The Changing Face of Sectarianism: *Applying a contemporary Social Movement Framework to Lebanon's distinctive case.*

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Introduction:

Despite agonising under severe poverty and penuries, in addition to a breakdown in the delivery of state services and public goods, the Lebanese working classes did not form a coalition capable of transforming the sectarian state. The deep-rooted sect-based inter-working-class divisions inhibited the formation of such a broad-based alliance between the various disenfranchised groups. Social being, the material and the spiritual circumstance experienced in sinking living standards and volatile security, parted ways with social consciousness, or the ideological and organisational framework needed to turn things around. The disarticulation between what people experience in daily hardships and the ideas/policies required to depose the failed system has deepened. The Lebanese revolution of 17 October 2019 was more about negation and less about workable alternatives. It only released the pent-up frustrations by opposing the ideals of the existing order, but did not provide clear-cut goals around which the population could have been mobilised to secure a better future. With this state of affairs in mind, the purpose of this paper is to examine why the people of Lebanon failed to unite and topple the state-sectarian system.

The case of Lebanon is no different than a spate of revolutions since the Arab Spring that changed the faces of those in power but did not revolutionise state policies to hem in the 'corruption' or, more pertinently, the usurpation of social wealth towards private ends. In Lebanon, an alliance of the sectarian ruling class and the banking sector sucked dry state finances driving the debt to un-serviceable levels. Yet, the same class and the same state order remain. Why revolutions fail or win is possibly the most vexing question of the times. At a broad level, there are common universalities and divergent particularities common to all social transitions. At a narrower level, frustration with divergent living standards combined with a corresponding revolutionary consciousness and adequate forms of political organisation appear to be a principal

driver of uprisings. The outcome of any uprising will depend on the balance of class forces, foremost the ideological balance. Naturally, no two cases are the same. After all, the universal or what is deployed to capture the facts in theory exists as the gelled/mediated practice of the particulars, and as such, even the universal has to continuously appear in new forms. That is why theory always develops lagging the *a-posteriori* facts and it is difficult to obtain clear results on revolutionary lapses without accounting for the specificities of each case.

At first sight, Lebanon boasts a disproportionate number of revolutionaries embedded in NGOs (Fawaz & Harb, 2020), heavy exposure to outside pressures and interventions, with nearly a quarter of the workforce being rurally based, while more than half population subsists below the poverty line (United Nations ESCWA, 2020). Still, they cannot unite against their oppressors. Instead of focusing on the dominant capital relationship, its hegemony and the power of the dominant ideology, which strengthen the cross-nationally bolstered ruling class, many Lebanese think that the oppressor is mainly the head of the other sect and not theirs. That ideology deludes is clear enough. Sectarianism as the ideology of capital veils reality so much that the working classes of Lebanon appear to be self-harming by different degrees, yet allegiance to the sect and the absence of sane alternatives make the negative dialectic an inexorable condition.

The above observations fall in line with the Goodwin and Skocpol model (1989) that without a broad front combining class and state elements targeting weak vulnerable spots in the existing order, revolutions succumb. In this work, I show that much of the empirical situation resembles the framework of the same model; however, inspired by the Gramscian notion of hegemony, I argue that the ideological/sectarian component is the decisive factor, which forms the historical undercurrent inhibiting a successful working-class alliance capable of toppling the Western backed sectarian order.

Description of the Goodwin and Skocpol (1989) Model:

For Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol (1989), the idea that "misery breeds revolt" does not explain many revolutions in a contemporary frame. Their framework is built upon the stance that some historians may have overemphasized the situation and value of 'peasantry' in social revolutions; in clearer terms, material conditions alone do not necessarily start to a revolution. Two myths are also raised and somewhat challenged in their work: the first being that professional revolutionaries and scarce material conditions are enough to kickstart a revolution, and the second that Third world countries are seemingly easy to be exploited by imperialist powers.

For the authors, revolutionary coalitions are likely to grow around pre-existing nationalist, populist, or religious discourses that legitimize resistance to tyranny and, just as essential, are capable of mobilizing a wide range of civil society groups and social classes. A revolutionary coalition is established not just by how many facets of civil society join forces and mobilise, but also by the political vacuum that the regime in power makes available to revolutionaries because of the regime's structural characteristics, weaknesses, and tactics of preserving power rule. Thus, the 'narrower' and/or repressive the regime is, the greater the coalition and mobilization will be.

Generally, for Goodwin and Skocpol, *closed/exclusionary and organizationally weak regimes* are the most vulnerable to the growth of revolutionary coalitions. In that frame, economic grievances and their victims quickly become politicized. There is also a clear focus for the opposition, through the form of a common enemy (namely economic and political elites) for classes and groups that have various types of grievances (including grievances against one another, such as the case intra-sectarian tensions). Religious and/or cultural authorities might join the coalition and also attract a large number of supporters and constituents. The regimes tend to undermine and cancel out any attempts of reformism, which adds to the coalition's struggle. And

lastly, they tend to apply repressive methods to preserve their authority and deter the capacities of revolutionaries.

On the other hand, *multiparty democracies and quasi-democracies* have historically not facilitated the growth of revolutionary movements, even in poorer countries. 'Inclusionary' authoritarian regimes – such as fascist and state-socialist regimes or single party corporatist regimes – have not either because, mass political mobilizations have drowned out the demands and representation of various smaller groups within. These types of regimes have also imposed strict controlled forms of political participation on key actors (such as the co-option of leaders).

The authors identify two specific types of exclusionary and repressive authoritarian regimes that are particularly susceptible to be overthrown by revolutionary movements.

Sultanistic neo-patrimonial regimes: they are centered in the personal manipulation of individual dictatorial rulers, they make it difficult to include independent groups of civil society in effective political engagement, even sectors of the military, public service institutions, or middle and upper social and economic classes. Their tendencies include: 1) important sectors of the economy are monopolized and seized by political and/or elite classes; 2) the current of ideas, propaganda, and information is meticulously controlled in the public settings, even in schools and in the press, 3) family connections are commonly used to monopolize government positions, contracts, business, and professional opportunities; and 4) the likelihood of favouring foreign capitalists when granting special privileges and serving their geopolitical interests in exchange for foreign aid. Their armed forces are usually corrupt and/or incompetent and political leaders are more concerned about being overthrown than establishing an effective state. Leaders of states as such will tend to lose foreign backing once they are confronted by a multiclass opposition and significant pressures.

Direct colonialist regimes: this is the case when a colony is governed directly by metropolitan officials. They undermine actual or potential moderate and reformist leaderships; they tend to create more indigenous elite and middle-class opposition than indirect rule, providing a common and highly visible focus of opposition. Their tendencies include: 1) Radicalizing its opponents by completely undermining actual or potential moderate and reformist leadership (does not attempt to preserve or create a traditional indigenous elite); 2) business, professional and (obviously) government positions are based on an explicitly racial/ethnic criterion; 3) they create a common focus of opposition for groups that may have very different reasons for seeking national independence; 4) their armed forces cannot be a force for reform - no ties or interest in decolonization – there, the sudden withdrawal of colonial armies clears the path for revolutionaries to seize power; and 5) generates contexts in which political symbols of nationalism (i.e., a flag for example) and cultural self-assertion may be harnessed by revolutionaries – where class struggle and other grievances overlap with a common struggle for national liberation.

Table 1
Some Characteristics of Exclusionary Polities

Patrimonial Dictatorships and Directly Ruled Colonies	Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Regimes and Indirectly Ruled Colonies
Relative weak, corrupt, and disorganized civil administration and army	Stronger and more coherent civil administration and army
Political openings difficult: military reformism and civil-military pacts unlikely	Political openings easier: military reformism and civil-military pacts more likely
Basis for popular and elite opposition to ruler	Elite opposition much less likely
External support more likely to be withdrawn, especially as elite opposition develops	External support more likely to persist, especially following a political opening
Probability of state disintegration when dictator or colonial power departs or is removed	State disintegration less likely during political crises and transitions

To conclude the model, The Third World is the principal site of social revolutions in this century, not simply because of its poverty and socioeconomic structures, but because it is where we find some of the most repressive and exclusionary political systems, based on poor governance, corrupt armies and institutions that do not have control over the territories they claim to rule and obfuscating social-state relations. Revolutionary coalitions in the contemporary Third World tend to succeed when civil society can wholly be politically organized to oppose a direct colonial regime or sultanistic neo-patrimonial regime. Lastly and most importantly, the structure of states and armies (and the political relations between states and various sectors of society) are essential in

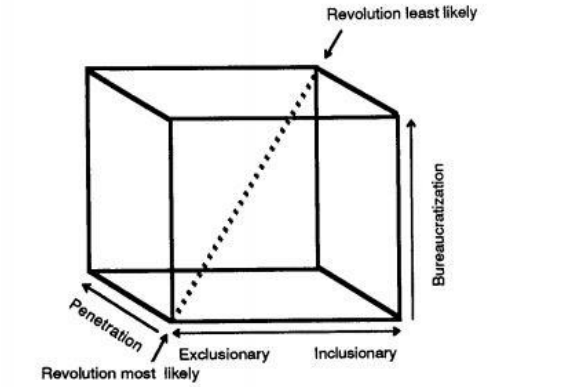

Figure 1. A graphic representation of states according to degrees of (1) *penetration* of national territory, (2) *incorporation* of socially mobilized groups, and (3) *bureaucratization* of the state administration and armed forces

understanding revolutions in the Third World.

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Upon a closer examination, Lebanese sects and NGOs command significant resources, and a following of citizens unified by a distinct ideology. As state capacity wanes, these deliver the services and public goods, which supplant former functions. Each sectarian group is an example of a semi-autonomous institution within the state; however, all non-sectarian political parties and organisations are semi-independent to some extent. The legitimacy of the political group or sect derives from the ideological commitment of the base plus the ability of the sect/party to offer support in various welfare functions. For Goodwin and Skocpol (1989), the efficacy of the broad

alliance materialises when these statal and class alliances offer enough in goods to attenuate the risk of transition to a better order.

In its broad outlines, the model offers an analytical tool to foreground the analysis of the Lebanese revolution. With respect to state structure, the state is both authoritative by sectarian-leadership consensus – none of the sect-leaders will sacrifice the state because it is the vehicle of rent sharing, also none would desire a strong state above sect. In all this, the broad mass base has been driven into indigence. Many should have no interest in upkeeping the same state apparatus. What invokes intellectual curiosity in the crisis is that all the civil servants, including the army and the internal security services, have had their wages cut to a fraction of their previous levels, including loss of pensions. The whole population has been marginalised as water, electricity and essential health services have practically hit bottom. What makes Goodwin and Skocpol's model pertinent is the sudden collapse of nearly all the functions of the state, its visible weakness/organization, and the almost uncanny intervention of the external world in its internal affairs. Another condition of that model that fully appertains to Lebanon is the *Zai'm* (paternalistic boss notion) who wields power and passes favours, which is befitting of Lebanon's clannish and hierarchical structure. This trait of the model, which enfeebles democratic institutions, and with that the resiliency of political rule, appears to tally with the Lebanese case. As the majority falls through the state welfare safety net and awaits either remittances from abroad or charity in kind to survive, the conditions of the Goodwin and Skocpol model are mostly satisfied, such that a successful front shifting the state and social structure should be a possibility; but it is not. Put differently, Lebanon's precipitous collapse makes it a prime candidate for popular fronts, which would overturn its state. The population already faces huge risks as civil society continues to act

as welfare cushion. Still, there is certainly not any solid indication that a revolutionary coalition is developing.

History brims with failed revolutionary experiments. Why people make 'history as they do, not please', to borrow from Marx eighteenth Brumaire, is the lacuna of social science even though massive writings on the subject exist. I do not claim that I will have the complete answers to the topic, but in this paper, I investigate Lebanon's revolutionary failure subject to above selective guidelines from the Goodwin and Skocpol model. It begins by situating the recent development within a historical continuum (part one), and then steps into an investigation of our hypothesis (part two). The findings are consistent with many of the tenets of the Goodwin and Skocpol model. I argue, however, that although Lebanon coheres with the conditions of the model, the social force needed to restructure the class order has not materialised because of the dominant power of Sectarian ideology re-nourished by geo-political rents. Fundamentally, Lebanon is too strategic for what it can offer by control of its location rather than what it can produce to sell or trade with.

The analysis based on the model fumbles as it addresses the social dynamic or the historical process. The paper finds that although there are significant aspects and many-sided issues of the Lebanese mess that are illuminated by the model, Goodwin and Skocpol underestimate the primacy of ideology in the determination of social events. Sectarianism is the ideological form of the ruling sectarian coalition. The well-entrenched sects are the product of the well-entrenched cross-national ideologies, and these prohibit a transition to a better world. The questions raised herein reinvoke Antonio Gramsci's (1989) point that the ideas of the dominant class are the dominant ideas, or the blinders that inhibit people from seeing the social reproduction cycle for what it really is: a private sector or capital emaciating the social sphere. In Gramscian terms, to

defeat the dominant class, it is imperative for the working class to establish cultural hegemony in all spheres of social reproduction. The Lebanese must defeat the dominance of old ideas, such as reliance on geopolitical rents as opposed to nationally mobilised production. Ideologies just like classes are cross-border social relations, which brings in the leading link, in this complex structure, which is the array of external forces corrupting the professional revolutionaries. The Gramscian approach informs of the absence of organic intellectuals, or those cultured individuals organically tied to their social environment and whose commitment to change is home grown. Questions of this nature arise in the progress of research and remain to be investigated.

The paper is organised as follows, it will start off with a set of hypotheses and contextualizing thoughts. Then, the first sections will attempt to summarize Lebanon's complex development of its current state/social relations – by pointing out the recurring themes and trends of sectarianism - through a chronological historical structure: beginning with the pre-independence Lebanon (Ottoman and French rules), post-independence Lebanon, events leading to the Civil War (1975-1990), and the post-conflict aftermath. The second part will make use of the Goodwin and Skocpol model with Lebanon's unique case, discussing its strengths and limitations, and concluding with a forward-looking assessment from the current picture.

The Hypothesis

What should have sparked domestic and international outrage is not the thrill of the spectacle, but the way the Lebanese government failed to ensure the security as well as the food and living security of its "people"[1]. Though the country's short-lived stability (1958-1975) was

[1] The term "people" is not loosely used to convey the idea that the population is divided into smaller ethnic groups who each possess their own primordial or essentialist identity and history, but rather as Chomsky & Chomsky (2007) realistically describe the various ideological inclinations that pervade the social and political fabric reconstituting

assumed to rest on its successful model of confessional representation, the emergent protests in October 2019 did however show that there is broad disapproval of the sect supplanting the idea of individual representation and rights. Throughout its history, anti-sectarianism has long been the agenda of the progressive forces. The notion that the sect derails progress is a salient cliché; however, the costs and risks of transition to a better order, along with an emaciated progressive left, make for grim prospects. And, shortly after the Beirut explosion of August 2020, the momentum of the opposition tapered off and divisions, more ideological than sectarian, within the protest movement thwarted the impetus of protestor-demands.

What should spark intellectual curiosity is the way people failed to organize and overturn their repressive system, which brings us to the topic of this paper. Using Goodwin and Skocpol's (1989) theoretical framework on social revolutions, can we explain what it is about the historical development of the Lebanese state and the way that it incorporated its people, through religious sects, that prevents the formation of broad-based coalition or revolutionary movement? In point of fact, the Lebanese state has proven durable. Those who question its viability could not practise their ideals. The system is resilient enough to carry out a balance between repression and welfare handouts to quell opposition to its obviously faulty structure. On the face of it, the fact that the history of Lebanon is a series of wars and deep crises has not even brought into question the nature of the state as a form of social organisation.[2] The Taif Accord after the 1975-1990 civil war

various identities. In fact, the inter-sect ideological divisions in Lebanon create many cross-sectarian alliances that let the constructed religious identity appear as it is: a fabricated connection meant to deepen working class divisions.

[2] There are many definitions of the state. These emerge from different schools with varying ideological optics. Broadly, the definition bifurcates along two lines. The first highlights its functionalist role in managing the affairs of a society immersed in deep differences. The second acknowledges the functional role, but only in relation to the state serving as instrument of a ruling class. I posited the Lebanese state in its most abstract sense. The state in Lebanon in its apparent dysfunctionality serves as an ideal instrument of the sectarian system. It is not too strong to subsume the sect, and not too weak to be subsumed by it. This delicate balance reorganizes society always in in the interests of capital. This paper will apply Ben Fine's (2013) conception of the state, defined and explored in page 19 to 21.

formalised the sectarian distribution instead of eliminating. It also mollified the division of labour between sects and deepened the rifts over the power demarcation lines, making the possibility of inter-sectarian détente more elusive. Yet, the enigma remains: the notion of a state based on individual as opposed to sect rights has never gelled. To be sure, the confessional model legitimates tribal-like representation and voids the role of the state in guaranteeing either the right of opportunity or the right to equality in basic living conditions. The model holds insofar as the state is of an archaic/authoritarian form permitting the formation of alliances, while the sect despite being in opposition to the state also understands that the state in its present form is relevant its continuity.

