

**The Shifting Salience of Sectarianism in Lebanon
2000–2010**

DPhil in Sociology

Rima Majed

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List of Abbreviations

AICP	Association of Islamic Charitable Projects
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CDR	Council for Development and Reconstruction
CFD	Central Fund for the Displaced
FPM	Free Patriotic Movement
LF	Lebanese Forces
LNM	Lebanese National Movement
MP	Member of Parliament
NLP	National Liberal Party
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organisation
PSP	Progressive Socialist Party
SDC	Standardised Degree Centrality
SSNP	Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party
UAR	United Arab Republic
WWII	World War II

Note on Transliteration

The transliteration adopted in this thesis mostly follows a basic transcription style (Ta'if, za'im, etc.). Only the diacritic for the word 'Shia' has been omitted ('Shia' instead of 'Shi'a') for simplification. The Arabic proper nouns adopt a common – or simplified – transliteration style (e.g. Rafic Hariri, Walid Jumblatt) in accordance with familiar usage in the English literature.

Acknowledgements

To love, family, friends... and revolutions!

Disclaimer

The below version of the thesis was heavily “censored” by the examiners. For a more critical version that engages more deeply with the literature on sectarianism and conflict resolution please email: rima.majed@gmail.com.

Abstract

This thesis addresses the question of the shift in the sectarian framing of political conflict and violence in Lebanon by focusing on the period between 2000 and 2010. Lebanon represents an interesting case where the salencies of sectarian dichotomies have been drastically remodelled in only a few years following the Hariri assassination in 2005. Whereas most studies focus on long-term ethnic and sectarian conflicts, few have addressed the issue of fast remodelling of sectarian divisions in times of political turmoil. How do sectarian schisms shift in a short period of time? Why do some political changes affect sectarian dichotomies and not others? What factors can push some people to take part in clashes framed as sectarian violence? In short, how does political closure happen along sectarian lines?

In order to answer these questions, this thesis uses a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods to disentangle the relationship between political change and sectarianism. Building on the social movement literature, it argues that street mobilisations, understood as peaceful or violent collective action, are important mechanisms through which political conflict can assume sectarian overtones. It relies on a compiled dataset of protest events that occurred in Beirut between 2000 and 2010, and applies network analysis techniques in order to study coalition formations and shifts in alliances. This analysis is combined with semi-structured interviews with a sample of 29 residents of Beirut neighbourhoods that witnessed violent clashes in 2007/8.

The analysis of my data suggests that the Hariri assassination marked a turning point in the dynamics of contentious politics in Lebanon, and acted as a catalyst for the emergence and consolidation of new coalitions and sectarian dichotomies. The study argues that sectarian political parties are the main channels through which political and sectarian

depictions become interchangeable. It suggests that in order for a political shift to be understood in sectarian terms, two main factors need to be taken into account: (i) the competing political parties should represent sectarian communities that are able to compete demographically (in terms of size), and (ii) the competing parties should be able to represent the majority of their sectarian communities (intra-sectarian homogeneity).

The analysis of my qualitative data explores the mechanisms at work during periods of collective violence, and shows that drivers such as peer pressure, neighbourhood-level networks, material grievances, pleasure in agency, ideology and previous fighting experience seem to explain individual decisions to participate in collective violence more than sectarian hatred. In fact, rather than being the primary cause of the violence, sectarian cleavages seem to have been crystallised by the 2007/8 episodes of violence.

Consequently, this thesis concludes that whereas the conflict in Lebanon today is often understood and framed in sectarian terms, a closer analysis suggests that the conflict at a macro level is essentially political and its implications at the micro level can best be understood beyond the notion of sectarianism.

1. Introduction

Today, we – actors and analysts alike – are no longer blind to ethnicity, but we may be blinded by it. Brubaker (2004, p. 93)

Lebanon provides an interesting case study for an exploration of how political closure can happen along sectarian lines. The history of the country has been characterised by repeated cycles of political upheaval and violence that have often been understood in sectarian terms. Since the proclamation of ‘Greater Lebanon’ in 1920, the political tension in the country has been portrayed as an ethno-national conflict between the supporters of a Lebanese nationalism, who wanted a separate Lebanese entity, and the supporters of an Arab (or Syrian) nationalism, who opposed the idea of a Lebanese nation and insisted on remaining aggregated with Greater Syria (Harris, 2012, p. 177; Salloukh, 2015, p. 15). This political division was quickly translated into sectarian terms and shaped the conflict as being between the ‘Christian’ supporters of ‘Lebanism’ and their ‘Muslim’ opponents, despite the existence of various intra-sectarian divisions and variations (El Khazen, 2000; Hanf, 1993; Harris, 2012; Ofeish, 2007; Traboulsi, 2012). Thus, the conflict over the national identity of Lebanon and its translation into ‘Muslim–Christian’ fault lines was at the centre of political and sectarian tension throughout most of the 20th century.

However, political developments since the assassination of the former prime minister, Rafic Hariri, in 2005 have greatly affected the political salience of the sectarian dichotomies in Lebanon. They turned the predominant framing of the conflict from ‘Christian–Muslim’ – prevalent since the inception of Greater Lebanon – to inter-Muslim ‘Sunni–Shia’, resonating with the more recent sectarian master frame of the region (Schenker, 2006; Harris, 2012, p.

282). How did this shift come about? More broadly, how do political conflicts take on sectarian overtones?

The year 2005 was a turning point in the history of Lebanon. The assassination of Rafic Hariri on February 14 triggered the biggest demonstrations in the history of the country. Hundreds of thousands took to the streets to either denounce the Syrian regime and accuse it of being behind the assassination, or flag their alliance with the Syrian regime and accuse the US and Israel of killing Hariri. The country split in two: an anti-Syrian alliance known as the ‘March 14th coalition,’ and a pro-Syrian grouping known as the ‘March 8th coalition’. To an outside observer, the events of the spring of 2005 were surprising. The two protest movements incorporated a mix of previously competing factions who were involved in deadly battles during the Lebanese Civil War that had ended in 1990.

However, the dominant narrative in early 2005 was that of national unity and so-called ‘reconciliation’ between Muslims and Christians. During the sit-ins and the rallies of 2005, the crucifix was raised next to the crescent (Figure 1), and the Lebanese flag was held by hundreds of thousands of protesters in an attempt to send the message that the Lebanese national identity supersedes confessional divides. As noted by Kerr (2012, p. 31), ‘in the post-2005 period, one interesting development that is worth noting is the absence of any deep division over whether the state of Lebanon in its current form should actually exist, which is one of the central theses of Theodor Hanf’s seminal work on civil war.’ Therefore, whereas the old conflicts revolved mainly around the question of Lebanon’s very existence as a nation state, the new conflicts in the country took a different shape.



Figure 1: ‘Christian–Muslim’ national unity in March 2005 protest

Banner from the March 14th sit-in showing a crucifix next to a crescent, symbolising Christian–Muslim unity. Photo taken in March 2005 by Rima Majed.

The growing political tension between the March 8th and March 14th camps quickly overshadowed the ‘euphoria’ of national unity, and degenerated into an open conflict that dissolved the pre-existing sectarian dichotomy and started to assume a ‘Sunni–Shia’ sectarian overtone. The aftermath of the Hariri assassination and the subsequent withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon shaped the political conflict around the question of the country’s political orientation and its external affiliations. Kerr (2012, p. 31) explains that the March 8th and March 14th camps were competing over two ‘contradictory Lebanons’: ‘One is an image of Lebanon that is Western-oriented, while the other is that of a country tailored to the East, harnessed to Persian nationalism in its post-revolutionary Islamist form and Syria’s refusal to give up the ghost of the Arab-Israeli conflict.’ This conflicting vision post-Hariri assassination in 2005 exacerbated internal divisions and led to the intensification of the conflict and the redrawing of the politically relevant sectarian fault lines.

During the first year following the Hariri assassination, internal tension and political instability mounted, with four assassinations and four failed assassinations, random bombings in a number of neighbourhoods, incendiary speeches by political leaders, very biased and

politicised coverage by the media, and a 33-day Israeli war on Lebanon in July 2006 that deepened the divisions between supporters and opponents of Hezbollah within the Lebanese political arena. When the country suffered political deadlock in the aftermath of the July 2006 war, all this tension came to a head. In September, the ministers of the opposition block led by Hezbollah resigned from the cabinet, declaring it an illegal government that did not represent the Lebanese people and accusing it of treason and support for the West, and more indirectly Israel (Norton, 2007, p. 188). As a result of this political crisis, a new wave of demonstrations led tens of thousands onto the streets. On December 1st, 2006, Hezbollah declared an ‘open sit-in’ in downtown Beirut, calling for the resignation of the pro-Western (and pro-Saudi) coalition government led by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora. The events following this mobilisation quickly degenerated into violence.

The years 2007 and 2008 witnessed a series of mobilisations and violent clashes that remained somehow contained. However, tension between the two camps continued to grow and in May 2008 the political crisis in Lebanon spiralled out of control. Street battles spread in West Beirut between opposition groups led by Hezbollah and Amal, and pro-government groups led by the Hariri Future Movement. After less than two days of clashes, the capital Beirut fell under the control of the opposition groups led by Hezbollah. Violence quickly spread to other parts of the country, with Tripoli and the Shouf witnessing the most violent and brutal confrontations. Despite the fact that many factions and sectarian political parties were involved in the clashes, the violence was still generally framed as ‘Sunni–Shia’. How did this happen? What explains the shift in the political salience of sectarian dichotomies at this particular time? How did this political conflict take on a sectarian overtone? And finally, how did the most politically relevant sectarian division in Lebanon move from a ‘Christian versus Muslim’ to a ‘Sunni versus Shia’ one?

I. The Puzzle

Whereas it has become established that conflict in Lebanon often adopts a sectarian overtone, it remains unclear how this happens. How does the configuration of sectarian dichotomies shift from one point to another? Why are political mobilisations often conflated with sectarian ones in Lebanon? What explains the interchangeability of political and sectarian language when analysing events at the macro and micro levels? In brief, how does political closure happen along sectarian lines? These questions form the puzzle that this research tries to tackle. The research agenda is driven by a dynamic approach that focuses on variation and change. It sheds light on the mechanisms that shape, transform and harden the boundaries of sectarian identities, and it explores the related mechanisms that determine behavioural choices at the individual level. The research will present an empirical study addressing the relationship between structural changes and sectarian relations in Lebanon at the macro, meso and micro levels. More specifically, the areas of study will be twofold and will address the following questions: firstly, at the macro/meso level, how do sectarian schisms and polarisations shift over a short period of time? And secondly, at the micro level, what are the push and pull mechanisms that can lead some individuals to participate in so-called ‘sectarian violence’?

II. What is Sectarianism?

Before delving into the details of this research project, it is important to lay a foundation by providing a clear definition for sectarianism and positioning the Lebanese case study within the wider field of ethnic studies.

Since the publication of Horowitz’s (1985) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, there have been extensive discussions on how to define ethnicity and how to differentiate ethnic from non-

ethnic identities. For Horowitz, ethnicity is broadly defined as incorporating ‘groups differentiated by colour, language, and religion; it covers “tribes”, “races”, “nationalities” and “caste”’ (Horowitz, 1985, p. 53). Although much of the recent literature on ethnicity adopts this umbrella definition (Chandra, 2004; Posner, 2005; Varshney, 2003; Wilkinson, 2004), some theorists argue that castes (Fearon, 2003) or tribes (Bates, 1983) should be excluded from the ‘ethnic’ category. The same uncertainty governs the literature on communal, sectarian, confessional, region-based, or tribal identities. Are these identities ethnic or not? Should they be treated in the literature under the umbrella of ethnicity or do they not fit into this broader category?

The definition becomes even more problematic once these identities are put into a context of conflict. Researchers who work on area-specific conflicts tend to develop new terminologies that better match the local context of the identities under study. For instance, the term ‘communalism’ has been coined to describe the Hindu–Muslim conflict in India (Varshney, 2003, p. 4). Similarly, the term ‘confessionalism’ has been used to refer to the Christian–Muslim conflict in Lebanon, while ‘sectarianism’ has been widely introduced into the literature on both the Protestant–Catholic conflict in Northern Ireland and the Sunni–Shia conflicts in Iraq and Pakistan, and more recently Lebanon. The diversity of terminologies and the specificity of each indicate the sensitivity of the matter under scrutiny.

Whether sectarianism falls under the rubric of ethnicity depends on how the terms are defined. The common usage of the term ‘ethnicity’ seems to be understood strictly as racial and phenotypical (Helms and Talleyrand, 1997). In the Lebanese context, many authors, such as Haddad (1985) and Traboulsi (1993), argue that the main ethnic (and linguistic) identity is ‘Arab’,¹ whilst the religious identities or primordial loyalties are confessional or sectarian.

¹ With the exception of the minority of Armenians and Kurds (Traboulsi, 1993, Chapter 1).

Through the lens of this approach, sectarian identities are surely not ‘ethnic’ in character. However, other scholars, such as Ofeish (1999) and Cammett (2014), consider that sectarianism can fall within the broader discussion of ethnicity if it is perceived as a political phenomenon rather than a cultural and phenotypical one. Such understanding of sectarianism is in line with Fearon’s (2004) rejection of the culturalist approach in defining ethnicity. He posits that while shared cultural features often distinguish ethnic groups, these are contingent rather than constitutive aspects of the idea of an ‘ethnic group’. Becoming fluent in the language, manners, and customs of Armenia will not make me ‘ethnically Armenian’. The key constitutive feature is membership reckoned by descent (Fearon, 2004, p. 2).

In a similar fashion, Chandra (2006, p. 398) explains that ethnic identities are ‘a subset of identity categories in which eligibility for membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent’. However, grounding the definition of ethnicity in descent should not imply that ethnic categories are fixed, since the demarcation of their boundaries and the perceptions of in-group and out-group membership vary across time and space (Cammett, 2014, p. 9; Wimmer, 2013, p. 10).

Therefore, following Barth (1969), Jenkins (1997), and Brubaker (2004), this thesis considers that sectarianism is not a matter of shared culture or blood relations, but rather a practice of ‘classification and categorization, including both self-classification and the classification of (and by) others’ (Brubaker, 2004, p. 65). This classification can take place at the individual level forming an ethnic or sectarian identity, or it can happen at the community level, creating a political representation system based on ethnicity or sectarianism. At the individual level, such classification in Lebanon is often made through certain ascribed markers such as a person’s name or region of origin. These markers are usually a strong indicator of a person’s sectarian identity. For example, living in East Beirut is an indicator of being most likely Christian, whereas living in West Beirut suggests that one is most probably

Muslim. Similarly, while names like Ali or Hussein have a strong Shia connotation, names like Omar and Othman are known to be Sunni, and names like Mark or George are clearly Christian. However, classification in Lebanon also takes place at the institutional level. In fact, following Decree No. 60 L.R. issued in 1936 under the French mandate, Lebanon officially recognises three confessions (Christian, Muslim and Jewish) and eighteen sectarian groups (twelve Christian, five Muslim, and one Jewish) (Salloukh, 2015, p. 32). Lebanese citizens officially register their sectarian identity with the government as part of their personal identification through their extract of personal civil status, known as *ikhray qayd shakhsy* (see Appendix 1). Membership is patrilineal, in the sense that a person is born into his/her father's sectarian group. Therefore, although Lebanese from all sectarian identities share a lot of similarities when it comes to language, traditions and physical features, the political and social organisation of society throughout history has led to the identification of the various communities as distinct groups along sectarian lines. This institutionalisation, further explored in the following chapter, results in the development of a system known as 'political sectarianism', whereby political representation is organised according to communal sectarian identities (see Appendix 1). Consequently, a key factor in the definition of sectarianism in Lebanon is its institutionalisation as part of the political and social system (Weiss, 2010).

The discrepancy between the individual and institutional levels suggests a distinction between the social and political relevance of ethnic or sectarian identities. According to Fearon (2004, p. 2), ethnic identities are *socially* relevant when 'people notice and condition their actions on ethnic distinctions in everyday life'. However, ethnic identities become *politically* relevant when 'political coalitions are organized along ethnic lines, or when access to political or economic benefits depends on ethnicity' (Fearon, 2004, p. 2). Fearon explains that it is possible for ethnic identities to be socially relevant without them being politicised,

but the opposite does not hold. Ghalyoun (2006) makes a similar point when he distinguishes between the social existence of sectarianism as a collective identity and the politicisation of sectarianism by its incorporation into state power. Building on this distinction Ofeish (2013), like Amel (1986), posits that sectarianism is ‘the politicization of sectarian affiliations and loyalties’, and considers sectarianism in Lebanon as ‘mainly a political phenomenon’ (Ofeish, 2013, p. 3).

Building on the sociological literature defining ethnicity, this thesis considers that sectarian categories are not simply a matter of biology (phenotypical features) or culture (language and customs); rather, they are determined by descent and are institutionalised (politicised) according to specific political and historical circumstances (Cammett, 2014, p. 11; Fearon, 2004, p. 4; Ofeish, 2013, p. 5). Adopting this definition helps explain why groups considered ‘religious’ in one context may be reasonably considered ‘ethnic’ in another. For example, under a ‘secular’ state such as the US, Protestants and Catholics are religious rather than ethnic groups. In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, Protestants and Catholics are ethnic groups because of the politicisation of those identities at the state level and because descent is the relevant criterion for determining membership, rather than profession of faith. Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland share many characteristics such as language, physical appearance and many traditions, but they are still perceived as distinct ethnic groups.

This takes us to a discussion of the relationship between sectarianism and religion in Lebanon. Although most analysts agree that religion and sectarianism are not coterminous (Haddad, 1985, p. 13; Khalaf, 2002, p. 290), Traboulsi (2014) explains that we cannot completely separate sects from religion. Borrowing from Maxime Rodinson, Traboulsi (2014, p. 15) says that at the very least, sects are ‘communities with religious contours’. Though he makes clear that going back to the theological past of sects does not help in explaining ‘them, their efficacy, and their political, social and mobilizing roles in modern Lebanon’ (Traboulsi,

2014, p. 16), he does not elaborate on what distinguishes sectarian from religious identities. In contrast, Amel (1986) rejects the idea that sects are directly related to religion; he posits that the term 'sect' refers to politics. Thus, sectarianism is no more than a political relationship that governs through both the state and society in the service of the dominant class. For him, the sectarian question is politics *par excellence*; it is a matter of control over political and economic power through state institutions. Following a similar argument, many scholars such as Ofeish (1999, p. 98), Makdisi (2008, p. 559), Joseph (2008, p. 553) and Cammett (2014, p. 11) extricate sectarianism from religion, considering that the shifting nature and 'the overtly political orientation of sectarianism as a social and political phenomenon differentiates it from religious identity and practices per se' (Cammett, 2014, p. 11). The distinction between religiosity and sectarianism is neatly illustrated by the joke that asks an atheist whether he is 'atheist Sunni' or 'atheist Shia'. This joke is very common in Lebanon and similar jokes are also made in Northern Ireland about Catholics and Protestants. These jokes capture the essence of sectarianism as a political phenomenon rather than a religious one. Therefore, in what follows, I consider that sectarian identities in Lebanon are not solely determined by religiosity and religious practices per se. However, I also understand sectarianism to be the politicised manifestation of religious identities.

In summary, this thesis considers that sectarianism in Lebanon is a practice of categorisation that operates at two levels: at the social level, it is understood as a cultural and religious identity determined by descent; and at the political level, it is seen as a tool for identification through state institutions, as well as a vehicle for political mobilisation and competition over power and resources. Therefore, socially relevant religious/cultural identities only gain a sectarian/ethnic aspect when politicised.

In what follows, sectarianism will be examined within the broader discussion of ethnicity in the sociological literature. This is not an attempt to claim that sectarianism and other types

of ethnicity are identical, but rather to link the analysis of my case study with the existing literature in the field of sociology. Therefore, in conversation with previously published literature, I will attempt to nuance the discourse on ethnicity in general – and on Lebanon in particular. I will use the term ‘sectarian’ when referring to the Lebanese case, and ‘ethnic’ when discussing the case study within the broader sociological literature.

III. The Conceptual Framework

A major gap exists in the literature between theories concerned with the formation of ethnic groups and theories examining the effect of ethnicity on economic and political outcomes (Chandra, 2012, p. 5). While research tackling the formation of ethnicity is mainly driven by constructivist findings underlining the changing nature of ethnicity over time, studies evaluating the relationship between ethnicity and political outcomes (such as conflict and violence) are still anchored in primordialist assumptions that consider ethnicity to be a natural, emotional and irrational phenomenon (Eller and Coughlan, 1993; Gil-White, 1999). Not only do such assumptions understand identities as innate and fixed, but many also treat ethnic groups as homogeneous units of action and analysis, and assume that ethnic diversity is a catalyst for violence (Wimmer, 2013). Therefore, although it is often noted that the academic literature has declared primordialism a dead horse since the late 1960s, it appears that such analyses have managed to survive (Chandra, 2012). Similarly, Ofeish (1996, p. 97) argues that primordialist analyses are still widespread in the academic literature dealing with social and political behaviour in Lebanon.

The theoretical framework adopted in this thesis comes from the constructivist school. It builds on the recent and influential works of Brubaker (2004), Chandra (2012) and Wimmer (2013) in adopting a dynamic and analytical approach to the understanding of ethnicity. This approach attempts to move beyond ‘clichéd constructivism’ (Brubaker, 2004, p. 3) that

simply emphasises the flexible nature of ethnicity. It considers that ethnicity is situational and deals with ethnic groups as heterogeneous clusters that cannot be used as units of analysis in the study of ethnicity. This approach falls within the tradition of analytical sociology that concentrates on the ‘how’ question instead of the ‘why’ question (Elster, 2007; Hedström and Bearman, 2009; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; Merton, 1968). Unlike traditional quantitative research that focuses on the estimation of causal effects, this approach is more concerned with the identification of causal mechanisms (Gerring, 2004; Hedström and Bearman, 2009).

Robert Merton (1968) developed the sociological concept of ‘mechanism’ as the middle ground between social laws (and general systems of sociological theory) and description (Hedström and Bearman, 2009, p. 6). He defines social mechanisms as ‘social processes having designated consequences for designated parts of the social structure’ and considers that the main task of sociologists is to study the conditions under which these mechanisms are activated or deactivated (Merton, 1968, pp. 43–44). Whereas Merton (1968) does not make an important distinction between processes and mechanisms, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, p. 24) consider processes to involve multiple mechanisms. They define mechanisms as ‘a class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations’, whereas processes are defined as ‘regular sequences of such mechanisms’. For example, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, p. 27) consider democratisation to be a process; however, they explain it through mechanisms such as coalition formation, co-optation, patron–client networks and brokerage (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, p. 264). Throughout this thesis, I will be focusing mainly on exploring mechanisms and the factors under which they become activated. This approach is best described as ‘middle-range sociology’ (Merton, 1967; Boudon, 1991), since it focuses on the meso-level analysis linking the macro changes with the micro behaviour.

This thesis will explore the mechanisms underlying the relationship between ethnicity, politics and economics, and asks why only certain constructed identities crystallise and take on primordial interpretations. Instead of completely dismissing primordialist claims, the dynamic and analytical approach adopted problematises these claims while taking them seriously. It considers that the variations in ethnic politicisation and salience can be understood through a finite number of mechanisms. Following McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, p. 25), this study explores three sets of mechanisms: (i) environmental, (ii) relational and (iii) cognitive. The environmental mechanisms explored in chapters 3 and 4 tackle the local and regional factors that have affected contentious politics and its sectarian implications in Lebanon. The relational mechanisms examined in chapter 5 focus on network alliances and coalitions as a basic mechanism that helps understand the reshaping of the sectarian dichotomy in Lebanon post-2005. Finally, the cognitive mechanisms investigated in chapter 6 focus on the individual-level perceptions and interpretations of the macro-level changes through an analysis of some push and pull mechanisms that lead individuals to participate (or not) in collective violence.

IV. Research Design

Four main approaches shape my research design: adopting ‘de-ethnicised (or ‘de-sectarianised’) research methods; using a case study approach; focusing on mobilisation; and using triangulation of research methods.

a) De-ethnicising Research Designs: Units of Analysis

Brubaker and Laitin (1998) argue that it was not until the 1980s that ethnicity was integrated into the academic discourse on political or collective violence. Prior to that, most influential studies (Gurr, 1970; Tilly, 1978) tackled the issue of ethnicity in violent collective action

without explicitly using the term ‘ethnic violence’. However, Brubaker and Laitin (1998) contend that an ‘ethnic’ language gained currency in the post-Cold War academic world, especially in the fields of international relations, security studies, political science, anthropology, and sociology. Although this literature successfully establishes that violence can take ethnic forms, it does not manage to disentangle violence over ethnic claims and violence entailing actors that belong to specific ethnic groups (Brubaker, 2004, p. 92). These boundaries are easily blurred, and they often result in lumping together all sorts of violence that could conceivably have an ethnic attribute under the rubric of ‘ethnic violence’. For instance, black rioting is often reported as ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’; however, detailed studies show that although the majority of rioters are from the black community, attacks are not directed towards white people, but rather the police (Myers, 1997). In other words, there are no overt ethnic claims in these riots, but they are still framed as such. This heavy reliance on ethnicity as an interpretative frame creates a clear coding bias in the literature. The literature on collective mobilisation and ethnicity overestimates the frequency of ethnic conflict and ethnic violence (Brubaker and Laitin, 1998). Therefore, it is crucial to seriously reconsider the social and academic characterisation of conflict and violence as ‘ethnic’, and to ‘de-ethnicise’ research designs (Wimmer, 2013, p. 38).

Brubaker (2004) makes considerable theoretical contributions to ‘de-ethnicising’ research designs in the field of ethnic studies. He distinguishes between ‘participants’ primordialism’ (Smith, 1998, p. 158) and ‘analytical primordialism’, arguing that the main problem in research is what Wacquant (1997, p. 222, as cited in Brubaker, 2004, p. 32) describes as the ‘uncontrolled conflation of social and sociological ... [or] folk and analytic understandings’. Brubaker (2004, p. 52) explains that in the study of conflict or violence, “‘identity’ is neither necessary nor helpful as a category of analysis even where it is widely used as a category of practice.’ He points out that although “‘everyday identity talk” and “identity politics” are real

and important phenomena' (Brubaker, 2004, p. 32), adopting ethnic categories as the unit of analysis in research is not helpful in dismantling the processes and mechanisms that shape ethnic salience, since this might entail serious problems of endogeneity. Instead, Brubaker (2004, p. 86) proposes the adoption of a cognitive perspective that studies ethnicity as a 'way of understanding, interpreting, and framing experience' rather than endorsing the 'substantialist or groupist ontologies' that view ethnicity as a fixed and homogeneous unit of analysis. In other words, the cognitive approach that focuses on the meaning, categorisation, and framing of conflict as 'ethnic' can be fruitful in explaining the situational nature of ethnic salience and the shifts in the relevance of identity cleavages over time (Flesken, 2014, p. 10). This approach helps explain participant primordialism without necessarily endorsing analytical primordialism.

Following a similar logic, Wimmer (2013, p. 38) argues that it is essential to de-ethnicise research designs by selecting non-ethnic units of observation and analysis in order to understand the dynamic processes and mechanisms of change as they relate to the saliency of ethnic boundaries. He proposes research strategies that study the formation and transformation of ethnic group boundaries without necessarily using ethnicity as the unit of analysis. Wimmer (2013, p. 38) clarifies that useful units of analysis can include individuals, localities (neighbourhoods), social classes, and institutional (or organisational) settings.

In what follows, I build my meso-level analysis (chapter 5) on the adoption of political organisations as my unit of analysis. Through this meso-level unit, I study the implications of coalition formation among political parties for the shifting salience of sectarian cleavages in Lebanon. This research method follows Brubaker's (2004, p. 15) emphasis on the necessity to distinguish between ethnic groups and political organisations that claim to act in the name of these groups. It is not correct to equate political parties with sectarian groups in Lebanon. However, it is important to study the relationship between them and to disentangle the

mechanisms that link them and transform political party behaviour into a perceived ‘sectarian group behaviour’.

In the second part of this research (chapter 6), I adopt a micro-level approach by focusing on individuals from Beirut neighbourhoods that witnessed violence in 2007/8 as my unit of analysis. Following Wimmer’s (2013, p. 38) suggestion, I adopt individuals as my unit of analysis based on neighbourhood rather than on sectarian identity. This research design helps disentangle ethnic from non-ethnic mechanisms that push or pull individuals to participate in violence with a sectarian aspect.

Consequently, this research is designed to go beyond participants’ primordialism and to delve into the mechanisms of change and transformation in the salience of sectarian cleavages. Since it is built on the constructivist understanding of sectarianism as fluid and non-static types of classification (as explained in chapter 2), this research design does not adopt sectarian groups or identities as a unit of analysis.

b) The Lebanon Case Study: Additions and Limitations

The choice of Lebanon as a case study for sociological research in the field of ethnicity and ethnic conflict stems from two main observations: (i) the near-absence of the Lebanese case in the broader sociological literature on ethnicity, despite its importance and relevance, and (ii) the heavy reliance on sectarianism as an interpretive frame in studies of Lebanese society, as explained in chapter 2. This research attempts to contribute to the broader sociological literature by bringing in an important case study. It also tries to address sectarianism as a phenomenon to be studied and analysed rather than assumed.

Although many theorists underline the difficulty of generalising based on one case study (King, Keohane, and Verba, 1994; Wimmer, 2013), others highlight the importance of case studies in providing rich and detailed analyses, thus advancing our understanding of social

mechanisms, social dynamics and general social phenomena (Brady and Collier, 2010; Gerring, 2004; Rogowski, 2004). Therefore, as explained by Gerring (2004, p. 349), case studies serve an exploratory purpose rather than a confirmatory one.²

Moreover, although this case study focuses on the detailed analysis of one unit – Lebanon – its causal propositions stem from within-unit variations (Gerring, 2004, p. 344). In fact, the research design adopts a comparative perspective that looks at change over time. Although most comparative studies use large-N cross-country comparisons (Gurr, 1993; Harff and Gurr, 2004; Horowitz, 1985), this research focuses on within-case comparison in order to analyse shifts within the Lebanese society across time. As argued by Brady, Collier, and Seawright (2004), within-case analysis allows the researcher to increase leverage without shifting the domain of analysis. In other words, the strength of this approach lies in the depth of the insights rather than in the breadth of covered cases. This is in line with Wilkinson's (2001, p. 18) argument that constructivist studies of ethnic conflict and ethnic violence need to analyse longitudinal data that looks at the changes in ethnic salience over time. This methodological approach's strength lies in its ability to provide detailed information on mechanisms of change over time and to examine theoretical implications through the in-depth analysis of one case study (Brubaker, 2004, p. 103; Rogowski, 2004, p. 77). However, as with any case study, the limitation remains tied to the inability to generalise the findings to other societies. Nevertheless, a well-detailed case study can serve as an eye opener if it clearly contradicts an established theory or if it sheds light on potentially new theoretical directions. Thus, instead of generalising the findings, case studies can play a crucial role in

² Gerring (2004, p. 350) explains that case studies can be used sometimes to 'disconfirm a necessary or sufficient hypothesis', although they are rarely used for theory generation.

exploring mechanisms and can contribute to the accumulation of knowledge and the setting of research agendas for future studies.

c) Mobilisations: A Rich Terrain of Study

Whereas a considerable number of studies in the field of ethnic conflict focus on the role of elites and their interests in instigating conflict (de Figueiredo and Weingast, 1999; El-Husseini, 2012; Snyder, 2000; Wilkinson, 2004), recent studies are moving below the elite level, concentrating on the mechanisms by which ethnic salience is shaped at the group and individual level. For example, Cammett and Issar (2010) explain how clientelism and the distribution of non-state welfare is an important mechanism used by political leaders to shape the salience of sectarian identities. Similarly, authors such as Brubaker (2004) or Kalyvas (2006) lay out the importance of violence as a mechanism that shapes and crystallises ethnic identities. Other authors, such as Scacco (2008) and Humphreys and Weinstein (2008), highlight individual-level mechanisms in an attempt to explain why particular groups follow particular leaders.

In this thesis, and based on the social movement literature, I consider that mobilisation plays an important role in forming and activating ethnic/sectarian boundaries (Beissinger, 1996; della Porta and Diani, 1999; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; Tilly, 2005). Flesken (2014, p. 3) argues that ‘mobilization is assumed to increase the salience of ethnicity, and with it in-group cohesion, out-group animosity, and national instability; yet the mechanisms have rarely been studied empirically.’ She calls for the study of ethnic relations as the outcome of political processes. Building on this literature, I choose to focus on street mobilisation – where people mobilise collectively on the streets – as a mechanism through which sectarian identities are shaped and crystallised in an oppositional way.

Lebanon's history is characterised by shifting saliences of political and sectarian dichotomies that are always shaped or transformed during periods of heightened street mobilisations and violence (see chapter 3). As noted by Karam (2006), social mobilisation in Lebanon provide rich material for the study of the relationship between collective mobilisation and political change.

This study, then, focuses on mobilisations and instances where people have gone onto the streets to express a certain stance, attitude, or identity. In fact, mobilisations offer a good way to study political saliences, since they represent protesters' spontaneous' behaviour and attitudes.³ Looking at mobilisation provides data on a section of society that is actively involved in the political life of the country and able to 'carry the weight of mass opinion into the public arena and to make their vision of the relevant ethnic divisions politically salient' (Wimmer, 2013, p. 69). More importantly, this type of analysis is interesting because it focuses on actual recorded behaviour, and not solely on reported attitudes.

In this research I limit the scope of my study to the capital Beirut, where almost half of the population resides and where most of the political activity and mobilisation takes place. Therefore, although mobilisations did take place in other cities such as Sidon, Tripoli or Ba'albek, focusing on Beirut for the sake of this research should not distort the analysis, especially given that the great majority of street mobilisations between 2000 and 2010 were very much centralised in the capital.

3 It may be argued that people's mobilisation is sometimes driven by coercion or financial rewards which make it less 'spontaneous'. In some protests this might be the case, but for the purposes of this chapter we are not looking at individual participation; rather, at general trends in protest issues and the political attitude of different confessional communities.

d) Triangulation: Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

The logic behind the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods derives from the dynamic approach adopted in this study (chapter 2). It also stems from the desire to link macro-level structural changes with meso-level mechanisms of transformation in sectarian salience and micro-level agency through political behaviour and mobilisation (Wimmer, 2013, p. 79). In other words, this approach is concerned with the mechanisms that generate sectarian dichotomies at the macro-level and those that transform or crystallise sectarian salencies at the individual level. Thus, the triangulation of research methods aims to provide a holistic and detailed study of sectarian boundary-making and unmaking within Lebanese society between 2000 and 2010.

A debate has emerged in social sciences since the publication of King, Keohane, and Verba's influential book *Designing Social Inquiry* in 1994. The book argues that there is no major difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods, suggesting that the difference is only stylistic since the same logic of systematic and scientific inference should be employed in both methods. Without trying to argue that one method is superior to the other, King *et al.* (1994) explain that statistical (quantitative) inference should be used in qualitative research in order to provide robust analysis. The authors provide a rich review of possible biases and errors in qualitative research methods and attempt to offer solutions through the use of quantitative logic.

This approach is heavily criticised in Brady and Collier's (2010) edited volume *Rethinking Social Inquiry*. The book collects several articles critiquing King *et al.*'s (1994) idea that qualitative inference has to follow statistical (or what is considered scientific) methods. The volume contends that both qualitative and quantitative methods can have robust inferential tools, without having to impose the tools of one method on the other. In his chapter on bridging the qualitative and quantitative gap, Tarrow (2004) explains that the

triangulation of different methods is one of the best strategies for studying a social problem by different measures. Instead of imposing quantitative inference logic on qualitative research, Tarrow suggests that each method has its strengths and is able to answer the same research problem from a different perspective. For instance, he argues that qualitative methods can be superior in research or studies that explore the tipping points that shape long-term processes of change. However, he concedes that quantitative analysis can be very useful in framing and generalising the findings of qualitative research, and vice versa – quantitative analysis can also serve as the starting point to highlight possible causalities that can then be scrutinised by qualitative analyses.

The research design adopted in this thesis follows Tarrow's (2004, p. 178) suggestion that the triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative research is the best solution for addressing the same research question from different perspectives. So, instead of focusing on one research method, I decided to tackle the same research problem but via a focus on different measures and different levels of analysis (macro, meso, and micro). The quantitative analysis proposes a set of explanatory propositions, whereas the qualitative analysis provides rich narratives that reveal a web of intertwined mechanisms and inter-related factors.

V. Research Methods

a) The Quantitative Approach: Data for the Macro- and Meso-level Analysis

In order to answer questions relating to the rapid change in sectarian salience in Lebanon after the Hariri assassination in 2005, a longitudinal dataset that set out how political and sectarian saliences and dichotomies changed over time is essential. The absence of updated national social surveys or official data dealing with such issues made the search for a relevant dataset less than easy. Because of political sensitivities related to power-sharing among the various sectarian communities, no census has been conducted in Lebanon since 1932

(Maktabi, 1999). As noted by Faour (2007, p. 910), '[It] is the only member state in the United Nations that has not conducted a population census since the end of the Second World War.' All published figures are no more than 'population estimates sometimes broken down by large administrative units (*muhafazas*) or their subdivisions (*qadas*), but never classified according to religion (Muslim versus Christian) or sect' (Faour, 2007, p. 910). Further, political sensitivity surrounds the size of the different sectarian groups, stemming from the fact that a sectarian quota determines political representation under the corporate consociational system adopted in Lebanon. This makes election data less than useful in our case, since we are looking for rapid shifts in alliances and sectarian representation. Parliamentary elections take place every four years, making it difficult to discern year on year shifts. In addition, parliamentary alliances are very volatile, especially given that cross-confessional and cross-ideological coalitions can – and in many cases do – shift once the election is over (Salloukh, 2006).

In order to overcome this problem, I have opted to focus on mobilisation as a mechanism that links political changes with sectarian salencies. I concentrate on the period between January 2000 and December 2010 (eleven years) as this represents a symmetric timeframe around the turning point of 2005. In other words, looking at street mobilisation five years before and five years after the Hariri assassination would help us discern changes in the trends of contentious politics. The data collection and coding phase took around ten months of work (see Appendix 2). Although I would ideally like to have included all mobilisation data since the end of the civil war in 1990, time constraints forced me to limit the scope of my study to the periods before and after the change in sectarian salience. My own dataset of protest events is based on the archives of both *Annahar* and *Assafir* newspapers: while the

former is considered to be pro-March 14th coalition after 2005,⁴ the latter is seen as closer to the March 8th camp after 2005.⁵

I have followed Charles Tilly's (1995) definition of contentious gathering in order to select the relevant newspaper articles for my dataset. I consider a protest event to be any gathering of ten or more people in a public place to make claims that affect at least one person or group outside their own number. Therefore, articles were gathered through the search engine using keywords such as:⁶ 'demonstration', 'sit-in', 'strike', 'vigil', 'march', etc. (see Appendix 3). Following Franzosi (1989), I used the 'Subject-Verb-Object Triplet (SVO)' scheme to find information and construct my dataset. This method has gained considerable traction, especially in the field of event data analysis (Shapiro, Tackett, Dawson, and Markoff, 1998; Tilly, 1995; Wada, 2004). The Subject is usually the actor who undertakes the event, the Verb describes the action, and the Object tells us about the target of the Subject. News articles on protests usually include additional information on each SVO such as date, venue of action, main slogans, etc. Following Wada's (2004) method, I constructed my dataset based on who (subject) did what (action) to whom (object); why (claim), where (location), and when (time). The analysis in this thesis focuses mainly on the

⁴ Two of the most prominent journalists at *Annahar*, Samir Kassir and Gebran Tuani (who was also the owner of the newspaper), were assassinated after the Hariri assassination because of their anti-Syrian stance.

⁵ *Annahar* newspaper is easily accessed through the library of the Lebanese American University, which gave me full and free access to its resources. However, *Assafir* only offers free access to a limited number of archived articles that can be printed out. Therefore, I compiled a dataset of protest events in Beirut based primarily on the *Annahar* newspaper archive; then looked for the missing information in *Assafir*, and cross-checked a random sample of data between the two newspapers (around 20 articles). There was no bias by either newspaper in terms of reporting the occurrence of a protest event. The main difference lay in the length of the article and the analysis that came with the coverage. However, this did not affect this study since its analysis focuses on the occurrence of the event, and not on the opinions surrounding it.

⁶ The newspaper keyword search has been done in Arabic, then translated into English.

‘who’ and the ‘why’ in order to understand coalition formation among political parties based on claim making.

To add robustness to my dataset, and after much negotiation with the Municipality of Beirut, I succeeded in securing official data.⁷ The municipality’s records consist of all the filled protest request forms presented by the different parties prior to the planned protest. I was only granted access to computerised data, which covered the period from January 2002 to November 2007.⁸ The final compiled dataset that combines both newspaper and official data comprises a total of 3,899 protests from January 2000 to December 2010. Table 1 summarises the data coding and provides descriptive statistics of protests and protesters broken down by claims.

The constructed dataset, then, attempts to capture the highest number of protests possible. Crosschecking data across three sources (official municipality data, *Annahar* and *Assafir* newspapers) lends robustness to the dataset. However, if a number of smaller protests are missing from the earlier (January 2000 to December 2001) and later (December 2007 to December 2010) periods under study, this should not affect the analysis given the high number of protests in the dataset.

⁷ Protest data in Lebanon is not officially published, and is held by the Ministry of Interior. The full data comprises police and municipalities’ records. The police record consists of reports prepared after the protest occurred, and covers all the details of the protest.

⁸ The total number of protests registered at the Municipality of Beirut between 2002 and 2007 is 268. Out of the 268 protest requests registered, only 83 appear in the newspaper data. Although the overlap is relatively low, this is not very worrying since most of the big protests (more than five hundred participants) appear in both datasets. The municipality dataset has a large number of requests for small protests that are not always covered in the newspapers because of their marginality or because they might not actually have occurred (after the protest request was filled out). In addition, most of the protests that do not appear in newspaper data are concerned with non-Lebanese causes, such as protests by the Kurds, the protests of Armenians against Turkey, etc.

Protest Claims	Number of Protests		Number of Protesters	
	(%)	Number	(%)	Number
Pan-Arab	9.23	360	8.07	920,590
Pro-Syrian	0.31	12	8.78	1,001,583
Anti-Syrian	6.49	253	40.89	4,664,549
Lebanese prisoners in Syria	53.86	2,100	0.96	109,513
Socio-economic	9.49	370	4.28	488,243
Anti-government	14.05	548	25.94	2,959,120
Internal peace	1.59	62	0.63	71,868
Civil rights	0.92	36	0.51	58,179
Internal politics	1.56	61	0.34	38,786
Other reason	2.49	97	9.60	1,095,125
Total	100	3,899	100	11,407,554

Table 1: Protests and protesters in Beirut between 2000 and 2010

The dataset used for the analysis in chapters 4 and 5 presents the per-week frequency of each category from January 2000 to December 2010 (see Appendix 2). Although this method is the best possible option in the absence of updated and reliable attitude surveys, its limitations are mainly linked to the fact that most of the analysis relies on the coding used to process the newspaper information. However, the validity of this coding stems from the fact that the coded categories were cross-checked across the three sources to make sure that the claims of the protests did not differ from one source to another. In addition, these codes were validated by individuals from various political parties who, during my interviews with them, adopted language in describing their mobilisation which closely mirrored the codes.

Another factor that adds relevance to this methodology is the relatively high level of participation in mobilisations within Lebanese society. For instance, it is estimated that

almost 700,000⁹ Lebanese citizens mobilised on March 8 and March 14, 2005, following the assassination of Hariri. As noted earlier, this is extremely unusual and important since such mobilisations provide information from a meaningful proportion of the population without having recourse to traditional research methods such as surveys and interviews. In fact, looking at protest movements has many advantages over analysing political attitudes over the years: it is less costly and more reliable because it is not subject to the problems of retrospective responses and untruthful answers in attitude surveys, but rather focuses on measuring actual behaviour.

In addition, focusing on the participation of political parties in protest events is particularly useful in our case, since we are interested in the shift in political and sectarian salience over time. Using political parties as a unit of analysis to understand the changes in sectarian dichotomies and salencies over time is a valid method since, as explained by El Khazen (2003, p. 607), ‘Lebanon’s major communities have been associated with one or more parties.’ Therefore, although it would be an oversimplification to equate any political party with a sectarian group, it is reasonable to say that the main political parties that were active in Lebanon during the period under scrutiny (2000–2010) are largely based on sectarian communities. Therefore, adopting political parties as a unit of analysis is a valid approach in our case, since the analysis is at the group/macro level and not at an individual/micro level.

⁹ Although each movement claimed to have gathered one million protesters, a study entitled ‘The Riddle of Numbers in Lebanon: the Myth of the Million!’, published in April 2006 in *The Monthly* by Information International, shows that taking into consideration the geographical area where the protests occurred, it is impossible for more than 688,000 people to have gathered in each of the demonstrations of March 8th and 14th. Therefore, I use this more realistic estimate in my dataset.

b) The Qualitative Approach: Individual-level Analysis

While the first part of this thesis focuses on a macro-level (chapters 3 and 4) and meso-level (chapter 5) analysis of changes in political and sectarian saliences and relations in Lebanon, the second part (chapter 6) looks at how these shifts are understood and played out at the micro level. This part of the study examines more closely episodes of ‘sectarian’ violence in Beirut during 2007 and 2008 in order to depict the behaviour of ordinary people in extraordinary times. The analysis revolves around the individual-level mechanisms that determine participation (or lack of it) in violent clashes in times of political upheaval that take on a sectarian overtone. Given the sensitivity of the topic, qualitative research methods are best suited to this question. Several authors argue that sensitive topics cannot be studied, still less understood, through large-scale impersonal research designs (Brannen, 1988; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong, 2009; Hamill, 2011). Therefore, I decided to rely mainly on in-depth interviews in order to collect data on individual incentives to participate in collective violence. Described as ‘a conversation with a purpose’ (Webb and Webb, 1932, p. 130), this method ‘provide(s) access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds’ (Miller, Glassner, and Silverman, 1997, p. 100). This is central to my research since I am trying to understand how individuals process macro changes, and how their behaviour is shaped during outbursts of violence. As explained by McCormack (2004), in-depth interviews allow the researcher to collect stories and personal experiences in order to come up with an interpretative narrative. I started my research design by choosing the neighbourhoods I intended to sample¹⁰ (see Figure 2).

¹⁰ King *et al.* (1994) emphasize the importance of being aware of selection bias, explaining that random selection is a bad technique when we have a small sample or few observations. Usually, the selection of observations must be intentional and in accordance with the research objectives.

I build on the research methods developed by Scacco¹³ (2008) in her research on Christian–Muslim violence in Nigeria. Having selected the neighbourhoods from which to sample, I needed to find interviewees. It was necessary to find participants in collective violence and convince them to take part in my study. It was also necessary to include non-participants in my sample and compare the two groups to find out why some people participate in collective violence and not others. In fact, most studies¹⁴ that deal with individual participation in collective violence usually only sample fighters or rioters (Fujii, 2006; Kreidie and Monroe, 2002; Mironko, 2004; Straus, 2013; Tambiah, 1996). This is a considerable methodological problem since such research design selects its sample based on the dependent variable. King et al. (1994) argue that the sample should always be selected on the explanatory variables (i.e. neighbourhood, age, gender, party affiliation, etc.), but never on the dependent variable (i.e. only fighters). Therefore, it was important for my sample to include both participants and non-participants in violence in order to allow for variation in the dependent variable. Since I was targeting potential (not just actual) participants in violence, my interviewees had to be men¹⁵ aged between 15 and 60 during the 2007/8 riots.

In order to locate rioters, I first needed to gain the trust of a small group of rioters, then build a snowball sample from this initial set of contacts (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Humphreys, 1970). I started contacting people I knew from the selected neighbourhoods in order to find the right access. I also used my friends' networks in order to find gatekeepers. In

¹³ Alexandra Scacco won the Best Fieldwork Award in 2009 from the American Political Science Association, for her dissertation research.

¹⁴ With some exceptions like Scacco (2008), and Humphreys and Weinstein (2008).

¹⁵ It is worth noting here that I did not include women in my sample since the overwhelming majority of rioters are usually men (McDoom, 2013; Haugbolle, 2012; Johnson, 2001).

total, I had nine gatekeepers¹⁶ from the different neighbourhoods I targeted. I spent a considerable amount of time explaining my research and informally discussing it with my gatekeepers in order to gain their trust. I tried to benefit from my multi-sectarian family background in order to present myself in the least controversial way possible (for a discussion on my connection with the different communities, see Appendix 4).

Since I was interested in comparing participants in violence to non-participants, I had to think of a way to overcome the important ‘network’ component of the snowball sampling technique. Participants in violence sampled through this technique are likely to belong to highly connected networks, which is not necessarily the case for the non-participants sample (Scacco, 2008). To overcome this challenge, I used a non-random convenience sample through an improved version of the snowball sampling developed by Scacco (2008). The methodological adaptation is inspired from respondent-driven-sampling¹⁷ and locates both participants and non-participants in violence in a similar way. Scacco’s (2008) method consists of asking each interviewee to recruit one participant and one non-participant for an interview. Whereas such sampling design was ideal to overcome the network component in

¹⁶ Through my own network, I could reach five gatekeepers: the brother of my grandparents’ concierge who lived and worked in Barbour, my hairdresser’s cousin who was born and lives in Tariq al-Jdideh, two chauffeurs from my neighbourhood (one a member of Hezbollah residing in Khandaq al-Ghamiq and another a member of the Amal Movement in Chiyah), and the brother of my sports trainer who is a PSP neighbourhood leader in Karakon al-Druze. Moreover, I was able to establish contacts with gatekeepers through some of my friends. My childhood friend introduced me to her neighbour who happened to be an electrician who lived and worked in Caracas, and who was a member of the Future Movement. Similarly, another friend introduced me to the local leader of the Future Movement in Ras al-Naba’, who was a close friend of his parents. I could access Hay al-Lejja through the gym partner of my childhood friend, who happened to be a member of the Amal party in that neighbourhood. Finally, I established contact with the head of the students and youth unit at the SSNP through a friend, who was a member of the SSNP at the American University of Beirut when I was a student there.

¹⁷ See Scacco (2008) for an introduction to respondent-driven sampling.

snowball sampling, it was very difficult in many neighbourhoods to get the respondents to recruit others. People were willing to talk about their experience once a certain level of trust was established, but many were reluctant to recruit others for an interview. The initial concern was that they didn't want others to know that they were part of this research. Therefore, I had to respect the confidentiality of the interview and my interviewees' wish to remain anonymous, and try to find a different way to reach people who belonged to the same networks. I decided to allocate this recruitment task to my gatekeepers. In other words, the adopted technique consisted of entering the neighbourhoods through gatekeepers (sometimes more than one in the same neighbourhood), who were in turn asked to introduce me to both a participant in violence and a non-participant who knew each other. The gatekeeper was not supposed to tell the interviewees who else was being interviewed from the neighbourhood.¹⁸ He also had to be sure that both interviewees knew each other (in some cases they were brothers, cousins, or neighbours in the same building). At the end of the interview, I asked the interviewee to recruit two others for an interview if possible.

Given that the gatekeepers played the biggest role in recruiting my interviewees, it was essential to find gatekeepers who trusted me and who were trusted by their neighbourhood communities. It was also crucial that they should be well embedded in their neighbourhood networks in order to introduce me to others. In two of the targeted neighbourhoods, some interviewees were recruited through the local offices of political parties (Future Movement in Ras al-Naba' and SSNP in Hamra). This was possible since I had personal contacts with the neighbourhood leaders of these parties, who acted as my gatekeepers. I asked these local leaders to introduce me to both participants and non-participants in violence. This was a successful technique to enable sampling from those who were enlisted in political parties or

¹⁸ Several of the gatekeepers were also interviewed as part of the sample.

part of their neighbourhood support network.¹⁹ However, it was impossible to get interviews through Shia-based parties (Amal Movement or Hezbollah), despite numerous attempts. These parties found the topic of my research problematic and suspicious, and preferred not to talk about the May 2008 violence. Therefore, I had to try through several gatekeepers before I finally gained access to interviewees who were members or close supporters of these parties. I was only able to interview individuals through personal networks, and not through their political parties. My gatekeepers were members of these political parties, but they had to recruit their friends without the direct knowledge of the party.²⁰

The process of recruiting interviewees also brought up the issue of material incentives for participation in the research. Three of my gatekeepers asked if it was possible to pay interviewees. They argued that it would be easier to recruit individuals for interview if there were some financial compensation. This was specifically the case in the more disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Although money incentives for participation in research is commonplace in medical and behavioural research (Grady, 2001; Singer and Kulka, 2002), the ethical considerations that this recruitment method can raise persuaded me to decide against it. In fact, as explained by Head (2009, p. 342), ‘alongside the concern for the impact on freely given consent is the concern that paying interviewees might mean they “tell us what he or she feels we want to know”, rather than giving an “authentic” account of their experiences, views

¹⁹ Some people are not officially enlisted in a party, but are supporters and part of the neighbourhood network of the party.

²⁰ Two of my gatekeepers were chauffeurs who worked in the neighbourhood where I reside, and the third one was the brother of a concierge in my grandparents’ neighbourhood. They had all known me for a long time and trusted that my research would not be used against them. A fourth gatekeeper was the gym partner of a friend and a member of the Amal party in Hay al-Lejja. I first interviewed them, then asked them to recruit other individuals from their neighbourhoods. This allowed me to include both rioters and non-rioters from the entourage of the Amal and Hezbollah parties.

and attitudes.’ Therefore, since I had to follow one research design in all neighbourhoods I decided not to offer money to any interviewee. Some participants might have felt offended had I offered cash for the interview; and I did not want respondents’ answers to be affected by any misunderstanding as to financial compensation. In addition, some interviewees might have thought that the very fact that they were interviewed was a ‘favour’ by the gatekeeper; thus, they might have altered their answers to fit what they thought the gatekeeper would have wanted them to say. In order to overcome all such complications, I refrained from paying anyone who took part in this research.

In all, I conducted a total of 29 interviews²¹ in ten neighbourhoods in West Beirut. The fieldwork lasted eleven months, between 2011 and 2012. The interviewees’ details are presented in Appendix 5. None of the names used in this research are the real names of any of the interviewees. Interviewees were chosen based on their neighbourhood of residence, their age, their party affiliation, their sectarian identity, and whether or not they participated in violence. Out of the 29 interviewees, 14 participated in the collective violence that occurred in Beirut during 2007/8. Although the violence was often reported in a ‘Sunni–Shia’ frame, the interviewed individuals who participated in the street battles were from various sectarian groups and political parties.

Before and during the interviews, I repeatedly highlighted the anonymity of the respondent and tried as much as possible to establish a level of trust with my interviewees. Information sheets (see Appendix 6) were given to all interviewees, who were briefed about the research project before the start of the interview. They were also asked for their consent

²¹ All interviews were conducted in Arabic. The interview questions, the information sheet, and the consent form were all translated into Arabic (see Appendices 6 and 7). Therefore, the preliminary coding and analysis of my collected data was done in Arabic, and then translated into English. Quotations used in the following chapters are all translated from Arabic.

to use a voice recorder during the interview (Appendix 7). Moreover, interviewees were given the chance to ask questions and raise any concerns they might have. Most of their questions revolved around my personal identity and my interest in doing such research. These questions were expected, and the answers provided were crucial to determine whether or not I could build trust and get access to information (see Appendix 4). In fact, as explained by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 65):

Whether or not people have knowledge of social research, and whatever attitude they take towards it, they will often be more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than with the research itself. They will try to gauge how far the ethnographer can be trusted, what he or she might be able to offer as an acquaintance or a friend, and perhaps also how easily he or she could be manipulated or exploited.

Therefore, I was careful to present myself as someone who was part of their society, but who had been abroad for a long time; who was interested in knowing more about how individuals living in these neighbourhoods understood the political changes. The fact of being an insider who spoke their language and was part of a community they belonged to helped in establishing trust. At the same time, the fact of having been abroad for some time and being a researcher gave the interviewee a certain distance that facilitated the creation of a ‘safe space’ for them to speak freely and without much worry.

Given that the location of the interview could affect the responses, all interviews took place in locations of the interviewees’ choice in order to ensure that they felt comfortable and secure with the setting. Each respondent was interviewed separately, with the exception of two respondents who insisted on sitting for the interview together. Those who belonged to political parties typically asked to meet at the party office in their neighbourhood. In these cases, I made sure to have the interview in a separate room and ‘behind closed doors’ in order to reduce the possibility of self-censorship due to location. Others asked to have the interview

in their homes, or shops in their neighbourhoods. As for those who asked me to provide a place for the interview, I had a friend's office in Beirut's central district at my disposal. Located in a neutral area, the office provided a quiet and safe place to meet.

Although consent forms (see Appendix 7) were provided to all interviewees recruited for this research, and I made sure to read it aloud for them to ensure they understood what to expect and what their rights were during and after the interview, only seven actually signed it and kept a copy on them. All others expressed the view that such formality was not necessary and that there should be mutual trust – otherwise they would not be sitting for the interview. Although this was a source of worry for me at the beginning, I quickly understood that such a procedure, designed to protect the individuals legally, created suspicion. Interviewees considered that there was no need to sign a piece of paper in order to safeguard their rights. This also stems from the lack of trust in the judiciary system in Lebanon, and the belief that rights are not preserved through signed documents. In addition, three interviewees refused to give their real names and so would not sign a document. Considering the specificities of Lebanese society and the prevalence of an oral culture when it comes to matters of trust, I respected the interviewees' choice not to sign the consent form.

It was also important to get interviewees' consent to record the interview. Although ethnographers such as Miles and Huberman (1994), Varese (1996, p. 13) or Hamill (2011, p. 10) note that the use of a recorder during an interview affects the responses of the interviewee, other authors, such as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) or Legard, Keegan, and Ward (2003), consider that tape recording is still the best and most accurate way of collecting detailed data. Being aware of the negative effect that the recorder could have, I made sure to clearly explain the purpose of using the recorder and gave the interviewee time to decide whether he agreed to be recorded or not. I explained that the recorder was there for two main reasons: (1) to save time in order for me not to have to take notes while he spoke, and (2) to

keep the analysis as accurate as possible, since I would have time to listen to the interview again and use precise quotes for my analysis. However, I also clearly stated that I was ready not to use the recorder if this was the interviewee's choice. I also made it clear that the recording would only be accessed by me and would be destroyed once the research came to completion. All interviewees agreed to be recorded with the exception of one, who initially agreed but then asked me to turn it off halfway through the interview as he was not comfortable talking about sensitive issues related to his involvement in the May 2008 battles while being recorded. I had to acknowledge his wish not to be recorded and turned the recorder off. I then had to take notes while he was talking. Similarly, interviewees had the right to withdraw from the interview at any point. No interviewee withdrew with the exception of one.²²

It was important to develop interviewing techniques that helped elicit truthful responses. I had to stress (often more than once) the total anonymity of the participants in the interview in order for them to feel comfortable and willing to talk. I clearly stated that I would neither use their real name nor any other characteristic that might give a hint about their real identity at any point. Therefore, some details in the analysis were slightly altered in order to make it impossible to trace the individuals who participated in this research.

