1

Advocacy Politics within
Weak and Fragmented States

A Framework for Analysis

Can active and dynamic civil societies make contributions to the strengthening of democratic policies and practices in weak and fragmented states? This is the guiding question in this book on the politics of civil society in postwar Lebanon. After a long fifteen-year period of civil conflict, Lebanon's sectarian democracy—based on a (now) formal power-sharing agreement between its many religious communities and/or confessions—was reestablished in 1991, albeit on the foundations of a precarious state, powerful elite-dominated yet factionalized political networks, and a hegemonic Syrian presence that compromised its sovereignty.[1] Paralleling this reemerging Lebanese state, however, was a resurgent civil society, historically one of the most dynamic within the Middle East region. Among its most active postwar components were several modest but vocal networks of rights-based advocacy associations that maneuvered to make their voices heard in emerging policy debates on socioeconomic and political reconstruction. They critiqued the hegemonic resilience of sectarian political practices, underpinned as they were by the country's confessional, clan, and clientelist political heritages, and called instead for strengthening the country's democratic political heritage through the protection of civil liberties and their promotion within the numerous social policy domains of the state.

This book takes up the analysis of three of these associational advocacy networks within the fields of gender, the environment, and disability. Initially, the efforts of all of these advocacy networks produced significant, if preliminary, institutional reforms and policy successes. These included the introduction of new norms and discourses, the formulation of new laws, the creation of more broadly based policy deliberation institutions

that have included within them the participation of civil society actors, and, in some instances, the implementation of new policies and programs, especially within the lower levels or "trenches" of the bureaucracy. Over time, however, it became apparent that these preliminary successes at the policy level have been difficult to sustain and have failed to translate into fundamental changes in institutional practice, let alone shifts in the dominant patterns of state–society relations in postwar Lebanon. Why have opportunities for sustained institutional and policy reform—for which several associational networks within Lebanon's civil society have strongly pushed—been so limited within Lebanon's postwar sectarian democracy? And, in the context of these powerful constraints, where do political opportunities for advocacy lie?

In order to answer these questions, this book uses insights from three distinct conceptual frameworks. The first revolves around the application of "historical institutionalism" with its focus on questions of path-dependency and the challenges of institutional change. The premise here is that Lebanon's sectarian democracy exhibits strong "path-dependent" qualities that create powerful obstacles—both structural and agential—for those within civil and political society interested in strengthening the democratic orientation of its political institutions and policies. Particularly important here is the concept of "feedback"—referring to the political dynamics that emerge to reproduce and reinforce a particular institutional configuration and legacy. It is the thesis of this book that, in the context of Lebanese politics, the broader dynamics of civil society networking—both within and between it and political networks at the elite level—produce powerful system-reproducing mechanisms of feedback.

The second component of the book's conceptual apparatus focuses on the debates that surround the dynamics of "civil society." While accepting the premise that civil society is the realm of associational life separate from the state and the market, this book moves away from theories of civil society that endow it with some kind of coherent, autonomous, and normative importance and move toward defining civil society as an open-ended and disaggregated concept whose coherence and autonomy are highly compromised by the interpenetrations of the market and the state. As a result, the normative significance of civil society is contingent on the socioeconomic and political context within which it exists. In deeply divided societies and polities such as that of Lebanon, not only is civil society likely to be affected by and to reflect these deep sociopolitical divisions, but elements within civil society also are likely to both benefit from and, as a result, work to sustain and reinforce these divisions. In short, belying the assumptions in the democracy and development literature that posit civil society as an agent of democratic reform, I argue that

certain actors within Lebanon's civil society are not only privileged by the sectarian social and political order within which they exist but also work to reproduce it over time.

From these two discussions emerges a third—how can one understand the nature of political opportunities for sustained institutional and policy advocacy in the context of such path-dependent dynamics to which elements of civil society also contribute? In the language of historical institutionalism from which the concept of path dependency emerged, how can one unpack the dynamics of "restricted agency"? Complementing the use of civil society as a tool of analysis, this study also adopts the concept of an "associational network"—one that reflects the internal divisions, power asymmetries, and interpenetrations with political society that characterize all civil societies. In short, it is through an analysis of the structure and dynamics of associational advocacy networks in the fields of gender relations, the environment, and disability that we arrive at a more nuanced understanding of restricted agency in deeply divided polities such as that of Lebanon.

But why Lebanon, and why these three case studies? My motivation emanated, first and foremost, from my longstanding (and often bewildered) fascination with its complex politics (see Preface). In that sense, Lebanon selected me. I was also normatively interested in understanding the opportunities and constraints that civil society actors faced when trying to promote an inclusive socioeconomic policy-making process in Lebanon's postwar period. After some preliminary research trips in the mid-1990s, it became clear that some of the most interesting and active subjects of research would be those associational activists within the fields of gender, the environment, and disability. In that sense, my selection of case studies was normatively and empirically driven (rather than "theory driven"). It was also only in the course of the research that *common* patterns, dynamics, and outcomes began to emerge—ones generated by the disadvantaged position of these associational activists vis à vis parallel actors embedded within the country's sectarian political structures.

