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The Making of a Shiite Bourgeoisie in Lebanon
Political Mobilisation, Economic Resources and Formation of a Social Group

L'invention d'une bourgeoisie chiite au Liban. Mobilisations politiques, ressources économiques et formation d'un groupe social

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Abstract

The thesis analyses the making of the Shiite middle- and upper/entrepreneurial-class in Lebanon from the 1960s till the present day. The trajectory explores the historical, political and social (internal and external) factors that brought a sub-proletariat to mobilise and become an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie in the span of less than three generations. The Lebanese Shi'a are the first community to have achieved significant political and economic power as a group in the modern Arab world. They are the only Arab Shi'a who were able to pull themselves out of oppression, isolation and marginalisation to achieve major political power and economic independence with the political order of Lebanon's state and society respectively. The Shi'a over a 30-year period have become quite simply the most powerful political force in today's Lebanon and the single largest community in the country, with a noteworthy contrast with other Shi'a communities in the region.

This work proposes the main theoretical hypothesis to unpack and reveal the trajectory of a very recent social class that through education, diaspora, political and social mobilisation evolved in a few years into a very peculiar bourgeoisie: whereas Christian-Maronite middle class practically produced political formations and benefited from them and from Maronite's state supremacy (National Pact, 1943) reinforcing the community's status quo, Shiites built their own bourgeoisie from within, and mobilised their "*cadres*" (Boltanski) not just to benefit from their renovated presence at the state level, but to oppose to it. The general Social Movement Theory (SMT), as well as a vast amount of the literature on (middle) class formation are therefore largely contradicted, opening up new territories for discussion on how to build a bourgeoisie without the state's support (Social Mobilisation Theory, Resource Mobilisation Theory) and if, eventually, the middle class always produces democratic movements (the emergence of a social group out of backwardness and isolation into near dominance of a political order).

The middle/upper class described here is at once an economic class related to the control of multiple forms of capital, and produced by local, national, and transnational networks related to flows of services, money, and education, *and* a culturally constructed social location and identity structured by economic as well as other forms of capital in relation to other groups in Lebanon. What is the social, political and spatial status of this 'new' (entrepreneurial) bourgeoisie? How does kinship, class affiliation, ethnicity and identity influence the transformation of capitals? ('the sect as a class').

Résumé

Ce travail analyse la création et le développement de la bourgeoisie et de la classe entrepreneuriale chiite au Liban dans les années 1960 jusqu'à nos jours. La trajectoire explore les facteurs historiques, politiques et sociaux (internes et externes) qui ont contribué à la mobilisation de un sous-prolétariat et à devenir une bourgeoisie d'entreprise en moins de trois générations. Les chiites libanais représentent la première communauté à avoir obtenu un pouvoir politique et économique significatif dans le monde arabe moderne.

Seulement le chiites arabes qui ont réussi à sortir de l'oppression, de l'isolement et de la marginalisation pour atteindre une grande puissance politique et l'indépendance économique avec l'ordre politique de l'état et de la société du Liban. Les chiites, dans une période de 30 ans, sont devenus tout simplement la force politique puissante au Liban d'aujourd'hui et la plus grande communauté dans le pays, avec un contraste remarquable avec les autres communautés chiites de la région.

La thèse propose les principales hypothèses théoriques pour révéler la trajectoire d'une classe sociale très récente que grâce à le rôle joué par l'éducation, la diaspora, la mobilisation politique et sociale a évolué en quelques années dans une bourgeoisie très particulière: alors que la classe moyenne chrétienne-maronite avait pratiquement produit des formations politiques et avait bénéficié de ces formations et de l'état de la suprématie maronite (Pacte National, 1943) pour renforcer le statu quo de la communauté, les chiites ont construit leur propre bourgeoisie, et ont mobilisé leurs "cadres" (Boltanski) non seulement pour bénéficier de leur présence rénové au niveau de l'Etat, mais en même temps à le opposer. La Théorie générale du Mouvement Social (Social Movement Theory), ainsi que une certaine quantité de littérature sur la formation de classes sont donc largement contredites, donnent lieu à l'ouverture de nouveaux territoires pour la discussion sur la modalité de construire une bourgeoisie sans le soutien de l'Etat (Théorie de mobilisation sociale, Théorie de Mobilisation des ressources) et si, finalement, la classe moyenne produit toujours des mouvements démocratiques (Hezbollah).

La bourgeoisie décrit ci-dessus est une classe économique liée à la maîtrise des multiples formes de capital, et produite par des réseaux locaux, nationaux et transnationaux liés aux flux de services, de l'argent et de l'éducation Quel est le statut social, politique et spatiale de cette «nouvelle» bourgeoisie? Comment l'appartenance de classe, l'ethnicité et l'identité influencent la transformation des capitales? ('La secte comme une classe ').

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE AND TRANSLITERATION

I have adopted a simplified transliteration of the Arabic language. For most Arabic terms that are not frequently used in everyday English writing I have transliterated the letter ‘ayn with [‘]; the letter hamza is designated by [’]: Shi‘a; ‘Amil; Ta’if, *zu‘ama*, etc. I omit diacritics.

For those Arabic terms, names, and expressions that appear frequently in English-language academic literature and texts I use the most simplified transliteration: *mahroumeen*, Beqaa, etc. Also in this case, I omit diacritics.

When quoting an outside source, I quote Arabic terms as they appear in the source.

A NOTE ON BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES AND EXPLANATORY NOTES

Bibliographical references and explanatory notes both appear in the footnotes at the bottom of the page.

A NOTE ON INTERVIEWS

To ensure the privacy of all interviewees, I referenced the source with a general ‘Interview with the author’, except for those cases that allowed me to mention the source. All interviewees that shared sensitive information were kept strictly anonymous.

Methods, Methodology and Epistemology

In the social sciences, qualitative research is hard to do well. Quantitative research is also hard to do well. Each tradition can and should learn from the other. One version of conventional wisdom holds that achieving analytic rigor is more difficult in qualitative than in quantitative research. Yet in quantitative research, making valid inferences about complex political processes on the basis of observational data is likewise extremely difficult. There are no quick and easy recipes for either qualitative or quantitative analysis. In the face of these shared challenges, the two traditions have developed distinctive and complementary tools (emphasis in original).¹

This research builds upon a methodological and theoretical pluralist approach and a multidisciplinary nature, combining a broad array of approaches, from explanatory theories and narratives to focused-comparison case studies, for investigating plausible hypothesis and explanatory hypothesis (the intermediate hypothesis that constitute a theory's explanation). The focus is mainly on qualitative approach, rather than quantitative/statistical, keeping a middling view of the relationship between quantitative and qualitative methods. Developed most coherently in a volume edited by Brady and Collier (2004), this 'dualist' approach promotes the co-existence of quantitative and qualitative traditions within a broad social scientific enterprise. Unlike 'purists', 'dualists' see value in collaboration between quantitative and qualitative researchers, and an important element of interdependence in their relationship. Compared to 'neopositivism', the 'dualist' school sees strengths and weaknesses in both approaches.²

Hypothesis was regarded as the 'compass' or the 'guiding principle' of research, since the whole investigation was basically meant to test whether the hypothesis was correct or incorrect, right or wrong ('how to create a bourgeoisie without the state's support'). Therefore, for the sake of focus and direction, the main hypothesis was essential. The hypothesis started as a conjectural statement which needed to be confirmed or refuted through experimentation. According to Osuala,

¹ Henry E. Brady, David Collier and Jason Seawright. (2004), "Refocusing the Discussion of Methodology", in David Collier and Henry E. Brady (eds.), *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, p. 10.

² Ibid.

The role of hypothesis in research cannot be overemphasized because it guides the researcher in planning the course of the inquiry, in choosing the kinds of data needed, in deciding the proper statistical treatment, and in examining the results of the study.³

The basic ways to test theories adopted were: in-depth literature analyses; experimentation (to check congruent conclusions with the predictions to corroborate theory) and direct observation (to collect data that could ‘speak’ and ‘act’ in a manner fitting the theory’s logic).

The types of observational analyses were: 1) Large-n analyses (collection of interviews >60 to a diversified audience, assembled and explored to see if variables covary as the theory predicts; 2) Case-studies to display how events unfold in the manner predicted.

Even though a frequent critique suggests that the findings of most qualitative analyses tend to be “conjectural, non-verifiable, non-cumulative, ‘meanings’... arrived at by sheer intuition and individual guesswork”⁴ — and therefore qualitative researchers are subject to the criticism that they leave their readers with little choice but to “trust” that their interpretations of the data are accurate and legitimate, as Mannheim et al. point out,

Quantitative researchers are usually able to employ some well-established rules of analysis in deciding what is valid evidence for or against their theory. These include such tools as measures of statistical significance and statistical tests of validity, as well as formal logic. Qualitative researchers generally lack this type of commonly agreed to and ‘objective’ tool. Rather, they must rely on their ability to present a clear description, offer a convincing analysis, and make a strong argument for their interpretation to establish the value of their conclusions. Advocates of qualitative methods argue that this is an inevitable result of seeking to deal with the richness of complex realities rather than abstracting artificially constructed pieces of those realities for quantitative analysis. Critics of their approach contend that the vagueness and situational nature of their standards of evidence make it difficult (if not impossible) to achieve scientific consensus and, therefore, to make progress through cumulative knowledge.⁵

By adopting a different set of disciplinary means and methods (case studies, interviews, documentary evidence, participant observation, and survey research), chances of persuasiveness of analyses and findings may rise. Hence, the preliminary theoretical

³ E. C. Osuala (2001), *Introduction To Research Methodology*, (Third Edition). Onitsha: Africana-First Publishers Limited.

⁴ Abner Cohen (1974), *Two-Dimensional Man: An Essay on the Anthropology of Power and Symbolism in Complex Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 5.

⁵ Jarol B Manheim, Richard C. Rich and Lars Willnat (eds.) (2002), *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science* (5th Ed.). Toronto: Longman.

propositions to assist in a scientific and empirical way throughout the research process up to a tentative understanding that comes from exploring the ‘totality of the situation’.⁶ The path followed contains the following elements:

- 1) epistemology – an introduction to the main paradigms that underlie qualitative research and how they link to methodological choices;
- 2) data collection and analysis – qualitative interviewing, historiographic and archival research, political ethnography and anthropology, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, process tracing;
- 3) research ethics;
- 4) research design (case study research, comparative and longitudinal designs).

As most research investigations, this thesis went through various stages in which preliminary hypothesis have oriented the investigation and have been modified and tested with fieldwork and theoretical readings. This work reflects a continuous tension between the empirical and theoretical. The discussion within this duality has been essential in outlining the problematic.

L’analyse des pratiques éditaires à travers les liens qu’elles établissent entre le spécifique et le général, le local et le global, peuvent constituer des opérateurs d’intelligibilité des transformations sociales et des rapports de force politique, tout en dégagant des éléments de périodisation.⁷

Fieldwork unfolded in the span of approximately three years. In general, qualitative methods were used to understand attitudes and experiences of the community examined. This approach is used when answering questions about ‘what’, ‘how’ or ‘why’ of a phenomenon rather than only ‘how many’ or ‘how much’ (even if a non-statistical quantitative aspect has been taken into account). Most of the data collected for this research embraces the perspectives that come from the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of the Utrecht School of Phenomenology, the empirical phenomenological psychology of the Duquesne School, and the Chicago School of Sociology.

⁶ Robert Bogdan and Steven Taylor (1987), “Looking at the bright side: A positive approach to qualitative policy and evaluation research”, in *Qualitative Sociology*, vol.13, no. 2, pp. 183-192.

⁷ Jean-Pierre Gaudin, “Pouvoirs locaux et territoires. Une approche des espaces politiques”, in *Études rurales*, vol. 101, no. 101-102, pp. 21-33.

Utrecht School of Phenomenology, which combines characteristics of descriptive and interpretive phenomenology based on the Dutch School of Phenomenology, was selected as the research approach, and the Utrecht School based on the Dutch School of Phenomenology was followed for data analysis.⁸ Phenomenology, specifically the Utrecht approach, was the best fit for this study because it describes the meaning of the lived experience through the shared essences among participants, and it uses the language to interpret the connotations of the experience of the participants.

The Chicago School of Sociology, known for its urban sociology and for the development of the symbolic interactionist approach, was also partially influential. The Chicago School of Sociology has focused on human behaviour as determined by social structures and physical environmental factors, rather than genetic and personal characteristics.

The following methods for gathering information were adopted: Participant Observation, Non-participant Observation, Field Notes, Structured Interviews, Semi-structured Interviews, Unstructured Interviews, Analysis of documents and materials, Critical Social Research and Historical Research.

I have interviewed more than 60 individuals and have collected and scheduled over 70 interviews, as I met a few interviewees more than once. 98% of interviews were conducted by person. Interviews were collected along two major broad categories:

1) interviews to academics, political organisations representatives, syndicates representatives, bank managers and directors,⁹ economic advisors, journalists, NGOs representatives and directors; These interviews were obtained through formal and informal networks;

Academic work was carried out at: the American University of Beirut; the Lebanese American University of Beirut; the Lebanese University Archives; Centre for Arab and Middle Eastern Studies (AUB); Lebanese National Library; Centre des archives

⁸ Loren S. Barritt, Antonius Johannes Beekman, Hans Bleeker and Karen J. Mulderij (1983), *A Handbook for Phenomenological Research in Education*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, School of Education.

⁹ Interviews to bank managers and bank directors were all structured.

nationales Beirut; USJ Université Saint Joseph Beirut; Balamand University; The Association of syndicates Beirut; Economic Research Institut Beirut; IREMMO Paris; Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne; Institut du monde arabe Paris; University of Bath UK.

2) interviews to shop owners, small/medium/ entrepreneurs, professionals, large-scale entrepreneurs, acquaintances, etc. Also in this case, interviewees were approached through formal and informal interconnections.

In a few occasions, original documents, brochure, publications, etc. were made available by interviewees.

In both cases, a few key-informant interviews emerged, facilitating interaction with further key-contacts.

Participant observation and becoming a member of a culture and setting was also essential to gaining a closer insight into the culture's practices and motivations and obtaining a relevant numero of biographies (non-structured interviews).

Interviews and documents were unpacked according to a three-stage process for the analysis of qualitative data: 1) a broad overview of the raw materials, in search of general themes. This 'open-coding' stage involved reading through a smaller sampling of the available documents, recording any noticeable patterns in the texts in the form of 'memos' or marginalia; 2) a second stage of 'axial-coding' with a review of the entire sample of documents, tagging specific issues as belonging under the various broad theme-categories; 3) during the third and final 'selective-coding' stage, I went through the documents in search of mis-coded passages and discrepant evidence. By following this three-stage process, qualitative document analysts are more likely to produce trustworthy and convincing interpretations of the data.

A multi-theoretical approach was also implemented to avoid potential risks of lack of objectivity. According to Max Weber, it is often always impossible for social scientist to eliminate the influence of value from the analysis of facts. The reason is very simple since "both the investigator and investigated are caught up in culture".¹⁰

¹⁰ Ian Varcoe, "Social Science" in William A. Darity Jr. (ed.) (2008), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 2nd edition. New York: Thomson & Gale, pp. 618-620.

The argument here is that in the natural sciences, the researcher does not need to, and cannot even if he wants, put his biases and wishes on his objects of study. The physicist who wants to know whether the law of gravity holds or not, cannot but observe what is. But if one asks a Marxist researcher and a non-Marxist researcher to study and make a report of their findings on the issue of poverty in Nigeria, one will be astounded by obvious disparity in their analyses. This disparity can be traced to the fact that they are dealing with a social phenomenon about which they have personal feelings.¹¹

Sampling also occupied an important space in the research. During this stage I had the freedom of choice concerning who to interview, and what to use as a case study. As such, a sample can be simply defined as “a smaller representation of a large whole”.¹² Sampling has never been haphazard or unorganised, but as structured as possible.

Constraints

A central issue in qualitative research is trustworthiness (also known as credibility and/or dependability). Most of the methods adopted to establish trustworthiness, included interviewer corroboration, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, confirmability, bracketing, and balance were extensively described by Lincoln and Guba.¹³

Prolonged engagement and on-the-field presence was essential in building a sufficient network of people working in certain fields such as banking, political organisations (Amal and Hezbollah), etc. This practice brought some positive results, but was very time consuming. Meeting high cadres in Amal or Hezbollah mostly required one or two blank meetings before the concrete interview could happen. At a very general level, Amal cadres and members were more eager to share information, whereas among Hezbollah members and supporters information were rather restrained.

Except a couple of occasions, those constraints were not present at the academic level.

Interviews with Amal or Hezbollah affiliates usually forecasted a preliminary ‘indoctrination’ before being able to address the pertinent issues; in most cases with a ratio of 70% vs 30%. Consequently, lack of precision (or lack of complete reliability of

¹¹ Rotimi Omosulu, “The Main Features and Constraints of Social Science’s Research Methods”, in *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, vol. 2, no. 3 (2013), pp. 1907-1918; Jacob Ajayi, “The objectivity question in the social sciences and humanities” in *Journal of Philosophy and Development*, vol. 7, no.1,2, (2001), pp. 98-104.

¹² Omololu Soyombo, “Doing Research in Social Science” in Lai Olurode and Omololu Soyombo (Eds.) (2001), *Sociology For Beginners*, (2nd Edition), Lagos: John West Publications, pp.80-126.

¹³ Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park (CA): Sage Publications.

the source) was one of the constraints of the research. To fix this bias, cross check with published material and de-classified documents has been carried out. To remain impartial, I tried to ensure as much as possible that the conclusions could drawn from the evidence at hand, as opposed to the predispositions of the researcher.

Even though the number and the method through which interviews were obtained do not possess any statistical value, the frequent pattern and trajectory of a relevant number of interviews concerning, for instance, the way Shiites became bourgeois and entrepreneurial out of backwardness and disenfranchisement, detects the reliability of the sources and a certain recurring broad-ranging theme. This could be considered an extension of the ‘member-checking’ tool. In this context, analysts often verify the results of their observations with the subjects, themselves, as a means of verifying the authenticity of their findings. In a few limited occasions, this method has been adopted also for document analysis. This led to consulting the authors of the texts, to see if one’s interpretations matched their original motives or intent. This begs the question, however: “How much data is enough to substantiate one’s findings?” Without enough supporting evidence, a qualitative document analysis amounts to little more than “armchair interpretation”.¹⁴ Striking a balance between evidence and analysis is especially challenging for a QDA research, in this regard.¹⁵

While no disciplinary convention exists, as “a safe rule of thumb,” Berg recommends including at least three pieces of corroborating evidence for each major interpretation. These may come in the form of direct quotations or detailed paraphrases, and – depending upon the researcher’s style and chosen venue – can be incorporated in-text or by way of footnote. This places the onus on the analyst to support his or her interpretation with adequate evidence, while providing the reader with the assurance that the findings are not derived arbitrarily.¹⁶

¹⁴ Jared J. Wesley (2009), “Building Bridges: Content and Narrative Analysis of Political Texts”. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Carleton University, Ottawa.

¹⁵ Jennifer Platt, “Evidence and Proof in Documentary Research: Part II, Some Shared Problems of Documentary Research”, in John Scott (ed.) (2006) *Documentary Research*, vol. 1. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

¹⁶ Jared J. Wesley, “Qualitative Document Analysis in Political Science”, Working Paper, T2PP Workshop, 9-10 April 2010, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam; Bruce Berg (2004), *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (5th Edition). Toronto: Pearson.

Turning to social classes (and to data in general), a major constraint and difficulty is the extreme scarcity of data and statistics on sources of income, property and wealth in Lebanon. Kamal Hamdan, the Managing Director at the “Consultation and Research Institute” (CRI) in Beirut and economist Boutros Labaki made available a number of statistics and surveys for this research. Likewise, Lokman Slim, a Lebanese publisher and independent social and political activist and director of the NGO Hayya Bina shared some of the most recent statistical surveys conducted by his organisation.

On the same subject, and considering the scarcity and general unreliability of data on social classes and consumption in Lebanon,¹⁷ a major problematic was to define the members of the Lebanese Shi‘a middle class, as a first step towards understanding how to unveil their potential. There has been no consensus thus far on a definition, beyond the general notion that the degree of choice people have in how they spend their household budget is critical in delineating their social class. Conventional measures to define people living in poverty are mainly based on the amount they spend daily to meet basic needs. Those who spend below a set amount are poor and those who spend above it are not. The issue becomes more complex, however, when a conspicuous part of the research focuses on the middle/upper-class and the entrepreneurial class, where both the quantity and quality of consumption are taken into account. For example, where does the middle class end and the affluent class begin?

This analysis presumes a measurement that combines economic and social definitions. The economic definition takes into consideration both the quality and quantity of household expenditure. Therefore, middle class members are those who can meet all their basic needs. The affluent are those who spend more than the national poverty line on non-essential goods and services. The social definition classifies the middle class based on a set of social attributes, regardless of their level of material welfare. It covers people employed in the formal private or public sectors, within a ‘white collar’ occupational category, and who have secondary education qualifications and above.

¹⁷ The largest relative gaps are in the cases of Lebanon and Yemen, but this is most likely because these two countries do not have consumption surveys available for a recent year (closest to 2011), so the calculations were done using data from 2006 and 2005, respectively, whereas the other countries’ latest consumption data is closer to the latest WVS (World Value Survey) data, ranging from 2010 to 2014 (Arab Middle Class Measurement and role in driving change, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Beirut, ESCWA, 2014 Report).

A Methodological Trajectory

Analysing wealth

Even though a conspicuous number of studies concerning social classes focus on poverty and poverty-line indicators, the interest of economics in studying human society is hinged on how to analyse and describe the production, distribution and the consumption of wealth. During one of the preliminary discussions with my supervisor in Paris, a question rose: “why not considering wealth instead of poverty?”, and “why not studying at some point the wealth trajectory instead of poverty?”. There is a well-established focus on studying poverty at the expense of an examination of wealth in respect of the Shi‘a community, since statistics on income distribution do not, by and large, extend to the incomes of the rich. Indeed, in the majority of these studies the figures cited go no higher than the mid-range of the middle classes. In 1968 Michael Hudson wrote that “political power in Lebanon is the exclusive preserve of a group of religious leaders, semi-feudal political chiefs, bankers, businessmen and lawyers. Members of this group come from less than fifty prominent families”.¹⁸ Other commentators, like journalist Michel Abu Jawda, estimated “one hundred families who rule the country”.¹⁹ But who constitutes the Shiite oligarchy these days? Which families /who form(s) the ruling class? To what extent are they in the political-economic game? How influential are they? What are their political affiliations? Where does their money come from?

The denial of wealth

In the same way, there has been for some time a ‘denial of wealth’ attitude. Ghassan Tuani denies that the Lebanese themselves possess vast wealth, because they work with the wealth of others without this wealth being their own “legitimate property”.²⁰ The problem with such approaches arises since the wealthiest Lebanese of all are those who

¹⁸ Michael Hudson (1968), *Precarious Republic*. New York: Random House, Inc., p. 105; Michael Hudson, “A Case of Political Underdevelopment”, *Journal of Politics*, November 1967, pp. 827-832.

¹⁹ *Al-Nahar*, 29/01/1967; Fawaz Traboulsi (2007), *A History of Modern Lebanon*. London: Pluto Press, p. 160.

²⁰ *Al Nahar* Annual Edition, 1966 .

amassed their millions or billions outside the country, brokering the wealth of others. Among those, many diaspora Shiites.

Another ‘cover up’ attitude is characterised by the ‘denial of exploitation’. In a work published in 1962, Michel Chiha wrote that the Lebanese,

[...] derives his wealth from the farthest corners of the earth and does no harm to any of his Lebanese brothers far away at home or exploits the sweat of his fellow-citizens. In the final analysis he is immune to criticism by either socialist or sociologist, and in any case there is no one in the world so lavishly generous as he.²¹

In this passage Chiha implies that Lebanese of the diaspora (“the farthest corners of the earth”) do not generate any capital whatsoever in their own countries, nor they generate a domestic economic and social system that can deeply affect/alter the political structure in their country of origin (nor to exploit the labour of those who are “far away”).²² This research will attempt to demonstrate the historical veracity of this assumption.

The denial of sects

In June 2014 I met a very well-known Lebanese scholar in Beirut. During our talk, when I proposed the subject of sectarianism in Lebanon, he immediately dismissed the validity of any debate on it. According to him, sects are simply irrelevant, and there is no need for yet another ethnographic or anthropological approach to investigate on a subject that tries to transcend the classic academic literature on Lebanese Shi‘a – the ‘*mahrumeen*’ (disenfranchised) literature on one side and the political Shi‘a on the other.

No sources or evidence are required to back the assertion that Lebanon is a sectarian country, a country of sects. There is certainly no need to set out to prove this. Sectarianism though, is often viewed as a plague, responsible for anything bad that happens in Lebanon from poverty to corruption or government inefficacy.²³ In the aftermath of the 2005 so-called Cedars Revolution, a significant number of NGOs were

²¹ Michel Chiha (1962), *Lubnan fi shakhshiyatihi wa-hudurihi*. Beirut: al-Nadwah al-Lubnaniyah.

²² Fawaz Traboulsi, “Social Classes and Political Power in Lebanon”, Report. Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Beirut, 2014.

²³ Ibid.

constituted with the banner “secular organisation” (meaning, *non-sectarian*). The impression is that the validity of a non-sectarian discourse in Lebanon starts in a Hamra or Downtown café or in a ‘sterile’ environment like the American University of Beirut campus, but quickly loses its ground when the various affiliates of the organisation get back to their own families’ environments in the evening, succumbing to the logic of sectarianism.

When I met a Lebanese journalist friend in March 2015 in Paris, I proposed the idea of not discussing about sectarianism in any way (not even theoretically) in my research. He quickly commented: “Talking or writing about anything Lebanese and never approaching the issue of sectarianism is like writing about airplanes without never mentioning that they fly”.

Entry Point and Research Questions

The historical, social and political factors behind the rise of the Shiite Middle Class. From Pre-industrial Peasantry to Mobilised Community: a class that does not churn out from a governmental elite (K. Marx) but a sub-proletariat that under the guide of a religious leader (Musa al Sadr) starts mobilising in the 1960s.

The Pre-Civil War

How and under which historical circumstances (the Ottoman and the French mandate legacy) this proletariat starts mobilising and transforming itself into a working class (at first) and into an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie at a later stage?

What are the reasons beyond the late development of a Shi‘a. working/middle class and entrepreneurship? What were the main internal and external factors that contributed to the development of the Lebanese Shi‘a middle class in the second half of the twentieth century? How do we build a bourgeoisie without a State’s support? What are the hypothesis?

The first stage of work on the social and economic history of contemporary Shiite Lebanon is influenced, builds upon and critically reflects a number of conceptual and

theoretical approaches to reveal the path of a very recent and peculiar social class that through diaspora, education, political factors and social mobilisation evolved in the span of less than three generations into a *certain bourgeoisie*.

How to create through mobilisation an economic space to build an economic bourgeoisie? Class structure in a peripheral society is different from that of mature capitalism, and there is a wide social space between the polar classes. Second, this space is occupied not merely by the petty bourgeoisie, but by a broad spectrum of intermediate classes. Third, these classes pursue policies of their own and generate ideologies that are designed not only to cement their own self-organisation but also to establish their hegemony at a state level (Gramsci).

At a later stage, I will proceed to analyse how the two main Shiite movements, Hezbollah and Amal, have managed to galvanise, modernise, and transform the character of leadership within their own community over the last several decades in ways that neither Sunni Muslim nor Christian movements have been able to do within their own communities. Is there a Shiite economic specificity? Can we just reduce the phenomenon to a simplistic ‘revolutionary process’? Is it appropriate to refer to Musa al Sadr movement as an organisation in search of an (identity) entrepreneurship? What was the ‘Shi‘a economy’ situation like when Musa al Sadr appears on the Lebanese scene? Was there an already established diaspora entrepreneurship ready to collaborate financially and ideologically to the movement? Why did the Lebanese Shi‘a succeed while other Shi‘a have not?

The Civil War

Many sectarian groups – and obviously many Shiites among them – greatly benefited from the civil conflict. The war-economy developed a structural persistence and lucrative sources of income. In this perspective, the dimension of ‘economic rationality’ is likely to be added to the political causes of war and armed conflict. The situation of war became an intrinsic part of the protagonists’ economic strategies and therefore the necessary basic condition for economic schemes and systems.

Again, the Shi'a community shows some specificities in the accumulation of capitals during the civil war. How did the Shi'a entrepreneurship benefit from the conflict? What were the short term and long term effects? What were the new business activities created during and after the civil strife and what kind of social mobility did they enact?

Lebanese Shi'a diaspora communities became more politicised when the Shi'a of Lebanon became more politicised, i.e. in the late 1970s. Throughout the Lebanese civil war, some elements from various sectarian factions in Africa engaged in an array of illicit activities to raise the needed funds to finance their respective militias.

The Shi'a community specific logic of capital investment directed toward speculation in real estate and foreign countries is a direct consequence of the extraverted character of the war and post-war economy.

A new ruling class rose, whose components reveal the degree of the political and social mobility that the war had created. What were these major components? Is there a specificity of the Lebanese Shiite entrepreneurial diaspora in sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America?

One key element in this transformation is a major reshuffling of the entrepreneurial class. The pre-war bourgeoisie, or economic middle-class – contractors, bankers, international financiers and traders – had largely left the country. One of the crucial questions of any reconstruction effort has been how, when, and to what extent this pre-war bourgeoisie was effectively re-attracted to Lebanon either as investors or to relocate some of their activities there. Arguably, is it likely that such assets made a significant difference at a State-reconstructive level? If Lebanon's transnationalised bourgeoisie had effectively participated in the country's reconstruction through a balanced, rational economic reconstructive plan, the country's tasks could have been considerably facilitated (i.e.: mitigated dependency on foreign aid or reliance on international agencies)?

The Post-Civil War

How did the Amal and Hezbollah respectively re-organised and reshuffled the capitals (P. Bourdieu) accumulated through diaspora remittances and diaspora enterprises? What

about the capitals involved in their welfare-distribution organisation? Are they still as relevant as they were throughout the 1990s?

The middle/upper class described here is at once an economic class related to the control of multiple forms of capital, and produced by local, national, and transnational networks related to flows of services, money, and education, *and* a culturally constructed social location and identity structured by economic as well as other forms of capital in relation to other groups in Lebanon. What is the social, political and spatial status of this 'new' (entrepreneurial) bourgeoisie? How does kinship, class affiliation, ethnicity and identity influence the transformation of capitals? ('sect as a class')

How hegemonic is the post-war Shi'a middle class? Who controls who? If the Shiite entrepreneurship does not depict the habitus of the classic entrepreneurship that calculates, rationalises but massively invests and transforms economic capital into social capital - what is the final outcome of this investment? What is the sociality of this entrepreneurship? (the cultural aspect of Shiite middle class)

Which bourgeoisie supports which political party? (Specificities; Strategic allegiances; Connections with the State State control/resources; Territorial Control; Syndicates; Clientelism or Mafiocracy?)

Different typologies of the Lebanese Shi'a middle/upper an entrepreneurial class: South Lebanon; Beqaa; Beirut.

The Scholarly Trajectory

Theoretical Framework

Resistance over Hegemony: A Struggle for Dominance

The intermediate and auxiliary classes in Asian and Middle Eastern formations have been historically constituted through epochal experiences and colonisation and peripheral capitalist development. The enhanced power of these classes in our societies is rooted in the historical genesis of the peripheral state.²⁴

The drive for hegemony on the part of the intermediate classes stems, principally, from the overwhelming role of the state in all aspects of the peripheral societies, including the economic, and from the powerful presence of the intermediate classes in apparatuses of the state [...] On the ideological level, this is expressed in a certain “fetishisation”²⁵ of the state, and the creation of a whole range of disparate and mutually contradictory ideologies — e.g., Western style developmentalism, the “socialism” of the radical-nationalists with its emphasis on “nationalisations” and the ethno-religiosity of the Khomeinist variety — all united in viewing the state as the principal agency of social transformation. Thus, Lebanese Shi‘a represents an exception in this framework developed by Ahmad Aijaz. Most noticeably for a number of intrinsic reasons: the phenomenon of the emergence of a social group out of backwardness and isolation into near dominance of a political order; the potential role of political sectarianism as a possible formula for the solution of other ethnic or religious sectarian issues in other states; the adaptation of Islamist movements to multireligious societies. What is relevant in Aijaz’s analysis is that the social formations we are discussing here are, by and large, transitional (and transnational) in character and represented by a variety of non-capitalist forms that occupy their own space, but at some time they become intertwined with the capitalist mode itself.²⁶ A passage from Antonio Gramsci sheds light on the

²⁴ Aijaz Ahmad (1992), *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London and New York: Verso.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ A. Ahmad (1992).

meaning and the modalities of “peripheral transition”:

In the typical peripheral countries [...] a broad spectrum of intermediate classes stretches between the proletariat and capitalism: classes which seek to carry on policies of their own, with ideologies which influence broad strata of the proletariat, but which particularly affect the peasant masses.²⁷

In this passage Gramsci is referring to the Southern Question in Italy in the first three decades of the XX century, and when he speaks of the peripheral countries he is mostly addressing to the Slavic countries and some other regions of Southern and Eastern Europe. But the passage contains several ideas which could be useful for an analysis of contemporary Lebanon. First, that the class structure in a peripheral society is different from that of mature capitalism, and there is a wide social space between the polar classes. Second, this space is occupied not merely by the petty bourgeoisie, but by a broad spectrum of intermediate classes. Third, these classes pursue policies of their own and generate ideologies that are designed not only to cement their own self-organisation but also to establish their hegemony at a state level. In other words, classes exist as historical actors in so far as they struggle against other classes, and struggle is most often for dominance.

This remark on hegemony and resistance is essential in this research on the making of the contemporary Lebanese Shiite middle class and entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, as this latest is essentially the result of resistance over hegemony. The emergence of the Shiite working class and middle class was the product of the complex and contradictory experience of peasants, landlords, workers, migrants and internal and external forces. Plus, Shiite middle class has evolved into a very peculiar bourgeoisie: whereas Christian-Maronite middle class practically produced political formations and benefited from them and from Maronite’s state supremacy (National Pact, 1943) reinforcing the community’s status quo, Shiites built their own bourgeoisie from within and mobilised their “*cadres*” (Boltanski)²⁸ not just to benefit from their renovated presence at the state level, but to oppose to it. The general Social Movement Theory (SMT), as well as a vast amount of the literature on (middle) class formation are therefore largely contradicted,

²⁷ Antonio Gramsci (1978), *Selection from Political Writings, 1921-1926*. New York: International Publishers.

²⁸ Luc Boltanski (1987), *The Making of a Class: Cadres in French Societies*, Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Maison des Sciences de l’Homme.

opening up new territories for discussion on how to build a bourgeoisie without the state's support (Social Mobilisation Theory, Resource Mobilisation Theory) and if, eventually, the middle class always produces democratic movements.

The case of the Shi'i community presents yet another picture. What is most noticeable in this instance is the paucity and weakness of mediating structures capable of integrating the increasing number of dispossessed and uprooted Shi'i immigrants who went to the capital throughout the 1960s and up to the outbreak of the civil war. The story of the migration of the Lebanese southern Shi'is to the capital is well documented. What has to be emphasised is the fact that patron-client networks in Beirut proved unable to absorb the constant flow of Shi'i rural migrants. This is, significantly, due to some of the basic provisions of the electoral law which links voting privileges not to residence but to one's place of origin. While Maronites and Sunnis has settled and were registered in their respective communities for several generations, Shiites did not experience any massive populations shifts into Beirut until the 1960s. Hence, they remained marginal in more than an existential sense. They had to eke out a precarious existence in the 'misery belts' of Beirut's peri-urban fringes, but could not, by virtue of the electoral law, mobilise their collective protest or vent their grievances through their numerical voting prowess. As a result, the original Shi'i immigrants and descendants were not integrated into the clientelist system of the capital. This goes to reinforce the idea of the birth of the Lebanese Shiite middle class as a self-made/self-aware bourgeoisie. The gradual increase in the rate of small businesses among Shiites throughout the 1960s seems to indicate not only a need, but also some success in devising strategies to compensate for the social, economic, and psychological tensions associated with rapid socio-economic change.²⁹

In this context, and with the relaxation of the ties of the Shi'i migrants from their former landlords, their socio-economic marginalisation, the disruption of their formal way of life, and their second-rate status as Lebanese citizens, all resulted in their becoming 'available for new patterns of mobilisation and behaviour'.³⁰ Karl W. Deutsch's Social

²⁹ Nadim Shehadi, Dana Haffar Mills (eds.) (1992), *Lebanon: a History of Conflict and Consensus*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd Publishers.

³⁰ Karl W. Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Sep., 1961), American Political Science Association Publishers, pp. 493-514.

Mobilisation Theory studies clarify this remark:

Social mobilisation can be defined, therefore as the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialisation and behaviour. As Edward Shils has rightly pointed out, the original images of "mobilisation" and of Mannheim's "fundamental democratisation" imply two distinct stages of the process: (1) the stage of uprooting or breaking away from old settings, habits and commitments; and (2) the induction of the mobilised persons into some relatively stable new patterns of group membership, organisation and commitment. In this fashion, soldiers are mobilised from their homes and families and mobilised into the army in which they then serve. Similarly, Mannheim suggests an image of large numbers.³¹

This last assumption recalls also the theoretical approach of Boltanski. Originally investigating Durkheim's question 'how do social groups form and how do they hold together?'³², and obeying his dictum that social facts must be explained by other social facts, Boltanski's approach is eclectic and creative in its account of the historical and contemporary social processes behind the formation of a social group from its organisational origins to its emergence as a potent symbol of a new era, new aspirations and new opportunities. The view is broad: the analysis includes political upheaval, class struggle, religious and ideological fervour and — most noticeably — education. Self-education represents an important channel of social mobility in the framework of this research (confessional schools and the Lebanese Arab University), while the outstanding position of elite schools reflects the closure of social elites.

Like Boltanski's *cadres* in France, Lebanese Shiite middle class had at one time to be taken into account and recognised as a collective subject of the nation. But to be counted, the group has to be defined, and this is no easy matter. How is an aggregate which spills over in all directions to be conceptualised in its unity? The difficulty arises from the dispersion (diaspora), on the scale of wealth, of the groups. In the 1960s in Lebanon (and obviously at least three decades earlier in France and Europe), it was ownership of individual or family assets that defined the "middle class" and which was supposed to make the link between *rentiers* and those whose assets constitute the tool of their trade: craftsmen, shopkeepers, small businessmen, etc. But these categories

³¹ *Ibid.* For a broader discussion on quantitative indicators, see Karl W. Deutsch "Toward an Inventory of basic Trends and Patterns in Comparative and International Politics", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 54, (March 1960), American Political Science Association Publishers, p. 34.

³² Émile Durkheim (1922), *De la division du travail social*. Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan.

constituted a wide majority *in* Lebanon; at the same time those who exercised those professions abroad were becoming more and more ‘entrepreneurial’. It followed that the diversity of positions occupied in the distribution of wealth and income largely interfered with the possibility of defining the “middle class” as a unity. Likewise, it was a “natural” space for those who actually started possessing some *patrimoine* to intervene substantially by incrementing the economic situation of those Shiites (mostly family members) who were still residing in their villages or moved to the suburbs of the capital. It was — and still is to many extents — “personal”, non-collective capital, embodied in a person, a family, a community, or a political formation.³³

Within a period of thirty years, the Lebanese Shi‘a has managed to transform its role in society and, consequently, the character of its leadership in a noticeable way. A community that had languished under an essential feudal fashion order dominated by *zu‘ama* managed to contain these clan-oriented leaders in favour of ‘modern’, populist, mobilising leaders with a clear sense of community and goals bolstered by ideology and the newly founded entrepreneurial middle class’ remittances.³⁴

The Shi‘a development is a product of several decades of significant socio-economic change. By the 1960s the Shi‘a were exposed to wide-ranging economic change and social disruption, the significance of which is partially anticipated by Karl Deutsch’s work on social mobilisation. As an indicator of change, the concept subsumes a wide range of variables that when measured over time signal the extent of the changes that are taking place in a given country. Thus, Deutsch (1961), frames the following clusters of change: exposure to aspects of modern life, changes in residence, in particular rural to urban migration, occupational changes, for instance shifts away from agrarian employment, rising literacy rates and changes in income. The Shiite community went through most of the changes mentioned by Deutch and moved from traditional to modern ways of life; this led to the need for new patterns of group affiliation and new organisations (political, religious, social and educational) that are capable of absorbing

³³ Luc Boltanski, “How a Social Group Objectified Itself: “Cadres” in France, 1936-1945. *Social Science Information*, 1984, 23: 469. Published by Sage on Behalf of SSI Maison desd Sciences de l’Homme.

³⁴ Graham E. Fuller, Rend Rahim Francke (1999), *The Shi‘a. The Forgotten Muslims*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, pp. 203-238.

the stress arising from change.³⁵ Social mobilisation can be defined therefore, as the process in which major clusters of old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialisation and behaviour³⁶.

Class Formation

E.P. Thompson's legacy (*The Making of*)³⁷ contributes as a potent resource for validating historical approaches to class formation and a ready argument against any simple minded economic determinism. Thompson's methodology inspires also the way this work on class is inspired: besides the sheer mass of 'ethnographic' detail about workers that Thompson had collected for *The Making*, his version of working-class history included not only trade unions, socialist doctrines, and real wages, but political and religious traditions, workshop rituals, back-room insurrectionary conspiracies, millenarian preaching, the iconography of trade banners, farmers' account books, and so on in endless profusion.

The narrative is, to be sure, informed by theoretical notions about class formation, which may vary from classical British stratification and class structure towards an integrated analytical approach class analysis (Erik Olin Wright)³⁸ on exploitation and domination and the macro and micro processes on combined class analysis (Marxist tradition, Weberian approach, Stratification approach)³⁹. The distinctive shift towards a model that can be relevant and apply to the making of the Lebanese Shiite middle class examines the political and ideological criteria as formulated by Nicos Poulantzas.⁴⁰ Purely economic criteria are not sufficient to determine and locate social classes. This becomes particularly obvious when we consider a concrete social formation. Here it

³⁵ Samir Khalaf, (1987). *Lebanon's predicament*. New York: Columbia University Press.

³⁶ K. Deutsch (1961).

³⁷ E. P. Thompson (1963).

³⁸ Erik Olin Wright (1978). *Class, Crisis, and the State*. London: New Left Books; (1979) *Class Structure and Income Determination*. New York: Academic Press; (1989) *The Debate on Classes*. London and New York: Verso.

³⁹ David B. Grusky (2014). *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective (4th edition)*. Boulder: Westview Press.

⁴⁰ Nicos Poulantzas (1978). *Political Power and Social Classes*. London and New York: Verso; Stuart Hall, "Nicos Poulantzas: State, Power, Socialism", *New Left Review* I/119, January–February 1980.

becomes absolutely necessary to refer to positions within the ideological and political relations of the social division of labour. It is also necessary to refer to political and ideological criteria in differentiating the various *strata* of the working class and the middle class. Many authors, especially A. Touraine, have tried to reduce the ideologico-political differences within the working class to technico-economic differences in the organisation of labour, or even the differences in the size of wages.⁴¹ These are differences which are directly classifiable (even though with some margin of imprecision in the Lebanese context). The basic criterion is that of ‘skills’ conceived in a ‘technicist’ fashion. These differentiations can be used as the basis of contradictory generalisations. But current inquiries, historical experience and sociological analysis show that these generalisations based on purely technico-economic criteria are arbitrary. Differentiations with the working and middle class do not purely coincide with positions in the organisation of labour. They rather depend on political and ideological criteria — especially in a context to intrinsically characterised by confessionalism and consociativism — on forms of struggle and tradition; and these criteria have their own autonomy. Contemporary Lebanese Shi‘a has emblematically shifted from pre-industrial working class to labour aristocracy, petty bourgeoisie and comprador bourgeoisie/national bourgeoisie in the span of less than three generations. This distinguishing *strata* analysis, specifically relevant for Lebanon, is an important one: according to the steps of the process, it is possible to envisage forms of alliance between the working class and bourgeoisie against the Maronite/Sunni controlled state. However, Lebanese Shi‘a (and this is true to some extent also for the other Lebanese sectarian groups) never entirely abandoned the *Gemeinschaft* model organised on the basis of kinship and tradition.⁴² I have already remarked how it is not possible to conceive of ethnicity as an independent basis for the acquisition of political and economic power without specifying the conditions (including the structures of political and economic power) which make it possible for sectarian groups to operate in that way. Richard Kuper’s work starting point is quite unequivocal on this: within Marxist theory, the concept of class is an economic

⁴¹ Alain Touraine (1981), *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴² Ferdinand Tönnies (1887), *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, Leipzig: Fues's Verlag. (Translated, 1957 by Charles Price Loomis as *Community and Society*, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press).

category, and the ‘catalyst’ of social transformation is to be found in the economy.⁴³ Kuper, however, accepts the great importance of economic factors in ethnically structured societies and that wherever there is ethnic stratification there is also economic stratification. The difficulty with Kuper arises in his attempt to develop the proposition that class and race, or more broadly, the economic and the political, constitute two entirely orders in society. This leads into an incoherent and inapplicable position, especially in countries fragmented along sectarian lines like Lebanon.

Heribert Adam in *Ethnic Power Mobilised* (1979) assumes that a racially structured society must be understood as “a synthesis of the interplay between ideology and economy”⁴⁴. Unlike Kuper, he assigns to class an explicit importance in the structuring of the society and he rejects the emphasis on ‘racism and prejudice’, which, he says, dominates the literature. Adam poses the problematic as follows:

Labour, capital and markets, while never sufficient as monocausal explanations, do determine the organisational needs from which ethnic ideologies emanate and with which they dialectically interact [...] Marxists analysis succeeds in penetrating beyond the symbolic structures with which groups interpret their changing reality. By not taking such ideological expressions as given or ‘primordial’ innate sentiment, the changing function of cultural identity can never be discerned. The decoded symbols mostly reveal class interests hidden behind the proclaimed ethnic unity. Thus Marxist analysis can pinpoint the constituents of ethnic agitation. But this is where the usefulness of class analysis usually ends.⁴⁵

The reason why class analysis loses its usefulness at this point is because it is unable to explain the process of ethnic mobilisation:

By which mere particularistic interests become a common cause...adherents mobilise for sacrifice, group action, and the promise of a better future in the name of a common bond [...] intragroup conflicts are portrayed as minor [...] class conflict, for example, is subjugated to the propagated need of group unity.⁴⁶

Ethnic attachments are said to change according to changing circumstances (including changes in class relations?) and to serve new goals (implying an instrumentalism?), and,

⁴³ Richard Kuper (1972), *The Origin of Marxism*. London: Pluto Press for the International Socialists.

⁴⁴ Heribert Adam, Herman Giliomee (1979), *The Ethnic Power Mobilised: Can South Africa Change?*, London and CT: Yale University Press., p. 50.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

yet, to persist if a need for ethnicity is perceived.⁴⁷ For the Lebanese Shi'a, the perceived need for ethnic identification (and social ransom) has always been highly present, and mobilisers have always been ready to capitalise on these needs. Ethnic identification, then, stems from universal yearnings not necessarily related to the economic sphere; yet, it persists as an instrument serving particular, changing goals, *including* economic motivations.⁴⁸

The problem with reductionist Marxism lies not in the fact that classes are first defined abstractedly, but in the fact that classes are formed unidimensionally as concrete social forces expressing an economic content. Consequently, the classes and the individual who inhabit them owe their formation, their homogeneity and their unity to a single, economic origin.

In an attempt to escape from the weakness of this line of argument, a Marxist literature has emerged which has been concerned with the development of non-reductionist concept of class, ideology and politics. Some aspects of this non-reductionist concept of class could be useful in advancing a theoretical position which migrates from both the reductionist and the dualist perspectives.

In addition to class fractions and strata, Marxism and its theoretical definition of *social categories* largely supports the hypothesis of how political and ideological criteria can intervene with a dominant role in the determination of those agents whose principal part is its functioning in the state apparatuses and in *ideology*. This is the case, for example, for the group designated by the common term *intellectuals*, whose principal role is the making and the inculcation of ideology (Poulantzas)⁴⁹. Since social categories themselves belong to classes — they are not groups outside or alongside classes — Lebanese intellectuals played a major role in Shiite class struggle and determination as an active political and social agent. But if social categories are not classes but themselves belong to a class, what is the point in trying to identify them? Social categories may, because of their relation with the state apparatuses and ideology, present a unity of their own, despite the fact that they belong to various classes (and in the

⁴⁷ Harold Wolpe, "Class Concepts, Class Struggle and Racism", in John Rex and David Manson (eds.) (1986), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 110-130.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Nicolas Poulantzas, "On Social Classes", *New Left Review* 1/78, March-April 1973.

specific case of Lebanon, also to different confessional groups); in their political functioning they can present a relative autonomy *vis-à-vis* the classes to which their members belong.

In its indispensable alliance with the 'intellectuals', the working class relates to them in a specific fashion. They often have particular interests which cannot be reduced to, for example, the general interests of the petty bourgeoisie to which they belong (freedom of intellectual production, freedom of expression); on the other hand, social categories belong to social classes and despite their apparent internal unity, the breaks and contradictions often coincide with the different class membership of their various members. Most of the Shiite intellectuals that ideologically sustained the Lebanese Shiite class struggle belonged to the Communist and Socialist Parties. Close to 40 percent of the members of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) in the early 1970s were Shiites. At the time, the Communist Party was probably the third party in the country in terms of membership, after the Christian right-wing Kata'eb party and the Druze-based Progressive Socialist Party. Throughout a direct account and interviews to some of the main representatives of the LPC at the time (many of whom formed at the Lebanese University) I will trace how these intellectuals have influenced on the embourgeoisement of the Shiite community through one of the most influential political groups in the Arab Levant – established and rooted in an environment of cultural enlightenment infused with a humanitarian and revivalist spirit. The LCP was unique among Arab communist parties for its cultural and intellectual output, on one hand, and involvement in armed resistance, on the other.

The Middle Class in the Arab World

Any discussion of the middle class in the Middle East must necessarily adopt a complex approach. On one hand, it needs to examine the historical, socio-economic cultural and political conditions unique to the Middle East and to each of the states in the area; on the other, it must take into account the context of global social processes and ideological trends. The modern middle class in the Arab world and in the Middle East was created by the modern education and the development of modern state bureaucracy as the main employer of the educated middle class. Educated and middle merchants are also part of the social stratum that may be perceived as middle class. However, in the view of the

weakness of an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie on the one hand and the weakness of working class on the other, the middle class in the Arab states was always dependent on the employment in the state bureaucracy as civil servants, as bureaucrats, as teachers, and as army and police officers.

At a general level, studies on the condition, goals, and political orientation of the middle class are scarce in many Arab countries. A set of stereotypes, and generally accepted facts control the dialogue about this segment of society.

Some who argue, without evidence, that the middle class has vanished, joining the category of low-income earners. Given the political changes that have taken place in Arab countries over the past few years and the emergence of new political and social forces, it is now necessary to reconsider the middle class and examine where it fits in among new social forces, particularly Islamic ones.

Most studies of the middle class undertaken in Arab countries during the last ten years have focused on political behaviour over consumption patterns. Prominent examples include economist Galal Amin's study on the changing political affiliations and activities of Egyptians over long periods of time⁵⁰ and Asef Bayat's works on social movements, civil society and political Islam.⁵¹ Possibly, one of the major reason for resorting to a focus on political behaviour is the absence of the information necessary to analyse consumption patterns over the long term. In addition, there is weak confidence among researchers and analysts in the data published by official statistical offices in a number of countries where such data is available, due to the assumption that these offices try to conceal unflattering realities.

The middle class in many Arab countries is loosely comprised of two broad categories: public sector employees and employees of security institutions. These groups are among

⁵⁰ Galal Amin (2000), *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians? Changes in the Egyptian Society from 1950 to the Present*. Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press; (1995) *Egypt's Economic Predicament: A Study in the Interaction of External Pressure, Political Folly, and Social Tension in Egypt, 1960-1990*, Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East (Book 51). Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers.

⁵¹ Asef Bayat (2007), *Making Islam Democratic: Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; (1991), *Work, Politics and Power*. New York: Monthly Review Press; (2010) *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; "Studying Middle Eastern Societies: Imperatives and Modalities of Thinking Comparatively", *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*, vol. 35, no. 2, Winter 2001, pp. 151-158; "Activism and Social Development in the Middle East", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, February 2002, pp. 1-28;

the most educated and influential; however, they have experienced a decline in their standard of living as governments scale back their spending, particularly in the area of education. As a result, the middle class has lost many of the incentives and privileges it used to enjoy. The term 'middle class' in the Middle Eastern and global context is so broad and so complex as to cast doubt on its usefulness to explain social and political processes. Without it, however, it is impossible to understand social and political processes and reality in the modern era.

In Lebanon, during the presidency of Fouad Chehab, education was the key to social mobility, particularly through public sector jobs. However, in the post-civil war period, this group was driven out of the middle class and its privileged status ended. Professionals also met the same fate, as their careers were subjected to impoverishment. Some lucrative lines of work like owning a photography studio or a grocery store also disappeared, but they were replaced by many business opportunities in a wide range of fields, including banking, finance, insurance, technology, and information.

Social inequalities were minimal before neoliberalism took its toll on the world economy starting in the 1980s. It promoted privatisation and made profit the overwhelming priority. Consequently, social inequalities between rich and poor increased significantly.

It is relevant to point at a significant Lebanese middle class that was formed in exile during the civil war in places like the Africa, US, Australia, Canada, Latin America, and the Gulf. These expats also benefited greatly from the meteoric rise in oil prices, remitting large sums of money to their relatives back home.

The middle class does in fact seem to be in a constant state of flux and renewal. One group loses out, while another emerges to take its place. There is some evidence of the emergence of a new mobile and globalised middle class — professionals who work abroad for a while and return, only to repeat the cycle again and again.

This means that new alliances will be established between the traditional classes, which are currently in decline, and the emerging ones, based on their common social interests. The alliance between businessmen and the emerging middle class will also continue, so as to protect the interests of these groups and their economic gains, accumulated during the period of economic transformation that began from the early 1960s.

The complexity and scope of the Shiite middle class in Lebanon and the difficulty in

defining it require us to focus our attention on the social processes within it and the political struggles in which members of the middle class rose and began to play a role. The middle class in the Arab world is at the same time globalised and localised. The middle class in Shiite Lebanon is (probably) a part of global process, but its conditions have unique characteristics and determinants.

Social Class, Sectarianism and Political Culture in Lebanon

There exists a well-established relationship between social class and political attitudes and behaviour in Europe and North America, supported of an abundance of research.⁵² According to those studies, the general tendency is to link lower class individuals to espouse 'liberal' or progressive economic policies, and to support left or socialist parties. Additionally, "the lower an individual is in status, the less likely is he to be active and involved - not only in politics, but also in other aspects of community life".⁵³

The situation is much less clear in Lebanon. First of all, there is not much published research on social classes in contemporary Lebanon, especially on the dynamics between social classes (Shi'a in particular) and political-economic culture. Furthermore, Lebanon's political life revolves mainly around coalitions, factions, ideological blocs - where sectarian, ethnic and family lines remain of overwhelming importance in determining political behaviours. Emrys Peters in his study on a southern Lebanese village, has analysed how sectarian immobility appears to be changing as a result of increased education, and the resultant increase in social and occupational mobility - not

⁵² See Melvin M. Tumin (1967), *Social Stratification. The Forms and Functions of Inequality*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall; Fred I. Greenstein (1969), *Personality and Politics: Problems of Evidence, Inference, and Conceptualization*. Chicago: Markham Publishing Company.

⁵³ F. I. Greenstein (1969), pp. 88-89.

to mention the political awareness on the part of the lower strata.⁵⁴ In the southern Lebanese village Peters studied, a loose coalition of high ranking families disintegrated after having been defeated by the lower status majority to whom they could no longer appeal effectively for support.⁵⁵ A similar situation was found in a study carried out in the central Beqaa valley by Armstrong and Bashshur.⁵⁶ The authors tried to detect a relationship between horizontal mobility and attitudes towards modernity. Along, with this, they discovered other factors just as important: in particular, religion and occupation: those in the higher occupational levels (in terms of education required, income received, and political power wielded) were more progressive than those on the lower levels. In other terms, there are factors other than social class which are more important in determining political behaviour and attitudes: sectarian affiliation (rather than 'religion'), kinship and family relationships.⁵⁷ The studies cited give some support

⁵⁴ Emrys Peters, "Shifts in Power in a Lebanese Village", in R. Antoun and I. Harik (eds.) (1972), *Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 165-197.

The works of George Balandier, specifically his theories on kinship and lineages (in G. Balandier (1972), *Political Anthropology*. Middlesex (UK): Penguin Books Ltd, p. 50.) should be also considered to analyse and describe the historical clan structure of Lebanese society. In reference to the rise, establishment, and decline of 'asabiyya, Balandier's examination of Marxist theories according to which class-society and the state are a result of the dissolution of the primitive communities and the political emerges with the disappearance of personal blood ties could be considered. Likewise, Balandier's investigation on lineage structure and power, territorial structure and political structure — as well as the "total political enterprise", from the capitalisation of wealth to the secession and genealogical legitimisation — could constitute an important theoretical outline for a structured approach on the evolution of 'family power' in Shiite Lebanon.

⁵⁵ Joseph G. Jabbara and Rima E. Jabbara, "Social Class and Political Culture in Lebanon", in *Indian Political Science Review*, vol. 10, no. ii, 1976, pp. 107-134.

⁵⁶ Lincoln Armstrong and Rashid Bashshur, "Ecological Patterns and Value Orientations in Lebanon", in *Public Opinion Quarterly* 22, No. 3 (1958), pp. 406-415.

⁵⁷ Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner argue that the development of nationalism is intimately bound up with the transition to a new form of economic organisation: the rise of capitalism (B. Anderson (1991), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso; E. Gellner (1983), *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press). Whereas Anderson and Gellner's assumption - subscribing to the influential account of modernisation formulated by Max Weber, according to which the transition to modernity is tied to an overall weakening of the relevance of religion in social life - necessarily implies a shift towards secularisation, other authors, such as Linda Colley, have argued that the rise of modernity did not necessarily remove religious identifications and discourse from national public spheres and from popular understandings of nationhood (L. Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument", *Journal of British Studies*, no. 31, October 1992, pp. 309-29). In the Lebanese context, this latest assumption rings even more authentic. In fact, belonging to a religious community in Lebanon is the only legitimate way of being part of the Lebanese nation. That doesn't necessarily mean that identity and nationalism should automatically concern the rule of God. Nonetheless, as Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr emphasises, Shiite modern activism is a way of defining a national public sphere that is in accordance with Shiite iconography without necessarily changing the fundamental concepts of territorial integrity and popular sovereignty (Shaery-Eisenlohr R. (2011), *Shi'ite Lebanon*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 4-5).

to this theory, as do the documented differences in economic condition and education amongst the different sects of the Lebanese populations.

Another possibility should be considered: the fact that it could be misleading and inaccurate to transplant Western notions of social stratification to the analyses of Middle Eastern society, let alone to a sectarian and fragmented country like Lebanon. Modern Lebanon has, in fact, emerged from what was an advanced agrarian society composed of groups which shared the same language and culture, but had different religious beliefs and practices. From early recorded times the area which now constitutes Lebanon has had a varied population with both Western and Eastern influences.⁵⁸ While appropriately indicating the importance of confessional and extended family groups in relation to other type of social differentiation, observers have often minimised additional factors upon which distinctions may be based — economic, educational or occupational criteria. Some have rejected the concept of social class as a useful tool of analyses, and few have seriously attempted to define or clarify the concept as it may be applied to Lebanon. What seems to be quite clear is that the primary element of social class — socioeconomic hierarchies with different lifestyles — most definitely do exists. And it existed even prior to the fall down of the *zu'ama* system. The study from Armstrong and Hirabayshi⁵⁹ conducted on eleven varied communities in the southern Beqaa valley in 1956 revealed a non-flat stratification system with more than just to polarised categories (landowners and village-dwelling peasants) identified. Further support for these conclusions was provided in another study of thirteen villages in the central Beqaa area by Churchill in 1959.⁶⁰

With the collapse of the pre-civil war semi-feudal system and the advent of the civil war, along with the waves of internal and external migration, the Shi'a has diversified even further. On one hand, migration has served to channel away political malcontent,

⁵⁸ Paul D. Starr "Lebanon", in C.A.O. Van Nieuwenhuijze (ed.) (1977), *Commoners, Climbers and Notables. A Sampler of Studies on Social Ranking in the Middle East*. Leiden (The Netherlands): Brill, p. 206.

⁵⁹ Lincoln Armstrong and G.K. Hirabashi, "Social Differentiation in Selected Lebanese Villages", in *American Sociological Review* 21, 1956, p. 425-434.

⁶⁰ Charles W. Churchill, "Village Life in the Central Beqa'a Valley of Lebanon", *Middle East Economic Papers*, pp. 1-18, Beirut, American University of Beirut.

on the other - with the entrance on the scene of political movements like Amal and Hezbollah - Shiite migrants (bourgeoisie and entrepreneurs) have been the backbone of such organisations. Urban migrants and diaspora Shiites continue to maintain extended family connections and village political commitments. Urban migrants, specifically, tend to secure their jobs through family contacts, as traditional relationships continue to be valued. This is one reason why labour unions have not fully developed as important political forces yet. Loyalty to unions, trade or professional organisations, comes second to loyalty to family, sect or region. But this lack of separation between kinship relationships and rational economic organisation did not prevent economic development for Shiites; in fact, it promoted it. The continuing patterns of communication among them - and the small distances between the villages and the city - have contributed to prevent the same breakdowns that social scientists have registered in other countries as a consequence of urban-rural migration.

In these last few decades, religious institutions and extended family groups had a near monopoly over a vast majority of the Shi'a population in Lebanon (the same dynamic can be applied to a lesser extent to other sects) on such matters as education, welfare, political and economic affairs. Shiite middle-class and upper class professionals and entrepreneurs who were able to pursue a career outside the community and that have ceased to be 'sons of the village' have become a part of a more cosmopolitan system of differentiation, which essentially coincides with the capital - Beirut. For many of them, Beirut is the only way to take a distance from the patronage of political organisations - even though maintaining solid relationships with the enlarged families in the villages.

In 1974, Claude Dubar wrote an article entitled "Structure confessionnelle et classes sociales au Liban" in which he reviewed the results of research conducted over the course of many years with his colleague Salim Nasr, and which had formed the basis of their seminal work, first published in 1976: *Les classes sociales au Liban*.⁶¹ Based on this, Dubar calls for a double break to be made: a break with the cultural idealisation which denies any efficacy to the social base, and a break with the mechanistic

⁶¹ Claude Dubar and Selim Nasr (1982), *Al tabaqaat al ijtimaa'iyah fi Lubnaan* (Social classes in Lebanon), Arab Research Institute, Beirut.

materialism which denies any independence to “traditional social relationships”.⁶² Thus Dubar defines his and Nasr’s methodology as a quest for the means by which this structure might be able to use economic relationships to determine the social practices of individuals, and to adjust the structure of symbolic relationships, that are first and foremost arranged according to a sectarian logic that cannot be readily resolved into effective economic relationships. The biggest plus of Dubar and Nasr’s contribution is that it recognises the existence of two structures in Lebanese society, the class structure and the sectarian structure - though it is on shaky ground when outlining the relationships between the political and economic, and between sect and class. Dubar’s preference for locating sects within the arena of politics, symbolism and consciousness, and the classes within the economic sphere, is a return to the ideology of the Left and the nationalist movement of the 1970s, in which sectarianism was either described in ideological terms (as ‘false consciousness’) or located within a ‘semi-feudal superstructure’ insisting that the main contradiction that led to the eruption of the civil war was the that between the economic development of the country’s infrastructure and the backwardness of its superstructure (i.e. feudalism, sectarianism, etc.).⁶³

There is another formulation that defines sects as ‘constructed’ entities or, following Benedict Anderson’s famous work on nationalism *Imagined Communities*,⁶⁴ as ‘imagined’ entities — though in many instances the inspiration from Anderson goes no further than the phrasing of the title. We should emphasise that by ‘imagined’ communities, Anderson does not mean to imply that they belong to a mental or imagined world. Rather, he claims it is impossible for individual community members to truly know one another, despite their belief that they share a common group existence.⁶⁵ Anderson seeks to differentiate the organic community, whose model is the village, from the imagined community. Furthermore, Anderson believes that the process of imagination implicit in the rise and formation of national identities is a very materialist bond, which he attributes to “print capitalism”, in other words a specific

⁶² Ibid., p. 312.

⁶³ F. Traboulsi (2014).

⁶⁴ Benedict Anderson (1991).

⁶⁵ F. Traboulsi (2014).

period in the development of capitalism which saw the printed word transmitted at speeds far greater than the manuscript and oral transmissions of previous periods. The sects are true societal entities, albeit ones that could be described as ‘imagined’ in Anderson’s usage. Certainly they are not ahistorical immutable essences, but are constructed and deconstructed, united and separated, their importance within the social sphere swelling and ebbing, all for reasons most of which do not lie within the sect but outside it.⁶⁶

Mahdi Amel denies that the adjectives ‘religious’ or ‘confessional’ can be applied to sects. For him, the term ‘sect’ refers to politics; it is defined by its political function. Sectarianism refers to a political relationship, one that only exists within and through the state.⁶⁷ Oddly enough, Mahdi was insisting on this theory at a time in which the state itself was disintegrating in Lebanon and sectarian leaders and warlords were laying claim to their ‘territories’ and ‘peoples’. Not content to decouple the religious from the sectarian, Mahdi goes out of his way to sever any link between the political and the economic and between state and society. The sectarian issue is a political issue and not an economic one:⁶⁸ there are no sects in economics, where people are defined by their class affiliations alone. The sectarian balance has no relevance to the bourgeoisie or the working class, even though some 80 per cent of these individuals belong to a single sect.⁶⁹ That said, the sole possible connection between the political and the economic (and the sects and classes) in Mahdi’s eyes is, “a relationship of articulation between two entirely separate levels”⁷⁰. Mahdi gives no detail about what he means by “articulation”, or whether or not the “separation” between the two realms precludes the possibility of mutual interaction.

Where Mahdi does go into detail is outlining the functional role of the sectarian in serving the class-based structure, where the sectarian is, “the distinctive historical form taken by the political system with which the bourgeoisie exercises its class-based

⁶⁶ Ibid..

⁶⁷ Mahdi Amel (1986), *Fil dawla al taa’ifiya* (The sectarian state). Beirut: Dar Al Farabi, p. 30; cfr. F. Traboulsi (2014).

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 152.

⁶⁹ 1989 ، الطبعة الثالثة 1974 أزمة الحضارة العربية أم أزمة البرجوازيات العربية. الطبعة الأولى

⁷⁰ Mahdi Amel, *Al Tariq*, Issue 6, January 1978, Volume 37, pp. 63-64; cfr. F. Traboulsi (2014).

control,” preventing the working classes from constituting itself into “the masses” (i.e.: into an ‘independent political force’). In Mahdi’s eyes, the sect is not an entity, nor an essence, nor indeed it is a “thing” at all: it is a political relationship.⁷¹

Mahdi’s definition leaves some seemingly unanswered questions: How do we build a bourgeoisie without a State’s support? What are the hypothesis? What is it that allows *une certaine bourgeoisie* to exercise dominance? What is it that compels the working masses to abide by this relationship and prevents them from forming into an independent political force? Mahdi can only explain politics in terms of politics, and given that he has reduced sectarianism to the status of a political relationship in the service of class dominance, it is difficult to discuss about it as an ideological component of this dominant/subservient relationship. We are confronted, in Amel’s vision, by two classes: a bourgeoisie too dazed to carry out its historically appointed task to construct a non-sectarian, bourgeois state; and a working class trapped in a politico-sectarian subservient relationship, incapable of apprehending the vital need to liberate itself and form an independent political force. But the problem arises if we consider that the Shi’a community at a certain point was effectively able to ‘liberate’ itself and become an independent social and political identity. How does this can be explained then?

Mahdi himself was certainly aware of the necessity of liberation and revolutionary theories, and of the political ferment in Lebanon prior to the civil war. In 1974, fifty thousand people demonstrated against the move to privatise education. In the tobacco fields of southern Lebanon the farmers went on strike, with the South Lebanon Tobacco Farmers’ Union attempting to come out from under the thumb of the old notables. Hamdan had taken his nom de plume - Mahdi Amel - from Lebanon’s southern mountains, the Jabal ‘Amil, one of the homes to the country’s Shi’a population, an area of economic wretchedness. Mahdi Amel travelled across the tobacco farmers’ bases, giving lectures about Marxism and its relevance to Lebanon’s contemporary problems. He spoke in homes and mosques and was listened to “with religious silence”.⁷² He explained how backwardness worked, and what were the intentions of Lebanon’s right

⁷¹ M. Amel (1986), p. 255-257.

⁷² Vijay Prashad, “The Arab Gramsci”, in *Frontline*, March 21, 2014.

wing (i.e.: the Phalange) as representatives of outside forces - outlining the conditions for the development of a social movement which was about to be led by the anti-communist/leftist Musa al-Sadr: discrimination, structural tension and disenfranchisement. Though Musa al-Sadr was able to conceive that the potential success of a movement does not depend merely on the sense of frustration ensuing from relative discrimination, but also on the presence of resources. The existence of resources such as money, manpower, means of recruitment and distribution is essential for the emergence of a movement whose intention is to have its own part in a state which has been neglecting its presence for a long time. Yet at the same time, we must acknowledge that the development of a Shi'a movement was promoted by the ideological and religious mobilisation practiced by sectarian leaderships and institutions. For this reason it is imperative to recognise that sectarian/confessional loyalty can play a role in guiding consensual actions, no less important than its role in organising of coercion and control. Al-Sadr's activism, which began in the mid 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s, shaped the political dynamics of the Shiite community, as he attempted to weaken traditional families on one hand and compete with the emerging left on the other. His insistence on enmity with Israel, his invitation to combat it, and his simultaneous criticism of the Palestinian practices and methods characterised his political ideology, as did his rhetoric on the Shiite rights in Lebanon and on defending the 'deprived' (*mahrumeen*) in general.

What remains essential in (partially) providing an answer to the question of how can a new-born bourgeoisie take on the state's resources without the aid of an 'older' established middle-class - is the notion that in Lebanon sects operate in nooks and crannies that the classes cannot enter. Their favourite theatre of operation is employment, public administration and the division of labour, and the spaces between city and countryside, centre and periphery, and mental and manual labour - just as they are governed by the dynamics of professional and social mobility, etc. What brings the sects into this is their resistance to the laws of the market: they guarantee certain individuals a share in the labour market, either preventing monopoly or, alternatively, protecting monopolist positions, according to each sect's position in the social pyramid. But in all cases, the sectarian differences - via minor educational, regional, labour and

social privileges and disadvantages - are apparent within the broader pattern of the larger class divisions.⁷³

Sects interfere in the labour market via restrictions and amendments to the market's laws necessitated by the presence of sectarian 'allocations' of positions within the state and the public sector.⁷⁴ Positions and responsibilities within an organisation can be distributed for the purposes of maintaining or securing a certain balance of power between staff members from different sects. During the civil war, a number of institutions relied on militias, both as employment agencies in their own right and to control and supervise the workforce.