Based on Varshney's (2003, p. 301) questionnaire for research on Hindu-Muslim relations in India, my interview questions (see Appendix 5) were semi-structured and

²² He was being interviewed in a local shop that belonged to his friend. He was 18 and worked as a motorcycle mechanic at his brother's garage. We had already completed more than 75% of the interview when he received a phone call and told me that he had to go for 5 minutes and come back. I then waited for him for more than 45 minutes, before his friend informed me that he had left the neighbourhood and gone 'to the cinema'. I was surprised that he did not inform me clearly that he was not planning to return, leaving me waiting for him to come back for the interview. Later, I learnt from that same friend that the interviewee's brother discovered that he was being interviewed and asked him to stop the interview immediately. This is mainly because he was a rioter and belongs to a Shia-based party in his neighbourhood.

designed in a way that allowed for crosschecking. Answers that seemed unclear or unrealistic were double-checked with follow-up questions. I repeated the question using different wording or asked the participant to talk more about a specific point and give more details. This helped me judge whether the information provided was true or not. I also used both negative and positive wording in order to minimise the effect of specific wording. Given that the interviews took place between 2011 and 2012 (around three or four years after the episode of violence studied), I had to deal with the problems of retrospective questions. I tried as much as possible to ask my interviewees to provide examples and tell stories in order to help them recall specific facts or events. I also used my research and detailed knowledge of the violent events of the period under study to ask about precise incidents that happened in the neighbourhoods of the interviewees. Finally, most questions were short and straightforward, and asked one thing at a time. Most questions were open-ended, allowing the respondent to elaborate on his experience and encouraging an open discussion through which the interviewee could elaborate on topics that were not necessarily thought of by the researcher. I used probing techniques to get as much information as possible.

In order to measure participation in collective violence, it was important to ask concrete questions about specific behaviours that differentiate participants from non-participants. Following the measurements of participation in collective violence adopted by Scacco (2008), I asked my interviewees whether they displayed any of the following behaviour during the violent clashes that took place in Beirut during 2007 and 2008:

1. Invaded or destroyed others' private property;
2. Blocked roads, burnt tyres, or prevented the free circulation of other individuals;
3. Stole property belonging to another person; or
4. Physically harmed another person.

I considered any respondent who answered yes to any of the four behaviour questions described above to be a 'participant' in the violent events of 2007 and 2008. Finally,

interviews lasted 2 hours on average, with the shortest lasting 1h 20min and the longest, 3h 10min.

The data collection method adopted in this research raises the question of validity and reliability of the data analysis. Although it is impossible to be certain that the stories and accounts collected throughout the research are a true and accurate reflection of reality (King *et al.*, 1994, p. 32), the validity of such data stems from the fact that most information was cross-checked and validated throughout the interviews and through informal discussions with gatekeepers and interviewees (mostly after the interview was done). Therefore, the analysis and inferences provided in this study ‘recognize the limits of establishing validity but, nevertheless, strive toward it’ (Hamill, 2011, p. 11).

Interviews were coded, based on the themes of the questionnaire (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003) – the coding was driven by the theories and hypotheses that shaped the questions. As noted by Weston *et al.* (2001, p. 384), ‘existing theories helped to frame our research questions, influenced the structure of data collection, and influenced our coding system.’ The codes included:

1. Demographic background data (age, family, education, economic background, etc.)
2. Attitudinal data (media, religiosity, masculinity, political opinions, sectarianism, etc.) and
3. Behavioural data (inter-communal relations, participation in mobilisation, participation in violence, etc.).

This data coding method was complemented with new codes that emerged from the analysis of the transcribed data. Some themes came up repeatedly during the interviews, and therefore deserved to be coded separately. These included codes such as pleasure in participation, or the role of previous fighting experience.

VI. The Argument

The main argument of this research is that the Hariri assassination marked a turning point in Lebanon, reshaping the political landscape along sectarian lines. It argues that street mobilisation, understood as peaceful or violent collective action, is an important mechanism through which political conflicts can assume sectarian overtones. Indeed, mobilisations have played an important role in shaping sectarian cleavages and transforming the saliency of sectarian dichotomies in Lebanon. The historical analysis shows that periods of heightened mobilisation often shape sectarian antagonisms, and are usually followed by periods of violence that harden sectarian identities and transform ‘sectarian categories’ into politicised ‘sectarian groups’. It is undeniable that structural factors at the macro level, such as shifts in economic structures or in the balance of political power (regional and local), are crucial to an understanding of variations in sectarian saliencies. However, it is the meso-level mechanisms of coalition formation and alliance building, as well as the micro-level dynamics of participation in violence, that form the foundations for a full understanding of the change in the political salience of sectarian boundaries.

The findings of my analysis of mobilisation data suggests that in order for a sectarian cleavage to become politically salient, two main factors need to be taken into account: (i) demographic size and (ii) intra-sectarian homogeneity. First, given the fact that political representation in Lebanon is supposed to reflect the demographic weight of the sectarian communities, a political conflict can take a sectarian turn when the rival political blocks are roughly equal in demographic size, since they are the ones able to compete for power. Second, there needs to be intra-sectarian political homogeneity when it comes to major political issues for the conflict to be depicted as sectarian. That is to say, intra-sectarian political clashes prevent the conflict from being portrayed in sectarian terms. Therefore, the relationship between political changes and sectarian dichotomies is not a direct one. The

variations in outcomes suggest that specific conditions need to be met in order for a political shift to be understood in sectarian terms. Moreover, the analysis of my qualitative data highlights the fluidity of sectarianism and its shifting nature. It explores the complex mechanisms at work during periods of collective violence, and shows that mechanisms such as peer pressure, neighbourhood-level networks, grievances, framing, ideology and previous fighting experience seem to explain individual decisions to participate in violence more than sectarian hatred. Consequently, this thesis concludes that whereas the conflict in Lebanon today is often understood and framed in sectarian terms, a closer analysis suggests that the conflict at the macro level is essentially political and its implications at the micro-level should be understood beyond sectarianism.

VII. The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents a review of the main literature dealing with the question of ethnic/sectarian salience. It bridges the sociological literature on ethnicity and the Lebanese literature on sectarianism in an attempt to incorporate the research on Lebanon within the broader sociological literature. The chapter does so by explaining both the primordialist and the constructivist approaches to understanding ethnicity and sectarianism. It places this case study within the latter school of thought and explains the shortcomings of primordialist analyses in Lebanon. The chapter explains why this research focuses on the questions of macro-level change and micro-level variations, and it elaborates on the literature dealing with the question of ethnicity from an analytical perspective. More precisely, the chapter positions this thesis within the dynamic analytical perspective initiated by Barth (1969) and recently developed by Brubaker (2004), Chandra (2012), and Wimmer (2013). Building on the social movement literature, it proposes three types of mechanisms to explain the change in

ethnic/sectarian boundary-making: (i) environmental mechanisms, (ii) relational mechanisms, and (iii) cognitive mechanisms.

Chapter 3 provides a historical overview of the development of sectarianism in Lebanon. It shows that sects are historical constructs that become salient or not depending on political, social and economic forces that often lie outside the sect itself. The chapter demonstrates that internal social developments (demography and class mobility) and external power dynamics have always shaped and transformed sectarian relations in Lebanon. Moreover, this historical account shows that each wave of change in sectarian saliencies is marked by an episode of heightened mobilisation, followed by violence or civil war that crystallises oppositional and often dichotomous sectarian identities: Druze–Maronite, Sunni–Maronite, Muslim–Christian and Sunni–Shia. The chapter also shows that intra-sectarian conflict is common throughout the history of Lebanon; however, conflicts often acquire a sectarian overtone and civil wars have always ended with foreign-brokered agreements that emphasise sectarian power-sharing as a solution.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the environmental mechanisms that can explain the recent shift in sectarian dichotomies in Lebanon. It offers a macro-level analysis of the conditions that more recently allowed the sectarian schism in Lebanon to move from a predominantly ‘Christian/Muslim’ to a predominantly ‘Sunni/Shia’ one. It explores the structural changes at two levels: regional/external shifts, and local/internal factors of change. Regarding the regional dimensions of the Sunni–Shia schism, the chapter explores three main factors: (a) the role of the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 in the politicisation of the Shia community in Lebanon and the creation of Hezbollah; (b) the role of Saudi Arabia in the growth of Sunni political groups with the decline of Nasserism; and (c) the role of the United States and other imperial powers in instigating sectarian violence in Iraq following the invasion of 2003. As for the local dimension, the chapter traces back the internal conditions allowing such a

change to happen to three main shifts: (a) demographic shifts, namely the growth in numbers of the Shia community and the relative decline of the Christian community; (b) social-economic shifts, essentially linked to the process of urbanisation of the Shia community since the 1950s and the emergence of a new bourgeoisie due to migration and upward mobility; and finally (d) political shifts, attributed to the politicisation of the Shia community into sectarian political parties since the 1970s, and the changes in sectarian power relations brought about through the Ta'if Agreement in 1989. The chapter argues that all these conditions were necessary for the Sunni–Shia dichotomy to emerge in Lebanon. However, they neither explain the mechanisms of transformation of sectarian salencies nor the exact timing of this shift in Lebanon. Therefore, the chapter goes on to delve into a study of protest claims in Lebanon between 2000 and 2010, arguing that street mobilisations are the main mechanism that could explain how regional and internal shifts have converged in order to shape the new political dichotomies in the country. The analysis suggests that the Hariri assassination was the main turning point that shuffled political priorities and redrew the Lebanese political and sectarian map accordingly.

Chapter 5 addresses the question of variation and timing through a focus on the process of polarization and its meso-level mechanisms. Whereas chapter 4 addressed the necessary conditions for certain sectarian identities to crystallise against one another, this chapter attempts to explore the conditions sufficient for the transformation of a political conflict into a so-called ‘sectarian’ one. It focuses on relational mechanisms through the use of network analysis techniques in order to study the relationship between the formation of political party coalitions and sectarian dichotomies. The chapter argues that the shift in political coalitions can take on a sectarian overtone and become portrayed as a ‘sectarian conflict’ between two ‘groups’ when two main conditions are met: (i) the rival political blocks are somehow equal

in demographic size; and/or (ii) the existence of intra-sectarian political homogeneity when it comes to major political issues.

Chapter 6 also addresses the question of variation through a focus on the cognitive mechanisms at work at the individual level. It adopts qualitative research methods in order to explore the pull or push factors leading some individuals – and not others – to participate in violence that is labelled sectarian. The chapter explores the mechanisms that can encourage (or discourage) individuals to participate in collective violence, and focuses on the interchangeability of sectarian and political language in depicting collective action. The analysis suggests that mechanisms such as economic grievances, peer pressure, neighbourhood-level networks, framing, ideology and previous fighting experience seem to play an important role in the individual's decision to participate in violence or not. The chapter also suggests that sectarian feelings were not essentially the cause of the 2007/8 episodes of violence in Beirut, but rather that they hardened and became more pronounced as a result of the violence. Therefore, the relationship between sectarianism and violence seems to be dynamic: whereas violence heightens sectarian divisions, sectarian feelings can then become the fuel for further violence.

2. Literature Review: Understanding Ethnicity and Sectarianism

Sectarianism in Lebanon is clearly political; it is neither natural nor the obvious result of primordial ties. Sami Ofeish (2013, p. 5)

This chapter reviews the main literature concerned with the understanding of ethnicity and sectarianism. It surveys the theories that explain the politicisation, as well as the shifting salience of ethnic and sectarian identities. Although the sociological literature on ethnicity and the Lebanese literature on sectarianism stand as separate, this chapter attempts to bridge the two by incorporating the Lebanese literature within the broader sociological approaches discussed previously. The aim of this chapter is not to flesh out a summary of all theories of ethnicity and sectarianism, but rather to provide an overview of the main arguments put forward to explain ethnic and sectarian mobilisation.

The chapter starts with a detailed discussion of the primordialist understanding of ethnicity and sectarianism. It shows that this school of thought is unable to make sense of change and variation in the salience of ethnic and sectarian identities. The second part of the chapter elaborates on the constructivist approaches in understanding the politicisation of ethnic and sectarian identities. It places the theoretical framework of this thesis within the constructivist school and explains the dynamic analytical approach that focuses on exploring mechanisms of ethnic or sectarian mobilisation. The chapter outlines a number of processes, mechanisms and factors that explain the labelling of contentious politics as ‘sectarian’, the shifts in sectarian divisions, and political closure along sectarian lines.

I. Theories of Ethnic and Sectarian Mobilisation

A significant debate has emerged in the literature on ethnicity over the past decades. It explores whether conflict described as ethnic or sectarian is actually motivated by fixed identities and innate cultural differences, or whether sectarianism has become a convenient umbrella term for conflict that is driven by a range of other factors. This debate can broadly be categorised as taking place between primordialists on the one hand, who contend that conflict is essentially prompted by sectarian identities and cultural differences, and constructivists on the other, who argue that conflict is fuelled rather by political competition and economic interests.

a) The Primordialist Understanding of Ethnicity

The primordialist school employs three main arguments in understanding ethnicity and sectarianism: (i) it views ethnicity as ancient, fixed and enduring; (ii) it treats ethnic groups as homogeneous and self-evident categories; and (iii) it argues that ethnicity is a catalyst for conflict and violence. In what follows, I start with a review of these three claims through a survey of the sociological literature in general and the Lebanese literature in particular.

i. Ethnicity as Ancient, Fixed, and Enduring

Based on Tönnies' (2001 (1887)) famous distinction between *Gesellschaft* (societies based on rationality and individualism) and *Gemeinschaft* (societies based on solidarity and communalism), Shils (1957) first introduces the concept of primordialism. He describes primordial attachments as those of *Gemeinschaft*, which are characterised by strong solidarity and a coercive quality. Shils considers that ethnic groups are similar to kinship groups or extended families, since most people die in the same ethnic category into which they were

born. Building on Shils' concept of primordial ties, Geertz (1963) develops the primordialist view in his famous essay, 'The Integrative Revolution'. He proposes an analysis of the social world based on the assumptions that (i) individuals can only have one ethnic identity, and (ii) this identity is fixed and immutable. In fact, Geertz (1963, p. 108) defines a primordial attachment as one that stems 'from the culturally "given", from a sense of natural ... affinity rather than from social interaction'. He considers that ethnic identities are rooted in ancient history and 'are the product of centuries of gradual crystallization' (Freeman, 1998, p. 19). He posits that although modernisation attempted to give supremacy to politics over primordial ties, ethnic identities have strongly persisted as powerful remnants of the pre-modern world. This idea was taken up and developed by Isaacs (1975), who criticises both Marxists and liberals for believing that tension between ethnic groups will disappear either with the toppling of the bourgeoisie or with the advancement of equality and democracy. He argues that the process of 'retribalisation' in the modern world suggests that primordial identities are enduring, since people find their physical and emotional security within their inborn ethnic groups.

This idea of the resilience of primordial ties is also widely adopted in the literature on Lebanon. For instance, the Lebanese sociologist Khalaf (1968, p. 244) argues that 'the political history of Lebanon provides ample proof of the persistence of primordial ties in local and national politics'. He explains that the rise of modernity in Lebanon was unable to erode the old and solid primordial relations, and posits that Lebanon's modernisation process was deeply invested in the country's traditional structures. In his more recent work, Khalaf (2002, p. 25) criticises 'Marxists and their offshoots' for believing that primordial ties and loyalties can disappear. He also uses the term 'retribalisation' to assert the survival of pre-modern types of communal loyalties in modern Lebanon. Moreover, Khalaf argues that, historically, primordial ties had a stable social and political salience. He posits that 'confessional

sentiments and their supportive loyalties, even in times of relative peace and stability, have always been effective sources of social support and political mobilization' (2002, p. 27).

From a primordialist point of view, ethnic bonds are essentially emotional, ancient and enduring; above all, they are given and immutable. Primordialists assume that ethnic identities are always socially relevant, and that the political purpose of ethnicity follows almost blindly its social relevance. This assumption has been revisited by a number of recent primordialist scholars such as Van Evera (2001) and Bayar (2009), who argue that although the boundaries of an ethnic identity can be constructed and hardened through politicisation or violence, it is rare for the identity itself to be reconstructed or significantly changed. They contend that as ethnic identities take on cultural and essentialist understandings, the ethnic boundary becomes irreversibly solidified. Primordialists believe that once this process is initiated, the boundary cannot be unmade. They consider that whether biologically determined or historically constructed, ethnic identities are social givens that cannot change or transform once created (Chandra, 2001, p. 7).

However, if ethnicity is fixed and enduring, what can explain the shifts in the salience of ethnic identities over time and across space? Why are certain identities politicised at a specific point in time (or in specific countries) and not others? For example, why have the Sunni and Shia identities become more politically salient only recently in Lebanon? Or, why is the distinction between Chewas and Tumbukas heavily politicised in Malawi but not in next door Zambia? Considering ethnicity to be static and enduring renders the primordialist claim weak and unable to explain change over time and/or variation across space.

ii. Ethnic Groups as Homogeneous and Self-Evident Categories

The second primordialist claim in the examined literature considers that society is made up of separate, culturally homogeneous ethnic groups. Following a Herderian (1968 (1784–91)) view of the social world, primordialists consider that the very existence of various ethnic

identities is a sufficient prerequisite for the formation of separate ethnic groups that are monolithic and closely knit. As noted by Wimmer (2009, p. 246), Herder does not consider ethnicity to be fixed, but rather fluid and changing. However, Herder's contribution to the primordialist thinking lies elsewhere: he views society as divided into separate ethnic groups, distinguished from each other by three main factors. First, each group forms a community with a unique culture that defines its world view (Herder, 1968, p. 234). Second, each community shares an identity based on a perceived common history and a belief in a collective destiny (Herder, 1968, p. 325). Finally, each group is closely tied together through a strong feeling of communitarian solidarity (Herder, 1968, p. 407). This view of the social world as made up of self-contained and culturally homogeneous ethnic groups forms the basis for many primordialist sociological analyses. This is specifically evident in the literature on immigration and assimilation: prominent scholars, such as Gordon (1964), argue that the assimilation process happens through the erosion of the ethnic culture of immigrants (acculturation), which leads to the weakening of ethnic identity and the dismantling of the immigrants' ethnic group. This analysis is clearly rooted in the Herderian tradition of assuming that cultural homogeneity is the basis for identity group formation. Similar arguments can also be found in the literature on multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1995) or ethnic conflict (Horowitz, 1985) that treats separate cultural or ethnic groups as homogeneous communities that form self-evident units of observation and social classification (Wimmer, 2013, p. 21). Such 'Herderianism' is also found in Samuel Huntington's famous (1997) *Clash of Civilisations*, in which he dedicates the first part of his book to arguing that the world is divided into eight major civilisations – Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Western, Latin American and African – differentiated by culture.

This Herderian tradition also has its imprints in the Lebanese literature. Authors such as Anis Sayegh (1955), Michel Chiha (1964b), Antoine Messarra (1983), Nurit Kliot (1987) and

Samir Khalaf (2002) all treat Lebanese sects as culturally distinct groups and assume that society is divided into separate sectarian communities. For instance, Messarra (1983, p. 18) explains that a realistic treatment of Lebanese society should acknowledge that competition among its several sectarian communities is what structures politics in the country. Similarly, Chiha (1964a) considers that sects have replaced classes as the main social division in Lebanese society. Likewise, Kliot (1987, p. 54) posits that Lebanon is a 'jigsaw of religious-ethnic communities which share a long history of continuous conflict'.

Following a Herderian approach, primordialists consider that the presence of diverse ethnic identities in society is sufficient basis for the formation of separate ethnic groups – society is considered to be divided into clear-cut ethnic groups that are culturally homogeneous. These groups are then used as the basic unit of analysis for research and study. For example, in his analysis of survey data collected in Lebanon during the civil war (in 1987), Theodore Hanf uses sects in this way. Analysing data on job satisfaction, he concludes that 'dissatisfaction is in general a Muslim, in particular a Shi'i phenomenon' (Hanf, 1993, p.472).

Moreover, if sects are homogeneous, how can we explain intra-sectarian divisions? For instance, why did the Christian-based political parties in Lebanon fight against each other during the 1975–1990 civil war, as explained in chapter 3? Why did the Shia Hezbollah and the Shia Amal parties engage in deadly battles with each other in the late 1980s? Dealing with ethnic groups as homogeneous and self-evident units of analysis does not reflect reality. Primordialist assumptions of homogeneity often overlook horizontal divisions of class and political diversity within ethnic communities. Primordialism, then, fails to acknowledge intra-ethnic variations of culture, politics, and class.

iii. Ethnicity as Catalyst for Conflict

Finally, the third primordialist claim points to a strong relationship between ethnicity and conflict. Horowitz (1985) argues that given the intensely emotional and irrational aspects of ethnicity, conflicts along ethnic lines are more likely to turn violent than conflicts from other differences (such as class or ideology). He maintains that group emotions and psychology rather than purely materialist readings can explain ethnic conflicts, because ‘a bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory’ (Horowitz, 1985, p. 140). He considers that ethnicity in particular is the explanatory variable for conflict and violence. A similar analysis is presented by Huntington (1993, p. 22) who argues that in the modern world, the ‘dominating source of conflict will be cultural’. Huntington (1993; 1997) develops a theory whereby conflict is understood as a ‘clash of civilizations’. He predicts that the most intense conflict will materialise in a clash between the Islamic and Western civilisations. Huntington’s analysis is premised on the assertion that cultural, ethnic, and religious identities are static and fundamentally opposed. This essentialist view of ethnicity assumes that belonging to an ethnic group elicits deep loyalty and strong emotions. Building on this, Kaplan (1994) predicts that cultural and ethnic clashes are likely to become more intense over the coming few decades, given the antagonisms that constitute the essence of such groups. Connor (1993) also explains the strong emotional and irrational aspect of ethnicity: generating a sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’, this aspect gives precedence to ethno-national feelings over patriotism, thus making conflict between ethnic groups more likely.

Such primordialist analyses can also be found in the literature on Lebanon. Many scholars, such as Khalaf (1987), Kliot (1987), or Khoury (1976) consider that the existence of plural sectarian cleavages (what they refer to as ‘sectarianism’) can be the primary cause of conflict and violence. So, in the concluding chapter of his book *Civil and Uncivil Violence in*

Lebanon, Samir Khalaf (2002) argues that in order to break the vicious cycle of sectarian violence, Lebanese citizens need to actively nurture some attributes of ‘civility’ in order to move beyond their primordial sentiments. He proposes a civil society approach whereby people from different communities would share public spaces and come together in civic and welfare associations as a strategy for ‘healing [the] symptoms of fear and paranoia’ (Khalaf, 2002, p. xvii) that could lead to violence. Not only does this approach strip the conflict of its political aspect, but it also assumes that violence is a matter of incivility and hatred amongst people from different sects. It considers that a social and cultural effort needs to be made in order to encourage co-existence. In other words, treating the conflict as an emotional or social one downplays the political roots of the divide.

Similarly, the literature on conflict in the Middle East and the Muslim world also advances primordialist analyses. For instance, Nasr (2007, p. 20) considers that inter-Muslim tension in the Middle East is ‘a great war of competing theologies and conceptions of sacred history’ between the essentialised and opposed Sunni and Shia identities. Portraying conflict in the Muslim world as embedded in the theological nature of Islam or in its historical clashes is neither new nor unusual. Theorists such as Kaplan (1994), Esposito (1999), and Lewis (2004) argue that the conflict in the Muslim world is essentially cultural. They consider that there is an inherent call for violence in Islamic teachings, and therefore link conflict and violence to the essence of Islamic texts.

Such approaches consider that most conflicts in today’s world are driven by culture and identity. They view ethnicity and sectarianism as intense emotional drivers that make conflict and violence more probable. Hence, portraying conflict and violence as essentially cultural, ethnic, or religious clashes is at the heart of the primordialist approach.

However, it is unclear why the primordialist literature considers ethnicity more emotionally intense than other types of belonging (such as ideology). And if ethnicity is

essentially more emotional and leads readily to violence, what explains the variation in conflict and violence throughout history? For example, why haven't Sunni and Shia continuously fought since their emergence as antagonistic groups? More importantly, if ethnic identities are the driver for violence, why is it that only a small minority of individuals in society participate in violence? In other words, why do not all individuals who identify as 'Sunnis' fight against all those who identify as 'Shias', and vice versa? Here again, the essentialist feature of primordialism fails to explain variation.

In sum, primordialism is unable to make sense of change and variation. Given its assumption that sectarianism is innate, emotional, and fixed, it fails to explain, a) why certain political conflicts take on a sectarian overtone and not others, and b) what pushes certain individuals to participate in violence and not others.

I now turn to the constructivist theories in order to find possible explanations for change and variation in ethnic dichotomies and violence.

b) The Constructivist Understanding of Ethnicity

Three main constructivist approaches have attempted to explain ethnic politicisation and the variation in ethnic salience: the modernist, the postmodernist and the instrumentalist.

Modernists, such as Anderson (1991), Gellner (1983), or Makdisi (2000), argue that ethnicity was apolitical (or politics was non-ethnic) prior to economic modernisation, and it only became the battlefield of political dispute with the rise of nation states and the spread of capitalism. Although this view offers an insightful account of the historical developments of ethnicity and nationalism, it does not provide an explanation for how ethnicity evolved in today's world. Moreover, by focusing on the slow-moving variables of economic modernisation, this approach is unable to explain rapid shifts in the salience of ethnic cleavages.

Postmodernists,²³ on the other hand, stress the fluid nature of identities and consider that ethnicity is not a real phenomenon, but a perception or a representation of reality through language, framing and master narratives constructed by elites (Giroux, 1993). Although postmodern theories succeed in critically questioning the nature of ethnicity and identities, they fail to acknowledge the ‘reality’ of ethnicity in society. Further, they overlook the fact that ethnic identities do crystallise and harden at certain points in time.

The third school of thought studying ethnicity from a constructivist point of view is the instrumentalist school. Instrumentalists consider that ethnicity is a real phenomenon that is used as an instrument for political and economic competition (Bates, 1983; Chandra, 2004; Fearon, 1999; Posner, 2005). They argue that elites, as well as ordinary citizens, make rational decisions regarding the deployment of ethnic identities for the allocation of – or access to – resources. The instrumentalist approach can help explain the situational elements of ethnic politicisation and disentangle the political and economic mechanisms underlying ethnic salience.

Contrary to the primordialist approach, the constructivist school contends that ethnicity is i) flexible, ii) situational, and iii) heterogeneous. It argues that the politicisation of ethnicity can vary across space and time and is ‘endogenous to a set of social, economic and political processes’ (Chandra, 2001, p. 7). In what follows, I explain the constructivist understanding of ethnicity, then move to an exploration of the main body of literature explaining change and variation in ethnic saliency. I build on the recent work of Brubaker (2004), Chandra (2012), and Wimmer (2013) to adopt an analytical and dynamic perspective that focuses on mechanisms of change and the crystallisation of ethnic identities. I elaborate on this

²³ For a discussion on the difference between modernist and postmodernist approaches to ethnicity, see Varshney (1997; 2003, pp. 31–35)

theoretical framework and discuss the main mechanisms advanced in the constructivist literature to explain the formation and transformation of ethnicity.

i. Ethnicity as Flexible

Constructivists argue that identities are constructed: they can – and do – change over time and across space (Gleason 1983; Giddens 1991; Hall and du Gay, 1996; Chandra, 2001; Hechter, 1971). In this view, social identities are presented as ‘takens’ (Laitin, 1986) rather than ‘givens’ (as the primordialists would say). Moreover, constructivists dispute that identities are malleable, and that their construction and configuration depends on traceable historical, political, and economic factors (Chandra, 2012). In his discussion of sects in Lebanon, Traboulsi (2014, p. 15) explains that sects are certainly ‘not ahistorical immutable essences, but are constructed and deconstructed, united and separated, their importance within the social sphere swelling and ebbing, all for reasons most of which do not lie within the sect but outside it’.

Fearon and Laitin (2000) argue that change in the configuration of an ethnic identity can take place at the levels of content and boundary. They explain that constructing an identity may refer to either the content of a social category, such as making Serbs believe that Serbs cannot live with Croats and vice versa, or to boundary rules, such as making Montenegrins believe they are Yugoslavs, or peasants in Gascony believe they are French (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, p. 850).

Applied to the Lebanese case, it seems that both the content and the boundaries of sectarian identities have been changing throughout history in response to shifts in political circumstances. For instance, with the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, the boundaries of the Lebanese identity were enlarged to include inhabitants of the coast, the south and the Beqa’ valley, as detailed in the next chapter. Similarly, the content of sectarian identities is

often remodelled based on selective historical and cultural baggage. For example, as shown by Deeb (2005) and Norton (2005), the ritual of Ashoura²⁴ has played an important role in changing the Shia identity through time. Deeb (2005) explains how the ritual transformed the nature of the Shia identity from passive mourning and a feeling of oppression in the late 1960s, to active politicisation and sectarian activism more recently.

An important proposition within constructivism is that, contrary to Geertz's (1963) claim, individuals have multiple ethnic identities, and 'the identity with which they identify varies depending on some specified causal variable' (Chandra, 2001, p. 7). Thus, the content and boundaries of social categories are malleable and changing (Fearon and Laitin, 2000), and identities are in a permanent process of production and reproduction. Ethnicity is 'a dynamic, constantly evolving property of both individual identity and group organisation' (Nagel, 1994, p. 152).

Although this constructivist claim is crucial in advancing our understanding of ethnicity and ethnic identities, its over-emphasis on fluidity (especially in the postmodernist school) makes it difficult to understand why ethnic identities can sometimes crystallise and harden. In other words, acknowledging that identities are constructed is not sufficient to explain how they are constructed, how they evolve and transform over time, and how they become more salient at some points rather than others. As explained by Brubaker (2004, p. 3):

²⁴ Ashoura is the ritual of commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein – the Prophet's grandson and son of Imam Ali – at the Karbala' battle in 680 at the hands of caliph Yazid. The Karbala' battle was a turning point in Islamic history since it marked the division between Sunnis (following the caliph) and Shias (following Imam Ali).

[I]t is not that the notion of social construction is wrong; it is rather that it is today too obviously right, too familiar, too readily taken for granted, to generate the friction, force, and freshness needed to push arguments further and generate new insights.

ii. Ethnicity as Situational

Another interesting constructivist point regarding the politicisation of ethnicity is Young's (1976) observation that individuals' perceptions of ethnic group memberships are 'situational'. He argues that the political context determines how individuals identify themselves. Reckoning that individuals identify with and mobilise according to multiple ethnic categorisations, Young (1976) explains that shifting identities depend heavily on the political context. For example, a person might identify as 'Sunni' or 'Shia' when in Lebanon, but as 'Lebanese' or 'Muslim' when in Europe. Similarly, a Rwandan might identify as 'black' in the United States, but as 'Hutu' or 'Tutsi' in Rwanda. This nested character of the systems of ethnic classification is discussed by the situationalist anthropologist Moerman (1965) and used by Wimmer (2013, p. 23) to demonstrate 'that ethnic identities may be of a relational nature and produce a hierarchy of nested segments rather than distinct groups with clear-cut, mutually exclusive collective identities'. Thus, ethnic identity is highly relative and depends heavily on the context.

Discussing the situational nature of sectarianism in Lebanon, Ofeish (2013, p. 2) contends that political identities among individuals in Lebanon often shift alongside 'their changing interests' and the 'changes in the political terrain'. For example, he explains that many Shia fighters who were mobilised through leftist and secular parties became members of sectarian-based parties such as Hezbollah or Amal after the civil war. Similarly, many Christian and Sunni activists 'relocated between "Christian" and "Sunni" sectarian-based organizations respectively' (Ofeish, 2013, p. 2) based on the changing political landscape after the civil war

and the shift in their clientelistic interests. For example, many Sunni members of the Murabitoun party became partisans of Rafic Hariri and later joined the Future Movement.

Moreover, the politicisation and polarisation of ethnic identities as oppositional is also highly situational. As explained by Wimmer (2013, p. 3), saying that one is ‘Christian’ indirectly implies an antagonistic categorical boundary (with ‘non-Christians’). However, the category ‘non-Christians’ can include a wide range of other ethnic identities (such as Muslims, Jews, Sunnis, Shias, the Druze, etc.). Therefore, the making of oppositional boundaries and their salience depends heavily on the context and situation. For example, as discussed in the next chapter, the salience of the sectarian framing of political conflict in Lebanon has moved from a period of ‘Druze–Maronite’ antagonism to a period of ‘Sunni–Maronite’ polarisation, followed by a period of ‘Muslim–Christian’ dichotomy, arriving at the present-day ‘Sunni–Shia’ schism. Although the constructivist approach reckons that these sectarian polarisations are a reflection of a political conflict, it is still unclear why some political conflicts are translated into a dichotomous sectarian language and not others. Acknowledging the situational nature of ethnic and sectarian identities is important; however, it does not provide a clear explanation of the conditions under which the politicisation of ethnic identities happens or shifts.

iii. Ethnicity as Heterogeneous

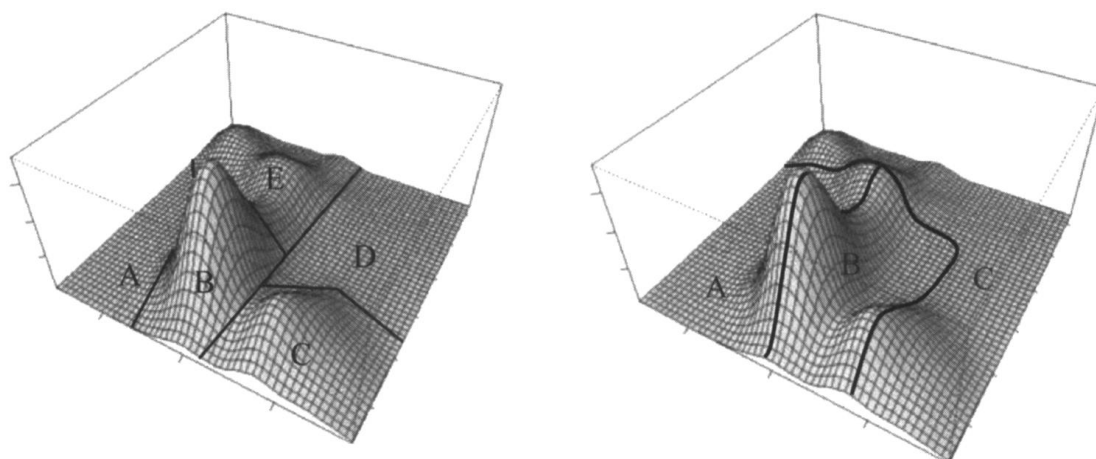
The third constructivist argument considers that, contrary to the primordialist claim, ethnicity is not homogeneous. Fredrik Barth (1969) was the first to criticise the Herderian approach discussed above and to consider that ethnic groups were not necessarily culturally homogeneous (Wimmer, 2013). He focuses on the study of ethnic groups’ boundary formation rather than on the cultural dimension of ethnicity. This approach constitutes a

milestone in constructivist thinking since it develops the idea that ethnic identities are constructed, and their boundaries are formed and transformed over time and across space.

Building on Barth's (1969) boundary-making approach, and following Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992, p. 228) refusal 'to think the social world in a substantialist manner', Wimmer (2013) advocates a move beyond primordialist essentialism and culturalist reductionism. He uses the three-dimensional landscape topography presented in Figure 3 to explain the difference between the Herderian view of the social world and the Barthian one. He considers that the x -, y -, and z -axes measure cultural variables such as language, religiosity, and gender relations respectively. Wimmer (2013, p. 22) explains that in a 'Herderian world, ethnic groups neatly map on this landscape of cultural similarity and difference'. Individuals are thus clustered together in separate groups based on their cultural resemblance. As previously explained, this primordialist view of the world assumes that ethnic groups are the basic units of observation in society; and that they are characterised by strong solidarity and cultural homogeneity.

In contrast, the Barthian view of society considers that 'ethnic distinctions result from marking and maintaining a boundary irrespective of the cultural differences observed from the outside' (Wimmer, 2013, p. 22). According to this view, ethnic groups can either be culturally heterogeneous or not depending on the degree of association between the ethnic boundary and the level of social closure (Wimmer, 2013, p. 23). Thus, instead of assuming that society is neatly and naturally divided into separate culturally homogeneous groups, the Barthian approach focuses on the group's formation of boundary, then asks whether groups happen to be homogeneous or heterogeneous and why.

Figure 3: A Herderian (left) and Barthian (right) view of the social world ²⁵



For example, although the Sunni population of Akkar (North Lebanon) is culturally (dialect, traditions, etc.) very different from the Sunni population of Beirut, the salience of the Sunni boundary remains relevant in the wider Lebanese society. By contrast, although the culture and traditions of the Sunni and Shia inhabitants of the Beqa' region are very similar, the salience of the sectarian boundary divides them despite cultural similarities.

By a very similar logic, Brubaker (2004, p. 8) also argues against 'the tendency to represent the social and cultural world as a multichrome mosaic of monochrome ethnic, racial or cultural blocs'. In his influential book *Ethnicity without Groups*, Brubaker (2004, p. 2) rejects what he calls 'groupism' – defined as the 'tendency to take bounded groups as fundamental units of analysis (and basic constituents of the social world)'. He proposes focusing on the dynamic processes of group formation, deformation, or transformation – what he calls 'groupness' (Brubaker, 2004, p. 12) – in order to treat group homogeneity and solidarity as an event that might happen or not. Brubaker (2004, p. 12) explains that 'being analytically attuned to "negative instances" can help correct for the bias that can engender an

²⁵ Source: Wimmer, A. (2009, p. 250)

“overethnicized” view of the social world’. This approach considers that cultural homogeneity is not a precondition for ethnic group formation, and acknowledges the possibility for such groups to be highly culturally heterogeneous, as shown by Barth (1969). Therefore, this view clearly opposes the primordialist and Herderian approaches and argues that the presence of ethnicity in society does not automatically imply or explain the presence of ethnic groups. The question is thus to understand how ethnicity can become the basis for group formation in some instances but not others. Therefore, instead of using ethnic groups as units of analysis, Brubaker (2004) contends that it is the very existence of ethnic groups that needs to be analysed.

Similar arguments are put forward in the literature on Lebanon. Although the predominant tendency is to adopt the sect as a unit of analysis in the study of Lebanese society (Ofeish, 1996, p. 97), some scholars such as Joseph (1975), Farsoun (1988), and Ofeish (1996) criticise this Herderian approach. For instance, Joseph (1975, p. 24) explains that ‘the lack of studies on the evolution of sects and of relations between sects may again stem partly from the assumption that sects are distinct social wholes whose existence is natural and therefore does not have to be studied and explained’. Similarly, Farsoun (1988, p. 101) highlights the fact that ‘in studies of Lebanon, sects and sectarianism are used more often as explanatory concepts (independent variables) than phenomena themselves to be explained’. Thus, the assumption that society is divided into separate and homogeneous groups on the basis of sects does not take into account the heterogeneity of sects and their internal divisions along other lines in society such as class, political affiliation, or region of origin. Moreover, focusing solely on vertical divisions (i.e. sect, religion, race, gender, etc.) often leads to overlooking horizontal divisions (i.e. class).

Although theories of intersectionality attempt to deal with the multifaceted nature of social divisions, equating identity and structural divisions can be a dangerous formula.

‘The rich Muslim is Christian, and the poor Christian is Muslim’ (Traboulsi, 1993, chapter 1) – so goes the popular Lebanese saying, capturing the interchangeability between class and sect to which many analysts subscribe. In fact, Traboulsi (1993) explains that this particular type of Herderianism emerged in the Lebanese literature in the 1970s through the equation of class with sect under the concept of ‘community-class’. This premise is built on the false assumption that most of the members in a given class belong to one sectarian community and vice versa, therefore assuming a certain sectarian homogeneity in class structure. Such approach is specifically present in many historical accounts that, for example, represent the social structure in Mount Lebanon in the late 19th century as being divided between the ‘Druzes’ as landowners and the ‘Christians (Maronites)’ as peasants (Salibi, 1965). However, scholars such as Ofeish (2007) show that this division is misleading, arguing that Druze peasants did mobilise on a class basis with the Christian commoners during the uprisings that occurred between 1841 and 1861, as further described in the next chapter. Similarly, discussing the Lebanese Civil War that lasted from 1975 to 1990, Johnson (2001) also criticises the mixing of sect and class. He writes:

It is not always the case that one community is predominantly ‘upper’ and another ‘lower’ class in ethnic disputes; and even where there is some overlap between class and ethnicity as there was in Lebanon, explaining a consequent conflict in such terms as ‘poor Muslims’ fighting ‘rich Christians’ is an over-simplification. The ethnic or confessional fighters in the Lebanese wars were largely recruited from the poor and lower-class members of the Muslim and Christian communities. (Johnson, 2001, pp. 197–8)

Nasr and Dubar (1984) extensively examined the relationship between class and sect, concluding that Lebanese society is formed of two main social structures: a class structure and a sectarian structure. They then went on to examine how these structures overlap. Their multiple studies delineate important contributions in exploring the sectarian composition of

social classes. For example, Nasr (2003, p. 151) shows that on the eve of the civil war in 1975, 65% of the upper class were Christians, whereas 35% were Muslims. In another study, Dubar and Nasr (1976, p. 88) lay out the sectarian composition of the industrial working class in the eastern suburb of Beirut in 1974, showing that it was almost evenly divided between Christians and Muslims (55% of the workers were Muslims and 45% were Christians). These findings are crucial to debunking the 'community-class' concept and to studying the social economy of sectarian transformations. However, treating vertical (sectarian) and horizontal (class) divisions as equal social structures is problematic. As argued by Assaf (2004, p. 48), the main difference between class and sect is that class hierarchy is almost the same everywhere in the world (poor at the bottom, rich at the top and middle classes in between), whereas ethnic and sectarian hierarchies are volatile and heavily dependent on the political context. In turn, as explained by Amel (1986), the state and sectarian political parties play a part in undermining class-based organisations (such as trade unions); not addressing their role alongside the politicisation of sects makes the relationship between class and sect ambiguous. Moreover, it is unclear why Nasr and Dubar (1984) speak of only two social structures (sect and class) when they also discuss the role of regional divisions (periphery/centre) in the development of inequalities. In other words, the sectarian composition of social classes is very much a result of the geographical location of communities – the rural/urban or centre/periphery divisions are often more relevant than sectarian divisions to understanding class composition. Finally, overemphasising the relationship between class and sect can lead to a fall into Herderianism. As explained in the introduction, sectarianism is first and foremost a political phenomenon.

In sum, the constructivist school has made considerable developments with the adoption of the Barthian approach. Acknowledging the heterogeneity of ethnicity is an important prerequisite to understanding ethnic group formation. Likewise, addressing the cultural,

regional, and class divisions within sects in Lebanon is important to understanding the evolution of sectarianism.

c) The Dynamic Analytical Approach: A Focus on Mechanisms and Processes

Moving beyond the simple constructivist observation of ethnic flexibility and variation, a new trend in the literature attempts to focus on the mechanisms of ethnic boundaries' formation, deformation, and reformation over time and across space. This approach recognises that identities can be either fluid or sticky, and attempts to explain variations in this density through a focus on mechanisms that harden or soften ethnic boundaries. Interestingly, it makes room for the explanation of how politicised identities can take over and transform current ones. Instead of focusing on causal effects, it explores causal mechanisms. Three books have contributed considerably to the development of what I will label the 'dynamic analytical approach' in the study of ethnicity: (i) Roger Brubaker's (2004) *Ethnicity without Groups*, (ii) Kanchan Chandra's (2012) *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*, and (iii) Andreas Wimmer's (2013) *Ethnic Boundary Making*.

Despite the different methods adopted, this approach builds on two decades of critical work calling for the 'de-ethnicising' of research concerned with ethnicity and ethnic conflict. Authors such as Bowen (1996), Brubaker and Laitin (1998), Chandra (2001), Fearon (2004), Gilley (2004), and Wimmer (2013) all argue that in the past few decades, over-emphasis on the role of ethnicity in conflict and violence has created a clear deviation in the literature, giving the impression that ethnic conflicts are on the rise. They explain that there has been a surge in the use of ethnicity as an interpretive frame in the studies of conflict since the end of the cold war (Brubaker and Laitin, 1998) – despite the fact that cumulative knowledge from empirical studies has established that conflicts are in most cases economic and political rather than ethnic (Chandra, 2001). Gilley (2004, p. 1155) says that 'despite a boom in studies of

ethnic conflict, the empirical and conceptual justification for this field remains weak. Not only are claims of surging ethnic conflict unsubstantiated, but the concept itself is problematic.’ Moreover, Fearon (2004, p. 5) explains that the literature ‘find[s] surprisingly few differences between the determinants of civil war onset in general, versus “ethnic” civil wars in particular’ once we control the per capita income (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Thus, it is unclear why some civil wars are classified as ‘ethnic’ if the drivers are not essentially ethnic in nature. Similarly, speaking of contentious politics since the mid-1960s, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, p. 125) explain that events have often been labelled as ‘communal conflicts’, ‘ethnic competition,’ or ‘age-old hatred’. However, they contend that ‘such labels have become uncomfortably familiar in our time’. This approach calls for rethinking the ethnic labels often used in describing conflicts, and urges the re-examination of the mechanisms that characterise conflicts as ethnic.

The dynamic analytical school generally follows a Bourdieusian attitude in emphasising a dynamic and reflexive approach to the study of ethnicity. This approach has become widespread in the study of contentious politics, especially with the work of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) calling for a relational approach that focuses on an exploration of the dynamics and mechanisms of contention. The approach builds on the tradition of analytical sociology (Hedström and Bearman, 2009; Elster 2007; Merton, 1968) to emphasise the mechanisms of change and develop dynamic models that link the macro-conditions with the micro-processes. Instead of completely dismissing primordialist claims, this type of constructivist approach problematises these claims while taking them seriously. It focuses on the mechanisms and dynamics of change and variation, and asks how certain constructed identities take on primordial interpretations. This approach considers that ethnicity is a real – rather than an imagined – phenomenon in society; however, it warns against taking it for granted.

Brubaker (2004, p. 11) highlights the reality of ethnicity and explains that ethnic identities are ‘real and consequential, especially when they are embedded in powerful organizations’, but he argues that ethnic groups are not a given in society. He differentiates between ‘ethnic categories’ and ‘ethnic groups’, and argues that we need to move ‘beyond groupism’ in order to dismantle the mechanisms of ethnic relations (Brubaker, 2004, p. 12). He argues that studies should focus on the processes and mechanisms that transform ethnic categories into ethnic groups in order to understand the fluctuation in ethnic politicisation across time and space. Brubaker (2004, pp. 24–25) writes:

Starting with categories, by contrast, invites us to focus on processes and relations rather than substances. It invites us to specify how people and organizations do things with, and to, ethnic and national categories; how such categories are used to channel and organize processes and relations; and how categories get institutionalized, and with what consequences. It invited us to ask how, why, and in what contexts ethnic categories are used – or not used – to make sense of problems and predicaments, to articulate affinities and affiliations, to identify commonalities and connections, to frame stories and self-understandings.

Brubaker (2004, p. 32) distinguishes between ethnic identities as a ‘category of practice’ and a ‘category of analysis’. Whereas he accepts ‘participants’ primordialism’ given the prevalent framing of conflict as ethnic in the media and in everyday life, he warns against the adoption of ‘analytical primordialism’, as this would distort the lens through which we study society (Brubaker, 2004, p. 115).

Following a similar approach, Chandra (2012) presents a comprehensive survey of constructivist theories of ethnic politics and explores the mechanisms that explain change and variation in ethnic identities and ethnic salencies. She argues that whereas most studies of ethnic group formation adopt a constructivist approach, theories looking at the effects of ethnicity are still driven by primordialist assumptions of fixed identities. Chandra (2012, p.

18) distinguishes between what she labels ‘ethnic structure’ and ‘ethnic practice’. While ethnic structure refers to ‘the sets of “nominal” identities, that all individuals in a population possess, whether or not they actually identify with them’, ethnic practice indicates ‘the set of “activated” identities that individuals actually employ in any given context’ (Chandra, 2012, p. 18). She contends that whereas ethnic structure tends to be fixed in the short term, ethnic practice can rapidly change when the boundaries of certain categories are activated. Similarly, ethnic structure can and does change over the long term. Chandra (2012, p. 18) explains the dynamic relation between the short and long term:

Today’s “structure”, then, can be in part the product of the ethnic practice of a distant yesterday. And today’s ethnic practice can affect the ethnic structure of a distant tomorrow.

She puts forward an analytical framework that looks at the relationship between ethnicity, politics, and economics through a constructivist lens. She summarises the main constructivist arguments with regard to change in ethnic identity depending on both the frequency and speed of change. She explains that mechanisms such as modernisation can explain slow change in ethnic identities, whereas mechanisms such as violence or patronage can make sense of faster and more frequent changes (Chandra, 2012, p. 20). These mechanisms are further developed in the section below.

Finally, Wimmer (2013) advances a theory of ethnic boundary-making, using a comparative analytical perspective. Like Brubaker (2004), he argues that both primordialist and radical constructivist thinkers fail to explain the variations in ethnic salience across countries. He calls for a comparative sociology of ethnic boundaries that goes beyond simple constructivism in order to explain such variations. Wimmer (2013, p. 89) disputes the Herderian approach that considers ethnic groups as self-evident units of observation. Instead, he argues that three main factors shape the dynamics of ethnic boundaries: (i) the position

within a power structure (i.e. power inequality) that defines which level of ethnic differentiation is most salient, (ii) the network of political alliances that determines who is counted as ‘us’ or ‘them’, and (iii) the institutional framework that increases the salience of certain ethnic boundaries over others. Building on Barth’s (1969) work on the metaphorical boundaries mentioned above, Wimmer draws attention to the ways in which ethnicity is performed, made, and unmade at its edges, rather than merely taking it to be an existing ‘thing’. In this way, ethnic ‘groupness’ may become more salient through the ‘expansion’ or ‘contraction’ of boundaries, thus shifting from one level of categorisation to another. Another useful mechanism described by Wimmer (2013, p. 61) is that of boundary ‘blurring’, which occurs when there is a shift from one axis of categorisation to another (often overlapping) one. Particularly focusing on whether ethnicity matters in processes of everyday group formation, Wimmer (2013, Chapter 5) conducts research on the social relations between residents and immigrants in three blue-collar neighbourhoods in Switzerland. He uses neighbourhoods as his unit of analysis, finding that ethnic boundaries are not between the indigenous Swiss and those having foreign or non-Swiss roots, as one would expect; rather, they are located between the established old-timer residents of the neighbourhood (regardless of their ethnic origin) and the new immigrants. This is one example where Wimmer shows how shifting the unit of analysis away from ethnicity (‘de-ethnicizing research methods’) can help in highlighting important mechanisms that would be overlooked when one focuses solely on ethnicity.

In the following section, I elaborate on some of the main mechanisms of ethnic politicisation and change that are put forward in the constructivist literature. I focus on the mechanisms, processes and factors that contribute to the formation and transformation of the salencies of ethnic/sectarian boundaries.

d) Explaining the Formation and Transformation of the Salience of Ethnic Boundaries

The social movement literature has provided some valuable studies dealing with the question of rapid shifts in identity boundaries in periods of major political turbulence and contention (Beissinger, 2002; Della Porta and Diani, 1999; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001). In what follows, I adopt McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's (2001, p. 25) three umbrella types of mechanism in order to explain political closure along ethnic/sectarian lines: (a) environmental mechanisms, (b) relational mechanisms, and (c) cognitive mechanisms (Figure 4).

I consider environmental mechanisms to mean the external influences and historical developments that affect social structures and the political formation of group identity.

Relational mechanisms are the mechanisms that 'alter connections among people, groups and interpersonal networks' (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, p. 26). These mechanisms are closely linked to network configurations and they directly contribute to the process²⁶ of polarisation.

Finally, cognitive mechanisms 'operate through alterations of individual and collective perception; words like recognize, understand, reinterpret, and classify characterize such mechanisms' (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, p. 26). These mechanisms contribute to the process of participation in violence that is perceived as ethnic or sectarian.

²⁶ As explained in chapter 1, processes are regular sequences of mechanisms.

	Environmental mechanisms	Relational mechanisms	Cognitive mechanisms
Process	Boundary activation	Polarisation	Individual participation in violence
Mechanisms	• Institutionalisation • Mobilisation • Violence	Coalition formation	• Grievance • Framing • Peer pressure
	Macro-level analysis (Ch. 3, 4)	Meso-level analysis (Ch. 5)	Micro-level analysis (Ch. 6)

Figure 4: Processes and mechanisms of political closure along ethnic/sectarian lines

As will become clear throughout this thesis, environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms can also combine and interact to shape the boundaries of ethnic/sectarian groups. Moreover, the analytical and dynamic approach adopted in this thesis allows for other mechanisms and factors to emerge from the empirical data collected throughout the fieldwork.

e) Environmental Mechanisms Explaining the Process of Boundary Activation

In this section I explore three main environmental mechanisms that can help explain the process of sectarian boundary activation: i) institutionalisation, ii) mobilisation and iii) violence. These mechanisms will help us better understand how structural and macro-level political, economic and social changes are channelled to shape and alter the salience of ethnic/sectarian boundaries.

i. Institutionalisation

One of the most important mechanisms that shape and harden ethnic boundaries is the institutionalisation of ethnic identities by the state and the subsequent political organisation of parties along ethnic lines. In his discussion of the role of categorisation in determining the salience of identities, Brubaker (2004, p. 43) explains that the state is a very powerful ‘identifier’ because it has the power to impose categories through identification documents or censuses. The constructivist literature dealing with the formation and politicisation of ethnicity in the 19th century often considers that colonisation and modernisation played an important role in institutionalising ethnicities and heightening the saliences of these identities (Chandra, 2012, p. 18). Modernists, such as Deutsch (1953), Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983), and Makdisi (2000), all argued that ethnicity was apolitical (or politics was non-ethnic) prior to economic modernisation, and that it only became the basis for political dispute with the rise of nation states and the institutionalisation of ethnicity through the state which led to the formation of interest groups based on ethnicity. Other scholars, such as Young (1976), Vail (1989), Prakash (1995), Mamdani (1996), and Ofeish (1996), argue that it was specifically the ‘divide and rule’ tactics practised by colonial forces in most colonies that played a major role in activating ethnic boundaries and creating political closure along ethnic lines. This role of institutionalisation is specifically relevant in Lebanon, where personal identification and political representation are based on sectarian identities.

As previously explained, personal registration and citizenship in Lebanon are defined in terms of one's religious identity (Maktabi, 1999).²⁷ In the absence of civil laws for personal status (*Qanun Madani lil Ahwal ash-Shakhsiya*), personal matters – such as marriage, divorce, custody, inheritance – are legally regulated through religious courts according to each person's registered sectarian identity. Therefore, according to the Lebanese constitution, it is only through belonging to a religious and sectarian community that a citizen legally exists. Analysing the effect of such institutionalisation on the creation and reinforcement of sectarianism, Salloukh (2015, p. 50) argues that 'personal status laws and their concomitant bureaucratic procedures divide and besiege the Lebanese in a web of sectarian legal procedures from birth to death, each locked into her or his communal group'. In a similar manner, Max Weiss (2010) analyses the history of the Shia community in Lebanon and shows how the establishment of Shia institutions (such as the Jaafari court) during the period of the French mandate has led to the sectarian mobilisation of the Shia community and its transformation 'from a "sect-in-itself" to a "sect-for-itself"' (Weiss, 2010, p. 134).

Another level of institutionalisation of sectarian identities in Lebanon is the system of political representation. The corporate consociational framework adopted in the constitution has created a rigid system of power-sharing, where electoral laws are devised along sectarian lines.²⁸ This has led to the organisation of the majority of political parties along sectarian lines in order to compete for political power in a system of sectarian power-sharing (El

²⁷ Although it has become possible to remove one's religious affiliation from one's official identification since 2009 (a law that a few couples have used in order to have a civil marriage in Lebanon), the absence of civil laws for personal matters and political representation still deprives people without sectarian affiliations access to many political and personal rights (Salloukh, 2015, p. 36).

²⁸ For a good discussion of elections, electoral laws and sectarianism in Lebanon, check Salloukh (2015, Chapter 6).

Khazen, 2003).²⁹ Thus, the institutionalisation of sectarian identities through the state could be an important mechanism through which identity boundaries are activated.

ii. Mobilisation

The literature concerned with social movements and identities has pointed to an important relationship between collective action and identity boundaries' change and crystallisation (Beissinger, 2002; della Porta and Diani, 1999; Drury and Reicher, 2000; McAdam, 1989; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; Melucci, 1995). Della Porta and Diani (1999, p. 5) explain that since the 1920s, the field of sociology, especially the Chicago School, considered social movements to be the 'engines of change' in society. They argue that collective behaviour in times of rapid change in social structures can produce 'cultural change' and affect identity boundaries and shape group formation. Della Porta and Diani (1999, p. 109) explain that the 'construction of identity is an essential component in collective action'. They point out that whereas many studies focus on identity as a precondition or a cause for collective action, identity can also be shaped and crystallised as the result of collective action (della Porta and Diani, 1999, p. 87). The very fact of participating together in collective action can heighten the feeling of belonging to a group and can shape or activate certain identities.

