

All of them means all of them

the rise of anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon



Master's Thesis Human Geography: Conflicts, Territories, and Identities

Matthias van Scherpenzeel – 1041336

29808 words

04/07/2021

Supervisor: dr. H.W. Bomert

Second reviewer: dr. M. van Leeuwen

Cover photo taken by the author on March 1 2020 in Beirut, Lebanon. Image shows road blocks put up by the Lebanese Internal Security Forces in the vicinity of the parliament building, covered by pro-revolution graffiti

“I want to build a future in this country, I don't want to live anywhere else. And I don't think that's possible within the current system”

- Karim, participant in the October 17 movement

Abstract

This research seeks to understand how anti-sectarian activism develops in Lebanon's institutionalized consociational political system, where sectarianism is encroached into all spheres of society. Through a single-case study, and with use of new social movement theory and the debate surrounding ethnic identity, the incentives of protestors to join the October 17 movement were explored. Simultaneously, the protest movement is placed in Lebanon's historical context, both in terms of sectarian history as well as other anti-sectarian movements which the country experienced. The results show that resistance to the sectarian system is a consequence of the presence of agency in identity construction, namely through people's journey towards rejecting the consociational, sectarian power-sharing system, which binds politics and religion together, with the aim to ensure the continuation of power being centred around the sectarian elites. Various interrelated aspects ultimately lead people to participate and although every journey is undeniably different, this research was able to identify conditions conducive for anti-sectarian activism.

Key words: *Lebanon, sectarianism, new social movements, ethnic identity*

Acknowledgements

I need to thank a few people who have been of great importance throughout the process of this research. First and foremost, I must thank Lea, Ghassan, Ahmad, Rita, Karim, Abed, Afifeh, Michele, as well as Rawad of Minteshreen and the Coordinator of the Media Committee of Lihaqqi for agreeing to be interviewed by me. It is their experiences that allowed this research to take shape. I must also thank the Orient-Institut Beirut of the Max Weber Foundation, which was willing to host me during my time in Lebanon. Although my stay was unfortunately cut short, I am grateful for their support both during and after my stay. Lastly, I want to thank my supervisor, dr. Bert Bomert. His extensive feedback and eye for detail was of great value to me and my research.

Table of contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
1.1 <i>Societal relevance</i>	9
1.2 <i>Academic relevance</i>	10
1.3 <i>Research objective</i>	11
Chapter 2: Theoretical framework	15
2.1 <i>Conceptualization</i>	15
2.2 <i>New Social Movement Theory</i>	16
2.3 <i>Melucci's reading of New Social Movement theory</i>	19
2.4 <i>Ethnic identity debate</i>	21
2.5 <i>Concluding remarks</i>	25
Chapter 3: Methodology	26
3.1 <i>Methodological position and case selection</i>	26
3.2 <i>Data collection</i>	27
3.3 <i>Analysis</i>	29
3.4 <i>Discussion</i>	30
Chapter 4: Institutionalization of Lebanese sectarianism	33
4.1 <i>Lebanon in the Ottoman Empire</i>	34
4.2 <i>Greater Lebanon: French Mandate and Independence</i>	36
4.3 <i>The Golden Age and Civil War</i>	39
4.4 <i>Ta'if, Syrian Tutelage, and the Cedar Revolution</i>	42
4.5 <i>From institutionalized sectarianism to sectarian clientelism</i>	44
Chapter 5: Anti-sectarian movements since the March alliances	46
5.1 <i>Arab uprisings, garbage crisis, and elections</i>	46
5.2 <i>The October 17 protest movement</i>	49
Chapter 6: Opposition to the sectarian system	53
6.1 <i>Personal relation to imposed sectarian identity</i>	53
6.2 <i>Incentives for protest participation</i>	60
6.3 <i>Sectarian loyalty</i>	67
6.4 <i>Enduring commitment to the movement and its future</i>	73
6.5 <i>Anti-sectarian activism in Lebanon's consociational model</i>	78

Chapter 7: Conclusion and reflection	81
7.1 Conclusion	81
7.2 Reflection	83
7.3 Recommendations for future research	84
Bibliography	86
Appendix I: List of respondents	95
Appendix II: Interview questions	96

Chapter 1: Introduction

On the 17th of October 2019, the Lebanese government announced a tax on Voice over Internet Protocol calls, which concerns calls made through messenger services like WhatsApp. Over the following days, tens of thousands of Lebanese took to the streets (Al Jazeera, 2019). By many citizens, the proposed tax, which was rescinded only days after its initial announcement, was seen as the final straw. The protests – quickly dubbed *thawra*, the Arabic word for revolution, or the October 17 movement, named after the first day of demonstrations – were about much more than just phone services; the protesters opposed the lacking public service provision, elite enrichment and corruption, and the institutionalized sectarian political system as such. A prominent slogan of the movement became '*killon yaane killon*', translated as 'all of them means all of them'; the protestors called for the entire political system to be replaced (Halabi, 2019).

Since the outbreak of the protests two cabinets stepped down, but the sectarian elites remain in power. At the same time, crises mount, as the country is still dealing with the aftermath of the August 4, 2020, explosion which killed over 200, wounded thousands, and left over 300,000 displaced, whilst also experiencing a severe economic crisis as the local currency has lost over 90% of its value: over 50% of the country has been pushed into poverty, access to necessities as gasoline, medicine and electricity is lacking (Al-Saeed & El Khalil, 2021). After initial mobilization, presence on the streets decreased, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This does not mean, however, that the movement disappeared. Rather, new political groups are forming, trying to formulate a counterbalance to the ruling class in the political field (Sawti, 2021).

Lebanon is situated at a crossroads between Europe and Western Asia; not only politically, where regional alliances and rivalries play out in the domestic locality, but also culturally, with 18 constitutionally acknowledged religious sects and a population with wide-ranging regional origins, either being naturalized citizens or classified as refugees. Its diverse population lies at the root of its sectarian history. Sectarianism is part and parcel of Lebanon. Sectarian power-sharing can be dated back to the *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon during the Ottoman Empire.

Consociationalism, a political system of power-sharing between social groups, was reified following independence from France in 1943 in the National Pact, which formalized the power-sharing of governmental positions and parliament. Following the civil war, in 1989 the power-sharing agreement, although slightly altered, was adopted again in the form of the Ta'if agreement (Traboulsi, 2012). A consociational system was presented as the only solution for Lebanon, to ensure peace between the various religious groups. In practice, it allowed sectarian leaders to capitalize on the culture of fear, warning for potential sectarian violence, whilst simultaneously cooperating to ensure their staying in power, and continued profiting from clientelist and corrupt networks (Corstange, 2018).

Hence, sectarianism has become deeply engrained into Lebanese society. In addition to politics, sectarianism has de facto spread to all spheres of society. This means that citizens are often dependent on their respective sect for public service provision, given the high degree of corruption and lack of government-provided public services. The recent trends of increased anti-sectarian movements, peaking in the protests which started in October 2019, are unprecedented, especially as they were spread throughout the entire country (Carboni 2020; Halawi & Salloukh, 2020). It is for this very reason that this research aims to understand how resistance to the sectarian system has grown and is being mobilized, as one could say this is counterintuitive given citizen dependency on elites. The consociational system caused many to find security within their sect, both during and after the violence of the civil war (1975-90). In light of this, it is all the more interesting to investigate why people turn away from sectarian politics.

This thesis explores how mobilization of anti-sectarian movements occurs. Based on the New Social Movement theory, this research uses the Lebanese case to add to the debate on (ethnic) identity, in particular the presence of agency therein. In the Lebanese case, sectarianism is institutionalized to a great extent, formally in the political sphere through power divisions, but also informally through clientelist networks. Of main concern in this exploration are the personal motivations of protestors to join the anti-sectarian protests, and how this is a result of their personal journey to turn against the consociational, sectarian power-sharing, political system. The term 'anti-sectarian' was chosen as it aligns with the protestors' demand of

abolishing the consociational system altogether, to be replaced by secular political institutions.

1.1 Societal relevance

The Lebanese case is worthy of more attention. Once having being dubbed ‘Switzerland of the Middle East’, it was plagued by a destructive 15-year civil war until 1990. Up until this day, sectarian tensions and the fear of reescalation into conflict has empowered the leaders of the various sects. For a long time, this allowed for elite enrichment with lacking or subpar public services in return. Lebanon’s violent history makes recent protests all the more relevant. The power-sharing system is often presented as the only option to keep peace in the country, as well as the only way to ensure the survival of sectarian minorities. Turning away from the sectarian power-sharing system indicates the profound grievances of the population, as fear for sectarian survival, whether or not manipulated by the elite, remains relevant. Given the several crises Lebanon is confronted with – which are unlikely to subside in the near future – it is important to understand what the country is going through, to be able to understand future developments accurately.

Whilst having remained relatively stable during the now infamous Arab Spring which started in 2011, Lebanon has seen several protest waves leading up to the mass mobilization of recent years. In 2011, Lebanon saw the rise of an anti-sectarian movement, which aligned with – but was also overshadowed by – the broader regional uprisings targeting authoritarianism and corruption (Meier, 2015). Although several anti-sectarian civil society organizations already existed, during the 2016 municipal and 2018 parliamentary elections various large-scale mobilizations took off; independent, secular or anti-sectarian candidates aimed to (re)claim the public space. These candidates are referred to as secular or anti-sectarian, as they aimed to get elected without being part of a sectarian party and aiming for a secular political system not determined by sectarian power-sharing. These movements were heavily influenced by the ‘garbage crisis’ which started in 2015, where the lack of waste collection services painfully portrayed the wider government failure of public service provision (Di Peri & Meier, 2017). In October of 2019, the most recent movement mobilized, which, although having decreased in terms of presence on the streets, still

has traction amongst the population. In light of this general rise of anti-sectarian activism, it is important to understand why and how people chose to turn away from their sectarian identities. Moreover, it is important to understand the dynamics of this process, as it is not a linear development, with pro-sectarian counter-protests taking place as well.

Lebanon is not the only country where sectarian or ethnic power-sharing agreements were implemented following violent conflict. Countries like Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina also have specific power-sharing institutions. In light of this, insights in anti-sectarian movements in countries where power-sharing was seen as a remedy to violent conflict or war, may contribute to our understanding of states wherein consociationalism is institutionalized.

1.2 Academic relevance

Given the developments in Lebanon over the past few years, and the role the October 17 movement played in the country, it is important to properly understand the dynamics at its foundation. Arguably, the case of the October 17 movement in Lebanon also has an academic relevance, to be laid down in this section.

New Social Movement theories, although varying in their specific perspectives, offer a distinct outlook on social movements. On a macro level, it seeks to understand the relationship between the rise of contemporary social movements and larger economic structures as well as the role of culture in these movements (Pichardo, 1997). On a micro level, it deals with issues of identity and personal action and their relationship to social movements (Pichardo, 1997). It approaches social movements in a distinct manner; how do individuals relate to the larger socio-political system and how do they interact with that system? (Pichardo, 1997) According to the theory, the civic sphere, where identity and culture are rooted, is being overlooked. By acknowledging this, it approaches this sphere as an area of contention, in addition to the historically dominant political and economic spheres (Pichardo, 1997). The major debates within the New Social Movement theory are very relevant to the case of anti-sectarian activism in Lebanon. Four debates will be briefly sketched, to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. First, the question arises to what extent movements as described by this theory are truly 'new', and by implication, if we can characterize

other movements as 'old'. Secondly, the question arises whether new social movements are defensive or reactive to larger social forces of society, or whether they can in fact also be proactive and progressive in their nature. The third debate distinguishes between political and cultural movements, in the sense of whether the movements in question are about something larger than conventional politics. The fourth and final debate is concerned with the social base of the new social movements, namely whether social movements are defined in terms of social class, as is the case with historic Marxist approaches to social movements (Buechler, 1995).

This research applies the New Social Movement theory to the case of recent anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, which will fill several gaps of knowledge within the academic field. First of all, by using a specific case, this research aligns itself with different positions within the posed debates. This will increase our understanding of the wide-ranging diversity of social movements, as all movements exist in a specific context. Thus, depending on their sociohistorical circumstances, they align with either progressive or reactionary movements, or political or cultural ones (Buechler, 1997). Secondly, this thesis will contribute to the case of Lebanon specifically, as, due to its timing, very little research has been conducted beyond literature studies or analyses.

In addition, this research will add to the debate around ethnic identity. Identity markers, allowing one to feel part of a group, are important in the Lebanese case as it is centred around social groups. The ethnic identity debate revolves around the question of whether ethnic identity is something primordial, meaning structural and culturally given, or whether there is room for agency in one's personal journey of identity construction (Kaplan, 2005; Sen, 2006). Moreover, the question of elite manipulation of identity will shed light on how sectarian leaders in Lebanon are able to use sectarian narratives to their advantage, as they benefit from an us-versus-them mentality, which secures their positions of power (Oberschall, 2000).

1.3 Research objective

The main goal of this thesis is to examine the rise of anti-sectarian activism in Lebanon. The main point of interest is how and why these movements increased in significance, peaking at the protests which started in October 2019. The aim is to

explore why people turn away from their sectarian identity, at least in the political sense, towards a united Lebanese identity, and wish for this to be portrayed in the wider political system rather than sectarian power-sharing or consociationalism. Melucci's reading of the New Social Movement theory is useful in this regard, as it sees the successfulness of social movements primarily in the ability to define an identity (Melucci, 1988). This links to the second theory to be used: the concept of ethnic identity and its debate regarding the role of agency in identity formation. By analysing the mass mobilization of people against sectarian identities and institutions, the research goes beyond the conventional political sphere; it rather sees the development as a potential change in culture.

As there is little research on anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, research was conducted through gathering qualitative data in an unstructured and open manner, with the aim of understanding a new phenomenon (Vennesson, 2008). A case study was conducted, which allows for a holistic method of analysis which also serves to develop and evaluate theories, all in the service of properly understanding this new occurrence (Verschuuren & Doorewaard, 2010; Vennesson, 2008). This research sought insights into participation in anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, contributing to New Social Movement theories and the debate around ethnic identity. The following research question was drafted to explore this: *'How does anti-sectarian activism develop in Lebanon's institutionalized consociational socio-political system?'* To complement the central research question, several sub-questions were used to allow for the different aspects influencing anti-sectarian protest participation to take place. Six sub-questions were formulated:

1. *'What is the sectarian identity structure in Lebanon and how did it become institutionalized?'*
2. *'Which anti-sectarian protest movements have occurred in recent Lebanese history?'*
3. *'How do people relate to their imposed sectarian identity?'*
4. *'What sentiments incentivised people to join anti-sectarian protests?'*
5. *'How can enduring loyalty to sectarian parties be explained?'*
6. *'How do sectarian stances change as protests continue?'*

The various sub-questions aim to portray a line of thought central to this thesis. The anti-sectarian mass mobilization should not be addressed as a linear line, going from zero to complete mobilization of the population. Rather, the dynamics of the protests need to be adequately and historically addressed. It is vital to properly understand the historic processes under which sectarianism in Lebanon rose and became institutionalized, as well as which anti-sectarian movements have previously taken place. These aspects are portrayed in the first and second sub-questions. This thesis aims to understand how people relate to their own sectarian identity, imposed at birth, and how this may have changed over time, to be investigated by exploring incentives to join social movements. Hence, the third and fourth sub-questions were drafted. Another important topic is what causes continuing loyalty to sectarian elites, and what may cause certain people to not mobilize against the system. This is addressed in the fifth sub-question. To acknowledge the volatility of the situation, one needs to explore how the continuation of the protests without major concessions by the political system, apart from the resignation of prime minister Hariri, affects the movement and the people involved. This is addressed in the sixth sub-question, inquires after the commitment to idea behind the movement as it progressed and gradually moved away from the streets over time.

1.4 Research outline

Moving forward, Chapter 2 addresses the theoretical framework in which this research is positioned, and what theoretical lens is used in this exploration. This will be complemented by a conceptualization of key notions and concepts which have been used to conduct the research. Chapter 3 delves deeper into this subject matter by explaining the methodology used, and accounting for the choices made throughout the research. Here, the concepts identified in Chapter 2 will be further operationalised. Chapter 4 discusses the first sub-question, as it will explore Lebanon's historical path towards institutionalised sectarianism. This will be followed by Chapter 5, which answers the second sub-question by looking at the recent anti-sectarian movements which developed in Lebanon up until the October 17 movement. Chapter 6 presents the data collected through interviews, and use them to answer the remaining sub-questions, to at last come to an answer to the main

research question. Finally, the conclusion provides an overview of the findings, followed by a reflection as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This research takes an interpretivist approach, seeking to discover the meaning of action (Demmers, 2012). This concerns action deriving its meaning from shared rules and ideas regarding social life, putting the focus on the construction of meaning as an embedded process. History, culture, and context-specificity are of paramount importance to this process, as well as approaching the world as socially constructed (Demmers, 2012). This thesis uses New Social Movement theory, as well as the conceptual debate on ethnic identity construction, which, as will be explained, are inherently linked.

2.1 Conceptualization

This research is based on several sensitizing concepts, concepts which are open to multiple interpretations, like ethnicity, the nation, and nationalism. Before diving into conceptual debates over terms like ethnic identity, such terms must be clarified. The dynamic between these three terms has specific peculiarities in the Lebanese case, which warrants an explanation. ‘Ethnicity’ refers to cultural markers which can be derived from a person’s family origins. These markers can be made up of language, customs, physical appearance and religion (Laakso, 1989). These markers of identity create a sense of belonging to a group (Kassis, 1985). In the Lebanese case, ethnicity and hence ethnic identity refers first and foremost to religion, specifically the religious denomination to which one belongs (Majed, 2017). In this regard, ethnicity and ethnic identity are mainly referred to as sectarian identity, the term used for religious denominations in Lebanon. Sectarianism undermines the national identity and can be perceived as nationalism of sectarian groups (Makdisi, 1996). The term ‘nation’ is also inherently linked to sectarianism, as sectarianism *is* the nation. Sectarianism discredits the secular nation; rather, the nation is dominated by sectarian elites, and individuals are defined by religious affiliation – there is no Lebanese citizen that is not also an (assigned) member of a particular religious community (Makdisi, 1996). Simultaneously, it is important to explain what is meant with anti-sectarianism. ‘Anti-sectarianism’ refers to the opposition to the sectarian. Its proponents see the abolishment of the entire political system as the way to enable a secular state to be

formed. Hence, the term anti-sectarianism is chosen rather than non-sectarianism, as its proponents see the need for the dismantlement of the entire system.

Another concept that warrants further explanation is consociationalism. Consociational democracy, a term coined by Lijphart, refers to “government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy” (Lijphart, 1969, p. 216). This elite cartel consists of leaders from rivaling subcultures, referring to the various religious denominations or sects in Lebanon, for example. Lijphart discusses requirements of consociational democracies to become successful, namely elite cooperation to overcome diverging interests. Moreover, there is the need to be able to overcome political problems of the country in question, as well as a relatively low load on the decision-making apparatus (Lijphart, 1969). Discussing the case of Lebanon, although written before the outbreak of the civil war, Lijphart acknowledges that the stability of Lebanon can also partly be explained by its productive economy and maintained social equilibrium, and that future burdens on this system may cause consociational democracy to no longer suffice to maintain the peace (Lijphart, 1969). In the end, consociationalism was not able to maintain the peace in Lebanon, although the end of the civil war brought back consociationalism once more through the Ta’if agreement (Traboulsi, 2012). This research talks of institutionalized consociationalism due to the fact that sectarian power-sharing is not limited to merely the political sphere. Rather, as to be explained in further detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, consociationalism is present in all spheres of Lebanese society. As consociationalism is the power-sharing between social groups, the term is used interchangeably with sectarianism in this research, as the Lebanese case of sectarianism concerns the power-sharing between the leaders of the various sects that make up the nation.

2.2 New Social Movement Theory

New Social Movement theory is an approach developed in response to the deficiencies of classical Marxism. Marxist economic and class reductionism cannot adequately grasp contemporary forms of mass mobilization and collective action. The notion of economic reduction, assuming that all politically significant social action is deduced from the notion of capitalist production and resistance thereto, implies that

all other social logics behind shaping collective action are second best (Buechler, 1995). Another reduction relates to the notion of class. Class reductionism presumes that all social actors are defined by class relationships, based on their part in the production process. This renders all other identity markers as secondary to the one related to production, hence inherently privileging the proletariat above all else. New social movements go beyond these reductions and explore political, ideological and cultural roots of collective action, and approach identity as consisting of a wide array of markers (Buechler, 1995). New social movements have many versions, with different approaches to the debates sketched in the previous section dealing with the scientific relevance. General trends within the New Social Movement theory will be explored before addressing the specific approach as described by Melucci, whose version of the theory is used in this thesis.

