]

An inability to provide basic utilities – electricity, communications, water supply and sanitation – had also long underlain latent, substitutive securitisation gaps, with ordinary Lebanese circumventing the state by paying extortionate rates to operators of private generators, or maintaining ever-present cisterns as a back-up supply; these gaps now also burst out in the

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[59]James Haines-Young, 'From trash to tax: Why Lebanon's protests are such a departure from the past', *The National* (20 October 2019), available at: {Nexis UK} accessed 27 April 2020.

[60]See: {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1184136396610691072?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1184780002195361793?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/YouStinkLeb/status/1184005787628249088?s=20}.

[61]Helen Sullivan, 'The making of Lebanon's October Revolution', *The New Yorker* (29 October 2019), available at: {https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-making-of-lebanons-october-revolution} accessed 27 April 2020; Habib Battah, 'A new politics is rising in Lebanon', *Al Jazeera* (15 November 2019), available at: {https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/politics-rising-lebanon-191114141631074.html} accessed 27 April 2020.

[62]Emily Lewis and Ghada Alsharif, 'Anger, pressure return to streets across Lebanon', *The Daily Star* (15 January 2020), available at: {Nexis UK} accessed 27 April 2020.

[63]International Crisis Group, 'Pulling Lebanon Out of the Pit' (Brussels, 2020), p. 14; Dan Azzi, 'Lebanon's Richest Need To Take a Haircut', available at: {https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-11-07/lebanon-s-richest-need-to-take-a-haircut} accessed 2021; Université Saint Joseph, 'Rencontre avec Nassim Nicholas Taleb sur le Thème "Le Liban: de Ponzi au Localisme"', available at: {https://www.usj.edu.lb/news.php?id=8350} accessed 3 June 2020; https://twitter.com/msmasref/status/1211323773212860418?s=20.

[64]See: {https://twitter.com/msmasref/status/1208462138450337799?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1193978824356237315?s=20}.

[65]See: {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1202647417285435392?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1193842743728132096?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/Akhbaralsaha/status/1188530703258005511?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1186934488561000448?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1193978824356237315?s=20}.

open as Lebanese attacked the corruption behind state incapacity.[66] The disproportionate consequences of the above for various income groups also gave the securitisation gaps on display in the revolution's social media a class-based aspect – and not just in those accounts associated with the radical left: 'solidarity' – through mechanisms circumventing the state – with the poor, the left behind, migrant workers, Palestinian and Syrian refugees was thus regularly referred to: victims of an unjust system of selective patronage and exclusion, and – especially for those groups further on the left – of the neoliberal economic policies imposed by both the local and global political-economic elites.[67]

In the political sector, securitisation gaps directly challenged many of the assumptions underlying the stability of the Lebanese state since the Taif accords in the early 1990s, and the Doha consensus of 2008: these sectarian 'covenants' were dismissed as outdated, ineffective and self-serving, helping perpetuate a 'mafia', an 'octopus' of corruption and divisiveness threatening all Lebanese through its horse-trading and backroom deal making.[68] Instead, most protesters argued in favour of a complete removal of the political elite regardless of sect – clearly expressed through the uprising's central slogan, '*kullon yaani kullon*' or 'All Means All' – in favour of a transitional *technocratic* government paving the way for genuinely secular rule for *all* Lebanese.[69] Accusations of foreign meddling were thrown back at all sections of the ruling elite, promises of reform were ridiculed, and suggestions that revolutionary instability might herald a return to civil war – the major 'meta-securitisation' of the post-Taif era – were angrily rejected as empty ploys aimed at thwarting the real change.[70]

With these economic and political securitisations, the split between elite and protesters, state and society widened to include *societal* issues, related to the very definition of Lebanese identity. Beyond a rejection of sectarianism as the basis of Lebanese political system lay a redefining of the meaning of 'being Lebanese', perhaps best expressed in the slogan 'My Sect is the Revolutionaries', and the elevation of a *civic* – or, on the political left, of *class* – over a *sectarian* identity.[71] Lebanon's legal regulation of social relations (birth, marriage, inheritance) had long been founded on a sectarian basis, and the long-standing demand that Lebanese be provided with secular personal status laws that would, among others, allow for intersectarian marriages officiated in the country was indeed revolutionary.[72] Demands for gender equality – expressed

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[66]See: {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1185208247470510080?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1204379115262021632?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/msmasref/status/1211757477013991432?s=20}.

