

*Ecclesia triumphans?*  
**Sectarianism and the Maronite Community**  
**1943-1975**

[*Ecclesia Triumphans?* El Sectarismo y la Comunidad Maronita,  
1943-1975]

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**Resumen:** Durante la Segunda República Libanesa (1943-1975) existía la percepción de que la comunidad maronita era la secta dominante del país y ostentaba un papel casi hegemónico dentro del marco confesional del Estado. Mediante el análisis de tres acontecimientos históricos clave (la “Revolución del Agua de Rosas” de 1952, la crisis de 1958 y las elecciones presidenciales de 1970), este ensayo tratará de probar que la comunidad maronita no ostentaba un control desproporcionado sobre la política libanesa y que el sectarismo no era el factor predominante y definitorio de su sistema político, sino uno más entre otros lazos tradicionales, cuya influencia era aún mayor.

**Abstract:** During the Second Lebanese Republic (1943-1975), the Maronite Community was perceived as the country’s leading sect, holding an almost hegemonic role within the state’s confessional framework. By analyzing three key historical events (the 1952 “Rosewater Revolution”, the 1958 Crisis and the 1970 presidential elections), this essay will try to prove that neither the Maronite Community held a disproportionate control over Lebanon’s politics, nor sectarianism was the predominant factor defining its political system, but one among other traditional ties, whose influence was even bigger.

**Palabras clave:** Maronitas. Sectarismo. Confesionalismo. Tradicionalismo.

**Key words:** Maronites. Sectarianism. Confessionalism. Traditionalism.



*A Rose among thorns, an impregnable rock in the sea,  
unshaken by the waves and fury of the thundering tempest*

Pope Leo X, *on the Maronites*

ونبتى

*And we stay*

(Written on the walls of Beirut, 1982)

### **Introduction\***

Between 1988 and 1990, the Lebanese Army, under the command of General Michel 'Aūn, and the strongest of the remaining Christian militias, the Lebanese Forces (*al-quwwāt al-lubnāniyyah*), fought a highly destructive, fratricide, intra-Christian war which brought the Civil War (1975-1990) to an end, ruining any chance of organized resistance against the Syrian invasion. However sad this episode might be, at least it gave a true picture of the internal divisions affecting all Lebanese communities, in spite of the Western press' tiresome – even misleading – insistence in presenting the conflict as a Muslim-Christian war, a kind of 'clash of civilizations' produced long before Huntington wrote his famous book.

This insistence, both journalistic and academic, on the confessional aspect of the Civil War is but a logic consequence of the peculiar structure of the Lebanese political system, where public office is distributed following a strict sectarian apportionment, which allows only certain

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\* The original version of this article will be published by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in its collection of MA theses. Special thanks are due to María Isabel Fierro Bello (CCHS-CSIC) for her inestimable help throughout the process of writing it, and Fiona McCallum (University of St. Andrews) for her kind remarks and improvement suggestions. The transcription of personal and place names follows the rules of IJMES. Those place names having an English translation appear in their translated form (thus, Beirut and not Bayrūt). Names of authors are displayed as they appear in their books or articles.

communities to occupy certain positions; therefore, the President is always a Maronite, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of the National Assembly, a Shiite and so forth. The Legislative Chamber itself was – and still is – confessionally structured, following a 6:5 proportion favourable to Christians before 1990 and now, divided by half for each religion. The origins of this system are widely known to hark back to the disturbances which ravaged the Mountain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the principle of confessional representation being firstly enshrined in the institution of the double *Qā'imaqāmiyyah*, the Northern one being put under a Maronite chief, the Southern one, under a Druze. Thereafter, all institutional arrangements in the area currently known as Lebanon have followed this line, including the *Mutaşarrifiyyah* (1861-1916), the French Mandate (1920-1943) and the independent Lebanese Republic.

The rationale behind this sectarian organization, enshrined later on in the so-called *National Pact*, obeys, in the words of Michel Chiha, father of the 1926 Lebanese Constitution and national conscience of the Second Republic (1943-1975), to the fact that Lebanon is «a country of associated confessional minorities»<sup>1</sup>, which need to find, in the Chamber and the institutions, the necessary balance between them in order to «gather in the Lebanese community all the Lebanese communities»<sup>2</sup>. In a country so divided as Lebanon, «the profound tranquility which results from an equitable policy forbidding all kinds of violence against the minority, whichever it is»<sup>3</sup> can only be achieved, in the opinion of Chiha, by guaranteeing all confessional groups a parliamentary watchtower for the defense of their rights.

And despite widespread criticism, the system managed to control inter-sectarian conflict for over three decades<sup>4</sup>. However, with so much scholarly

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<sup>1</sup> Michel CHIHA, *Politique Intérieure* (Beirut: Éditions du Trident, 1964), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> M. CHIHA, *Politique*, p. 97. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>3</sup> M. CHIHA, *Politique*, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Michael HUDSON, *The Precarious Republic Revisited: Reflections on the Collapse of Pluralist Politics in Lebanon* (Washington D.C.: Institute of Arab Development, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1977), p. 6.

emphasis directed at the external characteristics of the Lebanese political structure, the intra-sectarian aspect has been sorely forgotten, in spite of the recognition, by just a few authors<sup>5</sup>, of the importance of other loyalties beyond confessional belonging, like kinship or fealty, which in the case of the former was even considered «Lebanon's most solid and enduring tie»<sup>6</sup>, way ahead of confessional belonging. In the same spirit, Albert Hourani recognized that «[confessional] communities are not [...] solid bodies having a single interest or attitude, and [this] division [...] is not the only [...] which can be made of the population of Lebanon, and in some ways may not be the most significant.»<sup>7</sup>, therefore there is a felt need to study the inner working of the different Lebanese communities, in order to fully grasp the historical processes which took place in that country since it became an independent state.

Our essay will try to tackle this need making a contribution to the growing body of literature maintaining that confessionalism is not the dominant factor in Lebanese politics and, to do so, our attention will be focused on the Maronite community. An ethno-religious group<sup>8</sup> whose role during the First Republic has been variably described as preponderant<sup>9</sup>, dominant<sup>10</sup>, privileged<sup>11</sup> and even hegemonic<sup>12</sup>, which makes the unders-

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<sup>5</sup> Let us mention Arnold Hottinger, Samir Khalaf and Albert Hourani.

<sup>6</sup> Samir KHALAF, "Primordial Ties and Politics in Lebanon", *Middle Eastern Studies* 4 (1968), p. 246.

<sup>7</sup> Albert HOURANI, "Ideologies of the Mountain and the City", in Roger OWEN (ed.), *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> John P. ENTELIS, "Belief-system and ideology formation in the Lebanese Katā'ib Party", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973), p. 148.

<sup>9</sup> Boutros LABAKI, "Les chrétiens du Liban (1943-2008). Prépondérance, marginalisation et renouveau", *Confluences Méditerranée* 66 (2008), p. 106

<sup>10</sup> Marie-Christine AULAS, "The socio-ideological development of the Maronite Community: the emergence of the Phalanges and the Lebanese Forces", *Arab Studies Quarterly* 7 (1985), p. 14.

<sup>11</sup> M. HUDSON, *Precarious*, p. 8; Fawwaz TRABOULSI, *A History of Modern Lebanon*, (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007), p. 110.

tanding of its internal dynamics a must to realize why the only Arab Middle East's experiment at political and economic liberalism crashed in such a dramatic way as a 15-year-long civil war. This study will also provide us with the opportunity to demonstrate the radical falsehood of the aforementioned adjectives, and to prove that there was no Maronite dominance or hegemony in Lebanese politics in the Republic of Independence, but «a full partnership between the various Christian and Moslem sects in which no one sect alone could determine policy»<sup>13</sup>.

To achieve our goals, this essay is divided in three clearly differentiated parts. Apart from a thorough review of the available literature on Maronite History and Lebanese politics, we will examine Maronite politics in three periods: the Crises of 1952 and 1958 and the Legislative Election of 1970. In so doing, our attention will be focused in vital moments for Lebanon, emphasizing the inner working of the community, which will provide us with more information about it than a mere overview of Lebanese History during the studied period. After this second part, of an essentially descriptive nature, the third and last part of this essay will analyze the historical facts to give appropriate answers to the proposed questions.

## **1. Literature review**

It is almost a tradition in Middle East scholarship to begin any essay on Lebanon by stating that primordial ties dominate that country's politics. The widely accepted importance of sect, kin, fealty and family in the development of political life in the country of the Cedar overwhelms the literature, and this paper does not pretend to break away from this tradition, but to question the assumption that many authors make about the predominance of the sectarian factor over other considerations (Michael

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<sup>12</sup> Eyal ZISSER, "The Maronites, Lebanon and the State of Israel: Early Contacts", *Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (1995), p. 889.