Another theme within new social movements is the question of what aspect makes them explicitly 'new'. New social movements find their modernity in new aspects like the post-materialistic value base, their search for pragmatic solutions, their global awareness, and resistance to spiritual solutions (Buechler, 1995). Specifically, it is the new moral order against strategic, instrumentalist behaviour of elites that differentiates new social movements, as they aim for a more democratic formulation of what is demanded by society. The distinctly new aspect of new social movements can also be found in their political style which rejects institutionalized politics and established political parties (Buechler, 1995). Another debate, as indicated in Chapter 1, is the question of whether new social movements are reactive or progressive. Reactive movements refer to a defensive nature to technological, economic, or political changes. Progressive movements concern conflicts around self-determination and democratization (Buechler, 1995). As new social movements vary in their nature – and one must therefore perhaps talk of New Social Movement theories instead of theory – this debate is difficult to resolve and will rather be addressed in the discussion of the case of the Lebanese October 17 movement.

To understand new social movements, it is important to know where the collective action takes place. Most strands of the New Social Movement theory agree that the cultural sphere or civil society is the major arena for symbolic action. The issues that are salient in such movements concern the life-world, (physical) territory,

or space of action. Offe provides an apt description of these diverse issues, “such as the body, health and sexual identity; the neighbourhood, city, and the physical environment; the cultural, ethnic, national, and linguistic heritage and identity; the physical conditions of life, and survival for humankind in general” (Offe, 1985, pp. 828-829). New social movements also tend to attribute extensive importance to processes promoting self-determination and autonomy, as opposed to influence and power as the main drivers for action (Buechler, 1995). In line with this notion is the emphasis by some that post-materialist values have increased in importance (Buechler, 1995). In other words, prominent values across new social movements include autonomy and identity, and opposition to issues like manipulation, control, and dependence, among others (Offe, 1985; Buechler, 1995).

Another element of new social movements relates to their actors. An important aspect of this is identity construction, which moves away from structural determination towards a dynamic process of collective identity construction (Offe, 1985; Buechler, 1995). This is in line with an interpretivist reading of (ethnic) identity-building. Whilst the debate on ethnic identity will be exemplified in further detail later on, themes of elite manipulation of ethnicity, agency in individual identity and identity construction through discourse, all support the new social movement reading of identity (Oberschall, 2000; Sen, 2006; Fearon & Latin, 2000). New Social Movement theorists also agree that grievances and ideologies cannot be deduced from a group’s structural location; they are rather socially constructed (Buechler, 1995). The actors can, for example, not be grouped merely according to established political or socioeconomic codes, but actors rather unite over a common concern of social issues (Offe, 1985; Pichardo, 1997). These movements incorporate varying ideas and values, aiming for institutional reform through a pragmatic orientation (Johnston et al., 1994). In the case of Lebanon – where historic sectarian grievances and ideology have always been structurally determined, for example as seen through the rise of Amal and Hezbollah as a response to Shi’a disenfranchisement – it will be interesting to see how the new movements depart from this logic (Di Peri, 2014). As mentioned, new social movements are not confined to a clear social base, they rather transcend class structure (Johnston et al., 1994). They find their roots in diffuse social statuses.

Lastly, the so-called mode of action of new social movements has to be addressed. The process of actors forming a collective is highly informal and ad hoc, with no clear end point. This means there is no vertical hierarchy within the movements, nor a horizontal one, referring to an 'in' or 'out' mentality (Offe, 1985). The networks underlying collective action are highly dynamic (Buechler, 1995). Hence, organizations are often segmented, diffuse, and decentralized rather than centralized organizational forms preceding successful mobilization (Johnston et al., 1994; Buechler, 1995). There is considerable autonomy of various sections within the movements, not characterized by hierarchy (Johnston et al., 1994). In terms of the movements' external mode of action, referring to ways in which the political opponents and external world in general are addressed, several trends can be identified. Firstly, demonstration tactics revolve around the physical presence of often large numbers of people (Offe, 1985). There is ample room for a variety of beliefs among protestors, given the ad-hoc nature of the group of actors. Finally, the concerns of the movements are in essence non-negotiable, often referred to in antinomies like 'yes' versus 'no', or 'them' versus 'us' (Offe, 1985).

Major contributions of the New Social Movements theory relate to the importance it attributes to identity and culture in addition to the role of the civic sphere (Pichardo, 1997). Previously, debates revolved around the economic sphere as the one determining the civic sphere. With the addition of new social movements, the civic sphere itself is seen as a locus of social protest (Pichardo, 1997).

2.3 Melucci's reading of New Social Movement theory

As mentioned, this thesis will zoom in on Melucci's reading of New Social Movement theory. He defines a social movement as having to meet two conditions. First, defining collective action as "as the ensemble of the various types of conflict-based behaviour in a social system. A collective action implies the existence of a struggle between two actors for the appropriation and orientation of social values and resources, each of the actors being characterized by a specific solidarity" (Melucci, 1980, p. 202). Secondly, he adds the conditions that makes collective action a social movement: "Collective action also includes all the types of behaviour which transgress the norms that have been institutionalized in social roles, which go beyond

the rules of the political system and/or which attack the structure of a society's class relations" (Melucci 1980, p. 202).

Melucci starts his argument by stating that nowadays, traditional points of reference and sources of identity have been weakened (Melucci, 1988; Buechler 1995). The fluidity of identity in the modern world and in social movements means that identity construction is an ever-ongoing process (Melucci, 1988). Hence, unity of movements is a result of ongoing efforts to establish and maintain collective identity rather than a static given (Melucci, 1989). Thus, Melucci approaches collective action as a product, rather than an origin. In this regard, his reading of the theory is concerned with why social movements arise in societies and how they are formed (Melucci, 1989; Melucci, 1996; Ebrahimipour et al., 2015). New social movements are often concerned with identity markers that were previously less salient (Johnston et al., 1994). In the case of Lebanon, this relates to the degree of importance citizens attribute to being Lebanese, for example, in comparison to the importance attributed to being Christian or Shi'a, among other options. Moreover, a united Lebanese identity is worthy of attention in light of increasing nationalism around the globe. The applicability of Melucci's reading of the theory stems from the importance that is attributed to the re-appropriation of the socio-economic development as well as the personal sphere (Melucci, 1980). This is especially apt in the case of Lebanon, where the institutionalization of sectarianism has infiltrated every sphere of society, including the personal. The same applies to this thesis' aim of examining the Lebanese case in relation to new social movements' orientation towards the conquest of autonomy and independence vis-à-vis the system (Melucci, 1980).

Concerning the debate whether new social movements are political or cultural, Melucci adds an interesting point. In essence, new social movements should be seen as being oriented towards autonomy and independence vis-à-vis the system (Melucci, 1980). He argues that new social movements are anti-political in the sense that they are not playing by the rules of existing power-holders, making it difficult to ride the wave or co-opt the movement in the conventional political system (Melucci, 1989). This aspect is of interest in the Lebanese case, as throughout the advancement of the October 17 protests, various parties within the political establishment have tried to co-opt the movement and present themselves as one of

them, whilst other parties choose to set up counter-movements and protests (Middle East Eye and Agencies, 2019). The rejection of traditional, conservative politics by new social movements is a strength, and it does not mean a withdrawal to the individualist orientation (Buechler, 1995). Rather, cultural movements can cause major political contention; the challenges do not necessarily need to stem from the conventional political arena (Melucci, 1989). Hence one could arguably speak of conservative versus progressive politics, when not limiting the concept of politics to the conventional political system, rather seeing the expression of politics in social phenomena like social movements. Finally, Melucci sees new social movements as explicitly new in the sense that they refuse to accept any political mediation, insisting upon the immediate satisfaction of their demands (Melucci, 1980). This, again, is visible in the current Lebanese protests, demanding the removal of the entire political elite, not accepting any compromise.

2.4 Ethnic identity debate

As visible from the exploration of new social movements, identity and the possibility of having agency in the identity construction is important for our understanding of these movements. At the same time, (ethnic) identity itself is a sensitizing concept which is subject to debate. Ethnic identity or ethnicity, is relevant in the case of Lebanon given its institutionalization in the Lebanese political system, and more generally in Lebanese society at large. Having touched upon the role of identity in New Social Movement theory, it becomes evident that a proper conceptualization of identity and identity construction is pivotal to the proposed research. The debate on ethnic identity is divided between three main strands of thought: primordialism, instrumentalism and social constructivism.

The primordial view, most famously used by Kaplan in his 2005 *Balkan Ghosts*, sees ethnic identity as static and predetermined – in his example, ancient Balkan animosities lie at the root of the region's conflicts (Kaplan, 2005). Identity is a given and structural in this view, fixed by human nature; ethnic expressions of identity are culturally given and have an overpowering and non-rational quality (Fearon & Laitin 2000; Oberschall 2000). Primordialism views conflicts between two (or more) ethnic groups as unavoidable. There are, according to primordialism, unchanging

characteristics of members, and ethnic violence is the result of antagonisms and antipathies which are inherently linked to ethnic groups (Fearon & Laitin 2000). Even in communities that have experienced periods of cooperation, hatred and anonymities are always just below the surface, according to Kaplan (2005). Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* is also an apt example of primordialism. Huntington states that conflicts revolve around culture, and his perceived borders between cultures are the cleavages over which new battles start (Huntington, 1993). Eight cultures or civilizations are identified, whose differences in religion, culture, history and tradition are fundamental. This in turn will lead, according to Huntington, to a desire to protect these beliefs and hence these new perceived borders. There is a perceived need for self-preservation. Conflict is determined a priori through a long history of traditions and beliefs, which are impossible to change. Based on this notion, Huntington sees the civilizations as static, leaving no room for individuals to choose where they belong – it is rather something they are born into (Huntington, 1993).

The general critique voiced against primordialism is its static approach, leaving no room for cultural processes and social factors which may formulate or manipulate the identity of a community (Baumann, 2004). The suggestion that ethnic identities came to rise in a social and political vacuum fails to recognize historical and cultural construction of identity, which are the nature of key notions like the 'nation' or an 'ethnic group' (Baumann, 2004).

The instrumentalist view departs from the view that identities are totally fixed, but sees identity change mainly in elite manipulation. To start, Oberschall (2000) argues that ethnic violence was mainly militia against militia rather than neighbour versus neighbour; the elites manipulated existing ethnic sentiments and group loyalties for political ends. Describing elite manipulation of ethnicity through cognitive frames, Oberschall differentiates between normal frames and crisis frames. A cognitive frame is explained as a mental structure which makes sense of and adds narrative to the social world (Snow et al., 1986). Hence, it helps us to understand the events that take place around us and the people and groups that we encounter (Oberschall, 2000). In a normal frame, ethnic relations are cooperative, and cross-ethnic transactions occur in abundance. A crisis frame, however, is a left-over from

previous conflicts and/or wars, and is a state of destruction. Elites can reactivate these frames and choose to amplify them (Oberschall, 2000). The instrumentalist approach sees elites using and reiterating crisis frames to create public support for ethnic hatred, adding to societal polarization. If persistent, this creates a downward spiral, potentially leading to a legitimization of ethnic violence. The crisis frame is used for fearmongering, to remind the people of the atrocities of the past, and activate a perceived need for self-defence and self-preservation (Oberschall, 2000).

Elite manipulation of cognitive frames can also be identified in Lebanon. The sectarian system is tense, and experiences pressures from both within and outside. The civil war is the ultimate crisis frame; its atrocities were so horrific that they are not openly mentioned, not in the least by the former wartime militia leaders that are now political leaders. This crisis frame is effective in ensuring loyalty of followers as a way of community survival. Different sects have community-specific histories and memories of past grievances, and sectarian leaders amplify the sectarian identity as opposed to the national identity (Nagle, 2016). A spokesperson of the Shi'a Amal movement explained that, "A citizen's loyalty will primarily be to their community and their sect and then after this a national citizen. Patriotism is minimized for the good of the confessional system" (Nagle, 2016, p. 1156). In a similar manner to the use of cognitive frames, sectarian elites see proposed changes to the sectarian system, like legalizing civil marriage, as a threat to security. Such topics are deemed too sensitive, a potential sliding slope to new disputes, according to the sectarian elites (Nagle, 2016). In this regard, the ruling class is able to undermine the efforts of Lebanese social movements.

The third approach to ethnic identity construction is the social constructivist view. Social constructivism approaches social categories as being able to change over time. Our view of social categories is determined by the rules of membership and valuation of human action, but these are prone to change (Fearon & Laitin, 2000; Oberschall, 2000). This view departs from the assumption that the origins, contents and forms of ethnicity are shaped by choices of individuals and groups, through identifying themselves and others around them (Nagel, 1994). The social constructivist approach has sought to undermine primordialism, for example by showing how in society rules of membership of categories previously taken for

granted, like man or woman, have changed over time (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). Moreover, social constructivism argues that members of different ethnic groups need not see each other as such, as the content of social categories and the boundaries between them can change over time (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). This view does not deny the historical basis of ethnicity and ethnic conflict, but does depart from the reasoning that this is the sole explanation of conflict or mobilization (Nagel, 1994). Rather, there is a constant redefinition and reconstruction of identity (Nagel, 1994).

It is important to see how social construction of identity takes place. Fearon and Laitin (2000) identify three processes: construction by discourse; construction by social and economic processes; and finally, construction through individual agents. The latter can both concern elite strategic action, showing similarities to Oberschall's elite manipulation, but also strategic action on the ground, referring to non-political or elite individuals. The social constructivist approach is prominently represented by Sen, with an emphasis on individual identity construction. Sen's main focus is on the presence of choice within one's individual identity, as opposed to the primordial take on identity as something one is born into. Sen sees a plurality of identities, and individuals may choose which identity marker holds more or less significance to them (Sen, 2006).

Individuals or groups advocating for change in Lebanon often rest on the constructivist approach, namely that identities in divided societies are not necessarily terminally fixed (Nagle, 2016). Groups in Lebanese society that aim to dismantle the sectarian system are strengthened by the idea that ethnic identity can soften and change over time (Nagle, 2016). They hope that changes in identity move towards a shared public, national identity, superseding ethnic divisions. Moreover, these groups wish to see a disappearance of sectarianism in state institutions, through the abolition of quotas and the presence of religion in the public sphere (Nagle, 2016). As mentioned, there are people in Lebanon whose loyalty is first and foremost to the community rather than the nation, as exemplified by the comments made by an Amal Movement spokesperson. There is, however, also a significant group in Lebanese society that attributes more importance to the national identity rather than ethno-religious affiliation (Nagle, 2016). Importance attributed to specific identity markers by individuals is, however, not sufficient in explaining the persistence of sectarianism,

as topics like dependency on elites come into play as well, which will be explored in further detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

The social constructivist and instrumentalist approaches to identity are the main focus in this thesis, as they align with Melucci's reading of New Social Movement theory. This chapter has touched upon elite manipulation of cognitive frames by the Lebanese ruling class, as well as the anti-sectarian movements that try to utilize the constructivist approach to identity in their favour. These approaches will be explored in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6 when addressing previous anti-sectarian movements as well as the October 17 movement, and the trends that can be derived from the interviews.

2.5 Concluding remarks

Having a thorough understanding of the methodological grounding of the conducted research, these theoretical insights warrant an operationalisation. One of the main concepts that was measured in the interviews was identity, relating mainly to national, sectarian, and religious identity. This concept returns throughout the different sub-questions of this research, as the aim is to gain insights in self-identification in these fields, whilst also shedding light on the elite manipulation of sectarian identity. The concept of identity takes centre stage in the interviews, as personal motivations and changing sentiments vis-à-vis varying identity markers are of interest. Another concept of interest is that of clientelism and citizen dependency on sectarian leaders. Throughout the interviews and desk research, more insight has been sought into the trade-off between loyalty to sectarian leaders as a result of clientelism and anti-sectarian motivations as a result of faltering governance.

The next chapter presents the methodological framework used. This chapter will delve into the methods of analysis used to gain insights into anti-sectarian sentiments of the respondents, and will hence illustrate what coding methods were used in order to draw conclusions from interviewee feedback.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The research question of this research is: *'How does anti-sectarian activism develop in Lebanon's institutionalized consociational socio-political system?'* In order to answer this question, a single-case case study has been performed. In order to account for this thesis' methodology of data collection and analysis, this chapter discusses the methodological decisions made throughout the research process. The encountered limitations are also addressed.

3.1 Methodological position and case selection

As this research departs from an interpretivist approach, the goal is to explain social action resulting from shared rules on social life (Demmers, 2012). Interpretivism emphasizes human volition (Della Porta & Keating, 2008). This entails human agency in the construction of meaning, which is formed through history, culture, and context-specificity (Demmers, 2012). In the case of this research, action which is studied is participation in anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, specifically the October 17 movement. The method used for this research was a single-case study. Case studies have made significant contributions to our knowledge of the socio-political world, for instance the dynamics of power in democracies and during international crises, as well as different elements of social revolutions (Vennesson, 2008). The choice for this method stems from the research goal of gaining a profound and thorough insight into anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, hence focusing on a specified, demarcated process, confined in time and space (Verschuuren & Doorewaard, 2010). Within case study research, one can opt for a holistic or embedded analysis of the case (Creswell, 2007). Where an embedded analysis concerns an analysis of a specific aspect of the case, this research will be based on a holistic analysis (Creswell, 2007). A holistic method of analysis aims to obtain a general idea of the object as a whole (Verschuuren & Doorewaard, 2010). Another aspect of a case study is that it is used to develop and evaluate theories, and explain particular phenomena (Vennesson, 2008).

The aspects referred to make a case study suitable for the proposed exploration of anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, as there is relatively little

research on this topic as of yet. Gathering qualitative data through an unstructured and open way, paves the way for understanding a new phenomenon (Vennesson, 2008). More specifically, this research used an interpretive case study, based on the presented theoretical framework in order to provide an explanation of the case of anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon (Vennesson, 2008). Given the fact that every case is different in its historical embedding, context, and process, this may potentially lead to an evaluation or refinement of the presented theories and conceptual framework (Vennesson, 2008).

This research opts for a single case, given the uniqueness of the Lebanese case. Its uniqueness is given with the combination of institutionalized sectarianism and clientelism, creating citizen dependency. Due to this, rebelling against the sectarian system transcends the mere religious or ethnic origin context, but also concerns the socio-economic security of specific groups of people. Another reason to choose for a single case study is the scope and timeframe of this research. By focusing on one case, it was possible to conduct a thorough research while doing justice to the complexity of the case. It is important to acknowledge that there are other cases of institutionalized ethnic identity – for example Bosnia and Herzegovina and Northern Ireland. Hence, findings of this research might potentially be generalized beyond the Lebanese case, but this is not the aim of this research as such.

3.2 Data collection

In practice, the choice of a case study method entails the use of a triangulation of methods. This concerns the combination of interviews, content analyses of available textual and audio-visual material, and desk research (Verschuuren & Doorewaard, 2010). This is complemented by using a variety of sources, referred to as a triangulation of sources. A triangulation of both methods and sources also contributes to the holistic nature of the case study, as it adds to the aim of gaining a general idea of a specific phenomenon. Moreover, triangulation is of paramount importance as it eliminates chance as much as possible when focusing on merely one case (Verschuuren & Doorewaard, 2010). Hence, the internal validity of the research is safeguarded (Bryman, 2016). Another aspect of a case study which

renders it useful to the central goal of this research is that the object is studied in its natural context. This is crucial to this research, as understanding of what drives people to forsake their sectarian identity can only be done through conducting a research project on site. The advantages of the case study are thus that it paints a general picture of the research object, whilst not requiring much pre-structuring. By using this method, results are more readily accepted by people in the field (Verschuuren & Doorewaard, 2010). The disadvantage is its limited external validity. This, however, does not pose major problems to the proposed research, as it does not seek to make claims beyond the Lebanese case.

The practical implication of the chosen method, is that semi-structured interviews were the main source of data collection. Semi-structured interviews are relatively informal and flexible, rendering them suitable to be used alongside other forms of data collection (Clifford et al., 2010). Hence, they are a suitable part of a triangulation of methods. Unlike quantitative methods, participants are not selected randomly; rather, they are selected on account of their personal experience with the topic in question, anti-sectarian movements. Questions were designed to elicit different types of answers; descriptive, thoughtful, and emotional (Clifford et al., 2010). The interviews were complemented by desk research; the interviews are used to provide answers into personal motivations, considerations, and views regarding the social context of Lebanon in which the interviewees find themselves. The goal is not to gain insights into the factual information behind the events, as this was already found through research. With this interview method the discussion unfolds in a conversational manner, leaving room for the participants to go deeper into issues they attach more value to (Clifford et al., 2010). This is exactly what is sought after in this research, as personal motivations and considerations take center stage in the collected data. A list of guiding questions was prepared in order to have points of reference during the interview. This list also served to evoke new responses when interviewee feedback dried up concerning a certain topic. Two lists were created, one for interviews with protestors and one for civil society organizations, both of which can be found in Appendix II.

The research population consists of both individuals who participated in the protests, as well as civil society organizations that have emerged from the movement.

Ten interviews were conducted, two of which with civil society organizations. Before the interviews, desk research was conducted in order to get a broader understanding of the context and history of (anti-)sectarianism. The list of interviewees can be found in Appendix I.