Although Lebanon's worsening economy and security lay out the objective grounds for social revolution, I will argue that these alone are not sufficient and that sectarianism, as the engrained ideological forms of working-class divisions, prohibits the formation of any social alternative. The crises in Lebanon although of a particular nature, also fall under the retreat of the social alternatives under neo-liberalism. Moreover, peoples have lost faith in the social democratic alternatives after the troubling performance and fall of the Soviet Union.[3] This broad ideological failure of the left was doubly felt in Lebanon because of sectarianism. Mind-gripping sectarian identity masked over the real living conditions that people experience together. Identity is also real for many Lebanese, but it is the never completed process of becoming and shifting identifications (Hall, 2017), and not an unchanging meta-historical attribute. Nurtured to divide people, sectarian identity weakens societal cohesion, and mystifies life processes, creating obstacles on a daily basis.

[3] The political map of ideological proclivities in the region is complicated. However, the region is no different than the rest of the world, and the decline of the left began earlier and crystalized with the onset of neoliberalism. The majority of communist parties were pro-Soviet, and the demise of the USSR retrenched left losses throughout the Middle East.

As a subcomponent of the above research question, this paper posits that the social and historical failure of the Lebanese social movements and political parties is primarily the result of foreign powers' efforts to buy political capital in Lebanon, namely by the medium of divisive identity, in order to strengthen their geostrategic positions.

I hypothesize that the Lebanese model fits snuggly in the Goodwin Skocpol framework. First, it exhibits an authoritarian patrimonial setting. Secondly, the state's distributive capacities are undermined, and many are marginalised. Thirdly, the crisis has hit the state sector and the possibility of cooperating with state functionaries exists. Fourthly, there are well organised professional revolutionary with an alternative vision of the future. All of these are tested against the current state of affairs or the apparently deep-rooted sectarianism, which is a subset of the regional social classes positioned in a struggle for a strategic region and not primarily a drive to preserve cultural identity since culture cannot be preserved as it always changes. Moreover, the sects are sub-classes or extensions of the regional and international classes or social forces. However, the attachment to the imaginary construct of identity is a relationship to the privileges that can only be obtained through the rank/privilege of the sect as a constituent of the state. Concretely, people earn a living and enjoy a certain status only by belonging to a sect. The sect is de-facto and de-jure imposed upon the social order.

Contextualising thoughts

During and following the October 17 protests, a series of inter-movement altercations arose upon the pro- and anti- U.S. demarcation lines. In an overly politicized country subsisting mainly by geopolitical rents - consisting of finance flowing in to create support for the international powers seeking a base in Lebanon (Cramer, 1997) - the class lines extend beyond the national border. They do so for reasons of allegiance to foreign powers that buy political capital across

sectarian groups and because national elites do not store their wealth within the country. In a context of uncertainty stemming from complex geopolitical multi-positioning, most elites and financial class assets are stored abroad in safer dollar-assets. The accumulation of personal wealth for these elites depends on their ties to those who manage their resources abroad (Financial Times, 2020)[4]. This foreign strategic pressuring has been a historical trend, as we will see below, and still applies today, such as the ongoing U.S. sanctions on Lebanese figures (Reuters, 2020)[5]. One may surmise that as top sect leaders store their wealth abroad, they remain at the mercy of the West and/or other regional powers, and hence, identities are geared to further extra-national as opposed to national interests. The case may be that shared historical experience or common folk and mores may bring together certain social groups to form a common identity, however, there is precious little in terms of material base for a Lebanese national identity to be grouped around. Material base here denotes the material production circumstances which reproduce society and around which social groups share a common vested interest which foregrounds their consciousness/cultural development (Marx, 1863). Prior to its financial crisis of 2019, Lebanon was importing several times more than it exported[6] (World Bank-World Development Indicators, 2020). It paid for its exports with foreign savings and geopolitical rents (Aid, remittances, and Official Development Assistance).[7] Given the persistent deficits in the accounts of merchandise trade, the government or

[4] It is straightforward logic that capital flees to safer markets. Lebanon currency and instruments were long rated as junk. The news brims of capital flight stories. For instance, see: Bankers 'smuggled' $6bn out of Lebanon, says ex-finance chief. https://www.ft.com/content/df234c78-a945-4199-befe-0272259dc755

[5] The Treasury Department of the US imposes sanctions on individual not allied with it, which include inter alia a freeze on assets and possibly outright confiscation of assets abroad. See U.S. to continue imposing sanctions on Lebanese individuals – official https://www.reuters.com/article/lebanon-crisis-israel-sanctions-int-idUSKBN26M6T8

[6] Its current account deficit was quite significant requiring foreign savings to redress. See the appendix for illustrative charts from the IMF.

[7] Most remittances to Lebanon originate in the Gulf. Gulf states have in the past decided to replace Palestinians and Yemenis with workers hailing from other countries on account of political differences. The Gulf states threaten the

fiscal account and the capital account (triple chronical deficits plus building debt), it could be safely said that it was the geopolitical rents which had allowed for some semblance of stability. The Lebanese rich exported capital and spent far more than what was being produced at home. They financed their debts with continuous borrowing. Effectively, the poor either emigrated or subsisted at poverty levels. The Lebanese sectarian leadership made a living by acquiring rents (Tsourapas, 2019). These rents were moneyed windfalls related with ideological allegiance/positioning to some external power; in contrast to rents earned because of real domestic productivity effort[8]. In other words, there was more money earned from voicing support for Iran or Saudi Arabia, than there were profits from internally generated growth in industry and agriculture. This can be deduced after the fact because the value of consumption based on imports in the Lebanese economy is higher than the GDP (World Bank- Global Development Indicators). Also, one must recall that in this negative saving economy, which is burdened with huge internal dollar debts, the National Banks were lending the state the deposits of groups that are unwelcomed in Western Banks, like Syrians. As the state paid high wages to prop up the sectarian structures, its officials and functionaries were also partners with the banks as they depleted the savings of people who could not save their dollar assets anywhere but Lebanon for fear of sanctions or confiscations. Oddly, the communist party of Lebanon was always supporting the demands for the officials higher wages, although it had known the country's internal productivity was minimal and the wages were practically theft from banks thieving anti-US depositors.

Lebanese workers with expulsion now and then. See Lebanese expats fearful as Gulf expels dozens accused of Hezbollah links https://www.reuters.com/article/gulf-hezbollah-lebanon-idINKCN0X522M

[8] Here I am assuming that all above zero incomes or profits are some form of rent. While as per basic economics, profits tend to zero under perfect competition, above-normal or market-power associated profits are rents (Samuelson, 1948). While some income is earned by industrial effort, which produces real tangible goods, others are payment for loyalty or services rendered. In both cases any above competitive income or profit is rent. For instance, there are higher profits or income associated with new technologies, yet these are still classified as rents.

To rephrase, although the primacy in the formation of consciousness swings between cultural or materialist reasons depending on the school of thought, the latter (the Marxian) says that consciousness forms by the way people engage in material life to reproduce their conditions of existence (Marx, 1845). In Lebanon, the cultural landscape is so fluid such that it may be straightforward to presume that allegiance to the externally funded sect will be stronger than allegiance to the nation (Marx 1845; Larrain, 1979). To caveat: although neither Marx nor Larrain address the question of allegiance to externally funded sect, what is flushed out here is that the funds are the sources of income by which people survive and these are the material circumstances upon which consciousness unfolds. The money earned as wages represents the value outlays on labor or necessary labor: the bread and butter of the working population earned by the social activity (the material circumstance) of labor. To follow with Marx, as labour competes for jobs/earning a living as free labourers they compete against one another, and the very wage system becomes a form of capital that reproduces capital.

I deduce the materialist basis of this proposition (the primacy of the materialist grounding of consciousness) *after the fact* from the recurrent splinters within each of the sects. That is a Marxian position in which it is not the idea in the head of someone or the lingering idea from past cultures which fathom history; it is history and its stock of ideology that shifts to correspond to the materialist circumstances (Gramsci, 1971 : 445). History devolves by the fluid stock of the dominant ideas attendant upon the dynamics of the dominant class: the class changes, and with that, so does the dominant ideology. There was never a time when nearly all members of the sect formed a cohesive social group. Aside from the fact that the civil war's leftist national movement was multi-sectarian with the three leading parties (the Nasserites, the Communists and the Syrian Nationalist), it had Christians in position of leadership. The various sects, which emerged after the

demise of the Left experienced infighting and cross-sectarian alliances, albeit, in relation to the powers that fomented the inter-sectarian divisions (Abukhalil, 2010). Sunnis, Maronites, Greek Orthodox and Shias display stronger intra-sectarian differences and cross sect adherence. Moreover, the income position of all the members of sects could be determined by regional area rather than by sect. In Beqaa, the North and the South of Lebanon, all sects were poorer than their counterparts in Mount Lebanon and Beirut. There was not a long enough span of time in which conditions remained steady for us to witness how cultural symbols and traditions on their own could bring about the relative unity of any social group around a shared identity; not that identity remains unchanged anyways. As per Hall (2017), identity is a never completed process, and in Lebanon, identity is the product of the principal ongoing activity, which is dependent on rents. For example, Walid Jumblatt, a Druze leader, frequently changes positions oscillating between Saudi and Syria in ways that splinters his constituency as it becomes situated on one side of the political spectrum or the other. Factiously, one is never sure which side of the fence represents the cultural values of Druze's or any other sect.

Even at the time of writing, and as national income in some estimates is at almost half of what it was (19 billion US$), which implies that the debt to GDP ratio is around 400 percent – this level is possibly unprecedented for a developing country[9]. At any rate, the real GDP of Lebanon was tinkered with after the death of Hariri to appear large. Moreover, when the geopolitical rets and the theft of foreign deposits in Lebanese Banks are deducted, the GDP of Lebanon would have dismally smaller. Nowadays (2021), there are in kind aid and selective funds to stabilise the

[9]Lebanon's GDP has dropped by 40% since fall 2019 https://www.deseret.com/u-s-world/2021/7/7/22566943/lebanon-economic-financial-social-crisis.
Lebanon Sinking into One of the Most Severe Global Crises Episodes, amidst Deliberate Inaction, World Bank: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes

security services in order to avoid complete chaos, but implicitly more so to maintain the elites in control. The various sectarian leaderships handle the handouts to cement support from the base, while the adherents have not yet dropped the old spectacles with which they assess the future. Although, the reduction of geopolitical rent has had an impact, old sectarian habits linger, and the situation grows far more nuanced because globally as well as nationally, identity politics has been groomed in the US sponsored coloured revolution sense: one has the right to be white or black but no rights to claim against the state. The process lets people auto-legitimise their poverty.

My emphasis here is on the severe dependence of an economy on outside 'handouts'. Before the crisis, the rate of imports to exports was nearly ten to one, and the economy still needs several billion dollars to redress the deficit in the current account (International Monetary Fund, 2021). The aid in kind and other selective measures of financial aid maintain sectarian positions and annul the scope for a broader solution. There are many opposed political positions within a sect. Many proclaim to be the true guardians of the faith. Each subsect is subject to a certain degree of income mal distribution. Poverty and wealth are cross sectional. As Sarraf figuratively posited: each denomination preaches the faith by the amount of geopolitical rent it receives, rather than divine salvation (Sarraf, 1980).

Although the pre-capitalist forms of social organization (the many historical sects) may filter into the present state of consciousness as past traditions that remain alive in the present, the more substantive reason of geopolitical rents is the actual driver for the obvious strength of the sect. This mode of reasoning as *état d'esprit* erected upon external as opposed to internal class bonding relationships complicates the study of social movements in Lebanon. Additionally, the state may be the institution of all institutions (as Ben Fine reinterprets Russell's ship barber paradox): in Lebanon each sect as an institution is possibly bigger than the state (Salloukh et al.,

2015). Bearing in mind Fine's perspective of the state (Fine, 2013; Scruton, 2007), if one presumes that the role of the state is to correct market failures with distributional measures, then it is the sect which has taken over this role. The state in its ontological form may be the incarnate sovereign, the realization of the common will, law, or ethicality (Scruton, 2007). In view of the significant shortfall in nationally generated income, the weakness of trade unions independent of intra and inter sectarian allegiance, I only emphasize the functional or distributional role of the state to highlight the role of many sects as they proxy the role of the state in resource allocation. The state divided in fiefs between sects, or sectarian division of the state, lets its revenues filter up to the sectarian leaders, who in turn arrange the community level affairs (Salti & Chaaban, 2010).

To further illustrate the difference, the pre-market age is one in which the product in kind is taxed in kind. Under a market economy, as each capitalist actor lowers the wage to cut their costs, they also lower the purchasing power of the people to whom they sell and, eventually if they get in their way, they incur a loss as the crisis dawns upon them, the modern state enters to redress the blind avarice of business and mediate the divide that may cause economic downturns and try to achieve equilibrium (Keen, 2011: 178). Typically, under pre-capitalist forms of production the workers are direct producers who control their efforts in crop production as well as the quantity of the crop in relation to effort. Under capitalism, workers produce moneyed goods that are removed from the purview of the worker and whose product returns to the worker as a share of money. Hence, worker solidarity and organisation results in wage improvement as the state bridges the capital-labour canyon.

The aforementioned sectarian system existed under the Ottoman Empire until the *Tanzimat* reforms in the 1800s. It was known as the *dhimmi* system; however, it was a system whose productivity was mainly on in-kind trade, as opposed to moneyed market economy (Traboulsi,

2012; AbuKhalil, 1998). However, the denomination itself was not the receptacle for political representation. In other words, the sect did not determine the source or quantity of income for a social group. The political divide then was known as the tribal divide, in which Arab Christians and Muslim clans co-aligned to be favoured in terms of tax rates. Content-wise, this arrangement is different than the current sectarian division in which adherence to the sect and the sectarian leader determines the share of rent in the state.

Ideally, the state has a distribution and a welfare function, but, in Lebanon that role is delegated to the sect. Unlike its pre-capitalist mostly cultural functions, the sect morphed into a proxy of the working-class under capitalism; through the power it exerts upon the state, it acts as a medium for the acquisition of income and wealth[10] (Miliband, 1969). Hence, a state Fine's (2013) sense, the welfare state that channels the product in money form through taxation to enhance welfare, may never emerge under the sectarian binary in Lebanon. The point of the illustration is to identify sectarian structures in which social conditions cannot gestate to incubate revolutionary consciousness, as opposed to the essentialist ideal, or the common imaginary of the sect, which is reshaped by contemporary material interests. It is to say that sectarianism has a new content related to state and reproduction structure as opposed to being a set of beliefs that trail from the primordial past and shape the present.

The current sectarian dominant structures essentially germinated from the mid-19th century and gradually flourished since (Traboulsi, 2012). Yet, it is a credo which is highly esteemed by many of the Lebanese. By scratching the surface, one sees that the

[10] A central demarcation amongst many between the pre-capitalist past and the capitalist present is valuation of the product of society in its alienated moneyed form as opposed to the product in kind. The state may intermittently appear as independent of class interests, but altogether it is centripetally tied to the changes in the class structure (Miliband, 1969 : 16-17).

animistic/polytheistic society of 3000 BC may simply be the chimera with which elite groups maintain class position.

More so than other emerging markets, in Lebanon long term human and financial assets are difficult to secure (International Monetary Fund, 2021). The political insecurity drives people and money out of the country: cases of severe out migration and capital flight are the norm (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012). To make matters worse, following the 1975-90 civil war, the financialization of the economy, the high interest rate of the banking sector sucked resources away from the productive economy. Lebanon produced less and less and depended on foreign earnings, which came with strings attached. Saudi sponsored rebuilding rebuilt structures that benefited the rich, while potable water and electricity remain in shortage to date. As the debts grew beyond the capacity to be serviced and egged on the crisis, protests emerged. The protest movement began in a polarised context, which augured its difficulties. The anti US groups accused the Western backed civil society that it was not faithful to the *Moqawama* or "resistance" to Israel. Obviously, in the tit for tat, the pro-Western democracy groups hastily levied all sort of blame on the pro Iran parties. These conditions prevented some of the most vital civil society groups from working towards substantial developments in the realms of social and political life.

Part 1: The invention of Lebanon's sectarianism, from unwritten rules to the Taif Agreement.

This section highlights the historical contextualization and the sectarian foundations of the Lebanese social and political apparatus. It is divided into three sections. The first will examine the roots of sectarian division prior to Lebanon's independence (Ottoman and French mandate). The second covers the developments of thereof in the post-independence era. Lastly, the third will examine the developments that occurred during the civil war of 1975-1990, and after the

establishment of the Taif Agreement that, in spite of ending the conflict, actually deepened Lebanon's sectarian roots.

1. Pre-Independence Lebanon

To trace the roots of Lebanon's sectarianism first requires a historical review of the Millet system which was established during Ottoman rule in the 16th century. Derived from the word "Milla", which means "nation" in Arabic, the Millet system was designed to promote a relative level of autonomy to religious and ethno-linguistic communities (Firro, 2002). Confessional communities were granted the right to establish their own legal rules, giving shape to a pre-modern model of religious pluralism. Though destined to provide more visibility to minorities, the Millet system has caused further division amongst confessional communities since its establishment (Firro, 2002). Prior to the establishment of the Millet system, the settlement of Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, as well as Shia and Druze minorities in the Lebanese mountains was strategic in preserving and physically separating the autonomy of heterodox religious minorities (Traboulsi, 2012).