<sup>13</sup> Kamal S. SALIBI, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1965), p. 188.

Hudson, Fawwaz Traboulsi, Camille Habib, Jihad Nammour). Curiously, most of these “anti-confessional” scholars have also the tendency to underline what they label as Christian dominance over Lebanese politics, that is the case, for instance, of Fawwaz Traboulsi, who goes as far as to affirm that «sectarian pluralism barely concealed Maronite political primacy»<sup>14</sup>.

For most of the mentioned authors, confessionalism in particular, and the survival in general, of these traditional ties prevented the modernization of the Lebanese political system, this being the opinion of Michael Hudson, for whom «the proportional representation solution for sectarian tensions aggravated other problems because of the policy immobilism that it engendered [preventing] the Lebanese state to modernize itself»<sup>15</sup>, whereas Camille Habib thinks that «[c]onsociation is a system that contradicts the rules of Western democracy [and] defies the modern spirit of individual endeavour and social change»<sup>16</sup>. In his opinion, the «confessional political system breeds nothing but crises»<sup>17</sup>. Even some of the authors recognizing the prominent role played by other traditional ties, alongside confessionalism, in the political life of Lebanon, characterize their persistence as having negative consequences, Nizar Hamzeh, for example, considers that the former have had «a constraining effect on the enactment of universalistic policies and [have] discouraged the development of citizen participation»<sup>18</sup>.

However, as has already been mentioned, we will maintain throughout this study – together with authors the like of Farid el-Khazen, Samir Khalaf, Caroline E.A. Knight or Oren Barak, that confessionalism was neither the foremost factor conditioning Lebanese life during the Second

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<sup>14</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> M. HUDSON, *Precarious*, p. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Camille HABIB, “Lebanese Politics and the Tyranny of Confessionalism”, *Confluences Méditerranée* 70 (2009), p. 65.

<sup>17</sup> C. HABIB, “Tyranny”, p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> Nizar A. HAMZEH, “Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 37 (2001), p. 167.

Republic nor a factor preventing its political modernization because, as Samir Khalaf states, «political modernization and the persistence of traditions need not be incompatible»<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, we fully coincide with Caroline E. A. Knight, when she says that «confessionalism has been used as a scapegoat for many problems whose true roots lie somewhere»<sup>20</sup>.

In order to do so, our attention will be concentrated on the evolution of the Maronite community, trying to prove that this *tā'ifah* did not hold a hegemonic domination over Lebanon during the period under study, being instead participant in a consociational arrangement that «functioned relatively well [until] it was subjected to [...] externally-generated pressure»<sup>21</sup>. By putting the focus over this community, we are also trying to pay our modest contribution to a sector of scholarship which has been, until now, utterly neglected: that of Maronite History in independent Lebanon. It is truly surprising that, leaving aside a couple of PhD or MPhil thesis<sup>22</sup> and the not very scientific *The Maronites in History* by Matti Moosa (who uses more than half of the book to attack what he considers as the weak points of Maronite doctrine), almost no author has dealt in depth with the contemporary history of the Middle East's only Christian compact minority. This neglect contrasts vividly with the interest that the medieval and modern History of the Maronites has aroused in the scholar community, with such examples as the encyclopaedic *Histoire des Maronites* by Mgr. Boutros Dib, or Kamal Salibi's *Maronite Historians of Mediaeval Lebanon*, not to mention hundreds of academic articles

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<sup>19</sup> S. KHALAF, «Primordial», p. 245.

<sup>20</sup> Caroline E. A. KNIGHT, «Traditional Influences upon Lebanese Politics», *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 17 (1992), p. 341.

<sup>21</sup> Farid EL-KHAZEN, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon 1967-1976* (London–New York: I.B. Tauris in association with The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2000), p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> Ferdinand DREXLER, *Geschichte der Maroniten des Libanon unter politischem Blickpunkt mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der modernen Forschung* (Vienna: Universität Wien, 2012) and Noël W. SPENCER, *The role of the Maronite Patriarchate in Lebanese Politics from 1840 to the Present* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1963).

published in dozens of journals, first and foremost among them *Parole d'Orient*, the Arab Christian and Syriac Studies journal of the Maronite Université du Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (USEK).

To achieve our goals, attention will be given first to the historical evolution of the Lebanese State between its independence and the outbreak of the Civil war, by centering on three fundamental events: the 1952 “Rosewater Revolution”, the 1958 Crisis and the 1970 presidential elections, which will be followed by an analysis where the hypothesis presented in this section will be confirmed.

## 2. Historicak study

### 2.1. Bishārah al-Khūrī and the 1952 Crisis

On September 21<sup>st</sup> 1943, Bishārah al-Khūrī was elected President of the Lebanese Republic, receiving the overwhelming support of the National Assembly, with 44 votes in his favour and three abstentions<sup>23</sup>. His ascension to the First Magistracy represented a triumph for British interests at a time of intense rivalry between that country and France for the control of the Levant<sup>24</sup>, and French apprehensions about Khūrī’s triumph were indeed justified for, as soon as he took office, he made clear his aim to lead Lebanon towards full independence, by amending the 1926 Constitution and eliminating the prerogatives it reserved for the mandatory authorities<sup>25</sup>.

Khūrī was elected on the common Islamo-Christian platform represented by the Constitutional Bloc, which called for full Lebanese

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<sup>23</sup> Denise AMMOUN, *Histoire du Liban Contemporain 1860-1943* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 440; Kamal S. SALIBI (*History*, p. 188) gives a different result: 44 votes in favour and 11 abstentions.

<sup>24</sup> Charles WINSLOW, *Lebanon. War and Politics in a Fragmented Society* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), pp. 78-79.

<sup>25</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 79.



independence and cooperation with the rest of the Arab world<sup>26</sup>. Such an arrangement, which was on the basis of the future National Pact, was read differently by Muslims and Christians<sup>27</sup> but, as Kamal Salibi reminds, «neither side insisted on [their] point»<sup>28</sup>. The National Pact would be confirmed as a quasi-constitutional document, in spite of its oral character, by way of the Ministerial Declaration of October 7<sup>th</sup>, inaugurating an era of «virtual partnership in the running of the affairs of the state between [the] President [...] and [the] Prime Minister [...]»<sup>29</sup>.

However, things were soon to get sour for, as soon as the National Assembly approved the bill of Constitutional Reform on November 8<sup>th</sup> 1943 despite General de Gaulle's opposition<sup>30</sup>, the High Commission proceeded to suspend the Fundamental Law, imprison President Khūrī and most of his Cabinet and appoint Imīl Iddih – the longtime ally of the French and paramount representative of the Maronist current which promoted the idea of a smaller, Christian-homogeneous *Petit Liban*<sup>31</sup> in alliance with France or even the Zionist movement<sup>32</sup> – as the new president.

However, France's move went wrong. The whole of Lebanon mobilized in support of their incarcerated leaders and refused to pay heed to Iddih's Government, in spite of his popularity within the Maronite Community (in fact, the Maronite areas of Mount Lebanon had been the only area where Khūrī's Constitutional Bloc did not win the legislative elections in the Summer of 1943), and supported the rump Government constituted by the two members of Khūrī's Cabinet who had not been detained: Ḥabīb Abū

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<sup>26</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 79.

<sup>27</sup> Farid EL-KHAZEN, *The Communal Pact of National Identities. The Making and Politics of the 1943 National Pact* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1991), pp. 16-17.

<sup>28</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*, p. 187.

<sup>29</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 110.

<sup>30</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 79.

<sup>31</sup> Meir ZAMIR, "Émile Eddé and the Territorial Integrity of Lebanon", *Middle Eastern Studies* 14 (1978), pp. 232-235.

<sup>32</sup> Stéphane MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab. Une figure oubliée de l'Histoire libanaise* (Paris–Beirut: Karthala and Presses de l'Ifpo, 2011), pp. 113-114; E. ZISSER, "Contacts", pp. 889-918.

Shahlā and Majīd Arslān. Even the Maronite Church, which had maintained an ambivalent position towards full independence, expressed its full support for the imprisoned Government<sup>33</sup>, joining the voices which called for complete independence and French withdrawal. Under strong British and American pressure – even threats<sup>34</sup>, the French finally gave in and released Khūrī and his Government on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, effectively putting an end to their Mandate over Lebanon.

