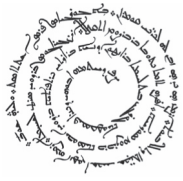
The Struggle to Define a Nation



The Modern Muslim World

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The Struggle to Define a Nation

Rethinking Religious Nationalism in the Contemporary Islamic World

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Alexander D. M. Henley[1]

Introduction: sectarianism and religious nationalism in Lebanon

A Lebanese prime minister once complained to his president, "When will we have the best soldier as chief of the army, the best diplomat as the minister of foreign affairs, and so on, regardless of their religion, Christian or Muslim?" The president replied, "What about loyalty? For me, loyalty comes before who can be the best." This anecdote was related by a political adviser long after the event, but regardless of historical accuracy it illustrates the commonplace assumption of an essential tension between religious and national loyalties in Lebanon. It is an assumption that has been held by countless politicians, commentators and academics since the early days of the Lebanese state, which was built around the management of religious difference. The presumed incompatibility of religious and national loyalties has in turn informed all sorts of political projects: exclusion of Muslims from power for fear of their trans-national loyalty to an Islamic or Arab *umma*; distrust of Christians in power for fear of their sub-national exclusivism; partition of Lebanon into confessional nation-states or federal units for fear of sectarian conflict; exclusive rule by a secular elite for fear of the irrationally religious masses; and secularization of the state in

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order to de-confessionalise those masses or to exclude divisive or oppressive religious leaders from power.

There has, in short, been a prevailing presumption that religion and nationalism must be irreconcilable in a multi-confessional state. According to one recent book on Lebanese politics: "The concept of national citizenship has not taken hold in Lebanon in the same way that it has in Western nations. Loyalty to the family, the clan, and the religious community overrides other allegiances, leaving little room for national patriotism."[2] Some nuance has been injected into this picture by scholarship on cases of sectarian nationalism, where national identities are not rejected but given a factional religious or sectarian twist to produce what Fanar Haddad, writing on Iraq, calls "antagonistic visions of unity."[3] Sune Haugbolle observes a similar phenomenon in Lebanon, commenting that in the language and imagery of party propaganda, "religious/sectarian and secular/nationalist imagery come together in attempts to *define the nation from a sectarian perspective*."[4] Lebanese Christian nationalisms have been the classic examples of this kind of antagonistic sectarian nationalism,[5] but Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr has more recently argued that Muslim communities have for decades been forming counter-nationalisms rooted in their own religious imagery.[6] Despite these less oppositional treatments of religion and nationalism, there

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[2] Rola El-Husseini, *Pax Syriana: Elite politics in postwar Lebanon*, (Syracuse, NY, 2012), p. 140.

[3] Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, (London, 2011).

[4] Sune Haugbolle, 'Spatial Representation of Sectarian National Identity in Residential Beirut', in *Visualizing Secularism and Religion: Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, India*, Eds. Alev Cinar, Srirupa Roy, Maha Yahya, (Ann Arbor, 2012), pp. 308–334.

[5] Walid Phares, *Lebanese Christian Nationalism*, (London, 1995); Ghassan Hage, 'Religious Fundamentalism as a Political Strategy: The evolution of the Lebanese Forces' religious discourse during the Lebanese Civil War', *Critique of Anthropology*, 12/1 (1992), pp. 27–45.

[6] Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities*, (New York, 2008).

remains an overall consensus that public expressions of religious identity in a multi-confessional environment will detract from the socially unifying benefits of national belonging in the modern state.

Whereas the term 'religious nationalism' in multi-confessional societies therefore tends to be used as virtually synonymous with sectarianism, this chapter will apply it to a cross-confessional nationalist discourse that emerged in Lebanon in the mid-twentieth century, and that has come into focus since the 1975–90 civil war as a direct response to sectarian discourses propagated by various parties and militias. This cross-confessional religious nationalism makes pluralism itself the basis for a common Lebanese identity, espousing ecumenical theologies and locating the authentic roots of modern concepts of civility in parallel Islamic and Christian traditions. The most prominent producers of this discourse have been the officially-recognized heads of Lebanon's various religious communities, especially the Sunni Muslim grand mufti and the Maronite Christian patriarch, whose discourse will be the focus of this chapter. Indeed, I would suggest that it is precisely because it comes from the mouths of these controversial figures that the striking phenomenon of a pluralist religious nationalism in Lebanon has largely been ignored by scholars of both religion and nationalism. 'Religious leaders' have been pigeonholed into the cosmology of sectarian religion versus secular nationalism, with scant attention to what they actually say or do, or to the differences among this almost incoherently broad class. From a recent book on challenges to the nation-state, for instance, we learn that "Lebanon's political structure revolves around the antagonistic and incongruous axis of religious authority versus state authority."[7] This chapter draws on public statements made by certain Lebanese religious authorities in order to elucidate a common discourse of religious nationalism that is characterized precisely by its affirmation of and connection to state authority.