The sampling method used in this research was the purposeful sampling strategy. This strategy, quite common in qualitative research, requires the researchers to select interviewees based on their ability to purposefully contribute to an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007). The interviewees were mainly selected through a personal network. In the case of civil society organizations, they were selected based on the fact that they emerged from the protests, and have been active in movements through mobilizing and consolidating their presence in the field. In order to protect the privacy of the respondents, only their first names, or their position within the civil society organization, are used. The reason behind this is the sensitivity of the topic discussed, which can lead to issues in familial, professional, or social spheres. The full names of all respondents are known to the author. Gaining access to interviews through a personal network is unavoidably accompanied by a bias, to be further explored in section 3.4, the discussion of the used methodology.

3.3 Analysis

The analysis of the interviews was conducted through coding, in order to organize the data and properly understand the meaning of interviewee responses (Clifford et al., 2010). The first two sub-questions were answered through desk research, as it was necessary to understand how sectarianism became institutionalized throughout Lebanese history, how anti-sectarian movements came to rise in previous instances, and how the October 17 movements erupted and progressed, before the interviews could take place. Connecting these empirical chapters to the theoretical framework allowed for a proper understanding of the backdrop against which the October 17 movement emerged. This, in turn, aided in painting a proper picture of people's reasons to mobilize in the October 17 anti-sectarian movement.

Through the use of coding, potential motivations to participate in anti-sectarian movements that intersect came to light (Clifford et al., 2010). Throughout this process

the sub-questions of this research were altered as new insights and meaning of data became apparent. For example, it was initially anticipated to include a sub-question on the relationship between sectarianism and religion, to inquire how interviewees look at their religious identity when not being affiliated with sectarianism. However, it soon became clear that interviewees detached their religious affiliation from views on sectarianism. At the same time, it became clear that it was important to understand why people would choose to remain loyal to their respective sect, namely through the use of cognitive frames by sectarian elites as well as clientelist networks leading to citizen dependency. Therefore, the sub-question was replaced by the current fifth sub-question, dealing with sectarian loyalty. Throughout the interviews, the coding structure was built and refined in the same manner, allowing for the data to influence the coding process.

Initially, the interview transcriptions were analysed through open coding, with specific interviewee feedback highlighted. Following this stage, these quotes were grouped in codes. For example, to answer the third sub-question, inquiring after people's relationship vis-à-vis their imposed sectarian identity, the code 'familial background' was created, containing interviewee feedback on the role of sectarianism in their upbringing. Subsequently, these codes were themed into four themes, all referring to a specific sub-question. The different themes have several codes. Individual quotes may be categorized in several codes, and individual codes may be categorized in more than one theme, when relevant.

Finally, feedback on the different themes was combined in the last section of the chapter. This had the aim to compare the answers to the different sub-questions, and to use these findings to go back to the central research question.

3.4 Discussion

As discussed, several methodological choices had to be made in the design and execution of this research, which inevitably have its consequences. Due to the depth of this research in combination with the triangulation methods used to gain insights into the Lebanese case, the internal validity will be relatively high (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010; Bryman, 2016). Whilst the internal validity of this research is rather strong, the external validity is not. The limited external validity can be attributed to

the methodological design being a single case study. The research aim is to inquire about a specific situation, in this case the rise of anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, as opposed to aiming to make findings that hold truth beyond the Lebanese case. However, as pointed out, there are other cases of institutionalized ethnic identity, notably Northern Ireland and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This means that the presented findings might aid in understanding other instances of institutionalized ethnic identity, but this is merely a by-product and not the central aim of the current research.

Throughout the process, several limitations were identified. The main, overarching limitation of this research was the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. This made it impossible to conduct field research on the ground as a result of lockdowns and travel restrictions. These restrictions influenced several methodological decisions, which will be addressed individually.

One of the limitations of this research is the limited number of interviews. In the end, ten interviews were conducted. Due to the travel restrictions, it was harder to gain access to protestors. Therefore, a personal network had to be used in order to reach people, which meant that the diversity of the interviewees was limited: many of them are based in Beirut and three out of ten are students. This means that a selection bias has occurred, as eight out of ten interviewees were approached through a personal network, rather than on the ground. Moreover, conducting online interviews also conveys a social class bias. Due to the electricity crisis and lack of basic public goods, not all groups have access to electricity or internet. Being forced to conduct interviews online due to the pandemic further limited the diversity of the interviewees. However, at the same time, contact with civil society organisations was successful. Interviews were conducted with *Minteshreen* and *Lihaqqi*, two civil society organizations and political groups that emerged from the October 17 movement. These limitations are further accounted for by using the method of triangulation, gaining insights through interviews with for example the abovementioned groups, but also through desk research.

In line with this limitation, but deserving separate acknowledgement, is the issue of language. All the interviews were conducted in English, which all interviewees mastered without any problem. However, this does add to the social dimension of a

selection bias, as English is not native to Lebanon and thus decreases the inclusiveness of participation in this research. Coincidentally, the desk research only makes use of English and French sources. Hence, the lack of Arabic in both interviews and empirical sources warrants acknowledgement. The use of triangulation methods aimed to fill this gap as effectively as possible.

The last limitation is the bias that arises through personal interpretation in the analysis. Interviewee feedback was analysed through interpretation, which is inherently personal, inevitably resulting in an interpretation bias.

Despite the identified limitations, this research was able to get data from both protestors and civil society organizations that arose from anti-sectarian activism. In addition, triangulation methods were used to support the field research, which could hence be placed in the historical context of the institutionalization of sectarianism in Lebanon and activism against it, complemented by further analysis gained from desk research. By taking this approach, new insights into the rise of anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon were derived from this research.

Chapter 4: Institutionalization of Lebanese sectarianism

Lebanon has always been a place of contention. Internationally, many actors have sought or still continue to seek influence. Domestically, throughout history, various sects have contested their 'right' to rule Lebanon. History textbooks used in Lebanese schools stop in 1943, the year the country gained its independence (Maktabi, 2012). There is no discussion or teaching about the tumultuous years following the end of the French mandate, specifically the 15-year civil war which raged from 1975 until 1990. The reason for this is that history is politics, and in order to avoid new tensions, no account of what happened is taught to the country's new generations. Rather, students depend on their own communities, their own sects, to learn about particular events during these years (Maktabi, 2012). Luckily, many scholars have tried to fill this gap, allowing this chapter to provide an account of how sectarianism was introduced in Lebanon, and how it has changed, yet remained present until today. This thesis does not view sectarianism as a result of primordial strife or a foreign conspiracy. Rather, in line with the instrumentalist and social constructivist approach to ethnic identity construction as discussed in Chapter 2, this chapter is based upon the assumption that both imperial and local histories, which interacted, produced sectarian realities (Makdisi, 2000).

The goal of this chapter is to answer the first sub-question of this research, namely 'What is the sectarian identity structure in Lebanon and how did it become institutionalized?' To answer this question, this chapter will move throughout Lebanese history to point out sectarian strife and institutionalization of sectarianism. The chapter is divided in four sections: Lebanon under the Ottoman Empire; Lebanon as a French protectorate; Lebanon's golden age followed by civil war; and finally, post-Ta'if political realities up until the 2005 Cedar Revolution. The goal of this chapter is not to provide an all-encompassing history of Lebanon, which would simply be impossible. Rather, this chapter aims to provide an understanding of the development and institutionalization of sectarianism throughout modern Lebanese history.

4.1 Lebanon in the Ottoman Empire

Sectarianism in Lebanon can be traced back to the days of the Emirate of Mount Lebanon under the Ottoman Empire. The main sects living on Mount Lebanon were Druze and Maronite Christians. However, the interrelated divisions of the population in the Emirate of Mount Lebanon transcended mere Druze-Christian strife; in total, five divisions can be identified (Traboulsi, 2012).

First, the religious difference was also a communal one; in the Ottoman Empire the Muslims, which includes the Druze in Lebanon, were a 'high' community, while the Christians and Jews belonged to the lower community. Although the latter two enjoyed religious freedoms, they had to pay a tax for their protection. In Mount Lebanon specifically, this was a divide between Druze tribal warriors and the largely peasant base of the Christian population (Traboulsi, 2012). Secondly, a division existed between the ranking order and commoners. The former held titles (Emir, Sheikh, *Muqaddam*) bestowed by the Emir, Ottoman *Wali* (governor), or the Sultan (Traboulsi, 2012). A third division was between local and central, Ottoman rulers. The fourth matter of contention existed between and within landowning families (*mqata'ji*) over power relating to the farm tax system (*iltizam*) (Traboulsi, 2012). Fifth, there were several conflicts between landowning families and peasants leasing land for a share of the crops, leading to peasant revolts (Traboulsi, 2012).

Exemplary for the fact that divisions transcended mere sectarian strife is the reign of Bashir Shihab II, the Emirate's longest reigning and first Maronite Emir, between 1788 and 1840. During most of his reign, the conflicts of the Emirate did not follow sectarian lines. Family alliances were cross-religious, the noble Shihab family itself having both Christian and Muslim branches (Makdisi, 2000). Thus, the different religious groups were separated by more than just religion, and the strife which eventually surfaced cannot be ascribed to mere religious competition.

Mehmed Ali, the ruler who successfully separated Egypt from the Ottoman empire and occupied Syria and Mount Lebanon between 1831 and 1840, used Christians to quell the Druze revolts, but even following those events the two religious groups returned to good relations (Makdisi, 2000). This exemplifies how elites, in this case exemplified by Mehmed Ali, used the religious differences to their own strategic advantage, but also how this strife is in fact not primordial, as it did not cause an

everlasting conflict between the two groups in Mount Lebanon. In a joint effort by British, Austrian, and Ottoman forces, Mehmed Ali was ousted, restoring once more the Ottoman sovereignty over Syria and Mount Lebanon. The subsequent implementation of the Ottoman *Tanzimat* reforms is seen as a period of modernization. It is important to note that this modernization by the Ottomans had no direct relation to the specificities of Mount Lebanon, which was a passive and traditional local society (Makdisi, 2000). The changes, first from Ottoman to Egyptian rule, later on – after Mehmed Ali's ousting through European intervention – followed by the restoration of pre-1831 societal relations and the imposition of the *Tanzimat* reforms, put strains on the relationship between Christians and Druze (Makdisi, 2000). These strains transcended mere religious elements, but were rather a result of political and cultural turmoil throughout this period (Makdisi, 2000).

By 1841, sectarian violence erupted, ushering in the age of consociationalism, or sectarian power-sharing. The violence of 1841 resulted in the partition of Mount Lebanon along religious lines (Makdisi, 2000). Two administrative regions were formed, a Christian northern district and a Druze southern district, each with its own governor (Traboulsi, 2012). Each district governor was seconded by two delegates, a Christian and a Druze. However, neither party was satisfied: the Christian population made up about 60 percent of the southern district, and the Druze insisted on a return to their traditional rule over the entire Mount Lebanon (Traboulsi, 2012). This resulted in new revolts, leading to new changes implemented by the Ottomans in 1845. Each district governor would be assisted by a council of twelve members, consisting of six councillors and six judges of each of the six religious communities: Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Druze, Sunni Muslim, and Shi'a Muslim. Since Shi'a Muslims did not have the right of representation by a judge, as all Ottoman Muslims were subject to Sunni jurisdiction, the twelfth member of the council was the vice-governor of the district; a Maronite in the north and a Druze in the south (Traboulsi, 2012).

The following years were characterized by many conflicts. The reorganisation had worsened the crisis, as it only addressed superficial sectarian and not social divisions (Traboulsi, 2012). After tumultuous years, the so-called 'events of 1860' took place. At first, seemingly stand-alone murders of both Druze and Maronite citizens

occurred. This was followed by full-scale hostilities following mobilization of Maronites in the Shouf area (Makdisi, 2000). Over 200 villages were ravaged, villagers maimed and killed; both sides took part in a savage campaign in an attempt to cleanse their respective lands (Makdisi, 2000; Traboulsi, 2012). The Druze were seen to be victorious, as they brought about an unprecedented massacre of Christians (Makdisi, 2000). As a result of these events a new administration of Mount Lebanon was installed: the *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon, encompassing both the Northern and Southern district (Traboulsi, 2012). Following the massacre of Christians, major European pressure was put on the Ottoman Empire to create a homeland for the Maronites within Mount Lebanon. Hence, the new *Mutasarrifiya* would be led by a Christian non-Arab Ottoman governor reporting directly to the central government. In addition, an Administrative Council of twelve members with consultative powers was to assist the governor. Initially, the membership of this council was equally divided between Christians and Muslims, two for each of the six denominations (just like the council of the annulled Northern and Southern districts), but this was later changed to seven Christians and five Muslims (Traboulsi, 2012).

In addition to local divisions, there is also an international dimension which influenced the developments in Mount Lebanon. With the decline of the Ottoman Empire came increased European intervention in the region (Schlicht, 1980). In Mount Lebanon, this gave rise to an Anglo-French rivalry. The French had a long prior relationship with the Maronites, presenting themselves as the defenders of the Christians in the region. The British turned to the Druze, who did not yet enjoy the support of a European nation, but saw their position strengthened following this newly gained support (Schlicht, 1980). In this way, local and imperial histories interacted, as a Maronite-Druze strife was also part of an Anglo-French competition for influence in the region.

4.2 Greater Lebanon: French Mandate and Independence

Following the relative calmness of the *Mutasarrifiya* of Mount Lebanon, the Ottoman Empire crumbled after the First World War. What would follow was the state of Greater Lebanon, a French mandate. The map of Lebanon as we know it today is a result of the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement, according to which the French and British

divided the region into spheres of influence, drawing the borders of states which, to a great extent, are still visible today (Traboulsi, 2012). This made Lebanon significantly larger, as territories were added to the new state on all sides. The creation of Greater Lebanon was preceded by varying motives of the different factions involved. The Maronite community, a relative majority at the time, was in favour of a Christian state, and hence opposed annexation by Syria. Within the Muslim community, there were groups rallying around the Arab cause (Hirst, 2010). In the end, it was France that decided, and the state of Greater Lebanon was created in 1920, with Syria being divided into the regions of Aleppo, Damascus and the Alawite state, with Jabal Al-Druze being added in 1921 (Traboulsi, 2012; Mallo, 2019). Again, these events show how both imperial and local histories influenced sectarian sentiments within the country.

In practice, the French 'protection' entailed a "regime of direct rule" (Traboulsi, 2012, p. 88; Rabbath, 1973). Like during the times of the *Mutasarrifiya*, the French High Commissioner Gouroud appointed an Administrative Commission, initially consisting of 15 members of which just five were Muslims. The commission was later expanded to 17 members, seven of which were Muslims (Traboulsi, 2012). Notably, the Druze representation was brought back to just one member in the commission. During the mandate, France allowed Lebanon to draft a constitution in 1926. This constitution included individual liberties, equality before the law, and communal representation. Moreover, in this constitution the state renounced its legislative duties relating to personal status, which would fall under the religious authorities of the various sects (Traboulsi, 2012). This remains the case until today (Zalzal, 1997; Human Rights Watch, 2015). However, the constitution would be disbanded in 1932 when a Sunni Sheikh tried to run for president, going against the principle of a Maronite head of state (Traboulsi, 2012).

Coinciding with the early years of the French mandate was the migration of Armenians to Lebanon, following the Armenian genocide. Over the years, several waves of Armenian refugees entered the region, and unlike the Palestinian and Syrian refugees of today, the Armenians were naturalized. This policy was encouraged by Christian groups as, the Armenians being Christian, it would increase their population in the country, the very same reason for which criticism arose from Muslim groups

(Traboulsi, 2012). According to the 1932 Lebanese census, the Christian denominations had a majority over the various Muslim denominations (Traboulsi, 2012; Hirst, 2012). Since then, no official census has been conducted in Lebanon, as there is fear that a change in relative sect size could lead to new tensions, for example sects with an increased membership demanding altered representation (Maktabi, 1999).

The French Mandate lasted until 1943, and although it was characterized by political strife between religious communities, within these communities diverse and competing political motives were also pursued. For example, the Christian prominent Eddé saw Lebanon as a Christian homeland, ethnically different from the Arabs (Traboulsi, 2012). Beshara al-Khoury, another Christian politician, envisioned Lebanon first and foremost as an independent country, liberated from its French shackles, and built in collaboration with the Muslim population, albeit with guaranteed Maronite political supremacy (Traboulsi, 2012). A comparable variance was noticeable within Muslim factions vis-à-vis annexation by Syria. Hence, the strife could no longer merely be reduced to a strife between Syrian unionism and Christian protectionism (Traboulsi, 2012). In 1943, independence was proclaimed at last. And while France did not immediately accept it, imprisoning several prominent politicians, it finally conceded following British and Egyptian pressure (Traboulsi, 2012). In addition to the re-establishment of a constitution, Beshara al-Khoury and Riad al-Sulh, the latter being a prominent Sunni politician and the country's first prime minister, reached a verbal agreement, known as the National Pact. Beshara al-Khoury would go on to be the country's first president (Bogaards, 2019).

The National Pact had four main elements: power-sharing, identity, foreign policy, and Muslim emancipation. The power-sharing agreement implied a six-to-five ratio in favour of the Christians in parliament, in addition to a Maronite president, Sunni prime minister, and Shi'a speaker of parliament (Traboulsi, 2012; Bogaards, 2019). The ratio of Christians to Muslims applied to all functions in government, not just the parliament (Bogaards, 2019). The country's identity was described as having an 'Arab profile' that is 'linked to Western civilisation', instead of either Syrian annexation or French intervention (Traboulsi, 2012). The foreign policy followed suit in ensuring the country would not become a gateway for future colonial endeavours.

The cooperation between the Maronite president and Sunni prime minister also entailed the introduction of Muslim public servants, who so far had been disenfranchised, unlike the Christian population, who enjoyed educational privileges (Traboulsi, 2012).

4.3 The Golden Age and Civil War

Lebanon's independence hence did not involve a departure from sectarianism, although the National Pact did lay the foundation for the independent state. The years following independence showed promising signs, and the 1960s are often referred to as Lebanon's golden age (Perry & Creidi, 2020). During these years, Lebanon bloomed as culture and tourism flourished; economic activity increased, but tensions also rose due to both local and regional events (Holtmeier, 2020; Perry & Creidi, 2020). The creation of Israel in 1948 initially made around 100,000 Palestinians flee towards Lebanon, with more to follow with the 1970 PLO expulsion from Jordan. During the Lebanese golden age, Arab nationalism rose across the region, led by Egyptian president Nasser whose tenure started in 1956 (Zaougui, 2016). 'Nasserism' spread around the region and in 1958 resulted in the United Arab Republic, the political union between Egypt and Syria (Zaougui, 2016). To parts of the Muslim population, Nasserism was seen as a solution for Lebanon. The Maronite president, Camille Chamoun, wanted to curtail Nasserist parliamentary successes, however, and in 1957 called upon the Americans for help. A year later, more American soldiers were brought in to prevent the outbreak of a revolution (Zaougui, 2016). Throughout his reign, Chamoun alienated Muslim elites by choosing weak Sunni prime ministers and changed electoral laws in order to weaken elites and ensure a safe majority in parliament, increasing the power of the office of the president (Traboulsi, 2012).

In 1975, ongoing tensions led to the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, which was to last until 1990. The causes of the civil war are contested by scholars. Whilst the 1960s were relatively calm, below the surface social tensions were boiling. The outbreak of the war is often attributed to tensions resulting from the Palestinian presence following the creation of Israel (Haugbolle, 2011). While this may be a simplified view, the Palestinian presence undoubtedly divided the Lebanese nation. On the one hand, there were people who believed in the right of the Palestinian

resistance to operate from neighbouring countries, including Lebanon, in line with the 1969 Cairo agreements (Haugbolle, 2011). After Black September, when King Hussein of Jordan expelled the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from his country, they relocated to Lebanon. On the other hand, there was a group opposing this, speaking out against the formation of a Palestinian state within the state of Lebanon, as the de facto Palestinian government gained influence (Traboulsi, 2012). This division was also visible within Lebanese political parties. Some saw the Palestinian case as the primary reason for civil war, for instance Farid Al-Khazen, who claims that all but one cabinet crises concerned the Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Therefore, according to Al-Khazen, the Palestinian presence in Lebanon must be considered to be the underlying tension which made way for the start of the civil war (Al-Khazen, 2000; Haugbolle, 2011).

Others regard this view as too simplistic, and seek to include internal factors as the root of escalating tensions, as opposed to exclusively laying blame on external actors. Internal factors included, for example, the enduring Maronite hegemony and favourable political and economic situation. During the 1970s, Christian entrepreneurs in business accounted for 75.5% in the commercial sector, 67.5% in the industrial sector, and 71% in the banking sector. The industrial working class, on the other hand, consisted of 75% Muslims, mainly Shi'a (Traboulsi, 2012). Other factors included the rising number of the Shi'a population and the recognition of their sect (Ghattas, 2020). These factors, in addition to an increased Sunni-favoured demography because of the Palestinian presence, had the potential to shake the fragile consociational system. Finally, scholars also point to the political economy of Lebanon at the time, in particular the over-dependency of the Lebanese economy on Western capitalism. Lebanon's increased wealth since independence created tensions between the new bourgeoisie and the traditional political families (Haugbolle, 2011). It is important to acknowledge these different viewpoints, as they are important to understand some of the same sectarian rhetoric, or cognitive crisis frames, that still persist until today.