How this personal history of the selection of case studies and the overall research for this book evolved has important implications for the significance of its findings. Certainly, this book makes some useful empirical contributions to several bodies of academic literature. In the literature on Lebanon, for starters, there are few significant English language studies of its civil society.[2] Nor have comparative studies of civil society in the Middle East region, for the most part, included work on Lebanon.[3] Neither have case studies on Lebanon been incorporated into the broader academic work on civil society politics in post-conflict situations despite Lebanon's paradigmatic status as a post-conflict, deeply divided polity.[4] At

the same time, the theoretical contributions and claims of this book are of an important but more modest nature. Because this book focuses on a single country within which are found case studies with similar outcomes, it is difficult to make strong generalizable, middle-range, causal equations that are *directly* applicable to other weak, deeply divided, post-conflict polities. Instead, its main contribution will revolve around its ability to construct what Robert Bates has described as an "analytical narrative" about Lebanon itself. This is defined as a historically informed case study that pays close attention "to stories, accounts, and context" while also maintaining a "close dialogue" with theory.[5] In order to operationalize this approach, I have made two main methodological decisions. The first was to situate the research within Lebanon's rich and complex history—especially as regards the transformation of its state–society relations and the effects this had on associational life over time. The second, motivated by the desire to examine the dynamics of advocacy politics over a longer period, was to stretch the fieldwork out over a ten-year time frame that included numerous short research trips, two year-long sabbatical leaves in 1999 and 2008, and hundreds of open-ended, semi-structured interviews. This opened up the possibility of engaging in hypothesis-guided "process tracing," through which underlying trends in associative action rather than momentary snapshots were revealed.[6] In short, through the construction of an "analytical narrative" by way of "process tracing," it is hoped that this book has produced some "defensible propositions"[7] and "contingent generalizations"[8] that will prove useful when applied to future studies of advocacy politics, not only in Lebanon but also in other deeply divided polities.

What follows in this Introduction is the laying out of the conceptual apparatus within which the subsequent analytical narrative of associational life and advocacy politics in postwar Lebanon is placed. This threefold conceptual framework begins with a brief examination of the relevant debates in historical institutionalist analysis—especially those revolving around path dependency, feedback mechanisms, and restricted agency. It then examines in more detail the contentious debates surrounding the concept of civil society—ones that problematize its use in this study. The third section brings in the complementary concept of associational networks, actors on which this study will ultimately focus. Having set forth the conceptual apparatus, the rest of the book turns to the construction of its analytical narrative, beginning with a historical institutionalist account of the emergence, consolidation, and reproduction of sectarian democracy in Lebanon, one that sets the scene for the subsequent examination of the postwar politics of advocacy networks, associational life, and civil society in the rest of the book.

Critical Junctures, Feedback Mechanisms, and Restrictive Agency: Examining the Path-Dependent Nature of Political Life

There is a consensus among those who examine questions of institutional change that political life has a tendency to be path dependent—a concept that points to the difficulty of reversing a particular institutional trajectory once it has been launched.[9] Histories of state formation, for example, are often discontinuous, consisting of "critical junctures"—defined as periods of significant contingency during which particular state forms may emerge[10]—followed by long stretches of institutional continuity. Atul Kohli has written, for example, that "the process of state formation in the developing world has proceeded in a series of "big bangs" with formative moments few and far between."[11] These critical junctures are important because they produce "basic" changes in the nature of political institutions and rules.[12] However, equally important are the "feedback mechanisms" that consolidate and transform these basic changes into institutional legacies that persist over time—ones that are distinct from those factors that produced the critical juncture in the first place. Indeed, Paul Pierson has argued that identifying feedback mechanisms is the key to uncovering the dynamics of path dependency.[13]

A second emerging consensus among scholars of path dependency is the particularly intensity of institutional "stickiness" within political systems where informal political dynamics are powerful and often hegemonic—precisely the features possessed by many of the power-sharing political regimes in the developing world such as that of Lebanon. Jack Knight, for example, describes informal rule dynamics as being tenaciously resilient, even in the face of formal institutional developments.[14] At the root of this resilience are unequal distributions of power that often underpin the political realm, providing the basic resources for processes of reproduction. Informal institutional orders are further strengthened by dynamics of *self*-reinforcement that emerge through the cultivation of a set of "ingrained" expectations among those who must comply with the rules, not unlike the consensual but inequitable dynamics that underlie clientelism.[15] Finally, those benefiting from these informal dynamics also will seek to strengthen them by instrumentalizing the state for their own particularist purposes, transforming it into a de facto "third party enforcer" of informal rules.[16] Indeed, in order to prevent the state from acting as a focal point for collective action or as an ally to those who seek to challenge the institutional status quo,[17] power holders within the prevailing informal institutional order often perform a careful balancing act, capturing the state in order to use it for their purposes while hindering the development of the state by limiting its overall power and scope.[18]