The public statements and sermons of the mufti and patriarch during Lebanon's 1975–90 civil war offer a clear alternative to the

[7] Maurus Reinkowski, Sofia Saadeh, 'A nation divided: Lebanese confessionalism', in *Citizenship Citizenship and Ethnic Conflict: Challenging the nation-state*, Ed. Haldun Gulalp, (London, 2006), pp. 99–116.

sectarian ideologies that held sway in each community's wartime enclave, peddled by militias and by Muslim or Christian clerics loyal to those militias. This is what makes the civil war period particularly interesting for a study of religious nationalism as well as sectarianism: issues of communal identity and belonging were cast in high relief, with an urgency and duration not seen before or since. The religious nationalist discourse described in this chapter was not an entirely new phenomenon in the 1970s, but it was elaborated in more sophisticated forms as a vision for national 'salvation' from the crisis. It has become a permanent feature of what could be called the official orthodoxy of the Lebanese public sphere.

WHAT IS RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM IN A MULTI-CONFESSIONAL NATION?

Nation

It is no exaggeration to say that the central concerns in the preaching of both mufti and patriarch on every major festival during the civil war period were nation (*watan*) and state (*dawla*).[8] These concerns are expressed through prayers or direct exhortations to action, which are authenticated and given moral weight by reference to Islamic or Christian values and sources. These divergent frames of reference, however, do not impede them

[8] The documents cited in this chapter were public messages delivered orally as sermons and distributed as texts. As well as being broadcast on television and radio, they were printed in the Lebanese press, and many can be found reproduced in the invaluable documents section of the quarterly review published by CEDRE (ed.), *Haliyyat / Panorama de l'Actualité / Panorama of Events* 50 vols. (Beirut, La Maison du Futur). These documents will here be cited by the year (CE) and the occasion in the Islamic or Christian calendar for which they were produced. Full texts are available from the author.

from being consistently and explicitly linked to an ideal of unity (*wihda*) for the Lebanese nation "in the shadow of the state."[9]

The nation is defined by Patriarch Antoine Khoreich as "a people whose children are closely united and who, of one heart, live the same zest of patriotism and lend together their wills to save their country, to save their heritage, stay faithful to their history and to their civilization."[10] These three core components – unity, commitment and heritage – are classic features of modern nationalist thought. Unity in the Lebanese context, and more urgently during the war, refers characteristically to unity among members of different confessional groups. "When will the sons of the one society," asks Khoreich, "recognize different religions and sects as equal in rights and duties, that they are born free without exception, and that they are together responsible before God and their conscience and their society […]?"[11] The question of unity raises the same specter of sectarian disunity for Mufti Hassan Khaled:

> In the homeland [*watan*], on the smallness of its area, spacious enough for all its people on a basis of justice and preservation of freedoms, any one of its groups cannot build Lebanon in its image, whether partisan or sectarian or ethnic; and whatever this or that group goes too far in, like these current attempts, it will return in the end to the logic of the wise citizen [*muwaṭin*], aware of his national responsibility [*mas'uliyyatihi al-wataniyya*], because Lebanon cannot be other than an image of wonderful homogeneity among all its communities […][12]

Shared commitment to Lebanon should override any other communal ties when it comes to the public space of the nation-state. Both mufti and patriarch, in the passages quoted, also express this connection to the nation in terms of commitment's flip-side,

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[9] This is an expression used with variations by both mufti and patriarch, e.g. Lent 1976; Adha 1986; "in the shadow of public laws", Christmas 1977; "in the shadow of legitimate authority", Fitr 1983.

[10] Christmas 1981.

[11] Christmas 1984.

[12] Fitr 1984.

responsibility. This adds an objective quality to the relationship with the nation. By implication Lebanon is not only a lofty ideal to which the preachers recommend the individual opt in; it is a social reality that demands a given response. To the nation one owes sacrifices of "loyalty, time, resources and even blood."[13] Khoreich rolls all these ideas neatly into his assertion that "the nation is one family,"[14] which plays on cultural associations of the family with ultimate responsibility and, ironically, with the sect as "spiritual family," a common way of referring to Lebanon's communities.

Undergirding unity and commitment in most nationalist thought is a sense of shared heritage. Culturalist narratives of Lebanese sectarianism have supposed the absence of a shared heritage to be the young nation's greatest obstacle, or even pointed to Lebanon as a tectonic fault-line in the supposed clash of civilizations. Yet when the Mufti of the Lebanese Republic talks about "our heritage" and "our civilization," it is not in the context of Sunnism or Islam but in terms of the Lebanese nation.[15] The Lebanese heritage that he recalls is a history of coexistence:

> Lebanon was, in the eyes of the world, Eastern and Western, the country of radiance and civilization and learning and beauty […] rest and relaxation. And the life of its people was a model of constructive brotherly cooperation and coexistence.[16]

Patriarch Khoreich similarly emphasizes a successful history of cooperation:

> In the history of Lebanon […] the Lebanese, when they speak in unison, can overcome all crises, and rid themselves of all occupations, and so bring peace in their lands.[17]

In a more specific example, Khoreich responds to the ravages of the 1982 'War of the Mountain' in the mixed Chouf region by pointing out not just the material destruction being wrought by

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[13] Christmas 1981.
[14] Christmas 1984.
[15] E.g. Ramadan 1979.
[16] Ramadan 1975.
[17] Christmas 1983.

Maronites and Druzes on each other's property, but the eradication of a joint cultural heritage dating back to the seventeenth century golden era of Emir Fakhreddine.[18] The implication in these sermons is that modern Lebanon is the product of cooperation between its indigenous confessional communities going back centuries; a reading of history by no means universally accepted. Mufti and patriarch thus stand together in opposing perceptions of Lebanon as either a later colonial imposition or a minority Phoenicio-Maronite creation.