Then the Millet system was implemented, Muslim minorities, such as the Druze and Shia communities, did not have the right to elect their own governors and judges in the regional council because all Muslims living in the Ottoman territory were subjected to Sunni jurisdiction, with a special privilege given to the Hanafi madhhab. Hence, power imbalances were generated between Muslim and Christian minorities, and as tension further grew amongst different sects, the conflict eventually broke out between two confessional groups, namely the Maronite and the Druze communities who were then the majorities in the region (Kefala, 2011). This situation gave France a window of opportunity, then led by Napoleon III, to launch an invasion in Mount Lebanon on the pretext of aiding Christian communities in warding off Ottoman-backed Muslim forces. France

was for long considered to be the protector of Christian communities in the Ottoman Empire, and for some, France's intervention was regarded as the first humanitarian mission ever conducted. The longer France's presence lasted in the territory, the more tension built up with other colonial forces, in particular Great Britain who likewise saw the opportunity of expanding their influence by assisting the Druze in battling the Maronite forces (Traboulsi, 2012). Nevertheless, the Maronites enjoyed relative support from the French in the fields of education and health, which undermined the Ottoman influence in the area. In order to regain control over the territory, the Ottomans established in 1861 a new institutional framework called the *Mutasarrifiyya* which decreed the status of an autonomous Ottoman province to the Lebanese area. This new province encompassed Mount Lebanon, and Zahle in the Bekaa Valley. The *Mutasarrifiyya* was established to ease the sectarian divisions between Druze and Maronite religious sects in Mount Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2012). This new regulation dictated that the appointed governor would be an Ottoman of Christian faith and the council would be composed of twelve members representing their respective religious sect (Spagnolo, 1971).

In the late 1800s, European consulates (namely the French and the British), foreign investors, and missionaries used Beirut as a regional seat to further their influence in the region. According to Traboulsi, they invaded the markets of Mount Lebanon at the expense of the collapse of traditional handicraft and local productions. As Beirut grew as a trade-hub, imports began to exceed exports by three times. Historians claim that this economic drive, ignited by the secondary industrial revolution that derived from European colonialism, added additional foreign component and indirect implications to the rising sectarian tensions (Traboulsi, 2012).

The Ottoman defeat in the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877 revived aspirations of bringing independence in Mount Lebanon. The French and English were then beginning to plan the eventual

collapse of the Ottoman Empire and strategically take hold of the region's 'gateway' to resources. Foreign investors, consulates and missionaries upgraded their seats in Beirut from the 1860's onwards. Missionaries already had a foothold in the capital since the beginning of the 19th century, which prompted strife between the English backed protestants and the French/Rome backed Maronites and resulted in Protestant missionaries leaving the region in 1830, only to return under Muhammad 'Ali 5 years later, establishing over 41 schools by 1862. This followed other Christian sects to establish their own Schools. Sunni Notables followed suit in 1878 (Lust, 2019).

It may be as well to mention that sectarianism is a form of the division of the working class. It is the identity that self-serves and therefore forfeits the possibility of forming a cross-cultural working-class alliance, as opposed to an identity whose goal is a positive sum game through linkages with other working-class organisations. As a self-centred identity, the sect must eliminate the real causes for the deterioration of living conditions of people, and hence, it carries an ideological function. The sect as a form of social organization has a structure and mandate similar to the state, but its within the state and outside the state. It the representation of the group within the state and the alienation of the individual's right from the state. The *Za'im* figurehead is the institution within the sect to whom allegiance is the benchmark of privileges and rights.

Following World War I, and the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the territory was conceded to the French as divided by the Sykes-Picot agreement, then (1920) renamed the State of Greater Lebanon under the guardianship of the League of Nations represented by France (Kefala, 2011). Under French rule, the territory expanded in its surrounding areas to include large number of Muslim populations. For some, this meant more control over the mountainous area and maritime trading routes because some of the most important ports in the Levant were located near the capital city of Beirut, namely the historical port of Sidon and that of Tyre. For others, this expansion came

at the cost of ensuring the swift formation of a solid communal foundation amongst different confessional sects. To elaborate, as the territory further expanded to include new Muslim communities, the balance of power increasingly was disrupted for the Christian majority (Rabil, 2011). Though the sharing of power was contested, discussions of independence and nationalism began to flourish within political and academic circles.

The first constitution was declared on the 23rd of May 1926 with the goal of maintaining equality between Muslims and Christians with regards to the distribution of government posts (Traboulsi, 2012). The constitution was inspired by the French third republic and written under the recommendations of French delegates. On the one hand, it reflected a solid commitment to the protection of individual rights and freedoms, and on the other it enacted measures of fair political representation amongst different sects. the French and English colonial forces then competed for a foothold in the region and part of the competition seeped through to the building of the social and physical infrastructure. These foundations were meant to ensure the swift progression of the nation-building process. Parliament seats were allocated on the basis of members' regional and confessional representation, which in turn strengthened the political representation of smaller elites and eventually led to what Samir Khalaf refers to as “territorial identities” (Khalaf, 2012).

Some constitutional articles were enacted to prohibit certain rights and freedoms from being practiced on the basis of confessional affiliation. For example, civil marriage was and continues to be nonexistent and unrecognized unless a certificate is issued from a country abroad - as religious communities were semi-autonomous and forced to abide by Ottoman laws (Zuhur, 2002). Civil adoption is likewise nonexistent as none of the eighteen religious courts in Lebanon recognize the parenting of non-biological children unless both the child and foster parent belong to the same sect (Chahine, 2004). Such religious measures were intended to secure the status quo

despite the ongoing demands of civil society to bring forth some level of reform to rigid sectarian policies. To summarize the argument in relation to our line of thought, this stage heralds the metamorphosis of sectarianism from its embryonic, or weakly institutionalised from, into a fully fledged tool of working-class splintering. The interest of the old ruling semi-feudal *Zu'ama* cohere with the interests of the colonialist as the process of capitalist accumulation picks up speed with modern industry and cash-crop agriculture. The state that will emerge after independence will be undergirded by the archaic sect now transformed into a means for capitalist exploitation.

2. Post-Independence Lebanon

Independence was granted to Lebanon on the 22nd of November in 1941. The pact that consolidated the formation of the Lebanese political apparatus, also known as *Al Mithaq Al Watani* (the National Pact), was comprised of four unwritten rules,[11] namely : that Lebanon was to be recognized as a fully independent and autonomous country, that it was to carry both an Arab and a Western face (as a way of recognizing its cultural and spiritual ties with the West and the Arab world), that as a member of the Arab states it would perform its duties of cooperating with other states and avoid siding with one state against another in the occurrence of conflict, and that there would be a proportional share of public office positions assigned for each religious group recognized in the country according to the 6:5 ratio (6 Christians to 5 Muslims), hence the top government positions were to be assigned as follows: the president of the republic is of Maronite confession, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament a Shi'a Muslim (Zahar, 2005).

[11]In Arabic the word *'ourf* denotes convention or unwritten rules. These were *alledal'ourf alwatani* or the national convention.

On the economic front, in the 1940s, it was clear that the wealth of elite Christians was growing at a rate far greater than that of the rest of the population, which is noteworthy since most of this population (Maronites and Catholics) were poor and worked as farmers. Not only did elite Christians, along with elites from other religious sects, enjoy greater visibility on the political front, they also assumed some of the highest positions in all axes of the Lebanese economy. Families practiced endogamy extensively to expand their business partnerships and their hold on the various economic sectors of the country. As Lebanon gradually started to establish itself as an intermediary for Western markets and the growing Arab oil states, the economy increasingly became tertiarized (meaning the service sector was developing substantially) as the oligarchs of all sects abused their authority to subject industrial interests to their own. These conditions eventually shifted the whole economy into an 'export-oriented' model of development which severely affected the capacities to develop a mode of production based on self-sufficiency and wider differentiation in exports (Traboulsi, 2012).

Although the class divide was obvious between the oligarchy and the lower and middle classes, it was also apparent that the gap was widening among the sects. This imbalance of power did indeed generate discontent amongst the Muslim communities,[12] but prior to the advent of Nasserism which spread across the Arab region, there were no real plans of actions to alter these conditions. There was nonetheless heavy criticism directed against the oligarchy following the dissolution of Lebanon's monetary unity with Syria, which included criticism from Christian

[12] The three are Sunnis, Shias and Druze, which prior to the defeat of the nationalist movement identified more as Muslims. The inter-sectarian divisions grew after the defeat, which may indicate that identity politics grows in response to the growth of capital.

members of the SSNP and journalists from all backgrounds who expressed anger over the growing neo-colonial policies of France over the Lebanese banking system (Khoury, 1987).

To recap, sectarianism is the ideological form of class dividedness in Lebanon. The sects, as forms of social organisations, mirror the neo-patrimonial state in their structures. The hierarchical formation of the sect is led by the *Zu'ama*, that optimally coalesce to appoint a mediator as the head of the state. The system evolves over time as the stresses between sect and state are resolved in the interests of neither. This occurs in order to keep sectarianism as the ruling idea reproducing the social formation.

3. Events leading to the Civil War (1975 -1990)

The Civil War is often-times characterised as "multifaceted" due to its complexities and intricacies. Some argued this war was nationalistically driven, while others thought it to be more a matter of class[13] (Fisk, 2002). Be it one or the other, what we know is that the factors that fomented the outbreak of the war in 1975 did not occur out of thin air. There is a long historical process that resulted in a clash of such magnitude. But what is most interesting to note is how the religious element comes to play an important role in shaping the fragmented identities of the implicated parties, which this section aims to further develop.

The causes of the war are multiple, but three particular causes stand out in the overall process of deepening class tension. At the national level, the country had undergone numerous political and sect-based rebellions over the general conditions to which the population was

[13] In the work by Robert Fisk (2002), the Criss-cross of sect with the class mosaic is aptly explained in terms regional wealth rather sectarian identity. Geography acts more as independent variable since in rural regions unaffiliated with modern capital all sects are poorer by comparison. Fitting class into sect compromises much of the content of and the history of the class formation. The writings on class generally tend to cut short the intricacies and the reduction would always fit into preconceived scholarly prejudice.

subjected. As mentioned in the sections above, the power dynamics which were established by the Lebanese Constitution, along with some other remnants of the French colonial period, were in great part responsible for generating religious and class-based discrepancies. The agrarian crisis was without a doubt the tipping point for the Lebanese lower classes. It urged many to mobilize against the under-valuation (neglect and under-pricing the direct producers) of domestic agriculture (Traboulsi, 2012; Nasr, 1978).

The crisis was caused by a series of agrarian reforms which sought to commercialize the sector and control the market via the sale of pesticides, insecticides, agriculture machines, distribution, bank loans and price manipulation. Conditions changed for the worse as farmers further sank into debt and monopolies swallowed smaller farmer-merchants. In the span of over twenty-five years, the repression and excruciating exploitation of farmers throughout the green revolution caused the percentage of the population which relied on agriculture as a primary source of income to drop from 50% in the 1950s to 20% in the 1975, which accounts to an overall loss of over 100,000 workers (Traboulsi, 2012: 175).

Following Arab defeat in the war of June 1967, the inter-Arab balance leaned towards the pro-Western block; obviously led by Saudi Arabia and other Absolutist Arab monarchies. The consequences of such a defeat created an alliance between the president of the republic Charles Hilou and other rightists such as Pierre Edde and Amine Gemmayel. These alongside other Muslim autocrats launched a campaign against "Nasserism, Communism," with the supposed intent of preserving the national unity and integrity of the country. Recalling Lebanon had a significant concentration of wealth in the hands of few families; for instance, Isakandar (1978) notes that 85 percent of Southern farmers were landless. Of late, it has been reported that few families continue to own most of the wealth and income inequality gapes away (Assouad, 2021). Not only did this

campaign severely impact the activities of trade unions and peasant workers, it also heavily disrupted the demographics of the country with drastic increases in emigration and rural migration of poor farmers to the outskirts of Beirut. Additionally, the high cost of living made it impossible for some families to afford living in the more urbanized areas of Beirut, which chose to settle in the surrounding areas of refugee camps within the city and the suburban areas that constitute Beirut's "poverty belt" (Traboulsi, 2012).

The second cause was the presence of Palestinian militias within Lebanon. The Palestinian resistance was symbolic of the then Pan-Arabist movement which re-empowered by Nasser and spread from Egypt across the Arab region. The socialist undertone aspect of pan-Arabism meant that the very presence of Palestinians in Lebanon posed a threat to the ruling classes and the whole of the Lebanese political apparatus (Traboulsi, 2012). Naturally, the ruling classes are cross-border alliances that include Western imperialism and Zionism. These forces must combine efforts and aggress national movements undermining their hegemonies. For instance, the historical event known as "Black September" was a case where the displaced Palestinians attempting to return to their homes via armed struggle, were crushed by the reactionary monarchy of Jordan with the assistance of the now well-known support of Israel. The case was put by the mainstream media as if Black September or the Jordanian civil war of September 1970 was an attempt by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the more radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to dethrone Jordanian King Hussein and take over Jordan. However, the Palestinians refugees in Jordan composed more than 60 percent of the population, while the British constructed Jordanian army exercises the worst forms of repression against them. The PFLP had to resort to plane hijacking to bring to the attention of the world the plight of the refugees and their national rights. Although it hijacked four airplanes and blew three of them up and kept 421 travelers as war

hostages, none of the hostages was hurt (Tristam, 2019)[14]. The point was to showcase the justice of the Palestinian right of return.

When the War of Attrition ended in a cease-fire by Jamal Abd Nasser and King Hussein supported the move along side with Arab leaders, PFLP leader George Habash and PLO leader Yasser Arafat promised , "we will turn the Middle East into a hell" and "we will liberate our land" respectively. These were comments made for a people who have acted in self-defence against continuous massacres and ethnic cleansing assisted by Western imperialism. When hey acted in self defence, Palestinians are said to have run a state-within-a-state in Jordan in which their militias ruled the streets and imposed their rules brutally. It is said that they attempted to assassinate King Hussein several times, which has sparked the war between the Jordanian Army and the Palestinians when in fact the Palestinians were deprived of the most basic rights for a decent human existence in their camps. The atrocities of the Western propped Jordanian army resulted in up to 15,000 Palestinian militants and civilians being killed and from 50,000 to 100,000 people being left homeless (Raab, 2007). Arafat and the PLO were expelled from Jordan in 1971. They went to Lebanon and again the reactionaries mentioned that they created a similar state-within-a-state, supplying many Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut and in South Lebanon with weapons, and weakening the Lebanese government. The plight of Palestinian refugees in the camps of misery was no different than in Jordan. The Jordanian government at the behest of Arab reactionary and Western forces played a crucial role in two wars: the 1973 war between the Lebanese Army and the PLO, and the 1975-1990 war, in which the PLO fought alongside leftist Muslim militias against

[14] Moreover, after the Arabs' defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Palestinian militants took part in the War of Attrition against Israel. The PLO started skirmishes and raids from Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon as well. The Jordanian king who had a secret mutual relation with Israel was not in the favor of such attacks (Tristam, 2019).

Christian militias. After Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the PLO was driven out of Lebanon (Raab, 2007).

In Lebanon, Palestinians camps were systemically repressed by the right wing governments. Open and undercover Israeli aggression prompted them to carry arms within and outside the refugee camps (Khaled & Hajjar, 1973).[15] Although the Palestinians are said to have stayed away and avoided mixing with the Lebanese Christian community (Siklawi, 2010), in actuality the Lebanese community constructs geographic spatial barriers on the basis of sect. This act of self-defence triggered a sense of threat for the Lebanese who perceived it to be a violation of Lebanon's national integrity, as well as the American backed Lebanese army who used the aggression by Israel, which committed several massacres in pro-Palestinian South Lebanon villages of Houla (May 12, 1968), Mays al-Jabal (June 15, 1968), and Majihdeih (October 27, 1968) as a ploy to crush Palestinian popularity in Lebanon and to reduce Palestinian military activities and relationship with the Lebanese citizens (AbuFakher, 2006). Although it is claimed that the Israeli retaliation for Palestinian attacks against Israel caused damage and death to the Lebanese, Israel aggressed Lebanon almost daily since its inception and prior to the PLO. The Arab League agreement allowed Palestinians to fight against Israel from Lebanese soil but only if they informed the Lebanese government first. This was a significant issue and source of tension for the Lebanese in general and for the Lebanese parties in particular (see Nasr and Abukhalil, also the text 'The Cairo Agreement').

[15]It may be useful to mention that the Jordanian assault to dislocate the Palestinian resistance from Jordan in 1970, overseen by Israel, resulted in the mass expulsion of Palestinian fighters to South Lebanon. The schism between the right and the radical left grew, and the lessons learnt for the Palestinians was to intensify asymmetric warfare; against the new base was Lebanon.