Similar arguments have also been put forward by Mark Beissinger (1996, 2002) in his study of Eastern European nationalist movements. He explains that nationalism, or the rise of separatist movements and the changes in identity boundaries, 'needs to be understood not only as a cause of action, but also as the product of action' (Beissinger, 2002, p. 11). He

²⁹ The influence and organisational power of non-sectarian political parties (especially Leftist parties) have greatly declined since the end of the civil war in 1990 and the fall of the USSR. This has led to the increased sectarianisation of political activism.

contends that ‘the association of the demonstration with the rise of nationalism is hardly accidental’ (Beissinger, 1996, p. 113). In fact, he explains that mobilisations are occasions for individuals and groups to rethink, expand or activate the boundaries of their identities through collective action. In his book, Beissinger (2002) focuses his analysis on the understanding of the interrelation between structural conditions, institutional constraints, and event-specific processes in explaining mobilisational activity (Beissinger, 2002, p. 145). He explains that the analysis of specific events, such as episodes of mobilisation or violence that ‘thicken’ history, becomes crucial to understanding identity politics and boundary activation (Beissinger, 2002, p. 39). Speaking of Moldovan independence, Beisseinger (2002, p. 148) addresses the phenomenon of swift change in identity boundaries. He explains that in 1987, public opinion polls showed that the idea of a separate Moldovan nation was completely absurd to the majority of the Moldovan society. However, a few years later, in 1991, these same polls showed that 79% of Moldovans believed that Moldova should be a separate state. He concluded that the wave of collective action and mobilisations in the late 1980s, and the “thickened” history, had provided the context for a fundamental transformation of identities which, in “quieter” times, were once believed to be fixed and immutable’ (Beissinger, 2002, p. 148). Moving beyond the dichotomy of primordialism and instrumentalism, Beissinger (2002, p. 155) focuses on event-generated influences in order to explain rapid shifts in identity boundaries. Therefore, mobilisation – defined as an event in which people collectively take to the streets with specific demands or claims – seems to be an important mechanism through which the boundaries of group identities are activated and crystallised.

iii. Violence

A third important mechanism often discussed in the literature of collective action and ethnic boundary activation is violence. Unlike primordialists, who contend that ethnic identities

shape violence, a number of authors note that violence can have powerful effects on the politicisation of ethnicity and shifts in ethnic salencies (Tambiah, 1996; Petersen, 2002; Brubaker, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006; Chandra, 2012; Wimmer, 2013). Violence is a rare outcome of ethnic relations (Fearon and Laitin, 1996), and only a small minority of the population directly participates in violence (Varshney, 2003; Mueller, 2000). Nonetheless, violent attacks framed along ethnic lines can often cause rapid and extreme ethnic boundary activation (Laitin 1995; Kaufmann 1996; Mueller 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2000; Petersen, 2002; Brubaker, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006). Chandra (2012, p. 147) explains that violence can be driven by different motivations and carried out by a range of participants from different backgrounds; however, once it acquires an ethnic label (through discursive frameworks), violence starts to have a self-perpetuating effect. Wimmer (2013, p. 71) and Brubaker (2004, Chapter 1) also argue that violence deployed by small groups of actors can force ethnic frames upon particular events, which can lead to the crystallisation of ethnic identities and the demarcation of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ ethnic lines. In fact, Brubaker (2004) argues that group crystallisation and the increase in ethnic salience is the result of violence and not its cause. Similarly, in his study of the logic of violence in civil war, Kalyvas (2006) claims that ethnic identities result from the war and are radically changed by it. On the other hand, authors such as de Figueiredo and Weingast (1999), Brass (1996), and Wilkinson (2012) focus on the role of elites in instigating violence and deploying ethnic frames. They contend that political entrepreneurs often use violence and orchestrate riots in order to recreate and reinforce group boundaries and to activate or change existing ethnic cleavages. Therefore, violence seems to be an important mechanism that shapes ethnic and sectarian salience.

f) Relational Mechanisms Explaining the Process of Polarisation

Relational mechanisms that focus on social network configurations play an important role in shaping and transforming ethnic polarisations. In what follows, I focus on the mechanism of coalition formation in an attempt to understand how ethnic or sectarian dichotomies are formed and transformed within short periods of time.

i. Coalition Formation: Patronage and Clientelism

According to the instrumentalist school, the most important mechanism to explain ethnic or sectarian salience is resource distribution through systems of patronage and clientelism. Chandra (2012, p. 144) argues that patronage-driven economies can be the source of relatively fast changes in the salience of ethnic identities. She contends that unlike long-term processes of modernisation, clientelistic systems or patronage-based economies can explain fast shifts in ethnic salience for electoral purposes. Chandra (2004; 2012) explains that elites, as well as ordinary citizens, make rational decisions regarding the deployment of ethnic identities for the allocation of, or access to, resources. Ofeish (1999, pp. 91–93) also asserts that sectarianism is maintained in society by the two sides: the ‘ruling class’ and the ‘ascending classes’. Thus, at the elite level, clientelism is a device of the bourgeoisie to reinforce their position, foster their interests, and maintain their power. It is the mechanism through which the elites control the masses and reinforce sectarianism in order to preserve the interests of the ruling class. However, in countries like Lebanon, access to resources – jobs, education, medical services, etc. – comes in the form of goods and services provided by the *za'im* (leader) of a community (through their respective political parties). Consequently, it becomes rational for individuals to follow their sectarian leader, not because they are blind followers or inherently sectarian beings, but rather because they are in search of their short-term interests. Therefore, Fearon (2004, p. 6) states that according to this view, ethnic groups

become political coalitions formed to advance the economic interests of members (or leaders). Variations in the politicisation of ethnicity are then explained by an argument about when it makes economic sense to organise a coalition along ethnic lines.

However, even under such systems of patronage, it is wrong to assume that all members of a community can have equal access to resources if they are loyal to the *za'im*. In other words, equating a sectarian *community* to a sectarian *group* is not always accurate. For example, not all members of the Sunni community in Lebanon can have equal access to resources through the main Sunni organisations and the Future Movement. Moreover, a sectarian community can contain more than one sectarian group depending on the number of clientelistic networks and channels available within the community. For example, not all members of the Shia community belong to the same clientelistic sectarian group since both Hezbollah and Amal are potential providers for the community. So how can a patronage economy create 'ethnic groups' out of 'ethnic communities'?

The literature concerned with the relationship between clientelism and ethnicity heavily depends on situational analysis to explain shifts in ethnic salience. Patron–client relations create social networks through which identities are activated and people mobilised in times of elections, demonstrations, or political upheaval (Chandra, 2012, p. 146). However, two main conditions seem to play an important role in determining strategies of patronage and its effect on ethnic and sectarian salience: the size of the communities, and intra-sectarian competition.

ii. Size of Ethnic Community

Bates (1983) initiated the coalition formation approach according to which ethnic behaviour is perceived as rational behaviour par excellence. He explains that there exists a high correlation between the allocation of benefits and resources and the spatial distribution of

ethnicities; consequently, it seems rational for ethnic groups to form the basis for coalitions in distributional conflicts over goods. As a result, Bates (1983, p. 164) argues that ethnic groups are, in short, a form of minimum winning coalition, large enough to secure benefits in the competition for spoils but also small enough to maximise the per capita value of these benefits.

According to Bates (1983), the crucial factor in determining ethnic group formation is the size of the groups and their ability to form minimum winning coalitions. Equally, Posner (2004) attempts to explain why the distinction between Chewas and Tumbukas is heavily politicised and salient in Malawi but not in next door Zambia: he points out that these groups are large enough to be competitors in small Malawi, but are too small to form minimum winning coalitions in much larger Zambia. Therefore, in a similar fashion to Bates, Posner's (2004, p. 529) analysis suggests that the political saliency of a cultural cleavage depends not on the nature of the cleavage itself (since it is identical in both countries) but on the sizes of the groups it defines and whether or not they will be useful vehicles for political competition.

Varshney (2003, p. 8) also discusses the importance of group size in creating conflict in India. He explains that according to the analyses of political parties, such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the demographics of a community are considered to be a highly significant factor for conflict. The debate about the importance of size in political representation is also central in Lebanon, since power distribution is supposed to rest on the demographic proportions of the different communities (Maktabi, 1999; Faour, 2007b; Farha, 2008).

iii. Intra-Ethnic Competition

The dynamic of in-group and out-group competition is another important factor in determining ethnic salience and patronage strategies. In *Compassionate Communalism*:

Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon, Cammett (2014) provides a detailed exploration of the role of welfare and sectarianism in Lebanon. Discussing non-state welfare through sectarian organisations, she explains that this aspect plays a crucial role of provision in the absence of a capable state. However, Cammett (2014) contends that this role comes at the expense of deepening social divisions and creating new forms of inequality. She states that political strategies and intrasect competition have shaped the distributional behaviour of the major sectarian parties in Lebanon (Cammett, 2014, p. 84).

Distributional behaviour of political parties across or within their sectarian community is determined by the level of intrasect competition. Cammett (2014, p. 189) shows that the high rivalry among the main Christian-based political parties – the Kata’ib, the Lebanese Forces and the Free Patriotic Movement – has led these parties to ‘concentrate their social benefits on in-group members’. However, the relative lack of severe in-group rivalry amongst the Sunni-based Future Movement and the Shia-based parties – Hezbollah and Amal – allows for their distributional politics and welfare strategies to reach out-group members, though to varying degrees. For example, the Hariri Foundation has offices in diverse parts of Lebanon, including heavily Christian areas such as Karm El Zeitoun, Batroun or Byblos (Cammett, 2014, p. 141). Indeed, the Hariri Foundation was best known for its educational scholarships that benefited thousands of students from all sectarian identities, including Shia and Christian students (Cammett, 2014, p.139). Similarly, Cammett (2014, p. 157) explains that Hezbollah’s welfare agencies have also reached out to many pro-FPM Maronites after the alliance between the two parties in February 2006. So, although the argument is centred on non-state welfare strategies, in-group and out-group competition seems to be an important factor in understanding changes in the political salience of sectarian identities, given the importance of patronage and coalition formation in shaping sectarian cleavages.

In brief, the mechanisms and factors proposed by the instrumentalist approach allow for an explanation of the rapid shift in ethnic relations, as well as in the temporal and spatial variations in ethnic salience. This approach considers that ethnic coalitions eventually change whenever political boundaries change; thus, the competition over power or benefits determines the content and boundaries of an ethnic coalition. These mechanisms are further explored in chapter 5 through the study of coalition formation within protest events in Beirut between 2000 and 2010.

g) Cognitive Mechanisms Explaining the Process of Individual Participation in Violence

As previously explained, violence is an important mechanism through which identity boundaries are shaped and hardened. This section focuses on the process of participation in collective violence, common in all societies that witness episodes of violent conflict. It attempts to explain some mechanisms that push individuals into participation in violent events that carry an ethnic or sectarian flavour. More specifically, this section discusses three main mechanisms: grievance, peer pressure, and framing and symbolism.

i. Grievance

Grievance is an important mechanism that can push individuals to participate in collective violence and shape ethnic boundaries. Arguments related to grievance stem from the emotion-based literature and the study of individual perceptions which in turn are linked to theories of relative deprivation. The most pertinent scholar in this school is Ted Gurr (1970) who argues that the potential for violence is often determined by the gap between the individual's expectations and reality, and particularly the injustice perceived when comparing one's relative economic, political and social position with that of other potentially salient groups (Gurr, 1970). This concept of relative deprivation resonates with Petersen's (2002)

analysis of resentment as a driving factor of collective violence in Eastern Europe. He explains that during periods of structural changes, namely modernisation and war, ethnic groups might engage in violent behaviour because, with the collapse of the state, constraints (fear of punishment) disappear and people are 'set free' to use violence against each other. Petersen (2002) develops four models or 'stories', each describing an emotion that motivates individuals to commit violent actions against ethnic others: fear, hatred, resentment and rage. Petersen's empirical testing led him to finding that Fear, Hatred and Rage, in contrast with what is commonly thought, seem to provide little explanation for variation in ethnic violence. Resentment provides an answer in most, but not all, of the Eastern European case studies.

In a similar fashion, other theories have touched upon political grievances through the study of the exclusion of one's social identity group from positions of political power (Lijphart, 1977; Lake and Rothschild, 1996; Reynal-Querol, 2002; Chandra, 2004; Langer, 2005). These theories argue that individuals are more likely to take part in rioting when they perceive that their identity group is being excluded from power and thus has limited ability to influence political decisions. Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010, p. 95) emphasise the role of the state in this, arguing that the most motivated groups in ethnic violence are those who are excluded, downgraded and underrepresented, resulting in feelings of resentment that can be 'channelled into successful collective action'. So, grievance seems to be an important mechanism explaining the process of participation in collective violence that is labelled as ethnic or sectarian.

ii. Peer Pressure

Another mechanism widely mentioned in the literature of collective action and 'ethnic violence' is peer pressure. This mechanism focuses on the importance of social sanctions and contends that strong communities and tight social networks can create pressure that leads

individuals to adopt certain behaviours (della Porta and Diana, 1999; Kitts, 2000; Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008; Oberschall, 2000; Scacco, 2008). In such scenarios, the gains from participation in violence are not strictly material or political, but rather social. In her study of riot participation in Nigeria, Scacco (2008) explains the various network mechanisms at play in the decision to participate or not. She argues that social networks can affect rioting through peer pressure that increases the likelihood of participation in high-risk behaviour. Social networks also play an informative role in disseminating information about the time and location of event for willing rioters. Similarly, networks and social ties have a considerable capacity to activate grievances among the community of ‘potential rioters’. Oberschall (2000, p. 997) found that peer pressure played an important role in pushing individuals to join militias during the Yugoslavian civil war. Thus, it seems that peer pressure too is an important mechanism in collective violence labelled ethnic or sectarian.

iii. Framing and Symbolism

Framing is another important mechanism discussed in the constructivist literature to understand the variation in ethnic salience and participation in contentious politics. Brubaker (2004, p. 16) explains that conflict or violence ‘becomes “ethnic” (or “racial” or “nationalist”) through the meanings attributed to it by perpetrators, victims, politicians, officials, journalists, researchers, relief workers, and others. Such acts of framing and narrative encoding do not simply *interpret* the violence; they *constitute* it as ethnic.’ Brubaker (2004) argues that discursive framing plays an important role in highlighting or shifting the salience of an ethnic boundary. He argues that the way we understand conflict in society depends to a significant extent on the prevailing interpretive frames. He contends that since the end of the Cold War, ethnic frames have become most accessible and resonant in

explaining conflict or violence. Brubaker (2004) asserts that these frames lead analysts to overestimate ethnic incidences.

Varshney (2003) also discusses the importance of narratives in shaping identities and conflicts. He uses the term ‘master narrative’ to describe how the ‘Hindu–Muslim’ antagonism has become the frame through which most social interaction is interpreted. Varshney (2003, p. 34) explains that trivial incidents between *individuals* turn into battles between the communities, for these incidents come to be, and have often been, ‘contextualized’ or ‘represented’ in terms of the master narrative, lending excessive rigidity to communal divisions and directly contributing to rising levels of communal violence.

In a similar fashion, Wimmer (2013) points out that framing and symbolism can play an important role in shaping the boundary of ethnic identities. He argues that ‘both categorisation practices (defining relevant groups) and identification practices (determining who belongs to which group) use discursive and symbolic means to increase the salience of an ethnic boundary’ (Wimmer, 2013, p. 64). He contends that state institutions actively reinforce certain ethnic boundaries over others through processes of categorisation, such as census and statistics, or through symbolic acts such as commemorative holidays or public ceremonies. Similarly, discursive and symbolic mechanisms can also be used by individuals or groups in order to increase the salience of an ethnic identity. This is most obviously done through clothing markers that highlight an identity, such as wearing the hijab to denote one’s Muslim identity. On another hand, authors such as Feldman (1991) and Gaborieau (1985) explore the role of symbolic actions or markers in activating ethnic identities and creating conflict. For instance, Feldman (1991) argues that the ethnically charged symbolism of the urban space in Belfast (slogans, graffiti, flags, banners, photos, logos, political party headquarters, or even specific colours) played an important role in triggering conflict and

violence. Such mechanisms of framing and discourse building are also strongly present in the media.

In his recently published book *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, Salloukh (2015) dedicates a chapter to analysing the relationship between the media and sectarianism in post-war Lebanon. He claims that discursive practices in the Lebanese ‘mediascape’ play an important role in shaping and sustaining the sectarian system. He explains that through their privately owned television channels, political elites in Lebanon are able to fuel sectarian sentiments and shape sectarian antagonisms in order to serve their own interests. Salloukh (2015, p. 154) asserts that the ‘media discourse is thus part of the complex holistic ensemble reproducing sectarian modes of subjectification and mobilization’.

The literature, then, points to an important role played by mechanisms of discourse framing and symbolism in heightening the salience of an ethnic identity and participation in collective violence. However, it is not always clear whether these frames are produced to shape and alter pre-existing ethnic or sectarian boundaries, or whether they are a reflection of the ethnic or sectarian power balance. This will be further explored within the Lebanese case in chapter 6.

The following research builds on the dynamic analytical approach explained above to study the changes and variation in sectarian salience in Lebanon. It attempts to move beyond groupism by exploring the mechanisms of sectarian relations at the macro and meso levels, as well as their implications at the micro level. The next chapter provides a historical overview of the birth and transformation of political sectarianism in Lebanon. It focuses on the historical development of sectarianism through an analysis of mobilisation, institutionalisation, and violence.

3. The Historical Development of Sectarianism and Conflict in Lebanon: Shifting Grounds and Mediated Agreements

If the story of sectarianism has been told here with any depth, it has been with the modest hope of showing that it is anything but a primordial identity.

Ussama Makdisi (2000, p. 164)

This chapter aims to give an overview of the events that have shaped Lebanon's modern history since the nineteenth century. It traces the slide into sectarianism, the various cycles of violence, and the shifting nature of political and sectarian relations, thus preparing the ground for the analysis provided in the following chapters. The aim here is not to delve into historical debates, but to provide an overview of how sectarian relations were moulded throughout Lebanon's modern history, using the constructivist theoretical framework adopted in this thesis. The chapter explains how religious categories are politicised and institutionalised to create sectarian communities and sectarian-based political groups.

The analysis shows that sectarianism is a historical construct that is activated or deactivated depending on political, social, and economic forces that lie outside the sect itself. It demonstrates that internal socio-economic developments – demography and class mobility – and external power dynamics have always formed and transformed sectarian boundaries in Lebanon. In fact, the uneven development of the various regions (centre/periphery) throughout the history of Lebanon explains how sectarian groups have occupied different positions within the power structure at different times. Under the Ottoman Empire, the Druze leaders of Mount Lebanon enjoyed a special relationship with the Sublime Porte. This bond was reflected in the political supremacy of the Druze notables and the socio-economic and political privileges of the Druze community of Mount Lebanon. However, the Maronite elites

ascended to power with the development of capitalism in the 19th century and the increasing role of European powers since the 1860 war. The declaration of 'Greater Lebanon' by the French authorities in 1920 and the annexation of mainly Muslim-inhabited land shifted the demographic balance and contested the political dominance of the Maronite elites. This period witnessed the growing political role of the Sunni notables in the newly added coastal cities. This role became more pronounced with the arrival of Palestinian organisations in Lebanon, the spread of Gamal Abdel Nasr's pan-Arabism, and the 1958 war. Finally, in addition to their remarkable upward mobility and their special relations with the Iranian and Syrian regimes, the sectarian politicisation of the Shia community since the 1970s brought with it the rise to power of the new Shia elites in post-civil war Lebanon. The growing demographic, economic, military, and political weight of the Shia political parties (mainly Hezbollah) clearly expressed itself during the violent clashes of May 2008.

This historical account shows that each wave of change in the politico-sectarian balance of power has been marked by an episode of heightened mobilisation, followed by violence or civil war that crystallises oppositional, and often dichotomous, sectarian identities: Druze–Maronite, Muslim–Christian, and Sunni–Shia. Most interestingly, the chapter demonstrates that sectarian groups are rarely homogenous: intra-sectarian conflict has been common throughout the history of Lebanon. However, conflicts often acquire a sectarian overtone, violence usually hardens sectarian boundaries, and civil wars have always ended with foreign-brokered agreements that rely on sectarian power-sharing.

The chapter starts with a historical exploration of the birth of sectarianism in Mount Lebanon in the 1800s. It then provides a chronological discussion of the main events that took place during the 20th century, before finally focusing on the period under study in the rest of this research: 2000–2010.

I. The Birth of Sectarianism in Mount Lebanon

Various religious communities existed in Mount Lebanon prior to the Ottoman and colonial periods. However, religious identity was not the essential factor in political mobilisation until the 19th century (Makdissi, 2000; Ofeish, 2007). In 1516, the Ottoman army invaded Syria and ruled Mount Lebanon for approximately four centuries. The Ottoman ‘millet’ system organised religious groups by giving non-Muslim communities some autonomy and protection within the empire, while treating Sunni Muslims³⁰ as culturally and socially superior (Makdissi, 2000, p. 11). Although this preferential treatment was the first step in transforming religious categories into sectarian communities, politics in the empire was not strictly organised along sectarian lines. In fact, the main social structure in Mount Lebanon was based on a class division between the notables (*muqata'jis*) and the commoners (*ahalis*).

Mount Lebanon was mainly inhabited by two major religious communities: the Muslim Druze and the Christian Maronite. The Druze community, also known as the *muwahhidun* (believers in God’s oneness), got their name from al-Darazi, an early follower of the Isma’ili Shia Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim,³¹ considered to be a manifestation of God (Harris, 2012, p. 18). Religiously, the Druze do not follow all the ‘pillars’ of Islam, and their religious knowledge is exclusively accessible to *’uqqal* (wise men). The door for conversion into Druzism was closed in 1043 (Harris, 2012, p. 18), which limited the demographic expansion of the community. The Christian Maronites are Catholics who accepted the Roman doctrine

³⁰ The Sunnis form the majority of the Muslim world and they are considered to be orthodox Muslims. They follow the Quran and the *sunna* (customs) of the prophet Muhammad, in addition to the first four caliphs. Unlike the Shia, they have no ‘veneration of Imams, saintly personalities of the family of the Prophet Muhammad’ (Harris, 2012, p. 17).

³¹ Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim disappeared in 1021 near Cairo (Harris, 2012, p. 18).

of the Vatican in the 17th century while keeping ‘their Syriac rituals and religious hierarchy, headed by the Maronite patriarch’ (Harris, 2012, p. 16).

The majority of the landlords in Mount Lebanon were Druze and most of the peasants were Maronites. Mobilisation and conflict remained class-based and did not take on sectarian overtones until the end of the 1830s. For example, the commoners’ tax revolt of 1820–21 was mainly led by Christian peasants asking for equal rights, but Shia, Sunni, and Druze commoners joined them in their class struggle; meanwhile, Maronite landlords fiercely opposed the revolt in defence of the feudal ruling class (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 10). Similarly, Ofeish (2008, p. 13) explains that the two main political groupings in Mount Lebanon at that time were the *al-Quaysi* party and *al-Yamani* party, both of which had a feudal structure and cross-sectarian membership.

However, religious identities became increasingly politicised during the Egyptian invasion and occupation of Syria from 1831 to 1840. While the majority of the Druze elites remained loyal to the Ottoman Sultan, Emir Bashir Shihab II aligned himself and many of his Maronite followers with Ibrahim Pasha, the leader of the Egyptian troops. In 1838, people in Hawran and Southern Mount Lebanon, a majority of whom were Druze, revolted against the Egyptian occupation. Ibrahim Pasha contained the revolt by arming his Lebanese Christian allies and sending them to crush the ‘Druze rebellion’. This was the first violent clash where a political conflict took the form of sectarian groups pitted against each other (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 12; Makdissi, 2000, p. 55). External powers (Egyptian, Ottoman and European), as well as local political leaders, have exploited sectarian identities in order to transform conflict into clashes between sectarian communities for their political interests.

In 1840, the Egyptian occupation ended and Ottoman rule was re-established with British support, opening the door for important economic changes that affected social and political organisation in Mount Lebanon. The development of free trade and capitalism (Traboulsi,

2012, p. 15), together with the important role played by the Maronite Church (Harik, 1966), the proliferation of Christian missionary schools, the demographic expansion of the Maronite community, and the strong ties between the Maronite elites and the West (namely France and Rome) contributed to the unequal development of the communities of Mount Lebanon (El Khazen, 2000, p. 35). Whereas the Druze elites – the privileged group – formed the majority of the feudal class, the Christian community witnessed a growing upward mobility with the rise of capitalism and the flourishing of the silk economy (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 19). These overlapping political, social, and economic changes laid the foundations for the subsequent institutionalisation of sectarianism in Mount Lebanon.

a) The Partition Scheme of 1843 and the Règlement Shakib Effendi

By 1839, the Ottoman Empire started to introduce economic, social and political reforms known as the ‘Tanzimat’ (Ofeish, 2007, p. 63). These reforms were brought to Lebanon in 1840 in collaboration with British and French advisers, who were interested in supporting their ‘Christian allies’ in the region. One of the first changes introduced by the Tanzimat was the legal equality of the different sectarian communities and the election of a religiously mixed council with representatives from each community. This formed the origin of Lebanon’s corporate power-sharing system based on fixed sectarian representation (Salloukh, 2015, p. 13). As argued by Makdissi (2000, p. 60), the Tanzimat laws were crucial in making religious identities the primary marker of political boundaries in Lebanon. While loyalties prior to 1840 were to one’s local notable (determined by geography), allegiance to one’s religious community gained greater importance with the introduction of the Tanzimat. However, administration and tax collection were complicated by the fact that regional notables were not always members of one’s religious group (Khalaf, 2002, p. 276). This tension turned violent in 1841 with clashes erupting over the administration of taxation

(Makdissi, 2000, pp. 63–65). As a result, the Ottomans divided Mount Lebanon into two administrative regions (*qa'im maqamiya*) in 1843: a southern Druze-controlled district and a northern Maronite-controlled district. However, the division of Mount Lebanon in 1843 and the introduction of a system of rigid sectarian representation did not solve the tension. As asserted by Salloukh (2015, p. 13), the establishment of the *qa'im maqamiya* further politicised the constructed sectarian identities and crystallised them in a rigid and oppositional way. A new round of violence erupted in 1845, leading European forces to pressure the Porte to intervene by sending its foreign minister, Shakib Effendi, to settle the matter. On October 29, 1845, Effendi introduced a new *Règlement* (regulation), reorganising the *qa'im maqamiya* (Salibi, 1965, p. 71) and establishing an advisory council composed of five members – one from each community (Sunni, Maronite, Druze, Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic). It is important to note here that the Shia community were to be represented by the Sunni elected members since the Ottoman authorities did not recognise the Shia as a separate community (Hanf, 2015, p. 59). Therefore, as argued by Traboulsi (2012, p. 26), the *Règlement* of Shakib Effendi marked a further entrenchment of sectarian political representation in the Lebanese system.

The partition of Mount Lebanon into two administrative regions exacerbated the struggle over identity and did not put an end to class-based uprisings. A series of commoners' insurrections took place between 1841 and 1861, marking the transition from the feudal *muqata'ji* system to the European-style capitalist system (Ofeish, 1999, p. 101). The northern district peasant uprising in 1858 quickly spread to other parts of the region, taking a sectarian turn.³² As noted by Traboulsi (2012, p. 29), the commoners' revolt against the feudal system

³² A discussion of the role of Tanios Chahine, the leader of the peasants' rebellions, in turning the mobilisation sectarian can be found in Makdissi (2000, Chapter 6).

produced two types of movement, 'a social revolt of Christian commoners against Christian overlords in the north and a sectarian civil war between Christian commoners and Druze overlords in the southern mixed districts'. Therefore, when the boundaries of class and communal identities coincided, the conflict took on sectarian overtones. These revolts formed the context under which the events of 1860 took place.

b) The 1860 Events and the *Règlement Organique*: the Rise of the 'Maronite Power'

The years 1859–60 were marked by a series of events that amounted to the reinforcement of the notion of 'sectarian geography' (Makdissi, 2000, p. 128). The random acts of violence and murder in late 1859 and early in 1860 ushered the way for war. In late May 1860, Druze notables met in the village of Mukhtara and decided to wage a war against Christian commoners and the populist leader Tanios Chahine, who was menacing the southern villages of the mountain (Harris, 2012, p.157). Widespread violence broke out, taking the form of an openly sectarian conflict. The massacres committed against many Christians in Deir al-Qamar by June 1860 created an atmosphere of terror. Clear demarcation lines emerged, and people started leaving the mixed villages to seek refuge in more homogenous areas (Makdissi, 2000, p. 134).

The events of 1860 were another occasion for foreign powers to interfere and reorganise political life in Lebanon. Known as the '*Règlement Organique*', a new organisation was formed on June 9, 1861, merging the two districts of 1841–61 into one Ottoman province: the Mutasarrifiya (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 41). As noted by Makdisi (2000, p. 161), 'every article in the *Règlement* indicated that the new order was to be sectarian.' In fact, the Administrative Council was initially divided equally between Christians and Muslims with two representatives of each of the six main sects (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Druze, Sunni, and Shia). However, the Maronite leaders were dissatisfied with this

arrangement, as they considered that it was not proportional to their demographic size (Khalaf, 2002, p. 279). Given their special relations with the French, they had the *Règlement Organique* revised in 1864, and the Administrative Council's seats were modified to seven for the Christians (four Maronites, two Greek Orthodox, and one Greek Catholic) and five for the Muslims (three Druzes, one Sunni, and one Shia).

So, the military defeat of 'the Christians' in 1860 was turned into a political victory in the *Mutasarrifiya* after European intervention (El Khazen, 2000, p. 36). Although the *Règlement Organique* marked the end of the feudal system and the establishment of sectarian-based social and political life under the *Mutasarrifiya*, the role of traditional elites and leading families was secured through the merging of clientelism into the new political system (Hamzeh, 2001, p. 170). Finally, by institutionalising sectarian representation in the Administrative Council, the *Règlement Organique* confirmed once more the sectarian foundation of Lebanese politics for years to come. Salloukh (2015, p. 14) argues that the Mount Lebanon experience established two main political traditions that would endure and shape Lebanon's future political life: the system of proportional representation known as corporate consociationalism; and the tradition of local parties' alliance to external powers that frequently interfered in shaping domestic affairs.

II. From Mount Lebanon to the State of Greater Lebanon in 1920

After the fall of the feudal *muqata'ji* system and the establishment of the *Mutasarrifiya* in 1861, Mount Lebanon enjoyed more than half a century of peace and prosperity. The economic growth generated by the silk industry and the relatively mild intervention of European powers in the affairs of Mount Lebanon contributed to this 'Long Peace' (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 42). However, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First

World War, the worsening economic conditions, and the famine that hit Mount Lebanon and provoked a wave of migration ushered in a new era in Lebanon's history.

Following the Sikes-Picot Agreement in 1916, Mount Lebanon fell under French mandate. The French soon separated Lebanon from the rest of Syria (as per Figure 5), extending it to include the mainly Sunni coastline, and the South and Beqa' Valley with a majority of Shia (Hamdan, 1997, p. 36). The annexation of these Muslim-dominated areas shifted the sectarian demography in modern Lebanon and remodelled the salencies of the overlapping regional, political, economic, and sectarian cleavages. Whereas Christians (specifically Maronites) formed a clear demographic majority in Mount Lebanon (two-thirds of the population), they were almost the same size of community as the Muslims in the newly created Lebanon (Hanf, 2015, p. 66). From that point of view, Christian leaders such as Emile Edde welcomed the French decision in 1924 to naturalise Armenians who settled in Lebanon and Syria after fleeing Turkey (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 91).

The state of Greater Lebanon was proclaimed on September 1, 1920 with an Administrative Council of ten Christians and seven Muslims, presumably reflecting demographic composition (Harris, 2012, p. 177). The formation of a separate political entity led to political tension between the supporters of Lebanese nationalism, who backed the French geopolitical partition, and Arab nationalists who opposed the idea of a Lebanese nation and preferred to remain aggregated to Greater Syria (Salloukh, 2015, p.15). This political division quickly took on a sectarian face, shifting the salient sectarian polarisation from the perceived Druze–Maronite rivalry of Mount Lebanon to the more salient Sunni–Maronite division of Greater Lebanon (Zamir, 1985, p. 25). Most historians and analysts³³

³³ Historians and analysts such as Zamir (1985), Salibi (1988), Hanf (1993), Khalaf (2002), Kerr (2006), and Messara (1983), all make this argument.

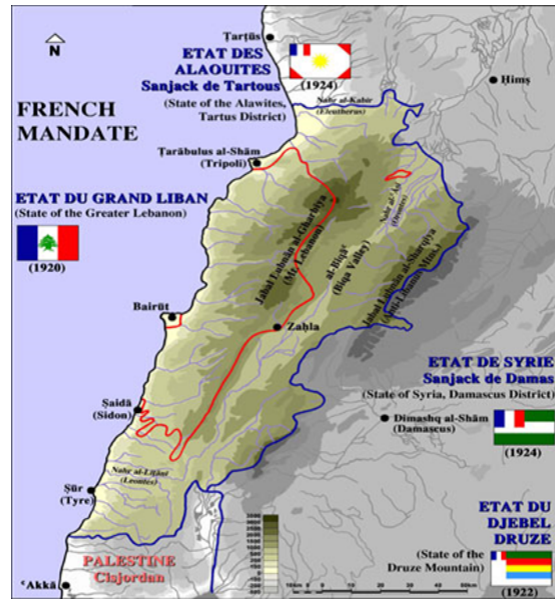


Figure 5: The Expansion of Mount Lebanon to the State of Greater Lebanon ³⁴

consider that this new sectarian split was caused by the fact that the supporters of ‘Lebanism’ were Christians, while its opponents were Muslims; many of the latter ‘refused to accept the designation “Lebanese” in their identity papers, considering that the creation of Lebanon is a defeat and asking for a reunification with Syria’ (Hanf, 2015, p. 65). However, the detailed historical accounts show that the division around the national question was not exclusively inter-sectarian. The strong familial, social, and economic ties with the Syrian interior contributed to shaping the political position of a large number of people and local elites. For example, Ofeish (2007, p. 64) and Stewart (2012, p. 163) note that many Christian notables (including Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic traders, as well as some Maronite figures) opposed the idea of a separate Lebanese nation because of their social and economic links with Syria.

³⁴ Source: Stanford Journal of Archeology (Figure 14. Map of the French Mandate).

(<http://web.stanford.edu/dept/archaeology/journal/newdraft/garnand/figurepage.html>, accessed on July 2nd, 2015)

Traboulsi (2012, p. 81) points out that five hundred Christian notables signed a petition addressed to the King–Crane Commission in favour of annexation to Syria and opposing the French mandate plan. On another hand, Harris (2012, p. 176) and El Khazen (2000, p. 41) argue that within the Muslim elites, the voice of the Shia *zu'ama* was not coherent since many leaders, such as the Asa'ad family for example, oscillated between the French plan of separation and the Arab plan of unity with Syria. Similarly, Harris (2012, p. 180) points out that the Druze community was split, with Fouad Jumblatt accepting the formation of Greater Lebanon, and the Arslans holding on to their Arab nationalist leaning. Therefore, although intra-confessional and political divisions existed, the political schism regarding the creation of a separate Lebanese nation was quickly translated into an inter-sectarian divide between Muslims and Christians, and conflict over the national identity of Lebanon was at the heart of political and sectarian tension throughout the 20th century.

a) 1920–1943: Lebanon under French Mandate

Buzzing with economic, political, and social life, Beirut became the capital of Greater Lebanon.³⁵ Whereas the role of Beirut was central prior to 1920, the formation of the new state under the mandate gave the Maronite³⁶ leaders of Mount Lebanon an incentive to move to Beirut and compete with the traditionally Sunni and Greek Orthodox politicians and economic elites (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 93). The mandate period was marked by unequal development as between the centre and the peripheries. As noted by Mackey (2006, p. 13), 'Greater Beirut and the mountainous areas to south and north of the city were like a

³⁵ For a detailed history of Beirut and how it became the capital of Lebanon, check Kassir (2010)

³⁶ Inter-Maronite rivalry was typical during that period since many leaders were jostling for position in political life under the mandate. This is best depicted by the conflict between Emile Edde and Bechara El Khoury (Traboulsi p. 93; Harris, p. 183).

prosperous city state while the Akkar region in the north, Jabal Amil in the South and Bekaa Valley in the East, largely populated by Sunni and Shiite Muslims, were zones of economic stagnation.’ This uneven regional development stimulated the politicisation of the different communities in Lebanon.

Lebanon’s first written constitution was proclaimed in 1926 and adopted a confessional distribution of electoral seats, thus institutionalising the consociational system within the first Lebanese Republic (Hamdan, 1997, p. 38). During the same year, the Shia were granted the right, as a separate community, to have officially recognised courts within this new consociational system. The recognition of the Ja’fari School of Jurisprudence gave the Shia community legal autonomy separate from the Sunni courts. Shia leaders in the marginalised South and the Beqa’ started to participate in the Beirut-based government. As argued by Max Weiss (2010), this institutionalisation of Shi’ism in Lebanon under the French mandate marked the beginning of the sectarianisation of the Shia community.

The 1920s and 1930s were also a period of high political mobilisation. Union-led protests burgeoned on the streets, and campuses (especially at the American University of Beirut) experienced a growing radical student activism throughout the 1920s. However, the 1930s witnessed the establishment of most of the Lebanese right-wing political parties. Inspired by European fascism, Antoun Saadeh – a Greek Orthodox student at the American University of Beirut – established the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party in 1933, which promoted a Greater Syrian identity and opposed both the French mandate and Arab nationalism (Harris, 2012, p. 187). In 1936, the signing of a Franco-Lebanese treaty angered the Sunni community, and the Kata’ib (or Phalange) paramilitary organisation was established in November of that year to recruit Maronite youth. The party was led by Pierre Gemayel, a Maronite pharmacist from an old sheikh family in Bikfaya, who was inspired by the European fascist youth movements. The Sunni leaders were equally influenced by the far right-wing youth movements of Europe

Sect	1911 (Mount Lebanon)	1921 (Greater Lebanon)	1932 (Greater Lebanon)
Maronites	58.40%	32.70%	29.11%
Greek Orthodox	12.62%	13.37%	9.88%
Greek Catholic	7.70%	6.97%	5.97%
Other Christians	0.73%	2.08%	5.77%
Total Christians	79.45%	55.12%	50.73%
Sunnis	3.50%	20.48%	22.63%
Shia	5.64%	17.23%	19.81%
Druze	11.40%	7.16%	6.82%
Total Muslims	20.54%	44.87%	49.26%
Total (in number)	414,858	609,069	782,415

Source: based on Zamir (1985, p. 98)

Table 2: Population distribution from 1911 to 1932 based on census data

(Harris, 2012, p. 190). In 1937, the Sunni Arab nationalists established the Najjada (scouts) party in order to attract their youth into disciplined organisations. This period was a turning point in the creation of sectarian-based political parties in Lebanon. It is worth noting here that the sectarian mobilisation and organisation of the Shia community only took place later on, as explained below.

In 1932, the mandate authorities conducted the second census.³⁷ Unlike with the 1921 census boycott, the Sunni leaders advocated maximal Muslim registration in order to leverage their demographic weight within the republic. It is interesting to note here that in the early years of independence, Sunni leaders still felt the right to speak on behalf of the Shia community and used their demographic superiority as ‘Muslims’ to increase their political stake within the Lebanese system (Harris, 2012, p. 185). As per Table 2, the results of the

³⁷ For a detailed discussion of the 1932 census, see Maktabi, Rania (1999).

census revealed a small Christian majority (51%) and a growing Muslim community (49%). This shifting trend in the demographics of the communities later became an explosive matter in Lebanese politics given the importance of size for political representation. The 1932 census was the last census in the modern history of Lebanon. Today, all available statistics are no more than estimates and speculations.

The institutionalisation of sectarianism was further entrenched in 1936 with the declaration of Decree No. 60 L.R. by the French High Commissioner Damien de Martel (Salloukh, 2015, p. 32). The decree institutionalised sectarianism at the social and legal level by officially recognising the existence of 18 sects in Lebanon and giving them the right to establish and follow their own religious courts for personal status laws (*Qanun al-Ahwal al-Shakhsiya*). Fifteen separate personal status laws were adopted to regulate marital, familial, and other personal matters (see Appendix 1). Within this system, still valid today, citizens in Lebanon can only legally exist through their sectarian communities. Thus, following Brubaker's (2004) and Wimmer's (2013) theories of ethnic group formation, these acts of political and legal institutionalisation transformed sectarian categories into sectarian communities that organised as political groups.

The year 1940 brought sweeping political changes as WWII unfolded. Nazi Germany defeated France and the Vichy government took control of the Levant. In June 1941, Britain imposed Allied authority over Lebanon and Syria with the help of De Gaulle (Kerr, 2006, p. 115). Churchill appointed General Spears as the British representative in Lebanon and Syria. By 1942, with the support of Spears, the aspirations of the main Maronite and Sunni leaders converged in seeking the removal of the French mandate. Most Maronite leaders were willing to accept a small dose of Arabism in return for support from the major Muslim leaders to end the mandate. Similarly, Sunni leaders were ready to agree to a Lebanese state. However,

whereas Sunni elites viewed this as a temporary step on the road to Arab unity,³⁸ Maronite leaders viewed it as a final solution to the Lebanese national question (Kerr, 2006, p. 123). Compromise by the principal Sunni and Maronite leaders on their aspirations for independence did not resolve the opposing views they held vis-à-vis Lebanon's national identity. These divergent aspirations re-emerged after independence in 1943 and took the form of a Muslim–Christian split despite the nuanced reality of intragroup divisions and intergroup alliances.

b) 1943–1952: Independence and the National Pact

On October 8, 1943, the newly elected President Bechara El Khoury appointed Riad Al Solh as prime minister. As soon as he took office, Al Solh proposed several new laws to curtail the French influence in Lebanon. On November 8 the parliament unilaterally ratified the 1926 constitution under deletion of the role of the mandatory power. Three days later, the Free French delegate-general Jean Helleu ordered the arrest of El Khoury, Al Solh and all government ministers, who were detained in the Rashaya prison. The French took further steps by arresting the Maronite Kata'ib leader Pierre Gemayel, which led his followers to join the Sunni Najjada supporters in protests against the French (Harris, 2012, p. 198). This co-mobilisation consolidated the unity between Christian and Muslim protesters. On November 21, 1943, under British pressure, France released the politicians, marking the end of the French political mandate³⁹ and the start of a new chapter in Lebanese politics under the banner of independence.

³⁸ Arab nationalist ideology envisioned one Arab nation stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Sea, including all Arab-speaking countries.

³⁹ The French military presence in Lebanon only ended in 1946 (Harris, 2012, p. 200).

The post-1943 independent republic was guided by two founding texts: a formal written constitution based on that of 1926, and an informal oral agreement between Bechara El Khoury and Riad Al Solh. The oral accord, known as the National Pact, can be found in the ministerial declaration of October 7, 1943 (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 110). The Pact was a reformulation of the consociational system as a system of representation of the Muslim and Christian communities. It preserves the role of President for a Maronite, Prime Minister for a Sunni. It was not until 1947, following wide mobilisation and protests against under-representation, that the Shia were granted the speaker position (Kerr, 2006, p. 125). The Pact divides parliamentary seats on a ratio of six Christians to five Muslims, based on the 1932 census (Picard, 2002, p. 70). Similarly, the cabinet has to be representative of the main communities in the country. In fact, until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1975, the Pact allowed representatives of the Maronite sect to secure 'key political positions in the government, the army, and the Deuxième Bureau (internal security), as well as sensitive positions in the state administration, such as in the Directory General of Personal Affairs (DGPA) and the Directory General of Public Security (DGPS)' (Harik, 1966). In addition, the Pact brings compromise to the question of national identity and external alliances: Lebanon was not viewed as a purely Arab country, but as 'a country with an Arab outlook' (Kerr, 2006, p. 133). Moreover, the Pact adopts neutrality in external/regional conflicts. In fact, as expressed by Kerr (2006, p. 134), 'The Pact did cement the Christian-Muslim dichotomy that preceded 1943 and established unnatural political lines that were more Maronite-Sunni than Christian-Muslim.' However, as explained by Hudson (1976), the National Pact has two main limitations. Firstly, by adopting a confessional distribution of power, the Pact provided a static power-sharing agreement that does not take into account the shifting demographic size of the different communities. Secondly, the position of neutrality regarding regional and external conflicts proved to be untenable after the 1948 Palestinian Nakba and the creation of

Israel. Lebanon's position vis-à-vis the Arab–Israeli conflict became a central question that divided Lebanese politics until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1975.

c) 1952–1958: Chamounism, the 1958 War and the Rise of the Sunnis

In 1952, Camille Chamoun, a close ally to the West, was appointed as the second president of an independent Lebanon. Enjoying the wide power delegated to the President of the Republic under the National Pact, Chamoun ruled in an authoritarian manner (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 129). However, the rise of Abdel Nasser in Egypt in 1954 and the spread of pan-Arabism attracted a wide audience in Lebanon, especially among Sunni Muslims. Chamoun's refusal to cut diplomatic ties with Britain and France following the Suez Crisis of 1956 led to widespread protests by local Nasserites, as well as the resignation of Sunni Prime Minister Yafi, who quickly aligned himself with the opposition (Harris, 2012, p. 209). In March 1957, Chamoun made his alliance with the USA clear when he linked Lebanon to the Eisenhower doctrine to fight communism (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 133). Chamoun considered that the adherence of some Lebanese (mainly Muslims) to Abdel Nasser broke the National Pact's agreement to remain neutral regarding regional politics; while the opposition considered that Chamoun's adherence to the Eisenhower doctrine contradicted the National Pact's agreement not to align Lebanon with Western powers (Harris, 2012, p. 210).

Matters came to a head in February 1958 when Egypt and Syria unified under the United Arab Republic (UAR). This was celebrated in Lebanon (Traboulsi 2012, p. 134) by the pan-Arabists, who welcomed inclusion in the newly formed Arab republic. Chamoun became an increasingly unpopular president. Riots broke out in May 1958 in different parts of the country, taking the form of a 'mini-civil war' that lasted for two months and resulted in the election of army commander Fouad Shehab to succeed Chamoun on September 24 (Harris, 2012, p. 212).

d) 1958–1970: Shehabism and the Palestinian Resistance

Shehab started his term with a meeting with Nasser on the Lebanese–Syrian border (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 139). This brought him closer to a wide range of Lebanese who perceived Nasser as an Arab national hero. Under Shehab's presidency, there was a wave of urbanisation characterised by the move of many Shia peasants from their rural villages to Beirut's suburbs, where they settled in underprivileged areas known as the 'belt of misery'. This was mainly due to a shift in the economy from the manufacturing and agricultural sectors to the service sector with a heavy focus on banking (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 141; Harris, 2012, p. 216). This period also saw the ascension of the Shia cleric Musa al-Sadr and the establishment of the Higher Shia Islamic Council (Harris, 2012, p. 217). Meanwhile, as explained in the next chapter, increasing fertility rates amongst the Shia community started to tip the demographic balance towards a Muslim majority. Although Shehab had introduced favourable reforms, such as the development of public education and the establishment of the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), he maintained tight control over the trade unions, protecting the economic interests of both the Christian and Muslim oligarchs (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 142).

In the spring of 1964, Fouad Shehab was succeeded by his ally, Charles Helou. During Helou's term, social movements and socio-economic demands rose with labour and teachers' strikes reaching a peak in 1966. These movements were backed by leftist and nationalist organisations (Traboulsi 2012, p. 146). At the same time, an 'anti-foreigner' discourse was on the rise amongst the right-wing – mainly Maronite-based – parties, who warned against the presence of Palestinian refugees and Syrian workers in Beirut's eastern slums (Qarantina), and accused leftists of destabilising the economy by backing the spread of 'international communism' (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 149). In October 1966, the largest bank, Intra, collapsed, marking the entry of the economy into a serious crisis (Harris, 2012, p. 218). However, the

final blow to Shehabism came with the June 1967 Arab defeat during the Six Days War. The entry of the Palestinian fighters (the Fedayeen) to Lebanon transformed the southern part of the country into a battlefield. In December 1968, Beirut-based Palestinians from the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked an El Al plane going to Athens. Israel retaliated by destroying thirteen Middle East Airlines planes in Beirut Airport (Harris, 2012, p. 222). By that time, the country was split into two camps: the Tripartite Alliance (the Hilf) and the National Movement Alliance (the Nahj). The Hilf mainly comprised Maronite leaders (Chamoun, Edde, and Gemayel) who expressed their position as being against ‘Nasserism, Communism, and Zionism’ (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 154). On the other hand, the Nahj included Kamal Jumblatt’s Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), in addition to leftist and nationalist parties – such as the Nasserites, Baathists, Communists, and the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP) – who supported the free movement of Palestinian resistance in Lebanon (Harris, 2012, p. 223). The tension between the two camps led to a political deadlock that lasted almost a year. In November 1969, under Syrian and Egyptian pressure, the Cairo Agreement⁴⁰ granted the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) free military movement. The treaty infuriated the main Maronite leaders, who considered the agreement to be a blow to Lebanon’s sovereignty.

In summary, by the end of the Helou regime in 1970, the start of the drift into civil war was marked by polarisation between the mainly right-wing, Lebanese Nationalist Christian Hilf and the predominantly leftist, Arab Nationalist Nahj over the Palestinian presence, together with deteriorating economic conditions and the heightened social mobilisation of the population.

⁴⁰ The Cairo Agreement was signed between the Lebanese army commander General Emile Bustani and the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

e) 1970–1975: The Slide into Civil War⁴¹

In September 1970, the sudden death of Gamal Abdel Nasser had an immense impact on regional developments. Between September 1970 and July 1971, Jordan expelled the PLO, and thousands of Palestinians – including Yasser Arafat – moved to Lebanon to settle in refugee camps (Harris, 2012, p. 224). In September 1972, Israel retaliated to the killing of Israeli athletes during the Munich Olympic Games by raiding Lebanon, causing massive damage in the South and pushing many families to leave their villages for Beirut. The attack alarmed Christian leaders, who perceived the flood of Palestinians as a threat. In May 1973, violent clashes took place between the Lebanese army – backed by Gemayel's Phalange Party – and the PLO – supported by the leftist organisations. Two weeks later, the Melkart Agreement was signed, reiterating the principles of the Cairo Agreement (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 187). The accord was considered a defeat for the Lebanese army backed by the right-wing Christian parties, and a victory for the Palestinian and leftist organisations.

By 1973, the country was drowning in mass mobilisation by workers' unions, students, and activists, supported by leftist organisations. The crisis of agriculture, high inflation, hike in rent levels, growth of the belt of misery around Beirut, growing inequalities, and political tension all brought people onto the streets. At that time, 'Beirut was classified as being more expensive than Washington, DC' (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 161). This had led to a burst of protests from several quarters, ranging from the students' radical movements after 1967, to the peasants' revolt in Akkar in 1968, the Ghandour factory workers strikes in 1972, and the wave of violent demonstrations that followed. Growing inequality in development as between Beirut and the peripheries contributed to the rise of the Shia cleric Musa al-Sadr's 'Movement of the *Mahrumeen* (Deprived)', later to become the Amal paramilitary

⁴¹ For more historical details about the 1970s and the civil war period, see Hanf (2015) or Kassir (1994)

movement. What was remarkable in the social conflicts of that time is the absence of a confessional overtone. People were mobilising on political or economic grounds, not on communal ones. Even when the Shia community started to become politicised with al-Sadr, a discourse of economic deprivation had to be used in order to attract followers (Hanf, 2015, p. 108). As noted by Hanf (2015, p. 110), 'the social conflict of the 1960s and early 1970s was between strata, classes, and interest groups, not communities', which could mainly be attributed to the heavy involvement of the secular leftist and nationalist parties in everyday political life.

The year 1975 saw the culmination of all these economic, political, and social tensions. On February 26, a demonstration of fishermen in Sidon against a fishing company chaired by Chamoun became violent when the army opened fire on the protesters (mainly Palestinians and Nasserites), leading to a number of casualties. Amongst the injured was the Lebanese Nasserite leader, Maarouf Saad, who died a few days later (Harris, 2012, p. 227). These events led to a series of violent confrontations throughout March in Sidon, between the army on the one hand, and the Nasserite and Palestinian organisations on the other. In response, the Phalange mobilised in Beirut to show their support for the army. The split between the mainly Christian-based parties backing the army and the leftist and Palestinian organisations became even more entrenched. On April 13, shots were fired from a car at a Phalange congregation in a church in Ain al-Rummaneh. A few hours later, Phalange militiamen responded by killing twenty-seven Palestinians who were on a bus headed to Tal al-Zaatar camp. Fighting broke out in several parts of the country between Phalange and Palestinian organisations and their Lebanese leftist allies. This marked the slide into a civil war that would last fifteen years and cost approximately 150,000 lives.

III. The Lebanese Civil War: 1975–1989

a) The Two Years War: 1975–1977

Between May and October 1975, several ceasefires were negotiated. However, fighting always continued. In December 1975, the war took a clear sectarian turn with the ‘Black Saturday’ massacre: almost 200 Muslims, mostly port workers, were killed by the Christian Phalange on the basis of their identity cards (Harris, 2012, p. 236). Leftist organisations and the newly established Sunni militia, the Murabitoun, responded by pushing back the Phalange into East Beirut during battles that took place in the Beirut hotel district (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 198). The capital became geographically divided, with a demarcation line between Christian-controlled East Beirut and Muslim/leftist/Palestinian-controlled West Beirut. Expulsion and killing of people based on their sectarian identity became widespread throughout 1976. Although the National Movement in West Beirut was not exclusively Muslim, the conflict quickly took on a Christian–Muslim framing: East Beirut was controlled by the Lebanese Front and comprised exclusively Christian parties who viewed their mobilisation in sectarian terms. Once again, the boundaries between political and sectarian identities became blurred.

In March 1976, Kamal Jumblatt asked for the resignation of President Frangieh following the collapse of the army. However, there was a quick response from Damascus and Hafez al-Assad, who backed Frangieh by sending military troops into the Beqa’ in April 1976. Christian leaders considered that the gains from a Syrian intervention outweighed the losses, since the new coalition would provide them with an opportunity to defeat the Left and the Palestinians. In the meantime, Christian militias intensified their siege on the Tal El Zaatar Palestinian camp. Bachir Gemayel, son of Pierre, united the command of the Christian militia paramilitary organisations under the banner of the ‘Lebanese Forces’ (Harris, 2012, p. 238). A few months later, on August 12, Tal El Zaatar camp fell, and around 100,000 – mainly

Shia – residents left the eastern suburbs of Beirut to settle in the southern suburb of Dahieh, which later became the main stronghold of Hezbollah in Beirut. The Tal El Zaatar events alarmed the Arab community. In October 1976, a special Arab summit in Riyadh agreed to military intervention. However, most Arab countries that sent troops to Lebanon withdrew a few months later, leaving Lebanon in the hands of Syria, which acted in the regime's best interests. This led to several rounds of clashes between al-Assad's troops and Arafat's PLO. By then, as Harris (2012, p. 239) puts it, 'Asad had unfinished business with Kamal Junblat' who sided with Arafat. On March 16, 1977, the Druze *za'im* (leader) was assassinated. Although most fingers pointed at Syria, the Druze of Mount Lebanon attacked the Maronite villages of the mountain in a wave of anger that resulted in the killing of around 170 Christians (Harris, 2012, p. 239). The massacre marked the start of a new chapter in the grim history of the civil war. Having entered Lebanon as an ally to the Christian leaders and under Arab auspices, Syria's presence would last approximately four decades.

b) Operation Litani and the Reshuffling of the Deck: 1977-1982

Between 1977 and 1978, most Maronite leaders became disenchanted with the Syrian regime since it had started to become closer to the PLO with the common goal of fighting Israel. On March 11, 1978, the PLO launched an attack on Israel from within Lebanon in an attempt to disrupt the Egyptian–Israeli peace negotiations. The response was a devastating counterattack, with Israel invading the South up to the Litani River and killing around two thousand civilians (Harris, 2012, p. 240). Impressed by Israel's power, Gemayel and Chamoun started to perceive Israel as a potential ally in overturning al-Assad's power. This infuriated Frangieh – a close friend of the al-Assad family – who considered that Israel was the reason for Lebanon's suffering from the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. These divergent views led to clashes among the Christian militias in the north. On June 13, 1978, a Geagea-

led Kata'ib group killed Frangieh's son and other members of the family in the northern village of Ehden (Harris, 2012, p. 240). The assassination directly provoked al-Assad and triggered the first clashes between Syrian troops and Lebanese Forces. These clashes lasted from 1978 to 1981, with Beirut divided by a red line between a mainly Muslim West and a predominantly Christian East. During this time, the National Movement (including leftist parties such as the PSP, the Communist Party and the Organisation of Communist Action) had to make several concessions in order not to lose the 'Muslim street'. As noted by Traboulsi (2012, p. 220), the LNM's discourse 'was progressively slipping toward an Arab nationalist one with sectarian colours, in which sects were divided between "patriotic" and "non-patriotic" ones.'

Although the Druze PSP and the Sunni Murabitoun sided with the PLO and Syria against the Christian militias, defection within the Muslim political community came from the Shia Amal Movement, who remained close to Syria but clashed with the PLO. Following the Litani Operation and the killing and displacement of thousands of Shia in the South, Musa al-Sadr reckoned that the security of the Shia community took priority over the Palestinian cause. From 1979 onward, clashes often erupted between Amal militiamen on one side, and the PLO, the Left, and the Murabitoun on the other.

Within the Christian political camp, rising tension led to clashes between the second-generation of Chamouns and Gemayels. Dani Chamoun refused to integrate his National Liberal Party (NLP) military wing (the 'Tigers') into Bachir Gemayel's Lebanese Forces. The ensuing tension between the two parties led to clashes that resulted in the killing of 150–200 civilians in the summer of 1980 (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 215). During this period of the civil war, all boundaries were obscured: inter-communal as well as intra-communal clashes became commonplace.

c) The Israeli Invasion and the Rise of Hezbollah: 1982–1987

On June 6, 1982, Israel launched a large-scale operation into Lebanon, invading the South and besieging Beirut. The operation came in response to the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador in London (Harris, 2012, p. 243) and marked a new episode in the civil war.

On August 23, Bachir Gemayel was elected President of the Lebanese Republic with the backing of the US and Israel. Three weeks later, on September 14, Gemayel was assassinated by a member of the SSNP following his secret visit to Israel to meet Prime Minister Begin (Harris, 2012, p. 245). The Lebanese Forces immediately reacted, in two days conducting massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, murdering around a thousand Palestinian civilians and many Lebanese inhabitants of the camps (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 224; Harris, 2012, p. 245). Amin Gemayel, the older brother of Bachir, became Lebanon's president on September 21, 1982.

By 1983, Israel's occupation was still ongoing, but Syria and its allies started to regain the upper hand. The Druze leader, Walid Jumblatt, capitalised on the partial Israeli withdrawal in Mount Lebanon, taking his revenge on the Lebanese Forces who had committed atrocities during the Israeli occupation. He launched a war against Geagea in what has become known as the 'War of the Mountain'. This ended with Jumblatt's militiamen killing more than 1,500 Christian civilians, destroying many of their villages and forcing thousands to leave (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 230). The War of the Mountain ended with international mediation to lift the siege and evacuate Geagea and his troops.

Meanwhile, a new Shia group was on the rise. As a direct product of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Israeli invasion of 1982, Hezbollah was born out of the Shia Amal Movement when Hussein Moussawi established the 'Islamic Amal'. Unlike al-Sadr's version of Shia political Islam, the Islamic Amal – later called Hezbollah – believed in the

notion of the ‘governance of the jurisprudent’ (*wilayat al-faqih*) and was directly supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran. As early as June 1982, 1,500 Iranian Revolutionary Guards were sent to Lebanon to face the Israeli invasion and provide military training to Islamic Amal followers (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 229). The year 1983 witnessed a series of attacks by the group on the US embassy, compound, and headquarters. Israel retaliated by attacking Shia villages in the South during the commemoration of Ashoura⁴² and making a series of arrests. On February 16, 1984, Ragheb Harb, a religious leader of Islamic Amal, was killed by Israel. Hezbollah (the ‘Party of God’) was inaugurated on the first anniversary of Harb’s assassination (Harris, 2012, p. 247). On February 17, 1985, Israel withdrew into the border strip, keeping a part of the South under its occupation.

At the end of 1985, a new attempt to end the war was initiated through a Saudi-Syrian initiative.⁴³ On December 28, a Tripartite Agreement was signed in Damascus between the main militia leaders: Berri, Jumblatt, and Hobeika. However, Geagea reassumed leadership of the Lebanese Forces in January 1986, and Hobeika was expelled from East Beirut. This marked the collapse of the Tripartite Agreement.⁴⁴

In the meantime, the country’s economy was collapsing. The public debt had reached LL35 billion in 1985⁴⁵ (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 234), essentially because of militia control over tax and customs collection. Similarly, the currency had collapsed and the cost of living

⁴² Ashoura is a mourning ceremony through which Shia Muslims commemorate the killing of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, by the Umayyad caliph Yazid during the Karbala’ battle.

⁴³ Rafic Hariri was Saudi’s envoy to mediate the negotiations (Kerr, 2006, p. 150).

⁴⁴ The Tripartite Agreement was ‘resurrected after some years as the basis for the Ta’if Agreement’ (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 233).

⁴⁵ According to the Lebanese Central Bank database, the exchange rate in 1985 fluctuated between LL10.15 and LL18.10 for each \$1 (USD). Source: <http://www.bdl.gov.lb/webroot/statistics/table.php?name=t5282usd>, accessed on September 23rd, 2015)

increased spectacularly. At that time, paramilitary organisations were a main source of salaries for many Lebanese. Moreover, militias developed a network of social and public services in the areas under their control to replace the crumbling state.⁴⁶ The setup of those services increased people's dependency and deepened the system of clientelism and patronage.

d) The Ta'if Agreement and Aoun's 'War of Liberation': 1987–1990

By 1987, the decline of leftist organisations had given way to increased sectarianisation of Muslim political activity (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 235). However, although the Shia and the Druze communities succeeded in maintaining their political presence through their community leaders and sectarian-based political parties, the Sunni community suffered from a lack of proper representation, especially after the liquidation of the only Sunni organisation – the Murabitoun. In addition, sectarian groups were far from being homogenous. In the South, an inter-Shia clash took place in Nabatieh between Hezbollah and Amal in May 1988, and it soon spread to Beirut's southern suburb. Intra-sectarian conflicts took over inter-sectarian ones with Christian militias fighting each other and Muslim militias repeatedly clashing: each leader was trying to establish his supremacy over his community (Picard, 2002, p. 153).