[67]Ayman Makarem, 'Beyond Charity: Our Critical Need for Mutual Aid', available at: {https://thepublicsource.org/charity-mutual-aid} accessed 6 January 2021; see also {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1192013217280790528?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1201093616938209285?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/msmasref/status/1205413441588092929}.

[68]See: {https://twitter.com/YouStinkLeb/status/1188872180261629952?s=20\}; {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1213891025254723584?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/msmasref/status/1205413441588092929} {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1185920780430905351?s=20}; Jamil Mouawad, '"All of them means all of them": The beginning of the end of the Taif system's hegemony?', available at: {https://english.legal-agenda.com/all-of-them-means-all-of-them-the-beginning-of-the-end-for-the-taif-systems-hegemony/} accessed 11 January 2021.

[69]See: {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1193869006228332544?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1188756579878871041?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/YouStinkLeb/status/1197552481598935042?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1201940782967595008?s=20}.

[70]See: {https://twitter.com/Legal_Agenda/status/1191795004894851073?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1187768882154610688?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1197666323964268545?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1193936021248983041?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1196062106799525889?s=20}.

[71]See: {https://twitter.com/Akhbaralsaha/status/1186648729845207040}; {https://twitter.com/Akhbaralsaha/status/1195055241693212672}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1196062106799525889?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1192546206548971520?s=20}; Sana Tannoury-Karam, 'Founding the Lebanese Left: From Colonial Rule to Independence', available at: {https://english.legal-agenda.com/founding-the-lebanese-left-from-colonial-rule-to-independence/} accessed 11 January 2021.

[72]See: {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1202238761679097857?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1190588225833832449?s=20}.

in challenges to domestic violence, or discriminatory citizenship laws, among other sectarian-patriarchal excesses – were also voiced by women's groups active among the demonstrators, as were issues like disability rights in which the state had been found wanting in previous years.[73]

Many of these issues had already been taken up in civil society before the uprising, or had led to the Lebanese circumventing or challenging the state while remaining within the legal framework; they had, in other words, remained *latent*. The illegal, extraordinary measures taken by the protesters changed that, and turned their underlying securitisations into manifest securitisation gaps. Throughout the months in question, calls to disobey law enforcement – by 'reclaiming public space', and demonstrating in front of the objects of the demonstrators' ire, including the Banque du Liban (BDL – the Central Bank), the Association of Lebanese Banks, the state electricity monopoly – were actively reproduced by most of the channels under review.[74] As the weeks and months went on, discourses and their associated 'extraordinary measures' radicalised. With the BDL imposing capital controls on ordinary Lebanese – in a technically illegal move which to many demonstrators indicated the impotent and subordinate nature of the Lebanese state – what had started out as peaceful demonstrations in front of the BDL, and isolated direct action by the radical left expanded into occupations of bank branches by ordinary citizens.[75] For one, attempts by the establishment to install governments which the protesters did not see as meeting their demands resulted in – violently suppressed – efforts at preventing sessions of parliament, coordinated and supported through social media.[76]

Abuses by the security forces reinforced the view of their role in enabling the continued capture of the Lebanese state by, and maintaining security for these sectarian elites, rather than the population at large; tips on how to peacefully resist these organs of state authority thus also proliferated on social media. Unlike previous years, when other, more politicised and sectarian branches of the security forces might have been the object of popular ire, a growing sense of alienation emerged between large sections of the protestors and an erstwhile focus of national unity – the LAF themselves. Rather than the product of a post-civil war cross-sectarian consensus, they came to be seen as just another organ of elite repression and corruption, a perception intensified by their perceived inaction against regime thugs ('shabiha') regularly attacking demonstrators on the street;[77] tellingly, apparent attempts by the LAF to mediate between a small group of self-appointed representatives and the authorities were angrily rejected, as were suggestions by a minority that the army take over from Lebanon's sectarian elite.[78] The challenge to the sectarian state's legitimacy in favour of an alternative, non-sectarian project was thus near complete, at least on the protesters' part.