The war itself can be divided into three phases: the war of two years (1975-76), the civil war (1977-82), and the inter-Maronite war (1982-90). The initial violence was ignited when Maronite churchgoers, including members of the Kataeb political

party, were shot at. Kataeb militiamen responded by firing a machinegun at a bus driving towards a refugee camp, killing 21 Palestinians (Traboulsi, 2012). During the first couple of years, several reforms were proposed by leaders from various sects. The progressive leftist political bloc, consisting of Muslim and Druze parties, proposed steps towards secularization and a new electoral law. The Christians, a conservative block, opposed changes to the electoral laws as they saw it vital to keep the 6:5 ratio of Christians to Muslims in parliament in place (Traboulsi, 2012). As reforms were not enacted, the various parties and their respective militias continued the violence. The Syrians, initially allied to the progressives, changed sides to the conservative Christians and entered Lebanon, with the approval of Israel.

During the second phase of the war, alliances shifted and collapsed under tensions. The Syrian regime, claiming its intervention saved the Christian conservatives, demanded an end to their ties with Israel. It is important to differentiate between Christian factions, as it was Suleiman Frangieh of the Marada movement who requested Syrian assistance, whilst the far-right Kataeb party opposed Syrian interference. The conservative bloc, consisting of right-wing Christian militias, asked for the disarmament of the PLO, as their alliance with the progressive Muslim groups undermined the relatively stronger position of the right-wing parties vis-à-vis the progressive ones (Traboulsi, 2012). In the meantime, Israeli involvement increased as in 1978 it launched operation Litani, occupying Southern Lebanon up until the Litani river. The Palestinian presence in Lebanon had evolved into a state within a state. During the war of two years, the PLO mainly followed the progressives of Lebanon, while during the second phase of the war, it was rather the other way around, the progressives following the PLO (Traboulsi, 2012). In 1982, Israel once more invaded Lebanon and reached all the way to Beirut. The PLO was ousted from Lebanon, and under severe pressure Bachir Gemayel, son of Kataeb leader Pierre Gemayel, was elected president. However, before he was even able to take office, the president-elect was killed in a bombing. Following these events, the Israeli army entered West Beirut and consequently facilitated and aided in the massacre in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila, where the Kataeb militia killed over a thousand Palestinians (Al-Hout, 2004).

The third phase of the war was ushered in by the election of Amin Gemayel, brother of the slain president-elect Bachir Gemayel, as president of Lebanon in 1982 (Traboulsi, 2012). The third phase of the war saw the withdrawal of the Multinational Force from Lebanon, which consisted of American, British, Italian, and French troops. At the same time, the Israeli presence in the south of the country continued, and the Syrian armed forces actually re-entered the country to stop infighting between the Shi'a Amal movement and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party (Traboulsi, 2012). The Syrians would remain in the country until 2005.

Notably, this phase also saw competition within the Maronite community. The Maronite Christians were the victors of the war, and its main leaders now battled over the leadership of the community. Besides the newly elected Amin Gemayel, this concerned Samir Geagea of the Lebanese Forces, Elie Hobeika, also part of the Lebanese Forces, and finally Michel Aoun, head of the (official) Lebanese army. Aoun in particular, currently the president of Lebanon since 2016, played a crucial role in the final stages of the civil war and the implementation of the Ta'if peace agreement through his refusal to leave the presidential palace, before finally going into exile in France (Traboulsi, 2012).

4.4 Ta'if, Syrian Tutelage, and the Cedar Revolution

The Ta'if agreement marked the beginning of the end of the Lebanese civil war. Signed in 1989 in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, the agreement was not accepted by all. Since 1988 general Aoun had headed a rival government, and he had entrenched himself in the presidential palace. After Aoun led the (later dubbed) 'War of Liberation', he was finally ousted in 1990 and went into exile in France, allowing for the Ta'if agreement to truly be implemented (Traboulsi, 2012). The Ta'if agreement ensured the disarming of sectarian militias, but making an exception for the military wing of Hezbollah, which had been formed in the 1980s. The reasoning behind this was that Hezbollah used its arms for the struggle against Israel, which still occupied parts of Lebanese territory, and that it, as opposed to other militias, had not used its arms against the Lebanese population (Daher, 2019). The Ta'if agreement was supposed to form a temporary second Lebanese republic, which would transition into a third one. This temporary state would be in place to lead to a third, final, and most

importantly, non-sectarian Lebanon. The third republic would be inaugurated by a non-sectarian parliament, although sect representation would be made possible in a newly created senate. A special council was called into life for this purpose, but this council for the abolition of sectarianism is yet to be created (Traboulsi, 2012). In 1991, the Lebanese Parliament agreed on a general amnesty law for all crimes committed before the 28th of March of 1991 (Geahchan, 2019).

The contemporary Lebanese political reality is still based on the Ta'if agreement. Reproducing sectarianism, the agreement replaced the previous 6:5 Christian to Muslim ratio in parliament to an equal divide. Sectarian quotas in the army, police, judiciary, and civil service were abolished. The power of the president was curtailed, increasing the profile of the prime minister, the cabinet, and the speaker of parliament. These positions kept their sectarian representation, meaning the president would remain a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shi'a Muslim (Traboulsi, 2012). Another result of the end of the civil war was the Syrian tutelage of Lebanon, taking on the role of patron (Traboulsi, 2012). In effect, the end of the civil war meant the start of de facto Syrian rule over Lebanon, which was to last until the Cedar Revolution of 2005 (Bahout, 2016).

The events leading up to the Cedar Revolution and its aftermath reaffirmed that sectarian peace has always been hanging by a thread in Lebanon. In February 2005, former prime minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated. Politically, Hariri contended with the Syrians, as Lebanon was under its tutelage since the end of the civil war (Bahout, 2016). Public outcry over the assassination led to major demonstrations. In March 2005, the Lebanese political stage was divided between two blocs; the so-called March 14 alliance versus the March 8 alliance, a division existing up till this day. The March 14 alliance grew around calls for the immediate withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, as they were widely seen as responsible for the assassination of Hariri. The bloc centres around the Future Movement, the Sunni political party led by the Hariri family. Opposing the Syrian presence, the March 14 alliance enjoys the support of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, the United States, and the European Union. The March 8 alliance, on the other hand, centres around Hezbollah, with its partners being the Amal Movement, and since 2006 also

the Free Patriotic Movement of general Aoun (Arsan, 2018). The March 8 alliance presents itself as a counterforce to Western neo-imperialism, Zionism, and/or Sunni jihadism. It supports the Syrian and Iranian regimes. Hence, the divide between the March alliances was not merely one between different sects, but rather a separation along ideological lines. Following the unrest, dubbed the Cedar Revolution, the Syrian troops left Lebanon in April 2005 in line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1559 which called for all foreign troops to leave Lebanon (United Nations Security Council, 2004).

The end of the Syrian tutelage did not, however, end the string of political assassinations in Lebanon. Whilst Rafiq Hariri may be the most famous example, many politicians, journalists, and activists have been assassinated in Lebanon over the years, often when being critical of the Syrian regime or Hezbollah (Ramadan, 2021). Another aspect which has not changed following the departure of the Syrians is the persistence of political dynasties. Lebanese politics has remained more of the same, where existing elites or their family members remain on the political scene. For example, during the most recent parliamentary elections of 2018, a quarter of the 128 seats were targeted by family members of incumbents, 19 candidates of which were standing for seats previously held by their parents (Houssari, 2018).

4.5 From institutionalized sectarianism to sectarian clientelism

Throughout Lebanese history, sectarianism has known different forms of institutionalization, the last and current form being formalized in the Ta'if agreement. In the Lebanese case, however, sectarianism transcends mere political representation, but has become entrenched in all spheres of society. It is important to understand how sectarianism is interlinked with clientelism in Lebanon because, as will be shown in following chapters, it represents a certain bargain between sectarian elites and their constituents in which sectarian voting and support is given in exchange for public service provision. The state fails to provide public goods, and the sectarian groups come into play to provide public goods, social welfare, and jobs to its own constituents (Cammett & Issar, 2010). Another important aspect is safety. Sectarian elites have created a socio-economic dependency of their constituents, but these elites have also often built on constituent's fear of other sects increasing in

power. Leaders are profiting of an ‘us versus them’ mentality, portraying themselves as the only option to keep their sect safe from sectarian danger (Collard, 2019). In general terms, the Lebanese state consists of weak institutions complemented by strong communal groups, where social capital has become institutionalized in public service provision (Deets, 2018). Clientelist payoffs can include cash, subsidized schools, access to health care, payment of medical fees, government permits and public sector employment (Corstange, 2018). In exchange for public service provision, sectarian leaders are (re-)elected by their constituents. During the 2009 parliamentary elections, roughly half of the respondents of a post-election survey indicated that payoffs influence voting behaviour (Corstange, 2018). One of the reasons behind the large civil service in Lebanon is the provision of jobs by sectarian elites to their constituents. For example, the country still has a railway authority with 300 employees, despite the fact that the railway system has been defunct since 1989 (LBC, 2019). Another poignant example of clientelism is the state’s inability to provide 24-hour electricity, leading to daily scheduled power cuts, complemented by the use of private generator operators for those who can afford it. Interestingly, the use of private generators is illegal, but generator owners enjoy political protection. In exchange for this political cover, the recipients of electricity contribute to the re-election of the politicians in question (Whewell, 2019). The current economic crisis, however, has exacerbated the electricity issues. Whereas blackouts in Beirut usually lasted for a scheduled three hours each day, the economic crisis caused blackouts to last up to 22 hours per day in 2020, as the country faced a lack of fuel (Majzoub, 2020). Anti-sectarian movements became more prominent when sectarian leaders could no longer keep their end of the bargain, and the benefits to their constituents no longer paid off. In light of this, the next chapter will focus on the anti-sectarian movements Lebanon has known in its recent history, including the October 17 movement, each of which will be described in its specific socio-economic context.

Chapter 5: Anti-sectarian movements since the March alliances

Having a thorough understanding of the historic formation and institutionalization of sectarianism in Lebanon, this chapter turns to previous anti-sectarian movements in order to understand the context in which the October 17 movement developed. For that reason, this chapter tackles the second sub-question, ‘Which anti-sectarian protest movements have occurred in recent Lebanese history?’ To understand previous anti-sectarian movements, however, it is important to understand what institutionalized sectarianism entails in modern-day Lebanon. As discussed in Chapter 4, sectarianism in Lebanon exceeds the set quotas and divisions of government functions. Effectively, sectarian leaders have a grip on many sectors of society, and are able to create citizen-dependency assuring their loyalty. In the same way, the sectarian elites are able to benefit from lucrative business deals and offer public services not provided by the government (Bryce, 2020). This chapter discusses movements after the 2005 Cedar Revolution, which had a very distinct sectarian nature and simultaneously revolved around political parties which would later go on to form the respective March alliances and parliamentary blocs (Deets, 2018).

5.1 Arab uprisings, garbage crisis, and elections

During the years following the 2005 formation of the March alliances, several anti-sectarian movements arose. In 2011, when the region experienced political unrest leading to the downfall of dictators who had ruled for decades, the situation in Lebanon was relatively quiet. Protests took place nonetheless. Labour movements and civil society members mobilized segments of the population, albeit to a limited extent (Fakhoury, 2014). Demonstrations rallied for issues like socioeconomic justice and equality, civil marriage, and in general the instalment of a democratic and secular state (Hermez, 2011; Fakhoury, 2014; El Kak, 2019). Initially, the specific demonstrations during this time targeted specific issues, rather than calling for the overthrow of the regime altogether, as was done in the uprising in other nations (Atallah et al., 2011). However, as time progressed, anti-regime protests also

occurred, drawing the largest crowds. The movements gained in size quickly, but also lost traction soon thereafter, as organizers were unable to unite over the means and objectives of the campaign (Atallah et al., 2011). This movement also failed to materialize and increase in number as citizens' loyalty to respective sect leaders remained important. As illustrated in Chapter 4, many citizens depend on sect leaders to fill the gap of public service provision, where the government is notably absent. This context problematizes citizen's participation in movements that claim that all leaders are to blame for the current state of affairs, as their livelihoods may be dependent on those very same leaders (Hermez, 2011). Politics of sectarianism hence prevents collective action towards a unified goal (Fakhoury, 2014).

Another important protest movement started in 2015 against the backdrop of the so-called garbage crisis. Having no clear organized opposition, Lebanese social networks can ignite periods of mobilization and gain widespread support, for example during the garbage crisis, which was framed as anti-system and anti-sectarian (Geha, 2019). The crisis was sparked in 2015, in addition to grievances related to electricity cuts, the postponement (twice) of parliamentary elections and the ongoing presidential vacuum. A last spark to ignite new mass mobilization came with the collapse of the waste management sector. The contract of the private company dealing with the waste treatment in the Greater Beirut Area expired, causing garbage to pile up in the streets (Geha, 2018; El Kak, 2019). Since the civil war, no clear strategy of waste management had existed, leading to a string of temporary solutions, with hazardous health effects to the population as a result (Geha, 2018). In 1994, the government of Rafiq Hariri gave Sukleen, a company owned by Hariri's business partners, the contract to manage the city's waste (Deets, 2018). This unfair allocation furthermore allowed the company to charge four times the international norm for waste collection. In response, other companies related to different sects emerged, eager to get a piece of the pie. As Sukleen's contract was due to end in late 2014, the national unity government – consisting of parties from both parliamentary blocs – sought to divide the waste sector among sectarian companies (Deets, 2018). Simultaneously, the garbage dump used by Sukleen was closed after protests of local citizens. The end result of these issues was that Sukleen no longer had a valid contract to collect garbage, and in addition did not have a garbage dump where

garbage could be disposed of. These events exemplify the encroachment of sectarianism beyond the political sphere, taking place against the backdrop of a country without a president since over a year, and a parliament which had postponed elections, leading many to view it as illegitimate (Deets, 2018).

As garbage piled up in the streets, the mobilization of the 'You Stink' movement started. The protest marches were directed against the system and leading political classes. Once again, a point of contention among protestors was the disapproval of the entire political class. As in previous movements, some groups remained loyal to their sectarian leader (Geha, 2019; Hermez, 2011). However, the movement was unique in its formulation of a specific demand around which civil discontent was centred. The argument was that leaders had to resign, as they had proven to be incapable of governing, as illustrated by the mismanagement of the waste sector. It was the first time that anti-sectarian protestors formulated clear demands, such as the resignation of the Minister of Environment and new parliamentary elections (Geha, 2019). The movement went into dormancy after the plan of dividing the waste management sector amongst sectarian companies was put aside and Sukleen's contract was renewed, leaving the country to return to the status quo (Geha, 2019). However, the movement is strongly linked to the anti-sectarian groups taking part in the 2016 municipality elections, and hence re-emerged.

During the dormancy phase of the 2015 'You Stink' movement, preparations were made for the 2016 municipal elections. Social networks behind the movement organized an electoral campaign called *Beirut Madinati*, Beirut My City, set out to address local issues through the municipality (Geha, 2019). They believed that decentralisation could go hand in hand with technocratic supervision (Arsan, 2018). Their response to the ruling class was formulating clear solutions to the garbage crisis. This was met with fervent opposition of the ruling elite, who joined forces in an electoral list opposing Beirut Madinati, even though many of these parties are in fact opponents of each other (Geha, 2019). Beirut Madinati was able to win 30% of the votes, but given the majoritarian electoral rules this failed to materialize in any seats in the municipality (Geha, 2019).

In the 2018 parliamentary elections, non-sectarian candidates tried again. Eleven groups with a total of 66 candidates from secular and non-affiliated segments

of civil society grouped together to form *Kulluna Watani*, We Are All Our Nation (El Kak, 2019). This coalition sought to challenge the hegemony of the ruling elite and counter the increasing inefficiency and lack of accountability of the state (El Kak, 2019). They did not succeed, with only securing one out of 128 seats. *Kulluna Watani* illustrates the difficulty facing new actors wanting to enter the political arena, especially the ones opposing existing sectarian parties. At this time, parliamentary elections had already been postponed for three years. The reason behind this was the failure of the elite to agree on a new election law. The electoral law needed adjustments to further fit the agenda of the existing parties, which make sure that electoral laws and voting districts are designed in their favour (El Kak 2019). Moreover, political parties use extensive techniques of oppression and manipulation to ensure loyalty of their constituents due to the citizens' dependency on sectarian leaders, as mentioned earlier (El Kak, 2019; Geha, 2019; Hermez, 2011).

However, anti-sectarian movements or groups also have to deal with internal shortcomings. For example, the *Kulluna Watani* coalition spent a lot of time arguing over list formation and alliances, leaving too little time to produce a common agenda and on campaigning locally (El Kak, 2019).

5.2 The October 17 protest movement

The October 17 revolution seemingly started after the introduction of a new tax, but under the surface several grievances had already caused feelings of civil unrest. The Lebanese economy was already facing serious hardships, at the time having the third highest debt-to-GDP ratio, at over 150% (Youssef, 2020). Following the announcement of further austerity measures, including the now dubbed 'Whatsapp Tax', people took to the streets on October 17, 2019 (Elghossian et al., 2020). Demonstrations took place for weeks, with protestors blocking major roads and highways in and between cities. Citizens occupied main squares and erected camps, and reclaimed public spaces that were either privatized or made inaccessible (Carboni, 2020).

Generally, the anti-sectarian ambitions of the protest movement were a result of the economic grievances the Lebanese population faces combined with political dissatisfaction. With increasing austerity measures disproportionately affecting

ordinary citizens, protestors denounced the corruption within the political class and the accompanying failure to provide public goods like 24-hour electricity or accessibility to (clean) water (Sullivan, 2019). Although the government withdrew the proposed measures, the protests continued, increased and spread outside of the greater Beirut area. The cross-sectarian character of the movement was not unique, as movements in 2011 and 2015 also showed how protestors increasingly linked their economic demands with political ones (Carboni, 2020). The movement was, however, unique in the sense of being able to spread throughout the country, with approximately 300 towns and cities hosting rallies, openly defying clientelist networks (Carboni, 2020; Halawi & Salloukh, 2020). This added a feeling of strength, as different regions and thus sects, knew that they were not alone in demonstrating. Most significantly, protests also took place in northern and southern Lebanon which, contrary to the more cosmopolitan Beirut area, had not seen such protests, putting blame on protestors' own sectarian leaders (Halawi & Salloukh, 2020). Moreover, the movement was able to unite people from different social classes (Fakih, 2020). The demonstrations, popularly called *thawra*, meaning revolution in Arabic, paralyzed the nation, closing down banks, schools, and other public and private institutions (Melki & Kozman, 2020; Carboni, 2020).

On October 29, prime minister Saad Hariri announced his resignation (The National News, 2020). A main demand of the protestors was the installation of a technocratic cabinet to deal with the imminent economic crisis, whilst calling for early parliamentary elections. In Lebanese politics, the prime minister needs to have the support of the main parliamentary blocs and thus the main sectarian leaders. In this regard, any new proposed prime minister is met with suspicion by the protestors, as interference of the establishment contradicts the technocratic nature of any new government. Indeed, Hariri's successor Hassan Diab was met with scepticism when he was finally named as the prime minister-designate in January 2020 (The National News, 2020). As protests continued and gained momentum, counter-protests were also taking place, notably by followers of Shi'a parties Hezbollah and Amal, who attacked the protestor's camps in Beirut's Martyr's Square, and in Sidon and Baalbeck (Middle East Eye and Agencies, 2019). In the Sunni-majority city of Tripoli,

Hariri loyalists erected new roadblocks when Hassan Diab was appointed as prime minister, a role they only saw fit for Hariri (Carboni, 2020).

The ruling elite became actively engaged in a counter-revolution with the aim of demobilization. Direct state suppression, delegitimization and vilification of protestors, as well as a divide-and-rule strategy were used to counter the movement. The latter, divide-and-rule, has been used in Lebanese history time and time again, by using sectarian tensions to instil fear among the population. Some political parties – significantly Kataeb, the Lebanese Forces, and Hariri’s Future Movement – tried to co-opt the movement in the street. Co-optation of the revolutionary agenda and discourse was also attempted through Diab’s ‘technocratic government’.

Lebanon’s ailing economy further suffered under the outbreak of Covid-19. At the time, half of the Lebanese were already estimated to be living under the poverty line; these most vulnerable groups were hit the hardest by the series of lockdowns imposed (Carboni, 2020). These lockdowns, however, also curbed protests, taken advantage of by the security forces who cleared out remaining protestor camps in city squares (Carboni, 2020). The situation worsened, as illustrated by a lack of electricity and water, but most notably by the spiralling loss of value of the Lebanese lira. From October 2019 to June 2020 the Lebanese currency lost 70% of its value. Against this backdrop, some demonstrations took place once again, despite the pandemic. However, previous protests being overwhelmingly peaceful, this time around the security forces no longer showed restraint in their approach to the demonstrations, which hence turned more violent (Carboni, 2020).