On the last day of his tenure, Gemayel went to Damascus in an attempt to renew his term; however, President al-Assad rejected his approach (Harris, 2012, p. 254). On September 22, hours before leaving office, President Gemayel declared a military cabinet and appointed the Maronite army commander General Michel Aoun as prime minister (Kerr, 2006, p. 151). Muslim politicians quickly opposed this appointment, since the position was reserved for a

⁴⁶ For a detailed account on the economic role of militias during the civil war, see Elizabeth Picard (2000) and Judith Harik (1994).

Sunni by the terms of the National Pact (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 246). Salim al-Hoss, who had resigned from the position, returned and declared himself the only legitimate prime minister in the country. Lebanon found itself without a president and divided between two competing prime ministers: Aoun in East Beirut, and al-Hoss in West Beirut (Harris, 2012, p. 254).

In January 1989, the Council of Ministers of the Arab League appointed a commission with representatives from six countries to address the Lebanese crisis and Syria's role. The commission was headed by Kuwait and excluded any Syrian representation (Kerr 2006, p. 152). This gave a boost to Aoun who, on March 14, declared his 'War of Liberation' against the Syrian presence in Lebanon. A blockade of Beirut and heavy shelling continued for six months, leaving around 850 dead and 3,000 wounded (Harris, 2006, p. 252). In the meantime, at the Arab Summit in Casablanca in May 1989, the six states' commission was replaced by a tripartite committee comprising Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Algeria. The committee quickly acknowledged that no agreement to end the war in Lebanon could be reached without Syria's approval. On September 14, 1989, the troika called the sixty-two surviving Lebanese deputies to convene at Ta'if in Saudi Arabia in order to negotiate a new agreement to end the war (Harris, 2012, p. 255). A month later, on October 22, the Ta'if Agreement was signed, producing a new power-sharing formula and legitimising Syrian tutelage over Lebanon.⁴⁷

As with the *Règlement Organique* and the National Pact, the Ta'if Agreement accepted that the essence of the conflict was sectarian, with its solution lying in the revision of the

⁴⁷ The Ta'if called for a special relationship between Lebanon and Syria, where Syria would 'gratefully' help the Lebanese state in regaining its control and sovereignty (Maila, 1992, p. 82). The Agreement postulated a redeployment of Syrian troops to the Beqa' 'two years after the constitutional amendments based on the Ta'if Agreement went into effect in September 1990' (El Khazen, 2003, p. 57). However, no clear date for a complete Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon was set, leaving this issue for a later agreement to be made by a joint Lebanese-Syrian commission (Maila, 1992, p. 82).

sectarian power-sharing formula⁴⁸ adopted previously. It therefore reproduced the corporate consociational system of the National Pact with modifications that altered the balance of power. Despite the fact that the Christians had become a numerical minority, the agreement maintained equal representation between the Christian and Muslim communities. Although the Ta'if did not directly stipulate that the president must be Maronite, the prime minister Sunni, and the speaker of parliament Shia, it preserved this distribution as part of the customs that formed Lebanon's powerful unwritten agreements (Kerr, 2006, p. 167). However, as further explained in the next chapter, the Ta'if reshuffled the balance of power, shifting executive power away from the Maronite president into the Council of Ministers, which automatically weakened the Maronite president and empowered the Sunni prime minister. Similarly, the Ta'if Accord 'embodied the political and military rise of the Shi'a community' (Salloukh, 2015, p. 21): it increased the powers of the Shia speaker and called for the disarmament of all militias except Hezbollah, given its role as a guerrilla resistance to Israeli occupation.

All parties accepted the Ta'if Agreement in one way or another, with the exception of Aoun who considered it to be a major blow to Lebanon's sovereignty (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 248). Aoun's position brought him remarkable popular support. As noted by Harris (2006, p. 264), 'After Ta'if, large crowds congregated daily to Ba'abda, reaching tens of thousands by the end of October, to applaud Aoun's pronouncements that the Ta'if Agreement negated Lebanese sovereignty.' However, this did not stop its implementation. On November 5 the US-backed René Moawad was elected President. A few days later, on November 22, he was

⁴⁸ Although the Ta'if called for a gradual abolition of political sectarianism, it did not specify a clear mechanism or timetable (Maila, 1992, pp. 49–53). In fact, the first elected parliament had to form a National Committee to 'study and propose the means to ensure the abolition of confessionalism' (Salam, 2003, p. 44). However, as time has shown, this has not materialised since it is not in the interest of the ruling political elites (Salloukh, 2015, p. 21).

assassinated in a car bomb in West Beirut. It is believed that the Syrians wanted to get rid of him following his attempt at reconciliation with Aoun (Harris, 2012, p. 256). Elias Hrawi, a second-rank Maronite politician with close connections to Damascus, became President on November 16, 1989. He announced a government under Salim al-Hoss, who quickly removed Aoun from his position as army commander and replaced him with the Syrian-favoured Emile Lahoud. Aoun refused to accept the new arrangement, and in a last attempt to maintain Christian political influence, he launched his war for 'unifying the guns'⁴⁹ against Geagea (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 249). Between January and May 1990, East Beirut and other Christian-controlled areas were turned into a ferocious battleground. In parallel, armed conflict resumed between Hezbollah and Amal in December 1989, and spread from the Beqa' to South, then West Beirut. The conflict lasted until Syria interfered in May 1990 to put an end to inter-Shia fighting (Hanf, 2015, p. 603). By the summer of 1990, Lebanon was completely divided into small territories controlled by sectarian militias fighting over the control of their own communities.

The end of Aoun's power trip came in October 1990 when Syria was given the green light by the US to interfere militarily. By mid-1990, the regional scene started to change with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Aoun's main external ally, Saddam Hussein, was now preoccupied with his own war. At the same time, the US needed to form a coalition with Arab states in order to back Kuwait against Iraq. Al-Assad was among the first to offer his help to the US against Saddam Hussein (Kerr, 2006, p. 157). In return, the US required the Ta'if authorities to officially demand Syrian military intervention in Lebanon (Harris, 2012, p. 257). On October 13, 1990, the Syrian air force shelled the Baabda presidential palace where Aoun resided.

⁴⁹ By 'unifying the gun', Aoun meant the dissolution of the Lebanese Forces and its absorption into his army brigades (Harris, 2006, p. 268).

		1975	1989
Christians	Southern Mount Lebanon (Shouf, Aley, Upper Metn)	55%	5%
	West Beirut and Suburbs	35%	5%
	Beqa'	40%	15%
	South Lebanon	26%	10%
Muslims	Eastern Suburbs (Beirut)	40%	5%
	South Lebanon (Security Belt)	50%	10%
	Koura, Batroun	10%	2%
	East Beirut	8%	1%

Source: Salim Nasr (2003, p. 149)

Table 3: Sectarian redistribution of Lebanese communities

He fled to the French embassy and was later exiled to Paris (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 246).

After fifteen years of fighting, the civil war took a dramatic human and economic toll: around 71,000 killed, 97,000 injured, 17,000 disappearances, and almost 800,000 displaced, not to mention the hundreds of thousands who emigrated and the almost total destruction of large parts of the country (Traboulsi, 2012, p.244). During those years, Lebanese society underwent radical transformations that shaped the post-war era. The war ended with a new politico-sectarian consociational system and a transformed social geography (Nasr, 2003, p. 148) divided along Christian–Muslim fault lines despite all the nuances of intra-communal divisions.

As shown in Table 3, the geographical redistribution of the sectarian communities by the end of the Civil War indicates that the Christian presence dramatically decreased in Southern Mount Lebanon, West Beirut, the Beqa', and the South. Meanwhile, the Muslim presence considerably dropped in Eastern Beirut, Northern areas (such as Koura and Batroun), and in the Israeli-occupied areas in South Lebanon (the Security Belt).

The reshaping of the sectarian geography as a result of the Civil War was most obvious in the capital city, where a demarcation line (known as the Green line) emerged to divide the capital and separate the mainly Christian East Beirut from the predominantly Muslim West Beirut.

IV. 1990–2005: Lebanon under Syrian Tutelage

a) 1990–2000: A Decade under Hafez al-Assad

The Ta'if Agreement was translated into thirty-one constitutional amendments approved by parliament in August 1990 (Hanf, 2015, p. 610). Lebanon's second republic was thus announced. However, although the constitution was eventually amended and came into effect in September 1990, the implementation of the Ta'if was selective, and the post-Civil War period was marked by a heavy Syrian hegemony.

In December 1990, Prime Minister Omar Karami formed a National Unity Government 'staffed by the old elite, warlords, and Syria's loyalists' (Harris, 2012, p. 258).⁵⁰ Within months, the new political landscape started to shape up. In March 1991, Geagea resigned from the government after feeling marginalised by the Syrian authorities. By June 1991, the disarmament of all militias, except Hezbollah, was completed under Syrian supervision

⁵⁰ The government only had three anti-Syrian ministers from the Kata'ib and the LF (Hanf, 2015, p. 164).

(Hanf, 2015, p. 615). The Syrian regime needed to strongly anchor its presence in Lebanon before 1992 – the date stipulated by the Ta’if for the redeployment of Syrian troops to the Beqa’. For that purpose, a ‘Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination’ (Hanf, 2015, p. 617) was signed on May 22, 1991, to reinforce the legitimate Syrian military presence. A few months later, on September 1, a ‘Defense and Security Pact’ was signed between the two countries, specifying that security and strategic matters would be entrusted to Syria. Under these terms, the Syrian regime was able to ignore the Ta’if call for redeployment of its army, and to consolidate its control over Lebanon.

The agreements introduced a division of labour: whereas politics and security were to be handled from Damascus, trade and the economy were left for the Lebanese to deal with (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 252). By 1992, the economy was suffering badly. Unable to deal with the economic crisis and the deterioration of the currency, Karami resigned in May after strong street protests. An interim government was formed in order to prepare for the August parliamentary elections. On July 16 a new electoral law was passed ignoring the Ta’if Accord, expanding the parliament to 128 seats, and adopting obvious gerrymandering (Kerr, 2006, p. 172). The sizes of the electoral districts were reorganised to serve the interests of the Syrian regime. El Khazen (1998, p. 27) explains that while Muslim representatives were mainly elected by their co-religionists, Christian candidates would depend heavily on the votes of the Muslims. Feeling targeted, Christian leaders called for the boycott of the elections (El Hussein, 2012, p. 32), which led to a very low turnout.

In the aftermath of the 1992 elections, Syria needed a strong prime minister, able to reinvigorate the economy and stabilise the country. The Saudi-Lebanese billionaire, Rafic Hariri, was the best man for this mission, despite Syria’s worry regarding his strong relationship with the Saudi royal family and his close friendship with several world leaders. By October 1992, Lebanon’s new troika was formed with Elias Hrawi as President, Rafic

Hariri as Prime Minister, and Nabih Berri as Speaker. As argued by Mansour (2010, p. 86), ‘Hariri’s global persona and innumerable philanthropic activities across communal lines revived Sunni morale and sense of empowerment.’ However, this period was marked by an increased feeling of *ihbat* (marginalisation) amongst the Christian community. According to Khalaf (2002, p. 300), during the years of the Syrian tutelage, Muslims were ‘represented by their most established and credible political leaders’ (namely Hariri for the Sunnis, Berri for the Shia, and Jumblatt for the Druze). As for the Christian representatives (in the presidency or in consecutive cabinets), they were always of a ‘lesser stature and credibility’ (Khalaf, 2002, p. 300). Both Aoun and Gemayel⁵¹ were in exile, and the Lebanese Forces were banned in 1994 when Geagea was imprisoned after being convicted of the assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami in 1987 (Harris, 2012, p. 261). So, the Syrian authorities made sure to eliminate all strong Christian leaders who could possibly oppose them.

Under Hariri’s premiership, the country adopted its most neo-liberal economic policies. Although Hariri was able to stabilise the currency and achieve economic growth, this came at the expense of massive public debt and increased polarisation between social classes. While reconstruction was booming and aid funds were flooding into the country, only a minority of Lebanese prospered – businessmen, politicians and their networks. In fact, as argued by Baumann (2012), a new ‘contractor bourgeoisie’ emerged during that period and reached political power, replacing the traditional elites. Meanwhile, the 1990s witnessed the emigration of more than 100,000 young Lebanese in search of employment and better prospects abroad (Harris, 2012, p. 260).

⁵¹ Aoun was exiled to France until 2005, whereas Gemayel went into self-imposed exile until the summer of 2000 ([‘Gemayel Returns to Lebanon’](#), MEIB, 2000).

This period was also marked by flagrant corruption and abuse of public funds by Syrian and Lebanese officials. After the Ta'if Agreement, most of the pro-Syrian militia leaders and warlords became ministers, deputies, or top-ranked civil servants. They transformed their military power into economic control of most public funds. As expressed by Picard (2000, p. 318), 'Their control over public and private foreign aid gave them exceptional leverage to broaden their clientele and thus to renew their legitimacy.' Examples include the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) dominated by Rafic Hariri and his protégés, the Central Fund for the Displaced (CFD) run by the Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, and the Council of the South controlled by the Shia Speaker Nabih Berri (Salloukh, 2015, pp. 44–50). In the meantime, and in response to a Hezbollah rocket attack into the Galilee region, a massive Israeli attack in 1993 on the South gave Syria the opportunity to further strengthen its position in Lebanon. The US turned to Syria for a ceasefire, and al-Assad positioned himself in Lebanon as the guardian of the resistance. This attack increased Hezbollah's popularity and made the strategic role of Syria in Lebanon almost unassailable (Harris, 2006, p. 281). A few years later, in April 1996, Israel launched 'Operation Grapes of Wrath' in an attempt to end Hezbollah's operations in North Israel. This time, the shelling was more brutal, and it culminated on April 18 with the Qana massacre when 102 civilians sheltering in a UN compound were killed. This attracted widespread media coverage and further convinced a wide section of the Lebanese population that Syria was their strategic ally.

In 1998, Bashar al-Assad, son of President Hafez al-Assad, took over the Lebanese file, and adopted a more openly authoritarian style. In October 1998, army commander Emile Lahoud was elected President and Salim al-Hoss was appointed Prime Minister. Bashar al-Assad disliked Hariri's growing internal and regional weight and wanted to marginalise him. He encouraged Lahoud and al-Hoss to launch a campaign against Hariri, accusing him of corruption (Harris, 2012, p. 263; Baroudi, 2002; Nizameddine, 2006). The allegations pushed

both Hariri and Jumblatt into opposition in 1998, although neither adopted a clear public anti-Syrian stance. However, the regional scene started to change in 1999, following the arrival of Ehud Barak to power in Israel. After intensified Israeli operations in South Lebanon throughout 1999 and 2000, Israel started to pull its troops out on May 22, 2000. Hezbollah spread its forces in the liberated area and declared its victory on May 25. A few weeks later, on June 10, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad died and was succeeded by his son Bashar.

b) 2000–2004: Israeli Withdrawal and Lebanon under Bashar al-Assad

The years 2000–2004 were marked by a fierce crackdown on any opposition to Syrian hegemony in Lebanon. After the withdrawal of Israel from the South, the Syrian presence and the arms of Hezbollah became highly contested issues. The parliamentary elections of July/August 2000 marked a strong comeback for Rafic Hariri, who was then designated Prime Minister. However, his tense relationship with both Bashar al-Assad and Lahoud made his years in office difficult. Not consulted on security matters, Hariri became increasingly isolated. On the one hand, he was sidelined when it came to internal security matters such as the crackdown on anti-Syrian activists orchestrated by Lahoud and al-Assad's security apparatus. On the other hand, his relationship with Hezbollah became lukewarm after its clashes with Israel in April 2002 over the Sheb'a farms⁵² (Harris, 2012, p. 266). However, Hariri still had considerable control over the economy. In February 2001 and November 2002, he managed to sign economic agreements for foreign aid and soft loans at the Paris I and Paris II meetings (Dibeh, 2007). Nonetheless, Hariri was widely criticised for his neo-liberal economic policies. He often clashed with Lahoud over his economic decisions and

⁵² The Sheb'a Farms are territories that Israel took from the Syrians in 1967; however, they became contested after 2000 since there were claims that the land was Lebanese.

positioning, especially after the crisis instigated by the privatisation of mobile phone companies reached a peak in 2002/3 (Nizameddine, 2006, p. 105).

Elsewhere, opposition to Syria had been growing since 2000. With the main Christian leaders either in exile or in prison, the Maronite Patriarch Sfeir headed the Christian opposition under the banner of the Qornet Shehwan Gathering (Shebaya, 2007, p. 258). In September 2000, the Council of Maronite Bishops issued a declaration calling for a Syrian withdrawal. President Lahoud quickly condemned this statement, and ‘the Sunni mufti and other Sunni, Shi’ite and Druze sheikhs spoke of their “astonishment” and reminded their people of the sacrifices made by “sisterly Syria” to preserve a united Lebanon’ (Johnson, 2007, pp. 152–153). In parallel, Jumblatt, a time-long ally of Damascus, made a political U-turn when he openly criticised Syria’s interference in the elections of 2000 (Harris, 2012, p. 266). As noted by Blandford (2009, p. 81), ‘it was the first time since 1990 that a senior non-Christian figure had publicly criticized the Syrian presence.’

In 2001, anti-Syrian mobilisation grew with mainly Christian university students holding sit-ins and demonstrations. These protests were harshly repressed by the Lebanese–Syrian security apparatus. In August 2001, Patriarch Sfeir visited Jumblatt in the mountains, marking a public Maronite–Druze reconciliation. Jumblatt’s rapprochement with the Christian opposition upset the Syrians, who reacted by arresting hundreds of anti-Syrian activists in the mass protests that followed this visit (Harris, 2006, p. 294). A few months later, fearing a Syrian backlash, Jumblatt tried to repair his relationship with Damascus with the help of Hariri’s Syrian friends such as Vice President Khaddam. However, all cards were reshuffled in 2003.

The Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in March 2003 had clear repercussions in Lebanon. Syria’s stance against the US invasion and the opening of its borders for fighters to infiltrate Iraq marked a new phase in regional politics. In December 2003, the US congress passed the

Syrian Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act. As expressed by Harris (2012, p. 267), 'Just as U.S. President Bush senior had opened the gate to Syrian hegemony in Lebanon in 1990, rewarding Syrian cooperation against Saddam Hussein, so President Bush junior revoked approval of this hegemony in response to Syrian facilitation of attacks on U.S. forces in Iraq.'

Matters in Lebanon came to a head in 2004, when Bashar al-Assad wanted to impose an extension of President Lahoud's term for an additional three years. By that year, the tension between Lahoud and Hariri had reached its climax. Both Hariri and Jumblatt opposed a constitutional amendment for the extension of the President's term. In August 2004, Hariri was called to Damascus where President al-Assad threatened to 'break Lebanon over his head' (Harris, 2012, p. 268) if he did not extend for Lahoud. Fearful of Syrian repercussions, Hariri had his government approve the constitutional amendment, and Lahoud was re-elected President by the majority of parliament with the exception of 29 MPs. Unhappy, the US and France sought to increase pressure on Syria by subtly backing the opposition and co-sponsoring UN Security Council resolution 1559. Passed on September 2, 2004, the resolution called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, indirectly hinting at Syria. It also stipulated the disarmament of Hezbollah and called for new elections free from external intervention (Harris, 2006, p. 299). The resolution infuriated al-Assad and his allies in Lebanon (i.e. Lahoud and Hezbollah), who reacted with even more repression. On October 1, a Druze opposition politician of the PSP, Marwan Hamadeh, was targeted in a car bomb that failed to kill him. According to Harris (2006, p. 300), the attempt bore the mark of Syria. Realising that the tension with Damascus was only going to escalate, Hariri resigned on October 20, 2004. Omar Karami was appointed to form a new government and prepare for the May 2005 elections. Keeping a low profile, Hariri aligned himself with the opposition that mainly comprised Maronite parties and leaders, in addition to Walid Jumblatt's Druze

PSP. Hariri's plan was to consolidate the opposition in order to win the 2005 elections. On December 13, 2004, the broad opposition coalition met at the Bristol Hotel in Beirut, marking a clear shift in regional and internal alliances.

Two months later, on February 14, 2005, a massive explosion shook the centre of Beirut: Rafic Hariri was assassinated on his way back from parliament. The history of Lebanon took a new turn.

V. Lebanon after the Hariri Assassination: 2005–2010

The assassination of Hariri triggered the biggest demonstrations in the history of the country (Harris, 2006, p. 303). Protests and sit-ins ravaged the heart of Beirut. Although this was not the first political assassination in the recent history of Lebanon,⁵³ the death of Hariri was a political earthquake in terms of what he represented at a national, regional, and international level. His funeral was attended by hundreds of thousands of angry mourners accusing Syria of his murder. On February 19, anti-Syrian protesters started an open sit-in labelled the 'Freedom Camp' around Martyr's Square, a few metres away from the Al Amin mosque, where Hariri was buried. Lebanese from different walks of life and political affiliations joined the sit-in and made four main demands: the withdrawal of Syrian troops; the resignation of the Omar Karami government; the establishment of an international tribunal to investigate the assassination of Hariri; and the resignation of security officials in Lebanon (Knio, 2005, p. 225). On February 28, Prime Minister Karami resigned amid heavy street protests. In response to the growing anti-Syrian movement, on March 8, 2005, pro-Syrian parties organised a massive demonstration that mobilised hundreds of thousands to thank Syria and reiterate their alliance with the al-Assad regime. A few days later, on March 14,

⁵³ For more details, see Are Knudsen (2010).

another huge demonstration took place in Beirut to commemorate the one-month anniversary of the Hariri assassination. These two protests, each allegedly assembling a million participants,⁵⁴ set the ground for a new political era. The country was split in two: the March 14 anti-Syrian coalition comprised members mainly of the Christian, Druze, and Sunni Muslim communities, whereas the March 8 counterdemonstrations by pro-Syrian groups included a majority of Shiites who rallied behind the Hezbollah and Amal parties.

After Karami's second resignation on March 14, an interim government headed by Mikati was formed in order to organise the May 2005 parliamentary elections (Knio, 2008, p. 447). A few days later, on March 27, a UN Security Council preliminary report pointed to a Syrian role in 'creating the atmosphere of intimidation preceding the crime, charged the Syrian/Lebanese security machine with negligence and covering up evidence, and recommended a full international inquiry' (Harris, 2012, p. 269). On April 7, UN Resolution 1595 was passed, authorising an inquiry into Hariri's assassination. Under intense international pressure and daily protests in Beirut, Syrian troops withdrew on April 26, after 29 years on Lebanese soil.

a) Elections, Assassinations, and Shifting Sectarian Fault lines

Adopting the 2000 electoral law, the May/June 2005 elections saw tactical alliances across the March 8 and March 14 coalitions. A 'Four Parties Coalition' was forged for the elections, bringing together Hariri's Future Movement, the PSP, Hezbollah, and the Amal Movement, despite their deep disagreement on political matters (Kota, 2012, p. 20). General Aoun, who had returned from exile on May 7, quickly realised that his plan to return as president was not warmly welcomed by his March 14 allies (Harris, 2012, p. 270). The elections resulted in the

⁵⁴ For a discussion on the number of protesters see *The Monthly* (2006).

March 14 coalition winning the majority of seats,⁵⁵ and a new government was formed a month later with Future Movement's Fouad Siniora as Prime Minister.⁵⁶ At the same time, Samir Geagea of the Lebanese Forces was released after eleven years in prison: the two main Christian leaders were back on the political scene.

Following the parliamentary elections of May/June 2005, Lebanon witnessed a series of assassinations, described by Harris (2012, p. 274) as 'the post-Cold War world's most dramatic political murder series'. The killings mainly targeted anti-Syrian politicians and journalists. On June 2, the prominent anti-Syrian journalist and intellectual Samir Kassir was killed in a car bomb. A few days later, on June 21, the former secretary general of the Communist Party, George Hawi, was also assassinated. Failed assassinations also targeted Defense Minister Elias Murr and television anchor May Chidiac. On December 12, a bomb blast killed Gebran Tueni, the *Annahar* publisher and a Christian anti-Syrian politician.

The country was in political and security turmoil, and the gap between the pro-Syrian and anti-Syrian camps continued to grow. The tension between the two political blocs quickly acquired sectarian overtones. In fact, during the first few months of what is known as the 'Cedar Revolution' in the West, or 'Independence 05' by some Lebanese protesters (Blanford, 2009, p. 156), both the media and political leaders focused on the image of national unity between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon. On February 17, 2005, journalist Gebran Tueni expressed this inter-confessional unity:

⁵⁵ March 14th coalition won 72 out of 128 seats without Aoun, who had won 21 seats. March 8th won the remaining 35 seats (Harris, p. 270).

⁵⁶ It was the first cabinet in the history of Lebanon that included Hezbollah representatives.

*Rafiq Hariri's funeral has put an end to the myth according to which Lebanon is divided and in need of the Syrian tutelage, at the political and security levels, so that the Lebanese people would not fight each other [...] This myth was abated yesterday when church bells rang in blended unison with the verses of the Koran rhymed out from Mosque minarets, in the presence of a crowd from all confessions, regions and political movements!*⁵⁷

Although in 2005 much attention was given to the so-called 'reconciliation' between both confessional groups, little importance was accorded to the growing split within the Muslim community. Whereas the salient sectarian cleavage in Lebanon prior to 2005 had been the Christian–Muslim division, a Sunni–Shia split had started to emerge. As noted by Assad AbuKhalil (2008a, p. 360),

No more is the classic Christian-Muslim divide relevant; nor the narrow Sunni-Maronite divide, which dominated the squabbles of the Lebanese political elite in pre-war Lebanon. The two new camps have crystallized along lines that are rather new to the history of the Lebanese conflict.

In February 2006, the balance of power tilted in favour of March 8 when Aoun signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hezbollah and realigned himself with the March 8 coalition. By giving 'Syria's allies cross-communal credibility' (Harris, 2012, p. 270), Aoun wanted to bargain a greater share of power and to increase his chances of becoming president after Lahoud's departure. Khashan (2012, p. 79) argued that 'a careful examination of the agreement shows that its real goal was the neutralization of Sunni political power' through a coalition of minorities (Shia and Maronites). At that time, tension between March 8 and March 14 reached its peak. In an attempt to calm the situation, Speaker Berri launched a 'National Dialogue' between March and June 2006, bringing together members of the two

⁵⁷ Gebran Tueni, 'The Rise of Lebanon and the Demise of Subordination'. *Naharnet Newsdesk*, Beirut, 17 February 2005.

blocs to discuss matters of division (Haddad, 2009, p. 407). However, these efforts did not prove fruitful: they were quickly overshadowed by the July 2006 war and the subsequent political deadlock.

b) The July 2006 War and its Aftermath⁵⁸

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah crossed the UN-demarcated Blue Line and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. According to Hezbollah officials, the operation's aim was to compel Israel to release Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners. Israel replied a few hours later by launching a full-scale war on Lebanon. Lasting 33 days, the Israeli reprisal led to the death of more than a thousand people and the massive destruction of infrastructure. Despite the high human, economic,⁵⁹ and political cost Lebanon had to pay, Hezbollah was able to frame the war as a 'divine victory'. The war ended with a UN-brokered ceasefire under resolution 1701 and opened what Fakhoury-Mühlbacher (2007, p. 4) called the 'Pandora's box of division'. Hezbollah's unilateral decision to go to war without the knowledge of the Lebanese government infuriated the March 14 Alliance, and the communal tension mounted with the exchange of accusations of treason (Salem, 2006). Matters came to a head on November 11, when six March 8 ministers resigned following the cabinet proposal to endorse an international tribunal for the Hariri assassination (Haddad, 2009, p. 408). Amidst this growing tension, a new wave of assassinations announced itself with the killing of the Kata'ib minister Pierre Gemayel on November 21, 2006. The country entered a period of still greater tension and political deadlock. On December 1, 2006, Hezbollah called for an open sit-in in downtown Beirut, urging the resignation of Prime Minister Siniora. The paralysis of

⁵⁸ For more details on the July 2006 War, see Hovsepian (2008) or Ibar (2007)

⁵⁹ See Sayed and Tzannatos (2008, p. 316).

Lebanese political life lasted until May 2008. It was often portrayed by the media, politicians, and religious leaders as a conflict between Sunni and Shia. Religious leaders did not miss the opportunity to intensify the conflict, mixing religious and political positions. For example, Haddad (2009, p. 408) notes that ‘in a symbolic gesture that underlines the intensity of the Shi’ite-Sunni discord – Sunnis supporting the government headed by a Sunni, and Shi’ite attempting to topple the cabinet – the Grand Mufti of Lebanon held a Friday prayer publicly in the office of the prime minister’. The events following Hezbollah’s mobilisation against the Siniora government quickly disintegrated into violence.

c) Degeneration into Violence: 2007–2008

The years 2007 and 2008 witnessed a series of violent outburst and clashes, which were somehow contained.⁶⁰ On January 23, 2007, the opposition (led by Hezbollah) enforced nationwide strikes, shutting down much of the country. The violence they sparked ended in the death of three people and the wounding of 176. Two days later, on January 25, a clash between students in the cafeteria of the Beirut Arab University quickly degenerated into violence that was framed as sectarian. Sunni pro-government and Shia anti-government activists and militiamen gathered round the university. Violent clashes erupted in the area (Tariq al-Jdideh), resulting in the death of four people and the wounding of around 200. In May 2007, clashes broke out in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp between the Lebanese army and an Islamist group called Fatah al-Islam. Smaller-scale clashes were registered almost on a daily basis in different neighbourhoods. For example, on January 26, 2008, young men mobilised in the area of Mar Mikha’il (Chiyah) in the southern suburb of Beirut (mainly Shia supporters of Hezbollah and Amal) and blocked roads with blazing tyres

⁶⁰ The events described in this section are mainly based on the information accessed through *Annahar* newspaper archives.

to protest power cuts in their area. This created clashes between the army and the protesters, resulting in three killed and 18 injured.

In the meantime, assassinations continued, with Future Movement politician Walid Eido assassinated in June 2007, and Kata'ib politician Antoine Ghanem killed in September 2007. However, the target of the assassinations shifted after Lahoud's departure from office in November 2007, leaving a vacuum in the presidential position. Starting in December 2007, it was the 'military and investigative apparatus' that was targeted (Harris, 2012, p. 273). General Francois Al Hajj, who was likely to become army commander, was assassinated on December 12, 2007. A month later, on January 25, 2008, the head of communications investigations in the Hariri case, Captain Wissam Eid, was killed.

On the streets, small-scale clashes continued, but remained contained. However, the tension was ratcheted up and came to a head in May 2008, when the political crisis in Lebanon spiralled out of control. On May 7, Hezbollah fighters and their allies mobilised to seize the capital Beirut. This move came after a government decision to shut down Hezbollah's telecommunication network and remove Beirut Airport's security chief Wafic Choucair, known for his close ties with Hezbollah (Harris, 2012, p. 273). Hezbollah considered this move to be a declaration of war against the organisation (Haddad, 2009, p. 409). The street battles in West Beirut between opposition groups led by Hezbollah and Amal, and pro-government groups led by the Future Movement, left 11 dead and 30 wounded. In less than two days of clashes, Beirut fell under the control of Hezbollah. The violence quickly spread to other parts of the country, with Tripoli and the Shouf witnessing the most violent and brutal confrontations with a total of 84 killed and more than 200 injured. Although many factions and sectarian groups were involved in these clashes, the violence had Sunni-Shia overtones. Both the media and politicians hastily translated the events on the ground in sectarian terms. For example, On May 7, 2008, the Grand Mufti of Lebanon

Hassan Kabbani appeared on television calling on Hezbollah to withdraw its fighters from the streets of Beirut in order to prevent a slide into sectarian conflict, saying that ‘the Sunnis are fed up with the abuses and violations’.⁶¹ This sectarian framing was echoed in the international media as well. For instance, on May 8, 2008, *The Guardian* published an article entitled ‘Violence escalates between Sunni and Shia in Beirut’ (Statton and Stewart, 2008).

After two weeks of fighting, the government revoked its two recent decisions, and Lebanese political leaders flew to Qatar for a meeting brokered by the Arab League. The ‘Doha Agreement’ was signed on May 21, 2008, putting an end to the clashes. Army commander Michel Suleiman became President, and the March 8 coalition was granted the blocking third⁶² in a new cabinet headed by Siniora (Haddad, 2009, p. 410). Although the agreement succeeded in stopping the violence, the events of May 2008 increased inter-communal resentment. Hezbollah’s use of its weapons in the internal conflict created much bitterness, especially among a considerable section of the Sunni community who had previously supported its possession of arms to fight Israel (Hamdan, 2012, p. 53).

The parliamentary elections of 2009 gave March 14 a majority of seats and brought Saad Hariri, son of Rafic, as Prime Minister. However, the March 14 majority bloc was crippled in early 2010, when Walid Jumblatt withdrew his party from the coalition and tried to reconcile with Damascus. Harris (2012, p. 274) argues that although Jumblatt was one of the most outspoken anti-Syrian leaders in the 2005 uprising, he realised by 2009 that ‘Syria and Iran had the upper hand’ in the region, especially after the election in the US of Barack Obama, whose policy was to ‘engage’ with Syria. Jumblatt’s reversed position pushed Saad al-Hariri to visit Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in December 2009 in his capacity as Prime

⁶¹ See Almustaqbal Hawks Online (2008).

⁶² The blocking third meant giving Hezbollah and its allies a veto over major government decisions (Irani, 2013, p. 247)

Minister, and in spite of investigations pointing to a Syrian role in the killing of his father. Once again, political alliances proved to be volatile and highly dependent on regional and international political changes.

VI. Post-2010: Arab Uprisings and the Implications for Lebanon

In December 2010, a wave of protests started in Tunisia following the self-immolation of a young street vendor. It was the beginning of what became known as the ‘Arab Spring’ or the ‘Arab Uprisings’. Mass mobilisation spread to several Arab countries, with Tunisia and Egypt ousting their dictators by early 2011. In Lebanon, the events sweeping the region were followed with attention (Fakhoury, 2011). In March 2011, people took to the streets chanting, ‘The people want to overthrow the sectarian regime’. However, the movement did not survive long and failed to achieve any tangible change. By end of 2011, Lebanon became mainly preoccupied with developments in the Syrian revolution and their implications for the country. The Syrian revolution deepened the political divide in Lebanon, with March 14 supporting the Syrian opposition, and March 8 supporting the Bashar al-Assad regime. Although the Mikati government remained neutral, the streets of Beirut were as polarised as ever. With the rise of Sunni Islamist groups, many Lebanese Sunnis were recruited to fight in Syria. Similarly, fearing for its existence, Hezbollah came to defend its Syrian ally under pretext of protecting the religious shrine of Zaynab. Later, Hezbollah’s participation in the fighting alongside the Syrian regime and under Iranian guidance became overt (Sullivan, 2014). Its involvement in the Syrian civil war reinforced the political gap between the Sunni and Shia communities and intensified sectarian tension (Alagha, 2014). Moreover, refugees arriving in Lebanon in late 2011 reached more than 1.2 million, according to the UNHCR 2014 annual report. The refugee crisis contributed in creating divisions among the various

political groups and brought a wave of racism against Syrians. Today, Lebanese society is divided on its position vis-à-vis the Syrian revolution.

VII. Conclusion

With the shift to modernity and capitalism and the institutionalisation of sectarian power-sharing, sectarian politicisation and communal violence activated and crystallised the boundaries of sectarian communities in Lebanon during the 19th century. Whereas mobilisation and conflict in Mount Lebanon were mainly class-based, the 1800s witnessed the sectarianisation of political life. Three communities rose to power consecutively in the modern history of Lebanon, shaping the political and sectarian landscape: the Maronite leaders gained political power over the Druze feudal lords after the 1860 war; the Sunni leaders challenged the power of the Maronite elites in the 1958 war; and the Shia leaders saw their ascendance to power during the 1975–1990 Civil War and tightened their control following the May 2008 clashes.

From Shakib Effendi's *Règlement* to the Ta'if Agreement, conflict and violence in Lebanon were always understood and dealt with as a crises in sectarian representation and power-sharing. All episodes of violence and civil war ended in agreements mediated by foreign powers, and a reshaping of the sectarian balance between communities. Thus, each round of violence hardened communal identities in an oppositional way. Polarisation such as the Maronite–Druze division in Mount Lebanon under Ottoman rule, the Maronite–Sunni hegemony in Greater Lebanon, the Christian–Muslim dichotomy of the Civil War era, and the Sunni–Shia split since the Hariri assassination, all emerged as a reflection of internal and external power relations. Detailed historical accounts show that although politics often takes on dichotomous sectarian overtones, the communal dynamics are more complex. In fact, all sectarian communities have been involved in the political conflicts. However, these conflicts

were often reduced to a polarisation between two communities, and although sectarian groups are often perceived as homogeneous in the context of a broadly dichotomous understanding, intra-communal divisions have been widespread throughout the history of Lebanon. That being the case, why does conflict and violence in Lebanon produce a dichotomous sectarian framing? And how do such dichotomies shift over time?

The instability of sectarian divisions and the shifts in the saliencies of sectarian identities and dichotomies over time pose serious questions regarding the nature of the conflict in Lebanon. Are these conflicts essentially sectarian? Is violence driven by a clash of primordial identities? How do political conflicts taken on sectarian overtones? These questions are dealt with throughout the following chapters.

4. Regional and Local Changes Shaping the Political Salience of Sectarian Dichotomies in Lebanon

The Sunni-Shia split is the most visible change... it is one of those things you really feel have changed... this discourse really didn't exist before... we really never heard of it before, except rarely. From the interview with Karim.

This chapter looks at the macro-level conditions that contributed to the process of Sunni–Shia boundary activation. It analyses the conditions that allowed for the main sectarian schism in Lebanon to move from a predominantly Christian–Muslim to a prevailing Sunni–Shia one after 2005. The chapter begins by sketching the regional and internal structural changes that affected Sunni–Shia relations in Lebanon. It argues that regional changes, such as the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979, the increasing role of Saudi Arabia, and the US-led war on Iraq in 2003 were all necessary conditions for the Sunni–Shia dichotomy to emerge in Lebanon. Similarly, internal changes in demographic, socio-economic, and political conditions were also necessary for this shift in sectarian saliency to occur. However, these macro-level shifts are not sufficient to explain the mechanisms of transformation of sectarian dichotomies or the exact timing of this shift in Lebanon. Therefore, the second part of the chapter provides an analysis of protest events between 2000 and 2010 in order to detect the main shifts in the salience of political matters at a societal level. The analysis shows that mobilisation trends in Lebanon shifted after the Hariri assassination in 2005. It suggests that the Hariri assassination forms a turning point that led to a period of heightened mobilisation, reshuffling the priorities of the public and reshaping the political landscape. This analysis constitutes the building block for the next chapter, where I attempt to explain how the meso-level shifts in political alliances during protests were a mechanism through which the saliencies of sectarian divisions in Lebanon were reshaped.

I. Structural Changes: The Regional and Local Dimensions of the Sunni–Shia Conflict

In many analyses of the current Sunni–Shia tension, the historical perspective of the split is highlighted as the root of the animosity (Gonzalez, 2013; Mervin, 2013; Nasr, 2007; Rogerson, 2006). In *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, Vali Nasr (2007) traces the schism back to the conflict over succession after the prophet's death in 632. Nasr (2007) argues that the Shia identity was forged and crystallised during the Karbala' battle (in modern-day Iraq) in 680, when Hussein, the son of Imam Ali, was killed by Yazid, the son of Mu'awiya. This battle created a culture of martyrdom among the Shia that is still commemorated every year during the month of Ashoura.

Sunni–Shia relations have undergone many episodes of political conflict since then, most graphically during the Saffavid–Ottoman war of 1623–1639. This tension between the two sects was renewed in the late 1970s with the rise of Sunni extremist groups funded by the US and Saudi Arabia in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the success of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 in establishing an Islamic republic headed by a Shia *'alim* who served as supreme leader. Again, the sectarian conflict gained new ground in the Arab region after the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq: the subsequent civil war took the form of a Sunni–Shia conflict despite the many divisions and conflicts within each camp.

The following pages explain the regional dimension of the Sunni–Shia conflict in Lebanon, before turning to an analysis of the local factors that shaped it.

a) The Regional and International Dimensions of Sunni–Shia Tension

The effect of the regional dynamics on the internal Lebanese political scene is studied at length in the literature on Lebanon (El Khazen, 2000; Hanf & Salam, 2003; Kassir, 1994; Kerr, 2006; Khalaf, 2002; Tueni, 1985). Many authors argue that external factors have played a crucial role in shaping the political and sectarian landscape of Lebanon. For example, El

Khazen (2000) states that ‘our understanding of Lebanon in times of crisis remains incomplete if the external, namely, the regional dimension, is not taken into account’. Similarly, Salam (2003, p. 39) writes that Lebanese politics are shaped by ‘the deadly dialectic of Lebanese protagonists’ search for outside support to strengthen their domestic position against local rivals and of foreign actors’ exploitation of Lebanon’s internal divisions to enhance their regional power’. Thus, most scholars consider that the political life of the country is heavily shaped by external and regional powers. This section analyses the main regional factors that could have affected the emergence of a Sunni–Shia split in Lebanon since 2005.

i. The Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the Rise of the Shia

Most geopolitical studies of Sunni–Shia conflict stress the important role of the Islamic Republic of Iran from 1979 onwards in funding and radicalising Shia mobilisation across the Islamic world (Abou Zahab, 2002; Ahmed, 2011; Gonzalez, 2013; Gozlan, 2008; Karmon, 2007; Nasr, 2007; Wehrey, 2013). From Pakistan to Iraq, passing by Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Bahrain, the rise of many organised Shia political groups is a clear consequence of Iran’s attempt to export its Islamic revolution to countries that have a considerable Shia population (Emadi, 1995; Rakel, 2008). The creation of political organisations such as the Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jafaria (Organisation of the Jaafari Law) in Pakistan or Hezbollah (the Party of God) in Lebanon is a clear and direct outcome of this process.

Shaery-Eisenlohr (2013, p. xiv) argues that ‘the Iranian revolution altered Lebanese Shi’ite identity politics and forced Shi’ites to experiment with new modes of political mobilization and identification’. She explains how the Islamic Republic plays a crucial role in strengthening the Lebanese–Iranian Shia ties at the expense of those of Lebanon–Iraq that had dominated Shia identity politics since the 1960s. In fact, prior to the Iranian Revolution,

the traditional destination for Shia religious education was al-Najaf or Karbala' in Iraq.⁶³ Most of the Lebanese Shia *'ulama* (religious scholars) were passed through these Iraqi Shi'i seminaries during the 1960s and 1970s (Beydoun, 2012, p. 142; Charara, 2006, p. 55; Norton, 2007, p. 30). However, at the end of the 1970s, and with growing tension between Iran and Iraq after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Iraq became increasingly hostile towards foreign Shia. In that period, many of the Lebanese Shia clerics studying in Iraq, such as Subhi al-Tufayli⁶⁴ or Abbas al-Musawi,⁶⁵ had to return to Lebanon (Norton, 2007, p. 31). Most of these returnees were members of the al-Da'wa party (Party of the Islamic Call), founded in Iraq in 1958 as an Islamic alternative to the Communist Party. Since the al-Da'wa party was disbanded in Lebanon, these members decided to infiltrate the Amal party and try to reform it from within (Norton, 2007, p. 31). However, with the Israeli invasion of 1982, many of them split from the Amal Movement and, with the direct support of the Iranian Republic, established the Islamic Resistance, which later became known as Hezbollah (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 229).

Saad-Ghorayeb (2002, p. 14) states that 'it was Iran's dispatch of 1,500 Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) to the Biqa'⁶⁶ in the wake of Israel's 1982 invasion, which played a direct role in the genesis of Hizbu'llah'. These Iranian Revolutionary Guards played a crucial role in the 'mobilization, recruitment, religious education, and military training' of many Lebanese members that formed Hezbollah in 1982 (Blanford, 2011, p. 44). In addition to military support and training, Iran provided major financial support to Hezbollah, which

⁶³ Today, the city of Qom in Iran has become a major destination for Shia clerics and religious scholars.

⁶⁴ Subhi al-Tufayli was a principal founder of Hezbollah and its first secretary general from 1989 to 1991. Today, al-Tufayli has become a vocal critic of Iran and the current Hezbollah leadership.

⁶⁵ Abbas al-Musawi was also a co-founder of Hezbollah. He succeeded al-Tufayli as leader. However, he only occupied that position for a year since he was killed in South Lebanon in 1992 by an Israeli missile.

⁶⁶ The Biqa' is a region in East Lebanon (geographically close to Syria).

allowed the party to grow to the detriment of Amal (Norton, 1987, p. 106). Picard (2000, p. 316) asserts that unlike Amal's reliance on Lebanese state institutions to secure its funding, Hezbollah 'undertook to distance itself from the state as a way to enhance both its organisational autonomy and its popular legitimacy as an independent alternative to Amal'. Relying on Iranian funding, Hezbollah fighters received higher salaries than other militias (specifically Amal); and the party was able to establish an extensive system of services and cash payments covering its members as well as the families of martyrs (Norton, 1987, p. 106).

The exportation of the Iranian Revolution not only happened through political, financial, and military channels, but also through the spread of Iranian Shia Islamic culture and ideology (Beydoun, 2012, p. 136). The Shia Twelvers ideology and belief in the guardianship of the jurist (*wilayat al-faqih*)⁶⁷ under the Iranian supreme leader are some of the most evident efforts to spread an Iranian version of Shia Islam. This version believes in twelve divinely ordained leaders (or Imams), the last of whom is the Imam al-Mahdi, who is promised to reappear. The centrality of the Twelvers ideology within Hezbollah is evident through the naming of its network of schools after the awaited Imam al-Mahdi. Beydoun (2012, p. 136) highlights the importance of al-Mahdi in Hezbollah's discourse; he explains how the Iranian cultural influence has managed, since the 1980s, to transform many aspects of the traditional Shia rituals in Lebanon, such as the Ashoura commemoration rites. Moreover, Hezbollah attempted to impose conservative religious social codes by banning the sale of alcohol in areas under its control and encouraging women to wear Iranian-style black *chador* (Blanford, 2011, p. 45; Daher, 2014, p. 116). The social, cultural, and ideological influence of Iran within Lebanese pro-Hezbollah circles became even more pronounced after

⁶⁷ For more information on the concept of the guardianship of the jurist (*wilayat al-faqih*), see Mavani (2011).

the end of the Civil War in 1990, when Iran realised that culture and politics were as important as military support for Hezbollah to prevail (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2013, p. 159). In 1991, Iranian funding and expertise helped establish the al-Manar television channel, the official channel for Hezbollah. As another indicator of the cultural influence of Iran, the founding of the Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly⁶⁸ in 1990 aimed to strengthen relations between the Islamic Republic and Shia outside Iran. The Cultural Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Beirut plays an important role in disseminating political culture through films, art exhibitions, and other activities (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2013, p. 161). Similarly, the re-opening of the Persian Language Centre at the Lebanese University⁶⁹ in 1999 falls under the heading of the Republic's efforts to spread its culture (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2013, p. 166).

So, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 had a direct and far-reaching impact on the politicisation and organisation of many Lebanese Shia under Hezbollah after 1982. The direct deployment of Iranian military forces, the funding, ideological infiltration, cultural penetration, and political backing of Iran allowed Hezbollah to rise as a powerful political player in Lebanon. This formed a turning point in the radicalisation of the Shia political identity in Lebanon and beyond. However, if Iran has actively contributed to the radicalisation of the Shia in Lebanon since the 1980s, why did the tension between Sunni and Shia only surface clearly after 2005, and not earlier?

⁶⁸ The expression '*ahl al-bayt*' refers to the family of the Prophet Mohamad. This is a central concept in Shia Islam since they believe that the *ahl al-bayt* are the legitimate successors of the Prophet.

⁶⁹ The Persian Language Centre at the Lebanese University was established in 1956.

ii. The US–Saudi Arabia Alliance and the ‘Radicalisation of the Sunni’

Although the intensification of Sunni–Shia tension is often linked to the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution, the role of Saudi Arabia in supporting Sunni extremism and fostering inter-Muslim sectarian hatred is often overlooked. In fact, Saudi Arabia’s role considerably increased with the decline of pan-Arabism after the defeat of Abdel Nasser during the Six Days War of 1967 (Frisch, 2010; Myhill, 2010) and the rise of the US-sponsored Sunni fundamentalist groups⁷⁰ that fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (Abou Zahab, 2002; Ahmed, 2011; Irfani, 2004). These groups are believed to have formed the seeds of what then grew into the new jihadi movements, such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.⁷¹

Since the Second World War, the interests of the United States and Saudi Arabia had converged. While the US considered Saudi Arabia to be a strategic ally in the Arab region, the Kingdom saw a great opportunity to strengthen its position in the Middle East and the Muslim world through its American ally following the geopolitical changes of the Cold War. Al-Rasheed (2008, p. 1) explains that the US and Saudi Arabia have cooperated at the military, financial, and political levels to fight common opponents in many countries such as Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Pakistan, and even Nicaragua. In fact, Saudi Arabia played a crucial role in financing and backing the spread of *madrasahs* (schools) throughout Afghanistan and Pakistan, which had a huge role in the flourishing of many extremist Sunni movements (Nasr, 2000, p. 140). Thus, Saudi Arabia⁷² contributed to the religious training and financial support of Sunni Islamist groups in both Afghanistan and

⁷⁰ For more information about the origin and ideologies of jihadi groups in Asia, see Haqqani (2005).

⁷¹ Ossama Bin Laden was among the foreign fighters who joined the US-backed war against the Soviets in Afghanistan (Kepel, 2006).

⁷² In addition to Kuwait and Iraq.

Pakistan (Abou Zahab, 2002). The prominent role of Saudi Arabia in South Asia was similarly noticeable in the Arab region.

Traboulsi (2008, p. 65) claims that Lebanon was one of the first Arab countries 'to become a site for political and economic expansion of the emerging Saudi kingdom'. He argues that the role of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon dates back to the period of the French mandate and developed with the important financial and political ties Saudi Arabia fostered with Lebanon. After Lebanon's independence in 1943, Saudi Arabia actively sought to strengthen the Sunni-reserved position of Prime Minister by pushing for the appointment of a Saudi ally to this position. However, the role of Saudi Arabia at the regional level was impeded with the arrival of Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in Egypt in 1952, and the expansion of his pan-Arabist views.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Abdel Nasser was considered to be Saudi Arabia's major regional opponent: he opposed the US and was able to appeal to a large section of the Arab population (who happened to be Sunni by majority). Saudi Arabia played a major role in supporting opposition to Abdel Nasser. Following the crackdown on Islamist organisations in Egypt in the 1950s, Saudi Arabia provided shelter to many members of these groups, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who later became the Kingdom's fierce enemies⁷³ (Wehrey, 2015). Similarly, since Saudi Arabia 'has long seen Lebanon as a proxy arena to outmaneuver its regional competitors' (Wehrey *et al.*, 2009, p. 78), it backed Lebanese opponents of Nasserism, such as the Christian leaders Pierre Gemayel and Camille Chamoun. In fact, the appointment of Hussein al-Uwayni, an ultra-rich Saudi-Lebanese

⁷³ Relations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia soon became tense because of the ideological clash with the Saudi Wahhabi version of Salafism, and because clerics close to the Muslim Brotherhood became outspoken against the Al-Saud Wahhabi rule during what has been labelled as the 'Sahwa', meaning the "Awakening" (Wehrey, 2015).

businessman (Traboulsi, 2008, p. 66), to the position of Prime Minister of Lebanon in 1951 was a clear attempt by Saudi Arabia to ‘counteract Nasser’s influence among Beirut’s Sunnis’ (AbuKhalil, 2008b). However, lacking charisma and popularity, al-Uwayni was unable to play this part.

It was not until the end of the 1970s that Saudi Arabia’s political role within the Sunni communities in Lebanon started to increase. This was especially the case after the decline of the role of Egypt following the Camp David Accords.⁷⁴ In fact, during the Civil War years, and unlike other sectarian-political groups, Sunni political organisations in Lebanon failed to create strong sectarian militias and leaders (Asfura-Heim *et al.*, 2013, p. 4). With the exception of al-Murabitoun and Harakat al-Tawheed (the Islamic Unification Movement), both roundly defeated in the mid-1980s, Sunni militancy in Lebanon was traditionally organised through Palestinian groups and Salafi-jihadi groups, such as the Dinniyeh Group and later the Fatah al-Islam group (Asfura-Heim *et al.*, 2013, p. 4). Many of these Islamist groups, especially those active in Palestinian refugee camps, were mainly funded by Saudi Arabia (Wehrey *et al.*, 2009, p. 78).

By the end of the 1980s, Saudi Arabia was able to re-establish itself as a major player on the Lebanese scene. In 1989, the Saudi city of Ta’if hosted the negotiations that put an end to the Lebanese Civil War. This US-backed effort was considered to be an attempt by Saudi Arabia to counterbalance the Syrian/Iranian influence in Lebanon (Krayem, 1997). Then, the growing role of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon’s internal politics became even more entrenched in 1992 with the coming to power of the Saudi-Lebanese billionaire Rafic Hariri. Like al-Uwayni, Hariri had especially strong ties with the Saudi royal family, and he openly

⁷⁴ The Camp David Accords were signed in 1978 between Egyptian president Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and led to the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979.

represented Saudi interests in Lebanon. Therefore, during the 1990s and the early 2000s, Saudi Arabia rarely had recourse to Sunni extremism in Lebanon since it was able to protect its economic and geopolitical interests through its more moderate Sunni ally, Hariri.

The assassination of Hariri in 2005 marked a turning point in both the role of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon and the rise of Sunni extremist groups (Abdel-Latif, 2008; Asfura-Heim *et al.*, 2013; Wehrey, 2015). As argued by Asfura-Heim *et al.* (2013, p. 5), Hariri was ‘the only Lebanese Sunni figure in recent history who was able to serve as a leader to the Sunni community as a whole’. Political developments following his assassination led to the formation of a number of new Lebanese Sunni groups that resorted to more extremist versions of Sunni militancy⁷⁵ (Beydoun, 2012, p. 154). In fact, the assassination of Hariri stirred tension between what later came to be known as the March 8 and March 14 coalitions and their allies – Iran (and Syria) and Saudi Arabia (and the US) respectively. Saudi Arabia attempted to limit Syrian and Iranian influence by acting as the ‘long-standing patron of Salafi currents in the country’s Palestinian camps and cities such as Sidon and Tripoli’ (Wehrey *et al.*, 2009, p. 78). Saudi Arabia backed and funded Salafi movements in Tripoli (northern Lebanon), such as the one led by the Sheikh Dai al-Islam al-Shahhal. Indeed, Wehrey *et al.* (2009, p. 83) explain that ‘Saad al-Hariri, the son of Rafik Hariri, has played a critical role as an intermediary in this effort, by providing \$52 million (much of it from Saudi Arabia) to the Sunni populations of the northern part of the country to counter the influence of Hizballah and, by extension, Iran.’

Finally, Saudi influence in Lebanon also took the form of direct financial support. For example, in the aftermath of the July 2006 war, the Saudi–Iranian rivalry over Lebanon was translated into competition over donations. Whereas Saudi Arabia donated a total of \$1.5

⁷⁵ For a detailed review of Lebanon’s Sunni Islamist Movements, see Omayma Abdel-Latif (2008).

billion through the Lebanese Central Bank and the Arab International Reconstruction Fund, Iran's financial contribution to reconstruction reached around \$120 million in addition to undeclared amounts of financial and military support directly sent to Hezbollah (Wehrey *et al.*, 2009, p. 82). Iran's contribution was focused on Hezbollah's areas and institutions, and Saudi Arabia's donations covered mainly Sunni areas – the aid that came from the Saudi Development Fund financed an express road in Northern Lebanon (Wehrey *et al.*, 2009, p. 82). In addition, Saudi Arabia attempted to counter Hezbollah/Iranian popularity in Lebanon after the July 2006 war, framed as a 'divine victory', by offering to cover the tuition fees of all Lebanese students in public schools for the 2006/2007 academic year. These donations and development projects were often accompanied by a clear sectarian discourse that reflected the rivalry between 'Sunni' Saudi Arabia and 'Shia' Iran.

So, Saudi Arabia played an important role in the sectarianisation of political conflicts and the intensification of the Sunni–Shia schism. In Lebanon, it funded and supported Sunni political groups – from the moderate Hariri family to the more extremist Salafi groups – in an attempt to expand its influence in the Muslim world and to counter growing Iranian power.

Although the role of Saudi Arabia in supporting Sunni movements (and regimes) across the region is clear, what remains unclear is the timing of the increase in the salience of Sunni–Shia tension in Lebanon. What explains the surfacing of this sectarian tension mainly after 2005, despite Saudi Arabia's growing role in Lebanon since the 1980s?

iii. The 2003 Invasion of Iraq and Sunni–Shia Tension

With the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the fall of the Baath regime, the political conflict in Iraq took on an overtly 'Sunni versus Shia' frame. Nasr (2007, p. 169) explores the dimension of the Sunni–Shia conflict in Iraq and explains how it influenced the radicalisation of both political groups in the region. He argues that Shia clerics and leaders, such as

Ayatollah al-Sistani and Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr, played a crucial role in radicalising the community in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. He also discusses the role of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq) in undertaking terrorist attacks against the Shia, and in giving the conflict a clear sectarian flavour after his declaration of ‘war on the Shia’ in September 2005 (Kazimi, 2006). Multiple divisions and deadly competition among political factions within each of the Sunni and Shia sectarian groups in Iraq, and fluctuating Iranian and Saudi support for their respective allies in Iraq, complicated the conflict. However, its wider framing managed to transcend all these nuances and to open a general Sunni–Shia fault line that became resonant throughout the Arab region.

In fact, the 2003 invasion of Iraq ‘exacerbated sectarian tensions and prompted an us-versus-them mentality in a variety of predominantly Sunni Arab states’ (Norton, 2007, p. 184). Norton (2007) explains that the Iraq war clearly benefited Iran who saw in it a great political opportunity to support the rise of Iraqi Shia to power. Similarly, Gonzalez (2013, p. 136) contends that although Iran was the biggest political winner in the Iraq war, Saudi Arabia used the war ‘as a pressure release valve for homegrown Islamist movements’. Felter and Fishman (2007) show that a large number of al-Qaeda *jihadis* fighting in Iraq came from neighbouring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Libya, Algeria, and Syria. They explain that Saudi Arabia facilitated the travel of these fighters into Iraq in order to diminish their threat at home and to destabilise Iran’s influence over Iraq. So, the involvement of both Iran and Saudi Arabia in the Iraq war could be understood as being part of a wider political contest over the spread of their influence throughout the region.

