Conflict Studies Research Centre

Multi-Ethnic Armies: Lebanese Lessons & Iraqi Implications

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June 2005

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Key Points

*   In building up effective Iraqi military forces, attention should be given to the ethnic balance, as this will either undermine or strengthen their legitimacy.

*   Lebanon's efforts to create a multi-ethnic military, both before and after the 1975-1990 Lebanese war, and the troubles and successes of this military over time can be instructive to the Iraqi case.

*   Care should be taken that a situation does not develop where the privilege of military service is pre-empted by one group. Nor should employment and promotion in the Iraqi military be based on a quota system, as this carries major risks of its own. A 'universalistic' system of military employment should be used, combined with possible upward mobility for all members and ethnic mixing in sub-units.

*   Absorbing militias into the military is possible as long as there is a political incentive for the groups they represent, and as long as former militia membership is not an impediment to a military career.

*   Even an ethnically balanced military of perceived legitimacy cannot function properly without a balanced political leadership of perceived legitimacy.

Contents

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Pieter Koekenbier

Introduction

One of the most crucial tasks facing the Iraqi government and coalition forces today in recreating Iraq as a single, successful and democratic state is the creation of effective military, security and police forces. There are two main reasons for the importance of this process. First of all, stability and security in Iraq have remained elusive at best since the fall of Baghdad and especially since the increase of insurgent activity from early 2004. If Iraq's economy and its political institutions are to function properly, this security will have to be guaranteed. Secondly, the build-up of effective Iraqi military, security and police forces is the only way to gradually reduce, and eventually withdraw, coalition forces. This in itself may go a long way towards reconciling groups of discontented Iraqis, particularly Sunnis, to the new state and government, which may reduce insurgent activity and instability.

The Americans, as leaders of the coalition forces, have only very belatedly realised the immense importance of the creation of effectively functioning Iraqi forces for the future of the country. The US decision in May 2003 to formally disband the existing Iraqi military forces has been much criticised. It is far from clear, however, that using the old military institutions as starting points for creating new ones would have yielded much better results. However, even treating the fact that the Americans have had to start from scratch in creating a new Iraqi military as a given, Washington has wasted precious time in not recognizing the importance of the task and thus not allocating sufficient resources and expertise to it. It was only in the summer of 2004 that the US seriously started working on this issue, appointing Lt. General David Petraeus to head the operation of military reconstruction, and starting serious training programmes and the delivery of badly-needed weapons and equipment.[1]

However, while significant progress has been made in the process of rebuilding Iraqi military and security institutions, and hopefully progress will continue to be made, this is not the whole story. This is because, unfortunately, a military's operational effectiveness is not all that counts. No military exists by and for itself but always functions within society. Therefore, the military's legitimacy in the eyes of this society is of crucial importance, at least in societies that aspire to be democratic. An army can be highly professional and efficient, but unusable if it is not perceived by society as being legitimate. It is here that the Lebanese experience is relevant to the situation in Iraq. As we shall see, Lebanon created a rather professional and efficient military after its independence. It is also a fairly democratic country, at least by regional standards, and yet has a complex ethnic and religious makeup. However, on numerous occasions the military has behaved not at all as it should. It has refused orders from its nominal commander, the President of the Republic, on two occasions; it has remained passive in situations where it could have been employed, and it broke apart twice during the course of the 1975-1990 Lebanese

Pieter Koekenbier

war. The reasons have much to do with its perceived legitimacy in Lebanese society.

I will focus in this paper on four significant events in the military's history. They are its inactivity in the crises of 1952 and 1958, and its breakdown in 1976 and 1984. Since the end of the Lebanese war, the reconstruction of the Lebanese military has been on lines that differ from the pre-war organisation. Some of these have seemed to be rather successful. A look at the new Lebanese military will therefore be useful for the understanding and planning of military reconstruction in Iraq.

The Lebanese Military Experience[2]

A Model

This paper emphasizes the role of the military as part of the larger system of society. In the cases of Lebanon and Iraq, two relationships are of particular concern: that of the military with the state and that of the military with the ethnic makeup of society.[3] These interrelationships can be visualized in a simple Venn diagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1[4]
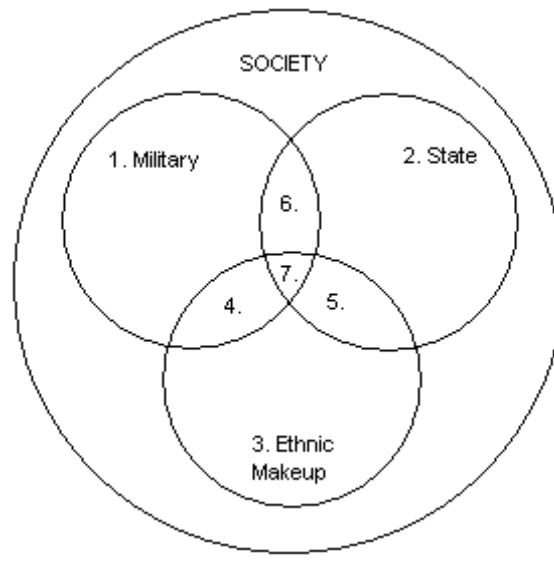
The two areas that concern us most are thus numbers four and six in the diagram. Number one is mainly concerned with the internal organisation of the military, while number five is concerned with state-ethnic relationships. These include political mechanisms for dealing with ethnicity, such as consociationalism[5] or federalism. This is important as a contextual variable as it shapes the military's relation with society.