Free to rule without French interference (which would be definitely erased by the transfer of the *Services d'Intérêts Communs*<sup>35</sup> on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1943 and the handover of the commandment of the *Troupes Spéciales*, on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1945, soon to become the embryo of the Lebanese Army), Khūrī and his partner in the fight for independence, Riyād al-Ṣulḥ, gave birth, as was advanced before, to the tradition of partnership at the helm of the State between the Maronite President and the Sunni Prime Minister, counterbalancing the constitutional omnipotence enjoyed by the President with the popular support that strong Sunni leaders like Ṣulḥ or Karāmī commanded among their correligionists<sup>36</sup>. Together, Khūrī and Ṣulḥ undertook the task of building the institutions of independent Lebanon and managed to do so with a considerable degree of success, particularly in the international arena, where Lebanon joined the UN as a founding member,

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<sup>33</sup> E. ZISSER, “Contacts”, p. 900.

<sup>34</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 79.

<sup>35</sup> Denise AMMOUN describes these services as follows: «*Les “services d'intérêts communs” comprennent un large éventail d'organismes dont la France, en sa qualité de mandataire, assurait jusque-là la direction pour le compte des gouvernements libanais et syrien. Il suffit de citer les douanes et la gestion des recettes douanières, les travaux publics, les PTT, les poudres et explosifs, la Sûreté générale, le contrôle des sociétés concessionnaires et le séquestre des biens ennemis, le service relatif à la propriété industrielle, commerciale, littéraire et artistique, etc. Et, bien sûr, le commandement des Troupes Spéciales*». (*Histoire du Liban Contemporain 1943-1990* [Paris: Fayard, 2004], p. 19).

<sup>36</sup> Eyal ZISSER, “The Downfall of the Khuri Administration: A Dubious Revolution”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 16 (1994), p. 493; F. EL-KHAZEN, *Breakdown* (2000), pp. 241-242.

at the same time that regional threats to the country's independence were finally suffocated with the signing of the founding document of the Arab League, the Alexandria Protocol (October 7<sup>th</sup> 1944), whose article 4 «emphasize[s the Arab States] respect of the independence and sovereignty of Lebanon in its present frontiers»<sup>37</sup>.

In the internal scene, Khūrī's mandate is considered the golden age of the "Merchant Republic", an era of unbridled capitalism and economic flourishing, which Kamal Salibi defines as a time of «phenomenal prosperity»<sup>38</sup>. Long before the advent of oil money from the Gulf, Lebanon had already become an international trading center<sup>39</sup>, which was judiciously spending its wartime savings in the development of massive infrastructure projects, like the construction of a new airport. «In no time», Samir Khalaf reminds, «Beirut evolved into the main financial center of the Middle East and one of the leading centers in the world»<sup>40</sup>. The Lebanese economy benefited even from the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, which provided the country with a huge pool of unskilled and inexpensive labor, but also with the investments and training brought in by the Palestinian middle classes<sup>41</sup> (one of them, Yūsif Baydas, popularly known as «*monsieur cent milliards*»<sup>42</sup>, founded what was to become Lebanon's largest bank, the *Intra*, and also its biggest financial scandal, when the Bank collapsed in 1966). Moreover, the Arab boycott against Israel did also redound to the benefit of Beirut's role as a trading center, for most firms settled in Palestine relocated to its northern neighbor.

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<sup>37</sup> The Avalon Project. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/alex.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/alex.asp)

<sup>38</sup> Kamal S. SALIBI, "Lebanon under Fuad Chehab 1958-1964", *Middle Eastern Studies* 2 (1966), pp. 214-215.

<sup>39</sup> Samir KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon. A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 160.

<sup>40</sup> S. KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil*, p. 160.

<sup>41</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 93.

<sup>42</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 390.

However brilliant the macro-economic framework could seem, prosperity did not benefit all elements of the Lebanese society equally. In fact, the service-oriented economy was under the control of an extremely reduced number of families – mostly Christian<sup>43</sup>, known as “the consortium” which held «monopolistic control over the main axes of the country’s economy»<sup>44</sup>, including two-thirds of all foreign imports<sup>45</sup>, and around 40% of the GNP for 1948<sup>46</sup>. At the same time, lower-income strata, which represented about 78% of the total population, controlled less than a fourth of national income<sup>47</sup>.

Together with such an unequal income distribution, Bishārah al-Khūrī’s mandate was also plagued by corruption and nepotism<sup>48</sup>, as well as by scandalous electoral fraud, both in the legislative elections of 1947 and 1951, the former being vividly described by Denise Ammoun in the following terms:

*Dans certains villages, même les morts ont voté. Dans plusieurs villes, les fonctionnaires ont ajouté des urnes gonflées de bulletins factices, et le nombre de voix obtenues par le vainqueur a atteint le double, sinon le triple, de celui des électeurs inscrits [...] Parfois aussi [...] un candidat est élu sans avoir le nombre minimum de voix requises ...*<sup>49</sup>

The reasons behind such an electoral fraud stemmed not only from the President’s willingness to control the Legislative Chamber, but also from his desire to be reelected, in spite of the express constitutional provision

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<sup>43</sup> Fawwaz TRABOULSI (*Modern Lebanon*, p. 115) counts a total of 30 families, 24 Christian and 6 Muslim.

<sup>44</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 115.

<sup>45</sup> S. KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil*, p. 163.

<sup>46</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 117.

<sup>47</sup> B. LABAKI, “Chrétien”, p. 172.

<sup>48</sup> George BRITT, “Lebanon’s Popular Revolution”, *The Middle East Journal* 7 (1953), pp. 3-5; C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, pp. 95-96; E. ZISSER, “Downfall”, pp. 496-497; D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 109.

<sup>49</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 110.

preventing the President to serve more than one consecutive mandate. His goal achieved by the favorable vote of the National Assembly on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1947, this provoked, nonetheless, the apparition of a growing, nation-wide and inter-sectarian opposition<sup>50</sup> to his rule, which was further fed by the economic discontent extended among the middle and lower classes<sup>51</sup>, and ended up by exploding after the legislative elections of 1951, which being cleaner than those of 1947<sup>52</sup>, gave the opposition more visibility. Moreover, the death of Riyāḍ al-Ṣulḥ, killed in Amman on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1951, dealt a severe blow to Khūrī, who lost one of the mainstays of his power. The Sunni leader, whose prestige both among his coreligionists and around the Arab world, was intact, and his Maronite counterpart had been masters in «the art of Levantine patronage»<sup>53</sup>; without him and his ability «to control the Moslem populace in times of crisis»<sup>54</sup>, Khūrī started to find increasingly difficult to reshuffle the cabinet in order to ensure his permanence in power.

Meanwhile, the Opposition was organized under a common platform calling for social and political reform<sup>55</sup>, which was variously labeled as the “Socialist Front”<sup>56</sup> or the “Patriotic Socialist Front”<sup>57</sup>, joining together figures as diverse as Kamīl Sham‘ūn, Kamāl Junblāṭ, the Iddi brothers or Pierre al-Jumayyil’s Katā’ib party<sup>58</sup>. Even higher Maronite prelates, not

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<sup>50</sup> E. ZISSER, “Downfall”, p. 497.

<sup>51</sup> G. BRITT, “Revolution”, pp. 4, 8-9; F. Traboulsi, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 124.

<sup>52</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 96.

<sup>53</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 82.

<sup>54</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*, p. 195.

<sup>55</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 125.

<sup>56</sup> G. BRITT, “Revolution”, p. 11; C. Winslow, *Lebanon*, p. 96.

<sup>57</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 125.

<sup>58</sup> Founded in 1936 «as a paramilitary youth movement» (Frank STOAKES, “The Supervigilantes: The Lebanese Kataeb Party as a Builder, Surrogate and Defender of the State”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 11 [1975], p. 215), the Lebanese *Katā’ib* Party evolved into one of the biggest mass parties of the Arab world. Inspired by Maronite nationalism in its origins, the party evolved towards more moderate positions before the Civil War (J. P. ENTELIS, “Belief-System”, p. 151), but always with the aim of building a strong

least among them, the Patriarch himself<sup>59</sup> and the Archbishop of Beirut, Mgr. Mubārak<sup>60</sup>, joined the choir of voices demanding the President's resignation.

Khūrī's last attempts at reform did not manage to convince anyone<sup>61</sup>, despite his nomination of prestigious members of the Sunni Community to the Premiership, like Sāmī al-Ṣulḥ and 'Abdallah al-Yāfī. Not even Khūrī's sacrifice of his unpopular brother Salīm, in the Summer of 1952, by forcing him to resign from his responsibilities in the Police and the *Gendarmerie*<sup>62</sup>, managed to calm down the popular reaction that, by then, had already set Lebanon on fire, with a wave of strikes that paralyzed the country<sup>63</sup>, and the huge Opposition rally in Dayr al-Qamar (August 17<sup>th</sup> 1952), which gathered over forty thousand people calling for the President's resignation<sup>64</sup>. Unable to recompose the governmental coalition, without army support<sup>65</sup> nor any possible ally to turn to, Bishārah al-Khūrī resigned on September 18<sup>th</sup> 1952, leaving General Shihāb as provissional Head of Government until the election of a new President.

