The transformation of the Maronite community in Lebanon in the post 2005 era and the rise of sentiment of Relative Deprivation

(Article begins on next page)

08 January 2022

CHAPTER TWO
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MARONITE COMMUNITY IN LEBANON IN
THE POST-2005 ERA AND THE RISE OF RELATIVE DEPRIVATION
ROSITA DI PERI

Introduction

Lebanese society is marked by multiple identities and belongings within and across groups and individuals. It is divided along—among others—a communitarian/confessional fracture line. Communities are the main pillars of the Lebanese socio-political system and before Lebanon achieved independence in 1943, they were closely linked with external powers that shaped them producing different visions for the future of the Lebanese State. The French, in particular, saw in the Christians of Lebanon an *avant-garde* able to spread western values in the broader Middle East. Under the French Mandate (1920-1943), Lebanese Christians, and the Maronites in particular, felt a special attraction to French ideals and aspired to create a Christian State in Lebanon under the auspices of France. Their hopes were dashed by the National Pact (1943), an unwritten "gentlemen's agreement" between Lebanon's two main communities at the time, the Maronites and the Sunnis, who agreed to renounce their own prerogatives for the sake of the country's unity and to achieve independence from France. This period was crucial to the evolution of Lebanon and its communities. From this moment on, communities apparently became independent entities, but they always maintained strong ties with their foreign "patrons." A constant wavering between two identities, the Western (French) and the Arab, was one of the main features in the political evolution of the Maronites over the years that preceded the eruption of the civil war (1975). During this period, they rapidly became the most powerful political force in the country, playing a pivotal role in its evolution.

Following the end of the civil war and the 1989 Taëf Agreement, however, the Maronite community underwent a slow but steady process of marginalisation that is believed to have affected historical values—a product of the French influence—that were at the heart of the Maronite community and, to some extent, permeated its *modus operandi*.

According to this view, marginalisation is leading to a gradual erosion of the sense of community, producing feelings of "Relative Deprivation" (RD) that could act as an incentive to transformative (if not violent) phenomena that may affect the consociational system in the long run. According to the eminent scholar Ted Robert Gurr, political violence can be explained in terms of RD as the result of collective discontent arising from a discrepancy between expected and achieved welfare. Collective relative deprivation is defined as a group's perception of unfair differences between the group itself and other groups within society. The process of marginalisation of the Maronite community at the demographic, political and economic levels is seen as altering the shared feeling of confidence in the community's founding principles—many of which were influenced by French ideals—and "pride" in being Maronite. The present situation is placing a strain on the "political estate" of the Maronites, leading to change in relationships within the community itself—particularly in the religious and political spheres.[1] Moreover, widening inequalities—both in Lebanon and within the Maronite community—as a consequence of neo-liberal processes and the pressure of Syrian refugees after 2011, reinforce feelings of marginalisation and breed resentment towards the wealthier, more powerful members of the community. This interesting new phenomenon significantly contributes to changing perceptions of what it means to be Maronite.

This chapter relies on fieldwork conducted in Lebanon between 2014 and 2015. It is divided into three sections. The first section reflects on how Lebanese society is marked by pluralism and multiple belongings and illustrates to what extent the latter were challenged by the transformation of Lebanese society, especially after 2005,[2] paving the way for the rise of a sense of Relative Deprivation (RD). Focusing on demographic, political and especially economic factors, the second section looks at the main stages in the marginalisation process of the Maronite community and the accompanying rise in RD. Finally, a general reflection on the effects of marginalisation in Lebanon and in the broader regional context offers insights into the challenges Maronites face today.

The politicisation of communitarianism in Lebanon:
a catalyst for relative deprivation?

In order to understand the recent transformations within the Maronite community and its implications for the Lebanese system, we will briefly discuss how the societal structure, permeated by the communitarian system, has provided fertile ground for the development of a sense of RD over the years. Before doing so, the concept of "confessional community" and its meaning for the Lebanese society need elucidating. "Confessional community" can be defined as a system characterised by the coexistence, in the same territory and under the aegis of religion, of various different groups or communities that are governed by their own authorities, led in turn by organic institutions. Members of the religious hierarchies are granted jurisdiction by the State over matters relating to personal status—understood in the broader sense

---

1 Fiona McCallum, "The political role of the patriarch in the contemporary Middle East," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (2007): 923-940.