The area of military-ethnic relationships is most clearly reflected in "military manpower policy".[6] This includes the recruitment, promotion, assignment and deployment of officers and soldiers. In multi-ethnic states, ethnicity may be an important factor in these policies. State elites base their military policies at least in

2

part on ethnic state security maps.[7] These in turn are based on expectations that elites have regarding the political reliability of different ethnic groups. Military policies, and in particular manpower policies, reflect these state security maps. Thus, military manpower policy operationalises states' ethnic security maps and shapes military-ethnic relationships. For countries that were colonized, this practice of ethnic recruiting often started during the colonial or mandatory period with the military enrolment of minority groups that were supposed to be reliable and have martial qualities. This was done because of presumed efficiency, on the precept of divide and conquer, and because minorities had a greater interest in retaining the colonial power's suzerainty.[8]

Ideally, the military is regarded as an integrative force in multi-ethnic societies. However, this integrative potential depends on many factors. One of these factors is the way in which different ethnic groups are recruited into the military. A distinction, stemming from pluralist theory, can be made between the differential mode, the equivalent mode and the universalistic mode of military recruitment.[9] The first of these means the pre-emption, by law or in practice, by one ethnic group of the privilege of military service. A system like this institutionalises, or at the very least fosters, inequality. In the equivalent mode, the basic unit of recruitment and hence military organisation is the group. The principal concern here is not control of the military; rather, it is the ethnic balance among the various groups in society. This system usually works with quotas for the different levels of authority within the armed forces to keep the balance. However, since it is principally concerned with ethnic equality, such a system suffers from the dilemma between the essential centralisation of military organisation and the essential decentralisation of ethnic organisation. The use of a quota-based army threatens to cleave an already divided society even more. A second major drawback of a quota-based system is its rigidness over time. Although quotas might be based on the most recent census (not always very recent) or population estimates (not always very accurate), this would not allow for a change in demography due to varying birth rates, emigration, etc. This might in the long term lead to unbalancing the military rather than balancing it. The third mode of military recruitment is the universalistic mode. This is characterised by the recruitment of people into the military as individuals. This type seeks to recruit throughout the entire nation. Sometimes, this form of recruitment tends to make use of some form of universal and compulsory military service.

Other factors that influence the integrative potential of the military as well as its perceived even-handedness and legitimacy are possible upward mobility for all qualified members, a complete ethnic mixing in various sub-units and sufficient trust in soldiers from all groups to be assigned to the most strategically sensitive roles.[10]

The other interrelation of importance to the cases at hand is that between the state and the military, often referred to as civil-military relations. This field initially owed much to the early discussion between Huntington and Janowitz,[11] although most recent progress in the field has been in the context of security sector reform (SSR) in the wake of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.[12] Naturally, SSR is much more than just the question of civil-military relations; it also includes, among other things, technical and organisational reform in the wake of the changed security environment after the end of the Cold War and the rise of international terrorism. However, the particular emphasis of much SSR practice and literature on the security sector functioning within a framework of democratic governance makes the issue of civil-military relations paramount. This is especially the case if

Pieter Koekenbier

the need for SSR arises out of a transition from authoritarianism to democracy (as in Iraq), or one from conflict to peace (as in both Lebanon and Iraq).

A History

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) arose out of the *Légion d'Orient*, which was created by the French in 1916 to help the Allied war effort against the Ottomans in the Middle East and which consisted of Armenians, Lebanese and Syrians[13] recruited to help 'liberate' their countries from the Ottomans. Lebanon became a French protectorate after WWI, but the Lebanese component of the *Légion d'Orient*, renamed *Troupes Spéciales du Levant*, would form the basis for an independent Lebanese army[14] after independence in 1943.[15] Judicially, this army was placed under strict civilian control, with the President of the Republic and the Minister of Defence being in charge of the military. The first commander of the independent Lebanese Armed Forces was General Fu'ad Chehab. A Maronite of illustrious descent, he proved himself to be a highly competent commander. He created a rather well educated, efficient and professional institution. However, in a Lebanon that was politically organised along sectarian lines in a consociational system,[16] the same rang true for the military. Confessional quotas were established whereby army employment and promotion was based on demographic numbers, which were themselves based on the census of 1932.[17] In reality, these quotas, combined with a Sunni reluctance to join the military[18] and a Shi`a lag in education,[19] ensured a Maronite preponderance in the military, particularly at the officer level.[20] Moreover, the confessional system required the army commander always to be a Maronite.[21] As a result, the military came to be seen over time by the other communities as a Maronite institution.

Inactivity: 1952 & 1958

To counter this perception, Chehab had to insist on perfect neutrality in sectarian matters. The first test of this came in 1952. President Bechara al-Khoury had become increasingly reluctant to relinquish his power; he had resorted to fraud and increasing oppression to be elected president for a second time in 1948, and he was rapidly losing the domestic allies and supporters he once had. Things came to a head in 1952, when a refusal of Sunni politicians to serve as Khoury's Prime Minister combined with massive strikes paralysed the country. When Khoury ordered Chehab to use the military against the strikers, the latter refused. Thereupon, Khoury saw no other option but to resign. This episode in Lebanese history has been called the Rosewater Revolution.