As the months progressed, the movement was confronted with demobilization, with fewer and smaller demonstrations taking place. Sporadically, new demonstrations erupted, with two main notable events. After the August 4, 2020, explosion in the Beirut harbour, which caused widespread destruction and killed over 200 people, large numbers of protestors returned to the streets. The explosion was, in their view, just another example of the incompetence of Lebanese politics. Following the explosion, prime minister Diab resigned. Unable to fill the position, Saad Hariri returned as the proposed prime minister, but he is yet to form a government. The second notable wave of demonstrations took place around October 17, 2020, the first anniversary of the movement. By this time, the country’s economic

situation had deteriorated significantly, Covid-19 was raging, and Saad Hariri was once again designated the prime minister. Over the following months, smaller protests occurred from time to time, but without the momentum of the initial phase of the revolution (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Today, the country is in a political gridlock, its economy spiralling downwards, whilst also still recovering from the massive explosion (Carboni, 2020). Although the intensity of protest waves decreased, the movement has been everything but dormant. Rather, one can notice different non-sectarian groups being established and consequently entering the political arena and civil society. This involves new political parties, single-issue activist groups, as well as civil society organizations.

In the next chapters, the remaining sub-questions will be answered, based on the conducted interviews. Throughout these interviews, insights have been gained into mobilisation motives, the relationship between anti-sectarian political views and sectarian identity, and changing stances of protestors. Additionally, interviews with newly emerged political groups will create understanding of upcoming groups trying to enter the political arena.

Chapter 6: Opposition to the sectarian system

Having covered the theoretical, methodological, and contextual embedding of this research, this chapter turns to the analysis of interviewee feedback. Ten interviews were conducted for this research, eight with individual protestors, two with activist or political groups which emerged from anti-sectarian movements. Section 1 through 4 of this chapter each seeks to answer one of the sub-questions based on the collected data, after which the final section will compare the findings, connecting the data in an attempt to answer the main research question. During the coding stage of data collection and analysis, interviewee quotes were given codes, which were consequently grouped in themes. Each theme represents one sub-question. In the coding stage, several codes may have been added to one quote, and codes may have been relevant for different themes. The collected data was complemented by additional sources, as explained in Chapter 3, to ensure the validity of the findings.

6.1 Personal relation to imposed sectarian identity

In Lebanon, one's religious identity is determined at birth, arguably even before, as religious identity is transferred through the paternal line (Deeb, 2020). Hence, we speak of an imposed sectarian identity, as, although conversion to a different faith is possible, one initially has no agency over the sectarian identity ascribed at birth. This thesis departs from the notion that there is in fact agency in identity constructions (Sen, 2006). It is for that reason that the second sub-question, *'How do people relate to their imposed sectarian identity?'*, aims to explore how respondents manoeuvre between their identity marker ascribed at birth and their personal evolvment. The question was answered by inquiring about interviewees' sectarian experiences throughout their life.

The interviews provided insights into respondents' family background and upbringing, and how their stance vis-à-vis the sectarian system may have changed. Looking back at the theoretical framework, and in particular the presence of agency within identity construction, the interviews expose the discrepancy between the institutionalized, ascriptive, approach to identity imposed by the state, and the lived experience of sectarianism, which is more dynamic.

It became especially apparent that, as a result of the sectarian system, the dividing lines between religion and politics are extremely blurred. Interviewees agreed that their opposition to the system was not the result of moving away from religion, but rather a disapproval of the political system. The quote below is exemplary for how entangled religion and politics are in Lebanon.

“So, there was probably no relation between the citizens and the state itself. [...] If you personally don’t identify with this sectarian political model, you are kind of neglected by the system itself. So, you only exist if you’re part of a segment of a sect, or if you’re part of one of the major political groups. And if you don’t fall in line with either the sect itself or the major political parties which are already in the system, then you don’t exist as a person and you don’t have any rights or opportunities.”

(Rawad, Minteshreen, personal communication, May 31, 2021)

The quote above shows how one’s citizenship is dependent on the sectarian background, as sectarian groups provide for their constituents and religious courts rule in matters concerning the personal status (Zalzal, 1997). Personal status laws concern marriage, divorce, and inheritance, for example. There is no civil personal status law, a citizen’s only option is to go to a religious court (Human Rights Watch, 2015). This means that inter-sectarian marriage is impossible; in order for people from two different sects to marry, one of them must convert (Deeb, 2020). This is just one way in which the ascriptive nature of religion as an identity marker used by the state may hold far-reaching consequences for citizens. Many respondents also indicated that from a very young age on they were aware of the religious pluralism in the country, although the political awareness came at a later age.

At the same time, the interviewee feedback shows that familial background affected how they viewed sectarianism, and what role it potentially played in their upbringing. This is visible through the next quote, wherein one respondent explains how, while growing up, her parents’ view on religion and politics affected her view on the matter. She stated that her parents supported the right-wing Christian party called Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea, a political and militia leader who played a significant role in the Lebanese civil war, and how that influenced her view on the party as well.

“Well, first when I was younger, like way younger, I didn’t understand politics. So, I was like, yes, everything my parents said was right. Like yes, maybe they’re better, you know, because you don’t know, you don’t even learn politics. In school we don’t even learn about Lebanese politics. I mean, our history books stop after the Second World War. After that, we have nothing, literally, we don’t learn anything. [...] We don’t know anything about the Civil War because they don’t want to talk about it. They want to just hide it. And in my house, like being younger, I was like, yes, they are right.”

(Michele, personal communication, May 5, 2021)

The interviewee is referring to a common phenomenon in Lebanon. Even if people question the system, specifically its corruption and clientelism, they excuse their own leaders as not being involved, or at least being less bad than other sectarian leaders. The interviewee noticed the same pattern with her parents. Children are inevitably more prone to internalize narratives of their parents, and this respondent, looking back, identified the ways in which her upbringing and background was formative in her initial stance on sectarianism. Section 3 of this chapter will delve deeper into the phenomenon of party loyalists trying to excuse their party, and their party alone, from any wrongdoing throughout Lebanese history, which was also an identified narrative during the October 17 movement.

One interviewee, when asked whether she was aware of her sectarian background when growing up, answered:

“Yes. I mean, in Lebanon, you grew up in this mentality, sadly. [...] I was lucky to be in a family where they’re not politically affiliated to anyone. But you know, being Christian was something like... [...] My family wouldn’t allow me to marry anyone that’s not Christian. So that mentality, like, stayed on.”

(Afifeh, personal communication, May 4, 2021)

This shows how sectarian identity can be apparent to children when growing up, but also how sectarian biases and prejudices may be ingrained early on as a result of parental stances vis-à-vis sectarianism. In the following interview excerpt a respondent recounted a similar experience of sectarian biases expressed by, in this case, her mother during her teenage years.

“My mom used to tell me, oh, only like Shia men are better and they’re more generous. And I internalized that. [...] But to an extent, like there is this bias that you grow up with, like thinking that the person of your sect treats you better, or somehow, they’re more generous, or somehow, they’re kinder, and stuff like that. [...]. You tend to internalize these things and believe them.”

(Lea, personal communication, December 21, 2021)

It is important here to mention that there may be an extra dimension of sectarianism in the latter two instances, given the fact that these interviewees were both female. As explained, sectarian identity as perceived by the state is transferred through the paternal line. This means that children of a woman marrying outside her sect, would be of a different religious denomination than their mother and maternal grandparents. This also connects to the idea of sectarian survival, meaning the fear of people that the country will be taken over by sects other than their own. A way to avoid this is to ensure the existence of the next generation, which as mentioned, is not possible through the maternal line (Deeb, 2020). One of the interviewee’s parents have an inter-sectarian marriage, her mother being a Shia Muslim and her father a Sunni Muslim:

“The fact that my grandpa allowed my mom to marry especially, my mom’s a woman. Like, this is sexist, but I mean, thinking like him: he has Sunni grandchildren, and so that, I think, must have been hard for him.”

(Lea, personal communication, December 21, 2020)

It becomes clear that the institutionalized, power-sharing nature of sectarianism in Lebanon has implications in the familial sphere. These sentiments, especially relating to sectarian survival, are exacerbated by narratives of elites manipulating identity, which will be further explained in section 4 of this chapter.

Besides the family stance on religion and sectarianism, another significant factor of the personal sphere is one’s environment in terms of neighbourhood and schooling. One of the interviewees indicated that she lived as one of the few Christian families in a majority Muslim neighbourhood in Beirut, growing up with children with Islamic backgrounds, as well as attending a school with students from diverse sectarian backgrounds.

“It was actually a privilege to get to know the people from different backgrounds. [...] For me, like wearing a hijab is something that’s normal, because I grew up seeing them at school. I know the people, I know the culture. But when I went to my first job, there was a lot of Christians. And I remember them, whenever they saw someone with a hijab, they used to get really shocked. And they used to ask these people many questions, ‘Why, are you going to get married, is that why you decided now to put [on] the hijab?’, there were all these assumptions around them and prejudgments from the Christian community towards the Islamic community that I wasn’t aware of. Because for me, I know the culture. I know them, I accepted them and everything. But I was really surprised when I saw that other Christians who were brought up in religious Christian schools or districts that are more Christian, they really didn’t understand their culture much and they had a lot of prejudgments towards the Muslim people.”

(Afifeh, personal communication, May 4, 2021)

Throughout the interviews, inter-sectarian encounters became a recurring reason for one’s stance towards sectarianism. Being surrounded by people from different religious denominations gave this interviewee an understanding of people’s background and culture. Sects are, after all, social constructs, constructed through social and political processes, and they have become and remained important because they were actively politicized (Deeb, 2020; Joseph, 2021). As discussed in Chapter 4, both imperial and local histories produced sectarian realities, and up to this day are maintained and reinforced in various spheres of society (Makdisi, 2000; Deeb, 2020). The interview feedback confirms this discrepancy between the lived sectarian experiences of people as opposed to the sectarian narratives of tensions and threats, specifically when exposed to other groups. This was further confirmed by an interviewee who grew up in a majority Christian region of Lebanon, but moved to Beirut during her adolescence, exposing her to a more diverse environment.

“This big area is Keserwan and Keserwan is mainly Christian. Yes, and it’s very like you meet parents and older people that are really in like into Christianity, you can feel like they are different from, they want to be different from Muslims, they want to be different from other religions. They are Christians. Whereas in Beirut, it’s like really different. You see Christians, Muslims, everyone living together, I work with a lot of people from different religions. And we never ask about it. Because it’s, we don’t even think about it. You know, there is no... it’s like a friend, just a friend. [...] But in Keserwan, you can feel it.”

(Michele, personal communication, May 5, 2021)

The interviews confirm the presence of agency in identity construction. The abovementioned interviewee grew up in an area where sectarianism was very present, having previously stated that her parents supported a traditional Christian

party. This sectarian experience shows how, as explored in the theoretical framework of this research, identities in divided societies may be subject to change as opposed to terminally static (Nagle, 2016). Specifically, one has agency in this process (Sen, 2006). It is important to note that when discussing changing views vis-à-vis sectarianism, this does not mean a rejection of religion. The interviewees agreed on the fact that sectarianism utilized religion for political purposes, and that their rejection of the system has to be seen as being separate from their religious experience.

Throughout the interviews, the idea was conveyed that the sense of urgency for maintaining the sectarian system and ensuring sectarian survival was more apparent for people in relatively homogeneous regions, like the region of Keserwan. These regions are often more tightly in the grip of sectarian leaders and hence their narratives, which explains this tendency. Other interviewees have mentioned similar experiences, for example when confronted with family members from villages in the South, with a strong connection to Amal or Hezbollah.

For many respondents, their opposition to the system grew over time, and it often stemmed from failure to comprehend, to explain, why the system worked in the way it did. Below are some examples of initial doubts or hesitations towards the sectarian system, as expressed by several interviewees.

“Like, I didn’t know anything about politics, but I knew what we had was flawed and not right. [...] It’s weird how in Lebanon, we don’t have this sense of patriotism. [...] We weren’t proud to be living the way we were. And so, I’ve always found that, like, very disappointing, and it shouldn’t be like that. So, I’ve always, like wanted to help out in a certain way.”

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

“So, growing up, I realized, okay, but we don’t have electricity. We are always saying motor [generator]. And then when you travel... I went to Paris for my master’s, I was like, okay, they have electricity, you know, they have a decent life, they have dignity. [...] I was a bit awakened slowly.”

(Michele, personal communication, May 5, 2021)

“The thing is, when I was young, there was a lot of assassinations. So that kind of got me asking questions pretty early. [...] I started getting kind of acquainted with how the political system here works. And the sectarian system was always confusing to me, I really didn’t understand why we had a sectarian system. It bothered me more than it confused me actually. Even from a, from a very young age, I was very uncomfortable with it.”

(Karim, personal communication, May 27, 2021)

The respondents explained how, slowly, they came to question and disapprove of the system. Again, the constructivist approach to identity construction is confirmed, as construction by discourse, social and economic processes, and individual agency can be noticed in interviewee's sectarian experiences and changing feelings vis-à-vis the system (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). Specifically, many respondents identified the lack of public service provision, but also the lack of general safety, as reasons why these feelings developed. It is important to place this in its historical context, namely that following the civil war, many politicians, journalists and activists were assassinated (Ramadan, 2021). The culprits were often not found, although they did always target critics of the Syrian tutelage over Lebanon or Hezbollah's (military) presence, the most famous example being the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 which instigated the Cedar Revolution (Arsan, 2018). However, Rafiq Hariri is just one of many. Interestingly, when talking about the older generation, namely their parents, the interviewees convey an understanding for how their lived experiences formed their political reality, which differ from their own.

"My generation has always been way more open. But you know, of course the older generations, our parents' generations, they have their reservations. And to an extent, like it's the struggle of: do I blame them? Or do I blame the Civil War and their education and what they went through? You know? I don't know."

(Lea, personal communication, December 21, 2020)

"I think people that went through a war and saw political assassinations and saw conflicts and all that... You can't really blame them for being biased. It's not your fault to be biased, especially as Lebanon is a country that still suffers from PTSD. The destruction of all that happened, it was kind of brushed off. You don't really talk about the civil war. Do you get what I mean? So, we never really got over that."

(Ahmad, personal communication, March 10, 2020)

It becomes evident that despite their own reservations, generational differences are acknowledged and understood. The effect of personal experiences with sectarianism plays a significant role in one's support or attachment to the system. Many groups in Lebanon have experienced sectarian violence, also after the end of the civil war, and respondents validate these experiences. Cases of sectarian violence and protection against it by established political parties or militias also add to people's relation to the sectarian system and its main players, which will be further touched upon in

section 4, discussing sectarian loyalty of citizens vis-à-vis their respective leaders. In discussing generational differences, it is important to understand that when the Civil War era ended with the Ta'if agreement, a general amnesty law soon followed, exonerating the militia leaders turned politicians (Geahchan, 2019). Generally, many speak of collective amnesia after the hostilities ended, state institutions worked hard to avoid mentioning the war, practically ignoring it (Barak, 2007).

Through analysing and comparing family backgrounds of respondents, as well as their environment in terms of geography and schooling, it becomes evident that, as described in the new social movement theory, they are linked by common goals and interests. They are not merely linked through sectarian background or socio-economic class; their common denominator is their united stance vis-à-vis the system. As discussed in the methodology chapter, most interviewees came from middle- and upper-class backgrounds, and were based in Beirut, a result of the sampling method. However, this is not representative for the movement in its totality, as the movement was unique in its widespread nature, as well as its ability to bring together people from different socio-economic backgrounds to unite over perceived injustices (Alamine, 2020). For many respondents, their negative feelings towards the sectarian system in Lebanon grew stronger over time, which ultimately led them to participate in anti-sectarian movements.

The next section will present and analyse how the respondents explain their mobilization in the movement, and what personal motivations led them to call for the abolition of the entire sectarian system in the country.

6.2: Incentives for protest participation

The previous sub-question analysed how people who participated in the October 17 movement felt towards their imposed sectarian identity. It became clear that interviewees were aware of their sectarian background from a young age on, and that sectarian narratives can be internalized depending on one's environment in terms of family, neighbourhood or region, or schooling. Whilst interviewees understand, to some extent, the relics of war still ingrained in the older generation's memory, they themselves developed anti-sectarian sentiments whilst growing up and seeing injustices around them. In this section, the second sub question is answered: '*What*

sentiments incentivized people to join anti-sectarian protests?’ Throughout the interviews, the direct motivations to participate in the October 17 movement were addressed. Interestingly, many people had some difficulty at first to articulate a specific reason, as to them it seems self-evident why the system is no longer sustainable.

Many interviewees portray economic grievances as a tipping point, although their participation cannot be reduced to just economic motivations. For many, it comes down to wanting to continue living in Lebanon, as opposed to being forced to migrate elsewhere. The Lebanese diaspora is notoriously larger than the population inside the national borders, a result of decades of instability, war and lacking economic opportunities (Hourani, 2007).

“I think there’s a simple answer. I want to build a future in this country, I don’t want to live anywhere else. And I don’t think that’s possible within the current system. And I think we’ve seen that already. And you just take a look at our history, it’s pretty clear: it’s civil war over and over again. We had to be bailed out by the IMF [...] and now we have another financial crisis. It is more than economics. There have always been assassinations. [...] The motive behind them has been unclear and the perpetrators, we don’t know who they are, we never know who they are. I guess growing up with that also made me hate the system even more. [...] It’s the decades of mismanagement and corruption of state resources. It’s the lack of a clear relation between the citizen and the state, since the state sees you as part of a sect.”

(Karim, personal communication, May 27, 2021)

“People just wanted to change the entire system, so that we’d be able to maintain proper living conditions and work towards the future. [...] Usually, these parties, they wouldn’t think, they wouldn’t plan for the future. [...] And then when things like don’t function anymore, they just give a small fix, and say, okay, look, we’re doing something. And then they would make sure that they’re getting on, like, they’re distributing all the profits.”

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

It becomes evident that the inaction by the state, combined with the deteriorating socio-economic situation in the country, led interviewees to no longer see salvation in the beaten track of the existing political system. Rather, interviewees describe how, through government inaction in times of crisis, they felt the need to reclaim their basic rights on the streets. Below, an interviewee recalls how wildfires in the Shouf area caused her to rethink her position, whilst another interviewee explains how government apathy persists despite the ever-deteriorating situation in the country.

“There was the wild, very wild fire that happened in Lebanon. [...]. And so, can you imagine that the fires were spreading in such a short amount of time, and we didn’t have the ability to stop that fire. People were dying, people lost their businesses, and still the government wasn’t ready to face what happened, you know? And this is where I think something clicked in my mind. And I said no. [...] What am I going to do, if my government is not going to save me, I’m going to have to save myself. I want to fight for my basic rights. If you don’t want to give me my basic rights, I’m going to force you to give them to give it to me.”

(Rita, personal communication, May 22, 2021)

“Basically, the system in Lebanon depends on trying to satisfy all the sects that live in Lebanon. Prime Minister [designate] Saad Hariri is trying to form a government that satisfies everyone and he’s not able to because the Free Patriotic Movement is demanding that they have one third of the government. So, this idea of power sharing, and the idea that someone is more superior than the other is leading to the entire collapse of Lebanon, not just economically: we’re talking about migration, the culture, we’re talking about economics, politics, everything. Everything is happening, and they’re just waiting. [...] The country is sinking [...]. Electricity of Lebanon announced that there’s going to be some shortage in electricity this week, because we’ve not provided enough amount [of] fuel, because the central bank cannot afford to continue subsidies. [...] It’s a domino effect, and they’re just sitting doing nothing, because they care about the power sharing in the country right now.”

(Abed, personal communication, June 2, 2021)

Having to fight for basic rights due to an incapacitated government is a recurring theme throughout the interview feedback. It becomes apparent how, as described in the new social movement theory, protestors indeed unite over post-materialist values. Whilst economic motives undeniably play a role in mobilization, they are merely one part of a bigger picture. The sectarian system has encroached into all spheres of society, causing protestors, increasingly desperate from witnessing the collapse of their country, first and foremost demand dignity.

The power-sharing system, which was supposed to provide safety and stability after the events of the civil war, is unable to provide its citizens with basic services. However, established political parties have been able to remain in power, partially because of two distinct tactics for maintaining their base, namely sustaining a clientelist network and using the narrative of sectarian safety and defence.

“We realized that over the past 30 years after the war, [...] they haven’t accomplished anything. [...] They maintain basically the Civil War, it just wasn’t violent. It was like a Cold War, you know. They would always say, be careful, you know, other groups, they want to take over, and if they do that, then you won’t have any say in the government, you wouldn’t have any power, [...]. And so, basically, I am your only choice to protect you.”

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

“The way they sustain their influence by linking to a clientelist network [...]. So, they control people and localities, linking them to sectarian affiliations and linking them to network of clientelist networks. They weaken the state. The state cannot provide basic services to its people. They steal from us, [...] they give part of it back to clientelist support in exchange for political affiliation. [...] The government steals money through the people, and they feed it back into personal interest. And they keep people’s allegiances by their clientelist network. It’s a deep-rooted system of injustice and inequality, basically. It is actually hidden by what they call competition and democracy, we have no form of any democracy. They control everything, the difference is that we don’t have one dictator, we have an oligarchy of political and economic leaders, with correlated interests.”

