# Consociationalism and State-Society Relations in Lebanon

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# Abstract

Power-sharing arrangements between the elites of the dominant ethnic communities have been the preferred form of conflict management in post-conflict divided societies. The literature on the impact of power-sharing has often been dominated by macro-level analysis that places the main focus on elites and ethnic communities. However, there is only so much this can tell us about state-society relations and interactions. This thesis will focus on the missing individual micro-level analysis, through a case study of Lebanon – a country with a power-sharing model that is based on a deeply embedded political confessionalism. It will aim to examine how power-sharing has affected micro-level state-society relations in Lebanon, more specifically how it has contributed to the significant gap that exists in understanding individual's perceptions and relations to the state and the dynamics that shape this. Part of this study will also assess whether identities remain firmly sectarian-based, as continuously claimed in the early literature/studies, or if there is a shift in identities and new social forces.

# Acknowledgments/Preface

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

During a trip to Lebanon in 2015, I overheard two old men quarreling about their sense of the presence of the state - "wayn al dawla" (where is the state?) they asked. One contended that the weak state had been unable to provide the necessary electricity and garbage collection. The other instead claimed that their Zuamas – influential political leaders - were the ones who were failing to provide for their needs. It was clear from this conversation that what the state meant to each one of them was very different. This was amidst agitation over the lack of garbage collection and service provision that gathered 300,000 Lebanese in the capital of Beirut and mobilized the "You Stink" and "We Want Accountability" movement in 2015 (Ensor, 2015; The Sectarian Political System, 2012, 13). People were upset with the power-sharing system that was at the heart of Lebanon's political structure, and linked the problem of garbage collection to the inefficient sectarian system that permitted corruption and government inefficiency, and neglected the environment and citizens (Nagle, 2017, p. 16-17). The 2018 parliamentary election, the first in nine years, gave rise to similar sentiments: increased voter skepticism regarding the political process and the prospect of change (Chulov, 2018). The election marked the lowest voter turnout despite bringing in many independent candidates that challenged traditional political elites (Khatib, 2018). "If I thought standing in a two-hour line to vote would change anything, I would have," were sentiments shared by Beirut residents during the elections (Chulov, 2018, 1).

Notwithstanding these recent trends, scholars have continued over the past decades to study post-conflict Lebanon primarily through the same lense, confessional communities, and sectarianism, neglecting how the Lebanese, as individual citizens, may understand and relate to the state. Recent feelings of insecurity and powerlessness, combined with dissatisfaction, suggests that it may be time to revisit notions surrounding the complex intangible dimension of state-society relations in Lebanon and delve deeper into local perspectives of the state.

Lebanon is a commonly cited example of a divided society with deep cleavages between its 18 religious/confessional communities and high political salience (Kachuyevski & Olesker, 2014, 304-306). Lebanon's history - marked by a 15-year civil war, internal and external pressures, and periods of sporadic instability - have often relegated it to a state of fragility and high tensions. The Lebanese power-sharing model, institutionalized during independence and reinforced after the civil war (1975-1990), is based on a deeply embedded political confessionalism that allocates proportional representation and provides segmented autonomy and veto rights to the country's confessional communities (Salamey & Tabar, 2008, 242; Bray-Collins, 2016, 446; Schmid, 2007, 30). This consociational power-sharing system is designed to accommodate elites and foster cooperation (Lijphart, 1969). However, there is very little understanding of how such an arrangement engages and impacts the relationship between individuals and the state – both formally and informally. Both power-sharing and sectarianism have become the predominant reading key of political relations and state-society relations.

The early literature following the Lebanese civil war examined state-society relations in terms of confessional identification, elite inter-confessional relations, and confessional interaction with the 'state' (Harik, 1993, Haddad, 2001, Haddad, 2001, Azar & Mullet, 2002, Moaddel et al., 2012, Tamirace, 2008). Furthermore, earlier studies, heavily reliant on structural questionnaires and surveys, demonstrated that individuals uphold sectarian identities and that their interaction with the political system is negotiated and filtered by their confessional communities and elites. There is extensive literature on the sectarian consociational system and the political aspirations of the different confessional groups in Lebanon, much of which is centered on specific political events and elite inter-confessional competition. The state's weak ability to provide social provisions is emphasized to highlight the way in which it has impacted state-society relations and reinforced the dependence on sectarian political leaders and confessional communities to fill the

void (Joseph, 2011; Makhoul and Harrison, 2004; Delattola, 2016). Within this system, political clientelism is an essential state-society dynamic in which 'zuama' - those who have political and economic influence - provide essential goods and services in exchange for political support (Joseph, 2011; Delattolla, 2016; Makhoul and Harrison, 2004; Hermez, 2015). It is evident that confessional identities play a significant role in Lebanese society, in the way that they have been enshrined in the political system, played out in the exchange of public goods, characterized social relations, and impeded the creation of a unifying Lebanese identity (Makdisi, 1996; Haddad, 2001; Kliot, 1987; Tamirace, 2008).

But the little new literature produced on the impact of power-sharing in post-war Lebanon remains dominated by a macro lens that focuses on macropolitics and privileges confessional elites and their communities. Due to this, most of the literature on power-sharing and state-society relations in Lebanon examines how confessional groups and the elites engage in the political system. This has further led to the neglect of a microanalysis of state-society relations beyond confessionalism and communities and hence resulted in an extensive gap in understanding the local and individual dynamics and perceptions regarding the state. Beyond macropolitics and the inevitable void that confessional political leaders or 'Zuama' fill for the state, how do individuals perceive the state? What impacts have power-sharing schemes had on an individual's perceptions of and relations with the state? Moreover, has the nature of confessional/sectarian identification changed since this early literature? Ultimately, what shape does this all take more than 28 years after the end of the war?

This thesis targets this gap in the literature. More specifically, it provides a micro-analysis of individuals' identification and their identification with the state. It contributes, as a result, to the largely missing understanding of how individuals understand, perceive, and identify with authority and the state. Furthermore, it provides insights into what factors shape public perceptions and

expectations of authorities and state institutions. This is by far the most crucial aspect of the research. In divided societies such as Lebanon, it is vital to examine the changing nature of citizens' identification, inter-community relations, and perceptions of what the state is because it touches on issues of social cohesion, perspectives of state legitimacy and how identities and state relations evolve through the project of state-building. This can further reveal why individuals feel represented or excluded from public institutions and the impact this has on feelings of individual civic agency. In the context of managing divided societies, this study moves away from the tendency to focus and fixate on institutions, communities, and the configuration of elite power to provide a bottom-up approach of ordinary peoples' perspectives instead. It takes the missing micro-lens of state-society relations in Lebanon, that not only delves into individual/state relations but also reveals the impact of power-sharing at the local level.

***Literature Review – Divided Societies and Power-sharing:***

To understand the impact of power-sharing, as deployed in the Lebanese context, it is vital the examine the literature that characterizes divided societies and the role that different institutional models are meant to play. Lebanon is representative of many of today's modern states that are rarely homogenous and primarily made up of multiple ethnic groups with cross-cutting cleavages (Kachuyevski & Olesker, 2014; Horowitz, 1985; Wimmer, 1997). In the literature, ethnicity is understood as an inclusive concept that entails descent-based attributes and a sense of collective belonging defined by race, language, religion, and/or history (Horowitz, 1985). There are different definitions of what characterizes societies with multiple ethnic groups - known as plural, divided, and deeply divided societies. A plural society is culturally diverse with salient ethnicities and is politically organized along ethnic community lines (Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972, 6). Within plural societies, there are different categories of diversity, depending on whether they have balanced competition, a dominant minority, a dominant majority, and a fragmented environment with

multiple non-dominant groups (Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972, 220). Divided societies, for their part, have deep cleavages (ethnic, religious and cultural) and are "based on identities with high political salience that are sustained over a substantial period of time" (Lustick, 1979, p. 325; Kachuyevski & Olesker, 2014, 304-306). These societies are divided along cleavages–which means that ethnic divisions are visible within the media, in education, and associations (Guelke, 2012, 6). In addition, people are conscious of the divisions, and community identification plays a predominant role (Guelke, 2012, 30; Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972, 65).

In the context of state-society relations in divided societies – "the interactions and interdependency between the state and society" is even more complicated (Sellers, 2010, 26). This is because divided societies are characterized by competitive ethnic politics in which salient issues align with identity-centric sentiments (Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972, 63, 91; Stewart, 2001, 2). There is an ethnicization of public goods, state bureaucracy, and political parties (Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972, 90-91; Wimmer, 1997, 633-636; Reynal-Querol, 2002, 31). It is connected to the struggle for the resources of the modern state, which includes legal, economic, and political representation/resources (Wimmer, 1997, 642). When this polarization over resources translates into severe horizontal inequalities that coincide with ethnic difference, they may become a marker for ethnic mobilization and potential violence (Stewart, 2001, 2-8; Horowitz, 2007, 1215; Reynal-Querol, 2002, 30-31; Gurr, 1993, 2).

It is important to note that this does not mean ethnic behavior governs every situation, but instead that it is a salient filter in divided societies (Horowitz, 1985, 6). Furthermore, not all divided societies experience violence. Some, such as Lebanon, experience spurges of violence, while others live in relative peace (Reynal-Querol, 2002, 36; Stewart, 20001, 2-3). Nonetheless, intrastate (civil) conflict is the most common form of armed conflict, and since the 1990s there has

been a dramatic increase of intrastate conflicts between ethnic groups (Buhaug et al., 2007, 4-5, Hanlon, 2009, 2, 13).

Given the complex dynamics in divided societies and their links to ethnic-based violence, the study of conflict resolution has gained prominence, striving to shed light on new forms of political institutions to regulate state-society relations and address ethnic divisions. In the discussion of ethnic conflict resolution, institutions are vital for instilling legitimacy, peace, and social stability (Wolff, 2010, 2; Simonsen, 2005, 315). According to scholars, higher levels of inclusiveness and democracy reduce the chances of civil war (Reynal-Querol, 2002, 2). There is no consensus on the most suitable institutions for stable conflict settlement, but power-sharing, including consociationalism, has dominated peace agreements following political crises and civil wars in divided societies (Cheeseman, 2011, 336; Guelke, 2012, 31).

In negotiated peace settlements, power-sharing signifies the creation of an inclusive government in which political positions and executive power are shared among the various ethnic groups (Cheeseman, 2011, 338-339; Tull & Mehler, 2005, 386-87). In the African context, they are referred to as 'unity governments,' where inclusion is defined "in terms of the minimum range of interests necessary to legitimate the exercise of aggregate political authority" (Le Van, 2011, 32-43; Cheeseman, 2011). As a well-known form of power-sharing, consociationalism, developed by Arend Lijphard in 1977, is a theory and programme that provides mechanism for conflict regulation in divided societies through the incorporation of elites from divided communities into government structures (Reilly, 2012, 261; McCulloch, 2013, 112; Butenschøn, 1985, 86). This is institutionalized through coalitions, mutual vetoes, proportionality in public appointments, and segmental autonomy (Nagle, 2016, 858, Nagle, 2013, 82).

The underlying logic of power-sharing is that it will reduce the security dilemma – the propensity to center on one's group at the risk of antagonising the others - that emerges amongst

warring parties and ethnic groups by ensuring that all groups have an influence on decision-making and a stake in the transition to peace (Lemarchand 2006, 3; Jung, 2012, 489). It is based on the premise that, by ensuring representation of the salient cleavages in government, contentious politics can be transformed into an environment of cooperation and compromise that is essential for the eventual softening of ethnic divisions (Butenschøn, 1985, 85-10; Nagle, 2017, 5; Jarrett, 2016, B, 402-412). This institutionalization of inclusive participation is seen as the key to conflict resolution that will contribute to political stability and democracy (Lemarchand 2006, 2; Jung, 2012, 489-490).

Nonetheless, there is a disconnect between theory and practice. Despite being widely practiced, academics and practitioners are divided on the merits of power-sharing and especially consociationalism (McCulloch, 2014, 502; Simons et al., 2013, 682; Cheeseman, 2011, 359; Sriram & Zahar, 2009, 21). Opponents assert that power-sharing arrangements instill 'negative peace' and fosters short-term stability while impeding and rarely facilitating long-term sustainable peace and democracy (Sriram & Zahar, 2009, 20; Cheeseman, 2011, 359; Jung, 2012, 489). Another major criticism against stringent power-sharing is that by locking cleavages in the political structure, it entrenches the divisions it seeks to ameliorate (Guelke, 2012, 121; Jung, 2012, 500; Yakinthoum 2009, 20; Simonsen, 2005, 304).

In the case of Lebanon, scholars regularly claim that power-sharing is the only practical solution for Lebanon's turbulent history and profoundly divided makeup (Di Mauro, 2008, 467; Haddad, 2009, 410). This is based on the premise that maintaining the peace in Lebanon is a matter of keeping a balance and preserving the rights of communities that view themselves as the basis on which the Lebanese state was constructed (Haddad, 2009, 4040). However, not all scholars agree, some firmly assert that the Lebanese power-sharing agreement, known as the Taef accord, has further entrenched sectarianism in the public and private sphere, while also strengthening

confessional identities and hampering intergroup cooperation (Salti & Chaaban, 2010, 640; Haddad, 2009, 410). For these scholars, the Taef Accord and more broadly, the power-sharing arrangement behind it, has produced tensions and inter-confessional violence (Di Mauro, 2008, 467; Haddad, 2009, 413; Salamey and Tabar, 2012, 507).

***State-society Relations:***

Both proponents and opponents of consociationalism raise valid arguments that should be examined for their long-term impact on state-society relations. The implications of consociational power-sharing on identity politics and whether this model entrenches identities or moderates identities is heavily debated. Within this debate, it is important to note that there are different strategies for implementing consociationalism. The corporate model predetermines and institutionalizes ethnic groups that are entitled to power-sharing (McCulloch, 2014, 502-503; Nagle, 2016, B 858; Nagle, A, 2016, 1145). This freezes a particular polarized moment that becomes the base of government, and may perpetuate the same divisions it seeks to reform (McCulloch, 2014, 508-509). Consociationalism's logic maintains that ethnic identities "are unlikely to assimilate, fuse, or dissolve into one common (national) identity at any foreseeable point" (Nagle, 2012, 4). In light of this stringent view of identity, some scholars have recently argued that consociationalism "creates an exclusionary form of citizenship based solely on ethnicity to the detriment of alternative identity markers, such as gender or sexuality" (Pierson & Thomson, 2018, 100). This excludes and discriminates against those who diverge from the dominant ethnic narrative and narrows the space for other forms of identification (Nagle, 2017, 6; Nagle, B, 2016, 860; Pierson & Thomson, 2018, 104-105; Yakinthou, 2009, 20). These groups of 'others' include feminists, secularists, socialists, migrants, sexual minorities, and individuals who do not identify as part of their ethnic communities (Nagle, 2017, 2; Pierson & Thomson, 2018, 103-104; Stojanović, 2017, 5-7). This is further reinforced through segmental autonomy, which

provides ethnic groups with authority over areas of exclusive concern that also reinforcing individuals' reliance on these groups and limits inter-ethnic contact (O'Flynn, 2010, 581; Aunger, 1996, n/a).

In response to criticisms, leading proponents of consociationalism acknowledge that pre-determined forms of power-sharing are susceptible to institutionalizing identities and have suggested reforms promoting instead a more liberal form of consociationalism (Nagle, 2016, B, 858; Nagle, 2016, A, 1145; McCulloch, 2014, 505; Wolff, 2012, 2010, 7). Liberal consociationalism does not constitutionally entrench group representation or identify the groups entitled to a share of power, but it places thresholds, allows devolution, and leaves the question of power-sharing in the hands of voters (McCulloch, 2014, 502-504). Liberal consociationalism is more adaptable because it allows citizens to determine the saliency of identity and the parties to power-sharing (McCulloch, 2014, 502,510,514; Nagle, 2016, B, 858; Nagle, 2016, A, 1145; Pierson & Thomson, 2018, 104). However, during the negotiated transition from war to peace, groups prefer strong guarantees, in which corporate consociationalism continues to dominate (McCulloch, 2014, 502, 505, 510; Nagle, 2016, A, 1147-48). Weak examples of liberal cases include Iraq and Afghanistan, both of which remain engulfed in conflict and lack the necessary bases for the actual implementation of consociationalism. Hybrid cases such as Northern Ireland, which mix formal measures within an open system that does not institutionalize identity, may be grounds for more optimism (McCulloch, 2014, 509).