In 1958, again, a crisis erupted. The new President Camille Chamoun started deviating from the very thin line of Lebanon's professed neutrality as articulated in the National Pact.[22] He embraced the Eisenhower Doctrine, which recommended use of American forces to protect Middle East states against overt aggression from nations 'controlled by international communism', and urged the provision of economic aid to those countries with anti-communist governments. In doing so, Chamoun openly risked confrontation with the pro-Soviet Egyptian president Nasser, who was immensely popular throughout the region, also among Lebanese Muslims. This was, after all, the heyday of pan-Arabism, with 1958 seeing the Iraqi monarchy being overthrown and the United Arab Republic, consisting of Egypt and Syria, being proclaimed. Once again, rebellion broke out, once again, Chehab's military was told to move on the rebels to restore order, and once again, he refused.[23]

In both 1952 and 1958, there were numerous reasons for Chehab's inactivity. One was his apparent reluctance to protect a particular administration as opposed to

4

the national interest. This would then be similar to the self-appointed role of militaries in certain states as "the guardians of the state against the whims of the government in power".[24] It has also been suggested that Chehab refrained from action in 1958 because he had personal designs on the presidency and thought it expedient to see Chamoun fall.[25] However, arguably the main reason he refrained from action was his fear of the army's disintegration in case he employed it in this heavily communalised conflict.[26] In this sense, then, the reality and, perhaps even more, the perception of the military as a Maronite institution severely limited Chehab's options to use it, effectively rendering it useless in domestic communalised conflict.

If Chehab did have his eye on the presidency, his designs succeeded, for he was elected the next Lebanese president in 1958. His presidency saw a rise of military power in politics. This has even been construed as amounting to a military intervention in politics.[27] This view seems exaggerated, however: Lebanon's democratic institutions never stopped functioning and the anti-Chehabist coalition succeeded in defeating the Chehabists in democratic parliamentary elections in 1968 and presidential elections in 1970, indicating that a military takeover of politics had never fully occurred. What is beyond doubt, however, is that the presidencies of Chehab (1958-1964) and Charles Helou (1964-1970) introduced a certain measure of military authoritarianism into Lebanese political life.

The anti-Chehabist new President Suleiman Frangieh, seeking to end the period of Chehabism, proceeded to weaken the military, which he rightly saw as the power base of Chehab and his associates, through purges[28] and reorganisations.[29] However, this also meant that the effectiveness of the military was severely undermined, at a time when Palestinian armament and power, Israeli incursions into Lebanon, and Maronite armed build-up were all increasing. It also meant that when war broke out in 1975, the army was unable to intervene to stop or contain it.

Disintegration: 1976 & 1984

During 1975, the fighting was mostly between the Phalangists, a Maronite militia led by Pierre Gemayel on the one side, and Palestinian groups allied with Lebanese Leftist groups (united in the National Movement or NM led by Kamal Jumblatt) on the other. Christians increasingly started calling for military intervention, but Muslims were suspicious that the army would be biased on the Maronites' side. For this reason, senior Muslim politicians, including Prime Minister Karame, were reluctant to support military intervention. Furthermore, there was a vagueness in the chain of command that made President Frangieh highly hesitant to call for the deployment of the army without the consent of the Prime Minister, who was also Minister of Defence.[30] Therefore, no decisive action on the part of the military was ever undertaken, leading to rapid demoralisation in the ranks that were already demoralised by Frangieh's actions of the early 70s.

The military finally came apart in January 1976. It was Sunni army lieutenant Ahmad al-Khatib who caused its break-up. Disappointed by the inactivity and distrustful of the composition of the regular army, Khatib announced the creation of the Arab Army of Lebanon (AAL). Soon, Muslim officers and troops started joining him, and he obtained control over much of Lebanon's heavy weaponry that was stationed in the south of the country. The AAL then allied itself with NM (National Movement) and PLO forces under a joint command. This effectively completed the division of Lebanon, symbolised by the physical division of Beirut with the two sides facing each other across the Green Line.

Pieter Koekenbier

The main cause of the break-up of the Lebanese military in 1976 was the perception of it by large sections of the Muslim population as a Maronite institution. Arguably, this image was exaggerated. The reluctance of Frangieh to deploy the army without Sunni politicians' consent despite calls from militant Christians to do so, the fact that the army remained relatively even-handed in cases where it was deployed[31] and the fact that even after Khatib's creation of the AAL the remainder of the army did not enter the war on the side of the Maronites all suggest that the army was, indeed, more neutral that was commonly believed. But Thomas' dictum that if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences holds up here: the very perception of the army as a Maronite institution created a situation in which the army could not be effectively deployed and in which Khatib found a large number of associates for his breakaway.

The task of attempting to reconstruct the military did not start in earnest until 1982. At this time, following the Israeli invasion and partial withdrawal, the evacuation of most Palestinian fighters and the arrival of a multi-national force (MNF) consisting of US, French, Italian and some British forces, the new government headed by President Amin Gemayel wanted to concentrate on the pacification and rebuilding of society and realized the reconstruction of the military was a main prerequisite for this. The US contributed much to this reconstruction with regard to the training and equipping of the military. The army grew from 20,000 to 33,000 between January and September 2003. Major equipment was acquired from the US and France, and by September the LAF had become the largest and best equipped Lebanese armed force in the country. Many insiders, both Lebanese and American, were optimistic about the process of rebuilding.