2 2005 was a crucial year for Lebanon: after Hariri's assassination, the outbreak of the so-called Cedar Revolution led to the Syrian redeployment from the Lebanese territory.

of family and spiritual life—and they can enforce their own laws and customs. Of course, communities are not monoliths: depending on different leaderships or economic and social conditions, they change over time and can experience deep internal fractures.

The so-called institutionalisation of communities[3] was the crucial element in the development of the confessional system of power allocation in Lebanese society. This process (political as well as social), legitimised by amendments to the 1926 Constitution—which already provided for a communitarian power-sharing formula—has created a system of "social pluralism" where individuals identify with multiple levels of belonging, interests and affiliation.[4] The unity of Lebanese society, in spite of the prominent role of the confessional system, is founded on a high level of multi-belonging.[5] Social integration, unity and supranational alliances, however, cannot by themselves restrict conflict in multi-communitarian societies, where the problem lies in the perception of divisions and their politicisation, and this is especially relevant in the case of Lebanon.[6] According to Gurr,[7] perceptions of divisions develop when a group experiences a feeling of RD, that is to say, when group members perceive they are being treated unfairly compared to other groups. The degree of perception of RD depends on the nature of the people or groups to which they compare themselves.

"Deprivation is relevant to the disposition to collective violence to the extent that many people feel discontented about the same things. Unexpected personal deprivations such as failure to obtain an expected promotion or the infidelity of a spouse ordinarily affect few people at any given time and are therefore narrow in scope. Events and patterns of conditions like the suppression of a political party, a drastic inflation, or the decline of a group's status relative to its relative reference group are likely to precipitate feelings of relative deprivation among whole groups or categories of people."[8]

In Gurr's argument, the theory of RD explains why phenomena of collective violence occur. According to him, the stronger the feeling of RD (especially when it is accompanied by feelings of economic deprivation), the more the groups of a given society will resort to violent phenomena: "The potential for collective violence varies strongly with the intensity and scope of RD among members of a collectivity."[9] Gurr argues that individual or group feelings of prolonged frustration can lead to the explosion of violent phenomena. These arguments are in line with those developed by scholars in the 1930s: Dollard, Miller et al. (1939), for example, were the first to identify a link between repeated frustration and the development of aggressiveness; recently, their arguments have been used in a series of studies seeking to analyse the link between the deterioration of group and individual economic conditions and the development of terrorist phenomena[10].

Going back to Gurr's argument, "The primary source of the human capacity for violence appears to be the frustration-aggression mechanism [...] the anger induced by frustration […] is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression, irrespective of its instrumentalities."[11] The rise of RD with regard to political participation, prosperity, collective/communal values and societal status can result in a decline in coherence, which could lead in turn to a breakdown in the social order and violence. Gurr argues that one group's gain is automatically perceived as a loss by other groups, possibly leading to security issues for societies. Expanding on his argument, it can be claimed that the more the perceptions of RD are politicised, the more likely they will be a problem for societies in terms of limiting violence.

The RD theory seems to be particularly effective in explaining Lebanese society. In a fragmented multi-communitarian society, politicisation of the perceptions of RD helps reinforce divisions and make them the basis of an ideology. When divisions are politicised, they can become conflict generators.

Looking at the recent history of Lebanon, the politicisation of divisions can be seen as being one of the "founding matrixes" of Lebanese society.[12] Since the 1943 National Pact, in particular, identification with the community has become all-encompassing, as communities are responsible for managing every aspect of their members' lives.[13] Community membership has effectively dampened individual dissent: first, because community leaders, be they religious or political officers, have responded to the demands of their members; second, because they have endeavoured to contain individual dissent, lest it question the primacy of the community. Moreover, behaving as a cohesive entity has helped to better define ideological differences among communities; this has proved advantageous in social, political and economic

3 Albert Dagher, *L'état et l'économie au Liban : action gouvernementale et finances publiques de l'indépendance à 1975* (Beyrouth: Cermoc, 1995); Edmond Rabbath, *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel* (Beyrouth : Université Libanaise, 1986).

4 This long-standing process of institutionalisation led to the firm establishment of the communities in the Lebanese territory and their recognition by the central authorities. Pierre Rondot, *Les communautés dans l'état libanaise* (Beyrouth: Cahiers de l'Association France Nouveau Liban, 1979).