The patriarchs, unlike Muslim leaders, are able to appeal to Maronite pietistic traditions rooted specifically in the land of Lebanon, and they do not shy away from such non-inclusive references. Khoreich, for instance, incorporates references to the shrines of the Maronite saints of Mount Lebanon into an almost creedal formula alongside faith in a Trinitarian God and in Lebanese heritage:

> We believe in God […] and we believe in His Divine Redeeming Son […] and we believe in His Holy Spirit […] and we believe in Lebanon whose soil has been intermixed with the remains of the saints […] and we believe in the authenticity of the Lebanese and their history and heritage and civilization and humanitarian values.[19]

Yet these Christian and Maronite themes are used to cement an attachment to a nation in which a man's closest tie is to "the son of his nation" – whether Christian or Muslim – who is "his partner in joy and sorrow and the loneliness of destiny [*masīr*]."[20] Muslim leaders do not have a comparable Lebanese religious geography to draw on, but this has not prevented some, like Mufti Khaled, from treating the Lebanese nation as an objective reality. Thus, speaking of "the unity of the land, the unity of the people, and their destiny [*masīr*] together,"[21] Khaled echoes the patriarch's usage of the word *masīr*, imbuing national solidarity and territorial sovereignty with a

[18] Christmas 1982.
[19] Easter 1984.
[20] Christmas 1984.
[21] Fitr 1984.

sense of predestination or divine ordination. This is a principle concisely encapsulated in the idea of Lebanon as "final homeland [*watan niha'i*]" for its people. It is a testament to the mufti's influence on official nationalist discourse that this phrase, popularized by Khaled's *Islamic Principles* on the Lebanese predicament in 1983,[22] appears in the first article of the 1989 *Document of National Reconciliation* on which the post-war 'Second Republic' was founded.

State

The mufti and patriarch share a vision of Lebanese nationhood whose basis is a history of religious pluralism and a vocation to coexistence. This nation, moreover, is nothing without a state to represent and protect its values of equality and freedom. Mufti Khaled expresses the relationship between citizen (*muwatin*) and state as a kind of symbiosis, whereby the greatness of the Lebanese citizen is what makes Lebanon great, but conversely "the citizen is only great if legitimate authority extends its shadow over the whole of the nation's soil and the whole of its people."[23] The ideal stated time and again by both leaders, here in the words of Khoreich, is therefore "a single strong state [*dawla*], imposing its prestige and authority on everyone without exception […] equal in the shadow of social justice and responsible freedom and dignity without injustice or fear."[24] The role of the state on which the sermons focus is enforcement of the rule of law, serving "to guarantee for us life in an atmosphere of security and contentment and dignity."[25]

The patriarch and mufti agree, throughout the war, that any way forward must be found through the constitutional mechanisms of the state. The triple presidencies – of the Republic, of the Council of Ministers, and of the Chamber of Deputies – are

[22] "*Al-Thawabit al-Islamiyya*", 21/9/1983, full text reproduced in *Haliyyat*, vol. 31 (documents section), and in *al-Liwa'* newspaper, 22/9/1983.

[23] Fitr 1983.

[24] Easter 1984.

[25] Christmas 1977.

imbued with a particular significance, both as executive offices essential to the operation of the state, and as symbolically representative of national continuity. As Khaled says, "these symbols of Lebanese authority remain the only way by which the march of concord between the Lebanese can pass."[26] This is a particularly bold statement from the mufti, given that the three presidencies were (until 1989) set in a confessional hierarchy of powers that favored the Maronite head of state over the less influential Muslim offices of prime minister and speaker. Khaled lobbied for reform of the confessional system of government, but such was his regard for the state as the institutional expression of the nation that he would only envisage reform from within. So, for example, although the Presidency of the Republic (as it then was) embodied Maronite hegemony, in 1988 he preached the importance of "holding the coming presidential elections in a calm atmosphere supported by cooperation and accompanied by a great sense of national responsibility."[27] A similar point could be made about Khaled's desire to see the Army perform its "historic role,"[28] from which heights it had fallen into "practices that put it on the level of the militias."[29] Nor is this merely the rhetoric by which he criticizes a military he sees as a means of Maronite domination. Whereas the Muslim militias tended to regard the Army as part of the problem and therefore in practice a military adversary, Khaled accords it "a full share in restoring secure living and peace to the nation."[30] The mufti actively preferred Muslim West Beirut to be controlled by a flawed organ of the state than by Muslim militias.[31]

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[26] Fitr 1981.

[27] Ramadan 1988.

[28] Adha 1987.

[29] Fitr 1985.

[30] Adha 1987.

[31] Khaled negotiated security agreements to this effect in the 1980s. See e.g. *Haliyyat*, 24/9/1983; 25/3/1984.

HOW DOES A LEBANESE RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM RECONCILE RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR LOYALTIES?