Yet it all went wrong again. In the south of Lebanon, anti-Gemayel elements, particularly among the Druze and Shi`a population, were organising.  Their main grievance was the treaty with Israel that had, in their view, been forced upon Lebanon by Tel Aviv and Washington.[32]  The Shi`a in particular were also outraged by President Gemayel's policy of tearing down the mostly Shi`a slums of Southern Beirut in an attempt to restore order in, and regain control over, the capital, and accused the president of having a Maronite, rather than a Lebanese, agenda. Things were heating up again: Amal[33] decided to challenge the government's authority in West Beirut and started a new round of fighting, and the US embassy in Beirut was bombed, resulting in 63 casualties including 17 Americans. Things really escalated when the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) pulled out of the Chouf, south-east of Beirut, without prior warning. Fierce fighting between Druzes and Maronites erupted; the Druze resisted the deployment of the LAF unless a more representative government took office. This was refused by the president; the army forces sent into the Chouf took the side of Maronite Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geagea; General Nadim Hakim, the Druze chief-of-staff, absconded, and sixteen Druze officers together with 900 troops declared themselves conscientious objectors. Meanwhile, the MNF, committed to the government's sovereignty, became involved in the fighting on the side of the government, consistent with their pledge to protect it but thereby clearly allying themselves with one side in what was again turning into a full-scale civil war. That it was perceived this way became agonizingly clear when suicide bombers simultaneously targeted the headquarters of the American marines and the French paratroopers on 23 October, killing a total of 300 soldiers.

Although the US support for Gemayel's government halted the combined Druze-Shi`a offensive for a few months, the offensive was renewed in January 1984.  With the Druze fighting towards Beirut from the Chouf, and the Shi`a fighting in West

Beirut, the army now started shelling southern Beirut, causing extensive damage and heavy casualties among the mainly Shi`a population there. Amal leader Nabih Berri now appealed to the Shi`ites in the Lebanese army not to shoot at their brothers. The sixth brigade of the LAF, mainly composed of Shi`a, heeded this call and deserted to Amal. The overwhelmingly Druze fourth brigade disintegrated, with many of its personnel joining the Druze militias. The last regular soldiers fighting in West Beirut, mostly Christians, then pulled back to the eastern part of the city. On 7 February, Beirut was divided once again.

The reasons for this second disintegration were different from those for the first. Unlike the first collapse, the army fell apart while engaged in battle. When first Druze soldiers were ordered against Druze in the Chouf, and subsequently Shi'a soldiers were ordered to bomb Shi'a in South Beirut, the desire of troops to stay loyal to unit and commander was irreconcilable with the desire to protect one's own family and community. This dilemma was not solvable except through socially unacceptable means: desertion, such as happened with the Druze soldiers who absconded in the Chouf, or the transfer of a unit's loyalty from the army command to the opposition, such as was the case with the fourth brigade. However, the ultimate cause of the military's breakdown in 1984 was more political than strictly military. With the Shi'a and the Druze fighting the regime in Beirut, Gemayel could hardly claim to preside over a genuinely national government. Thus, the military could not, under the direction of this government, be regarded as a national institution. It was the Shi'a and the Druze who were faced with this problem, and the entire military finally paid the price for it.

Reconstruction

Army General Michel Aoun was named commander of the Armed Forces in the wake of its second disintegration in 1984. He inherited an institution that was split, divided between those units loyal to the presidential palace, those whose responsiveness was limited by foreign power, and those that officially refused to take orders from central command. However, Aoun did not succeed in bringing the several components of the army back under central control. Mainly this was because of the continued foreign occupation and division of the country. But it was also clear that Aoun was looking forward to the 1988 presidential elections and was already pursuing a strategy to be elected president.[34] For this reason, he went forward with an unprecedented politicisation of the part of the military under his control. When parliament in 1988 could not agree on a suitable presidential candidate, President Gemayel in the last minutes of his tenure named Aoun provisional Prime Minister.[35] However, there already was a Prime Minister, Salim al-Hoss in West Beirut, who naturally refused to accept Aoun's nomination.

The next three years saw Aoun, commanding a reasonably powerful and loyal army, taking on the Lebanese Forces (LF) militia as well as the Syrians in the East. Meanwhile, General Emile Lahoud had been put in charge of the Western army, which was in terrible shape, particularly with regard to equipment and training. While Lahoud was concentrating on improving his army, but struggled because of a lack of funds and territory, Aoun found that he was not able to overcome the LF, not to mention the superior power of the Syrians. Then, in September 1989, the majority of the remaining Lebanese Members of Parliament[36] met in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, under the auspices of the Arab League, to discuss a National Reconciliation Charter with the purpose of finally ending the war. They agreed on what was to become known as the Ta'if Accord in October, ratifying it in the Syrian-controlled part of Lebanon on 4 November 1989.[37] While leaving Lebanon's sectarian system intact, the Ta'if Accord changed its rules, in particular elevating the positions of the

Pieter Koekenbier

Chamber of Deputies and of the Council of Ministers, and thus of these bodies' respective leaders, the Speaker of the House and the Prime Minister, to the detriment of the President.[38] Although it called for the eventual abolition of political sectarianism,[39] it did not provide a timetable for this. In effect, it recreated Lebanon's sectarian system based on slightly different rules, thus establishing a framework for the Lebanese Second Republic. However, Aoun was not ready to give in; over the next eleven months he continued his offensives against the LF, the Syrians and anyone he could get to. The Syrians hesitated in forcing him to surrender; France, America and Israel insisted there should not be an all-out assault on Aoun. But the Syrians finally did get the go-ahead to oust him after they had joined the anti-Iraq coalition in the wake of Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait. A joint Syrian-Lebanese operation[40] moved on Baabda in October 1990, defeating Aoun[41] and finally ending the fifteen-year war.

