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*The Making of a Resistance Identity:
Communism and the Lebanese Shi'a
1943-1990*

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The University of Edinburgh
2015*

Abstract

This is a study of the identities and political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi'a throughout the modern history of Lebanon. Currently, the dominant paradigms for such studies focus on the question of sectarianism in Lebanon and the corresponding Shi'i political movements, Amal and Hizbullah. This thesis presents an alternative approach. It argues that secular identities have also been an important component of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation. This is explored through an analysis of the relationship between the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) and the communist Shi'a.

Drawing on interviews with senior LCP officials, current and former Shi'i communists, party documents and additional interview evidence from the documentary film, *We Were Communists*, this thesis examines the origins, evolution and transformation of the relationship between the LCP and the Shi'a after Lebanese independence in 1943, until the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990. Utilising the concepts of identity and political mobilisation, this thesis develops a hybridised approach to the study of political identity that combines primordial with constructionist readings of identity. This acknowledges the presence of a repertoire of multiple and varied identities among any individual or group, and their potential for mobilisation. Rather than assuming the domineering influence of primordial sentiments, such as sectarian identity, the hybridised approach requires an analysis of the conditions under which a particular identity becomes the basis for political mobilisation.

In the aftermath of Lebanese independence in 1943, the Shi'i community's political mobilisation was characterised by a politics of resistance. This was a product of the legacy of the Shi'i community's experience of the French Mandate (1920-1943), as well as the newly reformulated confessional political system that was established by the National Pact (1943). The net

effect of these processes was the marginalisation of the Shi'a. The LCP, as a prominent anti-system opposition movement in Lebanon at this time, became the Shi'i community's main vehicle for the mobilisation and development of their resistance identity.

During the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) the relationship between communism and the Shi'a transformed as the LCP went into decline and new Shi'i political actors emerged. The mantle of the Shi'i community's resistance identity became subject to the tensions between communism and communalism within the community. In the end, the Shi'i community's resistance identity was adopted and repackaged by Hizbullah, under whose auspices it remains today.

The Shi'i-communist relationship constitutes the Shi'i community's first engagement with formal, party-based and ideologically driven political mobilisation in Lebanon. The impact and legacy of the LCP's influence on the Shi'a in these terms encompasses not just the communist Shi'a, but every other political actor in the community. Concern over the growing influence of communism led directly to the political mobilisation of the previously quietist Shi'i religious clerics. This outcome is represented by the arrival of Imam Musa al-Sadr to Lebanon in 1959 and his stated goal of combatting the influence of communism among the Shi'a. This thesis is an important addendum to the current understanding of the origins of Shi'i political mobilisation, which erroneously place Musa al-Sadr at the beginning of that process.

This study's emphasis on alternative, non-sectarian forms of political identity is also a reminder of the Shi'i community's political diversity at a time when critical voices, resentful of Hizbullah's and Amal's monopoly, are currently emerging from within the Shi'i community.

Thesis Declaration

- (a) I, **Jehan Saleh**, hereby certify that this thesis has been composed by me,
and
- (b) that the work contained within this thesis is my own, and
- (c) that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or
professional qualification.

Signed:

Date:

Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to the AHRC for the award of a PhD scholarship and the opportunity to study at the University of Edinburgh. I am also grateful for the additional travel grants the AHRC provided throughout the duration of my studies, which enabled me to conduct fieldwork in Lebanon and participate in several conferences abroad. Without the support of the AHRC, this project would simply have not been possible. Special thanks to Kirsty Woomble, the AHRC contact in the University of Edinburgh, who always responded to my queries with grace and kindness.

My PhD supervisors Dr Anthony Gorman and Dr Andrew Newman have been a consistent source of helpful guidance throughout the PhD process. Dr Gorman also nurtured the other aspects of professional development essential to a rounded PhD experience, encouraging me to present at conferences and providing me with numerous opportunities to tutor and lecture in the department. I am grateful to both my supervisors for all their kind and patient assistance over the years. IMES is a formidable community of scholars who excel in their fields and provide ample support and encouragement to all who are fortunate enough to become a part of that community. I am particularly grateful to Jonathan Featherstone and Mourad Diouri who advanced my Arabic language skills in a manner unparalleled to any of my previous learning experiences. I would also like to thank Songul Mecit for her continued support and friendship.

The idea for this thesis was developed while I worked as Amman Scholar for the British Institute (CBRL) in Amman, Jordan from 2008-2010. The institute was pivotal to the development of my practical research skills following the completion of my formal university education. My first fieldwork visits to Lebanon were facilitated and supported by the CBRL. I continued to benefit from their generous travel grants throughout the course of my PhD studies. I am also grateful for the time and space I was given by the CBRL to develop my Arabic proficiency through formal study in Amman and Damascus. I made many lifelong friends during my time in Jordan, and they have been a lasting source of encouragement throughout

this journey. I am eternally grateful to Carol Palmer for her academic guidance and personal friendship. Likewise, I would also like to thank Alex Bellem whom I look to as a mentor and dear friend. Fiona McCallum has continued to be both a friend and source of academic support, for which I am also grateful. I am also thankful to Alison Damick, Pascal Abidor, Sandra Rosendahl, Charlotte Whiting, Scarlett Anstiss-Liljefors, Lucine Taminian and Waleed Gharaibeh for their friendship, advice and support throughout my time in Jordan.

My interest in identity politics and the Middle East developed while I was a student of Politics and International Relations. Toby Dodge, Brendan O'Duffy, Yezid Sayigh and Ahron Bregman were my early sources of inspiration and intellectual development. And so I will always feel fortunate and grateful to have benefitted from their teaching.

I would like to thank everyone who assisted me with my research endeavours throughout the last four and a half years. Many thanks in particular to Adham Saouli who was a great help during the early stages of this project and ahead of my fieldwork visit to Lebanon. I am also extremely grateful to Rami Siklawi who was pivotal to the success of my research work in Lebanon and facilitated many of my interviews. Rami was always willing to give so freely of his time in Lebanon and shares a passionate scholarly interest in the Lebanese Shi'a as I do. I would also like to thank Miriam Younes who provided me with my first contacts in the Lebanese Communist Party. I am also indebted to Bilal el-Amin who gave so freely of his time to discuss all things related to Lebanese politics during my visits to Beirut. I thank all the people in Lebanon who gave so freely of their time to be interviewed by me.

I would also like to thank my lifelong friends, Annushia Goede, Zaitoon Begum, Tara Henshaw and Sylvana Siddique, for being a source of support and much needed laughter throughout my studies. I have always been able to rely on their kindness and warmth. Among my friends and fellow PhD students in Edinburgh I would particularly like to thank Lina Mohamad, the first person I met on my PhD journey and who immediately became a

dear friend to me. Likewise, I would also like to thank Ula Zeir and Hannah Lena-Hagemann for enriching my life and being a constant source of encouragement over the years.

I thank my mother tremendously for always being there to listen and comfort me at the most testing of times, not least during the final months of my writing-up. I am also thankful to my father, who sparked my fascination with the Middle East from an early age. My brother has kept me grounded in the world outside academia, if not for his constant prodding for me to get a 'real' job. I thank him here too for designing the front cover of this thesis. I thank my grandmother too, for her everlasting love.

Last but by no means least, I would like to thank my husband and best friend, Omar Al-Azzawi, who has by far had to endure the most of all my friends and family. He has been a consistent voice of encouragement, clarity and reason, not least because he is familiar with trials of life as a PhD student. And finally to my extended family in Baghdad, I would like to thank them dearly for all their prayers, love and faith in me.

Abbreviations

DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
FLA	Free Lebanese Army
LAA	Lebanese Arab Army
LCP	Lebanese Communist Party
LF	Lebanese Forces
LNМ	Lebanese National Movement
LPRF	Lebanese Popular Resistance Front
NLP	National Liberal Party
OCAL	Organisation for Communist Action in Lebanon
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organisation
PSP	Progressive Socialist Party
SSNP	Syrian Social Nationalist Party

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Introduction

Traditionally, the origins of the Shi‘i community’s political mobilisation in Lebanon have been associated with the emergence of distinctly Shi‘i sectarian and religious political identities. This is evidenced by the abundance of studies available on Hizbullah and, to a lesser extent, Amal. Departing from these paradigms, this thesis argues that secular political identities have played a crucial role in the political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi‘a. In fact, this study shows that the first example of the Shi‘i community’s engagement with formal, ideologically driven and party-based political activity occurred under the auspices of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), in the aftermath of Lebanon’s independence in 1943. This is an important corrective to most conventional accounts of the Shi‘i community’s political mobilisation, which associate the origins of this process with the activities of the Shi‘i Imam, Musa al-Sadr.

In order to explore the role played by secular identities in the political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi‘a, this thesis analyses the origins, evolution and transformation of the relationship between the LCP and the Shi‘a after Lebanese independence in 1943, until the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990. The analysis utilises theories of identity and political mobilisation to construct a conceptual framework for the study of how political identities become mobilised. This framework is then applied to the analysis of the primary sources for this study, which include interviews with senior LCP officials, current and former Shi‘i communists, party documents and additional interview evidence from a recent Lebanese documentary film entitled *Shiyu iyyin Kunna* (We Were Communists). The analysis finds that not only did secular political identities constitute the initial basis of Shi‘i political mobilisation in Lebanon, but that the relationship between the communist Shi‘a and the LCP led directly to the mobilisation of other, previously quietist, political actors among the Shi‘a. In this sense Musa al-Sadr’s political project did not constitute the

beginning of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation, but a clerical challenge to the growing influence of communism among the Shi'a.

The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the Taif Accord (1989) which ended the conflict, created a climate in which sectarian identities became reaffirmed and newly legitimised in Lebanon. This occurred to the detriment of most secular political movements in the country, not least the LCP. The decline of the LCP directly facilitated the emergence of the new Shi'i sectarian players, Amal and Hizbullah, who capitalised on the LCP's loss of territorial influence in the Shi'i locales of Lebanon during the war. However, the legacy of political learning imparted by the Shi'i community's association with the LCP was visible in the political programmes and strategies of mobilisation adopted by the new Shi'i players. The resistance identity upon which the relationship with the LCP was initially forged, also left a lasting imprint on the Shi'i community's political mobilisation. In the wake of the LCP's decline, this resistance identity has been adopted, reformulated and ultimately monopolised by Hizbullah. The concept of resistance, although subject to transformation, remains a central tenet of the Shi'i community's political identity today. Its making, however, originates with the communist Shi'i.

In this introductory chapter the discussion begins with a background of the Shi'i community's political development throughout the modern history Lebanon. The discussion then moves on to establish the research rationale for this thesis. This includes a critique of current trajectories in the historiography of the Lebanese Shi'a. The secondary literature is analysed, suggesting reasons why the relationship between communism and the Shi'a has been largely overlooked by scholars, and highlighting the key areas of this relationship that are addressed by this study. The research hypothesis, main research questions and methodology are then outlined, before providing an overview of the key terms that are deployed throughout this study. The introduction ends with a summary of the main chapters of the thesis.

Background

The Shi'i community's struggle against marginalisation and the pursuit of rights, recognition and inclusion as equal citizens in the burgeoning Lebanese state pre-dates Lebanon's acquisition of independence in 1943. During the Ottoman Empire (1516-1920), the Ottoman state officially designated the Shi'a as heretics. Nevertheless, the political families who represented the Shi'a at this time (the *zu'ama'*) managed to strike a delicate balance between the experience of Ottoman subjugation and repression, the pursuit of political inclusion in the Ottoman state, and the maintenance of administrative autonomy in the Shi'i locales of the Bekaa Valley and Jabal 'Amil. That autonomy however, was lost with the imposition of the French Mandate (1920-1943).

The borders established by France incorporated the territory of the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil into the new Lebanon. French rule facilitated, at the behest of the Muslim majority, the political, social, cultural and economic dominance of the Maronite Christian minority community in Lebanon. This led to fissures and competing narratives between the Christian and Muslim communities over Lebanon's national identity. Officially, the Shi'a were subsumed within the Sunni Muslim position. In reality, the Shi'i community found itself pushed and pulled between French attempts to court Shi'i loyalties to their European modelled Lebanese state, and the Arab nationalists, who looked eastward toward the Arab world, rejected the French idea of Greater Lebanon and sought the restoration of Greater Syria. The Shi'a did not develop a unified position on these questions during the French Mandate. In fact, the political expediency of the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, whose loyalties to the French and Arab nationalist positions frequently alternated, became a source of resentment among others in the Shi'i community. This produced new sites of political mobilisation among the Shi'i literati, peasantry and workers.

During the French Mandate, the political mobilisation of the Shi'a consisted initially of a politics of demand - agitation for greater recognition of Shi'i rights, increased state investment in Shi'i regions and demands for political inclusion in the Maronite Christian and Sunni Muslim dominated Lebanese polity. As the Shi'a grew frustrated over their continued marginalisation by the French authorities, their political strategy shifted to a politics of protest involving strike action and demonstrations. Thus, on the eve of Lebanese independence, the Shi'a were already politically restive, with a developing diversity of political identities and commensurately broadened sites of political mobilisation.

Lebanon achieved independence from French colonial rule in 1943 on the basis of a verbal and unwritten agreement known as the National Pact. The agreement was the product of exclusive negotiations between Bishara al-Khoury (a Maronite Christian) and Riad al-Solh (a Sunni Muslim), respectively the first President and Prime Minister of Lebanon. The Shi'a, along with Lebanon's many other confessional communities were not included in these informal negotiations. The pact institutionalised the confessional distribution of political office in Lebanon on the basis of the 1932 population census. This apportioned political power according to a 6:5 ratio that favoured the Maronite Christians over the Muslim population. The Shi'a objected to the use of a census they regarded as flawed due to its exclusion of large Shi'i areas. The National Pact permanently allocated to the Shi'a the Speakership of the Lebanese parliament, while the Maronite Christians were assured the Presidency and Sunni Muslims the office of Prime Minister.

The Shi'i community was disappointed with the circumstances in which Lebanon's confessional political system was institutionalised under the terms of the National Pact. This disappointment was compounded by the continued deterioration of the political, social and economic position of the Shi'a in the aftermath of Lebanon's independence. In this environment, some Shi'a came to regard the National Pact as a tool for the maintenance

of the privileged few who held power in Lebanon. They began to view the provisions of the pact as intertwined with the corrupt and personalist political dominance of the political families. This state of affairs guaranteed the perpetuation of the political status quo and privileges of Lebanon's sectarian elites. It was for these reasons that Shi'i political mobilisation developed a rejectionist element in the aftermath of Lebanon's independence. The pursuit of political inclusion, and the politics of demand and protest that had accompanied that agenda, gave way to a new agenda based on resistance. It is from this point onwards that this thesis is positioned.

Research Rationale

Until the 1980s, the Lebanese Shi'a did not constitute a genre of its own in the field of Lebanese studies. The Shi'a were subsumed within general histories of Lebanon, and they were more likely to be found in the indexes rather than the contents pages of these volumes.¹ Scholarship of modern Lebanese history has focused predominantly on debates about sectarianism, often in relation to the question of national identity in Lebanon and the origins of the confessional political system.² Reflecting their lived experience in Lebanon at this time, the Shi'a were relegated to the margins of these analyses, which focussed on the mainstream Maronite Christian and Druze Muslim narratives of Lebanon's origins. This implied that the Shi'a community's absence from the national deliberations that paved the way to Lebanese independence in 1943 was because the Shi'a

¹ Although they have since been revised and updated, some examples of these first histories of Lebanon include, William Harris, *Lebanon: A History, 600-2011*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012; Kemal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered*, London: I.B Tauris, 1988; Philip K. Hitti, *Lebanon in History: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, London: Macmillan, 1957; David Gilmour, *Lebanon: The Fractured Country*, London: Sphere, 1987; Meir Zamir, *Lebanon's Quest: The Road to Statehood, 1926-1939*, London: I.B Tauris, 1997; Raghid el-Solh, *Lebanon and Arabism: National Identity and State Formation*, London I.B. Tauris, 2004; Engin Akarli, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920*, University of California Press, 1993; Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills, *Lebanon: A History of Conflict and Consensus*, London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies & I.B. Tauris, 1988.

² For numerous examples and analysis of the nature of this body of work, see Max Weiss, 'The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon', *History Compass*, 7:1, 2009 pp. 141-151.

were a passive, quietist and disengaged community. The Shi'i community's marginalisation was thus equated with their political alienation.

In the 1980s and 1990s a new subfield of Lebanese Shi'i studies emerged that focussed on Hizbullah as a radical, militant Shi'i organisation.³ This was a direct result of the international interest Hizbullah had accrued from its attacks on Israeli and American forces in the context of the Lebanese Civil War. Studies of Amal and its founder Musa al-Sadr also emerged during this period. These analyses developed under the thematic rubric of a 'Shi'i awakening', but they were rooted in events largely external to Lebanon.⁴ Amal's ascendance was attributed to the disappearance of its founder, Musa al-Sadr on a trip to Libya in 1978 (Sadr was never seen or heard from again, and his whereabouts remains subject to intense speculation today). Israel's invasion of South Lebanon (a Shi'i region) the same year, and again in 1982 were also strongly correlated with Amal's and Hizbullah's rise as military actors. The significance of the Iranian Revolution for these movements was additionally touted by scholars as part of a broader 'Shi'i awakening' in the region. Suddenly, the previously quietist, passive Shi'i community emerged as religious, sectarian and violent. These were ahistorical assumptions, for now the Shi'i community's experience of repression and marginalisation was no longer equated with alienation per se, but their radicalisation and mobilisation.

³ These texts have also since been revised and updated but include Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, London: The Fourth Estate, 1997; Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, London: I.B Tauris, 2005; Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*, London: Pluto Press, 2002; Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, London: Saqi Books, 2005; Augustus Richard Norton, *Hizbollah: A Short History*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007.

⁴ Thom Sicking and Shereen Khairallah, 'The Shi'i Awakening in Lebanon: A Search for Radical Change in a Traditional Way,' *Vision and Revision in Arab Society*, CEMAN Reports 2, 1974, pp. 97–130; Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shia: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987; Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, London: I.B Tauris, 1986; Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied: Musa Sadr and the Shii community*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1992; Peter Theroux, *The Strange Disappearance of Imam Moussa Sadr*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.

In the 2000s, scholarship of the Lebanese Shi'a shifted slightly from its preoccupation with recent Shi'i political actors, and travelled back in time in to search for the origins of Shi'i political mobilisation. These new studies explored the Shi'i community's political development under the Ottoman Empire (1516-1920) as well as the French Mandate (1920-1943).⁵ Stefan Winter's study of the Shi'a under Ottoman rule challenges the view, frequently made in the Shi'i community's own historiography, that the Shi'a were systematically persecuted by the Ottoman state. Winter argues that the Ottomans did not always view the Shi'a in sectarian terms, despite the community's official status as heretics. On the contrary, the Ottomans frequently coopted the powerful Shi'i political families into the administrative apparatus of the Empire. Thus, Winter demonstrated that the Shi'a were far from passive actors but politically active and engaged from as early as the 16th and 17th centuries.

Moving into the French Mandate, Tamara Chalabi, Kais M. Firro and Max Weiss argue that the Shi'a were actively seeking their rights and recognition in communal terms, 'as Shi'a' during this period through the enactment of *matlabiyya*, the politics of demand. Weiss claims that this was a two-way process of 'sectarianization' from above and below. In his view, the French sought to encourage Shi'i particularism and the Shi'a actively lobbied the French for legal rights and recognition as a distinct religious sect. Thus, the French granted the Shi'a jurisdiction over matters of personal status, recognising the authority of the Jafari courts, and their adjudication of the community's affairs according to Twelver (Shi'a) religious rulings.⁶ Firro also discusses the interaction between the French

⁵ Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Tamara Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal Amil and the New Lebanon*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006; Kais M. Firro, 'Ethnicizing the Shiis in Mandatory Lebanon' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:5, 2007, pp. 741-759 and also 'The Shiis in Lebanon: Between Communal 'Asabiyya and Arab Nationalism 1908-1921', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:4, 2006, pp. 535-550; Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shiism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

⁶ Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 15.

Mandate and Shi'a as a process through which the French sought to promote Shi'i particularism.⁷ These contributions challenge the earlier assumptions made by scholars, which overstated the extent of the Shi'i community's marginalisation, while assuming that this equated initially with a passivity before transforming into a radical awakening. The newer studies of the Shi'i community's early political development suggest that the Shi'a were already active political players by the time Lebanon acquired its independence in 1943, while also comprising a highly diverse body politic with multiple and changeable political identities. This thesis is situated here, but this point is also where this analysis stakes its claims for a new approach to the study of the Shi'a, after 1943.

Although the historical remit of Lebanese Shi'i studies has necessarily expanded over the last fifteen years, the field's paradigmatic approaches have remained largely the same. Studies of the Lebanese Shi'a are spread across three main themes: the theory and practice of Twelver Shi'ism, political Shi'ism, and sectarianism.

The theory and practice of Shi'ism in the community of believers is a prominent theme in studies of the Lebanese Shi'a. These studies focus on the theological practices of the Lebanese Shi'a in the public and private spheres. Included here are issues concerning faith, doctrine, ritual and performance e.g. the commemorative festivals and practices associated with Muharram and 'Ashura'.⁸ One of the most interesting findings to emerge from this body of work is the diversity of interpretation that exists within the community in the fulfilment and enactment of religious rites.

⁷ Firro, 'Ethnicizing the Shiis in Mandatory Lebanon', 743.

⁸ See for examples, Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shii Lebanon*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006; Augustus Richard Norton, 'Ritual, Blood, and Shiite Identity: Ashura in Nabatiyya, Lebanon', *The Drama Review: Special Issue on Ta'ziyeh*, 49:4. 2005, pp. 140–144; Lara Deeb, 'Living Ashura in Lebanon: Mourning Transformed to Sacrifice', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 25:1, 2005, pp. 122–147; Werner Ende, 'The Flagellations of Muharram and the Shi'ite 'Ulama'', *Der Islam*, 55:1978, pp. 19–36, Sabrina Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite. Ulémas et lettrés du Gabal 'Amil (actuel Liban-Sud) de la fin de l'empire ottoman à l'indépendance du Liban*, Paris-Beyrouth-Damas, Karthala-CERMOCIFEAD, 2000.

Whereas some Shi'i clerics forbade the practice of flagellation during the Muharram marches, in Nabatiyya, the local community continued the practice.⁹ This also serves as an example of the potential for deviation from the theory of Shi'ism, usually the purview of the Imam, and how Shi'ism is practiced by the community of believers. While the theory and practice of Shi'ism is not the core concern of this study, it was sometimes found to be relevant to the interaction between communism and the Shi'a. For example, Shi'i communists sought to transform the lamentation rituals associated with the Muharram processions into a strategy for mobilising the Shi'a who observed this ritual, transforming the occasion into a source of motivation for resistive forms of political mobilisation.

Another paradigm applied to studies of the Lebanese Shi'a is that of political Shi'ism i.e the role played by religion in the political mobilisation of the Shi'a.¹⁰ Scholarly interest in the broader term, political Islam, peaked across the field of Middle Eastern studies in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution.¹¹ In Lebanon this became problematic because it exacerbated the tendency to assume a link between the Shi'i community's political mobilisation and its clerical elites. The appearance of Musa al-Sadr within almost all studies of the Shi'a at this time illustrates this trend. The late Ayatollah Muhammad Fadlallah was also frequently erroneously described as the leader of Hizbullah, (which is in fact sayyid Hasan Nasrallah) or otherwise the source of the organisation's 'spiritual guidance.'¹² But

⁹ Norton, 'Ritual, Blood, and Shiite Identity', 141; Deeb, 'Living Ashura', 124.

¹⁰ Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion*; Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011; Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalisation*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

¹¹ A number of studies on political Islam emerged in the wake of the Iranian Revolution, among the best of them: John L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, New York: Syracuse University Press; Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; Nazih Ayubi, *Political Islam: Religion & Politics in the Arab World*, London: Routledge, 1993; Laura Guazzone (ed), *The Islamist Dilemma: The Political Role of Islamist Movements in the Contemporary Arab World*, London: Ithaca Press, 1995; Francois Burgat, *Face to Face with Political Islam*, London: I.B Tauris, 2003.

¹² Martin Kramer, 'The Oracle of Hizbullah: Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah', in R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Spokesmen of the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East*

although Fadlallah's ideas influenced Hizbullah, he was never a member or affiliate of any political party in Lebanon.¹³ Newman criticises this tendency to drag Shi'ism into the political arena by assuming the centrality of the Imam's leadership over the community.¹⁴

The precise relationship between Shi'ism and politics remains subject to scholarly disagreement. Whilst some have bemoaned Shi'ism's inherent opposition to political authority, inherent expansionism and its anti-Western agenda, others have emphasised Shi'ism's apparently apolitical, otherworldly nature.¹⁵ Implicit in these debates however, is an essentialist idea that the political attitudes of the Shi'a are shaped by their religious identity. This study finds that these assumptions have obscured the role played by secular identities in the political mobilisation of the Shi'a.

The third main theme underlying studies of the Lebanese Shi'a is sectarianism. The newer studies of the Shi'a under Ottoman and French rule discussed earlier took on the question of sectarianism in a commendable effort to bring the Shi'a into the Lebanese national narrative, from which they had long been excluded. Thus, the story of the Shi'a during the French Mandate was about their struggle against marginality, and their pursuit of political inclusion in the Lebanese state as equals, but also as sectarians. However, the questions underlying this narrative have had a teleological focus imposed on them that seeks to understand when and how the Shi'a became sectarian. This is a result of the initial scholarly

Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 83–181; Jamal Sankari, *Fadlallah: The Making of a Radical Shi'ite Leader*, London: Saqi, 2005, pp. 198, 237.

¹³ Adham Saouli, 'Intellectuals and Political Power in Social Movements: The Parallel Paths of Fadlallah and Hizbullah', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 41:1, 2014, 98.

¹⁴ Andrew J. Newman, *Twelver Shi'ism: Unity and Diversity in the Life of Islam: 632-1722*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, 2.

¹⁵ This is discussed in Andrew J. Newman's *Twelver Shi'ism*, pp. 4–5. On Shi'ism's apparently threatening nature see several chapters in Martin Kramer, *Shi'ism, Resistance and Revolution*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1987. On the apparent esoteric nature of Shi'ism see Hamid Dabashi, *Shiism: A Religion of Protest*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

preoccupation with the distinctly sectarian Shi'i political actors - Amal and Hizbullah. Since it is known that this is how the political mobilisation of the Shi'a culminated, those studies that sought to delve further into this community's history have that outcome in focus. Weiss' study in particular is concerned with the process he describes as the Shi'i community's sectarianisation. This follows that the Shi'i community's struggle for inclusion is necessarily a story about the Shi'a finding their sectarian identity, and adjusting to the rules of Lebanon's sectarian political system in order to finally acquire their fair share at the communal table. The problem here is that the Shi'i community's desire for inclusion as sectarians is an assumed rather than proven objective of their political mobilisation in the aftermath of Lebanon's independence.

Weiss et al argue that the Shi'a became sectarian under the French Mandate.¹⁶ However, after French rule ended in 1943, the first Shi'i sectarian political movements did not emerge until 1974, the year Musa al-Sadr established the Movement of the Deprived. This is a significant historical gap. If the Shi'a had a fully formed sectarian identity on the eve of Lebanon's independence, and the Lebanese system necessitated sectarian mobilisation, why did it take more than thirty-years for the Shi'a to establish a sectarian political movement? This study, in scrutinising this gap, finds that the Shi'a did not have a cogent sectarian political identity in 1943, nor was their political mobilisation characterised by the pursuit of inclusion in the political system as sectarians. On the contrary, upon Lebanon's independence the Shi'a were resisting the political system *because* of its sectarianism, and were utilising a political strategy that was distinctly anti-sectarian, and anti-system, rooted in the secular parties of the Lebanese left, and the LCP in particular. These political organisations sought the abolishment of the confessional political system in its entirety. These findings necessitate a shift away from the sectarian paradigm in

¹⁶ Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 212; Chalabi, *The Shia of Jabal 'Amil*, pp. 114–138; Firro, 'Ethnicizing the Shi'a', 741.

order to expand our view of the Shi'i community's political development in Lebanon after 1943.

The rationale for this study stems from the important need to move beyond sectarian and religious themes in the study of the Lebanese Shi'a. This thesis argues that these approaches have obscured the presence of secular political identities in the Shi'i community's identity repertoire. This study also seeks to move beyond the view that the development of sectarian identities among the Shi'a was an inevitable process. The analysis presented by this thesis demonstrates that this was a highly contingent process, and unlike most studies of Amal and Hizbullah, it situates their rise firmly and appropriately in the domestic political environment of Lebanon at the time of their emergence. In this sense, this study does not avert from the fact that sectarian identities are a prevalent feature of the contemporary Shi'i community of Lebanon. On the contrary, by examining the relationship between secular identities and the Shi'a, this thesis provides a more dynamic consideration of the interplay between secular and sectarian identities in the political development of the Shi'a between 1943 and 1990.

Secular Identities and the Shi'a in the Literature

Norton made an important observation in 1987 when he noted,

To an extent that is not widely appreciated, the race to mobilize the Shi'i community during the early 1970s was a race between secular creeds and a distinctly sectarian movement.¹⁷

Norton did not elaborate on this statement; the focus of his study was the sectarian movement, Amal. Yet the field of Lebanese Shi'i studies has yet to develop an appreciation of the role played by secular identities in their political mobilisation. Scholars are broadly aware of the range of secular

¹⁷ Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 33.

parties courted by the Shi'a in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸ It is also well known that the terms 'Shi'i' and 'Shiyu'i' (communist) were used synonymously in Beirut's popular parlance throughout this period, which was a play on the assonance between the shared Arabic root of each term.¹⁹ Why, then, has this relationship not been subject to rigorous scholarly analysis? There are two main explanations.

Firstly, this thesis contends that studies of modern Lebanese history, particularly in the context and aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War, have marginalised from their analysis the secular movements of the Lebanese left. Weiss states that 'Lebanese history has been more or less defined by its engagement with the problem of sectarianism.'²⁰ Only a few exceptions to the sectarian narratives of Lebanon, and the civil war in particular, exist; and these contributions come from Marxist sociologists.²¹ The prevalence of the sectarian narrative, however, has hidden the role played by secular political identities in the social and political development of Lebanon. As this thesis shows, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), an umbrella organisation comprising the LCP and multiple other political formations on the Lebanese left, came close to changing the sectarian political trajectory of Lebanon at the beginning of the civil war. The continuing failure to adequately explore the relationship between secular identities and the Shi'a is therefore a symptom of the preoccupation with sectarian narratives in contemporary Lebanese studies.

¹⁸ Brief references to the association appear across a range of studies on Lebanon and the Shi'a: Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005, 102; Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 72; Deeb, *Gender and Public Piety*, 74; Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 33; Augustus Richard Norton 'Changing Actors and Leadership among the Shiites of Lebanon', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 482:Nov, 1985: 113; Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon*, Preface-xiii; Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 106; Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 165.

¹⁹ Silvia Naef, 'Shi'i-Shuyu'i or: How to become a Communist in a Holy City', in Rainer Brunner & Werner Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture & Political History*, Leiden: Brill, 2001.

²⁰ Weiss, 'The Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon', 141.

²¹ Fawwaz Traboulsi, *Surat al-Fata bil-Ahmar*, [A Portrait of the Young Man in Red] Beirut: Riad El-Rayyes Books, 1997; Fuad Shahin, *al-Ta'ifiyya fi-Lubnan: Hahiruha al-Tarikhiyya wa al-Ijtima'iyya*, [Sectarianism in Lebanon: its Historical and Social Present], Beirut: Dar al-Hadatha), 1980; Mahdi 'Amil, *Bahth fi-Asbab al-Harb al-Ahliya fi Lubnan*, [Study of the Reasons for the Civil War in Lebanon] Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1979.

Secondly, the conventional paradigms through which the Lebanese Shi'a are studied (discussed earlier as the theory and practice of the Shi'i faith, political Shi'ism and sectarianism), have also limited the potential for a wholesome consideration of secular political identities in the political mobilisation of the Shi'a. While scholars are aware that there is an association, their peripheral treatment of the issue means that knowledge of the origins, nature and impact of the Shi'i community's interaction with secular political identities has remained piecemeal and incomplete.

The ensuing discussion illustrates what is presently known about secular political identities and the Shi'a. The limited attention devoted to this matter in the literature has produced underdeveloped accounts of when and why the Shi'a joined the secular parties. For example, one scholar emphasises the role played by events external to both Lebanon and the Shi'a, while others have focussed on domestic-level explanations, such as class and socio-economic factors. This study takes issue with both views, because neither provide a sufficient consideration of how the historical and political experiences of the Shi'a in Lebanon shaped their interaction with the secular parties. In so doing, this study finds that ideational factors are a more convincing explanation for the initial attraction to the secular political parties. The discussion also addresses the question of what impact Shi'i involvement in the secular parties had on the trajectory of Shi'i political development, as well as the degree of political learning imparted on other political actors within the Shi'i political community by their interaction with the secular political parties. This is particularly pertinent to the objective of developing a more dynamic consideration of the interplay between secular and sectarian identities among the Shi'a. The discussion concludes with an explanation for why the LCP, and not the various other secular political parties with which the Shi'a are known to have been associated, constitutes the best case-study for understanding the Shi'i community's relationship with secular political identities in Lebanon.

Secular Identities & The Shi'a: Origins of the Relationship

The existing narrative of the Shi'i community's association with the secular political parties is that it began in the late 1950s and lasted into the 1970s, before dissipating in the sectarian environment of the Lebanese Civil War.²² Among the parties that the Shi'as are known to have become associated with are the LCP, the Organisation for Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL), the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), al-Murabitun (a Lebanon-based Nasserist party), as well as Syrian and Iraqi branches of the Ba'ath Party in Lebanon. In addition, the Shi'a also joined various Palestinian factions operating in Lebanon, including Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). The political power of these parties in Lebanon peaked in the 1950s and 1960s, the heyday of the Arab left. Whilst it is logical that the Shi'i community's association with the secular left also peaked at this time, the literature remains non-specific on this point, meaning that only an inference can be made about its historical origins and duration. This study found that the first offices established by the LCP in the southern Shi'i towns of Bint Jbeil and Nabatiyya were in 1936. From the outset this suggests that there is a longer history to the Shi'i community's association with the LCP.

Staying with the existing narrative of when the relationship originated, there are different explanations for why the secular political parties appealed to the Shi'a. Shanahan states that Shi'i involvement in the LCP began in 1967, and should directly be associated with the aftermath of the Arab defeat in the Six Day War.²³ This is problematic because it removes both the LCP and the Shi'a from the territorial context of Lebanon in which the relationship was formed. More common explanations speak directly to

²² Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 102; Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 72; Deeb, *Gender and Public Piety*, 74; Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 33; Norton 'Changing Actors and Leadership among the Shiites of Lebanon', 113; Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon*, Preface-xiii; Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 106; Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 165.

²³ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 102.

the Shi'i predicament in Lebanon and the appeal of secular political identities on the basis of class and socio-economic factors.

The class factor refers to the Shi'i community's historically marginalised status in Lebanon. Shaery-Eisenlohr argues that relative to Lebanon's other main sectarian communities, the Shi'a have consistently been worse off across most indicators of social, economic and political status:

Figures on social status reveal how the Shi'a situation was lower than all other sects - the Shi'a were underrepresented in the 'upper' and 'middle' occupational groups and considerably over-represented in the 'lower' category. This helps to explain why, in the 1970s, many Shi'a sub-proletarians, workers, peasants, salaried staff, and students joined leftist parties.²⁴

The Shi'i community's deprivation is therefore the basis upon which scholars have emphasised the appeal of secular political parties in class terms. Shanahan argues that 'Marxist philosophy on the centrality of class struggle as a societal construct must have appealed to many of the Shi'a.'²⁵ Too, Abisaab states, 'In the 1960s hundreds of Shi'is in South Lebanon expressed class-based resistance to the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie controlling the state.'²⁶ Ajami also makes this connection. In romanticised terms he argues:

The young displaced peasant speaking of Marx and Lenin and Stalin, the primary school teacher pushed off the land yet without a new world to anchor him, with a family still on the land making claims on his salary and sensibility, found in the ideological parties a world that could be made their own.²⁷

Following on from these readings, the existing literature states that the communist Shi'a were workers and peasants. Shaery-Eisenlohr writes,

²⁴ Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon*, 195.

²⁵ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 103.

²⁶ Rula Abisaab, 'The Cleric as Organic Intellectual: Revolutionary Shi'ism in the Lebanese Hawzas', in H.E Chehabi, *Distant Relations*, 2006, 240.

²⁷ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 72.

'many Shi'a sub-proletarians, workers, peasants, salaried staff, and students joined leftist parties like the LCP, the CAO and Arab Ba'ath.'²⁸

In analysing the social background of the Shi'a who became communists, this thesis finds class and socio-economic factors to be inadequate explanations for the initial attraction. The Arab communist parties are well known for the difficulties they experienced recruiting from the traditional demographic groups associated with communist movements worldwide, i.e the workers and peasantry. The LCP also experienced this difficulty. Thus, the first Shi'i communists, much like the rest of the LCP's membership, were of well to do middle-class backgrounds. Furthermore, research carried out for this study found that the LCP's opposition to the confessional political system in Lebanon constituted the initial basis of the Shi'i community's attraction to the party. This occurred at a time when the Shi'a were transitioning from their pursuit of political inclusion to the politics of resistance in the aftermath of Lebanese independence.

The existing literature offers limited and varied explanations for the origins and appeal of the secular political parties among the Lebanese Shi'a. However, it offers much less in terms of the impact this association had on the trajectory of Shi'i political mobilisation.

Secular Identities & The Shi'a: Impact and Legacies

The impact of the Shi'i community's relationship with secular political ideas on other political actors within the community, before the Lebanese Civil War, constitutes a significant gap in the existing literature. The impact of the civil war on the relationship between the communist Shi'a and the LCP is also unaccounted for. This implies that secular political identities had no lasting influence over Shi'i political mobilisation. This study finds that the influence of secular political identities, particularly communism,

²⁸ Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon*, 195; See also, Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: : The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*, London: Zed Books, 1994, 165; Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 72; Norton 'Changing Actors and Leadership among the Shiites of Lebanon' *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 482:Nov, 1985, 113.

was simultaneously a source of fear, political mobilisation and emulation for the Shi'i political families and clerics. Additionally, the LCP has continued to maintain a Shi'i following in Lebanon, while the Shi'i community's interaction with secular identities has also imparted a lasting legacy over the broader trajectory of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation in Lebanon.

Communism's influence among the Shi'a led directly to the political mobilisation of the Shi'i community's religious clerics. This was a concern that developed over many years. Abisaab notes that the Shi'i religious centres of learning, the *hawzas*, in Iraq and Lebanon were by the late 1950s producing 'polemical tracts and books' against communist thought and its presence in Shi'i locales.²⁹ Musa al-Sadr's political project in Lebanon was designed to counter the communist project with a distinctly communal one. This implicates communism in the rise of communal identities among the Shi'a, which is different from the current assumption that the latter process was an inevitable outcome of Lebanon's political system. The rise of the Shi'i communal movements was directly predicted on the decline of communism. The secular political movements constituted a school of political learning for their Shi'i members, but also the wider political community of the Shi'a who observed their activities closely. The new Shi'i communal actors who emerged in the civil war, drew inspiration from the secular party's successful mobilisation of the Shi'a, coopting and repackaging many of their political platforms and mimicking their strategies of mobilisation. This study argues that the resistance identity is the most lasting legacy of the interaction between the secular political parties and the Shi'a.

Secular Identities & The Shi'a: The Lebanese Communist Party

The Shi'a became associated with a wide range of political parties among the secular left in Lebanon throughout the 1950s and 1960s. This study

²⁹ Abisaab 'The Cleric as Organic Intellectual', 240.

focuses on the relationship between the communist Shi'a and the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) as a case study of the Shi'i community's secular political identities. The relationship with the LCP was the most enduring; the party developed the largest Shi'i following of all the secular political parties in Lebanon. This is explained in part by the fact that the LCP is also one of the eldest secular political parties in Lebanon. Although OCAL was also known for its significant Shi'i following, it was not founded until 1971. It therefore lacks the historical association with the Shi'a that the LCP holds on account of its founding in 1924, and early presence in Shi'i areas of Lebanon. The other secular parties the Shi'a joined, including the SSNP, Syrian and Iraqi Ba'ath parties, as well as the various Palestinian factions, lacked a distinctly Lebanese identity. This could be a reason why the Shi'a did not view them as viable vehicles for their long term political mobilisation. These parties were all non-Lebanese movements with political interests that extended beyond Lebanese borders. Whilst the LCP was also part of a transnational ideological movement, and indeed subject to the constraints of the Soviet Union's directives, its Lebanese identity and political orientation was gradually consolidated in the years proceeding Lebanon's independence.

Originally founded in 1924 as the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon, the LCP was established as an independent party in Lebanon in July 1943.³⁰ By 1948, the LCP had developed a reputation as a leading voice in the Lebanese opposition. The party was an effective mobiliser of trade union activity and strike action.³¹ Domestic protest movements spearheaded by the LCP were a regular feature of Lebanese politics following Lebanon's independence in 1943 until the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. Despite the LCP's political prominence throughout these years, and the role it played in the broader Lebanese opposition movement, the LNM, the party has not attracted significant interest among scholars of modern

³⁰ Tareq and Jacqueline Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon*, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998, 6-7.

³¹ Walter Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2010, 161.

Lebanese history. The marginalisation of secular political parties from Lebanese scholarship was noted earlier.

There are just two studies of the LCP's history available in English.³² The Ismaels' book is a sympathetic, and systematic, account of the party's history through its published programmatic documents and the proceedings of its party conferences. Suleiman's analysis is critical of the LCP's apparently inconsistent stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as the frequency with which sudden changes to the party line would occur without adequate internal deliberations. Suleiman's criticisms are echoed by several other outsider perspectives of the LCP's history, which provide broadly negative appraisals of the party's political programme and performance.³³

The points of criticism raised with the greatest frequency include, firstly, the LCP's stance on national issues. The party is accused of sidelining the struggle for national sovereignty and independence, focussing instead on the issues of worker's and farmer's rights i.e social emancipation before national liberation. Secondly, the LCP is criticised for its failure to adopt a strong ideological adherence to scientific socialism. The 1943 May Day speech by Khaled Bakdash, in which he stated that the party did not aspire to a socialist system in Lebanon, is often quoted as evidence for this failing.³⁴ Bakdash's leadership was universally acknowledged by both outsiders and insiders as having been highly damaging for the Syrian and Lebanese CPs. This relates in particular to Bakdash's strict adherence to the Soviet Union's directives and the lack of internal party democracy that his enforcement of Soviet loyalty necessitated. This is also related to the third

³² These are Tareq and Jacqueline Ismael's, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon* and Michael W. Suleiman's, *Political Parties in Lebanon: The Challenge of A Fragmented Political Culture*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967 and Michael W. Suleiman's, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 3:2, 1967, pp. 134–159.

³³ In addition to the English language LCP histories mentioned above, the outside accounts of the LCP's history include the Arabic publications by S.Ayyub, *al-Hizb al-shiyu 'i fi-Suriya wa-Lubnan* [The Communist Party in Syria and Lebanon], Dar al-Hurriyah lil-Tiba'ah wa-al-Nashr:Beirut, 1959 and Elias Murqus, *Tarikh al-Ah dab al-shiyu 'iyya fi al-Watan al-Araby*, [History of the Communist Parties in the Arab World], Dar al-Tarli'a, Beirut 1964.

³⁴ See Murqus, *Tarikh al-Ah dab al-shiyu 'iyya*, 226 and Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 148.

major point of criticism, which is the party's alleged inconsistency over the Israel-Palestine conflict, specifically its treatment of Israel, the British Mandate, Jewish immigration to Palestine and the partition plan.

Ilyas Murqus' book is a highly critical account of the LCP from the perspective of a former communist, Syrian Arab nationalist. Murqus' account is a rather selective presentation of LCP documents, publications and speeches, followed by his commentary. Murqus accuses the Syrian and Lebanese CP of many of the aforementioned failings, but extends these to include the issue of Arab regional unity. Unfortunately, Murqus' criticism is frequently comprised of straw man arguments and semantics, or is otherwise lacking in adequate supporting evidence. For example, Murqus quotes directly from a speech by Khaled Bakdash published in the LCP paper, *Sawt al-Sha'b*, in which the LCP leader outlines the party's position on Palestine as follows:

'...All the Arabs and honourable democratic powers in the Arab world have no choice but to agree on the demands of the Palestinian people:

- Complete rejection of the partition of Palestine.
- Preventing Jewish migration to Palestine.
- Prohibiting the sale of Palestinian land.
- Building a democratic constitutional system that ensures peace and quiet in Palestine'³⁵

Murqus' commentary follows, in which he argues that readers of Bakdash's *book* will not find any mention of the case for Palestinian independence, the evacuation of Jews from Palestine or the ending of the British Mandate in Palestine.³⁶ This hardly substantiates Murqus' claim about the CP's failure to develop a strong position on Palestine. Additionally, Murqus suggests

³⁵ Khaled Bakdash's speech to the Bludan Conference in 1937 published in *Sawt al-Sha'b* on 15th September 1937, and republished in Murqus, *Tarikh al-Ah dab al-shiyu 'iyya*, 198.

³⁶ Murqus, *Tarikh al-Ah dab al-shiyu 'iyya*, 198.

that the largely non-Arab composition of most of the Arab communist parties accounts for their failure to properly understand the meaning of the loss of Palestine for the Arabs. While a tenuous link to make in the first instance, this simply does not apply to the LCP, which unlike the rest of the Arab region's communist parties, its founders were all Arabs. In another example, Murqus takes issue with the Syrian and Lebanese CP's national charter, which states that the party is not only a party for the socialists but all loyal citizens. Murqus' criticism is that it is not a party if it is designed to appeal to everyone. Despite the fact that all political parties seek to extend their popular appeal beyond their base, Murqus also accuses the party of failing to advocate unity both domestically and in the region. The contradictions in Murqus' claims therefore, make for an unconvincing critique.

The publication of historical accounts by the LCP provide some basis for cross-checking the outsider perspectives described above. Of course, some insider accounts, such as Dakrub's early history of the party, also exhibit a tendency to be selective in their historical accounts, or simply gloss over the more controversial stages of the party's history.³⁷ Dakrub's book is also only a narrative historical account. It is neither a Marxist nor analytical study. However, the volumes edited by Khalil al-Dibs and Dahir al-Akkari are valuable primary sources on the LCP's history. Khalil al-Dib's book is a comprehensive collection of the party's newspaper publications.³⁸ Although not every issue of each newspaper is present, the collection offers an invaluable insight into the party's early historical development. Many of the articles contained within this volume serve to refute some of the criticisms the party has been subject to, particularly in relation to its position on Israel and the Palestinians. Articles dating back to the LCP's

³⁷ Muhammad Dakrub, *Judhur al-Sindiyyana al-Hamra: Hikaya al-Hizb al-shiyu'i al-Lubnani 1924-1931*, [Roots of the Red Oak Tree: Stories of the Lebanese Communist Party] Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1974

³⁸ Khalil al-Dibs (Intro), *Sawt al-Sha'b Aqwa: Safahat min al-Sihafa al-shiyu'iyya wa al-'Ummaliyya wa al-Dimuqratiyya fi 50 'ama* (The People's Voice is Stronger; Pages from the Communist, Workers' and Democratic Press in 50 Years), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1974.

first newspaper, *al-Insaniyya*, show that the party has a long history of advocating Palestinian independence and self-determination.

Dahir al-Akkari's volume is also a collection of LCP publications, arranged thematically.³⁹ The nature of themes are indicative of an attempt to respond directly to the criticisms that have been levelled at the party. For example, the first section is titled 'In the heart of the struggle for independence and national sovereignty' and 'The people's voice leads the evacuation (of foreign armies). This is a direct counter to the claims that the party neglected national issues. The second section, entitled 'Towards a democratic Arab unity' and 'Defending Arab Palestine in the face of British occupation and the Zionist conspiracy' are also clear attempts to counter the claims that the party spurned the issue of regional unity and was soft on the Palestine question. Addressing the matter of the party's adherence to scientific socialism, there is also a section dedicated to 'theoretical issues' which is followed by a definition of scientific socialism and an analysis of the social situation in Lebanon. These core themes are interspersed with additional analysis of worldwide communist issues, the struggle against fascism and Nazism, as well as a section entitled 'Toward freeing the Arab and Lebanese women.'⁴⁰

Yusef Ibrahim Yazbek's book provides an additional insider account from one of the founders of the LCP.⁴¹ Yazbek's account is analytical as well as reflective on his role in the party's early development. He confesses that none of the party's early founders had any grounding in Marxist-Leninist thought; they were simply inspired by this tradition and wished to follow in its footsteps. However, Yazbek also acknowledges that this lack of scientific knowledge, coupled with the relative regional isolation of the LCP, led to confusion and uncertainty with regard to the direction the

³⁹ Dahir al-'Akkari (ed.), *Al-Sihafa al-Thawriyya fi Lubnan 1925-1975* (The Revolutionary Press in Lebanon 1925-1975), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1975.

⁴⁰ Al-'Akkari (ed.), *Al-Sihafa al-Thawriyya*, contents pages.

⁴¹ Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbek, *Hikayat Awwal Nuwwar fi al-'Alam wa fi Lubnan* (The Story of May Day in the World and in Lebanon), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1974.

party should take in its early stages.⁴² With the exception of the Palestinian Communist Party, the LCP did not have any links with the Soviet Union or other communist parties in the Arab world. Yazbek also counters the accusations of anti-semitism levelled at the LCP, highlighting the important role played by Jewish communists in the founding of the LCP, and in establishing the party's first links to the Soviet Union.⁴³ This issue also highlights the contradictions in the critiques levelled at the LCP. On the one hand, the LCP is criticised for failing to support the Palestinian struggle for independence. On the other hand, the LCP is simultaneously accused of anti-semitism on the basis of its critiques of Israel and Zionism.

Finally, Alexander Flores' reconsideration of the LCP's early history brings together the insider and outsider accounts to produce a more nuanced reading of the party's achievements and failures.⁴⁴ Flores demonstrates that many of the standard critiques of the LCP are without foundation. He finds the argument that the LCP failed to adopt a strong position on national issues and the Israel-Palestinian question to be inaccurate. In Flores' reading:

Indeed, from 1934 the communists spoke less about Arab unity than before, but they did not drop the subject altogether. They did not oppose Syrian independence but advocated it vigorously, if in a form open to criticism. They did not acquiesce in the ceding of Iskenderun but protested sharply against it. They did not neglect the Palestine problem but until 1947 advocated a unitary democratic solution to it.⁴⁵

However, Flores rightly upholds four other areas of criticism. Three of these are inter-related and concern the enforced adherence of the Arab communist parties to the Soviet line. In Flores' view, this severely constrained the political freedom of the Arab communist parties, which were always required to take direction from the Soviet Union. This followed that the decisions made by the Arab communist parties often bore

⁴² Yazbek, *Hikayat Awwal Nuwwar*, 7 and 69-70

⁴³ Yazbek, *Hikayat Awwal Nuwwar*,

⁴⁴ Alexander Flores, 'The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered', *Khamsin*, No. 7, 1979, ><https://libcom.org/library/khamsin-07-communist-parties-middle-east>> Accessed 23-08-15

⁴⁵ Ibid.

little resemblance to their local reality, leading to significant domestic problems. The most infamous example of this situation occurred in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's endorsement of Israel's declaration of independence in 1948. Finally, Flores correctly highlights the problem of the communist party's propensity for adopting sudden changes in its party line. The absence of democratic, internal deliberations over these decisions is also highlighted by Flores as detrimental to the party's domestic credibility.⁴⁶ These points of criticism are further substantiated by this study's findings in chapter five, later in the LCP's history, where the analysis highlights the LCP's failures in the context the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990).

Although the present study is not directly concerned with the history of the LCP, some of the issues raised by the literature are highly pertinent to this study's consideration of the LCP's relationship with the Shi'a. This includes, firstly, the changeable nature of the LCP's policies. In addition, the LCP's position on both national and social emancipatory issues are also important for this study, particularly as they relate to the party's stance on the sectarian political structure in Lebanon, and the issue of agricultural reform in the south. Finally, the Israel-Palestine question is a key facet of the Shi'i community's relationship with the LCP. Indeed, the LCP's relationship with the Palestinians became pivotal to the Shi'i community's involvement in the party. This study therefore provides an important correction to the inaccurate historical narrative pertaining to the LCP's position on the Israel-Palestine issue. Furthermore, while the shortcomings acknowledged by Yazbek and other party insiders are important, they only apply to the early history of the LCP. This study's consideration of the later stages of the LCP's activity, particularly in the context of the Lebanese Civil War, provides an updated account of the LCP's political history in Lebanon. This study's analysis of the Shi'i community's relationship with the LCP offers an alternative insight into the party's political history in

⁴⁶ Flores, 'The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered', *Khamsin*, No. 7, 1979, ><https://libcom.org/library/khamsin-07-communist-parties-middle-east>>Accessed 23-08-15

Lebanon. The main area highlighted by this study is the LCP's role in the movement to abolish Lebanon's confessional political structure. This effort came very close to success during the early stages of the civil war, when an agreement on substantial political reforms was initially reached with the government. This study also highlights the LCP's agricultural initiative for South Lebanon. This was an important component of the party's political reform programme for Lebanon, and by extension, a major source of the Shi'i community's involvement in the party in South Lebanon. In addition, this study analyses the LCP's armed resistance against Israel, and support for the Palestinian armed struggle based in South Lebanon. This thesis provides a different reading of how the LCP fared on the Israel-Palestinian issue, as the LCP largely recovered its reputation when it established the Popular Guard in South Lebanon 1969. Then, the LCP pledged to protect South Lebanon's villages from Israeli attacks. The LCP was therefore the first Lebanese party to enact a resistance agenda against Israel.

The analysis of the literature shows that the role played by secular identities in the political development of the Lebanese Shi'a is currently a well known but little studied relationship. The dominance of sectarian paradigms in the historiography of Lebanon has produced far more exhaustive analyses of sectarian identities and the Shi'a. However, this has obscured an important episode in the story of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation in Lebanon post-1943: communism and the Shi'a. In addressing this gap, this thesis' original contribution to knowledge is its analysis of the origins and evolution of secular political identities in the political mobilisation of the Shi'a.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

This thesis contends that the Shi'i community's involvement with the secular political parties of the Lebanese left, specifically the LCP, was in fact an important component of their political identity development and mobilisation between 1943 and 1975. Although the relationship between communism and the Shi'a declined during the Lebanese Civil War, the

association will nevertheless be shown to have imparted a lasting legacy on the Shi'i community's political identities and mobilisation. To develop this hypothesis into a cogent project, the following research questions are posed:

- What are the political identities of the Lebanese Shi'a?
- Who are the main political actors among the Lebanese Shi'a?
- What are the strategies of political mobilisation among the Lebanese Shi'a?
- What role did secular political identities and the LCP play in the political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi'a between 1943 and 1990?
- Who were the communist Shi'a? And what impact did their association with the LCP have on other political actors within the Shi'i community?
- What is the relationship between secular and sectarian identities in the political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi'a?

Methodology

Concepts and Definitions

To answer the research questions, this thesis utilises a conceptual framework based on theories of identity and political mobilisation, in combination with primary source material obtained from fieldwork carried out in Lebanon. In chapter one, the analytical framework for this study is explained in detail. This framework is comprised of a hybridised approach to the study of identity, which draws on primordial and constructionist schools of thought. This posits that primordial e.g. sectarian identities, are just one among many potentially mobilisable affinities on the identity repertoire of an individual or group. Rather than assuming that primordial identities are predisposed to dominate the hierarchy of the identity repertoire, the hybridised approach requires an analysis of the conditions under which a particular identity ascends the hierarchy, and becomes the

basis for political mobilisation. This entails an analysis of how identities are generated, and the role played by power structures, social interactions and state-society relations in that process. Chapter one also explores the concept of political mobilisation, highlighting two main variants: affirmative and resistive political mobilisation. The resulting framework for this study is built around an analysis of why and how identity entrepreneurs (e.g. political parties or movement leaders) seek to create and mobilise resistance identities, with the objective of challenging, rejecting or significantly transforming the structure of the political system.

In addition to the concepts of identity and political mobilisation, this study's analytical framework is also informed by a particular conceptualisation of the Lebanese Shi'i community. The deployment of the term 'Shi'i community' as though it is a sociological or political category implies a type of monolithic, cohesive bloc. However, as Shaery-Eisenlohr has noted,

there is no singular conception of what it means to be Shi'i in Lebanon, nor a singular vision of Shi'i Lebanon...Shi'i identity is fluid, contentious and does not constitute a single, united project.⁴⁷

The notion of 'Shi'ism' is a question of definition, even self-construction: religion itself evolves, as has the meaning of Shi'ism. This study does not adopt the use of the category, 'Shi'i' as an analytical form, nor assume that being 'Shi'i' determines individual or group politics. As Brubaker notes, 'we should avoid unintentionally reproducing or reinforcing reification by uncritically adopting categories of practice as categories of analysis'.⁴⁸

The Shi'a became a sect through a process of gradual definition. In this sense, the meaning of Shi'ism has often emerged from an act of definition on the part of an authority - state, society, community or otherwise, and is therefore subject to change in the same way as such authorities. In short,

⁴⁷ Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon*, Preface.