Salvation by faith alone

The preaching of Lebanon's official religious leaders boils down to a central message of salvation by faith alone: faith in "the sanctity of the formula" of coexistence; and faith in Lebanese citizenship as a vocation, a "great message" for the world.[32] Perhaps it is no wonder that scholarship has paid scant attention to this discourse, since faith is not, by and large, the stuff of secular political science. It is excluded from the conventional narratives of power and politics, even though this 'religious' discourse has a prime place in public commentary on national affairs, being delivered on major national holidays at ceremonies attended by the full cadre of state officials and broadcast on television and radio. When the mufti and patriarch address the nation, they do not differentiate between salvation (*khalas* or *inqadh*) of a religious nature or a political nature. For instance, in an 'Eid al-Fitr sermon given to a massive audience at Beirut's municipal stadium, Khaled speaks of the patience learned through the Ramadan fast:

> Patience is one of the forms of jihad, and jihad is an act of worship; and the respect of life is an act of worship […] Lebanon today needs acts of worship like these, leading to salvation, all its people doing them equally.[33]

This salvation achieved through worshipful acts (*'ibadat*) defies any separation between 'other-world' and 'real-world' motivations or goals. Similarly, one 'Eid al-Adha, the feast of sacrifice, Khaled explains the significance of the occasion thus:

> The day of Abraham and Ismael – in which is manifested the meaning of sacrifice supported by faith and surrender to God – is your day. It is a day of seriousness and determination and

[32] Fitr 1975.
[33] Fitr 1983.

> resolve upon going into a constructive phase, a phase of spreading security and peace.[34]

Meanwhile the patriarch turns the theme of self-sacrifice as a means to salvation during Lent and Easter, into a patriotic imperative, with direct implications for the crucial wartime issue of state reform. Khoreich rebukes the intransigence of Lebanese Christians who defend their privileged place in the confessional system as a necessary guarantee of communal security. He advocates, to the contrary, that the state must be rebuilt on the foundation of "a generous cooperation between the spiritual families of Lebanon in a spirit of reciprocal sacrifice for the good of all."[35] One such sermon concludes with a prayer addressed as follows:

> to the Divine Redeemer who forgives our sins and is gracious to us and gives us wisdom and prudence and inspires us in the best ways to save our country and ourselves and our children, and restores hope and stability and tranquility and peace to our nation, Lebanon.[36]

Neither mufti nor patriarch, therefore, disconnect personal 'inner' or 'religious' dispositions – faith, surrender to God, wisdom, prudence, patience – from a public order defined by 'social' or 'political' concerns such as security and stability. In the midst of sectarian bloodshed, the mufti and patriarch argue faith to be the only sure route to national salvation.

The citizen-believer

If faith still sounds a rather lofty or even naïve ideal on which to pin a nationalist project in a country apparently divided by faith itself, the mufti and patriarch ground this in practical discussion of the role of the individual believer in realizing the national ideal. In so doing, they advocate a model of citizenship in which national belonging and the religious identities of Lebanon's various sects are

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[34] Adha 1981.
[35] Lent 1976.
[36] Easter 1984.

not only compatible, they are indissoluble. The two converge especially in the teaching of moral values, which in both leaders' preaching is at the heart of being both a good citizen and a good believer. These leaders are of course unequivocal in their support for the rule of law and the state's monopoly on violence, but their notion of citizenship as responsibility to the nation does not stop at compliance with law enforcement. Whether based on 'secular' or 'religious' principles, the modern ideal of a harmonious national community requires citizens to hold themselves to a higher standard – a standard conforming to commonly-held values. "There are many cases of what is forbidden by law and goes unpunished, but the deterrent there is conscience, honor and chivalry. How can we correct all these defects without the right religious, moral and national education?"[37] Religion is thus identified not as a source of conflict but as the common source for an authentically Lebanese national value-system. One implication is that confessional schools are the proper context in which to nurture, through the same process of moral education, both good believers and good citizens. This conclusion is particularly pertinent because the predominance of confessional schooling in Lebanon is commonly cited as a structural cause of sectarian division in society. While there may be truth to that claim, it is not to be found in simplistic contrasts between religious education and (secular) national education – especially given that the same official religious leaders who are chief authors of religious nationalism also supervise many of those schools.

The essential likeness of Lebanese values and identity is encapsulated by the theme of a fraternity of citizen-believers. "O brothers!" is the most common form in which both mufti and patriarch address their audience, expressing the kinship of believers within a "spiritual family." There has been a tendency in some studies of 'political Islam' to view such language as antithetical to modern (secular) citizenship. Fuad Khuri puts this strongly, explaining that the "contradiction between 'brethren' and 'citizens'

[37] Lent 1977.

is one of the most obvious examples" of the modern state's "essential contradiction with Islamic religious traditions":[38]

> The logic of 'brethren' implies that equality of interaction, both in theory and in practice, is contained within the same religious community. This belief necessarily stands in opposition to the concept of 'citizens', where equality, at least in theory, is thought to be a generalized phenomenon within the state boundaries. State laws apply universally to all citizens; religious laws are by definition particular, applicable only to brethren.[39]

Bryan Turner, writing more recently on Islamic discourse in Egypt, makes the same point that "the word *brotherhood* itself indicates the presence, in Weber's terms, of closed/communal ties within the open/associational world of state arrangements."[40] The conflict between these alternatives is manifested, Khuri suggests, in "opposition to state structures, demanding the enforcement of Islamic laws under such mottoes as: 'the Qur'an is our constitution', 'the re-establishment of the caliphate' or 'the return to the roots' (*asala*)."[41] By contrast, "the protagonists of the state" respond to such 'religious' language by emphasizing "a new political language: 'national unity', 'public interest', 'the country's sovereignty', 'the maintenance of independence', 'civil and political rights' or 'progress and development'."[42] Bernard Lewis clarifies that this new language is truly understood and accepted only by "small, mostly Westernized elites," whereas "traditional beliefs and aspirations still predominate" in the Muslim masses, who can never

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[38] Fuad I. Khuri, *Imams and Emirs: State, Religion and Sects in Islam* (London, 1990), p. 219.