Once more, a process of military reconstruction and reunification could now be started. There was the technical question of forming, staffing and equipping battalions, of repairing or reconstructing army infrastructure and of securing foreign aid to finance these actions. It was decided that former loyalty would be disregarded in the creation of the new military. This seemed to work quite well with former Aounists attaining positions of rank quite rapidly in the new organisation. Then there was the issue of the militias. From a military point of view, disarming the militias was essential if the Lebanese government was to regain at least part of their territory and of their monopoly on the use of armed force (part, for Israel and Syria still maintained troops on Lebanese soil) and, finally, to make the peace work. But disbanding the militias was not only a military problem: it was just as much a social one. Many of the militiamen on all sides had been raised in wartime; they had joined the militias at a young age and did not master any other skills or trades. Therefore, it was believed that the best way to offer these men a chance of an alternative career was to integrate them into the military. This could be combined effectively with the envisaged enlargement of the military to around 60,000 men. For these reasons, as early as June 1991, law 88 was promulgated, calling for 6,000 militiamen to be integrated into the armed forces. As with former Aoun loyalists, militia membership was to be disregarded in the new military. However, while the Lebanese Forces and the National Movement were disarmed, in the south Hizballah and the Israeli-sponsored South Lebanon Army[42] were not.

In the domain of military-ethnic relations, the first issue to be tackled by Lahoud was the confessional equilibrium within the brigades. Before the war, most brigades had had a clear confessional character: the 6th brigade Shi'a, the 4th Druze, the 10th Maronite, etc. The war only exacerbated this situation, as soldiers forming a minority within their brigades deserted in large numbers. If Lahoud was to keep his promise to create a truly national army in which the soldiers' confessions were of no importance, this situation would have to be remedied. Therefore men, and sometimes whole battalions, were to be transferred from one brigade to another in order to create more of a confessional equilibrium. This process of equilibrisation was successful in establishing more ethnically balanced units.[43]

A second important issue was the implementation of general conscription. This measure had long been called for by Lebanese Muslims as a way of redressing the skewed communal balance in the military. Although it had officially been introduced in 1983, during the reconstruction efforts of Amin Gemayel's administration, conditions on the ground had made it impossible to implement and it had remained a dead letter. Now it was revived again, with consecutive laws in

1991 and 1993 eventually introducing compulsory military service for all males attaining 18 years of age, for the duration of one year. Essentially, the change from a quota-based system of recruitment to a system of universal conscription was a shift from an equivalent mode to a universalistic mode of army recruitment and thus increased the balance and the integrative potential of the military.

This was combined with a change with regard to a third issue, namely the abandonment of a quota-based system of promotions in favour of a system based purely on merit. For this purpose, promotion would be exclusively based on specifically designed exams. This guaranteed, in essence, the condition of upward mobility for all objectively qualified members. There remains a conspicuous exception, however: the Army commander would remain a Maronite, his deputy a Shi`a, and the chief-of-staff a Druze. The perpetuation of this sectarian-based regulation is a stain on a military that has otherwise been moving into a more equitable and integrative direction.

An important question is whether the Lebanese military, apart from having moved into a more balanced direction, has also been operationally strengthened. It is hard to offer any firm conclusions in this respect but a brief analysis of the army's operations since 1990[44] suggests that this has indeed been the case. On the numerous occasions it has been called into action, it has acted decisively and effectively, not displaying any of the hesitancies so characteristic before and during the war. The essential test of this was the offensive against the Palestinian resistance near Sidon in 1991.[45] There, the LAF performed in an exemplary fashion. The operation was extremely well planned and executed. Cooperation between different army units was good, as was performance on the battlefield. Moreover, the fact that these battles took place even before completion of the army's reconstruction and re-equipment is encouraging. The operations over the next years, although militarily less challenging, were also carried out professionally and successfully. There is good hope, then, that the reconstruction of the Lebanese armed forces has indeed been an operational success. For the moment, the essential questions are whether the LAF will be able to effectively fill the void left by the Syrian army after its withdrawal from Lebanon, and whether it will eventually be able to deploy in the south and incorporate Hizballah.

Implications for Iraq

Several lessons from the Lebanese military experience can be instructive for the current Iraqi effort to reconstruct the military. The first is the paramount importance of having a military that is perceived as being a national institution. If this is not the case, the military will be either paralysed, as was the case in Lebanon in 1952 and 1958, or prone to break-up, as happened in 1976. This perceived legitimacy is important at two levels, both of which have been less than perfect in the Lebanese context. The first level is that of the rank-and-file. Two aspects are of importance here: the numeric proportion of various subgroups in the military, and the mixing of such subgroups within army units. In Lebanon, soldiers have been disproportionally Maronite and Shi`a, and units, up to the level of brigades, were largely mono-ethnic. The second, perhaps even more important, level is that of the military command. Maronite preponderance in the Lebanese army was particularly notable among the higher-level officers, including the stipulation that its commander always had to be a Maronite. This fact, in particular, made other groups especially suspicious of, and prejudiced against, the military. Lebanon has tried, since the war, to create a more balanced, and thus

Pieter Koekenbier

more legitimate and more effective army. This has been done through establishing more ethnically balanced units, through the implementation of universal conscription and through the introduction of a merit-based system of promotions. This has arguably transformed the military into a more nationalistic institution.

