LEBANONIZING THE STATE: NGOS IN A CONFESSIONAL SOCIETY

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis, based on field research in Lebanon, explores how the confessional nature of the Lebanese state affects the construction of civil society. It elaborates on the state's role as a social service provider and its legal and bureaucratic relationship with the Lebanese NGO community while also exploring how the state's role as a service provider is perceived in the Lebanese media.

Pulling from a variety of archival sources in Lebanon, this thesis surveys 26 Arabic language newspaper articles published between 2006 and 2008. It also utilizes a myriad of primary sources including government and donor documents, unpublished NGO studies and statistical data.

This thesis argues that confessionalism inhibits the state's capacity to provide social services efficiently. The politicization of these services conditions the relationship between the state, sectarian political parties and the NGO community. This phenomenon is reproduced in the Lebanese media and allows confessional relationships to infect civil society.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigates one way in which confessionalism acts as the predominant obstacle to socio-political reform in Lebanon, interacting with a variety of other factors to stymie the growth of civil society and true democratization. It explores the relationship between the state and the NGO community in Lebanon, and investigates the economic, bureaucratic, and legal contexts which frame the interaction between the state and the NGO community. This thesis also analyzes the way the state, confessionalism, NGOs, and social services are discussed in the Lebanese media. This project builds on recent scholarship done in other countries in the Middle East that elucidates the way that politicized social services are used to shape identity and reinforce the legitimacy of political parties. It also adds to the scant literature that currently exists concerning civil society and the state in Lebanon.

This literature generally asserts that the primary obstacle to strengthening civil society in Lebanon is the corrupt confessional state. I contend, however, that confessionalism not only corrupts the state but also, and more problematically, civil society. In this vein, I argue that sectarian NGOs act as a conduit between the confessional state and civil society, allowing service provision to become politicized. Sectarian NGOs explicitly politicize service provision, undermining the state's ability to expand upon its existing social service portfolio.

In an effort to explore how the politicization of social services impacts the perception of the state and civil society, I also investigate how the media portrays sectarian NGOs, the state, and confessionalism. Focusing on articles from the period of political unrest that enveloped Lebanon between December 2006 and May 2008, I argue that although various newspaper sources seem to view confessionalism as a socio-political problem, they also use the need for confessional reform to advance either thinly veiled sectarian agendas or conceptions of Lebanese citizenship premised on sectarian affiliation. In the end, I argue that to truly understand the failings of Lebanon's confessional system, we cannot simply focus on the corruption of the state apparatus. Rather, we need to understand confessionalism as an endemic social problem; its corrosive effects pervasive in Lebanese civil society as well as the state.

Framing the Project: Research Questions

Lebanon is a confessional society. This means that every Lebanese person must belong, officially, to a sect. In my experience, most Lebanese, when asked about Lebanon's socio-political problems, respond with political answers, superficially implying that political agendas occupy a more important sphere in Lebanese political life than sect or confession. However, invariably, if one probes further, sectarian attitudes or confessional weariness surface in a passing remark, in the way a person talks about what it means to be Lebanese, or even in the way he or she discusses Beirut's geography. Confessionalism and sectarianism shape Lebanese politics in an existential way, leading, in my experience, most Lebanese to blame them for all their problems. Likewise,

literature on Lebanon usually seeks either to render sectarian groups political, separating sectarianism from its political expressions, or it simply assumes that confessionalism *is* the primary source of Lebanon's socio-political difficulties.

My project stems from a desire to understand *how* confessionalism creates many socio-political problems in Lebanon. I chose to explore how social services are politicized through sectarian NGOs because of my interest in Hezbollah and other confessional parties in Lebanon. These sectarian organizations use social service networks to build political capital and reinforce sectarian political ideologies. The politicization of social services therefore provided me a discreet way of accessing the relationship between confessionalism in the state and sectarianism in civil society. In reviewing the academic and development literature on social services in Lebanon, I noticed that a robust discussion of the state was largely absent. When it is mentioned in the scholarly literature, the state is portrayed as a purely bureaucratic, often corrupt organ that does not warrant much systemic analysis. On the other hand, the international donor community invariably views the state as an intentional obstacle to the growth of civil society, attempting to scale back rights of free association in its effort to promote a statist political program.

I chose to investigate how the state is perceived as a social service provider rather than on a specific confessional group or set of sectarian NGOs. Following from this line of reasoning, my thesis project explores three interrelated research questions:

1. In Lebanon's recent political context, does the Lebanese government present itself as committed to socio-economic development through the provision of social services? If so, why does the state view social service provision as important? How do sectarian social services undermine the state's ability to assert itself as a legitimate social service provider?

2. What is the legal and administrative relationship between the state and the NGO community? Does the state actively infringe on the rights of NGOs as associations? Do sectarian NGOs exploit the bureaucratic inefficiencies of the state by politicizing social services?

3. If identity is contested relationally in local contexts through service provision and the press is a major vessel for articulating disparate identity constructs, then how does the Lebanese press influence, reinforce or create perceptions of confessionalism, the state, and civil society?

These three questions map on to the major thrust of my research project, which is to explore *how* confessionalism, through the provision of social services by sectarian NGOs, creates a sectarian civil society.

Confessionalism and the Ta'if Accord: Lebanon's Political Context

Lebanon is technically classified as a consociational democracy. Consociational states proportion parliamentary seats according to internal ethnic, linguistic, or religious

demographics and divisions. Each distinct socio-cultural group is called a confession. In Lebanon, confessions are explicitly sectarian, meaning religious affiliation defines the structure of the Lebanese state. Sectarianism does not mean that there are not a plurality of political parties and party alliances in Lebanon, but it does mean that these parties work within a discreet sectarian framework with implied power arrangements. This structure contrasts with other consociational states such as the Netherlands that are constituted by pluralities of confessions, containing multiple ethnic, religious, or even political confessions. For this reason, I sometimes use the term confessionalism interchangeably with sectarianism.

The Origins of Lebanese Confessionalism

In 1943, Lebanon gained independence from France. This independence was based on an informal agreement between Shi'a, Sunni, and Maronite Christian leaders called the Mithaq or National Pact. This pact defined Lebanon as a multi-confessional state. Though the pact was never actually written down, this handshake agreement continues to define the contours of the Lebanese state. According to the National Pact, the President of Lebanon is always a Maronite Christian; the Prime Minister is always a Sunni; and the speaker of the Parliament is always a Shi'a. This type of designation extends to other high government offices as well; however, at the ministerial level, sectarian representation changes with each new government. Together, the ministers form a cabinet called the Council of Ministers. In Lebanon, this affiliation is generally

generated from a complicated and unstated patronage network.[1] Parliamentary seats are proportioned based on sectarian demographics. These demographics came from a 1932 census conducted by Maronite officials, under French auspices. Even at the time, the study was questionable at best. The Maronite leaders and French authorities used demographics that ensured a Maronite majority, allowing them to leverage more power in Lebanon's fledgling government. Additionally, the Sunni population was also overrepresented, and the Shiite community, now estimated to be Lebanon's largest single confession, was only marginally represented. These flawed demographics also affected the power-sharing arrangement between the President and the Prime minister, giving the President disproportionate power in the Lebanese government. This arrangement governed Lebanese political life until the civil war began in 1975 (Khalaf 214-220; Mackey 137-138).

The Ta'if Accord, which ended the war, was meant to resolve the methodological flaws of the National Pact and the Lebanese constitution. The Accord redistributed power between the President and Prime Minister. The President was turned largely into a symbolic figure and the Prime Minister's power was proportionally expanded. The Accord also made the Prime Minister the leader of the Council of Ministers (Mackey 139). The President of the Chamber of Deputies remained designated for a Shi'a representative, but the term of office was extended from one year to four and the office's responsibilities were increased (Hudson 27). Representation was made equally

[1]This implicit network of patronage definitely warrants further research. However, that research is outside the scope of this project.

proportional at a 5:5 ratio and 8 seats were added to Parliament for a total of 108. Proportions were changed to reflect the reality that the Maronite population had shrunk, eclipsed by both Sunnis and Shi'a. However, these new proportions were not the result of a new census. Once again, Lebanese political realities were determined behind closed doors by confessional leaders. The Ta'if Accord asserted that confessionalism was merely being maintained temporarily, recognizing the need to end confessionalism in Lebanon in order for the state to become a functioning democracy. The newly amended Constitution also echoed this sentiment in Article 95, which states, "The first Chamber of Deputies which is elected on the basis of equality between Muslims and Christians takes the appropriate measures to realize the abolition of political confessionalism according to a transitional plan" (*Article 95; clause 1)* However, this transition has never been achieved.

Methodology

I conducted my research between June and November 2010 in Beirut. For the first six weeks of my stay, I participated in the American University of Beirut's summer Arabic program. Afterwards, I began an internship at the Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity (ACRLI). Though I began my participant observation during the summer, my research did not begin in earnest until completing AUB's program and starting my internship.

Given the difficulty of navigating Lebanon's complex political system and the highly politicized nature of economic and demographic data, gaining access to such

information proved quite problematic. Fortunately, I made contact with Madame Sawsan Masri, the UNDP's representative to the Ministry of Social Affairs. Madame Masri put me in touch with Mr. Omar Traboulsi with the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action NGO (CRTD-A). Mr. Traboulsi and his colleague Hind Younes graciously gave me access to CRTD-A's archives. In addition to many previously unattainable working papers from Donor conferences along with other primary documents and unpublished academic papers, the archive also had a vast collection of media resources. It was through Mr. Traboulsi that I learned of and gained access to the archive for *The Monthly* magazine,[2] a resource which has proved uniquely capable of providing me current economic and statistical data about Lebanon. I have worked hard to attain information that is not only credible, but also timely. Without *The Monthly*, I am not sure this would have been possible.

Media Selection

Though the document analysis is conducted in a relatively straightforward manner, I found that choosing second-language media sources was difficult to do in a timely manner when I was in country. Before leaving for Beirut, I decided that I would

[2]The *Monthly* is a periodical that focuses on publishing raw statistical data. It has a unique reputation in both Lebanon and the Arab world for providing reliable statistics. However, it is not always clear where these statistics come from. Usually, articles reference government reports and studies. I chose the *Monthly* because of its reputation within the NGO community. For more information about the magazine, visit http://www.iimonthly.com/default.asp.

select articles from the period of general unrest between December 2006 and May 2008.[3] While in Lebanon, I discussed this plan with several people in the NGO community. After this discussion, I decided to focus my research not only chronologically, but also topically. I chose to review articles that dealt with the relationship between the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) and the NGO community. This choice significantly narrowed the kinds of articles I was searching for as well as changed my notion of how many articles needed to be sampled. Using the CRTDA's archive, I intentionally pulled as many articles as possible (over 400 in all). I used articles from four Lebanese-Arabic dailies: *An-Nahar*, *Al-Safir*, *Al-Mustaqbal*, and *Al-Akhbar*. They represent a good overview of sectarian and political opinions, which I will expand upon in my discussion of the media in Chapter V. Upon returning to the U.S, I translated the titles of all the articles and discarded the ones that were tangential to my research. This process left me with 80 articles.

I chose my final articles in two ways. First, I divided the protests into 5 distinct periods: Early/violent (December/06-March/07), Stalemate (April/07-August/07), Ramadan (September/07-October/07), Eid Al-Adha (12/07), and Escalation (February/08-April/08). After deciding on this timeline, I went about selecting articles, which corresponded to these time periods. Additionally, I only chose months during these periods that had at least one article from each of my four papers. This final process left me with 25 articles. Though I am a third-year Arabic student, translating 25 articles remained quite difficult. I simply did not have the skill level to do the translations in a

[3]A summarization of this period of unrest is offered in Chapter V.

timely manner. Therefore, I chose to translate two of the articles myself and I gave 18 to a translator recommended by the Arabic department at the University of Oregon, Hassan Saleh Shiban. Five of the articles were summarized by a different Arabic instructor at the University of Oregon, Hanan Ahmad.

Limitations of Media Research

Obviously, the selection process described above was not scientific. Articles were chosen based on pre-determined criteria regardless of their content. Though I pulled many articles, I focused on those that contained Arabic words that I felt were related to my research such as budget, citizenship, society, NGO, nationalism, sectarian, and confessionalism. This process, though rigorous, was certainly inexact and I may have indeed discarded articles that would have added to the substance of my project. However, I feel that despite these limitations, the final articles correspond well with the timeline I devised and the conceptual issues that I am exploring in this thesis.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters including the introduction and the conclusion. Chapter II reviews academic literature about the composition of civil society in Middle Eastern countries with a specific emphasis on the development of voluntary associations in relation to the state. It also engages with literature that focuses on how identity politics

are contested and negotiated through the media. Chapter III looks at the current role that social services play politically in Lebanon. In doing so, it investigates how much emphasis the state places on social services and why state officials believe them to be of crucial political importance. Chapter IV outlines the bureaucratic, administrative, and legal relationship between the state and the NGO community in Lebanon in an effort to understand how the state relates to civil society in a confessional atmosphere. This chapter also elaborates how social services are politicized through sectarian NGOs. Chapter V reviews the findings from my close reading of 25 media sources with my conclusions presented thematically.

In my conclusion, I argue that sectarian NGOs politicize social services, thereby undermining the state's ability to provide them. As a result, the media perceives the state as weak, incapable of providing the services its citizens need. However, this situation also highlights confessionalism's corrosive effects as a system of government. Rendering the state a mere composite of sectarian interests, confessionalism creates space for sectarian NGOs to foster political legitimacy through service provision. These sectarian services allow confessional agendas to take root in civil society through a certain sector of the NGO community.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Lebanon is a unique case study that complicates and challenges traditional definitions of civil society in the Middle East in two ways. Lebanon's Confessional government creates space for the emergence of sectarian NGOs, a problematic form of association for regional paradigms. Additionally, literature on civil society in the Middle East primarily engages with associations in authoritarian states. Lebanon is neither an authoritarian nor a democratic state. Therefore, Lebanon's unique status as a confessional state and consociational democracy force a reevaluation of how we define civil society and the state. The second part of this review explores how nationalism and other identity constructions are politicized, reproduced, negotiated and contested in the media. I argue that nationalism is not a monolithic, ideological construct. Rather, it is one of many types of identity constructions that are dynamic and contextual. I also argue that in Lebanon's case, the manner in which the media engages topics such as confessionalism, citizenship, and the state is demonstrative of confessionalism's systemic infection of Lebanese society. Taken together, both of these discussions supply the analytic framework for my discussion of the relationship between the state and NGOs in Chapter IV as well as the analysis of identity and the media in Chapter V.

The State

Rather than delving into a comprehensive discussion of the state, I focus specifically on Lebanon and its place in the literature about civil society in the Middle East. Lebanon's consociational system recognizes that it is composed of subnational entities (Butenschon 24). These subnational entities are given proportionate representation based on sectarian demographics with high government offices designated for each sect. However, many critics assert that Lebanon's confessional system does not constitute an authentic democracy. These criticisms are best understood through a discussion of the condition of the Lebanese state after the civil war.

After the end of the civil war, the constitution was amended. It asserted along with newly elected state officials and sectarian parties themselves, including Hezbollah, that the Ta'if Accord was meant to be a transitional document that would peacefully facilitate the end of confessional rule in favor of true democracy (Krayyem 421-424; Mackey 139-140; Hudson 27). However, this transition never happened. Therefore, the resultant reforms never really addressed the inter-sect conflict that started and prolonged the civil war. The Ta'if Accord also reinforced sectarian boundaries leaving the state a confessional composite, where sectarian groups use the idea of a unified state as a method of solidifying their own political legitimacy; while continuing to monopolize the state's limited resources to achieve their own agendas (Alagha 231-236). In this system, sectarian actors in Lebanon find their own security and survival linked to the continued existence of the confessional state. Since these groups are technically the polity, they actively subvert any real efforts to reform confessional bureaucracy in favor of

democratic institutions. This reality creates a multitude of at once sectarian, but also national political agendas, contested and negotiated in the press that are meant to inhibit the creation of a traditional, unified nation-state.

Literature on the relationship between the state, NGOs, and civil societies in the Middle East has primarily focused on authoritarian states. In authoritarian states such as Bahrain or Egypt, power and legitimacy are predicated on both organic and programmatic qualities (Butenschon 18). The state's control is "organic in the sense that the constituent community is considered an indivisible whole whose existence and interests have a superior moral value. It is programmatic in the sense that the state is considered to have an historical mission in the realization of the constituent community's fundamental aspirations (Butenschon 18)." States such as Egypt and Turkey therefore use civil society as a way to maintain their hegemony and control reformist movements and ideological contestations within their own nations (Alhamad 38-40). However, Lebanon is not an authoritarian state. As such, I argue that it is difficult if not impossible to understand the Lebanese state as an institutional hegemonic actor. Confessionalism in Lebanon renders the state a composite of actors interested in maintaining the current system so as to ensure their own legitimacy. This project is aided by sectarian NGOs that connect discreet political ideologies with the public. In addition to the very real gap in literature that addresses the Lebanese state through the lens of service provision and NGO activity, the case of the Lebanese state also challenges the normative idea that Middle Eastern States, no matter how they are labeled, can be understood in authoritarian terms. Confessionalism, in this sense, forces a redefinition of the relationship between the

state and civil society, while creating new implications for identity construction in Lebanon.

Civil Society: Voluntary Associations and the State

The literature surrounding civil society is vast. For the purposes of this discussion, I focus on literature concerning civil society in the Middle East. Definitions of civil society in the Middle East generally involve two components: voluntary associations and intermediary space (Abootalebi 1; Abdo 3-4; Whaites 127-129). I define civil society as a space where "clubs, syndicates, guilds, associations, unions, and political parties provide a buffer between the polity and the individual (Hassassian, 253)." This definition allows civil society to be an intermediary space where a myriad of associations interact with the state on behalf of a political public. This softer formulation of civil society does not engage overly theoretical conceptions such as Gramsci's formulation that posits it as a discursive space where the state's hegemony is negotiated and institutionalized (Pratt 125). It also is not a purely instrumental definition in that civil society is not simply viewed as a component or symptom of true democracy as some of the development literature contends (Abdo 1-3; Pratt 124)[4]. Rather, the definition speaks to the two implicit components of both theoretical and practical formulations of civil society: voluntary associations and the state (Whaites 127-129; Alhamad 36-40).

[4]Both Pratt and Abdo critique this optimistic viewpoint, while also acknowledging its prevalence.

Voluntary Association: NGOs as Civil Actors

In regional literature, various authors give NGOs special consideration as primary representatives of civil society due to their relationship with democratic reforms and their relative newness (Abootalebi 1-3; Alhamad 33-37; Ghosh 476-477). Since most Middle Eastern regimes are authoritarian, NGOs are either viewed as symbols of state opposition or more critically as simply another manifestation of state hegemony (Abdo 3; Sa'id 63-65). This viewpoint can be understood both empirically and theoretically. During the 1980s and 1990s, issue-oriented NGOs exploded throughout the MENA, providing service delivery, advocating for human rights, and fighting for women's rights among other issues. Authoritarian states found that these new types of organizations challenged their control. (Alhamad 37-40). Accordingly, states, particularly Egypt and Jordan, employed new methods to undermine the impact of these new NGOs including "intimidation, co-optation, the creation of parallel government organizations with greater resources, and bureaucratic requirements" (Alhamad, 38). These strategies created the appearance of reform while also marginalizing and dividing the organizational capacities of the NGO community. Issue-oriented NGOs were pigeon-holed and forced to fight for resources in a climate that pits issue versus issue rather than the state versus civil society association. State strategies were reinforced by the international donor community, which also provided resources based on issue-oriented priorities, further marginalizing and dividing the NGO community (Whaites 127-133). In authoritarian Middle Eastern states, NGOs are no longer uniformly perceived by academics, individual citizens, and states as representatives of a robust societal consciousness, emanating from individuals to the state

through civil society (Demirovic 214-15; Sa'id 63-68). Rather, NGOs are perceived as articulating the specific agendas of a multitude of voices within an increasingly differentiated civil society.

This process mirrors the theoretical literature about the role of civil society. Emblematic of this viewpoint is Gramsci's view that civil society actors are used by states to maintain their hegemony whether explicitly or discursively. Explicitly, civil society actors, in this case NGOs, work to reproduce institutionalized power relationships, thus maintaining state hegemony. Discursively, authoritarian states use NGOs to manage attacks on their hegemony. In this conception, the state determines what reformative aspects are acceptable and uses civil society to integrate them peaceably into institutional processes, allowing it to maintain structural and discursive power while appearing to be reformist and responsive to the concerns of citizens and the international community (Pratt 125-127).

Given the prevalence of authoritarian states in the MENA, other than Turkey, regional literature usually has only one type of state with which to engage. When addressing democratic, rather than authoritarian states, these arguments do not change as much as their vocabulary does. Democratic states integrate, incorporate, and respond to the concerns of civil society. Issue-oriented NGOs are not divided for the sake of state hegemony, but rather for the sake of a true democratic representation of individual concerns. This difference in vocabulary is coupled with a difference in the types of issues represented. In developed democracies, the NGO community does not have to act as a

primary service provider and gap-filler for the state (Pearce 19-24; Whaites 126-127)[5]. It does not have to advocate for basic human rights. In short, authoritarian states in the Middle East, though coercive and politically strong, are almost uniformly economically and infrastructurally weak (Whaites 131-134). I contend that Lebanon, despite its democratic designation, still has a weak state. Its NGOs still provide services and healthcare and advocate for human rights and basic civil liberties. I argue that for these reasons Lebanon complicates the dichotomy that is traditionally drawn between NGOs in democratic and authoritarian states.

Associations in Lebanon: civil association in a confessional atmosphere

The Lebanese NGO community suffers from many of the same issues that NGOs in authoritarian Arab states do. For example, international donors divide secular NGOs by creating issue-oriented priorities, forcing NGOs to address foreign concerns rather than indigenous ones. Politically-affiliated NGOs and NGO consortia enjoy classic patronage relationships with the state, calling into question if these organizations legitimately represent Lebanese citizens (Kingston 16-21; "Lebanon's Non-Governmental Organizations" 2008). However, confessionalism also creates a special and unfortunately prevalent class of sectarian NGOs, which make Lebanese civil society a unique case in

[5]Both of these authors' critique the notion the NGOs operate differently in democracies, specifically relating to neo-liberal development agendas. Though, the attitude towards NGOs roles in democracies is changing, the above discussion still resonates with certain development literature. I offer this footnote simply to clarify that both Pearce and Whaites are critiquing these notions and in no way advocating them.

the regional literature. In Lebanon, sectarian parties form the substance of the state and therefore compete with each other for communal resources. Multitudinous, undifferentiated political parties are not simply generated by the state to maintain power through a corporatist strategy as they are in most authoritarian states in the MENA (Albrecht 30).[6] NGOs affiliated with sectarian organizations and political parties effectively blur the line between political ideology and service provision, politicizing the latter in an explicit way ("Agency and Ideology in Community Services: Islamic NGOs in a Southern Suburb of Beirut" 243-245). This reality calls into question the applicability of definitions of civil society which understand NGOs as "non-politicized autonomous service providers ("Agency and Ideology" 234)." To illustrate how sectarian NGOs politicize service provision, thus reinforcing the political legitimacy of sectarian political parties, I review the case of Hezbollah's NGOs in the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Hezbollah, Resistance and Social Services: Blurring the line

In "Agency and Ideology in Community Services: Islamic NGOs in a Southern Suburb of Beirut," Mona Fawaz argues that Hezbollah has framed service provision as part of a larger project of resistance. This resistance identity is premised not only on a resistance to perceived Israeli aggression and historical occupation, but also on resistance to confessional patronage and the sectarian state. Hezbollah articulates this in its own

[6]This citation refers to footnote 13 in Albrecht's endnotes. He cites Peter J. Williamson's definition of corporatism in Williamson's "Corporatism in Perspective."

literature, speaking of the importance of creating a sphere of resistance within Lebanese society ("Faith Based Organizations as Development Partners" 222-224). According to Hezbollah official, Hajj Kassem Aleik, "the resistance society is our vision. It is the task to build a society that will refuse oppression and fight for its rights. All the rest-water provision, garbage collection, and agricultural training-is only a working strategy ("Agency and Ideology" 235)." Hezbollah's NGOs, though affiliated with the party, are not directed by the party. However, through their structure, responsiveness, and flexibility, they are the embodiment of Aleik's "working" political strategy (234-239). Using a complex and pioneering network of female volunteers, Fawaz details how Hezbollah's NGOs have been able to respond and tailor their service provision services and micro-credit strategies to the needs of their constituencies. She also demonstrates how they have reframed participation in service programs as vital to the resistance. She argues successfully that this reframing reduces the stigma traditionally associated with obtaining social services and receiving loans within the Shiite confession, positing participation, instead, as a positive assertion of Hezbollah's desired resistance identity. In this manner, Hezbollah's NGOs have blurred the line between service provision and political ideology (249-253).

The example detailed above illustrates the challenges that sectarian-oriented NGOs present to traditional conceptions of the relationship between voluntary associations and the state. It complicates the idea that NGOs are issue-oriented intermediaries between a monolithic, hegemonic state and the Lebanese citizenry. The NGO community in Lebanon is partially composed of traditional NGO actors such as

politically-related advocacy groups and local instantiations of international NGOs. However, sectarian NGOs that explicitly link their services to a political ideology blur the line between their own political legitimacy and the state's. When analyzing the relationship between the NGO community and the state, I argue that sectarian NGOs challenge arguments that portray Lebanon's weak confessional state as an authoritarian sheep in democratic clothes. Also, this more nuanced understanding hints at the way both service provision and political identity can be contested and negotiated in the Lebanese media.

Reproducing Identity

The complex network of sectarian parties and their affiliated NGOs in Lebanon articulate political identities premised on a variety of ideological constructs, including nationalism, which are politicized through social service provision. Outside of specific strategies like Hezbollah's, how are these various identities presented to the political public? Geographic Literature about identity negotiation and contestation focuses specifically on how nationalism is reproduced across multiple scales through the media. This discussion understands nationalism non-ideologically, and sees it as an historical construct, constantly negotiated and reproduced relationally through the media. The discussion of the Lebanese media in Chapter V emphasizes the relationship between identity and service provision in the same way. Newspapers help sectarian parties politicize service provision in order to reproduce and negotiate identity in an effort to

establish their own legitimacy and reinforce the perception of the state as corrupt and weak.