[39] Ibid., p. 220.

[40] Bryan S. Turner, 'Islam, Civil Society, and Citizenship: Reflections on the Sociology of Citizenship and Islamic Studies', in *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications*, Eds. Nils A. Butenschon, Uri Davis, Manuel Hassassian, (Syracuse, 2000), pp. 28–48.

[41] Fuad I. Khuri, *Imams*, p. 224.

[42] Ibid.

"entirely lose" their ingrained system of meanings.[43] There is an undercurrent of warning in Lewis' work on *The Political Language of Islam*, as he diagnoses the Muslim psyche as having only superficially adopted a modern political vocabulary. Words like 'brethren', therefore, reveal to Lewis the "older and deeper loyalties" of the Islamic *umma*, which a discerning analyst may see "stirring beneath the cracking surface of the modern nation-states."[44]

Lebanon's religious leaders offer a prime case against this kind of dichotomization between traditional and modern, or indigenous and Western, language and concepts. In no conventional sense could these clerics be called Westernized elites, but both mufti and patriarch perfectly fit Khuri's description of "protagonists of the state." They use a thoroughly modern vocabulary to discuss citizenship and the nation-state: every one of the new slogans listed by Khuri features prominently and repeatedly in their discourse.[45] Nor is this a superficial usage of a modish jargon, behind which one must delve as Lewis does to discover the real meanings of what he considers essentially "religious language." Rather, these concepts are invoked as tools for change, being translated in every sermon into a call to action with specific intended consequences for society. This chapter has already outlined the clerics' statist program, which translates the principle of sovereignty into unequivocal support for the Lebanese Army and Internal Security Forces, demanding that security and law enforcement be put

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[43] Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam*, (Chicago, 1988), p. 42.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Common expressions in their sermons include: "Lebanon the sovereign, the free, the independent"; "national unity" and "public interest" as opposed to "sectarianism" or "partisan interests"; and "human rights" or "citizen's rights". Development is mentioned less frequently, which is perhaps unsurprising given the more basic preoccupations of the war period. In several instances, the word *tanmiya* is used in connection with reconstruction, especially state-building and economic development. E.g. "Security is the key to all good, and the gateway to all development and prosperity," Adha 1987.

unconditionally in their hands. By the same logic, the clerical elite opposed any *de facto* devolution of local government, tax collection, or other functions of the state to the control of sub-state actors. This chapter has also sketched the sophisticated conception of national citizenship that underlies the slogans of "national unity," "public interest," and "civil and political rights" with which the official religious leaders pepper their speech. The implications of these ideas are real and challenging, a challenge they make quite explicit. Khoreich calls for "an urgent uprising to correct the course of destiny and undermine the mini-states and unite to build a single strong state."[46] In Khaled's words, "Zero hour has tolled, and all the Lebanese must rise up as one man against division and strife."[47] These were not empty words but incitement to pursue a specific "political solution to save our nation."[48] In the context of the civil war, the mufti and patriarch sought to incite a kind of citizens' revolution against the militias' sectarian logic of communal self-defense.

The mufti and patriarch are undoubtedly "protagonists of the state," but they also address their audiences as "brothers," "brother believers," "Muslims," or "Maronites." In this act of hailing a community they undeniably constitute those "closed/communal ties" that Turner so vilifies. Of course, their very identification as heads of Lebanese communities is part of the systemic ideology that constitutes sects as political subjects in Lebanon. Nor indeed do these leaders shy away from this implicit function of community-making; they make it explicit for instance through their sponsorship of religious education mentioned above, which is one element of their appeal for communal solidarity through "the return to the roots." Yet this "return to the roots" is not the "opposition to state structures" that Khuri assumes it must be. When Khaled speaks of Ramadan as an opportunity to return "to our Islamic roots [*asala*]," he explains that these are the same roots:

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[46] Easter 1984

[47] Adha 1981.

[48] Ibid.

> which taught us openness to all piety, and participation in all goodness and righteousness and betterment, and in every endeavor toward moderation, mediation, cooperation and understanding, in order to build with our hands the nation of peace and harmony.[49]

There is no sense here of serving two masters; the virtues that Muslims learn from their Islamic roots are the virtues of citizenship. Indeed, later in the same document Khaled emphasizes this congruence by using the same key words he used of Islam to describe Lebanon as "a nation of understanding and fruitful cooperation, and a nation of betterment and giving and good offices."

This whole text by the mufti on Ramadan is addressed "O Muslims and brother citizens!" – explicitly eliding these identities and inviting Lebanese Muslims to do the same. Throughout Khaled's discourse he uses these three words – "Muslims," "brothers," "citizens" – interchangeably or in combinations. It would be fair to say that he generally uses a hailing of 'citizens' to introduce some reference to the Lebanese nation-state or its government. This is not to say much, however, as such references are scattered liberally throughout his sermons, as are exhortations to behave in a manner befitting a Lebanese citizen. Nor would it be meaningful to imagine the mufti's hail of 'citizens' as invoking a secularized mode of identification, as Turner might expect. Khaled interweaves Qur'anic and other exclusively Islamic imagery throughout his discourse. For instance, in one sermon "O citizens" introduces a description of the nation built around the narrative of the feast: "On 'Eid al-Adḥa, we can hardly see anything but Lebanon as the sacrificial victim."[50] In another, it is interjected in a discussion of legitimacy in relations between the people and those who govern, but introduces a series of quotation from the Qur'an on divine creation:

> O citizens,

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[49] Ramadan 1986.