## 2.2. 'The Revolt of the Pashas' or the 1958 Crisis

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1952, less than a week after Bishārah al-Khūrī's resignation, the National Assembly elected Kamīl Sham'ūn as the second President of independent Lebanon. In his nomination speech, the President «promised to fight corruption, talked about the 'modesty and ascetism' of the president's post and promised to abolish the privileges and formalities

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state «commanding power, efficiency and respect» (F. STOKES, "Supervigilantes", p. 222).

<sup>59</sup> E. ZISSER, "Contacts", p. 900.

<sup>60</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> E. ZISSER, "Downfall", p. 501.

<sup>62</sup> E. ZISSER, "Downfall", p. 504.

<sup>63</sup> G. BRITT, "Revolution", p. 13.

<sup>64</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 120.

<sup>65</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*, p. 195.

attached to it»<sup>66</sup>, and in consonance with the platform of the anti-Khūrī Opposition, he also promised to foster a reformist agenda to end the abuses that had characterized the former Administration<sup>67</sup>. This initial reformist impulse, embodied by Khālīd Shihāb’s “Cabinet of Decrees”, manifested itself in a number of far-reaching reforms affecting both the public and the private sectors<sup>68</sup> (including granting voting rights to women, or establishing civil service examinations). However, the precarious alliance that had brought Sham‘ūn to power started soon to decompose, due to its members’ different positions on the extent of such reforms<sup>69</sup>, and the President started to rely on the Consortium and on President Khūrī’s former allies in the Constitutional Bloc<sup>70</sup>.

Sham‘ūn’s halfhearted reforms<sup>71</sup> were not enough to alter the socio-economic foundations of the Republic, which continued maintaining a *laissez-faire* outlook excluding most of the population from the benefits of an economic growth which continued unabated, in spite of the political turmoil affecting both the country and the region<sup>72</sup>. The passing of a banking secrecy law, in 1957, the growing gold coverage of the Lebanese pound (which attained a 95% by the end of 1955<sup>73</sup>) and the arrival of Arab capitals fleeing from the nationalizing policies then *en vogue* in most Middle East countries, only served to consolidate the country’s outward-looking, service-oriented economic outlook.

However, Sham‘ūn’s presidency is best remembered for the exorbitant role Lebanon came to play in Middle East politics<sup>74</sup>. The president’s

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<sup>66</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 129.

<sup>67</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 129.

<sup>68</sup> Caroline ATTIE, *Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950’s* (New York and London: I.B. Tauris in association with The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2004), p. 51.

<sup>69</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, pp. 132-134.

<sup>70</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 128.

<sup>71</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 99.

<sup>72</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*, p. 197.

<sup>73</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*, p. 197.

<sup>74</sup> Juan ROMERO, “Discourse and Mediation in the Lebanese Crisis of 1958”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 48 (2012), p. 568.

impeccable Pan-Arab credentials<sup>75</sup> led him to pose as a mediator between conflicting Arab States<sup>76</sup>, and so he tried to broker a settlement between the Iraqi Hashemites and Saudi Arabia's royal family<sup>77</sup> and, later on, between Egypt and Iraq<sup>78</sup>. However, the international scene Sham'ūn had to deal with was not the same as that of Khūrī and Şulḥ's era, for the old nationalist politics of the independence age, with its foreign-educated, liberal-prone *hommes politiques*, was about to set, to be substituted by a new epoch, wherein the charismatic leaderships of strongmen, like Nāşir, was to alter forever the face of Middle East politics.

Fearing the influence that the Egyptian president came to exert on Lebanon's Muslims<sup>79</sup>, Sham'ūn started to shift away from Lebanon's traditional neutralist position and to rely more intensely on the West, especially on Great Britain and the United States<sup>80</sup>.

The signature, on January 13<sup>th</sup> 1955 of the British-sponsored Baghdad Pact, by Iraq and Turkey, not only provoked «violent student and popular demonstrations across Lebanon»<sup>81</sup>, but also, and more importantly, excited inter-Arab passions beyond reason as Nāşir triggered a vicious media campaign against his Iraqi counterparts<sup>82</sup>. Despite Lebanon's attempt at mediation during the Arab League Cairo Conference<sup>83</sup> (January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1955), Iraq ratified the Pact in February, and Nasser responded by signing a Pact with Saudi Arabia and Syria (known as the "Arab Defence Pact"), which specifically refused any alliance with a non-Arab power, and called for a closer cooperation between those countries.

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<sup>75</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 45.

<sup>76</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 71.

<sup>77</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 152.

<sup>78</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 184.

<sup>79</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 130; C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, pp. 103, 105; K. S. SALIBI, *History*, p. 198.

<sup>80</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 83.

<sup>81</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 131.

<sup>82</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, pp. 177-178.

<sup>83</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 184.



Even though Sham‘ūn refused to join either of the Pacts, in spite of strong pressure coming from both sides<sup>84</sup>, he appeared to support the anti-communist Treaty when, in the midst of the Iraqi-Egyptian storm, he visited Turkey (March 1955) where he signed a number of cooperation agreements with the Turkish leader, Adnan Menderes, and both presidents proclaimed «the identity of views and policies of the two countries»<sup>85</sup>, thus linking Lebanon, to a certain extent, to the Baghdad Pact. The visit, widely considered a diplomatic *faux pas* even by staunch Westernists, like the owner and editor of *L'Orient*, Georges Naccache<sup>86</sup>, compromised Lebanon's position in the Arab world and eroded Sham‘ūn's popularity among his country's Muslim population, which was to be further undermined by the country's reaction to the Suez Crisis.

The Suez War, triggered after Nāṣir's Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal on July 26<sup>th</sup> 1956, had the double effect of polarizing even further inter-Arab rivalries and elevating Nasser to quasi-divine stature among the Arab masses, putting Sham‘ūn on the difficult position of having to choose between the growing wave of Nāṣir-sponsored Arab nationalism and his own Western-oriented Lebanism<sup>87</sup>. In order to avoid taking sides, the Lebanese President convened an Arab League meeting in Beirut, on November 1956, which severely condemned the tripartite (French, British and Israeli) aggression against Egypt and resolved to break off relations with both European powers. Sham‘ūn, however, refused to do so<sup>88</sup> – like Jordan and Iraq which maintained their diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom<sup>89</sup> – arguing that «it was more advantageous for the Arabs to maintain direct relations with the West, particularly during a crisis, rather

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<sup>84</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 100.

<sup>85</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 132.

<sup>86</sup> Vid. “*Taurus, notre souci... Lettre ouverte au Président Chamoun*, published in *L'Orient* on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1955.

<sup>87</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 104.

<sup>88</sup> S. KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil*, p. 108.

<sup>89</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 223.

than have to resort to third party mediators»<sup>90</sup>. However, and in spite of the apparent success of the conference<sup>91</sup>, Sham‘ūn’s reasons for not breaking relations with France and Great Britain did not manage to convince neither a large part of the Lebanese public, including Sunni ministers Salām and Yāfī, who resigned in protest<sup>92</sup>, nor the Egyptian president, who affirmed that «the rulers of Lebanon stabbed us in the back during our time of stress, at the time when Britain, France and Israel were attacking us»<sup>93</sup>, and began an intense propaganda war against the Lebanese president via his foremost tool: the radio broadcaster “The Voice of the Arabs”.

The international situation became even more complex with the announcement made by US President Eisenhower on January 5<sup>th</sup> 1957, of the new American policy guidelines for the Middle East (unsurprisingly, the principles became known as the “Eisenhower Doctrine”). The Doctrine’s purpose was, according to the President’s speech, to «preserve the integrity and independence of nations of the Middle East [...] against armed aggression from any country controlled by International Communism»<sup>94</sup>, committing American assistance whenever it would be necessary to avoid such an outcome. The Lebanese acceptance of the Doctrine, formally subscribed on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1957, had to do with Sham‘ūn’s perception of Nāṣir as a threat for Lebanese independence as well as his belief that «only close cooperation with the western powers could guarantee [the country’s] national security»<sup>95</sup>. The establishment of the United Arab Republic (joining Egypt and Syria in a unitary Republic under Nasser’s leadership) only served to confirm Sham‘ūn’s fears, for as soon as it was created, throngs of Lebanese poured into the road of

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<sup>90</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 104.