Sects also play a role in social mobility. A number of factors are involved here, such as the unequal access to cultural capital (i.e. access to private versus public education at all levels of the educational system), unequal drop-out rates at all stages of education, unequal access to educational opportunities abroad (and differences between the countries accessed and the subject studied).⁷⁵

In any case, the sectarian system oversees a vast game: a competition over rent in and through the state and the struggle over the distribution of state services, public works and contracts, and battles to optimise the various regional allocations taken from the state budget. It is a competition that also includes the apportioning of state contracts and the division of various forms of rents between the sectarian blocs and alliances.

In such politico-economic relationships the sects act as conduits to modify the class structure, by means of two processes: firstly, their role within the arena of political power, which allows them to generate new economic interests or defend/develop existing ones; and secondly, upward social mobility, which is the product of sectarian groups providing services outside the institutions of the state in education, charity, social and health services, the distribution of political funds, etc.

⁷³ F. Traboulsi (2014).

⁷⁴ Slowly but surely this sectarian system of allocation became a customary practice widely followed in the private sector. This is evident in the preference given by employers or heads of economic institutions to members of their particular sect. This leads to discrimination in employment, in the apportioning of wages, in the granting of promotions, in the allocation of executive power within an organisation, and elsewhere

⁷⁵ F. Traboulsi (2014).

The state constitutes a space for the reproduction of sectarian/confessional allocation policies based on sectarian partisanship (including negotiated settlements), just as it provides a space for the reproduction of the class structure, including all adjustments to this structure based on the relative strength of each class and the nature of political power.⁷⁶

We cannot understand the internal balances of power, and the transformations, even upheavals, in sectarian relationships, only by reference to the sects themselves, and without allowing for the introduction of internal social developments. More precisely, demographic changes and social and class dynamics have the greatest influence over changes in the sect's position within the political sphere and the state and the sometimes radical reordering of the balances of power that take place within the sect. In this respect - the rise of the Lebanese Shi'a community starting from the 1960s is the most contemporary and obvious case of the dynamics described.

The necessity to take partially a stance away from classical Marxism derives also from the consideration that Lebanon is quintessentially a pluralistic society. *Pluralism* in its social, cultural and political meaning is a theoretical construct which obviously emphasises vertical divisions of society, itself an organic structure. Pluralism ignores horizontal divisions, that is, divisions of social class. The concept of social class derives from a whole different theoretical tradition (Marx) in which the classical definition of social class is in relation to the means of production.⁷⁷ The class structure is in flux and certain classes are on the rise while others are in eclipse or are disappearing. In periods of rapid, disaggregated⁷⁸ social transformation from one mode of production to another, the societal practices are dislocated and class conflict is aggravated. The interplay of vertical and horizontal cleavages, of sect and class in Lebanon, in a period of rapid

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Karl Marx (1954), *Capital*, vol.1. Moscow: Progress House; Robert C. Tucker (ed.) (1978), "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in *The Marx- Engels Reader*, New York: W.W. Norton (2nd edition).

⁷⁸ John G. Taylor (1979), *From Modernization to Modes of Production*, London: The MacMillan Press

economic transformation produced sect-classes which emerged differentiated, unevenly stratified, polarised and antagonistic. This in the context of the intervention of external factors led to serious and nearly unbridgeable social-political fissures which are behind the incredibly (un)civil war.

In the same vein, social pluralism refers to societies which are “segmented into corporate groups” whose “social structure is compartmentalised into analogous, parallel, non-complementary but distinguishable sets of institutions”.⁷⁹ These institutions typically are duplicatory and culturally similar. It should be clear, however, that not all institutions of a pluralist society are segmented and duplicatory. Socially, in pluralist societies, different groups participate together in one or two institutions, the economy and the government, but otherwise maintain separate institutions. Relative economic interdependence or integration and political (governmental) “collaboration” draw the different groups together while in all other areas separate institutions keep them apart. Such societies are complex, and the dynamics of centripetal, integrative forces versus centrifugal, disintegrative ones may generate potentially volatile social change and conflict. Lebanon is such a society.⁸⁰ Contrary to the conventional assumption of pluralism which proposes the co-existence of social groups in one society, the sectarian groups of Lebanon have had a long and complex history of peaceful co-existence alternating with conflict and civil violence. Tolerance and co-existence, as well as conflict, are obviously not permanent qualities of pluralist societies but are consequences of historical factors which promote such conditions.⁸¹

The Impact of uneven western economic penetration on the *iqta* (feudalism) in Lebanon produced conditions which politicised the sects. The cultural, economic and political institutions that the French rule introduced, encouraged and later formalised and reinforced the differences between the sects and widened the social gap. The second wave of western economic expansion into Lebanon differentiated and stratified the sects

⁷⁹ John Gulick, “The Religious Structure of Lebanese Culture,” *Internationales Jahrbuch für Religionssoziologie* I, Westdeutscher Verlag, Köln and Opalden, 1965. See also: Halim Barakat (1977), *Lebanon in Strife*. University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.

⁸⁰ Samih K. Farsoun, “E pluribus Plura or e Pluribus Unum? Cultural Pluralism and Social Class in Lebanon”, in Karam Karam (ed.) (2005), *Le mouvement civil au Liban. Revendications, protestations et mobilisations associative dans l’après-guerre*. Paris: Karthala.

⁸¹ S. K. Farsoun (2005).

unevenly. It produced *sect-classes*⁸² and triggered both inter-sect and intra-sect conflicts as well as sectarian and cross-sect political parties. The uneven impact fell more heavily on the Shi'a community, whose traditional leadership lost legitimacy and control of the dispossessed and urbanised peasants and urban masses as their economic interests increasingly contradicted those of their co-sectarians and their ability to provide patronage was overwhelmed. Thus, any call for social justice (*a'adalah ijtima'iyya*) would take on sectarian meaning and would quickly turn into a sectarian socio-political confrontation instead of a class conflict, the long civil war and external interventions have reasserted sectarian identities and loyalties.

The Formation of a Social Movement: Theoretical Approaches

A social movement is defined as a social framework that is usually organised - acting outside the established system, possessing characteristics of collective action, and making use of certain levels of organisation and action that create continuity - for the sake of promoting or preventing changes in the existing social order.⁸³

J. McCarthy and M. N. Zald defined social movements as an accumulation of views and beliefs within the population that represent priorities for changing some of the elements of social structure or of the distribution of social welfare.⁸⁴

In the research literature, there are four main theoretical approaches that explain the formation and action of the phenomenon of social movements. They differ by identification and in accounting for the causes of the social movements' development, and mainly in the weight ascribed to the influence of one of the various factors in the process. Adherents of the psychological discipline consider psychological traits and changes at the individual and general level as the principal explanation for the formation of movements. In contrast, researchers from the social-economic school claim that the social position and the distribution of resources are the primary explanations for the

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Doug McAdam and David A. Snow, "Introduction - Social Movements. Conceptual and Theoretical Issues", in Doug McAdam and David A. Snow (eds.) (1997), *Social Movements: Readings on their Emergence, Mobilization and Dynamics*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

⁸⁴ John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory", *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6, May 1977, pp.1217-18.

shaping and activity of social revolutionary movements. Interestingly, the first Shiite social movement in Lebanon (*harakat al-mahrumeen*) is the result of both those tendencies, with a remarkable predominance of the latter. Furthermore, the Shiite awakening in Lebanon is a social-political protest movement in its essence. The man who led and shaped the patterns of this social Shiite protest in the 1960s and 1970s was Imam Musa al-Sadr, a Shiite cleric with the characteristics of a religious and political leader.

The *theory of relative discrimination* is based on psychological approaches and maintains that individuals will establish protest movements or will join them when they feel deprived in relation to other groups in the population. For them, joining a movement constitutes a means of improving social status and restoring justice to its rightful place.⁸⁵

Critics of this theory argue that this is only a partial explanation for the establishment of social movements. In their opinion, discriminatory condition is neither a mandatory nor a sufficient stipulation for founding a movement. This theory does not deal in any way with the contribution of social resources and processes causing the formation of a protest movement.⁸⁶

According to the *mass society theory*, social movements appear following a process of societal disintegration. They comprise people who are socially and personally disconnected and feel worthless as individuals. Joining a social movement provides a sense of belonging and social affinity. According to this approach, people with a strong social connection will less frequently join social protest movements.⁸⁷

Critics of this theory argue that it ascribes an exaggerated importance to the influence and weight of the psychological aspect on the micro level (individual) to the point of absurdity. From this, it can be deduced that social movements are a product of defective

⁸⁵ Herbert Blumer, "Collective Behavior," in *Review of Sociology: Analysis of a Decade*, ed. J. B. Gittler, New York, 1957. See also: Ted R. Gurr (1970), *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Denton E. Morrison, "Some Notes toward Theory on Relative Deprivation, Social Movements, and Social Change," in Louis E. Genevie (ed.) (1978), *Collective Behavior and Social Movements*. Itasca, IL: Peacock, 1978, pp. 202–9 as quoted by Eitan Azani (2009), *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God. From Revolution to Institutionalization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁸⁶ E. Azani (2009).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

people and not of a defective society. Furthermore, the research findings of Doug McAdam, John James Whalen, and Richard Flacks, who analysed the personal profiles of those who joined social movements in the United States during the 1960s, clearly contradict the social isolation approach that supports the theory. They found that people who entered social movements had, in fact, a strong social and political affinity.⁸⁸

The *theory of structural tension* was developed in the 1960s by a researcher named Smelser. It emphasises the social dimension and its influence on the development of movements. According to this approach, six factors encourage the growth of movements: a high level of social tension, a sense of relative discrimination, the presence of agitating factors, the development of leadership and organisational structure, readiness to join collective action, and the way the governmental system reacts. Critics of this theory argue that it ignores the role and the value of resources in the explanation of the formation of movements.

Resource management theory adds a central dimension to the explanation of the formation of movements. It maintains that the success of movements does not depend merely on the sense of frustration ensuing from relative discrimination, but also on the presence of resources. The existence of resources such as money, manpower, means of recruitment and distribution, and accessibility to communication media is essential for the emergence of movements. A movement must enlist internal or external resources to finance its activities, which is particularly critical in the initial stages. At this point, supporters of this theory emphasise the important factors in the development of a movement: the availability of resources and the existence of a formal organisational infrastructure.⁸⁹

As Asef Bayat has observed, operating in a structuralist paradigm, resource mobilisation theory, in line with other rationalist models, emphasises actors' rational motives for being part of a collective. Yet, like collective behaviour, it also presupposes the

⁸⁸ John G. Meshunim (1999), *Sociology*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, pp. 620–621.

⁸⁹ Charles Tilly (1978), *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley; McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements."; Lewis Killian, "Organization, Rationality and Spontaneity in the Civil Rights Movement," *American Journal of Sociology* 49, 1984, pp. 770–83; and David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier, "Social Movement Spillover," in Doug McAdam and David A. Snow (eds.) (2010), *Readings on Social Movements: Origins, Dynamics and Outcomes*. London and New York: Oxford University Press.

existence of somewhat ‘metaphysical’ commonness among social movement actors, with the difference that it bases this commonness on actors’ understanding of their shared interests. Authors working in this model place particular emphasis on collectivities based upon complex and structured organisations in which movement leaders play a decisive role. Disarray or differences might appear, but these often result from external factors, for instance, ‘repressive conditions’. Otherwise, cohesion, concerted ideas and actions are in a sense define a movement.⁹⁰ Perceived in this fashion, social movements come to characterise Bourdieu’s ‘real groupness’, whose existence depends on its capacity to be represented, and to be identified by its leadership. The image of Marcos, the leader of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran and imam Musa al-Sadr in Lebanon as the embodiment of mass mobilisation, reflects a vision of social movement which dominates the narratives of much scholarly work.

From Resource Management Theory to the Reshuffling of Capitals

In studying the Lebanese Shi‘a’s formation of a middle class/entrepreneurial identity, I employ the concept of resource mobilisation in relation to Ousmane Kane’s interpretation of Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of different kinds of capitals: religious, political, symbolic, social, and economic capitals. According to Ousmane Kane, accumulation of capital is “a process through which social actors go in order to obtain a given sort of capital”⁹¹, and by conversion, spending the accumulated capital to get something in return (mobilisation of civil society; political/identity power and stability). Employing the concept of resource mobilisation in relation to Ousmane Kane’s interpretation of Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of different kinds of capitals (e.g. religious, political, symbolic, social, and economic capitals) leads us to investigate how and why a shift in Shi‘a identity took place.

The term resource mobilisation is used to refer to the ways a social movement utilises such resources as money, political influence, access to the media, and personnel. The success of a movement for *change* [identity reconstruction] will depend in good part on how

⁹⁰ Asef Bayat, “Islamism and Social Movement Theory”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 6, pp. 891-908, 2005; Charles Tilly, Meyer Zald & D. McCarthy (eds.) (1978), *Social Movements in an Organizational Society*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

⁹¹ Ousmane Kane (2003), *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Renovation of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition*. Leiden: Brill.

effectively it mobilises its resources... Unlike the relative-deprivation approach, the resource-mobilisation perspective focuses on strategic difficulties [challenges] facing social movements.⁹²

Resource mobilisation plays a central role since the success of a social movement for change or identity construction depends on how well it mobilises its resources in order to face strategic difficulties or challenges. The concept of resource mobilisation is pivotal to the survival of a social movement.

Even today, not only Amal and Hezbollah's use of resource mobilisation employs different types of capital and the shifting balances among them, but even Lebanese diaspora Shiites who are not necessarily formally affiliated with either political party are still somehow involved in the process of resource mobilisation, whether at a religious, symbolic, political, social, economic level. This latest assumption is again reinforced by Ousmane Kane's application of Bourdieu's classification of capitals to the study of social movements. The Lebanese Shiite community has created its own institutions up to the point to become self-sufficient and to produce a very quick social mobility. The Shi'a has managed to create a space diminishing the power of Christians and Sunnis through social mobility *and* through the power of the arms: "we liberate, we don't want to be part of the state, we are powerful enough", generating a detachment from the institutions of the government, in the framework of the classic Weberian 'dual-closure' theory ('jumping in and excluding the others').⁹³ In this respect, it is worthwhile mentioning also Frank Parkin, best known for his contribution to the theory of social closure, most fully laid out in his *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*.⁹⁴ Parkin follows Weber in understanding closure as the process by which social

⁹² Richard T. Schaefer and Robert P. Lamm, *Sociology*. Sixth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1998, 584-5.

⁹³ Max Weber (1978), *Economy and society*.

Weber introduces the basic concept of "open and closed social relations." He points to different degrees, criteria, and motivations for closure, exemplifying processes of monopolisation with respect to both market relations and ethnic communities.

"Social closure" is one of the most basic terms and concepts in sociology. Basically, closure refers to processes of drawing boundaries, constructing identities, and building communities in order to monopolise scarce resources for one's own group, thereby excluding others from using them. Society is not a homogenous entity but is instead internally structured and subdivided by processes of social closure. Some social formations, such as groups, organisations, or institutions, may be open to everybody, provided they are capable of participation, while access to most others is limited due to certain criteria that either allow people to become members or exclude them from membership. Therefore, social closure is a ubiquitous, everyday phenomenon that can be observed in almost every sphere and place in the social world.

⁹⁴ Frank Parkin (1979), *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. New York: Columbia University Press.

collectives seek to maximise rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles. This entails the singling out of certain social or physical attributes as the justificatory basis of exclusion. Weber suggests that virtually any group attribute – race, language, social origin, religion- may be seized upon provided it can be used for “the monopolisation of specific, usually economic opportunities. This monopolisation is directed against competitors who share some positive or negative characteristic; its purpose is always the closure of social and economic opportunities to *outsiders*. The nature of these exclusionary practices, and the completeness of social closure, determine the general character of the distributive system.”⁹⁵

Parkin identifies two main types, exclusionary and usurpatory closure. The distinguishing feature of exclusionary closure is the attempt by one group to secure for itself a privileged position at the expense of some other group through processes of subordination. e refers to this metaphorically as the use of power downwards. Usurpatory closure, however, is the use of power upwards, by the groups of subordinates created by the exclusionary closure, aimed at winning a greater share of resources, threatening “to bite into the privileges of legally defined superiors”.⁹⁶

Religious capital: According to Bourdieu, religious capital refers to the way religious knowledge is appropriated and disseminated.⁹⁷ Kane broadens Bourdieu’s mandate by making the distinction between “ancient religious capital” and “new religious capital”. He labels the former as “non formally certified cultural capital”, and the latter as “formally certified cultural capital”. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital refers mainly to education, culture, and related skills. Kane adds, “Non formally certified cultural capital refers to the religious expertise, which... includes a combination of both exoteric religious knowledge (Quran, Islamic law, Islamic exegesis) and esoteric sciences [Shiite theosophy for instance]... This capital is not based on the possession of

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.; Frank Parkin, “Social Stratification”, in T. B. Bottomore & Robert A. Nisbet (1979), *A History of Sociological Analysis*. London: Heinemann; Roth Guenther “Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique by Frank Parkin”, *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 306-307.

⁹⁷ Bourdieu used the term religious capital in “Genèse et structure du champ religieux”, *Revue française de sociologie*, (12), 1971, 295-334. See also the English translation “Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field”, *Comparative Social Research*, 13 (1991), pp. 1-44.

a university degree, thus it is not formally certified. It tends to be the prerogative of traditional religious authorities...”.⁹⁸ Kane continues, “formally certified cultural capital is based on expertise in exoteric knowledge, ... but it equally includes knowledge of the Quran as well as knowledge of some secular subject matters (foreign languages, history, geography, mathematics, etc.). More importantly, formally certified cultural capital requires the possession of a degree delivered by a university or another formal institution of learning”.⁹⁹ (Middle-rank Shi‘a *cadres* and the elite are essentially the product of the American and European system of education). Kane’s analysis is cogent because, even though today the religious aspect has lost some of its initial importance, *‘ulama* still play an important role in the crystallisation and dissemination of the parties’ religious ideology.

Symbolic capital: Bourdieu defines symbolic capital as the “degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour [possessed by someone and] founded on the dialectic of knowledge and recognition”.¹⁰⁰ Since Hezbollah labelled itself as an Islamic *jihadi* movement in its initial phase, and Amal refers to itself as nationalist patriotic movement, symbolic capital acquires vital importance. Symbolic capital is an indispensable component of Amal and Hezbollah’s ideology to the extent that it acquires a substantial importance even among those Shiites who are not in any way involved in the political arena, but still decide to support the movements for a mere sense of ethnic identity. This seems to be in conformity with Amal and Hezbollah’s accumulation and conversion of capital.

Political capital: “Political capital is everything that enables leaders to get anything done. It’s their reputation, their ability to make the newspaper, their statutory role, their friends in the community, the amount of money they can raise, the number of people who support them, the length of time people are willing to pay attention to them and a

⁹⁸ This corresponds to a few of Hezbollah’s leading religious scholars (*ulama*), cadres, and the elite, who are the product of religious seminaries (*al-hawzat al-‘ilmiyya*)

⁹⁹ O. Kane (2003).

¹⁰⁰ Pierre Bourdieu (1993), *The Field of Cultural Production*. Cambridge: Polity Press; *In Other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, as cited in Kane, *Muslim Modernity*, p. 21.

lot more than that as well.”¹⁰¹ Thus, political capital is present in both Amal and Hezbollah’s realms. Political capital is the ability to get the bureaucrats to pay attention when the ‘*wasta*’ people call. The ability to listen to the constituents and get their trust that the issue will be resolved. In a country where basic infrastructures are far from being guaranteed, it becomes essential to know the ‘right’ people to secure them. This is where all the different capitals become intertwined and where the political capital runs parallel to the social capital.

Social capital: Social capital is “the network or influential patrons that you can use to support your actions”.¹⁰² Social capital is contacts, acquaintances, and the practice of durable social networks. According to Kane, social capital “is what ordinary language calls ‘connections’ (*wasta*). By formalising this concept, Bourdieu argues, one “acquires the means of analysing the logic whereby this particular kind of capital is accumulated, transmitted and reproduced, the means of understanding how it turns into economic capital and, conversely, what work is required to convert economic capital into social capital, the means of grasping the function of institutions such as clubs or quite simply the family”.¹⁰³

Economic capital: Economic capital corresponds to “stocks and shares but also the surplus present in very high salaries”.¹⁰⁴ According to Kane, “economic capital refers to material wealth in the most common sense of the word.”¹⁰⁵

Kane’s interpretation of Bourdieu’s theory helps us to classify and study his classification of capitals (religious, symbolic, political, social, and economic) as forms of resource mobilisation, mainly through accumulation and conversion of capital. A description and analysis of the interplay of the different forms of capital and why and

¹⁰¹ <http://www.theaesthetic.com/NewFiles/capital.html>

¹⁰² Bridget Fowler, “Pierre Bourdieu’s Sociological Theory of Culture”. *Variant*, no. 2 (Summer 1999) 8, p. 2.

¹⁰³ Pierre Bourdieu (1995), *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage Publications, pp.32-33, as quoted by O. Kane (2003), p. 23.

¹⁰⁴ B. Fowler (1999), p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ O. Kane (2003).

how occur shifting balances among them enables a clearer picture of Shiite identity and economic construction in Lebanon.

Lebanese Shi'a as a Social Embedding Insurgency?

Social embedding is a condition where the local population and an insurgency share the same goals and objectives in obtaining political control of their environment. This is in sharp contrast to when the insurgent intimidates the population to follow its orders. In the case of social embedding, the population willingly follows the insurgent's directions and guidance, which may include everything from political protests to outright revolt.

Social embedding is not concept for Lebanese Shi'a: it is the reality. Through a very diversified and elaborated operation of re-shuffling of capitals - economic, religious and symbolic - Lebanese shiites were *de facto* able to create a situation where the central state was forced to accept the political insurgence. This move proved to be eventually successful in giving the insurgency political legitimacy, which was (and still is) used to gain approval and resources, and to continue to resist the 'regime'. Over time, popular legitimacy led to another stage: the insurgency gaining a legitimate political voice in the regime's government. Hezbollah has strong domestic support for its social, religious, and political efforts. Military efforts to destroy the movement (most recently in 2006) have only resulted in heavy civilian casualties, a weakening of the regime's political influence and international condemnation.¹⁰⁶ Regionally, Hezbollah enjoys widespread popularity and substantial financial support. Since 1992, Hezbollah party members have seats in the Lebanese government, thereby gaining legal political authority within the country.

Resource mobilisation is the ability to gather goods and services to fulfil political goals. These goods and services (which include money, intelligence, weapons, and personnel) translate into political capability. For social embedding to occur, the political power must be capable of fulfilling the people's expectations with its available resources. As the group fulfils expectations, then it gains more legitimacy, which allows it to increase its capability. Political opportunity occurs when there is an intersection between popular

¹⁰⁶ Tobias Buck, "How a Nation Stumbled Into War," *Financial Times* – London, July 7, 2008.

expectations and political capability.¹⁰⁷ These events, which are discrete moments in time, represent a transition point between the social/political entities and the people. However, Hezbollah was not born as a socially embedded insurgency. What were the conditions that brought to the creation of a political power force in just a few years? What caused the transition from a 'class' of neglected disenfranchised people to a major political organisation in the region with local and international support of its new-born bourgeoisie?

One of the most influential writings in insurgency theory is Ted Robert Gurr's *Why Men Rebel*. In his seminal work, Gurr develops two theories that are useful for understanding the conditions under which insurgencies emerge. The first theory is Relative Deprivation, which posits that the people have value expectations (things to which they are rightfully entitled) and value capabilities (things that they are capable of attaining or maintaining). When the government fails to help the people in balancing their expectations and capabilities, the result is collective discontent.¹⁰⁸

Gurr builds on collective discontent to develop the theory of frustration-anger-aggression. Gurr posits that frustration grows as collective discontent increases. Over time, this frustration may arouse anger. When an individual or group is in an angry state, it is more likely to respond violently to the source of frustration and anger.¹⁰⁹ An insurgent movement can capitalise on the frustration-anger-aggression path by highlighting the government's failures in the face of rising popular expectations. If successful, the insurgent can focus the resulting anger and aggression into political violence against the state, Gurr builds on collective discontent to develop the theory of frustration-anger-aggression. Gurr posits that frustration grows as collective discontent increases. Over time, this frustration may arouse anger. When an individual or group is in an angry state, it is more likely to respond violently to the source of frustration and anger.

¹⁰⁷ Quintan Wiktorowicz (2004), *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

¹⁰⁸ Ted Robert Gurr (1970), pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

Mohammad Hafez builds on Gurr's theory and applies it to the political environment of the Middle East.¹¹⁰ While Gurr ties political insurgence to the socioeconomic causes in a state, Hafez contends that the political system itself is the principle cause of insurgence. As far as Lebanese Shi'a is concerned, Hafez's assumption proves to be persuasive. Hafez advances the study of insurgencies by applying social movement theory (SMT) as a means of explaining the conditions under which groups rebel. Even though SMT helps to explain how protest groups are able to grow in power and exert influence on the government (mobilisation structures, resource availability, and political opportunities) there is little discussion on the population itself. His discussion leaves unanswered which conditions lead the population to accept the imposition of political organisations as the best political solution. How does a nascent insurgency tap into this discontent and grow in power and influence? And how does a insurgency turn into a social class (bourgeoisie) by opposing the state and not engaging in it? To which extent is resource of *capital identitaire* essential in this analyses?

In conclusion, the basic idea behind this work is to discard monolithic and totalising narratives, because they ignore and even suppress other narratives which may come to give different understanding of how a social class/sect literally 'invented' itself, emerging out of backwardness and isolation into near dominance of a political order. Methodologically this requires to go beyond a variety of theoretical approaches, taking both multiple discourses and meanings as tools for re-thinking the history of a community out of the mere dichotomy which has pervaded the entirety of the literature on Lebanese Shi'a: the history of the disenfranchised on one side, and political Shi'a on the other.

¹¹⁰ Mohammed Hafez (2004), *Why Muslims Rebel: Repression and Resistance in the Islamic World*. Boulder, CO.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 19.

Introduction

The Shi'a of Lebanon possess a political, ideological and economic dynamism that makes them the most significant Shiite community in the Arab world today, representing approximately 30 to 40 per cent of the population, and attesting as the single largest sectarian group in the country. The story of the Shi'a's rise to economic power, while containing a number of features unique to Lebanon, can offer some relevant general insights to the shifts of a community - from peasants to entrepreneurial bourgeoisie - elsewhere in the Arab world. Indeed, the story of change and rise of a 'sectarian' middle class in Lebanon has relevance to the broader evolution of more open political systems in the region.¹¹¹

The Lebanese Shi'a are the the first community to have achieved significant political and economic power as a group in the modern Arab world. They are the only Arab Shi'a who were able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps from an oppressed, despised, isolated and marginalised community to achieve major political power and economic independence with the political order of Lebanon's state and society respectively. The Shi'a over a 30-year period have become quite simply the most powerful political force in today's Lebanon and the single largest community in the country, with a noteworthy contrast with other Shi'a communities in the region.¹¹²

The presence of traditional baronial families (which, in Lebanon's case, extend also to other communities), the *zu'ama* feudal system that for a long time contributed to the economic stagnation and marginalisation of this community, at some point started clashing with the various currents of Arab nationalism, socialism, and Westernisation which invested the rest of the Arab world, regardless of the religious/sectarian affiliations. Economic inequalities, a leftover of the Ottoman era and reinforced by the French rule, also created a class of Shiites with a yearning desire for economic stability, political representation and enfranchisement, and an aversion to revolutionary currents.

¹¹¹ G. E. Fuller and R. R. Francke (1999).

¹¹² Ibid.

Even though Lebanon is strongly based on the sectarian system, because it has been exposed to Western influences more than any other Arab country, large sectors of the population - including many Shiites - are secular, even though they perpetuate their sectarian affiliations.

Unsurprisingly, this secular, vested elements in the Shi'a community were not able to create their own political organisation or formed a political front that could exert pressure on or influence the political system. A large segment of this population migrated massively either to the commercial Beirut, or to other countries (mainly, Africa, Brazil, Canada, Europe) creating successful businesses and actively helping those relatives who still resided in their own native villages in Lebanon to achieve an economic stability.¹¹³ Instead, they left the political task to Amal and later Hezbollah, groups with overtly sectarian agendas, in taking the lead of the Shi'a revival and to advocate Shiite's rights, from the south of Lebanon to the Beqaa valley. The Shi'a community is not homogenous and neither Amal nor Hezbollah between them have universal Shiite support and many Shiites remain out of the range of these two organisations. Nevertheless, both the political groups and the entrepreneurial Shiite's bourgeoisie that churned out as a consequence of the massive Shiite Lebanese diaspora have enormously benefited either from the success of the organisations *and* the impressive amount of revenues that those entrepreneurs re-invested in their country of origins - securing a greater share for all Shi'a.

Shi'i social and economic mobility had begun in the late 1960s, mostly as a result of the Chehabist policies that strengthened state services, namely the establishment of the Lebanese University and the ministry of Social Affairs' centres for social services. This, enabled the community to migrate massively either towards the capital, Beirut, and to various countries outside Lebanon, most noticeably Africa, Brazil, Canada and Europe. This generation of educated, urban Shiites - sustained by the political space and representation created by Musa al Sadr - was able to churn out a self reliant bourgeoisie that also became the main stakeholder of the Shi'a community. This middle class and its generation of (ethnic) entrepreneurs greatly succeeded in improving the social,

¹¹³ G. E. Fuller and R. R. Francke (1999).

economic, and urban status of the Shi‘i community.¹¹⁴ The majority of the Shi‘a populated regions of South Lebanon and the Beqaa Valley that used to be “at the bottom end of the development hierarchy in terms of income and education status, extend of poverty or access to basic services”, saw their social indicators improve in the early 1960s due to “the increased political weight and representation of the Shi‘i community, translating in[to] increased attention and influx of public aid, in addition to a growing volume of remittances and local investments by Shi‘i diaspora in Africa and the Gulf in their regions of origins in the South and the Beqaa”.¹¹⁵ In the 1980s, with the consolidation of Amal under the leadership of Nabih Berri and the the advent of Hezbollah, the two organisations offered another possibility for further social mobility to the Lebanese Shi‘a: new services, new opportunities and - yet again - economic development.

Through different, almost concurrent and complementary stages, it is possible to unpack the trajectory of a very recent and peculiar social class that through education, political factors and social mobilisation evolved in the span of less than three generations into a very peculiar bourgeoisie: whereas Christian-Maronite middle class practically produced political formations and benefited from them and from Maronite’s state supremacy (National Pact, 1943) reinforcing the community’s status quo, Shiites built their own bourgeoisie from within, and mobilised their *cadres* not just to benefit from their renovated presence at the state level, but to oppose to it. The general Social

¹¹⁴ The term ‘ethnic’ comes from anthropologist Fredrik Barth. When one speaks of ethnicity in the media or in much of the social sciences, the attention is narrowly focused on the politicisation of this ground of cultural variation within certain modern state structures, i.e. ethnic conflicts, as they tend to arise today. Nonetheless, ‘ethnic’ in this framework has nothing to do with tribalism and pre-state political systems. “On the contrary, it is a response of people to a particular form of state organisation and the political opportunities it creates. Further, it is important to recognise that the dynamics whereby political mobilisation to conflict on an ethnic basis takes place are not the expression of collective popular sentiments, but result from tactical moves made by political entrepreneurs.” This constitutes an important reference for an analysis on how and why Shiite “identity” entrepreneurs distribute resources, as they seek not only to establish the previously marginalised Shi‘a as part of the Lebanese nation but also to claim their central position in it. In this sense, ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ can be applied to a variety of economical, political, religious or civilian activists: from NGOs directors or members to representatives of Amal and Hezbollah; from diaspora Shiite entrepreneurs who established firms in Canada or Sub-Saharan Africa during the Lebanese civil war to high ranking religious figures. (Fredrik Barth (1995), “Ethnicity and The Concept of Culture”. Paper presented to the Conference ‘Rethinking Culture’, Harvard February 23, 1995; F. Barth (1969), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference*. Boston: Little Brown).

¹¹⁵ Salim Nasr, “The New Social Map”, in Theodor Hanf and Nasr Salam (eds.) (2003), *Lebanon in Limbo: Postwar Society and State in an Uncertain Regional Environment*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, p. 155.

Movement Theory (SMT), as well as a vast amount of the literature on (middle) class formation are therefore largely contradicted, opening up new territories for discussion on how to build a bourgeoisie without the state's support (Social Mobilisation Theory, Resource Mobilisation Theory) and if, eventually, the middle class always produces democratic movements (the emergence of a social group out of backwardness and isolation into near dominance of a political order).

The demographic and social factors which led to the rapid growth of the Shi'a community in the halls of power and throughout Lebanese society began in the 1960s, and continued massively during and shortly after the civil war when a further qualitative leap in the nature of the power relationships between the Shi'a and the other communities occurred. These changes cannot be properly understood without recourse to following internal and external factors:

1. The rapid urbanisation of the Shi'a community, which in less than a quarter century went from being a community more than 70 per cent rural to one 70 per cent of whose members lived in cities.
2. The increasingly rapid capitalisation of agriculture in the South and the Beqaa Valley, the collapse of the sharecropping system, the decline in tobacco farming during the war and the growth in real estate speculation by Lebanese emigrants.
3. The three great waves of Shi'a emigration (1860-1943, 1943-1975 and from 1975 till today) to various locations in Australia, America, Africa and the Arab world, then the return of many of them to either take up residence or invest in Lebanon, plus the pressure of these returnee businessmen exerted in order to ensure their acceptance into Lebanon's political and economic system.
4. The rise of a Shi'a intelligentsia that rapidly spread thanks to secondary education and the University of Lebanon, and soon invaded both the state and private job markets, putting enormous pressure on the public sector in particular.
5. These developments coincided with the weakening of the traditional Shi'a *za'ims* and even affected the mid-ranking *za'ims* that had been propped up by the Chehabi regime in the 1950s and 1960s. This social mobility soon found expression, and the aspirations

of these new social classes (especially the returnee 'exiles' and the intelligentsia) were firmly pinned to the leadership of Sayyid Musa Al Sadr, the religious scholar backed by the Shah of Iran and who, with the support first of the Chehab-run state and later the Fatah Movement, sought to found a Shi'a political third-way, an alternative both to the traditional leadership referenced above and also to the Leftist, nationalist opposition that had captured the imagination of large swathes of Shi'a community, especially the youth.

Since the 1960s, the Shiite community has experienced three models of political mobilisation: the model of the secular parties, the sectarian model of Amal, and the religiously oriented model offered by Hezbollah. The secular model had done little to promote the Shiite community's common interests; its primary importance was reflected in the increased involvement of the Shiite masses in political activity. Al-Sadr's model never advocated radical reforms, but it was the first to organise the Shiite masses within a communal political framework. Its nonviolent protest movement has been increasingly challenged, however, since the early 1980s by the revolutionary Islamic model of Hezbollah. The growth of Hezbollah has accelerated the radicalisation of the Lebanese Shiites, a process that has proceeded simultaneously with the increasing political empowerment of the community.

Over five decades, the Shiite community has undergone striking social and political change, which has shifted the Shiites from the margins of the political community to its centre. Some have claimed that the demography of Lebanon accounts for its politics, while others attribute the Shiite ascendancy to regional politics or religious revivalism. But in fact Shiite empowerment must be seen as an outcome of the processes mentioned above, which have been at work since the 1960s. The erosion of the Shiites' commitment to the Lebanese state cannot be separated from the internal dynamics of the state's exclusion, marginalisation, and discriminatory treatment of the Shiites over many years - and it was exacerbated by the Shiites' increasing consciousness of being the largest sect in the country in terms of demography, military force, and political mobilisation. Shiite leaders recognise that under the current circumstances, no single group can dominate Lebanese politics; thus, they seek neither to seize power nor to dismantle Lebanon's territorial framework, but rather to control access to political power, as provided for in the Doha agreement.

The Lebanese Shi'a: Historical Background

Between 1307 and 1975 the Shi'a were a fringe group in Lebanon. By the end of 1306, the Shi'a's demise as the dominant community in Mount Lebanon was complete, with the remaining Shiites settling themselves far away from the coasts and from the major cities. As a consequence of the defeat of the Crusaders in the Levant and the Fatimids in Egypt, living conditions for Shiites in Mount Lebanon started resembling the fate of Muslims and Jews in Spain during the Reconquista.¹¹⁶ Usama ibn Mundiqlh – a Syrian warrior and poet who fought against the Crusaders with Salah el-Din – in his chronicles accused “the greedy and cheating merchants of Beirut as being Shi'a in disguise practicing *taqiyyah*”¹¹⁷, suggesting that a greedy and cheating merchant could only be a Shi'a.

Over the next two centuries, Shiites started to re-establish themselves in the Beqaa and in the region of Jabal Amil (modern south Lebanon). This was possible because the Safavis Shi'a dynasty in Iran “harboured hopes of controlling the Levant”.¹¹⁸ Obviously, there was no territorial jurisdiction by the name of ‘Lebanon’ five centuries ago. However, the origins of modern Lebanon, as a polity and society, can be placed between the closing era of the Mamluk rule and the beginning of the Ottoman rule – roughly the same period the saw the beginning of the Safavid rule in Iran.¹¹⁹ It was after the Safavid conquest in the sixteenth century that Twelver Shiism was adopted as state religion in Iran and southern Iraq. Albert Hourani was the first to suggest the importance of this first episode of a significant connexion between what is now southern Lebanon and

¹¹⁶ Kamal Dib (2006), *Warlords and Merchants. The Lebanese Business and Political Establishment*. Reading (UK): Garner Publishing Limited, pp. 18-22.

¹¹⁷ Issam Chebaro (1987), *Tarikh Bayrout min Aqdam al-Ossour ila al-Qarn al Ishtin* [A History of Beirut from Ancient Times to the Twentieth Century]. Beirut: Dar Misbah al-Fikr.

¹¹⁸ K. Dib (2006), p.20.

¹¹⁹ Houchang E. Chehabi (ed.) (2006), *Distant Relations. Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*. Oxford and New York: I.B. Tauris in collaboration with the Centre for Lebanese Studies, p.6.

Iran.¹²⁰ The Safavids' political vision and the concerns of a newly emerging Shi'a community suggested the possibility of migration from Ottoman Syria to Iran.¹²¹ This also coincided with a substantial migration of clerics from Jabal 'Amil to Iran.¹²²

Nonetheless, the victory of the Ottomans over the Mamluks in 1516 did not halt the persecution of the Shi'a. In the Ottoman Empire individuals were classified as Muslim, Christian, or Jewish, with the Shi'a classified as Muslims without the acknowledgement of their *madhab*.¹²³

The Ottomans established a system in which indirect rule was exercised through the local leadership whose authority was almost absolute and the conquered territories came to be regarded primarily as sources of revenue. Shi'a was divided into three *wilayas*: Aleppo, Damascus, and Tripoli. The Shi'a of Jabal 'Amil and that of Ba'albak became part of the *wilaya* of Damascus.¹²⁴ The Shi'a of Jabal 'Amil was mainly working the fields for the benefit of landowning families who in turn gave them protection and arbitrated their disputes. The Shi'a of the Beqaa, on the other hand, were a more nomadic and less rigidly defined society. They were not so dominated by a few landowning families but existed more as a series of clans, some of whom were considered more powerful than others.¹²⁵

Shi'a society remained under this essentially feudal structure until the *tanzimat* of 1864. At the top of the local social pyramid was a neofeudal lord who exercised control over the domain over which his powers extended. Likewise, following the reforms in the

¹²⁰ Albert Hourani (1986), "From Jabal Amil to Persia", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 49:1, pp. 133-40.

¹²¹ H.E. Chehabi (2006), p. 7.

¹²² In total, about 156 high-ranking clerics from the Jabal Amil were living in Iran at the close of the Safavid era. Rula Jurdi Abissab (2004), *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*. London: I.B.Tauris, pp. 302-14; cfr. H. E. Chehabi (2006), p. 7.

¹²³ Majed Halawi (1992), *A Lebanon Defied. Musa al-Sadr and the Shi'a Community*. Boulder-San Francisco-Oxford: Westview Press, p. 31.

¹²⁴ Mas'ud Dahir, "Adwa'ala Jughrafiyyat al-Tatawwur al-Tarikhi li-l-Muqata'at al-Lubnaniyya", *Dirasat*, Université Libanaise-Faculté de Pédagogie, 3ème année, no. 1 (1975), pp.55-95; M. Halawi (1992), p. 32.

¹²⁵ Rodger Shanahan (2005), *The Shi'a of Lebanon. Clans, Parties and Clerics*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., p. 15.

Ottoman Empire, the Shiite social structure had changed too, and a new class of prominent families emerged. These families, known as the *zuama* were acting as mediators between the Ottoman rulers and the peasants, introducing a feudal style of leadership.¹²⁶ They derived their socioeconomic and political power from the tax remittances on lands they had collected from the Ottoman rulers before the introduction of the reforms. Gradually, the power of these modern feudal landlords began to increase and even the *ulama* and sheikhs depended on the local *za'im* for funding their religious activities.

France established the Lebanese state in 1920, combining the area of Mount Lebanon, which was mostly populated by Christian and Druze, with four others nearby, including the Shiite districts of Jabal 'Amil and the Beqaa. In the aftermath of the French recognition in 1926 of Shiism in Lebanon as a separate religious sect with its own independent institutions, the majority of Lebanese Shiite scholars began to support the existence of the Lebanese state. It didn't take long for the *zu'ama* to realise that accepting Lebanon as a permanent reality would have allowed them a more suitable framework within which to maintain their socioeconomic and political dominance of the Shiite community. From the 1930s, many of them integrated into the official political institutions as members of Parliament and ministers.¹²⁷

In 1920, an enlarged Lebanon was given a special role by the French within the general economic union established between it and Syria, marked by a common currency and a common tariff.¹²⁸ As a result of a census taken in 1932, the two major communities in Lebanon, the Maronite Christian and the Sunni Muslims, agreed upon a formula that regulated political life for all communities. The agreement, known as the "National Pact" (*al-mithaq al-watani*) became a reality in 1943 and it gave the Maronite Christians the permanent presidency of the Republic and the Sunni Muslim the presidency of the Council of Ministers. The Shiites had to be content with the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies.

¹²⁶ Omri Nir (2011), *Nabih Berri and Lebanese Politics*. New York: Palgrave Mac Millan, p. 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²⁸ R. Owen (1988).

The 1943 National Pact implicitly proposed a Lebanon ruled by a partnership of Maronite and Sunni merchants, bankers and landowners that could play a significant role within the new Middle Eastern economic order. Even though many politicians strongly disagreed about the nature of future relations with Syria, almost all of them shared the common thought that Lebanon had to continue to benefit from the economic links with the Arab world as a whole. Political organisation in Lebanon institutionalised sectarianism. The Lebanese state is organised through a consociational political system centred on an inter-sectarian power-sharing formula. The system includes corresponding sectarian quota guiding the allocation of all public positions. While being a vibrant parliamentary democracy, as a result of its sectarian nature the Lebanese state's entire structure is informed by a quest for inter-communitarian balance that results in endemic patronage and clientelism.¹²⁹

The sectarian structure penetrated all areas of society, affecting the economy, social life and culture just as much as politics, symbolism and ideology. Sects cannot be confined to the political sphere, since this sphere is also - especially - the domain of class power. Furthermore, the sectarian system in Lebanon led to a configuration of society where sects and classes represent two distinct groups that compete for their share of the social surplus and play out their battles in both the social and political arenas. That said, the relationship between the two is not one of mirroring, but rather a distribution of labour, a relationship of overlap and of mutual influence and effect.

Historically, Lebanese sectarianism arose from the unequal levels of access to various political and socio-economic positions in the late-feudal system of Mount Lebanon, by the Druze community on the one hand and by the Maronites (or Christians in general) on the other. The upper classes - the rulers of Mount Lebanon - belonged to Druze landowning families (plus two or three Maronite families) while the vast majority of commoners - of all trades and various social levels: merchants, money-lenders, artisans, farmers, labourers - were Christians. The gulf between these two distinct communities within the Ottoman social structure was further exacerbated by the early association of

¹²⁹ Khalil Gebara (2007), "The Political Economy of Corruption in Lebanon", Beirut: Lebanese Transparency Association; Nizar Hamzeh (2001), "Clientelism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends", *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol.37, No.3, pp.167-178; Melanie Cammett and Sami Issar (2010), "Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon", *World Politics*, Vol. 62, No. 3, pp. 381-421.

certain groups within the Christian community with the capitalist penetration of the coastal regions and Mount Lebanon by the silk economy and, furthermore, by the fact they had early access to education in civil religious schools (established in 1736 at the Synod of Al Luwayzah) and in foreign missionary schools. The civil war of 1860 (and the peasant uprising in Kisrawan that preceded it) had a counterintuitive result: the Druze community won a military victory but then went into decline because of a breakdown in the feudal system they controlled; the Christians were defeated on the battlefield, but won themselves a form of self-rule in Mount Lebanon, where they constituted the majority. The seal was set on this outcome by the establishment of the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate (1861-1915) governed by a two-tier elected council whose twelve seats were parcelled out between the six main confessions, with a majority of Christians.

It was not long before the uneven political, economic, cultural and social development of the various sects expressed itself in the form of Christian-Maronite privileges, and disadvantages for the remaining sects:

- Privileged access to positions of political and military power; the near absolute powers enjoyed by the president of the republic and his oversight of the heads of the armed forces, the security services, the intelligence services, the financial ministry, the Bank of Lebanon and the defence ministry.
- The fact that Christians had been given first access to the most profitable sectors of the economy - services, trade and finance - and owned financial, trade, industrial and tourist institutions (this helps to initially understand the almost complete absence on the scene of a relevant Lebanese Shiite entrepreneurship prior to the mobilisation of the community starting from the 1960s).
- The cultural head start they enjoyed as a result of two centuries of contact with Europe and the educational advantages that resulted from an early exploitation of foreign missionary schools and the attendant decline in state education.
- The difference in levels of growth between the centre and the margins/regions, and their differing access to development, resources, state services, knowledge and health, plus their disproportionate benefitting from the distribution of wealth.

The Shiite traditional elite's participation in Lebanese political life, on the other hand, affected the community in at least one major respect. It widened the socioeconomic gap between the masses and the leadership. While the Shi'a leaders elbowed for government positions, the living conditions in Shi'a villages deteriorated as the problem of rural poverty and indebtedness was attacked in various ways, but effectively solved by none.¹³⁰

As a leftover of the ottoman rule, the Shi'a areas paid more taxes and received less government funds than Mount Lebanon.

While 82 percent of government revenues came from the Muslim areas, government expenditure on Mount Lebanon in 1927, for instance, accounted for 80 per cent of the total budget allocated for infrastructural development. Similarly, private Muslim schools received only 7.5 percent of the government's aid budget to such schools in 1934 (3.6 percent for the Sunni, 2.3 percent for the Shi'a, and 1.5 percent for the Druze), as compared to the 92.5 percent for their Christian counterparts [...]. Furthermore, there was not a single hospital in all of southern Lebanon in 1943. Also absent were irrigation schemes; the bulk of the people drank stagnant water.¹³¹

On the political side, the confessional system incited with a Sunni-Shi'a estrangement at the leadership level and an intra-Shiite division between leaders and supporters. Such divisions had far-reaching consequences that impacted upon the Shi'a community as a whole by alienating the traditional leadership from a slowly politicising generation whose political identification was Arab Nationalist, rather than Shi'a Lebanese. The natural repercussion in the 1950s and 1960s was a convergence of the frustrated Shiites to the neo-movement created in Egypt by Gamal Abd-el Nasser, as a rejection to the Lebanese establishment. In this context, Nasserism played a focal role in supporting a political consciousness among the Shi'a that underwent many transformations in a process that continues into the present.

¹³⁰ Stephen Longrigg (1958), *Syria and Lebanon Under the French Mandate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 280-281.

¹³¹ Najla Wadih Atiyah, "The Attitude of the Lebanese Sunnis Towards the State of Lebanon", (PhD dissertation, the University of London, 1973) and Fouad Ajami (1987), *The Vanished Imam*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, p. 61 as quoted in M. Halawi (1992), p. 42.

A Social Group in Motion: From Feudal order to the Rise of New Forces

The Composition of Society

The geographic concentration of the Shiite population in the mountainous periphery of southern Lebanon and in the Beqaa valley isolated it from the focus of political events in Beirut and created three Shiite communities, with different social structures, behaviour patterns, and characteristics. This dissimilitude made it difficult to find a common denominator that would enable the recruitment of community members for collective action to further clan interests and even fundamentally acted as a fracture line, which split the community into moderates and extremists in the early 1980s.¹³²

The social structure of the community, until the mid-1960s, can be separated into three strata. The political-economic elite, the *zu'ama*, included the members of the rich families in the south and in Beqaa. The religious elite, the *ulema*, included the members of the families comprising the Shiite religious establishment, some holding a distinguished familial pedigree. The third stratum included all the peasants, labourers, and small merchants. The developments that took place from the mid-1960s onward changed the power relations between the elites and their reciprocal connections and paved the way for the emergence of new social groups, such as the bourgeoisie/petit bourgeoisie and the newfangled clerical group, challenging the status of the traditional elites.¹³³

The economic-political elite (*zu'ama*) controlled all the power sources of southern Lebanon. It included a number of families and manned the power focus reserved for the community in the Lebanese parliament, the role of the parliament chairman, until the mid-1980s.¹³⁴ These families led in southern Lebanon a social order in the standard of

¹³² Helena Cobban, "The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon and Its Implications for the Future," in Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (eds.) (1986), *Shi'ism and Social Protest*,. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 138–43.

¹³³ E. Azani (2009), p. 62.

¹³⁴ F. Ajami (1987), p. 70.

the feudal model, meant to preserve and expand their power and to prevent a threat to their status as the ruling elite. The social structure of the Shiite community in Beqaa, on the other hand, was tribal in essence. The social order in this region was largely determined according to the importance, property, and genealogy of the family within the tribal frame. The rise of new forces in the community in the 1960s, the move from the villages to the city, the expansion of education, the change of employment patterns, the emergence of new competitors in the form of the Lebanese leftist parties, and the power struggles taking place within the elite posed an actual threat to this elite and gradually diminished its control over the power sources and its influence within the community.¹³⁵

The religious elite (*ulema*) consisted of the families of the old Shiite religious establishment. They were greatly dependent on the *zu'ama*, and many of them were appointed by it. The members of the Shiite religious establishment in those years were conservatives, somewhat disconnected from the masses, and found it hard to digest the rapid changes taking place in the community during the 1950s and 1960s.¹³⁶ In the 1960s and 1970s, changes in the composition of this elite took place with the arrival of the new activist spirit, blowing from the religious seminaries in Najaf. The first generators of change in Lebanon were two senior clerics with similar cultural and religious backgrounds: al-Sadr and Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah.¹³⁷ Their arrival in Lebanon, parallel to the social and demographic transformations taking place in the community in the 1960s, paved the way for them to set in motion processes of social change. Though they did not walk the same path and though, to a large degree, a concealed rivalry existed between them, they succeeded in acquiring many disciples and students from within the *ulema* and the new classes. The followers of al-Sadr united within the

¹³⁵ Joseph Olmert, "The Shi'is and the Lebanese State," in Martin Kramer (ed.) (1987), *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*. Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 194–200; F. Ajami (1987), pp. 68–80; E. Azani (2009), p.62.

With the appearance of the Palestinians in southern Lebanon in the early 1970s and the escalation in the security situation in the south further weakened the status of this elite. During the late 1970s, following Operation Litani and the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr (1978), its members succeeded in partially rehabilitating their position for a short period.

¹³⁶ F. Ajami (1987), pp. 81–94, 105–107.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 29–50; Martin Kramer (1997), *Fadlallah Hezbollah's Compass*. University of Tel Aviv, Moshe Dayan Center, pp. 12–19 as quoted by E. Azani (2009), p. 63.

framework of the Amal movement, while the followers of Fadlallah were among the founders of the Hezbollah movement.

The transformations taking place in the community in those years also radiated to this social stratum. More and more students joined religious studies in the seminaries of Najaf and Qom and the new seminaries founded in Lebanon. This process strengthened from the 1970s on, following the expulsion to Lebanon of several Lebanese religious students from the Najaf seminaries by the Iraqi authorities. Some of them were integrated into the seminaries and religious schools in Lebanon, where additional generations of clerics were trained in the spirit of activist ideas. Later, the Najaf expellees became the backbone of the Hezbollah movement. Even though the Iranian element was fundamental in the founding of Hezbollah, the genesis of the movement has to be traced in Iraq, and not exclusively in Iran.

As a result of the activities of the charismatic leaderships of al-Sadr and Fadlallah, who broadened and encouraged the religious training in Lebanon and supplied stipends for the funding of the studies of talented students in the seminaries of Iraq and Iran, the number and scope of religious studies significantly evolved in the 1970s. The Iranians contributed as well to the expansion of the circle of students of religion in Lebanon, even more enthusiastically after the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The students' revolutionary approach, and the way the new Najaf-graduated *ulema* conducted themselves, stood in total contrast to the conservatism and obedience that characterised the relationships of the traditional *ulema* with the *zu'ama*. These two groups (students and graduates) constituted the revolutionary vanguard, who laid the foundation for the formation of Hezbollah in Lebanon and provided the human resources for the leadership class of the movement.

The middle class developed within the Shiite community from the 1960s in the cities included members of the liberal professions, such as lawyers, clerks, merchants, doctors, and military men, alongside the *nouveaux riches*, who made their fortunes abroad, acquired education, and returned to Lebanon. This social group worked to realise its abilities and to influence political processes, but was rejected by the governmental system due to its Shiite descent. As a result, its members sought ways to change the existing social and political order in Lebanon. For them, the leftist parties,

and later the Amal and Hezbollah movements, provided an admission ticket to the political world without their ancestry being an obstacle.¹³⁸

The lower class comprised farmers, small merchants, and peddlers residing in remote villages in the mountainous regions and townships, whose decrepit access roads made connectivity with the outside world difficult. This was practically the largest social stratum in the community. The detachment between Beqaa and southern Lebanon created two Shiite sub-communities with different temperaments, occupations, and interests. The people of southern Lebanon were engaged in agriculture, small commerce, and peddling. They were regarded as submissive and subdued, and the authorities did not find it difficult to impose their rule on this region. The people of Beqaa, on the other hand, engaged in growing and trading drugs. They were tough and assertive and opposed any representation of authority in their region.

The members of this class, who resided in the periphery, were completely dependent on the graces of the *zu'ama*, who ensured that the immense gap between them and the villagers was maintained and any attempt to promote education and improve the standard of living in the territories under their control was nipped in the bud. Oppositely, those members of this class who immigrated to the cities experienced firsthand the feelings of frustration and relative discrimination more strongly than their fathers, a fact that made them attentive to the absorption of new religious or radical social messages. They were attracted, like to a magnet, by any framework that offered them even the haziest hope for the improvement of their situation. For them al-Sadr was the first of the community who delivered the necessary goods and who delivered the necessary goods and paved the way for their integration into a communal organisational system, with the goal of improving their condition.¹³⁹ The members of this class became, in time, the manpower pool upon which the two big movements, Amal and Hezbollah, grew. The importance of this sector of the population was great for both movements, and they fought for control over it. Each boasted itself as a popular movement, deeply rooted in the Shiite community.

¹³⁸ F. Ajami (1987), pp. 110–11, 116–19, 130.

¹³⁹ F. Ajami (1987), p. 163–68.

The Process of Demographic and Social Change within the Shiite Community

Lebanon is one of the prominent examples that proves that accelerated demographic and social processes are among the main causes for the rise of social protest movements, waving the flag of social injustice. The transition from the village to the city, changes in the natural increase in the various communities, immigration, the impacts of modernisation, and the appearance of new players in the Lebanese arena changed the intercommunity power relations and disrupted the delicate balance characterising the intra-Lebanese system.

The transition from the country to the city: The modernisation and urbanisation processes in Lebanon toward the end of the 1950s and the severe economic condition in the Shiite rural areas caused an internal immigration from the country to the city and, externally, from Lebanon to other countries. The immigrants mainly comprised youths who were unable to find their place in the traditional rural frameworks and who sought a way to improve their status. The immigration and accelerated urbanisation changed the face of the Shiite community and its spread in Lebanon significantly.¹⁴⁰ The Shiite immigrants established a belt of slums surrounding Beirut. This belt was, since its inception, a fertile ground for the growth of social protest forces. The encounter of the Shiite youths with the big city and with the members of the other communities, whose economic condition and social status was immeasurably better than their own, caused feelings of frustration and discrimination. This target audience was fought over by two new social forces, the leftist parties and the Shiite clerics.¹⁴¹

The Shiite immigrants arriving in Beirut settled in the slums on its fringes, in communal settings with some common denominator (family, tribal, or village kinship). The communities preserved their communal framework and clannish solidarity and absorbed new immigrants from their group.¹⁴² The strained reality of the Shiite immigrants on the fringes of cities and the sense of discrimination they experienced were exploited by the clerics for broadening their influence. They provided religious and charity services, but

¹⁴⁰ Salim Nasr, "Roots of the Shi'i Movement," *Merip Reports* 15, no.5 (June 1985): 11; W. Charara (1998), pp.180–89.

¹⁴¹ A. R. Norton 1987), *Amal and the Shi'a Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, pp. 35–38.

¹⁴² W. Charara (1998), pp.74–79.

not only. Their activities were aimed at widening the Islamic message, stopping the process of 'westernization', and reducing the impact of the leftist parties.

The natural increase: The Lebanese governmental system is based on the national charter. It is, in fact, an intercommunity agreement for the division of the governmental posts among the communities on the basis of their relative weight in the population as calculated in the 1932 census. In this census, it was found that the Christian community was the largest, followed by the Sunni community and then the Shiite community. On this basis, the governmental posts were divided: the post of president was given to the Christian community, prime minister to the Sunni community, and chairman of parliament, the lowest of the three to the Shiite community.

The demographic processes in Lebanon completely changed the balance of power in the country within three decades. The Shiite community became, in the course of time, the largest in the country due to a higher birth rate than the other communities', as well as due to the scope of the high rate of emigration of the Christian population from Lebanon. The demographic changes were not translated into changes in its political status or in the bases of the clan's power in the governmental system, due to the fact that a Sunni Maronite coalition stood before it, preserving the governmental pie in its hands. With the increasing social and political tension in Lebanon due to the crises of unfulfilled expectations from the 1960s on, voices rose within the Shiite community demanding a redistribution of the political cake in light of the significant changes occurring in the structure of the Lebanese population.

The impact of modernisation: At the same time as the transit from the country to the city, the impact of modernisation penetrated the rural areas. The Lebanese economy started to increasingly rely on commerce and services and less on agricultural production. As a consequence, the economic status of the *zu'ama* families, who dominated most of the lands and the agricultural production, was increasingly undermined. In the townships and burghs, centres of small industry and commerce were established. The improvement in the level of infrastructure in the country and the increase in the number of vehicles connected the isolated villages to the cities and tightened the contact and influence of the city on everyday life in the villages. Radio and television broadcasts made villagers more aware of the changes occurring around

them. The stories of family members who emigrated abroad and came back for summer holidays emphasised the gap between the material and physical conditions of the villagers and the opportunities open before them and increased the sense of relative discrimination and frustration with the existing situation. The prominent expression of the penetration of modernisation into the rural areas was the level of immigration of the Shiite population to the cities, which burgeoned significantly in the 1960s and 1970s. This population immigrated to the cities with the aim of finding employment, welfare, and better education and cultural life, as well as escaping the cycle of poverty and ignorance that characterised its lot in the villages.¹⁴³

The emergence of the Palestinians: The Palestinians have been part of the social fabric of Lebanon since 1948, with the settlement of Palestinians in the refugee camps around the major cities of Lebanon. In the beginning of the 1970s, members of the military Palestinian organisations, operating in Jordan, arrived in Lebanon. With their appearance, the center of gravity of the Palestinian anti- Israeli activity shifted to southern Lebanon. This situation transformed Lebanon into a battle arena between Israel and the Palestinians, with the immediate and direct casualties being the Shiite inhabitants of southern Lebanon. As the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians escalated, the situation of the residents of southern Lebanon worsened and many of them abandoned their homes and emigrated to the north. The Shiites, who were opposed to the Palestinian activities, found it difficult to prevent or reduce them in the 1970s.¹⁴⁴

The Great Exodus to Beirut

Shiite emigration, as a result of their economic blockage in the Lebanese society, began later than that of Maronites and Druzes. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the educated sons of small entrepreneurs and artisans of southern provincial towns such as Tyre and Nabatiyyeh began to seek their fortune in West Africa. The local communities blamed the *zu'ama* for not being able to find proper employment for this educated

¹⁴³ A. R. Norton (1987), pp. 29–32.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

youth. In Africa, some of those Shiite migrants started occupying middleman positions, with many of them becoming extremely wealthy, for example in the diamond trade.¹⁴⁵

With the new investment openings in Lebanon, and the growing African economic nationalism, Shiite *mughtaribeen* (returned migrants) began forming an active new business community “interested in gaining a share in Beirut banking, trade and real estate, as well as in developing the South, e.g. through agribusiness and tourism”. The emergence of this class was crucial in providing impetus and financial backing for Amal movement.¹⁴⁶

This element is particularly relevant because it’s this new Shiite bourgeoisie that greatly contributed to develop social services for the poor Shi’a population. Whereas in the 1930s leading Sunnis had begun to found institutions such as orphanages, schools, clinics and charities – perceiving the important role they played in the social advancement of the Maronite sect – Shi’a philanthropy is a product of the modern business bourgeoisie and it only began in the early 1940s when Rashid Beydoun, a migrant from Africa, founded the ‘Amiliyyeh School for boys¹⁴⁷. Until then the poverty of Shi’a held them back from developing sectarian sociocultural institutions that could compensate for the lack of public services.

Before analysing the external Shiite migration, it is necessary to concentrate on the pool of new arrivals to the capital starting from the late 1950s as a consequence of the sense of disinheritance, deprivation, and marginality that the Shi’a community was living in the southern villages and the Beqaa. Though Beirut lived an earlier, relatively small community of Shi’a residents concentrated within municipal Beirut, there is no comparison between this old nucleus and the mass of migrants whose incessant influx quickly led to the formation of a “second Shi’a in Lebanon”¹⁴⁸ in the southern suburbs of Beirut and its bidonvilles.

¹⁴⁵ Rosemary Sayigh (1994), *Too Many Enemies. The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*. London: Zed Books Ltd., p. 164.

¹⁴⁶ R. Sayigh (1994), p. 164.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁴⁸ Majed Halawi (1992), *A Lebanon Defied. Musa al Sadr and the Shi’a Community*. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, p. 68.

From the Villages to the Capital: The Internal Migration

Shiite mass internal migration from the rural areas to the capital and its surroundings began in the late 1950s. By 1975, it is estimated that as much as 40% of Lebanon's rural population had left the land. Among those, approximately 60% were migrating from the South (partially as a consequence of the Israeli invasions that started from the late 1960s).

Most Shiite settlements took place in the suburbs around Beirut, and by the mid 1960s this phenomenon began provoking social and political repercussions: the erection of illegal housing on privately own land, confrontation with the army and the creation of a "misery belt" all around Beirut that outreached the Christian Easter sector of the capital as well as the mainly Muslim western one.¹⁴⁹

The importance of studying the Shi'a exodus to Beirut is represented by the fact that by 1971, nearly half of the Lebanese Shi'a population was living concentrated in the Greater Beirut Area. Even though the capital had an earlier, relatively small community of Shi'a residents concentrated within municipal Beirut, the new arrivals quickly led to the formation of a "second Shi'a Lebanon" in the southern suburbs of Beirut and in its *bidonvilles*, gathering the interests of what were three geographically distinct Shi'a communities (the Beqaa, the South and Beirut's suburbs) into a single national constituency.¹⁵⁰ Obviously, the effects of urbanisation on Shiite life were not unidirectional. Displacement strengthened local and community ties, while at the same time introduced new sources of social and ideological differentiation. Shiites from the Beqaa were now interacting with Shiites from the South; at the same time, Lebanese Shi'a began joining 'opposition' parties or Palestinian resistance groups. Shiite rites such as 'Ashura were reaffirmed, becoming fertile ground for sectarian mobilisation.¹⁵¹ The new immigrants lived in unsanitary neighbourhoods where the population density reached 55,392 inhabitants/Km². Some of them found a work in Beirut's factories, while the majority joined the ranks of the "unclassified urban poor". It was a combination of

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Helena Cobban, "The Shi'a Community and the Future of Lebanon", *The Muslim World Today*, Occasional Paper, no. 2, Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Islamic Affairs, 1985, p. 3; M. Halawi (1992), p. 68.

¹⁵¹ Fouad Khuri (1975), *From Village to Suburb*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; R. Sayigh (1994), p. 164.

wage-earners, small property-owners and the unclassifiable urban poor, the invisible crowd.¹⁵² Some became the *semi-prolétariat de service* who found employment outside the industrial sector.¹⁵³ “These were the cab-drivers, the concierges, the peddlers, whose knowledge of the street and its opinions and allegiances made them particularly useful for the political machine of the urban politician”.¹⁵⁴ For the semi-proletariat, a *wasta*, or a minimal initial capital was required to find employment.

A study conducted on the twenty-six biggest firms of the eastern suburbs of Beirut in 1974 showed that 29 percent of wage earners had been on the job for less than one year, 43.6 per cent from one to five years, while only 27.4 percent had been there for more than five years. The same study showed that workers in the Beirut factories were mainly represented by a young workforce: 36 percent of the total working population in these enterprises, including 48 per cent of the female labour force, was under twenty years old.¹⁵⁵ This data clearly reflected the rural-urban migration: a study conducted on the composition of the displaced population of the village of Shyam in South Lebanon revealed that 41.7 percent of migrants were less than fifteen years of age, 52.3 percent were between fifteen and sixty-four, while only 6 percent belonged to an older age group (sixty-four and older).¹⁵⁶

A vivid description of the degrading life that existed in the ‘misery belt’ surrounding the capital and the work conditions inside one of the factories located in the area was given by Faris Bazzi:

[...] Mr. Ghandour hires new labour every Monday. He orders the applicants to queue, scrutinises each carefully, and chooses only those ones who look strong but stupid. He then inspects their identity cards and hires only those under twenty years of age. In this way, Mr. Grandeur avoids paying the minimum wage of LL 18/month and all of the insurance benefits guaranteed by law to those above that age [...] The workers are subjected to daily inspections. They are insulted in various ways by the foremen. The women workers have

¹⁵² Eric John Hobsbawm (1965), *Primitive Rebels*. New York: W.W. Norton, pp. 113-14; Salim and Marlène Nasr, “Morphologie sociale de la banlieue-est de Beyrouth”, *Maghreb-Machreq*, no. 73, Juillet-Septembre 1976, pp. 79-90.

¹⁵³ Claude Dubar and Salim Nasr (1976), *Les classes sociales au Liban*. Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, pp. 187-88.

¹⁵⁴ M. Halawi (1992), p. 70.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ali Faour, “Migration from South Lebanon with a Field Study of Forced Mass Migration”, *Population Bulletin of ECWA*, no. 21, December 1981, pp. 33-36.

vulgarity directed against them in addition to having to put up with the foremen entering their bathrooms [...] With the exception of the Palestinian women who live in the Tal al-Za'atar refugee camp, all of the other workers come from the villages of the South and the Biqa', and live in the suburbs of Beirut. There are few technicians from the West side of the capital as well.¹⁵⁷

Another recount of everyday life in the 'misery belt' around Beirut during the civil war comes a series of articles published in *Le Monde* between 21 and 25 September 1975 by Eric Rousseau:

Beirut: A nauseous stench rises from the numerous garbage heaps lining the narrow alley. Children with fly-covered faces wade in the muddy puddles. Crouched in the floor of a hovel, the emaciated face of an old man, and the mistrusting look of a youth intensely follow the stranger's passage. Contrary to traditional Lebanese hospitality, the stranger is not invited in for coffee. The house is too cramped. This hut of rusted sheet-metal houses children, parents, and grandparents.

The squatters in his shanty town in the heart of Beirut are painfully aware of their abandonment. They have but to raise their eyes to contemplate the proud buildings with flower-planted verandas where live wealthy Christians. The shells which destroy their homes are indelibly stamped with the Phalangist sniper's cross or with the mark of other Maronite militia men.

Six hundred thousand people are crowded in the 'belt of misery' which strangles Beirut and [its] suburbs. In the financial metropolis of the Middle East, where banks crumble under the weight of uninvested cash liquidity, more than one third of the population subsists on the brink of famine.¹⁵⁸ The mortality rate there is two to three times the national average. Low paid workers and the unemployed alike find it difficult to feed themselves due to the exploding prices. Decent housing is nearly out of reach as rents have tripled in two years due to real estate speculation. For their children, schooling and medical care are virtually out of reach [...] Islands of distress fester like cancers on the body of Beirut. Palestinian refugees founded the first core of shanty towns more than a quarter of a century ago. Sunni Muslim workers (Arabs or Kurds) increasingly moved besides them. But the great majority of inhabitants in the best of misery today are Shiite Muslims who fled their inhospitable countryside. Attracted to the industrial boom mirage, about then years ago, they deserted

¹⁵⁷ Farid Bazzi "Kayfa Wajahat al-Ahزاب al-Taqumiyya wa al-Haraka al-Niqabiyya Idrab 'Ummal Ma'mil Ghandour fi Kharif 1972?" [How did the Progressive Parties and the Syndicate Movement face the Workers' Strike at the Grandeur Factories in the Autumn of 1972?] (M.A. Thesis, the Lebanese University, Beirut, Ma'had al-'Ulum al Ijtima'iyya), 8-9.

¹⁵⁸ The basic contours and features of Lebanese economy were defined during the 1950s and 1960s with the rapid expansion of the services sector, especially commercial and banking services, which came to dominate the commodity-producing sectors (agriculture and industry) and to account for about two-thirds of the gross domestic product (GDP). By the middle of the twentieth century, Lebanon had a highly competitive and acquisitive population. Beirut was the banking and financial sector of the Arab Middle East, with a large number of people employed in the serving sector and competing with each other for jobs and markets. The private sector, which was primarily trade- and services-oriented with no significant natural resource wealth played the dominant role in economic development. Governmental policy was mostly non-interventionist and supportive of private sector initiatives. Domestically, a conservative fiscal policy was followed. Monetary policy began to play a role only towards the end of the pre-war period. Public sector management of economic enterprises was confined to a few public utilities. Externally, a free foreign exchange system had been maintained since the early 1950s, permitting the private sector to interact freely with the outside world. In sharp contrast, neighbouring countries (and indeed many other developing countries at the time) maintained exchange controls and gave the public sector the leading role in economic development.

the 'peripheral' underdeveloped regions such as Hermel [al-Hermel], Bekaa [Beqaa] and South Lebanon, where their religious community is in the majority.¹⁵⁹

A large portion of this urban proletariat migrated to take refuge in the impoverished ghettos of al-Karantina, Bourj Hammoud, al Nab'a, Tal al Za'atar, Shiyyah, Bourj al-Barajneh, Sabra or Shatila.