Nationalism as an Idiom: Mac Laughlin and the rise of Irish Nationalism

Jim Mac Laughlin, in Reimagining the Nation-State, traces the process by which nationalism became a powerful idiom in both the Irish nationalist and unionist movements in the 19th century. Using Gramsci and the larger input of cultural Marxism, he posits that the poor play a crucial role in how nationalism is defined and articulated. Rather than a monolithic idea introduced by a landed elite, who then leveraged it on the mass of the Irish and Ulster populations, Mac Laughlin asserts that nationalism in Ireland took shape slowly (Mac Laughlin 242-249). Instead of seeing nationalism as an ideology, he is interested in showing that nationalism gradually became integrated at local scales as an idiom of contestation. Nationalism becomes a powerful rhetorical tool for both Irish nationalists and unionists (242-247). It is, in his conception, a dynamic frame capable of encompassing divergent political aspirations and a myriad of epistemological categories. This non-ideological formulation of nationalism allows him to hypothesize how it is reproduced, reified and abstracted through local interaction (250-271). Mac Laughlin's discussion is reminiscent of Fawaz's project described earlier. If you replace nationalism with resistance, Fawaz's project explains how Hezbollah uses resistance as a dynamic and positive identity construct to simultaneously encourage participation in their service programs while still engendering political legitimacy. Hezbollah's NGOs' tailoring their

service projects to their constituencies is a physical representation of how identity can be constructed dynamically. This formulation easily translates to a mutable and robust conception of resistance, which can accommodate and articulate multiple meanings, all of which are related to Hezbollah's reputation as a service provider.

Turning back to Mac Laughlin's work, he explores the role that new media played in Ireland during the 19th century in order to tease out his analytical framework. For him, print journalism played a powerful part in articulating the nationalist sentiment being reproduced on local scales. Mac Laughlin turns to the work of Benedict Anderson to help him explain the power of the press. For Anderson, the advent of the press in capitalist societies allowed class to be rendered and rearticulated "across time and space (Mac Lauglin 195)." In doing so, Anderson provides methodological tools for looking at how specific organizational structures allow for the re-articulation of identity constructs across class boundaries (193-197). Coupled with Mac Laughlin's understanding of nationalism as a rhetorical frame, the press allowed class concerns, echoed in the vernacular of specific regions, to be expressed across geographic scales. Rather than assert that the new medium simply allowed the instrumental use of media for the purposes of the bourgeois and other elites, he argues that the newspaper acted as the primary conduit for cross-class nationalist negotiation (190-205). Mac Laughlin's understanding of the media's role in the relational reproduction of nationalism maps easily onto to the Lebanese case simply by replacing class with sect. In Lebanon, identity constructs, premised on confessional political ideologies, are contested in a sectarian press which uses, among other things, social services as a means for affirming and

articulating political legitimacy, while attacking the state's credibility and confessional nature.

Reproducing nationalism across scales

Geographic literature has further situated the reproduction of nationalism within work on scale and territory. This work fully strips nationalism of its monolithic, ahistorical qualities, situating it in thoroughly relational contexts. Carwyn Fowler and Rhys Jones, for example, in discussing the reproduction of nationalism in Aberystwyth, Wales, succinctly posit the case for local scale nationalism. They begin their discussion by noting the difference between scholars who look at nationalism as something represented and those who explore it as something reproduced. They maintain that a focus on reproduction allows one to truly investigate how nationalism is mobilized in everyday life (Jones and Fowler 334-349). They quote John Agnew to clarify their argument:

> The overall focus is on relating national identities to the geographical scales and contexts in which they are embedded rather than presupposing a nationalist 'wave' that washes over a territory from either a center or the margins wiping out all other identities in its path. In this view, the national is always forged in and through 'the local' (Jones and Fowler 335).

While Mac Laughlin argues against nationalism as a monolithic ideological operator, Jones and Fowler broaden his line of reasoning to argue against most inductive or deductive accounts of ideological nationalism. For them, the reproduction of nationalism is profoundly relational and therefore it is intimately tied to the interaction

between local actors. In a similar vein, Alon Confino and Ajay Skaria, in the "Local Life of Nationhood," undermine any attempt either to explain nationalism or use it as an explanatory model without first examining scaled territorial contexts. In this formulation, nationalism becomes part and parcel of the dynamic processes of local scale identity formation. Using cases from Europe and India, they thoroughly explicate how local territorial contexts affect the content and gravity of nationalist reproductions (Confino and Skaria 8-20). Using territory and scale, Carwyn and Fowler along with Confino and Skaria demonstrate that nationalism is reproduced relationally through the interaction of local actors. In Lebanon, this understanding again echoes Fawaz's exploration of how Hezbollah engenders political legitimacy through their social services ("Agency and Ideology" 243-253). Given the fact that Lebanon's confessional context simultaneously multiplies the number of possible identity constructs while also limiting their scope, this literature's emphasis on nationalism can be broadened to include other forms of identity premised on political aspirations tinged with sectarian affiliation. This discussion frames one of the primary research questions of this thesis: if identity is contested relationally in local contexts through service provision and the press is a major vessel for articulating disparate identity constructs, then how does the Lebanese press influence or create perceptions about both sectarian groups and the state?

Conclusion

This review explores two diverse sets of literature. I argue that confessionalism in Lebanon infects both civil society and the state, creating a unique form of association, sectarian NGOs. These NGOs connect political ideology with, among other things, service provision, thus politicizing civil society and using it as a vehicle for maintaining the confessional system. This process renders the state a composite of sectarian parties, which use reforming the confessional system as a means of maintaining its existence; thus, ensuring their own power. This understanding frames the discussion of how NGOs interact with the state both bureaucratically and legally in Chapter IV. In the second half, I review geographic literature that argues that nationalism is reproduced relationally through the media and the interaction of local actors. This literature attacks the notion that nationalism is a monolithic ideological operator. Instead, I argue that it is a dynamic construct constantly contested and negotiated. I broaden this discussion to include other identity constructs, substituting the aforementioned literatures' emphasis on territory, scale, and class for service provision, sectarian NGOs. In turn, these emphases form the basis for the thematic discussion of identity politics, the state, and confessionalism in the Lebanese media in Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL SERVICES AND THEIR HISTORICAL ROLE

Social service provision has always played a vital role in the confessional life of Lebanon. Sectarian leaders have historically used social services, provided by state money, to quell unrest within their respective communities. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, during the run-up to the civil war, as the state went bankrupt and the gap between confessional leaders and their constituencies grew larger, a lack of services splintered sectarian communities, realigning the population along class lines (Khalaf 210-220; Rigby 170-177). During the war, however, war-torn neighborhoods became increasingly dependent on sectarian militias to provide basic services such as water and food delivery (Kfoury 142; Hamzeh 329-331). After the war ended, the country was devastated economically, leaving fractured communities still dependent on sectarian organizations for their services. Economic reconstruction was premised on macroeconomic strategies geared towards revitalizing the country's financial sector and capital markets. Implicit in these strategies was a commitment to rebuilding the country's economic and physical infrastructure, which would eventually lead to an increase in both the quality of and access to social services (Saidi 249-257). However, nearly 10 years after the implementation of these strategies, the UNDP and the Ministry of Social Affairs found that social development continued to lag in Lebanon with regional poverty pockets limiting access to a variety of vital services ("Poverty, Growth, and Income" 14-19). In turn, the state has clearly recognized the importance of social service provision not only in securing donor funds but also in ensuring state legitimacy, territorial integrity and

spurring economic growth ("Recovery, Reconstruction, Reform" 8; 13-14). The state understands that sectarian organizations use expansive social service networks to maintain control of communities and foster confessional legitimacy. Despite this understanding, the state is also limited by both its confessional nature and its budget. However, the government's recognition of the importance of social development frames both its bureaucratic and legal relationships with the NGO community, while the historical significance of social services to the citizenry of Lebanon influences the way that service provision is contested and discussed in the Lebanese media.

This chapter begins by looking at how a lack of social services acted as an underlying cause of the Lebanese Civil War, and it very briefly discusses economic development after the war. Next, it summarizes the key findings of a joint report produced by the UNDP and the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2005 called "Poverty, Growth, and Income Distribution in Lebanon." This study elaborates the scope and scale of poverty in Lebanon within a social development framework. The discussion then turns to the Social Action Plan (SAP) presented by the Lebanese government at the Paris III Donor's conference in January of 2007. This SAP continues to frame both the governments and the UNDP's national development plan for Lebanon. The SAP presented a comprehensive agenda for both reforming and expanding the state's role in the social service sector. In the SAP, the state's strategies for reform coalesce almost uniformly with the suggestions made in the UNDP's joint-report The state, therefore, presents itself as an institution attempting to cater directly to donor interests, while still

profoundly aware of the important role that social services play not only in ensuring the state's legitimacy.

Social Services and the Lebanese Civil War

In the late 1960s, Lebanon was thriving economically as a global tourist destination. Sectarian tensions were swept under the surface as an oligarchic elite held power over both their respective confessions and the government. The confessional arrangement created solidarity among the leaders of different sects. This solidarity, premised on a power derived from state control, created dissonance between the interests of confessional leaders and those of their communities (Gordon 110-114; Khalaf 212-215; Rigby 170-175). This gap alienated everyday people from their government and confessional leaders from their sectarian constituencies. In an effort to close this gap, sectarian leaders used social services as a salve to calm political dissidence. For example, if Christians in the north were upset with their president, then the Council of Ministers would approve funds to build a hospital or school in the region.

However, the Lebanese population urbanized throughout the 1960s and access to higher education and information expanded among people of all socio-economic classes (Khalaf 217-220; Farris 17-20; Rigby 170-175). The Lebanese became the most well-educated, well-informed population in the region, exposed to new social and economic ideas. As a result, unionized workers and students engaged in widespread protests, articulating a unity premised on class solidarity rather than sectarian loyalty (Khalaf 212-

17; Gordon 110-113). These protests were emblematic of the growing gap between sectarian leaders and their constituencies and revolved around social development issues, which acted as an expression of a new nonsectarian class consciousness. These protests included strikes by judicial administrators, public school teachers, and public utility workers as well as students rallying against the raising of tuition fees (Khalaf 212-220). As these protests escalated, confessional solidarity amongst elites fractured. As the patronage networks fell apart, the government stopped providing services altogether, inflaming class consciousness further. Without access to state money, confessional leaders fought to reestablish trust by realigning with their confessional communities and painting other sectarian groups as the enemy and chief obstacle to political reform and service access. Social services and social development thus acted as an important rallying point during the run-up to the civil war (Rabinovich 32; Rigby 170-175).

Social services continued to be used to engender sectarian loyalty to militias throughout the conflict. Hezbollah, for example, built its first hospital in 1984. In 1988, intense fighting between Hezbollah and its chief intersect rival, Amal, ravaged the Dahiyeh, the impoverished southern suburb of Beirut. In response, Hezbollah began providing garbage collection to the area, formally replacing the Lebanese Sanitation Department for nearly five full years. In 1989, they opened the al-Rasul al-Azam Hospital there. Though the hospital was initially supposed to just help with war-related injuries, it quickly began providing other health services also. In fact, along with two other Hezbollah hospitals in the area, the party became the sole provider of health services in the area (Harik 83-86; Kfoury 142; Love 168-169). From 1988-1990,

President Michel Aoun, the Maronite Christian leader of the fledgling government, cut off water and electricity services to the Dahiyeh. In response, Hezbollah built several 4000 liter reservoirs in and around Dahiyeh and filled them daily. It also mounted generators on the backs of trucks, creating a mobile and constant source of electricity for the area (Harik 86-96). The ease with which Hezbollah integrated itself into the community after the war can be traced back directly to the political legitimacy they gained during the war as a social service provider to the massive, underserved, disenfranchised Shiite population in South Lebanon, the Bekaa, and southern Beirut (Harik 84-96; Hamzeh 335-336; Warn 112-114).

Though social services play an important role in the politics of any state, given the fractured nature of confessional politics, they have perhaps played a more explicit role in fostering political loyalty in Lebanon then other Middle Eastern states. In a confessional system, social services become political weapons used to undermine rivals within the same sect. For example, Hezbollah's social service network continues to undermine Amal, as it did during the war (Warn 112-115). However, confessional re-entrenchment after the war complicated the way social services are contested between the state and sectarian organizations. Rather than a network of confessional solidarity, sectarian leaders are now free to use the state's coffers to fund social service projects under a confessional banner, fostering the impression that the state plays almost no role in providing services.

Post-War Reconstruction

Although the Taif Accord was signed in 1989, fighting in Lebanon did not formally end until 1992. After nearly 17 years of fighting, the country was devastated economically. The war resulted in nearly 150,000 casualties, 300,000 severe injuries, and it displaced nearly 750,000 people (mostly technical workers and skilled labor) (Saidi 253-257). In 1992, the country endured an inflation rate of 120% and faced reconstruction costs estimated at 18 billion dollars for the public sector and between 35-40 billion dollars for the private sector (287-295;). Saddled with massive public debt, a low GDP, a marginally operational government, and a dependence on foreign loans, Lebanon's leaders focused their reconstruction efforts on rebuilding the economic sector, the country's physical infrastructure, and restoring foreign confidence in the country's political stability (260). Though some forecasters emphasized the importance of social service implementation to repatriation efforts, the government under the leadership of Sunni Prime Minister Rafik Hariri initiated fiscal reforms through privatization and neo-liberal economic policies (250-254). These policies were controversial at best and remain the subject of intense interest to those who would accuse the late Prime Minister Hariri of corruption. I do not want to delve into the minutiae of this history. The point here is that during the 1990s, Lebanon was saddled with extensive rebuilding after a period of extended conflict, the resolution of which did not address its underlying causes. After the war, new and old sectarian groups established themselves as political players, particularly Hezbollah. While the new government struggled to articulate its power, the confessional leaders of which the state was composed fought over political turf and the loyalty of their

constituent communities (Mackey 174-177). This period saw the expansion of international NGO activity in Lebanon with the YMCA rising to prominence, the rise of sectarian charitable associations, and the entrenchment of both Hezbollah's and the Sunni Future Movement's massive social service networks. Given this context, the state was in little position to assert itself or its interests as a social service provider, which led to stagnation in social development.

Poverty in 2007

The national report, "Poverty, Growth, and Income Distribution in Lebanon," was produced jointly by the UNDP and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) in 2005. Rather than using purely economic indicators for assessing poverty, it used a money-metric measurement for poverty based on household consumption.[7] It also used the Gini index for inequality to develop a more comprehensive portrait of poverty. Deriving its poverty line from both of these indicators allowed the study to explore social development in Lebanon (31-39). Using this paradigm, the report found that in 2004-2005, 28.5 percent of Lebanese are poor and 8 percent fall into the category of extremely poor. In this case, the upper poverty line translated to 4 U.S. dollars a day and the lower poverty line measured 2.4 dollars a day. These numbers indicate that slightly more than

[7]The purpose of my project is not to investigate the validity of economic indicators for measuring poverty or inequality like the using household expenditures or the Gini index. Therefore, the use of these indicators will not be questioned in this chapter.

1/4 of Lebanon's population was living below the poverty line (45). Poverty percentages are also broken down regionally.

Beirut has a very low incidence of extreme poverty at 2% and sports an overall poverty rate of between 5-8 percent. Mount Lebanon and Nabatieh also have a low prevalence of extreme poverty of between 2-5 percent and a lower than average incidence of overall poverty at 20 percent. However, as expected, when you look at traditionally underserved Mohafazas, the numbers jump. In the Bekaa and the South, the extreme poverty rate is between 10-12 percent. The overall poverty rate in the Bekaa is 29 percent, which is still quite a bit lower than the overall poverty rate in the South which is 42 percent. The North has both the highest extreme and overall poverty rates at 17 and 52 percent respectively (47-48). These raw numbers suggest that poverty alleviation strategies should be focused regionally rather than nationally, while also demonstrating that macroeconomic development does not translate into equitable, social development.

Poverty Distribution and Inequality

Poverty is also assessed regionally by looking at differences in inequality using an average of real per capita consumption. The mean real per capita consumption was 3,911 thousand LBP in 2004-2005. The overall inequality coefficient using the Gini index for Lebanon was .375 in 2004-2005. This coefficient is comparable to that of other middle income countries and is much lower than the .55 average of most Latin American countries. Overall consumption rates help to elaborate this data more. The bottom 20

percent of the population consumed 7.1 percent of the country's total consumption and the richest 20 percent consumed 43.5 percent. This leaves a middle portion of the population consuming at a rate of 50.4 percent (42-43). Correlating this data with regional consumption patterns creates a clearer picture of poverty and inequality across Mohafazas. Beirut had the highest overall rate of average consumption at 5,706 LBP and one of the lowest Gini coefficients at .341 for any Mohafaza. When you compare this with the Northern Mohafaza, the regional disparity in both poverty and inequality is obvious. The average per capita consumption in the north was 3,045 LBP and its Gini coefficient was .37, the highest of any region. These numbers indicate that though the North only consumed 60 percent of the nation's average amount of consumption, it also had the greatest disparity in terms of expenditure inequality (43-44). This type of regional disparity indicates that there are "poverty pockets" within Lebanese Mohafazas. Therefore, when addressing poverty alleviation in Lebanon, the best strategy would be to confront it on an inter-governorate level rather than on an intra-governorate or a national one (77-78). Furthermore, the data demonstrates the failure of macroeconomic policies focused solely on the development of Beirut's financial sector.

Poverty, Survey Sampling and Demographics

There is little demographic data for Lebanon. The last census conducted in the country was in 1932 during the Mandate period. There has been no census since because population data is extremely sensitive given that parliamentary representation is dictated by confessional demographics (Maktabi 220-225). The World Bank estimated population

of Lebanon is around 4 million ("Country Brief"). The lack of accurate demographic data makes the limitations of the UNDP's study transparent. It also makes it difficult to assess the severity of its conclusions. The study relies on a random sample of 14,948 households, which filled out the general Household Living Conditions questionnaire. Out of the 14,948 households, 9,623 were selected on the Mohafaza level to fill out additional materials. 7,341 households responded to these additional questionnaires with some disparities between Mohafazas. In all, the final sub-sample represented 32,417 individuals. Though this data represents easily the most exhaustive study of economic and living conditions in Lebanon in the last ten years, it is by no means comprehensive ("Poverty, Growth, and Income Distribution in Lebanon" 83-85).

Education, Health, and Poverty

In an effort to assess social development, the report uses its poverty data to target certain social indicators indicative of economic vitality. In particular, the report emphasizes education, unemployment, child services, and health. In 2004-2005, the study found that 8.7 percent of the population above 10 years old was illiterate, 29 percent had completed their elementary education, and 15 percent held university degrees or higher (60-61). This national data was broken down both regionally and in terms of economic status. Despite there being regional disparities in educational attainment, for example Nabatieh and the Bekaa had the highest illiteracy rates; there was a higher correlation between overall income level and illiteracy as the most significant difference in

educational attainment was between those categorized as extremely poor, poor, and the better-off (60-62). The study then coupled both of these markers together and found that a region's educational attainment rate correlated with its overall economic development. Therefore, the more economically developed a governorate was, the greater the impact education had on living standards. The report also found that the incidence of female illiteracy was double that of males, at 11.8 and 5.6 percent respectively. However, it found that these numbers correlated more significantly to economic status than to gender. For example, 3 percent of males within poor families were university graduates and this number rose to 19.8 among better off males. Similarly, only 3.6 percent of females in poor households were university graduates; whereas, this number rose to 17.5 percent among better-off women. Finally, the study discovered that there was a large correlation between the educational level of the heads of a household and that of their children. For example, children of poor families reached the same level of education as their parents 75 percent of the time (61-62).

Philosophically, the report sees a lack of education as the greatest driver of poverty other than unemployment. In this view, education is the process by which poverty is transmitted across generations. Therefore, the report makes educational reform an intrinsic part of its poverty alleviation plan and encourages the state to focus on improving school enrollment and lowering drop-out rates. The study states clearly that education is not only a vital part of any social development strategy, but it is also crucial in increasing work productivity and ensuring economic growth in the country. It favors regional implementation suggesting that geographical targeting in order to ensure

equitable development across governorates is vital to the success of any poverty alleviation strategy. Though the report finds in its discussion of the educational sector that there is a greater correlation between economic development and educational attainment, its continual emphasis on intra-governorate disparity demonstrates the lopsided benefits that Lebanon's more urban governorates enjoy, implicitly indicating the need for targeted, social development strategies in Lebanon (59; 77-82).

Social Action Plan

During 2006, the Lebanese government worked with donor agencies and the UNDP to develop a plan to facilitate the country's economic development. In January of 2007, the donor community held the 'International Conference for Support to Lebanon,' despite the devastation caused by the July War with Israel in 2006. Though augmented due to the war, the plan still echoed the UNDP's report, emphasizing social service delivery as an important mechanism for Lebanon's economic development. The plan paints a picture of the state as an actor enthusiastically accepting the donor communities' priorities, while also acutely aware of the important role that social services play in both perpetuating economic growth and securing state legitimacy ("Recovery, Reconstruction, and Reform).

In fact, the state devoted 17 of its 134 points to outlining its plan for social sector reforms. The plan proposed the creation of an inter-ministerial committee to coordinate a social development strategy, expanded the role that MoSA would play in creating social

policy, and outlined mechanisms for ensuring financial accountability with regards to the dispersal of donor funds. Additionally, the strategy also emphasized, much like the joint-report did, the need for educational, health, and pension reform (13-16). In terms of education, the state asserted specifically the need for "strengthening the educational policy-making and planning capability at the Ministry of education, the installation of a sector management information system to monitor key sector outcomes, and the development of evaluation tools for the instructor's development program." The state further stressed that education costs exacerbated poverty. In response, the state vowed to reduce "the burden of the education cost on the poor households in targeted areas… (15)" Additionally, the state promised that it would expand technical training in certain disciplines, increase educational studies, and reduced student drop-out and repetition rates (15-16). In terms of an educational strategy, the state based not only their priorities, but their reform strategies on donor-derived development philosophies.

The state also echoed the general tone of the joint report in the plan. In article 32, the state discusses the importance of comprehensive approaches to economic recovery and reconstruction after the war (8). In article 64, the state uses almost verbatim the report's language to discuss the challenges of inter-governorate development:

> The government will also work to reduce regional disparities through promoting local development as an efficient tool for balanced regional development and poverty reduction (15).

It aimed to accomplish equitable regional development through both the expansion of MoSA as well through increased coordination between donors and local development groups. These are phrased as efforts to improve accountability and reform

bureaucracy (9; 13-14). The state's SAP, therefore, is not simply premised on, but also written in the spirit of a donor-derived agenda.

Though the state clearly understands that social development plays an important role in the funding decisions of donors, it also clearly believes that social services play an important role in ensuring its own legitimacy. In article 32, this point is clearly made:

> …[S]ocial sector reforms and strengthening social safety nets become a critical element of a strategy aimed at ensuring the prevalence of the State over all Lebanese territory, to the benefit of all denominational groups (8).

In these ways, the state recognizes in its SAP the important role that social services play in not only creating political legitimacy, but also in engendering non-sectarianism and ensuring territorial control.

Conclusion

Historically, social services have played a crucial role in establishing the political legitimacy of sectarian organizations and confessional leaders. They have also acted as a rally point for those protesting government corruption and confessional patronage. After the war, social service provision was marginalized both because of the extent of reconstruction and the fragility of Lebanon's new government. The result of the war not only reestablished old sectarian patronage systems, but also saw the arrival of powerful new confessional representatives like Hezbollah (Mackey 141; 174-178). These groups capitalized on the dysfunction of the government by creating powerful social service networks, thus ensuring post-war legitimacy in their constituent communities.

As Lebanon gradually began to emerge from its reconstruction project in the early 2000s, a renewed emphasis was placed on social development and service provision by both the donor community, to which the state was heavily indebted, and the government. This emphasis resulted in, at least philosophically, a new commitment by the state to expanding its role as a social service provider to curry favor with the donor community, confront powerful sectarian networks such as Hezbollah, and ensure state legitimacy. However, this new stance is confused and complicated by the fact that the confessional networks the state is supposedly trying to undermine are those of which it is composed.

CHAPTER IV

THE STATE AND NGOS

How are NGOs regulated by and how do they interact with the state and each other in Lebanon? This discussion outlines the relationship between the state and the NGO community by elaborating the structure, finances, and administrative capacities of the Ministries of the Interior and Social Affairs. It also explores the history of NGO coordination in Lebanon in an effort to look at the internal dynamics of the NGO community there. These different topics work together to describe and problematize the reciprocal relationship between NGOs and the state. They also create space to assess what the explosion of NGOs implies about the strength of civil society in Lebanon.

NGOs are regulated by both a legal and a bureaucratic framework. Their legal registration is managed by the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). The relationship between the MoI and the NGO community is both contentious and ambiguous ("The Role of Lebanese NGOs" 8). NGOs complain that the MoI has systematically expanded its regulatory role as overseer of NGO registration in direct violation of both the constitution and the law ("Lebanon NGOs Mushrooms or Civil Society" 2009). Each of these explicitly provide for freedom of association and assembly (Makarem and Ball-Lechgar 13-16). In addition to this legal relationship with the government, NGOs are bureaucratically integrated into the Lebanese state through at least three different ministries: the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Health (MoH), and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) ("The Role of Lebanese NGOs" 9-10). This

discussion of state bureaucracy focuses on how NGOs interact specifically with MoSA. I chose to focus on MoSA because of the wide scope of its duties and services and the scale of its partnerships with NGOs. Finally, I consider how NGOs have tried to coordinate amongst themselves in an effort to outline some of the failings of the NGO community. While the overall project in this chapter is to draw a picture of the tense and often ambiguous relationship between the Lebanese state and the NGO sector, it also draws attention to the inherent difficulties of assessing the strength of civil society in Lebanon. I argue that a one-sided portrayal of the state as a corrupt and monolithic actor presents only one aspect of the systemic problems that confessionalism creates. It is clear that there are NGOs that play a complicit role in supporting the sectarian tone of service provision by taking advantage of state bureaucracy and exploiting Confessional relationships.