<sup>91</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 105.

<sup>92</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*; F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 131; C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 105.

<sup>93</sup> Cit. in C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 104.

<sup>94</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 109.

<sup>95</sup> J. ROMERO, “Discourse and Mediation”, p. 568.

Damascus to greet the Egyptian *ra'īs*<sup>96</sup>, while at the same time, violent demonstrations hailing Nāṣir and demanding the incorporation of Lebanon to the UAR<sup>97</sup> (the mob chanted: «*al-sha'b al-lubnani al-tha'ir badduh al-wihdah 'ajil 'ajil* [meaning] The Lebanese people in revolt want the union right away!»<sup>98</sup>) took place throughout the country.

Meanwhile, in the internal arena, the growing polarization of the public opinion regarding the external allegiances of the Lebanese Republic was further exacerbated by the Government's apparent intention to secure Sham'un's reelection<sup>99</sup> by amending the electoral law. The bill, finally enacted as law in April 1957, and presented as a victory over political feudalism<sup>100</sup>, increased the number of seats from 44 to 66, while at the same time reduced the number of electoral districts from 33 to 27. Whether gerrymandering was the Executive's true intention or not, the electoral results gave an overwhelming victory for Sham'un's supporters, who managed to secure 58 seats in the Assembly. Samir Khalaf reminds how «[v]irtually all the veteran politicians and prominent leaders of the opposition [...] were displaced in favour of pro-government candidates»<sup>101</sup>, which precipitated the organization of the – mostly Muslim – opposition under a common umbrella, soon to be known as National Union Front, calling for «cooperation with the Arab states; rejection of military aid which compromised Lebanese neutrality; and opposition to a constitutional amendment that would allow [Sham'un] to seek re-election»<sup>102</sup>.

However, Sham'un's policies did not only manage to alienate the Muslim street – by opposing Nāṣirism – and the Muslim élites – by preventing their election to the Assembly in 1957 – but also divided the

<sup>96</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, pp. 249-250.

<sup>97</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*.

<sup>98</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 155.

<sup>99</sup> S. MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab*, p. 166.

<sup>100</sup> Arnold HOTTINGER, "Zu'ama and Parties in the Lebanese Crisis of 1958", *The Middle East Journal* 15 (1961), p. 131.

<sup>101</sup> S. KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil*, p. 109

<sup>102</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 106.

Christian ranks<sup>103</sup>, with several relevant leaders, like Raymūn Iddih, Hanrī Fir‘aūn, Shārīl Ḥilū and Jurj Naqqāsh, creating an alternative force to the Opposition and the Government that became known, perhaps not very originally, as the “Third Force”. The Third Force opposed Sham‘ūn’s reelection<sup>104</sup> and called for «a return to Lebanon’s traditional neutralist foreign policy»<sup>105</sup>.

Even more important than the existence of the Third Force was the position of the Maronite Patriarch (who was to become the first Maronite Cardinal in 1965), Mgr. Ma‘ūshī, who had acceded to the Patriarchal throne in 1955. From the beginning of his reign, the Patriarch maintained a warm approach to Arab Nationalism, for he «believed that support for Arab causes was an effective means to maintain the loyalty of the Lebanese Muslims for the Republic»<sup>106</sup>, and consequently opposed both the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine. Ma‘ūshī’s stance not only earned him the appreciation of the Egyptian leadership<sup>107</sup>, but also that of Lebanon’s Muslim population<sup>108</sup>. However, Ma‘ūshī’s political position was not shared by all in the Maronite hierarchy; in fact, most of the lower clergy supported the presidential stand, with

*funeral bells [being] tolled in Deir el-Qamar [...] in protest to an [...] statement by the patriarch that ‘the Maronites were a drop in the sea of Muslims and must therefore support Muslim Arab Nationalism or pack up and leave’*<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 132.

<sup>104</sup> S. MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab*, p. 172.

<sup>105</sup> J. ROMERO, “Discourse and Mediation”, 573.

<sup>106</sup> Sami E. BAROUDI, “Divergent Perspectives among Lebanon’s Maronites during the 1958 Crisis”, *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 15 (2006), p. 10.

<sup>107</sup> J. ROMERO, “Discourse and Mediation”, p. 576.

<sup>108</sup> S. E. BAROUDI, “Perspectives”, p. 12.

<sup>109</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 171.

The Maronite League, a lay organization of Maronite notables, went as far as to present a formal complaint to Pope Pius XII protesting against the Patriarch's political activities<sup>110</sup>, and a number of bishops followed on the steps of the League by cabling the Holy See to criticize his stance during the crisis<sup>111</sup>. Nonetheless, the Vatican remained silent preferring not to interfere within the internal affairs of the Maronite Church<sup>112</sup>.

In this tense atmosphere, the murder, on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1958, of Nasīb al-Matnī, owner of the opposition journal *Al-Teleghraf*, served as a pretext for the beginning of hostilities between the Opposition and the Government. For the following two months, both parties strove for the control of the country, though the fighting reached different levels of intensity, depending on the area – with the Shūf, Beirut and Tripoli being particularly affected<sup>113</sup> – and normal life continued with just minimal disruptions (e.g.: in Beirut, fighting normally «took place in the afternoons and at night, also in several instances over the weekend»<sup>114</sup>).

In order to put an end to the conflict, and given the fact that the Opposition was receiving arms smuggled from the Syrian province of the UAR<sup>115</sup>, the Lebanese Government, which feared a coup d'état, requested US intervention<sup>116</sup> and presented an official complaint against the UAR before the United Nations<sup>117</sup>. However, none of these requests bear fruit until the Iraqi Revolution of July 14<sup>th</sup>, which threatening to knock down the entire web of American alliances in the Middle East, triggered a coordinated Anglo-American operation to protect both the Lebanese and the Jordanian regimes, the remaining Arab Allies of the West in the region.

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<sup>110</sup> C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 215

<sup>111</sup> S. E. BAROUDI, "Perspectives", p. 23.

<sup>112</sup> S. E. BAROUDI, "Perspectives", pp. 22-23.

<sup>113</sup> A. HOTTINGER, "Zu'ama", pp. 132-134.

<sup>114</sup> A. HOTTINGER, "Zu'ama", p. 132.

<sup>115</sup> S. KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil*, pp. 115-116; C. ATTIE, *Struggle*, p. 218.

<sup>116</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 134.

<sup>117</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 256.

Despite the initial tension between American and Lebanese troops<sup>118</sup>, the US intervention paved the way for a solution to the crisis, leading to presidential elections on July 31<sup>st</sup>, which brought a neutral and respected figure, the commander of the Army, General Shihāb to the presidency. The General's election «brought about a perceptible relaxation in the level of hostility»<sup>119</sup>, although Sham'ūn, who insisted in serving his full term<sup>120</sup>, did not step down until September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Thereafter, Shihāb assumed the presidential powers and entrusted Rashīd Karāmī, one of the leaders of the insurrection in Tripoli, with the task of forming a new government, which he duly did presenting a cabinet fully composed of sympathizers of the rebellion, to the exclusion of the former majority. His subsequent declaration, that the Cabinet had come to “harvest the fruits of revolution”<sup>121</sup>, as well as the kidnapping and murder of Fu'ād Haddād, editor of *al-Amal*, the official press organ of the Katā'ib, led to a violent wave of protests, a true «counterrevolution»<sup>122</sup> affecting mainly the Christian areas<sup>123</sup>, which did not cease until October 14<sup>th</sup> when a new, four-man cabinet was formed, including an equal number of representatives from both sides, under a formula which was soon to become famous: *la ghālib wa la maghlūb* (“no victor and no vanquished”).

### 2.3. The 1970 Elections

If the presidencies of Khūrī and Sham'ūn had been the golden age of *laissez-faire*, an era of unrestricted economic liberalism and prodigious economic growth, Fu'ād Shihāb and his heir in the Presidency, Shāril Ḥilū, are remembered for their Keynesian economic orientation (more

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<sup>118</sup> S. MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab*, pp. 190-195.

<sup>119</sup> S. KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil*, p. 137.

<sup>120</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 122.

<sup>121</sup> K. S. SALIBI, *History*, p. 203; D. Ammoun, *Histoire II* (2004), p. 274.

<sup>122</sup> S. KHALAF, *Civil and Uncivil*, p. 139.