⁴⁸ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond Identity', *Theory & Society*, 20:1, 2000, p.1-47, 5.

sectarian identities, like religious and political identities, reflect the most unifying feature of identity as a concept: diversity, inter-dependency, and of course, changeability.

In light of this study's emphasis on the Shi'i community's heterogeneity, it is important to clarify that the relationship between communism and the Shi'a, when written as so, does not imply a reference to the whole community. As much as possible, this analysis refers to this dynamic as a relationship between the LCP and 'the communist Shi'a' i.e those Shi'a who were communists, and vice versa. Indeed, as stated earlier, part of the rationale for this study is to highlight the diversity of political identities held by the Lebanese Shi'a, and not just those that were constructed on the basis of sectarian or religious identities. Communism represents one such alternative example of the Shi'i community's secular identities.

These conceptualisations of identity, political mobilisation and the Shi'i community comprise the analytical framework which informed the research work that was conducted in Lebanon for this thesis.

Interviews

Interviews constitute the main primary sources for this study. Alternative avenues for inquiry into the nature of Shi'i involvement in the LCP were limited. This is partly because the relationship has not been the subject of a detailed study before. Additionally, publications by the LCP, and other primary sources relating to the party or the Lebanese Shi'a do not provide significant insights into the particularities of the relationship between the two. Interviews also provided the benefit of an insiders perspective from current and former Shi'i communists. It was also possible to compare and contrast these views with perspectives from the LCP's party leadership, whom were also included in the interview sample.

The first interview sample included current, former, retired or inactive Shi'i members of the LCP. This category was important due to the historical nature of the research inquiry and the need for perspectives from before

and during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990). Within this sample were rank-and-file as well as senior Shi'i members of the LCP. This would enable an analysis of any differences in perceptions borne of the individual's status in the party. It would also illustrate the depth of involvement by Shi'i members in the LCP. The category of former communists was also selected for the input it would provide into the reasons why many communist Shi'a departed or disassociated from the LCP in the post-civil war phase. Interviewees identified in this category include Karim Mroue (Deputy Secretary General, LCP), Ahmad Dreiki, Rabie Dreiki, Ahmad Dakroub, Ali Salman, Redwan Hamzeh, Nadeem al-Deen and Dr Ghazi Berro.

The second interview sample consisted of current and former (non-Shi'i) members of the LCP. This sample was selected to provide (in combination with the first interview group) a comparative insight into the official LCP perspective on its Shi'i membership, with the actual experiences of the party's Shi'i members. Interviewees identified in this category include Maurice Nahle (Committee Secretary LCP), Mary Debes (senior LCP official), Khaled Hedede (Secretary General LCP).

The third sample included former Shi'i members of the LCP who are now members of Hizbullah. This category was selected to provide an important insight into the reasons why many former communists gravitated toward Hizbullah in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War. Interviewees identified include Ibrahim el-Amin (Hizbullah sympathiser) and Saud al-Mawla. It was intended that further respondents would emerge during the course of the fieldwork.

The fourth interview group included current, senior officials within Hizbullah and the LCP, who were involved in the coordination of military resistance against Israel from the south Lebanese town of Srifa in the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war. As this association marked an important stage in the rapprochement between two historic enemies (the LCP and Hizbullah), these interviews were to provide important insights in to the nature and

detail of a changing relationship. Intended initial interviewees were Khaled Hadedeh, Secretary General of the LCP and Ibrahim Musawi, Hizbullah's media relations and communications manager.

The fifth interview sample comprised Lebanese historians, particularly those with expertise on the country's secular political movements and/or Lebanese Shi'i history. This category was selected to provide a first level of critical reflection on the events leading up to and during the Lebanese Civil War as these related to the LCP and the Shi'a. In particular, respondents in this category were asked for their reading of the LCP-Shi'i relationship, including its origins, nature and aftermath. The information obtained would then be compared with the insights provided by the earlier interviews with party activists. Respondents in this category included Dr Munthir Jaber, Dr Ahmad Beydoun, Fawwaz Traboulsi, Tarif Khalidi, Hassan Krayem, Talal Itrisi and Wajih Kawtharani.

The sixth interview sample consisted of political activists in Lebanon's contemporary secular political parties and movements, including *Laique Pride* and *Nahwa al-Muwatiniyya* and other groups identified during the research process. The purpose of these interviews was to gain an insight into the broader secular movement in Lebanon, past and present. Among these respondents were also Bilal al-Amin and Maher Dib Abi Samra.

Additional respondents that emerged during the course of fieldwork and were identified as potentially useful sources of information were Amal associates Habib Sadiq and Bilal Sharara.

The interviews with senior LCP officials began by attaining the party's narrative of its historical development in Lebanon, focussing on the party's domestic political activities between 1943 and 1975, and then on the LCP's reading of the Lebanese Civil War. This included the causes of the war, and its impact on the LCP. After discussing these issues the interviews moved on to the question of the LCP's Shi'i constituency. Officially, the party does not keep a record of the sectarian identities of its members, and its senior officials demonstrated a reluctance to discuss the matter of Shi'i

membership. However, during the course of the one to two hour interviews, it was possible to broach the subject. The information obtained provides an official party perspective on why the LCP believes it developed an appeal among the Shi'i community between 1943-1975. The interviews also provide an insight into how the party saw its relationship with the Shi'a transform during the Lebanese Civil War.

The interviews with former communist Shi'i members of the LCP followed the same format. The insights obtained were then compared and contrasted with the interviews conducted with the LCP officials. The analysis found significant differences between the LCP's perception of its Shi'i constituency and how the former communist Shi'a viewed their relationship with the LCP. These contrasting perspectives are critically engaged with in chapter three of this thesis.

The interviews conducted with Lebanese historians provided an additional informed perspective on the LCP's history in Lebanon and relationship with the Shi'a. They were also the first stage in the process of verifying the historical narrative of events provided in the accounts of the LCP officials that were interviewed.

During the 2012 fieldwork visit, the author obtained information about the LCP-Hizbullah rapprochement in 2006. Srifa, in south Lebanon was also identified as a potentially useful site for exploring the dynamics of political identities within Shi'i households, where mixed affinities with the LCP, Hizbullah and Amal are present. A visit to Srifa was to be the main focus of the second visit to Lebanon.

Obtaining access to interviewees was generally a smooth process. Members of the LCP, both current and former, were welcoming and cooperative. Only one respondent refused to be interviewed. He objected to the idea of focussing on 'Shi'i' membership of the LCP, and was defensive in the telephone conversation. Following this experience, the author decided not to make explicit mention of the Shi'i-LCP dimensions of this project in telephone conversations. The non-personal 'cold call' setting heightened

the potential for suspicion about the author's intentions to arise. The author always found that in a face-to-face interview, it was possible to explain the nature of the research inquiry and reasons for interest. Because conversation frequently occurred in Arabic, the author's Jordanian background was always a matter up for discussion at the beginning of the interview encounter. Although wary of the implications of the author's 'Sunni' background, this did not lead to any reluctance on the part of the respondents once the author's intentions as an academic researcher were communicated. Respondents were otherwise happy to answer questions and were effusive in their willingness to facilitate the research process.

Fieldwork Limitations

Fieldwork for this thesis was carried out between 5th and 28th December 2012. This was intended as the first of two fieldwork visits to Lebanon. The purpose of the first visit was to conduct initial interviews, develop contacts and identify further potential respondents for the second, longer trip. Seven interviews were conducted during the first visit with the following respondents (identified above): Maurice Nahl, Karim Mroue, Ghazi Berro, Ahmad Dreiki, Rabie Dreiki, Munthir Jaber and Wajih Kawthawrani. The interviews all took place in Beirut. Five of these interviews were conducted in Arabic, with kind assistance from Dr Rami Siklawi with the colloquial Arabic translation. Dr Siklawi is a Lebanese specialist on Shi'i-Palestinian relations. This facilitated the translation process and identification of additional interview respondents in the field.

Travel grants from the AHRC and CBRL for the second fieldwork trip to Lebanon were awarded in the Spring of 2013. The research trip was scheduled for August 2013. However, at this time the conflict in Syria had reached a particularly precarious moment following the use of chemical weapons, and the prospect of armed intervention was on the international agenda. In addition, the author was aware of a Hizbullah directive embargoing any official contact with the media and researchers at this time. This made it unlikely that the author would be able to contact respondents identified in the fourth interview sample. The decision was

taken, in consultation with supervisors at the University of Edinburgh, to delay fieldwork to later in the year. Between December 2013 and February 2014, and again from June 2014 to end-July 2014 the author experienced two interruptions of study as a result of extenuating personal circumstances. At this point, because the author was nearing the end of the fourth writing-up year of the PhD, a period which was not funded, the second field work visit did not take place. The constraints of time and financial need necessitated that the author focus on the material obtained in 2012. A six-month extension to studies was granted in order to complete the writing-up of this material. As a result, the primary source material in this thesis falls far short of that which was originally intended. Each of the identified interview samples above was to have a minimum of five, ideally ten, respondents. However, the author maintains that the primary source material, in combination with the analytical conceptual framework, still constitutes an original contribution to knowledge. The author intends to carry out the remaining fieldwork before this thesis is transformed into a book publication.

Other primary sources

The analysis also draws from two party documents obtained from the LCP: *Al-Qadiyah al-Ziraiyah fi-Lubnan* (The Agricultural Issue in Lebanon) and *Al-Watha'iq al-Kamila lil-Mu'tamar al-Watani al-Thani lil-Hizb al-shiyu'i al-Lubnani* (The Complete Documents: Second Congress of the Lebanese Communist Party). These offer an insight into the LCP's political programme throughout the period of interest for this study. In particular, the document pertaining to the agricultural question illustrates the LCP's efforts to expand its influence and appeal among its Shi'i constituency in South Lebanon. These issues are also further explored in chapter three of this thesis.

An additional primary source obtained in the field was the documentary film *Shiyu'iyyin Kunna* (We Were Communists). The film was directed by the Lebanese filmmaker Maher Abi Samra. Born in 1965, he was educated in Beirut and France before becoming a photo journalist for Agence France

Presse, Reuters. Abi Samra is known for his use of film to explore both his own and Lebanon's past. Before filming *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, Maher had recently returned to Lebanon after residing in France for a period of fifteen-years. Narrating the film, Maher states that the 2006 Israel-Lebanon war evoked memories of his involvement in the civil war in 1982. The film serves as the medium through which Maher reconnects with three of his former comrades in the LCP. Together they reconstruct and reflect upon their involvement with the communist party during the latter stages of the Lebanese Civil War. Maher states that in 1982 the LCP was the only political party fighting sectarianism inside Lebanon, while also dealing with the myriad external forces present in Lebanon. However, the film also documents how Maher and his comrades became disillusioned by the war and the decisions of the LCP in that environment. It is also clear that Maher laments what he describes as Hizbullah's monopolisation of the political resistance, originally conceived by the LCP. For the purposes of this thesis, the interviews contained within the documentary provide a rare insight into the identity dilemmas experienced by the communists in the aftermath of the civil war, and the LCP's decline. The Shi'i voices featured in the documentary are particularly useful for this study. They highlight the issues that led some of them to transition toward affiliation with Hizbullah. Of further interest to this study was the film's exploration of the differences between the LCP's and Hizbullah's conceptualisations of the resistance.

Thesis Structure

Following the conceptual discussion in chapter one, the analysis in chapter two examines the identities and political mobilisation of the Shi'a in the years preceding Lebanese independence. This involves an analysis of the Shi'i community's political development under the Ottoman Empire (1516-1920) and French Mandate (1920-1943). The chapter begins by introducing the main political actors that emerged from the Shi'i community throughout this period, including the *zu 'ama'* (political families), the *wujaha* (urban political families), literati, 'Ulama', workers and peasantry. The analysis in chapter two illustrates the variety of political identities that

emerged among these social groups throughout Ottoman and French Rule. This produced tensions between the pro-Ottoman inclinations of the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, and the Arab nationalist leanings of the Shi'i intelligentsia. The analysis also highlights the nature of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation throughout these years, which was characterised by the pursuit of inclusion in the political system, and was enacted through a politics of demand and protest. Towards the end of the French Mandate, the analysis shows that the Shi'i workers and peasantry had grown increasingly frustrated with French colonial policy. This strata was among one of the most restive and mobilised components of the Shi'i community on the eve of Lebanese independence. The main argument developed in chapter two is that, contrary to the conventional understanding of the Shi'a in the French Mandate, the Shi'i community's political mobilisation was not characterised by a fully formed, or even dominant sectarian political identity. On the contrary, the only distinctive feature of the community's political mobilisation in this period was the diversity of political identities expressed by the Shi'a, and their high propensity for change and transformation.

In chapter three the analysis moves on to Lebanon's post-colonial era and the core subject matter of this thesis: secular political identities and the Lebanese Shi'a. The analysis explores the origins, development and impact of the Shi'i community's relationship with the LCP between 1943-1975. It argues that the Shi'i community's continued marginalisation and deprivation in the aftermath of independence led to a critical juncture in their political mobilisation. This resulted in a departure from the politics of demand and protest in the pursuit of political inclusion, to a politics of resistance based on a rejection of the confessional political structure. The anti-system agenda of the secular political parties was the initial basis of the Shi'i community's attraction to them. The development of the relationship between the LCP and the Shi'a is explored from the perspective of each actor, and their perceptions of the association are compared and contrasted. The Shi'i community's relationship with

communism directly influenced other political actors among the community, which led to the simultaneous rise of communist clerics and clerical-led opposition to communism's growing influence among the Shi'a. This is illustrated through an analysis of Musa al-Sadr's perception of the communists, and his efforts to reduce their influence.

In chapter four, the analysis explains the decline of the relationship between communism and the Shi'a in the context of the Lebanese Civil War. This chapter shows how the decline of secular political identities facilitated the rise of sectarian identities among the Shi'a. The analysis begins with an overview of the impact of the civil war on political life among the Shi'a, highlighting the breakdown of the state, the security environment and the communalisation of identities. The analysis then explores the decline of the LCP in this environment, illustrating how this directly facilitated the rise of the new Shi'i communal actors, Amal and Hizbullah.

In chapter five, the analysis focusses on the identity dilemmas experienced by the communist Shi'a in the aftermath of the LCP's decline in the Lebanese Civil War. The chapter then assesses the Shi'i alternatives in a comparative analysis of the different constituencies and relative appeals of the LCP, Amal and Hizbullah. It emerges that many of the former communist Shi'a found Hizbullah to be their preferred alternative. The chapter ends with an analysis of the legacy of the Shi'i community's interaction with the LCP, while also highlighting the endurance of the LCP's relationship with the communist Shi'a.

In the concluding chapter, the discussion draws together the main arguments of this thesis to assess their implications and importance for our contemporary understanding of the history of both the Lebanese Shi'a and Lebanon. The limitations of this study, as well as future avenues for related research are also noted. The thesis concludes that secular narratives have been largely marginalised in favour of sectarian narratives in the field of modern Lebanese history. The struggle between the secular and sectarian

Shi'a during the Lebanese Civil War is argued to have been a microcosm of a historic national struggle between secular and sectarian identities in Lebanon. The thesis concludes by calling for a renewed focus on the history of secularism in Lebanon. This study of the relationship between communism and the Shi'a represents an attempt to showcase one such dimension of Lebanon's secular past.

The perception of the Shi'i community's relationship with communism is that it was a fleeting, inconsequential moment in the inexorable rise of sectarian political identities among the Shi'a. The arguments presented in this thesis constitute a challenge to that perception. Not only does the LCP retain a relationship with the Shi'a in Lebanon today, but the history of that association has imparted upon all the political actors within the Shi'i community an enduring legacy: a resistance identity.

Chapter 1 ~ A Hybrid Theory of Identity and Resistance

This chapter develops an analytical framework for the present study, based on a hybrid theory of identity and resistance. The objective is to provide an alternative framework for the study of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation that is not based on essentialist readings of identity. In this sense, the conceptual framework presented in this chapter constitutes a departure from the sectarian and religious paradigms through which the Lebanese Shi'a have conventionally been studied.

The analysis begins by defining the concept of identity. The key features of identity are analysed, including its relational characteristics, diversity, fluidity and high propensity for transformation. The analysis then explores how identities are generated and transformed. This emphasises the role played by power and categorisation in the relationships between state and society, as well as sub-state interactions among individuals and communities within society. The analysis explores how identity generation produces new boundaries delineating who belongs and who does not. This constitutes the initial basis upon which identities emerge.

After defining identity and the processes through which identities are generated, the analysis moves on to establish a method for the analysis of identity generation. The main schools of thought in the study of identity, primordialism and constructionism are outlined. Elements of each school are then combined to propose a hybridised approach to the study of identity for this thesis. The theory of identity adopted by this study postulates that the identity repertoires of any individual or collectivity contain a hierarchy of diverse identities, some of which may be primordial and others constructionist. The superiority of primordial identities on this hierarchy is not assumed. Rather, the objective of the inquiry is to identify the processes through which a particular identity ascends this hierarchy and becomes the basis for political mobilisation.

The chapter then explains the application of hybridisation to this thesis. The concepts of secularism and sectarianism are explored to that end, before analysing their origins and meaning in Lebanon. Finally, the chapter outlines the concept of resistance identity, exploring its origins and meaning in relation to theories of political mobilisation. Two types of political mobilisation are highlighted. The first form emerges from legitimising identities, which conform to the structural parameters of the political system. The second form, which arises from resistance identities, rejects the political system and seeks to fundamentally alter or transform it. The role of agency in political mobilisation is also explored here. The chapter concludes by delineating a framework for this thesis' case study, based on a hybrid conceptualisation of secularism and sectarianism in the political mobilisation of resistance identities.

Defining Identity

According to Jenkins, identity is:

a human capacity - rooted in language - to know "who's who" (and hence, "what's what"). This involves knowing who we are, who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are, and so on: a multidimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it, as individuals and as members of collectivities.⁴⁹

Identification is a process that develops throughout a person's lifetime. It is subject to multiple influences, which are highly dependent on the context or environment in which the individual lives and develops. In Maalouf's terms, the individual 'is not himself from the outset: nor does he just "grow aware" of what he is; he becomes what he is...he acquires it step by step.'⁵⁰ Identities are also subject to change - they are not a static given, rather they evolve and transform multiple times throughout an individual's lifetime. One, or a group of people are defined by a cohabitation of multiple identities, which cannot easily be unravelled to reveal just one dominant type. As Maalouf states,

⁴⁹ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 3rd Edition, Oxon: Routledge, 2008, 5.

⁵⁰ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 21.

Every individual is a meeting ground for many different allegiances, and sometimes these loyalties conflict with one another and confront the person who harbours them with difficult choices...Of course, not all these allegiances are equally strong, at least at any given moment. But none is entirely insignificant, either. All are components of personality...⁵¹

Tilly defines identity in similar terms to Jenkins, noting that identities comprise a

potent set of social arrangements in which people construct shared stories about who they are, how they are constructed, and what has happened to them.⁵²

These definitions capture an important facet of identity. This is an awareness of the self, or individual identity.

The conditions under which political identities emerge and transform are highly specific, grounded in the particularities of the individuals or groups under consideration, and the context in which they are situated. As stated by Hall,

...we need to understand them [identities] in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies.⁵³

Thus, for the purposes of this analysis, the context comprises Lebanon and the experience of the Shi'i community in that particular environment. The main features of political identity discussed thus far are aptly summarised by the late Stuart Hall:

Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Amin Maalouf, *On Identity*, London: The Harvill Press, 2000, 5, 10.

⁵² Charles Tilly, 'Political Identities in Changing Polities', *Social Research*, 70:2, 2002, 608.

⁵³ Stuart Hall, 'Who Needs Identity?' in Paul Du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman (eds), *Identity: A Reader*, London: Sage Publications, 2006, 17.

⁵⁴ Hall, 'Who Needs Identity?', 17.

Having defined the meaning of identity for the present study, the analysis now moves on to the complex task of understanding the processes through which identities are formed and transformed.

Identity Formation and Transformation

The concept of identification raises important issues about the identity formation process, and whether identities are self-constructed or externally imposed. Closely intertwined with this issue is the role of power. Foucault's studies on the relationship between power and the individual are instructive. The analysis in this section examines the relational features of identity and the different actors involved in the construction of political identities in particular.

In addition to the role identities play in the construction of an image of the self, identities are also constructed to distinguish the self relative to another person or group. As identities are constructed, they may indicate who belongs, as well as who does not. This process of identity construction can occur on the basis of a conscious effort by the individual, but also as a product of influence, or imposition, from an external actor. The dualistic, relational features of identity mean that it is subject to multiple sources of influence. As Jenkins notes,

identification is often most consequential as the categorisation of others, rather than as self-identification...Identifying ourselves, or others, is a matter of meaning, and meaning always involves interaction.⁵⁵

A group may define its identity on the basis of an internally and collectively agreed formulation. However, the same group may also become subject to a collective external definition, or what Jenkins calls categorisation.

Tilly breaks down these internal and external relational dimensions of identity into four main components: a boundary separating me from you or

⁵⁵ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 15,

us from them; a set of relations within a boundary; a set of relations across a boundary; and a set of stories about the boundary and the relations.⁵⁶ These internal and external definitions form a collective dialectic of identification - neither comes first and neither exists without the other, rather they mutually enforce, or transform, the individual or group identity. The sources of external categorisation are wide and varied. The creation of political identities, which are the main subject of this study, are frequently tied to relations of power, which implicates the modern state as an important agent of categorisation.

As Bourdieu and Foucault argue, states seek to monopolise symbolic power. States name, identify and categorise. For Foucault, this lies at the heart of 'governmentality' in a modern state.⁵⁷ However, identities, as defined and determined by the state, do not necessarily correspond to real or felt identities by society. The depth, resonance and power that state created categories hold over their citizens cannot be assumed, and requires careful observation.⁵⁸ Whilst identities may originate from state institutions, they may only become real identities if social actors internalise them, and construct their meaning around it. The process of identity construction therefore comprises a mutual interaction between both state and society. While the state may seek to define identities, and categorise society on the basis of such definitions, groups within society may not only refuse to accept these definitions, but actively resist them.

Identities that are constructed by the state can result in a dialectic of power between the state and society. Individuals or groups in society may not accept the state defined identity. Although they may not have the power to change it, they can attempt to reposition their own identity, blending lines of power and creating a different space for the configuration of their

⁵⁶ Tilly, 'Political Identities', 608.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', trans. Rosi Braidotti and revised by Colin Gordon, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds) *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991

⁵⁸ Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, 'Beyond Identity', *Theory & Society*, 20:1, 2000, 26-7.

individual or collective identities.⁵⁹ Who constructs identity, and for what purpose, will determine the symbolic content of this identity, including its meaning for those who choose to identify with it or, conversely, those who do not identify.⁶⁰ The process through which identities are constructed always involves a relationship of power. This is particularly applicable to political identities, which form the main focus of the present study.

According to Tilly, 'identities become political identities when governments become parties to them.'⁶¹ However, political identities should not be conceived as mere byproducts of political processes, rather they make a difference in their own right. When political identities change, so do other meanings, practices and relations in society. Thus, political identities have transformative potential. Furthermore, political identities are often mobilised for the purposes of staking a claim for, or on behalf of, unrecognised political actors. In this sense identities are mobilised to resist the status quo - usually because one or more collectivities are excluded, or lack access to power; they therefore seek recognition.⁶² Castells defines these as resistance identities. Such identities are generated by 'those actors who are in positions or conditions that are devalued or stigmatised by the logic of domination.'⁶³ These political identities mobilise on the basis of principles that are different from, or opposed to, those of the state and its institutions. When political identities become activated, they produce sets of rights and obligations which serve to bind the mobilised participants in their political action.

The power relationships through which identities are constructed, the role of state created identities in that process, and the possibility for individuals or collectivities within societies to resist certain identities, are all features of identity construction that are present in this study's analysis of the

⁵⁹ G Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, trans. Constanine Boundas, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

⁶⁰ Manuel Castells, 'Identity and Meaning in the Network Society' in Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd Edition, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 7

⁶¹ Tilly, 'Political Identities', 609.

⁶² Tilly, 'Political Identities', 609-10

⁶³ Castells, 'Identity and Meaning', 8.

Lebanese Shi'a. In fact, resistance identities became a core feature of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation as a result of political marginalisation and exclusion from access to political power. In addition, state imposed categories of identity, which in Lebanon are deeply sectarian, resulted in the mobilisation of collectivities who rejected the sectarian categorisations of political identity. The Shi'a have historically been at the centre of such resistance movements throughout the modern history of Lebanon.

So far, the analysis has explored definitions of identity and the processes through which identities are formed and transformed. The ensuing analysis builds on this discussion to develop a theory of identity for the present study.

Primordialism and Constructionism

The study of identity in the social sciences produced two main theoretical schools of thought: primordialism and constructionism. These conflicting conceptualisations of identity are analysed here for their pertinence to the present study.

Primordialism posits that identities are developed during childhood, which upon integration into society, became relatively fixed and unchanging. In this view, features of identity, such as language and culture, are consciously shared among collectivities, and these are what constitute a group's identity.⁶⁴ In this sense, primordialists argue that people who share a culture, also share an essential understanding of their identity. This also follows that traditional loyalties tied to this identity give rise to very strong attachments. These affinities are the fundamental basis upon which the material and political interests of a group and its claims are based.⁶⁵ The early thinkers associated with primordialism were Edward Shils and Clifford Geertz. Shils emphasised the role of kinship ties, or family, as the

⁶⁴ Martin Sökefeld, 'Debating Self, Identity & Culture', *Current Anthropology*, 40:4, 1999, 417.

⁶⁵ J. L. Comaroff and P. C. Stern, 'New Perspectives on Nationalism and War', *Theory and Society*, 23:1, 1994, 38.

main unit within which 'natural' ethnic bonds become fixed. He also argued that kinship ties comprised a relational characteristic that could only be described as primordial. Thus in Shils's view, blood ties were an essential determinant of one's identity.⁶⁶ Geertz continued this approach, arguing that primordial identities are 'natural, ineffable and coercive.'⁶⁷ Durkheim also noted the importance of kinship, as well as moral and religious ties to the reinforcement of communal identities.⁶⁸

Primordial ideas about identity came under fierce criticism from scholars of modernisation and development. Benedict Anderson's study of the role of print capitalism in the creation of 'imagined communities', argued that modernisation processes were contributing to the expansion of social relations beyond close-knit local and territorial communities. This created opportunities for new identifications with different social groupings, of which one was not necessarily a direct member.⁶⁹ Thus, kinship ties were no longer the only determinant of an individual's identity. Primordial notions of identity were also criticised for being unable to account for the origins, change, or even decline of various ethnic groups. Primordialists did not view the idea that identities could change or be superseded as a possibility.⁷⁰ They also failed to account for the fusion of identities that occurs through intermarriage.⁷¹ An alternative explanation for the origins and nature of identities arose from the constructionist school.

Constructionists view identity as boundary-less, highly flexible and adaptable.⁷² Identities emerge in the context of historically specific, practical conditions; they are therefore highly situational and their changeability

⁶⁶ Edward Shils, 'Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties', *British Journal of Sociology*, 8:2, 1957, 142.

⁶⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, 259.

⁶⁸ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain, New York: Macmillan, 1915.

⁶⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London: New Left Books, 1983.

⁷⁰ Eric Kaufmann, 'Primordialists and Constructionists: A Typology of Theories of Religion', *Religion, Brain and Behavior*, 2:2, 2012, 141.

⁷¹ Josep R. Llobera, 'Recent Theories of Nationalism', *Working Paper*, No. 164, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, Barcelona, 1999, 4.

⁷² Josep R. Llobera, 'Recent Theories of Nationalism', 8.

also renders them analytically elusive.⁷³ Within the constructionist camp are many different explanations and sub-theories for explaining the constructed nature of identity.

Instrumentalists view identities as the product of social, economic or political processes. These processes constitute the environment in which identities both emerge and transform. In this view, identity tools such as culture, kinship and ethnicity can be manipulated by individuals with political motivations.⁷⁴ Instrumentalists do not view identities as consisting of fixed boundaries, they view them to be prone to change and transformation. The individual can also have multiple identities and be associated with one or more of these identities at the same time. Instrumentalists hold a more dynamic view of identity.⁷⁵ Also within this camp are rational choice theorists. They emphasise the role played by individual preferences, whom they view as motivated by the desire to maximise benefits accrued to them, either in terms of economic gain, security or prestige.⁷⁶

Today, debates about identity are no longer so starkly divided between primordialist and constructionist views. In fact, very few scholars openly embrace the label 'primordialist'.⁷⁷ Extreme primordialism is now viewed as ahistorical because it locates collective identities in human nature. The debate now continues along a continuum between primordialist and constructionist ideas. Scholars now prefer the latter approach, while others accept the constructed nature of identity, but view identities as slow to respond to rapid changes.⁷⁸ A more useful approach emerges from the combination of primordialist and constructionist contributions to the study of identity.

⁷³ Comaroff and Stern, 'New Perspectives', 38.

⁷⁴ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, 'Ethnic Identity, National Identity and Intergroup Conflict: The Significance of Personal Experiences' in Wilder Jussim Ashmore (ed.), *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict and Conflict Reduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001–
<http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Identity_politics.html> (11 January 2015)

⁷⁵ Llobera, 'Recent Theories of Nationalism', 8

⁷⁶ Llobera, 'Recent Theories of Nationalism', 10.

⁷⁷ The biological primordialists, such as Pierre van den Berghe would be the exception. See Kaufmann, 'Primordialists and Constructionists', 141.

⁷⁸ Comaroff and Stern, 'New Perspectives', 39.

A Hybrid Theory

This study combines a selective adaptation of primordialism with a significant component of constructionism. This views primordial sentiments as an active element on any identity repertoire. In this sense, when a collectivity realises its common interests, it is usually because they find their existence or interests under threat from an external source, an other. However, collective identities are not necessarily fixed, they have the capacity to become mobilised in response to a perceived threat. The hybridised approach recognises the presence of primordial attachments, such as ethnicity, religion, culture and heritage. However, rather than viewing these sentiments as always dominant and unchanging, this approach focusses on the circumstances in which these attachments may be tapped into, or mobilised for a particular purpose, in a specific situation.⁷⁹

This hybridised approach is of particular utility to the present study. As highlighted in the introduction, one of the key objectives of this thesis is to expand our understanding of the Lebanese Shi'a beyond exclusively sectarian readings of their identity and political mobilisation. To achieve this, the present study analyses the presence and mobilisation of non-primordial identities. This approach emphasises the cohabitation of multiple identities on an individual's or community's identity repertoire.

Secularism and Sectarianism as Hybrid Identities

Secular and religious political identities are prime examples of the theory and practice of hybridisation. Whilst secular and religious identities are frequently presented as a binary, this study argues that the choice between the two is a false dichotomy. Secular and religious identities are highly interrelated- secularism develops in relation to religion, and also influences the rise of religious formations. As Jakobsen and Pellegrini have persuasively argued, secular and religious formations are

⁷⁹ Comaroff and Stern, 'New Perspectives', 39.

mutually constitutive in particular historical moments - and this relationship is inflected by a variety of power relations - European colonialism is one of them.⁸⁰

This analysis refers to religion as sectarianism, partly because it is a term appropriate to the Lebanese context of this study, but also in order to place the analytical focus on politicised religious identities, and not on issues of religious belief and practice. Although sectarianism is institutionalised in the Lebanese political system, and therefore a central feature of social, economic, political and cultural life, very few Lebanese openly admit subscribing to a sectarian identity. Most Lebanese practice dissimulation, availing themselves of secular identities for instrumentalist purposes, to obscure their sectarianism.⁸¹ In this dynamic, sectarianism is regarded negatively as a regressive, anti-modern primordial identity, while secularism is the constructionist, progressive identity. However, secular identities have also played an important ideological role in Lebanese politics. Secularism, inspired by sectarianism, is a central concept among the Lebanese left.⁸² For this movement, secularism embodies an important counter narrative of resistance to the sectarian political structure.

Secularism and sectarianism are core concepts in this thesis. Secularism is also heavily implicated in this study's conceptualisation of resistance. However, these are also terms with highly complex, transnational histories and contested definitions. In this section, the analysis provides an overview of secularism, contrasting its Western (Euro-American) origins and definitions with its historical development opposite sectarianism in Lebanon. The discussion also notes the additional role played by colonialism in the development of secularism in Lebanon. The analysis demonstrates that, as in the West, the history of secularism is heavily intertwined with sectarianism in Lebanon.

⁸⁰ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2008, 11.

⁸¹ Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism in Multicultural Societies' in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam (eds), *Lebanon in Limbo: Postwar Society and State in an Uncertain Regional Environment*, Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft Baden, 2003, 23

⁸² Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism in the Lebanese Left', *Mediterranean Politics*, 18:3, 2013, 429.

Secularism and Sectarianism in Lebanon

The development of secularism in Lebanon was influenced by universalist theories of secularism derived from the Western, particularly Franco, Enlightenment model. In the Lebanese context, this model accrued a national historical dimension, which produced new, local terms of reference for understanding secularism. As Jakobsen and Pellegrini have emphasised, secular traditions are multiple and diverse. In this sense, the concept is best understood in the plural, as secularisms. But these secularisms are not free from the dominant narrative of Western secular universalism.⁸³ It is important therefore to begin by considering the Western origins and definitions of secularism, before analysing its origins and development in Lebanon.

The origins of secularism as a political and governmental doctrine lie in 19th century liberal European society.⁸⁴ Beginning with the Renaissance, secularisation initiated a challenge to the traditional authority of the church. This posited that reason would progressively free itself from the bonds of religion, liberating humanity in the process.⁸⁵ The principles of separation and neutrality emerged from the bitter religious wars that occurred in single-faith religious political systems in the West. In these systems, the state was defined as a common public authority in the service of both Protestants and Catholics, rather than as an instrument in the hands of these religious communities.⁸⁶

The Protestant Reformation broke the hegemonic status of the church, leading to numerous bloody religious wars among different factions, who fought over which religious framework should be enshrined in the state. The secularisation process posited that reason should replace religion as the basis of political power, which would allow multiple religious

⁸³ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 13.

⁸⁴ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, 24.

⁸⁵ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 4.

⁸⁶ Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor trans. by Jane Marie Todd, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011, 22.

communities to coexist with each other. In this framework, religion was relegated to the private sphere and became a personal commitment, while reason was relied upon for creating political and legal authority.⁸⁷ The transition from religion to secularism was completed in the European Enlightenment period, and became a central feature in the formation of modern nation-states. The secularisation thesis posits that the move away from religious authority constitutes a moral advance towards greater intellectual liberation and knowledge creation, which results in the establishment of governance according to reason and, ultimately, democracy and peace.

The origins of secularism are easier to delineate than a definition of the concept. Its historical development is indicative of a hostility toward religion, or a juridical separation between the political and the religious spheres.⁸⁸ However, there is more to secularism than the separation between church and state.⁸⁹ Among its other core features are concepts such as state neutrality and the public vs private sphere.⁹⁰ According to Maclure and Taylor, secularism comprises two main principles: equality of respect and freedom of conscience. It also comprises two operational plains: the separation of church and state, and the neutrality of the state toward religions.⁹¹ However, the boundaries between these distinctions are blurred, and often contradictory. Although secularism claims a neutral stance, it can often lead to oppressive behaviour. Secular states tend to privilege one identity (usually the nation-state), over other identities, which either become less potent or reduce their adherents to second-class status. The nationalist regimes in Iraq (pre-2003), Syria and Tunisia (pre-2011 Arab Uprisings) were all secularist but exclusionary. In Turkey, secularism developed a highly discriminatory nature, resulting in the oppression of religious and ethnic communities in the name of secular nationalism.⁹²

⁸⁷ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 4.

⁸⁸ Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism', 14.

⁸⁹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 1.

⁹⁰ Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism*, 3.

⁹¹ Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism*, 20.

⁹² Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism', 14.

These are examples of how secularist states are still capable of violating other citizens' rights and values, or forcing others to simply assimilate.⁹³ Thus, the assumption that secularism facilitates peace and democracy is questionable. Furthermore, tensions can arise between the principles of secularism, for example between respect for moral equality and protection of freedom of conscience. The contradiction between these secular values is manifested in the French debate about whether Muslim headscarfs should be permitted in public schools.⁹⁴

Jakobsen and Pellegrini provide a broader definition of secularism, which captures an important point about its contingency. Thus, secularism

is a political project that deploys the concept of the secular, and it may do so regardless of the empirical state of secularisation. Although the state and law are central to the discourse of secularism, secularism is not reducible to doctrines like that of separation between church and state. Secularism works across other institutional sites, like the mainstream media, civil life and ceremony, and the market.⁹⁵

In this view, secularism is not empirically verifiable; it usually emerges as a moral or political goal, which is used to enforce the projects of those who aspire to a secularised society, against those who do not. Asad argues that secularism is part of a project that seeks to establish modernity as a 'hegemonic political goal.'⁹⁶ This returns us to the issue of the binary between secularism and religion (specified as sectarianism in this study). Because secularism works through oppositions, the traditional narrative of secularisation fails to establish its precise meaning. It also makes claims about religion, and the meaning of religion, in the process.

The standard narrative of secularisation described above, which is rooted in European and Christian origins, is not universally accepted. Secularism is not just a cultural import from the West. As stated by Jakobsen and Pellegrini,

⁹³ Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism', 15-16; Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 8.

⁹⁴ Jocelyn Maclure and Charles Taylor, *Secularism*, 24.

⁹⁵ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 7.

⁹⁶ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, 13.

it is precisely the interactions of various religious formations with various cultural imports that make for the complex secularisms that mark today's world.⁹⁷

Indeed, secularisms are not necessarily Christian in origin, either. As the analysis now moves on to examine the historical development of sectarianism and secularism in Lebanon, the nuances in this study's conceptualisations become evident. The historical origins of sectarianism and secularism in Lebanon, however, remain subject to as much dispute as their definitions. A general overview of the key historical moments are presented next, before discussing the working definitions of these concepts for this study.

As Max Weiss has shown, there are multiple schools of thought concerning the origins of sectarianism in Lebanon. These range from the 'organicity' i.e. primordialism, of Lebanese sects, to a range of constructionist arguments: sectarianism as an invented tradition by external powers, a failure of coexistence among Lebanon's diverse religious communities or a critical analysis of the social, cultural and institutional underpinnings of sectarianism.⁹⁸

Among the key historical moments in the formation of sectarian and secular narratives in Lebanon are the religious wars of the 1800s, and in particular, the first Lebanese civil war of 1860 involving the Druze and Maronite Christian communities. The Ottoman Empire's millet system introduced minority rights to its non-Muslim communities, and so emerged the concepts of tolerance, coexistence, but also religious difference. The establishment of the *qa'immaqamiyya*, a dual governorate, which twinned the Maronite and Druze polities, led to the brutal sectarian wars of the 1800s. This led the Ottomans to establish an alternative administrative system to govern Mount Lebanon in 1861, the *Mutasarrifiyya*, which initiated the practice of apportioning political office

⁹⁷ Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, *Secularisms*, 16.

⁹⁸ Max Weiss, A Historiography of Sectarianism in Lebanon, *History Compass*, 7:1, 2009, 149.

on the basis of sectarian identities.⁹⁹ These developments however, did not mean that sectarianism had become an inexorable process in Lebanon. Europe's subsequent intervention also initiated a process of social engineering in relation to Lebanon's various sects.

The impetus toward the creation of a modern, territorially unified nation-state in Lebanon came from French and European powers, and their interventions as colonial myth-makers. The Europeans utilised religion as a metaphor for the boundaries between modern civilisation and pre-modern barbarism. This distinction was used to legitimate Europe's civilising mission among the world's 'backward' Muslim populations.¹⁰⁰ This rendering of religious organisation transformed the social, political and economic role of religion into a new order, whereby religious identities alone defined individuals. However, prior to European encroachment in the region, the social structures in Mount Lebanon were not formulated on the basis of religious identities and distinctions.

A hierarchical politics of notability, which transcended religious differences, characterised the administrative structure of Mount Lebanon. This contrasted with the European reading of social organisation in 19th century Lebanon. Demographic changes during this period led to increasing European penetration of the region, reforms to the Ottoman administered regional system, and its increased incorporation into European markets. These changes favoured Lebanon's Maronite Christian population, who were inspired to make appeals to the European powers to legitimate their position in the changing environment of Mount Lebanon. The European powers singled out the Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire for special protection from the Muslim population. Christian missionaries were sent to the region, and Christian traders were

⁹⁹ Carol Hakim-Dowek, 'The Origins of the Lebanese National Idea, 1840-1914', D.Phil, University of Oxford, 1997; Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000; Leila Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993.

¹⁰⁰ Ussama Makdisi, 'The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon', *MERIP* 200:26, 1996 <<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer200/modernity-sectarianism-lebanon>> Last accessed 21st July 2015.

courted over others. The Maronite Christian silk merchants of Mount Lebanon were heavily favoured by France.¹⁰¹ In this environment, both Maronite Christian and Druze Muslim elites sought to organise according to exclusively religious definitions of community, subsuming their kinship, region and village ties beneath a dominant religious solidarity. This is how the sect, or *ta'ifa* became a quasi-nation defined against other sects.

European encroachment and intervention was a strong element in the Lebanese experience of modern nation-state formation. The rise of the modern Lebanese state brought further interventions to the balance of power among the country's sects. The question of how to integrate the Lebanese population into a new nation led to changes in electoral and personal status laws, in favour of religious affiliations. This meant that the definition of 'Lebanese' became tied to religious identity. The National Pact of 1943, which symbolised the emergence of an independent Lebanon, also institutionalised a sectarian conceptualisation of Lebanese citizenship. The second Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the Taif Accord (1989), which ended the war, are further episodes in the evolution of sectarianism in Lebanon, and the involvement of external actors - Western and Arab - in that process.

As has been shown, there are multiple elements to the evolution of sectarianism in Lebanon, which span the country's pre-state, proto-state and post-independence eras of political development. However, it is important to recognise that these developments do not represent the inexorable rise of sectarianism in Lebanon. The sectarian conflicts of the 1800s and 1970s cannot simply be collapsed under the same heading of sectarian warfare. The antecedent factors in these conflicts, internal and external, arose under very different circumstances. Furthermore, each era of Lebanon's modern development has seen periods of conflict and compromise among the country's different communities. It is within this

¹⁰¹ Ussama Makdisi, 'The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon', *MERIP* 200:26, 1996 <<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer200/modernity-sectarianism-lebanon>> Last accessed 21st July 2015.

context that secularism in Lebanon must also be located, and brought to the fore.

As the earlier discussion highlighted, secular and sectarian identities are heavily implicated in each other's development. Although sectarianism is the primary 'signature' identity in Lebanese society, it has long inspired a counter demand for secularism, understood as the removal of any religious identity markers from the political field.¹⁰² The emergence of secular ideas occurred in the context of the sectarian wars of the 1800s, and in particular the 1860 war in Mount Lebanon between the Maronite and Druze communities. The renowned writer and scholar of the 19th century, Butrus al-Bustani wrote in the war's aftermath, calling for an end to religious solidarities. Al-Bustani's view of secularism was heavily influenced by French *laicism*, which combined secularism with nationalism.¹⁰³ Secularism as a national identity was seen as the vehicle for freeing Lebanon from sectarian particularities. Like many of his contemporaries, al-Bustani believed that this secular perspective was a call to peace, and a replacement identity for the sectarian hatred symbolised by the wars.

Al-Bustani's contemporaries included several other Christian Arabs. Ya'qub al-Sarruf (1852–1917), Farah Antun (1874–1922), Georgie Zaidan (1861–1914), Salama Musa (1887–1958), Nicholas Haddad (1878–1954) and Faris al-Nimr were among this secularising elite.¹⁰⁴ All were graduates of the Syrian Protestant College (today the American University of Beirut), which was founded by Christian missionaries. These secular thinkers published their writings in two scientific journals, *al-Muqtataf* and *al-Hilal*. They espoused secularist ideas as an alternative to sectarianism and religion and embraced Darwinism. This brought al-Sarruf and al-Nimr into conflict with the missionary founders of the Protestant college, which resulted in their

¹⁰² Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism', 7.

¹⁰³ Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism, 433; Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism', 25.

¹⁰⁴ Hichem Karoui, 'Secularism and Liberal Thought in the Arab and Islamic World', *Middle East Studies Journal*, 6:3, 2011, <<http://www.middle-east-studies.net/archives/1774>> Last Accessed: 20th July 2015.

expulsion to Egypt in 1884.¹⁰⁵ Another graduate of the college, Shibli Shumayyil was the first to introduce Darwinian ideas to the Arab world through his writing in *al-Muqtataf*. Shumayyil also linked these views directly to politics - calling for the separation of religion from political life. Through their extensive writing, these thinkers consolidated the foundations of secularism in the Arab world. Inspired by eighteenth and nineteenth century liberal western ideas, they argued in favour of reason as the standard of human relations. Their political goal was the establishment of a secular state, which in their view would facilitate peaceful coexistence and equality between Christians and Muslims. The late Ottoman period in which these thinkers emerged was the birthplace of a secularised resistance to sectarianism. In intellectual circles, this was referred to as the *Nahda* (cultural renaissance).

The *Nahda* thinkers and the rise of Bolshevik Russia, inspired the formation of a variety of new secular socialist, nationalist and Arabist political parties during the colonial era, and following the rise of the modern Lebanese state. These included the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP), est. 1924, the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), est. 1932 and the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) est. 1949.¹⁰⁶ These parties emerged as the main opposition to Lebanon's liberal Maronite Christian and Sunni Muslim political elite. These parties called for a radical alternative to the laissez-faire economy in Lebanon, and - importantly - a demand for an end to the sectarian political structure.

Lebanon's secularist parties experienced their heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. President Fuad Chehab's efforts to implement a modicum of social reforms and a restructuring of the sectarian political system reflected the political pressure exerted on the elite by the secular parties. However, the Chehabist reforms were not enough, and with the rise of the Palestinian resistance movement in Lebanon, faltered in the face of a secularist alliance

¹⁰⁵ Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism', 433.

¹⁰⁶ Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism', 433.

with the Palestinian revolutionaries.¹⁰⁷ In this period, the major players in the secular movement formed the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), under the leadership of the PSP's Kemal Junblatt. This alliance entered the Lebanese Civil War in 1975, bringing together various parties of the communist, Palestinian and socialist left.

As the fighting of the Lebanese Civil War erupted across the country, the LNM engaged in a debate with the leaders of the various sectarian communities over the contemporary role of sectarianism in Lebanon.¹⁰⁸ They proposed abandoning Article 95 of the National Pact, which ensured the distribution of power according to sect. Instead, they proposed giving 'every Lebanese citizen the right to occupy any post in the Lebanese state including those of the President of the Republic, President of the Chamber and President of Government.'¹⁰⁹ The Council of 'Ulama' (a Sunni Muslim association) criticised the proposal, and what it regarded as its roots in the anti-religious Enlightenment, French and Russian revolutions.¹¹⁰ These objections were echoed by the Vice-President of the Supreme Islamic Shi'a Council, Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din. He argued that the secular state would fail to recognise the role of religion in society due to its derivation of authority from individual citizens. These religious leaders argued that secularism could not guarantee the religious freedom of Muslims. In this sense the confessional order afforded these communities some protection.¹¹¹

The secular movement failed to convince Lebanon's religious leaders of their reforms. The debate that occurred in 1975-1976 also revealed the extent to which the religious communities were opposed to revoking Article 95. The LNM went in to decline in the context of the civil war, and following the death of its leader Kemal Junblatt. In the war's aftermath, Lebanon's secularists continued to struggle against the power of the

¹⁰⁷ Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism', 434.

¹⁰⁸ David D. Grafton, 'The religious secularism of Lebanon and the United States: a discussion between Lebanon's secular debate and Madison's 'principles of pluralism', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 19:3, 2002, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism', 440.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ David D. Grafton, 'The religious secularism of Lebanon', 43.

country's religious institutions and the depth of attachment to sectarian identity. The post-war political landscape of the secularist movement has shifted away from the radical politics associated with the '60s and 70s toward a more incremental approach 'towards citizenship' or *Nahwa al-Muwatiniyya*.¹¹²

The analysis in this section presented an overview of the key historical moments in the evolution of sectarian and secular identities in Lebanon. It argued that secularism emerged as a resistance identity against the sectarian political structure. There also emerged a paradox in the way sectarianism is conceived by Lebanese society. Sectarianism is often used pejoratively in Lebanese political parlance, yet it is enshrined in the country's political structure. As we have also seen, the leaders of Lebanon's largest religious communities also view sectarianism as a guarantor of personal status rights. These differences point to a diversity of interpretations pertaining to the concepts of secularism and sectarianism in Lebanon. The analysis now turns to these questions of definition.

Ta'ifiya translates directly as communalism, though it is also understood as confessionalism or sectarianism in Lebanon. As Beydoun has noted, it has a range of meanings which imparts a degree of vagueness on the term, while allowing for multiple ambiguities in its definition and implementation.¹¹³ The dissimulation tendency in Lebanon arises from a particular interpretation of sectarianism. According to Makdissi, this refers to the,

'allegedly atavistic tendency among Lebanon's various religious communities that undermines wataniyya (patriotism); thus the inter-communal massacres of 1860 and, of course those that occurred between 1975 and 1990 are often cited as prominent examples of sectarianism.'¹¹⁴

¹¹² Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism', 441.

¹¹³ Ahmad Beydoun, 'A Note on Confessionalism', in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam (eds), *Lebanon in Limbo: Postwar Society and State in an Uncertain Regional Environment*, Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft Baden, 2003, 75.

¹¹⁴ Ussama Makdissi, 'The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon', *MERIP*, 200 26:1996 <<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer200/modernity-sectarianism-lebanon>> Last accessed 20th July 2015

This is the view that posits the secular nation as inclusive, stable and democratic, whereas sectarianism is portrayed as exclusionary, undemocratic and disorderly.¹¹⁵ As we saw in the discussion on the development of secularism in Western contexts, sectarianism is depicted as the antithesis of the nationalist project, opposed to the territorially bounded, liberal nation-state. However, Makdissi makes an important intervention to this narrative:

‘the nationalist approach to sectarianism, which poses a tolerant and secular modernity against a resurgent religious fundamentalism, has itself to be historicized.’¹¹⁶

In this sense, the discourse of nationalism and sectarianism are fundamentally linked. This interaction is particularly felt by those communities in Lebanon that have historically felt excluded from national politics. The Shi‘a are one such community. As Shaery-Eisenlohr has shown in her study of the Lebanese Shi‘a, sectarianism and nationalism are not entirely separate categories. On the contrary, they form a dialectical relationship.¹¹⁷ This recalls the earlier points raised about the exclusionary, undemocratic possibilities in secular nationalist states. Beydoun highlights an additional factor that has further complicated the secular nationalist project in Lebanon. This is,

the paradox of a national unity in a multi-religious society wherein religion is inscribed as the citizen’s most important public attribute -- stamped prominently on his or her identification and voter registration card.¹¹⁸

This contradiction is a core problem for Lebanon’s secular nationalists. However, this particular conceptualisation of secularism (contra

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ussama Makdissi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000, 6.

¹¹⁷ Roshanak Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi‘ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and The Making of National Identities*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 20.

¹¹⁸ Ussama Makdissi, ‘The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon’, *MERIP*, 200 26:1996 <<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer200/modernity-sectarianism-lebanon>> Last accessed 20th July 2015

sectarianism) is not the only possibility for Lebanon and indeed is not the focus of the present study.

There are more neutral avenues for defining sectarianism in Lebanon that don't automatically introduce a binary with secularism. Sectarianism can also refer to a variety of specific descriptions of the nature of the Lebanese political system. It may refer to any or several of the following: the political administrative system of government, the social reality of sectarianism, the institutional organisation of the sect, a collective or individual attitude that involves sectarian institutions in the management of society, the exclusive identification with a religious community, affiliation with an institution or even a communal way of thinking, behaving or living.¹¹⁹ The definition of sectarianism in Lebanon adopted by this study adopts Beydoun's rendering, which is as follows:

Confessionalism...is the subjective and objective sense of collective identification and its institutional expression in global society...[It is] an unequally accepted and diversely interpreted contract between the confessional communities that constitute Lebanese society: a contract that stipulates the preservation of a minimal public space that all communities expect will ensure the exercise of the internal functions and privileges of the state.¹²⁰

Whilst sectarianism is the primary identity in Lebanese society, this analysis has also shown that it has, historically, inspired a counter demand for secularism. Many Lebanese who are not religious find it very difficult to disassociate themselves from their 'signature identity group' i.e the sect.¹²¹ However, secularism need not be understood singularly as a distancing of religion from the political field. An alternative view posits that secularism makes it possible for different communities to retain their identities, regardless of their status or rank in the political system. This requires secularism to be conceived of as an additional, rather than replacement,

¹¹⁹ Ahmad Beydoun, A Note on Confessionalism, in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam (eds) *Lebanon in Limbo: Postwar Society and State in an Uncertain Regional Environment*, Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft Baden, 2003, 75

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism in Multicultural Societies' in Theodor Hanf and Nawaf Salam (eds) *Lebanon in Limbo: Postwar Society and State in an Uncertain Regional Environment*, Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft Baden, 2003, 9.

identity. This study adopts Ilya Harik's contextual model of secularism, as a mode of behaviour rather than a fixed position of hostility to religion. In this view, secularism does not require the individual to throw off or disavow their sectarian identity, or simply replace it with a secular identity. On the contrary, it allows the expansion of the identity repertoire to include more than one active identity.¹²² This study's analysis of the Lebanese Shi'i community's relationship with the LCP provides an empirical example of this type of fluidity in secular identifications.

The contextual model of secularism allows the citizen to be mobile in the public sphere, defining his or her position and course of action according to the specific context, unhindered by their sectarian identity. This enables citizens from diverse backgrounds to find common ground in the public sphere, or to disassociate, a choice that is determined by the issue, rather than coercion.¹²³ In this sense, the more diverse views that are expressed and taken by members of a particular sect, the greater the potential for the secularisation process to succeed. As Harik argues, free interaction among the sects has long been a feature of the Lebanese public sphere, but it is not conceived of as secularism, which is understood in the Western sense i.e. the separation of religion and politics.¹²⁴

In line with the above delineation of secularism, the definition deployed by this study is as follows:

Secularism is the freedom of the individual or group to move in and out across social borders in a process of interaction, which does not obliterate distinctive identities nor use them as a pretext to exclude others.¹²⁵

This definition of secularism represents an ideal type, which foregrounds the proceeding analysis. However, the empirical focus of this study also requires a practical conceptualisation of secularism among the groups

¹²² Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism', 14.

¹²³ Ibid, 22.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 22.

¹²⁵ Iliya Harik 'Toward a New Perspective on Secularism', 35.

which constitute the Lebanese left. For this movement, the organising principal of sectarianism is a central element of its ideology. Thus, the binary model must still be treated as relevant to this study. To be a leftist, and for this study's purposes, a communist, the adherent must seek to transgress, subvert and fundamentally challenge the boundaries between sects and their institutional organisation in law. Secularism is a core concept among the Lebanese left. As stated by Haugbolle,

It [secularism] refers directly to their refutation of the basic principle of Lebanon's political and social contract as it was formulated in the National Pact of 1943 and reaffirmed in the Taif Accord in 1989: that individuals are legally recognised as members of a religious sect first and as citizens second.¹²⁶

This study's empirical analysis of communism and the Shi'a therefore defines secularism as a political project that seeks to abolish political sectarianism in Lebanon. This returns us to an earlier point about the role of secularism in establishing a counter-narrative in Lebanese politics, or a resistance identity. The questions that remain are, why and how did secularism become mobilised as a resistance identity in Lebanon? Resistance constitute the third major theme in this thesis. The analysis now moves on to explore the nature and function of resistance identities in the context of theories of political mobilisation.

The Political Mobilisation of Resistance Identities

Power plays a key role in the social construction of identities. In Lebanon, power relationships determine the interaction between secular and sectarian identities. Power struggles between the state elite and elements of Lebanese society produced a counter-narrative of resistance. Secular identities emerged as an important vehicle for the mobilisation of resistance against political sectarianism in Lebanon. However, theories of political mobilisation have conventionally overlooked the potential for resistance identities to be the driving force behind mobilisation. The focus has instead been on legitimising identities, which are produced by the state

¹²⁶ Sune Haugbolle, 'Social Boundaries and Secularism', 429.

and its institutions. For example, Nettl defines political mobilisation as 'the collective and structured expression of commitment and support within society.'¹²⁷ He views the main functions of political mobilisation as two-fold. First, to articulate interests and second, to legitimise authority.¹²⁸ Nationalism is an example of a legitimising identity. In Lebanon sectarianism is a central component of state nationalism, which comprises the legitimising identity in this context.

A second type of legitimising identity is mobilisation that seeks the redistribution of power, or the reshaping of the existing political structure in society.¹²⁹ This allows for the possibility that actors might seek to adjust, rather than overhaul, the existing system. The mobilisation of legitimising identities can occur through a variety of mediums, for example political parties, interest groups or social movements. Nettl attributes the activities of such groups to societal divisions, which form the initial basis upon which mobilisation occurs. These divisions develop into issues that are adopted by the mobilised group as they mature and become self-sustaining.¹³⁰ These functions form the process of mobilisation. However, legitimising identities are not the only basis upon which political mobilisation occurs.