Sunni–Shia political tension reached Lebanon following the Hariri assassination in 2005; and it intensified following the July 2006 Israeli War on Lebanon and the consequent political deadlock that lasted until May 2008 (Beydoun, 2007; Gonzalez, 2013). Similarly, more recent studies point to the amplification of this tension after the sectarianisation of the

conflict in Syria since 2012 and its spillover to Lebanon, especially after the influx of more than a million Syrian refugees into Lebanon, the crossing of borders by thousands of Sunni extremists supporting the Syrian rebels, and the direct military involvement of Hezbollah in fighting alongside the Assad regime (Bahout, 2013; Berti & Paris, 2014; Meier, 2013; Salem, 2012). Although the post-Arab Spring period is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is essential to note that the political divisions vis-à-vis the Syrian revolution fed into the growing Sunni–Shia divide in Lebanon. A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center between November 2011 and May 2012 shows that 67% of Lebanese Muslims consider that Sunni–Shia tensions are a big problem in their country (Pew Research Center, 2014). This result is the highest amongst the five sampled countries⁷⁶ (which also included Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Iraq), suggesting that the conflict is highly salient.

The diffusion of ethnic/sectarian conflicts across borders is also tackled in the wider sociological literature. Forsberg (2008) argues that ethnic conflicts and polarisations are likely to spread to neighbouring states. Therefore, an increase in the salience of Sunni–Shia cleavages across the Arab region is predictable. However, the mechanisms by which such cleavages can spread and the reasons behind their salience – in some neighbouring countries more than others – remain unclear.

Having explored the regional dimensions of the rise in Sunni–Shia tension, I now turn to an exploration of the internal demographic, socio-economic, and political factors that affected its increasing salience in Lebanon.

⁷⁶ The research design consisted of area probability sampling (proportional stratification by region and then random selection within each sampling unit) and the sample included 5,000 respondents. The surveys were administered through face-to-face interviews.

b) Internal Factors

Although most of the studies that address sectarianism and conflict in Lebanon focus on the role of foreign players and geopolitical considerations, internal social development and local political factors are equally important to understand the moulding of Lebanese politics. As argued by Traboulsi (2014, p. 22), ‘demographic changes and social and class dynamics have the greatest influence over changes in the sect’s position within the political sphere and the state.’ In order to better understand the background conditions that made the shift in sectarian salience in Lebanon possible after 2005, I devote the following pages to exploring the changes in internal dynamics. More precisely, I discuss three main shifts that affected the sectarian balance in Lebanon: (i) demographic shifts, namely, the growth in numbers of the Shia community and the relative decline of the Christian communities; (ii) socio-economic shifts, essentially linked to the process of urbanisation of the Shia community since the 1950s and the emergence of a new bourgeoisie due to migration and upward mobility; and (iii) political shifts, attributed to the changes in sectarian power relations brought about by the Ta’if Agreement.

i. Demographic Shifts

Demography plays a vital role in the Lebanese consociational system since, as explained in chapter 2, political representation is essentially based on the numerical size of the religious groups. Therefore, any change in the demography of sects can upset the delicate power-sharing arrangement and constitute the basis for political tension in the country. For this reason, the last official census in Lebanon took place in 1932 under the French mandate. Since then, all population figures have been no more than estimates. Faour (2007b, p. 910) confirms that since the mid-1950s, the consecutive Lebanese governments have followed an undeclared policy of refusing to publish any official statistic on the demography of sectarian

groups. He explains that official published data only includes ‘total population estimates sometimes broken down by large administrative units (*muhafazas*) or their subdivisions (*qadas*), but never classified according to religion (Muslim versus Christian) or sect’ (Faour, 2007b, p. 910).

Today, researchers and scholars widely agree that the demographic composition of Lebanese society has substantially changed (Faour, 2007b; Farha, 2008; Harris, 2012). However, the most available statistics are usually presented without referencing and without clear explanation of the statistical methods used to estimate the population figures. This is especially the case with the politicised data used to serve the agendas of certain parties. For example, Vali Nasr (2006) estimated the Shia population of Lebanon to form 45% of the total population. However, demographer Faour (2007a) considered the figure used to be a ‘gross overestimation’ since most calculations show that the upper limit for the Lebanese Shia population is 29%. However, although conflicting figures do exist in the literature, several scholars have published reliable statistics in recent years. For instance, in their study of the role of sectarianism in public expenditure in Lebanon, Salti and Chaaban (2010) rely on the Ministry of Interior’s voter registry dataset in order to estimate the sectarian composition of each *muhafaza* or governorate (see Table 4). Although this method does not include non-eligible voters (i.e. the population under 21 years old), it can still provide a rough estimate of population proportions. This data suggests that Sunni and Shia voters form the largest sectarian groups with 27% each, followed by the Maronites who form 21%, and the Druze who form 6%. It is also worth noting that according to voter registry data, other Christian groups add up to 19% of the total number of eligible voters.

	Beirut	Bekaa	Mount Lebanon	Nabatiyeh	North Lebanon	South Lebanon	All Lebanon
Druze	1%	0%	18%	9%	0%	0%	6%
Shi'i	16%	45%	8%	67%	4%	63%	27%
Sunni	43%	25%	8%	11%	53%	15%	27%
Maronite	7%	11%	44%	6%	26%	12%	21%
Other Christian	34%	19%	22%	8%	17%	9%	19%

Table 4: The sectarian composition by *muhafaza* in 2005 based on voter registry⁷⁷

Similarly, Harris (2012, p. 14) provides an estimate of sectarian composition in 2011 based on extrapolation from previously published studies by demographers such as Chamie (1981) and Faour (1991, 2007b), and from population survey data, such as the 1998 Hariri Foundation's population count for their food distribution programme or the 1970 Lebanese government's household survey. His results also suggest that Sunnis (28%), Shias (29%), and Maronites (22%) are the three biggest sectarian groups in Lebanon.

However, the most detailed study remains Faour's (2007b). He explains that inaccurate measures of emigration rates, death rates, or fertility rates can lead to wrong population estimations. However, he argues that in the absence of substantial differentials in emigration rates and death rates amongst religious groups in Lebanon, fertility rates become the major factor that determines religious differentials in growth rates. Taking the *muhafaza* as a proxy

⁷⁷ Source: Salti and Chaaban (2010, p. 650).

<i>Muhafaza</i>	Average number of children born to ever married women (per woman)	Average number of births to ever married women aged 45–49 (per woman)	
	1996	1996	2000
Beirut	2.8	3.7	3.2
Mount Lebanon	3.0	4.7	3.5
North Lebanon	4.2	5.4	6.5
South Lebanon	3.5	6.2	5.0
Nabatieh	3.6	5.2	(South Lebanon & Nabatieh combined)
Beqaa	3.9	6.2	5.5

Sources: Lebanese Ministry of Public Health and the League of Arab States, *Al-Mash Allubnani Lisihhat Alum Wattifl: Attaqreer Alraisi* (Beirut: Ministry of Public Health, 1996), Table 12/6; Central Administration of Statistics and UNICEF, *The State of Children in Lebanon* as cited in Adeeb Nime, 'Alfasl Athani: Assukkan wal Ittijahat Assukkaniya fi Lubnan' (Beirut: Ministry of Social Affairs, 2005), Table 2–11.

Table 5: Selected cumulative fertility indicators by *muhafaza*, 1996 and 2000⁷⁸

for religious groups,⁷⁹ he relies on official data to show that scholars, such as Chamie (1981), have argued that the fertility rate in the 1970s and 1980s was highest amongst the Shia in the South and the Beqa' (followed by the Sunnis, then the Maronites). However, using more recent demographic data from national surveys conducted in 1996, 1997, and 2004 (see Table 5), Faour (2007b) demonstrates that the 1996 highest average number of children per female was in the predominantly Sunni Northern *muhafaza* (4.2), followed by the predominantly Shia South Lebanon (3.5), Nabatieh (3.6), and Beqa' (3.9) *muhafazas*. The mainly Christian Mount Lebanon *muhafaza* had an average of 3 children per female in 1996, and the mixed capital Beirut had the lowest rate, with 2.8 children.

Another indicator of fertility rates is the number of births to ever-married women (including the married, divorced and widowed) aged 45–49 (i.e. completed family).

⁷⁸ Source: Faour (2007b, p. 194).

⁷⁹ This method is reliable in Lebanon since most of the *muhafazas* comprise a clear religious majority as seen in Table 4.

	1932	1975	2011
Maronites	33.5	23	22
Greek Orthodox	12.8	7	6
Greek Catholics	7.3	5	3
Armenians	3.3	-	3
Other Christians	1.6	5	2
Total Christians	58.5 %	40%	36%
Sunnis	18.6%	26	28
Shias	15.9	27	29
Druzes	5.9	7	5
Other non-Christians⁸⁰	1.1	-	2
Total non-Christians	41.5%	60%	64%
Total Population⁸¹	786,000	2.5 million	4.8 million

Table 6: Lebanese population distribution by religion (%), 1932–2011⁸²

Comparing the years 1996 and 2000, the data shows that in 1996, women in the South and Nabatieh *muhafazas* (mostly Shia) had the biggest completed families (6.2 and 5.2 births per woman respectively). In 2000, however, the mainly Sunni North held the highest average number of births to ever-married women (6.5). Therefore, relying on an analysis of fertility rates and on voter registry data, Faour (2007b, p. 919) estimates the population of the three

⁸⁰ Non-Christians include Jews, Ismailis and Alawites.

⁸¹ *Source*: Harris (2012, p. 14).

⁸² For 1932 figures see Maktabi (1999, p. 235), For 1975 see Cobban (1985, p. 16), and for 2011 see Harris (2012, p. 14).

largest sects in 2005 by *muhafaza*. He reports that in total, Maronites form 22.5% of the population, whereas Sunnis and Shias form 28.1% of the population each.

Relying on the population estimates discussed above and on other available sources in the literature, Table 6 provides an overview of the main demographic shifts in Lebanon since 1932. It shows a clear declining trend in the Christian population and an increase in the Muslim population. Moreover, the table reasserts the fact that the Maronites (22%), the Sunnis (28%), and the Shias (29%) form the three biggest sectarian communities that are able to compete for power within a power-sharing system based on demographic size.

However, how does this explain the shift in sectarian salience from a Christian–Muslim dichotomy to a more recent Sunni–Shia one? If the three biggest communities fall within the same size range (22%–29%), why do we not speak of a Maronite–Shia or Maronite–Sunnite divide? Although demographic changes are important and necessary conditions for the shift in sectarian power dynamics in Lebanon, these changes alone are not sufficient to explain why a Sunni–Shia split would emerge or why this split would become most salient, specifically after 2005.

ii. Socio- Economic Shifts

In addition to demographic shifts, major socio-economic changes have occurred in Lebanon since the country's independence in 1943. These changes have had an important impact on the politico-sectarian balance, given the strong relationship between economic power and political influence in Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 77). The most remarkable of these changes was the profound social and economic transformation of the Shia community following shifts in the economic structures of the South and the Beqa', and the consequent waves of urbanisation and emigration since the 1950s (Nasr, 1985, p. 10).

Understanding the changes in the Lebanese class structure becomes crucial to the study of social transformations and shifts in power dynamics in Lebanon (Baumann, 2012, p. 129). Following the development of capitalism in Mount Lebanon in the late 19th century, as well as the flourishing of trade, export, and the banking sector in the capital Beirut (as explained in chapter 3), economic power fell into the hands of mainly Sunni and Maronite elites.⁸³ Due to their control over the economy, the leaders of these two communities became the main political figures of the country. This was clearly reflected in the 1943 National Pact, which mainly took the form of a power-sharing agreement between the main Sunni and Maronite political elites. Similarly, the post-independence period was characterised by a high concentration of most of the political and economic activity in the capital. At that time, the Shia formed no more than 3.5% of the population of Beirut; 85% of the Shia communities were concentrated in two main 'heartlands' (Nasr, 1985, p. 10): one in South Lebanon (Jabal 'Amel) and the other in North-East Lebanon (Ba'albek-Hermel in the Beqa'). The majority of the Shia population consisted of peasant communities living on poor land in marginal rural areas with limited access to water (Nasr, 1985, p. 10). They mainly lived off dry farming, such as the cultivation of grain, olives, and tobacco. The economic deprivation of the Shia living in far-off regions was accompanied by high illiteracy rates. Nasr (1985, p. 10) explains that by 1943, 69% of the Shia community was illiterate compared to only 32% of the Christian Catholic community. This economic and social marginalisation of the Shia community was also reflected in their political representation. Although the National Pact gave the position of Speaker to a Shia representative, the authority that came with this position remained marginal. In fact, most of the Shia political *zu'ama* (leaders) hailed from

⁸³ Some Greek Orthodox families from Beirut were also amongst the main economic elites of the country; however, their political influence was more indirect since the National Pact did not give them any major political positions given their small demographic size.

six landowning families (the Assaads, the Zeins, the Osseirans, the Hamadehs, and the Haidars) who had little influence over the central power in Beirut and who constantly shifted alliances with the main political leaders in the capital (Nasr, 1985, p. 10).

In brief, at the time of Lebanon's independence, the Shia community was rural in its majority and suffered from economic, social, and political marginalisation. However, following the major economic changes of the 1950s, the socio-economic conditions of most Shia communities in Lebanon started to change.

During the 1950s, major economic shifts affected the mainly Shia heartlands of the South and the Beqa' Valley: namely, the capitalisation of agriculture through the expansion of exported produce and the spread of banks to rural areas (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 23). The sharecropping system collapsed at the expense of an increase in private holdings. The peasants found themselves in a state of deep crisis, since most of them became heavily indebted to the new merchants, the moneylenders, and the local banks. Moreover, Nasr (1985, p. 11) explains that the 'development of certain industrial crops such as tobacco and sugar beets was blocked by powerful commercial cartels like the cigarette and sugar importers who had great influence on government policy'. Following these economic transformations, more than 40% of the mainly Shia rural populations of the South and the Beqa' started to either migrate to Beirut and settle in the suburbs in search for jobs, or emigrate to other countries (mainly West Africa or Gulf countries) in the hope of better living conditions (Nasr, 1985, p. 11). The major waves of urbanisation and emigration witnessed by the Shia communities during the 1950s had drastic implications on the socio-economic and political structures in the country.

Saad-Ghorayeb (2002, p. 7) argues that 1950s urbanisation laid the foundations for the politicisation of the Shia community in the 1970s. She explains that during the first decades of their migration to Beirut, the Shia migrants mainly occupied blue-collar jobs and continued

to form the most disadvantaged segment of Lebanese society. Their exposure to the urban Sunni and Christian traders and employers created a feeling of marginalisation and relative deprivation, which led many working class Shia to join leftist parties such as the Lebanese Communist Party and the Organisation For Communist Labor Action (Norton, 2007; Shanahan, 2005). Saad-Ghorayeb (2002) contends that it was only following the establishment of the ‘Movement of the Deprived’⁸⁴ in 1974 by Imam Musa al-Sadr that the Shia started to politically organise on sectarian grounds.

The migration of so many of the Shia population to West Africa or Arab oil-producing countries (especially Kuwait and Libya) had major consequences on Lebanese class structures and local power relations in the villages.⁸⁵ The return of rich Shia migrants who accumulated wealth abroad led to the weakening of the traditional Shia *zu’ama*: a new social class of Shia economic elites was able to buy land and orchards and establish some commercial and social networks with the Sunni and Christian bourgeoisie of Beirut (Nasr, 1985, p. 11). Although these new elites were still unable to compete with the traditional Beirut bourgeoisie of the 1970s, they were able to use their capital to enter the banking sector and to invest mainly in real estate development and trade with Africa (Nasr, 1985, p. 11).

Therefore, at the beginning of the 1970s, the Shia population experienced a clear upward mobility and an increase in its living standards (Labaki, 1988, p. 556). This was also accompanied by an increase in education and literacy rates. Traboulsi (2014, p. 23) argues

⁸⁴ This movement later became known as AMAL, an acronym for ‘Lebanese Resistance Regiments’ – Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniya. ‘Amal’ also means ‘hope’ in Arabic.

⁸⁵ The return of rich Sunni emigrants from the Gulf countries, especially after the Civil War, also led to the decline of the traditional Sunni bourgeoisie and the rise of a new class of Sunni billionaires. It is worth noting here that since the Maronite emigration was mainly to the Americas, most of these emigrants settled in these new countries and did not return to Lebanon, unlike those who went to the Gulf or Africa (Pearlman, 2012).

that the spread of secondary education and the expansion of the Lebanese University contributed to the rise of the 'Shia intelligentsia'. This increase in education led to inter-generational upward mobility, since many of the second-generation Shia residents of Beirut were able to access white-collar jobs in public or private sectors. In fact, by 1974, the Shia communities ceased to be mainly rural, as 63% of them had already moved to urban areas, with almost 45% of the Shia urban-dwellers living in Beirut (Nasr, 1985, p. 11).

These major socio-economic changes continued to develop throughout the Civil War (1975–1990) and came to a head during the post-war period. The arrival of Rafic Hariri to power in 1992 and his adoption of clear neo-liberal policies for the reconstruction of Lebanon had important consequences on the Lebanese social structure. As explained by Baumann (2012, p. 131):

While often presented as a purely technical and 'common sense' project, neo-liberalism is also highly political. Firstly, neo-liberalism involves the reassertion of the power of capitalist classes. Secondly, the restructuring of the state, markets and privatisation provide scope for cronyism and rent-seeking. Hariri's reconstruction programme was neoliberal in both these senses. He sought to open up investment opportunities for foreign investors and for the new contractor bourgeoisie, while also seeking to ensure that he and his business allies obtained the largest slice of the pie.

So, the post-Civil War economy was characterised by two main factors: (i) an acute type of crony capitalism based on favouritism and clientelism, with increasingly blurred boundaries between economic and political power (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 25), with sectarian-political leaders acting as welfare providers to their followers, and (ii) a predominantly rentier economy based on services and remittances at the expense of developing production and industrial sectors (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 28). These economic changes clearly affected the class structure, as shown by the changing composition of the parliament. Traboulsi (2014, p. 85)

explains that whereas the majority of parliament members in 1943 were members of the traditional feudal *zu'ama* families, the majority of the MPs today are capitalist businessmen who belong to the new bourgeoisie that mainly accumulated their wealth abroad (examples include billionaires such as Rafic Hariri, Najib Mikati, Issam Fares, Mohamad Safadi, etc.). Traboulsi (2014, p.86) highlights another important observation: the political representation of businessmen moved from being indirect (through an intermediary, usually a lawyer) prior to the Civil War, to becoming direct more recently. Today, most politicians are businessmen, and most businessmen have direct access to or influence over political power. As the economy is increasingly controlled by the financial, import, and real estate sectors, Nasr (2003, p. 151) argues that the traditional control of the Christian elites over the pre-war economy with a ratio of 65:35 decreased in 1990 to reach parity between Christian and Muslim elites. In fact, the post-war decade witnessed the rise of new Sunni (non-Beirut) billionaire contractors and investors and the economic survival of some militia leaders, such as Walid Jumblatt or Nabih Berri, who were able to enter the post-war economy as 'businessmen' and sectarian patrons. Moreover, the 2000s saw the ascent of new Shia billionaires such as Jamil Ibrahim and Wissam Achour, who essentially made their fortunes in the real estate sector.

Thus, the class structure of Lebanese society witnessed drastic changes following independence in 1943. Urbanisation, emigration, and increased education contributed in creating a new Shia bourgeoisie that was able to assert its presence alongside the traditional Sunni and the Maronite bourgeoisie. Moreover, the drastic economic shifts after the Civil War and the adoption of clear neo-liberal policies after 1992 contributed to the rise of a new class of oligarchy, consisting mainly of nouveau riche capitalists (Traboulsi, 2014, p. 87). However, although these internal socio-economic changes led to the rise of a new bourgeoisie and an increase in Shia economic power in Lebanon, they are not sufficient in themselves to

explain the emergence of a Sunni–Shia schism following the assassination of Hariri in 2005. In other words, the socio-economic ascendance of the Shia communities started to take place in the two decades that followed the first wave of urbanisation and emigration in the 1950s. In that case, what explains the timing of the tension between Sunnis and Shias? Although the relative share of the Christian elites in the economy has declined, they still have considerable control over many economic sectors (such as the banking sector). So why did the conflict not take a new Muslim–Christian, Shia–Christian, or Sunni–Christian dimension, for example?

Finally, although economic competition is widespread and common in a neo-liberal economy, equating economic competition with sectarian conflict could be very misleading: as argued by Traboulsi (2014, p. 44), class solidarity and cooperation amongst the Lebanese oligarchy can overcome any political or sectarian rivalry. Many examples show that the Lebanese oligarchs often cooperate together across sectarian lines when the benefits of their class position are at stake. Therefore, sectarian considerations disappear when it comes to economic profit and class solidarity amongst capitalists.

iii. Political Shifts

Alongside the important demographic and socio-economic changes that occurred in Lebanon, important political changes affected the power balance in the country, especially after the Civil War. The Ta'if Agreement of 1989 introduced major changes to political representation, strengthening the Sunni and Shia representation at the expense of the traditionally more powerful Christians. Four main points of the Ta'if Agreement are worth discussing here.

First, the number of parliamentary seats increased from 99 to 108 (Maila, 1992, p. 22), and the division of parliamentary seats was adjusted from a ratio of 6:5 in favour of the Christians to parity between Muslims and Christians (see Table 7). Whereas the number of Christian seats remained the same (54 in total), the Muslims were given nine new seats: 2 for

	1972	1989 (Ta'if Accord)	1992
Maronite	30	30	34
Greek Orthodox	11	11	14
Greek Catholic	6	6	6
Armenian Orthodox	4	4	4
Armenian Catholic	1	1	2
Protestant	1	1	1
Other	1	1	3
Christian Subtotal	54	54	64
Sunni	20	22	27
Shia	19	22	27
Druze	6	8	8
Alawite	0	2	2
Muslim Subtotal	45	54	64
Total	99	108	128

Source: Kerr (2006, p. 161)

Table 7: Confessional representation in the Lebanese Parliament, 1972–1992

the Sunnis, 3 for the Shias, 2 for the Druze, and 2 for the Alawites. This gave an equal share for the Sunnis and the Shias and increased the representation of the Druzes and the Alawites. In 1992, when the constitution was ratified based on the Ta'if Agreement, a further increase to the number of parliamentary seats was introduced, bringing the total number of parliamentarians to 128 and preserving parity between Christians and Muslims. These changes indicated the start of a new political era where Christian political power was decreased while Muslim political representation was increased.

Secondly, the Ta'if Agreement also shifted executive powers and prerogatives from the Maronite president to the Sunni-headed Council of Ministers (Maila, 1992, p. 36–48). As noted by Hanf (2015, p. 588), the increased power allocated to the Sunni prime minister was a clear reflection of Saudi Arabia's role in pushing for a strong Sunni position within the new arrangement. This shift clearly weakened the Maronite president who lost the absolute right to appoint and dismiss both the government and the prime minister, or to dissolve parliament without consultation. All executive powers fell to the prime minister, who became the 'locus of political power'. Moreover, during the post-war era, the position of the prime minister was tied in with a growing control over the economy, especially after the arrival of Rafic Hariri to power in 1992. As argued by Traboulsi (2014, p. 84), the appointment of Hariri 'ushered in an era of unprecedented synergy between political and economic power', whereby the billionaire Prime Minister became the main defender of the interests of investors and businessmen.

Thirdly, the Ta'if Accord increased the term of the speaker of the house from one year to four years, conferring more influence to the Shia position (Kerr, 2006, p. 164). In fact, as noted by Khalaf (2002, p. 294), the speaker became the 'real custodian of executive powers' as the president had to consult him before nominating the prime minister. Moreover, the speaker had crucial decisions in his remit such as amending the electoral law, extending presidential terms, or ratifying other economic, social, or investment laws. Traboulsi (2014, p. 85) argues that the growing power of the speaker made him the 'locus of economic power'. For instance, the amendment of real estate laws by the speaker was key to the establishment of Hariri's Solidère company, which took charge of the reconstruction of downtown Beirut. Without the cooperation of the Shia speaker, such economic plans could not have materialised. Since his arrival to office in 1992, Speaker Nabih Berri became the arbiter of most political and investment decisions in the country. Moreover, Berri held the keys to

employment in most public service positions, and controlled the General Labour Confederation, the Lebanese University, and the Council of the South. This allowed him to use state institutions in order to build his clientelistic network and to consolidate his power in the post-war era.

Finally, the Ta'if Accord also called for the disarmament and dissolution of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias (Maila, 1992, p.76), with the exception of Hezbollah, which kept its weapons as a means of resistance against Israel. This had important implications for the balance of military power, since the various disarmed factions were considerably weakened in comparison with the growing military inventory of Hezbollah. The major tensions created intensified after the liberation of the occupied lands in the South in 2000: many factions considered that Hezbollah should be disarmed following the withdrawal of the Israelis from Lebanon. The disarmament of Hezbollah has not happened, and its military power became a major determinant in consolidating its power base after 2005.

So, the Ta'if Agreement reshaped the balance of power in Lebanon by weakening the Christian role and increasing Muslim influence. However, although these changes were introduced in the early 1990s, the tension between Sunni and Shia only surfaced after 2005. It became more politically acute when Hezbollah entered the government for the first time in July 2005. Moreover, the introduction of a 'blocking third' principle following the Doha Agreement in 2008 – giving Hezbollah and its allies a veto over major government decisions (Irani, 2013, p. 247) – meant that the March 14 coalition, with a majority in parliament, could no longer impose political decisions in the cabinet without the approval of Hezbollah.

These shifts in power relations are crucial to understanding the context under which the salience of a Sunni–Shia dichotomy could arise in Lebanon. The content and boundaries of sectarian identities and the salience of community fault lines are often shaped by different historical, social, political and economic factors that make the activation and crystallisation of

an identity possible at certain points in time. Nonetheless, however important these factors are, they still cannot disentangle the mechanisms that made such a shift in sectarian relations possible at this specific time in history, and not another. Most internal demographic, political, and economic transformations discussed date back to the 1980s and 1990s. How does this explain the remodelling of the sectarian dichotomy after 2005? Why did it not happen before? Similarly, the two main shifts in regional power – namely, the rise of Sunni extremism and the Iranian Islamic Revolution – took place in the late 1970s. What then explains the delay in the surfacing of a clear Sunni–Shia conflict until the 2000s? Finally, the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its aftermath clearly heightened sectarian saliences; but why should such a conflict spread to Lebanon first, and not to other neighbouring countries pre-2011? Although these factors are all plausible and important in understanding the context under which the remodelling of sectarian saliences happened in Lebanon, they still cannot answer questions related to the timing of such transformations. The ‘why now?’ question is what drives the analysis in the next chapters. To that end, I start with an analysis of the shifts in political saliences in Lebanon between 2000 and 2010, before moving in the next chapter to an analysis of the mechanisms linking political transformations to the salience of sectarian dichotomies.

II. The Shift in the Protest Claims in Lebanon between 2000 and 2010

The impacts of most regional and internal changes are usually reflected in protest events that mirror public opinion on the Lebanese street. Regier and Khalidi (2009, p. 12) explain that the English term ‘street’ has been used since the 1930s as a metaphor to refer to public opinion. They argue that it is very likely that this metaphor is derived from the Arabic usage of the word *al-shari*’ (the street), a term broadly used to depict general political trends in a

country.⁸⁶ Therefore, it is no coincidence that the Arabic language equates public opinion with the *street*. This captures the importance of street mobilisations (protests) as mechanisms through which the salencies of political divisions are shaped in a country. In Lebanon, regional geopolitical changes, as well as internal tensions, are often revealed in street mobilisations that highlight the most salient social and political issues in the country and the region. For this reason, the following pages are dedicated to a study of the protest trends in Beirut between 2000 and 2010; they depict the shifts in the salencies of protest claims in Beirut before and after the Hariri assassination. The aim of this analysis is to study how regional and internal changes are translated in Lebanese society through the mechanism of protest, activating sectarian boundaries and shaping the salencies of political issues over time. Thus, those changes indirectly affect the salience of sectarian dichotomies (as explained in the next chapter).

a) Dependent Variables

Based on the dataset compiled from newspaper archives and official records (as detailed in chapter 1), six dependent variables are used:

1. The number of protests
2. The number of protesters
3. The number of protests with socio-economic claims
4. The number of protests with political claims⁸⁷
5. The number of protests with pan-Arab (regional) claims and
6. The number of protests with claims related to internal politics that mobilised in Beirut between January 2000 and December 2010.

⁸⁶ For a detailed discussion of the origin and usage of the metaphor ‘Arab Street’ in both Arabic and English, see Regier and Khalidi (2009).

⁸⁷ The variable ‘political protest’ is an aggregate of five variables: pan-Arab protests, pro-Syrian protests, anti-Syrian protests, protests for Lebanese prisoners in Syrian prisons, and internal politics protests.

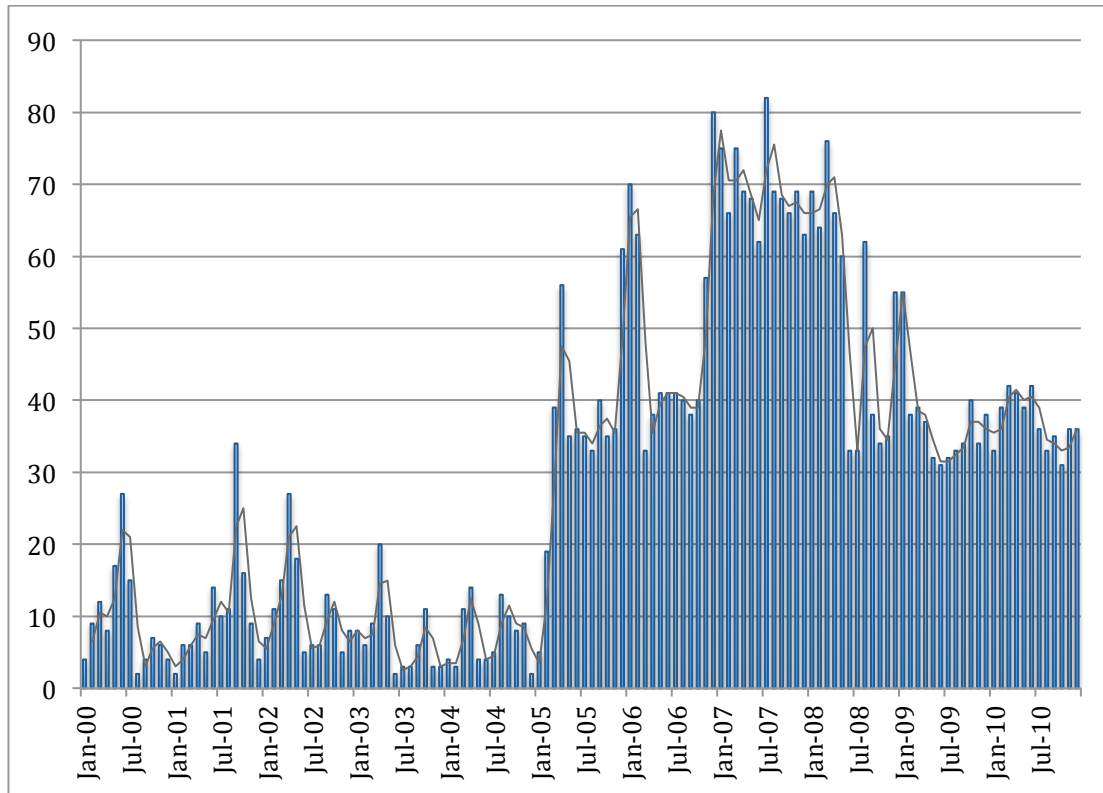


Figure 6: Monthly frequency of protest events in Beirut between 2000 and 2010

Figure 6 shows the monthly frequency of protest events. It demonstrates that the number of protests increased markedly in February 2005 and reached its highest levels in 2007/2008. These figures give us an idea as to the general frequency of mobilisation during the period under scrutiny. However, they do not say much about the size of these protests. Biggs (2016) argues that the size of the protest could be as important as the frequency when measuring protest changes over time or across space. Whereas sit-ins that lasted for weeks, months, or even years in some cases appear in our dataset on a daily basis, it is essential to look at the number of protesters who participated in these mobilisations. Our dataset shows that whereas sit-ins formed no more than 51% of all protests before February 2005, 93% of mobilisations after the Hariri assassination were sit-ins. It is reasonable, then, to expect an increase in mobilisation days alongside the increase of the sit-in type of protest. However, to better

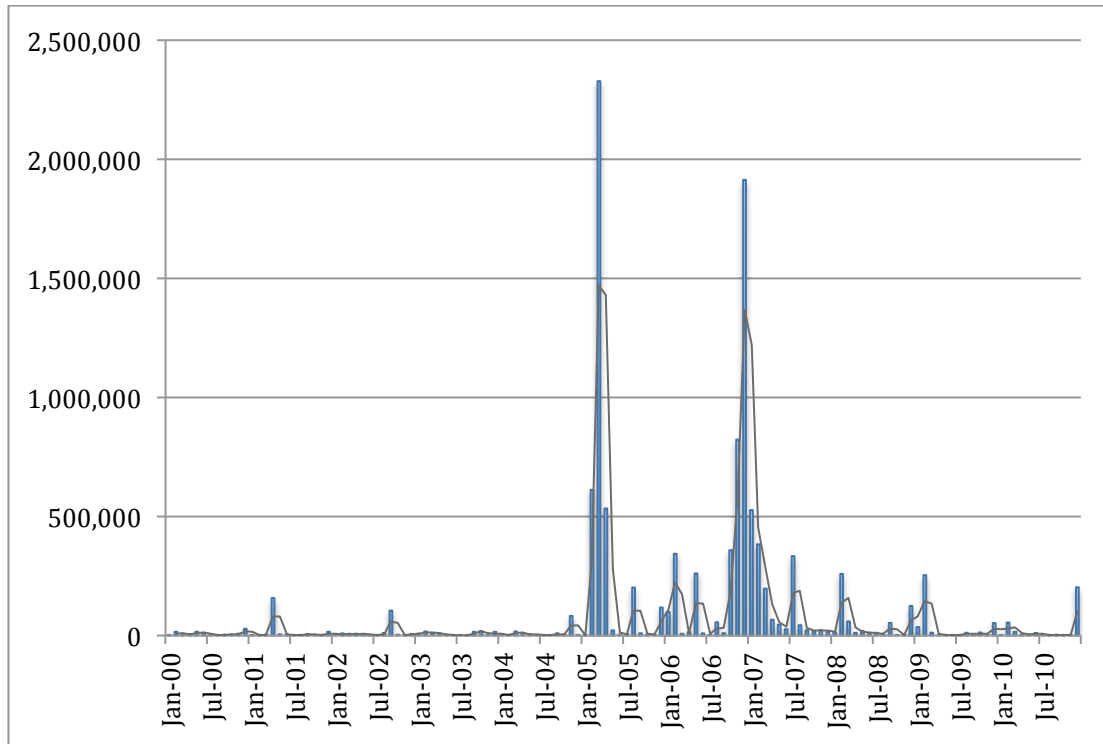


Figure 7: Number of participants in protests between 2000 and 2010

understand the impact of these protests on the general political mood in the country, a look at the number of protesters is essential.

Figure 7 shows the monthly number of protesters. It is clear that the number of participants peaked in two instances: once in March 2005 following the Hariri assassination, and again in December 2006 following the anti-government sit-in led by Hezbollah and its allies in the March 8 coalition. It is also evident from Figure 7 that protests post-February 2005 tended to gather more participants than those before the assassination. The statistical significance of these observations will be tested in what follows.

b) Independent Variable

In order to test for the effect of the Hariri assassination on street mobilisation, a categorical variable dividing the time period into pre- and post-Hariri assassination categories is introduced. The post-Hariri assassination period is further divided into two-year periods to

better analyse the effects of the assassination (and its aftermath) on protest movements in Lebanon. Therefore, my analysis ends with four periods: period 1 ranges from January 2000 to January 2005 (the period of Syrian tutelage⁸⁸); period 2 covers the months between February 2005 and December 2006; period 3 consists of the months between January 2007 and December 2008; and finally period 4 ranges from January 2009 to December 2010. The arbitrary two-year intervals between 2005 and 2010 create categories that are neither too short to observe clear trends, nor too lengthy to tease out the effects of specific events.

c) Method

My dataset comprises mainly count data, and my dependent variables are highly skewed. Whereas a total of 554 protests occurred from January 2000 to February 2005, this number was almost multiplied by six in the six-year period following the Hariri assassination (from February 2005 to December 2010), with 3,345 protests taking place in Beirut. Similarly, the number of protesters reached unprecedented peaks after 2005, with two huge protests mobilising around 700,000 participants each. Because the dependent variables are based on a count of the number of protest days or protesters, and because there is over-dispersion in the variance, I use negative binomial regressions:

$$\mu_t = e^{(\beta_0 + \beta_k * X_{kt})} \sigma_t$$

where μ_t is the rate of the dependent variable (number of protests or protesters), X_{kt} are the independent variables, and σ_t is the error term that accounts for the heterogeneity among observations.

⁸⁸ Although the Syrian troops withdrew from Lebanon in April 2005, I chose the Hariri assassination (February 2005) as the beginning of period 2 since this was when the Syrian power in Lebanon clearly shifted. The withdrawal of the troops was a consequence of this shift.

Table 8 provides descriptive statistics for the main variables used in my analysis. The unit of analysis is one week and the time period covers 574 weeks (from January 2000 to December 2010). It shows that the average number of protests per week jumps from two prior to the Hariri assassination to eleven after it. It is also worth noting that after the assassination (until 2010), protests occurred every week (the lowest number of weekly protests is three). Therefore, it is clear that the Hariri assassination was a political earthquake that dramatically increased mobilisation. As argued in chapter 3, such periods of heightened mobilisation usually have an important impact on reshaping political divisions in the country and activating the boundaries of political and sectarian identities.

Similarly, the number of protesters also increases remarkably after the assassination. Whereas the average number of protesters is 2,600 per week before February 2005, this number rises to an average of 34,900 after the assassination; in particular weeks, as many as 1,147,000 protesters mobilised in the streets of Beirut. I check these numbers by dropping the huge March 8 and March 14 2005 protests (700,000 participants each) in order to see if outliers drive my figures. The ‘adjusted numbers’ report that after the Hariri assassination, the average number of protesters per week is 29,926 with a standard deviation of 91,192 and a maximum of 845,350 protesters. Even though there is a slight decrease in the figures when the two biggest demonstrations are dropped, the massive increase in the number of protesters compared to the pre-2005 period is still clear.

Variables	Before February 2005 (N=267)				After February 2005 (N=307)			
	Mean	S.D	Min	Max	Mean	S.D	Min	Max
Number of Protests	2	2	0	10	11	4	3	25
Number of Protesters	2,600	12,391	0	151,500	34,899	118109	350	1,147,000
Pan-Arab Protests	1	1	0	8	0	1	0	9
Pro-Syrian Protests	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Protests for Lebanese Prisoners in Syria	0	0	0	0	7	0	7	7
Anti-Syrian Protests	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	10
Socio-Economic Protests	1	2	0	9	0	1	0	7
Internal Politics Protests	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	15
Pan-Arab Protesters	1,647	11,240	0	150,000	1,566	8,343	0	81,500
Pro-Syrian Protesters	366	4,941	0	80,000	2,942	41,513	0	700,000
Protesters for Lebanese Prisoners in Syria	11	124	0	2,000	348	132	0	2,350
Anti-Syrian Protesters	54	377	0	5,000	15,148	75,995	0	840,000
Socio-Economic Protesters	342	1,347	0	15,300	1,293	10,832	0	147,000
Internal Politics Protesters	37	186	0	2,000	10,156	49,415	0	690,800

Table 8: Descriptive statistics

Although these increasing patterns in the dependent variables seem to hold over the two periods, there are important variations related to the protest claims. The weekly average number of pan-Arab and socio-economic protests decreases after the Hariri assassination, while the average weekly number of anti-Syrian protests and internal politics protests increases. Similarly, the number of protesters generally increases across all reasons for protests, with the exception of pan-Arab protests, as the weekly average number of related protesters drops after the assassination. Observation points to a decrease in the salience of regional causes (namely Palestine and Iraq) despite the continuation (and sometimes intensification) of these regional conflicts.

III. Change in Protest Claims over Time: Is the Hariri Assassination a Turning Point?

Since I am interested in the temporal changes in protest claims in Beirut and their relationship with the changes in the salience of political divisions, I map the number of protests by claims in Figure 8. It shows that whereas the two main protest claims prior to February 2005 were related to socio-economic concerns and pan-Arab causes (namely Palestine and Iraq), post-2005 protests focused on anti-Syrian activism (including the sit-in of the families of Lebanese prisoners in Syria) and internal politics (mainly in 2007 and 2008). Similar results are found when we look at the number of protesters⁸⁹ (Table 8). In what follows, I will focus the analysis of the frequency of the claims by looking at the number of protests⁹⁰ by claim.

⁸⁹ Table 8 suggests that the highest number of participants prior to 2005 were in pan-Arab protests (on average 1,647 protesters per week), Pro-Syrian protests (366) and Socio-economic protests (342).

⁹⁰ Following Biggs' (2016) suggestion to look at protest participation in addition to frequency, I have run the regressions for each claim by the number of protesters in order to compare with the results reported in Tables 10 and 11: no significant difference in the results has been noted.

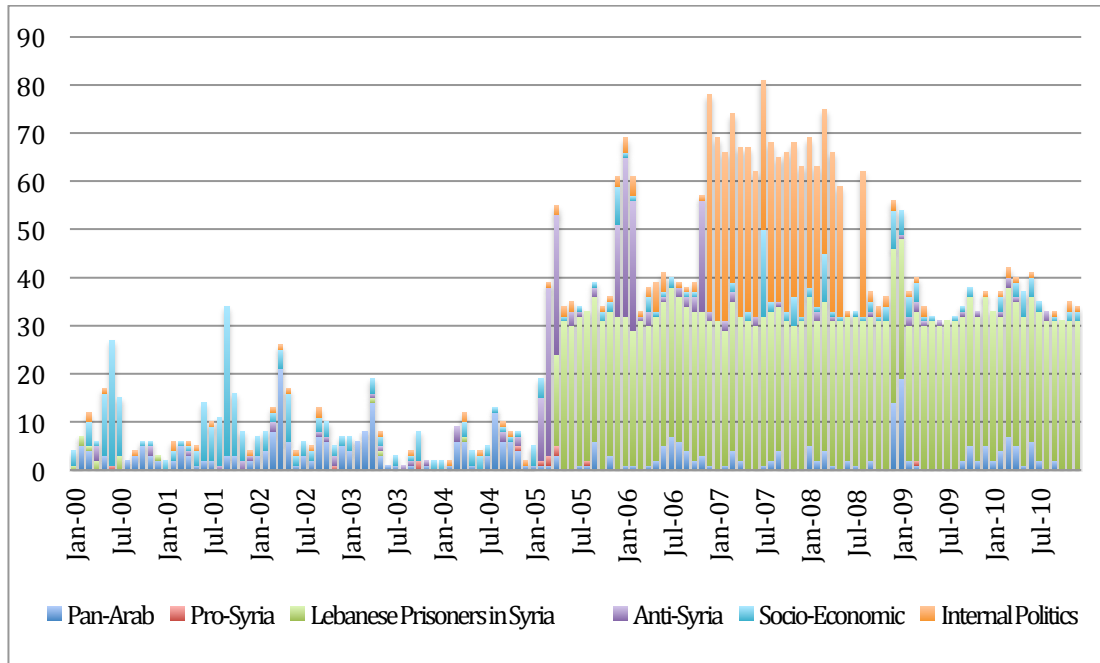


Figure 8: Monthly frequency of protests in Beirut by reason (2000–2010)

Tables 9, 10 and 11 test for the statistical significance of these changes over time and show the results. The results reported in Table 9 suggest that the increasing trends in both the number of protests and the number of protesters after the Hariri assassination are statistically significant. However, a more detailed reading of the results shows that whereas the number of protests reaches a peak during the third period (i.e between 2007 and 2008), the highest number of protesters belongs to the period directly following the Hariri assassination.⁹¹ The number of protests increases fivefold during the first two years after the Hariri assassination, compared to the pre-assassination period. However, it reaches its peak during Period 3 with an almost sevenfold increase, before dropping again in Period 4 to a fourfold increase compared to Period 1.

⁹¹ There is a weak correlation between the number of protests and the number of protesters ($r=0.2388$).

Table 9: Change in number of protests and protesters in Beirut over time (between 2000 and 2010), weekly (N = 574)

Negative binomial regression	Number of Protests				Number of Protesters			
	irr	Se	p		Irr	se	p	
Period 2 (Feb 2005-Dec2006)	4.93	.35	.00	***	30.39	11.63	.00	***
Period 3 (Jan 2007-Dec2008)	6.71	.45	.00	***	8.10	2.85	.00	***
Period 4 (Jan 2009-Dec2010)	4.10	.27	.00	***	2.86	1.48	.04	*
alpha (coefficient)	.02	.01			4.44	.28		
AIC corrected	2665.1				10096.8			

irr: incidence-rate ratio; se: robust standard error

p: p-value (two-tailed), *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

This suggests that right after the Hariri assassination (during Period 2), the number of protests quickly increased. Those protests were mainly centred on the dichotomy between the March 8 and March 14 movements as a direct result of the assassination. However, the number of mobilisations further increases in Period 3, essentially because of the intensification of the March 8 camp mobilisations against the Siniora government. For instance, the March 8 movement started an open sit-in that lasted from December 2006 to May 2008. Those sit-ins appear in the dataset on a daily basis, whereas demonstrations or vigils appear as a one-day event. In addition to the March 8 camp sit-ins, many new movements started to emerge. For instance, civil society organisations frequently mobilised in 2007, calling for civil peace and warning of the increasing tension that stemmed from the political crisis following the Hariri assassination. This call contributed to the increase in protest numbers in Period 3.

Looking at the number of protesters, a trend of increase in participation after the Hariri assassination is visible. The weekly number of protesters is almost multiplied by thirty during 2005 and 2006 compared to the pre-assassination period.

This number decreases in the following years (from 2007 to 2010). However, it remains on average higher than the pre-assassination weekly number of protesters. The number of protesters gradually starts to decline two years after the assassination, mainly because many of the demands of the movements were met in the few years following the assassination. For example, the March 14 movement was demanding the resignation of President Lahoud, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, and an international tribunal for Lebanon to investigate the assassination of Hariri (and the series of political assassinations that took place after February 2005). These three main demands were met by 2006, and a new government was formed, headed by Fouad Siniora, a leading member of the Future Movement and a main figure of the March 14 movement.

Therefore, the results presented in Table 9 strongly support the hypothesis suggesting that the Hariri assassination was a ‘switch’ that led to increased street mobilisations with higher participation compared to the pre-assassination period. This period of heightened mobilisation served as the incubation period for new political and sectarian divisions to appear and crystallise.

a) From Socio-Economic Claims to Political Claims

Turning now to Table 8, we note that the variable ‘political protest’ is an aggregate of five variables: pan-Arab protests, pro-Syrian protests, anti-Syrian protests, Lebanese Prisoners in Syria protests and internal politics protests. The results suggest that the frequency of socio-economic protests significantly decreases after the Hariri assassination, giving way for political protests to increase between 2005 and 2008. It seems that the frequency of political

Table 10: Change in the frequency of socio-economic and political protest in Beirut over time (between 2000 and 2010); weekly (N = 574)

Negative binomial regression	Socio-Economic Protest			Political Protest		
	irr	Se	p	Irr	se	p
Period 2 (Feb 2005-Dec2006)	.30	.10	.00 ***	3.38	.48	.00 ***
Period 3 (Jan 2007-Dec2008)	.70	.18	.16	6.44	.67	.00 ***
Period 4 (Jan 2009-Dec2010)	.44	.10	.00 ***	.95	.20	.81
alpha (coefficient)	2.70	.38		.93	.13	
AIC corrected	1184.4			2016.7		

irr: incidence-rate ratio; se: robust standard error (adjusted for clustering by week)

p: p-value (two-tailed), *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05

protests during Period 4 is slightly lower than that of the pre-2005 period.

The analysis suggests that in the first few years following the Hariri assassination, attention shifted away from socio-economic protests and became more concerned with political matters that were directly linked to the assassination and its aftermath. However, the high number of protests with socio-economic claims prior to 2005 could be misleading if it remains disconnected from the context of that period. In fact, most socio-economic protests pre-2005 were essentially manipulated by the Syrian presence in Lebanon through their allies in political parties. Following the end of the civil war, the main labour union – the General Labour Confederation (GLC) – became strongly controlled by the Amal Movement. The party transformed it into a body through which it indirectly manipulated the political street in Lebanon (Clark & Salloukh, 2013, p. 733). Commenting on the role of the GLC in Lebanon, Traboulsi (2014, p. 63) explains that ‘the trade union movement is like an empty shell: it

represents no more than 7 per cent of workers and its leadership makes no attempt to hide the fact that it receives its orders from the Amal Movement's leader, Nabih Berri'. Therefore, most of the GLC's protests were either staged for political reasons, or carried out in order to diffuse the anger of the working classes by calling for socio-economic reforms. However, the GLC has never really acted as a labour union that puts pressure on the employers or the government to obtain any rights for workers. Thus, the decrease in socio-economic protests after the Hariri assassination could be linked to the decline in the role of the GLC following the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and the lack of alternative union organisations able to lead any mobilisation.⁹²

Moreover, Table 10 shows that the increase in political protests seemed to diminish in 2009 and 2010, and the protest movements almost went back to their pre-2005 levels. The decline of political movements after 2008 is mainly associated with the demobilisation that followed the Doha Agreement, which put an end to the episode of violence witnessed in May 2008 (see chapter 3). Therefore, although the period between February 2005 and May 2008 was turbulent and saw high numbers of protests, the period following the Doha Agreement witnessed a relative decrease in street mobilisation. However, the high rates of mobilisation in the first three years following the Hariri assassination were enough to reshuffle the salience of political divisions in the country, and to create new dichotomies (March 8 and March 14 coalitions) that shaped the post-Hariri era.

b) From Regional Concerns to Internal Concerns

As previously established, the first few years following the Hariri assassination witnessed an increase in mobilisations with political demands in Beirut, while protests with socio-

⁹² The labour unions in Lebanon were only able to effectively reorganise and mobilise on the back of the Union Coordination Committee (UCC) battle over wage scales after 2011.

Table 11: Protests in Beirut between 2000 and 2010, weekly (N = 574)

Negative binomial regression	Pan-Arab Protest				Internal Politics Protest			
	irr	Se	p		irr	se	p	
Period 2 (Feb 2005-Dec2006)	.64	.14	.04	*	8.49	2.83	.00	***
Period 3 (Jan 2007-Dec2008)	.51	.15	.02	*	57.86	11.69	.00	***
Period 4 (Jan 2009-Dec2010)	.88	.23	.62		1.37	.43	.32	
alpha (coefficient)	2.13	.34			.91	.31		
AIC corrected	1221.5				1103.2			

irr: incidence-rate ratio; se: robust standard error (adjusted for clustering by week)

p: p-value (two-tailed), *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

economic demands decreased. I now take a closer look at the trends within political protests: Table 11 suggests that in the period following the Hariri assassination, the frequency of pan-Arab protests decreased significantly, whereas the number of protests concerning internal politics increased (especially in Period 3).

These results suggest that the salience of political concerns shifted from being mainly focused on regional politics (namely Palestine and Iraq) prior to 2005, to becoming more centred on internal political concerns (namely the March 8 and March 14 dichotomy) after the Hariri assassination. The frequency of protest for internal politics increased eightfold in Period 2, and was almost multiplied by fifty-eight during Period 3 in comparison to the pre-assassination period. Results for Period 4 are not statistically significant, but we still see a slight decrease in pan-Arab protests and a slight increase in protests for internal politics compared to Period 1. These trends could also be linked to the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005. Under the Syrian tutelage (1990–2005), the internal political opposition movements were severely repressed, whereas most political attention on the street was

directed towards regional causes such as Palestine and Iraq. This focus on regional conflicts, especially given the centrality of the Palestinian cause, was directly linked to the Syrian effort (through its allies in Lebanon) to overshadow internal political and socio-economic conflicts, as well as to justify its presence in Lebanon. Therefore, I can safely conclude that political mobilisations in Beirut moved from being mainly concerned with pan-Arab causes prior to 2005, to becoming mostly focused on internal politics after the Hariri assassination.

In sum, the analysis of the protest data provides compelling evidence that the Hariri assassination was a major turning point in the political history of Lebanon. It dramatically escalated protest trends in Beirut and led to the redrawing of the Lebanese political map, especially during the first three years following 2005. The analysis suggests that whereas the two main reasons for protest prior to 2005 were socio-economic pan-Arab concerns, the post-2005 protests were mainly focused on anti-Syrian mobilisation (especially in 2005–2006 when the March 14 coalition was leading the street protests) and internal political concerns (especially after 2007 when the division between March 8 and March 14 coalitions became more heated and started to turn violent). The data analysis also suggests that the period directly following the Hariri assassination witnessed an increased focus on political protests at the expense of socio-economic protests. Similarly, a close examination political protests reveals a decrease in pan-Arab claims and an increase in internal political claims. These changing trends highlight important modifications in public opinion following the Hariri assassination and the consequent withdrawal of the Syrians. The implications of these shifts in political trends for the formation and hardening of sectarian dichotomies are explored in the next chapter.

IV. Conclusion

This chapter laid out the macro conditions under which the process of Sunni–Shia sectarian boundary activation became possible in Lebanon. It discussed the regional and internal changes that contributed to the rise in the salience of the Sunni–Shia divide, arguing that three main regional developments formed the necessary conditions that allowed for the increase in Sunni–Shia tension: the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979; the increasing role of Saudi Arabia since the 1970s; and the 2003 US-led war on Iraq and its sectarian implications. However, whereas these regional changes are crucial to understanding the rise in Sunni–Shia sectarian tension, none of these developments can explain the exact timing of the tension or the mechanisms through which regional conflicts shape public opinions. Therefore, studying internal changes within Lebanese society is of utmost importance. The chapter highlighted three main internal developments that played an important role in shaping Lebanon’s political and sectarian landscape. First, demographic shifts since the 1950s led to an increase in the Shia population and a decrease in the relative size of the Christian population. Second, socio-economic shifts related to the process of urbanisation and emigration since the 1950s led to a general upward mobility within much of the Shia community. This resulted in the emergence of a new bourgeoisie under the neo-liberal economy adopted by Hariri from 1992. Finally, political shifts mainly linked to the redistribution of power after the Ta’if Agreement meant the weakening of the Christian position in parallel with the strengthening of the Muslim one (both Sunni and Shia). As with regional changes, these internal developments played a crucial role in shaping political and sectarian divisions. However, they are unable to explain alone how the change in the sectarian dichotomy only surfaced after the Hariri assassination. In order to answer this question, a further focus on the internal mechanisms of change was needed.

Thus, the chapter turned its attention to street mobilisations, arguing that they formed the mechanism through which regional and internal political changes converged in order to form public opinion and shape political divisions. An analysis of protest trends in Beirut between 2000 and 2010 revealed four main shifts in the salience of public issues in Lebanon. The first trend highlighted heightened mobilisation during the first three years following the Hariri assassination, which demonstrated that this period was a turning point in the political history of Lebanon. The second trend pointed to a decrease in the average number of weekly protests with socio-economic claims, and an increase in the average number of protests with political claims after the Hariri assassination. Focusing on political mobilisations, the third trend underlined the shift away from pan-Arab and regional concerns (namely Palestine and Iraq) to a focus on internal politics (related to the March 8 and 14 dichotomy). Finally, whereas the two main reasons for protest in Beirut prior to 2005 were related to socio-economic or pan-Arab concerns, the main reasons for mobilisation after 2005 became more directly linked to anti-Syrian activism (especially in 2005–2006) and internal politics (specifically in 2007–2008). As argued in the historical analysis provided in chapter 3, the analysis in this chapter suggested that the greater number of mobilisations between 2005 and 2008 was crucial for the process of boundary activation since it led to the transformation of pre-existing fault lines and the crystallisation of new divisions. However, how do changes in mobilisation trends and protest claims affect sectarian dichotomies? In other words, how did the Hariri assassination and its aftermath shift the salience of the sectarian dichotomy in Lebanon from a predominantly ‘Christian versus Muslim’ one to a more recent ‘Sunni versus Shia’ one?

The next chapter attempts to answer this question by focusing on who participated in protest events. A network analysis of coalition formation among political parties in Lebanon examines how political and sectarian relationships have unfolded.

5. The Meso-Level Analysis: Political Coalitions and the Changes in the Saliencies of Sectarian Polarisation

Here, as elsewhere, the protagonists of the conflict have been organizations, not groups. Brubaker (2004, p. 21)

How did the changes in mobilisation trends discussed in the previous chapter affect sectarian polarisation in Lebanon? This chapter offers a meso-level analysis of the relational mechanisms of change in order to understand how political changes can impact the salience of sectarian dichotomies in society. It focuses on protests or contentious gatherings in order to analyse the intersection between elite and popular politics. By zooming into the dynamics of street mobilisations, the analysis focuses on coalition formation during protest events in Beirut between 2000 and 2010. Building on Brubaker's (2004) and Wimmer's (2013) call for de-ethnicising research, this chapter argues that the protagonists of sectarian divisions are not sectarian groups per se, but rather sectarian political parties. It provides an analysis of political parties' co-mobilisations during protest events in order to trace changes in the networks of alliances and their implications for sectarian polarisation. The results point to a drastic remodelling in co-mobilisation networks after 2005. These changes in coalitions affected the pre-existing 'us' versus 'them' divisions and had important consequences for the salience of sectarian dichotomies. The analysis suggests that when certain conditions are met, a shift in political alliances can take on sectarian overtones.

I. Political Alliances, Co-mobilisations, and Network Analysis

In his discussion of the different means of ethnic (sectarian) boundary making, Wimmer (2013, p. 69) explains that political mobilisation forms an important channel through which

mass opinions are carried into the public arena. He argues that political actors try to mobilise sections of the population onto the streets to reflect their agendas and to ‘make their vision of the relevant ethnic divisions politically salient’ (Wimmer, 2013, p. 69). Political alliances and sectarian divisions are trickled down to the masses in the form of mobilisations. Thus, instead of imposing crude sectarian categories on these events, this chapter analyses the alliances between political groups which, in some circumstances, acquire sectarian overtones. Most political parties in Lebanon are clientelistic networks of sectarian patron-client relationships. As explained by Cammett (2014), they play an important role as non-state welfare distributors within the system of clientelism, where political leaders act as ‘providers’ to followers who are mainly from their sectarian constituencies (El Khazen, 2003, p. 606).⁹³

Thus, network alliances in co-mobilisations form a crucial channel for polarisation. In other words, participation in protest events with other parties or organisations constitutes an important mechanism through which political divisions are formed on the basis of ‘us versus them’. In most cases, mobilising together in the same cause bridges the gap between the constituents of different parties and mirrors elite-level coalitions. As argued by Wimmer (2013, p. 70), looking at social movements in order to study sectarian (ethnic) boundary making can

provide many useful insights into how exactly, through which strategies of mobilization, of claim making, and of choosing arenas and issues, the existence, cultural dignity, and political importance of an ethnic ‘we’ is made plausible to followers as well as the larger public.

⁹³ Although it would be an oversimplification to assume that all members of any political party belong to one sectarian identity, or that all members of a sectarian community belong to specific parties, it is reasonable to suggest that the main political parties active in Lebanon during the 2000s are largely based on sectarian communities.

This chapter, then, disentangles the main meso-level transformations that led to the shift in the political salience of sectarian dichotomies after 2005. It adopts network analysis techniques due to the relational nature of this method of analysis (Brubaker, 2004, p. 8) and its ability to capture political and sectarian boundary formations and transformations (Wimmer, 2013, p. 36). The chapter looks at the networks of party alliances five years before, and five years after the Hariri assassination. It builds on the findings of the previous chapter (the changes in mobilisation trends) and provides further insights into mobilisations in order to depict which parties participated together under the same protest claim. In doing so, it attempts to analyse the relationship between coalition formation and claim making in protest movements in order to understand how the shift in alliances could have affected the remodelling of sectarian polarisation.

