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A Veneer of Democracy: How *el-Zu'ama* Dominate Lebanon's Political System

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Senior Honors Thesis

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Abstract

As Lebanon has endured a never-ending cycle of crises for decades, scholars have sought explanations via the country's intense sectarian system, and have investigated its origins extensively. However, this search has neglected the question of sectarianism's permeance and maintenance. This paper will focus on the latter, and argues that the sectarian system is sustained by a sectarian elite class, known as *el-zu'ama,* via their own cults of personality enabling them to maintain control of their sects. This paper will examine pre-statehood history, the civil war, post-war reconstruction, and finally, modern failed challenges to the system to illustrate this thesis.

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Introduction

"The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes

Lebanon leap like a calf and Sirion like a young bull." -Psalms 29:5-6

"The Prophet (ﷺ) said: If anyone cuts the Sidr, Allah brings him headlong into Hell." [1]

Lebanon, a tiny country tucked between the Mediterranean Sea and *el-jabal ash-sharqī,*

or the Mountains of the East, is mentioned throughout both Christian and Islamic texts as a place

of incredible importance. Owing its name to the ancient Pheonecian root "𐤋𐤁𐤍" (l-b-n or laban),

meaning "white" in reference to the impressive imagery of Mount Lebanon's snow capped

mountains, this relatively small plot of land has been host to immense history, mythology, and

conflict. Much of the literature on modern-day Lebanon focuses on the phenomenon of

sectarianism and its implications in Lebanese politics, culture, and society. Sectarianism is often

the blame for every major and minor issue the country faces, from the brutal civil war that raged

through Beirut during the last two decades of the 20th century, to the shortage of air traffic

controllers at the nation's sole airport, Beirut-Rafic Hariri International.[2] Emerging literature is

making a case for other explanations for these problems besides sectarianism, such as an

embrace of neo-liberal economic policy post-war to account for the economic crash of 2019,[3] or

a view of the civil war as an ideological conflict rather than a religious one.[4] However, what

much of the literature misses is the central questions of this thesis, which are: Why is

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[1] Sunan Abi Dawud 5239 - General Behavior (Kitab Al-Adab) - كتاب الأدب - Sunnah.com - Sayings and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه و سلم)
[2] Salame, Richard. "Sectarianism Stymies Air Traffic Controller Recruitment, MP Says." *L'Orient Today*, 8 Aug. 2023,
https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1345857/sectarianism-stymies-air-traffic-controller-recruitment-mp-says.html.
[3] Nahas, Charbel. *An economy and a state for Lebanon*. Riad el-Rayyes Books, 2020.
[4] Mouawad, Jamil, and Hannes Baumann. "Wayn Al-Dawla?: Locating the Lebanese State in Social Theory." *The Arab Studies Journal*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2017, pp. 66–91.

sectarianism so embedded in the Lebanese political system and society? And, how has the elite sectarian class *el-zu'ama* maintained their positions of power? Through five distinct modes of analysis, this thesis, in response to the guiding questions, advances two arguments: First, I contend, sectarianism is maintained by an elite class known as *el-zu'ama* through their cults of personality, geographic and social pillarization, and legal institutionalization. Second, sectarianism is, rather than a cultural artifact of foreign imposition, a modern tool of political control to divide a nation and maintain power in a specific class. This thesis will go further to analyze these claims in a comparative fashion, looking to concepts such as pillarization and consociationalism to understand Lebanon's relationship to other similar regimes.

There are a number of competing claims in the debate surrounding sectarianism's emergence in Lebanon. Max Weiss outlines four main schools of thought that have come to exist in the literary vernacular regarding Lebanese sectarianism, they are: 1.) The 'organicity' of the Lebanese sectarian groups was inherently different and opposed, this differentiation later being formalized via the proportional representation of the constitution and power sharing. 2.) An opposite approach, the idea that sectarianism is foreign and invented, a system imposed by external powers. 3.) The third approach viewed the phenomenon as a failing of the different sects of Lebanese society to come together, tolerate one another and nationalize together under a Lebanese identity. This school came to being during the Civil War, and aimed to view the failings associated with sectarianism.) The fourth school, which came about post-war in the 1990s is less defined and relevant, but took a more broad and detailed sociological approach to the problem. It analyzed all of the new developments that came with post-war Lebanon and the

expansion of sectarianism into the social realm of Lebanon, civil society, and more via the Taif Agreement.[5]

While all four of these definitions represent different approaches in the literature, and perhaps opposing ideologies within Lebanese society, they fail to explain my central question: how sectarianism has become so embedded in Lebanese society today. The development of these different schools of thought in Lebanon has also aligned with political ideology, where it is common to see more conservative parties aligning themselves with an organicist view of sectarianism, and more left-wing ideologies with a colonial lens of it. While intense political differences between different religious groups in Lebanon is often seen as the reason for Lebanon's sectarianism, there is evidence throughout what scholars see as even the most brutal events of sectarian violence that prove otherwise. This analysis prefers a class lens rather than a religious one, seeing these conflicts as having less to do with sectarianism and more with a peasant or lower-class collective of multiple sects in dispute against a sectarian elite. This is evident in the pre-Mandate wars of Mount Lebanon, the Lebanese Civil War, and even today in revolutionary moments. Going beyond questions of historical origins of sectarianism, political science urges us to ask: 'who benefits from this system?' Who would want this system to remain in place? It is not difficult to answer these questions, of who has gained the most from the system, and who has the most to lose without it. The ruling class of Lebanese society, its *zu'ama*, religious leaders, and politicians have held onto their power for a long time. It is no coincidence that those who created and led the sectarian militias of the civil war on the battlefield that was Beirut now lead those same militias, now rebranded as political parties in the parliament. It is no coincidence that many of those same families were involved in the state building and

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[5] Weiss, Max. "The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon." *History Compass*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 2009, pp. 141–54.

constitutionalism of the Lebanese Republic. And it is no coincidence that many of those same families held power and influence as far back as the time of feudal lords, known as *el-muqata'ji* during Ottoman rule. This paper will analyze how such an oligarchic, family based elite came to be, and how they have succeeded in maintaining political control via a system of sectarian control that operates beneath a veneer of democratic legitimacy.

Lebanon today operates a political system divided by religious sects. On its surface, the system ensures representation of all religious groups, democratic leadership, free elections, and prosperity of a nation.The portrayal in western media typically shows a country in supposed religious turmoil. (Civil war, religious strife, terrorism, etc.) More specifically, war through the last decades of the 20th century that supposedly pitted Christians against Muslims, governments unable to pass budgets, or even elect presidents, and political parties and militant groups struggling for power are evident in viewing Lebanon through a purely religious lens. All of this framed as simply due to religious division, and not any higher problem. What is more useful is to understand where these groups came from, and why the people that have power, have it. Through looking through these lenses, a much different, more complex story emerges. A story that focuses less on blaming these problems on sectarianism, or labeling the system as inherent and organic. One that understands systems of elite politics at play, one where a lower class across the whole of Lebanese society is in a constant struggle with an elite political class, rather than a sect versus a sect. So, to actually understand questions like where did Hezbollah come from? Or why was the Civil War fought? We need to look back to see how these systems of power were implemented and reproduce themselves.

In order to answer these questions, this thesis looks to a variety of modes of analysis to understand how the system was built, maintained, and defended. This paper begins in Chapter 1

with historical analysis of Lebanon before its republican era, looking back to feudal systems which empowers a sectarian elite initially, and to Ottoman colonialism with politicized sectarianism for the first time. This chapter also analyzes French colonialism and its relationship with certain sectarian groups, expanding political sectarianism. Chapter 2 looks to the statehood era and agreements which formalized political sectarianism in the modern state such as the Constitution and National Pact. The chapter then looks to the civil war and offers a different account of the conflict, one which views it through a class lens rather than a religious one and traces the rise of the modern sectarian elite. Chapter three moves to a spatial and content analysis of the geographic polarization of sectarian groups in Lebanon, and investigation of placemaking and exclusion in Beirut. The content analysis looks to political propaganda which aids in building the cults of personality of the sectarian elite. Chapter 4 turns to analysis of 21st century challenges to the sectarian system, and the successes of the sectarian elite in defeating these movements, defending the system. Through these analyses, this paper seeks to prove that sectarianism in Lebanon is a system of political control leveraged by *el-zu'ama* via their cults of personality, geographic and social pillarization, and legal institutionalization in order to maintain their political power.

Chapter 1

Perspectives: Orientation to Lebanon

Pre-Statehood Lebanon: An Overview

There are certain schools of thought explaining the existence of sectarianism which have placed Lebanon's history, its status as seat of the Phoenecian empire, its interactions with neighboring nations, and specifically Mount Lebanon's status as a haven of Christians as part of the conversation This chapter will explore the perspectives that built Lebanon in its pre-statehood era, and the *perspectives* in the literature on the system the state is today. Many adherents to such schools of thought see sectarianism as inherent to the Lebanese identity, arguing that the different sectarian groups truly are not only religiously, but also culturally, and even ethnically separate from one another. Now, coexistence via a confessionalist state is a necessary condition.[6] This view stands as one of the four major schools of thought Max Weiss names in regards to the origins of Lebanese sectarianism, being the belief that argues for the organicity of the Lebanese sects present in modern society, owing their existence to longstanding historical differences, leading to the confessional system present in the modern government.[7] This approach is grounded in a historical understanding of Lebanese sectarianism, one that can be traced throughout Lebanon's history, from the French colonial era and mandate system, to the Ottoman era and the implementation of the *Mutasarrifiyya* system of governance, to centuries old disputes between Maronite Christians and Druze people of Mount Lebanon, and even further

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[6] Nassar, Jamal R. "Sectarian Political Cultures: The Case of Lebanon." *The Muslim World*, vol. 85, no. 3–4, July 1995, pp. 246–65.

[7] Weiss, Max. "The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon." *History Compass*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 2009, pp. 141–54.

back, all the way to the Phoenecian era. To understand the relevance of such a belief, an investigation of Lebanese history is necessary.

Even the concept of what the word 'Lebanon' means and was is controversial. But there is a conceptual identity of what the nation-state of Lebanon came to be. 'Lebanon' as a place has existed for millenia. The Bible references 'Lebanon' no short of seventy times,[8] referring to its people, its great mountains, its holy cedars, and of course, Jesus Christ's travels throughout, including his attendance at the wedding in Cana of modern-day South Lebanon, where he "transformed water into wine." However, there is an important distinction between the Lebanon of then and the Lebanon of today. Lebanon, in the sense we know it today, via its borders defined in 1920, had never existed before in history.[9] 'Lebanon' in its modern interpretation was a product of the French Mandate and colonial control. Prior to the French Mandate, Lebanon exclusively referred to Mount Lebanon, and none of its surrounding areas that we know as part of Greater Lebanon today, such as the Bekaa Valley, *el-Jnoub* or South Lebanon or even Beirut.

Mount Lebanon, which is what the Bible, for example, referred to in its mentions to Lebanon, is a somewhat tall mountain range extending from the Chouf of modern day Lebanon up to the northern border with modern day Syria. The Mediterranean coast aligns with the range on the western side with the ancient Phoenecian port cities dotting up along the coast, such as Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Byblos, Batroun, and Tripoli, and falls into the Bekka valley along its eastern side. With the many arguments that constantly arise regarding Lebanon's identity, its history, and its relationship to the nations around it, claims as far back as the Phoenecians come into play. There is a history understood by some as the origins of the modern Lebanese state tracing itself back to the times of Phoenicia, the great maritime empire of the Mediterranean

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[8] https://maronitefoundation.org
[9] Traboulsi, 75

between 1150 and 300 BCE. The Phoenecians excelled in their seafaring skills, and ruled the Mediterranean, rivaling the Greeks and Romans and maintaining trade routes between the eastern and western classical world.

Ottoman Era Mount Lebanon: Maronite and Druze

For the view that sectarianism is an innate facet of Lebanese society, predating any modern state, a key component is the history of 'sectarian conflict' within Mount Lebanon for centuries. This history needs interrogation: Were the groups in conflict actually opposing sects? Can they be identified as 'sects?' And can the conflict actually be considered sectrian? The key political power in Mount Lebanon in recent history (since the 16th century) were the Ottomans, following their defeat of the Mamluks in 1516.[10] For the next four centuries, Lebanon was under the administration of an Islamic empire, throughout varying degrees of control, autonomy, and reform.

Mount Lebanon was considered an Emirate under the Ottoman *iqta'* system. This was the first instance of 'Lebanon' as a political entity, but of course in this sense, 'Lebanon' referred specifically to Mount Lebanon. The *iqta'* was used to determine land ownership and usage rights in accordance with taxation, almost a quasi-feudalist system, with the families who held *iqta'*, or *muqata'ji* families holding certain autonomy within their communities on the land they owned, with taxes being paid to the central power. Alongside this system operated a traditional Islamic hierarchy, in which a higher community of Muslims existed within the empire alongside a second 'protected' community of 'people of the book' or believers of an Abrahamic religion other than Islam (Christians, Jews and Druze.) The Islamic system rooted in the Qur'an requires the physical protection of communities of the book, including freedom of religious belief and

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[10] https://www.britannica.com/place/Lebanon/Lebanon-in-the-Middle-Ages

ritual, in return for a tax called *jizyah*.[11] In Mount Lebanon, the population was almost

exclusively Maronite Christians and Druze, both considered protected classes.[12] This distinction

was one reason Mount Lebanon had such a system of autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. The

surrounding areas of Mount Lebanon, namely the port centers of Tripoli, Beirut, Saida, and Akka

(despite not being in modern day Lebanon) were far more culturally connected to each other than

to Mount Lebanon, being namely Muslim areas, and were far more integrated with the structure

of the Ottoman Empire. However, the muqata'ji system favored the Druze populationwhose

religion was considered much closer to the Islam of the Ottomans.[13] This reflects the modern

concept of Greater Lebanon not being rooted in this history. During this era, the Maronite

Church, an eastern form of Catholicism directly under the Roman Catholic pope, owned the

majority of land in Mount Lebanon.[14] Through this, its religious importance, and centralization

of influence, the Maronite Church became a dominant political power in Mount Lebanon, despite

Druze hegemony. Throughout the Ottoman Era, the economy of Mount Lebanon became a major

center of silk production,[15] with Beirut becoming the gateway to the western market. Through the

rise of the silk trade, Mount Lebanon became more connected to its surrounding areas as industry

grew. Between Mount Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, the Chouf, and the Coast, the silk trade

flourished. However, rising tensions, and changes in Ottoman administration lead to some of the

first sectarian violence in modern Lebanon and the end of the *muqata'ji* system.

  Rising tensions and outright uprisings during the early-19th century eventually led to the

fall of *mutqata'ji* and with it, the Emirate of Mount Lebanon. This was also the end of a system

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[11] The Qur'an (9:29)

[12] The Druze were and are considered a non-Muslim group, despite their classification in Modern Lebanese law for parliamentary allotment with Muslims, but we will get into this more later as such classification is much more a political one than a religious one in the context of Lebanese sectarianism and power concentration in Christian groups.

[13] Traboulsi 24

[14] Traboulsi 16

[15] Traboulsi, 19.

that favored Druze political hegemony over the entirety of the polity, and Lebanon's first foray into institutionalized sectarianism. It is unsurprising then, that this change came amidst a rise in the economic and political power of the Maronite Church. A new era of Ottoman rule began that divided the Mountain into two administrative entities: a Christian-administrated north and a Druze-administered south. Each region would have a governor, called a *qa'im maqam*. This agreement fostered as a compromise between the Ottomans and British who preferred to leave Druze hegemony in place with the French who preferred further Maronite dominance. However, it didn't take long for this system to sow divisions. The Maronites and Druze both opposed it, with the Christian's arguing that Christians residing in the south should also be under the rule of the northern Maronite administrator, and the Druze arguing they should regain control of both the south and the north. Despite most of the Druze residing in the south, there were still Druze populations within the north and Christians in the south. The Christian population had reached a majority of the population of Mount Lebanon as a whole leaving the Druze fearful of loss of their own power.

The mid-19th century saw a rise in divisions and hostilities between the two groups as the new divided system of administration set in. Attacks on both Druze and Christian villages occurred through the 1840s, forcing the Ottomans to dispatch forces to maintain Ottoman supremacy and peace. Reforms were made in an attempt to create fair representation, but what created the legalization of sectarian administration. The two administrative regions of Mount Lebanon formed councils which had equal representation of each of the six religious groups throughout Mount Lebanon and its surrounding regions: Maronites and Druze (the vast majority of Mount Lebanon); Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholics (smaller Christian communities scattered throughout the region); Sunni Muslims (living mostly along the coastal cities of the

Mediterranean, also the religion of the Ottoman Empire itself); and Shi'a Muslims (who were a

small minority at the time mainly south of the Mountain.) This system is the earliest precursor to

the constitutionalized sectarianism in the Lebanese Republic today. These councils had another

purpose: to challenge the power of the strong landowning *muqata'ji* families within the Maronite

and Druze populations that exercised control over their communities. This caused a series of

violent events where *muqata'ji* families challenged the authority of the Ottomans' rule through

the next years of the 19th century. The powerful Jumblatt family of the Druze community, led by

Said Jumblatt, entered into armed conflict with the Ottomans after they refused to recognize the

leader of the southern governorate's authority. The Ottomans were defeated initially, leading

them to seek support from the Maronite in their fight against the prominent Druze family. Of

course such action caused further alienation between the two groups and a rise in sectarian

tensions.

Peasant Uprising of 1858

Despite this, the prominence and influence of the *muqata'ji* families was declining as

more and more towns overthrew their rule in favor of elected sectarian leadership and councils, a

goal of the Ottomans.[16] In 1858-1860, uprisings led by the Maronites and commoners of the

north and the *muqata'ji's* of the south, the two groups with the most to lose under the *qa'im*

maqamiya system and the implementation of representative sectarianism. Both groups had been

increasingly arming themselves throughout the 1850s, with Belgium selling much weaponry to

buyers in Mount Lebanon.[17] What followed was a series of peasant revolts against ruling classes

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[16] Traboulsi, 28.
[17] Buheiry, Marwan, and Tarif Khalidi. "The peasant revolt of 1858 in Mount Lebanon: rising expectations, economic malaise and the incentive to arm." *Land tenure and social transformation in the Middle East* (1984): 291-301.

of any kind, largely centered on poor Christians of the north rising against their *muqata'ji*

overlords and Christians of the south engaging in what can be seen as a sectarian civil war

against their Druze overlords. Kesrawan, a prominent village in the north of Mount Lebanon set

off the major commoners revolts as the first success of the movement. The *muqata'ji* family of

Kesrawan named the Khazins' were opposed to the qa'im maqam (the Ottoman administrative

leader of the northern region.) This refusal to acknowledge the representative sectarian system

the *qa'im maqamiya* was supposed to bring about led to a commoners uprising against the feudal

tax system of Khazins. A power struggle between the feudal family and the Ottoman government

ensued in which both powers sought support from the commoners of the village. Ottoman troops

initially entered the village to implement their control, but left following opposition by the

French. Eventually, the Khazins were also completely forced out, leaving Kesrawan in full

commoner control. A purely representative council was formed, elected by the villagers, and

inspired similar movements throughout the north as well as the south.

The success of the Christian commoners of Kesrawan worried Druze leaders in the south,

dealing with a large Christian population. Druze leadership initiated several armed

confrontations to ward off revolutionary sentiments within their christian commoner class.

Fighting intensified, and Druze attacks on southern Chriustian villages multiplied during 1860.

The southern Christian city Jezzine fell to the Druze, causing refugees to flee to Dayr el-Qamar.

Eventually, the Druze attacked Dayr el-Qamar leading to a massacre with as many as 2000

Christians dying.[18] Christian refugees fled towns in the Druze controlled south Mount Lebanon

to Shi'a towns as well as the coastal fully Ottoman *wilayas* such as Sayda and Beirut.

While the northern region of Mount Lebanon did not engage in the war of the south in

1860, both the north and the south engaged in 'cleansing,' with the northern region expelling

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[18] Traboulsi, 34.

Druze inhabitants to the south as Christians fled Druze controlled territory. Action was taken by both Christians and Druze to also expel small Shi'a populations from their villages in attempts to make the mountain purely Christian in the north and Druze in the South. What is clear from a modern sectarian standpoint is that Mount Lebanon was extremely mixed prior to the events of the mid-19th century, with Christians, Druze, and Muslims throughout the region. The sectarian warfare, massacres, and sectarian cleansing that took place over these centuries massively shifted demographics throughout the two regions, but resulted in a Druze victory over the Christians. As the violence ensued, it became clearer and clearer that the Ottoman policy of *qa'im maqamiya* governance that had split the special administrative region of Mount Lebanon into two was not working. The Ottoman Empire had an opportunity to change course and reestablish its authority over the region. The lasting effect of the altered political geography is important. While Mount Lebanon existed as a special administrative region of the Ottoman Empire, owing to its people's status as a 'protected, non-muslim class' under the Ottomans, much of the surrounding regions, which are now a part of the modern Lebanese state, were under direct Ottoman rule as *wilaya* or states. These parts of modern Lebanon outside of Mount Lebanon were split under either the Wilaya of Beirut or the Wilaya of Damascus, and as majority Sunni Muslim regions, were directly under Ottoman control as full citizens. Despite this, the Christian population gained political power following European intervention, at the expense of Druze hegemony. With European intervention, and specifically French interest in the Christian population of Mount Lebanon, the entire *muqata'ji* system collapsed as the Ottomans weaned control away from muqata'ji families in the Druze controlled south. This was officially completed when the Ottomans established a new status for Mount Lebanon in 1861, called the *Mutasarrifiyya,* which lasted until 1915.

The *Mutasarrifiyya* Period

The Mutasarrifiyya brought half a century of relative peace following an agreement

between a French project (which favored a Christian emirate independent of the Ottomans versus

complete dissolvement of Mount Lebanon into the Ottoman Empire.) The *Mutasarrifiyya* of

Mount Lebanon was governed by a Christian administrator and merged the formerly two

separate *qa'im maqamiya* of the north and south mountain. The new system of governance,

based on a Mount Lebanon that operated as one entity under Christian leadership, was governed

by a non-Arab Ottoman Christian who had much executive power and answered to the Empire.

The governor was accompanied by an elected Administrative Council that did not have

significant power, but did possess the right to veto the governor over two actions: intervention of

Ottoman troops and imposition of taxes. Seeing as these two issues had been the source of many

of the uprisings against Ottoman rule in Mount Lebanon, it made sense that the elected council

could hold veto power over them. The council became the source of political and legalized

sectarianism in Lebanon for the first time, as the twelve councilors seated on it were equally

divided between the six major sects mentioned before. (Maronite, Druze, Greek Orthodox, Greek

Catholic, Sunni Muslim, Shi'a Muslim.) At first the twelve councilors were evenly divided

amongst the Christians and the Muslims (with the Druze counting as Muslim) with each sect

receiving two councilors, leading to a 6-6 split. However, this was changed to cement Christian

control in 1864 with a 7-5 split. Election to the council was determined via locally-elected

sheikhs, where each village's sheikh casted their votes for the council. However, the French

vision for a Christian emirate was still unrealized despite political control and the cease of

political power by the Druze feudal families, namely the Jumblatts.

Political power at this point was now cemented in two entities: the Maronite Patriarch in Bkirki and Bayt el-Din, the seat of the Ottoman Mutasarrif and Administrative Council. Demographically, Mount Lebanon's Christian majority had only grown at this point with property sales from Druze to Christians increasing, as well as the Maronite dominance of upper industry. A major problem the Mutasarrifiyya faced however was the 'recycling' of the old feudal families throughout the new government system.[19] No longer feudal powers, these families now held a majority of the elected village seats. (62% of 37 district governors and 77% of the 337 sub-district governors). Despite losing their prominence within the muqata'ji system, these families maintained a degree of support from the people that once sat under their feudal systems.[20] The Ottoman entity struggled to dissolve this power throughout the rest of its reign. As a reform movement grew not only within the Mutasarrifiyya but also the Ottoman Empire as a whole, subsequent attempts for change at Bayt el-Din were blocked by the other political pole, the seat of the Maronite Patriarch in the interest of the French.[21]

Jabal 'Amil and the Shi'a

Besides the forces described, another important sectarian group came to have a major impact on the Lebanese sectarian system. The Shi'a, the second major sect of Islam existed as smaller agricultural communities for much of the time up to this point. Inhabiting a region called Jabal 'Amil, the second, smaller mountain south of Mount Lebanon, the Shi'a had been under the authority of the Ottoman Empire as part of the *wilaya* of Damascus, until the creation of the *wilaya* of Beirut in the late 19th century. Unlike the Druze and Christian communities, the Shi'a were not classified as a protected class under Ottoman rule. Despite being a major minority

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[19] Traboulsi, 48.
[20] The major families in this system the Jumblatts, Arsalans, Khazins, Hubayshs, Dahdahs, Shihabs, and Abi-l-Lam's
[21]Traboulsi, 49.

within the Islamic community, it was still considered a branch of Islam and not afforded differing

rights from Sunni Muslims. Regardless, they existed as more rural farming communities existing

within the hinterlands of the *wilaya*. However, they were not alone, and much like the rest of the

region, Jabal 'Amil was also relatively diverse. They lived side by side with communities of

Druze, Maronite, and Orthodox Christians throughout the southern province.