The literature on consociationalism places emphasis on election results and political parties in explaining the impact of consociational power-sharing on the creation of a shared identity and the intensification of cleavages. A general concern with power-sharing is its failure to facilitate a shared identity, as evident in Belgium and Fiji, where ethnolinguistic and racial-ethnic identities remain salient despite a long history of power-sharing (Jarrett, 2016, 402; Iyer, 2007,

131). Even studies comparing the liberal/hybrid and corporate models, the former being Northern Ireland and the latter Belgium, conclude that both show a minimal potential of a shared identity and that identity moderation, in either case, is not the result of consociational arrangements (Jarrett, 2016, A, 427, 413-15).

The effect of power-sharing and party politics is even more evident when examining interactions in formal and informal spaces. The politicization of policy issues along salient cleavages creates tensions over who will profit most from policy development (Peters, 2006, 1089; Horowitz, 2007, 1221). When power-sharing models include a mutual veto system, this politicization leads to a dysfunctional system that disrupts public policymaking and contributes to intercommunal conflict and immobilism (Nagle, 2016, A, 1145; Peters, 2006, 1084, Le Van, 2011, 41). In this sense, vetoes have created state paralysis and gridlock, which leave citizens' needs unaddressed, contributing to perceptions of the failure of the government to meet those needs (Horowitz, 2007, 1221; O'Flynn, 2010, 585; Pierson & Thomson, 2018, 104). Despite this, the system continues to function because parties and politicians engage in bargaining, patronage, and clientelism to meet their self-interest (and the needs of their constituents), with little intervention and accountability (Peters, 2006, 1085-1086; Le Van, 2011, 45; Kendhammer, 2015, 145-147; Iyer, 2007, 141). This transcends into the societal realm, where it is acknowledged that ethnic connections and elite relations are a significant point of leverage for acquiring services and goods from state institutions (Peters, 2006, 1087; Kendhammer, 2015, 148). Patronage and clientelism are a response to institutionally weak states, allowing impoverished communities to access resources that the state is unable to provide (Spears, 2013, 39-40).

Much like the case with the conceptual literature, within Lebanon specific literature, there is a strong focus on the politicization of issues along salient cleavages and the role of elites in society - in both maintaining the balance of power between communities as well as fueling

sectarianism. Conflicting interests among the heads of state and the proportional parliament have led to the use of veto power and the failure to reach quorum on critical reforms. This has often resulted in political deadlocks that have hindered the implementation of public policies, paralyzed political institutions and eroded the commitment to public goods (Schmid, 2007, 32-33; Salamey and P 2009, 84; Devre, 2011, 233,236; Haddad, 2009, 414). According to Aoun and Zahar, the misuse of executive positions and parliamentary positions, has played out: in that each is "attempting to enhance his power and that of his community at the expense of the others" (2017, 107).

To add to this, scholars claim that the clientelist system is based on vertical loyalties to one's own confession/community (Schmind, 2007, 30). This is supported by Cammett's extensive study of Lebanon's non-state – Zuama and political party run welfare providers. The study provides evidence that confessional identity is critical for gaining access to welfare and that higher levels of political involvement and sectarian support is linked to greater access to financial assistance for health, education and other social benefits (Cammett, 2011, 59, 71-86, 219). Others have argued that the level of confessional diversity within electoral districts not only affects how Zuamas gain support, but who they provide goods to (Hamzeh, 2001, 172; Gubser, 1973, 173). This has led some to claim that the Lebanese state is a Zuama state, in which confessional and party leaders have manipulated the institutions, function, and power of the state to expand their clientelist interests (Hermez, 2015, 508).

Evidently, because religious institutions and political parties also provide access to schools, health services, and media, this reinforces a confessional society with differing socialization processes (Aoun & Zahar, 2017, 107-108; Haddad, 2009, 400-401). What this socialization process has led to, and what the literature emphasizes is that confessional communities have differing notions of what being Lebanese means, and this has hindered the creation of national

identity and reinforced the dominance of confessional identities (Haddad, 2009, 400-401; Aoun & Zahar, 2017, 105). It is important to note that in the literature there is a strong assumption of the sectarian/ideological leanings of the different confessional communities. Studies that have examined support for sectarian leadership indicate that sectarian affiliation drives Lebanese respondents and that stronger identification with one's confessional community affects attitudes towards other confessional communities (Salamey & Tabar, 2012, 504, 508; Licata et al., 2012, 181-189). These results are similar to earlier studies conducted by Harik (1993), Haddad (A, 2001), Haddad (B, 2001), and Azar & Mullet (2002). However, these studies fail to examine the reasoning behind participants' support or lack of support for sectarianism and how this connects to perceptions of citizenship/state, socialization, and ideas of authority, rights, and community. Furthermore, they are largely outdated, having been largely written following the civil war and in the early 2000s. Arguably much has occurred since then, making it vital to reexamine identity.

This is all very important for understanding state-society relations in the context of Lebanon because it provides insights into how specific power-sharing mechanisms impact citizens' relationship with the state and into the new modes of interactions, formal and informal, that emerge to compensate for political challenges and citizens' needs within power-sharing arrangements. Institutionalized power-sharing systems diminish the capacity of voters to correct or reward performance and make it difficult to identify and determine responsibility for policy (Le Van, 2011, 36-39). According to Le Van, this disrupts the relationship between citizens and their representations, as well as creates a space of dual sovereignty in which elites and the public may have different perceptions of who the government/state is (2011, 39-40). Arguably, as this research will show, these dynamics blur citizens' relationship with their state.

Nonetheless, since the literature primarily focuses on elites, and in particular modes of elite cooperation and engagement, there is only so much that macro party politics and formal

structures can tell us about state-society relations and interactions under divided settings subjected to long term power-sharing arrangements (e.g., Butenschøn, 1985; Tsebelis, 1990; Peters, 2006; Le Van, 2011; Cheeseman, 2011; Simons et al., 2013). This is partly because consociational theory emphasizes the role of elites as the main problem solvers and prioritizes macro-level cooperation for building inter-ethnic trust and social cohesion (Butenschøn, 1985, 85-94; Nagle, 2016, A, 1147-1148; Jarrett, 2016, 412). This presumes that top-down cooperative behaviour will eventually trickle down to the local individual level (Horowitz, 1985, 3; Yakinthou, 2009, 22; Till & Mehler, 2005, 375-398). In reality, however, how this translates at the local individual level is rarely examined.

This is an important gap, since a more in-depth analysis of broader interactions of power-sharing found in sparse literature on the topic reveals alternative forms of identification and social spaces (Pierson &Thomson, 2018, 108; Touquet & Vermeersch, 2008, 272-274). Touquet and Vermeersch reason that scholars of consociational politics should "view the state at once as a clearly bounded, unified organization and as a bulk of loosely connected parts…" (2008, 272). This deviates from a narrow focus on formal ethnic politics and allows an examination of state-society relations that reveals the "deviant social forces", the alternative forms of identity and organization that provide space for the interactions that are necessary for overcoming divisions (Pierson &Thomson, 2018, 108-109; Touquet & Vermeersch, 2008, 282). Civil society groups and social movements are essential agents of resistance to the dominant narrative surrounding segregated identity in the way they contest and alters modes of thinking, interaction, and geography (Nagle, 2012, 4, 7).

According to the literature on Lebanon, power-sharing has reinforced the hold of religious institutions and privileged confessional identities while limiting the space for "other ways of being" non-sectarian (Nagle, 2017, p. 2-4; Aoun & Zahar, 2017,111, 107-108). An examination

of micro-level dynamics reveals a mobilization of non-sectarian civil society organizations and social movements focused on public issues and rights advocacy - in favor of civil marriages, gay marriages, gender equality, reformed citizenship laws, and across the board service provision (Aoun & Zahar, 2017, 110-11; Bray-Collins, 2016, p. 452-469; Nagle, 2017, 10-13). Similarly, a study of social relations in Bosnia and Belgium, for example, reveals that cross-ethnic interactions in mixed workplaces and civic organizations allowed individuals to establish ties, bridge social capital and, in the latter, to communicate through "functional bilingualism" (Touquet & Vermeersch, 2008, 275, 283). These social spaces provide the opportunity for new associational relationships so that individuals can mobilize around common group issues, produce solidarity, reassess identity, as well as promote shared public spaces (Nagle, 2012, 24-25; Nagle, 2013, 90; Touquet & Vermeersch, 2008, 283-284).

It should be noted that overall, the literature on power-sharing and state-society relations in Lebanon is consistent with the overall conceptual literature. In both the Lebanon specific literature and the conceptual literature, the individual is largely neglected from the analysis. Little is known on how the above transactional dynamics impact how individuals fundamentally perceive and relate to the state or how the dynamics that arise out of power-sharing arrangements, such as segmental autonomy, may shape citizens view of the state. Ultimately, how power-sharing arrangements translate into micro-level processes and their impact on individual's perceptions and identification, are mostly unknown and unexamined. In Lebanon, power-sharing and sectarianism are vital for understanding political and even social life, however long-standing 'facts' may become assumptions that negate the process by which relations, dynamics and, identities evolve and shape one another.

***Conceptual/Theoretical Framework:***

Ultimately my inquiry into state-society relations in Lebanon is conceptualized within constructivism and more specifically, social constructivism theory. Social constructivism asserts that reality is constructed through interactions and activities that shape individual's knowledge, views, perceptions, and understandings (Kim, 2001, 2-6; Liu & Ju, 2010, 64), which they then act upon to further confirm. Constructivists, such as Berger and Luckmann, view society as existing both as objective and subjective reality – "the interaction of people with the social world… (which) in turn, (influences) people (and results) in routinisation and habitualization" (Andrews, 2012, 40).

In the same way, within constructivist thought, identity is socially constructed and fluid in nature (Chandra, 2012, 2-6). Constructivists agree that "individuals have multiple identities that can change endogenously to political and economic processes" (Chandra, 2012, 4). This challenges conventional knowledge that is premised on the primordial notion of identities (ethnic or otherwise) as unchanging and fixed facts of the natural/social world (Fearon, & Laitin, 2000, 848-4). Constructivists see identities as a product and response to the political/social/economic contexts (Varshney, 2007, 291). Constructivism allows for the possibilities that in some situation's identities may be fluid and malleable, that new identities may arise, as well that in some context's identities may be sticky and hard to change. It is important to note that despite social constructivism's emphasis on the use of narratives to create and change identities and citizenships, there is no general agreement on the pace of identity change and the factors that facilitate this (Cerulo, 1997, 390).

In the context of Lebanon and the earlier literature, sectarianism predominates, where it is important to consider what Kota's research puts forth as the existence of three kinds of sectarianism that may interact together but are not mutually exclusive (2012). The first is the sectarian identity due to the "parochial mentality" and the inter-community mistrust; the second is

sectarian practices based on the elite political behavior that pushes for sectarian-based interests; and finally, sectarianism as an institution that embeds confessionalism in the political power-sharing system (Kota, 2012, 103-104). These different forms of sectarianism will remain in the background, where this research sees them as potentially part of people's social world but not fixed in nature. In doing so, it will shed led on their micro-level interactions and what role they continue to play in people's lives today.

Taking the above into consideration, this thesis aims to focus on two central themes in its study of state-society relations in Lebanon. The first examines whether there are emerging social forces and non-sectarian forms of identity formation among Lebanese citizens. In trying to understand the possibly changing nature of identities, the thesis focuses on the following questions:

- How is identity being defined in Lebanon? Beyond the traditional frame, what are alternative forms of affiliation?
- How does identity affect interactions and lived reality?

Understanding perceptions of identity and identity formation has implications for the second component of the research that aims to understand the impact of power-sharing on how Lebanese citizens relate to and perceive the state and authority. The literature on power-sharing in Lebanon is fixated on confessional communities and their dynamics within the political system as well as confessional elite interactions at the macro level. This largely ignores individual narratives and automatically filters and lumps them within the larger confessional community dynamics. This leaves a gap in individual perspectives and very little understanding of what the state means to individuals. This set of issues raises the following sub-questions:

- How do citizens understand authority? What is their interaction with and expectations regarding authority?

- In that vein, what does the state mean to citizens, and how do they interact with it? And do they feel represented within the political structure and its power-sharing arrangement?

These two larger sets of questions not only update the literature on identities in Lebanon, including looking at whether recent events really do indicate the emergence of new social forces, but it also fills the gap on the impact of power-sharing on the essential relationship and social contract between citizens and the 'state.' Although institutionalized identities are sticky, they are also in flux and permeable, reinforcing the need to monitor their evolution continually.

Evidently, there is growing dissatisfaction with the political system and, in turn, awareness of its benefits, shortcomings, and failures. The "You stink" movement in 2015, the heavy discontent mirrored in everyday conversation during fieldwork in 2018, and what has become dubbed the "Lebanese revolution" in October 2019, suggest a need to examine new forms of expectations regarding the state. There is a more imminent need to revisit this pressing topic and to explore how this has impacted the way Lebanese citizens understand and relate to authorities and the state and whether they are attached to the state. Elkins and Sides examine "state attachment" in multi-ethnic states where they understand attachment as whether citizens define themselves as members of the state, and how warmly (positivity and pride) citizens feel towards the state (Do they self-categorize with their ethnic group or the state as a whole) (2007). Although this is not the primary purpose of this thesis, the findings may shed light on whether people feel a weak or strong state attachment and how this fits within their identity and their expectations of the state.

***Methodology:***

This thesis utilizes an in-depth case study of Lebanon to understand state-society relations in divided societies subjected to long-term power-sharing arrangements. The pros of studying Lebanon are that it is one of the most ethnically diverse countries, and it is hailed as a model of

power-sharing. Its long history and experience with power-sharing make it a perfect case to examine the long-term impact that power-sharing has and how it shapes state-society dynamics in divided and fragile contexts. However, many scholars categorise Lebanon as a unique case because it has been able to withstand conflict and instability in the region without reverting back to chaos. Lebanon's form of corporate consociationalism places it on the extreme end of countries with power-sharing arrangements, this in addition to its geopolitical location and the influence of various foreign actors adds further consideration before making broader generalizations. Despite this, the case study of Lebanon can act as both an exploratory and explanatory case that is vital for understanding the phenomenon at hand. An in-depth case study is recognized as a valid strategy to understand deep social trends, which allows the researcher to gather a wealth of details "important for the development of a nuanced view of reality" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 6).

This research entailed a qualitative study, which "is a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena (actions, decisions, beliefs, values etc.) within their social worlds" (Ritchie et al., 2013, 3). This was best fitted for exploring, explaining, and understanding the complex social processes at the core of the thesis. Furthermore, this is ethnographically inspired research that aims to "provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions, as well as the nature of the location they inhabit…" (Reeves et al., 2008, 1). In order to do this, the research methods included individual interviews and detailed field observations. This elicited information that offered a glimpse into participants' world – their experiences and perspectives, particularly in relation to their identities and relationship to the state.

The qualitative inquiry was primarily based on in-depth interviews because of its key focus on individuals and its detailed method of investigation into individual's perspectives and their social context (Ritchie et al., 2013, 58). The use of semi-structured interviews ensured specific questions were asked but also allowed space for the priorities and needs of participants to emerge

– essential for this type of research. The interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to three hours, with a sample size of 55 interviewees. The interviews entailed a proportional representation of Lebanon's confessional demographic characteristics. This was not to reaffirm sectarian logic: individuals may originate from a confessional community and not necessarily identify. However, because of Lebanon's divided character, it was essential to ensure representation. The most recent study by Statistics Lebanon found the demographic percentages to be 54% Muslim (27% Shia, 27% Sunni), 5.6% Druze, and 40.4% Christian (the most prominent of which are 21% Maronite and 8% Greek Orthodox). [1] The interview sample aimed for a more or less representative sample of Lebanese citizens from the major confessional communities in Lebanon; of the 55 participants, 11 were of Druze background, 17 of Shia background, 15 of Sunni background and 12 of Christian background. Almost all participants self-identified this during the process of the interview and those that did not indicated it in their reference to their family background. Furthermore, the sample took into consideration a proximate representation of males and females, 22 female participants and 36 male participants as well as 37 participants that fit into the younger population group of post-war children (between 20 and 40) and the 21 participants above the age of 40 who would have possible recollections of Lebanon's civil war (between 40 and 60). Notedly, there were attempts to set up interviews with individuals who lived through the war or were of their prime age during the war but these did not pan through – either individuals were not interested in participating, or they kept rescheduling to no avail. This could be due to possible trauma that would come out of participating in the interview and the lack of perceived trust. Despite this, I was able to obtain this perspective through conversations with people and interviews with participants who disclosed the differing perspectives that their previous generation held.