5 Nasri A. Messarra, *Le pacte libanaise: le message d'universalité et ses contraintes* (Beyrouth: Edition Librairie Orientale, 2002), 33.

6 This aspect is well emphasised in Lijphart's consociational democracy model. See, Lijphart (1977) and, more recently, for an application of such model to Lebanon, Di Peri (2010) and Fakhoury (2009) among others.

7 Robert T. Gurr, *Why men rebel* (Princeton: NJ: Princeton University, 1970).

8 Ibid., 29.

9 Ibid., 24.

10 Alan Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007); James Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 159-177.

11 Gurr, *Why men rebel,* 125.

12 Georges Charaf, *Communautés et pouvoir au Liban* (Beyrouth: Cedre, 1981).

13 Ahmad Beydoun, *Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains* (Beyrouth : Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1984).

terms. After the civil war ended, the need to take back the territory after years of struggle between and within communities,[14] in addition to the weakness of the Lebanese state, left no room for identification based on shared values and demands.[15] Moreover, due to growing inequalities promoted by neo-liberal State policies and the institutional difficulties well exemplified by the *troika* system,[16] communities underwent a profound transformation, which became more evident after the 2005 assassination of Rafiq Hariri and Israel's 2006 invasion.[17] While the Sunni and Shiite communities were also greatly affected, the most dramatic change was that which took place among the Maronites: the community was divided, its many leaders—Michel Aoun, Samir Geagea, and the Gemayel family, to name but a few— were locked in a fierce competition with one another, so much so that after the civil war, the Maronites seemed to have lost their political centre of gravity[18] as well as their social legitimacy.[19]

The "crisis" of the communities as social, political and economic aggregators,[20] in addition to the decline of their internal coherence, have been creating an increasing sense of RD in Lebanese society, which is especially manifest in the case of the Maronite community. According to Gurr, this situation could lead to a breakdown in the social order and the spread of violence.

---

14 Examples of this are the battle between Muslims in the so-called "War of the Camps" or the contrast between opposing Maronite factions, particularly the President of the Republic, Elias Hrawi, and General Michel Aoun, after the ratification of the Taëf agreement that led to Aoun's exile. See Salem (1991).

15 Elizabeth Picard, "Les habits neufs du communautarisme libanais," *Etudes internationales* 25, no. 4 (1994):49-70.

16 The Taëf agreement is generally thought to have devised the post-war Lebanese political system, where political decisions require the consensus of the three main State institutions (the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament). The three-way decision-making procedure gradually caused the impasse of the incentive structure in the practice of clientelism.

17 Gilbert Achcar and Michel Warschawski, *The 33-day war: Israel's war on Hezbollah in Lebanon and its aftermath* (London: Saqi Books, 2007).

18 Elizabeth Picard, "Les dynamiques politiques des Chrétiens au Liban. Changement de statut et crise du leadership," *Monde Arabe Maghreb Machrek* 153 (1996): 3-21; Simon Haddad, "The political transformation of the Maronites of Lebanon: From dominance to accommodation," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, no. 2 (2002): 27-50.

19 To regain legitimacy, Maronite leaders reinvent themselves employing new narratives. The case of Samir Geagea is emblematic: he was the only Maronite militia man to be imprisoned due to involvement in the civil war. He describes his experience in prison as a rebirth, the genesis of a new, purified political man. See Anid (2014).

20 Perhaps excluding those in the Shiite community who identify with Hizbullah.

"Becoming a minority": the process of marginalisation
of the Maronite community and the rise of RD

The Maronite community emerged from the National Pact of 1943 as the political favourite.[21] The Maronites are the only Christian community in the Middle East to have reached the apex of the political system. Besides, continued support from the West, and France in particular (also in economic terms), has certainly helped to distribute widespread prosperity among its members, to such an extent that, over the years, the Maronites have been considered emblematic of Lebanon's riches and its *laissez-faire* economy.[22] Awareness of their status as one of two leading communities, combined with the fact that they represent the richer strata of the Lebanese population, strengthened their sense of community and reinforced their leadership skills.

Thus, in the pre-civil war period, the Maronite community was demographically, politically and economically superior. After the civil war, the process of marginalisation profoundly affected the three main spheres of superiority of the Maronite community, and it is exactly in those spheres that the feeling of RD has become more pronounced.