Political mobilisation is not necessarily about acceptance of a regime or political system. New political identities often emerge as a form of resistance. An actor, or group of actors, may seek to radically change the existing distribution of power, rather than simply legitimise the existing order. Mobilisation may therefore represent resistance to the status quo, or opposition to a particular path of development adopted by a ruling

¹²⁷ JP Nettl, *Political Mobilization*, London: Faber & Faber, 1967, 123.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Brigitta Nedelmann, 'Individuals and Parties-Changes in Processes of Political Mobilization', *European Sociological Review*, 3:3,1987,190.

¹³⁰ JP Nettl, *Political Mobilization*, 123.

regime.¹³¹ This is the type of political mobilisation that occurs on the basis of a resistance identity.

Recognition of the role played by resistance identities in political mobilisation must also entail an analysis of the process through which resistance identities are constructed i.e why and how they emerge. According to Castells, resistance identities are,

generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued or stigmatised by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different to, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society.¹³²

The generation of resistance identities builds on material from history, geography, collective memory, culture and religious revelations, among others.¹³³ Generation can also be the product of more contemporary events, such as an unpopular governmental policy or the development of dissatisfaction with a regime over time. In this sense, the policy arena becomes an important context in which resistance identities arise. This can involve both the composition and decisions of the policy elites. As stated by Cameron,

it is...the degree to which policies are perceived to be unresponsive to needs - the degree to which they create or maintain perceptions of relative deprivation - which provides the spark for mobilization efforts.¹³⁴

Castells argues that resistance identities are the most important type of mobilisation in our time. Resistance identities lead to the formation of communities, which organise collective resistance against an otherwise unbearable opposition. Resistance identities, like other types of identities, are formed on the basis of history, geography or biology, which also

¹³¹ David R. Cameron, 'Toward a Theory of Political Mobilization', *The Journal of Politics*, 36:1, 1974,140; Stein Rokkan, 'Electoral Mobilization, Party Competition and National Integration', 241-265, in Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner, *Political Parties and Political Development*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966.

¹³² Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy Society and Culture Volume II*, 2nd Edition, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004, 7-8.

¹³³ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 12.

¹³⁴ Cameron, 'Toward a Theory of Political Mobilization', 145.

predisposes them to essentialism, much like the identities they seek to oppose.¹³⁵ Resistance identities can therefore manifest as ‘the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded’ i.e the construction of a defensive identity vis a vis the dominant institutions and ideologies of the state, which serve to challenge the state’s hegemonic identity while also reinforcing the boundary between excluder and excluded.¹³⁶ These features are visible in the case of Lebanon, where secularism constitutes a resistance identity, for example in the binary some adherents portray between secularism and sectarianism.

Recognition is a core goal of political mobilisation on the basis of resistance identities. If resistance identities are generated by a perception of exclusion, or non-recognition, then it is clear why recognition becomes a central objective. If, for example, the state identity refuses, diminishes or displaces other identities, the affected communities may seek a reversal of this position. In addition, the state may impose identities that are at odds with the identity claims of those labelled. This therefore becomes the basis on which resistance to imposed or fixed identities occurs.¹³⁷ Claims for recognition are also often more than just claims for tolerance. The proponents of resistance identities may advocate for greater rights, such as recognition in employment, education or in legal treatment, to name a few possibilities.

As with all issues pertaining to identity politics, how and by whom resistance identities are constructed, and with what outcomes, cannot be addressed in general, abstract terms. These issues are dependent on the social context. Resistance identities must therefore be situated historically.¹³⁸ In this study, secularism is the primary resistance identity under consideration. Secularism constitutes a resistance identity because it poses a structural counter-hegemonic challenge to the legitimising identity

¹³⁵ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 9.

¹³⁶ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 9.

¹³⁷ Craig Calhoun, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994, 20-21.

¹³⁸ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 10.

(sectarianism) of the Lebanese state. As the empirical analysis will show, the relationship between the LCP and the Lebanese Shi'a was coalesced around secularism as a resistance identity.

The analysis so far has focussed on the generation of political mobilisation and two main types - legitimising identities and resistance identities. The discussion has explored the nature and functions of resistance identities and delineated this study's application of resistance identity to the secular movement in Lebanon. The factors involved in the generation of resistance identities analysed above are important components of the broader process of political mobilisation. Of equal importance are how and by whom political mobilisation on the basis of resistance identities occurs. This brings us to the role of agency in political mobilisation, to which the analysis now turns.

Agency in Political Mobilisation

Early mobilisation theory identified social processes as the ultimate initiators of political mobilisation. The sociologist, Karl Deutsch, theorised that modernisation processes inevitably led to social mobilisation. Deutsch argued that mobilisation was a process in which 'old social, economic, and psychological commitments are eroded or broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behavior.'¹³⁹ The sources of this uprootedness were, in this view, urbanisation, commercialisation and industrialisation. These processes were the necessary prior conditions for political mobilisation, which involved the introduction of the 'socially up-rooted' into stable new patterns of behaviour and commitment. The outcomes of political mobilisation in this context include,

increases in the number and membership of political or quasi political organisations, in the scope and exercise of the franchise, and in the policy role and policy impact of the national government.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Karl Deutsch, 'Social Mobilization and Political Development', *The American Political Science Review*, 55:3, 1961, 494.

¹⁴⁰ Cameron, 'Toward a Theory of Political Mobilization', 138.

The role of modernisation in political mobilisation is certainly important. However, whilst modernisation processes might be the factors that initially spark mobilisation, they provide no particular indication of how an individual or group is moved to action as a result. Cameron highlights three of the shortcomings associated with Deutsch's mobilisation thesis. The first concerns the missing link between modernisation and mobilisation - i.e how the 'socially available' might become introduced to new or alternative patterns of political behaviour. Second, mobilisation is assumed to be the overriding feature of the modernisation process. However, the causal link between mobilisation processes and political mobilisation is missing. Thirdly, such theories are socially determinist in that they assume political mobilisation will always be the product of certain types of division and social change.¹⁴¹ The notion that such changes do in fact uproot individuals and break apart old social ties and identities is not adequately proven, and remains assumed. Indeed modernisation theory itself has drawn criticism for the assumption that traditional ties, usually meaning religious and communal bonds, become unravelled, producing more rational individuals with self-interests. So-called traditional forms of identification have been known to persist, despite the effects of urbanisation and related modernisation processes.

An alternative approach focusses on the organisations and the leaders with which the newly mobilised individuals or collectivities become associated. The recruitment policies and promotional activities of political actors or movement leaders play a role in attracting individuals that might be prone to or available for mobilisation. Tilly notes that the role of political entrepreneurs in this process are important. These might include party leaders, ethnic leaders or community organisers. These actors are responsible for creating the 'we-they' boundaries, generating new political identities and adherents, while simultaneously moving to suppress other competing identities.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Cameron, 'Toward a Theory of Political Mobilization', 139.

¹⁴² Tilly, 'Political Identities', 612.

Political actors who seek to mobilise their movement participants, or attract new members, will seek to establish a positive image of themselves as a viable alternative to preexisting movements or political rivals, championing issues that are important to the newly mobilised stratum of society. The extent to which political actors or organisations can adapt their infrastructure to accommodate changes will determine their success.¹⁴³ This is a crucial element of their own survival techniques and strategies to remain politically relevant, and viable contenders for political power. For this purpose, the mobilising actor must be able to adapt its ideology to capture and articulate newly arisen discontent, which requires sufficient resources.

Political mobilisation often results from a collective feeling of disillusionment by an aggrieved community, which feels neglected by the status quo. In this sense, political mobilisation is not always about lending legitimacy or support to a political system. On the contrary, it can also be a means of resisting the system. Any analysis of political mobilisation, particularly with regard to the process of how it takes place, should consider the role of the mobilising agent, or political entrepreneurs, and their attempts to create or redraw identity boundaries. How these actors promote themselves to potential adherents, and the extent to which they can successfully mould an ideology and resource infrastructure to both appeal to and cater for the desires of their adherents, is just as important a consideration as the question of why political mobilisation occurs. In this study, the analysis focusses in equal measure on the activities of the LCP in terms of the party's efforts to appeal to and recruit communist Shi'i adherents, as well as the factors conducive to the mobilisation of the Shi'a, and their gravitation toward the LCP.

Conclusion

The conceptualisation of identity deployed throughout this study has four main features. Firstly, identities are inherently diverse and changeable.

¹⁴³ Cameron, 'Toward a Theory of Political Mobilization', 140

Every individual possesses a broad repertoire of cohabiting identities that are organised along a fluid hierarchy. Secondly, the process through which identities are formed is primarily determined by the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion that are established by a variety of relational interactions e.g between individuals, groups or indeed the nation-state. Thirdly, the transformation of identity is determined by the context or environment in which the individual, group or collectivity exists. The process of transformation occurs after a change in the hierarchy of identities, for example where a previously dormant identity may supersede a more salient one. A hybridised understanding of identity is proposed for this study, which combines primordial with constructionist theories of identity. This recognises the presence of primordial attachments, such as sect, on an individual's or community's identity repertoire. However, the hybridised approach posits that primordial identities are not inherently salient, rather the conditions under which they or other identities become predominant must be proven and established. This thesis focusses on the interaction between secular and sectarian political identities in Lebanon as an example of hybridisation. The relationship between the Lebanese Shi'a and communism represents an example of this hybridity. In order to analyse the processes through which political identities become mobilised, this study utilises a specific conceptualisation of political mobilisation. Two bases of mobilisation were highlighted in this chapter: legitimising identities and resistance identities. Legitimising identities accept the structural parameters of the existing political system and lead to affirmative forms of political mobilisation, in accordance with the political system. However, resistance identities lead to political mobilisation in opposition to the structural parameters of a political system. This usually occurs because the mobilised group feels unrepresented, marginalised or repressed by that system. In addition to the structural factors that give rise to political mobilisation however, the agents of political mobilisation are also an important component of mobilisation processes. The agents of mobilisation, or identity entrepreneurs, are usually movement leaders, political parties, social movements etc. They are the intermediaries who determine the strategies for political mobilisation. In this sense, structure

and agency are essential to understanding the causes and processes of political mobilisation.

The ensuing analysis deploys a framework based on the relationship between secularism and sectarianism, as an example of hybridisation in the political mobilisation of a resistance identity among the Lebanese Shi'a. The analysis shows how this identity of resistance has its origins in the Shi'i community's relationship with the secular parties of the Lebanese left, the LCP in particular. However, as the secular political movement in Lebanon faltered in the context of the Lebanese Civil War, this study shows how a secular resistance identity transformed into a sectarian resistance identity among the Lebanese Shi'a.

Chapter 2 ~ The Identities and Political Mobilisation of the Shi'a during Ottoman and French Rule 1516-1943

This chapter details the early identities and political development of the Shi'a during the Ottoman Empire (1516-1920) and French Mandate (1920-1943). The analysis introduces the main political actors that emerged among the Shi'a during this period. Whilst studies of the Lebanese Shi'a tend to locate their political mobilisation in the 1960s and beyond, the analysis in this chapter shows that their mobilisation was already underway before Lebanon became independent in 1943. The Shi'i community also developed a diverse range of political identities throughout this historical period. The ensuing analysis explains the genesis of these identities, while also demonstrating that the main objective of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation during these early years was their pursuit of inclusion in the emergent Lebanese state.

This chapter develops four main arguments. Firstly, Shi'i politics was characterised by the pursuit of inclusion in the political administrations of the Ottoman and French authorities. This is illustrated by examining the relationship between the Ottoman authorities and the Shi'i *zu'ama'*. On the one hand, the Ottoman state officially regarded its Shi'i minority as heretics, thus rendering the Shi'a prone to exclusion and repression. On the other hand, the practicalities of administering the Empire led the Ottoman state to frequently co-opt powerful Shi'i political families into its ruling administrative apparatus. The theory and practice of Ottoman rule is therefore more nuanced than early histories of the Shi'a have recognised.

Secondly, the analysis asserts that the sites of political mobilisation among the Shi'a were varied and inclusive of different types of elites and non-elites during this period. In this sense, Shi'i politics was not solely the

purview of a small landed elite (the *zu'ama'*). The analysis shows that Ottoman reforms led to the social stratification of the Shi'a, and the emergence of new politicised elites, including the *wujaha* and *literati* (intellectuals). Furthermore, the imposition of the French Mandate in 1920 initiated the rise of non-elite forms of mobilisation among the Shi'i peasantry and workers. Although the *zu'ama'*, *wujaha*, *literati*, peasants and workers were distinct social groupings among the Shi'a, the analysis emphasises the interaction and cooperation between these groups towards the latter stages of the French Mandate.

Thirdly, the analysis posits that Shi'i political identities throughout this period were polytactic: multiple and changeable, but *not* sectarian/communal.¹⁴⁴ The analysis challenges accounts of the Shi'a that associate the 'sectarianisation' of their political identities with the Mandate period, in particular.¹⁴⁵ The analysis asserts that Shi'i political identities must be situated in the local, national and transnational environments that fermented their diversity and transformation. In this sense, the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Arab nationalism towards the end of World War I, gave rise to rival pro-Ottoman and pan-Arabist identities among the Shi'i elite. The imposition of the French Mandate initiated an anti-colonial movement among the Shi'i peasantry and workers. These groups rejected France's idea of Greater Lebanon, and instead sought reunification with Syria as part of the Arab nationalist movement. The analysis also shows that the unifying feature of these different Shi'i social groupings was not their sectarian identity but their collective pursuit of inclusion and recognition in the developing Lebanese polity.

¹⁴⁴ From the Greek poly (many), taxis (order) G. Elwert, 'Switching of We-Group Identities: The Alavis as a Case Among Others', in K. Kehl- Bodrogi, B. Kellner-Heinkele and A. Otter-Beaujean (eds.), *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, Leiden, New York and Koln: Brill, 1997, 67.

¹⁴⁵ Weiss uses this term to describe the process of political identity formation among the Shi'a during the French Mandate in Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism : Law, Shiism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010. Chalabi also subscribes to the notion that the Shi'a acquired a sectarian identity during the French Mandate in Tamara Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil and the New Lebanon*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Fourthly, the analysis argues that the Shi'i community's strategies of mobilisation converged around a politics of demand and protest. These strategies included political lobbying, petitioning, editorialising (and other forms of literary activism), as well as strike action, demonstrations, armed rebellion and uprisings. The methods chosen depended on the particular social grouping undertaking action. For example, the *zu'ama'* were more likely to partake in political lobbying and petitioning, while the intellectuals utilised the written word, and the peasantry pursued strike action, demonstrations and armed rebellion.

To address the highlighted arguments, the first section of this chapter begins with an overview of the main social groups that emerged among the Shi'a throughout this historical period. The analysis then moves on to explore the political development of the Shi'a during the Ottoman Empire. This involves an analysis of the theory and practice of Ottoman rule as experienced by the Shi'a, before detailing how the Ottoman reform process led to the social stratification of the community. The chapter then moves on to analyse the political development of the Shi'a under the French Mandate. The discussion includes an analysis of the origins of the Shi'i community's relationship with the Palestinians, the nature of the Shi'i community's politics of demand and protest, and the political status of the Shi'a on the eve of Lebanon's independence. The analysis concludes that by the end of the French Mandate, the Shi'i community was highly restive and mobilised, with great expectations for an improvement to their political, social and economic status in an independent Lebanon.

Sites of Political Mobilisation among the Lebanese Shi'a

Lebanon's Twelver Shi'a have historically resided in Jabal 'Amil and the Bekaa Valley. Jabal 'Amil is a mountain located in the southern part of Lebanon, which extends between the slopes of the Lebanese coastal range and the anti-Lebanon in the east. To the west of Jabal 'Amil lies the Mediterranean sea, with Palestine to the south and Jordan to the east. The

geographic status of Lebanon's Shi'i regions has been subject to change by the different entities ruling the territory. In the early Ottoman period, Jabal 'Amil was part of the wilayet of Damascus, which lay on a direct trade route between Damascus and Sidon, then an active port city.¹⁴⁶

The Zu'ama'

The *zu'ama'*, or traditional political families, are the most enduring feature of political organisation in Lebanon, and not just among the Shi'a. They have survived in part due to the institutionalisation of sectarian identities in the Lebanese political system, which grants access to the political institutions of the state on the basis of sectarian ratios and portfolio allocations. An additional explanation for why the political families have survived for so

long pertains to their political adaptiveness and ability to form symbiotic relations with the central political authority in Lebanon; from Ottoman rule, through to the French Mandate and into independent Lebanon. The analysis here begins with a simple definition of the *zu'ama'* (sing. *za'im*) and their political functions. The discussion highlights their personalist, interest-driven politics, which has frequently superseded the sectarian parameters of their existence in Lebanon. The analysis then moves on to highlight the key Shi'i *zu'ama'* families that have historically dominated the community's political representation in Lebanon.

According to Hottinger, a *za'im* is

a recognised leader of a community who has the power to speak for his clients as a group of individuals, who is expected to take action in their and in his interest whenever necessary.¹⁴⁷

Traditionally, the interaction between a *za'im* and his supporters was characterised by a patron-client relationship. Clientalist networks are

¹⁴⁶ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 12.

¹⁴⁷ Arnold Hottinger, 'Zu'amā' and the Parties in the Lebanese Crisis of 1958', *The Middle East Journal*, 15:2, 1961, 128.

developed around uneven but mutually beneficial relationships. The client gets what he needs and reciprocates with political loyalty.¹⁴⁸ An individual would seek out his *za'im* if he had business to conduct with someone more powerful than himself, for example a government official. The political families also fulfilled the function of landlord, employer or the intermediary through which an individual sought access to employment. At times of war, it was the responsibility of the political families to defend their territory and followers. Those loyal or with vested interests in their *zu'ama'* became their armed following. During peace time the relationship was more expansive, ranging from moral, political and commercial allegiance to the *za'im*, his family or the local group under his influence.¹⁴⁹ Episodes of state breakdown, experienced frequently in Lebanon, often served to invigorate the power of the political families. Where the state appeared absent or ineffectual, citizens turned to their families, including the *zu'ama'*, for resources and protection.¹⁵⁰ However, it is important to note that the Shi'i *zu'ama'* were less adept at fulfilling these functions during wartime. In the Lebanese Civil War for example, the Shi'i *zu'ama'* were superseded by the militias. The PLO represented a particular challenge to the military superiority of the Shi'i *zu'ama'*. The first generation of Shi'i *zu'ama'*, whose descendants still occupy political office in modern Lebanon, comprise the Harfush and Hamadeh families in the Bekaa Valley and Mount Lebanon, and the al-As'ad, 'Usayran and al-Fadl families in Jabal 'Amil. These families dominated political organisation throughout the early stages of the Ottoman Empire, before rival political families emerged, the *wujaha*. The most notable figure to emerge among the Shi'i *zu'ama'* of Jabal 'Amil was Kemal Bey al-As'ad, born in 1870 in Taybeh, the seat of the dominant branch of the al-As'ad clan. Kemal Bey claimed descent from the al-Saghir family which associates itself with Mohammad bin Haza al Wa'ili

¹⁴⁸ A. Nizar Hamzeh, 'Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 37:3, July 2001, 172.

¹⁴⁹ Hottinger, 'Zu'amā', 129.

¹⁵⁰ Suad Joseph, 'Political Familism in Lebanon', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, No. 636, 2011, 154.

whom, according to Shi'i tradition is believed to have inherited the emirate of Jabal 'Amil in the early 16th century. Several of Kemal Bey's ancestors are believed to have died in battle, defending land and faith. As a result, his words and actions carried significant weight among the community. Kemal Bey's lineage was perceived as a symbolic example of Shi'i historical projections of their past, characterised as struggle and

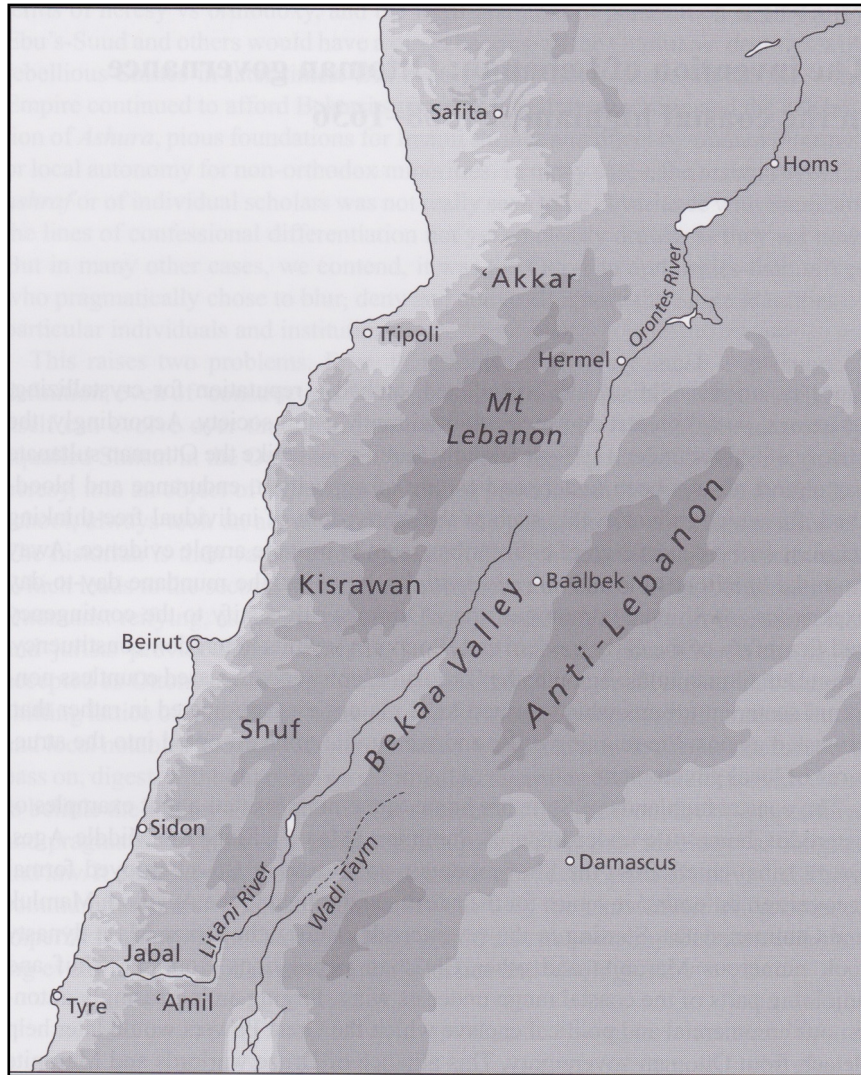
martyrdom in the face of injustice.¹⁵¹ In this framework, Kemal Bey al As'ad was well placed to rule over Jabal 'Amil's Shi'a. The structure of the *zu'ama'* system is hereditary. The title is passed from father to son, and only in rare cases from father to daughter. During the Ottoman Empire, the political families primarily derived their power from land ownership, social and political influence.¹⁵² Political influence complemented land ownership since the *zu'ama'* required significant wealth in order to effectively carry out their functions.

The political families inherited both the wealth and political legacies of their predecessors. Where such legacies were strong, the *zu'ama'* preserved their influence across multiple generations. However, the sources of their power and the nature of their political influence have undergone many changes and transformations in the context of Lebanon's modern development.

The first generation of Shi'i political families derived their power from tax collection (*iltizam*), land ownership and the sheer size of their family unit. The sources of their power and influence can be further linked to eight key areas: family background, economic ownership (land and feudal ties), hospitality and generosity toward their community, coercion, support for the dominant political authority, resource and service provision and

¹⁵¹ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 29.

¹⁵² Rodger Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005, 17.



*Map of Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley (from Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule* p. 32)*

finally, military prowess.¹⁵³ However, the nature and sources of their power have also been subject to change, generally becoming more bureaucratic.

As will be shown later in this chapter, Ottoman reforms had a significant impact on the nature of the political families' power. The social position of the *zu'ama'* was transferred to positions in the civil service. The reforms served to strengthen the power of the political families, whilst also giving rise to new notable families, known as the *wujaha*.

¹⁵³ Hayat Nabeel Osseyran, 'The Shiite Leadership of South Lebanon: A Reconsideration', MA Thesis, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1997, 37.

The Wujaha

The rise of the *wujaha* occurred in the 1800s, in the aftermath of a series of Ottoman reforms. The Ottoman land law of 1858 facilitated this development, although its effects were not felt in Jabal ‘Amil until the 1870s.¹⁵⁴ This law regularised land taxes and the survey of land. Several families in Sidon, Tyre, Nabatiyya and Bint Jbeil acquired landed property or became *multazims*, effectively transforming themselves into new *zu ‘ama* families.¹⁵⁵ The three most prominent families who achieved this breakthrough were the ‘Usayran, Khalil and Zayn families.¹⁵⁶ The ‘Usayran’s family history began in Sidon in the 16th Century; they were landowning grain merchants originally from Baalbek. They also had historic ties to the Qajar rulers of Iran. In 1848 they were appointed ‘Shabandars’ of Iran, which gave them access to commercial privileges.¹⁵⁷ The Zayn family claims descent from the Khazraj tribes in Medina, and trace their presence to the towns of Nabatiyya, Jibshit and Tyre in Jabal ‘Amil to the 16th Century.¹⁵⁸ Of the older generation in Jabal ‘Amil, only the al-As‘ad family retained its position of privilege.

The *wujaha* became an interrelated social group, bound by marriage. Their power arose from their successful manipulation of the newly instituted taxation system in Jabal ‘Amil, an outcome of the Ottoman land law. The *wujaha* became intermediaries between Ottoman surveyors and the local financial and judicial bureaucrats. The latter were poorly paid, which served as the avenue for their cooperation with the *wujaha* for mutual financial gain. Their wealth accrued them a significant degree of confidence and independence, thus the *wujaha* developed political voices, too.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Tarif Khalidi, ‘Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan’ in Marwan R. Buheiry (ed.), *Intellectual Life in the Arab East 1890-1939*, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981, 121; Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal Amil*, 24.

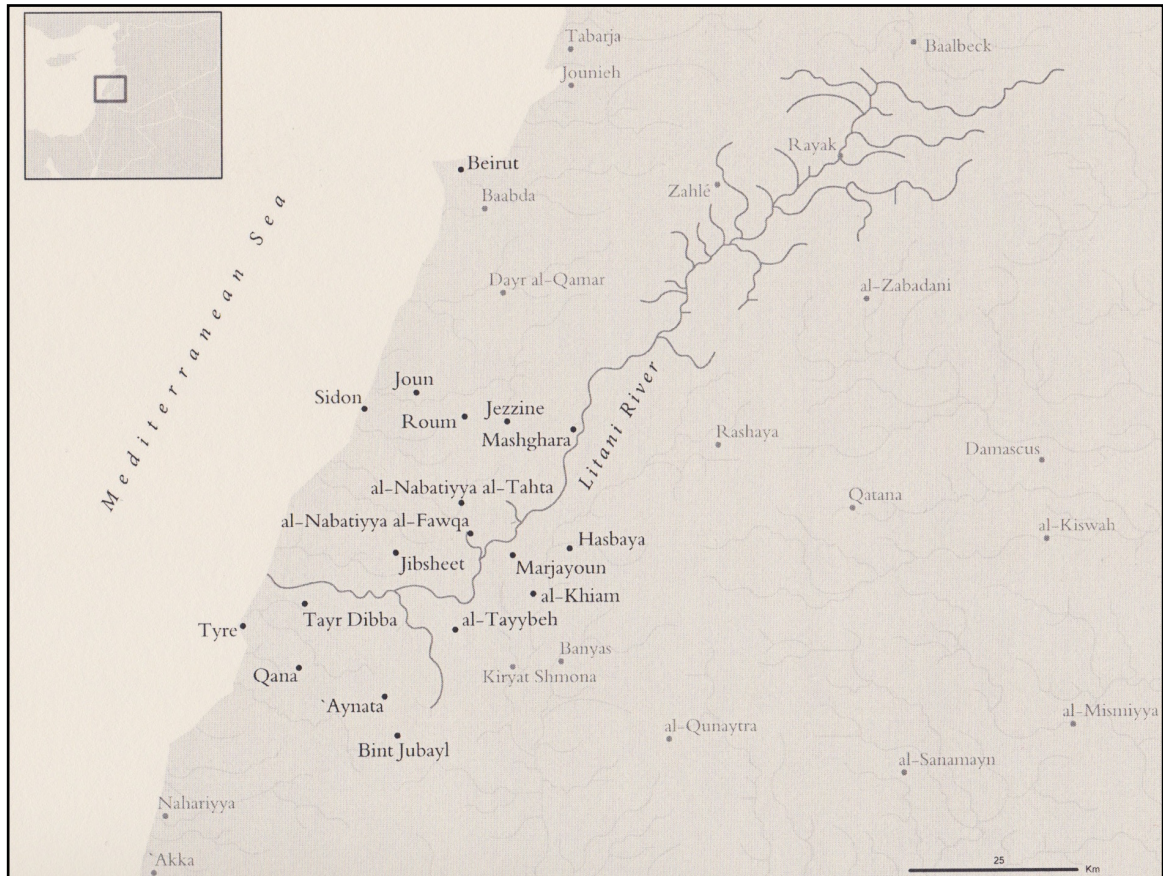
¹⁵⁵ Khalidi, ‘Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan’, 121.

¹⁵⁶ Khalidi, ‘Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan’, 121-2.

¹⁵⁷ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 25.

¹⁵⁹ Khalidi, ‘Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan’, 121-122.



Map of Jabal 'Amil (South Lebanon) from Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism* p. xii)

The *wujaha* were primarily an urban bourgeoisie, their emergence transformed the socio-political dynamics of Jabal 'Amil and they became rivals to the elder *zu 'ama'*. Several members of the Zayn family had links to the 'ulama' in Najaf, Iraq. The most well known of these was Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn, who became the founder of the highly influential journal *al-Irfan*.¹⁶⁰ Out of the *wujaha* stratum emerged another social grouping among the Shi'a - the intellectuals.

The Literati

The Shi'i community's intellectual elite is a difficult social grouping to define and trace. As already indicated, during the Ottoman era this group emerged from another distinct social group, the *wujaha*. Many of the most

¹⁶⁰ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 25.

prominent members of this intellectual elite also had ties to the Shi‘i ‘ulama’, and espoused enlightened religious sentiments in the various periodicals they wrote for. As mentioned, *al-Irfan* became a prominent mouthpiece for the ‘Amili Shi‘a during the Ottoman and French Mandate eras. Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif al-Zayn was joined by Shaykh Sulayman Dahir, Ahmad Rida and Muhammad Jaber al-Safa, all of whom were a part of Nabatiyya’s intellectual elite, and played important roles in the region’s cultural progress.¹⁶¹ Although they were well educated, their level of education was not on par with the returning ‘ulama’ from Najaf in Iraq.¹⁶² The elevated status of these intellectuals among the community had more to do with their political activities than professional qualifications.

The intellectuals developed good relations with the region’s other communities, particularly the Sunni grain merchants in Sidon; this also facilitated their urban connections. The intellectuals subscribed to a revisionist notion of Islamic identity that placed a greater emphasis on cultural and civilisational dimensions, rather than public worship and ritual practice. Jabal ‘Amil’s intellectuals were the first to muse about Arab nationalism, and the notion of an Arab state, as opposed to an Islamic one.¹⁶³ They did not espouse a distinctly ‘Amili (i.e sectarian) identity, unless dealing with the Ottoman authorities. Otherwise their Arab identity predominated. The most unifying feature of this intellectual elite was that they were a diffuse group with multiple connections to the Shi‘i community’s other main social groups. Unlike the ‘ulama’, they did not represent a distinct category, though they did maintain close ties with the ‘ulama’, which granted them greater legitimacy in the view of the local community.¹⁶⁴

The diffuse nature of the Shi‘i community’s intellectual elite is an enduring feature of this stratum. When Lebanon became independent in 1943, the

¹⁶¹ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 33.

¹⁶² Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 35.

¹⁶³ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 34.

¹⁶⁴ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 35.

community's intellectuals remained disparate and difficult to define. The analysis in this thesis offers some further insights in to the role played by Shi'i intellectuals in the LCP, and in the urban based protest movements emanating from the Lebanese University in Beirut in the 1950s and 1960s. Perhaps the most consistent feature of the intellectual elite is their more liberal engagement with Islamic political ideas. Much like the *al-Irfan* intellectuals, who adapted certain Islamic ideas over others, intellectuals among the communist Shi'a, e.g. Husayn Muruwwa and Mahdi 'Amil engaged in the same activity. Later in this thesis, examples of the intellectual exchange and interchange between communists ideas and Shi'i clerics, provides further evidence of the Shi'i community's intellectual dynamism. The discussion now turns to examine the role and functions of the Shi'i 'ulama'.

The 'Ulama'

The clerical families of Jabal 'Amil have a long and distinguished reputation for religious learning and education that began as early as the 14th century and lasted through to the 19th Century. During the Ottoman Empire, the 'ulama' had a significant degree of juridical autonomy in matters of personal status; this enabled the community to arbitrate disputes according to Jafari law rather than the Hanafi system. This challenges claims that the Shi'a did not receive such religious rights until the French Mandate. The 'ulama' families tended to establish dynasties, for example al-Amin, Sharaf al-Din and Shams al-Din are all well known religious families with a long heritage in South Lebanon. Despite the existence of these dynasties, however, the Shi'i 'ulama' were not significant political players during Ottoman and French rule.¹⁶⁵ This was largely due to their dependency on the Shi'i *zu'ama'*.

¹⁶⁵ Khalidi, 'Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan', 119.

In order to enforce their judgements, the 'ulama' relied on the influence of the *za'im* in their region, and formed a loose alliance for this purpose.¹⁶⁶ The 'ulama' rarely organised formal opposition over a political issue; on the rare occasion that a political stance was adopted, it would be according to lines already demarcated by other political actors, usually the *zu'ama'*. Specific 'ulama' families developed alliances with the political families that would last for generations.¹⁶⁷ The 'ulama' also lacked reliable sources of financial income, this was another source of their dependency on the political families, and the tendency toward political quietism.

Very few 'ulama' owned land; most lived on charitable donations and taxation. In the small villages, the 'ulama' were wholly dependent upon donations from the local population. The *khums* (tax) remained voluntary, and while the pious and wealthy members of the community paid the senior 'ulama' (sayyids) regularly, the tax was otherwise subject to regular bargaining.¹⁶⁸ At times of heightened political tensions, the *zu'ama'* would pay influential 'ulama' families to support their position; thus the clerics did enjoy a level of legitimacy and religious authority over their communities, even if they lacked a definitive political role.¹⁶⁹ The financial status of the 'ulama' therefore meant that they were rarely effected by the economic changes that influenced the *zu'ama'*, *wujaha* and peasantry.

The Shi'i clerics of Jabal 'Amil developed strong transnational links with the other centres of Shi'i learning, including Iran but to a greater extent, Najaf in Iraq, where many young scholars were sent for their religious education. Numerous stories abound of the poor Shi'i villagers who sold off the entirety of their belongings in order to be able to send their sons to Najaf. By the 19th century, the Shi'i scholarly curricula also paid more attention to the secular sciences than the Sunni curricular at this time.

¹⁶⁶ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 22.

¹⁶⁷ Khalidi, 'Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan', 122.

¹⁶⁸ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 22.

¹⁶⁹ Khalidi, 'Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan', 120.

It is important to note that the clerical families came from all strata of Lebanese Shi‘i society. It is not possible therefore to describe the ‘ulama’ as a particular class. In this sense, poverty was as much a feature of the Shi‘i clerics as it was the Shi‘i peasantry and workers, to which the analysis now turns.

Shi‘i Non-Elites: Workers and Peasants

As stated by Chalabi, the peasants ‘silent on paper, are difficult to document.’¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the ensuing analysis in this chapter documents significant episodes in the history of peasant-based mobilisation, in the form of uprisings, protests and rebellions against the French authorities. Peasant life was oppressive for the Shi‘a of Jabal ‘Amil. This was largely due to the imposition of a dual-taxation system on the region, which the local *zu‘ama* frequently exploited for personal benefit. After 1882 Jabal ‘Amil paid disproportionately higher taxes for its main agricultural outputs than other cities in Lebanon. For example, while Jabal ‘Amil’s cereal crop was taxed at 50%, the comparable export from Mount Lebanon, silk production was only taxed at 25%.¹⁷¹

The biggest burden on the peasantry came from the method through which taxes were collected, rather than the tax figure itself. There was no uniform system of collection. Taxes could be collected in cash or in kind. The process through which the tax was assessed could also be disruptive, as farmers would have to take their crops to market daily for the assessment to be carried out. Peasants also lived in a state of uncertainty over crop yields, weather, price changes and delayed payment for harvests. Furthermore, villages were not taxed on an equal basis. Rather, the rate depended on the power and influence of the landowning *zu‘ama*.¹⁷²

Chalabi identifies three types of peasant during the Ottoman period. The first were landless, illiterate and the most exploited. The second group

¹⁷⁰ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 19.

¹⁷¹ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 20-21.

¹⁷² Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 20-21.

were small landowners who had survived their levels of debt but were nevertheless a diminishing group. They eventually became part of the landless peasantry, and could not keep up with the new commercial environment unleashed by the Ottoman reform process. The third category consisted of the 'rich' peasants. These were the heads of villages, sheikhs and mukhtars, who were able to exploit their position and reclaim land they claimed was unusable. They employed workers to tend their land, and exploited the landless peasants who performed this job.¹⁷³

The exploited peasantry became a restive and mobilised element of the Shi'i community in the latter stages of the French Mandate. Rebellions occurred over a range of interconnected issues. This included the unfair taxation system Jabal 'Amil was still subject to under French rule, as well as the imposition of the *Regie*, the French tobacco monopoly that devastated the Shi'i workforce in this industry. Protests in Jabal 'Amil also occurred over changes to the region's economic system - the transfer of trade from the Port of Haifa to Beirut upset long held economic links between the southern Shi'a and the Palestinians. The Shi'a of Jabal 'Amil also expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian national movement, organising demonstrations, trading in weaponry and even participating in local resistance activities against the Zionist militias.¹⁷⁴

The social groupings discussed thus far comprise the main sites of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation during the Ottoman Empire and French Mandate. The analysis now moves on to examine their activities in greater detail, beginning with the Ottoman era before moving into Mandate Lebanon.

The Shi'a in the Ottoman Empire 1516-1920

Under Ottoman Rule, the Shi'a were a religious minority, subject to periodic episodes of repression and persecution. Particularly violent

¹⁷³ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 20-21.

¹⁷⁴ Malek Abisaab 'Shiite Peasants and a New Nation in Colonial Lebanon: The Intifada of Bint Jubayl, 1936', *Comparative Studies of South Asia and the Middle East*, 29:3, 2009, 490.

events, such as Ahmad Pasha al-Jazaar's campaign to reimpose Ottoman control over Jabal 'Amil in 1781, epitomise these readings. Emphasis on these experiences in Shi'i historiography creates an impression that the Shi'a were a politically marginalised and persecuted community under the Ottoman Empire, due to the latter's sectarian prejudices. However, a nuanced reading of this relationship reveals contradictions between the theory and practice of Ottoman rulings pertaining to its Shi'i minority. These nuances are examined below.

Early Ottoman-Shi'i relations in theory: Exclusion

According to Ottoman Islamic law, the Shi'a were considered heretics. The revolt of some Shi'i militant groups (*ghulat*) against the establishment of Ottoman rule and Islamic law in Anatolia in the late 1400s and 1500s, resulted in the proclamation of a legal position on Shi'ism that permitted the use of deadly force against this religious minority. The rebellious Shi'i groups were referred to by the Ottomans as *Qizilbash*, and they would apply this vocabulary against the Shi'a to justify their repression of this minority in the 1800s. When the Shi'a refused to pay taxes, and took up arms against the Ottoman authorities, the Ottomans denounce them as 'accursed Kizilbas whose elimination is a religious duty.'¹⁷⁵ This view was also shaped by external factors, including the Ottoman Empire's rivalry and conflict with the Safawid Shi'i Empire of Iran. Consequently, the Ottomans were highly suspicious of their own Shi'i populations, and their apparent relationship with Safawid Iran.¹⁷⁶ Perceived occurrences, such as the invited migration of Shi'i clerics from Jabal 'Amil to Iran, served to heighten fears of collaboration. However, the reality of Jabal 'Amil's

¹⁷⁵ Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 1.

¹⁷⁶ Hussein Gharbieh, *Lebanese Communalism and the Creation of a Shi'i Identity*, Beirut: Dar al-Manhal al-Lubnani, 2010, 18.

cooperation with Safawid Persia and the migration of clerics was in fact minimal, and often exaggerated.¹⁷⁷

While the Ottomans displayed an official antagonism toward the Shi'i community, which enabled the use of persecutory tactics against them at will, this did not always characterise the relationship. In fact, as Winter highlights in his extensive study of the Lebanese Shi'a under Ottoman rule,

away from the spotlight of histories of events...the mundane day-to-day reality of life tells a more nuanced story of Shi'ite existence under Ottoman rule.¹⁷⁸

The demands and complexities of governing the vast and expansive territory of the Ottoman Empire produced very practical limitations. The diversity of the social and cultural composition of the Empire, as well as the Empire's own desire to promulgate a heritage of metadoxy, mitigated against the application of religious uniformity. Thus, the Ottomans did not always view the Shi'a in terms of their religious variance with Sunni Islam. Such sectarian boundaries were not yet clearly demarcated. The Ottoman Empire ruled over numerous non-Sunni sectarian groups which, like the Shi'a, often comprised local majorities. In many instances the Ottomans selected to 'blur, deny or even ignore Shi'ite identities of particular individuals or institutions.'¹⁷⁹ As the ensuing analysis illustrates, the Shi'a, like other non-Sunni groups within the Empire, were not continually engaged in a process of protesting the Ottoman authorities. Rather, they participated in the ruling order, and were often directly co-opted by the Ottomans to govern their territories.

Early Ottoman-Shi'i relations in practice: Inclusion

Prior to the initiation of reforms in the late 1800s, the system of political power throughout the early Ottoman Empire depended entirely on the

¹⁷⁷ A detailed critique of this 'migration myth' is provided by Andrew J Newman, 'The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safawid Iran: Arab Shi'ite Opposition to 'Ali al-Karaki and Safawid Shiism', *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, 33:1, 1993, 66-112,

¹⁷⁸ Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 31

¹⁷⁹ Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 29-31.

economic control facilitated by land ownership. Social and political influence was accrued either by owning land or holding tax-raising powers.¹⁸⁰ This system facilitated the dominance of the *zu'ama'*. In Mount Lebanon the political system was called the *iqta'*, whereby authority was distributed among the political families.¹⁸¹ The holder of an *iqta'*, always a *za'im*, was given a short-term tax collecting contract called a *muqata'a*.¹⁸² The main feature of the Ottoman tax collection system was the basic annual tax, *miri*, which was collected by the Porte. This relied on a tax-farming scheme whereby the responsibility for raising taxes within a province (wilayet) was sub-contracted to an individual known as a *miltazim*, i.e a *za'im*. In this way the *zu'ama'* were empowered to implement the law on behalf of the local governor (*wali*).¹⁸³

The *iqta'* system encouraged and institutionalised the influence of purely familial loyalties over and above communal identities. Despite official Ottoman attitudes toward their non-Sunni Muslim communities, the practicalities of every-day political administration frequently overrode their sectarian prejudices. In this sense, at the beginning of Ottoman rule, the dominant Shi'i *zu'ama'* families were 'no less advocates of their own rural society than that of other local tax lord dynasties of the Ottoman period.'¹⁸⁴ Thus the Ottomans recognised individual notables and their families, but did not enact a distinctive ideological position with regard to the Shi'a. Likewise, the Shi'a did not deem it necessary, or indeed helpful, given the precariousness of their official status, to express an overtly sectarian political identity at this time. Instead, the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, in both the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil, enjoyed relative autonomy in the administration of their political affairs, as long as they consistently returned tax payments to the Porte.

¹⁸⁰ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 17.

¹⁸¹ Iliya F. Harik 'The Iqta' System in Lebanon: A Comparative Political View', *The Middle East Journal*, 19:4, 405.

¹⁸² Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 12.

¹⁸³ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 18; Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 13

¹⁸⁴ Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 56.

In the Bekaa Valley and Mount Lebanon, some Shi'i *zu'ama'* enjoyed significant autonomy and political authority, despite their proximity to the powerful Druze and Maronite *zu'ama'*. This was partly a result of commercial links, as the Bekaa was a source of grain and animal products for the Mountain. The Bekaa Valley's rich agricultural produce was therefore highly sought after by the region's *walis*.¹⁸⁵ Two prominent Shi'i families resided in this region, the Harfush and Hamadeh.

The Harfush family typified the role of the *iqta'* by the mid-1600s. As a cohesive family unit with military capability and strong relations with other *zu'ama'* in the area, the Harfush family were well positioned to become the type of local administrator sought by the Ottoman authorities. In fact, the Harfush were among the first *zu'ama'* to be co-opted as emirs into the imperial military apparatus of the Ottoman state. They were also the first to receive lump-sum tax collection contracts, as well as governor titles in the areas of Homs, Tadmur and Baalbek.¹⁸⁶ Ibn Harfush became governor of Baalbek in 1497, and his family were the source of three more governors of the town over the next century. Despite their inter-familial rivalry, the Harfush also became linked to the powerful Ma'an dynasty, through the Fakh al-Din, by marriage. As long as the Harfush were able to deliver the required taxes to the Ottoman authorities, their rule was tolerated. This family was powerful enough to rival that of the Druze emirate of the Shuf throughout the early 17th century.¹⁸⁷

The Shi'i Hamadeh family were also leading political actors in the Bekaa Valley. After the death of Fakhr al-Din in 1635, the Hamadehs were given the north of Lebanon as an *iqta'* by the Ottoman governor of Tripoli. Thereafter, the Hamadeh family of Baalbek had taxation powers over the Maronite Christian districts of Bsharri, Batrun and Jubayl, as well as the Orthodox Christian district of Kura and the Sunni areas of al-Dinniya and Akkar. In this sense the power of some Shi'i *zu'ama'* extended well beyond

¹⁸⁵ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 20.

¹⁸⁶ Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 56.

¹⁸⁷ Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon*, 31.

their own territory, where they exercised authority over non-Shi'i communities. The Hamadeh family were a powerful force until they were defeated by Druze and Maronite forces under the leadership of Amir Yusuf Shihab in 1759.¹⁸⁸

Jabal 'Amil came under Ottoman control in the early 1500s initially as part of the Damascus *wilayet*. Here the Shi'a inhabited well-fortified villages in the mountainous regions. The physical isolation of this region from the provincial capital rendered Jabal 'Amil's Shi'a largely autonomous.¹⁸⁹ The dominant Shi'i *zu'ama'* here comprised the al-As'ad, 'Usayran and al-Fadl families. Throughout the early years of Ottoman rule, Jabal 'Amil enjoyed relative independence and experienced a period of growth and prosperity.

Given the degree of tolerance exhibited by the Ottomans toward those who could assist with the administration of the Empire, the Shi'i *zu'ama'* aligned themselves with the Ottoman authorities in order to facilitate their inclusion in the administrative apparatus of the Empire. Between 1500 and the mid-1600s relations between the Ottoman authorities and the Shi'i *zu'ama'* were cooperative and mutually beneficial. In both the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil, the Shi'i *zu'ama'* enjoyed relative autonomy as long as they fulfilled a tax-collecting role on behalf of the Porte. This is an important addendum to conventional analyses that emphasise sectarian prejudices as a source of perpetual tensions in Ottoman-Shi'i relations. Indeed, as the analysis now moves on to focus on the emergent areas of conflict between the Ottomans and the Shi'a, the discussion shows that the impetus for this tension is more accurately attributable to structural changes within the Ottoman Empire, brought about by reforms as well as European encroachment, rather than sectarianism.

¹⁸⁸ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 21

¹⁸⁹ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 22.

Ottoman reforms and the social stratification of the Shi'a

Relations between the Ottomans and the Shi'a of Jabal 'Amil were transformed by the political reforms. The creation of a new *wilayet* in 1661 transferred control of Jabal 'Amil from Damascus to Sidon. This disrupted the strong trade and commercial routes connecting Jabal 'Amil to Damascus, with detrimental repercussions for Jabal 'Amil's fragile economy. The changes led to successive periods of unrest and revolt among the Shi'a inhabitants. The *wali* of Sidon came under pressure not just from the Shi'a but the economic power of Dahir al-'Umar, a strong tribal chief from Palestine, who was able to enlist the military support of Jabal 'Amil's Shi'a in his efforts to resist Ottoman control. Their combined efforts were successful on two occasions in 1771 and 1772 where they defeated the *wali* of Damascus.¹⁹⁰ It was under these conditions, and following Dahir's death, that the Ottomans sent the Ahmad al-Jazaar to regain control of Jabal 'Amil in 1778.

Al-Jazaar implemented a punitive campaign against the Shi'a, defeating them in battle but also razing their villages and appointing new governors to the region.¹⁹¹ The brutality of al-Jazaar's expedition destroyed many crops and villages in Jabal 'Amil, placing increased pressure on the inhabitants to produce taxable products. In addition, while al-Jazaar continued to collect taxes from the population, so too did the traditional *zu'ama'* leaders, thus effectively subjecting Jabal 'Amil to a repressive and impoverishing double taxation system.¹⁹² The impact of these events on Jabal 'Amil lasted well in to the 1800s. Its effects were severe.

While early Ottoman reforms occurred to the detriment of the power of the traditional Shi'i *zu'ama'* in Jabal 'Amil, the new political and economic structural adjustments associated with the Tanzimat (1839-1876) and administrative reforms of 1864, also led to the decline of the traditional

¹⁹⁰ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Communalism*, 21; Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 23-25.

¹⁹¹ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 23-25.

¹⁹² Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 25.

zu'ama' in the Bekaa. Concurrently, however, these reforms also facilitated the emergence of new elites among the Shi'a: the *wujaha* and literati.

The establishment of the *Règlement Organique* in 1864 led to structural changes in the Ottoman provinces, establishing autonomy in Mount Lebanon and a formal political organisational structure there. These reforms targeted the methods through which land was administered, effectively expanding access and the opportunities for ownership.¹⁹³ In Mount Lebanon, this often simply extended ownership for the existing zu'ama', enabling them to consolidate their control over land and populace. For the Shi'i zu'ama', the effects were disastrous as the Druze and Maronite zu'ama' were the most empowered by these changes. This occurred as a result of the rising economic and political power of Mount Lebanon, and its Christian and Druze leaders. The increasing autonomy of the Druze emirates occurred at the expense of the Shi'i emirates held by the Hamadeh and Harfush families. Relations between the Ottomans and the powerful Shi'i zu'ama' of the Bekaa therefore deteriorated in the 1800s. The rising prominence of Mount Lebanon and Beirut as a political and economic hub resulted in political losses as well as economic ones for the Shi'a, particularly as Shi'i merchant investments in the silk industry began to decline.¹⁹⁴

Relative to conditions in the Bekaa, the situation in Jabal 'Amil was worse. The reforms now rendered Jabal 'Amil a peripheral region, connecting it to the Beirut *wilayet*. The rise of Beirut as a centre for commerce and trade, as well as the emergence of Mount Lebanon as a significant economic hub, reduced Jabal 'Amil's status as well as its former trade links between Damascus and Sidon. The route to Damascus from Mount Lebanon became prominent while Sidon's maritime status declined.¹⁹⁵ Jabal 'Amil suffered significant disadvantage relative to its neighbouring and prospering

¹⁹³ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 12.

¹⁹⁴ Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War: the Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002, 28.

¹⁹⁵ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 12-13.

Maronite Christian and Sunni Muslim communities in Mount Lebanon. Illiteracy, due to a lack of schools, and an absence of economic opportunities characterised the status of Jabal 'Amil as the Ottoman Empire's reforms thrust the region into a new international order.¹⁹⁶

However, Fuad Pasha sought to compensate Jabal 'Amil's leaders, granting them symbolic administrative functions, including the deliverance of new titles and the naming of military princes and regional governors. These reforms bureaucratised the power of the traditional *zu'ama'* enabling their entry into the civil service, and thus becoming a bureaucratic arm of the Ottoman positions in the administration. Hundreds of Shi'i families were elevated to this new status by acquiring landed property or becoming tax farmers (*multazims*) and subsequently representing their communities in the newly established Ottoman administrative councils.¹⁹⁷ In this sense the traditional *zu'ama'* were able to maintain their local political influence among their constituencies. However, these changes also empowered new political families: the *wujaha*.

Emerging in the late 1800s, the new families were mostly grain merchants who were able to make use of the new Ottoman land laws and the Empire's increased integration with the world economy. For the traditional *zu'ama'*, the modernisation of the land regime resulted in the loss of their monopoly, forcing them to adapt and develop alternative sources of political power. Based primarily in Sidon, Tyre and the coastal cities of Jabal 'Amil, the *wujaha* combined landownership with commercial activities. Among these new elites were the 'Usayran, al-Zein, al-Khalil, Beydoun and 'Abdallah families.

The *wujaha* were not linked to the traditional sources of political power. They were primarily an urban bourgeoisie, whose ascendance transformed

¹⁹⁶ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 12-13.

¹⁹⁷ Joseph Olmert, 'The Shi'is and the Lebanese State' in Martin Kramer, *Shi'ism, Resistance and Revolution*, Boulder: Westview Press, 190.

the sociopolitical composition of Jabal ‘Amil.¹⁹⁸ These new elites had grown up with a religious education, but as Ottoman reforms had led to the closure of many Shi‘i religious schools, they were subsequently educated at the secular missionary schools.¹⁹⁹ Their entry into the political system constituted a direct threat to the power of the traditional *zu‘ama*’ - particularly the al-As‘ad family.²⁰⁰ These new families began to share the status of notables with those of the traditional political leadership.²⁰¹ As a result, the power of some of the traditional *zu‘ama*’ declined. The al-As‘ad family was more adept at survival, adapting to the new status quo and maintaining their supremacy until well in to the early twentieth century.

Among the *wujaha*, a prominent intellectual elite emerged in Jabal ‘Amil. The major figureheads of this group were ‘Abd al- Karim al-Khalil, Muhammad Jaber al-Safa, Ahmad Rida, Ahmad ‘Arif al-Zayn, Rashid ‘Usayran and Isma‘il al-Khalil. These individuals were active within several Arab societies established between 1906-1911.²⁰² Ahmad ‘Arif al-Zayn, Muhammad Jabir al-Safa, Ahmad Rida, known as the ‘‘Amili Trio’ also created the prominent and influential Shi‘i journal *al-Irfan* in 1909, which became a leading mouthpiece for this group’s activism and intellectual thought.²⁰³

For the *literati*, their loyalty to the Empire hinged on its continued commitment to modernisation, and they initially supported the activities of the Ottoman Empire’s Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), opening a branch of this office in Nabatiyya along side the many other clubs and societies they established between 1908-1911. These intellectuals also deployed their *‘ulama*’ to issue fatwas encouraging allegiance to the Empire

¹⁹⁸ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 23.

¹⁹⁹ Kais M. Firro, ‘The Shiis in Lebanon: Between Communal ‘Asabiyya and Arab Nationalism, 1908-1921’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:4, 2006, 541.

²⁰⁰ Firro, ‘The Shiis in Lebanon’, 541.

²⁰¹ Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil*, 23.

²⁰² Khalidi, ‘Shaykh Ahmad ‘Arif Al-Zayn’, 116 ; Firro, ‘The Shi‘is in Lebanon’, 542.

²⁰³ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 40.

and resistance to any form of foreign intervention.²⁰⁴ However, the Empire's failure to carry forward its promised reforms contributed to the loss of this important source of support from among the new Shi'i elites. The combined effect of the external pressure on the Ottoman Empire to enact reforms, as well as the rise of the Arab nationalist movement in 1916 produced the major turning point in Shi'i attitudes to the Ottoman authorities. Two trends emerged, one loyal to the Ottoman Empire and the other Arab nationalist.

The Ottoman loyalists among the Shi'a generally hailed from the first generation of *zu'amā'*. Weariness of increasing European encroachment, and a desire to maintain the political benefits accrued by attachment to the Ottoman administrative infrastructure, ensured their continued loyalty. Between 1839-1840, the development of commercial conventions between the Ottoman Empire and European powers facilitated the expansion of European economic encroachment in the region, transforming the dynamics of the Ottoman Empire's relations with their religious minorities.²⁰⁵

The European powers procured intermediaries among the various local religious communities, for which they sought to act as external protectors, and patrons. Britain established ties with the Druze, while France had historical ties to the Maronite Christians, and Russia supported the Orthodox Christians.²⁰⁶ As foreign protectors, the European powers came to play a vital role in promoting the interests of their respective communities. Direct European involvement in the aftermath of Lebanon's first civil war in 1861 set a precedent for continued involvement in the region. At this time however, the Shi'a lacked an external patron. Additionally, like the majority of the Empire's Sunni Muslims, the Shi'a viewed the prospect of European occupation and Christian rule with hesitation.²⁰⁷ The traditional

²⁰⁴ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 42.

²⁰⁵ Firro, 'The Shiis in Lebanon', 543.

²⁰⁶ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 25.

²⁰⁷ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 40.

Shi'i *zu'ama'* therefore maintained their close ties to the Ottomans, whom they remained dependant upon for their own political status.