Before moving onto the substance of this chapter, I want to note that much of the information here comes from the magazine *The Monthly*. Before finding *The Monthly*, the most recent data I had about NGO registration was from 1999. The fact that all my statistical data comes from one source is a drawback, but the magazine usually presents the data with little commentary. Accordingly, I have tried to focus on the numbers themselves rather than the opinions of the magazine.

Legal Framework

The registration of NGOs in Lebanon is governed by the law of Associations passed in 1909, when the Ottoman Empire controlled a territory called Greater Syria composed of modern day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. This law is also known as the law of the 29th Rajab or the law of Medhat Pasha. It consists of 19 articles and is divided into two sections. It has been amended twice since its adoption, in 1928 and 1932 ("Lebanon's Non-Governmental Organizations" 2008). This legal code is quite detailed covering virtually all aspects of what constitutes an association. However, despite this rigorous legal language, the law defines primarily the administrative parameters for establishing an association, rather than detailing the legal relationship between the state and an association (Makarem and Ball-Lechgar 13-20). For example, Article 6 states, "Accordingly, upon establishing any association, the founders must submit a signed and sealed statement containing its address, goals, objectives, main office, and the names, capacity, and position of those entrusted with its governance" (14). The law goes on to reiterate that this information needs to be filed with the Ministry of Interior (14). However, it is unclear whether this process is really necessary because as Article 2 states, "Establishing an association requires no prior permit, but by virtue of Article 6, notifying the government of its establishment is a prerequisite" (13). There is an obvious gap in defining what kind of documentation really needs to be submitted in order to notify the state of an organization's establishment since Article 2 is incredibly colloquial about its requirements. The rest of the articles go on to detail the appropriate ages of prospective members, provide dictums against forming nationalistic or clandestine organizations, and

define how an organization can be incorporated as a public utility (13-16). Outside of the law of Associations, several other laws provide guidelines for the regulation of NGOs, including the Lebanese constitution, which provides for the freedom assembly in Article 13: "the freedom to express one's opinion orally or in writing, the freedom of the press, and the freedom of assembly" (16). However, despite other regulations, the Law of Associations provides for an organization's basic right to exist. Therefore, other laws cannot supersede this one, making it very difficult for the state to dissolve or regulate organizations (16-20).

Though the Law of Associations is often praised for being modern in its allowances, it is also vague and lacking in punitive measures. The minor limits set on associations are virtually unenforceable within its framework because the law gives the government no right to dissolve an organization which is found in violation. The punitive measures that the law does provide for are *a posteriori* (Makarem and Ball-Lechgar 29-37). For example, each year an organization is required to submit "a list of names of all the members, signed by the secretary and the chairperson [and] a copy of the annual budget and the accounts, signed by the secretary and the chairperson" (36). After these are submitted they are subject to review by the MoI. However, if the MoI finds that the records are not in order, the organization is not summarily dissolved nor can the MoI move to investigate the organization. Instead, the organization is simply fined. In fact, an organization can only be dissolved by a decree of the Council of Ministers (CoM). The CoM can only dissolve an organization if it has violated the law or code of ethics, disturbed the integrity of the state, tried to overthrow the state or divide its ministries, or

its members have been involved in acts of terrorism. Furthermore, when an organization is found guilty of any or all of these charges, its activities cannot be suspended without a court order (33-37). So not only is the process of registering or dissolving an association vague and bureaucratically complicated, investigatory processes are almost implicitly lacking in definition. This situation works both for and against NGOs in Lebanon. While on the one hand, NGOs can exploit this legal ambiguity, it has also allowed the MoI to illegally expand its regulatory role.

The major failing of the law is that it does not classify different types of organizations. As is, the law sees no difference between an NGO like the YMCA and a local sports club. The current law runs contrary to efforts by successive governments during the 20th century to introduce classification into the legal code. These efforts created autonomous regulations for foreign associations, associations with mentorship authority, cooperatives and mutual benefit organizations, trade unions, and religious associations. However, after the war ended in 1989, the Lebanese constitution accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UNDHR provides for freedom of assembly and association in Article 20 (Internal Governance, 16). Thus, the constitution reestablished the Law of Associations as the fundamental guideline for registering all organizations, including NGOs and other CSOs. As stated above, the MoI is responsible for handling the registration of NGOs in Lebanon. Since the Law of Associations was reestablished, the MoI has introduced two "circulars" that contradict the law in an alleged effort to more explicitly regulate NGO activity in Lebanon ("Lebanon NGOs Mushrooms or Civil Society," 2009).

In 2006, the MoI introduced Circular no. 15/AM/2006. This circular requires the founders of an association to submit a request for a "factual certificate" to complete their registration ("Lebanon NGOs Mushrooms or Civil Society" 2009). This document includes the "name of the association, its address, by-laws, and the identity of its founders" (2009). These certificates are issued at the leisure of the ministry. This circular effectively created an NGO license. A second circular issued in 2008 asserted that the dissolution of an organization required the retrieval of its factual certificate (2009). This circular directly contradicted Article 3 by bringing dissolution under the purview of the MoI (Makarem and Ball-Lechgar 13-14). Through these circulars, the MoI has taken the parameters created by the law of Associations and integrated them into its own bureaucratic mechanisms. The MoI has reinforced the validity of these circulars by becoming increasingly active in the monitoring of NGOs. This increase in regulatory activity has brought accusations of rampant corruption within the MoI, manifesting in its dissolving oppositional administrative boards under threat of dissolution and strong-arming votes in general elections ("The Role of Lebanese NGOs" 3-10). These circulars are representative of the drawbacks of a vague framework like the Law of Association that does not provide classification schemes for different types of associations. Without classification and explicitly defined investigatory procedures, the law is easily exploitable by those who know how to navigate the confessional bureaucracy.

Though the actions of the Ministry create serious issues for NGOs operating in Lebanon, it must be reiterated that the law's lack of classification and its vague investigatory processes also create issues for the state. For example, Article 8 of the Law

of Associations stipulates the procedure for an association opening a bank account. According to Article 8, the bank needs proof of the organization's legality (which it gains through the process detailed earlier in this section). The bank will then ask for several other documents including the electoral record of the administrative board, the association's statutes and by-laws and the minutes of the meeting where the administrative board decided to open the bank account, identification and signatures of the account signatories, and occasionally some bank specific documents. The bank basically requires the organization to supply the same information that the MoI needs to register the NGO. Therefore, an association's official legal status plays a central role in an NGO's or a nonprofit's financing. This law also allows for an association to apply for a bank account while still waiting for the MoI's final decision regarding registration, meaning that an organization could at least in theory open a bank account and not receive legal status. Indeed, very little is required of an organization to become registered. If a bank allows this registration to play a crucial role in financing an association, then it is tacitly agreeing that the state has performed its due diligence in verifying the information provided. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the additional documents that a bank usually requires are either the same or quite similar to those required by the state in the first place (18-20).

Registration Increase

One might expect that the MoI, given its expanded powers limits NGO registrations. In fact, the opposite is true. In 2004, the MoI registered 125 organizations. This number increased in 2005 to 323 and exploded in 2006 to 518. In 2007, the number dropped back to 252, but then 2008 saw a record 560 NGOs register (493 of them in the last six months of the year). In total, 1,878 NGOs were established between 2004 and 2008. Most sources from 2009 conservatively estimate that there are 5,000 NGOs operating actively in Lebanon ("Lebanese NGOs Mushrooms or Civil Society" 2009). If this is true, then nearly 40 percent of all types of NGOs were registered in the preceding four years. For now this data suggests simply that the Ministry is not using its power to stall NGO and CSO registration, which in some sense would stymie the creation of civil society. Outside of the ministry, the UNDP has also become increasingly active in Lebanon since 2000. Part of the UNDP's mission is to encourage the growth of civil society through NGO activity. However, this data combined with the accusations of corruption at the MoI raises questions about whether an increasing number of NGOs necessarily means a stronger civil society, whether the UNDP encourages the growth of the NGO sector or not.

MoSA

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) is the primary, if underfunded, state ministry, responsible for financing NGOs and humanitarian organizations. Since being

established as an autonomous ministry in 1993, MoSA has taken a prominent role as the state's primary partner with the NGO community ("The Ministry of Social Affairs" 2011). Between 1997 and 2003, MoSA dispersed 100 million Lebanese Pounds (LBP) to organizations focused on geriatric care as well as on health and social projects that involved partnerships with CSOs. In 2003, this 100 million represented nearly 1.82 percent of the operating budget of the ministry and was nearly ten times the amount that the Ministry of Public Health handed out to non-state actors ("The Balance Sheet" 2003). As the chief representative of the state, MoSA has come under increasing fire concerning the accountability of the NGOs with which it partners, sectarian collusion, and general corruption ("The Role of Lebanese NGOs" 6-10).

History

In 1983, nearly eight years into the Civil War, legislative decree #91 combined the Ministries of Public Health and Social Affairs, while placing the Ministry of Social Welfare under the power of the Directorate of Social Affairs. This situation remained the case until after the end of the civil war in 1990. In 1993, Law no. 212 officially split the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs into separate entities. This decree also dictated that MoSA incorporate the Directorate of Social Affairs. From 1993-2009, MoSA changed leadership 11 times and was represented by ministers from 4 different sects. Ministerial leadership changed with each new government based on implicit inter-sect arrangements. The breakdown of sectarian leadership was 5 Shi'a, 4

Maronite, 1 Catholic, and 1 Armenian Orthodox. Though this type of turnover is not unusual for Lebanese ministries, it demonstrates that the ministry explicitly operates under the purview of a constantly changing sectarian authority ("The Ministry of Social Affairs" 2011). This ideological shift in leadership has overt implications for every facet of the ministry's operational agenda including the types of organizations with which it partners in joint projects.

Structure

According to Law 212, MoSA is comprised of 3 separate directorates consisting of the Directorate of Social Affairs (DoSA), the Directorate of Social Development (DoSD), and the Director of Social Services (DoSS). DoSA is charged with managing the Bureau Authority, the Accounting Authority, and the Planning and Research Authority ("The Ministry of Social Affairs and Its Beneficiaries" 2010). The Bureau Authority oversees "the Secretariat and Archive Department, the Department of Legal Studies, the Department of Administrative Affairs, and the Department of Public Relations and Conferences" (2010). It is also in charge of investigating NGOs that are accused of embezzling funds or otherwise obtaining them under false pretenses. The Planning and Research Authority manages the creation of statistical data, social training and program planning. The Accounting Authority oversees the finances for MoSA projects including those involving partnerships with NGOs and other CSOs. The Directorate of Social Affairs houses the Department of the Disabled, the Social Care Authority, the Civil

Society and Associations Authority, and the Family Affair's Authority. The Civil Society and Associations authority is in charge of nonprofits, joint projects, and public benefit associations. Finally, the Social Development Directorate consists of the Social Development Authority, the Handicrafts and Handmade Products Authority, and the Development Services Authority. In all, MoSA employs 470 people with each position being designated category 1-5 (1 being reserved for its minister) ("The Ministry of Social Affairs and Its Beneficiaries" 2010).

Mission

MoSA is charged with a wide range of duties including creating a social development plan for Lebanon, regulating non-profit organizations that provide social services, implementing service projects that the state administers on its own (including providing care for the disabled, orphans, victims of war, and the mentally handicapped), and contracting joint projects with CSOs. MoSA acts as an umbrella ministry responsible for navigating and regulating a wide range of actors that provide social services. While it does not actively implement health or education projects, it provides these services in emergency situations and oversees those that provide them privately. A look at MoSA's sample budget from 2009 gives a clear picture of the types of projects that it funds. It spent nine billion LBP on Social and health-oriented project partnerships; 300 million LBP on reproductive health; and nearly a billion LBP on projects to fight against delinquency ("The Ministry of Social Affairs and Its Beneficiaries" 2010). That MoSA funds such an array of projects, which involve a variety of organization's spread across a

myriad of locations, stretches the organizations meager physical and financial resources very thin.

Budget

In 1993, MoSA's initial budget was about 38 billion LBP, according to the 2010 draft budget law that took effect in March 2011; MoSA's budget is now almost 143 billion LBP ("The Ministry of Social Affairs" 2011). This budget increase has created outside interest in the types of organizations that receive MoSA funds. According to *The Monthly*, "the majority of [MoSA's] budget (137 billion) is allocated to social care institutions, which are either affiliated with religious or confessional bodies, or civil society organizations related to political leadership ("The Ministry of Social Affairs" 2011)." This reality is made clearer by looking at two more of MoSA's budget items from 2009. MoSA gave 400 million LBP to Caritas Lebanon, a branch of Caritas International, an NGO that implements various types of community development projects. Additionally, MoSA itemized one billion LBP for development project expenses. When this one billion is combined with the nine billion spent on partnership projects and the 40 million given to one organization, the need for project accountability is obviously pressing ("The Ministry of Social Affairs and Its Beneficiaries" 2010). MoSA's accountability issues also crystallize when we look at where foreign funding goes in Lebanon. Though the Ministry of Education and Higher Education received 225 million LBP from foreign actors, the Ministries of Public Health and Social Affairs received

nothing from the international donor community ("Who Benefited" 2010). The lack of foreign funding indicates a general lack of trust by the donor community in the MoH and MoSA.

Partnership & Accountability

Every year MoSA enters into partnership agreements with many NGOs and other CSOs to conduct educational and social health projects. These projects are a primary focus for critics of MoSA because the contracts are perceived to be largely unenforceable and generally lacking in transparency. To become a partnering agency with MoSA, an NGO must endure an 11-step process. Each year the Ministries of Finance and Social Affairs issue a joint decree calling for project proposals. These proposals are submitted to the Bureau Authority in the Directorate of Social Affairs, who in turn submits them to the Authority of Civil Society Associations in the Directorate of Social Services. At this point, a team of two government social workers carries out a study to decide on the legitimacy of the application. After this process, the application is either recommended or denied by the DoSS. If it is recommended, the NGO submits eight required documents including a registration statement to the MoF and MoSA. The application is then sent back to the Directorate of Social Affairs where a contribution amount is decided upon and allocated to the NGO. Funded projects are supervised by a team composed of people from the DoSS and DoSA. Together, they draft yearly reports, which assess the degree to which the project is fulfilling the contractual obligations of the partnership. After

contracts are approved by the ministry, they are submitted to the Audit Bureau for approval. The Audit Bureau cannot base its decision to approve or deny the contract on whether MoSA conducted a full investigation of the applicant organization ("The Ministry of Social Affairs and Its Beneficiaries" 2010). So, if MoSA does not perform its due diligence in ascertaining the applicant's legitimacy, the Audit Bureau cannot ask for proof of the association's legitimacy. The Audit Bureau can only ask for copies of administrative documents and recommend that MoSA reevaluates its regulatory procedures. However, this recommendation is usually ignored because MoSA lacks follow-up capabilities. The bureau can also ask the MoI for names on the administrative board of the organization. Therefore, if the bureau is properly registered, this alone acts as evidence that the organization is legitimate ("The Ministry of Social Affairs and Its Beneficiaries" 2010).

This process obviously has systemic flaws. It is inherently biased towards projects with political or sectarian backing because the process crosses ministerial and inter-ministerial lines. The labyrinthine bureaucracy at work also makes assessing projects essentially impossible. Therefore, though the project is put through a complicated application process, it is actually a purely administrative undertaking, creating only symbolic obstacles to a partnership ("The Ministry of Social Affairs and Its Beneficiaries" 2010). Finally, the bureaucratic relationship and lack of accountability between the MoF, MoI, and MoSA is indicative of the failure of the legal framework for NGO registration both substantively and instrumentally. If NGOs are required to simply notify the MoI of their existence to gain legitimacy as an association, then their

administrative boards are implicitly approved by the government. Therefore, when they submit a contract to MoSA, particularly if they have sectarian backing, it is impossible for the ministry to figure out if the organization is actually legitimate according to its own rules and regulations because they have already been given legal status by another Ministry in the government.

NGO Coalition Building in Lebanon

In "Struggling for Civic Space: NGOs in Postwar Lebanon," Paul Kingston argues that two early examples of NGO coordination during and just after the civil war are emblematic of the political and sectarian tensions, which envelop the NGO community and undermine its ability to articulate a non-sectarian message. These examples demonstrate the difficult challenges that continue to plague the NGO community in Lebanon. The first example focuses on a non-sectarian group from the late 1980's called the National Forum on Social Development (NFSD). This organization failed because of its internal power dynamics and the fact that it lacked a unified message. The second example is the Lebanese NGO Forum (LNF). Though the LNF endures, it is representative of the difficulties inherent in separating sectarian interests in a confessional bureaucracy as well as the dangers in associating civil society with large and powerful bodies with overt political agendas. A discussion of both these groups suggests that the sectarian flavor of service provision and civil society itself in Lebanon is not simply the result of a corrupt government.

NFSD

At the height of the civil war, a group of NGOs called 'The Solidarity NGOs' met in the offices of Oxfam-Lebanon in hopes of coming together to promote non-sectarianism and encourage development cooperation. At the time, a lack of foreign funding and a completely functionless state left local and international NGOs underfinanced and understaffed in the midst of massive conflict. This lack of centralized service provision resulted in sectarian groups using social services to further their own political and military agendas (Kingston 11-12). These NGOs sought systemic changes focused on "a sense of solidarity rather than charity (12)." For example, the group's members shifted their focus from distributing medicine to providing primary healthcare. The group kept their membership small and held two conferences in Cyprus in the spring of 1987 and 1988. These conferences gave rise to the National Forum on Social Development (NFSD). On the surface, the organization represented a real awareness that the civil war created an opportunity for real change. However, internally, the organization was flawed from the very beginning. Core members knew that the fledgling outfit needed more members, but refused to integrate organizations they saw as being part of sectarian power networks. This decision kept the organization deliberately small and in a time of increased sectarianism, relatively weak. Also the organization suffered from an inflated air of self-importance, which cloaked it in a mask of unreality (11-14). For example, the NFSD tried to assert itself as a 'forum' "for the exchange of information…" (14) However, in reality, the organization was more of a cartel controlled by its larger and more powerful members. These flaws, coupled with external interference from the

International Committee for Voluntary Agency (ICVA), led to the dissolution of the NFSD. The ICVA decided to come to Lebanon and assess the NGO situation there. Viewing the NFSD as a marginal coordinating entity, its members met with representatives of the newly formed Lebanese NGO forum and confessional emissaries. Additionally, despite the urging of both Oxfam and the NFSD, it focused its efforts in Beirut and failed to visit other regions in Lebanon. This failure to understand the geographic scope of the war resulted in an overemphasis on Beirut and therefore overemphasized the importance of the Beirut powerbrokers that comprised the LNF (14-16).

The NFSD is an instructive if disappointing example of the difficulties of articulating a non-sectarian message in Lebanon. Devastated by the worst violence of the period, the country suffered from an increased sense of sectarianism as inter-confessional rivalries ripped the Christian and Shiite contingents apart. This fact meant that the NFSD, if it was to maintain a non-sectarian message, would have to be small. This decision, in turn, reduced its influence. Despite Oxfam's endorsement, the organization was also plagued with in-fighting and internal power struggles. This meant that it could not clearly articulate or embody a message of systemic change and non-sectarian cooperation. Finally, the organization also failed because an external actor, (the ICVA), recklessly sanctioned the LNF. This first attempt at NGO coordination is unfortunately emblematic of several recurring problems that continue to inhibit the growth of the NGO sector in Lebanon: political in-fighting and power struggles, the difficulty contextualizing a nonsectarian message, and external meddling.

Lebanese NGO Forum (LNF)

The LNF was started by the head of the YMCA, Ghassan Sayagh. The organization rose to prominence after the ICVA endorsed it as the chief NGO coordinating body in Lebanon. Throughout the early 1990s, the LNF positioned itself as the primary organization in Lebanon concerned with raising the profile of social welfare issues and building a community of NGOs. Its strategy included organizing national conferences on social needs and the need for cooperation between NGOs and the state in 1991 along with a conference on child welfare in 1992. Notably, it began a high-profile NGO training program, funded by CIDA, designed to reach out to other NGOs, particularly those associated with the Palestinian NGO forum. Projects like these were also emblematic of the LNF's attitude towards confessionalism. Whereas the NFSD refused to include NGOs associated with sectarian parties, the LNF, composed of much larger and more influential NGOs, sought to include parties regardless of their confessional associations. This strategy allowed Sayagh to paint the LNF as a 'progressive organization' that encouraged cooperation while recognizing that real reform in Lebanon cannot happen without engaging confessional groups. The understanding that sectarianism was a reality that simply had to be faced allowed the LNF to align itself as a political organization rather than a simple sectarian mouthpiece (Kingston 16-21).

However, there were and continue to be recognizable problems with the LNF. Though these problems did not destroy the organization, they are indicative of core issues confronting the development of a strong NGO sector in Lebanon. These problems revolve primarily around the role of Sayagh and the YMCA. Ghassan Sayagh is a

charismatic figure in Lebanese politics and the YMCA remains today among the most powerful NGOs operating in country. The prominent role that he plays on the board of the LNF (his official status according to the LNF website lists him as being part of the board of directors, but only as a member) raises the suspicion that the LNF is merely a vehicle for the YMCA.[8] However, in addition to the YMCA, seven out of the ten members of the LNF represent the social welfare arms of powerful religious groups. The other two organizations, the Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped and the Lebanese Union for childcare have powerful political connections to the Lebanese government (18-21). Considering these facts along with the YMCA's international and religious affiliation, the legitimacy of the LNF as a coordinating body comes into question. Instead of being a powerful symbol of the growth of civil society in Lebanon, the organization looks to be another example of the re-entrenchment of sectarianism. It is also unclear whether the organization represents real coordination between its 10 constitutive NGOs or whether its influence is symbolic and rests on the autonomous strength of its members. Despite its longevity, the LNF is a cautionary example for those enthusiastic about NGO coordination and growth in Lebanon. Studying the LNF reinforces the notion that those organizations that are politically, religiously, or externally connected are firmly embedded in the political fabric of the Lebanese state and will perpetually dictate the parameters of social service provision in Lebanon.

[8]The LNF's official website can be accessed at http://www.lnf.org.lb/

Geography and Sectarianism: NGO Distribution in Lebanon

I have alluded to the difficulty of assessing civil society growth in Lebanon. I have illustrated the multiple meanings implied by the growth of Lebanon's NGO sector by discussing the legal and bureaucratic frameworks for NGO regulation and internal dynamics of NGO coordination. The suggestion that NGO growth is synonymous with a stronger civil society is complicated by looking at both the geographic distribution of NGOs and, in a limited fashion, their sectarian affiliations. The point is that more NGOs does not necessarily equate to less sectarianism or an equitable distribution of NGO activity throughout Lebanon.

Geographical Spread

Lebanon is divided into five governing and electoral districts called Mohafazats: North Lebanon, the Beqa'a, South Lebanon, Mount Lebanon, and Beirut. Figure 1 is a political map of Lebanon featuring transliterated Arabic names for each Mohafazat: Ech Chimal (North Lebanon), El Bekaa (the Beqa'a), Al Jinoub (South Lebanon), Jabal Loubanane (Mount Lebanon), and Beyrouth (Beirut).

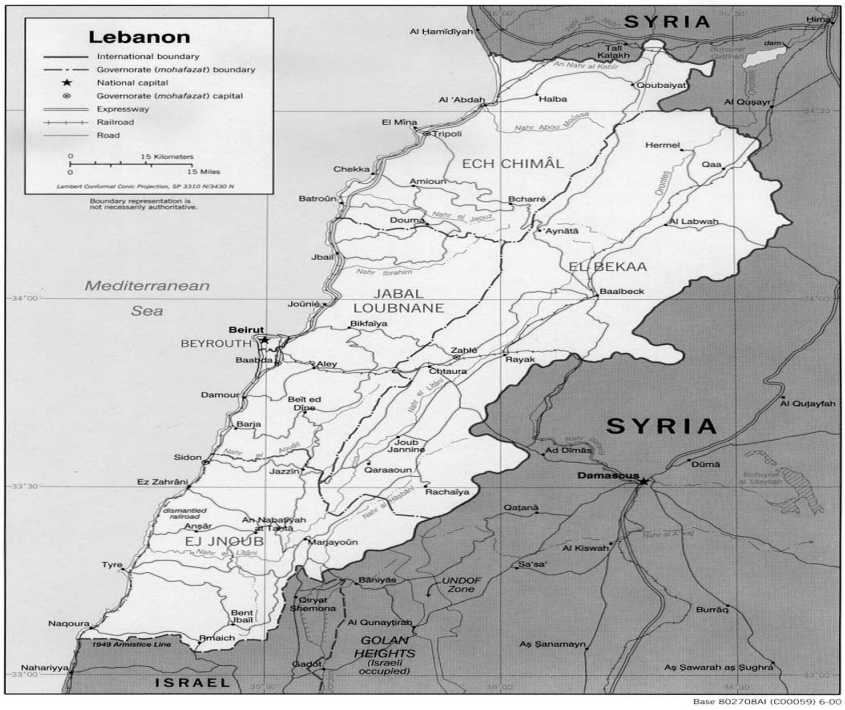

Figure 1. A map of Lebanon showing the five governing and electoral districts.

The Monthly counted 4,175 registered NGOs in total among the five Mohafazats. 1,969 of the NGOs were active. These numbers suggest that 47.2 percent of registered NGOs in Lebanon are active. Table 1 details the total number of NGOs and the active number of NGOs in each Mohafazat.[9] The vast majority of registered NGOs in Lebanon are in Beirut or its surrounding area, Mt. Lebanon. This fact is not a surprise because

[9]The data in Table 1 comes from a series of *Monthly* articles published in 2008. North Lebanon's date comes from the article, "Lebanon's Non-governmental Organization." The data for South Lebanon comes from the article "Non-Governmental Organizations in South Lebanon." The data for the Beqa'a comes from "Non-Governmental Organizations in the Beqa'a." The data for Mount Lebanon comes from "Non-Governmental Organizations feature predominately in Mount Lebanon." The data for Beirut comes from "NGOs in Beirut: their Activities Cover the Entire Country."