But while a host of grassroots social groups had emerged that transcended sectarian divides and challenged sectarianism itself, these challenges were, in fact, quite partial. Securitisation gaps with a *sectarian* motive continued to be of relevance, in two ways: sectarian groups took

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[73]See: {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1188096162630393856?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1190691285310595072?s=20}.

[74]See: {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1216006260505686022?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/Akhbaralsaha/status/1198907049674981376?s=20}; Cynthia Bou Aoun, 'Reclaiming Public Space and Its Role in Producing the Revolution', available at: {https://english.legal-agenda.com/reclaiming-public-space-and-its-role-in-producing-the-revolution/} accessed 11 January 2021.

[75]See: {https://twitter.com/msmasref/status/1210876533767843840?s=20}; Hani Adada, 'The Space Between State Violence and Revolutionary Violence', available at: {https://thepublicsource.org/state-violence-revolutionary-violence} accessed 7 January 2021.

[76]See: {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1221547998762672134?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/Akhbaralsaha/status/1196406130513268737?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1185459569666998272?s=20}.

[77]See: {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1205978462751731712?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1199818382545215490}; {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1186936016944410625}; {https://twitter.com/BeirutMadinati/status/1187041732376047616}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1187139303580807168}.

[78]See: {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1197518732719001600?s=20}; {https://twitter.com/megaphone_news/status/1197845383373824002?s=20}.

(extra-legal) emergency action in defence of the *sectarian system itself*, and of referent objects *specific to their particular sect*. Predictably, the sectarian elites securitised the uprising as the harbinger of chaos and potential civil war, and were vocally supported by their adherents and clients in counter-demonstrations in their respective strongholds, complementing their recourse to states of emergency and 'official' security forces.[79] Demands for 'secularism' were reportedly less vocal in conservative, Sunni-dominated Tripoli,[80] while Hezbollah and its allies suppressed a perceived threat to their (armed) role as the 'resistance' by sending thugs to intimidate the anti-sectarian protestors and journalists, which they and their media attacked for – unwittingly or not – being in the service of foreign forces.[81]

Overall, the sectarian system has proved more resilient than was hoped by the participants in the 'October Uprising': their immediate result was the installation of a government of supposed 'technocrats', led by former minister of education Hassan Diab, on 21 January 2020.[82] Far from satisfying the cross-sectarian revolutionaries' central slogan ('All Means All') continuing political linkages to the elite meant that this government still suffered from a lack of legitimacy apparent in the protesters' reaction to its appointment.[83] Its lukewarm attempts at reform were blocked by a parliament still controlled by the traditional sectarian forces and an uncooperative BDL, while a debt default in March 2020, the COVID19 pandemic, and the particularly destructive port explosion in August last year – widely believed to be the result of neglect and corruption – appeared to confirm many of the securitisations of the ineffectual statehood maintained during the demonstrations earlier that year.[84] Following the resultant fall of the Diab government, Lebanon appeared to have come full circle, with Saad Hariri once again engaged in the traditional tortuous sectarian horse trading typical of earlier years, still unable to form a new executive as late as in April 2021.

This has left the country beset by a dangerous, two-layered set of manifest securitisation gaps: the elite-led, sectarian gaps of old – underlying clientelism and corruption, pro-Western vs pro-Iranian/Syrian orientations, and other substitutive circumventions of state authority – have recently been complemented by a series of grassroots 'post-sectarian' gaps of a more *reactive* nature, with a more extensive range of decentralised actors directly securitising post-Taif

[79]Sahar Houri, 'FPM holds demonstration in support of Aoun, Bassil', *The Daily Star* (3 November 2019), available at: {https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Nov-03/494884-fpm-holds-demonstration-in-support-of-aoun-bassil.ashx} accessed 22 February 2020; 'Hezbollah warns of chaos, civil war in Lebanon', *Reuters*, available at: {https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-protests-scuffles-idUSKBN1X41IV} accessed 3 February 2020; Tom Perry and Nadine Awadalla, 'Lebanon crisis is "dangerous", evokes start of '75 war – defense minister', *Reuters* (14 November 2019), available at: {https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-protests-idUSKBN1XO1YK} accessed 5 February 2020; 'Army intervenes as Kataeb-FPM supporters clash', *The Daily Star*, available at: {https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Nov-26/496330-army-intervenes-as-kataeb-fpm-supporters-clash.ashx} accessed 5 February 2020