The massive migration to Beirut provoked a transformation in the social and political consciousness of the Shi'a. As the community grew more conscious of its disenfranchisement compared to the other Lebanese confessional groups, its political vision began to change and Shiites began to create flexible political allegiances. Shiite workers became conscious to belong to a wider social class under development and consolidation.¹⁶⁰

In an attempt to split the waves of the Shiites exodus from the Beqaa and the southern villages to the capital from the turn of the twentieth century to the beginning of the civil war in 1975, we could locate four different stages:¹⁶¹

- 1) The first one from 1900 to 1920 with a minor displacement mostly limited to the cities of Saida, Tyre, Nabatiyyeh and Marjaoun. During this stage Shiites started settling also in the poorest and popular areas of Beirut, mainly Zaqt al-Blatt, the old palace, Basta and the trench Algamiq. The reason why Shiites from the south decided to move to these areas mostly resides to their proximity to the commercial capital markets and job, which could easily be reached just by walking, providing good job opportunities for daily work-seekers as bus drivers, in parking lots, restaurants, cinemas, etc.
- 2) A second stage took place between 1920 and 1930. During this decade many Shiites displaced from the periphery areas of Byblos, Jezzine, Marjaoun and Nabatiyyeh, and Saida, joining those who preceded them in the previous decades and creating also 'new' Shiites areas in Burj Abi Haidar and Musaytbeh, Hret Hreik and Ghobeiry.

¹⁵⁹ Eric Rouleau, "Le Liban dans la Guerre Civile", *Le Monde*, instalment no. 3, "La Révolte du Tiers Etat", 23 September 1975, as translated in *SWASIA*, 17 October 1975, and republished in *MERIP Reports*, no. 44 (1976), p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁶¹ Talal Atrisi, interview with the author, November-December 2013.

- 3) The wave of migration from 1930 to 1940 was mostly characterised by families (sons, wives, brothers and relatives) joining the person (namely, the head of the family) who had migrated during the previous stages stretching their settlements to the areas of Aicha Bakkar and Basta.

*“After years of coercive celibacy I saw the arrival of wives and children of the displaced, joining their husbands and parents who came to the capital more than a decade ago. Many of them settled down quite well, working in flourishing trade-businesses”*¹⁶².

*“I left the noble village of al-Zahrani in the beginning of the 1940s to join my father and my older brothers who had preceded me. My family was composed of nine members. Some of my brothers migrated to Palestine to work in the services sectors in Haifa and Jaffa. Only later we all joined our father in Beirut who was running a business in the distribution of bottles of Kerosene. Two of my cousins found a work in the port of Beirut. When my father’s business expanded we were able to call in other members of the extended family (all young men coming from the south) to work with us, providing them a small place to sleep for three pounds per month”*¹⁶³.

Although a very few Shiites lived in the cities, a number of important small towns grew up during the period between the two world wars. This was due primarily to the caravan routes between northern Syria, southern Syria, Palestine and the Lebanese coast. Fairs and markets were held in Tyre, Bint Jbeil, Nabatiyyeh, Jwayya, Khiam and Baalbek, where people concluded business deals and exchanged the various agricultural products. Related cottage industries developed in this commercial atmosphere: mainly shoemaking in Bint Jbeil and pottery in Rashayyah al-Fakhar, for example.

- 4) During the stage of migration that goes from 1940 to 1960 Shiites from the villages mostly coming from Hasbayye, Ballbak, the Western Beqaa, Hermel, Zahle and Qadaa Keserwan joined their predecessors heavily crowding the popular

¹⁶² Interview with the author

¹⁶³ Ibid.

neighbourhoods of Ras Beirut, Zaroob al-Jamal (a popular district close to the city centre and Riad al-Solh Square), al-Hamra, Bechara al-Khoury (near the trench Alqmiq), Fakhani, Burj Barajneh, al Safir, al-Masalh, Karantina, Corniche al Nahr, Burj Hammoud, al-Nabaa. During this stage of migration and settlement, the displacement head towards the eastern suburbs of Beirut, an area with a good concentration of laboratories and factories which needed daily manual workers.

*“In the late 1940s, nearly 85 percent of the Lebanese Shi’a were concentrated in two heartlands: one in the south (Jabal ‘Amil), and the other in the northeast region of Ballbak-Hermel. They were a homogeneous and rural group of people. No more than 10 percent of the entire community lived in cities. The vast majority of the Shi’a peasantry lived on eager pots with poor soil and very limited water resources. They practiced subsistence dry farming (grains, olive trees and vineyards in the south; grains and orchards in Ba‘albak). Only tobacco production, well suited to the dry plateaus of southern Lebanon and grown as a cash crop, had expanded since the 1930s. But in 1948, tobacco was still a minor crop, planted in only three percent of the cultivated area of the south and involving some 3,000 to 4000 farmers. In the Hermel area, the main form of property ownership was collectively-owned (musha‘a) land, more often grazing area than a well defined holding. In the Ba‘albak area, very large property existed alongside fields collectively owned by villages”.*¹⁶⁴

The breakup of large tracts of land into smaller, private holdings had been under way since the 1930s, but peasants smallholdings were still insignificant except the towns and larger villages of Jabal ‘Amil. The peasants gradually increased their access to the land through contract planting and buying the property of bankrupt feudal lords with savings from wage labour in the countryside and cities, and as time went on, a prosperous middle-peasantry emerged. But the distribution of property remained still very unequal.

Shiites began their work in Beirut in daily non-permanent occupations, so they could return frequently to their villages to work in the fields and crops. Then they went back again to the city. Almost any one of them was moving between the villages and Beirut.

¹⁶⁴ Salim Nasr, “Roots of the Shi’i Movement”, *MERIP* 133, vol. 15, May/June 1985.

But in contrast, the difficulties encountered in the rugged mountainous lands, water-scarcity and regular abuses from the landowners pushed many of them to move permanently to Beirut or even to migrate outside Lebanon.

*“Some people were working for the As‘ad family. And the landowner was taking up to 37% off the workers’ wages at the end of the season if he was not satisfied with the crop. Nobody used to speak out or to rebel to this system. Even our wives were forced to work as maids and cleaning ladies in his house. Sometimes women were also sent to the city in place of the landowner if he had to administer some ‘dirty job’, and they were given half the initial price if they were intercepted”.*¹⁶⁵

After the occupation of Palestine, Beirut became a destination for many misplaced southern Shiite Lebanese who had migrated to the country during the previous decades, who now went to intensify the exodus to the capital, rising the rates of migration between the beginning of the 1940s and early 1950s. The Shiite pre-migration from the south to the capital in the early twentieth century was now able to provide employment for newcomers and extending a helping hand to them through a network of relations with traders and shop owners in Beirut. One can easily say that Lebanon has moved in less than two generations from a rural-community country - where life was organised around the village - to a very urban centre.

*“[...] With the intensification of Jewish terrorism in Palestine, my father returned from Haifa to his hometown in Tirzibna and later joined my other residents of [Lebanon’s] southern villages in their exodus to the capital. Haifa had lost its harbour right after the announcement of the birth of the State of Israel in 1948 and trading economy visibly declined. The streets of Safed and Hula were empty [...].”*¹⁶⁶

It is interesting to stress how most of the Shiites that were coming to the city did not carry with them a specific profession to turn to and rely on. The first generation of migrants literally took any job available, from selling gums to porters in the markets,

سعید عیسی، العلاقات الاجتماعية لأهالي بلدة الطيبة في مدينة بيروت، رسالة اعدت لنيل شهادة دبلوم الدراسات العليا في 165 الانتروبولوجيا، الجامعة اللبنانية، معهد العلوم الاجتماعية، 1999، ص 45-46

علي بيضون، السيرة القلقة، طير زبنا - النبعة، من الجنوب الى حزام البؤس البيروتية والثورة، دار التنوير، بيروت 2008 ص 35. 166

from selling cakes to selling household items on vehicles in the streets, from dish-washers in restaurants and shoe-shiners to parking-lots administrators.

A Beirut physician coming from an eminent Shiite family in Beirut recalls: *“My great grandfather migrated from the south to Beirut in the 1920s. He was very poor and started working on the streets selling home-made cakes. With the first incomes generated by this activity he was able to start a small coffee shop in downtown Beirut, near Martyr’s Square. With the economic expansion of the time his business gradually increased and was able to sustain my grandfather at the university and later on in helping him out to financially develop his real-estate business. My grandfather became a successful and rich entrepreneur and established a private hospital in Beirut for my father and my uncle who attended the university and became MDs”*¹⁶⁷.

There has also been evidence of some upward mobility on the part of those who remain in the same occupational category as their fathers. A grocer, for example, continues to follow the trade of his father, but the small business of his father has been transformed into a much larger *supermarché* with a significantly greater income.

Several factors contributed to this Shi‘a displacement towards the capital, which began to turn - in certain areas - into a large centre for services for all the people who were willing to aspire to better living conditions and opportunities historically neglected since the Ottoman rule and that 1928 famine that devastated many villages in the Southern regions. Southerners still tell of the horrors of hunger caused to them in those days, and left its impact on some villagers’ habits of fear and eagerness to store anything even if they did not have any material value or even food to be stored. The withdrawal of foreign armies and the declaration of independence contributed to encourage many people to come to the capital in the hope of new opportunities and to address the issues concerning their social struggle to the parliament. The capitalisation of the mass mobilisation that was undergoing the Shi‘a community in Lebanon had started and

¹⁶⁷ Interview with the author.

among some Shiite notables at the time, such as al-Zein and Beydoun, it was important "to encourage a move to the capital from southerners for electoral purposes".¹⁶⁸

After that very first wave of internal migration in the first half of the twentieth century, Beirut was now more ready to provide employment for newcomers and extending a helping hand to them through a rather efficient network of relations with a lot of traders and shop owners in the capital. These people had established a support community eager to offer a shared apartment or a decent accommodation to those southerners ready to migrate to Beirut (often relatives):

*"[...] it was a natural thing to do. My father decided to come to Beirut as he had a brother and a cousin who already migrated a few years before them. They were living in the same flat. It was like a gathering centre of [people coming from] other villages. Sometimes newcomers arriving in town were renting the places of those relatives that could afford something better, since their businesses were starting to be successful".*¹⁶⁹

A man who fled in 1945 I interviewed recalls how Shiites at the time were starting to gentrify traditionally inhabited Armenian quarters:

*[...] Shiites at that time [1960s] bought in that area [Bourj Hammoud] homes and properties of the Armenians who lived in refugee camps; Camp Tarad, Camp Mar Aish, camp Seis, or in southern Beirut. The Shiites started to construct buildings there [...].*¹⁷⁰

On how kinship and affiliation to the original villages and the web of self-help initiatives were at the backbone of the Shiite migration to Beirut is the story of Hajj Hasan, who migrated from the south border to the capital in the mid 1950s:

"In the mid-fifties I was thirty years of age, and the idea of leaving my own village in the south had always been present. At first I was intended to work in Palestine in the forties of that century. After the creation of Israel, Beirut had become the destination. I was the eldest son and my father separated from his wife and married again. My

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with the author.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.; حسين فاعور، قبضات الشيعية في مدينة بيروت، 1920-1975 رسالى اعدت لنيل شهادة دبلوم الدراسات العليا في الانتروبولوجيا السياسية، اشراف د.شوقي الدويهي، الجامعة اللبنانية، معهد العلوم الاجتماعية، الفرع الأول 1996-1997

brothers and me spent a few years in the village school and then left to work in Palestine. When I left for Beirut, accompanied by my wife and six children I started working in a small shop in Dikwana area. After a few years and with the help of the people of my neighbouring villages I could invest a small amount of money to establish my own activity. Over time Hajj Hasann Trade expanded, thanks to other Shiite workers who came to work there from the south. During this time, my two younger brothers graduated from their universities and could access a good job in an official institution. Consequently, they helped a number of relatives and villagers to move to Beirut: in the Cornish al Mazraa, Wata Musaytbeh, and Shi'ah areas. One of my brothers was a Baathist and later became one of the party's leaders, and the other adhered to the Communist party".¹⁷¹

Hajj Hasan's story resembles that of many others Lebanese Shiites at the time who migrated with the help of their predecessors and at the same time were able to establish good enough business activities that could guarantee a higher education to younger brothers. These younger relatives could eventually access the ranks of politics in the Communist, Socialist, Ansserist and 'leftist' parties - which all flew into the Sadrist movement at a later stage. Almost all the Shiite immigrants arriving in Beirut settled in the slums on its fringes, in communal settings with some common denominator (family, tribal, or village kinship).

In spite of all these changes, the Shi'a community had not yet experienced the social disruption, peasants revolts, or rapid expansion of export farming that had already transformed the Maronite area of Mount Lebanon as it was integrated into the world capitalist economy and developing, de facto, a 'Maronite entrepreneurship'. In 1948, Shi'a were only 3.5 percent of the population of Beirut. The community was socially, economically and even culturally peripheral (68.9 percent illiteracy as compared with 31.5 percent among catholics in 1943).¹⁷² It was equally peripheral to the French mandate and was consolidated with independence. The intercommunal National Pact of

¹⁷¹ حسين فاعور، قبضات الشيعية في مدينة بيروت، 1920-1975 رسالي اعدت لنيل شهادة دبلوم الدراسات العليا في الانتروبولوجيا السياسية، اشراف د.شوقي الدويهي، الجامعة اللبنانية، معهد العلوم الاجتماعية، الفرع الأول 1996-1997

¹⁷² Salim Nasr, "La transition des chiites vers Beyrouth: mutations sociales et mobilisation communautaire à la veille de 1975", in Mona Zakaria et Bachchâr Chbarou (eds.) (1985), *Mouvements communautaires et espaces urbains au Machreq*, Beyrouth: Presses de l'Ifpo, Institut français du Proche-Orient.

1943 was essentially a division of power between Maronite and Sunni political and economic elites. From 1920s to 1950s, Shiites were politically (and consequently economically) represented by a handful of powerful landowning families - the Asads, the Zeins and the Ossirans in southern Lebanon, and the Hamades, the Haidars and the Husseinis in Ba'albak and Jbeil. This elite was divided into quarrelling rival factions. Some of them were between alliance and opposition to the central power in Beirut, others at the periphery of the Lebanese system, though maintaining ties with the Maronite-Sunni dominated political power.

This emergent class-consciousness was not able to fully thrive in a solid and united working class that could reliably transcend confessional challenges. Rather, it perpetuated and re-enacted an economic scheme that was derivative of the social structure that characterised the preceding century, "which was particularly susceptible to fragmentation along lines of clientelist and confessional allegiances".¹⁷³

As far as the sub-proletarian majority was concerned, their political affiliations were fluctuating, reflecting the precarious situation in which they found themselves. They supported their referential *zu'ama* at the elections, embraced the leadership of Musa al-Sadr and Gamal abd-el Nasser, and at the same time joined the ranks of the countless protest movements that spread in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Beirut. The country's local notables still kept the sub-proletariat at their dependencies and they were not ready to serve a population that was not willing to reciprocate with electoral support. Despite the massive migration movement which left only 17% of the population in rural areas, the political distribution of parliamentary seats remained unchanged. A citizen, irrespective of where he was living or for how long, was required to return to his hometown to exercise the right to vote - consequently, the majority of the country's political forces were still tied up to their original communities in rural areas, despite the emptying that those areas experienced.¹⁷⁴

By the early 1960s, the Shiite milieu in Lebanon was in the process of gradually acquiring an ideological framework through which to launch social movements and to

¹⁷³ M. Halawi (1992), p. 72.

¹⁷⁴ Fouad Khuri, "The Social Dynamics of the 1975-1977 War in Lebanon", *Armed Forces and Society* 95, no.3, Spring 1981, p. 392.

deploy political rhetoric that would articulate specific claims to sectarian rights and representation.¹⁷⁵

Despite all the political inconsistencies, towards the end of the 1960s it became clear that Lebanese society was undergoing a rapid social transformation. The exodus of those years that reshaped the urban design of Beirut created new demands that the existing socio-political compartment could not satisfy. Shiite citizens mobilised not only because of economic and political marginalisation, but because such mobilisation did not reflect the guidelines of the National Pact anymore. The experience of disenfranchisement and dislocation created all the conditions for the emergence of a Shi'a group solidarity. Most of all, it originated a leadership vacuum that facilitated Musa al-Sadr to bring this community onto the Lebanese political scene.¹⁷⁶

Exogenous factors to Shi'a Economic Development

Besides the urban migration and the 'savage' explosion of an agro-exporting capitalism and the commercial and usurious commercial urban networks (starting from Beirut, Saida and Zahle), other important factors enabled the expansion of the Shiite community out of its native villages:

- 1) the progressive administrative integration under the presidency of Fouad Chehab of the peripheral Shiite regions in the Lebanese state which raised the interest of the dominant financial-commercial powers based in Beirut;
- 2) Development of the school system by the state, partly under the pressure of widespread collective aspiration to education as instrument of social mobility.
- 3) The Shiite diaspora, most notably in West and East Africa, South Africa, Brazil, Canada, Australia and Europe
- 4) The arrival on the Lebanese scene of imam Musa al Sadr.

¹⁷⁵ Max Weiss (2010), *In the Shadow of Sectarianism. Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*. Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London (England): Harvard University Press, p.1.

¹⁷⁶ M. Halawi (1992), p. 74.

The Fouad Chehab Era

In the late 1950s, President Fouad Chehab (1958-64) tried to reduce the socioeconomic gap in Lebanese society by massive investments in peripheral areas. The Shiite population centres in Jabal ‘Amil and the Beqaa were central targets for these projects. Chehab’s policy led to massive migration of rural Shiites to the cities, mainly to Beirut, because it ‘shortened’ the distance from the village to the city. More important, his policy raised the level of expectations among many young Shiites, who were disillusioned a decade later, with the failure of the policy.¹⁷⁷ In the era of Chehabism, the process of urbanisation was given a tremendous boost. Chehab’s regime, which was centrist, increased the authority of the president at the expense of the parliament. Chehab initiated and implemented intensive development programs aimed at improving the living conditions of residents in the country’s provinces. It was during these years that the hegemony of the feudal lords in the rural Shiite areas started decreasing.

During the Chehab presidency (but also with his successor Charles Hellou) rural Lebanon underwent some major development also of infrastructures: main and secondary roads, electricity, supply of running water. In late 1950s nearly 450 Shiite villages in southern Lebanon and 300 in the Beqaa Valley were not connected to the national road network; nearly 350 of them lacked of electricity. Initially Shi‘a demands were largely based on economic terms, focusing on irrigation, dams, schools, hospitals, and the like. They did not articulate these concerns as Shiites, as members of a community, but as inhabitants of depressed areas, as agricultural labourers and tenants exploited by dominant landowners, as badly paid industrial workers and as unskilled labourers without any social security.¹⁷⁸ The integration and reorientation of Shiite networks to Beirut led to a gradual spread of new lifestyles, consumption and circulation; new sociocultural patterns and new aspirations.

Many observers agree that his regime brought stability and economic development to Lebanon and that it demonstrated the need for compromise if the Lebanese confessional

¹⁷⁷ O. Niri (2011), p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ Theodor Hanf (2015, New Edition), *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon. Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*. London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Centre for Lebanese Studies; Lawrence P. Markowitz (2013), *State Erosion: Unlootable Resources and Unruly Elites in Central Asia*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press, p. 128.

system of government were to work. At the same time, however, it showed that in times of crisis the only solution might be to call on an outside power to restore equilibrium.

Public Education and Social Mobility

To better understand the role the socio-politico-economic factors played in the mobilisation of the Shi‘a community in Lebanon, it could be useful to view deprivation in the light of William Tabb’s definition of poverty as “lack of freedom and absence of choice”.¹⁷⁹ Majed Halawi furtherly elaborated this theory pointing out that deprivation in the Lebanese Shi‘a context equals to “degradation emanating from neglect, from the absence of choice over employment and education in the lives of the poor”. Such a definition seems to acknowledge certain fundamental aspects of the Lebanese sociopolitical system, as it encompasses the idea that many economically privileged Shiites nevertheless found themselves among the deprived.¹⁸⁰

According to all statistics and indicators – education, occupation and income – the socioeconomic differentials that emerged between regions and religious groups were rather unanimous: South Lebanon and the Beqaa were the poorest and last developed regions in the country; the Muslims were poorer than the Christians; with the very exception of the Sunni communities living in the Aarsal area – Shiites stood at the very bottom of the socioeconomic scale.¹⁸¹

In the field of education, specifically in term of the number of students and educational institutes, the gap between Christian and Muslims during the *mutasarrifiyya* was initially incredibly wide. By 1920, Lebanon had 471 Christian-run schools compared with 241 Muslim-run schools. While the Sunni had 219 schools, the Shi‘a and Druze had only 12 and 10 school respectively.¹⁸² During the mandate, there was a relevant increase in the number of Muslim students both in private and public schools. The

¹⁷⁹ William K. Tabb (1970), *The Political Economy of the Black Ghetto*. New York: W. W. Norton, pp. 4-5, and pp. 81-82.

¹⁸⁰ M. Halawi (1992), p. 60.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁸² Farid el-Khazen (2000), *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, p. 61-63.

majority of Muslim students attended public schools (80-90%), while the majority of Christians attended private schools.¹⁸³ Shiites resented the fact that although Muslim sects appeared to have surpassed Christian population growth, they had not received the comparable share of political influence required by Lebanon's confessional formula. They also decried the advanced socio-economic development of the Christian sector of the capital and its Christian suburbs while Shiite sectors remained neglected¹⁸⁴. Central Lebanon had been largely schooled for more than half of a century thanks to the action of Christian religious orders and a significant private activity.¹⁸⁵ Thus for south Lebanon and the Beqaa the number of pupils in primary and secondary passed 62,000 in 1959 to 225,000 in 1973, having increased 3.7 in fifteen years.¹⁸⁶

The history of education in Lebanon until independence is largely a history of educational achievements attained by private foreign and local religious groups. The educational literature on Lebanon includes a number of studies dealing with the contributions of these groups, but hardly any of them have dealt in depth with the educational efforts of the Shiite community. The factors that intensified the underprivileged status of the Shiite community united them by hardship and thus created fertile ground and high receptivity to its mobilisation which indirectly led to the development witnessed today. In fact, the development of Shiite education is a product of many factors, including social, political and religious factors. These factors responsible for the community's social political and religious mobilisation allowed the Shiite community to ask for more educational opportunities. Within this context, Deutsch (1961) examined the impact of social mobilisation phenomena on communal consciousness; according to Deutsch, certain changes in residence and lifestyle such as rural to urban migration, occupation (for instance shifts away from agrarian employment) and exposure to aspects of modern life (e.g., consumer goods, and technology) will induce personal changes on the psychological and behavioural levels,

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Judith Palmer Harik (1996), "Between Islam and the System: Sources and Implications of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hizbullah", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (March 1996), Sage Publications Inc., pp. 41-67.

¹⁸⁵ طلال عتريسي، البعثات اليسوعية ومهمة اعداد النخبة السياسية في لبنان، الوكالة العالمية للتوزيع، بيروت، 1987

¹⁸⁶ S. Nasr (1985).

changes in expectations, habits and needs. Moreover, Deutsch (1961) affirmed that, the expansion of literacy, education and mass media exposure, further flourishes the range of individual demands and heightens expectations for their fulfilment.

Indeed, the Shiite community experienced a change in social expectations (for instance rise in their demand for education) due to migration, urbanisation, change in occupation and exposure to new social contexts. Besides, advancements in education, literacy and mass media exposure elevated expectations within the Shiite community at an exceptional rate. However, since the state failed to satisfy these expectations at the same rate at which they are rising, the Shi'a embraced a communal character, relying on ethnic solidarities to fill this psychological and material void.¹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, educational progress was achieved; in fact, president Chehab's modernising reforms directly targeted the Shiite peripheral regions; his most noted success was in the educational realm. In both the Beqaa and the south, the number of students increased from 62000 in 1959 to 225000 in 1973.¹⁸⁸ However, these educational achievements were not matched by employment opportunities, since Chehab's plan failed to develop the industrial sector in the rural areas. However, Chehab's successor Charles Helou, did not effectively follow the former's footsteps and as such rural development schemes were only partially achieved. As a result, these half fulfilled developments culminated in raising the expectations of the Shiites, who naturally opted for internal or external migration as a mean of satisfying their newly articulated demands. Moreover, in the city, individuals came to compete with one another not on a personal basis as they had previously done in their rural home towns, but as groups striving for the same valued collective goods.¹⁸⁹ Ben-Dor (1988) proposed that when these goods are unequally distributed along communal lines, the incorporation of aspirations of all group members generates ethnic conflict.¹⁹⁰ Consequently, migration accompanied with urbanisation and exposure to education and to new ways of life raised the hopes of the Shi'a for more

¹⁸⁷ Joseph Rothschild (1981), *Ethnopolitics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹⁸⁸ Theodor Hanf,(1993), *Coexistence in war time Lebanon*.

¹⁸⁹ M. Halawi, 1992.

¹⁹⁰ Gabriel Ben-Dor (1988), "Ethnopolitics and the Middle Eastern State", in G. Ben-Dor, *Ethnicity, Pluralism and the State in the Middle East (71-92)*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

improvement in their social conditions (educational and economical). Their high aspirations by then opposed to the restricted existing socio-economic conditions stimulated a social mobilising process which was manifested in the enhancement of their life circumstances. The development of education through opening schools was the main tool to be used to achieve their aspirations for progress and growth.

Shiites began to grope their way toward education at a time when Beirut was buzzing in schools, newspapers, and experiencing a scientific and cultural renaissance¹⁹¹ which furtherly increased the social difference between Shiites and the other communities in the capital, which in the meantime had become a combination of neighbouring communities.

In this intellectual environment, surrounded by a variety of newspapers, magazines and associations, a Shiite-led organisation — Al-‘Amiliyya — founded and run by the Beydoun family,¹⁹² began its journey with the purpose to teach and educate the Shiite community in Beirut in 1925. It started with only three classes in a small room. In 1932 it became an elementary school made up of two layers containing ten rooms hosting 330 students, until it became an intermediary school in 1945 and a high school in 1967, with two branches: French and English (known as Al-Kulliyah al-‘Amiliyya). This ‘private’ school opened its doors to a generation of poor Shiite and educated them to become members of military associations, officers in the army and internal security forces, official departments, professors at the Lebanese University and other universities,

¹⁹¹ Since the mid-nineteenth century to the the early twentieth century, Beirut saw the birth of dozens of newspapers and magazines such as: *Hadiqat al-Akhbar* directed by Khalil Jibra’il al- Khoury in 1858; *Nafir Suriyya* founded by Boutros al Bustani in 1860; *Majmou’at al Al-‘Aloum* founded by the Syrian Scientific Society (al-Jama’iyyat al-‘Almiyyah al-Suriyyah) in 1868; *Thumrat al-Fnoun* by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Qabbani in 1875; *Lisan al-Hal* by Khalil Sarkis in 1877; *Beirut* by Mohammad Rashid Al-Dana in 1886; *Al-Mashreq* by Father Luis Sheikhu in 1898; *Raudat al-Ma’aref* by Salim al-Unsi and Shaker Abu Nader in 1889; *Al-Qanana* issued by the Syrian Evangelical College in 1900; *Ittihad al-Lubnani*, founded by Sheikh Ahmed Hassan Tabara and Khalil Aoura in 1908; *Al- Lisan al-Arab* by Abed al-Ghani El-‘Areisy and Fouad Hantas in 1912; *Al-Musaouwar* by Abdul Wahab al-Tanir in 1912; *Al-Islah* by Sheikh Ahmed Hassan Tabara in 1914; *Al-‘Ahed al-Jadid* by Khair el-Din el-Ahdab in 1925; *Al-Sharq* by Abdul Ghani Kaki in 1926; *Al-Doustour* by Khalil Abu Jawda in 1927; *Al-Nida’* by Kazem al-Solh in 1930; *Al-Loua’* by Ali Nasir al-Din in 1930; *Al-Makshouf* by Fouad Hubaysh in 1935; *Beirut* by Mohiuddin Nsouli in 1936; *Saut al-Shaab* by Nicolas al-Chaoui; *al-Nataq al-Rasmi*, the official print of the Communist Party of the Syrian-Lebanese; *Al-‘Amal* belonging to the Phalange Party, 1939 and other magazines and newspapers who stopped their publications during the First World War. Some of them started publishing again after the war ceased.

¹⁹² The Beydoun family settled in Lebanon in 1910 after leaving Damascus where they had been successful merchants. Following the move, they became wealthier. Whilst the family had not been directly politically active during the ottoman or early mandatory periods, they did, however become prominent in funding the ‘Amiliyya Society, a charitable organisation set up largely to provide educational services to Shi’a youth.

writers, intellectuals and journalists. Al-‘Amiliyya had a protocol which allowed the first son of a Shiite family to study upon payment of a small fee; the second one could pay half of the fee, while the third (and so on and so forth) were allowed to study free of charge (and it was a rarity for a Shiite family to have less than three sons/daughters at the time).

Al-‘Amiliyya became a torch of light for illiterate Shiites, but private Christian and Muslim schools in Beirut had preceded Al-‘Amiliyya since more than half a century. Despite the efforts, the Shiite level of education in those years remained quite low. Some Najaf-educated religious figures like Mr. Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah or Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din helped to partially overcome this rate by establishing educational and cultural institutes and associations outside the capital, in the areas of Nabaa and Dikwana. According to the Al-‘Amiliyya archives,¹⁹³ the number of students who completed their high school studies (bac) from 1947 till 1952 is fifteen. This explains the delay among Shiites in accessing public jobs.

Musa al Sadr greatly contributed to the establishment of schools and educational institutes, also thought the donations of Shiite expatriates and migrants. But someone before Musa al-Sadr is known for using expats’ monies and donations to finance educational or philanthropic activities. Rashid Beydoun, starting from the late 1930s, travelled to Africa in a few occasions for this purpose. The use of philanthropic organisations as a basis for establishing popular support was to prove a common theme in Lebanese politics, become Amal and (especially) Hezbollah’s flagship a few years later.¹⁹⁴

When Rashid Beydoun became a deputy in the Lebanese parliament, he started advocating for Shiite integration in the Lebanese educational system, publicly denouncing the “unfair” contributions reserved to his community and claiming for an “equality treatment”. Beydoun sent a cable to the prime minister in which he declared that the Syrian republic had asked the Lebanese politicians to raise their attention to the Shiite community, to the “low representation of Shi‘a in the public offices, despite being

¹⁹³ أرشيف الجمعية

¹⁹⁴ Rodger Shanahan (2005), p. 42.

the demographic majority in the country” and for not “fulfilling the requirement assumed in front of the State allies”.¹⁹⁵

It is also noteworthy to mention that starting from the 1950s and in a very substantial way in the 1960s, many poor and middle class Shiites received grants to study in the counties of the former Soviet Union, in the context of a consolidating affiliation of many disenfranchised Shi‘a youth to communist and socialist parties. The Soviet Union-supported Shiites pursued a higher education in engineering, medicine, dentistry, etc., and went to form later — with the Lebanese University graduates — the first generation of specialised Shiite professionals.

The breakthrough for Shiites entering higher education came with Gamal abd el Nasser’s supported Arab University in the 1960s. This represented the very first chance for mobility, as many Shiites could finally access law and political universities and consequently enter in the political arena. Pursuing a higher education became less and less unusual for Shiites in those years and it certainly was a means through which Shiites could advance their social status and political influence. Until the late 1950s and 1960s very few students could access the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University (approximately 25%). An important obstacle in accessing private universities was the foreign language test. Since many Shiites obtained their diplomas in public schools, most of them did not have an appropriate knowledge of French or English and were automatically marginalised by this selection. Nabih Berri himself was a victim of this system when he completed his secondary education at Beyt al-Talaba in Beirut, and took the matriculation exam. Although the overall grade Berri achieved was higher than necessary, the exam was marked as ‘failed’ because he had passed only 25% of the language part of the test. Eventually, Berri managed to complete the matriculation exam and to access the Lebanese University in Beirut.

The Lebanese University was subsidised by the government, and it attracted mainly Muslim students, many of them Shiites. As a consequence, for many Shiite students the possibilities to finally access upper education and advance their social status were not precluded anymore. Education was also a mean through which Shiites could awake their political consciousness and actively participate to the fervent intellectual debate in the

من وثائق الجمعية، كتاب "رشيد بيضون قول وفعل"، بتاريخ 2/12/1937 ص 22-32¹⁹⁵

mid-1960s, entrenched by the Cold War, the 1967 Israel-Arab War, and the discrimination against the Shiites in the public sector and the educational system.¹⁹⁶ The presence of many Muslim students (particularly Shiites) on campus turned the Lebanese University into a focus for leftist movement activity.

Although unequal academic development between regions remained very strong again in the mid-seventies, the access of a considerable percentage of Shi'a youth to education through the public school and the Lebanese University caused considerable consequences in terms of training of a young generation and the local presence of a group of teachers who had some political and socio-cultural influence on their students, to the detriment of the traditional clergy and community leaders.¹⁹⁷ Along with instruction, the progressive diffusion of press and books - including the Arab nationalist and Marxist literature - Shiites gradually started entering senior management jobs and the *cadres* professions after graduating at the Lebanese University. There was also a gradual expansion of Shiite participation in the broad sector of modern Tertiary (commerce, banking, insurance, transport, etc.). In short, the free and open Lebanese University trained a new middle class of Shiites, relatively educated, ambitious, reformist or radicalised, seeking to strengthen their status and question the peripheral position of the community.

The diaspora

Education reinforced the position of many traditionally high status groups, but also provided others with an important channel for upward mobility. Those who had no such opportunity migrated abroad. Given the significant increase in the population — most notably among Shiites — limited land, natural resources and economic opportunities, many had little choice. Although some families deserted their villages in a body, emigrants were typically young men who traveled in small groups. Migration abroad, both temporary and permanent, had been an important feature of Lebanese society since the very beginning of the 20th century. By 1915, about a quarter of Lebanon's

¹⁹⁶ O. Niri (2011), p. 21.

عبد الإله شمس، التعليم والمؤسسات التعليمية عند الشيعة في لبنان في إطار التحولات السياسية والاجتماعية خلال القرن العشرين، رسالة أعدت لنيل شهادة دبلوم الدراسات العليا في علم الاجتماع التربوي في معهد العلوم الاجتماعية، الجامعة اللبنانية، أشراف د. طلال عتريسي بيروت 2002-2003

population had emigrated,¹⁹⁸ and no community has not in some way felt its effect. The Lebanese presence in Australia, Brazil, USA and in West Africa has been of particular economic and political importance.¹⁹⁹

Of course, not all emigrants became exceptionally wealthy, but the sums they have been able to send their relatives or return with to Lebanon have had a significant effect on social relations, disrupting coalitions among families, disturbing existing status hierarchies, and becoming an important factor in the country's prosperity.

Many emigrants returned with new skills and ideas, establishing modern firms and further contributing to the cosmopolitanism of the country. Others remained abroad, establishing large Lebanese communities in the cities they were living.

Emigration was hardly accomplished or accompanied by the severing of kinship ties.²⁰⁰ Family members abroad often financed the travel of kin from Lebanon or returned to seek wives for themselves or their sons. In some cases, family rivalries which had their roots in Lebanese communities were perpetuated abroad. With the passing generations, however, significant assimilation has occurred in both North Africa and South America. Recent emigration, with the most important exception being those going to Australia and to some degree West Africa, has been of more temporary nature with many, including skilled technicians and professionals, taking jobs in Arab oil-producing countries and making occasional return trips to Lebanon. Many of those who owned taxis ("services") until the 1960s — mostly Shiites — bought them by driving trucks or engaging in similar work in the Arabian Gulf.

The common belief that a person could best improve his position by emigration rather than by rebelling against economic condition in the country has tended to channel out social unrest and lessen class conflict.

¹⁹⁸ Charles Issawi (1966) "Economic Development and Political Liberalism in Lebanon", in Leonard Binder (ed.), *Politics in Lebanon*, New York: Wiley and Sons, pp. 69-83.

¹⁹⁹ Fouad Khuri (1965), "Kinship, Emigration and Trade Partnership Among the Lebanese of West Africa", *Africa* 35, pp. 385-395.

²⁰⁰ Toufic Touma (1958), *Un village de montagne au Liban*, Paris: Mouton; Herbert H. Williams and Judith R. Williams (1965), "The Extended Family as a Vehicle of Culture Change", *Human Organization* 24, pp. 59-64; Victor F. Ayoub (1965), "Conflict Resolution and Social Reorganization in a Lebanese Village", *Human Organization* 24, pp. 11-17.

Shi'a emigration overseas followed a pattern similar to that of the exodus to Beirut. Pushed by internal political and economic crisis in their homeland, thousands of Lebanese Shiites migrated in search of enrichment in Africa, the Americas, the Arab Peninsula and Europe. Although statistics on the volume of emigration of the different confessional units are nonexistent, it can be stated with accuracy that the Lebanese Shi'a today constitute the largest proportion of Lebanese expatriates in many West African countries, parts of the United States, Brazil and elsewhere.

The Shi'a diaspora engendered a Shi'a bourgeoisie that took over from the state the control of the socioeconomic development of the towns and villages across south Lebanon and the Beqaa. By the late 1960s, the impact of this new Shi'a wealth was strongly felt in the south where it helped to consolidate many of the large agricultural estates of the region, and to gain financial control over other sectors of the Lebanese economy, especially the real estate, the entertainment industry, tourism, commerce with Africa, the diamond business. With a very few exceptions (the Jammal Trust Bank), however, the impact of this bourgeoisie at a national level was still limited, partly as a result of the hegemony exercised by its Sunni and Maronite counterparts over much of the industrial and commercial sectors. Furthermore, its potential to transform itself into a new political force was still partially restricted by the system of old clan politics that pervaded the Shi'a and Lebanese political and social life in general.

Well aware of these obstacles, the new Shi'a bourgeoisie pressed for change - the same change that Musa al-Sadr was starting to advocate for. Facing and resenting their exclusion from the political and social elites, many of this bourgeoisie began to question the rules of the game and in the process found that their interests converged with those of their coreligionists in the suburbs of Beirut and elsewhere. It is in this specific context that should be analysed the advent and success of Musa al Sadr's movement. Undoubtedly, al Sadr movement succeeded thanks to the support of the Lebanese disenfranchised Shi'a community, but it was the initial back up of this new Shi'a diaspora middle class that consolidated the organisation.

Although economic growth in Lebanon and restrictions on migration into certain African states have served to curtail migration, the flux of people moving out of the

country to work and seek fortune or simply better conditions continues to be a significant characteristic of Lebanese society.

Particularly important is the case of Lebanese diaspora to West Africa. Over the span of a generation, poor Shiites who were able to establish medium-successful businesses in subsaharan Africa generated individuals born in Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone or Senegal returning to Lebanon for their education before heading back to West Africa again to run their families' businesses and, eventually, leaving their enterprises and interests to their children and returning to their 'home' villages. Those businessmen were moving around within networks of agents, creating webs of translocal kinship relations and retaining at the same time strong relations with their villages of origin. This element reinforces Copperbelt's studies beforehand mentioned (migrants never dissolving the link with their own kinship) and at the same time explains how and why many of Shiites became 'ethnic entrepreneurs' affiliated with political organisations and - affiliated or not - the majority of them expressed a sense of 'ethnic' (sectarian) belonging to these organisations representing their own community.

Those who returned to Lebanon did not just invest their earnings or made show of their affective commitments. They actively strived to insert themselves into political networks, helping in the process to shape the country's political culture. Alongside the members of the new Shi'a intelligentsia - lawyers, physicians, civil servants, professors, activists - the new men with money of Africa played a significant part in the *harakat-al Mahrumeen*, the 'Movement of the Deprived' founded by the charismatic leader Musa al Sadr in 1974. Frenzied individuals eager to make their mark, they found their access to politics which was until now closed off either by the pervading economic and political influence of Maronites and Sunni or by the local *zu'ama* or influential *wasta* people of Jabal 'Amil like the omnipotent Kamil al As'ad.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Andrew Arsan (2014), *Interlopers of Empire. The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial West Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 257.

The African Diaspora and the Making of an Upwardly Mobile Shiite Community

On the night of 25 January 2010, a few minutes after take off a Boeing of the Ethiopian Airlines crashed into the Mediterranean Sea, about 5 NM South West of Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport in Beirut.

ET 409 was being operated under the provisions of the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Regulations (ECAR) and as a scheduled international flight between Beirut and Addis Ababa Bole International Airport.²⁰² It departed Beirut with ninety persons on board. There were no survivors. Of the ninety who lost their lives as a consequence of the crash, twenty-two were Ethiopians (most of them domestic workers returning home for a brief break). However, the majority of passengers consisted of Lebanese nationals. Many of these fifty-six travellers were either heading to Addis Ababa or catching connecting flights bound for Dakar, Abidjan, Lagos and Freetown. The ET 409 flight disaster was a reminder of the seemingly incongruous presence of Lebanese migrants in sub-Saharan Africa. For a long time concerned with bettering their living conditions, the inhabitants of the poor provinces of Mount Lebanon, Akkar or Jabal 'Amil started undertaking long journeys from the shores of the East Mediterranean to the port cities and trading posts of colonial West Africa starting from the 1920s, finding in such exotic places a potent source of profit.

The tales of these migrants, then - of their travels through the world, their businesses and their jobs - can tell us a few different readings and understandings of the phenomenon of diaspora.

Even though there is a remarkable tendency in the literature to analyse diasporic life in melancholy, binary terms, as a form of leave-taking and abrupt break with the familiar ties:

on the contrary, these men and women showed a magpie-like propensity for poaching ways of living in the world from here, there and everywhere, sticking together homespun scripts of kin, gender and confession, place and political community, repertoire of commercial strategies, and registers of domesticity and respectability. The lives of these men and women were never quite settled, never defined by attachment by a single place: they did not remain irretrievably wedded to the ways of home, but not did they meld unreservedly into the new milieu, like swimmers hurriedly casting off their clothes to throw themselves into the sea [...] for their particular wish was to have their presence felt in the eastern

²⁰² Republic of Lebanon, Ministry of Public Works & Transport Investigation: Report on the Accident to Ethiopian 409 – Boeing 737-800. Registration ET-ANB at Beirut - Lebanon on 25th January 2010. Presented by the IIC on 17th January 2012.

Mediterranean even as they were in Africa, and to maintain a foothold in Africa even when they returned to Lebanon.²⁰³

Lebanese migrants to Africa could be considered as ‘cosmopolitans among the locals in world culture’. Whereas the latter assimilate ‘items of some distinct provenance into a fundamentally local culture’ whose ‘structures of meaning’ are hardly altered by these convenient new additions, cosmopolitanism demands a ‘greater involvement with a plurality of contrasting cultures, an intellectual and aesthetic openness towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity’.²⁰⁴ In a similar vein, Prima Werbner draws a line between cosmopolitan subjects, those ‘gorgeous butterflies in the greenhouse of global culture’, flitting from one source of sustaining to another, and ‘transnational bees and ants who build new hives and nests in foreign lands’, remaining ‘anchored in translocal social networks and cultural diasporas rather than the global ecumene’.²⁰⁵ One might argue that those theories are too much infused with the spectrum of modernisation theory, idealisation of mobility and draw a drastic line between those who seek to live in the world and those who merely wish to reproduce home.²⁰⁶ Diasporas in general, and specifically Lebanese Shi‘a diaspora in subsaharan Africa, are far more complicated phenomena. Lebanese migrants to West Africa were trying to live comfortable existences far from the places of their birth, but on the other hand they were striving to maintain relations with friends, relatives and commercial partners, either in far afield locales *and* in their own villages in Lebanon. At the same time they adopted discursive repertoires and practices which operated at a global scale, striving for a universality that might raise the inconvenient traces of that particular circumstances.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ A.Arsan (2014), pp. 226-227.

²⁰⁴ Ulf Hanner (1996), *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. London: Routledge, p. 103.

²⁰⁵ Prima Werbner, “Introduction: The Dialectics of Cultural Hybridity”, in Prima Werner and Tariq Modood (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. London: Zed Books Ltd., p. 12.

²⁰⁶ Leonard Daniel (1958), *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

²⁰⁷ A. Arsana (2014), p. 227.

Diasporas in modern Lebanon started to be structured and play different roles in the socio-economic development of Lebanon since the end of the nineteenth century. Emigration from Lebanon and the role of Lebanese returnees in Lebanon, were tightly related to the economic, political and cultural expansion of Western (manly European) countries and their penetration in the Arab World in general and Lebanon in particular. A limited, migration, existed since the seventeenth century and before: Lebanese, migrating to Egypt for commercial purposes, and to Italy for studying. In Lebanon and since the beginning of the second part of the nineteenth century, an important movement of emigration started, to Egypt, the U.S.A, to a lesser extent to Latin America, and on a very limited level to Australia and subsaharan West Africa. Between the first and the second world wars (1918-1945) emigration from Lebanon changed in some aspects: On the one hand, Lebanese emigration to Egypt, the USA and Latin America, declined because of the world economic recession. On the other hand, emigration from Lebanon to South Saharan Africa developed, the sending and receiving country being generally under the same colonial rule: France.²⁰⁸

Between the end of second world war (1945) and the “oil boom” (1973), the patterns of emigration changed radically and was mainly an emigration to Arab oil producing countries. On the other hand, Lebanese emigration to South Saharian Africa persisted in spite of growing difficulties for the emigrants since the sixties.

The 1940s and 1950s brought along a great deal of change to the lives of Lebanese migrants to Africa. Those who had arrived in the 1920s and 1930s, and whose businesses have survived the war, began to call upon their relatives, wives and children as they acquired a measure of prosperity, and found that their presence in Africa was rather more permanent then they had initially envisaged.

Hussein Watfa was born in 1911 in the village of Ain Baal in South Lebanon and migrated to Sierra Leone in 1924 after the vessel sent his father a few years earlier. During 1953, he could manage to buy his first building in Ras Beirut area near the lighthouse and in 1974 he settled permanently in his homeland and resided in Mar Elias, having bought the the entire building where he lived.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Boutros Labaki, “ L’émigration libanaise sous le Mandat Francais”, *Hanon. Revue libanaise de géographie*, Volume XVII, 1982-1984, Recueil du Département de géographie, Université Libanaise, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Beyrouth, 1985, pp. 1-23.

²⁰⁹ حسين فاعور، قبضايات الشيعة في مدينة بيروت، 1920-1975 رسالى اعدت لنيل شهادة دبلوم الدراسات العليا في الانترنتوبولوجيا السياسية، اشراف د.شوقي الدويهي، الجامعة اللبنانية، معهد العلوم الاجتماعية، الفرع الأول 1996-1997

The *Directorat des Libanais d'Oure-Mer* estimated in the late 1950s that west Africa was home to 18,300 Lebanese citizens. Another 6,200 lived in Nigeria, And a further 3,000 in Sierra Leone.²¹⁰ Côte d'Ivoire also grew in popularity with the commodity boom of the early 1950s as coffee and cocoa beans production increased sensibly. Lebanese migrants served not only as brokers, but also as suppliers of these valuable consumer goods to plantation workers with disposable income, to whom they sold pipe tobacco, cigarettes, milk, soap, sardines, and tinned tomatoes. The same opportunities could be found in Senegal, especially the Dakkar. In the late 1940s, Lebanon appointed its first consul to *Afrique Occidentale Française*, Muhammad Sabra - a Shi'a member of the *Nida al-Qamwi* party founded by prime minister Riyad al-Sulh.²¹¹ This administrative change marked a very important shift: Lebanon was no longer part of the French empire but a fully sovereign state. These men and women lived at once within the confines of empire, and beyond its suffocating embrace. But the administrative innovations of the late 1940s also signalled the change in the relation of Lebanon to its diaspora. "On one hand, the territorial nation attempted to hold these men and women in its embrace. On the other, it increasingly came to treat them as an awkward appendage, not fully integrated into a state which remained largely founded upon a conventional understanding of the relations between the policy and the land upon which it lay".²¹²

The effects of this shift are still to be felt, just as traces of Lebanese migrants to subsaharan Africa are there to be found either in the big mansions in the south of Lebanon, in Africa or in Parisian neighbourhoods. The presence of these migrants, sustained by a short-term economic vision for endurable investments, manifested itself in ostentatious prosperity at times in all the places where these 'new' businessmen alighted. Many Lebanese traders operated many of the restaurants, electronic goods stores, and textile and clothes shops of dakar, Bamako or Abidjan, selling mobile phones and laptop computers, children's outfits etc., whereas the most affluent members of the community built transnational commercial empires, engaging in industrial production and wholesale import-export businesses - from plastic factories (like the

²¹⁰ Elie Safa, *L'Emigration Libanaise*, Beirut: Université Saint Joseph, 1960, pp. 119-120.

²¹¹ Centre des Archives d'Outremer, Aix-en-Provence, Ministère des Colonies, Fond Ministériel, Série Géographique, 2303/6, Pharaon to Reynet, Beirut, 24/07/1945.

²¹² A. Arsan (2014), p. 231.

‘Ummais in Côte d’Ivoire), to soaps and blue-jeans (Sa’id Fakhri) - expanding their own activities from Senegal to Côte d’Ivoire and beyond.

On pense souvent que les Libanais se limitent aux activités commerciales. Les choses sont plus complexes et ont évolué au cours des années. Les pionniers qui ont débuté en 1900 connaissent des conditions de vie très pénibles. Colporteurs, ils vendent des bijoux fantaisie ou des tissus. Boutiquiers, ils vivent dans une médiocre case de paille, couchant sur leur comptoir. Leur niveau de vie, selon toutes les descriptions, est analogue à celui des autochtones. Dès qu’ils le peuvent, ils font venir leur famille et des compatriotes, formant ainsi un réseau commercial de plus en plus cohérent. Avec le succès, leurs entreprises se transforment, se développant de boutiques en succursales et se diversifient, des tissus à l’hôtellerie ou à l’alimentation. On croit souvent que les Libanais sont uniquement commerçants et s’enrichissent en parasites. En réalité on trouve parmi eux des cultivateurs. Il y avait en Guinée, en 1958, plus de 50 planteurs de bananes libanais. La première usine de textile du Cameroun, la première usine de plastique de Conakry ont été fondées par des Libanais. Les investissements immobiliers sont importants. Certains s’orienteront vers des industries alimentaires, créeront des ateliers de confection, des entreprises de transport. Il faut souligner combien ces hommes sont souples, capables de s’adapter aux circonstances. Ambitieux, économes, énergiques, ils sont venus pour escalader l’échelle sociale et ils y parviennent. Les grands-pères ont été colporteurs, les pères ont été boutiquiers, les fils font l’import-export ou créent des industries. En même temps ils entraînent, semble-t-il, dans leur sillage, l’ascension d’une bourgeoisie noire: Beaucoup de villages ont maintenant leur boutiquier africain [...] Presque partout, les Libanais ont pris une part dominante dans des commerces liés à l’alimentation, mais à une alimentation de luxe, type européen (légumes, conserves) . Ils ont également conquis restauration et hôtellerie et ont pris une part importante dans les industries alimentaires.²¹³

Mr. Jawaad migrated with his parents in Sierra Leone in the early 1950s from the small village of Qana in south Lebanon. His family was running a small workshop with a few basic machines for the production of plastic. The machine was operated by just one person, and the outlet was left in the hands of Mr. Jawaad’s mother and her sister. What started as a small-scale business eventually evolved into a full-scale dominant plastic industry in Mr. Jawaad’s hands, producing all kind of plastic-related commodities. Mr. Jawaad could send all his sons and daughters to the university and relocate in the United Kingdom. Likewise, the Wehbe family, after achieving a fortune in the real estate business in the 1950s and 1960s, while maintaining significant businesses interests in West Africa, no longer regards Dakkar as a permanent place of residence, and most of this family’s members today share their time between Beirut and Paris.

The axis Beirut-Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire) has also served as a strategic commercial trajectory from the 1930s onwards:

[...] la Côte d’Ivoire a toujours ouvert les bras aux Libanais, devenus des acteurs majeurs de son économie. Autrefois cantonnés au petit commerce, les Libanais de Côte d’Ivoire sont désormais actifs dans des secteurs cruciaux comme les transports, la finance ou les

²¹³ Jean Binet, *Les Libanais en Afrique francophone*, Kroniek van Afrika, IRD, 1975/3, pp. 258-265.

hydrocarbures. "Ils tiennent l'économie" dit-on facilement à Abidjan, une idée corroborée par les chiffres : selon Roland Dagher, grand patron libanais d'Abidjan, "35 voire 40%" de l'économie est aux mains de la communauté libanaise, qui fournit "le même niveau d'emplois, sinon un peu plus, que la fonction publique ivoirienne".²¹⁴

The Hijazi group or the Global Manutention de Côte d'Ivoire (GMCI) in the hands of the (Shiite) Lebanese magnat Ibrahim Ezzeddine are crucially important enterprises in Côte d'Ivoire.

A French entrepreneur based in Abidjan suggested that sometimes the Ivorian government has been too indulgent towards the Lebanese:

Les quartiers chiites de la capitale sont en effet connus pour abriter des sympathisants du Hezbollah. Les drapeaux verts du Hezbollah flottaient sur certains balcons du quartier de Marcory, surnommé 'le petit Beyrouth', pendant la guerre israélo-libanaise de 2006. L'imam de la mosquée Al-Ghadir, Abdul Menhem Kobeissi, a un temps été expulsé vers le Liban sous pression américaine en raison de sa proximité avec le Hezbollah [...] avant de revenir à Abidjan: on l'a vu prononcer un discours lors d'un meeting présidentiel de Laurent Gbagbo en octobre 2010.²¹⁵

In the entire world, only two countries stood by Gbagbo: Angola and Lebanon. The decision by Lebanese ambassador Ali Ajami (Shiite) in Côte D'ivoire to attend Gbagbo's sham swearing in is at the heart of why the Lebanese community is being harassed today in Côte D'ivoire. The Lebanese community in neighbouring Ghana is whispering that it's all Nabih Berri's fault. That he and his allies have significant economic interests in Côte D'ivoire and strong ties to the Gbagbo regime, and that it was his foreign minister who told the ambassador to attend Gbagbo's swearing in.

Important for many Lebanese migrants to Africa are local attachments to the home village in Lebanon. While maintaining a base in subsaharan Africa, many Lebanese migrants divide their time between West Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and - for the most affluent - France or England. This dual (or triangular) presence can be found anywhere in Lebanon- from Beirut's glitzy buildings to Jabal 'Amil, Sur, Bint Jbeil. Those villages that have experienced (Shiite) migration to Africa can easily be parsed from those whose inhabitants have remained rather more immobile: suddenly, among crops and tobacco fields, rise up plush, immense villas standing behind gold-plated gates, their owner's expensive cars parked in the drive. With their pagoda-like roofs,

²¹⁴ <http://www.france24.com/fr/20101210-crise-politique-inquiete-communaute-libanaise-cote-ivoire-ajami-abidjan-economie-cacao-gbagbo> [retrieved April 2015].

²¹⁵ Ibid.

children's bedrooms in the shape of yachts or boats and external lifts, the mansions of migrants make a village such as Juwayya int a 'capital of rural kitsch'.²¹⁶

Considérés comme de « nouveaux riches » aux sympathies marquées pour le Hezbollah, les « Africains » ne sont pas toujours les bienvenus. Il faut dire que ces « Libanais-Africains » ne sont pas franchement bienvenus lorsqu'ils rentrent au pays. « Ce sont souvent des familles d'origine modeste, sans grande culture et qui reviennent dépenser leur argent de façon ostentatoire pour étaler leur réussite. On ne les a pas beaucoup vus pendant la guerre », explique Karen, une élégante bourgeoise francophone du quartier d'Achrafieh de Beyrouth. Car, derrière le rimmel et le Botox, suinte souvent le mépris pour ces « nouveaux riches » d'Afrique, par opposition aux grandes familles chrétiennes dont les membres aventureux ont choisi l'expatriation en France, au Canada, aux États-Unis et surtout au Brésil. Dans un Liban rongé par le communautarisme religieux et le clanisme familial, personne n'ignore que les Libanais-Africains sont très majoritairement chiites et issus du sud du pays. « Mon père a quitté le Liban en 1916 pour éviter l'enrôlement forcé dans l'armée ottomane, il pensait rejoindre l'Argentine au départ de Marseille, il s'est retrouvé à Dakar », explique Abdehalim Sehlab, 78 ans, originaire de la région de Tyr. « À l'époque, il y avait seulement une dizaine de Libanais au Sénégal. Il a fait tous les métiers, il a vendu du poisson, de l'indigo, du beurre de karité », raconte le vieil homme qui a poursuivi la saga familiale en se lançant dans le négoce de tissus dans les années 1960-1970.²¹⁷

African migrants '*nouveaux riches*' presence is disseminated everywhere in such neighbourhoods. On one hand, migration to West Africa has imposed relevant cosmetic changes on places such as Bait Shabab, Juwayya, Zrariyya, Burj Rahhal and 'Abassiyya in Jabal 'Amil, on the other it has radically altered social relations. Migrants, some retired, others only visiting for a few short weeks and months and summer, far from simply spending their assets on cosmopolitan commodities to demonstrate their renewed status, they have been careful to invest their earnings in their own birth villages, to distribute resources through their families and to contribute - at times ostentatiously - to the life of their community. Sur's seaside walk - tellingly renamed 'Avenue du Sénégal' - is filled with branches of the Banque du Liban et de l'Outremer, Byblos Banl, Fransbank and other financial establishments directly founded - like the Shi'a owned Jammal Trust Bank - by migrants and their relatives. Even the names of the shopping centres that line the trafficked roads of the southern cities and villages - Ghana Centre, Ivoire Shopping, etc. - are a vivid demonstration of the investment strategies of these workers. In other cases, mosques, hospitals and infrastructures serve as reminders of their benevolence. Zrariyya alone had six mosques in the late 1990s. Each one of them had been built by migrants. "Every wealthy migrant builds a mosque

²¹⁶ Nicolas Marmié, "Liban : « Nos très chers compatriotes ! »", *Jeune Afrique*, Octobre 2009.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

with money made in Africa,”²¹⁸ “they don’t build wells, water pipes or orphanages because they want to intervene on the local infrastructures’ system. They just basically want a tag with their names printed on it” are rather common remarks to be heard. Zrariyya’s artesian well, by the way, was also the donation of an ‘African’ immigrant, Hussein Ta’n.²¹⁹ The general expectation (and this is not solely restricted to the Shi’a community) is that those who can afford to do so will maintain their ties to the localities of their forebears. Consequently, these ‘webs of translocal kinship relations’²²⁰ did not just invest their earning or made show of their affective commitments: they have striven to insert themselves into Lebanese *political* social networks, helping in the process to shape the country’s sectarian and communitarian political culture. Together with the new Shi’a intelligentsia - lawyers, civil servants, physicians - the *nouveaux riches* of Africa played a significant part in the *harakat al-mahrumeen* founded by Musa al-Sadr in 1974. They found their access to politics, previously all in the hands of the local *zu’ama* or pervading political figures like the powerful Kamil al-As‘ad. It was precisely al-As‘ad that - fearful of losing control on the Shi’a community - continued to regard the rich entrepreneurs who returned from Nigeria, Côte d’Ivoire or Senegal to buy up land and request a seat in the parliament as ‘peasants’ unworthy of his consideration. These ‘new migrants with new money’ joined al-Sadr’s movement, pushed by the motivation to break down the old semi-feudal political environment, and at the same time to draw the Shiites away from secular organisations like the Communist Party or the Socialist Progressive Party led by the Druze leader Kamal Jumblat.

‘African migrants’ continue to play a pivotal role in *harakat-Amal*, as the organisation counts a conspicuous number of Shiite entrepreneurs and businessmen, and its leader since 1980 - Nabih Berri - is exactly the product of West African migration, being himself born in Sierra Leone in 1938 to Lebanese parents. His appointment to the Lebanese Parliament since 1992 signalled a decisive changing of the guard from the old Shi’a elite of post-independence to the ‘new men’ with their ‘new wealth’ and their money made in Africa. Small wonder then, that both Amal and Hezbollah both enjoy

²¹⁸ Anja Peleikis (2003), *Lebanese in Motion. Gender and the Making of a Translocal Village*. Piscataway, NJ: Transcript.

²¹⁹ Boutros Labaki, “The Role of Transnational Communities in Fostering Development in Countries of origin”, Beirut: United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs, 2006.

²²⁰ A. Arsan (2014), p. 247.

strong support among Shi'a migrants to Africa. Not only these men and women sustain the organisations from localities which have increasingly fallen over the years under the control of the two main Shiite political parties; they have also found their way back into Lebanese political life through them. This is a reminder of the ways in which migrants to sub-Saharan Africa are, in most cases, conventionally Lebanese in their political attachments and practices. Even nowadays, many of the young men and women who hold degrees from the American University of Beirut or the Lebanese American University and have embarked on business ventures on their own - either in the Gulf or far East - have spent their childhood in Africa and eventually returned to Lebanon to continue their studies and reuniting to some of the relatives still residing in the country. Some of the 'Africans' from the previous two or three generations successfully managed to get into the organisation founded by al-Sadr. This is the case of Yassin Jaber, born in 1951 in Lagos, who completed his studies at the International College of Beirut in the early 1970s, before studying for a degree in business administration at the American University of Beirut. A wealthy businessman with investments in Nigeria and London as well as Lebanon, he has been deputy for the district of Nabatiyyeh since 1992.

With the mourning for the victims of the Ethiopian Airlines flight ET409 crash, inevitably came recriminations and speculations. "For this not only prompted an outpouring of grief among the Lebanese of West Africa, but also revealed their continuing anger and frustration at their treatment at the hands of the national state. It shed all too stark a light on their predicament, liminal beings living on the margins of both the African states in which they spend much of their time, and of Lebanon - that 'homeland' to which they maintain resilient, ambivalent, ties".²²¹ Hussein Ja'afar is a Shiite businessman originally from Nabatiyyeh and reported about the complicated route he is forced to take between Lebanon and his base in Libreville, Gabon:

Middle East Airlines does not fly to Africa, except for one flight each week to Abidjan [...] Over the years, we've taken Air Congo, Air Algeria, and now Ethiopian Airlines. A Beirut-Libreville flight, with this company, takes ten hours [...] Is it too much to ask that we expect [MEA] to fly two or three times a week to the African destinations in which many Lebanese work.²²²

²²¹ A. Arsan (2014), p. 250.

²²² "La ville de Nabatiyyeh porte le deuil de quatre de ses fils", *Orient le jour*, 29/01/2010.

What is remarkably interesting about this testimony, is the perception of lack of concern on the Lebanese state's side for its migrant citizens. For some, it was also a confirmation of the contempt with which the political and commercial elite of Beirut continued to look upon the south of Lebanon and its Shi'a inhabitants, historically seen by the petty bourgeoisie of the capital as synonymous with everything that was uneducated, retrograde and bad taste. To other Lebanese, the Shi'a are seen as obedient drones, dutifully fulfilling their electoral duties come polling day. Then there is the petty bigotry, fuelled by the old perception of the Shi'a as Lebanon's underclass. "The reality is that as an economic force they have been marginalised by their political orientation. No one wants to deal with them", reported a fund manager in Beirut. "It's hard for them to leverage any long-term economic investments as they don't have any serious banks to represent their interests unlike the other sects. They are not welcome in the GCC and in the US they are seen as pariahs. The majority of the community's money comes from Iran and Africa. When you deal in diamonds, you are outside the system. When you don't pay [value-added tax], you are outside the system and when you send remittances home, you are outside the system".²²³ Which is all very sad because Lebanon's Shi'a is a growing and dynamic sect, a genuine economic force that will have a significant say in the economic future of the country and obviously - not all remittances come from 'tainted monies'. And not all prejudices are destined solely to Shi'a migrants. Youssef, a 41 year old psychotherapist from Nabatiyyeh explains:

Mon épouse se rend chaque semaine à Beyrouth pour suivre des cours à l'Université Saint-Joseph. Avant la crise, elle s'y rendait seule. Aujourd'hui, je l'accompagne car j'ai peur pour elle. A Beyrouth, quand on me regarde, je sens qu'on me juge. Je sais que l'on pense que les chiïtes sont arriérés. "

«Avant, j'aurais aimé vivre à Beyrouth, mais aujourd'hui, non», renchérit Mouna, son épouse, une institutrice âgée de 35 ans.²²⁴

What is certain is that Africa, even in post-colonial Lebanon, appealed to many migrants as a strategy for social mobility, compared to the unappealing prospects at home and

²²³ Michael Karam "Lebanon's Shi'as Need to Concentrate on Business not Politics". *The National Business*, May 10, 2012.

²²⁴ Emilie Sueur, "Comment ils se perçoivent", *Confluences Méditerranée* 2007/2 (N°61), L'Harmattan, pp. 31-40.

migration, as much as a secular social strategy, has become for many symptom of the despair affecting contemporary Lebanon.

Originaire de Tyr, Wael, 37 ans, fait partie de la nouvelle génération de migrants. En 1989, avec en poche son BTS d'action commerciale obtenu à Strasbourg, il tente l'aventure au Nigeria, comme responsable de l'hôtel d'un cousin à Benin City. Il trouve les Nigériens « travailleurs et courageux » et a épousé une Nigérienne. Père de trois petits métis, il dirige actuellement, à Freetown, la première société de pêche de Sierra Leone et exporte poissons et crustacés dans tout le continent.²²⁵

It is this generation of migrants that made the phenomenon of migration not just demographically significant, but also economically crucial. Remittances are an important voice in the Lebanese economy²²⁶, along with the localities and regions towards which these remittances are allocated to. And even more significantly, there is no sign of decline: the amount of money transferred electronically to Lebanon has gone from \$4,743 million in 2003 to \$5,759 million in 2007 and \$8,177 million in 2010. Some analysts argue that Lebanese migrants regard their country's large banking sector (relatively insulated by draconian regulations from the ravages of the subprime crisis), as a safe heaven. Others insist that remittances are driven by the perduring political and economic uncertainty in Lebanon, which has pushed many to rely on relatives abroad.²²⁷

Whatever the case, remittances remain a principal source of income for many. In a study conducted in 1995 among Shi'a inhabitants of Beirut's southern suburbs, it was found that around 64 per cent of his respondents received regular assistance from relative established abroad. The 2,500 remaining inhabitants of the Beqaa village of Lala depend on its 7,000 migrants for 70 per cent of their income.²²⁸ Clearly, migration has led those who stay behind to be reliant on those who leave, perpetuating a system which, generation after generation, pushed Lebanese citizens to travel abroad in search of financial prosperity. On the other hand, migrants receive little official recognition for

²²⁵ Nicolas Marmié, *JA*, Octobre 2009.

²²⁶ In 2009 remittances represented no less than 21.7 per cent of Lebanon's GDP (Dilip Ratha, Mohapatra Sanket and Ani Silwal, *The Migration Remittances Factbook 2001*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

²²⁷ Byblos Bank, "The Global Crisis and Expatriates' Remittances to Lebanon: Trends and Elements of Resilience". Beirut: Byblos Bank, 2011;

²²⁸ Marwan Samra Abi, "L'emigration libanaise et son impact sur l'economie et le développement", Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2011.

their contributions: on the contrary, officials tend to think of diaspora as a vast ‘cash cow’ to be milked for all it is worth.

Series of field investigations were undertaken in Lebanon to study this type of use of remittances. This use, even difficult to be detected through statistical evidence, is detectable for the period studied by comparing the numbers of working emigrants to the total number of emigrants. This support is obvious in the case of emigrants to the Arab oil producing countries, where it is a work emigration mainly, with an important part of the family remaining in Lebanon in spite of the later trends towards family emigration. The same could be said concerning emigrants to West Africa.²²⁹

Remittances from the diaspora, a far cry from simply supporting the families in the village of origins, generate a vast amount of money connected to real estate business²³⁰ (where the Shi‘a community is very active), construction, engineering sectors, and firms of various sizes in different sectors of the economy. In Lebanon the majority of this type of investment is in small firms, allowing an upward social mobility of the emigrant from the status of wage earner to the higher status of independent worker or small entrepreneur. This case is frequent in the construction, transport, retail trade, and various services activities.²³¹ Medium size firms are mainly established by white collars emigrants, small and medium entrepreneurs coming from West Africa (or oil producing countries). Large size firms were also established in various sectors by Shiites and they are generally better known: Investments in agriculture and stock farming are frequent on the Southern coast, Central Beqaa: areas of rich and irrigated agriculture. These investments are gradually gaining the inner parts of South Lebanon, where they are changing gradually the environment characterised by traditional dry farming. Again, these agricultural projects are carried out mainly by Shiite emigrants from West Africa who are numerous among Southern Lebanese emigrants.

²²⁹ B. Labaki (2006).

²³⁰ In Lebanon, this type of use, even existing before 1973, became one of the main component of the demand on the real estate market since 1977. Its role is clearly detectable by the increase of operations on the real estate market during the summer which is the traditional period of return of emigrants for holidays in Lebanon. This acquisition of real estate covering land and buildings, was particularly noted in the Greater Beirut area.

²³¹ Boutros Labaki, “Capitiaux d’émigrés et reconstruction du Liban”, *Le Commerce du Levant*, Beirut, 10 December 1984, p.13.

This economic role of emigrants in Lebanon even existing since decades, has developed vastly during the last thirty years, because of the new competitiveness acquired by some Lebanese manufactured goods in the world market as a consequence of the sharp fall of the rate of exchange of the Lebanese pound and the low salaries in Lebanon since 1984.

In addition to that, the growth of a Shiite middle class related to diaspora remittances from transnational family networks, contributed significantly to the incomes of resident Lebanese family members, facilitating opportunities for improved social mobility.²³² In Shiite-dominant areas in south Beirut like Dahiyeh, many of their residents share personal stories of upward mobility benefiting from the Shiite milieu's institutions and the transnational remittance flows. In the wake of the Syrian army departure from Lebanon, private investments and real estate development schemes privileging middle and high-end consumers multiplied in Dahiyeh. Many of these investors were return emigrants who moved back to Lebanon bringing their money and their business ideas with them. Hajj Abu Sa'id, the mayor of Ghobeiri, is also the entrepreneur behind Fantasy World, a company working in restaurants and fast food business activities. The opening of Abu Sa'id, activity encouraged the development of other leisure spots - and leisure desires. When Fantasy World's owner described this new market, he situated himself as 'wealthy' rather than middle class:

There is a saying, "*al rizq 'ind tazahum al-aqdaam*" [where there is movement/chaos, there is fortune]. We, al-Dahiya [Dahiyeh]...here is a huge number of people, six to seven hundred thousands. In the end, there is a class, not all Dahiya [Dahiyeh] is poor. There is a class [*mustawa*] that has [economic] potential, and there is a middle class, and there is a lower class...We are from the wealthy class.

The Lebanese Shiite diaspora has also contributed, even though in a minor trend, to contribute to some social aspects of development in their country of origin. Some examples include: 1) the funding of the Amiliya network of schools and other social institutions of the Amiliya association by Southern Lebanese emigrants to West Africa and the Arab Gulf; 2) the numerous donations from Southern Lebanese emigrants to Imam-Al-Sadr's and Islamic Shiite Supreme Council's medical institutions in South Lebanon and in Beirut's South Western suburbs; 3) the already mentioned funding of an

²³² Lara Deeb and Mona Harb (2013), *Leisurely Islam. Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press., p. 52.

artesian well to the village of Zrariah (Sur) by Hussein Ta'an, an emigrant to West Africa; 4) The funding of the Imam al-Sadr social welfare institution and those belonging to the Muslim Shi'a Supreme Council by Shi'a Southern Lebanese emigrants to West Africa and the Arab Gulf.

The Political Impact of Diaspora in the Lebanese State Structure

Diasporas role in Lebanon is not purely economic, even if its economic consequences are obvious. It's a social role, which frequently turns to a transition to politics. But it is only one of the ways for Lebanese diasporas to play a political role in Lebanon. There are several ways for diasporas to play a political role in Lebanon.

Lebanese emigrants began to play a political role in their home country since the beginning of the twentieth century, when the present Lebanese territory was part of the Ottoman Empire and during the French Mandate.