   The establishment of Greater Lebanon was a major shift for the Shi'a living in Jabal

'Amil. Unlike cities such as Beirut and northern coastal villages, which at least had some sort of

relationship and connection with the Mount Lebanon communities, Jabal 'Amil and the Shi'a

had been far less integrated with the rest of what was to become Greater Lebanon. There is also

far less documentation of the activities of the Shi'a community in Jabal 'Amil pre-Mandate than

those of other sects from other regions in Lebanon. The social makeup of Jabal 'Amil was

stratified. At the bottom existed a peasant class, crippled with high debt and labor. The region

was cereal-producing, and Ottoman taxation of the agricultural output was higher than that of

silk-producing regions in Mount Lebanon. Peasants were either non-landowning, landowning, or

a wealthier class of local leadership.[22] The next class was the *Ulama* class. *Ulama* refers to

Islamic religious scholars and jurists. The *ulama* of Jabal 'Amil were more known externally

with the region being an important Shi'a center, from where a good amount of religious scholarly

work originated. The *ulama* also largely ran the legal affairs of the region due to a lack of official

Shi'a courts.

   Finally, the top tier of the traditional social makeup of Jabal 'Amil was the *Zu'ama*. This

was a very important group, and is a concept that has carried to present not just for the Shi'a

community, but all sectarian communities in Lebanon. The *Zu'ama (plural)* class refers to a

group of community leaders, largely family-based and patrilineal. A community's *Za'im*

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[22] Chalabi, 2006.

(singular) was the de facto leader, whose responsibilities included the safety and protection of his community, and in return, the community's loyalty and support. The *zu'ama* of Jabal 'Amil further claim to trace their ancestry to much older Arab tribes from Yemen, the location of the original Arabs, further evidence of this being a family based patrilineal system. The *Zu'ama* controlled massive stakes in land ownership under Ottoman rule, until the Ottoman modernizing *Tanzimat* reforms of the mid-19th century. With the *Tanzimat* reforms, the political hegemony of the historic *Zu'ama* class was threatened, but most of the families were able to maintain their power. A fourth class rose into relevance in the early 20th century known as the *Wujaha'*. Largely an urban bourgeois class, their rise as new power brokers from outside the traditional families was supported by the increase of European interaction with the region and represented a threat to the more traditional *Zu'ama* class.[23]

The economic livelihood of Mount Lebanon had been directly tied to Jabal 'Amil for centuries prior to conversion of what Greater Lebanon would look like. With its agricultural output largely limited to silk farming due to the climate of the mountain, Mount Lebanon relied on the grain production of Jabal 'Amil for its food supply. Politically, the leadership of Jabal 'Amil was also tied to Mount Lebanon by alliances with the various clans engaging in fighting with one another throughout the mountain. This relationship was key in the decisions made by Mandate leaders and Christians in Mount Lebanon to annex Jabal 'Amil to be part of the future state encompassing Greater Lebanon. There was an understanding that Mount Lebanon's success was directly tied to its relationship with the cereal and tobacco producing plains of the South.

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[23] Social Origins of the Modern Middle East, 75-76.

Role of Beirut

As the economic activity of Mount Lebanon increased rapidly via the silk trade under the *Mutasarrifiyya*, Beirut grew in prominence as a port city and the connection to Europe. Silk exports brought imports, largely consisting of cotton fabrics and manufactured goods,[24] but also increased Mount Lebanon's reliance on Europe. Beirut's importance led to it becoming the capital of a new wilaya of the Ottoman Empire and the city's increasing economic and political influence over Mount Lebanon. As the city grew in size and wealth, attracting migrants and merchants, sectarian division began to become apparent. The most lucrative trade within Beirut, that with the Europeans, was dominated by Christian merchants while Muslim merchants were left with internal Ottoman trade.[25] By this point, Beirut was primarily a Sunni/Orthodox city, with one third of the population Sunni Muslim, one third Greek Orthodox, and the other third various other Christian groups.[26] The legendary 'Seven Families of Beirut' are a group of aristocratic Sunni families likely originating from el-Andalus or Islamic Spain, who entered into a written agreement with the ruling Mamluk Sultanate in 1350 to protect the city of Beirut.[27] They largely occupied Ras Beirut, and controlled considerable political influence. There were internal sectarian divisions as well, such as within Beirut's Christian population between the older aristocracy of Greek Orthodox families who had been in Beirut for centuries with the new Maronite merchant class that had been inhabiting the mountain, only now engaging in Beirut due to its trade potentials. The Greek Orthodox aristocracy has its own legendary 'Seven Families' that made up the aristocracy of the city.[28] These families occupied much of what became East

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[24] Traboulsi, 52.
[25] Ibid, 58.
[26] Kassir, Samir. *Histoire de Beyrouth*. Perrin, 2012.
[27] These families are the Mneimneh, Sinno, Kreidieh, Itani, Doughan, and Houri families *www.sinnofamily.org.lb*.
[28] They were the Boustros, Abou Saleh, Dagher, Fayad, Sursock, Trad, Merhie, Fernaine, and Tueni families.

Beirut. The influx of new groups into Beirut as the city grew and industrialized threatened to disrupt a balance of power that had been in place for centuries.

As Beirut grew in prominence it became a cultural hub, in the arts, literature, and music. The rise of Arab nationalism in this respect in Beirut is integral to understanding why the different sects of Lebanon came to such different conclusions on the matter by the Lebanese Civil War. Beirut saw some of the earliest aspirations for Arab unity and independence, and the construction of a pan-Arabist ideology. Pan-Arabism is an ideology that sees an importance in uniting Arab people of all countries under one national homeland. While it did not gain major prominence as a movement until later decades, calls for independence from the Ottoman Empire and the formation of an Arab state were painted through the streets of Beirut as early as 1881 by Christian students at the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, a university founded by foreign missionaries, known as the American University of Beirut since 1920.[29] These calls were short lived in the moment, but represent a stark contrast to the attitudes of many Lebanese Christians a century later against pan-Arabism.[30] During World War I, the Ottoman response to the pan-Arab movement was forceful with dozens of activists sentenced to death in Lebanon in 1915 for organizing for independence.[31]

Collapse of Ottomans and Mandate Period

With the end of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Lebanon as a mountain, a region, and a polity would be forever different. The end of the war brought the end of the Ottoman Empire. That which encompassed much of the former Ottoman Empire, was now

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[29] Traboulsi, 69.

[30] Evident in the manifestation of anti-Arabist Conservative Maronite political parties, such as Kataeb Movement, Lebanese Forces etc. More on this later.

[31] Dawn, C. Ernest. "The Formation of Pan-Arab Ideology in the Interwar Years." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20.1 (1988): 67–91.

to be under the control of the victorious Allied powers. Pan-Arabists, who had fought alongside the Allied powers during World War I against the Ottoman Empire, had been promised their own state following the end of the war to unite the Arabs under a common nation. This agreement ultimately floundered, as European colonial ambition outweighed the interests of the Arab nationalists. In what became known as the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, the Levant was split up into what became spheres of influence for the French and British Empires. The French, who had had colonial ambitions over Lebanon for decades, fought for their claim over the Syrian mandate.

Many of the claims made by British colonists during this struggle were rooted in concepts of self-determination for ethnic and religious minorities.[32] In this respect, the French's claim to Syria was 'in protection of' Christian, Druze, Shi'a and Alawite minorities, and the British claim in Palestine was in an interest in creating a national homeland for the Jewish people via the Balfour Declaration. At this point, the French Mandate of Syria was of Syria as a whole, with Lebanon included in that, and not as a separate entity. However, there still existed a 'Lebanese Project' for the French. Through the support of the Maronite Patriarch, the French pursued this 'project' to further its control. While the Patriarch supported this ambition, the still elected Administrative Council of the Mount Lebanon era opposed it, and declared Lebanon's independence in April of 1919. Traboulsi describes the Balfour Declaration itself as a "striking example of the ethnicisation of the people of the region."[33] Here, he argues that while the Jewish people are assumed to be a nationality and a people in order to establish a *national home*, "the Arabs who encompass the majority of the inhabitants are 'negatively defined by their non-jewishness and reduced to the status of religious communities (Muslim and Christian) whose

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[32] Traboulsi, 76.
[33] Traboulsi, 76.

only rights were civil and religious, that is, neither national nor political."[34] Under this logic, France had a responsibility to protect the rights of minority religious classes in Lebanon itself, rather than seeing the Arabs as a nation and a people with a right to self-determination.

As negotiations ensued, references to 'Lebanon' still only meant Mount Lebanon as negotiations ensued. The years 1919-1920 consisted of negotiations between the British, French, and a Prince Faysal, who ruled Damascus as seat of the Arab Kingdom, over what came of the greater Syrian province, which included Mount Lebanon. Eventually, France gave up its claim to Palestine, and the British the French control over Syria. In 1920, the Arab Congress declared Syrian independence and made Faysal the King of Syria. At this point, the Maronite Patriarch and the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon had been negotiating with Faysal, and both had opposed the decision of the Arab Congress to declare independence. Faysal eventually won over the Council however after agreeing to allow for Lebanon's territorial expansion and independence, with the Patriarch still supporting a French Mandate.

In the negotiations, the International Mandate Commission which had been created by the Allied Powers to determine what to do with the former Ottoman Empire's lands had met with delegations, with the French and British boycotting, from all across Greater Syria, and determined the support for each option of colonization. 80% of respondents supported a united Syria, 74% supported independence, and 60% supported 'democratic and decentralized monarchy'. In terms of support for foreign mandates, 60% supported an American mandate, a small proportion supported a British mandate, and only 14%, almost completely Lebanese Maronites, supported a French mandate. The matter of what to do with Syria, and Mount Lebanon itself was largely divided along sectarian lines. In July of 1920, eight of the thirteen members of Mount Lebanon's Administrative Council headed to Damascus to sign a treaty with

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[34] Ibid, continued.

the Syrian Prince in which both rejected a French Mandate and Prince Faysal supported

Lebanese independence. The Council party was intercepted by French troops on the road to

Damascus, arrested, and later convicted of corruption by the French. A week later, French forces

crossed Mount Lebanon and defeated the Arab army, entering Damascus where the Arab revolt

was headquartered. The revolt was destroyed and Prince Faysal fled to Iraq.

On September 1st, 1920, French General Gouraud declared a new entity called Greater

Lebanon administered under a French Mandate. The borders of what largely resembled the

modern Lebanese state today were set, far exceeding the region of Mount Lebanon. As Fawwaz

Traboulsi recounts, "Lebanon, in the frontiers defined on September 1st, 1920, had never existed

before in history."[35] The eastern provinces under the Ottoman's Damascene *wilaya*, the western

coast of Beirut, and the rest of that *wilaya's* cities were all now effectively annexed territories

that had never before been 'Lebanese.'

Politics and Partisanship of the New Mandate

The move came with immediate opposition from Muslims across what was now Greater

Lebanon in the newly annexed territories. In a 1921 letter from influential community leaders

across the major annexed cities called the "Memorandum de protestation présentée par les

habitants des territoires annexes illégalement au Sandjak autonome du Mont Liban," the

formation of the French Mandate of Lebanon was protested. The French took disproportionate

actions in the interests of the Maronite Patriarch, at the expense of other communities residing

within the new mandate. First, the population of the annexed areas was higher than that of Mount

Lebanon. The annexed areas were also wealthier, owing to their increased attachment to the

Ottoman core as well as trade with the broader world. Furthermore, the administration of the new

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[35] Traboulsi, 75.

mandate was made up mostly by veterans of the *Mutasarrifiyya* government, and not by those of the *wilayas*. Immediately, with the formation of a new polity and the annexation of new territories, there was a new sectarian imbalance and disagreement. First, the Christian population, which had been a majority in Mount Lebanon, had effectively 'minoritized itself' through the creation of Greater Lebanon and the introduction of a large Muslim population. Second, those Muslims now included in the new mandate strongly opposed their inclusion into the new project. In fact, most non-Maronite Christians also opposed the mandate, supporting unification with Syria. The major force behind the changes occuring was the will of the French colonists, and their own self-appointed 'spokesman of Lebanon' Maronite Patriarch Ilias Huwayik, whose views differed from many Maronites as well. The major camps in these disagreements included,

The Arab Federalists were elite members of society supporting an Arab Kingdom and Arab unification, including Beirut's aristocracy, and notable Maronite nobles. The Syrian Federalists supported a unified Syria, and was made up mostly by Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox Lebanese. The Protectionists formed two camps, extremists and moderates. The extremists believed in full annexation by France, seeing the Maronites as being French and supporting France in opposing Islam. The moderates of the flank supported Lebanon's autonomy from Syria and relationship with France. This flank is where the Patriarch largely fell and what was the main outcome. The Lebanese Independentists were largely an arm of the Administrative Council, an independent, democratic, and equal multi-sectarian Greater Lebanon. However, there was annexationist interest in this ideology as well. The main motivation of inclusion of the annexed territories was to supply Mount Lebanon with resources, mainly agricultural, in its economic interest. [36]

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[36] Traboulsi, 82-84.

These four camps made up the broad interests of views of all of the sectarian groups of Greater Lebanon at the time. What is perhaps most interesting here is the split between Maronite Christians and both the Greek Catholics and Orthodox. The Greek Catholics and Orthodox appeared to be closer in ideology to the Muslims than to the Maronites. And even then, a majority of the Maronites, via their representation on the Administrative Council, as well as popular sentiment across Mount Lebanon, were opposed to the actions of the Patriarch. As with the peasant uprisings during the Ottoman era, another movement of a cross-sectarian front opposed an elite system. This time, rather than one led by feudal lords, it was led by the Maronite Patriarch and French colonists. And in fact, with the mandate proclaimed, and amidst an interest within the Maronite elite to preserve what had been built, the first institutions of political partisanship began, with the creation of *Hizb el-Taraqqi*, or the Party of Progress. Made up by an alliance of Mount Lebanon's elite with Beirut's financial aristocracy, the movements toward an elite system began.

Also in accordance with the creation of an elite-based system, while the French claimed that their interest in the creation of Lebanon was the protection of religious minorities, its true motives were economic: the use of Lebanon as an easily controllable import/export colony to the east, as well as access to its lucrative silk-making industry.[37] However, the silk industry did not last long into the mandate period, despite French investment, and a shift was made toward a new model in the French interest: the creation of a strong tourism industry, as well as finance. A movement of a society called the New Phoenecians, a Beirut based collective of the Maronite aristocracy pushed for the idea. With Lebanon already having earned the moniker 'Switzerland of the East,' the formation of the region's banking industry seemed fitting for the new mandate.

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[37] Geukjian, Ohannes. "The History and Politics of French Involvement in Lebanon (1860–2021)." *The Maghreb Review*, vol. 48 no. 1, 2023, p. 66-88.

The sectarian elite already made use of mass media in order to amplify their views. The two leading newspapers of the time Le Jour and L'Orient aligned themselves with the politics of Bechara el-Khuri, a Maronite politician of Arabist interests, and Emile Iddi, a Maronite absolutist and the Patriarch's favorite, respectively.

The Road to Independence: Instituting Sectarian Politics

The road to independence for Lebanon took time, especially as opposing factions supporting full Lebanese independence versus reunification with Syria battled it out. In late 1941, amidst World War II, free-French soldiers overthrew the occupying Nazi administration in the Mandates of Syria and Lebanon. Shortly after, independence of the two nations was proclaimed but was swiftly rejected by a front of all Lebanese sects who favored independence, as the proclamation was both incomplete and still included French administration. Independentists continued to push for full independence, under a number of motives. Once again, a sectarian elite was pushing for a system to operate in its own interest. A cross-sectarian elite led by Maronite politician Bechara el-Khoury, Sunni politician Riad el-Solh, and Bkirki, the seat of the Patriarch, sought independence for a number of economic reasons. The Lebanese oligarchy, with all sectarian factions represented, was interested in the privatization of the French-owned industry within Lebanon. There was also elite interest in ridding its port of a restrictive and unattractive French monetary zone, which was struggling to compete with the now booming port of Haifa in Britain's mandate of Palestine, which had been outgrowing the port of Beirut.[38] The intense regulations on the port and import/export business had also created a

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[38] Carolyn Gates, The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy (Oxford and New York: Centre for Lebanese Studies and I.B. Tauris, 1989).

massive black market accounting for between 40-50% of currency imports.[39] The sectarian elite

now found itself losing massive profits due to French economic restrictions and tariffs. The

resulting power shift was significant, not only as it led to statehood, but because it represented

the new era of Lebanese partisanship, a system that has lasted to the present. An alliance between

the Sunni elite led by Riad el-Solh with Maronite aristocracy and the Patriarchy laid the ground

for the oncoming Lebanese elite to control the political system for decades to come. The major

question left to answer was how this sectarian elite was able to maintain their grip over Lebanon.

In late 1922, debate ensued over representation in Parliament. The tradition of sectarian

representation established via the Administrative Council of Mount Lebanon under the Ottomans

was not questioned, and it was assumed that there would be a representation based on sect.

However, unlike the Administrative Council, which held equal representation between Christian

and Muslim members with six seats each, the interim government was first established to a ratio

of 32 Christian members to 22 Muslims, a major difference especially considering that Greater

Lebanon had a Muslim majority (unlike the previous *Mutasarrifiyya.)* Although this number was

rejected by the Muslims, an agreement of 30 Christians and 25 Muslims was reached,

establishing a ratio of 6:5. This ratio remained in place until the end of the Civil War in 1990.

With statehood imminent and the formation of a Greater Lebanon nation underway, a key

question is why sectarian representation was established. Why not seek to nationalize the new

nation around a common identity? Instead of casting aside sectarian labels in favor of a national

identity, and instead of even maintaining the previous tradition of equal representation that

existed in Mount Lebanon's Administrative Council, a sectarian imbalance was established. This,

once again, is a clear example of the sectarian elite's interest in *manufacturing sectarianism.* In

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[39] Samir Makdisi, 'Post-War Lebanese Foreign Trade', unpublished MA thesis (Beirut: Economy Department, American University of Beirut, June 1955).

building a legalized, constitutional system of sectarianism to submit its people to. With the establishment of these quotas, elections held in September of 1943 resulted in big wins for the Constitutionalists. Bechara el-Khoury was elected President, and Riad el-Solh was invited to form a government as Prime Minister. Steps toward independence were taken almost immediately, with constitutional revisions getting rid of French authority in November. Three days after the election, the leaders of the government were arrested by French forces, with Emile Iddi, the Maronite absolutist, appointed head of state. A political boycott followed. A week and a half later on November 22, 1943, following British threats of intervention, the incarcerated Constitutionalists were released, and the French Mandate of Lebanon ended.

Lebanon's path to independence stands opposed to common narratives about sectarianism's hold in Lebanese society. First, there was no revolution of the masses, and no confrontation between civilians and colonial forces, etc. The movement was instead led by a political elite and ultimately the oligarchic class. Within that elite movement, there were no clear sectarian distinctions, such as Muslims favoring independence or Christians favoring France. The movement of Constitutionalists was made up by a cross-sectarian elite in opposition to a conservative pro-French establishment. While many of the political shifts discussed represented cross-sectarian movements of the lower class against an elite, this one represented a cross-sectarian elite pushing change within the economic interest of itself, across religion. The one action that was taken with sectarian intent was the formation of a parliament based on representation by religion, and with that, unequal representation. This institutionalization of sectarianism, by the elite class, was intentional. Instead of forming a collective Lebanese identity, the citizens of the new republic would be divided by religion, and through that, much easily more exploited by the sectarian elite of each group. This echoes the earlier feudal system,

which included the *muqata'ji* class of feudal lords in charge of the protection and governance of their groups. What came over the next decades further implemented this system into the Lebanese psyche, and built a republic divided, where many of its nationals plead loyalty not to their country and President first, but to their sect and *za'im*.

Literature Review

There has been a wealth of scholarship focused on Lebanon's sectarian system, but it has focused overwhelmingly on the origins of Lebanon's divisions. Ranging from arguments of the system being totally inherent to the Lebanese people and completely organic, to others making the claim that it is a pure colonial project imposed by foreign powers for imperialist ambition. This following section will investigate these views among others, and identify the existing gap in the literature on Lebanese sectarianism my argument aligns with.

These accounts say even less about the identities of the elites who remain at the top of the system. When social scientists attempt to understand the roots of sectarian identity, we find three groups debating origins: the primordialists, modernists, and the instrumentalists.[40] Typically, primordialists study the historical roots of such identities. Modernists look to current events and contemporary answers to identity. Instrumentalists prefer to understand personal agency in those decisions of identity.[41] In a criticism of a dominant primordialist understanding of Lebanese sectarianism, in fact, Max Weiss contends that "Part of the problem might stem from the fact that many observers of the Middle East region perceive the problem of sectarianism to be so deeply ingrained in Lebanese society and culture as to be of little analytic purchase."[42] With debate

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[40] Hinnebusch, Raymond. "The sectarian revolution in the Middle East." *Revolutions: global trends and regional issues*. 2016: 4(1), 122.
[41] Matthieson 2015: Chapter 1; Varshney 2007; Malmvig 2012; Hinnebusch 2016a.
[42] Weiss, 2009 142.

being so focused on where it came from, very few have attempted to explain why it is relevant

today, and why it has lasted so long. Before I focus on the latter, I will examine the various

leading claims in the literature of its origins. Referenced previously, Weiss breaks down

historical analysis of Lebanese sectarianism, into a number of schools of thought described in

greater detail.

The Organicists contend that Lebanese sectarianism is indeed an organic phenomenon

inherent to the Lebanese people.[43] This school argues that the Lebanese people are truly divided

based on their religious sect, and that each sect is politically, socially, and religiously different

enough from each other for such a stratification of society. This social order was built into the

modern political system via the state's constitutionalism and proportionate religious

representation. Adherents to this view often naturalize the modern political system, arguing that

confessionalism is necessary to ensure representation of all groups and no political domination

by one sect. In a more extreme expression of this view, a logical direction was to see the

federalization of the country into more independent regions or even separate states based on

sect.[44]

The Artificialists contend that sectarianism was invented in Lebanon by foreign powers

for colonial ambition.[45] This belief often hinges on a Marxist lens. Some Maronite Christians

take the view that they are not Arabs, but that they rather self-identified as descendants of the

Phoenecians or even Europeans. This belief stems from French colonial propaganda within

schools and everyday life to divide the Arabs and make Lebanon a stronghold for colonial

advancement in the Middle East. Those who link sectarianism to colonial intervention tend to

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[43] Weiss, 2009, 142.

[44] Rabil, Robert. *Can Federalism Work in Lebanon? | The Washington Institute*. The Washington Institute, 20 May 2023, https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/can-federalism-work-lebanon.

[45] Weiss, 2009, 142.

criticize urging instead that all Lebanese unite under one nationality, and discard their sectarian differences. Extremists of this view may still hold aspirations for pan-Arabism.

Modernization Theorists began examining sectarianism in the 1980s, during the peak of the Lebanese Civil War. With the first two schools seeing sectarianism as either inherent/necessary, or artificial/useless, this third group of scholars accepted sectarianism as a reality in Lebanese society, but examined it as neither useful nor necessary. They concluded that the harmful system of sectarianism present in Lebanon apparently driving the Civil War was a failure of the Lebanese people to come together as a nation, coexist, and be tolerant of each other.[46] Furthermore, they argued that analysis of history was no longer useful in understanding sectarianism, and rather that its cultural impact was more important. These groups sought to understand how sectarianism was affecting all aspects of society in the present, from politics to civil society, the economy, and more.