Methods

This chapter's analysis is based on the same dataset used in the previous chapter, containing information on all protest events that took place in Beirut between 2000 and 2010. I dropped socio-economic protests and protests for Lebanese detainees in Syrian prisons⁹⁴ from the dataset⁹⁵ in order to focus on political mobilisations (see Table 10). The analysis follows Takeshi Wada's (2004) method of analysing claim making in protest events.

Sectarian-based political parties are the main vehicle by which political and sectarian divisions are shaped at the societal level. Therefore, it is essential to study their mobilisation behaviour in order to understand how public opinion is shaped at street level. Using political

⁹⁴ The protests for Lebanese detainees in Syria are dropped for two main reasons: first, the claims are not explicitly political as much as they are framed as a human right; second, the protests were mainly led by one NGO that formed almost no coalitions.

⁹⁵ According to the dataset, these protest claims often did not mobilise sectarian-based political parties.

parties as the unit of analysis is particularly useful in this case since, as explained by El Khazen (2003, p. 607), ‘Lebanon’s major communities have been associated with one or more parties.’ This approach is especially valid since the analysis is at the group/meso level and not at an individual/micro level. In other words, I am aware that not all party members necessarily belong to the same sectarian identity and that not all members of sectarian communities necessarily identify with the main political parties associated with their sect. However, it remains reasonable to assume that most political parties in post-war Lebanon are based on clear sectarian constituencies.

The sectarian-based political parties analysed in this chapter are categorised in Table 12 based on their confessional and sectarian representation. In addition to these parties, other non-sectarian parties and Palestinian factions mobilised in protest events that took place in Beirut between 2000 and 2010. For the sake of the analysis in this chapter, I focus only on the main political parties and drop other actors (such as the Armenian Teshnag and Henschag parties, Kurdish parties, Unions and Syndicates, NGOs, and Student Groups) that did not play a major role in shaping political or sectarian divisions in the country between 2000 and 2010. It is worth noting here that all political parties used in this analysis were established prior to 2000 with the exception of the Future Movement (founded in 1992 but officially registered in 2007) and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM – founded in 2003 and officially declared in 2005). Although these two parties were established after the start year of the study (2000), the leaders of both parties – Rafic Hariri and Michel Aoun – had followers prior to the official registration of their parties. The fact that the parties were not yet officially registered could have led to an under-reporting of the mobilisation of their followers in the newspapers. That said, many newspaper articles prior to 2007 reported the participation of pro-Hariri protesters under the name of ‘Future Youth Organisation’, or pro-Aoun protesters under the label of

‘Aounists’. In those cases, I coded these mobilisations as Future Movement or FPM mobilisations respectively.

The protest data for mobilisations is divided into four main claims: pan-Arab; anti-Syrian; internal politics; and pro-Syrian.

Based on the analysis provided in the previous chapter, the data is further divided into two time periods: pre-Hariri assassination (January 2000 to January 2005) and post-Hariri assassination (February 2005 to December 2010). Thus, I created a separate network matrix for each claim before and after 2005. Those matrices show the number of times each party mobilised with other parties for a specific claim.

The categorisation⁹⁶ adopted in this chapter leaves us with eight separate network matrices. The analysis is conducted using UCINET, with diagrams created in NetDraw.

⁹⁶ Although these categorisations are based on simplifications, King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, p. 42) argued that good social science research is the one able to systematically simplify the complexity of reality without distorting it. In other words, they explain that simplification and categorisation are the only choice for social scientists, since the ‘thickest’ description of reality, no matter how much details and variables it includes, won’t be able to capture the full complexity of the world. Therefore, categorisation is at the heart of systematic social science research.

Party	Details	Sect	Confession
Hezbollah	Founded in 1985. Leader: Hassan Nasrallah	Shia	Muslim
Amal Movement	Founded in 1974. Leader: Nabih Berri		
Shia, other	Including the Free Shi’ite Movement, the Democratic Socialist Party, the Lebanese Option Gathering, etc.		
Future Movement	Founded in 1992. Officially registered in August 2007, declared April 5, 2009. Leader: Saad Hariri	Sunni	
Sunni Other	Including the Democratic Nasserite Movement, the Union Party, Federation of Popular Leagues and Committees, Lebanese Popular Congress, al-Ahbash (otherwise known as the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects – AICP), Movement of Independent Nasserites – al-Murabitoun, Arab Liberation Party, Majd Movement, etc.		
Progressive Socialist Party (PSP: Druze main)	Founded in 1949. Leader: Walid Jumblatt	Druze	
Druze, other	Including Lebanese Unification Movement and the Lebanese Democratic Party , etc.		
Phalange (or Kata’ib)	Founded in 1936. Leader: Amine Gemayel	Maronite	Christian
Lebanese Forces	Founded in 1976. Leader: Samir Geagea		
Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)	Founded in 2003, officially declared in 2005. Leader: Aoun		
Christia, other	Including Al Marada Party, the Promise Party (Hezb Al Waed), National Liberal Party, the Independence Movement, the Lebanese National Block, etc.		
Non-sectarian Parties	Including: the Communist Party, the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (SSNP), the Democratic Left, the Arab Socialist Baath Party, etc.		
Palestinian Parties/Factions	Including: Fatah or Palestinian Liberation Movement, Hamas or Islamic Resistance Movement, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, etc.		

Table 12: The main political parties and their confessional/sectarian affiliations, 2000–2010

II. Data Analysis and Results

a) Frequency of Party Mobilisation by Claim

In the previous chapter, I show that whereas pan-Arab claims and socio-economic issues were the two main reasons for protest before the Hariri assassination, anti-Syrian activism and claims concerned with internal politics became the principal motives for street mobilisation after 2005. In this section, I examine those political protests to see which parties, by claim, participated in the different mobilisations.

Table 13 shows the relative frequency of party mobilisation by claim. The reported frequencies reveal the proportion of party mobilisation (relative to the total number of mobilisations by party) for any given claim before and after 2005. I divide the number of protest days for any given party for each claim by the total number of protest days for this party (for all claims). For instance, the Future Movement's relative frequency of pan-Arab protest before 2005 is 0.57 ($=4/7$ – 4 protest days for pan-Arab claims divided by a total of 7 protest days for all claims). The claims for which each party mobilised the most pre-2005 are highlighted in yellow; the ones post-2005 are highlighted in blue. The unit of analysis is the party.

The results show that whereas the main reason for the mobilisation of the Future Movement (the main Sunni-based party) pre-2005 was pan-Arab claims mainly related to Palestine (57% of their total participation in protests), it switched to anti-Syrian claims after the Hariri assassination, when 90% of its mobilisations became focused on the accusation that Syria was behind the assassination (as explained in chapter 3). Similar behaviour can be demonstrated for the Progressive Socialist Party (the main Druze-based party) and some non-sectarian parties (for example the Democratic Left that was created in 2004).

	Pan-Arab		Anti-Syrian		Internal Politics		Pro-Syrian		TOTAL	
	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005
Future Movement	0.57	0.02	0.14	0.90	0.00	0.07	0.29	0.00	7	222
Sunni Other	0.81	0.28	0.00	0.04	0.04	0.62	0.03	0.06	67	104
Hezbollah	0.63	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.93	0.08	0.01	40	583
Amal Movement	0.58	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.95	0.16	0.01	31	571
Shia, other	0.75	0.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.25	0.00	4	3
PSP (Druze main)	0.56	0.04	0.10	0.92	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.00	41	168
Druze, other	0.54	0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.95	0.15	0.01	13	570
FPM	0.07	0.02	0.70	0.12	0.11	0.86	0.00	0.00	27	635
Phalange	0.22	0.01	0.56	0.96	0.06	0.03	0.06	0.00	18	182
Lebanese Forces	0.11	0.01	0.89	0.96	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	9	180
Christian Other	0.30	0.01	0.39	0.23	0.09	0.75	0.04	0.01	23	728
Non-Sectarian Parties	0.67	0.18	0.03	0.53	0.06	0.24	0.05	0.02	97	313
Palestinian Factions	0.97	0.82	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.02	0.00	86	91

Table 13: Relative frequency of party mobilisation by claim pre- and post-2005

On the other hand, the two main Shia-based parties, Hezbollah and Amal, also witnessed a shift in their main reason for protest after 2005. Whereas they previously mobilised mainly for pan-Arab claims (in support of Palestinians and Iraqis, or to condemn Israel or the US-led war on Iraq), the direct basis of their protests after 2005 became related to internal politics, mainly in the form of the March 8 mobilisations against the March 14-led government⁹⁷ (and its anti-Syrian stance). A similar shift can be observed in the political behaviour of the minor Sunni, Druze, and Christian-based parties.

The three main Christian parties (FPM, Phalange, and the Lebanese Forces) all mobilised primarily for anti-Syrian claims between 2000 and 2005,⁹⁸ but their behaviour diverged after 2005. The FPM (led by General Michel Aoun) became mainly concerned with mobilisations for internal politics, specifically after 2006 when the party signed a memorandum of understanding with Hezbollah and aligned itself with the March 8 coalition. The Phalange (led by Amine Gemayel) and the Lebanese Forces (led by Samir Geagea) held to their pre-2005 tradition of mobilising primarily against the Syrian regime.

Likewise, the Palestinian parties' and factions' main reason for protest did not change after 2005. The main claim for Palestinian organisations has consistently been the Palestinian cause (coded as pan-Arab). This is understandable given the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the concentration of around half a million Palestinians in refugee camps around Lebanon.

In line with the analysis of the previous chapter, it is clear that there was a shift in the claims of the different political parties after the Hariri assassination in 2005. The political

⁹⁷ Fouad Siniora, a very close advisor of the late Rafic Hariri, became Prime Minister from July 2005 to November 2009. He was succeeded by Saad Hariri, the son of the late Rafic Hariri, who occupied the seat until January 2011. Both Prime Ministers belong to the Future Movement and held strong position against the Syrian regime following the assassination of Hariri in 2005.

⁹⁸ As explained in chapter 3, these anti-Syrian mobilisations were heavily repressed by the Syrian-Lebanese security apparatus during Lahoud's presidency.

activism between 2000 and 2005 (dropping socio-economic protests) was essentially divided between pan-Arab activism and anti-Syrian activism. In the pan-Arab protests, mainly Muslim-based political parties (such as the Future Movement, Hezbollah, Amal, and the PSP, along with smaller sectarian-based Muslim groups) mobilised together with secular parties (leftist and nationalist parties such as the Communist Party or the SSNP), a minority of Christian-based parties (such as the Marada Movement of Suleiman Frangieh), and Palestinian parties and factions. However, anti-Syrian protests pre-2005 were solely led by Christian-based parties such as the Lebanese Forces, the Phalange, and the FPM (with minor participation of the Future Movement and the PSP). This clustering of the main Muslim-based parties in the pan-Arab political camp on one side, and the main Christian-based parties in the anti-Syrian political camp on the other, can explain why the political divide had a Muslim–Christian sectarian flavour prior to 2005.

After 2005, the map of parties' mobilisation was completely redrawn. The post- Hariri assassination period was politically divided between anti-Syrian claims and internal political claims. This new division was embodied by the March 8 and March 14 coalitions: whereas the March 14 mobilisations between 2005 and 2010 were mainly targeted at the Syrian regime, the March 8 coalition declared its pro-Syrian stance in the first few months after the Hariri assassination, but then focused its mobilisations mainly against the March 14-led governments (meaning that most claims raised during these protests were coded as internal politics). As explained, the Future Movement, the PSP, and the Democratic Left's main reason for mobilisation was anti-Syrian. Two of the three main Christian-based parties (the Lebanese Forces and the Phalange) kept anti-Syrian claims as their main reason for protest. As for the FPM, it started mainly mobilising for internal politics, namely against the March 14 government, when it shifted its alliance and joined the March 8 camp in 2006. The Shia-

based parties (both Amal and Hezbollah) also shifted their main basis for mobilisation from regional (pan-Arab) claims to internal politics (March 8 mobilisations).

I have established that most parties underwent major changes in their main claims and divisions after the Hariri assassination. But how did those parties interact together in the light of the structural changes that the country was witnessing? How did coalitions form and change over the eleven years under study? In respect of which claims did parties mobilise together and create coalitions? Is it that parties protesting for the same claim were mobilising together and forming coalitions or were they in fact mobilising separately? In brief, how did these shifts in parties' claims affect the broader political and sectarian divisions in the country?

b) Coalition-Network Analysis: Standardised Degree Centrality (SDC)

In this section, I employ social network analysis techniques to study coalition formation in protest events. I use the 13 parties/organisations identified as nodes and create a matrix for each reason of protest. The matrix shows the number of protests in which parties/organisations mobilised together, forming a coalition over a political, social, or economic claim. I call these matrices 'coalition networks' and I use them to trace which parties/organisations mobilised together and for what claims. Once the matrices are created, I calculate Freeman's degree centrality statistics in order to see the number of ties each actor has to the network. The higher an actor's degree centrality, the more alliances this actor has with other parties over each claim. In order to make a meaningful comparison, I standardise the degree centrality by turning it into a proportion, i.e., by dividing it by the total number of ties per party for each claim. For instance, the standardised degree centrality (SDC) for Hezbollah's co-mobilisation in pan-Arab protests pre-2005 is 0.63 (=90/142). So out of 142 co-mobilisations for Hezbollah between 2000 and 2005, 90 of these alliances were built

around pan-Arab claims. Therefore, 63% of Hezbollah's coalitions in mobilisations were mainly focused on pro-Palestinian or anti-Israeli or US claims.

Table 14 reports the SDC in party mobilisation by claim before and after 2005. The claims for which each party has created the most alliances pre-2005 are highlighted in yellow; the ones post-2005 are highlighted in blue. Table 14 shows that before 2005, coalitions were mainly built around two political claims: pan-Arab claims and anti-Syrian claims. The parties that created the most coalitions around pan-Arab claims were the Future Movement, Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, the Progressive Socialist Party, the Phalange, non-sectarian parties including the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party and the Communist Party, Palestinian parties and factions, and minor Sunni, Shia, Druze, and Christian-based parties.

The parties that created the most coalitions for anti-Syrian claims were the FPM, the Phalange, and the Lebanese Forces. It is worth noting here that the mobilisations of the Phalange between 2000 and 2005 is puzzling since it appears to have built coalitions for both pan-Arab claims (SDC=0.40) and anti-Syrian claims (SDC=0.38) at the same time, which is politically contradictory given the divisions in the country in the early 2000s (see chapter 3). The main reason for this can be traced back to the internal division in the party during the era of Syrian hegemony after the civil war. The party actually split into two factions, but it was not possible to distinguish these two factions in the dataset because newspaper reports of protest events do not always differentiate the two. El Khazen (2003, p. 615) explains as follows:

The power struggle within the Kata'ib Party continued after Saade's death in 1998 and was intensified following the return of former president Amin Gemayel to Lebanon in mid- 2000 from a twelve-year exile in Paris. The election of Karim Pakradouni as head of the party in 2002 widened the internal rift. As Pakradouni drew the party closer to President Emile Lahoud and to Damascus, he clashed with Amin Gemayel and his supporters, and that led to the de facto emergence of two Kata'ib Parties: the 'official' party loyal to Lahoud and hoping to benefit politically for its stand, and the other supported by the party's traditional base in the opposition.

Thus, the mobilisation trends of the Phalange (Kata'ib) Party between 2000 and 2005 could be understood in terms of internal party divisions at the time of the Syrian presence in Lebanon. While the 'Official Kata'ib' (led by Pakradouni) was mobilising with the supporters of the Syrian regime in Lebanon, the traditional bases of the Kata'ib (led by Gemayel) were still protesting against the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

Turning now to the post-Hariri assassination era, it can be inferred that coalitions were mainly formed over three political claims: pan-Arab claims, anti-Syrian claims, and internal politics claims. Table 14 shows that pan-Arab claims remained the banner under which Palestinian-only parties and minor Sunni-based parties built most of their coalitions. Post-2005, the biggest coalitions were divided between anti-Syrian (through March 14) and internal politics activism (mainly protests against the March 14 government). The parties that possess the highest SDC for anti-Syrian claims are the Future Movement, the PSP, the Phalange (Kata'ib), the Lebanese Forces, and non-sectarian parties (namely the Democratic Left). These parties form the bulk of what is labelled the March 14 coalition. In parallel, the parties with the highest SDC for internal politics are Hezbollah, Amal Movement, the FPM, and minor Shia, Druze, and Christian-based parties. These parties are the main members of the March 8 coalition.

The results reported in Table 14 demonstrate the intensity of the alliances of each party by claim. Nonetheless, they do not show who was included in those alliances. In other words, knowing that different parties built coalitions for a specific claim does not necessarily imply

	Pan-Arab		Anti-Syrian		Internal Politics		Pro-Syrian		TOTAL	
	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005	Pre-2005	Post-2005
Future Movement	0.52	0.02	0.12	0.95	0.00	0.03	0.36	0.00	33	1212
Sunni Other	0.77	0.53	0.00	0.14	0.02	0.18	0.03	0.15	199	181
Hezbollah	0.63	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.95	0.04	0.00	142	2291
Amal Movement	0.67	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.96	0.04	0.00	132	2817
Shia Other	0.91	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.99	0.09	0.00	11	548
Druze Main - PSP	0.59	0.03	0.07	0.94	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.00	167	1110
Druze Other	0.59	0.04	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.93	0.03	0.00	61	1757
FPM	0.12	0.02	0.63	0.21	0.12	0.77	0.00	0.00	60	2831
Phalange	0.40	0.01	0.38	0.66	0.02	0.34	0.02	0.00	58	1707
Lebanese Forces	0.19	0.01	0.81	0.96	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	26	1160
Christian Other	0.36	0.02	0.26	0.39	0.04	0.58	0.01	0.00	80	2834
Non-Sectarian Parties	0.68	0.07	0.03	0.59	0.04	0.33	0.02	0.00	270	1899
Palestinian Factions	0.99	0.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	523	134

Table 14: Standardised degree centrality in party mobilisation by claim pre- and post-2005

that those parties all mobilised together for this claim. For instance, Table 14 shows that Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, and the FPM have all built coalitions around internal politics. However, this does not automatically mean that these three parties have mobilised together in protests. It could be that Hezbollah and Amal mobilised together on one side, and the FPM and Hezbollah on another in different protests, but in both cases over internal politics. It is possible for the FPM and Amal to have no coalition around internal politics, but for both to have a high SDC score. In order not to fall in this trap, I turn in the next section to an analysis of how coalitions were built pre- and post-2005. By doing so, I hope to depict which parties mobilised together and for what claims. Once this is clarified, I will be able to trace the coalitions and analyse how the relationships between the different parties have changed over time.

c) Coalition Analysis: Network Diagrams

Since I am interested in changes to the political divisions and their implications on sectarian relations, I focus in this section on coalition formations over political claims. Diagrams 1 to 8 show the network structure of the different parties by claim. They show which parties mobilised together for each claim before and after 2005. Parties that are listed in the upper-left corner of the diagram are the ones that did not mobilise for the given claim. The thickness of the lines joining the nodes (the parties) is an indicator of the strength of the tie. In other words, the thicker the line, the more co-mobilisations between the parties. Therefore, we can talk in terms of a coalition when we identify the parties joined by a thick line.

i. Anti-Syria Protests

Diagram 1 shows that between 2000 and 2005, the main anti-Syrian coalition in Lebanon consisted of the FPM, the Lebanese Forces, and the Phalange, together with other Christian-

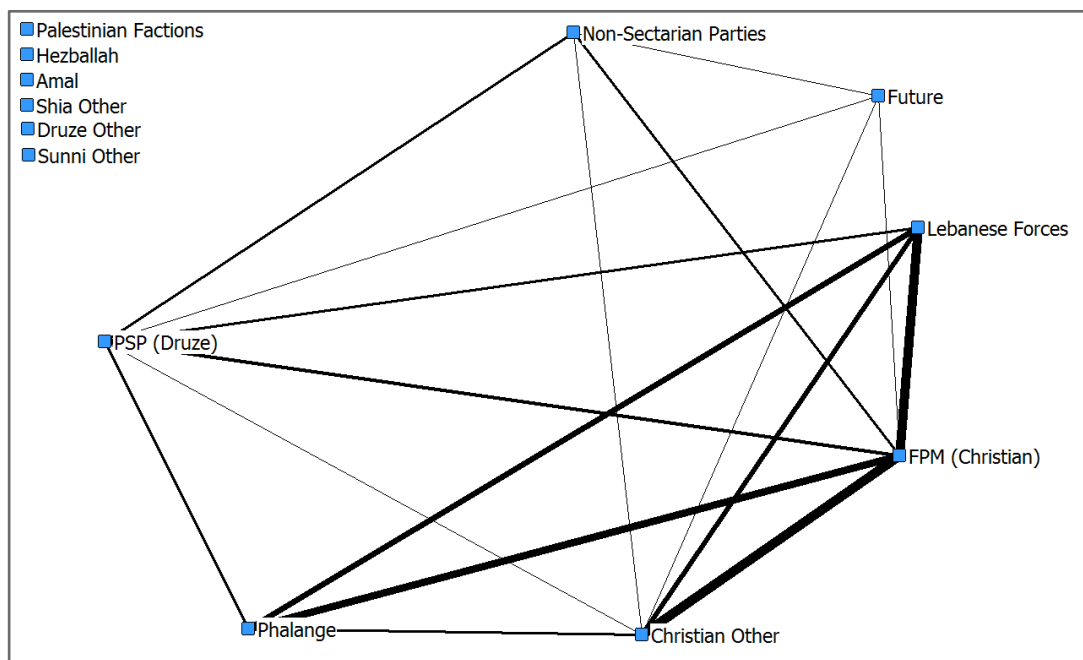


Diagram 1: Anti-Syrian protests re-2005

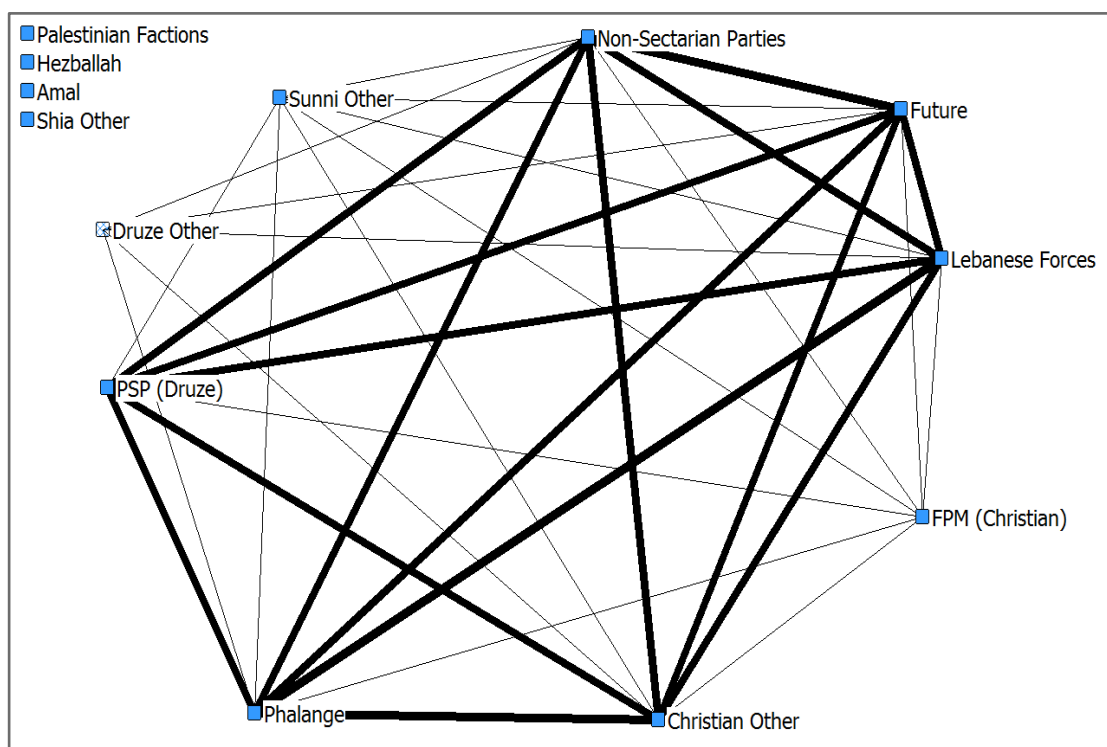


Diagram 2: Anti-Syrian Protest Post-2005

based parties. As expected, this coalition relies heavily on the main Christian-based political parties. Anti-Syrian protests were occasionally joined by the Future Movement, the PSP, and some non-sectarian parties. According to the dataset based on the newspaper archives, the first anti-Syrian mobilisation in which the 'Future Youth' and the PSP participated was on April 19, 2000. The protest was organised by the FPM together with some Christian-based parties and leftist groups to call for the release of anti-Syrian activists who were arrested by the Lebanese-Syrian security apparatus. Clashes took place between the police and the protesters, leaving 14 injured. As noted in chapter 3, during that period relations between PSP leader Walid Jumblatt and Rafic Hariri, and the Syrian regime and its direct ally in Lebanon – President Emile Lahoud – worsened. Other examples include the 2004 anti-Syrian mobilisation of the PSP in support of UN Resolution 1559 calling for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon and the disarmament of all militias. Similarly, the PSP also joined some protests in November 2004 against the extension of President Emile Lahoud's term.

Diagram 2 shows the drastic changes in the anti-Syrian coalitions after the Hariri assassination. Whereas the pre-2005 coalitions were almost exclusively based on the mainly Christian-based parties, the post-Hariri assassination period witnessed a remarkable expansion of the anti-Syrian coalitions. The March 14 Alliance comprised a large number of political parties, united under the accusation that Syria was behind the assassination and the demand for an end to Syrian hegemony. Those parties, as per Diagram 2, include the Future Movement, the PSP, the newly established Democratic Left (non-sectarian), the Lebanese Forces, the Phalange, the FPM (until February 2006 when it left the March 14 Alliance, signed an agreement with Hezbollah, and shifted camps), other smaller Christian-based parties such as the National Liberal Party, as well as the Independence Movement (led by Michel Mouawad) and the Lebanese National Bloc (led by Carlos Edde).

The parties that never participated in anti-Syrian protests pre-2005 included Hezbollah, Amal, minor Sunni, Shia and Druze-based parties, NGOs, and Palestinian parties; after 2005 they included Shia-based parties (Hezbollah, Amal Movement, and other Shia parties) along with Palestinian parties. By contrast, the position of the mainly Sunni-based and Druze-based parties, and even that of some non-mainstream parties (like the Sunni-based Islamic Group or the Druze-based Muahedeen Group) clearly shifted after the Hariri assassination.⁹⁹

ii. Pan-Arab Protests

Before 2005, the largest pan-Arab alliance in protests was among Palestinian factions, non-sectarian parties (such as leftist and nationalist parties), and Sunni-based parties. These protests were often joined by the PSP, Hezbollah, and the Amal Movement. Pan-Arab protests are exceptional because they are the only claim for which all parties in our dataset have mobilised (pre- and post-2005). This shows the diversity of possible pan-Arab claims for which parties can mobilise. For example, on October 21, 2004, the main Christian-based parties mobilised in solidarity with the Iraqi people after the targeting of churches in Iraq. Although this protest is coded as pan-Arab in our dataset, it is still important to note that those parties are mainly mobilising in support of the Iraqi people with whom they religiously identify. It is also interesting to note that, between 2000 and 2005, the Phalange and the Lebanese Forces never co-mobilised with Shia-based parties (Hezbollah and Amal) for causes related to political developments in Iraq or Palestine. In other words, although these parties have mobilised for a seemingly similar cause (Iraq), they did not join forces politically

⁹⁹ Smaller sectarian-based parties are all coded under one category. Therefore, if one minor Druze-based party mobilised in an anti-Syrian protest, the whole category of minor Druze-based party will appear in the diagram. Thus, we know that some Druze-based (or Sunni-based) parties like the Lebanese Democratic Party of Arslan or the Arab Tawhid Party of Wahhab never mobilised against Syria even after 2005.

at any point. This is understandable and expected given the political divisions in the post-Ta'if era and during the years of Syrian hegemony.

According to diagrams 3 and 4, the Future Movement appears never to have co-mobilised with the Shia-based parties (Amal and Hezbollah) for pan-Arab claims pre-2005. However, the historical reading of the period (chapter 3) suggests that the Sunni-based parties and the Shia-based parties (together with the Druze-based parties despite fluctuations) were political allies under the Syrian tutelage pre-2005. As previously mentioned, the Future Movement was not formally registered as a political party until August 2007. This could explain why the participation of the pro-Hariri protesters, known as the 'Future Youth', possibly went underreported in newspaper articles. Nonetheless, a look at co-mobilisation between smaller Sunni-based parties and Hezbollah, Amal, and the PSP, strongly suggests that the Sunni-based, the Shia-based, and the Druze-based parties were close political allies that mobilised together for pan-Arab causes. Those protests gathered very large crowds (the largest in the pre-2005 period) that chanted anti-Israel and US, and pro-Palestinian and Iraqi slogans. For example, on March 15, 2003, a massive protest took place in central Beirut in support of the Iraqi people, condemning the US military intervention. Sunni-based, Shia-based, and Druze-based parties mobilised together alongside nationalist and leftist parties, burning the US flag and chanting 'Death to America' (*'al-mawt li America'*). Similarly, on April 20, 2004, a big demonstration took place in front of the US embassy in Awkar, denouncing the assassination of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi. Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, and the PSP, together with Palestinian parties and smaller Sunni Islamic parties, all participated in this protest, chanting slogans such as, 'From Fallujah to Palestine, one people that won't surrender' (*'Men al-Fallouja ila Falasteen, sha'bon wahidon la yaleen'*).

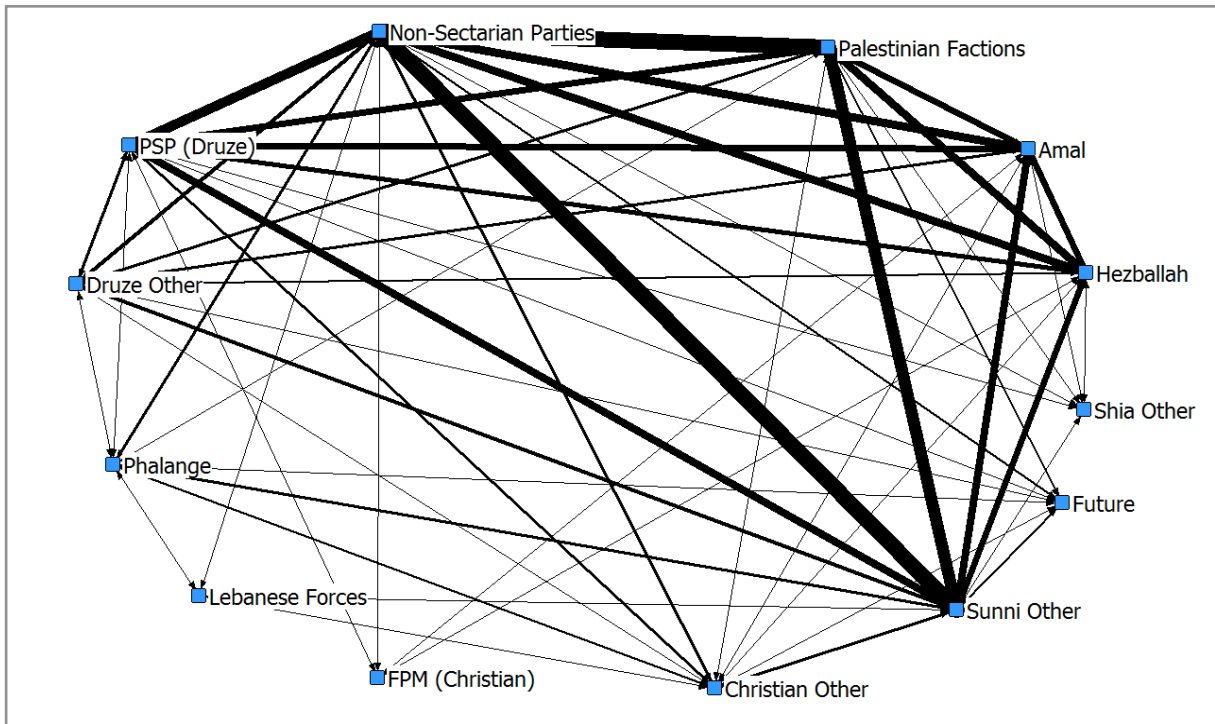


Diagram 3: Pan-Arab protests pre-2005

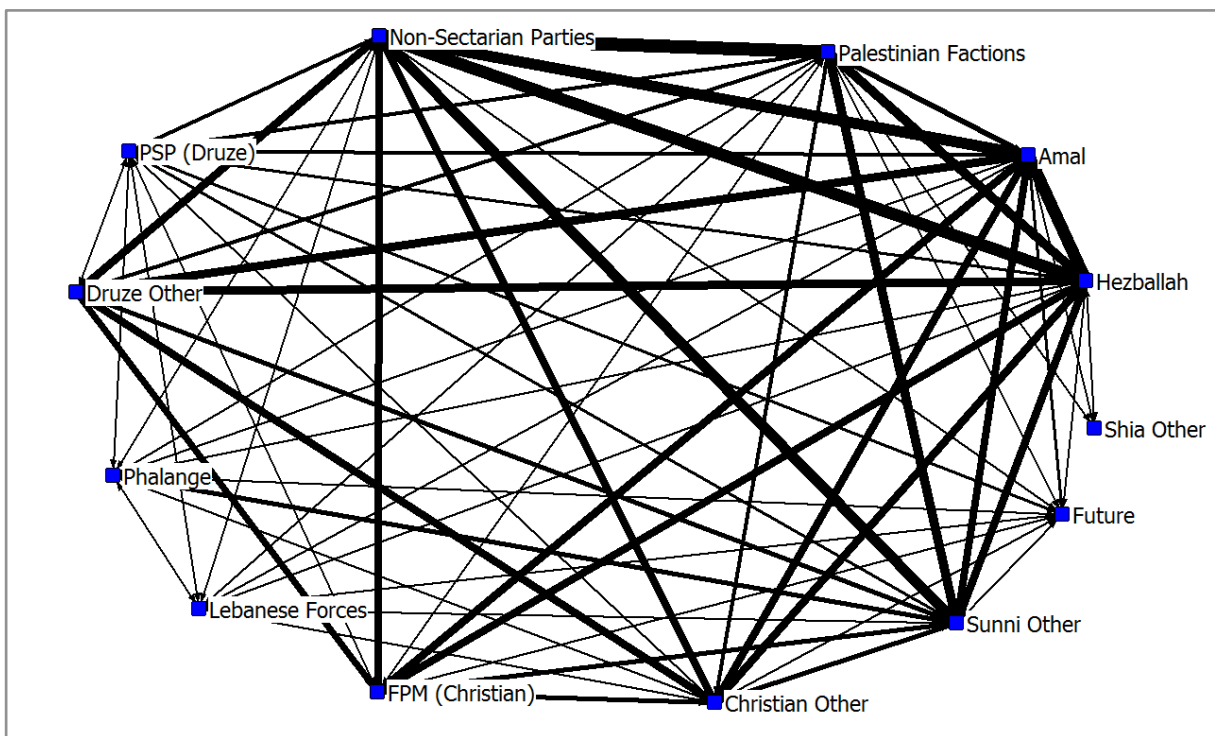


Diagram 4: Pan-Arab protests post-2005

Diagram 4 shows that the post-2005 co-mobilisation network for pan-Arab claims involved more political parties than the pre-2005 period. The parties that mobilised the most with each other for pan-Arab causes post-2005 are Hezbollah, Amal, minor Sunni-based parties, minor Druze-based parties, the FPM, minor Christian-based parties, Palestinian parties, and non-sectarian parties, namely the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party, the Baathist Party, the Communist Party, and other leftist and nationalist parties. This coalition constitutes the March 8 Alliance.

In the pre-2005 period, I considered the minor Sunni-based parties to reflect the general political salience of the Sunni communities. However, it is worth noting that this does not hold for the post-2005 era. After the Hariri assassination, the Future Movement became an official political party that mobilised (and was supported by) a considerable section of the Sunni community. The division between the political stance of the Future Movement (mainly anti-Syrian) and that of the smaller Sunni-based parties (such the al-Ahbash party) made it important to distinguish between them. However, the lead Sunni-based party after 2005 clearly became the Future Movement. In 2009, the International Crisis Group¹⁰⁰ analysed voting behaviour in different regions of Lebanon. The report explains that

*The 2009 parliamentary elections revealed a strikingly different picture that illustrated both the Future Current's broad and more or less unrivalled support among Sunnis country-wide and Saad Hariri's clear leadership status.*¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ The International Crisis Group is an independent organisation that conducts research in conflict areas in order to provide conflict prevention advocacy. Its headquarters is in Brussels.

¹⁰¹ *Crisis Group Middle East Report*, 'Lebanon's Politics: The Sunni Community and Hariri's Future Current', 26 May 2010, no. 96, p. 19.

Although voters' behaviour is reported according to regions and not confessions or sects, it is possible to deduce the sectarian nature of the votes in some regions that have a clear sectarian majority. For instance, it is reported that 'in predominantly Sunni areas, such as Tripoli, Akkar, Saida and the West Bekaa, the elections clearly consolidated Hariri's pre-eminence' ('Lebanon's Politics,' 2010, p. 14). Therefore, following this analysis, it is reasonable to consider that the Future Movement represented political tendencies within a considerable proportion of the Sunni community in Lebanon post-2005.

In addition, although protests for regional claims became a secondary cause for mobilisation after February 2005, a few co-mobilisations between some parties of the March 8 Alliance and the March 14 Alliance still emerged over pan-Arab claims. Those co-mobilisations took place mainly in 2010 and addressed humanitarian issues. For instance, on June 2, 2010, a big protest took place in front of the UN building in downtown Beirut, condemning the Israeli attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. It is, however, noteworthy that during the 2008 war on Gaza, no Christian-based party mobilised for this cause and the Future Movement organised a protest on its own without joining the March 8-led protests in support of Gaza. This again shows that the political division post-Hariri assassination realigned political parties and redrew fault lines. Even though both the March 8 Alliance and the Future Movement were mobilising for the same cause (pro-Gaza and anti-Israel), they did not organise together or co-mobilise.

Moreover, the data reveals that towards the end of 2010, the PSP mobilised several times with Hezbollah and Amal for pan-Arab claims. This is essentially explained by the withdrawal of Jumblatt (leader of the PSP) from the March 14 Alliance and his rapprochement with the March 8 block (chapter 3).

Thus, the shifts in political alliances are clearly depicted in the protest behaviour of the different parties, and they explain the coalition formations portrayed in our diagrams.

iii. Pro-Syrian Protests

Diagram 5 shows that before the Hariri assassination, the main coalition for pro-Syrian claims included the Amal Movement, Hezbollah, and non-sectarian parties such as Arab or Syrian nationalist parties and leftist parties. The Future Movement and minor Sunni-based and Druze-based parties also joined this coalition, though they co-mobilised less frequently. Additionally, Palestinian parties and factions participated in protests that overtly supported the Syrian regime. The first pro-Syrian protest in the dataset dates back to June 16, 2000, when a protest took place in Beirut after the death of Syrian president Hafez al-Assad. The protesters reasserted their alliance with the Syrian regime and supported the handing of power to Bashar al-Assad, son of the late president. Most parties in Diagram 5 participated in this protest, including the ‘official’ Phalange (Kata’ib) that was politically close to Damascus (contrary to the traditional Phalange). Another important pro-Syrian protest took place on October 22, 2003 in front of the US embassy, condemning the passing of the Syria Sanctions Bill. This protest was led by Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, the SSNP, and Palestinian factions. It is therefore clear from Diagram 5 that the main Christian-based parties (the FPM, the Lebanese Forces, and the traditional Phalange, Kata’ib) did not participate in pro-Syrian protests between 2000 and 2005 (with the exception of the official Kata’ib’)

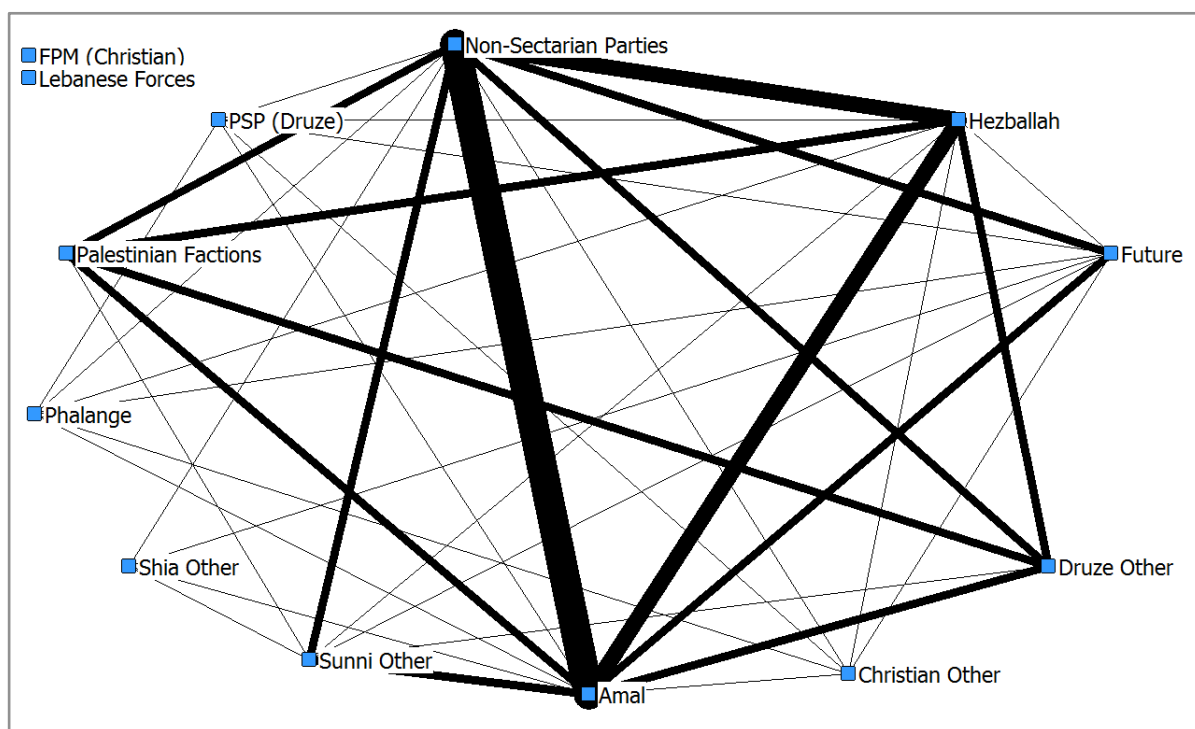


Diagram 5: Pro-Syrian protests pre-2005

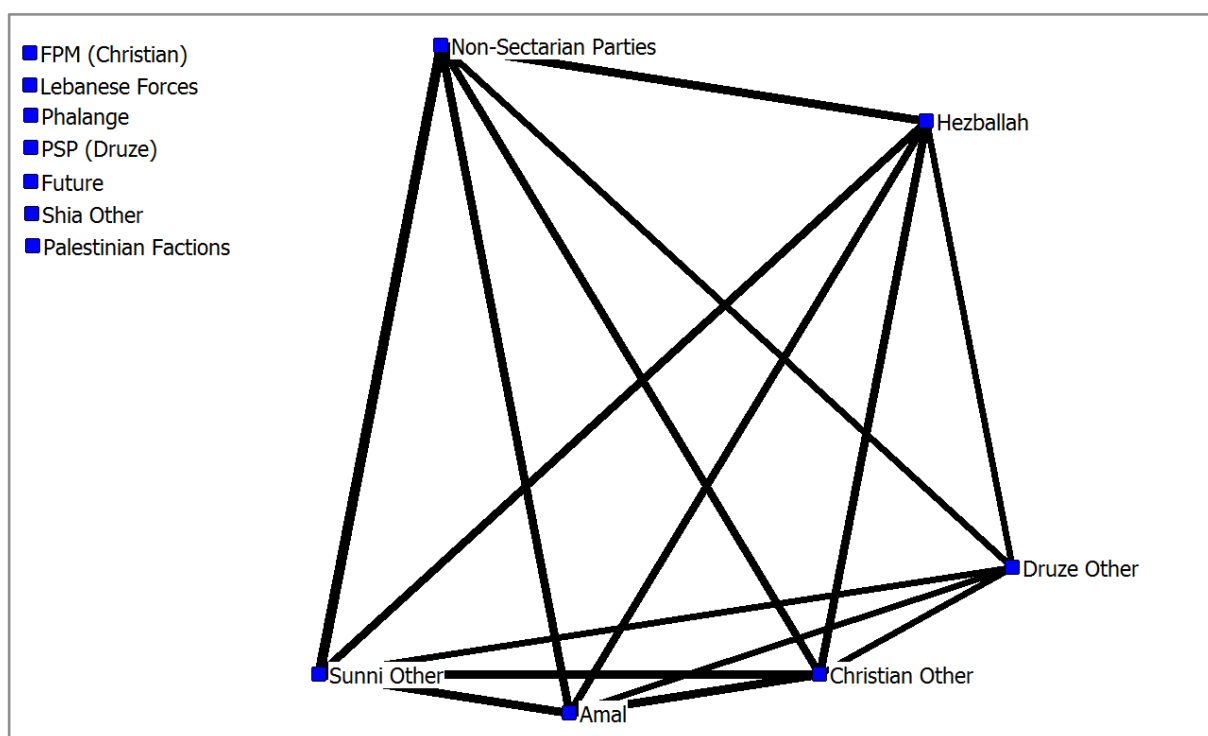


Diagram 6: Pro-Syrian protests post-2005

Turning now to the pro-Syrian alliances after the Hariri assassination, we can see that they mainly comprised Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, and non-sectarian parties (mainly the SSNP and the Ba'ath party), together with minor Sunni-based, Druze-based, and Christian-based parties. Diagram 6 shows that the Future Movement and the main Druze party, the PSP, dropped out of protest events with pro-Syrian claims after 2005 (they now appear at the top left of the diagram). Similarly, the official Kata'ib party did not mobilise in any explicitly pro-Syrian protest. In fact, the first pro-Syrian protest after the Hariri assassination was a turning point in coalition formation and created the building block for the March 8 Alliance.

The protest took place on March 8, 2005, in the Riad Al Solh Square in downtown Beirut, its main slogan being 'Thank you Syria'. It came in response to the growing accusations that Syria was behind the Hariri assassination. The leaders of this protest expressed their gratitude to the Syrian regime for the role it played in the post-civil war era and for its backing of the resistance against Israel. This protest deepened the split between the March 8 coalition and the March 14 coalition.

iv. Internal Politics

The pre-2005 alliances over internal politics claims were very scattered as per Diagram 7. Most alliances were mainly forged between non-sectarian parties, the FPM, the PSP, and minor Christian-based parties. For example, on March 18, 2002, civil society organisations mobilised in support of a civil law of personal status, together with some leftist and nationalist parties, the FPM, and the PSP. Another example of coalitions forged for internal politics pre-2005 is the April 13, 2003, protest that included some leftist parties and the FPM (in addition to NGOs). This protest mobilised in commemoration of the civil war and asked for a serious follow-up on the issue of the 'disappeared'.

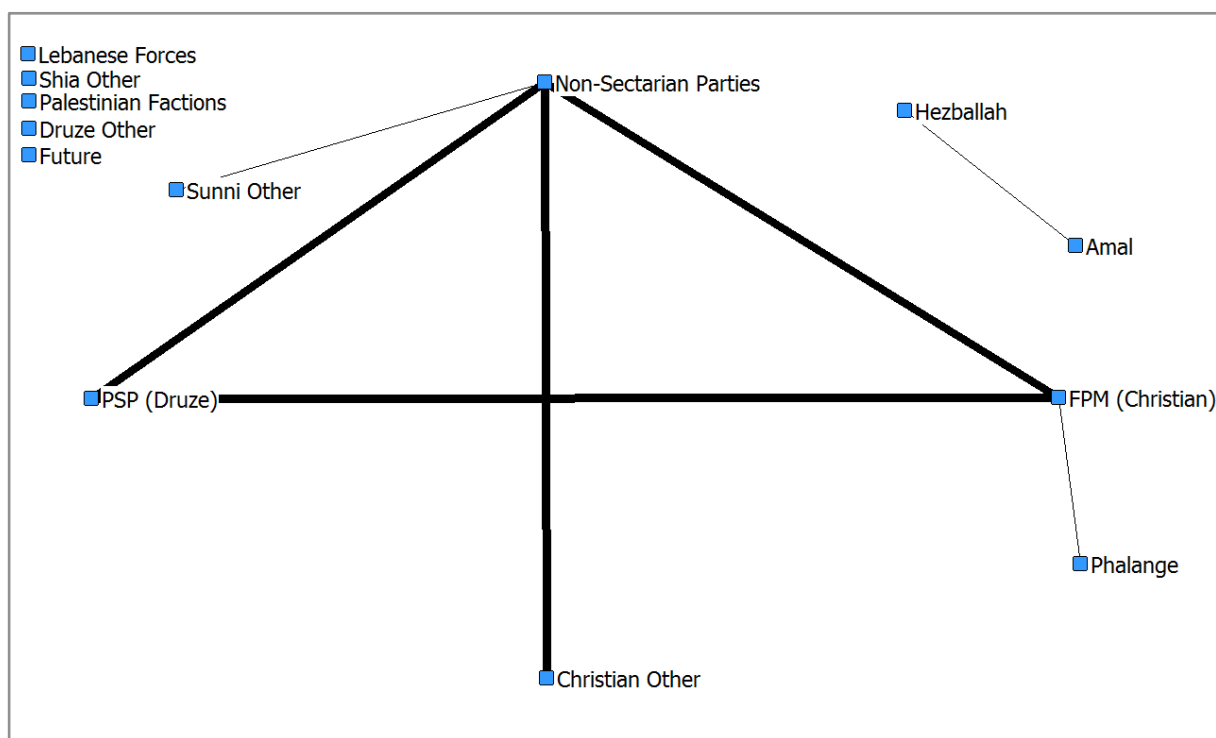


Diagram 7: Internal politics protests pre-2005

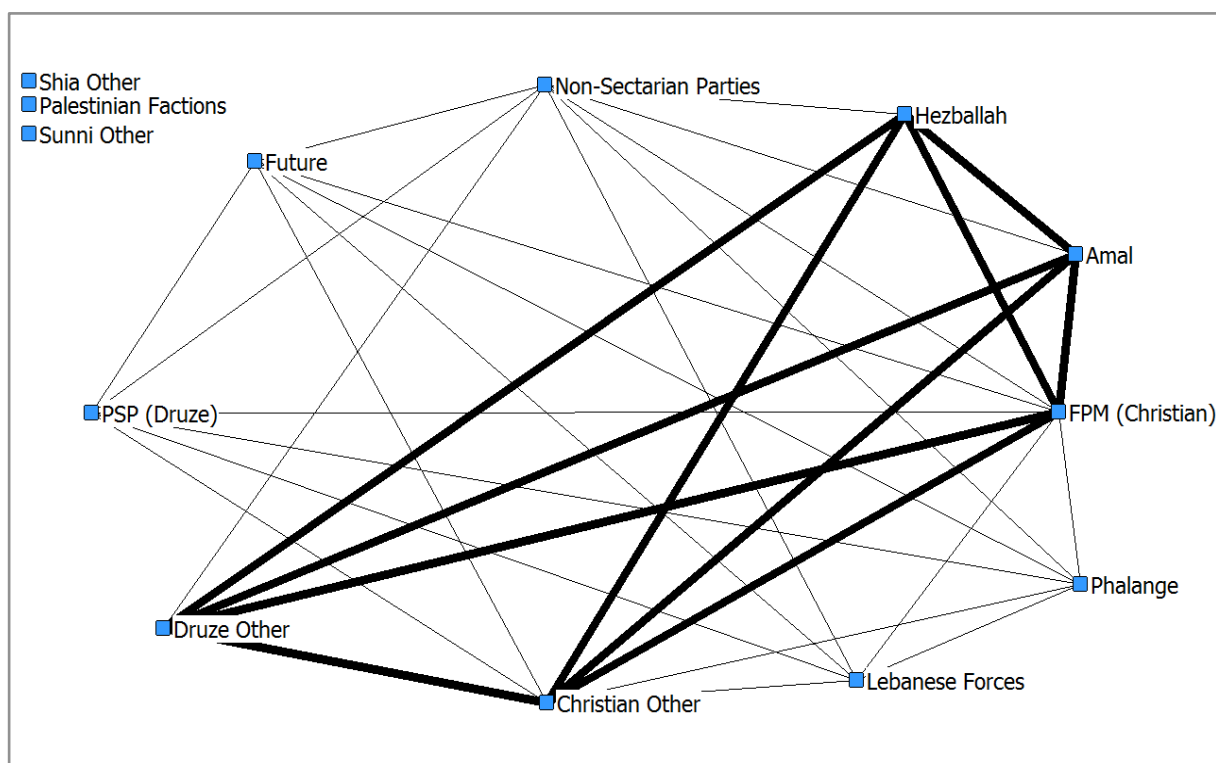


Diagram 8: Internal politics protests post-2005

Similarly, on December 21, 2004, some leftist parties protested, asking for a proportionate electoral law and the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18.

Diagram 8 shows that after the Hariri assassination, the main coalition for internal politics mobilisation is the March 8 block, including Hezbollah, Amal, the FPM and minor Christian-based parties such as the Marada party, and minor Druze-based parties such as the Lebanese Democratic Party (led by Talal Arslan) and the Lebanese Unification Movement (led by Wiam Wahhab). This coalition mainly mobilised against the March 14-led government, especially after the July 2006 Israeli war. Diagram 8 also shows another coalition that co-mobilised less frequently than the March 8 Alliance and that mostly included parties of the March 14 Alliance such as the Lebanese Forces, the Future Movement, the Phalange and the PSP, alongside the FPM and non-sectarian parties (mainly the Democratic Left). This coalition appears in this diagram mainly because mobilisations in commemoration of a martyr (usually after an assassination) are also coded as internal politics. This coalition mobilised after every assassination to denounce it. Similarly, the FPM and some leftist and communist parties (together with NGOs) mobilised a great deal with the March 14 parties to raise awareness about the danger of drifting into a new civil war. For example, on October 3, 2005, the March 14 coalition, together with some civil society organisations, mobilised on the first anniversary of the failed assassination attempt that targeted the Progressive Socialist Party's MP Marwan Hamadeh, calling for civil peace and condemning the political instability the country was experiencing. These claims are also coded as internal politics.

Although the greatest incidence of co-mobilisation for internal politics was among March 8 parties and mainly called for the resignation of the March 14-led government, other internal political claims included civil peace, commemoration of martyrs, electoral laws, etc. Those claims were essentially raised by coalitions comprising some March 14 parties, together with

the FPM (since it was still part of the March 14 Alliance up to 2006) and non-sectarian parties.

d) Discussion of Results

The shifts in political claims and alliances described above were accompanied by a shift in sectarian dichotomies. Following the dataset, I identified the participation of political parties in the different protests based on claims. The political dichotomy before the Hariri assassination was between political parties concerned with pan-Arab claims on the one hand, and those concerned with anti-Syrian claims on the other. All the anti-Syrian protests pre-2005 were organised, and almost solely led, by Christian-based parties (with the exception of a few incidences of the participation of the PSP and the Future Youth), namely the FPM, the Lebanese Forces, and the Phalange. On the other hand, the pan-Arab protests were mostly undertaken by Muslim-based parties (such as Amal, Hezbollah, Future Youth, PSP, and smaller parties), Palestinian factions, and leftist and nationalist parties (such as the Communist Party, the Baathist Party, the SSNP, etc.). These alliances witnessed major transformations after the Hariri assassination. The political dichotomy became one between the anti-Syrian March 14 Alliance and the pro-Syrian March 8 coalition (that mainly mobilised in opposition to the March 14 coalition).

Examining the political participation in these blocks reveals that the March 14 Alliance primarily comprised the main Sunni-based party (the Future Movement), the main Druze-based party (the Progressive Socialist Party), and the main Christian-based parties (the FPM, the Phalange, and the Lebanese Forces), alongside one newly formed leftist party (the Democratic Left Movement). The March 8 coalition was formed in its majority by Shia-based parties, namely Hezbollah and the Amal Movement, together with a minority of Druze, Sunni, and Christian-based parties allied to Syria. These alliances lasted until February 2006,

when Michel Aoun, head of the FPM, signed a memorandum of understanding¹⁰² with Hezbollah, and thus shifted a major Christian-based block from the March 14 coalition to the March 8 coalition.

So far, the analysis is largely based on political parties' coalitions. However, as previously argued, most political parties in Lebanon are largely drawn from (and speak in the name of) clear sectarian communities. Therefore, in order to understand how political alliances have affected the salience of sectarian divisions in the country, I analyse the interchangeability of the political and sectarian identity of the main political parties in my matrices. In other words, I demonstrate the relationship between the 'sectarian' and the 'political' by looking at how political mobilisations and coalitions can be translated into a sectarian language, given the fact that the boundaries of political parties and sectarian groups coincide in most cases. So, based on the analysis of my dataset, the political realignments in mobilisations after the Hariri assassination – translated in sectarian terms – can be understood as follows:

1. The majority of the Sunni community, led by the Future Movement, shifted from mainly mobilising for pan-Arab claims pre-2005 to essentially protesting against the Syrian regime after the Hariri assassination and the formation of the March 14 coalition.
2. The majority of the Shia community, led by Hezbollah and Amal, shifted from mainly pan-Arab (and pro-Syrian) protests prior to 2005 to focus their mobilisation on internal political matters, mainly against the March 14-led government.

¹⁰² According to Khashan (2012, p. 82), 'Aoun is not oblivious to Hezbollah's strategy but feels his alliance with it will eventually secure the presidency for him.'

3. The majority of the Druze community, led by the PSP, mainly mobilised for pan-Arab concerns prior to 2005. However, they took a stand against the Syrian regime after the Hariri assassination (until late 2009) and allied themselves with the March 14 coalition¹⁰³.
4. Finally, the Christian community split after 2005. Whereas the main Christian-based political parties (the FPM, the Phalange, and the Lebanese Forces) mainly mobilised together against the Syrian presence in Lebanon prior to 2005, the post-Hariri assassination era witnessed some major divisions on 'Christian street'. In February 2006, the FPM's leader Michel Aoun realigned himself with the March 8 coalition, shifting with him a considerable section of the mainly Christian partisans of his party. However, the Kata'ib and the Lebanese Forces remained in the March 14 camp and mobilised their Christian followers in essentially anti-Syrian rallies.

In the midst of these political changes, understood in sectarian terms, why did the sectarian schism shift from a dichotomy between Christians and Muslims to one between Sunnis and Shias? Where do the Christians and Druze stand in this translation of political conflict into sectarian terms? Since the main Druze-based party (PSP) had the same political behaviour as the main Sunni-based party (the Future Movement) after 2005, why do we speak of a 'Sunni-Shia' conflict and not a 'Druze-Shia' conflict? Moreover, why are the Muslim-Christian boundaries no longer the most salient divisions after the remodelling in political alliances?

¹⁰³ The PSP stayed with the March 14 coalition until 2010, when its leader decided to leave this alliance given the changing regional balance of power and the repositioning of Hezbollah as a major internal player after May 2008 and the 2009 elections (see chapter 3).