The period following political independence (1943), gave a new impetus to the political role of emigrants. One of the consequences of the withdrawal of French political power from Lebanon was that Lebanese politicians obtained more and more influence in the country. Emigrants played (and are still playing) a political role through various channels in the state structure. Since 1943, number of emigrants or sons of emigrants returning home (20 persons) were elected to Parliament in several Lebanese regions.

Emigrants and emigrants sons elected to Parliament in Lebanon from independence (1943) to 1975

Name	Community	Region represented in Lebanon	Area of emigration
Yussif Estefan	Maronite	Zawiyeh	Australia
Antun Estefan	Maronite	Zawiyeh	Australia
Emile Bustany	Maronite	Shuf	Arab Gulf
Abdallah Saadeh	Greek Orthodox	Kura	Saudi Arabia
Assad Ashkar	Maronite	Metn	Ghana
Mirna Bustani	Maronite	Shuf	Arab Gulf – U.K.
Ali Arab	Shia'a	Sur	Nigeria
Raymond Eddah	Maronite	Ibail	Egypt
Manuel Yunes	Maronite	Batrun	Venezuela
Tufik Assaf	Druze	Aley	Venezuela
Yussef Hammud	Shia'a	Sur	Nigeria
Abdallah Rassy	Greek Orthodox	Akkar	Saudi Arabia
Jebrane Tawk	Maronite	Besharreh	Nigeria
Farid Gebran	Latine	Beirut	Cyprus, Egypt
Camille Akl	Maronite	Batrun	Colombia

Source: Who's who in Lebanon – 1988-1989 – Beirut – Gegeon Printing Press – 1989.

The figure is not impressive per se, as it is drawn from nine National Assemblies, each one comprising 44 to 99 members. But we have to take into consideration that ten among them were ministers (two out of three Shiites from subsaharan Africa migration), and four were important party leaders.

These politicians were able to use the education, skills, experience and especially the wealth acquired overseas, to gain influence through various channels by reinforcing their position inside their kinship network, having key positions in their parties, offering donations to institutions of public interest in order to acquire prestige and influence, providing employment or subcontracts in order to create networks of political clients, financing electoral campaigns.

After the 1975-1990 wars, the number of deputies with migration experience grew sensibly. This is a clear indication of the growing role of Lebanese diaspora in the political institutions of Lebanon.²³³

The role of deputies with migration experience in each community in post (1975-1990) war Lebanon

Source: Boutros Labaki (2006)

Parliaments Communities	1992		1996		2000		2005	
	Number of deputies	%	Number of deputies	%	Number of deputies	%	Number of deputies	%
Maronites	3/34	8.82%	7/34	20.5%	6/34	17.6%	6/34	17.6%
Greek Orthodox	2/15	13.3%	4/15	26.6%	4/15	26.6%	4/15	26.6%
Greek Catholics	1/7	14.2%	1/7	14.2%	2/7	28.5%	3/7	42.8%
Armenian Orthodox	0%	0%	1/5	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Protestants	0%	0%	0%	0%	1/1	100%	0%	0%
Shiites	2/27	7.4%	4/27	14.8%	2/27	7.4%	5/27	18.5%
Sunnites	1/27	3.7%	3/27	11.1%	4/27	14.8%	5/27	18.5%
Druses	2/8	25%	1/8	12.5%	2/8	25%	1/8	12.5%
Alaouites			1/2	50%	1/2	50%	1/2	50%

As a consequence of the wars using the Lebanese territory as a battle-field since 1975, the role played by emigrants towards communal institutions extended to militias. This role appears clearly as accelerating the evolution from a society dominated by the

²³³ This growth was accelerated in 2005 with the bigger implication of Lebanese politicians who were abroad in the legislative elections after the withdrawal of the Syrian Army from Lebanon end of April 2005, just before legislative elections.

extended family structures to a society characterised by a preeminent role of sectarian communities. This evolution being probably one of the most important aspects of the social change in contemporary Lebanon. The rise of communal institutions tends to weaken the power of notables based on a pyramidal familial hierarchy. For these migrants those institutions are good channels for their political promotions. Particularly for Shiites. In this respect we can mention the role of the Shi'a Diaspora of Africa in the promotion of the Talayeh Party, established by Rashid Baydoun, the role of the Shi'a Lebanese diaspora in the support of Imam Musa al-Sadr and the Amal Movement, which was lead later by Nabih Berri (Sierra Leone), and obviously the role of the Shi'a Lebanese diaspora in the support of Hezbollah. The Amal and Hezbollah networks are effectively (and efficiently) mainly established among Shi'a emigrants in West Africa, the U.S.A. and the Gulf. It is a development of the tradition of fund raising established among Shi'a emigrants, by the Amiliya Association since the thirties and by Musa al-Sadr since the sixties.

The Shi'a diaspora produced a Shi'a bourgeoisie that took over from the state the control of the socioeconomic development of the towns and villages across south Lebanon and the Beqaa. By the late 1960s, the impact of this new Shi'a wealth was very strongly felt in the south, where it was used to consolidate many of the large agricultural estates that had at one time belong to the old semi-feudal families of the region, and to gain financial control over other sectors of the Lebanese economy (real estate, contracting, tourism and entertainment industry, and commerce with Africa).

Even though the information concerning the diaspora role in strengthening the Shiite community is evident, it is necessary to underline some problems that any researcher on Lebanese emigration is faced, i.e. *precise* and *reliable* data on the: 1) number of emigrants in each country of destination (registration in the consulates and embassies); 2) number of emigrants by village or town of origin (registration in the registry offices in Lebanon); 3) total number of emigrants by year; 4) economic, social, political, cultural, emigrants activity abroad; 5) exact amount of remittances per year; 6) exact amount of capital transfers per year; 6) type of economic activity and investment of returnees; 7) contribution of emigrants to public infrastructure, education, health, social welfare, transfer of knowledge; 8) contribution of returnees and emigrants in the

political life in Lebanon (i.e. the amount of ‘donations’ to Shiite parties: Amal and Hezbollah); 9) activities (licit or illicit) in which Amal or Hezbollah are directly involved outside Lebanon.

A New Shi‘a Intelligentsia

The development in educational achievements was the crystallisation of an active and radicalised intelligentsia on the one hand and a socio-politically mobilised community on the other.²³⁴ Actually, in the late 1960s, the Shi‘a intellectual elite swelled the ranks of leftist and Arab nationalist parties.²³⁵ By the late 1970s this support was redirected to the Amal movement, a great portion of which diverted toward Hezbollah in the mid 1980’s.²³⁶ Furthermore, the low status of Shi‘a professionals, aggravated by their political underrepresentation, enabled parties like Amal first, and Hezbollah later, to gain the support of this class by serving as venues for socio-political mobility. In Harik’s study, 44 percent of all Shi‘a respondents of high socio-economic status who selected a preferred party, favoured Hezbollah and 35 percent of this class opted for Amal. Hezbollah also drew 53 percent of middle class support, while Amal attracted 22 percent of middle class respondents.²³⁷ The appeal of these movements lies in their ability to satiate the social status of this socio-politically alienated class, by entrusting its members with a special mission to articulate party ideology and accordingly, placing them at the upper echelons of the party’s hierarchy.²³⁸ Thus, this group may be classified as lower middle class, a socio-economic status which is highly correlated with political participation. Accordingly this group is considered as a critical dynamic in spreading Shiite dogma through the development of Shiite education. In fact, the Shi‘a community was galvanised to action by its social, economic and political achievements. Amal and

²³⁴ It was the students of the liberal arts who were most susceptible to political activism. This group is characterised by Hudson as the lower stratum of the politically relevant category, whose employment as salesmen, clerks, and other psychologically unrewarding and low-paid occupations, had rendered them amenable to radical ideologies (Michael Hudson (1976), “The Lebanese Crisis: The Limits of Consociational Democracy”, in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 5, 109-122).

²³⁵ R. Shanahan (2005).

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Judith Palmer Harik (1994), *The Public Services of the Lebanese Militias*. Oxford: Center for Lebanese Studies.

²³⁸ Amal Saad-Ghorayeb (1996), Political Mobilization of Lebanese Shiites. Unpublished master’s thesis, American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon.

Hezbollah *needed* to take the community out of poverty and disenfranchisement: if the Shi'a masses had remained in a state of complete indigence, they would have been too occupied with their daily suffering to worry about the take over of the socio-political system. Furthermore, without the initiation of the economically, educationally and professionally advanced classes, their mobilisation is confined to urban riots. It is the educated, wealthy and professional members of society, whose sense of political efficacy enables them to perceive their participation as instrumental in pursuing the community's political, social and educational objectives. Even when there is little incentive for upwardly mobile individuals to act, they may find it emotionally rewarding to identify themselves with their deprived communal group and to struggle for its cause. At the same time, it is not the Shi'a actual and social economic hardship per se which is directly responsible for the community's mobilisation, but their secondary status compared with other groups which have stimulated their politicisation. In other words, had the Shiites lived in a socially homogeneous society, their absolute poverty would not have conduced to their engagement in political action. It is because their deprivation is of a relative nature that is in comparison with other communities, that their discontent is politicised and is considered instrumental in achieving the community's educational objectives through developing Shiite education.

The Charismatic Leader: Musa al Sadr and the Mobilisation of the Masses

Musa al-Sadr and the *harakat al-mahroumeen*

It is within those conditions of growing activism against injustice that the religious leadership formed the space to galvanise and mobilise the community under a sense of loyalty to a new form of heavily religious Shiite identity.

Historically, radical political change has often been linked to charismatic leadership — and this is certainly the case for Shiite Lebanon. The social and political mobilisation of the Shiite masses, which in the long haul brought to the decline of the traditional *zu'ama* order, could not have taken place without the emergence of a new type of political leadership, represented by Musa al-Sadr.

The emergence of the charismatic leadership of Imam Musa al-Sadr in the Shiite community is identified in Dekmenjian's *Islam in Revolution*, where he states: "Generally, the founders of Islamic societies tend to be charismatic [...] The charismatic founders include such powerful personalities as [...] Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr (Hizb al-Dawah of Iraq); and Imam Musa al-Sadr (Amal of Lebanon)".²³⁹ Dekmejian analytical framework states the presence of a leader with charismatic potential is key to mobilisation and that without it, the process of development cannot be initiated regardless of the intensity of crisis.²⁴⁰

Between 1920 and 1975, the Shiite community had been subjected to the authority and control of six prestigious feudal families: al-Asad, al-Khalil, al-Zayn, Hamadah, Usayran, and Haydar, in addition to three non-feudal ones: Baydoun, al-Fadl and al-Abdallah.²⁴¹ The traditional leadership was primarily interested in preserving its political power and promoting a self-serving agenda. Though they controlled land,

²³⁹ Richard Hrair Dekmenjian (1995) (2nd edition), *Islam in Revolution*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

²⁴⁰ Richard Hrair Dekmenjian (1987), *Charismatic Leadership in Messianic and Revolutionary Movements. In Religious Resurgence*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

²⁴¹ Antoine Messarra (1977), *La Structure Sociale du Parlement Libanais (1920–1976)*. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, pp. 195, 347–361.

wealth, and access to political power, these families failed to accommodate the new demands of their coreligionists, or to adjust their politics to their community's changing needs.²⁴² The traditional leadership failed to recognise the consequences of the changes that the Shiite community was undergoing: immigration, urbanisation, and political mobilisation.²⁴³

Although Nasserism dominated the Arab political landscape in the 1950s and 1960s, it remained a mass movement without an organisational structure or a clearly formulated program of action. This allowed Muslim *zu'ama* like al-As'ad and Salam to survive its impact.²⁴⁴ Nonetheless, The penetration of the Shiite community by leftist and anti-establishment parties was a sound indication of the increasing erosion in the legitimacy of the traditional leadership, as these forces were the first to contest that leadership's political authority.²⁴⁵ With the arrival on the scene of Musa al-Sadr, the traditional leadership crumbled gradually, leading to its replacement by Amal and Hezbollah.²⁴⁶

Musa al-Sadr's rhetoric and social action were specifically designed to respond to definite exigencies and concerns. One such exigency was dictated by his emergence as the central Shi'a political force in Lebanon. One of these concerns was the delicate balance which he believed it was necessary to maintain between Shi'a political organisation and the larger national mosaic.²⁴⁷ The movement founded by Musa al-Sadr, *harakat al-mahrumeen* (which later became *harakat-Amal*²⁴⁸) had surely been born as an expression of the aspirations of the Shi'a community at large, and specifically those of the Lebanese underclass. Nonetheless, at the community level, the Movement of the Disinherited attempted to include the broadest multiclass coalition as possible. As a believer in the Lebanese mosaic himself, Musa al-Sadr worked to realise the needs of

²⁴² Yusri Hazran, "The Shiite Community in Lebanon: From Marginalization to Ascendancy", *Middle East Brief*, Brandeis University – Crown Center for Middle East Studies, June 2009, No. 37, p. 4.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁴⁴ M. Halawi (1992), p. 103.

²⁴⁵ Y. Hazran (2009), p. 5.

²⁴⁶ For an in-depth analysis of *zu'ama* phenomenon, see "The Rise and Fall of the Traditional *Zu'ama*" in Shanahan R. (2005).

²⁴⁷ M. Halawi (1992), p. 156.

²⁴⁸ Amal is the acronym of *Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniya* (Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance).

his community within the framework of the existing political institutions in the country.²⁴⁹ It must be said, that at the beginning the Movement received quite some positive feedback and sustainment from Lebanese sects other than the Shi'a. At the same time, the *harakat's* pluralistic ideal succumbed before the social character of Lebanese society itself in which subnational sectarian allegiances were given the upper hand.²⁵⁰ The cleric organised and led *harakat al-Mahrumeen* to protest the poverty and deprivation that the Shi'a in Southern Lebanon endured. The movement was primarily a call for justice and a repudiation of oppression, but its implications went beyond economic redress. The movement became an expression of Shi'a self-worth and assertiveness in a country where the political system of proportional representation failed to acknowledge their increasing numbers, and where the Shi'a feudal landlords upheld their own private interests rather than those of the community. Actually, even though education was spreading among the Shi'a and immigrants returned with greater wealth, the Lebanese system was closed to social and political advancement forced by barriers of social mobility, regardless of their socio-economic achievements. *Harakat al-Mahrumeen* dug into a consistent reservoir of frustration and inferiority felt by the Lebanese Shi'a. Through *harakat al Mahroumeen*, Musa al-Sadr prevailed in displacing many well established Shi'a traditional politicians from the political arena by publicly exposing their exploitation of the sect in pursuit of political gains. Al-Sadr was asking to the national government to invest more in the Shi'a-populated areas, in their infrastructures, giving Shiites more employment opportunities, educational and health services. In one of his speeches, he declared:

the Shi'a have come of age; they need no trustees; they have emancipated themselves despite all the means adopted to keep them from learning and enlightenment [...] there are those who want to rule and oppress without giving anything in return; those who ruled the community for years without building a school.²⁵¹

There is no doubt that al-Sadr's movement stood for the economic and social advancement of the Shi'a. *Harakat al Mahrumeen* was able to penetrate and extract

²⁴⁹ M. Halawi (1992), p. 165.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156..

²⁵¹ Thorn Sicking & Shereen Khairallah (1974), "The Shi'a Awakening in Lebanon. Vision and Revision in Arab Society", in *CEMAM Reports*, no.2, Center for the Study of the Study of the Modern Arab World, Saint Joseph University (97-30). Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq.

resources of the Shi'a professionals and businessmen for a Shi'a region building effort. Thus, for the first time, the sect's collective wealth increase in size and power was channeled through the movement towards collective ends.

In fact, during the 1972 parliamentary election, 18 of the 19 Shi'a Parliament Deputies nominated by Imam Musa al-Sadr were elected by the Imam's followers. This new parliamentary coalition established the South Lebanon Reconstruction Council, and allocated LL. 130 million (about \$40 million) to improve conditions in Shi'a regions by building schools and hospitals and developing small industries. When funds began to flow in from the national government, the rest of the Arab world joined in support. Schools, shops, clinics, hospitals and industries proliferated in Shi'a regions

Harakat al-mahrumeen was a Shi'a movement, but it transcended sectarianism by "awakening" the critical consciousness of the disenfranchised, thus making it possible for them to enter the historical process of self-affirmation as responsible subjects.²⁵² Imam Musa al-Sadr transformed religious commemoration into vehicles for building communal solidarity and political consciousness. One of his first significant social acts was to establish a vocational institute in the southern town of Burj al Shimali.²⁵³ Al-Sadr established charitable organisations through which he could provide services to the Shi'a that the government did not; at the same time he established himself as a benefactor of his community. He did so by expanding existing charitable organisations and by establishing new institutions such as *al-Muu'assasa al-Ijtima'iyya* (Social Institute) which catered for Tyre's orphans and destitute²⁵⁴. Before the civil war, his growing influence through the movement that he founded – *harakat al mahrumeen* and its Amal militia – gave to the community a direction towards a political and social awakening. In addition to giving a voice to the socially and politically alienated population, Musa al- Sadr's success consisted also in radically reducing the authority and influence of the traditional Shi'i elites. The oldest form of political organisation amongst the Lebanese was the traditional leadership of the clan, with its emphasis on

²⁵² Paulo Freire (2005), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,. New York and London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., p. 20.

²⁵³ Augustus R. Norton (2007), *Hezbollah. A Short History*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

²⁵⁴ R. Shanahan (2005), p. 161.

familial loyalty and its preference for clientelism as the means of social ordering. Consequently, Musa al Sadr represented the beginning of an institutionalised political and social consciousness that addressed issues beyond the immediate purview of traditional Shi'a familial leadership. Musa al-Sadr understood extremely well the complexities of the Lebanese political system based on sectarianism and communalism, and consequently chose the most appropriate means to alter the political and social status quo that disadvantaged Lebanese Shi'a.

Upon Sadr initiative, Lebanese Shi'a completed their transformation into a structured and official sect. "Law no. 72/76 of 19 December 1967 recognised the right of the representatives of the Shi'i community to act and express themselves 'in conformity with the *fatwas* emanating from the supreme authority of the community in the world' (Article 1) and granted a Higher Islamic Shi'i Council (HISC) the prerogative of 'defending the rights' of the community and 'improving its social and economic conditions' (Article 5).²⁵⁵ Two years later, the HISC was created and in May 1970 the government recognised the new Shiite body and disbursed \$10 million in aid for the south.

In August 1978 imam Musa al-Sadr flew from Beirut to Tripoli, with two aides to attend ceremonies commemorating the ascent of Muḥammad Qaddafi to power in 1969. Soon after his arrival, al-Sadr vanished under circumstances that remain mysterious. Hussain al-Hussaini, lawyer and ex-speaker of the House of Parliament took over Amal during 1978-1980. He believed, like Imam al-Sadr, that Amal should remain a flexible socio-political tool of the Shiite establishment.

Along with Musa al-Sadr's disappearance, the 1978 Israeli's first invasion of Lebanon designed to weaken the PLO's base in the south and the Iranian Revolution greatly contributed to Amal's renewed popularity. The Khomeinist Revolution not only proved to be an exemplar model for action but also a precise pattern for emulation. The Litani

²⁵⁵ Fawaz Traboulsi (2012), *A History of Modern Lebanon* (Second Edition). London: Pluto Press, p. 184.

Operation's²⁵⁶ immediate consequence was another mass exodus of Shiites to the suburbs of Beirut that further incremented that phenomenon of Shi'a migration that began a few years earlier and that greatly contributed to swell the ranks of impoverished young people around the capital.

The establishment of Amal was certainly the first important step in the militarisation of the Shiite community, but the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 was undoubtedly the most crucial event in this regard. At first, many Shiites welcomed the Israeli army, seeing its arrival as signalling an end to PLO domination in the South. However, with Israel's support to the Phalangist government and the prolongation of the occupation, Shiites changed their tune rapidly. By invading Lebanon just a few years in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, Israel created the ground for the establishment of Hezbollah.

In 1980, Al-Hussaini was replaced in new party elections by Nabih Berri, a much younger lawyer from a modest family in the Jabal Amil of Tibnin. The rise of Nabih Berri to the presidency of Amal represented the emblem and the emergence of a new generation of entrepreneurial, mobilised middle-class Shiites who were traditionally not involved in politics.²⁵⁷ Berri, like many of his financial supporters, was born in West Africa, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, where many Shiites earned their fortunes. He was educated in Beirut and Paris. He lived in the United States in the early 1960s and for a brief period in the 1970s. Nobody better than him could represent the emergent Shiite bourgeoisie.

The populist nature of the Shi'a awakening in Lebanon is particularly important in understanding why both Amal - and to a much larger extent Hezbollah - became important and reliable welfare distributors, other than political parties. The rise of the

²⁵⁶ The 1982 invasion was the second Israeli massive attack on Lebanon. The first happened in 1978 and led to the establishment of an Israeli occupied security zone. Ninety percent of the inhabitants of that zone (which constitutes 49 percent of the area of southern Lebanon), of whom the overwhelming majority was Shiite, moved as displaced to other areas, especially to the southern suburbs of Beirut. The 1978 invasion was followed by UN resolution 425 calling for the withdrawal of the Israeli troops and the deployment of UN forces (UN Interim Force in Lebanon) to monitor the situation and help Lebanon restore its sovereignty. Lebanon and the UN had to wait until May 2000 to see the resolution respected (Ziyadh Majed, "Hezbollah and the Shiite Community: From Political Confessionalization to Specialization", The Aspen Institute in collaboration with Lebanese Renaissance Foundation, 2010).

²⁵⁷ A. R. Norton (1987)

Shi'a started from the grassroots, rather than from an elitist reformist effort. Its energy derived from emotive sociological forces rather than out of ideological justifications.²⁵⁸ Al-Sadr devoted his early efforts to raising Shiites self-esteem and improving their living conditions by establishing schools, professional training centres, hospitals, and other social service institutions, to bring the Shi'a in line with the rest of the educated and trained sectors of Lebanese society.²⁵⁹

Amal and Hezbollah have managed to galvanise, modernise, and organise the Shi'a community in a way that neither Sunni Muslim nor Christian movements have been able to do. Lebanese Shi'a is far from being a unanimous community, though. In fact, quite a few Lebanese Shiite are not affiliated neither to Amal nor Hezbollah. In some cases, they even strongly disagree on the parties' political agendas. Nonetheless, all Lebanese Shi'a have at different intensities somehow benefited from the improvements and the developments permitted by Amal and Hezbollah.

Within a period of thirty years, Lebanese Shi'a has been able to transform the character of its leadership dramatically, shifting from the feudal order represented by *zu'ama* to a relatively modern, populist governance.

Even though Musa al-Sadr socially and economically revolutionised the Lebanese Shi'a, what he had in mind was certainly not a revolutionary movement in the literal sense, as his intentions were not to overturn the existing order, but rather claiming for social justice. The ideological identification with Iran surfaced only at a later stage, after al-Sadr's disappearance and most importantly after the Khomeinist revolution.

It was not until the Iranian revolution that Lebanese Shiite leaders were forced to explicitly address the question of their community's identity in relation to a broader Shiite world, and to clarify their position toward the strong transnational Shiite outreach efforts from Iran.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ G. E. Fuller and R. Rahim (1999), p.205.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ R. S. Eisenlohr (2011), p. 34.

Invading the State and Replacing it - To What Extent?

“The essence behind the survival of nations is [social] justice and [citizen’s] dignity [...] we will start a new chapter in Lebanese history by pursuing the rights of those who are suffering dispossession”²⁶¹

With this speech during a ‘Ashura ceremony, Imam Musa al-Sadr outlined the essence of his movement and unveiled a new phase in the political life of Lebanon’s Shi‘a community. Borne out of the deprivation and marginalisation of the Shi‘a community in Beirut’s poverty belts, al-Sadr’s charisma and his emphasis on the “injustice of negligence and dispossession” resonated with tens of thousands of Shi’ites in Lebanon. Al-Sadr’s appearance on the Shi‘a political arena in Lebanon, as mentioned, coincided with the collapse of the feudal elite that governed the community and a substantial shift in the community’s political life. The community’s detachment from the mountains, valleys and agriculture of Jabal ‘Amil and the Beqaa and mass migration to the more urban settings of Beirut, Ba‘albak and Tyre introduced a new political player within whose ranks Shiites enrolled. The self-professed “democratic, progressive and non-sectarian” outlook of the pan-Arab and leftist parties and militias and their struggle against Maronite hegemony and Lebanese isolationism inevitably resonated with the cultural and socio-political convictions and aspirations of many in the Shi‘a community throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. In turn, the Lebanese left provided the more ambitious Shiites unprecedented access to new economic cycles, new modes of production and most importantly, education.²⁶²

Al-Sadr’s emergence on the Shi‘a political scene in Lebanon in the early 1970s and the birth of *harakat Al-mahrumeen* also played a central role in linking the poverty belts of Lebanon’s Shi‘a community with the revolutionary winds of Shi‘a revisionism coming from the seminaries of Qom in the run-up to the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

But - more than three decades after al-Sadr’s disappearance, to what extent does the political discourse of Musa Al-Sadr relate to the contemporary Shi‘a reality? Are the Shi’ites as deprived and marginalised as they were at the birth of Sadrist Political Shi’ism?

²⁶¹ From a speech delivered by Imam Musa Al-Sadr during a Ashura sermon. The speech was delivered in the South Lebanese village of Yater, Caza of Bint Jbeil, on 3rd January 1974.

²⁶² Fouad Marei, “Political Shi’ism”, *Middle East Political and Economic Institute*, 4/05/2010.

This question was one of the starting points and backdrops of my study of the political economy of contemporary Lebanese Shi'a, which suggested that necessary departures from the perceived deprivation and dispossession of the first half of the twentieth century to what actually characterises the Shi'a reality today.

According to disciple of al-Sadr and former Amal activist and ideologue, al-Sadr and Amal aspired to

invade the state and carve out a space in the administration for the Shi'a, not out of sectarian motivations but to reform the relationship between the state and the Shi'a community, and to engage the latter in the cross-confessional political and economic life of Lebanon.

This can perhaps be seen clearly in the developmental achievements and infrastructural improvements in South Lebanon which were only made possible through Nabih Berri's grip on state funds and agencies (such as *majlis al-janoub*). Nevertheless, Amal failed to raise the more competent individuals from within the Shi'a community to the relevant administrative and political positions of the state before being plagued with the corruption and favouritism for which Imam Musa al-Sadr had harshly criticised the sectarian system.²⁶³

Consequently, the Shi'a community's aspiration and enthusiasm towards engaging the state and its institutions or seeking employment in the civil service and public sector gradually decreased throughout the 1990s. This however, wasn't solely a product of the corrupt and inefficient Shi'a civil servants – nor was it borne in a Shi'a vacuum away from national and cross-confessional realities. This Shi'a heedlessness and indifference towards the state in post-war Lebanon was perhaps a product of three fundamental changes which tainted political life in post-war Lebanon. Firstly, the undermining of the President Fouad Chehab's étatist project at the beginning of the Civil War and the emergence of a neo-liberal state in the aftermath of the Ta'if Accord reduced the political will to enlarge the state apparatus and increase efficiency and effectiveness of state institutions to provide public goods and services, rehabilitate and equip the post-war generation with the competences needed in the post-war economy, or develop and reform the education system. Similarly, the structure and contract of the post-war Lebanese state allowed the emergence of private (or multinational) business-gear

²⁶³ F. Marei (2010).

empires to overtake the provision of public goods and services rendering the state unnecessary.

Secondly, the reestablishment of transnational networks connecting the wealthy Shii'a diaspora in West Africa with the sending communities in Lebanon further changed the expectations of the Shi'a community towards the state. Unlike al-Sadr, Shi'ites in the 1990s looked towards emigrant relatives and transnational migrant networks to address development issues; reconstruct war-torn villages and neighbourhoods; create employment opportunities and provide the capital necessary to reinvigorate life in the economic cycles of the Shi'a community often through the establishment of numerous, small-scale and diversified family businesses employing immediate relatives and generating profits to support immediate family members.

Both the erosion of the state and the rise of a Shi'a 'private sector welfare system' coincided with the rise of an Islamist competitor on the Shi'a political scene whose ideologues perceived engagement with the state with reluctance and ambiguity. For Hezbollah's leadership, engagement with the state and its institutions could only introduce corrupt practices and favouritism into its tightly-knit ranks as it had done with Amal. This belief, coupled with the militant nature of Hezbollah's struggle against Israel, justified the establishment of parallel institutions replicating, or even replacing, their public (state) counterparts to address the immediate, developmental and social concerns of the Shi'a constituency.

Nonetheless, the transformation of Political Shiism from a movement protesting state negligence and demanding a larger share in the jobs, investments and public goods and services provided by the state to a movement offering its following a viable alternative to the state served, invoked the uneasy relationship and detachment between the state and the Shi'a – a central pillar of the Sadrist movement since the early 1970s.

Creating the Space for a New Patron: The Crumbling of the Traditional Shiite Families

Following the reforms of the Ottoman Empire, beginning in the 1858, the Shiite social structure had changed and a new class of prominent families emerged. Those families mediated between the Ottoman rulers and the peasants, introducing a feudal still of leadership. Their strength derived from the fact that, before the reforms, they had served

as tax collectors (*multazimun*) on lands they had either bought or received from the Ottoman rulers for that purpose. The social structure of five families leading a sort of sociopolitical feudalism was based in Jabal ‘Amil, similar to that one that existed in Mount Lebanon. The al-As‘ad family owned much land in the Marj ‘Ayoun and Bintr Jbeil area. In the Nabatiyyeh area, the al-Zein family possessed most of the land. In the cities, notable families (*wujaha’*) played a similar role to that of the *zu‘ama* in the villages. The al-Khalil family ruled the area around Sur, and the Osseyran was strong in the areas of Sidon and Zaharanai. In the Beqaa, the social order was based on tribal and familiar elements, under the leadership of the Haidar and Hamadeh families in the Ba‘albak-Hirmel area, and the Abu-Ha,dan tribe the the Zahle region.²⁶⁴

The senior member of a leading Shi‘ite family was usually someone with an official political position in parliament or the government. Most studies characterise the *za‘im* as a patron with a group of clients who were the foundation of his political support. The Shi‘ite *zu‘ama* are usually portrayed as having four channels for recruiting clients: (1) control of landed families over their sharecroppers; (2) capital of merchant families; (3) control over the allocation of national resources; and (4) ability to mediate between the public and the authorities.²⁶⁵ All of these made it possible for a *za‘im* to provide his clients with protection and employment, and help them in their contacts with the authorities. This patronage-based socio-political structure is presented as being all-encompassing, characterising not only the relationships between the *za‘im* and the public, but also between senior *zu‘ama* and *zu‘ama* of lower standing.²⁶⁶

This patron-client approach is the primary analytical framework to consider when analysing the shift from the *zu‘ama* system to their loss of power and status. The decline of agriculture, beginning in the early 1960s is certainly a contributing factor because it decreased the population’s dependence on the landed families. Two other processes,

²⁶⁴ Arnold Hottinger, “Zu‘ama in Historical Perspective”, in Leonard Binder (ed.) (1966), *Politics in Lebanon*. New York, London & Sydney: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 85-87; Max Weiss (2010), pp. 188-191.

²⁶⁵ Harel Chorev, “Power, Tradition and Challenge: The Resilience of the Elite Shi‘ite Families of Lebanon”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2013, Vol. 40, No. 3, 305–323.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

On the lower social scale than the *zu‘ama* were the religious clerics (*ulema*). The religious Shiite establishment was formed from people with a relatively good background, at least in comparison to other community members. This enabled them to devote themselves to their studies. The *ulema* were heavily dependant on the *zu‘ama* for funding their activities in Lebanon. The lowest and broadest class included the peasants and merchants, who were also very dependant on the *zu‘ama*.

which began in the late 1950s have deeply influenced the Shiite community. One was the 'internal repair' policy of President Fouad Chehab, which tried to reduce the socioeconomic gap in Lebanese Society by massive investments in those peripheral areas densely populated by Shiites (Jabal 'Amil and the Beqaa). The migration of Shiites to cities and outside Lebanon that followed Chehab's reforms is also to be taken into account as a process that gradually disconnected them from the patronage of *zu'ama*.²⁶⁷ These social and political changes threatened the client-based power of the *zu'ama*, and they were unable to adapt because they lacked alternative sources of power on which to base their efforts to cope with the changes and maintaining their status.²⁶⁸ But most importantly, the significant decline of the semi-feudal system coincided with the arrival on the scene of Musa al-Sadr. Sad understood very well the political rules of the game in Lebanon and his goal was to create a new leadership pattern, by enlisting the best talents within the Shiite community and attracting the masses with popular declarations.

Until 1969, most of the leading families ignored Sadr, but his appointment to chair the Supreme Shiite Islamic Council (SSIC)²⁶⁹ led them to re-evaluate their attitude. While most chose to move closer to Sadr, some families headed towards an inevitable clash. Kazem al-Khalil considered Sadr a threat even before 1969, primarily because Sadr gained influence in his traditional power base, the Tyre region.²⁷⁰ This friction between Sadr and the Speaker of the Parliament Kamil al-As'ad was more serious. Sadr undoubtedly saw al-As'ad as one of those responsible for the miserable situation of the Shi'ite community, but the friction was also the result of simple political rivalry between al-As'ad, the most senior Shi'ite leader, and Sadr who aspired to take his place.

On the eve of the civil war in the mid-1970s, the Shiites of Lebanon supported three main political factions. One, headed by Shiite speaker of the Parliament, Kamil al-As'ad, included supporters of the traditional leadership among large landowners, tribal leaders, traditional local religious scholars, and some of the peasants who worked under

²⁶⁷ Yosef Olmert, 'The Shi'is and the Lebanese State', in Martin Kramer (ed.) (1987), p. 195; A. R. Norton (1987), p. 27.

²⁶⁸ R. Shanahan (2005), *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, pp. 71-77, 79, 81-83, 85, 86.

²⁶⁹ *al-majlis al-islami al shi'i al-a'ala*.

²⁷⁰ F. Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, p. 111. H. Chorev (2013).

the system land rental. A second faction included supporters of leftist movements, mainly Marxists and Ba'ath party supporters, which comprised of the new Shiite intelligentsia: professors, lawyers, journalists, teachers, as well as industry and agricultural workers. The third faction consisted of supporters of Musa al-Sadr's Movement of the Deprived (later Amal), which included most of the new Shiite bourgeoisie which had been created among migrants to the cities: liberal professions, civil servants, teachers, merchants, and young people in Beirut.

The ambitious men - aspiring civil servants, younger men with university degrees trying to make their way into prestige government appointments, men with money dreaming of seats in parliament - were behind the cleric [Sadr] when his political stock rose, when they thought that he could deliver favours from the state or enhance their careers. Conversely, they were nowhere to be found when the old notables and political bosses offered them patronage or made more extravagant promises.²⁷¹

With the collapse of state institutions during the war the Shiite families, like other elite families in Lebanon, lost another authority and public resources that had enabled them to supply services to the public.²⁷² Some of these functions were now taken over by the militias.²⁷³ The internal and external migration led to the dissolution of some social networks headed by the families. The migrants included many members of the leading families, who sometimes disappeared from their strongholds overnight, leaving ghost towns behind.²⁷⁴

The effect of the events of the 1970s on the elite families in southern Lebanon was threefold. First, the families lost their ability to impose their political agenda in their areas of influence, and fulfil what was their traditional role: 'protector's of the community. This loss became even more evident after the civil war erupted in 1975, and control of the south was divided between the Palestinian and Lebanese militias. Here, the small militias of the Shiite families had no chance of competing against the Palestinian organisations, nor could they prevent the disastrous results of the ongoing conflict between the Palestinians and Israel. Furthermore, many of these feudal families

²⁷¹ F. Ajami, p. 208.

²⁷² Ales Dobronsky and Tzvi Lanir (1983), *Pgishot B'rashidia*. Jerusalem: Dvir, pp. 64, 65; H. Chorev (2013).

²⁷³ *Al-Safir*, 6/06/1976; *Al-Hadaf*, 1/07/1976.

²⁷⁴ Beate Hamizrachi (1988), *The Emergence of the South Lebanon Security Belt: Major Saad Haddad and the Ties with Israel, 1975–1978*. New York: Praeger Publishers, p. 126. H. Chorev (2013).

were scattered, and - even though they did not maintain their militias while in exile - some of them reconstituted their forces after returning to the south in 1982. The situation of the leading families in the smaller Shiite concentration of the Beqaa was better because of the relative stability that prevailed in the region, under the control of the Syrian army.

Despite all these these changes, two important factors contributed to help some of the prominent Shiite families to maintain their status. First, the dissolution of some social networks did not necessarily indicate a decline in the standing of the family institution. The family as the cornerstone of Lebanese society, as well as of these networks, remained relevant. Moreover, the lack of personal and economic security encouraged nuclear and extended families to take on functions they had not filled in the past; this strengthened and increased their internal ties.²⁷⁵ Second, the dissolution of networks in their original location did not necessarily prevent them from re-establishing themselves elsewhere. In fact, after the second half of the 1970s, many of them settled far from their traditional strongholds - in Africa, Latin America, etc. However, after the Israeli invasion in 1982, it is possible to notice the re-emergence of the prominent families, indicating an ability to preserve and re-establish at least some of their old networks. Hanf claimed that urbanisation and modernisation did not decrease the importance of traditional social frameworks, which adapted themselves to the changing circumstances.²⁷⁶ On the same vein, Khalaf noted that radical changes in the social geography of the country led to intensification of kinship relationships and increasing confessional and regional loyalty.²⁷⁷ So consequently when old networks re-formed, some families appeared on the scene again²⁷⁸, but without that powerful potential that characterised them before the 1960s. As a Shi'a representative I interviewed admitted "traditional families stopped having political power when replaced by Amal and

²⁷⁵ Samir Khalaf (2002), *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 263-265.

²⁷⁶ Theodor Hanf (1993), pp. 78, 79, 483, 484.

²⁷⁷ S. Khalaf (2002), *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, pp. 262, 263, 265-272.

²⁷⁸ The same pattern appeared in other displaced communities in Gaza, Jordan and Lebanon. See: Sari Hanafi (2001), *huna wa hunak: nahu tahlil al-'alaqat byn al-shatat al-filastini wa al-markaz* [Here and There: Towards Analysis of the Relations between the Palestinian Diaspora and the Centre]. Ramallah: Muaten.

Hezbollah, but they certainly keep on having an important social position even today”²⁷⁹. At any rate, networks in Lebanon are an essential reality: they are built on functional advantages and on a variety of social and cultural ties. Until the early 1980s, not even Amal was able to fully conquer the totality of the Shi‘a community. Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 pushed the Palestinians and leftist militias out of the south, and made it possible for several leading Shi‘ite families to return from exile. There is evidence of some cooperation between those families and Israel’s intentions, considering the new situation a potential opportunity.²⁸⁰ An example was the al-Khalil family, led by Kazem al-Khalil who returned to his city in 1982, after 12 years in exile. His militia was re-established, and armed by the Israel Defence Forces; his family’s offices in central Tyre were reopened to receive requests from the public; and the family’s home became a pilgrimage site for Israeli public figures.²⁸¹ Israel also formed ties with Kamil al-As‘ad who, as speaker of parliament, helped facilitate the processes needed for Israel’s ally Bashir Jumayyil to be elected president.²⁸² The turning point for these families came when that sponsorship waned as Israel gradually withdrew from Lebanon.²⁸³ In October 1984, Kamil al-As‘ad paid the price for aiding Israel and abandoning his Syrian patrons when he lost his position as speaker of parliament in favour of an Amal representative, Husayn al-Husayni.²⁸⁴

Familiar networks and local political entrepreneurs always ruled vast areas of Lebanon and decided both economic and political developments.²⁸⁵ In fact, most of the political

²⁷⁹ Interview with the author.

²⁸⁰ For the village associations and the Israeli concept of governance, see Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal (1998), *Palestinians: The Making of a People*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 245.

²⁸¹ Dobronsky and Lanir, *Pgishot B’rashidia*, pp. 126, 127 as quoted by H. Chorev (2013); for more on the al-Khalils’ cooperation with Israel, see: Ze’ev Schiff and Ehud Ya’ari (1984), *Deceived War*, Jerusalem & Tel Aviv: Schocken, pp. 299–300.

²⁸² Clinton Baily, “Lebanon Shi‘is after the 1982 War”, in Martin Kramer (1987), *Shi‘ism, Resistance and Revolution*. Boulder: Westview Press, p. 221; Beirut Radio, 19–20 July 1982 (Daily Report); Voice of Lebanon, 23 July 1982 (Daily Report).

²⁸³ After the Israel Defence Forces withdrew from Tyre on 29 April 1985, Amal began to fight for control of the city. After a short battle, it defeated the militia of Kazem al-Khalil. The property of the *za‘im* was confiscated, and he was again exiled from the city.

²⁸⁴ *Al-Safir*, 17 /10/1984.

²⁸⁵ Michael Gilson (1996), *Lords of the Lebanese Marches: Violence and Narrative in an Arab Society*. London: IB Tauris.

alliances were not definable on categories such as right/left, or Muslim/Christian. Over the years, the evolution of the concept of *za'im* moved from mere traditional feudal leadership to political and economic entrepreneurship. However, undoubtedly the Israel-led Litani Operation dramatically accelerated the rise of a new patron. Even today, Hasan Nasrallah admits that without the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hezbollah wouldn't probably even exist.

Notables, Upper Class, Middle Class and Lower Classes in Lebanon until 1975

On the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, Lebanese class structure had undergone major shifts. Emigration, education, economic expansion and the growth of native enterprise had visibly modified the characteristics and structure of social classes. Even though sharp distinctions between one stratum and those immediately below or above it are difficult to make, Lebanese society had become differentiated into various social groups. Instead of the rigid, broad two-class division that had characterised Lebanese Shi'a (if not Lebanese society as a whole) - the elite and the commoners in cities and landlords and peasants in the villages - there evolved a much more fluid and diversified class structure. Studies conducted by Fuad Khuri, George Hakim and Manfred Halpern in the 1960s already showed evidence of a "would-be middle class" in addition to the professional, salaried middle class, and the upper and lower classes".²⁸⁶ Other patterns of classification, especially those based solely on income or occupation, do not necessarily correlate with class rankings. The Lebanese conceive of class (*tabaqah*) as a social category of distinct social position, not purely an occupational or income group. Income, occupation, expenditure, education, and other related criteria, become class indices only if translated collectively into a social position, a way of life.²⁸⁷ For instance, not all those who earn the same income belong to the same class. In 1963, Khuri conducted a study in Aramti in South Lebanon, revealing that the village

²⁸⁶ Fuad L. Khuri, Unpublished M.A. thesis *Education as a Function of Social Stratification in Cedairstown*, Department of Education, American University of Beirut (1960); George Hakim, "The Economic Basis of Lebanese Polity", in Leonard Binder (ed.) (1966), *Politics in Lebanon*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., pp. 57-68; Manfred Halpern (1964), *The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 62.

²⁸⁷ F. Khuri (1960).

shopkeeper, while he earns as much money as the bus driver, is nonetheless grouped in a higher class; the former manages and owns his shop, the latter serves his patron, the bus owner.²⁸⁸ As for professionals, they started pursuing other means, leading to careers outside the community: in medicine, business management, etc. Sometimes upward mobility was also ensured by marrying someone from a more economically advanced out-group (a strategy which was still unthinkable for the children of the notables families, still immobilised by marrying within their own group). Consequently, many sons of the professionals group have stopped to be 'sons of the village' and have become part of a more cosmopolitan system of differentiation, that of the society as a whole, essentially synonymous with that of the capital, Beirut. The 'old' aspiration to become a respected village officer hold very little attractions to this generation.

The studies conducted by Khuri (1966; 1969) revealed the presence of five broad, definable classes: the elite; the upper class, the middle class, the upper lower class and the lower class.

The national elite shows many analogies with the upper class as far as education, income, and and patterns of consumption are concerned. Wealthy and well-established families who have possessed regional or national influence over several generation belong to this category. They are often involved in the ownership and running of major business enterprises in the country. Also the leaders of each of the major religious sects - although not always wealthy - could be included among the elite. This class is distinguished from the affluent not by education, expenditure or profession, but by belonging to 'established houses' (*biyut ma ma'arufi*). An 'established house' refers to a preeminent extended family, a part of a larger kin who trace descent to a known ancestor after whom they are named. A person with the right kin *and* an 'established house' can achieve a position of leadership much faster than a person with sufficient kin and skills, but who lacks a solid 'established house'. Notables can greatly differ on how much influence they can impose on kins or non-kins, on land and on people in general. *Zu'ama* is a typical leader who can control kin and non-kin alike, while at the same time exercising regional influence and practising national politics. The notables are called in different ways: *ashab nufuth* ('possessors of influence'); *ashab sha'biyyi* ('possessor of

²⁸⁸ F. Khuri, "The Changing Class Structure in Lebanon", *Middle East Journal* 23, no. 1 (1969), p. 34.

popularity’); *mafatih intikhabiyyi* (‘election keys’); *ahil mantiq* (‘men of eloquence’); *human an-nas* (‘protectors of the people’). In most cases, when a *mastur* (middle class) supports a notable, he does so because the latter can be either a relative, an enlarged family member or has rendered the former a special political support.

The upper class and the elite differ mainly with regard to family background. Some of the upper class have much higher incomes than members of the elite, but the latter belong to traditional important families. The upper class is composed of wealthy merchants and property owners, big entrepreneurs, bankers, higher level executives, and professionals such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. Many of them own or belong to enterprises dealing with import/export activities and international commerce. Except for the wealthy landowners and some merchants who have inherited their wealth, most of these men have achieved their status through education and emigration. Their emphasis on achievement makes them receptive to modernisation more than any other class. This element is very significant, because this modernising middle/upper class of professionals conflicted significantly with the traditional elite and partially contributed to its disempowerment.

The middle class (*masturin*) differs from the upper class primarily by the level of education and income. This middle class would include small landowners, merchants, shopkeepers, teachers, technicians, junior military officers, many government employees, secondary school teachers, tradesmen and those who earn their living independently by owning and managing their own capital and resources. Considering the great possibility offered by education and emigration and the realistic possibility of achieving some upward mobility with it, this middle class is characterised by a very strong entrepreneurial spirit. In general, it would be correct to say that in the 1960s and 1970s the Shi’a middle class and the Shi’a upper class were emerging classes, as membership was achieved by individual initiative and the mobility was very high. Adherence to political arrangements is also a common practice among the middle class businessmen and growers, particularly those dealing with transit trade, produce export and tourism.

The upper lower class is composed primarily of poorer people who have a source of income which can support the nuclear family. Typical occupations of this group include

small farmers, taxi drivers, waiters, elementary school teachers, clerks, soldiers and less affluent tradesmen. Again, the level of income and the position with a specific job could make a great difference in the classification: while a taxi driver who works for an entrepreneur is classified as 'needy', the same person who owns and drives his own car is classified as '*mastur*' (middle class)

Sharecroppers, peasants, day unskilled labourers, peddlers, servants and all those categories who must rely on the labour of most family members are included in the lower class category. The income of the head of the family alone is not sufficient, even if measured by the lowest standard of living; it needs to be subsidised by the labour of wives, sons, daughters, brothers or sisters. Sometimes this subsidisation is attained by living in extended family households. This constitutes an important difference in respect of the middle/lower middle classes, who have almost completely shifted to the nuclear family pattern.

The War Economy and the Social Reconfiguration of Lebanese Society

In the quarter of the century that followed the eruption of the conflict in Lebanon, in 1975, the Lebanese society underwent a radical transformation in its demographic, territorial and societal base. Fifteen years of protracted civil war and a decade of 'reconstructive politics' produced a society much different from the pre-war Lebanon, in terms of demographic dynamics, population movements, social stratification, balance of communities, role of the state, or political economy. The civil strife generated, among other things, a highly profitable economic opportunity and economic strategy among the Lebanese militias. The persistent war-system necessitated and enabled the militias to act economically and to gain enormous economic profits.

Without any doubts, warfare requires major economic assets. Troops (regular as well as irregular) have to be paid, costs for the supply of armament and ammunition have to be covered, administration as well as social services have to be established in territories newly under military control, new combatants have to be recruited, etc. Wars and armed conflicts demand money and the longer they continue, the more economic resources needed.

And undeniably, the situation of war or armed conflict determined the basic conditions of forms of economic reproduction and – at the same time – necessitated that the protagonists directly participating in war adjusted their modes of economic reproduction to the new situation: market regulative state-institutions vanished, a ‘radical-free’ market-economy evolved.²⁸⁹ Within the war-zones, short-term economic strategies dominated over long-term strategies, new entrepreneurs appeared on the scene, ‘new economies’ evolved and the availability of new economic possibilities became an economic instrument itself; there was no longer a difference between ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’ trade, commerce and goods; also the way of appropriation of economic resources was not subject of restrictions.

Many sectarian groups – and obviously many Shiites among them – greatly benefited from the civil conflict. The war-economy developed a structural persistence and lucrative sources of income. In this perspective, the dimension of ‘economic rationality’ is likely to be added to the political causes of war and armed conflict. The situation of war became an intrinsic part of the protagonists’ economic strategies and therefore the necessary basic condition for economic schemes and systems.

It is necessary to emphasise that, in many cases, forms of war-economies are similar to economic strategies and systems employed by the so-called ‘organised crime’ organisations. In other cases, the way of economic acting is not war-specific itself and also the traded goods do not have any war-specific characteristics. This is to some extent the case of the Lebanese civil war, in which the economic protagonists themselves and the way of appropriation of economic resources in a ‘free market’ made economic acting a ‘war-economy’.

²⁸⁹ Georg Elwert (1997), “Gewaltmärkte. Beobachtungen zur Zweckrationalität der Gewalt, in *Trotha: Soziologie der Gewalt*, pp. 86-101.

Economic violence is a violence form in which short-time profit is made. Its motivation may not necessarily be purely economic. It may be encouraged or tolerated for political reasons, although ultimately it is provoked to defend economic privileges.²⁹⁰ That is why it is profitable for this analysis to consider the concept of ‘war-economy’ in its micro-economic sense. Due to profitable economic rationality, the aim of fighting parts is not necessarily the establishment of a new government or a new state and not always the establishment of a new political order. On the contrary, it can also be the paralysation of state institutions and the restriction of their functions. Consequently, the purpose of a continuing war is not to win, but the perpetuation of it, so that the conflicting leading parts can benefit as much as possible economically from a stalemate condition of ‘free’ market.

Not only the opposing Lebanese parts did not want to establish a new state-order, but the main aim of the Lebanese militias was not the military victory over the opposing forces and the elimination of the enemy either. In contrast, only the existence and the maintenance of an ‘enemy’ who endangered the existence of their own community, only the persistent threat provided the various Lebanese fighting groups with the necessary legitimisation and the possibility to see their own existence guaranteed. In short, with their actions, the opposing parts provided each another with legitimacy and stabilised their war-system. The Lebanese militias at the same time were fighters, thieves, territory controllers, tax-collectors *and* entrepreneurs. Corm, not hesitating to qualify the Lebanese militias as “syndacat du crime confessionnel”²⁹¹, estimates that the Lebanese militias obtained with their war-adapted economic structures and systems about USD 2 billion per year.²⁹² According to Corm, about one half of it was of external origin, either financial support through states contributions through the highly organised Diaspora abroad. The other half (USD 1 billion per year) was – according to Corm – of internal origin and the astonishing economic result of a diversified system of war or militia economy in the above presented sense.

²⁹⁰ David Keen (1998), “The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars”. Adelphi Paper 320, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London.

²⁹¹ Alain Labrousse (1991), *La drogue, l’argent et les armes*. Paris: Fayard.

²⁹² Georges Corm (1991), “Hégémonie milicienne et problème du rétablissement de l’État”, in *Monde arabe: maghreb machrek*, no. 131 (janvier-février-mars 1991), pp. 13-25.

Internally, the Lebanese war, far from being a state of anarchy or just a machine for destruction, was rather an intricate set of mechanisms, articulated around the functions of demographic balance, political power, social control and economic predation.

An important factor in the breakdown of the internal Lebanese conflicts into armed conflicts was the deterioration of the traditional clientelist/patronage system, a powerful safety-valve for the Lebanese political and economic system.

In the 1960s, traditional clientelism had been competing with a new form of clientelism initiated by the regime of General Fouad Chehab (1958-1964) articulated around the security services and the army. This latter network, which blended the provision of services with the exercise of strict social control, broke down in the 1970s under the combined effect of the predominantly Christian opposition to Chehabism and the growing force of the armed Palestinian organisations.²⁹³

Furthermore, the social and economic problems led to new form of organisation and mobilisation, articulated by the Phalangist party, on one hand, and the parties of the 'left' alliance led by Kamal Jumblat on the other.

As far as external aid is concerned, the two militias profiting most from the external donor-states were the Christian militia-coalition Lebanese Forces and the Shi'ï militia Hezbollah. The Lebanese Forces benefited from the financial aid and military support, possibly also from Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, Israel and France.²⁹⁴ On the other side, Hezbollah was practically entirely financed by Iran. From 1982 on Iranian support for its Shi'ï ally totalled about UDS 100 million per year.²⁹⁵

Cantons, Ports, and Thin Boundaries

As previously mentioned, Lebanese militias depended not only on external donors but developed their own economic strategies and systems within Lebanon which provided them with the necessary economic resources.

²⁹³ Michael Johnson (1986): *Class and Client in Beirut. The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840-1985*. London: Ithaca Press.

²⁹⁴ Élisabeth Picard, "Liban: la matrice historique", in François Jean and Jean-Christophe Rufin (eds.) (1996), *Économie de guerres civiles*. Paris: Hacette.

²⁹⁵ Georges Corm, "The War System: Militia Hegemony and reestablishment of the State", in Deirdre Collings (ed.) (1994), *Peace for Lebanon? From War to Reconstruction*. London: Boulder.

Specific regional functions were assumed in the context of the Lebanese civil war. Particularly interesting is the role that Lebanon-at-war played for the Syrian economy. One such role was the transformation of the Beqaa plain and the Northern coast into a free-trade zone (or ‘informal market’) in the service of the state-controlled Syrian economy, providing the Syrian market with a number of necessary or consumer imported goods, at a time when Damascus was not ready for the relaxation of its strict legislations and regulations on external trade.

Beirut’s central (and centralising) role in the economic, political and administrative fields exploded in favour of no less than then militia-controlled ‘cantons’ most of which were built around an access to the sea and controlling among them up to eighteen illegal ports. Similarly, central market towns lost their function or were replaced by new ones. Catholic Zahle, for example, had to cede its role as the economic and administrative capital of the Beqaa to a number of local towns, among which Ba‘albak (Shiite Muslim). In the Mountain, Maronite Dayr al-Qamar, in the Chouf, lost much of its role to Baaqline (Druze).

The first illegal ports on the Lebanese coast emerged at the beginning of the war and were used to smuggle arms and drugs. Later, they became economic enterprises in their own rights and took over foreign trade. Starting from the north, the small port of ‘Abdeh engaged primarily in imports destined to the Syrian market, while the port of Tripoli was still run by the Lebanese government with Syrian control and ‘protection’. Junnieh engaged in the import of foodstuff for the Christian zone and ran a regular ferry to Cyprus as the majority of the inhabitants of that area stopped using Beirut airport situated in the Western Shi‘a-dominated sector of the capital. The port of Beirut was mainly under the control of the Phalangist party and the Lebanese Forces. Ouza‘i, at the southern periphery of the capital, was run by Amal militia since 1984. Likewise, under the control of Amal, the port of Zahrani’s major operation was to import fuel.²⁹⁶ The

²⁹⁶ Like many other militia leaders, Berri used his control over various economic installations to derive enormous sums of money during the war years. The most notable case involved the Zahrani oil refinery. Berri, in collaboration with the now-deceased Jamil al-Sa‘id (the former dictator of Sierra Leone, half Lebanese and half African, who embezzled an enormous sum of money from his homeland and fled to Lebanon, where he acquired a passport with Berri’s help), received a substantial cut from every gallon of oil refined and sold from Zahrani (money that should have gone into the coffers of the Lebanese government).

revenues of the port were shared between the Shiite militia and the Lebanese government and a share also went as protection money to general Lahd (South Lebanese Army – SLA). The port of Naqurah, on the Lebanese-Israeli borders, had since 1978 been managed by the SLA and the Israeli army. It imported goods for the Israeli-controlled southern strip.

The illegal ports not only engaged in the smuggling of cigarettes, drugs and arms, they also smuggled ordinary commercial goods and livestock.

In addition to that, a modern form of piracy took on an exacerbated importance during the Lebanese war. Merchants' ships along the Lebanese coasts deviated from their course, their merchandise sequestered and the ships sunk or put again in service under a different name, registration and flag. The bulk of this activity was carried out by the Lebanese Forces militias, allegedly in collaboration with the Italian mafia.

It is quite difficult to compute the sums obtained in the arms traffic during the Lebanese wars, one major obstacle being the fact that a sizeable amount of the military ware employed was donated by different states involved in the conflict.

At any rate, a large surplus of arms and ammunitions existed throughout the war to make of the PLO organisations and the warring Lebanese militias into international arms dealers in their own rights.

The Lebanese State, fragmented along sectarian divisions, saw its power reduced to the sheer parameter of the Presidential palace in Ba'abda. It had to coexist with militias which yielded *real* power over the greater part of the Lebanese territory. Militias took over the majority of the State's income-generating functions, especially those which provide the bulk of the state revenues – custom's duties and indirect taxes. Further, the State's monopoly over the audio-visual media was shattered to pieces as tens of militia-owned TV stations and FM radios went on the air.

Confessions – as social, political and cultural units – were not also determinants in the cause of the eruption of the conflict, but also a product of it. It is when militias finally 'purified' their controlled territories and came to 'control' their own 'people' and run

their affairs, that the imposition on the individual to define himself in terms of a unique social cultural identity reached its climax.

Militian powers not only practiced ethnic, confessional and political ‘purification’ of their territories from what they considered ‘strangers’ or enemies, but also practiced what Juan Goytisolo has aptly called ‘memoricide’²⁹⁷: the eradication of all memories of coexistence and mutual interests between the Lebanese population. Instead they imposed their ‘protection’ discourse on their ‘own’ people.

Paradoxically, however, it is when the confessional system realised what could be considered its paramount ghost – self-rule of each community on its own territory – that the contradictions inherent this system exploded in the most violent forms. For that same period is simultaneously characterised by a shift in the war effort from *inter*-confessional fighting to a bitter of *intra*-sectarian struggle for power and control inside each community. This period witnessed the harshest confrontation of the war: the ‘war of the camps’ between Amal and the Palestinian organisations (in Western Beirut and Southern Lebanon); periodic fighting between Amal allied with the Social Progressive Party of Walid Jumblat and the parties of the ex-National Lebanese Movement (over the control of West Beirut); prolonged fighting between Amal and Hezbollah (in Beirut, the Beqaa and the South).

From Clientelism to Economic and Sectarian Mafism

The war order also generated a phenomenon that to a lesser extent and with different variables still permeates Lebanese contemporary society: *mafism*. According to Pino Arlacchi, the ideal type of mafia cannot be thought of as existing in a social and economic ‘void’.²⁹⁸ This is substantiated by some authors who attribute the mafia phenomenon to the rise of the commercial bourgeoisie (e.g.: to capitalism in the North of Italy).²⁹⁹ Hobsbawm defined the mafian phenomenon as a form of bourgeoisie, issued from a particular form of patronage and intimately tied to the transition from rural

²⁹⁷ Juan Goytisolo (2000), *Landscapes of War: from Sarajevo to Chechnya*. San Francisco: City Lights Books; Fawaz Traboulsi (2007).

²⁹⁸ Pino Arlacchi (1988), *Mafia Business: The Mafia Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

capitalism.³⁰⁰ Sciascia speaks of the ‘savage exploitation’ which the bourgeoisie operates within the aim of drawing the maximum profits in the shorter laps of time.³⁰¹ Wallerstein has revealed another aspect of bourgeoisie, namely its tendency to transform profits into rents: i.e. into revenues accruing from a spatial and temporary reality which cannot be considered the creation of the owner or a result of his personal work.³⁰²

According to the ideal type described by Arlacchi, societies characterised by the presence of mafism are subject to three essential economic and social pre-conditions: 1) the market plays a determining role within them; 2) they are riven by intense horizontal conflicts between individuals and groups; 3) they suffer from the weakness or absence altogether of any principle of centralised regulation of social and economic relations or state control over the use of violence.³⁰³ The mafia leader plays the role of intermediary in these conflicts, which stem from rivalries, movements, upsets and re-orderings in the marketplace. These three traits apply to Lebanon, with the addition of a fourth: vertical conflicts (sectarian/confessional/regional).

The existence of a widespread struggle between sects, confessions, individuals, families, kinships and neighbouring groups in wartime Lebanon played a determining role for the penetration of the mafioso behaviour, since it secured the mobility, instability and stratification of all social positions essential to its activities.

Competitive societies always favour the strongest party, and the Mafioso functions as a recourse for those who wish to subvert this law. This is the role played by the sects and confessions in allotting public sector positions and, increasingly, private sector posts. Arlacchi’s point here is that the constant upheavals and changes in the chaotic social hierarchy, and in the ways in which this hierarchy is used, prevent the establishment of a stable system of social classes and likewise prevent the growth of permanent, mutually

³⁰⁰ Eric Hobsbawm (1965), *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th Century*. London and New York; W. W. Norton & Co.mpany, Inc. and Ltd

³⁰¹ Leonardo Sciascia (1979), *La Sicile comme metaphore. Conversations avec Marcelle Padovani*. Paris: Stock.

³⁰² Immanuel Wallerstein and Étienne Balibar (2007), *Race, nation, classe. Ies identities ambiguës*. Paris: La Decouverte.

³⁰³ P. Arlacchi (1988).

supportive relationships between any given group or class or category. He calls this “a society in a state of permanent transition”³⁰⁴, with its oscillation between the rapid accumulation of wealth and its equally rapid loss, and the alternation of groups between positions of wealth and bankruptcy, generating an acute sensitivity to social hierarchy and an exceptional interest in the acquisition of social honour/prestige.

Indeed, Arlacchi seems to be talking about the Lebanese system when he says that the mafia system is characterised by the endorsement of ‘honour’ and artificial kinship (a constructed kinship, not blood kinship) to access new opportunities in the competition/struggle in both the economic sphere and civil society. Traditional values and structures are utilised in such a way that ties of friendship and kinship serve commercial and competitive goals.

Mafia power arises in a situation of anarchic competition for honour and represents an excellent instrument of social promotion in a commercial capitalist society where risky, fraudulent and unscrupulous practices are indispensable for success. Mafia power is the dominant competitive force: In its shrewdly reformist dimension, mafia power also mediates between market forces and society, thus protecting the latter from the potential destruction inherent in the ambition of the market to impose itself as the supreme regulator of all [human] relations.³⁰⁵

In Lebanon, we might add sects and confessions (vertical divisions) to the list of conflicts into which the Mafia leader insert himself as intermediary, especially if we take into consideration that the weakness of the state and its monopoly over the means of violence is doubled in Lebanon as a result of the war and post-war periods.

Indeed we might state that to the collection of rents via control over various economic fields should be added the willingness of the various groups (distributed among positions of influence and self-enrichment in the state) to resort to violence in order to generate new economic interests.

As a matter of fact, rent articulates the economic and the political in so far as political and military power become the principal means of extracting the economic surplus and

³⁰⁴ Pino Arlacchi, “From Man of Honour to Entrepreneur: The Evolution of the Mafia”, in *The New Left Review*, no. 118, November-December 1979, pp. 53-72.

³⁰⁵ Pino Arlacchi (1979), p. 56.

the constitution of new economic interests and social relations. In the Lebanese case, during the civil conflicts, at stake it was not the sheer transformation of profit into rent – an old practice of the Lebanese bourgeoisie – but the tributary and tax-farming role of the warlords by which they realised revenues and profits without capital investment, through their politico-military hand on practically all economic activities.

What is very peculiar about the revenues generated by Shi‘a-controlled illegal activities during the war is the short-term economic vision that characterised (and to a certain extent still does) this community.³⁰⁶ Whereas the revenues collected, for instance, by the Lebanese Forces through their activities in their ports of dominance was essential in rebuilding and in structurally re-organising the city of Jbeil (Byblos), the massive money received by the Shi‘a revenues was immediately lost down to bad administration, negligence, and in the best of cases it was employed in the construction of private buildings, villas, etc.

Pillaging

A major source of money for the warlords and their militias came from pillaging. That, along with the confiscation of private property, the ‘cleansing’ of confessionally heterogeneous enclaves, the establishment of militia-controlled cantons and militia-organised theft, made a large part of the economic resources of the Lebanese militias. Some spectacular acts of predation during this time included the pillage of the Port of Beirut by the Phalangist Party (estimated at 1 billion USD) and the robbery by a Palestinian organisation of the British Bank of the Middle East in April 1976, which even made it into the Guinness Book of Records as the world largest bank robbery.³⁰⁷ For the members of the militias, facilities to reach some economic fortune were disseminated everywhere and the possibility of pillaging even led to the interruption of fighting sometimes:

Selon les récits concordants, des Libanais qui se battaient dans les rues du centre-ville, après avoir fini de piller tous les magasins derrière eux, conclurent une trêve dans le pur style du compromis pour pouvoir mettre à sac les magasins qui se trouvaient entre leurs positions respectives. Ils se réunirent, établirent un comité bilatéral et dépêchèrent des équipes communes chargées de vider systématiquement les boutiques. Une fois l’entreprise

³⁰⁶ Waddah Charara, interview with the author, December 2013 & November 2014.

³⁰⁷ Fawaz Traboulsi (1993), “De la violence. Fonctions et rituels”, in *Stratégie II, Peuples Méditerranéens*, no. 64-65, juillet- décembre, pp. 57-86.

achevée, ils repirent le combat. Le partage du butin entre les partenaires, associés et rivaux, est demeuré la règle.³⁰⁸

According to Corm, the various Lebanese militias seized in the period from 1975 to 1990 about 5 to 7 billion UDS in total, using those ways of appropriation of economic resources.³⁰⁹ To those should be added the regular practice of stealing cars which became a lucrative trade in itself throughout the war. According to police files, during eight months in 1985-86, 1945 cars were registered as stolen, the majority of which in Beirut.

Drug Traffic

The militia cooperation in the drug traffic is the economic activity in which all militias collaborated from the production to the consumer stages. In the wartime period the surface of hashish cultivation doubled and came to occupy more than 40% of the cultivable land in the Shi'a dominated Beqaa valley. It was during the war years that opium culture was introduced for the first time in Lebanon, with a production estimated at a dozen tons of heroin processed in a number of clandestine laboratories which equally processed Colombian coke. Nowadays, the cultivation of opium poppies is a very lucrative business in the Shi'a dominated Beqaa valley. Many agricultural farms in that area are dedicated to this illicit business, producing a great deal of profits. The government tries to contrast these activities by mere cosmetic actions, like burning the cultivations every couple of years or so.

'Controlled' Ports

Militia-controlled ports were also engaged in the import of toxic waste from Europe, appropriately dumped in return of large sums of money, and the tributes and 'protection' money coming from checkpoints and passageways on the borders between the different cantons. Reminiscent of the old feudal divisions of the country during the *muqata'ji* system, they had the dual function of controlling the entry and exit to the zone under militia control and of serving as customs' posts. On them the militias imposed their tolls on passengers, vehicles and merchandise. Passengers paid per head, while cars

³⁰⁸ Antoine N. Messara (1989). "Le citoyen libanais et l'état. Une tradition tenace de constitutionnalisme menacée", in *Monde arabe: Maghreb-Machreq*, no. 125, juillet-août-septembre 1989, pp. 82-99.

³⁰⁹ Georges Corm (1994), "The War System", p. 217.

were taxed both on the estimated value of the goods transported and the nature of the vehicle itself.³¹⁰

On the Lebanese Forces' checkpoints controlling the entry into Christian Mount Lebanon, goods were estimated and taxed at 2% their estimated value. At Batir, the checkpoint operated by the Progressive Socialist Party of the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt imposed high duties on the transport of cement (a measure of protecting the local cement factory at Sibliin owned by Jumblatt). On the road to the South, were present the checkpoints of the popular Nasserite Organization on the outskirts of Saida, and further on, the Amal militiamen were imposing a fixed tax on trucks leaving the Iraqi Petrol Company (IPC) refinery at Zahrani. On the border with Israel, the South Lebanese Army (SLA) controlled the Israeli occupied zone by sealing it off economically from the rest of Lebanon and diverting its economy towards Northern Israel.

'Protection money' and taxes

'Protection money' and income taxes were imposed on all inhabitants of the territories under militias' control, as well as imposed on practically all the economic activities: agricultural exploitations, commercial and industrial firms, liberal professions, etc. A direct tax of 30 USD was imposed on all industrial and economic enterprises. Then, enterprises were furtherly taxed according to their importance. Sand extraction, for example, was taxed per cubic meter directly both by the Lebanese Forces and by the Amal militias. This extraction industry turned out to be so profitable that Amal created its own company for sand extraction in partnership with migrant capital. Another important source of income for Amal was the agricultural South, on which they imposed a tax of land ownership.

Most big business companies like the Middle East Airlines and the tobacco monopoly Regie, paid enormous sums in 'protection' money to almost all the militias.

Another important source of militia fiscality were the taxes and dues levied on administrative formalities previously held by the State: registration of transfers of

³¹⁰ David Hirst, "Jumhuriyya al-Milichiyat", *Al-Qabas*, nos. 98-100, 26-28 August, 1985; "L'argent des milices", *Les Cahiers de l'Orient*, Paris, no. 10, 1988; *Al-Hayat* series of articles on the Lebanese militias, their administration and revenues, 31 December 1990 – February 1991; "Le livre noir des Forces libanaises", in *l'Eleveil*, Centre Libanais d'Information (CLI), no. 2, 17 May 1990; Georges Corm (1991), "Liban: hégémonie milicienne et problème du rétablissement de l'Etat", pp. 13-25.

landed property, registration of cars, building permits, work permits, residence permits for foreigners, etc.

New Business Enterprises and Social Mobility

In addition to robbing the State's revenues and taxing their 'own' communities, the militias in power articulated their economic activities around the dominant and more profitable sector of economy, the services' and the commercial sector. After 1983, the main militias took control of a large part of the importation, and of all the distribution, of two products of vital necessity: fuel and flour. In addition, they imposed high taxes on the consumption of these products and reaped enormous profits from speculation on the differences in price of these commodities between different regions.

Practically the whole of foreign trade was in Milton hands and the newly-created ports had become militia-owned enterprises.

Not only did militias 'exchange services' with sections of the bourgeoisie (protection money in return for import and export quotas or sheer profiteering) but soon they became large business enterprises in their own right and an integral part of the Lebanese middle-class, entering in close business partnership with many of its members.

The revenues of these enormous enterprises were partially invested in the war effort, but another substantial part became the personal fortune of the warlords, deposited in Swiss bank accounts or invested abroad. Yet, another part was reinvested in a number of 'holding companies' registered in Lebanon. The three major ones were under the control of the Lebanese Forces, Amal, and the Progressive Socialist Party. As a direct result of confessionalistic business, these respectively three Maronite, Shiite, and Druze holdings now own a number of companies operating in all economic sectors: private ports, import-export trade, cement factories, tourism, real estate agencies, FM radios, television companies, newspapers and publishing houses, just to name a few.