A third general consensus among those who study issues of path dependency within the political realm revolves around the idea that while political systems—particularly those infused with powerful informal dynamics, as is the case with Lebanon—are characterized by a remarkable degree of stability, this institutional "stickiness" is not static but gives rise to possibilities and processes of gradual institutional change. Kohli, for example, suggests that "incremental changes have certainly altered power configurations," even if the process is "rare and tends to be drawn out and complex";[19] Ira Katznelson argues that institutional legacies are "durable but not immutable";[20] and Paul Pierson stresses that "nothing in path-dependent analysis implies that a particular alternative is permanently "locked in" following the move into a self-reinforcing path." Rather, "change continues, but it is bounded change—until something erodes or swamps the mechanisms of reproduction that generate continuity."[21]

So what promotes institutional change within path-dependent institutional environments? While some focus on the possibility of "learning," this study focuses on power struggles. Knight argues, for example, that because many institutional orders are built on significant asymmetries of power, they give rise to considerable contestation over the institutional rules of the game.[22] James Mahoney has similarly written that where political institutions are supported by a small elite, they are susceptible to mass challenges or what he calls "reactive processes" that, over time, can have a transformative, as opposed to a self-reinforcing, effect on institutional arrangements.[23] Ruth and David Collier add a temporal dimension to this debate, suggesting that contestation may be most pronounced at the early stages of a critical juncture where institutions have not yet been consolidated, an idea that dovetails with the interesting hypothesis of Pierson that it is "the first mover" in the aftermath of a critical juncture that can most influence subsequent institutional development.[24] In short, whether the result of processes of institutional contestation or the emergence of an effective "first mover" in an early post-critical juncture stage, path-dependent institutional contexts are dynamic—not hermetically sealed—and give rise to opportunities for the emergence of what Katznelson has called "restricted agency."[25] It is to an analysis of one potential "restricted agent" of institutional change—associational networks that arise out of various segments of civil society—that we turn now.

Toward a Political Economy Analysis of Civil Society

Civil society is generally defined as the realm that exists between the state, the market, and the individual. This realm is made up of associations

and the relationships between them, some of which are formal, others of which are more informal. As a result of the interaction both within and between these associations, norms promoting mutual trust, reciprocity, and a commitment to social and political engagement—what Adam Seligman describes as adding up to "some sense of a shared public"[26]—will begin to strengthen and spread and, if practiced over time, result in the emergence of associative and/or social capital. This social capital, in turn, provides civil society with some degree of collective, autonomous, organizational, and normative influence when interacting with the broader social and political systems.

But what does this associative capital emanating from civil society actually do? The general assumption is that it will promote "the stability and effectiveness of democracy."[27] Indeed, in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the belief in the democratic potential of civil society has reached new heights, spawning all sorts of national and international development programs aimed at its "strengthening" and "deepening." Liberal and neoliberal theorists and policy makers alike, for example, have supported the promotion of civil society on the basis of the "neo-Tocquevillian" belief that associations can help revive communities, train effective citizens, reinvigorate the public sphere, limit intrusive bureaucracies, and, hence, promote the consolidation of liberal democracy.[28] Others on the left have articulated an even more expansive set of goals for civil society, transforming it into the foundation "of a new strategic vision" and/or "utopian social project" for a new left that was searching for a transformative project in the face of the collapse of old paradigms. In these versions, civil society became a haven for the growth of counter-hegemonic popular movements that were independent from discredited political parties and separate from the state.[29] Describing the former notion of civil society as being aimed at contributing to effective democratic governance and the latter being aimed at curbing authoritarianism, Michael Edwards and Bob Foley argue that both versions treat civil society as "an autonomous sphere of social power."[30]

Do these expectations concerning the role and potential of civil society correspond on a consistent basis to political reality? John Ehrenburg is skeptical that civil society necessarily possesses either of these capacities. Based on his assessment of civil society in the West, he argues that civil society is often a "minor player" when it comes to the politics of development and democracy, "too weak to seriously contest the effects of inequality." Neither is it clear that civil society necessarily promotes freedom, participation, pluralism, and/or equality, suggesting instead that it may actually do the opposite in certain circumstances. The result, concludes Ehrenburg, is that "civil society cannot automatically be theorized

as a democratic sphere."[31] Geoffrey Hawthorn is similarly pessimistic about the importance of civil society in the Global South, arguing that it is "simply mistaken" and "unrealistic to suppose that . . . associations can act to extend the scope and power of public policies to improve the well-being of the majority of the population."[32] Adding to this chorus of skeptics has been Joel Migdal, who is critical of the "lingering assumptions" that surround the concept of civil society, particularly its presumed tendency to generate an integrating normative and/or moral consensus that works to pull all of its diverse associations and interests "in a single direction."[33] Writes Migdal, rather than transcending the social realities in the developing world, ones characterized by social hierarchies, social exclusions, and sharp differences in interests and solidarities, civil societies tend to simply reflect them.[34]