Organicists represented an older dominant view in the literature. Jamal R. Nasser argued that the sectarian system predated its constitutional establishment which only formalized it. He wrote that as it was formed "a modern state, its sectarian culture was incorporated into its modern political system. Consequently, the country remained compartmentalized into sectarian divisions."[47] Nasser contends that political sectarianism had been present throughout the region that became greater Lebanon for centuries, as Christian populations stood in contrast to the Islamic empires Lebanon sat under prior to its independence. However, this view fails to recognize the diversity of opinion within Christian populations regarding Lebanon's status under empire, and in debates regarding the Mandate-era and Lebanese independence. As discussed previously, there had been disagreements amongst Christians, with many Orthodox Christians,

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[46] Ibid.
[47] Jamal R. Nassar, 'Sectarian Political Cultures: the Case of Lebanon'. *The Muslim World*, 85/ 3–4 (1995): 248.

and even those within the Maronite community more closely aligned with Arab or Syrian unification rather than French Mandate. Another scholar, Kamal Yusuf Hajj went so far to argue that foreign agents were not interested in establishing sectarianism, but rather were the ones dead set on getting rid of it.[48]

The artificialist camp has mainly argued the direct opposite. It has existed as a counterweight to the dominant political force of the time through the establishment of the Lebanese state. Arab nationalists, who had been seeking to build a unified Arab state with Lebanon being a part of it, saw claims of the need for Lebanon to exist in order to protect certain minority classes as foreign talking points. They argued that divisions within Lebanon were attributed not to sectarian differences but rather differences in development, investment, and foreign interventionism, riling up internal strife. The concept of *Phoenicianism* is part of this. The French colonial system typically educated colonial subjects in schools which taught French history and neglected to teach local history. The Lebanese colonial model differed. French colonial schools in Mount Lebanon did teach local history to the Maronite students, but it was often a history of revisionism, intended to make the Christian population of Lebanon feel separate from the Muslim population.[49] This was meant to make them feel not Arab, and often, to instill a Phoencian mindset. Asher Kaufman explains how the Maronite Church, and Patriarch Elias Huwayik – the divisive Maronite Patriarch who had strongly pushed for Lebanese independence – helped to instill this belief in the population. In fact in a visit of the Patriarch to Versailles for negotiations, he referenced this concept of Phoenicianism to emphasize a non-Arab ethnicity of the Lebanese.[50] Kaufman's explanation of the revisionist Pheoencian identity is

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[48] 2 Kamal Yusuf Hajj, *Al-'â'ifiyya el-bannâ'a aw falsafat el-mïthâq el-wa'ani* (*Creative Sectarianism, or The Philosophy of the National Pact*) (Beirut: Ma—ba'ad al-RahbAniyya, 1961).
[49] Kaufman, Asher. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2001, pp. 173–94.
[50] Kaufman.

central to some of the arguments made by artificialists regarding the foreign imposition of sectarianism.

Within this camp also existed a Marxist lens, which also saw sectarianism as an imposed system, but not exclusively as imposed by colonists, but also by a Lebanese bourgeois class. Mahdi 'Amel led much of the Marxist analysis of the system in his book, asking if sectarianism can be viewed as a class system. He answered that "Sectarianism is the particular historical form of the political system through which the Lebanese colonial bourgeoisie exercises its class dominance within a relation of structural dependency on imperialism"[51] 'Amel goes on to argue that sectarianism is directly tied to capitalism and that the two systems are dependent on one another in Lebanon. He then differentiates the sectarianism existing in modern Lebanon from the supposed sectarian strife of the pre-Republic era, arguing that it was of the nature of some other force, not necessarily sectarian strife. 'Amel, ahead of his time, with Sunni political hegemony and later Shi'a political hegemony on the horizon, then asks if a solution would be to replace the dominant sectarian power, in his time the Maronite Kataeb movement with another, such as Shi'a hegemony. His answer: "The sect is not a real entity, but a political relation that is renewed and perpetuated as the sectarian system is renewed and perpetuated."[52] He maintains that the political parties claiming to represent their sects are more so representative of a class system: "Its [the Kataeb Party's] sectarian character is not determined by its affiliation with a particular sect, namely the Maronite sect. Rather, this sectarian character is determined by the Kataeb's affiliation with the sectarian system, insofar as it is the system of bourgeois domination."[53] And finally, in a slam dunk, 'Amel pulls down the curtain on the entire system: "The Kataeb and its sectarian fascist project had direct, systematic, and multi-faceted support from, first, the state and

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[51] 'Amel, Mahdi, On the Sectarian State. Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 3rd edition, 2003. (First published in 1986).
[52] 'Amel, 94.
[53] 'Amel, 94.

all bourgeois factions regardless of sect (including the Islamic factions), and second, the reactionary Arab regimes that funded the project."[54] Through this line, 'Amel has argued that the political parties which claim to represent their own sectarian interests, actually exist to represent a bourgeois class, and that the replacement of any dominant sectarian party with one of another sect would amount to no actual change in the system, as each party is supported by the bourgeois elements of each other sect and even outside interests.

The organicist and artificialist schools both rested on the assumption that regardless of its use, origin, or strength, sectarianism was embedded and unavoidable in Lebanese society. The new school of thought that came next chose to, in a different course, view sectarianism as a social phenomenon.[55] The third school, modernization theorists argued that any sort of sectarian loyalty was "an impediment to national unity and progress and would ultimately have to be left behind along with other traditional mores."[56] In this respect, these theorists objected to the system as a whole on the grounds that sectarianism was preventing what should be the natural process of nation state formation and the coming together of a people under a shared national identity. What differed this school from the fourth oncoming view was the emphasis still placed on the formation of sectarian identity based on much older histories and 'historical amnesia.'

The modernization theorists' development in the late 20th century into the modernists chose to discard discussion of historical developments, historical amnesia, and legalistic analysis in favor of understanding how sectarianism was related to modern Lebanese life and culture. Scholars such as Fayez Sayigh were far less concerned with feudal warring in Mount Lebanon in the 19th century and more interested in how sectarianism manifests itself in 'popular life.' Sayigh argued that if it wasn't popular in the culture, "the institutions focused on [sectarianism]

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[54] 'Amel, 95.
[55] Weiss, 145.
[56] Weiss, 145.

wouldn't have developed in the first place."[57] This school does not view sectarianism as

necessary or good, however. In fact, Sayigh's work itself proposes 'treatment' as he calls it for

the problem of sectarianism. Discussion of a term known as 'radical sectarianism' came to light

in the 1960s, as scholars such as Waddah Shararah blamed the Maronite Christian right wing for

the radical system, placing focus Pierre Gemeayal's founding of the Lebanese Phalange Kataeb

Party, modeled on the Spanish Phalange and German Nazi parties.[58] I will come to my own

analysis of the founding of the Kataeb as a key point in the rise of radical sectarianism, but for

other reasons having to do with the later rise of *el-zu'ama* and patrilineal power structures.

While all of these schools sought to understand Lebanese sectarianism and debate its

origin and usefulness, none chose to focus on the question of why it has remained such a

powerful system and who has benefited the most.

What is Missing?

The vigorous academic debate about Lebanese sectarianism is present throughout

Lebanese society, such as the rhetoric between Lebanese politicians from Suleiman Frangieh to

Hassan Nasrallah, and demonstrations and debates in the halls of the leading universities.

However the arguments found both in the literature, as well as in the political and university

spheres often focus on what I see as, somewhat echoing Fayez Sayigh, irrelevant points today. It

seems that often instead the most interesting or insightful points on the subject can be discovered

through arguments between uncles over some *argileh* (shisha) at the local cafe in Hamra, or

heated disputes amongst friends at the bar in Badaro. We find it ranging from cultural arguments

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[57] Fayez A. Sayigh, *Al-'â'ifiyya: Bath fî asbâbihâ wa-akhʿârihâ wa-'ilâjihâ* (*Sectarianism: A Study into its Causes, Dangers, and Treatment*) (Beirut: Manshurat Maktabat el-WAjib, 1947).

[58] Waddah Shararah, *Fi uŠûl Lubnan el-'â'ifî: Khaʿʿ el-yamïn el-jamâhïrï* (*On the Origins of Sectarian Lebanon: The Line of the Populist Right*) (Beirut: Dar el-Tali'a, 1975).

of 'it's just here and not going to go away' referenced by more conservative or older figures such as originalists like Jamal R. Nasser. The cultural argument lacks substance, and favors a politically conservative mindset and status quo understanding of Lebanon's problems. However, it has also been adopted by mainstream political movements and figures as a dominant ideology. This is evident in the political messaging of right-wing conservative parties such as the Lebanese Forces, as well as can be found in the messaging of Islamist Shi'a parties such as Hezbollah and the 'Amal Movement. It seems the two extremes of the Lebanese political sphere have more in common than they admit. International theory, which the artificialists often depended on, often lacks substance, and while it poses that sectarianism is implemented, and largely bad for Lebanese society, artificialists neglect to admit that the Lebanese, via their political figures and even people, could be partially at fault for this system. Rather, it places full blame on foreign powers, colonialism, and imperialism. In prior work, I have leaned heavily on this argument, often neglecting Lebanese complicity. I proposed a concept of 'orientalist constitutionalism,' in which Lebanese was prevented from forming its own national identity and constitutional culture in a manner similar to the Global North, and argue that had it never been colonized, Lebanon would be radically different from what it is today.[59] While there is much truth to this argument, and while French colonialism is highly important, it neglects other important historical events and internal practices and policies. A fusion of these theories, as well as other justifications may be more helpful to explain the emergence of Lebanese sectarianism.

It has become increasingly clear that while the literature almost exclusively focuses on explaining the emergence of Lebanese sectarianism, this is no longer relevant or useful. Time has progressed, and while history can explain much, it is hard to make a case that peasant rebellions

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[59] Banat, S. Orientalist Constitutionalism: How Western Imperialism influenced the rise of the post-colonial state. *Jindal Global Law Review* 14, 69 (2023).

in 19th century Ottoman Mount Lebanon are very helpful in explaining the dominance of Hezbollah, or the defeat of popular anti-sectarian movements such as the 2019 Thawra. The literature has largely missed a much more pressing and modern questions: why is sectarianism so strong in Lebanon today, and how has it sustained itself? These questions, rather than trying to answer origins, and place blame on whichever party was guilty decades, or even centuries ago for implementing such a system, rather illuminates who is complicit in maintaining the system and elevating it. It provides insight into who stands to gain the most from the status quo, and who will lose the most if the system were to change. It helps to explain the political scene of Lebanon today, why those in power remain there, and why those rising up for change continue to be unsuccessful. This question helps us understand Lebanon's modern problems, and to get to the heart of how an elite system can effectively take democracy hostage.

In the next chapter, I turn to republican-era Lebanon, to understand how political sectarianism was built through the formation of state institutions and sectarian elite political leadership. The chapter analyzes the era of Maronite sectarian political dominance and formation of modern political parties. This is traced to growing internal tensions which ultimately erupted into civil war, in which I offer a non-sectarian lens to the conflict.

Chapter 2

Construction: Elite Versus Mass Politics

Following analysis of pre-statehood Lebanon and its history in relation to those who had ruled it, the political alliances that formed in order to create its borders, and the differing schools of thought regarding the origins of sectarian division, this next chapter will focus on the *construction* of a political system in the modern state and the formation of political parties led by the ruling class, *el-zu'ama* which has been referenced briefly in relation to *el-zu'ama* of Jabal 'Amil in south Lebanon. This chapter will explain the modern confessionalist government system and then analyze the rise of sectarian dominance of the Maronites via their powerful political arm, the Kataeb Movement. This will be followed by an analysis of the Lebanese Civil War, commonly understood as a sectarian conflict, with a radical different perspective focusing on an economic lens, and a war not of sect, but of ideology and the elite versus the masses. The Civil War is also instrumental in understanding the masses' alignment around sectarian and militia leaders as well as the rise of new *zu'ama*. This emphasized my argument surrounding the elite's maintenance of the sectarian system via their cults of personality. This era will also see the rise of the 'Amal Movement and Hezbollah, demontarting the growth of Shi'a political power. Furthermore, this chapter will study the Palestinians in Lebanon and their effect on the civil war and sectarian system.

Current Political System Overview

Where are we today? The formal political system of Lebanon is the manifestation of three major agreements: the Constitution of the Republic of Lebanon, adopted in 1926 to create the

republic, while still under the French mandate; the National Pact of 1943, an informal understanding/unwritten law agreed to upon Lebanon's independence from French rule; and the Taif Agreement, a treaty signed and ratified in 1989, on "the basis for the ending of the civil war and the return to political normalcy in Lebanon."[60] These documents created the confessionalist democracy that exists today, with political sectarianism legally embedded. While Lebanon stands out as a very representative case in the literature regarding consociationalist systems, it maintains a number of unique qualities. This consociational system builds upon both formal (the Constitution and Taif Agreement), and informal (the National Pact) agreements. While the Constitution created a system of representative democracy based on sect, the National Pact implemented the necessity of consociationalism into the psyche of Lebanon's political class and very deeply into government and the public sector, with the Taif agreement later expanding sectarianism into Lebanese daily life via a number of factors.

Consociationalism can exist in either form, and can function in a mostly informal system, as Lipjhart argued in his *The Politics of Accommodation* in regard to the case of the Netherlands.[61] In Lebanon, the National Pact came into existence via a "gentleman's agreement"[62] amongst the political class of the time, to ensure adequate representation of all the religious groups under the system. Never written down on paper or formally signed, it was understood as an agreement of the highest importance which was a red line to violate. The National Pact formalized sectarianism into the political system, creating the confessionalist system. First, the Parliament was to be proportionally representative of the sectarian groups, though only somewhat based on their share of the state's population. A major component of the

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[60] Krayem, Hassan. "The Lebanese civil war and the Taif agreement". American University of Beirut. Thesis. Retrieved 10 June 2012.

[61] Lijphart, Arend. *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands*. 1st ed., University of California Press, 1968.

[62] Matthijs Bogaards (2019) Formal and Informal Consociational Institutions: A Comparison of the National Pact and the Taif Agreement in Lebanon, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 25:1, 32.

breakdown was a 6:5 ratio of Chrisitan versus Muslim representation in the parliament, with the Druze counting as Muslims. Furthermore, the top offices of the state were allocated to the three major religious groups, with the President always being Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the parliament Shi'a Muslim. This informal agreement proved extremely strong, with it existing up to the Civil War, and only undergoing slight modification following the war.

Pre-war Sectarian Dominance of Maronites

The period following the establishment of the Lebanese state saw important developments that shadow Lebanon to the present: the rise of sect-based political parties led by a *zu'ama* class. Lebanon's history, from its independence to today, is marked by four major eras of sectarian dominance: Maronite political dominance from Lebanese independence to the Civil War, led by the Kataeb Movement and Gemayel family, the Civil War from 1975-1990, where no major sect held dominance; Sunni political dominance from the 90s to mid-2000s, led by Rafiq el-Hariri and later his son; and then finally Shi'a political dominance from the late-2000s to the present, fostered by (Imam Musa el-Sadr) and more recently, Hassan Nasrallah, via Hezbollah's monopoly on violence as the only non-state entity to retain its arms following the Taif Agreement. I fail to identify an era of Druze political dominance in modern Lebanon. However, this does not mean that the Druze, and its *za'im*, (the Jumblatt family) have not held political relevance or importance. On the contrary, the Jumblatts have been very relevant as leaders of their community, as militia leaders and warlords, and as political players. Not failing to mention the Jumblatts status as likely the longest reigning family amongst *el-zu'ama*.

Rise of the Maronite Right and Kataeb Party

The period following Lebanese independence from France and the beginning of the Republic was a political victory for the Maronite movement which had been advocating for Lebanese independence from Syria for decades. As the sect which arguably had the strongest hand in the formation of the Republic, via its close relationship with the French, the Maronites dominated the system in the coming decade. The rise of a new political movement founded in 1936, *Hizb el-Kataeb el-Lubnaniyya*, the Lebanese Kataeb Party, helped lead this dominance. The new Maronite party's primary founder, Pierre Gemayel, became one of the major players in the construction of the new republic, and through his party, inserted his family line as the primary *za'im* for the Maronites. Crucially, the founding of el-Kataeb can partially be attributed to Gemeyal's attendance at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where he was impressed by the German Nazi regime and Spanish Phalange movement.[63] The influence of Fascist ideas continues to the present, along with Lebanese nationalism, and anti-refugee sentiment in the party. Part of the Kataeb movement's early rise to popularity can be attributed to the movement's association with the independence movement amidst rising anti-mandate sentiment. The Kataeb's involvement in independence demonstrations, and Pierre Gemeyal's leadership through that period helped propel him to already being seen as a sort of 'revolutionary hero' as:

> "the bloody confrontation between several hundred well-armed Senegalese troops
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> of the force publique and Kata'ib demonstrators on the occasion of the
>
> movement's first anniversary on November 21, 1937, which saw two phalangists
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> killed and eighty others (amongst whom Jumayyil) wounded, aroused nationwide
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> support for the Kata'ib and increased the general dissatisfaction with the Mandate.

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[63] Entelis, John P. "Party Transformation in Lebanon: Al-Kata'ib as a Case Study." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1973, pp. 325.

This 'bapteme du sang' marked the movement's official entry into the

independence struggle, created a kind of mystique around Jumayyil, 8 and

immeasurably strengthened the popularity and appeal of the Kata'ib movement."[64]

Through its early years, *el-Kataeb* lacked the degree of a racial/sectarian dimension it

very clearly embodies in later decades and the present. In its goal to foster an independence

movement and rise in republican Lebanon, it would espouse ideas of nationalism, regardless of

sect. Its 1938 platform stated *el-Kataeb* was a "purely Lebanese national institution' free of any

'confessional or racial characteristics, fighting against all anti-nationalist doctrines which seek to

destroy or diminish present-day Lebanon,"[65] and the party's primary goals were represented in its

motto: Allah (God), el-Watan (fatherland), el-'a'ilah (family).[66] However, the party had a military

dimension from the start, a tool to further embolden Gemayel as its leader, and which contributed

to the formation of his own cult of personality, as not only a political leader or even military one,

but as his community's *za'im* as its protector. By Lebanese independence, the party's

membership had grown to 39,000,[67] allowing it to have massive influence over Lebanon's

formative years.

In order to ensure his party's continuity in the Republican years, Gemayal politicized his

movement following Lebanon's independence, which had been the Phalangists' primary, even

only goal, to that point. A candidate representing el-Kataeb ran for the office of President, and

the party made lists for legislative elections. Despite a relative lack of electoral success initially,

Gemeyal managed to build his party as the ideological opposition to the growing popularity of

pan-arabism across the Arab world and within Lebanon. However, this rising anti-Arabism

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[64] Ibid, 326.
[65] Al-Qanun el-Asasi (the basic laws) (Beirut: Matba'at 'Azar, July 1, 1938), articles 1, 4, and 5.
[66] Entelis, 327.
[67] Ibid, 328.

within the Maronite right was at odds with increased support for pan-Arabist movements amongst the Muslim population and especially within the Druze community.

Chamoun and Chehab: Division and Reform

With the establishment of the state of Israel to the south, Lebanon, while still a 'belligerent' during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, had largely stayed out of the conflict, with a very small number of troops engaged in fighting on behalf of the Arab side. An ultimate Lebanese withdrawal from the conflict followed an agreement between the Israelis and Maronites.[68] The major consequence of the creation of Israel for Lebanon in the short-term was to spur sectarian strife as Palestinian refugees arrived from the newly established Israeli state during the Nakba[69]. An estimated 110,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Lebanon during the Nakba, most from northern Palestinian cities such as Galilee, Haifa, Acre, and Yaffa.[70] The northern cities were home to largely a Muslim Palestinian population, with most Christian Palestinians elsewhere.[71] While the Armenian refugees, who were exclusively Christians, fleeing genocide at the turn of the 20th century, were granted Lebanese nationality and became full citizens, these muslim refugees to Lebanon were never granted such a status, and remain legally defined to this day as 'stateless refugees' in Lebanese documentation. Sectarian politics are at play here: nationalizing the Palestinians would have further diluted an already decreasing Christian population due to the establishment of Greater Lebanon as the state, and Maronite sectarian leadership had no interest in such a result. The lack of a path to citizenship for the

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[68] Gelber, Yoav. "Israel's Policy towards Its Arab Minority, 1947-1950." Israel Affairs, vol. 19, no. 1, 2013, pp. 51–81.

[69] Arabic for 'catastrophe,' the term used to commemorate the forced and violent ethnic cleansing of Palestinains from their lands in 1948 during the establishment of the State of Israel.

[70] https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/6590/palestinian-refugees-lebanon

[71] As such, almost all the Palestinians who fled to Lebanon were Muslims. I argue this is an important distinction in terms of the nationalization of these refugees.

Palestinians, which also meant consequences such as the lack of a right to work in the Lebanese

economy, has resulted in a lack of integration of the Palestinians into Lebanese society. This

heightened sectarian tensions.

Further heightening tensions, the election of Camille Chamoun as President of Lebanon

in 1952, brought to power a far-right Maronite politician who was opposed to Arabism and

Lebanese involvement in Palestinian movements. He also worked to concentrate the power of the

state in his own hands – a difficult feat considering the consocianalist nature of his government.

Traboulsi argues he did so by, "Pushing his exercise of power to the limits of autocracy, relying

on the textual interpretation of the constitution at the expense of the spirit of the National Pact."[72]

Chamoun's presidency was marked by conservative Maronite emboldenment at the expense of

the spirit of the unwritten National Pact, the guiding principle of co-governance. His autocratic

nature contributed to increasing sectarian tensions, especially between Maronite and Druze

leadership on an ideological basis of conservatism versus the socialism of the Jumblatt clan.[73]

With pan-Arabism on the rise via the accession of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser,

western interest in preventing the spread of Soviet influence engulfed the region via the Baghdad

Pact in 1955, an agreement between Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran with western powers

opposed to the Soviets. Lebanon did not officially join the pact, but Chamoun's clear support and

work to lobby other Arab leaders on its behalf exacerbated tensions, leading to demonstrations in

Beirut and clashes between police forces and student protestors, even resulting in the death of a

student. Chamoun violated principles of neutrality, and subsequently received CIA aid in election

efforts, resulting in the growth of his coalition and loss of seats of several important Muslim

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[72] Traboulsi, Fawwaz. "The Pro-Western Authoritarianism of Kamil Sham`un (1952–1958)." *A History of Modern Lebanon*, Pluto Press, 2012, pp. 130.
[73] Ibid, 130. Chamoun refused any ministerial post for the Jumblatts

MPs, further alienating elite Muslim leadership. A former CIA operative described the

relationship between the agency and Chamoun's government, describing his mission in Lebanon:

"Throughout the elections I traveled regularly to the presidential palace with a

briefcase of Lebanese pounds, then returned late at night to the embassy with an

empty twin case I'd carried away for Harvey Armada's CIA finance-office to

replenish. Soon my gold DeSoto with its stark white top was a common sight

outside the palace, and I proposed to Chamoun that he use an intermediary and a

more remote spot. When the president insisted that he handle each transaction by

himself, I reconciled myself to the probability that anybody in Lebanon who

really cared would have no trouble guessing precisely what I was doing."[74]

This account described the stark violations of the nature of the National Pact, carrying

grave consequences for the alienation of the conservative Maronite *za'im* leadership, not just

from Muslim leadership, but from Christian ranks as well, who formed a 'third way' coalition

against his leadership. Even the Maronite Patriarch of the time opposed Chamoun, calling for

outright rejection of the Baghdad Pact.[75] Chamoun's corruption and growing autocratic behavior

resulted in a brief but major clash, amounting to the level of a civil war in 1958 for a few

months. Clashes between this 'third way' and Chamoun's front were confronted by a wary

Lebanese Army, led by General Fuad Chehab, which focused on attempts to subdue the fighting

rather than intervene on Chamoun's behalf. Eventually American military involvement ended the

revolt to Chamoun's rule and resulted in new elections, in which General Fuad Chehab was

elected President.

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[74] Words CIA Operative Wilbur Crane Eveland, operative in charge of the elections 'bought' for Chamoun by the CIA, quoted in Traboulsi, 2012.
[75] Traboulsi, 2012, 133.

Chehab did much to resolve tensions exacerbated during Chamoun's presidency. He became well liked amongst the Druze and Muslims as a Maronite leader and reformist. 'Chehabism,' coined as his ideology, created a 'moderate welfare state' in response to demands for social justice, but without violating principles of Lebanese capitalism and sectarianism.[76] Chehab had been able to form a strong political position via a consolidation of support from leading sectarian parties and factions, across religious differences, unlike Chamoun who attempted to consolidate his power via authoritarianism. Chehab enjoyed the cooperation of the conservative Maronite Kataeb Party, Armenian Tashnaq, Assad-aligned Shi'a blocs in South Lebanon, the Jumblatt *za'im* clan and their Progressive Socialist Party, Sunni elites in Beirut and other major cities, as well as various Maronite and other Christian notables.[77] The opposition was small and weak, and Chehab became known as the 'reformer,' largely uniting the Lebanese people in attempts to form a national Lebanese identity, healing sectarian divisions.

Chehab's reforms at political leadership also directly contradicted the preceding political organization, which was directly tied to the *za'im* system. His hand-picked group of loyalists were his agents in government, and his appointment of progressive-minded skilled technocrats to middle-rank bureaucratic jobs was a major shift from the *za'im's* clientalist apportionment of government jobs. Chehab was indeed at odds with the system.[78] Chehab's massive administrative reforms, touching every aspect of the Lebanese government, and the government's massive expansion alongside it,[79] gave him a very FDR 'New Deal' style of leadership. A shift in the representation of each sect in bureaucratic positions also was important under Chehab's rule, in

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[76] Hudson, Michael. The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon. New York: Random House. 1968.
[77] Ibid, 301.
[78] Ibid, 303.
[79] The Lebanese State's budget and expenditures saw a massive increase under the Chehab regime, resulting in growth from expenditures of 198,571,296 Lebanese Pounds in 1959, to 473,016,000 Pounds budgeted in 1964.

which non-Christian sects reached almost full parity with Christians amongst the top positions.[80]

The Chehabists were relatively anti-sectarian as they sought out on their mission to 'modernize

the Republic,' with one of his loyalists remarking that any modern person would like to get rid of

the sectarianism system as a whole. That was not possible at the moment, so the next best thing,

equal representation through reforming the state, was neccesary.[81] However, despite the massive

wave of reform undergone via Chehabism, with the end of Fuad Chehab's term in 1964, the

political institutions of sectarianism, the *zu'ama* system and sectarian leaderships' power, and

sectarian division had not been defeated, and grew under the following decade until erupting into

civil war.