In his study on the Mafia, Pino Arlacchi talks about the 'honour crisis' as a factor that generates the mafia phenomenon and as efficient means of social promotion.³¹¹ Lebanon civil war functioned mostly in the same way. In the early stages the popular sacking of

³¹¹ P. Arlacchi (1979), pp. 53-72

the port of Beirut and the city of Beirut were incontinent forms of redistribution of wealth. Later on, redistribution became more stratified as the 'masses' withdrew gradually from the stage. Although these forms of income redistribution by military and political means were not restricted to warlords, the amount of money that reached the different social groups is quite difficult to define. Also the nature of these social groups is complicated to detect, especially that social mobility related to emigration cannot easily be differentiated from the one arising from the war itself.

What could be safely said is that mafism in Lebanon, the highest stage of clientelism, follows the same logic as any other form of clientelism, that of the 'uneven exchange' and 'uneven distribution' between patrons and clients.

A New Wave of International Migration

Wars, civil or regular, share common anthropological functions: One of them, emphasised by Bouthoul, has a special relevance to Lebanon. It is the role of wars in the expulsion of the 'human surplus' and the establishment of a new demographic equilibrium.³¹² The expulsion of 'human surplus' in Lebanon took three basic forms: i) confessional 'purification' of the community's territory from 'strangers' (i.e.: Muslims in the Christian enclave and Christians in the 'Druze' mountains); ii) the expulsion of 'foreigners' and 'intruders', with a specific reference to Palestinians (Sabra and Shatila and the wars of Amal against the Palestinians camps and the Israeli operations in 1978 and 1982); iii) the expulsion of the Lebanese themselves from their country, regardless of their communal affiliation. This led to another important wave of emigration that created another important means of social mobility within the Shi'a community (but not exclusively).

The economic and social consequences of this important outflow of the working population, mainly the young, are enormous: a majority of the Lebanese working force is now employed outside their country; the balance of power between the sectors of the economy has tipped even more in favour of the tertiary and rentier activities at the expense of the productive sector. The Shi'a community specific logic of capital

³¹² Gaston Bouthoul (1991), *Traité de polémologie*. Paris: Payot.

investment directed toward speculation in real estate and foreign countries is a direct consequence of the extraverted character of the war and post-war economy.

A new ruling class rose, whose components reveal the degree of the political and social mobility that the war had created. It was a blend of three major components: i) the successor of the old notables (*zu'ama*): their sons and immediate family heirs; ii) the warlords and the representatives of pro-Syrian parties; iii) the new bourgeoisie issued from war and emigration.

A land of old migration and emigration, a major receiver and sender, contemporary Lebanon has been both at the heart of one of the first global Diaspora and the objective of many in the region who aspired to and moved to become part of it.

Emigration waves that followed civil strife, economic crisis, family and village networks, produced a global Diaspora of almost 14 million persons of Lebanese descends scattered around the world: Brazil and Latin America, North America, Africa, Europe, Australia and the Arab World. Although it is difficult to give a precise account on the considerable effects of the Diaspora on families, villages and towns of origin, the economy and institutions, there is clear evidence throughout the past century of the impact of Lebanese emigration. Through remittances, donations, investments, scholarships, religious endowments, and building of schools and local infrastructure, emigrants contributed to the survival of resident Lebanese in times of economic crises, and to the upgrading of the assets and capacities of Lebanon in time of relative peace. As a matter of fact, it is well known that wealthy Lebanese emigrants (a massive amount of Shiites among them) who returned to Lebanon have contributed significantly to the development of sectors such as contracting, real estate, tourism, etc.

After the end of the civil war, in the early nineties, many Lebanese entrepreneurs, professionals and skilled workers returned, either encouraged by the emerging opportunities of the reconstruction program and/or pushed out by the declining opportunities in West Africa, Canada, France, and the Arab Gulf countries. A new community of 'dual citizens' emerged, living in Lebanon, some returning, some

commuting, some departing according to economic and market opportunities in Lebanon, in their country of naturalisation or elsewhere.

Around 900,000 Lebanese permanently left the country during the 1975-1990 conflicts, almost a third of the 1975 resident population.³¹³ Paradoxically, hundreds of thousands of Lebanese left in the post-war decade (1991-2000). It is estimated that a yearly average of 50,000 people left in the early post-war period and the take-off of the reconstruction project (1991-1994). In the second half of the past decade, as the economy in general and reconstruction activity slowed and finally gave way to recession, tens of thousands of mainly young and highly qualified Lebanese continued to emigrate each year.³¹⁴

The phenomenon of continuing migration poses the problematic nature of Lebanon's model of development. It also raises the issue of weak capacity of that model to take advantage of historical capital accumulated in Lebanon, on national territory and for resident Lebanese.

One key element in this transformation is a major reshuffling of the entrepreneurial class. The pre-war bourgeoisie, or economic middle-class – contractors, bankers, international financiers and traders – had largely left the country. One of the crucial questions of any reconstruction effort has been how, when, and to what extent this pre-war bourgeoisie was effectively re-attracted to Lebanon either as investors or to relocate some of their activities there. Arguably, it is very unlikely that such assets made a significant difference at a State-reconstructive level. If Lebanon's transnationalised bourgeoisie had effectively participated in the country's reconstruction through a balanced, rational economic reconstructive plan, the country's tasks could have been considerably facilitated (i.e.: mitigated dependency on foreign aid or reliance on international agencies).

³¹³ Ministry of Social Affairs – United Nations Development Programme, *Mapping of Living Conditions in Lebanon*, Beirut: MOSA-UNDP, 1998.

³¹⁴ Administration Centrale de La Statique, *Conditions de vie des ménages au Liban*, Beirut: ACS, 1998; Boutros Labaki, "Le Développement Équilibré au Liban", in *Lettre d'Information* 11, Observatoire des Recherches sur Beyrouth et la Reconstruction, 1991, pp. 23-26; National Human Development Report – Lebanon 2001-2002, *Globalization: Towards a Lebanese Agenda*, Beirut: UNDP, 2002.

What is evident, though, is that the 'old' entrepreneurial class had been largely replaced by a number of emergent groups inside Lebanon. Among these, the so called 'Gulf entrepreneurs' (represented by the most prominent among them, Rafiq Hariri) on one side, and the vast amount of Shiite emigrants returning from West Africa (among them prominent tycoons in the real estate business like Ali Jamal, Jamil Ibrahim, etc.). While the rising of an entrepreneurial middle/upper class was underway even prior to 1975, it was undeniably accelerated by the war. The result was a re-equilibration of the sectarian composition of the bourgeoisie, a phenomenon of considerable importance. In 1960, for example, 75% of the economic upper class of Lebanon had been Christian and only 25% Muslim. By 1975 the gap had already narrowed through various social transformations. By the late 1980s, it had become roughly evenly divided between the two major groups. The return of Diaspora Muslim entrepreneurs was slowed down if not halted in the 1990s, by the combined effects of neoliberalism, political clientelism, widespread corruption, limited investment opportunities and economic recession. The first decade of 2000s had finally established a concrete percentage of Shiite tycoons and entrepreneurs, mostly engaged in the contractor, construction, real-estate businesses.

In the hierarchy of regions, a very significant change was brought about by the social dynamic of the war and post-war periods. The area of South Lebanon and the Beqaa used to be at the bottom end of the development hierarchy, in terms of income and education status, extent of poverty or access to basic services. Studies of the late 1990s revealed that the province of North Lebanon had fallen to the bottom end. This comparative deterioration has to be read in the light of the increased political weight and representation of the Shiite community, translating into increased attention and influx of public aid, in addition to a growing volume of remittances and local investments by the Shiite Diaspora in Africa and in the Gulf regions transmitted to their enlarged or close families in the country of origin, most notably in the Beqaa and South of Lebanon. No equivalent trend benefited North Lebanon, which also suffered from State neglect because of the marginalisation of the Northern Sunni political leadership by the increasing pre-eminence of the Beirut and Saida based Rafiq Hariri.

The Lebanese civil war that began in 1975 was caused mainly by developments external to the clientelist system of political control which had more or less effectively sustained

a relative order until the outbreak of the conflict. Two communities were excluded from the clientelist system: the Palestinians of Lebanon who were not citizens of Lebanon and were consequently unable to trade votes for services; and the recent Shiite migrants to Beirut who were registered to vote in their villages and were thus excluded from the patronage of the city. Both groups were susceptible to radical politics (with many Shiites joining Lebanese leftist parties) and came to be seen as a threat to the Lebanese political system. Must al Sadr collected the Shi'a disenfranchisement and gave the community a sense of belonging and security. For many of the Shi'a migrants to Beirut, the capital was much more competitive than the landed estates from which they had been expelled by their landlords in the 1960s. The harsh domination of landlords on their sharecroppers was hard, but sometimes mitigated by occasional acts of kindness: money for medical treatment, the landlord's presence at a family wedding or funeral, a loan. Shiites' position in the social and political arena in Lebanon until that time was possibly the weakest, and peasants (the majority of Shiites living in villages) had very little opportunities to imagine a different social order. When Shi'a landlords turned to mechanised farming in the 1960s and expelled their peasants, thousands of migrants made their way to the slums of Beirut, creating what has been labelled by some scholars *hizm al bu'us* ('the misery belt'). In the city they had to compete with other members of a growing sub-proletariat or 'under class' for scarce jobs and housings.³¹⁵ No wonder so many of them eventually turned, first in the 1970s to Musa al Sadr's movement, and then in the 1980s to Amal or Hezbollah in search for a moral and social security. Shi'a confessional organisations were also able to capitalise the newly founded community's sense of honour and greatly benefit from the conspicuous remittances of those Shi'a migrants who were forced to move to Africa, Europe, Canada and Latin America establishing successful businesses and of those who decided to return to Lebanon actively starting a first generation of fortunate entrepreneurs.

The Transformation of the 'Hierarchy of Poverty' in Lebanon

The Lebanese War contributed to major changes in the Lebanese polity, economy, and society. In considering the process of political and socioeconomic reconstruction of

³¹⁵ The city was also certainly not lacking of a system of 'urban protection' and racketeering at the level of competitive economy. For an analyses see: M. Johnson (2001), pp. 40-54.

Lebanon in the 1990s, it is necessary to keep in mind that the society has been profoundly altered by the civil conflicts. The shifts and changes should not be dismissed as merely a reflection of geographic redistribution or temporary relocations of services and functions. Therefore, we can no longer assume that it is essentially the same society as in 1975. The forced social mobility has resulted in the decline or even quasi-demise of some classes and the attrition of others. It is thus a profoundly transformed society that formed the basis of the political and economic reconstruction.³¹⁶

Undoubtedly, the disparities between region and socio-economic strata started diminishing since the 1960s³¹⁷ as a consequence of government policies, the educational and social activities of the communities and the economic and social consequences of the Lebanese first and second waves of emigration. But it was the war period between 1975 and 1990 that radically changed the Lebanese economy. The country suffered huge physical, human and economic losses: 3% of the population was killed, 2% displaced and 28% emigrated. Ranked four among middle-income counties in 1974, Lebanon ranked 20th in 1990.³¹⁸

Despite substantial losses and regional and international changes, Lebanon was not without some comparative advantages: i) the experience and competence acquired by Lebanese individuals and companies abroad; 2) the considerable capital accumulated by Lebanese individuals and companies working abroad, mainly in East and West Africa and in oil-producing countries, since the mid-1970s. The capital was deposited and/or invested primarily in Western Europe and North America; iii) no alternative centre to Lebanon had emerged in the Near and Middle East offering the variety, complexity and quality of service available in Lebanon.³¹⁹

One major consequence of the war was the reshaping of the power balance among Lebanon's sects. The Christians lost some of their former economic power and much of

³¹⁶ Salim Nasr, "The New Social Map", in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam (eds.) (2003), *Lebanon in Limbo*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

³¹⁷ Boutros Labaki, "l'Economie politique du Liban indépendant", in Nada Haffar Mills and Nadim Shehadi (eds.) (1987), *Consensus and Conflict in Lebanon*. Oxford and London: Centre for Lebanese Studies and Tauris.

³¹⁸ Boutros Labaki, "The Postwar Economy: A Miracle that Didn't Happen", in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam (eds.) (2003).

³¹⁹ Ibid.

their former political clout. The Shiites saw an expansion in their economic and political power. Their sense of themselves as a community distinct but equal to Sunnis has grown as a direct result of the war. In the years following the end of the civil strife, Shiite businessmen – backed by Shiite politicians and spiritual leaders – launches a series of campaigns (mainly the Association of Lebanese Industrialists³²⁰, the Bank of Credit and Commerce and the Association of Beirut Merchants) to achieve equality of representation with the Sunnis. In some cases, the demands of the Shi'a community were too ambitious (given the respective numbers of Shiites and Sunni merchants) and were met with stiff opposition. Nevertheless, Shiites were able to improve in the 1990s their representation on the Beirut Traders Association's Board³²¹, but without achieving full parity with Sunnis.

The transformation of the 'hierarchy of poverty' in Lebanon is therefore a consequence of many factors. One is undoubtedly related to the second wave of forced migration down to the civil war. The South benefited (and still does) enormously from the investments coming from the Diaspora. The presence of lavish villas in the periphery of the Southern villages testimonies the generous amount of money implied to build such sumptuous architectures. This new Diaspora bourgeoisie in more than a few cases actively and willingly donated conspicuous amount of money to both Amal and Hezbollah.

Another major factor of development and balance in favour of the Shiite population (particularly in the South) is the political compromise operated by *harakat* Amal in the immediate aftermath of the civil war. Nabih Berri has permanently occupied without any discontinuity the office of the President of the Parliament. From Berri's point of view, membership in the cabinet was not only a condition that reflected his own as well as Amal's importance, but was also a major step in the struggle for Leadership within the Shiite community. This allowed him to dispose of a substantial power of negotiation on public and developmental politics, from which benefited directly the Shiite

³²⁰ Tajamu' al-Sina'iyyin al-Lubnaniyyin

³²¹ Jam'iyyat Tujar Beirut.

population, specifically those living in the Southern regions.³²² Under the new ministry, Berri controlled the Council of the South (*Majlis al-Janub*), which was the economic governmental instrument for developing the region. As would become clear during the next years Berri saw his entrance into the government as an instrument with which to execute his own political agenda and to influence the high political ranks from the inside.

³²² O. Nir (2011).

It is worthwhile mentioning that the Southern region lived symbiotically with the capital, most of all after the enhancement of the infrastructures and the roads that connected the villages to Beirut. Even the wages – particularly those coming from the public administration – that were earned in Beirut were re-distributed to the villages..

Amal, Hezbollah and the Making of Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Nabih Berri: The Diaspora Entrepreneur *par excellence*

Nabih Mustafa Berri was born on January 28, 1938 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. His family came from the village of Tibnin in Jabal 'Amil. Tibnin is comprised of four neighbourhoods, but only one is named after a family: Berri - the most dominant and influential for generations. From the late Ottoman period until the 1930s approximately 60 percent of the people of Tibnin emigrated; almost two-thirds of them from the extended Berri family.³²³ Most immigrants moved to the United States and Canada. Many of the Berri family members settled in Detroit, and became successful entrepreneurs in the city, to such an extent that one of Detroit's International Airport's terminals was named in 1974 after a family member, Michael Berry [Berri], who served in the past as the airport commissioner.³²⁴ Another minority of immigrants who left in the 1930s arrived - according to Fouad Ajami - accidentally in West Africa.³²⁵ According to the Ajami, upon reaching Marseille, on their way to America, they discovered the lack of health certificates and financial means required. Therefore, they became an easy target for ruthless agents who offered them a transport to West Africa instead. As a result, some of them arrived in Sierra Leone and started working as petty traders in the diamond business and as mediators between Europeans and local farmers.³²⁶ Mustafa Berri, Nabih's father, headed one of these families.

Mustafa was a merchant who suffered during the 1930s economic crisis, and emigrated from south Lebanon to seek his fortune, like many other Shiites. At first, in Africa he became involved in the rice-trade business, but following the discovery of diamonds in

³²³ Nabil Haytam (2004), *Nabih Berri, askunu hadha al-kitab* [I Live in this Book]. Beirut: Mukhtarat, p. 11. [Beirut] : هيثم، نبيل. نبيه بري : أسكن هذا الكتاب. 2004 مختارات،

³²⁴ O. Nir (2011), p. 17; For more on the Lebanese Shiism from Tibnin in the United States, see: Linda S. Walbridge (1997), *Without Forgetting the Imam: Lebanese Shiism in an American Community*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp. 24-25.

³²⁵ Fouad Ajami (1986), p 103.

³²⁶ F. Ajami (1986), pp. 103.

Sierra Leone, he began dealing in this new commercial sector. Soon he became very successful and one of the largest diamond traders in West Africa.

Nabih was less than one year old when he was sent to Lebanon, after his mother's health conditions deteriorated and was unable to look after her son. Berri attended *imam 'Ali bin abi Talib* secondary high school, which belonged to the *al-Muqasid* Islamic association. Nabih had already been introduced to Islamic education when he turned six by his grandfather, Mahmoud Saleh, who taught him prayers and *al-Mashikha*, the first stage of Islamic education. This element - apparently of no interest - became an important asset in Berri's life later on, when he needed a 'religious confirmation' when contending for power against Hezbollah, despite the fact that Berri has always been portrayed as the 'secular option' for the Lebanese Shi'a.³²⁷

From *al-Muqasid* Berri moved to *al-Hikma* High School in Beirut. This was probably one of his first experiences outside Jabal 'Amil that reinforced his feelings of deprivation as a Shiite, and greatly influenced his ambition later in the political career he pursued. In 1956, Berri completed his secondary education in *Bat al-Talaba* in Beirut, and took the matriculation exam. This resulted in another major disappointment when he fell victim of the Lebanese education system at the time: although the score he achieved was higher than the necessary to pass the exam, it was marked as 'failed' because he had passed only 25 percent of the French language part of the exam. Before the establishment of the Lebanese University, it was a *conditio sine qua non* to pass either an English or a French language test to have the chance to enter a major private university. And since Shiites represented a vast portion of the poor population and could only access to public schools where foreign languages were not studied, chances to make it in a private higher institution were less than minimal.

After the matriculation test debacle, Berri left Lebanon to assist his father's business in Sierra Leone, but after two years he returned to complete the matriculation examination. After passing the exam, he began to study law at the Lebanese University in Beirut.

³²⁷ Amal has never claimed to be a secular party, and the fact that the party that split from Amal called itself Islamic Amal (1982) did not necessarily imply that Amal's political project was in any way less concerned with identifying itself as a pious Shiite party. Amal is not a monolithic entity. Class, urban-rural divisions and the ideological orientations some of its members have developed before joining Amal have resulted in the emergence of factions. Amal members tend not to be too concerned to advocate a secular image for the party. Another reason Amal was often labeled as a secular party was the European-derived assumption that nationalisms are based on secularism, encompassing the earlier world made of dynastic polities, kinships and religious orientations. When the Iranian revolution broke in and started propagating pan-Islamic solidarity, Amal's decision not to submit to the official Khomeinist line (*vilayat-e-faqih*) was enough to label it as a 'secular party' (R. Shaery-Eisemlohr, 2011, pp. 106-107).

Berri's time as a student coincided with the period of great change in the educational system in Lebanon and the Lebanese University, sponsored by the government, attracted mainly Muslim students, many of them Shiites. In the 1950s and 1960s, pursuing a higher education for Shiites became an important mean for social mobility and to break from the neglected opportunities and advance their social status and political influence.

Berri's leadership talent began emerging when he was appointed chairperson of the association of faculty of law and the representative of the Lebanese University in the National Union University Students in Lebanon (*al-ittihad al-watani lil-tulab al-jamiy'iyin fi lubnan*). It was during those years that Berri met Musa al-Sadr - a meeting that changed Berri's life and put him on track to the Shiite leadership in Lebanon.

In 1963, Berri graduated from law school at the Lebanese University and left for one year of advanced studies at the Sorbonne in Paris.³²⁸ Upon his return, he joined the firm of attorney Abdallah Lahoud, a prominent Lebanese law instructor and literary figure.³²⁹

Another major disappointment was on its way, as Berri realised that without the right family status or connections it would have been very complicated to be elected to the Lebanese parliament. In fact, his attempt to join southern parliamentary list of candidates for the 1964 elections, under the leadership of Kamal al-As'ad failed. The feudal master of Jabal 'Amil preferred yes-men to ambitious candidates who could put in danger his status.

In 1974, Nabih Berri joined the *harakat al-mahroumeen* established by Musa al Sadr. As a member of the movement he became a candidate for one of the dozen seats allocated for seculars to the Supreme Shiite Islamic Council (SSIC), but was not elected.³³⁰ Berri's legal education, rhetorical ability, and independent ideas brought him close to Sadr. When the imam founded Amal in 1974, he appointed Berri as the movement's spokesperson and chairperson of the supervisory and jurisdictional committee. Later on, Berri served in other high positions in Amal, including as secretary of the political bureau, coordinator between Amal and the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), and as an assistant secretary general. This was Berri's position when Amal's leader, Musa al Sadr, disappeared.

³²⁸ As told by N. Berri in Beirut: Mukhtar, p. 11. [Beirut]: أسكن هذا الكتاب. 2004 مختارات، : [Beirut]

³²⁹ Augustus Richard Norton, "Political Violence and Shi'a Factionalism in Lebanon", *Middle East Insight* 3, no. 2, 1983, p. 12.

³³⁰ F. Ajami (1986), p. 230.

The Berri Leadership

In 1980, when Nabih Berri was elected chairperson of Amal, the Shiite community in Lebanon was facing three major problems: i) The unresolved issues toward the Lebanese left. One year earlier, the armed militia of Amal was frequently involved in incidents against Palestinians, with the Lebanese Communist Party and with the pro-Iraqi wing of the Ba‘ath Party; ii) The nature of the relationship between the Lebanese Shi‘a and the Islamic Republic of Iran; iii) The leadership of the Lebanese Shiites.

Event though Amal never claimed to be a “secular party”, it was very clear from the beginning of the Berri’s leadership that — with the intensification of the Shiite ties to post-revolutionary Iran — Amal was forced to redefine the categories of foreign, local, and religion in new terms.³³¹ Berri explained in 1980:

Amal is not a fanatic/dogmatic movement. We consider the resistance a noble necessity. Amal is neither a fanatic nor sectarian. Amal is a national movement [...] Amal is against fanaticism and sectarianism, Amal is a movement of the believers. Amal is a Lebanese national movement.³³²

Under the leadership of Nabih Berri³³³ – imam Musa al Sadr's successor – Amal expanded from an adjunct militia to the Movement of the Deprived into a political reform movement as well. In 1982 with the second full scale Israeli invasion of Lebanon the Syrian government, which lacked the means to fight a conventional war against Israel in Lebanon, reacted by encouraging the most uncompromising elements in the Shiite community to spearhead a counter-offensive against the new status quo. Syria encouraged the deployment of several hundreds Iranian pasdarans in the Beqaa Valley which it controlled, enabling the Islamic Republic to participate directly in Lebanon's politics³³⁴. During the same period, an internal split occurred inside Amal's ranks and in the second half of 1982 Ayatollah Mohtashemi – Islamic Republic's

³³¹ Ibid., pp. 105-106.

³³² *Amal* (official weekly newspaper of the Amal Party between 1980 and 1982), January 14, 1980; R. Shaery-Eisenlohr (2011), pp. 105-106.

³³³ Nabih Berri was elected in 1979.

³³⁴ Gilles Kepel (2006), *Jihad. The Trail of Political Islam*, London, I.B. Tauris, p. 126.

ambassador to Damascus – brought together various Shiite groups and clerics who shared the same views in the Beqaa, the south and the Beirut suburbs, under the single banner of an organisation which was named Hezbollah³³⁵.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s Hezbollah operated as an agent for the growing radicalisation of the Shiite community and as a tool for the Iranian policy³³⁶. With the devastations of the civil war and the Israeli war – within the community, a major charitable program was set in motion, with the general logistical and financial support of Tehran³³⁷ (whereas Amal was economically supported by Syria)³³⁸. Aid was distributed to the young urban poor through a network of religious clerics affiliated with the party, blending the social needs of the disenfranchised and the political interests of Syria and Iran on Lebanon.

It was under these circumstances that Nabih Berri shifted Amal and part of the Shiite community from a marginal political position to a key representative role in the Lebanese political scene. First, he placed Amal at the centre of the moderate camp; secondly, he managed to remove from his movement his main opponents: Muhammad Mahid Shams al-Din and Hussein Mussawi. Most notably, during the 1980s Berri was able to take control of the Council of the South (*majlis al-janub*), founded by the Lebanese government in the 1970 and commanded by the *za'im* Kamil al-As'ad during the decade. The control of the Council of the South was essential to Berri, as the *majlis* represented the economic governmental instrument for developing the region. As it would become clear in the following years, Berri saw the entrance into the government as an instrument with which to execute his own political agenda.

Berri's strength incremented when he gained — with the help of his ally at the time Walid Jumblatt — military control over West Beirut in 1984, which resulted in a

³³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 127. See also M. Kramer, "The Pan-Islamic Premise of Hizbullah, in David Menashri" (1990), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*. Westwood Press, Boulder, p. 105.

³³⁶ G. Kepel (2006), p. 127.

³³⁷ Augustus Richard Norton (1990), "Lebanon: The Internal Conflict and the Iranian Connection", in Esposito (ed.) (1999), *The Iranian Revolution. Its Global Impact*. Miami: International Global Press, p. 126.

³³⁸ Mohammad Nasrallah (Abu), Interview with the author, August 2008.

defection of Shiite Lebanese soldiers from the Lebanese Army to Amal. The combination of military control of West Beirut and his political established Berri as one of the key leaders of the time in the Lebanese government and radically changed the Suuni leadership's view of Shiites as marginal to the Lebanese political scene for good. Nonetheless, the Shiite community was a far cry from being united under a single group and in the second half of 1982 an internal split occurred inside Amal's ranks: Ayatollah Mohtashemi – the Islamic Republic's ambassador to Damascus – brought together various Shiite groups and clerics who shared the same views in the Beqaa, the south and the Beirut suburbs, under the single banner of an organisation which was named Hezbollah (party of God).³³⁹

The New Patron: The Party of God

An analytical account on the formation and first years of Hezbollah and its politics would be too misleading for this work. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that throughout the 80's and early 90's the party of God operated as an agent for the growing radicalisation of the Shiite community and as a tool for the Iranian policy³⁴⁰.

Hezbollah was founded in the summer of 1982, and established in its early years the slogan of the Islamic Revolution in Lebanon. It also spoke openly of building an Islamic state within Lebanon. However, the party did not change the rules of the game or threaten the 'Lebanese formula' since it was believed that its project was difficult to achieve within the context of Lebanese society. In addition, the fact that Hezbollah focused its efforts on consolidating and expanding its presence among the Shiite community and fighting the Israeli occupation in South Lebanon tamed the Sunnis and Christian reactions to its rhetoric.³⁴¹

³³⁹ G. Kepel (2006), p. 126-127; See also: Martin Kramer, "The Pan-Islamic Premise of Hizbullah", p. 105.

³⁴⁰ G. Kepel (2006), p. 127.

³⁴¹ Z. Majed, (2010); Ahmad Baydoun (2007), *Loubnan: Achya' Assuna wa Asnan Ashi'a: Jadid fi Rasm Al-Jabha*. Beirut: Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.

Iran was Hezbollah's patron. It provided inspiration, funding, training, weapons, from a generous close accompaniment in the initial years of the movement. In return, Hezbollah took a clear pro-Iranian stance, compatible with the positions of its benefactor. In contrast, Amal leaned on Syria, from which it won reserved support according to the Syrian interests in the Lebanese system. This support was expressed by guarding the movement's status within the Lebanese system.³⁴² However, it must be pointed out that at that time Amal did not enjoy the same massive financial support from outside that Hezbollah did, and had some difficulties with cash flows. For this reason Berri insisted on creating a new portfolio, the ministry of the South, in addition to his position as minister of justice. As the new minister, Berri could use governmental money to carry out his own agenda in the South and to partly overcome Amal's financial difficulties.³⁴³ In the absence of an important financial supporter, Berri based the income for his movement on a tax levy in the harbours of Tyre and the southwest Beirut suburb of Ouza'i; a tax on the sale of fuel from the refineries of the Tapline company in Zahrani; and taxes on real estate deals. In addition, conspicuous amount of money was donated from the Shi'a diaspora.³⁴⁴

However, it must be said that, although Hezbollah has a huge influence on the attitudes of the Shiites toward the Lebanese state, it was Berri who enabled a rather smooth entry of the party of God into the political system by mediating between it and other factors in the system to diminish the fear which existed among many Lebanese. By that, Berri reduced the anti-Shiites sentiments.³⁴⁵

Hezbollah continued to greatly expand during the late eighties: it succeeded in expelling all of the leftist groups that participated in the resistance against Israeli occupation from its areas of control. The Amal movement had assisted Hezbollah in these efforts, but later found itself later in direct confrontation with the party in the south and Beirut's suburbs. The competition between the two Shiite factions manifested itself through

³⁴² E. Azani (2009), p. 62-63.

³⁴³ O. Niri (2011), p. 56.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 76.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

violent fights and assassinations from 1987 to 1991.³⁴⁶ The Syrian-Iranian alliance seemed, at that time, incapable of imposing a reasonable solution to dividing the Shiite power and leadership between the two groups. An accord was finally reached between Hezbollah and Amal in 1991. At this point, the two parties inaugurated a new phase in their relationship and more broadly in the organisation of Shiite political leadership in Lebanon. The Amal movement was offered Shiite representation in the government, and Hezbollah the monopoly of resistance against the Israelis in South Lebanon.

The political shifts within the political Shi'a of Lebanon go hand in hand with the social changes. When the Shi'a only lived in their own enclaves, there was little to no interaction with the Sunni or Christian population. With their arrival in the capital region, there were increased contacts between the different confessional groups, where the Shi'a recognised their political and economic disadvantages. With a growing professional class, a migrant middle class and an industrial working class, the Shi'a began to question the political status quo. The Shi'a were not just a rural population with a politically naïve leadership anymore and in the next years and with a strong leadership they could confront the confessional system and bring the Shi'a to political parity with the other Lebanese confessional groups.

Amal and Hezbollah both competed for the patronage of the Shiite community. Amal supported the concept of a pluralistic society in Lebanon in which the Shiites' role would be determined according to their numerical proportion of the population, whereas Hezbollah supported a more radical agenda: liberating Palestine was certainly not one of Amal's ideological guidelines, while it was central in the political programme of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah was engaged in seeking the path to all strata in the Shiite society. It was a rather difficult task for the party of God to create an alternative to the path of Amal, and provided the Shi'a the springboard they were seeking for the improvement of their

³⁴⁶ The struggle between Amal and Hezbollah became an actual war in 1988. This war is also referred to in Lebanon as *harb al-shaḥiqayn* [war of the two brothers] or *hard al-ikhwa al a'ada'* [the brothers-enemies war]. In Berri's opinion, Hezbollah had crossed a 'red line' when it started to establish itself in Jabal 'Amil. This war between the two Shiite groups ended on November 5th, 1990, with the signing of an agreement in Damascus. Nabbed Berri signed in Amal's name and Sushī Tufayli in Hezbollah's, in the presence of Ghazi Kan'an, a Syrian intelligence commander in Lebanon and Hassan Akhtari, the Iranian ambassador to Damascus.

condition. The existence of Hezbollah as a movement in the first few years was conditional on its abilities to develop as a popular movement. This task was not easy at all. Hezbollah was forced to compete with Amal, which experienced in that period (1982–1985) a significant surge in its power within the community and, at the same time, in the intra-Lebanese system.³⁴⁷

Starting from Below: Creating Opportunities for the Popular Shiite Strata and Shaping Loyal Citizens

The economic situation and the difficult living conditions of the Shiite community in general and the Shiite immigrants in the margins of the cities from the 1970s onward in particular, alongside the government's inability to provide the necessary services, created a vacuum into which the Islamic agents entered.³⁴⁸ These agents funded by Iran and by donators from abroad, established and managed a branched network of religious, charitable, and educational institutions, through which they expanded their circle of

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ E. Azani (2006), p. 71.

influence in the Shiite society.³⁴⁹ This process, starting before the founding of Hezbollah, gained momentum from the mid-1980s onward.³⁵⁰

As a result of the administrative and service gaps created by fierce fighting during the civil war, militia leaders had to create mini-public administrations in areas under their control. These handled essential tasks such as electricity, road repairs and the provision of educational and health services, to mention but a few³⁵¹. The factors that determined the shape and expansion of these mini-administrations were the strategic location of areas to be defended, helped and administered, not to mention the extent of the human resources which could be mobilised for the cause.

Hezbollah's very first welfare provisions were mainly aimed at supporting the needs of the *mujahiddeen* fighting the Israeli army in the south and their families.³⁵² Gradually

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ During Lebanon's civil war another important figure, the prominent Shiite *marja* Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah (1935-2010), spoke about the necessity of creating a *dawlat al-insan*, or "human state," that would provide the resources for people to help themselves and one another. Coming from a Lebanese family, but born in Najaf (Iraq), Fadlallah returned to Lebanon in 1952. In the following decades, in addition to an intense academic activity, Fadlallah also founded several Islamic religious schools and established the *Jam'iyyat al Mabarrat al Khairiyyah* (The Society for the Benevolent Charity), a public library, and a women's cultural centre. In addition to the Mabarrat Association, at the heart of Fadlallah's infrastructure were also al-Ma'had al Shar'i al Islami (The Islamic Legal Institute) and the *Usrat al Ta'akhi* (The Fraternal Society). The Society re-established its *husainiyya*, opened a religious book-store and a medical clinic. Fadlallah's concept has inspired the emergence of many private social-service associations, most of which serve the Shiite community. Some are linked directly to Fadlallah or to other leading *sayyids*, institutions, and parties, notably including the Musa al Sadr Foundation, the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, the Amal movement, and Hezbollah. *Husainiyyas*, sometimes built by families, others funded by municipalities or benevolent trusts (*awqaf*) are often important centres for associational life, and in smaller villages they are often the only site for social assistance. Fadlallah's philanthropy coexisted with his well known intellectual and political activities. Besides its affiliated mosque, the Society, thanks to its orphanage and boarding school, catered for the pressing needs of some of the most underprivileged and vulnerable segments of society. Fadlallah's rich complex of institutions today includes gas stations, a publishing house, a photocopy store, book-stores and gadget-stores, libraries, many orphanages, a restaurant and leisure centre, a factory for *halal* foods, and a computer store. Individual donations include alms (*zakat*) that may be paid in kind, such as gifts of food for the poor; Ramadan gifts, *khums* (a fifth of one yearly income after meeting living expenses), half of which is paid to one's *marja* or *wakil* and the other half to a descendant of the prophet or *sayyid*, and ad hoc donations by the faithful (*sadaqat*). Respected *jam'iyaat* are often authorized by several *marjai'is* to collect donations on their behalf. It is not unusual for as much as two million dollars to be collected on a single night during Ramadan. Even though Fadlallah always rejected the notion attributed by the media of being the oracle and spiritual leader of Hezbollah, the party's television channel al Manar reported after his death in 2010 that he had at least "inspired the leaders" of the group. It added that "From the pulpit of the Imam Rida mosque in the Bir al-Abd neighbourhood, Fadlallah's sermons gave shape to the political currents among mainly the Muslim Shiite sect of Lebanon, from the latter half of the 1980's till the last days of his life." Even though Hezbollah's official spiritual guide of reference had always been imam Khomeini, Fadlallah's opinions were very much taken in consideration by the party of God.

³⁵¹ Judith Palmer Harik (2005) , *Hezbollah. The Changing Face of Terrorism*, London and New York, I. B. Tauris, p. 82.

³⁵² Judith Palmer Harik (1994), *The Public and Social Services of the Lebanese Militias*, Papers on Lebanon, no. 14, Oxford, Centre for Lebanese Studies.

those services expanded and extended to all needy civilians in areas under the party of God's influence.³⁵³ But what considerably differed Hezbollah from the Christian, Druze and Shiite's counterpart militia Amal was the way the party of God was able to fund the welfare services it provided. Whereas the other groups had to rely mainly on government resources, Hezbollah's incomes came directly from Iran, and precisely from Iranian institutions called *bunyads* – foundations run from the clergy, whose funds can be used to finance Iran's charitable activities abroad. The reason why Hezbollah's social services differed so evidently from those supplied by the other militias obviously resides in the fact that Shiite's community's needs exceeded that of other Lebanese communities. As we have already explained, Shiites in Lebanon were historically neglected in terms of basic infrastructures, organisations and institutions such as schools, hospitals etc. Civil war, two Israeli invasions, the intra-Shiite conflict between Hezbollah and its counterpart Amal for the control of the suburbs and the acquisition of the Shiite leadership furtherly destroyed already heavily deteriorated infrastructures. At the end of the Civil War, Hezbollah leaders found themselves responsible for the half million or so inhabitants³⁵⁴ living in destroyed neighbourhoods without electricity, water networks and a serious social service crisis, as thousands of displaced families were migrating towards Beirut's suburbs.

One of the most basic struggles between Amal and Hezbollah was aimed at the social field. The real struggle in this field was, in fact, carried out in southern Lebanon. For every sector in the Shiite population in southern Lebanon in which Hezbollah invested, so did Amal. In the 1980s, Amal had a relative advantage over Hezbollah. This advantage derived from its control over government money channeled to the development of the south, by virtue of it being the militia responsible for security in the south and by virtue of the areas of civic activities it took care of.³⁵⁵ Hezbollah's social activities consisted in actions and strategies targeting the family circle, directly or indirectly through 1) economic assistance to poor families, or families of the organisation's casualties; 2) medical assistance: two hospitals in Beqaa and Beirut,

³⁵³ J. P. Harik (2005), p. 82.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

³⁵⁵ Judith Harik, "Public and Social Services," 22; *Al-Amal*, 2/10/1987; E. Azani (2009).

seventeen medical centres, centres for civilian defence, and dental clinics;³⁵⁶ 3) the area of education (elementary schools and kindergartens were founded or renovated, and education programs and educational settings for infants were operated according to the spirit of the movement; as well as the scout's movement with a military training); 4) media: two radio stations (from 1991), an official journal (al-Ahd, from 1984) and the television station al-Manar.(from 1989).

A description of Hezbollah's social activities could easily generate a little confusion. Some organisations are directly linked to the party's formal device. The party exercises its authority on these organisations by appointing directors and managers, recruiting social workers³⁵⁷ or by simply imposing the associations' direction. An example of these associations is the Philanthropic and Social Martyrs' Institution (Shaheed Association) who takes care of 1,384 families of martyrs who had given their lives in the resistance. It attends to 684 spouses, 1,215 children and 1,596 parents. A programme of joint social responsibility ensures the availability of housing, education, clothing, health services and various others needs, in addition to active participation in job placement once children complete their education. The Institution also monitored and assisted the families of 276 war prisoners. It founded the Greatest Prophet Hospital as well as the Shaheed Educational Forum, alongside other services³⁵⁸.

Even though Naim Qassem describes these organisations as being financially, operationally and managerially independent from the party, Hezbollah's promotions documents present these organisation as a building force of their service institutions (*mu'assasat al-khidma*). The same organisations support the party by adorning their leaflets with Imam Khomeini's image and by displaying posters portraying the martyr's pictures on the association's walls³⁵⁹. Mona Fawaz counted about 15 of these

³⁵⁶ W. Charara, (1996), pp. 241-246; Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*. Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 42.

³⁵⁷ Mona Fawaz (2004), *ONG islamique dans le banlieue sud de Beyrouth*, in Sara Ben Nefissa, Nabil Abd al-Fattah, Sari Hanafi, Carlos Milani, *ONG et gouvernance dans le monde arabe*, Paris, Karthala/CEDEJ, p. 358.

³⁵⁸ Naim Qassem (2005), *Hizbullah. The Story from Within*. London: Saqi, p. 85.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 447.

associations in southern Beirut. They are regularly registered at *widharat al-dakhiliyah* (Home Office) as “charitable NGOs”. These organisations are strictly interdependent and their managers and officers alternate their work within those NGOs and the Jihad al-Bina Development Association, the al-Manar Hezbollah's TV channel and the Martyr's Association.

As I have already pointed out, the Lebanese state does not provide enough social services to its citizens and each community in Lebanon has developed its own system of social safety nets. Hezbollah's social institutions, however, are the most respected and efficient and stand out both quantitatively and qualitatively with respect to those organised by other communitarian parties or movements. And even though Hezbollah's array of social services such as construction companies, schools, hospitals and micro-finance initiatives tend to be located in predominantly Sh'a areas, they are open to anyone requesting help regardless of their political views or religion.

Many of Hezbollah's social institutions were initially funded by Iran or are Lebanese branches of Iranian organisations. This is true of the Martyrs Association, which was created in 1982 by Khomeini and operates as a sister organisation to an Iranian organisation with the same name. The Islamic Charity Emdad (ICEC) was created in 1987 with Iranian financial support but today depends heavily on volunteer labour³⁶⁰. The Jihad al-Bina Development Organisation, which was created by Hezbollah, has reconstructed large areas and repaired much of the damage caused by war. Obviously, all these are an important tool for social and political mobilisation.

Along with the Shaheed Association, Hezbollah started the Emdad Committee for Islamic Charity to alleviate social hardship in that part of the Lebanese population most affected by the Israeli occupation of the south of the country. Its activities covered in a few years all Lebanese regions. It established 9 branches, 5 schools and two care centres for handicapped children. The major objective of this association is to support and help families with no supporter or breadwinner. These families include those with a father who died or is detained or missing or suffers from a chronic disease. Families with social problems (divorce, handicap or permanent handicap or impoverished) can benefit

³⁶⁰ In 2006 only 90 employees of Emdad were paid out of a total of 440 (Lara Deeb (2006), *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press).

from our services. The main condition to be included in our support program is the lack of any type of financial support. The exception will be during times of war and displacement where all enduring families are helped regardless of their religious or political status³⁶¹. The association provides services in the following domains: Financial aids, donations in kind³⁶², health care, education and recreation, income generating programs and donations. The social welfare and guidance programme of the Emdad Committee Association also provides a social custody program to care for the families of prisoners and drug addicts. This program is looking after 40 children from those families. It provides for their education, psychological and social support and all the needs of any family with no breadwinner.

The Jihad al Bina (“Effort for the Reconstruction”) Developmental Association is an umbrella organisation encompassing numerous sub-committees and organisations engaged in a variety of activities aimed at infrastructural development in areas of southern Lebanon. Officially established in 1988, initially Jihad al Bina sought to facilitate reconstruction amid the devastation of the sixteen-year Lebanese civil war³⁶³. Also known as the Relief Committee (RC), Jihad al Bina administers and funds a variety of social welfare and charitable activities, displaying a high degree of institutional development, to the extent that in the Dahiyeh district, the infrastructural and social welfare capabilities clearly rival those of the Lebanese state. Jihad al Bina encompasses numerous organisations devoted to improving medical services. For example, al Rasul al A‘zzam Hospital/Mosque complex provides medical services in Dahiyeh³⁶⁴. Jihad al Bina also administers and funds primary, secondary and vocational schools and participating in financial sectors, administering micro-loans aimed at increasing agricultural development in those regions devastated by the civil war.

³⁶¹ <http://almashriq.hiof.no/lebanon/300/320/324/324.2/hizballah/emdad/index.html> [accessed 01/02/2011].

³⁶² Food assistance according to a yearly plan (3 to 4 times per year), household necessities (carpets, refrigerator, kitchen utensils, blankets, mattresses, etc.), clothes for children according to needs, medicines and other necessary medical products, orthopaedics for handicapped, stationary and school books

³⁶³ Korany Bahgat (2010), *The Changing Middle East. A New Look at Regional Dynamics*, Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, p. 182.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

Following the 2006 conflict with Israel, with nearly twenty years of experience in disaster management, Jihad al Bina was busy preparing for post-conflict relief even as the military wing continued to battle Israeli forces in south Lebanon. The speed with which Jihad al Bina began assessing war damage and distributing funds days after the cease-fire came into effect, spurred something of an “aid race”³⁶⁵. During the July 2006 war with Israel, when there was no running water in Beirut, Hezbollah was arranging supplies around the city. People in south Beirut see Hezbollah as a political movement and a social service provider as much as it is a militia.

Jihad al Bina was also constructed to establish many constructional and humanitarian projects such as Hospitals, Schools, Cultural Centres and Public clinics in order to raise the social level of population in Lebanon.

Hezbollah's Islamic Health Committee³⁶⁶ is another organ directly affiliated to the social services network. The Islamic Health Organisation (IHO) manages nine health centres, sixteen fixed and three mobile infirmaries catering to fifty-one villages. Three centres have treated 111,077 cases since 2001, provided free medication and free health services to eighty-eight schools, and continue to provide regular vaccination rounds, in addition to launching promotions against smoking and disease-prevention awareness campaign. The IHO has also been concerned with civil defence, executed through the ten centres created for this purpose³⁶⁷.

It is important to stress out that Lebanese healthcare system is highly fragmented and private groups are basically free do provide health services if they choose. Direct provision of health services is heavily dependent on religious communities and political organisations. Most providers are either major institutions affiliated with medical schools or religious groups, most of which have hospitals or clinics. Over 100 hospitals

³⁶⁵ Nicholas Blanford, “Hizbullah's Jihad al Bina Has Been Doing Infrastructure Work for Twenty Years”, *Daily Star*, Monday, October 16th, 2006.

³⁶⁶ <http://islamichealthorganization.org/>

³⁶⁷ N- Qassem (2005), p. 84.

exist in Lebanon, The majority of which are owned by physicians and are profit-making entities³⁶⁸.

In addition to that – because of the indirect method of public financing of healthcare system – the population generally does not recognise the importance of state contributions and agencies to the operation of the healthcare system. State spending on health has increased since the war. At the same time, government financing reinforces rather than displaces private organisations³⁶⁹.

Instead, the impetus for the creation of community-based health centres comes from local districts, municipalities and, especially, non-governmental organisations, which include politico-religious organisations.

The Rasul al A‘zzam Hospital³⁷⁰ located in Bourj al Barajneh in the southern suburbs of Beirut was established in the 1980s with financial assistance from Iran's Martyr's Foundation (*bonyad-i shaheed*). Because funding from Iran has been greatly reduced, hospital administrator Hajj Mohammad Hijazi told "RFE/RL Iran Report"³⁷¹ that the hospital must rely on earned income and assistance from the local al-Shaheed Organisation. According to Hijazi, the hospital provides out-patient care for 5,000 people per month and emergency room care for another 3,000 per month. He said patients of all confessions – Shi‘a, Sunni, or Christian – are attracted by the low cost of care (about \$10 per clinic visit)³⁷².

This brings us to the question of *whom do politico-religious providers target?* A rather simplistic assumption may let us believe that those institutions target primarily the needy, lower middle-class and the underprivileged. Not to mention the dominant perception that politico-religious social welfare institutions only serves co-religionist. Yet, evidence seems to be a bit more complicated and it is not a rarity to see

³⁶⁸ M. Cammett (2007).

³⁶⁹ Ibidem.

³⁷⁰ http://www.alrasoul.org/_index.php?filename=201001251240380

³⁷¹ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/1999/46-221199.html>

³⁷² Many sources claim that the hospital services and facilities are provided totally free of charge to the people directly affiliated with Hezbollah.

confessional and political groups service providers contend with the opposing groups' offer.

As for those who benefit from medical services from politico-religious organisations such as those offered by Hezbollah, my personal twelve-year intermittent experience in Lebanon brings me to believe that religious organisations cater to beneficiaries inside and outside of the same religious group. Even though sectarian providers tend to locate their facilities in areas with large concentrations of co-religionists (who constitute their primary clientele) and even though Hezbollah obviously mainly targets Lebanese Shiites, doctors at Rasul al A'zzam hospital are more than willing to offer their services to non-Shiites citizens too.

As it can be easily expected, the directors of politico-religious social welfare institutions in Lebanon almost universally deny that they pursue political goals through social welfare activities. In reality, however, political and religious messages are prevalent in institutions run by all the major politico-religious organisations in the form of religious symbols or photos of the leaders of sectarian groups and political parties³⁷³. This is the case of Hezbollah/Amal-run or affiliated organisations, with the images of imam Khomeini, Musa al Sadr, Hasan Nasrallah and other Shi'a symbolic figures overtly displayed in their hospitals, shops, schools, offices etc. Likewise, Rafiq Hariri and his son Saad adorn the imagery of many Sunni-related institutions and the Farah Social Foundation – a self claimed indigenous development NGO – has photographs of Walid Jumblatt throughout the waiting room and administrative offices³⁷⁴.

On the subject of health-care related associations, the Hezbollah-run al Jarha (Wounded) Association needs to be mentioned. Established in 1989, the organisation, located in Beirut's southern suburbs, cares for over 3,000 men, women and children. Eighty percent of the men the association assists were resistance fighters. The rest were wounded during the civil war or by Israeli aggressions in the South. Once a fighter or civilian is hurt, the association steps in and pays all medical bills, including trips abroad for any needed surgery or therapy. For those who need homes, the association purchases, furnishes and equips apartments. At times, a nurse or maid is employed.

³⁷³ M. Cammett (2007), p. 26.

³⁷⁴ Ibidem.

Each wounded person receives a monthly stipend from the association. The cash comes from a charity in Iran, individual contributions and mostly from the *khoms*³⁷⁵.

Hezbollah was also attentive to the educational requirements of the needy, subsidising these through ‘educational mobilisation’³⁷⁶, which has provided educational support to thousands of students (part of which was in the form of books and stationary, in addition to assisting with the school fees, scholarships and grants.

One shot drive from al Rasul al A‘zzam is the al Mahdi School which was established by Hezbollah but which now is funded and managed by another non-governmental organisation, the Islamic Institution for Education and Teaching. The school is one of nine al Mahdi institutions in Lebanon. There also is one in Qom, Iran. Some of the schools, such as the two in Beirut, are private, while those in the south and in the Beqaa Valley are funded partly by the government and partly with fees paid to the Beirut schools³⁷⁷. Lebanese public school system is scarce and beyond mediocre. Therefore, parents and students are increasingly looking to private, sectarian institutions like the school in Dahiyeh, where the overall quality of education at the elementary and secondary levels exceeds that in the public school system. In some schools, academic quality increases with religious and political influence³⁷⁸.

At another school run by Hezbollah, enrolment is steadily increasing. The al Mahdi School in Baalbek, one of 13 such schools in Lebanon, opened in 1985 for kindergarten through third grade with fewer than 200 students enrolled at the time. It has since expanded to include all levels through grade 12, with total enrolment now exceeding 1,700 students. There are currently five kindergarten classes, with a sixth being added in the upcoming school year³⁷⁹. Needless to say, religion is a big part in these schools³⁸⁰.

³⁷⁵ Reem Haddad, “Getting By With a Little Help From a Friend. Beirut’s al-Jarha’s Association Helps Wounded Resistance Fighters Build Themselves a Future”, *Daily Star*, Beirut, January 17th 2002.

³⁷⁶ N. Qassem (2005), p. 84.

³⁷⁷ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/iran/1999/46-221199.html>

³⁷⁸ Sarah Lynch, “A is for al-Mahdi”, *Now Lebanon*, June 24th 2010.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ Religion isn’t unique to Hezbollah schools. There are 49 Sunni al Makassad schools in Lebanon, for example, which teach three to four hours of Islam each week, according to Mohamad Machnouk, chairman of the Education Council of Makassad schools. The 35 schools of Saint Joseph, distributed throughout the country, follow the curriculum of the Catholic Church (Lynch S., 2010).

The imam al Mahdi Scouts are a Hezbollah youth movement which was established in May 1985, after the IDF withdrew from the security zone in south Lebanon . It has branches in the Shi'ite communities of Beirut , the Beqaa Valley and south Lebanon. It received a permit for its activities from the Lebanese ministry of education in September 1992, seven years after its founding, and today they associated with the Federation of Lebanese Scouts. There are approximately 42,000 male and female imam al Mahdi scouts between the ages of 8-16 organised into 499 groups³⁸¹.

When Charity Becomes Entrepreneurship: From Social Capital to Economic Capital

The political impact of Hezbollah's social and public services has assuredly been profound. None of their rivals, religious or secular, can compete with them as large patrons. While Berri does have an important state resource he can manipulate in the form of a state fund earmarked for Southern reconstruction, the loose organisation of his Amal Movement has meant that the establishment of a modern service organisation – such as Hezbollah's social services bureau, or Jihad al Bina with its statisticians and fieldworkers – is completely out of reach. Interestingly, Hezbollah not only outstrips its Shiite rivals but also outstrips all other local non-governmental service organisations, which distribute funds to institutions for various projects.³⁸²

Jihad al Bina is a far cry from being simply a welfare organisation: it's a massively-structured profit-generating enterprise. Lamia al- Moubayed, in a study commissioned by ESCWA in 1999, collected a very revealing testimony which emphatically collides with the stereotypes often associated with Hezbollah-run firms:

Looking at the leadership from technical, human and conceptual skills of the supervisors, the organization seems to be remarkably organized. Their knowledge and ability is based on experience and educational achievement and they are quite aware of management techniques and processes. Their ability to build teamwork is obvious. They are the moral and technical reference of the group.

Although the number of employees is large (about 100), chains of command are short and communications in both directions strong by virtue of regular meetings and strong group interaction; meetings are held on weekly, monthly, biannual and yearly bases to review

³⁸¹ http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/hezbollah_scouts_e.htm

³⁸² J. Harik (2005), p. 93.

progress and revise work plans, exchange information, co-ordinate and share decision-making.

Written communication is strong and is practised by all staff at all levels. Everyone fills in a weekly report sheet that is submitted to immediate supervisors and others. Departments report progress on a weekly basis to the director-general who uses them to set meeting agendas; a four-day retreat which all employees attend is held annually in December. There the year's activities and expenditures are reviewed and evaluated and the discussions in which all employees participate result in a work plan and budget for the year to come.

A well-known private consulting and engineering company, Team International, has been contracted to undertake on-the-job training for technical staff in engineering, AutoCad drawing, computer training and management. Linkages with bilateral donors have resulted in training programmes financed by them. All staff is additionally encouraged to attend and participate in all events, workshops, seminars, etc. organized in Lebanon by the various NGOs, syndicates, and universities.

Extensive networking with line ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Hydraulics and Electrical Resources, Environment, Water Authorities, High Relief Committee, Social Affairs and Public Works, with local municipalities and with the farmers of the region is carried out. Hizbullah partisans, it must be noted, often head or sit on local municipal councils.³⁸³

This reveals how the association works with defined plans and priorities defined by engineers on the basis of needs they perceive during their field visits and upon interaction with the population.

Professionals such as engineers, lawyers, agrarian experts, etc. are strategically important in those organisations, and are recruited on the basis of expertise and competitive salaries. Numerous interviewees during my field research revealed how lucrative it was for them to engage in Hezbollah-run businesses, especially during the massive reconstruction after the 2006 Israeli war:

Many engineers who run small/medium enterprises were interested in participating to the Hezbollah-orchestrated reconstruction after the war [2006]. Many of them made very good money and could eventually expand their businesses. In some cases they were already party-members or affiliates, in other cases they voluntarily got in touch with the organisation to offer their services. This way they could increment their work [...] If you're an engineer or professional and you're running your business in a Hezbollah area, there is no way that the organisation will stay out of the picture [...] The war is lucrative. Hezbollah has recently opened many cafés in the south, even close to the [Israeli] border. And the small businessmen who opened these cafés are not afraid of investing in an area where their activities could be destroyed, because they know that the party for sure will help them in the reconstruction.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Lamia El-Moubayed, "Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Rural Community Development: Two Case Studies from Lebanon", Beirut: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 1999.

³⁸⁴ Interview with the author.

Driving through the southern villages reveal - above all - prosperity, with booming construction, small/medium scale manufacturing, services, and retail. As V. Nasr has pointed out “there is something different about this Shi‘a [Shi‘a] enclave and it does not have to do with war but with its uncanny ability to churn out entrepreneurs who generate wealth and sustain the rising local middle class”.³⁸⁵

South Lebanon and the southern peripheries of Beirut are undoubtedly under the control of Amal or Hezbollah and very few can happen without the organisation’s approval. Some commentators have described Hezbollah as a state within a state. It seems like today this notion should be slightly revised. Hezbollah created a ‘sub-state’ (the process was started by Amal) which took control and works in a very efficient way. The notion of ‘sub-state’ fits better than the one of a ‘counter-state’³⁸⁶ as Hezbollah cannot be defined as a ‘counter-society’ anymore, as the movement has actually taken control of the state’s institutions and what the party can offer today as an institutional body is more important than pure ideology. Today ‘ideology’ is more than pure recruitment and engagement: it’s what makes you climb the social ladder and can transform a small business into a big-scale entrepreneurial activity. Hezbollah has made a strategic use of its financial resources to gain electoral and political support from the population. In the meantime, Hezbollah’s population has grown and changed along with the organisation. Today it is completely appropriate to talk about a Hezbollah bourgeoisie, despite Hezbollah’s emphasis to identify itself as a party representing just the disempowered (*mustadfa‘oun*) and that the welfare of the community goes above personal welfare. Hezbollah’s Shiite Lebanon is not a nation of faithful, subaltern, disempowered population anymore. The social justice discourse (*al-‘adala al-ijtima‘iyyah*) has been functional in breaking the Maronite and Sunni hegemony over the nation, but these last years’ engagement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict seem to show a great shift in the party’s priorities.

Hezbollah has proven its ability to engage in this sub-state model and its programmes have continued to expand and diversify. It is probably fair to say that even if Iran were to scale back the funding of some of Hezbollah’s associations and projects, even the

³⁸⁵ Vali Nasr (2009), *The Rise of Islamic Capitalism. Why the New Muslim Middle Class is the Key to Defeating Extremism*. New York: Free Press, p. 54.

³⁸⁶ W. Charara (1996).

more modest services the Party of God could still provide would continue to further its religious and political goals.³⁸⁷ The disenfranchised Shiite villagers of the 1950s and 1960s has produced a new diaspora generation that opened shops and businesses, growing beyond their peasant roots to become merchants. They became the trading class, shopkeepers, service providers, wholesalers, and traders. And they prospered. The money that they made in Africa and Latin America went back to their towns and villages supporting other family members to open new businesses, creating local jobs in real estate and construction, retail, factories, and services that generated even more growth.

This growth is also reflected in certain Shiite wealthy residential areas in south Beirut. Bir Hassan, for instance, is not only the neighbourhood which saw the explosion of two bombs at the Iranian embassy in November 2013, but it is the residential embassy-filled area of the south's wealthy who emigrated to Africa and other places and came to be known as the southern suburb's wealthy, since they constituted an extension of their family members and relatives who still resided in the suburb. Rarely do you find, among the families living in Bir Hassan, children who fight in the ranks of Hezbollah. Instead, they are sent to study in the most prestigious schools and universities. Still, especially after the bombings, a number of people admit to pledge their lives to the party.

Emigration entails a potential exchange of human presence at home and increased access to material resources from abroad. This is a rake-off faced by those who compete for power, be they families willing of informal power in a small village or residential area or political parties seeking control of state institutions. Outmigration lowers the number of potential loyalists that a party can really to follow its directives, vote on its behalf, mobilise in the streets or sustain a collective presence on the ground. Yet, as in Lebanon's case, emigration is often a prime path to wealth. this wealth has an impact back home when successful migrants return, send remittances, or spend earnings in their countries of birth. The Lebanese case suggests that the significance of outmigration to power struggles is filtered through the ways that institutions structure the role of demography and money in power struggles. In Lebanon, the role of money comes into

³⁸⁷ J. Harik (2005), p.94.

play in patronage politics, vote buying and parties' abilities to mobilise or de-mobilise constituents as deemed necessary.³⁸⁸

Amal's Beehive: The Social Institutions

“Chez les gens, au Liban, le service public n'a pas de valeur, c'est le service individus qui compte”.³⁸⁹

Despite Hezbollah's incomparable assets and capacities to run a massive welfare machine, Amal is also very active in this sector. It actually runs a network very similar to Hezbollah's, though on a smaller scale. Nabih Berri, unable to compete with the financial aid that Iran convoys to Hezbollah, tries to use his political position as a speaker of the parliament (and the access to the resources that this position can bring) to gain public support among the Shiites, establishing a link of dependency with them, in order to influence governmental budgets allocated for his community.

The main differences between Amal and Hezbollah's social provision is best described by Mona Harb:

Le mouvement Amal de Nabih Berry et le Hezbollah ont chacun développé un système de distribution de services collectifs pendant la guerre civile. Amal se présente comme un acteur politique qui fait partie du système politique libanais et utilise sa position au sein de l'état pour gérer la prestation des services collectifs auprès de la communauté chiite. Le Hezbollah a mis en place son propre système de gestion de services collectifs, structuré autour d'un ensemble d'organisations autonomes opérant en réseau et fournissant aux chiites un ensemble complet de prestations. Amal est un mouvement politique qui utilise la religion chiite comme une valeur culturelle qui guide son action, alors que le Hezbollah se défend de positionner la religion chiite comme idéologie qui guide et structure son modèle d'action.³⁹⁰

Consequently, the Shi'a community is characterised by its complex relationship vis-à-vis the Lebanese state, in which legitimisation is obtained and kept through a continuous exchange between alternative alliances and state resources. Collective services are therefore interpreted as material resources, means of organisation of the territory (and of the frontiers), but most of all as a mean of social and political mobilisation, and consequently source of legitimisation. Amal's functionaries inside public administration

³⁸⁸ Pearlman W. (2013), pp. 103-133.

³⁸⁹ Interview by Mona Harb with the director of Amal's educational services. M Harb (2010), p. 72

³⁹⁰ Mona Harb (2010), *Le Hezbollah à Beyrouth (1985-2005). De la banlieue à la ville*. Paris and Beyrouth: Kartala & IFPO, p. 17.

should be considered like notables (Grémion)³⁹¹ operating as intermediary agents between the political and the economic spheres, both at a central and local level.

An efficient way to influence the state's resources is the control of the governmental ministries relevant to the South of Lebanon. At the end of the 1980s, Amal's ministries were located in every key infrastructure's spots: agriculture, public works, energy, trade and health. Each budget addressed to these ministries could be allocated to improve Shiites living conditions (*la greffe sur l'état*).³⁹² The mechanism through which public action is displayed is situated at two extremes:

[...] soit l'acteur communautaire instrumentalise les ressources publiques, pour s'enrichir mais aussi pour le redistribuer, et assoir son pouvoir politique dans une dépendance de type clientéliste — c'est le cas de la greffe sur l'état (l'exemple du mouvement Amal); soit l'acteur communautaire ignore le système public, et choisit de fabriquer ses propres ressources qu'il gère et redistribue à travers un réseau d'organisations qui lui sert pour légitimer son action mais aussi pour ancrer et renouveler son pouvoir politique, et développer son potentiel économique — c'est le cas de l'alternative à l'état (l'exemple du Hezbollah).

Amal's efforts not to leave welfare activities exclusively to Hezbollah are not solely concentrated in the organisation of the Council of the South, but through an intricate network of associations - sometimes called "*khalil al-nahl*" ("beehive") by Amal's insiders³⁹³ - that try to narrow the gap with Amal's Shiite counterpart in providing aid and sustain to the community.

Amal's philanthropic activities operate under The Association of Civil Activity (*jam'iyyat al-'amal al-ahli*) — an umbrella organisation which has three main goals: i) to improve the living conditions of the poor population in southern Lebanon and in rural areas; ii) to deal with the demands of the population and its integration into the society; iii) social justice in its various aspects.³⁹⁴

To fulfill these goals, Amal has launched various projects and established an educational network, called "*al-Zuhara*" named after Fatima, Muhammad's daughter and Ali's wife. The network comprises a nursery for children as young as three years of

³⁹¹ Pierre Grémion (1976), *Le pouvoir périphérique*. Paris: Seuil.

³⁹² Ibid., p. 19.

³⁹³ Interview with the author.

³⁹⁴ O. Niri (2011), p. 139.

age (founded 1988), elementary schools, and schools for children with special needs (f. 1997); plus a nursery school (f. 1975), and other short training programs.³⁹⁵ Another project affiliated to this network is called “The Green House”. It instructs women on how to run an agricultural business. In order to help women to promote their businesses, Amal occasionally organises an open market with their products. In 1992 Amal opened a culinary school, which included guidance in milk production.³⁹⁶

Another wide-range welfare network is *Usrat al-Risala* (The Family of the Emissary). This foundation has got a mild religious connotation, and it includes the *Jami‘iyat Khashafat al-Risala al-Islamiyya* (Scout Association of the Islamic Mission). This association was founded in 1977 and is currently headed by Nabih Berri. Amal’s scouts follow the Boy Scouts’ European tradition by encouraging patriotism. As Berri once claimed, “developing the nation [takes place] through securing the strength of the youth”.³⁹⁷ Scouts activities include fundraising, commemorative marches, the organisation of dinners during special occasions, such as the *iftar*, or during *‘id al-ghadir*.³⁹⁸, and visits to the holy places of Islam and the Shi‘a.

While Hezbollah-run *jami‘yyat kashshafat al-imamn al-mahdi* (Imam al-Mahdi Scouts Society) organises military training for scouts, Amal does not provide such training; nonetheless, many Amal insiders confirmed that scouts get indoctrinated to eventually become militia fighters in case of an outbreak of civil war in Lebanon.

Amal or Hezbollah – just like many other movements – try to perpetuate their ideology through youth movements or educational centres to train the movement’s next generation, who will have to try to implement its world view.³⁹⁹

The *Risala* Foundation provides help also to the wounded (during the civil war of the 2006 war) and their families. Amal pays tuition fees and scholarships to the sons and

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ *Amal’s Encyclopedia*, Part IX: The Movement’s Institutions, p. 28-33 (Arabic); O. Niri (2011), p. 139.

³⁹⁷ *Sada al-Risala*, no. 46, 2000, p. 14; R. Shaery Eisenlohr (2011), p. 81.

³⁹⁸ Eid al-Ghadeer, observed by Shi‘a Muslims on the 18th of Dhu al-Hijjah in the Islamic calendar, is a celebration of the appointment of Ali ibn Abi Talib by the Islamic prophet Muhammad as his successor.

³⁹⁹ O. Niri (2011), p. 140.

daughters of the wounded, provides medication and a monthly salary of approximately \$300 to each family.⁴⁰⁰

Usrat al-risala has got branches outside Lebanon as well: e.g. in Africa, in Michigan, etc.

Similarly to Hezbollah, Amal runs a few organisations that provide medical support to the sick population. *Usrat al-Risala* disposes of a health support body (*jam‘iyat al-risala lil-is‘af wal-sahi*) which operates 2,300 paramedics and 75 ambulances. “The Association of Civic Activity” runs two clinics in Jabal ‘Amil, in the village of Taybe and near the Qouzah-Ita al-Sha‘ab junction, as well as mobile clinics in rural areas.⁴⁰¹ Another organisation which provides a variety of activities aimed at strengthening weak population is *al-jami‘iya al-lubnaniyya lil-ri‘ayat al-saha wal-ijtima‘iya* (The Lebanese Association for Health and Social Care) and operates in Beirut’s district of Ghobeiri.

The Lebanese Association for Health and Social Care is not the only organisation that emphasises its national Lebanese character. In 1990, Amal established *mu‘assasat wahat al-shaheed al-lubnani* (Organisation of the Lebanese Martyrs). The organisation cares for the families of the martyrs, assisting them with employment or full-coverage education for their children.

Amal competes with Hezbollah also on the media network. *Mu‘assasat Amal al-I‘lamiyya* is Amal’s media institution. Its television station, known as Nabih Berri’s N.B.N., is also called *al-shahaka al-wataniyya lil-irsal* (National Broadcasting Network). Finally, a weekly political magazine called *al-‘Awasif* (The Storms) gets published in Beirut.⁴⁰²

With its main branch located in the city of Tyr in South Lebanon, the Imam Sadr Foundation (*Mu‘assasat Imam Sadr*) is the most long-lived and important Amal side foundation. For nearly half a century, the Imam Sadr Foundation — directed by Musa

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with the author.

⁴⁰¹ *Amal’s Encyclopedia*, Part IX: The Movement’s Institutions, p. 31; p. 115 (Arabic); O. Niri (2011), p. 139.

⁴⁰² O. Niri (2011), p. 140.

al-Sadr's sister, Rabab al-Sadr — has worked to improve the lives of tens of thousands of men and women throughout Lebanon. Whether in providing accessible health services for families assailed by the fallout of war, empowering women and orphans through occupational training programs and educational facilities, or creating strategic partnerships with political and social development organisations, Imam Sadr Foundation remains dedicated to its original aspirations. As Imam Sadr once said, “Lebanon is our country. It is a country which considers Man to be the first and last asset, and that he should be adequately maintained.”⁴⁰³

The analyses of the public action elaborated by Amal and Hezbollah helps us to advance a few conclusions on the effectiveness of this action, which varies greatly according to the combination of certain key-parameters that can enable the success in the distribution of sectarian private welfare, the variety of the services offered, the capacity to reach and mobilise a wide number of beneficiaries, the sustainability and, obviously, the possible electoral return.⁴⁰⁴ A few of these key-parameters may include: a) the structure, organisation and the variety of the institutions responsible of the management of the collective services; the elaboration and the realisation of public policies; b) the level of political representation at the state level, but also at a communal level; c) the national and international power relationships; d) the ideological meanings; e) the eventual complementarity with local social and cultural institutions and structures; f) the level of political territoriality.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰³ <http://imamsadrfoundation.org/home/Show/About-Imam-Sadr-Foundation>.

Connected with the Imam Sadr Foundation is the American branch, Sadr Foundation USA. Since 1999, the Sadr Foundation USA has been providing assistance to the under-served in the United States and Lebanon. Sadr Foundation USA has provided funding for many causes including the Wayne County Youth Fund, Children's Hospital in Detroit, Focus Hope, Relief for Hurricane Katrina, and the new construction of medical and educational buildings for the Imam Sadr Foundation in Lebanon.

Affiliated to the Imam Sadr Foundation are: the Lebanese Women's League, the Nursing School Alumni Organisation, various international NGOs and Imam Musa Sadr Center for Research and Studies, established in 1995. The Centre exists to preserve Imam Sadr's methodology and to disseminate his ideas to a wider audience of scholars. Among its main activities, the Centre collects and publishes Imam Sadr's writings and lectures, participates in inter-religious dialogue, and organises symposiums throughout the region such as the annual Common Terms conference.

⁴⁰⁴ Deborah Stone (1997), *Policy Paradox. The Art of Political Decision Making*. New York: Norton & Co.

⁴⁰⁵ M.Harb (2010), p. 20.

The Making of Ethnic Entrepreneurs in State Institutions: Amal Education Centres

In post-war Lebanon, Amal needed to create a generation of loyal, educated “ethnic entrepreneurs” who would take up the positions the party created for this Amal Shi‘a acolytes Shiites in Lebanon.⁴⁰⁶ Those entrepreneurs were an essential tool to keep the Amal’s bourgeoisie constituency united and could serve as an essential mean to act on the identity capital of the organisation.

Between 1990 and 2002 – encouraged by a strong competition with Hezbollah’s social institutions created in post-civil war Lebanon – Amal opened a total of seven schools in Shiite areas. Four schools are located in South Lebanon, two in the Beqaa, and one in Beirut.⁴⁰⁷

In 1990 Amal opened its first school, the Bilal Fahs Institute, in the city of Tul in South Lebanon. According to the director of the school:

Much of the financial support for Amal was solicited during the war, especially between 1985 and 1991. This was a period when the influence of Amal as a militia was at its heights and when it was able to collect funds from numerous sources. Besides receiving substantial contributions from wealthy immigrants, Amal militiamen exploited the Ouzai Port, taking tax on all the imports. This form of extortion was widespread during the war [...] Amal also monopolised the oil refineries in the south.⁴⁰⁸

Each Amal school is named after a martyr. Bilal Fahs was a seventeen-year-old from the town of Jibshit, near Nabatiyyeh in South Lebanon. He was the first “self-martyr” affiliated to Amal who carried out an operation that took place on 16 June 1984, when a Lebanese car approached an Israeli military patrol in south Lebanon. As the patrol and the car met, the driver of the car detonated high explosives packed in the vehicle, killing himself and wounding a number of Israeli soldiers.