[1] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2015). Refworld | 2015 Report on International Religious Freedom - Lebanon. Retrieved from Refworld website: https://www.refworld.org/publisher,USDOS,,LBN,57add85f13,0.html

In terms of the sample population, the above representation did not include pre-set quotas for confessional background, and it was difficult and unfeasible to ensure a full geographic representation, given the time and resource constraints. The sample population was gathered primarily from Beirut, due to its diversity, and ensured a blended approach of canvasing mixed and non-mixed areas. The Verdun area of Beirut, among others, is a mixed area, other areas of Beirut are also mixed but with confessional majorities. Western parts of Beirut have a large Sunni population, the southern suburbs of Beirut have a predominantly Shia makeup, and the eastern and northern part of Beirut (suburbs) are predominantly Christian. The Druze community has pockets within these areas and are close by in Mount Lebanon, which is part of Greater Beirut. In terms of state-society relations, Beirut is the capital city and is not entirely representative of the rest of Lebanon. However, there are more grassroots movements in Beirut, so this was the best place to start. Additionally, a vast majority of individuals residing in Beirut were registered in other districts in Lebanon, but either they or their parents moved to Beirut, which meant that participants were able to speak to their experience beyond just Beirut. Additionally, I was able to diversify and gather participants and interviews in other urban centers around Lebanon, such as Saida and Tyre where political parties had more of a presence but remained diverse.

Given the possible sensitivity surrounding the interview topic, a combination of sampling and recruitment approaches were used. I recruited participants through community centers, organizations, universities, public events, and public spaces. I networked, used connections and a snowball method in which participants referred me to other potential participants. In the case of Lebanon and the timing of my research, political deadlock over ministerial seats, political violence on the streets that at times led to rescheduling interviews and growing fear of freedom of speech: I found that participants were most comfortable if we had a mutual contact that they knew or could trust or if they were able to talk to me in a different context first. Participants were very open about

referring potential participants who differed from their views and would reach out to me once they confirmed the sharing of contact information.

The interviews were conducted in Arabic or English depending on the participant's comfort level, and all the interviews were recorded with the participant's consent. I transcribed/translated all the interviews and used Microsoft word and excel for analysis. The recording only took place once the interview began and allowed me to engage and intently focus on listening to the participants. I used qualitative content analysis to interpret the meaning of the text data, which was done "through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). This was an inductive category development process guided by the research questions and data content.

The ethnographically inspired field observations were "day-by-day writing up of fieldnotes observations and reflections concerning "the field"' (Emerson et al., 2001, 1). This included daily/weekly observations and accounts of the social settings, scenes, informal conversations, thoughts, and anything significant to understanding the context and phenomena at the heart of the research (Emerson et al., 2001, 4). Although this was helpful for the research and myself as a researcher, not all observations or notes were used for the final research/written component.

Despite the calculated planning, there were limitations to data collection, which were mitigated during the research process. Interviews allow researchers to gather rich data, but that data may not always be wholly accurate as interviewees can exaggerate or downplay their reality and not give an accurate account of events/experiences (Morris, 2015, 7). To address the possibility of this bias data, construct validity was maintained and corrected through additional vetting and triangulation of information through local articles, secondary literature, and field observations and notes. This was complemented by consultation with local experts, and attendance at workshops and community initiatives related to my subject area and topic. I had the opportunity to attend

panels and discussions on the following topics: Is Wasta More Effective than Experience in the Workplace? (at the Lebanese American University); Feminist Advocacy, Family law and Violence Against Women (American University of Beirut); Reconstructing Neighbourhoods of War (OIB Orient-Institute Beirut); War Series Discussions with the Public (hosted by the NGO Coffee and Politics) - History of Lebanon, Independence to Civil War; 28 Years on the End of the War: How do we Face the Legacy of Political Violence in Lebanon; and How to Rehabilitate Politics in the Eyes of Lebanese Society and Universities.

Another limitation is the bias arising from my preconceptions, especially in terms of how they may shape the analysis. Despite my Lebanese background, I was born and raised abroad, and as an outsider-insider, it was imperative to maintain an awareness of my preconceptions, assumptions, beliefs, and experience to minimize bias influence on the data analysis and findings (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017, 95-97). During the interviews, participants were curious about my confessional and regional background in Lebanon and made assumptions and sometimes even directly asked me. This sometimes made for uncomfortable situations. However, in such instances, I focused on my multifaceted identity and the fact that I was born and raised abroad, arguably being “somewhat of an insider” but not too much helped in putting participants at ease without having to worry about offending me. In academic research, confirmability refers to the degree to which objectivity is possible in social research and takes steps to reduce investigator bias and to demonstrate good faith (Shenton, 2004,72). In line with this, caution and transparency were key to ensure adequate checks were in place to safeguard against bias. Some techniques that were used were reflexivity and audit trials; the former entailed being aware of my position and questioning my interpretations, and the latter included detailing and making explicit the course of data collection and analysis.

***Ethics:***

As a starting point to ethical considerations, it is important to note that people in Lebanon are open to discussing politics and their confessional background, and due to my familiarity with Lebanese politics and social life, I was confident in my ability to read social cues and interpret my surrounding. However, like most research in the social sciences, there were benefits and risks to participation in the interview process. Although the interview questions were sensitive to people's emotions and circumstances, there was a small risk that while opening up about their lives, participants could experience emotional, psychological or social stress/anxiety/embarrassment. I am accustomed to Lebanese culture and was able to pick up on signs of discomfort and remind participants that they could skip any questions, halt or withdraw from the interview at any point, or contact me after the interview if they wanted to change something in their answers or withdraw altogether. In addition, while taking into consideration emotional/psychological effects, I also considered differing views on this in Lebanese society. Therefore, depending on the interview and the participants' backgrounds, I assured participants that they could always contact me to discuss further and that I could refer them to community health resources.

Furthermore, due to my positionality and status as an outsider – my gender, status, and privileges - I was aware of the potential power-dynamic inherent to my research process. This positionality invariably shaped the dynamics of the research interaction – how I was viewed as a woman conducting research on 'politics' and of a certain socioeconomic background that instilled privileges. On my part these were mitigated by constant engagement in transparent reflexivity and awareness. Part of mitigating power-dynamics rests in addressing issues of coercion and minimizing the possibility of infringement into the autonomy of participants. In terms of my gender, this included maintaining professionalism while allowing a natural flow of conversation to help ease participants comfort. Additionally, I considered compensation since I asked

participants for their time and effort to conduct the interviews. In the Lebanese case, monetary compensation was questionable and inappropriate. Therefore, forms of compensation included covering the participant's transportation to and from the interview (taxi) and offering tea/coffee or finger foods during the interviews, which took place in public areas and cafes. This ensured that participants felt adequately appreciated, but done in a way that did not sway the relationship or drive them not to be reflective in their choice to participate. Participants were informed that the research is independent of any organization and that participation remained voluntary and that withdrawal from the study, at any time, would not have repercussions – on the research-participant relationship or otherwise.

In addition, ethical concerns that were addressed included informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. Through informed verbal consent, individuals were provided with the necessary information to decide whether or not to participate in the study. The following was made explicit: the participant's role, potential risks and benefits, how the data will be used, and both measures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. It was made clear to participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time. This was a verbal consent process that included a consent script before every interview that was read to the participants. The participant's decision was then logged. In the Lebanese case, this made the most sense, because written consent is viewed with wariness and hence risked hindering rapport or confidence. In addition to consent to participate in the research, consent to record the interviews was obtained. This included verbal consent that indicated that the recording would begin once the interview officially started and can be stopped at any point during the interview. In addressing privacy concerns, interview locations were selected to favour discretion, as well as safety. The research process ensured anonymity and limited access to raw data. This included indication from participants that they preferred to be anonymous and hence included the use of pseudonyms and removing and altering identifying and biographical

details – such as name, place, etc from all data (Sanjari et al., 2014, 4). I responded to any arising ethical concerns promptly with the principle of preventing harm to research participants and myself.

# Chapter 2: Lebanon Context

Lebanon has a very complex history of nation-building, which is evident through the uneasy history of alliances between today's 19 sectarian communities. In order to understand present-day Lebanon, one must recognize its lengthy history of colonial rule, interchanging religious and ethnic dynamics, foreign influence, and the expansion of what would become the Republic of Lebanon. Lebanese history is often told from the beginning of Mount Lebanon, which in the late 16th century constituted an autonomous region under the control of the Ottoman Empire. Life in Mount Lebanon was characterized by a codified system of social divisions of labor along religious lines between the two dominant communities: the Druze and the Maronite Christian community. Early in the history of Mount Lebanon, the Druze community, often favored by the Ottomans, was given feudal-lord privileges over the large Christian peasant majority (Harris & Harris, 2014, 104-140, Traboulsi, 2012, 4-5). The Druze-Maronite equilibrium broke down following a period of rebellions in the 18th century and the Christian-Druze civil war in 1845 (or 1846) (Traboulsi, 2012, 9-14; Malik, 2010, 17-18). By the late 18th century, the Christian community increased dramatically. It constituted the largest numerical community. However, their stagnant social/political ranking and lack of proportional representation became a significant source of Maronite, Christian grievances (Malik, 2010, 18-20, Harris & Harris, 2014, 166).

Ultimately, social divisions and their accompanying dynamics transformed social (labour) and political conflicts into sectarian conflicts centered on the question of the identity of Mount Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2012). From the late 18th century onwards, the Druze lost their primacy over the more numerous and economically dynamic Maronites (Harris & Harris, 2014, 106). With the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, on April 28th, 1920, Mount Lebanon became a French colony, in which the French privileged the Maronite Christian community and further exacerbated ethno-religious divisions. In that same year, on September 1st, the Republic of Lebanon was

created, which expanded Mount Lebanon to include the coastal cities of Beirut, Sidon, Tyre and Tripoli, as well as Hasbaya, Rashaya, Ba`albak, and `Akkar (Traboulsi, 2012, 80). The creation of Greater Lebanon was not without contestation and violence from the larger incorporated populations. This expansion increased religious heterogeneity and included Shia and Sunni populations from neighboring areas who regarded themselves as historically belonging to an independent Arab Syria (Malik, 2010, p. 19). Previously, Mount Lebanon was comprised of 80% Christians, of which 58% were Maronite while following the expansion of Greater Lebanon Christians made up 35%, of which a mere 14% were Maronite (Butenschøn, Hassassian, Davis, 2000, p.159). However, even with these changes, the Christian elite and community's concerns were incorporated into the newly created Lebanese constitution.

The French opted for a notion that Lebanon was a land of religious minorities, and the political supremacy of the Maronites reflected their numerical prominence, asserting overall Christian control (Traboulsi, 2012, 90). The Maronite elite dominated the Republic of Lebanon, led by an idea of Lebanon as the homeland of predominantly Christian residents in a majoritarian Muslim Arab world (Butenschøn et al., 2000, 176). The French set the stage for what would resemble a power-sharing agreement by establishing sectarian/regional quotas to help rule, in addition to mandating specific articles within the constitution that ensured religious communities' representation and autonomy. Article 95 of the constitution provided for the (temporary) distribution of government and administrative posts (but not of parliamentary seats) among the various sects. Additionally, with Article 9, the French delegated to religious courts responsibility over personal statue law (marriage, divorce, custody, adoption, inheritance, etc.), and Article 10 summoned the state to defend private religious education on the condition it did not conflict with public education (Traboulsi, 2012, 90-95).

When Lebanon gained its independence on November 22nd, 1943, the Lebanese constitution, and an informal verbal understanding known as the National Pact, institutionalized power-sharing and corporate consociationalism in the political system. The Pact confirmed the power-sharing formula among the sects already established in Article 95 of the constitution. Additionally, the Pact established a 6:5 Christian to Muslim ratio in political and administrative representation, as well as the distribution of the Presidential post to a Maronite, the Speaker of the House to a Shia, and the Prime Ministerial seat to a Sunni (El-Khazen, 1991,6). Political representation was based on the 1932 census, where representation in the government, parliament, and the bureaucracy reflected the relative size of the sects, ensuring Maronite political dominance over critical political positions in the government and army (Butenschøn et al., 2000, 163). On the eve of Lebanon's independence from France in 1943, several communities were divided regarding the future character of the country: Christian nationalists with their version of Lebanese nationalism, and the largely Muslim dominant socialist who believed in Arab nationalism (Varady, 2017). Ultimately, the Pact defined the country's identity and relations to the outside world, where the Christians pledged to abandon their traditional dependence on France and to accept Lebanon's "Arab face" while the Muslims recognized Lebanon's 1920 boundaries and pledged to relinquish aspirations of union with a greater Arab state, particularly Syria (El-Khazen, 1991, Malik, 2010, 20).

On the eve of the civil war, Lebanon's social structure was rife with large-scale class privileges and divisions produced by patronage and the sectarian system. These inequalities were evident in unequal access to higher positions in the state administration and private sector, as well as disparities in salaries. The majority of the Lebanese held no more than 12–15 percent of the national income and five families-controlled half of the country's import/export trade (Traboulsi, 2012, 160-164). In the 1970s, businesses were predominantly under the control of elites from the

Christian community. A study conducted in 1973 by Boutros Labaki found that Christians dominated up to 67.5-75.5 percent of commerce, industrial field, and the banking sector (Traboulsi, 2012, 164). Other studies have emphasized the intersection between class and sectarian discrimination and privileges at the time, in which Christian – Maronites, in particular, constituted the majority of upper and middle class and had the highest access to education, in contrary to a smaller number of Muslims, particularly Shia Muslims (Traboulsi, 2014, 14). The late 1960s and days before the outbreak of the civil war, the country saw numerous large-scale student and teacher-led protests demanding lower tuition fees, funds, unions, and wage increases. At the time, there were fears this would unleash a revolution, as the struggles and calls for economic and social change resonated with the larger Lebanese population that stood in solidarity (Traboulsi, 2012, 170-171).

With the articulation of the above tensions and the impending security threats and polarization over the Palestinian cause, on April 13, 1975, the Lebanese civil war broke out, bringing the Lebanese state to near collapse. The conflict, which lasted 15 years, cost between 100,000-150,000 lives, left 100,000 wounded, 20,000 kidnapped or disappeared, and led to the displacement of almost a million people (Amnesty International, 1997; 2002; Haugbolle, 2011, 2). On the surface, the civil war erupted when the Phalangists, a Christian militia, clashed with Palestinian factions over the latter's armed struggle against Israel from Lebanese territory. However, tensions had been rising for years, and the conflict involved multiple causes and factors that eventually unfolded and became a struggle over the Lebanese state and its political system, bringing with it geopolitical interests, localized conflicts, and shifting alliances (Abraham, 1994). Sometimes described as being Muslim versus Christian, the Lebanese Civil war was a multifaceted conflict with nearly as much inter-factional violence between members of the same religion, as there was violence between Muslims and Christian.

However, the fear of Palestinians and Syrians presence cannot be understated, as they both played a significant role in the Lebanese civil war – the first with its armed struggle in Lebanon and the second with its influence over Lebanese affairs, both of which trigged concerns over Lebanon's delicate sectarian balance. From the beginning, the Lebanese establishment was split over the presence of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, for fear that it would tip the sectarian scale towards Sunni Muslims and move Lebanon away from its neutral western stance. The Syrian government's involvement in the civil war entailed shifting alliances with the phalangist and the Arab socialist movement, the latter of which would mark a turning point that would leave a bad memory for many Lebanese, particularly Christians. Today, the presence of thousands of Palestinian and Syrian refugees is tangled in the debate over naturalization laws and fear over how their inclusion can tip the balance between communities.

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The Taef peace accord, known as the National Reconciliation Accord, ended the civil war, through its "no victor, no vanquished" stance, which reformed consociationalism to accommodate a new post-war balance of power between confessional groups and their respective elites (Nagle, 2017, 6). Like the Pact, the Taef agreement provided a proportional representation of the dominant sectarian groups and relied on cross-confessional elite consensus to accommodate, co-opt and balance confessional communities (Cammett, 2011, 73; Di Mauro, 2008, 458). Lebanon's corporate consociational model was meant to be a temporary measure to facilitate the transition to non-confessional democracy, yet it has remained a central aspect for most of its modern history (Nagle, 2016, C, p. 49-50). The Taef accord reinforced the division of the Presidential, Speaker of the House, and Prime Ministerial posts while also diminishing the authority of the President and giving more powers to the prime ministerial position as well as the Speaker of the House. Additionally, seats in parliament were redistributed equally 1:1 between Christians and Muslims, with ministerial posts and top public office positions allocated based on confessional quotas (Salamey, 2009, 83; Haddad, 2009, 403). The amendments were meant to accommodate the changing landscape and respond to the grievances of the Muslim population that felt underrepresented in what they saw as Christian dominance.