Table 1. NGOs by Mohafazas

Mohafazas	Total Number of NGOs	Active number of NGOs
North Lebanon	707	390
South Lebanon	457	238
Beqa'a	363	188
Mount Lebanon	1,478	744
Beirut	1,170	409

Beirut's NGOs and to a lesser extent those in Mount Lebanon have a much wider scope and scale then the NGOs in other Mohafazats ("NGOs in Beirut" 2008). However, strangely, all the Mohafazats except Beirut have more than 50 percent of their NGOs active. Only 34 percent of Beirut's NGOs are active.

Also, one would have guessed that Beirut would have the highest number of registered NGOs since it is the seat of the Lebanese government. However, it is second in terms of registered NGOs to Mt. Lebanon. Despite its relatively low activity, Beirut along with Mt. Lebanon, easily the most affluent and urban parts of Lebanon, account for more than 60 percent of the total NGOs registered in the country[10]. It is not surprising that

[10]This data was gathered from a 4 issue spread the Monthly did in 2008 on the geographic distribution of NGOs in Lebanon. I totaled the data and calculated the percentages using those issues, 70-74.

South Lebanon and the Beqa'a, two of the poorest areas of Lebanon, receive the fewest NGO services. Both of these Mohafazas are also perceived as areas where voting behavior is dictated by sectarian affiliation. The infrastructure in South Lebanon and the Beqa'a has also been decimated repeatedly since the civil war, limiting the ability for service delivery. North Lebanon, by far the poorest part of the country, receives more attention from the international community, despite its own sectarian unrest ("Poverty, Growth, and Income Distribution in Lebanon" 43-46).

These numbers suggest several interesting realities about NGO activity in Lebanon. First, communities in north and south Lebanon as well as the Beqa'a are being underserved by an active NGO community. Though the large number of registered NGOs in Mt. Lebanon and Beirut is not surprising, the fact that Beirut has such a low rate of activity is. At 34 percent, Beirut's NGOs are markedly less active than those in surrounding areas ("NGOs in Beirut" 2008). This fact remains true despite the larger scope, scale, and finances of many of Beirut's NGOs. This low activity rate begs several questions: Why are Beirut's NGOs, given their proximity to the government and their financial resources, not more active? How does one determine whether an NGO is active? Does the government ever give money to inactive NGOs?

Sectarian Distribution

In 2008, there were nearly 4,400 NGOs registered in Lebanon. Of these, 87 were designated social welfare associations ("Associations of Social Welfare" 2008). A social

welfare association is an organization which is recognized by the Ministry of Social Affairs as one that "seeks to fulfill any of society's needs" (2008). This classification is not elaborated in the Law of Associations. Rather, it is the result of a legislative decree from 1977 (before MoSA really existed). However much like MoSA's partnering procedures, organizations that are recognized as social welfare associations are still subject to license renewal by an audit court and need a factual certificate from the MoI (2008). Social welfare associations are usually non-profit groups and they are usually involved in charitable giving projects. In 2008, only 59 of the 87 applications were submitted for renewal to the MoI (2008). It is much easier to ascertain the sectarian and civil affiliations of these groups than it is other, often inactive, NGOs. Many NGOs are extremely reticent to reveal anything about their affiliations, budget, or staff. This means that exhaustive records of who caters to whom are non-existent and the handful of studies that have been carried out do not make affiliation their main focus.

Thirty Four of the officially recognized social welfare associations had explicit sectarian or confessional ties. Nine of them were Shi'a non-political foundations; four were Hizbullah-affiliated associations; three were Druze non-political groups; seven were Christian organizations; and 4 were Sunni-affiliated.[11] 57 percent of all social welfare associations had a sectarian or explicitly political orientation. The 25 remaining associations are classified as civil organizations. However, interestingly, many of these organizations are associated with international groups such as Lions International and the

[11] 12 others were affiliated with smaller confessional groups and political movements including the Popular Nasserite Movement and the PSP.

Red Cross of Lebanon (2008). This fact indicates that the majority of social welfare associations are not the response of an active civil society but, rather, the expression of confessional power or the manifestation of external influence.

Obviously, the social welfare association is a rare categorization encompassing only about two percent of registered NGOs. However, even among this small group of organizations, sectarian affiliation is an obvious factor. Of the 34 organizations with obvious sectarian attachment, 13 were Shiite affiliated, 7 were Christian and only 4 were Sunni. MoSA is almost always presided over by either a Christian or Shi'a. This fact cannot be a coincidence. The confessional orientation of a ministry can dictate who gets money and who gets a designation (2008).

In the section detailing the geographic distribution of Lebanese NGOs, we saw that NGO activity varied depending on Mohafaza. Here we see that even in a special category of organizations, sectarianism still plays a powerful role in determining government recognition. This section has in a small way tried to complicate the notion that a growth in NGO activity necessarily indicates a strengthening of civil society as both the geographic distribution and the sectarian scope of some of these organizations suggest that the status quo is merely being maintained.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the legal and bureaucratic regulations which govern NGO activity in Lebanon. Legally, NGOs are classified as an association under the Law

of Associations. This law does not classify organizations based on their type, creating a situation where a youth soccer club and a charitable NGO are somewhat identical in the eyes of the law. Furthermore, this framework fails to articulate clear investigative procedures or putative measures in regards to NGO registration or the dissolution of an association. Though the law is deliberately vague in these aspects, in an effort to ensure freedom of association, both the Ministry of Interior and the NGO community have exploited the ambiguity of the law.

Bureaucratically, NGOs are largely regulated by one of three ministries: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Health, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. This discussion focused on MoSA because of its extensive partnerships with the NGO community. MoSA's poorly-defined partnering procedures have allowed NGOs to take advantage of government resources. MoSA, as a result, is perceived as lacking in accountability or as out-right corrupt. This perception is circumstantially corroborated when one looks more closely at MoSA's itemized budget. It is also telling that MOSA does not receive any funds from foreign donors, when others do such as the Ministry of Education. Both bureaucratically and legally, NGOs are given space to exploit confessional bureaucracy. Sectarian NGOs more effectively and more profitably negotiate this space given their explicit confessional ties.

The rest of the chapter shifted its focus from the state to the NGO community itself. Two examples of NGO coordination were used to demonstrate that in-fighting, external interference and sectarian patronage plague the NGO community in Lebanon. These examples also undermine the notion that an explosion in NGO growth between

2004 and 2008 necessarily indicates a stronger civil society. The final section analyzed the geographic and sectarian distribution of NGOs in Lebanon. This data supported, at least superficially, the notion that an increase in NGO registration does not simply signify the growth of civil society in Lebanon.

CHAPTER V

THE MEDIA AND CONFESSIONALISM

In the preceding chapter, I elaborated the bureaucratic and legal relationship between the state and the NGO community in Lebanon. This chapter discusses how social services, the state, and confessionalism are perceived in the Lebanese media. I have chosen to arrange my findings in three themes: the state as an actor; the political promise of social services; and confessionalism in Lebanese society. I have placed a special emphasis in each thematic discussion on how sectarian NGOs impact each theme. My argument in this chapter is that confessionalism affects the perception of the state, civil society and Lebanese identity. The articles allow us to observe how perceptions of the state demonstrate the politicization of social services and the NGO community. If it is difficult to gather the overt sectarian affiliations of many NGOs, the press provides excellent insight into the interplay between sectarian NGOs and social service provision in the public sphere. Before turning to the themes, I outline the time period from which the articles came and briefly introduce each of the newspapers that I have selected.

Time Period

On May 21, 2008, Lebanese political leaders signed the Doha Agreement, drawing 18-months of protests, government closures, and sectarian struggle to a close. This period of unrest began in December 2006, when six members of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora's government quit his cabinet. Afterwards, widespread protests began,

including a sit-in in downtown Beirut that effectively turned the area into a tent city. The period that followed brought the country to the brink of civil war. This outbreak of sectarian strife came after nearly two years of general political turbulence following the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in February 2005, the withdrawal of Syria from Lebanon during the spring of that same year (known as the Cedar Revolution), and the July War of 2006. The 18-months of protests ostensibly pivoted on two basic issues: election reform and opposition veto power. The turbulence also represented a showdown between the March 14th and March 8th alliances. The March 14th alliance continues to be led by Saad Hariri, leader of the "Movement of the Future,[12]" current Prime Minister, and son of Rafik Hariri. The March 8th alliance forms the parliamentary opposition and includes political parties such as Hezbollah and Michael Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement (a Maronite political party). The political chasm between the March 14th and March 8th alliances continues to define Lebanese political life today. It is also emblematic of the divide between the three dominant sects in Lebanon: the Sunni (March 14th), the Shi'a (March 8th), and Maronite Christians (split between the two coalitions March 8th and March 14th)[13] ("Lebanese rivals set to elect president after historic accord;" "Lebanese leaders clinch deal to end crisis"). I chose this time period because of it still lingers in the memory of all Lebanese. The upheaval and violence of 2005 and the July War crippled the country economically and drew sharp, confessional borders around communities and

[12]Officially called the "Movement of the Future," this party is more generally know as the "the Future Movement."

[13]The Maronite Christian church is politically split in Lebanon between the Kataeb party and Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement. The Kateab party supports the March 14th alliance and Aoun's movement controversially currently supports the March 8th alliance.

politicians alike. I believed articles written during this time period would highlight the politicization of social service provision, the confessionalization of civil society and more specifically the NGO community, and the fractured and paradoxical relationship Lebanon has with confessionalism and their national identity.

Newspapers

For this project, I sampled articles from four Lebanese dailies: *An-Nahar*, *As-Safir*, *Al-Mustaqbal*, and *Al-Akhbar*. I chose these papers because they represent several of the predominant viewpoints that define the everyday politics in Lebanon. I did not pull articles from any English language daily or *The Monthly*[14]. Below, I give a brief background of each paper, a general synopsis of its orientation, a brief summary of the type of articles I found, and my impression, if any, of how people viewed each paper based on my own conversations, interactions, and observations with Lebanese taxi drivers, Arabic teachers, journalists, wait staff, various other professionals, and NGO staff.

[14]As previously noted, I tried not to use *The Monthly* as an editorial source. Rather, I focused on the rare statistical data that it published.

An-Nahar

Established in 1933, *An-Nahar*, meaning "the day," is the oldest daily in Lebanon. Over the years, *An-Nahar* has continuously changed its aesthetic look, attempting to connect with different generations and sects of the Lebanese population ("In Beat with the Times"). The newspaper is generally considered centrist, placing an emphasis on Lebanese sovereignty and the need for Confessional reform. After the assassination of Rafik Hariri, the paper's editor and chief, Gebran Ghassan Tueni and one of its most notable journalists, Samir Kassir, were assassinated after they advocated for a special U.N. Tribunal to investigate Syria's possible role in the killing ("Assassinations that rocked the country since 2005"). Tueni and Kassir are emblematic of the newspaper's advocacy for Lebanese sovereignty, rooted in its anti-Syrian stances. The four articles that I sampled from *An-Nahar* covered a variety of topics from a number of different perspectives, crossing sectarian lines by stressing the importance of cultural dialogue, civil society, and a spirit of service. The articles selected gave special emphasis to the connection between NGOs, civil society, and national values, stressing the role an active civil society can play in fostering citizenship.

As-Safir

As-Safir, meaning "the Ambassador," was launched by Talal Salman in March 1974 just before the start of the Civil War. The newspaper is noted for its distinctly regional outlook, which attempts to connect Lebanese life with the larger Arab world

("About Ambassador"). This outlook is summed up by the newspaper's famous slogan "the newspaper of the Arab World in Lebanon and the newspaper of Lebanon in the Arab World." Talal Salman continues to edit the paper, and is a vocal proponent of secularism and the end of confessionalism (Hasmea 2008). The four articles that I sampled reflected an outlook committed to elaborating a Lebanese identity from multiple perspectives including those that detail Hezbollah's plan for socio-economic development in the south, explore the connection between secularism and Lebanese identity, and emphasize cultural dialogue and Lebanese citizenship. Like *An-Nahar, As-Safeer* also connects social service projects with a strong national identity. However, it also details and lauds Hezbollah's NGOs, emphasizing the fact that they are Arab-Lebanese owned and address the needs of the Lebanese people. In this sense, the newspaper uses sectarian NGOs, their social services, and civil society more broadly as representative of both Lebanon's distinctive qualities and its indigenous capabilities. In my experience, people found *As-Safir* to be the 'best newspaper' for finding news that challenges existing political viewpoints while maintaining a non-sectarian perspective.

Al-Mustaqbal

Al-Mustaqbal, meaning "the Future," is the official press organ of Saad Hariri's Movement of the Future. Founded by Rafik Hariri, the newspaper is allied with the March 14th alliance ("Legal Loophole used to snare journalist"). In accordance with this orientation, the newspaper covers a variety of topics that reinforce the views of the party.

However, since the March 14th alliance forms the majority in parliament, *Al-Mustaqbal* also espouses the viewpoint of the government. The articles I sampled reflect the paper's dual role as mouthpiece of both the parliamentary majority and a political party. While some articles promote the agenda of the Future Movement, others discuss the disruptive effects of confessional opposition on the state's ability to govern. The fact that the newspaper is officially associated with a sectarian group colors its approach to issues of sectarianism and citizenship. In this vein, social services are at the core of the party's promise to its electoral base and therefore are explicitly politicized. Though it does not emphasize Arab identity, *Al-Mustaqbal* also strongly advocates for Lebanese sovereignty. The newspaper provides a unique insight into the tenuous relationship between a political party as a standing government and a political movement as a party trying constantly to win the loyalty of its political constituency.

Al-Akhbar

Al Akhbar, literally meaning "The News," was founded in August 2006, just after the end of the July War, by veteran Lebanese journalists Joseph Samaha and Brahim El Ameen. Perhaps the most controversial daily in Lebanon, the newspaper aligns itself with the March 8th alliance. This association leads many people in both the U.S. and Europe to assume that the *Al-Akhbar* is in some way the mouthpiece of Hezbollah ("*Al-Akhbar* newspaper lays off 20 of its staff"). However, this affiliation has been challenged by Hezbollah's Secretary General, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, who has said that *Al-Akhbar* is

"not run by [Hezbollah], and [is] not committed to [the party's] policy or ideology ("*Al-Akhbar*")." Despite these remarks, *Al-Akhbar*, due to its alignment with the opposition alliance, is considered a far-left newspaper and it is often criticized for its political polemics. In the many articles I sampled, *Al-Akhbar* presented stories that were consistently critical of the government, emphasizing alternative forms of socio-economic development while critiquing confessional corruption and external interference by western governments. Social services and the NGO community are corrupt when proffered by the March 14th alliance; however, they are also symbolic of the alternative, indigenous development that the opposition envisions for Lebanon. In a similar fashion to *Al-Mustaqbal*, *Al-Akhbar's* attacks on sectarian alliances and interference by western governments and donor agencies have to be understood in terms of the newspaper's political stance. *Al-Akhbar* and *Al-Mustaqbal* highlight the difficulty of discussing sectarianism in Lebanon because both newspapers render confessional agendas through a political lens.

I will now discuss the findings of my close reading of articles from these four newspapers. Again, my conclusions are arranged into three themes: the state as an actor, the political promise of social services, and confessionalism in Lebanese society.

Theme: The State as an actor

An obvious theme that emerges from reading the sampled articles is the overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the state. Rather than critiquing the explicit

sectarianism of the coalition government, several of the articles attack the government's dependence on foreign actors and foreign development priorities. Articles also blame the state for its failure to allocate funds properly, foster a unified Lebanese identity, or spearhead socio-economic projects and democratic reform in a timely or efficient manner, effectively making the state the "fall guy" in confessional politics. Though these articles attack the governing coalition or in some cases the political opposition, they assign agency to a conceptual state, creating the impression that this "state" is responsible for Lebanon's problems, allowing writers to ridicule the governing coalition without overtly invoking sectarianism. This impression is reinforced by articles that advocate for NGOs to take charge of civil reform by detailing the state's lack of services and other bureaucratic failures. Paradoxically, these assignations are tempered by a resigned understanding that the state is composed of sectarian groups, rendering it a uselessly bureaucratic entity. The state, therefore, is simultaneously portrayed as a corrupt, dependent, externally-oriented actor, failing to take care of its citizenry as well as a farcical composite weakened by a dependency on sectarian interests and their foreign patrons.

Al-Akhbar attacks the state for its dependence on foreign governments. In "Democracy or Progress: Which Comes First," Abdul Haleem Fadlallah premises his attacks on the ruling coalition on the fallibility of western modes of democracy (1-2). He begins by critiquing western development models for undermining Lebanese sovereignty, asserting that "in some cases, the idea of democracy chalks up to the exchange of power between small, exclusive circles--experienced social and financial elite who manage to

acquire power through manipulating the polls and evading the law" (2). This type of comment is typical of *Al-Akhbar's* veiled attacks on the ruling coalition. The article contextualizes this accusation by critiquing western conceptions of economic progress, which in turn force governments to become corrupt (1-3). Another article from *Al-Akhbar* states, "the current government, through undermining the constitution…through its corruption, impotency, and subordination to foreign powers…, and through its efforts to make Lebanon a nation subservient to the hubs of the global capitalist system…is indicative of a crisis of the ruling class" (Musallam 1). *Al-Akhbar's* criticisms thoroughly conflate the current government with the state apparatus, allowing the writers to promote their own political agendas while forcing the reader to see the state and the ruling coalition as synonymous. The conception offered by *Al-Akhbar* elucidates just how confessionalism weakens the state by making it a composite of political interests. It also highlights the way that social services and socio-economic development become political tools. In this case, alternative indigenous development acts as an authentic reaction to western development practices. The newspaper's sympathy with the Hezbollah-oriented resistance stance lends even more weight to the author's criticism of western development tropes because it relates alternative socio-economic practices to the values of Hezbollah and its NGOs ("About the Social View of the Resistance"). This representation gives political legitimacy to the opposition's social services and development strategies, which are, in turn, premised on Hezbollah's confessional ideology and political agenda.

Al-Mustaqbal is interested in using it's party's status at the governing coalition to conflate the state's resources with the party's. In "The Hariri Foundation Opens the

Ukroum Health and Social Center Aaklar," the author, Zeiad Monsour, uses the opening of a health center as a method of demonstrating the strength and beneficence of the Future Movement. For example, He quotes Husein Al-Masri, the general coordinator for the Future Movement in Aaklar, as saying, "[t]his is the true way of interaction between a leadership and a people who are united by love and loyalty" (2). Strangely, he does not say it is typical of the interaction between a state and its people or even a government and its people. Instead, Al-Masri uses leadership and loyalty to invoke the party and in turn build political capital for the party, not the governing coalition. In the same article, Monsour also quotes Sheikh Zeiad Adra, a spokesman for the people of Mt. Ukroum, as saying, "[t]he martyr, president Rafik al-Hariri, wanted Lebanon to be a country of the Lebanese, and for reform to prevail in every region and in every corner of the nation without a concern for ideological, racial, or class-based distinctions" (1). Here, Adra equates the Lebanese state with the politics of Rafik Hariri[15]. This quote creates the impression that the government and the state are synonymous with the Future Movement and that to be Lebanese means to be affiliated with the party.

The article is also indicative of the same paradoxical understanding of the state found in *Al-Akhbar's* articles. Both newspapers enjoy using the state for their own purposes. *Al-Akhbar* wants to create the impression that the state is a corrupt platform that is manipulated to force sectarian political agendas and foreign governing ideologies and development priorities on the Lebanese people. However, the newspaper also uses this conception to promote the political strengths of the March 8th alliance, namely a

[15]It should also be noted that Adra referred to the former Prime Minister as the President.

vision of indigenous service provision premised on resistance similar to the services offered by Hezbollah's NGOs. However, it never offers an alternative form of governance. *Al-Mustaqbal* associates the benefits of state infrastructure with the Future Movement's political power, creating the impression that to be Lebanese means to be aligned with the party. However, the article also emphasizes the importance of the party over the importance of the ruling coalition. The newspaper is much more interested in building political capital for the Future Movement than maintaining the power of the March 14th alliance. Interestingly, none of the articles I reviewed from *An-Nahar*, the newspaper considered the most centrist among the four that I surveyed, used "the state" as a vehicle for any specific political agenda, focusing instead on confessionalism's negative effects on society and the positive relationship between civil society, development, citizenship, and national identity.

As-Safir highlights the state's inefficiency in providing social services in articles that discuss civil society and NGO activity. In one article, the newspaper details Jihad Al-Binaa's, Hezbollah's construction NGO, plan to rebuild the southern suburbs ("Hezbollah launches Project Promise" 1). In doing so, the article questions not only state accountability, but also the state's ability to finance reconstruction, saying, "…the reparations from the state will not be sufficient to cover all the costs of reconstruction" (2-3). The article goes on to detail that the NGO's funds will come from philanthropic organizations throughout the Arab and Islamic world, couching donor confidence in terms of the NGO's proven expertise (3). The article juxtaposes the state's ineptitude with the professional experience of Lebanon's NGOs. In describing the quality, character, and

context of the project, this article also creates an extraordinarily negative impression of the state. It also always refers to it as the state and not the government (1-4). *As-Safir* praises Hezbollah's project at the expense of the state. As a result, Hezbollah emerges as positive example of alternative, Lebanese development. However, *As-Safir* is not interested necessarily in advancing Hezbollah's sectarian political agenda. Instead, it is trying to explicitly demonstrate the basic failings of a confessional state. Bizarrely, one method of devaluing the state is to highlight a sectarian NGOs social health project, equating Lebanese development with Hezbollah and the resistance.

Another *As-Safir* article recounts the proceedings of a conference of civil forces who met to undermine political factionalism, call for cultural dialogue, and foster national unity. The conference included a number of prominent nonsectarian NGOs including the Lebanese Human Rights Organization and the Lebanese Women's Council ("Domestic Forces" 1-3). This article articulates a nuanced understanding of state politics in Lebanon, recognizing the difference between the government and the state. In quoting one of the conference presenters, Jemaa J.D., the article asks the Lebanese "…to stop playing this game of constitutional interpretation and heretical legislation where adherents of some party or other set up for battle according to alignments which strip away whatever was left of state institutions" (2). However, other presenters focus on a "schism in the state's overall conception (2)," devolving the conversation into a discussion of who is to blame for the current situation. The article never engages in any criticism of the proceedings, making its agenda the same as the conferences. Together, the author and the conference attendees believe that it is necessary for "Lebanese civil

authorities that believe in modernity, secularization, and social justice… to save the nation before it is too late" (3). These articles use NGOs and civil society to demonstrate the manner in which confessionalism makes the state weak. Another *As-Safir* article details the rise of a formerly powerful organization in the Maronite community called the Maronite league. The Maronite league supports neither the March 8th nor March 14th alliance, blaming the country's problems on both coalitions. Instead, the Maronite league seeks to reunite the Maronite community, prioritize social services over a political platform, and end confessionalism in Lebanon (Hadad 2008). Again, *As-Safir* is willing to highlight the work of an organization explicitly affiliated with a sect in order to articulate the failings of a confessional state. However, the most casual indictment of the state's ineptitude comes from *Al-Mustaqbal*. While the article, "Tuesday's Conference on Society's Role in Lebanon's Revival," details the state's role in coordinating another NGO conference, it leaves one overwhelmed by the state's inability to supply basic services such as "agricultural development, basic social services, education, and health…" (1). Furthermore, the article also discusses the state's lack of transparency and accountability and the need for civil supervision mechanisms (2). In these ways, even the ruling coalition's newspaper undermines a positive perception of the state. This lack of faith in the state's ability to provide services creates space to politicize social services provided by sectarian NGOs.

Theme: The Political Promise of Social Services

Social service provision plays a prominent role in many of the articles. Some of them discuss service provision positively, emphasizing the preponderance of services offered by various sectarian organizations including Hezbollah and the Future movement, while some stress the state's failure to provide them. Generally, this negative portrayal comes from *Al-Akhbar*. It uses the issue of service provision to critique neo-liberal development projects, undermine western notions of democracy, portray the state as corrupt, and articulate the benefits of non-western development strategies. *Al-Mustaqbal* positively details the Future Movement's social service projects, emphasizing that constitute the fulfillment of a political promise. However, it does not attempt to link the political benefit garnered through these projects with the state. Instead, it emphasizes that the services came from Hariri's movement, ensuring that constituents maintain a connection with the party and not necessarily the government. In these ways, social services are used both as tools of sectarian political differentiation as well as a platform to ensure political support. Interestingly, the state plays a negligible role in the latter case and is a symbolic sectarian punching bag in the former. In neither case is the state seen as a positive or autonomous entity. Services, primarily in *An-Nahar*, are also portrayed as intrinsic to the development of civil society. These articles stress NGOs and volunteerism as being integral to creating a spirit of service, which is foundational to any alternative notion of Lebanese citizenship.

In *Al-Mustaqbal,* there is a persistent emphasis on social services as representing the fulfillment of a political promise. In the article previously discussed, "The Hariri

Foundation Opens the Ukroum Health and Social Center Aaklar," this theme is echoed several times. For example, the author again quotes Husein Al-Masri the representative of the Future parliamentary bloc, saying, "[t]he guarantors of Hariri's estate have promised to realize his dream and honor his fondness for Aaklar and its peoples, and here we are, celebrating the fulfillment of one promise among many, innumerable promises, which are soon to be fulfilled as well" (2). Going further, Al-Masri also says,

> …we will be at a crossroads celebrating the realization of another dream and the fulfillment of another promise by establishing another similar health center in Bire. And after that, not a week will go by…without another project being launched in every municipality and village of Aaklar without exception (2).

Al-Masri praises these new health centers as fulfilling the promise of the Future Movement only with no mention of the state's role in helping coordinate services. Along with Al-Masri, the article also offers the view of Dr. Nour al-Din al-Koush, representative of Mrs. Nazik al-Hariri. Dr. Al-Koush describes the services that will be provided by the health center including pediatric services, women's health services and vaccinations. He also notes that the center will provide primary health care by employing local physicians. Finally, he describes how the Ukroum Health Center will be coordinated with other health centers around Lebanon using technology proffered from the Social Health Directorate (3). This statement is the only connection made to the state, and it merely portrays it as a coordinating entity. The doctor, as a representative of the Hariri family, is creating the perception that medical expertise and health services are integral to the politics of the party. The article also describes the residents of Mt. Ukroum as Rafik Hariri's true kin (3). Social health services are presented here as a political windfall for those who support the Future Movement. These services are thoroughly politicized,

downplaying any strong connection to the state. They are also used as a way to connect the Future Movement's leaders in Beirut with the people in Mt. Ukroum and Aaklar. This article is a pertinent example of how social services are used by sectarian leaders to maintain a connection with their constituencies through the press. In this article, social services are value solely for the political loyalty they engender. This position differs significantly from the way the Maronite League frames social service provision, dissociating it from and prioritizing it over any political agenda or ideology (Neez 2008).