Demographics have always been a crucial issue in Lebanon.[23] The Lebanese consociational system is based on a delicate communitarian balance where demographic weight is essential. After the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920, the Maronites became demographically predominant[24] and this went unquestioned until the 1960s, when the presence of the Imam Musa al Sadr in Lebanon played a key role in the political rise of the Shiite community[25]—a repercussion of the broader demographic growth that led the Shiites to prevail over the other communities in the late 1970s.[26] Following the civil war, the loss of demographic centrality[27] became an important part of the rhetoric of Christian leaders, and of the Maronites in particular. Some, such as Samir Geagea, leader of the Lebanese Forces, conducted statistical surveys showing how, for instance, if the diaspora were taken into consideration, Christians would still constitute the majority in Lebanon.[28] This is one of the most often invoked points among Maronites, especially as regards voting rights for the Lebanese living abroad.[29] Thus, looking at the demographic sphere, the sense of RD towards other communities has increased as a consequence of the loss of demographic centrality of the Maronites.

As for the political sphere, it should be noted that the Taëf agreement, rejected by the Maronites, "institutionalised" their marginalisation. It also led to deep divides within the community itself and between the Maronite Church and the Holy See, which looked with favour on an agreement that would put an end to the civil war.[30] The Taëf agreement ratified a de facto situation: on the one hand, the loss of importance of the Christian community, and of the Maronite community in particular, on the other hand, the rise and strengthening of the Muslim communities, notably the Shiites. The main points in the agreement echoed the 1943 National Pact save for a new power-sharing arrangement between communities, introducing a new political and institutional set-up. The (Maronite) President of the Republic was replaced by the (Sunni) Prime Minister as the highest political authority in the country; powers and term of office of the (Shiite) president of Parliament were increased and the number of deputies was raised to 128, equally shared between Christians and Muslims. The Taëf compromise profoundly changed the inter-confessional balance. Equal representation of Christians and Muslims, and the attempt to divide power equally among Maronites, Sunnis and Shiites, altered the communities' perception of the distribution of power and the nature of their relations with their leaders. Whereas before the civil war Maronite pre-eminence had caused considerable frustration among the Sunni and Shiite Muslim communities, after the Taëf agreement the political role of the Maronites was significantly scaled down, although their overall political weight still remained significant.

Rejection of the agreements resulted in the Maronite decision not to hold the 1992 and 1996 elections, and ushered in a process of self-marginalisation and increased fragmentation within the community. This became apparent after 2005: following Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon in the month of May—in the wake of the protests over Hariri's assassination— General Michel Aoun's return from exile,[31] and his decision to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Hizbullah in 2006, exacerbated intra-community bias. Many Christians, especially those involved in the March 14 Coalition, as opposed to the March 8 Alliance that included Hizbullah and Aoun's party, stood up against the Memorandum, viewed

---

21 The National Pact was an (unwritten) agreement that legitimised the power of the Maronite and Sunni communities not only at the social, but also at the State level. The National Pact outlined a power system based on the representativeness (also demographic) of the communities, which favoured the Christians. See, among others, Assaf (1999).

22 Boutros Labaki, "The Christian communities and the economic and social situation in Lebanon," in *Christian communities in the Arab Middle East: the challenge of the future,* ed. Andrea Pacini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

23 The last regular census in Lebanon was conducted in 1932 and from that moment on the demographic question was instrumentally used by all Lebanese political parties. See Maktabi (1999).

24 Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

25 Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1986).

26 See, in particular, Faour (2007).

27 In "Christian" surveys, the comparison is between Muslims and Christians as a whole and not between communities because this would further underline the Maronite marginalisation. Today, Christians make up about 34% of the Lebanese population.

28 The Lebanese Demographic Reality (2013). Interview, member of the Lebanese Forces, Maarab, November 22, 2014.

29 Thibaut Jaulin, *Lebanese Politics of Nationality and Emigration* (Florence: EUI Working Papers, 2006), 29.

30 "The Vatican should understand that Christians in Lebanon are not guinea pigs for the Christian–Islamic dialogue in the world." Bashir Gemayel, quoted in G. E. Irani, "Diplomats in a quandary: The Vatican and the Lebanon war," *American–Arab Affairs* 24 (1988): 38.