In response to these criticisms, scholars have been hard at work reexamining and re-theorizing their understanding of civil society. Sunil Khilnani, for example, advocates abandoning civil society as a "substantive" and "self-sufficient" category with a determinate set of institutions that throw up "inputs" and "outputs," recommending instead that discussions about civil society and its impact be conditioned by the socioeconomic and political structures that surround it.[35] Omar Encarnacion, in his comparison of the dynamics and influence of civil society in Spain and Brazil, similarly concludes that civil society is a "neutral" actor, constituent of the political context within which its associational actors operate.[36] Finally, describing civil society as the social relations and structures that not only lie between but also are "determined by" the state and the market, Ehrenburg stresses that civil society "can only be grasped by looking at what its constituent structures do, how they are organized, and what political and economic forces are at work—no matter how strenuous some theorists try and describe it as an autonomous sphere of democratic activity."[37]

What follows, therefore, is a general discussion of the ways in which these structural contexts revolving around markets and states can impact the makeup and orientation of civil societies in the developing world. I argue, for example, that the development of civil society is directly linked to processes of social transformation and the penetration of capitalist markets. In the developing world, these processes have been uneven, leading to complex, fluid, and fragmented social structures that combine emerging but weakly delineated class formations with resilient social formations linked to kinship, ethnicity, and religion—what Hawthorne has called "vertical heterogeneities" and "horizontal inequalities."[38] I further argue that processes of state and regime formation have been equally important in structuring dynamics within civil society—heavily influenc-

ing the ways in which civil society actors access the resources of the state. A paradoxical feature of weak states, for example, is their tendency to provide elite-based actors with political opportunities to establish and entrench strong and resilient regimes. These, in turn, structure access to the institutions and/or resources of the state in partisan and particularist ways, empowering allies of state power within civil society while disadvantaging opponents. Hence, as a result of the uneven structuring effects of markets, states, and regimes, civil societies are not open playing fields in which all associational actors have universal and institutionalized opportunities. Rather, they consist of structurally advantaged actors that are empowered and act to reproduce the prevailing sociopolitical system as well as structurally disadvantaged actors—"restricted agents" in the words of historical institutionalist theory—that seek to challenge it. Before delving into a discussion of how these structurally disadvantaged actors within civil society attempt to overcome these entrenched constraints on their activities, it is to a more in-depth analysis of the structural context within which they operate that we turn first.

Community, Class, and Civil Society: Uneven Development and the Fragmentation of Associational Life

The makeup and dynamics of any given civil society are directly linked to the penetration of capitalist markets and the resultant processes of class formation that these processes unleash. Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Stephens, and John Stephens, for example, describe class as the "master key" to understanding the social structuring of interests and power in society.[39] They argue that classes exhibit "central political tendencies"[40] and that class coalitions are "particularly revealing" of how societal complexities work themselves out, particularly with respect to civil society.[41] Paralleling Migdal's critique of the overly optimistic tone of the bulk of civil society literature, they argue that "the political effect of the growth of civil society can only be understood in connection with its articulation with the structure of class power."[42] Laurence Whitehead, likewise, argues that civil society derives many of its special characteristics from "the deeper socio-economic structure and the distribution of interests, social norms and power resources which society embodies."[43] To understand the "variable political functions of civil society," argues Whitehead, we must link them to "a basic theory of socioeconomic transformation."[44]

The nature of class formation within the developing world, however, is uneven and weak, leading to class formations and identities that are porous and fluid rather than rigid and clearly defined. Reuschemeyer and colleagues argue, for example, that the working classes have for the most

part been subject to "a whole array of partly contradictory interests,"[45] a problem that they argue is key to explaining "the infrequency of full democracy and in its instability where it did emerge."[46] Neither has the bourgeoisie, which they describe in terms of its "great internal heterogeneity,"[47] been able to fulfill its "historic" role as a primary agent of democratization. Rather, it has acted in more ambiguous ways and has proven to be very susceptible to the hegemonic power of the upper classes.[48] Finally, Rueschemeyer and colleagues argue that ethnic and religious social actors and divisions can hinder the emergence of "counter-hegemonic" class coalitions. On the one hand, they can capture and instrumentalize market forces in such a way as to strengthen rather than weaken their structural position within any given society. At the same time, these same divisions can be used as a "conduit" for upper class hegemony that can penetrate deep into civil society.[49]