The Shi'i intellectuals associated with the 'Amili Trio, as well as the *wujaha* became strong proponents of the Arab nationalist movement. Figures such as Rusum Haydar, from the Bekaa was a member of the nationalist *al-Fatat* society, and later participated in the Sharifian administration of Damascus.²⁰⁸ Many of these intellectual elites used their newly established clubs and societies, foremost among them the Arab Literary Club (founded. 1909) to organise opposition against the Ottomans in Jabal 'Amil, and established branches of the Decentralisation Party in Sidon and Nabatiyya.²⁰⁹

The Ottomans responded to these Shi'i nationalists with repressive measures, whilst also exploiting the newly arisen differences among the Shi'a between the traditional *zu'ama'*, who generally supported the Empire, and the *wujaha* and intellectuals, who supported the Arab nationalist movement. Jamal Pasha wrote that Kemal al-As'ad betrayed Abd al-Karim al-Khalil, revealing his nationalist activities to the Ottomans, which led to his execution in Jabal 'Amil in 1915.²¹⁰ This was a prime example of the emergent rivalries among the different strata, old and new, of the Shi'i political elite. Other Shi'i writers confirm that the motives of the al-As'ad family during this time were primarily factional rather than ideological. Kemal al-As'ad thus had a reputation for preventing the rise of competitors from within the Shi'i community.²¹¹

In addition, the Shi'i intellectuals, 'Abd Abd al- Karim al-Khalil, Muhammad Jabir Al Safa, Ahmad Rida, Ahmad 'Arif al-Zayn, Rashid 'Usayran and Isma'il al-Khalil were among the many nationalist leaders

²⁰⁸ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 40.

²⁰⁹ Muhammad Jaber al-Safa, *Tarikh Jabal 'Amil [A History of Jabal 'Amil]*, Beirut: Al-Nahar, 1981, 211.

²¹⁰ Firro, 'The Shi'is in Lebanon', 542-3.

²¹¹ Muhammad Jaber al-Safa, *Tarikh Jabal 'Amil*, 23-66.

who were jailed by the Ottoman governor of Syria in 1915 for their anti-Ottoman activities.

The traditional *za'im*, Kemal al-As'ad continued to rely on Ottoman support in order to preserve his power over Jabal 'Amil until the middle of 1918. At this point, the Sharif Hussein of Mecca, backed by British forces, entered Damascus in 1918 and established an Arab government over Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Arabia.²¹² When the Arab forces in Damascus, led by Faysal appeared to be succeeding in their battle with the Ottoman Empire. Al-As'ad then transferred his allegiance to the Arab nationalists. Despite al-As'ad's late adoption of an Arab nationalist stance, and the arguably more ideological commitment of the *wujaha* and intellectuals to the nationalists, the latter did not benefit from the Arab government's early administrative appointments. These went instead to the traditional *zu'ama'* who had mostly opposed the nationalist movement. Muhammad Fadl, a traditional Shi'i *za'im* from Nabatiyya, was appointed as a representative of the new Arab government in 1918. And after Amir Faysal arrived in Syria, he appointed Kemal al-As'ad as a leader in Jabal 'Amil.²¹³

al-As'ad's loyalties continued to fluctuate into the French Mandate period. Upon the establishment of the Arab government, French forces on the coast were attempting not only to put a swift end to the new Arab government, but also to continue the Ottoman's attempts to exploit Shi'i rivalries, particularly that of the continued al-Sulh/al-As'ad discord.²¹⁴ As al-As'ad sought to secure his position in Jabal 'Amil, his stance now oscillated between the newly emerged political authorities of the territory: the Arab government on one side, and French forces on the other.

²¹² al-Safa, *Tarikh Jabal 'Amil*, 23-66.

²¹³ Gharbieh, *Lebanese Confessionalism*, 42; Chalabi notes that al-As'ad's appointment was not a significant indication of a central role in decision-making as part of the Arab government, however. The invitation was for Jabal 'Amil to declare independence and join the centre, rather than a direct alliance with the leaderships of both Jabal 'Amil and Damascus as equals. See Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 62.

²¹⁴ Firro, 'The Shi'is in Lebanon', 544.

The relationship between the Shi‘i *zu‘ama* and the Ottoman Empire was characterised by periods of inclusion, cooption and repression. It would be erroneous to assert that sectarian identities or prejudices played a significant role in these dynamics. *Zu‘ama* politics was interest-driven, personalist and prone to factionalism. Ottoman repression borrowed from their legal justification of violence against the Shi‘a as heretics, but was more directly attributable to the Empire’s efforts to quell Shi‘i resistance to Ottoman reforms. The reform process strengthened the power of some traditional *zu‘ama*, while giving rise to new Shi‘i elites in the form of the *wujaha* and *literati*. Towards the end of the Ottoman period, Shi‘i politics was characterised by intra-elite rivalries over power and identity. These elites held conflicting visions of where and how the Shi‘i community would be placed in the new Lebanese polity. As the analysis now moves on to the colonial era of the French Mandate, these intra-elite dynamics become more complex, with ideological and political allegiances subject to change. This is the result of the rise of new non-elite Shi‘i groups, the workers and peasantry, who exerted a powerful influence over the Shi‘i community’s political relations with France in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Shi‘a in the French Mandate 1920-1943

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, the League of Nations established the French Mandate over Greater Syria. On August 31, 1920 the French General, Henri Gouraud, proclaimed the State of Greater Lebanon, attaching the formerly Ottoman provinces of Tripoli, Sidon and the Bekaa Valley to Mount Lebanon. This produced substantial demographic transformations, with profound implications for socio-economic relations and trade routes, particularly in relation to the Bekaa Valley, which had formerly belonged to the province of Damascus. The separation of Baalbek from southern Syria also interrupted pre-existing trade routes between these areas. The re-drawing of regional territorial boundaries established by the Sykes-Picot agreement also had an impact on Jabal ‘Amil’s position vis a vis the new Lebanese state - the division of the Galilee between Palestine and South Lebanon contributed to the geo-

political marginalisation of Jabal ‘Amil, rendering it on the periphery of Lebanon.²¹⁵ This territorial change also disrupted the southern Shi‘i community’s economic relations with Palestine.

The analysis in this section begins by highlighting the close relations held by Jabal ‘Amil’s Shi‘a with the Palestinians in the 1930s, and the impact of the French Mandate on this relationship. The Shi‘i-Palestinian relationship becomes an important component of the analysis in chapter three; the purpose here is to emphasise that the relationship has a longer history than is conventionally understood. The analysis then moves on to demonstrate how the different social groupings within the Shi‘i community, elite and non-elite, mobilised in pursuit of their political inclusion, utilising a politics of demand and protest directed at the French authorities. The analysis ends with a summary of the Shi‘i community on the eve of independence, emphasising their restive and mobilised status.

Shi‘i-Palestinian Relations

Until the late 1930s, Jabal ‘Amil maintained strong commercial links with Palestine. The port of Haifa lay at the centre of this relationship. France transferred Haifa’s functions to Beirut following the imposition of the Mandate. Jabal ‘Amil’s shoe makers and leather producers found strong markets for their goods in Palestine. Indeed, Nabatiyya, Bint Jbeil and ‘Udaya all developed market exchanges with Palestine.²¹⁶ One of the reasons why Jabal ‘Amil’s residents aligned with the Arab nationalist movement that sought reunification with Syria was because the majority of their markets and trade relations occurred between Jabal ‘Amil, Syria and Palestine. However, trade links were not the only dimension of the southern Shi‘i community’s ties to Palestine. The other aspect related to the development of the Palestinian’s struggle with Zionism. Indeed, this

²¹⁵ Chibli Mallat, ‘Shi‘ite Thought from the South of Lebanon’, Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1988, 5

²¹⁶ Malek Abisaab ‘Shiite Peasants and a New Nation in Colonial Lebanon: The Intifada of Bint Jubayl, 1936’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia and the Middle East*, 29:3, 2009, 490.

dynamic would become a lasting feature of Shi'i-Palestinian relations in south Lebanon.

After Britain permitted Jewish immigration to Palestine in the 1930s, Palestinian fears resonated with the southern Shi'a, who mobilised in support of the 1936 Arab Revolt. In Bint Jbeil, the Shi'a supported the Palestinian national resistance, granting Palestinian fighters refuge in the town. In Nabatiyya, the Shi'a ran markets for young Palestinian fighters to purchase arms. The town's inhabitants also intercepted several vehicles destined for the Zionist movement in Palestine. When Britain expelled the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem from Palestine in 1936, he went to Tyre where he met with the prominent Shi'i cleric, Sayyid Husayn Sharaf al-Din. French administrators attempted to prevent the meeting from taking place, but were met with large local villager protests and demonstrations expressing their support for the Palestinian resistance. Nabatiyya was often the site of large demonstrations opposing Jewish immigration to Palestine, which was met with repression by the French administered police force.²¹⁷ Protest marches and demonstrations against the French authorities were also a frequent occurrence in South Lebanon, as the ensuing analysis in this chapter demonstrates. These protests often mixed a number of issues, and solidarity with Palestine was an ever-present dynamic.

Although the French Mandate began to disrupt the trade connections between Jabal 'Amil and Palestine in the 1930s, the most significant split occurred in the aftermath of 1948. From then on, South Lebanon became a flashpoint in the war with Israel, cementing the Shi'i community's involvement in the conflict for many years to come. Zionist militias frequently invaded several southern villagers which bordered the emerging state of Israel, engaging in battles with the Arab Army of Salvation, a volunteer force comprised of Arab soldiers and officers, which was formed in 1947 to oppose the UN partition plan for Palestine. The massacre at Houla in 1948 committed by Zionist militias against local Shi'i

²¹⁷ Abisaab 'Shiite Peasants and a New Nation', 491.

villagers set the scene for future relations between the Shi'a and Israel thereafter.²¹⁸

The Shi'i community's relationship with the Palestinians, and involvement in the wars with Israel would become a lasting feature of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation, and is revisited later in this study. For now, the analysis returns to the other aspects of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation that were influenced by the imposition of the French Mandate, starting with the politics of demand.

The Politics of Demand

The new territorial realities of France's Greater Lebanon were deeply unpopular among the Shi'a. The changes incurred by Jabal 'Amil caused particular consternation among its inhabitants. The restoration of the Ottoman taxation system here was disproportionate to the taxes levied elsewhere in Lebanon and strained an already fragile economy in South Lebanon. The Mandate tightened its economic hold over Greater Lebanon, and tied the Syrian currency to the unstable franc.²¹⁹ Whilst Beirut swiftly began to prosper from the new territorial arrangements, Jabal 'Amil was heavily taxed and generally neglected by French administrators. For these reasons, the French presence immediately mobilised a vigorous politics of demand and protest among the Shi'i community. Although the traditional *zu'ama'* sought to establish an alliance with the French in return for a share of political power, the strength of anti-colonial feeling among their constituencies frequently forced these *zu'ama'* to participate in the politics of demand too.

The politics of demand drew the participation of the *wujaha*, intellectuals and, when it was politically expedient to do so, the traditional *zu'ama'*. The strategies utilised in pursuit of the politics demand, also referred to in the sources as *matlabiyya*, ranged from political lobbying and petitioning to

²¹⁸ Rami Siklawi, 'The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon', *Middle East Journal*, 64:4, 2010, 602.

²¹⁹ Khalidi, 'Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan', 122-123.

editorialising and other literary forms of protest.²²⁰ The substance of the demands included calls for infrastructural development in the south, such as the building of roads, schools, hospitals and clinics, as well as demands for greater political rights, representation and inclusion in the colonial state. The politics of demand also straddled ideological differences among the Shi'i elite. It drew the participation of both those who opposed and accepted the French presence and her designs for the new Lebanon.

The intellectuals expressed their demands via the press. The 'Amili Trio led this intervention via the Shi'i journal, *al-Irfan*, which carried numerous headlines and articles highlighting the difficult conditions endured by the inhabitants of Jabal 'Amil. One such editorial in 1922 described the following situation:

The sources of living in Jabal 'Amil are spent this year. The season was famine. The taxes are coming while the land is still bemoaning the coup de grace tax already imposed by the French. Had it not been for working people in America and Beirut the situation would have been unbearable.²²¹

Al-Irfan had a regular news opinion section dedicated to the demands of Jabal 'Amil. This column also frequently carried statements from the Shi'i 'ulama':

They [the Shi'a] form the largest or second largest group of the inhabitants of the Grand Liban, and they pay nearly fifty percent of taxes, and despite this, the benefits go to others and the burden goes to them. There is not a single "Amili civil servant in the capital. There are also very few in their district of South Lebanon for no justifiable reason. The state of education, the condition of the roads is very poor given what they [the 'Amilis] pay in terms of taxes. The increase in taxes is extortionate and cannot be supported by the state of the country [Jabal 'Amil]. The wrongdoings of a few ignorant have become the burden of the many innocent [this is in reference to the fines imposed by the French following the massacres at Ayn Ibl in May 1920, see page 139 for further details]. Mercy for justice and

²²⁰ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 114.

²²¹ *al-Irfan*, October 1922, p. 77.

equality because the 'Amili people, is a vigorous people with beneficence in their hearts.²²²

The participation of the Shi'i *'ulama* in the politics of demand was a particularly notable event as they were a generally non-politicised element of the community. This illustrates the depth of feeling generated among the Shi'a in the aftermath of the French Mandate's imposition, and the pressure placed on all aspects of the community's leadership to respond.

The pleas from Jabal 'Amil were joined by the Greek Orthodox communities in the south who also suffered from the new administrative realities. A headline in *al-Ma'rad*, a local non-Shi'i newspaper, in 1927 read 'The new sons of Lebanon demand reform.' Articles in a newspaper based in Marjayoun, *Jaridat al-Qalam al-Sarih*, addressed the position of South Lebanon with titles including 'Are We Lebanese or What?' and 'South Lebanon: Angry, Resentful and Bitter.' The founder of this newspaper, Abu Samra wrote an open article addressed to the High Commissioner entitled 'Governor of Lebanon, Save the South':

Your Excellency, we have resorted to different roles, and the different governments have turned on us and we are still in the role of experimentation, watching with a vigilant eye your final position on the South. This South that has not rightly enjoyed since joining (your Lebanon) any of the luxuries of the old [Mount Lebanon], so if you acted on realizing its demands) you would be doing a sacred duty...²²³

Abu Samra then lists his demands, calling for the reduction of taxes, the establishment of a farmer's union, the building of roads and nationalisation of schools.²²⁴ Another petition sent from 'the inhabitants of Jabal 'Amil' to the French General in 1922 contained a detailed analysis of the socio-economic constraints besetting Jabal 'Amil, and described the unfair nature of the taxation system the region was still

²²² Quoted in Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 122.

²²³ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 119.

²²⁴ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 121.

subject to. The petition called on Gouraud to treat Jabal 'Amil and Mount Lebanon more fairly.²²⁵

In addition to the involvement of Shi'i intellectuals, both the *wujaha* and traditional *zu'ama'*, partook in the politics of demand, despite the nature of their collaborative relations with the French. Rashid Beydoun, of the *wujaha*, established close ties to French Mandate authorities in Beirut, and sought to use the influence this brought to petition the authorities for improvements to Jabal 'Amil's Shi'a. Beydoun wrote the following letter to the French Dean in 1933:

Your highness, the Shiites with the Sunnis and Maronites constitute the majority in the Republic and the third sect in number. Does this sect receive its rights proportionate to its number, which according to the latest census is 154,218 out of 785,729 (20%)? Out of approximately 300 judges, it has 4; out of 210 employees in the departments of general, financial, agricultural and internal affairs, it has 8; out of 5 muhafizin it has 1; out of 18 commissaires it has 1; out of approximately 350 vice judges it has 4...We find that Shiites receive one part of 58 in the salaries paid by the government..while they pay about 1/4 of all that Lebanon gets in taxes..I believe that the only way to bring justice to the Shiite sect is for the government to hire only Shiites in a job when it becomes vacant, so that under your patronage this sect will receive part of its lost rights.²²⁶

The traditional *zu'ama'* appeared to embark on a complete reversal of their position on the French Mandate, instead advocating their support for Syrian unification, with the Arab nationalists. The US established the King-Crane commission in 1919 to investigate public political aspirations in Anatolia, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. The Shi'i *zu'ama'* of the Bekaa boycotted this process entirely.²²⁷ This was a protest against even discussing the prospect of formal European control over the region. In Jabal 'Amil however, Kemal al-As'ad appeared before the committee in Tyre, where he declared himself representative of 'all 'Amili Muslims' and publicly

²²⁵ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 121.

²²⁶ Evelyn Aleene Early, 'The 'Amiliyya Society of Beirut: A Case Study of an Emerging Za'im', *MA Thesis*, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1971, 109.

²²⁷ Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence', *UNRISD Discussion Paper*, No. 42: April, 1993, 4.

advocated the cause of Syrian unity.²²⁸ At the Coastal Conference in 1936, Shi'i attendees voiced their views on the question of Lebanon. Subhi Haydar, the Shi'i representative, was a signatory to the conference's closing communique, which called for reunification with Syria. That same year, Haydar was a prominent member of the parliamentary opposition, and in June attended a congress for Syrian unity held in Damascus.²²⁹ The Shi'i rejectionists were heavily influenced by the Christian and Sunni intellectuals and political families who also opposed French rule, and often coordinated their efforts. For example, one of the *'al-Irfan* intellectuals, Abd al-Karim al-Khalil's was involved in the organisation of the Arab congress of Paris in 1913 alongside Christian and Sunni Muslim intellectuals.²³⁰

Not all families of the traditional *zu'ama'* elite were supporters of the nationalist movement. At the 1936 Coastal Conference 'Adil 'Usayran refused to sign the resolution calling for unity with Syria because he supported Lebanon's right to exist as an independent state. The 'Usayran family were known for their oscillating views on the issue but one of their members, Munir 'Usayran offered vociferous support for the French presence:

You have in effect entered the country, holding in your two hands the torch of freedom and independence, towards which the Lebanese have always turned...We have never doubted that France would achieve our independence because France has always fought and continued to fight for freedom and democracy....Vive General Catroux and his Allies! Vive General de Gaulle! Vive Lebanon!²³¹

The 'Usayran family became supporters of Greater Lebanon and closely aligned with the Lebanese nationalist movement. However, as also occurred among the al-As'ad family, 'Usayran's support for French rule

²²⁸ Quoted in Hayat Nabil Osseyran, 'The Shiite Leadership of South Lebanon: A Reconsideration', *MA Thesis*, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1997, 15

²²⁹ Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon*, 51.

²³⁰ Kais M. Firro, 'The Shi'is in Lebanon: Between Communal 'Asabiyya and Arab Nationalism, 1908–21', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:4, 2006, 543.

²³¹ Quoted in Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 203,

was known to change depending on circumstances. In 1943, for example, Adil 'Usayran was jailed for his anti-French activism.²³²

The French authorities sought to exploit these differences among the Shi'i elite. To this end, two meetings were held in 1933 which drew together several notables from the Shi'i *wujaha* and 'ulama'. The first was held in Kafar Rumman, led by Sheikh Ali al-Zayn. The second meeting was held in Sidon, led by Najib 'Usayran and Fadl al-Fadl (of the *wujaha*). The Sidon meeting circulated two petitions with conflicting demands - France reported the one which voiced support for the French Mandate and made few demands on behalf of the Shi'a. The second petition listed several demands, including increasing representation of the Shi'a in governmental posts, greater tobacco cultivation and the opening of new schools. The conclusions of the Kafar Rumman petition stated,

Until now, we, who form 20 per cent of the population of this republic, do not find ourselves in a situation of equality with the others, since the attachment of our region to the old Lebanon.²³³

Disagreement subsequently arose among the Shi'a over which petition was an adequate representation of the community's real demands.

Despite the polarisation among the Shi'i elite at the beginning of the French Mandate, between those who supported reunion with Syria, and those who sought integration with Lebanon, the nature of their politics of demand remained the same. As stated by Chalabi,

The unionists strongly expressed dissatisfaction with the economic and developmental status quo of the South but also called for further French involvement and improvement. The integrists expressed their belonging through strong demands for infrastructure investment in the South, in the form of schools, roads, electricity, and so on.²³⁴

²³² Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon*, 51.

²³³ Kais M. Firro, 'Ethnicizing the Shiis in Mandatory Lebanon' *Middle Eastern Studies*, 42:5, 2006, 746.

²³⁴ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 117.

The French responded to these petitions with indifference. Their stance was aided by the fact that some Shi'i *zu'ama'* cultivated alliances with the French, which the later pursued and reciprocated. In the 1934 parliamentary elections, Sabri Hamadeh outmanoeuvred a rival from the Haydar family for the single Shi'i seat. In response, the Haydar family began openly interacting with the pro-Syrian National bloc, publicly supporting the incorporation of the Bekaa Valley into Syria. France responded by offering the Haydars political appointments - Ibrahim Haydar became the only Shi'i deputy appointed by the Mandate, whilst his cousin became a director in the Lebanese administration of the Mandate. These events are indicative of the absence of ideological political motives among the Shi'i *zu'ama'*. Haydar's advocacy of a nationalist stance was a political strategy designed to outdo his rivals. It was also a ploy to distract French authorities from pursuing a legal investigation into corruption (for which he would be culpable) at the Ministry of Finance.²³⁵ Thus the alternating political allegiances of the *zu'ama'* illustrated their primary concern with the preservation of their political power and status.

The relationship between some of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* and the French authorities has been interpreted by some scholars as symptomatic of a broader process of the Shi'i community's 'sectarianization' during the French Mandate.²³⁶ This was a two-way interaction between Shi'i activists and French authorities whereby the Shi'a made demands for sectarian rights and religious recognition 'from below', and the French encouraged the consolidation of such identities 'from above' by politicising and institutionalising sectarianism in Lebanon. The establishment of the Ja'fari Court, the Muslim 'Amili Higher Council and the Speakership of Parliament (for the Shi'a) constituted 'the historical process of institutionalising Shi'i sectarianism in Mandate Lebanon.'²³⁷ Of note, this

²³⁵ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 59.

²³⁶ This view is present in Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, and Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*.

²³⁷ Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 212.

sectarianism was not imposed by the French, rather it emerged out of 'routinized forms of cultural and social practice.'²³⁸

This rendering of the interaction between the French and the Shi'a requires greater scrutiny. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the Shi'a 'from below' in this relationship are not the masses, but part of the elite and mostly the traditional *zu'ama'*. Secondly, the motives of this elite as a power and interest-driven social structure must also be acknowledged, since this analysis has shown that such motives frequently overrode sectarian identities among the political families throughout this period. Thirdly, French motives should be acknowledged, too. France sought to incentivise the Shi'a away from the Arab nationalist movement that opposed their rule. In this sense, the interaction between the French 'above' and the Shi'i *zu'ama'* that they courted 'below', was one of reciprocation between two elites for mutual gain. The French deployed an overtly sectarian (and colonial) political strategy of divide and rule in order to separate Shi'i elites from the broadly Sunni Arab nationalist movement. However, those Shi'i *zu'ama'* who agreed to accept France's colonial authority did so *not* because of the sectarian rights and recognition they received in return, but because of the access to power these new rights, and the institutions they established, accrued to the *zu'ama'*.

The politics of demand failed to yield significant improvements to the lives of the Shi'a under French rule. The collaboration of the community's elites with the French authorities dismayed other elements of the Shi'i community, and led to the rise of a peasant based Shi'i revolt against the Mandate. This development also contributed to the radicalisation of the Shi'i peasantry's political strategy, from demand to protest.

The Politics of Protest

Despite the French Mandate's promotion of some *zu'ama'* and *wujaha* to political posts, the incorporation of these Shi'i elites into the political

²³⁸ Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 15.

administration did little to improve the appearance of the Shi'a in France's administration of Lebanon, or increase the community's presence in the political decision making about the emergent Lebanese polity. This situation contributed to a sense of frustration among the Shi'i masses with their elite representatives, who drew no tangible benefits from their representatives' collaboration with the colonial regime. The emergent political discourse and socioeconomic environment effectively excluded both the Shi'i elite and the peasantry. In the 1930s, this situation contributed to the convergence of interests between different segments of the Shi'i community. By 1936, the Shi'a were collectively engaged in a broad-based movement initiated by the peasantry, but coordinated in alliance with the other Shi'i elites, including the *wujaha* and intellectuals. The Shi'i peasantry were expressing their opposition to the emergent sectarian culture of the 1930s, the Libanist discourse that accompanied it, while insisting on greater political representation, as well as an equal share in the economic resources of the developing state.²³⁹ In this sense, the Shi'a were still pursuing a policy of political inclusion, but with a more radical political strategy.

Two popular, peasant and worker-led Shi'i protests against the French Mandate occurred in Jabal 'Amil in 1920 and 1936. The first was a spontaneous uprising by the peasantry against the Mandate, and in particular against the dire conditions the inhabitants of Jabal 'Amil were still experiencing. This uprising occurred on the basis of the same issues raised by the Shi'i petitioners demanding improvements to Jabal 'Amil's infrastructure during the politics of demand. In this environment, little incentive existed among the Shi'i peasantry to accept the French imposition of Greater Lebanon.²⁴⁰ It was in this environment that opposition to French rule emerged, and a call for unity with Syria from Jabal 'Amil.

²³⁹ Abissab, 'Shiite Peasants', 484.

²⁴⁰ Abissab, 'Shiite Peasants', 484.

The first uprising occurred during Faysal's short reign over Damascus, and encompassed both Jabal 'Amil and the Bekaa regions. The rebellion took the form of banditry and was led by a Shi'i rebel from the town of Tibnine, Adham Khanjar and associates, Sadiq Hamza and Mahmud Bazzi. Armed, these bandits emerged independently of Jabal 'Amil's *zu'ama'*, *wujaha* and *al-Irfan* intellectuals.²⁴¹ Their followers hailed from a mixed peasant base, comprising pastoralists and agriculturalists.²⁴² They attacked French positions as well as Lebanese towns who hosted French soldiers and personnel. They were loosely allied with Prince Faysal's Arab government, and increased their attacks following Faysal's failure to negotiate Syria's future with the French Prime Minister in 1919.²⁴³

In 1920 a group of these bandits from Bint Jbeil killed one hundred Maronite Christians from the town of 'Ayn Ibl. Although the massacre was widely condemned by the Shi'i elite, including its 'ulama' and intellectuals, the French responded harshly, utilising air and ground attacks to target Jabal 'Amil indiscriminately. The damage was severe, resulting in heavy loss of life and the arrest of scores of local residents suspected of involvement in the incident. France then imposed a new tax as punishment on the inhabitants. The severity of the French response foiled the uprising, and forced Jabal 'Amil's incorporation into Greater Lebanon for good.

An additional explanation for the failure of this first uprising pertains to the absence of broad-based support from the rest of the Shi'i community. The intellectuals did not develop an unequivocally supportive stance toward the bandits, displaying 'a mixture of admiration, fear and disdain toward the rebels.'²⁴⁴ Abisaab links this issue to the differences in class status - the intellectuals viewed the bandits as 'uncivilised.'²⁴⁵ The activities of the bandits, particularly the 'Ayn Ibl incident also disturbed the Shi'i

²⁴¹ Khalidi, 'Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan', 123.

²⁴² Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Peasants', 492.

²⁴³ Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Peasants', 492.

²⁴⁴ Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Peasants', 492.

²⁴⁵ Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Peasants', 492.

elites, including the 'ulama'. In an effort to spur the increasing violence of the uprising, and fears of French retaliatory measures, Kemal al-As'ad set up a consultation including over six-hundred community leaders in April 1920, known as the Wadi al-Hujayr conference. The delegates discussed whether they should unify with Syria or integrate with Greater Lebanon. The rebel component of the meeting concluded that Jabal 'Amil accepted incorporation into Faysal's Kingdom, but demanded administrative autonomy within that framework. This required an increase in attacks on the French in order to assure continued support from Faysal.²⁴⁶ However, after 'Ayn Ibl, both the *zu'ama'* and *al-Irfan* intellectuals sought to mediate between the armed groups and France to bring an end to the particularly brutal incidents.²⁴⁷ France viewed the intervention of the Shi'i elites with ambivalence, and therefore did not discriminate in its military response to the massacre at 'Ayn Ibl.

In the second major rebellion to occur in 1936, the intifada of Bint Jbeil, the Shi'i peasantry appeared to learn from their previous experience. In this uprising the Shi'i peasants established strong alliances with the Shi'i elites, including the *zu'ama'* and *literati*.²⁴⁸ The basis of this rebellion was socio-economic, and resulted from changes incurred to the system of tobacco cultivation in Jabal 'Amil following the takeover of the industry by a French monopoly.

As France sought to incorporate Jabal 'Amil's economy with that of Mount Lebanon's, the tobacco industry in the south became a significant dimension of its regional and global trade networks. Tobacco cultivation quickly overrode the declining silk industry as an alternative cash crop in Jabal 'Amil. The extent of tobacco production from 1930-1935 was such that most families in the south planted tobacco instead of garden vegetables.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Peasants', 492.

²⁴⁷ Khalidi, 'Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan', 123.

²⁴⁸ Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Peasants', 497.

²⁴⁹ Abisaab, 'Shi'ite Peasants', 497.

However, the tobacco industry in Jabal 'Amil was overtaken by a French monopoly, the *Regie des Tabacs* in 1935. French authorities imposed severe restrictions on tobacco cultivation, ruling where and how much tobacco farmers could grow.²⁵⁰ The motivations for doing so were often political - to put pressure on 'radical' *zu'ama'* who opposed French rule, by punishing the peasantry.²⁵¹ As the *Regie* continued to impose restrictions on cultivation and sales, many peasants were forced to emigrate or migrate. This led to a deterioration in crop yields and quality, and rising local resentment toward the French. This culminated in the Tobacco Revolt, which quickly expanded into a regular and organised protest movement against the French Mandate.²⁵²

The Tobacco Revolt was a broad-based movement across Syrian and Lebanese towns and cities. It drew the participation of peasants, tobacco workers and elites, Muslim and Christian. Among the intellectuals who joined the uprising, a strong middle-class component was present, comprising graduate students of the schools of Damascus, recent employees in the Lebanese administration, schoolteachers and returning migrants who had accrued financial wealth abroad.²⁵³ It also drew the support of a number of literary clubs and cultural committees, which became central to the discourse of the uprising. Among the participants in these literary movements were reform-minded intellectuals as well as political figures from the *wujaha* including 'Ali Bazzi, Musa al-Zayn Sharara and Ali Beydoun. These figures voiced their support for the uprising through the press, speeches, rallies and demonstrations.²⁵⁴ The intellectuals attached to *al-Irfan* also played a role in the uprising, with the journal again becoming a source of information and advocacy for the resistance. *Al-Irfan* was banned twice by the French authorities in 1931 for its role in supporting the rebellion.²⁵⁵ Notable for their general absence from

²⁵⁰ Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 189.

²⁵¹ Khalidi, 'Shaykh Ahmad 'Arif Al-Zayn and Al-Irfan', 123.

²⁵² Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 193-4.

²⁵³ Abisaab, 'Shiite Peasants' 493.

²⁵⁴ Abisaab, 'Shiite Peasants', 494.

²⁵⁵ Sabrina Mervin, *Harakat al-Islah al-Shi'i*, Beirut: Dar al-Nahar, 2000, 450-1.

this uprising were the traditional Shi'i *zu'ama'* and 'ulama'. This did not go unnoticed by the other supporters of the rebellion who satirised the symbiotic relationship between these traditional notables.²⁵⁶

The Tobacco Revolt was an extended uprising that continued to instigate general strikes, marches and protest movements across Jabal 'Amil. However, in April 1936 a meeting was held at the al-As'ad residence in Taybeh to discuss the repercussions of the revolt and the potential for a collective stance on the reality of Greater Lebanon. Among the members of *wujaha* that were present, the call was for Arab unity and reunification with Syria. However, the *zu'ama'* and 'ulama' in attendance rejected any talk of Syrian - or Arab - unity. These elites argued that the only remaining alternative for the Shi'a was acceptance of the new territorial reality if they were to have any hope of securing their socioeconomic and political futures.²⁵⁷ Although the meeting concluded with a long list of Shi'i demands to the French authorities, which again called attention to the lack of investment in the infrastructure of South Lebanon, it was the positions of the *zu'ama'* and 'ulama' that were ratified. Despite objections from the Shi'i peasantry, *wujaha* and *literati*, who together had risen in revolt against France and her colonial designs for Lebanon, the Shi'i *zu'ama'* had won the day.

Conclusion

The reform process that presaged the collapse of the Ottoman Empire led to the social stratification of the Shi'i community. The power of the traditional Shi'i *zu'ama'* became bureaucratized, while a new largely urban elite, the *wujaha*, emerged. The reform process also led to the political mobilisation of the Shi'i *literati*, workers and peasantry. A diversity of political identities emerged both within and between the old and new Shi'i social classes. Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, far from having

²⁵⁶ Malek Abisaab, 'Shiite Peasants', 494.

²⁵⁷ Malek Abisaab, 'Shiite Peasants', 498.

developed a cohesive and distinctive sectarian identity, the Shi'a were still pondering the very question of their identity and political position in the new Lebanese reality. Numerous editorials in the journal *al-Irfan* reflected these concerns. Ahmad Rida's article, '*Ma Hiya al-Umma?*' (What is the Nation?) shows Shi'i intellectuals attempting to reconcile their sectarian identities with at least three other identity references: the Muslim (religious) community, the Ottoman (civic) community or nation, and the Arab national community (nationalist).²⁸⁸

The imposition of the French Mandate in 1920 was deeply unpopular among the Shi'i masses, and the switching of identities became a feature of the Shi'i community's elite politics during this period. Whilst the *zu'ama'* oscillated between anti-French and pro-Arab nationalist inclinations, the Shi'i literati and peasantry began to petition the colonial authorities for greater autonomy, as well as further social, economic and political rights in their territories. The Shi'i *zu'ama'* were also compelled to partake in this politics of demand, due to the depth of feeling and unrest the French presence generated among the Shi'i community.

By the end of the French Mandate, those among the traditional *zu'ama'* who once held anti-French and pro-Arab nationalist leanings began to accept the new territorial reality of Lebanon, and participate in the electoral process. The participation of Kemal al-As'ad was a significant turning point for this powerful political family, particularly since many of the influential Sunni *zu'ama'* were still boycotting parliamentary elections and professing their Arab nationalism.²⁸⁹ The motivations of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* for participating in the institutional apparatus of the French Mandate were the same as they had been under the Ottoman Empire: to preserve their political power and influence. Only the strategies changed, which in Mandate Lebanon required parliamentary representation. Seats in parliament conferred significant powers on their holders, including access

²⁸⁸ Firro, 'The Shi'is in Lebanon', 537.

²⁸⁹ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 123-124

to government funds for the development of projects the *zu'ama'* wished to support, as well as the opportunity to seek government jobs for their clients. Thus the Shi'i *zu'ama'* adapted to the political institutions introduced by the French, eventually partaking in every election and accepting posts in the governmental administration. Their participation in the electoral process indicated a shift away from the Arab nationalist movement, towards integration with the national Lebanese political framework.²⁶⁰

As elections primarily became arenas for contestation among rival elite political families, the other Shi'i social groups had little means of access to the political system. For the Shi'i literati, workers and peasantry, the politics of demand was an attempt to improve their livelihoods and draw the attention of the French authorities. The *zu'ama'* also engaged in the politics of demand, but this was merely an effort to shore up popular legitimacy among their restive Shi'i constituencies. As the politics of demand transformed into one of protest, the intermediary function of the *zu'ama'* became overshadowed by the onset of regular popular protest movements, led by the Shi'i workers and peasantry, and supported by the literati and *wujaha*. The politics of protest became a feature of the Shi'i community's political agitation against French rule towards the end of the Mandate.

The politics of protest was a distinctly grass-roots movement that attracted broad-based social support in the Shi'i community. It signified growing dissatisfaction with the Shi'i *zu'ama'* from within, as well as the radicalisation of a community experiencing rapid socio-economic decline under colonial rule. For these Shi'a, their aspiration for political inclusion had not been realised; the politics of demand and protest had failed and a new strategy was required.

²⁶⁰ Chalabi, *The Shi'is of Jabal 'Amil*, 120.

Chapter 3 ~ The Making of a Resistance Identity: Communism and the Shi'a 1943-1975

The prospect of Lebanese independence was viewed enthusiastically by the restive and mobilised Shi'a of the French Mandate era. When Lebanon became independent in 1943, these Shi'a expected a swift improvement to their political, social and economic status in Lebanon. However, the political system established by the National Pact (1943) and the impact of Lebanon's modernisation process institutionalised the Shi'i community's marginalisation and exclusion from the emergent Lebanese state. These circumstances formed a critical juncture in the Shi'i community's political mobilisation. Many Shi'a viewed the confessional political system as the source of their systematic marginalisation from politics and life in Lebanon; they no longer sought to enact a politics of demand and protest in the service of acquiring their inclusion in that system. Instead, the Shi'a pursued a politics of resistance against the status quo. The LCP became the primary vehicle for the mobilisation of that resistance identity.

In this chapter, the analysis explains the genesis of the Shi'i community's resistance identity, why and how the LCP became the primary vehicle for its mobilisation, and the resulting impact of that association on the wider Shi'i community.

The analysis begins by highlighting three main events that led to the formation of a critical juncture in the Shi'i community's political mobilisation. The first issue pertains to the National Pact in 1943, which institutionalised Lebanon's confessional political system and with it the marginalisation of the Lebanese Shi'a. Secondly, the chapter considers the socio-economic status of the Shi'a in the aftermath of independence, highlighting the continued deprivation of Shi'i locales as a result of government neglect, but also as a direct economic outcome of Lebanon's pursuit of a capitalist path toward modernisation. Thirdly, the analysis

explores an additional dimension of Lebanon's modernisation process and its disproportionate impact on the Shi'a: migration and urbanisation. The overall status of the Shi'a in the aftermath of Lebanon's independence, and the already restive nature of the Shi'i community prior to 1943, are argued to have comprised the conditions under which the Shi'a departed from their pursuit of inclusion in the political system, and instead formulated a resistance identity based on their outright rejection of the Lebanese political system's sectarian structure.

The chapter then moves on to explain how the Shi'i community's newly formed resistance identity became mobilised. The analysis challenges the conventional link between Lebanon's modernisation process and the rise of sectarian identities and mobilisation among the Shi'a. Instead, this chapter argues that *secular* political parties emerged as the primary vehicle for the mobilisation of the Shi'i community's resistance identity after 1943. Drawing on interviews with senior LCP officials and former Shi'i communists, the analysis argues that the LCP's anti-system, political reformist agenda, which advocated resistance against the sectarian regime in Lebanon, constituted the initial basis of the Shi'i attraction to communism. The analysis continues to elaborate the appeal of communism among the Shi'a, demonstrating that in addition to its anti-sectarian political agenda, the LCP attracted Shi'i adherents on the basis of its agricultural reform initiative for South Lebanon, as well as the establishment of the LCP's Popular Guard. The LCP pledged that this military unit in South Lebanon would protect and defend the Shi'a from Israeli attacks, and provide support to the Palestinian resistance fighters that were also stationed there.

After establishing the initial basis of the Shi'i community's attraction to communism, the analysis in this chapter moves on to explore in detail who the communist Shi'a were. The LCP's perception of its Shi'i adherents is compared and contrasted with the view of the communist Shi'a themselves. This reveals the contradictions between the image and reality

of the Shi'i communists. While the LCP conceives of its Shi'i members as workers and peasants i.e in traditional class terms, the analysis finds that the communist Shi'a spanned a broader base of social classes within the community that included the middle-classes, intelligentsia and even 'ulama'. Utilising the examples of the lives of Husayn Muruwa and Mahdi 'Amil, the analysis explains why the LCP also generated an appeal among young Shi'i clerics-in-training, as well as senior Shi'i clerics.

Finally, this chapter explains the impact of the Shi'i community's relationship with communism on other actors within the community, including the *zu'ama'* and 'ulama'. The chapter argues that the influence of communism led directly to the political mobilisation of the previously quietist Shi'i clerical elite. This is illustrated by an analysis of Musa al-Sadr's interaction with the communists in Lebanon. Additionally, the appeal of communism is also shown to have led to cosmetic changes in the political organisation of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* who sought to apply an ideological veneer to their activities, particularly at election time, in an effort to tap into the Shi'i community's engagement with the ideological political parties on the Lebanese left.

The arguments in this chapter serve as an important corrective to conventional analyses of the Shi'a during Lebanon's post-independence period that posit these years as the origins of their sectarian identities and political mobilisation. On the contrary, this chapter argues that secular political identities were a central feature of the Shi'i community's political mobilisation between 1943 and 1975.

The Formation of a Critical Juncture

The politics of demand and protest that emerged during the colonial era was an expression of the Shi'i community's frustration with their subordinate status in the political institutions of the French administration, as well as the socio-economically disruptive effects of the new territorial reality of Greater Lebanon. Upon independence, and the departure of the

French colonial authorities, the Shi'a hoped that their political status would improve. However, as the ensuing analysis demonstrates, the Shi'a found themselves institutionally marginalised by the new political system.

Political marginalisation

The primary source of the Shi'i community's political marginalisation in 1943 was the National Pact. This was an unwritten agreement that enabled the establishment of an independent Lebanon in 1943, the end of French colonial rule and the consolidation of the confessional political system. The latter dimension was particularly controversial for the Shi'a. The new political system institutionalised political sectarianism, whereby sectarian identity determined entry and access to the political system and its bureaucracy. The formula upon which this allocation occurred was a 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims.²⁶¹ Thus the office of the President would, thereafter, always be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni and the Speaker of Parliament a Shi'i.

The new political system effectively accorded the Shi'a third place in terms of their political power. However, the most disagreeable dimension of this formula was the population census upon which the statistical allocation of power was based. The census, conducted by the French colonial administrators, did not cover all the Shi'i regions of the Bekaa Valley.²⁶² In addition, at independence in 1943, thousands of Shi'a who resided in the Baalbek-Hermel region were still not registered as Lebanese. This was due to their nomadic way of life as shepherds, where they would move out of the country for several months. The census contained multiple flaws and was beset by numerous administrative irregularities.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Hanna Ziadeh, *Sectarianism and Intercommunal Nation-Building in Lebanon*, London:Hurst, 2006, 114.

²⁶² The 1932 census stated that there were 155,000 Shi'a in Lebanon, that is, 19.6 per cent of its population (P. Rondot, 'Les institutions politiques du Liban, des communautés traditionnelles à l'Etat moderne', *Institut d'études de l'Orient contemporain, Paris*, 1947, pp. 28-29.

²⁶³ Elizabeth Picard, *The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence*, *UNRISD Discussion Paper*, 42: 1993, p. 10.

The National Pact's marginalisation of the Shi'a disappointed the community's high hopes for their political inclusion in an independent Lebanon. Lebanon has not had another official population census since 1932. The process and predictable outcome is broadly understood to be too controversial for the country's fragile political system to bear.²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, this also means that the political system has not evolved to reflect the country's changing demographic realities. In today's Lebanon this would certainly mean that the Muslim population outnumbers the Maronite Christians.²⁶⁵ The National Pact's marginalisation of the Shi'a is therefore also its legacy. This analysis contends that it imparted a commensurably enduring imprint on the nature of Shi'i political mobilisation thereafter.

All subsequent forms of Shi'i mobilisation after 1943 have contained varying degrees of resistance to the Lebanese political system. To be clear, this should not be understood as a non-patriotic rejection of the Lebanese state. Rather, it is a nationalist rejection of the inequalities inherent within the sectarian foundations of the Lebanese political system. Whereas in chapter two we saw the Shi'a deploy a politics of demand and protest in an effort to achieve their inclusion in the political system, after 1943 the strategy transformed into one of resistance against the system. The Shi'a mobilised to reject the political structure that had excluded them. However, the National Pact was not the only factor that contributed to the marginalisation of the Shi'a at independence. The affect of Lebanon's modernisation process on Shi'i regions had detrimental socioeconomic ramifications.

²⁶⁴ For further analysis of the population census and its controversies see, Rania Maktabi, 'The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who are the Lebanese?', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26:2, 1999, pp. 219–241.

²⁶⁵ Current records place the Christian population at 40.5% and the Muslim population at 54%. Among the Muslims, estimates indicate an even split: 27% Sunni and 27% Shi'a. Source: CIA World Factbook <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le.html>> (14 October 2014)

Socioeconomic status

Upon independence, Lebanon's political elites pursued a capitalist model of economic development. During the 1950s, the Lebanese economy was service-centred, principally based on trade and financial services, and centred in the Lebanese capital, Beirut. As the economy boomed between 1960 and 1970, Beirut developed an external reputation for being one of the most prosperous, liberal and democratic capitals in the region. This further fuelled its ability to lure investment and wealth.²⁶⁶ However, internally, Beirut's image as a prosperous metropole contrasted sharply with the vast inequalities of wealth produced by Lebanon's rapid modernisation. This was visible in the relative deprivation and impoverishment of Lebanon's rural regions.²⁶⁷

Both the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil lacked basic infrastructure such as communications, roads, schools, clinics and hospitals. Half the villages of Jabal 'Amil did not have running water and neither the Bekaa nor Jabal 'Amil had electricity supplies. Education levels were a particularly alarming indicator of the Shi'i predicament: illiteracy levels were 68.9% in 1943.²⁶⁸ More than half of Jabal 'Amil's children were still without schooling in the early 1960s; in the Bekaa the situation was worse. Health care was also a problem: Jabal 'Amil had just three clinics, whereas the Bekaa had one hospital for the entire area. Relative to Lebanon's other communal groupings the Shi'i situation appeared disastrous. The Shi'i standard of living was said to be five times lower than that of Beirut's inhabitants in the early 1950s. And even by the early 1970s, 50% of the Shi'i community were still unschooled compared with a national average of 30%. The percentage

²⁶⁶ For a detailed analysis of the structure of the Lebanese economy in this period see, Carolyn Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon: Rise of an Open Economy*, Oxford Centre for Lebanese Studies: IB Tauris, 1998.

²⁶⁷ Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 11.

²⁶⁸ Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*, London: Zed Books, 1994, 162; Elizabeth Picard, 'Political Identities and Communal Identities: Shifting Mobilization among the Lebanese Shia through Ten Years of War, 1975-1985' in Dennis L. Thompson and Dov Ronen (eds.), *Ethnicity Politics and Development*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986, 164.

of Shi'is who had a university education was 6.6%, compared with 15% of Sunnis and 17% of Christians.²⁶⁹

Eighty-five per cent of the Shi'a resided in Lebanon's rural areas and depended on agricultural production for their livelihoods. Since agricultural output comprised only 15% of the Lebanese economy, the sector did not attract governmental investment. The agricultural sector also failed to produce enough output to sustain the 45% of the Lebanese population whose income and well-being depended on its output.²⁷⁰ Industries with a long history of Shi'i involvement, including fruit, sugar beet and tobacco cultivation in the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil regions, all suffered from government neglect.²⁷¹ The standard of living for Shi'i inhabitants of the countryside was five times lower than Beirut's residents in the 1950s.²⁷² These conditions compounded the absence of adequate infrastructure in Shi'i locales.²⁷³

Lebanon's capitalist modernisation process had a devastating impact on the Shi'a in socioeconomic terms. However, as the discussion in chapter one on political mobilisation argued, theories of social mobilisation fail to adequately link cause with effect. Rather, they assume that poverty inherently leads to political mobility, without providing evidence for the latter process. Socioeconomic factors can and often do produce feelings of alienation and disaffection. However it cannot be assumed that this also entails mobilisation. In order to draw the latter connection, it is important to consider the agents and actors who become the practitioners and intermediaries of political mobilisation.

Author interviews with Shi'i communists and officials within the LCP provided different insights into the relationship between socioeconomic

²⁶⁹ Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 162.

²⁷⁰ Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 10-11.

²⁷¹ Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 12-13; Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*, London: Zed Books, 1994, 161.

²⁷² Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 11.

²⁷³ Ibid; Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 162

status and political mobilisation. Some respondents did suggest a correlation, for example, family hardship and the experience of financial difficulty. However, these issues were never proffered as the only or indeed overriding factor in their decision to become communists. Other more complex factors emerged from interviews. One respondent experienced his 'first brush with communism' during the time he was educated in the Soviet Union. Others had a history of family involvement in the LCP, or were simply introduced to Marxism by a close friend or mentor.²⁷⁴

Officials within the LCP were more likely to affirm the correlation between socioeconomic status and an attachment to communism. In the LCP's view, the party's political programme throughout the 1950s and 1960s centred on political and economic reform. It is clear therefore, why they would advocate the resonance of their political manifesto with their membership. In this sense the LCP's explanation for its Shi'i membership was more structural and rooted in classic communist dichotomies: the bourgeois oppressors verses the downtrodden and poor proletariat. These explanations were also expounded by the LCP when asked about its Shi'i membership in particular.²⁷⁵

Existing analyses of the Shi'i community's involvement with communism resort to the poverty thesis. This states that because the Shi'a were poor, effectively comprising a downtrodden working class, the attraction to communism was inevitable.²⁷⁶ A related argument raises the ideological attraction of Marxism. In this sense, because the Shi'a were socioeconomically disadvantaged, any party proposing a fairer and more

²⁷⁴ Interviews with Rabie Dreiki (12 December 2012) and Ahmad Dreiki, (9 December 2012), Beirut, Lebanon.

²⁷⁵ Interviews with Maurice Nahl, (21 December 2012) and Karim Muruwa, (19 December 2012), Beirut, Lebanon.

²⁷⁶ See for example, Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon, Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, 195. Refer back to literature review for further discussion.

equal distribution of power and wealth would appeal.²⁷⁷ Other explanations assert instrumentalist reasons, such as financial benefit and protection. These apply particularly to the cases of Shi'i involvement with the Palestinian groups, for which Shi'i volunteers received payment.²⁷⁸

The difficulty with attempting to correlate socioeconomic factors with the Shi'i community's mobilisation is that they were not the only community in Lebanon who were adversely affected by Lebanon's burgeoning capitalist economy. Other groups in Lebanon's rural regions, including Tripoli, Akkar, Sidon and Tyre, which contained Maronite Christian, Sunni Muslim, Druze, as well as Shi'i populations, were also adversely effected by Lebanon's economic changes.²⁷⁹ Further still, dissatisfaction with the Lebanese economy and the political elites who spearheaded its transformation occurred in Beirut too, where mass anti-government protests, demonstrations and strike action took place. The violent civil unrest that culminated in the insurrection against President Sham'un's government in 1958 was the product of widespread popular dissatisfaction with socioeconomic conditions in Lebanon.²⁸⁰ In this sense, the socioeconomic effects of Lebanon's modernisation process cut across communal boundaries. This was why the main mobilisers of political opposition in this period were dominated by a coalition of mostly secular leftist political parties - the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). This alliance opposed the confessional political system and its capitalist oriented economy. Among the LCP's adherents, in addition to the Shi'a, were other minority communities who lacked representation in the confessional political structure. Lebanon's non-Arab communities, such as the

²⁷⁷ Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied: Musa Sadr and the Shi'i community*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1992, 111.

²⁷⁸ Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2005, 103; Augustus Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987, 38.

²⁷⁹ This was documented in a report by the Institut de Recherches et de Formation en vue de Developpement (IRFED) commissioned by the Lebanese President Fuad Shihab after the 1958 civil unrest to assess the social and economic conditions inside Lebanon. For discussion of the reports findings see, Kamal Salibi, 'Lebanon Under Fuad Chehab 1958-1964', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2:3, 1966, 221.

²⁸⁰ For more on the 1958 uprising see Kamal Salibi, 'Lebanon under Fuad Chehab 1958-1964', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 2:3, April 1966, pp. 211-226.

Armenians and Kurds were among these.²⁸¹ The LCP also drew adherents from the underrepresented Arab communities, such as the Orthodox Christians. Opposition to the confessional political structure in Lebanon that barred these communities from political representation was the primary issue that the diverse communities that comprised the LCP's membership had in common.

The affects of Lebanon's modernisation process on the socioeconomic status of the Shi'a were severe. In fact, it unleashed an additional socio-structural transformation. As agricultural output declined in the rural regions of Lebanon, and capital increasingly became concentrated in Beirut, the Shi'i communities were forced to migrate in search of better opportunities of employment, education and an improved quality of life in general.

Migration and urbanisation

The decline of Lebanon's agricultural sector produced a seismic shift in the demographics of the Shi'i community. Whilst migration, like the socioeconomic effects outlined above, impacted many of Lebanon's other communal groupings too, the effect on the Shi'a was disproportionately greater. Such was the extent of the Shi'i community's migration to Beirut that by 1973, 50% of the Shi'i communities in the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil left: 43% had moved to the city, where they already comprised 29% of the population.²⁸² The Shi'a also emigrated abroad at this time too, most notably to West Africa.

Historian Munthir Jaber argues that much of the impetus for Shi'i migration originated from the search for employment. The migrants were typically the farm workers who could no longer find work at home.²⁸³ In Beirut, they became menial labourers, working in the city's construction

²⁸¹ Michael W. Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 4:2, 1967, 146.

²⁸² Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 13.

²⁸³ Interview with Dr Munthir Jaber, Beirut: Lebanon (14 December 2012); See also Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 13.

industry and factories. These migrants generally settled in its northern and southern suburbs - Naba'a, Ghobeiry, Burj el-Barajneh. These areas came to be known as Beirut's Hizam al-Bu'us (Misery Belt), where the quality of life and standard of living was exceedingly low, and employment still difficult to acquire.²⁸⁴ However, it was here where the new Shi'i migrants got a real glimpse of their relative deprivation.

The paradox of Lebanon's booming economy, epitomised by Beirut's external image of flamboyance and luxury, verses the Beirut experienced by the Shi'a, represented a stark contradiction. The impact of migration on the political mobilisation of the Shi'a is subject to different interpretations. Some argue that migration produced a politically adrift community, isolated and in search of an identity, and opportunities for employment, upward mobility and political representation.²⁸⁵ However, it has also been argued that the Shi'i community's predicament in Beirut strengthened the community's primordial attachments, i.e sectarian identity, and thus contributed to the 'ruralisation of the city'.²⁸⁶ Thus, the Shi'a maintained strong links with their places of origin and sought to reproduce familiar religious and cultural practices in order to affirm their Shi'i identities. Because of this, the argument continues, migration and urbanisation contributed to the political mobilisation of the Shi'a on the basis of *sectarian* identities.

Elizabeth Picard asserts that the outcome of the aforementioned modernisation processes for the Shi'a was 'the search for radical change in a traditional way.'²⁸⁷ Augustus Richard Norton also argues that despite modernisation, which supposedly unravels traditional ties, sectarian identities persisted. Norton follows his analysis of the social mobilisation of the Shi'a immediately with a discussion of 'the persistence of sectarian

²⁸⁴ David McDowall, 'Lebanon: A Conflict of Minorities', *Minority Rights Group International Report*, 1996, 13.

²⁸⁵ Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 25-26.

²⁸⁶ Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 13.

²⁸⁷ Picard, *The Lebanese Shi'a*, 18.

identity.’²⁸⁸ While both scholars acknowledge the role played by secular political parties in attracting Shi‘i members, it is clear from their analyses that they have prioritised the political mobilisation of the Shi‘a that occurred in sectarian terms. This is despite a significant historical gap of at least twenty-years between the aforementioned modernisation processes and the appearance of sectarian identities among the Shi‘a. Whilst it is correct to relate the impact of Lebanon’s modernisation processes to the political mobilisation of the Shi‘a, this analysis argues that it is inaccurate to also relate these processes to the formation of a specifically sectarian political identity.

The net effect of migration on the Shi‘a was also not as negative as is usually asserted. On the contrary, migration also produced opportunities for the Shi‘a to improve their social and economic status.²⁸⁹ Indeed despite her stance, Picard acknowledges that opportunities for employment in Beirut’s exports and service sector were present, and some Shi‘a found work there.²⁹⁰ Other Shi‘a managed to break out of Beirut’s poverty through the acquisition of an education. This was facilitated by the availability of a secondary level education in Beirut as well as the establishment of the Lebanese University (LU) in 1951- the country’s first and only public university.²⁹¹ Emigration also produced success stories, particularly among Shi‘i migrants to West Africa who accumulated wealth there. These migrants also maintained their ties to Lebanon, returning remittances to their families, and establishing businesses in Beirut. Migrants to West Africa developed into a burgeoning Shi‘i middle class.²⁹² Improvements to the community’s social and economic status also expanded opportunities

²⁸⁸ Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 25.

²⁸⁹ Interview with Dr Munthir Jaber, Beirut: Lebanon (14 December 2012)

²⁹⁰ Elizabeth Picard, *The Lebanese Shi‘a*, 13.

²⁹¹ Interviews with Maurice Nahl, Current Committee Secretary Lebanese Communist Party, Beirut, 21st December 2012 and Dr Ghazi Berro, Retired Professor of Sociology at the Lebanese University, and associate of the LCP, Beirut, 15th December 2012

²⁹² The political mobilisation of this Shi‘i middle-class occurred under the auspices of Amal, and is discussed in the next chapter. For more detail on Shi‘i emigration to West Africa and elsewhere, consult Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (eds.), *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1991.

for political mobility. The Lebanese University became an important component of the Shi'i community's mobilisation, and acquired a large Shi'i student body. This contributed to the growth of a Shi'i intelligentsia in Beirut. In fact, it was among the university's Shi'i staff and students in the 1950s and 1960s that the LCP developed a strong following.²⁹³

The role of migration and urbanisation in the political mobilisation of the Shi'a is more complex than the story presented by existing studies. Whilst these modernisation processes sometimes enhanced cultural and religious identities among the Shi'a of Beirut, it is a reification to suggest that this also resulted in the sectarianisation of Shi'i *political* identities. In this sense, the impact of migration and urbanisation on the Lebanese Shi'a was not their political mobilisation in sectarian terms. This process occurred later, under different circumstances of causality, namely the Lebanese Civil War. Migration and urbanisation constitutes the third and final factor that contributed to a historical juncture in the Shi'i community's political mobilisation. Crucially, however, the type of mobilisation initiated by these processes among the Shi'a was decidedly secular - and anti-sectarian.