31 See note 3.

as an attempt to neutralise the opposing coalition.[32] While diversified alliances and the Christian leaders' vibrant dialectic were seen as examples of internal democracy,[33] the fragmented political spectrum became a restriction. Maronite leaders have since demonstrated their inability to compromise on crucial political issues and the divisions among them have become systematic and hard to overcome. Notable examples are provided by the current difficulties in reaching an agreement on the election of the president of the Republic[34] or, after 2011, the lack of dialogue on the Syrian refugees issue.[35] At the political level, this process of double marginalisation—within the Lebanese political system as a consequence of the Taëf agreement, and within the Maronite community itself as a consequence of internal fragmentation—has increased the feelings of RD and ghettoization.

Finally, in order to understand how quality of life in the Maronite community deteriorated due to the post-civil war shift of power, it is necessary to take a step back and focus on the period immediately preceding the year 1975. Before the civil war broke out, the economic debate was dominated by two contrasting visions: on the one hand, supporters of free trade who wanted to turn the country into a regional "hub" for services and commerce; on the other hand, those who advocated a diversified economy based on domestic agricultural and industrial capacities.[36] The former option prevailed, strongly supported by the Maronites, especially under the presidency of Fouad Chehab (1958–64).[37] Not only did this have important consequences for the Lebanese economy but also for the country's political and administrative systems. The lack of investment in the public sector, the State's inability to provide a range of basic services, and the virtual absence of investments in the manufacturing sector over time have resulted in an economy that is not self-sufficient and a country that is permeated by the values of finance.[38] This also had an impact on the construction of a shared national consciousness, exacerbating sectarian divisions and individualism: the State, committed to supporting entrepreneurial freedom, has substantially failed to reduce social and economic inequalities. This failure proved even more evident in the post-civil war period, as the widening gap between rich and poor become more apparent. As pointed out by George Corm, Lebanon today is a "two-speed country" where most of the wealth and production activities are concentrated in Beirut and Mount Lebanon and concern more or less five percent of the entire population.[39]

When the dream of the "Lebanese miracle"[40] came to an end, Lebanon, like the other countries in the region, was affected by globalisation and neoliberalisation. These processes have had a relevant impact on the communities, their leadership, and the ways in which they interact with the institutions, the political system, their own base and other communities.[41] Rafiq Hariri's rise to power and his reconstruction policy, driven by a neo-liberal agenda, had a strong impact on increased inequality in the country.[42] According to a 2008 UNDP report, approximately 8% of the Lebanese population lives in conditions of extreme poverty on 2.4 US dollars/day, and 20.5% of the Lebanese population falls between the lower and upper poverty lines (4 US dollars/day).[43] Two governorates, Mount Lebanon and the North, witnessed a relative decline in their mean per capita expenditure (compared to the overall average) from 1997 to 2004–05. This is in line with the large concentration of Maronites in the Mount Lebanon region.

The worsening economic situation was met, in Hariri's politics, with the repression of social dissent—a strategy that reached its peak with the suppression of incipient protest movements and the defeat of the Lebanese Trade Unions, skilfully co-opted and silenced by Hariri and his entourage.[44] This policy increased control over the entire society, exacerbating rather than dampening sectarian tensions and social inequalities.[45] However, at least prior to Hariri's assassination, such tensions were kept in check so as to maintain a situation of "neither war nor peace" for the benefit of foreign as well as domestic businessmen and investors.[46] Besides Hariri and his family,[47] the richer and more active strata

32 Hilal Khashan, "Lebanon's Shiite-Maronite Alliance of Hypocrisy," *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (2012): 79-85.

33 Interview, political journalist, Beirut, November 21, 2014; interview, Lebanese parliamentary, Beirut, November 19, 2014.

34 The article was written at the end of 2015. On this point, see Al-Araby al-Jadeed (2015). At the beginning of June 2015, in a joint press conference, Aoun and Geagea declared the start of a common path to reach an agreement for the Presidency of the Republic. *The Daily Star* (2015).

35 Interview, representative of the Phalange Party, Bikfaya, November 20, 2014.

36 Carolyn Gates, *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon. Rise of an Open Economy* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies-I. B. Tauris, 1998).

37 See, in particular, IRFED (1960-61).

38 Albert Dagher, *L'état et l'économie au Liban : action gouvernementale et finances publiques de l'indépendance à 1975* (Beyrouth: Cermoc, 1995).

39 Georges Corm, "Le Liban et les retombées économiques des révoltes arabes," *Oriente Moderno* 94, no. 2 (2014): 302-316.