The new actors that emerged from the civil and agreed upon the Taef Accord legitimized their presence through the state. Most of Lebanon's current political parties emerged during the civil war, where they controlled large swaths of territory and developed quasi-governmental organizations and roles ("Lebanon: The Rise of Militias as Political Actors," 1999). Due to the magnitude of their influence and the inability of the state to fill the gap in terms of delivering services to their citizens, the religious charities, parties, and militias played a particularly critical role in the health care and education sectors in Lebanon (Cammett, 2011, 70-77). In the post-war era, the parties and militia leaders that mainly partook in the war became part of the political

establishment and took on the role of representing their confessional community. These actors emerged primarily from outside the state: landowners, wealthy businesspeople, or militia leaders, who had gained local authority and control. To further legitimize and consolidate both their influence and presence, as well as grip on power, these actors entered a new arena: the state.

For example, Rafiq al-Hariri was a prominent Lebanese-Saudi businessman who entered the state through the leadership of the predominant Sunni political party, the Future Movement and further accumulated his wealth. He became and served as the Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1992 until his resignation in 2004 and following assassination. His son, Saad al-Hariri took over leadership of the political party and has been the sitting Prime Minister of Lebanon since 2009 (Rafiq al-Hariri, 2019). Kamal Jumblat was a feudal landowner that entered politics when Lebanon gained its independence and formed the leading Druze Party, the Progressive Socialist Party. After his assassination, his son Walid Jumblat played a prominent role in the civil war and presumed leadership of the party and is a current minister in the state (Landis, 2019). The two leading predominantly Shia political parties, Harakat Amal and Hezbollah were former militias that emerged during the civil war. The former emerged as a movement advocating for Shia rights (Harakat Al Mahrumi – Movement of the Deprived) which became to represent the Shia voice in politics in the 1970s, with the latter taking on an armed role in the 1980s, in their resistance against Israel in southern Lebanon (Nasr, 2016; El-Husseini, 2012, p. 65). The leader of Harakat Amal, Nabih Berri, is a prominent lawyer who has been the Parliamentary Speaker since 1992. The leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, holds no posts in the state but a large number of MPs in parliament. The predominant Christian political parties: the Kataeb, the Lebanese Forces, and the Free Patriotic Movement emerged from the civil war. The two formers led the Phalangist coalition of militias during the civil war, and the later was formed by former army commander Michel Aoun, who led

one of the rival governments in the final years of the civil war and is the current President of the Lebanese Republic ("Lebanon - Political Parties." n.d).

The list of political parties is extensive but includes what is today known as the traditional political establishment, which primarily operates on a sectarian/confessional basis, and includes community or political/economic elites, known as Zuamas (Zai'm). To add to this, Lebanon's geographical landscape mirrors the divisive sectarian makeup of the country, a result of the country's making and divisiveness of the civil war. Almost all Lebanese can verbally map out the country as mostly homogenous blocs belonging to each sect: the Shias predominantly in South Lebanon and Beqaa; the Druze predominantly in Mount Lebanon, Hasbaya district, and Chouf district; The Sunnis predominantly in major cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, areas in Akaar as well as West Beqaa valley; and the Christians predominantly in Northern Mount Lebanon, Southern North Lebanon, as well as parts of Beqaa and the South Governate.

Religion, the state, and public life remain strongly linked in Lebanon, in which the constitution has relegated the role of Personal Status law to the 19 sectarian courts and institutions to delegate on personal matters (birth, marriage, family, divorce, custody, inheritance) (Zalzal, 1977). Article 7 of the Lebanese constitution asserts the equality of rights and duties for all citizens (all citizens equal under the law), and Article 8 stipulates that individual liberty will be guaranteed and protected by law.[2] Lebanon does not have a civil code regulating personal status matters. Additionally, certain provisions of the Lebanese Nationality Law (No. 15 of 1925) limit the equality of citizens to pass on their nationality – the foreign husbands of Lebanese women and their children have no right to obtain Lebanese nationality whereas a foreign woman married to a Lebanese man may become a citizen after one year of marriage and their child is automatically

[2] An English translation of the constitution can be found here -- http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/le00000_.html

considered Lebanese. [3] However, these are not without contestation: non-sectarian civil society organizations (CSOs) focusing on women's rights have challenged Lebanese citizenship laws to secure women's right to pass on citizenship - through campaigns such as "My Nationality is a Right for Me, and My Family" and "My Nationality is My Dignity" (Allaw, Haddad, Ibrahim, Saidi, Traboulsi, 2017, 48-51). As well, several non-sectarian CSOs have been advocating and promoting changes to the civil status law, including the Non-Sectarian, Non-Violent Young Lebanese Citizens and the Tayyar Al-Mujtamah Al-Madani (The Sectarian Political System, 2012, 13; Aoun & Zahar, 2017, 110-111).

As Lebanon grappled with the above, major changes took place in the 2000s, where a changing political landscape further complicated the reconstruction in the post-war era. With a particular focus on the post-2005 landscape, the country has been broadly split between two political camps that have often clashed over how the country should be run. Two large coalitions arose out of the Cedar Revolution, dividing Lebanon's established parties: the March 14 coalition that opposed Syrian influence and the March 8 coalition that was pro-Syrian. These camps are cross-confessional and have shifted the nature of cross elite alliances. In the last decade, political violence and demonstrations have plagued the country on multiple occasions, stemming from sectarian tensions and the lack of political consensus among the elite. The government collapsed three times as a result - in 2005, 2011, and 2013 ("Lebanon Profile Timeline," n.d). On October 31, 2016, before the presidential election of Michael Aoun, Lebanon had been without a head of state for 29 months and the political deadlock translated to nearly all ministerial portfolios and security appointments. Furthermore, following concerns over the spillover of Syria's ongoing civil war, members of parliament extended their term in 2013, 2014 and 2017 (Jalabi, 2013; Holmes,

[3] English translation of the National law can be found here http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalDB/docs/LEB%20Decree%20No%2015_consolidated%20version%201960_ENGLISH.pdf

2014; Nohra, 2017). With mounting political tensions, the 2015 garbage crisis and growing protests happened in the context of much disenfranchisement and dissent with the political system and the lack of basic services. The most recent election in 2018, marked the first parliamentary election in nine years. It brought hopes of change within the political arena but left behind disappointment as the political establishment united and maintained their stronghold on the state.

# Chapter 3: Identity and State – "everyday sectarianism"

Sectarianism in Lebanon is present, and its everyday processes and lived reality shapes people's relationships with each other, with communities, political parties, and the state. The rhetoric, modes of being, and change on the ground fuel sectarian identities and are essential to understanding why and how people continue to identify through sectarian communities and political parties. This identification includes a system of being, which this chapter unpacks. It becomes then essential to connect this to how representation is perceived within Lebanon's power-sharing arrangement and the strong community-centric narratives and anxieties that continue to dominate. While participants may feel represented through confessionalism, they perceive the state as being dominated by political interests, absent, and limited in its role. This chapter then delves into the difference between the state and the authorities on the ground, revealing the intricate relationships and interactions that participants maneuver in their everyday reality.

*[Chart 1: Overview of Sectarian Identification]*

| Religious and social | Political |
|---|---|
| 44 identified with their sectarian community at a religious and/or social level.<br>- Self as an interchangeable part of the sectarian community.<br>- being "born into" and "raised in" the community - about history, traditions, norms, and familial roots and environment. | 10 espoused stringent and clear political identification.<br><br>25 expressed fluidity in their affiliation and support: affection, familial ties, and community presence.<br><br>35 felt power-sharing is essential for preserving the diversity and balance between communities. |

## Section one: Identity

When interacting with participants, there was a general difficulty on my part in conveying the word identity because of its connotation with sectarianism. The word in Arabic is "هوية" (Huw-eya). In the context of Lebanon this translates to the identity and national identity cards that every

Lebanese is issued and that up until 2009 included the holders confessional background ("ID petition prompts religious reform," 2009). However, sect and area of origin remain on the Ikhraj Qayd, which is the personal status record that is required for many administrative dealings. Participants struggled and were unable to define or reflect on identity outside of this context, particularly in relation to their own individual identity. Unsurprisingly, the discussion around identity was dominated by community in which many participants defined themselves and the society around them, through the sectarian and partisan lens.

The significance of sectarian identification is twofold for participants, where despite their different profiles, 44 participants out of the majority identified with their sectarian community at a religious and/or social level. Twenty participants admitted that sect played a role in how they identified at both the religious and social community level. Religious identification included holding religious beliefs and to an extent abiding by religious norms and practices. Though practicing one's faith is perceived as a personal and private aspect of one's identity, it also guides everyday life and functions within the community. The majority within this group expressed a natural inclination towards their confessional community and held a strong perception of self as an interchangeable part of the confessional community they belonged to. This meant an attachment to one's community and a sense of camaraderie, belonging, and pride. For both Jafar and Hamada, this translated into pride towards their "Shiaism" that on the surface resembled sectarian patriotism.

Although sectarian identification does include a sense of belief in the religion, this is not the case for all. For 24 participants, the sectarian community mainly acted as a social community, where participants emphasized their social identity rather than their religious identity. The most striking element is the diversity of this group, which included those who identified as atheists, did not practice their religion, or expressed passiveness, but all saw their sectarian identity as a social

identity. It is ultimately seen as the culture and lifestyle that is attributed to “being born into” and “raised in” a certain sectarian community; and is about history, traditions, norms, and even mindset. This community encompasses the surrounding environment and neighbourhood, as well as the core circle, which includes parents, extended family members, and everyday interactions. Family plays a vital role, where identifying through familial roots and environment means belonging to a community, and by default, the sectarian community. For example, Elias, who identified as an atheist, concedes the following: "I am part of and attached to the Christian community, it is a community about friendship, family and my history." Participants expressed growing up with the mentality that the community has to stick together, and though some agree, others felt that they did not necessarily relate to this notion and that for them it remains about the family and norms that they grew up with. Subsequently, because communities remain close-knit, regardless of the spectrum of identification, participants felt there were serious social consequences within the community when one diverged from certain norms. For example, for the majority, this is present around the discussion of marrying outside one’s community. For Amani, the fear of losing her community and broader family outweighed her openness to marrying outside the Druze community. This is also felt by the minority who expressed murky identification where they do not necessarily identify with the community but nonetheless belonged to it. As Rana puts it, “no matter how much I try to resist it, there is some programming that I cannot run away from,” or for Ziad, who stated he does not identify as Christian but continued by expressing himself as “being Christian.”

In addition to identification with one’s sectarian community, partisanship and political identification were evident, appearing stringent with some and more fluid with others. Ten participants espoused clear political identification, of which six were members of political parties themselves. These participants adopted ideological stances, based on the party’s cause and goals,

as well as historical causes that they believed in and strongly identified with. This identity also closely aligned with their sectarian identity/social identity and a strong community-centric narrative. This was especially evident for members of political parties, such as Mohammed and Elies, the former a member of Harakat Amal and the latter a member of the Lebanese Forces. Mohammed espoused a strong narrative of the Southern or Shia community historically being disadvantaged, and Elies the role of his party in protecting the Christian community during the civil war. Both saw their political party as having protected and invested in their community and the latter "building the true image of Lebanon." (Elies). Nevertheless, not all political identification was based on sectarianism, a small minority (2) of participants identified with the Syrian Socialist Party and pan-Arab secular parties – such as Ba'ath, socialist, and communist parties.

Conversely, 25 participants expressed fluidity in their affiliation and leaning to political parties but no clear indication of what role this played for them identity wise. Many of these participants were passive supporters that did not express belonging to a political party but instead conveyed fluidity in their affiliation and support. This involved a sense of affection towards a political party or a relationship that entailed familial ties or acknowledgment to the political parties for their work in the community. For example, within this group, participants who identified as Shia or were from Southern Lebanon expressed a sense of connection to Harakat Amal and Hezbollah, both dominant Shia parties. These parties are credited for defending their community and area during the Israeli occupation in the 1980s as well as during the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah.

***Rhetoric:***

Participants shed light on the everyday rhetoric that accompanied sectarianism and partisanship and how this affects one's perception and interaction with others and self. Evidently, politics in Lebanon is seen as directly related to sectarianism, where political parties are perceived

to align and represent confessional communities. Participants who identified or leaned towards the dominant political parties used strong language that implied that the two are one. Notedly, when expressing their views towards political parties' participants tended to conflate the party with the confessional community. For example, Aaron, who identified with the Lebanese Forces, believed that "when you are facing Harakat Amal, then you are facing all the Shias." This prevalent narrative imposes this idea that anyone from a "Shia background" automatically belonged to and supports the dominant political party in their community. Although this was seen as the case for all sects and parties, it was mostly the case when participants referred to the Shia community because of the monopolization by the two political parties Harakat Amal and Hezbollah. With the above discourse, participants who did not identify with the dominant political parties were often questioned about their identity and viewed as the 'other' and sellouts within the confessional community. For example, Hassan, who identified as a practicing Sunni but did not identify with the dominant Sunni political party (Future Movement) admits that "I am always questioned about my Sunnism if I say I endorse, for instance, this political movement or I endorse social liberalism…" This was cross-cutting and evident for other participants, such as Ahmad, who saw himself as outside the Shia community because he did not identify with either dominant political parties and Abir who felt rejected from her area because she did not support Hariri.

In addition to the above, there was a consistent sense among participants that intolerance, fear, and division came from above and was experienced during tense times. It came from the realm of the political elites associated with their rhetoric and contest for power, as well as the outbreak of violence and political instability. This is particularly the case for participants who expressed fluidity in their affiliation and leaning to political parties. Participants acknowledged that during elections and heightened political events, they felt sectarian frustrations and fears that involved a protective instinct to defend and stand by their sectarian community and political party.

Ragheb describes this: “as long as nothing is going on in politics, people are good with each other, but…when there are political problems, it pulls this nerve –the sectarian nerve which makes people go back to their community.” Others expressed the prominence of this during elections, and the sense that voting is based on an existential threat, where Jamal described the last electoral environment as “feel(ing) like I am going to war, not to vote....” During the elections, many participants describe how the heightened sensitivities and fear of the other political parties or confessional communities winning more seats, played on their sectarian nerve and compelled them to vote. Similarly, even for participants who did not appear fluid in their support for political parties, but rather supported independent civil society, such as Halah, described similar feelings;

> “During the times of the elections, my family was divided between the Future Movement and civil society, and many of my friends voted like me for civil society, but at the time there were many sensitivities after the elections when the results started coming out, and it showed that there are many seats that the Hezbollah and Haraka took in Beirut, so they started to regret that. They had their motor parades in the middle of Beirut, and they played on the sectarian nerve, and my friends started to say oh Allah we should not have, we should have strengthened our sect because no one sect is at the expense of another. I, for one moment, I thought, maybe what I am doing is wrong.”

This fits with the common Lebanese saying that is heard in closed circles and during interviews, that “yigee el areb ahla min el ghareb” (translation: better to have the close one, rather than the stranger) with the former being your sect. Many participants used a very present “us versus them” language, and when prompted, had a hard time defining the “other.” For example, Aisha, who strongly identified with her sectarian community and the Future Movement, states that “The Shias hate us…” when prompted about who “they” are, she responded that “as a sect, as a doctrine, as a mindset, they don’t like us, but for regular people maybe they are fine.” Similar expressions were used by other participants, and more strongly with those who identified with both their sectarian community and the sectarian party.