The Making of a Resistance Identity

The Shi'i community's experience of political, social and economic life in Lebanon after independence produced a critical juncture in their political mobilisation. This shifted the objective of their political activities away from the pursuit of political inclusion towards a radical politics of resistance. Now the Shi'a required a vehicle for the mobilisation of their newly developed resistance identity. The ensuing analysis details the path taken by the Shi'a in their search for a new strategy of political mobilisation.

²⁹³ Interviews with Maurice Nahl and Ghazi Berro, Beirut: Lebanon (21/15 December 2012).

In Search of a Political Alternative

For the Shi‘a, frustrated and radicalised by their continued marginalisation and impoverishment in the new Lebanon, the existing political options within the community: the *zu‘ama* and ‘ulama’, did not match the new criteria for political mobilisation, which was formulated around a resistance identity opposed to the status quo. On the contrary, the *zu‘ama* represented precisely the confessional political structure that these Shi‘a rejected, and sought to overturn. The Shi‘i ‘ulama’ also failed to comprise a viable alternative. Aside from their generally apolitical character at this time, the ‘ulama’ also lacked political credibility due to their financial dependence on the *zu‘ama*. The political families maintained alliances with the ‘ulama’ in order to ensure the selection of their preferred candidates at election time. And in return for their loyalty and political quiescence, the ‘ulama’ received financial backing to maintain their religious activities, e.g schools, seminaries and awqāf (religious endowments).²⁹⁴ In this sense the ‘ulama’ were perceived in much the same terms as the *zu‘ama*: as part of the Lebanese system, and an additional element that perpetuated the regressive sectarian logic of political power in Lebanon.

Since the *zu‘ama* and ‘ulama’ represented part of the problem for those frustrated by political system, many Shi‘a embarked on a journey beyond the confines of their sect to find an alternative vehicle for their political mobilisation. By the 1960s, a wide range of political parties and movements attracted significant numbers of Shi‘i members and sympathisers. Among these were the LCP, the Organisation for Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL), the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) and the Arab Socialist Ba‘ath Party. The Shi‘a also became involved in the various Palestinian resistance organisations with bases in Lebanon, including the PLO, PFLP and DFLP.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Tamara Chalabi, *The Shi‘is of Jabal ‘Amil and the New Lebanon*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 22.

²⁹⁵ Shanahan, *The Shi‘a of Lebanon*, 95-106.

Scholars have struggled to provide an accurate characterisation of Shi'i involvement in such a diverse range of political movements at this time. This is partly because they have not accorded this phenomenon any particular significance to the overall trajectory of Shi'i political mobilisation. Norton's conclusions summarise well why Shi'i involvement in these parties is considered by scholars to be of little significance:

No single party was overwhelmingly successful in the recruitment of Shi'i members, and, in retrospect, it is *the relatively broad ideological spectrum covered by the organizations that seems noteworthy* [emphasis added].²⁹⁶

The emphasis on the wide ideological spectrum of these parties overlooks an important aspect of what they all had in common. This was their rejectionist, anti-system, revolutionary resistance agenda. Whether it was the LCP's pledge to abolish Lebanon's communal political structure; the SSNP's aspiration for Greater Syrian national unity (which by definition meant that it also opposed the sectarian political system institutionalised by the National Pact); the Ba'ath party's pan-Arabist vision of regional unity; or the Palestinian's adoption of revolutionary armed-struggle, all these parties upheld a resistance agenda. In this sense, they matched the criteria for the Shi'i community's burgeoning resistance agenda, and offered a variety of expositions for how the Shi'a might eventually pursue that agenda for themselves.

Statistics denoting Shi'i membership of these political organisation are extremely difficult to ascertain. As author interviews with the LCP also discovered, since an important ideological foundation of the LCP is its opposition to what it calls the sectarian regime in Lebanon, it is not in the interests of the party to acknowledge that it had significant following from a particular sectarian community. The party stated that it does not keep records of the sectarian identities of its members. Nevertheless, one available estimate of the LCP's demographics in 1975 indicated that Shi'i

²⁹⁶ Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 38.

members comprised 50%, the Greek Orthodox Christians 30% and the Sunni and Druze 15-20%.²⁹⁷ Given the high proportion of Shi'i members of the LCP, the analysis now moves on to explore the history and development of the LCP

The Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) - Early History

The main founders of the LCP were Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbek and Fouad al-Shimali. Shimali, a Lebanese tobacco worker, was the only founding member with a background in labour activism. He had worked in Egypt where he gained experience in the trade union movement. Shimali's communist activity led to his expulsion from Egypt in 1923.²⁹⁸ Shortly after his arrival in Lebanon he met Yazbek, with whom he developed a strong friendship.

Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbek was a Lebanese liberal intellectual inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution. Born in 1907, Yazbek was deeply affected by the devastating wartime situation, and the brutality of Turkish rule in Syria. His activism was inspired by this miserable reality. Yazbek began to develop his socialist views in this context. The first May Day celebration in Lebanon was a clandestine affair that took place in Raouche, Ras Beirut in 1907.²⁹⁹ Yazbek recalls the involvement of himself and Khairallah Khairallah, Mustafa al-Ghlayani, Daoud Ja'as, Flex Faris and Nicola Baz. They also liaised with a group called The Free Youth.³⁰⁰

After this event, Yazbek began writing a series of letters and articles which appeared in the Zahle based newspaper entitled *al-Sihai al-Ta'ih* (The Wandering Journalist) between 1922-1924. This newspaper was the first vehicle for the expression of socialist ideas in Syria/Lebanon. Its target

²⁹⁷ As'ad Abu Khalil, 'The Politics of Sectarian Ethnicity : Segmentation in Lebanese Society', PhD Thesis, Georgetown University: USA, 1988, 183.

²⁹⁸ Alexander Flores, 'The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered', *Khamsin*, No. 7, 1979, ><https://libcom.org/library/khamsin-07-communist-parties-middle-east>> Accessed 23-08-15

²⁹⁹ Alexander Flores, 'The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered', *Khamsin*, No. 7, 1979, ><https://libcom.org/library/khamsin-07-communist-parties-middle-east>> Accessed 23-08-15

³⁰⁰ Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbek, *Hikayat Awwal Nuwwar fi al-'Alam wa fi Lubnan* (The Story of May Day in the World and in Lebanon), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1974, 48-9.

audience was 'the workers and the miserable.'³⁰¹ It's tagline called for class unity and respect for 'the poor and the sad more than the wealthy and the happy.'³⁰²

Yazbek, Shimali and their colleagues had no connections with the Communist International in the early stages of the Syrian/Lebanese movement. In fact, the initial connection was made with the help of several Jewish communists from the Palestinian Communist Party. Joseph Berger, a Jewish Palestinian communist of Polish origins played a prominent role in the early stages of the Syrian/Lebanese party. Berger noticed a socialist undertone in an article written by Yazbek on Anatole France's death. He then travelled to Beirut where he met Yazbek, Shimali and several other communist workers from Bikfaya.³⁰³ Together, this group officially established the party in Beirut on 24th October 1924 under the name of the Lebanese People's Party (LPP). Yazbek was declared the party's General Secretary. Although he was reluctant to be selected for this role, the decision was unanimous.³⁰⁴ In 1925, a small group of representatives from the Syrian Armenian Communist party, Spartacus, met with LPP representatives in Beirut. This led to the unification of the two groups and the formation of the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon (CPSL). The party's remit spanned the territories of both Lebanon and Syria until separate parties were established in July 1943. Shimali moved to Bikfaya in Mount Lebanon where he worked in its tobacco factories and established the General Syndicate of Tobacco Workers. This was later incorporated into the CPSL with the Supreme Committee of Syndicates.³⁰⁵ Its interim central committee comprised Yazbak, Shimali and three others, two from the Spartacus leadership. The CPSL's first conference was held in December 1925 and was attended by fifteen representatives from Aleppo, Bikfaya, Zahleh and Beirut.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 50.

³⁰² Ibid ,50-52.

³⁰³ Alexander Flores, 'The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered', *Khamsin*, No. 7, 1979, ><https://libcom.org/library/khamsin-07-communist-parties-middle-east>> Accessed 23-08-15.

³⁰⁴ Yazbek, *Hikayat Awwal Nuwwar*, 65-6.

³⁰⁵ Tareq and Jacqueline Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon*, 6-7.

The origins of Lebanese/Syrian communism are markedly different from most other Arab communist parties. The early Lebanese communists were inspired by the French Revolution, and understood bolshevism as a more radical variant of West European humanistic socialism.³⁰⁶ They had only a minimal understanding of Marxist culture, which is acknowledged by Yazbek in his memoirs.³⁰⁷ The culture of Marxism-Leninism served more as an inspiration and stimulus rather than an organisational framework for the party. However, unlike most of the Arab communist parties, which were founded by non-Arab minorities or, in the Palestinian case, left-wing Zionist settlers, all the founders of the LCP were Lebanese Arabs.³⁰⁸ The LCP therefore emerged from a genuine Lebanese Arab tradition.

The second May Day celebration in Lebanon took place in 1925 at the Crystal Cinema in Beirut. Unlike the 1907 May Day celebrations, this was a public affair that drew greater participation, as well as the attention of the French Mandate authorities. The programme of the CPSL was announced at this gathering, which consisted of support for the Syrian revolution of 1925, strengthening the struggle against Imperialism and the struggle for national independence, democratic reforms, including a call for the end of sectarianism; worker's rights in Syria and Lebanon, as well as a call for the confiscation of the private property of landowners who did not support the revolution.³⁰⁹

After the May Day celebration, the CPSL established its first newspaper, *al-Insaniyya* (Humanity) in Beirut. The paper announced a 'call to the workers and farmers' along with the CPSL's principles. The version published in Khalil al-Dibs collection of party documents omits some of the contents of these announcements, emphasising the social dimensions of the party's

³⁰⁶ Flores, 'The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered', *Khamsin*, No. 7, 1979, ><https://libcom.org/library/khamsin-07-communist-parties-middle-east>>Accessed 23-08-15.

³⁰⁷ Yazbek, *Hikayat Awwal Nuwwar*, 69-72.

³⁰⁸ Flores, 'The early history of Lebanese Communism reconsidered', *Khamsin*, No. 7, 1979, ><https://libcom.org/library/khamsin-07-communist-parties-middle-east>>Accessed 23-08-15.

³⁰⁹ Muhammad Dakrub, *Judhur al-Sindiyyana al-Hamra: Hikaya al-Hizb al-Shuyu'iy al-Lubnani 1924-1931*, Beirut: Dar al-Farabi, 1974, 472.

political agenda e.g. the working day, a national minimum wage, anti-child labour laws etc. However, the pages of *al-Insaniyya* also contained regularly featured columns supporting the the Druze-led Syrian revolt against the French in 1925-1926, and calling for French troops to join the rebellion.³¹⁰ For this reason, the party became the target of the French Mandate's censors, and the newspaper was closed down after only five issues in June 1925. The party continued to circulate its articles in secret pamphlets until they established a second newspaper.³¹¹ Government suppression also targeted the party's leadership, many of whom were arrested or fled in early 1926. The absence of its leadership effectively halted the party's activities for two years until they were released from prison in 1928.³¹² During these early years, the CPSL came to be admired primarily for its anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist platform, evidenced by its support for the Syrian revolt and later, its declaration for Arab unity in 1931.³¹³

Censorship of the CPSL's newspapers became a regular feature of the party's relationship with the French Mandate authorities, as well as the independent authorities of the Lebanese state after 1943. After *al-Insaniyya* came *Sawt al-Ummal (Voice of the Workers)*. The first issue was published on 17th March 1930. This was a weekly paper edited by Fouad Shimali. Its primary focus was on the workers, farmers and union activity.³¹⁴ However, this paper was also shut down after only its second issue. The literary newspaper, *al-Duhor*, owned by Ibrahim Haddad served as an interim publishing outlet for the communists, and focussed mainly on scientific, philosophical and literary issues until it too was temporarily shut down in 1932. *Al-Talia* followed in 1935, with the Arab youth its target demographic. The newspaper published articles in science and literature in an attempt to foster free thinking. The paper sought to bring together writers, poets and

³¹⁰ Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 23.

³¹¹ Dahir al-'Akkari (ed.), *Al-Sihafa al-Thawriyya fi Lubnan 1925-1975* (The Revolutionary Press in Lebanon 1925-1975), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1975, 11.

³¹² Ismaels, *The Communist Movement*, 23.

³¹³ Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 105.

³¹⁴ Khalil al-Dibs (Intro), *Sawt al-Sha'b Aqwa: Safahat min al-Sihafa al-shiyu'iyya wa al-'Ummaliyya wa al-Dimuqratiyya fi 50 'ama* (The People's Voice is Stronger; Pages from the Communist, Workers' and Democratic Press in 50 Years), Dar al-Farabi, Beirut 1974, 51.

Arab intellectuals to defend the national position against the French Mandate authorities.³¹⁵ For this reason it remained a secret paper run by several key party officials including Yazbek, Shimali, Nicola Shawi, Farajallah al-Hilu and Khaled Bakdash.

Another party newspaper, *Sawt al-Sha'b (The People's Voice)*, was established on 15th May 1937. This was arguably one of the LCP's most successful and longest running newspapers. By the time of its censorship by the French High Commissioner in 'independent' Lebanon in 1948, the paper had reached a circulation of between 5-6,000 copies, and up to 20,000 copies were often printed on Sundays.³¹⁶ *Sawt al-Sha'b* was a major voice in the Lebanese parliamentary elections of 1937, and had helped the party establish important organisational relationships with other parties in Lebanon. It is considered by the LCP to be a high point in the Lebanese communist movement's history.³¹⁷

Several more LCP newspapers followed *Sawt al-Sha'b*, including *al-Tarikh (The Path)*, *al-Sarkha (The Scream)*, and *al-Akhbar (News)*, culminating with *al-Nida' (The Call)*, which continues to be in circulation today. *Al-Sarkha* was managed by Farajallah al-Hilu from a secret room rented near LCP headquarters in Beirut. This paper filled the immediate void left by *Sawt al-Sha'b*.³¹⁸ *Al-Sarkha* was situated in the post-1948 Arab regional context. Yusuf Khatar al-Hilu characterised the newspaper's placement in this period of LCP history as follows:

Issued after 1948, when the Lebanese prisons were full of socialists, dictatorship was controlling Syria, the blood of the communists were shed in Baghdad, Libya under the Mandate, Morocco under the control of the French, the Gulf under British control, and the Cold War was at its peak, and the chances of another third world war were very high.³¹⁹

³¹⁵ Al-'Akkari (ed.), *Al-Sihafa al-Thawriyya fi Lubnan*, 16.

³¹⁶ Al-Dibs (Intro), *Sawt al-Sha'b Aqwa*, 137-138.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Al-Dibs (Intro), *Sawt al-Sha'b Aqwa*, 255-256.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

Al-Sarkha was shut down in 1947 until 1951. In its place, *al-Tarikh* filled the gap as a monthly newspaper, while LCP leaflets and flyers provided the party with the minimum organisational and political support. At this time the party viewed the ability to publish a weekly newspaper as an essential element of the communist struggle in Lebanon. *Al-Akhbar* began circulating in October 1954. It sought to mobilise Lebanon's workers, farmers, students and intellectuals, and propose solutions to national issues. The LCP believes that *Al-Akhbar's* success was evidenced by its censorship in several Arab counties. The newspaper had a circulation of between 13,000 and 20,000 copies throughout the 1950s, and the LCP argues that socialist ideas in Lebanon at this time were progressing very well, alongside the increasing power of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM).

The Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) - After independence

As was noted in this study's literature review, most studies of the LCP provide a negative appraisal of their political performance.³²⁰ The main source of criticism surrounds the conscious decision by party elites in 1943 not to pursue a rigidly scientific socialist agenda in Lebanon. Ahead of parliamentary elections in 1943, the then leader of the party, Khaled Bakdash stated, 'the issue before us is not to establish socialism in Syria or Lebanon...all that we want...is the introduction of certain democratic reforms talked about by everyone.'³²¹ Bakdash mentioned the traditional targets of communist movements worldwide in his speech: the 'national capitalist', the 'national factory owner' and the 'owner of land.'³²² However, his message was that the communists meant them no harm. Instead, the LCP's First Congress, held in 1944, established the party's primary aims as the pursuit of moderate democratic reforms, national unity and the

³²⁰ Tareq and Jacqueline Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon*, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1998; Michael Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 3:2, 1967, pp. 134–159; S. Ayyub, *Al-Hizb al-shiyu 'i fi Suriya walubnan, 1922-1958*, Beirut: Dar al-Huriyya, 1960. Note: the Lebanese and Syrian branches of the communist party were united as the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon until 1943, when they each became nominally separate entities.

³²¹ Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 32.

³²² S Ayyub, *Al-Hizb al-shiyu 'i*, 96.

establishment of a democratic republican regime in Lebanon.³²³ Because of this decision, Suleiman concludes that the party did not pursue a radical socialist agenda, and was therefore non-revolutionary. Government pressure, internal party dissent and an Arab public wary of communism are argued to have 'forced the party to limit its revolutionary activities and resort to "peaceful means" to spread its ideology.'³²⁴

If the LCP's ideology was indeed 'non-revolutionary' it is difficult to see how it could possibly meet the criteria for an anti-system, resistance party. The problem with the above historical readings is that they hold the LCP rigidly accountable to an ideological agenda that the party itself did not seek to pursue. This leads the Ismaels to conclude that soaring membership of the LCP between 1947 and 1948 is because of the party's accommodation of 'liberal bourgeois principles', evidenced by the LCP's decision to compete with other national parties in Lebanon for popular support.³²⁵ However, this conclusion tells us very little about what exactly accounted for the LCP's popularity during this period. In essence, the Ismaels argue that the LCP's ascendancy cannot be attributed to its communist ideology. This leaves open the question of what exactly did contribute to the party's domestic popularity.

Suleiman offers an alternative explanation for the LCP's popularity at this time: '...this support is merely protest registered against the confessional sectarian set-up in government and society.'³²⁶ Although Suleiman appeared to regard such anti-confessional protest as peripheral, his observation is highly pertinent to the present analysis, and the question of how the LCP came to be at the forefront of Lebanon's anti-system movements during this period. An analysis of the LCP's programme and activities in Lebanon helps account for the LCP's national popularity during the first twenty years of Lebanon's post-independence period. The LCP's domestic political

³²³ Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 36.

³²⁴ Suleiman 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 140-141.

³²⁵ Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 58.

³²⁶ Suleiman 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 144.

agenda in Lebanon at this time constitutes an important component of the explanation for the interest shown by the communist Shi'a in the party.

According to LCP officials, the main focus of the party's activities in the late 1940s and after was to force political reforms. Their efforts specifically targeted Lebanon's sectarian political structure which, in their reading, constituted the main obstacle to the incorporation of all citizens, irrespective of religious background, into the Lebanese state.³²⁷ Characterising the political field in Lebanon at this time, one respondent stated,

prior to the Lebanese Civil War, the main issue was that between the [political] left and right: non-sectarian, democratic reform of the system, verses preservation of the status quo.³²⁸

Asked whether such political reforms superseded the LCP's economic agenda, party officials responded in the affirmative, though would also hasten to add that the economy remained a priority area. As we have already seen, LCP pronouncements at the time certainly referenced the economy, but the type of economic reforms sought did not seek to bring down Lebanon's capitalist economic model. Nevertheless, respondents indicate that the party's call for a more equitable distribution of wealth in Lebanese society was intertwined with their aspirations for political reform. One senior party official said,

The core issues of concern for the parties of the secular left in the 1950s-1960s were resistance against the sectarian regime and the economy.³²⁹

These statements from LCP officials are corroborated by our existing knowledge of historical events in Lebanon at the time. The LCP was a prominent participant in a vibrant leftist domestic protest movement in

³²⁷ Interviews with Dr Ghazi Berro and Karim Mroue in Beirut:Lebanon, (15 and 19 December 2012). This point is also present in the LCP's National Program released after its First Congress held on 31 December 1943. Point two states 'Equality between all Lebanese citizens regardless of difference in religion or race; strengthening fraternal ties among them.' Tareq Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 36.

³²⁸ Interview with Rabie Dreiki, Beirut:Lebanon (12 December 2012).

³²⁹ Interview with Karim Mroue, Beirut:Lebanon (19 December 2012).

Lebanon, which arose in the late 1940s, and experienced its golden years throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The Rose-Water Revolution of 1952, which forced the resignation of Lebanon's first post-independence President, Bishara al-Khoury over allegations of economic mismanagement and corruption, was the first success story for this burgeoning movement.³³⁰ Comprising an informal parliamentary opposition group led by PSP leader Kamal Jumblatt, this movement also involved the LCP and several unions that it controlled. Thus, the LCP oversaw regular strike action among workers, including bakers, taxi-drivers and lawyers until the President's resignation.

Whilst membership of the LCP at this time is estimated to have been between 10,000-18000, the party's reach is also understood to have extended far beyond its card-carrying members, to include an estimated 40,000 followers.³³¹ This was because the party controlled several peace movements, labour unions and syndicates. In 1945 the LCP established the General Union of Workers.³³² It also controlled the the Federation of Trade Unions, which encompassed carpenters, builders and printers unions.³³³ The LCP also controlled the Lebanese Partisans of Peace. This latter movement continued to be involved in the protest movement against the new Lebanese President, Kamil Sham'un, which culminated in the May 1958 insurrection against the government. During this time, the government's concerns over the country's security were such that it requested American military support. The Partisans of Peace called on Lebanese citizens to:

fight them wherever you find them with the bullets of your guns and machine-guns, aim your bombs at them; attack them with everything that comes to your hands, tear them with your teeth and make their life an inferno on our free land, so that they should depart vanquished.³³⁴

³³⁰ J.L, 'Peaceful Change in the Lebanon: The "Rose-Water" Revolution', *The World Today*, 9:4, 1952, pp.162-173.

³³¹ Interview with Maurice Nahl, Beirut: Lebanon, (21 December 2012); Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 38; Suleiman 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 141.

³³² Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 38.

³³³ Suleiman 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 144.

³³⁴ Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 54.

While the LCP had already been described in 1948 as 'one of the strongest parties in the country', in the aftermath of 1958, the LCP remarked that apart from making the renewal of Sham'un's Presidential mandate impossible, the events of that year increased among the populous 'a strong sense of belonging to a free, independent and sovereign Lebanon.'³³⁵ The 'Shihab Reforms' initiated by President Sham'un's presidential successor are generally viewed as an attempt to address some of the issues raised by the protest movement, and in particular, regional sectarian economic inequalities - particularly as they related to the Shi'i predicament.³³⁶

The LCP's public advocacy of systemic reform to Lebanon's communal political structure continued until the outbreak of war in 1975. In April of that year, the LCP initiated a national debate about the nature of the country's sectarian system. They developed a critique of the political system on the basis of its preservation of key governmental positions for the Maronite Christians and Sunni Muslims, advocating its replacement with a secular democratic political structure.³³⁷ The resultant nation-wide deliberations over the subject engaged representatives from all of Lebanon's different sects - all of whom rejected the proposal for a secular political model in Lebanon.³³⁸ Regardless of the outcome, this episode illustrates that a complete overhaul of the Lebanese political structure was a key aspiration of the LCP.

Senior LCP officials' accounts of this historical period argue that transforming Lebanon's sectarian political structure was the primary objective of the party. This is corroborated by the evidence of the party's calls for such reform, as well as their involvement in protest and strike action against successive Lebanese governments between 1943 and 1975.

³³⁵ Walter Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2010, 161; Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 83.

³³⁶ David R. Smock and Audrey C. Smock, *The Politics of Pluralism: A Comparative Study of Lebanon and Ghana*, New York: Elsevier, 1975, 173.

³³⁷ David D. Grafton, 'The "Religious Secularism" of Lebanon and the United States: A Discussion between Lebanon's Secular Debate and Madison's "Principles of Pluralism"', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 19:3, 2002, 40-41.

³³⁸ Sune Haugbolle 'Social Boundaries and Secularism in the Lebanese Left', *Mediterranean Politics*, 18:3, 2013, 439.

This illustrates why and how the LCP did in fact constitute an anti-system, resistance party. As a political party at the forefront of Lebanon's domestic protest movement, this also explains why the political agenda of the Shi'a found its initial home with the LCP. As the LCP became aware of its growing Shi'i constituency, the party sought to both maintain and expand that following. Thus the appeal of communism among the Shi'a developed still further.

The Appeal of Communism

The foundations of the LCP's appeal among the Shi'a lay in the party's resistance agenda and specifically the party's call for the abolishment of Lebanon's confessional political structure. In this section, the analysis draws on further evidence from interviews with LCP officials and Shi'i members of the party, as well as party documents to demonstrate how the LCP expanded its appeal among the Shi'a.

Agricultural Reform

The formulation of the LCP's reform initiative for Lebanon's agricultural sector contains many indications of the party's awareness of its burgeoning appeal among the Shi'a, and the party's attempt to build and strengthen that appeal. Indeed, one of the largest projects developed by the LCP in South Lebanon was its agricultural reform initiative. Such was the extent of the LCP's investment in this issue that it discussed the matter at length during party congresses and published pamphlets and books containing a detailed diagnosis of the maladies of Lebanon's agricultural sector, as well as detailed proposals for its reform. The LCP's analysis of the agricultural situation is considered here, as well as the proposed reforms. In addition, the analysis notes how frequently the LCP's description of agricultural conditions in South Lebanon expanded to include many other aspects of the south's deprivation, including the status of its infrastructure, educational provision and healthcare system. In this sense, the LCP was undoubtedly speaking to the Shi'a of South Lebanon, and pledging much needed reforms that extended beyond the agricultural realm.

During the LCP's Second Congress in 1968, the party noted the impact of Lebanon's modernisation process on the country's farmers, referring to the regions of the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil specifically. The party reported that Lebanon's industrial agricultural sector was undergoing significant decline, with growth only averaging between 2-4.5% a year.³³⁹ This is attributed to the government's neglect of industry in favour of the service sector. The LCP also notes that the initiation of free trade, which encouraged foreign investment and the entry of 'bourgeois elements', flooded Lebanon with foreign goods to the detriment of local production. The LCP argues that despite the government's neglect, the agricultural industry remained a source of employment for 50% of the Lebanese population, but that production levels were falling far below a level that could sustain the country.³⁴⁰ In the LCP's analysis, the impact of government neglect meant that the agricultural workers and farmers suffered from low living standards and only seasonal employment. This pushed many thousands of agricultural labourers to migrate to the cities, or emigrate. The LCP was effectively describing the experience of South Lebanon's Shi'a community throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

High on the agenda of the LCP's Second Congress in 1968 was the agricultural issue. The discussion produced a summary of the main issues facing Lebanese agriculture. These included the need to secure land, water and investment in machinery for agricultural workers and peasants deprived of their land. They also called for the provision of greater social rights for agricultural labourers, including freeing young workers from landlords and financial oligarchies, reclaiming all lands (nationalisation), and increasing productivity and secure exports. The LCP presented a ten-point 'Agricultural Reform Initiative' which covered a broad number of issues, ranging from defining a minimum wage for agricultural workers, establishing new and fairer laws for land rental, protection for workers from debt, reform and reallocation of all neglected or unused land,

³³⁹ Al-Hizb al-shiyu'iy al-Lubnani, *Al-Watha'iq al-Kamila lil-Mu'tamar al-Watani al-Thani lil-Hizb al-shiyu'i al-Lubnani*, Beirut: Manshurat Al-Hizb al-shiyu'i al-Lubnani, 1988, 173.

³⁴⁰ Al-Hizb al-shiyu'iy al-Lubnani, *Al-Watha'iq al-Kamila*, 173-4.

nationalisation of imports and exports control and, significantly, the annexation of the tobacco monopoly (the Regie) for the public sector.³⁴¹ The latter issue would have held particular appeal among Jabal ‘Amil’s Shi‘a, who revolted against France’s imposition of the Regie in 1936.

The pronouncements at the LCP’s Second Congress were followed soon after by the publication of a detailed study that had been carried out by the party, entitled ‘The Agricultural Issue in Lebanon.’³⁴² This book echoes many of the public statements made at the party conference, but contains more detailed policy proposals. The study analyses the 1936 Tobacco Revolt in Bint Jbeil, and criticises the (French) government’s response to the revolt as antagonistic to the whole agricultural system, favouring the monopolies and big owners against the local farmers in South Lebanon. The LCP’s analysis also notes that this event demonstrates the potential for union among the farmers, and their ability to lead reforms, but that they require assistance.³⁴³ Clearly the study is also positioning the LCP as a potential vanguard for rural (Shi‘i) workers.

The LCP’s book publication on the agricultural issue is also notable for the additional terrain it covers on social conditions in South Lebanon. The analysis references the absence of general services and facilities in the south, noting for example that not one publicly administered hospital exists in the region, while all government-administered hospitals were located in Beirut. The study also argues that ‘out of 122 private hospitals in Lebanon, there is only one in al-Bekaa and fourteen in the south...’³⁴⁴ The analysis continues to note the unavailability of clinics, pharmacies, doctors and nurses. In addition to the state of the health sectors, the LCP also considered the state of the region’s infrastructure, finding the status of roads, communications, water supplies and schools to all be inadequate.

³⁴¹ Al-Hizb al-shiyu‘iy al-Lubnani, *Al-Watha‘iq al-Kamila*, 178-9.

³⁴² Al-Hizb al-shiyu‘i al-Lubnani, *Al-Qadiyah al-Ziraiyah fi Lubnan*, Beirut: Manshurat al-Hizb al-shiyu‘i al-Lubnani, 1973.

³⁴³ Al-Hizb al-shiyu‘i al-Lubnani, *Al-Qadiyah al-Ziraiyah*, 98.

³⁴⁴ Al-Hizb al-shiyu‘i al-Lubnani, *Al-Qadiyah al-Ziraiyah*, 166.

Illiteracy rates and school attendance in the south and Bekaa are all noted as being below the national average in 1971.³⁴⁵

The LCP concluded its report with a five-point pledge to deal with all these areas:

1. Provision of water resources, electricity, roads, and public telephones.
2. Building sufficient number of schools to cope with the population figures.
3. Building large, modern hospitals in every district, and small hospitals in every village, and groups of clinics in the main towns and mobile clinics to perform rounds.
4. Building cultural and sporting clubs, public libraries and providing facilities for the younger generation.
5. Programme for ending illiteracy.³⁴⁶

These proposals were part of the LCP's efforts to spearhead Lebanon's agricultural reform movement. In the process, it also positioned the LCP favourably among the southern Shi'a, who were most affected by Lebanon's declining agricultural sector. Thus, the LCP expanded its influence beyond Beirut's Shi'i community to include the Shi'a of South Lebanon.. The LCP's analysis of conditions in the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil certainly reflected the Shi'i experience there in the wake of Lebanon's capitalist reforms and modernisation process. These were the issues identified earlier as creating the impetus for Shi'i migration to Beirut, and elsewhere. Indeed, by the end of the 1960s a rural proletariat, predominantly Shi'a, had emerged in the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil. The commercialisation of agriculture saw the number of destitute agricultural workers increase from 20,000 to 60,000 between 1950 and 1970.³⁴⁷ Under these conditions, the LCP notes that the leftist presence in South Lebanon increased in 1967, leading to a power struggle over the social issues of importance to the south, which simultaneously raised the profile of these issues.³⁴⁸ As we have seen, the LCP's formulation of a comprehensive

³⁴⁵ Al-Hizb al-shiyu'i al-Lubnani, *Al-Qadiyah al-Ziraiyah*, 166.

³⁴⁶ Al-Hizb al-shiyu'i al-Lubnani, *Al-Qadiyah al-Ziraiyah*, 170.

³⁴⁷ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 102.

³⁴⁸ Interview with Karim Muruwa, Beirut:Lebanon (19 December 2012)

agricultural reform initiative sought to target those Shi'a affected by these processes. Indeed, the LCP drew increasing numbers of support from these areas, and particularly Nabatiyya, where the party attracted supporters from among the agricultural and tobacco industry workers.³⁴⁹ In the end, the party failed to follow through on most, if not all, the above pledges. This failure would not become apparent to the Shi'a until the Lebanese Civil War, however.

The LCP's activities at this time were not confined to the rural regions. Indeed, many of the destitute Shi'i agricultural workers formed an urban proletariat in the southern and eastern suburbs of Beirut, where they comprised the majority of the city's factory workers during the 1970s.³⁵⁰ The LCP followed these Shi'i migrants to Beirut too. For those who could find work as menial labourers or factor workers in Beirut, they were introduced to the LCP via its syndicates and trade union organisations in the city.³⁵¹ However, the LCP's championing of the agricultural issue was not the only element of the party's programme that generated appeal among the Shi'a of these locales at the time. An additional issue also emerged as highly salient for the LCP: the party's development of a hostile attitude toward Israel.

Israel and the Palestinians

The LCP's support for the Palestinian struggle for independence, as well as the party's own armed resistance activities against Israel, became an important source of the party's appeal among the Shi'a, particularly in Jabal 'Amil. The analysis in chapter two explained the origins of the Shi'i community's affinity and friendship with the Palestinians, and opposition toward Israel, which dated back to the 1930s. However, the history of the LCP's position on Israel is arguably one of the most inconsistent aspects of the party's political programme in Lebanon. The analysis in this section

³⁴⁹ Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut*, London: Ithaca Press, 1986, 172.

³⁵⁰ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 102.

³⁵¹ Interview with Maurice Nahl, Beirut: Lebanon, (21 December 2012)

begins with an overview of the evolution of the LCP's stance on Israel and the Palestinians. The discussion then moves on to show how the LCP's position on this issue became an important source of the Shi'i community's attachment to the LCP. In particular, the analysis shows how the LCP was the first party to coin the concept of resistance with regard to Israel. Additionally, the analysis shows that the LCP also conducted martyrdom operations against Israel. These are two issues that, when it comes to the Shi'a, are conventionally associated with Hizbullah's activities. In this sense, the analysis in this section shows how the resistance against Israel was originally constructed in secular political terms by the LCP.

The LCP on Israel

Until 1947 the LCP's position on Israel, reflected that of the Soviet Union. The LCP therefore opposed the partition of Palestine, and supported the Palestinians in their struggle against Zionism.³⁵² However, following the UN resolution on the partition of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish state in May 1947, the Soviet Union recognised the resolution, stating that there were two nations in Palestine - Arab and Jewish - 'having equal historic roots in the country.'³⁵³ Khaled Bakdash immediately announced that the Syrian and Lebanese communist parties would also recognise the partition plan. He also denounced the resulting Arab-Israeli war as an imperialist plot initiated by Jordan's King Abdullah.³⁵⁴

The resultant shift in the LCP's position on this issue, forced by Moscow, was disastrous for the party, and indeed all communist parties in the Arab world. Party offices were burned and ransacked in Damascus. In Lebanon the government saw an opportunity to clamp down on LCP activities, which if we recall, were heavily involved in the domestic protest movements of this era. The party's newspaper, *Sawt al-Sha'ab* was shut down, while the LCP was banned in Lebanon on 8th June 1948. Arab nationalists region-wide capitalised on the opportunity to denounce their

³⁵² Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 38; Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 153.

³⁵³ Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 153.

³⁵⁴ Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 153.

fiercest rivals, the communists, for their recognition of Israel.³⁵⁵ Such was the extent of the damage caused to the LCP that party membership severely declined; internal party dissent over the decision led to the expulsion of further members, while others left of their own accord. Under these conditions it is difficult to see how the LCP generated any appeal among the Shi'a for its position on Israel. A shift in the party's political position had to occur before this issue became a significant factor in the relationship between communism and the Shi'a.

The necessary change came in 1956, when Moscow again reversed its position on partition. The communists of both Syria and Lebanon immediately followed suit, describing the idea of a Jewish national home as

from the beginning, an imperialistic, aggressive and unjust idea...Israel has proved since its existence, to be a base for imperialism in the heart of the Arab East.³⁵⁶

In October of 1967, the LCP Secretary-General Nicola Shawi wrote in the Lebanese newspaper, *al-Akhbar*, calling for the Soviet Union's acceptance of UN Resolution 242, which called for the full withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Arab territories occupied during the war. The article called for a solution to the Palestinian problem, and was critical of Israel and its links with imperialism. The new program adopted by the party declared,

The complete solution of the Palestinian problem must be based on principled positions and must begin with the recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian Arabs to their soil and their homeland; hence the recognition of their right to return to that homeland and their right to self-determination. One cannot justify anything founded upon violence and robbery; and the presence today of Jews in Palestine cannot prejudice the historical and natural right of the Palestinian Arabs to their land.³⁵⁷

The LCP's reversal of its highly controversial stance on the Israel-Palestine issue was an important turning point in the party's reconciliation in

³⁵⁵ Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 38; Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 39.

³⁵⁶ Quoted in Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 154.

³⁵⁷ Al-Hizb al-shiyu'iy al-Lubnani, *Al-Watha'iq al-Kamila*, 156.

Lebanon among its members and regional allies. The party began operating publicly in Lebanon again between 1953 and the mid-1960s. In 1970, Kamal Jumblatt, in his capacity as Interior Minister legalised the LCP once more.³⁵⁸ At this point, not only did the LCP completely reverse its position on the conflict, but it adopted a far more radical attitude toward Israel, formulating an agenda of armed resistance.

In 1968 the LCP established a military wing called *al-Haras al-Sha'by* (The Popular Guard) in South Lebanon. The organisation actively participated in offensive and defensive military mobilisations against Israel from Jabal 'Amil. The party justified its military mobilisation as defensive and in the service of the local Shi'i population. The LCP frequently lamented the Lebanese government's failure to adequately protect the southern villages from Israeli attacks, simultaneously promoting itself as the only force willing and capable of protecting the Shi'a from Israeli attacks and territorial encroachment. But the party also justified its action in offensive terms, in support of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, and therefore also proclaimed its presence in the south as being in the service of the Palestinian resistance fighters stationed there, close to the border with Israel.³⁵⁹ As LCP involvement in armed resistance against Israel increased, it joined the wider Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and fought alongside PLO military forces.

The LCP was therefore the first movement with a large Shi'i following to establish a resistance agenda against Israel. This agenda had two main components. The first was the LCP's pledge to provide security and protection for the local Shi'i populace that bordered the disputed territory of Israel, and suffered disproportionately from Israeli reprisal attacks that deliberately targeted Shi'a homes.³⁶⁰ Secondly, the LCP pledged that its Popular Guard, based in South Lebanon, would provide active military

³⁵⁸ Interview with Maurice Nahl, Beirut, 21st December 2012.

³⁵⁹ Interview, Karim Mroue, Beirut, 19th December 2012.

³⁶⁰ Rami Siklawi, 'The Dynamics of Palestinian Endurance in Lebanon', *Middle East Journal*, 64:4, 2010, 602.

support for the Palestinian resistance against Israel. As the LCP's involvement in the wars with Israel increased, the party's resistance strategy acquired another dimension that would also impart a lasting legacy over the Shi'i community's resistance activities: martyrdom operations. This aspect is explored in the next chapter, since it occurred in the context of the 1982 war with Israel.

As the LCP continued to expand its appeal among the Shi'i community, the social classes from which the communist Shi'a arose also transformed. While the early communist Shi'a tended to come from the middle-class and intellectual elite, the development of the LCP's political programme for South Lebanon was designed to appeal to the traditional base of the communist party - the workers and peasantry. In the next section, the analysis critically assesses the image and reality of the LCP's Shi'i following, comparing and contrasting the official LCP view with the views of the former communist Shi'a.

The Communist Shi'a

The social basis of communism's appeal among the Shi'a was broad-based. In this sense, the conventional tendency to link communism's appeal to class based or socioeconomic factors alone is problematic. As the ensuing discussion demonstrates, the Shi'i communists arose from multiple class and socioeconomic backgrounds including the peasantry, workers, middle-classes, intellectuals, professionals and even clerics.

Class and Communism

Ilya Harik has contributed some important insights in to the concept of class as applied to Lebanon. He found that class consciousness was often obscured by primordial identities - sectarianism. Referencing the Lebanese Shi'a in particular, Harik argues that 'objective socio-economic conditions and primordial sentiments so overlap, that it is difficult to disaggregate one

from the other.’³⁶¹ Norton also correctly notes that ‘the depressed economic status of the Shi‘a provides a basis for defining the communal reference group, but it has not led to significant class-based participation across confessions.’³⁶² These observations illustrate the complexities of associating class with the political mobility of the Lebanese Shi‘a. However, the assumption that class-based factors explain adherence to communist parties has persisted in attempts to explain the Shi‘i community’s involvement in the LCP. For example:

The second group of Shi‘ites, principally of working class or from poor agricultural backgrounds, couched their demands to the state in the form of activism in leftist parties such as the Lebanese Communist Party...³⁶³

The notion that the communist Shi‘a were principally from working class backgrounds is an assumption. In fact, the LCP’s membership base in general has historically lacked a dominant working class component. The LCP’s cadres typically hail from middle and upper class backgrounds. Lawyers, physicians, engineers, merchants, students, teachers and intellectuals dominate the party’s membership. Workers, or the traditional proletarians associated with communist parties worldwide, are a distinct minority - though a presence, nonetheless. Suleiman provides two explanations for this. First, he points to the political dominance of the feudal zu‘ama’ and religious (sectarian) leaders in Lebanon, which left the intelligentsia with few political options other than communism. Secondly, Suleiman argues that since religion is a powerful force in Lebanon, ‘the poor and largely ignorant masses have strongly clung to their religious affiliation, rejecting communism as a godless monster.’³⁶⁴ On the latter point, Suleiman exaggerates, since the LCP eventually developed a working class

³⁶¹ Iliya Harik, ‘The Political Elite as a Strategic Minority’ in Fuad I. Khuri, *Leadership and Development in Arab Society*, Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981, 71.

³⁶² Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi‘a*, 26.

³⁶³ Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi‘ite Lebanon*, 24.

³⁶⁴ Suleiman, ‘The Lebanese Communist Party’, 145.

attachment among the rural Shi'a as a result of its agricultural initiative and resistance activities against Israel.

Although Suleiman notes the regions in Lebanon where the LCP predominated as including Baalbek and Tyre, he did not mention the party's strong Shi'i following in these areas. In fact, the LCP attracted Shi'a from both the Bekaa and to a greater extent, from Jabal 'Amil. As a more conservative, nomadic and tribally based society, the Shi'a of the Bekaa are believed to have been less responsive to 'foreign' ideologies such as communism.³⁶⁵ Jabal 'Amil, however, despite the presence of a strong Shi'i religious tradition in the area, is still considered a more liberal, progressive society - and contributed greater numbers of communist Shi'a than the Bekaa.³⁶⁶ Beirut also became a hub for communist Shi'a following their migration there.

Batatu acknowledges the LCP's Shi'i base, noting that as early as 1935, 'membership of the LCP came in majority from the Christian and Shi'i communities.'³⁶⁷ Among the Christian community it was the Greek Orthodox that predominated, though the party also comprised Maronite Christians too, to a lesser extent. The LCP also had a following among the Druze, particularly in the south-eastern towns of Hasbaya and Sheb'a. The Sunni Muslim presence hailed from Sidon and Tyre.³⁶⁸ In this sense, the LCP's appeal cut across communal and ethnic boundaries in Lebanon, a claim made by many political parties in Lebanon, usually falsely.

The LCP's Shi'i following reflects the observations made above about the class background of the party. The first communist Shi'a, and those who made it in to the party's leadership cadres, were either of middle class

³⁶⁵ Interview with Karim Muruwa, Beirut: Lebanon (19 December 2012); Rula Abisaab, 'The Cleric as Organic Intellectual: Revolutionary Shiism in the Lebanese Hawzas', in H.E Chehabi, *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the last 500 Years*, London: I.B Tauris, 2006, 232-233.

³⁶⁶ Interview with Karim Muruwa, Beirut: Lebanon, (19 December 2012)

³⁶⁷ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, London: Saqi Books, 2004, 422.

³⁶⁸ Interview with Karim Muruwa, Beirut: Lebanon, (19 December 2012)

background or from among the student body, and emergent Shi'i intelligentsia, of the Lebanese University (LU) in Beirut. The LCP developed a strong campus presence in the form of the Union of Democratic youth, and gained between 35-40% of the Student Union's membership in the early 1970s.³⁶⁹ Many of the student demonstrations and strike actions of the 1960s, described earlier, were planned and initiated from the campuses of the LU. In fact, a survey conducted among LU students towards the end of the 1960s found that 61% of Shi'i students questioned considered themselves leftists, compared to 45% of their Sunni counterparts, 35% Druze and 20% Maronite. In addition, 68% of Shi'i respondents agreed with the statement 'What is needed in Lebanon is revolution not reform'.³⁷⁰ This lends further credence to the claim that the roots of the LCP's attraction among the Shi'a lay in its anti-system, resistance agenda. At the same time, the predominantly middle class background of the communist Shi'a illustrates why class factors fail to adequately explain why the communist Shi'a did indeed become communists. However, the LCP, too insists on explaining its appeal among the Shi'a in class-based terms, emphasising the Shi'i community's poverty.

The LCP: Image of the Communist

The LCP explains the Shi'i community's attraction to communism on the basis of class and socio-economic factors:

The party was not interested in sectarianism or the Shi'a specifically because they were Shi'a - but those who were poor, deprived...because they needed representation. Social situation was paramount.³⁷¹

In this sense, the LCP argues that it championed the cause of the deprived in Lebanon's rural areas, the south and the Bekaa. The party also notes the its presence among the Shi'i migrants in Beirut whose social conditions

³⁶⁹ Interview with Maurice Nahl, Beirut: Lebanon (21 December 2012)

³⁷⁰ Halim Barakat, 'Social Factors Influencing Attitudes of University Students in Lebanon towards the Palestinian Resistance Movement', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 1:1, 1971.

³⁷¹ Interview with Maurice Nahl, Beirut: Lebanon (21 December 2012)

were still fraught, even when they were able to acquire menial jobs.³⁷² Thus, the argument continues, because the Shi'a were not well represented in the state, the LCP became an attractive option.³⁷³ The limitations of class and socioeconomic based explanations have already been highlighted. It is nevertheless important to demonstrate that these factors are not just raised as explanations for the relationship by historians or scholars of the Shi'a, but by the LCP itself.

There are two issues that make it important to critically evaluate the LCP's own explanations for its appeal among the Shi'a. The first factor pertains to the reality that the LCP was conscious of its working class membership deficiency from very early on in its existence. In fact, the decision to replace Ibrahim Yazbak with Fuad al-Shamali as Secretary General of the party in 1926 occurred because the party wanted to see the leadership transferred from the intellectuals to the workers.³⁷⁴ However, the imbalance remained, irrespective of this move. Such was the extent of the gap, that party leaders considered themselves representatives of the working class, while seeking to offset the problem by reference to Lebanon's apparently unique circumstances - its limited industrialisation as well as 'imperialist domination, feudal tyranny and the weakness of class struggle.'³⁷⁵ As we have already seen, the majority of the LCP's members were neither poor nor working class, but middle and upper class, with a few workers placed in the party's command for symbolic effect.³⁷⁶ This constitutes the first reason why it would have been in the interests of the LCP to describe Shi'i involvement with the party in class terms, since in this reading, the Shi'a constituted a demographic that the LCP sorely needed.

The second related factor is that there is evidence of the LCP actively and deliberately pursuing a Shi'i constituency; the party's agricultural reform initiative and stance on Israel was indicative of that agenda. In this sense, it

³⁷² Interview with Karim Muruwa, Beirut: Lebanon, (19 December 2012)

³⁷³ Interview with Maurice Nahl Beirut: Lebanon (21 December 2012)

³⁷⁴ Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 138.

³⁷⁵ Khaled Bakdash, quoted in Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 145.

³⁷⁶ Suleiman, 'The Lebanese Communist Party', 145.

served the party's interests to attribute its Shi'i membership to inherent - class based - factors, which would produce a natural attraction to communism among class-conscious Shi'a. In this way the implication is that the Shi'a found the LCP, and not vice versa. Thus, the LCP protects itself from the type of criticism that is frequently directed at political parties in Lebanon - the sectarian bias of their membership. Such criticism would be particularly harmful to the LCP since, as we have seen, a foundational element of the party's political programme in Lebanon was its opposition to the country's sectarian political structure.

Despite the propensity for both scholars and LCP officials alike to attribute class and socioeconomic factors to their Shi'i following, these factors alone do not provide a complete picture of communism's appeal. The influence of communist ideas in Shi'i clerical circles represents a case in point.

Communism and the Clerics

The appeal of communism extended to many Shi'i clerical families in South Lebanon, producing a number of adherents to communism. Two individuals in particular: Husayn Muruwa and Hassan Hamdan (Mahdi 'Amil) became the LCP's most prominent Shi'i intellectual ideologues. In this section, the analysis shows how the attraction to communism resonated in Shi'i clerical circles, leading some to abandon their religious education. The analysis explores the life trajectories of these two figures. In addition, the experiences of Muruwa and 'Amil illustrate the transnational dimensions of communism's appeal among the Shi'a. Both Muruwa and 'Amil spent time studying in Najaf, Iraq. Hailing from prominent clerical families, they were expected to embark on a lifetime of religious learning. Instead, they became communists.

The themes discussed thus far in this chapter: political marginalisation, socio-economic upheaval, migration and urbanisation, the status of agriculture in South Lebanon, the Israel-Palestine issue, and the position of the LCP on these issues, were all important dimensions of communism's appeal among the Shi'a. The Shi'i community's clerical elites were not

isolated from the debates occurring about these issues in Lebanon, and indeed among the Shi'a, who were arguably most affected by these processes. In fact, in Jabal 'Amil, communism peaked the interest of some members of the Shi'i clerical community, including Sayyid Ja'far al-Amin, who came to be known as a 'Red Cleric', as well as Husayn Muruwa and Mahdi 'Amil.

The example of Husayn Muruwa's life (1910-1987) demonstrates the particularly interesting dilemmas posed for those Shi'a that hailed from deeply religious family backgrounds. Muruwa was born in the village of Hadatha, Bint Jbeil in 1910. He was the son of a prominent local cleric who had studied in the holy Shi'a town of Najaf in Iraq. Muruwa's father's position pre-destined him to follow a similar pathway, and embark on a religious education in Najaf too.³⁷⁷ Muruwa's childhood in Jabal 'Amil reflected the impoverishment of his surroundings; he was also aware of that reality, despite his youth. Muruwa deplored Jabal 'Amil's conditions and was highly critical of the exploitative nature of the *zu'ama'*.³⁷⁸ His family could not afford the cost of his travel to Najaf, and relied on the efforts of a local Shi'i cleric to raise money among the villagers in order to finance Muruwa's education in Iraq.

The *hawza* in Najaf was an environment in which Muruwa could combine his traditional religious education with exposure to modern and classical literature. He became a prolific reader as a result. Muruwa also joined a number of youth groups and clubs, where he interacted with fellow students from both Jabal 'Amil and Najaf. While a student, Muruwa's thought was torn between his strong religious identity and an attraction to modernism and secular nationalism. He supported Jabal 'Amil's revolts

³⁷⁷ Silvia Naef, 'Shii-Shuyu'i' or: How to become a Communist in a Holy City' in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times*, BRILL, 2000, 261

³⁷⁸ Yoav Di-Capua, 'Homeward Bound: Husyan Mroueh's Integrative Quest for Authenticity', *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 44:2013, 26.

against the French, and the pro-Syrian nationalist sentiment present in the area at that time.³⁷⁹

Upon graduating from Najaf, Muruwa resided in the politically turbulent environs of Baghdad throughout the 1940s, where he worked as a teacher and journalist. Much like the situation in Lebanon, Iraq was experiencing regular protest and political demonstrations by 1948 in protest against British colonial policy. It was under these conditions that Muruwa was first introduced to communism. He met Husayn Muhammad al-Shabibi, a prominent member of the committee of the Iraqi Communist Party who introduced him to Marxist ideas. Al-Shabibi gave Muruwa a copy of the Communist Manifesto, which also led him to discover Lenin's *The State and Revolution* and Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*.³⁸⁰ As Muruwa regularly published articles in support of the Iraqi intellectuals and nationalist activists involved in the country's demonstrations, he was eventually expelled from the country in 1949, whereafter he returned to Lebanon.

Muruwa's interest in communism continued upon his return to Lebanon, where he became a journalist for the newspaper *al-Hayat*. He later founded the cultural periodical *Al-Thaqafa al-Wataniyya* (National Culture) in 1951 alongside some of the founding members of the LCP, including Farajallah al-Hilu. Muruwa eventually joined the LCP in 1951 and continued to work in Lebanon as a writer, journalist, literary critic and high school teacher. He also travelled to Moscow in the 1960s where he conducted research toward the publication of one of his most renowned titles, *'Materialist Trends in Arabo-Islamic Philosophy'*.³⁸¹ Upon his return to Lebanon from Moscow, Muruwa had developed a new fascination with the theory of Socialist Realism. He thereafter continued his involvement in the LCP as one of their most prized theorists and activists.

³⁷⁹ Rula Jurdi Abisaab, 'Deconstructing the Modular and the Authentic: Husayn Muroeh's Early Islamic History', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 17:3, 2008, 241-242.

³⁸⁰ Naef, 'The Arab Shia and the Fascination with Communism', 541-542.

³⁸¹ Di-Capua, 'Homeward Bound', 48-51.

Tracing Muruwa's physical movements and evolution as an individual illustrates the influence exerted upon his political identity by the various places in which he lived, and the impact of each specific environment on his intellectual thought and development. Muruwa did not 'convert' from Shi'ism to communism, rather his intellectual journey can be extracted from his movements and experiences in every city he lived in: from his experience of Jabal 'Amil's poverty to his religious and literary learning in Najaf's *hawza*; from his participation in Baghdad's Arab nationalist uprising and discourse, to his joining of the LCP in Beirut under similar conditions of domestic upheaval. The time Muruwa spent in Moscow was also significant; there he engaged directly with socialist theory and practice and developed an intrigue, before returning, finally, to Beirut where he consolidated and refined his own ideas and sense of identity.

In the end, Muruwa chose to remain in Lebanon, where he performed a key role in the development of the LCP's revolutionary project throughout the 1970s. His contribution to the party's intellectual thought was thoroughly influenced by his own life experiences, which he sought to reconcile with events in Lebanon, and develop solutions to the country's myriad crises during this period.

Further evidence of how the life experiences of Shi'i individuals could shape their political formation as communists, is illustrated by the case of Mahdi 'Amil, who also became one of the LCP's prominent political thinkers.

Mahdi 'Amil (1936-1987) was the pen name of Hassan Hamdan, born in Beirut in 1936, though he grew up between Beirut and his family's village, Haruf, in South Lebanon. His pen name illustrates his identification with his home town, Jabal 'Amil. Like Muruwa, 'Amil was cognisant of the realities of Jabal 'Amil's impoverishment. He became involved in Lebanon's domestic protest movement in the 1950s and 1960s, though with more Arab nationalist leanings at first. He would, however, later travel

throughout the tobacco farmers' bases in Jabal 'Amil, giving lectures on Marxism and its contemporary relevance to Lebanon.³⁸²

While studying in France, 'Amil became influenced by French philosophy, encountering the work of Marxist thinkers such as Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas. His doctoral thesis reflected an interest in French colonialism and while in France his interaction with leftist circles further exposed him to the ideas of Marxism, colonialism and Third World studies. He moved to Algeria in 1963 as a result of his developing interest in anti-colonial struggles. As well as teaching there, 'Amil also began to publish in Algerian journals about revolutionary struggle and Frantz Fanon's theories of colonialism.³⁸³

'Amil returned home to Lebanon in 1967, where domestic political unrest was rife. 'Amil joined the LCP and played a central role in the party's reformulation of its political strategy at the Second Congress in 1968.³⁸⁴ Thereafter he began publishing in the LCP's monthly journal, *al-Tariq*. In the 1970s he also taught at the Lebanese University, noted earlier as a hub for Shi'i intellectuals and communist sympathisers among the student body. 'Amil was active in Beirut's student protest movements, and wrote regularly on the subject of educational reform in Lebanon.³⁸⁵

After Mahdi 'Amil settled in Lebanon, his intellectual thought reflected his encounter with Marxism and a desire to reconcile this with the realities of the Arab world, and in particular, Lebanon. Like Muruwa, Mahdi 'Amil's curiosity about communism was borne of his life experiences, in South Lebanon but also in the countries he travelled to, and the colonial struggles he came to be intrigued by. Both cases represent examples of an

³⁸² Vijay Prashad, 'The Arab Gramsci', *Frontline*, March 21, 2014, <<http://www.frontline.in/world-affairs/the-arab-gramsci/article5739956.ece#>> (9 May 2014)

³⁸³ Prashad, 'The Arab Gramsci'.

³⁸⁴ Samer Frangie, 'Theorizing from the Periphery: The Intellectual Project of Mahdi 'Amil', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 44, 2002, 465.