On the other hand, *Al-Akhbar* leverages the legitimacy of their own services by attacking the ruling coalition's development politics. As recounted earlier, *Al-Akhbar* frames the state's corruption in terms of its dependence on neo-liberal economic development strategies. In "Lebanon…A Crisis of Governance or a Crisis of the Regime," Ghalib Abu Musallam states, "The [Lebanese] crisis is not born from some fleeting state of affairs…rather, it is a product of financial, economic, and monetary policies that have had catastrophic socio-economic effects. It is simply upsetting that there is a faction in power in Lebanon that believes that the way out of this crisis is to continue along the same path that got us into it" (1). The article goes on to relate this development strategy to neo-liberalism and the West, framing democracy as an imperialist system that runs counter to the "interests and welfare of the overwhelming majority of the population" (3). This article politicizes service provision negatively, using the state's dependence on foreign donors as a means to undermine its legitimacy. This criticism creates space for the reader to infer that there is an alternative system of development. In another article, the newspaper explicitly relates this alternative system of

development to the resistance, inherently politicizing social services and relating them to the sectarian ideology of Hezbollah and the March 8th alliance ("About the Social Views of the Resistance").

The article, "Democracy or Progress: Which Comes First," attacks western notions of democracy using the UNDP's *Human Development Report* (1). The article uses "the right to development," as a platform to critique developed democracies' human rights records (1-3). The article claims that sovereignty is integral to human development and asserts its own summation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, saying,

> …our conception of human rights must evolve to reach a full recognition of a person's practical needs. A person has the right to adequate wages; he has the right to work in appropriate conditions. He has the right to healthcare, to insurance against poverty and disease, and the right to be protected from war (3).

In short, a person has, among other things, a right to basic social services. These are services that need to be supplied by local providers with regional funding. The ruling coalition is infected by western influence and, therefore, there needs to be an alternative vision of development that stems from indigenous Lebanese (3). It is this vision that is detailed by *As-Safir* in the aforementioned article about Hezbollah's NGO and their plan to rebuild the Southern suburbs of Beirut ("Hezbollah launches 'Project Promise'"). Whereas *Al-Mustaqbal* politicizes social services in a deliberate attempt to maintain political power, *Al-Akhbar* negatively qualifies these services, thereby implying that the opposition is free of western corruption with a more authentically Lebanese understanding of social development and a stronger connection to the surrounding region that is premised on resistance ideology.

As-Safir and *An-Nahar* portray social services differently from *Al-Akhbar* and *Al-Mustaqbal*. In both of these newspapers, social services are understood as a platform to build civil society and citizenship awareness through volunteerism and NGO activity. *As-Safir* presents articles that emphasize the importance of a secular, Arab-oriented Lebanese identity. Even in discussing Hezbollah's NGO project, the newspaper frames it as authentically Arab and stresses indigenous expertise and regional support rather than the political platform of the March 8th alliance ("Hezbollah launch 'Project Promise'"). However, the issue with this article is that it gives the impression that it supports Hezbollah, confusing the reader and creating the impression that Hezbollah is representative of an authentic Lebanese identity. *An-Nahar* also focuses on the positive role that international NGOs like Caritas play in building Lebanese civil society, detailing how the organization, after the July War, "made a commitment to support the impoverished and the marginalized without any consideration for their political or religious orientation" ("Projects carried out by Caritas" 2). Another article called "Certificates for Fifty Volunteers for their Work in the Community," connects civic participation in local NGOs with positive, sustainable development stating that "the spirit of volunteer work in the schools will be a means of moving forward, since the unproductive society is the one that is unable to develop" (1). These articles clearly want to connect the concepts of a nation and a citizen to something other than confession and sect, stressing instead participation, sustainability, and connecting the international with the local free of the domestic political context and confessional agendas.

Confessionalism in Lebanese Society

Confessionalism is perceived as Lebanon's defining problem in numerous articles throughout all the newspapers. These pieces stress that confessionalism is inhibiting the development of unified concepts of citizenship, the state, and the nation, among other things. According to many of the articles, the idea of the Lebanese citizen is emblematic of the need for substantive reform in the country, as opposed to the incremental structural reforms brought about by amendments to the constitution. There is also a widespread recognition that without some sort of unified national identity, Lebanon cannot achieve true democracy. The Ta'if Accord is portrayed as an easily-manipulated document, used to keep sectarian elites in power.

Confessionalism also frames the discourse about tradition and modernity in Lebanon. In this discourse, secularism is usually portrayed as diametrically opposed to sectarianism with the former being associated with modernity and progress and the latter meaning traditional and backwards. Similarly, Lebanese political identity stresses the value of democracy, freedom of choice, and cultural dialogue. Confessionalism is thus the predominant undercurrent running throughout the articles, where it is generally represented as an endemic social ill, forever creating chaos and inefficiency in Lebanese political life. Despite this fact, many of the articles, while still asserting this viewpoint, use their advocacy for an authentic Lebanese identity as a method of making thinly-veiled sectarian attacks or advancing discreet political agendas. This unfortunate reality reflects the corrosive nature of confessionalism and the degree to which it is embedded

within the press and perhaps Lebanese society, giving some of the articles a detached attitude and a tone of weary desperation.

Confessionalism is often seen as weakening Lebanon as a nation. *Al-Akhbar*, for example, quotes the famous Lebanese philosopher, Michel Chia, who characterizes Lebanon as a" bridge, station, shop, store, or hotel," where its strength lies "in [its] weakness; that is, by [its] being necessarily occupied, and by its being made subordinate" (Musallam 2). The newspaper also differentiates the Lebanese state from formalist democracies, asserting that the Lebanese have real freedom to choose what to worship and what to trade (2-3). *Al-Akhbar* develops its conception of Lebanese identity out of the negative qualities of the ruling coalition, urging citizens to participate in policy decisions through grassroots efforts despite the failure of the Lebanese parliament to truly represent them ("The Citizen's Part in Policy Making"). The newspaper also asserts, despite its alliance with the March 8th alliance that it advocates for the end of confessionalism and modern reforms, while indicting the ruling coalition as a mere vehicle of sectarian agendas (Bules 2007).

While *Al-Akhbar* develops its understanding of citizenship negatively, *Al-Mustaqbal* does it through a nuanced, but somewhat convoluted call to true citizenship. Bassam Do, in an editorial for the newspaper, urges sects to "build their statements upon the foundation of Lebanese nationalism" (Do 4). He elaborates from confessional cohabitation a spirit of compromise that is a fundamental quality of the Lebanese people (4). Interestingly, he critiques the resistance for "falling into contradiction between what it appoints itself to do, [and] what the national community can tolerate…" (4). He also

calls for substantive debate about citizenship rather than superficial dialogue about reforming the office of the presidency, the government, or the election law (4-5). Though this editorial can be read as a sophisticated call for national dialogue, the explicit political affiliation of *Al-Mustaqbal* indicates that it is also interested in using confessionalism to obscure the failings of the current government. He makes significant distinctions between secularism and sectarianism, asserting that there is a middle ground between the two and urges a non ideological conception of resistance identity and Arab nationalism. Though he is sensitive to the need for national dialogue, he asks for it in a tempered way that does not actually address bureaucratic problems (1-5). In doing so, he identifies confessionalism as the predominant problem in Lebanese society, but by placing it outside the bounds of the government, he also allows the ruling party to evade any responsibility for exacerbating sectarian tensions. *Al-Mustaqbal* wants to dissociate confessionalism from both the state and the party. This dissociation allows confessionalism to be an omnipresent political reality for which neither the governing coalition nor the party can be blamed. Both *Al-Akhbar* and *Al-Mustaqbal* advocate for a new type of Lebanese citizen while condemning confessionalism, but it is unclear whether or not this is done in an effort to encourage real dialogue or simply for the benefit of their respective political agendas. Both agendas use social services as a way to create political legitimacy, advance confessional ideologies and political agendas, turning civil society and the NGO community into another sphere of entrenched sectarian power.

As-Safir and *An-Nahar*, on the other hand, call for civic reform along secular lines. *As-Safir* does so more emphatically, painting confessionalism as backward and

political secularism as modern. In doing so, the newspaper describes in devastating detail the ramifications of political sectarianism:

> So the sectarian system prevails, closed in on itself and detached from the people. Citizens are unable but to resort to sectarian leadership for guidance. Sectarian leaders are aware of the dangers of sectarianism, but they play the game because that is the easiest way to hope for the best ("Secularization" 4).

The same article attacks the Ta'if Accord, noting its easy manipulation, while also discussing the vertical disintegration of sectarian unity in contemporary Lebanon (4). It states that political sectarianism infects civil society, creating profound societal discord (3). The newspaper grounds its concept of citizenship on the voluntary participation of Lebanese who are interested in overcoming sectarian hurdles in the interests of becoming part of a "modern and advanced nation (3)." Creating a spirit of voluntary contribution is up to civil associations who connect citizens with reform agendas ("Domestic Forces Call" 1-3). *As-Safir's* perspective is largely sympathetic with a regional outlook that emphasizes Arab identity. In this light, though some of the newspaper's articles present sophisticated descriptions of the destructive effects of confessionalism, it is also presenting a discreet viewpoint on the issue of Lebanese citizenship tied to the Arab culture of Lebanon. Bassam Do, in the *Al-Mustaqbal* article, critiques this viewpoint saying, "[t]his society would preserve Arab identity without turning Arabism into a pretext for excess Lebanese nationalism" (Do 4). Finally, *As-Safir,* despite its attacks on sectarianism, does not want to isolate religion from secularism. The newspaper carefully understands that Lebanese secularism cannot abandon religion; instead it must embrace it as a sphere separate from national politics (Hasmea 2008). Social services act as a means of mobilizing indigenous identity towards a nonsectarian version of Lebanese citizenship,

grounding this concept in grassroots economic development, service provision, civil society growth, and civic participation.

Asaad Qitan, in an editorial for *An-Nahar*, articulates another sophisticated call for cultural dialogue. Qitan's sketch of the controversial Christian Orthodox thinker, Kosti Bendali, is a deliberation on the need for Christians in Lebanon to engage in cultural dialogue. This philosophical piece also asserts that cultural dialogue encourages religion to become bold and novel with real freedom only coming through learning how to synthesize one's culture, which includes other religious traditions, with one's own beliefs (1-7). *An-Nahar's* inclusion of this type of opinion piece is indicative of the newspaper's commitment to creating a national culture premised on being Lebanese, while still recognizing sectarian cultural norms. This conception links clearly with other *An-Nahar* articles that focus on participation, volunteerism, and Lebanese sovereignty. *An-Nahar's* multicultural understanding of Lebanese citizenry is also evidenced by the inclusion of religious, non-sectarian international NGOs like Caritas in their vision of Lebanese civil society. For *An-Nahar*, service provision and the NGO community act as a conduit between Lebanon and the international donor community as well as a method of creating a conception of Lebanese citizenship not premised on Arab cultural values or confessional ideology, but instead on the values inherent across confessional lines. This conception of citizenship is premised on Lebanese nationalism, volunteerism, civic participation, and youth education.

Conclusion

Throughout all the articles, the state is paradoxically portrayed as a corrupt political tool that fails to provide for its citizenry in any comprehensive way as well as a mere composite of sectarian interests, making it a useless and inefficient administrative organ. This perception of the state allows sectarian groups to politicize social services and development policy, thereby allowing confessional ideologies and political agendas to enter civil society through sectarian NGOs and competitive service provision. Confessionalism's pervasive influence on Lebanese society is negatively regarded by nearly all the papers, facilitating a discourse on citizenship and civil society that contests what it means to be Lebanese in a multi-sect nation. However, this discourse is flawed because the newspapers' political and sectarian agendas undermine their ability to advocate for honest dialogue, turning calls for reform into veiled political attacks that reinforce confessionalism's power and pervasive reality in Lebanese society. The discussion also highlights the fact that in Lebanon, It is very difficult to differentiate between political and sectarian motivations.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis argues that confessionalism is an endemic social problem in Lebanon. To explore this claim, I use social services and the NGO community to explicate the relationship between the state and civil society. Confessionalism is usually seen as the source of state corruption. However, in reality, though state agencies are certainly sometimes corrupt, confessionalism's base effect is to inhibit the state's capacity to efficiently allocate resources. Excessive bureaucracy, competing ministries, and the politicization of the budget stand in stark contrast to the cohesive state structure that is presented at international donor conferences. The gap between the state's message and its actual activities is perceived within the donor community and Lebanese society to be indicative of either a weak state or a corrupt one.

That analysis misses what the state's failure to administer services actually indicates, which is that confessionalism is not merely corrupting the state, but civil society as well. The failure to allocate resources creates space for social services to be politicized through sectarian NGOs. It also creates a climate where confessional relationships condition interactions between NGOs, other CSOs, and the state. It is this relationship, premised on the need for service provision, that acts as merely one avenue for confessionalism to infect civil society. Furthermore, sectarian NGOs, because of confessional relationships, stand a better chance of receiving government funds to enact service projects. These NGOs use these projects as a platform for confessional agendas,

creating political loyalty for their party and reinforcing the people's dependency on sectarian political parties. Confessionalism's pervasive effects can be seen in the way that the media portrays the state, sectarianism, secularism, NGOs, social services and civil society. Through these topics, various newspaper articles demonstrate the exhaustive effects that confessionalism has in nearly every sphere of Lebanese society. Though the media attacks confessionalism as the primary obstacle to political reform in Lebanon, it also uses confessional reform to leverage sectarian agendas, reinforcing the composite, but fragmented nature of both the Lebanese state and Lebanese society. The above formulation is just one way that confessionalism acts as a pervasive socio-political problem in Lebanon, limiting the opportunities for state reform, the development of a non-sectarian concept of Lebanese citizenship, and the growth of civil society.

Conceptual Limitations

Lebanon presents a truly unique case to regional literature on civil society and the state in the Middle East. This thesis analyzes one aspect of this case, focusing on social services and their politicization in a confessional society. Accordingly, it uses NGOs as a paradigmatic example for all of Lebanese civil society, limiting my ability to draw any real conclusions about how confessionalism influences everyday Lebanese interactions and the workings of non-service based, voluntary associations. There is, therefore, great space for future research on Lebanese civil society that includes other types of

associations. Also, there is a need to situate Lebanon's case within literature on civil society in democratic states such as Turkey.

Methodological Limitations and the Media

Though I already detailed the limitations of my media research in the introduction, I feel it is important to reiterate them here. My thesis' article review was limited by my inability to read fluently in Arabic. A more exhaustive study of the media by a native or fluent speaker would provide a more robust portrait of how social services and confessionalism influence perceptions of the state and civil society in Lebanon. I used a targeted archive that also limited the types of articles I was able to access. It is unclear how this filter actually affected my thesis, but it is clear to me that they did affect it negatively in some sense. In general, the Lebanese media is a medium starving for more exhaustive research as it reflects the cross-section of people who call themselves Lebanese and often works at the service of a variety of international, regional, and sectarian actors. I think that, in the very least, a comparative study of the Lebanese media across time periods would prove useful in elucidating persistent obstacles to confessional reform in Lebanese society. I also believe that research that surveys what Lebanese citizens read and why would be extraordinarily helpful in distilling the actual influence of the print media in Lebanon.

The Economy, the State Bureaucracy, and NGOs

Statistical data is extremely political in Lebanon. I said in the introduction that I had difficulty gathering it. Without *The Monthly*, I probably would have been forced to use data from the mid to late 90s. Despite the useful UN reports and donor papers I was able to access, the fact remains that Lebanon is still without a current budget because of political differences. It is difficult to truly assess the government's attitude towards service provision without a current budget.

The state bureaucracy in Lebanon is the stuff of legend, even in other Middle Eastern countries. It is a labyrinth of sectarian ministries and implicit political associations. Successfully navigating this bureaucracy seems to be largely based on luck. Therefore, I was fortunate to actually get in touch with both the Ministry of Social Affairs and the UNDP's representative to MoSa. However, without exhaustive contacts in the government, it is nearly impossible to comprehensively describe the inner-workings of Lebanese ministries. Therefore, future research needs to develop a more comprehensive picture of the institutional workings of the Lebanese state that includes an elaboration of the administrative relationship between ministries. This relationship also needs to be contextualized within a current budget. Explicating the complex patronage relationships that define the Lebanese state would be helpful not only to academics, but also to the Lebanese citizenry.

As a result of both government bureaucracy and confessional mistrust, NGO data is also limited. Most, if not all, my NGO data came from studies conducted by *The*

Monthly. However, this data did not include any budget information. To more fully understand how political associations and sectarianism dictate NGO activities, there needs to be a comprehensive review of NGO financial records with a specific focus on the source of their operating budgets. Also, my study focused specifically on the interaction between NGOs and the Ministry of Social Affairs, largely eschewing the need to discuss specific types of service. However, service specific case studies would help elaborate a more comprehensive picture of other factors inhibiting service provision in Lebanon. Though some of these, like Mona Fawaz's excellent exploration of Hezbollah's NGOs, do exist, there is still room for more. Finally, more studies such as those carried out by the CRTD-A on how individual Lebanese citizens see service provision, are desperately needed. I would like to conclude this section by saying a brief word about the CRTD-A. They are doing groundbreaking work on the scope, scale, and politicization of social services in Lebanon. I encourage any researcher going to Lebanon, who is interested in social services, the media, or frank political conversation, to contact them and ask for their help.

Final Thoughts

Confessionalism is a failed system. This fact is not a mystery to anyone with even a passing interest in Lebanese politics or Lebanese society. Though confessionalism is understood as an existential reality in Lebanon given the continuous sectarian violence, the fragility of confessional alliances, sectarian geography, and external interference, it is

important for us not to take a fatalistic approach to confessional reform. This thesis has offered an explanation of one way in which confessionalism enters Lebanese civil society. This explanation provides a platform for a variety of more exhaustive studies of the Lebanese bureaucracy, the media, and the everyday importance of social services to the Lebanese polity such as the ones being carried out by the CRTD-A. Awareness of how confessionalism impacts various spheres of Lebanese life can open avenues to reform. I am certainly not overly optimistic that this study will, or even should, have any impact given its limitations, but it does in a narrow way try to understand at least one systemic function of confessionalism in Lebanon.

I believe special attention should be given to the existence of sectarian NGOs. This unique type of NGO obviously has a particular prevalence in Lebanon given its confessional government. Sectarian NGOs act as a conduit for bringing confessional politics into Lebanese civil society. Though this thesis is critical of these types of NGOs, it is important not to dismiss the social services that these organizations provide. Hezbollah and the Future Movement each provide healthcare, education, sanitation services, and water delivery to many people in Lebanon who otherwise would not receive them. It is true that these services engender a political loyalty to these and other parties in Lebanon, but this does dismiss the need for these services nor make the people who help administer these services for sectarian NGOs mere puppets of a confessional ideology.

Outside of Lebanon, I think sectarian NGOs warrant further investigation in academic literature which explores political NGOs, international NGOs, and the interaction between grassroots NGOs and the international donor community. For

example, the UN works with Hezbollah's NGOs because of their expertise. Does this or should this impact the international perception of either organization? How can one separate sectarian service providers from the political or paramilitary arms of their parties, which in some cases are considered terrorist organizations by prospective donors? Do sectarian social services provide a different way of accessing how organizations foster political legitimacy in Lebanon, particularly in relation to the Resistance and its motivating ideologies?

The Lebanese media is representative of just how paradoxical the Lebanese attitude toward confessionalism actually is. Though the media is critical of confessionalism, it is also weary of prospects for real reform. Therefore, calls to Lebanese nationalism, true citizenship, indigenous development, and democracy often mask, acknowledge, or openly advocate for confessional agendas, indicating that many in the media often find themselves participating in a blame game that essentially boils down to accusing the other side of being confessional and corrupt. While *As-Safir* obviously does not want to participate in this game, it understands that sectarianism shapes a basic part of the Lebanese identity. Therefore, one cannot dismiss sectarian projects like Hezbollah's or the Maronite League's just because they are affiliated with a confessional group. Instead, it is important to highlight what makes these organizations similar, and more importantly, authentically Lebanese. However, in each article, the lasting impression is that Hezbollah's NGOs are good or the Maronite League should be the voice of the Maronite community. In other words, *As-Safir* explicitly and the other newspapers more generally walk a fine line between advocating for confessional reform

through alternative indigenous development and supporting confessional ideologies and party politics.

In the end, this thesis argues something small and in many ways obvious. The confessional state is a composite of sectarian interests rather than a monolithic and corrupt actor. Sectarian NGOs act as one avenue for confessional politics to enter Lebanese civil society. A confessional civil society uses social services to advance sectarian political agendas and reinforce confessional loyalties. This situation is reproduced in a media that either explicitly politicizes social services or frames them as playing a core role in elaborating a nonsectarian Lebanese identity. Often these newspapers also struggle with the existential reality of sectarianism in the everyday lives of the Lebanese people. This thesis explained the workings of this process. In doing so, it suggests that one cannot simply focus on the state as the primary obstacle to confessional reform in Lebanon, because confessionalism plays a pervasive role in all aspects of Lebanese society.

APPENDIX

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF ARABIC-LANGUAGE MEDIA ARTICLES

Translation Note

As noted in my thesis, I did not translate the majority of the articles in this appendix. The two that I did translate are entitled "How do I lead the Community?" and "Lebanese Society for Rural Development." Hassan Saleh Shiban translated the rest of the articles contained here. Additionally, there are five articles cited in the bibliography that were dictated to me by Hanan Ahmad, my Arabic teacher at the University of Oregon. These articles are: "About the Social Views of the Resistance," "A Year Since Discussion by the Maronite League," "National Challenges and the suffering of the cities of Al-Fayet and Tripoli- over Iftar," “The Romance of Secularism in the Absence of a National Identity," and "In a Changing Lebanese Social System." As such, there are no translations of these articles, merely my notes, which are not included here. Due to formatting issues, the original Arabic articles are not contained in this appendix. If you would like access to those articles, please email me! My email address is Patrick.Jones4@gmail.com.

Friday, December 29th 2006 No. 10589

As-Safeer Newspaper

Domestic Forces Call for Civil Peace and a Return to Dialogue

Emphasizing the Necessity of Agreement and Transcending Alignments

"Lebanon's fate is in the palm of an imp." This expression epitomizes the reasons that the civil forces held their conference for the second time in the press syndicate, under the banner, "Working to affirm domestic tranquility, reject civil strife, preserve national unity, and face the risks of escalation and put pressure the factions of the crisis in order to return to dialogue and national agreement." Despite the participants vehement call to save Lebanon from the situation it is in, and a restatement of what had they had expressed previously, their ideas were many and diverse. There were some who deplored national dialogue and some others who pointed out the necessity that there not be any power except Lebanese in Lebanon, "which has one army and one security force that alone bears arms." This multiplicity of ideas provoked one of the attendees to leave the conference before it was over. The conference ended with a short address delivered by the Sheikh Rashid al-Qadi with the title, "Civil Organizations! Wake up! Unite! Lebanon is in Danger and the Storm has Come!"

Present at the meeting were: Press Chairman Mohamed al-Balebki, Southern Lebanon Cultural Council Former Deputy Habib Sadiq, Vice President of the Lebanese Women's Council Sana as-Silh, President of the Cultural Movement in Antelias Dr. Isam Khalifa, President of the Lebanese Human Rights Organization Nima Jemaa, J.D.,

Secretary of the Arab Cultural Club Marwan al-Ayoubi, Former Chairman of the Confederation of Engineers in Beirut Aasim Salaam, Dr. Antwan Musira of the Lebanese Institution for Enduring Domestic Tranquility, Former President of the Union of Tenured Professors at the Lebanese University Dr. Sadir Yoonis, member of the Southern Lebanon Cultural Council Dr. Abdullah Rizq, and Ahmed Faqih of Muntada Sour[16].

Chairman al-Balebki began by stating that all personal, ideological, sectarian, and partisan concerns should be set aside for the sake of more consequential national interests and productive discussion, which was generally a shared sentiment.

Sadiq implored all of the civil organizations as well as those affected by the chaotic and deteriorating situation to converge, to enter into a dialogue, and to "devise an equitable interim settlement to drive away the specter of civil strife in Lebanon."

Al-Silh spoke on the "woman's role in combating civil strife," affirming, "that the woman works to transcend ideological, sectarian, and class-based issues that threaten Lebanon's solidarity and longevity." Dr. Khalifa delivered a speech entitled "Sticking to the Essential in the National Charters is the Path to the Solution," in which he addressed key crises that the Lebanese peoples face, such as the current one. Jemaa, J.D. called, through his presentation entitled "Memory," for, "us to stop playing this game of constitutional interpretation and heretical legislation where adherents of some party or other set up for battle according to alignments which strip away whatever was left of state institutions." Al-Ayoubi then took the floor saying that the appeal to one legislator as

[16]Literally meaning "pictures forum."

well as his opponent to make a decision on the same issue contributes to the exacerbation of this political schism and further entrenches it without a due realization of the gravity—in the current situation or in the future—of this schism on the state's overall conception. Chairman Salaam talked about "who is responsible for the current situation," emphasizing that it is a result of foolish and ill-conceived ways of dealing with the changes and developments that took place within Lebanon.

Dr. Musira remarked upon the rules of expression in the charter and in the constitution wherein he explained that the government is a procedural power and not an institution of dialogue, and that the parliament is always the place of dialogue. And as for dialogue within Lebanon, it has ceased and these dialogues remain in politics.

Yoonis confirmed that facing these frightening conditions would require a broad gathering of the Lebanese civil authorities that believe in modernity, secularization, and social justice with the aim to save the nation before it is too late. Rizq spoke about the economic situation and its difficulties and invited the civil bodies to acquaint themselves with the perils of the current and future situation. He advocated for people to take action that would force stakeholders to employ their scuffle for power to instead build up the country.