Not only has rhetoric played a role in maneuvering one's identity, but also memory played a role in bringing forth uncomfortable feelings that are associated with trauma, fear, and the protective instinct that is associated with the sectarian nerve. On the topic of collective memory, as a whole, interviewees contended that society continued to feel the wounds of the civil war. Moreover, although the war has ended, its political and emotional repercussions remained and acted as a reminder of what can erupt at any moment. For those who lived through the war, the trauma and scars of the war are present –and often, those who experienced the war avoided attempts to discuss this period. For participants under 40, almost all expressed that they were raised in a post-war environment, with the older generation's caution and fear towards the "other." These participants acknowledged that for family members, the hate and fear made sense because of the trauma they lived through. However, participants admitted that they were fed the same logic and fear outside the context of the war, and cannot always relate. Rana contends that "for us maybe we cannot relate, when they tell us that the Christians will eat us, we cannot relate…"

Though unable to always relate to the trauma of the civil war, for the post-war generation, some events have contributed to their fear of the other and reinforced and manifested what some admit their parents warned them of – the 'other.' Many participants described the negative feelings that arose out of the May 2008 events by the Hezbollah led opposition. This key event brought to the forefront a very real threat and a sense of marginalization. For example, Hassan, who lived in a contentious area and was affected by the events, describes how this affected him:

> "….the Hezbollah invasion in Beirut, I remember very well how I could not hear the word Shia for like three days. It was so hard, and I used to hear from my balcony the shouts and voices calling out Sunnis as traitors …So, for me, I lived in a place that had more Shias than other places, so the civilian armed forces/militia, they used to go from our region to the other region, which was more predominantly Sunni, where my sisters lived. So, I felt very concerned, and the thing is I saw that they are killing me and persecuting me based on my identity. So that period I felt so strongly and emotionally moved against, not with my sect, but more like against the other sect. The other is what made me feel this way. The build-up of events, hearing, and listening to people downstairs and not being allowed for

> 10/11 days to move from the house and my mom going down to bring us food and being harassed, etc. But I can point out what strongly stirred my feelings, and it was the Sahar khateb speech on Future TV back then, and it was such a powerful narrative. She was saying that why did you do that to us, when it was 2006 war happened we opened our houses, we welcomed you, it was the feeling betrayed speech. And I felt so much in touch with that, and it stirred a lot of feelings because in 2006, I was down in the pharmacy working with my uncle… to help serve the displaced refugees coming from Southern Lebanon to Beirut. So, I felt a big-time betrayal, and this stirred my sectarian emotions that I am from Beirut, I am Sunni, and I am here."

This narrative illustrates what many felt during this period, and the sectarian undertones of self with the community, against the other. For some, this reinforced the rhetoric they grew up with, cautioning them of threats to their community, and became their reference for their sectarian narrative. Though this was initially the case for Hassan, he was able to push past this narrative, which was challenged by the interactions and relationship he built through his involvement with a non-profit organization that worked on inter-religious dialogue and citizenship. This allowed him to build friendships with people from different sects and to move past this, where he acknowledged that even if he wanted to generalize, he was unable to.

***Identity Lived Through Geography:***

Hassan's experience tells a compelling narrative of geography, social makeup, and interactions with the "other." Though Hassan's narration was in reference to heightened political instability, it also sheds light on how identity is lived through geography and how this comes with accompanying experiences. Evidently, geography plays an important role in the discussion around identity, wherein Lebanon, geography is visibly configured along sectarian, communal lines. When introducing themselves and their identity, participants delved into describing the area they lived in, and in doing so, referred to the social makeup and the spatial boundaries around them. Notedly, Beirut, on a smaller level, with its population of approximately 2.2 million, represents the epitome of diversity in Lebanon. However, even within this capital, the civil war's segregation had a lasting impact on the spatial divisions in the city. Many areas in Beirut have dominant

sectarian enclaves, and the division between West Beirut, mostly populated by Muslims, and East Beirut, predominately Christians continue to exist today. Participants contended that some areas have a specific history and that political flags and signs help them identify the sectarian makeup. This was the case for neighborhoods within areas and even streets where the social makeup changed dramatically. This sense of fragmentation was evident during a taxi ride from Tariq Jdeeda, a Sunni dominated area where one is bound to pass flags of Araafat and Rafik Hariri on almost every street, driving a few minutes north, where photos of Nabih Berri and Harakat Amal flags signified that we were in a different area, and a few minutes further, visible white flags (Lebanese Forces) indicated that we had entered Furn El Shabayk and Ein el Remana. When participants discussed their ventures into other areas in Beirut, some expressed discomfort with the polarity that Beirut provided, describing feelings of strangeness and foreignness when they entered areas outside their extreme scope of reality. The difference in social makeup brought forth an unconscious discomfort in areas that imposed a very obvious and specific sectarian or political character.


*(This is a snapshot of the route on the way to Tyre – these are Harakat Amal flags in the Nabatiyeh district of south Lebanon, where the head of the political party has a house and a political office)*

In their perception of these spatial realities, participants commented on the lack of infrastructure connecting different parts of Beirut and that one can live in their area and rarely leave to interact with people from other areas. This meant that many grew up with minimal interactions with others of different backgrounds. It was common to hear that many had never befriended someone from a different sect, up until a certain age or until they were exposed to diverse university campuses, areas, or workplaces. These spatial barriers created what participants admit is a society that resembled them in terms of sectarian background. For example, Joseph concedes that he lived in a "society that is Christian" and rarely went outside his area. Additionally, Adam, who grew up in the Msaytba area of Beirut, acknowledged that "I was not exposed to a lot of different kinds of people growing up." Even for business relations, participants admit having to cater to these dynamics. Chadi, who works for a sales company as a manager, reveals that when they have call cycles for products, they always send a salesperson that fits the dominant sect in the designated area.

Evidently sect and geography correspond and their interactions tend to mean it is not uncommon during introductory conversations and when getting to know someone to try to maneuver around the question "where are you from." Through interviews and interactions, I realized that the question carried a lot more than at face value, and its answer imposed successive judgments. In like manner, participants expressed that this often-asked question, at its core, is about sectarian and political identification. Identifying one's family name and area/village of origin is a stepping stone to pinpoint what sect someone belongs to, and from there based on the area, what political party is present in order to figure the person's political orientation and possible sympathies. This is based on the perception that a person's area of origin and the sect they were born into is "what they are." Some participants expressed frustrations with being automatically labeled with an identity that they did not necessarily identify with. Adam, who is of Shia

background, contends that "as hard as I could try to insist that it is not part of my identity for them, it will always be part of my identity no matter what I do." Conversely, some insist that this is just part of the culture and the natural curiosity involved in wanting to know a person's background, where Eyad admits that "{…}I like knowing the sect of the person I am interacting with, that's it, not less or more, just to take comfort in the conversation."

Moreover, this seemed like a larger trend where participants admitted that this is part of determining what discourse to use, as well as the limitations and the topics of discussion to bring up or avoid. Admittedly, participants contended that growing up in less diverse spaces, with an idea of the "other" that espoused fear, also instilled a sense of caution and affected one's interactions. For many, this translated into a natural sense of gravitation and comfort with those who resembled their background or a change of demeanor and boundaries for those who did not. It should be noted that participants who grew up in a setting where they regularly interacted with others, admitted that a sense of connection to their area, and the shared commonalities superseded the sense of caution. For example, Amin, who worked as a chef for the same bakery in Byblos for the past 22 years, declares that he has never felt treated differently due to his background and that instead, the people in the area treated him as someone who has lived amongst them.

Participants admitted that the changes on the ground had become a source of tension for many. Beirut has seen the influx of people coming from different regions, those displaced due to the civil war or conflict, as well as those in search of economic opportunities that the metropolitan offers. This influx was seen as displacing Beiruti residents and resulting in unaffordable real estate. Participants such as Chadi, an original Beiruti resident, expressed that the "citizens of Beirut," commonly used to reference the original residents and Sunnis, were no longer able to afford to rent and buy in their areas and were, therefore, moving to the outskirts. The often-cited explanation for this was the influx of residents from South Lebanon and rich Shias that were perceived as ruining

the market. For example, Aisha, an original resident of Beirut, contends that the morphology of Beirut is changing “the Sunnis are leaving, Beirut was pure for Sunnis and Christians, but where are the Sunnis now? In Aramoun and Bchamoun, which at the core are Druze areas.” Abbas, who was born in Beirut to parents originally from South Lebanon, expressed frustration regarding what he felt was discriminatory treatment, recounting how in Hadat, a neighboring area to the Shia dominated Dahya, Shias were being prevented from buying or renting land. These sensitivities were not limited to Shias, though. Daniela, a resident of Achrafieh, Beirut, admitted that there is a building that does not rent out or sell to anyone outside the orthodox Roman Catholic community. This may suggest a common theme, where participants admitted that both in Beirut and outside, there was caution towards selling land to people that did not belong to the dominant sect in the area. Some admitted that this was part of protecting land for one’s community and that it arises out of fear of the changing sectarian/demographic makeup. Notedly, many participants, even those who did not agree with this, admitted that this was creating sensitivities between people of different sects. For some, this was accompanied by more sectarian and political rhetoric, perceived as a purposeful political move supported by Hezbollah to migrate them out of their area. Dareen, whose family is from Shouf, admitted that for many Druze of the mountains, they would not sell land to anyone from outside the sect, especially to Christians, where trauma and collective memory of massacres of the mountains in 1860 and the civil war remained.

On a similar note, participants expressed frustration over citizenship laws that may have a dramatic effect on the confessional make-up demographic calculations. There was especially opposition and wariness to citizenship laws that would permit the naturalization of Palestinians and Syrians. Participants argued that this would increase the Sunni demographics and strengthen the Sunni sect in terms of representation, which would have a determinant effect on the balance between communities. Likewise, some saw Syrians and particularly Palestinians as members of a

distinct community and a threat to Lebanon's identity and culture. According to Caleb, "it is dangerous to accept their naturalization because we could completely turn around the country's identity and culture with such a giant number." Within this, a sizable number of participants displayed prejudice, distrust, and hostility towards Palestinians, some of which stemmed from the historical Palestinians presence in Lebanon and their perceived negative role in the civil war. Within this discussion, there was a common reference to the country's capacity and the effects that the naturalization of big numbers would have on the economy (jobs and real estate).

Moreover, the debate around citizenship laws also applied to Lebanese women's ability to pass on their nationality to their spouses and children. This is framed as an extension of the demographics problem, where it is perceived that most Lebanese women married to non-Lebanese men were actually married to men from neighbouring countries that held majority Sunni populations, which would have a similar negative effect on demographics. In regard to this, participants appeared more divided between those who supported a women's right to pass on their nationality and those who did not support it due to its perceived effect on the confessional make-up. Badriah, who married an Egyptian, described how this stripped her identity and agency and dramatically affected the future of her children. For Badriah, her involvement with civil society groups and mothers in similar situations provided her hope that this may one day change. Many women expressed similar sentiments that this diminished their rights as equal Lebanese citizens. Participants remained wary towards its potential repercussions but acknowledged that citizenship laws were mixed in the complexity of the sectarian system and were a source of injustice towards Lebanese women. Despite this, a small number were open to amendments that would give women the right to pass on their nationality, and that ensured proper procedures and laws were in place.

Evidently, this section has provided insight into how participants perceive identity and its accompanying sectarian narrative. The reality has strained and affected people's interactions, lived

geography, and responses to the changes around them. The proceeding section reflects similar sentiments to those surrounding identity, in particular, how participants viewed representation within the power-sharing system. Additionally, it showcases how sectarian dynamics are translated into access and interactions with the state and authority, and how this has created absence and reminders of where the state was falling short.

## Section two: Representation and Views of the State

Participants predominantly saw representation through the lens of sectarian communities. For participants, the system guaranteed representation for sectarian communities at different levels of government and ensured a consensus amongst the political elite. More than half of the participants (35) felt that this sort of representation was necessary to ensure a balance among the different sectarian communities and preserve Lebanon's diverse religious and cultural makeup. According to Jad, "it is nice to have a mix of sects," while Caleb adds, "it is healthy to define set numbers in the government."

This representation provided a sense of fairness and an implied notion that only someone belonging to one's sect would adequately represent them and that even those who claim to be technocrats may lean towards and serve their own sect more. For Hamada, this goes as far as to question whether members of a specific sect would lean towards helping members of other sects "[…] a Christian Parliamentary official, will he run towards the Shia sect? I will tell you no, you cannot say it depends…" The majority of participants emphasized the necessity of this system to ease people's concerns and ensures that sectarian groups are not marginalized or weakened at the expense of another. This is seen as preventing any sect from dominating and shielding one's community against the possibly threatening political agenda of other communities. There is a strong sense that, because this system provided sectarian communities and elites with a say, it plays a role in minimizing tensions and preventing the fall back into a civil war.

When prompted about the division of posts within this system, almost half of the participants mentioned that the proportional representation of the 1932 census that the power-sharing system is based on has become outdated. Many concede that demographics have changed significantly since, and criticize the overrepresentation of the Christian quota. Admittedly, those who felt represented through the Christian quota, acknowledged that the system serves their community well, and consequently, opposed any amendments for fear of its effect on their rights and impending minority status. Others expressed concern that recalculation of demographics would increase the quota for the Shia community, and ultimately strengthen its dominant political parties. There is a fear that should the system be amended to reflect any changes, the tensions would lead to a spillover of violence.

Though participants expressed support for confessional representation within the system and implied inclusion in that representation, they all struggled to communicate how they felt represented at the individual level rather than the community level. For example, Caleb concedes that he felt represented in the Christian voice but that it is "in a very complex, messy way, not represented from a proper political system but through dirty games and work." This meant that representation through one's community was messy, but what benefited the community also somehow served the individuals within it. However, many participants concede that although they felt partially represented through the voice of their sectarian community, they did not necessarily feel represented through the state.

Participants conceived the state through a more critical lens that disassociated it from representation. When probed on how they viewed the state, participants generally struggled with conceptualizing the state, and the automatic answer was often "there is no state." This was not meant literally but rather implied that the state was not acting as a state should. Evidently,

participants often referred to the Lebanese state as a "failed state," a "weak state," or an "ineffective state," that is dominated by personal political interests.

Some of the more rehearsed answers during interviews came when participants described what comprised the state. Participants acknowledged that the state encompassed the head of state, parliament, cabinet, and state institutions. Notably, participants perceived the three highest authorities in government; the President, Prime Minister, and Speaker of the House, as the three heads of state. The state is described as being in the hands of the heads of established political parties: Hassan Nasrallah, Said Harriri, Walid Jumblat, Nabih Berrie, Michael Aoun, Saaed Hariri, and Samer Geagea. These "Zuama" and their parties are seen as dominating and ruling the state. Conversely, participants pointed to the lack of new faces in government, and for those who have occupied their posts since the civil war, the need for a turnover in leadership. When prompted about whether any political party dominated the state, all agreed that there is a distribution that is based on a consensus and that no party can govern on their own. However, some participants expressed that this is not entirely the case and that both Harakat Amal and Hezbollah have a stronger influence in the government/state. Many like Amjad believed that "When Hezbollah wants to make a decision they can go to war, they can shut down the country, they can take over the central bank. They have the authority of war [Sulta harbeya]; we are talking about a practical strength, it is either with arms and violence or money, and they have both." They are seen as having significant influence in government, through their MPs, allies, and political bloc that has affected the formation of the government on multiple occasions and placed their allies in strategic posts in government.

When prompted about the relationship between the state and these political parties, participants generally implied, in many different ways, that the authority of political parties superseded and ruled over the authority of the state. Some went as far as claiming "they are the

government and the state" (Amira and Samira). In contrast, others viewed it as political parties "imposing on the state" (Husnain) and as the "state under complete control by these people and has been taken hostage" (Najem). When prompted about whether it is practical to see them as one, Adam admits that he equates them to the state, "but ideally, I know the state should be separate." Participants used language that either conflated the state and political parties or separated them; leaving much to be confused about. For example, some referred to aspects of the state – 'nowab' parliamentary officials and 'hookoma' governing bodies as either one with political parties or as separate from political parties. This was difficult to pinpoint, as participants acknowledged that the line is very blurry, particularly for those with political affiliations. When prompted about whether the state or political parties should be held accountable, common rhetoric placed the blame on the state, despite the dominance of political parties. Zahra admits, "[…] we never really ask ourselves if it is the state or political parties."

Political parties and elites are described as pursuing their political interests instead of the public and collective interests, hence impeding the work of the state and diluting its effectiveness. Therefore, in the perception of many, the state is highly driven by these "community leaders" and is not seen as an "objective state" due to the political agendas and interferences. Participants saw the state as strong in force while also weak because institutions directly served political leaders. Generally, participants expressed apparent frustrations towards the performance of the state and described the frequent deadlock and widespread corruption. As one of the participants, Najem put it: "the state is not fulfilling its duties and is being manipulated according to different agendas." Participants were vocal about their dissatisfaction with the state and how it worked; for example, Hiba struggled to put it into words but admitted, "…they do not even meet my ideas of how a state should be, or how they should… I do not know, act." Many voiced their expectations for an

"effective" state with checks and balances, as well as functional institutions, to represent them instead of the whims of political leaders.