(Coordinator media committee, Lihaqqi, personal communication, April 4, 2021)

Two themes become apparent from these quotes. First of all, the first quote indicates how elite manipulation of identity through cognitive frames, as discussed in Chapter 2, is visible. By referring to past atrocities, warning citizens to be careful, sectarian leaders reiterate crisis frames to ensure their own staying in power. Interestingly, these tactics can work in two directions. For some, cognitive crisis frames may result in enduring loyalty to communal leaders, whilst for others, this discourse can add to their movement away from the sectarian system, hence causing their identity (re)construction to take a different turn. The second theme, identified in the latter quote, shows how clientelist networks of the political parties benefit from the weak state, which is intentionally kept weak by a so-called oligarchy of political and economic leaders, as to maintain citizen dependency. Where the state is unable to provide, the sectarian leader comes in to fill the gap in exchange for sectarian loyalty. This can be done through one-time transactions to ensure loyalty during the elections, but it can also entail long-term, deeply entrenched clientelist networks through which sectarian parties provide jobs, public goods and education (Cammett & Issar, 2010). For a long time, this bargain may have held up, but the deteriorating situation in the country meant that these networks increasingly failed to suffice. Moreover, non-politically affiliated Lebanese who did not see the benefits of clientelism were hit by the faltering economy.

Issues that are important to interviewees in leading to their participation in the October 17 movement align with those of new social movements. Namely, the importance attributed to self-determination and autonomy (Buechler, 1995), rather than being dependent on communal leaders and governed by the influential fearmongering of sectarian parties is a central issue. Protest participation concerned the physical conditions of life (Offe, 1985), being able to sustain a living in Lebanon,

which the interviewees describe as increasingly impossible. An interviewee explained how the accumulation of problems affected her.

“I see my mom’s savings from when we were like, kids till now disappear, like the money no longer exists, it no longer exists! Understanding this and understanding my education is at risk, and my brother’s education is at risk, and my sister having to leave the country just to finish her degree, you know. Like, between your family being torn apart, to your friends leaving, and you’re seeing your own money being stolen in front of you, to being beaten on the streets, being arrested on the streets. It can’t not be personal.”

(Lea, personal communication, December 21, 2020)

The above quote warrants some explanation of the financial crisis Lebanon is currently facing. Lebanon has a dollarized economy, in most places one can pay with either Lebanese lira or American dollars (Blair, 2021). Prior to the economic crisis, one dollar was worth 1507.5 Lebanese lira, but since the crisis the exchange rate has plummeted, one dollar being exchanged for around 17,000 Lebanese Lira at the time of writing. Moreover, the country is running out of its dollar reserves, meaning that depositors have not been able to access their dollar bank accounts, as banks are quite frankly no longer in the possession of dollars (Hassan, 2019). Instead, depositors can withdraw their money in Lebanese lira, at the alternative rate of 3,900 lira to the dollar, which is in no way the market value (Meyer, 2021). This has caused enormous issues for that part of the population that is dependent on dollars, namely the middle class. As illustrated above, as families grapple to pay for rent, especially those who have to pay in dollars, or families being forced to end their children’s education abroad as they have no access to foreign currencies.

For the interviewees, it became overwhelmingly obvious that the current political system of power-sharing would not allow for change, as it facilitates the re-election of the same figureheads at every election (Shebaya, 2018). At the same time, the October 17 movement also laid bare what the alternative to the current ruling class could be, if secular candidates would be elected in the future. In the following quotes, one by a protest participant, another by a member of a political activist group, they explain how the participants in the protests filled the gap left by the dormant state.

“There’s always garbage on the streets, people don’t respect the roads, [...] they don’t care if they throw stuff on the ground. But during the revolution, when we took over like a huge part of downtown area, people were cleaning up every day in the morning, people were setting up recycling bins, people started paying attention, started caring or feel ashamed if they would throw something on the ground, they would go to the garbage bins. [...] It also showed, if we were able to take over, take back the government, what we would what the alternative would be. It gave like a [...] small idea of what a functioning government is.”

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

“In less than 24 hours, we did what the state should have done, which is setting an emergency camp in, in the red zone, which was the most damaged zone. We brought in equipment for cleaning. [...] During the first, early days, most houses did not have any windows at the time. So, actually within less than 12 hours after the blast, we but we got emergency equipment to try to close the windows and the houses in each and every possible way with wood or other equipment. It was the largest emergency camp and it stayed functioning for at least six months afterwards. And that is when we also saw our capabilities as an entity, because it was really the largest operation for recovery in the city itself. We’ve had – in less than 24 hours – over 1,500 volunteers at the time, if not more.

(Rawad, Minteshreen, personal communication, May 31, 2021)

Through such events, the latter of which occurred after the explosion in the port of Beirut, the potential, whether through new political groups or individuals, became apparent. This also meant that people were confident that if they were successful in toppling the system, what would follow would not necessarily be anarchy. Rather, people were well-equipped to fill the gap left by the state, meaning that both the state and the political parties’ clientelist networks were redundant. However, not all groups were able to easily break the shackles of sectarian affiliation and clientelism. Many people are dependent on the political parties for daily survival. This aspect will be discussed in further detail in the next section, where sectarian loyalty and dependency are explored. Generally, it becomes clear that the October 17 movement, like Melucci’s reading of the new social movement theory posits, is oriented towards autonomy vis-à-vis the system (Melucci, 1980). The movement is apolitical in the sense that it does not play the sectarian game of Lebanon; rather they are outspoken anti-political in the sense that Lebanese status-quo politics should become a thing of the past.

In the previous section, interviewees’ familial background was discussed. Some of the participants were raised in an environment that was more closely linked to the sectarian system than others. In line with this, the interviews also inquired after the reaction of family regarding protest participation.

“They try to tell me to keep my distance, like, just chant normal stuff, but like, don’t go extremely political. Don’t try to entice someone, keep your distance, don’t post extremely political stuff during the beginning of the uprisings, because they might consider you as a potential target later on. And then as the time passed, they became extremely supportive. Because, my mother who lives in Lebanon right now, currently gets her salary in Lebanese lira, and her salary went down from \$3,000 a month to roughly \$400 now, so, day by day, she started to realize as well, if we stay silent then we’re actually picking the ruling class aside.”

(Abed, personal communication, June 2, 2021)

This comment is telling of the political situation in Lebanon. As mentioned, the country is no stranger to political assassinations of critics of certain political parties, which is certainly not a thing of the past: in February 2021, political activist Lokman Slim was murdered, just one of the many examples of how critical voices are still being smothered in the country (Ramadan, 2021). Like Abed, other interviewees have indicated that the main concern of their immediate family was their safety during the demonstrations. In the past, outspoken criticism had proven to be reason for future targeting, which is also why some of the interviewees wished to remain anonymous. At the same time, several interviewees have seen their family’s view on sectarian parties change, as a direct result of the worsening situation in the country, as stipulated in the above excerpt. At the same time, the internalized sectarian thinking, a result of decades of war, sectarian narratives and politics, is proving to be difficult to let go of.

“[My mother] still has some biases, these biases... I think people that went through a war and saw political assassinations and saw conflicts and all that... You can’t really blame them for being biased. It’s not your fault to be biased, especially Lebanon is a country that still suffers from PTSD. The destruction of all that happened it was kind of brushed off. You don’t really talk about the civil war. Do you get what I mean? Yes. So, we never really got over that. Some people would have their biases, but at the same time after the protests of October 17, for example, my mom was like, I would never vote for Hariri again.”

(Ahmad, personal communication, March 10, 2020)

Again, people are understanding of the lived experiences of others, specifically of those that went through the civil war. However, even within those groups interviewees notice a change in attitude in questioning the system as it’s designed currently. In other families, protest participation can lead to more friction, especially if the family has a higher level of allegiance to or dependency on a specific political party. Interviewees have indicated that politics can be a highly divisive topic.

“I would actively avoid it. It’s not something... it’s a pretty sensitive issue. Yeah, no, I think we all try to avoid discussing topics like that. [...] The politics here is just generally, a very sensitive issue. Like, if you say the wrong thing, you could really stir up a problem. And I guess, within a family, that’s not the best thing to do.”

(Karim, personal communication, May 27, 2021)

“I am from the south. So, you know, my, for example, my great grandma and my grandma, my grandpa, they were quite literally saved by Hezbollah soldiers. And so, it’s hard for me to go to them and suddenly tell them: you can’t support them, or: they’re bad people, when without them, we could still be occupied, or, you know, my family could not exist possibly. So, I tried to tread the line of like, of like, making a like, having them question their beliefs, while also maintaining a certain level of respect for their experiences.”

(Lea, personal communication, December 21, 2020)

It is harder for people to break away from or to be critical of sectarian and clientelist networks when they are or have been dependent on it for a significant period of time. Overall, interviewees expressed an interconnected array of issues which lead them to take to the streets to demand change. It is not merely the deteriorating economy, the lack of public services, of the lack of basic rights. Rather, interviewees stipulate how the power-sharing system has encroached every aspect of society, being controlled by the sectarian parties, who in turn fail to act when confronted with crises. The protests lay bare what the alternative to the dormant state would look like, with citizen initiatives arising throughout the country, especially after the August 4, 2020, explosion, when much of Beirut was left in rubble. At the same time, interviewees explained that they saw a changing culture around them, for example in their direct family, where people increasingly questioned the legitimacy of the political system.

However, not all people were willing or able to move away from the sectarian model. Certain groups in Lebanon are greatly dependent on political parties, whilst others may agree to the elite narrative of sectarian defence and safety. The next section will explore the phenomenon of sectarian loyalty in Lebanon, and what role this played during the October 17 movement.

6.3 Sectarian loyalty

Having discussed what drove people to participate in anti-sectarian protests in Lebanon, it is important to also shed light on groups who remained loyal to their communal leaders and the system in general. This section seeks to answer the

following sub-question: *'How can enduring loyalty to sectarian parties be explained?'* This concerns clientelism, through the dependency of civilians on sectarian leaders, as well as sectarian narratives as a way for the parties to present themselves as the only viable option to protect their constituents against the (imagined) threat of other sects.

As discussed in Chapter 4, clientelism is entrenched in all sectors of society. In Lebanon, many sectors are privatized, like healthcare and education. Public education and healthcare are available, but private institutions are often of significantly better quality and enjoy more prestige. Sectarian parties may approach constituents and provide services based on sectarian background. An interviewee describes this as a state-led campaign to create mass poverty, only to allow the sectarian parties, who are part of the government, to come in privately and position themselves as the solution. Other interviewees describe enduring sectarian loyalty as follows:

"They're extremely brainwashed, because they're in these small, like areas [...] where they control everything. And because they impoverished them, so, they took away everything from them, and they can't get any basics rights, or any basic resources without going to these leaders and asking for it. So, their whole life is dependent on them. So, this was like a very hard period of the revolution where we try to reach out to these groups, but it didn't work as much."

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

"I think that a lot of people who were on the streets might not have benefited from these sectarian benefits that I just mentioned. [...] And I think that people who didn't go to the streets were scared of losing their jobs [if they went to the streets], or because they truly believe that these parties have helped them, and so, 'they can't be as bad as they tell me'."

(Lea, personal communication, December 21, 2020)

Protestors describe the difficulty they had in engaging people who have a high dependency on the established parties. More than ever, as the economy deteriorated further, people were dependent on parties to feed their families. At the time of writing, the Lebanese lira has lost 90% of its value, whilst local wages have not increased. Moreover, there is a shortage of fuel, meaning further electricity cuts and a lack of gasoline for cars, there is a shortage of medicines, and the Covid-19 pandemic is far from over (Iskandarani & Rose, 2021). This non-exhaustive list of issues facing the country is undeniably putting extra strain on citizens, causing some to have no choice

but to return or remain loyal to sectarian leaders and maintain clientelist networks. This especially played a role the more the movement progressed. The situation was not optimal before the movement was initiated, but as the effects of the economic crisis became visible and the Covid-19 pandemic started, the country started spiralling.

“And I believe the difference is more across the economic classes than across regions. So, the middle class in a way is more and more able to be liberated from political class, first because they’re not dependent on them for their daily life. And second, because they’re not upper class, so they don’t have direct interest with the political system. So, they’re in the middle. That’s also one of the issues with the opposition, it’s highly middle class, it’s difficult [to] integrate or penetrate the lower classes in a way and become an organic opposition from the lower class. Today, I believe that the lower classes tend to go back to their parties and leaders and sects during the crisis because they have no other choice. That’s evident, because parties are doing everything. There’s the vaccine, there’s food, they’re using all their clientelist network to tell them that you only have us to survive.”

(Coordinator media committee Lihaqqi, personal communication, April 4, 2021)

This difficulty to integrate the lower class in anti-sectarian movements, is obviously linked to poverty. For example, following the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, the party started rebuilding affected towns and neighbourhoods the very day the war ended (Kifner, 2006). It was the party that made reconstruction possible, not the state. Arguably, this affects lower classes more as they would be more dependent on the state, were it not for the fact that the state is absent, causing them to become clients to their respective party.

“So, they give, for example, the education to people. So, they build schools. [...] Those schools are pro-Hezbollah, just as there are schools pro-Nabih Berri or pro-Sunni, or whatever. [...] They tell people, okay, we’re going to put your kids in school for free. [...] And then, for example, kids who are really intelligent [...] they sent him to a very good university, outside Lebanon. And then he comes back and they’re like, okay, we gave you everything. Now your role is to stay and to vote for us, because we gave you all this. [...] It’s not only about giving money. It’s not about giving an opportunity. It’s not only about the doing roads or whatever, building houses, it’s not about that. [...]. It’s about a mindset, a culture that’s being built into your mind from the age of three or four, for you to vote Nasrallah after 10, 15, 20 or 50 years.”

(Michele, personal communication, May 5, 2021)

Serving their own constituents, meaning only people from a specific sect, also serves sectarian parties in maintaining the narrative that the parties are needed to ensure the survival of sects. By creating divisions and imagined threats, parties may fuel tensions

within the country whilst cooperating at the top level to maintain the status quo (Crisis Group, 2021).

“Look, the thing is, our political parties and Lebanon, they used religion and sectarianism as a game, if you want, that they can brainwash people, you know. Like, okay, you’re Christian, I’m going to give you water and feed your kids, but at the same time, you’re going to have to vote for me, you know. This is this is the game that they’re playing. And this is how they divided us. You know, like, if you see people... we can live together we have lot of diversity. I’m telling you, we don’t even care about religion, [...] they know that religion is just another way to divide us.”

(Rita, personal communication, May 22, 2021)

These divisions and threats are reiterated through cognitive frames, as described in Oberschall’s instrumentalist view of identity (Oberschall, 2000). Arguably, one can see the remnants of so-called crisis frames, described as left-overs from a previous conflict or war, in Lebanon’s heritage of the civil war. Used for political ends, these crisis frames are used by the Lebanese elites to instil fear to ensure support. Interviewees describe how they experience the elite manipulation of identity in their society.

“Every sect in Lebanon has this oppression narrative. [...] The Christians are oppressed by the Muslims, or they’re oppressed by the Syrian refugees, or the Palestinians. And the Shias are being oppressed by Israel and the Sunnis and the Christians. [...] Every sect has this oppression narrative. Because if you don’t keep the us-versus-them mentality, there is no use for these political parties. The only reason people I think vote for Hariri is because you have to have a Sunni, because if there is no Hariri, then Hezbollah will take over everything. And you can see this mentality when I asked my dad, okay, so you’re not with Hariri then why do you vote for Hariri? He says, because if I don’t vote for Hariri, I have no option left. I have no option but Hariri, and if I don’t vote, Hezbollah will take over the country. So, it’s that type of narrative that is ingrained in Lebanese people’s minds.”

(Ahmad, personal communication, March 10, 2020)

“And then they started bringing up historic events. Don’t forget the massacre that took place in Damour like, 40 years ago, when the Palestinians killed the Christians or some other event. They try to use fear to incite people to vote for them. So, it’s still a thing to this day. And you can see many, many politicians still tweet about some stuff so that they can keep their momentum or make sure that they don’t lose any votes.”

(Abed, personal communication, June 2, 2021)

By reminding people of the atrocities of the past, leaving out their own participation in it, the sectarian elite activate a perceived necessity for self-defence and self-

preservation (Oberschall, 2000). It is the active act of polarizing society which keeps the Lebanese, at least a significant part of the population, divided.

“The pattern of behaviour of the politicians in the current system, we see that they play a lot on the culture of fear. So, [they say:] you have to be organized with us, because other groups are trying to destroy us as a sect as a minority as whatever. There’s an established culture, of course, managed and supported by a clientelist network. What we believe and what we’re trying to do, we believe that in order to be able to ask people to be liberated of their clientelist tendencies, we need to create alternative economic networks based on solidarity.”

(Coordinator media committee Lihaqqi, personal communication, April 4, 2021)

The clientelist network is inherently linked to the culture of fear and cognitive frames. For the part of the population that remains receptive to crisis frames, clientelist networks seem to be valid as – as seen in previous interview excerpts – people view their sectarian leader as the only option. Hence, distrust towards other sects also adds to clientelist networks appearing to be a viable option, especially for disenfranchised population groups.

Cognitive frames were and still are also used to disincentivize people from taking to the streets. During the early stages of the October 17 movement, the Shia sect was well represented, not in the least due to the fact that the sect has a history of disenfranchisement in Lebanon (Alamine, 2020; Di Peri, 2014). Obviously, this was of concern to leaders of Hezbollah, who painted the revolution as a foreign conspiracy, as a tactic to pull Shias out of the movement, according to one of the interviewees. It was Amal and Hezbollah supporters who, as well as Free Patriotic Movement supporters, took to the streets in counter-protests. This was one of the two ways in which established parties dealt with the protests. Again, cognitive frames came into play in people’s motivations to remain loyal to sectarian elites and take a stance against the anti-sectarian October 17 movement.

“They come from these areas that they have a strong hold on, for example the Hezbollah and Amal groups. [...] They would yell ‘Shia, Shia, Shia’. They come out thinking that we’re attacking their religion, and their sect, like we want to wipe out the sect. This is this is how they get to them. They think that these protestors want to eliminate our religion, they want to eliminate us because they’re against our religion. No matter what you tell them, a lot of the people protesting were from the Shia sect, so it doesn’t make sense.”

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

This shows that the protests, at least initially, enjoyed a large Shia base. Regardless, cognitive frames were successful in turning people against the uprising, as the very existence of groups was called into question through the successful use of crisis frames. The centre of the counter-revolution was Khandak el-Ghamik, a predominantly Shia neighbourhood close to the epicentre of the October 17 movement, under extensive influence of both Amal and Hezbollah. As a response to the movement, as indicated by the above quote, young men from this area terrorized protestors on foot or scooters, party flags in hand (Chahine, 2019). Cognitive crisis frames were successful in painting the October 17 movement as a foreign conspiracy, funded by America and Israel, an anti-Shia plot, and associated with the far-right Lebanese Forces party (Chahine, 2019).

The second way in which established parties dealt with the protests, most notably tried by the abovementioned Lebanese Forces as well as Kataeb, was co-optation. Both historically extreme-right wing sectarian parties, they tried to position themselves as supporting the revolution's call for the removal of the entire political class, even though they both played a decisive role in Lebanese history and are arguably an intrinsic part of that political class. The Lebanese Forces has been less successful than Kataeb, the latter being welcomed by some to join the opposition.

“The Kataeb and the Ouwet [Lebanese Forces] before the revolution had been basically marginalized. They had really lost control over the Christian populace. And, they had lost control to the Free Patriotic Movement, the president's party. So, they were trying to use the revolution to gain back some of their popularity.”

(Karim, personal communication, May 27, 2021)

“Today, Kataeb is trying to build a new identity to present itself as a social democratic movement, as a secular movement. And there's a division in the opposition, because [...] some people are ready to consider it as a position and others are very critical about this. And we are very critical about this, we believe that this is a tactic and we treat this as impossible, without genuine revision of the role Kataeb played in the war, in the post-war, in everything. And this doesn't happen without national reconciliation. We want to actually create a different political system. We need to go beyond the decisions that happened in the war and this is impossible with.”

(Coordinator media committee Lihaqqi, personal communication, April 4, 2021)

It must be acknowledged that Kataeb had already initiated its shift away from its original politics a few years ago. At the same time, given its history – most notably the atrocities committed by its members during the civil war – this shift leads to

scepticism. As explained by a member of Lihaqqi, the role of the party during the war must be acknowledged. As the end of the civil war saw the implementation of a general amnesty law, exonerating all actors of any blame, this national reconciliation has not taken place (Geahchan, 2019). The Lebanese Forces have been less successful than Kataeb in shifting its discourse, being blamed by protestors for its involvement in electing Michel Aoun, the leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, as president in 2016 (Jalkh, 2021). Additionally, the Lebanese Forces present themselves as a counterweight to Hezbollah, itself having had a militia during the war. Some people suspect the Lebanese Forces militia is being rebuilt, especially after they held a military parade, albeit without weapons, in Beirut in 2020 (Jalkh, 2021).