40 Arnaud Malabre, "Le fantasme du miracle libanais," *Cahier d'Histoire immédiate* 19 (2000): 9-40.

41 Hannes Baumann, "The 'New Contractor Bourgeoisie' in Lebanese Politics: Hariri, Mikati and Fares," in *Lebanon after the cedar revolution,* ed. Are Knudsen and Michel Kerr (London: Hurst & Co., 2012).

42 Ussama Makdisi, "Reconstructing the nation-state: The modernity of sectarianism in Lebanon," *Middle East Report* 200 (1996): 23-30; Young, M. "Stability and the Poor," *The Lebanon Report* 2 (1996): 34.

43 See UNDP (2008). Despite the lack of more recent data, the situation is expected to worsen, especially after the 2011 influx of Syrian refugees in the country.

44 Bassen Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

45 Mona Fawaz, "Neoliberal Urbanity and the Right to the City: A View from Beirut's Periphery," *Development and Change* 40 (2009): 827–852.

46 Lara Khattab, "Neoliberal sectarianism and associational life," in *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon*, B. Salloukh et al. (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 52-69.

47 Ward Vloeberghs, "The Hariri political dynasty after the Arab Spring," *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 241-248.

of the Maronite community benefited the most from this situation. Although the Maronites were affected by political marginalisation, they still had bargaining power within the Lebanese society because of their *economic* power.[48] Marginalisation did not prevent the Maronites from promoting an aggressive policy against the political and social forces that could somehow undermine their economic privileges. For instance, the Maronites played a leading role in co-opting the Lebanese Trade Unions and contributing to their disintegration.[49] Moreover, in the aftermath of the civil war a new face of "maronitism"[50] appeared, marked by widespread uneasiness and fierce criticism of the Maronite political and religious leaders.[51] More than any other community, the Maronites spared no effort in trying to maintain the *status quo* (and conceal their internal malaise). However, and paradoxically, this led to a progressive impoverishment in the country, and to a greater extent in their own community, as well as to self-marginalisation.[52]

The loss of centrality of the Maronite community has generated ambivalence: on the one hand, members who are experiencing the worst living conditions see their situation as being very similar to that of other communities. This feeling appears to be a step towards new trans-communitarian claims. On the other hand, the Maronites are experiencing a sense of RD towards other communities who, many of them seem to believe, receive more attention and aid from their respective leaders.[53] Furthermore, these feelings are fuelling divisions within the Maronite community itself: first, distancing the leaders (political and religious) from the base; second, widening the perception of a gap between rich and poor, thus increasing resentment towards one another. This was especially clear after 2005–06, when the country's general economic conditions underwent a sharp downturn.[54]

The Maronites ultimately seem to be breaking away from the previous communitarian logics, a consequence of the rise of a sense of RD towards the richer strata of their community and towards other communities. Whereas to date violent phenomena have been limited,[55] it can be argued that the increased feelings of RD in the three analysed spheres could be an incentive to the social and political transformation of the Lebanese society.

Conclusions

The process of marginalisation of the Maronite community in Lebanon is leading to its "ghettoization" as part of a broader regional process affecting Christians in general. In Lebanon, where Christians, and the Maronites in particular, traditionally played a crucial role in the construction of the State and society[56] with strong French support, this phenomenon is something new. The rising sense of RD within this community, due to demographic, political and economic marginalisation, is producing new perceptions of the self. The novelty of this process lies in the fact that the sense of RD is increasingly perceived towards members of the Maronite community itself, rather than towards other Lebanese communities. This, in turn, is leading to claims that cross communitarian boundaries. Christians, and the Maronites in particular, are increasingly feeling like a minority in the region. Whereas in the past this feeling was mitigated by the awareness of their dominant position in the socio-political system and by external support, such as from France, today the loss of centrality of the Maronite community may push some members to seek trans-communitarian alliances—and not just at the political level.[57] In particular, the poorest fringes of the Maronite community, which no longer feel represented by an immovable political class,[58] are also losing their confidence in religious leaders that do not seem to care about their conditions.[59] In the long run, this element could lead to the explosion of transformative phenomena: not *between* communities but rather *within* the communities themselves, as happened for instance with the emergence of Salafist groups inside the Sunni community.[60] The rise of inequalities in Lebanon and the internal fractures between rich and poor in the Maronite community could change the essence of "being Maronite" in the future and give birth to a new subject able to transcend the confessional system through the rejection of old patronage ties and external influences. This "emancipation" from old logics and mechanisms of subjectification, not just within the confessional system but also with regard to external influences, could be paradoxically conducive to the creation of new paths of resistance in Lebanon.