⁴⁰⁶ R. Shaery-Eisenlohr (2011), p. 77.

⁴⁰⁷ *Mu‘assasat amal al-tarbawiyya*, 2002-2003; R. Shaery Eisenlohr (2011), p. 77.

⁴⁰⁸ Hayat Nabeel Osseyran, “The Shiite Leadership of South Lebanon: A Reconsideration”. M.A. Thesis, American University in Beirut (1997).

After the Bilal Fans school started generating income, it supported the establishment of other institutions. Another community-based school located in Beirut⁴⁰⁹ is the Martyrs Hasan Qasir School. It is directed by Muhammad H. Nasrallah (Abu Ja‘afar), who described the school as an institution with “no political colouring, and no sectarian tone. It is an ordinary school, our only goal is education”.⁴¹⁰ At any rate, each Amal school teaches the Lebanese curriculum, but with a strong “Amal identity” specificity. This is certainly not the only case of a community-based school addressing its students with a specific “identity curriculum” in Lebanon. “Community-based schools inevitably produce ‘sons of the community’ and not ‘sons of the nation’.”⁴¹¹ Even though the stated goals of Amal educational centres are “the promotion and solidification of belief in God, the promotion of the idea of a national belonging and the promotion of the idea of belonging to a soil of a Lebanon that is united and independent, while understanding its history and geography within the context of its Arab identity”⁴¹² – Amal explicitly avoids school policies regarding religion. This is primarily down to the fact that Amal wishes to embrace the largest Shiite community, including “Shiite secularists”. Even though students’ decisions upon religion are very much relegated to the private sphere, teachers and employees are supervised by the party, and they follow a public Muslim Shiite identity agenda (e.g., teachers are supposed to wear the *hijab*). “Amal educational centres also try to meet the ideologies of the Christians bourgeoisie halfway by downplaying their Muslim Shiite identity, such as not insisting on visible icons of identity, like the wearing of the *hijab*”⁴¹³. Textbooks are produced by the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, known as *al-tarbiyya al-diniyya*. The SISC is under Amal’s control and Hezbollah is not affiliated with the institution in any way.

Concerning educational issues, Nabih Berri most probably has lived a moral dilemma rather typical to Amal: “not too secular, not too religious”. As someone who believes the Lebanese nationality must be a primary form of identification, Berri would probably

⁴⁰⁹ Until 2011 the Martyrs Hasan Qasir School is the only educational centre in Beirut under Amal supervision.

⁴¹⁰ R. Shaery-Eisenlohr (2011), p. 78 and interview with the author.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² *Mu‘assasat amal al-tarbawiyya*, 2002-2003; R. Shaery Eisenlohr (2011), p. 77.

⁴¹³ R. Shaery-Eisenlohr (2011), p. 85.

endorse national schools for Shiite children. Nonetheless, in post-civil war Lebanon, when Amal was losing support in favour of Hezbollah on the social welfare ground, Berri ordered the opening of the Amal Educational Centres.

Nabih Berri and his Network of Power

When the war ended, Berri received an important reward from Syria for his loyalty during the civil strife by providing strong political support. He received an appointment to the new parliament after Ta'if negotiations and was able to keep this position in the following popular elections. Berri's mandate as Speaker of the parliament was renewed in 1996, 2000, 2005, and 2009. Although a number of other Amal leaders have also maintained parliamentary seats (even after the Syrian withdrawal), Berri's status seems to shadow all other within the organisation. According to most of Amal's active supporters I have interviewed during my field research, seem to be unanimous in saying that the possibility that Berri might withdraw from his office might leave Amal with a dangerous vacuum of power.

Berri (and his family) has used his position to place his sympathisers into key state offices and enterprises, and this network of clients helps him to ensure the loyalty of his electorate and consolidate his position within the Shi'a community. Berri himself admits that he actively works to make sure his supporters get into the state institutions; however, he insists that he did not start this practice but only followed the lead of others.⁴¹⁴

Consequently, state organs such as Télé Liban and the Lebanese University are filled with Shiites loyal to Berri. In other words, Berri was very strategic in channeling the state's resources obtained through the *majlis* of the South and the 'donations' (spontaneous or not) coming from the Lebanese entrepreneurs and businessmen inside and outside Lebanon, and reshuffling the capitals obtained to gain

⁴¹⁴ Rola el-Husseini (2012), *Pax Syriana. Elite Politics in Postwar Lebanon*. New York: Syracuse University Press, p. 249.

the other members of the Lebanese Troika,⁴¹⁵ strengthen his position with the Lebanese working class (also through welfare services) and middle/upper class entrepreneurs through his connections, and to consolidate his position in Shiite areas by controlling local unions and creating autonomous syndicates within the Amal. Many interviewees confirmed that in Lebanon to get a position as a civil servant it is necessary Berri's approval.⁴¹⁶ Likewise, the general consensus is that no business activity can happen in Amal's strongholds without Berri's acknowledgment.

It is also rumoured that it is difficult for students to register at the Lebanese University without the permission of an Amal cadre. In an unsigned article on the *Daily Star* (Lebanon), a university professor suggested that Amal's members consider the Lebanese University "their property" and control its academic and administrative appointments.⁴¹⁷

It is indisputable that Nabih Berri's position as Speaker of the parliament for more than two decades made him a powerful political player and an important actor on the Lebanese political, economic and social scene. His policy of creating an efficient network of clients (also through the help of Syria) contributed to his reputation over the years: he has been described as favouring short-term gains, as being one of the most petty⁴¹⁸ and corrupted⁴¹⁹ politicians of the region. Nonetheless, he is the only member of

⁴¹⁵ The Ta'if Agreement constituted a compromise among the Lebanese deputies, political groups and parties, militias and leaders. Any agreement or compromise is a synthesis of conflicting interests and ideas. As such, on one level, the Ta'if Agreement constituted an effective deal that provided the basic mechanism for ending the civil war. However, at another level, the Agreement was, perhaps, not the best arrangement for launching the process of rebuilding a more stable political system in Lebanon. The Ta'if Accord, *de facto*, restructured the 1943 National Pact political system in Lebanon by transferring some of the power away from the Maronite Christian community, which had been given a privileged status under the period of French rule. Since the Agreement embodied an unstable and contradictory formula, it was predictable that preserving it in its initial form would lead to further conflict in the future. The Agreement resulted in a reproduction of the Lebanese confessional state under a new formula. Sectarian balance and sectarian participation replaced one-sect hegemony, thus power became distributed centrally. In fact, at the state level, the Agreement produced a three-man show or *troika* consisting of the three Presidents: the President of the Republic, that of the Council of Ministers, and that of the Parliament. In practice, the understanding among these three presidents as individuals sensibly diminished the importance of the three institutions they represented. This contradicted the fundamental purpose of the Agreement, which was to replace the rule of the individual (the President) by the rule of the institutions.

⁴¹⁶ This statement seems to be substantiated by a claim made by Jamil al-Sayeed, former head of the Sécurité Générale, who said that Berri was one of the political leaders who used to think that state employees 'belong' to them [Amal]" (O. Nir, 2011, p. 97; R. al-Husseini, 2012, p. 249).

⁴¹⁷ *Daily Star*, Beirut, 31/01/2001.

⁴¹⁸ O. Nir (2011), p. 111.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

the original troika who is still in public office and who has acted, after the civil war, as a mediator between the president and the prime minister.

“Berriland” is how some Lebanese call the Amal-controlled areas in Beirut or the south of Lebanon. Despite many scholars and commentators have been posing their attention on Hezbollah, undermining Amal’s power in Lebanon, Berri’s organisation is still very strong and dominant in vast Shiite areas of Lebanon. Omri Nir has argued that Berri’s rise in the past two decades was parallel to the rise of Hezbollah: “as Hizballah [Hezbollah] gained more power with the Shi‘ite community and the general Lebanese political arena, Berri’s importance grew”, since he acted as a mediator between western governments and Hezbollah.⁴²⁰ In “Berriland”, the leader’s presence is pervasive with constant interference in the population’s businesses and affairs. Amal, like Hezbollah, has been able to gain social, political, economic and symbolic capital to create a popular constituency. In order to develop this capital, they employed clientelism and corruption, translating their ‘protection’ into other forms of political and economic resources.

Despite the general opinion that sees Berri as the only ever plausible choice to lead Amal, some rumours want the leader to currently groom his son, Basil, to continue his legacy. However, according to a leak cable from the United States Embassy in Beirut, it is Abdallah, a son from a previous marriage, the family member designed to assume the successor role. The cable also indicates that Amal’s members oppose Abdallah, for being more interested in making money than running Amal: “Abdallah is like his father in a way: a widespread reputation for corruption”

Qassim Daoud, a Tyre businessman with ties to Amal, told econoff that Abdallah is not respected in the party. Abdallah seems more interested in making money and undertaking business ventures rather than party operations. Abdallah is like his father in one way: a widespread reputation for corruption. Senior Amal officials feel they must deal with him, but do not believe he has the capability to run Amal and do not like him personally, according to Daoud. Daoud pointed out, however, that Abdallah has one key advantage: he is the gateway through which GOL development aid to the south must pass.⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 113.

⁴²¹ Charge d’Affaires Christopher W. Murray. Reason: Section 1.4(d). https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05BEIRUT1123_a.html [accessed May 2015].

But corruption goes beyond Lebanon's boundaries, as evidenced by a statement made by an NGO director I interviewed, when he admitted that a young Lebanese (Shiite) entrepreneur "has payed 1.5 million dollars to Abdullah Berri to establish his own company in a Berri-controlled area in Africa".⁴²²

Whoever will be designated to follow Berri's footsteps will have a strong constituency to refer to. Amal lower and middle-classes have become largely dependant on the organisation. Anything, from a medical check-up to an admission to a school or university can be taken care of by the party. In the same vein, the new generation of entrepreneurs that - since the end of the civil war - have become increasingly prominent in the Lebanese economic and political scene, can count on Amal's 'protection' and connections. A cable sent from the U.S. Embassy dated April 7, 2006 about a meeting between Iranian and Lebanese diplomats with economic expert and political analyst Mohammed Obeid and former MP and Minister Mohammed Abdel-Hamid Beydoun stated that the support of the Shiite Amal movement in the south has been diminishing.

The reason, according to Obaid, is the decline in credibility of Nabih Berri. Obaid said, according to the cable, that Berri family's wealth is around US\$2 billion. He added that Berri family is the largest landowner in the south of Lebanon. Obaid conveyed that Berri receives US\$400,000 per month from Iran. He directs some US\$100,000 to his supporters, and leave the rest in his pocket.⁴²³

The consociational nature of the Lebanese political system is associated with weak national institutions, overseen by strong sectarian elites who are the representative of the country's various communities. Distinguishing among the various economic, symbolic, professional and personal resources that allow one to become a representative political leader in postwar Lebanon can help to create a taxonomy of these elites: new businessmen, warlords, re-vamped notables, technocrats and clients of Syria (Amal) or Iran (Hezbollah). Of course, these categories are not monolithic, and - especially in Amal or Hezbollah's case - more than one kind of resource or capital can overlap in a single political or 'ethnic' entrepreneur.

Money is always essential in political life. The new generation of businessmen that churned out after the civil war have extensive international experience (diaspora

⁴²² Interview with the author.

⁴²³ <http://www.albawaba.com/main-headlines/cables-lebanese-speaker-family's-wealth-hits-about-us2-billion> [accessed March 2015].

businessmen), and their expertise is often interjected into political dealings. They represent a modern compromise between the traditional leadership (notables) and meritocratic values. In the absence of an established political constituency, these entrepreneurs put great efforts into creating new charitable organisations and working to build a popular support base.

Toward the end of the 1980s, after a few years in which Berri's ability to control Amal and to enforce his policy were challenged, he succeeded in removing all his opponents from the movement. Amal was certainly comprised of a variety of people from different background. Sadr was the unifying force, but after his disappearance the movement remained without a leadership who would bring the divided Shiite community together. His successor had to deal with new forces that were not present at the time of Sadr: the Islamic Republic of Iran and the newborn party of God. Furthermore, Berri managed to survive as the leader of Amal in spite of many attempts by senior members to undermine his leadership. During this time, he succeeded in reinforcing his political status, while at the same time dismissing all enemies.⁴²⁴

The 1992 first post-war parliamentary election's results clearly indicated a great victory for the Shiite coalition in the two major Shi'a constituencies: Hezbollah in the Beqaa and Amal in Jabal 'Amil. (even though there were claims of fraud in the Beqaa).⁴²⁵ The results represented the changing of the guard among the Shiites representatives and the defeat of the *zu'ama's* candidates: the representatives of the Hamadeh and Dandash families in the Beqaa and Kamil al-As'ad in Jabal 'Amil.

The elections were also a triumph for Berri's *al-Tahrir* list. Twenty two out of the twenty three delegates the southern constituency elected were from his list. Hezbollah became the largest party in the Parliament with eight Shiites seats. Amal had for seats (three from the south and one from the western Beqaa) and Berri controlled the largest political bloc in the elected Parliament (based on the *al-Tahrir* list). Two factors played in his favour: Syria's presence in Lebanon and the expanded authority of the Speaker of the Parliament derived from the Ta'if Accord.

⁴²⁴ O. Niri (2011), p. 81.

⁴²⁵ *Al-Liwa'*, August 25/08/1992; *Monday Morning*, 31/08/1992; *Voice of Lebanon*, 29/08/1992.

The 1992 elections indicated two important tendencies in the Lebanese Shiite community: 1) the end of the old *zu'ama* order; 2) the presence of candidates from middle and low social classes in the parliament.

It was during this election that the Rafiq Hariri government was formed.

Shi'a Presence in Postwar Lebanon's Business Associations

Lebanon has always had a vibrant associational life, with labour unions, business and professional associations, and other interest groups all trying to exert some influence over government policy. A relatively open political system and the private sector economy in the Lebanese economy, led to the formation of various associations to represent business interests. Business associations can approximately be divided into national associations and sub-national or regional ones. At the national level, the most representative and powerful associations are the Association of Lebanese Industrialists (ALI) and the Association of Lebanese Banks (ALB). Other national associations include the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture of Lebanon, the Assembly of Lebanese Businessmen, the Association of Insurance Companies, the Syndicate of Hotel Owners, and the Syndicate of Bakery owners. At the regional level, the number of associations is much higher. The most important regional associations are the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Beirut and Mount Lebanon (CCIAB) and the Beirut Traders Association. Also numerous (but less important) regional associations of merchants and industrialists are present. Analysing the sectarian composition of all these associations is a task that goes far beyond the scope of this work; nonetheless, it is possible to trace the Shiite presence inside the major organisations and the shifts in the aftermath of the first postwar elections.

The Beirut Traders Association (Jam'iyat Tujar Beirut)

The Beirut Traders Association was established in April 1921, making it the oldest business organisation in Lebanon. The historical dominance of the trade sector in the Lebanese economy and the central role played by Beirut made the BTA a rather powerful body in the pre-1975 era. The Shiite and Druze presence in the Board of the organisation was minimal, as it reflected the scarce Shiite and Druze economic

relevance in Beirut at the time, in contrast with a strong Sunni presence. The civil war rendered the BTA (as well as other established business groups) ineffective and the association ceased its activities. An important consequence of the war was the increase in the demographic and economic presence of Shiites in (Western) Beirut. Supporting the demands of Shi'a businessmen (and Shi'a politicians) for greater representation on the Association's board of directors proved to be one of the most challenging issues to confront for the BTA. In the postwar era, almost all the leaders of long established sectarianly-mixed economic associations had, somehow, to work out arrangements with Shi'a businessmen (and Shi'a politicians) that, increasingly, expanded the representation of Shiites on their governing bodies.

The first postwar elections that took place in April 1994 produced a Sunni dominance (fourteen members), compared to only 10 Christian board members elected.⁴²⁶ The Shiites boycotted in block the elections, following the dispute over the size of Shi'a representation in the 24 member board of directors and the posts that would be reserved for Shiites on the Bureau of the Board (executive body). Apparently, Shiites demanded six or seven seats on the board, and either the vice presidency or the general secretariat - demands that were unacceptable on the Sunni merchants (and their politicians) side.⁴²⁷

The results of the elections created some friction between the Sunni and Christian merchants, as well as between the Sunni and Shiite merchants.⁴²⁸ The 1994 board was a very unbalanced one along sectarian lines, and three Christian members immediately resigned as a consequence of this 'lack of balance'. However, no attempt was made to appoint Shiite members on the board.⁴²⁹ Shiites demanded equality with the Sunnis on the Association Board of Directors. Representatives of *al-Nawdat* rejected this demand on the ground that Shiite merchants constituted no more than 10 percent of Muslim

⁴²⁶ *Al-Nahar*, 11/04/1994, p. 4; *Al-Iqtisad wa al-A'mal*, May 1994, p. 25.

⁴²⁷ Interview by Sami E. Baroudi with Salim Diab, president of *al-nadwat al-iqtisadiyyat*, 17 September 1998 in Sami E. Baroudi, "Sectarianism and Business Associations in Postwar Lebanon", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 4, Fall 2000, pp. 81-107; cf. interview by the author with Kamal Hamdan, Consultation and Research Institute Beirut, April 2014. See also interview by S. Baroudi with Salim Zein (one of the Shiite candidates who withdrew from the elections), in *Al-Diyar*, 24/04/1994, pp. 7-8.

⁴²⁸ *Al-Sharq*, 21/03/1994, pp. 5-6; *Al-Safir*, 22/03/1996, p. 6.

⁴²⁹ *Al-Nahar*, 12/04/1994, p. 12; *Al-Nahar*, 28/04/1994, p. 7.

merchants in Beirut, and that registered Shiite voters in Beirut represented 12.31 percent of all voters and 24.14 percent of Muslim voters.⁴³⁰

The second postwar elections (April 1998) restored the sectarian balance in the association which could not be achieved in 1994, but not without hurdles to overcome. The biggest issues was, again, on the appropriate number of Shi'a board members. This time, unlike the previous, there was heavy political intervention to resolve the "Shi'a problem". The solution came after an agreement worked out between the (former) Sunni prime minister, Rafiq Hariri, and the Speaker of the House and head of the Amal movement, Nabih Berri. Berri first demanded six or seven Shi'a board members, while Hariri offered only three slots.⁴³¹ After some heavy discussion and bargaining, the two men agreed on four Shi'a members to be nominated directly by the Shiite merchants themselves in consultation with the Shiite-dominated *Tajamu' al-Iqtisadiyyin al-Lubnaniyyin*.⁴³² The selection of the candidates, though, was carried out associations and businessmen and not by politicians.

Shi'a representation in the all the other associations followed approximately the same path as the one in the Beirut Traders Association, with an increasing Shiite presence and significant shifts from the prewar years to the second elections (1998). The civil war contributed to great changes in the Lebanese polity, economy, and society. The reshaping of the power balance among Shiites' presence in business association was a consequence of the re-balancing of power among Lebanese sects. Undoubtedly, Shiites saw an expansion in their economic and political power. In the years following the civil strife, Shi'a businessmen (backed by politicians and spiritual leaders) launched a series of campaigns to achieve equality of representation with the Sunnis. In some cases (the Association of Lebanese Industrialists and the Beirut Chamber of Commerce) their efforts were substantially rewarded, while in others (Association of Beirut Merchants), Shiites demands were too ambitious and found the stiff opposition of Sunni members. Nonetheless, Shiites businessmen were able to improve their presence on the Board of

⁴³⁰ Issam Suleiman, "Beirut: Khuthrat Murashanin Qilat Musharikin", (Beirut: Many Candidated, Few Voters), in Farid Khazen and Paul Salem (eds.) (1993), *Al-Intikhabat al-Ula fi Lubnan Ma Ba'd al-Harb* (The First Elections in Postwar Lebanon). Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Lubnani lil-Ditrasat (Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies), pp. 277-318.

⁴³¹ *Al-Nahar*, 26 June 1998, p.21.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

Directors, becoming concrete interlocutors in a Sunni-dominated business environment.⁴³³ This reveals also another fact: the competition and sectarian tension among businessmen in the postwar period was primarily among Sunnis and Shiites (more than between Christians and Muslims), possibly representing the intra-Muslim complexities at the political level at the time. Lebanese businessmen, like businessmen everywhere else, are mainly interested in profit. But what makes the Lebanese business environment different from any other Arab country, is that Lebanese businessmen have their sectarian loyalties to keep an eye on. Given such a context, it is no surprise that business association's members are expected to observe how well (or how poorly) their sect is represented within an organisation.

⁴³³ The only major business association that did not report a significant increasing number of Shiite members in its Board of Directors is the Association of Lebanese Banks.

From Liberalism to Neoliberalism

“In the Lebanon of today, when we say ‘capital city’ we really mean commercial hub; when we say ‘family home’ we mean real estate speculation; when we say forest, vineyards, orange groves and olive trees we mean land for construction; when we say ‘citizen’ we mean a shareholder, when we say ‘patriot’ we mean a property owner, when we say ‘values’ we mean fortunes, when we say ‘democracy’ we mean plutocracy, when we say ‘freedom’ we mean the free market and when we say ‘sovereignty’ we mean insolvency” (Percy Kemp, *L'Orient Le Jour*, January 25, 2007).

According to journalist George Naqqash, Lebanon has been globalised since the 1950s. In his ongoing dispute with Syrian economists and journalists - itself part of a wider dispute between the bourgeois of the two countries over the relative merits of protectionism versus the free market - the journalist Georges Naqqash has boasted that independent Lebanon's greatest achievement has been the “internationalising” or “globalisation” of its economy, quite the opposite of the Syrian economy with its production base and protectionist policies. Naqqash uses the term “*mondialise*” to characterise the Lebanese economy, a term which in current usage approximates to “globalised”.⁴³⁴ Before the start of the civil war in 1975, Lebanon was often referred to as the ‘Switzerland of the Middle East’.

Since its independence in 1943, Lebanon has adopted a liberal economic system that gave the private sector freedom of initiative in the economic field, including financial and monetary aspects, with no restrictions imposed on currency transfers and external trade. This openness gave Lebanon a comparative advantage in the region and enabled it to attract Arab and foreign capital and investment, helped to transform Beirut into an important regional trade and financial centre and enabled its banks to draw an important share of Arab deposits, especially from the oil revenues of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Despite significant income differentials between rich and poor and between Christians and Muslims (most notably Shi'a and Sunni), the banking and the trading economy of Beirut ensured that Lebanon was a relatively prosperous nation state.

Naqqash's point was not just that independent Lebanon built its economy on free-market principles, but that it also drew on what we might regard nowadays as neoliberal

⁴³⁴ 1999 اتصالات بلا موصل: ميشال شيحا والأيديولوجيا اللبنانية. فواز طرابلسي. بيروت: الرياض الرئيس، p. 24

economics: the financial sector, commerce and the service industry predominating; the country's economy acting as an intermediary between the global market and the Arab interior; rejecting protectionism (or "import substitution policy", that allowed imported products to dominate the local market while forcing industry and agriculture to gear themselves towards exportation and competing in foreign markets, etc.).

The Lebanese private sector has traditionally been enterprising. Under these favourable conditions for private sector initiatives, the national economy experienced a broad-based expansion in the pre-war period, while maintaining relative financial stability. Lebanon attracted foreign capital and enterprises supplemented by emigrant remittances from the Lebanese diaspora, especially from those living in the US and South America. The process was also accompanied by the emigration of part of the commercial, financial and industrial bourgeoisie of Egypt, Syria and Iraq to Lebanon and their integration into the Lebanese bourgeoisie.⁴³⁵

From 1950 until 1965, a fraction of the Lebanese bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie of Arab origin played an important role in the development of the banking sector and activities. The number of Lebanese banks increased from ten in the mid-1950s to twenty in 1960, and to fifty-five in 1965, controlling one third of total deposits.⁴³⁶ The most important one, Intra Bank,⁴³⁷ controlled big corporations in Lebanon and developed a strategic investment system in Europe, Africa and Latin America. The bank had acquired international stature for attracting a big share of the influx of Arab capital into Lebanon and for investing in the Arab world and Africa in association with émigré capital. In late 1966, a convergence of internal and external factors led to the collapse of

⁴³⁵ This followed the socialist policies, agrarian reforms and economic intervention of the regimes in those countries. Despite state control of the external economic relations of Syria, Egypt and Iraq, the Lebanese services sector has profitably served as their point of contact with the international capitalist market (Salim Nasr, "Backdrop to Civil War: The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism" *MERIP Reports*, No. 73 (Dec., 1978), pp. 3-13, Published by: Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP).

⁴³⁶ S. Nasr (1978).

⁴³⁷ Intra Bank, owned by Yusuf Baydas, had built an impressive financial empire. The Intra group controlled a number of the country's major companies: the Compagnie du port de Beyrouth, Middle East Airlines, Radio Orient (the ex-franchise- holding French company) and eight others in property development (including the Société immobilière libanaise, the owner of the luxury Phœnicia Hotel), services, tourism and industry. Intra also financed the government's infrastructure and transactions such as the import of wheat. Overseas, the group had substantial investments in property in France (including the Champs Elysées), controlling shares in the naval docks of La Ciotat, and a number of small banks in Switzerland. Yusuf Baydas's bank was particularly proud of the high number of its small depositors, some 19,000 accounts. These individuals turned out to be the biggest victims of the crash (F. Traboulsi (2007), p. 149.

Intra Bank and other several Lebanese banks.⁴³⁸ Political divisions in the country contributed to a massive withdrawal of capital. Western finance capital greatly benefitted from this situation increasing its direct control of the Lebanese financial sector, reducing Lebanese banks to marginal activities, taking away credits and resources that could have contributed to the growth of the national economy by investing 40 to 50 per cent of its resources outside Lebanon over the 1970-74 period. This foreign-dominated banking sector partially explains the all-Lebanese paradox between an excess of banking resources and inability - due to a lack of financial resources - to assure the development of infrastructures, including the vital sectors of irrigation, housing and education. On the eve of the civil war, a banking sector with excessive credit organising international loans for Western companies cohabited with a public sector unable to finance social and economic projects.⁴³⁹ The Intra Bank crash also inaugurated a tendency that would manifest itself fully in the 1970s: the rise in interest rates in Europe and the USA and the strong pressures on the rulers and the rich of the Gulf and Saudi Arabia had succeeded in attracting petrodollars to be deposited and invested in Western capitals. This development would henceforth make Lebanon into a 'place' for recycling petrodollars toward Western networks. The result further subjected the economy to foreign capital, while exaggerating its monopolistic structure and strengthening the domination of the commercial/financial complex.⁴⁴⁰

It might be useful, though, to look at the economic period prior to the civil war in Lebanon in slightly analytical details. Although many observers go the 1950s and 1960s as the golden age of the 'Merchant Republic' when peace and prosperity seemed walking hand in hand, it was during the troubled conditions of the 1970s that the significant expansion in the industrial and service sectors really began. The key point was indeed the dramatic increase in the revenues of the oil-producing states which began with the first price rises in the 1970. This not only led to a huge increase in the Lebanese banks and financial services sectors, but also to a relevant expansion in Arab tourism and a large rise in the size of the remittances sent back by Lebanese

⁴³⁸ Raymond A. Mallat (1973), *Seventy Years of Money Muddling in Lebanon*, Beirut: s.n.

⁴³⁹ Pierre Nasrallah and Roland Pringuey, "Radioscope du système bancaire libanaise et son adaptation aux opérations d'une place financière internationale", *Proche-Orient Etudes Economiques*, January-April 1975, pp. 46-47.

⁴⁴⁰ F. Traboulsi (2007), p 156.

workers flooding into Saudi Arabia and the Gulf.⁴⁴¹ This, together with the rise in bank deposits, the interest in the Lebanese economy shown by American and European capital, and a huge increase in industrial exports⁴⁴² made Lebanon a country open to become a major Middle Eastern industrial and financial power.

This positive assessment does not mean that the economy was free from structural weaknesses and distortions. Signs of strain were beginning to appear in the economy mainly as a result of saturation in the services sector, lack of discipline in economic activity and underdeveloped legislative and administrative structures governing the functioning of institutions and sectors. The coexistence of a number of features and imbalances in the economy laid the ground for the economic and social crises that emerged or were aggravated during the war and its aftermath. The most significant of these features and imbalances include: 1) Substantial discrepancies in growth between the different regions of the country (concentration of business in the capital and very poor, underdeveloped rural areas, especially in the south); 2) Concentration of income distribution and existence of social discrepancies; 3) Imbalance among the main economic sectors - services, industry and agriculture - in favour of services which produced negative effects manifested especially in the deterioration of agriculture, the persistence of rural - urban migration, and the swelling of Beirut and its poor suburbs in particular. 4) Coexistence of two apparently contradictory tendencies within the internal structure of the economy. The first is the numerical dominance of small economic establishments having a traditional form (individual or family establishments, or companies of individuals); 5) An underdeveloped and politicised administration, and inadequate legislation to cope with the evolving economic and social situation.

This development pattern had a direct impact on the internal fabric of the society. Growth based on commercial and banking activity and an open economic system, when national productive capacity is limited, is narrowly - based growth that deepens reliance on imports and encourages consumer life styles and behaviour. Lebanese rural areas were the main victim of this pattern, which was also characterised by the uncontrolled

⁴⁴¹ Salim Nasr (1968), "The Crisis of Lebanese Capitalism", p. 6.; Roger Owen (1988), *The Middle East in the World Economy*, p. 36.

⁴⁴² Mainly industrial exports: shoes, clothing, construction goods and chemicals, much of it to Gulf markets. Here the merchants were able to benefit from their knowledge of local tastes as well as from the fact that there already existed a widespread network of Lebanese work in the oil-rich states as architects, engineers and contractors who were willing to use Lebanese products.

and random expansion of the capital and other urban centres. The political economy of independent Lebanon is thus characterised by strong growth, albeit extraverted and unbalanced. In parallel with these structural changes in the national economy, a significant demographic increase in the country's Shi'a population over the last four decades occurred. The transformation of Lebanon from an agrarian republic into an extended city state,⁴⁴³ and the ramifications that entailed for the Shi'a community have proven to be one of the determining forces behind its politicisation. The demographic revolution and intense social mobilisation this community has undergone, the 'clanism' that has characterised the Lebanese polity, and spillover from regional and international dynamics have all been major factors sustaining the politicisation⁴⁴⁴ and its consequent economic enfranchisement.

However, prior to the outbreak of the civil war, Lebanon was a upper middle-income country prospering as a regional service. It enjoyed prudent economic management and an economy driven mainly by a dynamic private sector and supported by a small public sector. A combination of microeconomic environment, liberal economics, and its role as a regional intermediary gave Lebanon a strong comparative advantage in the services sectors of its economy, particularly in banking and finance, tourism, insurance, and trade-related services. This blissful situation was quickly to turn upside down as a result of the civil war, which resulted in massive destruction of infrastructures and industrial facilities, while the reluctance to invest resulted in the obsolescence of remaining production capacity. Another major wave of mass emigration occurred, which repeated itself again after the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, which led to an unmitigated loss in professional and entrepreneurial skills.⁴⁴⁵

Against the background of a stagnating economy, Rafiq Hariri, one of the sons of the Lebanese-KSA 'contractor bourgeoisie' was ready to launch his 'plan for reconstruction'. While at the same time, former warlords had found their way to impose themselves and gain access to state's resources.

⁴⁴³ Albert Hourani, "Lebanon. From Feudalism to Modern State", *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 2, no. 3, April 1966, p. 263.

⁴⁴⁴ A. R. Norton (1987), pp. 13-36 uses the Karl Deutsch's social mobilisation model in order to delineate the "sources and meaning of change among the Shi'a in Lebanon" (M. Halawi (1992), p. 78). See also Karl Deutsch, "Social Mobilization and Political Development", pp. 493-514.

⁴⁴⁵ Raphaeli Nimrod, "Lebanese Economy Between Violence and Political Stalemate", in Barry Rubin (ed.) (2009), *Lebanon. Liberation, Conflict and Crisis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

The Postwar Troika of Clientelism and Corruption

Richard Graham characterised clientelism as an action-set built upon the principle of “take there, give here”, enabling clients and patrons to benefit from each other’s support as they play in parallel, but different levels of political, social and administrative articulation.⁴⁴⁶ In the political realm, clientelism is associated with the particularistic use of public resources and with the electoral arena, and entails votes and support given in exchange for jobs and other benefits handed over by incumbent and contesting power-holders as favours.⁴⁴⁷

In Lebanon, the widely prevalent informal system of clientelism is a key contributor to fostering corruption, distorting the delivery of public services and establishing a clientelistic network⁴⁴⁸ that is both difficult to detect and to remove. Lebanon’s clientelism has created a complicated network of brokers and clients which have infiltrated the Lebanese administrative system. Thus, Lebanese politicians have provided clients with government services which distorted loyalty the obligatory confessional which resulted in hindering the efficiency of the Lebanese institutions in performing their functions. Yet, although clientelism and corruption may certainly walk hand in hand, clientelism implies a model in which public resources are distributed ‘personalistically’ to private individuals or private groups in exchange for political support.⁴⁴⁹ In Lebanon, there is an evident relationship between the politician as a patron and the civil servant as a client. Throughout its history, the Lebanese state became owned by political elite who claimed state resources as their own, which entitled them to produce entrenched networks of patronage that encompassed a sectarian clientelism formula which produced corruption at the social, organisational, political, structural and administrative levels.

The post-war in Lebanon, in particular, was characterised by a massive and institutionalised recourse to corruption, which became the primary means for elite

⁴⁴⁶ Richard Graham, “Clientelismo na cultura politica brasileira: Toma lá dà cà”, Sao Paulo: Braudel Center Papers No. 15, 1997.

⁴⁴⁷ Luis Roniger, “Political Clientelism, Democracy and Market Economy”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36 no. 3 (April 2004): 353-375.

⁴⁴⁸ Luis Roniger & Ayşe Günes-Ayata (1994), *Democracy, Clientelism and Civil Society*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, p. 112.

⁴⁴⁹ Rahhall Mahasin, “Privatization: Implications on Political Clientelism in Lebanon”, Lebanese American University, School of Arts and Sciences. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, January 2012.

factions and former warlords to consolidate and negotiate their hold on power.⁴⁵⁰ The greatest amount of literature describing corruption in post-war Lebanon tends to focus mainly on the Rafiq Hariri phenomenon. However, it would be a serious overstatement to say that solely Hariri dominated the Lebanese government throughout the 1990s. Undoubtedly, during this decade Lebanon's economy experienced an uneven neo-liberalisation – a mixture of policies that conformed to the precepts of neoliberal economics and others that went against them: government over-borrowing to stabilise the exchange rate, reconstruction aimed at making Lebanon 'competitive', failed attempts at privatisation, and spending increases on 'service ministries'. These policies resulted in one of the highest debt-to-GDP ratios in the world and low investment in productive sectors due to 'crowding out'. This pattern is best understood as a result of the competition of various types of elites, which are differentiated using a "reputational method" before unpacking the economic logic they followed. Two groups in particular were important: firstly, Rafiq Hariri as a member of a new 'contractor bourgeoisie' which was seeking investment opportunities in finance and reconstruction; secondly, former militia leaders who were primarily concerned with access to resources to service their clientelist networks: Nabih Berri.

Hariri gained control of ministries and agencies associated with the "right hand" of the state, concerned with finance and the economy:⁴⁵¹ finance ministry, central bank, but also the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR). Berri had access to the "service ministries" and welfare agencies to benefit his clientele – the "left hand" of the state: the ministry of social affairs, the Council of the South, or the Fund for the Displaced.

The Prime Minister Locus of Power: Rafiq Hariri

Rafiq Hariri headed the Lebanese government from 1992 to 2000, and then again from 2004 to 2005 and championed a policy of reconstruction that sought to refashion the Lebanese system to match the age of neoliberal globalisation with the assistance of

⁴⁵⁰ Charles Adwan, "Corruption in Reconstruction: The Cost Of National Consensus in Post-War Lebanon", CIPE (The Center for International Private Enterprise), Economic Reform Feature Service, Washington D.C., 2004.

⁴⁵¹ Pierre Bourdieu (1998), *Acts of Resistance. Against the Tyranny of the Market*. New York: The New Press.

bankers, contractors, importers and a political coterie of militia leaders, while the lines between political and economic power grew increasingly blurred. In fact, Hariri Rafiq was a member of a new “contractor bourgeoisie” which was seeking investment opportunities in finance and reconstruction. But Hariri focused his reconstruction efforts (with a public-private partnership named Solidère) mainly on central Beirut, building Gulf-style infrastructure consisting of roads and luxury real-estate housing offices, shops, hotels, and restaurants in the hope of attracting investors from abroad. As a billionaire contractor who had made his fortune in Saudi Arabia, Hariri was able to realise this ambitious project.

Hariri’s reconstruction project, called “Horizon 2000”, consisted of two main pillars: a policy of reconstruction based on developing the state’s debt, and the conversion of downtown Beirut into an international commercial and financial centre. Hariri promised the Lebanese that he would return them to the living standards they enjoyed in 1974, restore Lebanon’s position at the head of the region’s economies and ensure an average growth rate of 9.4 per cent from 1993 to 2003. Indeed, Hariri’s reconstruction project had much in common with the neoliberal globalisation which informed the policies and directives of international financial institutions: a leading role for the financial and construction sectors at the expense of industry and agriculture; substituting reliance on market movement for development; privatisation; prioritising imports over protecting local industries; the state withdrawing from its distributive role and from the provision of subsidies, etc. Hariri’s reliance on economic power opened the doors to charges of financial corruption and political critique.

One of Hariri’s most important areas of control was the Council of Development and Reconstruction (CDR), whose mission was to rebuild the country after the war. The CDR was entirely run and maintained by men appointed by and loyal to Hariri. Most of the members of the Council of Development were directly accountable to Hariri.⁴⁵² Moreover, during the 1990s, control of the three semiprivate institutions that were in charge of the reconstruction and its suburbs was divided among important political actors. Solidère, the company in charge of Beirut’s central districts was seen as Hariri’s

⁴⁵² Reinoud Lendeers, “Nobody Having Too Much to answer For: Laissez-Faire, Networks, and Postwar Reconstruction in Lebanon”, in Steven Heydemann (ed.) (2004), *Networks of Privilege in the Middle East: The Politics of Economic Reform Revisited*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 169-200.

control area.⁴⁵³ Elyssar, the company appointed to the reconstruction of Shiite's suburbs and southern Beirut was controlled by Nabih Berri and Hezbollah.⁴⁵⁴ Lined, the company that was charged with the reconstruction of the mainly Christian area in north Beirut was controlled by Michel Murr⁴⁵⁵.

Indeed, Solidère and 'Horizon 2000' - an expenditure plan centred on the reconstruction of Beirut's downtown area and various infrastructures of the country - were the centrepiece of Lebanon's postwar economy. But it became very soon evident that Hariri and his allies were privileging large companies and the wealthy elite, to the detriment of middle- and working-class Lebanese. Their plan was overall based on extensive borrowing, to the extent that economist Toufic Gaspard described it as "more of a wish list than a reasoned economic programme".⁴⁵⁶ Solidère came soon to monopolise many government-subsidised functions, including the roles of city planning and construction regulation. Plus, the propensity toward personalised control of state institutions in Lebanon was (and is) often mediated through family networks. This transfer of public funds and responsibilities to private monopolies was - of course - extended to a variety of projects and to newly privatised sectors (postal service and garbage collectors, just to name a few).⁴⁵⁷

It is interesting to see how, at a certain point, Rafiq Hariri created social upward mobility to Shiites when at the very early stages of his Solidère project, he outbought the area in Downtown Beirut where quite a few Shiites were living at the time. With the amount of money received by Hariri, Shiites living in Downtown Beirut moved to much larger accommodations in Dahiyeh. Some of them received enough money to buy two apartments: they lived in one and renting the other, generating some extra income.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵³ Najah Wakim (2000), *Al-ayadi al sood*. Beirut: Sharikat al-Matbuat li al-Tawzi' wa al-Nashr, pp. 143-156.

⁴⁵⁴ Mona Harb, "Urban Governance in Post-war Beirut: Resources, Negotiations, and Contestations in the Elyssar Project", in Seteney Shami (ed.) (2001), *Capital Cities: Ethnographies of Urban Governance in the Middle East*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 111.133.

⁴⁵⁵ Rafic Nabaa (1999), *Rafic Hariri: Un homme d'affaire premier ministre*. Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 44-46.

⁴⁵⁶ Toufic Gaspard (2004), *A Political Economy of Lebanon, 1948-2002: The Limits of Laissez-Faire*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, p. 212.

⁴⁵⁷ R. Lendeers (2004), p. 183.

⁴⁵⁸ Interview with the author.

What is certain, is that there was an agreement between Hariri and Berri on the construction of Solidère, of course with Syria's backing.⁴⁵⁹

The Speaker of the Parliament Locus of Power: Nabih Berri

During the Second Republic, the Speaker of the National Assembly became one key element of the ruling troika, with its constant pleas to the Syrian president (first Hafez, then Bashar Al Assad) to intervene in Lebanon. Although the speaker's term was set to coincide with that of parliament, the office would never have gained similar prominence under anyone other than Nabih Berri. Berri was the leader of a militia, chief of the Southern *zu'ama*, the representative of the Shi'a in the troika, the most influential figure in the GLC and the Lebanese University and the man who held the keys to employment in the civil service, the armed forces and the security services, responsible for bringing thousands of young Shiites - and hundreds others - into public service and promoting them within it. Not only that, but Berri also controlled his share of top ranking positions: he was head of a large parliamentary bloc and has ministers in every government in both the Foreign Affairs and Health ministries; Berri has headed parliament for the last twenty years and has had a hand in critical decisions, such as extending presidential terms, forming ministries and extending the parliamentary term itself. To this can be added his decisive role in the legislative process, something that been clear on numerous occasions, such as the Election Law, or amendments to the law governing real estate firms, which facilitated the creation of Hariri's Solidère.

At any rate, Berri was already involved in a variety of economic interests, especially the real estate, banking, trade and other concerns of diaspora Shi'a in Africa and the Gulf. During the war, Berri had formed what was termed 'the Shi'a Holding Company'; when fighting, he forced the closure of Beirut's commercial centre and economic activity had become divided between Jounieh and Kaslik in East Beirut and Hamra and Verdun streets in the West. At that time, Berri came to oversee a new real estate zone in 'Ain El Tineh and Verdun that constituted the second biggest arena for African investment after that of Mazraa. Following the 1975-89 war, he oversaw IIC and the Finance Bank

⁴⁵⁹ Talal Atrisi, Interview with the author, November-December 2013.

through its chairman Hassan Farran, as well as infrastructure developments projects in the South, the majority of which were handed to Syrian firm Qasioun at a cost of 4 million dollars per kilometre, which is a higher rate for roadwork than, for instance, in California, where it costs just 935,000 dollars per kilometre.⁴⁶⁰ Though Hezbollah successfully competed with Berri for influence in Shi'a bourgeois circles - particularly post-2006 - the Speaker was able to compensate with an increasingly central role in representing the Lebanese bourgeoisie in general, as became clear in recent battles over wages, salaries and positions. It is possible that this role may grow in order to fill the void in the representation of capitalist interests that was left by Hariri's assassination.

Establishing control over the visual media is one of the most important objectives of the partnership between money and political power. Investment in television stations transcends economic considerations, aiming to establish control over public opinion and public space. At NBN Television, Nabih Berri's wife Randa (who is also in charge of numerous other businesses and NGOs, included the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped, described by one of my interviewees as an "asylum")⁴⁶¹ and his sister Amina, own a large share of stock in partnership with the siblings and sons of Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Bahjat Ghaith (who with his brothers operates one of the biggest contracting firms in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates), minister Yassine Jaber⁴⁶² and his brother Rabah⁴⁶³, and Nehme Tohme.⁴⁶⁴ To the names of these television company shareholders we can add the following: the Abou Fadel family, the Mikati

⁴⁶⁰ http://www.cnsx.ca/cmsAssets/docs/Filings/2014/2014_12_20_21_40_31_ASA_Asean_Energy_Corp_Q2_Interim_MDA_Oct_31,_2014.pdf [accessed May 2015].

⁴⁶¹ Interview with the author

⁴⁶² Yassine Jaber is a Shi'a Lebanese member of parliament representing the Nabatiyeh district. He is part of the Amal Movement led by Nabih Berri which is part of the opposition. Yassine Jaber was a minister of Economy from 1996 to 1998 and also served as a minister of Public Work.

⁴⁶³ A magnate of the real estate business, head of the Jaber Group.

⁴⁶⁴ Nehmé Tohme (Greek-Orthodox) is an engineer, member of the Lebanese Parliament and ex-Minister. Tohme serves as the Chairman and member of the Board of Directors of various companies, and a well-known businessman. He has significant ownership interests in various companies operating in numerous business sectors in Lebanon and abroad. He serves as a Non-Executive Director of Fransabank SAL.

family⁴⁶⁵, Jamil Ibrahim (a leading Shiite entrepreneur) and Georges Frem⁴⁶⁶. Nabih Berri, his current wife Randa and his wife's other sister Samira Assi have been making commissions on everything involving south Lebanon and the Shiite community. Samira Assi made a fortune by getting a contract from Libyan leader Mohammar Qadhafi to print one million copies of Qaddafi's "Green Book"⁴⁶⁷ - so much for the blood of Imam Musa al-Sadr, the founder of the Amal movement, who was (presumably) liquidated by none other than Qaddafi himself.

The Octopus of Money and Power

This "octopus of money and power"⁴⁶⁸ shows how Lebanese politics-mixed-with-entrepreneurship has become transectarian after the end civil war and with the advent of neoliberal policies. Hariri, Berri, Murr and Jumblatt all had the cooperation of militia leaders and of those who had accumulated their wealth from war and emigration. They were (are) surrounded by associates, party members and security officials, in addition to a large coterie of technocrats and lawyers, graduates of international financial institutions and private companies. One of the measures either Hariri and Berri took to entrench their power were their costly efforts to gain control of the media. Another astonishing way to appropriate collective and public property came to evidence with an official report by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (November 26, 2012 as part of a project dating back to 2006) exposes facts about organised and protected operations to seize public beachfront property in Lebanon. The report named former and current (at the time it was published) presidents, ministers and parliamentarians, as well

⁴⁶⁵ Before entering politics, Najib Mikati (current prime minister of Lebanon) co-founded with his brother Taha INVESTCOM, a leading telecom family business which pioneered telephony in emerging markets and was later merged into MTN after its shares were listed on both the London and Dubai stock exchanges, in what was the largest international listing of a Middle Eastern company.

⁴⁶⁶ Georges Frem, (d.2006), was a Lebanese politician and industrial giant who served as a minister in various roles on three occasions between 1982 and 2003. His company, Indevco, is a major manufacturer of plastic, paper and tissue. He was also minister of Post and Telecommunications and minister of Industry between 1982-84 during the Chadic Wazzan and minister of Hydraulic and Electrical Resources in 1992 during the Hariri government.

⁴⁶⁷ Daniel Nassif, "Nabih Berri. Lebanese Parliament Speaker", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, vol.2, no. 11, Jointly published by the United States Committee for a Free Lebanon and the Middle East Forum, December 2000.

⁴⁶⁸ The expression comes from Walid Jumblatt in an interview to *Al Safir*, 17/9/1996.

as political parties, party officials, local chieftains, and their lackeys who carry the titles of ‘investor’ or ‘entrepreneur.’ The report singles out violators using their seafront properties as touristic establishments, industrial facilities, agricultural lands, military installations, and even centres of worship.⁴⁶⁹ The report revealed the existence of more 1,141 instances of infringement on coastal public property. In only 73 of these cases was the infringement ‘licensed’ (meaning that permissions had been granted by the cabinet - in contravention of constitutional rulings and the law - which entitled some individuals and agencies the right to profit from public lands, to the exclusion of other citizens). The so-called ‘licenses’ are based on cabinet decisions which violate the constitution and basic laws. They give particular people and organisations the right to exploit public property at the expense of the rest of society. By checking the names published by the Ministry report it turns out that the most prominent supporters of these abusive occupations of some 4.9 million square meters of the Lebanese coastline (worth billions of dollars in rents each year) were Rafiq Hariri, Nabih Berri and Walid Jumblatt, while the greatest beneficiaries of these infringements have been presidents, ministers and MPs (both past and present) as well as political parties, party leaders, dependents commonly termed ‘investors’ or ‘financiers’, tourist resorts, industrial installations, fuel dumps, agricultural fields, public utilities and military installations, sports pitches, places of worship, chalets, palaces and private residences. Just to give some examples, Nabih Berri has encroached an area of 2,100 share metres in Saida (al-Yahoudiyeh) for the construction of a private harbour; not to mention Berri’s direct involvement with major entrepreneurs. Hariri’s Solidère counts numerous infringements of coastal/public areas (also related to the construction of the so-called Zeituna Bay). The real estate business is still a major economic force in Beirut, regardless the drastic drop of Saudi tourism following the 2006 war. Guaranteeing maximum benefit to the occupiers of the state’s seafront properties, Law No. 2522 has not been amended since 1992. The annual fees for temporary working licenses of these properties, excluding the infringements and occupation without licenses, have remained the same. This is despite the rapid increase in real estate prices and the rise of the general price index by 200% during the past 20 years, leading to the erosion of the value of these fees, which were already too low. In the meantime, the occupiers collected enormous profits, considerable benefits,

⁴⁶⁹ <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/14271> [accessed May 2015].

and superior privileges. These licenses have led to dividing the beaches among politicians along with local and foreign investors (included many diaspora entrepreneurs). Because the shores of the Lebanese people are protected by completely compromised laws, they are filled with hundreds of touristic, commercial, industrial, military, and residential projects. In return, these ‘occupiers’ pay the state treasury ridiculously low fees compared to the benefits and profits they reap.

Noticeably those neoliberal tendencies and a habit of submitting to the economic *status quo* and the interests and pressures of various economic institutions and bodies affected also Hezbollah. Even though the post-Ta'if division of labour imposed by Hafez al-Assad declared “Hezbollah manages the resistance while Hariri manages the economy”, episodes of nepotism and corruption affected also Hezbollah’s circles responsible for municipal and ministerial administrations (e.g. the scandal of a senior Hezbollah security official’s brother heading a network for the manufacture and supply of narcotic Captagon tablets, or the brother of a Hezbollah minister being linked to a pharmaceutical smuggling case).

A new Ruling Entrepreneurial Elite?

In considering the post-war period, the economic representation is almost never split or separate from the political arena. What we are witnessing are social dynamics altering not just the density of the social classes, their interrelationships and the balance of power between them, but also, and more importantly, the balance of political power and the emergence of politico-economic bodies trying to absorb new social forces and categories created by the war and the diaspora, and which demand representation to express their interests in the political arena. The renewal of the political and economic elite is accompanied by an intense concentration of political power in a manner, which only adds to the power of the troika. After the 2008 Doha Agreement, which introduced the ‘blocking third’ principle to ministerial representation, the link between

parliamentary election results and government formation was effectively severed.⁴⁷⁰ The sectarian consensus was imposed on political power, and effectively meant that the country was to be ruled by the president and a group of 'leaders' - the majority of them originally warlord *zu'ama* - who could be counted on two hands: Nabih Berri and Hassan Nasrallah from the Shi'a, Michel Aoun and Samir Geagea from the Maronites (with Michel Aoun in coalition with Hezbollah since 2006)⁴⁷¹, Saad Hariri for the Sunnis and Walid Jumblatt representing the Druze. Again, hypothesis of strong economic interests revolving around the coalition between Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (FPM) and the party of God circulate: a few Hezbollah's insiders I have interviewed - opposed to the affiliation - saw the Aoun/Nasrallah pact as a way to get some money on the Aoun side that enabled him to open a few months later his own TV channel (media control). In addition to that, apparently many Aoun-affiliated middle class entrepreneurs and middle professional greatly benefitted from the alliance, as many Hezbollahi started requesting services (insurances, constructions, etc.) from them. Of course, maintaining the Shiite-Maronite alliance nominally requires concessions from both sides. Hezbollah's domination of Lebanon was unthinkable in the 1980s when the movement's manifesto was written, and its leaders, especially Hasan Nasrallah, have learned the necessity for de-emphasising ideology in the name of politics and long-term strategy. For these reasons, Hezbollah tolerates Aoun's demands for expensive infrastructure and development plans, reform of state finances and the civil service, and the questionable biographies of some of his officials. Since the alliance with Aoun

⁴⁷⁰ The period after the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon (2005-2006) was characterised by the predominance of Hezbollah and its excess of power in the domestic arena. Hezbollah sought to institutionalise some practices, such as the blocking third in government decisions. That provided Hezbollah with the ability to disrupt all government institutions, something that the other side considered a departure from the constitution and from the spirit of the national pact. The pact among the Lebanese sects has a defect that came to the surface with the decline of Syrian influence in 2005. The defect can be summarised by two points: one, the partnership crisis and the distribution of power among the sects, in addition to the issue of how the sects are represented and consequently to their right to choose their representatives; and two, the state project being on hold because of the lack of consensus on the face of governance and its components. This, of course, raises a deep question about Hezbollah's weapons and legitimacy, and also raises other regional issues - whether those related to the conflict with Israel or Iran - that have lately taken unprecedented sectarian dimensions.

⁴⁷¹ <http://www.voltairenet.org/article163916.html>

serves Hezbollah's long-term plans for Lebanon, the group also tends to downplay the involvement of Lebanese Christians in working with Israel.⁴⁷²

Indeed, during the postwar period, the Lebanese Parliament saw an extremely high rate of elite circulation. This turnover could be seen as a measure of the rate of political change. Between 1942 and 1960, the average rate of turnover was 42 percent.⁴⁷³ After the 1992 elections, 82 percent of the parliament was composed of new entrants to the elite. In the following years, this trend reverted itself: in 1996, 35 percent of the parliamentarians were first-time deputies were first time deputies, and in the 2000 elections the turnover rate was 29 percent.⁴⁷⁴ In the 2005 elections (after R. Hariri's assassination) the renewal rate of the elite went back to 48 percent. This high rate circulation in 2005 indicated a new era of change and the emergence of a new political elite. The majority of parliamentarians hold a university degree in 2000 (90 percent) and the percentage of rich businessmen in parliament steady increased in the postwar era. This element is indicative of a progressive financialization of Lebanese politics. The postwar parliament witnesses a substantial presence of wealthy political entrepreneurs who use their riches to gain political power, along with members of political dynasties with enough sociopolitical and financial capital to run for office and to create a popular constituency.

Unfortunately, the consolidation of a governing coalition composed of wealthy businessmen, political entrepreneurs, notables, warlords and their acolytes, in addition to clients of the Syrian, Iranian or Saudi regime, accompanied by a stagnating economy

⁴⁷² *As-Siyasa* (Kuwait), 08/092011; *Al-Safir* (Beirut), Jan. 25/01/2012.

The present alliance between Nasrallah and Aoun coalesces rural Shiites and Maronites against urban Sunnis, bringing together the legacy of Shiite dispossession and Maronite incipient sense of political loss. Unlike previous Shiite-Maronite alliances, such as the one between feudal Shiite leaders and Maronite politicians (1920-58), and Sadr's rapport with the Maronite political establishment (1959-78), which were based on mutual strategic interests, the present one between the FPM and Hezbollah is an "alliance of hypocrisy". Less than a year after the two sides signed their memorandum of understanding, FPM parliamentary deputy Ibrahim Kanaan told then-U.S. ambassador in Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman that Aoun was "the last person in Lebanon who wants to see Hezbollah's militia keep its arms" (Hilal Khashan, "Lebanon's Shiite-Maronite Alliance of Hypocrisy", *The Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3, Summer 2012).

⁴⁷³ Iliya Harik, "Voting Behaviour: Lebanon", in Jacob Landau, Ergun Ozbudun and Frank Tachau (eds.) (1980), *Electoral Politics in the Middle East*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, pp. 145-172; R. el-Husseini (2012), p. 102.

⁴⁷⁴ Farid el-Khazen (2000), *Intikhabat Lubnan ma baad al-harb*. Beirut: Dar el-Nahar, p. 227; R. el-Husseini (2012), p. 102.

and increasing public debt - not to mention the outbreak of the 2006 Hezbollah war with Israel - led to a new generation of disenchanted, educated youth at the mercy of corruption, few opportunities and structural constraints that limited their possibility to engage in the political and economic process. For many of them, leaving the country was the only realistic option.

A New Wave of Migrants (1990s -): The “Brain Drain”

In the previous paragraphs we have analysed how internal and international migration were inextricably linked to the rise of the Shi‘a community during and after the Lebanese civil war. Some Shi‘i migrants later became business or political elite in Lebanon (Nabih Berri). However, migration did not always launch Shiites to the top echelons of economy to the same degree, or with the same structural power, as did with other sects.⁴⁷⁵ But it certainly enacted a continuous transformation of the community from a peripheral peasantry into the ranks of urban middle class.⁴⁷⁶ In a study conducted by Ali Faour in 1989 in the Shi‘i villages in south Lebanon, the survey revealed that, for example, migrants with high school education (or lower) outnumbered university graduates at a rate of four to one. Eighty-one percent were labourers. Of these labourers, 20.24 percent went to Africa (and those were the ones who acquired social mobility faster) and 40.6 percent went to Arab countries (typically the Gulf).⁴⁷⁷ Given their educational background, most of these labourers ended up working as chauffeurs, construction workers, mechanics, plumbers, etc.⁴⁷⁸ They certainly were less apt to become Hariri-style tycoons. The situation began to change when this generation started to send their

⁴⁷⁵ Kamal Hamdan, “Primary Issues in the Development of the Sectarian Character of the Lebanese Economy”, *al-Marqab*, no. 1, 1997, pp 158-166. Interview of the author with Boutrous Labaki, Kamal Hamdan and Waddah Chararah, 2013-2014.

⁴⁷⁶ Lara Deeb (2006), *An Enchanted Modern. Gender and Public Piety in Shi‘i Lebanon*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 178-179. Paul Tabar, “Immigration and Human Development: Evidence from Lebanon”, *Human Development Research Paper 2009/35*, United Nations Development Programme, August 2009, p. 20.

⁴⁷⁷ Ali Faour, “Social and Economic Effects of Lebanese Migration”, *al-Dayar*, 1 October 1990, pp. 40-41-44.

⁴⁷⁸ Michel Nancy, “Du Liban vers le Golfe: deux cas de migration villageoises”, in André Bourgey (ed.) (1985), *Migration et changement sociaux dans l’Orient arab*. Beirut: Cermoc, p. 94.

sons and daughters to university, creating long-term effects which presumably are yet to be analysed. The immediate effect of remittances and migrant capital was sustain families in Lebanon and improving infrastructures and living standards.⁴⁷⁹ This greatly altered the social and economic map of the country, reversing the disparities-location: in the 1960s there was no substantial difference among Lebanon's northern and southern peripheries. Today, Akkar, Lebanon's northernmost district, is by far the most deprived region; while the south outlook has dramatically changed.⁴⁸⁰ Monies and remittances transformed the misery belt into an abroad-funded construction boom. Villas and mansions are the moments of those migrant who made it big in Africa, Latin America, etc. From 1997 onwards, the south underwent a significant improvement, to the extent that the Nabatiyyeh province (once a poor one) today registers the lowest rate of illiteracy in all Lebanon⁴⁸¹ and the highest level of growth in per capita consumption.⁴⁸² That does not mean that there are not still sockets of poverty left, but most analysts attribute to the high rate of emigration's remittances of these provinces the decline of poverty.⁴⁸³ In Bint Jbeil, for instance, the most southern province, most of its inhabitants live or have lived abroad (many of them in Michigan and Australia).⁴⁸⁴ The same applies for Shiite areas in south Beirut like the wealthy Bir Hasan neighbourhood, mostly inhabited by families of rich émigrés or successful businessmen returned to Lebanon. Likewise, the majority of buildings in central areas of Beirut like Verdun were erected by (Shiite) real estate diaspora entrepreneurs. An Amal insider admitted that "the real estate and tourism business in Beirut is still so strong - even after the collapse of the Gulf tourism - thanks to the wealthy diaspora émigrés who return to the country

⁴⁷⁹ Wendy Pearlman, "Emigration and Power. A Study of Sects in Lebanon (1860-2010)", in *Politics & Society*, vo. 41, no. 1, 2013, pp. 103-133.

⁴⁸⁰ Waddah Charara, Interview with the author; Aicha Mouchref (2008), *Forgotten Akkar: Socio-Economic Reality of the Akkar Region*. Beirut: Mada Association, p. 13; Heba el Laithy, Khalid Abu-Ismaïl, Kamal Hamdan, "Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon", United Nations Development Program, August 2008, p. 50; W. Perlman (2013), p.122.

⁴⁸¹ Interview with the author.

⁴⁸² Heba el Laithy et al. (2013), p. 46.

⁴⁸³ Ibid. 46, 157.

⁴⁸⁴ Ahmad Beydoun, "Bint Jbeil, Michigan suivi de (ou poursuivi par) Bint Jbeil, Liban", *Maghreb Mashrek* 125, July-September 1989, pp. 69-81.

to spend their holidays or just buy luxury apartments as investments or for their families”.⁴⁸⁵ Migrant earning and investments made significant changes in sustaining key business sectors, such as restaurants and hospitality services that hosted émigrés who returned for summer vacation.

The economic mobility was accompanied by political ascendance. Regardless the infamous rivalry between Amal and Hezbollah, the two organisations contributed in elevating the power of the Shi‘a community as a whole, offering services and employment, mobilising crowds, and gaining electoral support in exchange. As we have seen, the Shi‘a development was a consequence of many factors (the formation of militias, foreign economic backing, etc.), but migrants have made an essential contribution. Along this, there’s the “dark-side”, constituted by reports that narrate of expatriates amassing fortunes in diamond trade and various other illicit businesses; of bribery and not-so-spontaneous contributions to Amal or Hezbollah and their projects. What is certain, is that directly or indirectly, migrants have contributed so the socioeconomic mobility of the Shi‘a community. But it is not just a matter of social prestige: for Shiites, their mobility has translated into key positions among the country’s elite, control of economic sectors and resources, or funding for institutions and social movements. For the Sunni community, migration contributed to “the rise of a new breed of financiers [...] armed with contacts with wealthy Saudi and other Arab personalities”.⁴⁸⁶ On the other side, the Shiite Lebanese appear to be beneficiaries of migration’s contribution to a more bottom-up and dispersed accumulation of resources. Monies from emigration supported socioeconomic transformation among a once disenfranchised community, as well as its political branch. In absence of a major representation in Lebanon’s politics, economics, and society, Shiites created their own space - from below.

From the mid 1990s onwards Lebanon has witnessed a generation of migrants who work abroad but return often and maintain their primary residence in their own country. This pattern of travel tends to be a “circular migration” in which workers repeatedly

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with the author.

⁴⁸⁶ Kamal Dib (2006), p. 294.

KSA or Gulf countries generally do not offer to migrants (or their children) the possibility of naturalisation.

leave the country for contactually determined amounts of time to work on specific projects abroad.⁴⁸⁷ A study conducted by economist Jaad Chaaban in 2009 indicated that - even though Lebanon was suffering from a severe lack of skilled professionals - nearly half of recent university graduates aspired to leave the country.⁴⁸⁸ The study also suggested that - even if the country's universities ability to create professionals is unquestionable - their efficiency in retaining these individuals is much more disputable. Georges Corm believes that universities in Lebanon tend to produce migrants, and not in-country professionals,⁴⁸⁹ contributing to a significant "brain drain".⁴⁹⁰ Political instability and the high cost of living may be other major reasons behind this "brain drain". This youth migration phenomenon seem to be of no concern to political elites in Lebanon, as many of them find more relevant to the economy the amount of money that these émigrés can send back to their own families each month. In addition to that, they rely on the possibility that migrants could bring back to their own country some technological and professional skills once they return; Some even implied that migration can reduce the amount of competition among youth and their future progeny. Apparently, diaspora remittance can perfectly counterbalance the loss of human capital.

Entrepreneurs for the Reconstruction. A Triangular Game: Depending Citizens, Political Forces and Predatory Businessmen

Lebanese contemporary history has been characterised by a high degree of tension between sectarian groups and the state. In a number of cases, minority groups'

⁴⁸⁷ R. el Husseini (2012), p. 119.

⁴⁸⁸ *MainGate Magazine*, American University of Beirut. "Brain Drain", Fall 2009.

⁴⁸⁹ George Corm, interview with the author.

⁴⁹⁰ R. El Husseini (2012), p. 120.

resistance to localised majority groups developed into a manifest attempt to limit the action of the central authority by embracing alternative loyalties, both transnational and inter-religious. Makdisi argues that in a multiconfessional Lebanon the old-fashioned idea of longstanding violence between competing sects is unsustainable.⁴⁹¹ However, political microanalysis based on empirical material and published researches on the southern peripheries of Beirut and south Lebanon show that in situations where state and ethno-religious groups fail to establish a dialogue, tension leads citizens to view the state as alien and other groups as enemies.

This section analyses how Amal and Hezbollah post-conflicts (post-1990 and post-2006) *strategies of reconstruction* have interacted with the central state and how they have been legitimated. Considering the Weberian notion of the state's power and Prato's analysis of citizen loyalties to the state as a welfare provider,⁴⁹² and reassessing this notion with empirical data collected in the Lebanese context, these paragraphs examine how the process of reconstruction was undertaken, the main actors involved, and how the widespread corruption in Lebanon is the result of the consensus and the prevailing confessional system that was established at the end of the civil war. The analysis also suggests that group denial of the state's role is most evident at a local level, where sectarian attitudes (e.g. concerning land or property issues) take precedence over nationally based loyalties and where this denial is the only perceptible means of survival for both the individual and his group.

Amal and the Elyssar Project: Negotiating and Opposing the State

The Public Agency for the Planning and Development of the South Western suburbs of Beirut is commonly known as The Elyssar Reconstruction Project. The Elyssar project area is situated about 3.5 km south of the Beirut Central District; it is well placed in relation to major planned highways and other developments in the Metropolitan area. The project area extends over 586 hectares from the Summerland Resort and Sports

⁴⁹¹ Ussama Makdisi (2000), *The Culture of Sectarianism. Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon*. Los Angeles: California University Press.

⁴⁹² Giuliana Prato, The cherries of the mayor. Degrees of morality and responsibility in local administration, in Italo Pardo (ed.) (2000), *Morals of Legitimacy: Between Agency and the System*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

City in the North to the boundary of Beirut International Airport in the South.⁴⁹³ Before the Public Agency was enacted, the contention over the private agency which was originally submitted to the council involved three years of political debates between Nabih Berri, Hezbollah, under the pretext of the majority of Shiites inhabiting the affected areas, and the late Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri.

The Elyssar project was aimed at the reorganisation and rehabilitation of the post civil war's destructed suburbs of south Beirut, an area populated predominantly by illegal Shiite squatters displaced during the conflict. The project aimed at the relocation of these inhabitants and their provision with housing in return for the right to demolish and redevelop part of the land, particularly the high-potential coastal area.⁴⁹⁴ To ensure the development, Elyssar had the aim to: 1) provide the area of all necessary infrastructure and public services; 2) the construction of approximately 10,120 units of affordable housing over a 14-year period; 3) the creation of around 100,000 m² of light manufacturing, parks, warehouses and workshop centres.⁴⁹⁵

In 1993, Berri advocated against the creation of a real estate company, preventing it from passing in parliament. It took three years to debate the form of the company, its aims and plans. When the draft of a public agency was prepared by the late Prime Minister Hariri, it was given to Berri for his review, as well as the Minister of Public Works "who refused to sign the decree until political consensus was reached."⁴⁹⁶ The private agency proposal was dropped in 1994, as a result of heavy criticisms from Hezbollah and the Amal movement who claimed that the inhabitants had the right to not be relocated. Many observers also attributed this vehement opposition from Amal and Hezbollah against creating a real estate agency to the effects of physical separation and demographic changes. Such separation and changes would ultimately lead to weakening the parties' influence in the area as well as their electoral base, should a reconstruction plan be implemented. Hezbollah's MP Hajj Ali Amar, in relaying

⁴⁹³ For more information on the project, the mandate, goals, aims and phases of the agency see: www.elyssar.com [accessed May 2014].

⁴⁹⁴ Mona Harb el-Kak, "Transforming the Site of Dereliction into the Urban Culture of Modernity: Beirut's southern Suburb and the Elisar project". in Peter Rowe and Hashim Sarkis (eds.) (1998), *Projecting Beirut: Episodes in the Construction and Reconstruction of a Modern City*. Munich: Prestel-Verlog, pp. 173-82.

⁴⁹⁵ H. Sarkis (1998).

⁴⁹⁶ Ibrahim Amine, "After Solidere ... Elyssar for tidying the southern suburbs of Beirut" *As-Safir* 16 August 1994.

concerns about Elyssar, stated that “we are against any demographic change in the area; not due to religious or political reasons, but to national interest lending credit to the role of these people in maintaining Lebanon’s unity”.⁴⁹⁷ After much negotiation and talks, the agency was created as a public agency in 1996 as per Decree No 9043 dated 30/08/1996, with administrative and financial autonomy, and commercial real estate development prerogatives to fulfil its mission under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister.

Major criticisms were directed at the agency’s board members, primarily because of its unbalanced composition and its unequal sectarian representation. Among the criticisms, an interesting issue was raised: the board restricting the Shiite representation to Amal and Hezbollah only. As some noted, “the original inhabitants of the suburbs are not represented” because although a minority, not all Shiites can de facto be claimed to support Amal and Hezbollah.⁴⁹⁸

After the inception, the project began with some concessions made to Amal and Hezbollah. Although, unlike the Central District (Downtown) or Haret Hreik, no accommodation was reached between actors seeking exclusive sovereignty over the area and Elyssar was soon converted into a largely inactive public agency.⁴⁹⁹

The first evidence of failure came with the infamous Ouza‘i bridge (southern peripheries of Beirut). The members of the agency agreed at first that the residence would not be evicted except after providing them with alternative housing units, and consequently no monetary compensation had to be expected, as the housing units would provide an alternative. The debate over the Ouza‘i Bridge went on from 1995 until 2002 and culminated in the completion of two end sections and the abandonment of the median section of the bridge.⁵⁰⁰ Throughout those years, while the government was trying to continue the works for the implementation of the bridge project, members of Amal and Hezbollah on the board kept on voting against it because in their terms it threatened the

⁴⁹⁷ *Al-Shira*’ magazine pp. 16. na, nd. as quoted by Nadine Khayat, “Case Studies: The Elyssar Reconstruction Project. The Ministry of the Displaced. The Economic and Social Fund for Development”, Lebanese Centre for Policy Studies (LCPS), Lebanon 2007. Beirut: LCPS; London: Tiri.

⁴⁹⁸ “Amal and Hizb’allah dialogue with the people”, *An-Nahar* 11/08/1995, as quoted by N. Khayyat (2007).

⁴⁹⁹ Edward Randall, “Reconstruction and Fragmentation in West Beirut”, *The Middle East at King’s*, 13/02/2014.