What is the impact of these uneven processes of class formation on the development of associational forces within civil society? On the one hand, it must be stressed that there is no exact equation here, there being degrees of "associational slippage," defined as the disjuncture between the level of associational development and the social power that underpins it.[50] Moreover, although linked in general to structural forces in society, the creation of associations within civil society cannot be seen merely as a function of socioeconomic forces alone. Rather, through effective strategies of resource mobilization and collective action, some associational actors may be able to transcend the limitations of their structural position, allowing their associational activities to establish "a dynamic of [their] own . . . outside of the imperatives of economic structures."[51] This helps to explain, for example, the influence of "uncivil" associational actors, those willing to use extortion and violence as a way of promoting their interests.[52] At the same time, there will be other associational actors who will prove unable to take advantage of their structural position within society—some pointing to the educated middle classes within the Middle East region as a prime example.[53]

Nonetheless, understanding processes of social change and class formation in any given national context remains a necessary starting point for any analysis of associational life, one that has several important implications. First, if uneven capitalist penetration produces social structures that are characterized by "vertical heterogeneities" and "horizontal inequalities,"[54] one should expect the formation of civil societies with similar diverse associational characteristics. Second, depending on the degree of inequality and conflict of interest that lies beneath the surface of this diversity, one should also expect relations between civil society's different components to be characterized by significant degrees of

associational contestation. This leads to a third important implication for the study of civil societies in the developing world—that they will find it difficult to regulate and/or integrate themselves, leading to situations whereby associational actors within civil society will not only be vulnerable and susceptible to the penetration of social and political forces "from without,"[55] but *they will often call these same external forces into play as a way of bolstering their own associational competitiveness*, a key argument of this book.

Hence, social structures play a crucial role in generating the "varieties of social capital" being promoted by the various components of a given civil society. At the same time, they cannot by themselves explain the overall influence of each of these associational components, let alone how each would choose to use that power. In that sense, they are necessary but insufficient components of the complex civil society equation, leaving unanswered the question of how the social-structural foundations of civil society translate into influence in the political realm. For this, we need to extend our analytical equation to include, first, the structuring effect that states and regimes have on civil societies—one that generates political opportunities for some associational actors while denying them for others—and, second, the ways in which associational actors within civil society take advantage of, or overcome, these differential political opportunity structures through strategic collective action. Before turning to an examination of these latter debates about civil society agency, it is to an examination of the political context that structures this strategic action that we turn now.

Strong Regimes, Weak States, and Political Opportunity Structures for Civil Society

States and regime structures have a crucial effect on civil society, influencing the relative strength and influence of its different components. Peter Evans has argued that where effective state institutions exist, they create favorable environments within which more civic-oriented associations can thrive as well as enhance the developmental capacities of states.[56] Similar arguments have been made by Jack Knight and Henry Farrell in their discussion of "an institutional account of trust." Critiquing Robert Putnam's assertion that social capital is the key factor in explaining economic and political success, they argue instead that it is institutions (and the power relations that underpin them) that are the driving forces behind the production of social capital, rather than the other way around.[57] Indeed, in an earlier work, Knight goes further by arguing that the existence of an institutionalized and unified political realm was crucial to the formation

of civic-oriented movements of collective action both by acting as a target for their activities as well as by emerging as a "third-party enforcer," directly supporting their campaigns for change.[58]

However, in much of the developing world, strongly institutionalized and autonomous states are hard to find. Migdal, in his extensive writings on the state, has highlighted the absence of institutionalized and/or normative frameworks within which states of the developing world operate today. Rather than being dominant, for example, the state acts more like a "confused conglomerate of people and agencies,"[59] "a crippled giant,"[60] and a series of "fragments" that often work at cross-purposes to themselves.[61] It rarely operates according to unified set of rules, nor is it necessarily the preeminent rule maker in society. Moreover, rather than being distinct and autonomous from society, it is often penetrated by a variety of competing social forces, all vying for hegemonic power, that appropriate parts of the state and end up producing a political order characterized by "multiple sets of practices," "alternative sets of rules," and, ultimately, the absence of integrating frameworks of authority.[62]

Weak states, however, do not necessarily produce weak regimes. On the contrary, regime structures within weak states—usually of a highly informal nature—are often powerful, resistant to change, and, hence, highly resilient. Indeed, it is precisely the weakness of the state apparatus that allows powerful social actors to structure politics in ways that serve to entrench and reproduce their power. Hence, politics in weak states is not only about penetrating the state in order to pillage it; it is also about penetrating the state in order to structure politics in ways that maximize the access of certain elites to the state while minimizing that of others. In this sense, Midgal's path-breaking analysis of the relationship between strong societies and weak states is an incomplete one, missing the crucial discussion of regime structures that emerge between them.