Civil War and Rise of Militias

The Lebanese Civil War is typically understood both in popular and scholarly accounts as

a sectarian conflict in which Muslims and Christians went to war against each other.[82] Part of the

reason for this reading today is likely due to a lack of communal memory in Lebanon, which has

resulted in individuals today only remembering the civil war by the massacres committed by one

religious group against their own, contributing to an 'us versus them' mentality. I will get into

this crucial concept of memory more later. This exclusively religious analysis of the conflict

neglects many of its complexities. Less mainstream discourse during the civil war and such

literature today investigates other factors explaining the war: issues of economic instability,

political ideology, or wealth inequality. These conceptions are much more relevant in

investigation of the causes of the war. Beyond this, my argument brings a new dimension in the

literature in this conflict: the complicity of the sectarian elite, *el-zu'ama* in such events. This

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[80] Ibid, 318.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Stoakes, Frank. "The Civil War in Lebanon." *The World Today*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1976, pp. 8–17.

investigation of the civil war will analyze a number of claims made in the literature for causes of the war, as well as my argument of the complicity of the elite.

Taking Sides: Traditionalists and Progressives

The 1970s in Lebanon saw a rise in tensions between conservative Christian groups and the Palestinians, now having settled in Lebanon for over a dozen years. Various attacks were made by Christian militias on or around Palestinian camps while Palestinian armed resistance groups carried out attacks on Israel from South Lebanon, territory the Lebanese state had ceded to the Palestinian Liberation Organization to allow them to carry out such operations. Rhetoric from conservative Maronite leadership, such as the Gemeyal *za'im* dynasty or other leaders such as Camille Chamoun incited more disillusionment within the Maronite community against the Palestinian presence. The final trigger for the civil war followed the shooting of a high-ranking member of the Lebanese Phalangists (Kataeb Party) in East Beirut on April 13th, 1975, which was blamed on the Palestinian guerrillas. Phalangist leader and Maronite *za'im* Pierre Gemeyal was attending a memorial service while a bus of Palestinian civilians passed by, which was subsequently machine-gunned down by Phalangists in an act of brutal retribution. This event gave rise to what became the series of massacres between different groups which constituted the civil war.

While massacres were recorded as being committed against certain sectarian groups, there was an ideological dimension to the sides that took place. First, there was not a coherent 'two sides narrative' to the entirety of the civil war. Sides shifted, groups once allied later fought against one another, and individuals switched between sides.[83] The one constant, however, were

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[83] Chamie, Joseph. "The Lebanese Civil War: An Investigation into the Causes." *World Affairs,* vol. 139, no. 3, Winter 1976/1977, pp. 176.

the militias, which represented military arms of the existing political parties, and the militia leadership, whose warlords remained the major players of the war. To simplify things, we can first look to the two broad groups that formed near the beginning of the war. Often simplified to 'Muslims and Christians' there was actually a more complicated mix with all religious groups on both sides. Writing shortly after the start of the war, Joseph Chamie described the two sides at the beginning of the war as 'the traditionalists' and its opposition. The traditionalists were the right-wing Front of the Lebanese Forces: *the Phalange Party, National Liberal Party, Zogharta Liberation Army, Guards of the Cedars, and Maronite Monastic Order.* The front was mostly Maronite, but included some other Christians and a significant number of like-minded Muslims as well.[84] The right wing front was interested in maintaining the status-quo in Lebanon, the dominance of the National Pact, and upholding the sectarian system. They were opposed by a stunningly diverse coalition which Chamie describes as being a collection of three major think groups: *1.) Lebanese 'progressives,' both Muslims and Christians, 2.) Traditionally-minded Lebanese, and 3.) Palestinains.*[85] The oppositional front was extremely heterogeneous, made up by a collective led by the Druze Progressive Socialist Party and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization,[86] as well as many smaller parties and groups.[87] The oppositional front saw the political system as flawed, corrupt, and inherently wrong for Lebanon, favoring immediate change to a system without a religious role.

Beyond the ideological lens offered here is an economic one. Chamie elaborates that there was a fundamental difference in wealth between the traditionalists and the progressives,

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[84] Ibid, 176.
[85] Ibid, 177.
[86] Ibid, 177.
[87] In total, these groups included: Kamal Joumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party, the Ba'th Socialist Party of Syria as well as Iraq, the Lebanese Communist Party, the Communist Action Organization, the October 24 Movement, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Movement of the Deprived, the Independent Nasserist Movement, the Popular Nasserist Organization, the Union of Popular Labor Forces, the Nasserist Organization-Corrective Movement, the Arab Socialist Union, and of course, the Palestinian Liberation Organization led by Yasser Arafat.

maintaining that "it is widely known that the traditionalists are the 'haves' and the progressives are the 'have-nots.' In general, the traditionalists are wealthier, more educated, better clothed and housed, and in more prestigious occupations than the progressives."[88] Beyond this, the Palestinian dimension was at play. Arafat's PLO was one of the major belligerents of the progressive side, and was in an existential battle with the right-wing front which demanded the end of the PLO's military offensive against Israel within Lebanon, and the removal of the Palestinian refugees.[89] Owing to a pan-Arabist ideology, as well as Kamal Joumblatt's close relationship with Nasser of Egypt and Mr. Arafat, the Druze and his militia front of the PSP were in full solidarity with the Palestinians. Finally, the elite lens is also important in the early development of 'sides,' as we see a number of the prominent community leaders or *zu'ama* *l*eading certain fronts of this conflict. Namely, the Gemayals and Chamoun's of the Maronite community leading the traditionalist front, in opposition to a political enemy of theirs Kamal Joumblatt leading the progressive front as the Druze *za'im.* So, through a variety of different lenses – ideological, economic, Palestinian, and elite, there are a number of factors contributing to the eruption of the civil war, at least in the beginning, other than religion or sect.

With the war's eruption, militias arose. Almost all of the armed groups mentioned above were what became the armed wings of pre-existing political parties. All of the major parties in Lebanon had their militias at this point, including the Kataeb, the Lebanese Forces, the Progressive Socialist Party, etc. And also importantly, any of the small, even tiny political parties or factions had their own militias now at play. As an example, former President Camille Chamoun's political party, the National Liberal Party, had formed its militia wing, known as *the Tigers,* under the command of his son, Dany Chamoun. Politicians and party leaders became

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[88] Ibid, 178
[89] Stoakes, Frank. "The Civil War in Lebanon." *The World Today*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1976, pp. 10.

militia leaders and warlords overnight, and politics was put on hold for battle. The remarkable factor was how much the sides changed. All it takes to understand is a quick look at a Wikipedia entry for any of the militias at play. A look at the 'allies' and 'opponents' list of a militia saw the same militias allied and in opposition to one militia at various points throughout the war.

Political Economy of the Civil War and the Militia Elite

Due to the factors I discussed, we can read the civil war as a battle for dominance of sectarian leadership as well as an opportunity for this leadership to enrich themselves via the political economy of the civil war. I have already demonstrated how a certain *za'im* political class became the militia leadership during the civil war, and led their armies in the series of massacres and battles that consumed the latter decades of the 20th century. However, another side of the civil war took place outside of 'sectarian fighting' and battles over territory. With the vacuum created by a lack of a state, illegal activity flourished. A massive black market import/export scheme, alongside major drug trading, and even more illicit activities became central to the civil war, funding armed groups involved. The massive amount of money generated during this period via illicit activities not only funded these militias, but also enriched the militia *za'im* leadership, giving ample opportunity for those in power to take advantage of the civil war to become incredibly wealthy. In this section I will argue that while the *za'im* leadership used sectarian tensions and fighting to control and subdue their populations, the leadership of the various sectarian groups established a backroom black market scheme to help each other generate wealth.

In what Elizabeth Picard refers to as *the militia economy*[90] during the civil war, Lebanon witnessed a decline in what had been a successful and rapidly growing liberal economy. This economy has been based on an attractive and relatively massive banking industry modeled after the Swiss system, a major tourist industry, and an increasingly risky loans market. In its wake came the militia economy: a black market, highly organized, elite-driven system, from which sectarian elites were able to profit. Picard remarks that the pre-war liberal economy was resilient enough to sustain itself for some time, largely between 1975-83. The growing economic power of the militias however, sealed the fate of the liberal economy for the remainder of the conflict. The initial destruction of capital assets and occupation of the port of Beirut (curtailing its activities) resulted in massive decreases in Lebanon's GDP, and the need of outside financial resources, such as from external actors to Lebanese expatriates in order to fund militia activities, amounted to $1.5 billion to $2.5 billion a year.[91] Between 1983-90, the Lebanese state fully collapsed for a variety of factors, including the Lebanese Army fracturing and collapsing. The state lost its enforcement power. As the state's power and formal economic activity dwindled, the militia economy grew and fortified itself.

Picard attributes the form of the Lebanese militia economy to long-standing traditions of clientelism present in Lebanese politics prior in which loyalty to a political or community leader (the *za'im*) was exchanged for protection or work or other things.[92] This system expanded and evolved with the fall of the state, through 'predation'[93] in which resources such as electricity or food may have been withheld for time to ensure community loyalty to the militia force, allowing the power and influence of the *zu'ama* to grow as well. Finally, with the state out of the way, the

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[90] Picard, Elizabeth. "10. The Political Economy of the Civil War in Lebanon." *10. The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon*, University of California Press, 2000, pp. 293.

[91] Starr, "Lebanon's Economy: The Cost of Protracted Violence," p. 72. The Lebanese GDP was $8 billion in 1974.

[92] Hottinger, "Zu'Ama' and Parties," pp. 85–105.

[93] Picard, 299.

militias found their way into formal industries (communications, technology, and trade) as well as informal industries, especially drug production and trafficking. Militias staked out their territories across Lebanon to engage in these various industries, resulting in many violent confrontations between different militia groups. This included those of the same religious or sectarian affiliation, in order to maintain and expand economic control further. Fighting between the Lebanese Forces and the Maradas over territory and port access for years, both being Maronite militias, is a clear example of this, violating beliefs in a sectarian nature of the war. Massive profit was made off of traditional industries controlled by the militias.

The profit made of the drug trade was 'immeasurable.'[94] Hashish and heroin became major profitable trades, and was a driving force in militia income, used to pay soldiers, purchase weapons, and enrich leadership. The trade expanded massively, with Hashish agricultural activity doubling between 1976 and 1984, and doubling again by 1988. Poppy fields expanded from 60 to 30,000 hectares between 1984 and 1988.[95] With this, the informal economy which developed in the wake of a stateless Lebanon allowed for massive incomed by the militias to purchase arms, and pay salaries. In accordance with the *za'im* system and responsibility of leadership in protecting its community, militia activities were expanded to include services such as income, housing, and more to their civilians.[96] Aspects of this informal militia economy remained in Lebanon far after the end of the civil war.

The use of the drug trade for militia activity has also continued to the present, in helping to fund Hezbollah's modern military arm. Recently, Hezbollah has been able to break into the global Captagon market, an illegal amphetamine which is seeing high demand in the Gulf states.

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[94] According to Corm, "Hégémonie milicienne et le problème du rétablissement de l'État," the figure is $700 million per year. Le commerce du Levant (July 11, 1988): 10, gives a figure of $1 billion. -Picard
[95] Picard 304-305.
[96] Malik, Adeel; Izak Atiyas; and Izhac Diwan. "Crony Capitalism in the Middle East—What Do We Know and Why Does it Matter?" in *Crony Capitalism in the Middle East: Business and Politics from Liberalization to the Arab Spring*. 2019. 8-10.

There is much evidence that production of the drug has helped to fund Bashar el-Assad's regime and war in Syria, and with it, allies of el-Assad and Iranian proxies throughout the region, such as Hezbollah.[97] As a number of Captagon production facilities were shut down in Bulgaria and Turkey, Hezbollah was able to break into the market with the help of allies, "produced cheaply and simply using ingredients that Iran (a known supporter of Hezbollah) was able to supply, the production of Captagon was an ideal solution for Hezbollah's financial predicament."[98] This involvement in the drug trade is by no means limited to Hezbollah or to Captagon, as Hezbollah has long been involved in the production and sale of illegal drugs, with Lebanon being a transit point for these drugs as well as a source of cultivation of hashish and opium.[99] While this market flourished within the militia economy during the civil war, largely focused on production and trade of Hashish and Opium, as Picard remarks, it continued beyond largely controlled by Hezbollah and expansion of those trades as well as the introduction of Captagon.

Picard goes so far as to name militia actors during the civil war as non-state welfare providers such as: The Druze PSP as *The Autonomous Principality,*[100] or Hezbollah as *the Islamic Welfare State,*[101] demonstrating the extent to which the militia economy built and supplied the militias into massive clientelistic networks rooted in the *zu'ama* system and supporting *za'im* leadership. The image of the figurehead at the top of each militia, the *za'im,* became immortalized as protective figures of their communities. Through propaganda, political imagery, and promises to protect their people from rival militias, and to bring justice for martyred members of the community, the civil war not only enriched *el-zu'ama*, it also strengthened their position as the head of their community and emboldened their leadership.

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[97] Eadwan Mortada, Syria's War Drug, Film, BBC Arabic, September 12, 2015.
[98] Kravitz, Max, and Will Nichols. "A BITTER PILL TO SWALLOW: CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CAPTAGON, SYRIA, AND THE GULF." *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 69, no. 2, 2016, pp. 34.
[99] Ibid, 38.
[100] Picard, 313.
[101] Picard, 315.

What came out of the civil war was a warlord *za'im* class, absolved of all crimes and able to re-enter civil life as politicians and party leaders once again, this time with their solidified status as protectors until death.

The Rise of the Shi'a Militia: Hezbollah

There is a special significance in this regard to Hezbollah, due to its relevance today and its modern elevation of Hassan Nasrallah as a newcomer in the *za'im* class. Prior to its formation, the primary political entity within the Lebanese Shi'a community was the 'Amal Movement, still a relevant political party today.[102] The Shi'a community prior to the civil war was the least economically developed sect in Lebanese society, largely existing as small-village communities with some of the lowest population densities within Lebanon, at 137 people per square kilometer in south Lebanon and 47 per square kilometer in the Bekaa Valley in 1963.[103] Most of these villages were largely engaged in the agricultural sector, and the Shi'a population was low, albeit rapidly growing. The political system prior to the civil war in the south was still highly entrenched in the feudal-era *zu'ama* system, with *zu'ama* from certain prominent feudal families dominating Shi'a politics through the 1960s through extensive patronage networks maintaining community loyalty.[104] However, with growing Israeli aggression throughout south Lebanon, brewing internal tensions, as well as the question of Palestine, politics within the Shi'a community was shifting, with themes such as 'secularism and liberation' brewing, (as well as Islamism in other channels.) The arrival of Imam Musa el-Sadr in south Lebanon breathed life into some of these growing political sentiments and represented a serious threat to the traditional

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[102] Norton, Augustus R. Hezbollah : A Short History. Princeton University Press, 2007, 6.
Although some characterize its organization as more of a patronage network than an actual political party in the structure it is today.
[103] The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon. By *Michael C. Hudson*. (New York: Random House. 1968, 60.
[104] Norton, 14.

power schemes and patronage networks that existed to empower the traditional feudal *za'im* class. el-Sadr's mysterious disappearance later in 1978 led to a resurgence in the power of the 'Amal Movement amidst Israel's invasion. Followers of the 'Amal Movement, in line with the brewing sentiment against the status-quo, largely were interested in undoing the feudal *zu'ama* system and carried sentiments of anti-confessionalist opinion. Despite this, the reformist-minded 'Amal Movement was not enough for the Shi'a political revolution that was brewing and brought rise to a more revolutionary-minded Hezbollah.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 paved the way for the formation of a resistance movement, in what became Hezbollah. At this point, Hezbollah is better described as a loose link of village-based resistance operations to the Israeli occupation, or a cabal,[105] rather than a distinct political entity. The rise of Hezbollah foretold a new era of sectarian dominance in the political system, coming decades later when the militia became a major political and military player, almost controlling the Lebanese political system. However, at this point, the group held very little actual power. Hezbollah's rise came with sentiment opposed to the United States and most importantly, its close ally, Israel. Hezbollah was unrelenting and refused to engage in compromise, unlike its posture today, where it has become more of a negotiating member of government.[106] The militia was successful not only in pushing Israeli occupation out of south Lebanon, but also in countering the other major Shi'a political player, the 'Amal Movement, eroding its power base throughout Lebanon. However, the result remained with 'Amal Movement leader and warlord Nabih Berri, and Hezbollah leader and warlord Hassan Nasrallah both being elevated to a *quasi-za'im* status, and Hezbollah taking control of the political system in the 2010s to present, ushering in an era of Shi'a political dominance, similar to that of the

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[105] Norton, 34.
[106] Norton, 37.

Maronites in the mid-20th century. Before this could occur however, a major era of Sunni

political dominance took place directly after the civil war in the 2000s, led by Rafiq el-Hariri.

Chapter 3

Maintenance: Post-War Normalization of the Sectarian Elite

While Lebanon's political system was built up in the early 20th century, it endured a civil war only to grow stronger, with its elites more entrenched by the end of it. This chapter will explore the *maintenance* of Lebanon's sectarian system: h-ow it was been expanded, protected, and entrenched through war, treatise, and, and propaganda through analysis of the agreements at the end of the 20th century and the pillarization of the Lebanese people bases on where they live and the media they consume.

The Taif Agreement

First, the Taif agreement intended to end the Civil War which was largely viewed as a sectarian conflict. But rather than ending the war by casting away the system of sectarianism in favor of national unity under a shared Lebanese identity, it simply altered the sectarian system by editing the representation of each sect. One of the most significant changes to the constitution was the change of Christian versus Muslim representation in the Parliament from a ratio of 6:5 in favor of the Christians to an equal 1:1 ratio, still assuming Druze are counted as Muslim.[107] Indeed by formalizing sectarianism, the signers accepted the reality of it in Lebanese life, legitimizing it and expanding upon it.

The agreement also expanded the system of sectarianism into the Lebanese social sphere by beginning a practice of sect-based hiring in public and non-profit sectors. This further emboldened and empowered the *zu'ama* in Lebanese daily life. In this system, jobs, specifically public sector jobs, (but the strength of the system translated to it existing in the non-profit and

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[107] Lebanon. *The Taif Agreement*. 5 Nov. 1989.
https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf

private spheres as well, just not as legal requirements,) are allotted based on sect. Similar to how the Lebanese parliament is divided up based on 18 legally defined sects,[108] public sector jobs were divided up as well by quotas for Sunnis, Shi'as, Maronites, Druze, etc.[109] These jobs are then distributed to the *za'im* for each community, who then gives members of their community these jobs, as a form of a patronage system.[110] This also meant the continued maintenance and expansion of the *wasta* system, which translates to 'nepotism' or 'connections.' In order for a member of the community to get one of these jobs, they needed *wasta* or a connection to someone important in the sect, political party, or just generally powerful who could then get them that job, the opposite of a meritocracy, thus the *'wastatocracy'* was expanded. *Wasta* could also be used for avoiding criminal prosecution, enabling illegal activities, or threatening and intimidating others. It is a master system of corruption.

This system does a number of things. First, it cements sectarianism into every corner of Lebanese society, even down to the job one can get. Second, and important to the argument here, it strengthens the *zu'ama* within their respective communities. This also then allows the *zu'ama* to fulfill an important role of their own: their obligation to protect and provide f*or* members of their community. And as mentioned prior, in return for this, the *zu'ama* are to receive the political support and loyalty of their community.[111]

The signing of the Taif Agreement meant the continuation of a system that resembled a democracy, but where a patrilineal, oligarchic class assumed control. It should be no surprise

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[108]https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-internationel-religious-freedom/lebanon/#:~:text=There%20are%2018%20officially%20recognized,evangelical%20Protestant%2C%20and%20Roman%20Catholic)

[109] For example, if there existed 100 jobs at the Ministry of Education, it may be allotted as following: 21 jobs for Sunnis, 21 jobs for Shi'as, 27 jobs for Maronites, 11 for Greek Orthodox, 6 for Druze, etc. all the way down to counting for the smallest legally recognized sects.

[110] Malik, Adeel, et al. *Crony Capitalism in the Middle East—What Do We Know and Why Does It Matter?" In Crony Capitalism in the Middle East: Business and Politics from Liberalization to the Arab Spring. 2019. Pp. 1-5; 8-18*.

[111] Chalabi, Tamara. The Shi'is of Jabal 'amil and the New Lebanon : Community and Nation State, 1918-1943. 1st ed., Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 22-24.

then, that many of those who negotiated and signed the agreement were the warlords during the

civil war, and had stood as, and would continue to stand as, the *zu'ama* class. In agreement with

one another, this oligarchic class had been able to create an agreement together, one that

preserved the system which legitimized their power, and further expanded their control over

Lebanese society.

Sunni Political Dominance

The signing of the Taif Agreement and end of the war ushered in a new era of Lebanese

politics; the peacetime republic. With the requirement of the Prime Minister belonging to the

Sunni sect, the first couple years following the signing of the agreement had a few transitional

ministers, but the big shift in politics came with the ascension of Lebanese-Saudi business

magnate and billionaire Rafiq el-Hariri to Prime Minister. Often heralded as one of the greatest

and most beloved politicians in Lebanese history, Hariri was tasked with rebuilding the republic

following the war – its government, its institutions, its cities, its land, and its people as one

nation. And he was indisputably successful. Hariri oversaw the almost complete demolition of

what remained in Beirut, and rebuilt the city as a new, modern one, looking westward into the

allure of neo-liberalism and integration with the global north. The tourism industry reignited,

malls were built, luxury shopping brands arrived, and Lebanon's reputation for banking and

finance returned. Things appeared to be going well, were it not for the dark underbelly of Hariri's

dominance. Deep clientalist networks, and Hariri's choice to award his own company, Solidere,

the rights to demolish and rebuild the capital city, with few taxes, fees, or restrictions meant his

personal enrichment. The construction of a neoliberal society in Lebanon came with monopoly

ownership of all major industries distributed to Hariri's cronies and allies. Crony capitalism had

taken full effect in Lebanon.[112] Hariri's pro-western stances, opposition to Syrian occupation, and

neoliberal views came in opposition to rising Islamist sentiment sweeping throughout the Middle

East, and pro-Syria sentiment from Islamist groups such as Hezbollah. All this led to Hariri's

assassination in 2005 and the formation of the March 8th and March 14th Alliances, political

coalitions lasting to this day foregoing sectarian labeling in favor of parties with either

pro-Syrian, or anti-Syrian stances, respectively. While those responsible for Hariri's assaination

are unknown, a mass belief amongst the anti-Syria coalition is that Hezbollah was a force behind

it, weakening Sunni political control and allowing for Hezbollah's rise as the most important

player in Lebanon.

Hezbollah's Arm's of Exception

The stipulations of the Taif agreement helped to pave the way for the eventual rise of

Hezbollah as a dominant political player later in the 2010s. While the Sunni sect enjoyed

political control immediately after the Taif agreement through Rafiq el-Hariri, one major

stipulation of the agreement allowed Hezbollah to constrict the state and control the government

to a greater and greater degree in the following years. This stipulation was an article of the

agreement which required the demilitarization of all of the militias, in which militias disarmed

themselves of soldiers and weapons.[113] While the militias have covertly retained some arms, they

largely demilitarized at the time, with each militia converting into a peacetime political party,

and each warlord becoming party leader, as another major term was blanket amnesty for the

militia leaders of all war crimes. However, the signatories of the agreement agreed to an

exception: that Hezbollah would be allowed to retain its arms and remain a militarized entity

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[112] Malik, 2019. pp: 10.
[113] Lebanon. *The Taif Agreement*. 5 Nov. 1989,
https://www.un.int/lebanon/sites/www.un.int/files/Lebanon/the_taif_agreement_english_version_.pdf

while engaging in the government as a political party. Many of the signatories did recognize Israel as a threat to Lebanon, and feared future invasions that could reach Beirut and even lead to an occupation of the entire country. Hezbollah was seen as the best line of defense, and the militia was allowed to remain militarized in order to protect the border.

This came with major consequences. First, the Lebanese State does not hold a monopoly on violence throughout all of Lebanon, as the authority of the Lebanese Army is contested in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah challenges its sovereignty of the Lebanese state. Hezbollah maintains its support within the Shi'a community through its massive and well developed clientalist networks, ensuring jobs for many residents under its 'protection' as well as providing social services where the Lebanese state may lack.[114] This power is maintained through intimidation, violence, and persecution as well. This massive party apparatus, a 'state within a state,'[115] has a hold on political involvement, military action, and social services within its community. All of this helps to embolden its leader and Shi'a *za'im*, Hassan Nasrallah, as he today directly impedes democratic reforms.