Sectarian loyalty remains an obstacle to mobilization of the October 17 movement. There are several dimensions to sectarian loyalty, namely clientelism, cognitive crisis frames, but also co-optation of the revolutionary rhetoric by sectarian parties (Comaty et al., 2020). Clientelism, entailing a citizen dependency on sectarian parties for basic public service provision, is a way of ensuring loyalty and voting behaviour, exacerbated by the enduring economic crisis the country is facing. Co-optation has proven another way for sectarian parties to try and hold on to the support of their base, although the success of this remains debatable. Having discussed the difficulties in engaging sectarian loyalists in the October 17 movement, the next section discusses the enduring commitment of protestors to the movement, their view on the success of the movement, as well as an outlook on the future.

6.4 Enduring commitment to the movement and its future

The October 17 movement started in October 2019. Today, demonstrations still take place from time to time, although in lesser numbers than initially, new groups are being formed, and many are looking forward to the 2022 parliamentary elections. This section seeks to answer the following sub-question: *'How do sectarian stances change as protests continue?'* In particular, this section seeks to discover how interviewees relate to the ideas behind the October 17 movement as the movement progressed, as well as how they view the achievements of the movement.

Undeniably, the movement experienced demobilization as the months progressed. In general, interviewees stated that it was unsustainable to remain on the

streets, due to economic reasons like being obliged to work or academic obligations of students.

“You know, you protest for two weeks, one month, two months, but at the end of the day, you have to you have to feed your family and your kids, you can’t just stay on the streets and protest. So, I guess people went back to work, because they, they couldn’t just afford to not have an income, you know?”

(Rita, personal communication, May 22, 2021)

“So, there are waves, I think the pandemic really, really slowed things down. [...] Also, when there are huge amounts of people on the streets, a lot of the times there are families. So, like young kids, and like, old people, [...] people who can’t stay on the streets for too long. And who also can’t handle tear gas or being chased or being attacked. So, for example, after the explosion, there was a big protest [...] and I would see like little kids like crying, we’re talking like 11 years old, 10 years old, even younger, being tear gassed, running away and being scared. They shouldn’t be on this position at all. So, I think between the violence and the pandemic, it really slowed down the revolution, which really made it harder for people to go down to protests and it made people very scared.”

(Lea, personal communication, December 21, 2020)

As time progressed, the regime also started to use tactics of state repression more often. Violence by the security forces, arrests, and judicial proceedings to silence activists became more prominent over time (Comaty et al., 2021). In addition, the extent of the economic crisis became evident as the local currency started losing its value rapidly, another aspect that led people to being forced to go back to work, for example. For the interviewees, however, this did not mean that they are no longer committed to the ideas behind the revolution; rather, they see their means of participation change.

“It basically became a mindset, we want something different. We protested for it, we know what we want. It’s hard, because now things changed a lot, so you have to prioritize certain things. It’s hard because this country really beats you down. These politicians, they really beat you down. At some point, you have to start thinking of yourself.”

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

“For me, when I stopped going down the streets because of redundant violence, and it was really getting out of hand. For me, the only way I could contribute was through social media, literally, my whole stories on Instagram, on Facebook, was that, like, trying to share as much as I can spread awareness, and I felt like I was bit, contributing, at least, to maybe converting one or two people, but contributing as much as I can.”

(Afifeh, personal communication, May 4, 2021)

Remaining committed to the idea of the movement, people's participation starting changing over time, for example through social media activism. In general, a change away from a presence on the streets became visible, as political groups started to erupt from the movement, materializing over time. Two activist groups were interviewed, Lihaqqi and Minteshreen. Lihaqqi is a movement established in 2018 as an anti-sectarian campaign during the parliamentary elections. Minteshreen arose from the October 17 movement, and is currently in the process of transforming itself into a political party. These are just two examples of political parties of activist groups which were recently established. Naturally, it takes time for such organizations to mature; the ones who existed prior to the October 17 movement failed to materialize their support in the political sphere. One interviewee, in discussing anti-sectarian parties or groups during the 2018 parliamentary elections, said:

“And these campaigns, they all ran against each other because they disagreed on certain areas. They didn't win many seats. So, I think they're going to learn from that. [...] They try as much as they can to form a bigger block, between the different groups. [...] They're trying to do that because when we see statements coming out from these groups, they're all co-signed by the different groups, so I think they have some sort of understanding between each other.”
(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

New groups are trying to form a block against the elite. There is a need for alternative groups to join efforts, as previous anti-sectarian efforts, for example Beirut Madinati during the 2016 Beirut municipality elections, failed when all the established sectarian parties joined their lists to ensure victory. This shows how different sectarian parties, although some are sworn enemies of one another in public, work together to maintain their power. Undeniably, these parties still enjoy considerable support from their historic base. However, an executive council member of Minteshreen sees a trend, especially among the younger population, of increased support for anti-sectarian alternatives.

“I do see it, especially among the among the youth. But then if you look at the overall political spectrum and overall narrative in the country, if you want to be a realist in your perspective, the traditional political parties still have humongous support, they have a huge base that still supports them. But that does not necessarily mean that Minteshreen, for example, or other opposition groups are failing, no. Actually, there is always growing support for this opposition. But I'd say that the political parties still have their base and their support as well.”
(Rawad, Minteshreen, personal communication, May 31, 2021)

This changing attitude towards anti-sectarian parties, and thus generally towards the sectarian system, has been cited by interviewees as one of the gains of the movement. Although tangible change may not be seen yet, interviewees agree that the culture vis-à-vis sectarianism is changing.

“And 2019, the revolution that happened really helped in changing the type of discourse we have regarding politics. [...] We’re not [anymore] reduced to what Hariri says and what Nasrallah does, and Sunnis and Shias, because people started talking about economics, people started to talk about societal issues. People started to talk about politics in a different way. [...] And if we don’t see that as a benefit, as a win, then we will always be in the circle of defeatism.”

(Ahmad, personal communication, March 10, 2020)

“I’ve been discussing sectarianism for a while, so I know that it doesn’t matter. [...] But for the rest of the Lebanese, this was a huge step. [...] It was similar to how, three years ago or four years ago, [...] I started supporting the idea of secularism and stuff like that, all these people were going through that [...]. So, it was a big step for them to start saying, okay, it doesn’t matter, [...] I don’t care about the religion, we’re just Lebanese. So, it was a huge step and people went down with the Lebanese flag, not the party’s flag.”

(Ghassan, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

Generally, protestors are able to see what has changed in the country as a result of the October 17 movement. Again, the October 17 movement aligns with new social movements as it is concerned with identity markers with previously were of less importance (Johnson et al., 1994). In Lebanon, as shown in the previous quote, this concerns being Lebanese, as opposed to being a Maronite Christian or a Sunni Muslim, for example. Some interviewees have stated their frustrations of the lack of tangible results, citing difficulties in bringing about political change. Many refer to the upcoming elections as a turning point. When asked about the possibility of secular parties gaining seats in the next elections, an interviewee responded:

“The political parties are actually working on, on the laws that they can have for the next elections. Every strategy every way of turning the elections is being studied. So, this is what political groups do. So, to have a seat? Yes, I think it’s very possible, but to actually have a lot of people there? No. But from the previous elections, it has proven that independent parties can actually have a lot of voices. [...] But it will take a lot of time.”

(Michele, personal communication, May 5, 2021)

Prior to previous elections, Lebanese leaders used to draft new electoral laws to ensure their re-election. These new laws entailed, for example, changing district lines to elites' favour. In the past, elections have also been postponed; the 2018 parliamentary elections were originally scheduled for 2013, being pushed back several times (Khatib, 2018). Already, experts warn that the 2022 parliamentary elections might be postponed, hence, protestors will be very vigilant for signs of postponement or the drafting of new electoral laws (AlHussayni, 2021).

“Honestly, I think now people are more aware, people actually know that the ruling class is trying to set these new laws in their favour and not the favour of the people. So, once they announce that they’re going to be working on a new law that actually helps keep them in power, I think we’re going to witness an increase in demonstrations.”

(Abed, personal communication, June 2, 2021)

Adjusting election laws in their own favour is only one advantage held by the existing sectarian parties, as they enjoy better access to the media and finances, while their clientelist networks and vote buying which ensures continuing support of their constituents (Kranz, 2020). Despite the obstacles the October 17 movement faces, participants are able to see the accumulation of changes that have occurred over the years. One of the interviewees, when asked about his commitment to the movement today, given the lack of tangible results, replied:

“Without 2012 you can’t have 2015 and without 2015 you can’t have 2019. So, in 2015 you kind of built that thing, like yes, you can protest, [...] and actually voice out your opinions that are not really subjected to March 14 or Hariri or Ouwet [Lebanese Forces] [...]. And when you deviate from that narrative, it’s an accomplishment. And it built a base, it built a base for 2019. [...] So, we can’t really negate everything that happened because the outcomes of 2019 won’t show now. [...] Nothing will change now, in a year, everything will stay the same. But we’ll see the outcomes of this protest four years from now.”

(Ahmad, personal communication, March 10, 2020)

Generally, the decreased mobilization of the movement on the streets did not cause people to abandon the movement altogether. Interviewees remained committed to the ideas behind the movement, but continued presence in the streets was not sustainable. Rather, some people moved their activism online, or joined newly formed political groups. Respondents see an accumulation of changes in the country, although not tangible in the traditional political scene yet, but rather in terms of a

cultural shift. One of the ways in which tangible change is noticeable, albeit outside of traditional political sphere, is the election of secular candidates in university student elections around the country (Chehayeb, 2021). The elections are often said to be a microcosm for national politics, as sectarian parties are represented in student councils around the country (Gatten, 2013; Chehayeb, 2021). In the most recent student elections, secular student blocs become the majority in several universities and even gaining seats in universities with strong links to the traditional elite (Rose, 2021). Many have their hopes pinned on the next elections, it remains to be seen, however, how the entrenched elites will try and secure their survival in the next parliament.

As the various sections of this chapter have dealt with people's sectarian experiences, their motivations to join the October 17 movement, the question of sectarian loyalty, and commitment to the movement as time progressed, the final section serves to connect the collected answers to the sub-questions, and use these to answer the main research question.

6.5 Anti-sectarian activism in Lebanon's consociational model

Having answered the various sub-questions through the previous sections, the gained insights can be connected in an attempt to answer the main research question, *'How does anti-sectarian activism develop in Lebanon's institutionalized consociational socio-political system?'*

The collected data shows that the mobilization of anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon consists of several interconnected aspects. All interviewees had different journeys that led them to oppose the sectarian system in Lebanon. Some came from very liberal backgrounds, in terms of family, neighbourhood or region, or schooling, whereas others grew up in an environment where the sectarian narrative was constantly reiterated. It is impossible to set out a list of criteria which drove people to oppose the system, but the collected data does allow for the identification of conditions conducive to developing anti-sectarian sentiments.

First of all, one's personal sectarian experience is important in dismissing the sectarian model. Many respondents have state that their parents' liberal position vis-à-vis sectarianism has allowed them to explore this as well. At the same time,

respondents who came from more conservative sectarian backgrounds stated how they started to question the system once being exposed to a more diverse environment. In other words, background entails more than merely one's family, it rather also has a geographical significance in terms of region or neighbourhood, as well as schooling, which can be mixed with students from different sects or open to merely one religious denomination. For many people, sectarianism is something extremely sensitive. The conducted interviews have portrayed how some avoided the subject at all costs. In order for anti-sectarian activism to take place, one must first be able to question the system in order to turn against it. Another dimension to this is one's receptiveness to cognitive frames used by elites, or elite manipulation of identity. Lebanese sectarian leaders continue to use civil war narratives to instil fear into the population, presenting themselves as the only option to ensure the defence and preservation of their sect.

Interviewees also noted how generational differences play a role regarding lived sectarian experiences. None of the interviewees experienced the civil war, but they notice how their parents have sectarian narratives more ingrained in their mind, which to an extent effected the interviewees in their early youth. However, as opposed to the older generation, the youth is more able to turn away from or dismiss sectarian narratives. At the same time, anti-sectarian sentiments cannot be merely attributed to exposure to different groups, being in a liberal environment, or merely being young. An extra dimension in people's anti-sectarian sentiments is that in the Lebanese case, sectarianism is inherently linked with the political and economic sphere. Throughout the interviews, it became clear that implications of sectarianism, namely the lack of public service provision, political assassinations and the overall lack of a functioning state caused people to question the system.

Having negative sentiments towards the sectarian system does not, however, automatically lead to participation in anti-sectarian movements. The interviewed protestors explained how an interconnected array of issues lead them to participate in anti-sectarian activism. This ranges from a faltering economy, lack of basic rights and public services, as well as a failure to deal with the numerous crises facing the country. At the same time, their ability to do so in part results from their independency vis-à-vis the system. Sectarian elites have created extensive clientelist networks,

making citizens dependent as far as for jobs, food and education are concerned. There is no clear relationship between the state and the citizens; rather, citizens have a relation with their respective sectarian leader. Citizens need to be able to break away from this clientelist network in order to engage in anti-sectarian activism, as many livelihoods still depend on sectarian leaders.

Lastly, it is also important to acknowledge that anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon are not stand-alone events. They are a continuation of and build upon one another. The culture of sectarianism cannot be 'unlearned' in a few months, especially as there are active attempts to maintain it. Protestors do see, however, a shift towards secular thinking, a realization in society that the current state of the country is a result of sectarianism's encroachment into all spheres of society. It is not realistic to expect immediate change, nor do interviewees see it as realistic for the entire process to take place on the streets – it is first and foremost a mindset resulting in changing societal attitudes towards the sectarian system.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and reflection

Having presented the collected data, this chapter concludes this research, followed by a reflection and several recommendations for future research.

7.1 Conclusion

Lebanon's diverse sectarian population is at the root of the country's problems. The tensions between religious groups have been described as primordial, inevitable, with the only solution to be found in consociationalism, or sectarian power-sharing, wherein sectarian leaders transcend the sectarian strife to cooperate at elite level to ensure peace and stability. This could not be further from the truth. Research has shown that, although sectarian power-sharing can be traced back to a Lebanon of centuries ago, sectarian tensions can never be seen as separate from both local and imperial histories, and elite manipulation of identity. Thus, as opposed to a primordial, ever-existing hatred between groups, one can notice the strategic and active maintenance and reinforcement of sectarian narratives to serve the purpose of an oligarchy of leaders.

But as sectarian strife can be learned, ingrained, and internalized, it too can be 'unlearned', albeit not overnight. It is interesting to follow the journey of those who turned away from sectarian leaders and their sectarian narrative, especially as secular, anti-sectarian movements are taking off in the country. It is for that reason that this research explored how people joined anti-sectarian movements in Lebanon, despite the fact that sectarian power-sharing is institutionalized in its consociational political system, complemented by extensive clientelist networks which in turn create a dependency on sectarian leaders. The October 17 movement was not the first anti-sectarian uprising Lebanon has seen, but it was unique in its ability to spread around the entire country, uniting people irrespective of sect or class.

A single case study was conducted through interviews with protestors and political activist groups, complemented by desk research, to answer the following research question: *'How does anti-sectarian activism develop in Lebanon's institutionalized consociational socio-political system?'* The exploration of this research question led to an understanding of how people came to oppose the

consociational system, or sectarian power-sharing, and what caused them to participate in the October 17 anti-sectarian movement.

First of all, as briefly touched upon, the idea that sectarian strife is endemic to Lebanon, seems oversimplified. Looking at the country's history, there has always been elite manipulation of identity, whether by local or imperial actors. This did not always lead to everlasting sectarian strife – for example, after Mehmed Ali's use of Christians to quell a Druze revolt in the 1830s, the two groups returned to good relations. It is important to properly understand this history, and what forces influenced it, as this still shapes our present-day understanding of social phenomena. Hence, it is through social construction of identity that sentiments are formed and internalized. This is the result of discourse, social and economic processes, but also through individual agents (Fearon & Latin, 2000). In the case of participation in the October 17 movement, all interviewees had a journey which led them to first oppose the system and ultimately participate in the anti-sectarian demonstrations. This shows how identities are not static, but rather dynamic and evolving.

Based on the theoretical insights, it was possible to analyse why protestors chose to oppose the system and participate in the movement. Despite the fact that everyone has an individual journey in their construction of identity, the interviewee feedback did allow to detect conditions conducive for anti-sectarian activism. An initial point for coming to opposing the sectarian system, as described by interviewees, was their background. This could be their family, who may have given them a secular upbringing. For others, their family could be aligned with the consociational politics of sectarianism, meaning that their feelings vis-à-vis the system may have changed after attending a mixed school, or moving away from a fairly homogenous region to Beirut, for example. For some, their changing positions may cause tensions in their family, especially as generational differences can be identified. As mentioned, sectarian narratives can be unlearned over time, but is important to acknowledge the deep wounds the civil war and following unrests have left on the population, without national reconciliation once peace arrived. The events of the war were simply swept under the carpet, not to be discussed, neither in politics nor in education.

But continuing sectarian biases are not the only factor which may lead people to remain loyal to established sectarian parties. Besides the small group of ultra-rich which benefit from the sectarian system, there is a large part of the population that remains loyal out of sheer dependency on sectarian parties, or who buy into the use of cognitive frames around sectarian safety. Having unpacked this throughout this research, it became clear that sectarian public service provision filled the gap of the unwilling and unable state. In a country where the population is increasingly impoverished, there are few alternatives for people to survive. Another aspect to this is the cognitive crisis frames reified by the sectarian elites which present themselves as the only option to ensure the survival of their sect, strategically using narratives that other sects are trying to take over the country.

While the movement may not be packing the streets these days, it is everything but dormant. Political organizations are establishing and maturing, getting ready to participate in the parliamentary elections, which are supposed to take place in the spring of 2022. Student council elections across the country, which are often said to be a microcosm of the parliamentary elections, have overwhelmingly elected secular candidates. The consociational system is undeniably strong, with the people in power able to change electoral laws to ensure their re-election, for example. However, it has become clear that resistance is possible, and that anti-sectarian movements are gaining traction in setting about a change in culture.

7.2 Reflection

Looking back on the research findings and general process, several reflections can be made. First of all, as touched upon in Chapter 3, the number and background of respondents is a weakness of this research. Having been forced to cut the physical fieldwork in Lebanon short, the research continued by holding interviews online. This meant that most interviewees were found through a personal network, in general being of similar backgrounds in terms of social class, as all respondents needed to be in the possession of adequate electronic hardware and a stable internet connection. Fortunately, the organizations Lihaqqi and Minteshreen were very responsive, allowing the research to include their views. Ideally, this research would have benefitted from an increased number of interviewees, namely through

conducting one or two focus groups with several protestors together. However, this proved to be impossible due to digital limitations and a lack of interviewees found within the timeframe of this thesis. By using a triangulation of methods, the presented gaps were filled by using desk research for the data which could not be collected through interviews.

Theoretically, this research portrays the importance of acknowledging agency in identity construction. This is especially important in (post-)conflict situations, where policy is based on the understanding of a geographical region in question. Approaching sectarian tensions in Lebanon as primordial or endemic to the country are dangerous, in the sense that it disregards the active and continuing use of social differences to both local or imperial advantages. At the same time, this approach disregards the possibility of individual agency, which, as shown in this research, is of paramount importance in understanding resistance to the consociational system of sectarian power-sharing. This is inherently linked to the New Social Movement theory, as protestors united over a collective identity, which is not structurally determined, but is rather the result of a shared concern for social issues. The importance of post-materialist values is also visible from the October 17 movement, which, while also having economic motives, is above all a movement which strives for human dignity as citizens of a state. In this regard, this research acknowledges that the New Social Movement theory helps us understand movements which have the discussed characteristics.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Future research on this topic would do well to study the upcoming parliamentary elections in Lebanon. In the end, elections are the moment in which anti-sectarian sentiments can be tested. First and foremost, it will be important to analyse how the electoral law will be altered by the existing parliament, and whether the elections will actually take place in 2022, as the previous elections were postponed by five years in total. If the elections take place, it will be important to study what people's motivations were to vote in a particular way. It is unlikely that the existing elite will shy away from tactics of vote buying, voter suppression, and voter intimidation. Moreover, they will count on the continuing loyalty of their base. It will be interesting

to compare people's sentiments vis-à-vis the October 17 movement, and whether they participated in it, to their voting behaviour in the parliamentary elections. This would then, in turn, also need to be compared to previous parliamentary elections, to see whether there is indeed a change in culture of sectarianism. In studying this, however, it will be vital to not limit research to the electoral results, as it is not a given that free and fair elections will take place.

By continuing research in this field, it will be possible to analyse whether the movement yields result in the long term, and whether the commitment to anti-sectarianism persists in its base. Moreover, it will be interesting to follow how the movement further transforms, as it has already moved from the streets to the formation and maturing of political groups. This is not necessarily a straight line towards participation in the political field. At the same time, it is very likely that in addition to the formation of such groups, new mobilization will take place. Generally speaking, as the movement is relatively young, it is important to keep studying the broader phenomenon of anti-sectarian activism in Lebanon.