Though this is in regards to participants view of the overall state it is also reflective of their perceived everyday relationship with the state. There was a consistent sense among participants that the state continues to fail to provide for them and that their relationship with the state is tainted through their daily struggle to access services. “Wein hiyye el Dawla?” (where is the state?), a phrase regularly heard during electricity cuts, intense traffic jams, and after every inconvenient obstacle throughout the day, came to represent people’s everyday reference to the state. During interviews with participants, it was used to refer to the absence of the state and was deployed as an expression of longing for dependable security, infrastructure and essential services and accountability when those were absent. Additionally, it was used to express anger, humor or cynical appeal at a state that seemed unable or unwilling to provide them with their rights and basic amenities.

When asked about official or unofficial interactions with the state, many described interacting with the state on administrative matters – when they paid the car mechanic, taxes, municipality fees, and acquired legal documents, as well as renewed identifications and passports. How they conceived of this relationship with the state is that, despite abiding with the law and doing their part, they felt they generally did not receive much in return. Thus, participants admitted that they mainly interacted with the state through its absence and through reminders of where it was falling short. For example, Moe stated the following: “I see the absence of the state more than I see the presence of the state, for example, the traffic, the electricity, the water crisis, and the garbage. I see where the state is failing to show, and that makes me remember that the state should be doing this stuff.” This reference extended to the state’s limited and weak health care, public schools, and provision of basic amenities, such as water and electricity. All participants paid

multiple bills for the same service, for example, one bill for the state water, one bill for the clean bottled drinking water, and another bill for water to cook in. Similarly, it was standard to have two electricity bills, in which most homes, depending on where they were located, received 5-12 hours of electricity from the national grid before the privately-owned back-up generators turned on.

Everything the state provided was perceived to be limited and at a bare minimum. For Adam, an engineer that made the equivalent of 800 US dollars a month, "this is the perception we grew up with, everything the state provides is shit, electricity does not exist, clear running water does not exist, and I enter the hospital and pay a bill as big as my head. We all struggle to keep afloat, so tell me where is the state?" This sense of frustration echoed across all participants, who expressed that in addition to the state's inability or unwillingness to provide them with their basic needs laid the fact that there was no safety net and an impending sense of humiliation if they were ever to stop working. Every household leaned, to some extent, towards private suppliers to meet their needs, whether that be water, electricity, education, and health care. Those who had financial freedom and were able to secure an alternate provider would and those who could not would get it worst.

***Authority on the Ground:***

When asked about who the authority is in their area, participants rarely responded that it was the state. For many, the state was present on the ground through the security apparatus and visible through military and police checkpoints and convoys. However, participants contended that the state's presence and strength distinguished dramatically, and depended on the area and the presence of other authorities. For participants, local authority translated into 'authority on the streets' and in the community, and more often than not, this authority tended to be political parties. Beirut holds a population of approximately 2.2 million people, this alongside the diversity and

polarization visible from area to area, makes it is unsurprising that participants viewed the role of the municipality as limited in scope. Participants saw the municipality's role in infrastructure development, traffic management, and the maintenance of what is left of public spaces, roads, and infrastructure in primarily touristy areas. When they thought of local authority or authority on the ground, the municipality rarely came to mind; instead, it was the role and influence of political parties.

Since Beirut brings together people from all over Lebanon, many participants were able to share their views on authority and the role of the municipalities elsewhere. Zahra, who moved to Beirut from South Lebanon, described Harakat Amal and the municipality as interlinked actors in her village and that the head of the municipality belonged to the party. Others described similar cases where elected individuals in the municipality were either members or affiliated to political parties. In doing so, participants acknowledged that municipalities gained their authority through the backing and support of political parties. And though municipalities should be linked to the state, many admitted that the link did not automatically come to mind.

In contrast, participants noted that for some municipalities, it was not political parties that had the dominant influence but rather families that had a historical stronghold in the area (some participants described having the same head of municipality for the past 15-18 years). In some areas in Lebanon, the authority of prominent families functioned as oligarchies and reflected the long-time power of local strongmen and their families who influenced and overstepped decisions made by municipalities. For Ziad and Aaron, who both lived in the Keserwen district of Mount Lebanon before moving to Beirut, the authority of patriarchal families, such as the Khazen's and Khalil's, often interfered and overstepped the authority of the municipality. Both of these are prominent families and clans based with influence and reach that dated back to the 18th century.

Though their dominance has decreased, they continue to own land and properties and play a role in politics and business.

Participants acknowledged that the presence and authority of political parties differentiated based on the sectarian makeup of the area and that their influence was not uniform across the capital and the country. According to participants, political parties exercised authority in areas and on residents that shared the same confessional identity/background. For example, Dareen admitted that for the Druze community in Beirut, they would go to Kamal Jumblat, whom they saw as their authority. Additionally, participants saw areas as being calculated towards specific parties, and for Neda, "every political team is in charge of the area they are in." When identifying the authority on the ground, participants contended that they could tell the area's allegiance based on the presence of flags, posters, and photos of the political parties and leaders, all of which usually corresponded to the authority in the area. Additionally, participants described how political parties placed checkpoints in strategic areas where they have a strong presence or a political office. For example, both Jamal and Amir described a Harakat Amal checkpoint in the Barbir area of Beirut, which held one of many of the party's political offices. Participants recalled similar experiences across Beirut, usually in reference to Harakat Amal, which, in comparison to other political parties, seemed to have more of a security presence on the streets.

In a city like Beirut, participants acknowledged that the authorities on the ground could change dramatically from streets, neighborhoods, and areas. When most of the residents belonged to a dominant sect, the authority was often easier to identify. For example, Tareeq Jdeeda, an area of Beirut where the majority of residents belonged to the Sunni Sect, the dominant authority was known as Hariri and the Future Movement political party. In districts and sectors where there were pockets of confessional communities, the authority was in the hands of diverging sectarian political parties. For example, participants who lived in the district of Bchamoun described that the area

was originally a ‘Druze area,’ and the authority was the Progressive Socialist Party, but that within this area, there is a Shia neighborhood with its own authority. In the neighbourhood of Hamra in Ras Beirut, where participants acknowledged diversity was standard, the presence of the state and that the work of the municipality was more visible. This is because the neighbourhood held two prominent universities, and was seen as an intellectual hub and tourist network. Participants who resided in Hamra concede that thought there was a leftist presence (SSNP office) in the area there was no apparent authority or affiliation and that some areas like Hamra appeared more neutral.

This was not always clear cut, in which participants explained that at times, there were different layers of authority and that this changed depending on the issue, setting, and scenario one was in. For example, Jamal Ch explained that “[…] There are some cases where a local member of parliament will be that authority, some cases where the feudal strongman is, and in some cases, it will be the police and the state.” When asked about ways one can identify the authority, Husnain admitted that "through my interactions with people and the problems that happen, you see who gets involved in solving the problem/issue… as well as who creates the problems and is not held accountable."

This leads us to the discussion around the relationship with the authority on the ground. One of the critical roles that local authorities and political parties were seen to play was as brokers and go-betweens that facilitated access to the state. This is based on the belief that one cannot access the state otherwise, where many such as Ragheb believed that “if you require something from within the state, the state will not look at your request unless you are coming from someone with influence.” Participants described this relationship with political parties as occurring through a “wasta,” which in English translates roughly to “intermediary.” A wasta included the use of an intermediary to help facilitate access to something, resolve an issue, or reach a specific outcome. This “intermediary” was more likely than not in government, or politics, or connected to a political

party, or had connections that would help reach the person from whom service was required. Participants acknowledged that there were different ways to get a wasta and that this depended on the proximity, relationship, and affiliation to the relevant "intermediary" - person/political party. Joseph admitted that for a wasta "maybe I can call [an important politician who] was in school with me…" whereas for Hiba this included talking to a person she knew, who knew someone, who could talk to someone "up there" who then talked to the "person [she] need[ed] something from." Participants noted that a wasta usually came from those who belonged to the same confessional community, but that personal relationship also played an important role. When asked about whether something is given in exchange for a wasta, participants concede that one's vote and political support was expected during elections and that there was a promise of a returning favor. However, some participants concede that it depended on who was giving the wasta and their relationship to them and that sometimes the wasta involved nothing in return other than the goodwill of a person that openly served their community.

When prompted about when they turned towards a wasta – the answers ranged but where often during times of need. Participants frequently cited the use of a wasta to overcome roadblocks in obtaining administrative paperwork and services from government ministries and that instead of taking days, months, years, or not receiving the service at all, they acquired it through someone with connections. For Chadi, the use of a wasta from his father's friend, who is a member of parliament and part of the Al-Ahbash Sunni group, acted as a last resort to overcome the hurdles to naturalize his Palestinian wife and child that had a legal right to Lebanese citizenship. Participants cited similar cases, where they resorted to using a wasta to acquire medical services, which in Lebanon's highly privatized health system, the use of national security coverage at private hospitals proved difficult.

Beyond the role of political parties in facilitating access to services, participants also acknowledged how difficult it was to obtain public service jobs without a wasta and the backing of a political party. Public service jobs included quotas to ensure the representation of different sectarian groups. However, participants unanimously agreed that one is more likely to get in through a wasta than through their qualifications and degrees. It was common practice for employers to request that individuals provide a reference that indicated support from a political party. For example, in Samira's efforts to help secure a job for her daughter, she admitted that "when my daughter entered the domain, and there were 60 people who applied and only six positions; it was all based on wasta, so we used a wasta from a political party to get the job." Notedly, the reach of political parties goes beyond state jobs, where Ramzi, recalled that during the elections the Social Progressive Party employed ten young men from his village into positions at private companies.

*'Backbone'*

During the interviews, participants expressed a lack of trust and deep frustration with the state and its judicial system. When it came to feeling protected by the law, participants perceived national laws and their implementation as too weak or slow to defend them. The law was regarded as unable to take a neutral decision without outside interference from political parties and those with connections. Participants considered wastas and connections as being commonly used to evade justice– where political parties with their influence and outreach would slow or stop criminal or civil cases from proceeding. According to Hadi, even in cases where the police and court got involved, if the person in the wrong was affiliated, "all it takes is one phone call to someone with connections" to clear everything. In turn, this created a predicament where participants acknowledged the difficulty in protecting oneself without backing from a political party. Nedal, who saw himself as law-abiding and non-affiliated, recognized that "if you and I create a problem,

we will be stepped on because we have no backbone… if you are not with this person or that person, forget your rights." This is based on the premise that sectarian parties and communities provided people with a "backbone," which was seen as a protection racket and safety net to fall back on. According to Dareen, this meat that "you are going to have to rely back on your sectarian backbone to survive and to make sure that you don't run into life-threatening problems or anything of that sort, so need someone to protect you." This ranged from more prominent cases to smaller things, in which participants admitted that if they were arrested or issued a ticket, they would use a wasta and the backing of their sectarian community to get out of it.

But participants who admitted to using a wasta also expressed a strong sense of discontent with having to resort to that to acquire jobs, services, and protection. The use of wastas is seen as having produced an environment where some are supported, and others are not, and hence contributed to a sense of inequality and injustice. Those who did not have to resort to using a wasta and continued to meet their livelihood needs were seen as a privileged minority. This was the case for some participants who had financial means, connections, and family members who were willing to help out. For example, Aaron, who comes from a prominent family of surgeons and academics, and admitted that he did not have to rely on a wasta and that if he faced a problem, he could get a lawyer and get things done with the influence of his money. Similarly, for participants like Adam and Tannous, the family was their backbone and the first line of defense: for Adam, this was afforded through his parents and extended relatives and for Tannous through the financial support provided by his kids who lived abroad**.**

# Chapter 4: Alternatives and Change

Though sectarianism is predominant, alternative notions exists that suggest diversity and change. This chapter focuses on these alternative spaces and provides insight into promising interactions in diverse spaces and the "other" ways of beings. These "other" included participants who presented a counter-narrative of identity outside the dominant categories of sectarianism and partisanship. Some of these identities and counter-narratives signal a desire for change. In fathoming the feasibility of change, this chapter provides insights into how people related to and talked about independents and civil society groups as well as the prospect of systematic change. These elements of change illustrate people's expectations and frustrations, in which this chapter will describe the general mood and environment that accompanied the timing of this fieldwork. Ultimately, leaving us with the question of "what are we turning to next and why."

*[Chart 2: Overview of Non-sectarian Identification]*

| "Other" identification | Representation outside the political mainstream |
|---|---|
| 5 identified as atheist/agnostic and no longer through religion or their confessional community.<br><br>6 identified with religion at the personal level but not with the confessional community.<br><br>13 emphasized interest-based identification. | 20 expressed opposition to sectarian political parties and identified as patriotic and nonaligned - against sect and party.<br>- Expressed a desire for an alternative. |

***Interactions in Diverse Spaces:***

Interactions in diverse spaces enabled many to manage cultural diversity and try to move past misunderstandings rooted in identity issues. Evidently, participants who experienced diversity later on in their lives, through school and work, admitted that it challenged their fears and the

stereotypes they held, as well as contributed to more open-mindedness. This was especially the case for participants who worked in Hamra and Badaro, areas in Beirut described as "colourful" spaces for interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. For Isa, his experience pursuing his masters at a university located in Hamra was transformative: "all my perspective changed like I was very closed to mixing with others and with time I started understanding that what is portrayed in my background, culture, is not the real thing and this included some fear and hesitation." Similarly, Hadi who grew up in a very Shia-dominated environment concedes that his thinking dramatically changed when he joined a diverse company as an engineer and stated that "the guy I was before and who I am today is very different."

In the case of Beirut, civil society was prominent, and one could find spaces that brought people of different backgrounds together for common goals and interests. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to engage with secular activist groups, clubs, campaigns, and workshops present on university campuses and outside. These spaces provided participants with tools to communicate with each other and exposed them to different identities. Tariq who attended a three-day workshop on urban spaces a week before our interview described it as people with different backgrounds "gather[ing] for the same cause even though each one of us was from a different place and we all have that thing in common, a passion to be in the same place." Though how accessible these events and spaces are to people from all socioeconomic backgrounds and educational levels remains up to debate because access to these spaces requires financial mobility that many may not have.

A small sample of participants who had the opportunity to travel and live abroad admitted that the experience exposed them to diversity and interactions they did not get at home, which translated into openness and a change in their perspective. Majid, who lived abroad to pursue his graduate studies, admitted that "living abroad changes you because you start seeing Lebanon as a

country and not as a place where your confession is having struggles with other confessions." Similarly, Mariam, who did a one-year exchange program abroad, admitted that she came back to Lebanon with more openness because this was the first time she had been exposed to so much diversity and the opportunity to break down barriers. These diverse spaces were not as accessible to all Lebanese – more so afforded to those who have the financial ability and support to go outside their community, afford to travel, and go to places where diversity was standard. Such as elite universities with diverse campuses and areas known to be intellectual hubs.

***"Other" Category:***

While the previous chapter showcased the prominence of sectarian and partisan identities as well as their interactions, it did not discuss the participants who did not fit within this narrative. Indeed, the interviewee sample also included a diverse group of people with different profiles and who identified outside "the mainstream." A minority of (5) participants identified as atheist/agnostic and no longer through religion or their sectarian community. Though these participants continued to declare their background as Shia, Maronite, or Sunni sect, they gave this no weight in terms of their social identity. This identification included exploring other ways of being. Amjad, for example, admitted that "my sectarian identity stopped making sense…so I needed to adapt and find my inner voice and who I am," whereas for Tariq, this meant seeing himself as "an architect, Lebanese and simple guy." Only one participant, Majid, removed his sect from his Lebanese identity card, whereas others expressed its potential negative implications on employment. Though these participants continued, in part to live within communities, some like Amjad acknowledged that he is "living in the community, the community is not living within me (him)."

Similarly, even some who did practice or identify with their religion expressed similar sentiments to the above. A small minority (6) of participants identified with their religion/sect at

the personal level but admitted that this did not translate into identification with the confessional community attached to it. Practicing and following one's religion was a private aspect of their identity and fluid in its level of religiosity and expression. These participants opposed the community narrative and ultimately disassociated themselves from the sectarian community, which they felt imposed on their identity and did not provide them with what they wanted. For individuals like Hassan, who identified as a practicing Sunni, this meant identification with "a community within a community with a different narrative than the mainstream," that encompassed his close Sunni friends who shared the same openness.