Hezbollah today exercises strong control over the Lebanese government, as one of the most represented parties in the parliament, and as part of the governing coalition. The representation is not independent, and answers to Nasrallah, who also controls a massive military apparatus, while maintaining the necessity of Hezbollah's existence in the name of the protection of the republic from external threats, such as Israel and the western interventionism.[116]

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[114] Cammett, Melani. "Sectarianism and the Ambiguities of Welfare in Lebanon." Current Anthropology, vol. 56, no. S11, Oct. 2015, pp. S76–87.
[115] Abdul-Hussain, Hussain. "Hezbollah: A State Within a State | Hudson." *The Hudson Institute*, May. 2009, https://www.hudson.org/nationel-security-defense/hezbollah-a-state-within-a-state.
[116] Hijazi, Salah. "The Perfect Image: Nasrallah Family's Legacy in Service of 'Resistance.'" L'Orient Today, 1 Apr. 2024, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1408881/the-perfect-image-nasrallah-familys-legacy-in-service-of-resistance.html.

Hezbollah's power remains evident when wandering through Shi'a majority areas of Lebanon, where political imagery and public displays of support of Nasrallah are most prominent, an important phenomenon I will discuss next.

Spatial and Content Analysis

Intro to Spatial and Content Analysis

One of the major ways in which the *zu'ama* class have manufactured their cults of personality has been via public political imagery. Often relics of the Civil War era, large posters of this class – both current political/community leadership as well as *martyred* leadership – is a common sight throughout Lebanon. Serving as reminders of who is in charge and 'who your guy is,' this political imagery is often represented alongside messages of safety, loyalty, and community membership. To understand how useful such imagery has been in maintaining these leaders' political power and building their cults of personality, I will conduct a content analysis of a few images of these public banners to illustrate their widespread use across sect. Central to this as well is the use of space and division of territory in Lebanon and specifically in Beirut. I will perform a spatial analysis to demonstrate how sectarian identity is as geographic as it is personal to the Lebanese population. I will begin this section with spatial analysis to ground the discussion, focusing on Beirut itself, due to the proximity of each group and deep lines that have been drawn.

Spatial Analysis

      The sectarian identity of Lebanon is so ingrained that the state's geography reflects it. While not absolute, we can find striking evidence of geographical pillarization.[117] When looking at the larger state of Lebanon, it is clear that people of the same sectarian group live in the same areas as their community members. Of course, there is a historical angle to this. Many of these villages and communities across the state are centuries old, with those groups having lived there for a very long time. However, there is also evidence of sectarian internal migration. As discussed in Chapter 1, the 19th century saw internal migration of Christians to the north half of Mount Lebanon and Druze to the southern half, shifting demographics and lowering the mix of sectarian groups throughout the region. Today, we see a much more distinct trend of Christians of the mountain in the northern half and Druze in the southern half. This is evidence of geographical pillarization and the further decay of a unified national identity in favor of sectarian 'purity.'

National Spatial Analysis

      Figure I shows the religious representation by municipality across Lebanon. Christians populate the northern half of Mount Lebanon. The Maronites are strongly represented in this region in red, and are not represented anywhere else as strongly. Other Christian populations can be found alongside the Maronites, in some coastal areas as is the case for the Greek Orthodox, and somewhat scattered throughout the

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[117] Molendijk, Arie L., 'Pillarization', *Protestant Theology and Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands* (Oxford, 2021; online edn, Oxford Academic, 20 Jan. 2022).

Figure I: Map of Religious Identity in Lebanon by Municipality
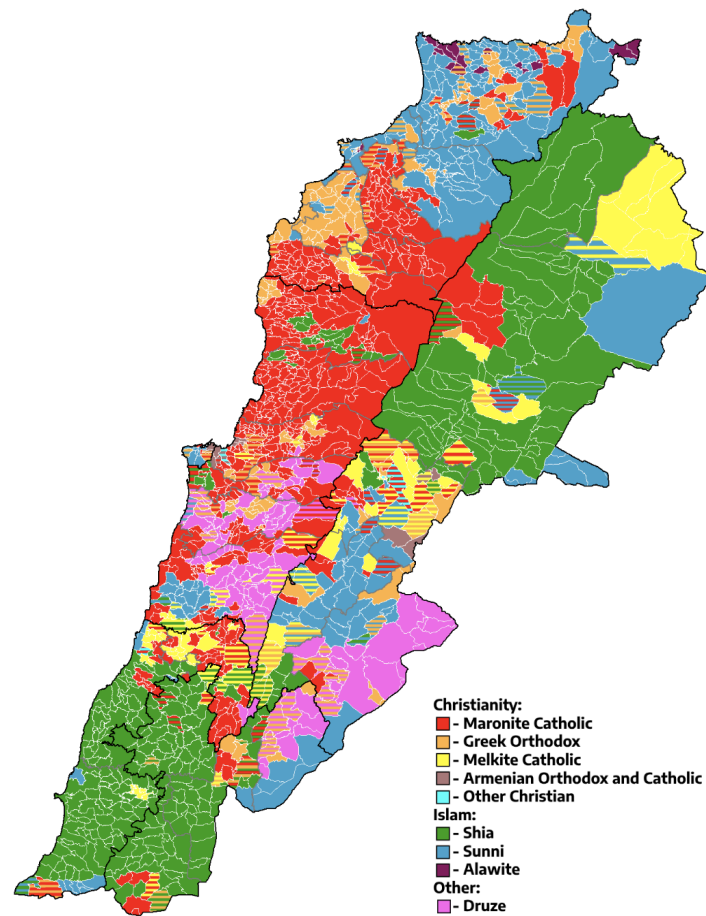
Credit: By Prodrummer619 - CC BY-SA 4.0,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=114418500

Bekaa Valley on the eastern side of Mount Lebanon. The Druze, in purple, are highly and almost

exclusively represented in the southern half of Mount Lebanon. This sharp, almost exclusive

geographic split between Maronites and Druze as I mentioned before. Next, the Shi'a are

strongly represented across Southern Lebanon, in the region called Jabal ʻAmil. Similar to

previous discussion, this is a long-historic trend. The major shift that caused internal migration of

Shi'a Lebanese within Lebanon was the brutal occupation of Southern Lebanon by Israel from

1985 to 2000. The occupation displaced a large number of internal refugees, who moved to

Beirut and settled in its southern suburbs, known as Dahieh. I will discuss the implication of this more in spatial analysis of Beirut.

The Sunni population is historically known as the city dwellers, which is why we see them mostly represented in pockets in Saida, Beirut, and Tripoli, Lebanon's three largest cities. While much of the distribution of these groups throughout Lebanon follows historic patterns, some internal migration and displacement has had major implications for the state. This sectarian geographic breakdown is important to understand how the geographic pillarization of the Lebanese sects has resulted in a political pillarization across the state. For example, when traveling through Lebanon, it becomes very clear what sectarian group is represented in the village or city one drives through, not only by religious iconography, but more importantly through political iconography of the sectarian groups *za'im*, its community and political leaders, current and martyred. I will discuss this further alongside images and examples in the accompanying content analysis. But first, I will move to a spatial analysis of Beirut, to understand how this sectarian 'segregation' has played out in the country's largest and most diverse city, its capital, while also challenging myths of pure segregation in favor of an understanding of Beirut as a truly mixed city and a rare example of nationalization under a common Lebanese or maybe Beiruti identity rather than a sectarian one in certain instances.

Urban Spatial Analysis

First, I will preface that the accompanying map with a sectarian geographic breakdown of Beirut and its surrounding areas is not perfect. It makes sweeping generalizations of who lives where in the city and does not account for the actual diversity that exists across Beirut of

different sectarian groups sharing neighborhoods, buildings, and homes which is common in Beirut.

Figure II: Sectarian Geographic Map of Beirut and Surrounding Areas

Credit: http://www.mappery.com/map-of/Beirut-Relgions-Divides-Map
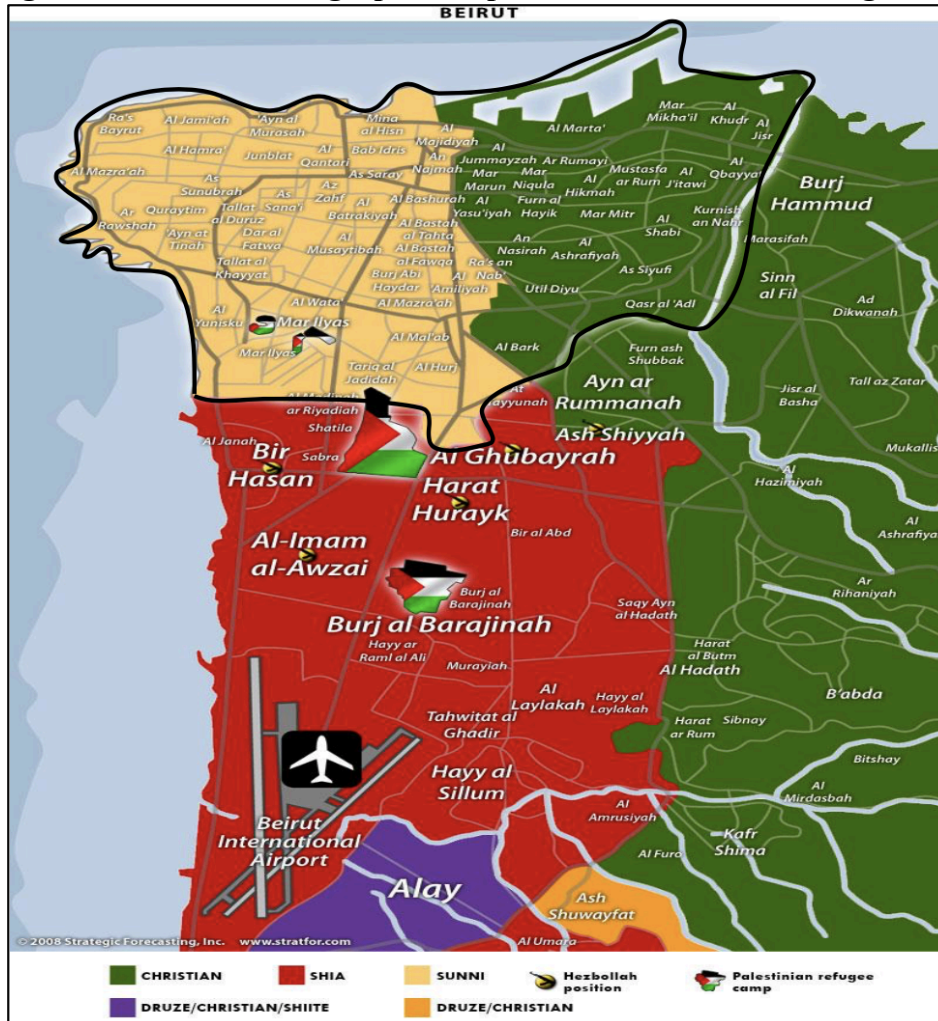
It does not account for the cases of a number of truly mixed neighborhoods in Beirut that cast aside any notion of sectarian identity in favor of a communal Lebanese or Beiruti one. This map however does represent what is understood in the Lebanese psyche to be dividing lines of the city, largely due to the Lebanese Civil War and the creation of the Green Line, dividing the city into two halves: East and West Beirut, respectively Christian and Muslim Beirut. I have also

added a solid black line to the map to show where the approximate city limits of Beirut are and

its surrounding suburbs, showcasing the relatively small size of the city limits.

The city limits of Beirut show a strong contrast between yellow and green, representing

West Beirut as home to the Sunni Muslim population, and East Beirut as home to the Christian

population. The dividing line falls along Damascus Street, which incidentally was the Green

Line during the Lebanese Civil war, a dividing line between the Muslim and Christian sides of

the city, as a no man's land occupied by snipers.[118] Today, there is no rugged no man's land, and

no snipers, but a noticeable shift on either side of the street between the two halves of the city in

terms of religion, sect, and political alignment.

The civil war sharpened the neighborhood sectarian distinctions, but these were not

definite or complete distinctions then or today. (Muslims lived in the past and today in East

Beirut, and Christians the same in West Beirut.) Furthermore, it is important to point out clear

areas of sectarian diversity, with no true majority, such as Downtown and Zaitunay Bay

neighborhoods, encompassing the northern section of the East/West split, which have a diverse

sectarian makeup and little sectarian political imagery. Another important area of such

distinction is the Hamra neighborhood, located in West Beirut in the sector on the map identified

as el-Hamra' and its northern neighbor Al-Jami'ah. Al-Jami'ah houses the American University

of Beirut, the top university in Lebanon and one of the top in the Middle East, long known to be

a place central to anti-sectarian movements, a birthplace of political theory such as pan-Arabism,

and a refuge and enclave during the Lebanese Civil War as a place of diversity and anti-sectarian

thought. (This however did spare it from violence during the war, such as numerous bombings of

its campus.) The neighborhood directly to the south of the AUB, known as Hamra, is probably

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[118] Simon, Reeva S., et al. "Demarcation Lines in Contemporary Beirut." The Middle East and North Africa, Englewood Cliffs, NJ : Globe Book Co., 1993. Internet Archive.

the clearest example which combats traditional beliefs of sectarian segregation in Beirut. Long known as the intellectual and cultural hub of Beirut, Hamra is home to a diverse mix of all sectors of Lebanese society, as well as various refugee communities such as Syrians and Palestinians in Lebanon, and a diverse international intellectual pool. A hotbed of intellectuals, theorists, revolutionaries, and communists in Beirut, Hamra has withstood much sectarian encroachment, and represents what Beirut is as a city, as well as the idea of what Lebanon could be through a unity of national identity.

The surrounding suburbs of Beirut do not function as suburbs in the American sense, since they are just extensions of the city which are often just as densely populated, if not more, as the city itself. First, looking just east of the city limits is the suburb of Bourj Hammoud. Bourj Hammoud is home to the majority of Lebanon's Armenian population, who have grown more important in Lebanon through the 20th century. The Armenians fled to Lebanon in the early 20th century as refugees fleeing persecution and ethnic cleansing in their home country during the Armenian Genocide perpetuated by Turkey. Unlike the Palestinian refugees who came later to Lebanon, they were nationalized and granted Lebanese citizenship. There is an important sectarian angle to this. The Armenians, who are a Christian group, were granted citizenship while the Palestinian refugees who fled to Lebanon, most of which were Muslim, were not. Christian political leadership, holding a majority of seats in parliament at the time, did this to help boost the Christian population of Lebanon and their political power.[119] So the Armenians, fully Lebanese citizens, integrated into the political fabric, and thus sectarian fabric of Lebanon with their own political parties and guaranteed representation in Parliament. The region of Alay, represented in purple on the map, while a bit farther away from Beirut, is the largest Druze city in Lebanon.

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[119] Sorby, Karol. "LEBANON: THE CRISIS OF 1958." *ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 76–77.

Turning south are the suburbs known as el-Dahieh. Dahieh literally just means 'suburb' in Arabic, but el-Dahieh in Beirut has earned this name, while the other suburbs to the East such as Bourj Hammoud or Hazmieh are not typically called 'suburbs' in Arabic due to a sense of stigmatization of Beirut's southern suburbs, which have undergone intense sectarian changer for decades. el-Dahieh today is home mostly to Shi'a Muslims, joined by Palestinians (who are Sunni Muslim) in the two major refugee camps Burj el-Barajneh camp and Shatila, and a small population of remaining Christians. The suburbs of el-Dahieh used to be a Christian area until1948, following the Nakba, when an influx of Palestinian refugees arrived in Lebanon, with many heading to Beirut. The refugee camps mentioned above were established in 1948 and 1949 on land leased to the U.N. by the Lebanese state on a 100 year lease.[120] This led to a large and growing number of Palestinians residing not only within the camps, but eventually some moving into the surrounding neighborhoods if they could afford to rent or purchase a home there. Major sectarian demographic change occurred here a few decades later, when Israel invaded southern Lebanon in 1985 and occupied it until 2000. The 15-year occupation was brutal, and caused an influx of internally displaced Shi'a refugees from southern Lebanon who moved to Beirut and settled in el-Dahieh. This influx of Shi'a refugees to el-Dahieh saw the continued exit of Christian's from the area who moved to other parts of Beirut and eastern suburbs, growing the population of cities such as Hazmieh to the East. The few Christians who remain in el-Dahieh are invisible in the now almost exclusively Shi'a suburbs, with some lingering monuments, such as the Mar Mikhail Church.

The Palestinian refugee camps which exist here as well, two within the Beirut city limits and the two much larger camps outside it. With the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the camps, they operated as enclaves of a Palestinian State until the end of the

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[120] https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees

Civil War, and today the Shi'a political party and militant group Hezbollah, keeps el-Dahieh as its stronghold. Representing an extreme case of geographic pillarization of the Shi'a sectarian identity, el-Dahieh is cut off from the rest of Beirut by checkpoints, at almost every road into the region, making the suburbs a caged entity. While traffic is free-flowing, with cars, pedestrians, and motorbikes simply passing through checkpoints armed by the Lebanese Army with a wave and a *ya'teek el-'afieh* (literally, *may God give you health*, a common Arabic greeting to people who are at work), this geographic checkpoint creates a deep sense of 'othering' in the Lebanese and Beiruti psyche of el-Dahieh, where almost anyone in the out-group without family or residency ties to the area would never even think of visiting the area, due to extreme othering and vilification.

In that sense, el-Dahieh represents an extreme case of geographic pillarization in Lebanese society, and stands as a direct opposite to what I have discussed in terms of the impact places such as el-Hamra have on combating such pillarization. So now, in what follows, I use a content analysis of sectarian and political imagery one would encounter when moving through these places, to show how such pillarized geography has created a system of sectarian politics. This demonstrates how sectarian in-groups maintain sectarian attachments and build cults of personality for the *zu'ama* class that represent it, emphasizing loyalty and support to the leader.

Content Analysis

The following content analysis will demonstrate the manufacture of cults of personality around the *za'im* class. I have mentioned the idea of the cults of personality that exist for the *za'im* class within their sectarian communities briefly so far. The manufacturing of these identities has been facilitated in a few different ways: via their political leadership in parties and

government, via the civil war, where warlords claimed to represent and protect their community, via martyrdom, one of the most intense and important mechanisms in sustaining the legacy of a *za'im* and through post-war political imagery, which I will discuss in this section. The imagery one encounters while driving through villages throughout Lebanon is often a legacy of the civil war era, with messages of loyalty, protection, and leadership alongside images of strong-looking men. Some of these posters depict the community's *zai'm* using photos from the civil war era itself. Through this analysis, these public displays will demonstrate how embedded this class is within their community, and the cult of personality that exists to embolden their leadership and promote loyalty.

Contrasting a birds eye view of geographical sectarianism across Lebanon , the street-level view shows that the average citizen experiences sectarianism in daily life. Through political rhetoric and images, we can see one way the status-quo of sectarianism in Lebanese daily life is reproduced and sustained. This reinforcement is dynamic: a person experiences this messaging as they move around their setting, especially in urban spaces. I will pursue this analysis first with a few villages and cities that have clear sectarian majorities, and then look more closely at Beirut, via a path someone might walk through the city. I have included a map in Figure II below which shows the districts of the major cities I reference in this chapter to help form a mental map of this journey taken. Important cities and regions I mention include Bsharri (Bcharre), Saida, South Lebanon (near Jezzine/Nabatiye districts) and Beirut. Bourj Hammoud is directly Northeast of Beirut.

Figure III: Map of Lebanese Districts

Credit: Johan van der Heyden - uploaded from http://www.geohive.com

National Content Analysis

Looking to the north of Lebanon, where Maronites make up a large proportion of the

population, several large villages demonstrate clear sectarian political imagery promoting loyalty

to Maronite *zu'ama*. Bsharri is a large village of about 20,000 people which is the seat of the

Bsharri district, and is effectively 100% Maronite. The city is a stronghold for the Maronite

Christian political parties and certain *za'im*. One sees many churches, small shrines to the Virgin

Mary or Saint Maroun, patron Saint of Lebanon and founder of the Maronite church alongside

roads. One important aspect about demographic data to mention is that in Lebanon,

municipalities' demographics are typically recorded via elections, as no census has been taken since 1932. Due to the state's confessionalist system, citizens vote based on religion, and sectarian demographic data can be pulled from voters. However, this doesn't necessarily provide an accurate reflection of the demographics of each municipality, but rather its generational demographics. Crucially, voting in Lebanon is not based on where one lives, but rather where one is from ancestrally. For example, if someone was born in Beirut to Maronite parents from Bsharri, the child would vote with the whole family in Bsharri, not Beirut. So, demographic data represents the historical patterns of sectarian occupation.

Image 1: Samir and Setrida Geagea poster in Bsharri

Credit: Sheri Laizer / Alamy Stock Photo

And throughout the major streets, along buildings and pasted to houses one sees posters for the Maronite political party the Lebanese Forces scattered throughout, and as referenced in

Image I, its leader, Samir Geagea, alongside his wife, Setrida Geagea, MP. Geagea's influence

over the party and the Maronite community is indisputable, and he, like many other za'im, is

celebrated for his role by many in his community as a warlord during the Lebanese Civil War.[121]

Despite being one of the very few who were prosecuted for war crimes during the conflict,[122]

many in the Maronite community hail him as a protector and community leader.

Image II: Poster of Wartime Maronite Leaders

Credit: Self

His involvement in Civil War atrocities and subsequent imprisonment led to him being

hailed as a hero for many in the community, and gaining him *za'im* level prestige and

importance. Eventually, this led to him leading one of Lebanon's main political parties, the

Lebanese Forces. The cult of personality surrounding Geagea has been manufactured since his

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[121] Mardirian, Nayree. "Lebanon's 'age of Apology' for Civil War Atrocities." *ANU Historical Journal II*, no. 1, May 2019, pp. 137–55.

[122] Ghosn, Faten, and Amal Khoury. "Lebanon after the Civil War: Peace or the Illusion of Peace?" *Middle East Journal*, vol. 65, no. 3, 2011, pp. 390.

warlord days during the civil war, and that cult of personality is still maintained via iconography such as in signed crafted such as that in Image II, which uses photos of several Maronite leaders and warlords from the civil war era, including Samir Geagea (top left) and Bachir Gemeyal (bottom left). The inscription reads "From the martyred President… to the imprisoned leader, we remain." The "martyred President" references the former Lebanese Forces leader and President of Lebanon Bachir Gemayel, and the "imprisoned leader" references Samir Geagea. The sign, likely from a home or political site emphasizes those in the Maronite community's loyalty to their *za'im* figures. It helps to form a cult of personality around Bachir Gemeyel, emboldened by his martyrdom. The same is done to Samir Geagea by his imprisonment as a leader of not only the conservative Maronite movement, but also a 'resistance' or 'struggle.'

Now moving to the south, Saida is big and bustling, the third largest city in Lebanon, and historically a Sunni Muslim city. So, much of the political and religious imagery one would expect to see here would be similar to that in Bsharri, just in this case Sunni political figures and *za'im* rather than Maronite ones.

Image III: Rafiq el-Hariri Poster in Saida

Credit: Self

Image III shows a political poster of the late former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafiq

el-Hariri. The poster in the figure reads: "February 14th, 2023/No, we have not forgotten." This

references the date of the assassination of el-Hariri in 2005, and emphasizes the importance of

Rafiq el-Hariri to the Sunni community, and much of the community's continued loyalty to him

even after his assassination. This photo was taken on the anniversary of his assassination, so

much of the political imagery around Saida was new on that day to memorialize the martyred

Prime Minister, who was a major Sunni politician, and truly a *za'im* of the Lebanese Sunni

community. In this sense, martyrdom becomes an important theme in the development of *za'ims'*

cults of personality. Rafiq el-Hariri was considered one of Lebanon's most popular politicians,[123]

as he became the first post-war Prime Minister of Lebanon, and is often credited with rebuilding

Beirut following its immense destruction, and liberalizing the post war economy.[124] His

martyrdom, by way of a bombing in 2004, has immortalized him as a sort of father of the

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[123]Vloeberghs, Ward. "Chapter 8 Worshiping the Martyr President: The Darih of Rafiq Hariri in Beirut." Chapter 8 Worshiping the Martyr President: The Darih of Rafiq Hariri in Beirut, Edinburgh University Press, 2012, pp. 80–92.
[124] Baumann, Hannes. *Citizen Hariri: Lebanon's Neoliberal Reconstruction*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

post-war republic, and importantly, as an immortal *za'im* of the Lebanese Sunni sect. With the

Sunni sect dominating Lebanese politics during Hariri's reign, the sect has found itself largely

leaderless since his assasination, with little political dominance. The memory of Rafiq el-Hariri

remains as a sort of nostalgic reminder of his leadership and past success for the Sunni

community. Sunni public displays such as this, found all throughout Lebanon's major cities

where there are large Sunni populations often display either Rafiq el-Hariri, or his son Sa'ad

el-Hariri, a propaganda tool which helps in emphasizing and legitimizing the patrilineal form of

succession that exists within Lebanon's sectarian communities for *za'im* leadership.