³⁸⁵ Miriam Younes, 'A Tale of Two Communists - The Revolutionary Projects of the Lebanese communists Husayn Muruwa and Mahdi 'Amil', *Unpublished Paper*, 25 March 2014, 11.

attachment to the LCP on the basis of a genuine ideological commitment to communism and the political programmes of the communist party. In Mahdi ‘Amil’s case, such was his engagement in the political thought of Marx and their application to the the Arab world, that he published profusely on these matters. ‘Amil is remembered foremost as the Middle East’s greatest Marxist thinker. In this sense, the life stories of Husayn Muruwa and Mahdi ‘Amil demonstrate that Shi‘i involvement in communism and the LCP could and did occur on the basis of ideological attachments.

In addition to their fascination with communism, Husayn Muruwa and Mahdi ‘Amil noticed many parallels between communist ideas and Shi‘i doctrine across a range of issues, including social justice, emancipation and resistance to oppression. They developed innovative methods for combining Islamic tradition with elements of Western modernity and intellectual thought. Husayn Mruwwa did not view the utility of Islamic symbolism as merely a tactic to promote secularism in society. He believed that components of both Islamic *and* Western scientific and philosophical traditions could, together, provide solutions to modern problems. Thus, as the Abisaabs argue,

Marxism in Lebanon, far from leading to the demise of religious sensibilities, encouraged new ways of approaching religion and Islamic tradition, which is not the same as “using” religious symbolisms to promote secular organisation of society.³⁸⁶

During an ‘Ashura’ procession in Nabatiyya in 1970, young men from the LCP publicly urged people in the town to stop chastising themselves and instead direct their anger ‘against the enemies of both class and nation.’³⁸⁷ This event was illustrative of the intellectual exchange taking place between communism and Shi‘ism inside the LCP.

³⁸⁶ Rula Jurdi Abisaab and Malek Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah’s Islamists*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014, Prologue: XVI.

³⁸⁷ Picard, ‘Political Identities and Communal Identities’, 166.

While communism evoked the curiosity of many Shi'i scholars and clerics, both in Lebanon and Iraq, it also led to the mobilisation of others in the religious community to counter communism's growing influence among the Shi'a. As the ensuing analysis demonstrates, communism's continued influence over the Shi'a led directly to the political mobilisation of the previously quietist Shi'i clerical elite in Lebanon.

Communism and the other Shi'a

Earlier in the discussion it was noted that for the communist Shi'a, the other political actors within the community - the *zu'ama'* and 'ulama'- did not adequately represent the type of resistance identity the communist Shi'a advocated. However, while the *zu'ama'* remained active and relevant political players within the Shi'i community, Shi'i involvement in the LCP led directly to the mobilisation of the previously quietist Shi'i 'ulama' and the rise of the first successful clerical political actor among the Shi'i community in Lebanon: Musa al-Sadr. The impact of Shi'i engagement with the LCP on Musa al-Sadr's activities is considered here. In addition, the adjustments made by the Shi'i *zu'ama'* in their efforts to stem the rise of communism among the Shi'a are also explored.

Musa al-Sadr and Communism

Musa al-Sadr moved to Lebanon from Iran in 1959. This was a time when the Shi'i clerical establishment region-wide had become increasingly concerned over the rise of communism among its ranks.³⁸⁸ Sadr's reputation for worldliness, reform and intellect endeared him to the prominent Lebanese Shi'i cleric, Sayyid Husayn Sharaf al-Din, who would eventually nominate Sadr to succeed him. Many among the clerical elite in Iraq saw Sadr as their best option for combatting the challenge presented by communism.

³⁸⁸ Abisaab, 'The Cleric as Organic Intellectual', 240.

Sadr's opposition to communism stemmed from principle, as a religious scholar, but also as a result of the threat it posed to his political project for Lebanon's Shia. A conversation between Musa Sadr and the US Ambassador to Lebanon illustrated Sadr's concern:

...[Sadr] then discussed the Communist menace...He is optimistic that peace can return to this part of the world and that Muslims can devote their energies to repairing inroads that the Communists had made in recent years...He believed the Government of Lebanon had underestimated the effectiveness of Communist propaganda which has found fertile soil among young southerners who are able easily to compare Beirut extravagance with backwardness and poverty that exist only an hour or so away from the affluent capital. The "rulers" in Beirut are only slowly realising the importance of this problem.³⁸⁹

While Sadr shared some of the LCP's ambitions for political and socio-economic reform, he sought to craft a political programme and mobilisation strategy that was distinct from his major rivals, and particularly that of the LCP's. In this sense Sadr rejected any form of a secular state in society, arguing that religion was the basis of morality in society. While he agreed with the LCP that the *zu'ama'* represented a feudal political structure to be abolished, he did not agree that the solution was through total secularisation of the state.³⁹⁰ Sadr also expressed a firm Lebanese patriotism, associating the Shi'a with the very foundations of Lebanon's existence, a throwback to the politics of demand expressed by the Shi'a toward the end of the French Mandate: 'It is the Shi'ites who guard Lebanon's frontiers, it is Shiites who work the Lebanese soil.'³⁹¹ Overall, Sadr's project for Lebanon is best viewed as an attempt to establish a middle way between the communists and the *zu'ama'*, who in Sadr's view represented two extremes: 'It was the politics of polarities: feudalism

³⁸⁹ Quoted in Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, I B Tauris: London, 1986, 49.

³⁹⁰ Houcheng Chehabi and Majid Tafresh, 'Musa al-Sadr and Iran' in H.E Chehabi, *Distant Relations*, 142.

³⁹¹ Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 169,

(*al-iqtā'*) on one side, extremism (*al-taṭarruf*), on the other. A new way had to be found'.³⁹²

Sadr's political project for the Shi'a was inherently different to that which was represented by the LCP's. Sadr's project effectively sought the revival of the Shi'i community's pre-1943 political strategy, which sought the Shi'i community's *inclusion* in the Lebanese state. However, Sadr's project represented a new form of Shi'i political mobilisation in its sectarian strategy. Sadr sought the Shi'i community's inclusion for the purposes of attaining Shi'i privileges, and access to the state in accordance with its sectarian rules.

A core element of Sadr's political strategy was to highlight the flaws in the community's current leadership, while also establishing a renewed sense of community awareness and belonging. This latter project borrowed extensively from the religious dimensions of Shi'i identity. Sadr skilfully deployed the central principles of Shi'ism, particularly the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, to mobilise support among the Shi'i community. Sadr held up Husayn's tragic end as a great example of bravery and commitment that all Shi'a could strive for in the face of oppression.³⁹³ Sadr spoke with greater authority on Shi'i religious occasions than his rivals in the LCP. If we recall the incident mentioned earlier where members of the LCP interrupted an 'Ashura' procession in an effort to encourage revolution rather than lamentation, these individuals were admonished and removed from the crowd. However, just four years later when Musa al-Sadr appeared on the scene, advocating a similar re-interpretation of 'Ashura' to that of the LCP activists who interrupted the Nabatiyya procession, Sadr's interjection was both welcomed and embraced. In this sense, Sadr was increasingly able to

³⁹² Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 165-6.

³⁹³ Hussein Gharbieh, *Lebanese Communalism and the Creation of Shii Identity*, Beirut: Dar al-Manhal al-Lubnani, 2010, 113

take up the causes of the left, but present them in a language that illustrated Sadr's potential for success.³⁹⁴

Sadr publicly called for a more just distribution of access to state employment, as well as greater expenditure on Shi'i locales. Unlike the LCP however, he was not calling for the complete overhaul of the country's sectarian system, only its adjustment for the purposes of parity and fairness of opportunity. Although Sadr became associated with the LNM for a short time, participating in regular strike action and demonstrations, he did not direct his criticism at specific employers or the economic system as a whole. These activities therefore established Sadr as the foremost Shi'i national figure in Lebanon, and were indicative of his intentions to reach a compromise with the state in order to improve the Shi'i predicament.

On the issue of Israel and the Palestinians, Sadr shared the LCP's post-1967 view. He viewed the Palestinian struggle for independence as sharing many similarities in experience to the plight of Jabal 'Amil's Shi'a. On this basis, the LCP initially approached Sadr in 1974 to explore possibilities for cooperation in coordinating resistance activities against Israel. A secret meeting to such effect occurred in 1974 when senior LCP figures, George Hawi, Karim Muruwa and Ali Abed met with Sadr to discuss the possibility of coordinating their activities. In this meeting the LCP proposed quiet collaboration over common issues. Sadr reportedly expressed his agreement with the 'notion' but that the differences between his religiosity and the LCP's secularism were too fundamental to put to one side. Sadr indicated they had a long way to go before they could work on common issues together.³⁹⁵ Sadr was known for his ability to work with both his allies and rivals by this time, particularly the Shi'i *zu'ama'* so it may seem unusual that he rejected the opportunity to cooperate with the LCP. However, since the primary motivation with which Sadr arrived to Lebanon was to curb the influence of communism among the Shi'a, it

³⁹⁴ Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies*, 169.

³⁹⁵ Interview with Karim Muruwa, Beirut:Lebanon, (19 December 2012)

becomes clear why he did not wish to emphasise any shared ground between his project and that of the LCP's.

Sadr's objectives, in terms of reducing communism's influence among the Shi'a produced mixed results. He successfully adopted many of the causes of the LCP, imbuing them with a religious language that resonated with the Shi'a. Unlike the LCP, Sadr also achieved some success at the ballot box, which made him a greater threat to the Shi'i *zu'ama'* than the LCP were by 1974. However, the demographics of Sadr's Shi'i constituency transformed by the onset of civil war. Whilst his initial appeal was among the Shi'i masses, and the most impoverished working-class stratum of the Shi'a, a constituency we have seen was also pursued by the LCP, Sadr's appeal began to increasingly attract a different section of the Shi'i community.

Sadr's *Movement of the Deprived* was most successful in recruiting the returning Shi'i migrants from West Africa, who accrued a significant amount of wealth and had returned to Lebanon in search of business opportunities and new forms of political representation.³⁹⁶ This new, relatively wealthy middle class were not attracted to communism or the traditional *zu'ama'*. Instead, they favoured Sadr's movement, and became a sizeable element of his Shi'i constituency in Lebanon. In this sense, Sadr's project and appeal among the Shi'a was significantly different from that of the LCP's. Sadr's political project however, was the first indication of the development of a sectarian political identity among the Shi'a. In the next chapter, the analysis shows how sectarian identities came to represent the biggest threat to the LCP's Shi'i constituency in the context of the Lebanese Civil War.

In contrast to the LCP, whose political engagement with the Shi'a began with its middle and upper classes, and ended with its working classes, Musa al-Sadr's project started with the Shi'i masses, the working classes in

³⁹⁶ Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon*, 74.

particular, and later settled with the upper and middle classes. However, as the analysis now moves on to consider the impact of communism on the Shi'i zu 'ama', the locus of politics shifts once more, not in class terms, but in spheres of influence. To some extent, both Sadr and the LCP were operating in the sphere of popular politics and mass mobilisation. However, the zone of influence for the Shi'i zu 'ama' was and has always remained in the domain of formal politics, where power is acquired through politicking and electioneering.

The Shi'i Zu 'ama' and Communism

The LCP's ability to mobilise the Shi'a did not extend to significant wins at the ballot box, or to political appointments. By contrast, the zu 'ama' have consistently dominated the political representation of the Shi'a in parliament and in government. Despite these differences, the LCP's popularity and ability to influence the Shi'a did in fact become a significant source of concern among these traditional political families. This is evidenced by the attempts of the zu 'ama' to adapt their politics and strategies to meet the ideological challenge presented by communism.

Throughout the various popular mobilisations, strike actions and episodes of civil unrest that occurred in Lebanon between 1950-1975, the Shi'i zu 'ama' often discovered that their political survival was highly dependant upon the positions they publicly adopted on these issues. The influence of communism among the Shi'a during this time had, in the view of the zu 'ama', served to politicise the community and introduce a politics based on ideology, rather than the kind of interest-based politics that characterised the activities of the political families. This led the zu 'ama' to increasingly adopt political issues in their daily activities, in an effort to retain legitimacy among their traditional constituencies.³⁹⁷ Several of the powerful families displayed a populist political stance, aligning themselves

³⁹⁷ Harel Chorev 'Power, Tradition and Challenge: The Resilience of the Elite Shiite Families of Lebanon', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 40:3, 2013, 308.

with the anti-government protests and Arab nationalist currents in Lebanon and the region.

Where the Shi'i *zu'ama'* failed to heed to popular currents, they often discovered the repercussions at election time. The Shi'i *zu'ama'* who supported the Lebanese government during the 1958 crisis ultimately paid the price at the ballot box in the 1960 parliamentary elections. Khazem al-Khalil lost his seat to candidates from the anti-government, pro-Arab camp, and was not able to return to parliament for a further twelve years. 'Adil 'Usayran also lost his position as Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, punishment for acting as a mediator between rival parties during the crisis, despite his otherwise pro-Arab stance. In contrast, all who opposed Sham'un's government and supported the Arab nationalists earned political capital, including Sabri Hamadeh, Ahmad and Kamil al-As'ad.³⁹⁸ Indeed the role of Speaker of the parliament oscillated continuously between Sabri Hamadeh and Kamil al-As'ad for the period between 1960-1984.

Whilst those *zu'ama'* who were able to navigate the opportunities and pitfalls of a more populist politics received the reward of electoral wins, it did not signify their ultimate victory over the LCP's rising influence. Kamil al-As'ad set up his own 'Democratic Socialist Party' (DSP) in an effort to tap in to the appeal of the political left among the Shi'a. But al-As'ad was neither a socialist nor a democrat, and his party failed to delude those he was targeting. Unlike the LCP and other parties al-As'ad sought to challenge, the DSP had no manifesto other than support of his personal viewpoint. Its committee was comprised of close associates of al-As'ad. Despite proclaiming that it was opposed to feudal-style politics, it operated in precisely that way.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ Chorev 'Power, Tradition and Challenge', 308.

³⁹⁹ Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon*, 76-77.

In their efforts to combat the ideological influence of parties like the LCP, the *zu'ama'* proved less adept. Al-As'ad experiment with the DSP illustrates a failure to understand the nature of the LCP's appeal. A later statement by Kamil al-As'ad following his re-election as Speaker in 1972 shows that he understood the implications of the rising influence of the LCP - for his own power,

While there are many who are calling for reform in this country, the leftists are calling for essential changes that did deep into the country's basic set-up. [T]he people must resist such change.⁴⁰⁰

This statement indicates the realisation of the political families that their status was stable in the present environment, since they retained an ability to win at the ballot box and thus secure their political authority. However, a fundamental change to the system, which is what the LCP was agitating for, represented the larger threat to the *zu'ama'*, because it targeted the very foundations of their political power.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of Lebanese independence in 1943, the Shi'i community reached a critical historical juncture in their political mobilisation. This produced a pivot away from the pursuit of political inclusion in the emergent Lebanese state, which had been the objective of the Shi'i community's politics of demand and protest during the colonial era. Instead, the Shi'a developed a resistance identity formulated around a rejection of the political status quo in Lebanon, and in particular the confessional political structure that the Shi'a deemed responsible for their marginalisation. This was the initial basis of the Shi'i community's resistance identity - and their subsequent involvement in the LCP. As the LCP sought to capitalise on its Shi'i constituency, it developed a comprehensive agricultural reform programme, as well as a resistance agenda directed at Israel. The LCP positioned itself among the Shi'a of

⁴⁰⁰ Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon*, 75.

South Lebanon as a provider of security and protection from Israeli attacks, as well as a supporter of the Palestinian resistance against Israel. This resonated with the local Shi'i community who were shown in chapter two to have long been advocates for the Palestinian struggle against Israel.

The analysis in this chapter also emphasised the broad-based nature of communism's appeal among the Shi'a, challenging the conventional 'poverty thesis', promulgated by both the LCP and existing scholarship, that links the Shi'i-communist association to class-based and socioeconomic factors. However, the analysis argued that the LCP's appeal among the Shi'a cut across class and social status, drawing Shi'a from the middle class, intelligentsia as well as those who had previously been associated with Shi'i clerical circles as the cases of Mahdi 'Amil and Husayn Mroue demonstrated. The chapter also argued that the interaction between communism and the Shi'a had a significant impact on the trajectory of Shi'i political mobilisation thereafter. Concern over the growing appeal of communism among the Shi'a mobilised the previously quietist Shi'i 'ulama' in Lebanon. This was illustrated by Musa al-Sadr's political efforts to erode communism's influence among the Shi'a. The Shi'i *zu'ama'* also felt threatened by the ideological appeal of the LCP among the Shi'a, and thus sought to imbue their politics with an ideological veneer.

Conventionally, the Shi'i community's political, social and economic situation in the aftermath of Lebanese independence in 1943 is argued to have initiated a 'search for radical change in a traditional way.'⁴⁰¹ This followed that Musa al-Sadr's political activities, which saw the establishment of a Shi'i sectarian political movement in 1974, the Movement of the Deprived, was the realisation of both the radical and traditional dimensions of the Shi'i community's post-1943 mobilisation. Challenging this narrative, this chapter has argued that the LCP was in fact

⁴⁰¹ Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence', *UNRISD Discussion Paper*, 42:1993, 18.

the first vehicle for the Shi'i community's radical political mobilisation, while the form it took as a party political, secular ideological movement was decidedly non-traditional. Further still, the Shi'i community's involvement in the LCP as an anti-system party that rejected the sectarian political structure in Lebanon, constituted a far more radical agenda than that which was later promulgated by Sadr. While the communist Shi'a mobilised on the basis of a resistance identity that rejected the sectarian foundations of the Lebanese political system, Sadr's movement represented a renewal of the Shi'i community's Mandate-era politics of demand and protest, and the pursuit of inclusion in the confessional political system as Shi'a.

The arguments in this chapter also demonstrate that the relationship between communism and the Shi'a was a formative period in the development of the Shi'i community's resistance identity. Under the LCP's political framework, the resistance identity had two core components: a political agenda of resistance directed at the Lebanese confessional system, and a military agenda of resistance directed at Israel. The political component of this agenda manifested in the protest activity and strike action orchestrated by the LCP and its leftist allies (the LNM) in the aftermath of Lebanese independence. As the next chapter shows, this political agenda of resistance transformed into the basis of the LNM's negotiating strategy with the government in the early stages of the Lebanese Civil War. The LCP was the first political movement in Lebanon to establish an armed presence among the Shi'a of South Lebanon, with the stated goal of defending the local community from Israeli offensives, while supporting the Palestinian resistance fighters that were also based there. As the ensuing analysis in the next chapters demonstrates, the nature and meaning of the resistance identity was subject to change and transformation. However, the making of the Shi'i community's resistance identity is historically grounded in the relationship between the communist Shi'a and the LCP.

Chapter 4 ~ Between Communism and Communalism: The Shi'a in the Lebanese Civil War 1975-1990

During the Lebanese Civil War, the Shi'i community's resistance agenda became the focal point of a battle for the Shi'a between the LCP, Amal and Hizbullah. The civil war was the arena in which the sectarianisation of the Shi'i community's political identities occurred. The breakdown of the state and the resultant security environment provided the conditions in which the saliency of primordial identities increased and communal political actors with sectarian agendas emerged. The LCP failed to deliver any of its political reform initiatives and security pledges to the Shi'a. This produced widespread disaffection among the communist Shi'a. The new Shi'i players capitalised on the LCP's decline during the war, targeting its infrastructure as well as its leadership with political assassinations. As the influence of the LCP fell away in their Shi'i strongholds, the new Shi'i political players moved in to secure territorial control over their communities. In this environment, secular identities among the Shi'a were steadily superseded by sectarian identities in the form of two new Shi'i political actors: Amal and Hizbullah.

This chapter analyses the decline of the relationship between communism and the Shi'a during the Lebanese Civil War. It argues that the rise of Amal and Hizbullah was directly predicated on three interlinked factors: the domestic political environment in Lebanon during the civil war, the decline and failures of the LCP, and the consolidation of sectarian identities in the war.

The analysis begins by exploring the impact of the Lebanese Civil War on political life in Lebanon and among the Shi'a. It argues for a critical reassessment of the rise of sectarian identities among the Shi'a during the war. This situates these developments in Lebanon's domestic political environment in Lebanon during the war rather than in external events such

as the Iranian Revolution. The discussion highlights three important domestic effects of the civil war: the breakdown of the state, the violent and unstable security environment and the sectarianisation of identities. The analysis then reviews the main chronology of the Lebanese Civil War to identify the key historical periods and events that are relevant to the decline of the relationship between communism and the Shi'a.

The analysis then moves on to explore the first stage of the LCP's entry into the Lebanese Civil War between 1975-1978, highlighting their initial political and military successes before the setback caused by Syria's military intervention. In the second stage between 1978 and 1982, the analysis examines the interaction between the LCP, Israel, Amal and the Palestinians, detailing Amal's usage of the security environment to displace the LCP's territorial presence in Shi'i locales. The analysis then moves on to the period between 1982 and 1984, highlighting the failures of the LCP's resistance against Israel contra Hizbullah. The final stage of the war between 1984 and 1990 highlights the devastating impact of the internal wars on the LCP, particularly in relation to the coordinated and targeted attacks on the LCP by Amal and Hizbullah. The analysis also assesses the political ramifications of the Taif Accord on the LCP in terms of its affirmation of the confessional political system in Lebanon. The analysis concludes that in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War, the LCP was in decline and the communist Shi'a were in search of a new vehicle for the mobilisation of their resistance identity.

The Lebanese Civil War

This section begins with a brief critique of the existing historiography of the Shi'a in the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), which overstates the role played by external factors in the sectarianisation of Shi'i political identities. The discussion then proposes a reassessment of the Shi'a in the civil war that places a greater emphasis on the war's internal dimensions. Three main features of the civil war are highlighted: the breakdown of the state, the security environment, and the sectarianisation of identities. The analysis then provides an overview of the civil war's main chronology.

This also serves as a primer on the key events of the war. A new rendering of this chronology is then presented, in order to facilitate an analysis of the civil war's impact on the relationship between the LCP and the Shi'a.

Reassessing the Shi'a in the Lebanese Civil War

The local dynamics of the Lebanese Civil War have been underplayed in analyses of the Shi'a during this period. A brief critical overview of the current explanations for the rise of the communal Shi'i players, Amal and Hizbullah, is presented here, justifying the need for a reassessment of how the civil war affected the Shi'a.

Four main events comprise the most overstated explanations for the sectarianisation of the Shi'a during the Lebanese Civil War, and the subsequent rise of the Shi'i militias, Amal and Hizbullah. The first event was the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr on a visit to Libya in 1978.⁴⁰² Sadr's disappearance is argued to have reinvigorated his political project for the Shi'a, which had experienced a setback caused by the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War.⁴⁰³ In chapter three, the analysis argued that one of Sadr's primary aims was to combat the influence of communism among the Shi'a through the establishment of a potent Shi'i sectarian political identity. Although Sadr's public position upon the outbreak of the civil war was one of political neutrality, an accident at a training camp in the Bekaa on 6th July 1975 revealed that Sadr had secretly been building a militia, Amal.⁴⁰⁴ However, Sadr's militia consisted of only around 800 members at the beginning of the war, the majority of whom were volunteers.⁴⁰⁵ In fact, there

⁴⁰² Marius Deeb, 'Shia Movements in Lebanon: Their Formation, Ideology, Social Bases, and Links with Iran and Syria', *Third World Quarterly*, 10:2, 685; Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shia: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987, 49-58; Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006, 79-82; Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shi'a of Lebanon*, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986, 23; Peter Theroux, *The Strange Disappearance of Imam Moussa Sadr*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987.

⁴⁰³ Augustus Richard Norton, 'Changing Actors and Leadership among the Shiites of the Lebanon', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 482: Nov, 1985, 144

⁴⁰⁴ Fawwaz Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, London: Pluto Press, 2007, 199.

⁴⁰⁵ Rosemary Sayigh, *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon*, London: Zed Books, 1994, 171.

were more Shi'a carrying arms under the banner of communism than Sadr's Amal movement in 1975.⁴⁰⁶ In this environment, Sadr's disappearance, and particularly the mystery surrounding the event, which remains unresolved to this day, became a symbolic manifestation of the Shi'i tradition of the absent Imam (*al-Imam al-Gha'ib*).⁴⁰⁷

The second event that is frequently associated with the rise of Amal and Hizbullah in the civil war was the Iranian Revolution in 1979.⁴⁰⁸ The establishment of a Shi'i Islamic State in Iran provided a model of governance based on Ayatollah Khomeini's *Wilayat al-Faqih* (Governance of the Jurisprudent). This was an event with transnational implications, that heightened the Shi'i community's identity as Shi'a.⁴⁰⁹ The influence of the Iranian Revolution is particularly associated with Hizbullah's rise in 1982 since its charter specifically referenced Ayatollah Khomeini as a source of emulation, while the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were also closely associated with the training of Hizbullah's fighting forces in Lebanon.⁴¹⁰

The third and fourth events that are frequently associated with the mobilisation and radicalisation of the Shi'a in the civil war, were the Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982. On both occasions, the Shi'i communities in South Lebanon suffered greatly in terms of loss of life and physical devastation of their homes and livelihoods.⁴¹¹ The first invasion in 1978 is also considered a turning point in relations between the Shi'a and the Palestinian fighters based in South Lebanon - a breakdown that Amal was able to capitalise upon with significant success. The Israeli invasion in 1982, which extended beyond just South Lebanon to Beirut, is directly correlated

⁴⁰⁶ Augustus Richard Norton, 'Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon' in Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (eds) *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, New York: Yale University Press, 1986, 167.

⁴⁰⁷ Marius Deeb, 'Shia Movements in Lebanon', 685.

⁴⁰⁸ Deeb, 'Shia Movements in Lebanon', 685; Norton, *Amal and the Shia*, 49-58; Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern*, 79-82; Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 23.

⁴⁰⁹ Deeb, 'Shia Movements in Lebanon', 685

⁴¹⁰ Norton, 'Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon', 172.

⁴¹¹ Helena Cobban, 'The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon and Its Implications for the Future', in Juan R. I. Cole and Nikki R. Keddie (eds) *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, 146.

with the emergence of Hizbullah, whose primary objective at this time was to militarily force Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory.⁴¹²

The disappearance of Imam Musa al-Sadr in 1978, the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982, were all significant historical moments for Amal and Hizbullah. However, as external factors, the emphasis on these events obfuscates the internal dynamics of the Lebanese Civil War that were equally conducive to the radicalisation, mobilisation and sectarianisation of the Lebanese Shi'a throughout this period. Furthermore, the association of the Israeli invasions with the rise of Amal and Hizbullah alone, overlooks the equally significant impact these events had on the LCP and its relationship with the Shi'a. In this sense, rather than considering the external dynamics of the civil war in isolation, and assuming the exclusivity of their import to Amal and Hizbullah, this analysis argues for a more inclusive approach. This posits that the external *and* internal dimensions of the Lebanese Civil War had a mutually reinforcing impact on the Shi'i community's political identities, which manifested in the different political fortunes of the LCP, Amal and Hizbullah. The analysis now moves on to analyse the internal dimensions of the Lebanese Civil War.

The Breakdown of the State

The event that triggered the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War occurred on April 13 1975, following an attempted assassination of the Maronite Christian President, and leader of the Phalangist (al-Kata'ib) Party, Pierre Jumayyil. Believing the assassins to be Palestinian, Phalangist militiamen retaliated later that day, attacking a bus carrying Palestinian passengers through a Christian neighbourhood in Ain al-Rummaneh, and killing twenty-seven civilians.⁴¹³ The next day, violent clashes broke out at demonstrations across Beirut and Sidon. Militiamen arose from all sides in

⁴¹² For more on Hizbullah's origins see: A R Norton, *Hizbollah: A Short History*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007; Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, London: The Fourth Estate, 1997.

⁴¹³ Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 2002, 105.

the capital and surrounding cities, including Zahle, Tripoli, Zghorta and Damur.⁴¹⁴ All entrances to the Palestinian refugee camps became violent battlegrounds. While the conflict was initially characterised by 'small wars' between local gangs settling old scores with rivals, or seeking to enlarge their areas of control, the violence quickly acquired a sectarian character.⁴¹⁵

The main dichotomy that underlay the conflict was between the conservatives and progressives. On the progressive side were those who rejected the political and socioeconomic reality of the old Lebanese order. This camp, led by the Druze leader of the PSP, Kamal Jumblatt, was formulated under the banner of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), a conglomeration of parties which included the Arab nationalists, Ba'athists and Murabitun. These parties also sought to develop a strong commitment to the Palestinian resistance based in Lebanon, and its right to launch attacks against Israel from Lebanese territory (South Lebanon, in particular). They were joined by the various rejectionist elements of the Palestinian revolutionary movement, including the PFLP, Arab Liberation Front and left-wing of Fatah. This camp also drew support from elements of the Sunni Muslim elite, including Rashid Karamah and Saeb Salam, who were opposed to the National Pact's apportioning of executive powers to the Christians and Maronite Christians in particular.⁴¹⁶ Although Muslims constituted the majority of the progressive camp's membership, it also drew the support of the secular political parties, including the LCP and SSNP. The progressives were therefore a diverse camp, comprising leftist, Muslim and Palestinian elements.

The conservative camp sought the preservation of the political and socioeconomic status quo in Lebanon. It was also opposed to the presence of Palestinian fighters in Lebanon, and their right to launch attacks against Israel from inside Lebanese territory. This camp was almost exclusively a

⁴¹⁴ Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 189.

⁴¹⁵ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 107.

⁴¹⁶ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 107-8.

Christian coalition formed around the Presidency, led by the Phalangists and its parties and supporters, including the former President Kemal Sham'un's National Liberal Party (NLP).⁴¹⁷ This coalition formed its own militia, the Lebanese Forces (LF) during the war.

From the earliest stages of the war, where the domestic and external stakes were still unclear, violence acquired a sectarian character. Attackers made combatants and civilians of other communities their target, constructing an easily identifiable enemy. As stated by Picard, in Beirut, where the population was heterogeneous and closely intermingled, particularly at the workplace, 'militiamen arrested, kidnapped and murdered members of other communities, or Palestinian refugees,' after simply looking at their identity cards and identifying their sectarian affiliation.⁴¹⁸ Thus the initial division between progressive and conservative merged with the categories of Muslim and Christian, a division set to splinter still further as violence increased. While events on the ground developed their own sectarian logic, they were also a microcosm of sectarian disintegration and political disagreement at the state level.

The failure of the Lebanese state to present a unified national position, arbitrate disputes, or contain the violence was a key contributing factor to the civil war's sectarian violence. Sulayman Franjiyya's acquisition of the Presidency in 1970 signalled a resurgence of *zu'ama'* styled politics at the state level. Although the Kata'ib Party had been an advocate for the strengthening of the state, the *zu'ama'* viewed public service with indifference, systematically undermining the state.⁴¹⁹ The President and Prime Minister failed to reach agreement over any issue during this period. Following the resignation of the Prime Minister, Rashid al-Sulh, the President attempted to create a Cabinet tasked with restoring peace, comprised of mostly Sunni Muslim 'moderate' military personnel only. This was a first in Lebanese history. However, the attempt galvanised the

⁴¹⁷ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 107.

⁴¹⁸ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 109.

⁴¹⁹ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 109.

Muslim political elite and religious leadership, including representatives from the Sunni, Shi'i and Druze communities, in unanimous opposition, leading to the collapse of the new cabinet in just two days.⁴²⁰ Thereafter, politics continued to be mired in factional disagreements between the President, Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The lack of political consensus at state level was reflected in the disintegration of political power - away from the President, Prime Minister and the rest of the political administration - to the warlords fighting each other on the ground. The factionalism of the political leadership also transferred directly to the creation and political sponsorship of the various militia groups involved in the fighting; violence came to reflect and mimic the political disagreements. Thus the Kata'ib Party, NLP and Marada Brigade all established their own militias whose membership was drawn from the Jumayyil, Sham'un and Franjiyya *zu'ama'*. The political opposition embodied by the LNM also established its own militias; the alliance with the Palestinian fighters formed the bulk of the LNM's fighting force in the civil war. As stated by Picard, 'communal strategies and individual ambitions had swept away the compromises of the National Pact.'⁴²¹

The factionalism of the political elite, which enabled and sponsored the violence committed by the warlords, also facilitated the involvement of external actors in the civil war. Internal divisions over the Palestinian presence inside Lebanon became a significant precipitator for the interventions of Syria and Israel, whose involvement frequently occurred at the invitation of their shifting alliances inside Lebanon. By the end of 1975, political factionalism, the involvement of external interests and militia violence eroded the power and authority of the Lebanese state. Events inside Lebanon also became increasingly subject to changes in the regional

⁴²⁰ Farid el Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*, London: I.B Tauris, 2000, 294-295.

⁴²¹ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 107.

balance of power, further eliminating the possibility for internal stability.⁴²² The growing presence of foreign armies in Lebanon, and the fact that after 1976, every Lebanese President owed his election to a foreign power, as well as the presence of semi-autonomous armed forces across Lebanon, signalled the breakdown of the Lebanese state.

In this environment, the Lebanese Army collapsed. In January 1976, the army was sent to liberate Damur from the Palestinian and Druze factions controlling it. At this point, the army divided along partisan lines. Some elements formed the Lebanese Arab Army (LAA), based in the Bekaa. Major General Saad Haddad established the Free Lebanese Army (FLA). Other brigades aligned with the Lebanese President, while still others aligned with the rival political factions, the LF and the LNM.⁴²³ The splintering of the Lebanese Army signalled the complete collapse of the Lebanese state, which ceased to function as a guarantor of security, political legitimacy or public services. These functions increasingly fell under the purview of the militiamen and warlords. This produced a paradox, as the militias became both the purveyors of violence, and the guarantors of security.

The Security Environment

Following the collapse of the Lebanese state, the general population became motivated by the basic human need to survive, defend and protect itself against random acts of violence.⁴²⁴ Militias became a core means of survival. They established a local-level order in the absence of any national-level order that the state could provide.⁴²⁵ As the violence of the war increased, the security needs of society also expanded. This facilitated what Norton has described as 'the democratisation of the instruments of

⁴²² Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence', *UNRISD Discussion Paper*, 42:1993, 22.

⁴²³ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 109.

⁴²⁴ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Human Conflict*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 236.

⁴²⁵ Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence', 33.

violence.’⁴²⁶ After 1975, the supply of firearms to the militia groups dramatically increased. At the beginning of the war the largest group of militiamen belonged to al-Kata’ib (8,000), followed by the LCP (5,000) and SSNP (5,000). The LNM coalition had a total of 18,700 militiamen, while the Christian-based parties totalled 12,000. The numerical superiority of the LNM was facilitated by its alliance with the Palestinian factions, who contributed the largest numbers of fighting forces.⁴²⁷ By 1984, there were up to 186 different warring factions and splinter groups in Lebanon, each with different backgrounds, ideologies, patrons, grievances, visions and justifications for why they had resorted to armed struggle.⁴²⁸

In the absence of the state, the militia groups organised community defences on a territorial basis. These newly demarcated territorial borders became extremely effective security cantons. Their cohesion was based on the effectiveness of communitarian-based militia loyalty, and the way in which militias communicated with other groups on the basis of threats and negotiations. A territory could only be entered via checkpoints that were guarded by militiamen with machine guns, who performed searches and interrogations on all who tried to enter. The militias also enforced the cohesion of the communities residing in their territory by making it extremely difficult for people to leave.⁴²⁹

The dominance of the militias over the new security environment elevated their status above that of the political and economic leaders who had dominated Lebanon before the war. The militia men came to comprise both volunteer and salaried members - the latter were thus a more long-term presence. Although the militiamen remained a minority, they displayed their dominance via the wearing of paramilitary uniform and the deployment of armed vehicles to accompany their movements. In each of their areas of control, the militias established quasi-governmental

⁴²⁶ Norton, *Amal and the Shi’a*, 127.

⁴²⁷ El Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State*, 299-304.

⁴²⁸ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 240.

⁴²⁹ Picard, ‘The Lebanese Shi’a and Political Violence’, 32.

structures, organising their own judicial systems to display their hegemony and intimidate the local community subject to their control.⁴³⁰

The militia established strong financial networks to facilitate their control over the security environment in the absence of any state-led framework. They militarily took over the Lebanese economy, targeting the banking industry in Beirut, the customs area of the port and airport, and many other areas of Lebanon's financial infrastructure. The militias also took partook in drug trafficking, guaranteeing themselves large financial incomes.⁴³¹ This wealth enabled the militias to pay their members extremely well, further securing the loyalty and commitment of their members.

The security environment in Lebanon throughout the civil war was characterised by three inter-linked issues: the absence of any state orchestrated order, the violence that engulfed all of Lebanese society throughout the war, and the militia's acquisition of control over security provision across the country. These conditions, and the territorial nature of militia-led security provision, led to the widespread sectarianisation of identities.

Sectarianisation of Identities

Another effect of the state's absence, particularly from the arena of security provision, was that society now increasingly sought security from within the family unit. The violence contributed to the resurgence of primordial identities, which linked the survival of the individual to their group of origin. Mobilisation of fighting forces occurred for more immediate purposes - the defence of close relatives, or fellow villagers from attacks by community outsiders. These battles became more urgent than class struggles or ideological motives. In areas that were relatively homogenous, patrons were transformed into warlords, exploiting community unity for compliance with their leadership.⁴³² Thus, in the Shuf Mountains, where the

⁴³⁰ Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence', 33.

⁴³¹ Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence', 33.

⁴³² Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 109.

majority of the population was Druze, the area became a stronghold for Kemal Jumblatt's PSP, and therefore rallied to the LNM. In the central areas of Lebanon, Kisrawan, East Beirut and its suburbs, where the Maronite Christians formed the majority, these areas were strongholds of the Kata'ib and NLP, excluding both the leftists and the Muslims.⁴³³

The methods employed by the militias in order to secure their territories also contributed to the communalisation of identities. By not allowing residents to leave their areas of control, and severely limiting the entry of outsiders, the militias also contributed to the homogenisation of their communities. These changes sharpened the territoriality of communal identities. The boundaries between communities therefore became more pronounced. The community, locality, neighbourhood or quarter was no longer just a space to seek shelter in or reside. It now became an ideology and a perspective in which groups interacted and perceived those outside the group.⁴³⁴ Thus, the group transformed into a form of communalism. The emergence of insular communities and the retribalisation of identities that it produced, provided temporary relief from the horrors of the war. But this survival technique also made these communities prone to intra-group conflict, too.⁴³⁵

Having distanced themselves from the 'other', these communities now had to face each other. In fact, the Lebanese Civil War represents an acute example of how inter-communal rivalries descended into intra-communal violence. As Khalaf states, 'The ecology of violence, reinforced by demonisation of the 'other', provided the sources for heightened vengeance and entrapment into relentless cycles of retributive in-fighting'.⁴³⁶ Thus the labels conventionally applied to the Lebanese conflict, left vs right, Christian vs Muslim, fail to take account of the intra-communal violence that was borne of factional territorial disputes.

⁴³³ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 109.

⁴³⁴ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 265.

⁴³⁵ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 265.

⁴³⁶ Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon*, 234.

The breakdown of the state, the security environment and the communalisation of identities (as well as the propensity for intra-communal conflict) are all interrelated aspects of the domestic environment caused by the Lebanese Civil War. In the ensuing analysis of this chapter, these factors form the underlying domestic conditions in which the political identities of the Shi'i community transformed. From the outset it is apparent that the breakdown of the state and the resultant security environment during the civil war established a precedent for the resurgence of primordial identities. Thus, a partial explanation for the transition from communism to communalism among the Shi'a is already evident. The analysis now moves on to establish the chronological context in which that transition occurred, by revisiting the war's main events.

Chronologies of the Civil War

The first stage of the Lebanese Civil War, known as the two years war, includes the period from the initial outbreak of violence in April 1975 to November 1976. This period was characterised by sporadic episodes of violence, and government attempts at negotiation and peace building through dialogue. The failure to stop the violence and reach agreement gave way to the second stage of the conflict: November 1976 to June 1982. During this period, Syria entered Lebanon upon the invitation of the conservative camp, the internal wars continued, and Israel conducted its first invasion of Lebanon, Operation Litani in 1978. The third stage of the conflict, 1982-1984 involved the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, followed by the deployment of a multi-national force in Lebanon led by the US, and the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon. The fourth stage of the conflict, 1984-1988 was marked by the intra-communal battles, including the War of the Camps, which pitted the new Shi'i militias, Amal and Hizbullah against each other, as well as the Palestinians and their allies in the LNM. Intra-Christian battles also characterised the violence of this period. The period between 1988-1990 constituted the closing stages of the war. In 1989 the Taif Accord was signed under Arab tutelage in Saudi

Arabia. The ratification of the agreement by the Lebanese National Assembly (parliament) in August 1990 officially ended the civil war.⁴³⁷

It is interesting to note that most chronologies of the Lebanese Civil War refer to the key events as those involving the interference of external players - Syria, Israel, the Arab and other multi-national forces. This emphasis is also replicated by some of the historiography of the Lebanese Civil War, which emphasises the role of exogenous factors in both causing and perpetuating the conflict. This study places itself in the opposing camp, which recognises the role of external actors, but views them in conjunction with endogenous issues, events and actors in Lebanon. The remit of this review is also narrower than a consideration of the domestic factors of the Lebanese Civil War would normally be, because the focus is on the war-time relationship between the LCP and the Shi'a in particular.

The analysis now moves on to explain the impact of the Lebanese Civil War on the LCP and its relationship with the Shi'a. For this purpose, the aforementioned chronology of the war is reformulated as follows. The first period, 1975-1978 examines the LCP's entry into the war as part of the LNM, and the initial faltering of the LCP in that context. The second period between 1978 and 1982 is analysed in relation to the LCP, Israel, the Palestinians and Amal. This stage is marked by the conflagration of internal and external events, to the detriment of the LCP's influence among the Shi'a of South Lebanon. The third period between 1982 and 1988 involves a comparative assessment of the the resistance activities of the LCP and Hizbullah in the war with Israel. At this point the LCP and its allies failed to halt Israel's expansive invasion of Lebanon in 1982, while Hizbullah emerged as a more formidable proponent of the resistance. In addition, the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon took with it a significant

⁴³⁷ Sune Haugbolle, 'The historiography and the memory of the Lebanese civil war', Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence 25 October 2011, - <<http://www.massviolence.org/The-historiography-and-the-memory-of-the-Lebanese-civil-war>>; Samir Makdisi and Richard Sadaka, 'The Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990', 18-22, *Lecture and Working Paper Series*, 3:2003, American University of Beirut Institute of Financial Economics, - <https://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/ife/Documents/downloads/series3_2003.pdf> (1 January 2015)

component of the LCP's (and LNM's) military capability in Lebanon. The fourth stage between 1988 and 1990 involves an analysis of the internal wars as well as the implications of Taif. During this period, the LCP becomes a target in the intra-communal battles involving Amal and Hizbullah, lacking the military capacity to defend itself. Additionally, the signing of the Taif Accord re-legitimised Lebanon's confessional political structure, with severe implications for the LCP's political survival in Lebanon as a non-sectarian political actor.

Bringing the LCP and the Shi'a into the Lebanese Civil War

The analysis in this section demonstrates that the decline of the LCP and its relationship with the Shi'a during the civil war was directly implicated in the rise of the new Shi'i sectarian actors, Amal and Hizbullah. The argument is illustrated by documenting the failures of the LCP in the war, as well as the party's interaction with the Shi'i communal actors in the context of those failures. In this sense, the decline of communism among the Lebanese Shi'a, and the consequent rise of Shi'i sectarianism is situated first and foremost within the domestic framework of Lebanon. External themes and trends, such as the global decline of communism and the rise of political Islam, while relevant, are not prioritised by this analysis. This is because their influence was peripheral, and can only be inferred rather than demonstrated.

The LCP in the Civil War 1975–1978

The LCP was a prominent member of the political opposition in Lebanon under the framework of the LNM. The party was involved in the deliberations with the Lebanese government at the beginning of the war, which sought to halt the violence and negotiate for political reforms. The failure of these deliberations precipitated the breakdown of the state and the rise of sectarian violence, and the LCP became embroiled in these battles. The analysis in this section contrasts the stated objectives of the LCP in the war with the party's actual conduct. It argues that the failure of the LCP to adhere to its political principles, as well as successive strategic

errors and miscalculations by the party leadership, contributed to the initial faltering of the LCP in the war.

Following the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, the LNM announced its transitional reform programme for Lebanon in August 1975. Its main emphasis was on the abolition of political sectarianism in Lebanon. The reform program also called for an end to the system of political and administrative quotas, a voluntary civil code for personal status rights, a new electoral law based on proportional representation, administrative decentralisation and the formation of a constituent assembly on a non-sectarian basis.⁴³⁸ According to the LCP, this agenda was to be pursued via cross-platform negotiations and co-operation as the best means of averting further violence.⁴³⁹ The following month, a twenty-member Committee for National Dialogue (CND) with the Lebanese government convened to discuss the reforms proposed by the LNM.

The CND's deliberations marked the first and last attempt during the war to address the political and socioeconomic disagreements that lay at the heart of the Lebanese conflict. The discussion was formulated around the reforms proposed by the LNM. The issue of secularism was debated, while the committee unanimously voted to abolish sectarian quotas in parliamentary representation and administration.⁴⁴⁰ In addition, the PLO delegation pledged to respect Lebanese sovereignty and reject any alternative homeland for the Palestinians. Despite the unanimous agreement over sectarian quotas, the reforms were not implemented by the President. Thereafter, the violence resumed, with the LNM, who viewed themselves as progressive nationalists, pitted against the status quo i.e the Phalange and their allies in the LF.

⁴³⁸ Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 189; George Hawi & Jim Paul, 'Problems of Strategy, Errors of Opposition', *MERIP Reports*, No. 18: October 1983, 20.

⁴³⁹ George Hawi, 'The New Political Power and the Need for a National Front', *Information Bulletin*, 11, 1975, 48.

⁴⁴⁰ Hawi, 'Problems of Strategy', 191.

The failure of the peaceful negotiations, however, gave way to what Fawwaz Traboulsi has described as a period of 'reform by arms.'⁴⁴¹ The LNM's parliamentary members used their veto powers to prevent the Lebanese government from deploying the army for domestic order issues. This resulted in an escalation of hostilities between the progressive and conservative camps. In November 1975, the LNM launched an offensive in West Beirut known as the 'Battle of the Hotels' in an effort to remove the Phalangist forces from a mixed quarter of West Beirut. This was a direct response to an earlier Phalangist assault on East Beirut, where 200 Muslims were killed.⁴⁴² Following a Phalangist attack on a Palestinian Christian refugee camp in Matn on the Lebanese coast, in which all of the refugees were expelled, the LNM's Joint Forces mobilised again. They laid siege to Damur, a Maronite Christian town on the coast of the Shuf mountains. After Phalangist forces captured Karantina in January of 1976, the Joint Forces invaded Damur, Sa'idiyat and Jiyeh, pillaging the Christian villagers and forcing thousands to escape by sea.⁴⁴³ These events constitute the first of many examples of the LNM committing 'sectarian excesses' in the war.⁴⁴⁴ These acts contravened the principles contained within the LNM's domestic reform program - specifically those that opposed all aspects of sectarianism in Lebanon. For the LCP, the outcomes of some of its military misadventures in the war further reduced the credibility of its political programme.

The LCP suffered immediate military setbacks between 1975 and 1976. The party provided the LNM with 1,000 fighters, and lost 200 of these in the first year of the war. More than 100 fighters died in combat throughout the Winter and Spring of 1976.⁴⁴⁵ The LNM lost most of its fighters in and around the zone controlled by the LF and their allies in the North, as well

⁴⁴¹ Hawi, 'Problems of Strategy', 189.

⁴⁴² Traboulsi, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, 192.

⁴⁴³ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 109.

⁴⁴⁴ This is how the leader of the Organisation for Communist Action in Lebanon (OCAL), Muhsin Ibrahim described the LNM's attacks on anti-Phalange Christians. Quoted in Joel Beinin, 'Criticism and Defeat: An introduction to George Hawi', *MERIP Reports*, No. 118, 1983, 17, pp. 16-18.

⁴⁴⁵ Karim Muruwa, quoted in Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 103.

as Matn. By August 1976, the Muslim and Palestinian enclaves of northern Beirut, Nabaa (100,000 Shi'is), Jisr al-Basha (6,000 Palestinians) and Tel al-Zat'ar (50,000 Palestinians and southern Lebanese) were decimated.⁴⁴⁶ In Bikfaya, LCP fighters were given ultimatums - either they renounced their communist affiliations or they faced expulsion from the town. Many of the party's Christian members heeded these warnings. In fact, such was the extent of the exodus of Christians from the LCP that the party came to be perceived as wholly identifiable with the Muslim camp. Although the LCP's leadership continued to be dominated by its Christian members, the party was now openly accused of advocating Shi'i communal interests.⁴⁴⁷ While the public association between the LCP and the Shi'a was not a new accusation, the LCP's activities in the war were increasingly delegitimising its anti-sectarian political agenda in this regard.

The second military setback experienced by the LCP occurred following Syria's intervention in 1976. Despite the heavy losses inflicted upon the LNM in the first year of the war, the Phalangists and LF still perceived their alliance with the Palestinian fighters to be a substantial political and military threat. Fear of their potential success led the Lebanese President, Sulayman Franjiyya, to call for Syrian military intervention.⁴⁴⁸ The entry of Syria on behalf of the LF in 1976 placed the LNM in a dilemma - they had expected support from Syria. Despite Syria's entry on behalf of the LF, the LNM were reluctant in their military engagement with Syrian forces. This led to heavy casualties among the Joint Forces. The greatest damage exerted on the Syrian Army came from the LNM's Palestinian allies stationed outside Sawfar and Sidon. However, the LNM was ultimately subdued in the second half of 1976.

⁴⁴⁶ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 110; Traboulsi, *A Modern History of Lebanon*, 201.

⁴⁴⁷ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 109.

⁴⁴⁸ Traboulsi, *A Modern History of Lebanon*, 196.

Among the LCP's Shi'i communist cadres, disbelief was expressed at how quickly the LNM stood down from its engagement with the Syrian Army.⁴⁴⁹ However, the more extensive damage to the LCP's reputation was caused by the party's disingenuous portrayal of its military drawdown - and defeat - as victory. While the LCP declared victory in this battle, the cessation of hostilities was a negotiated agreement in the face of the obvious military superiority of the Syrian army, as well as the reluctance of the LNM to engage in battle with Syria from the outset.⁴⁵⁰ Among the LCP's Shi'i cadres, who comprised the bulk of the party's fighting forces in this battle, this declaration of victory was an insult. Ibrahim al-Amin, who participated in those battles expressed this frustration:

All of the sudden we receive an order to leave our posts and gather at the Palace. We are told to go in a single file to headquarters, the Syrians wanted the Palace. They served us a speech about our victory. How we had won the battle for democratic change and so on. It was so ironic.⁴⁵¹

Later in the war, the LCP and Syria would be fighting side by side as allies in a different battle. This illustrates the extent to which the LCP became embroiled in the myriad contradictions of the conflict, which underscored the loss of the party's political agenda and foresight. For the communist Shi'a, the beginning of the war represented the first instance in which they developed doubts about their role in the LCP, and in particular the role envisioned for them by the LCP's leadership.

The strategic failings of the LNM in the war have since been acknowledged by the leadership of its composite organisations. For example, George Hawi, then Secretary-General of the LCP, acknowledged the party's failure to adhere to the reform initiative at the beginning of the war:

⁴⁴⁹ These views were expressed by several respondents in *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna (We Were Communists)*, Documentary Film, Orjouane Productions et Les Films, Director: Maher Abi Samra,, 2010.

⁴⁵⁰ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 111.

⁴⁵¹ Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*.

...we did so [abandoned our reform program] under pressure, when the unfavourable balance of forces after the first two years of civil war forced us to make a tactical retreat. But this had disastrous repercussions on the internal Lebanese conflict. It allowed the demands of the Muslim communities - legitimate demands for equality - to appear as the sole positions of the anti-fascist camp. Our camp thus lost its secular and democratic nature. Muslim demands for equality should have been subsumed within the vast and democratic and secular program of the National Movement, a program whose secular reforms would eliminate all religious oppression. Instead the National Movement seemed to be dominated by the Muslim movement, as if it were just part of one of the two camps in the 'traditional' Lebanese conflict...⁴⁵²

Hawi highlights how the LCP's early political and military failings in the war contributed to the delegitimisation of the party's anti-confessional political agenda. The failure to maintain a secular political agenda also rendered the LCP's communist Shi'a more exposed to the tendencies toward communalisation exerted by the breakdown of the state and the resultant security environment in the civil war. The LCP appeared from the beginning of the civil war as a party with a suspect sectarian agenda and limited military capacity. As the analysis now moves on to the next stage of the civil war, the security environment and process of sectarianisation become the second precipitant of the LCP's declining relationship with the Shi'a.

The LCP, Israel, the Palestinians and Amal 1978–1982

Events during this period illustrate how external actors exerted influence over the internal dynamics of the Lebanese Civil War. The analysis in this section further demonstrates the LCP's declining influence among the Shi'a, both as an advocate for the Palestinian resistance (a joint interest that had previously been shared with the South Lebanese Shi'a), but also as a guarantor of Shi'i security in South Lebanon.

Until the events of 1978, relations between the Shi'a and the Palestinians in South Lebanon were strong. Their ties dated to the 1930s and revolved

⁴⁵² Hawi, 'Problems of Strategy', 20.

around trade relations, as well as a shared sense of dispossession between the Lebanese Shi'a and the Palestinian refugees who arrived in South Lebanon in the aftermath of 1948. In chapter three, the analysis showed how, after 1967, the LCP capitalised on the strong ties between the Lebanese Shi'a and the Palestinians, deploying the LCP's Popular Guard in South Lebanon in support of the Palestinian struggle against Israel. The LCP's presence in South Lebanon was therefore initially welcomed by the local Shi'i population, some of whom joined the LCP on the basis of its support for the Palestinian resistance, as well as the party's pledge to defend South Lebanon from Israeli attacks. However, by 1978 the expansion of the Palestinian presence in South Lebanon, and the ferocity with which Israel retaliated against the South Lebanese villagers, strained relations between the local Shi'i community and the Palestinians.

Initially, Shi'i frustration with the Palestinian fighters stationed in South Lebanon grew out of the increasing levels of arbitrary controls imposed on the Shi'i villagers by the Palestinian militants. Checkpoints were manned by young Palestinians who conducted random searches of vehicles and persons wishing to pass, and some individuals sometimes behaved disrespectfully toward those they stopped. Shi'i village elders began to take offence to the behaviour of the Palestinians in their villages. Shortly before his disappearance in Libya, Musa al-Sadr warned the PLO against establishing a long term presence in South Lebanon, describing the PLO as a 'factor of anarchy in the South.'⁴⁵³ Sadr's comments reflected the growing disenchantment of the local Shi'i villagers with the Palestinian militants in their midst.

The Israeli invasion in 1978 further radicalised Shi'i opinion with regard to the Palestinian presence in South Lebanon. Heavy Israeli bombardment of the area, including artillery fire and airstrikes caused extensive infrastructural damage to the Shi'i villagers. Civilian casualties were also extremely high, with over two thousand killed. The Israeli bombardment

⁴⁵³ Norton, 'Shiism and Social Protest', 165.

forced more than 100,000 civilians to flee South Lebanon.⁴⁵⁴ Most of these refugees came to settle in West Beirut. While the PLO's forces withdrew from the North to avoid Israeli forces, the local Shi'a community therefore bore the brunt of Israel's assault. It was under these conditions that relations between the Shi'a and the Palestinians transformed, with implications for the LCP's presence, too.

Amal's strategy at this time, commensurate with the militia strategies outlined earlier in this chapter, was to acquire, expand and communally homogenise the territory it controlled in Lebanon. Thus the provision of communal security constituted the organisation's main agenda, and the growth in membership of Amal in the late 1970s was indeed predicated on its security pledges toward the Shi'a. Amal's initial strongholds developed in the suburbs of Beirut, particularly in Ghobeire. Amal's influence here was directly facilitated by the relative territorial contiguity of the location. In South Lebanon, Amal's strategic position was different. Although a Shi'i region, this was a much vaster territorial area. In addition, military capacity overwhelmingly determined influence in this area, which Amal did not yet possess.⁴⁵⁵ In South Lebanon it was the LNM's Joint Forces, among them the LCP but, importantly, the PLO, which had a powerful and pervasive armed presence.

Although Amal lacked the military capacity to challenge the LNM's military presence in South Lebanon, the movement was able to capitalise on the breakdown in relations between the Shi'a and the Palestinians caused by the Israeli operation. Amal deployed a rhetorical strategy that related the presence of the Palestinians and, importantly, their allies in the LNM, with the insecurity of the Shi'a in South Lebanon. Many Shi'a, motivated by the basic need to protect their families, homes and villages, left the LCP, PLO and other component entities of the LNM, and instead

⁴⁵⁴ Cobban, 'The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon', 146.

⁴⁵⁵ Norton, 'Shiism and Social Protest', 165.

began to join the ranks of Amal, or offer their support to the movement.⁴⁵⁶ One Shi'i villager, expressing his anger at the conduct of the Palestinians in South Lebanon said, 'We gave the Palestinians everything and they gave us back insults, corpses and a lesson in corruption.'⁴⁵⁷ Some Shi'a were so frustrated with the PLO that they also provided assistance to Israel's ally in South Lebanon, General Haddad's South Lebanon Army (SLA).⁴⁵⁸ Shi'i frustration with the PLO also extended to other areas of Lebanon, including West Beirut. From 1980 onwards, frequent armed clashes took place between Amal, the PLO and their allies in the LNM. These battles occurred in both West Beirut and South Lebanon; Amal began to accrue significant success where the Shi'a expressed their frustration with both the left and the PLO in these areas.