Applying this insight to Iraq, it is clear that the Iraqi government and coalition face a similar challenge. However, some conditions are different in Iraq and Lebanon. For a start, the demographic balance. Whereas in Lebanon, there are seventeen officially recognized communities,[46] with no single one forming an absolute majority, in Iraq there are only three major groups, with the Shi`a forming a majority of around sixty percent. Therefore, arguably, a largely mono-ethnic Shi`a military, or combined Shi`a-Kurdish military, might still be able to function and carry out operations, but it will suffer heavily from a lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the groups that would be excluded from it, mainly the Sunnis. This, in turn, will both hamper its effectiveness and perpetuate the insurgency. Therefore, it is paramount that a national, multi-ethnic army be created. Once again, this depends on successful balancing on two levels. First of all, enough Sunnis have to be present in the military's rank-and-file. No reliable data exist on the ethnic composition of the current Iraqi military, but indications are that relatively many more Shi`as than Sunnis sign up, while the Kurdish Peshmerga, although scheduled to be integrated into the Iraqi military, have been reluctant to give up their autonomy. The relative lack of Sunnis, especially threatens to create a kind of Catch-22 situation: while not enough Sunnis join, the military will increasingly been regarded as a Shi`a and anti-Sunni institution, but as long as this is the case, Sunnis will not sign up. This is another difference with Lebanon. While in Lebanon Muslim groups were actually calling for a more balanced army, and for the introduction of measures like conscription and a more even higher command even before the Lebanese war, in Iraq there is a risk that Sunnis will increasingly turn away from military service. Therefore, it seems that at the very minimum, incentives to join the military will have to be increased to induce Sunnis to join. If this does not work, it would perhaps be wise to contemplate reintroducing some kind of universal conscription. However, a major disadvantage is that employing conscripted personnel in the military will probably lower professional standards, thereby weakening the whole army at a time where army efficiency is of vital importance to keep order in Iraq. What is more, an efficient military is a *sine qua non* for the implementation of universal conscription, which ultimately depends on physical compulsion. Therefore, it seems that the process of creating an efficient military, no matter what its ethnic composition or its perceived legitimacy, should be a first priority, but should be followed very closely by measures to enhance this legitimacy at the level of the lower ranks.

A second level is that of the higher officer levels and high command. Upward mobility for all qualified members of the military organisation is vital for its ethnic legitimacy. However, if the lower ranks are skewed ethnically, it is likely that so too will be the higher ones. This will enforce the image of an ethnic army, thereby further limiting the appeal for minority groups to join. A possible solution to redress this imbalance is to draw from the higher echelon of officers in Saddam's army, which were disproportionally Sunni, and try to re-employ some of those. Of course, care should be taken that persons responsible for serious crimes in the Saddam era are not brought back in. Only as a last resort should one look at policies of affirmative action to ensure a certain balance in the higher command. As this is essentially the opposite of the condition of upward mobility for all qualified members, it should be treated with extreme care; although it might be used on an individual basis, it should not be institutionalised.

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The second Lebanese lesson for Iraq is that integrating militias into the military is hard, but not impossible. Two conditions have to be fulfilled. The first is that there should be a political incentive for the respective groups to allow their militias to be disarmed. The disarming of any militia will result in a loss of military power; this has to be offset by some kind of political gain to convince the community to comply. The second condition is that past militia membership should not be an impediment to employment and promotion in the new military. If this condition is not met, militia members will be reluctant to join the military and will not integrate well into that institution, which will perpetuate a separate militia identity.

A third lesson from Lebanon is that no matter what the composition, balance or effectiveness of the military, major political frictions will still damage or even split it. This is perhaps the major lesson of the events in Lebanon of 1984. The cause of the army's break-up in that year was essentially political in character. The national government was unwilling to listen to the political grievances of major segments of the population. When these segments then chose to escalate militarily, the government sent in troops. But with the central government's authority being challenged, the military it commanded could not be regarded as being national in scope. The order to bomb the southern suburbs of Beirut was merely the catalyst, not the cause, of the break-up. This goes to show that the issue of an ethnically balanced and legitimate military is secondary to that of ethnically balanced and legitimate polity in a democracy. Only if this is fulfilled will the military have any chance of fulfilling its potential.

Conclusion

For Iraq, the importance of creating a functioning military to ensure domestic and foreign security and to eventually allow coalition troops to leave is obvious. However, the significance of creating a legitimate multi-ethnic military so far seems to have gotten less attention. The reality is however, that unless Iraq achieves this, the military is at risk of being neither legitimate nor effective. The lessons from the Lebanese experience will hopefully provide some insight into failures, risks and successes with regard to this project. This is not a luxury problem. The future of Iraq may depend on it.

ENDNOTES

[1]   A useful account of the American failures in starting off the reconstruction of the Iraqi military and security forces and subsequent measures and results can be found in A H Cordesman: *Strengthening Iraqi Military and Security Forces*, Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005, available at http://www.csis.org/features/iraq_strengtheningforces.pdf.

[2]   The information in this section is largely drawn from P A Koekenbier: *A New Model Army? The Reconstruction of the Military in Post-War Lebanon*, Amsterdam: Master's Thesis University of Amsterdam, 2005, available at http://www.pieterkoekenbier.nl.