As a result of this power imbalance, a series of massacres were perpetrated against the Palestinian people and by the Palestinians before the PLO was expelled, including their Lebanese allies which were mostly of Sunni and Shi'a backgrounds. Following a succession of brutal attacks on the Palestinians and their socialist counterparts and the armed conflict between the Lebanese Army and the Palestinians, the civil war was declared on the 13th of April 1975. After two incidents happened at the same time when Pierre Gemayel, leader of the Phalange Party (Kataeb) was attending a consecration service, a vehicle carrying half a dozen Palestinian militiamen firing their rifles into the air, so the Phalangists intercepted their way and attacked them. The Palestinian driver was killed as well as three Phalangists. Later that day, a bus full of Palestinians was ambushed outside the same church. There are two conflicting versions of what happened. The Phalangists insisted that the bus carried armed Palestinian reinforcements to avenge the death of their driver, and as the Phalangists had been anticipating such a reaction they had been waiting in ambush. As a result, 14 Palestinians were killed. On the Palestinian side, they insisted that the bus had contained only families (27 men, women and children and wounding others). These two incidents provoked hatred and started street clashes between Phalangists and Palestinians. (O'Ballance, 1998; Siklawi, 2010). The war against the Lebanese left and their Palestinian allies started with the assassination of the representative of the fisherman union earlier in March 1975. The rising number 'Sunni' Palestinians allowed all the sectarian leader to raise the sectarian palaver further deepening the sectarian divide. The issue of granting Lebanese citizenship to Palestinians remains a fuel of sectarianism.

It is self-evident that as the demographic balance distorts the sectarian balance, the sectarian system begins to exhibit a fragility that must be addressed. The Palestinian population increased the numbers and the perceived power of the Muslim community. The negotiations turn

to the point that higher numbers deserve better representation in the state. The horse-trading between sects was not peaceful and the new alliances were formed to broker the shares of the sect in the state. Whereas this demographic imbalance could have been a boon to undermine the sectarian system, the outcome of the antagonisms, was settled in favour of more sectarianism.

The third and rather pivotal cause was that of geopolitical rivalry which galvanised the other causes. Why? Mainly because it traces back to the roots of the conflict, which was ultimately ideological in nature. The civil war in Lebanon was not merely a class struggle exclusive to the Lebanese people, it was also a struggle over geopolitical influence between the two Great powers of that time, namely the United States and the Soviet Union. Though they may not have appeared as being directly involved in the conflict, they did exert major influence over it, mainly through the funding of proxy parties and allies. The divide is clear-cut and is a continuum of the schism in international relations between rising colonial Europe and descending Ottomans and later fading Europe and rising US imperialism. The case may be that as Lebanon was part of Syria, Lutsky pointed out how the Syrian elites at the time sought equal representation for Arabs in the Ottoman parliament to deflect Western aggression, but the Turkish nationalists rejected these appeals, later forcing the elites of Syria-Lebanon to rally behind Sharif Hussein or the forces organised by Lawrence of Arabia to make way for full European colonisation (Lutsky, 1969). Two years after the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1956, the French, English and Israeli alliance retreated from the Suez egged on by the US, which left the world stage open for US dominance. The Suez Canal crisis signalled the rise of the new western hegemon and the class allies that the French and English left behind had a new patron (Huberman & Sweezy, 1956). Accordingly, the bourgeois cross-sect alliance was more inclined to pro-western foreign policy, whereas the socialist side was more or

less inclined towards the soviet bloc, because Soviet support for Syria was unfavorably received by the Palestinians who were then in conflict with the Syrian regime (Bjørsvik, 2018).

The Soviet aims were to establish an Arab Front that would unify Arab countries against Israel (Bjørsvik, 2018; El Khazen, 2000). Israel was a formidable military power. Since its inception, the Arabs suffered hundreds of thousands of deaths and significant territory loss to Israel. In hindsight and in view of the highly unequal power balance between Israel and the Arabs, the massive human and resource losses of the Arabs show, after the fact that it was the Arabs who faced the existential risk (Isreali, 1961). In 1962, the US noted that Israel could defeat all the Arab armies together; the Six-day war is post facto proof[16]. Israel touted its wars as a war of existence against the Arabs. So far, one sees that it is the Arab working classes which struggle to remain alive or to subsist at a decent level. The sect and dividedness policies remain formidable obstacles, but these are the divisions attendant on the labour process fuelled by capital as it auto-reproduces. The Arab ruling classes are allies of Israel and oppress their own peoples to extract the maximum wealth, which later they convert into dollars and recycle to the US's financial sector (Hanieh, 2018)[17]. Though Soviets were expecting to be on par with the United States in terms of geopolitical influence, the possibilities of forming such a union were rigged with obstacles. For most socialist-leaning Arab countries maintained very desultory relations with one another. Syria's position was weakest after the Camp David Accords. It was a complete satellite of the Soviets. Although it

[16] Department of State, Central Files, 784A.5/5–2462. Secret. Drafted by Hamilton on May 23; cleared by Tucker (DOD/ISA) in substance, Talbot, and Pezzullo (S/S); and approved by McGhee. Repeated to London, Cairo, Beirut, Baghdad, Jidda, Damascus, Amman, and Jerusalem http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v17/d275.

[17] See the writings of Adam Hanieh (2011, 2013, 2018) which reflects the opinions of most left-leaning scholars in the Arab world. The point here is that the Arab elites deposit their financial wealth abroad. They invest this wealth in US financial interests, their vested interest is tied to where their wealth resides. More so, than their ties to their own homeland. This is the material basis for the social class ties between them and the Israeli elites.

openly stated it wants to liberate the Golan Heights, it was fully aware that the balance of forces was gravely tilted against it.

Syria's second objective to dominate the PLO was doomed, because Fatah's Arafat was a Gulf funded organisation, which is historically predestined by class forces to become Israel's ally; as happened after the Oslo accords (Massad, 2021).[18] Jordan, a state created by the British as a buffer against Iraq at the behest of the Zionist movement (Massad, 2001), was pivotal in its support for Israel against Syria and other Arab socialist states. The Jordanian monarchy has contradicted the Palestinian's aspiration to gain their own autonomy. Though the Soviets preferred a union of Arab nations to rally around the PLO, they were aware of their inherent weakness (Shlaim,2012) no matter their unity. They concentrated and were more concerned over the risk of losing important clients such as Syria. Their confusion as to whom they should prioritize in terms of military and financial support contributed to the decline in the ideological strength of the Soviet Union in the overall Arab resistance movement (Bjørsvik, 2018). However, the case may have been that the Soviet Union itself was losing ideological support from its own population, and hence Bjørsvik (2018) appears to have narrowed the reasons for Communist ideological retreat.

In 1976, the Syrians were invited to Lebanon by Lebanon's government and as approved by the Arab League, to protect the then defeated right wing militias. Its intent of establishing control over Lebanese territory and subduing PLO forces only worked as Israel routed out the PLO in 1982. The semblance of stability in Lebanon and the rise of Hezbollah as a fighting force backed by Syria and Iran was not to the liking of Israel. Before Syria was pushed out of Lebanon in 2006, Hezbollah became a significant force, especially in the Guerrilla war that forced Israel to retreat

[18] For reference: Joseph Massad: 11 June 2021 12:12 UTC https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/Israel-western-allies-run-out-Palestinian-enforcers

and withdraw from Lebanon in 2000. One must note that whichever political force takes hold of South Lebanon, it must act in self-defence against Israel, because the imperialist basis of Israeli capital accumulation necessitates that it should aggress to grow by means of militarism. Relative economic stability is correlated with security; stability came to a critical point and as Hezbollah fought to secure the liberation of national territory from Israeli occupation. Hezbollah may have held the war and peace cards but that is so because some powerful sects represented in the Lebanese state did not want to fight for national liberation. Hezbollah in turn avoided cooperation with the Lebanese government or to be involved in the Lebanese Army as a brigade and preferred to be an independent national resistance which publicly announced their allegiance to Iran and Wilayat Al Fakih. Hezbollah was involved in Syria against ISIS and in Yemen against the allied Arab forces and other places raising the slogan of protecting Shiite and protecting the borders of Lebanon whereas the general idea is to maintain Iran international interests in the Middle East. Short of armed conflict, this involvement subjected some in Lebanon to US economic sanctions. As Lebanon reels under poverty, its resistance weathered the storm because of Iranian financial and weapon support.

Things took a turn when on the 14th of September 1982 President Bachir Gemmayel, who was also then the leader of the Phalange Movement (Kataeb), was killed (Trabousli, 2012). He was assassinated while delivering a radio speech. The Phalange Movement and the Israeli army, as an act of revenge, besieged two Palestinian refugee camps and committed a massacre of approximately 3500 people within 36 hours which is infamous by the "Massacre of Sabra and Shatila". It may have become a sad refrain: when in doubt massacre some Palestinians. The fact is President Gemayel's assassin was neither a Muslim nor a Palestinian, as Christians would have immediately expected, which underscores the porous demarcation lines between sect and politics.

He was a Christian Lebanese named Habib Tanios Chartouni, a member of the SSNP (Syrian Social Nationalist Party) a political party which advocated for the reattachment of decolonized lands to Greater Syria (Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan) (Saadah, 2004). Hence, it opposed the Phalangist aspirations for an irredentist Lebanon; where the Christians remained in a position of power while living and sharing the country with non-Christians.

Purges of Christian or Muslim villages were frequent during the Civil War. They were not really intended to "purify" villages of sectarian minorities, but rather to avenge the victims of previous battles. As Samir Khalaf puts it in his own words: “Instead of killing those they were supposed to kill, they ended up killing whoever they could.” (2012: 101) A common practice was to stop random people in checkpoints or towns, and demand to see the sect inscribed on the identity card (Traboulsi, 2012). All out ethnic cleansing is a taboo in modern international relations. All the parties involved used partial and graded measure of mass dislocation. The link between class and sectarian politics can be put on the basis of non-economistic definition of class. At a concrete level, however, class is the ideology of class or ideology is the representation of class. The fact that the Lebanese adopt a position that they require protection from the other sectarian poor workers, rather protection from the capitalist who exploits all sects by differing degrees, is evidence that they adopt sectarism as a mode of consciousness imposed by capital. This also shows that class reproduces by ideology and capital specifically targets ideological production to maintain its power.

An overlook of the Zu’ama’ and their appropriation of power

It is important to note that the different types of *Zu’ama*’ (political bosses) inside each sect harvested political and social power that was stronger than, or one that instrumentalized, the central

government (Najem, 2000). The state as a representative entity of the myriad of social colours is weak and it is further weakened as a result of an intersection between sectarian and foreign powers interests. Anecdotally, the Lebanese flaunt the interests of Russia in protecting Christian minorities in the Levant as the cause of the Crimean war, when the real reason was Europe's fear of Russia's strength (Engels, 1985 [1854]). Nationally, the control the bosses had stemmed from three different areas. The first was in the form of landowners. The second was a populist type, and lastly in the form of an 'urban boss' (Sarraf, 1996). All these different forms had a couple of common practices for their projection of power, the use of strongmen, the insurance of protection and patronage – not too different from the Mafia. However, the populist types and the urban bosses had ideological appeal. This pyramid of power that was predominant in every sect gave birth to a horizontal conflict where the lower class within each sect was spoon-fed fear of the other sect by their political bosses (Nasr, 1978) – sort of like the middle-class fearing job losses to the unemployed. Their benefits manifested in positions which stripped the central government of any unifying power. As a case in point, the Lebanese Armed Forces were split off according to different sects during the civil war (Fadlallah, 2017). However, before the civil war, the state was at the mercy of the commercial bourgeoisie coupled with its *Zu'ama*'s from different sects. Commercial class opposed manufacturing or agriculture. These could not blossom. The *laissez-faire* economy was only '*laissez'* for the poor and pretty much hands on for the rich of every sect. The poor relied on the minimal assistance of the government. Low taxes on the rich gave the room for the trade, banking, and service sector to occupy three-quarters of the national product (Najem, 2000). This economic strategy, according to George Corm (2002), contributed the pathway to the civil war. As with the impact of neoliberalism on inequality, the sect was no buffer to this outcome. These policies aggravated economic disparities between the elites and the lower class. Lebanon's wealth

was dominated in two different areas: Class and Geography. The first is evident when you look at the numbers, 4% of the population got 32 % of the total gross national product (GNP), whereas 82% of the population received only 40 % of the GNP (Najem, 2000 : 11). There lies the power struggle: while the commercial bourgeoisie consisted of all different sects, coupled with the *Zu'ama*'s grip at the behest of foreign powers, these widening social gaps historically predisposed the intra-sectarian civil war. The second area was geographic. Beirut received a third of the GNP in 1957 while the agricultural sector received 15%, when it employed half of the labour force. The marginalisation of the countryside was a source of cheap labour for cities, but at the same time, it undermined the reach of the state and weakened it. In some places in the North, the Hashish growing communities were beyond the reach of the state. The government attempt to support the outlying areas, such as the rural ones, was not serious; for obvious reasons, the *Zu'ama*' enjoyed the fall out rents of cheaper waged labour. Most funds were invested in low quality capital projects as opposed to long term productive projects (Najem, 2000).

The role of the French colonialist in entrenching sectarianism is widely documented. For instance, meshing the rural *Zu'ama*' to the urban ones, as well as the emergence of the merchants, lawyers and other professionals during the French mandate blossomed in a unique way– shortly after Charles Dabbas was elected as the first Lebanese Republic's President of the mandate in 1926 (Najem, 2000). As a Greek Orthodox, he was elected as a result of a compromise with the Sunni elites, who perceived Lebanon as a buffer state against the Syrian one. The Syrian revolt in 1925 triggered the Sunnis to distance themselves from Lebanese institutions and the Lebanese Mandate in general. This boycott led the High Commissioner to place many Sunnis as Senators. The High Commissioner returned the favour to the Shias by appointing 3 of them as Senators, as well as guaranteeing their hold on the ministry of agriculture. Thus, the newly formed government was an

extension of the elites in Lebanon, as members of the cabinet had close relations to the Beirut merchants (Farha, 2015: 108). However, Al-Khuri's, involvement in the political sphere, until World War 2, created very close ties with the French, and specifically the Jesuits. His intentions to unify the elites was well received in general, using the same French strategy, by appointing Christian merchant *Zu'ama*' with Sunni, Shia and Druze Landlord *Zu'ama*' in his cabinet.

As hypothesized, the issue with the Lebanese state, even during the mandate, was the overriding factor of external interventions. The French and Syrian influences aggravated the Sunnis and Maronites' differences. They had a hard time to reach a compromise on many occasions. Political stability was essentially dependant on the multi-sect elites getting along. Obviously, the government not only enabled elites to strengthen their ties, it also gave external actors with sufficient leverage to disrupt any sort of stability to join in on the party (Bahout, 2016). What Bahout and others fail to see is that Lebanon by its very construction as a state is impossible to govern without imperialist intervention. Colonialism may have physically left in 1946, but it left in its place a political order that could promotes its interests by the very divisions it sows in society.

The Beirut bias in development was driven by a political bias (the rural population was comprised of Sunni, Shiite, and Druze Muslims). Rural poverty had led to a massive migration to the capital. The 'problem' of the lower, poorer class alternatively was thrown to the urban *Zu'ama*', which in return were unable to implement some sort of patronage system amongst its new potential clients. Therefore, the leftist movements blossomed which sparked a few challenges to the elites of all sects, specifically those who were positioned on the right (AbuKhalil, 2010)[19]. At any rate,

[19] See AbuKhalil's "The ugly face of Lebanon: Unpleasant sectarianism and racism" *Arab48*, Web: shorturl.at/gwIMT

the late sixties and seventies were periods of rising left-wing tides globally. What fueled this challenge were external players, especially the Soviets, which took advantage of the inequalities between the rich and the poor, as well as the internal conflict between elites in the state; by backing the sects that suited their strategic interests (Saliba, 2002). The internal conflict between the nation's elites and their loss of control vis-à-vis the masses, across both Muslim and Christian sects, prefigured the conditions not only for the civil war but helped dismantle the government's capabilities to find any compromise. As an example, Sunni elites had no choice but to endorse the Palestinian, pan-Arab groups, after the mass influx of Palestinian refugees (Siklawi, 2010). Also, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Arab Gulf nations financially and politically supported the Sunni elites unconditionally and played a leading role in maintaining Sunni elites in their positions until the present. This irritated Western-allied Maronite elites, which caused further division in the nation. There is also an argument to be made for the Shiites: at the start of the civil war and before, their political as well as their demographic influence was not strong, to say the least (Baumann, 2016). Despite the emergence of Imam Moussa Al-Sadr and his quest to minimize the differences between religions and unite the different sects and religions under one flag, the Lebanese flag, his forced absence with two of his comrades in Libya with Kaddafi's red hands in this was an open road for the ambitious Nabih Berri – the current speaker of the parliament – to take control of *Harakat el Mahromeen* (now known as Amal) and with cooperation with Walid Junblat to form a wide frontier exploiting what the poor classes wished for in living a better life in Lebanon. Traboulsi mentioned that in contradiction to Junblat's "socio-sectarian model of the *muqata`ji* sect, the superior aristocratic/tribal society that was condescending toward those who harvested the soil and engaged in manual labour, Nabih Berri's sect was primarily defined by its populist, anti-feudalist connotations" (Traboulsi, 2012: 231). Amal's war against 'political feudalism', represented

primarily by the Asaad family, interpellated the bourgeois parvenus and the intellectuals – blocked in their social mobility – to occupy the place they deserved in the political and economic system. (Traboulsi, 2012 : 231)

This increasing sectarian divide which was quelled during the pre-war era was propelled further down the line during civil strife (Traboulsi, 2012), from outside influence and from poverty. The growing problem of outside influence was mostly due to the financial ties of the Nation elites to the western financial markets. These bosses were partners with the banking sector whose assets circulated in Europe and the US (as is typical of developing nations, they must deposit their assets in safe financial instruments). As the poor began to mobilise, these elites found that the state becoming more assertive, against outside influence; this was not an acceptable western elite allied arrangement (Nahas, 2019)[20].