Following Israel's withdrawal from South Lebanon, Amal sought to prevent the return of PLO forces to South Lebanon, in an effort to consolidate its territorial control over the Shi'a. The provision of security for the Shi'i community became a battleground between Amal, the LCP and its allies in the LNM, particularly the Palestinian factions. The advancement of Amal's security strategy in the south was directly predicated on the decline of the LNM's. Thereafter the LCP also suffered a loss in local Shi'i confidence due to its association with the LNM. This was an outcome for which the LCP also bore responsibility. The LCP and its allies in the LNM have since acknowledged their failures in the arena of security provision in the south.

George Hawi acknowledges that the LCP displayed indifference to the welfare of the populations that lived in the regions under their control. While the LCP was frequently critical of the government's failures in this regard, the party took no independent initiative to provide for the security needs of the southern Shi'a. The local population frequently complained of

⁴⁵⁶ Norton, 'Shi'ism and Social Protest', 169.

⁴⁵⁷ Norton, 'Shi'ism and Social Protest', 60.

⁴⁵⁸ Cobban, 'The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon', 146.

the coercion and physical intimidation they experienced at the behest of the Joint Forces.⁴⁵⁹ These smaller issues could have been addressed through the imposition of some basic disciplinary coherence within the Joint Forces, or the establishment of an interim joint local authority to arbitrate disputes and provide a semblance of order. In the end, the LCP failed to deliver on its pledge of security to the southern Shi'a; the Israeli invasion in 1978 amplified that failure, while providing Amal with an opportunity to develop its communal legitimacy and authority among the Shi'a.

The Israeli invasion of South Lebanon in 1978 contributed to the breakdown of relations between the Shi'a and the Palestinians. This in turn transformed relations between the Shi'a and the LCP due to the latter's political and military support for the Palestinian resistance against Israel. The new Shi'i militia, Amal, capitalised on local Shi'i frustration with the Palestinian presence in South Lebanon, positioning itself with the Shi'a against the Palestinians and their allies, the LCP. In this way Amal began to promote itself as a more capable provider of communal security for the Shi'a, as a 'Shi'i' militia. In this sense, an external event (the Israeli invasion) dovetailed with the internal security environment and the resultant sectarianisation of identities.

The Resistance: LCP vs Amal vs Hizbullah 1982–1984

The third stage of the conflict was marked by Israel's second invasion of Lebanon in 1982. This initially presented the LCP with an opportunity to re-establish its reputation among the Shi'a as a leading force in the resistance against Israel, particularly due to the absence of an effective mobilisation by Amal in the first two years of the war.⁴⁶⁰ The analysis in this section examines the LCP's mobilisation against Israel in 1982, arguing that, ultimately, the LCP, and its allies in the LNM failed to mount an effective resistance. By 1984, Amal re-grouped and began to participate in the resistance against Israel. However, the real turning point in the war

⁴⁵⁹ George Hawi, 'Problems of Strategy', 21-22

⁴⁶⁰ Norton, 'Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon', 176.

with Israel came after the emergence of Hizbullah, which mounted a resistance effort that was superior to both Amal's and the LCP's. By the end of this period, the LCP had failed to reverse its fortunes vis a vis its resistance agenda among the Shi'a. The exodus of the PLO from Lebanon also removed from the LNM a significant component of its fighting force, reducing the military capacity of the alliance further. Additionally, the LCP now faced two new powerful sectarian rivals for the Shi'i community in the form of Amal and Hizbullah.

The Israeli invasion led to an immediate mobilisation of the LNM's forces in Lebanon, supported by Syria. The LCP's General-Secretary, George Hawi called on all Lebanese 'to unite regardless of ideological, religious and other differences in order to give a determined rebuff to the Israeli aggression.'⁴⁶¹ The LCP further issued an appeal with OCAL and the Arab Socialist Action Party, calling for the formation of the Lebanese Patriotic Resistance Front (LPRF). This group also later joined forces with the Front for National Salvation, which comprised the PSP, the PLO, Syria, and Amal.⁴⁶²

It's worth noting that the Israeli invasion in 1982 continued to galvanise the LCP's Shi'i members, while producing new adherents. In the Lebanese documentary film, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, all of the respondents interviewed described the Israeli invasion of 1982 as the most important motivating factor behind their decision to either join the LCP or volunteer to fight the Israelis. For several Shi'i communists, the LCP's involvement in the fight against Israel consolidated their relationship with the party:

My real awareness emerged in 1982, with the Israeli invasion, when the Communist Party decided to engage itself directly in the mission of fighting Israel. At that moment, I felt my relationship with the party was natural...Because when it came to the subject of resisting Israel, whether the general secretary of the party had sent you or not,

⁴⁶¹ Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 113.

⁴⁶² Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 115.

it was your duty to do it. This helped. It was the instance where my relationship with the party consolidated and became very real.⁴⁶³

The 1978 and 1982 Israeli invasions elicited different reactions from the Shi'i community, resulting in commensurately contrasting reconfigurations of the community's political alliances. In 1978, the Israeli invasion sparked a breakdown in relations between the southern Shi'a and the Palestinians. The Shi'a blamed the Palestinian militants, and their allies in the LCP and LNM for the Israeli incursions, which disproportionately impacted the Shi'i residents of south Lebanon. This provided Amal with the opportunity to make inroads into the LCP's traditional Shi'i support base in south Lebanon, resulting in the loss of some territorial control by the LCP and its allies. However, the 1982 Israeli invasion, and the speed in which the Israeli army passed through Lebanese territory to reach Beirut, was a source of great alarm to the residents of south Lebanon.

The Israeli invasion appeared to have the unintended effect of reunifying the fragmented Lebanese opposition, while also aiding the LCP's recruitment among the Shi'a, and strengthening the resolve and commitment of its existing members. In addition, it was during the 1982 war the the LCP's resistance strategy vis a vis Israel adopted a more radical strategy: the deployment of martyrdom operations. Conventionally, the use of such tactics is associated with Islamist organisations, and in the case of the Lebanese Shi'a, Hizbullah. However, this analysis shows that martyrdom operations were originally conceived under a secular conceptual framework. Indeed the majority of suicide missions carried out against Israel in the 1982 were the work of the LCP, SSNP, Ba'th and Nasserist Parties based in Lebanon.⁴⁶⁴

The secular political parties, among them the LCP, justified the use of suicide bombings against Israeli forces in nationalistic terms. In this sense, suicide bombing served to uphold the honour and dignity of the nation,

⁴⁶³ Ali Ayoub, quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu'iyyun Kunna*, documentary film.

⁴⁶⁴ Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity Construction*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011, 108.

and to liberate a land from occupation.⁴⁶⁵ The notions of dignity and honour had wide application; they referred to all aspects of the occupation, including the destruction of villages, the loss of jobs and access to basic human resources.⁴⁶⁶ While the term, 'martyr' is nominally used to describe individuals who suffer persecution and death for a religious cause, in Lebanon almost anyone who dies an unnatural death is called a martyr.⁴⁶⁷ As stated by Mroue,

Images of these dead men and women populate the walls of Lebanese cities and towns...staring back at the living who more often than not behave as though they are oblivious to their ghostly presence. *Posters of martyrs can be encountered in almost any neighbourhood of Beirut, regardless of the sectarian or political identity of the location [emphasis added].*⁴⁶⁸

Another often unremarked feature of the secular party's use of martyrs, is that both women and men partook in such activities. The LCP's most celebrated female martyr is Lola Abboud. Described as 'the flower of the Bekaa', Lola hailed from a middle-class Christian family. Aged 19, she blew herself up among Israeli soldiers attacking her village on 20th April 1985.⁴⁶⁹ The explanations for why female suicide bombers carried out their actions were the same as those for the men, revolving around nationalistic intent and the upholding of the nation's honour and dignity. Lola's father explained that she was 'fighting for the liberation of her homeland.' In his view, Lola's sacrifice, as a woman, was even greater than that of the LCP's male martyrs: 'Loula Abboud's actions exceeded all expectations not only for women in war, but for men as well.'⁴⁷⁰ Too, Lola's Christian identity

⁴⁶⁵ Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity*, 109.

⁴⁶⁶ Online Commentary 'Body as Weapon: The Mediated Body of the Suicide Bomber', - <<http://mashrabiyya.wordpress.com/2011/03/16/body-as-weapon-the-mediated-body-of-the-suicide-bomber/>> (4 January 2015)

⁴⁶⁷ Rabih Mroué, '1000 Words', *Artforum*, 48:3, November 2009, 194; Chad Elias, 'Jamal al-Sati and the Lebanese Left', - <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/rabih-mroue-on-three-posters/jamal-al-sati-and-the-lebanese-left-r1144500>> (4 January 2015)

⁴⁶⁸ Chad Elias, 'Martyrdom and Mediation', <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/rabih-mroue-on-three-posters/martyrdom-and-mediation-r1144502#fn_1_6> Last accessed 4th January 2015.

⁴⁶⁹ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity*, 110.

⁴⁷⁰ Quoted in Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity*, 110.

could also be invoked, since she died the day after Easter, thus her death served as a resurrection to her people.⁴⁷¹

Elias Atallah, a senior LCP official stated that the Politburo voiced no objections to the party's use of suicide-bombings in the 1982 war. However, he acknowledged that the party did engage with the paradox represented by the practice of martyrdom, long associated with religious notions of sacrifice, being deployed in the service of a secular Marxist project. Atallah believes the LCP's use of this strategy remained necessarily ambiguous, but that this rendered the tactic prone to cooptation by the Islamic resistance (Hizbullah). He contrasts the LCP's use of suicide bombing, which,

as a secular, left-wing act...was open to interpretation, challenge and debate...[whereas for the Islamists]...there is clarity in the motivations behind such missions, and little room for debate.⁴⁷²

Hizbullah's use of martyrdom operations deployed the same reasoning as its secular purveyors, however. Thus, honour and dignity also featured in Hizbullah's justification:

'when duty calls and when there are dignities that are going to be downtrodden, when the pride and honour of the umma is going to be downtrodden by the Jews, then we we will not lay idle...'⁴⁷³

In Hizbullah's reading, the nation simply becomes the ummah. But the connotations are the same, only the martyrs offer different kinds of symbolic capital, only. As stated by Khosrokhavar,

For the Shiites it is God's encounter that is realised by combatting an infidel enemy. For the nationalists and the communists, immortality is achieved by identification with the 'collectivite nationale' or by identification with all the poor [deprived] in the world.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity*, 110.

⁴⁷² Chad Elias, 'Jamal al-Sati and the Lebanese Left', <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/rabih-mroue-on-three-posters/jamal-al-sati-and-the-lebanese-left-r1144500>> Last accessed 4th January 2015.

⁴⁷³ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity*, 110.

⁴⁷⁴ Quoted in translation in Alagha, *Hizbullah's Identity*, 110-111.

The Lebanese Shi'i historian, Munthir Jaber argues that there is no overwhelming difference between the LCP's and Hizbullah's justifications for martyrdom acts. In Jaber's view, the secular and Islamic resistance should be viewed as two overlapping political formations:

Hezbollah is continuing the same old Leftist approach. We saw countless faceless and nameless martyrs in the images of the fedayeen [resistance fighters] produced by Palestinian resistance [in the 1960s and 1970s]. Even at the higher ideological level nothing really has changed...Hezbollah is repeating the same basic message.⁴⁷⁵

It is interesting, and important, to note that martyrdom operations in the war with Israel were originally conceived under the various secular political frameworks extant in Lebanon, before Hizbullah. However, in the end, the LCP and its secular allies were far less successful on the battlefield than Hizbullah in 1982. The analysis now returns to the LCP's military role in the 1982 LNM-led resistance against Israel, contra the new Shi'i formations, Amal and Hizbullah.

What began as an Israeli invasion of South Lebanon became, in just six days, a full-scale occupation of Lebanon. Israel entered Beirut, which lay besieged for three months. It also invaded and occupied the Shuf mountains for one year, until September 1983, and the Western Bekaa and South Lebanon for three years until June 1985.⁴⁷⁶ From the first day of Israel's invasion, the PLO's combatants were poorly prepared and fled their posts across South Lebanon. In West Beirut they came under fierce artillery bombardment from Israel for one month, before capitulating to an American sponsored evacuation plan. This dispersed 15,000 PLO fighters from Lebanon, and the PLO's leadership relocated to Tunisia. During the siege, Beirut's residents were left without electricity and water, while

⁴⁷⁵ Chad Elias, 'Jamal al-Sati and the Lebanese Left', -
<<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/rabih-mroue-on-three-posters/jamal-al-sati-and-the-lebanese-left-r1144500>> (January 2015)

⁴⁷⁶ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 124.

facing daily shelling from Israel. In the northern Bekaa, the Syrian Army also fled after sustained heavy losses.⁴⁷⁷

Despite the reality of the LPRF's failures in the war with Israel, the LCP circulated propaganda extolling the bravery of its cadres and claiming victory.⁴⁷⁸ The propensity for the LCP to exaggerate its military successes was a continual source of frustration among its Shi'i cadres throughout the Lebanese Civil War. This led to a feeling among the communist Shi'a that they were exploited by the LCP, and used as 'cannon-fodder' for the party's various battles in the war.⁴⁷⁹ In the aftermath of the 1982 war George Hawi acknowledged the limited achievements of the coalition, noting the lack of foresight and unpreparedness for Israel's advance from the South to Beirut, and in to the Mountain.⁴⁸⁰

While the LCP and its allies in the LNM continued to mount attacks against the Israelis, including suicide bombings, by the mid-1980s the resistance was increasingly becoming dominated by different Shi'i groups. Amal's resistance was initially slow to emerge. This led to internal dissent within Amal, with one of its Command Council members, Husayn Musawi, accusing the group of collaborating with Israel, and deserting its Islamic principles.⁴⁸¹ Musawi then established Islamic Amal in mid-1982, which organised resistance activities against the invading Israeli army.⁴⁸² By 1984, guerrilla attacks against Israeli forces were increasing, but the assailants were now mostly from among the Shi'i community in Jabal 'Amil rather than from the Palestinians. The Mayor of Sidon summarised opinion

⁴⁷⁷ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country*, 124.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Jabhat al-Muqawama al-Wataniyya al-Lubnaniyya, wa-Intasarat' [The Lebanese National Resistance Front, Victorious] Lebanese Communist Party, Beirut, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuwUEXl4VqQ>

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Dr Munthir Jaber, Beirut: Lebanon, 14 December 2012.

⁴⁸⁰ Hawi, 'Problems of Strategy', 18.

⁴⁸¹ Norton, 'Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon', 172.

⁴⁸² Norton, 'Shi'ism and Social Protest in Lebanon', 172.

among the southern Shi'a at this time: 'They invaded us to hunt Palestinians and have stayed to occupy our land?'⁴⁸³

The emergent Shi'i resistance carried out daring and deadly attacks against the Israelis and Multi-National Forces in Lebanon. In November 1982 in Tyre, Shaikh Ahmad Qasir drove a bomb-rigged vehicle into an Israeli base, killing 75 officials and soldiers. So unexpected was the attack that Israel insisted for many years that the explosion had been the result of a gas leak.⁴⁸⁴ In October 1983, a truck-bomb targeted a US marine base in Beirut, killing 241 soldiers. A simultaneous attack on the base of the Multi-National Forces killed another 57 French troops. While responsibility for this attack was claimed by a group calling itself Islamic Jihad, it is widely believed to have been carried out by the factions that eventually formed the new Shi'i militia, Hizbullah⁴⁸⁵. The official founding of Hizbullah occurred in February 1985, when the movement released its 'Open Letter to Downtrodden in Lebanon and the World.'⁴⁸⁶

Hizbullah's rise in Lebanon signalled the emergence of a resistance movement against Israel whose funding, organisation and weapons were far superior to that of the LCP's and Amal's combined. Founded by a group of Shi'i clerics in the Bekaa, Hizbullah was a radical Shi'i Islamist militia; it sought to emulate Iran's Revolution through the establishment of an Islamic State in Lebanon. Hizbullah also received military assistance and training from Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The group deployed a sophisticated strategy against Israeli forces in South Lebanon in particular, targeting its local ally, the SLA, first before moving against Israeli army outposts. While Hizbullah also deployed suicide attacks, it is noteworthy that the bulk of suicide attacks carried out against Israel during this period

⁴⁸³ Cobban, 'The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon', 149.

⁴⁸⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 80.

⁴⁸⁵ Cobban, 'The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon', 151.

⁴⁸⁶ Hizbullah, 'An Open Letter to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and the World', -
<http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000361273.pdf> (1 January 2015)

came from the LNM's secular allies. Thus nationalist and patriotic motives superseded religious inspirations in the resistance against Israel.⁴⁸⁷

The rising toll of casualties inflicted on Israel by the emergent Shi'i-led resistance forced Israel's withdrawal from most of South Lebanon in 1984. Israel was also unable to rely on the SLA to cover the territory it retreated from, testament to the success of Hizbullah's resistance strategy.⁴⁸⁸

The 1982 Israeli invasion triggered the expansion of the Shi'i community's mobilisation in the civil war. The LCP's resistance activities were simply outclassed by the combined efforts of the new Shi'i actors, particularly Amal and Hizbullah. Although the LCP can be credited with the founding of South Lebanon's resistance movement, the party struggled to retain ownership over its nature and direction in the civil war, while the effectiveness of its resistance also paled in comparison to the new Shi'i players. Thus, decline also came to characterise the LCP's relationship with the Shi'a in terms of the resistance directed at Israel. As the analysis now moves on to the final stages of the civil war, the attention of the new Shi'i players shifts away from Israel toward the internal wars, with the consolidation of their presence among the Shi'i community now the priority.

The Internal Wars & Implications of Taif 1984–1990

The analysis in this section details the last two events of the Lebanese Civil War that cemented the decline of the LCP's relationship with the Shi'a. The first issue pertains to the impact of the internal wars, during which time the LCP found itself targeted by the new Shi'i players that were seeking to consolidate their dominance over the Shi'i community. Numerous senior LCP officials, many of whom were Shi'i members, were assassinated by what the LCP referred to as 'Islamic alignments'.⁴⁸⁹ However, Amal and

⁴⁸⁷ Norton, *Hezbollah*, 81.

⁴⁸⁸ Cobban, 'The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon', 152.

⁴⁸⁹ George Hawi quoted in Ismael, *The Communist Movement*, 120.

Hizbullah also coordinated a campaign against the LCP in the latter's Shi'i stronghold areas across Beirut and South Lebanon, before eventually turning on each other in the War of the Camps in 1988. The combination of the LCP's losses in the wider battles of the civil war and the targeted campaign against them towards the end of the war, decimated the party's infrastructure.

The second issue during this period constituted the final blow to the LCP's political standing in Lebanon, and among its Shi'i constituency. This was the Taif Accord, signed in 1989 and officially ratified by the Lebanese parliament in 1990. This agreement reestablished Lebanon's confessional political system, according it a legitimacy that it had not received in Lebanon or the region in the pre-war environment. As a non-sectarian actor, the LCP was one of the least placed parties in Lebanon to benefit politically from this system. The Taif Accord effectively consolidated confessional identity in the Lebanese political system. This assured the continued ascendance of the new Shi'i communal players, Amal and Hizbullah in Lebanon's post-war political environment, to the detriment of the LCP's continuing influence among the Shi'a.

Before the LCP came under attack by the new Shi'i players in Lebanon, the party had already signalled its ambivalence toward the rise of Hizbullah in particular. An article written in 1985 by the Deputy Secretary-General of the LCP, Husayn Muruwa, outlined the ideological and political currents that the party should continue to resist. One of these was identified as a Islamic political movements.⁴⁹⁰ Muruwa argued that in their interpretation of the national question, political Islamists transcended even the boundaries of the the Arab world, not just its individual countries. Muruwa claimed that in the view of Islamists, neither national nor pan-Arab problems had any meaning unless viewed as an integral part of a more comprehensive entity - that is Islam, and Muslim unity. For Muruwa,

⁴⁹⁰ Husayn Muruwa, 'A Study of Islamic Organizations', *World Marxist Review*, February 1986, 90.

this reduced the concept of 'nation ' and 'people' to the (narrow) framework of a 'Muslim Community.'⁴⁹¹

The rise of Hizbullah represented a threat to the LCP's secular democratic vision for Lebanon. The LCP was wary of Hizbullah's pursuit of an Islamic styled political system in Lebanon, arguing that:

Islamic hegemony...would be a new form of exploitation and domination making the Islamic bourgeoisie the strongest partner, even though it would certainly cede part of that power to the Christian bourgeoisie.⁴⁹²

The LCP's Central Committee's draft report to its Fifth Congress in 1987 further revealed the party's anxiety that the 'doctrinal ideology of Islamic hegemonists will submerge the "national" ideology of Amal.'⁴⁹³ In this sense the LCP viewed Hizbullah as an even greater threat to its interests in Lebanon than Amal. However, the LCP's public pronouncements against Islamic political movements may have precipitated the targeted assassinations initiated against the LCP by radical Shi'i Islamist militants towards the end of the civil war.

In February 1987, two years after Husayn Muruwa's earlier comments were published, he was assassinated in his home. Muruwa had also been a writer and editor of the newspaper *al-Tariq* as well as a professor of Philosophy at the Lebanese University.⁴⁹⁴ He was aged 78 when he was killed. Another top LCP Shi'i figure, Mahdi 'Amil, one of the the most well-regarded Marxist thinkers in the Arab world was also assassinated on 18th May 1987.⁴⁹⁵ These were some of the high-profile assassinations of 'Amil

⁴⁹¹ Muruwa, 'A Study of Islamic Organizations', 90.

⁴⁹² Augustus Richard Norton, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, Lebanon, Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1987, 451.

⁴⁹³ Norton, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 451.

⁴⁹⁴ Vijay Prashad, 'The Arab Gramsci', *Frontline*, 21st March 2014, <<http://www.frontline.in/world-affairs/the-arab-gramsci/article5739956.ece>> Last accessed 28-11-14

⁴⁹⁵ Jadaliyya Profiles, 'Hassan Hamdan 'Mahdi 'Amel': A Profile from the Archives', *Jadaliyya*, 3rd October 2012, <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/7672/hassan-hamdan-mahdi-%60amel_a-profile-from-the-archi> Last accessed 20-11-14.

communists during the war. The LCP received numerous written threats signed by various 'Islamist' groups in South Lebanon:

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful the Most Kind
You must leave the south, otherwise you will be killed for numerous reasons: because you are atheists, traitors, unbelievers, and because you are hypocrites. And because you are abusing both Islam and the believers. And this has dire consequences.

The Organisation of Imam Husayn, January 1986

In the name of Allah, The Communist Party, under the guise of the socialist movement: your activities are exposed and all your movements known. Stop all your activity otherwise you are exposing yourself to danger.

The Security of the South April 1986⁴⁹⁶

In 1984 fifty-two LCP members were kidnapped and murdered.⁴⁹⁷ Several more party officials were killed between 1986 and 1988 including Khalil Na'us, a senior party official based in West Beirut and Suhayl Tawilah, editor-in-chief of the LCP daily, *al-Tariq*.⁴⁹⁸

In addition to the attacks against the LCP by radical Islamists, Amal also bore responsibility for LCP losses at this time. In January 1986 another LCP official, Michel Wahid was killed after being held captive by Amal for more than two months.⁴⁹⁹ One hundred LCP members were arrested by Amal in South Lebanon in February 1986, supposedly to prevent 'unauthorised military activities' against Israel.⁵⁰⁰ Clashes between the LCP and Amal subsequently broke out in West Beirut, resulting in the arrest of further LCP officials in Beirut and the south. The clashes with Amal inflicted heavy casualties on the LCP. A former Shi'i member of the LCP remarked that the party viewed these episodes with Amal as an existential battle:

⁴⁹⁶ 'Hakadha Ightala 'hulafa' al-Asad' qadat 'al-muqawama al-wataniyya'', *NOW Lebanon* [Arabic] <<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/ar/nowspecialar/المقاومة-قيادة-الأسد-حلفاء-اغتيال-هكذا>> Last accessed 1 January 2015.

⁴⁹⁷ Vijay Prashad, 'The Arab Gramsci' *Frontline*, 21st March 2014, <<http://www.frontline.in/world-affairs/the-arab-gramsci/article5739956.ece>> Last accessed 1 January 2015.

⁴⁹⁸ Norton, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 451.

⁴⁹⁹ Norton, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 451.

⁵⁰⁰ Norton, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 451.

A week or ten days prior there was a lot of talking that Amal and the Syrians planned to eradicate the Communist Party and expel it forever from Beirut...I was in charge of mobilising people to fight. If Amal was going to attack the Arab University and take control of the Communist Party headquarters, we would be exiled from the area. There was something personal about it.⁵⁰¹

While Hizbullah advocated an Islamist ideology and opposed secularism in principle, this is not a sufficient explanation for why the LCP in particular, came to be targeted by the movement at the end of the war. The LCP was not the only advocate of a secular political agenda in Lebanon, nor was it ever the most powerful secular political party in Lebanon. Thus the LCP did not constitute a significant threat to Hizbullah's agenda. In this sense, secular-Islamist dichotomies arguably played a limited role in these events. The written threats received by the LCP in South Lebanon were therefore more likely to have come from other radical armed Shi'i elements at this time. Hizbullah's motivation, like Amal's, is more convincingly explained by the efforts of these organisations to consolidate their presence among the Shi'a community. Since the LCPs relationship with the Shi'a was well known, this explains why the LCP was indeed viewed as a rival by the new Shi'i players. Thus, both Hizbullah and Amal found common cause, for a short time, in eliminating a shared competitor among the Shi'a. Indeed, some of the most devastating attacks on the LCP occurred when Hizbullah and Amal coordinated their attacks.

In February of 1988 Hizbullah and Amal forces jointly attacked the LCP's headquarters in West Beirut. This offensive targeted the offices of the LCP's *al-Nida* publication too. One report indicated that thirty-two LCP members were killed in these attacks while a further seventeen were kidnapped. Other sources put the toll at one hundred and eighty dead and three hundred and eighty wounded. The LCP was unable to prevent this

⁵⁰¹ Ali Ayoub and Maher Abi Samra, quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*

continued assault; the attacks only ceased after the LCP requested assistance from its allies in the LNM.⁵⁰²

The LCP suffered greatly from the unity of newly emergent Shi'i forces in the civil war. The campaign was organised, well planned and targeted some of the LCP's most prominent and important intellectual voices; among them were the party's only senior Shi'i officials. By the end of the war, the LCP had suffered significant political, military and infrastructural losses. This was partially a result of the LCP's own strategic errors in the war, but also the result of the rise of powerful competitors from the Shi'i community in the form of Amal and Hizbullah. The LCP's relationship with the Shi'a was not able to withstand the sectarianisation effect of the civil war. These identities eventually coalesced around territory, igniting fierce internal battles for the consolidation of sectarian fiefdoms. The clashes between the LCP and Amal in West Beirut resulted in the departure of several communist Shi'i members from the party.⁵⁰³ The feeling within the LCP was that these battles definitively indicated the LCP's loss of purpose in the war:

From 1982 onwards, after the Israeli invasion, there were the battles in Dahiyeh [Southern suburbs of Beirut], then in the mountains, then the battles in the north, then battles between Amal movement and us, then with Hizbullah. *Battles over territorial demarcation*. Each battle spilled into the next one. And we reached a point, where *sectarian affiliations against one another were consolidated*. When I think back now, I feel we were being manipulated in many ways by sects...In my opinion, *the Communist Party was itself being used in these battles by one sect against the other*. [Emphasis added].⁵⁰⁴

The event which ultimately sealed the LCP's political fate in Lebanon at the end of the civil war was the Taif Agreement. The Accord effectively re-legitimised the system of confessional politics in Lebanon, albeit on a more equitable basis between the two main religious communities, Christian and Muslim. The agreement enhanced the position of the Prime Minister (a

⁵⁰² Norton, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 452.

⁵⁰³ Norton, *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, 452..

⁵⁰⁴ Maher Abi Samra, quoted in *Shiyu iyyin Kunna*, documentary film.

Sunni Muslim post), as well as that of the Speaker (a Shi'i post), thereby reducing some of the powers of the Presidency, and introducing a greater consultative role for the Council of Ministers and National Assembly⁵⁰⁵ The Speaker's tenure in office was extended from one to four years. This strengthened the role of the Shi'a in Lebanese politics, no longer subjecting this position to the restrictions imposed by just a one-year term.⁵⁰⁶ However, for the LCP, the maintenance, indeed strengthening, of confessional representation in the new constitution was a blow to the party's long fought opposition to the sectarian system. Although the Accord stated that the abolition of political sectarianism was a national goal, it did not set a deadline or schedule for this process.⁵⁰⁷

Although the LCP was on the right side of the conflict at the end of the civil war - meaning that it was an ally of Syria and supporter of the 1985 Tripartite Agreement, the LCP was not rewarded any Cabinet posts or representation in government.⁵⁰⁸ The LCP also failed to make any gains in the first post-war elections in 1992, or thereafter. Politics in post-war Lebanon no longer revolved around a stark division between a right-wing government elite and the ideological parties of the left. Politics was now the main purview of the President, the Cabinet, the loyal political parties and the opposition directed against what would become Syria's long-term presence in Lebanon.⁵⁰⁹

Amal took advantage of the political gains accrued to the Shi'a by the Taif Accord, dominating both the Speakership and the Council of the South, the

⁵⁰⁵ Samir Makdisi and Richard Sadaka, 'The Lebanese Civil War', - <https://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/ife/Documents/downloads/series3_2003.pdf> (25 February 2016)

⁵⁰⁶ Hassan Krayem, 'The Lebanese Civil War and the Taif Agreement', The American University of Beirut, - <<http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html>> (1 January 2015)

⁵⁰⁷ Krayem, 'The Lebanese Civil War', - <<http://ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html>> (1 January 2015)

⁵⁰⁸ This was an earlier attempt at ending the war, orchestrated by Syria and involving the LF, Amal and the PSP. The agreement failed in 1986 when the Lebanese President, Amin Jummayil organised a coup against the LF leader Elie Hubayka, who was ousted from his position, thereby rendering the agreement void. See Krayem 'The Lebanese Civil War'.

⁵⁰⁹ Farid el-Khazen, Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon: Parties in Search of Partisans, *Middle East Journal* 57:4, 2003, 616-620.

two main Shi'i political institutions. As the Lebanese state and its institutions reformed after the war, the Shi'i *zu'ama'* also re-emerged in the political sphere.⁵¹⁰ Hizbullah was the only anti-system party that remained among the Shi'a in the immediate aftermath of the war, though it too transformed into a fully participatory political party in the 1992 legislative elections.

In the post-war sectarian political environment, the LCP's anti-system agenda no longer had any purchase.⁵¹¹ The new political environment also constrained the labour movement, one of the LCP's traditional sources of strength and mobility in Lebanon.⁵¹² Disagreement among the party leadership, and intolerance toward any form of internal party dissent further mired the LCP's activities in the aftermath of the civil war. The party's centralised organisational structure meant that the leadership could always dominate decision-making, despite disagreement within the membership. This led to further dissent, and the departure of many members, evidenced by the decreasing number of attendees at the party conferences.⁵¹³ A Shi'i communist, 'Commander Abed' described his departure from the party in this environment:

The resistance was at a very low point...The party's infrastructure, because of the war, had not been renewed institutionally, nor was the methodology, I witnessed corruption become rampant with individuals...I left. I moved away and lived by the sea, never again mixed with the communists or non-communists...In 1995, I left behind anything that had to do with the party...I wanted to live like an everyday citizen.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ For more on this see Harel Chorev, 'Power, Tradition and Challenge: The Resilience of the Elite Shiite Families of Lebanon', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 40:3, 2013, pp. 305–323.

⁵¹¹ Farid el-Khazen, 'Political Parties in Postwar Lebanon', 619.

⁵¹² Nadim Abdul-Samad, quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu iyyin Kunna*, documentary film.

⁵¹³ Farid al-Khazen 'Al-Ahzaab al-Siyasiyya fil-Lubnan: Hudud al-Democratiyya fi al-tajruba al-Hizbiyya', 1st Edition, 2002, Beirut: Al-Makriz al-Lubnani lil-Dirasaat 109.

⁵¹⁴ Quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu iyyin Kunna*.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that the Lebanese Civil War was the main arena in which the relationship between the LCP and the communist Shi'a transformed, and sectarian identities emerged in earnest among the Shi'a. Rather than linking the latter development primarily to events that were external to Lebanon - such as the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr and the Iranian Revolution - the analysis argued that the rise of the new Shi'i sectarian players should also be associated with the domestic political environment in Lebanon during the civil war. The chapter proceeded to analyse the effects of the Lebanese Civil War on political life in Lebanon, focussing on the impact of the breakdown of the state, the resultant security environment and the sectarianisation of identities. The analysis then provided a chronology of the main events of the civil war, before revisiting its key stages with a view to establishing the factors that led to the decline of the LCP, and its relationship with the communist Shi'a. In the end, the LCP suffered a crisis of legitimacy in the war as a result of its participation in the sectarian violence and its poorly calculated political and military decision making. Instead of delivering on its political and security pledges to the Shi'a, the LCP came to be perceived as exploitative of both its Shi'i members and the Shi'i residents who resided in its strongholds during the war. Amal capitalised on the growing disaffection among the Shi'a with the LCP and its allies, and promoted itself as a more effective provider of communal security. Amal forcibly removed the LCP from its territorial strongholds in South Lebanon. In addition, Hizbullah emerged with a superior military capability to the LCP, and mounted an effective resistance effort against Israel in 1982. Towards the end of the war, Amal and Hizbullah launched a coordinated campaign of assassination against the LCP, targeting its top personnel and offices across Lebanon in what was arguably a battle for the Shi'a between the three most powerful political actors among the community.

The fall of the LCP in the civil war was compounded by the political ramifications of the Taif Accord in its aftermath. The sectarian political

system received renewed legitimacy from the domestic, regional and international support that underlay the agreement. After suffering multiple political and military strategic defeats in the war, the LCP was in decline and the new Shi'i political players were poised to reap the benefits of the loss of their main rival for the mobilisation of the Shi'i community. The arguments in this chapter demonstrate that the rise of sectarian identities among the Shi'a occurred in the Lebanese Civil War - and not before. Furthermore, it has been shown that the rise of the new secular political actors among the Shi'a was directly predicated on the decline of the LCP's influence over the Shi'a in the domestic political environment of the Lebanese Civil War.

Chapter 5 ~ Dilemmas of Identity among the Communist Shi'a

The decline of the LCP in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War initiated identity dilemmas among the former communist Shi'a as they sought a new vehicle for the mobilisation of their resistance identity. The different conceptualisations of the resistance identity offered by the LCP and Hizbullah was the main source of these dilemmas. While the LCP's resistance was decidedly secular, encompassing a political reformist, anti-sectarian agenda for Lebanon, Hizbullah's resistance was sectarian and only singularly orientated toward the armed struggle against Israel. In this sense, Hizbullah's resistance identity did not contain an agenda for political reform in Lebanon that was comparable to the LCP's pre-1975 vision. A comparative assessment of the ideologies, political programmes and social composition of Amal and Hizbullah reveals that across these criteria, Hizbullah emerged as the preferred alternative among the former communist Shi'a. This is based on Hizbullah's adoption, reformulation and monopolisation of the Shi'i community's resistance identity.

This chapter argues that in the aftermath of the collapse of communism and the LCP in Lebanon, the political trajectory of the former communist Shi'a shifted toward Hizbullah and its reformulated conceptualisation of the resistance identity.

This chapter begins by exploring the nature of the identity dilemmas experienced by the former communist Shi'i. The alternative options represented by the Shi'i zu'ama' and the new sectarian actors, Amal and Hizbullah, are assessed from the perspective of the former communists. The analysis then moves on to explain why Hizbullah, contra Amal, became the preference for the former communists. The chapter concludes with an overview of the legacy of communism among the Shi'a in terms of the continued relevance of the resistance identity to the political

mobilisation of the Shi'i, as well as the enduring relationship between the LCP and the Shi'i in present day Lebanon.

Identity Dilemmas

The decline of the LCP and the emergence of Shi'i sectarian alternatives presented the communist Shi'a with difficult dilemmas over their political identities and future avenues for political mobilisation. Interviews from the documentary film, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna* offer interesting insights into these issues, and in particular the reluctance of the former communists to embrace the reality of political sectarianism in Lebanon. In this sense, despite there being powerful alternatives for the Shi'i communists after the civil war, it was precisely because these alternatives were distinctly 'Shi'i' options, that they were viewed with apprehension - 'the problem is you go back to your Shi'i sect, you go back to Hizbullah.'⁵¹⁵ This further underscores how important the LCP's anti-system, anti-confessional, political agenda had been to the party's successful recruitment of Shi'i members in Lebanon's post-independence period. Ibrahim al-Amin's comments suggest that membership of the LCP allowed the Shi'i to leave their sectarian identity at the door:

Basically when we entered party headquarters, it was if there was a safety deposit box into which we unburdened from our sect...and placed them in safe keeping. Then we melted inside the party.⁵¹⁶

Although sectarian identity did not determine or indeed prevent membership of the LCP, it is important to recall that the party still deployed recruitment strategies vis a vis the Shi'a that invoked precisely their Shi'i identity. Thus, even for the communist Shi'a, their sectarian identity remained an active element on their identity repertoires. The difference therefore, between a Shi'i member of the LCP and a Shi'i member of Hizbullah, is the position of the individual's sectarian identity

⁵¹⁵ Quoted in, Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

⁵¹⁶ Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

on that repertoire - more prominent for the Hizbullah member than for the communist. The relative and changeable positioning of different identities is not a unique feature of identity, however. The analysis in chapter one showed how all individuals possess a variety of identities, and that the dominance of one identity over another is determined by environmental factors. Thus, in the case of the communist Shi'a who left the LCP, the world outside communism, which in post-war Lebanon was decidedly sectarian, triggered a re-ordering of political identities. Thus al-Amin metaphorically describes the process of reluctantly becoming Shi'i (or sectarian) again:

When the party collapsed and we left, each one of us collected their deposits and went back home. Each person went back a communist but also a Shi'ite, or Shi'ite communist or Christian communist or Druze communist, back to being influenced by the same calculations.⁵¹⁷

To be clear, this transition from communism to sectarianism was not a unilinear process. As the case of Commander Abed demonstrated, some communist Shi'a retired from an active political life altogether. For others, financial or familial priorities also contributed to a personal shift away from politics, and a grudging acceptance of the new sectarian reality. Ali Abed, describes how his acquisition of employment in the post-war political environment was determined by sectarian quotas and communal attachments:

I heard there were openings for positions in the public sector...After I applied, it took almost a year and a half before I was appointed. The delay was due to changes in government. It is a place like any other, in government...It has to obey the logic of sectarian quota... Nine of us were appointed, practically and effectively, the nine of us were affiliated to someone.⁵¹⁸

For the communist Shi'a who sought to remain politically active, the main alternatives to the LCP were either Amal or Hizbullah. The *zu'ama'* also experienced a reawakening in the aftermath of the civil war. The analysis

⁵¹⁷ Quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

⁵¹⁸ Quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

now moves on to assess these and the other available options, and their relative appeal among the former communist Shi'a.

The Shi'i Alternatives

The consolidation of political sectarianism in Lebanon after Taif facilitated a return to political life for the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, who had been rendered obsolete during the Lebanese Civil War. The analysis in this section begins by analysing the political status of the *zu'ama'* during and after the war. While the *zu'ama'* reemerged after Taif, they did not represent a viable option for the former communist Shi'a. They were still objected to for the same reasons they did not meet the criteria for mobilising a resistance identity in the post-1943 political environment. The new Shi'i options, Amal and Hizbullah were the main recipients of the former communists. The analysis compares and contrasts Amal and Hizbullah as political alternatives to the LCP in Lebanon's post-war environment. The comparison is made across four main areas, including: political identity and ideology, territorial basis, social composition and political programme. The analysis demonstrates that both Amal and Hizbullah replicated and reformulated aspects of the LCP's pre-war political agenda, which had previously been essential to the party's successful recruitment of the communist Shi'a.

The Fall and Rise of the Shi'i *Zu'ama'*

In chapter two the analysis demonstrated that the Shi'i *zu'ama'* were their most effective in the formal political sphere, where they developed a strong ability to contest and win elections. However, the breakdown of the state in the context of the Lebanese Civil War disrupted the traditional sources of *zu'ama'* political power as Lebanon's political institutions ceased to function. As the intensity of militia violence increased throughout the conflict, an additional challenge to the Shi'i political families arose in the arena of military capability. These two factors combined to severely erode

the capabilities of the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, rendering them the weaker of the myriad Shi'i political actors in the war.

The traditional intermediary function of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* could not be deployed in the absence of the government's political institutions. This role was adopted by the political parties, and subsequently the militias. Thus the *zu'ama'* suffered a significant loss of influence and legitimacy among their clients. The status of the Shi'i political families was further influenced by the Syrian presence in Lebanon. As Syria's power-brokers became crucial political players in Lebanon, their relationship with the *zu'ama'* became an additional determinant of the latter's political status. Kemal al-As'ad's decision to support the American sponsored peace attempt between Lebanon and Israel in 1983, which failed, lost him the support of both Syria and his Shi'i constituency. This was a miscalculation that had a lasting impact on al-As'ad's political status thereafter - in 1983 he lost his position as Speaker of Parliament to Amal's candidate, Husayn al-Hussayni.⁵¹⁹

The *zu'ama'* established their own armed strongmen during the war, and the larger entities, including the al-As'ad and Khalil families both had their own militias. However, their military capacity was limited in comparison to their emergent Shi'i rivals, Amal and Hizbullah who were better equipped and externally resourced by Syria and Iran respectively. The Palestinian fighters in South Lebanon also had superior military capability to the Shi'i *zu'ama'*. In fact, the Palestinian resistance was a direct threat to the status of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* in their traditional areas of influence during the war. While Kazem al-Khalil's outspoken anti-Palestinian views won him political favour at the national political level, locally, his views led to clashes with the PLO. Al-Khalil was forced to flee his native Tyre in 1970, while the PLO took over the municipality, previously an important tool of this family's political influence. Other notable political families experienced

⁵¹⁹ Shanahan, *The Shia of Lebanon*, 80.

similar circumstances. In Nabatiyya the al-Zayn family was uprooted by both the PLO and their leftist allies, as were the Beydouns in Bint Jbeil. The situation for the al-As'ad family in Taybeh was worse; the family's villa and traditional symbol of their dominance was taken over by the PLO and became their regional headquarters. While Adil 'Usayran continued to live in his domain of Sidon, the neighbouring building was occupied by the commander of Palestinian forces in the city, demonstrating who really was in control of the area.⁵²⁰

As formal politics in Lebanon disintegrated, the Shi'i *zu'ama'* lost their most powerful tool of influence in their communities. As the security of their regions also deteriorated, they lost an additional source of power - their ability to protect their local communities. Control over South Lebanon fell under the purview of the various Palestinian and leftist militias. The political families lacked both the numbers and sophisticated weaponry to prevent this development. Indeed the weakness of the Shi'i political families' military capability contrasted with that of Lebanon's other *zu'ama'*. While the Jumblatt's dominated the Druze community's fighting capability, the Maronite Jumayill and Sham'un families also led powerful militias, the Phalanges and Numur. The latter also joined forces with other militias to form the Lebanese Front. The Shi'i *zu'ama'* were also unable to deploy their traditional alliances with other Shi'i political families since many were forced to flee their areas of territorial control. The continued mass migration of the Shi'a to the cities (more than 141,000 between 1975-1982) further eroded the social networks that had supplied the *zu'ama'* with influence.⁵²¹

The collapse of the Lebanese state removed both authority and resources from the Shi'i political families. These functions were seized by the militias and deployed with the aid of their superior fighting capability. However,

⁵²⁰ Chorev, 'Resilience of Elite Shiite Families', 312-313.

⁵²¹ Chorev, 'Resilience of Elite Shiite Families', 313-314.

the political environment instituted at the end of the civil war facilitated the eventual return of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* to political life.

Although the Taif Accord stabilised the political balance of power between the Muslim and Christian communities of Lebanon, it consolidated Lebanon's consociational political system and its underlying sectarian power sharing mechanisms. This, coupled with the removal of the Palestinian and leftist militias (including the LCP's) from Shi'i areas, enabled the Shi'i political families to return from exile. However, unlike Lebanon's other *zu'ama'*, the Shi'i political families had two new competitors in the form of Amal and Hizbullah. This has placed a check on the unbridled power of the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, although they have benefited from Israeli efforts to shore up their power as a counterweight to Amal and Hizbullah.³²² The strength of the *zu'ama'* remains in the Bekaa, traditionally a more tribal and conservative Shi'i community than the Shi'a of Jabal 'Amil. Both Amal and Hizbullah have been forced to reluctantly engage with the Shi'i *zu'ama'* in the Bekaa, particularly for the purposes of winning elections. Thus, Hizbullah has formed joint-lists with prominent *zu'ama'* and Amal candidates in the Bekaa Valley.

The return of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* to the formal political sphere did not increase their chances of attracting the political loyalties of the former communist Shi'a. Their perception of the political families as self-serving and corrupt was only heightened by their collaboration with Israel during and after the Lebanese Civil War. To the communist Shi'a the *zu'ama'* remained symbolic of the problems associated with political sectarianism in Lebanon. The LCP's appeal, it should be recalled, lay not in its ability to win at the ballot box but in its rejection of the sectarian political system that facilitated the power of the *zu'ama'* among others. The Shi'i *zu'ama'* therefore remain furthest from the conceptualisation of the resistance identity that was formulated by the communist Shi'a. Thus, in order to

³²² Chorev, 'Resilience of Elite Shiite Families', 314-5.

follow the political trajectory of the communist Shi'a after Taif, the analysis must turn to Amal and Hizbullah.

Amal and Hizbullah: Political Identity and Ideology

In terms of political identity, neither Amal nor Hizbullah represent anti-system political parties. In this regard, they constitute a significant departure from the LCP's conceptualisation of a resistance identity. Nevertheless, a contradiction persists in both cases with regard to their position on the confessional political system. While both charters of the parties advocate the abolishment of political sectarianism in Lebanon, as political actors who participate in elections and are represented in various state institutions, Amal and Hizbullah seek integration within the national Lebanese framework as Shi'a'. Amal and Hizbullah therefore seek to gain access to the privileges accorded the Shi'a by the Lebanese state.

Although Hizbullah emerged as a virulently anti-system party in the civil war, its decision to participate in the Lebanese elections of 1992 saw the party gradually reduce its pursuit of an Islamic-styled political system in Lebanon.⁵²³ This marked the beginning of Hizbullah's integration into Lebanon's national political framework. Thereafter the party successfully ran in elections, winning parliamentary seats and acquiring Cabinet-level appointments.

Amal has a longer history of pursuing an integrationist agenda than Hizbullah. Indeed, Amal's stance began with Musa al-Sadr in the Charter of the Movement of the Deprived, where Sadr expressed the demands of the Shi'i community for a share in Beirut's prosperity. Amal's preparedness to accept the constitutional document prepared by the Maronite President, Suleiman Franjiyyeh in 1976, also shows Amal's willingness to accept proposals that would not have significantly altered Lebanon's confessional dynamics at the political level. The leader of Amal since 1980, Nabih Berri, held various government posts, including Minister

⁵²³ On Hizbullah's transformation, see Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God: From Revolution to Institutionalisation*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

of Justice and a post created exclusively for him, Minister of South Lebanon, between 1984 and 1988.⁵²⁴ In 1992 he became the Speaker of Parliament, a post he still holds today. The reforms heralded by the Taif Accord in 1989 further consolidated Amal's position in the political system, considered by the party's elite who benefitted from these changes, as victory for 'consociational democracy.'⁵²⁵ Since Amal benefits greatly from the confessional political system, it is unlikely that the party would ever pursue its charter's pledge to abolish political sectarianism, since this would erode a significant component of Amal's political power.

Ideologically, Amal is a Shi'i party with a secular nationalist political ideology. Although Amal's charter calls for a separation between religion and sectarianism, it also contains references to Imam Ali, the highly revered Shi'i Imam as well as Musa al-Sadr's religious political ideas. Amal does therefore have a religious identity, which it has conserved for legitimacy purposes in order to be able to compete with the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, as well as Hizbullah.⁵²⁶

By contrast to Amal's relegated religious identity, Hizbullah is a Shi'i party with an Islamic nationalist political ideology. It emerged ostensibly as an Islamic resistance movement against American hegemony and Israeli occupation. Hizbullah's first manifesto, which was published on February 16, 1985 expounded a doctrinal ideology that sought to emulate Ayatollah Khomeini's *Wilayat al-Faqih*, or Guardianship of the Jurisprudent.⁵²⁷ This was the primary justification for the party's pursuit of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Hizbullah's second manifesto illustrated a shift in this political objective - since Hizbullah by this time had become an active political player in Lebanon, and no longer identified the pursuit of an Islamic state in Lebanon as a key objective. However, the party maintained that this did not mean it had abandoned *wilayat al-faqih*, only that this did not prevent

⁵²⁴ Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 21-22.

⁵²⁵ Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 21-22.

⁵²⁶ Maurus Deeb, 'Shia movements in Lebanon', 691.

⁵²⁷ Hizbullah's Open Letter, February 16 1989 <<http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/open-letter-hizballah-program/p30967>> Accessed 28th August 2015

Islamists from integrating with Lebanon's political system.⁵²⁸ This is indicative of Hizbullah's ability to adapt its ideological and political objectives while claiming to still adhere to its doctrinal foundations. The political identities and ideologies of Amal and Hizbullah are therefore also markedly different from the LCP's communism and civic-national, non-confessional political ambitions for Lebanon.

Amal and Hizbullah: Strongholds & Social Composition

Moving on to territorial strongholds, it is worth recalling the battles over territorial demarcation that occurred between the LCP, Amal and Hizbullah during the Lebanese Civil War. The LCP lost much of its territorial dominance over the Shi'a in Jabal 'Amil, the Bekaa and suburbs of Beirut, first to Amal, and later to Hizbullah. Hizbullah's advances in Lebanon between 1985 and 1989 occurred at the expense of Amal's territorial gains over the LCP. Thus, Hizbullah first established bases in Baalbek, before expanding to the southern suburbs of Beirut (*al-Dahiya*), which remains a stronghold today.⁵²⁹ Hizbullah and Amal have both retained significant followings in different areas of the Bekaa and Jabal 'Amil. Amal tends to draw more of a following than Hizbullah in Tyre, along the coast.

Conventionally, Amal's following is associated with the Shi'i middle-class bourgeoisie in Beirut and wealthy expatriate Shi'i communities, particularly those in West Africa.⁵³⁰ This is contrasted with Hizbullah's poor, working class and clerical following.⁵³¹ The characterisation of Amal is mostly accurate. It was founded by university-educated Shi'a who had experienced some upward mobility in Beirut in the 1950s. The vast majority

⁵²⁸ Hizbullah's Second Manifesto <<http://www.lebanonrenaissance.org/assets/Uploads/15-The-New-Hezbollah-Manifesto-Nov09.pdf>> Accessed 28th August 2015

⁵²⁹ Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 45.

⁵³⁰ Deeb, 'Shia movements in Lebanon', 688-689; Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 44; Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*.

⁵³¹ See for example Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004; A R Norton, *Hezbollah*; Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

of its early members were lawyers, who formed most of Amal's politburo, including its Secretary-General since 1982, Nabih Berri. Amal also drew a small number of clerical figures. Despite the movement's association with Musa al-Sadr, clerics were always the minority in Amal. Many of its adherents were also described as 'secular clerics', i.e those influenced by Musa al-Sadr's political project of achieving greater Shi'i representation in accordance with the sectarian logic of the Lebanese political system.⁵³²

The conventional association of Hizbullah with the clerics and the poor, however, is more problematic. Although the movement's leadership was and remains almost exclusively dominated by high-ranking clerical figures, the social composition of Hizbullah is far broader than this image implies. Hizbullah emerged with a large following among the Shi'i poor, which remained the case for the first decade of the party's existence. However, thereafter, the party's social basis began to expand, attracting a significant component of middle-classes, professionals and intellectuals. Lebanese migrants from West Africa, traditionally associated with Amal, also became a significant component of Hizbullah's support, in terms of members and finance.

The religiosity of Hizbullah's membership tends to be assumed rather than demonstrated. Harik's study of Hizbullah's base showed its members to be less religious than is assumed, with religiosity only modestly linked to Shi'i political preferences more generally. In addition Hizbullah's appeal was found to be broad-based and mixed-class, incorporating many professionals, lawyers, engineers and teachers. Hizbullah's membership was not overwhelmingly associated with followers of a particularly low socio-economic status.⁵³³ In this sense, Hizbullah's Shi'i following contained a similar mix of classes and social groups to the LCP's.

⁵³² Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 42

⁵³³ Judith Palmer Harik, 'Between Islam and the System: Sources and Implications of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hizbullah', *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50:1, 1996, 55.

Amal and Hizbullah: Political Programmes

One of the explanations for Hizbullah's broader social base can be found in its political and socioeconomic programme. In the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War, Hizbullah sought to consolidate its long-term position within the Shi'i community. The destruction wrought by the war produced a levelling effect among the Shi'i population. To this end Hizbullah implemented an extensive range of social, educational, medical and relief projects. The party used tanker trucks to regularly deliver drinking water to almost all of the southern suburbs half a million residents. This was a vital service due to the city's damaged water-distribution system.⁵³⁴ Hizbullah's agricultural engineers provided services to Shi'i farmers in the Bekaa, as well as landowners and tenant farmers. Thus, Hizbullah did not discriminate in terms of class in its service provision among the Shi'a.⁵³⁵ In this sense, too, Hizbullah was delivering much needed services and development to the Shi'a, particularly in the agricultural sector. These were services and reforms long promised to the Shi'a by the LCP, but never delivered upon.

In addition to Hizbullah's service provision, the party's consistent support for the Palestinians inside Lebanon, and successful military mobilisations against Israel were a further source of the party's broad-based Shi'i following. Hizbullah came to the defence of Beirut's Palestinians when they came under attack by Amal in the War of the Camps. Hizbullah's contribution of military aid and medical relief also drew the party support from among the peasantry and Shi'i migrants in Beirut.

As Hizbullah became engaged in economic projects, the party increasingly drew additional support from the Shi'i emigrants to West Africa. This support increasingly came in the form of significant monetary donations from wealthy Shi'i businessmen. In this sense, the conventional argument made about Hizbullah being beholden to Iran for military and financial aid

⁵³⁴ Judith Harik, 'The Public and Social Services of the Lebanese Militias', Papers on Lebanon Series No. 14, Oxford: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1994, 37-8

⁵³⁵ Harik, 'Between Islam and the System', 55.

is inaccurate. Financially, Hizbullah is believed to accrue the majority of its income from the wealthy Shi'i diaspora of West Africa, and elsewhere in the world, as well as the party's own fundraising initiatives in Lebanon and abroad.⁵³⁶

Hizbullah's more cohesive organisation, service provision and resistance agenda has rendered the party far more popular among the communist Shi'a than Amal. Whereas Hizbullah's network has reached a much wider swathe of the Shi'i community, Amal has struggled to convince the communist Shi'a that they will benefit from political and economic opportunities provided by the government. Amal's pursuit of political appointments accrued the party control over the government's largest Shi'i institution, the Council of the South. This receives millions of dollars in government expenditure, which is politically controlled by Amal, whose leaders are frequently the first to benefit. Although Amal continues to be a powerful political player in the Shi'i community, there is a popular perception among many that views Amal as incompetent, corrupt and arrogant in its political dealings.⁵³⁷ Furthermore, while Amal's charter decries Zionism and Israeli repression, the memory of Amal's siege of the Palestinian camps in Beirut, as well as its delayed mobilisation against the invading Israeli forces in the 1980s, further delegitimised the party in the view of many former communists.

The analysis in this section has compared and contrasted the political alternatives available to the communist Shi'a in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War. This included the Shi'i *zu'ama'*, Amal and Hizbullah. The suitability of the *zu'ama'* was immediately dismissed, though the

⁵³⁶ Harik, 'Between Islam and the System', 63; Douglas Farah, 'Hezbollah's External Support Network in West Africa and Latin America', *International Assessment and Strategy Centre*, 4th August 2006; Ana Maria Luca, 'Hezbollah's Wallet', 15th December 2011<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/hezbollahs_wallet_>; Carl Wege, 'Hizballah in Africa', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 6:3, 2012.

⁵³⁷ Elizabeth Picard, 'The Lebanese Shi'a', 44; Wikileaks documents also highlight a collection of quotes and sources referring to Amal's corruption in Lebanon. See for example, 'What's Wrong with Amal?' Wikileaks Cable, 30 November 2004,-<https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/04BEIRUT4941_a.html> (1 January 2015)

reemergence of their political power in Lebanon was noted. Amal and Hizbullah were compared and contrasted in terms of their relative appeal to the communist Shi'a. A number of the points developed here need to be taken forward to help explain why Hizbullah became the preferred choice of the communist Shi'a. These are firstly, Hizbullah's more nuanced and strategic integration with the Lebanese political system, contra Amal's entreating approach toward the Lebanese state. Secondly, Hizbullah's expansive programme of social service provision. Thirdly, Hizbullah's consistent support for the Palestinians, and more sophisticated resistance strategy. Fourthly - and most importantly for the remaining analysis - Hizbullah's broad-based social basis of support among the Shi'a, which also encompasses members with lower levels of religiosity, or non-practicing Muslims. These factors are important preliminary indicators for why the shift from the LCP's communism to Hizbullah's Islamism was possible.