Bibliography

- Alamine, M. (2020, October 14). *Lebanon's loyalists*. Synaps. <https://www.synaps.network/post/lebanon-uprising-revolution-loyalists-parties>
- Al-Hout, B. N. (2004). *Sabra and Shatila: September 1982* (First edition). Pluto Press.
- AlHussayni, R. (2021, May 30). *Lebanon's 2022 election facing postponement: Experts*. Al Arabiya English. <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2021/05/30/Lebanon-s-2022-election-facing-postponement-Analyst>
- Al Jazeera. (2019, October 26). *Lebanon: The WhatsApp tax that launched a hundred protests*. Media | Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/the-listening-post/2019/10/25/lebanon-the-whatsapp-tax-that-launched-a-hundred-protests>
- Al Jazeera. (2021, March 8). *Lebanon: Protests continue over political, economic crises*. Business and Economy News | Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/8/protesters-paralyse-lebanon-in-anger-over-multiple-crisis>
- Al-Saeed, A., & El-Khalil, Z. (2021, May 1). *Lebanon Sinking into One of the Most Severe Global Crises Episodes*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/05/01/lebanon-sinking-into-one-of-the-most-severe-global-crises-episodes>
- Arsan, A. (2018). *Lebanon: A Country in Fragments*. Hurst.
- Atallah, S., Atrissi, T., Beck, M., Saghieh, N., Salloukh, B., & Young, M. (2011). *Arab Uprisings and Challenges of Change*. Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. <https://www.lcps-lebanon.org/publication.php?id=213>
- Bahout, J. (2016, May). *The Unraveling of Lebanon's Ta'if System*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/05/16/unraveling-of-lebanon-s-taif-agreement-limits-of-sect-based-power-sharing-pub-63571>
- Barak, O. (2007). "Don't Mention the War?" The Politics of Remembrance and Forgetfulness in Postwar Lebanon. *The Middle East Journal*, 61(1), 49–70. <https://doi.org/10.3751/61.1.13>
- Baumann, T. (2004). *Defining Ethnicity*. The SAA Archeological Record.
- Blair, E. (2021, June 17). *Explainer: Lebanon's financial meltdown and how it happened*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-crisis-financial-explainer-idUSKBN26821L>

Bogaards, M. (2019). Formal and Informal Consociational Institutions: A Comparison of the National Pact and the Taif Agreement in Lebanon. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 25(1), 27–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2019.1565176>

Bryce, R. (2020). *A Question of Power: Electricity and the Wealth of Nations* (1st ed.). PublicAffairs.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Buechler, S. M. (1995). New Social Movement Theories. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36(3), 441–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1995.tb00447.x>

Cammett, M., & Issar, S. (2010). Bricks and Mortar Clientelism: Sectarianism and the Logics of Welfare Allocation in Lebanon. *World Politics*, 62(3), 381–421. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0043887110000080>

Cammett, M. (2019, April 10). *Lebanon, the Sectarian Identity Test Lab*. The Century Foundation. <https://tcf.org/content/report/lebanon-sectarian-identity-test-lab/?agreed=1>

Carboni, A. (2021, March 11). *Breaking the Barriers: One Year of Demonstrations in Lebanon*. ACLED. <https://acleddata.com/2020/10/27/breaking-the-barriers-one-year-of-demonstrations-in-lebanon/>

Chahine, M. (2019, December 18). *Khandak el-Ghamik: the other side of the thawra*. L’Orient Today. <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1199084/khandak-el-ghamik-the-other-side-of-the-thawra.html>

Chehayeb, K. (2020, December 4). *Lebanon: Sectarian parties trounced in unprecedented student elections*. Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/lebanon-elections-student-victory-independents-sweep-sectarian>

Clifford, N., French, S., & Valentine, G. (Eds.). (2010). *Key Methods in Geography* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Collard, R. (2019, December 14). *How the Sectarian Power-Sharing Agreement in Lebanon Led to Today’s Protests*. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/13/sectarianism-helped-destroy-lebanon-economy/>

Comaty, L., Younan, O., Geha, C., Fawaz, M., Hassan, N., Masri, R., & Tannoury-Karam, S. (2020, October 17). *Has the October 17 Revolution Accomplished Anything At All?* Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. <https://lcps-lebanon.org/agendaArticle.php?id=197>

Comaty, L., Younan, O., Geha, C., Fawaz, M., Hassan, N., Masri, R., & Tannoury-Karam, S. (2020, October 31). *Why Did the October 17 Revolution Witness a*

Regression in Numbers? Lebanese Center for Policy Studies. <https://lcps-lebanon.org/agendaArticle.php?id=199>

Corstange, D. (2018). Clientelism in Competitive and Uncompetitive Elections. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51(1), 76–104. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414017695332>

Crisis Group. (2020, June 8). *Pulling Lebanon out of the Pit*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/eastern-mediterranean/lebanon/214-pulling-lebanon-out-pit>

Daher, A. (2019). *Hezbollah: Mobilization and Power* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.

Deeb, L. (2020). Beyond sectarianism: Intermarriage and social difference in Lebanon. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 52(2), 215–228. doi:10.1017/S0020743819000898

Deets, S. (2018). Consociationalism, Clientelism, and Local Politics in Beirut: Between Civic and Sectarian Identities. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 24(2), 133–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2018.1457817>

Della Porta, D. and Keating, M. (2008). *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, Cambridge University Press.

Demmers, J. (2002). *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Di Peri, R. (2014). Re-defining the Balance of Power in Lebanon: Sunni and Shiites Communities Transformations, the Regional Context and the Arab Uprisings. *Oriente Moderno*, 94(2), 335–356. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22138617-12340064>

Ebrahimipour, H., Jome'zadeh, S. J. E., & Masoudnia, H. (2015). Epistemology of the New Social Movements in the International System and Middle East. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6(5), 319–322. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n5s1p319>

Elghossian, A., Slim, R., Moubayed, A., & Haboush, J. (2020, October 22). *Special Briefing: Lebanon one year on from the October uprising*. Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/blog/special-briefing-lebanon-one-year-october-uprising>

El Kak, N. (2019, July 25). *A Path for Political Change in Lebanon? Lessons and Narratives from the 2018 Elections*. Arab Reform Initiative. <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/a-path-for-political-change-in-lebanon-lessons-and-narratives-from-the-2018-elections/>

Fadaee, S. (2011). Environmental Movements in Iran. *Social Change*, 41(1), 79–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004908571104100104>

Fakhoury, T. (2014). Do Power-Sharing Systems Behave Differently amid Regional Uprisings? Lebanon in the Arab Protest Wave. *The Middle East Journal*, 68(4), 505–520. <https://doi.org/10.3751/68.4.11>

Fakih, L. (2020). Une révolution est-elle possible au Liban? *Politique étrangère*, 185–196. <https://doi-org.ru.idm.oclc.org/10.3917/pe.202.0185>

Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2000). Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity. *International Organization*, 54(4), 845–877. <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081800551398>

Gatten, E. (2015, January 24). *Lebanese Student Election: a Microcosm of the Nation's Conflicts*. Al-Fanar Media. <https://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2013/11/lebanese-student-election-a-microcosm-of-the-nations-conflicts/>

Geahchan, S. (2019). Beyond the Failure of Justice: Lebanon's General Amnesty Law of 1991 and Access to Redress for Victims of the 1975-1990 Civil War. *SOAS Law Journal*, 6(1), 17-68.

Geha, C. (2018). Politics of a garbage crisis: social networks, narratives, and frames of Lebanon's 2015 protests and their aftermath. *Social Movement Studies*, 18(1), 78–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2018.1539665>

Geha, C. (2019). Co-optation, Counter-Narratives, and Repression: Protesting Lebanon's Sectarian Power-Sharing Regime. *The Middle East Journal*, 73(2), 9–28. <https://doi.org/10.3751/73.1.11>

Ghattas, K. (2020). *Black Wave*. Henry Holt and Co.

Halabi, F. (2020, June 22). *From "Overthrowing the Regime" to "All Means All": An Analysis of the Lebanonisation of Arab Spring Rhetoric*. Arab Reform Initiative. <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/from-overthrowing-the-regime-to-all-means-all-an-analysis-of-the-lebanonisation-of-arab-spring-rhetoric/>

Halawi, I., & Salloukh, B. F. (2020). Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will after the 17 October Protests in Lebanon, *Middle East Law and Governance*, 12(3), 322-334: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18763375-12030005>

Hassan, F. (2019, December 20). *Understanding the Lebanese financial crisis*. Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com/content/282eba28-9ed9-4b8f-8cc8-50d2096a400a>

Haugbolle, S. (2011). The historiography and the memory of the Lebanese civil war. *Violence de masse et Résistance*. <http://bo-k2s.sciences-po.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/historiography-and-memory-lebanese-civil-war>, ISSN 1961-9898

Hermez, S. (2011). On Dignity and Clientelism: Lebanon in the Context of the 2011 Arab Revolutions. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11(3), 527–537. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9469.2011.01128.x>

Holtmeier, L. (2020, May 20). *Lebanon from golden age to economic crisis, new data shows rise and fall: Report*. Al Arabiya English. <https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2020/04/16/Lebanon-from-golden-age-to-economic-crisis-new-data-shows-rise-and-fall-Report>

Hourani, G. (2007). Lebanese Diaspora and Homeland Relations. *Migration and Refugee Movements in the Middle East and North Africa*.

Human Rights Watch. (2015, January 19). *Unequal and Unprotected*. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/01/19/unequal-and-unprotected/womens-rights-under-lebanese-personal-status-laws>

Huntington, S. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), 22-49.

Iskandarani, A., & Rose, S. (2021, June 30). *Shortages, strikes and queues as crisis in Lebanon intensifies*. The National. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/shortages-strikes-and-queues-as-crisis-in-lebanon-intensifies-1.1239416>

Jalkh, J. (2021, January 4). *Riding the revolutionary wave or wiping out? How the Lebanese Forces is trying to capitalize on the Oct. 17 uprising*. L'Orient Today. <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1246926/riding-the-revolutionary-wave-or-wiping-out-how-the-lebanese-forces-is-trying-to-capitalize-on-the-oct-17-uprising.html>

Johnston, H., Arana, E., and Gusfield, J. (1994). Identities, Grievances, and New Social Movements, in: Johnston, H, Arana, E. and Gusfield, J.: *New Social Movements*, Temple University Press: Pp.3-35.

Kaplan, R. (1993). Chapter 2: Old Serbia and Albania: Balkan “West Bank”, in: R. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. New York: St Martin’s Press. Pp. 29-48.

Kassis, H. E. (1985). Religious Ethnicity in the World of Islam. *International Political Science Review*, 6(2), 216–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251218500600206>

Khatib, L. (2018, May 8). *Lebanon re-elects its political status quo*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/5/8/lebanon-re-elects-its-political-status-quo>

Khazen, E. F. (2000). *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967–1976*. Harvard University Press.

Kifner, J. (2006, August 16). *Hezbollah Leads Work to Rebuild, Gaining Stature*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/16/world/middleeast/16hezbollah.html>

Kranz, M. (2020, February 4). *Why protesters want Lebanon's new government to pass a new electoral law*. Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2020/02/lebanon-protesters-new-electoral-law-ruling-political-elite.html>

Laakso, L. (1989). Ethnicity in the World-System Perspective: the Case of Lebanon. *Current Research on Peace and Violence*, 12(4), 176-190. Retrieved July 3, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40725132>

LBC. (2019, April 22). *Lebanon's railway administration has 300 employees, but no railroad*. <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/d/news-bulletin-reports/440237/lebanons-railway-administration-has-300-employees/en>

Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS). (2011). Arab Uprisings and Challenges of Change, Roundtable Reports Series.

Lijphart, A. (1969). Consociational Democracy. *World Politics*, 21(2), 207-225. doi:10.2307/2009820

Majed, R. (2017, November 7). *The Political (or Social) Economy of Sectarianism in Lebanon*. Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/political-or-social-economy-sectarianism-lebanon>

Majzoub, A. (2020, October 28). *Lebanon in the Dark*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/09/lebanon-dark>

Makdisi, U. (1996) The Modernity of Sectarianism in Lebanon, *Middle East Report* 200.

Makdisi, U. (2000). *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (First ed.). University of California Press.

Maktabi, B. C. R. (2012, June 8). *Lebanon's missing history: Why school books ignore the past*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/06/08/world/meast/lebanon-civil-war-history/index.html>

Maktabi, R. (1999). The Lebanese census of 1932 revisited. Who are the Lebanese? *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 26(2), 219–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530199908705684>

Mallo, A. (2019). Development of Violence and Sectarianism in Lebanon. *Williams Honors College, Honors Research Projects*.

- Meier, D. (2015). Popular Mobilizations in Lebanon: From Anti-System to Sectarian Claims. *Democracy and Security*, 11(2).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2015.1036238>
- Meier, D., & di Peri, R. (2018). *Lebanon Facing The Arab Uprisings*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Meyer, C. (2021, March 19). *Why Lebanon ran out of money and what it can do now*. Arab News. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1827756/business-economy>
- Melucci, A. (1988). Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements. *International Social Movement Research*, 329-348.
- Melucci, A. (1989). *Nomads of the Present* (1st ed.). Temple University Press.
- Melucci, A. (1996). *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age (Cambridge Cultural Social Studies)* (Later Printing Used ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Melucci, A. (1980). The new social movements: A theoretical approach. *Social Science Information*, 19(2), 199–226. <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901848001900201>
- Melki, J., & Kozman, C. (2020). Selective Exposure During Uprisings: Examining the Public's News Consumption and Sharing Tendencies During the 2019 Lebanon Protests. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 194016122097289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220972892>
- Middle East Eye and Agencies. (2019, December 14). *Lebanese security forces crack down on protesters in Beirut*. Middle East Eye. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/lebanon-counter-protesters-clash-police-beirut>
- Nagel, J. (1994). Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture. *Social Problems*, 41(1), 152–176. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3096847>
- Nagle, J. (2015). Between entrenchment, reform and transformation: ethnicity and Lebanon's consociational democracy. *Democratization*, 23(7), 1144–1161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2015.1058361>
- Houssari, N. (2018, March 12). *Lebanon's political power clans pass their assembly seats to the next*. Arab News. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1264131/middle-east>
- Oberschall, A. (2000). The manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23(6), 982–1001. <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700750018388>
- Offe, C. (1985). New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics. *Social Research*, 52(4), 817-868.

Pichardo, N. (1997). New Social Movements: A Critical Review. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 411-430.

Ramadan, T. (2021, February 7). *Lebanon's growing list of assassinations: A historical perspective*. Al Arabiya English. <https://english.alarabiya.net/features/2021/02/07/Lebanon-crisis-Lebanon-s-growing-list-of-assassinations-a-historical-perspective>

Schlicht, A. (1980). The Role of Foreign Powers in the History of Lebanon and Syria from 1799 to 1861. *Journal of Asian History*, 14(2), 97-126.

Sen, A. (2006). 'The Violence of Illusion' and 'Making Sense of Identity', in: A. Sen, *Identity and Violence; The illusion of destiny*. London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books. Pp 1-39.

Shebaya, H. (2018, May 5). *Lebanon's parliamentary elections to deliver more of the same*. Al Jazeera. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/5/5/lebanons-parliamentary-elections-to-deliver-more-of-the-same>

Rabbath, E. (1973). *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel*. Librairie Orientale.

Rose, S. (2021, July 2). At Lebanon's university elections, a small change signals a brighter future. The National. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/at-lebanon-s-university-elections-a-small-change-signals-a-brighter-future-1.1114440>

Perry, T., & Creidi, I. (2020, August 27). *From golden age to war and ruin: Lebanon in turmoil as it hits 100*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-security-blast-centenary-insi-idUSKBN25N1PO>

Sawti. (2021). *Explore the alternative Lebanese political parties*. Sawti. <https://www.sawtvoice.org/explore-the-alternative>

Snow, D., Rochford, E., Worden, S., & Benford, R. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, 51(4), 464-481. doi:10.2307/2095581

Sullivan, H. (2019, October 29). *The Making of Lebanon's October Revolution*. The New Yorker. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/the-making-of-lebanons-october-revolution>

Traboulsi, F. (2012). *A History of Modern Lebanon* (2nd ed.). Pluto Press.

United Nations Security Council. (2004). *Security Council Declares Support for Free, Fair Presidential Elections in Lebanon; Calls for Withdrawal of Foreign Forces*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2004/sc8181.doc.htm>

Van Ommering, E. (2015). Formal history education in Lebanon: Crossroads of past conflicts and prospects for peace. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 41, 200–207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2014.06.009>

Vennesson, P (2008). Case study and process tracing: theories and practices, in D. Della Porta and M. Keating (eds), *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences. A Pluralist Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 223-239.

Verschuren, P., & Doorewaard, H. (2010). *Designing a Research Project: Second Edition* (2nd ed.). Eleven International Publishing.

Whewell, B. T. (2019, December 13). *Lebanon electricity crisis: Stealing power to survive*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50760043>

Zalzal, M. (1997). Secularism and Personal Status Codes in Lebanon: Interview with Marie Rose Zalzal, Esquire. *Middle East Report*, (203), 37-39. doi:10.2307/3012648

Zaougui, C. E. (2016). *Dictators* (1st ed.). Uitgeverij Polis.

Appendix I: List of respondents

Interviews with protestors:

- Lea, 22 December 2020, 1:13:54
- Ghassan, February 27 2021, 51:34
- Ahmad, March 10 2021, 49:35
- Rita, May 22 2021, 30:55
- Karim, May 27 2021, 44:16
- Abed, June 2 2021, 41:18
- Afifeh, June 4 2021, 37:49
- Michele, June 5 2021, 46:37

Interviews with political activist groups:

- Rawad, Minteshreen, May 31 2021, 45:52
- Coordinator Media Committee, April 14 2021, 48:18

Appendix II: Interview questions

Interview questions for protestors:

On sectarian identity:

- Which of the sects do you officially belong to?
- When did you first notice that you belonged to the sect that you belonged to?
- Which region are you from? (And ask about diversity of region)
- What role has your sect played in your upbringing?
- What kind of school did you attend?
- Do you feel like you can discuss sectarian identity with your family members?
- How do you see yourself in relation to the rest of your family? Do you relate to identity in a similar manner?
- Growing up, did you have many encounters with people outside of your sect? Friendships?

On joining protests:

- What is your first memory of activism against the Ta'if system? Can be a demonstration, does not have to be something you participated in personally.
- When was the first time you participated in an anti-sectarian movement?
- How did you start participating in anti-sectarian activism?
- What were personal motivations to join protests?
- Concerning the October 2019 protests, what was for you personally the reason to join in the protests, and at what time (roughly) did you join?
- How did you participate as months progressed?

On sectarian loyalty

- How do you relate to the slogan "*killon yaane killon*" (all of them means all of them)?
- Have you experienced a counter-protests, if yes, how was this experience?
- Have the protests tried to engage people who remain loyal to sectarian leaders? If yes, was this successful?
- How do you look at the clientelist aspect of sectarian parties?
- How do other family members relate to the protests, and/or to you joining the protests?

On changing positions as the movement progresses:

- Do you feel like your stances have altered as the protests continued, if yes, how?
- Have you, or has anyone you know, abandoned the movement after a while? How did this happen (renewed loyalty to sect, other issues?)
- How would you describe your relation/commitment to the movement today, more than a year after the movement started?
- Do you still participate in events?
- Have your encounters with people from other sects changed over time? More/less, friendships, professional, etc.?

- Do you see changing manner of allegiance of other protestors?
- How do you look at the issue of loyalty? E.g. people dependent on sectarian leaders for public services/jobs etc.?

Ending:

- Is there anything that you want to add? If there is anything you think we should have discussed, please take this opportunity to bring it up.

Interview questions for political activist groups:

1. Introduction
2. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and about [ORGANIZATION]?
3. Can you tell me how [ORGANIZATION] was formed? What do you think about the context you are currently in? What are your thoughts on the public support for [ORGANIZATION]?
4. How has this situation developed over the years? How do you think public opinion changed? Why do you think this happened?
5. How does [ORGANIZATION] relate to the increased anti-sectarian sentiments?
6. How is [ORGANIZATION] trying to reach its goals? How is [ORGANIZATION] trying to mobilize people?
7. Could you describe the context of Lebanon and the social and political situation in Lebanon?
8. How do you relate Beirut to the rest of Lebanon?
9. Where you active in previous protests against the sectarian system?
10. Why did you join [ORGANIZATION]?
11. Where you part of an organization during earlier protests? What has changed since joining [ORGANIZATION] for you personally?
12. Do you think of the current protest movement as being successful? Why?
13. Do you think the movement lost momentum? What is [ORGANIZATION] organizing during this time?
14. How do you explain the balance between anti-sectarian sentiments and dependency on the sectarian system by the population?
15. Do you think remobilization will occur of the movement? How does [ORGANIZATION] try to achieve this?
16. How do you look at cooptation attempts of established parties?
17. Do you think movements like this can eventually change the sectarian system and specifically sectarian politics in Lebanon? Can you already identify changes?
18. What do you think of Lebanon's internal peace in relation to sectarian strife?
19. Do you want to add anything?