[3]   In this paper, the terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' are used not just in a narrow, racial sense, but in a more inclusive sense that encompasses Lebanon's (and Iraq's) religious and sectarian divisions.

[4]   Taken from H Dietz, J Elkin & M Roumani (eds): *Ethnicity, Integration and the Military*, Boulder: Westview Press 1991, p13.

[5]   See A Lijphart: *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

Pieter Koekenbier

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6   A Peled: *A Question of Loyalty: Military Manpower Policy in Multi-Ethnic States*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

7   C Enloe: *Ethnic Soldiers: State Security in Divided Societies*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980.

8   R McLaurin: 'Lebanon and its Army: Past, Present and Future', in Azar, E (ed): *The Emergence of a New Lebanon: Fantasy or Reality?,* New York: Praeger, 1984.

9   J B Adekson: 'Military Organizations in Multi-ethnically Segmented Societies', in Bagley, C (ed): *Research in race and Ethnic Relations*, Greenwich: JAI Press Inc, 1979; M G Smith: 'Some Developments in the Analytic Framework of Pluralism', in Kuper, L & Smith, M G (eds): *Pluralism in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California, 1969.

10   Enloe: *Ethnic Soldiers.*

11   See, in particular, S Huntington: *The Soldier and the State*, New York: Vintage Books, 1957 & M Janowitz: *The Professional Soldier*, Glencoe: Free Press, 1960; for a discussion of the Huntington-Janowitz polemic see P D Feaver: 'The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz and the Question of Civilian Control', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol 26, No 1, 1996.

12   For a somewhat broader discussion, see A Bryden & H Hänggi (eds): *Reform and Reconstruction of the Security Sector*, Geneva: Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2004.

13   Although Syria and Lebanon were not separate countries at that time and both belonged to the Ottoman Empire, Mount Lebanon had had a separate status and identity for a long time.

14   Lebanon also has a navy and an air force. However, they have both been tiny and largely ineffective forces. The emphasis in this paper will therefore be largely on the army.

15 Although Lebanon gained its independence in 1943, the Lebanese troops were not transferred to the national authorities until 1 August 1945; the last French troops left on 31 December 1946.

16   The main implication of the Lebanese consociational system is the agreement that the President always be a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni, and the Speaker of the House a Shi`a. For a more detailed discussion of the formation and implications of the Lebanese political system see E Rabbath: *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionel*, Beyrouth: Librairie Orientale, 1973; T Hanf: *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*, London: Centre for Lebanese Studies / IB Tauris, 1993

17   The census of 1932 is still the last one ever to be held in Lebanon.

18   The Sunni community had largely been opposed to the 1920 creation of Greater Lebanon by the French. They were therefore not very inclined to serve in an army they considered a symbol of an illegitimate state.

19   The Lebanese Shi`a were mainly native to the Lebanese South and the Beqaa Valley, very much rural and peripheral areas of the new state.

20   In fact, Shi`a did form a fairly large proportion of the rank-and-file, because they viewed an army career as a attractive option because of their relative educational backwardness.

21   It was also stipulated that the Deputy Commander be a Shi`a and the Chief-of-Staff a Druze; however, considering the inferior power these officers enjoyed compared to the Commander, this was arguably mere window-dressing.

22   The National Pact was the name of the set of political principles agreed upon by President Khoury and Prime Minister Riad Solh in 1943. It formed, together with the 1926 Constitution, the basis of Lebanon's sectarian democracy.

23   Chehab did deploy the army in 1958, but he did so only to contain the violence and to prevent the strategic Beirut-Damascus highway and the international airport at Khalde from falling into the hands of the opposition, not to actually suppress it or protect the regime. See A Freiha: *L'armée et l'état au Liban*, Paris: Librairie générale de droit et de jurisprudence, 1985.

24   B Møller: 'Conscription and its alternatives', in Mjøset, L & Van Holde, S: *The Comparative Study of Conscription in the Armed Forces*, Oxford: JAI, 2002, p293.

25   See eg R Habib: *La vocation des militaries au sein de l'exception démocratique libanaise*, Mémoire en DEA de science politique, Beyrouth: Université Saint Joseph, 2002.

[26]   The dividing line between government loyalists and opposition in 1958 never was a clear-cut religious one; many Christians, including the influential Maronite patriarch Méouchy, joined the opposition. However, the loyalists were largely Maronite, the opposition largely Sunni and Shi`a.

[27]   Habib: *La Vocation des Militaires*; R N El-Rayyes & D Nahas: *Politics in Uniform: A Study of the Military in the Arab World and Israel*, Beirut: al-Nahar, 1972.

[28]   Five high-ranking officers were tried and convicted on charges of electoral fraud, embezzlement and the violation of army regulations. The five fled to Syria where they were granted political asylum. Other high-ranking officers were removed too.

[29]   One of Frangieh's measures was to take the internal security forces away from the Ministry of Defence and place them under the jurisdiction of the Minister of the Interior. While this certainly reduced Chehabism's authoritarianism, making the 1972 parliamentary elections "the freest and cleanest in Lebanese history" (Hanf: *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*, p125), it also meant that their effectiveness was severely reduced, rendering them unable to monitor the armed Palestinian and Maronite groups that would directly cause the outbreak of war in 1975.