This was also evident in the formation of interest-based identities. When prompted about what mattered to them at the personal level, a fifth (13) of participants delved into their passions, hobbies, and field of work (engineer, nurse, teacher). This was seen as playing a significant role in who they were and their everyday lives. For example, Maya, an architect, expressed that her field affected her identity and how she saw her surroundings and the importance she placed on public spaces. Samira and Badriah, both teachers for over 20 years, saw themselves as educators and part of their school community. And for others, this was related to their passion and involvement in the environment, media, and arts. This was considerable amongst participants aged 20-35, that made up more than 60% of this group and confided that they were still exploring this part of their lives. Abir went as far as to admit that "I definitely did not find myself yet. I am trying to express myself in photos, in my art, and that is the life project I want to work on." Though participants struggled to probe into this part of their lives or to view it as part of their identity, this included a minor part of the interviews, and its magnitude identity wise is unknown.[4] For example, Dareen, who viewed her passion and work in anthropology as part of who she was, also admitted

[4] This included both those who identified through the sectarian lens and those who identified with the "other."

that “my identity comes from communities because I don't see the characteristics that I have as being my entire identity, they are characteristics not identities for me.”

There were similar trends for political identification, where 20 participants expressed that they did not identify through the partisan lens or political communities. It should be noted that participants that identified outside the dominant sectarian lens of confessional communities encompassed part of this group. However, the remaining nine participants also felt this way irrespective of their sectarian/social identity. These participants expressed opposition to sectarian political parties and instead identified as patriotic, non-aligned, and ultimately against the dominant intersection of sect and party. For many like Maya, this arose out of having witnessed “the failure of the political system, we saw everything from the garbage crisis to political issues that did not help us feel we can identify with anyone of them.” Participants described the political system as being dominated by the same political elite that belonged to traditional sectarian parties that have left little room for parties that were secular oriented. A key trend that emerged out of this was that more than half of this group identified as ‘secular.’ When prompted about what that meant, Jamal Ch upheld that “if you believe in liberal Lebanon you are actually a secularist, and as a political secularist who believes in a state which is not religious in nature [...].” Thus, these participants also claimed that they did not feel represented in the state or the consociational system. Some expressed that if one did not identify with any of the sects and their dominant political parties, their voices did not count. This is even the case for those who did identify with a sect. Abir, for example, admits that “I do not want someone to represent me because I am Sunni, it is representation in an abstract sense.”

When prompted about the type of representation they preferred, these participants generally agreed that sect should not be the basis of representation in government and that the basis should be the right person in the right position in terms of qualifications. Ultimately, for these

participants, representation as Lebanese citizens and working for Lebanon superseded sectarian representation. A very small minority of participants went as far as suggesting another quota for seculars (those who do not want to identify with a sect). This would provide them with 10% of the jobs and allow the option of civil marriage and the freedom to choose without it hindering access and employability in the public service. Insofar, participants expressed opposition to the establishment and a desire to identify with an alternative that was cross-confessional, inclusive, and oriented towards the broader public good. For some, this meant a direct reference to secular groups and civil society groups that provided an alternative space of identification.

***Potential for Systematic Change and Views Towards Civil Society:***

Though not all participants in this sample base expressed support or leaned towards civil society, all of them to different degrees referred to the platform of non-sectarian/secular civil society groups and independents in Lebanon. When asked about non-traditional identities, participants brought up civil society groups, which they perceived as a minority that was opposed to the political establishment. Additionally, almost all participants mentioned the Kulluna Watani (we are all our nation) coalition of 66 candidates that emerged during the elections across Lebanon. This included references to Li-Baladi ("for my country" – a Kulluna Watani group which ran in the Beirut 1 district) as well as Li-Haqqi ("For my Rights" – a Kulluna Watani group which ran in the Mount Lebanon 4 district). Some participants admitted to voting for civil society during the elections because of the pretense that they practiced their politics differently. For Jamal Ch who voted for Li-Haqqi "it was the least damage and I liked how they directly tried to challenge the hierarchies and had deep conversation …. So I voted feeling that what they discussed represented my politics."

When asked about the success of civil society in garnering support during elections, there was a common criticism that civil society actors appeared divided and lacked a clear political

discourse and ideology. Particularly, those who supported them felt that they failed to organize and mobilize strategically and were rushed in implementing their campaigns or too inexperienced in politics. When prompted about previous attempts to demand change, many saw these as failed attempts and expressed passiveness towards the possibility of change. For example, Hala admitted, "we are numb, we have had previous experiences, and they are failing experiences, so we have learned to live with it." In addition, participants were critical of how civil society mobilized in the past and cited common criticisms and questioned the extent to which civil society actors were independent and neutral. This was based on the notion that independence in Lebanon was difficult – and that almost everyone had affiliation or leaned towards a specific political party. Many perceived that at the end of the day, most people would go back to their roots, which was their confessional community and political party. According to Hiba, two-thirds of the people that were part of civil society during the garbage protests in 2015 were partisans who had previously supported the establishment. Hence, they could not be actual dissidents, where support for a political party was seen as mutually exclusive to support for civil society. Similarly, Amira concede that "people maybe go on TV or join an NGO and make campaigns but inside they are like this and they are not able to get out of it but at least they are trying but they are unable to or showing different."

Many also criticized the elitist nature of civil society and their privileged backgrounds, which was perceived to be detached from the reality of most Lebanese. Some saw them as appealing to a middle working class which was financially stable and had very little to lose. According to Amani this is "a very small class in Lebanon because how many people in Lebanon are working without a wasta, they are self-made and financially stable. We are not a lot of people." However, not all agreed with this. Amjad claimed that "I know a lot of the people whose names came and they are not a specific class of people, they are diverse and from multiple places."

Because of this perceived detachment, many also criticized civil society and secular groups for their language that often converged around "us and them." This was apparent through their strong, or often extreme stances as well as the generalizations they made towards the larger sectarian society. According to Ramzi, "sometimes they speak like the political class is imposed but it is not the case, people are voting and many felt offended by their speech and didn't vote for them because their speech was very high up." This rhetoric by civil society was seen as pushing people away, and alienating many who were attached to their identities including those who wanted to support them. Those who continued to have faith in them contended that civil society should work on becoming more inclusive and pragmatic in their ways.

When asked about whether they would join protests or demonstrations demanding change, many struggled with their response. Some participants admitted they would join protests only if the goals were focused on demanding services and against garbage and tax increases but not if they targeted a specific political party. According to Abbas, during protests "in Lebanon we say give us electricity you thugs and dogs, but we don't name them." This is further supported by others who admitted to joining protests in 2015 against garbage and corruption but that when protests attacked and targeted the political leader that belonged to their community, many felt embarrassed or hesitated to join. This was when participants acknowledged that support tended to dwindle down then. Participants perceived protests as a stringent faceoff against a much stronger side; the establishment, the state, and political parties. Additionally, the anti-sectarian movement and civil society were perceived to be a minority that is often displayed as powerless in the face of religion and politics. Despite their frustrations with the system, many felt that their voices or demands had little impact and that protests rarely brought about change. Elie contended, "I have an opinion, and it is like everyone else's, my opinion is whether I speak it or don't speak it, it is useless."

There is also the livelihood factor where some participants contended that if it is between providing a source of income and food for their families versus protesting, the former came first. According to Abid "the economic life is very hard and people are dealing with enough problems, and there is a fear that this will impact your livelihood where we are already weak economically." Many also believed that this would threaten their livelihood and the only source of income their families relied on. Husnain agreed and admitted that "I am one of the people who can't do anything, for fear over my livelihood/food on the table, because I know when I want to do this, I know I will be prisoned and humiliated and beat up and my kids will die of hunger."

When prompted about the feasibility of an alternative political system that was secular oriented, participants admitted it was tough to envision this change. There was a sizable number of participants who did not feel represented and were outspoken against the system yet felt that change was also not feasible at the moment. For the younger generation, there was more readiness for change, where many expressed feeling disenfranchised, tired, and disgusted with the system and its politics. However, participants and those I encountered during fieldwork felt that the political elite and system were unchangeable and that there was no previous pattern to rely on. There had been no practical alternative that has taken into consideration people's concerns. The population is regarded as being attached and bound to their sect and party and generally opposed to any change. However, for those who believed systematic change was possible in the future, there was a strong inclination that such change would only come with increased public awareness, a change in mentality, and generational change. On another level, many claimed that if change were to occur, it would only do so multiple generations down the line, and only from the ground up because it had to start with the people that were closed up and attached to sectarianism. Some even went as far as to state that Lebanon cannot be governed except in this way. According to Hamada, "The system is like that, since the day I was born until now, nothing will change. It is

impossible. It has been the same officials, same system, same everything." For the majority, there is wariness towards change due to sectarian anxieties and the fear of whether or not change would be in their favour.

The general mood of participants seemed to be that of pessimism and fatigue with the political and economic situation in the country. All participants expressed fear for their future and a sense of hopelessness. This was felt through the economic decline and instability, as well as the political turmoil that participants expressed as being part of their normal reality. Najem indicated that "people are apathetic and they do not care that they are dying slowly," and for Adam, "people are fed up and it is not just being fed up, but it is fatigue… it is never going to change, and we are never going to get anything done." There was a strong sense of exhaustion and resignation towards what tomorrow would bring, where many expressed that harder times were ahead. For Tariq, "we live in this routine, not knowing what is next, it is unknown what is coming, and if you ask anyone what is to come, no one will be able to answer your question" and for Sandra, "every year it gets worse." This is both about the political and economic situation in the country, where job opportunities were seen as scarce, and wages hardly met the daily expenses and livelihood needs. For example, many like Carmen expressed anxiety over limited job opportunities and a competitive and desperate market post-graduation. Notedly, one could feel the tension and anxiety in the air. Hala admitted she felt it boiling up, "walk on the street, people are frustrated and can't even stand themselves, there are no jobs, and they are afraid they will lose their job at any moment, people are waiting on a nerve to let it off on each other, it is not normal."

Participants expressed their hope for better prospects abroad and described how the political instability, worsening economic situation, increased poverty, and unemployment was pushing them towards immigration. Participants felt forced to consider leaving the country because they had lost hope and wanted a better future for themselves and for their children. According to

Maya, “all of the Lebanese now want to acquire another passport or want to travel, we are leaving because there is no future here...” Participants in their mid-20s and early in their career admitted they grew up with the belief that the best option as a young Lebanese was to seek opportunities abroad. This was based on the idea that there were no strong prospects of a good future in the country, where many believed they were unable to build a life or progress forward. Hassan goes as far as to claim, “I just don’t believe it is a platform I can empower myself on, but I feel it is a place that I can serve.”

# Chapter 5: Analysis and Conclusion

This thesis aimed to provide an understanding of micro-level state-society relations in Lebanon and to examine how relations, dynamics, and identities evolve and shape one another. Though sectarianism is commonly found in the literature on Lebanon, its reality is more complicated, and its existence is less than straightforward. The literature on Lebanon views identities from the sectarian community perspective that asserts the predominance of confessional identification in Lebanon. This thesis began with the hypothesis that 29 years after the civil war and with recent events in Lebanon, it may be time to revisit the topic and its earlier literature. This presupposes the question of whether individuals continue to identify with sectarianism and whether changes have occurred that signal alternative forms of identification. The answer to that question is not a simple yes or no since people continue to identify with their confessional community and uphold sectarian narratives, and this is reinforced through interactions in their everyday lives and the sectarian system. However, there is a minority that holds an alternative form of identification that challenges the boundaries of sectarianism and identifies spaces that enable change. When combining this with the state-society relations, it is evident that the state's limited role in people's lives and the identity structure of the political system has shaped the way people navigate its framework and meet their needs. In turn, how individuals understand, perceive, and identify with authority and the state is complicated, where authorities on the ground hold significant influence and tend to correspond with sectarian communities and political parties.

How sectarianism remains alive and permeates every aspect of people's lives involves how individuals navigate and shape the complicated webs of sectarianism at different levels. Individuals experience sectarianism from above that is instigated by the political system and its institutional structures that affect the lives of individuals and their modes of interactions. There is also sectarianism from below, that is based on sectarian community narratives, perspectives,

affiliations, interactions, and spaces of existence (not all tangible). Taking these into consideration, this thesis contributes to a more nuanced understanding of individuals' modern-day experience with sectarianism and how it has affected their relationship with the state and how they perceive themselves and the reality around them. I refute the notion that sectarianism is a natural outcome of competing primordial identities and instead put forth the interconnected ways in which sectarianism shapes and constructs identities and state-society relations and how some conform and others challenge. In bringing forth this notion, I argue that individuals through their social and economic processes act as agents of construction, and the political system with its identity structure and the way it functions institutionalizes and reinforces this identification.

From a social constructivist standpoint, identity formation in Lebanon is established within the perception of self as derived from interactions between oneself and others in one's social context. Though sectarian-based identification remains a strong focal point in Lebanon, it is a social norm that people relate to, reinforce, and find it difficult to move away from. Through their actions and everyday social exchange, people reproduce and perpetuate these structures of sectarian cleavages that can be seen as 'everyday sectarianism.' This relates to James Fearon and David Laitin's "everyday primordialism," in which people produce through their actions this belief regarding the unchanging and essential characteristics of a social category (2000). Within this, people live it, act it and make it primordial, and hence through their agency act in ways that confirm and reproduce this identity. The socialization process and speech in Lebanon plays an essential role in reinforcing sectarian identification and people's perceptions of the reality around them.

When it comes to sectarian identity, it is common for individuals to self-declare their confessional background and to label others in this way too, where ultimately sect in Lebanon is seen as an in-born quality and treated as an ethnic marker. Though how one identifies on the scale can range and is not black and white. It is strongly based on social norms and beliefs that one

grows up with and is seen as something challenging to move away from. Additionally, through their views, they reproduce the symbolic boundaries that mark people into groups – generating feelings of similarity and identifying in and out-group members. Citizens frown upon more overt shows of sectarianism, but less tangible and emotive forms such as the above become acceptable and understandable.

When combining confessional identification with one's social world, sectarianism is reinforced through spatial reality and entrenched in the different ways of life of citizens, appearing in the daily practices of segregation and interactions. These defined boundaries and geographical areas between sects are inscribed in the experience of living in Lebanon, which has its origins in the creation of the country and the remnants of the civil war that saw individuals seek security in sectarian communities bound together in their neighborhoods and areas. Arguably, for the postwar generation, they inherited the consequences of this segregation without directly experiencing its origins, and through their routines, they continued to reinforce the boundaries in how they viewed and acted in the space around them. Thus, this factionalization and people's interactions within it leaves limited opportunity for an inclusive and cross-confessional experience of public life. Additionally, this affects the dynamics of social relations and how people of different identities or backgrounds may see and interact with the 'other.' The intangible feeling and concerns that participants described in areas that do not mirror their own confessional upbringing reproduced this conscious sectarian mindset. Moreover, this is reasserted in the way participants viewed demographic changes 'on the ground' through suspicion and sectarian sensitivities.

But not all interactions with the other are necessarily negative interactions, and social relations are at most relatively calm. Still, at the surface, there is caution: where it should be acknowledged that the identity of individuals may operate differently between everyday life and times of crisis. The difference between both can come down to speech and rhetoric that pull on the

"sectarian nerve" that affects every individual in the way it brings them closer to the sectarian community or sectarian political party. Under ordinary circumstances, this may not be as visible. However, political polarization, instability, and accompanying sectarian rhetoric used by the media, political elite, and in everyday language has created an environment of heightened sensitivity.

With this said, within sectarian structures and everyday sectarianism, it is important to recognize different forms of agency that conform and others that push the boundaries of sectarian state-society relations. Those who identify outside the mainstream illustrate that there is a separate category of individuals who see themselves outside the boundaries of confessional and political communities. These individuals are often provided little representation, and beyond this, illustrate that identities are not as stringent as previously thought. Though there are promising fluidity and different spectrums of identifications, it is bounded and afforded by a class of people that are actors of change but remain a very specific type of people. These people are cosmopolitan and can afford to be in spaces that transgress, subvert, and fundamentally challenge social boundaries. When talking about agency to change or explore, not everyone lives the pressure of conforming to identity in the same way, and some are given more advantages in terms of embracing alternatives. Ultimately, people that fit within this category showcase the construction of altered identities and are able to contest the content and boundaries of ethnic/confessional/sectarian categorization. These include metropolitan professors and students, academics, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, activists, artists, cosmopolitans, social liberals, and secular leftists.