<sup>123</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 124.

pronounced in the case of the General<sup>124</sup>) and their attempt «to introduce comprehensive reforms in [Lebanon's] political and administrative system». Both presidents achieved an immense success in reducing the inequalities that had plagued the country, so that by 1974 the middle class represented two-thirds of the population<sup>125</sup>. However, the rule of Shihāb had also its dark side, for the development of socio-economic projects could not mask the growing influence of the Military Intelligence Service, known as the *Deuxième Bureau*, which overstepped its mission to control the country's external and internal security<sup>126</sup>, becoming an authentic political police that «interfered in domestic political life, the administration, legislative and municipal elections, distributed licences for carrying firearms and engaged in arbitrary arrests»<sup>127</sup>.

On the eve of the 1970 presidential elections, the country was facing several challenges to its very survival, in spite of the economic prosperity it still enjoyed (although the *Intra Bank* crash had dealt a harsh blow to the international prestige of the Lebanese financial system<sup>128</sup>), the gravest of them being the armed presence of Palestinian guerrillas, whose attacks against Israel from Southern Lebanon triggered Israeli retaliations which struck vital infrastructures (like the bombing of Beirut Airport on December 28<sup>th</sup> 1968). The Palestinian presence became rapidly an extremely divisive issue in Lebanese political life, for, whereas most Muslims supported it and demanded the government to «give a free hand to Palestinian organization»<sup>129</sup>, a majority of Christians feared that the guerrillas were being used as a tool «to subvert the Lebanese system»<sup>130</sup>. The signature of the Cairo Agreement, on November 8<sup>th</sup> 1969, giving legal

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<sup>124</sup> M. HUDSON, *Precarious*, p. 328.

<sup>125</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 162.

<sup>126</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 343.

<sup>127</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 142.

<sup>128</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>129</sup> Dan NAOR, «The Quest for a Balance of Power in Lebanon during Suleiman Frangieh's Presidency, 1970-76», *Middle Eastern Studies* 49 (2013), p. 993.

<sup>130</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 152.

recognition to the presence of armed *fidā'ī-s* on Lebanese territory<sup>131</sup>, aroused even further the already existing Christian fears of a Palestinian takeover of Lebanon.

By then, the main leaders of the Christian community: Kamīl Sham'ūn, Raymūn Iddih and Pierre al-Jumayyil had already formed an alliance (the Triple Alliance, more known under its name in Arabic: *al-Ḥilf al-thulāthi*, henceforth the *Ḥilf*) rallying together against what they perceived as «the increasing threat from the Palestinians and radical forces in Lebanon»<sup>132</sup>. The new coalition profited from the thirst for a change that existed in the population after more than a decade of Shihābist rule<sup>133</sup> and, together with the Central Bloc, score a victory over the establishment candidates in the 1968 legislative elections. However small – only one seat – might have been the difference between the *Ḥilf* and the *Nahj* (as were known the Shihābist deputies), the *Ḥilf* won by landslide in Mount Lebanon<sup>134</sup>, revealing thus the growing opposition of the Christian communities to the continuation of Shihābism, which many of them regarded as «a threat to their own positions and to the Christian character of Lebanon»<sup>135</sup>.

Knowing how difficult it would be to elect a president of their choice with both blocs in the Assembly commanding an almost equal number of MPs, relevant members of the *Nahj* pressured General Shihāb to run as candidate for another mandate, which was constitutionally possible, as six years had passed since he had left the Presidency. Even though Shihāb toyed with the idea of making a comeback, he finally dropped it, not only because his candidacy was opposed by most Maronite leaders, including the Patriarch<sup>136</sup>, but also because he could not obtain the unanimous support of the Muslim leaders for his plan to militarily cripple the Palestinian

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<sup>131</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 154.

<sup>132</sup> Meir ZAMIR, “The Lebanese Presidential Elections of 1970 and their Impact on the Civil War of 1975-1976”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 16 (1980), p. 54.

<sup>133</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 412.

<sup>134</sup> S. MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab*, p. 449.

<sup>135</sup> M. ZAMIR, “Presidential Elections”, p. 52.

<sup>136</sup> F. DREXLER, *Geschichte*, p. 94; M. Zamir, “Presidential Elections”, p. 52.



guerillas<sup>137</sup>. The General expressed clearly the reasons for his refusal when he said:

*Les libanais attendent de mon action beaucoup plus qu'ils en réclameraient à un autre président et je ne peux pas faire de miracles. Si je suis élu, les libanais et les hommes politiques jugeront leur mission terminée, ils diront qu'il incombe à Chéhab de résoudre le problème. Par la suite, si l'on voit un seul fedai en tenue de combat place des Canons, et cela ne manquera pas de se produire, le problème reviendra à son point de départ. La réputation de Chéhab en souffrira. Les solutions magiques n'existent pas<sup>138</sup>.*

With Shihāb out of the scene, the *Nahj* rushed to select a candidate, and the choice finally fell on Ilyās Sarkīs, Shihāb's appointee<sup>139</sup>. An efficient administrator, who had served as director of the National Bank, Sarkīs, who lacked a political base of his own<sup>140</sup>, was nonetheless a much weaker candidate than the former President, being opposed even by a significant section of the *Nahj*<sup>141</sup>. On the Opposition side, the three leaders of the *Hilf*, coveted the presidency, but being unable to muster all the votes required to reach their goal, they decided to block Sarkīs' candidacy by supporting a consensus candidate<sup>142</sup>. The designation of such a candidate was not to be, however, an easy task, and it was not until twenty four hours before the electoral *séance*<sup>143</sup> that the coalition agreed on a candidate: Sulaymān Faranjiyyah.

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<sup>137</sup> S. MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab*, p. 464.

<sup>138</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 458.

<sup>139</sup> S. MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab*, p. 464.

<sup>140</sup> M. ZAMIR, "Presidential Elections", p. 54.

<sup>141</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 159; M. ZAMIR, "Presidential Elections", p. 53; D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, pp. 460-461.

<sup>142</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 159.

<sup>143</sup> M. ZAMIR, "Presidential Elections", p. 58.

The choice of Faranjiyyah, a Mountain *za'īm* from Northern Lebanon, who had been involved in the infamous *Tuerie de Mizyārah*<sup>144</sup>, responded to his appearance as a strong man, who would be able to impose his authority over the country after Ḥilū's weak presidency<sup>145</sup>. Moreover, his opposition to Sham'un during the 1958 uprising, as well as his belonging to a political coalition (the "Central Bloc", also known by its name in Arabic as *al-Wasaṭ*) whose other leaders were Muslims (the Sunni Ṣā'ib Salām and the Shiite Kāmil el-As'ad), made him appear as «a Maronite notable who [did] not [confine] his loyalties to the Christian community»<sup>146</sup>. Faranjiyyah was, thus, the perfect consensus candidate.

The election took place on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1970 and was a hectic event. Three ballots were needed before the President was finally chosen, and even then, Faranjiyyah was elected by only a vote of difference over Sarkīs. Paradoxically, a man so representative of the feudal class ascended to the presidency thanks to the votes of a man who wanted to completely modify the Lebanese system<sup>147</sup>: Kamāl Junblāt, who, together with three other members of his group<sup>148</sup>, voted for Faranjiyyah, giving him thus the necessary advantage to win the election.

Faranjiyyah's election was a fateful choice. Lacking ability and tact, the new President was soon unable, in spite of a promising beginning with the appointment of a Youth Cabinet under the leadership of his partner Ṣā'ib Salām<sup>149</sup>, to control the situation of a country suffering of serious internal and international problems. Focused on hoarding power by stretching to the

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<sup>144</sup> As a consequence of rivalries before the 1957 parliamentary elections, the Faranjiyyah-Mu'awwaḍ clan of Zghartā attacked their rival clan, the Duwayhī-Karam, in the church of Mizyārah, where a funeral service was taking place, killing 24 and injuring 30. This event, having taken place in a place of worship, shook the whole country.

<sup>145</sup> M. ZAMIR, "Presidential Elections", p. 58.

<sup>146</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 160.

<sup>147</sup> Yusri HAZRAN, "Lebanon's Revolutionary Era: Kamal Junblat, the Druze Community and the Lebanon State, 1949 to 1977", *The Muslim World* 100 (2010), p. 157.

<sup>148</sup> M. ZAMIR, "Presidential Elections", p. 59.

<sup>149</sup> D. NAOR, "Balance of Power", p. 991.

limit the wide constitutional faculties of the President, he alienated the whole Sunni establishment. With the positions on both sides of the political divide progressively radicalized, the war seemed inevitable.