[80]Mark Ghazali, 'Al Khiam Tajtah al Sahat Fi Bayrut w Trabls: Rusim al'Intifadat Eabr Masahatiha al Hawaria', available at: {https://legal-agenda.com/الخيم-تجتاح-الساحات-في-بيروت-وطرابلس-ر/} accessed 11 January 2021.

[81]Sunniva Rose, 'Lebanon: Hezbollah supporters clash with anti-government protesters', *The National* (24 October 2019), available at: {Nexis UK} accessed 27 April 2020; Bassem Mroue, 'Lebanon's journalists suffer abuse, threats covering unrest', *Associated Press* (7 December 2019), available at: {Nexis UK} accessed 27 April 2020.

[82]'Hassan Diab, Lebanon's "technocratic" premier', *Associated Foreign Press*, available at: {Nexis UK} accessed 27 April 2020; Hussein Dakroub, 'Time to work, Diab says after unveiling govt', *The Daily Star* (22 January 2020), available at: {Nexis UK} accessed 27 April 2020.

[83]See: {https://twitter.com/Li_Haqqi/status/1221547998762672134}; 'Lebanon announces new government, protestors far from impressed', *France24*, available at: {https://www.france24.com/en/20200121-lebanon-beirut-hassan-diab-saad-hariri-new-government-protests-cabinet} accessed 22 February 2021; Samar Kadi, 'Protesters' rejection amid challenges awaiting Lebanon's new cabinet', *The Arab Weekly* (26 January 2020), available at: {https://thearabweekly.com/protesters-rejection-amid-challenges-awaiting-lebanons-new-cabinet} accessed 22 February 2021.

[84]Kareem Chehayeb, 'Lebanon was on life support: Now it's in free fall', *The Washington Post* (29 December 2020), available at: {https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/12/29/lebanon-explosion-pandemic-economy-crisis/} accessed 22 February 2021; Ben Doherty and Helen Sullivan, 'Crisis upon crisis: Blast rocks Lebanon already on its knees', *The Guardian* (5 August 2020), available at: {https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/05/crisis-upon-crisis-blast-rocks-a-lebanon-already-on-its-knees} accessed 22 February 2021.

Lebanon's sectarianism as a threat. Lebanon's current loss of legitimacy is thus of a dual nature: first, in the circumvention of its norms and institutions by the sectarian elites, and, secondly, in the rejection and challenging of its sectarian logic by a large part of the population. Whether the contention that emerges from these quite divergent views of Lebanese statehood will remain *manifest*, rather than escalating into *violence* – in the absence *lethal* extraordinary measures by those challenging state authority – very much remains the question at the time of writing, when the country is still under a caretaker government; the odds are very much against the Lebanese state recovering from such a massive – and complex – loss in public trust.

Conclusion

Securitisation gaps provide a radically interpretive route towards understanding state weakness, by operationalising the long-neglected ideational elements of statehood and state weakness through an adapted, well-established methodological framework. From this perspective, a state's strength, or its weakness are constituted by its role in a given society's security discourses and practices, as apparent in an ensemble of securitisations and counter-securitisations. The short-comings of traditional approaches to state weakness – their claims to a rigid, and often Western-centric objectivity, their focus on bureaucratic solutions to the detriment of traditional structures, their frequent, and often politically expedient stigmatising of polities not conforming to the Weberian norm – are countered by an ability to *understand*, rather than *explain* divergences in the culturally conditioned expectations of a given society towards the state as a provider of security. Such an interpretive, multilevel, and agential approach elicits a measure of intellectual humility, by no longer positing the Western Weberian model as an ideal, and divergences from that model as pathology.