Insofar as promising to dissolve sectarianism, the Taif Agreement[21], on paper looked promising, though in practice, it ran against elites who drew rents from sectarianism. The Taif wrote down the unwritten accord; it made sacrosanct and constitutionalised the rule of the sect. One should expect little democracy from the Saudis – the prime sponsors of the Taif, alongside the US. The Syrian dominance over the country, specifically over the porous Bekaa Valley borders, opened the lane for the assassination of President René Moawad who was vocally against Syrian influence. The fighting did not cease until October 1990; the Taif Agreement was signed in 1989.

[20] When the poor mobilise, they request that the state erects capital control to keep the financial wealth inside the country, especially the dollarized wealth. The wealthy would like to take their money or their dollar assets to safer environments abroad, especially in the US. It is in the purview of the state to control the wealth flow for the poor or for the rich. As the poor pressure the state, the rich have an interest in weakening the state such that it does note erect the capital controls that prohibit them from taking their dollar wealth out of the country. See the writings of Charbel Nahhas (2019 and https://mmfidawla.com/en/)

[21] The settlement imposed by Saudi Arabia, which may have given the Sunnis more power, when in fact it institutionalized sectarianism and created irresolvable deadlocks by which the sectarian system faces increasing crisis of politics.

Opposed to the agreement, General Michel Aoun, the commander of the Lebanese Army at that time, initiated a takeover, first over the Christian militias and continued pushing, unsuccessfully, against his Syrian counterparts in the region - the Syrian army responded with air strikes which were backed (and essentially 'approved') by the U.S. Following the defeat of General Michel Aoun, the recently Syrian-backed Lebanese Army finally took over the government, and the hostilities towards the new President Elias Hrawi ended. The last months of the year 1990 gave us a prelude to the upcoming political sphere, which was to be dominated by Syria's interests along with any sect who wished to stick with them. Interestingly, Hezbollah, in the Taif agreement, was given a carte blanche in order to uphold its resistance against the Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon. According to Habib Malik (2002), the Syrian government had unprecedented leverage on the Taif accords, and it gave them the ability not only to control most of the Lebanese political sphere but gave itself the opportunity to implement numerous bilateral agreements on Lebanon. The rebuilding of Lebanon was undertaken by cheaper deregulated Syrian workers who indeed represented the most exploited class in this whole affair, and possibly the heroes of the peace (Chalcraft, 2009 : 4).

4. Post-conflict: Taif Agreement and the assassination of Rafik Al Hariri

Other Arab states stayed away from what was going on in Lebanon due to the Arab leaders' conflicts and disagreements among each other and that President Saddam Hussein of Iraq backed General Aoun in his quest with the support of France (Traboulsi, 2012). In contradiction to this, King Hassan II of Morocco, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and President Chadli of Algeria, met in the city of Taif in Saudi Arabia in 1989 to draft a reconciliation treaty that would mark the end of the Civil War. General Aoun rejected the agreement because it did not allow for a complete Syrian

military withdrawal from Lebanon, and decreased the president's prerogatives in favor of the prime minister, without any other reforms of the political system (Traboulsi, 2012).

On November 5, the Taif Agreement was approved by the Lebanese Parliamentarians which embarked on a project to rebuild the nation. The agreement stated: "Lebanon is a sovereign, free, and independent country and a final homeland for all its citizens". Political reforms revolved around the issue of power distribution, as such the Parliament was enlarged to 108 seats, and for the first time Christians held equal representation to Muslims. Some disagreements were raised with regard to the model of power, which were indeed cause for concern on major grounds. A 'Troika' was formed, "an inter-sectarian partnership rather than a hierarchical confessional one" (Salloukh et al., 2015 : 23) so that three 'presidents' of different sects were to assume the following positions: the president of the republic, the president of the Council of Ministers, and the president of the Parliament. This resulted in the reproduction of the confessional structure, which was originally at the core of political tension, despite the discrepant fact that the fundamental objective of the agreement was initially to replace the rule by structure by rule of the individual (El-Solh, 2004).

Without laying a clear foundation for a more democratic exercise of authority, the agreement inadvertently caused the intensification of sectarian divisions and consequently hindered the capacities required to build solid democratically participative institutions. Therefore, ultimately "[the agreement] was rather a constitutional remaking of the sectarian order under the supervision of regional and international mediators, some of whom were directly involved in the conflict" (Salloukh et al., 2015 : 20). This agreement was misapplied and abused and manipulated by the warlords who took control of Lebanon and forced their authority on all governmental and private sectors and institutions and put their men in office. Thus, these warlords become demigods

and irreplaceable as sectarian figures and representatives. What made the issue worse, the Troika members attached their actions and sects to Syria as the regional player and their umbrella to cover them locally, regionally and internationally[22]. The lower and poor class of the Lebanese society were forced to follow such system since in order to get a job or an education in an Ivy League university, a letter of favouritism or clientelist from someone in charge must be in hand. Thus, the rich got richer, and the poor got poorer, and the wealth gap widened, with a diminishing middle class. In contrast, it is worthwhile noting that throughout the early post-conflict years, the Christians had been reduced in power – and they as well as all sects – decided to regress further into sectarianism as a mode of self-defence, while they aimed to regain some power in the later post-conflict years.

Rafik Al Hariri was elected prime minister in 1992, a businessman of Sunni confession who was then known as one of the wealthiest men in the world, as well as the most influential on the Lebanese political scene due to his funding of various social movements and groups, as well as his connection with regional partners. The other two members of the Troika, namely Nabih Berri who was speaker of the parliament and Elias Hrawi, then president of the Lebanese Republic, sought to outweigh Hariri's power by relying on Syrian support. This later resulted in an acute paralysis of state institutions and the bureaucracy, as Syria's control grew in some important areas in Lebanon, particularly in West Beirut. Christian political groups who strongly opposed Syria's presence in Lebanese territory such as the Free Patriotic Movement and the Lebanese Forces were

[22] A distinction between early post-conflict years is called for. The Christians, here those attached to the Lebanese Forces and President Aoun group, felt reduced in power. Their assertiveness of sectarianism rose as a mode of defense as they tried to regain some power.

consequently hounded by internal security forces and pushed to either flee the country or organize secret meetings and activities (Salloukh et al., 2015: 27).

Hariri's implicit anti-Syria politics shifted the sectarian alliances into a namely Sunni-Maronite axis in opposition to the Shiite groups (c. 1995 until 2005). The Sunni-Maronite entente amounted to an uneasy alliance, since the Maronites saw in the Taif Accord an undermining of the power of the presidency, which is reserved for Maronites. At this moment of writing, the Sunni-Maronite divisions are the new sources of sectarian flare-ups that are stalling the formation of a national unity government. These sectarian quick sands, too many to account for, have been all about the cut from the rents around the state rather than the improvement of working-class conditions. After the fact, the crisis and the continued deterioration in living conditions provide clear evidence of the costs of sectarian politics. The impetus for the continuation of such a debacle remains principally nested in external forces.

Due to Syria's proximity with the Lebanese government, relations with the United States became all the more brittle. Financial allocations fell sharply from $28 million prior to the Taif agreement to $22 million in 1991. Likewise, none of this aid was directly deposited into the accounts of the Government of Lebanon, but rather in private American voluntary organizations and various other independently-run international institutions (Hudson, 1994). On the other hand, Syria became laxer in its political stance towards the Palestinians, which was particularly demonstrated by the release of Palestinian prisoners as well as a cessation of arrests. Such actions suggested that the Syrian government strategically sought to keep the Palestinian community as an active force in Lebanese territory, as well as support for Hezbollah, "to put pressure on Israel and the United States in the peace negotiations" (Sayigh, 1994).

It may be as well to mention that Lebanon was crucial to U.S.'s hegemonic ambitions. Its 1958 military intervention to defeat the Nasserist resurgence is proof. Although the stated justification was to protect American citizens in Lebanon (Wright, 1959), According to Yaqub (2005) the U.S. was containing Nasserism as well as the Soviet influence. A stronger more autonomous Lebanon implied less US/Israel clout and, subsequently, the accent was laid on fomenting internal social division along sectarian lines, more so than just to earn a few dollars from the Lebanese economy. After 1958, the U.S. increased its aid to particular groups in Lebanon whose interests were tied to the U.S. (Yaqub, 2005 : 205). Lebanon is relevant for the strategic value of the region as a whole rather than the meagre value of the natural resources it harbours. The US always sought to fill the void left by a weakened France after the Second Great War. The avalanche of evidence may be discerned from a cursory search of U.S intervention and geostrategic aid to Lebanon, which would produce thousands of articles. At the time of writing, the U.S. ambassador was discussing the assassination of renowned journalist Lokman Slim with the Lebanese Justice Minister Marie-Claude Najm – in an obvious effort to influence the legal process. The many NGO's which are supported by the U.S. and Europe employ a small army of pro-western middle-class youth who seek to replicate an idealised version of the U.S. model of democracy. This is not a secret. It is a public declaration by the U.S. embassy in Lebanon[23], and an explicit demonstration of U.S. geopolitical and strategic interests in Lebanon and its domestic politics.

In conclusion, the confessional political system thrives on the belief that its existence is founded and enriched by the totality of historic conditions that Lebanon has endured. The fabricated imaginary heritage, the trumped-up suffering of a particular group under capitalism,

[23]U.S. Embassy Supports "NGOs are Stronger Together" Project https://lb.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-supports-ngos-stronger-together-project/

when in reality all working people suffer, is crucial to gluing together persons who foundationally benefit from sectarianism apart, but endure it altogether. Although most are aware that together they fare better according to surveys conducted by sociologist Ahmad Baalbaki (2011), they privately disclose how dreadful sectarianism is, but when questioned in public, they fear group retribution and abstain from critiquing the system. The vicious circle of sectarianism weakening the state and a weak state bolstering sectarianism is what has to be broken, and against which a broad-based coalition fails to be formed.

However, the flaws begin to reveal themselves over time as those culturally constructed conditions have moved on. In turn, it becomes clear that the ruling classes must turn to new methods and apparatuses to maintain their political power. One may interject here that Goodwin and Skocpol have studied in which structures the ruling classes seem to thrive by suppressing rebellions and extinguishing social revolutions, so long as their hold on the state or parastatal institutions permits them to do so. The sectarian division is rooted at the level of distribution of economic, political and social resources (materialism) and in relation to the strong grip of sectarian ideas: manifest as usual in the sophistry of cognitive dissonance (Fanon, 1967). Although nothing works by being sectarian, everything is justified by the fault of the other or as the facts are falsified. Adjacently, Goodwin and Skocpol's framework lends itself to analyze Lebanon's ongoing (and very much so unique) case since the implementation of the Taif Agreement in 1990: the death of a social democratic ideology faced with a crumpling state and re-splintering sectarian structure. The current crisis has put more than half the population below poverty and yet, despite the hunger, the allegiance to sectarian demigod leader abounds (United Nations ESCWA, 2020). The rift is existential and cannot possibly be mended unless a developmental/distributional role of the state follows.

Part 2: Goodwin &Skocpol framework: Does the Lebanese case apply?

Before beginning to address Lebanon's case under the lens of any theory, there are two points worth mentioning:

First, the Lebanese masses have failed to effect serious political change to its economic system. The demos and the demands of various NGOs to dismantle sectarianism and erect a new democratic political and economic representation have come up against the old wall of deeply established sectarian institutions that had already survived the long civil war. This failure proves that people support the system or are afraid of change. It also shows that the switch in consciousness from a sectarian mindset to a more secular or universal frame of thought, one that encompasses the rights of all traditions in what amounts to a synergetic diversity in unity, did not occur – at least at a scale large enough to revolutionise the social order. At the risk of sounding utopian, the fear and the shift to a sane state-society relationship requires more than just domestic anti-sectarian activity, but more so the support of an internationally nurtured and socially responsible ideology. Such harmonisation of efforts does not appear to be in the offing.

Lebanese elites are canny and their organised dimension in the various state and non-state institutions is backed by many external players. As soon as it senses danger to the existing order, remedial and assuaging aid pours in to snuff the budding ideas of revolt. So far, the sect is unequally represented in the state, but not the individual as citizen with equal rights and obligations. Some sects have more rights than others and receive rents from the state on the basis of their weight of representation. Every sect is a hierarchically structure with its elite, which distributes these rents to its members as a result the sect's own readings of the balance of forces that keeps them in power. So sectarian elites redistribute and cooperate or antagonise other sects only insofar as their power with the overall sectarian structure is maintained. To ensure their

continuity, these elites reconstruct history and void other more socially responsible alternatives – by socially responsible, I mean socially accountable state policies. They have their own ideological platforms, in education and media, which they feed with conservative ideas and finance, always though a system of rewards and punishments. Some have compared the Lebanese system to the Mafia family structure, where a sect member cannot survive outside the sect, but it is allegorically closer to a caste system where the allegiance to the sect guarantees the continuity of all the sectarian elites, while poverty ravages the majority in all sects.

Secondly, we should address the problematic use of western Eurocentric theories on the Arab spring and more broadly on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As Jeff Goodwin notes, the popular uprisings in the MENA were unexpected from the point of view of Westerners, and rose one after the other without prior notice; academics, intelligence apparatuses, and other institutions all failed to predict the uprisings. Countries that were relatively stable (likely due to authoritative control) such as Tunisia, Libya, and Bahrain were actually in the bottom half of the Failed State Index compiled by the U.S. think-tank *Fund for Peace* in collaboration with the *Foreign Policy* journal (Goodwin, 2011). One ought to point out that predictions of exact timing or an approximation thereof is impracticable. The Eurocentric bent is revealed in the idea that there are Eastern people to whom authoritarian rule is tolerable, and therefore it is unusual for revolts to mature into successful social democracy experiments. This is not about correctly predicting a revolution, for revolutions cannot be predicted; it is about the inherent drivers within cultures, which inhibit them from progressive revolts for essentialist reasons. When humans are subjected to undue duress, they must revolt, no matter where they come from. The conditions for revolt are complicated and contingent as I will discuss below.

According to Jeff Goodwin (2011), a future uprising is much more likely to occur in a middle-income country, controlled by a long-established corrupt authority, which abruptly undergoes a dramatic economic crisis than in a wealthy democracy with a thriving economy. In his work, *No Other Way Out*, Goodwin does an in-depth comparative analysis of revolutionary movements of Southeast Asia, Central America, and lightly touching on Eastern Europe. Based on his findings and claims, he confidently states his principal thesis that revolution was not a simple response to economic exploitation and inequality, but rather those material elements combined with political oppression which sometimes does involve brutal violence (Goodwin, 2011 : 452). He states that: "Revolutionary movements developed and sometimes thrived in opposition to repressive and exclusionary authoritarian states that were infrastructurally weak or weakened, even if these states held more or less competitive elections; and revolutionary movements were most likely to actually seize state power when the repressive states that they confronted were especially autonomous of (or dis-embedded from) civil society – including middle classes and even elites in addition to lower classes and organized along patrimonial or clientelist as opposed to rational-bureaucratic lines" (Goodwin, 2001 : 290). That picture partly fits Arab regimes: they are repressive, exclusionary and patrimonial (Ayubi; 1996). However, these regimes were embedded in civil society and operated under the hegemony of the authoritarian state and its bureaucracy. One notices that in none of the Arab countries undergoing revolts, including Lebanon, did the elites even change or rotate as was envisioned by Mosca in his elite circulation theory (people in command did not even change while the power structure remains the same no matter which elite rotates into power) (Bottomore, 1993: 41). For Alain Badiou (2013), it is indispensable – in order to understand and analyse the uprisings in the Arab countries – to distinguish between a 'historic event' which breaks with the established situation and promises a new beginning, and/or a

'political creation' different from previously known models, whether that means Western capitalist 'democracy', nationalism or twentieth-century state socialism.[24] The latter did not happen, especially in Lebanon. Much of the same people in the ruling class apart from the president and his immediate entourage remained as in the countries not undergoing violent war after the Arab Spring.

Goodwin also notes that revolutionary movements are less likely to occur in a modern contemporary period in contrast to the Cold War era. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, movements that would challenge the neoliberal/Capitalist world-system would not stand a chance. Leftist ideals and aligned movements seem to have lost considerable appeal and influence in this globalised context (Goodwin, 2001 : 290). John Foran adds that the new conditions of globalization call for new methods to render revolutions (and its associated alliances) more effective (Foran, 2003). New methods, however, are not born out of intellectual exercises. New approaches to revolution are learned from past and present experience of organising against the tyranny of elites. The level of organisation and the direction of the political struggle, whether it is truly social and 'artistic' enough to incrementally build reform into revolution, are real activities of history and not mental exercises. At first sight, the Arab Spring demonstrators lacked a social agenda. As per Badiou (2013), they negated the power but did not provide a clear option of policy to implement. After the uprising, the appeal was gone, and the same neoliberal policies remained in place.