Further south in Lebanon, one would expect to begin to see much more Shi'a aligned

political imagery. A common sight is of banners for the Shi'a political party Hezbollah lining the

highway, or posters for the party chief, Hassan Nasrallah alongside streets. However, to highlight

where these political alliances often align, I'll reference imagery to a non-Lebanese political

figure due to his association with Hezbollah through partnerships and arms trading.[125] The

roadside poster in Image IV is from South Lebanon near the city Nabatieh. The poster is of

Hafez el-Assad, former President of Syria on the left, and his son, Bashar el-Assad, the current

President of Syria on the right. The text reads: "Just as we won the war… we are always

victorious" in reference to the Syrian Civil War.

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[125] https://carnegie-mec.org/2019/03/29/power-points-defining-syria-hezbollah-relationship-pub-78730
https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/02/politics/syrias-assad-hezbollah-wagner-missile-system/index.html

Image IV: el-Assad Poster in South Lebanon

Credit: Self

The piece of propaganda demonstrates the Assads family's influence outside Syria and its close association with Hezbollah. These posters also often show praise of political figures for their actions in wartime, something evident throughout all the sectarian imagery in Lebanon. Similar posters can be found with both Bashar el-Assad and Hassan Nasrallah side by side throughout the south.

Urban Content Analysis

Now I turn to Beirut, where a neighborhood can feel like one side of the world and then walking just two kilometers in the other direction will feel like another side of the world because of the diversity of sectarian life represented and the intense displays one will encounter across the city, placed to make sure the average passerby understands whose territory one is in. This begins with a walk through Beirut in the northeastern suburbs, known as Bourj Hammoud. As I

referenced earlier, Bourj Hammoud housed a large number of Armenians in Lebanon since they immigrated there during the Armenian Genocide in the 1910s. While the Armenians were nationalized and are Lebanese today, Bourj Hammoud feels distinctly Armenian. Street signs are written in Armenian, Armenian flags are seen throughout, and Armenian churches are scattered around the neighborhood.

Image V: Armenian and Lebanese Flags in Bourj Hammoud

Credit: Self

The distinct localization of Armenians in one place is a common occurrence for refugee groups anywhere in the world.[126] However the Lebanese perception of Armenians is an interesting contrast to other refugee groups.[127] With their full nationalization, the Armenians were largely integrated into Lebanese society and are spoken highly of in casual conversation

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[126] Seethaler-Wari, Shahd. "Urban Planning for the Integration of Refugees: The Importance of Local Factors." *Urban Planning*, vol. 3, no. 4, Dec. 2018, pp. 147.
[127] Ghobeira, Pascal. *Lessons Learned: A Comparative Study of the Integration Experiences of Armenian and Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon*. 2017. Naval Postgraduate School.

with Lebanese.[128] However, as with any sect, they are politically distinct. Seats are reserved in the Parliament for Armenian Christians, and the Armenians have their own political parties and unions. So, through becoming Lebanese nationals, the Armenians reinforced the system with their replication of other sectarian group's politics and imagery.

As Armenia Street crosses the Beirut River, East Beirut, becomes a largely Lebanese Christian population, and one would expect to see many churches and Christian religious imagery throughout, as well as sectarian political imagery. This creates a sense of knowing what territory one is in, as well as reinforcing the traditional *za'im* system and contributing to these men's cults of personality. This is a clear yet violent example of the phenomenon of urban placemaking and place making – in this sense leading to exclusion.[129] The epicenter of political Christianity in East Beirut is in its major neighborhood, Achrafieh.

[128] Ustan, Mustafa Tayfun. "The History of The Armenian Community In Lebanon: From 'Refugee Camps' To 'Neighborhoods.'" Asia Minor Studies, no. 09, 2016, pp. 93–108.

[129] Trudeau, Daniel. "Politics of Belonging in the Construction of Landscapes: Place-Making, Boundary-Drawing and Exclusion." *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 13, no. 3, July 2006, pp. 421–43.

Prescott, Jenny Glenton. The Politics of Place in Urban Landscapes: Boundaries, Exclusion and Belonging Three Case Studies from São Paulo, Boston and Oslo. 2021. Master thesis.

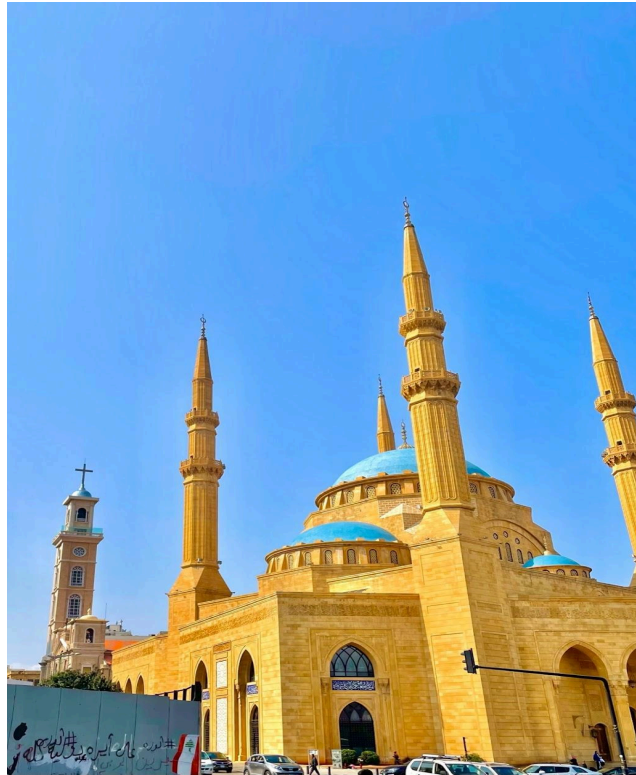**Image VI: Bachir Gemeyal in Sassine Square**

Credit: Self

The three-story tall banner in Image VI is located centrally in Sassine Square, the hub of

the Achrafieh neighborhood. This banner depicts Bachir Gemeyal, former President of Lebanon,

and warlord leader of the Lebanese Forces militia during the civil war, at the time the military

front of the Kataeb Party. Gemeyal is revered by many Maronites, especially within the large

right-wing for his involvement in the Lebanese Civil War and time as President. He is

immortalized as a martyred *za'im*, following his assassination in 1982 in Achrafieh. This

highlights the patrilineal tradition of the *zu'ama* system in Lebanon. Pierre Gemeyal, discussed

in Chapter 1, was revered as a za'im for the Maronite community as the founder of the Kataeb

Party, or the Lebanese Phalange. His role in the Civil War was also important, and the succession

of his son, as leader of the Lebanese Forces, and later President of the Republic, and ultimately

as the revered former *za'im* of the Maronite sect represents how this status, as a community

leader is often passed down from father to son. There is more evidence of this with the Joumblatt

clan of the Druze community, discussed later. The text reads "You rise… Lebanon remains."

Such a sentiment reveals a continued loyalty to the martyred *za'im* even after his death.

The massive poster of Gemeyal in Sassine Square does not only represent his importance

as a martyred *za'im* to the Maronite community, but also stands as a warning: an informal barrier

and border to those outside the community. While people freely flow through Beirut, and many

Muslims and Palestinians live in Achrafieh, such a representation of a controversial warlord

figure stands as a mark of territory. Bachir Gemeyal was not only a president, but a brutal

warlord behind some of the worst civil war atrocities. The Sabra and Shatila Massacre was

committed between September 16 to 18 1982, and was a major event during the Civil War in

which the Lebanese Forces, led by Gemeyal, in partnership with the Israeli Defence Forces,

invaded the Shatila Refugee Camp in Beirut, killing between 2,000 to 3,500 Palestinian

civilians.[130] His larger than life banner overlooking Sassine Square of a Civil War era photo of

Gemeyal represents a warning to opposing sects.

One only needs to walk for a few minutes down the hill and to the west to reach

Damascus Street, the former dividing line of East and West Beirut.

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[130] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/16/sabra-and-shatila-massacre-40-years-on-explainer

Image VII: Downtown Beirut Mosque and Cathedral

Credit: Self

When crossing the street to the west side, one may marvel at the sights of the Mohammed el-Amin Mosque and the Saint George Maronite Cathedral, standing side by side. In the spirit of national unity and reconciliation of sectarian differences, the spires of the mosque and the belltower of the cathedral were built to be the exact same height, so neither religion stands over the other. These are among the shared spaces of Beirut: places traditionally mixed such as Hamra, or places for shopping or tourism, such as Downtown, devoid of sectarian messaging. There is not visible sectarian political imagery, nor a demarcation of space. What is visible, especially in the case of Hamra, is what Lebanon may have looked like if it had been able to manufacture a national identity, which came first, before a sectarian identity.

Even such spaces are not fully spared from sectarian displays, however. The Mohammed el-Amin Mosque, pictured in Image VII, houses the tomb of Prime Minister Rafiq el-Hariri in its

courtyard. On the anniversary of his assassination, a vigil is performed there. The 2024 vigil

coincided with a return of Hariri's exiled son, Sa'ad el-Haririm back to Lebanon. This resulted in

massive displays of support for Sa'ad from the Sunni community, where massive posters

depicting Sa'ad standing beneath his father, an eternal za'im of his community.[131]

Image VIII: Rafiq and Sa'ad el-Hariri Posters in Downtown Beirut, February 14, 2024

Credit: @mankoochie on 'Twitter/X'

These sectarian displays matter for a number of reasons. First, their location, in

Downtown Beirut, a place typically devoid of such imagery, is covered in the former Prime

Minister's image. Second, the mass display of support for Sa'ad el-Hariri on his return from

political exile abroad emphasizes continuing sectarian loyalty to him and the Hariri name. With

the posters reading of messages left to right "In your presence, the light of Lebanon" and "Of

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[131] "Sa'ad Hariri Receives Support for Political Return during Beirut Visit - L'Orient Today." *L'Orient Le Jour*, 13 Feb. 2024,
https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1368112/saad-hariri-receives-support-for-politicel-return-during-beirut-visit.html.

your eyes, we are coming/Youth of Choice" and "The loyal sons of Danniyeh" (their hometown),

Sa'ad's sectarian leadership remains influential and important to his community. Finally, most

important here, the banners are a physical representation of the patrilineal nature of sectarian

za'im leadership. Sa'ad, as the son of a titan of Lebanese politics, inherited his father's role as a

za'im for his community due to his 'experience' as his son. With it, Sa'ad inherited the cult of

personality around his father. This is evident due to the relative lack of achievements of Sa'ad.

His political life has been marked by mediocrity, failure, and exile.[132] But he is his father's son,

and due to the traditional nature of the *zu'ama* system, he inherits that role, which we see in these

banners with Rafiq's figure standing over his successor, his son.

The downtown does not routinely host such imagery, but a short walk in numerous

directions brings one to sectarian neighborhoods. Just a couple kilometers south, one reaches the

city limits of Beirut, and enters Dahieh, the southern suburbs of the city. Political imagery and

the manufacturing of the cult of personality of a *za'im* returns dramatically. Dahieh, as discussed,

is largely Shi'a, with a Palestinian population as well due to the proximity of the refugee camps.

Sectarian borders are the most demarcated here. Checkpoints existing at every road into the

suburbs creates a sense of othering and isolation, and leads those not from there to never even

imagine entering, despite for the most part, Dahieh just existing as another part of Beirut, with

families living the same daily lives. The stigmatization of Dahieh and its Shi'a residents is a very

strong force in the Lebanese psyche, driven by conservative sectarian sentiment as well as fear of

Hezbollah.[133] The Shi'a political sphere is largely split into two camps: the 'Amal Movement, led

by Speaker of the Parliament and former Warlord Nabih Berri, and Hezbollah, led by Hassan

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[132] "Hariri Intends to Return, but Not Yet." *L'Orient Today*, 16 Feb. 2024,
https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1368407/hariri-intends-to-return-but-not-yet.html.
[133] Harb, Mona. "La "Dâhiye" de Beyrouth : Parcours d'Une Stigmatisation Urbaine, Consolidation d'Un Territoire Politique." Genèses, no. 51, 2003, pp. 70–91.

Nasrallah. The political segregation is often evident, with certain parts of Dahieh more favoring Hezbollah, and other parts favoring the 'Amal Movement. The manufacture of cults of personality for the community's two major za'ims, Berri and Nasrallah, is in full view here.

Image IX Left: Poster of Nabih Berri in Dahieh
Image X Right: Poster of Nabih Berri and Imam Musa el-Sadr in Dahieh

Credit: Self

The photos in Images IX and X, both depict Nabih Berri in service of his cult of personality as a *za'im* for the Shi'a. Berri is no different from almost everyone mentioned so far, in the fact that while he is the leader of his political party now and a politician, his former career was as a notorious war criminal warlord during the Civil War. The 'Amal Movement, existing now as a political party, was a civil war militia, notorious for its brutality. The text in Image IX, which reads "With you until death" represents his devotion to his responsibility as *za'im*, supposedly to protect and provide for his community, quite literally, until death. And he has followed through on that claim, seeing as he, now 86 years old, has been the Speaker of the

Lebanese Parliament since the end of the Civil War in 1992. The use of such political imagery marking his territory and demanding loyalty is a mechanism to support his political life. The poster in Image X, a three-story tall image, depicts Berri standing side by side with Imam Musa el-Sadr, the Iranian-Lebanese cleric and founder of the 'Amal Movement. It depicts Berri's role as his successor as *za'im* for the Shi'a community. The text, reading "There is hope in unity" further emphasizes the use of this political imagery in manufacturing consent and loyalty to the *za'im* class.

The Hezbollah-aligned areas of Dahieh display an allegiance to the other major *za'im* of the Shi'a community, Hassan Nasrallah. He stands arguably as the most consequential single politician in Lebanon today, as well as an important regional leader as the chief of Hezbollah's political and military wings. Hezbollah, being the only remaining officially armed former civil war militia in Lebanon, holds considerable power in any decision making process, as well its status as one of the most represented parties in the Parliament and part of the governing coalition.[134] Nasrallah's cult of personality is large, polished, and formidable. He is the exclusive voice and leader of his party, and the largest voice claiming[135] to represent the Shi'a community. The political imagery for Hezbollaha and Nasrallah blankets Dahieh, and is depicted in massive posters lining streets, to even on the sides of neighborhood coffee carts, emphasizing his omnipresence in daily life.

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[134] I say officially because it is a common held understanding in Lebanon that other major sectarian groups and parties still retain some arms, although not to the degree of Hezbollah
Hoffman, Michael T., and Elizabeth R. Nugent. "Communal Religious Practice and Support for Armed Parties: Evidence from Lebanon." Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 61, no. 4, Apr. 2017, pp. 869–902.
[135] I make a distinction in saying 'claiming' because not all Shi'a Lebanese support Nasrallah or see him as representative of their views.

Image XI: Hassan Nasrallah Banner in Dahieh

Credit: Self

In a style similar to all other sects, Nasrallah stands larger than life, superimposed over an apartment building in Dahieh. His figure stands in stark contrast to the old, decrepit building he is draped across. Dahieh is a highly impoverished part of Beirut, and despite Hezbollah's control of the suburbs and thus, responsibility for its development, community support for the party remains high, largely due to a nostalgic view of Hezbollah as a freedom fighting party which beat Israeli occupation. His cult of personality may be the most strongly implemented of any *za'im* in Lebanon, despite his elusiveness and refusal to be seen publicly. Nasrallah, unlike some other *za'im*, does not participate directly in political life. He is not a member of parliament, nor in any government office. He instead opts for weekly speeches on television where he describes his views on all the current happenings. However despite his lack of participation in government,

Nasrallah and his speeches are so influential that he is often seen as a political bellwether. For example, following the events of the Hamas attacks on Israel on October 7th, 2024 and Israel's subsequent invasion of Gaza, Nasrallah's weekly speech was one of the most anticipated events in recent Lebanese memory, as millions waited to see what action he would take, and if Lebanon would see an escalation, due to Hezbollah's monopoly on violence.

Image XII: Nasrallah's Coffee Cart

Credit: Self

el-Sayyed, as he is commonly referred to, (literally 'lord' or 'master', an honorific given to descendants of the Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) is omnipresent in the daily life of many Lebanese in Dahieh and South Lebanon. From his weekly speeches, to his image placed everywhere, even as seen in Image XII, on a neighborhood coffee cart hangout spot, *el-Sayyed* watches. Nasrallah's status as a *sayyed* contributes to his cult of personality. Through this title, Nasrallah supposedly holds religious justification to legitimize his leadership in politics and

within his community. Civil war era events contributed to Hezbollah's importance and support by many. The creation of Hezbollah militias in villages in response to Israeli occupation across south Lebanon led to widespread support for the movement as they sought to drive the occupation out. The success of the militias in ending the fifteen-year occupation in 2000 led to widespread support for Hezbollah, even to a certain extent across other sectarian groups.[136] The resistance to the occupation was the reason why Hezbollah was allowed to be the only militia following the end of the civil war that was not forced to disarm under the Taif Agreement. Nasrallah as chief of Hezbollah thus not only makes him chief of a political party, or even a militia, but as the 'chief of the resistance' to what the Lebanese see as Israeli occupation and aggression.

Finally, despite not being Lebanese or a legally recognized political sect, Palestinians in Lebanon also display political imagery. The existence of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon since 1948 rose to the extent of operating as enclaves of the Palestinian state in exile, making the camps, their people, and their ideologies important players in Lebanese politics and society. The political imagery bordering the camps and within is everywhere. Palestinian leaders, heroes and martyred community members cover the entrances to the camps and throughout their winding, narrow streets.

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[136] Haddad, Simon. "The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 29, no. 1, Jan. 2006, pp. 21–34.

Image XIII: Burj el–Barajneh Refugee Camp Entrance

Credit: Self

In Dahieh, the large entrance to Burj el-Barajneh refugee camp, alongside *Tariq el-Matar* (the Airport Road) is covered in a canopy of Palestinian flags and banners of politicians, such as the President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas, former President of the PLO Yasser Arafat, and images of martyrs. Again, martyrdom is omnipresent. This created the sense of entering a new zone, arguably even more intensely than at the checkpoint borders between Beirut and Dahieh. It creates the sense of an enclave, seeing an absence of Lebanese soldiers and police replaced by Palestinian militia soldiers and flags of Palestinian political parties. Perhaps the most important figure present in this camp, (and other refugee champs in Lebanon) is Yasser Arafat, who is immortalized as a sort of *za'im* for the Palestinian community largely, and especially in Lebanon.

Image XIV: Yasser Arafat Mural at Entrance of Burj el-Barajneh Refugee Camp

Credit: Self

Image XV: Yasser Arafat Mural at Entrance of Mar Elias Refugee Camp

Credit: Self

The murals in Images XIV and XV are large public displays of the martyred Palestinian

leader Yasser Arafat, who lived in Beirut while the Palestinian Liberation Organization was in

exile in Lebanon. Despite not being a Lebanese politician, he helped to shape the sectarian strife leading to the civil war, as certain factions aligned with him or against the Palestinian cause, in what led to the PLO's eventual removal from Lebanon following the civil war.[137] As evidenced by these murals, as well as by countless other posters and banners throughout the various refugee camps, Arafat's cult of personality, which he built via his charismatic and pragmatic leadership,[138] remains intact and important to a somewhat large minority's cultural memory in Lebanon. This is unlike many of the Lebanese figures, whose cults were often a birthright.

These spatial and content analyses to demonstrate how sectarian identity has come to also describe origin, family, where one may live, the areas one may visit, the areas one may avoid, and more. Most importantly, they demonstrate how such sectarian pillarization has been a crucial tool in the maintenance of the *zu'ama* class' power and position. The intense displays of public support for such figures in Bsharri for Maronite leadership versus that of it in Saida for Sunni leadership reeks of pillarization and polarization. With only one sect and ideologies' leadership represented, loyalty to the community *za'im* is expected. And with it, pillarization leads to a lack of exposure to other groups, ideas, and beliefs as religion, sect, and politics combine into one thing.

Collective Memory, or Amnesia?

Traumatic national events, such as wars, create collective memory: common understandings or consciousness of historical events developed within certain subgroups of

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[137] Eleftheriadou, Marina. "Building a Proto-State on Quicksand: The Rise and Fall of the Pal...: Ingenta Connect." *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 75, no. 1, Spring 2021, pp. 99–120.

[138] Matar, Dina. "Hassan Nasrallah: The Cultivation of Image and Language in the Making of a Charismatic Leader." *Communication, Culture and Critique*, vol. 8, no. 3, Sept. 2015, pp. 433–47.

people over time.[139] The size of the groups can be large or small, but often revolve around some shared common identity, and often, a national identity. Maurice Hallbwachs, who wrote on collective memory in the early 20th century, went as far as to argue that "human memory can only function within a collective context,"[140] a radical, yet provoking statement. In the case of Lebanon, the concept of collective memory however, can only take us so far. First, it is clear that there is a distinction of a national versus a communal collective memory,[141] and that these communal memories can oppose one another. Second, collective memory is based on the perception of historical events as a community. When there is disagreement of what the national collective memory is within different communal groups, there must be a different phenomenon at play. The inverse concept of collective amnesia becomes important for understanding how memory has affected the outcomes of civil war in Lebanon.

Aboultaif 2019 reflects on the two levels of collective memory in Lebanon, referring to the national memory as 'fragile and weak' and the communal memory as being developed within the different sectarian groups.[142] The national memory is weak for a variety of reasons, but largely via what is referred to as 'state-sponsored amnesia'[143] where "The state has been accused of enforcing amnesia on its population, thanks to the famous general amnesty law that 'institutionalized forgetting the war."[144] With the amnesty law pardoning perpetrators of war crimes and massacres, and other crimes like bank fraud and other illicit activities during the war, collective memory was fractured. The urban reconstruction of Beirut, and bulldozing of the city

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[139] Gedi, Noa, and Yigal Elam. "Collective Memory — What Is It?" *History and Memory*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1996, pp. 30–50.
[140] Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. *press.uchicago.edu*.
[141] Eduardo Wassim Aboultaif & Paul Tabar (2019) National versus Communal Memory in Lebanon, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 25:1, 97-114.
[142] Ibid, 97.
[143] Ibid, 100.
[144] Ibid.

in order to erase the memory of the horrors that occurred there and build on top of it,[145]

effectively killed the national memory of the war. The Martyr's Square in Downtown Beirut was

supposed to stand as a symbol of national memory, but was also bulldozed following the war and

stands today largely as a parking lot.

For the communal memory, one can trace these sectarian differences among the modern

party lines within each sectarian group and their party leadership. Aboultaif explores the

communal memories by investigating each sectarian group, and the different paths for memory

that exist within each. For example, two major paths of development of memory in the civil war

and onwards via the Lebanese Forces led by Samir Geagea and the Free Patriotic Movement led

by Gebran Bassil are evident when examining the Maronite communal memory.[146] By doing this,

it is clear that the route for the development of the communal or sectarian memory in Lebanon is

controlled by the *za'im class*. Why is this? When a political science class at the American

University of Beirut I attended in 2023 was asked how they know about the events of the

Lebanese Civil War, the exclusive answer from each student, whether they were Maronite,

Sunni, Shi'a, Druze, or even Palestinian, was "From stories my parents told me." The response

from the Professor was an analysis of how a fractured memory of the events of the civil war has

developed along sectarian lines based on stories told from father to son, which came directly

from the talking points, political messaging, and propaganda of what was then militia but now

political leadership. The lack of a national memory of what happened during the civil war that is

accepted throughout the population is what gives rise to a memory that is based on tropes of 'my

people were massacred by your people, and my za'im is the only thing protecting me from your

people' or 'my people had a right to attack your people for what your people did to mine' but

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[145] Nagle, J. (2017) Ghosts, Memory, and the Right to the Divided City: Resisting Amnesia in Beirut City Centre. *Antipode*, 49: 149–168. doi: 10.1111/anti.12263.
[146] Aboultaif, 102.

never 'the war was a dark period in our history and we must rebuild as one nation and forgo

these sectarian divisions which have caused so many problems.' This type of communal memory

and rationale is exactly the reason why, this professor argued, Lebanon struggles to reconcile

with its past and be able to walk into the future with closure.[147] And this struggle is advanced by

the collective amnesia the *za'im* political class subjugates Lebanon to in order to maintain a

divided and conquered control of the state.

Despite the intense collective amnesia Lebanon faces, dividing itself since the civil war,

there have been a number of major events in which the people have come together under a

shared national identity, foregoing sectarian differences, and in some cases, even calling for an

end to the entire sectarian system. The next chapter will explore these recent events, all within

the 21st century, and how they have all been defeated by the *za'im* class, gripping to power.

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[147] Mouawad, Jamil. "Teaching Lebanon's Politics in Times of the Uprising." *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 120, no. 2, Apr. 2021, pp. 473–80.