Taking into account all the macro-level changes discussed in chapter 4 and their relevance in shaping the salience of sectarian dichotomies, the analysis presented below focuses on the internal conditions that affected the salience of sectarian dichotomies following shifts in political mobilisations. It considers that regional power dynamics and internal political and social shifts are reflected on the street through the mobilisation of political parties. Therefore, dissecting this mechanism is important to understanding how macro changes are carried out at the meso level, and why some changes take on a sectarian overtone and not others.

III. The Meso-Level Mechanism Explaining the Shift in Sectarian Polarisation

In light of the literature review provided in chapter 2 and based on the results of the network analysis, I attempt to explain the process of sectarian polarisation through the mechanism of coalition formation. The literature points to two main factors that determine the salience of sectarian boundaries: the size of the sectarian communities within the country (Bates, 1983; Posner, 2004); and intra-sectarian political competition (Cammatt, 2014).

The bulk of the literature focuses on the importance of the size of the communities in determining the potential salience of their sectarian boundaries in times of conflict (Bates, 1983; Posner, 2004; Varshney, 2003, p. 35; Wimmer, 2013, p. 145). This factor is important in explaining why the Druze are not captured in the main sectarian dichotomy that emerged as Sunni–Shia in post-2005 Lebanon. The Druze community is heavily involved in the political life of the country, mainly through the PSP; however, it forms a tiny demographic minority (5% according to Table 4 in chapter 4) and is therefore unable to demographically compete with the bigger sectarian communities such as the Shia, Sunni, or Maronite. While demographic size could explain the absence of the Druze from the overall picture of sectarian polarisation in Lebanon, what explains the fact that the salience of the Maronite boundary waned after 2005 while that of the Sunni boundary increased, given that no major shifts in

demographic size were recorded between 1990 and 2005? In other words, why did sectarian polarisation shift from Muslim–Christian to Sunni–Shia after 2005?

An important internal factor that has been under-studied is the internal fragmentations within confessional-based coalitions. Although intra-sectarian competition was discussed by Cammett (2014) as a main determinant of resource allocation strategies in Lebanon, her analysis did not directly attempt to link intra-sectarian divisions with the salience of sectarian dichotomies. Therefore, I build on Cammett's work in order to argue that a major determinant of sectarian polarisation is intra-sectarian competition or alliance. Whereas most Muslim-based political parties were allies prior to 2005 (and mainly mobilised for pan-Arab claims), divisions after the Hariri assassination led to the split of Muslim public opinion into two camps: a majority of the Shia-based political parties on the March 8 side, and a majority of the Sunni-based and Druze-based parties on the March 14 side. However, as previously explained, the small demographic size of the Druze community made of it a less salient sectarian boundary. The Muslim confessional alliance became fragmented into an inter-Muslim sectarian divide between the main Sunni-based parties and the main Shia-based parties. The Muslim confessional boundary became less salient, while the Sunni and Shia sectarian cleavage gained more significance.

Similarly, while the main Christian-based political parties mostly co-mobilised in anti-Syrian claims prior to 2005, they split after February 2006 as the FPM joined the March 8 camp and the Lebanese Forces and the Phalanges stayed in the March 14 camp. This political fragmentation within the Christian (and more precisely Maronite) community dropped them out of the confessional and sectarian master frame since it did not coincide with any inter-Christian sectarian divisions. In other words, the division in the Christian communities happened within the Maronite community and not across intra-Christian sectarian lines (Greek Orthodox or Catholic for example) since the three most powerful Christian parties are

essentially Maronite-based. The presence of the major Christian (Maronite)-based political forces on both sides of the political divide (March 8 and March 14 coalitions) meant that the political mobilisation of these parties could no longer be translated in sectarian terms.

The analysis suggests that intra-sectarian political homogeneity is an essential condition for political conflicts to take on sectarian overtones and shape sectarian polarisations. In fact, when the majority of a sectarian community is not represented primarily through one political party (as with the Future Movement for the majority of the Sunni communities or the PSP for the majority of the Druze communities), the political alliance of the main political parties representing the community becomes a major determinant in the salience of the sectarian boundary. Thus, the Shia community's boundary became salient after 2005 because of the alliance between its two main political parties (Amal and Hezbollah), whereas the Christian sectarian boundary lost its salience given the intra-sectarian political competition between the FPM on one side and the Phalange and Lebanese Forces on the other.

To recapitulate the findings of this chapter, the analysis presented above suggests that a shift in political coalitions could affect the salience of overall sectarian polarisation when two main conditions are met:

1. **The competing sectarian-based political parties represent communities that are demographically large enough.** The size of the sectarian community is a major determinant of the salience of its boundaries, especially in consociational systems, such as in Lebanon, where the political representation of a community depends heavily on its demographic size (as explained in chapter 4). Therefore, a shift in the alliances of political parties that represent communities that are large enough could affect the salience of the sectarian polarisations.
2. **Intra-sectarian political alliance.** An important finding from the analysis of my data suggests that intra-sectarian political divisions play an important role in decreasing the

salience of sectarian boundaries. In other words, if the majority of the sectarian-based political parties of a certain community are politically divided (not co-mobilising for a similar political claim), their mobilisation is understood as merely political and does not translate into sectarian terms. This explains why the intra-sectarian political competition amongst the main Christian (Maronite)-based political parties led to the decline in the salience of the Christian (Maronite) identity. A political division can only take on a sectarian tone when there is intra-sectarian alliance. Thus, sectarian identities only become interchangeable with political identities when the boundaries of these two identities coincide.

Similar mechanisms and conditions apply to the pre-civil war period alliances that resulted in the crystallisation of political polarisation into sectarian ones between the 'Muslims' and the 'Christians'. As explained in chapter 3, by the end of the 1960s the country was split into two camps: the Tripartite Alliance (or *Hilf*) comprising the main Christian right-wing Maronite parties (the *Kata'ib*, the National Liberal Party, and the National Block), and the National Movement Alliance (or *Nahj*) including the mainly Muslim-based nationalist and leftist parties (such as the PSP, the SSNP, the Nasserites, the Baathists, the Communists, the *Murabitoun*, etc.). The Tripartite Alliance emphasised a Lebanese nationalism against the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon and against Nasserism, while the National Movement Alliance supported the Palestinian resistance and subscribed to regional types of nationalism (Syrian nationalism or Arab nationalism) in its majority. Both blocks were able to compete in terms of demographic size, external support, military capacity, and political power. Moreover, each block represented an intra-sectarian alliance between the main political parties of each confession: the main Christian-based parties were allies in the *Hilf*, and the majority Muslim-based parties (although secular in their majority) formed a coalition under the *Nahj*. Although these alliances drastically shifted throughout the

civil war, the initial years following the formation of these two blocks were enough to crystallise the polarisation that would later on take on sectarian overtones. The high level of mobilisation in the early 1970s and the violence of the two years' war (1975–1976) hardened confessional cleavages and made of its boundaries a salient division that would last for around three decades (despite all the political changes that followed).

IV. Conclusion

This chapter attempted to explain the process of sectarian polarisation through an analysis of the mechanism of coalition formation within protest events. It systematically dealt with the meso-level dynamics of change in the salience of political and sectarian divisions in Lebanon before and after 2005. The analysis focused on the mechanisms through which mobilisation shifted from Christian–Muslim to Sunni–Shia in post-2005 Lebanon. It suggested that coalition formation, measured through co-mobilisation in protest events, can be an important mechanism that affects the wider process of polarisation. It considered that political parties are the main vehicle through which political leaders and ordinary citizens are linked. The political and sectarian shifts in the process of polarisation are displayed through the coalitions formed in street mobilisations by sectarian-based political parties. This analysis is in line with the constructivist school that considers that ethnic or sectarian divisions stem from political divisions that are shaped along ethnic/sectarian lines.

Despite the presence of eighteen officially recognised sectarian communities in Lebanon, the salience of the overarching sectarian division usually takes the form of a dichotomous split (it is only the boundary between two sectarian identities that becomes salient). The analysis of coalition formation in protest events in Beirut between January 2000 and December 2010 suggests that in order for a shift in political alliances to affect the salience of sectarian dichotomies, two main conditions need to be met: the competing sectarian-based

political parties must represent communities that are demographically large enough; and major intra-sectarian political divisions should not exist. This last condition is essential in order for political and sectarian identities to become interchangeable. For example, although the Christian community is demographically large enough to potentially form a salient cleavage, the lack of political unity within the group post-2006 (after the FPM move to the March 8 camp in 2006) made this cleavage irrelevant. Whereas the first year following the assassination of Hariri was mainly focused on Muslim–Christian reconciliation, the move of the FPM to the March 8 camp in February 2006 divided the main Christian-based parties. This political divergence obliterated the political connotation of the Christian sectarian identity. However, the political homogeneity amongst the main Shia-based parties (Amal and Hezbollah) and the leading role of the Future Movement within the majority of the Sunni community, made the boundaries of these two identities salient. The analysis of the data suggests that the main political division between January 2000 and February 2005 was between the mainly Muslim-based parties (Amal, Hezbollah, PSP and Future Movement, together with leftist and nationalist parties and Palestinian factions) that essentially mobilised for pan-Arab claims, and the majority of the main Christian-based parties that predominantly mobilised on the basis of anti-Syrian claims. However, this dichotomy shifted after 2005, creating a schism between the main Sunni-based, Druze-based and Christian-based anti-Syrian coalition referred to as the March 14 block, and the mainly Shia-based (and later Christian-based with the FPM realignment in 2006) coalition that became known as the March 8 block. This shift in coalitions after 2005 (and more specifically after the realignment of the FPM with the March 8 coalition) allowed for the political divide in Lebanon to be framed as one between ‘the Sunnis and the Shias’.

Finally, this chapter showed that the assumption in the primordialist literature as well as some constructivist literature (such as Bates (1983)) on ethnicity – that it is natural for

ethnic/sectarian identities to form the basis for political mobilisation – does not always hold. Although some sectarian communities, such as the Sunni or the Shia communities in Lebanon, have managed to form political closure along sectarian lines (given intra-sectarian alliances or political homogeneity), other communities, such as the Christians, are fragmented along political lines. In fact, divisions within ethnic/sectarian groups have always existed and are usually based on the economic and political interests of sub-groups or political leaders. Therefore, studying ethnicity and sectarianism using a dynamic approach is important in order to depict the shift in the salience of these boundaries and the shaping of sectarian polarisation in societies. Therefore, this chapter concentrated on cross-temporal comparisons¹⁰⁴ in order to show the ways in which the salience of the same sectarian cleavage can change over time within the same society, controlling for history, depth of cleavages, or role of colonisation.

¹⁰⁴ Other studies, such as Eifert, Miguel & Posner (2010) have focused on a cross-country comparison of the political salience of ethnic divisions.

6. Individual Participation in Collective Violence in 2008

Rather than aspire to construct “a theory” of ethnic and nationalist violence – a theory that would be vitiated by its lack of a meaningful explanandum – we should seek to identify, analyse, and explain the heterogeneous processes and mechanisms involved in generating the varied instances of what we all too casually lump together – given our prevailing ethnicizing interpretive frames – as “ethnic violence”.’ Brubaker (2004, p. 115).

This chapter explores how the macro- and meso-level changes discussed in the previous chapters are trickled down and played out at the micro-level. It focuses more closely on the 2007/2008 episode of violence in Beirut in order to analyse variations in individual behaviour in times of political upheaval and violent clashes that are portrayed as ‘sectarian’. While chapters 4 and 5 study the relationship between conflict (through boundary activation, mobilisation, coalition formation, and polarisations) and sectarian salencies, this chapter rethinks the relevance of the primordialist argument that considers ethnicity or sectarianism to be a catalyst for violence (see chapter 2). Does the labelling of violence as ‘sectarian’ imply that individuals who took part in the clashes were driven by sectarianism? Did people participate in the violent clashes of 2007/2008 as a result of Sunni–Shia antagonism? What drives some individuals to participate in such collective violence and not others?

This chapter disentangles sectarian from non-sectarian mechanisms that inform individual-level motivations and push or pull individuals to participate in collective violence. Following Brubaker’s (2004) and Wimmer’s (2013) call for de-ethnicising research, this chapter questions the sectarian lens through which violence has been viewed. The analysis suggests that an intersection of several mechanisms can activate or deactivate the individual’s willingness to participate in violent clashes. These mechanisms include – but are not

restricted to – grievances, framing and peer pressure. The chapter argues that the relationship between sectarianism and violence is dialectical, since they feed into each other. Sectarian divisions seem to deepen and crystallise as a result of the violence. It then becomes a frame through which individuals explain their behaviour in what Brubaker (2004, p. 84) labels as ‘participants’ primordialism’. At this level, political, geographical, and sectarian identities often become conflated and used interchangeably. However, a deconstruction of the sectarian narrative points to strong political and personal accounts underpinning individual grievances and motivations.

I. The Context

The events of May 2008 were not the first confrontation between the March 8 and March 14 camps. The years 2007 and 2008 witnessed a high number of clashes: they typically started either as a fight between a few individuals that turned into neighbourhood-level violence, or as staged protests, strikes or sit-ins that quickly escalated into blocking roads with burning tyres and paralysing life in parts of the capital. Although these confrontations were dangerous and bloody in most cases, they were contained until May 2008, when things spiralled out of control. The events of May 2008 were closest to what could be labelled ‘mini short civil war’ (Klaushofer, 2008).

In the early hours of March 7, 2008, Hezbollah supporters from different parties and neighbourhoods gathered in the streets of West Beirut in what seemed to be an organised and planned action. Dressed in black shirts, balaclavas covering their faces, and carrying machine guns, they used the workers’ strike as a pretext to launch their attack on pro-government forces.



Figure 9: Hezbollah and Amal gunmen during clashes in the Mazra'a area of Beirut, May 9, 2008.¹⁰⁵

A day earlier, the government had decided to shut down Hezbollah's telecommunications network and remove Beirut Airport's security chief Wafic Choucair, known for his close ties with Hezbollah (Zahar, 2012, p. 69). Opposition rioters started blocking the main roads of the city with blazing tyres, burning cars, and overturned rubbish bins in order to prevent traffic from passing. The road leading to Beirut International Airport was blocked with burning barricades, prompting airlines to cancel their flights. Explosions and gunshots were heard across the capital. The so-called strike paralysed most of the capital, especially the mainly Muslim western part of Beirut (BBC, 2008). The eastern neighbourhoods, mostly Christian, seemed to be calm, but most stores were closed and roads were empty. The ghost of the civil war hovered over the city. Opposition rioters insisted on blocking roads in some areas of West Beirut (namely Mazra'a street, dividing Sunni-dominated Tariq al-Jdideh from Shia-

¹⁰⁵ Source: Photo taken by Fadi Ghalyoun, Reuters. Retrieved from Butter's (2008) article in *TIME* magazine.

dominated Barbour). The first clashes started when some pro-government (Future Movement) and opposition (Amal Movement members) supporters exchanged insults and threw stones at each other (Shiar, 2008). This quickly escalated and turned into violence, as both sides started shooting at each other. An opposition rioter from Zoqaq al-Blat told me:

We were asked to be present and ready in our neighbourhood at 4am on Wednesday in order to make sure that the General Confederation of Workers' demonstration, that was supposed to march from Barbir to Downtown passing through our area, was well-protected. We were all ready, some in the streets and others on rooftops with their arms, but the protest didn't kick off, it was attacked by a rocket-propelled grenade in Barbir, and it turned into violent clashes. We were ready for everything.

By the end of the first day of heavy street battles, most areas of West Beirut had fallen under the control of the opposition. Hezbollah supporters declared that they would continue their actions of civil disobedience until the government revoked its two decisions. On March 8, in a televised speech, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah declared that they 'will cut off the hand that targets the weapons of the resistance' (The New York Times, 2008). Minutes after his address, street clashes resumed in many neighbourhoods in West Beirut. According to Omar, a pro-government fighter from Tariq al-Jdideh:

It all started with Nasrallah's speech. They usually fire in the air after his TV appearance. This time they shot at us instead.

The security forces and the army did not interfere for fear of sectarian division within their ranks, as had happened during the civil war. Pro-Hezbollah gunmen occupied the international airport and Beirut port. People started fleeing neighbourhoods that were considered to be close to demarcation lines. Militia-held checkpoints quickly spread throughout the city. Houses were raided and searched, people were arrested and beaten up, and some were kidnapped. Anti-government gunmen (mainly from the SSNP) occupied all

media outlets related to pro-government Future Movement (Future TV, *Almustaqbal* newspaper, and Radio Orient) and forced them to close. The opposition also took over and burnt three offices of the Future Movement. Adel, a member of the Future Movement, said:

*After the battles, I returned to the office to find that they had burnt and destroyed everything. They burnt the photo of Rafic Hariri that I had on my desk, they stole our computers and took all our archives. They even left their signature, they wrote on the wall 'The Men of God!'*¹⁰⁶

The battles of 2008 were mainly planned and led by Hezbollah (Stell, 2009). However, fighters on the ground included members of different political parties that belonged to the neighbourhoods involved in the clashes. The Amal Movement (mainly Shia) and the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party (secular) played a crucial role in the street battles for the opposition. On the other side, pro-government fighters were mainly members of the Future Movement (mainly Sunni) and the Progressive Socialist Party (mainly Druze). Pro-government parties were on the defensive as pro-Hezbollah groups launched their offensive in order to take over the capital. However, although both parties were ready for the battle, anti-government fighters clearly had the upper hand. As explained in chapter 4, all militias were disarmed in 1990 with the exception of Hezbollah, whose armoury kept on growing. Hussam, a pro-Future Movement man from Ras al-Nabe', asserted:

¹⁰⁶ Hezbollah means the Party of God in Arabic. Therefore, the signature 'The Men of God' is a clear hint at the involvement of Hezbollah.

Of course we were getting ready since tension was clearly escalating, especially after the events of January 23rd and 25th. We started getting some arms, and some of our supporters in Akkar were moved to Beirut and dispersed in different areas in order to help protect the neighbourhoods; but we never imagined Hezbollah would deploy its force the way it did. We had expected that they would plan protests in which some clashes would happen; in return we would reply with a counter-mobilization and a few gunshots to show our presence. This would make them realise our size on the streets, and would then lead to diplomatic solutions in order to prevent the country from entering another civil war. Our plan was obviously wrong!

As the pro-government fighters realised that there was no parity in capacity for the battles to continue, they started surrendering their arms and retreating from the streets. The neighbourhoods seized by opposition militiamen were then handed to the Lebanese army. The takeover of Beirut happened in less than two days, but the occupation by pro-Hezbollah militiamen continued, and clashes occasionally erupted in different neighbourhoods (Abdallah, 2008). On May 10, during the funeral procession of a young Sunni man in Tariq al-Jdideh, an alleged Amal supporter opened fire on the crowd of mourners, leaving two dead and many injured (Abdallah, 2008). Fighting quickly spread to other parts of the country, with Tripoli in the North and the Shouf in the South East witnessing the most violent clashes.

It was not until May 14 that the army finally intervened, calling on all factions to withdraw from the streets and declaring that the two government decisions at issue had been revoked (The New York Times, 2008, p.1). On May 21, 2008, the Doha Agreement, mediated by Qatar, ended the 17-month political deadlock that started after the July 2006 war. Shia ministers resigned from the Siniora cabinet in September 2008 and the March 8 coalition initiated in December 2008 an open sit-in against the US-backed government.

II. The Puzzle

Alagha (2013, p. 62) described the violence of May 2008 in Lebanon as the ‘major post-civil war Sunnite-Shiite *fitna*’¹⁰⁷ and explained that these ‘violent Sunnite-Shiite confrontations threatened to spark a new civil war’ (Alagha, 2013, p. 77). Similarly, newspapers and commentators often reported the violent clashes in Beirut during the years 2007/2008 as confrontations between ‘the Sunnis and the Shias’. For example, a typical headline in the *New York Times* was ‘Shiite-Sunni Clashes Intensify in Beirut’ (Bakri, 2008). What does such analysis imply at the individual level? Were people involving themselves in the clashes in the name of the Sunnis or the Shias? Were they mainly driven by their sectarian identities? If yes, what can explain the variation in individual participation in violent clashes? Why didn’t all Sunnis or Shias get motivated by their sectarian identities to participate in violence against each other? What other mechanisms contributed to the individual decision to take part in violence?

The analysis in this chapter relies on data collected from 29 semi-structured interviews with individuals residing in Beiruti neighbourhoods that witnessed violence during 2007/2008. As previously explained, the sample includes both participants and non-participants in violence in order to depict the mechanisms that incite these individuals to take part in the clashes, or refrain from participating. Table 15 presents the main characteristics of my interviewees.

¹⁰⁷ The Arabic word *fitna* is used here to mean divide or discord.

III. The Analysis

The analysis of the data suggests that several mechanisms interacted to shape individuals' decisions to take part in the street clashes of Beirut between 2007 and 2008. As stated by Humphreys and Weinstein (2008, p. 439), 'the case of a single explanation of participation appears weak.' In fact, most theories in the literature are divided between two approaches. The rational choice approach considers individuals' decision to participate in collective violence to be motivated by material incentives and cost-benefit calculations (Azam, 2006; Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989; Kalyvas, 2006; Lichbach, 1995; Olson, 1965, Popkin, 1979). On the other hand, the emotional-based approach focuses on the importance of identities, symbolism, and perceptions (Feldman, 1991; Gaborieau, 1985; Laitin, 1995; Naimark, 2001; Petersen, 2002). However, these approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In fact, a dynamic understanding of the mechanisms that lead to individual participation in violence (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008; Scacco, 2008) is needed in order to go beyond the dichotomy between primordialist/emotional and constructivist/rational arguments. In the literature review provided in chapter 2, three main mechanisms were discussed in explaining the process of individual participation in violence: grievance, framing and peer pressure. The analysis provided below will cover these mechanisms in addition to one other that emerged from the data analysis and a broader literature review.

NON-PARTICIPANT IN VIOLENCE	Name (not real)	Age	Party Affiliation	Sect	Highest Education	Job	Previous Fighter?	Fighter in Family
	Akram	45	PSP	Druze	Bachelor	Coach	No	Yes
	Karim	27	NA	Shia	Bachelor	Sales Manager	No	Yes
	Mustafa	23	Close to Amal	Shia	3 rd yr University	Unemployed	No	No
	Fadi	27	Future	Sunni	Vocational	Electrician	No	Yes
	Zuhair	56	NA	Sunni	2 nd yr University	Trader	No	No
	Sami	25	SSNP	Druze	Med. Degree	Dentist	No	No
	Habib	31	NA	Sunni	Bachelor	Unemployed	No	No
	Hassan	30	NA	Shia	Bachelor	Unemployed	No	Yes
	Faisal	62	Future Mov't	Sunni	Elementary	Shop Owner	No	No
	Hussam	32	Future Mov't	Sunni	Bachelor	Graphic Designer	No	No
	Ali	25	Communist Pty	Shia	Vocational	Photographer	No	Yes
	Firas	21	Close to Amal	Shia	Bachelor	Student	No	No
	Ahmad	33	NA	Shia	Bachelor	Unemployed	No	No
	Talal	61	NA	Sunni	Baccalaureate	Retired Security Officer	No	No
	Hadi	24	NA	Shia	2 nd yr University	Student	No	No
PARTICIPANT IN VIOLENCE	Walid	52	PSP	Druze	Baccalaureate	Security officer	Yes	Yes
	Jad	18	Amal	Shia	Second	Mechanic	No	Yes
	Kamal	25	Future	Sunni	Vocational	Electrician	No	Yes
	Shadi	26	SSNP	Refused to Declare	Master Degree	Student	No	No
	Dani	25	SSNP	Refused to Declare	Master Degree	Student	No	Yes
	Naji	48	SSNP	Christian Orthodox	Baccalaureate	Party Official	Yes	Yes
	Omar	41	Future	Sunni	Baccalaureate	Employee	Yes	Yes
	Fouad	43	Ahbash	Sunni	1 st yr University	Sales man	Yes	Yes
	Anwar	25	Amal	Shia	Vocational	Plumber	No	Yes
	Adel	46	Future	Sunni	Baccalaureate	Party Official	Yes	Yes
	Ziad	23	Amal	Shia	Baccalaureate	Employee	No	Yes
	Adnan	42	Hezbollah	Shia	Baccalaureate	Chauffeur	Yes	Yes
	Hani	38	Amal	Shia	6 th grade	Chauffeur	Yes	Yes
	Abbas	19	Amal	Shia	Brevet	Coiffeur	No	Yes

Table 15: Characteristics of interviewees

a) Grievance: Selective Incentives in the form of Direct and Indirect Material Gains

The literature dealing with the study of individual participation in collective violence tends to argue that actors can be driven by selective material incentives, such as gains through direct payment or looting (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008; Lichbach, 1994). Applying this perspective in his study of rebellion in Vietnam, Popkin (1979) argues that a crucial recruitment strategy offered peasants material incentives for their participation. Lichbach (1994) surveys a wide array of cases where material goods, in the form of land, loot, or money, played an important role in motivating individuals to participate in violent mobilisations. The importance of this mechanism implies that most participants in collective violence belong to the more impoverished classes in society. Such accounts suggest that those in a relatively better economic position would most likely not mobilise in the streets in times of violent conflict (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008, p. 441). Similarly, in the Lebanese context, Picard (2000) explains the political economy of the civil war and argues that material gains played an important role in the recruitment of militiamen. In his discussion of the militiamen of the Lebanese Civil War, Haugbolle (2012, p. 126) asserts that ‘ex-militiamen can be seen as victims of clientelism, poverty, and limited opportunity in the Lebanese political economy’. He says that whereas senior-ranking militiamen benefited from their positions and privileges in the post-war era to become politicians and achieve upward mobility in terms of class, the vast majority of ex-militiamen were politically and economically marginalised in post-war (as well as pre-war) society. Most of them ended up in jobs in the security sector, the army, or as taxi drivers (Haugbolle, 2012, p. 126). This description of the majority of militiamen as belonging to the poor and underprivileged classes could explain why these individuals would be attracted to parties and organisations that provided material incentives.

Confirmed by most interlocutors, the importance of the class dimension was evident throughout my interviews. Adel, a neighbourhood commander with the Future Movement, explains that

there is a certain class, from all sectarian groups, that doesn't mobilise in the streets, especially not when it turns violent.

He describes how apartments in the new buildings in Ras al-Nabe' now cost more than half a million dollars. According to him, those who can afford to pay that much for a flat are usually not willing to risk their lives in street battles. He does not deny the fact that rich people can be involved in politics, but he argues that 'they practice politics in air-conditioned offices not in the streets'.

The analysis of my fieldwork data points to an important role for material gains in the individual decision whether or not to participate in the clashes. This, of course, does not imply that all participants were necessarily being paid; just that material gain was an important mechanism in play. Considerable direct or indirect material gains were mentioned throughout the interviews. Given the clientelistic nature of political parties in Lebanon (Cammett, 2014), it was expected that parties involved in the clashes would offer material incentives to their 'fighters'. Although most of the interviewees did not directly admit that they were receiving financial compensation for their participation, many of them acknowledged that their party was offering material benefits either in the form of aid or jobs. Kamal, who left the Future Movement after the 'defeat' of May 2008, said:

I still remember when they stopped paying the \$100 after May 2008. They even stopped sending the food baskets. I didn't really care because we never asked for it; but others, those who were full-timers, used to get around \$500 USD¹⁰⁸. They were really affected by the decision to stop the payments.

Hussam, an officer in the Future Movement, confirmed that they were recruiting people to form neighbourhood-level security groups. Owned by Saad Hariri, the Secure Plus¹⁰⁹ company hired people and paid them monthly salaries in order to defend neighbourhoods in Beirut. Hussam explained that this only started after 2007, when the Future Movement realised that the March 8 forces were intensifying confrontations in the streets. In fact, involvement in fighting as a job is exemplified by the Future Movement's recruitment of men from villages in Akkar (North Lebanon) to fight in Beirut alongside the party. Hussam participated in their recruitment and was in close contact with them when they came to Beirut. He noted that most of them lived in extreme poverty:

Many of those who came from Akkar lived below the poverty line. I was once on a mission in Akkar and people kept asking me for photos of Hariri. I thought they were trying to show loyalty, but then I discovered that they needed it to close the holes in their walls to protect themselves from rain!

Even though Hussam might have been exaggerating, it was clear that conditions in the villages where these *shabab* (young men) came from were miserable. According to him, most of them came to Beirut thinking that this was a job opportunity:

¹⁰⁸ The minimum wage in Lebanon rose from LL500,000 (\$333 USD) to LL675,000 (\$450 USD) in 2012.

¹⁰⁹ Secure Plus is a private company providing security services. It is owned by Saad Hariri and is believed to have recruited and trained Sunni militiamen who participated in the clashes of May 2008 (Picard, 2012, p. 100).

Those who came from Akkar were very deprived, they didn't have jobs. They came here hoping for their conditions to improve, they didn't just want money – above all they wanted jobs. They kept asking us if they are now recruited for a permanent job since they came to Beirut.

In other words, those men travelled from their poor villages to the capital to fight alongside members of a party owned by one of the richest men in the country, Saad Hariri. It was only logical for them to believe that they would be rewarded with stable jobs. However, they soon discovered that they were just on a short term 'mission', and they were sent back to their villages after the defeat of the Future Movement in May 2008.

Interviewees who belonged to the March 8 camp described an equally important impact of direct payments. Adnan, a member of Hezbollah, said:

Those who are full-timers are paid monthly salaries in order to carry out such duties. They cannot but fight when asked to.

Thus, by transforming party membership into a paid job with a fixed salary, involvement in violent mobilisations when needed becomes part of one's job description. Members of these parties feel that they have been recruited and that they are being paid in order to carry out such duties. These people perceive the party as their main source of income and support, and they consider their participation in the fighting as an obligation. In fact, Adel stated:

It is true that money plays an important role, but money is not everything. I was present in the streets, not because I expected to get paid, but rather because I am committed to my party and it was my duty to defend it and also defend my neighbourhood.

Adel lives in Ras al-Nabe' and works there as a neighbourhood official in the Future Movement. For him, the neighbourhood and the party represent his home and his job. Therefore, defending the party and the neighbourhood also meant defending the stability in his life – his house and his livelihood.

Similarly, Abbas discussed the material rewards of Amal party members. He explained that the young members do not get salaries but the ‘neighbourhood commanders’ (*massa’eel*) do. However, Jad, an 18-year-old member of the Amal Movement in another neighbourhood, said that the party often offered them money but they ‘refused to take it’. Not sounding very convincing, he later admitted:

If I am ever in need for money – if I want to invite my girlfriend out and don’t have money – I ask my local commander and he will always give me what I need.

In other words, although material reward did not always come as a fixed salary, it appeared that most participants relied on their political parties for financial support. This practice is neither new nor exceptional. Hani, a fighter during the 1980s, explained that he kept getting a ‘war salary’ until 1992 when he found a job as a chauffeur. Of all my interviewees, Hani was the most direct and open in discussing material benefits. Like many other interviewees, he found money to be important during wars, violent clashes, and elections. According to him, political parties offered money during elections in order to get votes. He recalled the first elections after the civil war:

After the first elections in 1992, because of God’s generosity, we bought a fridge; our old fridge was not working and we had no money to fix it. During those days the dollar had reached about 3,000 Lebanese pounds; but then elections came and it started raining money on us.

Many other interviewees – both party members and non-members – confirmed Hani’s statement on remuneration during elections. The same mechanism seems to apply for riots and violent clashes in order to recruit men onto the streets.

Another indirect, yet important gain from participation is what is locally known as ‘*wasta*’. Repeatedly mentioned throughout the interviews, *wasta* is a key concept through

which favouritism operates in a system of clientelism. If one shows loyalty to a certain leader or party, one can expect to get ‘backing’ in return. When asked about the benefits of being a member of the Amal party, Abbas said:

The Amal Movement does not pay you money ... but it certainly gives you wasta.

This is key to understanding why some people, especially the less privileged, show high commitment and readiness to defend their parties. Through a *wasta*, one can get a job, free (or discounted) medical service, free (or discounted) schooling, or even protection if anything happens. Lebanese society is based on a social system that operates through *wasta* in the absence of a state that is able to provide for its citizens. The *wasta*, which usually comes through a powerful leader or a political party, replaces the state and acts as a service provider for loyal followers. Although the rich also benefit from *wasta*, the dynamics are often different: the *wasta* for the rich usually comes in the form of corruption and business deals with the state from which the leader also benefits. The poor can only pay back the leader through their commitment, offering their votes in times of peace and themselves in times of violence. This reliance on clientelistic networks was expressed vividly by Jad, a motorcycle mechanic from Hay al-Lejja, who said:

Nabih Berri is our leader, he is our commander; I am ready to pay my blood for him. In reality our blood is green,¹¹⁰ not red! (laughs)

Finally, payments or *wasta* through the political party are not the only possible financial rewards in times of violent upheaval. Although none of my interviewees explicitly admitted that they were involved in looting, robbery seems to have been common practice during the

¹¹⁰ In reference to the green colour of the Amal party flag.

May 2008 events. Anwar, a member of Amal, revealed that the fighters gathered after the clashes and talked about their adventures when they raided houses:

They told us stories about what they found in the drawers of some people while they were stealing their jewellery.

Similarly, Shadi, an SSPN member, recounted how he had to intervene when a group of fighters from an allied party were looting a shop in Hamra Street. So, although not all participants in the clashes were involved in looting, it seems that some of them took advantage of the chaos in order to make some material gains through stealing.

So far, the analysis suggests that material grievance formed an important mechanism in the decision to participate, or not, in violent mobilisations. It appears that party membership and involvement in the May 2008 clashes was, for many of the participants, a matter of commitment to a clientelistic party that offered direct or indirect material gain in the form of direct payments and fixed salaries, employment, *wasta*, or even the chance for looting.

b) The Strength of Ideology: Belief and Commitment

Another important mechanism that came up in the analysis of the data is ideological belief. Commitment to a political party is not always necessarily linked to the clientelistic system and material incentives. In fact, not all political parties provide similar incentives to their members to participate in violence. The analysis presented in the previous section suggests that within political parties, the role of street fighting is frequently delegated to the less privileged members who are often attracted by direct or indirect material gain facilitated by the party. However, commitment to a political party can also be driven by ideological (including religious) belief. Some of my interviewees brought up the important role of ideological conviction (secular or religious) in shaping their decision to participate in violent clashes to defend their party or to fight an enemy. Many authors, such as Drake (1998) and

Gates (2002) discuss the importance of strong ideologies in driving individuals to participate in acts of violence, ranging from rebellion to terrorism. Haugbolle (2012, p. 122) argues that ‘ideologies as varied as communism, secularism, and Syrian, Arab, and Christian Lebanese nationalism motivated people to join the ranks’ during the Lebanese Civil War (before 1982).

Although secular and nationalist parties have declined in influence since the 1980s, certain ideologies or religious beliefs still motivate people to fight. Based on my interviews, participants who belonged to religious or doctrinal parties, such as Hezbollah, the SSNP, or the Ahabash, explained their main drive: they believed in their party’s ideology and were convinced by the need to defend it regardless of cost. For example, Adnan, a member of Hezbollah, explained that it is a ‘religious duty’ to fight when the party calls upon you. He explained that this commitment is not just to defend the Shia in general, but that it is specific to a certain type of Shi’ism embodied in Hezbollah. His explanation is related to the idea of *wilayat al-faqih* or the ‘guardianship of the Islamic jurist’ through which political orders become religious duties. As explained in chapter 5, this model of Twelvers Shi’ism was established in Iran after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and is followed by Hezbollah in mobilising its partisans. Therefore, considering that the words of the leaders represent the words of God on earth, the commitment of Hezbollah members becomes stronger and unquestionable. However, as previously explained, Hezbollah also used material incentives in order to recruit full-time fighters. Whereas religious conviction plays a crucial role in the decision to join the party, the willingness to become a full-time combatant is also linked to other considerations such as social class or career prospects. The relatively high salaries of Hezbollah and the special treatment the party offers to the families of martyrs (see chapter 5) can make it appealing for economically deprived Shia individuals to join the ranks of the combatants. However, this does not deny the fact that ideology can be a strong driver as well.

Similarly, ideology plays an important role within the SSNP. Although the party is secular, its doctrine (Syrian nationalism) is taken as a strong belief by most of its members. In the discussions with SSNP members, most of them considered that their ideology and commitment to the party were the main drivers in their participation in the ‘battles of May 2008’. Sami, a member of the SSNP and a medical student specialising in dentistry, explained:

We are people who follow a doctrine. In the end, not all those who fight are from deprived backgrounds; for example, we had martyrs in the SSNP, like Ibtissam Harb, who were educated and held university degrees.

However, Sami did not participate in the events of May 2008. He was visiting family in the mountain when roads were blocked, and he could not return to Beirut before the fighting was over. He went on to say:

In all cases, I was not needed in the party as a fighter – there were enough trained people who could carry out the task better than me. My role is in the recruitment and political bureau; however, I wished I could be in our headquarters at that time – at least I would have been closer to our comrades who were fighting.

There is a contradiction between the belief in the need to defend the party at all costs, regardless of one’s background, on the one hand, and the division of tasks according to class on the other. This discrepancy shows that the push and pull mechanisms that determine individual participation in violence are intertwined. Whereas beliefs can push individuals to enlist in doctrinal or religious parties, class positions often pull them from participation in violent clashes and attribute to them positions in political bureaus and safer settings.

Other interviewees also highlighted the importance of their commitment to a political party in their participation in violent clashes. Fouad is a Sunni salesman who lived all his life

in Tariq al-Jdideh and belongs to the Ahbash party. His commitment to Ahbash is mainly driven by his strong belief in its religious Sufi-based Sunni ideology. He said that he only participated in the clashes of Burj Abu Haidar in 2010¹¹¹ because his party was being attacked there. When asked about the clashes that erupted in his neighbourhood (Tariq al-Jdideh) following the dispute at the Beirut Arab University in 2007, he replied:

No, I wasn't there for the Beirut Arab University clashes; I am not concerned, my party wasn't attacked.

For Fouad, participation in violent clashes is only a matter of defending his party. Even though he expressed his belonging and attachment to Tariq al-Jdideh, he did not feel the urge to participate in any of the clashes that happened there, mainly because his party was not involved. Similarly, although the attacks on Tariq al-Jdideh often took a sectarian turn and were perceived as attack on Sunnis, Fouad did not feel targeted in his sectarian identity. He considered that the Future Movement was taking the '*shabab*' of Tariq al-Jdideh in the wrong direction since it is paying them salaries to sit around and do nothing'. For him, these clashes were political, not sectarian. In fact, the Ahbash party had a political alliance with Hezbollah until 2010. Although religiously Sunni, the involvement of Fouad in the conflict was not built on sectarian considerations, but rather on his commitment to the party's ideology and its political choices.

The details of how alliances were built (cross-sectarian or non-sectarian alliances) and their implications for participation in clashes, show that sectarian hatred was not always an important driver for many of the participants in the clashes of 2007/2008. The sense of

¹¹¹ It is worth noting here that in 2010 clashes occurred in Burj Abu Haidar between the Ahbash and Hezbollah following a personal dispute in front of a mosque. However, prior to that clash, the two parties were political allies in the March 8 coalition.

belonging and commitment to an ideological party can be a much stronger incentive for many people to participate in fighting.

From a different perspective, several non-participants justified their lack of engagement in the clashes of 2007/2008 by referring to the absence of ideological basis for these fights. Zuhair, a 56-year-old Sunni man from Caracas, said:

Those people you see in the streets today are all brainwashed, the political leaders enflamed their sectarian feelings and pushed them to fight. During the civil war, regardless of all the atrocities, at least people were fighting for ideals.

Zuhair was referring to the decline in Arab nationalist and Nasserist parties in Lebanon, and the rise of more sectarian-based parties after the civil war. According to him, it is worth fighting in defence of ideals and beliefs. However, he considered the violence of 2007/2008 to be orchestrated by sectarian leaders and carried out by ‘brainwashed’ sectarian individuals. This distinction between ‘sectarian feelings’ and ‘ideals’ implies that people were driven by emotional motives rather than rational beliefs. Such depiction of fighters as solely driven by sectarian emotions feeds into what Fearon and Laitin (2000, p. 848) call ‘everyday primordialism’, since it disregards the non-sectarian mechanisms that also play an important role in motivating individuals to participate. For example, the secular fighters of the SSNP did not participate in the violence of May 2008 to save the Shias or fight the Sunnis, as the sectarian logic would imply. They rather did it out of political conviction and the necessity to stop the pro-Western government from hampering the capacities of the ‘resistance’ (embodied in their political ally Hezbollah). Naji, an SSNP commander, said:

It is not a sectarian conflict. It is not Sunni–Shia ... it is a battle against those who want to weaken the resistance.

Therefore, for many of the participants in the violent clashes, political conviction and strong commitment to the party seems to have mobilised them onto the streets during the battles of May 2008. Building on the analysis of my interviews, it is plausible to consider that ideology and strong commitment to the party can have an important effect on one's decision to participate in collective violence, or not. This mechanism appears to be better activated when it interacts with other mechanisms such as material grievance (measured through class position and level of education).

c) Social Sanctions: The Role of Social Networks

To understand the micro-foundations of individual participation in collective violence, recent studies focus on the positions of individuals within the structure of social networks and the importance of social sanctions through network channels. Authors such as Schussman and Soule (2005) or Scacco (2008) argue that a common characteristic of protesters or rioters is that they tend to be well embedded in neighbourhood or party networks. This approach considers that dense social network structures can create information channels; and they can also exercise social pressure that lead individuals to participate (or not) in collective action (Kitts, 2000; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008; Scacco, 2008). In such scenarios, the gains from participation in collective violence are not strictly material or ideological, but also social.

My qualitative research suggests that belonging to a political party or being well embedded in neighbourhood networks played an important role in the violent clashes of May 2008 in Beirut. When asked about the difference between himself and those who participated in the clashes, Karim replied:

The difference between me and those who participated? They are enlisted in political parties, I am not.

Karim lives in the same building as Walid, who was leading the PSP battles in Karakon al-Druze in May 2008. Unlike Walid and his '*shabab*', he is not a member of any political party and has no interest in politics. He neither hangs out with people from his neighbourhood nor considers them to be his friends. Most of Karim's friends are from his university (the American University of Beirut), and they usually hang out in areas such as Gemayzeh, where the pubs and restaurants are. Clearly, Karim is not especially embedded in his neighbourhood network. Although he grew up there, his social life revolves mainly around university friends, who mostly belong to the upper-middle class, given the high fees of the American University of Beirut and based on his description of his lifestyle. Therefore, educational and class background could inform one's positioning within neighbourhood networks. People who are involved in or have built their social life around neighbourhood or party networks can feel more motivated to participate in collective violence. These networks can form channels of information about mobilisations, increase the feeling of belonging to the neighbourhood/party, and create peer pressure in the form of negative (or positive) sanctions.

i. Networks as Channels of Information

The analysis of my interviews suggests that the dense networks provided by political parties can channel individuals to mobilise at the neighbourhood level in times of violent upheaval. The interviewed participants in violence all pointed to an important role played by the political party in transmitting information. Jad, a young man from Hay al-Lejja, recalled that in many cases, they 'knew about clashes before they happened'. They usually got such information 'from the neighbourhood' and through their 'local party leaders'. Local networks were crucial not only for party members, but also for non-party members who mobilised in times of violent clashes. Adel explained that

not all those who participated in the clashes in Ras al-Nabe' were party members. After the attacks of the March 8th forces on us, people automatically felt the need to protect their neighbourhood, their houses, their family; however, most of these men who joined us in the streets were people we knew and had contact with. They were all close to the Future Movement and supporters of us.

Social networks serve as channels for the dissemination of information about the unfolding of events on the ground. An individual can be motivated to defend his neighbourhood; however, participation in such collective action requires the pre-existence of social networks that connect them with the other participants. These are usually available for individuals who are already highly embedded in their neighbourhood networks at the time of the clashes. Therefore, being part of a political party or being strongly embedded in a neighbourhood network give access to important information about logistical details related to violent mobilisations. This seems to be a key factor.

ii. Neighbourhood Nationalism?

Apart from being a channel for the dissemination of information, high embeddedness in local networks can create a feeling of belonging and attachment to the locality. My interviews suggest that for many participants in the clashes, defending the neighbourhood was a crucial motivation. When asked about the May 2008 events and his involvement in the battles, Kamal, an electrician who lives with his extended family in his grandfather's property in Caracas, replied:

What people don't understand is that this neighbourhood represents us – attacking it is like attacking our honour. This street here is named after my great uncle, so it is only normal that I defend my home and my street. I wasn't defending the Sunnis or the Future Movement, all I cared about was that no one attacks my neighbourhood.

Until 2007, many of Kamal's friends were Shia, and this never created problems. When I tried to dig deeper into the reasons behind his participation in the May 2008 clashes, it became clear that Kamal's main trigger was the defence of his neighbourhood for what it represented to him in terms of familial ties and pride. Although political and sectarian belongings were not his initial motivation to participate in the clashes, he often used sectarian and political language interchangeably throughout the interview, especially when talking about his cousin's death during the May 2008 clashes in Caracas. Kamal's political hatred towards Hezbollah and his sectarian feelings of resentment towards the Shia were a result – rather than a trigger – of the May 2008 clashes and the loss of a family member.

Zuhair lives in the building facing Kamal's house. I asked him about his belonging to the neighbourhood and why he did not feel the need to defend it during the May 2008 clashes. He said:

We have moved to Caracas only five years ago – I surely don't feel the urge of defending the neighbourhood ... My life is more valuable than that.

Like Zuhair, many of the non-participants in the clashes expressed a detachment from their neighbourhoods. Habib, who lived all his life in Tariq al-Jdideh, pointed out:

I don't belong here; I hope to move out as soon as I get a job. This neighbourhood is full of thugs.

Therefore, belonging to the neighbourhood is not always a matter of years spent in it: sometimes, it has to do with integration in the community and embeddedness in its social networks; in other instances, it is interrelated with political involvement. These superposed layers of party strongholds and neighbourhood belonging often came up during the interviews. In many cases, neighbourhoods in Lebanon are not simply residential areas; they

are heavily charged ‘political territories’ as well. Anwar, a member of the Amal Movement, explained that Barbour has a strong symbolic meaning for him:

Barbour is ours, it is controlled by Amal. Of course I belong here and I am ready to defend it.

In a similar fashion, when asked about his neighbourhood belonging, Shadi, a member of the SSNP, reported:

I belong to Hamra more than the village where I grew up. This is mainly because the party is heavily present here.

For Shadi, Hamra represents the party and the locus of most of his political activism. Therefore, he feels the need to defend it because this means defending the party. In other words, individuals’ belonging to their neighbourhoods can be determined by familial ties, social embeddedness in their network structures, or their political symbolism. In all cases, territoriality and the urge to defend (or not) one’s neighbourhood seems to be an important mechanism in times of violence. The recurrence of the ‘neighbourhood defence’ theme throughout the interviews is reminiscent of Les Back’s (2013) notion of ‘neighbourhood nationalism’. For some, defending their locality can become a form of nationalism that shapes the boundaries of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomies. Whereas the sectarian framing is the most prevalent, a multitude of other mechanisms play a crucial role in shaping group boundaries and violence at the micro-level.

iii. Peer Pressure

As discussed in chapter 2, peer pressure is another important mechanism through which social networks can operate to push or pull individuals in times of violent clashes. While

material incentives, ideologies, neighbourhood nationalism, or party commitment can all shape one's participation (or not) in collective violence, peer pressure can play an equally important role. Individuals who are highly involved in certain network structures are more sensitive to peer pressure within their group, as it can entail positive or negative sanctions. Omar, a fighter from Tariq al-Jdideh, always called his friends when clashes erupted and asked them to join:

It is my duty to inform them and to ask them to participate. They wouldn't forgive me if I don't call them, and I also wouldn't forgive them if they don't participate with us.

According to Omar, there is a special bond between fighters that makes them very close. He described them as 'blood comrades':

These people are heroes, they stood up for their rights and defended their people – unlike the cowards who disappeared at the first bullet fired!

Omar's labelling of his fellow fighters as heroes and his judgement of non-participants as cowards shows exactly how peer pressure operates.

The literature concerned with the experience of militiamen in Lebanon often stresses the importance of the 'culture of masculinity' in shaping the behaviour of men during wars (Haugbolle, 2012; Johnson, 2001). Through a macho-patriarchal lens, the militiamen/fighters are perceived as heroes who defend their families and their land. When such positive values are associated with participation in violence, the social cost of not taking part becomes high. Many of the fighters I interviewed confirmed that individuals who were part of their network group but did not participate in the clashes were often bullied and mocked. Adnan said:

I personally don't blame those who didn't participate, but of course we considered them cowards and we often make jokes about them.

In addition to the collective participation of one's group, such pressure could push individuals to take to the streets out of fear of being marginalised. Participation in collective violence becomes a 'group activity' driven by the solidarity within the group and by the mechanisms of peer pressure imposed by the group dynamics. When asked why he participated in violent clashes, Anwar explained:

I participated because everyone participated ... I wasn't alone, we all went together and I wasn't going to let my friends down.

This explanation shows how group behaviour and peer pressure can affect individual behaviour.

However, the perception of fighters as heroes does not always hold true: many of the non-participants that I interviewed referred to those who took part in the fighting as 'zo'ran' or thugs. Hassan, a thirty-year-old man from Barbour, said this:

Most of those who were in the streets with Amal are 'zo'ran'... I know them from the neighbourhood, they are all uneducated and have nothing to do with their lives ... This is not a matter of manliness, these people are 'zo'ran.'

By emphasising the negative depiction of those who participated in violent clashes, Hassan brings the class dimension to the surface. To him, those less educated have no moral grounds to represent the neighbourhood or shape its political life. Their involvement in violence becomes a sign of their ignorance rather than one of manliness. However, Haugbolle (2012, p. 117) explains that while the official post-civil war narrative was to represent the militiamen as the 'villains', particular groups still viewed them as heroes.¹¹² This heroic image that many ex-militiamen's families still hold seem to have instigated the involvement of younger generations in the May 2008 unrest. In fact, speaking of the implications of the

¹¹² For more details, see Haugbolle (2010, pp. 161 –93).

absence of rehabilitation plans for Lebanese Civil War ex-fighters, de Clerk (2012, p. 26) argues as follows:

The lack of a comprehensive rehabilitation programme has helped encourage new young militia recruits from postwar generations, who carry their fathers' frustrations and romanticise the civil war.

She explains that the heroic image of the militiaman can propel people from the younger generation towards violence.

The effect of the civil war fighters on the younger generation was also evident in many of my interviews. When asked whether members of his family had participated in the civil war, Kamal recalled that both his father and his uncle were fighters with the Murabitoun:

The stories we used to hear from my uncle specifically encouraged us to participate. He used to teach us about arms; he also told us a lot of heroic stories from the civil war.

Kamal's father and uncle took to the street with them during the May 2008 violent clashes in Caracas. Kamal described how, in the very early hours of the morning (around 4 a.m.), rumours from the Future Movement office informed them that Hezbollah and SSNP fighters were approaching the street. He was in the neighbourhood's mosque with his cousins and uncle for dawn prayers. They quickly went out to see what was happening while his uncle went back home to get the rest of the 'men' and what was available to them in terms of 'personal arms'. Instead of stopping them, the older members of the family who had participated in the civil war encouraged them to take part in the violence. Similar stories were recounted by other ex-fighters, such as Hani, who showed me photos on his phone of his twelve-year-old son holding a Kalashnikov. In 2008, his son was still too young to participate, but he was already teaching him how to use the weapon so that he would not grow up to be the outcast in his group. Hani spoke of this as a 'rite of passage' to manhood, a

training that would make of his son a man in his community. When I asked him whether his previous military experience during the civil war affected his decision to participate in the 2008 clashes, he replied:

We have been fighters for a long time ... it is in our blood. We are the war generation, we are used to be present in very battle – I like to be there.

Many of my interviewees explained that the street battles of May 2008 were usually led by the ‘experienced fighters’ – those who had participated in the civil war – while the younger generation fighters followed them. This inter-generational exchange of ‘fighting skills’ emerged as an unexpected factor in my study. Such information helped locate my research in a wider historical context. Although my initial questionnaire focused on the more recent clashes, it became obvious during my pilot study that the civil war generation had a considerable influence on events. This aspect seems to be under-studied in the broader literature on participation in political violence, especially in countries that witness repeated cycles of violence. In one of the few studies that address this question, Jha and Wilkinson (2012) examine the effects of participation in combat during World War II on collective violence in South Asia. They find that the organisational and military skills acquired by those who fought during the war increased the lethality of ethnic violence. My research points to the importance of the role of ex-fighters in terms of organisational and military skills, but also in terms of influencing the younger generation to take part in collective violence under their guidance.

d) Pleasure in Agency: Power to the Powerless

Although most studies in the literature tend to focus on the role of material deprivation (Scott, 1977; Verwimp, 2005), peer pressure (Haugbolle, 2012; Scacco, 2008) or negative emotions such as hatred or resentment (Naimark, 2001; Petersen, 2002) in explaining participation in

collective violence, other research has started to look at the positive emotions related to such collective action. Wood's (2003) investigation of insurgents in El Salvador shows that 'pleasure in agency' plays an important role in recruiting people. Such positive emotions appeared in my data as an important mechanism to understand the process of individual participation in violence. These accounts bring a more mundane understanding to the mechanisms that drive individuals to participate in violent collective action. In fact, many of the rioters/fighters that I interviewed expressed their willingness to do it again, saying they did not regret their participation. Jad, who was 15 at the time, considered that 'rioting is fun'. He explained how he would be bored in the neighbourhood with his friends, but then they would be called to participate in blocking roads and burning tyres. For him, it added excitement to his everyday life, especially as he did it collectively with friends and family (his older brother) from the neighbourhood.

Similarly, Hani revealed that he always felt 'happy' to participate in riots or battles. Speaking of his participation in the May 2008 clashes, he reflected on the civil war days:

I realised how much I had missed those days ... It might sound weird, but I actually liked my life during the civil war.

Like him, other previous fighters, such as Omar, Adel, and Walid, expressed a certain feeling of happiness that the 'old days' were back. They said that they were 'used' to the war and that they saw a role for themselves in such times. In fact, such feelings of nostalgia for the chaos of the civil war suggests that these individuals have more agency and power in such periods than during peacetime. They enjoy the battles because they feel that they have a role and that they can be in control of whole neighbourhoods. Although my interviewees did not explicitly say this, I could sense it in the way they talked about the civil war and their role in recent clashes. Abbas, a young man from an unprivileged economic background, pointed to the feeling of 'accomplishment and strength' after each battle. According to him, power is an

important driver in overcoming fear. I asked Kamal why he participated in the battles of Caracas, although it was clear that Hezbollah was stronger. He replied:

To be honest, today I blame my father and uncle for not stopping us. They have more experience and they should have known that it was a lost battle. But back then, I was very excited, I felt that I was the strongest man on earth ... At no point did I think about death or fear.

Kamal said that, despite the defeat, he does not completely regret his participation. He is proud of it and believes it brought him more respect in the neighbourhood and within the family. He also added that although his family paid a high cost (the death of his cousin), he is willing to participate again if he can be well armed to stand against Hezbollah.

Participation in violent clashes gives a feeling of power and strength to those who are usually the most marginalised and weak in society – the poor. Most of my interviewees who came from poor backgrounds felt that they ‘owned the city’ when participating in the riots. For once, they had the power to shape the politics of the country and to affect the lives of others in society. Thus, the positive emotions of power generated from one’s participation in collective violence can form an important mechanism that encourages the less privileged member of society to participate and express their frustration.

e) Sectarian Framing

As previously mentioned, the literature on ‘ethnic violence’ is divided between those who assert that ethnicity is, in most cases, the cause of the violence (Horowitz, 1985; Lewis, 2004; Nasr, 2007) and those who believe that the crystallisation of ethnic identities is a result of the violence (Chandra, 2012; Brubaker, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006). Out of this debate, an important mechanism has emerged to understand individual participation in violence: framing. As explained in chapter 2, framing plays a crucial role in shaping individual cognition and understanding of the macro- and meso-level changes. Throughout my interviews, I attempted

to understand how the tension in Lebanon after 2005 assumed Sunni–Shia overtones, and how this affected (or was affected by) the violent clashes of 2007/2008. Many informants recounted personal histories of the changing rhythm of sectarianism.

The way that the political dispute was transformed into a sectarian one after 2005 is revealed by the testimony of Hani, a Shia ex-civil war combatant from Zoqaq al-Blat. He explained that the Sunnis and the Shia were political allies:

Even in the middle of Tariq al-Jdideh, you could find photos of Hassan Nasrallah and flags of Hezbollah. They were with us, but what changed our relations is the politics of their leaders after the Hariri assassination.

Hani refers to Tariq al-Jdideh as being the stronghold of the Sunnis and their Future Movement, and he uses the pronoun ‘us’ to refer to ‘the Shia’. This interchangeability of geographical (Tariq al-Jdideh), political (Future Movement and Hezbollah), and sectarian (Sunni and Shia) language exemplifies how these three frames interact in the Lebanese context to transform a political dispute into a sectarian one. Hani continued explaining that on the day of the assassination of Rafic Hariri, he was as shocked and sad as most Lebanese. He went to the funeral of Hariri because he considered that the country had lost one of its ‘greatest men’. However, he sensed change almost immediately:

It was a matter of days and everything turned against us ... Suddenly we were accused of killing Hariri.

Whereas the March 14 protesters politically accused the Syrian regime and its allies in Lebanon of being behind the assassination, this accusation quickly took a sectarian tone, condemning the Shia for standing with the Syrian regime. The conflation of politics with sectarian belongings shows how political conflict could have assumed a sectarian overtone. The blurring of these frames denotes a mechanism through which sectarian communities, political parties, and neighbourhoods become interchangeable. The majority of a sectarian

community belonging to one or a few political parties; political parties being mainly based on one sectarian community; and neighbourhoods having a clear sectarian majority amongst their residents – all are factors of this mechanism. It is only in such cases of alignment that the political and the sectarian frames become conflated, as analysed in the previous chapter.

Once political tension starts to mount and to be framed as a conflict between communities, the historical baggage resurfaces. The tension between the Sunnis and the Shia was not completely new to Beirut. Adnan, a Shia member of Hezbollah, recounted the story of his grandfather, who migrated from his southern village of Nabatieh to Beirut in the 1950s in search of a better life. Adnan recalled his grandfather telling him stories about how there was no Shia mosque in Beirut at the time. They had to pray in Sunni mosques where people could tell they were Shia because of the slight differences in the praying rituals. According to Adnan, the Shias were exposed to all sorts of harassment and they were often told to ‘go back to their villages’. The tension described was more social than political. During the period of Shia urbanisation, a class-based distinction emerged between many the well-off urban Sunni (and Christian) Beirutis and the poor rural Shia migrants from the South or the Beqa’ (as noted in chapter 5). The tension between the newcomers to the city and the old inhabitants of Beirut also had a Sunni–Shia sectarian dimension at that time. However, when the civil war started in 1975, political divisions overshadowed social ones. Adnan continued his story: in 1976, the (Christian-based) Lebanese Forces killed his father while he was on his way back from the bakery where he used to work. His dead body was returned to his family in a rubbish bag. After that, Adnan and his brothers were involved in several battles of the civil war. Explaining how this event affected his relationship with the Sunni community, he said:

We forgot about the tension and we fought together against the Christian threat at that time. We became one community and we remained as such after the end of the civil war ... until 2005.

Hani expressed how, although social tension had existed between the Sunnis and Shias since the 1950s, the framing of the civil war as a ‘Christian–Muslim’ conflict overshadowed other sectarian divisions. This was the case until 2005, when all political and sectarian cards were reshuffled.