Contemporary intellectuals are generally critical of the Marxist-Leninist model of revolutions, claiming the latter simply does not bear into account the social and cultural

[24] Both are historical events, but political creation involves the right (wing) methods masquerading as left policies to prevent the necessary socialist ruptures.

transformations that constitute a 'proper revolution' (Paige, 2003). Demonstration, as a general act of disobedience, either employ violent or non-violent measures. While the latter has gained more appeal in the new age of revolutions, it is, according to contemporary literature (McAdam & al.; 1997), the use of 'well considered violence' and organized calculated account of enacting state reforms that leads to a 'successful' revolution. There is a spontaneity, the spark or appeal of certain revolts, which taper down quickly without overturning the reigning power along with is policies. The case may be put to certain sections of educated and disenfranchised middle classes who seek to improve their situations by coalescing around catchy slogans that unnerve the tyrannical states. Yet, these 'spur of the moment' revolts, otherwise the spontaneity, lack the organisational depth, broad working-class political parties and unions whose agenda are about commanding the channels of resource flow. The left is fundamentally at fault for having neglected the ideological war and the organisational means necessary to cushion the revolutionary transition. These social organisations are also crucibles of working-class memories, which keep the symbols of past revolts as reminders to safeguard the gains or make more gains for working people in the future. The working-class agenda here is straightforward: it is about controlling where wealth is made and how much of it distributed to the working class. It is noteworthy, in the case of Lebanon as well as other Arab states undergoing uprisings, the socialist platforms were already devastated by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Obviously, the mistake was theirs because they should not have overly latched themselves to Soviet communism. As the joke goes in the Arab world, if it rained in Moscow, the Arab communists opened their umbrellas. History shows they lacked the political autonomy that emerges from fostering organic intellectualism.

As per the cliché, the art of revolution lies in the patience of shifting reformist politics to outright revolutionary politics. Reform leads to revolution or rule of working people is difficult

because the social alternative has been demolished by demonising communism. Through this new age and perception of social revolution, in contrast to the classical Marxist approach, I argue that most of modern (more so western) academia has been purposed, designed, and honed to teach the faults of leftist ideals applications. My evidence for this is *a posteriori* or it is to be seen in the fact that western universities teem with tens of thousands of self-proclaimed Marxist professors, while their communist parties' membership number in the hundreds, sometimes much less. In other words, western academia sends the message that socialism has been tried and failed, and in a sense, the western democratic model is the only way out. The overwhelming emphasis on the pursuit of individual interests in the mainstream spilling over into public benefits is the received theory. Even in the most basic economic undergraduate courses, we are taught that individuals are only self-interested, and the invisible hand and trickle-down theories are the only feasible methods of perceiving a 'working society' - taking the worst egotistical aspects of humanity and tagging it as a principal rule of macro-economics (Fine, 2016). There is little said about the elementary role of mediating agency between personal and social interests, i.e., nothing works without some subject acting out in one way or another, which shows the power of the dominant ideas or the reification.[25] It is as if the Western population do not fund and vote for their wars of aggressions and previous colonial wars. These markets are determined processes and not the product of a working class engrossed in its partnership with imperialism.

Still, Goodwin (2011) and Foran (2003) both observe that 'classic' leftist approaches to revolutions are simply no longer a feasible option in our contemporary hyper globalized societies. There are now numerous ideological factors that play into the dynamisms and cultural shift of

[25] By this we mean the intellectual class that sees in Western intervention a promotion of liberal and democratic ideals. The liberal support of the Afghanistan invasion is a case in point.

identity politics and modern protest culture. To their eyes, there are simply too many factors for classic Marxism to bear into account. While identity politics may serve to cloister people from each other, they can also grow outwards and engage the other in the struggle. As tyrannical regimes grow by furthering the oppression of most people from different identities, it has been possible for a universal framework in which people keep their traditions while supporting others to achieve rights goals – the civil rights movement with many whites supporting blacks is a case in point. Then again, Marxism is not rigid frame and it could develop to include these newly adopted factors: The Marxian positions are disparate and some are receptive while others are deaf to the new phenomenon.

Which model applies to Lebanon?

It is important to that from an immediate reading of the *status quo* in Lebanon that much of the population has fallen through the safety net. That in itself as per Goodwin and Skocpol (denoted as G&S here forth) is not sufficient reason for revolution. Much of the literature on revolutions agrees on this point as well. Poverty alone does not make revolts. The other constituent of revolt as per the G&S model are there and visibly present in Lebanon. The professional revolutionaries, the discontented state sector, and the penuries thwarting the ability to deliver collective goods are all there. However, it is the ideology uniting the populace under a single banner that is missing. This point goes back to Marx (1845) and later Gramsci (1971), which point out that ideology has to be translated into a material force in order to overturn capital. Ideology itself is not autonomous and independent from the poverty or the factors that G&S pronounce. It is formed by these factors. In Lebanon, every element in the recipe for revolution is rearticulated by the sect and the state to feed a counter-revolutionary ideology.

With respect to coalitions

For G&S, coalitions are defined by the existence of professional revolutionaries and the mobilization of resources, ideologies capable of attracting adherents (nationalism, religion, populism), the ability to deliver collective goods (education, health care, welfare, security, autonomous spaces), selective goods for those willing to engage in high-risk activities, and an ability to include those social classes or groups excluded by the regime (p.496). All of these constituents prevail in the Lebanese landscape; however, they as segregated as the different sects are. That is so because the sect and the state cohere to reinforce the division by co-opting the ideas and the space upon which a common ground for struggle could arise. The state is not weak insofar as it boosts the function of the sect. The state, as instantiated by the sectarian constitution, acts as a catalyst for sectarianism.

According to G&S, revolutionary coalitions tend to form around pre-existing nationalist, populist, or religious discourses that legitimize resistance to tyranny and, just as important, can mobilise a broad range of social classes and strata, nationalism has also historically been more effective than class struggle as a driver for revolutionary organisation in the Third World [26]. The scope of revolutionary coalitions is made not just by how many facets of society try to organise, but also by the political space that allows revolutionaries to take advantage of the governing weaknesses, due to the regime's structural failings and traits described in their various models (p. 503-504). In brief, the more repressive and disorganised the regime is, the broader and more

[26] Adjacently, I must note that G&S reduces materialism to empiricism. Materialism does not mean that social thought springs from reflexive experience with phenomenon. Moreover, Marx sees in nationalism and national wars forms of class struggle. It should be obvious that he not credulous to the point to believe the proletariat is simply the industrial worker of Europe, while his points in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte clearly state that the past resurrects and weighs like a nightmare on the shoulders of the living.

effective the opposing coalition will be. The constructed/fabricated history of the sect is the resurrected ideal around which the group rallies. In contradistinction to the model, there is no nationally recognised common history: there are many histories. Anecdotally, the debate over how history should be taught in Lebanese curricula lingers as a quarrel between how sects present themselves in the process of historical development. Naturally, all sects play on the heroism of disadvantaged groups, as opposed to erecting a common national identity. Even the army is not spared. Army officer appointments still follow clear cut sectarian lines. Needless to say, the revolt and coalitions should be carried out within each sect against the leadership of the sect; however, without a concerted effort between all citizens, the machination of sectarianism rallies all sectarians against reform or revolution. A clear example of this is the civil marriage law of Lebanon, which was passed by parliament but never took effect because the religious establishments opposed it.

With respect to state structures

G&S argue that authoritarian regimes that are exclusionary, i.e., not capable of making groups and classes think they have a stake in the survival of the regime. Following G&S's logic, we should assume that the larger the number of people not formally incorporated under the umbrella of the state should lead to more people mobilized in the broad-based coalitions. This is not the case of Lebanon – there is no singular state to incorporate any peoples; as I was at pains to show, there are many mini sectarian states within the state. As demonstrated by recent history, the relation of the state structure and society has severely degraded over time. This decline in living and security standards is an immediate by-product of the ruling sectarian divisions, which as a form of capitalist ideology entrenches exploitation and indigence. There are only sects (let's call them micro-states, within the same border) that oversee their constituents and rely on their

dependence for legitimacy. Throughout the Late 2019 to late 2021, Lebanon has shown once again that it is disunited around common goals. It has been weakened further with countless political scandals, foremost is the squandering of savings and pensions. Another persisting characteristic of the regime is the sway of multiple external powers.

To re-emphasise, these recurring vulnerabilities, in theory, should have 'technically', as per the model, paved the path for a successful broad-based coalition. Yet, the demonstrations in Lebanon have become barricades of sect against sect. Instead of weakening sectarianism, the crisis backfired. The sectarian system is in crisis without an opposition to undo its makings. How the aspiring universalist revolutionaries lost their momentum has to do more with the absence of an alternative social democratic ideology than anything else. For example, the Communist party of Lebanon, a supposedly non-sectarian entity, does not question the social basis of capitalist reproduction by sectarianism, and instead focuses on distributional and wage related struggles. This in turn situates the communists within an acceptable sectarian orbit. They ask for crumbs (higher wages) but not for change in the basis of social reproduction: from the rentier state to the productive state (Salem, 2020). Deprived from clear ideological and organisational goals, the population appears to have acquiesced to the failure of anti-sectarian reforms. For most, procuring a student or work visa abroad has been the only solution, while the brain drain structurally sinks the nation further. The G&S model applies to Lebanon with the caveat that each sect must be treated as a mini state co-supported by a love-hate relationship with other sects, and articulated by a central state whose '*raison d'être*' is sectarianism. While all the other assumptions of the model apart still fit the case of Lebanon, the G&S model underemphasizes the point that ideology is a cross-national power relation that is in part recreated by the various institutions of the Lebanese sectarian model. So yes, exclusions and professional revolutionaries are present, but these are

reproduced within the same thought structure that reproduces the system, which is mostly the result of the weakens of social alternatives globally, and to a lesser degree, the workings of deeply entrenched sectarian institutions.

Closed or exclusionary and organizationally weak regimes

Furthermore, for G&S, exclusionary and organizationally weak regimes are the most vulnerable to the growth of revolutionary coalitions. In this sense, we would expect the Lebanese victims of the outstanding political deadlocks and economic grievances to join the revolution and/or remained politicized. Following that logic, the Lebanese *Thawra* also has clear focus for the opposition, under the slogan "*kellon ya'ne kellon*" (a tautology translating to: 'all of them means all of them'). This common enemy has been identified mostly as the political elites and members of parliament, as all groups and lower classes began sharing the same grievances, that common enemy became easier to share and target. In Lebanon's case, as history shows, intra-sectarian tensions have continued to shift the focus away from the elites and rather point towards other sects as the source of their recurring miseries, a trend that G&S also underline. The Lebanese regime has continuously applied this strategy all while blocking any attempts of reformism, which keeps it in power providing leverage over the undermined coalitions. When such regimes face weaknesses, the application of repressive force is expected according to G&S; however, the sectarians have auto repressed instead of being repressed by the state. The various intuitive assumptions of this model apply to Lebanon's case quite strongly, but the role of sectarian ideology as means of auto-repression, and as it reshapes the assumptions of the model, is a variant unaccounted for.

Multiparty democracies and/or Quasi-democracies

There is a similarity of G&S with Lebanon's multiparty (supposedly) democracy that has not facilitated the growth of revolutionary movements. In the case that G&S's termed 'inclusionary' authoritarian regimes (such as fascist and state-socialist regimes, or single party corporatist regimes), mass political mobilizations have drowned out the demands and representation of various smaller groups within. In Lebanon, some sectarian loyalists will argue the same point: that the *Thawra* is undermining the voices of particular minorities or simply disregarding the authority of a sect. There is also a recurring instance of counter-protests against the generic or professional revolutionaries; button men and zealous supporters of Saad Hariri (Sunni aligned Future movement), Nabih Berri (Amal) have openly assaulted and threatened anti-government protesters on numerous occasions. The Lebanese regime has also imposed a strict controlled form of political participation on key actors and the broader population due to a debilitated state structure, corruption, and inexistent sociopolitical reforms (the co-option of leaders, judges, security personnel – among other key actors – is common)[27]. In a Lebanese context, democracy becomes a form of power exercise veiled by the faux jargon of rights. Instead of the state alone exercising repression, the sect is the entity that really excludes and represses. Supported by the state, it may deprive unruly members of all benefits. Without an alternative source of livelihood, rational citizens find themselves slaving for the very system they despise.

The two models that are especially susceptible to be overthrown by revolutionary movements are tested below:

[27] A few examples linked: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/2/lebanon-ex-army-boss-intelligence-heads-charged-with-corruption ; https://www.reuters.com/article/imf-lebanon-idINKBN2BY0DS ; https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes

Sultanistic and/or neo-patrimonial regimes

DeGrassi (2008) describes neo-patrimonialism as "a hybrid regime consisting of, on the one hand, a patrimonial spoils network in which centralized elites mobilize political support by using their public position to distribute jobs, rent-seeking opportunities, and resources as personal favors" (p.107). According to G&S, they are centered in the personal manipulation of individual dictatorial rulers, who allow no stable group prerogatives in the polity, not even collective prerogatives for military officers or upper social and economic classes. Their armed forces are usually corrupt and/or incompetent; this is absolutely the case with the Lebanese security apparatuses, discussed further in the next subsections. Political leaders are more concerned about being overthrown than establishing an effective state, similarly to Lebanon's persisting elite structures and dysfunctional delivery of public services. Leaders of these types of states will tend to lose foreign backing once they are contested with a multiclass opposition and significant pressures, this was definitely the case after the onset of the October 17 revolutions of 2019 and the August 4th Beirut blast; international donors and foreign governments kept funding to the Lebanese regime to a bare minimum. Their tendencies and my comments follow below.

The monopolization of significant sectors of the economy; aside from the feudal origins of the ruling elites in Lebanon, there are the already mentioned import patterns and the dominance of the banking sector. Moreover, the concentration of wealth in Lebanon has always been high due to the unquestionable hold of sectarianism (Assouad, 2021). The transition from the pre-capitalist property rights, then exercised by few families, into the capitalist forms, was smooth; there was no liberal bourgeois revolution to overthrow the old order. The French colonials found it easy to tap into the pre-existing structure in order to cement their hold. What panned out is a capitalism with Feudal like governance structure, and with that the lingering high concentration of wealth that

originates from land ownership, especially so, as the old subsistence crops became cash crops (Isakandar, 1978).

Heavy-handed control of the flow of ideas, propaganda, and information in schools and in the press, once again, this may be a universal condition, but in Lebanon the sect and the state cohere to present the sectarian system as the only system. They back their words with deeds through a carrot and stick approach. My take on this is the film *Prizzi's Honor*, a story in which the protagonists cannot escape the clasp of the family. Members of the clan are like fish that cannot survive without the belonging and the social support net that the clan provides. In Lebanon, it is much the same, and although many realise the system is defunct, they cannot find the alternative social space in which to grow independently. The propaganda has an easier task than in more atomised social setting because it comes in to bolster the already entrenched social order and cement the clannish bonds.

The regime generally nourishes family connections and '*wasta*' to monopolize government positions, contracts, business, and professional opportunities; the family within the sect and Kinship alliance are once again reminiscent of pre-capitalist formation. However, here it is not the wheat that is crop-shared, it is the moneyed wealth wrought through market-oriented operations. These loyalty-buying kickbacks have faded with the crisis; however, the submission of the various social groups is best ascribed to the hopes they pin on the rejuvenation of the rentier system. Instead of seeing a common future bereft of sectarianism, the masses see in sectarianism a resilient structure that emerges from the ashes because of an international consensus on keeping Lebanon safe and sound. That is a debatable point, because overall Lebanon has been in tumult rather than peaceful.

Lastly, the neo-patrimonial regime is likely to favor foreign capitalists when granting special privileges and serving their geopolitical interests in exchange for foreign aid. As borne out by the debt crisis that disembowelled the productive economy, Lebanon favours rent seeking financial capital as opposed to industrial capital with linkages that improve its productive structure. More so than other developing states, Lebanon has wrecked its own subsistence base with excessive abuse of its agriculture and pollution (Lake Qaraaoun is possibly the most polluted lake globally) (World Bank, 2021). The recipes of the World Bank for Lebanon emphasised neoliberal openness and adjustment through financial austerity. Trying to service an ever-increasing debt with more borrowing at high interest rate, turned the state into a tax collection agent, while the high interest rate shifted funds into savings and disfavoured investment. Over the last thirty years, industry and agriculture have shrunk (Diwan, 2020), while the service sector declines on account of regional insecurity. The crisis has now reached insuperable limits, while the politics is still locked in a sectarian framework, which was the cause of the crisis. This point is additional evidence of the blinding effect of ideology.

Although the neo-patrimonial model applies to all market-based situation to one degree or another, it is excessively self-evident in Lebanon. The case may be that the rent-seeking elites in Lebanon consume the resources of their state beyond the point of repair. As the state orchestrates or mediates the differences between sects, it will have less resources and power to actuate the inter-sect mediation. The blockage of government function since the onset of the crisis in 2019, is additional evidence to such point. The irrational behaviour of elites, their self-damaging acts that undermine their continuity, is the resultant of a structure that is independent of their immediate personal will; hence the irrationality. The social form of their organisation and the mindset that governs its development are less dependent of rational personal will, and more dependent on the

foreign powers that fuel their self-harming path for the purpose of control. This model fits well in line, if not mostly, with Lebanon's case.