Understanding this contrast between weak states and strong regimes is crucial for our ensuing discussion of civil society, for it is regimes rather than states that structure state–society relations, determine the ways in which citizens can access the political system, and, hence, heavily influence the evolution of associational life and its access to those with political power. In regimes underpinned by strongly institutionalized states, for example, political rules structuring relations between state and society are predominantly formal in nature, embodied within constitutions and electoral laws. It is in this political context, as in the argument by Evans discussed previously, that high levels of "civic" associationalism, profiting from their institutionalized, universal access to the state, can often flourish, especially if the regime is a democratic one. On the other hand, in weakly institutionalized states where formal rules are not the only game

in town, regimes tend to be hybrid in nature, characterized by a complex intertwining of the formal with the informal, of the universal with the more particularistic. In these situations, the access of associational life to the state and its resources is likely to be less universalist and more reflective of the particularistic political dynamics generated by the regime's hybridity, thus providing enduring advantages to some segments of associational life while disadvantaging others.

Several features of hybrid regime types emerge as being particularly disadvantageous for those advocating for universal citizenship and social rights, many of which are associated with the deleterious effects of clientelism. Jonathan Fox, for example, in the context of Latin America, and in particular Mexico, looks on clientelism as being inimical to the achievement of full citizenship rights.[63] Douglas Chalmers argues further that when clientelism is expanded "to incorporate the 'whole' system of political relationships between citizen and the state, [it] becomes a rationale for the excessive concentration of power in the hands of a 'few' patrons."[64] And, in their comparison of several forms of "representational regimes," Elizabeth Friedman and Kathryn Hochstetler argue that rights-based advocacy politics are particularly difficult within hybrid regimes that are fragmented into competing and adversarial clientelist networks—essentially because the state is effectively neutralized as a mediator and/or "third party enforcer." Not only does this make it difficult for civil society associations to come together in the form of stable and cross-cutting advocacy networks, but it also significantly complicates their efforts to establish, let alone sustain, access to the policy-making apparatus of the state.[65] The result is often advocacy efforts that are fleeting and that give rise to at best "temporary formulations of understandings around particular issues."[66]

Hence, states and their regimes have important structuring effects on civil society, influencing its makeup, dynamics, and political influence. Using the terminology of social movement theory, states and regimes help to determine the "political opportunity structures" within which the myriad of civil society associations operate. As we have seen above, however, the weak and uninstitutionalized nature of many states in the developing world has led to the emergence of hybrid regimes whose particularist informal dynamics often overpower the more formal rules of the game, providing differential rather than universal access to state resources. As we have just argued, this can be a particularly enduring feature of political systems dominated by fragmented, adversarial, and competing forms of clientelist networks. With respect to civil society actors, this facilitates the empowerment of a regime's associational allies within civil society while marginalizing its associational challengers, potentially leaving them

"marooned on embattled islands" with little to no significant access to the political arena at all.[67] With respect to incumbent elites, it not only provides them with greater room for maneuver, but it also transforms components of civil society into useful actors in the broader game of reproducing their power. In short, empowered by unequal and asymmetrical systems of regime access, favored components of civil society emerge as feedback mechanisms, contributing to the path-dependent quality of hybrid political systems in weak and fragmented states.

Yet there remains a paradox with respect to the path-dependent dynamics of such hybrid political systems, with their mix of the formal with the informal. For, however unequal and entrenched power relations may be within any given polity, they are "rarely if ever 'one way.' "[68] Indeed, the very informal nature of these mechanisms of political access and the often-shifting nature of political alliances and power relations that characterizes them—particularly apparent within power-sharing regimes such as that of Lebanon—also creates opportunities for more open-ended processes of political bargaining. Fox uses the term "semi-clientelism" to describe the spaces that can emerge, that allow for greater associational autonomy and "other kinds of unequal exchanges,"[69] and Chalmers argues in similar fashion that the political spaces that emerge within hybrid regime structures can have "democratic potential."[70] It is here that possibilities for the exercise of restricted agency emerge. Through intelligent and strategic action, for example, structurally disadvantaged civil society actors may nonetheless find ways, if only of a fleeting nature, to transcend the entrenched power asymmetries that constrain them and exert political and/or policy influence. It is the assertion of this study that manifestations of restricted agency are best captured through an analysis, not of civil society politics per se, but of the attempt by select civil society actors to access the political arena through the construction of and participation within cross-cutting policy networks. It is to the analysis of the advocacy potential of policy networks—the final building block of this study's theoretical framework—that we now turn.