---

48 Interview, Maronite religious leader, Jbeil, November 19, 2014; Interview, representative of the Progressive Socialist Party, Beirut, November 22, 2014.

49 Bassel Salloukh, "Sectarianism and struggles for socio-economic rights," in *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon,* Bassel Salloukh et al. (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 70-87.

50 Maronitism is the political and socio-economic strategy promoted by the Maronite community, characterised by the imposition of a pervasive political presence, conservatism, and an economic policy of laissez faire. See Hagopian (1989).

51 To some extent, criticism began during the civil war period when Patriarchs were considered incapable of protecting the Maronite community. See Henley (2008).

52 Interview, Mayor of Ghebele, Kesrouan, May 26, 2015.

53 Interviews carried out in the Maronite village of Ghebele, Kesrouan, between 2014 and 2015.

54 Georges Corm, "Le Liban et les retombées économiques des révoltes arabes," *Oriente Moderno* 94, no. 2 (2014): 302-316.

55 Since the end of the civil war, social tensions in Lebanon have been few and far between: the May 2007 conflict between Hizbullah and the President of the Republic; fighting in the Nahr el Bared camp in 2009 and, more recently, fighting near the Syrian border and in Sidon, related to the Syrian crisis. Overall, Lebanon has shown considerable flexibility and adaptability. See Di Peri (2014).

56 The Maronites believe they are legitimately entitled to rule over Lebanon. See Hagopian (1989).

57 The reference here is to the alliance between Michel Aoun, leader of the Free Patriotic Movement Party, and Hizbullah after the end of the 33 day war of 2006.

58 See, for example, the list of candidates for the elections, where the same names and families appear.

59 Interviews carried out in the Maronite village of Ghebele, Kesrouan, between 2014 and 2015.

60 Daniel Meier, "Lebanon: The Refugee Issue and the Threat of a Sectarian Confrontation," *Oriente Moderno* 94, no. 2 (2014): 382-401.

Bibliography

Achcar, G., and M. Warschawski. *The 33-day war: Israel's war on Hezbollah in Lebanon and its aftermath.* London: Saqi Books, 2007.

Ajami, F. *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon.* London: I. B. Tauris, 1986.

Al-Araby al-Jadeed "Lebanon fails to elect president for 25th time." June 25, 2015. Accessed September 30, 2015. http://goo.gl/7QtIqT.

Anid, N. *L'homme de cedre.* Paris: Calmann-Levy, 2014.

Assaf, G. "Système communautariste et déconfessionnalisation: la problématique de la mutation du système politique libanais." *Travaux et jours* 64 (1999): 43-73.

Baumann, H. "The 'New Contractor Bourgeoisie' in Lebanese Politics: Hariri, Mikati and Fares." In *Lebanon after the cedar revolution,* edited by Are Knudsen, Michel Kerr. London: Hurst & Co., 2012.

Beydoun, A. *Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains.* Beyrouth: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1984.

Charaf, G. *Communautés et pouvoir au Liban.* Beyrouth: Cedre, 1981.

Corm, G. "Le Liban et les retombées économiques des révoltes arabes." *Oriente Moderno* 94, no. 2 (2014): 302-316.

Dagher, A. *L'état et l'économie au Liban : action gouvernementale et finances publiques de l'indépendance à 1975.* Beyrouth: Cermoc, 1995.

Dagher, G. "Radicalisation de l'identité confessionnelle au Liban." *Cahiers de l'Orient* 61 (2001): 131-14.

Di Peri, R. "Il modello consociativo e la sua applicazione al caso libanese*." Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 2 (2010): 1-31.

—. "Re-defining the Balance of Power in Lebanon: Sunni and Shiites Communities Transformations, the Regional Context and the Arab Uprisings." *Oriente Moderno* 94, no. 2 (2014): 335-356.

Dollard J., Miller N. et al. *Frustration and Aggression.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939.

Fakhoury, T. *Democracy and Power- Sharing in Stormy Weather: the Case of Lebanon.* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag for Social Sciences, 2009.

Faour, M. A. "Religion, demography, and politics in Lebanon." *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (2007): 909-921.