Direct colonialist regimes

This is the case when a colony is governed directly by metropolitan officials. They undermine actual or potential moderate and reformist leaderships, and they tend to create more indigenous elite and middle-class opposition to direct rule. Their presence (the colonists) provides a common and highly visible focus of opposition. Their tendencies and my comments follow below.

Radicalizing its opponents by completely undermining actual or potential moderate and reformist leadership (does not attempt to preserve or create a traditional indigenous elite). In Lebanon sectarianism was constitutionally enshrined by the French to manipulate the opposition. Such is standard colonial practice. All sects reconstruct a mythical history in which they appear victimised. Their hold on power within the state under the power of the *Za'im* is a form of compensation for that fabricated history. While poverty is experienced by peoples of all sects, as also evidenced by the high rate of emigration of all sects, sectarianism combines with its attendant system of religious belief to breed a manifest destiny scenario for each sect: every sect is destined for glory and will obtain security as it battles its old age enemies. These schisms are strengthened by the degree of the conflict with other sects, especially as the sectarian antagonism polarises people on the basis of sect. During the civil war, people who were anti-sectarian were forced to flee and seek the protection of their sect leaders because the war worked in ways that entrenched the sectarian divide (Calame & Charlesworth, 2011 : 44).

Business, professional and (obviously) government positions are based on an explicitly racial/ethnic criterion; In Lebanon, the criterion serving the same purpose is the sect. There are specific quotas in government jobs for each sect, which are finally controlled by the sect leader. Up until the crisis, these jobs paid inflated salaries. During the crisis, these salaries fell, and the army was receiving charity aid, mostly from foreign governments[28] (Reuters, 2021). There are reports of desertion and soldiers not reporting for duty, but the evidence is anecdotal. Still at about a tenth of their previous levels, the salaries are far below subsistence. Yet the French socially engineered the army in the same way they envisaged the sectarian state. The cadres are distributed by sect and the allegiance remains principally to the sect.

They create a common focus of opposition for groups that may have very different reasons for seeking national independence. By a process of historical inversion, or as policies naturally boomerang to breed their opposites, the French in Lebanon created enough common grounds for all sects to agree on their departure in 1946, however, not enough common grounds for all sects to shed the sectarism they left behind. Although the divide and rule dictum applies when the colonialist is present in the occupied country, it seems to serve the colonialists as well after they leave.

With respect to the Lebanese Armed Forces, they were never a catalyst for reform, and there was no interest in decolonizing the people from their various oppressors. Even with the worst working conditions and depreciated salaries, the LAF have proven their will to continue to support the comprador classes. There is a remote chance that the army would join the revolutionaries or stage a military coup, as elaborated in the next section below.

[28] https://www.reuters.com/article/lebanon-crisis-security-crime-int-idUSKBN2B11D3

Perhaps the most significant trait that applies to Lebanon's purist revolutionary coalition is the active use of a political symbol of nationalism (i.e., the Lebanese flag), one that distances itself from all other sects and projects unity despite the differences. The early weeks of the October 17 revolutions were the most promising; revolutionaries had channeled a form of cultural self-assertion that had rarely been seen before (few events, such as the death of Rafik al Hariri, had created similar short-lived instances of unity). The greatest issue was that class struggles and grievances did not properly overlap – though there was a common struggle for national liberation. Parts of the movement eventually felt disconnected to the *Thawra*, the proposed WhatsApp tax which triggered the protests was a thing of the past and people of the middle classes gradually adapted and returned to their jobs and routines.

Is a Military Coup possible?

Lebanon's military institution is far from patriotic because it is riddled with corrupted sectarian loyalists at all levels. Any attempt to turn the army against the elites would be immediately ousted by loyalists who report back to their sectarian leaderships. Hypothetically, if this were to occur, the military would fragment as it did before during the civil war. Furthermore, any bid to take over the country by force would require the sectarian militias to concede. Hizballah's militia has worked closely with the LAF, a collaboration demonstrated in its capacities during the 2006 conflict with Israel. Iran's backing and support is a major influence to be reckoned with, one that the LAF would surely think twice before challenging. Even though the salaries of the security forces have been reduced to a fraction due to the severe drop in value of the Lebanese Lira, hand-outs, amenities, and pecuniary subsidies keep the security institutions from disintegrating (Reuters, 2021).

Theoretically, G&S (1989) explain that weaker forms of rule must maintain resilient military control and loyalty; failure to do so exposes the rulers, in some circumstances, to an increased threat of emerging civilian-military alliances. Lebanon now shows that threat. The risks of conflicts are ahead of us. Conflicts are auto-reinforcing social as well as natural calamities. Widespread gun ownership in Lebanon, and within each sect, also raises realistic possibilities for a full-scale armed conflict following state military disintegration. The international community is watching because the stakes are high. Increased refugee flows, asymmetric warfare, and neglect of natural preservation benchmarks are not something worthwhile to anyone.

Criticisms and limitations of the theory

In *States and Social Revolutions*, Theda Skocpol (1979) builds on Samuel Huntington's definition of a revolution:

> Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below...
>
> What is unique to social revolution is that basic changes in social structure and in political structure occur together in a mutually reinforcing fashion. And these changes occur through intense sociopolitical conflicts in which class struggles play a key role. (1979: p.4-5)

Skocpol's framework combines the aspects of social relations undergoing change with close attention to states' fiscal crises. She also focuses on states' interaction with their regional vulnerabilities and international influencers (as detailed by McAdam & al., 1997 : 146). More so than not, revolutionary outcomes resulted in larger state structures while international factors subsided into the background. McAdam & al. describe Skocpol's statism as being the cause of her reductionist perspective, which is centered on the dynamics of political culture, coalition building, and agencies. Critics were quick to find fault with the primacy of statism as opposed to the role of social movements, however, whether by state or non-state forces, a revolution is about capturing

state power, which is pre-determined by all forms of cultural hegemony, and which as the revolution wins, it rearticulates the novel forms of hegemony through the state. Naturally, the revolutionaries capture the state and imbue the newly captured states with their ideology. The praxis or the practice of the struggle, the ideas put to work and developing from the experience of the struggle come to fruition as they integrate and co-support each other with the state being the object of struggle and in the lead position to crush the struggle. All thought requires reduction and the question is what to reduce without losing the gist of the message being conveyed. The generalisation or emphasis on the state by Skocpol is adequate because it (the state) is central to the exercise of power, as well as being the objective of the revolution.

None of the Arab Spring states, including Lebanon underwent a revolution in Skocpol's sense because the centres of power were not changed. Lebanon, in particular, had a sectarian power structure, which weathered the storm – at least so far. All the new NGOs and their call for a civil state culture are marginal in comparison to the ideal model in which revolutionary forces restructure the system. The failure of the revolution in a roundabout way supports sectarianism. Despondent people lose faith in change for the better and revert back to the sect. Moreover, as some NGO leaders appear to be wealthy pundits who trade in peoples' misery for hefty salaries in the dollar – the loss of the professional revolutionary hero comes into the picture and adds to despair. The key point is that *social dividedness* in this instance sectarian politics, as is the case elsewhere, blocks the revolution. The historical as well the theoretical problem of a roadmap to revolution remains challenging because it deals with the age-old question: the synchronised rise of revolutionary consciousness accompanied by the role of strong social organisations. These are historically contingent issues with a different bearing in different historical circumstances to which a single model formula cannot apply at a concrete level. At a more general level, it is now a given

that identity politics and the hold of neoliberalism, in addition to Soviet failure, have mitigated revolutionary consciousness and class organisation formation. ‘The free market works, and communism failed’ appear like catchphrases that are often repeated to inculcate the populace.

Goodwin (2001 : 298) refers to one of the fundamentals of Marxism: material circumstance alone may not necessarily motivate the masses to take action and seize the means of productions through the state. For G&S, world insurgencies that emerged from poverty and which transformed themselves into industrialist capitalist egalitarian redistributive states, have attenuated poverty in less-advanced capitalist countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Since the model was coined in 1989, the onset of neoliberalism brought back elements of primitive accumulation, forced dislocation of private labour (farmers), along with a growing wealth gap in most capitalist countries (Harvey, 2003), including neo-liberal champions such as U.S. and Canada (Broadbent institute; 2014).

The hegemony of the U.S., known for its recurring interference in developing countries, including coup-staging, bribing and co-opting local elites for second-hand ruling, among other specious methods, catalysed a historical process that resurrected the primitive accumulation. Conspiracy making as per the disclosed archives of the U.S. department of state is real according to Pilger (2018), which in turn leads some to construct wild and unwarranted conspiracy theories. G&S posit that imperialist meddling in preyed upon countries tries to operate through local regimes, if not then then through local elites that hold strong ties and working arrangement with the incumbent regime (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989 :501). That should not come as a surprise because the vested interests of the corporate-U.S. serve a dual but intertwined purpose: it cheapens the resources of other countries used as inputs for profit making and it boosts the power of ‘empire’, which reverts in more economic gains to the U.S. (Harvey, 2003). In the latter case, the

gained recognition of ‘power and status’ play a leading role in bolstering neoliberal ideological hegemony; the ideas of the US become the norm irrespective of their validity or invalidity, so long as they promote a continuation of profit making by cheap inputs and keep would-be competitors away.

Lebanon is a preyed upon state. One could argue that Lebanon’s rent-seeking governance system, the US-sponsored sectarian system, and its post-colonial history exhibit many similarities to the hypotheses of the model against which the reality of Lebanon is to be tested. Lebanon is in crisis and riddled with layer upon layer of endemic corruption. Concretely however, many uphold the sectarian ideology that boosts the same system that worsens their plight. This takes us to the point of departure from the model, which is that ideology is a seminal mover of revolutions, being recreated by the social institutions of the nations to reinforce the ruling sectarian relation. That being said, though many traits of the framework are relatable to Lebanon and many other third world countries, none of the models fit completely with Lebanon’s case.

Although there is no state which is fully independent of private sector meddling or capital, in Lebanon the state is overly exposed to these private interests with almost a complete absence of labour. Labour and its organisations are divided by sect. Anecdotally, even the Lebanese communist party respects the sectarian representation in its conferences. It would not shame someone less qualified than another person from another sect to boast that its his or her sectarian ties that guaranteed the job. However, the substantive rents of sectarianism are not this or that sectarian job. The real rent is the wealth of the top echelons of the sects, as demonstrated by gaping income inequality. This could also be discerned from the falling share of wages across the past thirty years. According to Georges Salem quoting ILO statistics (2020), the wage share fell from about 50 percent in 1990 to about 25 percent prior to the uprising (Salem, 2020). The shares of

workers' income as a result of the recent inflation are far worse (inflation is an indirect tax on the poor); however, there are no concrete estimates for lack of data. Although it may be absurd to posit that the sect-identity is primordial, the persisting crisis without a successful or promising revolutionary coalition has resulted in more reactionary or pro-sectarian bourgeoisie measures. This signals to us that despite the cross-cutting terms with the G&S model and the relevance of capturing state power, the ideological momentum of sectarianism was continuously reformulated and carried the nation into a direction opposite to revolution.

As G&S (1989) positioned it, (directly ruled) colonial regimes and neo-patrimonial rules are more susceptible to social revolutions. The moment the ruling class generates opposition from the middle class, which in Lebanon's greyish case, has severely diminished due to the rising poverty line, one expects that more grounds for revolt will be available. Recent literature also supports Goodwin and Skocpol's stance on the brittleness and near-irreformable nature of neo-patrimonial states (Stohl & al., 2017; Barkey & Rossem, 1997; Bearman & Everett, 1993; Goldstone, 1991). Lebanon did not even reform to absorb the shocks of angry demonstrators.

On the ground, as I write, most Lebanese middle and upper-middle class citizens (and dual-citizens) who have been able to afford a way out of the country have already done so - or are meticulously planning to do so. The Lebanese nationals who are stuck within, with salaries dropping to a tenth their previous levels, and who have most of their wealth frozen in Lebanese banks, are more invested in the protests. However, there are many disunited protesters who tend to shift blame on each other rather than the system.

Another weakness that neo-patrimonial modes of rule are subjected to once the middle class joins the revolution, is a tendency for foreign backing to diminish. Following the August 4th blast, and the resignation of the government shortly after, along with the numerous scandals that

pointed towards the outlying level of negligence that led to the explosions (i.e., the fact that most high-level politicians, including the president and numerous ministers, were aware that explosives were unsafely stored in the port), international support for the interim government was severely discouraged. Lebanon's current vulnerability viewed from the international scene is that it is widely renowned as 'brittle and *unreformable*' if we were to use G&S's specific wordings. In fact, most donor countries and humanitarian envoys strongly advised against collaborating the (interim) government and Lebanese authorities in any steps when delivering supplies, aid, or funds; that is unless the government took significant steps to curb corruption and enact concrete reforms on banking, capital controls, transparency, and accountability. For instance, when Sri Lanka donated 1675 kilograms of Ceylon tea to the Lebanese victims of the blast, the government redirected the supplies solely for military use, granting the nickname 'Tea thief' to the president in many news headlines (The National, 2020). Lebanon and its elite should have effectively lost all credibility as a trustworthy and functioning government, but neither their own populations nor the donors really intend to displace them. The donors have more strategic reasons for wanting a weak Lebanon and that is why they come with makeover reforms aiming to re-establish the same order. The sectarian population has no unifying alternative ideology and stands to benefit from the aid being delivered to each sect by the sectarian leader. There is not a national reform agenda around with which all identities are in agreement and the anger is just vented in the protests. The downside of this is some aid strengthens sectarianism and social division as a strategic goal in Lebanon. Some of the various sects increase the aid and their shares of it from escalating the divisiveness in the country; the undertone of this is that Lebanon is strategically located for the US.

The last and third trait that G&S tie to disorganised and weakened regimes are armed forces described as 'corrupt and incompetent'. The LAF and ISF, and most Lebanese public institutions

for that matter, are no stranger to corrupt practices, ranging from bribes, obstruction, evasion, scapegoating, favoritism, and other creative forms of 'wasta' (Azhari, 2020). Lebanon's corruption has completely debilitated its government capacities; the 2019 Global Competitiveness Report compiled by the World Economic Forum concluded that out of 141 countries, Lebanon ranked: 132nd in reliability of water supplies, 131st in checks and balances (including budget transparency, judicial independence, efficiency of legal framework in challenging regulations, freedom of the press, etc.), 128th in government's long-term vision, 127th in quality of road infrastructure, 125th in government's responsiveness to change, 116th in transparency, 115th in public sector performance (Schwab, 2018 : pp.342-345). What is peculiar to Lebanon is the rate of incompetence of these institutions imperils the whole Lebanese structure. To the question why do sectarian politicians, the patrons of the system, induce the type of corruption that may destroy Lebanon as an entity, which is the source of their rents may be the case that destruction and war rents are just as high or higher than peace time rents. The answer from a class position, including the ideological dimension arising therefrom, may be that their strata are overly tied to external funding and politics at the expense of their local sources of income. Lebanon is a debt and import-dependent state. They rarely look for an internal integration plan and always look for external funding and support to cement their internal standing. This tallies with Skocpol's studies on modern rentier states, which argues that these elites, as per the take from Stohl, are "highly dependent on the revenue from extraction to assure loyalty, are also more likely to crumble when resources diminish" (Stohl & al., 2017: p.172).

Notwithstanding all these vulnerabilities, regimes described in the model eschew multiple strategies to deter opposing mobilisations. The most explicit fashion to do so is through the use of repression and heavy-handed responses, which are effective when the state controls the monopoly

on violence. The more implicit and ideological method is by instigating conflict within ethnic divisions, at all levels including the elite class, which complicates any attempts to bridge revolutionaries with conflictual ethnic confessions. As the situation stands in Lebanon now, while the nation sinks into poverty, the different sects are warning against their loss of power in the state. As such, each and every sect scurry to save what it can for itself from an ever-shrinking share of wealth. In simple payoff calculations, as in a game theoretic model, all Lebanese sects stand to benefit from cooperation, yet they do not because these stirrups. This renders political stability somewhat arbitrary on the vigilance of the ruler which is greyish if applying this ideal to Lebanon's case.

Furthermore, G&S (1989) comment on Charles Tilly's hypothesis:

> The analysis in this section, we might note, raises questions about Tilly's argument that revolutionary movements are more likely to succeed when they can forge alliances with "polity members". Coalitions between polity members and what Tilly calls "challenger groups" are often, if not always, anti-revolutionary in their consequences. In fact, such coalitions may be formed precisely in order to prevent the further growth of movements led by radical political forces. Contrary to Tilly's hypothesis, social-revolutionary movements seem more likely to seize power when civilian-military coalitions are unable to form and initiate a political opening from above. (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989: p. 500-501)

In the case of Tunisia, one notices an alliance between the civilian revolutionaries and the army which turned against President Ben Ali. In the case of Egypt, the revolutionaries took power as the army stepped aside and the Muslim Brothers were voted to power, but later, backed with popular support the army deposed the elected government. In the Arab world, the army is the strongest institution and, no revolutionaries could assume power without some sort of alliance with it. However, if we change the definition of revolution and define the Arab Spring as spontaneous uprisings, then G&S may prove contingently correct. In the case of the great revolutions, the dissolution of the army or an alliance with the army were the steppingstones for overturning the social order and projecting whether there will be democracy or dictatorship (Moore, 1966: 453).