The holistic view of state weakness provided by this perspective opens up several additional avenues for further research, beyond the application of the framework above to other states described as 'weak' in the conventional sense. Firstly, because of its rejection of the taken for granted nature of the strong, Western Weberian state, and of simple, often stigmatising distinctions between strong (usually Western) and weak (usually Southern) states, it could, for once, turn our attention to the often-idealised states of the Global North, providing an insight to the securitisations that are, among others, at the root of their diminished legitimacy. Questioning the role of populist securitising actors, and their ability to talk to the existential concerns of large swathes of Western populations may be one way of examining the crisis of the liberal, Western state, for instance – a line of inquiry made all the more pertinent by events like the recent storming of the Capitol in Washington, DC. Similar exercises examining the securitisations by separatist actors and social groups against 'their' respective states could be carried out in both North, and South. Rather than making an often stigmatising categorisation between 'weak' and 'strong' states, the goal would be to identify *weaknesses within states*: and every state, however developed, would have its specific fissures, its legitimacy gaps – some large, some small, but all of them essential to understanding legitimacy, or the lack thereof, without preconception.

The scalability of the above approach also opens up the possibility of including the often neglected – or even dismissed – *micro*-level of analysis in such mappings. While this wasn't applied to the brief and necessarily constrained Lebanese case study provided above, an ethnographic, monograph-length insight into what Bubandt has referred to as 'vernaculars of security'[85] might provide valuable, finer-grained views of the relationship between social groups, and the state than the national-level one offered above: in the Lebanese case, for instance, one could examine securitising moves and acts by actors in villages, in the smaller-scale components of civil society, or even within the family or clan; how such smaller-scale audiences engage in

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[85]Nils Bubandt, 'Vernacular security: The politics of feeling safe in global, national and local worlds', *Security Dialogue*, 36:3 (2005), pp. 275–96.

self-help or resistance within such micro-scale social groups; and how these efforts than aggregate into the larger-scale protests like the October Uprising. Just as securitisation gaps can decentre our view from the Western-centric Weberian 'gold standard' of statehood, the micro-level – and attendant ethnographic methodologies – may decentre our views of the security discourses and practices from those of elites, opening up a systematic way of studying small-group security concerns within the wider context of state-society relations.

Eventually, a detailed, multilevel mapping of securitisation gaps could point the way to pragmatic solutions to the problems afflicting a wide range of states and societies, through their ad-hoc, open-minded desecuritisation – ST's solution of choice – unbound by the Western ideas of 'appropriate' statehood and a fixation on national-level elites. Indeed, in the Lebanese case proffered above, the cross-cutting securitisations between sectarians and anti-sectarians suggest a need for unorthodox institutional outcomes – attuned to specific local social, cultural, and structural conditions. In Lebanon and elsewhere, the required desecuritisations might result in something more akin to Thomas Risse's idea of 'Hybrid Political Orders',[86] Richmond's notion of 'Peace Formations',[87] or Ken Menkhaus'sconcept of 'governance without government'[88] than the ideal of the centralised, monopolistic, secular, Western Weberian state.

While the objections to desecuritisation are well known – the absence of emancipatory politics, the danger of ignored silences, excessive cultural relativism – these could be overcome: the search for a normative basis for (de)securitisation is, after all, ongoing, ignored silences could be uncovered by listening to social groups at the micro-level, and cultural relativism could be avoided through the discovery of emancipatory potential in local contexts. But these are elements for future exploration; as it stands, suffice it to say that an interpretive approach to statehood – or governance, broadly conceived – would add to Western traditions a non-elitist cross-cultural humility that has so far been largely lacking, through the realisation that there are no pre-set, exclusively liberal forms of legitimacy. To paraphrase an often-used dictum in International Relations: the twenty-first century, post-liberal state might have to become what societies make of it.

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[86]Risse, 'Governance in areas of limited statehood'.

[87]Oliver Richmond, 'A post-liberal peace: Eirenism and the everyday', *Review of International Studies*, 35:3 (2009), pp. 557–80; Oliver Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace?* (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 2011); Richmond, 'Failed statebuilding versus peace formation'.

[88]Ken Menkhaus, 'Governance without government in Somalia: Spoilers, state building, and the politics of coping', *International Security*, 31:3 (2007), pp. 74–106.