[30]   Decree No 66 of April 1953 states that the Armed Forces are "at the disposal" of the President of the Republic. However, it is not actually clear what this meant in practice, nor what the roles of the commander of the armed forces, of the Prime Minister and of the Ministers of the Interior and of Defence are in regard to deciding on military action. See M Jabbour: *L'Armée libanaise: entre le professionalisme et le destin national 1945-1989*, Mémoire en DEA de science politique, Beyrouth: Université St Joseph, 1989; F Lahoud: *ma'sat jaysh lubnan*, Baabda, 1976.

[31]   The army was deployed as a buffer force between Sunni Tripoli and Maronite Zgharta in 1975, as well as safeguarding the Beirut airport and the Beirut-Damascus highway. This last action, which repulsed a Palestinian offensive on the Galerie Samaan area which was itself a response to a Christian blockade of the Palestinian camps Tell al-Za`tar and Jisr al-Basha, allowed Christian militias to tighten this blockade and was therefore construed as a biased intervention. See Lahoud: *ma'sat jaysh lubnan*.

[32]   The mainly Shi`a population of south Lebanon had been the main victims first, of Palestinian *fedayin* activity and Israeli retaliations, and subsequently of two full Israeli invasions in 1978 and 1982. Most of them were therefore resolutely opposed to a treaty with the Jewish state.

[33]   Amal was at that point the main Shi`a militia; Hizballah had yet to rise to prominence.

[34]   Aoun was politically inclined to the Chehabist tradition of an authoritative state. However, his Chehabist inclinations inspired him to covet the job of president for himself from the start. He believed that only an authoritative leader who came forth from the army and had the support of the army, such as Chehab had been, could return peace and sovereignty to Lebanon. Aoun himself wanted to be that leader. See Habib: *La Vocation des Militaires;* R McLaurin: 'From Professional to Political: the Redecline of the Lebanese Army', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol 17, No 4, 1991, pp545-568; Hanf: *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon*.

[35]   Although there was a precedent to this action in the 1952 appointment of General Chehab as Prime Minister, the circumstances were different. Chehab was named by President Khoury precisely because of his neutral position in the troubles, and skilfully manoeuvred his way out of the institutional crisis without seeking to improve his own position. Aoun, on the contrary, *was* one of the parties in the conflict; his ambitions to become president were well known, and he had even indicated to the president's advisers that he would take over the palace whether or not he was named prime minister. Thus, he would certainly not be part of the solution. See McLaurin: *From Professional to Political*.

[36]   This was the parliament elected in 1972; it would survive as Lebanon's official legislative body until the 1992 election.

[37]   The Christian MPs had not returned to Beirut after the Ta'if conference for fear of reprisals by Aoun, who was vehemently opposed to the accord mainly because it authorised a continuing Syrian presence in Lebanon.

[38]   See A R Norton: 'Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the Civil War Over?', *Middle East Journal*, Vol 45, No 3, 1991, pp457-473.

[39]   National Reconciliation Accord, article I.II.G.

Pieter Koekenbier

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[40]   Several units of Lahoud's Western Army participated in the attack on Baabda, the Presidential palace.

[41]   Aoun sought refuge in the French embassy. He was granted political asylum in France and leave on 29 August 1991, spending 14 years in France before eventually returning to Lebanon in 2005.

[42]   The SLA was Israel's proxy army in its self-proclaimed 12-mile 'security zone' in Southern Lebanon. Originally headed by Saad Haddad, its command was taken over by Antoine Lahad after Haddad's death from cancer in 1984.

[43]   See R Taqi al-Din: *Ihya' al-Jaysh 1988-1994*, Beirut, 1994.

[44]   See Koekenbier: *A New Model Army?*, pp113-120.

[45]   The Palestinian armed groups, not having been a party to the Ta'if Accords, were determined to resist the dismantling of their strongholds in the south and the disarming of their fighters. They dug in around Sidon and waited for the LAF. On 2 July 1991, the fighting began. The LAF fought exceptionally well and it seems the Palestinians had both underestimated it and overestimated themselves; within four days they were routed. The Palestinians were subsequently forced to sign an accord agreeing to give up their heavy and medium weapons.

[46]   They are Maronite, Greek-Orthodox, Greek-Catholic, Sunni, Twelver Shi`a, Druze, Armenian Gregorian, Armenian Catholic, Chaldean, Jacobean, Nestorian, Syriac, Latin, Protestant, Alawi, Isma`ili and Israelite (Jewish). The first six groups are the most important politically and divide most of the power in the sectarian system between them.

Want to Know More ...?

See: On the reconstruction of the Iraqi army:
● A H Cordesman: *Strengthening Iraqi Military and Security Forces*, Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005, http://www.csis.org/features/iraq_strengtheningforces.pdf

On the history and reconstruction of the Lebanese army:
● P A Koekenbier: *A New Model Army? The Reconstruction of the Military in Post-War Lebanon*, Amsterdam: Master's Thesis University of Amsterdam, 2005, http://www.pieterkoekenbier.nl

● R McLaurin: 'Lebanon and its Army: Past, Present and Future', in Azar, E (ed): *The Emergence of a New Lebanon: Fantasy or Reality?*, New York: Praeger, 1984
● R McLaurin: 'From Professional to Political: the Redecline of the Lebanese Army', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol 17, No 4, 1991, pp545-568

On multi-ethnic militaries in general:
● A Peled: *A Question of Loyalty: Military Manpower Policy in Multi-Ethnic States*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998
● C Enloe: *Ethnic Soldiers: State Security in Divided Societies*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980

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