There is no escaping the army hurdle: it has to be defeated if it is pro-regime, or allied with, to revolutionise the existing state of things.

As the authors explicitly state: “neo-patrimonial dictatorships identified with a foreign power, create contexts in which political symbols of nationalism and cultural self-assertion may be harnessed by revolutionaries in addition to the forces of class struggle.” (Goodwin & Skocpol, 1989: p.502). Lebanon’s various sects identify with foreign powers, cultures and states. It so appears that each sect represents a mercenary army to some external nation. In fact, with so much external inflows of capital and so little internal contribution to production in order to cover a trade deficit in which imports are nearly ten times exports, it seems that the political affiliation rests on solid geopolitical rents basis (World Development Indicators, World Bank Data base). The local production capacity produces so little in rents and profits such that the pecuniary basis upon which a national solidarity may grow is missing. Even with the crisis of 2019 no one is talking about re-establishing credit to kick-start the local economy (The banks have stopped lending and a capitalist economy without credit stops to operate). The real industry of Lebanon is not in manufacturing, but rather in the power to draw rents from abroad, which lets the conflicting external powers play the Lebanese groups against each other.

Closer to home, the regional conflicts are also a source of political fragmentation, such as the neighboring Palestinian struggle, and the decade-long Syrian tragedy. These split the national population in a criss-cross way. The Christians in Syria and Palestine are anti-American, while the Pro-Saudi Sunnis are pro-American in Lebanon. The picture of allegiances is a shifting sand dune with cross-sectarian ties, but the bottom line is not the sectarian belonging which decides positions. Here, social class, persons who realise that the cycle of violence must end and whose class position trumps their sect appear to form a front, albeit in embryonic form still, to take things ahead – but

that is an issue that hinges on the rise of a socialist ideology whose development must be a symbiosis between regional and international struggles. It is primarily the culture of the outside, the toppling of U.S. neoliberalism or the internationalism, which would birth the revolutionary social class a historical force. As this outside torrent of change forms, one may expect that the divisive sectarians will subside.

On another note, local economically based grievances can be supported by foreign entities (including state-actors, foreign landlords, prominent businesspeople, etc.), adding more pressures and expectations when demanding national liberations. Once more, the overlap with Lebanon is apparent from the fact that French had left behind a social structure meant to promote its interests long after it is gone (El-Solh, 2004). The point is the funds and the ideological enticements kept pouring in to maintain a splintered national community.

As G&S note, it should be obvious that it is easy to topple states that enjoy an almost total autonomy from internal classes; at least that is the case because these states do not exercise any hegemony over the social context as per Gramsci. However, they add that "in contrast, when radicals confront a state with significant social connections – even if the state is authoritarian and its ties are restricted to the middle and upper classes-then revolutionary coalition building becomes very difficult. Furthermore, if a state traditionally allied with economic elites can politically incorporate at least some popular sectors or organizations, then the prospects for revolutionary success become still more remote." (Goodwin and Skocpol, 1989: p.504). This is quite informative for the case of Lebanon and the failure of its revolution because the sect is the principal conduit for the exercise of capitalist hegemony which distorts class – the many workers do not see themselves as experiencing the same poverty due to rentier capitalism, but rather due to the avarice of the other sect. Hence, as revolution is the exercise of the working class of its right in governance,

then the sect as means of class subversion blocks the revolutionary potential. The sect penetrates all forms of social life, schooling, marital and civil affairs as well as traditional folk culture. It is the practice of distinction from the other as opposed to connecting to the other which is the hegemony of the inter-sectarian capitalist class. Because they foment inter-sect hatred, the revolution is on hold.

Lebanon is weak, disfigured and lacks significant unity. However, the state's clout recedes, the sect's clout and services take over, all this with funding from abroad for the purpose of geopolitical positioning and goals in a strategic region. Lebanon is divided along various lines, ideological, cultural, even economic; this environment becomes more precarious as it undergoes regressive change. Yet, once more, the balance of power bounces between state and sect in a way that does not compromise either forms of social or political organisation. And in this tug of war, only the poorest strata of the population of all sects suffers the consequences of instability and austerity.

In the cases explored by G&S, most countries had a state-society relations which were far more coherent than Lebanon's, in contrast, Lebanon has exceptional sect-society (sub-state) relationships compared to most third world countries. At least, the state was not always in a low intensity civil war, while individuals may have equal status before the law instead of the sect. In Lebanon, the constitution based on unequal sectarian divisions already enshrine a multi apartheid system. There is more of a disconnect between the nation-state and its people. The sectarian enrichment and empowerment prevailed at that expense. The straightest way to demonstrate and explain this politico-cultural divide can be done so by referring to Edward Said's (1979) notion of the inferior other. It so seems that the discourse of local politics is instilled in the notion that the other is of lesser quality and deserves less – orientalism writ large and oddly in an oriental country.

The current picture and a closing comment

Lebanon's present case is highly complex as it is, persisting political infighting between the elites have prevented all prospects for cabinet formation, the latter being one of the essential requirements for any hopes of international funding and even a potential bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The PM designates Diab, Hariri, Mikati and President Aoun seem to be butting heads on a couple of matters, such as Aoun's sanctioned son in law, Gebran Bassil (leader of the FPM), in holding key Ministerial positions (judicial and internal) to aid him in his political endeavours and presidential campaign. The closest that all parties had gotten to forming a government, would have led to an 8-8-8 structure (which would grant veto powers to each 'blocking third'); given that, it would then be highly unlikely that any significant reform would be passed with a majority. On another note, elites are disinterested in passing reforms that may unveil their long-lasting corrupt practices to begin with. Hezbollah is least affected by the fiscal crisis, since they largely receive their funding from Iran in US dollars; their Shi'a constituents in turn have had less of a bearing equally. The most troubling aspect, perhaps, would be the issue of the foreign reserves depleting not only the purchasing power of the general population, but also of public servants and military personnel. The country was expecting a complete blackout by May due to its inability to import fuel (Reuters, 2021). It may be as well to remember that oddly the local banks lent all the depositor's money to a government that could not possibly pay them back. Food subsidies are also a daunting issue in the face of increasing poverty, subsidized goods have been known for being easily subject to smuggling. The greater issue is when the ISF and LAF won't have the capacity to pay the salaries of their soldiers. Both institutions are already suffering from understaffing, as hinted from the LAF general press statement in March 2021; their soldiers, being somewhat intelligent, have been well known for deserting the country

the moment they ask for vacation and find an opportunity to escape. Following Natasha Erzow and Erica Frantz (2011) novel on *Dictators and Dictatorships*, and their studies of coup d'états, Lebanon's ongoing situation and inability to paying the salaries of their military personnel would come close to meeting the conditions or even instigating a military coup. As a result of corruption, anarchy, economic stagnation, and severe submersion of the system, a *guardian* (or government) type of coup could occur, as "members of the military seize power as a means of achieving order and restoring efficiency to the government" (Erzow & Frantz, 2011 : 98), generally for the benefit of the middle class, which in Lebanon's case has mostly fallen victim to the rising dollar and to rising the poverty rate (most consumption is imported). Another factor that makes Lebanon's financial crisis worrying in the medium and long term is, unlike Greece's case, widespread gun ownership. This alone may let the security situation devolve into something resembling the seventies civil war.

Nevertheless, Lebanon's looming economic problems always seem to find another short-term morphine-like solution to its issues, generally through international or regional donors or loans. The US-Iran talks regarding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), if successful, could unfreeze billions of Iranian assets and US dollars held in Lebanese banks, which could temporarily postpone Lebanon's economic demise. Yet if this were to occur, it would also boost financial influence for Shia factions – namely Hezbollah – and for various Shia elites and constituents, in contrast to other sects.

Reporting or researching Lebanon, just like the interests of the foreign powers that look for a foothold there, is biased and mostly Euro-slanted. Naturally, policies developed in Europe serve western interests in the middle east. Their notion of a 'social revolution' is something that poorly replicates a western governance model in the Middle East. That the U.S./Western states desire a

bourgeois/liberal type democracy to emerge in Iraq, Syria, Libya or Lebanon has proven to be a farce. Essentially, their interests lie in their power over these states. Empowering the peoples of these nations lets their population control their national resources, especially oil.

The effort to U.S. democratise by sponsoring regime change and NGOs flaunting liberal ideals has resulted in untold damage to the peoples of the region. The deteriorating living conditions in those countries are getting worse. Economic poverty is a form of repression too. The idea that liberals rising to power and practically instituting the system of the West upon the Arab world is not something the West wants: it is not in their strategic interest.

Many still posit that Lebanon and the region require that their people own and command their resources. That their investment in the social structure do not go astray through fiscal and labour leakages – money and people fleeing abroad. Cultures and traditions may be different, but channels of economic resource allocation to relieve poverty are the same everywhere. Cultures are different within the western world; they are supposed to be so to enrich humanity.

Enlightened folk have a different view on how things should progress in the Middle East (ME). There are two types: the ones with a Washington-esque approach of instilling their imperial motives in the guise of development and progress, the other is the social democratic view that sees that the development of democracy in the ME is actualized by the advancements for human rights. The bundle of rights is indivisible and at the root of democracy. While reflecting on G&S's models and on their comparative analyses of third world countries globally, I would like to make the point that an understanding of the processes within the ME without bias and mystification would assist in development rather than destruction. The context in which ME issues are addressed through foreign policy, diplomacy, or outright interventions is obscured mostly to guarantee U.S. desired goals and outcomes. It is normal for western intervention to be motivated by vested and/or strategic

interests, but interests can also be mutual and for the better of both parties. In a sense, the environmental issues and concern for real democracy are central to welfare and sane nature. The issue is existential for all at this time and more concern for delegating power to people whose lives are at risk can serve all the strategic interests at once. The luxury of putting in power or maintaining a group of people (i.e. an elite class) with which the west can actually work in order to get cheaper resources from the ME is no more. The corrupt classes abuse humans and nature. Nature is borderless and the odds are overwhelming.

There is also the possibility of U.S. soft power to establish a geopolitical influence (namely to counteract the rising influence of China as an economic global superpower, and its allies). We must keep in mind that the ME is multifarious, already split between pro-western absolute monarchies, and the local brand socialists who fell in the soviet order before, most who were bombarded afterwards (Syria, Libya, Yemen to name a few). Yet in the case of Tunisia and Egypt, these were states who had somewhat fallen within the American order, where the intent of regime change went a lot more smoothly. The same class in power assuming a different guise insofar as economic and social development have been concerned, nothing anew happened – economic conditions in Egypt and Tunisia are still awful and the other countries who resisted regime change to the likes of the westerns were indiscriminately bombed.

Postscript on future research

The point that ideology is a product of the various initial assumptions of the model that also reinforces the condition for revolution or the opposite thereof, is the point of emphasis in this research. This leaves us with the difficult question of ideology and the rise of revolutionary ideology. In Lebanon, the elites are aware of the danger of social ideas with organisational power. Their efforts are focused on stemming the possibility of an alternative to their system. So far, they

have been successful. Their ability to co-opt real descent by soft and hard powers is a lesson in ideological manipulation that requires further research. Despite the calamity, state and sect align forces to quell a more inclusive model provides a lesson to be learnt.

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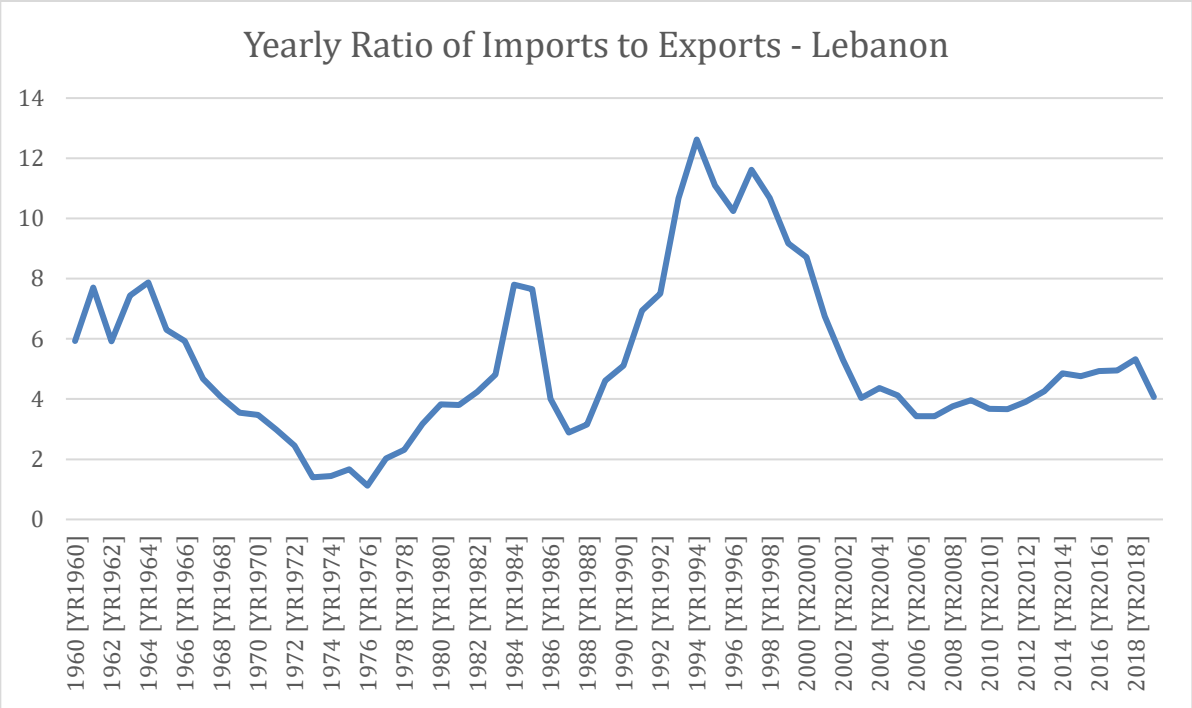
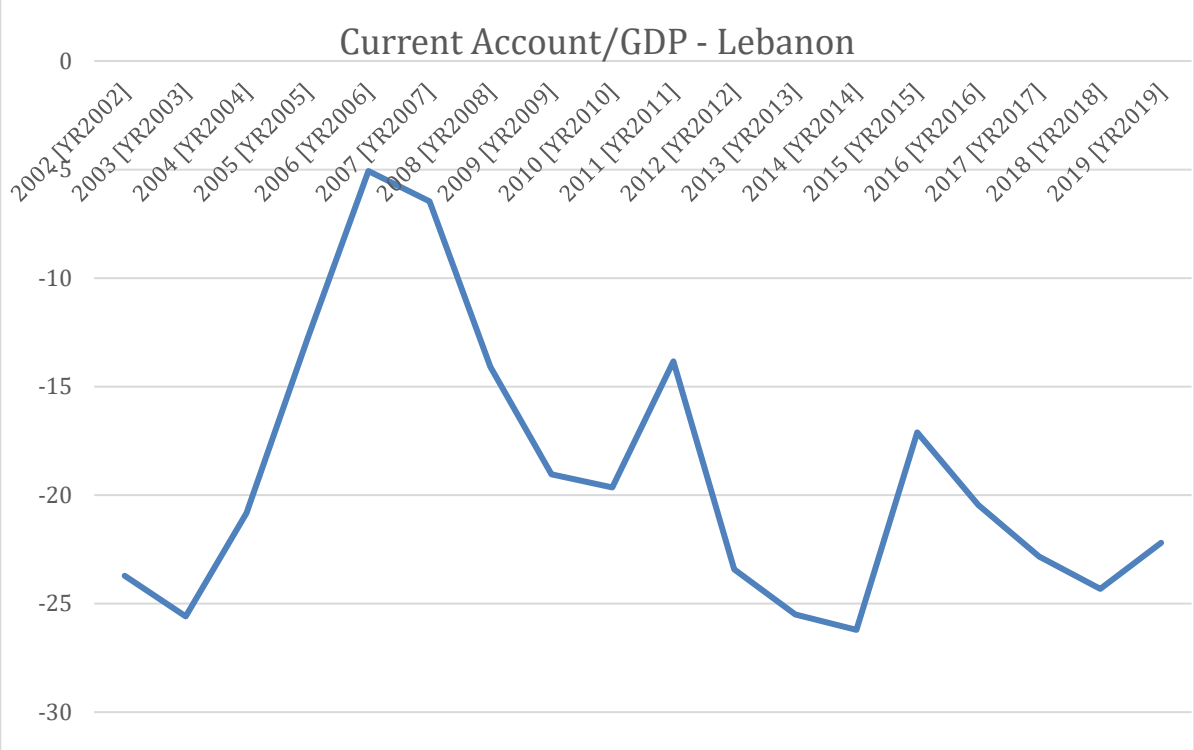
Appendix:





Source: (International Monetary Fund, 2020)