### 3. Analysis

When, after fifteen years of Civil War, the remnants of the Lebanese Parliament met in Saudi city of Ṭā'if to reach a peace agreement, the participating deputies addressed what was widely believed to be Lebanon's foremost problem: that of confessionalism and sectarian imbalance. Therefore, presidential powers were severely curtailed to the benefit of the Sunni Prime Minister, and confessionalism was mostly abolished throughout the Administration<sup>150</sup> (except at the level of Director-General). Moreover, Lebanon's identity was constitutionally defined as "Arab" and the country was put under Syrian overlordship<sup>151</sup>. However, when a quarter of century has passed since the ratification of the Agreement, Lebanon remains a hotspot in the Middle East; sectarian infighting, administrative corruption and financial misdemeanors have been plaguing the country ever since, making its Second Republic (1943-1975) appear as a cherished memory of an era of economic growth and inter-religious harmony.

How is it possible, then, that if confessionalism and "Maronite primacy" were the main reasons behind the war's outbreak, its collapse has not brought peace and stability? The answer is obvious, because neither Maronite "hegemony" existed nor confessionalism was the main engine driving the Lebanese political machine. Beginning by the latter, it is obvious that Lebanon was a State organized under confessional lines, for positions in its political and administrative apparatuses were distributed following sectarian criteria, however, «guaranteeing equity and amity by a

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<sup>150</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 244.

<sup>151</sup> B. LABAKI, "Chrétien", p. 110.

proportional representation of the different confessional groups»<sup>152</sup> not only did not prevent the formation of inter-sectarian groupings, but even worked to «[ensure] that electoral alliances and programmes [cut] across communal divisions»<sup>153</sup>, as deputies represented the whole nation and not only their sect.

The examples provided above underline this trans-communalism of Lebanese politics, as in the three studied periods, alliances crossed confessional boundaries and were forged over ideological, economic or social interests. In 1952, opposition to Bishārah al-Khūrī's corrupt regime came from both sides of the religious divide, and its main leaders, making an intelligent use of the media to mobilize a dissatisfied power opinion against the Government<sup>154</sup>, joined together in an *ad-hoc* political movement, the Socialist Front, to overthrow a President whose growing accumulation of power threatened their position in the political game<sup>155</sup>.

The “Revolt of the Pashas”, in 1958, followed a similar scheme of wide élite resistance against a President determined to reinforce his power over other powerful political brokers (first, with the 1957 electoral reform which excluded most *za'īm-s* from the Assembly, and later with Sham'ūn's willingness to amend the Constitution to ensure his reelection), who rapidly constituted an expedient and temporary political umbrella to advance their goals, the National Union Front, which despite all its Pan-Arabist rhetoric, did not have a true desire of breaking Lebanon's ties with the West<sup>156</sup>. The establishment of the Third Force, including many Christian leaders, underlined that Opposition to Sham'ūn was not based mainly based neither on his Western affiliation nor on his liberalism, but on what was perceived as his breaking the rules governing balance of power in Lebanon.

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<sup>152</sup> C. KNIGHT, “Traditional Influences”, p. 341.

<sup>153</sup> Albert H. HOURANI, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), p. 138.

<sup>154</sup> F. KHAZEN, *Breakdown*, p 19.

<sup>155</sup> E. ZISSER, “Downfall”, p. 486.

<sup>156</sup> J. ROMERO, “Discourse and Mediation”, p. 572.

The 1970 elections constitute maybe an even better example of this inter-sectarian élite cooperation, as Shihāb's reelection was opposed not only by the mainly Christian *Hilf*, but also by wide sections of the Muslim establishment<sup>157</sup>, and Faranjiyyah's election under the banner of the Islamo-Christian *Wasat* alliance, was only possible thanks to the votes of Kāmal Junblāt's Progressive Socialist Party, who legitimately maneuvered within the system to advance his own political goals<sup>158</sup>.

These examples prove sufficiently the lack of basis of those explanations arguing for the primacy of sectarianism over other ties in Lebanon, and gives credence to Oren Barak's assertion about the primacy of the intra-sectarian aspect over the inter-sectarian, for that country is characterized by its «“pluralism within pluralism” [meaning that there exists a] pronounced internal diversity within each of its communities»<sup>159</sup>, to the point that inter-sectarian alliances are very often needed to counter intra-sectarian feuds<sup>160</sup>. Instead of sectarianism, the two elements that dominated political life in Lebanon during the studied period were kinship and *za'im-ship*.

Samir Khalaf defines kinship as «Lebanon's most solid and enduring tie»<sup>161</sup> and as an almost sovereign institution, acting as the individual's «exclusive agency of political socialization and tutelage»<sup>162</sup>. The importance of blood relations is underlined not only by the fact that Lebanese politics during the period examined in this essay were the preserve of a reduced number of families (Iddih, Salām, Karāmī, Junblāt), who compete furiously for parliamentary and governmental appointments, but also by the fact that an individual's stand in the social and political

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<sup>157</sup> S. MALSAGNE, *Fouad Chéhab*, p. 450.

<sup>158</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 161; M. ZAMIR, “Presidential Elections”, p. 59.

<sup>159</sup> Oren BARAK, “Intra-communal and Inter-communal Dimensions of Conflict and Peace in Lebanon”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15 (2002), p. 622.

<sup>160</sup> O. BARAK, “Conflict and Peace”, p. 630.

<sup>161</sup> S. KHALAF, “Primordial”, p. 246.

<sup>162</sup> S. KHALAF, “Primordial”, p. 247.

scale was mostly defined in terms of his ancestry<sup>163</sup> (the resistance of Rashīd Karāmī to the appointment of Ilyās Sarkīs as *Nahjī* candidate in 1970 had to do with the latter's lack of pedigree<sup>164</sup>). Episodes of intra-sectarian violence like the *Tuerie de Mizyārah*, or the infighting between the Tripolitan Karāmī and Munla families in the 1940s, stand as good witnesses of the fierce competition between different families belonging to the same confessional group.

Rooted in the feudal traditions of the *iqṭā'* system<sup>165</sup>, *za'īm-ship* refers to the quasi-feudal, or even Roman-like<sup>166</sup>, relation linking «a political leader [to a] locally circumscribed community»<sup>167</sup>, involving a kind of *do ut des* compromise whereby, in exchange for the support of his clientele or *zilm*, the *za'īm* had a duty to provide them with services<sup>168</sup>. Although most *za'īm-s* belonged to the same confessional community as their *zilm*, the patron-client relation was not based on sectarian allegiance (in fact, in confessionally-mixed areas, the *za'īm-s* actively sook to gather a following belonging to all the religious groups<sup>169</sup>), but on their reciprocal utilitarian obligations<sup>170</sup>. Within the *za'īm* system, competition had mostly an intra-sectarian character as, frequently more than one *za'īm* fought for the control of the same territory and used to present their feudal quarrels under a political colouring (Junblāṭ and Arslān in the Shūf, Faranjīyyah and Duwayhī in Zghartā or Skāf and Abū Khāṭir in Zaḥlah).

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<sup>163</sup> S. KHALAF, "Primordial", p. 246.

<sup>164</sup> D. AMMOUN, *Histoire II*, p. 459.

<sup>165</sup> Nizar A. HAMZEH, "Clientalism, Lebanon: Roots and Trends", *Middle Eastern Studies* 37 (2001), pp. 167-169.

<sup>166</sup> Vid. Jérôme CARCOPINO, *La Vida Cotidiana en Roma en el Apogeo del Imperio*, translated from French by Mercedes Fernández Cuesta (Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores, 1994), pp. 207-208.

<sup>167</sup> C. E. A. KNIGHT, "Traditional Influences", p. 334.

<sup>168</sup> N. A. HAMZEH, "Clientalism", p. 172.

<sup>169</sup> Peter GUBSER, "The *Zu'ama* of Zaḥlah: The Current Situation in a Lebanese Town", *The Middle East Journal* 27 (1973), p. 175.

<sup>170</sup> N. A. HAMZEH, "Clientalism", p. 172.

Contrary to the opinion of Nizar Hamzeh or Michael Hudson, the persistence of these traditional ties did not make the Lebanese system neither innately weak<sup>171</sup> nor unable to modernize<sup>172</sup>. Had it been so, it is unexplainable why Lebanon's score on almost all indicators of political and social development was much better than those of other Third World countries whose political systems were organized alongside more "modern" lines<sup>173</sup>. On the contrary, as Samir Khalaf states, it was precisely the persistence of such traditional bonds that led the way to a specifically Lebanese approach to modernity, based on adaptation and assimilation, not swift transformation<sup>174</sup>, that could have persisted and reached new heights had it not been for the external pressures the system had to deal with from 1967 onwards, which overwhelmed its capabilities to withstand change and prevented the continuation of its natural development.