Faqih opined that there would be no domestic tranquility without first finding a way to stop this, "feuding amidst combative sanctifications and censures and simultaneous treachery and transcendence[17]." He urged a diverse people to not actually

[17]No one knew what this meant.

fight or quarrel with each other. Iskandar emphasized that the true national agreement comes, primarily, from the voluntary contribution of Lebanese citizens and through whoever rightly represents them in politics and in their citizenship by way of elections, irrespective of ideological or sectarian affiliation.

Zina Burjawi

Thursday, January 4th 2007; Friday, May 25th, 2007 (No. 10707)

As-safeer Newspaper (6)

Local News

Hezbollah Launches "Project Promise" to Reconstruct the Suburbs:

A Mix of Quality, Aesthetics, and Speedy Implementation

Hezbollah launched, during a meeting of the developmental organization Jihad Al-Binaa, "Project Promise," which aims to reconstruct the southern suburbs. Present at the meeting were the resigned minister, parliamentary member Mohamed Fenish and the delegates Ali Ammar, Amin Sharee, Ali Al-Miqdad, Samir Al-Khateeb, and chiefs of the municipalities of *Haret Hraik*, *Hadath*, *Borj Al Brajne*, *Ghobeiry*, and *Chiayah*.

Advisory board member Doctor Mohamed Sharaf Al-Din directed the conference. The vice-president of the Federation of Municipalities, mayor Samir Dukash of *Haret Hraik* spoke first, asking: Where is the state accountability for those people whose houses

have been destroyed, who live in towns with a dilapidated infrastructure, and who have been deprived of their livelihood? They say that there have been many building violations taking place in the suburbs: structures built on others' land and buildings encroaching on public property and the projects. This state of affairs warrants apathy and negligence, and it even serves to justify harming the community and punishing its members because they supported the resistance in driving back Israel. They were sure that the violations taking place in the suburbs would be completely dealt with and that the state would be responsible for that.

The Project Manager: The next speaker was Hasan Jeshee, an engineer and the general director of Project Promise. He remarked that Project Promise represents the rightful owners and undertakes, in lieu of them, the rebuilding of partially as well as completely destroyed buildings, in accordance with a frank and explicit legal mandate. From what we have seen, Project Promise does not represent the interests of some private company or other; rather, it is one among many plans being undertaken by Jihad Al-Binaa.

After joint consultation with a large number of competent, experienced professionals in the fields of architecture and reconstruction, acclaimed on both a national and regional level, a task force was formed. The team, consisting of capable engineers and administrative specialists, directed its attention to accomplishing those goals for which it was created with utmost precision and transparency and began work according to the following general guidelines:

The plan should be implemented as fast as possible, and buildings should be constructed with an eye for quality. An advanced architectural model should be presented that reflects our visions for urban planning, and full cooperation with the law should be observed. The project should adopt the principle of integration and complementarity with the municipalities as well as with concerned authorities and should encourage people to participate and put their opinions forward. It should offer an improvement package consistent with available funds and applicable laws and regulations, and it should improve the aesthetics of the area by treating any blemishes or flaws that may currently exist in the buildings. It should support public peace and protect the economic interests of business owners, inasmuch as those interests contribute to public peace and the region's aesthetic appeal. Work should be in the spirit of humanitarian service, and the project should distance itself from the usual bureaucracy. The plans should be executed with utmost precision, clarity, and transparency, and should utilize the best information technology systems. And finally, the best, most efficient, and most reputable cadre should be employed.

He went on by saying: Accordingly, a clear action plan was set forth. Statistical data revealed that 281 buildings were either completely destroyed or in need of improvement in each of: *Haret Hraik*, *Borj Al Brajne*, *Chiayah-Al-Hadath* and four buildings remained under the investigation of Khatib and Alami to determine whether they should be destroyed or rebuilt. The average floor space of one building is 3950 square meters for all stories including basements.

The sum total of what needs to be reconstructed is approximately one million, one hundred thousand meters, and therefore, the reparations from the state will not be sufficient to cover all the costs of reconstruction. Project Promise will tolerate this disparity in funds with the knowledge that Jihad Al-Binaa will cover the difference and property owners will not bear any cost in the matter.

He went on to say: And as for covering the difference between the dues of the property owners and the actual cost, we hope that it come from gifts and contributions, since some of the philanthropic organizations and institutions throughout the Arab and Islamic world continued, during and after the hostility, to offer aid packages for reconstruction. In this respect, the Kuwaiti Development Fund initiative deserves mention for undertaking the reconstruction of twelve buildings in the region extending from *Haret Hraik* Street on the east and Airport Road on the west. The total cost of the undertaking was about fifteen million dollars.

Along the same lines, work took place after the formation of the advisory counsel, which consisted of distinguished elite from experienced and competent professionals in the world of architecture. They are: engineer Rahif Fayad, engineer/doctor Maroon Dukash, engineer/doctor Mahmoud Sharef Al-Din, engineer Jan Khawan, engineer Mohamed Dendeshli, and engineer Suni Jemal.

This organization, made up entirely of non-paid volunteers, met continuously over the course of three months—without any fatigue or boredom—to draw up a preliminary sketch for the most devastated region. After laying down the foundations, the

organization collaborated with the engineer Hanaa Ilm Al-Din Jaidar, who wrote the plans in accordance with the agreed-upon vision.

Additionally, work took place according to the set guidelines, conditions, specifications, and improvements according to criteria of peace.

Expected Improvements: Engineer Raheef described the nature of the improvements that Project Promise would carry out, saying:

1 - First, they are civil: We recommend, then, the implementation of those plans that allow for the preservation of paths in places of communal memory, according to what has been reported, and at the same time, allow for the categorization of the streets into “main streets,” “bystreets,” and “internal streets,” as well as paths and wooded walkways for pedestrians. These plans would also give each street a special character.

They allow for traffic regulation and facilitate ease of passage, and provide a place for temporary parking in front of shops, as well as permanent parking for residents.

The public space, the most enduring place of communal memory, the soul of this quarter of the city, and the meeting place of its residents will be bolstered by: the improvement of paths, the broadening and adding trees to sidewalks, the improvement of zoning and waste management, and the acquisition of some pieces of real estate suitable to build parks on and adjacent parking lots.

2 - Second, the improvements are civil-architectural: the suggested urban organization urges for the reproduction of city blocks consistent with one another and

with their surroundings. They should be organized, simple, familiar, and colored with the colors of the earth: the color of the soil, rock, and sand. They should regulate the spatial relationship of the buildings with streets. These buildings will be parallel with streets, adjacent to one another, and the space between the street line, building line, interior lot, and side yard line and rear yard will be constant. These plans give us a plain and comprehensive course of action for urbanization. Also, the relationship between the buildings and passers-by and the residents is improved.

3 - Third, the improvements are human and social: This is because the design for these buildings' reconstruction, in terms of floor space and the functions and tasks allocated to the different floors, is only completed with direct participation from property owners.

Thursday, January 4th 2007

Al-Akhbaar Newspaper

Lebanon… A Crisis of Governance or a Crisis of the Regime? (Part 1 of 2)

Ghalib Abu Musallam[18]

Most Lebanese people agree that their country is engulfed in a profound crisis. This crisis is not born from some fleeting state of affairs; it is not born from the hostilities of July and our preoccupation with them, nor is it born from Syria's former presence as

[18]Lebanese writer

some are deluded to believe. It is not a result of the 1982 Zionist occupation and the civil war and resistance that it necessitated; rather, it is a product of financial, economic, and monetary policies that have had catastrophic socio-economic effects. It is simply upsetting that there is a faction in power in Lebanon that believes that the way out of this crisis is to continue along the same path that got us into it. This is pure stupidity.

This crisis is not limited in scope to the makeup of the Lebanese government and its illegitimacy; rather, the current government, through undermining the constitution, interfering with supervisory institutions, evading laws and statutes; through its corruption, impotency, subordination to foreign powers, disengagement from national interests, and through its efforts to make Lebanon a nation subservient to the hubs of the global capitalist system and its local consular agents, is indicative of a crisis of a ruling class, which has lost its historical role, and is working vigorously and desperately to reclaim this role for itself and extenuate its own existence.

This historical role has two faces, a political one and a socio-economic one, and they are inseparable. The domestic and foreign political orientation of the ruling class in regards to their stance on the resistance and its armaments, as well as on the partisan foreign policy towards the Zionist, imperialist enemy, does not stem from misunderstanding, miscalculation, or misperception, nor does it stem from overthinking. It stems from the nature of interdependence with powers external to Lebanon, and the ruling classes' interest in their own welfare, as well as in the resistance and their policy of liberating man and earth. This policy also calls for complete democratization as well as total socio-economic development and social equity. The word "imperialistic" here is

not meant to be abusive, nor is it an attempt at "stonewalling[19]," as some "apostates[20]" from scientific socialism might understand it to be. It is instead, a technical characterization of the global capitalist system at its most monopolizing and globalizing stage, led by America and a network of international monetary institutions under the auspices of dominant neoliberal ideology.

Governance in Lebanon represents the interests of the wealthy ruling class, which is in turn represented by agents of foreign companies, either exclusive or non-exclusive, and bank owners, who trace their ancestry back to moneylenders and usurers, as well as exclusive contractors and possessors of domestic monopolies in every sector. This class finds its origins in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the Mutasarrifate was instituted and the feudal system fell in Mount Lebanon. The western colonial powers had focused their efforts to establish Beirut as a foothold for their advance on the Arab interior and their attempts to control it. France built Beirut, a city surrounded by a mountain range settled by its supporters, as a financial center and an economic hub and developed the harbor, implemented infrastructural works and set up lines of communication and trade between the west on one side and the Arab world on the other.

What is the nature of Lebanon's system of government? The Lebanese philosopher Michel Chiha may be the best to characterize it. According to Chiha,

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[19]This contextual translation of what would be literally translated as, "wooden language," was suggested by *Xence* on Word Reference Forums. For more information, visit: http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=2129975

[20]This translation was selected by *Rayloom* on Word Reference Forums, as suiting the (negative) connotation of the original word, which could also be translated simply as "converts." For more information, visit: http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=2129975&highlight=apostates

Lebanon is not a "nation" as nations are generally accepted and recognized; rather, it is according to him, it is a "bridge," or "station," or "shop," or "store," or "hotel." All of these are, if you will, a sort of "nation." Their strength lies in their weakness; that is, by their being necessarily occupied, and by their being made subordinate. On this, Edwar Haneen states, "In independence, Lebanon quakes in discomfort, and in subordination, she boasts with pride." This subordination is, naturally, to the west, the all-powerful fulcrum of capitalism.

Chiha believes that the Lebanese are merchants by nature, descendents and heirs of Phoenician traders. They are too lofty a race to pursue careers in agriculture or manufacturing, and they should leave manual labor to those less dignified peoples. The Lebanese system of government is a sovereign system that places value on the freedom to worship as one pleases, the freedom to trade as one sees fit, and it gives its children the "freedom" to emigrate. As for Democracy, it is a formalist system in which sectarian loyalties come before the nation itself. A nation is an amalgamation of various sects and ideologies, and membership in it should virtually transcend and permeate sectarian-ideological divisions as well as their traditional leaders and proponents.

This system has allowed thirty-six families to rule Lebanon by exploiting their assets and monopolies and their foreign, commercial and political agencies. They have clung obstinately to a sectarian system that subjugates the masses and casts a veil over their interests, and they have prevented the people from realizing legitimate parliamentary representation.

During the period of mandatory rule, the Bank of Pharaoh and Shiha appointed more than half of the parliamentary representatives and ruled using them. During the period of independence, and even until the mid-sixties, Intra bank paid monthly salaries to sixty-five Lebanese ministers and delegates and ruled through them. But when Mr. American[21] showed up, angry with Yousef Beidas, Lebanese politicians broke away from him[22], and Intra bank was pushed forcibly into bankruptcy. Today, the majority of delegates and ministers are members of administrative councils or are liaisons for the great banks and monopolies, which dominate by means of them just like in past eras.

The interests of this ruling class run counter to the interests and welfare of the overwhelming majority of the population. This class is anti-production, anti-agriculture, and it even entered into foreign economic contracts to flood the local market with subsidized goods. An example of one such contract is the partnership agreement with the European Union, which was initiated some five years ago without the knowledge of the masses and at the expense of their welfare. This agreement, which went into effect several months ago, devastates the Lebanese agricultural sector in favor of highly subsidized European produce. Some agricultural goods are subsidized at a rate of more than 50% of their value, and the average subsidization rate exceeds 35%. These European goods enter the market with tariffs not exceeding 5%, according to the agreement. Every European cow earns a subsidy of $2.50 a day. How then, for example, can the Lebanese farmer compete with European milk and dairy products, or European fresh and processed

[21]Meaning, according to *Ayed* on Word Reference Forums, "those Americans who had assets in that bank."

[22]This is a possible reference to the Quran. For more information, visit http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=2130153

meats, or European canned and fresh foods? How can the Lebanese manufacturer compete in his local market with high-tech European products from experienced manufacturers, which enjoy substantial government subsidies and protectionism? Why are Lebanese agricultural exports to Europe being cut off according to a partnership agreement made with Europe? Why are they being regulated and limited and only permitted to enter the European marketplace during certain months so that they do not vie with similar European products like grapes, apples, potatoes, olives, and olive oil.

This class has burdened the less wealthy with the heaviest taxes, and has freed the rich from direct taxation.

January 9th, 2007

Lebanese Society of Rural Development

An-Nahar

Translated by Patrick Jones

The Lebanese Society for Rural Development is holding a party to commemorate its anniversary. This party will be held at 6 PM on January 12th at the University of Saida al-Louisa (Omitted Word)**.**

The party program will include speeches by the former minister of the environment, Yakoub al-Saraf, the current head of the Public Relations office at the University of Saida al-louisa, Suhail Mater, and the head of Gazeer county,

Ibrahim al-Hadad along with speeches by the head of the society for empowering women in Lebanon, Hyatt Arslan, and the representative of this association to the state, Rodrigue Mater. Katia Shamoun will host the party.

Saturday, January 13th 2007

24 Dhu al-Hijjah 1427

Al-Mustaqbal Newspaper

Tuesday Conference on Society's Role in Lebanon's Revival

The Network of Arab Non-Governmental Organizations for Development and the Canadian Social Development Fund: Oxfam Quebec and the United Nations Developmental Program arranged a conference addressing, "civil organizations' part in reviving and developing Lebanon." This conference will be held in the presence of the government representative, president of the council on development and construction, Nabil al-Jisr and the Canadian ambassador Louis Dolourmieh next Tuesday at the Crown Plaza Hotel.

This conference aims to improve the coordination between civil society and its contribution to rehabilitation efforts, as well as promoting partnerships between affiliated and concerned stakeholders. It will pose many questions regarding the basic infrastructure of local communities, including questions about water supplies, sewage, living conditions, and economic development (with the exception of agricultural

development). It will also address living conditions, agricultural development, basic social services, education, health, reintegration and reconciliation, affected/vulnerable groups, the assistance rendered in the process of removing land mines, (urban) civil planning, and the environment. It will also participate in harmony with community programs with the National Lebanese Initiative for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.

Additionally, Lebanese and international civil organizations, coalitions of local authorities, ministries, and concerned national agencies, international institutions, and representatives of foreign embassies and United Nations Agencies will in attendance at the conference.

It also strives to gather active community organizations from various sectors together in order for them to exchange knowledge and experience about strategies and experiences. This will help to pinpoint shared interests in regards to reviving and reconstructing the country. And that is to say nothing of the strengthening of right-guided practices, as in the participation of beneficiaries and ensuring their transparency and accountability, and discussing a mechanism of civil supervision for the whole operation.

Friday 23rd February 2007

Al-Mustaqbal

Arranged by the Basil Flaihan Institute and Al-Qiddis Yoosef University

Workshop discusses the role of the urban community in preparing and implementing a public budget in Lebanon

A workshop was held in the auspices of he minister of finance Jihad Iz'awar, representing the ministerial chief of staff Alan Bifani. The workshop was entitled, "Can the urban community have an impact on the public budget in Lebanon?" and was organized by the Institute for the Political Sciences and the Institute of Finance at Al-Qiddis Yoosef University and by the Basil Flaihan Institute of Economics and Finance with the Ministry of Finance and the State Institute for Administration and Training.

The director of the Political Science Institute at the Jesuit University, Fadya Kaywan began the workshop by addressing, "the increasingly important function of community organizations in partnering with the state and in working together to draw up and implement public policies like the public budget." She added, "Public finances are the nerves of the country," calling attention to the, "anxiety over the current public finances which troubles the minds of younger members of the Ministry of Finance and the Institute of Finance." She also emphasized the importance of young people's role in writing public policy.

Then Lamya Mbayyid Al-Bsat spoke, indicating that, "The goal of the seminar is to reconcile between the academic and applied fields and to benefit from the experience available in both."

Jon Deeb Al-Hajj shifted the focus to, "the efforts that the urban community has made to assume an active role in setting reformations in motion and in guiding public

policies, except that it has not ascribed due attention to the public budget, and it has not sought to fully acquaint itself with a mechanism of preparing and implementing it. Its influence has therefore, remained limited in this domain." And he said, "Strengthening the urban community's influence on the public budget is a way of stimulating the community to participate in its preparation and implementation, to understand the foundations on which a budget rest, and to offer critical suggestions about priorities and needs.

And he clarified that, "The budget workshop aims to explain the process of preparing a public budget and to shed light on the difficulties the government faces in this undertaking. It means to acquaint community organizations with the last war's adverse effects on Lebanon as well as on its plan to implement a budget. And it seeks to make them familiar with the efforts that the Ministry of Finance has undertaken in order to remedy these problems and to discuss community organizations' potential to prepare and implement a public budget."

Deeb Rashid, professor of law at the Jesuit University stated, "The urban community can impact the public budget but its influence various between normal circumstances and the exceptional circumstances which we are experiencing today. The current situation enjoins community organizations to assume a more active role, starting with being the source of the powers that draw up laws and legislations—like the budget—on their behalf.

He especially emphasized that, “The community must intervene directly and take initiatives that suit the current situation,” calling upon the community organizations to take a strong and instigating position like in the democratic countries upon which Lebanon bases its legislation.

Bifani said, “The public budget has lost much of its pivotal role in shaping civil and economic policies in Lebanon, and it no longer redistributes wealth in a way that guarantees the society’s continuity or its domestic tranquility. This happened because of the accumulation of deficit and different expenditures outside of the budget. In other words, it was due to a lack of focus on the clear priorities in public policy.”

He went on to say, “The budget deficit has been piling up since the end of the 1975-1990 war, and the public debt grows steadily greater, the largest debt in the world in comparison to the GDP. Greatly increasing the tax burden did not essentially change the situation, and the lack of comprehensiveness in the state budget itself had been among the factors that made solving the budget’s problems impossible from inside out. Additionally, estimations of actual interest and deficit lack completeness.

Bifani also clarified that, “The tax system in Lebanon in based essentially on consumption and only peripherally on income. As for the component based on capital, it is almost non-existent and the tax burden is not based on fair participation of the whole community in building and developing the country.

He also added, “The revenue collected from direct taxation constitutes only a small percentage. Telephone fees however, which represent a large part of the country’s

revenue, are considered consumer fees. The other part of the country's revenue is based on the incurrence of debts.

Addressing expenditures, Bifani said, "Attending to the debt is a major concern and it imposes itself by allocating a significant portion of the budget to its own service in the form of salaries, compensations, and support costs. Investment expenditures make up a miniscule portion of the public budget, consisting of contributions to outside organizations that remain far outside the budget's control.

And he said, "As a general principle, nothing inhibits the political power, as it faces this increasingly dangerous situation, from developing a program for economic growth, from reorganizing and restructuring public organizations through public or private financing, from reevaluating the role of the public sector and its size, or from ameliorating the state-entrusted function of redistributing wealth, developing the tax system, reforming the labor market, reexamining the aid policy in its widest sense, and curbing political expenditures to a reasonable degree."

After the introduction, three consecutive sessions were held addressing the following points:

1. The mechanism of preparing and implementing the public budget.
2. When and where in the public budget can the urban community play an influential role?
3. How can we go about consolidating the urban community's influence on the public budget?

Monday, May 21st 2007 No. 231

Al-Akhbar Newspaper

The Citizen's Part in Policy Making

The third conference of the socio-economic rights watch program in Lebanon, entitled, "Legislation, Media, and Public Administration for a People's Democracy," reached the conclusion that the citizen must participate in defining socio-economic policies that directly affect his life. The discussion in the seminar, which was arranged yesterday by the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace in the auditorium of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture in Tripoli, revolved around two pivotal issues: the reality of socio-economic concerns in daily life, and practical suggestions to secure rights, especially those pertaining to housing security, hospitalization, knowledge, and consumer rights. Touni Atallah, professor at the Lebanese University, said: "Not only have political tensions dominated through the legislative powers; rather, they have weakened the supervisory role as a whole and led to escalating prices." The newswoman Sonia Nakd posited, "The economic media does not influence what people think, since a citizen constructs his opinions according to current political alignments. Some media organizations would rather broadcast something about a congressman as opposed to what really matters to people and pertains to their lives. The seminar's participants demanded that the concept of the "active citizen" be reinforced, and called for the monitoring and distribution of applied models for attaining these socio-economic rights through the judiciary, the public administration, unions, municipalities, and the media.

Thursday, May 31st, 2007

How Do I Lead the Community?

An-Nahar

Translated By Patrick Jones

570 Lebanese students, coming from different regions, were invited by Injaz-Lebanon and Amideast to take part in this workshop.

The program of the workshop, 'how can I be leader in my community', revolved around how to help students become leaders in their schools, communities, and work environments. The workshop discussed leadership characteristics from different angles, while also helping participants develop the individual skills necessary to initiate their own projects. This workshop also shed light on how to implement the knowledge gained from it by starting a comprehensive project in different regions of Lebanon.

Students were divided into groups that were assigned 27 projects in different regions of Lebanon. At the end of each workshop, groups designed a project to serve the community. Each student implemented their project in their region. These were multifaceted projects: some of them involved planting trees, others displayed and marketed goods made by the physically handicapped and another collected books to reopen the village library. Volunteers participated in

implementing these projects, which found great success in each region and were widely supported and admired by everyone in each community.

Thursday, May 31st 2007

14 Jumada al-Awwal 1428

Al-Mustaqbal Newspaper

Maronite Social Institutions Examine their Residential Activities and Projects

The Maronite Patriarch Cardinal Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir led the usual annual meeting of the general body of the Maronite Social Institution in Bkirke.

Patriarch Sfeir opened the meeting with a prayer. He then delivered a speech in which he indicated that the institution, "has established, up until now, a very considerable number of homes that a great many Maronites in particular have benefited from (and also non-Maronites). This is a sound indicator of what has been accomplished or what is on its way to being accomplished. There are workshops underway in Ain Saade, Blaibel, al-Majdhoub, Baabdat, Mazhar, Zouk Mosbeh, and Tabarja. Thanks to the curators of this project, and for how strenuously and quickly they have worked, for securing some tax exemptions: building fees, a fiscal stamp, property tax for building, establishments, and al-'ifraaz[23] to what reaches more than a million American dollars. We want to

[23]This word, which literally means, "secretion," may have some fiscal meaning that I have been unable discover .

congratulate you for that, but the surplus value remains and there is seemingly no exemption for it."

Afterwards, Archbishop Abu Jouda, as the president of the institution's administrative council, read the annual report containing all of the institution's residential projects. He also disclosed the comprehensive report on the activities of the Higher Economic Commission, which had joined with the institution after it had been practically founded for "papal guidance" "new hope for Lebanon."

Sunday, September 2nd 2007

20 Sha'aban 1428

Al-Mustaqbal Newspaper

Following the Opening of Centers in Bebnine, Funaidiq, and Aaklar, El Attiqa

The "Hariri Foundation" Opens the Ukroum Health and Social Center

Aaklar – *Zeiad Monsour*

Under the auspices of the president of the Rafik Hariri Foundation, Mrs. Nazik al-Hariri, the Ukroum Health and Social Center was founded in Baldat Qunia, one of the villages around Mt. Ukroum. This is the fourth center in a series of centers that have been established in Bebnine, Funaidiq, and Aaklar El Attiqa, and more that will be established

subsequently in Aaklar with the support of the Rafik Hariri Foundation—Directorate of Social Health.

Many attended the opening: Dr. Nour al-Din al-Koush on behalf of Mrs. Nazik al-Hariri, the engineer and general coordinator of the Future Movement in Aaklar Husein al-Masri on behalf of the president of the Future Parliamentary Bloc deputy Saad al-Hariri, Nasser Adra, director of the Government Hospital in Tripoli, on behalf of Abdulghani Kebara, the coordinator of the Future Movement in the north, Abdulqadir Abdu on behalf of the coordinator of the Future Movement in al-Koura Rasen al-Hasan, Dr. Saad Khouri, president of the administrative council of the Halba Government Hospital, a throng of medical experts and authorities from the Mt. Ukroum region, municipality chiefs and leaders from al-Duraib, and the people of the organization themselves.

After the national anthem and a reading of the Fatiha in memory of the martyred president Rafik al-Hariri, Sheikh Zeiad Adra spoke in the name of the people of Mt. Ukroum saying, "The martyr, president Rafik al-Hariri, wanted Lebanon to be a country of the Lebanese, and for reform to prevail in every region and in every corner of the nation without a concern ideological, racial, or class-based distinctions. Behold the result: a radiant tribute to that mentality. In the name of every woman, child, young man, and Sheikh, may Deputy Saad al-Hariri and Mrs. Nazik Rafik al-Hariri be granted a long life.

Shouqi Asbar, representing the Future Current in Mt. Ukroum, talked, indicating that the opening of this center was nearly impossible—although it had been a dream for generations—because of material difficulties and constraints. But this noble organization

founded by the even nobler martyr Rafik al-Hariri, who gives without avarice at all, is what made this great achievement possible in such a far-removed Lebanese village.

Then al-Masri spoke, passing on the president of the Future Parliamentary Bloc's regards to the people of Ukroum and Mt. Ukroum and Aaklar, "The guarantors of Hariri's estate have promised to realize his dream and honor his fondness for Aaklar and its peoples, and here we are, celebrating the fulfillment of one promise among many, innumerable promises, which are soon to be fulfilled as well.