⁵⁰⁰ N. Khayat (2007).

demographics in the area, had repercussions for the electoral base, and was unfair to the inhabitants. The Amal movement also demanded a compensation paid for residents from four million to 10 million USD for the whole plot.⁵⁰¹ According to the Shiite parties' MPs the people living in Ouza'i area had been "impoverished and displaced during the war and came and settled here from the South and Bekaa [Beqaa] and today the prime minister and Elyssar want to disrespect the people by paying 175,000 LP/square meters for both commercial and residential space which is robbing peoples' rights".⁵⁰² This reflects the extreme sectarian dynamic: the power-sharing relationship between stakeholders and the attempts to balance each group's quotas and demands within the board which eventually led to the inefficacy of the project. Not to mention an ambiguous overlap of responsibilities between a triangular game made of politics, depending citizens and contractors.

Under the presidency of Fouad Siniora (2007), the negotiations with Hezbollah re-initiated but with no significant outcomes. While Hezbollah and Amal delegates previously stressed the importance of Elyssar as a public agency because it allowed for the local participation of the concerned community and the importance of consulting with the community in the reconstruction process, both Hussein Khalil (now serving as Hezbollah Secretary-General's Political Aide) and Ali Hassan Khalil (now serving as Public Health Minister) thought it was unreasonable to expect the residents to stay in the area. Khalil even stated that around 60% of the area needed to be demolished for building hospitals, schools, and roads.⁵⁰³ But Elyssar failed to fulfil its mission of constructing public housing units, favouring instead the building of highways and large-scale facilities, such as the Sports City.⁵⁰⁴ It should be pointed out that the Khalils are also a family of wealthy entrepreneurs who became successful real estate businessmen in the 'social upward mobility' years. This shows not only yet another episode of corruption in Lebanon, but how the the political post-war status quo of powersharing led to completely subvert what was initially a potentially effective large-scale

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Mona Fawaz and Isabelle Peillen "Understanding Slums: Case Studies for the Global Report on Human Settlements 2003 - The case of Beirut, Lebanon" Report, 2003.

⁵⁰³ N. Khayat (2007).

⁵⁰⁴ Mona Harb, (2000) "Post-War Beirut: Resources, Negotiations, and Contestations in the Elyssar Project", *The Arab World Geographer*, Vol.3, no.4, p. 117.

development project. In many ways, Elyssar can be viewed as a case of post-war public participation that was to a certain extent successful in involving the public and gauging public needs and aspirations. The project did attempt to include stakeholders on a large scale through their perceived representatives. However, the project's idea of participation was more one of negotiation to achieve the materialisation of this plan rather than to gather information public. The plan fell through even after financial compensation was offered to the local population. Elyssar has therefore, since its establishment, failed when it comes to the implementation of the major portions of the project.⁵⁰⁵

Actors such as Rafiq Hariri and Hezbollah could have had an interest in the policy being implemented, but the official and officious policy-making has turned the policy into an un-applicable one. The necessity of consensus about features such as the type of agency executing the project and the content of the policy have brought the actors to collectively block possibility of implementation. Lebanon's consociational context makes it compulsory to integrate numerous actors into the process, especially because the area concerned by the policy is governed by Shiite groups. Therefore, the symbolism of the policy (because of the territory, scope, and people affected) has pushed actors to involve themselves a lot in decision-making and communication about this step, so as to make implementation secondary.⁵⁰⁶ The southern suburbs have traditionally been a territory of confrontation between two parties. Knowing those features, the approval of Hezbollah and Amal has been essential in the steps of policy formulation, decision-making and (non-)implementation. But Amal and Hezbollah are not the only actors to have found an interest in the policy even if it has not been implemented: 1) a public agency has been created but has not been able to satisfy its tasks; 2) inhabitants have mostly not been expropriated, neither rehoused; 3) Hezbollah has not lost its privileged power on the territory; it has even gained some legitimacy; 4) the state has had the possibility of investing the area through a new institution and to lead some infrastructure works facilitating the access to Beirut.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Tala Nasr Stevenson, "Informal Consent: The Complexities of Public Participation in Post-Civil War Lebanon", PhD Thesis, Faculty of the Graduate School University of Southern California, December 2007.

⁵⁰⁶ Marion Waller (2013), "The Elyssar Project in Beirut and the Big Machine of Implementation Failure", *Essais des étudiants des masters urbains de Sciences Po*, 2013-xx, Paris, Sciences Po.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

The argument concerning Hezbollah and Amal is that they integrated themselves in the policy process not for the sake of policy implementation but for limiting the other coalition's power — reinforcing the argument that the Lebanese consociational system enables interest groups to be powerful, and not the State. A state actor is not only an elected or appointed official: in the first place, a state actor is an official representative of his community expected to defend his group's interests.

All the actors of Elyssar think that acting on space is, and can only be, political, and that everyone but him has strategic intentions regarding the space (the actors almost always express the assumed strategies of others, very seldom their own). Thus, the southern suburbs are considered by all of them as a territory, a space inhabited by a group, controlled by an authority, a place of power, a space that has to be defended or conquered, a marked space, collectively thought of, used and lived as specific, prone to multiple political and symbolical representations, the strength of which depends greatly on the suffering and passion which took place there and made it an emblematic place. The term "southern suburbs" or *dahiye* is never neutral in the mind of those who use it.⁵⁰⁸

Interestingly, Amal and Hezbollah don't have a different vision and different deep core beliefs when compared to the Solidère-Hariri coalition. It has been shown by a study on local governance in the southern suburbs by Mona Harb⁵⁰⁹ that their vision of urban planning is highly based on neoliberalism, as for Rafiq Hariri. Both models were prey to self-serving interests and political networking. What made a difference then, were the *interests* involved, not the vision *per se*. Hezbollah and Amal already had power on that portion of territory; consequently, it was not in their interest to let the state gain power. Besides, it was in their interest that people stayed inside a defined perimeter. The obvious interest for the Shiite groups was to get institutionalised in the process: they knew they would be included in a public agency while a private firm would have depended only on Hariri's coalition.

On Elyssar, Harb proposes four categories of resources: territory, information, legislation and time. As for territory, Hezbollah and Amal have incontestably more resources than the State; the policy implementation would surely lower this resource. This resource also explains why Hezbollah and Amal absolutely wanted people to stay

⁵⁰⁸ Valérie Clerc, "Negotiations of space, perceptions and strategies in the urban projects of Beirut's Southern Suburbs reconstruction. Negotiation of Space: The Politics and Planning of Destruction and Reconstruction in Lebanon", Report, Jun 2008, Oxford, United Kingdom.

⁵⁰⁹ Mona Harb "Pratiques comparées de participation dans deux municipalités de la banlieue de Beyrouth: Ghobeyri et Bourj Brajneh", in Agnès Favier (dir.), *Municipalités et pouvoirs locaux au Liban*. Beyrouth, CERMOC, 2001, p. 157-177.

in the Elyssar perimeter: they wanted to keep their voter pool (since a territory also means a “clientele”). As for information, the Shiites groups had a crucial role: they served as information intermediary for both the actors (because they knew the territory) and the residents (because they were included in the policy process). Hezbollah and Amal can therefore disseminate information as they wish, create rumours, block some processes.⁵¹⁰

Even though both Solidère and Elyssar provided a high risk of corruption because they served politicians’ self interests, the latter by being a public agency, it is directly accountable to the supervisory bodies in the Lebanese government such as the court of audit, the central inspection board, etc.⁵¹¹ While Solidere, as a private agency, is not directly accountable to the Lebanese government.

Elyssar as a final product turned out to be a major failure as a policy-making instrument. But there has been no real failure for the Hariri coalition in the sense that some modernisation works did happen in the area opening up the access to the suburbs; there has been no failure for Hezbollah and Amal since they retained their territorial power and improved their representative position toward residents of the southern suburbs; finally, it was not a failure for residents since their voice was heard.

Elyssar is also an unique policy-making case study, considering the consociational Lebanese context, with its constraints and restrictions, as a result of the prevailing confessional system that was confirmed at the end of the civil war. Negotiating with the state led to an opposition from the groups most spatially and ideologically involved in the project (negotiation of the appropriation and control of space) and to the non-implementation of the policies.

Hezbollah and the Waad Project: Dominating and Replacing the State

During the 2006 war, the Hezbollah TV channel Al Manar was able to broadcast two hours a day due to electricity provided by a local generator. During periods of intense bombing, Al Manar’s spokespeople repeatedly said, “We will rebuild everything they destroy”. Based on the extent of the damage, it was difficult to see how that could be

⁵¹⁰ M. Waller (2013); M. Harb (2001).

⁵¹¹ N. Khayat (2007).

possible either logistically or financially. Nevertheless, after the war concluded, Hezbollah followed through on its promise.

Hezbollah policy as a provider is generally in line with what Eicklman terms “new Muslim politics”, where being Muslim plays a role in the way people think “collectively and concretely about themselves and their society”.⁵¹² Prior to the 2006 war, Hezbollah was well known for its welfare and social institutions, which were mainly aimed to target the Shi‘a population, but traditionally served anyone requesting help. The case of the Hezbollah-led post-2006 war reconstruction project, known as Wa‘ad (‘promise’), is no different. Wa‘ad is sometimes presented as an NGO. It is true: Wa‘ad is related to the party association Jihad al-Bina, thus reflecting the power of a well structured and professional political organisation.⁵¹³

Lebanon has an extensive history of reconstruction, its systems’ coordination is complicated; arguably, reconstruction planning decisions can be understood as paradoxically centralised and decentralised simultaneously.⁵¹⁴ In spite of the most obvious assumption that would position the state at the centre of the reconstruction efforts, in the aftermath of the 2006 war “the Lebanese government did not regard itself as a primary reconstruction agent [...] Instead, it saw itself as an enabler or

⁵¹² Dale F. Eicklman, “Patrons and Clients in the ‘New’ Muslim Politics”, in Dionigi Albera, Anton Blok, & Christian Bromberger (eds.) (2001), *L’anthropologie de la Méditerranée*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, pp. 331-349.

Hamieh and Mac Ginty write that Lebanese state incapacity has long necessitated the involvement of non-state and international actors in both reconstruction and development more generally. Western governments’ aid bodies undertake certain projects, however, the involvement of Arab and Gulf States and Jihad al Bina, is particularly important. For instance, they note that the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has maintained a presence in Lebanon since 1966. In the aftermath of the 2006 war, aid contributions from Western states also paled in comparison to the contributions of Middle Eastern states: Kuwait donated US \$315 million, Qatar donated US \$300 million, Iran is rumoured to have donated as much as US \$1 billion, as did Saudi Arabia (Hamieh and Mac Ginty’s, “A Very Political Reconstruction: Governance and Reconstruction in Lebanon after the 2006 War”, in *Disasters*, no. 34, 2010, pp. 103-123; Dakin McDonald, “The Political Aesthetics of Postwar Reconstruction in Beirut. Solidere, Hezbollah, and the Disruption of the Sensible”. MA Thesis, Cultural Studies and Critical Theory Hamilton, Ontario Department of English and Cultural Studies, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, 2012).

⁵¹³ Eric Verdeil, “The Reconstruction Between Urban Planning Policies and Cultures: Beirut- Based Reflections. Waad, The uniqueness of experience”. Workshop on the reconstruction of the southern suburb of Beirut after the Israeli aggression in 2006, Jun 2012, Haret Hreik, Lebanon. Waad, pp.88-101, 2012.

⁵¹⁴ Dakin McDonald (2012).

facilitator”.⁵¹⁵ This happened largely because of a general acknowledgement that the Dahiyeh is Hezbollah’s ‘turf’.⁵¹⁶ In fact, Wa‘ad presents a few singularities if compared with other (re-)construction projects: if Solidère’s project serves the interests of private ownership (Hariri) and global capital, Hezbollah’s project (re)produces an ‘ownership’ structure designed to secure its *political* and *symbolic* capital. As such, in contrast to the state and replacing it, Hezbollah lost no time in commencing reconstruction efforts that were comprehensive, collective, and immediate. Just as reconstruction plans for Beirut’s Central District were constantly prepared throughout the civil war period, Hezbollah began taking notice and documenting the destruction of the Dahiyeh in the midst of ongoing bombings⁵¹⁷ and apparently it distributed over USD 100 million in cash to displaced homeowners within three days of the war’s end:

Hezbollah seemed the most effective on-the-ground actor as it directed bulldozers to raze damaged buildings and its volunteers staffed registration centres to assess the needs of returnees. The party justified its reconstruction activities as another part of its ‘war of resistance’ and, for many Lebanese, Hezbollah’s reconstruction activism contrasted with the seeming inefficiency of the state.⁵¹⁸

Examples of the efficiency of Hezbollah’s reconstruction work were also reported by other scholars in their fieldwork notes:

Hizbullah [Hezbollah] rebuilt everything. They finished everything. They gave money even to people who did not have damage. Many even lied to get money. Depending on the damage, they paid from \$100 to \$60,000. Later they even paid for the trees: from \$100 to \$200 per each tree. In Alma they gave money to 50 families. They also paid some \$20,000 for animals, for we have two big farms for cows and chickens. Hizbullah [Hezbollah], we assume, got money from Iran and paid in US dollars, brand new, in packets with serial numbers from bank, brought in black bags. They came without weapons, three on a car, with the money. They opened the bag in the municipality and gave money to those who signed in to get compensation. Hizbullah [Hezbollah] paid.⁵¹⁹

As a matter of fact, the same day the ceasefire went into effect, Nasrallah gave a speech on television and promised to help the Lebanese rebuild their houses, pay their rent,

⁵¹⁵ Roger Mac Ginty, and Christine Sylva Hamieh, “Made in Lebanon: Local Participation and Indigenous Responses to Development and Post-War Reconstruction.” *Civil Wars* 12.1-2 (2010), pp. 47-64.

⁵¹⁶ Mona Harb, and Mona Fawaz, “Influencing the Politics of Reconstruction in Haret Hreik”, *Lessons in Post-War Reconstruction: Case Studies from Lebanon in the Aftermath of the 2006 War*. Ed. Howayda Al-Harithy. London: Routledge (2010), pp. 21-45.

⁵¹⁷ Mona Harb, and Mona Fawaz (2010), p. 24.

⁵¹⁸ R. Mac Ginty, and C. S. Hamieh (2010), p. 106.

⁵¹⁹ Marcello Mollica, *A Post-War Paradox of Informality in South Lebanon: Rebuilding Houses or Destroying Legitimacy*, *STSS (Studies of Transition States and Societies)*, Vol 6/Issue 1, 2014.

and/or buy furniture.⁵²⁰ He did not precise where the money would come from, but a few hours later, hundreds of Lebanese reported damage estimates to Hezbollah agents. By the next day, Nasrallah was able to give a precise accounting of damage and officially launch a rebuilding program.⁵²¹ “Immediately [after the 2006 war] the Lebanese government came [to Dahiyeh] to show it felt responsibilities toward Lebanese citizens. They got money from Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to help us, but they stole almost all of it. Hezbollah started paying the day after [the end of hostilities]: in dollars, and in cash”, an informant from Dahieyh declared.⁵²² “My house was totally destroyed”, an other citizen from Dahieyh stated, “After I heard Sheik Nasrallah's speech, I started looking for an apartment”. Advisedly he did so, considering that the Hezbollah official in charge of the centre in Haret Hreik — one of the worst bombed areas in Beirut's southern suburbs, said people whose homes were totally destroyed would get money for one year of rent as well as for new furniture. Those whose homes were damaged would either fix it themselves and then collect money, or Hezbollah would send workers to do the job. Likewise, Nabil Kaouk, Hezbollah's commander in Tyre, declared that it would have taken Hezbollah reconstruction programme one year to rebuild their homes. In the meantime, the organisation would have covered their rental costs. And, most importantly, that Hezbollah assistance would not be funnelled through the federal government.⁵²³

The speed of Hezbollah’s reconstruction work was also recognised by teams from the United Nations Environment Programme, which conducted a post-conflict environmental assessment at the request of the Lebanese Government. In the final report’s sections devoted to the situation in Haret Hreik, the UNEP notes the efficiency — if not always the effectiveness — of Hezbollah’s reconstruction work. For instance, by the time UNEP teams conducted their environmental assessment of Haret Hreik in the fall of 2006, the removal of rubble had commenced

and the clean-up operation was well underway [...] Significant progress had been made in a relatively short period of time. The site was a hub of activity, with hundreds of heavy trucks

⁵²⁰ “Hezbollah promises to rebuild in Lebanon”, USA Today, 16/08/2006.

⁵²¹ Ibid.; M. Mollica (2014).

⁵²² Interview with the author, August 2008. In the aftermath of the war and for a few months, flyers and posters reading “Thank you Qatar” were affixed all over the Dahieyh area.

⁵²³ “Hezbollah Promises to Rebuild in Lebanon”, *As-Sharq al-Awsat*, 16/08/2006.

and machines involved in the demolition of damaged structures, backfilling of bomb craters, clearing of sites and transportation of rubble for treatment and disposal.⁵²⁴

Even though Hezbollah's reconstruction efficiency is undeniable, a few commentators have underlined how the organisation's post-war response demonstrates that urban planning was of secondary importance to an immediate reconstruction project that would almost literally rebuild the area as it had been prior to the war:

At work here are two distinct temporalities, one that abstracts from the urgency of everyday needs in a devastated neighbourhood in order to privilege comprehensive planning strategies for the future configuration of the district; and, on the other hand, an urgent temporality that seeks to quickly restore conditions familiar to residents of Haret Heroic even if such conditions are unsustainable, unliveable, and undesirable.⁵²⁵

Mona Fawaz, for instance, demonstrates how the Haret Hreik inhabitants did not want to have the area rebuilt to what it was before:

Interviews with dwellers indicate that the replication of the old urban fabric doesn't correspond to their aspirations. Residents expressed frustration vis-à-vis the spatial consequences of the high physical density...They also imagined a different Haret-Hreik through the speeches of Hezbollah's secretary general, one that includes many open spaces and of and gardens, something the master plan cannot possibly secure without reducing car circulation and the number of buildings.⁵²⁶

Hana Alamuddin, a Hezbollah-commissioned architect, also commented on Hezbollah's re-building strategy as a way to meet the residents' urgent basic needs and to demonstrate its capacity to provide necessary welfare services in contrast to the state (and replace it); and, at the same time, to ensure that residents remain dependent upon Hezbollah's welfare apparatus, which cannot be separated from its political hegemony in al-Dahiyeh.⁵²⁷

At the same time, Hezbollah cultivated Wa'd's image as a local, participatory project, (just as Solidère sought to convey a public image as a democratic project and

⁵²⁴ Lebanon. Post-Conflict Environment Assessment, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Report, First published in January 2007 by the United Nations Environment Programme; D. McDonald (2012).

⁵²⁵ D. McDonald (2012).

⁵²⁶ Mona Fawaz, "Hezbollah as Urban Planner? Questions To and From Planning Theory", *Planning Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2009), p. 329.

⁵²⁷ Hana Alamuddin, "Wa'd: The Reconstruction Project of the Southern Suburb of Beirut", in Howayda Al-Harithy (ed.) (2010), *Lessons in Post-War Reconstruction: Case Studies from Lebanon in the Aftermath of the 2006 War*. London: Routledge, pp. 46-70.

benevolent corporation).⁵²⁸ But if Solidère detains the primacy of a project involving private capitals and reducing the city to a set of assets with no citizens' participation included, Hezbollah is engaged in the production of subjectivity through a not entirely dissimilar strategy of accumulation: Hezbollah's Wa'ad project is meant to produce partisan political consolidation and not merely economic gain. The party has used the war and its limited engagement with the Lebanese state "to reinforce bonding *social capital*" (no emphasis in the original)⁵²⁹, and according to Fawaz's analysis, Hezbollah's reconstruction "project is [...] clearly different than other Lebanese projects since it doesn't seek the accumulation of financial capital. However, here too, the *accumulation of a different (political) capital* has trumped dweller's needs and the possibility of inclusive planning" (no emphasis in the original).⁵³⁰ As Fawaz writes:

In sum, *Wa'd* replicates in its design options the built environment that existed before the neighborhood demolition, despite the fact that several building clusters in this area had been produced in disrespect of minimum standards of liveability.⁵³¹

In short, Hezbollah's Wa'd project seeks to ensure that the structural unliveability of the neighbourhood is maintained, so that its own services and corresponding authority will continue to be required within the community. Its project attempts to 'own' politically the residents of al-Dahiyeh by ensuring that the presence of Hezbollah's welfare network and political apparatus remains unavoidable.

Interestingly, Hezbollah's reconstruction efforts were directed differently in Beirut than from the Beqaa or south Lebanon. In those areas (with the exception of Bint Jbeil and Tyr) the reconstruction was much more decentralised and only piloted by Jihad al-Bina, which collaborated with the municipalities. But in Beirut's suburbs, Hezbollah's position was radically different. The project Wa'd was elaborated in a very centralised and authoritarian way, without any negotiation with the central state whatsoever.⁵³²

⁵²⁸ Even though the general approach from urban planners is to regard 'indigenous' approaches as more effective, sustainable, and affordable in comparison to projects and processes imposed upon communities (R. Mac Ginty and C. S. Hamieh (2010), p. 47), the same authors suggest that "this linkage [between indigenous development and participatory reconstruction activities] deserves critical scrutiny" (p. 57).

⁵²⁹ R. Mac Ginty and C. S. Hamieh (2010), p. 61.

⁵³⁰ M. Fawaz (2009), p. 329.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² M. Harb (2010), *Le Hezbollah à Beyrouth*, p.229.

The experience of Wa'ad proves that urban planning in Lebanon could be executed without and even against the government. Moreover, re-building the area afflicted by the 2006 war with Israel to the immediately former state: the bond between the inhabitants and their living area was not strained; the memory remained sharp and not scrambled by other experiences.

Hezbollah's leading role in post-conflict reconstruction is consistent with the perpetual tensions between the organisation and the Lebanese state, as both strive to build or maintain legitimacy. Hezbollah was already challenging the state in what was supposed to be the state's exclusive domain of power, that is, the use of force as a legitimate means.⁵³³ Weber defines the modern state as "a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory [...] as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force". However, the right to make use of physical force may be given "to other institutions or to individuals [but] only to the extent to which the state permits it, for the state is the sole source of the right to use violence".⁵³⁴

⁵³³ M.Mollica (2014).

⁵³⁴ Max Weber (1918), Politics as a Vocation, Lecture.
<http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf> [accessed August 2015].

‘Tainted’ Remittances’, ‘Tainted Businesses’: Hezbollah’s ‘Fundraising’ Activities

Diaspora Remittances: Ideology and Realpolitik

The way in which Lebanon’s political economy has structurally enabled and shaped diaspora entrepreneurship is often unexplored. This political economy dynamic is dialectic and heavily influenced by Lebanon’s sectarian system. On the one hand, the social and financial capital of emigrated Lebanese entrepreneurs is crucial for their respective communities back home in accessing business capital and state posts.⁵³⁵ On the other hand, because this is the case, Lebanon’s socio-political communities have supported their respective diaspora entrepreneurs.⁵³⁶

Pearlman shows that emigration is beneficial for Lebanon’s various political- sectarian communities “in the sense of realpolitik”⁵³⁷, making it reasonable to assume these communities have an interest in supporting ‘their’ entrepreneurs abroad. Similarly, Lebanese abroad “are in a continuous process of being involved in homeland politics”.⁵³⁸ Hourani emphasises that “participation in the political life of Lebanon, particularly in Parliament, by the Lebanese migrants has been evident” and shows that “today, one out of five Lebanese deputies was at one time a migrant”.⁵³⁹

I have already described how the Lebanese Shi‘a entrepreneurial class in Sierra Leone has “made regular contributions to factions in that region’s never-ending conflicts, in

⁵³⁵ Wendy Pearlman, “Emigration and Power: A Study of Sects in Lebanon 1860-2010.”, *Politics and Society*, vol. 41, no.1 (2013), pp. 115-116.

⁵³⁶ Nora Stel, “Diaspora versus Refugee. The Political Economy of Lebanese Entrepreneurship Regimes”, Working Paper No. 2013/16, Maastricht School of Management, 2013.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.; W. Pearlman (2013), p. 105.

⁵³⁸ Paul Tabar, interview with the author (April 2014); Paul Tabar and Nathalie Nahas, Introduction, in Paul Tabar and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss (eds.) (2010), *Politics, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. xv-2; N. Stel (2013).

⁵³⁹ Guita Hourani, “Lebanese Diaspora and Homeland Relations.” Paper Prepared for the Migration and Refugee Movements in the Middle East and North Africa Conference, The American University in Cairo, Egypt - October 23-25, 2007.; N. Stel (2013).

return receiving the support of these political militias in their endeavours in Sierra Leone's diamond industry".⁵⁴⁰ Gbeire has illustrated how Nabih Berri and Jamil Sahid Mohamed, a Shi'a business magnate in Sierra Leone,⁵⁴¹ had huge joint investments in the Middle East that were used both to fund the Lebanese Amal movement as well as business investments in Africa.⁵⁴² Similar paths have been shown for the Sunni community in Saudi Arabia.⁵⁴³

Supporting entrepreneurship abroad is a balancing act between "losing demographic numbers inside the country and accessing material resources from outside it".⁵⁴⁴ According to Tabar "on the one hand, the emigration flow leads to a major loss in human capital, and, on the other, it has created a vast Lebanese diasporic community which provides a main source of foreign currency and makes a global network available to the local community".⁵⁴⁵ Emigration reflected the relative power of the Lebanese sectarian communities – while initially especially Christians had the resources and networks to emigrate, later migrants were Sunni and Shi'a, "highly skilled and highly paid".⁵⁴⁶ Approaching "the rises and falls in sects' power through the lens of migration",⁵⁴⁷ what made the Shi'a diaspora strategically distinctive compared to the other main sects is the political impact of the migration, via a broader-based social mobility that supported collective organisation. If entrepreneurs in the diaspora constitute a crucial element of political movements' strategies to acquire and maintain

⁵⁴⁰ Lansana Gberie (2013), "War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection". The Diamonds and Human Security Project, Occasional Paper #6.

⁵⁴¹ The Shiite community's growing predominance in Sierra Leone's diamond trade was cemented in the 1970s with the rise in power of Jamil Sahid Mohamed, known as Jamil. By 1984 Jamil controlled most of the nation's diamond production of some 2 million carats a year. Jamil was a childhood friend of another Lebanese born in Sierra Leone, Nabih Berri. A December 2000 issue of the *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* noted Berri had distinguished himself "as both one of the most reviled of Lebanon's militia elites (even among fellow Shiite Muslims) and the most loyal of Syria's Lebanese allies" (Daniel Nassif, "Nabih Berri: Lebanese Parliament Speaker", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, December 2000; L. Gbeire, 2013).

⁵⁴² Ibid. p. 12-13; N. Stel (2013).

⁵⁴³ Denooux, Guilain and Robert Springborg, "Hariri's Lebanon: Singapore of the Middle East or Sanaa of the Levant?", *Middle East Policy* 6 (1998), pp. 158-173.

⁵⁴⁴ W. Pearlman (2013), p. 105.

⁵⁴⁵ P. Tabar (2010), p. 6.

⁵⁴⁶ W. Pearlman (2013), p. 116.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 116.

political power, it can be assumed that political support from these movements for diaspora entrepreneurs is an integral component of this strategy.

The need for financial resources to support welfare programs combined with a desire to be more self-sufficient resulted in the early establishment of fundraising operations separate from state sponsorship (like *zakat*, that utilises common ideology to garner financial resources, and *khoms*⁵⁴⁸). An organisational goal to increase self-reliance led Hezbollah to seek alternate sources of funding. The geo-strategic variables, host-nation characteristics, and diaspora characteristics of areas in Africa and Latin America provided a potential source for an independent source of required funding. However, despite the development of separate sources of funding, the generous amount of financial support Hezbollah receives from Iran is a mean to sustain its legitimacy with its constituency in Lebanon. It appears logical that Hezbollah's fundraising operations (through ideology linked procedures like *zakat* or fundraising operations within diasporas) can be attributed to an organisational motivation to increase the diversity of sources of its funding. The fact that multiple causal relationships support the rationale behind Hezbollah's use of fundraising operations in Africa, Latin America, or elsewhere reinforces the argument that, although state support is vital to Hezbollah's operations and its maintenance is important, financial self-sufficiency is a goal of organisational survival.⁵⁴⁹

Hezbollah's major source of finances - along with Iran's contributions and the party's social network activities - comes in the form of foreign remittances from contributors of the supporters of the party living outside Lebanon, particularly those Lebanese Shiites living in South America and Africa. MP Mohammad Ra'ad, head of Hezbollah's "Loyalty to the Resistance" bloc in the Lebanese parliament, claims that the main

⁵⁴⁸ Khoms (also spelled khums) are an exclusive phenomenon related to the Shiite Islam. They represent one fifth of individual income and they are paid to local marjiyyah (pl. marjaa), who exercise religious authority with the right to explain Islamic law. For the majority of Lebanese Shiites, the main religious authority is Iranian Supreme leader, who, nevertheless, named Hezbollah representatives Hasan Nasrallah and Shaikh Yazbak its representatives, thus religious contributions can be channelled to Hezbollah directly.

⁵⁴⁹ Howard Vincent Meehan, "Terrorism, Diasporas and Permissive Threat Environments. A Study of Hizbollah's Fundraising operations in Paraguay and Ecuador", Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA., December 2004.

income of Hezbollah is generated through private investment and wealthy Shiites⁵⁵⁰. That said, there is a portion of Shiite Lebanese businessmen living in Africa, Canada, USA, Latin America,

etc. who are not affiliated in any way to Hezbollah.⁵⁵¹ ‘Protection’ from Amal or Hezbollah is a different matter: according to many primary sources I interviewed, it seems impossible to carry on medium-large scale business activities anywhere in Lebanon or in many Shiite-dominated areas in sub-Saharan Africa without somehow ‘dealing’ with the organisations. One of the very first anecdotes I was told is about an orange juice businessman who had established his activity in a location near Sur ‘governed’ by Amal. It didn’t pass much time when Amal representatives visited him to ask for some ‘protection’ money. When I approached a Amal *cadre* to inquire whether this story corresponded to the truth, he elaborated: “We did not ask for a bribe, we just offered him our services to help him out with documents and other stuff regarding his activity”.⁵⁵² A thirty year old entrepreneur I interviewed in 2008 on corruption and clientelism (or ‘mafism’, in Pino Alracchi’s terms) remarked:

“Sorry but there is no way to pity the Shi’a. They are 80%-85% Amal or Hezbollah supporters and will be infinitely more emboldened now, looking to rap the political benefits of their military “victory”. I think we are heading towards a period where an Entrepreneur will have to hire a certain contingent of Shi’a or else... a banker has to give loans to Shi’a or else...an investor has to work with a Shi’a dimension or else... And perhaps more importantly, comes election day, vote for the Shi’a-sponsored list or else”.

⁵⁵⁰ Scott Wilson, “Lebanese wary of a rising Hezbollah”, *The Washington Post*, 20/12/2004.

⁵⁵¹ It must be pointed out in their new countries of origin, particularly in West Africa, Lebanese usually became very successful businesspeople due to their centuries-long experience as traders and merchants. However, Lebanese abroad experienced great difficulties with integrating into their new homes and they often retained certain form of distinguished identity. Generally speaking, Lebanese around the world also maintain large degree of empathies with their homeland, what was proofed for example during 2006 conflict between Hezbollah and Israel. These distinctive features of Lebanese communities made the relationship with local populations tense. Lebanese businessmen have been also frequently accused of unfair or even illicit business practices and exploitation of local labour. This has lead into widespread resentment against Lebanese population. In fact this perception of Lebanese and Syrians has been even immortalised in legendary novel by Graham Greene *The Heart of the Matter*. As a consequence, despite being materially wealthy, Lebanese community in West Africa and beyond has been often politically marginalised and often used by various “ethnic entrepreneurs” as widely accepted “others (Mara A. Leichtman, “Migration, War and the Making of a Transnational Lebanese Shi’i Community in Senegal”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 42, (2010), pp. 269-290,

⁵⁵² Interview with the author.

A way to keep the foreign remittances and immigrant donations flowing actively, Hezbollah organises fundraising activities in countries where the Shi'a presence is considerable. Millions of dollars are collected and sent to Hezbollah during such activities. To give an example, the Union Transport Africaines Flight 141 that crashed while taking off from Cotonou, Benin in West Africa was said to be carrying two million dollars of contributions to Hezbollah all the way to Beirut.⁵⁵³ This generous amount, is just the proceeds of one of many similar fundraising events that are organised to support Hezbollah. The party's charity organisations are very powerful in keeping party followers mobilised and always ready to support the party financially aside from the moral backing.⁵⁵⁴ In fact, what must be understood is that diasporas are commonly motivated to support organisations for communal or ideological reasons.⁵⁵⁵ The tactics used for fundraising from a diaspora may indicate the relative power relationship that exists between the communal or ideological motivations for support. Evidence of a large amount of donations by diasporas to Hezbollah-linked social organisations or of large amounts of donations sent to organisations and individuals in Lebanon is likely indicative of a strong communal motivation within the diaspora. An important distinction must be made regarding the nature of this relationship: the existence of communal motivation does not depend on whether the donations made to Hezbollah-linked organisations or individuals.⁵⁵⁶ However, evidence of Hezbollah's extensive use of extortion is likely indicative of weak communal support. Additionally, levels of communal support will fluctuate with perceptions the effectiveness of Hezbollah. This relationship, otherwise known as the "bandwagon effect,"⁵⁵⁷ appears to be linked to ideological motivations for support.

⁵⁵³ David Levitt (2013), *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God*. London: C. Hurst & Co.

⁵⁵⁴ Meghry KhoShi'an, "Unraveling Hizbullah Institutional Paradox. State Interventionist Thought Versus Neo-Liberal Practices", MA Thesis, School of Arts and Sciences, Lebanese American University, June 2012.

⁵⁵⁵ Daniel L. Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Roseneau, and David Brannan, "Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements". RAND, 2001.

⁵⁵⁶ H. V. Meehan (2004).

⁵⁵⁷ D. L. Byman et al. (2001)

Business and Logistics Between Lebanon and Africa: The Tajeddine Brothers

When the Ethiopian Airlines Flight 409 crashed off the Lebanese coast in January 2010 Hasan Tajeddine, one of the victims, received the Hezbollah equivalent of a state funeral.⁵⁵⁸ Tajeddine was identified as the owner of the Angola-based Arosfran Company, which he ran with his brother Qassem. Speaking at the press, one of Hasan's cousin said that "Hasan had been living in Africa for over thirty years. He was a very successful businessman, with ties to Hezbollah, a movement he strongly supported".⁵⁵⁹

Qassem Tajeddine is one of the biggest business men in Lebanon, and possibly one of the richest Shi'a in the world. He is originally from south Lebanon (Jabal 'Amil) and he was designated by the US Treasury Department in May of 2009. The Treasury declared that Qassem and his brother ran several cover companies for Hezbollah in Africa.⁵⁶⁰ Qassem had also "contributed tens of millions of dollars to Hezbollah and has sent funds to Hezbollah through his brother, a Hezbollah commander in Lebanon".⁵⁶¹ He was also previously imprisoned in Belgium (2003) on charges of large-scale tax fraud, money laundering and trade in conflict diamonds. The action also targeted a network of businesses that are owned or controlled by the Tajeddine brothers operating in Gambia, Lebanon, Sierra Leone (Qassem had a double citizenship), the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, and the British Virgin Islands. Also designated by the US Department for providing support to Hezbollah was Bilal Mohsen Wehbe, a Hezbollah member who has served, at the request of Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah, as

⁵⁵⁸ Mona Alami, "Disproportionate Loss", *NOW Lebanon*, 27/01/2010; Tony Badran, "Hezbollah Acts Local, Thinks Global", *NOW Lebanon*, 22/06/2010.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Matthew Levitt (2013), p. 258.

⁵⁶⁰ Treasury Targets Hizballah Financial Network. US Department of the Treasury, Press Centre, 12/9/2010.

<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg997.aspx> [accessed July 2015]; Everett Stern, "Intelligence Report: Hezbollah's Active Network in the United States", *Tactical Rabbit*. Premium Intelligence Services, 27/10/2014; Federal Register/Vol. 75, No. 244/Tuesday, December 21, 2010/Notices <http://docs.regulations.justia.com/entries/2010-12-21/2010-32003.pdf> [accessed July 2015].

⁵⁶¹ Matthew Levitt (2013), pp. 246-261.

Hezbollah's chief representative in South America.⁵⁶² Wehbe also has worked for the office of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei,

Another Tajeddine — Ali — also said to be involved in the conflict-diamond trade, is better known in Lebanon for buying swaths of real estate in Druze and Christian areas (to the extent that starting from the 1990s, Waleed Jumblatt prohibited the sale of Druze-area terrain lots to Shiites). In this way, he has helped provide geographical continuity between Lebanon's disparate Shi'a areas, in which Hezbollah has allegedly established "security zones". Much in the same way that Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps has set up multiple business ventures, Hezbollah is partnering with Shi'a businessmen in the diaspora, voluntarily or through coercion and intimidation.⁵⁶³ This is not without consequences for the Shi'a communities abroad. For instance, in October 2014, news broke that the Emirati authorities had deported dozens of Lebanese Shi'a, perhaps more, on suspicion of working with Hezbollah. According to some sources I interviewed in a Ghobeire-based NGO, the Lebanese Shi'a community in the Gulf is the least likely to have connections with Hezbollah because of its close monitoring.

Ali Tajeddine is also a major player in Jihad Al Bina, the south-Beirut based construction company formed and operated by Hezbollah. According to Nicholas Blandford, "Ali Tajeddine was reportedly paid top dollar for each square meter of land, often paying sellers' initial asking price in cash. The land purchases were near a new highway build by Iran-funded NGO that replaced a potholed road running between Jezzine and the southern Beqaa Valley — traversing precisely the security pockets where Hezbollah was said to be building Shi'a communities aimed at linking Shi'a communities in the east near Nabatiyyeh with others in the west."⁵⁶⁴

Husayn Tajeddine, another brother, and Qassem Tajeddine's network were designated by U.S. Department of Treasury in 2010 as a multipurpose, multinational business

⁵⁶² "America Sanctions Lebanese Companies in Salone...Funds Hezbollah Groups", *Standard Times Press Newspaper*, 01/08/2015.

⁵⁶³ Jeffrey Goldberg, "In the Party of God. Hezbollah sets up operations in South America and the United States", *The New Yorker*, 28/10/2002.

⁵⁶⁴ Nicholas Blandford (2011), *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle Against Israel*. New York: Random House, pp. 424-425; Nicholas Blandford, interview with the author, April and June 2014.

venture involved in international trade as well as real estate and presided over by Ali, Husayn and Qassim Tajeddine.⁵⁶⁵ Under the name of Tajco Company LLC, Ali Tajeddine developed the properties, established mortgage loans and acquired mortgage-life insurance to cover the mortgage borrowers. Since at least March 2006, Husayn Tajeddine owned 50 percent of Tajco Ltd, in Banjul, Gambia and served as the managing director of the company. Kairaba Supermarket is also a subsidiary business of Tajco Ltd, with both companies naming Husayn Tajeddine as the same point of contact and manager and using the same primary business address. As of mid-2007, the Tajeddine brothers were running cover companies in the food, services and diamond trades for Hezbollah. And since at least December 2007, Ali Tajeddine used Tajco Sarl, operating as Tajco Company LLC, as the primary entity to purchase and develop properties in Lebanon on behalf of Hezbollah.⁵⁶⁶

In September 2012, the Treasury Department exposed another Hezbollah money laundering scheme in Gambia: drug proceeds were used to purchase used cars in the United States that were then shipped to West Africa, among other destinations.⁵⁶⁷ These transactions were facilitated through the Lebanese Canadian Bank and its subsidiaries, including Prime Bank Limited, a private commercial bank in Gambia.

The scandal of the Lebanese Canadian Bank was the biggest evidence of the ever-expanding role of Hezbollah in drug trade according to the investigations of the American and Israeli intelligence. The bank was accused of serving as a haven for Hezbollah's money deposits and around 200 accounts inside the bank - all worth millions - were identified as belonging to supporters of the party. The way things were interpreted, these Shi'a businessmen who owned these accounts were involved in illegitimate businesses to finance the party. They were combining the drug proceeds with their legitimate business gains to make it sound legitimate.⁵⁶⁸ Lebanese financial institutions tied to Hezbollah wired over \$300 million from Lebanon into the United

⁵⁶⁵ Treasury Targets Hizballah Financial Network, U.S. Department of Treasury, Press Centre, 12/9/2010 <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg997.aspx> [accessed July 2015].

⁵⁶⁶ *Standard Times Press Newspaper*, 01/08/2015.

⁵⁶⁷ Treasury Targets Hizballah Financial Network.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

States to buy and ship used cars to West Africa as part of a money laundering scheme. Profits from the car sales and narcotics were then funnelled back to Lebanon through money laundering channels controlled by Hezbollah, including LCB and two Lebanese exchange houses – the Hassan Ayash Exchange Company and Ellissa Holding – as well as their subsidiaries and affiliates.⁵⁶⁹

“It’s no Secret”

The Lebanese Canadian Bank scandal also exposed the tactics used by Amal and Hezbollah to raise funds from Lebanese communities in Africa. Almost the totality of the people I interviewed in Lebanon, at all levels, admitted to be aware of the ‘forced’ nature of some Lebanese expats’ contributions. The tactics used by the political organisations to get money from their compatriots include strategies to appeal to their national, political, sectarian or religious affiliations, but do not exclude threats or even open violence, according to a NGO report.⁵⁷⁰ “For those expatriated who have resisted solicitations to support various groups back home, including Hezbollah, the response has often been attacks on commercial properties by organised groups of Lebanese thugs”.⁵⁷¹

It is necessary to stress out again how, in general, Lebanese businessmen in West Africa have maintained close political ties with their home country. As Gbeire writes:

The Lebanese in West Africa, even those born there, remained and continue to remain intensely aware of events in Lebanon. The more successful have property and other investments in the Middle East. This is a source of mistrust throughout the region, for many have never fully integrated into the countries in which they live. Some of the wealthiest businessmen in the Middle East are Lebanese who made their money in West Africa; in Lebanon they are referred to as ‘Africans’. Their loyalty, however, remains with the Middle East, and many have made regular contributions to factions in that region’s never-ending conflicts. In Côte d’Ivoire in the 1980s and 1990s (as in Sierra Leone and Liberia) individual Lebanese were required to fund the war in Lebanon, and as in Beirut itself, the youngest members of the community are recruited to collect these dues while immigrants are continuously having the good fortune of their immunity from the war impressed on them, and their moral obligation to make at least a financial contribution to national

⁵⁶⁹ Abha Shankar, “Lebanese Canadian Bank to Pay \$102 Million in Hizballah Laundering Case”, The Investigative Project on Terrorism, 27/06/2013.

⁵⁷⁰ Global Witness, “For a Few Dollars More: How al Qaeda Moved into the Diamond Trade”, 24/04/2003; M. Levitt (2013), 259.

⁵⁷¹ Lansana Gberie, “War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection” Report. Publisher: Partnership Africa-Canada (PAC), 2004.

liberation or to the new Lebanon. This pressure ‘on occasion develops into an outright racket, as when organized gangs attack commercial premises’ belonging to unenthusiastic Lebanese. Many of the factions in the Lebanese civil wars, including the Christian Phalange, the Druze militia, Hezbollah and Amal, working within the various Lebanese communities, were implicated in these activities, but Amal was by far the strongest.⁵⁷²

The most obvious expression of this “outright racket” at the expense of even legitimate businessmen is ‘tax collection’ from Amal or Hezbollah. “At least once a year, senior Hezbollah operatives travel through the region collecting the ‘donations’ to be returned to Beirut”.⁵⁷³ “With the aid of extensive social intelligence networks in Lebanon and abroad, Hezbollah knows which Lebanon-based families have diaspora relatives.⁵⁷⁴ Carrying the cash home on chartered flights, Amal and Hezbollah’s couriers avoid bank transfers and scrutiny by authorities. Once or twice a year, according to Farah, Hezbollah officials inform businessmen abroad how much their contribution should be, based on assessment of each business’s expected earnings.⁵⁷⁵ That goes to show how much spread and institutionalised Amal and Hezbollah presence in Africa is,

For a glimpse of how much money Hezbollah raises in the region, consider one case. On Dec. 25, 2003, a charter flight UTA 141, scheduled to fly from Cotonou, Benin, in West Africa to Beirut, crashed on takeoff, killing all the passengers. On board were senior Hezbollah members, carrying \$2 million in contributions to the organization from across the region. Arab press reports said the money represented the “regular contributions the party receives from wealthy Lebanese nationals in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin and other African states.” A senior Hezbollah official was immediately dispatched to Benin to console the “sons of the Lebanese community”.⁵⁷⁶

Even though most Lebanese in Africa are middle/upper class traders, the community also included a number of multimillionaires in import-export, manufacturing and agro-industrial companies, as well as restaurant, hotels, tourist resorts owners. Over time the Lebanese Shiite community has come to be dominant in the trade of rice, gasoline, wine, chicken, pasta and many other basic imported commodities, often through family alliances that control all aspects of the trade from buying the produce in Europe to the

⁵⁷² Ibid.

⁵⁷³ Douglas Farah, “Hezbollah’s External Support Network in West Africa and Latin America”, International Assessment and Strategy Centre, 04/08/2006.

⁵⁷⁴ Rex Hudson, “Lebanese Businessmen and Hezbollah in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Symbiotic Relationship,” Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, September 2010.

⁵⁷⁵ D. Farah (2006); M. Levitt (2013), p. 260.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

airlines that ship it to the West African outlets.⁵⁷⁷ Lebanese families negotiate monopoly import deals with the government, allowing them to charge more than competitive rates for specific products and share some of the wealth through payoffs to government officials while generating more revenue for Hezbollah and other recipients of their largesse. This was particularly true in Liberia, where the Taylor regime sold monopoly franchises of rice, petroleum products and vehicle importation to different Lebanese families, who in turn made millions of dollars.⁵⁷⁸

In 2000 a European Union official pointed out how Hezbollah pressures Lebanese in Africa to contribute to its cause: “Hizbollah [Hezbollah] is active and deeply involved in many businesses across the region. Its is only a small part of the Lebanese community that is sympathetic, but many people contribute to them to keep Hizbollah] off their backs”.⁵⁷⁹ In 2004 the deputy chief of mission at the US embassy un Sierra Leone reported: “It’s not even an open secret; there is no secret. There’s a lot of social pressure and extortionate pressure brought to bear: ‘You [...] better support our, cause or we’ll visit your people back home’”.⁵⁸⁰

Hezbollah Business Activities: The Latin America Connections and Beyond

Another important income source for Hezbollah is its widespread networks of business activities whether legitimate or not. The party is known to have established major companies in several countries in Africa, Latin America and beyond.⁵⁸¹ In addition to the party of God’s substantial funds generated from exporting diamonds from various African countries such as Liberia, Congo, and Sierra Leone, Hezbollah is also known to be popular in trading of other goods such as cosmetics or frozen meat.⁵⁸² One

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁸ “Following Taylor’s Money: A Path of War and Destruction,” Coalition for International Justice, Washington DC., May 2005.

⁵⁷⁹ Global Witness, “For a Few Dollars More”, p. 24.

⁵⁸⁰ Associate Press, “Hezbollah Extorting Funds from West Africa’s Diamond Trade”, *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv), 30/06/2004.

⁵⁸¹ M. Levitt (2013); M. KhoShi’an (2012).

⁵⁸² Jo Becker, “Beirut bank seen as a hub of Hezbollah’s financing”, *The New York Times*, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/14/world/middleeast/beirut-bank-seen-as-a-hub-of-hezbollahs-financing.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all [accessed June 2014].

accusation that has become popular is the claim that the party uses its charity organisations as a tool to hide secret activities.⁵⁸³ Similarly, the party is said to be using its legitimate business companies for laundering or transferring large amounts of money. The most common example here is the Western Union offices run by local Hezbollah officials.⁵⁸⁴

When talking about the party's illegitimate activities, the most common illegal businesses are money laundry/whitening and drug smuggling.⁵⁸⁵ The party is said to be involved in various criminal businesses related to these two charges across the world and particularly in North and South America and in Africa. The purpose is to provide money for the party to finance its military, social, and political programs.⁵⁸⁶ Government bureaucrats in Chile and Venezuela have identified a number of import-export companies, mostly located in the free-trade zone areas that purportedly serve as shell companies for Hezbollah. The same have been observed by Venezuelan officials as well.⁵⁸⁷ One recent exposition of the party's illicit activities claims that it has "gained a deepening foothold in the cocaine business according to an assessment by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime".⁵⁸⁸ It also asserts that senior party officials are involved in the cocaine trade. Moreover, the article claims that new routes are being added like Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Paraguay, to expand the illegitimate yet highly profitable businesses of the party.⁵⁸⁹

It is obvious that Hezbollah operates without any revenue constraints. Although Iran provides the party with substantial funds, the party has been successful in its

⁵⁸³ James B. Love (2010), *Hezbollah Services as a Source of Power*, Hurlburt Field, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, pp. 10-15.
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2010/1006_jsou-report-10-5.pdf [accessed June 2014].

⁵⁸⁴ M. Levitt (2013); M. KhoShi'an (2012).

⁵⁸⁵ J. Becker (2011).

⁵⁸⁶ Maurice R. Greenberg, William F. Wechsler and Lee S. Wolosky (2002). *Terrorist Financing* (Report of the independent task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations). New York, NY: Council on Foreign Relations.
www.cfr.org/content/publications/.../Terrorist_Financing_TF.pdf [Accessed June 2014].

⁵⁸⁷ M. Levitt (2013); M. KhoShi'an (2012); H. V. Meehan (2004).

⁵⁸⁸ J. Becker (2011); M. KhoShi'an (2012).

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

independent fundraising through a wide range of activities from charity to legal and illegal businesses. These diversified activities guarantee the party's independence and its attempt to continue its vast social service sector no matter what happens to its state sponsor.⁵⁹⁰ The question that remains, however: what will happen to Hezbollah if the United States or any international organisation can find a way to stop all the party's dubious funds and businesses? Through reconstruction, health, charity and welfare provision, will the party be able to keep on sustaining itself? Western analysts and diplomats estimate that Hezbollah receives nearly 200 million dollars per year from Iran⁵⁹¹, plus other incomes coming from charity and material goods - as not all Hezbollah's "tainted" money comes from cash. But after the September 11 attacks and after some states have labeled the party as the terrorist team A organisation, Hezbollah finances have come have come under scrutiny. Three of the bank managers and one bank director I have interviewed confirmed that it is virtually impossible today for Hezbollah to open front or cover check accounts today as everything is highly controlled and scrutinised. Nonetheless, that is what *paravent* activities are for: to generate money, whitening it and flowing it back to the party without necessarily passing through a regular bank checking account. One of the people I have interviewed during my fieldwork informed me of a very well-known clothes shop chain in Lebanon, whose branches located around the Hamra district are supposedly activities under Hezbollah's control for money laundry.

The Tri-Border Area

In Latin America, the Tri-Border Area seems to be a favourite spot for infiltration. The Tri-Border Area, also known as Triple Frontier, is a junction, where Paraguayan, Brazilian and Argentinean frontiers meet. This area includes the Brazilian city of Foz de Iguazù, The Argentinean city of Puerto Iguazù, and Ciudad del Este in Paraguay, has served in the past twenty years as the operational and logistical centre for international groups such as Hezbollah. The area has a population of approximately 700,000 inhabitants, including 30,000 of Arab descent. the Arab community constitutes one of

⁵⁹⁰ M. KhoShi'an (2012).

⁵⁹¹ S. Wilson (2004).

the largest immigrant groups in the region and is predominately made up of Shiite Lebanese, particularly in the city of Ciudad del Este and Foz.⁵⁹² Triple frontier is characterised by extremely difficult terrain, weak governance and it is renowned for being a regional hub for whole spectrum of illicit activities. The volume and variety of people and goods, together with its porous borders, are two important factors that originally attracted both criminal and armed groups in the region. The relative ease with which money is laundered and transferred to and from regions overseas has attracted Mexican and Colombian drug cartels, Chinese and Russian mafias, the Japanese yakuza and a few others. According to Brazilian intelligence sources, Hezbollah operatives and supporters are present in Ciudad del Este and have been active in the underground world that includes drug smuggling, gun running and pirating.⁵⁹³ The same source reveals that an outlaw presence in that area goes back to the early 1980s and has been consolidating in the 1990s.

Although the presence and activities of Hezbollah in the Tri-Border area have been well documented, the exact amount of money actually transferred to the group is almost impossible to estimate, partly because a large portion of this money is transferred via monetary transfer arrangements, known as the *halawa* system.⁵⁹⁴ This system allows transactions out of the conventional banking marketplace, and it's difficult to identify and trace.⁵⁹⁵ Likewise, it is also difficult to determine the amount of remittances, entrepreneurial activities, connections and various spontaneous or encouraged 'donations' circulating in this area. In 2007 a Lebanese businessman, Kassem Hijazi, resident of Ciudad del Este and owner of Telefax company, came under international scrutiny for his suspected money transfers to shadow enterprises in Beirut and

⁵⁹² Joshua L. Gleis and Benedetta Berti (2012), *Hezbollah and Hamas. A comparative Study*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 67.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.; Latin America Overview. Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000
<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2000/> [accessed July 2014].

⁵⁹⁴ In the most basic variant of the *hawala* system, money is transferred via a network of *hawala* brokers, or *hawaladars*. It is the transfer of money without actually moving it. In fact, a successful definition of the hawala system that is used is "money transfer without money movement". For a comprehensive analyses of the *hawala* system see: Roger Ballard collection of academic papers at Centre for Applied South Asian Studies (CASAS) at <http://www.casas.org.uk/papers/hawala.html> [accessed July 2015].

⁵⁹⁵ Benedetta Berti, "Assessing the Role of the Hawala System, Its Role in Financing Terrorism, and Devising a Normative Regulatory Framework", *MIT International Review*, Spring 2005, pp. 15-17.

Ramallah.⁵⁹⁶ The money was believed to be the proceeds of crime - anything from drug smuggling, to gun running, to counterfeit goods to tax evasion. “From the evidence and documentation we saw, it was clear that this man was moving large sums, hundreds of millions of dollars, through its doors, in its own name, hiding the identities of who was truly the owners of the money”, said Carlos Maza, of the US Department of Homeland Security. “Kassem Hijazi is a serious player who more than anything else has found the vulnerability in the Paraguayan system, the ability to control how money is moved through its banking system”.⁵⁹⁷ Hijazi denied all accusations producing a large amount of the prosecution paperwork allegedly showing thousands of money transfers, and claiming that every single one of the documents had been forged.

The existence of a well-developed financial infrastructure and influential businessmen (that are sympathetic to Hezbollah’s ideology) within the diaspora significantly increases the environment’s profit potential. Available evidence suggests that the involvement of Lebanese businessmen in Hezbollah’s fundraising operations in Latin America is common. However, evidence to determine if these businessmen participate in these terrorist fundraising operations because they are sympathetic to Hezbollah, share some kind of ‘ethnic’ belonging to the group, or they act out of greed is very difficult to determine and goes down as one of the major constraint of this research. All the large/medium-scale businessmen I managed to interview in Lebanon refused any linkage to the party — included the relatives of well known entrepreneurs who have been multiply sentenced for being the primary entity to purchase and develop properties in Lebanon and Africa on behalf of Hezbollah. However, Hezbollah’s relationship with influential Lebanese businessmen in the region appears to be a more significant contributing factor to the nature and significance of Hezbollah’s fundraising operations than either communal or ideological support.

⁵⁹⁶ Rex Hudson, Terrorist and Organised Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America. A Report Prepared by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress under an Interagency Agreement with the Director of Central Intelligence Crime and Narcotics Center. July 2003.

⁵⁹⁷ “Tri-Border Transfers Funding terror”, *BBC News*, 14/012/2006.

In the past few years, Hezbollah has been spreading its activities in other areas in Central and Southern America, also as a result of increased scrutiny of the Tri-Border area by Western intelligence agencies. According to various reports, Hezbollah has been

Permissive Threat Environments (include both geo-strategic variables and Diaspora characteristics).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weak political institutions ▪ Widespread government corruption ▪ Weak legal framework ▪ Prominent Lebanese Diasporas (Lebanese businessmen) ▪ Geo-strategic location (high profit-potential economic environments) ▪ Communal support of Diaspora ▪ Ideological support of Diaspora

active in a most every major Latino American country . (Venezuela, Argentine, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay)⁵⁹⁸. Frequent accusations have been also directed to alleged cooperation between Hezbollah and some local regimes with an anti-American agenda such as Hugo Chavez’s Venezuela.⁵⁹⁹ With its Shiite Lebanese diaspora and anti-American government, Venezuela has reached a hand out to Iran. In fact, a Spanish reporter named Antonio Salas went undercover (as Mohammed Abdallah) training at a Hezbollah base in Venezuela and managed to sneak out video footage and a book of his experiences.⁶⁰⁰

Hezbollah in Paraguay

In Latin America and beyond, Hezbollah is thought to be involved in different serious crimes such as smuggling of drugs, cigarettes, cars, identity thefts, counterfeiting,

⁵⁹⁸ William Constanza, “Hizballah and Its Mission in Latin America”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 35, no. 3, (2012), pp. 193-210; Matthew Levitt, “Criminal Connections: Hizballah’s Global Illicit Financing Activities”, IHS Defense, Risk and Security Consulting, 2012, (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Levitt20120930-Janes.pdf>) [Accessed June 2014]; “Hezbollah in Latin America – Implications for US Homeland Security”, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, 2011 (<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-112hhr72255/pdf/CHRG-112hhr72255.pdf>) [accessed June 2014].

⁵⁹⁹ Emili J. Blasco (2015), *Bumeràn Chàvez. Los fraudes que llevaron al colapso de Venezuela*. Washington, D. C. and Madrid: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform; Martin Arostegui, “U.S. ties Caracas to Hezbollah Aid”, *The Washington Times*, 07/07/2008; Douglas Schoen, Michael Rowan (2009), *The Threat Closer to Home: Hugo Chavez and the War Against America*. New York: FP Free Press. A Division of Simon and Schuster.; Jennifer L. Hesterman (2013), *The Terrorist-Criminal Nexus: An Alliance of International Drug Cartels, Organised Crimes and Terror Groups*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group.

⁶⁰⁰ Antonio Salas, (2010) *El Palestino*. Barcelona: El Planeta.

selling of pirated good and many more. The evidence of Hezbollah's fundraising operations in Paraguay includes a substantial amount of donations to Hezbollah-linked organisations, extortion of Lebanese businesses, illegal sales of contraband and pirated goods, and money laundering.⁶⁰¹ Hezbollah party operatives primarily coordinate with prominent Lebanese businessmen who are sympathetic to Hezbollah's ideology. These Lebanese businessmen then coordinate various legal and illegal fundraising operations within the TBA and elsewhere in Latin America. The primary legal means for generating financial support for Hezbollah are donations. The illegal means for generating financial support for Hezbollah are extortion, sales of contraband and pirated goods, and money laundering. One of the most likely strategic Hezbollah goals is to increase levels of ideological and/or communal support within the Lebanese diaspora, thereby potentially increasing the profit potential for its fundraising operations. Another businessman arrested in February 2000 in Paraguay on software piracy charges was Ali Khalil Mehri. The software Mehri distributed among the Arab population to raise money to support Hezbollah contained interviews of suicide bombers (prior to their acts of terror) encouraging viewers to strike at U.S. and Israeli targets in Latin America.⁶⁰²

Other documented links between Hasan Nasrallah and Assad Barakat — an entrepreneur who owned several legitimately registered businesses in the TBA, Chile, and the U.S. like Galleria Page (Ciudad del Este's largest shopping mall) was arrested in Brazil and extradited to Paraguay in 2002. Investigators believed Barakat's businesses were fronts used to funnel profits to Hezbollah.⁶⁰³ Sobhi Fayad, a business partner of Assad Barakat was arrested in November 2001 on charges of tax evasion after bank statements retrieved by Paraguayan investigators in a raid on one of Barakat's businesses revealed Fayad made significant financial transfers to Lebanon on nearly a

⁶⁰¹ H. V. Meehan (2004).

⁶⁰² Rex Hudson "Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of South America." Library of Congress Report, July 2003, p. 74.

⁶⁰³ Blanca Madani, "Hezbollah's Global Finance Network: The Triple Frontier", *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, vol. 4, no. 1, January 2002. p. 3; Harris Whitbeck and Ingrid Arneson, "Sources: Terrorists Find Haven in South America.;" and La Tercera de la Hora, November 14, 2001, as translated for FBIS, "Hizballah-Linked Businessman Acknowledges Having Businesses in Chile, US," November 14, 2001. FBIS Document ID: LAP200111140000752000.

daily basis.⁶⁰⁴ Seized documents indicate that, in 2000, Sobhi Fayad made contributions of more than \$3.5 million to the Martyr Social Benefit Organisation- a *humanitarian* organisation in Lebanon that financially supports the orphans and families of Hezbollah suicide bombers.⁶⁰⁵ Sobhi Fayad was also charged with running an extensive extortion operation to squeeze ‘donations’ from Lebanese businessmen in Ciudad del Este.⁶⁰⁶

Besides these facts and figures, it is important to point out that although the U.S. and Paraguayan governments recognise Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, the group *is* a political party in Lebanon and it does provide a substantial amount of humanitarian services in Lebanon, toward which many Shiite Muslims feel obligated to support. “Muslims have the religious duty of donating money to charity institutions, and the Hezbollah works with poor children justifying money remittance operations”, said Adrienne Senna, chairman of the Brazilian Financial Activities Oversight Council. According to Ali Hussein, a Muslim who lives in Ciudad del Este, “A Muslim should give 20 percent of his income to charity, for poor children and unemployed Muslims [...] If I can help the Hezbollah I do so, because the Hezbollah has brought peace to Lebanon”. Even on my field trip I was told this by a variety of people of all ages and social classes dozens of times in Lebanon. This sense of communal shared experience, struggle and *ethos* between the Lebanese Diaspora and Lebanon is reinforced by religious teachings promoting support for charity. The ambivalence of Hezbollah’s *modus operandi* (armed party and welfare provider) make the motivations of individual sources of donations rather unclear. However, the sense of communal support within the Lebanese diaspora anywhere in the world is evident regardless of whether the motivations of individual Lebanese supporters are humane or mundane.

Lebanese started migrating to Paraguay, along with other Middle Eastern nationals, over sixty years ago. The country formally accepts a small number of naturalised citizens from Arab countries each year. As a result of the region’s ideal geographic and

⁶⁰⁴ “Paraguay; Lebanese Man with Alleged Hezbollah Links Arrested in Ciudad del Este,” BBC Monitoring, 9/11/2001; H. V. Meehan (2004). <http://www.abstract.xlibx.com/a-other/25972-18-a-report-prepared-the-federal-research-division-library-congre.php> [accessed July 2015].

⁶⁰⁵ *ABC Color* as translated by FBIS, “Paraguay: Daily reports More Evidence of Barakat’s Contributions to Hizballah,” May 28, 2002, FBIS Document ID: LAP20020528000073.

⁶⁰⁶ Jeffrey Goldberg, “In the Party of God,” *The New Yorker*, October 28, 2002.

economic characteristics, the heterogeneous population of the TBA increased from 60,000 in 1971 to more than 700,000 in 2001.⁶⁰⁷ Obviously, many Lebanese Shiites fled to Paraguay due to the civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s⁶⁰⁸, and the country soon became a comfortable hub for businessmen and entrepreneurs of all sorts, acquiring the necessary infrastructures to control their own cultural, commercial, educational, and social activities, thanks to ideal geographical conditions, and a general lack of immigration control and accountability. In addition to these factors, a uniform religious composition of the Lebanese diaspora (Shiite) helped to provide Hezbollah operatives with essential levels of cover and legitimacy. This is an important element, as it outlines a singularity of the Paraguayan case, being an environment completely different from other Latin America's countries, namely Ecuador, where the biggest Lebanese community is Christian.

Hezbollah in Ecuador

The analysis of Hezbollah's fundraising and business operations in Ecuador is interesting because Ecuador and Paraguay have similar geo-strategic variables (weak political institutions, weak legal framework, prominent Lebanese diaspora businessmen and entrepreneurs) and host-nation characteristics, which could result in consistent forces shaping Hezbollah's fundraising operations across both cases. Of particular interest then, are the differences in diaspora characteristics evident between Paraguay and Ecuador and their influence on the nature and significance of Hezbollah's fundraising operations.⁶⁰⁹ Ecuador's Lebanese community is larger compared to Paraguay, and has access to a more robust economic and political infrastructure. As a result, Ecuador could provide a potentially more favourable environment for Hezbollah's fundraising operations than the Lebanese community in Paraguay. However, this potential is limited by the religious composition — predominantly

⁶⁰⁷ Mariano Cesar Bartolome, "*Amenzas a la seguridad de los estados: La triple frontera como 'area gris' en el cono sur Americano*" [Threats to the Security of States: The Tri-Border as a 'Grey Area' in the Southern Cone of South America]. Buenos Aires, November 29, 2001; H. V. Meehan (2004).

⁶⁰⁸ LaVerle Berry et al. "Nations Hospitable to Organized Crime and Terrorism." Library of Congress Report, October 2003, p. 175.

⁶⁰⁹ H. V. Meehan (2004).

Christian — of Ecuador's Lebanese diaspora. Lebanese immigrants entered Ecuador with enough capital to open small businesses immediately, or they steadily accumulated enough capital to eventually open businesses by traveling and selling small items. Through hard work and determination, the Lebanese diaspora eventually increased the size and profits of their businesses. However, despite their relatively rapid economic success, the Lebanese remained socially and politically isolated.⁶¹⁰

Even though there has been some evidence of money laundering and smuggling operations linked to Hezbollah, there is no clear monitoring of illegal activities related to the party.⁶¹¹ Although the northern border with Columbia remains a sensitive area. In 2001, the Colombian Technical Investigation Corps (CTI) arrested a Lebanese businessman, named Mohammed Ali Farhad, with ties to Hezbollah for managing a \$650 million cigarette smuggling and money laundering operation between Ipiales, Colombia and ports in Ecuador.⁶¹² The investigation of Mohammed Ali Farhad established a link between Farhad and a Hezbollah-backed money laundering operation, run by Eric and Alexander Mansour, through the Mansour Free Zone Trading Company N.V.⁶¹³ The Mansour Free Zone Trading Company N.V. was Phillip Morris' main distributor in Latin America until the U.S. indicted the Mansour brothers for money laundering.⁶¹⁴ There has also been some speculations on possible associations between the Columbian FARC and Hezbollah, but at the time of writing there is are no substantial facts to sustain a similar statement. The lack of evidence documenting any significant amount of donations made by Ecuador's Lebanese diaspora to Hezbollah-linked organisations in Lebanon indicates low levels of communal and ideological support (justified by the scarce Shiite presence), indicating that diaspora characteristics become increasingly important to fundraising/illicit business operations when

⁶¹⁰ H. V.Meehan (2004).

⁶¹¹ Although one of the earliest examples of Hezbollah terrorist activity in Ecuador occurred in 1998. Seven terrorists identified by Interpol as members of Hezbollah, and linked to the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires by several international intelligence agencies, were detained in Quito (Douglas Farah, "7 Suspected Terrorists Detained in Ecuador; Police See Link to Buenos Aires Bombing", *The Washington Post*, 09/05/1992).

⁶¹² R. Hudson (2003), p. 49-50.

⁶¹³ Fabio Castillo, "The Hizballah Contacts in Colombia," Part III of "Tracking the Tentacles of the Middle East in South America", *El Espectador*, 9 Dec 01. FBIS Document ID: LAP20011210000036.

⁶¹⁴ *Tobacco Companies Linked to Criminal Organizations in Cigarette Smuggling: Latin America*, The Public I: An Investigative Report of the Center of Public Integrity, March 3, 2001.

similarities in geo-strategic variables, host nation characteristics, and communal sectarian (religious) affiliations occur. Why then the Shiite financial bourgeoisie supports Hezbollah? What is the ultimate peculiarity in comparison to the other communities? Hezbollah — to a greater extent if compared to other political parties — has the ability to strengthen the cohesion and solidarity of the Shiite community which in turn can be used to bargain the State for a better share. The same applies to Amal: Nabih Berri himself cuts across class interests for the sake of the upper class, in a continuous flow of connections and co-habitability with the other communities. After all, Musa al-Sadr — long before Hezbollah — realised the political potential of diaspora remittances and he actively used that money to replenish and remodel the old Shi'a *'asabiyya*, opening up the community to new patrons.

Salah Ezzeddine: The Shiite Bernie Madoff

Salah Ezzeddine was born in 1962 in Ma'aroub, a Lebanese southern village not too far from the city of Tyr, to an upwardly mobile family. His father owned a few properties and a fabrics shop in downtown Beirut. Some acquaintances in Ma'aroub have memories of Salah as a teenager taking care and running his father's business when his parent had to travel abroad to buy wholesale. Ezzeddine family is believed to have made money abroad, in Latin America. Even though Ezzeddine precise international connections are very difficult to detect, it is a fact that Salah's ambitions have always resided outside Lebanon. He started his first lucrative business (Bab Salam) in the 1980s but establishing a travel agency that organised five-stars *hajj* expeditions to Mecca. Not just regular *hajj* or *'omra* travels, but deluxe pious trips that granted Ezzeddine the nickname "master of the *hajj*":

"Ezzeddine's style had to be the newest, the best" a Maaroub resident name Abu Islam" told. "For transportation, he'd have a brand new bus, with zero mileage. The hotel they are staying in, he would book it for the while year". It was also, apparently, a money-losing venture, but the *hajj* business served a second purpose: it helped Ezzeddine establish close ties with both the Hizbollah [Hezbollah] political establishment and the local villagers, who would become his future clientele [...] "Being a successful businessman and religious, that played into this image that we can trust him" [...] "his *hajj* business helped a lot in creating this. That was one of the best in Lebanon. Maybe a bit more expensive, a bit of luxury — people felt good, they came back and said good things, and it played well into his image".

Salah Ezzeddine's story is remarkably similar to that of many Shiites that were able to change their status through diaspora successful businesses. The economic conditions of Shi'a had indisputably changed: the shoeshiners and garbage collectors of Lebanon had turned — encouraged by the resistance movements of *harakat al-mahroumeen*/Amal and Hezbollah — into wealthy entrepreneurs. The south was changing and what was until just a few decades before the most neglected and poorest sect in the country, was now including in its ranks some of the richest persons in Lebanon. Indeed, Ezzeddine was one of them. He was also known as a pious, generous man, as besides sponsoring pilgrimages to Mecca, he built a stadium and a mosque for his hometown of Ma'aroub, sponsored and published children's books.⁶¹⁵ But Ezzeddine's magnate status — investments in oil, publishing, metals and television, spread out from the Gulf to Africa — started to crumble in 2009, when his businesses went bankrupt with charges of fraud. Rumours circulating in the press were talking of a pyramid scheme of more than \$1 billion, that soon led the media to label Ezzeddine as the Lebanese Bernie Madoff. All across the Shiite-populated regions of Lebanon, thousands of small investors — many of whom bundled small sums of money with their neighbours to give to Ezzeddine — feel betrayed by both the man and the organisation. "I inherited \$100,000 from my father to continue my studies. I invested them with Ezzeddine, and now all my dreams are destroyed", says Mohammad, a 25-year-old student from Ma'aroub. "I don't know what I was thinking when I invested with him. We thought he was Hezbollah's financier".⁶¹⁶ Hajj Salah, as he was known in the south, was so trusted among a certain portion of Shi'a that his investors never bothered to ask for a receipt or to inquire where their money was being invested in. After all, Ezzeddine was providing for everyone in the south. Not only the local charities or hospitals were benefiting from his donations, but — as the mayor of Ma'aroub at the time revealed to a journalist — "it seemed for a time like everyone in town was trading in their beat-up sedans for brand-new BMWs or Cadillac Escalades".⁶¹⁷ Ezzeddine was so trusted among Shiites in the south that no bell rang in them, even when he prospected almost impossible rates of return — 40, 60, 80 per cent. Plus, the Hezbollah factor was there. Being south of Lebanon, everybody

⁶¹⁵ Andrew Lee Butters, "Lebanon's Bernie Madoff: A Scandal Taints Hizballah", *Time*, 16/06/2009.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ *The National*, 04/02/2010.

implicitly knew that in such environment, “no entity was more closely tied to this shifting economic reality — as both catalyst and beneficiary — than Hezbollah”.⁶¹⁸ Small wonder then that when the scandal broke, everyone’s eyes turned to the party. In August 2009 Ezzeddine vanished into thin air. Hezbollah took the lead in his search, caught him and held him up for several days, trying to figure out what he had done with all the money of the the investors. After a while, the party turned him to the police.