On the question of Maronite primacy, it is important to examine the figure of the President, who was – and still is – always a member of that Church. Taking into account the dispositions of the 1926 Constitution, the Lebanese President could be defined as an «autocrat»<sup>175</sup>, an heir to French colonialism<sup>176</sup> or even a corporal incarnation of the State<sup>177</sup>. However, and in spite of the express provisions of the Fundamental Law, it is important to take into account that Constitutional Law goes well beyond "Law on the books" to cover customs and practices whose importance often equals that of written Law. In the Lebanese case, the National Pact not only was intended to provide for the distribution of official positions under a sectarian formula, it also established a power-sharing agreement between the President and the Prime Minister, whereby the President had to restrain

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<sup>171</sup> M. C. HUDSON, *Precarious*, p. 20.

<sup>172</sup> N. A. HAMZEH, "Clientalism", pp. 176-177.

<sup>173</sup> F. KHAZEN, *Breakdown*, p. 24.

<sup>174</sup> S. KHALAF, "Primordial", p. 244.

<sup>175</sup> F. TRABOULSI, *Modern Lebanon*, p. 109.

<sup>176</sup> C. WINSLOW, *Lebanon*, p. 75-76.

<sup>177</sup> Edmond RABBATH, *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel : Essai de synthèse* (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1973), p. 173.

his power to become something akin to an arbiter, in the words of Professor Hourani:

*it [was] expected that he [the President] should stand above the communities, that his authority should be secular, that he should express the unity of the state [and] to cut across the network of sectarian interests, and make necessary decisions in the light of the national interest*<sup>178</sup>.

Whenever the President forsook his arbitral role to push for his own interests, disturbing thereby the balance and compromise that characterized Lebanon's politics<sup>179</sup>, the political equilibrium has been severely perturbed, as happened in 1952 and 1958. When Khūr and Sham'un's actions went well beyond the accepted consensus, the response of the political élite was to block their action until they were forced to back out. The reverse was also true, for in the late 1970's Faranjiyyah refused to cooperate with his arch-rival Rashīd Karāmī, whom he had had to appoint as Premier in a desperate attempt to quell the violence which was extending throughout the country, and thus crippled the Cabinet's ability to enforce its authority. It can therefore be said that the system worked under a double-veto arrangement which effectively limited the wide Constitutional powers of the President.

The alleged supremacy of the Maronite community is also questionable when the internal divisions affecting the Church and its members are taken into account. For almost a century, between the 1820s and the inception of the French Mandate, the Church, having gotten rid of the influence of the Maronite feudal lords (mainly of the Khāzin family), became the dominant influence in the Mountain<sup>180</sup>, and her Patriarchs the principal spokesmen

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<sup>178</sup> A. H. HOURANI, *Emergence*, p. 139.

<sup>179</sup> Elie SALEM, "Cabinet Politics in Lebanon", *Middle East Journal* 21 (1967), p. 497.

<sup>180</sup> Engin D. AKARLI, *The Long Peace. Ottoman Lebanon 1861-1920* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 19-20.



for the community. The accession of powerful figures,<sup>181</sup> like Būlus Mas‘ad, Yūḥanā al-Ḥāj or Ilyās al-Ḥuwayyik, to the Patriarchal throne only served to confirm this empowerment of the Church which came to its zenith with the travel of Mgr. Ḥuwayyik to the Paris Peace Conference where he presided one of the Lebanese Delegations, demanding the independence of the country and the extension of its borders<sup>182</sup>. However, as soon as the Lebanese Delegation’s goals were achieved, the leading role in the community passed from the Patriarch to the politicians, and thus the unity of the community under a common project was broken. Iddih and Khūrī, under the French Mandate, represented the first of the long series of intra-Maronite quarrels that plagued the History of independent Lebanon.

Given the chasm dividing most Maronite leaders, their quest for political prominence had to deal on the support of other confessional groups. As has been seen throughout this essay, both Khūrī and Sham‘ūn acceded to the presidency thanks to the support of most Muslim leaders and both Presidents kept their position by building a preferential alliance with a prominent member of the Sunni community<sup>183</sup>, and in spite of the opposition of the Maronite Patriarch (Mgr. Arīḍah during Khūrī’s tenure and Mgr. Ma‘ūshī during Sham‘ūn’s presidency) to their respective political orientation<sup>184</sup>.

The influence of the Maronite political élite was thus limited and, in fact, the community’s apparent advantage in the educative and professional arenas over her Muslim counterparts was progressively eroded during the Republic as more Muslims started receiving a formalized education<sup>185</sup> and acceding the professional sectors of the economy<sup>186</sup>. By 1975, the

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<sup>181</sup> Joseph MAHFOUZ, *Précis d’Histoire de l’Église Maronite* (Kaslik, Lebanon: Ordre Libanais Maronite, 1985), pp. 65-68.

<sup>182</sup> Élias B. HOYEK, “Les Revendications du Liban. Mémoire de la Délégation Libanaise à la Conférence de la Paix”, *La Revue Phénicienne* 1 (1919), pp. 236-241.

<sup>183</sup> E. SALEM, “Cabinet Politics”, pp. 490-491.

<sup>184</sup> E. ZISSER, “Contacts”, p. 900; S. E. Baroudi, “Perspectives”, pp. 10-27.

<sup>185</sup> F. KHAZEN, *Breakdown*, p. 65.

<sup>186</sup> B. LABAKI, “Économie”, p. 175.

Maronites were just another community within the Lebanese mosaic-like sectarian framework

### Conclusion

On March 10<sup>th</sup> 1949, the editor-in-chief and owner of the daily *L'Orient*, Georges Naccache published an editorial which was to become famous and to put him in jail. *Deux négations ne font pas une nation* expressed a considerable distrust towards that gentleman's agreement between Bishārah al-Khūrī and Riyād al-Ṣulḥ, which was to be known as the "National Pact". «À la force de ne vouloir ni l'Ouest ni l'Est [...] nos dirigeants ont fini par nous faire perdre le nord»<sup>187</sup> deplored Mr. Naccache in his article, but despite all his mistrust towards the agreement, it managed to give Lebanon over thirty years of prosperity, only briefly broken twice until the definitive disruption of civil life in 1975.

In this essay, we have tried to prove that the era inaugurated by the National Pact witnessed an unrivaled trend of political and social modernization, reducing the gaps between the different sectarian and regional groups the Lebanese society is composed of, and generating a level of personal and political freedom without comparison in the Middle East. The fact that this trend took place while traditional ties continued commanding the loyalty of wide sections of the population cannot, in any case, overshadow the merit of the progress achieved between 1943 and 1975. In fact, the compatibility between the persistence of traditional bonds and progress serves to destroy those radical approaches that only conceive of modernization within a Western-like framework based on individualism and secularization.

Our approach to the evolution of Lebanon during its Second Republic has also permitted us to realize how confessionalism was not the main factor driving that country's politics, but only one more amongst other ties.

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<sup>187</sup> Georges NACCACHE, *Les Faits du Jour* (Beirut: L'Orient-Le Jour and Dar al-Nahar, 2001), p. 67.

We have actually tried to prove how political tension used to have more an intra-communal than an inter-communal character, while at the same time, alliances and cooperation extended well beyond sectarian boundaries, defying thus, the «essentialism [of those authors who conceive] of ethnic groups as rigid, homogeneous, and unchanging entities»<sup>188</sup>.

The study of confessionalism that has been undertaken throughout these pages has had the Maronite Church as its main character. Thereby it has been tried to pay a modest contribution to an area of scholarship utterly deserted by the Academia, despite the fact that the Maronite Church is not only the only Christian compact minority in the Middle East, but also one of the few of such communities conceiving of herself as nation. By focusing on this Church, we have also aspired to overcome the prejudices which defined her as a dominant, hegemonic or even racially prejudiced community<sup>189</sup>, and I believe that our goals have been reached, for it has been sufficiently proved that the Maronites participated as equal partners in a power-sharing agreement with all other Lebanese communities, and were far from being a solid, united bloc, suffering instead from profound internal divisions which forced the different sectors of the community to build trans-sectarian alliances in order to reach their political goals. Under the Second Republic, the Maronite Church was not, in spite of all appearances, a *Ecclesia Triumphans*.

At present, in a time of growing exacerbation of sectarian animosities throughout the Middle East, and with Lebanon lacking a President for over two months, maybe it would be useful to remember the spirit of the National Pact, whose “live and let live” philosophy managed to propel Lebanon to its golden age.

Recibido / Received: 25/02/2015  
Informado / Reported: 31/07/2015  
Aceptado / Accepted: 05/10/2015

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<sup>188</sup> O. BARAK, “Conflict and Peace”, p. 638.

<sup>189</sup> M. C. AULAS, “Development”, p. 14.