Chapter 4

Challenges: Anti-Sectarian Movements and Triumph of *el-Zu'ama*

With the construction of a post-war neoliberal society came the entrenchment of sectarian and *za'im* politics in the current political system. While I have discussed the lack of formation of national identity, and the lack of coming together of the Lebanese people as one, there have been examples of nationalism and anti-sectarianism present in the 21st century. All as examples of resistance to the political system and its shortcomings, the four revolutions I discuss in this chapter represent what Lebanon could be with a strong national identity, and the choice of the people to forgo sectarian loyalties. However, each of these movements largely failed. Despite some symbolic wins, such as defeat of certain policy choices,[148] or the election of independent MPs,[149] the system itself, and those in charge of the system, *el-zu'ama*, always came out on top, beating back anti-sectarian movements.[150] How can we explain the dominance of this political class? How have they been able to beat back every single threat to their power? This chapter will explore challenges to the system through four major Lebanese social movements in the 21st century: the Cedar Revolution of 2005, the 'You Stink' Movement of 2015, the 2019 Thawra (revolution), and finally, most recently, the Beirut Port Explosion of 2020 and its political aftermath. All four of these movements saw major uprisings across Lebanese sect and class, rising expectations among critics of sectarianism, and defeat, as each movement was infiltrated, coopted, and defeated by the ruling *za'im* class. The proceeding analysis will trace the *za'im*

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[148] "Lebanon's October 2019 Protests Weren't Just about the 'WhatsApp Tax.'" *Amnesty International*, 20 Oct. 2021, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/lebanons-october-2019-protests-werent-just-about-the-whatsapp-tax/.

[149] "Elections in Lebanon: Independents Win at Least 13 Seats: Results." *RFI*, 17 May 2022, https://www.rfi.fr/en/international/20220517-elections-in-lebanon-independents-win-at-least-13-seats-results.

[150] *The Legacy of Lebanon's October Revolution | The Washington Institute*. https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/legacy-lebanons-october-revolution. Accessed 19 Mar. 2024.

class' use of infiltration, cooptation, and division to break movements apart and demobilize protestors.

The Cedar Revolution (2005)

The Syrian occupation of Lebanon lasted from 1976, when Syria invaded Lebanon at the outset of the Lebanese Civil War, until 2005, following mass anti-Syrian demonstrations in Beirut which became known as the Cedar Revolution. Syrian involvement in the civil war turned to administrative occupation and control following the end of hostilities.[151] This lasted for some 15 years, during which former Lebanese President Amin Gemeyal referred to Lebanon as a "Syrian client state."[152] Maronite and Druze opposition to the occupation did little to cause changes in the face of Sunni passive acceptance and Shi'a explicit support via Hezbollah and the 'Amal Movement.[153] However, a constitutional amendment pushed through parliament by the Syrians to lengthen the term of pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud led to former Prime Minister and Sunni *za'im* Rafiq el-Hariri's opposition to the occupation. With the Sunni leadership now opposed, the balance tipped away from the Syrians as the United States and France led an anti-occupation resolution through the UN Security Council.[154] Hariri's subsequent assassination in February of 2005 still remains unsolved, but Syrian intelligence and Hezbollah are often seen as perpetrators.[155] Hariri's status not only as a Sunni *za'im*, but more importantly as a unifying national figure credited with rebuilding the republic after the war meant mass outcry across

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[151] Nisan, Mordechai. "The Syrian Occupation of Lebanon." *Coalition for Responsible Peace in the Middle East*, 2000, 55.

[152] Statement by Amin Gemeyal. Former President of Lebanon, before the United States House Committee on International Relations, US POLICY TOWARD LEBANON, June 25th, 1997, Washington, DC, pp: 45.

[153] Zimmer, Benjamin. "Budding Hope: Lebanon's Cedar Revolution." *Harvard International Review*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2005, pp. 8.

[154] *UNSC Resolution 1559: The Situation in the Middle East*, United Nations Security Council, 2004.

[155] Rafik Hariri Killing: Hezbollah Duo Convicted of 2005 Bombing on Appeal. 10 Mar. 2022. www.bbc.com, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-60691507.

sectarian identities in Lebanon. The protests took place from February 14th until April 27th of 2005, when Lebanese people of all sects and backgrounds converged in downtown Beirut's Martyr's Square, calling for an end of Syrian Occupation. A sense of hope and national unity was evident in the thousands of Lebanese flags flying during the protests as the people came together, challenging their own sectarian leadership, in favor of national self-determination. However, while the movement successfully ended the Syrian occupation, it did not result in institutional change to Lebanon's confessionalism and sectarianism.

The movement also exposed cracks in the supposed brewing national unity. Other events occurring undermined the 'unity' and 'cohesiveness' of the revolution.[156] In an attempt to fracture cross-sectarian support for independence and unity, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah organized a massive pro-Syrian rally downtown, largely attended by Shi'a Lebanese.[157] A pro-national pro-Lebanese movement which excluded one sect (here, the Shi'a) was already a failure and was not able to amount to a significant threat to the political system, or the sectarian elite. Nasrallah, in the first key example of the *za'im* class working to fracture and crush pro-unity anti-sectarian movements following the Civil War was able to cleave his community away from the rest by claiming foreign, western involvement as the primary motivator to ending Syrian occupation. He did this by citing the Security Council resolution as an arm of western pressure in opposition to the mutually-negotiated Lebanese Taif Agreement, which he maintained was the basis of any 'national debate' in Lebanon.[158] Knio Karim argued in the wake of the Cedar Revolution that despite the hope of national-unity emerging, this was simply a realignment of a still intact sectarian structure, now along March 8th and March 14th coalition

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[156] Knio, Karim. "Lebanon: Cedar Revolution or Neo-Sectarian Partition?: Mediterranean Politics." *Mediterranean Politics*, vol. 10, no. 2, July 2005, pp. 226.
[157] Ibid, 226.
[158] Ibid.

lines. Elisabeta-Christina Dinu demonstrated the newly drawn lines which exist largely to this day in the following graphics.

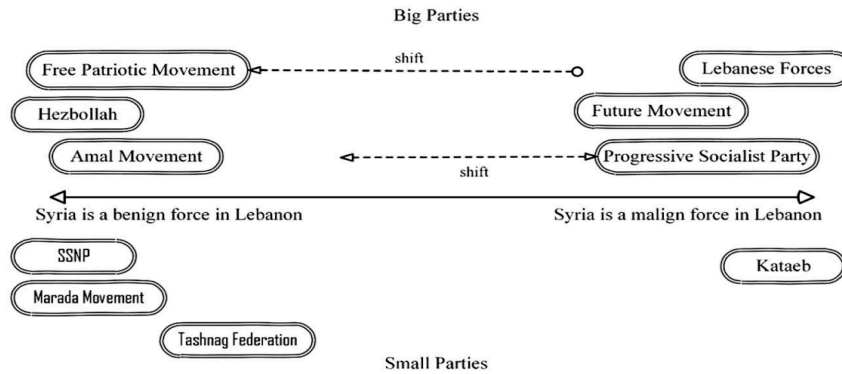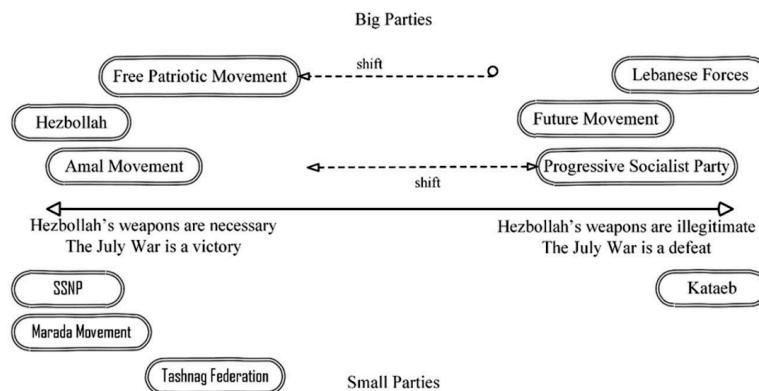**Figure IV: Party Positions Regarding Syrian Presence in Lebanon[159]**

Figure V: Party Positions Regarding Hezbollah's Weapons[160]

What these charts demonstrate is that despite apparent changes in the Lebanese political scene in regards to the mass demonstrations and the end of Syrian occupation, the end result was the continued existence of the same political parties, under the same *za'im* leadership, albeit with some new alliances. Despite the withdrawn of Syrian troops, ans signs of hope in both pro and

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[159] Dinu, Elisabeta-Cristina. "Consociationalism in Lebanon after the Cedar Revolution: External Threats, Political Instability, and Macrosecuritizations." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, vol. 28, no. 3, July 2022, pp. 301. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2022.2092959.
[160] Ibid, 305.

anti-Syrian protestors waving Lebanese flags,[161] the system itself remained. Ersunb Kurtulus

outlined the four major signs of continuity that existent in the wake of the Syrian withdrawal,

being:

1. the confessional nature of Lebanese politics underpinned by sectarian loyalties and the

predominant role of the confessional leadership, the so-called zu'ama;

2. the omnipresence of trans-national alliances of varying degrees of intensity and

mobilization of external support for promoting domestic goals;

3. the confrontational nature of the political rhetoric, especially in relation to the foreign

affairs of the Lebanese state;

4. the various forms of unremitting foreign intervention in Lebanese politics.[162]

A key here is the first continuity: the confessional nature of the politic, sectarian loyalties,

and confessional leadership of the *zu'ama*. The pro versus anti-Syrian sides were largely on

sectarian lines, with polling conducted in the late phases of the movement demonstrated this

split, and most importantly, the pulling away of Shi'a support, finding the anti-Syrian

demonstrators consisting of 52% Christian, 25% Sunni, 24% Druze, and only 3% Shi'a,

while the pro-Syrian demonstrators were 75% Shi'a.[163] The *za'im* class survived the war,

controlled the recovery, and thwarted the first major challenge to their control of the political

system. Nasrallah successfully cleaved his community from the broader pro-national

movement, and the deeper goals of systemic change beyond the Syrian occupation of the

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[161] Kurtulus, Ersun N. "'The Cedar Revolution': Lebanese Independence and the Question of Collective Self-Determination." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2009, pp. 200.
[162] Ibid, 200-201.
[163] Opinion poll conducted by Zogby International/Information International quoted in James Zogby, Poll Shows Bases for Unity in Lebanon www.cggl.org/scripts/document.asp?id=46232
See also Karim Kino, 'Lebanon: Cedar Revolution or Neo-Sectarian Partition?', Mediterranean Politics, 10(2) (2005), p. 226.

movement were thwarted. The next challenges proved stronger, and even ongoing today, and yet, the *za'im* class has won each time.

Arab Spring (2011) and 'You Stink' Movement (2015)

The Arab Spring, a wave of revolutionary sentiment across the Arab world, and most notably in Egypt and Tunisia,[164] did not reach Lebanon to the same extent by which it did elsewhere, largely due to Lebanon's status as a democracy, and relatively high standards of freedom of speech already in place compared to the rest of the region.[165] However, the revolutionary sentiment of the Arab Spring did incite a popular movement for some time in Lebanon, known as the *isqat an-nizan at-ta'ifi* (downfall of the sectarian system) movement in 2011.[166] The campaign, launched by a collective including leftist parties and organizations, the Secular Club of the American University of Beirut, and a variety of civil service organizations, was born out of attempts to revive pro-secular movements in the wake of Arab Spring organizing. However, despite the demonstration's clear anti-sectarian calls, the idea of a 'sectarian ghost' existing within the activists by looking at sectarian approaches and narratives playing out weakened this and future movements.[167] The *isqat an-nizan at-ta'ifi* ended up relatively short lived due to the reproduction of sectarian narratives within it, and its lack of strong organizing, and the sectarian elite survived until the next major movement in 2015.

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[164] Maurice Ogbonnaya, Ufiem. "Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya: A Comparative Analysis of Causes and Determinants." *Turkish Journal of International Relations*, vol. 12, no. 3, June 2013, pp. 4–16.
[165] Marshall, M., and K. Jaggers. *Polity IV Country Report 2010: Lebanon*. The Polity Project, tracking global markers of democracy versus autocracy, has held Lebanon at the top spot amongst the Arab world in terms of its status as a democracy.
[166] AbiYaghi, Marie-Noelle. "From Isqat An-Nizam at-Ta'ifi to the Garbage Crisis Movement: Political Identities and Antisectarian Movements." *Lebanon: Facing the Arab Uprisings*, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2017, pp. 73–91.
[167] Ibid, 75.

The 'You Stink' movement came about in the summer of 2015 in the wake of a garbage crisis unfolding throughout Beirut. After Lebanon's main landfill was shut down, 3,000 tons of garbage started filling the streets of Greater Beirut each day without any pickup.[168] Obvious discontent arose immediately, and erupted into mass demonstrations quickly after. What started as protests against the halt of trash collection services became demonstrations against the entire system, and the elite politicians running the game, *el-zu'ama.* Thousands took to the streets, under unifying anti-sectarian slogans such as *killun ya'ni killun* ("all of them means all of them.") This is significant language, as it represents people of all sectarian groups coming together, and blaming not their opposed *za'ims* or politicians, but collectively attacking all of them, including 'their own.' Activists began carrying photos of the politicians who represented the sectarian elite, each of the major *za'ims,* such as Samir Geagea, Walid Jumblatt, Michel Aoun, Gibran Basil, among others, and even Hassan Nasrallah, who had not been attacked in demonstrations to this degree before.[169] The inclusion of Nasrallah was controversial, in part because many of the protestors supported his March 8th coalition, and also because of fears of retribution and violence against Shi'a protesters present. The sectarian ghost arrived and out of fears that the movement was moving beyond anger at the obvious garbage problem, and towards all out revolution against the sectarian system, the sectarian elite began muddling to divide the movement, along sectarian lines. Political pressure resulted in the decision to remove Nasrallah's photos from the demonstrations, despite Hezbollah's complicity in these issues and development. Suddenly, the 'You Stink' movement began to fracture. Activists began to feel as if it was one sided, attacking certain elites (namely those of the March 14th Alliance) while sparing others

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[168] Wood J. (2015, July 23). Beirut's trash war pushed Lebanon to the brink. *The National.* Available from http://www.thenational.ae
[169] AbiYaghi, 82.

(Nasrallah.) In an interview conducted by AbiYaghi et al, one activist described the fracturing in incredibly poignant detail:

> "I used to go to the protests with three long-time friends. It was the first time we had a common cause. They are all Aounists. And suddenly, two of them didn't want to go anymore. When I asked them why, they said the movement had become confessionally biased, that they only attacked members of the March 14 coalition, and seemed to be supported by March 8. I had no idea what to say to this."[170]

This sense of the interviewee's friends, that the anti-sectarian movement had become biased on sectarian lines perfectly demonstrates the effect of the sectarian ghost in these movements, how the sectarian elite take advantage of it, and successfully fracture the movements, rendering them ineffective and contradictory.

It is important to mention how origins of the trash crisis can be attributed to the sectarian system as well and its clientelist system of distributing contracts, such as waste management, to cronies of the sectarian elite, ensuring monopolization of entire industries. In the case of the trash crisis, waste management had been monopolized via a sectarian crony resulting in collection fees more than double the global average. This led to the eventual shutdown of the landfill.[171] From the monopolization of the industry, to the fracturing of the movement, and crushing of another mobilization against the sectarian system, *el-zu'ama* and the sectarian elite were safe until the next major challenge.

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[170] Via AbiYaghi, Marie-Noelle, and Youness. "From Isqat An-Nizam at-Ta'ifi to the Garbage Crisis Movement: Political Identities and Antisectarian Movements." *Lebanon: Facing the Arab Uprisings*, Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2017, pp. 73–91.
[171] Richani, Diana El. This Is Not a Revolution: The Sectarian Subject's Alternative in Postwar Lebanon. 2017. University of Ottawa, 29.

Thawra (2019)

October 17th, 2019 saw the spark of what is commonly known as the *Thawra* (Simply Arabic for 'Revolution'). Thawra became one of Lebanon's largest revolutions in its history, seeing the mobilization of people of all classes and sects across the whole country into the streets. Sparked by the announcement of a proposed series of regressive tax schemes amidst economic despair, popular discontent, and decades-old opposition to the sectarian system, hundreds of thousands took to the streets for weeks, once again united across sect and calling for an end to the sectarian system and removal of the *zu'ama* political class. While the spark of the protests may seem small – a tax on calls made on the popular messaging platform *Whatsapp*, the economic conditions facing many Lebanese led to the most significant uprising since the end of the Civil War.[172]

Between nightly teach-ins, and daily rallies at Martyr's Square, as well as in cities across the country, the energy was often described as a 'carnival.'[173] There seemed to be much hope, perhaps more than ever, with the people arriving in Beirut by the thousands to protest. Hope was in the air that the system could finally be beaten, that the sectarian elite could be defeated. And at first, it seemed things were headed that way. The media was helping. Major national stations, including sectarian-affiliated ones,[174] were airing the revolution in real time, and independent outlets such as *Megaphone News* grew in popularity.[175] Civil society groups were out in full force

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[172] Makdisi, Karim. "Lebanon's October 2019 Uprising: From Solidarity to Division and Descent into the Known Unknown." *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 120, no. 2, Apr. 2021, pp. 437.

[173] Jawdat Nader, Sarah. *Success and Failure of Revolutions in Lebanon: The Case of the October Revolution.* 2022. Lebanese American University, 68.

[174] Of the major national broadcasters in Lebanon, such as LBCI, Al-Jadeed, MTV, among others, almost all of them have a sectarian affiliation and regularly air the messaging of one or another political party's views.

[175] "Thousands Protest in Beirut over Tax Hikes as Country Declares Economic Emergency." *NBC News*, 17 Oct. 2019,
https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/thousands-protest-beirut-over-tax-hikes-country-declares-economic-emergency-n1068431.
Jawdat Nader, 61.

supporting the protestors, and the movement was growing. The initial demands of the protestors were met almost immediately with a government frantically responding to the sudden and unexpected uprising threatening its stability. The taxation proposal was withdrawn by Ministry of Telecommunications Minister Mohamed Choucair within hours of the protests starting, and the government was instructed by Prime Minister Hariri to cooperate and meet the demands of the protestors on October 18th.[176] However, the actions of the government which ignited the protests were only a small part of what the protestors were fighting against, the main message being the upheaval of the entire political system. The movement continued and grew, with a general strike beginning on the 21st, and targeting of the banks, who had been named complicit in a ponzi scheme causing the inflation of the Lebanese currency and economic problems engulfing the state. The announcement of a political reforms package by PM Hariri was not enough to satisfy the demands of the protestors. The protestors demanded the resignation of the *troika* of Lebanese political leadership (President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of Parliament), the formation of a technocratic government, investigation of misuse of public finds, the removal of banking secrecy law for the political class, and the installment of a non-sectarian and independent judiciary,[177] and more generally, the wholesale removal of these haramiye (thieves), or 'mafia' as they were generally described.[178] Karim Makdisi describes the sense of hope the protestors felt early on, describing, "Those early days of unity across class, sect, gender, and generations were the sort if idealied moments of anti-sectarian national sentiment that Lebanese, particularly urban liberals, long imagined but deep down feared were more fantasy than reality."[179] The arrival of many protestors from the Dahieh area, Beirut's southern strongholds, a

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[176] Ibid, 65.
[177] Ibid, 64.
[178] Makdisi, 437
[179] Makdisi, 439.

large Shi'a community and stronghold for the Hezbollah party apparatus, also added to the sense

of inter-sectarian solidarity against the system. The return of the rallying cry of *killun ya'ani*

killun ("all of them means all of them") from the 2015 protests was resoundingly clear, but also a

clear and growing threat to the sectrian elite it demanded to oust. Prime Minister Sa'ad Hariri,

son of the legendary martyred *za'im* Rafiq el-Hariri resigned to the protests demands, just 10

days into the revolution, becoming the first of the elite to fall.

As strong as the movement seemed, there were cracks growing, just in time to protect the

very threatened *za'im* class. Internal issues were embroiling the revolutionaries. First, once

again, the lack of organized and agreed upon leadership meant a lack of a clear and unifying

message for the protests. The inclusion of many political parties, activist groups, and civil

service organizations, such as *Beirut Madinati* (Beirut is My City) and *Mouwatinoun wa*

Mouwatinat fi Dawla (Citizens in a State) meant a broad reaching and expansive coalition of all

aspects of the Lebanese people.[180] However, I argue that this disunity was not the primary factor

for the movement's failures, and that once again, *el-zu'ama* were able to break the movement

apart.

While many of the sectarian elite and political parties claimed to sympathize with the

protestors from the start, they vehemently opposed the demonstrations and worked against

them.[181] Sectarian leaders used sectarian strife to instill fear in the protestors and maintain their

role as protectors of their communities, with several sectarian leaders warning that the protests

could cause a new civil war, reminding people of the *za'im's* roles as warlords during the last

civil war.[182] The major forces that worked to squash the movement were not internal, but came

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[180] Makdisi, 438.
[181] Jawdat Nader, 73.
[182] Tamirace Fakhoury, "Lebanon Protests: Why a WhatsApp Tax Sparked a Political Movement", in The Political Quarterly Blog, 18 November 2019, https://wp.me/p9PVIh-Mc.

from the sectarian elite themselves. First, the issue of Hezbollah and inclusion of its leader

Hassan Nasrallah in the 'all means all' messaging was a problem once again. Hezbollah

remained steady in terms of its popular support, once again largely due to its role combatting

Israeli aggression, which continues to be a source of much of the party's support from many

Shi'a and Lebanese of other sects who still see the party as the sole thing which ended Israeli

occupation. Beyond this, Hezbollah's large patronage networks providing social services to its

citizens across Lebanon, and just general popular support for Nasrallah amongst many Lebanese

Shi'a due to his connection to combatting the Israelis also contributed to the party's popular

support. Nasrallah, despite acknowledging the protestor's demands early on, quickly warned of

foreign agendas motivating the protests and American and Israeli interventionism, calling on his

supporters to not take part in the protests.[183] Hezbollah and 'Amal Movement supporters

storming Martyr's Square and fighting with protestors continued to build a divide between the

Shi'a activists and the rest of the protestors. Sectarian elite also got involved by using their

parties to 'undermine the integrity of the movement'[184] was the cooptation of the street by

infiltrating party supporters between the protestors. This resulted in more clashes and violence,

and a decrease in the number of people taking to the streets out of a fear of violence.[185] Political

parties even tried to hijack the protests, efforts which alienated certain protestors due to the

appearance of the Thawra having a sectarian bend.[186]

Finally, both obviously and ironically, *el-zu'ama* broke the Thawra by co-opting the

slogans and calls of the movement itself. Data research conducted based on the compiled Twitter

data of hashtags representing slogans of the Thawra found the cooptation of the same messaging

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[183] Jawdat Nader, 73.
[184] Ibid, 74.
[185] Tannoury-Karam & Comedy, 2021, Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.
[186] Cheheyab, Kareem, and Abby Sewell. *Why Protesters in Lebanon Are Taking to the Streets*. Foreign Policy, 2 Nov. 2019, https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/02/lebanon-protesters-movement-streets-explainer/.

posted by many of the sectarian and political elite of Lebanon.[187] The study found the most
highly used and spread hashtags referencing the 2019 Thawra by all Twitter users to have been
slogans which translate to the phrases '#Lebanon_Revolts' '#All_of_Them_Means_All _of
_Them' and '#Time's_Up'.[188] Below is the data for two of the many slogans studied on the
dataset.

Figure VI: Siegel Report, Prominence of Thawra Hashtags on Twitter[189]
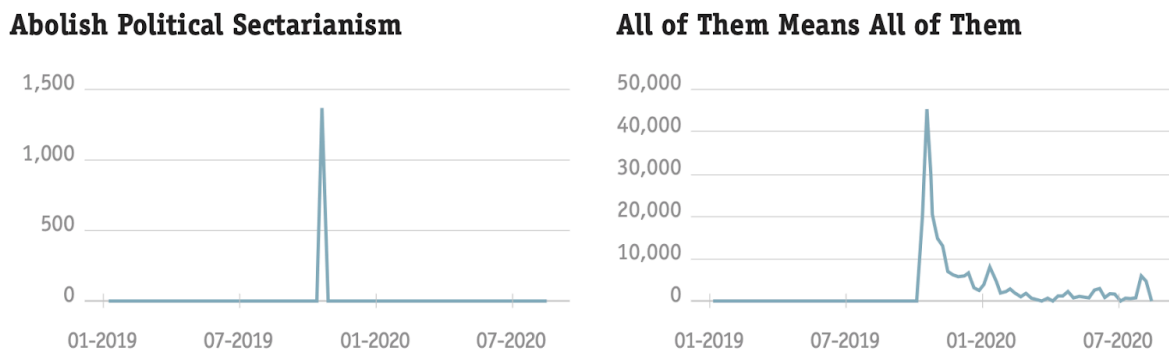
Namely, the hashtag '#Nasrallah_Is_One_of_Them' grew in popularity, a reference to his
controversial inclusion amongst those the protestors sought to oust.