[50] Adha 1983.

> This is the tradition [*sunna*] of life built on an appointed order and not lasting except in an appointed order, and this is the tradition of God in the universe, which does not change nor transform. The Most High says: …[51]

Mufti Khaled's view of national citizenship is neither Turner's "secularized version of the more primordial bonds of tradition, religion and locality,"[52] nor is it merely a new way of dressing up "older and deeper" ways of identifying, as Lewis suspects.

The mufti and patriarch fully integrate the values and goals of the national community and the religious community. The "return to the roots" is not proposed as an alternative to embracing modern association with the nation-state, but is a cultural resource for the ethical codes that can underpin a Lebanese understanding of responsible citizenship. So, what of Khuri's dictum that "State laws apply universally to all citizens; religious laws are by definition particular, applicable only to brethren"?[53] The official religious leaders certainly agree that state laws apply universally to all citizens, or ought to; rule of law and equality of citizenship were key principles upon which they stood in the face of wartime opposition. There is a difference, however, in the way they discuss what Khuri ironically equates as "state *laws*" and "religious *laws*." As mentioned above, they have a more sophisticated conception of citizenship for which state law is necessary but not sufficient. Law is only a dim reflection of the nation's values, and it is those values by which a good citizen abides in order to live harmoniously in a national society, not merely those laws which are written and enforced by the state. It is the religious community that these clerics propose as the source of the Lebanese nation's values.

Are the values of each sect "by definition particular, applicable only to brethren"? 'Religion', as imagined by Lebanon's official religious leaders, is essentially a force for good in the world, and

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[51] Fitr 1984.

[52] Bryan S. Turner, 'Contemporary Problems in the Theory of Citizenship', in *Citizenship and Social Theory*, Ed. Bryan S. Turner, (London, 1993), pp. 1–18.

[53] Fuad I. Khuri, *Imams*, p. 220.

that benevolent religious essence is in the authentic roots of all Lebanese citizens:

> We cannot lose trust in the roots [*asala*] of the Lebanese and his devoted patriotism [*wataniyya*], which must make him return to himself and his conscience and his Lord […] working for the predominance of good over evil […][54]

Khoreich elsewhere asks, "would all these evils [perpetrated during the war] have happened if religion was firmer in hearts, morals more stable in souls, and patriotism more fixed in minds?'[55] There is certainly here a notion of universal religion being the common heritage of all Lebanese and the source of their values. The clerics also express this more specifically in terms of the proximity of the Islamic and Christian traditions. Khaled elaborates on this point:

> We [Muslims] participate with our Christian citizens in one nation, and both we and they are people of the book, representing a civilization with convergent religious and historical roots, seeking a single common goal, which is Lebanon's sovereignty, and the unity of its land and its people. And we repeat today, in the shadow of these fateful conditions, their call to a common word between us and them: that we worship only God, and we do not associate anything with Him, and some of us do not take others as masters aside from God, and we will rebuild the nation on goodness and truth and justice and equality among all its citizens.[56]

Khaled expresses what might be called an ecumenical belief that the two religions share the basics of a theology and a morality. This view is justified here with reference to the Qur'anic phrase 'people of the book', which emphasizes common traditions of revelation between Jews, Christians and Muslims, but there are also notes in the discourse of a more universalistic ecumenism:

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[54] Easter 1985.

[55] Lent 1977.

[56] Ramadan 1982.

> It is true that fasting in this noble month is the worship of the Muslims […] but it cannot be ignored that fasting is an ancient human worship practiced by nations in different eras […] and thus was one of the most important forms of worship and spiritual exercises of Jews and Christians and others […][57]

Part of the modern articulation of the secular (including politics, the state, etc.) has been the development of a sociology of religion, which sought to describe religion in very much the terms used by Khaled as a universal human phenomenon, comparable instances of which may be found in different cultures in all times and places. Using this distinctly modern understanding of 'religion', Khaled is thus able to speak of the Ramadan fast as a valuable resource for moral improvement among Muslims, while downplaying the exclusivity of Islamic spirituality and morality.

The mufti and patriarch exhibit a belief in their "two great religions"[58] as manifestations of universal religion, which allows them to think of the Lebanese nation in its entirety as a community of citizen-believers. This does not mean, however, that they take the further step of imagining or advocating anything like an American-style 'civil religion', which in Robert Bellah's classic description is a public agglomeration of the (lowest) common denominators of a state's religions, or more accurately all those things that its majority hold sacred.[59] The social function of civil religion is integrationist, serving to mitigate or altogether subsume sectarian difference. An assimilationist model of unity is not what the official heads of Lebanon's sects have in mind, and they certainly do not try to produce a neutrally religious discourse intended to be equally accessible to all Lebanese.

> The different religion of citizens and the origins of their civilization do not affect this unity. The diversity in unity has

[57] Ramadan 1975.

[58] Lent 1976.

[59] See Robert N. Bellah, 'Civil Religion in America', *Daedalus*, 96/1 (1967), pp. 1–21.