Restricted Agency, Associational Networks, and the Politics of Advocacy

There are numerous definitions of policy networks. Joseph Wong describes them as the "patterned interaction . . . of state and society actors who have a stake in a particular policy area";[71] Steven Heydemann, in his work on "networks of privilege" in the Middle East, has defined them as "a regular set of contacts of similar social connections among individuals

and groups";[72] and Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, in their work on transnational advocacy networks, have described them as being "voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange" made up of "webs" of personal relationships that are "lighter on their feet than hierarchy."[73] While rigor varies with respect to how networks analysis has been used, with Gould arguing that many of its applications are more "metaphorical" than "analytical,"[74] all agree that networks provide a useful tool for understanding advocacy politics in highly fluid and weakly institutionalized political arenas that are underpinned by significant power asymmetries.

Networks operate within policy domains and/or policy arenas; indeed, their activities help to create them.[75] While they are not legally recognized entities and, as such, are to be differentiated from state ministries, they are sometimes looked upon as "new governing structures" that are "neither state nor society . . . but hybrid structures that carry out their own functions."[76] Whereas in the context of the developed world, policy domains are "relatively autonomous,"[77] in the context of weakly institutionalized regimes within the developing world, this assertion of autonomy is more problematic. Heydemann argues, for example, "that policy domains are far more interconnected . . . reflecting the density of elites, their concentration in positions of power, and their interlocking relationships that bind them to one another."[78] This porous nature of policy arenas and their linkage to broader struggles for hegemony also means that ensuing political battles often transcend policy debates and reach right to the heart of political contestation between state actors and different social forces. As Migdal recognizes, "these are not simply policy arenas in which various groups attempt to shape public policy . . . [S]truggles and accommodation also take place over the basic moral order and the very structure within which rights and wrongs of everyday social behavior should be determined."[79]

The outcome of these political battles being waged within policy domains is determined by two basic factors: the structure and, hence, power of the various competing policy networks at play and the strategic resources—including cognitive ones—each brings to bear on its struggles. While network structures can vary enormously, for example, there are two, lying at the polar ends of the continuum, that are most relevant to our analysis: policy communities and issue and/or associative networks. While no network is "entirely closed," the most exclusive is called a policy community and is characterized as small, highly restricted, insulated, and dominated by elites who share strong personal relations of trust and loyalty.[80] While some scholars suggest that they can foster incremental policy changes, most argue that these types of networks represent "a clear

structural inequality in the access to, and influence over, government policy making" and, as a result, act as "a major source of inertia" in the policy-making process.[81] In short, policy communities can be conceptualized as a feedback mechanism that contributes to the path-dependent nature of political life.

At the opposite end of the policy network continuum lie issue and/or associative networks.[82] Rather than being small, homogeneous and tightly knit, these networks are characterized as large, holding a diversity of interests and resource endowments within them, and possessing a structure that tends to be unintegrated. Whereas policy communities are seen as being fairly stable, issue, and/or associative networks are characterized by a great deal of instability and discontinuity[83] and often emerge out of an "unexpected coalition of actors."[84] They also are usually "non–hierarchical" in structure, and it is this, according to Chalmers, that gives them the potential to represent the interests of the popular classes in the policy-making arena.[85] Rising out of research into the policy-making process in the United States, the notion of issue/associative networks challenged the characterization of the policy-making process being dominated by "subgovernments" and "iron triangles,"[86] promoting instead the notion that policy-making processes could be "fairly open" and more inclusive than was previously conceived.[87]

What facilitates the success of an issue/associative network? Keck and Sikkink, for example, stress that the strength of a network is not determined merely by the sum of the network components but rather by the sum of the "interaction of voices," in short, by its structural effect. Write Keck and Sikkink, "[T]he network-as-actor derives a great deal of its effectiveness from the network-as-structure."[88] They highlight two particular features of a network structure that facilitate the success of network advocacy: network density and network access. Density on the want hand can be determined by the number of actors within the network, the regularity and intensity of exchanges, the degree of internal consensus, and the internal distribution of resources and, hence, power. These determine the relationship, for example, between network "peripheries" and "cores." Access to the network, on the other hand, is facilitated by the number of "nodes" or points of contact it possesses within the policy domain as well as by the nature of those "nodes." Kekk and Sikkink stress, for example, that effective networks are not only made up of idea-generating actors, there also must be powerful elite actors located at the "core" of the policy domain itself "who are vulnerable to persuasion and leverage" and who would be willing to take costly action to promote issues either because "they care about [them] deeply" or because they have "other incentives to act."[89]

The success of issue/associative networks, however, is not determined only by their structure; it also is heavily influenced by the nature of the issues and policy ideas being promoted. The most important function of associative networks is "cognitive," writes Chalmers, determined by their ability to promote debate, transmit, and reshape competing claims over policy in ways that, if successful, can lead to "the redefinition of interests."[90] In this sense, associative networks perform a "deliberative as much as a bargaining function."[91] Indeed, Chalmers argues it is really only through deliberation that less powerful actors can overcome the structural inequalities inherent in the policy-making process and, hence, make their presence felt.[92] Other scholars make similar assertions about the prior importance of the cognitive impact of advocacy networks. Keck and Sikkink, for example, have described advocacy networks as "communicative structures" and write of their importance in formulating and/or framing "causal claims" that are "short and clear."[93]