Figure VII: Nasrallah is One of Them Hashtag Prominence[190]

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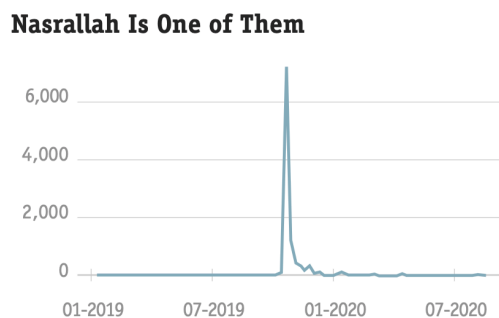
[187] Siegel, Alexandra. *How Lebanese Elites Coopt Protest Discourse: A Social Media Analysis*.
[188] Ibid, 3.
[189] Ibid, 4.
[190] Ibid, 4.

The study then compiled all tweets posted on the same period by a list of 159 Lebanese elites, described to be *el-zu'ama*, political leaders and politicians, religious leaders, etc. The study found the elite group to have started tweeting the same hashtags shortly after the beginning of the protests.[191]

Figure VIII: Weekly Volume of Revolution Hashtags Tweeted by Elites[192]

Abolish Political Sectarianism   **All of Them Means All of Them**
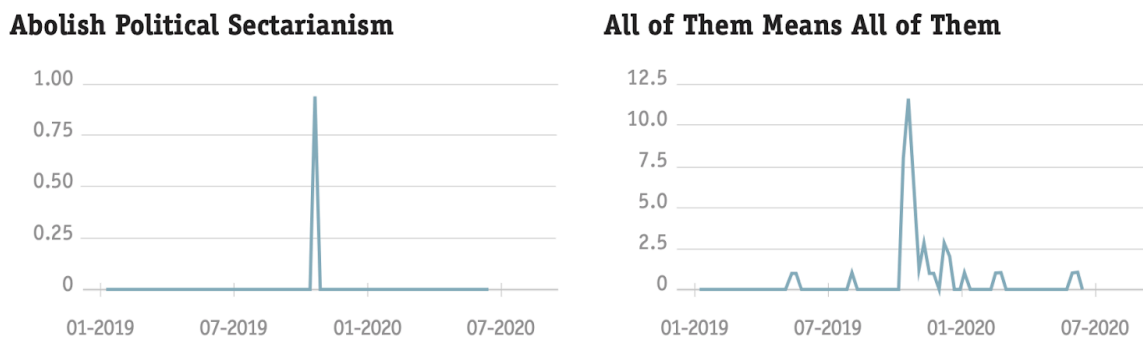
The study reveals the usage of pro-Thawra, anti-government, anti-sectarian messaging, by *el-Zu'ama* the sectarian elite. Interestingly enough, any of the pro-Thawra hashtags referencing *el-zu'ama* directly, such as *Nasrallah is One of Them* or *Gebran Failure* were not tweeted by the elite. So this analysis begs the question: why would the sectarian elite use the messaging of the Thawra, which calls directly for their ouster, themselves on their official platforms? I argue that just like in 2011 and in 2015, the co-optation of the movement by sectarian leadership was the most important and decisive factor in fracturing the movement and rendering it ineffective and useless. Similarly to in 2011 when this began, protestors from certain sects began to feel alienated and opposed to the movement, as it seemed that political leaders of opposing sects/parties expressed their explicit support for the movement and made it their campaign messaging for the upcoming elections. Suddenly, the numbers of the people showing up to protests dwindled, the people reverted back to their own sects and parties, and *el-zu'ama*

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[191] Ibid, 6.
[192] Ibid, 6.

once again rendered the movement useless.[193] The great hope that was felt just months prior in ending the sectarian system had been extinguished.

Beirut Port Explosion (2020)

August 4, 2020 shocked people around the world as what is thought to be the world's most powerful non-nuclear explosion sent shockwaves through Beirut. The storage of 2,750 tons of ammonia nitrate, an explosive chemical, at the Port of Beirut for six years out of political and judicial negligence led to the most recent challenges to the political status quo in Lebanon, which continue to be aired in Lebanon to this day. An outrageously traumatic event for anyone living in Beirut at the time, the explosion claimed the lives of over 200 people, and injured 6,500.[194] The destruction throughout the city was estimated to amount to US$ 3.8-4.6 billion.[195] For many Lebanese, the explosion was seen as the most glaringly obvious and destructive examples of the failures of the political system, negligence by their leaders, and most importantly, *el-zu'ama,* who many argued were directly complicit in creating the conditions required for such an institutional failure. As described,

> "Following the Ta'if Accord in late 1989 and with the help of outside forces,
> including Syria, these same warlords sat together with exponents of Lebanon's
> traditional political families (the zu'ama) and a rising new elite of Lebanese
> entrepreneurs (dubbed the "contractor bourgeoisie")[196] to work out the

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[193] Al-Ameeddine, Lyanna. "Once upon a Time There Was a Thawra." *L'Orient Today*, 17 Oct. 2021, https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1278286/once-upon-a-time-there-was-a-thawra.html.

[194] Leenders, Reinoud. "Timebomb at the Port: How Institutional Failure, Political Squabbling and Greed Set the Stage for Blowing up Beirut." *Arab Reform Initiative*, Sept. 2020.

[195] *Beirut Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) — August 2020*. World Bank, 31 Aug. 2020, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lebanon/publication/beirut-rapid-damage-and-needs-assessment-rdna---august-2020.

[196] Hannes Baumann, Citizen Hariri: Lebanon's Neoliberal Reconstruction, (Hurst & Company, Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 13, 23-24.

implementation of a political arrangement that could lift the country out of war."[197]

The architects of the modern port were the wartime warlords, the *za'im* political class, among other powerbrokers. Those same people are in charge today as the leaders of the political class infers their direct complicity in the explosion and responsibility for the deaths, injuries, and damages to many Lebanese people. Warnings had been made for years about the decrepit state of the port, and the danger of the ammonia nitrate sitting there. Unfortunately, port officials, judges, law enforcement, and even the President, had ignored the calls for years,[198] and nothing had been done to prevent the disaster. Sick of the stereotype of 'resilience' often hoisted upon the Lebanese for their endurance of so many crises, one scholar noted a Whatsapp voice message he received from a friend, vehemently yelling, "Enough resilience, I cannot hear that word anymore. We do not want to be resilient, we want to live!" [199] And he himself later remarked: "This time, we choose resistance and not resilience."[200] Protestors took to the streets once again, marching in inter-sectarian unity against the guilty political class, standing in solidarity with the families of the victims demanding justice for the negligence which led to their deaths. The system itself was to blame for the ineffectiveness and negligent government which had led to the tragedy, and the people were fed up and demanded justice.

So, how did *el-zu'ama* survive this challenge? They delayed the process and waited it out. Investigations were launched, judges were appointed, and even independent prosecutors were involved. But the sectarian elite interfered in the investigations, protecting themselves and their cronies via their patronage networks. The lead investigator of the case, Judge Tarek Bitar,

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[197] Leenders, 5-6.
[198] Ibid, 4.
[199] Geha, Carmen, et al. "Breaking the Cycle: Existential Politics and the Beirut Explosion Field Notes." *Middle East Law and Governance*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2020, pp. 359-360.
[200] Ibid, 360.

has endured years of obstruction, and the investigation has been suspended multiple times.[201] Allowing the investigatory process to take place supposedly could satisfy some of the protestors demands, and cool things off, while the process was delayed, interfered with, and also rendered useless over months, and now years of time. As the process continued, the energy of protestors dwindled, people showed up less often, and *el-zu'ama* avoided another serious challenge to their position.

This challenge remains ongoing, however, as people continue to call for justice, now long awaited, while the process continues to be stymied. Most recently, a massive march and rally took place in Beirut in August 2023, on the three year anniversary of the port explosion. I was able to take part in the march and witnessed people of all Lebanese sects marching together, raising the images of the victims, and listing their names at the port itself, demanding an independent investigation and justice.

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[201] Fakhri, Michael. "Justice for the Beirut Blast Can Help Avert Lebanon's Collapse." *Al Jazeera*, 6 Aug. 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/8/6/justice-for-the-beirut-blast-can-help-avert-lebanons-collapse

Image XVI: A crowd of protesters marching to the Port of Beirut raise images of the victims of the Beirut Port Explosion

Credit: Self

Image XVII: Protestors fly a bloodied Lebanese flag at the march for the 3 year anniversary of the Beirut Port Explosion

Credit: Self

The cycle of repeated sparks for protest and challenges to the sectarian system, met by methodical opposition by *el-zu'ama*, and the ultimate failure of the challenges in each example in the 21st century gives light to the extreme power held by the *za'im* class. They wielded

sectarian strife as a weapon to divide the masses and maintain their control of the political system. In almost every single crack that is visible in these protest movements, we can attribute the failure to the *za'im* class in one way or another, which I will demonstrate in debunking the following counterargument to my thesis which places more blame on the divisions of the protestors themselves.

Counterargument

While there is an argument to be made that these challenges to the sectrian system in the 21st century had internal divisions and problems which led to their downfall, I maintain based on this analysis of five major challenges in the past 24 years that the hands of *el-zu'ama* have also been present in each of these movements, meddling with the goals to squash the challenges and maintain their authority. Abbas Assi brings forth an argument focused on internal division, but certain key points of the article's argument better reflect actions taken by the sectarian elite to divide the people, rather than the people just being divided on their own.[202] A member of the Citizens in a State party described the disunity, recounting, "Those who participated in the October 17 protests, or Intifada, did not represent one political viewpoint, and did not have a united understanding of the political situation. The protests declared a strong rejection, but did not present an alternative."[203] Assi, 2020, argues this being a large part of the movement's failures in 2011, 2015, and 2019.[204] However, while internal disunity was certainly a factor for

[202] Assi, Abbas. "Sectarianism and the Failure of Lebanon's 2019 Uprising." *MIDDLE EAST INSIGHTS*, no. 251, 2020.
[203]Ibid, 4.
[204] Abbas Assi, "Lebanon's Protest Movement Needs New Strategy to Keep People's Support," The Globe Post 2020, available on:
https://theglobepost.com/2020/01/28/lebanon-protest-movement/.

failure in each of these examples, the meddling by the sectarian elite out of an interest in self-preservation remains the major cause.

First, while Assi blames the movement itself for its failures, claiming that disunity amongst the protestors based on sect caused its downfall, Assi neglects to recognize where that disunity comes from, and how the sectarianism entrenched within the people is reproduced by the sectarian elite's actions. In this regard, Assi references the action of blanket amnesty following the civil war as an obstacle to reconciliation amongst the people. Assi notes that,

> "Another important factor that contributed to the failure of the Uprising was the absence of transitional justice. After the end of the civil war, the Lebanese did not move to prosecute those who committed crimes and mass killings, return those displaced by the conflict, reconstruct devastated villages and buildings, or investigate what happened to those who disappeared or were kidnapped. The failure to do this impacted reconciliation, and was an obstacle to unity against the political class."[205]

While recognizing this action as an obstacle to sectarian reconciliation this neglects to recognize that this was an action taken by the sectarian elite, which led to the divisions present today that divided protestors. Actions such as the blanket amnesty agreement, which meant no justice for victims of the war's atrocities and led to distrust between sects, were actions which directly benefited the sectarian elite, not only in helping them avoid jail time for war crimes, but also in maintaining a divided society which allows them to maintain their power. Assi doubles down further by arguing that the sectarianism present in the Lebanese people prevented them from "uniting against a common foe" and instead, "each community viewed the protests as a tool to weaken its

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[205] Assi, 4.

opponents."[206] Once again, this crack in the movement must be attributed not to the protestors themselves, but to the actions, both explicit and implicit, taken by members of the *za'im* class to weaponize sectarian strife and divide the protestors themselves. I argue this because of the sectarian elite's complicity in manufacturing and maintaining the system which is meant to divide the Lebanese people in the first place. I comment on the argument raised by Assi in order to show how while it does pin certain reasons as to why these movements did not achieve success, my argument gets to the heart of why those divisions exist, and how the sectarian elite have been able to beat these challenges, time and time again.

Ultimately, the series of challenges to the sectarian system and elite *za'im class* throughout the 21st century represent the ability of the Lebanese people to come together, defying sectarian expectations, to call for an end to the system and reign of *el-zu'ama*. But the failure of each of these major challenges also represents the major success of the sectarian elite in effectively squashing any attack on the system and their authority.

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[206] Assi, 5.

__Conclusion__

This thesis has investigated the impact of the system of political, economic, and social sectarianism in Lebanon. Two primary, related questions guided this research: the first being how is sectarianism sustained in Lebanon? Second, how has the elite sectarian class *el-zu'ama* maintained their positions of power? The commonly-held answers to these questions have laid the blame with culture, colonialism, or internal power. The first school sees sectarianism as an organic system which is inherent to Lebanon and its people, scholars such as Jamal Nassar[207] develop this argument along an organicist route as Max Weiss[208] described it. This view is prevalent in Lebanese society today amongst many conservative classes, as well as across the older generation, possibly as a reflection of the civil war's impact on their psyches. These sentiments are often heard in day to day conversations, with many arguing that sectarianism, and the confessionalist political system that came with it, is the only thing which allows Lebanon to function in its great diversity, and is an important system which prevents conflict and allows for stability. The artificialists, as Weiss describes them, see sectarianism as an invented system with no inherent basis in the Lebanese people, instead laying blame on foreign interventionism,[209] traced to Ottoman colonization and the first instances of political sectarianism, French colonialism, and today, with proxy wars raging on in Lebanon and dividing the people. A third, much less prevalent school is less interested in the origins of sectarianism and more so in its sustenance and use today. The Modernists seek to understand how sectarianism impacts day to day life, rather than seek answers on if it was a product of colonialism or not. This view is often

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[207] Nassar, Jamal R. "Sectarian Political Cultures: The Case of Lebanon." *The Muslim World*, vol. 85, no. 3–4, July 1995, pp. 246–65.

[208] Weiss, Max. "The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon." *History Compass*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 2009, pp. 141–54.

[209] Kaufman, Asher. "Phoenicianism: The Formation of an Identity in Lebanon in 1920." *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2001, pp. 173–94.

accompanied by a Marxist lens, as is the case with the work of Mahdi 'Amel[210], who in part leads this school, despite his research occurring in the 1970s and 80s. I have argued that all three of these schools have limitations, and my contribution has been to understand how sectarianism has remained in power for so long, and is leveraged by an elite class in order to maintain their political power.

Main Arguments Summarized

Through this investigation, I have developed two major arguments. First, rather than being a cultural artifact or foreign imposition, sectarianism is a modern tool of political and social control used to divide a nation and maintain political power in a specific class. Second, sectarianism is maintained by an elite class known as *el-zu'ama* through their cults of personality, geographic and social pillarization, and legal institutionalization. In short, whatever the origins of sectarianism are, today it is a modern and effective tool of political and social control to divide a nation and maintain power. And those doing the dividing to maintain their power? The sectarian elite political class known as *el-zu'ama*.

Modes of Analysis

To develop these arguments, I undertook a number of modes of analysis, being historical analysis, constitutional/legal analysis, spatial analysis, content analysis, and analysis of challenges to the system. My historical analysis investigated pre-statehood Lebanon, and the roots of sectarianism already existent and elevating a *za'im* class growing in size and power. This analysis saw how Ottoman colonization implemented sectarianism as a political system for the

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[210] "On the Sectarian State." *Arab Marxism and National Liberation*, by Mahdi Amel, BRILL, 2020, pp. 84–98.

first time in the *mutasariffiyya*, and how forced resettlement of Druze and Maronite communities in Mount Lebanon exacerbated it. This analysis also investigated the French impact on expanding the political system of sectarianism and the elevation of choice sectarian groups and elite leadership, as well as analyzed the civil war's relationship to sectarianism. My constitutional and legal analyses sought to understand how the three major guiding legal texts of the republic, the 1926 Constitution of Lebanon, the 1943 National Pact, and 1989 Taif Agreement, expanded the systems of sectarianism into the legislative politics of the country, the entire government system, as well as into the social and economic spheres of Lebanon, respectively. The spatial analysis employed the concept of pillarization, developed to understand the religious divides present in twentieth century Netherlands, to see how sectarianism determines not only where people live across the Lebanese state, based in villages of long-standing sectarian heritage, but more importantly, how Beirutis are divided into neighborhoods based on sect. My content analysis examined sectarian political propaganda throughout the country and Beirut which are plastered everywhere, to understand how the sectarian elites develop cults of personality in their communities based on patronage networks, clientelism, and crony capitalism, maintaining community loyalty and support for their leadership. Finally, my revolutionary analysis examined five 21st century challenges to the sectarian system and *za'im* class. I found that each of the five movements failed in that respect. I analyzed how the sectarian elite were actively present in working to defuse and immobilize each of these movements in order to protect themselves and their status as *el-zu'ama*. I argued that the sectarian elite were so effective in immobilizing these mass movements by using sectarianism as a force to divide protestors, feeding on collective trauma and fears to tear cross-sectarian unity

apart. Collectively these five modes of analysis show how the sectarian elite have maintained their positions of power for decades, passing down sectarian leadership patrilineally.

Two major theoretical conversations were important in understanding about the manufacturer of sectarianism. Arend Lijphart's concept of consociationalism has played out deeply in Lebanon, which is set up as a consociational democracy today.[211] Lijphart's original conception of the system was meant to enable states with intensely diverse and divided populations, along religious/sectarian/ethnic lines to form a type of government in which all groups could be represented. In Lebanon, consociational democracy is not meant to allow for effective governance, but rather, to build a democratic system which operates albeit some issues, effective enough, with the larger goal being the keeping of peace amongst sectarian groups. In that sense, consociationalism works in Lebanon. However, this thesis suggests that the implementation of consociational democracy may be attributed to reinforcing and even manufacturing the sectarian system. Consociational democracy and sectarianism in Lebanon became endogenous, with both systems creating the other, or being a product of the other. A second major theoretical conversation important to this thesis is Arie Molendijk's pillarization theory.[212] Initially developed in the wake of deep religious divides present in 19th century Dutch society, pillarization is the process by which people of differing communities became separated in multiple overlapping dimensions, such as religious groups, neighborhoods, media and information networks, political parties, and so on, with those forming pillars, or silos, in every facet of daily life. This concept applies well to Lebanon today, and explains both the pattern of divisions and its political effects. In particular, this maintains the political power of the sectarian

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[211] Lijphart, Arend. "Pluralism and Democracy." *The Politics of Accommodation*, 1st ed., University of California Press, 1968, pp. 1–15.
[212] Molendijk, Arie L. "Pillarization." *Protestant Theology and Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands*, edited by Arie L. Molendijk, Oxford University Press, 2021.

elite via the concept of divide and conquer. Both of these concepts are essential in an understanding of how sectarianism has influenced the development of Lebanon and in defense of this thesis.

Comparative and Global Lessons

This thesis carries important lessons not only for Lebanon, but for countries across the Middle East and around the world that grapple with sectarianism. The example of the Netherlands is instructive, because it de-pillarized in the last quarter of the 20th century. Political interest in de-pillarizing Lebanon could lean on the strategies and mechanisms used in Dutch society to break those walls down and form a common national identity. Lebanon could also look to other consociational democracies, and specifically, better-functioning ones, such as Switzerland, to gain lessons in effective governance and political legitimacy. Inversely, Lebanon also serves as an important lesson in the dangers of sectarianism. Across the Middle East, a number of countries deal with internal sectarian divisions, such as Iraq. These nations should look to Lebanon as a warning sign of the problems to come in embracing and promoting sectarianism in their political systems. The creation of the modern post-invasion Republic of Iraq looked to Lebanon not as a warning, but as a model for how to implement sectarianism into its political system. This could pose to be problematic by exacerbating sectarian divides in the country via their constitutional politicization. Lebanon also serves as a warning for the broader Saudi-Iranian proxy wars playing out across the Middle East, which exacerbate the Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divide.

Looking more broadly, Lebanon teaches lessons about the dangers of extreme polarization evident across many societies, including the United States today. The danger of an

oligarchic, family-based elite in manipulating political systems for their own benefit, under a veneer of democracy for their own political cover has played out in ways very detrimental to the Lebanese people, and can happen anywhere in the world. The United States faces an oligarchic elite also threatening its own democracy, especially since the United States Supreme Court's ruling in *Citizens United v. FEC*,[213] which allows for the oligarchic class to have further influence on American elections. American polarization, now at an all-time high, can resemble Lebanese sectarianism to a certain degree as well, in its religious divides which often demarcate political sides, the growth of American Evangelicalism, and culture war politics sustaining such intense polarization.[214] Although not identical by any means, the issues facing Lebanon should provide warnings to the United States in regard to polarization and oligarchy.

Limitations and Routes for Further Research

This thesis has several limitations. Further field research could have been helpful, as well as more time in Lebanese archives. Unfortunately, some of the archives are hard to access or were indefinitely closed when I was in Lebanon for my research. I was able to make use of the helpful archives of the American University of Beirut, but was unable to access the Lebanese national archives. This meant that I was unable to access several primary documents. Additionally, an interview-based approach, based on different sects, age groups, and political affiliations to further see how sectarianism is embedded in the individual consciousness, and how this might differ generationally, and across urban/rural spaces. In a similar vein, this thesis is

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[213] *Citizens United v. FEC, 558 U.S. 310 (2010)*. 20 Jan. 2010, https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/558/310/.
[214] Campbell, James. *Polarized: Making Sense of Modern America*. Princeton University Press, 2018.
Hartmann, Thomm. The Hidden History of American Oligarchy: Reclaiming Our Democracy from the Ruling Class. Barret-Koehler Publishers, 2021.
Chua, Amy. *Political Tribes: Group Instinct and the Fate of Nations* Penguin Books, 2019.

heavily based on qualitative research methods. Quantitative analysis would be helpful in supporting and expanding this argument. Survey research to understand political/sectarian attitudes of Lebanese people, again across sect, generation, locality, etc. would be an appropriate route for future research.

Comparative analysis may be the most useful in determining a future for Lebanon beyond sectarianism. Further development of the application of the model of pillarization to the Lebanese case, and a comparative analysis between Lebanon and other pillarized societies is a ripe path for research. This could provide insight into how Lebanon can learn lessons from the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and countries that have confronted their divisions. There is also room for conversation regarding how pillarization manifests across the white, global north versus a global south which has experienced European colonization. Overall, the concept of pillarization offers a strong path for further comparative research on Lebanese sectarianism.

For Lebanon's Future

Ultimately, sectarianism is not unique to Lebanon, but its intensity and role in supporting an oligarchic class stands at an extreme end of a global spectrum. The further institutionalization of sectarianism into every facet of Lebanese society continues to be problematic and harmful to the Lebanese people, who deal with the effects of its system of poor governance, and looting of state resources and the nation's wealth by the elite. Meanwhile, *el-zu'ama* continue to dominate the system, fortifying their positions of power at the expense of all other classes. 'Keeping the peace' via consociationalism is not enough to build a strong Lebanese democracy. In that regard, the solution cannot lie in simply telling the Lebanese people to 'wake up' and discard their sectarian and religious divisions. There is a case to be made that the organicist approach has

some legitimacy, and that there are embedded cultural divisions which drive sectarianism to

being a prominent force. While some scholars I reference throughout this thesis have blamed the

people specifically for the failures of protests, and for failing to discard sectarianism, I maintain

through this that this deflects the responsibility that is due to the sectarian elite who fight to

uphold a system that empowers themselves and their cronies. In order for the people themselves

to bring an end to this system, an understanding of these divisions being beyond religion and

sect, and more so rooted in class – elite versus the masses – must come to light. Bridges must be

built, and historical traumas need to be healed for Lebanese across sects to understand they have

more in common with each other than they do with their own *za'im*. Trust will need to be built.

The ills of the civil war must finally be confronted, instead of continuing to be ignored. This

includes gaining closure by repealing the clause of blanket amnesty in the Taif Agreement for the

militia warlords, and the fair litigation of these crimes to pursue justice for all victims of the war.

One of the most acute roadblocks to overcoming these divisions is the lack of a national memory

of the Civil War and Lebanon's history. As most people rely on sect-based memory, a general

collective amnesia of past atrocities and crimes of the sectarian elite pervades political dialogues.

An actual national memory of the war, rather than personal and sectarian memory, needs to be

built via education in a non-pillarized school system. These are the first steps to overcoming the

divides and traumas still present after the civil war. Ultimately, the manifestation of sectarianism

on such a high political scale via consociationalism needs to be torn down in order for a true

Lebanese national unity to exist beyond Fairuz and man2oushe. Clearly, the problems Lebanon

faces are many and complex, and I cannot name the path to solving all of them. A bright future

for Lebanon beyond sectarianism, economic despair, and *za'im* control is possible, if the

Lebanese people can dream it. The rallying cries of the 2019 Thawra must be heard again, and

killun ya3ni killun (all of them means all of them) must be heard loudly.

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