> never meant poverty, but richness, wealth and energies which are employed by citizens to uphold the nation.[60]

Typically, Khoreich here does not downplay cultural difference, but points to the potential to mobilize diverse cultural resources toward the same goal – the "single common goal" to which Khaled refers in the passage quoted above, "which is Lebanon's sovereignty, and the unity of its land and its people."[61] Although divisive ideologies and violent practices of sectarianism are among the chief social ills against which the official religious leaders preach during the war, their solution is not to marginalize sectarian identity but on the contrary to re-center it on their own terms. Communal solidarity thus becomes a route to national solidarity. In Khaled's words: "Our appeal for unity of the Muslims is nothing but an appeal for unity of all the Lebanese."[62] In another sermon he takes this further to emphasize the point that intra-communal disputes are to no-one's benefit:

> Therefore the unity of the Lebanese Christians has become an Islamic political responsibility and the unity of the Lebanese Muslims a Christian political responsibility, and the unity of Muslims and Christians in one nation has become a shared Lebanese responsibility.[63]

Lebanon's communities are seen as discrete but essentially compatible cultural sub-units of the nation, their destined "final homeland." Each religion provides the cultural resources for its believers to become good citizens, but these societal sub-units must be functioning harmoniously and in a manner true to their religious values in order to cooperate effectively as a whole society.

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[60] Lent 1977.
[61] Ramadan 1982.
[62] Fitr 1985.
[63] Fitr 1983.

WHERE DOES THIS DISCOURSE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM COME FROM?

The comparison of sermons produced by a Muslim and a Christian in this study is crucial for the light it sheds on the cross-confessional nature of their religious nationalism. Since neither figure waters down the Islamic or Christian content of his preaching, their common goals are less apparent in isolation. And since both are primarily interested in addressing their own communities – not in any kind of inter-faith dialogue between religious leaders – the multi-confessional context that shapes their discourse could well be missed by separate treatments. What makes a comparison of these particular leaders especially interesting is their different relationships with the state, which defy a simple 'inclusion-moderation' explanation of their national ideologies as simply accommodating the sensibilities or propagandizing needs of masters in the regime.

State muftis, being government employees in most Middle Eastern countries, are generally afforded little legitimacy as independent actors. This is especially true in authoritarian contexts where they may be expected to function as mouthpieces of the ruling party, "defining Islam for the state" as the title of Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen's classic book puts it.[64] Even in single party regimes, however, there is reason to believe that the religious establishments often have more room for maneuver than they are given credit for.[65] A striking byproduct of modern regimes' efforts to centralize religious affairs under state supervision has been the creation of new institutional power centers with formidable resources and a public platform. This was a process of bureaucratization evident in Lebanon through the course of the twentieth century just as in the majority of its regional neighbors. On top of the influence that may be negotiated by any well-coordinated interest group even within an authoritarian framework,

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[64] Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: muftis and fatwas of the Dar al-Ifta*, (Leiden, 1997).

[65] See e.g. Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria: The Sunni Ulama from Coup to Revolution*, (Cambridge, 2013).

these religious establishments and the muftis placed at their heads possess the unique political capital generated by their religious designation – reinforced by the state no less. If muftis under authoritarian rule cannot be assumed to have no authentic voice of their own, the case in Lebanon is far clearer.

The Mufti of the Lebanese Republic, as the office has been formally styled since 1932, is on the payroll of the state. But in practice that does not make the incumbent a mere instrument of the regime, nor should his individual influence be discounted or analytically subsumed as a cog into the mechanism of the state. The Lebanese mufti is not appointed by government, but is elected by an assortment of representatives of the clerical, political, and business sectors of the Sunni community.[66] Much like the mufti's salary, the involvement of state officials is almost entirely ceremonial: the prime minister, as highest-ranking Sunni official, is responsible for presiding over the electoral session but has no privileged part in the process. Once elected, a mufti is virtually impossible to dislodge before the retirement age of seventy-three, after which he retains a salary in any case. The Lebanese Sunni religious establishment, moreover, is functionally autonomous by virtue of its separate treasury and income derived from *waqf* endowments, as well as the constitutional power of its legislative body – the Higher Islamic Shari'a Council, of which the mufti is president – to pass laws concerning the internal religious affairs of the community that carry the force of the state. The state itself, on the other hand, is a nebulous thing in Lebanon, neither unitary nor static. Structured around a principle of confessional power-sharing, precedence among its loosely-interconnected institutions has constantly been negotiated through creative strategies of cooperation or obstruction. The segmented nature of the Lebanese state therefore sets this case apart from the institutional contexts of state muftis in other countries: the image of a regime puppet assumes a single will pulling the strings, which is far from the

[66] The election and powers of the Mufti of the Lebanese Republic are governed by the provisions of Legislative Decree 18 of 1955 (with numerous amendments), which functions effectively as the constitution of the Sunni religious institution in Lebanon.

reality of a power-sharing system. Even under French Mandate (1920–1943), when the state represented something more like a unified will, Lebanon's muftis felt confident enough to speak out against policies handed down by colonial or local authorities.