Even here, however, the cognitive dynamics of advocacy networks are limited by the prevailing political and/or cognitive structures that surround them. Wong writes that notions of justice and equity are "grounded in empirical reality" and, as a result, efforts to promote such policies as a reduction in poverty may depend on "the degree to which society is willing to tolerate such a distribution."[94] Keck and Sikkink are even clearer on this essentially path-dependent argument, emphasizing that issues need to be framed in such a way that they can "fit into institutional venues." Add Keck and Sikkink, "new ideas are more likely to be influential if they fit well into existing ideas . . . in a particular historical setting." Hence, a principle challenge for associative networks is being creative—framing new policy issues and ideas in ways that address "some elements of structural problems" without attacking them directly.[96] In short, new policy ideas are more likely to promote incremental—rather than path-breaking—institutional change within the confines of an existing political legacy.

Conclusion

Political institutions—and policy-making processes—are generally resistant to change. As we have argued, this resistance can be particularly acute within weak states because they provide opportunities for political elites to build informal and clientelist-based regime structures that have proven to be extremely effective in preserving factional power. Depending on the degree to which they buttress the power and maneuverability of elite cartels, communal power-sharing agreements can be especially

prone to path-dependent dynamics. Underpinning this regime resilience are numerous feedback mechanisms, and it is a major argument of this study that certain actors within civil society emerge as some of these mechanisms of reproduction. Taking advantage of their informal and factional links to, and alliances with, elites within the regime, these civil society actors both can act as a conduit for the penetration of regime elite interests into civil society and/or represent, promote, and protect the interests of regime actors within civil society itself, all the while strengthening their ability to do so due to their privileged access to the state, its resources, and its power.

However effective these civil society feedback mechanisms may be in promoting regime resilience, the informal and fragmented institutional climate within which they operate also can open up opportunities for restricted agency by counter-hegemonic civil society actors. Extrapolating from the literature on policy networks, a useful concept for analyzing such restricted forms of agency are associative networks. Unlike popular sector social networks or more homogeneous elite-oriented policy communities at the highest level of a polity, associative networks usually combine a diverse range of actors who include—in an unstable, informal, yet salient network structure—both selected elites at the commanding heights of the state along with key actors in civil society. Depending on the internal network structure and the strategic calculations that take place within them, especially as regards the framing of advocacy campaigns, associative networks have the potential to promote incrementally more universalist-oriented policy change within the context of highly resilient and often exclusionary institutional contexts.

What follows in the rest of this book is an examination of the dynamics of associative policy networks in the context of postwar Lebanon. In Chapter 2, we examine the practice of sectarian democracy over the course of Lebanon's modern history—from its emergence in the late Ottoman period, to its consolidation and reproduction during the colonial and post-colonial periods, to its reconsolidation and reinforcement during the periods of the civil war and Syrian hegemony. Particular emphasis is placed on highlighting feedback mechanisms—from the exogenous shocks of the French and, subsequently, Syrian presence, to endogenous elite networking at the national, regional, and subnational levels of Lebanon's political field—that have served to reinforce the path-dependent hegemony of sectarian political practices over the weakly institutionalized democratic ones. In Chapter 3, we turn our attention to the effects that this reconsolidation of sectarian democracy in Lebanon has had on the emerging postwar associative sector, focusing in some detail on the efforts of national-oriented associative and popular networks to challenge the returning hegemony of postwar sectarian practices.

It is at this point that we turn our attention to a detailed examination of the three case studies of associational advocacy in the fields of gender, environment, and disability. All feature the postwar rise of several dynamic associative networks seeking to take advantage of perceived opportunities in the immediate post–civil war period to promote the mainstreaming of rights-based social policies into the institutional heart of the postwar Lebanese state. Chapter 4 examines the efforts of women's associations pushing for gender equality; Chapter 5 examines the campaigns of environmental associations to establish a rule-bound environmental policy domain founded on the principles of sustainable development; and Chapter 6 examines the tenacious advocacy work of disability associations pushing for the development of a disability policy domain founded on the principles of "rights" rather than "belonging." In a concluding chapter, we compare the challenges faced by these three advocacy networks, ones that revolved around the resistance of powerful sectarian elite networks and the reinforcing support of their sectarian associational allies within Lebanese civil society. While these associative networks achieved some notable successes in institutionalizing their presence within the country's civil society, their efforts to promote new rights-based directions in postwar Lebanese state formation have ultimately been stymied by the institutions and political forces that combine to entrench and reproduce over time the country's sectarian political system.