Conversely, there are carved out spaces in diverse neutral neighborhoods and streets with specifics social spaces as well as liberal academic institutions that allow these alternatives to organize and manifest and push the boundaries of sectarian customs and identification. This is also the case for jobs and academic institutions that bring together people from diverse backgrounds

and provide them with the opportunity to challenge their everyday reality. However, how accessible these spaces are to individuals of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels is up for debate. These spaces may be mostly afforded to those who have the resources and knowledge to feel safe, afford to travel, and afford to go to places where diversity is the standard like the American University of Beirut and elite spaces. Ultimately, this allows individuals to push their spatial reality and expand their environment outside the boundaries of sectarianism. These spaces become areas of co-existence and bring together diversity with the hopes of breaking down barriers. Consequently, understanding the parameters of civic space is an essential step in identifying existing and potential avenues for engagement that can break down increments of everyday sectarianism.

Structures and dynamics of sectarianism are sticky and resilient, hence having access to diverse and inclusive spaces as well as being afforded specific privileges does not necessarily imply the non-existence of non-sectarianism. Change is incremental, and there are strong tendencies for the reproduction of sectarianism discourse and dialogue. Even within privileged spaces, people may remain attached to their sectarian community and Zaim. Having witnessed the student elections at the American University of Beirut in November 2018, the tense and heightened atmosphere on campaign day saw the blatant display of sectarian division among the students, distinctive colors of the Lebanese political coalitions, on one side students campaigning with the March 14 bloc and the other students with the March 8 bloc. With the only difference being the presence of independents running with the secular groups during elections, student elections often reproduced the same political divisions from outside and brought them in—which is visible in one form or another, on nearly every university campus in Lebanon. At first, this seemed puzzling since young people are the most frustrated with the dominance of political parties, yet their apparent presence continues to be supported during student elections. Arguably students make use

of the networks and resources for many purposes that might not just be political but to pursue social (family and friends and community), personal (positions and opportunities), and even material (networks for jobs).

Beyond this obvious form of sectarian divisions, within diverse neighborhoods, such as Hamra, the less visible sectarian discourse is still present: "of that person of that sect," and it remains a marking in dialogue. Arguably when pushing the boundaries and contesting sectarianism, there is programming that is difficult to get out of, where internally, there is an identity crisis that may take place. This identity crisis involves being pulled on one side by one's traditional heritage and traditional community, and on the other hand, one's cosmopolitan practices and alternative ways of being.

Through individuals' experience of everyday sectarianism and its stickiness, one cannot negate the role of the political system and its identity structure that shapes and reinforces the relationship to sectarian political parties, leaders, and communities. Conversely, both the political institutions and the social context that individuals live within activates and pushes them towards their sectarian identity. At a very practical level, religious-based personal status law guarantees the transmission of religious beliefs and core values from generation to generation. It ensures that citizens gain their rights through the sectarian community and reproduces sociopolitical cleavages through the institutionalized of sectarian structures in politics and law. These norms and beliefs become a mandatory social practice and leave very little alternatives, given the importance of family and community networks. The lack of state power in this critical legal field has implications for Lebanese citizens who reject religious affiliation or even do not want to be represented by religious personal statue law.

Additionally, when examined alongside representation within the consociational system, the system strongly restricts and structures voter's identification along sectarian-based grounds.

This does not really get at representation and instead reinforces communal bonds and entrenches the authority and electoral power of geographically based elites. Those who do not identify with the traditional modes of identification are individual dissidents and members of neglected categories (not represented in the power-sharing arrangement and tight spaces of existence). The system reinforces confessional affiliation as the basis for one's identity – an identity not only accepted by oneself and by the other but also by the state.

Evidently, with representation predominantly based on sectarian affiliation, the system incentivizes citizens to identify predominately with the local authority and within the bounds of sect for social and economic reasons. Geographically based elites and their authority on the ground should be understood as one of many "zuama" enterprises, which compete with each other, but all rely on the same overarching system. This overarching system is related to historical authority in the area as well as the authority of political parties that have interconnected networks in the state. The overlap of actors, of the jurisdictions they activate and legitimate through the cultivation of robust networks of patronage, is not only spatial or territorial but also based on context. The presence and influence of this authority is strengthened through political confessional, and through its modes of interactions is legitimized by communities and people.

Through informal channels, individuals strongly rely on their confessional identity and their social relationships (in the community and political parties) to gain access to resources and services and sort out their matters. This means that these actors, and the channels of using a wasta mediate the experience of accessing "rights." In doing so, these political practices reinforce the status quo and the sectarian boundaries of inclusion and exclusion and even entrench existing social inequalities. It is in the benefit of individuals to be closer to political parties and the community because of the sectarian modes of allocation, wealth sharing, and distribution. However, people feel that they have little choice, so they have to be sectarian because that is how

one acquires a job or can access services. Regardless of an individual's partisanship or political identity, many end up falling into the arms of these political, sectarian leaders to gain their rights and secure protection.

But the relationship with political parties and elites is not simplistic by any means; it includes multilayered and complex dynamics, where relations can be an expression of interest-based and identity-based politics that are not mutually exclusive. The minority that is self-reliant and has the financial means to overcome sectarian mechanisms and economic relations are not so dependent on sectarianism and its structures. Hence, they do not feel the same pressures to conform and are able to supersede these relations. Therefore, these people can liberate themselves from the system of patronage and clientelism, provided they have the means or opportunities. The emergence of independents during elections, who offer a counter-narrative, forms a basis for these citizens who are looking for representation beyond one's confessional affiliation. Hence, there is always this space for a slight change, and for people to navigate a minor space for an alternative without taking down the system completely.

***Where does this leave us when it comes to how citizens then understand the state?***

Theoretically speaking, the authority of political parties and sect leaders has blurred the boundaries and traditional lines of authority between the state and nonstate realm. Citizens navigate the complex political and administrative system through local and sectarian authorities that act at the margins of the state. Ultimately, citizens across the country have learned to deal with the state through sect leaders (Zuama) and their local intermediaries. This is not seen as favoritism, but rather how things work in this system because the state is unable to give them the safety and security they need and desire. Whenever introducing a middle man between their rights and the state, citizens are fracturing their relationship with the state. These dynamics are weakening the bond between the state and its citizens, where people feel a very strong degree of distance in

relation to the state, which is seen as an abstract and alienating structure. To put into larger perspective, these Zuama's who dominate the establishment have been present since the civil war and have instilled their stronghold in the state are part of this symbiotic relationship; where the establishment feeds off the existing divisions in society and where society plays along with it, and sectarian dynamics and identity is reinforced. This creates a climate of insecurity, which further enables state elites to offer their power and network as a solution while they preserve their privileged access to wealth and resources.

Ultimately self-identification with an ethnic (confessional) community also raises questions about citizens' attachment to the state. According to Alekins and Sides, a weak state attachment exists when citizens self-categorize with their ethnic community over the state or if they hold negative feelings/views towards the state (Elkins & Sides, 2007, 697). My research in Lebanon points to stronger identification with ethnicity (sectarian community) over the state and high discontent with the state. This is reinforced by a significant degree of pessimism and cynicism towards the government and the role of state institutions in bringing about meaningful change in the everyday lives of citizens.

Even for those who express frustrations with the state, it is not necessarily dissatisfaction with the confessional representation, but rather annoyances over the frequent deadlock, corruption, nepotism, and the entrenched political class. As the economic situation deteriorates, citizens live with much precariousness, in which sectarian dynamics add an element of difficulty in accessing or gaining anything outside the avenues of political parties. In addition to the political interferences, this has instilled a sense of anger that many relate to, where the trickledown of wealth is limited, and those who are closer are favored. Frustrations are targeted towards traditional elites and the state, implying that there is also a declining legitimacy of the former. However, for those

calling for a normative preference for non-sectarian egalitarian politics, this may not be enough motivation for dismantling the sectarian system.

Sectarian anxieties remain, and any attempts at change are perceived as bringing about insecurity and threatening the country's fragile political formula. For the system to change, it would require providing citizens with the security of knowing that there is a neutral state and government behind them regardless of who is running. Ultimately, the longing for full representativeness in Lebanon of sectarian communities has become a long-lasting barrier to the secularization of politics and the difference between "sectarian citizen" and "equal citizen." The argument supporting the current system, even after the 15-year civil war, is still stability, where many Lebanese believe that power needs to be shared to maintain the sectarian plurality of the country. Sectarian narratives of history and the civil war remain, and the country as a whole has failed to move towards reconciliation. However, there is a sign of hope as the newer generations are willing to discuss the civil war and their detachment to its trauma but their entanglement in its consequences. The resulting sectarian dynamics and cleavages permeate not only confessional governance but also the civic consciousness of the Lebanese public. This raises the question of citizens' awareness of their ability to claim rights for themselves and on the part of the state to provide for their citizens and foster an active sense of citizenship that goes beyond the identity of its citizens (legal, social, political, or otherwise). This sense of citizenship will be crucial in countering sectarianism from below, providing alternatives pathways beyond sectarianism, and constructing stronger relationships between citizens and the state.

## ***Conclusion:***

This thesis attempts to update the literature on identities in Lebanon and fill the gap in the understanding of micro-level dynamics and relations between citizens and the state. It explores the role of sectarianism in Lebanon – how sectarian identities persist and are incorporated into

peoples' lived reality. Additionally, it brings attention to how rhetoric, history, and space is lived and how it reinforces people's identities and the community-centric narrative. It is impossible to discuss people's engagement in state-society relations without acknowledging underlying sectarian dynamics. Since sectarianism is so profoundly present in Lebanese politics and society, it directly impacts citizens' relationships with the state in both the public and private realm. Lebanon's deeply imbedded political confessionalism has created a precarious space where citizens feel low confidence in the state and view the role and presence of the state as almost non-existent because one cannot rely on the state, which in itself is overcome by political interests. The interconnected links between the state and political parties have resulted in citizens becoming more reliant on local authorities and political parties that further activate sectarianism. As this study has demonstrated, the spaces and mechanisms where sectarian identities were deployed socially, politically, and economically, have reinforced and reproduced sectarian cleavages. Ultimately, the reality is that citizens reconcile factionalized spaces, societal and community norms, and sectarian structures, in the way they interact with the self and the other. Identification with confessional communities and local authorities provides citizens with security and order that is missing but has also added a layer of difficulty in having to negotiate their needs and access to the state.

The thesis also moves beyond this and provides insights into the presence of other ways of being and spaces that enable diversity and change. It is not just religious, political, or, ultimately, sectarian identities that are present but also different forms of identities that oppose and counter the sectarian narratives. Some spaces allow people to communicate with each other and to dispute sectarian boundaries of othering. There is a desire for change by those who do not feel represented through the fold of confessionalism. Social change is built on forms of consensus that emerge, and some people are open to engaging with an alternative and undoing existing social boundaries. Though how feasible and inclusive this is and how it will play out over time is difficult to say as

there remains hesitancy towards the uncertainty that accompanies change where sectarianism remains sticky and resilient and is reproduced by the majority of the population.

The conclusions reached within this study applies mainly to the context of state-society relations in Lebanon. However, this case study of Lebanon acts as both an exploratory and explanatory case that is vital for understanding the impact of power-sharing arrangements on micro-level dynamics and permeates the rethinking of macro-level generalizations about state-society relations in these contexts. Despite the efforts for pluralistic representation, the inelasticity of the system is hurting citizens and creating frustrations towards its associated political and economic processes. Many are exhausted with the politicization of their daily lives and are looking towards change rather than reinforcing the confessional divisions of their predecessors. However, during the time of the study, the potential for change towards a political system that could meet citizen's needs and represent them is conveyed as impossible with the country's current conditions, where underlying sectarian rhetoric remains. Instead of serving as a solution, the institutionalization of identity-based divisions often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, increasing sectarian tensions and making it more challenging to have a neutral state that provides for its citizens. In other words, the sectarian features of the Lebanese political system must do more than ensure equitable confessional participation in government. Ultimately, the early literature following the Lebanese civil war examined state-society relations in terms of confessional identification, elite inter-confessional relations, and confessional interaction with the 'state.' Though these narratives fit within peoples' reality, examining them from a micro-level provides a nuanced understanding of how this directly affects citizens. And ultimately, how sectarianism is also a product of people themselves who actively engage in dynamics that contribute to the reproduction and reinforcement of Lebanon's sectarian institutional configuration.

Much has happened in Lebanon since December of 2018, and this research can help widen our understanding of sectarianism and its implications to make sense of what is currently taking place in the country. Since the "You Stink" protests that took place in 2015, against garbage collection and the inefficiency of public services, there have been ongoing spasms of activism in Lebanon, directed towards changing the structure and challenging the politicization of the state. Fast forward to October 17, 2019; a significant event took place: the country is undergoing what some are calling a large-scale revolution. The country-wide protests that began in Beirut have been unprecedented in both diversity and scale, bringing together citizens from all confessional and socio-economic backgrounds. The unrest erupted from a build-up of anger at the rising cost of living, new tax plans, and frustrations with the state's lack of preparedness with the emergency response (wildfires). At the core, citizens are revolting against the entrenched sectarian political class and calling for a move beyond sectarianism and for accountability regarding the mismanagement of the Lebanese state and economy.

The rallying cry of the protests has been "all of them means all of them," placing accountability on the establishment as a whole and demanding a new government that is free from the political elite that emerged after the civil war. Though protestors have not agreed on a set of demands, there are calls for a technocratic government consisting of specialists and free of sectarian allegiances (Chehayeb & Sewell, 2019). During the time of my fieldwork, right before these events, there were strong frustrations and discontent with the state and pessimism towards the economic and political situation. I vividly remember the sense of something on the horizon, a boiling frustration that could explode at any moment. People opened up about their concerns, fears, and the vulnerability of their everyday reality and, in doing so, signaled a hope that the future would hold a loud awakening. The economic situation has worsened since, affecting those at all

socio-economic levels and particularly the already vulnerable and its pressures have become unbearable, signaling a desperate opportunity to mobilize (Dadouch, 2019).

The revolution taking place in Lebanon is a result of long-lasting frustrations with the system where accountability has been a difficult thing to place. Calls for change in Lebanon have usually been met with an unyielding system that has proved resilient, deeply self-reinforcing, and incredibly difficult to challenge. What this research can teach us about the current crisis is that sectarianism cannot be rid in a day or even in a few months, it is sticky and easily reproduced at both the micro and macro level. Many remain attached to their sectarian communities and affiliate in some way or another to sectarian political parties – that often play a significant role in mediating access. As is evident with the revolution, those who have an interest in maintaining the status quo have pushed back, where at present, both state and non-state actors are responding with excessive force and clashing with protestors ("Lebanon: Protect Protesters from Attacks," 2019; Molana-Allen, 2019). However, those who desire representation that goes beyond confessionalism, have been provided with an opportunity to strengthen the opposition and widen the narrative to include those who did not have the privileged spaces or opportunities to demand this before.

Challenges remain ahead for protestors and activists, but this time around may signal a conscious awareness of the setbacks of previous movements and more bottom-up grassroots engagement by the larger Lebanese population instead of previous movements that were led by civil society organizations and middle-class activists. Protestors are using a more inclusive narrative to speak the language of all and include all those affected by sectarianism – which was a common complaint by participants when it came to independents and civil society actors. Undoubtfully, protestors will have to contest attempts at sectarianization of the revolution by political elites and their followers, already visible through the display of counter-protests by those attached to their sectarian/partisan identity (Knecht, 2019). However, even those who identify with

their sectarian community are frustrated with the state and the established political parties. This may signal that some are demanding more, though one must be wary of sectarianism from below during times of crisis.

As efforts have shown, any initiative against sectarianism in its various guises will render an uphill battle. Even if the goal of overthrowing political sectarianism or replacing the establishment does not succeed, this will have made significant strides and inspired thousands across the country and in the diaspora. Arguably as the research has shown, spaces that bring together people also enable them to break down barriers and get to know the other. The diversity of the protests on the ground will bring forth opportunities for the formation of networks that will remain far beyond and sustain possibilities for change and refashioning of citizen's social world. While this may seem to be a daunting task, it is also an opportunity to reimagine the type of political community citizens want that draws on the common good and citizen's everyday concerns. This research has taught us that citizens have often felt that the state has played a limited or absent role in their lives where they secure their needs through wastas and intermediaries. However, what this revolution says loud and clear is that people are demanding more from the state, and though this stemmed from the economic situation, it is an opportunity to challenge sectarianism as a system.

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