And he added: "It was just yesterday when Aaklar's disparate parts came together and united, and had it not been for the "War of Haters" which took place at al-Baarid, the final links uniting Akklar would have long ago been joined.[24] In spite of this, there are only a few weeks that separate us from opening the most important bridge in Aaklar.

And he said: A week from today, we will be at a crossroads celebrating the realization of another dream and the fulfillment of another promise by establishing another similar health center in Bire. And after that, not a week will go by—with God's help—without another project being launched in every municipality and village of Aaklar without exception. This is the true way of interaction between a leadership and a people who are united by love and loyalty. He also passed on the deputies' greetings to the people of Aaklar, acknowledging that they were separated you all physically, but they were not and will not be able to separate your daily concerns from them, wherever they were continuing and undertaking what is required for you, adding: no matter how much

[24]This translation owes some credit to Tracer, on Word Reference Forums. http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=2153795

some might try to frighten and drive a wedge between people and loved ones, they will not be successful.

Dr. Nour al-Din al-Koush then spoke on behalf of benefactress Mrs. Nazik al-Hariri, presenting to the peoples of Mt. Ukroum the Ukroum Social Health Center in Baldat Qunia, as the fruit of committing to President Rafik al-Hariri's campaign for social development of our faithful and true kin in the north.

He went on to say: Yesterday, we were in Khirbet Rouha in western Bekaa. Today, we are here in Qunia, and tomorrow, we will be in Bire so that health care will be within reach of all citizens in the north, and especially Aaklar.

He also pointed out that the Ukroum Social Health Center in Qunia would guarantee primary health care for the people of the villages of Ukroum by offering pediatric services, vaccinations, women's health services, care for pregnant women, family health care, health care for the elderly as well as drugs for chronic illness, and orthodontic services. This will be accomplished by appointing local physicians and staff. He also said: This center will be associated with other centers that have been introduced in the north (centers in Miryata, Funaidiq, Bebnine Tripoli, Aaklar El Attiqa, al-Minie, and al-Haddadine) and all of the management centers in Beirut, in the south, in Bekaa, and in al-Jebal with respect to the technology that will be proffered by the Social Health Directorate. Everyone holding the magnetic health card will be able to benefit from the services of these centers that are spread all over Lebanon.

After the speeches were over, the ribbon was cut and Drs. al-Koush and al-Masri took the attendees on a tour within the center and demonstrated the equipment.

[The subtext under the picture] Reading the Fatiha in memory of the martyred president Rafik al-Hariri at the center's opening ceremony in Baldat Qunia.

Tuesday, September 4th, 2007

An-nahaar newspaper

Projects carried out by Caritas since the July war:

Caritas has spent Approximately 12 billion liras to assist 84 affected communities

Yesterday, Caritas Lebanon discussed developmental projects that it had carried out in regions overtaken by destruction, a result of Israeli hostility towards Lebanon in July of 2006, in cooperation with other world Caritas organizations and especially Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in pursuit of social, economic, and spiritual rehabilitation for those affected by the war.

Caritas president, Father Louis Samaha, held a press conference called "Caritas attests that there is love and solidarity in times of war as well as in times of peace" at the central administration headquarters in *Sin El Fil*.

Samaha presented a comprehensive report on the support projects that the organization had carried out between September 2006 and September 2007 to aid to

the 84 affected small towns and villages in the districts of *Bent Jbail*, *Said*, *Nabatieh*, *Marjaayoun*, *Hasbaya*, and *Bekaa*.

Caritas' plan aims to rehabilitate the infrastructure, distribute agricultural and nutritional supplies, make available means of individual and collective livelihood, organize social and recreational activities, and assist those with handicaps.

As many as 84 communities benefited from the infrastructural work, and as many as 65,897 people benefited from the availability of alimentary and hygienic supplies, fuel oil, school assistance, medical consultations, and medicines. Agricultural supplies were provided along with self-employment aid to 9,040 beneficiaries, 761 aid packages were distributed the disabled, and 43,885 people benefited from social and recreational activities.

The total sum spent by Caritas on these projects is 11 billion, 748 million, 217 thousand Lebanese liras.

Documentation of the implemented plans was provided before and after their effectuation.

Father Abu Kassam spoke, saying, "Wherever the church may be, Caritas will be there also, and wherever Caritas may be, the church will be there also. …(?)"

He explained that during the last war on the south, "I was in contact with the president, Father Samaha, when, just as matters were at their worst, Caritas took the initiative to set out for the villages of *Rmaich*, *Ain Ebel*, *Bent Jbail*, *Aalma Ech Chaab*,

and *Qouzah*. Caritas stopped at the gates of those villages and negotiated with the state authorities to provide medicine and water. And after the hostility had ended, Caritas was there to offer agricultural support and promote livelihood so that the people might remain on their land and Caritas is still there today."

Father Samaha also spoke. He said, "For several months, Lebanon has passed through intensely difficult political circumstances and exceedingly complicated economic conditions, and a crisis of territorial integrity[25] troubles the global conscience. Perhaps this crisis will, through its repercussions, determine the fate of the homeland—at least for the foreseeable future. And in this bitter reality political concerns rise above all others and impede social initiatives. This distressing state of affairs grieves and pains humanitarian organizations in general, and Caritas Lebanon in particular, and it spurs us to exert more effort to give and testify for love."

He went on saying, "Caritas Lebanon has followed through with its promise with vigor, zeal, and earnestness in a continuous, humanitarian campaign. It has made a commitment to support the impoverished and the marginalized without any consideration of their political or religious orientation. After the war, Caritas enlisted itself to combat the subjugation and pain of the people by contributing to the revival of the desperate and the frustrated, by standing beside its brother citizens, and by upholding the equality of every poor person. Caritas organized and implemented developmental projects in regions overtaken by destruction with the cooperation of

[25]An alternative translation here is, "existential crisis." The translation provided is inferred from context.

sister organizations, and particularly Catholic Relief Services (CRS), striving for social, economic, and spiritual rehabilitation for those affected."

Samaha concluded, "Caritas Lebanon has confirmed that it is ready to face the challenges that afflict the country and is determined to continue its humanitarian and social campaign. We have many plans and projects which we hope to implement in the near future, and with the contribution of kind and gentle souls in peace, love, and charity, and with the participation of Caritas' sister organization, which has long stood resolutely beside the Lebanese people."

The picture: The fathers Louis Samaha and Abdu Abu Kassam in the press conference. Hasan Aasal.

Wednesday, September 5th 2007

An-Nahar Newspaper

Education and Civics

The "Spring of Questions" Releases a Summary of their Report

Most Think That the Sectarian System Is Responsible for the Problems and Two Thirds Fear a Resurgence of War

The Taif "Grafts" and Secularization May Lead to "Moral Chaos!"

Karim Abu Mari

Despite the signing that took place yesterday in the Virgin Megastore in downtown Beirut, we cannot consider *Beirut's Spring at the Core of Reformation* to be a book in the traditional sense of the term. It is primarily a summary of a study conducted over the course of two years with the participation of approximately 2500 university students, in addition to 2000 online participants, who responded to 31 questions about various issues like sectarianism, the sense of belonging, and general freedoms, arriving at their relationship with the Arab world and with the West and the nature of political systems.

The "Spring of Questions" taskforce hopes that these initiatives will facilitate a broader discussion of these and other subjects in order to "depart from being completely absorbed with problems of time, and in order to concentrate on what we consider to be the main reason for our blind wandering amidst these ups and downs," as quoted from the foreword of the book.

The book opens with an analysis of the Lebanese political system and its complicated construction, reckoning that, "Lebanon's deficiency basically stems from the diversity of her peoples and the foreign powers' constant meddling of in the region, even if we might think that our sectarian system, endemic in absolutely every dimension of our social and political life, is more responsible for this weakness." Approximately 77 percent of the university and online participants considered the Lebanese system to be inherently contributing to the obstruction of political life. Answers were disparate with regards to what influences a communal sense of belonging, where 54.6 percent of university participants and 63.6 of online participants thought that the sectarian

representation, established since the outset, pushes people to rally around individuals and families instead of agendas and ideas (90). The poll posed an indirect question about the extent of the capacity of a system similar to the Lebanese one to guarantee stability in Iraq. The majority of the participants believed that this was not a possibility. The task force concluded that university students are the most critical of the political system, also noting that, "the sectarian system is detestable on all levels, and more than two thirds consider it responsible for our various problems and feelings."

The second theme focused on, "The Dangers of Radical Change in Lebanon." It became clear through the responses that half of the participants fear that Lebanon will be divided into small sectarian states (98), whereas the majority of two thirds fears a resurgence of war (102). Online and university participants' responses were approximately the same in their determination that the greatest threat to communities is the sects and their continuation in Lebanon. Fifty-seven percent of them consider the current political system responsible for this, 25 percent attribute the problem to secularization, and approximately 17 percent motion to abolish political sectarianism altogether. In their summary, the taskforce noted that, "the answers essentially reveal the mutual sense of danger and instability among the people. Furthermore, we cannot disregard young people's lack of trust in Lebanon's future, which may encumber their future plans and horizons."

The third, fourth, and fifth themes focused on stances on legal reforms related to sectarianism, human rights, and election law, where some fears arose concerning the abolishment of political sectarianism, while the trend towards secularization was

connected with complications and divergent socio-political trajectories. The study noted more acceptance of secularization among those well-off students associated with the Jesuit University and the American University. With regards to civil marriage, the study highlighted the role of pluralism and socialization in the acceptability of this matter, indicating that, "the vestige of religious affiliation dissolves during the cultural, economic, intellectual, and social interactions that characterize the civil relationship between citizens." As for elections, a question emerged about the population of Lebanon. The majority of the participants suggested that it was four million people, 17 percent said it was closer to five million, and 12 percent estimated three million. The topics summary stated that the questions, "actually expose the problems we face in our efforts to provide the people with just representation in the electoral process," indicating that, "the principle of quotas leaves a feeling of discontentment when one of the groups feels that it is not adequately represented.

The three following topics studied the influence of law, the concept of Arabism, and religious attitudes. Whereas the majority of the participants did not indicate that abolishing political sectarianism is inconsistent with "consensual democracy" (146), different groups have obscured the concept of "sect," despite the fact that the majority considered it, "a stopgap… positive because fighting will cease at that time." Most of the participants summarized the concept of Arabism as the Arabic language, while they defined the "trend to the West" as the institution of democratic freedoms. The religious question evoked a great many answers, where secularization was associated with discrepant notions like, "protecting religious practice in its diversity," and "moral chaos,"

but the majority of participants in the poll expressed secularism's capacity and willingness to accept someone who, "does not believe in God." The book draws a connection between supporting secularization and a number of socio-economic and linguistic considerations that apply to students without neglecting the principal role of religion.

The last theme focused on faith in democracy. Spring of Questions polled opinions, according to political affiliations, on the issue of consensus between the desired president and the elected president (in the case of direct popular vote). The result clarified that there is a kind of "faith" among the opposition that their candidate will win, whereas there are a variety of opinions among the support. The overwhelming majority of participants expressed their view that law can be adopted to ensure freedom of belief and religious practice in lieu of a sectarian system in Lebanon. The study also pointed out that the numbers indicate, "the respondents' faith in democracy, since it does not seem that the principle of universal suffrage facilitates the election of candidates who are subject to sectarian favoritism.

In conclusion, "Spring of Questions" admits that it is difficult to pinpoint, exactly, the extent of agreement between the university and online participants' opinions and the opinion of the Lebanese people as a whole. It wagers however, that they are associated with a well-to-do, socio-economic segment of society that is more educated in comparison and is generally more open-minded and flexible." It also indicates that, "identifying socio-economic factors enables us to infer the influence of religion and ideological-sectarian affiliations, which has not yet been indexed clearly, and which

accords us with an understanding of the political tilt of the religious or class-based plan in order to better estimate the purport of a given political notion connected with the various powers.

Thursday, September 6th 2007 (#10793)

As-Safeer Newspaper

Mahanna: Communty's Responsibility in Building the State

Tyre—Husein Saad

The Tyre Cultural Forum organized a dialogue with the president of the 'Aamil organization in Lebanon, Kamil Mahanna, addressing the role of the community in public life. In attendance was the chairman of the federation of municipalities of Tyre with an assembly of civil, social, and cultural activists. After an opening statement by forum member Mohamed Farran regarding the importance of the community in building the contemporary state, Doctor Mahanna spoke in affirmation about the historical responsibility of the community in laying foundations for a lawful, peaceful, and prosperous nation. He added: the civil community in Lebanon achieved a real presence for the first time through its participation in the last dialogue with France, focusing on the responsibility of the public at large to offer resistance and support and in being historically responsible, especially considering the sensitive and precarious circumstances facing Lebanon at present.

Mahanna said that the basic problem contributing to the fracturing of the Lebanese infrastructure and the weakening of the society's capacity to make an impact in public policy lies in the commotion between its internal structures and the absence of mechanisms of dialogue which provide safe and acceptable means of reconciling the mutually disparate interests without favoring one side over the other. He stated that the sectarian political administration in Lebanon has, for half a century, undermined attempts at reform, which has made the exalted idea of democracy far-fetched and difficult to attain.

He said: the decisive challenges which face Lebanon today, along with the aggravation of the livelihood crisis and the impoverishment of the overwhelming majority of Lebanese people, make it incumbent upon us to take steps toward a national consensus on the formation of a new social contract between the state and the civil community and the securing of a real partnership between the state and the private and domestic sectors on the condition that policies are formed which facilitate an interconnection between economic development on the one hand and social development on the other. In conclusion, he called for the adoption of the principle that basic civilian rights originate in a person's humanity through bolstering independence of political and cultural decisions on an individual basis, building a culture based on the principle of respecting life, setting up a fair economic system, and other essential issues regarding the individual and the community.

Saturday, September 29th 2007, No. 341

Al-Akhbar Newspaper

Milestones in the History of "The Mujahid Islamic Movement"

Commenting on the installments of "The Secret History of the Jihadists as they See it," by colleague Fidaa Aytaani (see *al-Akhbar*, nos. 326-339), "The Mujahid Islamic Movement" brings us the following:

The Mujahid Islamic Movement originated in 1973 in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon as a moderate movement under the slogan "The Call for Jihad." It was a call to shed light on true Islam and explain that it is a creed, a means of worship, a system of law, a code of ethics, and a culture. It also protested the Zionist occupation of Palestine and called for unified effort throughout the Arab and Islamic world to combat it.

In 1982, during Israel's invasion of Lebanon, The Mujahid Islamic Movement and other factions faced—with their limited resources—the Israeli forces in the region of *Saida* and the encampment of *Ain al-Hilweh*. Many of the movement's leaders were martyred in this resistance (the martyr Fouzi Aagha, the martyr Munir al-Hafi, and the martyr Abulkarim Samara).

In 1985, after the Israeli withdrawal from *Saida* towards the south, the movement sought to establish social, cultural, educational, and religious advocacy institutions that embraced the coming generations of Palestinians, cared for them, guided them

religiously, culturally, scientifically, and ethically, and affirmed that returning to Palestine was possible by one road only: Jihad.

When war broke out between the encampments and the surrounding region, the Mujahid Islamic Movement played an important role in nipping the strife in the bud. The movement collaborated with upstanding citizens on all the initiatives they carried out to end this confrontation, and especially with the Iranian Islamic Republic's initiative, which conscripted its political and diplomatic energies for this task (i.e. ending the strife). His Imminence Abbas al-Mousawi seized the initiative with a band of Shiite and Sunni scholars from an assembly of Muslim scholars (Sheikh Mahir Hamoud, Sheikh Muharram Aarifi, Sheikh Abdul Hallaq, Sheikh Ghazi Hanina, and Mr. Aisa Tabataba'i). After enervating efforts, meetings, and correspondence with Amal leadership and Palestinian authorities, in which Mahir Hamoud's house in *Saida* transformed into a political cell, the Iranian embassy in Beirut set out to mobilize all of its energies and its communications and relations with the Sunni and Shiite domain for the sake of making the scholars' efforts successful. It was a great success. The strife, which had been increasing in intensity, ended.

The Mujahid Islamic Movement also played a distinguished role in actively striving to reconcile perspectives between the leadership of Fatah and al-Ansar, and in putting an end to the political disputes that had turned into a security concern between the two parties. Every now and then, a crisis cell was formed, comprising Sheikh Jamal Khitab (Mujahid Islamic Movement director), Mahir Hamoud, the People's Committee in *Ain al-Hilweh*, and most of the political activities in *Saida*, in order to find possible

solutions to all of the unforeseen problems. These efforts succeeded in bringing peace between the two sides, and they were able to enter into dialogue and deal with any problem. We should not forget in this matter the contribution of all of the Palestinian organizations in pressuring both sides to improve the political situation and state of security in the camp and in *Saida*.

Wednesday, December 12th 2007

As-Safir Newspaper

Issues and Opinions

Secularization… Is it the Solution?

Samir al-Tanir[26]

The word "secularism" is derived from the word "world," and not the word "science."[27] Philosophically, "secularism" means that the origin of truth is the world around us and not what is unseen and unknown (i.e. beyond the world). Furthermore, while secularism does not necessarily negate religion, it recognizes that religion is not the source of knowledge in this world, and likewise, should not be the source of law and power among humans.

[26]Lebanese writer

[27]In Arabic, the words "world" and "science," although they share the same triliteral root, have different etymologies. This is attested for by Hans Wehr, who lists the two words and their derivatives in two separate entries.

The term "secularism" is not ancient; rather, it is a relatively new term, and we can surmise its origin to be in the era of the European renaissance, which burst forth from social and industrial development on the continent, as well as from the separation of church and state. It stripped the church of those powers that it had arrogated on the pretext that the church is God's shadow on the earth. The church had reached beyond its walls and practiced its authority in the social, stratal, and political spheres, all the while legitimizing this authority with divine right. This divine authority enabled men of the church to interpret religious truths, but also authorized them to grant or strip legitimacy from the ruling powers as they pleased. The philosophical substance of secularism was that the origin of truth was the world around us, not the unknown, and it called for the separation of church and state—as in Europe—, which would ultimately lead to a all-encompassing cultural achievement. Such a society would boast of the various aspects and characteristics of modern civilization.

Upon the end of the Ottoman Empire and during its dissolution as an intact political entity, thought began on a regional level about a new renaissance movement in the Arab world. The concept of "secularism" was posited by the elite classes, who had been influenced by the western renaissance, as a way to treat problems of socio-economic development and power. In fact, we can consider the economic, social, and political development of the region after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire to be a triumph for secularism, wherein a true division between church and state institutions took place, even though religion had still held a symbolic influence in some sub-domains of the legislature.

Since secularism separates church and state, yet does not negate the foundations of religion, we can consider Lebanon's judiciary and legislative system a secular one. It does not derive its power, law, or legitimacy from any of the religions that its citizens practice, and consequently, the Lebanese system needs to complete and perfect its secularization. In doing so, we must take into account sectarianism, as it exists in the organization of the state and the Lebanese administration, and in parliamentary representation (considering political sectarianism as the foundation in building a state). We must also take into account the Status Law of the Lebanese sects, which are a part of the nation's legislative system. These two concerns are pivotal in any plan to further secularism in Lebanon.

The predicament that secularization faces in Lebanon is the following: There are those who demand the removal of the sectarian political system, considering it the most significant rift in Lebanon's secularization. They claim that by removing the sectarian political system, we will have achieved secularization. They see that the Status Law does not detriment this aim because it preserves a necessary aspect of Lebanese social diversity, which is associated with numerous religions and sects. They go on to say that the removal of the sectarian political system is possible with regards to parliamentary elections and on an administrative level, but it is impossible with regards to Status Law (why?). We say that this problem is easily solved. Every Lebanese citizen can choose his type of Status Law: religious or civil, according to his preference. In such a way, his freedom is completely protected, and we satisfy the men of religion who fear losing their jobs in the various and ideologically diverse Sharia courts.

Secularizing the Lebanese state brings three disparate obstacles to the fore. First, Shiite and Sunni Islamic authorities believe that secularization is not concordant with Islam. Second, the church remains keen on playing a role in public life in Lebanon, and it fears that Lebanese Christians, who represent the last Christian stronghold in the East, will stray from their faith on the pretext of secularization. Third, Lebanese politicians, whose political positions are built on political sectarianism, fear losing their influential role if Lebanese life were to become secular. And apprehensions only deepen with the prominence of a liberal, educated younger generation under the influence of movements for democracy and social justice.

The third of those obstacles is a very important one because removing the political faction that depends on political sectarianism is necessary with or without secularization. And as for the first and second, Lebanon's sectarian and religious foundations will necessitate judicious measures. Some Lebanese sociologists say that while Christian authorities may disparage secularization, the resistance is not ideological and is easily remedied with the setting down of certain regulations (why?). Contrarily, the Islamic resistance is in fact a dogmatic one, and will demand strenuous efforts to overcome (again, why?). It is clear that these reservations can be resolved as long as the plan for secularization in Lebanon takes into consideration the defining characteristics of Lebanese society.

Political sectarianism remains, along with what ripples out from it in the parliamentary elections, state functions, and institutions of civil society, the most profound societal deficiency and an impossible hurdle that must nevertheless be

surmounted; that is, if we, the Lebanese people, want to build a society based on justice and equality in a modern, advanced nation.

The Lebanese constitution has, in its current form, obstructed the path to political progress in the country. Item 95, in its original and amended form, is the cornerstone upon which the sectarian make-up is built. It specifies temporary "sectarian justice" in the state department and its functions (we believe that this is impossible as experience has shown) as the Taif Agreement determined a method to execute this sectarian justice through the unjust system of quotas. This entailed equal distribution between religious leaders and relative quotas between sects and regions. Politicians heeded this constitutional article, and they mastered its application in both letter and spirit.

The political class has covered up a policy of quotas with undeniable Salafi fundamentalism. They have made an ethical décor for it, a verbal blanket, a cosmetic powder, and the sectarian quotas have brought about corruption in every domain: political corruption, the squandering of funds, and scandalous robbery.

The Lebanese constitution did open a small window for development through abolishing political sectarianism. This alleged window, found in article 95, is suspended indefinitely. The National Commission to End Political Sectarianism has not yet been born, and if it were granted birth, it would be stillborn, because the sectarian is smarter then to secure a noose around his own neck. So the sectarian system prevails, closed in on itself and detached from the people. Citizens are unable but to resort to the sectarian

leadership for guidance. Sectarian leaders are aware of the dangers of sectarianism, but they play the game because that is the easiest way to hope for the best.

Abolishing political sectarianism would pave the way to remove sectarian leaders and dispossess them of their privileges. But article 95 gives us instead an oblique framework that leaves no room for growth in the future. What can be accomplished as long as the Taif Agreement, a sectarian agreement of the highest caliber, claims to endorse "equitable sectarianism," which is paradoxical?!

The sectarian political system in Lebanon has collapsed on its own, and the vertical divisions taking place within the biggest sects are nothing if not an expression of that. Maronites have divided into Aunis, Quwatis, and Kata'ibis. Roman Catholics and Roman Orthodox Christians have divided within their respective histories. Sunnis have divided between the "future current," which cannot claim any national heritage or history of struggle; rather, it is based on the system of "mutual benefits" between its leadership and its followers. The other sect within the Sunnis is comprised of the Nasserites, who were joined by numerous movements to other Islamic organizations, from the AHbash and al-Tauhid in Tripoli to the Islamist groups—we do not know where they stand. Are they in the east or the west, the north or the south? The Druzes are also divided into Junbulatis and Orslanis, and followers of Wiam Wahhab. The Shiite sect however, is—as an exception—still unified until this day because of the uninterrupted Israeli hostility on the south since the year 1978. We belief this democratic pluralism will inevitably reach them too in the near future.

The last settlement, which put an end to a violent political crisis that lasted for over a year and preoccupied the Lebanese people day and night for fear of a resurgence of civil war, is one that we are surprised could have happened due to the aforementioned sectarian divisions. The unification of the sects then, is a collision course and an invitation for civil war. This is what was not available. We believe that General Michel Suleiman will be a worthy successor to the great leader Fouad Shehab. Through the coming 2009 elections, Lebanon can embark on its passage from abonimable sectarianism to radiant secularism.

Monday, December 24th, 2007

10 Dhu al-Hejja 1428

Al-Mustaqbal Newspaper

The Lebanese Association for Civil Order Launches al-Hukmiyya al-Mahalliyya[28] in Hammana

The Lebanese Association for Enduring Civil Order has launched a program aimed at improving governance in the Lebanon entitled, "Solidarity, Participation, and Initiative on a Local Level: Initiatives, Citizenry, and Supporting the Domestic Community for Public Affairs and Municipal Work," in cooperation with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

[28]Literally meaning, "rules or guidelines for governance on a local level."

The Association has already organized the first preparatory meeting for the program in which it posed the question: “How can Hammana be a model town.” The meeting took place in Hammana in the Valley View Hotel, and attendees included municipality chief Habib Rizq, program officials, and presidents and representatives from town associations and clubs. Participants received program documents and association publications.

The association’s program coordinator Anton Musira affirmed that the program aimed to, “assist the community in municipal work by encouraging citizens to take initiatives that might seem simple at first glance in order to improve quality of life in the town, perhaps by way of neighborhood committees and through committed volunteers.

The program itself can be summed up with three points that concern the general public: citizen-born initiatives, a better quality of life, and moving from mentality of support (waiting on the state or the municipality to do something or for foreign aid…) to a mentality of development, where citizenry is three-dimensional: I care, I participate, and I am responsible.

Hammana was included in the program, which comprises other towns as well, because of its archetypal diversity and the dynamism of its community, and because the al-Hukmiyya al-Mahalliyya program is not starting from scratch when it comes to public affairs initiatives. The association has already collaborated to arrange a meeting with the local tourist club in hopes of reviving Hammana’s popularity as a tourist destination during the year as well as the summer.

The meeting coordinator Maya Kanaan Saad concerned herself with what a (foreign) visitor might see during an excursion in Hammana.