Toward Hizbullah

The analysis in this section offers some preliminary insights into why Hizbullah became the preferred alternative to the LCP among many of the communist Shi'a. Interviews and conversations in the field, as well as additional evidence from the documentary film, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, produced a number of references to either the presence of communists in Hizbullah, or sympathies toward Hizbullah's political agenda. The discussion in this section offers some preliminary explanations for why this happened. Three lines of inquiry are proffered. The first explanation relates to a historical precedence. The analysis posits that the interest of the Shi'i clerics in communism in the 1960s, inverted in the 1980s, and the Shi'i communists became intrigued by Islamic thought once more. The second explanation pertains to the evolution of Hizbullah's political agenda in Lebanon, which coopted many of the features of the LCP's pre-1975 political agenda that had appealed to the Shi'a. The third and related explanation pertains to Hizbullah's resistance identity, and how this

particular issue consolidated communist sympathy for the party. These three issues are examined concurrently below.

The decline of communism in Lebanon occurred in line with a regional ideological shift away from secular ideas. This occurred in the aftermath of the great Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel, and the subsequent crisis of legitimacy suffered by Arab nationalist thought. Thereafter, political ideology in the Middle East became more involved with Islamist critiques. The Iranian Revolution constitutes the symbolic ascendance of political Islam in the Middle East, although Arab intellectuals had also begun to engage with Islamic nationalist ideas before 1979.⁵³⁸ The collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s was the second symbolic indicator of communism's decline; the loss of an important source of ideological, moreover, financial support also prefigured in the multiple problems the LCP was experiencing by this time. However, the emergent political Islamists engaged with Islamic tradition in almost an identical fashion to that of their communist predecessors.

Multiple Shi'i clerics, from Iraq's Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, to Lebanon's Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah and Ayatollah Muhammad Fadlallah, have engaged in the same dialectical discourse between Islamic and secular ideas that they previously criticised the communists for. Leftist political slogans appear in their discourse too, including references to the 'toiling masses', 'shameless class-based order'⁵³⁹, as well as the *mahrumin* (deprived), 'downtrodden', *mustakbirun* (oppressors) and *mustad'afun* (oppressed).⁵⁴⁰ Fadlallah's usage of *harakiyya al-waqi* (perpetual transformation of reality) through jihad against an unjust power is a discussion inspired by Marxist thought on the role of the proletariat in the 'negation of social reality'. In Fadlallah's reading, reality

⁵³⁸ Michelle Browsers, *Political Ideology in the Arab World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 23-24.

⁵³⁹ Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon*, 93.

⁵⁴⁰ Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon*, 93.

can be transformed spiritually rather than materially.⁵⁴¹ In this sense the juxtaposition of communism with Islamism is not as stark as it is conventionally imagined. The Islamists engaged in a dualistic re-appropriation of key elements of Marxist *and* Islamic thought and symbolism, and in the regional ideological environment described above, many leftists followed suit. The fluidity of relations between the Shi‘i clerics and Marxism are illustrated by the remarks of one of the sons of the prominent ‘Red Cleric’, Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin: ‘Muslim clerics drove me to the path of Marxism and those who brought me back to religion and Islam were the communists themselves.’⁵⁴²

The affinity between the Shi‘a and communism, as well as their shared disposition toward Islamic political thought, partly explains why the transition from communism to Islamism among the Lebanese Shi‘a was a definite possibility. Ibrahim al-Amin, once a Shi‘i communist and now the editor of the Lebanese daily *al-Akhbar* considered to be a mouthpiece for Hizbullah communications, expresses how his attraction to Hizbullah occurred on the basis of the latter’s appeal to his Shi‘i religious identity:

It was the first time someone called me ‘Sayyid’. It was no longer comrade or Ibrahim or the son of so and so or any of that, ‘Sayyid’. What about this ‘Sayyid’ thing? I know the implications of ‘Sayyid’ but how is it significant to me? I gave myself some space, a grace period, or margin, away from the rest of the communists being a ‘Sayyid’. Immediately I remembered a discussion with Sayyid Mohammad Fadlallah about martyrs or the difference between the greatest hero for communists and Islamists. Theirs went to heaven, but the communist martyrs went nowhere.⁵⁴³

Al-Amin’s transition toward Hizbullah’s Islamism exemplifies the fluidity of the interaction between religion and secularism among the Shi‘a. In this sense, ‘being Shi‘i’ did not preclude involvement with communist *or* Islamic political movements. On the contrary, ‘being Shi‘i’ was sometimes

⁵⁴¹ Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon*, 93, Prologue xvii.

⁵⁴² Abisaab, *The Shi‘ites of Lebanon*, Prologue XV.

⁵⁴³ Quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu’iyyun Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

the marker that determined one's involvement in either movement. The analysis in this study has therefore demarcated the environmental conditions in Lebanon under which each of these identities surged and reverted among the Shi'a.

The second factor that explains the transition from communism to communalism is the appeal of Hizbullah's political agenda to the communists. As the analysis in the previous section demonstrated, Hizbullah's appeal within the Shi'i community superseded Amal's across several indicators. These included the party's broad social base among the Shi'a, which transcended both class and territory. Additionally, the evolution of Hizbullah's sophisticated social service provision throughout the 1990s began to fulfil a long-held Shi'i demand and need for socioeconomic welfare and development initiatives. Further still, Hizbullah's consistent support for the Palestinian resistance, and the refugees residing in Lebanon, as well as the party's military superiority (relative to the other elements of the Lebanese resistance) in the wars with Israel, was and remains a significant source of Hizbullah's legitimacy among the Shi'i community. Finally, although Hizbullah is no longer technically an anti-system party in Lebanon, its rapprochement with the Lebanese state has been more strategically pursued than Amal's. Importantly, these four measures dovetail directly with the initial basis upon which the LCP developed its appeal among the Shi'a between 1943 and 1975.

To recall, among the communist Shi'a, the LCP formulated a resistance identity based on opposition to the confessional political system, political and military support for the Palestinian resistance inside Lebanon against Israel, and socioeconomic reform for Jabal 'Amil. In addition, the social basis of the LCP's support among the Shi'a also cut across the traditional class lines usually associated with communist movements. The LCP enjoyed support among the middle-class Shi'a first, before expanding its following among the peasantry, rural and urban workers, intellectual elites and, as has been shown, some Shi'i clerics.

However, as the analysis in chapter four demonstrated, the LCP failed to uphold the principle of anti-confessionalism in the civil war, while also failing in its resistance activities against Israel. Further still, all the socioeconomic reforms and welfare programmes for the southern Shi'a promised by the LCP failed to materialise either during or after the war. In fact, the indifference displayed by the LCP and its allies in the LNM toward the welfare of the Shi'i populations in Jabal 'Amil was a significant factor in the deterioration of relations between the LCP and the Shi'a. In this sense, Hizbullah has coopted the most successful aspects of the LCP's political programme in Lebanon, it has also Islamised that agenda, and implemented it with a greater level of sophistication and success than the LCP.

The Legacy of Communism

Despite the decline of communism's influence among the Shi'a during the Lebanese Civil War, the relationship with the LCP imparted a lasting legacy over the Shi'i community's political identities in Lebanon. Elements of that legacy have already emerged in this chapter's discussion, such as communism's influence over the Shi'i clerics as well as the aspects of the LCP's agenda that became features of Hizbullah's political programme for the Shi'a during and after the war. However, the discussion in this section argues that the most enduring feature of communism's influence was in its making of the resistance identity.

The Resistance

As'ad Abu Khalil draws a direct line of comparison between Hizbullah and Marxist political organisations.³⁴ Though relatively dated now, this is one of few scholarly contributions that have explicitly documented the similarities between Hizbullah's organisational structure, as a radical Islamist party, and those of the Marxist parties. Abu Khalil's study is based on an analysis of Hizbullah's Islamic ideology, and the terminological congruence

³⁴ As'ad Abu Khalil, 'Ideology and Practice of Hizballah in Lebanon: Islamization of Leninist Organizational Principles', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 27:3, 1991, pp. 390–403.

between its central tenets and that of Marxist-Leninism. For example, Lenin's notion that 'class consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without', is in Hizbullah's reading reformulated as, 'the umma alone can bring about Islamic consciousness.'⁵⁴⁵ However, although Abu Khalil's contribution is a valuable insight, the legacy of Marxist influence over Hizbullah extends far beyond ideological points of reference only. The ensuing analysis argues that a more interesting manifestation of communism's legacy is in Hizbullah's adoption of the resistance identity.

The resistance remains the most unifying feature of the Shi'i community's political identity in Lebanon today. Any political actor or movement that seeks to mobilise the Shi'a must display a conformity to the resistance agenda. Commenting in 2006, Khaled Hadedeh, the current Secretary-General of the LCP, emphasised the centrality of the resistance to the Shi'i community's political identity when he stated '...in the average [Shi'i] Lebanese family with seven children, four will be with Hezbollah, two will be with the Communists and one will be with Amal - *all of them with the resistance* [emphasis added].'⁵⁴⁶ The concept of resistance, however, has evolved since its original conceptualisation by the LCP in the 1960s.

When the LCP originally formulated the resistance identity, it contained two dimensions. The first component of the LCP's conceptualisation consisted of resistance to Lebanon's confessional political structure, and advocacy of its overhaul and replacement with a secular democratic political system. The second component was armed resistance directed at Israel, in support of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. However, following the LCP's decline during the Lebanese Civil War, ownership of the resistance identity was transferred to Hizbullah by default, since this was the party which emerged from the civil war as the most powerful Shi'i political actor in Lebanon. But Hizbullah, perhaps

⁵⁴⁵ As'ad Abu Khalil, 'Ideology and Practice of Hizballah', 394.

⁵⁴⁶ Quoted by Herbert Doceana 'Amid the Bombs, Unity is Forged', *Asia Times Online*, 17th August, 2006, - <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HH17Ak02.html> (2 November 2014)

having recognised the mobilising potential of the resistance identity in the LCP's relationship with the Shi'a, consciously adopted and reformulated the resistance identity.

Hizbullah's definition of the resistance is somewhat paradoxical, for it is both a reduction and expansion on the LCP's conceptualisation. Unlike the LCP's definition, Hizbullah's resistance no longer contains an anti-system component that aims to reform or overhaul the confessional political structure in Lebanon. Indeed, Hizbullah has only adopted the part of the LCP's definition that referred to the struggle against Israel. In this sense Hizbullah's concept is narrower - and not all communists approved of this change, particularly because of the way Hizbullah's resistance became imbued with Shi'i religious symbolism, and Islamist notions of jihad. Thus, on the one hand, some communists acknowledge the superiority of Hizbullah's resistance- 'I can't help noting how much the sons of its [the LCP's] resistance resemble us, how much they improved what we had begun.' On the other hand, the communists remained wary of the communal and religious components of Hizbullah's resistance: 'But Hezbollah remains captive...captive to its own sect.' Indeed, one senior LCP official, Nadeem Abdul-Samad lambasts Hizbullah's conceptualisation as devoid of a national component, and thus inferior to the LCP's more inclusive definition:

I see resistance as a national resistance...it includes the entire nation. What is there today is not a national resistance, it is sectarian. This is regression, simply. The strength of its vision is that it tries to impose its own perspective. The subject is seen from the blood of Hussein. I have no place in this...who can tell me where the gains of this liberation will go, if this will actually happen, this accomplishment achieved by the resistance. The critical question is who determines the gains yield will be distributed within the nation, or the scope of the nation will be considered rather than the scope of Islam or the Shi'ites and their role in the overall political scheme in a way that serves Iran's interests? How can I endorse it? it is no longer about action, or

taking action against Israel. OK, I'm against Israel but I can no longer accept this in all simplicity and accept givens.⁵⁴⁷

Of note, the Shi'i communists have been far more willing to accept Hizbullah's sectarian and political Shi'i interpretation of the resistance, perhaps for the reasons presented earlier pertaining to the fluidity of relations between communism and religion. Thus, for Ibrahim al-Amin, since the LCP is no longer a viable contender, and a viable secular alternative does not exist, Hizbullah's resistance does not present a problem for him:

...secularism has become a prerequisite for any project. If the resistance is not secular, then the liberation it produces is not acceptable. If liberating Palestine is going to happen through Hezbollah, then it is rejected. But how is it going to happen? At the hands of a secular power? Who is this secular power? Where is it? What is it doing these days? Give me a resistance that suits my taste, and I won't reject it.⁵⁴⁸

Other Shi'i communists present their willingness to accept Hizbullah's resistance in ways unrelated to the question of communalism or religion. Ali Ayoub argues that it is simply a matter of making the best choice available under the present circumstances. He acknowledges that Hizbullah's resistance lacks a progressive or reformist component, unlike the LCP's definition. However, since the LCP was in decline, and no other progressive alternative existed, Hizbullah's resistance represents an acceptable alternative, perhaps for the short-term: 'If the resistance exists but the opportunity for change does not exist, you can be with the resistance until change becomes a possibility.'⁵⁴⁹

Although Hizbullah's resistance is viewed by some communists as reductive, Hizbullah's conceptualisation is highly expansive in other ways. This is because Hizbullah utilises the resistance agenda vis a vis Israel to justify *all* its political activities and decision-making in Lebanon and the

⁵⁴⁷ Quoted in Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

⁵⁴⁸ Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

⁵⁴⁹ Maher Abi Samra, *Shiyu 'iyyin Kunna*, documentary film, 2010.

region. For example, while most studies of Hizbullah argue that the shifts in the party's attitude to the Lebanese political system were facilitated by ideological flexibility, this study posits that it was actually the party's resistance agenda that determined this transformation.⁵⁵⁰

The decision to participate in the Lebanese elections of 1992 was made on the basis of a calculation that greater parliamentary influence for Hizbullah would aid its resistance agenda:

Ideology was never a reason for conflict; rather, *it was the role and nature of resistance activity. Political reality calls for a concentrated effort in order to group resources for defiance of the occupiers* [emphasis added].⁵⁵¹

Hizbullah's election coalition was titled 'Allegiance to the Resistance', which also subsequently framed the party's consideration of all parliamentary proposals.⁵⁵²

Other areas of Hizbullah's activities in Lebanon are also promulgated as being in the service of its resistance agenda. The party's social service provision and development work is pursued for the purposes of building a 'society of resistance.'⁵⁵³ From waste collection, the delivery of water, the building of hospitals, schools and mosques, to the associations Hizbullah oversees that manage the welfare of its militants and civilians wounded in war, all of this work is conceptualised in terms of Hizbullah's resistance identity:

Such social work, which has evolved alongside resistance activity, served to relieve the Resistance of a considerable burden by assisting the populace in their endurance of Israeli aggression and of the remnants of occupation. It also fostered a humane and social environment of joint responsibility, thus shielding the Resistance from

⁵⁵⁰ See for example, Hala Jaber, Hezbollah; Nizar Hamzeh, 'Lebanon's Hizbullah: from Islamic revolution to parliamentary accommodation', *Third World Quarterly*, 14:2, 1993, 321-337; Norton, *Hezbollah*; Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, London: IB Tauris, 2004.

⁵⁵¹ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah.*, 170.

⁵⁵² Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story From Within*, Perseus Book Group, 15th July 2012 [e-book], 346-7.

⁵⁵³ Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story From Within*, 481.

social catastrophes - those from which the government simply alienated itself.⁵⁵⁴

Thus, the resistance has become a central feature of Hizbullah's political identity. In Lebanese public lexicon the terms 'Hizbullah' and 'the resistance' are frequently deployed interchangeably when referring to the party. Indeed, by way of emphasis, the website address for Hizbullah's online presence is entitled *al-Muqawama* (the resistance) and not the actual name of the party. Although Hizbullah has monopolised the resistance agenda against Israel, the LCP continues to stake its own claims over the meaning of the resistance, rejecting Hizbullah's conceptualisation in political Shi'i terms, and instead advocating for the revival of a national resistance. This is illustrated by the following case of the LCP's involvement in the 2006 Israel-Lebanon War.

The LCP in the 2006 Lebanon-Israel War

Although the Lebanese Civil War marked the beginning of the end for communism in Lebanon, and the LCP's declining influence in Lebanese politics, the party's relationship with the Shi'i community has continued to endure. This is evidenced most recently by the LCP's mobilisation as part of the Hizbullah-led resistance in the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war.

Whilst media and scholarly analysis of the 2006 war focusses exclusively on the battle between Hizbullah and the IDF, there were other fighting forces present on the Lebanese side, among them the LCP. The response from the Shi'i community to Israel in 2006 was similar to that which occurred in the 1982 war, a full military mobilisation that included Amal and the LCP. The LCP announced at the end of the war that it had lost 12 soldiers.⁵⁵⁵ The party published biographical information about 7 of these, 4 of whom were identifiably Shi'a and all from the same southern Lebanese village of Srifa. Comrades Ahmad Salim Najdi and Mohammad Ali Najdi both joined the LCP in 1984, a time when the LCP was fully mobilised against invading

⁵⁵⁴ Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story From Within*, 176.

⁵⁵⁵ Herbert Doceana 'Amid the Bombs, Unity is Forged', *Asia Times Online*, 17th August 2006,- http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HH17Ak02.html. (27 July 2014)

Israeli forces.⁵⁵⁶ The other two Shi'i communist martyrs from the 2006 war, Ali Husayn Najdi and Hassan Salameh Karim, were younger members of the party who joined in 1992 and 1998 respectively. Both were active members of the LCP's youth wing in Srifa.

Aside from illustrating the endurance of the LCP's special relationship with the Shi'a, the party's involvement in the war of 2006 also marked the beginning of a rapprochement with Hizbullah. Only two years before the 2006 war, relations between Hizbullah and the LCP were still hostile. A major prisoner swap with Israel resulted in the release of 400 prisoners to Hizbullah in 2004. Although the majority of the prisoners were LCP members, Hizbullah refused to allow the LCP to attend a welcoming reception for the released prisoners at Lebanon's airport.⁵⁵⁷ However, two years later, at a mass funeral for the fallen fighters of the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war, the LCP's 'martyrs' were buried alongside Hizbullah's. Video footage of the funeral procession shows the flags of the LCP, Hizbullah and Lebanon flying in unison.⁵⁵⁸

During the 2006 war, Hizbullah and the LCP coordinated the resistance efforts between their fighters in the South Lebanese town of Srifa. The practicalities of a war in which Lebanon was at a distinct military disadvantage to the IDF was undoubtedly a factor in Hizbullah's openness to cooperation with willing participants. The LCP's participation was an effort to expand the remit of the resistance effort beyond Hizbullah's conceptualisation. In this sense, the LCP was calling for the nationalisation of the Lebanese resistance. While limited, the LCP's role in the 2006 war is symbolic of a lasting special relationship between communism and the Shi'a in South Lebanon.

⁵⁵⁶ 'The Lebanese Communist Party Mourns its 7 Heroes', *Marxism Leninism Today: The Electronic Journal of Marxist-Leninist Thought*, - <<http://mltoday.com/the-lebanese-communist-party-mourns-its-7-heroes>> (27th July 2014)

⁵⁵⁷ 'Hezbollah Goes Left' *NOW Lebanon*, 30th April 2008, <https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/commentaryanalysis/hezbollah_goes_left>. Accessed 27th July 2014.

⁵⁵⁸ 'My Lebanon War' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qth7JsXG6XI>> 23 March 2010. See related blog post for further commentary on the event. <<http://the-war-diaries.com/?tag=lebanese-communist-party>> Last accessed 27th July 2014.

Conclusion

Secular political identities ceased to be a viable basis for the Shi'i community's political mobilisation in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War. The events of the war and the nature of the political settlement that followed elevated the centrality of sectarian identities to the Lebanese political framework. The dilemmas of the former communist Shi'a and their gravitation toward Hizbullah illustrate their reluctant acceptance of the sectarian realities of Lebanon's post-war political system. The relationship between the Shi'i and the LCP nevertheless imparted a legacy of political learning on the Shi'i community's political successors. This is visible in the political programmes and strategies of mobilisation utilised by both Amal and Hizbullah. The resistance identity remains the most lasting symbol of the Shi'i community's relationship with communism, and continues to be a unifying feature of the Shi'i community's contemporary political mobilisation. However, the meaning of the resistance identity has become subject to significant change and transformation since its original conceptualisation by the LCP. Although Amal and Hizbullah remain opposed to Lebanon's sectarian regime in principle, their ascendance in Lebanon during the civil war was largely due to their acceptance of the sectarian rules of the political game in Lebanon. In the aftermath of the civil war, Amal and Hizbullah continued their skilful navigation of the political system as sectarian actors, and today are the two most powerful representatives of the Lebanese Shi'a. The resistance, however, in its contemporary usage, no longer refers to a reformist agenda contra political sectarianism in Lebanon; rather it is primarily deployed as a legitimising tool in the ongoing war with Israel.

Thesis Conclusion

This study explored the identities and political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi'a. The objective was to bring to the fore the previously sidelined role of secular identities in the early political mobilisation of the Shi'a. This was achieved through a case study of the relationship between the communist Shi'a and the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) from Lebanese independence in 1943 to the end of the Lebanese Civil War in 1990. The analysis challenged conventional readings of Lebanese Shi'i political mobilisation that place Amal and Hizbullah at the beginning of that process. Furthermore, the analysis showed that Shi'i interaction with the secular political movement played a formative role in the construction of a resistance identity, which was subsequently adopted and transformed by Hizbullah.

The conceptual framework developed for this study was based on a hybridised approach to the study of identity. This posits that both primordial and constructionist identities are present on the identity repertoires of individuals or groups. It was argued that the conditions under which primordial or constructionist identities ascend or descend the hierarchy of identities are determined by the particular context in which these identities arise. The process of studying these dynamics is a highly empirical endeavour, and varies from country to country. For the purposes of this study, secular and sectarian identities constituted the hybrid identities under consideration. For the Shi'a, secularism was a resistance identity that challenged the sectarian political structure of the Lebanese state. The collapse of the LCP in the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War, and the rise of the new Shi'i political actors, Amal and Hizbullah, transformed that resistance identity from a secular to a sectarian political project. In this sense, this study has emphasised the dynamic interplay between secular and sectarian identities in the political mobilisation of the Shi'a. However, the fundamental difference between secular and sectarian identities among the Shi'a lay in their conceptualisation of resistance. For

the communist Shi'a, their secularised resistance identity manifested in a political project that sought to overhaul and transcend the sectarian political structure in Lebanon. For Amal's and Hizbullah's Shi'a, their sectarianised resistance identity sought to organise the expression of Shi'i identities in within the existing framework of the (sectarian) political system in Lebanon. In short, whereas the communist Shi'a sought to change the rules of the game in Lebanon, the sectarian Shi'a sought to play the game. Each deployed the resistance identity in a different way to achieve these aims.

From the Ottoman Empire to the French Mandate and beyond Lebanon's independence, the Shi'i *zu'ama'* have consistently pursued their inclusion and incorporation into the Lebanese state in accordance with the sectarian logic of the political system. As chapter three showed, Musa al-Sadr aspired to reform the political system so that the Shi'a acquired a more equitable share in the state's confessional distribution. In today's Lebanon, Amal retains the Shi'i community's guaranteed post of Parliamentary Speaker, while also holding 13 parliamentary seats, and control over the Council of the South, the main governing body of South Lebanon. Although Hizbullah emerged as a rejectionist party, its militantly Shi'i identity still conforms to the sectarian logic of Lebanese politics and society. Hizbullah also transformed into a fully participatory political party in Lebanon's 1992 elections, and currently holds 12 parliamentary seats. Hizbullah is also regarded as one of the most powerful political movements in Lebanon today.

If sectarian identities predominate over the Shi'i community's contemporary political mobilisation, what is important about their historical association with secular identities? Highlighting the historical significance of secular identities and their interaction with sectarian identities among the Shi'a has important implications, not just for correcting our historical knowledge of the historical development of the Lebanese Shi'a, but also for broadening our understanding of Lebanese

history. The battle for the Shi'a that took place towards the end the civil war, which pitted the LCP against Amal and Hizbullah, represented a microcosm of a historic struggle that was also taking place at that time: the battle between secularism and sectarianism in Lebanon. By the end of the war, the main advocates of secularisation - the Lebanese left - had been defeated. Thereafter, the secular left in Lebanon was condemned to the margins of history. While the primary focus of this study has been to highlight and examine the significance of secular identities to the Lebanese Shi'a, the findings also represent the recovery of a period of Lebanese history in which the idea of sectarianism was challenged by a powerful secular political movement. Removing the paradigm of sectarianism from our analytical focus reveals a secular history of Lebanon that is largely untouched.

The history of secular identities in Lebanon is a heterodox subject. But this study has illustrated the important role secular identities played in the political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi'a, and their legacy over the sectarian identities that came after. Further still, as was shown in chapter five, the LCP still retains a small but loyal Shi'i following in Lebanon today. But the communist Shi'a are not the only participants in the continuing struggle for secularisation in Lebanon. Social movements such as *Laique Pride*⁵⁹⁹ (Secular Pride) and *Nahwa al-Muwatiniya* (Towards Citizenship) are also part of the continuation of Lebanon's historic struggle for secularisation.⁵⁶⁰

This study's findings highlight the need to recognise the role played by secular identities in the Lebanese Shi'i community's past, while also serving as a call to revisit the history of the Lebanese left in general. Additionally, the findings of this thesis are also pertinent to the contemporary Shi'i political field in Lebanon. Various actors, including Shi'i clerics, intellectuals, grassroots activists and descendants from the

⁵⁹⁹ Rana Khoury, 'Secular Lebanon Marches for Citizenship', *al-Arabiya News*, 8th May 2002, <<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/05/08/212864.html>> (23 February 2015)

⁵⁶⁰ Nahwa al-Muwatiniya <<http://www.na-am.org/about-na-am.html>> (23 February 2015)

traditional political families are seeking to formulate a 'third-way' for the Shi'a that is independent of both Hizbullah and Amal. And many of these independent Shi'i actors are advocating a secular political agenda.

Critical voices directed at the Hizbullah and Amal monopoly are an emerging trend within the Lebanese Shi'i community. Dissatisfaction with Hizbullah originates from the party's unrivalled power, intolerance of dissenting voices and intimidation tactics.⁵⁶¹ The influence of external states, namely Iran and Syria over Hizbullah's domestic and regional policy decisions is also a source of growing frustration within the Shi'i community.⁵⁶² While Amal is traditionally perceived as a more domestically integrated, secular counterweight to Hizbullah's Islamism and regional alliances, it has developed an unfavourable reputation for corruption and political mismanagement.⁵⁶³ Although Amal and Hizbullah are political allies, Amal is widely perceived as the junior partner in this alliance. As Shanahan writes,

The further that Amal moves from its founding ideals of probity, equality and political empowerment espoused by its founder Musa Sadr, the more peripheral it becomes to Shi'a politics. Hizbullah acts as the senior partner on whom it relies for its electoral relevance.⁵⁶⁴

Three key recent events have served as catalysts for internal dissent within the Shi'i community to spillover into the public domain. The first event concerns the 2006 Lebanon-Israel war triggered by Hizbullah. In the war's

⁵⁶¹ 'Lebanon: Alternative Shi'a Advocates Not United', *Wikileaks Cable 07BEIRUT1597*, 11th October 2007 <<https://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/10/07BEIRUT1597.html>>; Laure Stephen, 'Shiites in Lebanon Start Saying 'No' to Hezbollah', *Worldcrunch* 12th September 2012, <<http://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/shiites-in-lebanon-start-saying-039-no-039-to-hezbollah/syria-shia-iran-hani-fahs/c1s9549/#.VbgAOXg6H8t>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁶² 'Lebanon: new Think Tank Aimed at Linking Independent Shia', *Wikileaks Cable 08BEIRUT570*, <<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=08BEIRUT570>> Accessed 29th July 2015

⁵⁶³ 'What's Wrong with Amal?' *Wikileaks Cable 04BEIRUT494*, <<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=04BEIRUT494>> Accessed 29th July 2015

⁵⁶⁴ Rodger Shanahan 'Lebanon: The Chimera of a Shi'a 'Third Way'', 30 July 2003, *Lowy Institute for International Policy* <<http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/lebanon-chimera-shia-third-way>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

aftermath, voices from within the Shi'i community began to question Hizbullah's provocation in light of the resultant loss of human life, and extensive infrastructural damage to homes and property.⁵⁶⁵ Secondly, Hizbullah's takeover of west Beirut in a 2008 dispute with the Lebanese government also led to criticism of the organisation's political tactics.⁵⁶⁶ In the process, the events reignited the debate over Hizbullah's continued retention of its weapons. Hizbullah's implication in a 2009 corruption scandal constituted the first blow to the party's reputation for moral altruism, upon which the party has historically prided itself.⁵⁶⁷ The third and final precipitating event relates to Hizbullah's decision to send its fighting forces to Syria, in defence of the Assad regime. Although it was known that the party was in Syria from 2011, the Secretary-General, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah only publicly admitted Hizbullah's presence in Syria in May 2013.⁵⁶⁸

The sources of Shi'i dissent are therefore wide and varied. Contemporaries of the Shi'i *zu'ama'* are prominent among the dissenting voices, and have established new political organisations to contest the Hizbullah-Amal monopoly. Chief among these figureheads is Ahmad al-As'ad, who established the *Lebanese Option Party* in 2007.⁵⁶⁹

Several prominent Shi'i intellectuals have also openly declared their opposition to Hizbullah. Professor Mona Fayed of the Lebanese University,

⁵⁶⁵ Rola el-Husseini 'Cracks in the Hezbollah Monopoly', *The Washington Post*, 8th January 2015 <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/01/08/cracks-in-the-hezbollah-monopoly/>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁶⁶ Robert F. Worth and Nada Bakri, 'Hezbollah Seizes Swath of Beirut From US-Backed Lebanon Government', *The New York Times*, 10th May 2008 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/10/world/middleeast/10lebanon.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁶⁷ Robert F. Worth, 'Billion-Dollar Pyramid Scheme Rivets Lebanon', *The New York Times*, 15th September 2009– <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/16/world/middleeast/16lebanon.html>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁶⁸ Loveday Morris, 'Hezbollah Chief Defends Group's Involvement in Syrian War', *The Washington Post*, 25th May 2013, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/hezbollah-chief-admits-and-defends-groups-involvement-in-syrian-war/2013/05/25/3748965a-c55e-11e2-9fe2-6ee52d0eb7c1_story.html> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁶⁹ Lebanese Option Party Website <<http://www.lebaneseoption.org/en/>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

published a scathing article entitled 'To be a Shi'ite now' in Beirut's *An-Nahar* newspaper during the 2006 war.⁵⁷⁰ Professor Fayed, along with 50 other Lebanese Shi'i intellectuals and activists, signed another opinion piece in the same newspaper in August 2012, voicing their support for the Syrian people.⁵⁷¹ This was a direct challenge to Hizbullah's position on the conflict.

Dissenting clerical voices are also prominent among the Shi'i challenges to Hizbullah. Ali al-Amine, the late Hani Fahs, Sheikh Subhi Tufayli and Sheikh Muhammad al-Hajj were among the more influential critical clerics involved in the establishment of the *Free Shi'a Movement*.⁵⁷² Sheikh Muhammad Ali al-Husseini, founder of the Islamic Arabic Council was also a critical clerical voice. However his organisation was effectively disbanded following his arrest in May 2011 on charges of spying for Israel.

Shi'i businessmen involved in grassroots, civil society activism have also been advocates for a Shi'i 'third way'. Chief among these are Raed Sharafeddine, Youssef al-Khalil and Mohammad Matar. The latter established a think-tank entitled *Lebanese Analytica Matrix (LAM)* with the aim of linking together the disparate independent Shi'i groups.⁵⁷³ Although the founder of this group suffers from the reputational damage of being a well-known lawyer for Saad al-Hariri, his new organisation has a number of prominent Shi'i members. These include, Mohammad Hussein Shameseddin (journalist), Ibrahim Shameseddin (the head of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Beirut), Loukman Slim (independent activist), Youssef

⁵⁷⁰ Mona Fayyad, 'To Be a Shiite Now', *An-Nahar*, Beirut, 8th August 2006 <<http://www.10452lccc.com/hizbollah/fayad10.8.06english.htm>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁷¹ Laure Stephan, 'Shiites in Lebanon start saying 'No' to Hezbollah', *Worldcrunch*, 12th September 2012 <<http://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/shiites-in-lebanon-start-saying-039-no-039-to-hezbollah/syria-shia-iran-hani-fahs/c1s9549/#.Vbk9M3g6H8t>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁷² Rodger Shanahan 'Lebanon: The Chimera of a Shi'a 'Third Way'', 30 July 2003, *Lowy Institute for International Policy* <<http://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/lebanon-chimera-shia-third-way>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁷³ 'Lebanon: new Think Tank Aimed at Linking Independent Shia' *Wikileaks Cable 08BEIRUT570*, 24th April 2008, <<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=08BEIRUT570>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

Khalil (Central Bank Director), Mona Fayed (Professor, Lebanese University), Yousef Zein (son of the founder of *al-Irfan*), Ahmad Baydoun (historian), Karim Mroueh (a former communist interviewed by this author), Jamil Mroueh (publisher of the Daily Star) and his brother Malek (close to March 14 leader Nassib Lahoud).⁵⁷⁴

Clearly there are numerous internal voices of dissent currently emerging from the Shi'i community. However, the obstacles to their success are also many. These range from Lebanon's current electoral laws, which favour blocs over independent, single parties; the March 14 Hariri camp, which favours working with Amal and Hizbullah, (the emerging Shi'a want to operate completely independently of these parties); Hizbullah's insurmountable resource base coupled with the reluctance of the Shi'i diaspora to openly declare support, by way of providing funding, for the Shi'i independents; and finally the general absence of unity of action among the various elements of the Shi'i independents. However, the majority of these figures hold a shared aspiration for a secular political vision for the Lebanese Shi'i. This is a development that is particularly interesting in light of this study's findings.

The Lebanese University professor Mona Fayed is a secular Shi'i intellectual.⁵⁷⁵ The founder of LAM, of which she is a member, has described the organisation's approach as twofold. On the macro level, LAM highlights the main objectives of the Shi'a, which are to secure an independent, sovereign, and secular Lebanon. On the micro level, LAM

⁵⁷⁴ 'Lebanon: new Think Tank Aimed at Linking Independent Shia' *Wikileaks Cable 08BEIRUT570*, 24th April 2008, <<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=08BEIRUT570>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁷⁵ 'Lebanon: Alternative Shi'a Advocates Not United', *Wikileaks Cable 07BEIRUT1597*, 11th October 2007 <<https://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/10/07BEIRUT1597.html>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

intends to focus on grassroots issues and bring together the various Shi'a independents.⁵⁷⁶

Mohammad Obeid, who seeks to reform Amal from the inside, has spoken of his desire to 'tap into the segment of the Shi'a community that leans towards secularism...'⁵⁷⁷ The neo-zai'am, Ahmad al-As'ad also advocates a mostly secular political platform. However, he sees it as necessary for his new party to begin as a Shi'i movement in order to act as a bulwark against Hizbullah and Amal. Thereafter, he envisions the party branching out to the cross-confessional. The feudal past of the Shi'i zu'ama' must, however, be taken into consideration when considering these proclamations. Overall, as summarised by US Ambassador to Lebanon, Jeffrey D. Feltman, a secular ethos is a significant presence among the burgeoning independent Shi'a, but this movement faces many constraints:

The Shia who are prone not to ally with Hizballah or Amal are largely secular and looking for a cross-confessional alternative movement, rather than a third Shia party...nevertheless the "state of fear" of sectarian conflict, Israeli aggression, and a history of respect for Hizballah's integrity and accomplishments keep many secular, well-educated Shia with Hizballah.⁵⁷⁸

Although Shi'i 'third way' activists currently lack a unified political platform, which is one of several impediments to their success at the present moment, there are two things they all have in common - a secular political vision for the Shi'a, and a desire to be completely independent from Amal and Hizballah. The findings in this thesis demonstrate that there is in fact a historical precedent for secular political identities to play a prominent role in the political mobilisation of the Lebanese Shi'a. In the

⁵⁷⁶ 'Lebanon: new Think Tank Aimed at Linking Independent Shia' *Wikileaks Cable 08BEIRUT570*, 24th April 2008, <<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=08BEIRUT570>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁷⁷ 'Some Shia Look for Way to Escape Client' *Wikileaks Cable 06BEIRUT2072*, 21 June 2006 <<https://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/06/06BEIRUT2072.html>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

⁵⁷⁸ 'Lebanon: Independent Shia Organizing Slowly, Independently of One Another' *Wikileaks Cable 07BEIRUT269*, 20th February 2007– <<https://cablegatesearch.wikileaks.org/cable.php?id=07BEIRUT269>> Accessed 29th July 2015.

final analysis, the rise of third way independents within the Shi'a community is indicative of the resurgence of secular identities among the Lebanese Shi'a today.

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Appendix

Transcript of quotations from the documentary film Shiyu iyyin Kunna (We Were Communists), Documentary Film. Director: Maher Abi Samra, Beirut, 2010.

Huseein ali Ayoub, born in Aynata, south Lebanon, 1965. Shi'ite. Lives in Beirut, Arab University area. Working class family. Relationship with LCP began with my family, they were communists, father was one of the first martyrs of the LCP in its struggle against Israeli occupation. I was active in party meetings, distributed the party newspaper as well as other partisan activities.

Bashar Nadim Abdel Samad, born in Moscow, 1964. Lives in Beirut in the Arab University area. Currently a student, belongs to middle class family. Came to know LCP through family, father is in the party leadership. Participated in party meetings, other partisan activities and military training.

Ibrahim Mohammad Ali Al-Amin, born Ras Baalbek, 1965. Shi'ite. Lives in Sidon. From Middle Class family, came to know LCP through my family. Participated in party meetings, military training and other partisan activities.

Maher Dib Abi Samra, born in Shiyyah in the Dahiyeh originally from Shebba, 1965, Sunni and works as electrician, from lower middle class family. Came to know the LCP through the neighborhood in Shiyyah, participated in party meetings and military training. Did not leave Beirut during the 1982 Israeli invasion. Maher was 17 years old when he joined the LCP

Maher: "I thought my relationship with the communists had ended. But I found myself thinking about the chicken coop."

Maher first took up arms against the Israelis in 1982 as part of the LCP's resistance.

Hussein: If there was a party that could secure at once liberation and change, or establish a correlation between liberation and change, between resistance and change, then I would take my hat off to it. It is what we want. But if this party does not exist, and there is one that proposes resistance and another that wants change, then you can endorse the part related to resistance and the part related to change. If the resistance exists but the opportunity for change does not exist, you can be with the resistance until change becomes a possibility. And if change is a possibility but there is no resistance, then one can work towards change until the resistance becomes a possibility. Today in this country there is no real party or force proposing change in a cogent or clear terms, on the one hand. On the other hand, this is not a question that can be isolated from the general context, whether you consider strictly the local context or the larger context...but I can no longer see the question of the Lebanese resistance as a purely Lebanese issue...I cannot isolate the resistance in Lebanon from the resistance in Palestine. And I cannot see the resistance in Palestine far from the context of the resistance in Iraq. They are all one issue that cannot be regarded separately.

Ibrahim: What scares me is that we are actually living in a present moment where secularism has become a prerequisite for any project. If the resistance is not secular, then the liberation it produces is not acceptable. If liberating Palestine is going to happen through Hezbollah, then it is rejected. But how is it going to happen? At the hands of a secular power? Who is this secular power? Where is it? What is it doing these days? Give me a resistance 'that suits my taste', and I won't reject it.

Bashar: First we need to agree and define our position regarding the resistance. I see resistance as a national resistance...it includes the entire nation. What is there today is not a national resistance, it is sectarian. This is regression, simply. The strength of its vision is that it tries to impose its own perspective. The subject is seen from the blood of Hussein. I have no

place in this...who can tell me where the gains of this liberation will go, if this will actually happen, this accomplishment achieved by the resistance. The critical question is who determines the gains yield will be distributed within the nation, or the scope of the nation will be considered rather than the scope of Islam or the Shiites and their role in the overall political scheme in a way that serves Iran's interests? How can I endorse it? it is no longer about action, or taking action against Israel. OK, I'm against Israel but I can no longer accept this in all simplicity and accept givens.

On Joining the LCP

Bashar: I think the moment I joined the party was the instant Israeli tanks rolled in. Joining had a lot to do with the encouragement my family insisted on. The kind of environment I grew up in made it all seem like a natural outcome. I grew up in this environment I'm from a Communist family. My father was in the leadership, it was expected. Or natural, based on my political convictions, that I would join the party. So I joined the party quite early but actually my membership was never really officialised! The real test of your loyalty to the party...the central mission that compelled us, and measured the extent of our loyalty to the party...the major mission I considered my duty was the struggle against the Israelis from the moment they invaded.

Ibrahim: I found that after all that I heard at home, and all I stored from long discussion with my father, was that the ideas inspiring the party were good, the party was good but its leadership damned hopeless. My real awareness emerged in 1982, with the Israeli invasion, when the Communist Party decided to engage itself directly in the mission of fighting Israel. At that moment, I felt my relationship with the party was natural. The arguments and clashes about the party with my father at home decreased to the point of lapsing altogether. Because when it came to the subject of resisting Israel, whether the general secretary of the party had sent you or not, it was your duty to do it. This helped. It was the instance where my relationship with the party consolidated and became very real.

Hussein: If my father had died a natural death, and we had continued living in the village, I don't know what our choice would have been, how we would have turned out. But my father was the first martyr in of the Communist Party's resistance. This fact shut the door on any discussion. That's it! You're communists and you remain communists. We are taken in charge by the Communist Party....The real test for my personality, my behaviour, my loyalty and my commitment to these principles or concepts, was in 1982. Not after 1982, I mean specifically during the Israeli invasion. My experience began with the Israeli invasion and continued afterwards.

Maher: There were obviously a thousand reasons, I fell in love with a girl...whose family and brothers were communists. It also had to do with my desire to escape my own family to find other people, I was in need of friends. There were a thousand reasons, but I can say now that one of the fundamental reasons was that being close to the party in that neighbourhood, was like being closer to the city, more so than being close to a particular ideological school...of course there's the over-arching notion that with the communists, there is social justice issues like medical care for all...it's not much what Marx said, rather there were fundamental or basic issues I thought the Communist Party espoused around the social justice between people.

Bashar: The Communist Party is a party whose nature, composition, program and means were different from all the other political parties that existed in the country. During that difficult time when political struggles became so mobilised, the party was in retreat, we lived in a very challenging and turbulent arena. In this conflict and pressures, we perceived it as the last ditch before the total collapse of the country altogether. If a blow were directed at the Communist Party, If I left the faculty of arts, it would be a sign that everything was over, and darkness would overcome...in the faculty of arts, in Raousheh in Beirut and in Lebanon. The world would lapse in to darkness. [it depended on you?] Yes, as if we were the last barricade, the last bastion of the anti-sectarian, the secular and the plural. Therefore we had to be fierce. In a way we felt we were engaged into defensive battles, but in reality they were backwards.

This began to impact our core, it became obvious, each one of us was beginning to ask questions.

Declining Relationship

Hussein: The older we got, the deeper our experience, the more we allowed ourselves the right to question decisions and express opposition. There's a story, you remember the party meeting in the Beqaa in 1989, I stood up at that meeting and said we should withdraw from internal warring, that it was an absurd war that it was not our war. Suddenly, someone took a stand against you and identified your position as treacherous, and accused you of being influenced by others, that this was a patriotic war, even though sects were involved, there were also national sects. All those catchphrases circulating at that time.

Maher: The perception of the resistance was fundamentally that of flawlessness. To be asked to join the resistance implied without question that I would join. It was an honour to join the resistance. I joined and stayed in the south until 1984, until I was detained. During that time, I felt no hesitation participating in battles, when I was in the resistance. That was not the case when I participated in the battle of the mountain, or the battles in Dahiyeh, the internal wars.

Bashar: Yes, we considered our role in the resistance as part of imparting change in the country. The relationship between liberation and change is a key question. If you are a great person, but the person sitting next to you is drowning you with things that are practically insignificant, it's a question of raising the levels of deviation and corruption of sectarianism and draining the country altogether. You're somewhere and he's somewhere else. OK, if you want to draw a conclusion, maybe we should have pulled out of the war. Maybe we should have.

Maher: From 1982, onwards after the Israeli invasion there were the battles in Dahiyeh then in the mountains, then the battles in the north, then battles between Amal movement and us, then with Hezbollah. Battles over territorial demarcation. Each battle spilled into the next one. And we

reached a point, where sectarian affiliations against one another were consolidated. When I think back now, I feel we were being manipulated in many ways by sects. Like in the battle of the mountains, I remember I felt that people were there wondering who we were? What were we doing here? We were sent to fight anyway but it was really as though we were being used as individuals at the time. In my opinion, the Communist Party was itself being used in these battles by one sect against the other.

During the Civil War: Battle with Amal and Decline of LCP.

Narrator [Maher]: The civil war began in 1975, the party was involved in it up to its proverbial ears. We had great dreams but the resistance didn't last long, it fell almost entirely in the hands of Hezbollah, and other sects, we are allied with them and that we described it as national, swallowed us. And the Red Bear, that was from us and of us, began to disintegrate and we left. There was a specific battle that marked our departure from the war and the party. The one we called The Battle of the Arab University. It was the only one where the four of us fought together in Beirut's streets and alleys, under the command of Abu Mushen, in 1987.

Bashar: Before our battle with Amal began in 87, the situation escalated to a point where a fight was going to break out for sure. The party was at its worst state, it was a shadow of itself. We were fighting for our very survival.

Hussein: A week or ten days prior there was a lot of talking that Amal and the Syrians planned to eradicate the Communist Party and expel it forever from Beirut. They posted me across from the Palace, in a building we referred to as the district center. The day the battle broke out I was there.

Maher: In a few words, our intention was to wage a battle to purge Beirut of Amal, the Palestinians were our allies, and this alliance was against the Syrians. It was complicated and it was the only battle where all four of us participated.

Hussein: I was in charge of mobilising people to fight. If Amal was going to attack the Arab University and take control of the Communist Party headquarters, we would be exiled from the area. There was something personal about it.

Bashar: One of them lunges for the centre and begins to fire and the fireworks erupted. The battle went on for about 6 days. I was in charge of protecting the roof, so I went up to the roof.

Ibrahim: Of course at that moment I felt my back to the wall. During that battle, my biggest fear was to be killed. I believe in the end it was a collective feeling.

Maher: There's this feeling in the midst of this city, where you live, that you relate to, suddenly you stop seeing what's around you, it's as if you're numbed, but at the same time your adrenalin levels are incredible.

Ibrahim: In this battle we're fighting with Walid Jumblatt, the Druze against the Shi'ites, with the Palestinians against the Syrians. At the same time in other areas, we were allied with other factions. Within the party it wasn't easy to criticise your leadership. To be expelled from the party wasn't an administrative matter. The party was your whole life, it implied a social and psychological exile. It was very difficult for people to leave.

Abu Mushen: After 1976, there was a resurrection but it was the last one. Through these events, the Syrian Army's direct involvement in Lebanon was restored and particularly in Beirut.

Hussein: We followed the news, we had a small radio, and I hear the declaration by the Islamic Assembly calling on Hafez al-Assad to enter Beirut. The Syrians accepted the invitation. Suddenly, the battle ended. A cease-fire. The Syrians entered Beirut, I shaved my beard for the first time. I remember a Syrian officer arrived and introduced himself. He asked 'Who is in command of the Communist Party here?' We answered: Abu Rabih. Abu Rabih went with them by himself. And I went home. I enrolled back in university, and a new phase started there.

Ibrahim: All of the sudden we receive an order to leave our posts and gather at the Palace. We are told to go in a single file to headquarters, the Syrians wanted the Palace. They served us a speech about our victory. How we had won the battle for democratic change and so on. It was so ironic. In the evening, we were told our weapons will be returned to the Russians. The next morning we were told to go away or go home.

Abu Mushen: For me, on some level, I was not able to understand what had happened. We walked in a single file carrying our weapons and ammunition, everything we had, walking away. I handed over everything and went home.

Hussein: One battle ended, another started immediately. Each battle ended the previous battle's debate. I don't know if I could have acted any other way at that time, I doubt it. Even if later I assessed critically what the battles did...at that time, I was seeing the world from a hole in the wall at the Arab University.

After Communism

Ibrahim: "When I try to figure out how I belong in this place I'm returning to, that is welcoming me back and treating me like I'm special, i return in a different way. I come back to the periphery, the edges of the sect, I hover around it. Like when I joined the Communist Party, I had to strip some things, leave them at the door. Now it's 'My dear to enter this place, you have to get rid of everything you carry from the Communist Party.' It's not a coincidence that the majority of communists don't have a normal relationship with their social surroundings. Basically when we entered party headquarters, it was if there was a safety deposit box into which we unburdened from our sect, family and futures, and placed them in safe keeping. Then we melted inside the party. When the party collapsed and we left, each one of us collected their deposits and went back home. Each person went back a communist but also a Shi'ite, or Shi'ite communist or Christian communist or Druze communist, back to being influenced by the same calculations.

I always felt that if the Communist Party fell apart from here, if it failed to unite the sects then there was no other force in Lebanon who achieve that. For 40 to 50 years, it was a movement that appealed to every place, every sect...every area. It was so active, tens of thousands of people walked its path, poor workers, professors, engineers, union leaders, doctors, everyday people, even people involved in commerce. I mean if that was not enough to guard its mission that transcended sects and regions, then no other force could succeed. I was so depressed with the state of the local situation. The resistance was like a solace.

Hussein: I left the party in 1992, or in the beginning of 1993, there was a general collapse in the world, a general collapse in the region, in the country, in the party and so on. One project was collapsing, and another was rising....In my case, I hung on to the cliché, to strengthen the self, rebuild myself. I mean, facing this overwhelming collapse all around me, the most important thing was to preserve myself, or in other words, to develop personal immunity to allow myself at any moment to take a stand without enabling anyone to sway my position. No one can impose where I work, or what I work on, or what I can write about. In the Kuwaiti newspaper al-Watan we weren't allowed to criticise Hariri, but I never once wrote an article pro-Hariri. After 2004, I felt stronger I was no longer simply a monitor, I felt I could and ought to take a stand vis a vis the resistance. In 2006 after the July War, I felt an even stronger urge. Not only was I being asked to take a stand, but it was important for me to take a stand, to influence others. It was important to be involved in the internal battle in the country. The choices were clear, and questions were clear. There were this project or that project, and I had no hesitation. My position and opinion were clear. This was the project with significance to me.

After the War

Bashar: Practically, unions stopped being a professional realm, a platform for discussions of general issues, instead it became a space of subjugation, resorting to coercion or need. Coercion because now, there are stakes tied to context. So it has the power to pressure and coopt politically and

financially from an economic position. They could inhibit you from stirring any debate within the syndicate, or an insurrection in the general opinions of engineers, or from showing where and how they were being threatened. After Hariri came to power, he re-shuffled the leadership of the union. It mirrored the political leadership of the country. It was reproduced here. Spaces became more constricted, more and more suffocating. We kept the fight for a long, long time until he died..[Maher: Could you do anything?] To some extent. In the end, we just became this vague body. What could they call us? Communists? We were also in a confrontation with the Party! Who are we? Were we from another planet?...At some point there was no space left, it kept shrinking, smaller and smaller until it lapsed, no one was left, we were finished. This group that once was, is finished done...[Maher: Where did they go?] At one meeting, one guy said "everyone go back to where they came from!" I stared at him and said "there is no place left for us to go back to!" The problem is that you go back to your Shiite sect, you go back to Hezbollah. But what about us? There is no place to go back to. You want us to leave this place? We'll leave. We're used to leaving!

The lack of security I endured, economically and financially pushed me to seek stability, something consistent. I had to meet obligations. I was putting at risk people I brought into this world, who had nothing to do with this. I have kids now. What can I do? That was my logic. I heard there were openings for positions in the public sector, that I should apply. After I applied, it took almost a year and a half before I was appointed. The delay was due to changes in government. It is a place like any other, in government and work etc. It has to obey the logic of sectarian quota. Where access is predicated on the logic of 'who belongs to whom.' It could be political affiliation or which sect one belongs to. It could be something else, personal acquaintance works too. Generally that's the way things operate. Nine of us were appointed, practically and effectively, the nine of us were affiliated to someone. Each one of us, in one way or other, accounted for someone. All of us were affiliated to the spiritual father of the ministry, Walid Jumblatt."

Moving toward Hezbollah

Narrator (Maher) : Hezbollah is a riddle. On the one hand, it enforced what was proper (halal) and what was not (haram) in the areas in controlled. At the same time, it was accused of assassinating intellectuals from the left. On the other hand, I can't help noting how much the sons of its resistance resemble us, how much they improved what we had begun. But Hezbollah remains captive...captive to its own sect.

Ibrahim: I meet people, individuals, of different kinds, from different sects, from different regions. There was a political debate between us but also an understanding, we are still communists, and thus reject some things. We experimented on our own, but I began to really falter when I made my first contact with Hezbollah. I went as a journalist to see someone from Hezbollah, I think it was Abu Hassan Ra'ad, investigating what was going on between them and Amal. That day, I felt the resistance existed but it was no longer with the communists. I remembered, when I used to see someone from Hezbollah, images came up immediately. They had begun to transform, but the images I carried were old, walking in slippers, shirts untucked, bearded, with some kind of grim look, holding worry beads, and showing them off speaking loudly as if to say 'I'm here', and the way they apprehended you as if you were a reject, a blasphemer, an apostate. I had only one friend affiliated to Hezbollah at the university, he was the only one I had a personal relationship with. So I recalled these old images, and I wondered what's going on with me? What's happening to me? Somehow there is something here appealing to me! What's going on? It was the first time someone called me 'Sayid'. It was no longer comrade or Ibrahim or the son of so and so or any of that, 'Sayid'. What about this 'Sayid' thing? I know the implications of 'Sayid' but how is it significant to me? I gave myself some space, a grace period, or margin, away from the rest of the communists being a 'Sayid'. Immediately I remembered a discussion with Sayid Mohammad Fadlallah about martyrs or the difference between the greatest hero for communists and Islamists. Theirs went to heaven, but the communist martyrs went nowhere. His explanation was to ask if I thought communists could undertake their action without believing, there must be

somewhere in their hearts, the belief that there is something else, there must be something else. I was attracted to this place that had something to do with resistance, I felt comfortable with the 'Sayid' thing but I was also frightened. I was frightened when I realised that I could not be like them.

This is a new stage in my relationship with them, the resistance. Because it has become visible. By the way, it's a bit startling when one realises that visibly you are one of them, but not really of the, you seem like an instrument in the eyes of the other, 'a means'. Not an autonomous individual who have an understanding with them about this channel inside the party, the resistance. I know eventually I came to notice that my articles contained messages to the Israelis. Israelis began to treat my articles not as someone close to Hezbollah, and someone who knows. There are messages to the Israeli Army within this man's articles. It's true. This has come to be by tacit complicity, there is no necessity for Hezbollah to tell me that he's passing on this information, for the Israeli, to see it in my article. Nor am I writing articles in a way to say look, I'm passing on your information. It just happened. I understood without being told, that part of this reciprocal game, was for me to communicate messages. The matter evolved to the point that complicity was no longer implicit but rather public and explicit. I accepted this role. I felt I had a role. I became a partner, small, but a partner nonetheless. A partner in debate and in the ways ideas are communicated. Somehow I felt I was back to being part of the resistance.

Commander Abed: It was our choice to resist. It was no longer a choice, but rather became an option. What was an option? There was no longer consensus in the party. I sensed there was no longer consensus in the party. The resistance was at a very low point, in the higher levels of the leadership. The party's infrastructure, because of the war, had not been renewed institutionally, nor was the methodology, I witnessed corruption become rampant with individuals. I witnessed narcissism. I still had ability. The energy was there, but the desire to put up with lying to myself as Abdel Karim, or to comrades who might die, whom I could convince, I knew I could convince them, or intimidate even if I fail to convince, they might be intimidated because they still believed me. I sent them and wait, I

don't want to say 48 hours, 24 hours, on my nerves, waiting for their return. They might return or not. How am I going to tell their families? I became responsible then for informing the families for the burials, memorial services and so on. I felt defeat when people started talking behind closed doors and out in the open. It was stated publicly at the regional conference in the south that these people should be brought up before the party's military tribunal. [talking about me] I felt defeated when the vice secretary general, or that peacock, a member in the political bureau stood up and said, 'we in the political bureau had decided to stop all operations but Abdul Karim saw fit to continue himself.' He was lying. That's the moment I felt defeat, I left. I moved away and lived by the sea, never again mixed with the communists or non-communists. Honestly, in 94 I lived at Golden Shores (beach managed by the party). In 95, I left behind anything that had to do with the party. In 94 I left and moved to the sea shore. I also rejected anything to do with civilian life. I wanted to live like an everyday citizen, an employee in a company and so on. But I wasn't able to..I couldn't live like an everyday citizen.