Fawaz, M. "Neoliberal Urbanity and the Right to the City: A View from Beirut's Periphery." *Development and Change* 40 (2009): 827–852.

"Geagea, Aoun declare thaw in chilly ties." *The Daily Star.* June 2, 2015. Accessed October 12, 2015. http://goo.gl/EhVlQZ.

Gates, C. *The Merchant Republic of Lebanon. Rise of an Open Economy.* London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies-I. B. Tauris, 1998.

Gurr, T. R. *Why men rebel.* Princeton NJ: Princeton University, 1970.

Haddad, S. "The political transformation of the Maronites of Lebanon: From dominance to accommodation." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, no. 2 (2002): 27-50.

Hagopian, E. C. "Maronite Hegemony to Maronite Militancy: The Creation and Disintegration of Lebanon." *Third World Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1989): 101-117.

Henley, A. D. M. "Politics of a Church at War: Maronite Catholicism in the Lebanese Civil War." *Mediterranean Politics* 13, no. 3 (2008): 353-369.

Irani, G. E. "Diplomats in a quandary: The Vatican and the Lebanon war." *American–Arab Affairs* 24 (1988).

IRFED *Besoins et possibilités de développement du Liban.* Beyrouth: Ministère du Plan, 1960-61.

Jaulin, T. *Lebanese Politics of Nationality and Emigration.* Florence: EUI Working Papers, 2006.

Khashan, H. "Lebanon's Shiite-Maronite Alliance of Hypocrisy." *Middle East Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (2012): 79-85.

Khattab, L. "Neoliberal sectarianism and associational life." In *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon.* B. Salloukh et al., 52-69. London: Pluto Press,2015.

Krueger, A. *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007.

Labaki, B. "The Christian communities and economic and social situation in Lebanon." In *Christian communities in the Arab Middle East: the challenge of the future*, edited by Andrea Pacini. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Lijphart, A. *Democracy in plural societies: A comparative exploration.* Yale University Press, 1977.

Makdisi, U. "Reconstructing the nation-state: The modernity of sectarianism in Lebanon." *Middle East Report* (1996): 23-30.

Maktabi, R. "The Lebanese Census of 1932 Revisited. Who Are the Lebanese?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 219-241.

Malabre, A. "Le fantasme du miracle libanais." *Cahier d'Histoire immédiate* 19 (2000): 9-40.

McCallum, F. "The political role of the patriarch in the contemporary Middle East." *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 6 (2007): 923-940.

Meier, D. "Lebanon: The Refugee Issue and the Threat of a Sectarian Confrontation." *Oriente Moderno* 94, no. 2 (2014): 382-401.

Messarra, A. N. *Le pacte libanaise: le message d'universalité et ses contraintes.* Beyrouth: Edition Libraire Orientale, 2002.

Piazza, J. "Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 159-177.

Picard, E. "Les habits neufs du communautarisme libanais." *Etudes internationales* 15, no. 4 (1994): 49-70.

—. "Les dynamiques politiques des Chrétiens au Liban. Changement de statut et crise du leadership." *Monde Arabe Maghreb Machrek* 153 (1996): 3-21.

Rabbath, E. *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel.* Beyrouth: Université Libanaise, 1986.

Rondot, P. *Les communautés dans l'état libanaise.* Beyrouth: Cahiers de l'Association France Nouveau Liban, 1979.

Salem, P. "Two Years of Living Dangerously: General Awn and the Precarious Rise of Lebanon's Second Republic." *The Beirut Review* 1, no. 1 (1991): 62-87.

Salloukh B. & al. *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon.* London: Pluto Press, 2015.

Salloukh, B. "Sectarianism and struggle for socio-economic rights." In B. Salloukh et al., *The Politics of Sectarianism in Postwar Lebanon* 70-87. London: Pluto Press, 2015.

The Lebanese Demographic Reality. Lebanese Information Centre. Beyrouth: January 2013.

UNDP. *Poverty, Growth and Income Distribution in Lebanon*. (2008) Accessed September 14, 2015. http://goo.gl/64sE4b

Vloeberghs, W. "The Hariri political dynasty after the Arab Spring." *Mediterranean Politics* 17, no. 2 (2012): 241-248.

Young, M. "Stability and the Poor." *The Lebanon Report* 2 (1996): 34.

Zamir, M. *The Formation of Modern Lebanon.* London: Croom Helm, 1985.