Rizq confirmed that, "al-Hukmiyya al-Mahalliyya is basic concern, not just for the success of the township, but also for its sustainable development. Political problems have, for some time, interfered with developmental work. Young people abandon their lands, and problems arise from the lack of ambition and a weak sense of devotion to the land and they end up selling it. In order for the public affairs initiatives to be successful, there needs to be solidarity, participation, and consciousness raising through communication with various institutions, and there must be a sweeping and common vision to completely oust competitive politics from the developmental sphere.

Former president of the Hammana Tourism and Rotary Club, Anton Barmaki spoke about the need to revive Lebanon's cultural heritage to pave the way for a national museum. Evelyn Bmutri Massara focused on the, "the educational aspects to local initiatives," and suggested that specialists offer a few volunteer hours every month to prune trees, whereas children can water saplings to bolster interest in agriculture.

The president of the Mariam Women's Association, Suaad al-Masri Abu Shahin suggested that a campaign be launched to, "get rid of the construction refuge on the road as far as it extends in the direction of Bhamdoun by cooperating with the youth of Rotaract and other clubs as well as associations for the revival of an annual charitable project that will dedicate its returns to the beautification of the town."

Rabea Qais, program coordinator, spoke about, "the regained trust due the performance of sound leadership." Toni Atallah, lecturer at the Lebanese University, illuminated the advantageous of the al-Hukmiyya in developing a culture of voluntarism, which no longer cites exceptional circumstances as a pretext to avoid work on a local level.

The meeting ended with the specification of programs that would improve the quality of life in the short term. One of these programs suggested implementing, "an afforestation campaign in February 2008 (preparation would take place in January), in collaboration with local clubs and schools.

Tuesday, December 25th 2007

An-Nahar Newspaper

Certificates for Fifty Volunteers for their Work in the Community

The Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development, in collaboration with the Volunteer Services Organization, conducted a training session to "build volunteer skills in community and civil work." The session was arranged by those two bodies and took place in Sidon over the course of four weeks. Approximately fifty volunteers participated in various subsidiary agencies, associations, and bodies in the overall, unified framework for volunteer activities in Sidon.

The meeting took place in Al al-Hariri's Villa in Majdelyoun with the support of the representative Bahia al-Hariri, who called for those trained and graduated to be functional nucleus in encouraging our society, Sidon, to move forward, saying that the spirit of spreading volunteer work in the schools will be a means of moving forward, since the unproductive society is the on unable to develop. She reiterates that we must transform every individual into a source of production energy. She said, "I am not afraid for you, and I am not afraid for Lebanon at all despite the difficult phase. I say to you all that we are determined to built up our community and our country and to fight poverty and unemployment and combat misery and extremism… It is our posterity's right to enjoy modern education and benefit from different fields and work opportunities. Furthermore, we deserve a nation that cares for us and helps to reach this productive state.

After speeches from the president of the Volunteer Services Organization, Patresa Nabti, the association coordinator Safaa Makawi, Manager of Human Development with the Hariri Foundation and session coordinator Mohamed Baltaji, and a number of trainees, al-Hariri distributed the certificates to the participants.

Sunday, March 23rd 2008

An-Nahar Newspaper

Religions and Schools of Thought

The Contribution of the Orthodox Youth Movement in Arab Culture

Kosti Bendali: Discussing a Cultural Project

Asaad Qitan

"Verily, the death of the Christ and His resurrection represent the dividing line between faith and magic, and between symbol and superstition" (*Al-Nour*[29] 1981, Nos. 6 and 7). The author of those lines, Kosti Bendali, is an Orthodox Christian intellectual unlike most of his kind, who might consider him unrefined or (ironically) unorthodox. Bendali, born in the "Tripoli Harbor," as he likes to call the port city, works from the underlying logic that the Christian faith—were he to have a say in today's world—must enter into a discourse with the various manifestations of human culture. Indeed, it is difficult for us to stumble upon, amongst ourselves, an intellectual figure that broaches this topic with such range and depth as does Bendali, the intergenerational pedagogue in the Orthodox Youth Movement. Bendali is primarily a specialist in analytical psychology and an expert in the pedagogical sciences through teaching these subjects in the Lebanese University and by virtue of his many informative and inspirational years as an educational counselor, but more particularly, through the cognitive achievement he realized by way of the doctoral thesis he submitted in 1981 at the *Université de Lyon*. In his thesis, Bendali sets up a new pillar for communication between Christians and Freudians by demonstrating how true religion is rooted in maternal and paternal experiences, and simultaneously transcends them so that these experiences take up the

[29]Literally meaning, "The Light."

power of a symbol that reveals their origins and conceals them at the same time. In addition to the psychological and pedagogical sciences, Bendali is a shrewd scholar of contemporary philosophy from Nietzsche to Paul Ricoeur, which is attested for by his utilization of modern philosophical and intellectual notions in developing his theory "Symbolism," if one may call it that, as it relates to the formation of religion. And all that is to say nothing of his open-minded discourse with contemporary atheism in both its Marxist and Satrean forms. Furthermore, Bendali is an indefatigable connoisseur of the ancient and modern literary masterpieces, taking from them what strengthens his analysis of psychosocial phenomena. He is convinced that the novelists, through their astute perception, have identified many of man's internal and external movements and tendencies. And along those lines, it is appropriate to point out that Bendali belongs to the forefront of intellectuals in this country who have turned to the Arabic novel and esteemed its role in the analysis of the human personality, and in particular the Arab personality; whereas before the seventies, the Arabic novel had not yet established itself as the foremost means of expression in the Arab world.

From this quick overview, and the latter is only a small part of a vast amount related to Bendali, we find that we have arrived before a project characterized by what we have indicated above as the foundational condition of achieving some sort of cultural presence. That is, an abundant understanding of the Other, a serious study of it, and a profound respect for it in its otherness and a recognition of its achievements. Bendali's ideas have also spread in unorthodox and non-Christian eastern circles, particularly his views on the disadvantages of sectarianism, consumer culture, and the marginalization of

women in our society. This is comprised within a creative mechanism of critical intercourse, which only serves to highlight the authenticity of the cultural dimension that is bolstered by this philosophy. But what I want to point out here, as a matter of specification, is the essence of this cultural project, which Bendali's work represents. I have indicated earlier that Bendali's wish to make the Christian be acknowledged today, in the community in which he is a member—Bendali is, in this respect, in agreement with George Khidr, and with the Orthodox Youth Movement in general—has made him believe in the necessity of dialogue between Christianity and contemporary culture. Does this dialogue warrant being entitled "Cultural Project?" The answer is, as I see it, that it cannot be positive unless we share in Bendali's understanding of what a dialogue is. Indeed, Bendali comprehends dialogue as a great adventure—an adventure that changes and transforms. This dialogue is not a search for what might further entrench traditional Christianity and assert its dogma through, for example, pointing out the cognitive and existential dilemmas that surround our culture. Furthermore, dialogue is not simply a declaration of the points of convergence and divergence between Christianity and contemporary thought, despite their presence, and especially with what concerns human rights and dignity. Dialogue is, in Kosti's approximation, a process of self-criticism in the first degree. It is the willingness to receive right guidance from what appears as plainly evident, even if it were to come from dissident culture[30]. It is, secondly, a preparation for

[30]"Dissident" here refers specifically to al-khawarijiyya, another sect of Islam that rejected the leadership of Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib. They are known for their extreme doctrines and the fact the author is implying that guidance could come even from them is a cause for concern amongst most Muslims. I believe he is trying to make a point (i.e. we should be open-minded enough to consider others' position even if it seems completely contrary to our own).

adaptation, reparation, and renewal. “That is the suffering of religion that is eternally pulled back and forth by these two poles: symbol and superstition, faith and magic. Therefore, it is called to a constant purification process so that it may remain on a straight path and cleanse itself of its blemishes. And by virtue of that, religion should, with magnanimity, accept all criticisms brought to it by those from the outside, even they are occasionally accusatory or mean. This because, by guarding religion against diversions that are liable to knock it off its straight course, they help it to correct its trajectory and they become, whether or not they realize and whether or not they intend, a source of aid to realize this “contrition” (in the evangelical sense of this word, which is a conceptual transformation and a shift in mentality), which religion must continuously pursue, if it wishes to achieve its authenticity” (“Religiosity between Faith and Magic”). It is beyond doubt that Bendali requires the same stance (i.e. self-criticism) of contemporary culture as it embarks on a dialogue with Christianity. He, in this spirit, does not tire in his efforts to expose, for example, the extent of reductionism that the Freudians use when examining the phenomenon of religion, or that which philosophical atheists use with regards to the human being. This critical opposition however, does not hinder him, as he is an Orthodox Christian who believes that Jesus of Nazereth represents all truth, from perceiving himself as “a seeker of truth until the last breath of life.” This is inexplicable except by saying that true dialogue, according to Bendali’s definition, is a process that demands great understanding and is characterized by utmost modesty. Only this synergy between cognitive objectivity and spiritual humility is adequate to explain how he who is deep-rooted in truth is enlightened by his partner in dialogue, the Other, and ascertains new means of approaching his own truth and understanding it. This is to say that real truth,

however deep-rooted you may be, is always deeper and more profound. The truth does not belong to you; rather, you belong to it. The Orthodox Kosti Bendali, with his characterization of himself as "a seeker of truth," explains that dialogue, as a cultural project, is primarily based in and inseparable from its bearer. That is to say: you cannot remove the substance of the dialogue from the person himself; true dialogue does not support any differentiation between knowledge and ethics.

Conclusion: What has been presented—by way of summary—attests for the extent of agreement between George Khidr and Kosti Bendali in regards to their cultural contributions. The importance of this agreement does not lie in the substantive approach that Khidr and Bendali share in their views towards philosophy, psychology, literature, and other religions (particularly Islam). Rather, it lies in the way they approach the raging "outside" culture. I have already touched upon a few of the characteristics of this approach, like an abundance of knowledge, an approach to the Other by acknowledging him as such, and an existential self-infatuation of Being-in-Itself[31]. I wish to, in conclusion, focus on a point of juncture in the cultural project between Khidr and Bendali that seems central to me, and which does not specifically pertain to the approximation of the Other, but rather to the approximation of the Self. We have already become familiar with the importance of self-criticism in Bendali's plan, and we have elaborated at length. Tens of Khidr's articles leave no room for doubt that their author is a master of

[31]Although it is not clear, Qitan may be alluding here, according to one commentator on this article, to the concept of Being-in-Itself, a philosophical neologism denoting the "self-contained and fully realized Being of objects." This term is especially discussed in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, who also uses the term "Dasein," which applies specifically to the Being of persons.

disassembling and analyzing Christian religiosity and history. Is he not the one that once wrote: "From here we plunge, without fear, into all that might be gleaned from knowledge, and we take from it unashamedly; we penetrate further and further into a knowledge that may shake the foundations of religion in its rigid social and traditional sense. Scientific knowledge is always purified. If it is proven, then it is a truth sent down by God lying latent in His creation" (*If I Told the Story of My Childhood*, 2nd Edition, 2001, pg. 74)? The capacity for criticism and adaptation is not limited, according to Khidr and Bendali, to the violence in the history of Christianity and the extremism and superstitious spectacularism that may characterize Christianity today. Rather, it arrives, and this is the most important thing, at what others might consider the pith of the Christian faith. So you ask, for the sake of the development of modern human science, about some of the interpretations arrived at by fathers of the church, and you will disdain the habitual excess of this legacy, or most of it, in its masculinity, and you will not tire in disparaging the mysticism of much of what was written in the hagiography, which is what paves the way for intellectual approximations characterized by extreme boldness, novelty, and voluntarism. Comprised in the allegiance to the gospel of Jesus, the God—the one who died and was resurrected, there is then, according to Bendali, an immeasurable freedom in dealing with the given Christian legacy itself. I do not suppose that I would be wrong if I were to hypothesize that heeding this freedom constitutes an indispensable criterion for any Christian or Orthodox cultural contribution worthy of mention. But freedom is not merely a condition of entry into the vastness of culture by way of religion; rather, it is also in some sense, the last chance for religion to assimilate into culture. Whenever the allegiance to that light, "which burst forth during three years

on the way to the Sea of Galilee (*The Great Light: Places of Prostration* 2, 2001, pg. 101) is associated with the freedom to reexamine thoughts and practices that have accumulated for centuries amongst the ranks of those who call themselves followers of Jesus of Nazareth, and whenever profound knowledge flourishes alongside boundless receptivity, and whenever passion and zeal fuse with creativity and vision, then and only then, can the children of the Orthodox Youth Movement find a firm foothold in a creative Orthodox culture, a culture of sustenance and inspiration for the people of the East....our East.[32] Indeed I do not find, in conclusion, a better explanation of this climate than that which George Khidr once offered, referring to the freedom with which the fathers of the church give and take with one another. "I am addressing the greats amongst us, who dwell in my mind, and I take what I take just as a confused son lays hold on what has been passed down to him from his father, and his father's fathers. The heir will enjoy his inheritance, but at the same time he will act with it, and make it his own. So I cast off their teachings inasmuch as I see that they may have been mistaken, bigoted, or careless with them[33]. And at times, I silence them, because we take great liberties when dealing with our own families, just as the legitimate son does so with his father (*Planet of the Saints*, Places of Prostration 2, 2001, pg. 175).

[32]I owe a great deal of credit to both Ustath and to Tracer on Word Reference Forums for helping me to translate this sentence. Some of the word choice is theirs.
http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=2150795

[33]There is a typo in this sentence. The misprinted word either means to say "in them," or "virulence." The former is assumed, but in the case of the latter, the translation might be: "I cast off their teachings inasmuch as I see that they were, in their virulence, mistaken, bigoted, or careless."

It was left unmentioned last week that Doctor Asaad Qitan is the professor of Divinity at the University of Münster[34] in Germany, and that his research was presented in the celebration of the inauguration of the "Dynamic Forum for Publication and Media" of the Orthodox Youth Movement in the *Le Royal* Hotel, *Dbaiyeh* on March 1st.

Saturday, April 19th 2008

Al-Akhbaar Newspaper

Economy

Illustrative Figure

Democracy or Progress: Which Comes First?

Abdul-Haleem Fadlallah

Some people ask themselves: if the most acute characterization of the current state of affairs in the Arab world is "political congestion," then is Lebanon doomed to stagnate and risk its chance to move forward? Or should a distinction be made between two tasks: political reforms that can wait until interior issues are resolved and the quorum[35] is assembled, and sound, completely conceived, socio-economic development projects that can be immediately implemented.

[34]This could not be verified. The Arabic transliteration does not seem to match well with any actual University.

[35]This is the best I could come up with here. I consulted with some native speakers, and no one seems to know exactly what this refers to.

For many however, development is a political challenge just as much as it is a socio-economic undertaking. It is even, in some sense, a cultural challenge. This is because, in addition to what we know of the human and material role in socio-economic growth, successful development is connected with the accumulation of social capital; that is, with the existence of public values that encourage people to cooperate voluntarily in an active economy, without state coercion. Using data from the 2002 Human Development Report, the United Nations found that socio-economic growth problems are associated with a lack of rightly guided leadership. In the HDR report, studies—which include data from a range of different countries—showed that issues like poverty and underdevelopment were often mitigated with an improvement in general political performance, a greater public participation it critical decision making, and a more widespread sense of accountability and equitability.

But our conception of political freedom as a means to societal growth does not necessarily mean there is a causative link between the two. The relationship between the level of human development and the form of government is neither certain nor clear, and the same applies to the development of economic freedoms versus political ones. The majority of empirical evidence suggests that there is no significant relationship between democracy and socio-economic progress. The democratic model generally produces two mutually irreconcilable forces: one working towards economic progress through, for example, more investments in human resources, and the other working towards *curbing* growth by forcing the government to, as an example, spend more to win in elections.

If this question were posed differently like: Is socio-economic development an incentive for democratization? Or in other words: Can democracy flourish in an unsettled and underdeveloped environment? Then answer to this question is also fraught with ambiguity, and the interrelationships are not sufficient to say that democratic governments always spring from advanced societies characterized by stable growth and a general availability of basic social services.

It is important that people have access to information, that they have the freedom to express themselves, and that they have control over their futures, but this alone does not constitute prosperity and fails to alleviate social injustice. Along with these freedoms must come an improvement in general political performance and a palliation of other societal deficiencies. In some cases, the idea of democracy chalks up to the exchange of power between small, exclusive circles—experienced social and financial elite who manage to acquire power through manipulating the polls and evading the law. For this reason perhaps, we do not see a differentiation between democratic governments and authoritarian regimes in terms of balanced tax systems and equitable distribution of income. Countries with dissimilar political systems, like China, Mozambique, Senegal, and the United Kingdom, have realized roughly the same results in terms of equitable distribution. Jordan, a non-democratic country, performed quite well, while Brazil, generally accepted as democratic, did poorly. This same relationship holds with respect to the relationship between the values of the Human Development Index and the respective indexes of democracy and legal sovereignty.

All in all, we find that democracy does not inhibit revenue increase, and likewise, a lack of revenue does not inhibit democracy. The results are generally inconclusive: In the last two decades, 33 military regimes fell from power and 60% of countries achieved freedom of press, but mankind's condition remains the same, if not worse. In democratic nations, worker's wages are decreasing more than in other countries, and in a country like Germany, workers bear 20% of the additional tax burden. In exchange, the wealthy have been unburdened of 22% of the taxes, and this is happening in the midst of an international competition to lower taxes in favor of globalized capital.

Of course, we do not mean to disparage democracy as a viable and constructive political framework compared to authoritarianism, particularly since we are discussing the Arab world, the countries of which occupied the lowest rankings in the United Nation's Governance Index. Although dictatorships occasionally succeed and achieve economic growth, they are unsettled, the elite in power are more disposed then those unlike them to make mistakes, and these societies are in constant danger of being thrown back into their former, underdeveloped state.

The HDR report encourages us to think about developing the idea of democracy itself. In 1986, the United Nations created the slogan "The Right to Development," which described socio-economic progress as "an integrated process with political, cultural, social, and economic dimensions, paving the way to ensure a person's basic rights and freedoms." This in turn calls for a critical reexamination of these rights, which demand our utmost attention. They are not limited to those rights found in international charters, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; rather, our conception of human rights

must evolve to reach a full recognition of a person's practical needs. A person has the right to adequate wages; he has the right to work in appropriate conditions. He has the right to healthcare, to insurance against poverty and disease, and the right to be protected from war.

So to return to where we started, should the democratic process stop to allow for growth or the opposite? Which of the two sayings are more accurate? "Let reform come later," demanding that before reforms can be implemented, propitious circumstances must come about to allow for them, and that before economic progress can take place, socio-cultural deficiencies that hinder it must be dealt with. Or, "Let reform come first," acting on the pretext that that will lead simultaneously to reformations in decision-making processes, and will improve the efficacy and equitability of production and distribution cycles.

Political reform and socio-economic development are integrated and contemporaneous processes, even if they may not be closely tied to one another, and there is no reason not to embark on them simultaneously. There is nothing for us to do but to end this stagnancy and begin work. We may trip while treading this path, but we will not permit ourselves to be thrown down on a road teeming with those searching for a better tomorrow.

Saturday, April 26th 2008

20 Rabeea Al-Thanii 1429

Al-Mustaqbal newspaper

[Upper Left Corner] Free Space

Citizenship as an Alternative for Utopian Nationalism and Metaphysical Religious Conceptualizations

Bassam Do[36]

Are the Lebanese political powers conducting an internal investigation to examine their stances, behaviors, and aspirations? Or are they continuing in production, and in replication, according to pragmatic logic, striving towards extenuation, as opposed to critique and reform? A great deal of news circulates—although faintly—about the commencement of such investigations, but they remain within a limited scope. These investigations then, are unreliable, and even untrustworthy unless they are public and depend upon the principles of disclosure and transparency. They should glean from previous experiences Lebanon has past through since what has been nearly nine decades, in order that lessons be learned and universal formulas (?) be discovered, and in order to end rumination on crises and blood and introspection about violence and doubt which have become (i.e. rumination and introspection) like unconscious instinctual tendencies that the overwhelming majority of Lebanese practice, influenced by the recurring past,

[36]Lebanese Political Writer

the increasingly dangerous present, and a quasi-deadlocked future. All this so we do not say that it, even in this moment, is actually deadlocked, and additionally, so we do not say that the conditions of doubt and violence, which escalate in the continuation of the current congestion, almost turned into a general social instinct giving people a strong impetus to behave harshly and dangerously and to hold political ideas which awaken skepticism about the potential of living together, and about the possibility of moving from a state of "cohabitation" threatened with division to a state of "citizenry" entrenched in the unity of the society in a comprehensive and apt state framework, which would open a future horizon, and encompass diversity within unity.

If a critical investigation were necessary at all times then it is, in the midst of the current crisis, more necessary than ever, but most political powers do not recognize this necessity. What this means—with frightening clarity—is that the aversion to critical review leads to stagnancy, to hesitation, and to a dissolution of what remains of a role in the balancing of power. In regards to the latter however, this is true to the point that reaching an actual, national compromise that moves Lebanon from being a "war-zone" into being a "nation" is impossible. The most one could imagine in this scenario would be a mere political settlement, which is liable to come to nothing, just as all of the previous settlements came to nothing, because they did not transcend the shifting political sphere, and they did not address what is national and constant.

We are in urgent need of a national settlement. This is exactly what we imagine should be the pith of the critical investigation that the political powers conduct, or else what we see today will repeat tomorrow. Every morrow is close, however far it may be.

Every echo is tainted with the possibility of tragedy in the guise of comedy, and every tragedy pours forth enough blood to color all Lebanon's waters. How long will we play this game from Hell?

The peoples of Lebanon have lived roughly a century and nine decades in a vortex of a war that has been resurfacing approximately every ten years since the year 1840 and continues until today; that is, we arrived in our current state in 1920 with a nearly unsolvable contradiction between our sectarian legacy and outside influences. We have to attempt to balance these two in order to make them palatable to all, regardless of sectarian and regional differences, and regardless of Lebanon's precarious political make-up. This is the only way she can become a viable state[37].

How do we accomplish this balancing act? We should focus of the meaning of "nation" and "state" in regards to Lebanon. This meaning continues to be controversial and disputed between national and religious schools, whereas experiences in Lebanon have proven that the nationalistic bond does not by itself contribute an essential part of the meaning of the nation and the state. The religious bond is essentially incapable of providing this meaning in a society where numerous different sects wrestle for power, without rising at any point from meaning "cohabitation" to meaning "diversity within unity," which actually leads to the concept of "citizenship." True citizenship is the only

[37]I was unable to translate this sentence. The provided sentence provided owes credit to *Tracer* on Word Reference Forums. It seems to depart from the original Arabic, but it is much more intelligible. A literal translation is as follows: *Things will remain this way unless we are able to reconsider the balance of power, so as to make it influential at the core of any solution that the provincial/state intersections might impose, as long as the our political geography puts us at the very point of these intersections.*

possible alternative for the Utopian nationalism and the metaphysical religious conceptualizations that have been proven inapplicable in Lebanese political life[38].

The civil, contractual concept of "citizenship" is the foundation to which the meaning of "nation" and "state" must return in the case of Lebanon, and it, alone, constitutes a middle ground between diametric sectarianism and secularism. But is this the concept that spurs the acting political powers today? Is this concept taken seriously when they hold meeting and assemblies? The answer is no. It is greatly unfortunate that what we see today forces us to notice that the concept of citizenship is thrown aside and marginalized and fails to take a meaningful or influential role in any political dialogue. And if the percentage of that were to differ from one group to another, then what is any dialogue if does not take into consideration the meaning of "homeland" in Lebanon and the meaning of "citizenship" in a framework of complete independence and sovereignty and the fragile relations with Arab countries like Lebanon, countries which emerged and developed during the period of the first and second world wars. However, for some of them, not even a half-century has passed since their establishment and political formation.

If we were to posit all of this in the field of direct political observation, we would see clearly that opposition forces did not look to the Arab initiative to remedy the crisis in Lebanon from the perspective of making the concepts of "nation" and "state" the priority. If that were not true, the president of the republic would have been elected, and he would

[38]This sentence was translated by *Outlandish* on Word Reference Forums. http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?p=10654134#post10654134

have held dialogue-based political and constitutional operations which would have put foundations down for a national settlement in Lebanon, and not just for a political one. And even if some sort of dialogue were desired before the election of the president of the republic, as the opposition states, and even if the sponsorship agreed on that, it has no historical or future value unless it is based on an agreement that, "Lebanon is ultimately a nation for all Lebanese people," and that the logic of compromise is what governs political life in Lebanon. The balance of power must also reclaim its role and its vigor, and become critical in national settlement plans because it moves in this case within its national sphere, in its original geography, history, and political and economic society, and because in this situation, sects build their statements upon the foundation of Lebanese nationalism and do not look past what is interior to the country. They are able to settle and live together, and they gradually move from cohabitation to a unified national existence. In this way, Lebanon does not remain an open war-zone. The state and provincial roles subside and the country withdraws from excess in internal power-balancing acts, or at least, balance is realized between what is interior and exterior. A new political society develops, which embraces internal diversity within national unity, and lives in what resembles objective neutrality. This society would preserve Arab identity without turning Arabism into a pretext for excess in Lebanese nationalism. As balance is realized between Lebanon's difficult position in the region's present geography and between its potential, there is no holy-war zone based upon foolish undertakings which try to seek pretext in the glitter of the extremist religious slogan, whichever region is the one to use it. And so that the latter does not cause ambiguity, what this point means is not resistance in and of itself; rather, every resistance against the

Israeli occupation is legitimate, but resistance must not appoint itself to carry out tasks further than the liberation of the Lebanese homeland. It must not fall into contradiction between what it appoints itself to do, what the national community can tolerate, and what the interior organization has the potential to absorb. We must recognize the specificity of this organization, no matter our own convictions. It is an extant reality that reinforces its own results and expressions, and it will stay that way for a long time before it changes.

It is natural that, facing all this, it might be said that these issues necessitate a deep dialogue, and this is true, as no sane person would refuse dialogue. Productive dialogue however, is the dialogue that transcends discussion about the presidency, the government, and election law and deals with concepts of "nation" and "state" embarking on them from the underlying logic of "citizenry." This dialogue arrives at a national settlement more capable of longevity and development.

[Picture caption] Drawing by Fatima Murtada

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