However, although the conflict started to take on a Sunni–Shia flavour after 2005, my interview testimonies suggest that this sectarian divide became more pronounced after the July 2006 war, and heavily intensified after the violent clashes of 2007/2008.

Hussam, a Sunni officer in the Future Movement, explained that tensions between the Sunnis and the Shias started to become more obvious during the July 2006 war. At that time, most southerners (mainly Shia) had fled their villages because of Israeli shelling. Many of them came to Beirut as refugees, and were lodged in public schools around the capital. Speaking of his involvement with the Future Movement’s relief work at that time, Hussam said:

We went to the Omar Faroukh School in Tariq El Jdide with boxes full of food as a donation from the Hariri Foundation. The refugees refused to take the boxes and threw the food on the floor; they also broke the school’s banner and removed the name of ‘Omar’ from it. They behaved in a very sectarian way, although we were welcoming them in our neighbourhoods!’

Hussam considered this behaviour to be sectarian, given the Sunni connotations of the name ‘Omar’. Omar Ibn Khattab was the second Sunni caliph, and is a highly respected figure within the Sunni community. However, the Shia have an opposing view of him and consider that he was not the legitimate leader of the Islamic Ummah since he conspired, with Abu Baker, to seize power from Imam Ali. Such symbolism based on historical events and sectarian connotations seems to have contributed greatly to the intensification of the sectarian aspect of the conflict.

Although Hussam considered that the sectarian tension between Sunnis and Shias had been building up since July 2006, Hani explained that it actually worsened after the May 2008 violence. In 2009, his friend went to rent a flat in the area between Basta and Ras al-Nabe', but when the landlord discovered he was Shia, he refused to rent him the flat. Such stories of intensified sectarian tensions after 2008 were recounted by many of my interviewees. Some mentioned instances in which there were calls to boycott Shia-owned shops, and others explained how new demarcation lines emerged in the city. It was clear that people were becoming more cautious in their relationships with each other, and that the sectarian framing of the conflict had become dominant.

Such sectarian behaviour was mainly the result of the mounting political tension between the March 8 and March 14 camps and the framing of this political conflict in sectarian language, especially after the violent clashes.

As argued by Feldman (1991), symbolism operates to harden sectarian boundaries and create more tension. Anwar, a Shia resident of Barbour, revealed that there were a lot of provocations prior to May 2008:

After the Hariri assassination they dug in our ancient histories to provoke us. They brought up the history of the Sunni-Shia split and started to use slogans and graffiti mocking the Imam Hussein and praising the Karbala massacre. They played on our sectarian emotions and insulted our figures.

In a similar manner, Ziad also considered that there were clear sectarian provocations, especially after 2007/2008:

Beirut turned into a graffiti exhibition. The Future Movement tried to provoke us by writing sectarian slogans, especially during Ashoura.

As I drove through the various neighbourhoods of West Beirut in 2011, I could see the names of the main Sunni and Shia figures written all over the walls: ‘Ali,’ ‘Omar,’ ‘Abu Bakr’, ‘Hussein’, etc. Ziad was particularly irritated by one piece of graffiti:

It was the month of Ashoura, the month of mourning for the Shia, and there was a graffiti on the road to Khaldeh that read: ‘Thank you Ibn Muljam’ ... You know who Ibn Muljam was?? He was the killer of Imam Ali – of our Imam!

Provocation was deeply felt by both sides. Many Sunni interviewees accused the Shia of using sectarian slogans to insult their figures, especially during the month of Ashoura. In addition to these incitements, the Shia also described how their feelings of resentment resurfaced as a result of the tension. Adnan recalled hearing insulting remarks, such as ‘Shia have tails, just like animals’; he was often told to go back to his village in the South because Beirut does not belong to the Shia. So, it is clear that both sides used symbolic triggers, creating an environment of tension between different groups. These triggers instigated sectarian feelings; and, in many cases, led people to engage in violent acts because of the resulting tension. Together with my interview testimonies, a deeper analysis of the timing of the appearance of symbolic triggers – such as graffiti and banners – suggests that sectarian tension was the result of the political tension that had been rising since 2005 and that had assumed sectarian overtones.

Behind the sectarian behaviour of many of my interviewees lay a political narrative and a blurring of the two levels – sectarian and political. I interviewed Walid, a Druze fighter from the PSP, in July 2011. Our meeting took place at his beach chalet in Jiyeh because he avoided going to his house in Karakon al-Druze. He employed a sectarian language of hatred towards the Shia, especially in relation to the May 2008 events. He said:

It is true that there wasn’t a lot of blood, but there is a lot of hatred now.

Walid was captured by Hezbollah and held for 10 days in May 2008, and threats prevented him from returning to his neighbourhood (Karakon al-Druze) for more than a year following the incident. Feeling belittled and defeated, he was waiting for the first occasion to get his revenge:

In my entire life I was never humiliated like this ... I was never slapped once in my life. I have been a fighter since 1972, I participated in the most ferocious battles, but I was never captured and humiliated like this time.

The strong feeling of humiliation clearly affected Walid's sectarian feelings. He conflated his hatred for Hezbollah with hatred against the Shia in general. Although he had many Shia friends prior to 2008, he could no longer tolerate them and 'their love for Nasrallah'. Walid revealed that he was not very religious, but he had become highly sectarian. After 2008, he took to hating all Shia and was also teaching his children to hate them. He asserted that he did not allow his children to have Shia friends and that he was already getting ready for the next round of clashes in order to get his revenge. Therefore, although the interview with Walid suggests that his initial incentive to participate in the May 2008 clashes was more political than sectarian, the defeat and humiliation he felt after the battles, and the framing of this defeat as being caused by the Shia, transformed his political incentives to sectarian feelings of hatred and a need for revenge. These new sectarian feelings could act as a trigger for Walid to participate in future rounds of violence.

The intensification of sectarian divisions after the violence of 2007/2008 not only affected individuals' motivations to participate in future violence on sectarian grounds; it also affected the personal and social lives of many people. Omar (a Sunni fighter from Tariq al-Jdideh) met the woman who became his wife through her brother-in-law (a Shia), who was his close friend. He used to see her at her sister's house when he was visiting him. However, with tension building up from 2005 onward, the gap between he and his wife started to widen as

the polarisation between March 8 and March 14 increased. Like her whole family, she was pro-Hezbollah and supported the March 8 camp, while he was a fierce supporter of the Future Movement. Omar recalled the many disputes between him and her family, reaching a point where he 'could no longer stand her'. It was a matter of weeks before they got divorced, in June 2008. According to Omar, 'She was attached to her religion more than to her family.' He asserted that he did not regret divorcing her. In fact, he did not allow the children to see her a lot because he did not want them to grow up as Shia. Instead, he wanted them to be Sunni like him and to uphold the same values. As for his close Shia friend, Omar had no contact with him anymore:

He was with Amal Movement on the Barbour side and I was in Tariq al-Jdideh in 2008. We shot at each other. Since that day we never spoke again.

This story exemplifies how the framing of political divisions and violence in sectarian terms can affect individuals' personal lives. In fact, if Omar had had a sectarian leaning from the start, he would not have married a Shia woman. However, the political tension since 2005 and the violent clashes of 2007/2008 affected his sectarian feelings and amplified the importance of his sectarian identity at the personal and social level.

The testimonies collected in the interviews suggest that, as argued by constructivist theorists such as Kalyvas (2006) and Brubaker (2004), violence seems to play a crucial role in intensifying sectarian feelings and giving political conflict a more pronounced sectarian frame. However, this does not deny the fact that, as many primordialists contend, sectarian tension can then become a trigger for more violence. Although sectarian divisions existed prior to the violence, they often became deeper and more pronounced afterwards, which could lead to more sectarian behaviour. The tension resulting from political polarisation after the Hariri assassination assume sectarian overtones and led to the violent events of

2007/2008, which in turn deepened sectarian cleavages and affected the personal and social lives of many individuals.

IV. Conclusion

Analysis of the process of individual participation in the violent clashes of 2007/2008 in Beirut suggests that the depiction of these events as ‘sectarian violence’ is often reductionist. A deeper look at the push and pull factors indicates that individuals’ participation in collective violence was determined by the interplay of several mechanisms related to material grievance, ideological belief, social sanctions (such as peer pressure), and framing. The analysis points to the crucial role played by political parties – as clientelistic networks or ideological groupings – in mobilising certain individuals in times of violence.

This chapter has shown that rational and emotional mechanisms worked simultaneously to form individuals’ decision to participate in collective violence in Beirut between 2007 and 2008. Whereas material incentives, in the form of direct money payments, party-related jobs, *wasta*, or loot, were key for many of the fighters who belonged to the less privileged classes, peer pressure, feelings of belonging to the neighbourhood, and commitment to an ideological (or religious) party also played an important role in mobilising many of them. Similarly, individuals are not always driven by negative emotions such as resentment, humiliation, or sectarian hatred; positive feelings of agency and power can also be a trigger for many to participate in collective violence. My interviews suggest that in times of violent upheaval, the most deprived members of society could potentially be attracted to participate because of the feeling of power and agency that they get on the battleground.

The analysis indicates that the relationship between violence and sectarianism is dynamic and interrelated. Whereas political and sectarian depictions were often used interchangeably by informants in describing the events of 2007/2008 through a sectarian interpretive frame, a

disaggregation of the mechanisms points to the political essence of the tension (following the Hariri assassination). However, it assumed a sectarian framing given the sectarian nature of most political parties. This sectarian divide then became more acute during the years 2007/2008, and the usage of sectarian framing and symbolism (graffiti, banners, slogans, etc.) intensified the conflict.

My interviews show a further deepening of sectarian feelings as a result of the May 2008 clashes. Building on Wimmer's (2013, p. 138) analysis, it seems that the increasing levels of sectarianism after 2005 were 'an indicator of high levels of closure and conflict, not its explanation'. Whereas the conflict was primarily driven by political divisions following the Hariri assassination, the adoption of sectarian interpretive frames and the interchangeable usage of sectarian and political language led to the depiction of the conflict as 'sectarian'. The intensification of the political schism between March 8 and March 14 informed the escalation of street violence during 2007/2008. This violence then contributed to the intensification of sectarian feelings and the widening of sectarian divisions. In turn, it affected the personal (family) and social (friendship) relations of many individuals. In other words, macro- and meso-level political changes play out at the micro level and affect individuals' lives, shaping their political, social, and personal decisions.

7. Conclusion

This study has focused on the period between 2000 and 2010 in order to dissect the mechanisms of change in the salience of sectarian dichotomies following the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005. Lebanon provides an interesting example of fast remodelling of sectarian divisions within only a few years. Whereas the repeated cycles of political tension and violence since the inception of Lebanon in 1920 mainly took on ‘Christian versus Muslim’ overtones, the post-2005 political shifts remodelled the master sectarian dichotomy into a ‘Sunni versus Shia’ one (AbuKhalil, 2008a; Beydoun, 2012; Hamdan, 2012; Harris, 2012; Salamey, 2009; Salloukh, 2015).

Following the assassination of Hariri, the country split into two camps: the March 8 coalition, which reasserted its alliance to the Syrian regime and accused the US and Israel of killing Hariri, and the March 14 coalition, which directly accused the Syrian regime of being behind the assassination. At first, the events that followed the Hariri assassination seem puzzling: the new coalitions incorporated a mix of parties that had been fierce enemies during the civil war (1975–1990). In the first few months of what was labelled the ‘Cedar Revolution’, much attention was given to reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. However, the political divide in the country was growing and it started to turn into violent clashes in January 2007. This tension came to a head in May 2008 when the political crisis in the country spiralled out of control. On May 7, Hezbollah fighters and their allies mobilised to seize the capital, Beirut. Violent clashes erupted in many neighbourhoods of West Beirut, quickly spreading to other parts of the country to become the most brutal internal confrontations since the end of the civil war. Although many sectarian and non-sectarian

factions were involved in these clashes, the violence was generally framed in terms of Sunni versus Shia (Alagha, 2013).

These shifts in the salience of sectarian dichotomies after 2005 posed important questions regarding the nature of sectarianism in Lebanon. How does political closure happen along sectarian lines? How does the salience of the main sectarian division in the country shift within such a short time? Why are certain political changes understood in sectarian terms and not others? Why is collective violence labelled as sectarian violence? Does this imply that individuals who participate in collective violence are motivated by sectarian sentiments?

In this thesis, I embarked on an examination of the processes and mechanisms that affected the shift in the sectarian framing of conflict in Lebanon. More specifically, I attempted to examine two sub-questions: how did sectarian cleavages and polarisations shift in Lebanon over a short period of time, and what are the mechanisms that pushed certain individuals to participate in the collective violence of 2007/2008, which was framed as sectarian?

In trying to answer these questions, I moved from a macro analysis of the relationship between structural changes and sectarianism (chapter 4) to the meso-level mechanisms transforming the salencies of political and sectarian divisions (chapter 5). I then looked at the micro-level mechanisms that can lead certain individuals to participate in collective violence framed as sectarian (chapter 6). Linking the different levels of analysis provided a holistic, yet detailed, analysis of the processes of political and sectarian change in Lebanon. Building on the works of Brubaker (2004), Chandra (2012), and Wimmer (2013) in the field of ethnic studies, this thesis adopted a dynamic and analytical approach in the study of sectarianism in Lebanon and de-sectarianised the research agenda. Similarly, this thesis benefited from the social movement literature (Beissinger, 1996; della Porta and Diani, 1999; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001) in order to develop the research method and the conceptual framework.

In what follows, I will provide a summary of the conceptual framework and a synthesis of the main findings before moving to a discussion of the research implications.

I. Conceptual Framework

The academic literature dealing with the question of ethnicity or sectarianism is still influenced by primordialist analyses, despite the rise of constructivist theories in the late 1960s (chapter 2). Although most theories concerned with the formation of ethnicity/sectarianism acknowledge the constructed nature of identities, studies focusing on the effects and implications of ethnic/sectarian identities are still mostly built on essentialist and Herderian assumptions (Chandra, 2012; Wimmer, 2013). They consider that ethnic/sectarian identities are mainly fixed and enduring (Bayar, 2009; Freeman, 1998; Geerts, 1963; Khalaf, 2002; Shils, 1957; Van Evera, 2001). Similarly, they believe that these identities are the catalyst for conflict and violence in most diverse societies (Kaplan, 1994; Horowitz, 1985; Huntington, 1997; Lewis, 2004; Nasr, 2007). More importantly, many of these studies adopt a Herderian (1968) view in considering that ethnic/sectarian identities form the basis of homogeneous, self-contained groups in society (Gordon, 1964, Horowitz, 1985; Huntington, 1997). Thus, they use sects as a unit of analysis in their research.

Throughout this thesis, I attempted to move beyond these conceptual and methodological pitfalls by relying on the constructivist literature that considers ethnicity to be constructed, flexible and heterogeneous. I tried to understand how sectarian identities can become the basis for group formation and how such flexible identities can sometimes harden and crystallise to take on a primordialist interpretation. In doing this, I adopted an analytical approach that focuses on the mechanisms of change in the salience of sectarian identities. This approach builds on the work of Merton (1968), Elster (2007) and Hedström and Bearman (2009) in focusing on the ‘how’ question instead of the ‘why’ question. In other

words, this approach is interested in identifying causal mechanisms rather than focusing on estimating causal effects. The study has built on work within the social movement literature that adopts a similar approach in studying the relationship between contentious politics and fast change in the salience of identity groups (Beissinger, 2002; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001).

Borrowing from McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), this thesis explores three sets of mechanisms: environmental, relational and cognitive. It argues that environmental mechanisms such as institutionalisation, mobilisation and violence – explored in chapters 3 and 4 – play an important role in the politicisation of sectarian identities and the activation of sectarian group boundaries. Similarly, the research explores relational mechanisms that are closely linked to network configurations and directly contribute to the process of sectarian polarisation. Chapter 5 argues that coalition formation forms the main relational mechanism through which political behaviour can shift sectarian polarisations. Finally, cognitive mechanisms such as grievances, framing or peer pressure, can help us understand the process of individual participation in violence perceived as ethnic or sectarian. These processes and mechanisms will be discussed further in what follows.

II. Synthesis of Research Findings

In this section, I will attempt to answer my research question regarding the mechanisms that contribute to political closure along sectarian lines, and shifts in the salencies of sectarian boundaries. More precisely, I will summarise the main findings of my research through an exploration of the three main processes studied in this thesis: sectarian boundary activation, sectarian polarisation and individual participation in violence framed as sectarian.

The historical analysis of the sectarian phenomenon in Lebanon (chapters 3 and 4) shows that mechanisms such as institutionalisation, mobilisation and violence have played an

important role in the formation and activation of sectarian group boundaries. Chapter 3 suggested that street mobilisations formed an important channel through which the saliences of sectarian cleavages were shaped and activated. It also showed that violence played a crucial role in crystallising and hardening sectarian boundaries. Whereas mobilisation and conflict in Mount Lebanon were mainly class-based prior to the rise of capitalism and the spread of modernity, the 1800s witnessed the sectarianisation of the political life (Makdisi, 2000). Conflict started to take on a sectarian aspect as foreign powers (Ottoman and European) intervened to divide Mount Lebanon and institutionalise sectarian-based power-sharing arrangements. It was then that sectarian identities moved from being merely socially relevant to becoming politically salient identities. The shift from horizontal divisions (class-based) to vertical divisions (identity-based) in the late nineteenth century formed a turning point in the history of sectarianism in Lebanon. Since then, conflict in Lebanon has often been understood in terms of a primordial confrontation between sects, and civil wars have always ended with foreign-mediated agreements that reshaped the sectarian balance of power amongst communities. From the Shakib Effendi's *Règlement* in 1845 to the Ta'if Agreement in 1989, all power-sharing agreements adopted a Herderian view in treating sectarian communities as homogeneous groups, although intra-communal divisions were common and widespread. Thus, each round of violence hardened communal boundaries and paved the way for new sectarian dichotomies to emerge. However, a constructivist sociological reading of history suggests that sectarian polarisations, such as the Maronite–Druze division in Mount Lebanon under Ottoman rule, the Maronite–Sunni hegemony in Greater Lebanon, the Christian–Muslim dichotomy of the civil war era, and the Sunni–Shia split since the Hariri assassination, all emerged as a reflection of changes in internal and external power relations. The detailed historical account showed that although politics often took on dichotomous sectarian overtones, internal socio-economic developments – demography, class mobility,

and uneven development (centre/periphery) – and external power dynamics have always formed and transformed sectarian boundaries in Lebanon.

Since this thesis is focused on the rise in the salience of the Sunni–Shia cleavage following the Hariri assassination in 2005, I analysed the external and internal factors that could have activated these specific sectarian boundaries to bring about a shift from the previous Christian–Muslim polarisation (chapter 4). I argued that three main regional developments formed the necessary conditions that allowed for an increase in Sunni–Shia tension in Lebanon: the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979 and its role in the politicisation of the Shia communities in Lebanon and the creation of Hezbollah; the increasing role of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon since the late 1970s and its support of both moderate and extremist Sunni groups; and the 2003 US-led war on Iraq and the subsequent spread of a Sunni–Shia sectarian discourse. However, regional developments alone were not enough to explain the mechanisms through which sectarian saliences are shaped at the local level. It was necessary to understand the internal dynamics that made such a Sunni–Shia dichotomy possible.

My analysis highlighted three main internal developments that contributed to reshaping Lebanon's political and sectarian landscape. First, demographic shifts since the 1950s resulted in an increase in the Shia population and a decrease the relative size of the Christian population. Second, socio-economic shifts related to the process of urbanisation and emigration since the 1950s led to a general upward mobility within much of the Shia community, resulting in the emergence of a new bourgeoisie under the neo-liberal economy adopted by Hariri from 1992. Third, political shifts mainly linked to the redistribution of power after the Ta'if Agreement weakened the Christian position (President of the Republic) and strengthened the Muslim position (Sunni prime minister and Shia speaker). Although these internal changes were necessary to understanding the shaping of the salient sectarian boundaries in Lebanon, they were not sufficient to explain why and how the change in the

sectarian dichotomy only surfaced after the Hariri assassination. Neither could they inform why the dichotomy took on a Sunni–Shia aspect (although other sectarian parties were also involved). In order to answer this first research sub-question concerned with the shift in sectarian polarisation, a further focus on the internal mechanisms of change was needed.

Based on the social movement literature and on the analysis provided in the historical chapter, I turned to an analysis of street mobilisations since I considered that it constituted a mechanism by which regional and internal political changes converge to reflect political divisions and form public opinion. I relied on newspaper archives and official data from the Municipality of Beirut in order to compile a dataset of 3,899 protest events that took place in Lebanon between January 2000 and December 2010. I used this dataset to conduct a cross-temporal study of the changes in mobilisation trends before and after the assassination (chapter 4). The analysis revealed four main shifts in mobilisation trends in Lebanon. The first pointed to heightened mobilisation during the first three years following the Hariri assassination (2005–2008), which demonstrated that this period was a turning point in the political history of Lebanon. The second trend was a decrease in the average number of weekly protests with socio-economic claims, and an increase in the average number of protests with political claims, following the Hariri assassination. This indicated an intensification of political mobilisation at the expense of socio-economic demands. Turning to political mobilisations, the third trend was the shift away from pan-Arab and regional concerns (namely Palestine and Iraq) to a focus on internal politics (related to the March 8 and 14 dichotomy). Finally, the study of protest trends showed that whereas the two main reasons for protest in Beirut prior to 2005 were related to socio-economic concerns or pan-Arab causes, the main reasons for mobilisation after 2005 became more directly linked to anti-Syrian activism (especially in 2005/2006) and internal politics (specifically in 2007/2008). This suggested that the Hariri assassination and the subsequent Syrian

withdrawal from Lebanon had a huge impact on mobilisation trends in Beirut, reshuffling the priorities of the public and reshaping the political landscape. Based on the historical reading of conflicts in Lebanon, this analysis suggested that the heightened mobilisations between 2005 and 2008 were crucial for the transformation of pre-existing fault-lines and the crystallisation of new divisions. However, a meso-level analysis was needed to better explain how this period of heightened mobilisations shifted sectarian dichotomies from predominantly Christian versus Muslim to, more recently, Sunni versus Shia.

Chapter 5 focused on the process of sectarian polarisation. It studied the relationship between coalition formation in street mobilisations and the shaping of sectarian saliencies. Following Brubaker (2004, p. 21), I argued that conflicts and divisions are not led by sectarian communities per se, but rather by sectarian organisations and parties. I took political parties as the unit of analysis since they form the channels through which political mobilisations can be understood in a sectarian language, given the sectarian nature of most political parties in post-war Lebanon. I used network analysis techniques in order to detect the changes in political alliances and their implications on sectarian polarisations. The analysis showed that the main political division between January 2000 and February 2005 was between the primarily Muslim-based parties (Amal, Hezbollah, PSP, and Future Movement, together with leftist and nationalist parties and Palestinian factions) who essentially mobilised for pan-Arab claims, and the majority of the Christian-based parties (FPM, traditional Kata'ib, and the Lebanese Forces) who predominantly mobilised for anti-Syrian claims.

This dichotomy, however, shifted after 2005, creating a schism between the anti-Syrian coalition referred to as the March 14 block (including the mainly Sunni-based Future Movement, the mainly Druze-based PSP, the Christian-based Kata'ib, the Lebanese Forces, and FPM until 2006) on the one hand, and the March 8 coalition (including mainly Shia-

based parties (Hezbollah and Amal) and later joined by the Christian-based FPM in 2006), on the other. I argued that this shift in coalition formation after 2005 (and more specifically after the 2006 realignment of the FPM with the March 8 coalition) allowed for the political divide in Lebanon to be framed as a Sunni–Shia one, despite the heavy involvement of Druze-based parties (such as the PSP) and Christian-based parties (such as the FPM, the Lebanese Forces, and the Kata'ib). The analysis suggested that the Druze cleavage did not affect the master sectarian framing, since the Druze community represent a demographic minority that is unable to militarily or politically compete with the Shia-based parties. Moreover, it seemed that the Christian boundary also lost its political salience due to the internal political fragmentation amongst the parties representing Christian communities, which made it difficult for the sectarian and political boundaries to coincide and become interchangeable. Therefore, answering the first research question, the analysis suggested that in order for a shift in political alliances to affect the salience of sectarian dichotomies, two main conditions need to be met: the sectarian-based political parties must represent communities that are demographically large enough to compete; and there should be intra-sectarian political alliances (among the main political parties representing a given community) when it comes to major political issues in order for political and sectarian identities to become interchangeable.

This analysis showed that the Herderian view, holding that it is natural for ethnic/sectarian identities to form the basis for group formation and political mobilisation does not always hold. My study showed that although some sectarian communities, such as the Sunni or the Shia communities in Lebanon, have managed to form political closure along sectarian lines (given intra-sectarian alliances or political homogeneity), other communities, such as the Christians, were fragmented along political lines. In fact, divisions within ethnic/sectarian groups have always existed and are usually based on the economic and political interests of sub-groups or political leaders. Therefore, studying ethnicity and

sectarianism from a dynamic and a non-static point of view was important in order to depict the shift in the salience of these boundaries. However, what does political closure along sectarian lines imply in terms of individual-level behaviour in society? My research has so far shown that what is often labelled sectarian conflict is mainly driven by political and structural changes at the macro level, translated into political alliances and co-mobilisations at the meso level. However, when conflict turns into violence, what explains why some people participate in violence portrayed as ‘sectarian’? Are these individuals mainly driven by sectarian feelings or is our framing of the events as sectarian distorting our analytical lens?

In order to answer this second sub-question, I conducted 29 semi-structured interviews in neighbourhoods in Beirut that witnessed violent clashes between 2007 and 2008 (chapter 6). My sample included participants and non-participants in the clashes in order to unravel some of the push and pull factors that affected individual-level motivations to participate in times of violent upheaval. The analysis suggested that deepened and crystallised sectarian divisions are a result of the violence, and not a cause of it. Therefore, the depiction of the 2007/2008 violent events as ‘sectarian’ seems to be reductionist. A deeper look at the push and pull factors indicated that individuals’ participation in collective violence was determined by the interplay of several mechanisms related to material grievance, ideological belief, social sanctions (such as peer pressure), and framing. The analysis pointed to a crucial role played by political parties, as clientelistic networks or ideological groupings, in mobilising certain individuals in times of violence. Whereas material incentives, in the form of direct money payments, party-related jobs, *wasta*, or loot were crucial for many of the fighters who belonged to the less privileged classes, peer pressure, feelings of belonging to the neighbourhood, and commitment to an ideological (or religious) party also played an important role. Similarly, positive emotions seemed to have been important in shaping individual participation: in times of violent upheaval, the most deprived members of society

could be attracted to participate because of the feeling of power and agency available to them on the battlefield. Moreover, the analysis of my qualitative data indicated that the relationship between violence and sectarianism is dynamic and inter-related. Participation in the violence seemed to be the result primarily of political, economic, and emotional drivers. However, the adoption of sectarian interpretive frames (what Brubaker (2004, p. 115) called ‘participant primordialism’), and the use of sectarian and political language interchangeably, led to the depiction of the violence as ‘sectarian’. This, in turn, affected the personal (family) and social (friendship) relations of many individuals and became the basis for further crystallisation of sectarian cleavages and boundaries.

Finally, the empirical findings of this research suggested that political closure along sectarian lines is heavily affected by structural environmental, relational and cognitive mechanisms. At the macro level, the salience of sectarian cleavages was affected by structural changes in political, social, and economic conditions. However, at the meso level, street mobilisations formed the mechanism through which macro changes were trickled down, and political parties represented the channels through which political and sectarian saliencies were reshaped. The micro-level analysis also pointed to the importance of political parties and violent mobilisations in shaping sectarian dichotomies. However, by moving beyond participant’s primordialism, the crystallisation of sectarian cleavages seemed to be a result of the violence more than a cause of it. Thus, this research argued that the understanding of conflict and violence in Lebanon needs to move beyond the essentialist assumption that frames it as ‘sectarian’, in order to ask how political tensions can take sectarian turns and how sectarian polarisations can change over short periods of time.

III. Research Implications

Building on the immense sociological literature dealing with ethnicity, this study has several implications.

First, this research joins the growing call to redress overemphasis on ethnicity in the study of conflict within the sociological literature (Bowen, 1996; Brubaker & Laitin, 1998; Gilley, 2004; Wimmer, 2013). Since the 1980s, most studies concerned with collective violence have used an ethnic language in depicting the events (Gilley, 2004), which has skewed the sociological literature by giving the impression that ‘ethnic conflicts’ are on the rise (Brubaker & Laitin, 1998). Building on Brubaker’s (2004) and Wimmer’s (2013) call to de-ethnicise research methods and separate ethnicity from sectarianism as categories of practice and analysis, this research showed how alternative explanations could emerge when non-sectarian interpretative frames are adopted. Instead of using sects as the unit of analysis, this research considered sectarian group formation a phenomenon to be explained rather than assumed. For example, high levels of sectarian groupness could be the result of violence and not necessarily its cause. Labelling conflict as sectarian can be misleading in such cases. As argued by Brubaker (2004, p. 19), the adoption of ethnic frames ‘has often served to mask the pursuit of political and class-based interests’. Thus, instead of over-emphasising the ethnic aspect of conflict and violence, this research joined the call to disaggregate mechanisms and to not conflate political conflicts with sectarian ones.

A second important theoretical implication of this study is its acknowledgement of the crucial role played by mobilisation as a mechanism that links elite-level macro-politics to individual-level micro-behaviour. Although the social movement literature has studied the relationship between contentious politics and identity formation and transformation, the literature dealing with ethnicity has not explored this mechanism enough.

Fourth, and building on Brubaker's (2004) work, this study highlighted the centrality of political parties as vehicles or channels through which political changes can take on sectarian overtones and shape the behaviour of individuals. Instead of adopting a groupist approach and using sects as units of analysis, the study suggests that most sectarian politics is actually played out by political parties and not sectarian groups per se. Hence, in order to advance our understanding of the ethnic/sectarian phenomenon and to dissect the mechanisms of ethnic/sectarian boundary formation, researchers should focus on the behaviour of political parties and organisations that mobilise in the name of ethnic/sectarian communities.

A fifth important theoretical implication of this thesis is its focus on the fast remodelling of the salience of sectarian boundaries. Although most constructivist studies focus on long-term conflicts and slow moving variables of change (Anderson, 1991; Makdisi, 2000; Ofeish, 1996; Varshney, 2003), this study offered an analysis of an example of fast remodelling of sectarian dichotomies within only a few years. This provided an opportunity to reassert the political nature of sectarianism and its fluid character. Whereas the academic fields of political science and international relations have given some attention to the Lebanese case, especially concerning theories of conflict resolution and consociational democracy, the (Western) sociological literature dealing with ethnicity or sectarianism has rarely examined this very pertinent case. Thus, by adopting a sociological approach to the analysis of Lebanese society, this study was able to go beyond most primordialist theories offered in the literature on Lebanon, and to contribute to the sociological literature by providing a detailed case study of an often overlooked example.

Finally, the academic implications of this approach stretch beyond the production of theories in order to rethink the division of academic departments within universities (Wimmer, 2013, p. 20). The establishment of 'area studies' or 'ethnic studies' departments in many universities around the world embodies what I call 'academic primordialism'. These

manifestations of primordialism in academia are based on the assumption that the world is divided into clear-cut areas with societies that are essentially distinct (despite globalisation). This reinforces the exceptionalist approach since it assumes that vertical cleavages (ethnic, sectarian, national, or cultural) are more relevant than horizontal divisions along class lines for example. Therefore, by rejecting the Herderian approach, this study also calls for a rethinking of divisions within academic fields and departments.

IV. Conclusion

By adopting a critical approach to understanding the sectarian phenomenon in Lebanon, this thesis went beyond identity politics to focus on the dynamics of change in the salience of political and sectarian boundaries. I attempted to offer a nuanced account to challenge the essentialist approach that has occupied centre stage in the analysis of Lebanese society. My main concern was to go beyond the frequently used sectarian frames in order to understand the dynamics shaping the relationship between sectarianism and structural factors at the macro, meso, and micro level. My findings suggest that conflict in Lebanon is mainly economic and political; however it can take on sectarian overtones when political and sectarian boundaries coincide to become interchangeable. The analysis provided in this thesis is extremely important if we are to rethink the erstwhile framing of conflict in the Middle East as representing sectarian confrontation between Sunni and Shia.

8. Appendices

I. Appendix 1:

The Institutionalisation of Sectarianism at the Personal and Political Level

Confessions	Sects		Have a Personal Status Law?	Number of Parliament Seats
Christian	Maronite		Yes	34
	Greek Catholic (Melkite)		Yes	8
	Greek Orthodox		Yes	14
	Armenian Catholic		Yes	1
	Armenian Orthodox		Yes	5
	Protestant		Yes	1
	Christian Minorities	Syriac Catholic	Yes	1
		Roman Catholic		
		Syriac Orthodox	Yes	
		Nestorian	Yes	
		Chaldean	Yes	
		Copt Orthodox	Follow Orthodox Laws	
Muslim	Sunni		Yes	27
	Shia Ja'afari		Yes	27
	Druze		Yes	8
	Alawi		Follow Ja'afari Court	2
	Isma'ili		Follow Ja'afari Laws	None
Jewish	Jewish		Yes	None
TOTAL	18 sects		15 personal status law	128 MPs (64 Muslims and 64 Christians)

Source: Salloukh (2015, p. 22 and p. 192)

Table 16: Personal and political representation in Lebanon post-Ta'if Agreement (1990)

II. Appendix 2:

Quantitative Data Collection and Coding

a) Data Collection

The constructed dataset comprises a list of protest events that took place in Lebanon between 2000 and 2010. In the Lebanese context, this includes sit-ins, demonstrations, protests, rallies, marches, processions, meetings, celebration, memorials, and vigils. It is worth noting here that protest events (mainly sit-ins) that last more than one day are coded as a new event for every mobilisation day. The rationale behind this coding method is to focus on mobilisation days and not just protest events. Therefore, if a group of people is mobilising over a period of time for the same reason, their mobilisation cannot be equated with that of a one-day protest, hence the daily basis coding.

I also collected data on the strikes, even though they do not directly fit into the definition. Strike data is used in the analysis of the number of protests. However, I do not included it in the analysis of the number of protesters since the number of participants is missing in almost all strike cases. Therefore, in my analysis, I consider that protests can be measured by the frequency of mobilisation and/or the number of protesters.

The dataset contains information (collected from all three sources discussed above) on the following variables:

- 1) Date of protest
- 2) Organising party (proxy for sectarian participation)
- 3) Participating parties (proxy for sectarian participation)
- 4) Reason for protest (pan-Arab; pro-Syrian; anti-Syrian; socio-economic; internal politics and peace; other)
- 5) Type of protest (sit-in; demonstration; rally; vigil; strike; other)
- 6) Main slogans
- 7) Protest venue

- 8) Occurrence of violence (Yes / No)
- 9) Number of participants

b) Data Coding

The data is fully coded based on the protest claims according to the following categories (Table 1 shows the percentage of each type of protest over the eleven-year study period):

1. **Pan-Arab:** This category contains all the protests that took place in support of the main Arab regional causes during the period under study: Palestine and Iraq. Although the term ‘pan-Arab’ has a political connotation linked to the Nasserite period (as explained in chapter 3), this category’s coding is not linked to pan-Arabism as an ideology, but rather as a geographical area associated with political causes in Lebanon. The majority of these protests are concerned with the Palestinian Intifada, the Lebanese and Palestinian resistance against Israel, and the war on Iraq. Similarly, most of these protests are anti-Israel and anti-West (namely the US and Britain).
2. **Pro-Syrian:** Only three protests have been explicitly framed as pro-Syrian regime in our dataset.
3. **Anti-Syrian:** This category contains all the protests that denounced the Syrian hegemony over Lebanon or accused the Syrian regime of being behind political assassinations in Lebanon. These protests are mainly concerned with opposition to the Syrian political and military presence in Lebanon, the truth about the assassination of Rafic Hariri and his companions, the International Tribunal, the

anniversary of the assassination of former Lebanese President Bachir Gemayel, and the students' movement against Syria before 2005.

4. **Lebanese prisoners in Syria:** This campaign is solely focused on Lebanese detainees in Syrian prisons. Although it started before 2005 with a few scattered mobilisations, it became a more stable and visible campaign after March 2005 when an open sit-in took place in downtown Beirut in front of UN House, asking for the truth about the fate of Lebanese prisoners in Syria. Because this sit-in lasted for more than six years, it appears in our dataset on a daily basis after March 2005.¹¹³ Therefore, I decided to code it separately in order to distinguish it from the broader anti-Syrian category, especially that this movement had a low number of participants. I show that although the number of protests is very large (54% of all protests), the number of participants is extremely low (0.96% of all protesters). This movement is symbolically important although, unlike other movements, it does not involve a large portion of Lebanese society.

5. Internal politics

- a. **Socio-economic:** This category comprises all protests that occur for socio-economic reasons, such as the teachers' syndicate protests, the taxi drivers' syndicate mobilisation, etc.
- b. **Anti-government:** This category includes all protests that mobilise to demand the resignation of the government, or to directly attack the government and its political performance. The main movement in this category is the March 8 coalition open sit-in that started in December 2006 and lasted until May 2008,

¹¹³ Although this sit-in did not appear in the newspapers on a daily basis, there were articles that mentioned that the sit-in had been ongoing since March 2005. The estimated number of participants was kept at ten unless the articles stated otherwise (i.e. when special events took place around the sit-in tent and attracted more people).

asking for the resignation of the Siniora government. This sit-in gathered thousands of people on a daily basis during the 18 months of its activity. This protest is not coded as pro-Syrian, although it had pro-Syrian leanings, because the framing of the movement was not explicitly concerned with Syria; rather, it used internal political frames asking the government to resign.

- c. **Internal peace:** This category is concerned with all protests that take place for reasons related to peace and reconciliation. Protests that fall under this category are mainly associated with campaigns for inter-communal dialogue, campaigns against sectarianism and violence, campaigns against political instability, and awareness-raising campaigns about peace.
 - d. **Civil rights:** This movement contains all campaigns that call for civil rights in Lebanon. Some examples include the women's rights movements, human rights campaigns, campaigns for freedom of the press, civil marriage campaigns, etc.
 - e. **Internal politics:** This category includes all political protests that are strictly concerned with internal politics, and that do not fall into any of the previous categories. Examples of such protests would include campaigns to lower the electoral age to 18, campaigns to rectify the electoral law, etc.
5. **Other:** Finally, this category consists of all other protests, ranging from Islamic rallies during Ramadan or Ashoura, to Kurdish and Armenian protests, to environmental protests.

III. Appendix 3:

Keywords Used for Newspaper Search of Protests

Keywords used for newspaper search		
English	Arabic	Description
Sit-in	اعتصام	A gathering in an area (open space) for a certain period of time
Demonstration	مظاهرة	A moving protest that involves walking from one area to another
Protest / Rally	تظاهرة	A moving protest that involves walking from one area to another
March / Procession	مسيرة	A moving protest that involves walking from one area to another
Meeting	تجمع	A gathering in an area (open or closed space) for a period of time
Strike	اضراب	Organised abstenteeism from work
Celebration	احتفال	A ceremony of respect and festivity
Memorial	ذكرى	A gathering to remember a deceased person or a historical date
Vigil	اضاءة شموع	A night gathering that involves silence and holding candles

IV. Appendix 4:

My personal connections with the communities

It is important to discuss my personal position vis-à-vis the development of events in Lebanon since I happen to be Lebanese and this might affect the research. Although objectivity is impossible, I personally do not take sides with either of the two main political blocks (March 8 or March 14 coalitions). I describe myself as a non-sectarian, non-religious person, who is part of a highly mixed family: my father was born into a Muslim Shia family, my mother into a Christian Greek Orthodox family, and my husband is from a Muslim Sunni family. According to Lebanese law, I have to follow my father's religion; therefore, I am registered as being Muslim Shia on official records. However, I am also registered under my husband's rubric and thus can use his family name when needed.

It is important to note that although I consider myself an outsider to this conflict, people would still consider me an insider to their society and would want to label me. My first name (Rima) does not have any religious or sectarian connotation. However, my family name (Majed) is clearly Shia, and my region of origin (South Lebanon) is mainly Shia. Conversely, my husband's family name (El Hibri) is clearly Sunni, and his region of origin (Beirut) is mainly Sunni. Therefore, I alternated between my maiden and my husband's family name when introducing myself, depending on the interviewee's identity. I used my maiden name with Shia interviewees or those who belonged to political parties that were allies of Hezbollah (i.e. SSNP and Communist Party). I used my married surname when I was interviewing Sunni respondents or allies of the Future Movement (i.e. the PSP at that time). This flexibility helped in establishing trust and in allowing the interviewees to talk freely about the 'other sectarian groups'.

In addition, some interviewees asked me about my family and my place of residence in Beirut. I noted that my parents did not live in Lebanon, that I was born abroad during the civil war, and that I only returned to Lebanon for my secondary schooling and undergraduate degree, after which I left for the UK to pursue my post-graduate studies. This was the best answer to forestall a series of questions about the identity of my family and details of who I was. The fact that we live abroad is not uncommon in Lebanon, since a lot of people emigrate for higher education or work opportunities. The distance that I established by being 'abroad' enabled me to present myself as an 'informed outsider': someone who knows enough to distinguish untrue or unreliable information, but at the same time has a certain distance that can pre-empt the stress of being judged or stigmatised.

V. Appendix 5:

Distribution of Interviewees

Neighbourhood	Number of Interviews	Names (not real)	Rioter?	Age	Party Affiliation	Sect
Karakon al-Druze	3	Walid	Yes	52	PSP	Druze
		Akram	No	45	PSP	Druze
		Karim	No	27	NA	Shia
Hay al-Lejja	2	Jad	Yes	18	Amal	Shia
		Mustafa	No	23	Amal	Shia
Hamra / Caracas	7	Kamal	Yes	25	Future Mvt	Sunni
		Fadi	No	27	Future Mvt	Sunni
		Zuhair	No	56	NA	Sunni
		Shadi	Yes	26	SSNP	Refused to Declare
		Dani	Yes	25	SSNP	Refused to Declare
		Sami	No	25	SSNP	Druze
		Naji	Yes	48	SSNP	Christian Orthodox
Tariq al-Jdideh	3	Omar	Yes	41	Future Mvt	Sunni
		Fouad	Yes	43	Ahbash	Sunni
		Habib	No	31	NA	Sunni
Barbour	2	Anwar	Yes	25	Amal	Shia
		Hassan	No	30	NA	Shia
Ras al-Naba'	6	Faisal	No	62	Future Mvt	Sunni
		Adel	Yes	46	Future Mvt	Sunni
		Hussam	No	32	Future Mvt	Sunni
		Ali	No	25	Communist Pty	Shia
		Firas	No	21	Amal	Shia
		Ziad	Yes	23	Amal	Shia
Khandaq al-Ghamiq	2	Adnan	Yes	42	Hezbollah	Shia
		Ahmad	No	33	NA	Shia
Zoqaq al-Blat	2	Hani	Yes	38	Amal	Shia
		Talal	No	61	NA	Sunni
Chiyah	2	Abbas	Yes	19	NA	Shia
		Hadi	No	24	Amal	Shia
TOTAL	29					

VI. Appendix 6:

INFORMATION SHEET

Name of Study: *Who Participates in Collective Violence?*

Purpose of Study: As part of her DPhil research, sociology student Rima Majed is attempting to understand individual participation in collective violence. This research project looks at how some neighbourhoods in Beirut have witnessed riots and violence during the years 2007/2008. It tries to understand precisely what accounts for the fact that some young men in certain neighbourhoods participated in acts of violence while others didn't. This study mainly focuses on depicting the underlying causes that might push or pull individuals who might take to the streets and participate in riots at times of political unrest. In brief, the purpose of the study is to provide an answer to the short but very complicated question: Who participates in collective violence?

Length of Interview: Approximately two hours

Place of Interview: As chosen by participant

Interview Requirement: Every interviewee will be asked to recruit two new participants from his neighbourhood: one who has participated in collective violence, and one who hasn't participated in collective violence.

Please note that this interview is strictly confidential and anonymous.

ورقة المعلومات (ARABIC) INFORMATION SHEET

عنوان الدراسة: "من يلجأ إلى الشارع؟"

هدف الدراسة: كجزء من أطروحتها للدراسات العليا في علم الاجتماع, تحاول التلميذة ربما ماجد فهم المشاركة في أعمال الإحتجاج و العنف السياسي على الصعيد الشخصي. إن هذا البحث ينظر إلى بعض الأحياء التي شهدت أعمال شغب و عنف في بيروت خلال العامين 2008/2007. في التحديد, إن هذه الدراسة تحاول كشف الظروف و الأسباب التي تجعل بعض الشباب و الرجال في تلك الأحياء تشارك في أعمال شغب و عنف فيما غيرهم من أهالي المنطقة يقررون عدم المشاركة. هذا البحث يركّز على محاولة فهم العوامل الرئيسية التي يمكن أن تشجّع أو تردّ الأفراد من اللجوء إلى الشارع و المشاركة بأعمال شغب و عنف في أوقات عدم الإستقرار السياسي. باختصار, إن هدف هذه الدراسة هو الوصول لبعض الإجابات على السؤال القصير و لكن المعقّد جداً التالي: "من يلجأ إلى الشارع؟"

مدة المقابلة: ساعتين تقريباً

مكان المقابلة: كما يختار المشارك

متطلبات المقابلة: سيتمّ الطلب من كل مشترك أن يطلب من أثنين من أصدقاءه أو جيرانه في المنطقة أن يشاركوا في هذا البحث من خلال المشاركة في مقابلة. يجد أن يكون أحد المشاركين شخصاً من المنطقة قد لجأ سابقاً إلى الشارع. و آخر من نفس المنطقة لم يلجأ أبداً إلى الشارع خلال العامين 2008/2007 للمشاركة بأي عمل شغب أو عنف.

يرجى الإنتباه إلى أن المقابلات كلها سرّية و نحرص أن تبقى هوية المشاركين مجهولة لغير الباحثة الأساسية (ربما ماجد).

VII. Appendix 7:

Consent Form for Participation in Research

I hereby consent to participate as requested in the interview for the research project on sectarian conflict in Lebanon.

1. I have been briefed about the research project and I have read the information sheet.
2. Details of procedures have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and have received satisfactory answers to questions or any additional details requested.
4. I agree to audio recording of the interview.
5. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
6. I understand that:
 - I am free to withdraw from the interview at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - I will be asked to recruit two new participants as explained in the Information Sheet.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - I may ask that the recording be stopped at any time during the interview.
 - Maintenance of confidentiality of information is subject to normal legal requirements.
 - The project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.
 - Personal data provided will be securely stored and no one can have access to this data other than the main researcher (Rima Majed).
 - In order to raise any concern or make a complaint I can either contact Rima Majed or the department of Sociology through her supervisor (Dr. Michael Biggs at the address provided above).

Participant's signature..... Date

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

بيان الموافقة على المشاركة في البحث

Consent Form (Arabic)

أنا الموقع أدناه أوافق على المشاركة في المقابلة لمشروع البحث المتعلق بالصراع الطائفي في لبنان.

- لقد تمّ توضيح و شرح مشروع البحث لي, و قرأت ورقة المعلومات
- لقد تمّ شرح تفاصيل المقابلة لي و وافقت عليها
- لقد أتيح لي المجال للإستفسار حول البحث و طرح الأسئلة, و حصلت على الإجابات و المعلومات المرجوة
- أوافق على التسجيل الصوتي للمقابلة
- إنني على يقين بأنه من المهم أن أحتفظ بنسخة عن ورقة المعلومات و بيان الموافقة على المشاركة لأي إستعمال ممكن في المستقبل
- أنني على علم بما يلي:
- يمكنني الإنسحاب من المقابلة في اي وقت, كما يمكنني الرفض في الإجابة على أي سؤال
- سوف يُطلب مني تأمين مشاركين جدد في الدراسة كما هو مشروح في ورقة المعلومات
- في حين أن المعلومات المجموعة في هذه الدراسة سوف تنشر في الحقل الأكاديمي, لن تنشر أي معلومة يمكن أن تكشف هويتي أو تعطي أي تفصيل عن شخصي
- يمكنني الطلب بوقف التسجيل في أي وقت أثناء خلال المقابلة
- إن الإحتفاظ بسرية المعلومات تخضع للمتطلبات القانونية العادية
- إن هذا البحث قد تم مراجعته و نال على الموافقة من اللجنة المركزية لأداب البحث في جامعة أوكسفورد
- سيتم حفظ المعلومات الشخصية المعطاة خلال المقابلة في مكان آمن, و لا يمكن لأحد غير الباحثة الأساسية في هذه الدراسة (ريما ماجد) الإطلاع عليها
- في حال أردت التعليق أو الشكوى, يمكنني الإتصال بريما ماجد أو بكلية العلوم الإجتماعية في جامعة أوكسفورد عبر الدكتور مايكل بيغز على العناوين المتوفرة أعلاه

إمضاء المشارك التاريخ

إنني أوأكد أنني شرحت الدراسة للمتطوع بالمشاركة و أعتبر أنه قد فهم ما يتضمنه البحث و وافق بملء إرادته بالمشاركة.

إمضاء الباحث: التاريخ:

VIII. Appendix 8:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Background Information:

1. Let us start with some background information. How old are you?
2. What is the highest degree you have obtained?
3. Where do/did you study? (Private/public?)
4. What do you do for a living?
5. Where do you live?
6. How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?
7. Where did you live prior to moving here?
8. If you are a migrant in to the city, where did you come from? And when?
9. Do you contemplate moving out of this neighbourhood? Why?
10. Did your neighbourhood witness sectarian violence recently?
11. How would you describe the sectarian composition of your neighbourhood?

Family Information:

1. What is your marital status?
2. If you are engaged or married, answer the following questions:
 - What is your spouse's sectarian identity?
3. Do you have children?
 - If yes:
 - a) How many?
 - b) How old are they?
4. Do you have siblings?
 - If yes:
 - a) How many?
 - b) Do you live with your family?
 - c) How many persons live in your household?

Economic Information:

1. Compared to the period preceding Hariri's assassination (from 1990-2005), is the economic condition of your family now better, worse or the same?
2. Compared to the past, is the economic condition of your sectarian group now better, worse or the same?
3. Do you benefit from any financial support from your family?

4. Do you benefit from any financial support from your sectarian group?

Media:

1. Do you read newspapers? If yes, which one?
2. Do you watch TV? If yes, which channel?
3. Do you listen to the radio? If yes, which channel?
4. What is your primary source of information? (Newspaper, TV, Radio, Family, Friends, Political Party (which one?), other?)
5. Do you think the media in Lebanon is bias or not?

Cultural / Religious Information:

1. Do you consider yourself a religious person?
2. If yes, how often do you practice your religion?
3. Do you attend a specific mosque?
 - If yes,
 - a) Have you always attended the same mosque, or did you change? Why?
 - b) Since when did you start going to the mosque?
 - c) Do you usually go alone or with someone? Who?
 - d) Does the Sheikh of the mosque address political issues? Could you explain/give details?
4. For what matters (marriages, property matters, education, politics...) do you consult a religious authority?
5. Should there, in your view, be a common civil code about marriage and property for all communities in this country or should different communities have different personal laws? Why?

Political Information

1. Is your family associated with any political party? If yes, which one?
2. Do you have special affection for a particular political party? Why?
3. Are you a member of any political party?
4. If yes, which one? And tell me a bit more about how involved you are
5. Do you think your sectarian group is well represented in public institutions?
6. Do you think your political party is well represented in public institutions?
7. If participant is above 21:
 - a) Do you vote?
 - b) How many times have you voted in elections?
 - c) Have you always voted for the same parties, or have you changed?
 - d) If you have changed any of the parties you voted for, what accounts for the change?
 - e) What considerations matter to you when you vote?

- f) Do you consult some people before voting? If yes, who do you consult?
- g) Have you ever been offered money or services from a party before the elections in order to vote for them?
 - If yes, who has offered you money or services in exchange for your vote?
 - What was the offer made to you in exchange of your vote?
 - Have you accepted the offer?
 - Did you vote for that party?
- h) What do you think of:
 - Hassan Nasrallah?
 - Rafic Hariri?
 - Walid Jumblatt?
 - Amine Gemayel?
 - Michel Aoun?
 - Emile Lahoud?
 - Nabih Berri?
 - Syria?
 - Israel?
 - The US?
 - The Sunnis
 - The Shias
 - The Druze
 - The Christians
- i) Do you recall what was your view of each one ten years ago? (re-state each name/group mentioned above)

Intercommunity Relations:

1. Could you name your close friends whom you contact at least on weekly or monthly basis? Could you tell me about their sectarian identity?
2. Would you mind if you had a:
 - a. Sunni neighbour in your building?
 - b. Shia neighbour in your building?
 - c. Druze neighbour in your building?
 - d. Christian neighbour in your building?
3. Would you mind if a member of your household marries a:
 - a. Sunni?
 - b. Shia?
 - c. Druze?
 - d. Christian?
4. Would you consider marrying a:
 - a. Sunni?
 - b. Shia?
 - c. Druze?

- d. Christian?
- e. A girl from mixed background?
- 5. In the last year, have you visited the home of a :
 - a. Sunni?
 - b. Shia?
 - c. Druze?
 - d. Christian?
- 6. In the last year, have you had meals at the house of a:
 - a. Sunni?
 - b. Shia?
 - c. Druze?
 - d. Christian?
- 7. In the last year, have you discussed politics with a (*tell us more*):
 - a. Sunni?
 - b. Shia?
 - c. Druze?
 - d. Christian?
- 8. Do you think your relationship with people from different sectarian groups has changed? If yes, since when? And how?
- 9. Can we have you recall your childhood for us? How where the Sunni-Shia relations in your neighbourhood?
- 10. Did your parents have any Sunni/ Shia friends?
- 11. Did your parents mind if you had Sunni/Shia friends?
- 12. Did your parents mind if you wanted to marry a Sunni/Shia person?
- 13. Could you describe the sectarian composition of your neighbourhood 10 years ago?
- 14. Do you think the sectarian composition of your neighbourhood have changed since then?
- 15. Could you describe the political situation of the main sectarian communities in your neighbourhood 10 years ago? How is it compared to now?
- 16. Could you describe the economic situation of the main sectarian communities in your neighbourhood 10 years ago? How is it compared to now?
- 17. Could you describe the social situation of the main sectarian communities in your neighbourhood 10 years ago? How is it compared to now?

Network:

- 1. Are you a member of any community group/association/club?
- 2. Are you a member of any neighbourhood group/association/club?
- 3. Are you an enlisted member of any political party?
- 4. Do you spend time with your friends in your neighbourhood?
 - If yes:
 - a) How often do you hang out with friends in your neighbourhood?
 - b) Are they all from your neighbourhood?

- c) Do you think people in your neighbourhood know you? Can they recognize you if they see you on the street for example?
- If no:
 - d) With whom do you usually hang out most?
 - e) Where do you hang out?
 - f) Do you think people in your neighbourhood know you? Can they recognize you if they see you on the street for example?

Participation in Mobilisation:

1. Have you ever participated in a protest?
 - If yes:
 - a) Why did you participate?
 - b) What was the type of the protest? (sit-in, strike, demonstration...)
 - c) What was the main concern of the protest?
 - d) Do you recall which year you participated in your first protest?
 - e) Have you participated in any other protest since then?
 - f) Has the reason of protest always been the same, or has it changed over the course of years?
 - g) With whom did you participate in these protests? (
 - h) Where you asked by someone to participate in any of these protests?
 - i) Where you ever paid (in cash or services) to participate in any protest?
 - If no:
 - a) Why not?
 - b) Where you ever asked by someone to participate in any of the protests?
 - c) Have your close friends ever participated in protests?
 - d) Has any member of your close family ever participated in protest?
 - e) Where you ever offered money or services to participate in a protest?

Participation in Riots:

As you most probably know, Lebanon has recently witnessed a series of violence outburst (especially after 2007). In what follows I will use the word "riot" to refer to any act of:

- 1- *Physically harming someone (the degree of harm could vary from slapping to killing)*
 - 2- *Looting*
 - 3- *Harming public properties (blocking roads, burning tires or preventing free circulation of other individuals in the city)*
 - 4- *Harming private properties (burning cars, burning flags or photos, invading or destroyed private properties)*
1. Did you participate in any of the riot events of since 2007?
 - If yes, could you tell me about your participation?
 - a) Which of the following acts have you done?

- Destroyed others' private property?
 - Blocked roads or burnt tires?
 - Stolen property belonging to another person?
 - Physically harmed another person?
- b) In which neighbourhood did it happen?
 - Was it your own neighbourhood?
 - Did you go to another nearby neighbourhood (within walking distance from your home)?
 - Did you go to another far neighbourhood?
 - c) Was your participation planned or spontaneous?
 - d) In your view at that time, why did you think you had to participate?
 - e) Reflecting back on your experience, are you satisfied with what you have done or do you have any regrets?
 - f) Could you name two benefits and two drawback of participating in riots?
 - g) Would you be ready to take the streets again with weapon if another riot happens?
 - h) Did you tell your friends and family about your participation?
 - i) Were there women participating with you?
 - j) Would you tell your mother about your participation?
 - k) Would you tell your partner (girlfriend, fiancée or wife) about your participation?
 - l) Do you think your participation brought to you the respect and admiration of people around you? Explain
- If no,
 - a) Why not?
 - b) Where were you at the time of these riots?
 - c) Do you regret no participating?
 - d) Do you know people who participated? Can you tell me what you know about their experience?
 - e) Did you see who was on the streets during the main riots? How would you describe them?
 - f) Who do you think are the people who took the streets? Were they from your neighbourhood? Can you tell me more on that?
2. Did you participate in any of the events of May 2008?
 3. Where you asked/encouraged by someone to participate?
 4. Do you know anyone who participated?
 - If yes:
 - a) Who did you know?
 - b) How close were you prior to the riot?
 - c) Did this participation together affect your relation?
 5. Did you recruit anyone to participate?
 - If yes,
 - a) How did you convince him?

- b) How many did you recruit?
 - c) Why did you do it?
- 6. Did you own a weapon?
 - If yes:
 - a) How did you get it?
 - b) Why did you own it?
 - c) Do you still own it?
 - If no:
 - a) Why not?
- 7. Did you or any member of your close family participate in the 1975-1989 civil war?
- 8. Did you ever receive military training?
 - If yes:
 - a) Was it with the Lebanese army?
 - b) Was it with a political party?
 - c) Was it with any other body?
- 9. Do you think the police would severely punish anyone caught participating in riots?
- 10. Do you trust the Lebanese police and army?
- 11. Do you think the Lebanese police/army/judiciary system is fair or bias?
- 12. Have there been any riots / tension in your neighbourhood?
 - If yes:
 - a) Why, in your view, do riots take place in your neighbourhood?
 - b) What, in your view, should be done to stop riots in your neighbourhood?
 - c) When, in your view, did Sunni-Shia riots begin in your neighbourhood?
 - d) Where Sunni-Shia relations peaceful in your neighbourhood before?
 - e) Why do you think?
 - f) In your view, has the day-to-day relation between neighbours from different sectarian backgrounds been affected by the violence since 2007?
Explain
 - If no:
 - a) Why do you think it stayed peaceful?

Closing questions

1. Is there anything you would like to add that you feel is important but we did not touch upon?
2. Was there anything you found uncomfortable about the interview questions?
3. Would it be fine to get back to you in case we find that there are a few more questions or clarifications we need from you? If it is fine, how would you like us to contact you?

Thank the interviewees for their time and patience, and reassure them once again about the anonymity and confidentiality of their participation.

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