Drawing the Maronite patriarch into the same frame as the Mufti of the Republic sheds further light on the conditions that have produced the religious nationalist discourse elaborated in this chapter. It is often noted that the patriarch represents a virtually opposite model of religious organization from that of the mufti, by which is meant that the Maronite Church is institutionally separate from the state, whereas the official Sunni bodies were constituted by legislative decree. Certainly, it would be meaningless to call the patriarchate an organ of state propaganda – a point that helps emphasize the independent source of the religious nationalist ideology shared by patriarch and mufti. On the other hand, their shared conception of the nation should prompt us to ask what else they might have in common, and ultimately whether they are in fact structurally so different.

Without going into a detailed ethnography, the contexts in which this chapter's sources were produced provide some indications that the mufti and patriarch do actually operate within remarkably similar cultural fields. Holiday messages, especially those delivered from the pulpit on the two major Islamic and Christian festivals ('Eid al-Fiṭr; 'Eid al-Aḍḥa; Christmas; Easter), constitute the centerpiece of both leaders' public discourse. While they may now and then address local congregations or the media in response to pastoral duties or significant news events, these annual occasions provide a regular platform for the elaboration of a long-term vision or manifesto addressing overarching issues. These events have been institutionalized as major fixtures in Lebanese public life, recognized by the state as national holidays. Much as the 'secular' holiday of Lebanese Independence Day ('Eid al-Istiqlal) provides a national platform for the President of the Republic, the appointment of 'religious' holidays make these the preserve of the official religious leaders. On these occasions without fail, the mufti and patriarch are given the full attention of the media and state officialdom as the recognized doyens of (Sunni) Islam and (Maronite) Christianity. Thus, the president and prime minister or their senior representatives, as well as a host of other politicians and public figures, are by protocol expected to attend the

celebrations held by the mufti and patriarch. In this way, the official designation of religious times and their attribution to the functioning of religious leadership (performed in certain recognizable religious places) generates exclusive annual opportunities for the mufti and patriarch to address the nation as the authoritative voices of Islamic and Christian religion in Lebanon. What is important in contextualizing their discourse, therefore, is perhaps not so much their institutional structures per se but the ways in which those structures are translated into a clearly defined place in Lebanese public life at the intersection of state and society. Through their equal participation in and ritualized recognition by a broad cross-confessional nationally-oriented elite, I suggest that they are enculturated into a mutual recognition of their equivalence as religious leaders – over and above their separate identifications as mufti and patriarch – and of the equivalent social functions of Islam and Christianity as religions. Rather than simply "defining Islam for the state" – Skovgaard-Petersen's phrase – the religious nationalism of the Lebanese mufti and patriarch could be said to arise out of their twofold function of representing the religious community to the national community as well as representing the national community to the religious community.

CONCLUSIONS

Lebanon's official religious leaderships have become the champions of a pluralistic religious nationalism, the chief characteristics of which have been laid out in this chapter. This finding is particularly significant because it appears to contradict the scholarly orthodoxy that the salience of confessional loyalties bears an inverse relation to the formation of unifying national loyalties, and that the "success of sectarian organizations is a mark of the weakness of the state."[67] It has been thought that the

[67] Suad Joseph, 'Muslim-Christian Conflict in Lebanon: A Perspective on the Evolution of Sectarianism', in *Muslim-Christian Conflicts: Economic, Political, and Social Origins*, Eds. Suad Joseph, Barbara Pillsbury, (Boulder, 1978), pp. 62–97.

confessional system of government in Lebanon, with its attendant promotion of religious institutions and leaderships, was responsible for inhibiting the emergence of popular nationalism as the social bond between members of different religious groups, and between society and the state. The religious nationalist discourse accounted for here poses a clear case to the contrary on both counts of identity and institutional functions, since the spokesmen of this ardently statist form of nationalism are the heads of the "sectarian organizations" themselves.

A major concern raised in Fanar Haddad's work on sectarian nationalisms in Iraq is that although identification with the nation-state is being nurtured through communal cultural production, the result of this fragmentary production is what he calls "antagonistic visions of unity."[68] The comparative study of Sunni and Maronite clerical discourse in this chapter shows that such antagonism is not a necessary result of confessional articulations of the nation in a multi-confessional context. There is a remarkable concurrence between the discourse of mufti and patriarch on the major themes of nation, state, and citizenship. Sceptics have dismissed their message as naïve or insincere, in either case assuming that a discourse presenting values of faith and moral virtue must be ineffective in the face of 'real-world politics'. It is important to realize that, as Lynn Staeheli neatly puts it, "the invocation of responsibility, care and ethics does not deny or obviate politics."[69] Staeheli's work shows how ethical discourses can convey attempts to create new conceptions of belonging that redefine public space and are as such a vehicle for the re-structuring of power relations. In the case of Lebanon's official religious leaders, their idealistic language of national salvation by faith and moral conduct represents a potentially powerful attempt to shift social consciousness from partisan formulations of confessional identity to a unifying confessional nationalism. Of course, the very artificiality of any attempt to define the content of a national

[68] Farad Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, (London, New York, 2011).

[69] Lynn A. Staeheli, 'Citizenship and the problem of community', *Political Geography*, 27 (2008), pp. 5–21.

identity, even a pluralistic one, makes it a process of exclusion as well as inclusion. The formulation of a cross-confessional religious nationalism in Lebanon may be proposed as an inclusive solution to sectarianism, but it sits uncomfortably with the growing 'Laicité' movement in Lebanese civil society that refuses to be restricted by confessional categories. There is a need, I would suggest, for more comparative research across communities so as to explore the significance of cross-cutting structures associated with the state, such as that discussed here.

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