The press obviously went crazy when they found out the (presumed) Hezbollah connection and it was also rumoured that Hezbollah’s secretary general Hasan Nasrallah himself had been one of the investors. Being it true or not, the significant element is that many people actually trusted Ezzeddine because they believed (wrongly or not) that he was a business partner of Hezbollah, and therefore trustworthy. And it wasn’t big news either to read that Ezzeddine was praising himself to be able to arrange a meeting with Hasan Nasrallah within minutes.⁶¹⁹ This is something not so uncommon among major businessmen in the south. As it’s not uncommon either a continuous flow of major business arrangements among the party and a network of businessmen and fundraisers such as Ezzeddine, not just in southern Lebanon but also in West Africa, South America and wherever expatriate Lebanese do business. As we have already pointed out, Hezbollah has been trying to become financially independent from its main patron, Iran which has been affected by a massive economic crisis in these last years.

Ezzeddine's connection to Hezbollah is unclear. The organisation denied having an official relationship with him, but Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has acknowledged that the group was being tainted by association.⁶²⁰ But many investors have said Hezbollah officials not only encouraged them to put their money and trust in Ezzeddine but also claimed that his investments were *halal*, acceptable according to Muslim laws that forbid profiting from interest.

The worst part of the scandal for Hezbollah came in damage to its reputation for honesty, competence and integrity which is what makes the Shiite political party

⁶¹⁸ Ibid.

⁶¹⁹ “Le financier Salah Ezzeddine inculpé de détournement de fonds”, *Orient le Jour*, 14709/2009.

⁶²⁰ Andrew Lee Butters, “Lebanon's Bernie Madoff: A Scandal Taints Hizballah”, *Time*, 16/06/2009.

popular not just in Lebanon but in the wider Arab world. Those traits were on display when Hezbollah engineers and social-service workers fanned out immediately in the aftermath of the war with Israel in 2006 to assess damage and offer assistance to its supporters who had lost their homes and business. Months later, Nasrallah launched a reconstruction program called *Waad*, or ‘promise’, to rebuild every destroyed home by the beginning of 2010. Within shortly these promises turned out to be a reality.

Whether Ezzeddine was corrupt or a victim of business dealings gone bad, as well as his precise connections with Hezbollah are still to be fully proven and goes well beyond the scope of this analysis. What seems to be remarkable in this story is the trust conveyed in what was believed to be a pious, wealthy diaspora entrepreneur with (presumed) dealings with Hezbollah.⁶²¹ What is also relevant to highlight is that starting from the 1990s Hezbollah’s immersion into mainstream politics (which did not bring to the disarmament) did encouraged a whole generation of party’s top officials into the trappings of political power, and the subsequent birth of a new bourgeoisie and a new elite.

⁶²¹ Hezbollah formed a ‘crisis network’ to help investors who had lost their savings and started a fund to get people back on their feet, although they limited their aid in an attempt to avoid the appearance of accepting responsibility for their losses.

The Changing Face of the Lebanese Bourgeoisie

The transformation among the *cadres* of Hezbollah, as well as amongst its society, is yet to be properly analysed. A few urbanists at the American University of Beirut have documented the urban shifts within the southern peripheries of Beirut that occurred in this last decade or so,⁶²² but the changing economic and social changeover within Lebanese Shi'a society — and its subsequent political effects in the party's perception — will need some follow up in the next ten years. The alterations of the urban space are just a consequence of the changes within a political society that have turned what was just a few decades ago a community of peasants into villas of unseemly conspicuous wealth owners, sometimes only metres from the Israeli border. "Hezbollah's strongholds" underwent a global transformation in these last years. They are not "strongholds" anymore, but regular peripheries or, as Lokman Slim has told, "they are like Beirut but without too much diversity".⁶²³ What has happened is certainly not the complete eradication of Shi'a poverty, but the arrival of a Shi'a millionaire community. There is a saying around south Lebanon that a young enterprising person with the right connections could go to Africa today and come back as a millionaire within a couple of years. The most obvious question is whether Hezbollah is at risk of losing its original identity, its 'resistance soul', and therefore the uncontested constituency support in the south. If we also add the recent involvement of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict, the future seems a rather uncertain place. As an academic at the Lebanese University of Beirut noticed "Hezbollah do not need the welfare thing anymore. They need the community to help the party if needed".⁶²⁴ Even the descendants of *zu'ama* families nowadays are looking for Amal or Hezbollah's approval to enter the political arena.⁶²⁵ MPs Osseiran and Ezzeddine are on Berri's list in Beirut and Nabatiyyeh

⁶²² Lara Deeb (2006), *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press; Lara Deeb & Mona Harb (2013), *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shi'ite South Beirut*. Princeton (NJ) Princeton University Press.

⁶²³ Lokman Slim, interview with the author, June 2014.

⁶²⁴ Interview with the author, November 2013.

⁶²⁵ Interview with Talal Atrisi, December 2013.

respectively. In addition to that, Hezbollah today is the second largest employer after the Lebanese government.⁶²⁶ The party nurtures young unskilled people creating a relation of dependence (sometimes using them for the military wing of the party, for demonstrations, etc.) and finances the future professional middle class donating 45,000\$ to pharmacists to start their jobs. The same applies to the 1500 architects and engineers working at Jihad al-Bina, creating a real challenge to Amal in the post-2006 war reconstruction.⁶²⁷ Nowadays, in the Lebanese government are present three different forces: Businessmen; middle-class; professional politicians — in this order.

In 1999 Lara Deeb met a prominent Hizbollah figure for an interview. “He was thin and young”, she recalled “He didn't seem to care much about his appearance”. She described him as having “that Revolutionary look” — meaning the Iranian Revolution — with a trimmed beard and nondescript clothes. When Deeb met the same official seven or eight years later, he had risen in the party establishment. “He looked totally different. He wore Diesel jeans and a designer watch and was smoking a big Cohiba. The transformation was amazing”. Transformations like this are anything but anomalies in certain surroundings in Beirut and the south. Quite often the party's MPs drive around town in BMWs and Range Rovers, and dine at fancy restaurants. In the Dahiyeh, the southern suburbs of Beirut mostly inhabited by Hezbollah backers — many Shi‘a women have taken to wear designer-label headscarves, shop in the new-born American mall chains (like Kosco) and spend their spare time with their families in what Deeb and Harb have defined “pious entertainment” cafés, restaurant and leisure parks. Scenarios like this corroborate Hezbollah’s MP Ali Fayad’s assessment: “Hezbollah is not a small party anymore, a minority, it is a whole society. It is the party of the poor people, yes, but at the same time there are a lot of businessmen in the party, we have a lot of rich people, some elite class. This is normal, because Hezbollah has become one of the biggest parties in Lebanon”.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁶ Interview with Imad Salame, April 2014.

⁶²⁷ Interview with the author.

⁶²⁸ *The National*, 04/02/2010.

The *embourgeoisement* of Dahiyeh: From Shiite Banlieue to a Middle-Class Quarter

In the early 1990's, following the signature of the Ta'if agreement redefining the distribution of political power among Lebanese confessional groups, Hezbollah underwent major changes, despite significant rivalries within the party. Its leadership decided to integrate into the national political system and run in the 1992 political elections. As of then, the party of God became "lebanonized", and slowly opened up to others, increasingly tolerating diversity that it had previously repressed⁶²⁹. Yet, unlike any of the other Islamic movements in the Middle East, the Party of God uses its good works as a means of underlining and enhancing its legitimacy as a bona fide Lebanese political party rather than as a means of challenging Lebanon's pluralist system⁶³⁰.

Hezbollah was firstly responsible for controlling the severe health hazard that threatened the Dahiyeh area in the late 1980's. Daily collectors started removing mountains of garbage, replacing a basic governmental function in several municipalities that was lacking at the time. This went on for five years, until the Lebanese Sanitation Department started functioning again. However, it is important to point out that Hezbollah still trucks out some 300 tons of garbage a day from the Dahiyeh and treats it with insecticides to supplement the government's service⁶³¹. With 110 water tanks distributed across Beirut's southern suburbs, the party makes drinking water available to areas not endowed with such a public service. Three hundred thousand litre of water, available daily via mobile cisterns, reach 15,000 families. This service has been running free of charge as of March 1990 until the present day⁶³².

Hezbollah also concerned itself with agricultural activities through provision of agricultural credit, distribution of tractors, fertilisation, herbicide spraying, transfer of knowledge for honey production and other cultivation, and setup of guidance and

⁶²⁹ Ibidem, p. 15.

⁶³⁰ J. Harik (2005), p. 81.

⁶³¹ Ibidem, 83.

⁶³² N. Qassem (2005), p. 84.

piloting centres.. As Hezbollah's insider Naim Qassem points out, “attention was also directed at vocational training, providing villages with water, electricity and sewage utilities, working towards the creation of educational institutions, cultural clubs, mosques and homes for needy families or martyrs' relations”⁶³³.

Nonetheless, Hezbollah's Dahiyeh is not a place of exclusivity. Interactions and exchanges occur: people go to the Dahiyeh to buy food, to visit family and friends, to go to a doctor, to buy clothing and furniture. These people usually perceive the area as a rather ordinary neighbourhood, similar to others which are heavily populated in Beirut, like Tarik al Jdideh or Bushriyye. They do not see it as “Hezbollah's land”, but as a more diverse place; yet, very chaotic. Furthermore, Dahiyeh is not necessarily synonymous of integralism and backwardness. Veiled women walk hand in hand with their unveiled counterparts and a rather visible Christian church lies within a few miles from M. H. Fadlallah's offices and the mosque where the cleric used to deliver his sermons each Friday. Yet, for most, the southern suburb is simply a place one enters to meet Hezbollah's members. Space is décor, background⁶³⁴.

The spatial dimensions of Hezbollah's political action are important to understand, as they reveal the strategies the party of God uses to inscribe itself within the social and cultural environment from which it stems.⁶³⁵ For the greatest majority of Lebanese Shi'a, resistance is not only militarily but also social and cultural. In Dahiyeh the religious discourse takes a physical and spatial form: It becomes political and an identity-based territory, a place where society, space and politics are intertwined, negotiated and produced.⁶³⁶

⁶³³ Ibidem.

⁶³⁴ Mona Harb (2007), *Deconstructing Hizballah and Its Suburb*, MERIP 242, Spring 2007, p. 17.

⁶³⁵ M. Harb (2007), p. 16.

⁶³⁶ Ibidem.

Geographically, Dahiyeh stretches along a blurring line that runs parallel to the Cité Sportive and southward to Bir al-Hasan and the outskirts of the Beirut airport. It then extends eastward to Saint Thérèse and Hay al-Amercan (The American quarter) on the fringes of Hadath, and westward to Chiyah and Beirut's administrative city limits, a few meters from the Hippodrome and Beirut's pine forest. Mreijeh, Haret Hreik, Lailaki, and Bir al-Abed occupy the central area of Dahiyeh.

Until recently, Dahiyeh served two main functions: economically, it supplied the capital and the centres of economic activity in Mount Lebanon with migrant rural labor. Socially, it was a hub for those seeking further education in the capital. The circumstances that gave this area such a role formed the social and economic fabric that we see in Dahiyeh today. Among the most important of these is the civil war and subsequent wars in the south, and the dramatic rise in poverty in the Beqaa, driving the residents of these areas to seek shelter and employment in Dahiyeh.

In the aftermath of the civil war, city spaces gradually became less polarised. The 'Green Line' that divided Beirut in two, separating the *gharbiyyeh* (the west side, mainly Muslim inhabited) from the *sharqiyyeh* (the east part, predominantly Christian) became just another capital's trafficked artery. People started venturing more frequently into 'other sects' neighbourhoods. The west side of Beirut became even more dynamic in terms of leisure spots, restaurants, shops, etc, and overall retained its sectarian mix, particularly in middle-high income areas like Ras el-Nabeh, Badaro, Verdun, Ras Beirut. The Hamra remained what it always was: the vibrant night-club/shopping 'grey area'. The Downtown area in Beirut Central District projected Rafiq Hariri's vision of a space of interaction, albeit through big money and (mainly) Saudi tourism. Previously, the Downtown area had been completely destroyed during the civil war, with waves of middle- and upper-income people fleeing the city and Beirut losing completely its economic centre. As a consequence of this forced displacement, economic activities became decentralised in various areas, including those outside municipal Beirut. Despite the possibility to move freely within the capital, overall Beirut's residents remained attached to their own 'sectarian' neighbourhoods. After all Beirut is a small city, and sectarian (or religious) affiliations and kinship remain central in the lives of its inhabitants.

Dahiyeh has not always been a Hezbollah ‘stronghold’. Christians were living there and a small minority is still present today, and also Amal’s presence was relevant. Hezbollah’s takeover of Dahiyeh happened in 1989, when the party of God fought violently its counterpart, Amal, and expelled it from most of the neighbourhood. Amal remained dominant in specific areas of Dahiyeh like Ghobeiry or Bourj al-Barajneh, where it administers social service institutions and scouts troops. From the early 1990s Dahiyeh started being referred to as “Khomeini’s suburb” or “Hezbollah-land”. But the 1990s were also the years that saw the Hezbollah integration in the Lebanese political system (1992) and the Hariri-led rebuilding of the Downtown area. Neoliberal policies and the economic boom led large amounts of transitional capitals being invested in Beirut again, changing the relationships between the capital and its suburbs. The *troika* was fully governing, and while Hezbollah encouraged the evacuation of Shi‘i squatters from Downtown Beirut, Hariri helped the pour out of these elements enlarging money that eventually led them to buy apartments in the suburbs. Hariri re-built the Downtown area with Saudi money, while Hezbollah strengthened its suburbs (and its constituency) through Iranian donations, diaspora Shiites remittances and Hariri’s *laissez-faire* attitude.

In 2000, with the Israel withdrawal from the south of Lebanon, Hezbollah reached a peak in popularity. From this moment, the general perception of all Lebanese towards the Shiite suburb *par excellence* — the Dahieyh — began changing. It was no more exclusively the poor ghetto, a space of anarchy, chaos and illegality, but a space of interaction. It must be pointed out that not only non-Shiites had a very stubborn stereotypical vision of the Dahiyeh, but also middle-upper class Shiites themselves. I remember sharing a car ride with a Shiite friend of mine and her Christian and Muslim university colleagues during the summer of 2000. All of her acquaintances referred to the driver, a Shiite living in Dahiyeh, as an “*élément tellment exotique*”. This reflected a common vision of Shiite suburbs inhabitants as retrograde, ignorant, religiously fanatics and overall lacking that sense of ‘cosmopolitanism’ typical of their Beirut’s counterparts. “Shi‘is people were also assumed to speak in an accent related to their rural origins and be monoglot such that their speech was not sprinkled with English and especially

French, with the later associated closely with the Christian bourgeoisie. Similarly, Shi'a places were associated with a specific aesthetics".⁶³⁷

Following the period of politicised sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shi'a in the aftermath of Rafiq Hariri's assassination in 2005, old boundary lines between and in Beirut resurfaced and neighbourhoods went back to be defined along their sectarian affiliations. The Israeli war on Lebanon fuelled even more the hostilities. Escalating violence and insecurity, culminating in intra-Muslim fights in May 2008, led to a reconfiguration of the urban space of the city, with many streets and neighbourhoods inaccessible to protect politicians and government officials as well as high-end retail and business activities.⁶³⁸ This coincided also with a relative radicalisation of certain religious attitudes, particularly in women wearing *hijab* and not shaking hands to male's interlocutors. A few Shiites who moved to the Dahyieh from Beirut started accommodating to a Hezbollahi-model after decades of Beirut cosmopolitanism.

Dahyieh 'middleclassness' is therefore the result of a variety of components: Hezbollah's diligent efforts to invest in an Islamic milieu, the increased political and social weight of the Shi'a community, diaspora remittances and diaspora businessmen contributions and investments. Another major event that empowered the Dahyieh bourgeoisie were the 1998 municipal elections, during which many Hezbollah members and prominent Shi'a families (connected to the party) were elected. Municipalities in Lebanon hold some relative independence in local governments and developments and the Dahyieh largest and wealthiest municipality, Ghobeiry, has implemented various urban and economic development programmes in the area. "Such municipalities endowed Hizbullah [Hezbollah] with additional resources for their service delivery network, provided more efficient ways to distribute services, and created new opportunities for local and economic development".⁶³⁹

In 2008, I collected an interview from a shoe-shop owner, Salim, who had recently moved to Dahyeh with his wife and three children from Beirut's Basta al-Tahta quarter. In Basta, Salim managed a small shop with modest earnings that could barely cover his

⁶³⁷ L. Deeb and M. Harb (2013), p. 25.

⁶³⁸ Ibid.

⁶³⁹ Mona Harb (2009), "La gestion du local par les municipalités du Hezbollah", *Critique Internationale*, no. 45, pp. 57-72; L. Deeb and M. Harb (2013), p. 51.

family's basic necessities. When he decided to move to Dahieyh, he got in contact with local representatives of Amal who helped him out in finding a big apartment and a location for his business activity, which in the meantime took off and started bringing in good proceedings. Obviously, Salim didn't tell me if he had to 'offer' something in return for Amal's help, but those kind of upward social mobility anecdotes are anything but a rarity in Dahiyeh.

Private investments and real estate development projects mainly aimed at middle- and high-end consumers multiplied in Dahiyeh in this last decade, especially those related to the entertainment and leisure businesses. Many of these projects were developed by diaspora Shiites who returned to the country with good ideas and good money, and facilitated by local governors. One of the projects supported by Hajj Abu Said, the major of Ghobeiry, was the establishment of Fantasy World, a leisure park. He told to Deeb and Harb (2013):

[...] When Israel left, people started to think more about investment. Large investments began in Dahiya [Dahieyh]. Many tourist places opened, amusement parks, different types of restaurants, entertainment places, different types of cafés, and lots of gyms. These encouraged people to move toward these things.⁶⁴⁰

The Dahieyh municipalities encouraged private entrepreneurs (residents and non-residents) to develop business in the area in order to promote local economic development and provide jobs. Indeed, Hajj Abu Said was one of those governors who implemented a *infitah* policy facilitating legal and bureaucratic paperwork to potential investors.

Medium and large investors realised the economic potential of the former Shiite *banlieue*, transforming the outlook of the area from a (presumably) pious milieu into a middle class quarter. The French department store BHV and Monoprix opened their doors in 1998 in Ghobeiry, alongside Burger King. More recently, in 2006 a Saudi investor established the Beirut Mall, with its coffee shops (including a McDonald's), a Lebanese chain restaurant, and US and European brands (Mango, Vero Moda, etc.). This shows the existence of a vibrant middle class eager to consume in lifestyle amenities, and at the same time depicts how sect, class, and urban space are linked in Beirut. Just a few years ago, talking about Muslim 'middle class' in Lebanon was more reminiscent of

⁶⁴⁰ L. Deeb and M. Harb (2013), p. 53.

a certain bourgeoisie living in Ras Beirut or Ramlet al-Baida, typically not very religious observant, and whose references were more directed towards Europe or the United States. This new, suburban middle class is diversified, (typically) pious and with links to subsaharan Africa and Iran.

Diaspora remittances are also one of the main reasons behind social and economic differences which, despite all developments and investments, are still very obvious in Dahiyeh. Youth migration from Dahiyeh increased at a remarkable rate from the 1990s and now, remittances form a significant part of the incomes of the population in this area. Indeed, those who rely on remittances lead more affluent lifestyles. Socioeconomic disparities are also the consequence of the ruthless real estate boom during the same decade. Whereas the central and southern districts of Dahiyeh were formed before and during the civil war, the southeastern districts like Hay al-Amercan and Saint Thérèse emerged after the civil war, back when they were uncultivated lands owned mainly by Christians.⁶⁴¹ The owners started selling their lands gradually with the boom in the mid-1990s. At the time real estate dealers pushed prices in these areas very high, with plans to build housing for the wealthy. As a result, the new neighbourhoods started phasing out the central and western areas, and today, commercial spaces there sell for as much as \$10,000 per square meter. The difference in the price of a square meter of a built-up area between Hay al-Sellom and Haret Hreik can reach up to 30 percent. Similarly, an apartment in Hay al-Amercan can cost more than \$500,000, compared to a maximum of \$170,000 for an apartment in Hay al-Sellom.⁶⁴²

Another relatively new phenomenon signalling upward mobility in Dahiyeh is the growing number of young people — mostly from the upper and middle class in the suburb — graduating from foreign universities. This segment is earning decent salaries in sectors like banking, insurance, and import and export, and represents a phenomenon that did not exist in the past. Dahiyeh, has now become a “source of skilled human resources, when in the past it was mainly a source of unskilled labor”.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ Mouhamad Wehbe, “Dahiyeh: Not Your Average Suburb”, *Al-Akhbar*, 20/08/2013.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that all Dahiyeh residents are doing well. To be sure, the unemployment rate in the suburb is still very high, and public services are generally unreliable. The central government, giving too much *carte blanche* to local municipalities, always neglected Dahiyeh's infrastructures, opening the doors to individual initiatives at the expense of public order. It is in this context that the phenomenon of informal electricity generators emerged. The generators are sometimes run by local politically-connected managers and, in case of an electricity shortage, a bribe or a percentage 'donated' to these '*wasta*' people will ensure the proper voltage.

Overcrowding is also another major problem. According to According to Abdul-Halim Fadlallah, chairperson of the Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation (CCSD), Dahiyeh was developed to house 100,000 people, and then expanded to allow it to house 150,000 people, but in 2013 it was estimated that it housed 750,000 people, all competing over the same public services.⁶⁴⁴

There are several indicators showing the socioeconomic capacity of Dahiyeh. The number of bank branches in the area rose from 64 in 2009 to more than a hundred in mid-2013.⁶⁴⁵ It also contains 37,000 commercial establishments and provides the capital and surrounding areas with skilled labor. Restaurants, cafes, and snack shops absorb the majority, employing around 60 percent of this workforce, according to the head of the Restaurant Union in Beirut and Southern Mount Lebanon Ibrahim al-Zayde.⁶⁴⁶ Families living in Dahiyeh and its establishments represent approximately 30 percent of the total purchasing power in Lebanon.⁶⁴⁷

As a proof of how much Hezbollah is also investing in the 'cultural' domain (*thaqafa*), in 2004 Hezbollah established the Lebanese Associations for the Arts (*al-jamiyya al-lubnaniyya lil funun*), an independent professional organisation responsible for designing and implementing cultural projects commemorating resistance. The organisation brings together professionally trained artists, graphic designers and

⁶⁴⁴ "Reform of Social Policies in Lebanon: From Selective Subsidy towards Welfare State", The Consultative Center for Studies and Documentation, المركز الاستشاري للدراسات والتوثيق 2013

⁶⁴⁵ Mouhamad Wehbe, "Dahiyeh: Engine of the Lebanese Economy", *Al-Akhbar*, 19/08/2013.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.; "Jack Sarraf President of Mediterranean Businessmen Union", Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture of Tripoli and North Lebanon, 09/11/2014.

architects in an institution that creates a variety of media and sites.⁶⁴⁸ This *infitah* brought along also a broadening of Hezbollah's constituencies.

The same constituencies that enjoy the 'leisure' businesses created by private and 'independent' entrepreneurs. One of the most unique private entrepreneurs in terms of the scale of its investment in leisure is the Inmaa' Group, a major contracting and development firm responsible for the building of many amusement parks in Dahiyeh and across Lebanon. Al-Inmaa' Engineering and Contracting, a subsidiary, has been one of the largest and most successful real-estate businesses since the 1990s, when it started off building relatively affordable housing complexes in Dahiyeh. Later on, it began addressing to more affluent customers, with middle- and high-ending buildings in more expensive Dahiyeh neighbourhoods.⁶⁴⁹ Inmaa' is also known to have close ties with Hezbollah and has been used by the party as an investment mechanism. Inmaa' used his Hezbollah ties to create a construction monopoly for the company in Hezbollah-controlled parts of Beirut and southern Lebanon. And, more recently, according to the U.S. Department of Treasury, Mr. Tabaja used Iraqi branches of the subsidiary to win development projects in Iraq that provide financial support and organisational infrastructure to Hezbollah.⁶⁵⁰

The Inmaa' Group's entertainment projects are owned by a shareholding company that includes several entrepreneurs. Inmaa' rents space to other businesses like Baguette, a (Lebanese) restaurant chain, or international franchises, such as KFC and Krispy Kreme.⁶⁵¹

In the same vein, a multiplicity of small-medium entrepreneurs decided to invest in what Deeb and Harb call 'moral leisure'⁶⁵², including cafés (with different styles and

⁶⁴⁸ L. Deeb & M. Harb (2013), p. 67.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 88

⁶⁵⁰ Rubinfeld Samuel, "U.S. Targets Hezbollah-Linked Companies, Facilitators", *The Wall Street Journal*, 10/06/2015.

⁶⁵¹ L. Deeb & M. Harb (2013), p. 88.

⁶⁵² Hezbollah policy is in line with what Eicklman (2001, p. 331) terms "new Muslim politics", where 'being Muslim' plays a role in the way people think "collectively and concretely about themselves and *their society*" [author's italics]. This 'new' Muslim politics is thus ideological and, by implication, aims at a wider audience. Levitt (2006) explains a similar dynamic by looking at the relationship between Hamas social services and associated political activism (Marcello Mollica, "Post-War Paradox of Informality in South Lebanon: Rebuilding Houses or Destroying Legitimacy", STSS Vol 6/Issue 1, Studies of Transition States and Societies).

different decors, from traditional to *avant-garde*), and supermarkets with different sectors and cashiers for pork meat and alcohol consumers, to keep the businesses as *halal* as possible. One of the explanations why entrepreneurs decided to invest in the leisure sector is because its returns are distributed steadily over time: “there are two types of investments”, told a Inmaa’ Group spokesperson to Deeb and Harb, “temporary investment opportunities where the volume of profits is less than the permanent investment, but where profit is continuous and relatively independent from the economic situation. Currently, there’s an increase in real estate development because of demand and supply. This increase will go on for few years, but will stop, whereas the other demand for [entertainment] projects will continue”.⁶⁵³

A Non-Homogenous Community. Metrics and Indicators

The lower classes constituted Hezbollah’s mainstay during the first decade of its existence. Yet the party’s social composition changed, reflecting middle class elements after the 1992 elections. Hezbollah’s ability to achieve several parliamentary seats in 1992 and launch economic projects attracted the business and entrepreneurial Shiite classes, who saw an opportunity for sectarian power, political representation and profits. Lebanese émigrés started to donate and invest in Hezbollah’s institutions. Engineers formed the party largest professional sector in the late 1990s, and most of the merchants in the Dahiye became affiliated with the party,⁶⁵⁴ whereas some members of the older Shiite bourgeoisie in Western Beirut, like the al-Zayns, the Baydouns, the Makkis, seemed to maintain a distance from either Hezbollah or Amal.

What has characterised Hezbollah post-1992 is also a flexible and an adaptable culture, that decided to invest in middle-class consumption businesses and cultural enterprises (museums, cafés, restaurants, malls, etc.). According to Thanassis Cambanis, this non-exclusive ideology,

On ne demande à personne de renier son identité. Si tu es une femme tu n’es pas obligée de porter le voile, si tu es un homme on ne te force pas à t’enrôler, si tu es narcissique tu ne dois pas renier les plaisirs de la vie. Ce n’est pas comme la culture de l’élite militante

⁶⁵³ L. Deeb & M. Harb (2013), p. 89.

⁶⁵⁴ Houchang Chehabi, “Iran and Lebanon after Khomeini”, in H. Chehabi (ed.) (2006), pp. 180-198; Rula Jurdi Abisaab and Malek Abisaab (2014), *The Shi’ites of Lebanon. Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah’s Islamists*. Syracuse (NY): Syracuse University Press, p. 133.

iranienne, la culture Hezbollah embrasse les valeurs bourgeoises tout comme les valeurs fondamentalistes. On peut y voir une forme d'opportunisme, d'hypocrisie, il n'en reste pas moins qu'il s'agit d'une culture flexible et adaptable et c'est ce qui fait sa force.»⁶⁵⁵

Compared to Lebanon's many other communities, the image held typically by members of the Shi'a community is that it is essentially a 'closed society'. Clearly, the militarisation imposed by Hezbollah and infused into that community under the (once justifiable) pretext of 'resisting' the Israeli occupation (followed by a number of other pretences including the ongoing war in Syria) has affected practically every facet of daily life.⁶⁵⁶

Considering the litany of roles Hezbollah plays on the Lebanese landscape — gathering, addressing and exposing the shifts within the Lebanese Shi'a seemed particularly unnecessary to many domestic actors and foreign observers. After all, Hezbollah and the Lebanese Shi'a community appeared to be synonymous. Yet while the ability to take such measurements gained importance at certain periods in Lebanon's recent history, hard data was virtually unavailable. In fact, the most dependable metrics were little more than guesstimates of the extent to which the Lebanese Shi'a community was supporting Hezbollah's choices. In reality, however, the Lebanese Shi'a community is no less quantifiable than any other. It's highly diversified, fragmented and not all unanimous in its political reflections and behaviours. And the Dahiyeh reflects this diversity: this suburb's members hail from various regions throughout the country and represent the entire spectrum of social classes.

Following the July 2006 war, which caused widespread destruction in some Shi'a's areas, including Dahiyeh, Hezbollah opened the gates of Dahiyeh and other parts of Lebanon's 'Shi'a-land' to Lebanese and other curious visitors. However, soon after the doors had been wide open, the entrances to 'Hezbollah's stronghold' slammed closed once again.

⁶⁵⁵ Margherita Nasi, "Au Liban, voyage à «Hezbollah-land»", *Le Monde*, 21/08/2012.

⁶⁵⁶ Even the concept of Hezbollah's militarisation should be examined from a more social perspective. When the Lebanese civil war ended officially, Israel continued to occupy South Lebanon. The Lebanese Shi'a community — despite the 1990 'conclusion' of the civil war — has never had the opportunity to enjoy true peace: Israel retired from South Lebanon in 2000 and the 'Syrian tutelage' ended in 2005. As a result, Hezbollah inserted itself into virtually every aspect of daily life in the Shi'a community, eventually making it little more than a 'closed society'. In fact, Hezbollah's involvement in Syria simply seems to confirm the continuous and enduring strife within this community.

In 2014, I visited in several occasions the Hayya Bina NGO directed by Lokman Slim. The organisation in 2013/14 oversaw the first public opinion poll to focus on Lebanese Shi'a.⁶⁵⁷ The survey was conducted in Dahiyeh, In its 2015 effort, however, Hayya Bina decided to broaden the poll to produce an open and quantitative understanding of Lebanon's Shi'a community — which is an essential precondition for understanding the prevailing Lebanese situation. Therefore, this latest product of Hayya Bina's research includes the far broader expanse of Lebanon's "Shi'a-land." Sample size was obviously adjusted, and the range of questions was extended to reflect recent domestic and regional developments. The results reveal some interesting issues for debate and future analyses:⁶⁵⁸

- 78.7% support Hezbollah's involvement in Syria, even though for a staggering 81.3% of Lebanon's Shiites things are moving in the wrong direction;
- 79.9% think Hezbollah's actions in Syria make them feel more secure even though 53.2% know someone from their neighbourhood/village/family who was killed in Syria;
- 61.9% believe the Alawi in Syria, the Shi'a in Iraq and the Houthi in Yemen are fighting for the same cause;
- 61.5% say they trust a specific leader to provide a better future for their family (the top two are Hasan Nasrallah at 69.9% and Nabih Berri at 17.2%). Interestingly, wealthier and more rural respondents are considerably more likely to place their trust in a specific leader to improve their future. Older respondents have less faith in a leader's ability to make things better than the young. The poorer the respondent, the more likely he or she is to trust Nasrallah (from 84.4% of the poorest to 56.5% of the wealthiest and scaling down in that order). Nabih Berri, whose popularity increases according to income, is chosen by only 6.3% of the poorest but 21.7% of the wealthiest respondents. Michel Aoun is more popular among those making \$2,000 – \$3,500/month than any other group. The wealthiest respondents are much more likely not to specify (13%) than the poorest (0%).
- 43% consider themselves observant, among whom, 33% follow Khamenei's religious views (including *vilayat-y-faqih*) and others follow religious *marja'* who do not believe in that political-theological theory (M. H. Fadlallah);

⁶⁵⁷ Results from the 2013 and 2014 polls are available on www.ShiaWatch.com.

⁶⁵⁸ Results courtesy of Lokman Slim and Shi'aWatch team.

- 66% believe their financial situation is worse than it was last year;
- 86% consider the country's economic situation worse than it was last year;
- 52.8% think the Tai'f Agreement is no longer relevant to Lebanon;
- 57.2% consider the *takfiri* threat the most important issue facing the community;
- 55.6% think the South is safer than Dahiyeh or the Beqaa.

The outcomes of this survey are extremely interesting revealing of the trend evident in this poll. Though Nasrallah is the most popular leader by far, he enjoys far less support than one may expect. The wealthier the respondents, the higher chances to indicate Berri or Aoun as a trustworthy leader able to 'fix' the future of young Shiites. Although Nasrallah is considerably more popular in Beirut (75%) and the Beqaa (89.6%) than in the south (58.7%); Berri is somewhat popular in Beirut (22.4%) and in the south (24.2%) but seems to have very little influence in the Beqaa (1.6%), confirming a pervading presence of Amal in the south.⁶⁵⁹

The overwhelming majority of respondents in every group believe the country is headed in the "wrong direction." This demonstrably pessimistic opinion is corroborated by the answers given for question on the country's economic situation (compared to the previous year) and on personal financial situation (compared to the previous year). Overall, younger people and those living in the Beqaa indicate that they are enjoying the best financial circumstances. Unsurprisingly, wealthier respondents are more likely to report being in an "adequate" financial situation; 50% of those making more than \$3,500/month say their situation is adequate compared with only 43.9% of those making \$2,001 – \$3,500/month, 37.2% of those making \$1,001 – \$2,000/month, 30.5% of those making \$501 – \$1,000/month and 21.4% of those making less than \$500/month. People in the south (50.1%) and Beirut (49%) are considerably more likely to respond "less than adequate" than respondents in the Beqaa (40.8%). People in the Beqaa are more likely to report "very good" or "adequate" (4.2%, 45%) than those in Beirut (2.1%, 31.7%) or the South (2.9%, 32.2%). Beirutis are more likely to indicate "poor" (17.2%) than respondents in the South (14.8%) or Beqaa (9.8%).

⁶⁵⁹ In 1988 Amal and Hezbollah fought for the control of the quarters of the southern banlieue. Amal ended up weakened by the strifes against the Palestinians camps (which lasted from March 1986 till December 1988, when an agreement between Amal and Fatah for a ceasefire was signed) and lost its influence on the area. Amal left Bourj Brajneh, Mreijeh, Ghobeiri and Haret Hreik in 1989 and re-established in the southern peripheries: Chiyah, Jnah, Horch al-Qatil, Cocodi.

On the issue of security, another interesting element is confirmed. Respondents were asked to pick a security provider from one of the following options: “Hezbollah,” “the LAF,” “Lebanese state security services,” “family,” “no one” and “other.” To one extent or another, no Shi‘a area is free from the presence of some combination of state security/military/Hezbollah. As such, this question was obviously not designed to learn whether people had security, but rather *who they perceived* to be providing that security. The wealthiest respondents (44%) are considerably more likely to identify the LAF as providing security than are the poorest (32%). The poorest respondents are more likely than any other group to believe their security is being provided by “family” (5.4%) or “no one” (7.1%) (the two categories in which the wealthiest are not represented (0%). While the three middle-income groups are more likely than the wealthiest and poorest groups to believe that their security is being provided by Lebanon’s “state security services,” the wealthiest are the most likely (2.9%) to observe that Amal provides security for them.

Unsurprisingly, again, on security issues, while the South has been spared *takfiri* attacks and the Lebanese-Israeli border has not experienced any extraordinary events, Dahiyeh residents are reminded daily by the tight security measures being enforced by the LAF, Hezbollah and other state security agencies that they are living in the “line of fire.” Where the Beqaa is concerned, its proximity to the war in Syria (in which Hezbollah is heavily involved), persistent tensions between its Sunni and Shi‘a residents and the attacks it has already endured have made it seem like a war zone.

Those metrics are also explicative of how the ‘rural’ variable used to describe the Shi‘a social base is outdated and non-explanatory. A few authors have described Hezbollah’s affiliates as uneducated, religiously fanatics and poor⁶⁶⁰, but some others have started to demonstrate that Hezbollah’s constituency is socio-economically diversified.⁶⁶¹ Decomposing the stereotypical variable and adding all the other elements I have tried to outline and describe in this work (education, diaspora, social and economic

⁶⁶⁰ Magnus Ranstorp (1996), *Hezbollah in Lebanon. The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*. New York: The St. Martin’s Press; Avi Jorish, “Al-Manar and the War on Iraq, *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 4, April 2003.

⁶⁶¹ J. P. Harik (1996), pp. 62-63.

mobilisation, etc.) might help to raise a few more debates on contemporary Lebanese Shi'a, adding a few more information to the dominant perception of a politically marginalised, religiously-driven community.

Not Just One Shiite Bourgeoisie

The Middle Class

Waddah Charara delineates three levels of Shiite middle/upper class in Lebanon today.⁶⁶² a) a legal level composed of cadres, professionals and small-scale entrepreneurs who do not produce huge amounts of income; b) a mixed legal and illegal diaspora/remittances bourgeoisie and upper class with vast amounts personal wealth (even though big money today does not come exclusively from remittances but also from virtual companies and/through a few defined banks ; c) a huge underground/illegal level made of *paravent* businesses and the Beqaa 'hashish entrepreneurs' with some connections with the government, who irregularly tolerates such activities: "one year the government tolerates those illegal activities; the next year [the government] will burn down all the crops, knowing very well that the next year those crops will be cultivated again. Those Beqaa entrepreneurs are considered entrepreneurs 'at risk'".⁶⁶³

Lokman Slim argues that there has always been a huge divide between the *cadres* and the entrepreneurs in terms of personal wealth and connections, but with Hezbollah the divide has become a little bit thinner.⁶⁶⁴ At a general level, the Lebanese Shiite middle class shares the same problems with the rest of the middle classes in the region and beyond. There is a number of salaried doctors, engineers, bank employees, etc. who don't have any formal or proper connections with either Amal or Hezbollah who are restricted by their salary, they have loans to pay and cope with a lot of difficulties in

⁶⁶² Waddah Chararah, Interview with the author, December 2014.

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Lokman Slim, Interview with the author, June 2014.

organising their future in the long term. This middle class has to pay for food, hospitals, schools and universities (most of the health and educational sectors are private), insurance, etc. Hezbollah tends to 'play' with this constituency, sometimes offering the opportunity to access health institutions or schools for free or at a controlled rate, expecting these newcomers to fill up the party ranks at the elections and within their syndicates (Amal and Hezbollah have their own syndicates). On their side, this portion of middle class feels secured by the presence of their political representatives; they replenish their identitarian and economic needs. At the same time, even as the traditional middle classes struggle to maintain their living standard, new ('neoliberal') middle/entrepreneurial classes have consolidated, with their members clustered around the focal ganglions of politics, in a continuous flow of *do ut des*.

Lokman Slim also delineates different typologies of Lebanese Shi'a middle class according to its spatial dimension : a) those living in the Beqaa area are mainly constituted by employees/small employees and smuggling (hashish) entrepreneurs; agriculture (a self-dependant agriculture that does not invest in agricultural product that actually go on the market; Shiites never developed a strong agricultural structure like Christians in Zahle, for example). One of the main reasons for the limited development of the bourgeoisie in the Beqaa is the low level of emigration from this area; b) South Lebanon, Dahiyeh and Hret Hreik⁶⁶⁵ are the hub for entrepreneurs and small entrepreneurs; a few employees and with a rising presence of cosmopolitan and middle/upper class Shi'a. Nabaitye today is the cradle of the Shiite bourgeoisie with its Amal-deputy key-man Yassin Jaber strategically located to ensure businesses flowing between Berri and the municipality; c) in Beirut we may find *cadres*; medium and big entrepreneurs and the so-called 'cosmopolitan Shiite entrepreneurship': for someone who wants to be ideologically 'mute' the capital is the destination. To move out of Shi'a-suburbs like Dahiyeh is considered an expression of dissidence. Ideally, Shiites who don't want to be too much in the game will not move to fancy Beirut areas but to more small-middle class quarters like Mazra'a or Burj Abi-Haidar.

⁶⁶⁵ Haret Hreik up to 1975 was a residential/mixed Shi'a area. Between 1975 and 1985 Christians were physically removed after the siege of Dahiyeh (under Amin Gemayel) Following the 1986-87 fightings between Amal and Hezbollah, Hret Hreik becomes the 'capital' of Hezbollah.

Kamal Hamdan addresses the issue of a “fluid middle class” and introduces further issues to debate — besides the level of consumption, i.e. the psychological approach to class, self perception, habitus, patterns of imitation and self demonstration.⁶⁶⁶ Hamdan maintains that the concept of ‘middle class’ should be tailored to the country where this group is being analysed. And this rings even more true to a country like Lebanon, with its massive migration of human resources, its sectarian composition and its “immature economy”.⁶⁶⁷ There has long been an either-or debate whether class is a material phenomenon (arising from the Marxian perspective of socioeconomic relations of production) or simply a kind of associational category of people aligned around common sociopolitical goals. Indeed, the very use of the word ‘class’, as opposed to ‘status’ or ‘habitus’ implies a materialistic perspective: class is an idea associated with group experiences of socioeconomic differences.⁶⁶⁸ Though in the scope of this analysis seems more relevant an understanding of class as a sociocultural phenomenon growing out of industrial relations of production, at the same time incorporating notions such a ‘status’ and ‘habitus’ for the way in which they are implicated in class relations, even if (as in the case of status) they are social phenomena not specific to capitalist relations of production.⁶⁶⁹ Not only Marx, but also Weber, Gramsci, Foucault, Bourdieu and others (see the Theoretical Framework section) and their concepts of habitus, consumption, hegemony, reproduction and the production of space enable us to broaden our understanding of class relations, and most importantly how class subjects ultimately influence the economic and political order of things.

The Large-Scale Entrepreneurs

Nowadays, Shiites are fairly represented in the liberal professions: the number of doctors, lawyers, engineers, university graduates is increasing. Though Sunnis and Christians still outnumber Shiites in these professions: in particular, there are very few Shiite lawyers in Lebanon, being it traditionally considered a Christian profession since

⁶⁶⁶ Kamal Hamdan, Interview with the author, April and June 2014.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Rachel Heiman, Carla Freeman, Marc Liechty (eds.) (2012), *The Global Middle Classes. Theorizing Through Ethnography*. Santa Fe (New Mexico): School for Advanced Research Press.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

the building of the country by the French. Shi'a presence in the banking sector is also still underrepresented (but growing) if compared to that of the Christian and Sunni community. The Middle East & Africa Bank Sal and Phoenicia Bank are the only banks with a Shiite majority in their Board of Directors, in addition to the Hojeij family owned MEAB Bank.⁶⁷⁰ Other banks with a good Shi'a representation (but not a direct connotation) are the Jammal Trust Bank and the Lebanese Swiss Bank.⁶⁷¹

The sectors in which the Shi'a community is strongly present throughout Lebanon and the diaspora are the real estate, trade, retail, construction industry, public works linked to the state (mostly with the support of Nabih Berri and in a few cases of Hezbollah). But it is also significantly present in the tourism business (hotels, etc.) and in the entertainment industry; not only the 'pious' leisure spots, but also nightclubs and amusement parks. In addition to the traditional Shi'a medium/upper class neighbourhoods where the presence of Shiite real estate entrepreneurs is massive (Ramelt al-Baida, Verdun, etc.) Shiite big entrepreneurs have started to invest in areas historically dominated by other communities. That is the case of construction magnate Jamil Ibrahim and his recent investments in Achrafiyye. Jamil Ibrahim family started out in the ceramic sector and they became wealthy entrepreneurs (also through diaspora) owning big portions of Verdun. Ibrahim estimates that since his father's first project back in 1958, Jamil Ibrahim Ets has carried out around 120 projects, of which the best known are probably Sodeco Square, the al-Ahlam residential tower at Ain al-Mreiseh and Les Domes de Sursock. In the same vein, Wissam Ashour (mostly known for his endemic constructions in Jnah, included the BHV-Monoprix malls) now owns 99.9 percent of the company Bahr Real Estate while the rest of the shares are owned by the Hariri heirs, Siniora and others through their ownership of the company Irad Investment Holding whose board of directors is headed by Fahd Hariri. Eighty percent of the other company, Mediterranean Real Estate, is now owned by Ashour and 4 percent by the company Irad Investment Holding. This partnership between two different sides and the incursions in Christian/Sunni areas are revealing of the self-affirming attitude of the

⁶⁷⁰ MEAB was founded as a family-owned commercial bank in Lebanon in 1991. Following the success of their business ventures developing underserved regions of Africa (especially in Congo-Brazzaville and Nigeria), the Hojeij brothers applied their experience and entrepreneurial reputation and skills to open a bank in their home country. Since opening the first branch in Verdun, MEAB has expanded from a small, corporate bank to a full-service bank with 11 branches throughout Lebanon.

⁶⁷¹ Raed Charafeddine, Interview with the author, June 2014.

Shi'a community in the post-war/reconstruction years and helps to de-construct the idea of the contemporary Lebanese Shi'a as a homogenous community. This latter concept is reminiscent of Erik Olin Wright's contribution built on the works of Ehrenreichs, who defined the new middle class as a class — the “professional managerial class” — with the “potential to align with either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie because their material interests overlapped with both”.⁶⁷² Following in the footsteps of Gramsci,⁶⁷³ Ehrenreichs and Wright we may argue whether this ‘new managerial bourgeoisie’ is progressive or conservative, politically agentive or politically manipulated (or manipulative), or simply contradictory. Ethnographically, in Lebanon we can notice a continuous tension between politics, new and old economies, sectarian and intra-sectarian tension, religious conservatives and progressives, social collectivists and self-made entrepreneurs. Theoretically, these middle classes represent different versions and interpretations of the state, different modes of capitalist (re)production and different forms of subjectivity, intertwined with shifting fields of ethnicity, space and geography.

The Outsiders

But not all Shiites support Hezbollah. Some have been voicing their opposition to the ‘resistance’ agenda, and not surprisingly, Hezbollah is attempting to strong-arm these dissidents into line. For all that matter, intimidation has not yet degenerated into violence. While they do not represent majority sentiment in Lebanon's Shiite community, Mohammed Mattar and Mona Fayyad do represent an important and apparently growing segment of the population — Shiites who have no use for Hezbollah, Amal, or Iranian or Syrian suzerainty over Lebanon. Lokman Slim, who runs a Beirut-based NGO (Hayya Bina) focused on diversifying political representation of the Shiite community, is another outspoken critic of Hezbollah. Slim, who speaks critically about the “monopoly on representation”, claims Hezbollah has “undermined” the level playing field among Shiites by preventing moderates from emerging. Slim's point, of course, is that such moderates could play a role in Lebanese politics if the

⁶⁷² John Ehrenreich, Barbara Ehrenreich, Pat Walker (eds) (1979), *Between Labor and Capital* (1st ed. ed.). Boston: South End Press.; Erik Olin Wright (1989). *The debate on classes*. London & New York: Verso.

⁶⁷³ Antonio Gramsci (1971), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Translated and edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers.

intimidation stopped.⁶⁷⁴ Lebanon's Shiite community is not monolithic: There are alternative voices, articulating moderate agendas. And if Hezbollah is ever going to be stripped of its dominant power over the Shiites in Lebanon, these voices will have to be promoted and encouraged. But in the current environment of intimidation, the hope that moderates like Mona Fayyad (a professor of philosophy at the Lebanese University), Mohammed Mattar (a lawyer), Rami al-Amin (a journalist) and Lokman Slim and a few others will emerge to

seriously challenge Hezbollah dictates possibly remains a distant dream.⁶⁷⁵ Achieving pluralism within Lebanese Shiite politics is a long way off. In addition to being the leader of the resistance, Hezbollah represents the culmination of years of Shiite effort to have a significant role in Lebanon's political system. Convincing the long-suffering Shiites in Lebanon that they can remain influential without Hezbollah is going to be a tough sell. Dr. Saoud al Mawla, a sociology professor at Lebanese University, declared that Hezbollah's administrative stranglehold at the Lebanese University (with 70,000 students) represented an attack on a national institution even more important than the Lebanese Armed Forces. He estimated that more than 80 percent of the 2,000 faculty members do not support Hezbollah, yet they are censored in their academic environment by Hezbollah supporters who serve as the university's deans and senior

⁶⁷⁴ David Schenker, "Shiites Against Hezbollah. The other struggle in Lebanon", *The Weekly Standard*, 11/13/2006, Volume 012, Issue 09.

⁶⁷⁵ Cable Leak: Lebanon: Independent Shi'a Seek to counter Hizballah Dominance. 29 April 2008, 16:34 (Tuesday). Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

The cable reads: "1. (C) In an April 28 session at independent Shi'a NGO Hayya Bina four independent Shi'a figures met with the Charge to discuss efforts to counter Hizballah's influence in Lebanon. The interlocutors support the ideals of March 14, but they are critical of the political leadership which has mismanaged Shi'a relations for the last three years. Some other common themes of discussion emerged: the lack of a truly independent Lebanese media outlet, the need to further expand existing U.S. educational exchange opportunities for Shi'a students, the need to quickly address electoral reform issues, and the need to strengthen the GOL's institutions in order to provide citizen services. They also believe the USG should strategically target future USG assistance in a way that will undermine Hizballah and promote the GOL. End Summary".

"2. (C) On April 28, the Charge and Special Assistant visited the offices of the Hayya Bina Foundation (Ref B). In the final phases of preparing for the upcoming May 3-9 visit to Washington, Hayya Bina founder Lokman Slim organized a roundtable with four fellow members of the delegation: Rami Al Amin, who is a journalist; Dr. Farid Mattar, a physician; Malek Mrowa, a businessman; and Dr. Saoud Al Mawla, a sociology professor. (Note: See paragraph 17 for full delegation bios. End Note.)"

"3. (C) The interlocutors said that they agreed with the principles expressed by March 14 three years ago. They firmly believe that a free, sovereign and democratic Lebanon is in the best interest of the entire populace. "We believe in the ideals expressed during that crucial 'moment' on March 14, 2005. However, they lost us on March 15 when they returned to 'business as usual.'" These individuals agree that it is important for the independent Shi'a to maintain a separate identity from the party politics of March 14 coalition. Though critical of March 14's approach towards to independent Shi'a to date, they stand ready to follow a parallel and complimentary path which pursues the same national goals".

leadership.⁶⁷⁶ During my fieldwork I tried to get in contact with academic staff from the Lebanese University writing dozens and dozens of emails but every attempt turned out to be unsuccessful.

Conclusions

E.P. Thompson in his 1963 classic *The Making of the English Working Class* described how workers interpreted their everyday experiences of struggle in cultural terms, and how they ‘made’ themselves into a class as they developed a sense of community and identity. For Thompson, class was not an economic fact that preceded and gave rise to consciousness and action; class was instead the result of that consciousness and those actions.

Thompson's eye was turned to the specific and often surprising details of artisanal and working culture in pre-industrial England, the many ways in which the working people at the bottom of English society conceived of themselves and created their own organisations for education and politics in the last half of the eighteenth century. Neither peasant nor middle class, the many segments of working people in England were socially organised by trade, skill, cultural traditions, and political repertoires. They were not, in fact, a ‘class’. And yet, they became a class — this is the “making” that Thompson's title refers to.

For our purposes, the Lebanese Shiite middle class ‘made’ itself out of disenfranchisement, state neglect, political and economic confinement. Thompson's version of working class consciousness invokes liberty and justice as much as it does deprivation and material factors. “In the end, it is the political context as much as the steam-engine, which had most influence on the shaping consciousness and institutions of the working class”⁶⁷⁷. “The people were subjected simultaneously to an intensification of two intolerable forms of relationship: those of economic exploitation

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ E. P. Thompson (1963), p.197.

and of political oppression”.⁶⁷⁸ Shiites in Lebanon, through a conjunction of political interventions, internal and external social dynamics, could pull themselves out of domination and marginalisation and ‘made’ its own working class first, and middle-entrepreneurial class later — in less than two generations.

Lebanese Shi‘a certainly represents a peculiarity in the Shiite Arab region and most definitely depicts a uniqueness in the broader spectrum of social class/group-making. Although the literature about the Shi‘a of Lebanon is large, scholarship about this community before the second half of the twentieth century is not controversial at all; all research examines the same subject: that Shiites were impoverished and misrepresented since the creation of the Lebanese state. And even during the French mandate and at the announcement of Lebanon’s 1943 independence, Shiites were misrepresented and marginalised. The literature on the Shi‘a began to change as Shi‘a economic and social mobilisation began to change. The first stirrings of change came in late 1950s and early 1960s when the community started to be exposed to modernity due to internal and external factors.

The purpose of this research has been the one to trace the multiplicity of events that forged the creation of this social group and its relative political organisations. The story of the rise of the political Lebanese Shi‘a has been well narrated in other scholarly works. What has been neglected so far is a more comprehensive anthology of all the variety and combination of dynamics that brought the Lebanese Shi‘a to become the most powerful economic and social group within the whole Arab (Shiite) region.

The most dramatic single feature for the community was undoubtedly the advent of imam Musa al-Sadr, an Iranian religious figure who came to Lebanon in 1959 to replace the deceased Shiite *mufti*. Al-Sadr’s charismatic personality was the catalyst for the mobilisation of the masses. He injected to the disenfranchised Shi‘a a sense of ‘community’ (“a community as a whole”, in A. R. Norton’s words), pride and identity and opened the doors of politics and economy to the so far marginalised and poor masses. Al-Sadr generated a sense of hope among the Lebanese Shi‘a, scratching that sense of inferiority that had characterised this fragment of society until his advent; he

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 198.

made them start questioning themselves about their place within Lebanese society in respect to other major communities and enlightened the belief that they could achieve their own space in the government and in society through non-revolutionary political action. By doing so, he established the first educational centres, hospitals, and other social services to enable the Shiites to achieve living standards marginally equal to those of the other sects.

It is important to stress out the populist nature of the Shi'a awakening in Lebanon because the *embourgeoisement* of this community was from the very beginning a grassroots process, rather than a governmental top-down reformist approach (the Chehabist policies helped at the beginning the improvement of the community but they can not be consider the *conditio sine qua non*). The motivation behind this awakening lied in sociological and economical forces rather than pure ideology. This could possibly explain why the Sadr movement was successful, while the Communist organisations failed to mobilise the community. What Musa al-Sadr brought to the scene was ultimately a very well structured sectarian delineation of all Shiite grievances. It is possible, though, that the Iranian cleric had hoped to weaken the Shiite left in order to negotiate with the state's new sectarian 'rights' for the Shiite bourgeoisie.⁶⁷⁹ There is evidence of the influence that al-Sadr exercised on the (Shiite) Lebanese middle-class in Lebanon and abroad to 'donate' money to its cause. Plus, Musa al-Sadr was anything but a communist. On the contrary, he preached the southerners to dissociate themselves from the secular programs as well as from the Communists' and secular nationalists' (Syrian and Arab in general).⁶⁸⁰ As a non-revolutionary he bargained with the state: he did not advocate the complete destruction of the sectarian system, but he certainly moved the first steps towards the Shi'a collocation *within* the state.

Until the advent of Musa al-Sadr — and certainly until the outbreak of the 1975 civil war, Lebanese Shiites had been vivaciously flirting with other non-sectarian, transnational components of the Arab left, i.e. Communists, Syrian and Arab nationalists, etc. as a means of entering into the political process in Lebanon. However, these movements couldn't penetrate the pre-war traditional conservative power

⁶⁷⁹ R. J. Abissab and M. Abissab (2014), p. xx.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

structure, dominated mainly by Christian Maronites, Sunnis, and traditional Shiite families. So consequently these non-sectarian parties could not unite under the same flag the voice of the Lebanese Shi'a. Musa al-Sadr could instead take the lead, unite the community, and give a serious political voice to Shiites' governmental underrepresentation, economic underdevelopment, and political neglect.

In this work I have tried to describe the trajectory of the process of demographic and social factors which led to the rapid growth of the Shi'a community in the halls of power and throughout Lebanese society which began in the 1960s, and continued massively during and shortly after the civil war when a further qualitative leap in the nature of the power relationships between the Shi'a and the other communities occurred. These changes were corroborated by: 1) the rapid urbanisation of the Shi'a, which in less than twenty years went from being a rural community to urban; 2) a radical shift in the agricultural system (particularly in the southern villages and the Beqaa), along with the decline of the sharecropping system, the collapse of tobacco farming during the war and the growth in real estate speculation by Lebanese emigrants; 3) numerous waves of Shi'a emigration to various locations in Australia, America, Africa and the Arab world (I have mainly focused on the African and Latin America diaspora) which enabled the creation of a Shi'a entrepreneurship of businessmen which in many cases returned their investments to Lebanon, and through which they could pressure their acceptance into Lebanon's political and economic system; 4) the rise of a Shi'a intelligentsia that rapidly spread thanks to secondary education and the University of Lebanon, and soon invaded both the state and private job markets, putting enormous pressure on the public sector in particular.

These developments coincided with the dismantlement of the traditional Shi'a baronial families and had an impact also on the the mid-ranking *za'ims* that had been leading the community under the Chehabi regime in the 1950s and 1960s. This social mobility soon found expression, and the aspirations of these new social classes (especially the returnee 'exiles' and the intelligentsia) were firmly associated to the leadership of Sayyid Musa al-Sadr who, with the support first of the Chehab-run state, sought to found a Shi'a political third-way, an alternative both to the traditional leadership referenced above and

also to the Leftist, nationalist opposition that had captured the imagination of large components of Shi'a community, especially the youth.

By the mid-1970s, just as the Shi'a was moving its first important steps and progresses into the state order in Lebanon, the civil war broke through. The fifteen years strifes brought the central state to a complete collapse, destroying the previous social and political social order and creating a 'militia economy', marked by the transition from the local mobilisation of armed defence groups in villages or neighbourhoods that operated within the framework of a unified state to the monopolisation of resources and means of coercion by large, organised, and hierarchical militias that gradually carved up Lebanese territory after 1976.⁶⁸¹ Amal garnered support among the majority of the Shiite population until its radical competitor, Hezbollah, gained momentum after 1982.⁶⁸² The militia economy largely expanded on the ruins of a national economy that was falling back on agriculture as its leading sector and, again, this situation led to another massive wave of emigration of skilled and even unskilled workers (many Shiites among them).

The late 1970s and early 1980s were also the years which saw a significant rise of the Lebanese Shi'a. In 1978, Musa al-Sadr mysteriously disappeared during a visit to Qaddafi in Libya. One year later, the Iranian Revolution exploded in Iran, invigorating the Lebanese Shiite constituencies and finally, the 1982 Israeli-led Litani operation in south Lebanon led to the consolidation of Hezbollah. Amal's new leader Nabih Berri's decision to participate in the National Salvation Committee (NSC) formed in the wake of the invasion (alongside with the Maronite leader and Israeli ally Bashir Gemayel) resulted in a split within Amal. The Islamic faction of Amal broke away and founded the party of God, Hezbollah. This brought in the biggest transformation in the history of the Shi'a of Lebanon, and initiated a stage of radical institutionalisation in contrast with al-Sadr's engagement policy with the state, paving the road to Shi'a ascendancy and gradually bringing them to the centre of Lebanese politics.

⁶⁸¹ Elizabeth Picard, "The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon", in Steven Heydemann (ed.) (2000), *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*. Berkley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

Amal helped the Shiite community to have a voice in the politics of the 1970s and 1980s, while Hezbollah — with its Khomeinist revolution inspired re-elaboration of religious ideology — played an indelible role in showing the rest of the world what the Lebanese Shi‘a had turned into.

The civil war had also created those economic deficiencies in Lebanon that permitted the emergence and flourishing of self-help programmes and welfare activities especially among the Shi‘a. It was during this stage that Hezbollah started investing in its social service networks and organisations, becoming an efficient service provider for a substantial group of the Shi‘a population. Alongside Hezbollah, Amal continued its own social service and education provision. It is very important to underline how the emergence of the Shi‘a community is indeed a process from within, and other state’s support has very little to do with the emergence of this social and political group in the first two crucial decades. Musa al-Sadr came from Iran, but early funds from the Shah were limited⁶⁸³, and most depended on the imam’s ability to galvanise its community and to create important economical networks with the rising Shiite bourgeoisie in Lebanon and abroad. In this work, I have analysed the subsaharan case in particular, as it is revealing of how the business and merchant community was extremely well established in that area and how it significantly contributed to the economic upward mobility of those who remained in their own country. Certainly, the Iranian element became much more visible after the Amal split and with the birth of Hezbollah, but had it not been for the social mobilisation created *before* the rise of Hezbollah, Iran alone would have found a less hospitable zone for entering Lebanon in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution. Consequently, the uniqueness of the Lebanese Shi‘a in creating a middle class and entrepreneurial business bourgeoisie out of a formerly disenfranchised and isolated community is reaffirmed. There is no other evidence in all other states of the region of a marginalised sectarian sociopolitical group who was able to ‘create’ an educated middle class who able to ‘invade’ the state and to some extent replace it. It is extremely unlikely that the Lebanese Shi‘a experience could be replicated elsewhere. Lebanon’s unique form of representation based on the allocation of political power along pre-established sectarian proportionality facilitated the Lebanese Shi‘a struggle

⁶⁸³ F. E. Graham, F. C. Rahim (1999), p. 206.

for recognition. In all other counties, those Shiite movements have been firmly repressed so far. Finally, the Ta'if Accord (1989), negotiated under the auspices of Syria and Saudi Arabia, formalised and asserted Shi'as presence on the Lebanese political stage. Ta'if also marked the beginning of a new stage in the path of Hezbollah — and also greatly reinvigorated Berri's Amal. Some scholars refer to this stage as “Phase Two” of the Party of God.⁶⁸⁴ Starting in 1992, Hezbollah decided to turn the page of strict military action and radicalisation and begin a new chapter denoted by political accommodation (‘Lebanonization’). During this stage, Hezbollah started investing even more massively in its social service organisations. But while the party had been calling for state reforms, on the ground Hezbollah was undertaking its own reforms to its own population totally independent from the state. Hezbollah (and to a lesser extent Amal), succeeded in changing the status of the underdeveloped, marginalised, and uneducated Shiites not only through its vast network of various social, health, and educational institutions, but also through a vast web of legitimate and illicit activities carried out in Africa, Latin America, Canada and elsewhere. Most noticeably, it gained political power and substantial popularity among the Lebanese Shiites through a skilled practice of resources management and re-shuffling of capitals. In a continuous tension that demonstrates the clash between the neoliberal practices and policies of Amal and Hezbollah and the latter state interventionist thought, the double-edge success of Hezbollah's social services and for-profit businesses resulted at first in an improvement of the Shi'as socio-economic status, and at the same time for the party itself because its popularity grew and was enhanced. Indeed, Amal and Hezbollah, through their networks and businesses, succeeded in transforming the Shi'a “victimization complex into meaningful values of justice, solidarity, community, sacrifice, progress etc – which, in turn, instigate high self- esteem and a solid sense of pride”.⁶⁸⁵

The Ta'if Accord also extended the authority of the speaker of the parliament from one year to four years, giving him some balance with the prime minister and the president: a position that Nabih Berri, current speaker and leader of Amal, is exploiting to the full.

⁶⁸⁴ Bassel F. Salloukh and Shoghig Mikaelian, “Hizbollah”, in John L. Esposito and Emad El-Din Shahin (eds.) (2013), *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁸⁵ Mona Harb and Reinoud Leenders (2005), “Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, ‘Terrorism’ and the Politics of Perception. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(1), pp. 173-197.

Thus, this thesis has retraced the trajectory of Berri's leadership — a very overlooked aspect in literature — through an analyses of his business networks and political connections. By concentrating on the community's vast economic, social, and educational developments this thesis sheds light on the emergence of a self-conscious and self-reliant sectarian group, contributing to the relatively scarce academic literature that examines the non-military aspect of Lebanon's Shi'a. This entails unpacking the social, economic, and business aspects of Amal and Hezbollah. Studying this aspect of Amal and Hezbollah is uncommon, since researchers have mostly showed interest in their military and political activity. Moreover, all the studies about Lebanese Shi'a and Hezbollah have either analysed the theoretical aspect of Hezbollah's thought and doctrines or the military ones. Amal and Hezbollah's practices of establishing vast private social networks and proper businesses and enterprises conflicted with the political thought that brought Hezbollah into existence. Nonetheless, it is through the establishment of businesses and social institutions that the party saw the Shi'a ascendancy. Consequently, these non-political networks of Amal and Hezbollah shall be considered as crucial as the political ones in instituting a 'resistance' culture and identity, and in understanding the ascendancy of Shi'a socio-political status.⁶⁸⁶ And to some degree, Amal and Hezbollah's businesses and organisations *become* political institutions through an accurate reformulation of capitals. In certain specific cases (especially with Amal) the separating line is very blurring. As Le Thomas suggested for Hezbollah, the party brought together political, religious, and cultural components which produce a "comprehensive model that aims to foster [a] resistance-oriented behavioral pattern".⁶⁸⁷ The powerful social and economic base established by Amal and Hezbollah was able to win over the loyalties of the Lebanese Shiites and became an agent of "political recruitment, indoctrination and control and integrated mobilisation of the Shi'a community".⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁶ M. Khoshian (2012).

⁶⁸⁷ Catherine Le Thomas., "Socialization Agencies and Party Dynamics: Functions and Uses of Hizballah Schools in Lebanon", in Myriam Catusse and Karam Karam (eds.) (2010), *Returning to Political Parties? Partisan Logic and Political Transformations in the Arab World*. Beirut: The Lebanese Center for Political Studies, pp. 217-249.

⁶⁸⁸ B. Salloukh and S. Mikaelian (2013).

How is the dramatic change in the position of the Shiite community to be explained in comparison to the other Lebanese sects in the period examined? The Shi'a adamantly started from a much lower base of socio-economic development in comparison to the other major communities in Lebanon, "making their gains comparatively more vivid in a short period of time as they caught up with the more advanced Christians and Sunnis".⁶⁸⁹ For sure, the Sunni movement in Lebanon never engaged in a 'fight' for identity in the way the Shi'a did. Even after the 1975 civil war the Sunni community continued to rely on conventional figures and on the long-established baronial families. Likewise, the Maronite Christians throughout the period investigated remained trapped in the hands of their own traditional clans and *za'ims* in an attempt of preservation of their privileges and practically unable to produce a new leadership (except for the radical warlord Samir Ja'ja'). In these last two decades, the old traditional baronial Maronite families have been almost entirely dismantled and left the leadership to the Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir. In short, because Sunnis and Maronites were already well-established within the state of Lebanese society, they did not produce visible new social development during the war years, unlike the significant emergence of a Shiite 'new' middle class of businessmen, intellectuals, and new politicians to replace the old feudal leaders. The Shi'a community was ready for development by the time al-Sadr took the leadership. Shiites had already begun to build a financial base, supported by the expanding and vigorous merchant and entrepreneurial diaspora, settled mainly in West Africa, and that sent substantial remittances back to Lebanon's southern and peripheral villages. This mechanism enabled the Lebanese Shi'a to pursue education and eventually to gain access to universities, from which a professional and entrepreneurial ambitious class churned out. By the late 1960s, many Shiite families had been sending for a few years their sons to study or work abroad, eventually joining the diasporic relatives. In a substantial way, many of these 'new' professionals with various fortunes accumulated abroad returned to Lebanon, financially and ideologically invigorated to assault the traditional bastions of Lebanese society and to challenge the traditional system of sectarian division of power.

⁶⁸⁹ F. E. Graham, F. C. Rahim (1999), p. 209.

The example of the Lebanese Shi'a, while exposing a number of characteristics uniquely ascribable to the Lebanese contexts, may have a relevance for the Muslim context and possibly beyond. As I have tried to demonstrate, the rise of a social group out of isolation and backwardness into near dominance of a political order resulted from the confluence of a variety of conditions. The long-term effects of these shifts will have to be analysed in the forthcoming years. While carrying out my field research I discovered the extreme scarcity of data and statistics on sources of income, property and wealth in general. I have tried to connect and unearth some economic aspects of Lebanon Shi'a and their share of wealth. All the discourses and the few available figures on post-war reconstruction projects confirmed the hypothesis that these projects widened social divisions and the size of a social group deeply affecting Lebanon's politics and economy. The trajectory proposed by this work hopefully opens the doors for more in-depth research into the composition, income and wealth of Lebanese Shiite middle and entrepreneurial class — both at an internal level and the diaspora.

At the time of writing, Lebanese Shi'a has hardly reached a political stability. Hezbollah's deepening involvement in Syria is one of the most important factors of the conflict in 2013 and 2014. Since the beginning of 2013, Hezbollah fighters have operated openly and in significant numbers across the border alongside their Syrian and Iraqi counterparts. This creates an abnormal state of economic and political affairs for all Lebanon's sectarian groups, and for Shiites in the first place. Has the Lebanese Shi'a moved into a period of consolidation as a group? The community, besides an apparent façade harmony, is still very fragmented and the intra-Shiite rivalry may easily resurface. Under these conditions it is very complicated to foresee whether the Hezbollah formula or the more 'secular' Berri approach will gain even more political stability and popular support in the near future. It is also not very clear what the Shi'a who live outside these two organisations will do to advocate their initiatives and impose the presence they have lost in these past three decades.

The immense progress the Lebanese Shiites have made in establishing the dignity of their community within society, and the 'creation' of a self-made bourgeoisie and entrepreneurial community which imposed its presence and power within the state have certainly affirmed a 'Lebanese model'. However, if Lebanon should face further ideological crisis and popular dissatisfaction with the nature of the Lebanese system,

will the façade equilibrium between Amal and Hezbollah be maintained? And how would the Shi‘a middle- and entrepreneurial class react? As for the very complex relationship between class and sect. in the theoretical framework section I have proposed and recognised the role played by economic ‘interests’ in sectarian behaviour and identity. While acknowledging Nasr and Dubar’s interpretation of sect and class as social structures (both), throughout the thesis I have tried to emphasise how the relationship between them is not one of separate or parallel identities, but the result of complex network of interactions and disentanglement, mutual influence and antagonism, and both engaging in the struggle for domination and the acquisition of economic and political control.

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